
Community voices – transcript – OH 580

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Interviewer: Lizzie Russell

Extract of an Oral History with a former State Migration Officer where he explains the Commonwealth government's priorities for migration following World War II.

The federal Government's goals for the Migration Policy, as I understand it were:

- **to counteract the decline in population growth,**
- **to get full employment by diversifying the economy**
- **and to increase the defence capacity.**

How was this interpreted in South Australia?

Well it's difficult, I'd have to jump back minutely, to say that through the war the losses in shipping were incredible with torpedoing and that, which meant that priorities had to be extended. At first, the main priority was to bring our own men back from the forces and then English wives that they had married over there. Then we had agreed to accept refugees. So the Commonwealth Department of Immigration took a large number of European, definite Refugees. They had offices over there explaining what was happening. In consequence, lack of shipping had to govern the number of people coming out, in accordance with priorities pertaining at that time. At first the British Government who had the problem of their own returning service men and the rebuilding of cities that had been bombed flat. They had problems placing [people so they agreed to pay for assisted passages out to Australia. As the people mentioned previously diminished, so did the opportunities to bring by sea increase. Having previously been a British colony and additionally, give or take a different accent, the British people would be easier to assimilate, preference was given to Britain. At that time, in the program the Commonwealth instituted, at least 45% of an intake must be British.