

# objects

## through timeline...

1830-1840s

**Assisted immigration introduced**

---



To curb the dominance of the squatters and to end the system of free convict labour, the Colonial Government decided to promote the migration of free settlers and limit squatter land leases to 14 years. This was to create an emancipist (free people) consumer economy and improve the moral tone of the colony. The Colonial Government assisted some migrants by paying their fare to Australia and helped to set up farms and businesses alongside the wealthy squatters - who of course were not very happy with such competition.

About one third of migrants who came to Australia between 1830 and 1850 paid their own way. Convicts and settlers who came to Australia found that in comparison to Europe, conditions were very good and with hard work and determination they could prosper. They encouraged their relatives in England to come to Australia and enjoy the prosperity. Women migrants were also assisted to curb a gender imbalance in the colonies, to work as domestic servants and to foster marriages and childbirth. These migration schemes resulted in 58,000 people coming to Australia between 1815 and 1840.

With increasing numbers of free migrants and the desire of Colonial society to be free of the hated 'convict stain', the Colonial Government decided to cease transportation to NSW in 1852. Between 1788 and 1868 approximately 160,000 convicts were sent to Australia.

# 1840-1900

**Aboriginal protection legislation passed by NSW Parliament.  
New South Wales gold rushes and Robertson Land Acts.  
Development of urban and regional industries with migrant  
workers. Moves to federate Australian colonies..**

---



*Circular Quay, Charles Percy Pickering, 1871, XV1/Har/Circ/1, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales*

When James Cook sailed along the east coast of Australia in 1770 he named it New South Wales. By 1869, there were five other colonies in Australia - Tasmania, Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria and Queensland - all settled by British people. These separate colonies all had their own governors and systems of government reporting to Britain.

As the interior was explored and mapped, squatters and free settlers followed, eager to take up land. Wherever Europeans went, Aboriginal people were pushed from their home lands. Governments wanted to protect Aboriginal people from settler violence. By the 1880s, many Australians believed that Aboriginal people were dying out. In 1788, there had been over 300,000 Aboriginal people in mainland Australia, but by 1888 there were an estimated 80,000. Colonial governments believed that the best way to help Aboriginal people was by a policy of 'Protection'. This policy lasted from the 1880s to the 1930s. Aboriginal people were encouraged to live on government reserves and church missions far away from other Australians. They were given food, clothes, blankets and sometimes basic education. Squatters and settlers often used people from the reserves as cheap labour or, in some cases, as slaves.

## **The gold rush**

The discovery of gold sent a shock wave through Colonial Australia. In 1851, Edward Hargraves convinced the people of Sydney that there was payable gold just outside of Bathurst in New South Wales. Within a month, 400 prospectors were in the area looking for gold. Soon payable gold was found in Victoria near Ballarat and Bendigo and people began streaming to the two goldfields, resulting in a 'gold rush'. With so many people leaving for the goldfields, many businesses found it hard to keep operating. People began to act irrationally, spending all their savings and abandoning their families to get to the goldfields. Mining towns grew overnight at Sofala, Hill End, Ophir, Forbes and Lambing Flat. Ships crews deserted, leaving vessels stranded in port, shepherds left their flocks and government officials, clerks, teachers and policemen left their jobs in the excitement.

Immigrant ships brought thousands of people keen to try their luck at the

diggings. The sailing time from England was reduced to 80 days and the newcomers, like the migrants before them, endured appalling conditions under unscrupulous shipowners. While people migrated from all over the world during the gold rush most came from Scotland and England, followed by a large number of Chinese diggers who were often victimised on the goldfields.

However, in time people realised that gold was not the bonanza they anticipated and they began to filter back into cities and towns looking for work and places to live. They noticed that large areas of land were not being used and wanted the chance to establish farms like the squatters had done before them. With an increased population came further demand for land, food, clothes and buildings and the Australian economy grew to accommodate these needs.

Another impact of this large influx of migrants was that ideas of democracy and egalitarianism were imported from Europe and the United States. Up until the 1850s, only landowners and squatters had the right to vote. People began to demand 'one vote for one man'. Soon women demanded the right to vote.

Colonial governments sought to free up more land for all these migrants. The 14-year leases granted to the squatters ended by 1861, and colonial governments passed new laws to free up land and raise revenues. Between 1858 and 1872, all the colonies passed Selection Acts. In New South Wales the Acts were called the Robertson Land Acts. People could select a plot of land which they could then buy cheaply at auction. They then had to live on the land for a year and make improvements such as constructing huts, sheds, dams and fences. To cheat selectors out of land, squatters used friends and employees to put 'dummy' claims on the best land with water.

In the towns and cities, many migrants sought jobs in industries and new suburbs expanded across Sydney. Services like water, sewerage and transportation were slow to be introduced and public health issues became a problem. Women who came to Australia to work as domestic servants found that their pay and the employer's attitudes were not good and that better wages were on offer in food and textile factories. Migrants skilled in mining, steel milling and maritime trades were targeted with promises of better conditions and pay. During the 1870s and 1880s the economy was booming, but in 1892 a severe drought lasting four years crippled the economy, resulting in widespread unemployment, poverty and industrial strikes.

As a result of this economic depression, the colonies created a federal system of government that administered wages and conditions, defence, immigration and social welfare.



MIGRATION HERITAGE CENTRE  
NEW SOUTH WALES  
[www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au](http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au)

Crown copyright 2006 © NSW Migration Heritage Centre