

Dutch

The Dutch are one of the largest overseas-born groups in Australia, numbering at one point more than 200 000 arrivals in total. Presently there are 87 908 Netherlands-born people in this multicultural nation of which 15 219 are in Queensland: 3289 of these are in Brisbane and 2105 on the Gold Coast. Eighty-five per cent of the people of Dutch background, including a considerable proportion born in the Netherlands East Indies, now Indonesia, came in the 1950–1960 period. Most of them are presently in the 65-and-over age group. The Dutch are generally regarded as having integrated well into Australian society. There is a tendency to simulate assimilation while in reality the 'invisible Dutch' commonly hold onto their Dutch identity.

Early Contact

The United East India Company sponsored the vessel *Duyfken* with William Jansz of Amsterdam as captain. In 1606 his party went ashore on the west coast of what is now called the Cape York Peninsula. This caused some conflict with the Indigenous people, and Jansz turned around at Keer-weer (Dutch for 'turn-around'). This was the first recorded landing by Europeans on the Australian continent.

The Dutch continued their explorations of the Australian coastline. During Abel Tasman's first voyage (1642–43) the west coast of Tasmania was reached and he called it Van Diemen's Land. During a second voyage from the Indonesian Islands he was asked to find a passage between New Guinea and the South Land (the Australian continent). He sailed down the Gulf of Carpentaria without finding the passage (Torres Strait). Had he been successful, he would have circumnavigated Australia, which became known as New Holland.

Geographic names at Cape York are reminders of the early encounters by Dutch navigators with Australia, such as Duyfken Point, Nassau River, Staaten River and Cape Keer-weer. The Dutch sea-voyagers were more interested in trade than in settlement, yet they claimed sovereignty over New Holland by right of discovery.

From Early Settlement to 1947

Very few Dutch people settled permanently outside of their country in the early centuries. The number of Dutch migrants to Australia remained quite small until after World War II. The first few Netherlands-born people settled on the Australian continent in 1849. During the Gold Rush of the 1850s some Dutch became diggers on the Victorian goldfields. By 1871 the Dutch presence in Australia increased to around 400 and at the time of the 1881 census, to around 800, a figure that declined sharply in the next decade. In 1901 there were only 594 Netherlands-born people in Australia. Occupations recorded for the Dutch in Queensland for the period 1849–1903 included carpenters, farmers, tailors, storekeepers and traders. One of them became an importer of musical instruments, the founder of a famous music store and agent for the performing arts, Palings of Brisbane.

Colonial Queensland offered assisted passages and land grants to prospective non-British northern European settlers with emphasis on attracting Germans and Scandinavians. At the time few Dutch people showed interest in emigrating to Queensland. Some of those who did settle in this State did so after an initial stay in England.

During the Boer War (1899–1902) Queensland committed troops to the cause of the British Empire, and the locals of Dutch origin were subjected to some prejudice on account of their ties with the rebellious farmers in South Africa.

A small number of sugar growers and refiners came to Queensland via the Dutch East Indies. The Pioneer Mill was established by Booth, a Dutchman from Java. In 1908 a regular shipping service was begun between the east coast of Australia and the nearby Dutch colony, an initiative intended to stimulate trade contacts. The Holland-Australia Line commenced operations in 1921. At that time there were 1397 Dutch settlers in Australia.

Prior to World War II, Australia and The Netherlands grew closer ties, anticipating that

Japan might become a common enemy. Under conditions of war, the Dutch Forces in Australia's region fought alongside Anglo-Australian military forces representing all three services. In 1942 the Dutch colonial Civil Administration was transferred to Brisbane where it established a kind of government in exile. Some of the Dutch troops were housed in the barracks at Wacol on the outskirts of Brisbane. There were around 4000 Dutch people in Brisbane in 1942, most of them civilian refugees.

When Japan was defeated, a delicate political situation arose for Australian-Dutch relations. Indonesian nationalists were opposed to recolonisation, and Australia did not want to be dragged into a colonial conflict. Anti-Dutch feelings led to strong reactions at Brisbane's waterfront regarding the transport of troops and stores by Dutch merchant marine ships between Queensland and the island of New Guinea. Wharfies and Indonesian seaman walked off the ships intended to transport Dutch troops and war materials. Owing to this industrial trouble, six Dutch merchant ships remained in the Brisbane River for several weeks. Dutch troops, together with Australian police were employed as strike-breakers.

After Indonesia gained its independence, Dutch refugees were repatriated to The Netherlands, but many of them emigrated later and returned to settle in Queensland. By 1947 there were 2174 Dutch settlers in Australia.

Postwar Emigration

Europe continued to experience severe economic difficulties because World War II had ravaged vast stretches of the continent. The Netherlands with a very high population density was experiencing pressures from within. To minimise the housing shortage and high unemployment following the war, the Dutch Government encouraged emigration to countries such as the USA, Canada, South Africa, New Zealand and Australia. The Netherlands, about half the size of Tasmania, had a national population quite similar in numbers to that of Australia. Many parents were looking for a brighter future for their children. A considerable number of Dutch people emigrated because of the disastrous floods of 1953, called 'De Ramp', in which around 1800 people died, much livestock was lost and vegetation was extensively destroyed. Between 1947 and 1970

more than one million people chose to leave The Netherlands. Anxiety about Cold War dangers led to the 'second wave' of Dutch emigration to Australia during the 1980s.

