

Polonia in Australia

Challenges and Possibilities in the New Millennium

Elizabeth Drozd and Desmond Cahill



POLONIA IN AUSTRALIA
CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES
IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM



Australian-Polish Community Services, Melbourne

**POLONIA IN AUSTRALIA:
CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES
IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM**

Edited

by

Elizabeth Drozd and Desmond Cahill



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G R O U N D

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Contributors

Prof Desmond Cahill, RMIT University, Melbourne. Prof Cahill is a lecturer at RMIT University, and the author of numerous research studies on settlement aspects of people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Prof Cahill has been a friend of the Polish community for almost ten years and currently holds the position of Vice-President. He was a speaker at a Polish community conference in 1992. His expertise is frequently sought by various government departments. Prof Cahill regularly conducts research into the areas of settlement, religious harmony, ethnic education and multicultural affairs. He has authored 22 books and monographs, 18 articles and book reviews in refereed journals and 17 articles in professional publications.

Elizabeth Drozd, Director, Australian-Polish Community Services. For the last 11 years Elizabeth has worked in a paid and voluntary capacity, on access and equity for the Polish community in Victoria. Five years ago, she returned to work at the Australian-Polish Community Services after working for five years in local government. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Multicultural Studies and a Master of Arts in Social Sciences. She has authored and co-authored a number of reports, including a research study of Polish residents in aged-care facilities in Victoria and a comprehensive study on the settlement outcomes of the 1980s wave of Polish immigrants.

Marek Grzelinski, Australian-Polish Community Services. Marek Grzelinski was educated in Poland, where he graduated with a Master of Economics degree in Warsaw, and then worked for nine years in foreign trade. In 1981 he migrated with his wife and two young daughters to Australia, settling in Melbourne, where he worked as an Export Administrator for an American manufacturer of agricultural machinery. Two years later he joined an international English medical company as an Export Manager, and for many years was in charge of their export operations. In 1997 he relocated to Jakarta to become the Director of Sales and Marketing for the company's Indonesian branch. A few years later the global company restructuring, combined with the Asian crisis, led to the closure of several Asian branches, including

the Indonesian one. Marek returned to Melbourne, and a year ago joined the Australian-Polish Community Services where he is now in charge of all its Aged Services programs.

The Hon Gary Hardgrave, MP, Australian Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs. The Honourable Gary Hardgrave was first elected to the House of Representatives as Member for Moreton, Queensland, in 1996. He was re-elected in 1998 and 2001. Mr Hardgrave was appointed as Australia's first Federal Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs on 26 November 2001. In 1996, Mr Hardgrave was the first MP to walk out on Pauline Hanson's controversial maiden speech. He has a culturally diverse electorate, from the large Chinese community in Sunnybank to the increasing numbers of African refugees settling in the inner-city suburbs of Brisbane. In 1995 he graduated from Griffith University (BComm), and was awarded a Diploma of Market Research by the Market Research Society of Australia (Dip MR). He worked as a radio broadcaster, television presenter and journalist, radio news director and media advisor before entering Parliament.

Assoc Prof Adam Jamrozik, University of South Australia. Dr Adam Jamrozik is currently Associate Professor in the School of Social Work and Social Policy at the University of South Australia and also Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology, Flinders University. His extensive academic work has focused on teaching and research in social policy and multicultural issues and he has published a number of books and research papers on these subjects. His books of particular relevance to this conference include *Social Change and Cultural Transformation in Australia*, *The Sociology of Social Problems: Theoretical Perspectives and Methods of Intervention*; and *Social Policy in the Post Welfare State: Australia on the Threshold of the 21st Century*.

The Hon Gavin Jennings, Victorian Minister for Aged Care. The Hon Gavin Jennings was elected in September 1999 as a member for Melbourne Province. He was born in Melbourne. He has qualifications in social work and in the past has worked as an actor, social worker, policy analyst, industrial officer and ministerial advisor.

In his spare time Minister Jennings likes to spend time with his son, and follow his interests in photography, supporting the Bombers, films, innovation and design, and making and then eating desserts.

Prof James Jupp, Australian National University. Dr James Jupp has been Director of the Centre for Immigration and Multicultural Studies in the Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University since 1988. He was General Editor of the Bicentennial Encyclopedia of the Australian People from 1984 until its publication by Angus and Robertson as *The Australian People* in September 1988. He completed a second edition for the Centenary of Federation, which was published in October 2001 by Cambridge University Press. Dr Jupp was born in Croydon, England, and is an Australian citizen and resident of Canberra. He was educated at the London School of Economics between 1951 and 1956. He has held teaching positions in political science at the University of Melbourne, the University of York (England), the University of Waterloo (Canada) and the University of Canberra. His Doctorate of Philosophy, on the political development of Sri Lanka, was granted by the University of London in 1975 and published as *Sri Lanka: Third World Democracy* in 1978. In 1989 he was elected as a Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia and was its Executive Director from 1992 until 1995. He is an adjunct professor at the RMIT University in Melbourne.

Dr Jupp has published widely on immigration and multicultural affairs and has acted as a consultant for the Office of Multicultural Affairs, the Department of Immigration, and other public agencies. His recent publications include *Exile or Refuge?* (1994) and *Understanding Australian Multiculturalism* (1996). The second edition of *Immigration* was published by Oxford University Press in 1998. In 2002 he published a survey of immigration policy, *From White Australia to Woomera*, with Cambridge University Press.

Max Kwiatkowski is a PhD candidate in Human Geography, in the School of Geosciences at the University of Sydney. He completed his undergraduate studies in 2000, also at the University of Sydney, with an honours thesis on the cinematic ethnic Other in post-communist Polish cinema. His doctoral research explores some of the links that exist between homeland landscapes, migration, nostalgia, photography, identity and trips back home. This is accomplished

through an examination of the experiences and photographs of a number of Poles who migrated to Australia as children or teenagers in the 1980s as part of the Solidarity wave of migration. Max himself is a member of this generation, having been born in Poland before moving to Sydney in 1986 at the age of nine.

George Lekakis, Chairperson, Victorian Multicultural Commission. Mr George Lekakis was appointed Chairperson of the Victorian Multicultural Commission in September 2001 by the Bracks government. He has extensive experience as an advocate for ethnic communities at the local, state and national levels, including being a Chairperson of the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria. Mr Lekakis has had direct experience in delivery of services and managing a wide variety of programs to immigrants and refugees. He was the Director of the South Central Region Migrant Resource Centre. Mr Lekakis has formal qualifications in social work and nursing.

Krystyna Misiak, President, Federation of Polish Women in Australia and New Zealand. Mrs Krystyna Misiak was an active Solidarity member in Poland and in Brussels in the 1980s. She has an extensive involvement in the Polish community, including writing articles for the Polish newspapers and broadcasting a community radio program. Mrs Misiak has co-authored a book about the Polish Combatants Association in Australia. Mrs Misiak's hobbies include travel, literature and political discussions.

She has been the President of the Federation of Polish Women in Australia and New Zealand since 1999.

Franek Nowicki, Secretary, Polstar – Polish Youth Group. Being the child of Polish parents, Franek Nowicki grew up in the Polish Community. He completed his Bachelor of Music (Hons) degree at Monash in 2000. After being awarded an Australian Postgraduate Award he commenced his PhD the following year on the topic of 15th century Polish and Italian music. He has presented a variety of papers on early music history at a number of national conferences. In the Polish community Franek has worked closely with the Polish Community Council of Victoria, particularly with the youth organisation 'Polstar' where he is currently secretary.

Rev Father Wieslaw Slowik, SJ. In 1970, Father Slowik arrived in Australia as a student. He is a member of the Jesuit order and has completed studies in theology at the University of Melbourne. He also studied in the USA and in 1973 was ordained to priesthood by the current pope John Paul II.

Father Slowik has been very active in the life of the Polish community. Since 1984, he has been the Coordinator of the Catholic Migrant Chaplaincy in the Archdiocese of Melbourne and in 2000 was appointed Rector of the Polish Catholic Mission in Australia and New Zealand. Father Slowik also holds the position of the Deputy of Episcopal Vicar for Migrants in the Senate of Priests.

Sr Paula Szejder MChR, Missionary Sisters of Christ the King. Sr Paula Szejder is a Missionary Sister of Christ The King for “Polonia” (Polish people living abroad), based in Melbourne. She was born in Poland, where she graduated with two diplomas: one as a nurse educator, and the second as a religious educator. In Poland she worked for 10 years with youth and children as a teacher, and was subsequently sent by the Order to England, where she spent 3 years working in Polish Hostels as religious superior and deputy matron. Sr Paula came to Australia in 1991 to continue work for her Order in the Antipodes. She settled first in Sydney, then in Hobart, where she worked with older persons within the outreach program and in Polish schools, where she conducted various cultural activities and performed pastoral duties. Sr Paula moved to Melbourne in 2002 and established a link with the Australian-Polish Community Services. She now works under the Polish Older Persons Outreach Program, visiting ill and lonely people at homes and offering them help and comfort.

Foreword

Gary Hardgrave, MHR

Australian Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs

I want to thank the Australian Polish Community Services for putting together this collection of research papers and community reflections, based partly on a conference held in Melbourne in February 2003, and to thank those who have made their distinguished contributions to this book. Conferences and a collection such as this provide, in the spirit of each Annual Harmony Day, an opportunity for Australians of all backgrounds to come together to know each other more deeply, to keep alive the old stories and their lessons and to share both the good things and the frustrating things that inevitably occur. From my ministerial responsibilities I know that the area of an aging population within the Polish community is an issue of real concern. Families want equitable access to aged care services, appropriately shaped and styled, with proper input from groups such as the Polish. The Howard government is very much committed to ensuring this occurs.

The Polish community has a long tradition in Australia, over two hundred years in length. The involvement of the Polish community in Australia has been most profound, and yet names like Strzelecki and Kosciuszko are, probably and unfortunately, the most mispronounced. Many contemporary Poles have made distinguished contributions such as Professors Jerzy Smolicz and Jerzy Zubrzycki, who helped to create the solid foundations of today's Australian multiculturalism. Then there are others such as Gosia Dobrowolska, Bogdan Koca, Michael Klim and Paul Grabowsky, who in very different ways have been strongly involved in contributing to the creation of the Australia of the 21st century.

Statistics are always interesting. From 1947 to 1952, a massive influx of Polish people came to Australia, displaced persons and other refugees – 65,000 in number. So many of them were directly responsible for the construction of the Snowy Mountains hydroelectric scheme in New South Wales which has paid all Australians a more than lasting dividend – many of us are reminded of this every time we

switch on the light, or turn on the water. Another tangible result was the major irrigation schemes that have produced so much wealth for this country in the form of exported foodstuffs, such as rice to China. All this is a result of those amazing efforts that were made fifty or more years ago by Poles and others.

The Solidarity wave was, of course, the second large and significant wave of Polish migration to Australia. An estimated 15,000 new Polish migrants arrived in the early 1980s; they needed and utilized a range of services which were provided under the various settlement schemes. The 2001 census showed that there were 154,000 Polish-born in this country. Their presence can be typified in several ways. While stereotyping can be dangerous, the Polish family typifies an extremely hard working unit, immensely proud of its heritage, and a strong contributor to the economic and social growth and cultural life of this country, helping to lay the foundations of our free, open and respectful society.

Australian multiculturalism is one of our great strengths. When one looks beyond our borders today and asks profound questions about the conduct of other nations, one often sees a lack of respect for people who are perhaps not conforming to the ideal of a ruling elite, where there is no opportunity for dissent, no opportunity for public commentary, no opportunity for opposition. And yet concepts such as an opposition member or an alternate government are central to our political system. In some parts of the world that I have visited, on occasions I have had to explain our system and I have been told the translations suggested that an opposition member was a dissident. The point is that in this country we allow pluralist debate where people can air their views. The responsibility we have in exercising that freedom is that we must understand and accept that others have different views as well. In this country we can have Muslims and Jews, Buddhists and Christians, Hindus and Sikhs, all respecting our central values. This nation is set apart because of this great strength of diversity. It is important that people feel a sense of pride as well as confidence in the position they occupy in the community, with their culture and traditions, their family history, their religion and their choice of dress. It is important they feel this sense of confidence, because arising from this confidence comes a sense of commitment to respecting, preserving and growing what we already have. And out of this confidence and commitment comes the sense of competence to

contribute, to be good at being part of this country and to feel a sense of responsibility exercised in a reasonable way to do worthwhile and positive things. That really is what ownership is all about. Confidence, commitment and competence are some of the major elements of ownership and, furthermore, ownership is accompanied by the reinforcement of responsibility. The challenge for us is to ensure the maintenance of these strengths, and that we cultivate them, ensuring people within their families and communities pass on traditions, pass on languages, pass on cultures, always encouraging action and looking outwards, not engaging themselves in petty internal disputes.

The Polish community has every right to feel a sense of pride about ownership and commitment. Poles have one of the highest citizenship take-up rates of any community within the Australian nation – 98 per cent of those who have come to this country from Poland have become citizens, compared to 34 per cent for New Zealand and 65 per cent for the United Kingdom. The long-term prospects of an ethnic community hinge on the social and vocational education achievements of the second generational group. As shown by these social and educational indicators, the second generation of Poland-born migrants, as with those who have Eastern European origins, have proved to be enormous contributors to Australia's social and economic capital. Researchers have found that southern and eastern Europeans, as well as those from Asian source countries, have achieved in the second generation at a higher rate than the Australian average. In other words, the children of Polish migrants have taken that sense of struggle that their parents brought with them when they first arrived and turned it into a sense of success for themselves. They have worked hard. They have achieved higher rates in terms of higher income, higher university credentials and other qualifications. They have thus made a major contribution to the economic viability of this nation. And that ought to be another source of pride for the Poles.

At the same time the Polish community has displayed a pattern of high maintenance of the Polish language. Ruth Johnson found in her study of Polish settlers in Western Australia that many post-war Polish migrants to Australia placed a special emphasis on the preservation of their language, deeply convinced of the role that language plays in the retention of Polish culture. Most of them encouraged their children to learn Polish by speaking it in the home, and by sending them to the Polish schools, which were organised by various associations. Whilst

we all need to know English, we have an enormous resource growing day by day in this country because of the fact that families are directly interacting with children in languages other than English. Frankly, it helps grow jobs; it helps to grow export potential; it helps generate income for this country.

Australia's multiculturalism has enormous economic benefits not only for today but well into the future. Another notable feature of Polish settlement in Australia is self-reliance. In Pakulski's assessment of the Polish community life in Australia, he suggested that this resulted partly from national and religious identity, partly from shared experiences of war, migration and resettlement, and partly from geographical proximity and the initial social isolation, which helped to develop and maintain strong community ties amongst the post war immigrants. All this facilitated the formation of voluntary organisations and ex-servicemen's groups.

The work on the Snowy Mountains scheme, which concentrated so many people in one area for so long, ensured the growth of deep friendships. There are many stories of Polish and Greek migrants living and working together in the Snowy Mountains region with a common purpose, of Spaniards and Poles, of Italians and Poles, together generating a sense of self-reliance and a sense of success that has extended into the second and third generations.

While it is true that migration from Poland has declined substantially in recent years, it is equally true that there has been a simultaneous strengthening of other ties between Australia and Poland. The sociocultural and economic links have been sustained through tourism and family visits. The government is very conscious of this with its family visitor network. As well, there are the educational projects and several cultural and trade agreements between Australia and Poland.

I thank the editors of this book, Ms. Elizabeth Drozd, now known across Australia for her successful work with the Australian Polish Community Services, and Professor Des Cahill, a special friend of the Polish community in Australia who has been researching immigrant and refugee affairs for almost three decades. This book ensures that knowledge about the Polish in Australia is shared and extended, their history and their heritage, their love and affection for Poland, together with their confidence and their commitment in the building of a

culturally diverse society. It also allows the community to take stock and to plan for an even more productive future.



CONSUL GENERAL
OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND
IN SYDNEY
MINISTER PLENIPOTENTIARY

*Ms Elizabeth Drozd, Executive Officer
Australian-Polish
Community Services Inc.
MELBOURNE*

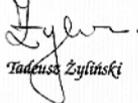
Dear Madam,

I wish to extend my sincere thanks to yourself and the members of the Australian-Polish Community Services Inc. for having invited me to take part in the Conference entitled "Polish Community: Where to Now?" to be held in Melbourne on the 14th of February 2003. I accept your invitation with great pleasure.

Initiatives such as this one are not only praiseworthy because they tackle social problems close to every single member of a modern society, but they are special to me as they give the rare opportunity to bring to the fore the dilemmas of the Polish community in Australia and highlight the achievements of those members of this community who are devoted social workers.

Therefore, I welcome with gratitude and appreciation the endeavour by the Polish Community Services Inc. to organise this important event, and I wish the best of luck to its Organisers and Participants. I am truly convinced that what we are looking forward to is a most interesting conference and successful debate.

Yours sincerely,


Tadeusz Zytyński

Sydney, 14th of January 2003

Chapter 1

John Potaski, Australia's First Polish Settler¹

A Problematic Beginning

Desmond Cahill

On October 9th 2003, it will be 200 years since the first Polish settler, the convict John Potaski, arrived in Australia, firstly, at the aborted Sorrento settlement at Sullivan Bay in Port Phillip Bay, and then, at the Hobart settlement in Van Dieman's Land, where he lived from 1804 until his death in 1824. The Polish presence in Australia throughout the 19th century was an illustrious one with distinguished Poles such as Lhostky and Strzelecki making significant contributions. The naming of Australia's highest mountain by Strzelecki has ensured that the Polish contribution and the Polish Australian heritage cannot be forgotten. In that sense, the Polish Australian community is more fortunate than most other immigrant communities. Since World War II, the various subsequent waves of Poles have, in their individual ways, made an immense collective contribution to Australia's social and economic capital with their tenacity, hard work, family life and religious faith. Yet, the history of Polish Australian settlement did not have an auspicious beginning, and the story lies buried in Australia's convict past.

Until 1802, little is known about John Potaski, Australia's first Polish settler. There is little agreement on the spelling of his surname (Patoskey, Potaskee, Potasky, Potocki etc.), and there is disagreement about his birth details. His family in the gravestone on his burial place in St. David's churchyard in central Hobart at the head of Salamanca Place suggest he was born in 1774 whereas other, perhaps stronger, evidence from the English records suggests it is 1762, perhaps 1764. He could speak some Russian but seemingly not well – the famous Russian navigator, Captain Andrei Lazarov, met him in 1823 and

¹ The author wishes to thank the family historian, Gerard English, for his assistance in collecting data for this article.

described him as an ‘aging native of Belorussia’². Earlier on, John Fawkner, the co-founder with John Batman of Melbourne much later, had travelled with him in 1804 as the eleven-year son of a convict on the boat to Tasmania as an eleven year-old and clearly knew him, as we shall see, quite well as a fellow member of the small colony of Van Dieman’s Land. Fawkner says that he was Polish³. Certainly, the weight of evidence suggests that Potaski identified with Poland.

Elena Govor in an online paper on Russian convicts in Australia suggests he may have been connected with the aristocratic family of Potockis who were strong supporters of the 1793 national-liberation rebellion. Whatever his date of birth, he was born and raised in a very troubled Poland that was heading towards the catastrophe that almost certainly triggered Potaski’s flight from a homeland to which he never returned.

The Polish Catastrophe of the Late 1700s⁴

After the earlier War of the Polish Succession (1733 – 1735), Poland increasingly became a victim of Russian expansionism which eventually drew in the other powers. In 1764, Russian troops invaded Catholic Poland and placed on the Polish throne Stanislas Poniatowski, known as Stanislas II Augustus, a onetime lover of Catherine the Great, who endeavoured to be a reformer but always within the limits of Russian control. This expansionism alarmed the other great European powers, and the Turkish Ottomans also declared war on Russia. Austria and Prussia each had their own malicious designs on Polish territory. As Potaski was growing up, negotiations which were finalized at St. Petersburg in 1772 were going on to partition the country with the three external powers seizing about 30 per cent of Polish territory and forming the Polish Commonwealth with the remainder. Its new constitution contained safeguards to prevent Polish resurgence which the accommodationist Polish nobility

² Govor, E (2003) Russian convicts in Australia. <http://argo.net.au/andre/RussianconvictsENFIN.htm>, downloaded 23rd May, 2003

³ Cotter, R. (ed.) (2003) *John Pascoe Fawkner Sullivan Bay Reminiscences*. Available at <http://www.collinssettlement.org.au/doc/fawkner.pdf>, downloaded 23rd May 2003.

⁴ There are many books on Polish history such as Halecki, O. (1983) *A History of Poland* (Routledge & Kegan, London); Zamoyski, A. (1987) *The Polish Way: a Thousand-Year History of the Poles and their Culture* (Murray, London) and Lukowski, J. & Zawadzki, H. *A Concise History of Poland* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge)

in any case did its best to prevent. As Potaski reached adulthood, according to Lazarev, he served in the Russian army but it seems he switched sides to fight with Kosciuszko's army.

