

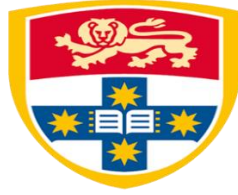
THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**SYDNEY**

Immigrants' Participation in Australian Politics

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge; the content of this Master of Arts (Research) thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been used for any degree or any other publications.

This thesis meets the University of Sydney's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) requirements for the conduct of the research.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

Name: Sushma Sapkota

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## **Abstract**

Immigration is a thought-provoking and important topic in all western democratic societies. However, immigrant political participation levels in host countries varies vastly from country to country. Australia is one of the widely diverse multicultural countries in the world. This research project investigates the reasons why its diversity is not fairly represented in electoral politics with a focus on parliamentary representation. It identifies the reasons underlying immigrant participation or non-participation in formal politics in Australia through a detailed analysis of the barriers and enablers for political participation in two Sydney migrant communities.

This research also considers why Australia remains behind other comparative settler nations such as the United States and Canada in the visible inclusion of ethnic and migrant representation. Today's modern world is a global village where globalisation has made it easy for people to move from one place to another. As a result, it is important to study immigrants and the role they play in host countries as active office bearers, voters, or as passive supporters of the political approach taking part in voluntary activities.

This research studies immigrants from 'non-white' and 'non-European' backgrounds to identify barriers and enablers to political participation in the Australian national parliament.

The study finds that the generational difference of migration plays a vital role in political participation in host countries. Pre-migration background, initial settlement and language are some of the factors in deciding the reasons for participation or non-participation in the national political process in Australia.

*Key words:* Australian politics, participation, immigrants, ethnic minorities, discrimination, inclusion, challenges, resettlement, community activities, multicultural country

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

The 2022 election episode of Kristina Keneally's 'parachuting' into the electorate of Fowler shows the Australian political parties' perception and policy when it comes to the inclusion of ethnic minorities and immigrants in mainstream political roles. Party selection of candidates sometimes sees the 'parachuting' of a candidate into a constituency where the party leader appoints the candidate to run for election (Koop and Bittner, 2011). This process of selecting contestants overlooks contestants' local constituency associations. In the election held on May 2022, Labor's 'white' candidate, Kristina Keneally, was preselected to represent one of the ethnically diverse constituencies. This led to a debate over inclusiveness in the Australian media. Local Labor member Tu Le, a second-generation immigrant from the Vietnamese community aspired to the candidacy but was unable to secure preselection. Ms Le is one of the elite interviewees in this thesis who contributed her opinions (see the Analysis chapter).

Tu Le embodies many voters in Fowler, and she was confident of her ability to represent people of the division and address community issues in parliament. This could not happen because she was not chosen to be pre-selected over Kristina Keneally in the recent election 2022. Fowler is an electorate where only 11.0% of people have both parents born in Australia, and 76.1% of people have both parents born overseas (ABS, 2016). Further, the most common descents in Fowler were Vietnamese 16.3%, Chinese 11.2%, Australian 8.1%, English 7.4%, and Italian 4.4% (ABS, 2016).

After the election, Kristina Keneally was defeated by an independent candidate with a local connection from the Vietnamese background, Dai Le. Locals decided to select Ms Le

over the ‘parachuted’ candidate to represent them in the parliament. Dai Le is now the MP of the electorate of Fowler, creating history as the first MP of Vietnamese origin in Australian parliament. This conveys the ultimate message to the political parties that culturally and linguistically diversified communities should not be taken for granted. The result shows the importance of respecting voters’ views, and the need for ethnic and migrant representativeness in the parliament, which this thesis discusses.

This thesis identifies reasons for the participation or non-participation of Australian immigrants in formal politics. The target population groups in this study are ‘Non-European’ and ‘Non-White’ immigrant communities. Australia has a significant immigrant history, with a multicultural society. According to former Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull in an Australian government multicultural policy statement, ‘Australia is the most successful multicultural society in the world’ (DOHA, 2017). This thesis analyses the reasons why immigrant and ethnic communities’ representation is not fairly presented in the Australian federal parliament. It also identifies the hidden and visible drivers in host countries’ politics. The motivations for participation and de-motivations for non-participation in politics in the host countries are also considered in the thesis.

Two migrant communities, Lebanese, and Vietnamese are studied, with interviews held with member participants and non-participants in Australian political activities. These two communities were chosen for study because both come within the required targeted population of ‘Non-European’ and ‘Non-White’ background. Both communities have a long-standing relationship with Australia from a migration and diplomatic perspective. According to DFAT, ‘Australia and Vietnam are strong partners with shared strategic interests in maintaining peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region based on international law’ (Vietnam Country Brief, n.d.). Detailed diplomatic relationship and migration history of both countries are discussed in the later chapters.

The underrepresentation of ethnic minorities and immigrants in political participation in Australia can be related to the country's immigration laws and policies from the late nineteenth century to the mid-1970s. The White Australia Policy (WAP) systematically excluded the migration of ethnic minorities, resulting largely in anxieties persisting motivation in 1940s and beyond (Walker, 1999). WAP was a complicated doctrine, predicated on racial nationalism (Tavan, 2005). WAP's racial and cultural viewpoint was diffused throughout society and government. At the turn of the twentieth century and the establishment of the Federation, non-European settlement in Australia significantly declined from an already low 1.25% to 0.21% in 1947. As Tavan notes:

‘By the early twentieth century, there existed a common-sense assumption that racial and cultural characteristics; that is, Whiteness, Britishness and Australianness were crucial elements of Australian nationhood and should be a major determinant of who would be allowed entry and granted membership of the national community.’ (2005).

WAP also gave power to immigration officers, at their discretion, to make non-European immigrants sit for a dictation test in any language. As a result, very small numbers of immigrants from non-European background were able to pass the test. These are some of the reasons behind the decline in the settlement of Non-European and Non-White populations in Australia during early 1910s.

Pietsch observes that the ‘representation gap in Australia suggests a broader social problem — namely, that Australia's goal of achieving racial and ethnic equality within a multicultural framework has yet to be realised’ (2019). She further mentions that the reasons for the participation gap in Australian politics between ‘People of Colour’ and ‘White’ is complex and multidimensional. WAP restricted immigrants from ‘Non-European’ and ‘Non-

White' backgrounds, which is one of the major historical reasons for immigrants to be low in representation in national politics, but even after the abolition of WAP there is still a gap in participation in politics by immigrants. So, the key to the thesis lies in this aspect of immigration. This thesis not only puts the claim of low participation of ethnic minorities and immigrants in electoral politics in Australia, but also it also goes in detail discussion into motivation and distraction factors about the topic from the selected two representative communities.

## **1.1 Thesis Chapters and Outline**

This thesis is organised into five chapters. The first chapter, Introduction, provides the thesis's background, objectives, research question, facts, and a brief immigration history of non-European immigrants. This chapter also discusses the significance and anticipation towards the topic of the research. The second, Literature Review, identifies relevant academic literatures that provide evidence concerning low participation by immigrants and ethnic communities in formal political and supports the macro argument presented in the thesis. This chapter includes literatures from Australian migration history, WAP and its abolition. It also explores migration programs in Australia through the extraction of facts and figures, and their analysis.

The third chapter, Research Design and Methodology, outlines the research strategy and methods used, providing an overview of the qualitative methodology utilised, and the strategies employed to recruit participants for elite and ethnographic interviews. It also discusses the research ethics considerations of the study, as well as the strengths and limitations of the methods used in this research. The fourth chapter, Findings, contains detailed discussion of the research findings. This includes an introduction to research

participants, with pseudonyms for ethnographic interviewees, and the actual introduction of the elite interviewees, their stories and views of the topics are discussed. This chapter is divided into seven sections, including the recommendations on how to increase immigrant and ethnic minority participation in Australia federal politics.

The final chapter, fifth, Conclusion, includes my study of the participants and their views, and contains my interpretations. It also includes my understandings from observations of participants, their expressions and physical environment during face-to-face interviews. It concludes by summarising the research findings. The chapter also includes recommendations and anticipation towards the participation and the whole research topic for further studies.

## **1.2 Australian Migration History**

Australia, since colonisation as a British Territory, has seen continuing arrival of people from other countries. Australian migration has a rich history, but the source of migration and the attitudes towards migration have considerably varied since 1788 (Migration Heritage Centre, 2010). The first migrants in the post-colonial stage largely consisted of convicts, and some military personnel from Britain, Ireland, and other British Colonies. This was followed by small numbers of voluntary migrants, again mainly from Britain and Ireland (Migration Heritage Centre, 2010). Immigration of free settlers was also encouraged by British authorities from the 1820s (*A History of the Department of Immigration: Managing Migration to Australia*, 2017). Later, the nature of migration completely changed with the arrival of migrants from different backgrounds and cultures after the discovery of gold in 1851. There have been various phased changes in migration policy and yearly priorities of the nature of migrant, and migration intake numbers are updated and revised by Immigration

Department. Recently, there has been more emphasis on general skilled migration along with family visas.

