Introduction

This book sets out to narrate Australian migration policy between World War I and World War II especially as it involved both government and people of the United Kingdom. The central theme is that of two polities seeking maximum advantage for interests dominant in either place, with but little regard for each other or for the migrants themselves. Broadly, the British government wanted a high level of emigration, seeing redundancy of population and unemployment as threats to domestic stability. Australian policy as to immigration was sceptical, but generally there prevailed readiness to subsidise the movement of people who promised to supply Australian needs at modest cost and minimal trouble. From 1922, following the passage of HMG's Empire Settlement Act, this subsidy was complemented by Britain itself giving aid to migrants approved by Australian authorities. Further the Act provided for subsidy by HMG of developmental programmes in Australia which arguably increased capacity there to absorb migrants. Thus the way broadened for Australia to be cajoled or bribed into greater receptivity. All this adapted a fundamental of Australian history since 1788—reliance on British resources as stimuli to expansion.

One should not feel much surprise the two polities should have been resolute in pursuing their own immediate ends. Such is the task of all governments always. Yet the tensions and toughness which mark this story were indeed formidable. They modify, almost to extinction, any picture of Australian federal governments of these years, notably that led by S. M. Bruce, as being supine and obsequious before the mother country. Not that this is the first academic study to point thus. The work of Kosmos Tsokhas does so outstandingly, his major book proposing such an analysis in relation to the marketing of wool, while other papers extend into further areas, including migration. More general, but scarcely less potent continuity subsists with E. M. Andrews's study of Australian–British relations during World War I.

While governments were often mean and petty in their bargaining, some positive purpose lay in the background. Both polities were seeking to restore social economies sapped by the Great War and its aftermath. Bruce had very considerable abilities, as in a different if diminishing way had his precursor,

W. M. Hughes. The latter more enthusiastically upheld a vision for the future, yet Bruce had expansive hopes too. The most powerful British politicians of the day scarcely evoke such praise, yet the next rank—outstandingly but not only in the person of L. S. Amery—included some who truly believed in Empire and in the benefits which migration might bestow. That optimism extended to the fate of the migrants themselves. The following pages will show that some among these were reluctant to move, but on balance more affirmative attitudes were dominant. Thus, in various ways, did hope prevail. The structure of this book, most obviously its chapter-titles, is predicated upon the notion that migration indeed could serve political and human aspirations—but always with a sense of the desperation that prevailed at every level and which became stronger with time's passing.

While the book's main concern is the development of Australian policy and the consequent interaction of governments, there are some subsidiary stories of interest and importance. The place of migration in Britain's domestic politics has received little attention from the historians. It seems to deserve more: especially the strength of popular resistance to emigration, and the general debate on demographic matters. Australian scepticism about immigration is better known, but not all its intricacies and effects. There, too, demographic debate had some interesting passages. Political and administrative history is illuminated at various points, most deliberately in the work of the Development and Migration Commission, an exercise in modernist government. One of the Commission's roles was to mediate in the relationship between the government of the federal Commonwealth of Australia, and the various State governments. That continuing theme in twentieth-century Australian history obtrudes throughout.

The migrants' personal experience does too. However, the first eight chapters treat such matters only insofar as is necessary to explain the development of policy. The final two chapters reverse this emphasis and strive to give more than a mere flavour of the human dimension. To decide just which material should come earlier, which should be reserved, was extremely difficult: no two people, or any one person at different times, would make the same decision. The hope is that by the end some totality develops. Many a future monograph surely will expand the story of experience (as a couple have already).

While numbers were never so great as migrationists wanted, they still constitute a sizeable human shift. Nearly half-a-million beings enter our purview. To stress that point, statistical tables come immediately. They will be supplemented and modified—or even, in the way of statistics, be brought into occasional doubt—as the book proceeds, but throughout they serve as an essential base.