Tadeusz Andrzej Kosciuszko, born into a family of minor nobility near Novogrudok in 1746 within the Grand Duchy of Lithuania under the nominal control of the Polish king, was educated at military schools in Poland and France. However, upon his return from Paris in 1774, there was no place in the Polish army for Kosciuszko after both the 1772 partition and a failed love affair with a general's daughter. He then went to America to fight in the War of Independence where his brilliant military and defence skills were used to great advantage against the British from 1776 to 1784. Upon his return to Poland, he was again unable to gain a commission in the Polish army and he languished on his small family estate where he freed many of his serfs from their servitude. He had been inspired by American liberal ideals which were to govern his subsequent actions.

Reform movements were gathering momentum in opposition to King Stanislaus. The time was near when Kosciuszko would step onto the national scene. Some liberal reforms were introduced, and, in 1791 the Polish Diet passed a new constitution, reducing the influence of the Russians and allowing Poland the possibility of becoming a more effective and centralised entity. The Russians were upset, and two Russian armies swept into Poland early in 1792, and Kosciuszko was asked to defend the area between the Wisla and Bug rivers. However, despite his own success in battle which immediately brought him hero status, the Russians eventually won. In January 1793, Poland was again partitioned with Prussia and Russia occupying a further 42 per cent of the Polish Commonwealth's territory. This was too much even for the Polish accommodationists, and throughout 1793, rebellion plans were formed with Kosciuszko being asked to take total command.

The Kosciuszko Rebellion

He gathered together the scattered Polish army and, as well, introduced peasant conscription to form an expeditionary force of *koziniery* or scythe-bearers to fight the Russian force. Potaski's role and whereabouts during this period are lost in the mists of history, but he eventually became a member of Kosciuszko's army. After an initial victory at Raclawice, the rebellion ended in disaster with a two-month

siege of Warsaw by a combined Prussian and Russian force. A terrible massacre took place in the suburb of Praga, and rebel soldiers were either executed or deported to Siberia. Potaski suffered neither of these fates, but nor could he stay in decimated Poland. Nor would he have wanted to remain in a land that had become a graveyard for his comrades, and his fate would eventually be worked out as far away as possible on the other side of the world. Perhaps the horror of it all left an indelible scar on his psyche. Perhaps it trained him in taking the criminal short-cut in the face of desperation. Perhaps it haunted him so much that he rarely, if ever, spoke about it with his family – they were even unsure of his birth year. Perhaps he wanted to cast the Polish half of his life far from his mind for Poland meant only disaster and doom. We shall never know.

We do know that, like so many other Poles then and since, he arrived in London, probably a refugee and asylum seeker. Tipping⁵ suggests he may have been a sailor from Danzig. While he was nominally Roman Catholic, religion seems never to have played a part in his life nor that of his immediate family. The Russian captain several years before he died had left him a copy of the New Testament though we are not sure whether he could read or write. The various spellings of his surname suggest a minimal literacy but it may also reflect the Australian difficulty with Polish surnames.

Potaski's Transportation to Van Dieman's Land

Potaski comes into identifiable historical purview on 27th March 1802 when he was arraigned before the Sussex Spring Assizes at Horsham in the United Kingdom for stealing, together with a John O'Brien, a woman's hair shawl from Mrs Pollard's shop at Newhaven. Perhaps he wanted his partner, Catherine O'Sullivan from Connaught in Ireland, to look nice or to protect her hair from the wind and the cold. Perhaps both were destitute. Who knows the reasons for these minor indiscretions? Convicted, he was sentenced by Baron Hotham to seven years' transportation to the Australian gulag. He escaped Siberia, but not Australia.

Much later, Fawkner's opinion of Potaski would be that he was an 'incorrigibly bad man' while his wife was described as a 'lowbred

⁵ Tipping, M. (1988) *Convicts Unbound: the Story of the Calcutta Convicts and their Settlement* (Penguin, Australia); much of the material for this article is based on Tipping's thorough research.

dirty idle Connaught woman', adding that they reared their children in 'filth and ignorance' and 'evil practices'. Marjorie Tipping⁶ who has written the history of the *Calcutta* convicts notes wryly, "other records neither confirm nor deny this less than flattering description".

At the time of their transportation from Portsmouth, they already had one baby son, Joseph, and a baby daughter was conceived on the high seas. They travelled on the *Calcutta* as part of the fleet under the command of Lieutenant Colonel David Collins who was charged with establishing the Sullivan Bay settlement on Port Phillip Bay. They arrived on October 9th 1803; in the words of one convict, it was "a horrid, desolated place". However, for the 467 people, lack of water, absconding convicts, unrest among the soldiers and threatening Aborigines meant it was not tenable to stay⁷. It was decided to go to the future Hobart and, after their departure on 20th January 1804, contrary winds ensured that the miserable journey took many more days than normal.

This time, the Potaskis travelled on the *Ocean*, and just before it berthed, Catherine gave birth to Catherine jnr at Risdon Cove on 17th February, 1804, the first European born and baptised in Tasmania. Landing next day, the Sorrento group were to become the permanent nucleus of the Hobart settlement. The mother was granted a plot of land at Clarence Plains⁸, and the father was freed in 1810. Tipping summarizes, "Her husband was renting farms at Kangaroo Point, Geilston and Risdon by 1816, growing more corn on them than was needed for a year's supply in the whole colony, according to Surveyor George Evans. They had a comfortable house at Kangaroo Point. In 1819 he grazed four male and ten female cattle and twenty ewes, while the land his wife owned grew wheat and provided additional pasture. He supplied the Commissariat with wheat".⁹

The Fate of the Potaski Children

Neither child brought credit to John Potaski during his lifetime. Potaski endeavoured to purchase the Geilston property but he was prevented by a new agent, Alfred Thrupp, who chose to take large

⁶ Tipping, p. 163

⁷ see Mullen, C (2003) Victoria's first European settlement: Sullivan Bay 1803 – 1804 *Ancestor* 26, 7, 13 – 14.

⁸ Donohoe, J. (1991) *The Forgotten Australians* (North Sydney)

⁹ Tipping, p. 301

quantities of wheat instead of rent. Was Thrupp exploiting a man whose English may not have been very good? There were disputes over the rent, especially when Thrupp would not issue receipts for the wheat¹⁰. Whatever the causes for this dispute, it was the context for the son John, together with four others, burgling the Thrupp house during which Mrs Thrupp was raped. John Potaski was taken to Sydney where he was convicted in March 1821 at the approximate age of 20. He was taken back to Hobart and hanged on 28th April 1821¹¹. The execution of this only son ensured the demise of the Potaski surname.

Even before this terrible episode, his sister, Catherine, had been in trouble. At the age of 16, she gave birth to an illegitimate son, William. He was baptised in the Church of England on 17th May, 1820 but died less than three years later on 25th February, 1823. There were allegations of prostitution, and she seemed not to enjoy the favour of the first Catholic chaplain, Fr. Connolly. But she lived to enjoy better times, marrying, again pregnant at the age of 20, Edward McDonald (var. McDonnell) just before her father's death and not long after her son's death. She was married at St. Virgil's church on 29th June 1824. Edward was from Ireland, and together the couple produced three daughters and a son between 1824 and 1833, all born in Hobart. He died in 1868, and Catherine jnr eventually died at Geelong on 30th January 1877,¹² beginning a family legacy that endures until today.

The Potaski Legacy

These series of events probably did not endear the Potaskis to the tightly knit River Derwent communities of the 1820s, and it is likely that life became difficult for the Potaskis, especially in the selling of their produce. In the year before his death, John Potaski was again in trouble with the law for cattle rustling. He died at Hobart on 31st August, 1824, and while the family inscription states that he was 50 when he died, he may have been as old as 62. Eventually both his wife and daughter moved to Geelong, and Catherine snr died on 13 April 1855 at Geelong where she is buried. There is a suggestion she was born in 1759, thus dying at a great age.

¹⁰ Tipping, p. 301

¹¹ Account in *Hobart Town Gazette*, 28th April, 1821.

¹² Funeral notice in *Geelong Advertiser*, 1st February, 1877.

John Potaski was always a victim of his historical circumstances though during the best part of his life, the 1810s, he clearly worked hard to establish himself and his family. But his son's outrage probably destroyed it all. Joseph had not moved as far beyond his criminal past as most other ex-convicts did. Perhaps the burden of his personal history, beset by the vicissitudes of Russian, Prussian and British imperialism, was too great. He had floated like flotsam on the waves of an unkind history. Whilst there is nothing great about his life, his progeny have become honourable and contributing citizens of the Australian Commonwealth. Most would not be aware of the Polish beginnings of their family heritage in Australia. Perhaps the lessons of John Potaski's life is that we must live by our decisions, including our mistakes, and that internal division, cynical opportunism and unbridled imperialism, eventually if not sooner, bring deviancy, defeat and death. Perhaps it shows, yet again, how God can draw good out of evil.

Chapter 2

The Polish Impact on Australian Society

James Jupp

Poles, like the Irish and Italians, have emigrated in their millions over the past two centuries. Most have gone to the United States, but many found work in the mines and factories of France and Germany. Losing their independence with the partitions of the late 18th century, many Poles also sought freedom in the west. The brief period of independence between 1920 and 1939 also coincided with the worldwide depression and the rise of fascism. There were always good reasons for leaving Poland. But there was also a strong desire to preserve Polish culture and, especially, the language and the special role of Polish Catholicism. It should not be forgotten, however, that many who left Poland did not share this aspiration, being Yiddish-speaking Jews. In more recent years, many have also come from the German-speaking minority incorporated into Poland from 1920. The Polish-born population has never been exactly the same as the 'Polish community' – which is also true for many other so-called 'ethnic communities' in Australia as in other immigrant societies.

Polish emigration to Australia was minimal until after the Second World War. There were plenty of other places to go and no encouragement either from Britain or the Australian colonies to come. The majority of the few who arrived were Jewish. Consequently, the Polish community, arising after 1947, was created from scratch, and became focussed around the concerns with Communism and the fate of Poland, which were so central to the Displaced Persons. Certainly some Polish individuals made an impact before then, most notably Sir Edmund Strzelecki. But he spent much of his life in Britain and his main contribution was to name our highest mountain and several other geographical features. His contemporary, John Lhotsky, though born in Lwów, was not of Polish origin. Almost the only Polish Catholic community was at Polish Hill River in South Australia, founded by the Jesuit, Father Leo Rogalski. The Polish impact on Australia thus

came after the society had entrenched its basically British and Irish character, with the Catholic Church very firmly Irish in its origins and leadership. Unlike the South Australian Germans, with whom many Poles and Wends arrived during the 1840s, the small Polish groups became absorbed within much larger entities and eventually lost their distinctiveness. Few families of Polish origin survived into the 20th century, the Broinowskis being a rare exception (Paszkowski, 1987).

Creating a Community of the Displaced

When the post-War migration program resumed in 1947, there were only 6,573 Polish-born in Australia of whom 4,000, mainly Jews, were in Melbourne. In the next seven years there was a huge jump of 50,000. Melbourne remained the favoured city, as it still is, but large communities were also created in Sydney, Adelaide and Perth and smaller but active groups in places like Hobart and Maitland. With a small exception for German-speakers, most of these new settlers were Polish-speaking Catholics. This encouraged the creation of a very wide range of community organisations. A viable Polish language press was created to replace the small, occasional publications which had appeared since the 1920s (Lencznarowicz, 2001). *Tygodnik Polski* has been published weekly since 1949 and *Wiadomosci Polskie* was published between 1954 and 1996. Even more important than the media – which had a limited circulation – was the growth of clubs and organisations. An official listing of 1977 shows 109 Polish organisations. In each major city, permanent clubhouses (*Dom Polski*) were created. This level has been well sustained but “attempts to assess the percentage of Polish people active in organisational life varies from five to 10 per cent ... But these numbers seem to be inflated” (Lencznarowicz, 2001:625).

The communities created by the inflow between 1947 and 1954 were unable to expand their numbers. Further emigration from Poland was forbidden by the Communists. Numbers peaked at 61,600 in 1966 and then went into a slow decline until the early 1980s. Nor was there much change in location, except for a slow movement of retirees towards Queensland as with many other European communities and the majority population. Melbourne remained the largest community but only Adelaide has actually increased its numbers in recent years – contrary to most other settlement trends which have bypassed South Australia. Poles have not concentrated their settlement very strongly

in the major cities. There remain some favoured areas, which are mostly in industrial suburbs. These have included the western suburbs of Melbourne such as Sunshine and Keilor and the southeast around Dandenong; western suburbs of Sydney such as Fairfield, Liverpool and Auburn; and northern suburbs of Adelaide such as Woodville, Enfield and Salisbury. In few of these areas do Polish-speakers make up more than three per cent of the population. There are also considerable numbers of middle-class Poles and Polish Jews in more residential areas such as Caulfield, Malvern and St Kilda in Melbourne, and Bondi in Sydney. None of these areas is sufficiently concentrated to make up the large voting blocs which are possible for some Greek, Italian, Vietnamese or Chinese local communities, nor can they support the same range of ethnic shops and restaurants. To some extent, then, members of the Polish community, though numerous, remain 'hidden' from those among whom they live (Sussex and Zybrzycki, 1985).

As there was almost no recruitment between 1954 and 1981, these communities have steadily aged. Their organisations have often become less active unless they have been able to recruit the second generation of Australian-born children. These now outnumber the immigrant generation, as is true of most European communities other than those from the former Yugoslavia. Nor did the advent of the Solidarity migrants of the 1980s make much difference. Nine thousand Polish-born were added between 1986 and 1991 and this brought the Polish-born numbers to a record high level of nearly 70,000 (Jamrozik 1983). But decline set in again. By 1996 the 'new Poles' account for a bulge of about one-quarter of the total who are aged between thirty-five and fifty. Even so, forty-four per cent of the Polish-born were over sixty years of age, of whom the majority were over seventy. This is the essential and inescapable fact with which Polish communities have to grapple.

Cultural Cohesion and Social Division

The Polish-born population in 1996 was predominantly Polish-speaking and Catholic in its origins, as it had been since the early 1950s. While almost one-fifth switched to using English in the home, Polish was still normally used by 70 per cent, with a small residue speaking German, Russian or Ukrainian. This shows a high degree of language retention, bearing out Professor Smolicz's claim that use of

the language is a Polish 'core value'. It also provides a strong basis for media and organisations. With 70,000 speakers (apart from those who use Polish and English), Polish is the twelfth most commonly used language other than English. But this should not be a cause for complacency. Polish is very much an 'immigrant' language, its local media is poorly supported and, like the other Slav languages, its position within the academic curriculum has been seriously undermined in recent years. Its use has, however, been better maintained than some other European languages. The numbers using Polish were exactly the same in 1996 as they had been twenty years before, though the census definition was slightly different.

The common experience of arriving over a short period of time gives this aging population a continuing cohesion. Three-quarters are Catholics and less than ten per cent are Jewish – as the Polish Jewish population is even older and declining more quickly. Only a few claim to be non-religious while smaller numbers are Lutheran, Orthodox, Jehovah's Witnesses or Seventh-Day Adventists. While there is a variety of educational and social backgrounds, most of the Polish-born could be described as 'working class'. But there is a considerable divergence, with one-quarter holding university degrees, which is higher than for the general population and much higher than for immigrants from southern Europe. This reflects the influence of the Jewish and post-1980 generations. Occupationally about one-third are professionals and semi-professionals, which reflects educational and trade qualifications. But well over one-half work in the traditional industrial occupations of tradesmen, production and transport, elementary clerical and sales and labourers. This largely accounts for Polish residence in the industrial areas of the major cities. Of course, a considerable part of the community is now retired but was previously also concentrated in 'working class' occupations. Indeed, the social position of the current Polish-born population is better than that of its predecessors. In 1976 sixty-one per cent of Polish-born males were tradesmen and labourers, a level comparable to that of Greeks and Italians and almost twice that of the Australian-born. As with other European communities, members of the second generation are better educated than the first and more likely to become professionals.

Linguistically, religiously, and as victims of the Second World War, Australian Poles are a relatively homogenous group. Socially they are divided and, as with other communities, leadership has

normally gone to those with professional occupations and qualifications. This may account for the relative weakness of the media and many organisations, as Unikoski noted over twenty years ago (Unikoski, 1978). It is also relevant to the relations between those who have led the organisations, often for many years, and the newcomers of the 1980s and the second generation. These latter are much less likely to use Polish in everyday circumstances and much more likely to have tertiary education than their parents. They are not dedicated to the overthrow of Communism, as this has already been achieved (to a large extent by resistance within Poland). They can, however, freely return to Poland and establish links with individuals, organisations and governments, which their parents always refused to do. The relationship with the original homeland is thus more fruitful than it has been for nearly fifty years. Such a relationship is essential for cultural maintenance and in avoiding what has been called the ‘fossilisation’ of diasporic communities.

Sustaining a Polish Presence in Australia

Polish-born immigrants and their Australian descendants now make up about one per cent of the population. Poles constituted the largest refugee nationality ever to arrive in Australia, even outnumbering the Vietnamese. In contrast to the United States, then, most Poles came to Australia to escape the political conditions in their homeland rather than for economic reasons. This has tended to make the organised community very conscious of Polish politics and rather less interested in Australian affairs than many other comparable groups. Moreover, because many Poles came as Displaced Persons between 1947 and 1952, the community was ageing – a problem faced even more acutely by those from the Baltic States and Ukraine. The post-War generation was not replenished until the ‘Solidarity’ emigration of the 1980s and was centrally concerned with the impact of Soviet Communism. It is unlikely to be replenished now that Communism has been defeated. The entry of Poland into the European Union will open up the possibility of short-term migration into Western Europe. European emigration to Australia – even from Britain – has steadily declined and is now almost non-existent from the EU states. Poland, like Ireland, is likely to benefit considerably from EU policy. Short-term and short-range migration is always more welcome than movement to the other end of the world. Most people – and most Poles – do not

want to emigrate unless there are compelling reasons to do so. The most compelling reason in the past was often the threat of Russian and German imperialism. Polish membership of NATO and the EU greatly diminishes this incentive. While Poland is certainly not a rich country it has been more competently governed with more beneficial results than is true for several other post-Soviet states, including Russia itself.

This presents the Australian Polish community with the same sort of dilemma it was starting to face twenty years ago, but with important new twists. The solidifying influence of anti-Communism is no longer relevant. The ‘myth of return’ has faded for the elderly, who are bound to Australia by their children and grandchildren. Return visits are possible now, but the Italian experience has been that most who go back feel alienated from the society they left behind – mainly because it has changed out of recognition. Over twenty years ago, Rachel Unikoski, in her study of ethnic organisations in Melbourne, foresaw the possibility of “protracted decline and general demise in organisations in groups with static immigration, *e.g.* East Europeans”. She qualified this by arguing that “a new flow of migrants” might form vigorous new organisations or rejuvenate the ailing old ones”. To some extent this happened with the Polish migration of the early 1980s. But another wave of immigrants from Poland is very unlikely. Moreover, those who arrived even under the disintegrating Communist regime, found themselves often at variance with their elders who looked back to the world before 1939. Unikoski’s critique was not well received at the time by many ethnic community leaders. But it retains validity.

Future Agendas

The major challenges to the Polish community (as for many others) are:

- Caring for the increasing proportion of immigrants who are elderly.
- Cultural maintenance and relationships with Poland.
- Retaining the interest of the Australian-born.
- Sustaining an organisational structure and media which can cater to and reflect the interests of Polish Australians.
- Co-operating with others in defence of multiculturalism, access, equity and mutual respect.

Of these the care of the elderly has probably received most attention, as it has for several other of the post-War European communities. This requires both the provision of ethnic-specific services and, where necessary, accommodation. It is resource intensive and requires close co-operation between community organisations, state agencies and NGOs. A significant role is played by the institutions of the Catholic Church. But the state has a major responsibility which should not be diminished in this era of privatisation and 'user pays'. The principles of access and equity – that society is made up of groups with differing cultures and needs – are very relevant and should be emphasised.

Cultural maintenance has been much less of a concern for governments than the provision of welfare services. This is likely to continue to be the case in the future for a variety of reasons. Conservative attacks on multiculturalism over the past twenty years have discouraged the use of the public sector and public funds to maintain languages and subsidise cultures. This is particularly a problem because of the considerable proliferation of the variety of cultures in the past twenty years and the expanded emphasis on Indigenous cultures. In the future ethnic communities will need to look to their own resources, preferably in co-operation with the homeland governments. Many European governments now devote resources to diaspora communities. With the defeat of Communism this need no longer be controversial, provided that there is no political 'hidden agenda'. As the accumulated wealth and education of ethnic communities has grown, there is no longer strength in the argument that the resources are not there. Certainly at the university level the teaching of most languages is heavily dependent on private support or the encouragement of overseas governments. There is no immediate prospect of this changing. This does not mean that communities should not keep asking for support from public funds – but these are unlikely to increase very much in the current political climate. In the short term at least, they are more likely to be forthcoming at the State rather than the Commonwealth level.

