

# Italian migrants to australia

[Parts of the World](#), [Australia](#)



History Assignment- Extended Response Describe the experiences of the Italian migrants from their arrival after WW2, through to the multicultural period in the 1970s The experiences of the Italian Migrants have changed from the time of their arrival after WW2 to the present day. The Italian migrants were forced to leave Italy after the war due to the fact that many of them were displaced as a result of sheer destruction that some areas had undergone. What was once a home, was now no more than a pile of rubbish.

Also, with many loved ones dead, leaving and making a new start was very tempting. When they first arrived in Australia, the Italians experienced considerable cultural shock. They found that Australia was insensitive to their culture and traditions and therefore expected them to change. The Italians were mainly like the “ black sheep” of the population. The feud between the Italian migrants and the Australians got to a point where the Italians had to go out in groups in fear for their own safety. It also appeared that the Australian government was not well prepared to accept them.

However, after their work on the Snowy Mountains Scheme and other enterprises, life changed for the better. The Italians overcame the resentment and social isolation to achieve a better future for themselves and their children. Australia was a country for white people. The migrants had to be white and from the British Isles or English speaking parts of the empire. However, after the bombing attack, Australia realised that their population was not big enough to defend itself and therefore, they must “ Populate or perish”. Immigration was the only answer.

On the border of Australia, the Italians had to pass a medical examination and if they passed they were allowed to live in Australia. If not, they were

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sent back. However, by this time Australia was 99% (most of the population being British) white, and the Australian public wanted to keep it that way. The Australian population reacted badly to the Italians and the minister was attacked by vicious criticism. When the Italians arrived in Australia, they were confronted with new and unfamiliar things, and were expected to change to match the "Australian way".

This was known as the policy of assimilation; think white act white. The Italians were allowed to migrate to Australia only if they left all their customs and traditions behind and lived the Australian way. Shortly after this was replaced by the policy of Integration. This policy allowed the Italians to practice their traditions and culture in the privacy of their own home, but still had to act Australian in public. Culturally based organisations were formed to help provide welfare and support for migrants.

When the Italian migrants began to look for work, they had to travel to find jobs. The Italian Prisoners of War were barely seen as a danger and often worked on farms without guards. Most of the early Italian migrants were unskilled and came from the poorer parts of Italy. Even those who did have skills, their qualifications were not recognised in Australia. As a result the Italians were forced to do tough, labouring work. One of the huge employment schemes such as the 'Snowy Mountain Scheme' contributed greatly to the multiculturalism of Australia.

The work was hard and the conditions were tough however the Italians were attracted by the relatively high wages. Due to ninety-eight percent of the project being underground, there was a lot of tunneling, often through solid granite rock. Work conditions in the tunnels were dirty, wet, noisy, smelly

and sometimes dangerous. More than 120 workers died in the projects twenty-five year period. Even though work was difficult and sometimes dangerous, it developed, on its workers, a sense of community and companionship. The ' Snowy Mountains Scheme' was the first real experience of multiculturalism in Australia.

It gave the chance for people from many countries around the world to communicate, accept and understand the culture and background of others without judging. It also encouraged all these people to work together as a team and put aside all their differences as there was no room for racial prejudice. Multiculturalism accepts the notion that Australia is a nation of many different cultures but that, as Australians, we all live together as one people. The policy of multiculturalism was introduced by the 21st Prime Minister of Australia, Gough Whitlam.

The Whitlam government keenly supported multiculturalism. Grants were made to ethnic organisations to promote their culture. Legislation was introduced to end discrimination and it was now illegal to discriminate people on the basis of their racial background. Some Australians did not want to see the British culture be diluted by other cultures. They had a fear of ' invasion' and that the Italians would take jobs from existing Australians. However, a majority of Australians were open minded to the new policy and began to look at the Italians from another perspective.

Overall the experiences of the Italian migrants when they first arrived in Australia were difficult. They felt very much out of place and little was done to help them. They were not part of the Australian community. However their involvement in areas like the Snowy Mountains Scheme played an important

part in helping the Italians because it gave them a decent wage, and also because it allowed them to work and bond alongside people of other races which made them work as a community and helped racism to greatly minimise. Italians nowadays have had a great impact on Australia.

Italian migrants have made an enormous contribution to cultural and economical life. They introduced new foods and ingredients and their restaurants continue to be very popular. Their music is continued to be enjoyed by many Australians. Their contribution to building and construction is crucial. The Italian migrants have made an economical effect on Australia by creating employment by opening large and small businesses. Also, they have had a large contribution in incorporating Italian teachings into the school curriculum.