

The Australian Women's Register

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Estonia Born Community of Australia

Summary

Most Australians of Estonian origin came here because of upheavals that occurred between 1940-50. During this time something like one in five Estonians was deported or forced to flee as a direct result of the Nazi and Soviet occupations and the associated military campaigns. Most Estonians in Australia were part of, or descended from, that group that fled westward.

The first Estonian Displaced Persons arrived on the ship the *General Stuart Heintzelmann* in 1947. This boatload, of whom 142 were Estonian, had been carefully chosen to show Australians that Baltic Displaced People were blond, blue-eyed and thoroughly assimilable. Young and well educated, they were determined to do well in Australia but equally determined to preserve their culture. They made a conscious effort to do so and established the Estonian Archives in 1952.

Prior to the mass migration period that directly followed the second world war, very few Estonian migrants to Australia lived outside New South Wales. Their numbers were sufficient enough, however, to form organisations and provide community support to the post-war Displaced Person community that grew after 1947. After this time, significant communities grew up in Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth. Most of this scattered but well organised population came about as the result of a burst of immigration between 1947 and 1952, with a small number arriving until 1958, but very few after that time.

Published resources

Edited Book

The Australian People: An Encyclopaedia of the Nation, Its People and Their Origins, Jupp, James, 2001

Archival resources

State Library of South Australia

[Interview with Ene-Mai Reinpuu \[sound recording\] Interviewer: Helen Chryssides](#)

Estonian Archives in Australia (EAA)

[Estonian Archives in Australia](#)

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