Vietnamese Family Reunion in Australia

1983 – 2007

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the reunification of Vietnamese families in Australia through the family reunion program from 1983 to 2007. Focusing upon these key years in the program, and building upon substantial existing research into the settlement of Vietnamese refugees in Australia, this dissertation adds to the knowledge of Vietnamese-Australian migration by focusing on the hitherto neglected story of family reunion. It offers an account of the process and circumstances by which Vietnamese families attempted to reunite and establish new lives in Australia, following the Vietnam War.

Drawing upon analysis of political debate and interviews with Vietnamese families, this thesis provides an overview of years that challenged traditional narratives of national identity and of the composition and character of the ‘family of the nation’. During this period, the Australian Government facilitated the entry of large numbers of Asian migrants, which represented a fundamental shift in the composition of the national community. Analysis of political commentary on Vietnamese family reunion reveals tensions between the desire to retain traditional conceptions of Australian national identity and the drive to present Australia as an adaptable and modern country.

The early chapters of this thesis examine political debate in the Australian Parliament about the family reunion program. They note differing emphases across the Hawke-Keating Labor Government (1983-1996) and Howard Liberal-National Coalition Government (1996-2007), but also similarities that underline the growing adherence to economic rationalism and the effect this had on the broad design of the program.

Subsequent chapters explore the impact of such political debate and decision making by providing insights gained through interviews conducted with Vietnamese people who came to Australia under the family reunion program, as well as community publications produced by Vietnamese organizations. These chapters note the impact of policy design and argue that family sponsorship, and the different conditions associated with either personally entering
Australia or facilitating the migration of family members from Vietnam, had a significant and often deleterious impact on family life and the ease with which individuals could settle into their new home. The imposition of quotas and withdrawal of certain welfare payments, in particular, are exposed in these interviews as having the potential to quite dramatically shape the roles performed in families, as well as family members’ social and economic participation in Australia more broadly.

The final chapter explores the implications of the family reunion program for Vietnamese families that reunited in Australia within the context of multiculturalism. Between 1983 and 2007, Australian governments adopted multicultural policies as the framework for managing cultural diversity domestically, and also for imagining the ‘family of the nation’. This framework emphasized loyalties and allegiances to the Australian nation, which was often at odds with the experience of Vietnamese family reunion participants forced to rely on family members rather than the state. This reliance on family necessitated through sponsorship arrangements complicated the extent to which many Vietnamese-Australians were able to live in Australia as ‘multicultural citizens’. The family reunion program is revealed, in this respect, as having a potentially detrimental effect on the ability of many families to establish lives that involve meaningful interaction with non-Vietnamese families and individuals. Family reunion as experienced by many Vietnamese families, it is argued, disrupted the project of creating a truly multicultural nation.
DECLARATION

This is to certify that:

1. The thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD;
2. Due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used; and
3. The thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendixes.
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This thesis was made possible through the support and encouragement, time and effort of many people.

I am very grateful to the people who offered their stories and experiences of interaction with the family reunion program. Without these stories, the depth and value of this thesis would not have been achievable. The following organisations that facilitated my meetings with interviewees were also crucial to the compilation of this thesis: St Vincent’s Institute of Education; Youth Substance Abuse Services; St Mary’s House of Welcome; and the Australian Vietnamese Women’s Welfare Association.

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INTRODUCTION

You often said you value the family          
Now you say because of the economy        
The family reunion must be cut            
But your savage cuts drive us nuts…      
                                      
- X. Duong, ‘No More Family’, Integration, 1997¹

Immigration policies reveal the real and symbolic parameters of national and cultural identity, citizenship and belonging.² As rules that regulate and determine formal membership of a nation, immigration policies can expose evolving ideas relating to where a nation has been, and where it is hoped it will go. The increasing interconnectedness of the world and the mass movement of people across the globe have stimulated numerous investigations into how nation states regulate, produce and experience national identity.³ The sharp rise in the number of countries within which culturally diverse communities coexist, however, has challenged conceptions of the nation as comprised of culturally similar people. Immigration policies provide a window into the beliefs and values that underpin understandings of national identity and belonging in particular contexts and during particular times. They underline in particular who can claim belonging to the ‘family’ of the nation, and how that familial belonging is experienced.

This thesis explores the experiences of Vietnamese families who have migrated to Australia under the family migration program since 1983. Reunion programs have been in place in

¹ This poem is discussed in more detail in Chapter Five. X. Duong, No more family. Integration 5, no. 13 (1997): 47
Australia since the post-Second World War era, when the Australian government embarked upon an ambitious scheme to increase the population through new immigration policies and programs. Earlier schemes were primarily targeted at migrants from Britain and Europe, in the hope that families from the ‘motherland’ and those deemed culturally proximate or ‘assimilable’ would comprise the population. The family migration program has since undergone several changes in nomenclature and design, and has come to occupy a different place in the overall Australian immigration program as national priorities have shifted from pure population growth to economic development. Specifically, family reunion has taken forms more relevant to this thesis since the early 1980s.

This thesis is concerned, therefore, with the sponsorship arrangements that constituted the program and which facilitated the reunification of Vietnamese families in Australia from 1983 to 2007. This period has been chosen to reflect key periods for family reunion among Vietnamese communities in Australia. Vietnamese refugees and migrants have been one of the largest migrant groups to utilize the family reunion program, with approximately 80,000 entering Australia through this stream from the early 1980s. While, it is difficult to be certain about the precise number of Vietnamese who entered Australia through the family migration

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6 The balance between those Vietnamese who arrived in Australia as either refugees or family reunion migrants has gradually shifted over time, as the refugee situation resolved. During the 1975 to 1981 period, almost all of the 49,616 Vietnam born entering Australia came as refugees and from 1981 to 1986 the proportion still was over 90 per cent of the 44,972 arrivals. The proportion coming as refugees decreased to around 45 per cent of the 44,984 that arrived between 1986 and 1991 and between 1991 and 1993 only 22.7 per cent of those who arrived were refugees. By the 1999–00 financial year the Vietnam-born humanitarian arrivals were less than two per cent of the total Viet Nam-born settler arrivals, and in 2011, less than one percent. Christine McMurray ‘Community Profiles, 1996 census, Viet Nam born’ in Community Profiles, (Canberra: Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs 1999). Skilled visa entrants are slowly and steadily climbing, with twenty-two percent of Vietnamese-born entrants in 2011 arriving through this category. See the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Economic Analysis Unit, Vietnam Country Profile, Canberra 2012.
program, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) identify three main phases: assisting orphans pre-1975; refugee settlement during 1975-1985; and family reunion in the late 1980s and 1990s. For the purposes of this thesis, I include Vietnamese entrants from the early 1980s in my estimates of the number of Vietnamese to come to Australia through the family reunion program because Vietnamese in refugee camps were more likely to be accepted to Australia if they already had family residing in the country.

Drawing on transcripts of parliamentary debates, interviews with Vietnamese people who reunited with family in Australia, Vietnamese community publications and multicultural policy documents, this thesis explores Vietnamese family reunification in the context of Australian national identity and public and private membership of the nation. By this I mean the capacity of the Vietnamese migrants included in this study to participate in Australian civil society, and the extent to which their lives are governed by private family arrangements and systems.

**Bringing the stories together: key sources for this thesis**

There were three key sets of primary sources utilized in research conducted for this thesis. These were selected for the diversity of perspectives and experiences they were able to provide on family reunion and comprised: evidence of political debate as recorded in parliamentary transcripts; interviews conducted with Vietnamese family members who had experience of the family migration program; and community publications that commented on the impact and outcomes of family reunion.

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Political discussion of the family reunion program was analysed through a survey of key speeches and debates in Hansard.\textsuperscript{8} Transcripts of federal parliamentary debates on the family migration program and entry of Vietnamese migrants to Australia under the Labor and Coalition Governments from 1983 to 2007 enable insight into the drive by the Hawke/Keating Labor Governments to reframe Australian national identity towards Asia and away from that of a British colony, and the response by many politicians in the Coalition.\textsuperscript{9} Vietnamese migration is illuminated in the parliamentary transcripts as an issue that touched upon sensitivities relating to White Australia and an historical fear of Asian ‘hordes’. While direct references to this fear are few, the transcripts provide evidence of how Australian politicians created narratives to justify policy positions that impeded the migration of Vietnamese families, and which sometimes had serious implications for early settlement experiences.

Hansard parliamentary transcripts are useful as official accounts of what politicians of all colours wish the Australian electorate to believe. As publicly available versions of the intentions, plans and explanations for different issues, the transcripts can be relied upon as evidence of what the Labor and Coalition parties wanted people to know and appreciate about the logic underpinning their policies. Nevertheless, the context in which these views are aired, and the subsequent public availability of these transcripts, also means that views are sanitized or at least not fulsome or wholly transparent. For this reason, the chapters that examine these transcripts include discussion of other accounts of the policy landscape. This includes media and academic commentary on political decision-making. Key newspapers surveyed include the national \textit{Australian} newspaper, the \textit{Age} and the \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, among other national and local papers. Key academic sources are discussed in further detail in Chapter One.

Parliamentary and other accounts of Labor and Coalition policies and attitudes towards family reunion provide a framework for interpreting the second key set of sources utilized in this thesis.

\textsuperscript{8} Hansard parliamentary transcripts comprise edited versions of debates in the Senate and House of Representatives published shortly after the chamber proceedings have concluded. They are available and searchable online through the Parliament of Australia website, \url{http://www.aph.gov.au} [accessed at various dates across the course of this thesis].

\textsuperscript{9} While lower-tiered governments at the state and local level play an important role in the lives of (migrants, through the provision of some settlement services for example), immigration policy is under the auspice of the federal government. It is debates relating to federal matters – entrance requirements, numbers of visas issued, debates about countries of origin, and the circumstances under which they can arrive and settle - which are of most interest to the author of this thesis.
interviews – and vice versa. The understanding I developed of the intentions behind the design of the family migration program helped to me to devise questions that I raised subsequently with Vietnamese migrants who were directly affected by family migration policies.

The interviews conducted for this thesis were obtained through several sources: some personal, but the majority through professional contacts. I met many Vietnamese families through my role as an English teacher to adults and adolescents for whom English was a second or third language in suburban Melbourne. Students and parents were made aware of my project through the principal of the school at which I taught, and many volunteered to speak to me out of interest and support for my thesis. In another role, as an administrator for an association that assisted youths aged 12 – 21 years who experienced some type of substance abuse, I came into contact with another organisation which provided support to migrant families coping with settlement issues. Substance abuse is a problem for some Vietnamese families, as it is for many other migrant and non-migrant families residing in Melbourne. The particular organisation that assisted with locating interviewees worked with some families who had problems with substance abuse, but worked generally to help newer migrants to navigate regulations around employment and welfare entitlements in Australia.

Several colleagues at the University of Melbourne, where I wrote my thesis, also had an interest in Vietnamese studies and kindly referred me to other people who could assist with my research. The Australian Vietnamese Women’s Welfare Association (AVWWA) was one organisation I came into contact with via this method. I was able to speak to several AVWWA employees, all of whom had involvement with family sponsorship in some way.

The majority of interviews were conducted in the workplaces of the interviewees or in empty classrooms attached to institutions of learning attended by interviewees. I also had access to a

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11 Youth Substance Abuse Service (YSAS) was established in 1997 in Melbourne to help youths aged between 12 – 21 years with alcohol and drug problems. See http://www.ysas.org.au [accessed 23 February 2016].
12 Mary of the Cross Centre assists families and communities with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds that are coping with drug and alcohol issues. http://www.maryofthecross.org.au/
conference room at the University of Melbourne library, which turned out to be an ideal space for interviewing. All interviews were recorded and later transcribed, and hand-written notes were taken as a backup of the discussion. Unfortunately I don’t speak Vietnamese and this limited the potential pool of interviewees. This inability to speak Vietnamese influenced particularly the age range of Vietnamese migrants to whom I could speak. In general, elderly Vietnamese migrants have lower levels of English language skill, and so I was only able to interview people from younger generations. As will be discussed further on in this chapter, this limitation meant I could not speak to parents who had been sponsored by their children under the family reunion program. Nevertheless, the material I gathered from the perspective of the children who sponsored their parents makes an important contribution to works that have focused on the experiences of the sponsored parents. Employment of an interpreter was necessary on one occasion, but I was able to recruit a sufficient number of people to talk who were able to discuss their experiences in English. Twenty-one interviews in total were conducted for this thesis, and more detail of this cohort is provided below in relevant chapters. Crucially, the testimonies of the people I spoke to completed the circle of knowledge I wished to obtain about the workings of policy, and the enormous potential governments have to shape day-to-day life. The interviews shed new light on the myriad consequences that can stem from single decisions made by politicians. The family migration program was revealed to be a policy that could bring a happy ending to stories of trauma and loss, or a policy that could contribute towards irreparable damage to the lives of those involved.

Another key source for this research was Vietnamese community publications that were produced and authored by Vietnamese people. These publications were important avenues through which information regarding English classes, community events and celebrations and support for different issues could be disseminated. Articles written by experts or community leaders on topics ranging from health care and addiction to skills development, employment and parenting offered advice on where to obtain support. Migration policy changes were a prominent topic in these discussions, with letters to these publications often expressing dismay and distress that particular approaches were being adopted.

13 Several studies confirm this. See for example: Diane Gibson, Peter Braun, Christine Benham and Frieda Mason Projections of older immigrants, (Canberra: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2001), p 112.
As sources, these community publications complement the interviews undertaken for this thesis. Both raise similar issues, but sometimes from different perspectives, including long delays in reuniting with family, changing gender roles and new divisions of responsibilities between elderly parents and their children, as well as the complexities of integrating into Australian communities for Vietnamese youth born in Australia. The community publications provide more and wider evidence of the issues that surfaced in interviews, but also add to knowledge of the context within which Vietnamese families and individuals were living. While the interviews provided clear insights into personal experience with the family migration program and early settlement in Australia, the publications reveal how similar issues were dealt with at a community level. They disclose also the advice offered regarding how and where to find assistance and guidance to lobby politicians, which in turn points to organized efforts to engage Vietnamese people with leaders and institutions outside the migrant community and to influence change. In this way the publications provided greater insight into the desires and intentions of many Vietnamese people to connect with mainstream Australia, and to settle permanently. Such desires and intentions, specifically to work actively with government to shape the conditions of family life for Vietnamese migrants, signals a commitment to life in Australia that is enduring and conducive to families thriving.

The political transcripts, interviews and community publications together, therefore, provide evidence of the most important voices in the history of Vietnamese family reunification in Australia during the period 1983 to 2007. The actions of the politicians responsible for developing the policy directions and the people directly impacted by these decisions were the two groups involved in this story, and their views reveal the parameters of family migration in all of its complexity.

**Families on the periphery of the Australian nation: clarifying the argument**

As discussed in the chapters that follow, the conditions associated with migrating to and settling in Australia under the family migration program include a contractual agreement not to call on the resources of the state. In order to quell public fears that migrants entering Australian under this program were a drain on welfare, successive governments have imposed limits and
restrictions on the types of government assistance family migrants can obtain during the early stages of their settlement. While many families have endured and survived these restrictions relatively unscathed, other families and individuals have suffered greatly as a combined result of their visa conditions and family circumstances. This thesis argues that a framework of public and private membership and involvement in national communities enables a clear insight into the way in which the Australian family migration program has contributed towards - and may still contribute to - the creation of a class of families who live on the periphery of the Australian nation.

As the recipient of large numbers of migrants and refugees since white settlement of Australia in 1788, and particularly since the end of World War II, Australia has been the subject of numerous studies of how understandings of national identity can be reconciled and confronted with the arrival and continued presence of culturally diverse communities.

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This thesis draws on many of these studies, but also aims to redress a dearth of analysis of several areas of Australian migration research, which seem to have fallen from focus. While research into Vietnamese communities living in Australia is extensive, studies have predominantly concentrated on the experiences of refugees. The findings of these studies have been groundbreaking for multiple reasons, which are discussed further below. Pertinent to this research in particular, are those studies into Vietnamese refugee experiences that have illuminated fears, values and hopes for Australian national identity. But the second phase of settling in Australia as a Vietnamese refugee has received less attention. By the second phase I refer to the process and period where families reunite. As refugees are rarely able to flee as complete family units, the period after refugees are accepted into a new country generally involves the sponsorship of remaining family members. The reunification of Vietnamese families predominantly involved young, male refugees sponsoring other family members, after they had arrived safely in Australia. These experiences of Vietnamese families reuniting in Australia under Australia’s family migration program operate as an interesting lens through which Australian national identity can be viewed.

As noted below, the family migration program admits people to Australia predominantly on the basis of family relationships and connections, and has often been viewed with suspicion, hostility and/or fear by politicians and Australian society alike. Facilitating or encouraging the migration of families, who have at times been cast as dangerous and antithetical to Australian national identity, has caused angst to politicians on both sides of the political spectrum. The influx of Vietnamese refugees and then family members to Australia stands out as a taxing time for Australian immigration policy and national identity in this respect. Remnants of the White


19 Works produced by the following researchers that were particularly important to this thesis include: Nancy Viviani, Lesleyanne Hawthorne, Stephen Castles, Mary Kalantzis and Ghassan Hage.

Australia Policy were still being dismantled at a time when fear of ‘the yellow peril’ was still very real. For many, the migration and reunion of Vietnamese families represented a strike at the idea of national kith and kin, the identity of many white Australians and at the future they believed was their entitlement.

Before progressing to an outline of this study, it is first necessary to unpack in more detail the key concept of national identity, and how it is employed in this dissertation. National identity is understood as a constantly evolving and historically located narrative that attempts to articulate the values, ideas and events that are important to a community of people. Governments engage in debates concerning national identity for the purpose of garnering public support for ideologies and policies that are consistent with the values and ideas espoused in particular national narratives. An examination of Vietnamese family reunion during this period enables insights into how Australian national identity was recast by Labor and Coalition governments for the purpose of winning elections and steering the Australian public towards support for migration and settlement policies that reduced the obligation on governments to provide direct support for new arrivals. Part of this effort involved clearly defining the characteristics of ‘true’ or ‘real’ Australian citizens as self-sufficient, productive and motivated to independently provide for themselves and their families, without drawing on state resources. Vietnamese family reunion migrants were frequently cast as outside this imagined Australian national community, and relevant delineations of citizenship, because their settlement needs required government support.

The journey from here: thesis outline

In order to clearly establish the contribution of this thesis to discussions of Australian identity and immigration policy, the next chapter turns to the themes and areas of interest explored by researchers of Australian immigration politics. The first section comprehensively reviews studies conducted thus far into Vietnamese communities living in Australia, and locates this thesis as a continuation of the research into Vietnamese refugees settling in Australia, but noting its particular contribution in terms of family reunion. Chapter One then turns to discuss the significance and history of the family reunion program in the overall Australian migration
program, and explains the reasons underlying the focus on this method of migration in this thesis. Finally, the chapter discusses the broad trends in Australian migration research during the past twenty years, with a particular focus on settlement experiences and the key factors that can shape this process. The role of government, through immigration and settlement policies, is highlighted as an area of research that can reveal the potential of governments to shape the connection between migrants and their new homeland.

Chapters Two and Three then examine transcripts of political debates that occurred in the Australian parliament during the period 1983 – 2007. These sources provide insights into the issues and tensions associated with facilitating the entry of Vietnamese family reunion entrants. National and cultural identity, and the place of Asian settlement in Australia are reoccurring themes throughout this period, and the Hansard transcripts demonstrate the difficulties relevant politicians had in convincing the electorate, their own parties and various lobby groups of the need to accept and manage cultural diversity, while strategically developing closer diplomatic and economic ties to parts of Asia. These chapters also demonstrate the growing influence of economic rationalism on all areas of policy development, including immigration, which contributed towards transforming narratives concerning cultural diversity towards one which emphasized productivity and economic value to Australia.

Chapter Four explores the interview material gathered for this thesis. As detailed above, I spoke to a sample of Vietnamese men and women who had direct experience with the family reunion program during the period under review. The interviews uncovered details of the ways in which sponsorship arrangements shaped early settlement experiences and which sometimes had long term implications for family relationships. The memories detailed in this chapter provide evidence of how the implications of the debates and issues surveyed in Chapters Two and Three were directly experienced by Vietnamese families reuniting in Australia.

Chapter Five complements the analysis of Chapter Four, through an examination of two publications produced by Vietnamese community organizations that have each played an important role in advocating for settlement services for Vietnamese families in Australia. *Integration, The Magazine for Multicultural and Vietnamese Issues* and *Phụ Nữ Việt*
(Vietnamese Women) are explored in this chapter for further evidence of how key settlement issues experienced by Vietnamese-Australians were managed, endured and integrated into family life. The community publications validate the experiences discussed in Chapter Four, and provide additional context to social environment in which Vietnamese families were attempting to establish new lives. Chapter Five also contributes towards a small but growing field of academic research into community publications, which have thus far received less focus than mainstream media.

Finally, Chapter Six views the family reunion program through the prism of the settlement framework of multiculturalism. The large scale entry of Vietnamese migrants to Australia coincided with the early development of multicultural policies, as the national approach to managing cultural diversity. Multiculturalism is explored in this chapter as a framework that varied in its intentions and effectiveness under each government, but which had the broad aim of addressing social and economic disadvantage that stemmed from belonging to a non-Anglo-Saxon background, and which inhibited the extent to which migrants were able to live as active and informed Australian citizens. This chapter examines how the settlement impacts of sponsorship through the family reunion program, intersect with the intentions of multicultural policies to influence the ability of many Vietnamese-Australians to become Australian citizens in the participatory sense of the title. The design of the family reunion program is demonstrated to impede the full expression of membership to the ‘Australian family’ and be counter to the intentions of the multiculturalism under each government examined.
CHAPTER ONE

Surveying the Field: Vietnamese Migration, Family Reunion and Migration Policy

Understanding Vietnamese in Australia since 1975: the refugee experience

In the forty years since the arrival of significant numbers of Vietnamese migrants to Australia, scholarship on this topic has burgeoned and developed along several key lines of inquiry. Particular attention has been paid to refugee experiences and key aspects of settlement for this group. Arguing that the experience, significance and implications of family reunion are less well represented in this collection of work, this chapter first reviews the contribution of existing scholarship to our knowledge of the Vietnamese experience of family reunion in Australia. It then examines literature from family migration more specifically, before turning to focus on our understanding of the implications of policy design on family formation and functioning. The chapter concludes by clarifying, in light of the literature reviewed, more specific gaps in knowledge that this thesis aims to fill.

Vietnamese migration to Australia occurred in very small numbers before the fall of Saigon in 1975. It is difficult to ascertain precisely how many Vietnamese lived in Australia before 1976, as Vietnam was not recorded as a country of settler birth until 1976-77. Vuong Nguyen and Mai Ho estimate, however, that Vietnamese residents numbered in the hundreds, and were predominantly students and professionals. Since this time there have been three main waves of Vietnamese arrivals in Australia: the late 1970s, when Australia’s initial reluctance to accept Vietnamese refugees was confronted by the actual arrival of refugees on Australia shores; 1983-1984, when the Australian and Vietnamese governments negotiated the Orderly Departure Program, which permitted relatives of Vietnamese-Australians to join their families

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1 In 1975 Vietnamese-born were 2.1 per cent of settler arrivals, compared with 13.2 per cent in 1980. ABS, 4102.0, Australian Social Trends 1996.
in Australia; and the late 1980s, when the majority of Vietnamese family reunion migrants arrived in Australia. The Orderly Departure Program was an early iteration of family reunion migration, and specifically applied to Vietnamese people wishing to come to Australia following the end of the Vietnam War. The ODP was enabled through an agreement between the Australian and Vietnamese governments in 1979, and permitted the reunification of Vietnamese families that had been separated through attempts by individual family members to escape Vietnam. The program was renamed the Vietnamese Family Migration Program in the late 1980s, and Vietnam nationals with family in Australia were able to apply to emigrate directly to Australia, subject to satisfying Australia’s standard refugee requirements. 

Studies into the early period of Vietnamese migration to Australia are extensive. As just one outcome of the Vietnam War, the mass exodus of Vietnamese people by boat has been described as ‘the biggest sea escape in the twentieth century’ and the settlement of refugees from Vietnam around the world has been recognised as one of the most significant, in terms of size and implications for social change.

From the Australian perspective, the plight of Vietnamese refugees has been studied from several angles. The politics of accepting Vietnamese refugees exemplified the unease associated with defining a new national identity, as ‘deep-seated Australian sensitivities about Asian migration’ were revived. So much hinged on how Australia dealt with the Vietnamese refugee crisis: relations with ASEAN, America and the UNHCR were intimately tied to the degree to which Australia agreed to become involved. Domestically, the Australian

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6 Nancy Viviani has commented that in Australia, the entry of Indochinese ‘has become the litmus test’ for the way in which issues including social cohesion, class, ethnic difference, population size and composition have been resolved and managed. Viviani, *The Indochinese in Australia*, p4.


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government faced a population who had many reasons not to support the war and an historical suspicion of Asian migrants.\(^8\)

Despite this early hesitation, Australia is home to over 185,000 people from Vietnam.\(^9\) Of this number close to 30,000 arrived as refugees by the end of 1980.\(^10\) Initial research into Vietnamese-Australian communities thus logically involved investigations into issues associated with refugees. Broader studies into migration during this time focused on the implications for social identity of the migrants themselves, and for those in the receiving country. Australian research into the arrival of Vietnamese refugees reflected this trend and a concern with Australian foreign policy in the region. Nancy Viviani, a founding researcher into Vietnamese-Australian migration, contextualises the arrival of Vietnamese refugees as significant for several reasons\(^11\):

(\textit{The entry of Vietnamese refugees}) had a profound effect on Australian migration policy, first as a test of the disestablishment of the White Australian Policy, and second, in demonstrating the erosion of our sovereignty over the entry of people to this country. When the Vietnamese boats arrived on our northern shores, Australia became for the first time a country of first asylum as well as a resettlement country. This situation raised fears within Australia of our vulnerability to future ‘peaceful’ invasions’ and tested Australian resolve in upholding international law in the treatment of refugees. Vietnamese migration also influenced the evolution of migration settlement policy in Australia and had long-term implications for change in Australian race relations and in our social and political life.\(^12\)

Nancy Viviani’s work along with other researchers such as Lesleyanne Hawthorne, founded much of the future research into Vietnamese Australian migration issues. Hawthorne’s research includes a compilation of stories of twenty Vietnamese refugees in the late 1970s and early

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\(^8\) The political context behind Australian involvement in the Vietnam War is well-documented, and the war occupies a prominent position in the history of Australian conscription. Debate around the actual acceptance of Vietnamese refugees however, included concerns regarding national identity and the recent dismantling of the White Australian policy. See Viviani, \textit{The Long Journey}, chapter 4.

\(^9\) ABS, \textit{Basic Community Profile} 2011 Census, catalogue no.2001.0.


\(^12\) Viviani, \textit{The Long Journey}, p1.
1980s. Specifically, Hawthorne’s study concentrates on life in Vietnam before, during and after the war, refugee camps in Southeast Asia, and finally, arrival in Australia.\(^{13}\) Such accounts provide useful background narratives to Vietnamese settlement in Australia, and the accounts of difficulties encountered during settlement offer valuable clues into the relationship between immigration policies and early life in Australia. Many problems relating to managing in Australia without the presence of particular family members or intolerance of cultural dissimilarities are concretely linked to (among other factors) immigration policies.\(^{14}\) Early investigations into Vietnamese settlement do not in general include (with the exception of Viviani’s work) references to the connection between policy and settlement experiences or cultural transformation. Instead, such works which concentrated on settlement issues revealed a fascination with cultural difference, and attempted to explain different settlement experiences as entirely a function of cultural practices and identity.\(^{15}\) Other analyses aimed to demystify to the Australian public who the Vietnamese were, where they had come from, and what they represented to Australia.\(^{16}\)

In addition to founding further research into the experiences of Vietnamese refugees in Australia, studies conducted by Viviani and Hawthorne provided early and clear analyses of Vietnamese family life. While their studies did not generally focus on the themes of family and nation, the accounts of personal experiences and analyses of contextualising politics provide a useful springboard for work, such as that carried out in this thesis, which relates Vietnamese families to ideas of the Australian nation.

\(^{13}\) Lesleyanne Hawthorne, *Refugee: The Vietnamese Experience* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1982). A much more recent example of this type of work, which specifically documents the stories of Vietnamese women refugees, is Nathalie Huynh Chau Nguyen, *Voyage of Hope: Vietnamese Women’s Narratives* (Altona: Common Ground, 2005).

\(^{14}\) For example, Hawthorne, *Refugee: The Vietnamese Experience*, p291, includes recollections of Vietnamese refugees to Australia who describe the guilt experienced from leaving behind relatives in Vietnam, of which immigration selection policies can be a contributing factor.


\(^{16}\) An example of such work is Nguyen Xuan Thu and Desmond Cahill, eds., *Understanding Vietnamese refugees in Australia* (Coburg: Philip Institute of Technology, School of Community Studies, 1986).
Indeed, a review of studies into Vietnamese communities living in Australia reveals an ongoing interest in issues associated with migrating as refugees. Recent examples of this work include Nathalie Huynh Chau Nguyen’s *Memory is another country: Women of the Vietnamese Diaspora*, and *Voyage of Hope: Vietnamese Women’s Narratives*\(^{17}\), which both examine in detail the stories of Vietnamese women who arrived in Australia as refugees. Memory and trauma theories are applied in Nguyen’s work to reveal insights into the personal and communal strength and adaptability these women demonstrated in order to establish new lives in Australia.

The settlement of many family reunion migrants during the late 1980s and 1990s depended upon the safe entry and establishment of a life in Australia of early refugees. The responsibility of securing a safe home for families who desperately needed to leave Vietnam was placed on the shoulders of many young Vietnamese men and women.\(^{18}\) While it is not my intention to revisit in detail the research into Vietnamese refugees, some discussion of the circumstances endured by Vietnamese refugees in Australia provides useful context to the experience of sponsorship which followed. The relationship between the modes of entry as refugees and family reunion migrants requires some interrogation, as there are both simple and more complex reasons why refugees of the late 1970s and mid 1980s are connected to family reunion migrants in subsequent decades. Many of the refugees of the 1970s and 1980s sponsored relatives through the family reunion program in later years. Statistics on Vietnamese migratory patterns demonstrate the inverse relationship between refugee arrivals from Vietnam, and those who entered Australia through the family reunion program.\(^{19}\)


\(^{18}\) While the majority of single Vietnamese to arrive in Australia as refugees were young men, many young women also made the journey unaccompanied. As potential recruits for the Communist army, young men were in a more precarious position in Vietnam to women and their need to escape was more urgent. The hazards of the journey by sea, documented by authors such as Nathalie Nguyen and Nghia M. Vo, were in some ways gendered, as the high rates of rape of young women by Thai pirates demonstrates.

\(^{19}\) As mentioned above in Christine McMurray, ‘Community Profiles’, 1996 census, Viet Nam, Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, the balance between those Vietnamese who arrived in Australia as either refugees or family reunion migrants has gradually shifted over time, as the refugee situation resolved. During the 1975 to 1981 period, almost all of the 49,616 Vietnam-born entering Australia came as refugees and from 1981
Establishing an official link between Vietnamese refugees and Vietnamese family reunion migrants, however, presents some difficulties. Applications for sponsorship generally only require a demonstration of the financial capacity of the sponsor; how the sponsor originally entered the country is not considered relevant. Researching political history that is less than thirty years old is also limited by the moratorium on some documents. Many other archives, such as actual visa applications are protected by privacy laws, and so are difficult, if not impossible, to obtain. For these reasons, evidence that Vietnamese refugees and family reunion migrants are in fact linked has been gleaned from several sources: research into Vietnamese family and migration patterns; statistics, such as those above, which suggest a causal link; and official interviews carried out for the purpose of this thesis. My research has not included analysis of quantitative primary data, but of the sample of Vietnamese families who were interviewed, almost all could identify a relative who arrived in Australia as a refugee. Refugees are part of the family history for many Vietnamese living in Australia, but for reasons relating to changes in immigration laws, which will be discussed in later chapters, not all refugees went on to sponsor other family members.20

The relationship between Vietnamese refugees and arrivals under the family reunion program can also be confirmed through the clear preference for intra-cultural marriages among Vietnamese living in Australia. Research into Vietnamese migration patterns has exposed the predilection for forming families with other Vietnamese a strong driver for sponsored migration. The gender imbalance initially caused by the above mentioned practice of predominantly sending out young men across seas created a pattern of young women being sponsored to Australia. The reasons for this are numerous, but one which appears to be at the core, and which again was frequently described in my interviews and personal correspondence, is the need to facilitate communication and relationships between the generations. Many

to 1986 the proportion remained over 90 per cent of the 44,972 arrivals. This percentage declined to around 45 per cent of the 44,984 that arrived between 1986 and 1991, and between 1991 and 1993 only 22.7 per cent of those who arrived were refugees. By the 1999–00 financial year, the Vietnam-born humanitarian arrivals were less than two per cent of the total Vietnam-born arrivals, and in 2011, less than one percent. At the same time, Vietnamese nationals arriving through the family migration stream was climbing: in 1988-89, this migration category enabled 43 per cent of Vietnamese entrants; 56 per cent in 1993-94; and 88 per cent in 2002-03.

20 For example, the Hawke/Keating governments cut the number of ‘concessional’ visas available in the mid-1980s and early 1990s. This was in response to evidence that people who entered Australia on this visa prior to this time, generally had poor English language skills, and thus poor employment prospects. Concessional visas were granted on the basis of skills and age (among other criteria), but not English language competency. Siblings of sponsors were quite often able to enter Australia through this category; spouses and dependent children qualified for preferential visas.
Vietnamese families have worked to sponsor Australia elderly parents who in general, have the most problems learning to communicate in English. As such, there is some pressure, overt or otherwise, to select a partner who will be able to communicate with elderly parents. Also, as will be discussed further in this thesis, there is evidence that some young Vietnamese men have more trouble acquiring English skills, and so travel back to Vietnam to find a Vietnamese wife. The reasons for problems with learning English for some Vietnamese men are numerous, but include the need to obtain work quickly, and so have less time to devote to language studies.

The established pattern of inter-cultural marriage combined with statistics that indicate the numbers of family reunion visas granted are used as evidence of the link between Vietnamese refugees of the 1975–1982 period and family reunion migrants of the 1980s and 1990s.

Studies of post-1975 Vietnamese refugees to Australia have further relevance to this thesis in that they also provide evidence of the particular impressions created on the Australian people and politicians. These impressions had repercussions for future policies and attitudes towards migrants yet to arrive. Broadly, the experience of operating as a settlement country for such large numbers of migrants who were previously formally discouraged from entering Australia, challenged understandings of Australian national identity, and stimulated a need to rethink Australia’s place in the world.

As the Vietnamese community became more established, and their arrival less new, researchers broadened their investigations towards understanding the issues Vietnamese migrants were likely to face during the early settlement years. The trauma associated with fleeing Vietnam and living for a period of time in refugee camps was linked to difficulties in finding employment and overcoming health problems that would enable an easier transition to life in Australia. Unemployment amongst Vietnamese refugees and migrants was another important

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21 This has become increasingly difficult as governments have become concerned about the pressure elderly migrants place on Australia’s welfare system.


focus of studies into settlement issues, particularly as an economic recession coincided with the ongoing arrival of more Vietnamese families in Australia.²⁴

Cultural identity and cultural difference continued to also be investigated; specifically, in terms of the relationship between this and life stages, the steps involved in living as a refugee in Australia, and in dealing with Australian institutions.²⁵ Jenny Burley’s work, for example, examined how Vietnamese cultural practices and behaviours intersected with the Australian legal system, and particular changes that were planned by the Australian Law Reform Commission²⁶ during the early 1990s. Focusing specifically on Vietnamese-Australians living in South Australia, Burley aimed to uncover any obstacles experienced by the communities when attempting to rent accommodation, obtain welfare, begin a business, or sponsor relatives (for example). While problems with language, both in terms of knowledge of English and with understanding legalistic terminology, the complexity of the law and with obtaining information about laws and legal practices were cited in Burley’s research as dominant problems identified by her informants, Vietnamese cultural values were also noted as conflicting with particular ALRC reforms. Specifically, Burley mentions family law as an area where there is strong potential for conflict between dominant Vietnamese practices, and Anglo-Saxon understandings of law and family. While the importance of recognising cultural diversity is said by Burley to be ‘stressed in (ALRC) reforms, they are still couched and administered in ways which cannot accommodate the collective nature of the Vietnamese family’.²⁷ The Australian family law system is described by Burley as reflective of ‘western, liberal, individualistic values’²⁸ which are in opposition to Vietnamese notions of collective


²⁶ The Australian Law Reform Commission is a national agency that conducts inquiries into areas of law at the request of the Attorney-General of Australia. The ALRC makes recommendations as part of these reviews as to how laws could be amended to better reflect societal values and dispense justice.

²⁷ Burley, New lives, new language, new laws, p74.

²⁸ Ibid.
responsibility. Whereas in western legal systems individual members of families are assessed before the law in, for example, property disputes, and the welfare of children is considered paramount, Vietnamese familial obligations are explained as centred more upon collective identity. The conduct of children is thought to be reflective of the family as a whole, and respect and reverence of children for their parents is more overtly articulated and tangibly expressed. In relation to gender roles, Burley also notes interesting differences in parental obligations:

Unlike the majority of Australian-born fathers who do not seek or contest custody of their children at the time of divorce, Vietnamese men take their parenting obligations very seriously and are greatly distressed if they are separated from their children...Men in western societies are often excluded from these spheres of family life because it is seen, in a derogatory way, as “women work” and therefore unworthy of male energy.

While Burley is careful not to generalise and claim that all Australian men are disinterested fathers, there was a tendency in this study (as demonstrated above) to fail to acknowledge exceptions to patterns in Vietnamese male parenting obligations. Burley’s work is however, a clear demonstration of the ways in which Vietnamese cultural patterns have been researched as interacting with Australian systems of social regulation, and the implications for Vietnamese families attempting to reside happily in Australia. Burley’s research is also pertinent to my research, in that her study includes some analysis of problems associated with immigration law, and specifically, sponsorship of relatives. Some of the problems experienced by Vietnamese-Australians when they attempted to facilitate the migration of family members that are revealed in this study were confirmed in my primary research. The thorough and lucid explanations offered by Burley of Australian legal practices were also invaluable to my accumulated understanding of immigration laws.

While Burley’s involved analysis of the link between Vietnamese cultural identity and settlement problems, other studies attempt to explain these issues as tied to the conditions and circumstances of early life in Australia. An example of such work is James Coughlan’s ‘Occupational mobility of Australia’s Vietnamese community’. As is evident from the title, Coughlan’s piece involves analysis of statistical data to determine the extent to which social mobility was achieved by Vietnamese-Australians, and the conditions that were conducive to such accomplishment. The relevance of Coughlan’s study for my research lies in his contention that ‘the labor force performance of Vietnamese Australians appears to be primarily related to what happens to them after their arrival in Australia, and is only minimally dependent upon

29 Ibid., p61.
what they brought with them to Australia’. Issues associated with residence and settlement in Australia are framed as more determinative of employment experiences than the qualifications and workplace experience many of the migrants arrived with. Variables such as English proficiency upon arrival, gender, ownership of family residence and whether tertiary qualifications were currently being sought, were, amongst other factors considered against the level of social mobility achieved.

Of particular interest to my research, was the analysis of sponsorship of relatives to Australia and the number of relatives resident in Australia. Coughlan concluded that while sponsorship and the associated financial burden motivated individuals to work hard and hence achieve ‘higher upward occupational mobility’ the actual presence of relatives was negatively linked to social mobility. Coughlan states: ‘It would appear that the presence in Australia of a large nuclear family and a large number of relatives inhibits, rather than enhances, the occupational mobility of Vietnamese Australians’. Although Coughlan surmises that the absence of family members motivates individuals to improve their relative incomes in order to sponsor out family members, his use of the word ‘inhibits’ points to another possible reason why mobility may be suspended as a result of familial presence. It is possible that the presence of family members may not support occupational mobility because the conditions of their migration and sponsorship are very demanding of the time and resources of the sponsor.

What Coughlan’s analysis does not disclose is whether the relatives who supposedly were inhibiting the mobility of the interviewees, were temporary or permanent migrants themselves, or on which type of visa they had arrived in Australia. The status of residency in Australia and whether a relative came to Australia through the preferential or concessional family categories,

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31 James Coughlan in ‘Occupational mobility of Australia’s Vietnamese community’ p185.

32 Ibid., p186.
had, and still has, enormous implications for the type government support available to them.\textsuperscript{33} Access to government welfare provisions could alleviate the financial pressure on families significantly, particularly if the families came from refugee backgrounds, and were having to rebuild lives with little personal wealth. While Coughlan’s research does not explore this angle, his work opens the way for further investigations into how the circumstances and conditions surrounding the residence of migrants in Australia can influence the lifestyles they are able to create.

Alongside investigations into settlement issues and cultural identity, there has also been considerable academic interest in Vietnamese cultural identity expressions and manifestations in Australia. Researchers such as Mandy Thomas and Adrian Carton have produced works which locate Vietnamese-Australian identity within local and transnational contexts, and which attempt to offer explanations for particular constructions of Vietnamese distinctiveness.\textsuperscript{34} Thomas’s work includes analyses of Vietnamese cuisine, Vietnamese migrant bodies and the relationship between displacement and perceptions of the homeland and the self. Her monograph \textit{Dreams in the Shadows} (1999) aimed to understand the relationship between identity and space, ‘because migrants are always in some sense “out of place” and because they almost always attempt to create a sense of being at home in the new place’.\textsuperscript{35} Gender and corporeal reality are examined in addition to the Vietnamese Tet festival, as manifestations of Vietnamese migrant identity in Australia. Although Thomas’s work provides an introductory chapter to Vietnamese migration to Australia, her central focus is the personal negotiations of space, both in relation to Vietnam and Australia, as Vietnamese-Australians construct a migrant identity within the particular historical and social context Australian conditions provide. \textit{Dreams in the Shadows}, as with other examples of Thomas’s work, detail the changes in Vietnamese-Australian identity and explore some of the dominant expressions of these

\textsuperscript{33} The time of writing of Coughlan’s article coincided with the introduction of more stringent regulations that governed the eligibility of government financial support to migrants. See Robert Birrell, \textit{Immigration Reform in Australia: Coalition government proposals and outcomes since March 1996} (Clayton: Monash University, 1997) for a discussion and analysis of the implications of these changes for migrant families.


\textsuperscript{35} Mandy Thomas, \textit{Dreams in the Shadows: Vietnamese-Australian lives in transition} (St Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1999), p.xvi.
transformations. Also included in Thomas’s publications, are discussion of the barriers and structures that supported identity transformation amongst Vietnamese-Australians. In this respect, Thomas’s work has relevance to my research: attitudes towards the homeland, the self and Australia are all informed by systems that regulate and channel migrant lives, identity and cultural expressions. Thomas’s explorations of how Vietnamese-Australians negotiate these systems are examples of the consequences of living within the particular social context that was and is Australia. The aim of my research is to detail one aspect of the Australian context within which Vietnamese-Australians negotiate identity and lifestyle.

Analyses of cultural identity have also extended to include investigations into family life, formation and changes in roles. This work has obvious parallels to my own, in that the changes observed form part of the picture of how immigration policies and conditions can directly influence the day-to-day circumstances of Vietnamese families. Family structure and functioning has sometimes been noted to adapt to new local conditions, which is evidence of familial malleability. Broad discussions of Vietnamese family life in Australia have provided the background to more specific analyses into changes in familial roles. In particular, grandparents have received some attention, as their function within Vietnamese-Australian families has been observed to quite radically change. As discussed above, some studies indicate that Vietnamese grandparents in Australia are particularly adept at coping in their new circumstances, and in providing a crucial link between past, familiar practices, and the challenges faced by their families in the future. Small, Rice, Yelland and Lumley have also conducted research into the experiences of new mothers coping in a new country, including

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36 Thomas, ‘Transitions in Taste in Vietnam and the Diaspora’, pp54–67, exemplifies this point succinctly: availability of foodstuffs in Australia in addition to a multicultural policy that endorses culinary expressions of cultural difference has promoted Vietnamese-Australian cuisine.

37 Vuong Nguyen and Mai Ho, ‘Vietnamese-Australian families’ in Families and Cultural Diversity in Australia, ed. Robyn Hartley (Melbourne: Allen and Unwin, 1995) is an example of such work, and provides a useful background to Vietnamese families in Australia; Zvi Gellis, ‘Kin and Nonkin Social Supports in a Community Sample of Vietnamese Immigrants’, Social Work 48 no.2 (2003): p248–258 also provides an interesting analysis of the importance of the overall family network, as opposed to particular members.

Vietnamese women.\textsuperscript{39} In particular, Small et al explored the significance and implications of not being able to observe specific cultural practices surrounding maternity care and birth, because of relocation to Australia. Similar expressions of distress were confirmed and reported in my primary research; new mothers endured additional stress because they were not adhering to practices followed in their home countries, which were thought to impact directly on the health of the child and the mother.

Much of the research conducted into Vietnamese-Australians’ experiences with policy and Australian legal institutions and ideas have already been cited. It is worth highlighting, however, that the studies relating specifically to immigration policy have focused on humanitarian visas, or, on a much smaller scale, the sponsorship of elderly parents. Nancy Viviani’s work comprises the bulk of studies on Vietnamese refugees, and Australian humanitarian policy, while smaller reports cover the subsequent migratory experiences of Vietnamese.\textsuperscript{40} Of direct relevance to my research are the smaller studies of the family reunion program. Particular examples of such works include: Trang Thomas and Mark Balnaves \textit{New Land, Last Home} and Rita Kritikos, Eva Lavie and Maria Papagrigoriou’s \textit{Newly Arrived Migrants and the ‘Two Year Waiting Period’}. Both works involved collecting data from migrants who had direct experience with migrating through the family reunion program. While Thomas and Balnaves’s study focused specifically on elderly Vietnamese coming to Australia as family reunion migrants, Kritikos et al’s analysis includes data gained from several different cultural backgrounds; Vietnamese migrants comprised about six per cent of the sample, with the dominant groups being Bangali and Latin American. These two reports are concise examples of analyses that highlight the relationship between policy and the lives of migrants to Australia. Trang and Thomas’s report discusses the stresses experienced by elderly Vietnamese migrants to Australia, and the strategies employed to manage them. The authors do not limit their explanations of the stresses endured to the conditions of the visas under which each interviewee migrated; homesickness for example is not directly caused by immigration policies. Within the general context, however, of the early settlement problems described in


the report, many can be related back to particular stipulations of parent visas. For example, for a period of two years parents are dependent upon their children financially; they are not permitted to apply for pensions. The lack of independence that entails disrupts existing hierarchies of responsibility and familial obligations. Kritikos et al provide an exploration of a specific change made to the family reunion program, and of the implications for migrants who experienced the new conditions. The two year waiting period is precisely the clause described above: ‘non humanitarian migrants who arrive with the intention to settle are subjected to a 104 week waiting period for accessing Social Security benefits’. The authors of this report conducted interviews with migrants in order to assess how migrant communities were being affected by the introduction of this clause in 1997. The relevance of this report is obvious; primary research conducted with migrants who are living within the confines of specific visa conditions is an example of the knowledge to which I wish to contribute.

Alongside the studies and issues noted above, it is also necessary to acknowledge recent work on the Australian-Vietnamese migratory experience that has begun to chart the experiences of subsequent generations. These studies examine issues ranging from the preference for intracultural friendships to the ways in which the trauma of escaping Vietnam of first generation migrants influenced family life and parenting. While less immediately pertinent to this thesis, this growing field certainly enriches and informs this study.

The breadth of research into Vietnamese experiences of arrival and early settlement in Australia provides a sound base for further investigation into Vietnamese family reunification through the family migration program. The background and formative experiences that shaped those

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41 See specifically chapter 4 ‘The Vietnamese elderly and stress’ in Trang Thomas and Mark Balnaves, *New Land Last Home*.
individuals who would go on to sponsor and support family members to Australia have been comprehensively detailed to allow some understanding of the domestic and community environments into which new family members arrived. This thesis extends and builds upon the picture of Vietnamese family and community life enabled by the focus on Vietnamese refugees and the issues confronted by living in Australia.

**Understanding Family Migration in Australia: Supplementing a Focus on Refugees and Workers**

Investigations into the family reunion program are a natural progression from the concentration on refugee studies, if a developed understanding of the issues faced by Vietnamese communities in Australia is to be gained. However, the research focus on the refugee experience in Vietnamese-Australian communities is indicative of a wider trend in investigations into the overall Australian migration program. Academic interest into the issues associated with Australia’s refugee intake is high, in comparison to research into other migration streams. Neumann notes that the past ten years in particular, have seen an outpouring of research into Australia’s response to refugees. The controversy surrounding refugee entry to Australia persists, as the arrival of people on Australian shores continues. The treatment of refugees and policy proposals to reduce or eliminate the number of people arriving in Australia through unauthorized channels is sufficiently polarizing to occupy the efforts of several prominent and public commentators.

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46 Janet Phillips and Harriet Spinks provide a useful historical overview of the arrival on Australian shores of refugees, from the end of the Vietnam war to the present, in ‘Boat arrivals in Australia since 1976’ Background Note, Canberra, Department of Parliamentary Services, 2013.

47 Examples include: Julian Burnside QC; Dr David Corlett; and Professor Robert Manne
The research focus on the most vulnerable people to enter Australia through migratory channels is juxtaposed by the attention paid to skilled migration, and the issues faced by this cohort of migrants to Australia. Approximately forty years ago, Australian politicians commenced a slow move away from the post-war priority of growing the Australian economy through immigration and instead embraced the premise that migration can be viewed as a source of expertise and skills. Skilled migration has thus become an area of popular research, as the implications of a non-permanent migration class are explored within the broader issue of recasting the Australian economy away from manufacturing and the industries that previously required high levels of permanent migration.

Despite these shifts in focus and the proliferation of research into refugee and skilled migration, this thesis argues that the family reunion program should still be considered important from a research and policy point of view. The family reunion program is a dominant source through which permanent migration flows, and as Australia remains a popular destination for humanitarian migrants who have been separated from their families, the avenue of reunification will remain necessary. Larsen recently argued that the political framing of immigration as an economic and not social policy ignores the fact that more than fifty per cent of the skilled migration stream is comprised by family members of the primary skilled visa applicant. Skilled migrants are not just economic actors; the desire and need to live with family remains. Refugee and skilled migration are framed as revealing more about Australian national identity and as contributing towards the nation’s economic future. The family reunion program has

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50 Gareth Larsen, ‘Family migration to Australia’, Research Paper, Parliamentary Library, Canberra, 2013-14, p1. Larsen is referring to people who migrate to Australia through the skilled migration stream as family members of the primary skilled migrant. People in this category used to be counted as part of the family migration stream, but from 1996 have been considered within the skilled stream. Mary Crock, *Immigration and Refugee Law in Australia* (Annandale: The Federation Press, 1998), p68.

51 Analyses of Australian refugee policy have drawn links between the treatment of refugees and the Australian national identity. For example, Richard Wazana argues a discourse analysis of the Tampa crisis reveals a re-
lost the potency it once had in terms of emotional public responses. It has also lost its perceived potential as contributing toward the Australian population, and hence, national community. Where Australian governments once publicly espoused the wonderful symbiosis between migrant families searching for a new permanent home and Australia as a land in need of population growth and labour, political rhetoric now emphasises the service that Australia, as a national community, provides to the majority of people seeking residency (temporary or ongoing). As explored in later chapters, the family migration program has failed to be recast as a valuable contributor to the Australian nation, since this has been framed in rationalist terms. Larsen confirms this observation in his review of the current government’s immigration policy objectives, where he finds: ‘family migration receives no special mention in the (Department of Immigration and Border Protection’s) strategic priorities, presumably fitting somewhere within broader economic, labour market, social and environmental goals.’

