

In 2011 a check of the Internet information about the DIMEX project suggested that there were gaps in the information provided to the public. Also, it was not easily accessible via the DACC website anymore. Furthermore, the transfer of the data had been incomplete and some URL's did not open for some. It was decided to digitise the 307 useable questionnaires and put them on a CD to be made available to all interested parties at a cost recovery price. Also a reasonably accurate statistical overview had not been done. These tasks have now been completed.

The DIMEX questionnaires were first distributed in late 2004. Distribution continued in 2005 and some questionnaires were still distributed in 2006/7 as people far away from NSW had heard about it and wanted to participate. The first batch went to the Dutch clubs in NSW. These were distributed via the committees of the clubs. A series of adverts were placed in local urban papers as well as in country areas. In country areas this was often the best way to reach the minority of Dutch migrants who settled in such areas of NSW. Interesting phone calls reached the DACC from such migrants who were very pleased that such a survey was being held. They preferred very much to speak in Dutch and often made lengthy calls to talk about their personal experiences.

# **The DIMEX SURVEY**

## **A brief assessment.**

We decided to go through it Question by Question and make additional comments following the outcomes. We needed to be aware of biases in the responses. As we decided to approach most potential respondents through the still existing clubs the sample has inevitably a bias in favour of club members. Some Dutch migrants had no desire to join clubs and were keen to integrate as soon as possible. Frequently, they had second thoughts about this in later stages of their life in Australia and this does show up in some responses, especially in additional notes added to the more formal answers to questions. Others, a fairly small minority probably, lived in country areas where there were often no clubs. Secondly, as about one third of the migrants had returned to the Netherlands by 1970, there are no responses from those who went back. It is true that some of them re-migrated later on but their number is uncertain.

### **Q 1: Name, address and contact details:**

No details used for analysis. We only provide number of respondents here (307 returns of 1950 blanks sent). It is estimated that well over 90% were NSW residents. Very few returns could be described as "not useable".

### **Q2: Why did you decide to emigrate?**

There are a number of responses possible. All reasons will be listed as given by respondents. The percentages will reveal (to some extent) the most important as well as the lesser important.

We counted all reasons given – sometimes three or four.

We had expected "encouragement by Dutch Government" as a possible reason. However, this was not mentioned specifically.

a. Lack of accommodation	9 %
b. Lack of economic prospects	27 %
c. Fear of WWII	9 %
d. Climate	5 %
e. Attraction of Australia	5 %
f. Sponsored by other migrants/marriage	5 %
g. Adventure	6 %
h. Had no say in it – came with parents	29 %
i. Applied successfully for a position	1 %
j. Avoid military service	1 %
k. Population density	2 %
l. Domestic problems	1 %

The percentage of adults who “had no say in it”, children, is high. These people were much younger in the mid 1950s. We have no exact figure number of Dutch migrants of the 1950 – 1970 period have passed away. It could be as high as 60,000 at the time of the Survey. Note that neither “climate” nor “population density” were major push factors. Clearly the top three were the most important push factors while the “Attraction of Australia” was a minor pull factor.

### Q 3: When arrived in Australia?

Which ship?

By plane?

The Dutch migrants arrived in 29 different ships and by plane. The most used ships were:

Johan van Oldebarnevelt	19 %
Sibajak	8 %
Waterman	7 %
Volendam	6.5%
Fair Sea	6 %
Zuiderkruis	5.5%

The other ships used were, in alphabetical order:

Aurelia, Australis, Ellinis, Fair Sky, Fair Star, Flavia, Groote Beer, Himalaya, Johan de Wit, Maasdam, Merchant Navy, Neptunia, Nieuw Holland, Oranje, Orsova, Ridderkerk, Seven Seas, Skaubryn, Southern Cross, Strathmore, Tahitian, The Nelly, Willem Ruys.

Migrants who came by plane: 28.9% of total.

#### Q 4: From which country?

Netherlands	86.5%	
Dutch East Indies	9.5%	
Other		4.0% (including New Zealand)

#### Q. 5: Where did you go after arrival?

Camp:	36.7%
Care of others:	
Church, Support Group, Friends, Family	29.0%
Own accommodation:	2.3%
Rented rooms:	30.7%
Hotel:	1.3%

#### Q 6: How old were you when you arrived in Australia?

Under 10:	28 %
10 – 20	19 %
20 – 30	29 %
30 – 40	16.5%
Over 40	7.5%

#### Q 7: Are you a naturalised Australian?

Yes: 80 %

If so, when?

Large range 1956 – 2001

Average year: 1969

Why?

1. Felt right, settled here.
2. Public service job
3. Married Australian partner

No: 20%

If not, why not?