Historically, in settler societies such as Australia, Canada and the United States, immigration policies were connected to ‘nation-building’ approaches, and the policies were mostly racially influenced, with widely accepted view that immigrants would come to stay back for the sesettlement (Bird et al., 2011). Migration was presented in a way that immigrants are expected to populate and work in low-level labour jobs, while official positions and office work and high-level jobs were covered by ‘Whites’. In the decade from 1851 to 1861, migrants from Britain, Ireland, Continental Europe, China, the United States, and New Zealand and the South Pacific made migration more diverse.

With Australia’s Federation in 1901, which itself had been motivated by limited migration control by the colonial legislatures, the management of immigration transferred to the Federal government. It passed the *Immigration Restriction Act* (1901), commonly referred to as the White Australia Policy (WAP). This legislation made tougher rules for Asian and other non-European migrants for the next sixty years. Finally, restrictions on migration were relaxed in Australia from the 1950s. But only six years later, in 1956, non-Europeans were permitted to apply for Australian citizenship, followed by the easing of mixed-race migration with the country’s first migration agreement with a non-European country, Turkey (Migration Heritage Centre, 2010).

Gradually after World War II, the WAP started getting down with the declining influence of racial theories and gained ground of assimilation theory. This led to the presumption that socialisation was one of the major determinants of people’s ability to integrate, not race (Tavan, 2005). Immediately after World War II, immigration of people from Europe and Great Britain had renewed emphasis, which led to Australia’s population growth by approximately 55 per cent that time (Price, 1968). The Holt and Whitlam

government reforms of 1966–1973 saw the increase of non-European entry rates to about 10,000, as the governments had been compelled to liberalise migration policy and citizenship laws.

The arrival of immigrants from Britain and Europe led to a decline in the dominance of ‘Britishness’ in the Australian political culture; however, British influence on the Australian political system is still there, even after the arrival of significant numbers of other European immigrants followed by Asians after WAP was abolished (Wilson, 1973). The British Westminster system and its operational process, along with its white supremacy, influenced the Australian politics then and that remain influenced till present mainly with its political structures.

Australia’s post-war assimilation policy started in 1945 when Australia accepted immigrants from Europe to work and settle permanently (Pietsch, 2013). Immediately after World War II, then Australian Prime Minister Ben Chifley established the Department of Immigration and introduced a post-war immigration program. The first Immigration Minister, Arthur Calwell, promoted mass migration, though in his November 1946 speech he stated that he hoped for every ‘foreign’ immigrant there would be ten Britons (Markus & Taft, 2015). In this speech, Calwell said that the government planned for the substantial increase in the proportion of the intake of Immigrants from continental Europe. However, as Calwell’s expectation of the significant migration from the mainland Europe could not happen in the time between 1947 to 1959 (Markus & Taft, 2015). Calwell’s proposal, especially his emphatic assurance, ‘for every foreign migrant there will be ten people from the United Kingdom’, was supported by trade unions, industry and unambiguously by most of the parts of Australian society (Collins, 1976).

The Calwell government's immigration policy was promoted to the Australian public. While assimilation was the stated policy aim, throughout the 1950s, close to no resources were committed to this objective (Markus & Taft, 2015).

Further, during the Labor Whitlam administration, the then Minister for Immigration, Al Grassby, introduced significant changes in official policy where migrants were recognised according to their skills, social attributes, and occupations, rather than on country of origin (Migration Heritage Centre, 2010). Grassby formalised a holistic change of policies towards multiculturalism, which had started informally after the dismantling of WAP. Minister Grassby moved forward on the abolition of ethnic and racial discrimination, announcing Australia as a 'multicultural' society. This led to the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948* amended that year, which declared that all migrants would be treated equally. This extension of multiculturalism and elimination of racially influenced Australia's law and practices extended into the Fraser Government.

By the 1970s, Australia became culturally diverse, with around 400 different languages, including Indigenous languages, spoken here (Department of Home Affairs, 2015). The establishment of two ethnic radio stations in 1975, ethnic television in 1979 and channel 28, now known as SBS, in 1980 has played a vital role in reaching out to people with ethnic and migrant stories. These media channels had great influence between 1975–82 in the expansion of multiculturalism, as they broadcasted different cultural and regional programs from around the world, mainly to people who have come to Australia to settle. Since then, there have been further advancements in multiculturalism, as the government started to launch various programs to enhance and expand this policy; for example, in 2009 the 'Diverse Australia Program' was launched. In 2010, this was amalgamated with the 'National Action Plan' to form the 'Diversity and Social Cohesion Program' (Parliament of Australia, 2010). This

proves the importance of multiculturalism and its significance in everyday lives which needs to be updated as per the need of the time.

### **1.3 The importance of Studying Immigrants**

Forty-four per cent of Australia's population comprises first and second-generation immigrants, making Australia one of the most diverse immigrant democracies in the world (Kwok & Pietsch 2017; Pietsch 2017). In 2021, 29.1% of Australia's population were born overseas, which decreased from 29.8% in 2020 (ABS, 2022). Also, the 2021 census released the report that almost half of Australians have parents born overseas (48.2%; ABS, 2022).

As such, it is important to study immigrants and the role they play politically in host countries, especially in a country with such great numbers of immigrants. This topic is of interest in most western democracies; however, immigrant participation in politics in host countries varies vastly from country to country (Zingher, & Thomas 2012). It is suggested that much of the literature stems from the observation that 'Non-White' immigrants are underrepresented in Australian political institutions, despite their having a long presence in the country of destination (Pietsch, 2019). There is a lack of literature on this topic in Australia given its importance. As nations become more diverse culturally, political institutions are under pressure to replicate the people they serve (Scarrow & Gezgor 2010). Political parties must be aware that inclusiveness and diversification is what the voters expect, so that people from diverse backgrounds are represented by those from their own communities. A deficiency of diversity within national politics is an indication of systematic segregation and the existence of a democratic shortfall (Phillips 1995).

In addition, not only is there a gap in the study of this thesis's topic in contemporary literature, this lack of research also appears to have been a feature of this area since being

first noted by Wilson in 1973. Almost every part of Australian society is affected by migration, and some of these areas are well-researched such as migrants and their macroeconomic context, for example, the current labour market issues. While the microeconomic part of the society and political science is not studied much so there is a prominent gap on it. It seems that political scientists have recognised that immigrants can also be one of the powerful parts of the political science studies and a worthy subject to be studied. But this subject is not studied in detail much till present period as well. Even looking into the with recent various election books there is a visible lack of discussion about migrant voting. For example, the series of election books such as *Morrison's Miracle* (2020), *Double Disillusion* (2018) and other books and special issues Australian scientists have been producing since late 1950s have tended not to include significant discussion on migrant voting. Different political parties and private organisations' sponsored workshops are held after each election to discuss key themes of elections and campaigns, patterns of voting behaviour, opinion polls, political party campaign strategies and the media's role (Gauja & Gromping, 2020). Therefore, discussions on elections are treated with importance, but migrant voting and immigrant participation in politics are missed in such discussions.

Gauja et al.'s (2020) *Morrison's Miracle*, book discussed the 2019 election campaign and its contexts, regulatory principles of federal election, candidates, and preselection; this chapter of the book is hopeful, but it focuses more on gender-based preselection issues but not on ethnic and migrant issues. The other chapters of the book are about ideology and populism, about polling's and all other aspects of election. While the 12<sup>th</sup> Chapter, 'Voter Behaviour' discusses about the Australian voter behaviour which examines impact of economic status, age, and ethnicity on how the citizen's vote. There is some discussion in this chapter about ethnic voting, but considering the importance of the topic still the space given on it is much lesser. A part of this 12<sup>th</sup> chapter only gives a detail about Asian migrants and

the marginal seats putting the middle-suburban seat in Melbourne, Chisholm in centre of discussion which was claimed to be made up of more than 30 per cent of East Asian voters. Both the major parties recruited Chinese candidates to attract the ethnic voters. This recruiting evident how important role the ethnic and migrant voters play in Australian federal elections. It can be related to the recent 2022 election of Fowler electorate in NSW where ALP sidelined the ethnic candidate on the preselection process and selected 'White' candidate resulting to lose its 'secured seat' to independent candidate from the local community as discussed in the starting of the thesis as well. Therefore, such an important topic not only has to be considered with importance by the political parties but also by the political scientists in the discussion to uplift its weightage on federal election.