Table 1 Gross, net and assisted immigration to Australia, 1919–40

Year	*a. Gross immigration from Britain*	*b. Gross immigration*	*c. Net British immigration*	*d. Net immigration*	*e. Immigration assisted by Australia*	*f. Immigration assisted by by HMG under Settlement Act*
1919					245	
1920				27 606	9 059	
1921			17 630	17 525	14 682	
1922			34 729	40 157	24 258	5 611
1923			35 154	39 714	26 645	24 221
1924	19 572	30 974	35 734	46 069	25 036	23 645
1925	47 596	66 477	32 164	39 801	24 827	22 527
1926	42 219	59 664	38 482	44 783	31 260	32 689
1927	41 945	67 078	39 872	51 580	30 123	29 136
1928	31 149	48 233	24 746	30 054	22 394	20 603
1929	19 700	31 698	10 268	11 820	12 943	11 528
1930	8 369	17 537	–7 538	–8 530	2 683	1 978
1931	3 782	9 441	–6 640	–10 094	275	211
1932	3 493	9 868	–2 454	–2 997	175	188
1933	3 473	10 749	–134	214	72	117
1934	3 718	11 778	807	2 280	159	192
1935	3 688	12 608	–2 139	–289	100	89
1936	3 718	12 593	–1 080	1 497	9	
1937	4 672	16 294	–411	5 203	141	
1938	5 562	19 548	739	9 137	852	
1939	8 654	24 068	3 330	13 891	2 686	
1940	2 491	11 609				

Source:

The main sources are statistics issued by Australian official agencies through the *Demography Bulletin* and *Labour Report*. Important figures as to HMG assistance are in *Report of the Oversea Settlement Committee, 1935–6* (Command 5200).

Notes:

1. Where no figures appear, it is because no official series provide them; such blanks do not necessarily mean zero.
2. Gross immigration columns *a* and *b* refer to people intending permanent residence, not all arrivals. Unfortunately columns *c* and *d* do not thus define immigration but result from subtracting all departures, for whatever reason, from all arrivals, likewise.
3. Column *a* refers to residents of the British Isles, including the Irish Free State, whereas column *c* applies to all citizens of the Empire/Commonwealth.
4. Most discrepancies between columns *e* and *f* result from Australia giving aid to various categories of nominees not assisted by HMG. The text describes these; most important were residents of the Irish Free State.
5. The figures in columns *a* and *b* for 1924 relate to the second half of that year. Only then, apparently, was this vital series established.
6. The statistics for inter-war migration have come under sophisticated demographic study by two scholars: Jupp, 'Factors Affecting … Australian Population', and Dryden, 'Australian Immigration'. Nevertheless, gaps and problems remain.

Table 2 Assisted immigration to Australia, by category, 1920–39

Year	*Females among all assistees*	*All 'selectees'*	*Nominees*	*'Selected' domestics*	*'Selected' farmboys*
1920	4 455				
1921	6 466				
1922	8 883	9 726	14 532	766	1 510
1923	8 744	15 367	11 278	1 013	3 500
1924	10 078	12 611	12 425	1 419	2 276
1925	9 766	10 131	14 696	1 268	2 409
1926	13 524	7 884	23 376	1 603	2 419
1927	13 880	7 409	30 123	1 897	2 318
1928	10 604	5 984	16 410	1 785	2 122
1929	6 179	3 762	12 943	1 243	1 318
1930	1 482			313	239
1931	164			29	7
1932	94				
1933	21				
1934	48				
1935	38				
1936	6				
1937	49				
1938	408				
1939	1 216				

Source:
Drawn from material at AOT: PD55/8/36.

Note:
Report ... of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Migration Policy (Command 4689) gives a total for 'selectees' 1922–31 of 58,574, very well below the above number. Perhaps the figure excluded dependants. The *Report* cited farm settlers as numbering 9125. Subtracting too the above totals of domestics (11,336) and farmboys (18,118), we are left with almost precisely 20,000, almost all of whom would have been adult male farmworkers.