Broader studies into policy and legislative changes in immigration law provide important context for this thesis and a framework for explaining many of the circumstances experienced by Vietnamese family reunion migrants. Cooney’s research, for example, focuses on specific and far-reaching changes in immigration law that have had significant repercussions for people attempting to migrate to Australia, and for the families in Australia hoping to reunite through family reunion visas. Described as the ‘codification’ of immigration law, 1989 was the first year that specific Australian immigration policies became legislation. Before this, the Migration Act (1958) gave absolute power to the Minister for Immigration to make decisions relating to the entry and exit of people to Australia. The detailed criteria that exist today, which delineate who can and cannot enter Australia through particular visas, did not exist on a


Larsen, ‘Family migration to Australia’, p2.

legislative level. Procedures outlining how visas were to be granted and refused were primarily contained in documents held by government departments. This situation meant that decisions made by the government of the day to refuse visas (for example) were more vulnerable to successful appeals; the lack of formal legislative backing enabled courts to effectively challenge decisions made by the Minister and immigration officials. Outcomes were often positive for the clients involved, which frustrated the government of the time as a rebuke of government processes and judgment.

The dependence on the Minister’s subjectivity instead of concrete criteria was described by the Human Right’s Commission in 1985 as in contravention to Article 26 of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights, which stated that all people had the right to be treated equally and without discrimination before the law. The Hawke Labor government, in power from 1983 to 1991, responded by remodelling the entire immigration program: detailed criteria were introduced, and the capacity for the Minister to have ultimate discretion over who could and could not enter Australia was removed.

The implications of these changes for family reunion migrants were numerous. While the system became less subjective and hence less (in theory) vulnerable to personal bias, the criteria introduced were narrow, specific and complicated, to the extent that many found the system unworkable. Continual reworking of the overall procedures would improve this situation, but during the period immediately following 1989, migrating to Australia was difficult.

A dominant problem for family reunion migrants that stemmed from the codification was the clause that applications for permanent residency had to be make off-shore. On-shore applications for a change of status represented the biggest challenge to governmental control over immigration, in that it was more difficult to reject someone already in Australia. Temporary residents had some right to legal redress: it was likely they had formed relationships with Australian citizens or permanent residents and perhaps had been claiming social

54 Cooney, The transformation of migration law, p19.
Attempts to remedy this in 1989 lead to the development of a highly complicated system, with tighter time frames for lodging applications for permanency. Demonstrating eligibility became increasingly difficult. In 1989 many people who entered Australia as visitors and who would previously have been eligible for permanency as (for example) aged parents on the basis of the balance of family test, had to leave Australia and apply off-shore. Applicants for humanitarian visas faced even tougher challenges: the political strife they were seeking refuge from had to be formally recognised by the Minister in the form of a gazetted notice.

This legislative context is complemented by a small, but useful body of research into the policies of family migration in Australia. Khoo has conducted several, detailed studies into spouse migration to Australia, while Birrell, has focused predominantly on the costs to government of migrants entering through this stream. The material produced by these two researchers is complementary, in that Khoo’s work is generally based on data and provides profiles of the people who enter Australia through family migration streams, and Birrell’s work critiques the flow-on implications of admitting family migrants. The combined works of Khoo and Birrell have provided important contextualization of Vietnamese spouses migrating to Australia, through the detailing of the policies and political debates surrounding their entry and settlement.

Birrell’s works are useful critiques of family migration policies, as his views are sufficiently and consistently conservative to provide insight into one parameter of the debates. His analyses of family migration focus on the themes of welfare dependency, unemployment and the incompatibility of many migrants who arrived through this category to national economic objectives. Birrell was generally supportive of the Coalition Government, in power from 1996

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58 Examples include: Robert Birrell, ‘Managing the 1996-1997 Immigration Program Implications of Recent Decisions to Cap Certain Preferential Family Categories’, People and Place 4, no.3 (1996): pp68–70; Birrell,
to 2007, and less so of the Labor Government proceeding the Coalition from 1983.\textsuperscript{59} His works have been useful to this thesis as a source of pithy analysis of different policy changes that were consistently based in a rationalist framework of investigation. Birrell’s analyses reliably provided academic evidence and commentary on the Howard government’s approach to immigration policy, which was responsible for many of the key changes in the family migration program that shaped the lives of the Vietnamese families under examination.\textsuperscript{60}

Khoo’s works are also factual and statistically based, but are presented without the ideological bias of Birrell’s research. Khoo has written extensively on broad immigration patterns and trends, including student and skilled migration to Australia.\textsuperscript{61} Khoo’s research into patterns associated with family migration include profiles derived from census and statistical data. These profiles have been important to this thesis; they explain the factors shaping the relationship patterns of the Vietnamese individuals and families studied.\textsuperscript{62}

Boucher’s study on the intersection between migrant welfare policy and family dynamics is more recent study that is of particular relevance to this thesis; she explores immigration policy changes that have had dramatic implications for Vietnamese families, is that conducted by Boucher’s analysis investigates the availability of particular welfare payments to migrants in Australia and Canada and concludes that governments in both nations ‘over the last two decades have sought to familialise \textsuperscript{sic} welfare costs in order to relieve the state of the economic cost of new immigrants’.\textsuperscript{63} The settlement experiences of Vietnamese families have

\textsuperscript{59} Birrell commented that the Labor government, particularly under Prime Minister Hawke, allowed its approach to immigration policy to be strongly influenced by ‘ethnic community leaders’, and not the interests of the broader national community. Robert Birrell, \textit{Immigration Reform in Australia: Coalition Government Proposals and Outcomes since March 1996} (Clayton: Centre for Population and Urban Research Monash University, 1997), p2.

\textsuperscript{60} Particularly useful were Robert Birrell, \textit{The Chains that Bind: Family Reunion Migration to Australia in the 1980s} (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1990); Birrell, \textit{Immigration Reform in Australia}.


included management of the pressures associated with supporting family members, in the absence or complicated availability of welfare support. This pressure has been compounded by the difficulties and realities associated with the founding family member commonly arriving in Australia as a refugee, including emotional and physical trauma, low skill levels and minimal resources.

**Understanding Migration Policy and the Impact on Families**

Distinct from my previous exploration of the research on the mechanics of sponsorship and family reunion migration, the following analysis will analyse research on the implications of policy design for family formation and functioning. In attempting to understand influences on settlement experiences, studies on the intersection between policy and migrant families build upon theoretical approaches. These approaches range from asserting differences in settlement experiences according to cultural background, to what Jack Collins terms the ‘political economy school’, which is more critical of categories such as race and ethnicity. The earlier approach, unsurprisingly, underestimated the role of the host nation in influencing the type of settlement experienced by migrants. Responsibility was placed on the migrants to ‘fit in’ with their new environment, and there was little interest in the ideas, values and approaches to life migrants brought to Australia. This approach to studies of migrant families was more popular during periods when overt assimilationist policies were in place. The proliferation of memoirs by former migrants and critiques of this type of analysis, have both highlighted the diversity of identity categorisation within migrant groups (in terms of family organisation, gender and class differences), and led to more comprehensive understandings of settlement issues experienced by new migrants.

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66 Bibliographies edited by Charles Price detail research on Australian immigration from pre-war onwards, including those relevant to this discussion: *Australian Immigration: A Bibliography and Digest*, Canberra, Australian National University, 1966.

Of those studies on policy design and migrant family life, the investigations into gender identity, as it is lived within migrant families and potentially shaped by policy, are pertinent to this thesis. Various studies have convincingly argued that gender analysis is particularly helpful in explaining or providing a framework for the experiences of Vietnamese men and women during the early years of settlement, and these studies have provided a crucial insight for this thesis. The tensions and pressures experienced within family units are illuminated by those scholars who investigate the transformation in gender roles of men and women. Studies of parenting and intergenerational conflict in Vietnamese migrant families are extensions of the research into policy, gender and migrant identity, and were also useful to this thesis, illuminating various aspects such as psychological stress and wellbeing among diverse family members.

Other research into Australian immigration policies influencing settlement experiences of newly arrived migrants, includes work that highlights the link between the selection criteria migrants must fulfil before they are able to migrate to Australia, and the success particular migrants had in the workforce. Deborah Cobb-Clarke examined whether migrants who entered under the skilled migration category were in fact more successful in finding employment than family reunion migrants. Cobb-Clarke’s analysis is consistent with the current focus of


71 Deborah Cobb-Clark ‘Do selection criteria make a difference? Visa category and the labour market status of immigrants to Australia’ in Economic Record v.76 no.232 p.15
research into immigration, in that the central concern relates to economics. Just as Australian immigration policy since Federation until the early 1990s was predominantly concerned with how Australian cultural and national identity would evolve as a result of the ethnic backgrounds of newly arrived migrants, the shift towards skilled migration has encouraged a focus on the implications for the Australian economy, to occur alongside questions regarding national identity. Cobb-Clark concludes that selection criteria do have bearing on how migrants perform in the workforce, as one aspect (although this is not explicitly framed by the author) of the early settlement experiences of the migrants in question. The findings revealed that gender influenced the extent to which this was true, in that male migrants who did not enter Australia through a skilled category were not found to have especially lower employment rates than men who did have specific qualifications. Conversely, labour participation rates for women differed according to visa category: women who were selected through humanitarian or on the basis of family relationships experienced lower rates of labour participation. Cobb-Clarke theorises that ‘there may be unmeasured differences in productive skills or preferences toward work for women, but not men, which are related to visa category and which influence entry into the labour market immediately after migration’. My research aims to uncover several of these ‘unmeasured’ differences.

Other research on the connection between selection criteria, migration policy and settlement outcomes has been undertaken by Peter Waxman, who focuses specifically on the success refugees from Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq in Sydney have in finding employment after arrival. Waxman investigated the role of pre and post migration factors in influencing the ability for refugees from the above countries to participate in the labour market. Predictably,

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72 See Lesleyanne Hawthorne, “‘Picking winners’: the recent transformation of Australia’s skilled migration policy’, International Migration Review 39 no.3 (2005): p663–697, for a recent analysis of strategies employed by the current government to ensure that professionals who migrate to Australia are successful in terms of employment.
73 Cobb-Clark, ‘Do selection criteria make a difference?’ p.24
74 Ibid., p.20
75 These factors are listed as being: reception in the host country; gender; loss of extended family; extent of torture or trauma experienced; support network; availability of services; social infrastructure; social distance; foreign education; recognition of overseas qualifications; level of English competency; type of assistance provided on arrival; ethnicity; similarity between the receiving the receiving country’s economic and labor system and that of the home country; education, retraining or training undertaken in Australia; health issues; number of dependent children in the household; number of wage earners in the household; age; expectations; state of the economy at the time of arrival; length of residence in Australia and racial discrimination. Peter Waxman, ‘The economic adjustment of recently arrived Bosnian, Afghan and Iraqi refugees in Sydney, Australia’, International Migration Review 35, no.2 (2001): p472–503.
unemployment rates were found to be the result of a combination between the two: ‘English language skills, period of residence in Australia and residential location’ in addition to a move away from Australian manufacturing, where many new migrants found employment, dominated the reasons why labour participation was sometimes low. Immigration policy is implied as influencing economic success in that the selection criteria applicants must fulfil function to permit or disallow the other factors to come into force. There is an obvious intermeshing occurring here—pre and post migration factors shape the selection criteria put in place by governments, which then open the way for particular experiences and abilities to manifest.

Waxman includes a brief and almost incidental observation in the concluding comments of his analysis, which is of particular interest and relevance to this thesis. In reference to the sponsorship of other family members, Waxman discusses the pressures of such arrangements, and the likely consequences for many of the families involved:

> It is doubtful that once the sponsor’s family members or fiancée is in Australia, the sponsor will resume his or her studies or English language classes. Therefore, the sponsor has no option but to be confined to the secondary labor market. This ensures that, although upward mobility within the firm or industry may eventuate, there is little likelihood of those entrants of a previous professional standing gaining employment in their former occupations or realizing similar professional status.  

Waxman’s observations relate to the conditions of migration as they existed in 2001. Although the above reflection does not detail exactly why the consequences outlined are likely to occur, Waxman alludes to the relationship between the day-to-day reality of particular families and the requirements entailed in migration through sponsorship. In relation to the themes detailed in the first part of this chapter, this brief analysis of sponsorship is an example of how a very particular provision enforced by the host nation can dramatically shape the present and future lifestyle of migrant groups. To further contextualise spouse sponsorship: it is a condition of this visa that the family member migrating to Australia cannot access any type of welfare assistance for two years. During this period, the spouse (or other relation) also resides in Australia on a temporary permit. Permanent residency is only granted after two years, and when immigration officials have deemed the relationship to be genuine, and not contrived for the purposes of migration. Thus, for twenty-four months, although the sponsored family member can work and study (international student conditions apply), all assistance the new migrant requires, which can be considerable, is the responsibility of the sponsor and other informal

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networks. The English skills held by the new family member dramatically effects the type and extent of assistance required of the sponsor. If a lot of support is needed, it is possible to see why the sponsor may not have the time, energy or resources to necessary for professional development. Policy is revealed in this analysis as having a very real ability to shape the settlement experience and family functioning of migrant families who enter Australia through this migration stream.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed research into Vietnamese families living in Australia and discussed the need for further research into how the policies of family reunion have shaped and influenced their lives. While the refugee experiences of many Vietnamese migrants are well documented, the second phase of relocating, where families attempt to reunite, has received less scholarly attention. This reflects a broader trend in Australian immigration studies, where the focus has been on refugee policy and skilled migration. The controversy and employment of refugee policy by governments of both political persuasions, and its status an election issue, has ensured continuous analysis and commentary on the treatment and entry of refugees into Australia. Skilled migration has grown in research focus also, as migration has come to be appreciated more as a source of skilled (and temporary) labour, rather than as a means to enhance the Australian population. The role of policy in shaping settlement experiences is also a growing area of research, and one this thesis aims to contribute to through an analysis of the family migration program, and the experiences of Vietnamese families. In order to provide political context for this analysis and the emergence of policy under specific governments, the next two chapters examine Hansard transcripts during the Labor and Coalition governments between 1983 and 2007. These provide evidence of prevailing attitudes underlying policy development and insight into Australian politicians’ management of values and concerns relating to Australian national identity.

77 Hansard transcripts are the verbatim transcripts of Parliamentary debates and discussions.
CHAPTER TWO

Family Reunion under Labor, 1983-1996

Drawing principally on transcripts of parliamentary debates available through Hansard, this chapter examines the politics and range of attitudes towards Vietnamese family reunion migrants displayed by politicians during the thirteen-year period of Labor government in Australia between 1983 and 1996. It focuses in particular on the seven ministers for immigration under the Hawke and Keating governments. Crucially, this is a period in which debates about the appropriateness of admitting Vietnamese family reunion migrants occur in the context of a tension that emerges between the desire to demonstrate compassion towards migrants and celebrate aspects of cultural diversity, and the lingering historical hostility towards migration from Asia.

The following discussion contextualises the entry of approximately 100,000 Vietnamese migrants to Australia during this period, focusing on political deliberations that shaped their conditions of entry, and which provide insights into the location of Vietnamese families in an Australian nation undergoing considerable transformation. The Hawke and Keating governments were responsible for introducing reforms and policy directions that were subsequently adopted and augmented with increased fervour by the following Liberal-National Coalition government, and this would have significant implications for Vietnamese families wishing to reunite in Australia. Thus this chapter emphasises the origins of these new developments within the framework of Labor-led debates on immigration and Australian national identity, but flags their continuation under the Coalition.

The Hawke Government’s Embrace of Asia:  
**Welcoming Vietnamese Families**

Robert J.L. Hawke led the Australian Labor Party to victory in 1983 after eight years in opposition. Prime Minister Hawke had a strong interest in immigration and multicultural affairs. James Curran, who examined the ways in which Australian prime ministers from Whitlam to Howard interpreted and constructed Australian national identity, observed that Hawke’s advocacy for multiculturalism stemmed from his childhood in a Congregationalist household. Curran contends that a belief in the brotherhood of man founded Hawke’s support for migration from traditional and non-traditional sources. Many of Hawke’s speeches involved drawing commonalities between the lifestyles of migrants and those of ‘ordinary’ Australians. When defending levels of migration from parts of Asia in 1984, for example, Hawke would opine:

> Once Australians understand that these are human beings who we are talking about, people who share the same sorts of aspirations and hopes for themselves and their families as we do, I do not believe that we should begin to allow to creep into our society an element of anti-Asianism.

This strong interest in immigration and multiculturalism led the Prime Minister to intervene in decisions and debates that his successor would tend to leave to his ministers.

The Hawke government inherited an immigration program that was dominated by British visa applicants in both the family and skilled migration streams. The Fraser government, as noted by Katherine Betts, concentrated recruitment efforts for new migrants on Britain.

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99 Hawke had only been the leader of the Labor Party for one month before the election, taking over from Bill Hayden. For an outline of his time in office, see the National Archives of Australia site: [http://primeministers.naa.gov.au/primeministers/hawke](http://primeministers.naa.gov.au/primeministers/hawke) (accessed 23 August 2014).


Applicants from (the then) Yugoslavia were the most populous from Southern Europe, and although members of the Australian Greek and Italian communities encouraged family from the homeland to join them in Australia, applicants from Greece and Italy remained small. Over 8,000 Vietnamese refugees applied for asylum in Australia during the 1982–1983 financial year, and close to 600 Vietnamese applicants applied under the family reunion scheme. Indeed, while the Australian government was still focusing on drawing British migrants to Australia, external factors were setting the scene for a much more substantial composition of family reunion migrants from Asia.

Acceptance of refugees and their families under the Fraser government’s reunion scheme was largely framed in terms of a humanitarian agenda. The White Australia policy had remained politically influential during the preceding Whitlam government, despite efforts to dismantle the associated practices and regulations. Australian National University demographer Charles Price observed:

> [T]he Labor Government, though abolishing the few remaining restrictions on non-European immigration… dragged its feet when dealing with the Chilean crisis in 1973, dithered over the Timor troubles in 1975 (allowing 1700 boat refugees to land as visitors but withholding permanent status) and was slow reacting to the Vietnamese crisis. Whitlam, in fact, so delayed his decision to admit a few hundred Vietnamese, mainly those with close relatives in Australia, that the embassy could process only a few before Saigon fell.

Moving somewhat more swiftly, family reunion under the Fraser government was framed as an extension of the compassion extended to refugees, and recognition of the significance of family connections. To deny family reunion after enduring the trauma and dislocation of war...
would have made a mockery of humanitarian claims, and was also politically dangerous. Betts has claimed that this was particularly so given the political strength of certain migrant communities.\footnote{Betts reference is largely to Italian and Greek communities. See Betts, Ideology and Immigration, p152. For a brief discussion of key policy decisions and developments in immigration under Fraser and immigration ministers Michael MacKellar (1976–1979) and Ian MacPhee (1980–1982), see Jupp, From White Australia to Woomera, pp42–46.}

That Hawke inherited an immigration program characterised by informal policy structures and criteria is also significant. As discussed in the previous chapter, when Hawke came to power, it was extremely difficult for potential migrants to ascertain their eligibility for particular visas: the information was not publicly available, and instead largely resided in policy manuals located in the Department of Immigration.\footnote{See Sean Cooney, The Transformation of Migration Law (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1996), especially chapters 3 and 4.} While the Migration Act 1958 (Cwlth) gave the Minister the power to grant or cancel visas absolutely, it did not disclose how this was to be done. Hawke inherited an immigration program that was un-codified in the sense that there was minimal documentation endorsed by parliament that regulated decisions relating to migration matters.\footnote{The power of the Minister for Immigration in Australia has been much debated, with governments amending legislation to increase or decrease this authority at different times, and under different circumstances. In 2008, for example, Minister Chris Evans ordered a review of his role, saying he felt the position had too much power. For a discussion of this issue, see for Kerry Murphy, ‘Overplaying the Immigration Minister’s Trump Card’, Eureka Street 24, no.21, 28 October 2014; online at http://www.eurekastreet.com.au/article.aspx?aeid=42225#.VrcFsjY3dSV (accessed 5 July 2015).}

Upon Hawke’s ascendancy, more than 40,000 Vietnam-born were living in Australia.\footnote{ABS, Australian Historical Population Statistics, Country of Birth as at 1981 Census.} Many of these people were anxious about the safety of family members who were in various camps in Southeast Asia and in Vietnam, and were hoping to bring them out to Australia.\footnote{Recent studies have examined the link between knowledge of a country’s family reunion policy and the decision to settle permanently. See, for example, Siew-Ean Khoo, ‘Sponsorship of Relatives for Migration and Immigrant Settlement Intention’, International Migration 41, no.5, p177–98. In relation to Vietnamese families, particularly those who came as refugees, the core motivation was to escape conditions in Vietnam. Of the refugees I interviewed for this thesis, few had any knowledge of Australia at all. The Australian family reunion policy was a greater motivation for migration to Australia during later years. See, for example, Rochelle Watkins et al, ‘Individual Characteristics and Expectations about Opportunities in Australia among Prospective Vietnamese Migrants’, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, Vol. 29, no. 1, pp. 157–67. There is also an argument for further research into ‘non-economic process and outcomes’ of family migration, in order to produce ‘more sophisticated analyses of the human agency of family migrants’. See Darren P. Smith ‘An “Untied” Research Agenda for Family Migration: Loosening the “Shackles” of the Past’, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, Vol. 30, No. 2, pp. 263–82.} The
Hawke government oversaw the second and third major waves of Vietnamese migration to Australia, during which the Australian population of people born in Vietnam grew to over 150,000 by 1996.\footnote{ABS, Australian Historical Population Statistics, Country of Birth as at 1996 Census.} After the entry of 29,754 Vietnamese refugees to Australia during the period 1975–1979,\footnote{ABS, ‘Demography’, in Year Book Australia 1981 p. 112.} the Orderly Departure Program, discussed above in Chapter One, heralded the second wave of Vietnamese migrants to Australia.\footnote{For further details see Linda Hitchcox, Vietnamese Refugees in Southeast Asian Camps (London: MacMillan Press, 1990); Nancy Viviani, The Long Journey (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1984), parts II and III; and Judith Kumin, ‘Orderly Departure from Vietnam: Cold War Anomaly or Humanitarian Innovation?’, Refugee Survey Quarterly 27, no1, pp. 104–17.} The third wave occurred during the late 1980s, when the majority of Vietnamese family reunion migrants arrived in Australia.

In addition to inheriting the domestic politics surrounding the family reunion program and legislative circumstances described above, the early years of Hawke’s governance coincided with an economic recession. This became a key factor around which all other policy areas were framed, with these years also described as a time during which “‘econocrats’ – economics-trained public servants with a bias toward encouraging “market forces” – made unprecedented territorial gains throughout much of the bureaucracy”.\footnote{Michael Stutchbury, ‘Macroeconomic Policy’, in Christine Jennett and Randal G. Stewart (eds), Hawke and Australian Public Policy (South Melbourne: MacMillan, 1990), pp. 54–78.} Immigration was included in the list of policy areas viewed through the lens of reduced government spending. The recession compounded the challenge set before the Hawke government: to justify an increase in family reunion migrant numbers while the intake of refugees was still rising.\footnote{While more and more potential migrants were applying under family reunion categories, refugees from Vietnam continued to climb. Over 8,000 Vietnamese refugees applied to migrate to Australia in the financial year of 1982–1983. Family reunion applicants only outnumbered refugee applicants in 1986–1987.} Rising unemployment and increased demand for welfare sat uncomfortably with the decision to accept more people who were likely to also experience problems finding employment.

Hawke was careful from the beginning to frame his support for immigration as allied with the economic interests of Australia. In the same speech cited above, Hawke explained the approach his government would take to immigration as one which would ‘be in the economic interests
of this country… What we will do is determine what we believe the interests of this country require in economic terms as an absolute level’.

This chapter will now explore the particular debates and issues each minister for immigration engaged in during their management of the immigration portfolio. Following the parliamentary discussions of these immigration ministers allows for close examination of the travails of persuading colleagues of the benefits of following particular policy directions in family reunion.

**Minister West: Supporting Vietnamese ‘Battlers’ in Australia**

The family reunion program and entry of Vietnamese migrants dominated the brief term of Hawke’s first Minister for Immigration, Stewart West, who held the portfolio from 11 March 1983 to 3 December 1984. Political transcripts disclose interesting attempts to employ new and old conceptions of Australian national identity to justify and facilitate the entry of Vietnamese families to Australia. Minister West, a former waterside worker, who was ideologically further left than many of his colleagues, also discussed developments in the area of family migration policy within a more humanitarian framework than the rationalist basis for changes drawn on by subsequent Labor immigration ministers.

Minister West launched into parliamentary debates on the viability of the family reunion program without any sort of pretence that migrants who entered through this stream would be immediately economically productive. Instead, the family reunion program was depicted as a logical extension of the benevolence and compassion that enabled the entry of refugees in the aftermath of the Vietnam War. Bravely, Minister West attempted to enhance this sense of generosity by referring to the Australian economic climate and explaining to parliament in September 1983 that ‘family reunion, at a time of recession, is a humanitarian program. It

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123 The Honourable R.J.L. Hawke, Australian Labor Party, House Hansard, 08/05/84 p2024.
124 Hawke had six ministers for immigration. See Appendix 1 for details.
125 For further discussion of Stewart West’s term in government as Prime Minister Hawke’s first Minister for Immigration, see Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera*, p47; and John Falkner and Stuart MacIntyre (eds), *True Believers: The Story of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party* (Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2001).
should not be seen as a program to bring in people to fill jobs’. Instead of explaining the economic downturn as a reason for why the family reunion program should have been rationalised, Minister West attempted to frame the recession as the impetus for viewing migrants more humanely.

In identifying the family reunion program as separate to an agenda to reform the Australian economy, West instead linked compassion towards this cohort of migrants to the fabled historical Australian attitudes displayed towards those down on their luck. The mythologised Australian compassion for people struggling to survive or succeed in difficult circumstances was applied to the plight of Vietnamese families wishing to reunite in Australia. For example, the decision to remove the two additional points that could be obtained by applicants under the family reunion program for English language competency were explained as a demonstration of Australian generosity for those whom the odds were against: ‘[w]e have reduced to a certain extent the reliance of skilled, English speaking, rich family reunion aspirants and given the battlers a chance’. In fact the removal of two points for English skills was only applicable to people entering under ‘concessional’ family reunion categories. Spouses and children were never subjected to English competency tests. While the policy change was generous, the total number of Vietnamese who applied under the family reunion category increased by only 26 people.

It is fair to say that West’s promotion of the government as advocates for these battlers was exaggerated. This strategy served the dual purpose, however, of also contributing towards the

128 For discussion of how particular icons and legends have been mobilised at different points in Australian history in relation to national identity, see Graeme Turner, *Making it National* (St Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1994); Fiona Nicoll, *From Diggers to Drag Queens* (Annandale: Pluto Press, 2001).
130 In the 1984–1985 financial year, there were 2,524 family reunion applicants from Vietnam, while in 1985–1986, there were 2,550. See Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs ‘Settler arrivals by region/country of birth by principal/accompanying by eligibility category for financial years 1984–85 and 1985–86’.
perception of Vietnamese families as weak and defenceless. This was important for addressing public concerns that the intake of Asian migrants was too high. The practice of only ever describing the vulnerability and desperation of Vietnamese family reunion migrants helped politicians to counter historical fears of ‘invading hordes’ from Asia.

Members of the Opposition were very uncomfortable with the attempt by the government to redefine who could claim the title of Aussie battler. The Shadow Minister for Immigration, Minister Hodgman, accused Minister West of ‘blatantly introducing into our Australian migration program a deliberate bias—it is almost unbelievable—against prospective migrants who happen to speak the English language’. Both Minister West and Minister Hodgman saw exaggerated consequences of the policy change.

Minister West’s background in the union movement, and his commitment to supporting Australian workers, formed part of his support for the family reunion program. Early in his term as the Minister for Immigration, West explained to parliament his preference for family reunion over ‘migration based upon alleged labour shortage; that is, persons very likely without family in Australia’. Investing in Australian employees appealed more to West and his supporters than advocating for increased skilled migration. West’s remarks on the family reunion program, like the one mentioned above, also occasionally included references to the need to prioritise and protect migrant family units. While Australia had a strong history of encouraging the migration of complete families from the United Kingdom and parts of Europe (mentioned in the introduction to this thesis), Asian families had not received the same welcome thus far. West attempted to link support for the family reunion program to this legacy and to concerns held by many Australians that skilled migrants, who were typically young, single and ambitious, would add to the employment woes of the population.

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131 The Honourable WC Hodgman, Liberal Party, House Hansard, 14/0901983 p760.
132 West was one of five Cabinet ministers with a union background in Hawke’s government immediately after winning the 1983 election. Factional backgrounds play a significant role in the career opportunities and community views of Labor politicians. For an analysis of how loyalty to the different expressions of leftist politics has influenced the determination of portfolio allocations in the ALP in the past thirty years, including those of West, see Paul Maley, ‘Labour Ties Didn’t Hurt Hawke – Election 2007’, The Australian, 18 October 2007, p5; Andrew Leigh, ‘Factions and Fractions: A Case Study of Power Politics in the Australian Labor Party’, Australian Journal of Political Science 35, no.3, pp427–48.
133 The Honourable Stewart West, Australian Labor Party, House Hansard 07/03/1984 p640.
West was not the only Minister to speak in parliament of the importance of protecting migrant families. Minister Young, went so far as to say in 1984 that:

[the] only way [Indochinese] communities would be able to succeed and survive in the Australian atmosphere would be if they had rather substantial communities of their own so they could assist each other, like former communities have done in building up their residences in Australia and in being able to settle.\textsuperscript{134}

While this appears to reflect a growing recognition that family and community support was essential to smooth settlement, it is at odds with concerns about the development of ‘ethnic enclaves’ that was still expressed in the ‘Principles of Immigration Policy’ formulated to guide the development of policy in this area. Presumably this would have been endorsed by the Minister for Immigration and senior bureaucrats. Principles five and eight stated respectively: ‘Applicants are considered as individuals or individual family units; not as community groups’; and ‘Settlement in enclosed enclaves is not encouraged’.\textsuperscript{135} The benefits for migrants of settling in communities made up of families was thus in direct tension with the belief that Australian national identity required a dilution of cultural diversity and maintenance.

Discourse under West also included attempts to explain the generosity displayed towards Vietnamese family reunion migrants as indicative that Australia had matured. The legacy of White Australia was too well known and remained too fresh in the minds of political leaders domestically and in the region to ignore or hide. In addition to efforts to extend the concept of Aussie battler to non-White Australians, Minister West worked to recast Australian attitudes towards cultural difference. The benevolence demonstrated had its origins in the past, therefore, but was integral to a new Australia, which had matured and adopted a more cosmopolitan outlook towards Asian migrants. Hawke was supportive of this strategy, and proclaimed:

[O]ne of Australia’s greatest achievement has been its acceptance of people from widely diverse nationalities around the world…Over the past decade we have buried the white Australia policy for ever. We have shown our capacity to accept people from Asian cultures, many of whom have sought

\textsuperscript{134} The Honourable Michael Young, Australian Labor Party, House Hansard 08/05/1984 p2021.
\textsuperscript{135} The Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, \textit{The Migrant Entry Handbook} (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1983), p.3. The other seven principles were: ‘It is fundamental to national sovereignty that the Australian Government alone should determine who will be admitted to Australia. Apart from people admitted as refugees and for family reunion, migrant entry should be developed on the basis of benefit to the Australian community. The size and composition of migrant intakes should not jeopardise social cohesiveness and harmony with the Australian community. Immigration policy should be applied on a basis which is non-discriminatory. Eligibility and suitability standards for migrants should reflect Australian social mores and Australian laws. Migration to Australia should be for permanent settlement although there should be no barrier preventing the departure of persons wishing to leave. Policies governing entry and settlement should be based on the premise that migrants should integrate into Australian society.’
a new life in Australia following the tragedy of the wars in Indochina in which Australia itself participated.\textsuperscript{136}

An overt example of political effort to demonstrate Australia’s maturation in matters of cultural difference was the response made by Minister West to historian Geoffrey Blainey’s claims that the pace of Asian migration was too fast for white Australians.\textsuperscript{137} Blainey argued that the White Australia policy had been ‘inverted’ and that the consequences of this move could radically disrupt the social harmony that had so far prevailed in Australia. Minister West responded by emphatically explaining:

\begin{quote}
Attacks suggesting that we are discriminating against British and European settlers are often barely concealed racism. Through its generous and wholehearted response to the claims of the Indo-Chinese refugees and migration sponsors, the Australian community and successive Governments have laid to rest forever any remnants of a White Australia image which used to damage us internationally. We must not reverse this process.
\end{quote}

The attempt to depict Australia as a nation that had adopted more cosmopolitan attitudes towards cultural difference and Asian migration was complicated, however, by the reality of policies designed to carefully control entry to Australia.\textsuperscript{139} While Australia was now open to those migrants who historically would have been excluded under White Australia, this was only to occur under carefully defined conditions set by the Australian government. Vietnamese family reunion migrants served the dual purpose of enabling the Australian government to display cultural growth and maturity, and the regulatory power it held over its borders. In order to manage the domestic concerns around the influx of Vietnamese migrants, the Australian government emphasised the extent to which this influx was under the direction of State

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\textsuperscript{136} The Honourable R.J.L Hawke, Australian Labor Party, House Hansard, 10/05/84 p2226.
\textsuperscript{137} The now infamous ‘Blainey debate’ began when Professor Blainey suggested to a Rotary conference in Warrnambool in 1984 that the large increase in Asian migration was occurring at a pace that was far ahead of that which white Australians were comfortable. These comments generated intense media debate over the inevitability of an ‘Asian Australia’ and whether this was desirable. See for example the collection compiled by Renata Singer, \textit{The Immigration Debate in the Press 1984} (Richmond: The Clearing House on Migration Issues, 1984). Blainey’s work has been the subject of much academic analysis; a recent example is Deborah Gare, Geoffrey Bolton, Stuart Macintyre and Tom Stannage (eds), \textit{The Fuss that Never Ended} (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2003). It has also been reinterpreted alongside other public commentators on multiculturalism and immigration. When the Member for Oxley, Pauline Hanson, made her first speech in Parliament and denounced high levels of migration from parts of Asia, for example, a link with Blainey was drawn to outline a particular development of Australian national identity. See, for example, Jon Stratton, \textit{Race Daze: Australia in Identity Crisis} (Annandale: Pluto Press, 1998) pp105–33.
\textsuperscript{139} Researchers of Australian immigration policies, such as Kathryn Cronin and Katherine Betts, have discussed this theme at length in numerous works. Examples include: Kathryn Cronin, ‘A Culture of Control: An Overview of Immigration Policy Making’, in James Jupp and Marie Kabala (eds), \textit{The Politics of Australian Immigration}, Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service, 1993, pp. 83–104; and Betts, \textit{Ideology and Immigration}.
\end{flushleft}
decisions. Australia was not accepting Vietnamese migrants because they washed up on the shore, but because the migrants were following a process established by the government. This process involved meeting certain criteria and conditions decided upon by the Australian government, who thus retained control over the composition of the intake and the migrants accepted.

The discourse surrounding the role of government in admitting Vietnamese family reunion migrants is a particularly interesting demonstration of how language is used to garner support for policy directions. The politics of Vietnamese family reunion, which were founded in historical fears of Asian invasion, were rigorously addressed through terminology that indicated the balance of power was not in fact in the hands of the Vietnamese who wished to live in Australia.

The explanation offered by Minister West in 1984, as to why Australia would continue to accept refugees, is one such example. Following his participation in an inter-government consultation on Indochina refugees in Honolulu, Minister West justified the family reunion program as the solution to ‘unorganised departure’, arguing that the monitored process of migration where applicants had to meet particular criteria was far more preferable than the desperate entry of refugees. Twelve months later in reference to the same conference, Minister West’s explanation strongly intersected with historical fears of being overrun by Asian migrants:

> Orderly departure is better than disorderly departure. Let us turn the refugee tap down, discourage the boat people from leaving. We will have a family reunion base to the policy here in Australia.

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140 For an exploration of discourse employed to incite fear on the issue of immigration in Canada, including the references to ‘floods’ of unauthorised migrants through ‘porous’ Canadian borders, see Tamara Vukov, ‘Imagining Communities through Immigration Policies: Governmental Regulation, Media Spectacles and the Affective Politics of National Borders’, *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 6, no.3, pp335–53.


142 For an exploration of the political description of refugees as ‘queue jumpers’, see Katharine Gelber, ‘A Fair Queue? Australian Public Discourse on Refugee and Immigration’, *Journal of Australian Studies* 27, no.77, pp. 23–30. Gelber argues this nomenclature frames refugees and migrants as hostile to a process that is impartial, fair and orderly (p. 26), and hence has been employed by different governments to persuade Australian voters to support reductions in immigration programs when it is expedient to do so. Gelber’s article informs much of the discussion in the following paragraphs: West’s reference to the family reunion program as an ‘orderly departure’ method has parallels with the implication that the Australian immigration program relies on migrants respecting the process of a ‘first in, first served’ queue.
it orderly departure and turn up the wick on family reunion. That is what we have done for the Vietnamese.¹⁴³

West’s use of a water metaphor spoke to past fears that Australia was in danger of being overrun by desperate refugees in rickety, unsafe boats on the coast of Australia.¹⁴⁴ Adjectives that have been used to describe the migration of Vietnamese all point to a fear that Australians and the Australian way of life was under threat by an unstoppable and out-of-control force: a tsunami of change and cultural difference. The ‘waves’ of Vietnamese migrants were caused by the breaking of dam walls, that was the fall of Saigon.¹⁴⁵ Desperate Vietnamese people spilled across national borders and images of hundreds of thousands of refugees saturated newspapers. West planned to stem the flow of refugees by turning down the tap. The family reunion program was going to reduce the flow of refugees, and instead put in place a system of organised, monitored and predictable Vietnamese migration.

That the family reunion program was the solution to the problem of refugees is also clear in West’s use of the expression ‘turning up the wick’: flames burn more brightly when troublesome currents of water have been controlled. The implication here is that the family reunion program was a candle, or small flame, within a sea of uncontrolled migration, which in turn reveals early concerns of Minister West that efforts to control Vietnamese migration were in danger of being swamped by knee-jerk reactions to desperate refugees. In contrast to other strategies employed by West to reconcile Vietnamese families with Australian stereotypes of battlers and a history of supporting migrant families from the United Kingdom and parts of Europe, this example drew on a complicated history of migration from Asia to demonstrate that the government had not lost control over Asian migrants crossing Australian borders. Thus, once more Australian immigration history, and nationalist discourse, was mined for narratives of how Australian governments had always actively determined the flow of Asian migrants—and the intake of Vietnamese families was no exception.

¹⁴⁴ Emma Herman notes the frequency with which water metaphors are applied to migration in ‘Migration as a Family Business: The Role of the Personal Networks in the Mobility Phase of Migration’, International Migration, Vol. 44, no. 4, p. 192.
¹⁴⁵ A ‘wave’ of Vietnamese refugees metaphorically speaks to the ‘queue-jumpers’ referred to by Katharine Gelber opcit, in that arriving on Australian shores also ‘violates the very impartiality and impersonality of the bureaucratic chain’. p26
Ministers Hurford and Young: From Humanitarian Principles to the Economic Viability of Migrants

Analysis of Hansard during the terms of Ministers Chris Hurford and Michael Young reveals a much broader coverage of core issues relating to migration than those Minister West had to respond to in parliament. In addition to elaborating on the reasons why Australia should maintain a role in the settlement of refugees from Southeast Asia, Minister Hurford (13 December 1984 to 16 February 1987) was forced to deal with the dynamics of Australia’s relationship with Vietnam and explain the influence this had on the reunification of Vietnamese families in Australia. Minister Young’s tenure was for approximately 12 months, and largely involved a continuation of the practices and themes developed by his predecessor.

Minister Hurford was a former accountant, who entered parliament in 1969 and retired after thirty years. His first six months as the Minister for Immigration involved confronting and explaining in parliament reports of criminal activity perpetrated by Vietnamese (or more broadly described as ‘Asian’) nationals, and questions regarding whether this was reason to slow the intake of family reunion migrants. The violence involved members of the Australian-Vietnamese migrant community harassing Vietnamese students studying in Australia, and

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146 Minister Hurford held the immigration portfolio from, and Minister Young held the portfolio for 12 months immediately after Hurford finished. Minister Hurford introduced the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs Amendment Bill 1985, which was responsible for revising the role the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs played in government policy objectives on multicultural and community relations issues. See The Honourable Chris Hurford, Australian Labor Party, House Hansard 22/02/1985 p86. The amended role was short lived however: the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs (AIMA) was abolished in August 1986, as it was ‘no longer considered the most effective means of achieving (government) objectives’. (The Honourable Chris Hurford, Australian Labor Party, House Hansard, 19/08/1986 p283.) The official reason for the ending of the AIMA, which was based in Melbourne, was that its potential to influence policy could be more effectively harnessed if its recommendations were produced by a Canberra-based body, which was located within the Department of Immigration. Budgetary pressures certainly also played a part, with the Minister for Immigration commenting that ‘if we were not cutting spending here, there would have to be a cut in spending on those services for people at the grass roots’. (The Honourable Chris Hurford, Australian Labor Party, House Hansard, 25/09/1986 p1413) Minister Hurford was also involved in general commentary around the appropriateness of investing public funds into migrant-specific services and activities, particularly those that assisted migrants to retain some cultural distinctiveness. For example, in justifying the expenditure of funds to Migrant Resource Centres, Hurford explained: ‘in return for (a commitment to integrate), migrants have a right to continue to enjoy their own cultural heritage in our multicultural society’. (The Honourable Chris Hurford, Australian Labor Party, House Hansard 12/02/1986 p317).


148 Members of the Australian-Vietnamese community were concerned that students from North Vietnam in Australia, under a UN-sponsored development program, were Communist spies. See Georgie Malon, “’Attack’ on Viets is deplored”, Courier-Mail, 5 March 1985.
on a few occasions, Vietnamese consulate officials. The attacks were reported as linked to the tenth anniversary of the fall of Saigon, which was reason for supporters of the communist regime to celebrate.\textsuperscript{149} Refugees and migrants from Vietnam took great offence to any celebrations, and lashed out at those Vietnamese who were associated with the suffering and trauma that resulted from the communist government.

The role of the Vietnamese government in facilitating and enabling the reunion of so many families in Australia was highlighted during Hurford’s tenure. Hurford admitted in parliament that the violence had damaged the Australian government’s relationship with the Vietnamese government, which had repercussions for the family reunion program:

\begin{quote}
Such attitudes and such violence are affecting the family reunion program concerning Vietnam. We shall have to rely heavily on the goodwill of the Vietnamese Government if we are able to pursue for compassionate and humanitarian reasons family reunions from that country. We rely on the Vietnamese Government to make available the necessary exit permits.\textsuperscript{150}
\end{quote}

Hurford, building on the foundation established by West, framed this incident within the narrative of Australian national identity that emphasised affiliation with countries within the region, and compassion for Asian peoples.\textsuperscript{151} Australia was described by Hurford as a nation that must overcome challenges and setbacks in order to make an appropriate contribution to the fall out of the Vietnam War. Family reunion between Australian residents and refugees in Southeast Asian camps would continue because:

\begin{quote}
we, as a nation, have a humanitarian obligation to those refugees. Indeed, we also have a fraternal obligation to the countries of the Association of South East Asian Nations, our fellow nations in Asia, which are the places of first asylum.\textsuperscript{152}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{149} See ‘Vietnamese in Sydney demonstrate violently against Communists’, Central News Agency – Taiwan, 6 May 1985.
\textsuperscript{150} The Honourable Chris Hurford, Australian Labor Party, House Hansard, 16/05/1985 p2541. In many of the interviews conducted for this thesis, which are the subject of chapter four, the actions of the Vietnamese government were mentioned by many interviewees as a dominant reason why reunification with family members in Australia took so long. The previously mentioned Judith Kumin article ‘Orderly Departure from Vietnam: Cold War anomaly or Humanitarian Innovation’, \textit{Refugee Survey Quarterly} 27, no.1, provides a comprehensive background to the evolution of the Orderly Departure Program, including the delicate negotiations needed with the Vietnamese government to agree to allow the safe passage of migrants through this channel. The alternative was an exponential loss of life at sea, as desperate people attempted to join their families through whatever means possible. See also Sten A. Bronee, ‘The History of the Comprehensive Plan for Action’ in \textit{International Journal of Refugee Law} 5, no.4, pp534–544 for additional background and commentary on the connection between fluctuations in the number of Vietnamese arrivals and the policies of the Vietnamese Government in supporting or inhibiting people to leave the country.
\textsuperscript{151} This is consistent with the sentiment identified by James Curran, in his analysis of Hawke’s conception of Australian nationalism when the Australian Labor party won government. James Curran, ‘The “thin dividing line”: prime ministers and the problem of Australian nationalism, 1972-1996’, \textit{The Australian Journal of Politics and History} 48, no.4, p477.
\textsuperscript{152} The Honourable Chris Hurford, Australian Labor Party, House Hansard 16/05/1985 p2541
He argued further:

[T]here is this nation’s word which must be taken into consideration. Our undertaking at the 1979 United Nations conference on refugees from Indo-China was given by a previous government, but it will be honoured... by this Government.153

Programs and services for migrants received strong attention under Minister Hurford. Government spending on migrant services was heralded by Hurford as another example of the Hawke government’s commitment to new migrant communities. In December 1985 Minister Hurford commissioned a committee within the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, to be headed by Dr James Jupp, to review and advise on the services provided by the Federal government that aimed to assist migrants to participate in Australian society. The review was part of the Hawke government’s commitment to ‘see that programs and services are delivered in appropriate ways, so that members of ethnic communities may share benefits on an equitable basis’.154 The Committee of Review of Migrant and Multicultural Programs and Services presented a report to Minister Hurford in August 1986, which noted that despite ‘a significant expansion in immigrant and ethnic programs and services’ during the past eight years, ‘the vast majority of programs and services used by members of ethnic groups are those provided for the community at large.’155 In line with Minister West’s practice of using the government’s treatment of migrants as indicative of a concern with the plights of desperate people ahead of fiscal or economic considerations, emphasised in parliament:

In difficult times, when spending has been restrained, our Government nevertheless kept up, and indeed increased, the services for migrant communities. Perish the thought that the Coalition will ever return to government, because it would go through the rhetoric of cutting government spending and one of the first things to go is special services for migrant communities.156

In fact, researchers of migrant services during this period have noted that the rationalist imperatives of the Hawke government and economic recession ‘made any expansion of welfare or educational expenditure impossible’.157 Jupp observed Hurford was more interested and attuned to the demands of his role as minister assisting the treasurer, which also built upon his

153 The Honourable Chris Hurford, Australian Labor Party, House Hansard 16/05/1985 p2541
154 Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs Don’t settle for less: Report of the Committee for Stage 1 of the Review of Migrant and Multicultural Programs and Services, Canberra, Australian Government Publishing, 1986, p8. See also p354 of this report for a complete list of the services reviewed.
background in small business.\textsuperscript{158} A focus on labour migration, ‘as well as entry of entrepreneurs with capital,’\textsuperscript{159} was reinforced by Hurford.

Hansard transcripts reflect this interest as it applied to immigration policy. Hurford expended considerable effort explaining to parliament the value of aligning immigration criteria with economic and labour objectives. In early 1986, for example, Minister Hurford outlined the migration program for the following financial year and drew heavily on research produced by the Committee for the Economic Development of Australia (CEDA) which explored the role migration plays on employment rates:

\begin{quote}
I draw the attention of the honourable members to three of the CEDA findings. The first is that immigration has contributed positively to economic growth and development. The second is that immigration, even in the very short term, does not adversely affect the employment prospects of the Australian resident population, with few localised and particular exceptions. The third is that the skill, education, population and self-sufficiency profiles of a particular intake are perhaps more important than the overall scale of any one intake.\textsuperscript{160}
\end{quote}

Minister Hurford went on to announce a new initiative based on the understanding ‘that immigrants, carefully selected, create more jobs than they take’,\textsuperscript{161} and which also capitalised on the ‘economic support that family in Australia can provide’.\textsuperscript{162} The categories of independent and concessional migrants were developed, which facilitated the entry of adult migrants who had particular levels of skill and education, and existing family in Australia.\textsuperscript{163}

In doing so, Minister Hurford deviated from the rhetoric of Minister West, which framed family reunion squarely in the category of humanitarian-based migration, and ‘began the process whereby the Immigration Department became more centrally concerned with the economic viability of immigrants’.\textsuperscript{164} Hurford described the win-win outcomes of these new categories when he said:

\begin{quote}
In summary, the new independent and concessionary migration category brings benefits from the economic gains to Australia from the people likely to succeed in their migration applications, whilst recognising at the same time the economic and social advantages of the extended family nexus.\textsuperscript{165}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{158} Jupp, \textit{From White Australia to Woomera}, p48.
\textsuperscript{160} The Honourable Chris Hurford, Australian Labor Party, House Hansard, 10/04/1986 p1969.
\textsuperscript{163} Tony Duboudin, ‘Australia to double migrant intake’, \textit{The Times (London)} 11 April 1986.

The political and policy strategy of transferring welfare needs to either the market or families is a core theme in this thesis. See Sheila Shaver, ‘Australian Welfare Reform: from Citizenship to Supervision’ in \textit{Social Policy}
For Vietnamese families, the creation of this category did not immediately result in a significant difference in applications. During the 1985–86 financial year, 2,550 Vietnamese nationals applied to come to Australia under the family reunion scheme, while in 1986–87, there were 2,631 applications. During the following financial year, however, when the implications of the policy were probably going to be more apparent, less than 800 Vietnamese applied under the concessional category.\(^{166}\)

While the Government recognised the value of reunification with extended family, Minister Hurford was also careful to explain that assistance with the settlement needs of newly arrived family members was not the only role extended family members were expected to play. Value to Australia also needed to be demonstrated. Extended family members had to be valuable independent of the roles and functions they performed in their families. The migration of extended family members to Australia could not solely be for the purpose of reunification. The family reunion program had further transformed therefore, from a program designed to primarily benefit migrant families, to one which also considered the economic needs of the Australian nation. Referring to the example of Vietnamese families, Minister Hurford stated:

> It needs to be understood that in return for their responsibility to integrate into and contribute to Australian society, one of the rights given to migrants is to be reunited with immediate family. But this right does not flow over to the extended family. Extended family members are given preference for migration more so in Australia than in the United States or Canada, but they must qualify for migration on the basis of the potential contribution they can make to Australian society.\(^{167}\)

Minister Hurford’s outline of the 1986-1987 Migration Program reflected a clear move away from Minister West’s depiction of the family reunion program as a demonstration of Australia’s commitment to humanitarianism, but with a careful pledge to migrant families wishing to reunite with the many refugees still languishing in camps in Southeast Asia. Migrant families assumed an additional value in this program that shifted previous depictions of them as people at the mercy of the State. The obligation to support newly arrived migrants, in both emotional


and financial terms, was portrayed as a service to the Australian Government that was payment for the privilege of permission to live in Australia. As will be explored in later chapters, however, this service to the State also functioned to distance migrant families from the government, and to create a different set of obligations migrant families had towards the State.

