

Seeking REFUGE

teacher notes



an education program
at the Immigration Museum

Acknowledgements

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Design

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The mission of the Immigration Museum is to record and interpret the immigration experience of people journeying to Victoria and Australia, and to promote and celebrate our cultural diversity. The exhibitions are based on the experiences that are common to all immigrants – leavings and journeys, the processes of getting in, arrivals and reunions, settlings and impacts.

Situated in the beautifully restored Old Customs House, the Immigration Museum is an exciting and stimulating environment for learners of all ages.

Program Outline

Suitable for: Secondary (Years 9 -12) and tertiary students studying Australian History, English, Geography, Media, International Studies or Political Studies.

Aim: Students will be challenged to confront their own understandings and points of view regarding refugees and asylum seekers.

Curriculum links:

The *Seeking Refuge* program is linked to Level 6 of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards and has been specifically developed for Later Years/ VCE students.

The program has particular relevance to the following VCE studies:

International Studies	Unit 1 & 2
English	Units 1, 2, 3 & 4
Geography	Unit 2
Political Studies	Unit 2 & 4
Australian History	Units 3 & 4
Media	Unit 4

Program Structure: Allow 1 1/2 - 2 hours

- Introduction with a Museum staff member – 45 minutes
- Time spent in the museum galleries investigating focus questions provided 45-60 minutes +.



Program content:

The program will use a range of media to discuss the definitions of refugee, asylum seeker and illegal immigrant, and the assumptions, generalisations and stereotypes that often lie behind them.

Students will view the story of Iraqi refugee, Jasim Alrihani, which features in the Museum's *Getting in* gallery.

Small group work and discussions will be led by a museum staff member.

In the Museum galleries:

Students will be divided into groups. They will each receive an activity folder, see image below.

Each group will visit locations in the museum that have exhibition content relating to refugees / asylum seekers. The activity will offer each student the opportunity to create a data set regarding Refugee stories based on the experiences documented in the museum.