Table 3 Requisitions by Australian States for 'selected' immigrants from Britain, by category, 1928

	Farmboys	*Adult Farmworkers*	*Domestics*
New South Wales	1 105	2 150	1 200
Victoria	480	830	600
Queensland	510		720
South Australia	125		240
Western Australia	172	2 150	480
Total	2 392	3 840	3 240

Source:

As remarked later, there is but scant detail on the numbers of 'selectees' whom the States *sought* through requisitions. The major exception is in the 1928 annual *Report* of the Development and Migration Commission, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers,* 1929, vol. 2, pp. 28–9, when peaks had passed.

Notes:

1. Nearly all these farmboys had affiliation with one of the philanthropic groups interested in migration. While the names of some of these will convey little at this stage, details seem appropriate. In New South Wales, 960 requisitions were associated with the Dreadnought Trust, 25 with the Fellowship of the British Empire Exhibition and 120 with the Big Brother Movement; in Victoria, 300 with the Big Brother Movement and 180 with the Boy Scouts; in Queensland, 300 with the Church of England; in South Australia, 125 with the Big Brother Movement; in Western Australia, 100 with the Young Australia League and 72 with the Church of England.
2. In addition Victoria sought 80 farmers, with capital.

* * *

The story which these statistics suggest and which this book pursues is a footnote to the truth that migration is fundamental to human experience. The history of Australia not only follows but embellishes that rule. The entry of Aboriginals into the continent traces to a past which research is pushing back to ever more distant times: an epic story, its detail will always remain in doubt. Since 1788 the potency of immigration has remained high, with several chapters of particular intensity.

In establishing its first Australian colonies as convict gaols, Britain showed how government-imposed migration could help resolve problems in the metropolis. The brutality of that intent was the key to much else of the convict era. Yet in Australia some convicts found prosperity and many led decent lives. While convictism still proceeded (to 1853 in eastern Australia, 1868 in Western Australia) Britain began to assist the migration of other common people. The aim, just as much as with penal transportation, was to diminish social conflict arising from Britain's industrialisation. Most radicals within the working class scarified this policy, insisting that all Britons had a right to independence in their native land; to be pressured into going to colonies where convictism shaped social and political values, was a double-

dyed insult.[1] Yet a fair number of everyday Britons were ready to go to Australia, and a few radicals were among them. The archetype was Henry Parkes, active in the Birmingham Political Union in the early 1830s and on that base to build in Australia a political career of fantastic success. In the late 1840s Britain's radical press not merely abandoned hostility to Austral migration, but barracked for it. This switch was as remarkable as, say, the weakening of Chartism in revealing the ebb of British militance at mid-century.

Australia saw fierce debate as to both free and penal migration in the 1830s and 1840s. Concerning the former, complaints waxed that Britain was dumping alleged paupers and ne'er-do-wells, and they were to recur ninety years on.[2] Withal, most Australians agreed that redemption of their new home depended upon free migration. There remained scope for division as to who were desirable newcomers. The most famous upholders of free migration were J. D. Lang and Caroline Chisholm—one a Presbyterian cleric, the other a Catholic philanthropist. Lang alleged that Chisholm's activities aimed to Romanise Australia. This controversy also reverberated in later years.

Lang and Parkes became leaders of the movement against convict transportation. This developed into a crusade with many facets—political in its resistance to imperial dominance, ethical in its call for a morally elevated population, social-democratic in its demand that free workers be immune from convict competition. Arguably, no episode in Australian domestic history has had greater import. Population issues stood central in public discourse.

That proved less true in the later nineteenth century, but only by a margin. Relative prosperity at once quickened self-paid migration and diminished the involvement of governments. In Britain official assistance dwindled to nothing by the early 1870s. The several Australian colonies varied in their policies. Queensland was most enthusiastic. Especially in New South Wales workingmen feared lest immigration flood the labour market, and so fought against public monies subsidising newcomers.[3] Still more vehement and effective was hostility to entry of Chinese, largely curtailed by 1890. Recruiting of Pacific Islanders for labour mainly in Queensland sugar plantations aroused similar concern from the 1860s.