Minister Young continued down this path during his short term as Minister for Immigration. Mick Young was a former shearer, and had been responsible for the iconic election slogan ‘It’s Time’ that heralded the Whitlam Government. Under Young, the ‘economic and social advantages of the extended family nexus’ were further harnessed when the Migration Amendment Bill 1987 was introduced, which sought to increase fees for particular services offered by the Department of Immigration. Specifically, the increased fee of $240 was to be paid by individuals who had requested a review of an unfavourable decision made under the Migration Act 1958 (Cwlth). The funding would go towards the development of Australia’s review system for migratory decisions. The new fees were reflective, according to Minister Young, of ‘the Government’s concern that some of the costs of services of benefit to clients should be borne by the user, and not the community as a whole.’

Thus the reunification of migrant families became more dependent upon the economic resources of families, and reflected a concern that Australian tax payers were unfairly burdened with expenses involved in settlement. This concern clearly surpassed the value of migrant families as a demonstration of a commitment to humanitarianism that was implicit in speeches given by Minister West.

**Minister Holding and Senator Ray: The Intersection between Economics and Family Reunion**

Minister Holding and Senator Ray held the immigration portfolio for a combined period of approximately 25–26 months. Clyde Holding, a former industrial relations lawyer, was the leader of the Victorian Labor Party for ten years from 1967, and moved to federal politics in 1976. Holding’s tenure for the immigration portfolio was short: from mid-February 1988 to

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170 Don Woolford, ‘Hawke Minister Holding dies’, *The Age*, 1 August 2011.
early September 1988, while Robert Ray, a former school teacher, had oversight of the portfolio until April 1990. This period coincided with the momentous and controversial Bicentennial celebrations of European settlement in Australia, which invoked debates and sensitivities that were particularly pertinent to the immigration portfolio.\textsuperscript{171} Holding and Ray also oversaw the Government’s response to the report produced by the Committee to Advise on Australia’s Immigration Policies (CAAIP). The ‘FitzGerald Report’ as it was more informally known, included recommendations on the future role Australia should play in Indochinese settlement, and the family reunion program. This report has been described as commencing ‘the process of shifting emphasis from humanist concerns with family and asylum to an economically rational focus on the “quality” of immigrants’ and as ‘the most important single influence on the Immigration Department [for the period from 1988–1998].’\textsuperscript{172}

Recasting Australia’s national and cultural identity was openly debated as crucial to the economic future of the nation during the late 1980s. The role of immigration was intimately entangled with these debates, as entry to Australia became more a function of economic contribution than an ability to culturally ‘integrate’. Castles et al noted in 1990 that:

\begin{quote}
The colour of an immigrant’s skin is almost irrelevant. Entry is assured if you can satisfy an area of demand in the labour market, or bring capital with you that might put a small dent in the current account deficit.\textsuperscript{173}
\end{quote}

The Holding/Ray period saw significant efforts invested in defusing fear and prejudice towards Asian migrants, and in explaining the permanency of Australia’s relationship with the region. Minister Holding contextualised the migration of Asian migrants in the history of Australian immigration, and noted the suspicion that surrounded any new cultural group. The low public support for Italian, Greek and Jewish migrants was cited as an example,\textsuperscript{174} as was the historical prejudice against Irish-Australians, who ‘were referred to as drunkards, as being of the wrong religion, as having too many children, as being anti-British and as making very poor servants’.\textsuperscript{175} Holding poignantly concluded by stating ‘[t]he tragedy of this debate is that we

\textsuperscript{171} The two-hundred year anniversary of European settlement in Australia has been the subject of numerous academic and media writings. Examples include: Tony Bennett (ed) \textit{Celebrating the Nation: a critical study of Australia’s bicentenary} (St Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1992); Stephen Castles, Mary Kalantzis, Bill Cope and Michael Morrissey, \textit{The Bicentenary and the Failure of Australian Nationalism} (Annandale: Common Ground, 1987).
\textsuperscript{172} Jupp, \textit{From White Australia to Woomera}, p49.
\textsuperscript{173} Stephen Castles et al \textit{Mistaken Identity: Multiculturalism an the demise of Nationalism in Australia} Sydney, Pluto Press, 1990, p163
\textsuperscript{174} The Honourable Michael Holding, Australian Labor Party, House Hansard, 25/08/1988 p410
\textsuperscript{175} Ibid.
are not talking about perceptions of Asian immigration. The real issue is that we are talking about our perceptions of Australian society.'\(^{176}\)

Senator Ray engaged in debates around the desirability of engaging with Asia in his role as the Minister for Home Affairs, before he assumed responsibility for immigration. Senator Ray spoke at length in parliament of his disappointment and concern that a non-discriminatory policy of immigration selection criteria was losing bipartisan support, and highlighted in one speech the danger to Australia’s economic interests in pursuing this development:

> In 1987–88 it is estimated that migrants brought over $3 billion to Australia – the same amount as our total foreign tourist industry. Business migrants brought over $1 billion. Eight per cent of those business migrants came from the continent of Asia. Asian migration reflects our changing economy and our closer links with the region. In 1986-87 our exports to Asia were worth $17.5 billion and our imports from Asia were worth $13.8 billion. This represents a 365 per cent increase in exports on the figures for 10 years ago. Five out of 10 of our largest export markets are in Asia...So it is not only morally wrong but also economically irresponsible to introduce an element of anti-Asian discrimination into our immigration policy.\(^{177}\)

Hawke echoed this view in the lower house when he criticised the Opposition for attempting to veil an anti-Asian bias behind references to a need to ‘protect social cohesion’:

> Let me make it crystal clear that we in the Government repudiate the Opposition’s position. We repudiate it on moral grounds and we repudiate it on grounds of this nation’s economic self-interest. This is one of the occasions when moral and economic interests coincide.\(^{178}\)

Aged parents who wished to reunite with children in Australia were the focus of considerable policy work during the Holding/Ray oversight for immigration. Parents of migrant families residing in Australia had high rates of unemployment;\(^{179}\) unfortunately the unpaid work provided in the home was not considered valuable. Holding largely reinforced the line held by his predecessors in relation to the valuable role migrant families play in facilitating the settlement of new family members. Migrant families were valued by Holding for their capacity

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\(^{176}\) Ibid.

Interestingly, one reason why Holding was removed from the position of Minister for Immigration when the portfolio was passed to Ray was because it was considered by some in the Australian Labor Party that he did not deal with anti-Asian sentiment more authoritatively. See Michael Malik, ‘Holding pattern: the Immigration Minister is sacked in a cabinet reshuffle’, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 1 September 1988, p25. Factional politics also played a role in the transfer of the immigration portfolio from Holding to Ray. See Bruce Jones, 'Ray tipped for Holding Job', *The Sun Herald*, 21 August 1988.


\(^{179}\) Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, *Community Profiles 1996 Census Viet Nam Born*, Canberra, Research and Statistics Unit, 1999, found that 30 per cent of Vietnamese males aged between 45 and 64 years were not in the labour force, and 54.7 per cent of Vietnamese women in the same age category were not in the labour force. These statistics were higher than any other overseas-born group.
to provide emotional, financial and practical advice to new family members, who were attempting to find their way in Australia:

The evidence available clearly indicates that many people who come to Australia under the family reunion program because they have a family network of brothers and sisters in Australia are joining people who have gone through the experience of finding employment. Therefore, they are able to direct and assist them not merely to settle but also to find work.'

The migration of aged parents to Australia was also defended by Holding as including some means of self-sufficiency, in that ‘many of them bring pension benefits from overseas’. Interestingly, Holding also framed the reunion of aged parents in Australia with adult children as a right belonging to migrants who had resided in Australia long enough to have obtained citizenship, when he posed the question to parliament: ‘Will anyone deny any Australian citizen or any person who has come to Australia the right to have his aged parents come here also?’ Few Ministers ventured to describe migrants as Australian citizens, even if the requirements for this status had been satisfied.

Senator Ray was responsible for introducing two new policy changes that would influence the ability of aged parents to enter Australia and their subsequent settlement experiences. These policy changes formed part of the government’s response to the recommendations made in the aforementioned ‘FitzGerald report’, which recommended:

That the Family Immigration Category be expanded to cover grandparents of Australian citizens, 55 years of age or older; (2) that the job offer requirement be dropped for parents 55 years of age and over; and (3) that parents under 55 be processed in Open Category.

The overall flavour of the FitzGerald Report, as supportive of high immigration but with a sharpened focus on migrants with skills conducive to the development of the economy is succinctly reflected in this paragraph. The entry of grandparents was still supported, and in

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180 The Honourable Michael Holding, Australian Labor Party, House Hansard, 17/05/1988 p2430
181 Ibid., p2429.
182 Ibid., p2429.


recognition of the overseas pension benefits and level of self-sufficiency some grandparents would bring to Australia, the job offer requirement was dropped for those aged over 55 years. The new focus on skills is apparent, however, in the recommendation to process parents under 55 through a newly devised ‘Open Category’, which involved assessing potential migrants through criteria that valued labour market skills, language capacity and age more highly than kinship ties in Australia.\textsuperscript{184}

The Hawke Government received extensive lobbying and criticism from migrant communities regarding these recommendations. Migrant groups feared these changes, if implemented, would significantly damage opportunities for family reunion.\textsuperscript{185} This was problematic for the Hawke Government, which ‘could not at that time afford to antagonise (ethnic and multicultural lobbies) or risk the loss of their votes’.\textsuperscript{186} Some recommendations were diluted as a result of this influence, while others were dropped altogether.

The Hawke Government recognised, however, that the immigration program needed to be reformed: the welfare costs and burden on the healthcare system was unsustainable. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, when the implications of the FitzGerald Report were being considered, unemployment among Southeast Asian migrants was at nearly 25 per cent.\textsuperscript{187} For political reasons, the recommendations made in the FitzGerald Report could not be immediately acted upon, and so an alternative plan had to be devised. In what was described by the media and the Opposition as ‘a trade-off intended to minimise the backlash from Australia’s ethnic communities’,\textsuperscript{188} a restructuring of the immigration program was announced in December 1988. A new economic migration category was created, which included visas allocated through the Business Migration Programme and employer nominations. The definition of immediate family was amended to no longer automatically include parents, and

the ‘balance of family’ policy was introduced, which was explained by Senator Ray as involving:

(p)arents with more children in Australia than in any single country or at least an equal number in Australia as overseas, will be selected as close family. Those not meeting this criterion may be considered under the points system for extended family.\textsuperscript{189}

While it was anticipated the ‘balance of family’ test would expedite the migration process for some aged parents wishing to come to Australia, the expected drop in applications was estimated to save the Government approximately 92 million over the next four years on welfare and health costs for older migrants.\textsuperscript{190}

The balance of family test built upon existing expectations that migrant families would take care of and provide for family members who no longer worked outside of the home. By virtue of numbers alone, and not actual capacity to care for parents or existing relationships between parents and children, the policy had the effect of preventing many aged parents from coming to Australia. In other families, the policy added to the responsibility of adult children, who were perhaps already caring for much younger siblings, and had been looking forward to the arrival of parents as a source of support.\textsuperscript{191}

In the years preceding 1988, thousands of applications for parent sponsorships made by Vietnamese adult children in Australia were impeded by corrupt and excessive bureaucratic processes of the Vietnamese government. Six months into 1988, however, many applications were processed, and over 2000 parents, some with dependents, were able to come to Australia.\textsuperscript{192} Approximately 7000 more applications were still to be assessed in mid-1989.

\textsuperscript{189} The Honourable Robert Ray, Australian Labor Party, Senate Hansard 08/12/1988, p3756. Birrerell speculated that the number of parent sponsorship applications would drop significantly in response to the balance of family policy in chapter 6 ‘Future size and composition of the family reunion categories’ of The chains that bind: Family Reunion Migration to Australia in the 1980s (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1990), pp43–47.

\textsuperscript{190} Seccombe ‘Government Slashes Immigrant Parent Intake’.

\textsuperscript{191} One of the women I interviewed for this thesis (chapter four is an analysis of all the interview material gathered) found herself in this situation. Lam (Interview 9) was only 23 years in 1988 when she had the responsibility of providing for her six younger siblings in Australia, while the family waited for her parents’ applications to be approved. The family was reunited in 1990.

\textsuperscript{192} See Birrell The chains that bind, p45.
The second policy change involved extending the assurance of support required by sponsors of parents to include ‘the recovery of unemployment benefits paid to the person assured’. Sponsorship arrangements involved the Australian resident entering into a contractual agreement with the Australian government to repay particular examples of welfare support (now including unemployment benefits) if they were drawn upon by the parent within the first five years of living in Australia. By extending the examples of welfare assistance that were out of bounds to unemployment benefits, the policy change reinforced the dependence migrant families had on each other. Migrant families were allocated the responsibility of assisting aged parents to become productive members of Australian society. The private resources of migrant families who entered Australia through the family reunion program were directly factored into government planning for the settlement of elderly parents.

While the government was careful to distance itself from several of the recommendations made in the CAAIP report, the broad parameters were consistent with the Hawke Government’s objective to increase the influence of economic rationalism on policy. That the immigration program should be consistent with national interests and characterised by a ‘balance between economic, social and humanitarian imperatives’ was confirmed. The family migration stream remained the largest category, with 71,000 places allocated for the two years following 1988. The economic stream was comprised of 54,000 and 14,000 humanitarian places were planned.

The government elected to not accept the CAAIP recommendation that ‘Australia gradually disengage itself from Indochinese resettlement, in line with the decreasing outflow and diminishing number of refugees from Indochina and in the context of positive strategies for solutions to this problem.’ Jupp noted that this argument made in the report was inaccurate; while only 2000 Vietnamese refugees came to Australia directly by boat, the refugee camps in Southeast Asia were still overwhelmed with numbers. Instead, the government response stated: ‘[the] approach to Indochinese resettlement should take account of current international

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194 Ibid.
196 Jupp, From White Australia to Woomera, p188.
development including a proposed International Conference on Indochinese refugees and Australia’s significantly increased Vietnamese Family Reunion Program.197

Also pertinent to this thesis was the government’s decision to not adopt the CAAIP recommendation to enable applicants for spouse visas to obtain additional points on the basis of skills. This would have resulted with an increase in the number of couples with qualifications or skills relevant to the Australian labour market. If adopted, the policy would have made the government vulnerable to claims that couples from countries with similar education and training practices would be privileged in their applications to come to Australia. An unintended outcome of this policy, discussed in later chapters, was to create circumstances in which people could live in Australia and not be able to participate in the labour market. This in turn encouraged a dependency between couples that perhaps would not have otherwise existed.198

The outcomes were similar for extended family members, when the government elected to also maintain the policy of not requiring extended family members to undergo an English language test. For reasons of equality and fairness, the government decided against implementing such a test for extended family members because ‘it was considered that an equal playing field in the family area was wanted’.199 Senator Ray explained: ‘If there were an English test, it would apply dramatically to different regions of the world... It would have greatly affected potential immigrants from non-Commonwealth countries such as the Middle East.’200

Major structural changes to the immigration decision making process, another significant outcome of the CAAIP report, were implemented during Senator Ray’s tenure. Until 1989 the many rules and regulations that guided the entry and departure of people into and out of Australia largely existed in policy documents in the Department of Immigration. These

197 The Honourable Robert Ray, Australian Labor Party, Senate Hansard, 08/12/1988 p3765 The majority of Vietnamese had entered Australia through the refugee program, or based on humanitarian selection criteria. The late 1980s and early 1990 signalled the commencement of the official family reunion program becoming the primary means through which Vietnamese came to live in Australia. Vuong Nguyen and Mai Ho, ‘Vietnamese-Australian Families’ in Families and Cultural Diversity in Australia, ed Robyn Hartley (St Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1995), pp216–240.
198 Examples of this dependency are discussed in chapter four.
199 The Honourable Robert Ray, Australian Labor Party, Senate Hansard 30/05/1989 p3012
200 Ibid.
regulations were not actually law; the *Migration Act 1958* (Cwlth) gave broad powers to the Minister to implement and design immigration policies, but did not specify how this was to be done. Senator Ray initiated steps towards making immigration regulations laws that were accountable to parliament and more transparent to people who wished to enter or leave Australia:

> The wide discretionary powers conferred by the Migration Act have long seen a source of public criticism. Decision-making guidelines are perceived to be obscure, arbitrarily changed and applied, and subject to day-to-day political intervention in individual cases. Accordingly I am proposing in this Bill a decision-making system in which policies governing entry to and stay in Australia will, for the first time, be spelt out in the migration legislative scheme. Parliament then, through its powers of disallowance will be able to monitor those policies. I am also vesting most of the decision-making powers currently conferred on me in the Secretary of the Department.\(^{201}\)

Jupp noted that many of these changes improved the process whereby potential migrant were selected.\(^{202}\) Decisions were able to be made without the same degree of politicking that had occurred in the past—clear criteria existed to delineate desirable migrants from those which were less so.\(^{203}\) To an extent, however, these efforts backfired: ‘serious inflexibility’ was required to ensure all ‘human beings could be fitted into limited categories.’\(^{204}\) Plans to regulate immigration and make the process more predictable led to the development of a system that was very complicated and required interpretation by experts. The reforms of the *Migration Act 1958* (Cwlth) under Senator Ray encouraged the formation of the Migration Agent industry, as it became increasingly difficult for lay people to understand the rules and documentation.\(^{205}\)

The Immigration Review Tribunal (IRT) was also part of the reforms, and enabled decisions to be appealed at a second tier of review if appeals to ‘specialist officers of the Department’

\(^{201}\) Ibid., p3447.
\(^{203}\) However, Jupp notes that patronage never quite disappeared, despite the reforms. Ernest Healy argues patronage was more overt under Senator Bolkus in Ernest Healy ‘The Management of the Immigration Portfolio under Senator Bolkus’, *People and Place* 2, no.4 (1994): pp37–44.
\(^{204}\) Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera*, p48.
\(^{205}\) Ibid.
failed. The IRT was an independent statutory body that would enable migration applicants a second chance if their initial applications were rejected.  

**Minister Gerard Hand: Protecting Australia from Unscrupulous Foreigners**

Minister Hand’s term as Minister for Immigration traversed two governments, with approximately similar time under Hawke and Keating. Hand was a former trade unionist and had been the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs for three years, during which he established the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. Hansard transcripts of speeches made by Minister Hand demonstrate a strong concern that Australia’s immigration policies were being exploited, and that Australian generosity was in danger of abuse. Sham marriages and other illegal migration occupied much of the parliamentary debates of 1990, 1991 and 1992, and the Government also introduced bills that aimed to strengthen border controls. Hand has the unfortunate legacy of installing mandatory detention in Australia for ‘unauthorised arrivals’. Before this time, Ministerial discretion was relied upon to determine whether unauthorised arrivals went into detention or could live in the community until the decision had been made to grant a visa.

Applications for refugee status piked concern that Australian immigration rules and regulations were being misused. The need for enhanced government control over who entered Australia

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208 Hand retired from the position of Minister for Immigration in 1993. Senator Bolkus took over from this date and remained as Minister for Immigration until Labor lost the 1996 election. See *Appendix 1*.

209 Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera*, p51. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) was a government-funded organisation that advised government on Indigenous policy development to promote the social, economic and cultural wellbeing of all Indigenous people. See Angela Pratt, ‘Make or Break? A Background to the ATSIC Changes and the ATSIC Review’ Parliament of Australia, *Current Issues Brief* no.29, 2002–03.

210 For example, under Hand, temporary protection visas were introduced for refugees and humanitarian applicants instead of permanent residence. See Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera*, p51.


was expressed in relation to ‘the increasing number of people claiming refugee status’.\textsuperscript{214} Illegal fishermen, business migrants who did not fulfil the requirements of their visas and migrants in possession of false documents were also targeted by the changes, with Hand emphasising in parliament that:

The purpose of the Migration Act is to enable the Commonwealth to exercise its power to control certain persons or categories of persons who may lawfully enter and stay in this country. It has always been the intention of this Government, and previous governments before it, that this power should be exercised with the public interest in mind. One means of ensuring that the public interest is observed is to define those categories of person whom it is undesirable to have stay in Australia.\textsuperscript{215}

In stark contrast to the attitudes conveyed by Minister West towards refugees arriving by boat, Minister Hand’s descriptions of Indochinese were much less favourable.\textsuperscript{216} The plight and desperation of people willing to risk such a dangerous journey ceased to be a theme of speeches to parliament, and instead refugees were described as devious people who had been able to manipulate Australian border controls. In November 1992, for example, Hand argued:

There are people who are intent on bypassing the established categories of entry into this country. Some do this by trying to avoid immigration processing altogether by arriving in Australia without authority. The boat people are a good example…At the very least, many manage to delay the substantive decision on their case and, as a consequence, their departure, by using the courts to exploit any weaknesses they can find in our immigration law. This must stop.\textsuperscript{217}

The above quote was taken from a speech given in support of the Migration Reform Bill 1992, which aimed to more vigorously regulate who entered Australia. Detention was reinforced as the only option available to people who managed to enter Australia illegally and wished to make a claim to stay.\textsuperscript{218} Phillips and Spinks note that Minister Hand argued that ‘detention would facilitate the processing of refugee claims, prevent de facto migration and save the cost

\textsuperscript{214} The Honourable Gerard Hand, Australian Labor Party, House Hansard 07/05/1992 p2678.
\textsuperscript{215} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{216} Eleanor Lamb provides a very interesting analysis of how language contributed to the ‘Othering’ of migrants and refugees in the United Kingdom. Lamb argues the language used by politicians that had the effect of marginalising migrants and refugees was linked to efforts to define national identity, and to delineate who was ‘in’ the nation and who was ‘out’. See Eleanor Lamb, ‘Resisting marginalisation: changing representations if migrants and refugees in UK text since the 19060s’, \textit{Journal of Language and Politics} 13, no.3 (2014): pp403–433; Tamara Vukov, ‘Imagining Communities through immigration policies: governmental regulation, media spectacles and the affective politics of national boundaries’, \textit{International Journal of Cultural Studies} 6, no.3 (2003): pp335–353.
\textsuperscript{218} Janet Phillips and Harriet Spinks, from the Australian Parliamentary Library in Canberra, have written a series of ‘Background notes’ on issues including asylum seeker and mandatory detention policies, which are used to support the work of the Australian Parliament. Examples of these background notes used in this section include: Janet Phillips and Harriet Spinks, ‘Boat arrivals in Australia since 1976’, Background note, Parliamentary Library 2013; and Janet Phillips, ‘A comparison of Coalition and Labor government asylum policies in Australia since 2001’, Research Paper, Parliamentary Library, 2014.
of locating people in the community’. Bridging visas were introduced to monitor people who were released from detention and were awaiting a change of residency status. A specialist refugee review tribunal was also introduced to assess rejection decisions made by the department in relation to onshore applicants. On the same day in Parliament, Minister Hand also moved the Migration (Delayed Visa Applications) Tax Bill 1992, which aimed to ‘provide more effective measures to detect and remove non-citizens who are unlawfully in Australia’. The Bill imposed a tax on applications for visas or entry permits made by people who had been residing in Australia illegally for 12 months or more. The tax was indexed against the period of time the migrant had been in Australia illegally, at $3000 per year. Refugees were exempt, as were people for whom the Minister had decided the tax would cause extreme hardship.

English language skills were again the focus of policy change during Minister Hand’s term as Minister for Immigration. Hand moved the Immigration (Education) Amendment Bill 1991, which allowed holders of particular temporary entry permits to access English language and citizenship courses. The policy change enabled nationals from the People’s Republic of China, who had been granted asylum after the Tiananmen Square massacre, to begin or continue the process of obtaining the necessary skills to settle in Australia. The bill amendments provide an interesting point to reflect upon in relation to ideas of community belonging. Granting access to English classes for holders of particular temporary entry permits is an active attempt to engage new migrants with the social and cultural resources necessary for civic participation.

223 Facilitating the entry and ongoing residency of Tiananmen Square refugees is an interesting example of where Hawke intervened to override the advice of his Minister for Immigration (who at the time was Robert Ray) and that of the specialist advice on the immigration program offered through the FitzGerald Report. See Damien Murphy, ‘Tears for Tiananmen: new sympathy for refugees’, The Sydney Morning Herald, 1 January 2015, p10 for commentary on this issue. Murphy’s article is based on analysis of Cabinet papers, which became available in 2010, after the moratorium on public access to such documents was amended from 30 years to 20 years. http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/explore/cabinet/records/index.aspx accessed 20/02/2015.
non-English language skills brought into contrast policies that implicitly created relationships of dependency in the ‘private’ realm of family and other community members.

In 1992 the Immigration (Education) Charge Bill was introduced, which imposed a charge on adult migrants who were on particular visas and required English language classes. Refugees, preferential family members (spouses and dependent children) were exempt from the fee, and it was primarily targeted at business migrants.

The assurance of support scheme was also amended to ensure health services provided by the Commonwealth were included. Minister Hand explained:

> The migration program operates to Australia’s benefit but there is a level of cost attached to some of its components. The Government proposes to improve existing cost recovery measures, through changes to the assurance of support scheme and through the provisions of this Bill.\footnote{The Honourable Gerald Hand, Australian Labor Party, House Hansard 07/11/1991, p2642.}

To sweeten the deal, the period of time for assurers to repay support received was reduced from five to two years.

Hansard transcripts reveal that the final twelve months of Hand’s authority over the immigration portfolio (which was the first year of Keating’s term as Prime Minister) involved rigorous defence of Labor’s immigration policies in debates with the then Shadow Minister for Immigration, Philip Ruddock,\footnote{Philip Ruddock was the Minister for Immigration from March 1996 to October 2003 and oversaw many controversial policy changes in this portfolio. The following chapter details Rudoock’s term as Minister for Immigration. See \url{http://www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/Parliamentarian?MPID=0J4} accessed 20/02/2015.} who demonstrated a suspicion of potential migrants unsurpassed by many other ministers. This defence was somewhat complicated, however, as many of the policy amendments Hand oversaw during this time were agreed to and supported by the Opposition. Ruddock was generally quick to ask why particular ideas had not been implemented earlier, or accused the Government of ‘catch-up’ politics, where it adopted ideas that had been previously suggested by the Opposition. The decision to reduce the number of migrants able to enter Australia in 1992–1993 is one example of this interplay, when Hand presented the following explanation: ‘It is not a question of the Opposition leading... it is a
question of well and truly documenting the discussions we have had and coming up with the figure of 80,000.’


Prime Minister Keating has been generally noted for a reduced personal interest in immigration matters, compared to Prime Minister Hawke. Comprehensive studies of Keating’s governance reveal a stronger emphasis on Indigenous issues, Australian integration with Asia and debates around whether Australia should become a republic. Vietnamese reunion through the family migration program hovered around 3,000 in number throughout Keating’s governance. Applicants from the Philippines frequently outnumbered those from Vietnam in the family migration category.

Senator Nick Bolkus: Citizenship and Authentic Migrants

Senator Bolkus became the Minister for Immigration after Minister Hand’s retirement, which followed the 1993 federal election. Minister Hand stayed on as the Minister for Immigration during the first 15 months of Paul Keating’s leadership, possibly to convey the impression of stability to the public. The analysis of Hansard transcripts during the period of transition from Hawke to Keating does not reveal significant changes in policy direction or debate.

The early months of Senator Bolkus’ term as Minister for Immigration were dominated by the issues of republicanism and citizenship. Hansard transcripts of speeches made by Senator

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Bolkus reveal eloquent attempts to contribute to the recasting of Australian national identity along the themes of global competition and dispersed centres of power. During a debate on the Australian Citizenship Amendment Bill 1993, Senator Bolkus explained the proposal for more flexible citizenship regulations as necessary for Australia to ‘keep up’ with the challenges posed by a world that was becoming ever more mobile and connected:

We are no longer six states and two territories competing against each other for markets. We are now one nation competing with Asia and the rest of the world for markets in the fields of technology and of commerce. We are now living within a world which no longer has people staying in one part of the world and not moving. With technology and with communications the world is moving very quickly. Money is moving quickly, financial corporations are moving quickly, jobs are moving quickly and, with that, people are moving quickly.  

The reference to the pre-Federation era is an interesting and ironic analogy to employ in a debate on Australian national membership. While repelling the ‘yellow peril’ was an initial motivation for unification of the Australian colonies,232 less than two centuries later, a call is made for the two major political parties to unite behind a broader and more inclusive policy that invites people, particularly people from Asia, to take out formal membership of Australia, while retaining loyalties and ties to their homeland.

Bolkus was also required to explain this new approach towards citizenship in light of comments made by Geoffrey Blainey in a keynote speech at a function for the Institute of Public Affairs in March 1995. On this occasion, Blainey claimed obtaining Australian citizenship was becoming ‘too easy’ and was hence less meaningful.233 Bolkus vehemently opposed this view and stated:

The Government’s current citizenship promotion campaign makes it quite clear that citizenship is the common bond which unites all Australians. When people become citizens they make a commitment not only to Australia’s people, our law, our democratic system, but also to a way of life which does respect that cultural diversity.234

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The Australian Citizenship Amendment Bill 1993 was the culmination of work to reassess Australian citizenship laws, which included a Joint Standing Committee inquiry into the meaning of Australian citizenship. Chaired by Senator Jim McKiernan, the inquiry Australians All: Enhancing Australian Citizenship noted considerable interest in the issue of dual citizenship, and whether permitting this to occur would enhance Australia’s identity as a globalised nation. The proposal to allow dual citizenship was not adopted until 2002, when the Howard Government acted on advice provided by the Australian Citizenship Council. See Adam Berryman et al., ‘Diversity, Integration and Citizenship’, *Humanities Research* 15, no.1 (2009): chp3 np.


233 Editorial ‘Citizenship undervalued’ *Institute of Public Affairs Review* 47, no.4, p64.

234 The Honourable Senator Bolkus, Australian Labor Party, Senate Hansard, 09/03/95 p1645.
The debates around citizenship extended to scrutiny of other steps migrants could take to illegitimately demonstrate and achieve a formal commitment to Australia. On 10 February 1994 Senator Bolkus responded to an extensive suite of questions asked by the Shadow Minister for Immigration, Senator Short, on the processes and logistics involved in taking out permanent residency. The questions related to departmental staffing requirements for processing permanent residency applications, the rigour of the criteria migrants had to fulfil before permanency was granted, statistics on applicants’ countries of origin, and knowledge of scams to achieve permanent residency.

Second, Senator Short questioned the authenticity of applications for permanent residency on the basis of spousal relationships. In particular, Short asked for numerical details of people who separated or divorced after permanent residency was granted, evidence of false documentation and details of the ‘chain migration’ that resulted from people who entered Australia on spouse visas. Senator Short was interested, for example, to know: ‘How many of the people who arrived here as spouses have made applications to sponsor other relatives to enter Australia?’ The answers to Senator Short’s questions were uncontroversial: discovery of false documentation led to rejections of any relevant applications and spouses could only sponsor dependent children. Senator Bolkus’ responses were concise and did not support the obvious contention underlying the questions: that the family reunion program was being exploited as a means of gaining permanent residency.

During this period, the family reunion program was becoming increasingly associated with migrants from PRC. While Vietnamese were still entering Australia through this migration stream, the publicity surrounding the Tiananmen Square massacre and Hawke’s response to

235 The Honourable Senator Bolkus, Australian Labor Party, Senate Hansard, 10/02/94 p759.
236 The Honourable Senator Bolkus, Australian Labor Party, Senate Hansard, 10/02/94, p759. Immediately after achieving government the Coalition announced policy changes that increased the level of scrutiny on spousal sponsorship, which reflected the concern expressed by Senator Short that the system was being exploited. See Michael Millett, ‘Shutting the door’, The Age, 5 July 1996.
237 Senator Bolkus responded to Senator Short’s earlier questions with: ‘Spouses of 437 holders are not eligible to sponsor other relatives to Australia, with the exception of dependent children’. The Honourable Senator Bolkus, Australian Labor Party, Senate Hansard, 10/02/94, p759.
239 Over 3,000 Vietnamese applied to enter Australia through the family reunion program in 1994–95, while applicants from PRC numbered just over 2,700. Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic
the many PRC nationals wishing to either stay in or migrate to Australia dimmed the spotlight on Vietnamese families. A visit by Senator Bolkus to Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam in April 1994,\(^{240}\) led to a self-congratulatory reference in parliament regarding the efforts to negotiate more streamlined migration processes with the Vietnamese Government.\(^{241}\) This was one of the few references to Vietnamese migration found in Hansard in 1994.\(^{242}\)

**Conclusion: The Foundation for Immigration and Rationalism**

The Labor governments of Bob Hawke and Paul Keating were responsible for instituting significant shifts in conceptions of Australian national identity. Hawke oversaw a careful and respectful distancing of Australia from Britain and the introduction of the idea (and reality) that the Asian region was where Australia’s economic future lay. Keating built on this foundation quite dramatically, and unsuccessfully launched into public discourse the idea of an Australian republic. While some parts of Australian society embraced republicanism, others were appalled, and Keating’s vision for a new, cosmopolitan Australia is cited by several researchers as contributing to his election loss in 1996. The parameters and composition of Australian national identity was to be extensively revisited and explored by John Howard’s Coalition Government, from 1996 to 2007.

The introduction and firm establishment of market-based reforms is another key legacy of the Hawke/Keating governments—reforms that fundamentally transformed policy development in

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\(^{241}\) See The Honourable Senator Nick Bolkus, Australian Labor Party, Senate Hansard, 09/05/94 p406.

\(^{242}\) Vietnamese refugees (and refugees from other parts of Indochina) was a high profile and controversial issue during this time. The arrival of several hundred refugees by boat on Australian shores in 1994 prompted the Government to amend the *Migration Act 1958* (Cwlth) to ensure that refugees who had been assessed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees as genuine refugees could not settle in Australia if they had access to settlement options in other countries. People who arrived in Australia and were found to have been positively assessed as refugees in other countries, but then made their way to Australia, were able to be deported under this amendment. See Migration Legislation Amendment Bill (No.4) 1994, Explanatory Memorandum; Padriac P. McGuinness, ‘Boat People and the Law’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 November 1994; Stephen Hutcheon, ‘First Boat People to Return Home’, *The Age*, 9 May 1995.
Australia. Immigration policy increasingly, and quite quickly, became subject to the guiding principles of economic expediency. The humanism espoused by Minister West was quickly usurped by the need to align immigration with the practical realities of economic decline and labour needs during the 1980s. The government saw the benefits of encouraging new migrants to rely on their family for support. The Coalition government enthusiastically embraced the intersection between immigration policy and economic rationalism, and built upon the concept of ‘familial welfare’ to ensure migrant families were essential, rather than merely beneficial, to the settlement experiences of new family migrants.

In reference to discussions about national identity during this period, Vietnamese family reunion tended to be cast in one of two ways: either as central to debates on evolving identity because it provided evidence of the cultural maturity Hawke and Keating wished to demonstrate; or as a reminder of the need to carefully monitor and manage that identity because of the unscrupulous behaviour of some immigrants willing to exploit the system. The possible exploitation of migration regulations was flagged by the latter group of immigration ministers in order to draw a distinction between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ migrants, and the required characteristics people must possess before acceptance in Australia was provided. Vietnamese family reunion migrants moved from being a highly visible and confronting contrast to the migrants historically supported and encouraged to settle in Australia, to occasional representatives of a new and more culturally inclusive Australia. Attempts were never made to construct Vietnamese migrants as economically valuable, in the sense that skilled migrants were. The task of depicting Vietnamese migrants as beneficial to Australia was politically challenging and one with which the Ministers for Immigration under Hawke and Keating struggled. Negotiations with the Vietnamese government could be conveyed as successful examples of diplomacy and as an indication of the influence and position of Australia in the Asian-Pacific region. But as a migrant group that would bring and add value to Australia, the stories of welfare dependency, legacy of trauma and desperate need to escape Vietnam, prevented Vietnamese migrants from registering politically as advantageous to an evolving nation.

This discussion now turns to explore whether these themes continued in the parliamentary discussions conducted by Ministers for Immigration under John Howard’s Coalition
government. The direction in which the Coalition Government took the immigration program—and the family reunion program specifically—built upon several policy foundations and themes established in the Hawke/Keating era. Nevertheless, it also demonstrated a heightened concern for the qualities and traits potential migrants needed to embody before they were considered worthy of joining the Australian national community.
CHAPTER THREE

Family Reunion and the Coalition Government, 1996-2007

In comparison to the Labor Government, Prime Minister John Howard’s Liberal-National Coalition Government (1996-2007) inherited an immigration program that was significantly more regulated and structured, and which had transitioned to assessing applicants by points-based criteria that paid strong heed to economic desirability. Detailed visa criteria and quotas on migration categories evolved alongside the industry of migration agents, who interpreted these policies for potential migrants with the means to pay for such assistance.\footnote{Migration Agents are people trained to provide advice and assist potential migrants with lodging visas. For more information on the role of migration agents, see Australian Government, ‘Office of the Migration Agents Registration Authority’, online at http://www.mara.gov.au [accessed 5 July 2015].} The composition of the migration program was also very different when the Coalition assumed government, in terms of both cultural background and the dominance of different visa categories. In 1983, migrants from Europe (including the United Kingdom) comprised 42 per cent of all permanent settlers to Australia, and made up 34 per cent of the family reunion scheme.\footnote{ABS, \textit{Australian Social Trends 1998} (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 1998), p28.} Migration from Asia was at 37 per cent, predominantly through the refugee and humanitarian visa categories.\footnote{ABS, ‘Overseas Arrivals and Departures, Australia, December 1983’ (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 1983), p2.} By 1996, migration from Asia through the family reunion program had grown to 31 per cent, with families from China, Hong Kong and Vietnam comprising the largest groups. Migrants from Europe, the United Kingdom and Northeast Asia still entered Australia in large numbers, but predominantly through the skilled migration program.\footnote{Family migration from the United Kingdom fell from 34 per cent in the early 1980s to 15 per cent by the mid 1990s. See ABS, \textit{Australian Social Trends 1998}, p28.}

The previous chapter surveyed the political discourse that portrayed and discussed Vietnamese family reunion migrants and refugees in the context of Labor Party objectives of establishing a new Australian national identity. Restructuring the economy, moving away from the United Kingdom and towards Asia were central tenets of this new national identity. The explanations offered in parliamentary debates for changes in the family reunion program moved quickly...
from a narrative of compassion and benevolence to one that prioritised economic stability and effective participation in the increasingly intense global competition for skills. Economic rationalism crept into the mesh of ideologies that influenced family migration policy, and, as explored in later chapters, Vietnamese families would experience the implications of this in the day-to-day reality of supporting new family members, as sponsorship arrangements and access to welfare support changed accordingly.

This chapter explores the intersection between Australian national identity and the reunification of Vietnamese families as articulated under the Coalition Government led by Prime Minister John Howard. Transcripts of parliamentary debates reveal that a form of cultural or symbolic racism developed during this period, where the behaviour of migrants associated with family reunion was described as incompatible with the interests of the Australian nation and people. The Coalition government framed family reunion migrants as a hindrance to economic growth and as undeserving of government support. While some of the themes employed for drawing the connection between the family reunion program and national identity were introduced by the preceding Labor governments, the Coalition Government was primarily responsible for producing the idea of family-sponsored as outside the Australian community and as unworthy of ever joining it.

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5 The concept of modern racism has been explored and developed by Martha Augoustinos, Danielle Every, James Liu and Duncan Mills. See, for example, Martha Augoustinos and Danielle Every, ‘Accusations and denials of racism: managing moral accountability in public discourse’, *Discourse and Society* 21, no. 3 (2010): pp251-56; and James H. Liu and Duncan Mills, ‘Modern racism and neo-liberal globalization: the discourses of plausible deniability and their multiple functions’, *Journal of Community and Applied Psychology* 16, no. 2 (March-April 2006): pp83-99. These authors note that modern or symbolic racism is described as differing from ‘traditional’ racism (where the cultural background or ethnicity of migrants is described in ways which infer inferiority) because of its focus on the ways in which migrants violate the norms, values and practices of the mainstream society. An example relevant to this thesis is the now infamous ‘Children Overboard Affair’, where politicians in the Howard Government attempted to convince the Australian public that refugees aboard a Norwegian fishing vessel, the *Tampa*, threw their children overboard in order to manipulate the Australian Government into allowing them to enter Australia. Refugees were portrayed as people willing to risk their children’s lives in order to obtain permission to land in Australia. See Andrew Clennell and Sarah Crichton, ‘They’re intimidating us: PM’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 August 2001.
The Coalition Government:
Reforming the Family Reunion Program

John Winston Howard became Prime Minister in 1996 after a campaign that included promises to check some of the cultural enthusiasm of the Labor governments over the preceding decade. The attempts made by Prime Minister Keating to prioritise relations with Asia, and identify less with the United Kingdom, were particularly targeted by Howard, a committed monarchist. Howard also promised to govern ‘for families’, which he described as ‘the most effective welfare system that any nation can devise’, and that ‘provide us with a rook over our heads... sustenance, as well as moral and emotional support’. Robert Birrell noted that the Coalition made very few references or promises in relation to immigration during the election campaign of 1996, and surmised the ‘Coalition (was) anxious to avoid antagonising any part of the electorate, including ethnic communities’. Howard also had a complicated history in terms of his attitudes towards immigration in the wake of the Asian immigration debates of the 1980s. In 1988 Howard suggested at a Liberal Party convention, that the rate at which Asian migrants were entering Australia was too fast for the wider community to adapt and become comfortable with their presence. The ensuing fallout from these comments was long-lasting, and Howard’s attitudes towards permanent Asian migration to Australia were observed closely by his critics during the years the Coalition was in Government. Minimising references to

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6 For analysis of Australian prime ministers and the ways in which Australian national identity has been reconciled with the country’s geographical proximity to Asia, see Laksiri Jayasuriya, ‘The Australian-Asian Connection: from Alfred Deakin to John Howard’, Australian Quarterly, March-April 2006, p12-21. See also Amanda Buckley, ‘Warning of Asia Cringe’, Sunday Age, 7 November 1993; and Louise Williams, ‘The Point is, PM, this is where we live’, Sydney Morning Herald, 8 September 2001.


9 These had been sparked by comments of historian Geoffrey Blainey in 1984. For a discussion of these debates, see Andrew Markus and M.C. Ricklefs (eds), Surrender Australia? Essays in the Study and Uses of History (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1985), and Terry Collits, ‘Geoffrey Blainey’s Bad Language: Racist Discourse and the Immigration Debate’, Meanjin 43, no. 3 (September 1984): pp385-92.


immigration was most likely an election strategy to draw attention away from controversial attitudes and historical gaffs.

**Philip Ruddock, Minister for Immigration 1996-2003**

The Coalition’s first minister for immigration was the Honourable Philip Ruddock, a long-serving member of the Liberal Party, who was first elected to Parliament in 1973. The length of time Ruddock spent as the Minister for Immigration (from 1996 until the end of 2003) means the following discussion will take a slightly different shape to that of the previous chapter. The analysis of parliamentary transcripts under the Labor Government followed the chronological events that occurred under the auspice of each of Hawke and Keating’s seven ministers for immigration. The commencement and cessation of each minister’s term of responsibility for the portfolio created clear demarcations for each stage in the analysis. The discussion below will also unfold chronologically, but sections in the analysis will fall around key policy changes rather than ministerial changes.

Ruddock was considered in many circles to be an interesting choice for the role, given his own views on immigration. Ruddock expressed opposition to the aforementioned comments made by Howard in 1988 on Asian migration, and had gone so far as to ‘cross the floor’ in parliament when members of parliament voted on a Government motion that immigration should never be based on racist criteria. His long-term association with human rights organisation Amnesty International was believed to be a dominant influence on his views relating to racism and prejudice.

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15 Ruddock was President of the Amnesty International Parliamentary Group from 1974-78 and Secretary from 1990-1996. See Parliament of Australia, Biography for the Hon Philip Maxwell Ruddock, online at: [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p?query=Ld%3A%22handbook%22handbook%22%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22handbook%22ha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Ruddock in fact wasted little time implementing quite radical changes to the immigration program. The early years of the Coalition’s governance saw immigration ‘initiatives (that) reversed the welcoming stance taken by the majority of Australia’s political leaders since the late 1970s’. Ruddock was responsible for overseeing an important shift in the logic underlying the Australian immigration program that enabled Australia to be more in line with the closed-fortress type approaches adopted by countries including France, Germany and the United Kingdom. The family reunion program underwent a series of significant changes, which included cuts to the overall intake, a particularly hostile targeting of visas for elderly parents, and new restrictions on access to welfare assistance. These reforms were framed within a discourse of migrant families behaving badly and embodying values that were ‘unAustralian’, which justified their exclusion from practical supports and symbolic membership to Australia. Commentators of Australian immigration politics quickly concluded that Howard’s promise to govern and devise supportive policies for all families was indeed false; migrant families wishing to reunite in Australia were to be subjected to suspicion and disregard.

Welfare for the Deserving

Welfare reforms were the first policy changes to be made. Dependency upon welfare among new migrants was of particular concern to the Coalition, which identified a cost of approximately $377 million to the Government in 1991 on welfare support to new arrivals.

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18 See, for example, Mick Millett, ‘Not Welcome’, Sydney Morning Herald, 23 May 1997. Aboriginal Australian lawyer and academic Noel Pearson made this same observation in late 1996, when he commented that the Coalition’s election campaign slogan ‘For All of Us’ in fact really meant ‘For All of Us (but not for them)’, Australian, 22 November 1996.

19 This figure was drawn from the Department of Finance is cited in Virginia Rapson, Robert Birrell and Chris Maher, Welfare dependence in Australia’, People and Place 5, no. 2 (1997): p71. Expert on Vietnamese migration Mandy Thomas surmised that it was likely approximately 25 per cent of Vietnamese men and women in 1991 depended on welfare support for their main source of income. See Mandy Thomas, ‘The Vietnamese in Australia’, in James E. Coughlan and Deborah J. McNamara (eds), Asians in Australia, Patterns of Migration and Settlement (South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1997), p291. For an analysis of dominant factors
In May 1996, only two months after winning government, a proposal to amend the policies that detailed the period of time migrants had to wait before they could access different forms of welfare support was introduced to parliament. The Social Security Legislation Amendment (Newly Arrived Resident’s Waiting periods and Other Measures) meant newly arrived migrants had to delay applying for many forms of government assistance for 104 weeks, or two years. This was an increase of eighteen months on the previously required six months moratorium implemented by the Labor government. Refugees and humanitarian migrants were exempted, as were their immediate family members. It was accepted that migrants in these categories generally arrive in Australia with no means of support.

Ruddock described these changes on 25 May 1996 as ‘modest and reasonable’ and noted that the ‘will ensure that taxpayers only pay for those in need’. By emphasising that refugees and humanitarian migrants would continue to be able to access government support, the Coalition was thus able to portray itself as still responsive to those who really required assistance, but as pragmatic in terms of deciding who could manage without such help. Family reunion migrants were increasingly distanced in political discourse, therefore, from those migrants who ‘genuinely’ required government support. This was despite the fact that many family reunion migrants were sponsored by adult children, spouses or siblings who had originally arrived in Australia as refugees. It also paid little heed to the fact that the majority of first-generation Vietnamese in Australia were still recovering from the trauma of war and displacement, and were yet to build the capital necessary to provide substantive support for other family members. Researchers Suvendrini Perera and Joseph Pugliese noted that some migrant communities influencing welfare dependency amongst different Australian migrants groups, including the Vietnamese, see also Siew-Ean Khoo, ‘Correlates of Welfare Dependency Among Immigrants in Australia’, International Migration Review 28, no.1 (1994): pp68-92.

The payments included under this proposal included: an allowance for carers of people with disabilities; a disability support payment; widow allowance; jobsearch allowance; sickness benefit paid to people who required assistance to pay bills while they recovered from an illness; maternity allowance; and child disability allowance, which typically helped parents to purchase treatment and equipment for their child. The The Honourable Philip Ruddock, Liberal Party, House Hansard, 23/05/1996 p1311.

See Luke Buckmaster, ‘Australian Government Assistance to Refugee: fact versus fiction’, Background Note for Parliament of Australia, Canberra, Department of Parliamentary Services, 28 September 2012 for analysis and clarification of the assistance refugees and humanitarian entrants have historically and generally continue to be eligible.

(such as the Vietnamese) were particularly hard hit by the restriction on access to welfare support as they typically ‘(did) not have the savings to survive a two-year period’.  

In advocating for these changes to the family reunion program, the Coalition emphasised its role as a government elected to act to protect and prioritise the interests of Australian taxpayers, and depicted migrants as having an unquenchable thirst for Australian social and economic resources. Echoing a sentiment also expressed under the Labor Government, migrants were portrayed as having an insatiable appetite for the valuable and hard-won resources of the Australian nation. Migrants were categorised as people undeserving of the Coalition government’s support: their lack of self-sufficiency and need for assistance rendered them undesirable and unworthy of investment. No acknowledgement was made that many migrants had in fact lived and paid taxes in Australia for several years. This point was made by Labor MP Robert Brown during the debate on extending the waiting period to two years for welfare support on 30 May 1996. Brown commented:

> The vast majority of newly arrived migrants and descendants of migrants have made an enormously important contribution to the development and the diversity of Australia and to the strength of the Australian economy and the national community for the past 50 years, which is of great credit to them.

Nevertheless, migrants seeking access to welfare seemed to sit outside the version of Australian society that the Coalition represented; migrants, they argued, were greedy and wanted a piece of the welfare pie, to which they had not contributed.

Ruddock’s response to a proposal made by the Opposition regarding the two-year moratorium on welfare payments illustrates this point. The Opposition suggested it be permissible for

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24 Minister West framed the Orderly Departure Program as necessary to ‘control’ the influx of Vietnamese refugees in the early 1980s, while Minister Hand introduced measures to contain refugees depicted as ‘devious’ and manipulative’ in relation to their regard for Australian border controls. See pages 15, 38-39 in the previous chapter.


migrants to stay in their home countries (or any other country) during the two year period they would not be able to access welfare support in Australia. This would avoid the situation where new migrants would reside in Australia without support from the welfare system, even though it might be needed. Ruddock angrily denounced this proposal on the basis that this would enable new migrants to ‘immediately take benefits without having contributed in any form whatsoever to work or the tax system’. The proposal was particularly galling to Ruddock in that it was suggested that it apply to people who had been assessed as having skills or qualifications that were useful to Australia. The family reunion program was implicated in this criticism, as concessional entry arrangements allowed people to be sponsored to Australia on the basis that they had family residing in Australia, and they had relevant skills that could be beneficial to the Australian workplace.

The Opposition’s proposal would have enabled concessional family members to access welfare two years after their application to migrate had been accepted by Australia, even if they had continued to live overseas for this period. Ruddock argued that this cohort of people was even less deserving of government assistance given their utility to Australia was part of the reason for their entry:

The opposition is seeking for Australian taxpayers to support through our benefits system people who are seeking to come to Australia on the basis that they are able to contribute positively to our economy, to essentially our way of life.

Framing concessional family migrants as capable of contributing to Australia but preferring to rely on taxpayers cast these migrants in a particularly negative light. Without interrogating why concessional migrants had a high propensity to access welfare, Ruddock implied that greed and laziness, rather than need and desperation, founded applications for government support made by this group. Contextualising the entry of concessional family migrants as partly because of

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27 The Honourable Philip Ruddock, Liberal Party, House Hansard, 30/05/1996 p1820.

28 People could apply for a concessional visa through the family reunion program if they were the sibling, niece or nephew, non-dependent child or working-aged parent of an Australian resident. While concessional family reunion migrants were screened for age and skills, their English language skills were not, which contributed to higher levels of unemployment for some migrant groups. See Birrell, ‘Immigration Reform in Australia’, p13.