1. Could see no advantage
2. Wanted to keep Dutch nationality
3. Dual citizenship not possible

### **Q. 8: Did you speak English when you arrived?**

Very well: 20%

Enough to get by: 27%

Just a little: 35%

Not at all: 28%

### **Q 9: What language do you mainly speak at home?**

English: 70%

Dutch: 30% (one "Friesian"!) )

If English, do you still speak Dutch outside the home?

Yes: 70%

No or rarely: 30%

There were a lot of respondents who said that they spoke both English and Dutch at home – this question should have been included.

### **Q 10. What were your FIRST impressions of Australia?**

### ***Positive***

Favourable/interesting	20 %
A lot of room:	14.5%
Favourable climate:	20 %
Easy going people:	11.3%
Plenty of work:	4.2%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>70 %</b>

### ***Negative (total)*** 30 %

Poor reception  
Work hard to come by/far away  
Food disappointing  
People not welcoming/discrimination  
Wrong information  
Professionally behind  
Strange  
Terrible  
Major cultural differences  
High taxes (one only!)

## **Q 11: Brief description of working life in Australia.**

Own trade (specify)	3 %
Small business operator	12 %
Education	10 %
Labourer/factory worker	10 %
Engineering/mechanics	10 %
Agricultural/horticulture	4.5 %
Care/welfare	4.5 %
Administration/accountancy	4.5 %
Management	6.0 %
Building trade	4.5 %
Health/hospital workers	4.5 %
Professionals	3.0 %
Housewives	13.5 %
Police	1.5 %

Artist/Decorators	4.5 %
Other	4.0 %

This wide spread suggests that migrants were often ready to take on anything. There were several examples of people who took courses to improve their occupational chances or simply because they were interested to further their knowledge. One migrant arrived here as a laboratory assistant and became a medical doctor after part-time study. Still later he studied law as well and in the end became a barrister. A few did other part-time study at universities and became educators of all kinds. So when people ask what are the Dutch migrants particularly known for there isn't a typical, specific answer possible.

### Q 12:

**a. Did your experiences in Australia accord with your expectations?**

**b. How were you initially received or treated by the people already here?**

a. 1. Yes:	64.3 %
2. No	14.3 %
3. Mixed	21.4 %

b. 1. Well, friendly	70 %
2. Badly, unfriendly	5 %
3. Mixed	25 %

**Q. 13: Have you travelled back to the Netherlands since you emigrated? Regularly, how often?**

Not at all	4 %
1 – 3 times	40 %
4 – 6	26.6%

7 – 9	13.3%
10 – 12	9 %
13 – 15	3 %
More than 15 times	4.1%

There were several respondents who travel to the Netherlands on a yearly basis. Very few seem to have lost touch with the old country altogether.

**Q 14: Do you know of Dutch immigrants who have permanently returned to the Netherlands?**

Yes: 53.5 %

How many? Information about them? Why??

Not many in most cases. As to "Why?" there were a variety of responses: "Could not adjust in Australia but eventually settled back well in the Netherlands", "Home sickness", "Personal tragedies", were explanations. The most problematical were cases where parents returned but teenage kids were reluctant, and later the kids went back to Australia. Results of these instances were split families.

No: 46.5 %

**Q 15: Do you have any regular contact with the Netherlands other than family?**

Yes: 50 %

No: 50 %

What kind of contact? Mostly with relatives and good friends. Phone and email mostly, also Christmas cards and birthday greetings. Some reported high level of continuous contact.

How important? In many cases (75%) this was rated as "very important".

**Q 16: When did you buy your first home and how was it financed?**

Year? Home purchases were reported from 1956 – 2001. On average the first home was purchased 11 to 12 years after arrival.

How financed? The usual ways: bank loans, mortgages, cash, other types of loans e.g. through credit unions. In some cases loans from other Dutch migrants.

How important? This question was answered quite emphatically. 96% rated it at "very important".

**Q 17: Did you become a member of a Dutch-Australian club, society and/or church group in Australia and how long have you been a member of that club or society?**

Yes: 70 %      No: 30 %

Types of?

Recreational:      53 %

Church:              25 %

Other:                20 % (e.g. NESWA, DACC, Choir, Dance)

How long a member?

This varied greatly, from 2 to 52 years (in 2005). An average is not meaningful here. Many migrants used the club early in their life in Australia, say, the first five to ten years. It was less necessary later.