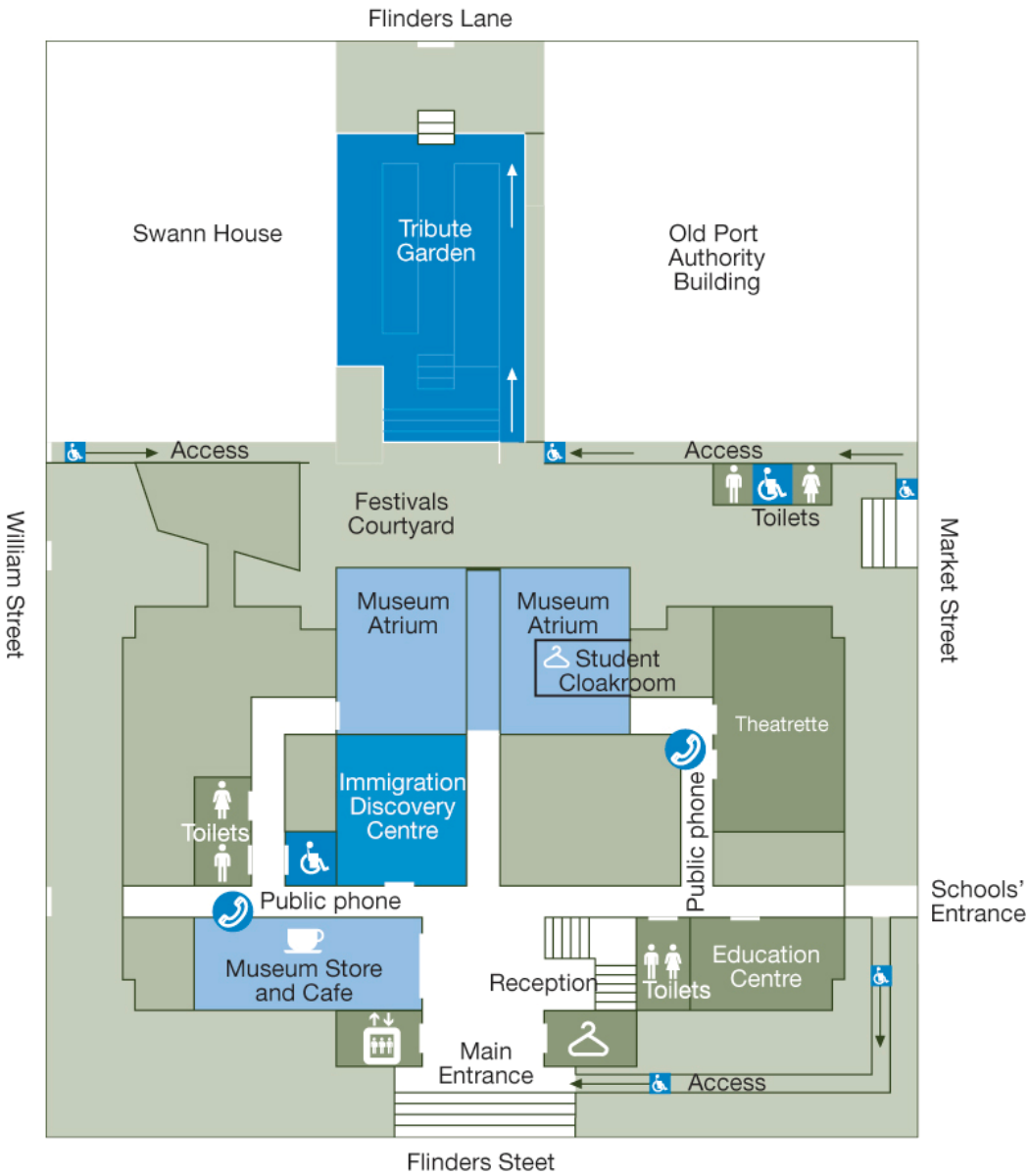


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Immigration Museum – Ground floor

Enter the Old Customs House on the ground floor. The Education Centre, the Immigration Discovery Centre, the Museum Store, the Atrium and the outdoor Tribute Garden are all on this level.



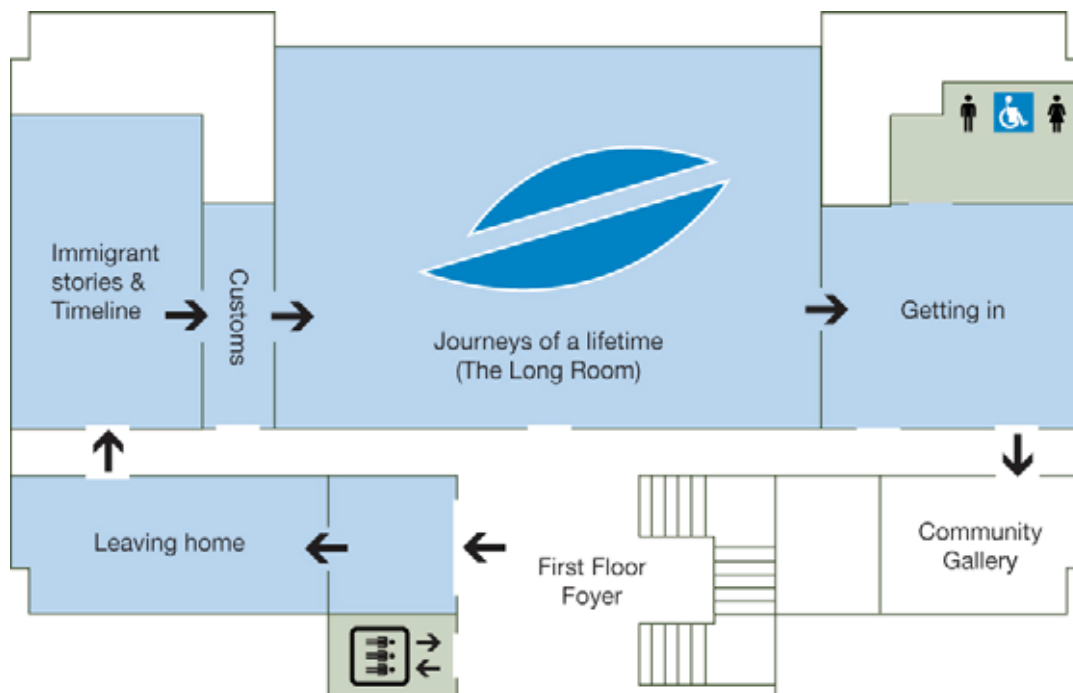
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Immigration Museum – First floor galleries