When we compare Australia to two other large settler societies, Canada and the United States, Australia is unique in having undertaken very limited research on migration and representation. In Australia, most of those studies were in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Jupp 1997, 2003; Zappala & Castles, 1999). After this period very little research has been conducted, which is significant, given Australia's self-image as a successful multicultural nation. The terms 'ethnicity' and 'ethnic' became dominant in public discourse in the late 1970s, these were eventually adopted by Australian political and administrative policymakers. The interest of studying 'ethnicity' and 'multiculturalism' in Australia is seen in the Census figures of 1971, 1976 and 1981, which included the proxy indicator for ethnicity: the ability to speak language other than English (Jupp, 1984). The study of ethnic participation in politics started taking place in the field of political science during this period (Bullryant, 1987). Bullryant analysed that Jupp's argument that multidisciplinary views are needed to analyse Australian ethnic relations during this period (1985). He argues that both Marxist and non-Marxist scholars need to study the relationship between ethnicity, class consciousness and class mobilisation in Australia (Jupp, 1984). Jupp, in his edited collection,

further argues that mainstream political science analysis identified a decline in the traditional political split of working-class politics. He also stated that, ‘At the simplest level, then, the argument for further research is that not enough yet exists for us to understand the relationships between ethnicity and politics within the Australian context’ Jupp’s work *“Ethnic Politics in Australia”* formed the basis of the contemporary studies of migration policy and political participation. This book also makes it clear that the topic is important, and its influence is felt in contemporary scholarship on this topic. There are few books published about Australian election but the book chapters, which discuss about elections also fail to treat the topic of immigrant’s participation in politics with importance. Given this paradox, more research is needed to understand the immigrants position in Australian politics accurately.

#### **1.4 Research Goal**

As a result of mass migration in recent decades, there have been shifts from the cultural identification and to changes of the nations’ international borders (virtual) worldwide (Bird et al., 2011). The quest here lies in the political participation of immigrants: how truly representative is the Australian parliament and why? The research aims to identify reasons for immigrant participation or non-participation in Australian politics (electoral politics). Within such a broad topic, this research thesis is particularly important, since it provides new insights into the reasons for participation / non-participation in Australian politics.

Thus, this research assists the Australian political scientists to reflect on its inclusion of ethnic and migrant communities from ‘Non-European’ and ‘Non-White’ backgrounds into

mainstream politics. The study investigates two immigrant communities, Lebanese, and Vietnamese, for in-depth analysis for purposes mentioned below in the methods chapter. Research participants will also provide recommendations to political parties through this thesis in the chapters later so it will also assist on discussing the party policy on making the Australian parliament more inclusive. The study aims to bridge a huge gap of the relevant studies from the ethnic and migrant aspect of electoral participation in Australia.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter includes relevant literature in the fields of migration and immigrant participation in politics in host countries. It particularly focuses on Australia, where it has been argued that ethnically distinct immigrants tend to show less interest in politics generally and have lower rates of participation than Australian-born voters (Mackerras & McAllister, 1999). In ethnically diverse multicultural societies such as Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, integration is unlikely to succeed without adequate representation of ‘Non-White’ immigrants and their diverse interests (Pietsch, 2019).

Table 1 below shows ethnic and racial diversification in the US Congress. It displays the number of ‘non-white’ house and senate members from 2001 to 2021. We can see the gradual increment in the trend of a diversified Congress as evident below. Among the participants too, Black and Hispanic member representation is distinctly higher than for Asian Americans and Native Americans. The figures give a positive connotation on the increase and importance of diversification in one of the major economies in the world; however, Asian Americans and Native Americans should have more representation, based on their population. The Asian population was 11.9 million in 2000, which by 2019 had doubled to 22.4 million and is predicated to exceed 46 million by 2060 (Pew Research Centre, Sept. 2021). With this trend in population growth in diversified background population a higher participation in Congress could be expected to represent those diversified people in the country.

Some of the ethnic and racial groups are now on par with their share of the population in the United States (Schaeffer, 2023).

**Table 1. Growing Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Congress**

Number of non-White House and Senate members by race/ethnicity

	107 <sup>th</sup> (2001)	108 <sup>th</sup> (2003)	109 <sup>th</sup> (2005)	110 <sup>th</sup> (2007)	111 <sup>th</sup> (2009)	112 <sup>th</sup> (2011)	113 <sup>th</sup> (2013)	114 <sup>th</sup> (2015)	115 <sup>th</sup> (2017)	116 <sup>th</sup> (2019)	117 <sup>th</sup> (2021)
Black	36	37	41	41	39	42	42	46	50	56	59
Hispanic	19	22	25	26	26	29	31	32	39	43	46
Asian American	7	6	7	8	7	10	11	11	15	17	17
Native American	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	4	6

Note: Non-voting delegates and commissioners are excluded. Figures for the 117th Congress are as of Jan. 26, 2021. Asian Americans include Pacific Islanders. and Hispanics are of any race. Members who have more than one racial or ethnic identity for the above groups are counted in each applicable group.

Source: Congressional Research Service, CQ Roil Call, Brookings Institution, Pew Research Center (Buddiman and Ruiz, 2021)

After looking into US representation of ‘Non-White’ Congress members, we also look at figures to compare the United Kingdom and Australia in Table 2 below.

**Table 2. Progress in Diverse Political Participations**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Australia</b>	<b>UK</b>
2001	1.2%	2%
2022	4%	11%

Source: BBC, 20 May 2022

Table 2 above shows comparative improvements in political representation in the national parliaments in both Australia and the United Kingdom. Looking at the graph we can clearly see the difference in diversification in the representations. In 2001, both Australia and the United Kingdom were close to each other 1.2–2%, respectively, while in 2022 the United Kingdom’s representation level of diversity in representation increased to almost 11% while Australia struggled at around 4 %. Table 2 shows how far behind Australia has fallen behind the United Kingdom. About 13% of the UK population aged 16 and above were from an ethnic minority background in 2021/2022, while after the 2019 election 10% of Members of the House of Commons came from ethnic minority backgrounds (Uberoi & Burteon, 2022). Also, the new Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Rishi Sunak, who took on the job on 25 October 2022, is from a migrant community as both of his parents are from Indian origin. He is now the first British Asian Prime Minister in the United Kingdom (BBC, 2022). In Australia, the overseas-born population represented 27.6% of the population in 2021, which is just over 7 million people (ABS, 2021).

Immigrants’ political marginalisation undermines the process of democratic representation and accountability and perpetuates the view of immigrants and their

descendants as outsiders (Correa,1998). One of the reasons why immigrants still feel they are outsiders, despite living in the host country for a while, is that their representation is comparatively lower and not taken account of by the major parties, as Correa 1998describes.

Migration provides an unavoidable issue of public debate in western countries, with refugees and migrants increasingly viewed through the lens of security (Nyers & Rygiel, 2012). International migration has become a main feature of our societies, its causes and consequences are heterogeneous and constantly evolving in the modern era. Migrant lives and experiences represent a variety in lifestyle depending on countries of origin and destination, personal circumstances, and year and duration of migration (Bermudez, 2016). The political incorporation of immigrants is a difficult and complex process (Chui et al., 1991; Dancygier & Saunders, 2006; Lim et al., 2006). As such, it is important to study immigrants and ethnic minorities' political participation from different perspectives.

## **2.2 Immigrant Facts and Figures, and Immigrant Parliamentarians in Australia**

Table 3 below shows Australia's overseas migration according to regions of birth. It gives us an idea of how ethnically and culturally diversified the Australian population is. Table 3 demonstrates the regional background of Australian immigrants.

**Table 3. Overseas Migrant Arrivals in Australia According to Region of Birth 2014–15 and 2019–20, Year Ending June**

<b>Region of Birth</b>	<b>2014–2015</b>	<b>2019–2020</b>
Oceania	77,112	91,703
North-West Europe	55,496	48,676
Southern & Eastern Europe	18,694	15,123
North Africa & Middle East	23,104	24,444
South-East Asia	66,166	67,912
North-East Asia	99,369	86,932
South & Central Asia	79,921	120,441
Americas	29,941	36,933
Sub-Saharan Africa	15,450	17,462

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics Migration Australia 2019, 2020 financial year

In analysing the data presented above, migration from Asian countries is much higher than from European and other regions, respectively. The total number of South-East Asian, North-East Asian and Central and South Asian migrants in 2019–20 is 275,285, which increased from 245,456 in 2014–15. On the contrary, there is a decline in the number of migrants from North-West Europe and Southern and Eastern Europe, 63,799 in 2019–20, decreasing from 74,190 in 2014–15. Irrespective of this change in social composition, representation of ‘Non-white’ or ‘Non-European’ ethnic minorities in the Australian federal parliament shows that there was only one representative of Asian background between 2001 to 2010, which increased to two in 2013. After the 2016 election this increased with two further representatives of Middle Eastern heritage, which reaches to 2.7% of the total

membership of the House of representatives (Pietsch, 2019). Among them, Asian Australians remain further unrepresented when compared with their population proportion. In 2019, only three candidates of Asian ancestry were elected, and represented one of the major migrant communities in Australia in the parliament. This increased to at least six members from the Asian descent in 2022 election.

