

Immigration records

The National Archives holds many records of immigration to Australia in the twentieth century. Prior to 1945 the main types of records are passenger lists, citizenship records and alien registration forms. From 1945 onwards we also hold migrant selection documents for people applying to migrate to Australia under an assisted passage scheme. Records are available for public access once they enter the [open access period](#).

Passenger records

Passenger records document the movement of people into and out of Australia. The master of each passenger ship and aircraft was required to provide authorities with a list of passengers disembarking and embarking at each port.

The Australian Government assumed responsibility for passenger arrivals and departures in 1923, so our holdings mostly date from 1924. Earlier records include arrivals into Fremantle from 1898 and microfilm copies of some earlier lists of passenger arrivals for some ports dating back to the 1850s.

The information found in passenger records varies considerably, but from 1924 standard details include name, place and date of embarkation, occupation or profession, sex, age, marital status, country of last permanent residence, nationality, and country of intended future residence. Details of the ship (or aircraft) are also given, including name, port of registry, shipping line, master's name and date and place of arrival.

A passenger arrivals index for passengers arriving by ship in Fremantle and other Western Australian ports between 1898 and 1964, or arriving at Perth airport between 1944 and 1964 is available to search through our collection database, [RecordSearch](#). Entries are continually added to the index. For more information on the passenger arrivals index please see *Fact sheet 220 – Passenger arrivals index*.

For more information on passenger records, see the following fact sheets:

- *Fact sheet 38 - Passenger records held in Canberra*
- *Fact sheet 56 - Passenger records held in Perth*
- *Fact sheet 64 - Passenger records held in Sydney*

- *Fact sheet 172 - Passenger records held in Melbourne*
- *Fact sheet 184 - Passenger records held in Hobart*
- *Fact sheet 190 - Passenger records held in Brisbane*
- *Fact sheet 256 - Passenger records held in Adelaide*

Citizenship (naturalisation) records

When immigrants arrive in Australia they do not have the privileges of natural born subjects. They can however become naturalised to be invested with the rights of a citizen. Prior to 1949, Australians were British subjects. On 26 January 1949 the status of Australian citizen was created when the *Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948* was passed.

The National Archives holds citizenship records for all states from 1904, when the citizenship function was passed to the Australian Government. The two main types of citizenship records are naturalisation certificates and case files. The National Archives holds duplicate copies of certificates issued between 1904 and 1962. Naturalisation case files, which include the application for citizenship, oath of allegiance and other correspondence, generally give more detail than the certificate.

Citizenship records provide much information about the migrant including date of arrival in Australia, ship (or flight) travelled on, town and country of birth, names of other family members, education, profession and address in Australia at the time of naturalisation.

For more information on naturalisation records see the following fact sheets:

- *Fact sheet 68 - Naturalisation records held in Canberra*
- *Fact sheet 100 - Records relating to Italian migration held in Sydney*
- *Fact sheet 187 - Citizenship in Australia*
- *Fact sheet 207 - Records relating to Italian migration held in Perth*

Alien registration forms

During both world wars, in the interests of national security, 'aliens' (meaning residents who were not native-born or naturalised) had restrictions placed on them. All aliens entering or residing in Australia had to be registered and report all changes of name, address, job or marital status.

Alien registration forms may include information on the ship and date of arrival, date and place of birth, occupation, marital status, a physical description or photograph, and addresses in Australia.

For more information on alien registration, see the following fact sheets:

- *Fact sheet 58 - World War I internee, alien and POW records held in Canberra*
- *Fact sheet 171 - World War I internee, alien and POW records held in Sydney*
- *Fact sheet 106 - World War I internee, alien and POW records held in Adelaide*
- *Fact sheet 59 - World War II internee, alien and POW records held in Canberra*

- *Fact sheet 101 - World War II internee, alien and POW records held in Sydney*
- *Fact sheet 107 - World War II internee, alien and POW records held in Adelaide*
- *Fact sheet 180 - Wartime internee, alien and POW records held in Perth*
- *Fact sheet 156 - Records relating to Dutch migration held in Sydney*
- *Fact sheet 182 - Civil Aliens Corps records held in Perth*
- *Fact sheet 186 - Alien registration records held in Perth*
- *Fact sheet 207 - Records relating to Italian migration held in Perth*

Migrant selection documents

Migrant selection documents are the documents completed by or for migrants applying to migrate to Australia under one of the many assisted passage schemes that came into place after World War II, including those for resettlement of refugees and displaced persons.

The Australian Government's role in sponsoring or assisting migrants prior to World War II was limited to providing funding to state-run schemes. After World War II Australia encouraged immigration, motivated by a need to improve the security of the nation in the Asian region. The National Archives holds migrant selection documents dating from 1945.

Migrant selection documents vary in the amount of detail they provide. Generally they contain a range of personal details such as name, address, place and date of birth, gender, marital status and nationality. Other details may include physical description, occupation, education, proposed employment and names of other family members, as well as health checks and photographs.

For more information on migrant selection documents see the following fact sheets:

- *Fact sheet 66 - Migrant selection documents held in Canberra*
- *Fact sheet 123 - Records of British migrants held in Canberra*
- *Fact sheet 156 - Records relating to Dutch migration held in Sydney*
- *Fact sheet 185 - Migrant selection documents held in Perth*

Other records

Many other records, including those of the accommodation centres where many migrants spent their early days in Australia, can provide personal details on migrants. For more information on accommodation centres please see *Fact sheet 170 – Migrant Hostels in NSW 1946 – 1978*.

The National Archives also holds some records for child migration to Australia from the United Kingdom and Malta between 1947 and 1953, please see *Fact sheet 124 – Child migration to Australia* for more information. See also *Fact sheet 147 - Child migrant records held in Sydney*.

Immigration case files can contain several types of immigration documents, as well as related correspondence. Files documenting internment of 'aliens' during the two world wars, as well as requests to purchase land, can also provide further information on a migrant. Photographs, especially the Immigration Photographic Archive (series [A12111](#)) depicting migrants in the

Australian community, can also be a useful source of information. For more information on the Immigration Photographic Archive please see *Fact sheet 254 - Immigration Photographic Archive*.

Searching for records

You can [search the collection](#) for immigration records, or ask us a question about records in the collection.