Malta-born Community Information Summary

Historical Background

The first Malta-born arrived in Australia as convicts in 1810. They were followed by the first free settlers. Charles Jacob is reported as arriving with the Duffield family as their servant in Fremantle, Western Australia, in 1831 and Antonio Azzopardi, a Maltese seaman, settled in Australia in 1838 and became a successful businessman. The first organised migrant group arrived in 1883 when 61 Maltese labourers were recruited to work on the sugar plantations in Queensland. Many of these migrants returned to Malta because of the harsh working conditions they experienced.

Immigration from Malta increased after 1944, when Maltese migrants were classified as 'white British subjects' for the purposes of Australia's immigration policy. In 1948, the Maltese were offered assisted migrant passage to Australia, which resulted in large numbers of arrivals. The majority of those who came to Australia left Malta because of poor socio-economic conditions or in response to government schemes to decrease Malta's population.

The peak period of Maltese migration to Australia occurred in the 1950s and 1960s. Most of the Maltese migrants who came were semi-skilled or unskilled workers and many were poorly educated, although there were a small number of Maltese medical practitioners. The 1981 Census recorded a peak of 57,000 Malta-born people in Australia. Since the 1970s the numbers of arrivals have declined and it is expected the Malta-born population in Australia will decline as the community ages. The 2011 Census recorded 41,274 Malta-born people in Australia, a fall of 5.6 per cent from the 2006 Census.

2016 Census

Geographic Distribution

The latest Census in 2016 recorded 37,613 Malta-born people in Australia, a decrease of 8.9 per cent from the 2011 Census.

The 2016 distribution by State and Territory showed Victoria had the largest number with 17,873 followed by New South Wales (14,481), Queensland (2,505) and South Australia (1,417).
Age and Sex

The median age of the Malta-born in 2016 was 68 years compared with 44 years for all overseas-born and 38 years for the total Australian population.

The age distribution showed 0.3 per cent were aged 0-14 years, 0.8 per cent were 15-24 years, 4.0 per cent were 25-44 years, 30.7 per cent were 45-64 years and 64.2 per cent were 65 years and over.

Of the Malta-born in Australia, there were 18,887 males (50.2 per cent) and 18,727 females (49.8 per cent). The sex ratio was 101 males per 100 females.

Ancestry

In the 2016 Census, the top ancestry responses* that Malta-born people reported were Maltese (34,608), English (2,788) and Australian (648).

In the 2016 Census, Australians reported over 300 different ancestries. Of the total ancestry responses* 175,555 responses were towards Maltese ancestry.

* At the 2016 Census up to two responses per person were allowed for the Ancestry question, therefore there can be more responses than total persons.

Language

The main languages spoken at home by Malta-born people in Australia were Maltese (20,759), English (16,065) and Italian (206).

Of the 21,369 Malta-born who spoke a language other than English at home, 89.4 per cent spoke English very well or well, and 9.3 per cent spoke English not well or not at all.
Religion

At the 2016 Census the major religious affiliations amongst Malta-born were Catholic (33,473), Anglican (355) and Christian, nfd (331).

Of the Malta-born, 4.4 per cent stated 'No Religion' which was lower than that of the total Australian population (29.6 per cent), and 2.6 per cent did not state a religion.

Arrival

Compared to 61.8 per cent of the total overseas-born population, 94.4 per cent of the Malta-born people in Australia arrived in Australia prior to 2007.

Among the total Malta-born in Australia at the 2016 Census, 1.0 per cent arrived between 2007 and 2011 and 0.6 per cent arrived between 2012 and 2016.

Median Income

At the time of the 2016 Census, the median Individual Weekly Income for the Malta-born in Australia aged 15 years and over was $423, compared with $615 for all overseas-born and $688 for all Australian-born.

The total Australian population aged 15 and over had a median Individual Weekly Income of $662.
Qualifications
At the 2016 Census, 33.2 per cent of the Malta-born aged 15 years and over had some form of higher non-school qualification compared to 60.1 per cent of the Australian population.

Of the Malta-born aged 15 years and over, 0.7 per cent had no qualifications and were still attending an educational institution. The corresponding rate for the total Australian population was 8.5 per cent.

Employment
Among Malta-born people aged 15 years and over, the participation rate in the labour force was 28.0 per cent and the unemployment rate was 4.0 per cent.

The corresponding rates in the total Australian population were 64.6 per cent and 6.9 per cent respectively.

Of the 9,817 Malta-born who were employed, 38.2 per cent were employed in either a skilled managerial, professional or trade occupation. The corresponding rate in the total Australian population was 48.8 per cent.

Produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics for the Department of Home Affairs
All data used in this summary is sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of Population and Housing.

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