In a relatively elderly community, cultural maintenance must involve retaining the interest of the Australian-born descendants. There need be no crushing pessimism about this. The North American examples suggest that it is quite possible to preserve an interest in Polish culture for several generations, even if this means the loss of

language. Such an interest is most fruitfully maintained by ease of travel. This is no longer a serious problem and many are returning regularly to the European homelands of their parents. The extension of dual citizenship makes longer stays important. Some Polish institutions, most notably at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, already run cultural exchange programs for the diaspora, and Polish Australians should take full advantage of this. But it has to be recognised that 'cultural maintenance' does not mean 'fossilisation'. Poland is changing at least as fast as Australia, and locally born Polish Australians will not be very interested in some traditional aspects of a Polish life which has passed away. All honour must be paid to those who resisted Communism and Russian and German imperialism – just as such honour is accorded to the Anzacs, locally. But Poland is a thoroughly modern country with a very healthy intellectual, cultural and sporting life. Young Polish Australians now have the opportunity denied to their parents of sharing in this and developing it locally and internationally.

As the community changes from 'immigrant' to 'ethnic', new approaches are needed to retain the interest of its members. Other ethnic communities have found that language fades over time but that a minority at least does not lose interest altogether. Folk dancing may give way to an interest in film, theatre, music or literature in translation. Here again close collaboration with public and private agencies in Poland is essential. It is also important for Polish organisations and individuals to give full and active support to the collective defence of multiculturalism through organisations like the Ethnic Communities' Councils and the various State agencies which fund them. There has been a consistent attack on multiculturalism for years now, which can only lead, if successful, to assimilation and the eventual diminution of public support for ethnic variety. Poles have in the past made an important contribution to developing and sustaining multiculturalism. Much of the theory fed into public policy was developed by professors Zubrzycki and Smolicz. George Wojak was one of the most effective presidents of the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils (FECCA). Sev Ozdowski has had a significant influence, most recently as Human Rights Commissioner. In recent years the emphases have shifted from the European to the Asian communities and from the Commonwealth to the United States. But there is no reason why Poles should not continue this work. If

multiculturalism declines and is run down as public policy, Polish Australia will also be diminished.

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Chapter 3

Re-creating the Polish 'homelandscape'

Mushroom Hunting in Belanglo

Max Kwiatkowski

Introduction

Driving down the Hume Highway through the Southern Highlands between Sydney and Goulburn, not far from the turnoffs for Berrima and Bowral, one is confronted by a tiny sign (blink and you'll miss it) pointing due west: Belanglo State Forest, it says. It's over there somewhere, over a handful of hills, down a rough unsealed road, for the most part unseen by passing traffic. For the bulk of these passers-by the sign, if not ignored, might send chills down their collective spines, for the name Belanglo since the early 1990s is most readily associated with one thing only: the backpacker murders.

Between 1992 and 1993 seven bodies were discovered in the then all but unheard of forest. These were identified as being those of backpackers—three German, two British and two Australian—known to have been hitchhiking down the Hume Highway. A major manhunt resulted in the conviction of Ivan Milat, who though he lived in southwest Sydney had a close association with the Southern Highlands through work, recreation and properties his brothers owned in the area.

The average driver may well shudder when passing the junction with the road to Belanglo, but for those of Polish extraction the forest turnoff provides an opportunity to leave the main road and head through the dust past a few cows and into the dark depths of the pine plantations, on their minds not murder, decomposing bodies, timber production or off-road driving but picnicking, mushrooms and memories of 'home'.

I have been a regular visitor to Belanglo since 1986, when at the age of nine I migrated to Australia from Poland. Every autumn after the rains at least a few times a year my family would make the hour

long trek from the southwest suburbs of Sydney into that other world, Belanglo. We went there because it was fairly close to where we lived; we went there because the pine forest and its surrounds resembled Poland—the ‘homeland’—perhaps more than any other part of Australia we knew; but most of all we went there for the mushrooms, three edible varieties of which sprouted among pine needles on the forest floor. And we were not alone. Mushroom hunting in pine plantations was quite a popular pastime among the Polish community of Sydney and over the years Belanglo had developed into a significant destination. Each year would see more and more parked cars and mushroom hunters scattered throughout the woods. Weekends and holidays such as Easter Monday saw whole convoys of Poles descend on Belanglo. Earlier on most parked in the established picnic areas but as these became increasingly popular the mushroompickers spread out into more remote areas where it was quieter and competition for mushrooms less fierce. Each family tended to have their own favourite spot—generally until it too became too popular, or was logged. If you met a stranger in the forest at that time of year it was virtually one hundred percent certain they were Polish. No one else seemed to go there. Perhaps the odd Italian or Russian family, but unless they were forestry workers or passing through to somewhere else Anglo-Celtic Australian visitors were certainly very few and far between. Belanglo had effectively become a Polish space—an outpost of Poland, or more specifically the Polish community of Sydney, in a corner of the Southern Highlands that for many years did not even register as a blip on the radar screens of most Australians, even locals. But of course all that was to change once those grisly discoveries were made ...

At the time the bodies were being uncovered and it was becoming clear a serial killer was on the loose, I couldn’t help thinking that someone from the Polish community might be responsible. Other Poles thought this, too. I mean, who else knew the place as well as the Poles? So later we all breathed a huge collective sigh of relief when Ivan Milat—with no links to the Polish community whatsoever—was arrested and subsequently convicted for the crimes. The fact that the bodies were found in the native rather than plantation part of the forest also was of some consolation, as it meant that for the last few years mushroom picking hadn’t been taking place over the top of makeshift gravesites after all, as some may have initially feared. The forest Poles

had territorialised and in a way claimed as their own hadn't been invaded after all. For them there existed a sharp distinction between the native bushland and softwood plantation parts of the forest, and so the location of the murder scenes in the bushland section tarnished that section only, not the plantations, and not Belanglo as a whole. For the wider Australian public, however, it was the entire forest, and the name Belanglo itself, that became tainted, perhaps forever to be associated with Milat and his gruesome crime spree.

Ethnic space and ethnoscape

Academic and popular discourse alike generally tends to attach the tag ethnic space to places to a significant extent inhabited by members of an ethnic group. Thus city neighbourhoods associated with particular immigrant groups become clear-cut ethnic spaces inadvertently created by these groups through the simple process of living their lives there. Cities with large immigrant populations are increasingly recognised as made up of countless, often overlapping, such ethnic spaces. What makes these spaces special is not so much their difference from the 'mainstream', or even diversity of culture and origin, but the way in which residents of these self-created spaces view them, interact with them, and use them to establish some kind of dialogue with the original 'homeland'. What I am talking about here is not so much physical modifications of, say, the streetscape, to make it look more like that of home. That's too obvious—everyone is aware of a Chinatown or Little Italy or similar so-called 'ethnic ghettos', and anyhow examples are not that numerous and arise more out of a need to be around others of the same background than due to some kind of need to transform a corner of suburbia into something it's not, something more like 'home' (house interiors are a different thing altogether, though). What I mean is seeing the world, the spaces and places around you, through the haze of the homeland left behind (see Schama 1995; Read 1996). Memories, images, sounds, smells firmly imprinted on one's mind, or heart. Nostalgia. You walk down the street and see something that reminds you of something else, somewhere else, and you are immediately catapulted back into the homeland. Thus even the most banal sites become sights to behold. I know I feel this way when I look up at the Housing Commission high rises in Waterloo/Redfern. I straightaway think of Poland—the Poland I knew, urban Poland, with its endless rows of drab prefab concrete

apartment blocks from the communist era. *Blokowiska*, we called them. See? Already I am nostalgic about the banal. Anyone back in Poland would think I was crazy for admitting a soft spot for these Stalinist monstrosities, yet for some strange reason I do. And others sufficiently removed from them do too.

But back to my point: these homeland memories, coupled with contemporary links with the homeland and the local ethnic community, and the latter's characteristics, combine to produce a very ethnic-specific way of viewing a set space or landscape for individuals from different ethnic backgrounds. Let us refer to this phenomenon as *ethnoscape*. Both ethnic space and *ethnoscape*, in the immigrant context, have traditionally been associated with urban areas only, presumably because this is where immigrants generally reside, at least in visible concentrations. Examples include studies by Blokland (2003), Hanhorster (2000), Penrose (2002), Schnell (1992) and Wise (2000), in which the idea of a space or territory one can term familiar, their own, or 'home', tends to be equated with residence; the idea of an ethnic space is thus essentially confined to the ethnic/immigrant 'ghetto'. Increasingly, the different ways disparate ethnic groups view and use public space has also undergone serious consideration. Risbeth (2001) for instance provides an account of not only how individuals use public and recreational spaces differently according to their ethnic background and cultural traditions, but how these factors also influence the way they view a particular landscape, or park. Often, she argues, what immigrants look for is familiarity and a resemblance to vistas seen back 'home'. Such things as 'a landform, a planting mix or even a particular density of woodland can provide a trigger for memories' (Risbeth 2001: 360). Nevertheless, much of such research continues to deal predominantly with public space either within the 'ethnic neighbourhoods' where these groups are concentrated, or relatively close to them (see Hutchinson 1987; MacFarlane, Fuller and Jeffries 2000; Stodolska 1998; Woolley and Amin 1995). The public space discussed, therefore is confined largely to urban parks, squares, playgrounds. One is left with the impression that the space beyond the larger cities, whether forest, farmland or wilderness, is the exclusive domain of the white, Anglo-Celtic majority—locals and holidaying outsiders alike.

Certainly, this seems to be the view held by general society. Immigrant minorities seem conspicuously absent from images

commonly associated with rural or natural or recreation areas (see Kinsman 1995). In Australia all the ads, books, brochures, and television shows show happy white faces and Australian accents. If they don't adhere to these two categorisations it is assumed they are tourists from overseas (my parents face precisely this problem when travelling). Immigrants just don't appear to belong beyond the last of the suburbs, at least within the public imagination. 'Ethnics—keep out', is the not so subtle message one seems to receive. It is to the metropolis that it is expected they be confined, and even then to particular neighbourhoods only.

The last ten to fifteen years have seen an increasing but still comparatively small number of researchers show interest in the influence of ethnicity on recreation in public space beyond the metropolis (e.g. Baas, Ewert and Chavez, 1993; Dunn 2002; Floyd 1991 and 1998; Gomez 1999). Their studies are concerned with taking into consideration the way in which outdoor recreation and conservation areas are viewed and used by ethnic minorities, and have at least in part been driven by government policy. Recognising, encouraging and managing for minority use are among the policy goals underpinning, if not driving, such research.

Among the few notable Australian examples of such research the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and its 'Studies in the Cultural Constructions of Open Space' project, begun in 1998. The first volume to come out of the project is an exploration by Martin Thomas (2001) of National Parks and the Macedonian experience. The impetus for the work was the observation that each Christmas Day large numbers of Macedonian-Australians from Sydney and Wollongong gather at a particular picnic area in the Royal National Park on the southern outskirts of Sydney. This annual gathering in the past caused a lot of problems for National Parks staff, with tension between participants and park rangers at times particularly rife. More generally, Thomas documents cultural misunderstanding, ethnic stereotyping and at times outright racism when it comes to the attitudes held by NPWS staff to ethnic minority park users. Thomas' work is intended as a first step in overcoming such attitudes and ensuring that future planning takes greater care to consider cultural difference among park users. But elsewhere even these first few steps do not appear to have been taken and public land managers seem to be either ignorant of or unwilling to plan for use by ethnic minorities.

The case of Polish mushroom gathering in State Forests of NSW pine plantations such as Belanglo provides an excellent example of this. Although Poles know and use the forest more than perhaps anyone else—indeed, at certain times of year the forest becomes an almost exclusively Polish space—their presence in, use of and attitudes toward the forest seem all but unacknowledged by State Forests planners, let alone wider society.

Belanglo State Forest

Belanglo State Forest is located in the Southern Highlands of NSW approximately, 130km south of the centre of Sydney. As with most entities within the NSW State Forests system, it is managed for both timber production and recreation. Due to its elevation, about 600m above sea level, Belanglo forest has a cool, humid climate much more temperate than that of the Sydney basin. This climate makes it ideal for softwood production.

Approximately half of the forest is comprised of softwood timber, mainly plantations of radiata pine (*Pinus radiata*), a native of the Monterey district of California. Unlike the hardwood part of the forest, the plantations are managed for harvesting timber rather than recreation or the protection of wildlife habitat. This utilitarian image is the one the majority of Australians generally have of softwood plantations. The exception might be those resident close to pine plantations, which might use them for such recreational pursuits as mountain bike or trailbike riding, or 4WD or rally-car driving. An important example include the inhabitants of Canberra, especially residents of its more westerly suburbs, who on their doorsteps have (or more accurately used to, before the fires of January 2003) vast tracts of pine plantation such as Stromlo forest. These forests were heavily used by locals who appreciated their proximity and the fact that, unlike in nearby native bushland areas, rules regarding use were more relaxed, permitting for instance activities like dogwalking and trailbike riding. There is little evidence, however, to suggest that the actual composition of the forest—exotic, monocultural pine as opposed to native bushland—was a major factor contributing to local residents' affinity for the forests. But for those of Polish extraction it is an altogether different story.

Not just Poles but, anecdotally, other groups, such as the Italian, Russian and Macedonian communities (Thomas 2001: 75), and

presumably anyone else who in the past spent many a glorious hour in a pine wood, do not share the general Australian antipathy to the pine plantation. For them, rather than just another component of the human-modified landscape, they are reminders of 'home' and its landscapes. The mere glimpse of a forest of tall, stately pines, or the whiff of pine resin, or needles, is enough to catapult me, and many like me, into the past, into the many forest paths treaded on many a walking or mushroom hunting expedition in the old homeland. There is nothing like a pine plantation to replicate the familiar environment of Poland—not even the aforementioned Housing Commission tower blocks—and bring the memories flooding back. To ramble through the depths of a plantation is to lose yourself in nostalgia. You can almost imagine you are back in Poland somewhere. Sure, the trees are a bit different, but you can always pretend. No other part of Australia—save maybe the occasional stretch of fertile, flat, verdant farmland, or some mountain vista—comes quite as close. Oh yeah—plus there's the mushrooms.

Mushroom picking

Picking wild mushrooms seems for most Australians a pretty strange thing to do. When I tell non-Polish acquaintances I just came back from a mushroom hunting trip they are aghast (of course when I add that the trip was to Belanglo State Forest their jaws drop even further). 'Why would anyone do that?', you can almost hear them think. Mushrooms are something you buy in the store. If they grow wild in the forest they must be either poisonous, or 'magic'. Maybe it even crosses their mind that I've had too much of the latter and the trip I've gone on is of the hallucinogenic sort. I have to reassure them that I am for real and that picking mushrooms is something large numbers of otherwise perfectly ordinary Poles do, including in Australia.

The picking of wild mushrooms is a popular activity throughout central and eastern Europe, as well as Italy. In Poland it has in particular been elevated to the status of a national pastime. Each autumn virtually the whole nation descends on and disappears into the woods. Each family usually has its favourite haunts. Edible species of wild mushrooms are in Poland numerous, with knowledge of which species are and aren't safe to eat passed on from generation to generation (Driscoll 2001). This annual mushroom mania leads to the collection by each household of a sizeable supply of mushrooms that

usually lasts all through winter, with meals including or based largely on mushrooms becoming somewhat of a staple. Over the centuries, however, mushroom hunting has transformed from being just a means of acquiring food to a much favoured activity, an opportunity to escape the world and commune with nature, and to a lesser extent family. Maybe it represents some kind of rekindling of dormant hunter-gatherer instincts. Watching my dad, you'd certainly think so. He parks the car, grabs a bucket and full of fervour disappears, emerging only hours later, victorious, armed with a huge grin as well as a bucket and countless plastic bags overflowing with mushrooms.

Wherever Poles have gone, mushroompicking has followed. For some strange reason even in countries like the US and Sweden, with many indigenous species of edible mushroom (generally the same or similar to those in Poland), and a past in which mushroom collection was by no means unknown, mushroom hunting is rarely pursued by the bulk of the population—with, of course, the exception of European immigrants, especially Poles. A friend once told me of how he was once gathering mushrooms somewhere deep in the American Rockies. Suddenly, a stranger, the first person he had seen all day, approached and started talking to him—unprovoked, and in Polish! My friend was shocked. 'How did you know I was Polish?' he asked. 'Who else in their right mind would be out here picking mushrooms?', was the prompt reply.

To Australia, too, the Polish mushroompickers came. But here early Polish immigrants found the environment entirely alien, with not only forests and animals, but mushrooms, very different from those encountered back home. Until, that is, they discovered plantations of radiata pine. These were home to three familiar species of edible mushroom, the saffron milk cap or pine mushroom (*Lactarius deliciosus*), and two types of slippery jacks (*Suillus luteus* and *S. granulatus*). No one is exactly sure how these exotic species got here, but it is thought that their spores travelled to our shores along with pine trees imported from the northern hemisphere. Either that or they were brought here by Poles homesick, or hungry, for familiar fungi.

Sydneysiders of Polish descent have traditionally accessed one of two areas for their mushroomhunting activities, the Oberon region to the west of the Blue Mountains, and the Southern Highlands to the southwest of Sydney. Both these regions possess a climate cool and moist enough for commercially viable *Pinus radiata* plantations; this

same climate, coupled with the presence of pines, also creates optimum conditions for the development of mushrooms, in particular those mushrooms reliant on pine trees for symbiosis, such as the three exotic edible species outlined above. The plantations of the Oberon district are significantly larger, higher, and cooler than those in the Southern Highlands, with the potential therefore for richer pickings, but are more difficult for Sydneysiders to get to. By contrast the Southern Highlands plantations—the Belanglo, Penrose and Wingello State Forests—are not only closer to metropolitan Sydney in kilometres, but enjoy easy access from the Hume Highway, a freeway that makes the trip between city and forest fairly rapid. The proximity is even more profound when one considers that much of the Polish-born population of Sydney lives close to the city's southwestern periphery, well on the way to the Southern Highlands and meaning that via the freeway the forests are little more than an hour away. Being the first of the forests encountered travelling southwest on the Hume, this proximity may also be the main reason for Belanglo developing as a mushrooming mecca, ahead of the Oberon area as well as Penrose and Wingello—another 10-20 minutes down the road.

It is perhaps worth noting that recent years have seen increasing awareness and interest in edible wild mushrooms, at least judging by the media. This awareness appears to be driven by the so-called 'foodies', on the lookout for new eating experiences, the more multicultural and exotic the better. Thus we have witnessed the appearance of some of the mushrooms picked by Poles and other immigrant groups in gourmet stores under the labels pine mushrooms or Blue Mountains blood mushrooms. Then there are stories in the popular media (albeit targeted at a particular class of reader/viewer/consumer only) such as a recent piece in the *Sydney Morning Herald's* Good Living liftout (Sheard 2003), or a segment on an episode of SBS's *Food Lovers Guide* TV show screened in 2002. The latter story was actually entitled 'Polish mushroom hunting' and focused on trips organised by the Polish Senior Citizen's Club in Ashfield, NSW, to the Oberon plantations. Even State Forests of NSW have gotten in on the action, with a short article in their magazine about mushrooms and mushroompicking in radiata plantations under their control (State Forests of NSW 1999). Such stories commonly assume that the reader knows nothing or little about mushroom hunting; the information they provide is more of the type that informs

the public that this activity exists, but doesn't really encourage participation. Eating the product once it ends up on the shelf, maybe, but going out and doing the picking yourself—not really. That, so the subtext goes, remains the exclusive domain of those weird Europeans.

For instance Sheard, in talking about professional pickers who 'provide us with safe wild mushrooms', states that 'many are of East European origin and their code of secrecy rivals that of the KGB. All my requests to go wild mushroom hunting have been rejected, as I might divulge the location of the treasured source' (Sheard 2003: 13). She later goes on to warn those inexperienced in the art against even contemplating foraging for mushrooms this autumn, just in case one of the not so edible species gets picked and eaten. Her advice: 'when in doubt leave it to the experts and go to the greengrocer' (*ibid.*). Accounts such as this only have the effect of reinforcing the aura of mystery that surrounds mushroom hunting in Australia. Even when its existence is acknowledged, its status as something European immigrants—not 'Australians'—do is reinforced. Mushroompicking can then be considered a kind of 'ethnic space', likewise the forests the mushroomers frequent. In this case the ethnic minorities are in the majority; they are the insiders, omnipotent in their knowledge of mushrooms and forest. Only they are not in full control of their cherished forests, for at any time, without warning or consultation, these can be logged.

State Forests of NSW are supposed to manage their forest estate for both timber production and recreation, though when it comes to pine plantations the recreation side of things is rarely considered. When it is, it is recreation by small interest groups like orienteers, enthusiasts of off-road vehicular recreation or even folks who participate in mock 'dogsledding' races (with wheeled carts instead of sleds, because of course snow cover in the area is conspicuously absent), rather than ethnic-based interest groups such as mushroompicking Poles. An example of State Forests' apparent inability to understand and plan for at least those of its forest users who are not of Anglo-Celtic stock is their indiscriminate clearfelling of even those areas most favoured by Poles for the collection of mushrooms. Up until a few years ago the focal point of the Belanglo mushroompicking experience was a beautiful clearing right in the heart of the forest. It was next to a dam, and surrounded by beautiful stands of tall pines. The fact that it came complete with barbecuing,

picnic and camping facilities suggested that State Forests managed this area for recreation. This clearing was where the biggest gatherings of Poles took place. They parked and picnicked there and picked mushrooms in the surrounding woods. Then one day my family drove down the usual firetrails to the idyllic clearing, only to find it idyllic no more. To this day I remember as if it happened yesterday that dark moment when the stretch of forest we knew and loved was replaced by many hectares of ravaged, flattened earth. The picnic facilities were still there, but this was now hardly a place where one wanted to picnic. So the Polish mushroomers diffused into the forest's yet wilder parts, finding new favourite spots, only to find these too eventually clearfelled. And so the cycle continued. The episode demonstrates a disregard on the part of forest management for those who might view the pine forest as anything other than utilitarian. You'd think that at least an area designated for recreation would be preserved from the chainsaw, with perhaps some kind of forested buffer around the clearing being retained but, alas, even that was not to be. After all, for most Australians pine plantations are not regarded as natural or held in particularly high regard, while when it comes to the management of public land the culture and opinion of ethnic 'others' seems to count for very little indeed.