**Table 4. Main Languages Spoken at Home**

<b>Main Languages Spoken at Home</b>	<b>Population Count</b>
Mandarin	685,274
Arabic	367,159
Vietnamese	320,758
Cantonese	295,281
Punjabi	239,033

Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021

Table 4 above demonstrates the main languages spoken at home by immigrants from specific linguistic backgrounds. The Arabic and Vietnamese communities are the area of focus in this research, and we can see here that these two immigrant communities are among the communities whose languages are on the top five languages spoken in Australia. The importance in choosing these communities for discussion is justified by this figure as well. The core of this research concerns the ‘Non-European’ and ‘Non-White’ immigrant communities and their participation in Australian political activities, which the above presented both tables, Table 3 and 4 depict its importance.

### **2.3 Anticipation of Political Participation**

Immigrant participation in host country politics differs from state to state. Though the political integration of immigrant groups is a complex process, each separate country should implement its policy as per the context (Chui et al., 1991; Dancygier & Saunders 2006; Lim et al., 2006). Political institutions must be inclusive, so that they represent diversity in today's globalised world. Within the complexity of this process, every host country must have a contextual policy concerning political integration of ethnic and migrant communities. A lack of diversity within national-level politics signals systematic exclusion and the existence of a democratic deficit (Phillips, 1995). The term 'democratic deficit' refers to a situation where the organisations and their decision-making measures lack democracy and responsibility towards the democracy (Democratic deficit, n.d.). In the context of this thesis, 'democratic deficit' refers to lack of representation of the ethnic and migrant community members in Australian parliament where the gap is seen in the inability of those communities' access national level to the decision-making institution which is the national parliament. The adequate political representation of 'Non-White' immigrants and ethnic minority groups has important implications for the overall quality of democracy — indeed, it is an expected outcome of the pluralist models of democracy (Pietsch, 2019). To practically implement democratic principles, countries must have an inclusive and diversified national parliament. There has been substantial research in Australia on the topic of migrant political participation, mostly in the late 1990s (Jupp 1997, 2003; Zappala & Castles, 2000).

Australia is an important suitable country to study immigrants and ethnic communities because it has the highest percentage of immigrants as citizens of any state in the

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (Zingher & Thomas, 2012). In the study of patterns in immigrant political behaviour, the large and diverse community of Australian immigrants provides an excellent environment to study immigrant political attitudes and voting behaviour. Therefore, it is important to discuss the role of political participation of ethnic minorities and immigrants when it comes to representation in political activities in Australia from a regional perspective, too. The adequate political representation of immigrants and ethnic minority groups has important implications for the quality of democracy — indeed, it is an expected outcome of pluralist models of democracy (Pietsch, 2019). Australia must encourage the participation of immigrant and other ethnic communities in mainstream politics, including in the Commonwealth Parliament. Therefore, as the high level of socio-economic involvement and achievement is shared by immigrants and ethnic minorities in everyday life in society, it is also anticipated that such active involvement of the immigrants and ethnic minorities in the Australian Parliament too in the future.

#### **2.4 Political Participation and Descriptive Representation**

This section focuses on the literatures in relation to political participation and its importance. Like any other social concept, the interpretation of political participation is subjective in nature. In this research, ‘political participation’ refers to the participation in the electoral process, which is one of the primary engagements in state power by citizens. This includes running for election, holding political office, having office holding roles in political organisations (such as political parties) and taking part in the party pre-selection process with the objective of being selected as a party-endorsed candidate for office.

This thesis is based on the view of ‘descriptive representation’, it poses that representation should be descriptive in nature for a variety of reasons (substantive and expressive), though there are arguments as to the effectiveness of relying on descriptive representation alone as a measure of quality. Underprivileged or disadvantaged groups gain advantage through better communication, practical understanding, community significance of ‘ability to rule’ and connection to the society of members of group through descriptive representative (Mansbridge, 2018). ‘Representing here means acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them’ (Pitkin, 1967, p. 209). In this thesis, ethnic and minority community representation is presented with importance, as the communities can have better communication, discussion on practical approach of political policies, community’s significance, and connection to the community member through descriptive representation. Communities vote for candidates who raise the voice of their communities in parliament. If the national parliament is represented, then community members see a candidate who is ‘like me’. The sense of ‘like me’ enhances efficacy, interest and engagement among the ethnic and migrant communities but the underrepresented communities who otherwise feel that politics is not for them, that it is a ‘white man’s game’ (Celis & Mazur, 2012). The advantage of having culturally diverse representatives in parliament is that they put forth issues faced by their communities. In addition, elected representatives can communicate back to those communities in appropriate languages as expected by their voters. When ethnicity comes into consideration, community members may choose or consider individuals that would represent their ethnicity rather than party policy preferences (Zingher & Thomas, 2012). Descriptive representation comes into action where community members prefer to choose a candidate who is ‘like me’ and ‘knows my community’s issues’. Members of ethnic communities seem to choose or nominate candidates

from their own background to represent them, which is a barrier for others from different backgrounds.

One of the classic definitions of political participation is by Sidney Verba, an American political scientist as, 'By political participation we refer to those legal acts by private citizens that are directly aimed at influencing the selection of the governmental personnel and/or the actions that they take' as quoted in (Adamson, 2007). However, others do not fully agree with Verba's definition, arguing that confining 'political participation' within such limited actions excludes a wide variety of activities that should be included in political participation (Adamson, 2007).

In general, political participation includes political activities by citizens such as voting, joining political parties, protesting, running for public offices, or even demonstrating in a conventional or unconventional approaches in their engagement in democratic countries (Ekman & Amna, 2012). Further to these, political participation also includes joining interest groups and social movements, volunteering, or raising funds for political campaigns, along with writing to Members of Parliament about issues that communities face (Al-Momani et al., 2010).

In addition, the term 'political participation' has been used in different ways since the growth of modern democratic theory in the eighteenth century. McAllister observes that '[p]olitical participation has generally referred to four discrete but interrelated mechanisms which link political actors to the political system: voting, participation within political parties, communal activity and particularised contact between electors and their elected representatives' (1981, p. 66).

Here, we are not stressing that voting mechanisms as voting systems are outside the scope of this thesis's focus. We investigate participation in political parties, community activities and lobbying, and being in contact with elected representatives.

Similarly, ‘political participation’ is defined or viewed as engagement with conventional politics that adapts different forms, including activities such as following political news, expressing political opinions or talking about politics (Desposato & Norrander, 2005; Garcia Bedoya, 2005). These other ways of political participation can be very important to groups such as migrants, which are excluded from more formal political involvement (Bermudez, 2016). Bermudez further stated that although migrant involvement in formal politics might be limited, this is not necessarily the case with more informal or civic forms of engagement in relation to both home and host countries. Migrants also participate civically and politically through a wide array of other organisations such as trade unions, consumer and neighbourhood groups, human rights and peace movements, churches, and cultural and sports clubs (Bermudez, 2016).

Therefore, ‘political participation’ in an Australian context is not confined to casting votes to participate in the process. This thesis also takes into consideration direct participation in electoral candidacy or indirect engagement in other political activities such as attending political meetings at local levels, campaigning for parties, collecting donations and volunteering in election processes. However, the thesis mainly focuses on formal electoral participation.

## **2.5 Literature in Australia Concerning the Determinants of Political Participation**

This section includes a summation of the literature in Australia on the determinants of political participation. Immigrant political behaviour is categorised by two distinct, but interrelated, theories from past research, especially since the 1980s. This was the time in Australian migration history when more than 70,000 refugees settled in Australia from South-east Asia, mainly from Vietnam. The arrival of Vietnamese refugees in such a large number

enhanced the arguments and discussions about accepting and acculturating migrants in the country. This episode of Australian migration history stresses how significant the role that Vietnamese migrants have played is. This is also one of the reasons in choosing this community as a target group for the research.

In recent decades, scholarly debate has paid increasing attention to the representation of ‘visible minority’ or ‘Non-White’ immigrant and ethnic minority groups in politics (Bilodeau, 2016; Bird, 2016; Bird, Saalfeld, & Wust, 2011; Black, 2016; Van Heelsum, Michon & Tillie, 2016; Jones-Correa, 2016; Morales, 2009; Morales & Pilati, 2011; Sagggar, 2016).

### **2.5.1 Economic Settlement and Generational Aspects of Participation**

Immigrants may be highly motivated to participate in politics, but there may be structural impediments such as more ‘immediate’ concerns; for example, economic settlement, which takes time and energy away from politics. The research on immigration world-wide suggests that having a stable job and earning a good income is an initial necessity, though it is not the sole determinant of successful integration into the host country (Collins, 2013). From Collin’s research it was found that the economic aspect of initial settlement of immigrants is one of the main reasons that can be connected to political participation in the host country.