Securing of Australia against 'coloured' migrants had some place in the movement for inter-colonial Federation which culminated 1901. Ronald Norris has warned against its exaggeration,[4] however, and broader issues of migration scarcely appear in J. A. La Nauze's *Making of the Australian Constitution*. Still, 'immigration and emigration' appeared among pre-scribed federal powers. Exclusion of undesirable aliens—in effect, Asians and Pacific Islanders—was a major object of early Commonwealth legislation. As very many future references will invoke, other immigration matters

remained in constitutional limbo, the Commonwealth having ultimate power but the States jealously retaining their de facto control.

Strength was the passion of men and governments pre-1914, even more than usual. The new polity of Australia, operative from the century's first day, taught this lesson with appropriate fervour. Outstanding in this story was Alfred Deakin, Prime Minister for half the first decade. From at least 1905 Deakin included British immigration in his programme for a powerful Australia within a powerful Empire within powerful Anglo-Saxondom. All this comported with his leadership of Australia's brand of 'new' or 'progressive' liberalism. Deakin best expounded national-imperialism at the 1907 Colonial Conference in London, stressing defence issues and trade preference. Migration also arose at this Conference, via lobbying by British imperial activists who wanted their government to resume financial backing in its support. Only the Australian delegation showed enthusiasm in response.[5] Outside the Conference, Deakin found much communality with L. S. Amery. Talk arose of Deakin heading a grand crusade dedicated to their common cause.

Management of normal immigration yet remained with the several Australian States. Some modification dated from 1906 when a Premiers' Conference (that is, a meeting of State and Commonwealth leaders) agreed that the Commonwealth should sponsor relevant advertising in Britain. About this time, too, most States became more enthusiastic in granting migrants assistance. Partly for that reason, numbers boomed. The peak for net entry was about 92,000 in 1912: some 90 per cent were British, and about half assisted. The Premiers' Conference that year agreed on uniform maximum assistance—£6 for an adult, half the minimum fare. Recruitment was directed specifically at farmworkers and domestic servants, although most States also were ready to assist approved newcomers nominated by established residents.[6]

Meanwhile, the federal government continued its interest. Deakin was supplanted as Prime Minister in 1910 by Andrew Fisher and a ministry which, while having some doubts, proved more supportive of migration than any other Labor government in Australian experience until that of J. B. Chifley (1945–9). Fisher upheld migration at the 1911 Imperial Conference, whence arose a Dominions Royal Commission to ponder the issue. That year Attorney-General W. M. Hughes, dynamo of Fisher's government, prompted the Premiers to consider a broader policy. They responded by proposing at their 1912 meeting that the Commonwealth should subsidise 25,000 adult fares. Thereby the Premiers hoped to save State money, but even so it was remarkable for that group ever to foster federal assertion. Also in 1912 Commonwealth Parliament passed an Immigration Act which intensified medical testing of immigrants. This bespoke the eugenicist strain in current reform thought, notably strong in Hughes.

Further action came with another change in federal office in mid-1913, Joseph Cook then heading a Liberal government. The advertising campaign proposed from 1906 became reality. Costing £50,000 a year, it worked through cinema, press, lectures, and posters. The Commonwealth government developed its fledgling film unit through pertinent work. On a wall abutting the site on which Australia House soon arose was blazoned a migrant-seeking poster, said to be the biggest in London. High Commissioner (that is, quasi-ambassador) George Reid wrote lyrical on all this, but warned that migrants were becoming scarcer.[7] The federal government acted on the Premiers' resolution of 1912 and put aside £150,000 to subsidise migrant fares.[8]

CHAPTER ONE

The Great War's Impact

For migration, as so many other areas of life and policy, the Great War intensified elements already dynamic by 1914. An exemplar in the United Kingdom was belief in Empire settlement, not only as a solvent of Britain's domestic tensions but as a generator of race-power. Erstwhile servicemen became central in this debate: on one hand, they were a potential source of discontent which might wreck Britain if a safety-valve were not opened; on the other, they were martial heroes who deserved the chance, glorious as the migrationists esteemed it, to farm imperial frontiers.