Instructions to leaders

1. Supervising adults and student groups assemble in the First Floor Foyer; confirm finish time and meeting place.
2. Start each group in a different gallery, moving on to the next in clockwise direction.
3. Gather your group at the gallery entrance; read the Pathway instructions/questions. Encourage students to look at all the exhibits, allowing 10-15 minutes to complete the activities.
4. Move on to the next gallery as a group; students may return to a previous gallery to record information.
5. Visit other areas of the Museum, including the Second Floor exhibitions and the Tribute Garden.



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Leaving home: film and sound explore the reasons why people left to come to Australia.

Immigrant stories: five displays tell personal stories of immigrants—why they came and how they started a new life in Victoria. Around the walls a timeline depicts key events in the history of immigration to Australia.

Journeys of a lifetime: in the 'Long Room' you can enter a life-sized boat and imagine what it was like to travel here by ship, or use an *Origins* computer to find out more about our immigrant communities.

Getting in: the history of Australia's immigration polices dramatically comes to life in the 'Interview Room'. Use the computer to 'interview' people applying for residency - who will be let in or rejected?

Further areas to visit

Please advise students as to which other areas you would like them to visit.

Community Gallery

Victorian communities and groups work with the Museum to create exhibitions that reveal and share our culturally diverse histories.

Ground Floor

The Information Discovery Centre

Located in the original vaults of Old Customs House, this is a place where you can:

- Leave your own immigration story and read the stories of others;
- Look up a CD ROM on immigration to Australia;
- Find out more about the Tribute Garden;
- Surf the net for family history resources;
- Explore links to other museums around the world;
- Read about current issues affecting immigration to Australia.

Tribute Garden

The Tribute Garden records the names of individuals and families who have immigrated to Victoria. There are more than 7000 names in the Tribute Garden, representing people from over 90 countries of origin. Look for the names of the Aboriginal language groups on the steps, recognising the languages spoken in this region prior to immigration.



Background context for immigration interview

In the *Seeking Refuge* program, students will see an 11 minute immigration interview with an Iranian refugee and then discuss whether he should be accepted into Australia.

The story is set in a UN caravan in Saudi Arabia. Mr Alrihani is applying as an off shore refugee (applying for refugee status while outside of Australia). The Immigration Officer is trying to establish whether Mr Alrihani will be accepted under the Humanitarian program that takes up to 13,000 refugees to Australia a year (as it currently stands 2005/6). To do that he asks a series of questions in an attempt to establish the legitimacy of Mr Alrihani's claims to be a refugee.

Mr Alrihani was part of a failed uprising against the Saddam Hussein Government in 1991. His father was executed in 1990 for anti government activities. Mr Alrihani escaped to Rafha refugee camp in Saudi Arabia in 1991. These refugees were joined by thousands of other Iraqi nationals who had fled towards the Saudi Arabian and Kuwaiti borders in late March, 1991 to escape gross human rights violations being committed by Iraqi Government forces following the crushing of the mass uprising earlier that month. They included whole families from the country's Shi'a Muslim southern provinces. Mr Alrihani's remaining family (mother, two brothers and a cousin) escaped sometime later and joined him in the camp in 1992.

At the time of the interview (2002) Mr Alrihani had been in the refugee camp for over 10 years.



Post Visit Activities & Resources

It is hoped discussion and further exploration of issues relating to refugees and asylum seekers will continue following the momentum gained from the visit to the Immigration Museum.

Three significant events; Tampa, Children Overboard and the SIEV X disaster may be useful for further investigation. As such, a brief background and a resource list to aid further study are provided.