Conclusion

As one might expect the only books about Belanglo—and there are quite a few—are about the backpacker murders. There is even a poem, 'The Murdering Forest', by Jennifer Compton (1998). None of these so much as mention Poles and mushroompicking, which is perhaps strange given that Poles are among its major users. Whittaker and Kennedy (1998: 288) provide an account of how at first the police placed all users of Belanglo under suspicion, listing forestry workers, orienteers, members of the Bowral Pistol Club, Water Board workers, truck drivers and firewood gatherers. No mention whatsoever of mushroompickers, though. Or Poles. Was no one aware of their presence? Elsewhere Whittaker and Kennedy, as well as Mercer (1997) and Shears (1996) in their respective books on the subject create the image of Belanglo being utterly remote and visited by almost no one. When speaking of orienteers and bushwalkers who make the occasional foray into the forest (and who actually discovered some of the bodies) they all express puzzlement: why on earth would

anyone go there? Clearly, though, Sydneysiders of Polish extraction have done precisely this for many years. Yet few seem to be aware of it, and the unique way in which they view and use the forest.

Even in media discussions of wild mushroom hunting Belanglo does not rate a mention as a mushroom hunting haven. The forests of Oberon do, Belanglo doesn't. Perhaps it's just that well kept a secret, and not too many Poles want it getting out in case excessive competition jeopardises their favourite mushroom hunting grounds. Or it could be that in the public eye the name Belanglo never can now be associated with anything else other than Milat and the backpacker murders. To associate Belanglo State Forest with recreational activities such as picking wild mushrooms, as I have here, may at present be considered somewhat perverse. But this is precisely why I wrote this paper—which I'm sure you agree is hardly perverse—to show how one stretch of public land can be so very differently interpreted by different groups of people, based largely on their ethnicity. The majority of Australians see it as not only a utilitarian source of timber but a tainted killing ground. For Poles by contrast it remains a beautiful, beloved place in which to sit back, relax, eat, pick mushrooms, and enjoy a landscape so very reminiscent of landscapes 'back home.' There are even moments that, with all those other Poles around in what seasonally essentially becomes a Polish-only ethnic space, you can, however briefly, pretend you're standing in the middle not of Belanglo but a forest in Poland itself. Therein, of course, lies part of its attraction.

People right around the world seem to hold in high regard the landscapes of their youth, landscapes deeply embedded with personal histories, memories and nostalgia—what I like to call nostalgic landscapes. A view from one's childhood window, a grandparent's house, farm or village, a local park or alleyway, a forest, grove or field. An old, otherwise non-descript building well on its way to oblivion. Such past vistas continue to haunt us well after they've been removed from our everyday realities. Who knows, maybe they continue to influence us precisely because they *have* been removed from the contemporary world. As Peter Read (1996) points out, maybe it's the very loss of particular landscapes—through for instance their destruction, or a person's migration—that makes them so cherished. Certainly migration, and a migrant's nostalgia for the homeland, appear to elevate what most in the home country may consider to be

fairly average or even mundane landscapes to a higher status. This is precisely what I have discovered in my study of members of the 'Solidarity children' generation of Sydney (Kwiatkowski, forthcoming). Time and time again study participants expressed a fondness for the kind of landscape the bulk of Poles in Poland would deem ordinary or unattractive and not hold in high regard. But for these Polish-Australians it was precisely these landscapes that were most vividly and enthusiastically recalled, that were imbued with the most meaning and memory, and that were most readily associated with Poland or their time in Poland.

Given the continuing presence of these nostalgic landscapes in the migrant's mind it's little wonder then that these affect the way in which the landscapes of the 'new country' are viewed. Equally, that in the 'new landscapes' migrants might observe, value highly, sometimes even actively seek out, a landscape most reminiscent of the landscapes of 'home' should also be of little surprise. Belanglo constitutes an example of this, albeit probably a fairly extreme one because the way it is viewed by many Poles is so very different from the way everyone else sees the place. Nevertheless, the case of Belanglo still is more or less representative of what is happening all around us, at various locations, among countless ethnic communities.

Belanglo (together with other pine plantations) also seems to stand out because it represents not just an example of 'ethnoscape'—an ethnic background-dependent way of viewing and interacting with a landscape—but a kind of (at least temporary) Polish 'ethnic space', and a fairly exclusive one at that. As such it directly counters commonly held assumptions of ethnic space being primarily an urban phenomenon, confined to areas of concentrated minority/immigrant settlement—to, in other words, the often disparaged 'ghettoes'. Patently, ethnic minority groups, whether Poles, Macedonians (Thomas 2001), Vietnamese (Thomas 2002), Lebanese, Greeks or others, do get out and about, just like all other Australians at least occasionally leaving the cities for recreational purposes. It's just that the places they like to visit, and the way they view and use such places may significantly differ from the assumed Anglo-Celtic norm.

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Chapter 4

Social Welfare Services to the Polish Community

Today and Tomorrow

Adam Jamrozik

It is now over ten years since the publication of *The Polish Community in Australia: Creating a New Future* (Drozd & Cahill 1993), indicating the intention of developing a range of activities in the Polish-Australian community aimed at achieving certain clearly defined objectives. The question ‘Where to now?’ is being asked again, and the question is even more important now than it was ten years ago. My reflections and suggestions are based upon my research and experience gained over many years. It is evident there is awareness of the importance of this question in the Polish-Australian community, not only in Victoria, but in Australia as a whole. ‘*Where to now?*’ was the theme of a conference held by the Polish Welfare and Information Bureau in Sydney in May 2002, and it is the question we are asking in 2003. Is the question asked because we want to ensure that social welfare services to the Polish community are provided in a rational and effective way; or is it a sign of uncertainty about the direction we should want to take in that area of activity? We may go further and ask whether the question is a sign of uncertainty about the future of the Polish community in Australia generally.

As for the current situation in the provision of social welfare services to the Polish community, there is not much that I can say with any degree of intimate knowledge. Because I have not been directly involved in the provision of social welfare services (and living in Adelaide curtails my perspective on the national scene) I can give only an impressionistic view about the manner or quality of service delivery to the Polish community on the national scale. As far as I can see, most attention in all States has been given to services for the

aged, as would be expected, given the age structure of the community. In that field, care has been provided through the contribution of three related services: Commonwealth and State provisions of funds and services; the work of Polish community organisations and volunteers; and the work of Polish social workers and community workers providing professional services to individual persons, as well as a range of services in information, coordination, counselling and research. The impression I gained from the research data I have examined is that the standard of care in this area has been reasonably satisfactory.

In other areas of social need, the situation is less clear. From the information that I have obtained informally from various sources, one of the more sensitive areas of need is the position of young people in Polish families and particularly in culturally composite families. Tensions and conflicts arising out of parents' expectations, and social and cultural realities their children experience in their daily encounters with their peers at school and in social contacts, at times contribute to breakdown in relationships within the family. This has serious consequences for all concerned, but especially for teenagers. This is certainly a problem experienced in most non-Anglo Australian families but is more significant in the Polish community because of a high rate of intermarriage. The relatively small size of the community means there is a lack of adequate social capital on which the families, and especially the young generation, can draw for support. This problem is not as widely acknowledged as I think it should be because it is usually perceived as the problem of individual families rather than the problem of the Polish community as a whole. In my view, the way in which we will recognise the nature of this problem and address it through a well thought-out effort will largely determine the future of our identity as an ethnic and cultural community in Australian society.

Looking to the future, I see at least four issues which constitute the broad social and political context that we need to keep in mind when addressing the question '*Where to now?*' and in considering the future of social welfare services for the Polish community. First is the position of the Polish community in Australia in relation to its numbers, demographic structure, and its identity in the context of the Australian society. Second is the policy of the Australian government towards ethnic and cultural diversity and towards the concept of multiculturalism. Third is the social policy and social welfare policy

of the Australian government and the changes in that policy that the government is likely to pursue under the name of reform. Finally, the fourth issue is the current world situation and the Australian government's initiatives and responses to the events taking place and likely to take place in the forthcoming months and years.

Context Issue One

The Position of the Small Polish Community

Addressing the first issue, we have to consider that numerically, the Polish community in Australia is very small. The 2001 Census recorded 58,110 persons born in Poland, accounting for 0.31 percent of the total population. Almost three times that number – 150,000 persons (0.82 percent of the population) – recorded their Polish ancestry. The numbers of Polish-born persons are certainly diminishing and it is unlikely that the numbers will be significantly replenished by further immigration from Poland. The numbers of persons claiming Polish ancestry are derived from the Polish-born immigrants and from their descendants, and, in looking to the future of the Polish community as a clearly identifiable ethnic and cultural group, the population with Polish ancestry will become increasingly important. Without an ongoing inflow of immigrants from Poland, the extent to which we can achieve the continuity of our identity and the provision of services to our community will depend on the degree of success we achieve in engaging people with Polish ancestry in the activities of Polish organisations, or rather in Polish-Australian organisations.

Context Issue Two

Multiculturalism and Australian Government Policy

As far as the issues of ethnic and cultural diversity and the policy on multiculturalism are concerned, we need to acknowledge that over the past ten years, and particularly since 1996, the prevailing attitudes among Anglo-Australian population towards non-Anglo-Australians have become increasingly unfriendly, and the government policy and various statements by government members have played an important role in that change. In effect, although the term 'assimilation' is not overtly used, the policy has again become assimilationist. The concept

of *Australian multiculturalism*, recommended by the National Multicultural Advisory Council in 1999, has not been translated into an active policy of promoting multiculturalism in Australian society. Today, the cultural divide in Australian society is again becoming more rigidly defined, and what might have been a reluctant acceptance of ethnic and cultural diversity in some sections of the Anglo-Australian population has now turned into open antagonism. At present, the antagonism might be directed mainly at some distinct non-Anglo-Australian ethnic and cultural groups but it affects the relationships with most of the non-Anglo-Australian population.

Context Issue Three

The Australian Government Policy and its Recent Social Welfare Policy

In considering the provision of social welfare services to the Polish-Australian community, we need to acknowledge that the current social policy and social welfare policy in Australia is an integral part of the growing social and economic inequality in Australian society. This trend has been caused by the allocation of resources in the 'free-market economy' by the so-called 'market forces' but also by deliberate policies of the present government in the allocation of resources to education, health insurance subsidies and taxation. Whether we like it or not, the reality of social policy guided by the philosophy of neo-liberalism, or what we call in Australia 'economic rationalism', is based not on what may be considered 'basic human needs' but rather on the minimum standard that is politically sustainable. In such a policy there is not much scope for special attention to be given to the needs of particular ethnic and cultural groups.

Context Issue Four

The Creation of Fortress Australia

As for Australia's relations with the neighbouring countries, we see a growing trend towards the policy of 'Fortress Australia'. This policy and the attention it receives in the mass media undoubtedly affect the attitudes within our society. The effect of the policy is clearly reflected internally in the growing negative or even openly antagonistic attitudes towards cultural, ethnic and now religious

diversity. In this increasingly tense social and political atmosphere, the special needs of cultural minorities are likely to receive less and less consideration.

Certainly, it is possible to think that most of these changes are not likely to affect the Polish community, but this would be something akin to 'wishful thinking'. It is the cumulative and compound effect of these changes that we need to consider if the question *Where to now?* is to lead to a direction that will produce the kind of social welfare services that will ensure a high quality of well-being in our community, as well as the survival of our distinct ethnic and cultural identity.

Whether my perspective on the issues that are relevant to the question *Where to now?* has some merit, I leave for the readers to judge. On my part, assuming that there is some validity in my analysis, the best I can do is to propose some of the suggestions that I proposed at the conference organised by the Polish Welfare and Information Bureau of New South Wales and held in Sydney last May. The suggestions are concerned with a wider context of activities which, in my view, are essential to the continuity of provision of social welfare services to the Polish-Australian community and to the survival of that community as a distinct ethnic and cultural section of Australian society.

From my perspective, we can best meet the needs of the Polish community by actively participating in Australian social, political, economic and cultural life as Polish-Australian citizens. As a distinct ethnic and cultural entity, we have much to contribute to the development of the Australian multicultural society. It is through active participation in public affairs, as a distinct ethnic and cultural entity, that we can identify our needs and communicate them to policy makers, administrators and the professionals in human services. It will also be our task to ensure that young persons with Polish ancestry are drawn into this process. This task may be regarded as one to which we should give a high priority. As for the other issues to address, there are six areas of social organisation on which, I suggest, we need to focus our activities to achieve our objectives.

1. Political Participation

We need to develop an ongoing interest in government activities; scrutinise proposed legislation concerned with social policy,

education, cultural matters, and make appropriate submissions to the government.

2. Interest in Human Services

As many members of the Polish community – first, second and now third generation – are employed in professional work, there are good grounds for establishing regular social contacts, organising seminars, and critically examining policies, organisations, and practices of service delivery, and communicating any appropriate comments or suggestions to national or state professional bodies.

3. Educational Institutions

It has to be of concern to us, as it would be to all people who are interested in education, that the Australian education system has remained almost entirely monocultural. This is particularly so in the humanities, in the social sciences, and in human services education.. In the program curricula and in the overall context of programs Australia is still relatively isolated, not only from our neighbouring cultures but also from the European countries. Even Australian studies may appropriately be called ‘Anglo-Australian studies’, with a multicultural ‘add-on’ like some kind of afterthought. We ought to seek ways to ensure that the Polish language and Polish culture have a place in the education system, guided by appropriate studies and research at a tertiary level.

4. Use of the Media

I don’t think that I need to emphasise the importance of using the media to communicate our opinions on social, political and cultural issues, as well as our problems. An equally important task is to maintain interest in the media – to be informed on what issues are raised, by whom, what is suggested, *etc.*

5. Cooperation with Other Ethnic and Cultural Organisations

Most Polish-Australian concerns are likely to be also concerns of other ethnic and cultural groups. For this reason, whatever we want to do, and whatever we want to achieve, we should endeavour to work together with these groups. There are and will be concerns that are specific to the Polish-Australian community, but most concerns are likely to be common concerns of ethnic and cultural communities,

although there may be some differences among them. We need to give particular attention to co-operation and involvement with the cultural groups from non-European countries. The breaking of barriers between 'white' and 'non-white' and now between Christian and other religions is of utmost importance, in my view.

6. Contact with Poland

If we are to maintain our culture and our identity as Polish-Australians, we need to maintain regular and active contact with Poland. It is a well-known phenomenon that people who emigrate and lose contact with the country of origin eventually experience what is known as 'cultural arrest'. Reciprocal exchange of students (at all three education levels), for example, would be an important program to contemplate, but reciprocal exchanges of various interest groups, formal and informal, are equally important.

The comments and observations I have presented, and the suggestions for actions that I have put forward, are certainly for discussion and consideration for possible and feasible action. Whatever actions are taken in the form of a sustained ongoing program, we need to bear in mind that actions in the areas mentioned will not be easy. The political and social climate is at present not very receptive to the promotion of ethnic and cultural diversity, and certainly not receptive to the concept of multiculturalism. Australian society presents a situation of a multicultural society governed by a monocultural structure of social and political organisations. A monocultural 'fortress' is maintained in those 'core' institutions, built around a mythical 'mainstream' or what is referred to as the 'core' population. As long as this situation continues, the cultural divide will continue its negative effects on Australian society.

As Polish-Australian citizens who are concerned about the future of this country as a multicultural society in which we can preserve our distinct identity, we have an active role to play to ensure that such a future becomes a reality. It is only through this approach that we can also ensure that we do not become neglected in the provision of appropriate social welfare services to our community.

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Chapter 5

Managing an Ethnic Welfare Agency

A Case Study of APCS from a Personal Perspective

Elizabeth Drozd

Director, Australian Polish Community Services

In 1991, when my involvement with the Australian-Polish Community Services commenced, I was a lone worker employed by this agency. We have come a long way in terms of our development. A critical element in this development was the 1993 conference which was a watershed in the development of the Polish community (Drozd & Cahill 1993).

Today, the Australian-Polish Community Services (APCS), employs eight full-time and 52 part-time staff. In addition to that, our work is supported by 46 volunteers. On average, the agency receives 10,000 client inquiries and requests for assistance annually. The majority of these requests come from older persons who seek information about services, require practical assistance in their daily living and ask APCS to be the go-between them and other service providers. Requests for assistance in writing or explaining business letters, seeking compensation from Germany and for advocacy are also common. Younger clients seek our assistance with finding employment, and dealing with immigration and family matters. Many of our clients are in difficult financial situations due to being on disability pensions and often require extra funds sometimes to just simply get by from week to week. Amongst APCS's clients are those who are unemployed and do not receive any Centrelink benefits because they are not eligible for them in the first two years of their arrival in Australia. These are sometimes some of the most difficult cases, along with clients not having enough money for food. Some

Polish migrants continue to have difficulty in communicating in English and APCS is often asked to organise English-language classes, especially in the southern and eastern areas of Melbourne. In recent times, APCS has also begun assisting three other eastern European groups and offers personal care to non-Polish service providers on a fee-for-service basis. All of the above-mentioned clients and their requests are given our utmost attention in offering information and providing immediate support and action.

APCS's achievements to date are a cause for celebration. We have played a key role in the planning, developing and provision of services. We have rightly been concentrating our efforts on services for older people. Our success to-date has been possible due to the funding provided by the relevant State and Commonwealth departments and other funding organisations. APCS acknowledges the support given by the Commonwealth Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs through the Community Settlement Services Scheme program. It is through this program that we have been able to work on service development, agency management, and assistance to clients, including new Polish migrants. Today, we also wish to thank the State Department of Human Services, in particular for supporting our proposals regarding meeting the needs of the Home and Community Care target group within the Polish community. This includes provision of a day care program in Geelong, a highly valued HACC Access program which has almost state-wide coverage and, recently, the appointment of a Polish-speaking missionary sister to the Polish Older Outreach Program, a move which has been so welcomed by Polish older persons. Our appreciation also goes to the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing for the Community Aged Care Packages Program and a volunteer-based Community Visitors program for residential care facilities. We value all programs which we manage, regardless of size or duration of funding.

What have been the other factors that have contributed to the development? These can be summarised in the following way:

- good working relationships with funding bodies and fulfilment of contractual obligations, including service standards;
- highly competitive and well targeted applications for funding;

- partnerships with other ethnic welfare agencies, mainstream service providers, teaching institutions and, recently, the religious congregations;
- lobbying and networking with key decision-makers;
- committed and competent staff and volunteers;
- committee of Management that is supportive and not afraid to give staff autonomy; and
- use of community development principles in our work.

The Current Situation

APCS clearly needs to continue with the current service provision.

It is part of the Polish community infrastructure in Victoria and it is important to consider the situation of other Polish community organisations. Based on our contact with the community, we detect three aspects which need to be considered when we think of the future. These include:

- Polish community leaders being tired of doing voluntary work or simply being too unwell to continue with their responsibilities;
- the difficulty of recruiting new members for committees of management; and
- financial difficulties such as not having enough funds to cover the cost of running Polish community centres or to organise activities.

These are only some of the issues raised and discussed by Polish community groups. They are important because they indicate and reflect the changes that are occurring in Polish organisations and the Polish community as a whole. On the one hand, the foundation of very involved and experienced community leaders is aging and there are very few following behind them. On the other hand, new Polish migrants sometimes say they have an aversion to becoming members of organisations as a result of living in communist Poland, where they experienced pressure to join the Communist Party and its associated groups. As a result, one gains the impression that some Polish organisations are unsure of the future; they feel vulnerable or, as pessimists might say, they are falling apart or are approaching that point. This disintegration is typically associated with difficult situations involving quarrels, blaming each other and divisions.

However, the picture I have described of the Polish community would not be complete without mentioning the 30,000 Poles who have arrived in Australia in the last 20 years. I will now share with you some of the research of my postgraduate studies about the largest wave of Polish immigrants, which I undertook at RMIT University under the supervision of Prof. Desmond Cahill. (Drozd 1998)

After living in Australia for 20 years, these immigrants have come a long way in their settlement. This includes their English-language proficiency, occupational status, social support networks, and job and life satisfaction. These achievements did not come easily, they resulted from hard work, further education, compromises and utilisation of skills and knowledge which they brought with them. Also helpful was the range of support services available to them and the Australian policy of multiculturalism. The most difficult thing to cope with in the initial years of settlement for these immigrants was learning English and not being able to communicate in that language, yet it was essential to establishing their lives in Australia. As well, they experienced high levels of isolation and stress and missed their families in Poland. Their occupational adjustment was also difficult although with time many have regained their occupational status and now work in positions commensurate with their skills and qualifications.

