

Youth Migration

1850s – 1980s

Other Names: • Juvenile Migrant

Details

Youth Migration to Australia comprised young people (post-primary school age, usually ranging from 14 to 20 years old), who had made their own decision to migrate to Australia, often to work in rural areas. They commonly came to Australia as assisted migrants, subsidised by colonial, state or Commonwealth governments. Non-government organisations were also involved in youth migration to Australia.

Youth migrants came to Australia to work, and were generally placed in private employment. (In contrast, child migrants were usually placed in 'care' in an institution when they arrived in Australia.) Youth migrants, because of their age, usually had more control over their lives than younger child migrants (On Their Own exhibition, 2010). However, some youth migrants were placed in institutions in Australia like farm schools, run by non-government organisations, including The Salvation Army and the Big Brother Movement.

Youth migration schemes began in the nineteenth century with schemes such as the Earl Grey Pauper Immigration Scheme (1848-1851) which brought Irish orphans aged 14-19, predominantly girls, from British workhouses to Australia to work as domestic labour.

Government-run schemes picked up in the early twentieth century, in New South Wales and South Australia.

The Dreadnought Trust was one of the first organisations to be involved in youth migration in New South Wales. The first Dreadnought Boys arrived in 1911, and were sent to government-run farms. This scheme continued until 1930.

The South Australian Farm Apprentice Scheme brought 172 boys aged 15 to 17 in 1913 and 1914. This program was temporarily halted by World War One but recommenced in 1922, with an aim to bring 6,000 farm apprentices to South Australia from Britain, to help repopulate the state after the heavy loss of young lives to the War. In all, 1,444 young men migrated to South Australia under this scheme (they were sometimes known as Barwell Boys, named after the Premier of South Australia in 1922).

There were waves of youth migration from Britain to Australia at different times. In the years following World War One, there was a wave of male youth migrants, sent to work in rural areas in Australia. Youth migrants constituted about 10% of British migration to Australia during the 1920s (Sherington, 2002). The youth migration schemes of the 1920s helped to strengthen British Imperial ties and were explicitly tied to Australia's White Australia Policy. Youth migration to Australia during this period was governed by an Imperial Act, the Empire Settlement Act 1922, and the Joint Commonwealth and States Scheme of 1921 which transferred responsibility for immigration from states to the Commonwealth.

The Great Depression halted youth migration to Australia and it did not start up again in great numbers until the post World War Two period, which saw thousands of youth migrants arriving. While many continued to work on farms, city work became more popular. Organisations involved in youth migration after World War Two include the Big Brother Movement and the Young Christian Workers Movement.

From the mid 1970s, migration policy in Australia changed. Rather than focussing on large-scale assisted programs used to attract specific groups from particular countries, migration policy began to focus on skill and labour shortages and targeting migrants with specific skills needed in Australia. By the early 1980s, government sponsorship of one of the last schemes of the Big Brother Movement was terminated, and youth migration in this form ceased.

Gallery



Group of 'Barwell Boys'

Description: The library description states: Large group of 'Barwell Boys' in front of the Destitute Asylum buildings. This photograph was published in The Observer newspaper 30 September 1922 page 29.

More info

Related Entries

Related Organisations

- [Dr Barnardo's Homes \(Australia Branch\) \(1883 - 1966\)](#)
- [Dreadnought Trust \(1909 - 1930?\)](#)
- [Big Brother Movement \(1925 - current\)](#)
- [Young Christian Workers Movement \(c. 1941 - current\)](#)
- [Dr Barnardos in Australia \(1966 - c. 1995\)](#)

Related Legislation

- [Juvenile Migrants Apprenticeship Act 1923, New South Wales \(1923 - 1926\)](#)
- [Juvenile Migrants Act 1926, New South Wales \(1926 - 1999\)](#)

Related Archival Collections

- [Records of the Immigration, Publicity and Tourism Department and predecessor and successor agencies \(1908 - 1978\)](#)

Related Archival Items

- [Immigration encouragement - Government schemes - South Australia - Settlement of 6000 boys \(1920 - 1924\)](#)
- [Boy Farm Apprenticeship Scheme South Australia \(1927 - 1928\)](#)

Resources

- Sherington, Geoffrey, *A better class of boy: The Big Brother Movement, youth migration and citizenship of Empire*, Australian Historical Studies, 2002
- Department of Justice, [History](#), Children's Court of New South Wales, 2012
- Coldrey, Barry, [Good British stock: child and youth migration to Australia](#), 1999
- Grant, Elspeth, [South Australia's British Farm Apprentices 1913-14](#), 2010
- Adams, Prue, [Hard Labour](#), 22 June 2008
- Langfield, Michele, [More people imperative: immigration to Australia 1901-1939](#), 1999
- Moss, Kellie, [Juvenile Immigrants: An Experiment in Convict Labour?](#), Carceral Archipelago, 2015

Other Resources



Title: Cover of *The New Australian*, the magazine of the Big Brother Movement

Type: Image

Date: 1929

[Details](#)



Title: South Australia - The Wheat and Garden State - Opportunity for Boys to Become Farmers

Type: Image

Date: 1913

[Details](#)

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