

Migrant hostels in New South Wales, 1946–78

Migrant hostels, also known as immigration dependants' holding centres, migrant accommodation, migrant reception or training centres or migrant workers' hostels, were established after World War II to accommodate displaced persons and assisted migrants. The largest hostels were at Bonegilla (northeast Victoria) and Bathurst (New South Wales). Other hostels in New South Wales included Adamstown, Balgownie, Bankstown, Berkeley, Bradfield Park, Bunnerong, Burwood, Cabramatta, Cronulla, Dundas, East Hills, Ermington, Goulburn, Greta, Katoomba, Kingsgrove, Kyeemagh, Leeton, Lithgow, Mascot, Matraville, Mayfield, Meadowbank, Nelson Bay, North Head, Orange, Parkes, Port Stephens, Randwick, St Marys, Scheyville, Schofields, Unanderra, Villawood, Wallerawang and Wallgrove.

Migrants and their dependants were permitted to remain in the hostels from 3 to 12 months, and were given training to assist with re-settlement. Much of the early accommodation consisted of disused army huts and other converted buildings. These were gradually replaced with purpose built structures with improved facilities.

The Department of Labour and National Service administered migrant hostels until 1948 when the Migrant Workers' Accommodation Division was established within the Department to take over control. The Division was organised into three regional offices – located in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide – from which hostels throughout Australia were run. From January 1952 the administration of hostels was handed over to Commonwealth Hostels Limited, a Commonwealth owned company registered in Victoria. The company operated until 1978.

Records relating to migrant hostels held in Sydney

Management and administration of migrant accommodation

The Sydney office holds a wealth of material about the management of the migrant accommodation program and the administration of hostels by the agencies referred to above. Most records relate to New South Wales hostels, but as the Central Office of the Migrant Workers Accommodation Division was in Sydney, references to hostels located in other states may also be found. Some staff files, along with records relating to the acquisition and lease of properties for hostels, and the building and maintenance of accommodation facilities are also held.

Residents of migrant hostels

References to residents of migrant hostels may be found in correspondence files that relate to specific matters or individual hostels. Some files in series SP446/1, for example, include nominal rolls of allocations of migrants to hostels from specific ships.

Information about post-World War II migrants who settled in New South Wales is available from sources such as migrant_selection documents, alien registration files (details below), naturalisation records (applications since 1951 are held in Sydney), and passenger lists.

Department of Labour and National Service, Branch Office, New South Wales (CA 1681)

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Correspondence files</u>	1943–46	SP113/1

Migrant Workers' Accommodation Division, Central Office, Sydney (CA 2047)

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Correspondence files (some files contain nominal rolls of allocations of migrants to hostels from specific ships)</u>	1948–52	SP446/1
<u>Personal files – staff wages</u>	1948–52	ST1189/1
<u>Administrative instructions</u>	1949–51	SP239/1
<u>Correspondence files</u>	1949–54	SP446/2
<u>Correspondence – Ministerial representations re hostel residents and staff</u>	1951–52	SP446/3

Commonwealth Hostels Limited, Central Office (CA 1649)

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>General administrative records</u>	1948–88	C3076
<u>Board of Directors' correspondence</u>	1951–73	C5109
<u>Common seals</u>	1951–78	C4717
<u>Miscellaneous photographs</u>	1951–78	C5102
<u>Minutes of board meetings and annual general meetings</u>	1951–84	C4719
<u>Agenda and notes from board meetings</u>	1951–88	C4718
<u>Minute book of meetings of the trustees of the Commonwealth Hostels Provident Fund</u>	1957–65	C5089
<u>Binder of agenda and notes for meetings of the trustees of the Commonwealth Hostels Provident Fund</u>	1957–77	C5088
<u>Policy, procedure and instruction manuals</u>	1957–87	C4722
<u>Trust Deeds relating to the Commonwealth Hostels Provident Fund</u>	1959–77	C5090
<u>Board of Directors' correspondence with state offices</u>	1961–88	C5110

<u>Company Tidings (staff journal)</u>	1962–85	C5101
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Commonwealth Hostels Limited, State Administration, New South Wales Office (CA 1650)

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
Correspondence files	1949–54	SP446/2

Department of Immigration, New South Wales Branch (CA 957)

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
Applications for registration of aliens (other than Asiatics)	1948–68	SP908/1
Applications for registration of aliens	1948–68	SP1121/1
Correspondence files	1952–77	C3939

Director of Works, New South Wales (CA 1029)

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
Building maintenance specifications	1881–1950	SP155/1
Architectural and standard drawings	1941–59	ST3462/1

Property and Survey Branch, New South Wales (CA 1599)

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
Acquisition and lease files	1905–63	SP615/1
Correspondence files relating to property acquisitions, leases, disposals and tenancies	1905–76	SP1450/1
Correspondence on acquisition of and claims re Commonwealth properties (NSW)	1913–69	SP857/1
General correspondence files	1924–64	SP755/1
Correspondence files relating to property acquisitions, leases, disposals and tenancies	1941–53	SP126/1
Personal files – staff wages	1949–52	ST803/1
Medical Boards – constitution and arrangements in Commonwealth Employees' Compensation Act cases	1954–59	SP531/1