

**THE SETTLEMENT EXPERIENCE OF  
ASIAN IMMIGRANT AND HUMANITARIAN  
ENTRANT PEOPLE LIVING IN THE  
AUSTRALIAN REGIONAL CENTRE OF COFFS  
HARBOUR NEW SOUTH WALES**

BY

ROGER NEAL VAN DER VEEN

BA University of Waterloo (Canada), 1983  
BSW (Hons) Lakehead University (Canada), 1984  
MSW James Cook University of North Queensland (Australia),  
1991

**THESIS**

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STATEMENT OF ACCESS

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## **ABSTRACT**

Australia has accepted several million immigrant and humanitarian entrant people since the large-scale immigration program began at the end of World War II. Since the White Australia Policy was completely abandoned in the early 1970s, many more Asian immigrant and humanitarian entrant people have arrived in Australia. They have disproportionately moved to and settled in the metropolitan centres, and not the regional centres. There is very little literature about the settlement of Asian immigrant and humanitarian entrant people in Australian regional centres.

This research used a dialectic social work lens to analyse critically how settlement was structurally and individually framed by exploring the settlement experience of Asian immigrant and humanitarian entrant people living in an Australian regional centre, using Coffs Harbour NSW as a case study. Respondents (31) and key informants (16) were interviewed using in-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews.

There were six themes that proved to be significant that exhibited minimal social inclusion of Asian immigrant and humanitarian entrant people, resulting in a position of social inequality:

Firstly, compatriots were present in small numbers, but were not deemed important. They did not play much of a role in the settlement of the respondents.

Secondly, DIMIA funded hours of English language tuition were quite limited, and this resulted in most respondents only learning survival to functional English.

Thirdly, the respondents had to interact with the townspeople, because of a lack of compatriots. Through this interaction, the respondents were forced to speak and learn more English. They were seen to be reaching out, by the townspeople.

Fourthly, the respondents reported experiencing mainly low-level and unintentional discrimination and racism. The townspeople were reported overall as polite but tentative (tolerant but not accepting).

Fifthly, the respondents were employed in part-time and casual work ranging from unskilled to semi-skilled. Their level of English kept them out of the occupations they wanted to work in, and this was not likely to change in Coffs Harbour; although, most of the respondents were employed in some capacity.

Sixthly, belongingness, acceptance by the dominant group and the respondents' sense of place, was attributed to Australia and in some cases to Australia and the country of origin. Belongingness was not attributed to Coffs Harbour or to compatriots. This reflects Australia, as the preferred country in which to live because of its standard of life.

The respondents' settlement was found to be one of minimal social inclusion (tolerance) resulting in a position of social inequality. This research has advocated change and reform, by striving to individualise the structural and giving voice to a marginalised group of people and then using this collectivised voice to advocate for change on the structural level. The commencement of this change and reform is the reconceptualisation of regional settlement.

## STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION OF OTHERS

I declare the following statements below concerning the contribution of others:

1) All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the relevant Ethics committee on 27 February 1997 (Approval number H648)

2) The only persons who have contributed to the design of the research and analysis of the research have been my thesis supervisors: Associate Professor and Head of School Dr Anthony McMahon from James Cook University in Townsville and Associate Professor and Rector Dr Peter Camilleri from Australian Catholic University in Canberra.

3) The only nature of any assistance received has been from James Cook University:

- a) purchase of a micro cassette recorder
- b) attendance at a conference for post-graduate students held at ANU in early February 1999 for four days and return train fare from Coffs Harbour to Canberra
- c) payment of \$390.00 to reimburse the payment to an individual to edit spelling, punctuation, and grammar of a draft of the thesis, in July 2003.

4) There has no contribution of any other authors with any co-authored material or papers.

5) There has been no other financial support of any kind. I have fully paid for all aspects of the thesis, except for those listed above.

Candidate's signature ..... Date .....

## **Declaration on Ethics**

The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted within the guidelines for research ethics outlined in the *National Statement on Ethics Conduct in Research Involving Human Subjects* (1999), the *Joint NHMRC/AVCC Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice* (1997), the *James Cook University Policy on Experimentation Ethics, Standard Practices and Guidelines* (2001), and the *James Cook University Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice* (2001). The proposed research methodology received clearance from the James Cook University Experimentation Ethics Review Committee (Approval Number H648, 27 February 1999).

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**Roger Van Der Veen**

Monday 5 April 2004  
**Date**

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