29 The Honourable Philip Ruddock, Liberal Party, House Hansard, 30/05/1996, p1820.

30 Ruddock’s inferences that migrants were lazy and comfortable with relying on welfare and therefore ‘outside the nation’ is in line with the research complied by Sheila Shaver, on welfare reform and changing conceptions of social and economic citizenship. Shaver noted that Australia, like many Western nations, increasingly adhered to the concept of an ‘active society’ developed by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), where people were encouraged to strive to improve their own circumstances, rather than rely on government support as a solution. People who did not actively try to improve their situation (or were constructed as too lazy to do so), were increasingly depicted as undeserving of membership to the Australian nation. See Sheila Shave ‘Australian Welfare Reform: From Citizenship to Supervision’ in Social Policy and Administration 36 no. 4 (2002): p336; D. Kalisch ‘The active society’, Social Security Journal (August 1991): pp3-9.
their capacity to ‘contribute positively to our economy, to essentially our way of life’ also reinforced the idea that the Australian way of life did not involve failing to exhibit self-sufficiency. Rather, the Australian lifestyle, which the Coalition sought to protect and promote, involved paying taxes and playing a role in the growth of the economy. Reducing access to welfare was justified in this example through an explanation of what it meant to be Australian.

Following an accusation by a member of the Opposition in parliament that the Coalition’s proposal was solely about cost cutting, Ruddock qualified his argument in support of the policy change, as only targeting dishonest concessional family reunion migrants:

It is the government’s view, and the view of our advisers, that this approach...will have an impact upon the numbers of people entering the country through the family reunion stream who are not bona fide, whose intention is to come here and be supported through our welfare system rather than supporting themselves through their own skills and capacities or through the support that has been promised by relatives here.  

In a clear example of symbolic racism, a number of concessional family reunion migrants were ‘othered’ in political discourse through the inference that they had the ability to be self-sufficient, but elected not to be.

In early 1997, the Senate agreed to the moratorium on some payments, such as the carer pensions and partner allowance, but maintained that others, such as maternity allowance and the minimum rate family payment, should not be subjected to a two-year waiting period. The Opposition (in addition to representatives from the minor parties and independent Senators) argued that to allow this limitation on the package of welfare benefits initially proposed would be ‘socially divisive and would hit the weakest members of the Australian community’, and it also demonstrated little sympathy for the Government’s contention that financial responsibility

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31 The Honourable Philip Ruddock, Liberal Party, House Hansard, 30/05/1996 p1824.
32 As noted earlier, Augoustinos, et al describe modern or symbolic racism as distinct from ‘traditional’ racism, where the cultural background or ethnicity of migrants is described in ways which infer inferiority, to explanations of how migrants violate the norms, values and practices of the mainstream society. See ‘Accusations and denials of racism: managing moral accountability in public discourse’, Discourse and Society 21, no. 3 (2010): pp251-56
33 The concessional visa category within the family reunion program was renamed the ‘Skilled-Australian Linked category’ and formally became part of the skilled migration program in 1997. The category enabled Australian residents to sponsor siblings, nephews or nieces, non-dependent children or working aged parents subject to them meeting a points’ test that assessed skills, qualifications, English language skills and age.
34 The Honourable Philip Ruddock, Liberal Party, House Hansard, 13/02/1997 p893.
for new migrants should fall to the sponsor, rather than Australian taxpayers.\textsuperscript{35} However, despite this disagreement, almost all of the welfare payments included in the Government’s plan were passed through the Senate. The support of two Independent Senators was negotiated, and this was ultimately responsible for migrants enduring a two-year moratorium on the majority of welfare support previously available.\textsuperscript{36} Toni Buti, a legal academic who became a member of parliament for the Labor Party, commented: ‘For the first time, Australia’s policy is to allow a particular group of legal residents to starve or beg rather than to grant them any form of social security’.\textsuperscript{37}

\textit{Creating Accountable Sponsors}

For the limitations on accessing welfare support to be effective in creating savings for the government, the Coalition recognised that significant changes were also required to sponsorship arrangements. If the welfare system was not available as a form of support, assistance had to be found elsewhere. Without any kind of support new migrants could ultimately fail to develop any of the skills or knowledge required to settle successfully in Australia. In the worst cases, new migrants could end up homeless or in hospital emergency wards if no safety net existed. The sponsorship system required attention if this was to be avoided.

Sponsors entered a contractual agreement, termed an ‘Assurance of Support’, with the Australian Government to provide all financial support for the family member in their care for

\textsuperscript{35} Birrell, \textit{Immigration Reform in Australia}, p16. The implications of the two year restriction on some welfare payments will be explored in following chapters.

\textsuperscript{36} One payment, termed the ‘Additional Family Payment’, was exempted from the two year moratorium. This payment was provided to families on very low incomes. Analysis of recipients of this payment during the late 1990s revealed approximately 40 per cent of Australian children aged 0-15 years lived in families that received this payment. Robert Birrell Chris Maher and Virginia Rapson linked this extraordinarily high rate of welfare dependency to the decline in employment in the manufacturing industry and shifts in demographics. Unfortunately this analysis does not extend to viewing the data by ethnicity, but the following sources indicate Vietnamese workers frequently found employment in the manufacturing industry, and so were disproportionately affected by a downturn in this area. Access to the Additional Family Payment was particularly important for Vietnamese families during the late 1990s. See Robert Birrell et al., ‘Welfare dependence in Australia’, \textit{People and Place} 5, no.2 (1997): pp68-77; W. McLennan \textit{Australian Social Trends 1998}, ABS, pp107-110; Victorian Multicultural Commission ‘Victorian Community Profiles 2006 Viet Nam – Born, Melbourne’, Melbourne, Victorian Multicultural Commission, 2007, p25-8.

\textsuperscript{37} Toni Buti (ed) \textit{After the Removal} (Perth: Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia), 1996, p23.
a period of time. Under the previous Labor Government this period was two years and was predominantly only required for residents sponsoring elderly parents. In reality, newly arrived migrants would sometimes make successful claims for welfare assistance before their residency period was completed for reasons including unemployment of their sponsor and/or a breakdown in the relationship. The Coalition Government wanted to reduce the likelihood of this occurring by strengthening the obligation sponsors had to provide for their new family member. Under Ruddock, an Assurance of Support was required by sponsors of all family members, including spouses and fiancés, and a prepaid bond of several thousand dollars had to be provided.

Ruddock framed these policy changes as stemming from the disrespect some sponsors exhibited towards Australian migration procedures, when he described in Parliament ‘unscrupulous sponsors’, who reneged on their ‘promise [to prevent their relatives from] becom[ing] a burden on Australian taxpayers’. Broadening the requirement for an Assurance of Support and prepaid bonds, Ruddock explained, was designed to ensure that ‘those who have accepted the obligation to support their relatives when they first arrive are made to accept that obligation and to repay any benefits that are paid to their relatives’. Sponsors were cast as unreliable and dishonest, as depending upon the integrity of the Australian government to pick-up the responsibility for care of their relatives when they ceased to do so. In February 1997, Ruddock stated:

it has been acknowledged over a long time… not all sponsors meet their obligations. Some people sponsor where they have no capacity to meet their obligations…we should not encourage people who

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38 Welfare payments are administered in Australia through the agency Centrelink, which is run by the Federal Government. Centrelink is under the auspice of the Minister for Social Services, not the Minister for Immigration. Communication and transparency between Centrelink and the Department of Immigration has varied in its effectiveness over the years, and it is likely that this is reason why migrants have frequently been able to make successful claims for welfare assistance, even if they have not fulfilled the residency requirements, of living in Australia for a specified period of time. The system depends on migrants disclosing to Centrelink their circumstances, if it is not possible to obtain this information from the Department of Immigration. If migrants fail to do so, they may receive payments they are not entitled to receive. Centrelink has improved over time at recovering money received by people (not just migrants) who were not entitled to particular payments.

39 Birrell, however, commented that extending the assurance of support to spouses and fiancés had limited success in recovering costs incurred when welfare was claimed within the two year period. An accompanying bond to be paid when the sponsorship was made did not have to be paid by the actual sponsor and there was no improvement in the efforts to establish whether sponsors really had the capacity to support the new family member. Birrell, Immigration Reform in Australia, p8-9.

40 The Honourable Philip Ruddock, Liberal Party, House Hansard, 30/05/1996, p1820.

have no capacity to continue sponsorship when we know that when the relative comes they are not going to be able to meet the obligation.\textsuperscript{42}

Failing to fulfil the obligations inherent in sponsorship of family members was frequently described in parliament as an example of a lack of moral integrity. Ruddock rarely included analysis of research conclusions into why particular patterns, such as unrealised sponsorship obligations, occurred. Instead, overtly hostile observations on the character of the sponsors were offered, with problems with the family reunion program primarily portrayed in parliament as a consequence of the migrants in question embracing practices and values abhorrent to Australian taxpayers.\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Real} Australians, it was clearly implied, would fulfil their obligations to support family members; whereas allowing the government to step in to make welfare payments to family members was not the act of a real Australian. Thus family reunion migrants were seen to affront the social and ethical values that supposedly underpinned Australian society. Narratives of deception and fraudulency were employed to describe the strategies used by migrants to obtain government assistance as part of this agenda.

### Restricting Entry: Capping Family Visas

Following the changes made to the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Newly Arrived Resident’s Waiting periods and Other Measures), the Coalition moved to investigate the practice of ‘capping’ different visa categories as another method of containing the family reunion program.\textsuperscript{44} This involved placing a limit on the number of visas granted in any one year, and then referring the remaining applicants to the following year’s quota. Legislation inherited from the Labor Government only enabled the Coalition to cap some visa categories; visas for dependent children, elderly parents and spouses were excluded from those governments were able to limit.

\textsuperscript{42} The Honourable Philip Ruddock, Liberal Party, House Hansard, 13/02/1997 p895.


\textsuperscript{44} The ability to cap, or cease to issue any more visas in particular categories once a limit had been reached, was introduced in 1989, when the then Minister for Immigration, Senator Robert Ray, instituted a revision of the Migration Act.
The Coalition sought to extend this power to cap all visa categories in the family reunion program, including the spouse category, which was identified as urgently requiring regulation. Broadening government authority to curb numbers in this category was framed as necessary to counter the exploitation of spouse sponsorship that was occurring: migrants were depicted as exploiting the process for the purpose of gaining permanent residency. As Ruddock noted in September 1996:

We have seen a situation develop which is out of control in relation to the spouse numbers, where there have been significant numbers of people rorting the system. I do not like to use those sorts of terms because it only brings the whole of the immigration program into disrepute… I know that many of my colleagues have had complaints, as I have, from people who find that after they have sponsored a partner into Australia they leave them almost immediately that they have been granted permanent residency.\(^{45}\)

The irony of the Coalition’s election promise of supporting families was again replayed in the media when journalist Margo Kingston noted that the policy proposal contradicted ‘the Coalition’s strong pro-family rhetoric’.\(^{46}\) Kingston quoted Duncan Kerr, a spokesman on immigration for the Labor Party, who suggested that capping spouse visas was tantamount to ‘social engineering’, noting that some families could be forced to live across separate countries for many years before reuniting.

The Coalition had limited success in pursuing broadened powers to cap particular categories: while visas for aged parents succumbed to the proposal, spouse and dependent children remained exempted.\(^{47}\) The government was pleased to be able to restrict the number of parent visas granted under the family reunion scheme, however, as this group had been identified as costly.\(^{48}\) Ruddock announced a cap of 1,000 places for parents as sponsored migrants in September 1997, and implored parliament to accept this as necessary for the greater good: ‘We understand that many people would like to have their parents migrate to Australia, but it needs to be understood that parents impose significant costs upon the whole of the community.’\(^{49}\) Migrant community groups were devastated and highlighted the restrictions on parents as an indication that the Coalition’s election pledge to govern ‘For All of Us’ was sorely inaccurate.

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\(^{47}\) Birrell, Immigration Reform in Australia, p39.


Mr Paul Nicolaou, the then President of the Ethnic Communities’ Council of NSW, noted that the cap would result in waiting periods of ten years and stated: ‘the harsh reality is that some of those parents waiting in the queue could die before they reach Australia’.

A key strategy employed by Ruddock to support the passage of policy reforms that targeted family reunion, including capping, was to continually emphasise the number of migrants entering Australia through this program. The undesirability of family reunion migrants was framed as a consequence of the sheer quantity of people who reunited with family in Australia. The growth of the overall immigration program and each visa category was constantly referred to in parliament. In September 1996 Ruddock emphasised:

the number of people entering Australia as either spouse or de facto partner of an Australian resident or citizen rose by almost 33 per cent—from 21,000 to 27,790 (from 1994-1995)… The preferential family category also includes preferential places for parents. The number there rose from 5,000 to almost 9,000—an increase of 74 per cent—in one year.

While Vietnamese family reunion migrants were not directly included in these references, there are strong parallels to how Indochinese refugees were described during the early Labor Government years and Ruddock’s explanations of why the family reunion program needed to be contained. The previous chapter noted the use of water metaphors in relation to Vietnamese boat arrivals by the then Minister for Immigration, Stewart West:

Orderly departure is better than disorderly departure. Let us turn the refugee tap down, discourage the boat people from leaving. We will have a family reunion base to the policy here in Australia, call it orderly departure and turn up the wick on family reunion. That is what we have done for the Vietnamese.

Faced with the first large-scale migration of Asian migrants since the end of the White Australia policy, in 1983 the Labor Government presented the family reunion program as a solution to the number of refugees desperate to enter Australia. Describing the arrival of refugees as occurring through a ‘tap’ (which could, of course, be turned off) helped to convince other politicians unsure about the family reunion program. It emphasised that this would be a systematic and controlled method of permitting entry to Australia. Ruddock’s references to the number of family reunion migrants, in terms of both annual increase and percentages, aided the creation of a perception that this method was now out of control as a means through which

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people could enter Australia. Ruddock described the family reunion program on several occasions as unbalanced and as being driven by interests that were not aligned with those of Australian taxpayers. In October 1996, for example, he told the House:

Members will recall that in 1995-96, Labor allowed the immigration program to get seriously out of control and out of balance. The family stream had grown by 27 per cent in 1995-96. It had come to represent almost 70 per cent of the migration program. The spouse category had grown by 32 per cent, and the number of parents had increased by 74 per cent alone. I have already announced a series of measures to ensure greater integrity in the family stream of the migration program. These measures are designed to bring the family stream back under control.53

The emphasis on the volume of migrants to come to Australia through the family reunion program has interesting connections to historical anxieties surrounding Australia’s proximity to Asia. Fears of being ‘swamped by Asians’ founded the impetus for Australian Federation, which was believed to provide a stronger defence against advancing armies from the north. Ruddock may not have explicitly mentioned the cultural background of family reunion migrants, but the Coalition’s reforms stemmed from analysis of the program as it operated under Labor, when the dominant groups to reunite in Australia were from parts of Asia, of which Vietnamese families were the most visible.

In addition to being numerous and out of control, family reunion migrants were presented as having different and inferior conceptions of family. Ruddock explained the need for a two-year probationary period before permanent residency applications could be made by all spouses and fiancés as necessary because some family reunion migrants saw marriage or betrothal as a means to gain residency in Australia. The symbolic racism employed by Ruddock to justify policy changes included framing family reunion migrants as willing to view this relationship as short, transactional and purposeful.54 The Coalition pitted itself as the guardian of Australian values; honesty and respect for family relationships was central to these behaviours, and family reunion migrants were not adhering to the code. Ruddock explained to parliament:

A key feature of migration entitlements based upon relationships must be that those involved have a long-term commitment to each other. Short term or transitory relationships should not provide non-Australians with the lifelong right to live in Australia. 55

54 The same suite of policy changes included measures to curtail serial sponsorships and a more rigorous assessment procedure for visa applicants be enforced. See Michael Millett, ‘Migration shake-up hits families’, Sydney Morning Herald, 3 July 1996.
Marriages between people who had not known each other for as long a period of time as Ruddock thought appropriate were also considered disingenuous.⁵⁶ Ruddock underlined to parliament why these same people who were willing to abuse immigration procedures for residency purposes should also be denied citizenship, if this was later applied for:

the government is... determined that the value of Australian citizenship should not be undermined by allowing the grant of citizenship... where it has been granted as a result of fraud or deception... People should not be able to hide behind Australian citizenship which was obtained following fraud. To allow them to do so weakens the meaning and value of Australian citizenship.⁵⁷

Capping family reunion visa entries, therefore, was also portrayed as a means of safeguarding ‘the meaning and value’ of Australian citizenship. It is also pertinent to note that, by the time Ruddock made this statement, it resonated in a new populist context created by the speech made one month earlier of a newly elected Senator.

Pauline Hanson: Traditional Versus Modern Racism

The strategies employed by Ruddock to justify drastic reforms to the family reunion program provide an interesting contrast to the views on Asian migration presented by Independent Member of Parliament, Pauline Hanson.⁵⁸ Hanson had been a candidate for the Liberal Party, but was disendorsed when she made some controversial comments regarding welfare assistance for Indigenous Australians in the lead up to the 1996 election. She successfully campaigned as

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⁵⁶ A member of the opposition, The Honourable Anthony Albanese, complained in parliament that viewing relationship where the people involved had only known each other for a short period of time as bogus was culturally insensitive: ‘The minister’s crackdown on so-called sham relationships in particular has targeted ethnic groups. In many groups in the community, arranged or partly arranged marriages are culturally appropriate. As a result, people may marry each other in good faith, but without knowing a great deal about one another. It so happens that the ethnic groups where this is most common are from Asia and the Middle East. It is true that sometimes these couples do now know each other as well as those in an Anglo or Irish relationship in Australia. It is true that there are cultural differences there. This does not mean, however, that their marriages are fake’ The Honourable Anthony Albanese, Australian Labor Party, House Hansard, 13/12/1996 p8674.


an Independent following this incident and won the seat of Oxley in Queensland. Hanson’s controversial and now infamous maiden speech in parliament outlined her view that:

we are in danger of being swamped by Asians. Between 1984 and 1995, 40 per cent of all migrants coming into this country were of Asian origin. They have their own culture and religion, form ghettos and do not assimilate. Of course, I will be called racist but, if I can invite whom I want into my home, then I should have the right to have a say in who comes into my country. A truly multicultural country can never be strong or united. 

For several reasons, Pauline Hanson’s political career was relatively short lived, and this excerpt from her maiden speech reveals a communication style more akin to the lexicon of ‘traditional’ racism, where a different culture, religion or ethnicity is openly avowed as problematic. Ruddock limits his criticisms to issues within the family reunion program and makes few, if any, direct references to the cultural background of the migrants entering Australia through this suite of visas. There are, however, clear parallels between the comments made by both politicians. Hanson referred to her fear of being ‘swamped by Asians’—a phrase and sentiment that has made many appearances in Australian political history. Ruddock made numerous references to the number and volume of family reunion migrants; the program was too large and out-of-control for comfort. The quantity of migrants entering Australia was too high for both Hanson and Ruddock. While Hanson makes direct reference to the cultural background of those migrants she believes are too numerous, Ruddock describes the undesirable behaviours displayed by family reunion migrants: most notably, their lack of self-sufficiency and inferior family values. The discomfort both Hanson and Ruddock express towards migration relates to the period under the Labor Government when it was predominantly Asian and Vietnamese and within the family reunion category. The difference in the ways in which the prejudice of Hanson and Ruddock is articulated illustrates the argument made by Liu and Mills, who stated that ‘(r)ather than express racism as categorical dislike, the modern racist couches his or her dislike through the premise that the minority person or group has done something to warrant being disliked’. Hanson expressed a straightforward hostility towards Asian migrants, while the Coalition government, through

59 Pauline Hanson, Independent, House Hansard, 10/09/1996, np.
60 For a review of Hanson’s career, see A. Martin-Madarasz and A. Horvath, The Hanson phenomenon or a desperate outcry of a nation (St Mary’s: Horvath Books, 1998); and Pauline Hanson, Untamed and unashamed: time to explain (Docklands: JoJo Publishing, 2007).
61 See, for example, Ghassan Hage’s discussion of the way in which conservative political movements such as that led by Pauline Hanson, was in response to a perceived loss of privilege held by white people. Ghassan Hage, “‘Asia’, Hansonism and the discourse of white decline’, Inter-Asia Cultural Studies 1, no.1 (2000): pp85-97.
Ruddock, merely complained that their migration was out-of-control, and involved a too-heavy dependence on welfare, which was obtained dishonestly and was undeserved.

The nature of Hanson’s comments in this speech and others made during her political career provided the Coalition with an opportunity to present views that appeared more moderate and considered. One example is the response Ruddock gave to a query regarding the claim that Asian migrants tend to form ghettos rather than live in dispersed locations. In this situation, Ruddock referred to an analysis of current Census data by well-known and respected researcher of Vietnamese migration, Nancy Viviani:

The research shatters that myth… People who use the word ‘Asians’ very often fail to recognise that Asians are not a homogenous mass of people all from the same culture and origins. They have very different cultures and different histories… The word ‘ghetto’ is often an emotive word that is used to suggest that people are living in areas which might be full of poverty where sometimes the housing is very inadequate… Nancy Viviani’s comments have shown that Vietnamese are the only group of Asians who have tended to concentrate in two limited areas—in Springvale in Melbourne and in Fairfield in Sydney. The data tends to show that people from other Asian countries do not tend to congregate in particular areas at all.63

In this speech Ruddock spoke to much of the hysteria and fear that historically has surrounded Asian migration. The myth of ‘Asian hordes’ was addressed in the reminder that ‘Asia’ is comprised of many countries, several of which have little interest in invading Australia. Incorporating an analysis of Census data was also an effective method to employ in challenging ideas that are based on stereotypes and profiling. Numbers are far less emotive than stories and photos in newspapers, which are more open to individual interpretation and elaboration. In fact, migration from parts of Asia climbed during the Coalition’s governance, but predominantly from those nations where English language skills were encouraged and migrants could come to Australia with skills and qualifications that were useful to the Australian economy.64

Pauline Hanson provided other opportunities for the Coalition to publicly reinforce the extent to which its immigration program aligned with the interests of Australians. In July 1998 Hanson’s political party One Nation released its plan for immigration and population strategy.65

63 The Honourable Philip Ruddock, Liberal Party, House Hansard, 27/10/1997 p9827. The publication Ruddock refers to is: Nancy Viviani, ‘Vietnamese concentrations: a response’, People and Place 4, no.2 (1996): pp20-3. Viviani’s works have been extensively relied upon in this thesis, as her work was ground-breaking in terms of educating the Australian population on the experiences of Vietnamese refugees and family reunion migrants.

64 ABS, Country of Birth (Region) of Person by Year of Arrival in Australia, Census 2006.

The strategy recommended drastically cutting skilled migration, which was, according to One Nation, undermining the efforts of ordinary Australians to find employment. Ruddock’s response in parliament included reference to why skilled migrants were preferable to family reunion migrants, who were often guilty of exploiting the migration process:

Unlike those who come through the family reunion program—particularly as we saw in the past when it was up to 70 per cent and, unfortunately, they were very often manipulating entry—these migrants are the ones who create jobs and very significant economic benefits.

What is the Once Nation Party proposing? They are proposing to rebalance the program against skilled migration. They are going to reduce it to 33 per cent of the program. They are going to eliminate entirely those two categories which have brought such substantial economic benefits... if you reduce the skilled migration numbers... and enhance the family reunion program, you are in fact deskilling Australia, and the consequences for us in terms of our ability to compete in international markets and our ability to come much more engaged in world terms is to tie a hand behind our back and leave us exposed.66

In perhaps one of harshest examples of denigrating family reunion migrants, Ruddock describes the family migration program as actually in opposition to the interests of Australia. The intake of family reunion migrants is posited as having a negative effect on Australian engagement on the global stage and as stalling the growth of the Australian economy. The intersection between the family reunion program and Australian national identity is explained to parliament as only benefitting the migrants wishing to enter the country; the broader Australian community would only experience stagnation and disadvantage.

**The Fallout: Consequences of the 1996 Reforms**

The implications of reforms to welfare, sponsorship arrangements and capping visa categories started to become apparent in 1999. Approximately 16,000 fewer visas were issued in 1997-98 in the preferential (spouses, finances, parents, and dependent children) visa categories of the family reunion program than in 1995-96. Ruddock framed this decline as an indication that the Government had succeeded in excluding dishonest applicants. The fall in application rates for spouse visas, for example, was explained as:

> an effective reduction in the extent of the manipulation. We have seen a fall off in application rates of something in the order of between 30 per cent and 40 per cent, and I suspect that that is a reflection of the fact that those people who were entering into non bona fide relationships are now not applying. I think that is the case.67

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67 The Honourable Philip Ruddock, Liberal Party, House Hansard, 17/02/1999 p3112. See also Robert Birrell and Virginia Rapson cite the high rate of divorce amongst Chinese migrants in Australia, as possible evidence of
In omitting all other justifications for the fall in application rates, Ruddock added weight to the view that the Coalition Government was correct in believing family reunion migrants were dishonest, and comfortable with exploiting the Australian immigration program. In doing this, Ruddock completed the narrative of the Coalition as custodian of Australian values of decency and honesty, and family reunion migrants as intent on subverting the extent to which these values penetrated Australian life. Ruddock was later quoted in a Sydney newspaper as declaring ‘[t]he immigration program... has been de-shammed’, revealing his belief that the Coalition was indeed a crusader for Australian national values.\(^6^8\)

**Aged Parents**

The biggest fall in numbers in the 1998-99 visa intake stemmed from the capping of the aged parent category, where only 1,000 visas were issued.\(^6^9\) This was a drastic reduction on the 7,580 issued in 1996-97. Dr Theophanous, a Labor Party MP with a strong interest in immigration and settlement issues, doggedly pursued changes made to the family reunion program in question time. In November 1999 he called Ruddock to explain and provide numerical details of changes made to the parent visa category, and to respond to the charge that ‘his current policy make(s) it impossible for families to join together, especially Australian residents wishing to bring their parents to Australia’.\(^7^0\) Ruddock responded that parent visas would be capped at 500 for the 1999-2000 migration program and that this was consistent with the Government’s ‘strong commitment to family migration’. Ruddock argued that the Government had placed:

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\(^6^9\) Robert Birrell and Virginia Rapson provide an analysis of the implications for the Family Reunion Program in 1998-99 of the reforms introduced by the Coalition when it first came to power, in ‘The 1998-99 Immigration Program’, pp24-36. In relation to aged parents, Birrell and Rapson noted that the cap on visas did not actually deter people from continuing to apply: approximately 500 applications were made each month following the decision to cap parent visas. Thousands of visa applications with the application fee of approximately $1000, continued to be submitted by parents wishing to be reunited with family in Australia. See Andrew Clennell, ‘Would-be migrants pay $20m, but few will make it’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 June 2000.

\(^7^0\) The Honourable Andrew Theophanous, Australian Labor Party, 24/11/1999 p12608.
processing priorities for visa applications in the Family Stream [on] immediate family members, such as dependent children [including children for adoption and orphan relatives], spouses, fiancés and interdependent partners of sponsors and nominators in Australia.\textsuperscript{71}

The irony of this statement in the context of the many previous references to fraudulent relationships is clear. The Coalition was committed to permitting the migration of \textit{some} families, when it had been estimated that members were not likely to be a significant economic drain on the country.

The Coalition’s justification for lowering the parent visa cap to 500 for the 1999-2000 migration intake allocations, despite the waiting list hovering around 20,000, was again that it would reduce costs.\textsuperscript{72} Any positive contribution parents may make to their families, communities or Australia was again downplayed or ignored. Ruddock’s colleagues provided opportunities for the immigration minister to elaborate the costs migrants on parent visas incurred. In March 2000, Member for Parramatta Ross Cameron asked Ruddock to explain ‘the political and financial constraints operating on the number of parents we can allow to permanently migrate to Australia [and] what would be the consequences of an immediate and significant increase in the size of the parent migration program’.\textsuperscript{73} Ruddock’s reply involved a detailed and extensive analysis of the financial outlay involved in the settlement of migrants on parent visas:

\begin{quote}
[T]he potential health costs that are associated for a person over 65 years of age are of the order of \$6,000 per year—and that includes their hospital, pharmaceutical, dental and allied health and nursing home care—and when you know that such a person may live in Australia for up to 20 years, you can see it represents a cost to the Australian community for a lifetime of something of the order of \$120,000 each. For the first two years after arrival a welfare bond cost was recoverable, and data shows that very few parents access special benefits in that time. But what it does show is that two years after arrival, and for up to 10 years after arrival, when costs are not recoverable, the special benefits are accessed in lieu of the age pension. At about \$8,500 for a single person, based on eight years of use, it represents a total cost per person of \$68,000. When you know that after 10 years residency they could also access an age pension, based on eight years of use, it represents another \$95,000 in lifetime costs.\textsuperscript{74}
\end{quote}

Unfortunately for the families involved, the Coalition Government did not appreciate the myriad of ways elderly parents supported their children and grandchildren in the process of adapting to a new life in Australia. The ‘Australian community’ referred to by Ruddock was comprised of those Australians who were unlikely to want to sponsor an elderly parent.

\textsuperscript{71} The Honourable Philip Ruddock, Liberal Party, House Hansard, 24/11/1999 p12608.
\textsuperscript{72} Lauren Martin and Josh Marsh, ‘Protest as migrant intake is raised to 70,000 new faces next year’, \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 30 April 1999.
\textsuperscript{73} The Honourable Ross Cameron, Liberal Party, House Hansard, 15/03/2000 p14767.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
Migrants who wished their parents to join them in Australia were outside this community, and were not represented by the Coalition.

Following the justification to parliament of the necessity for a cap of 500 on parent visas, Ruddock brazenly attempted to represent the Coalition as an ally of migrant families. The Coalition proposed to create a new visa category that was specifically for parents of children who had the capital to pay substantial up-front funds. Ruddock framed this proposal as a response to a strong indication from many potential sponsors of parents that they were willing to cover all costs for their parents, if only they would be allowed to reside in Australia. Ruddock promised:

4,000 additional places for aged parents on the basis that there be private health insurance for a 10-year period taken out on behalf of the aged parents before their arrival or that, if they cannot arrange such health insurance, they meet an upfront health services charge of $25,000 per person. That represents about 20 per cent of the potential cost. There would also be an increased bond of $10,000 if no benefits are accessed during that time. That is not an unreasonable request and, if people were coming to Australia and disposing of property interests, very easily obtainable.

In response to the accusation that the Coalition was intent on creating a visa for the rich, Ruddock responded: ‘We wanted to allow more parents to live in Australia, in a way which ensured a fair deal for the Australian taxpayer.’ Thus Ruddock infers in this statement that his government is representing the interests of two non-intersecting communities: migrants and Australian taxpayers. When, however, the Senate voted against the creation of the visa, Ruddock expressed in parliament his profound disappointment at the refusal of the opposition and the Democrats in the Senate to support the proposed new visa arrangements… My disappointment will be nothing in comparison to that which people who would have liked to have sponsored their parents under these arrangements will feel.

76 The Honourable Philip Ruddock, Liberal Party, House Hansard, 05/04/2000 p15285.
78 Mr Sciacca, the member for Bowman and of the ALP, when commenting on the decision of the Senate made an important inclusion into the debate, by reminding the House that many migrants considered themselves Australian, and for the purposes of sponsorship, where Australian: ‘I am pleased that the Australian Democrats have in fact agreed with Labor that the Migration Legislation Amendment (Parents and Other Measures) Bill 2000 has provided an unnecessary and unreasonable burden on Australian families. We are talking of Australian families wishing to sponsor their aged relatives under the aged category visa… The Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs always talks about the bottom dollar line, regardless of the benefits that a reasonable intake of aged parents would provide to these Australian families’. The Honourable Con Sciacca, Australian Labor Party, House Hansard, 11/10/2000 p21301.
79 The Honourable Philip Ruddock, Liberal Party, House Hansard, 11/10/2000 p21300. See Andrew Clennell, ‘Senate to veto user-pays plan for migrants’, Sydney Morning Herald, 21 June 2000. The Democrats are a small political party, which at the time of the Coalition Government, held the balance of power in the Senate, and so played a major role in the success or failure of the Government’s policy proposals.
In one of the first positive or non-critical references to the people directly affected by reforms to the family reunion program, Ruddock connected the happiness of these migrants to an outcome of a Coalition policy. For a brief moment, Ruddock implied that the Australia he represented included people wishing to sponsor family from overseas. An emotional connection was drawn between Ruddock and the migrants who were unable to benefit from the Coalition’s policy proposal.

The flexibility of this narrative, where migrants were either included or excluded from the carefully delineated community supported by the Coalition, was further evidenced in Ruddock’s acknowledgement that entrants on parent visas contributed important non-economic benefits to the families that supported them:

I have no doubt that people who are able to sponsor their parents—particularly if they are going to help with children and particularly if it enables two members of a family to be in the work force... would regard it as being very unsatisfactory that the opportunity has been removed from them.80

Despite the initial setbacks, the Coalition persisted in attempting to introduce an amended version of the proposed new parent visa.81 In December 2002 Ruddock read for the second time the Migration Legislation Amendment (Contributory Parents Migration Scheme) Bill 2002, contextualising parents as beneficial to the Australian nation, through social and economic contributions.82 Migrant families were implied to be a part of Australia that provided vague cultural benefits, in addition to real financial advantage:

Families with young children can benefit from the presence of grandparents. Australia’s cultural life is enriched by the migration of parents and grandparents. Research shows that parents bring economic assets with them. They also contribute to the economy through the consumption of goods and services and the payment of various taxes.83

The Bill was eventually agreed to on 13 February 2003, but not without further disagreement from the Opposition, which challenged the principle of positively discriminating towards wealthy migrants.84

81 The second attempt at getting this visa through parliament was made possible by a Senate ruling in October 2000 that allowed user pays principles to be applied to parent visas. See Migration Legislation Amendment (Contributory Parents Migration Scheme) Bill 2002 Bills Digest No.98 2002-03. Among the amendments, the second reading included a temporary visa option for parents attempting to migrate to Australia through this visa, which allowed them to pay the $25,000 health services charge in two instalments.
82 The Honourable Philip Ruddock, Liberal Party, House Hansard 05/12/02 p9693.
83 The Honourable Philip Ruddock, Liberal Party, House Hansard 05/12/02 p9693.
84 See for example: Mr John Murphy, Australian Labor Party, House Hansard, 12/02/2003 p11609, who stated: ‘My opposition to this bill is simply that it discriminates economically against family reunion and hence family
**Risk Factor Profiling**

In 1999, amid a public celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of Australian citizenship, the Coalition government turned its attention to ‘risk factor profiling’. Introduced by the previous government, risk factor profiling was described by Ruddock as ‘a management device constructed from objective data which simply allows decision makers to highlight those visitor applicants who must show appropriate evidence of their intention to return home’. The gathering of ‘objective data’ involved analysis of the cultural background of visa holders who had overstayed the period prescribed by the application. Lebanon, China, Turkey and Vietnam were included on a list of ‘high risk posts’, which meant consular staff were instructed to demand evidence from visa applicants from these nations that they genuinely intended to only visit Australia for a specified period of time. The symbolism of risk factor profiling against the backdrop of the anniversary of Australian citizenship was stark: heightened effort was made by the government to keep out potential migrants from Australia during a time when the values supposedly embraced by real Australians were being celebrated and defined.

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Dr Craig Emerson, Australian Labor Party, House Hansard, 12/02/03 p11692, also made the interesting and pertinent argument that by making family reunion difficult for many people, potential skilled migrants might be deterred from migrating to Australia because there would be little option to later bring over family members: ‘I know that the government has had the view that the family reunion program is a drain... But if you take it as a whole, if we are to attract truly skilled migrants in this tough competitive world, I think we do need to be more accommodating in relation to family reunion. That is my exhortation to the government: be fair, be more compassionate and take into account not only the value of elderly migrants to this country, but also the attraction of providing perspective migrants to this country with the knowledge that they would have a reasonable chance of being able to get their parents out here in later years’.

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85 Celebrations included a commemorative stamp, essay and artistic works competition for children and the conference ‘Individual, Community, Nation – 50 years of Australian Citizenship’. The Honourable Philip Ruddock, Liberal Party, House Hansard, 10/02/1999, p2346. The Australian Citizenship Council was also established to advise the government on citizenship matters. Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs Annual Report, 1998-1999, Sub-program 4.2 Citizenship.

86 The Honourable Philip Ruddock, Liberal Party, House Hansard, 17/02/1999 p3114.

87 The Honourable Philip Ruddock, Liberal Party, House Hansard, 23/03/1999 p4145.

The increased attention paid to applicants from these nations had dramatic results. When questioned by Dr Theophanous, Ruddock admitted that ‘the rejection rate for visitor visas in some countries is as high as 46 per cent, whereas the global average rejection rate was just 3 per cent in 1998’. Nonetheless, Ruddock stated he was confident in the decisions made by his department’s staff, and saw ‘no reason to initiate an inquiry into the administration of the visitor visa program as it is applied in Lebanon, Turkey, the People’s Republic of China and Vietnam’. Despite the very high rejection rate for visitor visas from people in the nations identified, Ruddock was comfortable, and indeed pleased, with the implications of this policy.

In one of the few examples where cultural background was directly referred to, the application of ‘objective data analysis’ contributed to the contention that it was not the actual ethnicity of the migrants involved that was the problem; rather, it was argued, potential migrants from these nations happen to have high rates of overstaying visas. It was the behaviour of these applicants that was the problem, not that they belonged to particular cultural groups.

Ruddock’s exceptionally long reign as Minister for Immigration ended in October 2003, when he was given the position of Attorney General, and Senator Amanda Vanstone took on the portfolio of immigration. Vanstone’s term as immigration minister was plagued with the surfacing of enormous flaws in the department’s information and data collection systems. Vanstone’s term was also dominated by Australia’s treatment of refugees: detention centres and temporary protection visas occupied much of question time. Hansard transcripts do not reveal any significant references to the family reunion program or Vietnamese migrants during the period Vanstone or her successor, Kevin Andrews, was in charge of the portfolio from 30 January 2007 to 3 December 2007. His short term involved attempts to introduce a controversial citizenship test and to rectify some problems with the skilled migration program. The Coalition’s plan to reform the family reunion program was implemented under

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89 The Honourable Philip Ruddock, Liberal Party, House Hansard, 23/03/1999 p4145.
90 The Honourable Philip Ruddock, Liberal Party, House Hansard, 23/03/1999 p4145. ABS Census data reveals a gradual drop in the number of entrants to Australia from all of these countries, from 1999 to 2001. Migrants from Vietnam were the only cohort to experience an immediate fall from 3,094 in 1998 to 2,468 in 1999. ABS 2001 Census of Population and Housing, Country of Birth by Year of Arrival.
Ruddock; and the scale of these changes in terms of impact and deviation from traditional government support for new arrivals, was to influence Ruddock’s legacy as a politician.\textsuperscript{93}

\section*{Conclusion}

The Coalition’s term in Government ended on 24 November 2007, when the Labor Party, led by Kevin Rudd, won 83 of 150 seats and therefore defeated Howard’s Coalition Government, with Howard losing his own seat of Bennelong. The Coalition had overseen eleven years of economic reform, significant changes to industrial relations, and an outlook on foreign policy that was founded on cautious engagement with Asia, while still looking to ‘traditional’ ties with the United Kingdom.

The immigration program underwent fundamental shifts during this period, including changes in structure, objectives and the migrants it targeted or prioritised. In 1996, when the Coalition first came to office, migration from Asia predominantly occurred through the refugee and humanitarian visa categories, and comprised 37 per cent of the overall immigration program. People from China, Hong Kong and Vietnam were the largest groups to arrive through this avenue. By 2006-07, migration from Asia had changed to include 13,496 from India and 12,009 from China across the permanent skilled and family migration categories.\textsuperscript{94} India and China followed the United Kingdom and New Zealand as the largest source countries for permanent migration to Australia.\textsuperscript{95} In 2006-07 the skilled stream made up 43 per cent of all settler arrivals to Australia and, in comparison, the family migration stream comprised 26 per cent.\textsuperscript{96}

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The alignment of the immigration program with Australia’s economic interests was not a new strategy when the Coalition came to power. Since Federation, the Australian Government’s had encouraged people to migrate to Australia for purposes of population growth, labour supply and to tip the cultural balance further towards the United Kingdom and away from Asia. The long-term prospects of Australian social and economic life had been linked to migration for a very long time.97

The approach adopted by Coalition, however, was unique in that it explicitly denigrated those migrants which did not obviously contribute to Australian economic development. The Coalition garnered public and political support for the reduction in the family reunion program by casting these migrants as completely outside the sphere of all that was valuable, admirable and useful to the Australian nation. Modern or symbolic racism was employed to explain why family reunion migrants were largely unacceptable to Australia, or could only be permitted entry under very specific conditions. The gradual withdrawal of government support for family migrants through the welfare system and the attempt to reinforce the role sponsors played in the settlement of new family members was a clear reflection of the Coalition’s displeasure at their presence in Australia, and the extent to which the government was willing to be involved in their adjustment to their new home. In doing so, Howard’s Coalition Government built upon the strong foundations laid by the Hawke/Keating governments, assessing potential migrants through a rationalist frame: those migrants able to live independently and productively were desirable. Those migrants who could only contribute to this agenda indirectly, by, for example, assuming responsibility for children while parents worked full time, were not worth government support.

The following chapter will examine in detail the experiences of several Vietnamese families who came to Australia during the period in question. The design of sponsorship arrangements, access to welfare support, and the capping of different visa categories are explored in terms of how family lives were shaped and confined in response to the policy decisions discussed in this and the preceding chapter. Individual and family circumstances were irrevocably changed when sponsors became obliged to support new family members with minimal government support.

97 See Andrew Markus, James Jupp and Peter McDonald, Australia’s Immigration Revolution (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2009), pp88-105.
involvement, and the identity of men, women and children were squeezed and challenged as new lines of responsibility arose from reforms to the family reunion migration.
CHAPTER FOUR

Vietnamese Family Reunion – Experiences with Sponsorship

The previous chapters explored how family reunion between Vietnamese migrants during the Hawke/Keating and Howard governments was linked in political discourse to ideas of Australian national identity. The family migration policy was variously described as an example of Australian generosity and national maturation in terms of appreciation of cultural diversity, but also through which uncontrollable floods of families would enter and deplete Australian resources. The political context behind these narratives, including new trade and diplomatic links with Asia and the recasting of the connection between British and Australian cultural identity, along with the alignment of policy with economic rationalist objectives, was revealed through the parliamentary transcripts as shaping debate on all aspects of the family reunion program. This chapter, will extend the analysis to a closer investigation of the conditions involved in coming to Australia through the family reunion program. The nuts and bolts of the policy conditions referenced in the earlier chapters will be examined in terms of how Vietnamese families attempting to settle in Australia were directly impacted by the changes made to the overall design of the program. I hope, through doing this, to rebalance this thesis’ overall analysis of Australia’s family reunion program, by contrasting the experiences of Vietnamese families with the thus far ‘top-down’ analysis.

In surveying the experiences of Vietnamese families with the family reunion program, this chapter focuses on the implications of sponsorship for both the people acting as sponsors, and the new migrants being sponsored. The relationship enabled through sponsorship arrangements was at the very heart of the family reunion program, and in many cases had the potential to shape settlement experiences more than other influences. The conditions imposed on this relationship by the Labor and Coalition governments had serious implications for the power dynamics that evolved in many Vietnamese families. The absence of personal or familial resources, stemming from the conditions associated with war, displacement and trauma, meant Vietnamese had few other options to draw upon for support. When, as detailed in earlier chapters, political attitudes towards the family reunion program favoured minimal government involvement and the increased responsibility of families, Vietnamese families and individuals
were forced to rely upon each other for settlement support. This chapter explores the implications of this increased reliance on family members and withdrawal of government support during the early years of family life in Australia.

The discussion below provides broad details of the demographics of the Vietnamese who arrived in Australia first under Prime Ministers Hawke and Keating and then the Government of Howard, noting how the first wave of families were later followed by other family members. It notes also the identity of the sponsors during each phase of government - in terms of their position in the family, gender, age and personal resources - which assists with contextualising how the processes of sponsorship were lived and managed.\(^1\) The analysis then draws upon interviews to uncover the personal toll involved in sponsoring family to Australia. I explore the reflections provided by individuals and families who lived under the conditions imposed by sponsorship, revealing how imposed dependency within families shaped early settlement experiences.

As detailed in the introduction to this thesis, the material gathered for this chapter involved conducting interviews with Vietnamese people who had either acted as sponsors for other family members, or who had been sponsored by family in Australia under the governments of Fraser, Hawke, Keating and Howard. Details of the interviewees are in Appendix 2. Many of the original sponsors entered Australia as refugees during the early exodus from Vietnam in the mid 1970s to early 1980s. The interview questions (see Appendix 3) concerned the processes and stages involved in sponsoring family to Australia, the assistance that was provided to newly arrived migrants, and the difficulties associated with coming to Australia through this channel. The responses provide fascinating insights into how Vietnamese families adapted to the design of sponsorship arrangements through transformed gender roles, new dynamics between adult children and their siblings, and revised lines of responsibility between children and parents of all ages. New social patterns also emerged. Young men who had particularly struggled with life in Australia as either first or second generation migrants sought

\(^1\) Nancy Viviani makes the point that ‘who you are and when you came matters in living in Australia’ in her overview of the different ‘waves’ of Vietnamese migration to Australia, and surmises that each grouping ‘corresponded to events in Vietnam that were the specific causes of departure, but... were also influenced by international and national factors influencing resettlement policies.’ See Nancy Viviani, *The Indochinese in Australia 1975-1995: from burnt boats to barbeques* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996), p103.
out and sponsored wives from Vietnam, creating a new wave of Vietnamese migration that was based on a cultural preference for life partners and any children that might be conceived.

While every effort was made to gather interview material that would illuminate key policy decisions in the family migration program during this period, this was not always possible. The analysis below is weighted towards experiences of sponsorship during the Howard era of government (which as detailed in the previous chapter) built upon approaches developed under Hawke and Keating, but involved harsher interpretations of welfare restrictions and increased responsibility for sponsors of new family members. The implications of these and other measures for many Vietnamese families were profound: some people found limited government support drove them to seek employment quickly, while others, found themselves without any kind of safety net and thus struggled during their early years in Australia.

The Sponsorship Policy in Brief

The broad policy of sponsorship has the effect of creating a formal link between the well-being of new migrants and the abilities and resources of migrants already residing in Australia. While the Australian state enables the entry of new migrants, family members already residing in Australia are assigned the responsibility for managing all the support and guidance their family member may need during the first few years of life in Australia. The well-being and early settlement experiences of people who enter Australia through the family migration program are intimately tied to the resources, abilities and intentions of their sponsor.

The previously mentioned lack of formal immigration procedures before 1989 complicated the process of compiling accurate details of how sponsorship of relatives occurred. Ruth Frieze, a sociologist in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Melbourne during the 1980s, provided a broad overview of the sponsorship process in a longitudinal study of Indochinese families who arrived in Melbourne in 1981, which outlined the following key stages:
Sponsors lodge applications to sponsor relatives in Vietnam with the Department of Immigration in the multiple offices situated in each Australian state;

When the state offices approve the applications, the paperwork is then sent to the central office in Canberra;

From Canberra, the lists of family members to be sponsored to Australia are sent to Vietnam;

Sponsors are required during this stage to send a letter of ‘introduction’ to their family member in Vietnam;

The family in Vietnam then take this letter of introduction to the relevant Vietnamese authorities;

The Vietnamese authorities issue exit permit lists to the Australian government; and

Australian immigration officers interview relatives in Ho Chi Minh City to see if they meet selection criteria (criteria only really available to immigration officials, and not people actually wishing to leave Vietnam and enter Australia).²

Frieze noted that also that an additional complication in this extensive list of stages was the fact that Australia immigration officials in Ho Chi Minh City had very limited access to interview rooms to assess each applicant. The availability of these spaces every six to eight weeks meant the Australian Government was powerless to hasten a slow process, and in 1984 had in excess of 30,000 applications waiting assessment for sponsorship for family in Vietnam.³

Nevertheless, many families have come to Australia and established happy, successful lives through this program. The family migration program enables people to live in a new homeland with or near people they love, while they perhaps pursue qualifications, or develop other skills that will allow them to live independently. As discussed in earlier chapters, the Australian governments of Hawke, Keating and Howard all distanced themselves from providing the support new family members may need. The responsibility for this support has increasingly

³ Ibid., p94.
become that of the family already residing in Australia. This can be problematic when sponsors are themselves unaware of services and supports.  

In this model, families of new migrants are expected to provide a wide range of assistance, most importantly the basic needs of housing, food and clothes, as well as an orientation to other services available. During the period covered by this thesis, governments progressively withdrew settlement support and non-government organisations attempted to fill this gap, with the provision of employment and education advice, family and health services. But sponsors had to be cognisant of these services before they could assist new family members to access them, and this was not always the case. Vietnamese families, who did not always have sufficient English language skills, could be particularly disadvantaged. Peter Waxman, a demographer at the University of Technology in Sydney, found the following reasons were also behind difficulties accessing services:

Distrust of government agencies, minimal self-confidence, monolingualism of service sector, cultural issues...shortage of interpreters and bilingual speakers, lack of knowledge of how the services operate, location of services...clients’ concerns over costs...(and the) tendency of client groups to rely on their families and the informal support network for provision of advice and assistance.[my emphasis]

Waxman concludes with the observation that ‘there is an apparent need to better educate sponsors on current availability and access criteria for all settlement services’.  

As detailed in earlier chapters, many Vietnamese families reuniting in Australia through the family migration program have refugee backgrounds. Particularly in the early 1980s and 1990s, sponsorship between Vietnamese family members involved high rates of Vietnamese people who initially arrived in Australia as a refugee sponsoring family who were residing in refugee

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4 Studies of refugee’s and other migrants’ awareness of settlement support services, such as that by Peter Waxman, found sponsors were often unable to provide sufficient settlement support because they were unaware themselves of what was available. This was attributed to sponsors themselves originally being refugees. See Peter Waxman, ‘Service Provision and the Needs of Newly Arrived Refugees in Sydney, Australia: A Descriptive Analysis’, *International Migration Review* 32, no.3 (1998): pp761–777; James Jupp et al., *Settlement Needs of Newly Arrived Ethnic Groups* (Canberra: Bureau of Immigration Research, 1991).

5 Examples of organisations that have offered new migrants settlement support for several decades include: Australian Migrant Employment Services (AMES); the Red Cross; and Spectrum Migrant Resource Centres. The services offered by these organisations range from finding lost family members, employment assistance, education and skills training and aged care for elderly migrants. See Harriet Spinks, ‘Australia’s settlement services for migrants and refugees’ (Canberra: Parliament of Australia Research Paper, April, 2009) for an overview of the development of and challenges to migrant services in coming years.

