



**Polish Community Council of Australia Inc.**  
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The Hon Alex Hawke  
Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra, ACT  
alex.hawke.mp@aph.gov.au

29<sup>th</sup> October, 2021

Dear Minister:

**RE: Publication of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection:  
*A History of the Department of Immigration – Managing Migration to Australia***

I am writing to you on behalf of the Polish Community Council of Australia (PCCA), the peak representative body of the Polish community in Australia, in relation to the 2015 book entitled *A History of the Department of Immigration – Managing Migration to Australia* (hereafter *A History*), published by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection. The book was revised in 2017 and is still available.

We understand that the book asserts a place as an authoritative source of information on immigration to Australia. If that is the case the book neglects the largest arrival of refugees between the 1940s and 1980s, i.e. those from Poland.

Poles sought refuge in Australia chiefly as a result of political changes in Poland at the end of the Second World War, leading to a deterioration of human rights. Imprisonment or death were potential rewards for having fought with the Western Allies for Poland's independence. At least one of our current committee members had a parent who served together with Australian forces in North Africa (Tobruk).

A 2019 monograph by Lucyna Artymiuk, **Destination Australia: Polish Soldier Migrants (1947-48)**, extensively documents the experiences of these ex-servicemen. Their arrival in Australia was a key element in the opening up of Australia to immigrants from beyond the Anglosphere.

Immigrants accepted by Australia included both these Polish ex-servicemen who settled in Australia after being demobilised in England, as well as Polish refugee families (and orphans) from refugee camps in East Africa, the Middle East and Displaced Persons camps in Europe. These persons arrived largely in 1949-50.

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The Australian Parliament House website (at [1]) reports at its entry for 1954 that:

*"The largest humanitarian group - the Poland-born, who are mainly admitted as Displaced Persons - totals 56 594".*

The entry for 1984 (at [2]) states:

*"DIEA publishes figures on numbers of refugees arriving in Australia from January 1945 to June 1984: a total of 418 870. The three principal groups are: Polish (74 973), Vietnamese (70 492) and Hungarian (26 185)."*

The omission of the Poles is so much more glaring as *A History* explicitly refers to refugee intakes which are orders of magnitudes smaller (the only comparable, but still smaller, numbers being the Vietnamese and Hungarians).

This omission of the Poles relates not just to the post-war migration but also to the 1980s, when a number arrived which, although numerically smaller, was of equal or greater historical significance in relation to the tectonic shifts in world affairs which occurred from 1989. Given that refugee arrivals after the Hungarian revolution of 1956 and the Prague Spring of 1968 (some 600 persons, at [3]) are mentioned, the omission of these Solidarity Polish arrivals (almost 16 000 persons, at [4]) is very noticeable.

There is some concern in the Polish community that Polish contribution to the Australian mosaic is subconsciously omitted. The PCCA is concerned that the trials and difficulties of our parents and predecessors in the Polish community are being inadvertently erased from Australian history.

One of the Polish Community Council's strategic planning sub-committees recently noted that a substantial number of persons born in Poland has been present through recent decades:

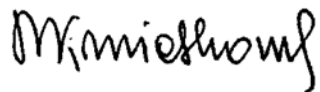
Year	Number of persons born in Poland	Comments
1947	6 573	
1954	56 035	56 594 – according to alternative sources
1991	68 500	the peak number recorded by ABS
2006	52 254	
2011	48 678	
2016	45 368	

Together with their descendants, the contribution of Polish culture to the Australian story is significant.

Accordingly, we would appreciate your taking any steps possible in ensuring that ***A History of the Department of Immigration – Managing Migration to Australia*** is rendered complete. We believe that a commitment by the department to this publication ought to be a commitment to do it properly, or not at all. Without relevant revisions, the public record in Australia will be stained by omission.

The Polish Community Council in Australia does count, amongst its membership, various historical and archival organisations which would be more than happy to help, and we can provide contacts if necessary. However, as noted above, the omitted history is already present in other Commonwealth resources, including websites, and so believe that any such revision would not be a particularly difficult one to effect.

Yours sincerely,



Ms Margaret Kwiatkowska,  
President,  
Polish Community Council of Australia

cc: Mr Michal Kolodziejcki, Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to Australia

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[1]

[https://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/Publications\\_Archive/online/Refugees2](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/Publications_Archive/online/Refugees2), accessed 22 September, 2021

[2]

[https://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/Publications\\_Archive/online/Refugees3](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/Publications_Archive/online/Refugees3), accessed 22 September, 2021

[3]

<https://www.destinationaustralia.gov.au/stories/journey/czechoslovakia-1968#:~:text=The%20Soviet%20occupation%20of%20Czechoslovakia,Australia%20to%20more%20than%2016%2C000>, accessed 20 October 2020

[4]

<http://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p14661/mobile/ch06s04.html#:~:text=Between%201980%20and%201985%2C%2015,cent%20of%20all%20new%20arrivals>, accessed 20 October 2020