The Royal Colonial Institute led enthusiasts for settlement. From 1912 the Institute's chairman was A. H. G. Grey, fourth Earl Grey. His uncle, third Earl, had been Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1830–3, and Secretary, 1846–52. The older Grey generally upheld the notions of E. G. Wakefield as to how colonies might blend liberal institutions with conservative social structure, thereby remaining in happy union with the metropolis. In fact Australia's colonists had found much repugnant in the third Earl's policies, notably those on migration. His heir evidently saw no warning in that story. During the early War years, HMG resisted expansive notions as expounded by the Institute. The Colonial Office was almost as negative as Treasury, which was ever jealous for the public purse.

> Can we afford at the end of the war in addition to the capital required to repair the ravages, an enormous sum to effect a large settlement in the Dominions, and if so could it not be employed with as great advantage to the Empire at home?

The question was put by John Anderson, permanent Under-Secretary for the Colonies, in December 1914.[1] His words reveal how the Office saw metropolitan interests as its prime concern.

The Institute sustained the pressure. In January 1915 it presented to the Colonial Office a proposal from S. W. Copley, a man of large interests in Western Australia. Copley proposed to vest Lord Kitchener with 100,000 acres of farm land in Western Australia for the settlement of ex-servicemen, and himself was ready to loan £50,000 for its preparation. The Colonial

Office remained sceptical, and its letter to Australia on the matter struck no sparks.[2] However, politicians began conceding to the Institute: Colonial Secretary Andrew Bonar Law granted members an interview in late July 1915. It was suggested that the Institute sponsor H. Rider Haggard to go to Australia and there urge action. This idea won support from *The Times* and from J. W. Taverner, still in London after serving as Victoria's Agent-General (that is, representative in Britain), 1904–13.[3]

Haggard already knew Australia, having visited in 1913 as a member of the Dominions Royal Commission. His imperialism combined passion for country life with a sense of the mystic glory of the non-civilised world. In Haggard seethed that yearning for a new human consciousness, based in psyche and blood, which found so many expressions throughout early twentieth-century Europe. He spent April–May 1916 on his new mission. In 1925 he told Rudyard Kipling, 'I converted a hostile Australia to my views, and brought home offers that were worth millions—which were thrown away by our Government.'[4] Actually, Haggard provoked some criticism—from the Melbourne *Age* newspaper, ever suspicious lest imperial interests keep Australia a mere primary producer, and from trade unionists. Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson, Governor-General of Australia, described union hostility to migration as 'selfish, urban and short-sighted, arrogant to an almost inconceivable degree'. Yet overall, Munro Ferguson judged, Haggard did achieve 'a change in public sentiment'.[5]

Haggard's crucial discussions were with State Premiers. He thus secured a place for his crusade at the Premiers' Conference in May. It overlapped with two issues discussed at their 1915 Conference—immigration and, much more important, repatriation policies for Australia's own soldiers, especially their establishment as farmers. In his early talks, Haggard stressed to at least one Premier that the Colonial Institute 'did not wish to tempt men to leave the United Kingdom'; the aim was only that those committed to emigration remain within the Empire.[6] Most Premiers had promised that British servicemen would have the same treatment as locals, although their enthusiasm varied. Haggard had found the Labor Premiers of New South Wales (W. A. Holman) and Queensland (E. G. Theodore) toughest in negotiation, but at the May Conference Theodore spoke of making available a million acres, whereas Holman remained very cool. John Earle of Tasmania, also Labor, offered 300 orchard acres at once and a 'very much larger number … if formal arrangements made with Imperial Government'.

Holman was further dissident. Whereas in 1912 he had urged the Commonwealth to develop a migration policy, now he surmised 'that the emigration problem is an insoluble one'; Britain would not want to lose farmers to Australia, and urbanites were incapable of pioneering. Holman provoked some counter-insistence on the need for migrants, but won modification of a proposed motion. As revised, it still affirmed readiness to