

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

Herman Wichgers

In May 1959, we arrived in Brisbane with three small children aged between eighteen months and four years. Initially, we stayed for six weeks at the Wacol Migrant Centre. The accommodation there was very basic – without any curtains or floor covering. After our comfortable house in Deventer that was a real set-back. Our first thought was: “What have we started...” The food from the central kitchen was not too bad and amongst the amenities was a small Catholic church building. The Dutch priest, who also lived at the centre, was available for guidance, which made the settling-in process a little easier for many newly arrived migrants.

Speaking Australian English was difficult at first despite the fact that my wife and I had learned English at school. After about a week of becoming used to our new environment I tried to find a job. In Holland I was employed as salesman/representative

[vertegenwoordiger] of wine-merchants but for a newcomer it would be difficult of course to continue straight away in that type of work in Australia. I became a tram-conductor at first and that provided a good opportunity to get familiar with the city of Brisbane. After three months I found employment as a representative with a firm importing goods from The Netherlands and four months later, I obtained a similar but better paying job selling potato chips. I did this for four years and during that period I learned a great deal, particularly in relation to marketing in Australia.

***Editor's Note:** This story was reproduced from “Our Story: Experiences of the Dutch in Queensland”, produced by the Dutch Australian Community Action Federation – Qld Inc. Reproduced with kind permission.*