Immigrants become preoccupied with economic security at first; it might take a long time to pass this stage. As Lam, one of the participants of this research said, ‘First I felt I need money to secure myself in this new country and started working day and night. Later I realised that I was already habituated to this routine which is not easy to come out and change priorities.’ So, according to Lam, we can relate the connection of economic settlement and political participation.

Writing in the 1980s, Wilson examined the low levels of political participation by migrants in the post-war years. He discussed that the position of immigrants in the socio-economic life of Australian society from where their past, current, and future political behaviour could be studied (Wilson, 1980). Wilson found that large immigrant groups mostly have the concern of economic benefits to settle first rather than getting involved in political activities. While others play active parts in Australian political, cultural, social, and intellectual life, some take part in these activities by changing the political beliefs they had prior to migration. Thus, it could be understood that migrants who are concerned about economic settlement focus on economic factors first.

With the decline of British immigration, the Whitlam administration turned its focus to more on Southern Europe to attract immigrants from Italy and Greece. This led to the gradual exclusion of the dictation test (Pietsch, 2013). Immigrants from Southern Europe formed the Australian post-war working-class workforce (Sherington, 1980), demonstrating the importance of immigration to Australian capitalism (Collins, 1976). Collins argues that immigrant labour has provided a reserve army of workers, making up for labour shortages that restricted Australian capitalism since settlement. This has been especially true for Southern Europeans who were recruited for the bottom layer of Australia's proletariat class (Collins, 1976). Between 1947 and 1971, approximately 337,000 immigrants arrived from Italy, which was a reasonable change in responding to the decline of the British immigrants (Pietsch, 2013). Family, regional groups and other organisations have been the principal agencies in resettling Southern Europeans in Australia (Price, 1968).

One of the important reasons that immigrants are not able to join political parties is that they enter the workforce at the very lowest occupational categories. The Australian workforce system does not always appreciate new Australians mainly as the system does not easily offer high-skilled and decision-making positions to immigrants (Wilson, 1980).

However, this is not the case at present. Since the 1990s there has been a high increase in skilled migration, family visas and refugee provisions, and changes have been implemented to encourage immigrants in the workplaces according to their skills.

Many first-generation immigrants generally face social and economic obstacles; for example, skilled immigrants such as doctors and engineers often end up taking semi-skilled jobs such as driving taxis. Either their qualifications are not recognised, or they are unsuccessful getting access to employment matching their skill set (Collins, 2013). Career settlement factors also play an important role in social and political integration in host countries. These general obstacles could later relate to political obstacles, too.

The motivation for political involvement may be passed on to immigrant offspring. Second generation immigrants may have more influence upon the political behaviour than on the parents themselves. Chui et al. (1991) stated that the second generation is more acutely conscious of its ethnic background as a social barrier than first generations. Second-generation migrants, even with greater upward social mobility compared to their parents, see themselves as treated differently by others because of ethnicity. Talking about generational differences the participants of this research argue this intergenerational effect needs to be tested directly in further research.

### **2.5.2 Language as a Barrier to Participation**

Language skills are important during migrant settlement, and the issue of language has been identified as central to integration in various studies by different scholars. Defining the role and importance of language in everyday life and political life, Anastassov (2017) presents the view that the basic language of the ‘talking human’ (everyday communication) dominates

over the ‘political human’ (presentations, seminars, or speech) of politically motivated and participating persons. They argue that language is ‘Freedom Within Constraints’, saying that in using language while abiding the rules of language one must have capacity to ‘play’ and ‘break’ them together (Anastassov, 2017). Anastassov further states that the relationship between language (linguistics) skills and political science on how power is maintained and imposed have the direct link with each other. So, it is justified that the use of language skills is important to lead a successful political career.

The explanation for the differences with the use of language is that language skills are imposed as high information cost to non-native speakers to take part in political activities (Hawthorne, 2005; Soto & Merolla, 2006) and are an important constraint on access to political information (Finifter & Finfter, 1989).

When talking about political participation by migrants, former New South Wales Member of Parliament, Franca Arena, stressed the importance of languages as she focused on the difficulties and problems that Australians of non-English background have in joining political parties and being elected to office. Born in Italy, Franca Arena felt that it is a difficult task to overcome the language barrier. She also highlighted that language and political participation role has not been studied by the scholars with much importance by the political scientists. From her perspective, language matters and language play a significant role in political participation by immigrants.

Language assists the transition of immigrants’ political interest from countries of origin to host countries. Having good linguistic skills in host country languages enhances participation. Further, predispositions that affect individuals’ levels of political interests such as age, education and income will affect migrant groups in the same way, with older and better educated individuals being more interested in politics, but the overall level of interest

of Non-English-Speaking Background (NESB) immigrants will be lower compared to the other groups due to the potential language barrier (Zingher & Thomas, 2012).

Language is a ‘technical barrier’ that is about narrow difficulties in communications. To sum up, these literatures make it clear that language plays a vital role in hindering the pathway towards political participation by NESB immigrants.

### **2.5.3 Racial and Ethnic Discrimination**

The political participation and representation of immigrants and culturally diverse people in national politics conveys significant representative and normative consequences for political parties, and for the whole democratic party system (Bloemraad & Schonwalder 2013). This highlights issues of unfair exclusion and prejudice. Pietsch raises the concern as:

‘Research to date has focused largely on candidate selection process and discrimination in practise however there are often formidable barriers to immigrant and ethnic minority representation in national level politics this barrier consists of a broad array of societal and institutional constraints which often vary according to ethnic, religious and social socioeconomic background and migration status and are often magnified by racial and ethnic discrimination.’ (2019)

In Australia, there is evidence that ethnically distinct immigrant groups are more likely to be subject to discrimination in terms of access to employment, and they are more likely to experience higher levels of interpersonal discrimination (Fozdar & Torezain, 2008; Hawthorne, 2005). While choosing political parties in host countries, visible minority

immigrant characteristics are more likely to be the subject of resentment (Zingher & Thomas, 2012). Zingher & Thomas (2012) further explained that due to the resentment there is great potential for ill-treatment and all the different ethnicity-related topics, members of those groups view ethnicity as a politically relevant issue. Zingher & Thomas (2012) further argue that ethnic differences between immigrant groups and the local population directly influence the level of political interest of immigrants and their propensity to vote as a cohesive bloc. Immigrants generally do not vote according to an immigrant-specific policy agenda, but they may articulate views about specific policies relevant to their interest as immigrants. Evidence of a distinctive immigrant or ethnic agenda that shapes immigrant voting choice is lacking (Zingher & Thomas, 2012).

Chong and Kim (2006) claim that immigrants who experience discrimination are more likely to give greater importance to the views of an ethnic members from the same community than any other individuals. Therefore, it is very important to find out the reasons beyond the migration numbers only to make immigrants and ethnic minorities participation visible in national politics, which this research aims to focus on in contributing to the relevant literature.

#### **2.5.4 Factors of Choosing Political Parties by Immigrants**

Political parties are very important in countries that have strong party systems. Political parties are the core of Australian democracy. Political power is exercised through parties: states, territories and federal levels are made of political parties' members. This section of the thesis explores the factors that help new migrants and others in choosing political parties, and a relationship between government and citizens. Studies show that prior political learning influences migrants in the process of political resocialisation. 'Resocialisation' is needed as

immigrants who practised politics in their home countries before migration will have to unlearn previous practices and learn the new host countries political system. Individuals who were interested in politics prior to emigrating are likely to remain interested in politics in their new countries (Finifter & Finifter, 1989; White et al., 2008).

Immigrant policy preferences are often heterogeneous, even on seemingly relevant issues such as immigration, bilingualism, and multiculturalism. Party policy preference also plays an important role in deciding immigrant participation, as immigrants seek policies that represent their views and their communities. Ethnicity and the traditional socio-economic factors are two determinants of the variation between host and origin countries in relation to political participation by immigrants (Zinghar & Thomas, 2012). Zinghar and Thomas (2012) further mentioned that immigrants' ethnic differences from the local population, which includes indicators such as language and residential segregation, are the regions that obstruct contributions in politics, as well as participation.

The political environment also influences migrants in host country political involvement: migrants tend to favour parties that have been electorally more successful in the Australian states and territories in which they reside (Finifter & Finifter, 1989).

### **2.5.5 Geography and Settlement**

Immigrant groups in Australia are geographically concentrated. Due to this there is a potential to foster ethnic kinship and politically mobilised immigrant groups along ethnic lines (Wierzbicki, 2004). Geographic concentration of immigrants not only leads to the possibility of political mobilisation along ethnic lines, but the potential for political organisations to organise immigrants along ethnic lines (Cho et al., 2006).