6 Waxman, ‘Service Provision and the Needs of Newly Arrived Refugees’, pp761–777

7 Ibid, pp768.
camps or in Vietnam. While these founding family and community members worked hard to buy houses and find employment, many were living with unresolved trauma associated with displacement and the reasons behind fleeing Vietnam. This trauma depleted the emotional resources of many sponsors, and assuming responsibility for new family members was tough and often beyond what could be managed.⁸

**Sponsorship experiences under Hawke and Keating: reuniting family**

During the 1980s and early-to-mid 1990s, significant numbers of sponsorship arrangements within Vietnamese families involved young adults bringing parents and siblings to Australia.⁹ Spouse and fiancé visas also grew in number during this time by approximately ten per cent per annum.¹⁰ These patterns of sponsorship reflect the stages in familial life of Vietnamese refugees who were accepted to Australia. Nancy Viviani’s work tabulates the age and marital status of Vietnamese arrivals in Australia during the period 1975–1980, and demonstrates that most Vietnamese fell into the 15 to 29 year-old age category and between forty and fifty per

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cent were married.\textsuperscript{11} The demographic profile of Vietnamese refugees who arrived in Australia during the late 1970s coincides with an age cohort that is likely to have begun the process of establishing family units of their own and still have living parents. As many households in Vietnam at the time had three generations living together, the absence of these young adults would have been more acutely felt.\textsuperscript{12}

The young Vietnamese adults who were accepted as refugees into Australia during this period had left for several reasons, a primary one of which was finding a new place for the family to live safely. Occurrences of sponsorship during this time between Vietnamese family members were very much about reuniting families in Australia that had been fragmented as a result of the Vietnam War. All interviewees who arrived in Australia during the early 1980s originally came as refugees and had spent some time, usually years, in refugee camps around Southeast Asia.\textsuperscript{13}

While my interview cohort comprised an even gender balance for those who arrived during this time, in fact far more Vietnamese males escaped to Australia in the early period. There were several reasons for this, as Nancy Viviani described:

> The necessity of escape deterred large family groups, the very young and the old from leaving. The family reunion basis of most settling countries’ selection policies encouraged sequential migration, sons to be sent out first, followed by remaining family members. Male survival rates, given the risks of departure and the journey, were presumably higher, which further encouraged families to send out sons first. Young males leaving to avoid conscription added to the bias in departures.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{13} Refugee camps in southeast Asia have been extensively researched. The works of Nancy Viviani have been utilised the most for this thesis. Other examples include: James M. Freeman and Nguyen Dinh Huu, \textit{Voices from the camps: Vietnamese children seeking asylum} (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), and Carol Dalglish, \textit{Refugees from Vietnam} (London: MacMillan Press, 1989). The later volume contains data on the numbers and ages of refugees who lived in the different camps.
\textsuperscript{14} Nancy Viviani, \textit{The Long Journey} (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1984), p131. See also Ruth Frieze, ‘Family setting in Indochina and Australia’ in \textit{The Price of Freedom: Young Indochinese Refugees in Australia}, eds. Jerzy Krupinski and Graham Burrows (Sydney: Pergamon Press, 1986): pp82–95, for analysis of nearly 500 Indochinese family groups who arrived in Melbourne in 1981. This study included accounts of individuals separated from their families during the process of escape and eventual reunification with some family members.
In families that did not have sons, or if sons were unable to make the trip, daughters were sent. Gender imbalances among those Vietnamese refugees accepted in Australia eventually became a source of concern for the actual community and the Australian government, and policy attempts were made to rectify the problem. Viviani’s analysis of marriage patterns among Vietnamese refugees in Australia during the late 1970s and early 1980s however, indicate that marriage rates were much lower than both Australian and Vietnamese average standards.

The experiences of sponsorship described by the interviewees are reflective of those broader sponsorship patterns described above: siblings, parents and spouses were sponsored to Australia in fairly even numbers. Interviewees Due, Giang, Mai, Lan and Lam all arrived in Australia from Vietnam during the 1980s and 1990, following their escape from Vietnam as teenagers and arrival in Australia via refugee camps in Southeast Asia. Due, at 17 years old, was the eldest son in his family of nine siblings when Saigon fell to the communists, and so assumed responsibility for finding a new home for the family. Giang had never wanted to leave Vietnam, but watched her siblings struggle against the prejudice of anti-Catholicism in their attempts to gain admission to good schools or find employment, and reluctantly decided to leave. Giang had older brothers, but was considered by her parents to be the most capable of their children. When Mai was 16 years old, both of her brothers were languishing in prison, and so she escaped Vietnam in a boat that was approximately ten metres by three to Singapore. Lam’s story was similar, but her journey took her to a Thai camp. Lam arrived in 1984, when she was 17 years old and was not the eldest child in her family. She comments ‘[it was]...my parents’ belief I [was] strong enough to go a different country and I [could] look after myself and family’. All sponsored their parents to come from Vietnam to Australia in the 1980s and early 1990s.

16 Nancy Viviani notes, however, that the policy was largely unsuccessful because the Australian government did not take into account ethnic differences between the men and women accepted as Vietnamese refugees. See Viviani, The Long Journey, p132.
17 Viviani, The Indochinese in Australia, p114.
18 All interviewees were allocated a pseudonym to protect their privacy. Names were selected from www.adoptvietnam.org during February 2009. Further bibliographical detail of all interviewees is in Appendix 2.
19 Giang explained the communist government associated Catholicism with the culture of the French colonialists, and surmised that adherents of this faith would be unable to adapt to life under the new regime. See Nancy Viviani The Vietnamese before 1975 in The Long Journey, pp6–9
20 Interview no.9 with ‘Lam’, 1 December 2005, Richmond.
Apparent from their experiences was the lack of clear and available information for sponsors during the early to mid 1980s. As detailed in earlier chapters, Australian immigration practices were not ‘codified’ or publicly available for scrutiny or broader understanding before 1989. Before this time, guidelines regarding applying for visas and sponsoring family did not comprehensively exist, and were certainly not accessible. Hoa, who arrived as a refugee in 1980, expressed frustration at the complexity of the processes during this time:

Back then…there was too much paper work and I just [didn’t] have time to fill out forms and be [a] sponsor. I wanted to [sponsor out family] but I was just too busy. How can you keep up with all the paperwork? It was just too complicated.

The Vietnamese government was also mentioned in experiences of sponsorship across the period under review as a major cause of delays and complications. Corrupt officials, a policy of non-release of Vietnamese nationals, and difficulties accessing the Australian embassy were all listed as reasons why reunification took years to arrange. Han, who was sponsored by her aunt and uncle in 1984, reflected that ‘it took about four years…the government of Vietnam didn’t want people to go, so they stopped applications for three years. A bit like a national shame to them, because so many people were leaving.’ For Due and his brother, the process of sponsoring their parents was fraught with many hurdles. The brothers spent five years organising paperwork that was constantly lost; sending money to corrupt and exploitative bureaucrats; and trying to interpret the good advice from the bad. Due stated ‘the paperwork [had to be sent] to Hanoi, but my parents lived in South Vietnam. They had no idea how to deal with immigration [people] and were taken advantage of by bad people with the wrong advice.’

21 Sean Cooney comprehensively explains the process of codification in *The Transformation of Migration Law* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1996). The informality of migration procedures were loosely held in place by ‘Ministerial discretion’, which meant the Minister for Immigration was able to exercise a large degree of control and influence over the granting of visas. In 2004 a Senate Inquiry was held into this issue, as it became apparent that this control made Ministers for Immigration vulnerable to manipulation or pressure from influential groups wanting visas for people who may not have necessarily met formal criteria. (See for example: Meaghan Shaw, ‘Police, but not Senate clear Ruddock’ *The Age*, 1 April 2004, and Editorial, ‘Dangerous Discretion’, *Sydney Morning Herald* 5 April 2004). The Senate Inquiry recommendations included: more procedures for capturing data on cases where Ministerial discretion was exercised and why; routine auditing processes, and importantly, the creation of an information sheet in several languages that explained grounds for ministerial intervention that was to be available on the department’s website. See *Senate Select Committee on Ministerial Discretion in Migration Matters* Canberra, Parliament House, 2004.

22 Interview no.6 with ‘Hoa’, 2 February 2006, Fitzroy.


24 Interview no.8 with ‘Han’, 18 June 2005, Flemington.

25 Interview no.16 with ‘Due’, 1 December 2005, Sunshine.
It took Lam six years to sponsor her parents to Australia, before they arrived in 1990. Lam commented, ‘we [couldn’t reunite earlier] ... because [at] that time in Vietnam and Australia the government[s]... [did] not [work] together, they [didn’t]...want to process any sponsorship for families to come to Australia.’ These recollections are consistent with the analysis in earlier chapters, which surveyed political debates concerning Vietnamese family reunion during the 1980s. In particular, Lam’s memories of difficulties during this time in sponsoring parents demonstrate the implications for Vietnamese families of the delicate negotiations referred to by Minister for Immigration Chris Hurford in 1985, between the Australian and Vietnamese Governments. Australia depended ‘heavily on the goodwill of the Vietnamese Government... to pursue for compassionate and humanitarian reasons family reunions from (Vietnam)... (and) to make available the necessary exit permits.’ The years spent finessing this relationship and the necessary agreements instigated years of separation, confusion over process and angst for many Vietnamese families.

By 1990 there was greater transparency in the rules governing immigration law and with it, sponsorship. Lam commented ‘at that time it [became easier]. [I] just [had to] go to the immigration department... get a form and fill [in] and the government [processed it] ... I also had to show payslips. [T]hey only want[ed] to prove me and my brothers were relatives, family members.’ Like Mai, Giang and Lam, the brothers worked 12 to 14 hour days, seven days a week, in factories or as textile workers, to raise enough money to provide for their parents when they eventually arrived. Lam, who worked long hours to sponsor her siblings, spoke extensively

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26 Interview no.9 with ‘Lam’, 1 December 2005, Richmond.
29 Interview no.9 with ‘Lam’, 1 December 2005, Richmond.
30 Unemployment has been an enduring problem for many Vietnamese-born in Australia. Several reasons account for this pattern, including a traumatic background and poor English skills. See James Jupp, From White Australia to Woomera (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p156 and Mandy Thomas, ‘The Vietnamese in Australia’ in Asians in Australia; Patterns of Migration and Settlement, eds. James E. Coughlan and Deborah J. McNamara (South Melbourne: MacMillan Press, 1997), p290. The actual state of the Australian labour market also affected Vietnamese families and individuals disproportionately during the 1980s, as the manufacturing industry, where many Vietnamese were employed, declined in profitability. See Sigrid Kirk, ‘Lebanese, Vietnamese hit hard by jobs crisis’, The Sydney Morning Herald, 5 August 1991, p2 and Viviani, The Indochinese in Australia, pp65–100.
of her experience as a very young adult who had to support brothers and sisters without parental involvement, in a culturally dissimilar land:

When I come here I always just work to support one brother and two sisters, they are at the high school age, and they can’t earn the money from the Centrelink, so everything had to put on my shoulders, so I work, work and look after them. I am like their parent. I look after and I support everything. So I can’t go to school, can’t study, just work at whatever I can. I have... four brothers and two sisters (and I was) roughly twenty-three. Before I come here you know I don’t have English, I don’t have skills (or) qualifications (and)... could (only) do hand work, until I understand Australia. I had to earn the money to cover for my family.31

Focusing on this task was difficult: the emotional trauma all interviewees had experienced thus far had to be put aside while they went about the business of creating a life in Australia for themselves and family yet to arrive.32 Boredom, loneliness and grief clouded their thoughts and made it difficult to make decisions.33 Hoa described the loneliness as overwhelming: ‘Lonely, very lonely. No support from family. Life was very difficult. Whole new life. Language, job, career, study, very difficult. Even food!’34 Giang also commented on the nonsensical situation of working to establish a new life in Australia for herself and her family, when in fact she had little idea of how her family were. ‘[It was] so hard to cope... [I was] grieving... [and had] lost so many friends and family’.35 Conditions had gone from bad to worse when she left Vietnam, and there had been minimal news since.

Due and his brother had the additional challenge of convincing their parents, via limited communication means, that life in Australia was their best option. The brothers feared for the safety of their parents in Vietnam under the new communist regime, but the prospect of ageing in a foreign country where they did not speak the language was frightening, despite the lure of family reunification.36 Giang likened the identity of elderly Vietnamese to that of old trees,
whose roots were still in Vietnam. She speculated that the wrenching from Vietnamese soil was so traumatic for so many elderly Vietnamese parents, that a period of twenty years in Australia could be required before they were at peace with their new home.37

The resilience and resourcefulness of the interviewees was clear when questioned about sources of settlement support during those early years in Australia, as was the role played by informal networks of other refugees in assisting new arrivals with securing employment and accommodation. These networks were crucial in providing assistance in areas where the Australian Government failed. Hoa reflected that in fact government policies towards new refugees during the 1980s were harsh in their impact:

Church groups helped, but not the government. In fact, the government forced us to leave [the hostel... they sent... a... letter, saying I needed to move on. [I received no help] ...from the government at all... only church groups. [I was in the hostel for] two months, without money, or language or anything.38

Lam described how she managed to find employment and accommodation through her own persistence and contact with friends:

Ah, [the]... first week I looked around the area in Fitzroy and I [could] see people... [working] in [a] factory... I just kept going to ask. It [was] really hard because [my] English [was] not adequate... and the owner... [didn’t] understand... Vietnamese... but some they asked more questions and it [took] about two weeks and more training, and [then] they [gave] me the work. I [didn’t] understand [I could approach]... job centres for help to find... work. [At] that time the people at social security they don’t have... interpreters or translators, and so what [could] I do?

At that time I had some friend[s]... [and] they share[d]... [their] accommodation with me at the housing commission flats in North Melbourne... I stay[ed] for one year.39

Danh’s reflections revealed that reliance on the existing Vietnamese community persisted as a settlement strategy for new families, fifteen years after Vietnamese began arriving in Australia.

I can still remember the early days. We had a friend and he was Vietnamese. He took us to [the] Smith family, where you can get food vouchers and stuff. [Other friends came] and [gave] us stuff, stuff we need. A lot of clothing. They were really supportive. At the time there were a lot of Vietnamese here already, and eventually we moved... to where a lot of Vietnamese live, in North Melbourne, Essendon and close to Footscray. When we [needed to] go shopping for something, shopping for food or entertainment, it was in the Vietnamese community.40

37 Dependency, isolation and high rates of depression are among the most common issues experienced by older migrants. See Trang Thomas and Mark Balnaves, New Land. Last Home: The Vietnamese Elderly and the Family Migration Program (Melbourne: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1993).
38 Interview no 6 with ‘Hoa’ 17 May 2006, Fitzroy.
39 Interview no.9 with ‘Lam’, 1 December 2005, Richmond.
These early settlement experiences of individual endeavour and community cohesion laid the foundation for supporting new family members from Vietnam. Individuals and families became increasingly familiar with and adept at responding to many of the challenges faced by new arrivals. Nonetheless, the interviews revealed the enormity of assuming complete responsibility for new family members, as was required through sponsorship conditions.

**Reunification at last**

Eventual reunification for many of the interviewees was difficult for them to describe, or to condense into short summaries. All commented on the relief they felt that their parents were out of political danger, and were now residing with people who would care for them. The money saved on phone calls to Vietnam, with interviewees citing figures as high as $3.50 per minute, was mentioned in all interviews as another source of relief. Lam was also sending a significant portion of her income to Vietnam to pay for crucial medications for her father, and was thankful when this was no longer required.

The immediate relief was quickly subsumed beneath the stress associated with managing parental expectations of living in Australia. The additional work required to support parents materially, while explaining the realities of life in Australia for former refugees during an economic recession, proved to be immense. With little or no knowledge of what life would entail for Vietnamese migrants in Australia, parental expectations went untethered, and it appears their children were reluctant to correct them. Lam remembered that while she felt

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41 Viviani suggested that family separation was the dominant source of poor mental health among refugees in *The Long Journey*.


43 Trang Thomas and Mark Balnaves, *New Land, Last Home: the Vietnamese elderly and the family migration program* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1993), conducted interviews with one hundred Vietnamese migrants, with a median age of 64 years, and found that this sample also had little real knowledge of what to expect of life in Australia.
relief when her siblings arrived (under her sponsorship) because they were ‘under my control and I can help them [as] much [as] I can, and I [no longer have to] worry, and they have time to start studying’, when her parents arrived the situation was different: ‘When my parents came... [it was] much harder for me... I had to cover everything because... the government [didn’t provide]... support for the money, so we had to support... It was on my shoulders, and I work so hard’. Giang, who sponsored her mother to Australia in 1989 also found the responsibility for her mother’s wellbeing overwhelming. This was particularly so when her mother had a stroke two months after arrival, and Giang, had just become a new mother herself.

For several interviewees the difficulties they experienced in sponsoring their parents were revealed in the interviews as a lingering source of shame. My attempt to discover whether policy had contributed to any delays Vietnamese children experienced when sponsoring their parents inadvertently uncovered feelings of inadequacy. Hoa defended the five-year gap between her arrival in Australia and her parents’ entry, stating: ‘I wanted to, but I was just too busy. I [tried], but then I [married], and I [bought] the house... I have to keep up with my... big mortgage!’

Despite their work and sacrifice, Due and his brother were ashamed of the housing commission flat in which his parents would initially have to reside. After working to convince their parents that life in Australia would be better than in Vietnam, the brothers felt compelled to combine care for their parents and the siblings who had joined them in Australia with extended work hours in order to buy a four bedroom house for the family.

Mai was also acutely aware of her parents’ expectations of life in Australia that she put up with poor working conditions and very long hours to provide for her parents. Mai explained that the biggest insult and reprimand for

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44 Interview no.9 with ‘Lam’ 1 December 2005, Richmond.
46 Interview no.6 with ‘Hoa’, 2 February 2006, Fitzroy.
47 Mandy Thomas commented on the surprisingly high rates of home ownership amongst people in Australia of Vietnamese background, when high unemployment rates and low income levels are taken into consideration in ‘The Vietnamese in Australia’ in Asians in Australia, eds. James E. Coughlan and Deborah J. McNamara (South Melbourne: MacMillan Press, 1997), p291.
48 While the majority of parents sponsored to Australia were in fact working age, various studies confirmed most were unlikely to find employment in Australia, for reasons relating to English language skills, qualifications and experience. See for example M. Morrissey et al., Working Aged Parents Study (Canberra: Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs, 1988); James E. Coughlan, ‘Occupational Mobility of
Vietnamese children was to be accused by their parents of not being sufficiently generous.\textsuperscript{49}

The stress associated with supporting her family on a low income damaged the relationship Mai’s parents had with their daughter, and her husband. Within the family home, Mai noted, ‘little things [could] become huge problems.’\textsuperscript{50}

Mai’s family experienced further difficulty when they misunderstood the restrictions on their access to welfare, and had to repay a large sum of money spent on repairing Mai’s father’s teeth.\textsuperscript{51} It was unclear exactly how this debt was incurred. It is possible that Mai’s family believed dental services were included in the general range of health services provided under the Australian Government’s public health system (Medicare), and accepted treatment for Mai’s father’s teeth from a dentist before discovering that Medicare only covers dental work in very rare circumstances. Due to a variety of circumstances, Vietnamese migrants and refugees often arrived with extremely poor oral health. Public dental services were available, but this system was overburdened and waitlists were extensive, causing significant pain and discomfort for people with ongoing dental problems. It is unlikely Mai’s family was the only Vietnamese family to experience this issue. Dentists Durward and Wright found Vietnamese-

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\textsuperscript{49} See Xuan Thu Nguyen, ‘The Vietnamese family moral code’, \textit{Journal of Vietnamese Studies} 1, no.3 (1990): pp32–36. Mai’s comments are reflective of the conclusions drawn by researchers into the expectations Vietnamese parents had of their children in California. Carole Cox and Donald Gelfand observed that Vietnamese parents were the least satisfied with assistance provided to them by their children, in comparison to Hispanic and Portuguese parents in the same study. Cox and Gelfand suggest that assistance was sometimes limited because Vietnamese children were struggling with the same settlement issues as their parents. See Carole Cox and Donald Gelfand, ‘Familial Assistance, Exchange and Satisfaction among Hispanic, Portuguese and Vietnamese ethnic elderly’, \textit{Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology} 2, no.3 (1987): pp241–255.

\textsuperscript{50} Interview no.19 with ‘Mai’, 2 February 2006, Fitzroy.

\textsuperscript{51} Access to dental services for migrant groups is a small but growing area of research. Experiences with dental services have been found to vary according to which visa program migrants entered Australia through. For example, refugees, who typically arrive with fewer resources than skilled migrants, have more difficulties accessing adequate dental care, as they are reliant on the over-burdened public system and cannot afford private dentists. E Riggs et al., ‘Hard to reach communities or hard to reach services? Migrant mothers’ experiences of dental services’, \textit{Australian Dental Journal} 58 (2014): pp201–207 and David Brennan and A. John Spencer, ‘Variation in dental service provision among adult migrant public-funded patients’, \textit{Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health} 23, no.6 (1999): pp639–643. Studies on the dental health of Vietnamese people living in Australia include: CS Durward and FA Wright, ‘The dental health of Indo-Chinese and Australian-born adolescents’, \textit{Australian Dental Journal} 34, no.3 (1989): pp233–239; and GW Stuart et al., ‘Acculturation and dental health among Vietnamese living in Melbourne, Australia’, \textit{Community Dentistry And Oral Epidemiology} 29, no.2 (2001): pp107–119, the latter of which notes the need to develop dental services that are more culturally-sensitive to improve the dental health of groups including Vietnamese.
born living in Australia had higher rates of dental problems than Australian-born people, and generally required more extractions.\footnote{CS Durward and FA Wright, ‘The dental health of Indo-Chinese and Australian-born adolescents’, \textit{Australian Dental Journal} 34, no.3 (1989): pp233–239.}

The interviews revealed families’ experiences with the hotly contested debates examined in earlier chapters—welfare provision and government support for migrants. The emotional and financial relief, improved family relationships and connectedness that came from income support were described as an important turning point in the lives of many families. Due, Giang, Mai and Lam all commented on the improvement in their relationships with their parents once their parents became eligible for some welfare assistance or government housing.\footnote{Earlier chapters noted this eligibility was only available after several years of residence in Australia. See Margaret Easterbrook, ‘Migrant parents’ welfare costs rising–study’, \textit{The Age}, 8 June 1993, p2.} Before this assistance became available, households were tense and anxious. Overworked adult children were frequently too tired and exhausted to emotionally support elderly parents who were distressed at the difficulties presented by poor English language skills. Elderly parents felt demoralised and useless as they were unable to manage any basic transactions outside of the home without their children.\footnote{See Thomas Trang, ‘Language acculturation among older Vietnamese refugee adults’, \textit{The Gerontologist} 30, no.1 (1990): pp 94–98.} The financial assistance eased the dependency parents had on their children, and enabled a semblance of the parent/child relationship to return.\footnote{See Nazil Kibria, ‘Power, patriarchy, and gender conflict in the Vietnamese immigrant community’ in \textit{Gender and Society} 4, no. 1 (1990): pp9–25.} In Mai’s family, the independence this allowed encouraged a kernel of social confidence in her parents, and they became more involved in church groups and community organisations where they met other elderly Vietnamese migrants.\footnote{Vietnamese community organisations have played an important role in providing settlement services and support for new migrants. A comprehensive list of these organisations can be found at: \url{http://www.acacia.org.au/links/melbournevietcommunity/} (accessed 16 August 2015).}

Just as Mai commented that the experience of sponsorship had the potential to exacerbate seemingly small financial issues, Lam found family politics to be intensified by the experience of migration.\footnote{Family conflict is a topic of research in the broader area of Vietnamese-Australian studies. Examples include: Doreen Rosenthal et al., ‘Vietnamese adolescents in Australia: Relationships between perceptions of self and parental values, intergenerational conflict, and gender dissatisfaction’, \textit{International Journal of Psychology} 31, no.2 (1996): pp81–91; Thanh Tran, ‘Family living arrangements and social adjustment among three ethnic groups of elderly Indocheinese refugees’, \textit{International Journal of Aging and Human Development} 32, no.2 (1991): pp91–}
providing for their parents and siblings in Australia, resonated through the family in a way that was louder than if the family was still in Vietnam. While Lam’s sister sponsored her to Australia, and assisted with the process of sponsoring their parents and remaining siblings, it fell to Lam to manage the welfare of the family. Lam explained:

[My sister has a] different style…when she escape Vietnam [she was studying] engineering, and she came here and she keep studying and she got family as well, so she came here by herself and she have to look after them.58

Lam described her sister’s decision to focus her energy on her own husband and children as a ‘different style’. Evidence of the responsibility Vietnamese children have for their elderly parents, however, suggests this must have been a controversial decision at the time.59 It is possible that if the family had remained in Vietnam, Lam’s sister’s decision would have had a softer impact, because other extended family members were likely to be present to assist Lam with looking after her parents.

In contrast to the above stories, Lan dismissed the responsibility of looking after her parents in Australia as something she would have been doing anyway: ‘actually [it was] the same thing... you have to work and have to take care of your family.’60 Her memories of early life with her parents in Australia were far more positive, as she recalled the assistance they were able to provide with her new baby.61 Perhaps an important point of difference between Lan’s story and

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58 Interview no.9 with ‘Lam’, 1 December 2005, Fitzroy
those of the other interviewees who sponsored their parents was that Lan had been in Australia for ten years by the time she was able to sponsor her parents. Lan commented ‘it was alright, because I got the house ready and everything ready for them. So not really [too] hard’. The baby-sitting Lan’s parents were able to provide for their grandson enabled Lan to work full-time, which was invaluable to a family that had just expanded to include two more adults and a child.

Family reunion during the Labor years was revealed through these memories as a process involving emotional extremes. The trauma of war and escape was often compounded by feelings of frustration and helplessness as corruption within the Vietnamese Government impeded attempts to sponsor family remaining in Vietnam. The relief felt when families were eventually reunited was overwhelming and sometimes initially complicated by feelings of guilt that reunification had not happened earlier. Early settlement years frequently involved tensions between generations as the reality of living in Australia during a period of economic recession for low-skilled refugees was communicated by young adults to their elderly parents. Sponsorship also enabled the birth of second generation Vietnamese-Australian babies to be shared and celebrated by first-time parents and grandparents, as new life in a new land signified the creation of a new chapter in the fortunes of many Vietnamese.

The experiences of the first waves of Vietnamese migrants to reunite in Australia through the family reunion program had lasting effects on subsequent generations. Sponsorship had the outcome of structurally reinforcing dependence between family members, as financial responsibility for new family was placed on the sponsor. While other supports, through community groups for example, may have been available, it appears that awareness of this support was low, and sponsors were too busy working long hours in low-paying jobs to provide for their growing families to seek out external assistance. In conjunction with an existing cultural preference for relying on private resources rather than outside options, as noted by Nguyen and Ho, this structured dependence encouraged the development of Vietnamese

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62 Interview no. 10 with ‘Lan’, 7 May 2005, Collingwood.
63 James Vo-Thanh-Xuan and Pranee Liamputtong Rice provide a comprehensive and interesting exploration of the role Vietnamese grandparents can play in Australia in ‘Vietnamese-Australian grandparenthood: The changing roles and psychological well-being’, *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology* 15 (2000): pp 265–288. Lan’s experience provides a clear contrast to the implications of limiting sponsorship of parents that occurred under the Coalition, which is told through My’s story further on in this chapter.
communities that were inwards-looking, and which for several reasons had not developed strong ties with the broader Australian society.⁶⁴

The following section will examine experiences of family reunion during the Howard years. Sponsorship between Vietnamese-Australians and Vietnamese continued to be strong, but the reasons behind this migration differed from the 1980s and 1990s. Against this backdrop of Vietnamese communities in Australia—in which the founding members had survived but perhaps not emotionally processed the trauma of war, and had also lived with the conditions associated with Australian family reunion—a new wave of Vietnamese migration to Australia occurred.

**Sponsorship under Howard: new family formations**

Unlike the majority of Vietnamese sponsored to Australia during the Hawke/Keating Governments, many Vietnamese who participated in the family reunion program under the period of Liberal-National Coalition Government had long standing connections with Australia. Several already had family residing in Australia, or had themselves travelled to Australia before they decided to settle permanently. Australia was more familiar to Vietnamese by this time, either through direct contact or knowledge gained from friends and family.

Moreover, Vietnamese family reunion in Australia during the Coalition’s period of governance was predominantly about the creation of new family units. As the legacy of family fragmentation associated with the Vietnam War grew more distant, migration became less about rescuing family members from refugee camps or Vietnam, and more about the preferences of the next generation to create families with strong cultural links to Vietnam. The Vietnamese continued to arrive in Australia under humanitarian visas and there was a slow increase in the number who applied for skilled migration visas. But family migration, through

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sponsorship arrangements, remained the dominant mode through which Vietnamese entered Australia, with applications for spouse or fiancé visas the most common.

The practice of sponsoring a spouse from (in this example) Vietnam represents a new intersection between Australian migration laws and the cultural preferences of a minority group. While the sponsoring of parents, siblings and spouses during the Labor years of government was predominantly about reunification, sponsorship under the Coalition involved many more examples of migration for the purpose of bringing a Vietnamese national to join a Vietnamese-Australian family, where there previously had not been a relationship. The interview material reflected broader spouse sponsorship patterns as primarily involving Australia-resident Vietnamese males sponsoring Vietnamese-born women. Vietnamese-Australians have one of the highest rates of inter-cultural marriage in all migrant communities. Understanding the reason for this particular sponsorship pattern, in which young men (as opposed to young women) returned to Vietnam to find wives instead of marrying Vietnamese-Australian women, was not deliberately investigated for this thesis. Nevertheless, numerous anecdotes were offered and these largely pointed to reasons of cultural preservation. The influence of Vietnamese parents in choice of partner or in the very act of

65 In 1999–2000 for example, there were 1,285 applicants under the family migration stream, 53 under the skills migration category and 21 humanitarian applicants from Vietnam. Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs, Settler Arrivals by Region/Country of Birth by Principal/Accompanying by Eligibility Category for Financial Years 1999–2000, p39.
66 ABS, 'Australian Social Trends' 1998, p19. See also Siew-Ean Khoo, 'The context of spouse migration to Australia', International Migration 39, no.1 (2001): pp111–131, in which Khoo notes that spouse or fiancé migration comprised approximately 50 per cent of family reunion migration, across all cultural categories. While spouse and fiancé visas were dominant during this time, research into marriage patterns among Vietnamese-Australians revealed it was a minority who preferred to find partners from within the Vietnamese community. Steve Waldon and Chloe Saltau, ‘Pride after the fall’, The Age, 4 November 2000; Robert Birrell and Ernest Healy, 'Out-marriage and the survival of ethnic communities in Australia’, People and Place 8, no.3 (2000): pp37–46.
70 A desire to reproduce cultural practices in the next generation is commonly cited for why some Vietnamese (and other migrant groups) parents encourage their children to marry a spouse from the country of origin. Interestingly, however, the cultural practices the parents seek to replicate in Australia may not actually exist or have transformed in some way in the country of birth. Trang describes 'Time bound recollections' as memories of 'the old country and its culture, customs and traditions as such things were expressed when they left it. The culture of the old country may have moved on but it is preserved in the memory and society of a generation of migrants as it was'. Thomas Trang, ‘Older migrants and their families in Australia’ Family Matters 66 (Spring-Summer 2003): p40.
deciding to marry was clear, with many interviewees commenting on the importance of their new spouse being able to communicate with their in-laws, most of whom did not speak English. It is possible that demographics intersect with this factor: of the Vietnamese-born men and women who live in Australia, around twenty per cent speak one of several Chinese languages at home, rather than Vietnamese. While there may be a fairly even balance between Vietnamese men and women living in Australia, language differences may explain the fewer potential marriage partners for some young Vietnamese men.

My interview data reveals additional reasons why young Vietnamese men visited Vietnam for the purpose of finding a wife. It appears the practice of sponsoring a Vietnamese-born wife to Australia was partially motivated by a preference for the type of gender dynamics that were thought to be more typical of Vietnamese male-female relationships. The preference for Vietnamese women who embodied a particular example of femininity was described as belonging to both the young Vietnamese men, and their parents, with whom many expected to live. Anthropologist Mandy Thomas, who has conducted extensive research with Vietnamese-Australian communities, argues that because many Vietnamese men in Australia have poor employment outcomes and limited financial power, they feel less able to maintain a position of authority within family units. Vietnamese women in Australia often have more success at securing employment and so have greater power within their relationships. This can lead to self-doubt, feelings of inadequacy and frustration among some Vietnamese men to the extent that they prefer to seek out Vietnamese women who, they believe at least, are less independent.

71 More tragic reasons involved Vietnamese parents attempting to manage problems with young Vietnamese men, such as involvement with gangs and drugs, by encouraging or orchestrating a union with a Vietnamese wife. It was presumed that the responsibility of a wife and children would set their sons on a more conventional path.
73 Viviani in The Long Journey, discusses how the majority of Vietnamese refugees (who were generally young men) accepted into Australia during 1978-1980 were ethnic Chinese, whereas later arrivals were ethnic Vietnamese. It is possible that this cohort of ethnic Chinese comprise a significant portion of the parents who were encouraging their children, to marry young women who could communicate with them in one of the several Chinese languages spoken at home.
The analysis below explores this intersection between a preference for brides from Vietnam and Australian sponsorship conditions during the Howard era. The stories of people who arrived in Australia through the family reunion program from 1996 to 2007 provide intimate and detailed accounts of how early settlement experiences were shaped by the personal resources and skills of newly arrived spouses, the welfare provisions permitted by their visas, and most crucially, the support of their partners.

**Spouse visas and early married life**

My arrived in Australia on a spouse visa when the Keating government was still in power in 1995. Cam, Phuong and Nhu all arrived in Australia on spouse visas under the Coalition, and Ngoc initially entered Australia as a student in 1998, where she met and married her Vietnamese partner. In order to become a permanent Australian resident, Ngoc’s partner, who was a permanent resident himself, had to sponsor Ngoc under a spouse visa, and agree to financially support her if necessary. Ngoc was in a better situation than the other women who arrived on spouse visas because she had studied in Australia for several years. Ngoc had a network of friends and was very familiar with the way of life in Melbourne, where she lived.

Reflections on the application process did not reveal the type and extent of complications experienced by families during the 1980s. Corruption was not mentioned, and the work of bureaucrats to create more formal rules, regulations and guidelines for migrating to Australia appears to have been successful, as most interviewees spoke of a relatively straightforward and clear process for visa applications. My for example, remembered minimal delay and a transparent process: ‘it was pretty easy... I applied in February 1995 by August the visa [had arrived.]’ My was fortunate in that her husband had lived in Australia for 25 years, and so was

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76 Interview no.2 with ‘Cam’, 19 March 2005, Flemington; Interview no.26 with ‘Phuong’, 1 June 2005, Springvale; Interview no. 25 with ‘Nhu’, 1 June 2005, Springvale; Interview no.20 with ‘Ngoc,’ 20 October 2005, Richmond. Student visas only permit a temporary stay in Australia, for the duration of the particular course the student is studying.


well established in Australia with social networks, employment experience and language skills. Ngoc described the process as ‘very quick [it only took about] two or three months to get my passport.’

My’s marriage was like many during this period, in which the husband had travelled back to Vietnam to meet a wife. The couple had a second marriage ceremony in Australia, and she was eligible to apply for permanent residency immediately. In Vietnam, My was a high school teacher. While she had good English language skills when she arrived in Australia, My was self-conscious about her accent, and so chose not to pursue employment in education in Australia. She completed a postgraduate qualification in information technology and a diploma in accounting instead. It was clear from the interview with My that her husband had been able to firmly establish himself in the workforce before My arrived; he was able to fund a 12 month course in English language at Footscray TAFE for My, and the couple have gone on to purchase a house. My found the restriction on access to welfare, such as unemployment benefits, ‘good because it pushed me to find a job.’ My balanced part-time work in various call centres with study for several years, and has broadly positive memories of her early years in Australia while she was residing on a spouse visa.

When discussing her experience of pregnancy and childbirth in Australia, however, My delved into the implications of a second dominant feature of the family reunion program under the Coalition government. As discussed in Chapter Three, the Coalition was responsible for a significant reduction in the number of parent visas granted. This visa stream was capped, and the conditions sponsors had to fulfil before the visa was granted became more difficult to achieve.

Despite My’s relative good fortune of having some income, qualifications and a capacity to study, she felt the absence of her extended family in Australia made her life much harder compared to what it had been in Vietnam. This was particularly so when My became a new

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79 Interview no.20 with ‘Ngoc’, 20 October 2005, Richmond.
80 It was unclear from My’s interview whether My and her husband knew (of) each other before he visited Vietnam, or whether they had been introduced through parents or friends via email while he was still in Australia.
mother, which My remembered as ‘a very lonely time.’ The couple tried to sponsor My’s mother out to Australia to assist after the child was born, but they were unable to raise the capital needed. While My’s husband went to work, she struggled with her own convalescence and their new baby.

[in] Australia I couldn’t stay in bed for one month... it felt very wrong to be moving about. [I wasn’t] meant to be doing anything [and] I worried about permanent health problems. [My mother tried to help] by calling to advise me about what I needed to eat.

My had been taught that it was ideal for herself and the baby to rest for one month after giving birth, and to allow family members to bring the baby to her for feeding, and to otherwise take care of the cooking and cleaning that she would normally perform.

Cam, Phuong and Nhu had different experiences when they were sponsored to Australia by their spouses. Cam’s husband came to Australia in 1999 with their son, and then sponsored Cam at the end of 2000, who had remained behind in Vietnam to sell the family home and business. Cam described the family’s early years in Australia as very tough: ‘No English! [That was the] first... problem... [which made it] too hard to [find a] job.’ Cam’s husband found work on a timberline after a couple of months, but Cam remained unemployed for this period. When I queried Cam as to why her husband’s lack of English did not prevent him from finding

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83 Several important studies confirm the role Vietnamese grandparents have played in the care of their grandchildren in Australia. This relationship has been described as beneficial to all generations involved, including the grandparents as they find personal value and esteem in performing such an important task. See James Vo-Thanh-Xuan and Pranee Liamputtong-Rice, ‘What it takes to be a grandparent in a new country: the lived experience and emotional wellbeing of Australian-Vietnamese Grandparents’, Australian Journal of Social Issues 38, no.2 (2003): pp 208–229.
85 Vuong Nguyen and Mai Ho, ‘Vietnamese-Australian Families’ in Families and Cultural Diversity in Australia, ed. Robyn Hartley (St Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1995), p232 provide a very broad overview of practices and customs many Vietnamese women follow when going through child-birth. The special diet is described as ‘very salty foods with almost no fresh fruit, as to eat anything “sour” or “cold”—that is, fruit or raw vegetables—may provoke further bleeding.’
87 Interview no.2 with ‘Cam’, 19 March 2005, Flemington.
work as it did her during that first twelve months she replied: ‘because he [is] a man... [it was easier] for a man to get a job... but [it was] not a good job.’ The family survived on $375 per week until Cam’s husband found a position for Cam on the timberline too. It was unclear whether Cam felt her English skills had sufficiently developed during that first twelve months for her to cope in the workplace, or whether she felt more comfortable managing with the level she had.

_Alone in Australia – sponsorship exploited_

Phuong and Nhu’s stories were more distressing, and are demonstrative of a broader pattern where the conditions of spouse sponsorship can enable patterns of abuse. The following section, which describes the early life of Phuong and Nhu in Australia while they were on spouse visas, is interspersed with the reflections of four social workers who were familiar with the stories of these women.

Phuong and Nhu both married Vietnamese men who were born or had resided in Australia for a long time. The men had travelled back to Vietnam for the wedding ceremonies 2001, after which they all returned to Australia. The parents of Phuong and her husband knew each other, and encouraged the union, while Nhu and her husband were introduced through friends. Neither woman had any knowledge about life in Australia, or knew anyone other than their new husband’s family and friends. They were entirely dependent upon their husband and his networks for information about living in Australia.

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88 Cam’s memory is further evidence of the conclusions drawn in Iain Campbell et al., ‘Occupational Mobility in Segmented Labour Markets: the experiences of immigrant workers in Melbourne’, _Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology_ 27, no.2 (1991): pp172–194. Campbell et al. note the informal networks that were frequently very successful in finding employment for new migrants.

89 This interview was conducted with both women, who were friends and were sharing a house together, simultaneously, and an interpreter was present.

90 The social workers in question worked for an organisation called St Mary’s House of Welcome, which is a support centre for disadvantaged people experiencing homelessness, mental illness of drug and alcohol issues. [http://www.smhow.org.au/](http://www.smhow.org.au/) accessed 20 September 2015. I came across these social workers through contacts when I was seeking people to interview for my thesis. The social workers were all Vietnamese women who had some involvement in sponsorship (their stories appear in the earlier section ‘Sponsorship under Hawke/Keating). They were able to offer further insights into the circumstances behind sponsorship patterns between spouses under the Coalition Government.
The problems started early in their lives in Australia. The newly-weds both lived in homes of their parents-in-law, where Phuong and Nhu were made to do all the housework, and were threatened with eviction if they did not do so. Occasional phone calls were the only contact they had with family and friends back in Vietnam. Nhu remembered feeling ‘lonely [and] scared... [and I wasn’t allowed] to visit Vietnam for three years.’ Phuong and Nhu began life in Australia without any of the skills needed to make social connections outside their homes.

Social workers Hung, Hoa, Khanh and Giang identified a lack of education as key to the problems many women experience when they come to Australia on spouse visas. Hung explained: ‘the majority of women, before they come from Vietnam, did not have much education. So they can’t cope with any new situations that come to their lives. They don’t know how to stand up for their rights’. Giang noted this created the situation where the women had very little practical knowledge or means to cope:

Because they have no...English, or what we call marketable skills, don’t have any support, beside the partner and his family, and if they are not supporting, then everything falls apart. They know nothing about Australia.

Interviews with the social workers revealed many instances of women who were frequently entirely dependent on their spouses for information and knowledge about Australian life and what they can typically expect to find. Hoa and Khanh mentioned an example of where this lack of knowledge led to a particularly difficult situation for one young woman:

One of my clients told me, she came home with her new husband. In Vietnam she ask him what he do in Australia. He tell her he is a pharmacist. But he do the chemical work in his garden, back garden. How could she understand that? In Vietnam that sometimes happens. People do some work from home, in their backyard. (But) when she came here, she found him making chemicals in the backyard... making amphetamines. And he said “I already told you. I am pharmacist, but I make the illegal drugs, not the legal drugs”. How could she know? She arranged to be married, she wants to...

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94 Interview no.18 with ‘Hung’, 2 February 2006, Fitzroy. The ‘Victorian Community Profiles: 2006 Census, Vietnamese Community,’ found slightly less than ten per cent of Vietnamese-born women in Victoria had no educational attainment, while the majority, nearly sixty per cent, had attained a secondary school level education. The data noted that women in this category included those who had either completed secondary school, or had left from the age of 14 years. See Victorian Community Profiles: 2006 Census, Vietnamese Community,’ Melbourne, Victorian Multicultural Commission, 2007, p19.

95 Interview no. 21 with ‘Giang’, 15 March 2006, Collingwood.
give it a try, but when she found out, she doesn’t want to stay. She wants it to end. But where can she go? After two years she may have a change, but before then, nothing.96

Phuong and Nhu entered Australia with a similar lack of understanding about Australian life. An absence of deep knowledge about her new husband also lead Phuong’s situation to immediately worsen: her husband’s undisclosed drug problem became apparent two weeks after her arrival in Australia.97 The couple had no money and relied upon assistance from his parents to pay bills and rent.98

A financial obligation to the in-laws is often created without the women’s knowledge. Quite often the sponsor has had to borrow money, or involve his family in the sponsorship arrangements because of reasons to do with his income or work-status. This arrangement is frequently organised while the spouse is still in Vietnam. Khanh recounted how:

If the father, I mean the husband, has to be the financial assuror, he has to ask other family members to also sign for him. It puts more pressure on her, because that person doing the favour. If any family conflicts occurs, she has to take into account that if she applied for the Centrelink, the person signed as the financial assuror bears the financial cost. So this makes her feel that she can’t do it. She’s under more obligation, to pay it back. So this means she would having nothing, nothing at all, if she decided to leave the husband before two years.99

96 Interview no.6 with ‘Hoa’, 2 February 2006, Fitzroy; Interview no.7 with ‘Khanh’, 2 February 2006, Fitzroy.
99 Interview no.7 with ‘Khanh’, 2 February 2006, Fitzroy.
Khanh added: ‘And the women are always powerless, because when they try to stand up for their rights, they are told to compare their lives if they with a man in Vietnam’. If tactics such as these do not result in more compliant behaviour from the spouses, the threat of shaming family is also included. Hoa noted:

And now they say “so you betray my family!” And if that happens, it is not only her fault, but the whole of her family. Because they haven’t given her the good upbringing and education. If you don’t obey the in-laws, you haven’t got the good guidance.

Hoa continued on to explain:

In my culture, anything to do with me, is to do with my parents. It’s hurtful. Ok, you can say anything to me, but don’t say anything about my parents. If they insult your parents, they take away everything.

Pregnancy also increased familial obligation and dependency for young Vietnamese sponsored wives. Phuong soon fell pregnant, and felt she had no option but to stay with her husband and his parents. There was a lot of pressure on Phuong to make the marriage work: her parents-in-law threatened to speak to her parents in Vietnam about how uncooperative and difficult she was. To go back to Vietnam because her marriage had failed would cause embarrassment and distress for her entire family. Phuong admitted she was ‘afraid of losing [my] baby if [I was] sent back... [I was told] because my baby was born in Australia, he would stay here and I would be sent back [to Vietnam].’ The temporary status of Phuong’s visa was also continually raised by her husband. He reminded Phuong several times that her only route to permanent residency involved his constant support, and an evidenced declaration that theirs was an ongoing and genuine relationship. Phuong eventually decided she had to leave the home when the physical safety of her two year old son was threatened.

100 Interview no.7 with ‘Khanh’, 2 February 2006, Fitzroy.
101 Interview no.6 with ‘Hoa’, 2 February 2006.
102 Interview no.6 with ‘Hoa’, 2 February 2006.
103 Interview no.26 with ‘Phuong’, 12 July 2006, Richmond.
104 Migrants on spouse visas are given temporary status for two years, during which they have minimal access to welfare. After two years, the couple is required to demonstrate to the Department of Immigration that their relationship is genuine, through the provision of various documents, photographs and signed declarations from friends and family.
105 Phuong’s son had come across and started playing with some used syringes that were left in the bathroom. There is evidence that witnessing violence (in its multiple forms) as a child can influence long term behavioural, educational, emotional and physical development. Angela Taft et al., ‘Intimate partner violence in Vietnam and among Vietnamese diaspora communities in Western societies’, *Journal of Family Studies* 14, no.2–3 (2008): p169.
Dependency upon the husband, as a result of temporary residence status, has also compromised the dominance Vietnamese women generally hold over responsibilities for the children. Any government support for children born in Australia (including the Family Tax Benefit¹⁰⁶) can only be received by the parent with permanent residency, which in the Vietnamese case is generally the children’s father. One of the most acute examples of compromised motherhood, described by Khanh, was in relation to obtaining medical services for children. Just as welfare benefits can only be paid into an account in the name of a permanent resident, government regulations stipulate that temporary residents cannot register children on their Medicare cards. Consequently, Vietnamese mothers residing in Australia on temporary residency visas must ask their husbands each time for use of their Medicare card before they can take their children to see doctors. Khanh described the implications of this: ‘It takes away their mother right. And when you go there to ask him for the Medicare card, you are giving him the power. The control, he has the control over her’.¹⁰⁷ I queried further as to whether this meant the fathers took on the responsibility of taking their children to see a doctor when they were ill, and Khanh laughed: ‘No, just the card. He never take the baby. Just the card so she can take the baby to the doctor’¹⁰⁸

Many of the women Hung, Hoa, Khanh and Giang have assisted have had to try to care for their children in this manner within a context of domestic violence. Khanh explained:

If the situation is where the family violence occurs, at the time she has to negotiate with him if the child is sick, and if there is a separation, she has to still ask him for the card if the child is sick, because she cannot take the child herself. If she has to separate from her family, from her in-laws family or her partner, she is not entitled to any Centrelink benefits, or any support whatsoever, for those two years. So there can sometimes be a mother and a child, and I think she is entitled to $57 a week for the child, if it is born in Australia.¹⁰⁹

Nhu was also threatened constantly with deportation if she failed to live in a way which pleased her husband and his family. Nhu and her husband were able to live separately from his parents for a short period of time. He was soon jailed for a drug-related offence, however, and Nhu had

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¹⁰⁷ Interview no.7 with ‘Khanh’, 2 February 2006, Fitzroy.
¹⁰⁸ Interview no.7 with ‘Khanh’, 2 February 2006, Fitzroy.
¹⁰⁹ Interview no.7 with ‘Khanh’, 2 February 2006, Fitzroy. $57 was the payment at the time of interview in 2006.
little option but to return to living with her parents-in-law.\(^{110}\) The situation quickly became unbearable, and Nhu ran away.\(^{111}\)

The two women eventually found support. A friend Phuong had made in an antenatal class learnt of her situation, and put her in touch with an organisation that could help. The transition was very difficult. Phuong did not have a permanent address (she was not included on any of the household documents), which made it harder for her to apply for any financial help. Government departments required an address and bank details so payments could be made. Phuong had neither of these, and so the organisation began the long process of setting her up with the necessary infrastructure. Unfortunately it was unclear from the interview how Nhu came across the service. It is possible that because she was living in an area where many Vietnamese have settled, she was able to find someone who could help her.

The experiences of Phuong and Nhu are consistent with the findings of a survey conducted in a women’s refuge in NSW, of women from non-English speaking backgrounds, where:

- 43 per cent had migrated on a prospective spouse’s visa;
- 96 women and their children in refuges were without or ineligible for income support due to visa category or pending immigration decisions; and
- 24 women had been threatened with deportation, so 13 returned to abusive partners.\(^{112}\)

The conditions of spousal sponsorship were manipulated in the examples of Phuong and Nhu to force the women to endure abusive and exploitative domestic situations.

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\(^{110}\) People of Vietnamese background are disproportionately represented in the Victorian prison system, and involvement with heroin and other drugs is a major reason attributed to this pattern. See Viviani, ‘The problems of drugs, crime and violence in Indochinese communities’ in *The Indochinese in Australia 1975–1995*, pp130–133; Ben Hill ‘Vietnamese crime: the facts officials suppressed’ in *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 May 1990; Chloe Saltau, ‘Prisoners to lose a link with the outside’, *The Age*, 5 December 2001.

\(^{111}\) At the time of the interview Nhu was homeless and was sharing a rental property with her friend, Phuong. Living with friends when escaping a family violence situation is now classed as a form of homelessness. See Joshua Butler, ‘Homelessness not just rough sleeping’, *Illawara Mercury*, 8 August 2013.

Ngoc had the advantage of being familiar with Australia, but was still vulnerable to the same hurdles the other women experienced as a non-permanent resident. Her parents were disappointed she had married, and Ngoc commented ‘[I couldn’t] ask Mum for money [for my studies] once I got married.’

Ngoc’s husband was unable to pay her school fees as an international student, and so Ngoc was unable to complete her studies and started to look for employment. Without permanent residency she was ineligible for many jobs, and so Ngoc found work in a restaurant and a factory. In 2002, while Ngoc was still a temporary resident, the couple’s daughter was born, so the family qualified for the Family Tax Benefit. Money remained extremely tight. Ngoc remembered her husband ‘was very critical of how I spent money.’

Eventually the strain became overwhelming and the relationship broke down.

All the women who spoke to me about their experiences of spouse sponsorship eventually obtained permanent residency. Cam and Ngoc were able to do so because their husbands fulfilled their obligations as sponsors. (Ngoc’s relationship ended afterwards.) Phuong and Nhu, however, became permanent residents because the organisation that assisted them advised and helped the women to apply for visas for victims of domestic violence. This set of visas was established for the purpose of assisting women in Phuong and Nhu’s situation. Phuong and Nhu spoke of the relief they felt when permanent residency was obtained. While their understanding of the spouse visa they arrived on was still minimal, they knew that permanent residency removed them from the danger of deportation and shaming their families in Vietnam.

**Conclusion**

The interview material discussed above reveals the real life implications of the policy decisions made by the Labor and Coalition Governments, from 1983 to 2007. The political debates on welfare assistance, capping visa categories and the decision to found the family reunion

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113 Interview no.20 with ‘Ngoc’, 20 October 2005, Richmond.
114 International students must pay the full cost of their courses. Permanent residents are eligible for some concessions.
115 Interview no. 20 with ‘Ngoc’, 20 October 2005, Richmond.
program on the premise that newly arrived migrants will be supported and provided for by their families and friends, were explored in this chapter as shaping family togetherness, individual identity, and in some examples, the transmission of cultural practices.