Interviews were conducted with 60 Solidarity immigrants in the mid 1990s; only eight per cent frequently had difficulties in understanding English and another 16 per cent had difficulties occasionally. That means that 76 per cent of the second largest wave of Polish migrants can understand English well or very well. However, their written English proficiency was significantly lower – 34 per cent experienced difficulties often or very often and another 20 per cent sometimes. Just over half were especially interested in improving their written English skills. This difficulty with writing in English continues to be a significant one for those who have come to Australia in the last 20 years, including those who work as professionals. In other words, we have significant literacy problems in our community.

Not all have succeeded and many paid a price, such as marriage break-up, deterioration in health, unemployment, or no contact with families in Poland. Let me now give an example in which settlement was and continues to be difficult.

Case Study 1

Jan was a 43-year old male when he arrived in Australia in the early 1980s. Although upon arrival Jan had no knowledge of English, he had a good command of the English language at the time of the interview in 1994. He had technical qualifications as an electrician with 20 years' experience from Poland. These qualifications were recognised but he was not allowed to practise as an electrician in Australia because the relevant accrediting body believed that electrical work in Australia is different to that in Poland. Consequently, he undertook and completed an electrician's course at TAFE of two and a half years' duration. Following this, he worked as an electrician with the railways for five years, then had two other jobs as an electrician, totalling four years employment. He then decided to work for himself – a dream he had since his arrival in Australia as a result of having had a successful business in Poland. He set up his own business as an electrician and for the last two years has been self-employed. Jan believed that while he remained self-employed, the sky would be the limit with regard to the amount of hours he would be able to work. Unfortunately, Jan's income has been low due to limited availability of work, and as a result the then Department of Social Security supplemented his income with an unemployment benefit.

In 1991, Jan's wife died suddenly. He lives in the southern part of Melbourne, an area that has been badly affected by the 1990s recession and has high levels on unemployment. Jan lives in a house with his two children, his mother-in-law and his sister-in-law. Jan's case was one of, if not the saddest, that the interviewer came across. The willingness to work was so strong, yet forces out of his control kept his dream, and life satisfaction, out of reach. Even worse, because of his age, it seemed that Jan's situation was unlikely to improve. In December last year, Jan contacted our office to ask for emergency relief and continues to be in a difficult situation.

The Future

Based on this research and on our APCS experience, I would like to offer some suggestions as we ponder, the first years of the new century, "where to now?"

- APCS and its equivalent organisations in other States need to continue the current service provision and consider other settlement gaps, involvement of the more

recent migrants, the issue of young people, and provision for the future leadership of the community.

- Service providers and government departments need to be aware that a percentage of Polish migrants require assistance in their settlement, including some of those who have been here for ten or twenty years.
- There continues to be a strong need to provide English-language learning opportunities, including written English, one-to-one conversation, and English grammar.
- Given the impact of unemployment and underemployment on a person's life, relevant departments, employment agencies and Polish organisations need to make a special effort to offer help in this area.
- The community needs to initiate strategies that will attract greater involvement in the welfare of the community – 2002 was the International Year of Volunteering and we need to promote the concept and benefits of voluntary work.
- Discussions within Polish organisations need to be intensified, regarding their aims, current difficulties and ways of preventing and resolving them.
- 2002 could be considered the 20th anniversary of the largest number of Poles to arrive in Australia. It would be beneficial to organise a celebration of what the migrants of the 1980s have achieved.

There is no doubt that the Polish community, despite its specific difficulties, is capable of finding solutions. We have strengths and are an important group within multicultural Australia. Together, with support from the relevant Australian state and federal departments and other organisations, we can think about our future full of hope and peace.

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Chapter 6

A Demographic Analysis of the Polish Community

Current Demographic Characteristics and Implications for Service Delivery

Marek Grzelinski

Australian Polish Community Services

Polish Population in Australia

According to historical sources (Paszkowski, 1987) the first Pole arrived in Australia 200 years ago. The first official record of Polish settlers – the 1921 Census – put their number at 1,800 at that time. A substantial expansion of immigration from Poland to Australia however, took place after WWII in three waves. During the period 1947-1954 the Polish-born population in Australia increased from 6,600 to 56,000, the bulk of whom were the so-called Displaced Persons.

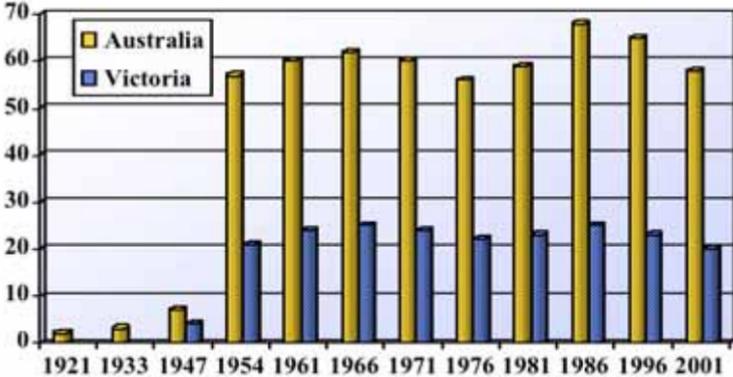
The second wave arrived in Australia in the late 50s to early 60s, mostly as a result of family reunion, and in response to a temporary relaxation of emigration policy in Poland. Consequently the post-war settlement peaked in the mid 1960s at 62,000, and then by the mid 1970s declined to 56,000 as a result of deaths and returnees.

After 1980, Polish immigration to Australia increased again with the third wave of 22,000 Poles arriving between 1981 and 1991. At the 1986 Census there were 71,200 Polish-born persons living in Australia, the highest number ever. By 1996, this number has again declined to 65,119 – of this number, 38.9% were aged over sixty-five. Followers of Judaism totalled 7.8%, while 79.7% were Roman Catholic and 5.5% had no religion. The second generation group with at least one parent born in Poland numbered 55,497.

Since then the Polish population has been on the decline. Some died, some went back to Poland after the return to the democracy in

the early 1990s. The latest Census (2001) puts the number of the Polish-born population in Australia at 58,000, which suggests a very declining trend for the first generation of Poles, in fact an 11% decrease.

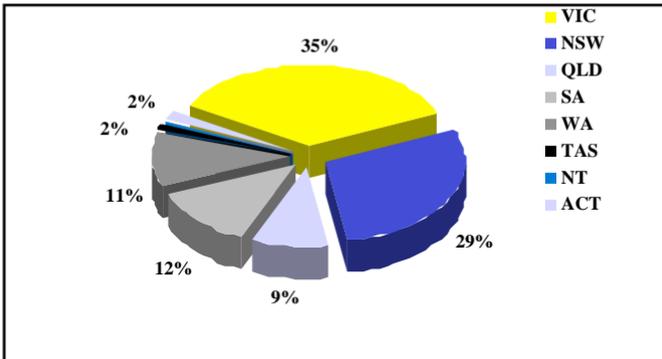
Table 1: Polish-born population in Australia



Polish Population in Victoria

Across Australia at any given time of settlement 35% of Poles lived in Victoria, followed by New South Wales (29%). The remaining 30% settled in South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland, a small number choosing ACT, Tasmania and Northern Territory.

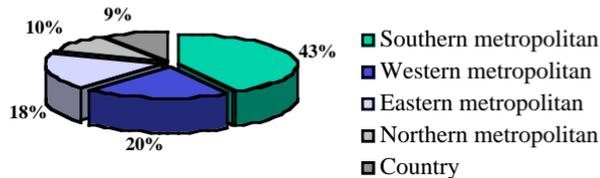
Table 2: Polish population by state (2001)



Melbourne has the largest number of Polish-born residents of all the capital cities (18,500, *i.e.* nearly one-third of the total Polish population in Australia). The highest concentrations are in the western region (4,000) – mainly around Sunshine (2,000) – and in the southern region (8,600) – mainly around St Kilda and Caulfield (3,600), where it is estimated that more than half of that number are people of Jewish background. Dandenong (1,300) proves the most popular outer suburban area, whilst Geelong has the largest number of Polish-born people (750) outside the metropolitan area, followed by the La Trobe Valley (200).

an half of that number are people of Jewish background. Dandenong (1,300) proves the most popular outer suburban area, whilst Geelong has the largest number of Polish-born people (750) outside the metropolitan area, followed by the La Trobe Valley (200).

Table 3: Polish population in Victoria (2001)



Polish Ageing Population

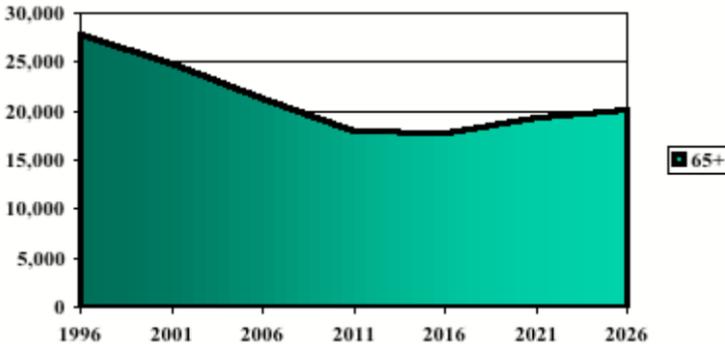
The Polish persons aged 65 years and over (8,200) account for 41% of the whole Polish-born population in Victoria. Fifteen years earlier that age group represented only 25% of the total Polish population. In the rural areas this proportion is alarmingly high, nearing 60%. It is believed that the proportions are similar in other states as well.

Table 4: Polish ageing population in Victoria (2001)

	Southern	Western	Eastern	Northern	Country	TOTAL
TOTAL	8,627	4,050	3,759	2,100	1,864	20,400
AGEING	3,643	1,497	1,218	825	1,092	8,275
% ageing	42%	37%	32%	39%	59%	41%

These figures make the Polish ageing ethnic community the third biggest CALD group after the Italians and the Greeks, and show clearly that the Polish population in Australia is rapidly ageing. The number of Polish persons in the frail age category, *i.e.* aged 75 and over, is now at its peak, which is expected to continue at least until 2006. This means, of course, a strong – and growing – demand for health and welfare services and supported accommodation for the aged.

Table 5: Projection for aged (65+) Polish population in Australia



Access to Welfare, Age-related Services

Australia has a very well-developed system of social support delivered by thousands of various service providers. Their objective is to help older people, people with disabilities, and their carers.

Some people choose, or, due to their condition, are obliged to use residential care, which is available in the form of retirement villages, hostels or nursing homes.

Still, most older persons prefer to remain in their own homes for as long as possible. For some, at a certain stage, entirely independent living cannot be continued without assistance from community health and service providers, such as local governments, community health services, hospital networks, disability services and non-government organisations. Their services include:

- Home and Community Care;
- Community Aged Care Packages;
- Planned Activity Groups (previously called Adult Day Activity and Support Services);
- Respite Care Services;
- Friendly Visiting Program (also called Social Support);
- Telelink; and
- an extensive range of services developed to meet a variety of special needs.

On average about 15% of aged Australians use these services. Statistics produced by government departments show, however, that only 5% of Polish older persons take advantage of any form of support. This striking inequity is particularly alarming in view of the fact that more than 40% of Polish people over the age of 65 live at home alone, and as much as 57% live on an income of less than \$300 per week.

So why does such a relatively small proportion of Polish older persons use social support services? The reasons for this can be found in the characteristics of the “first wave” of the post-war immigration, which consists largely of the Displaced Persons, taken in their youth by the Nazis to concentration camps and forced labour, separated from their families – often never re-united – and deprived of a chance of formal education. On arrival in Australia, they usually had no option but to take up menial, low paid jobs, and relied on mutual support within the Polish community, which further restricted their opportunity of learning the language. As a result, 44% of Polish older persons speak English “not very well or not at all”. The lack of fluency in English eroded their confidence and contributed to their social isolation and disorientation in the Australian system of social support, which makes it difficult for them to seek information, advice and help. Secondly, these people are very proud, and a hard life has taught them to be self-reliant. If anything, they might only expect help from their family, which, in many cases, they do not have.

Consequently they often refuse to accept help until crisis point is reached.

Understandably, an ever-growing overall demand for support services within the total Australian community puts pressure on the ageing Poles to compete with others for access to limited support services.

APCS and the Polish Aged

Australian-Polish Community Services (APCS) Inc., for the 20 years of its operation, has sought to assist individuals and groups within the Polish community who are in need of help. During that time APCS has demonstrated a great commitment to – and experience in – the provision of aged care for members of Polish and, more recently, associated Eastern European communities. Over the years it has developed a range of services including Community Aged Care Packages, Planned Activity Groups, Community Visitors Scheme, Social Support, information, referral and advocacy, community settlement services, carers support groups and emergency relief program.

Through its programs, APCS identifies and addresses the needs of the Polish community, particularly those of older and frail people. The bureau employs 15 office staff, plus a number of care workers and volunteers. The office is based in Footscray, with outreach services in Geelong and Dandenong, and has a well-established infrastructure which allows it to extend services to its clients at no additional cost (other than direct care costs).

It is expected that, along with other Polish organisations, APCS will continue its efforts – particularly in the next few years of the demographic peak of the Polish aged – to bridge the gaps in inequities and to facilitate access to services that are available within the service system for older persons, people with disabilities and their carers.

Recommendations

The first decade of the 21st century has presented the Polish community in Australia with an enormous challenge of becoming one of the first ethnic groups to reach peak demand for aged services. APCS has recognised that challenge, exacerbated by the overall increasing pressure on resources. In 2001, in cooperation with Jenny Ashby & Associates, multifaceted statewide consultants, a 10 Year

Polish Aged Care Plan was developed that identified key-issues, set priorities and recommended strategies to enable the proper care for rapidly increasing numbers of Polish older persons in Victoria.

APCS acknowledges:

- the need for focus on support services for older people living at home;
- the need for appropriate dementia care support services for Polish clients;
- the primary importance of carers in their selfless work;
- under-utilisation of Home and Community Care and Residential Aged Care services; and
- the need for stronger support for rural older Polish persons in Victoria.

The strategies for 2001-2011 outline four ways of dealing with these issues. These are

Advocacy

Partnership

Service system resourcing

Direct service delivery

The strategies have already been put into action.

Advocacy

Since the inception of this idea, APCS has created a position of Aged Services Officer that focuses on provision of information, assistance and advocacy for the Polish elderly, people with disabilities and their carers, in order to improve their access to relevant services. There is a continued need for promotion and lobbying for public and government attention, and for direct approaches and information through publications, brochures and attendance at conferences.

Partnerships

New partnerships are being formed with other service providers to enable Polish clients to better utilise available services. Existing partnerships need to be developed further, especially in the area of dementia, carer support and palliative care.

Service System Resourcing

Service system resourcing takes the form of educational publications, articles, radio interviews and meetings with groups of Polish older

people, aimed at explaining the system of community services. The emphasis is also on resourcing from other agencies. Programs that are designed to overcome the isolation that debilitates older people, especially in rural and remote areas, need to be developed.

Direct Service Delivery

In partnership with relevant service providers APCS needs to promote a more attractive option for residential aged care to enable people to remain at home. In partnership with service providers it hopes to explore ways to better provide services to the Polish elderly in reducing isolation, providing Polish cuisine, home maintenance support, carers respite, palliative care, *etc.*

Let's meet the challenges of this decade with confidence and determination to make a difference.

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Chapter 7

Delivering Aged Care Services to the Polish Community

The Role of the Victorian Government

Gavin Jennings

Victorian Minister for Aged Care

As the Victorian Government Minister who has responsibility for Aged Care, I want to outline the government's approach to service delivery, how it may impact upon your community, and to acknowledge the important work that you have done, particularly in relation to aged care and your comprehensive ten-year strategy plan, for which I congratulate the Australian Polish Community Services. I look forward to the start of an engagement and a dialogue that will lead to a very productive relationship between the Victorian government and APCS.

The Victorian government is deeply committed to enriching Victoria's cultural diversity. In its October 2002 statement, it celebrated the fact that Victoria's cultural, economic and political life has been invigorated and sustained by successive waves of immigration that provide an outstanding example of the positive effects of cultural pluralism. Today with over 40 per cent of Victorians having either been born overseas or having at least one parent born overseas, the State of Victoria is one of the world's most culturally and linguistically diverse societies. We believe that this diversity is one of the state's greatest strengths, and we are determined to maximise the advantages that it presents for all Victorians. The Victorian community is made up of citizens from an estimated 233 countries, 181 languages are spoken in the homes around Victoria, and 116 religions are actively practised. I want to contextualise the major issues confronting us as a multicultural community in terms of aged

care, including the issues facing your community, and the interconnectedness between the active participation of the Polish community in aged care and the role that we may play together as community-focussed departments of the Victorian government in order to improve the quality of life of older members and of the Poles in the Victorian community.

Our diversity is an important consideration in the formulation of government policies, programs, and the delivery of services. *Growing Victoria Together*, which identifies the government's achievements and its priorities for the next ten years for achieving economic, social and environmental benefits for all Victorians, includes promoting rights and respecting diversity. Cultural diversity based upon respect is the glue that binds our society and enriches us, both as individuals and as a community. By valuing diversity, reducing inequality, encouraging participation in an inclusive society, and promoting the social, cultural and economic benefits of diversity for all Victorians, a progressive state will be ensured.

We have an obligation as your government to respond to the needs that are underpinned by the differences in terms of cultural expectations, the languages and the range of the demographic make-up within each of those communities. And, in fact, the government has an active agenda that underpins all our programs to recognise the rights of all persons to participate in the mainstream of service delivery and to make sure that all those mainstream services are accessible to every Victorian citizen. And, particularly in your case, members of the Polish community in Victoria. We have insisted on having close-checking systems within government programs to actively monitor and evaluate the degree of access and to ensure that there are not perpetuating systemic pockets of disadvantage, either geographically or in terms of ethnically based disadvantage in the targeting of government programs. We are always very keen to hear where we have fallen short. We have a specific requirement of all departments, and all programs have accountability measures in place in terms of diversity and access and equality.

We want to ensure that gradually there occurs a fundamental shift in terms of tolerance, acceptance and understanding of cultural diversity, especially in times of crisis such as after September 11. During that dangerous time, government-commissioned television

advertisements underpinned the cultural diversity of Victoria and the fact that it is an enriching aspect of our lives. Providing that foundation for tolerance is an important underpinning of our governance. In terms of taking specific action, we have language services to make sure that people have the appropriate access. Our government has increased the contact hours over the last three years by more than two and a half million contact hours of English as a second language in TAFE institutes and adult centres across Victoria, in order to provide a better foundation of access to everyday community life. I should hope to hear that in the added commitment of two and half million extra hours, members of the Polish community have been beneficiaries of that effort.

In terms of specific mechanisms that the government has established in the last three years, a number of advisory bodies that augment the work of the Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs were established. These have indeed built on the work of the Victorian Multicultural Commission. We have specific programs to make sure that there are job creation schemes that assist communities, valued at \$6.5 million. The Polish community is not part of this program, and it needs to take the initiative in becoming involved.

In terms of aged care, the aged structure of the Polish community now and in the future is well-known. Overall within the Victorian population, over the next twenty years, we anticipate that one quarter of Victoria's population will be over 60 whereas the current figure for the Polish-born population is already about 40 per cent, presenting an acute situation. There are some serious pressures that we have to deal with in terms of providing home based care and residential care in the future, and dealing with the threats posed to a healthy, viable lifestyle. In 2003, our government published a document about promoting an active and healthy lifestyle for all senior Victorians, including the members of your community. In fact, on average 93 per cent of people over 60 maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Only 7 per cent of the older population is in need of residential or intensive care. In Victoria about 75 per cent of people over the age of 60 live in their own homes. Within that framework, there are many older people doing much voluntary work, including within the Polish community. People over the age of 55 spend an average of 100 hours per year on voluntary work. This demonstrates a need or wish for the capacity to have an ongoing working life. In fact one challenge before

us is to provide the organisational capacity to actually support those volunteers, and for people to continue to make a useful contribution in their life, as they grow older. These are the more exciting and proactive aspects in making sure that people have the opportunity to do volunteer work, and to be able to provide sport, cultural or recreational opportunities in the future and for them to make a contribution back to their community.

So indeed our major focus over the next few years will include a commitment to strengthen the level of state and Commonwealth collaboration, particularly in relation to residential aged care places and appropriate funding for the aged care assistance program. A priority will be to improve the continuity of care between the acute and sub-acute hospital systems. We need to ensure that people who have experienced acute and subacute care return home, where there is an appropriate level of home based care. My desire to improve home based care will be an essential part of the story.

In terms of the home and community care program, in Victoria about 15 per cent of older people take up those services that the state and Commonwealth jointly together with local government provide. Within your community, the figure is about five per cent. This implies that the take-up rate within the Polish community is only about a third of the overall rate. Together, the government and the Polish community need to address this issue.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge the significant role that APCS has played in providing services for the Polish community, and the leadership role that it has played in providing advice to government about the way in which we should focus on the needs of your community, within itself and as it interrelates with a diverse range of communities. I congratulate you on the ten-year plan and I note the important advocacy role. I am aware of the quality of the work that has happened so far and I look forward to the work we will do together in the future.