Brief Background

Tampa

The Tampa is a Norwegian freighter and in August 2001, while in international waters between Indonesia and Australia, rescued 433 asylum seekers, mostly from Afghanistan and Iran. The ship made its way towards Christmas Island, the nearest land and port, but was turned back by the Australian Government who refused to allow the ships human cargo of asylum seekers to disembark to Australian territory.

After a stand off, eventually an agreement was reached so that Nauru and New Zealand processed the asylum seekers. In September of the same year the Australian Government introduced the Migration Amendment Bill to the 1958 Migration Act which excised Christmas, Ashmore, Cartier and Cocos (Keeling) Islands from the Australian migration zone. This meant that any unlawful non citizen (asylum seeker) attempting to enter Australia via one of these islands, could not do so.

Thus began what was known as 'The Pacific Solution' and many observers believe that the result of the 2001 Federal election in November was decided on this issue and the related issue of the 'children overboard'.

Resources

Australian Parliament Library

Use ParInfoSearch and key words (Detention Centre, Christmas Island, Asylum) to locate government publications relating to issues of Asylum and Refugee policy.

www.aph.gov.au, and

http://www.aph.gov.au/library/intguide/SP/asylum_seekers.htm

Rural Australians for Refugees www.ruralaustraliansforrefugees.org

Peter Mares, *Borderline: Australia's Treatment of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the Wake of Tampa*, UNSW Press, 2003

Parliament of Australia www.aph.gov.au

Use [ParInfo Search](#) to download a range of documents relating to government policy.



David Marr and Marian Wilkinson, Dark Victory, Allen & Unwin, 2003 SIEV X

On 18 October, 2001, a wooden fishing boat departed the Indonesian port of Bandar Lampung with 421 passengers, all of whom were asylum seekers. It was dangerously overcrowded. At 3pm the next day the boat sank in international waters between Indonesia and Australia but inside the Australian aerial border protection zone. Approximately 146 children, 142 women and 65 men died. Controversy followed about whether the Australian Navy knew the ship was there and was sinking and could have rescued it but chose not to. A number of articles were written and debates and inquiries in parliament took place. The evidence has not been conclusive partly because the government refused to allow certain naval personnel to attend inquiries. As a result suspicion about what the government knew has not eased. This tragedy and controversy became known as the SIEV X (Suspected Illegal Entry Vessel X).

Resources

SIEVX.com archives primary and secondary source material related to the SIEVX Affair and Australia's People Smuggling Disruption Programme, <http://sievx.com>

SievX National Memorial Project www.sievxmemorial.com

Untold Tragedy: The story of the SievX (video) by Steve Biddulph.

Children Overboard

On 6 October, 2001 an Australian navy boat intercepted and later boarded a boat carrying 233 asylum seekers. This event occurred in the middle of a Federal election campaign. The next day the Minister of Immigration, Philip Ruddock, announced that children from the boat had been deliberately thrown into the water by their parents to force the Australian government to rescue and accept them. The Prime Minister, John Howard, publicly attacked the asylum seekers, saying that Australia did not want the type of people who would throw their own children overboard. Anti asylum seeker/refugee sentiment within the community became strong. It was only after the Howard Government was returned to office that it became clear that the 'evidence' the story was based on was not true and the government knew it at the time.

Resources

Parliament of Australia www.aph.gov.au

Go into Search Query with title 'Children overboard incident' to find relevant parliamentary Hansard.

Christmas Island.

2010 Government policy.



General source material on issues pertaining to refugees and asylum seekers

www.un.org/Overview/rights.html

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

www.unhcr.org

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees web sites outlines news, programs, statistics and contains basic background information on aspects of immigration.

www.immi.gov.au/facts/index.htm

Provides Humanitarian program statistics

www.hri.ca/

Human rights issues are explored and links to human rights organisations provided.

www.amnesty.org.au

Amnesty International provides information about human rights abuses and issues relating to refugees,

www.crr.unsw.edu.au/

Contains information about refugee rights and refugee law, policy and service provision.

www.asrc.org.au/

ASRC – Asylum Seeker Resource Centre.



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