Owing to widely perceived cultural, linguistic and other affinities with the Australian-born population, the Australian Government assumed that the Dutch would make excellent settlers. Those who served in Australia during World War II were welcomed under the Ex-Servicemen Scheme. Subsequently, the historic Netherlands Australian Migration Agreement (NAMA) was signed on 22 February 1951, which stated that skilled and unskilled young adults or family units with breadwinners under the age of 45 would be selected for assisted passage. The Australian and the Netherlands Governments shared the costs. Upon arrival, the receiving country accepted responsibility for temporary accommodation, employment and after-care.

Old warships were converted for the transport of Dutch migrants to Australia and from 1954 the Royal Dutch Airline KLM commenced to offer charter flights for that purpose. Subsidised accommodation was provided at the Wacol Migrant Centre, sometimes for a period of only a few weeks but many of the new arrivals stayed longer than 12 months. A considerable proportion of Dutch settlers came to Australia without any government support, paying for their own transport.

The Dutch have been highly valued as migrants because of their skills and professional qualifications. They were able to participate immediately in the work force and usually demonstrated a high motivation for work. The Dutch appearance similar to the local white population facilitated their settling-in adaptation. Upon arrival the majority of the settlers had only minimal English language skills but made a rapid cross-over to the new language.

Intermarriage was not uncommon, and for many families English became the dominant language at home. Most meetings of Dutch community groups in Queensland are conducted in English although Dutch tends to be widely spoken at social functions. Newspapers in Dutch continue to appeal to the people who came from The Netherlands, and the Dutch language program on Radio 4EB has a faithful audience, representing in particular the older section of the Dutch community.

Dr Chris Penders, a high profile historian with a PhD from the Australian National University, held the position of Reader in History at the University of Queensland, specialising in Indonesian history.

Bill Pruis arrived in Queensland in 1951 via Indonesia. He started his own printing business and currently focuses on publishing.

John van Riel, accountant and businessman with Keema Automotive group, Brisbane, was a judge in Indonesia and arrived here in the 1950s. He has been involved with Dutch-specific and mainstream organisations and is inaugural Treasurer of the DACA Federation, Queensland (1996-present).

Jan Welders arrived in Australia in 1950 and successfully developed the family business, Motorama.

Dr Herman Zeissink was Chief Geologist and Exploration Manager of Ashton Mining (1971-88). His exploration team discovered economically viable nickel and gold deposits in Queensland and diamonds in the Kimberleys, resulting in the construction of the Argyle diamond mine in Western Australia.

Economic Contributions

More than 70 major Netherlands-based businesses are established in Australia, including Shell, Philips, KLM, ABN-Amro, Rabobank, Unilever, ING, KPM, and Amsterdam Airport Schiphol, the latter being part of the consortium that tendered successfully to purchase Brisbane Airport. The Netherlands is rated as Australia's second-largest source of foreign direct investment from Europe after the United Kingdom, and the fourth-largest source globally. An estimated 45 000 Australians work in positions generated by Dutch investment and around 5000 Australians are employed to provide products and services for export to The Netherlands. Dutch contributions towards small business in Queensland include areas such as tourism, catering, fashion, finance, antiques, the building industry, house painting, floral industry, farming and agriculture.

A considerable number of first- and second-generation Dutch migrants have become professionals in areas such as medicine, health-care, teaching, music, accounting, manufacturing and numerous other fields. Many have established their own successful businesses.

A number of large Australian companies are presently operating in The Netherlands, such as AMP, Boral, Mayne Nickless, Qantas and Pasminco, attracted by the efficiency of the transport and communication infrastructure. As a key distribution point in the European Union, The Netherlands ranks as the eighth largest recipient of Australian direct investments.

Cultural Contributions

A number of exhibitions featuring works by Dutch painters have been held in Queensland, such as Dutch Art of the Golden Age at the Queensland Cultural Centre with valuable paintings from Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum and local collections.

The reputation of Dutch-born conductor Edo de Waart (Sydney Symphony Orchestra) and improved orchestral working conditions initiated by him, have had a nationwide impact and have lured many Australian musicians back from overseas.

Several Dutch settlers have contributed towards the arts and crafts, such as Kitty Breeden, who became known for her pottery. Counted cross-stitch embroidery, often with typical Dutch scenes, is regularly displayed by Dutch families. Some of the second-generation members are continuing this traditional form of embroidery. The well-known Delft-blue pottery can also be found in many homes.

Community Organisations

The social needs of a large proportion of Dutch migrants were historically met by their involvement with Dutch-oriented clubs and organisations, most of which were highly compartmentalised into religion-affiliated groups, consequently leading to minimal community cohesion and consensus. The Federation of Netherlands Organisations in Queensland (FNOQ) Inc. was founded in 1982. This umbrella organisation publishes the bi-monthly magazine *De Meerpaal*, organises the yearly Federation Ball, and published in 1996 the *Dutch Australian Community Directory*. Delegates represent the member-groups at bi-monthly meetings. While cooperation is strongly encouraged, the associated groups function autonomously and independently.

Examples of Dutch associations/groups/clubs are: the Netherlands Ex-Servicemen and Women