Community Perceptions

WOMEN, YOUTH, RELIGION

Chapter 8

Priorities for the Polish Community

Krystyna Misiak

President, Federation of Polish Women in Australia and New Zealand

At the end of World War II in June 1945, the western powers – the British Empire and the United States – withdrew their support of the Polish government in London and transferred it to the communist Temporary National Unity Government in Warsaw. At that time, Poles in Western Europe, including Polish soldiers, were faced with the dilemma of whether to return to a Poland occupied by the Red Army or to remain in the west. The majority decided not to return and this was the beginning of Polish political migration. As a result several thousand Polish soldiers settled in Australia.

Polish political migration continued for 55 years, up to December 1990, when President Ryszard Kaczorowski gave to President Lech Walesa the insignia of the highest state office. From that moment, Polish political migration ceased. We are not a large group, in size we are behind other ethnic groups in Australia, but we are respected by our adopted homeland. After living in Australia for many years, we are familiar with the country we live in, its values and achievement and the things we are grateful for. We are aware and proud of the enormous contributions made by Polish migrants to the development and transformation of their country of settlement.

Only several thousand elderly comprise the political migrants whose number diminishes every year. Their Australian-born children are also able to take advantage of the benefits this country offers. They contribute to and are part of Australia's wealth.

The Polish generation born here will be Australian, and that's why we must pass onto our children our culture and traditions. The reason for it is simple – we are one of the ethnic groups which easily assimilates and this needs to be resisted.

If we can demonstrate our presence as a close ethnic group, then future generations will benefit. Our strength will be our identity, reinforced by the values of the country we live in – provided that this is what we want, and that our Polish organisations will survive and will be able to meet the needs of our Diaspora.

The reason for the continuing existence of the Polish community should be to ensure the possibility of future cultural exchange. There are aspects of Polish culture that are worth communicating to the network of Australian cultural communities. In maintaining our traditions, we are ensuring the continued enrichment of the wider Australian community.

We need a convincing vision and a healthy concept: what is our goal? What do we want to retain? What is it that we want to achieve? Which organisations or individuals need our assistance as a priority? Our instinct to remain Polish is not sufficient. To achieve our goals we need commitment and funds – our funds, those of our foundations and funds which we as an ethnic community can access and receive from the Australian government.

Vital in this process, is the need to support existing organisations such as: the Polish Scouting Association, the Polish Educational Society, Polish schools and University departments, Polish parishes, the Polish Women's Associations, seniors' clubs, the Polish Cultural Society, radio committees, "Tygodnik Polski", the Polish Festival, and "POL ART" (a 1975 initiative of the Federation of Polish Women's Associations in Australia and New Zealand). We must support our artists, their concerts, their works, Polish Folkloric Ensembles, theatres, choirs, Polish community centres (Domy Polskie), sports clubs and other Polish organisations. Can we achieve this? One thing is certain – we need good leaders, we need representation at government level, we need a Polish lobby, we need our next generation to become involved in Polish organisations and we need to support Polish diplomatic posts in maintaining the good name of Poland and Poles.

The Polish community is an ageing community. Many of our aged members have had difficult experiences, tragic at times, but at the same time they have experienced great satisfaction through their achievements. They have established Polish organisations, built community facilities, churches, orphanages, Polish language schools, theatres, choirs, folkloric ensembles, ex-servicemen's associations and

scouting associations. Polish women played a vital role in the community's developments, particularly those who were involved in Polish Women's Associations. They organised and continue to organise assistance for Poles living in Poland and the former Soviet Republics. They care for the aged in our community, the isolated, the infirm, those in hospitals and residential facilities. Often they take on the role of chairperson of folkloric ensembles, Saturday schools and other organisations. They are the pillars of the family – they teach their children Polish and Polish history, they maintain traditions and Polish culture abroad.

In Australia we have created “a Poland outside of Poland” – it is with this motto that the Polish soldiers arrived from London to settle in Australia. They promoted Polish culture. No-one assisted them – the Polish Peoples' Republic was only interested in breaking up Polish migrant communities.

And now, after Poland has regained her independence, the lack of interest of Polish government in Poles abroad is noticeable – there is a lack of cultural exchange, lack of teaching resources designed for teaching Polish as a second language, lack of assistance for the aged, particularly to those who fought for the freedom of the motherland. Our community is a lot poorer than some other ethnic groups, such as the Italians and Greeks who maintained contact with the government in their homeland.

Australians of Polish background are the children of Poles who arrived in Australia over half a century ago and it is our responsibility, particularly the responsibility of Polish women – mothers and wives – to pass on Polish traditions and culture, its benefits and its roots in European history. We must pass it on in such a manner, so that the next generation will not only talk about it, but practice it. This can be achieved, in part, through youth exchanges between Poland and Australia. As migration from Poland has been drastically reduced, it is up to us and our families to ensure that we maintain our culture and language in Australia. In particular, Polish organisations need to remember this. Yes, we need to assist the aged. We are grateful to all those who provide assistance to them and those who provide the funds to do so. We also need to care about the generations of Poles in Australia to come. If Australia is to remain a multicultural community then part of it must be Polish.

Chapter 9

Dreams and Aspirations of Polish Youth

Franek Nowicki

Secretary, Polish Youth Group – Polstar

Over the past few years, I have been involved in many aspects of the Polish community and more particularly the Polish youth of Melbourne. In this time I have shared my views, listened to other views, attended and organised a number of forums, and I have had a fair amount of exposure to Polish events and groups. In this essay, I would like to share what I have learnt, share the common views of a number of Polish youth and, finally, express some of my own opinions. Thus, I would like to start a discussion on the dreams and aspirations of the young people who are the future of the Polish community.

Young people generally lean towards the ideal of ‘living your dreams’ – to be young is to dream and to have aspirations. Due to the hard work and sacrifices of our forefathers, we have much more freedom to pursue our dreams. When talking about dreams and aspirations, I find it necessary to divide these into two further groups, namely personal and community. By discussing these individually, then examining how one affects the other we may arrive at a more rounded picture. At a forum a number of years ago entitled ‘Youth – Future and Fantasy’ we discussed our dreams. Over time, in my discussions with a number of people, I have been able to compile a list.

Financial security/wealth

Many of us have experienced financial struggle, and many of us have seen our parents work extremely hard, striving for better lives.

Good education and careers

This point is reflective of the first one. Our parents have worked hard, and sacrificed a lot to enable us to pursue further education, and aspire to the careers of our dreams. Also, very often youth like to pursue knowledge.

Travel

Many of us have seen the world through the media, but now we want to experience it for ourselves. We are particularly drawn to visit Poland, visit relatives there and experience first-hand the country of our forefathers.

Family

Some of us dream of settling down and starting a family.

Good times, good friends.

In the end, it seems that all we really want is to enjoy our lives in the company of good friends.

On the other hand, we discussed what our dreams are as a Polish community in Australia:

Greater links with Poland – Communication

We want to share our lives, ideas, and thoughts with Poland, with Polish youth. We want to feel a part of Poland, even if we are in a country very far away. This we hope to achieve through tools such as the internet, telecommunication, and – finances permitting – travel to Poland.

To be more 'out there'

By this we mean to be more of a presence in the Australian community – we want to share our culture with Australia.

Stronger links with local Polish youth – Unity

We want to unite young people of Polish background, living in Melbourne. Share our ideas, reflect on our traditions and have a good time.

Greater access to facilities for Polish youth

Part of the problem of getting together with other Polish youth has been choice of venue. We discussed that we would like greater access to venues and facilities – even perhaps a venue that can be predominantly ‘ours’.

Looking at these lists we can see that they are strongly linked – for instance, very often Polish Saturday school has helped Polish-Australian youth (even if only in a small way) to further their overall education and careers. Good times and good friends can very often be traced back to our involvement in the Polish community. The desire for unity among the Polish youth of Melbourne is frequently mentioned.

To realise some of these dreams, a number of us, with help from the Polish Community Council of Victoria (PCCV) and funding from the Blum Foundation, started a Polish youth organisation named ‘Polestar’. Our mission statement was simple, ‘to encourage cultural awareness and provide an establishment for the social benefit of Polish youth in Victoria’ (see website: www.polestar-oz.org). Over the last few years we have organised some excellent social and cultural events such as *Polana* camps, forums, and co-organisation of the Polish high school re-union in 2002. But where are we headed now? Some of the problems we have encountered are conflicts of personalities, lack of commitment, lack of time, a feeling that we can’t make a difference. One of the main problems with a youth organisation like ‘Polestar’ is vision – because we are a somewhat abstract, superficial organisation – in other words, what are we really here for? There are other youth-orientated organisations that actually have more substantial, physical outcomes, such as dance ensembles, where the goal is to perform at concerts and events, whilst providing a strong social environment. This is much the same with the scouts and soccer teams. On the other hand, there is another example – a group called ‘Polacy w Melbourne’ (‘Poles in Melbourne’ - www.polmelb.net) which functions as a purely social network with a website and chatroom, where Polish-Australian youth can share their lives and ideas in a candid environment. This group appears to be highly successful in maintaining contact between a network of friends.

Over the past few years the forums we, as an organisation, have run, have helped us to better understand ourselves. We held a forum

on 'Generation X', where we asked 'who belongs to this generation?' and discussed some of the similarities and differences between this generation and future (Generation Y) and past (Baby Boomers) generations. Last year we held a forum on 'The Language Barrier' and were able to discuss our proficiency in Polish, some of the problems we have speaking it, and how we use it. However, while some of us enjoy having a say, learning, discussing and debating, others will look at a forum and say 'I don't really care, what is it going to do for me?' Thus, it is always difficult to motivate youth towards something which doesn't seem to offer any substantial physical outcomes.

To a degree, I think the youth have lost some sense of pride in the community. Our dreams and goals, unfortunately, are becoming more self-centred, but why is this? Firstly, I don't think this is a problem facing only the youth but other age groups as well. Based on the fact that we are becoming more and more of a consumer society, we are preoccupied with our work, then, after our families and friends we have very little time for anything else. Secondly, some of us have come across people or organisations that have not been supportive, or organisations where we have seen or felt little progress or appreciation. Instead of striving for a common good we turn our attention to our personal lives, where we feel we have control and our hard work is rewarded.

Youth and community has always been an issue, and it is becoming more of one. Compared to our forefathers who migrated, many of us are proficient in English, we have our own social networks, and are fully self-sufficient in Australian society. A community nurtures and provides, but to what degree is it a necessity for young people? It is not a necessity, yet many of us are drawn to it. Reasons vary, but seem to circulate around the sense of kinship we feel among other Poles of our age.

At this point, being a Polish-Australian youth myself, I would like to speak of my dreams and aspirations. On a personal level, I dream of what most Polish youth dream of – a good education, an enjoyable career, financial security, and a fulfilling life with family and friends. As far as the Polish community is concerned, I would like to see a stronger sense of unity, friendship and service. I would like to see the Polish-Australian youth embrace their Polish heritage whilst striving to build a better Australia, and a better Polish community in Australia. I am very proud of my Polish heritage, but I am also very proud to be

part of Australia, and grateful to the Australian community for contributing to what I have. I would like to see more Polish youth showing a greater sense of pride in being Polish, more depth of understanding with regard to the history, culture and language of Poland. I aspire to be a better Australian, a better Pole and to contribute positively to these communities.

In conclusion, I think that to understand the young people of Polish heritage in Australia we have to reach out more, keep on discovering what it is that the youth want and need, provide opportunities for expression, and re-think the way we perceive the community. To reach this end, I believe that we need a number of youth and a number of more senior-members of the Polish community, to discuss, debate and keep on building – no matter how slowly – a greater sense of community among the Polish-Australian youth of Melbourne and around the world. If anybody has any initiatives, ideas or suggestions, I would be very glad to hear them.

Finally, how can I describe the Polish youth of Melbourne? I think we are a group of dreamers, we aspire to meet our dreams and we work hard at attaining them.

Chapter 10

A Religious Ministering to the Polish Community

Wieslaw Slowik

Most of us here will remember the first year of our new life in Australia. We recall the uncomfortable sense of being different and lost in this new and unknown world. We could not communicate, and everything around us was strange. The only real and accessible link with the outside community was our faith.

A Membership in the Catholic community – writes John Paul II in his recent Message for the 89th World Day of Migrants – is not determined by nationality or ethnic origin, but essentially by faith in Jesus Christ and Baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity. The cosmopolitan make-up of the People of God is visible today in practically every local Church because migration has transformed even small and formerly isolated communities into pluralist and inter-cultural realities.

The Anglo-Celtic Catholic Church of Australia saw the new arrivals: Italians, Croats, Hungarians and indeed Poles as a gift and a challenge. However, the newcomers, who had survived the war or escaped persecution, saw that this Anglo-Celtic Church of Australia proclaimed the same faith, administered the same sacraments and celebrated the same Holy Mass. Therefore, the Catholic Church was their first and often their only familiar link with their lost home. It was a real anchor in their new land. That is the reason why so many of us in the early fifties and eighties flocked to the churches so often. Not only to meet people, to make friends or to find the information or help we needed, but also to reinforce our sense of belonging. The Church was important to all immigrant groups, not just to Poles.

In the Census of 1954 over 30% of persons born overseas and settled in Victoria were Catholic. Likewise, in 1961, Catholics formed 37% of those born overseas. In his History of the Catholic Church in

Victoria, Fr Bourke writes that, providentially there were some priests amongst the migrant national groups who had suffered with their own people; they have been uprooted from their homes and banned from returning, especially to communist dominated countries. Other priests were sought abroad and volunteered to serve their countrymen in Australia. Many of the migrant chaplains were unsung heroes; some of them had already suffered much ill-treatment, yet they were found faithfully at work in the transit camps and on construction sites in rough country. They had a slow and often painful journey to being recognized as migrant chaplains and to receive proper faculties and the support of the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

Most people are convinced that Poland is a Catholic nation and that few Polish people belong to any other faith or denomination. This could be true in Poland but according to the Atlas of Australian People in Victoria, based on the 1996 census, only 67% of Polish born settlers in our state are of the Catholic faith. Almost 16% percent profess Judaism and 1.5% are Seventh-Day Adventists. The religion of the remaining 16% is not specified, but it is likely that these described themselves as non-religious.

According to the 1996 Census, almost fifteen thousand Polish born Catholics now live in the archdiocese of Melbourne. Many others were born in Germany, or elsewhere, of Polish parents. Most would see themselves as Polish. If we add their children and grandchildren, we arrive at about forty thousand people of Polish background living in the two hundred and fifty Catholic parishes of Melbourne. The number of Polish people is decreasing as immigration dries up, many have died, older Poles return home and younger people seek a better life in Poland.

Each Sunday in the archdiocese of Melbourne some three thousand Polish people attend Polish language Masses. They are celebrated in twelve local parishes and two Polish centres. These Sunday liturgies form the largest and most regular gathering of Polish people in Melbourne.

The Polish community is richly served by its chaplains. For example the Polish, Filipino and Croatian communities are of about the same size. However, there is only one full time Filipino chaplain and four Croatian chaplains, while there are ten full time Polish chaplains. Only a few are supported by the archdiocese, and none by

the Government. Most of them have to rely on the support of their congregations.

All ten full time Polish chaplains in the archdiocese of Melbourne belong to three religious orders and live in five religious communities that play an important role in the pastoral and cultural care for the Polish Community. The chaplains themselves participate in the life of most Polish social, cultural and youth organisations in Victoria. They also contribute to most of the Polish Saturday Schools and to the Polish media.

In the *Encyclopedia of the Nation, Its People and Their Origins*, beautifully edited by Dr James Jupp, Professor Jerzy Smolicz sees the Polish culture in Australia demonstrated in the extensive contribution of the Polish Catholic clergy to the spiritual and cultural needs of the Polish-Australian community, as well as to Australian religious life in general. Members of religious orders have carried out the bulk of this activity. The work of such orders, although primarily concerned with catering for religious needs, has undoubtedly helped to maintain the Polish language through its use in services. Polish Catholic customs and devotions have proved to be not only of religious significance, but relevant to culture generally.

The importance of Christian faith in the life of the Polish people was vividly shown in the jubilee celebrations of the Black Madonna, the icon of Czestochowa. They were held on 8 May 1983 in St Patrick's cathedral and in Dallas Brooks Hall. At the end of the impressive concert to mark the occasion, Sir Francis Little, the archbishop of Melbourne spoke to over two thousand Polish participants. He said,

“How beautiful it would be to Mary, our Mother that this special honour is paid on Mothers Day”. In the parish, where I said Mass this morning, I spoke of my own mother. However, you have plunged me into a mystery far more beautiful, far more enduring, one in which, together as a family, we can recognize the one Mother. I met a beautiful Polish lady outside this hall this afternoon. She said, ‘It does not matter I am Polish, it does not matter you are Australian. We are Catholic’. That dimension counts far more than any national divisions. Therefore, I thank you. I hope that what you have presented here so beautifully will be for you and for me a prophetic example of what could happen to our Nation, which we form together now. You showed us, that what we need today in this country and in every

country of the world is what you have demonstrated to us today – a spiritual summit. Religious education is an effort to unite faith and culture, and faith and life. You have shown us through this afternoon that you are profoundly educated religiously. Religion is not separated from a culture. It is one and the same and it gives new dimensions and new heights and new visions to your culture. It is not just secular; it is profoundly human. Moreover, it reaches to the heights that humanity can reach. And may I conclude by saying these words as archbishop of Melbourne. May I join with you and with our Pope together saying and rededicating ourselves on this 600th centenary: ‘Mother, Totus Tuus, we are all yours’.”

Archbishop Frank Little, who was very dear to us, recognized the significant unity of religion and culture in the Polish soul. Poles never celebrate Easter without the customary blessing of baskets of beautifully decorated food. Blessed food is then shared and unites all the family. We bless homes at Christmas time, and walk in processions on the Feast of Corpus Christi. Many other Polish customs are partly religious and partly cultural. They have been developed over centuries and are very dear to the Polish soul. Ceremonies associated with death and mourning, and our prayers at cemeteries each first of November, are other powerful examples of the unity of the Polish culture and religion.

The relationship between the Polish community and the Australian church is sometimes misunderstood. Some Polish people would like to speak of a separate Polish Church linked with Poland, and would expect Polish Bishops to have some jurisdiction over them in Australia. However, there is no such thing as the Polish Catholic Church in Australia. There is only one Catholic Church, and one Bishop who is head of the local diocese or Church province, including its immigrant communities. Though we have Polish traditions, liturgies, language, customs and the Polish priests and nuns, we are really only a part of the local Australian Catholic Church.

The Australian Bishops Conference has encouraged the pastoral care of Polish Catholic immigrants through the Polish Catholic Mission in Australia and NZ. It was founded in 1953. The Rector who is head of the Mission is a sign of unity for the Polish chaplains and for the Catholic communities. He helps find new chaplains, represents their needs, organises occasional gatherings and conferences, and is ready to help, support and advise.

If we turn to Australasia as a whole, we find 45 Polish chaplains in Australia and New Zealand. They serve their people in 22 Polish Catholic Centres and celebrate the Eucharist in Polish in 75 local parishes. We have only four Polish churches, which are officially monuments rather than parishes. However, they function as parishes. Three of them are dedicated to Our Lady of Czestochowa (Sydney, Melbourne and Perth). The Adelaide church is dedicated to Saint Maksymilian Kolbe who died in Auschwitz. In Brisbane, the parish church of Our Lady, in Bowen Hills, was given to the Polish Community and for many years has served both the Polish and non-Polish parishioners.

All 45 Polish chaplains are members of different religious orders: 26 are members of the Society of Christ, 4 are Jesuits, 3 Franciscans and 3 Resurrection Fathers. Others belong to the Salvatorian, Dominican, Paulist and Divine Word congregations. Since 1952 three Polish womens congregations have worked among the Polish communities in Australia: first the Resurrection Sisters in Melbourne and Adelaide; later, the Sisters of Nazareth in Sydney, Perth and Brisbane, and most recently the Missionary Sisters of Christ the King in Hobart, Brisbane and Melbourne. They have helped spread the Gospel through their care for orphaned children after the War, then through schools, kindergartens, Saturday Schools, and also through their care for the aged and sick. I should mention here the development of the site purchased by the Polish community and religious sisters in the 1950s at Marayong in the West of Sydney. To celebrate the Polish Millennium in 1966, first the orphanage and a church were constructed, and then a whole complex was built. The orphanage became a part of the local school. A Special Accommodation Home and a huge village for the aged was next, then a nursing home with over 50 beds, a multi-functional Hall, a convent for nuns and a presbytery for the chaplain. Today, these, along with the Polish Marian Shrine and the Resurrection School in Essendon, are a source of pride to the whole Polish Catholic Community in Australia.

The growth of the Polish Catholic community can be seen in the Final Statement of the First National Convention on Pastoral Care in Multicultural Australia, organized by Scalabrinian Fathers fifteen years ago. It listed the Polish community as the fifth largest national group in the Catholic Church of Australia – after Italians, Irish, Croats

and Maltese, with 24 Polish chaplains. Today there are 45 Polish chaplains.