In Australia, settlement patterns of the local population and NESB people are quite different. NESB immigrants are concentrated in traditional Labor party constituencies in major urban centres, while immigrants from Britain, New Zealand and Ireland are more likely to settle in politically competitive suburban constituencies and in rural areas (Grimes, 1993). There is the possibility that NESB immigrants support Labor because they settle at high rates in typical Labour strongholds and are socialised as Labor voters by their neighbourhoods (see Zinghar & Thomas, 2012).

Finifter and Finifter (1998) argue that, when considering the development of political attitudes in immigrants, there are reasons for hypothesising different types of effects about influence of political attitudes immigrants already held. In their research they found that Americans settling in Australia have an overall similarity of the economic and political system as that of the United States. These pre-migration similarities make the American immigrants' political attitudes relevant when adapting to the new political culture in Australia.

Furthermore, as per Zinghar and Thomas (2012), the general political tendencies that affect an individual's interest in politics do not change because of migration; however, changing political systems offers a new set of political choices and individuals may translate their predispositions differently.

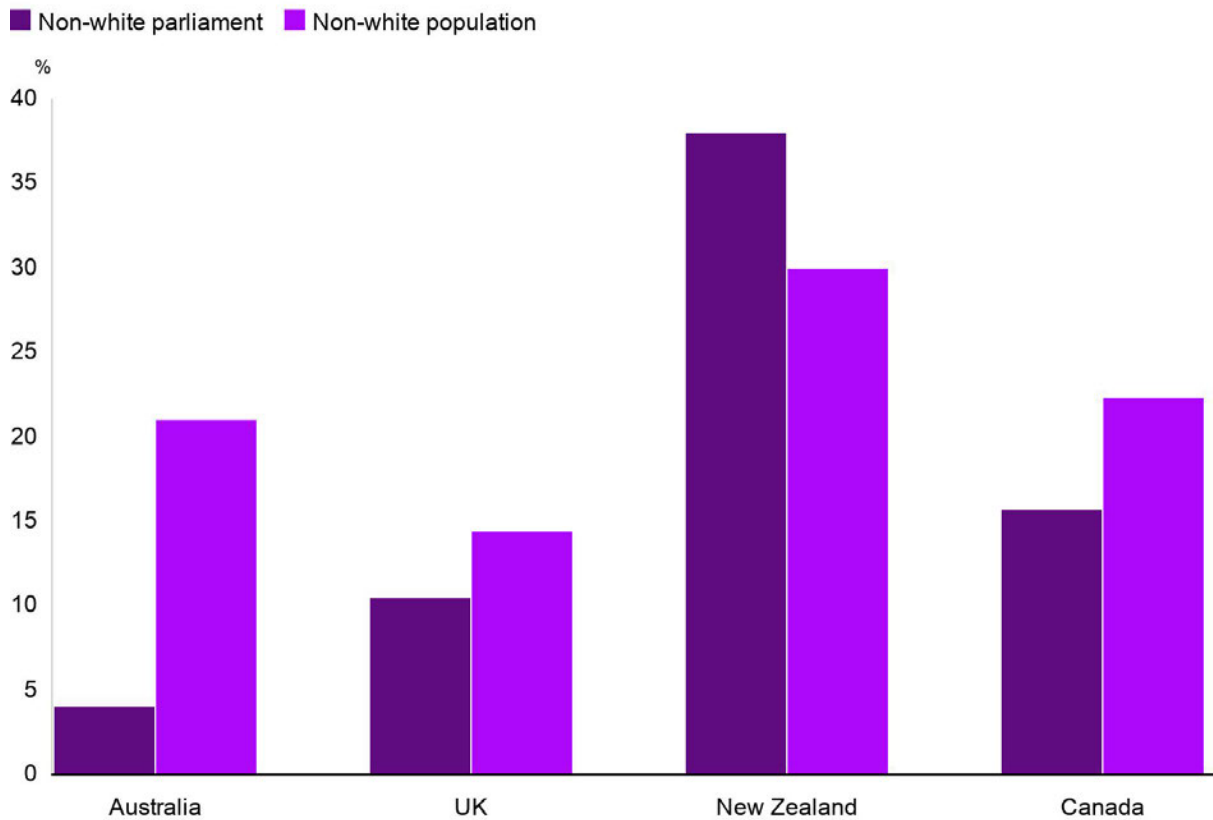
## **2.6 Migrants' Political Participation in an International Context**

It is important to study the broader literatures to understand the question of migration and politics. This section examines relevant literature outside Australia. Much of the research on the political participation and representation of immigrants and ethnic minority groups in national politics has been conducted in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and

the European Union (Banducci, Donovan & Karp, 2004; Bilodeau, 2016; Bird, 2005; Black, 2013; Bloemraad, 2013; Health et al., 2013; Jones-Correa, 2005; Lien, 1997; Ramakrishnan & Bloemaraad, 2008; Saggar, 2007, 2013, 2016).

**Figure 1.**

### **Racial representation: parliament v population**



Source: Parliaments/Osmond Chiu



Figure 1 above shows where the selected countries (Australia, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Canada) stand regarding non-white populations compared to non-white representation in parliament. Among these four nations, New Zealand outperforms Canada and is followed by the United Kingdom. Australia remains far behind when non-white parliament members are compared to its non-white population. The non-white parliament is higher as presented above in the table by approximately 10% with its own population in New Zealand, as the other three countries' non-white population percentage is higher than its

parliamentarians. In Canada and the United Kingdom, difference in the non-white population and its non-white parliamentary representation is just 5–7%. In Australia the gap is around 15%.

### **2.6.1 The Canadian Context**

Immigrants and their behaviour in relation to political participation in Canada is a planned process and a careful consideration by the government, which has both positive and negative aspects (Chui et al., 1991). One of the reasons preventing immigrants entering politics in their host countries is social ties. Social ties play a pivotal role in immigrants acquainting themselves with their communities, and language plays a crucial role. Without social connections it is almost impossible for politicians to represent the values and shared feelings of representation. Therefore, fluency in English or French in Canada helps in learning about politics, which eventually leads to familiarity with local social circumstances (Chui et al., 1991). The immigration settlement programs in general paralleled rather than integrated with economic integration in Canada with federal and provincial governments contracting ethnic organisations to deliver language support, orientation, and settlement services (Adelman, 1994).

In a political context, social assimilation and representation in national policy formation will matter more than formal education. Canadian adults who are children of immigrants may have greater levels of political participation than first-generation immigrants partly because of comparatively strong assimilation and achievement orientations (Chui, Curtins & Lambert, 1991). Chui et al. further mentioned: ‘Perhaps Canadian politics is more accessible to immigrants than the political systems in Australia or the United States, or there may be strong

ethnic community ties that promote party's promotion in Canada but not in other countries as expected'. The comparative study of Australian and Canadian public policy and politics gained in importance during mid-1990s, though most of the studies focused on constitutional matters and federalism (Cooper, 1996). Adelman et al. (1994) argued that there is a divergence in the policy styles of Canada and Australia, with Australia adopting a centralised approach on immigration and refugee policy, while Canada has adapted a more flexible model. Though there are several internal differences in Australian and Canadian approaches to immigration and integration of immigrants and refugees into the political system, the rationale for collaborative projects on the topics of migration remains solid. In reflecting on the socio-historical analysis of Australian and Canadian multiculturalism there are both commonalities and differences acknowledged (Adelman, 1994). In both Australia and Canada, multiculturalism seems to be under challenge, with public perceptions of economic problems and the increasing presence of non-European immigrants, perceived as resistant to commonly held cultural values (Adelman, 1994).

It was found that newcomers who had resided in Canada less than 10 years were less likely to vote and were less likely to be exposed to political stimuli. After naturalisation, possible after three years of living in Canada, it may take some time for immigrants to become interested in and to understand Canada's electoral system.

### **2.6.2 The European Context**

Many European countries did not regard political mobilisation, participation and representation of immigrants and their offspring as important issues in both academic and politics in the past. Now, the immigration perspective has changed in European countries that

have already faced waves of immigration in the past five decades (Martiniello, 2018). The study of immigrant-related issues in academic fields results in fewer scholarships and lower budget allocations in European universities. Most European countries now have a reasonably good knowledge of immigrant political activities, but some gaps remain.

The political abilities and agency of migrants, whether locally or transnationally, have received less attention than other aspects of migrant lives. First, it is important to figure out that human capability itself is not letting immigrants to involve in politics or understanding the host country's laws is making the political participation process steady (Martiniello, 2018). Martiniello further added that recently only the home countries and host countries began to move towards the full political inclusion of migrants. The focus on formal or conventional politics has obscured the many ways in which migrants participate in politics; for example, through trade unions, migrant organisations and other civic initiatives at the local, national and transnational levels (Bermudez, 2016).

