

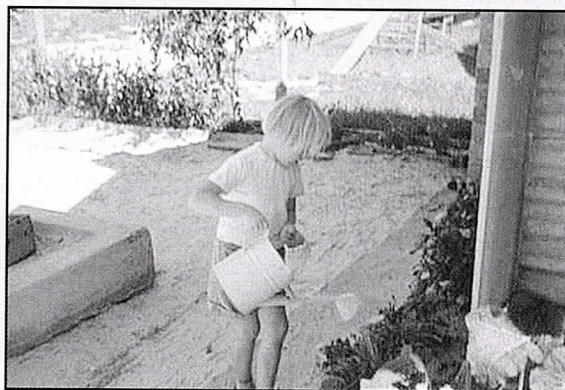
Country of Birth: **The Netherlands**Date of Arrival in Australia: **1959**

# Jacoba Oliver

I was eighteen and arrived with my parents, two sisters and a brother. My father was designated for Sydney, he was not given a choice, but when we all fronted up in Australia, the officers in charge asked my father where he wanted to go, so he said Brisbane. And that is how we arrived in Brisbane.

My parents were one of those unfortunates that had to get out of Indonesia in 1958 when Sukarno took control. We needed a hot area to resettle in, so Sydney would have been the death of my dad. I am Dutch Indonesian, born in Indonesia. My parents were Dutch (they are no longer alive).

## From the archives



*Activities at the Wacol Pre-school – 1957*

Wacol is where we went. The train trip was great, the white gum trees something I had never seen. Wacol was a place where one made the most of it. We were lucky. The hut was small, but my sister (nineteen) and I were given a job right away, as kitchen hands at Southport Boys School. We could not speak a word of English, but did not mind.

Father walked the narrow road to the station every day to find work. He could never get a lift as the roadside was full of stones, making him look like a drunk staggering. He came home late at night. Poor Mum had to spend all day in the hut with the young ones, aged nine and twelve. They went to school in camp. On our days off, we would go to the camp and share standing in line with our food

tray, and ate pumpkin and mash. We had never had pumpkin, and did not know that it can be cooked and made a lot nicer than we were given. Mother never complained. It must have broken her heart to see us go back to work.

Finally Dad got work and had enough money to buy a small house in Virginia. What I remember most of all about Wacol were the everlasting burning piles of gum leaves that the groundsman raked up everywhere. The grounds were large and neat.

The toilet was five minute walk away and we hated having to make that “long” walk. The showers were in a communal ablution block. My young brother nearly choked on the toothpaste, and a lady next to him said “Hey why are you so purple?”. It was so hot that even after your shower you could not get dry. In those days we all had to wear stepins and stockings, and tight dresses. The shower cubicle was small, people banging on the door “Hurry up!”. We really had trouble

putting all that gear on and be out of that hot box.

That was in 1958. My brother and I are the only ones left now. I still have the stainless steel trays we had to go to the kitchen with. There was a German family with six children, they had been there for years. Hopefully they made the change over all right, we could not converse.