**Q 18: If "Yes" please describe what this affiliation means (or meant) to you (e.g. friendship, can speak Dutch, like-minded people, socials, religious experience, sport, etc)**

Very meaningful:	69 %
Somewhat meaningful	24 %
Did not participate much in club life.	7 %

**Q. 19: If "Yes" were you active in Dutch club life (e.g. held position or helped arrange events)**

No positions:	44 %
Yes, was active in committees and/or assisted with organising events.	56 %

**Q. 20: If "No" Did you participate in Dutch social life in other ways. Please describe briefly, if you did.**

Made financial contributions:	10 %
Share holding in Dutch businesses or welfare organisations:	10 %
Subscribers/readers of Dutch Weekly:	50 %
Other – like helped organising Festivals, Dutch shop, Sinterklaas, Koninginnedag, East Indies lunch group:	80 %
(multiple answers here, respondents would participate at least in some of these activities)	

**Q 21: Do your children participate in Dutch Club life (e.g. NSW Holland Festival, Sinterklaas, rides, colouring in).**

Yes:	32.5 %
No:	67.5 %

If not, why not you think?

1. "Want to be 100% Aussies"

2. "Not cool"
3. "Married to Australian partner"

Grand children?

Generally regarded as "more connected than second generation", "want to find out where Opa and Oma came from and why they migrated to Australia". This generation doesn't have to spend energy and time to fit in. They ARE part of society anyway.

Are the children proud of their Dutch origin?

In general the consensus seems to be that the children are somewhat indifferent, but they want to please their parents by attending clubs and festivities, etc. More interest in Dutch heritage is shown once they have been to the Netherlands themselves.

**Q 22: Will you allow your responses to be made public?**

Yes: 94 %

No: 6

## **APPENDIX**

### **Progress statement of November 2003**

#### **Letters to respondents explaining the questionnaire and its purpose.**

#### **Acknowledgments**

The Survey was initiated by Gijs Kommer and Jan Joosten of the Rembrandt Club, St. Mary's and carried out by the Dutch Australian Cultural Centre, Ltd, Chester Hill and Smithfield. Generous financial

contributions were made by Gijs Kommer and the Royal Australian Historical Society, Sydney.

Internet records were completed by the DACC webmaster Joop Mulholland, a former President of the DACC.

The completed questionnaires were digitised by Paul Breedveld, current President DACC.

This statistical report of the Survey was done by Klaas Woldring, Board member and former President, DACC.

## **DIMEX Project in progress (early 2004)**

The Dutch Migrant Experiences (DIMEX) is originally an initiative of Gijs Kommer of the Rembrandt Club in St. Mary's, who approached the DACC to take it on. Largely financed by Gijs preparations are well on the way to distribute the first questionnaires. The DACC is now extending its earlier migrant history program (oral history/interviews) by distributing a large number of questionnaires (max 2000) to principally first generation migrants of Dutch origin. When returned to the DACC the completed questionnaires will be scanned and transferred to a CD. They will also be displayed on our website, but only with written permission by the migrants concerned. We believe this to be a viable and increasingly popular method of research and publication which can be accessed by many of our target groups listed below. Advertisements will be placed in the press, especially the *Dutch Weekly* but also mainstream newspapers to broadcast the Project. In any case the membership of the 23 Clubs will be contacted. The DACC is requesting Clubs to provide membership lists for this particular purpose. Where printed address labels can be supplied at the same time the operation would be facilitated greatly. While the original Dutch migrants are the principal target group at this point of time, many other, related and even unrelated groups and individuals may find this

information interesting and helpful.

We have identified the following target groups for the use of the proposed Archive as well as for the results of Migrant History Project:

- a. People interested in Dutch migrant history of Australia, especially of the 1950s and 1960s generation - but also the second and, especially, third and future generations
- b. Relatives/friends who want to check their roots
- c. Australians of any origin, interested in this aspect of Dutch culture
- d. Universities (sociology, history, economics, geography and political science departments)
- e. Persons of Dutch origin who were born or lived in Indonesia and later moved to Australia
- f. Dutch corporations who have donated and/or may donate in the future their corporate archive (s) to the Dutch Australian Centre.
- g. Dutch expatriates temporarily stationed in Australia

The reasons for targeting these groups are mostly self-explanatory. It should be noted the Dutch migrant and Dutch expatriate communities are substantial in number. A recent survey done at the time of the Olympic Games by a well-known corporation suggested that there could be as many 300,000 persons in NSW alone who have family links to the Netherlands, including distant relatives. This is certainly more than the identified (recorded) migrants numbers and their immediate descendants. Extrapolating from that and realising that the Dutch migrant community in Victoria is also quite strong one could estimate the national total at about 700,000 - 800,000. This would not necessarily show up in the 2001 Census because the ethnic origin question there was "where BOTH parents were born".

The Royal Australian Historical Society has taken a serious interest in the DIMEX . Following our application this year, this organisation has provided a grant of \$1000 to assist further with its completion. It is a condition of the grant that a publishable summary and analysis of the Project be written up providing a breakdown of the findings and a conclusion. When the Project is completed it will be published on this website as well.