In the last ten years, too, almost 50 Polish priests have become pastors or assistants in the local Catholic parishes. Three are serving in the Military Ordinariat. Australian bishops, especially in remote dioceses of Western Australia, are keen to look to Poland to provide extra help in times of the shortage of local Australian clergy. Four Polish monks of the Paulist Fathers now live the monastic life near Sydney and the Gold Coast.

At the National Convention ten years ago, Professor Desmond Cahill summed up the image of the Polish community. He described it as the image of a community, conservative with a fundamentalist type of Roman Catholicism, somewhat closed in upon itself, but basically doing okay. He was probably right. Certainly, the majority of Polish chaplains are reluctant to introduce lay ministers, communion services, liturgical committees, modern liturgies, or general absolutions. They maintain the reverence and dignity of liturgical gatherings, because they see the need to provide some kind of a bridge between the church of Poland and Church of Australia, between the homeland of yesterday and the homeland of today. They recognise the gap between two cultures, which confronts all migrants. Many Polish people travel a long distance to come to the Polish Mass on Sunday. They pass by many beautiful Catholic churches and vivid liturgies. It is not their difficulty with English that makes them travel so far, but rather need for the familiar and meaningful which they find in the link between faith and their culture.

It is very difficult to imagine the Polish Community in Australia without Polish pastoral centres. It is likely that we shall see Mass and sacraments celebrated in Polish for a long time.

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Chapter 11

Ministering to the Polish Aged

Paula Szejder

I belong to the Order of Missionary Sisters of Christ the King for Polish people living abroad. Our Congregation was established by the Servant of God, Father Posadzy in 1959. The headquarters of the Congregation is in Poznan, Poland.

The mission of our Order includes every apostolic and religious activity, as well as, depending on needs and resources, welfare, and social and cultural support for “Polonia” (Polish people living outside of Poland), irrespective of their religion.

The motto of our Order, “Wszystko dla Boga i Polonii Zagranicznej” (“Everything for God and for Polonia”), aptly describes our goals, which are:

- promotion of infinite love of God among Polonia; and
- desire to sacrifice life, to forgo comfort, and to joyously devote all efforts for the good of Polonia.

Cardinal Hlond used to say: “On emigration Polish souls tend to perish”. So very true! Emigration, a phenomenon existing since the dawn of mankind, carries with it both the good and the bad. On one hand it may lead to one’s improvement of living standards and inner enrichment. On the other hand, it creates a serious risk of uprooting, isolation, exclusion and loss of previously professed moral and religious values.

Our Founding Father, whom I was fortunate enough to have met, was a man who was extremely sensitive to human suffering, and at the same time, full of optimism and worldly wisdom. He always taught us that prayer and sacrifice is the best way to fulfil our mission.

We, Missionary Sisters, bring God to the Poles in this foreign land. We try to help them appreciate and preserve the rich traditions of the Polish culture. We serve God to our neighbours as per the example set by our King, Jesus Christ who came down not to be served, but to

serve. Our lives are filled with work and prayer that intertwine. In order to work well and to be useful in the eyes of God and his people, one has to pray hard. Prayer is a force in our everyday faithful following in Christ's footsteps.

Our Sisters work where there are large concentrations of Poles around the world. Most of them work in the United States, since the American Polonia is the largest. Furthermore, the Sisters provide service in Canada, Brazil, England, Germany, Italy, Hungary and Australia. In recent years many Sisters have also gone to Belarus, in the east.

The Sisters perform tasks dictated by particular needs of the Polish communities abroad: they teach in schools, catechise children and youth, look after the sick and lonely, work in parish offices, perform functions of sacristans, organists, and various other tasks stemming from apostolic needs.

I have established a link with the Australian-Polish Community Services thanks to the rector of the Polish Catholic Mission, Father Wieslaw Slowik. I recall that once in conversation, he mentioned an resourceful director of the Bureau, Elizabeth Drozd and a well-functioning organisation under her management. I met with Ms Drozd and the President, Mr Bill Nowak. The situation developed rather quickly. The President met with the Mother Superior of our Order in Poland. This was followed by an exchange of correspondence between the Bureau and the Order. The result: Sisters based in Melbourne.

I now work in the Polish Older Persons Outreach Program. In my work today I use experience gained in Hobart, where I was involved in a similar program that we established seven years earlier.

My main task is to visit older people in their own homes, as well as in hospitals. We call this "friendly visiting". The word "friendly" implies a friend, *i.e.* someone you can always depend on, someone who will always find time and be more than willing to help. I try my hardest to uphold the expectations of this name, "friend", at the same time being fully aware of my smallness. I know that it would be a mistake to count entirely on my own strengths and skills. Time spent before the tabernacle gives me courage, for "I am able to do anything in the One who makes me stronger".

The scope of the program in which I am presently working is very flexible and responsive to the client's needs at that moment. The scope

of tasks I perform is extensive: from various domestic chores, personal care, assistance in correspondence, reading newspapers and information brochures aloud, shopping, assistance with transportation, and the payment of bills. In addition, I provide information on available social services and assist in obtaining access to these services. I provide clients with Polish audio-cassettes, as well as cassettes with recorded Sunday Mass, run memory therapy activities, and offer respite to carers. I also offer emotional and religious support, such as listening, counseling, praying together, Holy Communion, organising services at peoples home's, and many other tasks, which, whilst they might seem simple, are so important in their everyday lives. From my experience it is these things that often decide whether the client has a good or a bad day.

Our help may prevent unnecessary problems or stress, and if these occur, we try to help minimise the impact or rectify the issues which are its cause.

Faith and prayer play a significant role in the lives of religious people (and more than 90% of Poles are religious). People need to pray, and they draw joy from the fact that someone prays for their benefit, from the awareness that nothing happens without God's will. And God is Love. This helps them to endure the hardest times. In every suffering we can identify ourselves with some moment through the Way of the Cross of Jesus Christ. And yet, Jesus' Way of the Cross is a way of love and salvation, a way that leads us to true happiness. Realisation that there is no Jesus without the Cross and there is no Cross without Jesus, is a great way to help in overcoming even the biggest difficulties encumbered in life.

“God didn't promise
days without pain,
laughter without sorrow
or sun without rain.
But God did promise
strength for the day,
comfort for the tears
and light for the way.”

Through our lives we learn how to accept God's will, although that learning does not come easily to everyone. In the book of Job, one of the authors of the Holy Bible, we read: “If we know how to receive good from God's hands, why can't we receive the bad?”

Based on my experience of working among older people, the ill and those struggling with various problems, I can see how important it is for them to be listened to, to be counseled, to be noticed as individuals. There are moments when a person needs to talk to someone without fear that they will be judged or betrayed. It is important to be able to bare the soul, to exorcise the heavy burden or pain. Sisters inspire trust. People become confident that they can tell a Sister everything, and that the contents of their conversation will remain confidential, that it will not even be analysed by the Sister herself. Some call the conversation with us a “life confession”. Sometimes I do not know how I am able to help. But I listen intently. I feel the pain or burden, and take it to the tabernacle, to our Eucharistic God. There, where our words are inadequate, and deeds impossible, prayer appears to be the power.

Years of work among people of the so-called “third age” convince me that there is not enough information and interest pertaining to the elderly. And yet, old age – like youth – is just one of the stages in our lives. Saint Efreem the Syrian likened the human life to fingers of one hand, trying to explain that life is as short as the span of a hand, and that its consecutive stages differ from one another in the same way as the fingers. Every stage of life is important, very important. It has its merits, tasks and duties. But it also has its ups and downs, joys and sorrows.

“Youth is like the dawn – it passes quickly”, says Kohelet, the author of the Book of Wisdom of the Holy Bible. It is followed by other life stages. And finally come the older years, which Cicero called “the autumn of life” in analogy to the four seasons. Some contemporaries call it “the evening of life” or “the joy of dusk”.

My older clients often tell me that “God did a good job of everything, except old age”, or “One should not get old; one should rather die whilst in one’s prime”. But let us ask ourselves: Have your previous years been problem-free? Entering into the so-called “third age” should be considered a privilege. Not everyone is given a chance to cross that threshold. Those who have received from God the gift of time:

- have a chance to think over and assess their past;
- have an opportunity to do something useful for others;
- have time at last to pursue their own interests; plus

- an older being is often predestined to the role of a guru, a patron, and to share his worldly wisdom with the young.

In The Holy Bible we find many references to a positive attitude to older age. For instance Psalm 90 shows the older age as God's reward "I shall fill him with a long life and shall show him my salvation", whilst in the Book of Proverbs we read: "A grey hair is a decorative crown."

According to a psychologist, Carl Jung, "the most important task for a man is to catch up psychologically with the physiological line of life". It is therefore an important element in the life of an aging person to take a positive attitude towards older age, and to fully accept it. It is also important to be able to enjoy every day and treat it as a gift from God.

Lev Tolstoy, when he reached the age of 80, said allegedly: "I can now die, but I would like to live a little longer to do something useful."

I am glad that I can work with older people, and that – thanks to the Program created by the Australian-Polish Community Services – I have a chance to meet people, whom I can offer words of hope and a helping hand by understanding their heart, and to whom I can simply offer my time and abilities. May I take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the State Department of Human Services for providing Home and Community Care funds to support our work with Polish older persons.

One can add to Merton's words: "Nobody is a lonely island" the words: "We all want to live among friends."

Let's listen to Jill Wolf who explains the reason for creating friends:

"God made the world with a heart full of love,
then he looked down from the Heaven above,
and saw that we all need a helping hand,
someone to share with, who'll understand.

He made special people to see us through
the glad times and the sad times too,
a person on whom we can always depend,
someone we can call a friend.”

In my everyday meetings with Jesus I pray to be able to be a friend.
to have eyes that can see,
ears that can hear,
heart that can feel
and hands always ready to help.

Chapter 12

About the Polish Community in Victoria

George Lekakis

Chairperson, Victorian Multicultural Commission

As I'm sure you are aware, there are more than 20,000 Polish people in Victoria and more than 7,500 of these people are aged sixty-five and over. In fact, Polish elderly form Victoria's second largest ethnic elderly group.

According to the 2001 Census data, more than 30,000 Victorians claim Polish ancestry. Poles have certainly established themselves here in Victoria as a thriving and active community that continues to participate in the life of our State and contribute to our success as a multicultural society.

In excess of forty per cent of Victorians were born in another country or have at least one parent who was born overseas. Our population is made up of people from more than 208 different countries, speaking over 150 languages and celebrating more than 100 faiths.

About the VMC's Role with Government in Supporting Communities

I am pleased to be here today to speak about the Victorian State Government's policies and support programs for ethnic community organisations. Many amongst you will be familiar with my personal commitment to community services, having both served as a Director of a Migrant Resource Centre for 13 years and as Chairperson of our state's Ethnic Communities Council. With respect to the development of multicultural policy within the parameters of the current government and the role of the VMC, I would like to share a few observations with you. The Victorian Multicultural Commission's aim

is to deliver on its vision, that is, the commitment to our culturally rich and dynamic state. Victoria is Australia's most culturally diverse state and Melbourne is one of the world's great multicultural cities.

My aim is to ensure that, in Victoria, we adhere to our obligations to deliver appropriate policy and service responses to our multicultural communities. The VMC will promote and defend the benefits of multiculturalism because it represents who we are. That is, a harmonious, pluralistic, dynamic community drawing on the strength of its people. And there is a renewed sense that this is occurring across a wide spectrum of government agencies.

That is why I am pleased that the government will enact a Multicultural Affairs Act for Victoria. The legislation will recognise the social, cultural and economic contributions of multiculturalism to Victoria. It will enshrine a range of principles, and define roles and functions, including the reporting frameworks of government departments. The legislation will enshrine the government's role in Multicultural Affairs, incorporating the Whole-of-Government practices into legislation. Reform of my Commission will also be considered.

Thus far the Government also launched its *Valuing Cultural Diversity* Statement, which seeks to foster respect and harmony, reduce inequality, encourage participation and promote the benefits of our diverse community. These are important developments.

State Government Health Care Initiatives

It is no secret that Victoria's population is ageing. And the largest proportional increase is amongst those aged sixty-five and over, born in countries where English is not the first language. As these Victorians reach their frailer years they will depend more heavily on existing aged and health care services for support. The State Government's *Growing Victoria Together* framework is designed to ensure that responses to cultural diversity must form part of the mainstream of government administration and do so consistently.

Consequently, in 2002 we witnessed the emergence of some key initiatives in the service provision and programs for ethnic elderly in Victoria. In particular, recent health initiatives that have been implemented include:

- the reform of the Central Health Interpreter Service (CHIS);

- the appointment of representatives from a range of cultural backgrounds to the various health boards and government bodies such as the Community Support Fund, Drugs Advisory Committee and others;
- the establishment of the Human Services Ministerial Advisory Council;
- the adaptation of HACC programs for non-English speaking elderly;
- four and a half million dollars set aside to develop ethno-specific independent living units for older migrants; and
- the review and enhancement of language services.

VMC Grants Program

In recent years our funding for VMC grants has risen from \$750,000 to \$2.85 million. This boost in funding has enabled the VMC to develop three new categories for the Grants Program, which are underway this year.

These include:

- a Community Strengthening Program;
- Migrant and Refugee Women's Support Program; and
- Community Heritage Program.

I want to ensure that ethnic organisations are funded so that they can continue to fulfil their important role in our society. I want to ensure that our pioneers of ethnic backgrounds are finally acknowledged at our information bureaux across Victoria. I want to make sure that women from non-English speaking backgrounds have access to support networks and programs that vastly improve their access to all aspects of society. By strengthening our ethnic communities, creating and expanding VMC programs and ensuring the delivery of cultural diversity targets by government, we will be in a position to ensure that our diversity is better protected and better served.

In August 2002, Minister Thwaites also announced that through the Human Services Department, an extra \$354,000 would be injected directly into the community through the VMC's Grants Program for our senior citizens clubs. With this additional money, we have been able to double the funding to our senior citizen's groups and make it recurrent over a three-year period. Senior citizen's groups now receiving support from the VMC automatically receive a second

cheque each year and need not re-apply for a period of three years – the paper work is already done!

Conclusion

Last year my Commission funded more than thirty Polish community organisations, including Australian-Polish Community Services, for organisational support; your project “They have come a long way”; and twenty senior citizens groups. These organisations provide the necessary support and community strengthening mechanisms, and are in many ways the backbone of the Polish community in Victoria. These are worthy organisations and ones that the VMC is proud to support.

What I hope to have conveyed to you today is that the VMC is an integral link between our communities at the local level, government departments, other agencies and the Minister. The VMC will continue to endeavour to provide government with independent advice and to set the multicultural agenda for government to consider, especially where ethnic elderly support services and health care facilities are concerned.

I invite you all to contact the Victorian Multicultural Commission at 1 Treasury Place and keep me informed of your community’s needs. In conclusion, I’d like to thank the Polish Older Persons Lobby Group for this inspirational work.

Chapter 13

Quo Vadis, Polonia in Australia?

Desmond Cahill

It was more than ten years ago, that we gathered to consider the plight of the Polish community in Australia. Again, the Australian-Polish Community Services are to be thanked for bringing us together to reflect on the past ten years and to consider the future, an uncertain future, a globalising future. It was timely then, and it is timely again. The quality of the research and community papers has been high, and yet there was expressed this uncertainty about the future. The Polish community has some unusual features inasmuch as the first post-War wave who arrived mainly in the late 1940s and early 1950s was a wave not subsequently supplemented with any chain migration process. The second major wave arrived in the 1980s and exhibited very different social characteristics. It renewed the community, as well as substantially altering its profile. This has now become more obvious.

The 2001 census revealed that the Jewish component now constitutes only a very small portion of the Polish-born population. Thus, the statistics have become much easier to interpret. During the 1980s, the needs of the Polish community had been swamped by the needs of the larger Italian and Greek communities and by the diversion of resources to the arriving Vietnamese refugees. This, fortunately, changed during the 1990s, as focus shifted to the care needs of the Depression and WWII generation of Australians and, by extension, of the ethnic aged. The driving force behind the 1992 Polish community conference was the Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs, whose personnel had realised that the Polish community, with its growing aged care problem, needed to be focused upon. Its secretary of the time, Chris Conybeare, admitted at the 1992 conference that the Polish community had been neglected. In the intervening decade, much has been achieved. Government departments, both Federal and State, need to be thanked for the funding they have given, here in Victoria, to APCS and, to a

lesser extent, to the Polish Community Council of Victoria. And those Polish people who have worked long and arduous hours to make this achievable need to be thanked, including Bill Nowak, chair of the Australian Polish Community Services.

At the 1992 conference, I asked the question: *Why had the Polish community missed out in the allocation of resources? Why had the Polish community been the losers rather than the winners?* The Polish community are no longer the losers, and certainly in the area of aged care resources, their needs have been met, except in the area of residential care where the solution is not easy, due to the excessive reluctance of Poles to enter into residential care, especially hostel care.

In my analysis a decade ago, my answer to the question was, firstly, to focus on the residual refugee mentality which Professor Jupp has today outlined in more depth than I did. As Roland Sussex and Jerzy Zubrzycki said in 1985, "Many resented Australia. Probably all, to different degrees, yearned to return to Poland. This refugee mentality dominated their early years in Australia and, in some cases, has never been overcome." (Sussex & Zubrzycki 1985: 7) My second area of consideration was the lack of communication patterns within the community which focused on the second-generation group, and their failure to involve themselves in the affairs of the community. This issue, as was stressed today, is still with us, though the presentation by Franek Nowicki provided a welcome but small antidote to the general trend. As a young person, he drew our attention to unsupportive organisations and access to venues.

Thirdly, I focussed on the Polish ambivalence to multiculturalism which has been further confirmed by the research conducted by Elizabeth Drozd (1997) on the Solidarity group, the young, urban, well-educated group of immigrants. I want to pursue this issue in more depth today because it is a serious issue. She showed that this group was overwhelmingly opposed to the entry into Australia of Middle Easterners and Asians. More dramatically, the study showed that, in the case of intermarriage, these Poles would not welcome Turkish (87%), Muslims (85%), Lebanese (81%), Vietnamese (77%), and Indians (72%) into their families. The percentage represents the proportion who said they would not welcome them into their family even though the Catholic Christian ethic says, "Welcome the stranger". But they would welcome Australians (15%), Catholics (20%) and Europeans (20%). This fear of the stranger, this

xenophobia, remains a serious problem within the community which the clergy and others need to address. The attitude seems to be “I’ll shake the hand of a Vietnamese Catholic at the sign of peace during Mass but I am opposed to his son marrying my daughter.” For many centuries, the Polish intelligentsia has had an open attitude to otherness, but this seems less pervasive today. Unlike the Dutch, for example, the Poles are not natural multiculturalists, yet the tendency throughout the world is towards cultural diversity.

In my analysis, I focused, fourthly, on the lack of political and academic leadership in Victoria – in other words, the lack of political participation, which Adam Jamrozik focused upon. The situation has improved over the past decade, and, as we have seen today, politicians now take the Polish community seriously, since it is a middle-sized community not without some limited voting influence. However, as James Jupp highlighted, the importance of political and academic leadership cannot be exaggerated.

The fifth factor was the attitude to welfare and the extreme Polish reluctance to make donations to Polish welfare and other agencies. “We Poles are more generous with our blood than with our money,” as one respondent told Rachel Unikoski (1978), back in the seventies. However, as the Hon Gavin Jennings highlighted today, volunteerism is an important aspect of welfare practice. It is thus gratifying to see so many Polish volunteers, serving the Polish aged, here today. This marks another step forward in the self-help philosophy that was not present a decade ago. The sixth issue was the image problem which still has not changed, though the community now has a slightly higher profile within the broader community. At that time, I summed it up and I think it remains true, that it is “a community, conservative with a fundamentalist type of Roman Catholicism, somewhat closed in upon itself, but basically okay.” It was gratifying that Fr Slowik, who has done so much to help the Polish community, endorsed my summation.

Quo Vadis, Polonia in Australia?

In answering this question, I want to focus my summarising remarks around (1) welfare, (2) the pastoral and (3) the cultural. Whilst I will be critical, even provocative, I do so as a sympathetic yet critical outsider. I hope my remarks will be received with a spirit of realism and acceptance so that the Polish community can better understand itself and position itself accordingly. A microscope has again been

placed over the community. This scrutiny can be painful but, more than most people, the Poles know that from suffering and critique great advances and progress can be made.

The Welfare

Poverty has not emerged as a major issue within the community though it remains an issue for a small but significant number of Poles for whom migration, always a risk, has not been a success. A small number of recently arrived Poles are not able to draw unemployment benefits during their first two years in Australia, leaving them and their families in desperate straits. However, the APCS, if informed of particular situations, can adequately handle this situation at the moment. Meeting the needs of aged Poles, certainly in Victoria, has made great advances in the past decade. This task is now long-term. It will need to continue for at least the next 35–40 years, since the aging of the second-generation Polish Australians and, more particularly, the aging of the Solidarity wave will begin to have a marked impact in 15–20 years, as the last cohorts of the immediate post-War wave pass on. Accordingly, there needs to be unity in the community to ensure that a body such as APCS is supported and made strong. As James Jupp has said, it remains very important to sustain an organisational structure, yet there are very definite signs that community infrastructure is cracking. As we move further and further away from the welfare state, the emphasis will be upon strong and innovative welfare agencies, well-connected and well-positioned. Bigger will be better, and professionalism in delivery will be paramount. There are many smaller Eastern European and Slavic communities not able organisationally to meet their needs. These could be met by a broader umbrella organization centred around the Polish community. This has already started to happen, with APCS delivering some services to the Ukrainian community, but it will all need more careful thought, flexibility and more innovative thinking.