The chaos of reuniting with family in Australia soon after the end of the Vietnam War was apparent in the memories of frustration and fear, when information about the wellbeing of family was scarce, and processes for migration were unclear. These stories contrasted sharply with those recounted about coming to Australia during the Coalition years, when the guidelines were transparent. The significance of welfare support in influencing the overall circumstances of individuals and relationships between people was highlighted in the interviews conducted with people across the entire period of research. Elderly parents adapted more readily to their new homeland when a small income of their own enabled independence and a degree of autonomy. The dire circumstances of Phoung and Nhu, when they had no financial freedom, demonstrated with frightening clarity the danger for people with no, or minimal personal resources.

The interview material drew out examples of how the outcomes of policy debates reviewed in earlier chapters combined with cultural values and practices to produce particular tensions and conflict. Meeting parental expectations was the most evident of these examples, which emerged in this analysis as playing a significant influence over the actions of adult children. During the Hawke/Keating Governments, when family reunification was primarily about rescuing family from refugee camps or Vietnam, adult children worked hard to establish themselves in Australia in order to provide comfortable lives for their parents. This drive to support and orientate their parents in a new country impelled adult children to put aside the trauma that was likely experienced in escaping Vietnam and living for an extended period of time away from their families and known support networks, and instead work to meet the expectations of their parents for a new life in Australia. While employment options for many low-skilled migrants were becoming increasingly limited during this time,\textsuperscript{117} obtaining adequate English skills would have greatly improved the opportunities available to many newly arrived Vietnamese.

Unfortunately, it appears the need to earn money quickly, which was partly a function of low welfare support, overrode plans to learn English, and the pool of obtainable employment positions remained small.

Demographically, it is likely that this same cohort of adult children, who worked to support their parents during the 1980s, became the parents of the generation involved in the sponsorship of spouses from Vietnam that was prominent during the Howard Government years. Adult children who arrived during the 1980s and immediately threw themselves into working long hours to sponsor and support family in Australia, sacrificed time and emotional engagement with their own children, as a result of the need to buy houses and establish new lifestyles for themselves and their parents. Intergenerational conflict is a large area of research in the field of Vietnamese studies, and it is quite possible this pattern of migration and the overlap of minimal welfare support, a declining economy and traumatic experiences is a root cause. Many Vietnamese-Australian children grew up with exhausted, stressed parents who had never had the opportunity to deal with the emotional and possibly physical trauma of escaping Vietnam, or to develop the skills that would have enabled better employment options and lifestyles in Australia. Disengaged Vietnamese youth were quite often left to navigate life in Australia without a lot of guidance from their parents, but at the same time felt significant pressure to succeed academically and to become adults capable of looking after their parents when the time came. A small percentage of this generation has had problems with drug addiction and crime.

Meeting the expectations of these parents was revealed as tied up in the sponsorship pattern most apparent during the Coalition years of government. Several interviewees spoke of the role their parents had played in introducing them to their future spouse from Vietnam. It is possible that some of the young men with drug addiction problems saw marriage to ‘traditional’ Vietnamese women as a way of appeasing parents who had been disappointed in the choices and lifestyles of their sons.

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Most significantly, the stories and memories of the people interviewed for this chapter reinforced the tendency for insularity of many Vietnamese communities living in Australia. The cultural preference for relying upon each other and not seeking support from institutions or individuals outside Vietnamese communities, combined with the conditions of sponsorship—which structurally encourage families to provide early settlement support to new arrivals—created Vietnamese migrant communities that were unfamiliar and unengaged with mainstream services and bodies. While this has led to examples of strong community cohesiveness and Vietnamese identity in Australia, it has conversely also contributed to individuals and families coping with enormous problems with little assistance: a legacy of unaddressed trauma; loss and separation of family; unrelenting pressure to provide for family members; adapting to a new homeland; and issues associated with living in a nation with a historical suspicion and hostility towards migrants from parts of Asia (as noted in earlier chapters).

The following chapter will continue the focus on perspectives from Vietnamese people on family reunion, sponsorship and settlement in Australia, through an analysis of Vietnamese community publications produced during the eras in question. To complement the personal stories of this chapter, the following discussion will explore how these issues were viewed and managed from a community perspective.
CHAPTER FIVE

Community Reflections on the Family Reunion Program

The previous chapter explored how the policies of the family reunion program shaped the daily lives of a selected group of Vietnamese migrants to Australia. The intricacies of sponsorship were displayed as strands of a web that caught many families into patterns of dependency that would otherwise perhaps not exist. While several of the families interviewed found this situation quite manageable, others did not, and the pressures of sponsorship severed relationships and stretched them beyond repair.

The interview material rebalances the perspectives offered in this thesis, by contrasting personal accounts of living in Australia under the conditions of family migration with the political logic underlying key parts of the program in earlier chapters. This chapter will provide further evidence of the experiences of Vietnamese directly involved in the family reunion program, but this time through an analysis of community publications. Small magazines or other publications have been produced by migrant communities in Australia for several decades, but have thus far received little academic attention.1 Several small and important studies are the exception to this, and it is intended that this chapter will contribute towards this growing field of study.2 Rob Cover, Associate Professor in Communication and Media Studies in Western Australia, notes the multi-faceted importance of these publications:

News publications written by and for minority community groups in Australian locales provide inclusive representation of news, personages and issues relevant and of interest to minority communities, a sense of representation in print where otherwise neglected in “mainstream” press publications, the maintenance of language and culture for those dispersed from environments of origin and a community sense of ownership over the “means of communication.”3

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Publications produced by Vietnamese communities in Australia have also served these purposes. Community publications have operated as forums where festivals, celebrations and special events have been explained to generations born in Australia, and where issues relating to living in Australia as a family with Vietnamese heritage could be examined. This chapter will argue that an additional function served by these publications was to consolidate bonds between Vietnamese individuals and families, by providing an accessible forum through which awareness of common experiences could be raised and shared. The publications worked in concert with a cultural preference to rely on intra-community rather than non-Vietnamese support, the shared circumstances of migrating through the family reunion program and existing relationships between families and friends, to further reinforce community identity and fellowship.

The following discussion, which extends the analysis of family reunion and its associated patterns of dependency, explores publications produced by two Vietnamese organisations as evidence of community awareness of and engagement with the reality of sponsorship and the associated conditions. Taken as a whole, the publications offer a significant view into the opportunities, challenges and barriers to belonging to Australia faced by Vietnamese during the period 1983–2007.

The publications: Integration and Vietnamese Women

*Integration, The Magazine for Multicultural and Vietnamese Issues* was produced by the Vietnamese Community in Australia (VCA) – New South Wales Chapter, which formed in 1975 out of an organisation named the Federation of Vietnamese for Freedom Association (FVFA). Integration appears to have been produced bi-monthly and was largely in circulation

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4 Benedict Anderson’s seminal text *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1982, Second Edition 1991) demonstrated the crucial link between capitalism and printing in creating and consolidating perceptions and understandings of nationalism. Accessing a common print media is argued to create a sense of community between individuals who will never meet, but will share in reading about the same events, issues and news.

5 The FVFA was originally established to assist Vietnamese students studying in Australia at the time of the fall of Saigon. The FVFA broadened its focus and changed its name to the VCA in 1977, when it became apparent that Vietnamese people living in Australia required representation on national issues and those that involved federal law. Since 1977, state and territory branches of the VCA have formed and work together on issues that involve Vietnamese people in more than two states.
during the mid to late 1990s and early 2000s. The aims and objectives of the magazine, as described on the front covers, included: to assist Vietnamese members in settling and integrating successfully into their new country; to promote mutual understanding and tolerance between Vietnamese-Australians and other communities in Australia; to provide cultural data for providers and planners of services relevant to the Vietnamese Australian community; and to provide a forum for those interested in Vietnamese settlement and multicultural issues. Contributors to the magazine extend from community members, academics and social workers, to school teachers and students, thus providing a variety of perspectives and views. Integration was an English-language magazine, which would have limited its value as a reference and guide to predominantly second generation Vietnamese, or members of the first generation with access to interpreters. While this fact greatly assisted the researcher who is without Vietnamese-language skills, it also influenced the extent to which Integration could be viewed as a publication which directly reflected the experiences of many Vietnamese. Rather, the magazine offers insights into issues experienced by second (and possibly third) generation Vietnamese and the efforts to engage with non-Vietnamese who may have picked up the publication.

Phụ Nữ Việt (Vietnamese Women) was first published in 1984 and was originally a small publication, stapled together by a team of volunteers. The content, appearance and scope of Vietnamese Women increased over time, however, to become a monthly publication that covered a wide range of issues, celebrations and achievements of members of the Vietnamese community in Victoria. Still produced on an annual basis by the Australian Vietnamese Women’s Welfare Association, the bilingual (Vietnamese and English) magazine has provided a vital space for discussing issues facing Vietnamese families in Australia, for explaining cultural practices and traditions and for debating various political issues in Vietnam or Australia. The publication also plays an important role in one of the key functions of the Australian Vietnamese Women’s Welfare Association, which has been to advocate and attract

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6This publication was initially published between 1984 and 1986 as Tạp chí tương trợ trên đất mới (Mutual assistance in the new land), before the title change to Phụ Nữ Việt (Vietnamese Women).

7The Australian Vietnamese Women’s Welfare Association is a Victorian-based organisation that was founded in 1983 for the purpose of assisting Vietnamese people to settle in Australia. Although the organisation has a focus on women, it also provides services and training to men and families.
funding for crucial services.\textsuperscript{8} Through the analysis and discussion of issues affecting the wellbeing of Vietnamese individuals and families, \textit{Vietnamese Women} assists with drawing attention to those spaces where increased government services could improve the circumstances and lives of many people. The contributions made by academics, community and social workers support this aim by providing insightful observations about settlement issues experienced by Vietnamese families. Working closely with communities, these researchers produced significant evidence and conceptual analysis of the key issues affecting those involved in family reunion. The production of articles in both Vietnamese and English enables \textit{Vietnamese Women} to be examined as a rich source of commentary and observations on the conditions of Vietnamese settlement.

Crucially, both publications reveal that the issues being debated in parliament outlined in Chapters Two and Three were also being discussed through a different lens by the people directly affected. The publications provide evidence of the struggles of Vietnamese families, especially when mainstream services failed, and the pressures and dependencies encouraged by sponsorship. This chapter highlights first the difficulties of family and community life under the Hawke/Keating governments, a period characterised by long terms of separation between family members and the first stages in establishing a new life in Australia following the end of the Vietnam War. The discussion then moves on to the Coalition years, when issues experienced by the children of families reunited during the Labor term of government were a focus of concern. These years also saw the emergence of a new pattern of family migration involving the sponsorship of Vietnamese women by Vietnamese-Australian men under spouse or fiancé visas, which led to new analyses of gender relations and roles in a cross-cultural context.

\textsuperscript{8} Nancy Viviani notes the success of this organisation in raising awareness of the need for particular services for Vietnamese families in \textit{The Indochinese in Australia 1975 – 1995: from burnt boats to barbeques} (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996), p122.
Family reunification under Hawke and Keating

The early publications of *Vietnamese Women* reflect the sadness that accompanied family life when relatives, who were normally part of the household, were absent. The pattern of family life involving reciprocal care of grandparents, parents, adult siblings, children, aunts and uncles and cousins was unable to be translated into Australian life.\(^9\) As explained in earlier chapters, the process of coming to Australia through the family reunion program, in conjunction with the displacement of relatives caused by the war, meant families were splintered for years at a time. Individuals who had made it to Australia through selection from a refugee camp had to navigate and follow through the long and sometimes corrupt bureaucratic process before their family members could join them in their new home. Years in Australia went by without the presence of those who would normally make life meaningful and joyous.

This loss is described early in *Vietnamese Women*’s circulation. An editorial in 1984, for example, described the ‘daunting challenge’\(^10\) presented to Vietnamese families in Australia living without extended family networks. The crucial role extended family played historically in Vietnam, when the nation experienced waves of invasion and war with the French and Chinese,\(^11\) was heralded as the traditional ‘trump card’ that ‘has been weakened by geographical dispersion... there is hardly a family that is not spread over 2, 3 or even 4 continents, including Asia, America, Australia and Europe.\(^12\) In Australia, many Vietnamese could not ‘rely on (the) network of close and distant relatives in hard times,’\(^13\) and the challenges of settlement appeared more acute without such support.

In numerous examples during this early period after the end of the Vietnam War, it was not just the absence of extended family members that complicated the settlement process: husbands and wives were frequently separated for many years before reunification was possible. As noted in earlier chapters, spouse migration grew to comprise 40 per cent of the overall


\(^13\) Ibid., p4.
migration program by the early 1990s. Professor Trang Thomas, who has extensively researched migrant settlement issues, commented in an article she contributed to *Vietnamese Women* in 1989, that ‘long separation (can bring) changes which make (couples) intolerant of each other. Some women (have) found they had to provide for themselves and their children, against their own wish and expectations’. A transformation in traditional gender roles was sometimes an outcome of separation caused by the corruption and lack of infrastructure and clear migration procedures detailed in the previous chapter. Thomas’ article also highlighted the broader dangers inherent in failing to achieve financial independence from husbands for Vietnamese women, an issue demonstrated to have disastrous consequences in the preceding chapter.

The analysis in *Vietnamese Women* extended to the creation of family units with new lines of responsibility, which were enabled by sponsorship. The occurrence of Vietnamese siblings living together without parents was an issue briefly raised in the interviews conducted for this thesis. A preliminary search of databases indicates this is an area of research that has thus far received little attention. *Vietnamese Women* thus makes an important contribution to early knowledge of this issue, where older siblings, who were still teenagers, found themselves in charge of very young children and had to carry the responsibility of ensuring their younger siblings went to school and were materially and emotionally provided for. Dr Marta Rado, a teacher and researcher of bilingual education, participated in a seminar on ‘Relations and communications between parents and children with special reference to the Vietnamese’,

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17 The experiences of ‘Lam’ included responsibility for younger siblings without the support of parents residing in Australia. See material relating to Interview no.9 with ‘Lam’, 1 December 2005, Richmond in Chapter Four.
18 An early and important exception to this is the PhD thesis written by Diane Zulfacar, ‘Policies, programs and outcomes for unaccompanied Vietnamese refugee minors in Australia’ University of New South Wales, School of Social Work, 1988. See also Ruth Frieze, ‘Family setting in Indochina and Australia’ in *The Price of Freedom: Young Indochinese Refugees in Australia*, eds Jerzy Krupinski and Graham Burrows (Sydney: Pergamon Press, 1986), pp82–95, for an analysis of family formations found in a selected sample of young Indochinese refugees. The majority of adolescents and young adults in this sample left their homeland without their parents.
which was organised by the Australian Vietnamese Women’s Welfare Association in 1985. Rado’s paper was printed in *Vietnamese Women*, and it explains the trap of ongoing poverty and isolation many older siblings found themselves in. Rado quotes a young girl:

I am living with my younger brothers, no adult living with us... We are hungry for affection. We miss our parents very much. As my parents are not here I have to look after my brothers and I don’t have enough time to study.¹⁹

Teenagers had to become parents to young children, which left little room for dealing with the traumas of escaping Vietnam, leaving refugee camps and settling in Australia without the support and presence of parental figures they so desperately needed themselves.²⁰ Skill development was also thwarted for this cohort as they prioritised quickly finding employment to support younger siblings and family overseas. Pursuing studies, including English-language training was less immediately important. Rado underlines that ‘without qualifications they will remain unskilled workers with the accompanying low wages and insecurity of employment’.²¹ This pattern lead to the creation of a class of young Vietnamese who arrived in Australia during the early to mid 1980s, which never had the necessary support or opportunities to establish the type of dexterity needed to survive economic recession and revival.²² Hien Dang, who came to Australia as a ‘detached refugee’ (a child without parents), reflects on the importance of parental guidance in emotional and social maturation: ‘A lot of children without parents don’t know how to be. They lack positive role-modelling. This factor couples with their low self-esteem and can be a drawback during job interview situation’.²³

Those families in Australia that were fortunate enough to have adults heading households still faced enormous settlement issues, including estrangement between parents and their children, which was discussed at length in *Vietnamese Women*.²⁴ Several of these issues stemmed from

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²⁰ Ibid.
²¹ See also: Jerzy Krupinski and Graham Burrows, ‘Psychiatric Disorders in Adolescents and Young Adults’ and Bruce Tonge et al., ‘Psychiatric Disorders in Children’ both in *The Price of Freedom: Young Indochinese Refugees in Australia*, eds. Jerzy Krupinski and Graham Burrows (Sydney: Pergamon Press, 1986) pp122–135 and pp136–159, which detail the outcomes of a study of a selected sample of Indochinese refugees in Australia. The mental health and wellbeing of young adults, adolescents and children were assessed as part of this study, including the extent of their recovery from escaping Indochina.
²² Nancy Viviani noted in her study *The Indochinese in Australia 1975–1995* that Vietnamese unemployment was particularly sensitive to both ‘prevailing economic conditions and to the variations in the numbers of new arrivals’, p71.
²⁴ Examples include: Cam Nguyen, ‘Relations and Communication between parents and children with special reference to Vietnamese’ *Phụ Nữ Việt* 10-11 (December 1984): pp6–7; Dr Nguyen Trieu Dan, ‘Language
the urgent need for both parents to leap into the workforce to bring in sufficient income to provide for themselves, their children and family members living overseas. This included Vietnamese women, who were observed in Australia to have two jobs: one to provide services to her family, the other to earn money. The care for her husband, children and parents is the traditional role of women. To earn money is a new role thrust on her by the circumstances of starting from scratch in a new country.\textsuperscript{25}

Parents were often working so hard and for such long hours that family life disintegrated. Cam Nguyen, founder of the Australian Vietnamese Women’s Welfare Association, comments that ‘(m)any families cannot even fit in an evening meal together’.\textsuperscript{26} Parents also did not have the time or resources to guide children through the emotional trauma of migration and the associated issues of losing family.\textsuperscript{27}

The reduced space for family life was described as contributing to the problems concerning both English language acquisition and retention of the Vietnamese language. Parents were observed to ‘spend most of their time at work... (and) because of their age, lack [of] time and opportunities... cannot progress as fast as the children [in their study of the English language].’\textsuperscript{28} In conjunction with the reduction in tuition hours for new migrants in the ‘On Arrival’ program, which was to the ‘extent that over half of the students leaving the Program do not reach the survival level’,\textsuperscript{29} parents were at an immediate disadvantage compared to their children. Parents were generally unable to ‘catch-up’ on English language acquisition at a later stage, as services delivered by the Department of Immigration were largely only available to migrants who had lived in Australia for less than two years. Viviani estimated that by the early 1990s, approximately 350,000 to 500,000 people required English language training, but were

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\textsuperscript{25} Editorial in \textit{Phụ Nữ Việt} 16 (October 1985).
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{28} Dr Nguyen Trieu Dan, ‘Language maintenance and language policy’, \textit{Phụ Nữ Việt} 10–11 (December, 1984), p18.
\end{flushleft}
considered ineligible because of the length of their residency.\textsuperscript{30} The vulnerability that results from prioritising earning an income above all else is also mentioned in a later issue, when Ngoc Trang Thomas comments that should adults find themselves unemployed ‘[r]etraining is... difficult as they had thrown themselves immediately into work on their arrival, and now they have been here too long to be eligible for English lessons at migrant centres.’\textsuperscript{31}

Increased exposure to the English language at school enabled Vietnamese children to develop English language skills far superior to those of their parents. This was described in an early \textit{Vietnamese Women} Editorial as disrupting the natural authority parents had over their children in Australia.\textsuperscript{32} Children quite often found themselves in possession of language skills that meant they were better equipped to deal with the world external to Vietnamese community life, but were simultaneously expected to demonstrate the respect and obedience to parents that was traditionally linked to wisdom and knowledge. \textit{Vietnamese Women} demonstrates how in Australia, Vietnamese parents frequently lost the ability to communicate wisdom with their children, or could not actually provide the guidance to their children that once would have warranted or supported traditional expressions of respect.

A seminar on ‘Relations and Communication between parents and children with special attention to the Vietnamese’ in 1984 included a paper in which it was argued that ‘it is therefore necessary for migrant communities to keep their own language so that parents can maintain their intellectual superiority.’\textsuperscript{33} Dr Nguyen Trieu Dan explains:

\begin{quote}
At home, all parents and elders speak in Vietnamese, however [for various reasons including working long hours away from the home] the time they spend with the children is limited. Moreover, children learn new concepts and acquire new interests from school, from their peer groups, from TV, i.e. from outside the family. Parents and elders often do not or cannot keep up and soon are left behind. The gap in communication between parents and children is not only a problem of language but is also caused by diverging concerns and interests.\textsuperscript{34}
\end{quote}

Parents were painfully aware of the communication gulf but were unable to do anything about it. A Vietnamese mother sadly admitted to researcher Ngoc Trang Thomas that ‘her children

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\textsuperscript{30} Viviani, \textit{The Indochinese in Australia from 1975}, p33.  
\textsuperscript{31} Thomas, ‘The psychological needs of Vietnamese women in Australia’, p18  
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are ashamed of her because of her mannerisms, her broken English, or her style of clothing’. 35
Children had ‘to assume responsibility as provider and interpreter between the older members
of the family and the wider Australian society’, 36 while their parents were only able to develop
expertise in navigating the much smaller world of community networks and the relentless
routine of earning sufficient income in low-skilled jobs to support fragmented families. This
common experience of alienation from children, insecure employment and limited English
skills, in conjunction with the structures of dependency encouraged by sponsorship
arrangements, consolidated bonds between this generation of Vietnamese adults, and possibly
contributed towards the insularity of Vietnamese communities. These factors have sometimes
made integration with the broader society difficult.

A transformation in gender roles in many families was another consequence of both parents
entering the workforce. *Vietnamese Women* devotes several pages to explaining and discussing
the new responsibilities and expectations for Vietnamese men and women, with a particular
focus on supporting Vietnamese women to confidently achieve a level of independence not
generally expressed in Vietnam. 37 While women also clearly worked in Vietnam, one
*Vietnamese Women* Editorial in 1985 observed that the routine was quite different: ‘women’s
salaries were seen as only adjunct and used as either spending money or additional savings.’ 38
The expectations in Australia, however, were quite different:

> When a women goes out to work, whether in a factory or an office, her job is not necessarily any
> lighter or her salary any less important to the family than that of her husband. Is that therefore fair
> that after work, the whole burden of housework should fall to her? 39

Many Vietnamese households in Australia thus became sites for the reworking of entrenched
gendered behaviours as men and women coped with the challenges of settlement in Australia.
Patterns of employment and household duties were sometimes further complicated by male
unemployment. 40 D’Mello notes that due to the types of employment available to people with
limited skills, it was quite often women who secured employment before their husbands could:

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for an overview of roles prescribed by gender and age in Vietnamese families living in Vietnam.
39 Ibid., p5.
40 The insights into gender and employment amongst Vietnamese living in Australia provided by *Integration* and
*Phụ Nữ Việt* are consistent with the conclusions drawn by Viviani *The Indochinese in Australia 1975 – 1993*, p66.
When this happens, there is a definite role reversal of functions: the man becomes the dependent spouse, a reality quite new and therefore, quite difficult to accept on the part of the men, but quite exciting on the part of the women. And even when the father or husband finally finds employment, the women usually cannot afford to relinquish their jobs for financial reasons, and also because they find in the paid employment new dimensions to their life.\(^\text{41}\)

Vietnamese women frequently experienced a new found pleasure in their ability to contribute to the household income in a more significant way than previously. *Vietnamese Women* offered a new perspective on the intersection between gender, employment and English language acquisition in D’Mello’s article, which challenged evidence that men had stronger English language skills and greater success at integrating into the broader society than women.\(^\text{42}\) If women found employment in industries or workplaces where exposure to the English language occurred, women were able to obtain skills in comprehension and communication that enabled interaction outside Vietnamese community networks and at a level more extensive than their husbands. D’Mello observes ‘it is in the paid work that (Asian women) come to hear, see, and therefore, learn of other lifestyles, of other options, of other possibilities which they have never heard of before.’\(^\text{43}\) Women were able to establish new identities that were partly linked to Australian norms and practices and which were not entirely formed within the parameters of Vietnamese values and behaviours. Sometimes these new identities were incompatible with existing expectations. Several researchers attributed strains on relationships to an inability to adapt to new possibilities for many Vietnamese women in Australia.\(^\text{44}\)

The latter issues of *Vietnamese Women* discuss the concerns facing aged Vietnamese living in Australia. As noted in previous chapters, the sponsorship of elderly Vietnamese by their adult

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\(^{42}\) Statistics on English language acquisition amongst Vietnamese Australians reveal men have higher rates of strong English communication skills than women. This is generally explained as the result of women staying home with children and living in environments where informal, Vietnamese-speaking networks are sufficient to carry out day-to-day transactions. See Mandy Thomas, ‘The Vietnamese in Australia’, *Asians in Australia: Patterns of Migration and Settlement*, eds. James E. Coughlan and Deborah J.McNamara (South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1997), p284 and *Victorian Community Profiles: 2006 Census: Viet-Nam Born*, Victorian Multicultural Commission 2007, p14.

\(^{43}\) D’Mello, ‘Image, Status and Reality of Asian Women in Asia and in Australia’, p22

\(^{44}\) Ibid. And Nguyen-Xuan-Thu, ‘The Vietnamese in Australia’, *Phụ Nữ Việt* 35 (1985): p15–19. Mandy Thomas notes that it is quite possible that divorce and separation rates are under-reported in Census data among Vietnamese ‘due to a generally negative perception of divorce and separation within the Vietnam-born community’. See Thomas, ‘The Vietnamese in Australia’, p283. See also Hung Cam Thai, ‘The Vietnamese Double Gender Revolt: Globalizing Marriage Options in the Twenty-First Century’, *Amerasia Journal* 29, no1 (2003): pp51–77 for a study into how attitudes towards marriage have been shaped by migration patterns of Vietnamese to countries including Australia. Vietnamese men living overseas demonstrated a preference for women believed to embody ‘traditional’ Vietnamese values, while women residing in Vietnam believed these same men were more likely to follow an egalitarian model of marriage and partnership.
children was frequently a complicated experience for all concerned. The challenges of coping in a new country within the confines of rapidly transforming family circumstances sometimes proved to be overwhelming.\textsuperscript{45} Traditional roles for elderly grandparents as authority figures or a source of advice and wisdom for younger generations were incompatible with the level of dependency on children and grandchildren. Elderly grandparents quite often relied on their children and grandchildren economically, emotionally and socially when sponsored through the family reunion program; their access to an ongoing income was restricted in their first years after arrival. David Cox in \textit{Vietnamese Women} draws a clear connection between the experiences of many Vietnamese elderly in Australia and the implications of sponsorship through the family reunion program:

\textit{The fundamental point is that if you want to destroy fragile, personal relationships across the generations, create situation of financial dependence. We do so for many immigrant elderly to save but a very small expenditure, which could mean the difference between the possibility of healthy independent self-esteem and undignified enforced financial dependence on another whose emotional support is crucial.}\textsuperscript{46}

**Reflections on Family Reunion under the Hawke/Keating Governments**

Cox’s analysis of the sponsorship of elderly parents speaks to broader problems of the family reunion program and the hallmarks of sponsorship. The issues associated with this means of migration to Australia was the focus of many articles, as family tensions and difficulties increasingly became understood as partly linked to the demands of sponsorship. Cox extended his observations of the family reunion program and implications for elderly Vietnamese to note:

\textit{Australia is so often ambivalent about migration. We recruit or we accept migrants, but are so often unwilling to follow through in ways that acceptance of integration demand. How in all conscience can we accept elderly people from Vietnam and hand full responsibility for them for five years to their still struggling sponsors?}\textsuperscript{47}

Such an observation highlights the arguments of earlier chapters. On the one hand the family reunion policy conveys a strong value in preserving family units; but on the other, the delicate


\textsuperscript{46} Professor David Cox, ‘Some comments on “New Land, Last Home”’, \textit{Phụ Nữ Việt} 39, (September, 1993) p25.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., p26.
bonds that connect family members together are strained and put under immense pressure as sponsorship requires a level of dependence that was quite often unsustainable.

In publications such as *Integration* the informal networks consolidated through chains of sponsorship, and the relationships of dependency inherent in the family reunion program, were noted to play a crucial role in early settlement experiences of new migrants. Diane Barnes, a researcher of refugee issues, confirmed the role of the Vietnamese community in supporting new migrants to Australia in her reflection on the first twenty years of Vietnamese settlement in a special issue of *Integration: The Positive Twenty Years*:

> Apart from… two programs (to assist refugees to find housing and jobs) and the income support measures that are generally available to all Australians through the Department of Social Security, the burden of assisting newcomers has largely been borne by the Vietnamese community itself through sponsorship agreements. This has been especially the case as the basis on which Vietnamese enter this country has changed from special refugee intakes to family reunion and other mainstream immigration categories.  

Sponsorship arrangements filled gaps in service needs, and reinforced community cohesiveness and relationships as external sources of support proved to be minimal, or absent.

The disquiet and controversy generated by the admission of Vietnamese refugees and family reunion migrants during the 1980s referred to in earlier chapters, is also confronted in the publications. The reliance on other Vietnamese family and friends in the context of a lack of formal assistance is explained as partly driven by a need for familiarity in a strange and often hostile new country. An early article in *Vietnamese Women* explored the issue of ‘enclaves’ as a myth perpetuated in the media that contributed towards anti-Vietnamese sentiment, but which actually played an important role in settlement. The relationships of dependency fostered through sponsorship arrangements encouraged the likelihood that families would settle in close proximity to each other, as the support offered through these arrangements was the only option available. The author, Cam Nguyen, founder of the Australian Vietnamese Women’s Welfare Association, very reasonably states that:

>(t)he rationale for migrants congregating in certain areas is that if you have a poor command of English, and there is real or perceived hostility or indifference of the host community, you would try and rent or buy houses close to your countrymen so as to get help and companionship.

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Cam Nguyen continued to explain the convenience for government in encouraging (deliberately or otherwise) migrants to settle close together, a strategy adopted by the Australian government as noted in earlier chapters, but also observed by Nguyen in *Vietnamese Women*:

> Neighbourhoods of Vietnamese are explained as also having advantages for the governments that provide settlement services, as it is more efficient to allocate resources in areas where many people will benefit from them. This is cited as one of the reasons why the governments of the United Kingdom did away with the ‘dispersal’ policy, where Vietnamese refugees were ‘spread...throughout the country, sometimes in groups of less than five families’.  

Nguyen-Xuan-Thu, Professor of Vietnamese Studies, confirms Nguyen’s earlier point in 1988 when he explains:

> The reason why the Vietnamese have come to live in (Cabramatta, Marrickville (NSW), Footscray, Richmond, Springvale (Victoria), Woodville (South Australia) and Darra (Queensland)) is simple: in a new country with a new language and strange culture, they need help from each other.

Demonstrating the longevity of this issue, Diane Barnes commented ten years later that ‘(re)search has consistently shown that the settlement process in any new country is helped, first and foremost, by the support and understanding that comes from the refugees’ own ethnic community’.

*Vietnamese Women* also contained objective reflections on the times when the coherence and strength of Vietnamese communities worked against the individuals and families who could have benefited from services and linkages with the broader Australian community. An article on Indochinese youth in 1992 noted that ‘the cultural value which leads to the cohesive family unit means that problems are always solved within the confines of the family’. This was problematic when the issues faced by some families required specialist intervention. The authors note, however, that ‘any disclosure of problems to the outside world is seen as shameful and weak. This attitude is still maintained and therefore inhibits any acceptance of the social work concept.’ Family and community closeness was observed to impede reaching out for external support, and compounding issues to the point where family breakdown was increasingly likely.

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50 Ibid.
51 Ibid., p15.
54 Ibid., p31.
Family life under the Howard Government

The themes of family relationships and the family migration program remain relevant to this chapter, as the discussion moves into the years during which the Coalition was in government. The following section explores the reflections in *Vietnamese Women* and *Integration* from 1997–2008, a period that saw the increased application of rationalist criteria to the family reunion program. A notable difference in the articles contributed to the publications during this era was a greater awareness of the implications of the design of the family reunion program, sponsorship, and broader issues associated with settling in Australia as low-skilled migrants. For this reason, the discussion below combines analysis of family life with the outcomes of sponsorship arrangements, cuts to particular visa categories, and the strain of supporting generations of families with limited financial resources.

Reunification with adult parents, an issue that has featured prominently in this thesis, continued to be a focus of reflection during this time. *Integration* in particular, devoted many pages to dissecting the sad consequences of obstructing the migration of ‘economically unproductive’ migrants. A poem contributed to this publication succinctly expressed the dismay felt by many Vietnamese:

You often said you valued the family
now you say because of the economy
the family reunion must be cut
but your savage cuts drives us nuts

You often said you were proud
of the humane heritage of this country
now you have changed your heart
and see our aged relatives as a non economic commodity

We might have to cope with the pain
of not ever living with our aged parents again
but while we, mum and dad, labour elsewhere
our children will miss the homely child care
the healthy household, the family love
the role model for the proper behaviour
What if our children later get lost

Who says the elderly relatives
do not contribute to the economy, socially and culturally?56

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Confirming the experiences recounted in the previous chapter, this poem refers to the loss of intergenerational relationships, as grandparents were denied the opportunity to look after their grandchildren. The irony of the implications of changes made to the family reunion program by a government that espoused family values was not lost on this generation of adult children, who had hoped to live in Australia with their parents. The same (anonymous) author penned another poem titled ‘The Lost Children’\(^\text{57}\) that highlights the experiences of coming to Australia as a young adult refugee, charged with the responsibility of sponsoring out other relatives, and then setting up lives without extended family networks.

> We have been waiting for our parents to come
> so that we can start having children
> now your cut is like a shot from a gun
> which kills off our hope and plan

> Can’t you see the economic values
> Offered by our aged relatives
> Child caring housekeeping, cooking, cleaning
> Neighbourhood watching and family counselling
> Teaching you children of the right and virtues
> Didn’t you say you care about family values

The unfairness of the cuts to aged relative visas was commented upon in the following edition, when the Editor noted that many families would happily take on the responsibility of providing for their elderly parents, if they had the personal and financial resources to do so:

> Many of them are proud, responsible, caring and respectful people who would not mind caring for their elderly relatives regardless. However given the fact that most of them are in low income brackets, to shoulder a new burden of welfare and health care for their elderly relatives would only further erode their financial status.\(^\text{58}\)

Of those elderly parents who are able to migrate to Australia, the difficulties involved in adapting to life in Australia mentioned in previous chapters, were comprehensively dissected. Diane Barnes contributed articles to \textit{Integration} that explained the challenges experienced by the families concerned as a result of the traditional hierarchy of \textit{usefulness} being inverted. Barnes argues that older generations in Vietnam were able to accumulate experience and knowledge because ‘the culture and lifestyles change(d) very little’.\(^\text{59}\) Aged relatives (were)


thus able to refer to strategies that were effective in the past when the family is presented with problems. Property was also generally passed through families, so elderly parents contributed in this way to the family income. These two roles were disrupted, however, when aged relatives come to join family in Australia:

Much of the older generation’s knowledge and experience is no longer seen by the younger generations to be relevant to the entirely new challenges. Furthermore, the older generation is least likely to be economically productive in the new country, and rather than providing the family with a home or land, they are likely to be largely dependent on the provisions their grown children make for them and/or a government pension. In Australia, the grandparent generation is in danger of becoming a drain on the family’s resources rather than being the primary contributor.

The same generation that was attempting to sponsor and provide for elderly parents were also, at times, managing complicated and fraught relationships with their disengaged children. Drug abuse among Vietnamese youth, an issue mentioned in earlier chapters, was a source of extreme anxiety for many Vietnamese parents. Coupled with a renewed focus on the practice of deporting migrants who committed particular crimes, the urgency in dealing with this problem escalated.

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60 Barnes, ‘Tension between the generations’, p37.
61 Ibid., p38.
62 In 2014, Vietnamese-born prisoners comprised the highest number of non-Australian prisoners for drug-related offences. See Prisoner Characteristics, Australia, 2014, ABS. This does not include youth who were born in Australia to parents born in Vietnam.
64 In 1998 the Department of Immigration began to investigate the legal possibility of deporting ‘offenders with migrant backgrounds’ who had committed crimes that normally attracted a one year prison sentence, and were within 10 years of achieving permanent residency. This plan was consistent with the increased emphasis on ‘the character’ of Australia’s migrants, which was increasingly used by the Coalition to justify broad changes to the immigration program. Selection criteria were narrowed and accessing income support became increasingly difficult.
65 A memorandum of understanding signed by both the Australian and Vietnamese Governments enabled the deportation of Vietnamese nationals back to Vietnam if they were convicted of particular crimes, even if they had obtained permanent residency in Australia. This memorandum of understanding was signed in June 2001, and by the end of the Coalition’s term in government led to the deportation of approximately 80 people back to Vietnam. See M.Madigan, ‘Foreign criminals face deportation’, The Herald Sun, 6 July 2001; Editorial, ‘Migrants deported after jail’, The Daily Telegraph, 26 February 2002; N.A, ‘Inmates wait to go home’, The Daily Telegraph, 13 February 2001.

Deportation was presented by the Coalition to the public as an extension of an immigration program that only permitted those migrants who could make meaningful contributions to Australia, and were not criminally dangerous to stay. The former immigration minister, Philip Ruddock, explained that ‘no government apologises’ for (facilitating criminal deportations) of ‘people who pose considerable risk to Australia’. Similar to the logic which framed the reduction in visas granted to elderly migrants, deporting criminals with migrant backgrounds supported the Coalition’s creed that the party would always and only defend those citizens who were productive, self-sufficient and morally sound. See Glenn Nicholls, ‘Gone with hardly a trace: deportees in immigration policy’ in Does History Matter? Making and Debating citizenship immigration and refugee policy in Australia and New Zealand, eds. Klaus Newmann and Gwenda Tavan (Canberra: the Australian National University E Press, 2009), pp9–24 for a history of Australian deportation policy. Nicholls’ chapter discusses how deportation policy has long
Vietnamese Women attempted to redress the balance in political views underlying the policy of deporting criminals. An article containing the following quote was included in one issue, which challenged the idea that Vietnamese were ‘unAustralian’, in the sense that they embodied values and practices abhorred by Australians:

The Vietnamese community (amongst other migrant communities) in particular, has been portrayed as somehow different to the “normal Australian” community in terms of attitudes to violence, the value of human life and the law... We’re told that cultural hangovers produce an acceptance of violence and a lack of concern about its consequences, that this is a community which tolerates illegality and actively obstructs the police by maintaining a wall of silence.66

Contributors to Integration and Vietnamese Women directly linked the problem of drug abuse among Vietnamese youth to the trauma of migration and complications inherent in the family reunion program. An Integration Editorial commented:

Social experts believe that these offenders are more likely to come from a group who have experienced a troubled adolescence due to immigration stress, including suffering from torture and trauma, cultural alienation, isolation and other settlement concerns. Had the immigration authorities understood better their situations and supported them accordingly in their efforts to seek family support through family reunion the circumstances may have not turned so sour.67

Children and young adults who tried to find their own way in Australia without the guidance and support of a family were recognised as experiencing increased rates of social and economic isolation, which in turn sometimes led to criminal activity. The Australian Vietnamese Women’s Welfare Association actively supported the people involved. Vietnamese Women listed the provision of support to Vietnamese prisoners and their families as one of the important programs run by the organisation during 1996–97. The profile of prisoners described in Vietnamese Women is consistent with that provided in Integration, where ‘most of the prisoners (were) young males involved in drug use and trade who were, according to a preliminary survey, isolated by ethnicity, culture and language and receiving little support from either community or families’68. Parents of such youths are described as lacking the power or authority over their children in Australia that may have existed in Vietnam, or as unable to spend sufficient time with their children to exert necessary influence over their decisions.69
A penultimate theme for discussion in the publications is that of gender roles and identity in Australia. In comparison to articles on this issue under the Labor Governments, the focus was less on gender role transformation, and more about issues of exploitation and vulnerability experienced by Vietnamese women. Contributors to the publications identified many key challenges associated with establishing new lives in a cultural context that was significantly different from that which many of the women originated. While the articles that analyse gender roles in Australia rarely refer to the family reunion program, the prevalence of reflections on issues facing vulnerable women is indicative of the dominant demographic entering through sponsorship arrangements under the Coalition government: young Vietnamese-born men and women on either finance or spouse visas. The social issues connected to this pattern became a primary focus for discussion in the publications, as community members came to realise that sponsorship conditions, in conjunction with existing social and economic issues, complicated the relationships between many young Vietnamese men and women.

Professor of Psychology Trang Thomas, for example, contributed a paper on the psychological needs of Vietnamese women in Australia. In her discussion, Thomas outlines how the needs for safety, love, self-esteem and self-actualisation in Vietnamese women are met (or not met) in the Australian context. Thomas primarily discusses how these needs are met within families, or how family life influences the extent to which they are able to develop. Concern and worry about family in Vietnam is described as a factor that disrupts the capacity for many Vietnamese women to provide for themselves. Prioritising the needs of their family in Australia also affects the potential for many Vietnamese women to develop skills and access education.

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73 Abraham Maslow argues these are the core needs people must have satisfied before they are able to live happy lives. Abraham Maslow, *Motivation and personality* (New York: Harper, 1954).

74 Thomas, ‘The psychological needs of Vietnamese women in Australia’, p18.
In the work she performs as a counsellor (in addition to her academic pursuits), a central theme to Thomas’ advice to Vietnamese women on how to live in Australia is that ‘the best security is the ability to support oneself. One cannot rely on the support of a man. If a woman is not financially independent, she is not independent at all’. Self-esteem, self-actualisation and self-love are necessary, and make obtaining employment and financial independence easier. Thomas admits, however, that these are all qualities that women in Vietnamese are traditionally not encouraged to develop. Instead, humility, sacrifice and self-effacement are thought to be more appropriate virtues for women to embody. Life in Australia then, offers opportunities for Vietnamese women to develop the skills and personal attributes that assist with self-reliance and independence. Thomas concludes: ‘I do believe that Australia provides opportunities for reaching self-actualisation. It’s up to the Vietnamese women to take advantage of the many opportunities that this country offers’.

Thomas links the personal growth of Vietnamese women to those values and behaviours that are outside of Vietnamese culture, and more closely aligned with Australian cultural patterns. Belonging to Australia, or becoming more like an Australian woman is implied to involve transcending those qualities encouraged in Vietnam, and adopting new, and in many ways, completely opposite ‘Australian behaviours’. Life within the family, even as they exist in Australia, is portrayed as barriers to the development of more ‘Australian’ characteristics. Whether these barriers are self imposed or conveyed through family expectations, family life is explained as the demarcation between private and public life, which inhibits a transition to full membership to Australia.

Thomas’ article speaks to the issues identified earlier in this thesis, where consideration of ‘traditional’ Vietnamese gender roles underlay the most prominent sponsorship pattern during the Coalition years of government. The preference of some men living in Australia, to sponsor women from Vietnam because it is believed that they embody the values and behaviours described by Thomas above, of ‘humility, subservience and self-effacement’, led to devastating consequences for many Vietnamese women living in Australia.

75 Ibid., p19.
76 Ibid., p20.
Finally, the publications also demonstrated a strong awareness of a pervading issue in this thesis: that of inadequate services and settlement support to effectively transition new migrant communities into Australia. Quynh-Tram Trinh, an employee of the Australian Government, noted in *Vietnamese Women* that the emotional momentum and energy new migrants often bring to Australia is often lost after months or years of struggling to find employment and ‘fit in’ with mainstream society.

The result (of limited resources) is a lot of pain and time wasted during the “integration” process. The skills and enthusiasm these newer Australians first brought with them to Australia rapidly decline…The consequence is while we have spent a lot of effort taking in new labour, we have yet to intelligently harness these human resources to build and advance our country, especially in the context of a rapidly changing world economy and labour market.77

Quynh-Tram Trinh was targeting a readership comprised predominantly of individuals and families who came to Australia through the family reunion program, which as discussed has become less politically popular than skilled migration. As responsibility for the settlement of family reunion migrants was increasingly shifted to sponsors, many of whom were struggling with settlement issues themselves, the potential of this cohort to contribute to the community, economy and nation was progressively under-realised. While these circumstances certainly disadvantaged the individuals and families in question, Quynh-Tram Trinh contextualised this issue within the broader loss of human potential to Australia. The failure of successive governments to adequately invest in family reunion migrants has inhibited Australia’s ability to further enhance its competitiveness on the global stage, which would ‘also help Australia raising its national saving level, a macro economic factor that will help persuade foreign investors to look at investing in Australia more favourably’.78

**Conclusion**

*Vietnamese Women* and *Integration* operated as important spaces through which Vietnamese people could share their concerns, celebrate achievements and festivities, and explain some of the causes underlying settlement problems. Communicating common experiences involved in becoming long-term residents of Australia was crucial to consolidating a sense of community and togetherness, resilience and strength, when the possibility of social isolation was so acute.

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78 Ibid., p37.
The intergenerational conflict, issues experienced by Vietnamese youth, and challenges to conceptions of gender identity were sufficiently confronting and potentially damaging to family life that individual efforts to address these problems were inadequate. The publications reflect concerted attempts to deal with settlement issues collectively and in a way that communicated new possibilities for collaboration when the traditional support structures (such as extended family) were incapable.

The publications also contributed an important piece of the puzzle for this thesis. The discussions, analysis, poetry and reflections provide further direct evidence of how family reunion, sponsorship and the broader context of Australian society during the periods in question were experienced by Vietnamese individuals and families. Many of the articles confirm and complement the memories recounted in the previous chapter, while others offer a balance to the political views discussed in the early chapters through first-hand accounts of the sponsorship and the shape of the family reunion program.

The following chapter will return to policy analysis and examine how the design and implications of the family reunion program influenced the overall government objective of creating a multicultural Australia. While the firm establishment of a culturally harmonious society has also been rhetorically the aim of Australian governments since the 1970s, there is much evidence to suggest that lingering attitudes concerning race and nation inhibit the extent to which this can happen.
CHAPTER SIX

Multiculturalism and the Family Reunion Program

This final chapter explores multiculturalism as a migration settlement framework, which also articulated the place of cultural difference in narratives of Australia’s national identity. Implemented by the Hawke/Keating and Howard governments, the intentions behind and value accorded to multiculturalism under each government varied, and so too did the implications of multicultural policies for migrant families, such as the Vietnamese. Prime Ministers Hawke, Keating and Howard all understood multiculturalism as a means through which cultural diversity in Australia could be officially presented overseas and, perhaps more crucially, as a way of conveying the more practical implications of social difference to a domestic audience. How this manifested in policy, however, transformed over time in response to regional and local events.

The relationship between the multicultural and immigration policies of each government was complex, and a focus on family reunion adds another layer of complexity. The following discussion will explore the extent to which the broad design and intended outcomes of multicultural policies under the Labor and Coalition governments was compatible with the reality of living in Australia under sponsorship arrangements for many Vietnamese families. While the intent behind some of the multicultural policies was admirable and had the potential to contribute towards creating a society that supported cultural difference, the conditions associated with family reunion made it very difficult for many Vietnamese families to participate in or enjoy the hallmarks of multicultural initiatives.

This chapter discusses the intersection between the family reunion program and multiculturalism under the Hawke/Keating and Howard governments through an analysis of the political narratives employed to describe how cultural difference could benefit Australia. Following this, the broad policy objectives of multiculturalism under each government will be investigated for the extent to which they were able to institute and influence beneficial change for Vietnamese families living under the conditions associated with sponsorship. Thus this
chapter addresses the question of how multiculturalism influenced the settlement of Vietnamese individuals and families who participated in family reunion.

Early Years: Developing the Vision

Multiculturalism had not been official Australian policy for very long before Vietnamese refugees and family reunion migrants began coming to Australia. Following the end of the Second World War and subsequent encouragement of European migration, narratives concerning cultural difference involved emphasising the superiority of the British heritage and identity of Australia, and good fortune of migrants to ‘blend in’ to this milieu. Migrants were described as having values and traditions that could be discarded at the door of their new home, or which would not interrupt the project of building an Australian nation that was founded on an ‘Australian way of life.’ The cultural difference represented by European migrants was considered to be broadly compatible with, or at least able to be easily diluted to the extent that an ‘Australian’ culture could emerge unhindered.

The cultural difference represented by migrants from Asia was considered to be beyond what was possible or desirable for this model of social integration. Historically, many efforts to define an Australian national and cultural identity involved contrasting the ‘Australian way of life’ against that in Asia. As Castles et al have observed, an emphasis was placed on:

> high standards of living in an advanced industrial market society…[where]…people would receive their share of the material benefits of a revitalized culture of progress and development. This classless, populist Australian Way was defined in sharp contrast to communism or poverty, both found in abundance in Asia.

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3. See Joy Damousi, “‘We are Human Beings, and have a past’: The “Adjustment” of Migrants and the Australian assimilation policies of the 1950s”, *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 59, no.4 (2013): pp501–516 for an analysis of how assimilation policies involved a ‘denial of a migrant’s past’.
While Whitlam was responsible for the final dismantling of the White Australia policy during the early to mid 1970s, and Whitlam’s Minister for Immigration Minister, Al Grasby (1972–1974), introduced the notion of multiculturalism as an ideal for the nation in his famous speech in Melbourne 1973, the Fraser Government (1975–1983) was the first major party to include multiculturalism in its election commitments on immigration. In contributing to the necessary groundwork for Fraser’s later establishment of multiculturalism as official Australian settlement policy, Whitlam amended immigration policy to remove the privileges that had thus far been enjoyed by British subjects, and enabled assisted passage for non-European migrants.

While this enabled Australian immigration to be proclaimed as based on non-discriminatory criteria, Castles et al have argued that ‘the reality was greatly different from the rhetoric as much stricter criteria continued to be applied to non-European applicants compared to Europeans in a systematic effort to ensure that non-European immigration was restricted in number and class background’. Migrants from parts of Europe and Britain coming to Australia also had the advantage of informal networks of family and friends already residing in Australia, who could provide assistance with navigating immigration bureaucracy.

Fraser commissioned what has been described as ‘the first major attempt to establish a concrete framework for the formulation and implementation of multicultural policies which had a long-term focus’. Barrister Mr. Frank Galbally presided over a committee that reviewed post-arrival services and programs for migrants and made recommendations on how the needs of new arrivals could be met by government. The Galbally Report not only recommended that respect for cultural diversity be the basis for new policy in migrant settlement, but also

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5 This followed a series of adjustments in the 1960s, as chronicled by Gwenda Tavan, *The Long, Slow Death of White Australia* (Carlton North: Scribe, 2005).
8 See Andrew Theophanous, *Understanding Multiculturalism and Australian Identity* (Brunswick: Elikia Books, 1995), pp6–14 for further detail about Whitlam’s actions that contributed to the establishment of multiculturalism.
recommended future services be founded on four principles, the second of which related to the public adoption of culturally diverse identities:

(a) all members of our society must have equal opportunity to realize their full potential and must have equal access to programs and services;
(b) every person should be able to maintain his or her culture without prejudice or disadvantage and should be encouraged to understand and embrace other cultures;
(c) needs of migrants should, in general, be met by programs and services available to the whole community but special services and programs are necessary at present to ensure equality of access and provision; and
(d) services and programs should be designed and operated in full consultation with clients, and self-help should be encouraged as much as possible with a view to helping migrants to become self-reliant quickly.\(^1\)

The Fraser government adopted many of the recommendations made in The Galbally Report, including increasing the availability of English language tuition and access to essential services in health and employment. Critics including academic Jeannie Martin argued, however, that the Fraser government’s framework lacked emphasis and commitment to establishing structural change that would address inequalities stemming from cultural difference.\(^1\) Castles et al supported this view when they noted that the ideology of ‘cultural pluralism which came to be the official embodiment of the multicultural response to ethnic politics… did not set out to reform society. It merely wished to describe society as it was in order to celebrate its diversity’.\(^1\) Thus, while Fraser contributed some of the broad necessary policy infrastructure towards multiculturalism there was little in terms of real reforms to address inequalities that stemmed from cultural difference.


