

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

Catharina Vullers

The Wacol camp was a left over from the American army during the war 1940-1944, so we were told. We lived for one year in the camp – the year of 1959. When you drove in from Ipswich Road through the main gate it looked like a big park. The living quarters were all spread around and were called huts. Some had eight rooms and some had six rooms. All rooms had their own outside door, but some had inside connecting doors. If you had more than one room and no connection, you had to go in from the outside. There was one room for two people, for three people there were two rooms, for four people there were two rooms etc.

The camp was divided in blocks and every block had its own shower, toilet and laundry accommodation. No shower or toilet or water connected to the rooms. You had to go outside for everything. That was alright during the day but a bit scary during the night. In the early days every block had its own kitchen, but later during my time, there were only two and a staff kitchen. The kitchens provided three meals a day, which you could eat in the dining hall or take to your room.

There was a Catholic chapel with a Dutch priest, a cinema and a room where you could visit a doctor sometimes during the week and a nurse was available every day. Two nights a week you could go to English lessons (free) if you wanted. There was a primary school where the kids could go till they could manage the language and were old enough to go to the school. Outside the camp there was a canteen where you could buy most of the things that you needed.

But the best thing was that there was a bush track to Darra and there was a self service store and it was a blessing that you could take off the shelves the items you needed because you didn't know how to ask for it.

Every block had its own supervisor, where you could go if you wanted work in the camp or if there was something wrong. There was the main office with Mr Holmes as Manager, second in charge was Mr McNamara and the kitchen supervisor was Mr Jones. You could always go to the main office if you needed help.

If there was an important announcement to be made for all people in the camp it was done in all languages over the loud speaker. There was a post office where you could pick up your mail and there was a linen store where you could change your bedsheets and bath towels once a week. Another good thing was that it was close to Wacol Station, walking distance. And the town of Brisbane was close, different from the other states.

Some people hated the camp, but others like myself liked it. What would we have done as migrants, coming to a strange country? It would have been very hard. Well this is my story about the Wacol Camp in the year 1959. I must say that in later years a lot changed over there. The name changed to Wacol Centre or Wacol Migrant Centre. They even built flats in there but people that came in later years like in the 1970s can tell more about that.

There are maybe things that I have forgotten, but forty-four years is a long time to remember everything.