The study of migrant participation in politics has developed less interest than other aspects of migration it is because for a long-time migrants were not considered as the political actors specially in the European region (Bermudez, 2016). Bermudez observed that immigrants were seen as temporary guest workers, which implies that they were not going to remain in the host country and that their sole field of activity was in the labour market. However, this perception has changed now as guest workers in Europe become permanent residents, bringing over families or starting new ones, and becoming involved in all aspects of society. Involvement in politics, both formal (electoral activities) or informal (not just electoral or party-related) political activities including that taking place across borders showed that migrants were not outside the political sphere, even if often they remained at the margins (Martiniello, 2005).

### 2.6.3 The North/South American Context

National and international literatures stress the importance and significance of immigrant participation in politics from different perspectives. The political participation and representation of immigrants and ethnic minorities in national-level politics carries important symbolic and normative implications for political parties and for the entire democratic political system (Bloemraad & Schonwalder, 2013).

On examining the political participation of Colombian migrants in the United States, it is argued that one of the reasons behind migrants' demand for dual citizenship rights was their interest in acquiring political rights in both the home and the host societies (Escobar, 2005). In an early study of Latinos in New York City, Escobar found that levels of naturalisation and participation in informal politics in the host country were low. Migrant men were more exposed to a lowering of their status and compensated by focusing on transnational activities such as economic, political, socio-cultural cross-broader activities (Jones-Correa, 1998). Escobar also claimed that women, on the one hand, made gains through migration and were more oriented towards the host society. Further to this, Bedoyac (2005) found that Latina women were more active than men in electoral politics in Los Angeles. On the other hand, it is found that the migrant politics oriented towards the home or host countries often goes hand in hand: 'many aspects of transnationalism end up accelerating the political integration of my immigrants in the United States' (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006).

At the micro level, the 2010 and 2014–2015 general social surveys in the United States of Colombian expats found that the correlation between engagement in home and host country elections can reflect the characteristics of the sample and political opportunities available in each country (Bermudez, 2016). Bermudez also found that Colombian migrants described their levels of engagement in host country politics, sometimes relating to their

participation in Colombia (home country), observing that '[f]inally, political contexts matter' (2016). Political involvement in the host country is analysed as the Columbian migrants were interested in politics in Columbia but felt this could only be expressed following migration to a freed democracy as they have been practising in the United States.

Representation of people from different cultures is crucial in the national political arena for policymaking preferences to address a society's needs. The country that includes representatives of varied cultural and ethnic backgrounds in national politics will be seen to be more democratic to its people. Immigrant and ethnic minorities participation in Australia's national parliament, and its importance as discussed in the chapter one above, analysed in subsequent chapters. We saw the facts and figures of immigrant participation in host country politics around the world in the literature review's 2.6 section earlier. These figures and data will assist in analysing the findings of the thesis relating with the above-mentioned background, context, facts and figures.

Another factor preventing entry into politics is a lack of political knowledge. Immigrants initially find it difficult to understand and be aware of the new political environment in the host countries. The other component, and one of the most significant factors, is cultural differences. Immigrants from different cultural backgrounds follow different cultures, so it takes time or even generations to get accustomed to the new cultural/political system, and to get involved in host country politics. This view is supported by Wilson's (1973) research in Australia. He studied levels of political activity, both informal and formal participation, which includes attention to politics, discussing politics, political campaigning, party membership, contacting officials and voting respectively on the part of native-born Australians and British and Italian immigrants. It was found that children of immigrants as adults had a considerably higher educational and occupational status than the first generation. As education directly correlates with participation, which depends on

educational background, it is anticipated about immigrants' roles in understanding politics in their host country through education is not the absolute factor. That role is played by social ties.

The next chapter focuses on the research design and methods used in this study. It includes the technical aspects of this research and the methodologies implemented in conducting the research. The focus of the research is the immigrant's reasons for participation or non-participation in electoral politics in Australia. While conducting the research, I talked to migrants with the aim of understanding their views, priorities, and opinion about the topic.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Research Design and Methodology**

This research identifies the reasons for participation or non-participation in formal (electoral) politics in Australia by immigrants from different regions and cultures. What migrants feel and how they see themselves regarding formal political involvement in their host country, Australia, is investigated in this thesis.

The research's methodology follows the qualitative approach, undertaken through different forms of interviews. Qualitative research is research about people's lives, social movements, cultural phenomena, and organisational functioning nationally or internationally. In qualitative research some data may have been quantified such as census data, evidence, or statistics about the background of the person or object studied, but most of the analysis is interpretative (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Furthermore, qualitative research is carried out by creating relationships with persons, locations and behaviour (Ezzy, 2002). Relationships among persons, locations and behaviour reflect the approach taken in this project, as I built relationships with people from two migrant communities. I met most interviewees in their workplaces, and interviewed them, accordingly, observing their own contextual daily lives.

The research approach is mainly based on an inductive methodology, which starts with comprehensive observations of the world, then moves towards more conceptual overviews and ideas (Neuman, 2003). This research started with the compilation of the current literature, then a sample was determined, a cohort selected, and new data collected. The main goal of using an inductive approach is to find out results of research from the themes that comes up from the raw data without restrictions imposed by structured methodologies

(Thomas, 2006). Individual and group interviews were conducted, and then observed them in their own daily life context. Brewer (2000, p. 313) defines ethnography as:

‘... the study of people in naturally occurring settings or “fields” by means of methods which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities to collect data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally.’

Ethnographic interviewing is the core method that includes people, languages, events and places where data are collected through observation, interviewing, reflecting and listening to participants.

### **3.1 Ontological Position**

This research takes a clear anti-foundationalist ontological position. Reasons behind the participation gap in the formal politics and the immigrant population — particularly the Non-Europeans, Non-Whites, and ethnic communities — cannot be understood without our interpretation of them.

Anti-foundationalists contend that the injunction to get knowledge is based on the ethical, political, and pragmatic aspect of the situation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The goal would be that there is no commitment to generalisation, objective ‘fact’, but the research is pitched to let the conversation continue. The diversity of experience is such that there are limits to the use of narrow, generalisable data collection and interpretive methods, given the diversity of the population and the subjective experience of individuals within it. Participant

observation, listening, and conversing and talking about life narratives is included in the qualitative privileged methodology.

### **3.2 Epistemological Position**

The 'real' or 'objective' phenomenon is identified and analysed after data collection concerning immigrant participation in formal politics. The interviewer, I, and the participants, had interactive and a personal mode of conversation process in collecting data. The epistemological phenomenon of that the data, their interpretations and results are based on the topic's context and not on its generalisation. Constructive researchers move forward by rejecting the view that an objective reality that can be known is present and take the position that social construction of knowledge and meaning must be the researcher's goal in understanding its complexities. A qualitative privileged methodology is used in this interpretivist research to find out the knowledge of the topic based on the understanding of the interviewees (Myers, 2019). An epistemological position with the classification of a hermeneutic (interpretive) approach is the method my research used for further research strategy. The interpretive approach is adhered to by an anti-foundationalist view.

Following the approach of interpretivism, this research fully supports the view that the world is socially constructed. The paradigm of the term 'constructivist' originated in Edmund Husserl's philosophical phenomena, along with several other German philosophers, including Wilhelm Dilthey — the training of interpretative understanding, which is called hermeneutics (Eichelberger, 1989). The reasons behind less participation cannot be determined as independently being objective, as we live in the world that is socially constructed of reality, which is explained from people's perspectives (Alston & Bowles, 2003).

### **3.3 Research Strategy**

Being a qualitative researcher, I've chosen interviews and focus groups as the major source of data collection to analyse the topic. I needed to talk to people, understand their opinions, find out the meanings of their stories, and analyse the significance of their behaviour through ethnography, interviews and participant observations to understand and study such social relations (Chirkov, 2009). Therefore, to understand the social relations of immigrants and their participation in Australian politics, first and second-generation immigrants of Lebanese and Vietnamese origins were selected for interviews and focus group research. As discussed in Chapter one, Lebanese and Vietnamese communities represent the target group of this research. These are immigrants from 'Non-white' and 'Non-European' backgrounds. While selecting the sample, not only the categories of 'non-white' and 'non-European' background were put forward, but also those who have a long-standing relationship to Australia. As a result, historical and generational differences could also be studied.

This research has employed triangulation and thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method of analysing, organising, describing, and illustrating themes revealed in data collection (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It has been a useful and flexible method in my research, so I opted for this approach.