\(^{14}\) Castles et al., Mistaken Identity, p121.
The Hawke government consequently inherited multicultural policies that represented a cautious shift in government attitudes to migrant settlement, but which did not contribute substantially to addressing disadvantage that stemmed from cultural difference. The evolution of multiculturalism up to this point had occurred with the supposedly disposable traditions and values embodied by carefully selected European migrants in mind. The expressions of cultural difference adopted into the concept of multiculturalism had been reduced to those innocuous aspects of life that were interesting or entertaining, such as ‘souvlaki and dragon dances’. The progression of multiculturalism under the Hawke/Keating governments involved bursts of increased efforts to address social equity issues and to frame this work as important to the migrant communities involved, and to the Australian nation. Multiculturalism was promoted as an avenue through which social disadvantage could be addressed and cultural diversity could be harnessed as a unique asset that could support Australia’s increasing enmeshment with the region.

Prime Minister Hawke’s personal and professional attitudes towards multiculturalism have been explained by previous researchers (and in earlier chapters of this thesis) as stemming from several sources. Curran, for example, opined in *Power of Speech: Australian Prime Ministers Defining the National Image* that Hawke drew on his Congregationalist family background, which emphasised ‘the brotherhood of man’, where ‘any suggestion of antagonism or discrimination on the grounds of race... [was] repugnant to that fundamental position’. Hawke consistently framed his conception of multiculturalism in universal terms, and his suite of policies has been described as focused on three things: ‘respect for individual difference, promotion of a fair go, and making the best use of all Australia’s human resources’.

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19 Lack and Templeton, *Bold Experiment*, p244.
believed multiculturalism was ‘something with which all Australians can and should identify—it goes to basic questions of social justice and economic efficiency’.20

Jupp has also offered a more practical explanation when he noted that the Australian Labor Party ‘rested heavily upon electorates in which NESB immigrants had been congregating since the 1950s’.21 This suggested that the issues faced by migrants were top of mind to Hawke and many of his ministers, and the positive management of problems associated with settlement was crucial to ongoing electoral success.

Sources highlight also the valuable potential Hawke saw in multiculturalism to propel Australia into a new era in international politics. The presence of culturally diverse communities had the potential to create linkages between Australia and other nations. Hawke also tended to emphasise the economic advantages of cultural diversity:

Multicultural policies are based on the realization that our diversity represents a tremendous economic asset. They are designed, for example, to promote readier acceptance of overseas qualifications. They seek to maintain and develop language and cultural awareness skills to promote Australia’s trade, tourism and diplomatic interests.22

These benefits were always carefully described as an outcome that could be partly achieved through addressing disadvantages that stemmed from belonging to a cultural minority in Australia. The narrative of multiculturalism under Hawke had a strong social justice agenda, with the core policy framework founded upon ‘the right of all Australians to equality of treatment and opportunity, and the removal of barriers of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, gender or place of birth’.23 Positive economic objectives were presented as a natural product of dismantling culturally-specific disadvantage.

Prime Minister Keating’s interpretation of what multiculturalism meant for Australia diverged slightly from that of his predecessor, in that he tended to describe it as a state already achieved.

20 Ibid.
22 Lack and Templeton, Bold Experiment, p246.
Political theorists Brian Galligan and Winsome Roberts noted that multiculturalism was further down the list of Keating’s political interests and, as such, ‘multicultural policy... had become essentially a restatement of Australian political values’. The following speech excerpt refers to public acceptance of cultural diversity as something that has already occurred:

To imagine a culturally diverse Australia and enjoy the idea meant overturning a lot of received wisdom... It meant recognizing that, far from lacking history and culture, we were the beneficiaries of an extraordinary heritage: that no settlers in Australia, whether they arrived from Great Britain and Ireland in the nineteenth century, or Europe, the Middle East or Asia in the twentieth century, ever entirely left their culture behind. To recognize that was to recognize the depth of our history and heritage. Essentially, I think that is what multiculturalism means. We have recognized that from new settlers we can derive more from raw energy, skills and ambition – there is a cultural dividend.

The same speech went on to state that

[My Government] does not attempt to impose a cultural landscape on Australia but to respond to one which is already in bloom... It is very much an attempt to lay the foundations of a new era: to pull the threads of our national life together, so that we can ride the waves of global change and create our own.

Multiculturalism was framed as a way of life that was already firmly established and understood by Australians as something beneficial and advantageous.

Keating’s references to and explanations of multiculturalism involved fewer suggestions that such policies were required to address social and economic disadvantage that stemmed from cultural identity. Instead, a greater emphasis was on multiculturalism’s potential to propel Australia into the new global order. Multiculturalism increasingly became a policy intended to bring advantages to all Australians as it was aligned with the broader objective of advancing Australian economic interests internationally. Carol Johnson, who has researched extensively in the area of Australian politics and cultural diversity, observed in 1996 that ‘(i)ssues of...
ethnic identity are frequently discussed in a way that seems to privilege their market value (while simultaneously reducing broader conceptions of identity to “food” or “festivals”).

Policy manifestations of this view of multiculturalism included the emphasis on learning a ‘trade’ language in schools, which were generally defined as East Asian.

**Access and Equity: developing services**

The core policy document on multiculturalism during Labor’s time in government was the *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia*. Launched by Prime Minister Hawke in 1989 at the Office of Multicultural Affairs in Sydney, the Agenda included major initiatives designed to assist people experiencing barriers to social and economic participation because they were not born in Australia. Hawke succinctly drew together the combined intentions of the framework in the foreword, when he juxtaposed providing for disadvantaged Australians with the constraints of government:

> The Agenda has been developed within the context of economic restraint that is the hallmark of my Government. It expresses the goals, priorities and strategies that the Government considers necessary in order to promote respect for individual identity, to ensure social cohesion and to enhance social justice. It addresses not only issues of equity but also of economic efficiency.

The Agenda established processes to recognise overseas skills and qualifications, outlined the development of community services that improved their ability to respond to cultural difference, and proposed the extension of the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) to more regions in Australia. The framework also clearly reflected an understanding of government

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30 Jerzy J. Smolicz, ‘Language Core Values in a Multicultural Setting: An Australian Experience’, *International Review of Education* 37, no.2 (1991): p36. Smolicz discusses this policy as encouraging a form of multiculturalism that was too external focused, and which was not complemented by strategies to foster a domestic multiculturalism.
31 The Office of Multicultural Affairs was established after a review of migrant services recommended such a body be set up to advise the Prime Minister on multicultural affairs. See James Jupp, *Don’t Settle for Less: report of the Committee of Review of Migrant and Multicultural Programs and Services* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1986).
33 Andrew Theophanous noted that the Fraser Government intended to extend the SBS network into more regions in Australia but lost office before the plan could be implemented. Andrew Theophanous, *Understanding Multiculturalism and Australian Identity* (Brunswick: Elikia Books, 1995), pp18–19.
as a means through which all people could be assisted to live a life that was marked by equitable access to opportunities.\textsuperscript{34}

While the aims and objectives of the \textit{National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia} ranged from more clearly articulating multiculturalism to some of the initiatives mentioned above, of particular interest to this discussion is the weight placed on the role of government in facilitating settlement and the ways in which new migrants were expected to participate in public life. The Agenda proposed a way in which the Commonwealth Government could develop the skills, qualifications and other attributes of migrants that would enable their public participation and reduce social isolation, increase domestic productivity, and contribute towards enhancing Australia’s reputation and practical links internationally.

Parts of the Agenda explicitly discussed the connection between the increased participation of migrants in the public sphere and the national advantages to adopting multiculturalism. For example, when explaining the human resources potential that multiculturalism could unlock in the area of trade and tourism, the Agenda noted:

\begin{quote}
Today seven of our ten largest export markets and eight of our ten fastest growing markets are non-English speaking countries. The language skills and cultural knowledge of Australians from non-English speaking backgrounds represent a natural reservoir of talent that could be deployed to advance the interests of Australian tourism, trade, foreign investment and diplomacy. This applies particularly to trade services where communication is paramount. We already possess a considerable pool of bilingual Australians fluent in key trade languages such as Chinese, German, Arabic, Spanish and Italian. Such community languages need to be developed and extended.\textsuperscript{35}
\end{quote}

Additionally, the Agenda also included a section entitled ‘Participation’, which outlined plans to rectify the lack of representation of Australia’s migrant (and Indigenous) communities in key decision-making institutions. Programs to improve language skills and training were explained as designed to ‘ensure that individuals are equipped with the necessary skills—


education, information, and English language proficiency\textsuperscript{36} to become involved in organisations occupied with governance.

The Agenda therefore spoke of benefits to the Australian nation and to migrant communities in quite different terms: multiculturalism would bring economic advantages to Australia and equality of opportunity to migrants. The policy framework was not developed or \textit{sold} to the Australian public as a strategy to create a new Australian cultural identity; the goals of multiculturalism under the Hawke government were more pragmatic and signified a more instrumental way of conceiving cultural difference.\textsuperscript{37}

While the multicultural agenda contained clear references to addressing social disadvantage, the extent to which this was actually achieved under the Labor Government has been questioned by several critics.\textsuperscript{38} For example, Castles et al argued that the Australian economic crisis of the 1980s, in addition to the free-market policies of the Hawke/Keating governments, were incompatible with rhetoric to support welfare strategies that may have addressed socio-cultural disadvantage.\textsuperscript{39} Collins confirmed the implications of this view when he noted that Keating’s decision to prevent new migrants from accessing basic welfare rights during the first six months of settlement in Australia was not conducive to alleviating economic and social isolation often experienced by new migrants.\textsuperscript{40}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{36} Ibid., p12.
\item \textsuperscript{38} For example Tavan, \textit{The Long, Slow Death of White Australia}.
\item \textsuperscript{39} Castles et al., \textit{Mistaken Identity}, p72.
\item \textsuperscript{40} Jock Collins, ‘Immigration and the Keating Government’ in \textit{Equity and Citizenship Under Keating}, eds. Michael Hogan and Kathy Dempsey (Sydney: Public Affairs Research Centre, 1995), pp88–116. Paul Keating also oversaw significant reductions in funding to migrant services and the abolition of the Institute for Multicultural Affairs, an advisory body to government, in his capacity as Federal Treasurer in 1986. This was perceived by some as evidence of Keating’s tendency to provide very limited and superficial support to multiculturalism. See Pino Bosi, ‘Multicultural platitudes leave our leaders queasy’, \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 30 April 1995.
\end{itemize}
The following section will overlay the above discussion of multiculturalism under Labor with an analysis of the implications of the growth in Asian migration in Australia during the 1980s and early 1990s. Alongside the development of multicultural policies that wavered between describing cultural identity and ways to address social disadvantage, occurred the largest intake of migrants from parts of Asia. The broader social context within which these two intersecting phenomena took place was one that struggled to positively respond to either; both phenomena presented a significant challenge to the Labor governments to appease and reassure.

**Asian Migration and the Labor Years**

As discussed in earlier chapters, the Hawke Government oversaw the second and third major waves of Vietnamese migration to Australia, which occurred in 1983–84, and 1987–89. At the time of the launch of the *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* over 83,000 Vietnamese were living in Australia and this figure would almost double by 1996, when Labor eventually lost government to the Coalition.41 The formulation of multicultural policies under the Labor Governments thus occurred alongside the largest influx of Asian migration since the official end of the White Australia policy. Furthermore, while the bias in immigration policies towards British migrants was in the process of being dismantled, sections of Australian society and members of the presiding government were strongly resistant to these changes.42 The challenge fell to Hawke and his several ministers for immigration to sell the concept of multicultural Australia to a population that was witnessing the entry of thousands of desperate, and very visible, Vietnamese.

Public critics of multiculturalism and Asian migration to Australia included historian Geoffrey Blainey, who described immigration from Asia as having the potential to erode any sense of national pride Australians felt towards their country. Blainey contended the cultural difference represented by Asian migrants would cut through ‘(t)he crimson thread of kinship’43 that was essential for national cohesion, and which in Australia, was based on the institutions and values

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41 ABS, 1996 Census of Population and Housing Australia, Birthplace (Countries) by sex.
42 See Chapter Two of this thesis, which surveys transcripts of speeches given by members of parliament during the Hawke/Keating governments.
43 Castles et al., *Mistaken Identity*, p128.
inherited from Britain. Blainey conflated multiculturalism with Asian migration, and asserted that this would damage the continuing development of Australia as a country with high standards of living and good fortune that had been built up for two hundred years:

Generations of Australians since 1788 have developed this land and its resources, applying sweat and grit and ingenuity. Asian immigrants had the opportunity to come several hundred years ago, but they had no incentive to come…

But Australia will not remain a piece of good fortune, its standards of living will not be sufficient to attract many immigrants, and its political and social stability will not attract the essential capital if immigration policies slowly destroy our sense of national cohesion and our pride in our past.\(^{44}\)

Asian cultural difference and lifestyle was, according to Blainey, inferior to that which was present in Australia. If European cultural difference had begun to be understood as harmless, light and even entertaining, Asian cultural difference still existed in the minds of people such as Blainey as dangerous, dark and menacing. Multiculturalism was interpreted as a gateway through which the Australian lifestyle would be diluted and eventually eroded away.

Blainey’s view omitted the role that European (and small-scale Asian) migration played in the development of Australia and instead contended that this was a function of British initiatives.\(^{45}\) In equating multiculturalism with increased Asian migration and lowered economic performance, Blainey also contributed to a public perception that embracing Asian cultural difference would disadvantage Australia and perhaps lead to global isolation during a time when nation-to-nation interconnectedness was intensifying. Multiculturalism was depicted as a social, cultural and economic mistake.

The Labor government had the additional challenge of persuading the Australian public of the virtues of multiculturalism during the unprecedented arrival of Indochinese refugees on Australian shores. While the cultural difference embodied by European migrants had been invited, in the sense that their migration had been encouraged and supported by Australian governments, the appearance of Indochinese refugees on Australian shores symbolised a new form of contact with external cultures. Representatives of Asian cultural difference, the type most historically feared and demonised in Australia, began arriving at Australian borders

\(^{44}\) Ibid., p129.

\(^{45}\) This view also ignored the obvious fact of British migration and any recognition of Indigenous Australians as the only non-migrant people of Australia.
without the prior consent of the Australian government or the Australian people. Mackie observed that the ‘arrival of these “boat people” gave a new twist to deep-seated fears in the Australian psyche of an uncontrollable flood of impoverished, desperate Asians, modern variants of the legendary “Asian hordes”, pouring south towards Darwin despite our efforts to hold them at bay’.47

The brand of multiculturalism that had thus far predominated in Australia was comprised of cultural artefacts carefully selected by the Australian government and Australian people. Indochinese refugees represented cultural difference and cultural expressions that had been imposed upon the nation; this was not compatible with the order and control over which cultural difference was integrated into the Australian psyche. Australian people had had decades to become familiar with spaghetti and polka, and the multicultural policies that framed their presence in Australia were the result of deliberate planning of what was considered safe and acceptable. The uninvited arrival of Indochinese refugees challenged the timing and control Australian governments maintained over the relationship between the Australian nation and other cultures. Most importantly, the agency and authority of the Australian government to initiate discussions into and decisions regarding cultural diversity was upset: the arrival of Indochinese refugees on Australian shores forced the government to respond to rather than instigate the presence of new migrants.48

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46 Although the actual number of Indochinese refugees who arrived in Australia directly by boat was very small (less than 5000) the fear generated in the Australian public was immense. This was partly due to intense and disproportionate media reporting. See Sam Lipsi, ‘Why we must give the boat people a home’ The Bulletin 9, no.5126 (1978): pp59–64; George Zubrzycki, ‘The boat people’, Quadrant 23, no.8 (1979): pp42–45; Rachel Stevens, ‘No, the Fraser era was not a golden age for asylum seekers’, The Age, 2 February 2012; Janet Phillips and Hariet Spinks, ‘Boat Arrivals in Australia since 1976’, Parliament of Australia, Parliamentary Library, 2011. http://www.aph.gov.au/library/pubs/bn/sp/boatarrivals.htm Accessed 12 October 2011.


48 Central to Ghassan Hage’s thesis on multiculturalism in Australia is the assumption made by White Australians, that it is their right to welcome or reject ‘ethnics’. White Australians, according to Hage, have an unfailing belief ‘in their centrality as enactors of the Law in Australia, or to put it differently, as ‘governors’ of the nation… (and) of ethnics as people one can make decisions about: objects to be governed’. Ghassan Hage, White Nation: Fantasies of White supremacy in a multicultural society (Annandale: Pluto Press, 1998), p17.
Growing controversy and backlash

Thus Vietnamese refugees and family reunion migrants entered a social and cultural context that was comfortable with some expressions and examples of cultural difference, but not all, and certainly not those associated with Asia. As noted in Chapter Two, the 1980s was a period that saw a series of anti-Asian migration debates, with the interventions of historian Geoffrey Blainey and then opposition leader John Howard reverberating into the 1990s.\(^49\) As discussed also in Chapter Two, attempts to recast Asian migration, and especially Vietnamese family reunion migrants as benign and controllable, occurred during the Hawke/Keating years. Vietnamese refugees and family reunion migrants were depicted in Hansard transcripts as evidence of the Australian empathy for ‘battlers’ and the disadvantaged, and their presence in Australia indicated a new maturity in Australian attitudes towards cultural difference.\(^50\) Portrayals of Vietnamese refugees and family reunion migrants as vulnerable and powerless also reinforced notions of white Australian cultural superiority, which contributed towards creating a place for Vietnamese cultural difference in the Australian psyche that was non-threatening. But such attempts to recast attitudes to Asian migration did not open the way for an embrace of Vietnamese cultural difference and a place for it in the story of Australian multiculturalism.

The foundation for the complex relationship between Vietnamese family reunion migrants and multicultural policies was set early on in the Labor Government, when Minister Young told parliament in 1984, four years before the launch of National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia, that the:

only way [Indochinese] communities would be able to succeed and survive in the Australian atmosphere would be if they had rather substantial communities of their own so they could assist each other, like former communities have done in building up their residences in Australia and in being able to settle.\(^51\)


As noted in Chapter Two, during his oversight of the immigration portfolio, Minister Young insisted extended family cover the costs associated with new family members coming to Australia.\(^{52}\) This statement is an early indication of the political sentiment towards migrant families that complicated the ability of migrants to develop preliminary and meaningful ties with people outside their cultural group. While there is logic in this argument, and the support families can provide to newly arrived members is clear, this basic tenet of the family reunion program problematised several of the foundational premises underlying the Labor governments’ *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia*. As discussed above, this prescribed how cultural diversity could harmoniously coexist within the context of common cultural institutions, values and models for behaviour, including ‘tolerance and equality... freedom and speech and religion, English as the national language and equality of the sexes.’\(^{53}\)

The societal dynamics created by sponsorship, however, did not sit comfortably with many of these values, and Vietnamese family reunion migrants were structurally discouraged from participating in the type of multicultural society envisaged by the Hawke/Keating governments.

The sponsorship arrangements, which structurally encouraged and supported the development of communities, such as those referred to by Minister Young, in the same instance challenged the premise articulated in the *National Agenda* concerning limited expression of cultural identity. By promoting reliance on family members for settlement support, sponsorship relegated interaction with Australian society to second place, which was important for developing an understanding of those ‘carefully defined limits’ referred to in the *National Agenda*, and for enabling Vietnamese migrants to ‘make links with mainstream economic and social frameworks’\(^{54}\). Knowledge of Australian values, behaviours and institutions, such as those mentioned above, was necessary for the multicultural society envisioned by the Hawke government to work. Modified cultural expression within the limits espoused by the *National Agenda* could only occur if migrant groups, such as Vietnamese, were aware of what those limits were. However, sponsorship encouraged Vietnamese families and communities to be internally focused, and this worked against the realisation of the first dimension of the *National Agenda*. Consequently, sponsorship had the potential to orientate the attention and energy of migrant communities towards creating neighbourhoods and geographically based communities.

\(^{52}\) The Honourable Michael Young, Australian Labor Party, House Hansard, 7 October 1987, p884.


that were culturally homogenous. As noted by migration analyst Stephen Castles, when combined with other factors, such as ‘racial discrimination and violence, and… lack of economic opportunities,’ this can lead:

minorities… to focus their activities within the ethnic community [which] stimulates the development of religious, political and economic institutions. This in turn increases the suspicions of the majority population that “alien enclaves” are developing.\(^{55}\)

By encouraging the Vietnamese to depend upon familial and friendship networks, the development of links with mainstream society were delayed, and even obstructed. In this respect, the evolution of the multicultural Australia envisaged by Labor governments was impeded.

Basing primary settlement support on family and community members also problematised the premise that ‘an overriding and unifying commitment to Australia’ be held by all Australians. This principle was recommended in the FitzGerald report, mentioned in earlier chapters, as one which would alleviate the concerns of Australians uncomfortable with multiculturalism, as a foundational commitment to Australia would, in theory, remain.\(^{56}\) The same internal focus on family and community described above, however, was an awkward bedfellow for an overriding loyalty to Australia. While electing to settle in Australia after escaping Vietnam demonstrated a clear motivation to commit to Australia, experiencing structural encouragement to base principle social, emotional and economic support on family and community members promoted reinforcement of local loyalties. The practice of Vietnamese families relying on each other within the context of a national policy that aimed to prioritise a commitment to the nation was also complicated by the ethnic and cultural minority status of Indochinese families. The unease surrounding Asian cultural identity and Vietnamese specifically, meant that mainstream Australia was suspicious of this internal focus, despite it being supported by official immigration policy.

This tension between intra-community reliance and the promotion of an overriding commitment to Australia is an example of the difficulties associated with ‘multicultural citizenship’, which has become an area of substantial scholarship, as theorists have speculated

\(^{55}\) Ibid.

on the implications for formal national belonging in a global context of increased mass migration.\textsuperscript{57} In attempting to engender ‘a system of rights and obligations which protects the integrity of the individual while recognizing that individuality is formed in a variety of social and cultural contexts’,\textsuperscript{58} the \textit{National Agenda} aimed to underline that a migrant’s primary loyalty should be to Australia, while acknowledging diverse cultural backgrounds. The policy of family reunion, in conjunction with the circumstances and particularities of Vietnamese reuniting in Australia, intersected awkwardly with this premise. That is, sponsorship encouraged individuals and families to fulfil their most basic needs for social, economic and emotional support among family and local community members. Developing an overriding commitment to Australia required a commitment beyond the relationships and structures that had been most instrumental to the settlement experience, and which indeed had been endorsed through immigration and settlement policy responsible. While researchers such as Diane Barnes have explored the extent to which a sample of Vietnamese former refugees feel loyal and a sense of belonging to Australia,\textsuperscript{59} for others, including many of those interviewed for this thesis, an emotional attachment to Australia was slow to develop, as the outcomes of sponsorship and reality of settlement obstructed positive impressions of their new homeland.\textsuperscript{60}


\textsuperscript{58} Castles, \textit{Ethnicity and Globalization}, p134.


\textsuperscript{60} This thesis has argued an ‘outcome’ of sponsorship is an increased incentive for Vietnamese families to live close together in the same neighbourhoods. In Virginia Trioli’s article ‘Racism casts shadow over land of hope’, \textit{The Age}, 25 March 1998, Springvale, a Melbourne suburb with a high concentration of Vietnamese-born residents, was noted as serving the dual and complicated purpose of operating as a haven for Vietnamese when racist attacks appeared in the media, but also as a place where racially-motivated physical attacks could easily occur. These physical attacks were able to continue unreported because Vietnamese in Springvale enforced a culture of not complaining in the hope the attacks would pass quickly. Residential concentration therefore enabled a complicated sense of belonging to Australia, in that people interviewed in the article spoke of feeling grateful to live in Australia after the terrors of the Vietnam War, but confused and upset that this same new homeland could prove to be so hostile and sometimes, dangerous.

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Sponsorship in the Vietnamese context presented other, more practical, difficulties for ‘multicultural citizenship’ during the Hawke/Keating era. While the rates at which Vietnamese applied for an obtained formal citizenship was high, sponsorship influenced the extent to which substantial citizenship—‘the rights and obligations connected with being a member of a national political community’—was able to be realised.\(^6\) The development of locales in which Vietnamese families lived in close proximity to each other. This situation, as I have argued, was partly encouraged by the dependency encouraged through sponsorship arrangements, which resulted in the reduced need to develop English language skills and relationships with non-Vietnamese supports.\(^6\) Focusing energy and time on sponsorship applications and then providing the social, financial and emotional support needed by new family members left little occasion for developing the knowledge and skills to actively live as an Australian citizen in a broader context. Developing substantial citizenship was delayed or indefinitely postponed beneath more pressing priorities. Many Vietnamese family reunion migrants were thus marginalised in the project to develop a nation of multicultural citizens. To again quote Stephen Castles: ‘A person cannot participate in political processes without a certain minimum standard of education and of economic and social well being. Political rights are meaningless in the long run unless they are linked to social rights.’\(^6\)

The ways in which this tension between sponsorship arrangements and the aims of multicultural policies were experienced or manifested varied according to the visa on which family members were in Australia. A central reason for this difference was the extent to which economic-based criteria encroached upon some categories, which meant that, theoretically, selected family members could participate more readily in the multicultural agenda. The

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Marlah Evans commented in her article ‘Choosing to be a citizen: the time path of citizenship in Australia’, *International Migration Review* 22, no.2 (1988): p253, that ‘in light of recent controversy highlighting native Australians’ anxieties about Asian immigrants (Harris, 1979; Birrell, 1984), it is noteworthy that Asian immigrants appear to value Australian citizenship much more highly than do immigrant Britons: immigrants from the Third World are about twice as likely as immigrants from the English speaking countries to be Australian citizens’. Castles, *Ethnicity and Globalization*, p141.

\(^6\) Mandy Thomas, ‘The Vietnamese in Australia’ in *Asians in Australian: Patterns of Migration and Settlement*, eds. James E. Coughlan and Deborah J. McNamara (South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1997), p281. She notes that ‘(T)here is little doubt that the clustering of Vietnamese people at different locations benefits the maintenance of Vietnamese language and cultural values, as well as providing networks for social communication and the flow of information about housing, welfare, jobs and services’.

independent and concessional visa, which enabled family members outside of the nuclear unit to apply to come to Australia, is a key example. Adult siblings were able to join their brothers or sisters in Australia as long as they also possessed specified qualifications and education. Minister Hurford explained in parliament that:

> the new independent and concessionary migration category brings benefits from the economic gains to Australia from the people likely to succeed in their migration applications, whilst recognising at the same time the economic and social advantages of the extended family nexus.\(^{64}\)

Independent and concessional family reunion migrants were attractive to the government because it was believed that they were already equipped with the necessary skills and qualifications to be *productive* new Australians. Their ability to participate in the workforce was assumed to be greater than that of migrants residing in Australia because of family ties. Independent and concessional migrants came ready, or more able, to be visible in public life as embodiments of ‘the diversity (that) is a great source of new talents and ideas, a catalyst for social dynamism, a true source of wealth in both its cultural and economic senses’.\(^{65}\)

The entry of independent and concessional family reunion migrants to Australia was an interesting development in the government’s plan to support the settlement needs of new migrants. Hurford’s explanation points to the role independent and concessional family members were expected to play in contributing towards the financial stability of the family that had sponsored them. This assistance was crucial for many families, given the minimal welfare support to which families were generally entitled. As a development that occurred alongside the establishment of *The National Agenda*, however, the independent and concessional visa categories both supported and discouraged the realisation of Labor’s multicultural aims. While the presence of family reunion migrants with qualifications and skills was evidence of the ‘productive diversity’ espoused by the Hawke/Keating governments, the necessity that they find primary settlement support within their families reinforced the necessity of private structures. Australian government support was not available to independent and concessional family reunion migrants. These migrants were able to *contribute* to Australia’s productive diversity, but were not able to draw on the services and assistance available to non-migrants.

\(^{64}\) The Honourable Chris Hurford, Australian Labor Party, House Hansard, 10 April 1986, p1971.

It is difficult to attribute poor substantial (but not formal) citizenship rates among Vietnamese solely to the failure of multicultural policies. Participation in programs designed to improve access to opportunities in the workforce, for example, is influenced by many factors that are beyond the reach of government. It is significant, however, that academic research into settlement issues experienced by Vietnamese families and communities has continued to explore the link between co-residency and various indicators of social isolation. This suggests that despite several decades of multicultural policies, many Vietnamese families continue to experience social and economic disadvantage, which could be alleviated by increased contact with mainstream services.

Thus while the concept of multiculturalism was considered valuable by the Hawke/Keating Labor governments, the extent to which multicultural policies resolved and addressed social disadvantage linked to cultural difference was questionable. Initiatives including increased funding for English language programs, the establishment of a National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR) and strategies to improve migrant access to government services played a role in the settlement experiences of new migrants, but many Vietnamese struggled to benefit from these initiatives, as the circumstances of sponsorship complicated their ability to settle in Australia. In particular, Vietnamese sponsors were unable to participate in various programs to improve their ability to interact with the wider Australian society, because they were preoccupied with providing for the family they had a contractual agreement with the Australian government to look after. The policy focus on productive diversity meant that the type of support most required by Vietnamese sponsors was less available. NOOSR focused on easing the transition of migrants who already had skills and qualifications into the Australian workforce; English language programs in schools were obviously only available to school aged children; and the additional resources provided for adult English language instruction (which included correspondence courses) were lost on people who simply did not have the time or energy to study. By outsourcing the financial, emotional and social support for new migrants

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who entered Australia through the family reunion program to family sponsors, immigration policies contributed towards the creation of insular communities, where many individuals struggled to develop the skills to survive outside of their district. As noted in Chapter Four, this could have a devastating effect on those who became marginalised within these communities.

Thus, multicultural initiatives did little to ease this problem; the focus on harnessing diversity for economically beneficial purposes failed to address the issues of those migrants who were not able to immediately contribute to advancing Australia’s global interests. It is possible to argue, however, that by providing the necessary settlement support for new family members, sponsors did support Australian economic growth: they enabled the governments of the day to divert resources towards those projects that were more closely aligned with positioning Australia as a strong economic player in the Asia-Pacific region. Nevertheless, sponsorship arrangements depended upon the complicated emotional connections that exist within families, where understandings of loyalty, love, obligation and guilt motivated the provision of settlement support by sponsors. The Hawke/Keating governments depended upon families either wanting or feeling obliged to look after each other.

**The Coalition Government and Multiculturalism**

The Coalition government thus inherited an immigration program and multicultural policies that were designed to enhance international relationships, most notably with Asia, but which struggled to genuinely address issues of social inequity. The Keating government’s focus on Asia during the 1980s and 1990s has been seen as one reason the Australian Labor Party lost office in 1996. A conservative backlash against ‘Keating’s exuberant extolling of the virtues of multiculturalism—together with this enthusiasm for Australia’s integration with Asia and his high-minded commitment to reconciliation with Aboriginal people’—was considered to

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be out of step with conceptions of Australian national identity held by those Australians who were more comfortable with the white British Australia of old. Keating’s reformulation of Australian national identity also, significantly, involved a push for White Australians to forfeit what Carol Johnson described as ‘the overwhelming privileging of Anglo-Celtic identity implicit in assimilationist politics’, where British culture was assumed to be superior and preferable over all others. Multiculturalism was also projected by the Labor government as intimately connected to globalisation, which had caused difficult and sometimes drastic changes for many Australians. This, too, contributed to increased support for the Coalition by people who had struggled to adapt to the consequences of a globalised Australian economy. Multiculturalism was perceived by many to therefore involve a loss of an identity that involved opportunity and advantage. The hostile electoral response against the Keating government reflected a failure to convince mainstream Australia that a culturally diverse society with close ties to Asia, and reduced reliance on traditional alliances, could only benefit Australia as it entered the twenty-first century.

As discussed in earlier chapters, John Howard’s attitudes towards multiculturalism were controversial long before he became Prime Minister. Howard was uncomfortable with the implication that multicultural policies inferred that past attitudes towards cultural difference were wrong. Howard did not support the view that to adopt multicultural policies would demonstrate Australia had grown and matured in relation to migrant settlement policies, and objected to what he saw as a requirement that Australians apologise for historical attitudes towards different cultures. In this way, Howard’s construction of multiculturalism enabled him to become the champion of those who were nervous about the societal changes multicultural policies could generate. ‘Real Australians’ were identified by Howard as those people who were comfortable with the consequences for migrants of the assimilations period:

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We’re apologising to the Aborigines about our past, we’re apologising to this or that section in the community for having offended them and in the process we’re apologising for our history and our identity as Australians. And I think it’s time to stop doing that.\textsuperscript{72}

Theophanous described Howard’s comments as ‘crude appeals to nationalism...[that]... distinguished between “old” or “authentic” Australians—with their traditional values—and the “new” Australians, who threatened the social cohesion of society’.\textsuperscript{73} ‘One Australia’ was the title of the Coalition’s immigration policy for the 1988 federal election, as an alternative to the Labor Party’s supposedly divisive emphasis on multicultural Australia. Indeed Howard was quoted during this same period as declaring ‘if multiculturalism is some kind of... federation of cultures instead of an authentic Australian culture then I’m all against it’.\textsuperscript{74}

With rising numbers of Asian migrants entering Australia during this period, Howard’s early unease about the potential social impacts of multiculturalism was directly related to the volume of people migrating to Australia from Asia. Couched as trepidation about Australia’s capacity to ‘absorb’ Asian migrants, Howard stated several times that, if elected, his government would be open to considering decreasing the number of migrants from this region.\textsuperscript{75}

In 1996 the Coalition won government after thirteen years in opposition. Howard’s aversion to multiculturalism was soon affirmed when he instigated the removal of the term ‘multicultural’ from the name of the department responsible for managing immigration and settlement issues: the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs became the Department of Immigration and Citizenship after Howard took office.\textsuperscript{76} The change in nomenclature could not be more telling: Howard refused to support any ideals that challenged his belief in an

\textsuperscript{72} John Howard, speech at official opening of the Queensland Division of the Liberal Party Annual Convention, Surfers Paradise, 11 June 1988. See Jon Stratton, \textit{Race Daze – Australia in identity crisis} (Ammandale: Pluto Press, 1998), chapter 3, for an analysis of Howard’s efforts to install a version of history that supported the superiority of Anglo-Saxon culture.


\textsuperscript{74} J.Howard, Speech at official opening of the Queensland Division of the Liberal Party Annual Convention, Surfers Paradise, 11 June 1988.


Australian cultural identity that privileged white, English-speaking identities, and suppressed other examples of cultural difference. ‘Citizenship’, with its implications of sameness, replaced the public focus of the department from one which symbolised cultural variability to that of formal commonality.

Evidence of a complicated scepticism of multiculturalism was clear throughout Howard’s term as Prime Minister. The caution exercised during the 1996 election on issues of cultural diversity and multiculturalism was left behind in 2001, when the Coalition’s election promises in relation to immigration were confidently delineated around the premise that ‘it is the sovereign right of Government to decide who will and who will not enter Australia’.

**Civic Responsibility and Community Harmony**

In comparison to the core framework developed for multiculturalism policies under the Hawke government, equivalent documents produced under the Howard government revealed a different focus. While ‘social equity’ remained as a key plank of the policy framework for multicultural policies under the Coalition, it was given less weight, and greater emphasis was placed instead on the agency of Australian residents in contributing to community life and participating in society.

The Coalition’s multicultural policy, *Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity*, was based on four overriding principles:

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77 *The Howard Government: Putting Australia’s interests first – Immigration - its role in our future*, (Melbourne: Liberal Party of Australia, 2001), p2. See Ghassan Hage’s *White Nation*, for a discussion of the confidence in which claims such as these were made. This confidence was in contrast to the election strategy adopted in 1996 when the Coalition released very little detail about what it would do in immigration policy where it to win office. See Robert Birrell *Immigration Reform in Australia – Coalition Government Proposals and Outcomes since March 1996* (Centre for Population and Urban Research, Monash University Clayton, 1997), p2; Patricia Ranald, ‘Howard’s Way–The Public Sector’, *Journal of Australian Political Economy* no.37 (1996): p1. See also David Marr and Marian Wilkinson, *Dark Victory* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2004) for a detailed account of the strategies employed by the Howard Government to win the 2003 election. These strategies included demonising refugees and ignoring United Nations covenants on signatory’s obligations to assisting people escaping persecution and torture.
1. Responsibilities for all – all Australians have a civic duty to support those basic structures and principles of Australian society which guarantee us our freedom and equality and enable diversity in our society to flourish;

2. Respect for each person – subject to the law, all Australians have the right to express their own culture and beliefs and have a reciprocal obligation to respect the right of others to do the same;

3. Fairness for each person – all Australians are entitled to treatment and opportunity. Social equity allows us all to contribute to the social, political and economic life of Australia, free from discrimination, including on the grounds of race, culture, religion, language, location, gender or place of birth; and

4. Benefits for all – all Australians benefit from productive diversity, that is, the significant cultural, social and economic dividends arising from the diversity of our population. Diversity works for all Australians.78

In response to the 11th of September 2001 terrorist attacks in the US, the policy document also included references to fostering harmonious social relations in Australia in order to protect against domestic unrest:

The Government believes firmly that Australian multicultural policy provides a framework of national unity and a coherent ethos for a diverse Australia at a time of conflict, as well as in times of peace. National security begins with domestic community harmony.79

*Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity* pledged to remain committed to access and equity principles. In order to ensure migrants could access services and enjoy similar opportunities for employment and education, for example, *Multicultural Australia* outlined the Coalition’s investment in the type of multicultural policies that provided assistance to new arrivals:

There is a strong case for better developing even greater levels of government investment in vulnerable individuals. Otherwise, the cost of remedying the problems that stem from social dislocation and lost opportunities for personal advancement will be greater in the years ahead. This is particularly relevant for refugees with a history of torture and trauma and who may have had a chaotic educational background or those who do not have their qualifications recognized in Australia.80

The policy document firmly emphasised social unification through common, Australian values, which would support the ongoing development of an outward-looking nation. Multiculturalism was explained as being about ‘respect for and of each person in our society. Each person has a strength through their culture and by harnessing this strength we all contribute to Australia.’81

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79 Ibid., p7.
The explanation also moved quickly from a policy regarding the treatment Australian residents should be able to expect from each other, to a strategy for improving Australia’s global competitiveness.

Despite the pledges for investment in multicultural policy, reflections on the success of multicultural policies under the Coalition government generally note the lack of resources provided for strategies to achieve many of the goals described in *Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity*. Tavan, for example, observed that:

> Spending was decreased on a range of welfare and services, including the capacity of newcomers to access unemployment benefits and the Adult Migrant English program. Ethnic organizations like FECCA were quickly marginalised, the government setting limits on funding and downgrading consultative efforts.\(^82\)

Howard’s infamous and continued refusal to use the ‘M-word’ also received much analysis, as did the undercurrent of assimilationism in much of Howard’s attitudes towards cultural diversity.\(^83\) While immigration actually increased under the Coalition government, as discussed in further detail below, multicultural policies and plans to support, encourage and celebrate cultural diversity remained under-funded, under-resourced and difficult to access. Multiculturalism was not *valued* by Howard, even if the economic benefits brought to Australia by some forms of migration were.

**Fear and Anger from White Australia**

The Coalition oversaw a growth in the immigration program, which reached over 108,000 in 2002–03 and 111,590 in 2003–04—significantly more than the 99,100 in 1995–96 under

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\(^82\) Gwenda Tavan, ‘Howard’s multicultural paradox’ paper presented to John Howard’s Decade conference, School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, 3–4 March, 2006. See also Jock Collins and Walter Lalich, ‘The dismantling of Australian multiculturalism and the migrant third sector: spotlight on the St George region of Sydney’, *Co-operatives, Co-operation and the Social Economy Third Sector Review* 10, no.2 (2004): p85–97, for an analysis of how ‘the dismantling of the programmatic content of Australian multiculturalism under the Howard Government’ was received by one of the most culturally-diverse communities in Sydney, NSW.

Keating. Kalantzis notes that this was in a large part due to the persistent efforts of Minister Ruddock, who finally ‘won the practical battle against John Howard’s anti-immigration sentiments’. Pertinent to this discussion is the national make-up of these migrants; in 2002 over 43,000 migrants who entered Australia were from Asia. North-east Asia was the largest contributing region, with migrants from China numbering 14,469. This figure was only slightly less than the total migrants from all of South-east Asia, which came in at 14,833; Vietnamese migrants totalled 2,067 in 2002. Just over 10,000 migrants came from Southern and Central Asia. This was a remarkable effort for a government headed by Howard, who in 1988 stated that he believed the pace of Asian migration was beyond the capacity for absorption by the community.

The election that brought the Coalition to power also resulted in the appointment of Pauline Hanson to the position of Member for Oxley in South-west Queensland. Hanson was originally a Liberal Party candidate, but was disendorsed during the campaign after she made disparaging comments about Aboriginal Australians in receipt of welfare payments. The Coalition sought to distance themselves from this and other remarks, and Hanson eventually won her seat as an Independent candidate. Jupp argued that despite her rejection from the Liberal Party, Hanson’s views were not without support within the Queensland Liberal and National parties, and that Blainey and ‘Howard had paved the way for Hanson’s success’, through the creation in the 1980s of a public space for opinions that were influenced by old prejudices and muddled statistics. Hanson continued in this tradition and argued that her public espousal of anti-

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85 Mary Kalantzis, ‘Australia Fair – Realities and Banalities of Nation in the Howard Era’, *Overland* 178, (2005): p14. In this article, Kalantzis provides an interesting discussion on the relationship between Howard and Ruddock before and after the Coalition was in government. Ruddock’s attitudes towards immigration were chronicled in earlier chapters of this thesis.
86 Country of Birth (Region) of Person by Year of Arrival in Australia, 2006 Census Tables, ABS.
87 Ibid.
88 Country of Birth of Person by Year of Arrival, 2006 Census Tables, ABS.
89 Quoted in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 January 1995.
91 Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera*, p129.
immigration, anti-multiculturalism and anti-Aboriginal sentiments echoed widespread belief within sections of Australian society.92

Hanson’s presented herself to Parliament and Australia as ‘a mother, a sole parent and a businesswoman running a fish and chip shop’,93 which may have accounted for some of her appeal to those who objected to Keating’s overtly cosmopolitan style. As Jupp argued, Hanson’s party ‘One Nation’ found the majority of its supporters in a:

...loose coalition of the disaffected—from impoverished rural areas, affluent retirement resorts, disadvantaged outer suburbs, and a variety of extremist and sometimes paranoid minor organisations. What held these together was a series of time-honoured populist beliefs, many of which had been almost consensual a century before, and the ability of Pauline Hanson to express them in simple language.94

Her politics sought to protect and reinforce the social and economic privileges enjoyed by white Australians, which she believed were under attack from ‘the various tax-payer funded “industries” that flourish in our society servicing Aboriginals, multiculturalists and a host of other minority groups’.95 Hanson wanted an end to all narratives and policies that suggested cultural difference should be valued and that white Australians should change their lifestyle and national identity to accommodate Indigenous and non-native Australians. She thus embodied ‘the voice of old Anglo-Celtic Australia, resentful of its displacement from the centre of Australian cultural life by the new ethnic Australians and nostalgic for a time when it imagined its identity was both secure and central’.96 In relation to cultural difference, Hanson believed:

...that, as all Australians were equal, there should be no special services for Aborigines or immigrants; that multiculturalism was encouraging minority cultures to stay out of the mainstream; that preference to Asians was changing the traditional character of the Australian population; and that governments did not listen to such complaints and, indeed, tried to repress them.97

While the Coalition had formally disendorsed Pauline Hanson during the 1996 election campaign and there were some attempts to demonstrate an intolerance of the attitudes she

94 Jupp From White Australia to Woomera, p135.
97 Jupp, From White Australia to Woomera, p129. See also pages 131–134 for an overview of the immigration policy proposal presented by Hanson’s party ‘One Nation’ for the 1998 election.
Howard was widely criticised for not challenging her opinions strongly enough. Several commentators argued Howard’s gentle response to Hanson’s viewpoints indicated implicit support or sympathy for her ideas, particularly the belief that immigration and multiculturalism would irrevocably change the Australian national community.

Hanson’s political success was relatively short-lived. Nevertheless, many of her proposals for immigration reform were adopted later by the Coalition, including the granting of temporary rather than permanent residency to refugees. Obtaining refugee status also became much more difficult if other countries had been passed through on the way to Australia, and penalties for people smugglers became increasingly harsh. Hanson may have been an extreme example of sentiments that were hostile towards multiculturalism, but it is a common conclusion that the foundation for such opinions already existed in historical practices of managing diversity, and the Coalition government built upon this solid, and fertile, ground.

Vietnamese-Australians were not directly affected by the policy decisions relating to people smugglers and obtaining refugee status in Australia made by the Howard government, as migration through this channel had not been accessed by Vietnamese in large numbers for some time. However, Hanson’s comments and attitudes towards all migrants and Asian migrants in particular were reflected upon in mainstream and community media by several

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98 For example, the ‘Racial Tolerance’ motion moved in Parliament by Howard in October 1996. The motion reaffirmed a commitment to equality and denounced racial intolerance. See The Honourable John Howard, House Hansard, Liberal Party, 30 October 1996.
99 Kalantzis, ‘Australia Fair’, p12; Jupp From White Australia to Woomera; Jon Stratton, Race Daze.
100 See Michael Leach, Geoffrey Stokes and Ian Ward eds., The Rise and Fall of One Nation (St Lucia: Queensland University Press, 2000) for an overview of Pauline Hanson’s political career.
101 See Jupp, From White Australia to Woomera, p128.
104 In 2001-02 for example, only 14 Vietnamese nationals arrived in Australia through the humanitarian stream. Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, ‘Settler Arrivals by Region/Country of Birth by Type of Applicants by Eligibility Category 2001-02’, Unpublished Tabulated Data.
commentators as evidence of persistent racism in Australia.105 These reflections were especially numerous in 1998, when a young Vietnamese-Australian law student was awarded the Young Achiever Award, for the Australia Day honours list.106 Ms Tan Le, who arrived in Australia with her family as refugees from Vietnam in 1982, was awarded the prize for her involvement in setting up counselling services for newly arrived migrants.107 Hanson commented that Le’s award was politically motivated by the Howard government to demonstrate the Coalition’s support for multicultural Australia.108 While this claim was rigorously denied by Howard, it was reasonable, given Howard’s past attitudes towards Asian migration.109 Commentary on Hanson’s politics offered by Vietnamese-Australians frequently reflected a strong sense of ownership or connection to Australia as the permanent home of thousands of Vietnamese, with calls to actively protect the concept of Australian multiculturalism and to challenge Hanson’s One Nation Party. Quynh-Tran Trinh, for example, a volunteer with the Vietnamese Professional Society, called on the Society to confront Hanson’s politics and assume a leadership role in contesting the attitudes she espoused.110

As noted by several commentators, this was also a period that saw a shift in the focus of moral panic relating to immigration and multiculturalism. Fear of an ‘Asian takeover’ of Australia was replaced by anti-Muslim and anti-‘Arab’ rhetoric.111 The issue of Asian migration became subsumed beneath a focus on migrants from ‘Muslim’ countries,112 particularly so after the Coalition decided to commit troops to the war in Afghanistan in the wake of the terrorist attacks

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108 Ibid.
on the United States of America in September 2001. Muslim communities living in Australia increasingly became case studies for Howard’s attitudes towards cultural minority groups.113

At the same time, the focus on attracting skilled migrants continued to grow.114 As mentioned above, migrants from Asia came to comprise a high percentage of the overall intake, with a shift from South-east Asian source countries to those from North Asia. This shift was due to several factors, including a decline in the demand for family reunion visas from countries such as Vietnam as many of the families separated by the war had already achieved reunification. The conditions involved in settling in Australia on family migration visas also became more complicated (discussed further below), which deterred some potential applicants and made it difficult for others to obtain permission to live in Australia. The Coalition’s efforts to increase skilled migration also meant that countries with the resources to provide educational and employment opportunities for its citizens that were transferable to Australia, were more likely to be represented in the source countries for Australia’s migrant intake during the years Howard was in government. Vietnamese migrants rarely had the skills and/or education to successfully obtain skilled visas,115 while migrants from China and India were the second and third largest source countries for skilled migrants, after the United Kingdom.116

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115 An Australian Government profile of Vietnamese living in Australia in 2001 noted that only 29 per cent of Vietnamese-born Australians over the age of 15 years had some form of educational or occupational qualification, compared with 46.2 per cent for all Australians. Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs ‘The Viet-Nam born community’ Community Information Summary, 2003.

Rationalism and Migrant Families

As noted in earlier chapters, Minister Ruddock (1996–2007), began reforming the immigration program and family reunion visas very soon after the Coalition won government. The reforms were in stark contrast to the overall approaches to immigration and multiculturalism under the previous Labor governments, and indeed the Coalition government under Fraser before Hawke.\textsuperscript{117}

The brand of multiculturalism promoted by the Coalition government was one which many migrants, including Vietnamese family reunion migrants, were going to have trouble embodying. With the heightened emphasis on ‘productive diversity’ that initially found expression in Hawke’s \textit{National Agenda}, Howard’s multiculturalism moved further away from strategies to address disadvantage.\textsuperscript{118} While Vietnamese families and communities had made significant advances in addressing and overcoming problems that were linked to living in Australia as a migrant of Vietnamese origin, issues associated with settlement still existed.\textsuperscript{119} Government assistance continued to be necessary to manage the difficulties Vietnamese people faced in obtaining employment, skills and access to services.

Professor of Sociology, Andrew Jacubowicz, reflected on the primary characteristics of multiculturalism under the Coalition government in an address at the Federation of Ethnic

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{117} Robert Birrell, \textit{Immigration Reform in Australia: Coalition Government Proposals and Outcomes since March 1996} (Clayton: Monash University Centre for Population and Urban Research, 1997), p.3.
\item \textsuperscript{118} Bertone and Leahy are careful to remind readers that the ALP was initially responsible for introducing ‘narrow utilitarian elements’ into multicultural policy. Santina Bertone and Mary Leahy, ‘Social Equity, Multiculturalism and the Productive Diversity Paradigm: Reflections on their role in corporate Australia’ in \textit{Everyday Diversity – Australian Multiculturalism in Practice}, ed. Scott K. Phillips (Altona: Common Ground Publishing, 2001), p.115.
\end{itemize}
Community Councils of Australia in 2003. Jacubowicz emphasised the existence of an implied bias towards White Australian cultural identity that, in turn, disadvantaged migrant communities in attempts to embrace the ‘productive diversity’ of Howard’s multiculturalism:

> If we map the content of [Howard’s] policy we can see the underlying moral order to which multiculturalism is directed. Firstly it fits with a free enterprise liberal model of capitalist economies, a market-oriented world-view. Individuals are perceived as primarily economic actors with cultural capital [generated by family socialisation, ethnicity, education and life experience] who should be able to mobilise that capital to create wealth in their own interest, with wider societal flow-ons from a multiplier effect... [There] is [also] a hierarchy of cultural values that are emphasised through national leadership, social institutions and expectations of behaviour in social interaction. This remains the essence of Australian multiculturalism, a structure of beliefs that places Anglo-Australian culture at the apex, and retains the control of the cultural economy in these hands. Thus other cultures are acceptable so long as they do not challenge this hierarchy, and accept the determining role of the core values of the dominant order—minority cultural retention is permitted but not mandated, and should be resourced by the groups according to their desires and capacities. There is no sense that the whole social order benefits from cultural diversity.