The lack in the Polish community is for residential care though the need is not yet fully apparent. As was shown in another APCS study (Drozd 1998), many Poles have been scattered across hostels and nursing homes – in fact, of the 252 responses from aged care institutions, 118 Poles were found to be present in 62 aged-care homes. There is the Polish home in Bayswater which seems, at this stage, a little too small to make it viable over the long-term. Small

aged care facilities are finding it difficult to survive. The cluster solution which was the strategy followed more in the western suburbs seems to have failed. It would seem that the issue needs to be given much more thought, and I would like to suggest that conversations begin to be held with organisations such as the Catholic Homes for the Aged and the Scalabrini Aged Care agency, which has done so much for the Italian aged, particularly in Sydney. I am not a great advocate of private providers.

Secondly, the Polish welfare organisations need to think beyond aged care. Imprisonment rates for the Poles are not high, drugs don't seem to be a major issue and family breakdown, whilst present, is certainly no worse than in the general community. But there are needs, and perhaps in co-operation with other organisations, family and community needs could be more focussed upon. Late in the conference, attention was drawn to two issues which will need careful reflection: the issue of mental health amongst Polish Australians and their over-use of legal drugs, and the issue of domestic violence.

The Pastoral

For today's conference, a major feature has been the input of the long-serving Fr Slowik and Sister Paula, newly arrived in Melbourne. This has been very welcome. There is a strong link between religion and culture but the two are not identical, neither in Poland nor in Australia. All countries, as a result of globalization and the movement of peoples, are having to deal with culturally diverse populations. As a result of the September 11 attacks and also of the sex abuse scandals, religious leadership is now under greater scrutiny from both the public and the community. The sex abuse scandals have greatly impacted upon the Catholic Church, though fortunately not upon the Polish Catholic community. Nonetheless, we need to be aware that, as we look world-wide, Catholic clericalism is in its death throes and a new Church will be born in the next three or four decades. Because the Catholic bishops of the world did not deal adequately with concerns about celibacy and other sexuality issues in the 1960s and 1970s, they are now paying a terrible price for their intransigence and incompetence.

There is much that is very attractive about Polish Catholicism – its long history, its strong foundations, its understanding of the force of popular religion and its opposition to Communism, all summed up in

the figure of Papa Wojtyła. But there is also something about it that worries Poles themselves. And it seems to me that it is not motivated by anti-clericalism. It seems that only about 80 per cent of persons with a Polish Catholic background tick the Catholic box whereas the same statistic for the Italians and Maltese is 95 per cent and 93 per cent respectively. Here, in Australia, the Polish chaplains have served their people well, though they have been partly hamstrung by the Australian bishops and their assimilationist policy. In her research with the Solidarity group, Elizabeth Drozd found that between a third and a quarter regularly attended either a Polish or an English Mass. Certainly, there had been a very reduced rate of Mass attendance recorded in Australia, compared to that of Poland. Her results showed that, whilst for exactly half there had been no shift in their religiosity, about 30 per cent said they had moved away from religion and 15 per cent had grown closer to religion, though perhaps not necessarily closer to the church. The results registered a high degree of distrust and dissatisfaction with the Polish priests. In the Polish clergy, I do not see the same degree of leadership and innovation that I see in the Scalabrinian (in particular) and Capuchin priests of the Italian community. It is not so much their theological conservatism that worries me as their lack of innovation and imagination. In her study, Drozd found the Australian church with its priests to be a more comfortable place for her subjects than the Polish Australian church. This is surprising to me, but it remains that they reported a more positive view of the mainstream Australian Church than the Polish Church, the former being “more friendly and closer to the people and a church that meets people half way (*wychodzi na przeciw*)” (Drozd 1997: 167).

Fr Slowik described in great detail the infrastructure of Catholic Poland in its work for its own migrants and for the Australian Church. It is an impressive contribution. Fortunately, for the foreseeable future, unlike other Catholic communities, Polonia Australia will be well-served by Polish-speaking priests. However, as the research evidence suggests, they need to change their style, and work to create greater social capital in all sections of the community. The Sisters of Christ the King, led by Sister Paula, who described her work with Poles in the evening of their lives, will be able to make a wonderful spiritual and welfare contribution but this will only happen if their financial base is made secure. This is the responsibility of the

community. At the moment, they are relying on the generosity of APCS and its ability to win government grants. But this cannot last. The Polish community needs to become united to ensure the nuns are looked after, beginning with paying for the costs of their convent. This challenge is not a large, but it needs to be taken up immediately. The nuns will also need to extend their services beyond the care of the elderly.

The Cultural

The Polish Australian heritage goes back over 300 years, and it has been well-researched, thanks to Lech Paszkowski (1982, 1988), and others. However, it seems to me that it has not been linked to the Polish Australian community, nor has it been disseminated well enough within the Polish Australian community. And there have been missed opportunities. In 1996, it was the three-hundredth anniversary of the first time Poles stepped onto Australian soil. A group of Polish Lithuanians were part of the crew of a Dutch ship that explored the Western Australian coast in 1696, and the Polish could easily have joined with the Lithuanian and Dutch communities for a series of memorable celebrations. But nothing happened. Later this year, there will be the 200th anniversary of the arrival of the first permanent Polish resident in Australia, Joseph Potaski, a convict who was involved in the failed settlement at Sorrento in 1803. Later, after his release, he became a successful wheat farmer in Tasmania. Similarly, the Strzelecki heritage needs to be linked to the Polish Australian heritage through plaques and monuments.

In preserving the Polish Australian heritage, there is now no need to build a physical museum. Rather, a virtual museum can be constructed in virtual space on the internet, properly controlled by the community and added to as the years go by, and to be viewed by successive generations of Polish Australians, including in their school time.

Polish Australia has been reasonably loyal to Catholic Australia, yet the Polish community has not been demanding enough of the Catholic schooling system. How many Catholic secondary schools have taught the Polish language? How many have taught about Poland, linking it to the Pope's background? About the contribution Polish people have made to Australia? How many of the thousands of Polish Australian children sitting in Catholic classrooms have been made to feel proud of their Polish heritage in an informed, not superficial, way? How

many know something about Strzelecki, one of Australia's first greenies? About the contributions of many Poles to Australia's artistic patrimony? Of course, the government schooling system also needs to hear these demands.

In conclusion, I want to address three issues. The first is community infrastructure, organisational death and community cohesion. Over the next decades, many organisations, long established by the post-War wave, will die; many have assets. To prevent the dissipation of these assets, a plan needs to be developed to ensure that they are brought together for the future of the community and its heritage. To achieve this, the community will probably need outside assistance.

Secondly, there is a lack of cohesion in the community due to the longstanding mistrust and animosity between the two major organizations here in Victoria – it is part political, part geographic, part personality and all history. Both need to keep their identity but there is a need for a greater spirit of co-operativeness, built around a series of confidence-building measures.

The last issue is the failure of the second-generation and the Solidarity wave to involve themselves in Polish community affairs. While the immediate post-War community was fundamentally a displaced refugee community, the Solidarity wave seems to exhibit the characteristics of a diasporic community, living in Australia but not overly committed to it, strongly Polish but wanting an updated, modern expression of Polishness, more problematic in its thinking about where home is to be found even though its members will almost certainly live out their days in Australia. It is totally committed to family, and family alone, ensuring not only its financial welfare but also making sure life is enjoyable. This can be changed but only if the image of Polishness that is projected is not one frozen in a past that is long gone but is modern and appealing. In conclusion, as has been said elsewhere and in different contexts but with the same purpose in mind, "it is not a sin to go back into the past, but it is a sin to remain in the past". The future cannot be allowed just to happen, especially in these years of profound change; the future must be embraced. This means that communities and their infrastructure of agencies and organisations will need repositioning in order to continue to achieve their missions.

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Appendix

Overview of the Polish Welfare Organisations in Australia—by State

Victoria

Victoria is unusual in that for the last 21 years, it has had two Polish welfare organisations operating in Melbourne: the Polish Community Council of Victoria and the Australian-Polish Community Services.

The Australian-Polish Community Services (APCS) was established in 1983 with the main aim of providing professional welfare and community services to the Polish community. Initially, a significant part of APCS' work focussed on the western suburbs of Melbourne, an area of high socio-economic disadvantage. Now, however, almost all APCS programs have either state-wide or Melbourne-metropolitan coverage.

During its years of operation the organisation has developed extensive knowledge and experience about the needs of the Polish community. This knowledge is greatly valued by mainstream service providers, who consider the organisation to be expert in dealing with culturally sensitive issues, and a competent trainer in culturally appropriate service provision to the Polish community. APCS' services include assistance to Polish background residents in rural Victoria. APCS played an important role in establishing several residential clusters for residents of Polish background and has conducted two surveys of all aged-care facilities in Victoria. Further, regular training sessions are conducted at hostels, nursing homes and other HACC providers *e.g.* local government.

APCS continues to play an active role in working parties and steering committees for various planning and policy bodies. Our input and views are frequently sought by State and Federal departments and other service providers. APCS works closely with health care providers to educate the Polish community about services and promote health care issues. These providers include Diabetes Australia, Carers Victoria, Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria, RDNS and others.

At present, APCS provides 13 different programs, employs 58 staff (8 full-time) and our services are supported by 50 volunteers. Since 2001, the organisation has had a formal partnership with the Missionary Sisters of Christ the King for Polonia, and two nuns are part of APCS' staff.

Lastly, APCS is proud of its record in conducting and publishing research studies and strategic plans. Further details can be obtained by perusing our website www.apcs.org.au

The Polish Community Council of Victoria (PCCV), established in 1962, is an umbrella organisation representing some 98% of all Polish organisations in Victoria. It assists and coordinates Polish Saturday schools, various youth organisations and the elderly, including veterans.

The PCCV Care Services bureau, operating for 35 years, administers programs funded by Federal and State governments and other agencies. It employs 27 staff and nearly 60 volunteers. Among its various functions, those relating to the Polish elderly include Community Aged Care Services; Planned Activity Groups; Social Support and Monitoring; Telelink; and coordination and support to all 25 Polish Senior Citizens Clubs in Victoria. Over the years, the PCCV has formed partnerships and cooperation with various mainstream agencies and published several reports and papers on the needs of the Polish community.

For more information refer to Annual Report and/or Web site: www.vicnet.net.au/~polishcc

New South Wales

Polish Welfare and Information Bureau in NSW (Inc) is a community non-profit organisation established and registered under the *Charitable Collections Act* in 1974. Initially services were offered two days per week and it was staffed by volunteers. The Bureau coordinated lobbying by the Polish community for funds for an aged care hostel. The submission, lodged by the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth, was successful and Br Albert's Hostel, a 30-bed facility, was opened at Marayong in 1977. In 1979, funding from the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs under the Grant-in-Aid Scheme, enabled the Bureau to engage the services of a Welfare Worker on a full-time basis to provide information, advice, referral, interpreting and translation services in the areas of immigration,

housing, employment, social security and health. An increase in funding in 1982 permitted the engagement of a second Welfare Worker. This enabled weekly half-day sessional services to be conducted from the Migrant Resource Centres at Liverpool, Blacktown and Parramatta.

To enable the provision of more effective services for the sudden increase in the number of Polish arrivals in the 1980s, the Bureau took the initiative of forming a task force in conjunction with the Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW, chaired by Prof A. Jamrozik of UNSW. The analysis of needs and recommendations for appropriate services for new arrivals was published in 1983 under the title *The Polish Immigrants – A Quest for a Normal Life*. In the same year the Bureau published *Kacik Imigranta* (A Migrant's Guide), which was collated and edited by Mr F. Rozmus, a member of the Management Committee. It was followed by a *Polish Committee Services Directory* which was mailed to all service providers to assist them with Polish speaking clients. In 1983 the Bureau conducted a one-day seminar on the situation and needs of Polish migrants. It resulted in the launching of *Aging in Australia – Needs of Polish Aging*, prepared by N. Skoroszewski and A. Chodkiewicz. The publication drew attention to the growing number of aging among Post World War II refugees. Following a campaign conducted by the Ethnic Communities Council of NSW, the criteria for funding of nursing homes was changed by legislature. This enabled funding of ethno-specific nursing homes, and allowed for the funding of a 40-bed Polish nursing home at Marayong. Subsequently the Bureau formed a Polish Nursing Home Committee, which conducted a fundraising campaign and assisted the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth with the co-ordination of the building of the Nursing Home at Marayong, opened in 1990.

The Bureau has also administered a number of annual grants from the Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW, including Telelink, which provided information and social interaction for aged, housebound Poles by use of a conference phone. There was also a Youth Project undertaken to research the needs of Polish youth and to develop services. In 1991, the *Informator Seniora* (Seniors' Guide) collated by Ewa Adamkiewicz, a member of the Management Committee, was published and then updated in 1994. In 1991, funding was decreased to one and a half grants. Funding was again reduced in 1994, to one grant, resulting, in that same year, in the gradual curtailment and

subsequent cessation of the sessional services. In 1992 the Bureau presented a report "Survey of Social Support Groups for NESB Older People, People with Disabilities, and Carers", funded by the Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs as a Pilot Equity and Access Project. The Bureau became incorporated in 1994 in line with the *Associations Incorporation Act 1984*. More recently, in April 1998 the Bureau achieved official recognition as an Aged Care Services provider under the *Aged Care Act 1997*.

Existing programs include Community Aged Care Packages (53 funded), National Respite Care Services and Community Settlement Services Scheme (which the agency hopes will be extended beyond September 2003), as well as Brokerage. Up until three years ago, there were three separate offices, which have since been integrated into one seamless provider. The management structure had to be developed without funds for a management position to oversee the whole service. An area that is currently identified as an unmet need is family violence and family conflict. English language classes (run by volunteers) are also offered, as is a Polish language class. The agency is often approached by students who arrive in Australia to study. Although assistance cannot be provided, practical placements are offered.

South Australia

The Federation of Polish Organisations in SA (Inc) was founded in 1968 with the aim of providing a representation for the Polish Community in SA and coordinating the activities of Polish organisations. The Federation is an umbrella body for 18 Polish organisations representing cultural, educational, sporting, social, historical and welfare aspects of Polish community life and activities. In 1974, the Federation played a leading role in establishing the Polish Radio Committee, which enjoys broad support from the community, and in 1976 began publishing its own monthly bulletin, *The Slowo Polskie*. In 1981, the organisation received funding from the Federal Government through the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs to employ a full time social welfare worker under the Grant-In-Aid Scheme. Over the years the worker provided a counselling and referral service to the Polish community at large and a settlement service to the newly arrived migrants from Poland. She assisted in the establishment of youth, seniors' and women's support groups as well as a carers' support group.

The Federation also offered English Language classes made possible through funding from the Adult Community Education Unit of the Department of Education, Employment and Training. These classes were held twice a week, for those who do not qualify for formal English as a Second Language (ESL) courses, and have proved very popular and beneficial to the Polish seniors who migrated to Australia in the 1980s and 1990s. Applications for the funding of this program were unsuccessful in 2002 and 2003.

In 1987, through the efforts of the Federation and funding from the Federal Government, the Port Adelaide Central Mission purchased a Nursing Home (St Teresa's) in Croydon with priority access to Polish residents.

In 1992, once again through the efforts of the Federation and funding from the Federal Government, Southern Cross Care (Inc) built the John Paul II Hostel in Klemzig with priority access to Polish residents.

In 2001 the Federation of Polish Organisations in SA (Inc) received funding from the Department of Health and Aging to set up Community Aged Care Service with 25 Community Aged Care Packages. This service is run collaboratively, with Wesley UnitingCare in Brompton providing support to the Federation. All staff are of Polish background, ensuring that the service provided is culturally and linguistically appropriate.

For the first 20 months, the program was based at the Wesley Uniting Mission. Since December 2002, the office of the Polish CACPs and the Polish Welfare Bureau has been situated in the Dom Polski Centre, 230 Angas Street, Adelaide. This enables greater access to the Federation's welfare work for the community.

Currently the CACP Program employs one coordinator and 10 careworkers who attend to 30 clients living in the metropolitan area of Adelaide. A Polish podiatrist attends to the needs of the clientele.

In 2003 the Federation received funding through Home and Community Care (HACC) to establish a Polish Social Support Service. This service employs a part time coordinator who is responsible for a team of volunteers who provide transport and home visiting to the frail, aged members of the Polish community in the metropolitan area of Adelaide. Additional funds were also received from HACC to undertake a needs analysis, identifying the community care needs of older and frail persons, with moderate, severe or

profound functional disabilities in the Polish community. The project will develop a strategic plan for the implementation of a comprehensive service response to the community care needs of the target group.

Queensland

OzPol – Community Care Association (Inc), was established in 1999 and is one of the ‘youngest’ Polish welfare organisations in Australia. The agency has a competent Committee of Management, the majority of members have a business and community background. In 2000, funding was obtained for the CACP program targeting 15 Poles. The following year, an application was made to assist other Slavic groups and now the CACPs program has 45 funded packages, with 49 clients assisted on a regular basis. OzPol has a multicultural workforce including Polish background personnel. The agency also manages a CVS program funded for 12 people, and providing for more than 20 Polish residents. Additional programs include: Telepol (telephone monitoring service), Social Support, Information/Referral and Advocacy, Service Development and Research, Carer Support, Brokerage Service, and Equipment Hire Service. The agency currently provides support services to people of ten culturally and linguistically different backgrounds.

Tasmania

Polish Welfare Office works under the auspices of the Polish Association in Hobart. The first HACC funding for the Polish community was obtained in 1985. Prior to that, community and welfare work was all performed on a voluntary basis. The office currently employs a Polish Welfare Worker who provides information, referrals, advocacy, and assistance with communicating in English; transport; and medical appointments. The Office also provides a Polish Outreach Program, which is provided by two missionary sisters and involves friendly visiting and monitoring, emotional and spiritual support, and practical assistance. The organisation also manages a Polish Day Centre Program twice a month at the Polish House in Hobart. In addition, a Polish state-wide Telephone Information and Referral Service (toll-free) is available to all Poles living in Tasmania with the aim of providing information, making appropriate referrals and generally linking people of Polish

background into HACC services. Volunteers play an important role in supporting all the programs managed by the Polish Welfare Office. This includes provision of a regular transport service to a cemetery and a Sunday Mass, and assistance in the day care programs. From time to time, the Office receives one-off funding from local councils. The agency also works closely with other service providers, including joint programs and initiatives, assisting Polish residents in aged-care facilities and providing health information sessions, and other services. People of Polish background in Tasmania also have access to other relevant services such as Community Aged Care Packages managed by multicultural and mainstream providers. Further, there are two Polish Senior Citizens Clubs – one in Hobart and one in Launceston.

Western Australia

Association of Polish Women (Inc), through its specialised welfare and aged care programs, has been providing high quality community service and care to multicultural communities of Western Australia since 1982. It is a non-profit charitable organisation with an honorary Board of Management comprised of members of the Association. Our specialised aged and disabled care programs, RAINBOW and UMBRELLA, are managed by a Committee comprised of members from the ethnic communities involved with these programs. We assist older people, carers and people with disabilities from 26 European communities including: Austrian, Bosnian, Croatian, Czech, Dutch, Estonian, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Macedonian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Romanian, Slovak, Slovenian, Serbian, and Ukrainian. Seven years ago, funding was obtained for 40 Community Aged Care Packages called the “Rainbow” program. Funding for HACC took three years to obtain. Initially one-off funding was obtained and now HACC funding totals \$400,000 and is called the “Umbrella” program. HACC services include domestic assistance, social support, day care, meals on wheels (self-funding), home maintenance, respite care, transport, and assessment hours. The agency employs 68 staff (including 35 volunteers). Meals are also provided on a brokerage basis. A physiotherapist comes in on a fortnightly basis. Offices in two locations exist. Brokerage services are also provided, with a total turnover last year of \$40,000. In addition, the agency provides a

visiting service (Community Visitors Scheme) at aged-care facilities and an emergency program for people in difficult financial situations. The Association of Polish Women (Inc) Committee of Management has aged in recent years and a significant restructure is currently occurring in view of that fact, to ensure that the management structure can respond appropriately to the challenges of managing significant community programs. There are also plans regarding residential care, starting with a retirement village. Out of the 9000 Poles in WA, 7000 are in the 70+ age group.

Polonia in Australia

Challenges and Possibilities in the New Millennium

Polonia in Australia: Challenges and Possibilities in the New Millennium is a collection of conference papers and research studies which consider the impact Poles had on the Australian society. Current and future issues regarding social welfare services and future priorities are discussed. The publication is intended for relevant service providers and decision makers, as well as those interested in the well-being of the Polish community in Australia.



Common Ground



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