Jacubowicz draws out here the fact that within this version of multiculturalism, cultural diversity was something to be contained, controlled and reigned in within the parameters of ‘those basic structures and principles of Australian society which guarantee... freedom and equality’. If cultural diversity could be cast into productive diversity, it became acceptable or tolerable diversity. Overlaying cultural difference with an economic value literally gave minority groups a new currency; multiculturalism under the Coalition framed migrants as units of worth. This worth or value was expected to be self-generating, or ‘resourced by the groups according to their desires and capacities’, with little or no investment from the government. The freedom of ‘all Australians... to live their lives and maintain their cultural traditions’, as stated in Multicultural Diversity: United in Diversity, was not couched in terms of how the Coalition would support and facilitate the expression of this freedom. Indeed, this same document describes the brand of ‘Australian multiculturalism [as one which] recognises, respects and celebrates cultural diversity’, but which does not actively make possible manifestations of cultural diversity.

120 The Federation of Ethnic Communities Council of Australia is Australia’s peak body for Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The Council promotes and advocates for issues relevant to these Australians to the government, businesses and the broader community. See [http://fecca.org.au/](http://fecca.org.au/).
123 Ibid.
Jacubowicz’s observation provides a useful scaffold for examining the intersection between Vietnamese family reunion migrants and multiculturalism under the Coalition government. The emphasis on competition and self-generated wealth, coupled with the lack of acknowledgment of the impact of settlement and external circumstances on the ability to participate in social and economic life, created a system where economic value and achievement was possible for very few. For many Vietnamese family reunion migrants, the Coalition’s multicultural framework was enormously problematic. To begin with, the presence of Vietnamese refugees in Australia was not the result of Australia working to attract citizens of a powerful nation, who had knowledge and connections that could be useful to Australia’s political interests. In terms of nationality, Vietnamese refugees and family reunion migrants did not embody a cultural group that represented immediate and obvious benefits to Australia.\(^{124}\) The strategic importance of Australia’s participation in the management of Indochinese refugees, was, indeed, largely because of the need and desire to build and maintain relations with other nations sharing the costs of settling refugees. Not to have contributed to the mass logistical exercise that was managing the human exodus from Vietnam would have damaged or put at risk Australia’s political relationships with those nations who were involved.\(^{125}\)

In addition, in 1996 Vietnam was listed by the Joint Standing Committee on Migration’s report *Australia’s Visa System for Visitors* as a nation from which visitors to Australia had an ‘overstay’ rate of nine per cent.\(^{126}\) This meant, of the 3470 Vietnamese nationals who came to Australia on visitor visas during 1992–1993, 312 people were found to have stayed in Australia past the time prescribed by their visa. Ruddock referred to this report in parliament in 1999.

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\(^{124}\) See Susan Schech and Jane Haggi, ‘Migrancy, Multiculturalism and Whiteness: Re-carting Core Identities in Australia’, *Communal/Plural* 9, no.2 (2001): p147. In the context of the Coalition’s multicultural policies, ‘symbolic capital’ included the ability to be self-sufficient and not require government welfare support, and indeed to contribute to the national project of ‘productive cultural diversity’. Many Vietnamese family reunion migrants who were still grappling with the legacy of war, upheaval and trauma, struggled to assume any kind of ‘whiteness’ in that reliance on welfare was still high and Vietnamese identity was inextricably linked to disadvantage and a history of being ‘rescued’ by the Australian government. See Hage, *White Nation* and Stratton, *Race Daze*.


when he justified the profiling of Vietnam, along with other nations including Lebanon, Turkey and China, as ‘high risk posts’. This label was described by Ruddock as:

a management device constructed from objective data which simply allows decision makers to highlight those visitor applicants who must show appropriate evidence of their intention to return home. The risk profile does not mandate refusal of the visa. While the visitor visa refusal rates from posts in certain risk factor countries are high, large numbers of visitor applicants at such posts are approved.127

Ruddock’s mention in parliament of Vietnam as a ‘high risk’ nation further damaged the value of Vietnamese cultural identity, in the sense referred to by Jacubowicz above. Vietnamese cultural identity was publicly and politically devalued by Ruddock’s public outing of Vietnamese nationals, who were noted as having a (slight) tendency to breach visa conditions.

The overt reference to Vietnamese visitors in parliament was not entirely fair and would perhaps have had a different potential impact if Ruddock had contextualised the statistic in relation to other nations from which many people also visited Australia. While nine per cent of 3470 Vietnamese visitors were found to have overstated their visas in 1994, more than 7000 people from the United Kingdom and nearly 5000 American citizens overstayed their visas during the same period.128 The percentage of people visiting Australia from these nations who overstayed their visas was lower, but they were far more numerous. Working in their favour, however, was the fact that people from the United Kingdom and America were less visible than Vietnamese nationals and did not have the same controversial history of arrival.

In addition to the national profiling mentioned above, and as discussed in previous chapters, during Ruddock’s term character assessments of migrant families increasingly became a tool used to determine the suitability of migrants to become new Australians. In what climaxed with the infamous call that Australia did not want people who deliberately threw their children overboard, a solid case was built under the Coalition government that migrant families valued

their relationships with each other differently, and in a way that was inferior to the way in which real Australians did.\textsuperscript{129}

Vietnamese families were rarely specifically referred to as migrant families that were ‘un-Australian’ in the sense that they represented values abhorred by real Australians. They were, however, tarred by the brush that swept over family reunion, which increasingly painted sponsorship arrangements as a means through which unscrupulous people could take advantage of Australian generosity. In 1997, for example, Ruddock explained a review of the financial assistance available to family reunion migrants as partly stemming from:

[an acknowledgement that]… not all sponsors meet their obligations. Some people sponsor where they have no capacity to meet their obligations… we should not encourage people who have no capacity to continue sponsorship when we know that when the relative comes they are not going to be able to meet the obligation.\textsuperscript{130}

Allocating the responsibility for settlement in Australia to family members who were not always the best candidates for the job was found in previous chapters to have dangerous implications for many people (mainly women) being sponsored to Australia. Living under the care of someone who had not successfully transitioned to life in Australia jeopardised the extent to which new arrivals under the family reunion program could create connected and harmonious lives. The ability of many of the women mentioned in Chapter Four to socialise the new generation of Vietnamese-Australians would be severely constrained and compromised, as they attempted to manage the negative consequences of being sponsored by a family member who had little capacity or skills to guide a successful settlement experience for someone else.\textsuperscript{131}


\textsuperscript{130} The Honourable Philip Ruddock, Liberal Party, House Hansard, 13 February 1997, p895.

\textsuperscript{131} In an aforementioned quote, Peter Waxman concludes the inability of sponsors to properly provide for new family members contributes to long-term settlement problems for newly arrived migrants. Peter Waxman, ‘Service Provision and the settlement needs of newly arrived refugees in Sydney, Australia: A descriptive analysis’, \textit{International Migration Review} 32, no.3 (1998): pp761–777.
Conclusion

Both the Labor and Coalition governments’ model of multiculturalism contained several parameters that were very difficult for Vietnamese family reunion migrants to live within. The cultural capital inherent in ethnic identity, for example, failed to lay the foundation for many Vietnamese migrants to go on to become effective economic actors who could bring immediately obvious ‘wealth and benefits’ to Australia. The conditions associated with sponsorship hindered the capacity of many Vietnamese families to socialise new arrivals, or for the next generation to overcome experiences of disadvantage that were linked to settling in Australia. The emphasis on productive diversity, where cultural difference was a permitted expression so long as it contributed to an Australian national identity based on economic prowess, failed to acknowledge that to become productive citizens some migrants required greater assistance than others with adapting to life in Australia.

The relationship between the brands of multiculturalism promoted by the Hawke/Keating and Howard governments can be seen as one which involved a gradual and relatively smooth development of similar ideas and attitudes towards cultural diversity. The foundation laid by the Hawke government of harnessing the economic benefits of a society comprised of migrants was enthusiastically embraced and built upon by the Howard government. Labor set the scene for community reliance through the policy of sponsorship, and the Coalition exacerbated this dependency by removing or further restricting access to external supports and influences in the move to transform immigration into a source of positive economic, rather than neutral, impact on Australian society. It is clear, however, that these positive impacts were designed to be experienced by the cultural majority in Australia: those Australians who were able to behave as the proscribed economic actors who could generate their own capital and contribute to the national wealth.

The narratives around productive diversity, under both governments, reflected an overriding concern with containing and transforming cultural difference towards a single expression of cultural identity; diversity was predominantly something to be streamlined into a process directed towards achieving a solitary outcome. By encouraging the idea that cultural diversity was a means to an ends, both Labor and the Coalition aimed to reduce the potential challenge cultural difference represented to Anglo Australia.

Of greatest consequence to this thesis is that different (but similar) incarnations of multiculturalism did not significantly contribute towards increased opportunities for economic or social participation for Vietnamese family reunion migrants. The Hawke government paid lip service to this objective, but the policy and conditions of sponsorship prevented many Vietnamese from participating in the meagre programs that aimed to support their involvement in various services and activities. As the Hawke government predominantly oversaw the reunion of adult Vietnamese children with their parents and adult siblings from Vietnam or refugee camps, this failure of multicultural objectives had significant implications for Vietnamese communities. The young adults who sponsored their parents and siblings were rarely able to develop or obtain the skills and qualifications that would provide resilience in the workforce, as the Australian economy and industries transformed with the flows of globalisation. Real equality of opportunity, and the necessary support to participate in mainstream society would have helped mitigate the poor employment and educational outcomes of many Vietnamese mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Social equity, as already described, received even less focus under the Coalition. While ‘fairness for each person’ is listed as one of the principles underpinning Australian multiculturalism, policy documents reflected a perception that this was a nice idea, but not one which would receive deliberate facilitation by the Howard government. Vietnamese family reunion under the Coalition predominantly involved young men sponsoring fiancés or wives, and so the community implications of the emphasis on productive diversity differed slightly to those which occurred under the Labor government. Many young Vietnamese women were brought to Australia but were left untouched by a brand of multiculturalism that was only interested in migrants who could immediately, and independently, support the accumulation of national wealth. This left a large cohort of young Vietnamese without any skills to enter the
workforce or to survive independently of their sponsor in Australian society. A multicultural policy that ‘recognises, accepts, respects and celebrates cultural diversity’, but which did not include active and deliberate investment from the government, meant women sponsored to Australia under the Coalition were left to the supervision and direction of their sponsors. Their cultural identity was not compatible with the mould prescribed by the parameters of productive diversity, and so many Vietnamese women were effectively left to exist outside the realm of Australian multiculturalism as defined by the Howard government.

CONCLUSION

I had to support [my parents] for about four or five years… because [that was] the government policy… [when] you sponsor[ed] someone [to Australia]; that [was the] condition. But I am happy that the government policy [allowed this to happen] … [It was] still better than my country… And you know, its good country. You don’t feel so stressed you know. It’s a good country. I rather choose poor financial [than] not poor and not safe.¹

You screen people too fast! But you don’t prepare them. [For example], what is life in Australia like? How much do people earn? What [does] electricity cost? People have [to be] more realistic about what they [can] expect. In Australia, you do have to work hard. You can’t just sit around and get fat!

The department thinks you are stupid. You can’t do anything. You’re a burden. People don’t feel good [when they arrive in Australia and do not receive help with finding employment]. I think it is fair to say that [most support for new migrants should be] the responsibility of the family… [but they need more from the government]. I think if they get support from [the government during] that most critical time… in the long run they [will be able to] pay it back in tax, when they work. We… don’t lose anything, we get [a new] … member of society. That’s what I think.²

The above quotes demonstrate two of the most pertinent outcomes of the Australian family migration program: it has enabled millions of families to reunite and establish new lives after fleeing war and trauma, but an over-reliance on migrant families to provide settlement support has led to ongoing social and economic isolation. The first quote, provided by Lam, who sponsored her parents to Australia during the early 1990s, reflects the personal resilience required to endure tough circumstances but that the long-term benefits were clear: a safe new life for herself with her parents. This quote also reflects an acceptance of the limitations of this new life, which for some Vietnamese during this period involved ongoing low-skilled employment and below-average income. Lam’s reflection demonstrates a belief that this was the trade-off: safety in exchange for predestined financial hardship.

On the other hand, Giang, in the second quote, demonstrates a clearer knowledge and critical appraisal of the structural design of the family reunion program.³ Giang believed that it was reasonable for the Australian government to request and structurally endorse the close involvement of migrant families and communities in the settlement of new migrants. It reflects also, however, that this was preferable within a context of government assistance aimed at

¹ Interview no.9 with ‘Lam’, 1 December 2005, Richmond.
³ Giang’s testimony was detailed in Chapter Four. It offers a unique perspective on the family migration program, as her professional role as a social worker brought her into contact with many (mainly women) new migrants involved in sponsorship arrangements.
enabling new arrivals to participate in Australian society. While families are most likely to be the best sources of some types of settlement support, such as emotional encouragement, social interaction and the short-term provision of housing and material support, other knowledge and skills crucial to long-term self-sufficiency had to be obtained elsewhere. This was particularly so for many families in Australian-Vietnamese communities, where there was a history of trauma and broken opportunities for education and skill development. Families may have wished to provide all the necessary support for new family members, but a legacy of unresolved emotional and physical distress and poor personal experiences with gaining language and employment skills in Australia, meant they were not ideally placed to assist with these settlement needs. Giang did not believe financial disadvantage and all the associated social issues had to be an inevitable part of coming to Australia through the family migration program. Her perspective on the program, made possible through her role as a social worker, enabled her to see where the provision of government support to new arrivals could make an enormous difference to successful integration of new migrants to Australia. While Lam was at peace with the implications of coming to Australia as a refugee and sponsoring her parents with minimal government assistance, Giang saw loss; the potential of so many new migrants was squandered through a lack of early government intervention and involvement in settlement support.

This thesis has explored the political logic and context underpinning the design of the Australian family migration program during the period 1983 to 2007, which was an era of immense change in Australian politics and policy development. By incorporating transcripts of political debates with academic works and media reports, the early chapters chronicled the development of the attitudes and arguments underlying sponsorship arrangements and the extent of government support provided to new migrants entering Australia through this program. Chapters Four and Five provided accounts and reflections on the real-life implications of the political attitudes detailed in previous chapters, with an analysis of interview material and community magazines produced by those individuals and families directly involved in the program. A complex picture of families relieved to be living together but struggling with the pressures of sponsorship emerged, as intergenerational expectations and new lines of responsibility intersected with gender and age to cause tensions and a disruption to traditional family patterns.
The final chapter drew on multicultural policy documents to demonstrate how the official settlement policy of the Labor and Coalition governments during this period reflected a growing ideological preference that migrants arrive in Australia equipped to immediately contribute to the economy with minimal or no assistance from any source, other than family. Exploring the compatibility of the versions of multiculturalism espoused by these governments with the dynamics of the family reunion program revealed a context in which Vietnamese family reunion migrants were immediately disadvantaged and faced significant obstacles to becoming the active, participatory citizens described in these policy documents.

Key findings and future research

This thesis has closely analysed the Australian family migration program and sponsorship arrangements as a lens through which long-term settlement issues and the particular dynamics of family life for many Vietnamese can be viewed and understood. While not all Vietnamese Australians came to Australia through the family migration program, and sponsorship arrangements have not directly been experienced by all Vietnamese families living here, it is likely the majority of Australia’s 185,000 Vietnamese residents are familiar with the conditions of sponsorship and some of the implications of migrating to Australia through the family migration program.\footnote{ABS, 2011 Census Quick Stats Country of Birth - Vietnam. Viewed online at \url{http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2011/quickstat/5105_0} on 8 January 2016.} Chapter One, in reviewing academic literature on Vietnamese-Australian migration and the family migration program, demonstrated the concentration of currently available research on the arrival of Vietnamese as refugees. The circumstances and consequences of escaping Vietnam following the end of the war have been carefully documented and explored by academics including Nancy Viviani, James Jupp, Mandy Thomas and Nathalie Nguyen to reveal the demographics of Vietnamese who arrived in Australia, and the trauma associated with refugee camps, dangerous boat trips and long periods of separation between family members. This foundational work has been built upon to some extent to uncover experiences of family reunification in Australia, including emerging research on intergenerational experiences, but studies into refugee and skilled migration policies have
dominated the broad area of Australian migration research. The role of skilled migration in contributing towards the Australian economy has secured it as a topic of academic research, while the plight of growing numbers of desperate refugees worldwide has meant this area of migration will continue to need extensive investigation. The balance of research into Vietnamese-Australian migration reflects this trend, with refugee experiences dominating academic research, and the processes and practice of reuniting with family through sponsorship remaining an under-researched topic. In broad terms, as noted below, this thesis argues for further research into this area.

Chapters Two and Three uncovered the political logic and reasoning underlying the family migration program and attitudes towards increased Asian migration. Transcripts from debates occurring in parliament were analysed for references to Vietnamese families and the broader political agenda of integrating Australia further into global processes and connections. The legacy of White Australia was demonstrated to still shape discussions and deliberations over the entry of migrants from Asia, with Vietnamese comprising the largest cohort. Economic rationalism, and the growing influence of this approach to policy development was also revealed as significant to the design of the family reunion program, and attitudes towards government assistance for new migrants. While parliamentary transcripts are valuable in providing the views of those who shaped Australian migration policies, they do not tell the whole story. The transcripts, which are published online after each parliamentary sitting, provide evidence of the official narratives surrounding Vietnamese family (and sometimes refugee) migration to Australia—that is, what Australian politicians were comfortable with having on the public record. Protocols and conventions prevent or at least inhibit access to so much of the deliberations that contribute towards policy development, thus it must be acknowledged that the transcripts explored in Chapters Two and Three were but one version of the truth behind why the family migration program was designed in the way it was. For reasons including political security and sensitivity, the transcripts likely present a sanitised interpretation of why particular decisions were made. For this reason, further investigation into the politics surrounding Vietnamese migration to Australia, involving cross referencing with

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5 For example, discussions and papers prepared for Cabinet meetings, are considered confidential and protected by a thirty year moratorium. For further detail see Mark Rodrigues ‘Cabinet Confidentiality’ (May 2010), Parliament of Australia, Background Notes. Viewed online at http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/BN/0910/CabinetConfidentiality#_Toc262815686 on 10 January 2016.
other government documents, should uncover additional details on the national context into which so many Vietnamese fled and reunited with family.\textsuperscript{6}

Chapter Four provided accounts of individuals who directly experienced the family migration program, through either acting as a sponsor, or as a sponsored family member. The implications of the conditions associated with sponsorship and type of government assistance available were explored in terms of the impact on family life, including intergenerational relationships and settlement experiences. The interviews uncovered memories of frustration and grief, as corruption and bureaucratic processes delayed or even prevented reunification with family members, particularly during the Labor years of government. But they also demonstrated that many felt simply enormous gratitude that the program was in place, and a safe, new lifestyle in Australia was eventually established. The pressures associated with supporting parents, siblings and other family members were revealed to be immense—some relationships were irreparably damaged, while others recovered when sponsored family members were able to gain some independence. Qualifying for some welfare support was found to make a significant difference in relationships where the seniority and wisdom of aged parents, for example, had been compromised through the conditions of sponsorship that mandated parents remain under the care of their sponsors.

Interview material from people who were involved in sponsorship arrangements under the Coalition government revealed new patterns of reunification. Families splintered by the Vietnam War had largely reunited, and sponsorship primarily occurred between young men and women wishing to live together in Australia. Chapter Four also uncovered some of the reasons why a sample of Vietnam-born or second generation Vietnamese-Australian men exhibited a preference to sponsor women from Vietnam to marry and establish new lives in Australia. Cultural maintenance, poor English language skills and a desire to have a partner who could communicate with Vietnamese-speaking parents were among the reasons revealed. On the one hand, it was shown that sponsorship could effectively assist with new partners settling into Australian life, enabling a relatively smooth transition to new social and economic

\textsuperscript{6} Since the conclusion of primary research for this thesis, much new material has become available. For reasons beyond the control of the author, a significant period of ill health saw some delay in the final submission of this thesis, and since that time some relevant additional material has been released.
contexts. Conversely, sponsorship was also revealed to be a partial cause of some very exploitative circumstances, where women were isolated from broader society and threatened with deportation if they did not comply with the demands of their sponsors.

The interview sample enabled some qualitative conclusions to be drawn about possible impacts on family life and settlement experiences for many Vietnamese. A broad cross section of the different types of sponsorship that occurred during the 1983 to 2007 period was presented through memories and accounts of adult children sponsoring their parents and siblings, grandchildren arriving with their grandparents, husbands working for several years to sponsor their wives and children, and men sponsoring women to Australia to establish new families. To build on and enhance the findings from this chapter, however, further interviews with a larger cohort would be necessary. The Labor and Coalition governments of this period were also in government for comparatively long periods of time, during which key parts of the family migration program were transformed. This chapter provides qualitative evidence of some of the possible impacts of these changes, which could be used as scaffolding for further investigation into more detailed consequences of policy changes made during this time.

Chapter Five provided additional qualitative evidence of how modifications to the family migration program were felt and experienced by Vietnamese families and individuals. The community publications *Vietnamese Women* and *Integration* offered reflections and accounts that were complementary to the stories explored in the previous chapter, in that they confirmed and provided further detail into settlement issues and family life raised in the interviews. This chapter also contributed to the small but important field of research into community publications, which is a rich source of reflections on direct experiences that are not always reported on in mainstream media. *Vietnamese Women* and *Integration* provided ample material for the purposes of this thesis; but a more comprehensive analysis of community publications produced by Vietnamese Australians would enable a deeper analysis of the role played by these publications in building and consolidating community identity and in tackling particular settlement issues that were commonly experienced.
The final chapter focused on multicultural policy documents, as the official settlement policy framework under both Labor and Coalition governments. The values and principles espoused in these documents, which defined the parameters for how cultural diversity was to be lived in Australia, were investigated in terms of compatibility with the circumstances created by the family migration program. Both governments were responsible for the development of ‘productive diversity’, a concept that aimed to explain the value of multiculturalism in terms of its boost to the Australian economy through increased international connections. Productive diversity depended upon migrants settling in Australia with minimal or no government assistance and achieving self-sufficiency in terms of employment and housing as soon as possible. Expressions of cultural identity were supported or tolerated as long as they did not interfere with this agenda. But as noted by this chapter, for many Vietnamese the conditions of sponsorship intermingled with a history of unresolved trauma, interrupted education and poor English skills to create lifestyles that were characterised by welfare dependency, and few opportunities for skill development or meaningful interaction with people outside Vietnamese communities. The ‘enclaves’, which evolved over time and were partly consolidated by the webs of inter-dependent relationships created by sponsorship, have not been viewed as conducive to productive diversity. Nor have the types of exploitative relationships uncovered in Chapter Four, which placed sole responsibility for the integration of new arrivals in the hands of people poorly equipped to do so. The version of multiculturalism developed by both the Labor and Coalition governments failed to invest in supports and education for new family members and to assist in creating citizens able to harness their cultural diversity for the growth of the Australian economy or society. Nevertheless, new research is emerging that reveals the proactive and creative uses made of multicultural programs by some communities, and research in the field of ‘everyday multiculturalism’ and community cultural development may add nuance to these findings.

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Contribution to Vietnamese migration studies

As detailed above, research into the arrival of Vietnamese refugees to Australia is extensive and multi-faceted. Investigations into this important topic range from the perspective of international relations and the negotiated agreements required to allow the safe passage of millions of Vietnamese to countries such as Australia, to the health effects of trauma and personal memories of the transition to a new home. A refugee background is common to many, if not most, Vietnamese currently living in Australia. This thesis contributes to this literature through its exploration of an important and connected stage in migrating to a new country as a refugee: that of family sponsorship. In furthering the investigative work into family reunion programs, this thesis extends the knowledge about experiences of refugees as the process of rebuilding families occurs. It is knowledge that is likely to be applicable to other groups who have arrived via family reunion programs both in Australia and worldwide; reuniting with family in a new safe country is the logical and preferred next step for many refugees.

Following the reunification of families directly affected by the Vietnam War, the interviews and analysis of community publications demonstrated how unresolved physical and emotional trauma caused by the outcomes of the war, for many people, shaped family life for generations to come. Grief and guilt felt by those who arrived safely in Australia regarding family left behind, the pressures imposed by sponsorship, and attempting to obtain employment in a nation in recession with few skills, all created family dynamics that were sometimes strained, tense and unhappy. While not wishing to essentialise or characterise all Vietnamese families in this way, this thesis has noted how children were often forced to assume responsibilities beyond their developmental age, as parents worked long hours to build new lives in Australia and were frequently absent for long periods of time. Such observations could and should inform our understanding of the challenges of second and third generation migrants in many settlement contexts.

Family reunification for Vietnamese during the period explored occurred within a national context of suspicion and unease about any migration from Asia. The intensity of this discomfort ebbed and flowed but never disappeared, and Vietnamese families were faced with the
challenge of rebuilding their lives in an occasionally hostile and unwelcoming environment. Again, it was often the children in these families who bore the brunt of managing tough family lives and issues associated with being a migrant of Asian background in Australia. Some of the young men who sponsored women from Vietnam during the Coalition’s period of governance fit this demographic, and Vietnamese migration to Australia through the family migration program was found to include new patterns of sponsorship and examples of reunification. This research suggests that some of the young men who proved to be inadequate sponsors—and left some women in a new country without support, open to exploitation and vulnerable—were in many cases those same young men who had struggled unassisted with early life in Australia as their parents worked to support other relatives and establish new lives. These circumstances contributed to troubled young men unable to develop the necessary skills to live peacefully in Australia. While many young men have gone on to create successful lives, such findings that emphasise contexts created in part by government settlement policies are not without relevance in an era of often hysterical debate about a dangerous and radicalised second and third generation migrant youth. 

The sponsorship between spouses under the Coalition also pointed towards another facet of Vietnamese migrant life: for many, there was a preference to marry and establish new family units with other Vietnamese. This predilection for inter-cultural marriage was not comprehensively explored in this thesis. Nevertheless, it did emerge through the interviews and analysis of community publications, and was enabled through the Australian family migration program, and this could be a topic of further research.

In addition to studies of Vietnamese migration, this thesis contributed towards rebalancing the focus on Australian migration studies through an investigation of family migration. While refugees and skilled migrants continue to dominate research in Australian migration studies, this thesis has focused on a migration program that is less popular politically, but which is crucially linked to both refugee and skilled migration. In addition to enabling reunification

between family members separated through war and conflict, as with the Vietnamese example, skilled migration also contains a component of family migration. An area of research not covered in this thesis due to the low levels of Vietnamese entering Australia through this avenue, the link between skilled and family migration is an under-researched topic of investigation. The focus on skilled migration policy frequently does not include analysis of the complications and settlement issues associated with sponsoring family members to Australia. Yet, the ability to bring family to Australia could influence Australia’s competitiveness as a destination for skilled migrants. Further investigation into this facet of family migration is warranted and would support governmental agendas to continue to build the Australian economy through this form of migration.

This thesis intended to contribute to the above-mentioned important areas of study and to explore, as closely as possible, the very real impact of government policy on migrant individuals and families. As a researcher who also works in government, I wanted to investigate and understand the link between decisions made by governments operating in complex international and domestic contexts and the daily experiences of migrants in entering and settling into Australia. The findings of this thesis have provided such insights, but the diversity of sources has also highlighted the multiple factors that contributed to settlement experiences of any new migrant. A historical suspicion of Asian migration and reluctance to encourage the development of a multicultural society with mainstream expressions of non-Anglo-Saxon cultural practices, worked in conjunction with an economic recession and drive to embrace rationalist policy principles to create the national context into which Vietnamese families sought to reunite. Vietnamese people arrived in Australia with untold experiences of trauma and despair to the almost immediate pressures of finding accommodation, employment and social networks, with minimal settlement infrastructure. The processes of sponsorship were woven into this complex web of social and economic pressures to produce circumstances that were simultaneously joyful and hard, liberating and restricting. It is my hope that this fascinating area of research continues to be embraced, and that the Australian government recognises the value of the family migration program as one that nurtures and sustains the most crucial and arguably important of all relationships, that between family members.
## APPENDIX 1

Ministers of Immigration during the Hawke/Keating and Howard Governments, 1983 – 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Minister</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hawke – Labor</td>
<td>Stewart West</td>
<td>1983 - 1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawke – Labor</td>
<td>Michael Young</td>
<td>1987 – 1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawke/Keating – Labor</td>
<td>Gerald Hand</td>
<td>1990 – 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard – Coalition</td>
<td>Philip Ruddock</td>
<td>1996 – 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard – Coalition</td>
<td>Amanda Vanstone</td>
<td>2003 – 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard – Coalition</td>
<td>Kevin Andrews</td>
<td>2007 – 2007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 2

Details of interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Han</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Han was only about 12 years old when she came to Australia in 1989. Her aunt and uncle sponsored her grandmother, who was 72 at the time, to live in Australia, and Han, who was living with her grandmother at the time, was a minor on her grandmother’s passport. The process was slow: paperwork was initially lodged with the department of immigration in 1985, but four years passed before Han and her grandmother arrived in Australia. Han commented this was because the Vietnamese Government saw the mass migration of Vietnamese to other countries as a ‘national shame’, and responded by ceasing to process visas for three years. Han and her grandmother lived with her aunt and uncle when they first arrived, which eased their early settlement considerably. Han remembered her grandmother was quite lonely during her early years in Australia. She struggled to meet new people and missed the noisy streets of Vietnam, where neighbours and friends would frequently drop in.</td>
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<th>Cam</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cam was sponsored by her husband to Australia in 2000. Her husband arrived two years earlier with their son, while Cam remained in Vietnam to sell the family business. The family wanted to migrate to Australia because a better standard of living could be achieved and enjoyed than in Vietnam. Early life in Australia was difficult, as neither Cam nor her husband spoke any English. Factory work was eventually obtained through friends. No assistance from the Government was received to find employment. Cam approached Centrelink for support, but was told they only assisted permanent residents.</td>
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<th>Giang</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Giang arrived in Australia in 1982 from a Malaysian refugee camp, where she had stayed for two months. She knew little about Australia, but as a single, educated, English speaking young woman, Giang fitted the criteria set by the Australian Government for acceptable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
refugees. Giang left behind her entire family. She didn’t want to leave Vietnam, but felt she had little option after witnessing the ongoing discrimination experienced by her family who were Catholic and considered by the Vietnamese Communist Party as aligned with foreign powers. Giang’s early memories of life in Australia were of loneliness and grief, as she desperately missed her family and friends. An informal network of friends assisted during this period with advice on where to find work and accommodation. She predominantly socialised with other Vietnamese people and met new friends through church groups. In 1984 Giang sponsored her sister to Australia, and in 1989, her mother. The process to sponsor was quick, compared to other experiences. Giang remembered a fairly simple process, with no interview. She was able to complete the paperwork herself. Life with her mother and sister in Australia was very hard in some ways. Giang had to assume complete responsibility for their wellbeing as neither spoke English. Life became more complicated when Giang’s mother had a stroke and required constant care.

**Khanh**

Khanh arrived in Australia as a refugee in 1977 when she was 15 years old. While she has not directly sponsored anyone, she has assisted many family member and friends with immigration matters in her capacity as a social worker. Kanh provided fascinating insights into settlement issues experienced by many Vietnamese people. This included pressures on the second generation to succeed academically, and to manage cultural expectations of their parents. Kanh also spoke in detail of the particular challenges faced by young Vietnamese women who arrived in Australia on spouse visas and were completely dependent on their husbands and his family, for all social and economic support.

**Hung**

Hung was sponsored by her aunt and uncle in 1996 to Australia, when she was 14 years old. She had been staying in a refugee camp for four years with her younger brother before her arrival. In 2003 Hung was able to sponsor her brother to Australia. She received no formal assistance with completing the paperwork to sponsor her brother, but remembers an Australian nun who volunteered with immigration services to assist people in Hung’s situation. The process to sponsor her brother took 11 months, a length of time partly caused
by corruption within the Vietnamese government. Hung’s early years in Australia involved working and studying English and computer literacy courses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hoa</th>
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<td>Hoa arrived alone in Australia in 1981, on a refugee visa. A teenager at the time, she was selected by the Australian Government from a refugee camp in Malaysia. Her early life in Australia was very difficult. Without the support of family, she struggled to find employment, accommodation and friends. Church groups were the most helpful with these tasks; Hoa emphasised that the Government provided no assistance at all. She found accommodation in Richmond, where she could live amongst other Vietnamese. This was important to her early settlement, as Hoa did not have any English language skills, and did not have time to attend English classes: she had to immediately begin earning money to survive and to save to bring her parents and other family to Australia. When asked whether she sponsored any family to Australia, Hoa became sad and said she simply couldn’t afford to bring her parents or siblings to Australia. She married and had children and then bought a house. Supporting her own family and servicing a large mortgage meant Hoa could not also financially support sponsored family from Vietnam.</td>
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<th>Lam</th>
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<td>Lam was sponsored by her sister to Australia in 1984, when she was 17 years old. She had fled Vietnam with two brothers and made it to a Thai refugee camp, where she spent 2.5 years before she was able to come to Australia. Lam’s parents encouraged her to leave Vietnam and establish herself in Australia. Lam was considered by her parents to be strong and independent, and capable of surviving the journey and acting as a sponsor for the rest of the family to Australia. Lam sponsored her brothers and sister in 1988 and her parents in 1990. Her memories of her early years in Australia are of hardship, exhaustion and loneliness. She had to ‘parent’ her six younger siblings and provide all the financial, emotional and practical support in her parents’ absence. Lam had no English language skills and so had to work in factories to earn enough money to provide for her siblings. Lam admitted that life did not become much easier once her parents arrived in 1990. In fact, in some ways it was harder, because she had to take care of them financially and emotionally too, without any government support.</td>
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assistance for four-five years. Fortunately, her parents had access to medicare immediately, so this alleviated the financial pressures associated with health care. Informal networks of friends and acquaintances helped Lam to find work and accommodation. Living in Footscray, where many other Vietnamese families had also settled helped with early settlement issues immensely, as language was not a barrier to finding out information or obtaining support. Lam worked in factories during the day and sewed piece work in the evenings, seven days per week to make ends meet. Lam remembered the process of applying for sponsorship and visas as relatively straightforward. The department of immigration provided interpreters and Lam just had to demonstrate proof of their relationship.

Lan

Lan arrived in Australia in 1986 with her two brothers. Her fiancé, whom she met in a refugee camp, was already living in Australia, sponsored Lan and her brothers. The process took approximately 3 years. Lan sponsored her parents to Australia after 10 years. She explained that she attempted to much earlier, but the system kept changing, and as there wasn’t an embassy in Vietnam, all the documents had to be sent to and lodged in Thailand, which delayed the process considerably. Her parents brought Lan’s younger sister, who was a minor on their passport to Australia also. Lan was required to provide an assurance of support to the Australian Government that she could financially support her family. This involved working 12 hour shifts at a factory to earn sufficient income. A friend helped Lan find work in a factory when she first arrived. Lan was grateful to be taken on by her employer, even though her English language skills were poor. Her early years in Australia were spent working and socialising with other Vietnamese people she met in the refugee camp, who were also selected or sponsored to resettle in Australia. Lan was well established by the time her parents and sister came to Australia. She had purchased a house big enough to accommodate them and enjoyed having them stay with her. This was particularly helpful when she had her son. Lan explained that taking care of her parents was something she would do in Vietnam anyway, so providing for them in Australia was consistent with what she imagined her future to be. Her parents later moved out to live in Richmond amongst other elderly Vietnamese, and enjoy having their own independence and the company of people who have been through similar relocation experiences as they have.
### Danh

Danh arrived in Australia in 1992 with his mother. Danh was 12 years old at the time. His father had already arrived in Australia and was able to sponsor his wife on a spouse visa. Danh’s father was a former soldier and had to escape from Vietnam or he would be imprisoned. In Australia, some friends helped Danh’s father to find employment in the clothing industry, ironing and mending clothes. He was fortunate to obtain some government housing in time for when Danh and his mother arrived. Danh remembered the assistance provided by friends as crucial to his family’s settlement in the early years. One friend drove Danh’s family around to show them where shops and services were, and took them to the Smith family to get some clothes and food vouchers. The existing Vietnamese community was important for the family’s social life too; Danh remembered most weekends were spent visiting other Vietnamese families.

### Linh

Linh arrived in Australia in 1981. After residing in a Malaysian refugee camp for 12 months, she was selected by the Australian Government for resettlement. Linh left Vietnam because she was afraid of being conscripted into the army. Her early memories of life in Australia are of hardship: she had no English language skills, and remembers no assistance with finding employment. A friend helped Linh to find a job in a factory, which gave Linh the start she needed to begin saving enough money to sponsor and support her parents to Australia. It took Linh four years to bring out her parents, partly caused by a hold-up with the paperwork in Vietnam. While Linh didn’t receive any assistance with completing the immigration forms in Australia, she doesn’t remember them as being too complicated. She just had to agree to provide financial support to her parents, and demonstrate her income through the provision of payslips. Linh only has positive memories of life when her parents finally arrived. She considered it her duty as a responsible daughter to provide for her parents, whether they lived together in Vietnam or Australia. Her parents were able to assist when Linh had her own children, and she is grateful a close relationship was able to develop between the generations, despite the challenges of settling in a new country.
**Due**

Due arrived alone in Australia in 1977. He escaped Vietnam as a teenager and spent a short period of time in a Thai refugee camp. Due was the eldest son in his family, and it was expected that he would attempt to establish himself overseas and then send for his family. He remembers his early years in Australia as very tough; he was bored and lonely and spent most of his time studying English. He initially lived in a migrant hostel and then obtained some public housing in 1978. Due sponsored his brother to Australia in 1980. The process was not too difficult, as his brother was also residing in a Thai refugee camp and fitted the criteria of young, single and with a relative already in Australia. Sponsorship of his brother took 3 months. Sponsoring his parents was much more complicated. The brothers had to work hard to convince their parents that it was no longer safe to live in Vietnam, and that they would have a better life in Australia. In the early 1980s Due and his brother commenced the application process. They had to send money to their parents for passports and try to manage the paperwork process from Australia, as their parents did not understand what was required. Due’s parents lived in South Vietnam, but during this time, there was only an embassy in Hanoi. The family fell victim to several unscrupulous officials in Vietnam, who lost the necessary paperwork and demanded bribes. Finally, after 5 years of resubmitting paperwork, in 1990, Due’s parents arrived in Australia. The brothers had by this time bought a 4 bedroom house and had arranged jobs for other siblings who also came to Australia. While money was tight when the parents arrived, Due commented that life was much easier. He no longer had to send money to his parents in Vietnam, and did not worry about their safety. His parents assisted with the care of the grandchildren when they arrived, and provided other domestic support.

**Mai**

Mai arrived in Australia in 1982 as a refugee. She lived for 3 months in a Singaporean refugee camp before she was offered a place in Australia for resettlement. Church contacts helped her to find accommodation and employment in hospitality when she first arrived. In 1984 she began the process of sponsoring her parents and siblings to Australia. This was a very tough period for Mai, who was only a teenager at the time. Completing the necessary paperwork to sponsor her family was very difficult. The process was opaque; she remembers having to
guess which documents were required, and it took several attempts to get it right. The fees associated with the applications kept increasing, so her stress levels were very high. It was frustrating no knowing why many of the applications made to sponsor her brother were rejected. She was never given clear feedback on which details etc were missing. Mai was also exhausted from working enough hours to support herself and to demonstrate she was capable of supporting her parents. Life had new complications once her parents arrived in Australia. The family misunderstood the limitations on welfare assistance and had to repay a large sum of money to the Australian Government for work done on Mai’s father’s teeth. Mai commented that tensions ran very high within the family home. Her parents, who were used to living independently, struggled with the role reversal inherent in sponsorship arrangements. Small issues were frequently blown out of proportion as the financial dependence upon Mai challenged existing patterns of authority. Money was extremely tight, and it was very difficult to make ends meet. After Mai’s parents had resided in Australia for two years they were eligible to apply for and receive a pension from the Australian Government. Her parents were also successful in obtaining public housing and so could live independently of Mai. The relationships within the family improved remarkably during this period. Mai commented that the government provided no assistance before the two year was over. Church groups were important in providing a social outlet for her parents.

My

My arrived in Australia in 1995 on a spouse visa. Her husband, a first generation Vietnamese-Australian, had lived in Australia for 25 years. He travelled back to Vietnam in the early 1990s to meet a Vietnamese woman to be his wife. The couple married in Vietnam but had to marry again in Australia before My’s permanent residency could be applied for. My remembered a fairly straightforward migration process; the couple were able to manage the forms themselves and a visa arrived after approximately six months. My was comfortable with the condition of her spouse visa that she receive no financial assistance from the Government for her first two years in Australia. She commented that it motivated her to work and study hard, so that she could find employment soon, and contribute to her household’s income. She spent the first 12 months in Australia studying English, and then completed a Diploma in Accounting and a postgraduate qualification in IT. While My was a secondary school teacher in Vietnam, she was worried about her accent and did not want to teach in
Australia. My had basic English when she arrived in Australia and so could manage some
tasks, like shopping by herself. Her husband was also very supportive and organised, and
showed her how to catch a bus, go to the Footscray market etc. My wanted to sponsor her
parents to Australia when she had a baby, but found it too expensive. Her parent’s didn’t
qualify for a tourist visa, and so My and her husband would have had to sponsor them on
parent visas, which were costly. My found the experience of childbirth and looking after a
new born stressful without her mother and worried about long term health problems for her
baby and herself.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ngoc</th>
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| Ngoc arrived in Australia in 1998 as an international student. In 2001 she married a second
generation Vietnamese-Australian. As Ngoc did not yet have permanent residency, he
sponsored her on a spouse visa application, to enable the couple to stay in Australia. Ngoc’s
mother, who had been paying her school fees, was disappointed with Ngoc’s decision to
marry, and so ceased financial support. Ngoc could not afford to finish her studies and
commenced working in restaurants and factories, while her husband largely remained
unemployed. In 2003 Ngoc gave birth to a baby girl and the family struggled to make ends
meet. Ngoc’s husband was very critical of how she managed their money, and the relationship
eventually expired. He has never paid any child support, and Ngoc survives on a single
pension in Melbourne. |

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<tr>
<th>Duong</th>
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| Duong was sponsored by his fiancé to Australia in 1992. The process took approximately 12-
18 months. He spent the first 12 months in Australia studying English and working casually
in the clothing industry. He remembers his early settlement years as stressful and commented
that he considered returning to Vietnam. After two years however, he found life in Australia
easier, and is happy he remained here permanently. |
Gia

Gia arrived in Australia in 1981 with his parents and sister. Gia was nine years old and have lived with his family for 12 months in a Thai refugee camp before they were accepted into Australia. Gia’s father was a soldier with the United States of America and recognised that he and his family would not fare well in Vietnam after the war ended, and so arranged for their departure. His parents also sponsored a nephew to come to Australia with them. Gia remembered his parents finding work through friends in farms or in factories when they first arrived in the country. Gia sponsored his wife to Australia in 2004. The couple met in Vietnam, married there, and then applied for an offshore visa. Approximately 18 months passed before Gia’s wife arrived in Australia. Gia remembers the process as being slow and expensive. A friend provided an assurance of support to assist with the application. He and his wife would like to sponsor other family members to Australia but the cost is prohibitive.

Giang

Giang arrived in 1988 as a refugee from a Malaysian refugee camp. He came to Australia with his brother, who was also in the camp. The brothers waited 2 years to come to Australia and left behind their parents and other siblings in Vietnam. Their father was a soldier and so the family was persecuted and discriminated against by the Communist government. The boys felt they had little option but to leave Vietnam. Giang sponsored his wife first to come to Australia. This was a surprisingly quick process, and she arrived within a few months. It was only necessary to demonstrate the relationship when he sponsored his wife. Sponsoring his parents took longer – it was about 3 years before they arrived from the commencement of the paperwork. This required Giang to provide an assurance of support and demonstrate he could support his parents financially in Australia. A problem occurred during the waiting period for visas for his parents, when the Ford factory closed, and Giang could no longer offer an assurance of support. After a short period of time however, Giang was able to secure work as a security guard, and the visas for his parents were issued. A friend helped Giang find work with Ford (car manufacturers) in Broadmeadows. Giang estimated that approximately one third of the workforce in this factory were Vietnamese. Friends within the Vietnamese community were also helpful with the sponsoring process. Giang remembered friends checking forms for him. Giang’s parents lived with him for the first four years they
were in Australia. He remembers this time as tough, in that he had to provide all financial
and emotional support for his parents, but was so relieved to know they were safe. A
community organisation was very helpful during the early years of Giang’s parents’
settlement, as it also provided social support and reassurance.

Hien

Hien was selected by the Australian Government as a refugee in 1981, from a Southeast Asian
refugee camp. He waited until 1986 to begin sponsoring family members from Vietnam,
because he didn’t realise he could have earlier. His early years in Australia involved working
during the day and studying at night. A friend helped him to secure factory work, and a church
group assisted with finding suitable accommodation. Hien completed the immigration forms
himself and doesn’t remember any assistance being offered. It took approximately two years
for his parents’ application to migrate to be successful. Life in Australia after they arrived
was difficult. While his mind was at ease that they were no longer in any kind of danger in
Vietnam, having sole responsibility for the wellbeing was exhausting.

Nhu

Nhu was sponsored by her husband to Australia in 2003. Nhu was introduced to her husband,
a second generation Vietnamese-Australian, through friends. The couple knew each other for
three or four months before they married in Vietnam in 2001. The visa application was
straightforward, and took approximately six months. Nhu’s life in Australia was very hard.
She did not know anyone except her husband’s friends and family and felt very isolated and
vulnerable. Nhu’s husband had an undisclosed drug addiction that eventually lead to his
imprisonment. Nhu was forced to move in with his parents, who made her do all the
housework and prevented her from visiting Vietnam. She was eventually made homeless but
found emergency accommodation through a community organisation. This organisation
assisted Nhu to obtain permanent residency, which had been denied to her after her husband
refused to continue his obligations as sponsor.
Phuong was sponsored by her husband to Australia in 2002. The couple married in Vietnam after their parents arranged the match. The process of applying for a visa, sitting interviews with immigration officials and waiting for a response took approximately 18 months. Phuong did not know anyone in Australia other than her husband’s family and friends. Her life in Australia was hard from the beginning. Phuong’s husband was unemployed so the couple lived with his parents, who made Phuong do all the housework. She was constantly threatened with being sent back to Vietnam, and her parents would be informed she was an inadequate or ungrateful daughter-in-law. This threat was compounded by the birth of Phuong’s son in 2004. Phuong’s parents-in-law lead her to believe that if she was sent back to Vietnam, her baby would remain in Australia because he was an Australian citizen. Very soon after her arrival in Australia, Phuong learnt of her husband’s drug addiction. Unaware of where to go for help, she attempted to make the relationship work until the day she found her young son playing with a used syringe in the bathroom. A friend she made through an ante-natal class put her in touch with a community organisation which was eventually able to help Phuong find some accommodation. This same organisation helped Phuong to obtain permanent residency in 2004. Phuong was surprised to learn she was not a permanent resident already; she was unaware of her temporary status and the conditions of her spouse visa, which included her husband’s financial support for a period of two years before her permanent residency could be applied for.
APPENDIX 3

Interview Questions

*Interview questions for the sponsors of other family members*

Background

1. Name (optional)
2. Age
3. Male/female
4. Ethnicity
5. Marriage status.
6. Number of children (if any)
7. Suburb of residence.

Arrival in Australia

8. What year did you come to Australia?
9. Did you come alone? Did you have family already in Australia?
10. How did you come to Australia? What sort of visa did you apply for?
11. Why did you decide to come to Australia?
12. Was it difficult to come to Australia? Did you have to wait very long before you could arrive?
13. What family did you leave behind in Vietnam?
14. Did they also want to come to Australia?
15. Why did you come to Australia before they did?
16. How long did you wait before you began to help your other family members come to Australia? Did you want to help them come to Australia earlier? Why did you wait as long as you did?
17. What was it like for you in Australia before you were able to help the rest of your family migrate? Were you lonely/ happy/ worried?
18. Were you able to find work once you arrived in Australia? Was it difficult to find work? What things or people helped you to find work?
19. What about accommodation? Why did you decide to live where you are now?
   Was it difficult to find somewhere to live? What things or people helped you to
   find accommodation?

20. What did you do in your spare time while you were waiting for your family to
   arrive in Australia? How did you meet friends? How did you relax?

The process of sponsoring

21. Which member of your family did you sponsor to Australia (first)?

22. Was it difficult to become a sponsor? What sort of things did you have to do? (I.e.
   How much money did you have to have saved? How much did the process cost?)
   Did you have to work overtime/ work two jobs? What were the implications of
   becoming a sponsor employment-wise?

23. Who (if anyone) helped you to fill out the forms/ speak to the immigration
   officials? Was it difficult to understand what you had to do?

24. How long did the process take, from the time when you filled out the forms and
   your family member arrived in Australia?

25. Were there other family members you wanted to also sponsor out? Were you able
   to? How difficult was that? Were there any problems with sponsoring out other
   family members?

After the new migrant/family member arrives

26. What was it like once your new family member arrived? Were there things she/he
   couldn’t do? I.e. could they find work/ go to school? If so, what sort of work or
   education/ training did they take on?

27. Could your new family member speak English very well? Could they go shopping
   by themselves, or go to the bank or the post office?

28. How did your life change when they arrived? Was it easier now, because there
   was someone to help at home with cooking and looking after children?

29. Did you have to look after your new family member a lot when they first arrived?
   Did you have to support them financially?

Two years later

30. What was life like for your family two years after your family member migrated
   to Australia? I.e. Did you own a house/ have a different job/ have (more) children?
Interview questions for the sponsored family member

Background

1. When did you come to Australia?
2. Who were you coming to join/ what family members did you have already living in Australia?
3. Did you have to wait very long before you could join them in Australia? Did you want to come earlier? Why did you have to wait? Why did you not come out to Australia together?
4. Was it difficult to come to Australia? What sort of questions were asked/ criteria did you have to fulfill before you could come?
5. Did you come to Australia alone? Did you bring any children?
6. Were there any other reasons for why you wanted to come to Australia, other than wishing to join other family?

Post arrival in Australia

7. How did you find life in Australia once you arrived? Were you happy to be here/ was life difficult?
8. Were you able to speak much English when you first arrived?
9. What did you do during the first two years of living in Australia? Did you find a job, go to school or do some volunteer work?
10. Were you able to do most things outside of the home by yourself during the first two years? For example, could you go shopping or to the bank or catch a bus by yourself?
11. Who helped you (if anyone) go shopping or find work when you first arrived? Where did you go when you wanted to do some shopping? Why did you go to this place? (Convenience/ other Vietnamese shopped there etc.)
12. How did you meet people or make friends when you first arrived? Was it difficult to meet people? (Were most of your friends Vietnamese or non-Vietnamese?)
13. Who did most of the house work when you first arrived in Australia in your family?
14. Who mainly looked after the children?
Two years after arrival

15. What was life like two years after you first arrived?
16. Were you working after two years? What sort of work?
17. How did you find employment? Did anyone help you? Did you go to Centrelink to find work?
18. Who was doing most of the housework two years after your arrival? Who was looking after the children?
19. Were you more confident about doing new things (going to different places) by yourself after two years?
20. Who are your friends/ who do you relax with/ spend most of your spare time with?
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