### **3.4 Methods**

The research project employed two methods: semi-structured elite interviews and ethnographic interviews. Focus group discussion is detailed below. Guided semi-structured elite interviews were conducted with participants, who were deliberately selected to get general information relevant to immigrants and their participation in Australian politics. The

interviewees were purposefully selected to get specific input on the topic based on their lived experiences (Patton, 2001). As Patton exemplified, I selected the participants to get their special input on the thesis topic purposefully. The initial plan was to conduct a focus group discussion in a proper setting, but for a variety of factors (choice and COVID-19), the research ended up using the other three variants of interviews, which are elite interviews, ethnographic/folk interviews, and mini-groups discussion. The interviewees were conducted between December 2021 and April 2022. Three candidates — two from the Vietnamese community and one from the Lebanese community — were interviewed using elite interviews. Also, 13 participants were interviewed using ethnographic and mini-group discussion techniques: six from the Vietnamese community and seven from the Lebanese community. The participants were active in community activities, some were fascinated about the discussion of national politics and some not so much. The participants' backgrounds and views are presented in the Findings chapter below.

### **3.5 Conducting the Interviews**

Interviews provide qualitative data for researchers with comprehensive understandings of an interviewee's experience, and their interpretation of those experiences and the meaning they generate from context (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). During interviews, immigrants' experiences, approaches and interpretations of political participation, along with their observations of the research topic, are discussed.

Platt observes that the 'interview, which may be structured or unstructured, as practically advantageous because it does not require literacy and has a better response rate, is more flexible, and is "the more appropriate technique" for revealing information about

complex, emotionally laden subjects, or for probing the sentiments that may underlie an expressed opinion' (2012, p. 242). Guided interviews were chosen so that the similar nature of the information could be gathered from each participant of the interviewee; however, questions and follow-up questions were adjusted as required.

The interview locations were initially planned for the participants' offices (for office bearers) and the specific community get-together place or office in consultation and approval of participants, but due to COVID-19 travel restrictions and risks, the interviews moved to zoom video conferencing for two of the interviewees. Interviews initially started with semi-structured questions, and then moved to the guided interview on top of the research questions. Research questions and sub-questions were addressed while conducting the interview (see the appendix).

Interviews were open-ended and followed the principles of elite interviewing. As Hochschild (2009) says in her presentation about interviews, the interviewer must understand the context of the conversation so that he or she is not wasting the respondent's time and value of their shared ideas.

Among the participants, three elite interviews were conducted. Two of them were politically active members of Vietnamese origin: Tu Le, who contested for preselection of party candidacy in the 2022 federal election, and Kevin Lam, a Fairfield City councillor. The other elite interviewee was Mohamad Moubayed, of Lebanese origin. He is a politically active member of the community at Bayside City Council, taking office after council elections and involved in various community programs and meetings. Mohamad is also active in business associations, organising community functions and many other social functions focused on the Lebanese community and local politics.

### **3.6 Focus Group (Mini-Group Discussion)**

Focus groups, a group discussion method, have reemerged as a popular qualitative data-gathering method in a wide range of academic research projects (Morgan, 1996). Anderson observes that ‘a focus group is a group comprised of individuals with certain characteristics who focus discussions on a given issue or topic’ (Dilshad & Latif, 2013, p. 241). One advantage of focus groups is the interaction among participants within the discussion of a research topic (Lavrakas, 2008), which gives an insight into how different variables affect each other. Though effective focus group discussion could not be held as expected due to the reason mentioned earlier, mini-group discussions of a similar nature occurred during the data-collection stage.

Furthermore, six participants of Vietnamese background were interviewed for the part of focus group discussion. The original plan was to conduct two focus group discussions that included four or five members of each community. This group discussion would have opened with broader discussion on the topic and collective output might have been generated in the conclusion; however, due to the methodological changes necessitated by the pandemic, individual interviews were employed as an alternative. Exchange of ideas among the participants, which leads to novel insights in group discussion, is absent due to this change in the data collection method. Among the six participants, two were interviewed via telephone, while the other four, involved in their own businesses, had interviews conducted at their workplaces.

Seven participants of Lebanese background were interviewed for the purpose of group discussion. Among them, five community members were first-generation immigrants, while two were born in Australia (here regarded as second-generation immigrants of Lebanese

background). Two participants were interviewed via telephone, three at a face-to-face meeting at their place, among them the elderly couple were interviewed as a mini-group discussion, while the remaining two visited me at my office for a focus group interview. The reason for these participants visiting me at my office is that they were busy at work during office hours. They requested to see me after office hours as their workplace is in the same area as mine. The privacy of the interview was fully maintained at my office, and this did not affect or breach conditions of human ethics approval.

During the interviews the following was discussed:

- family background of participants (parents' migration context if second-generation immigrants)
- academic background of participants
- views on political involvement by ethnic groups and immigrants
- any specific event that motivated participants' views on political participation
- views on the Australian parliament and election system
- the role of language in political participation
- community context or view on Australian politics and participation by immigrants
- if compulsory voting plays some role in political interest or awareness
- views on Australian non-inclusiveness in the national parliament
- any recommendations the participants may have about increasing participation among ethnic and migrant communities.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

All the interviews and group discussions were transcribed from recordings and summarised from notes taken during the process. This material was then reviewed and coded as per

thematic analysis approach guidelines in *Thematic Analysis, A Practical Guide* by Braun and Clarke.

Roller and Lavrakas state that '[q]ualitative research outcomes will be no better than the quality of the data that are gathered — which, in turn, will be no better than the calibre of the data gatherers who carries out the work' (2015 p. 33). Given this, if there is an error in data collection or negligence, that will not only affect present work, but the generations ahead will also have its effects. Therefore, all detailed processes and aspects of research data collection should be approached sensitively and diligently, which I made sure I did. All the recording and memo writings were secured during the research process, and, upon the completion of the project, all study materials were stored safely in the Research Data Store (RDS) at the University of Sydney. Access to the RDS was restricted to myself and my supervisor. Any hard copy study materials were scanned, saved to the RDS, and subsequently shredded. At the end of the five-year data retention period, all study materials will be deleted from the RDS.

### **3.8 Ethical Considerations**

The study's human ethics application, including recruitment letters, participant consent forms, participant information sheets and all related procedures were approved (project number 2021/637) by the University of Sydney's Human Research Ethics Committee prior to the recruitment for the data collection. All participants provided written consent for the recording of interviews and focus groups. With elite interviewee consent, their names were disclosed in this thesis and pseudonyms used to refer to individual participants of the ethnographic interviews and mini-group discussions.

All participants consented to interviews, agreed to audio/video recording and the use of direct quotes and other information for writing and analysis purposes. Participants were informed that their privacy would be fully maintained throughout the interview and during writing processes. Elite interviewees agreed to use their names in the writing and publication process, while those who were interviewed as a part of the focus groups wanted to be referred to only as a community member from their respective country of origin; that is, Lebanon or Vietnam. So, pseudonyms were used to refer to ethnographic interviewees.

### **3.9 Strengths and Limitations of Methods**

One of the major limitations of the methodology used had been finding participants to partake in the interviews and focus group. This was exacerbated by the period in which the research was undertaken. During this time (2020–2021), New South Wales’s COVID-19 restrictions and the ongoing pandemic made the prospective participants not that comfortable with in-person interviews at first. Physical meeting restrictions led to the use of zoom teleconferencing. While this provided access, it presented problems in the gaining of trust and in building a rapport with participants. Due to the reliance on zoom, some possible participants had been excluded from the study. Some did not know how to use the technology and needed the help of children, which was difficult to manage, while some preferred not to talk virtually. As a result, some possible participants were left out.

Both methods of data collection were challenging due to timeliness, costliness and, as mentioned above, due the COVID-19 situation. Also, for many people health is the only major concern and taken health sector only as the prime topics to be discussed into that pandemic stage. I was interviewing immigrants only, so not only were Australian COVID-19 restrictions on their minds, but also families and friends back in their home countries. Some

participants were not that flexible in expressing their opinions, so needed to careful and considerate this concern. Due to the use of the word ‘politics’, some were not interested or felt that it was none of their business (see discussion in Chapter 4). However, when the context and purpose of the research was explained, some understood and agreed, appreciating the researcher for taking the initiative in such an important topic, while a few others were reluctant to talk. With the few acceptances and refusals by community members towards interviews, the research ended up collecting a good number of responses for the analysis of the topic.

Chapter 4 is about the research findings, which are analysed in relation to the literature review and to participants’ views on the topics discussed. The tables in Chapter 4 help the reader to understand participant and background information of the interview participants.

## Chapter 4

### Findings

The chapter is divided into ten sections, starting with one of the core issues of immigrant political participation concerning settlement patterns, loyalty to parties, views on the political system, community importance, roles played by networks, pan-ethnic coalitions and participants' views of federal politics. A structured approach to the analysis has been taken where themes have been identified and linked between the primary research and the literatures from the related topic. The analysis connects the primary research findings to the literatures and provides an analysis under each theme.

Table 5 and Table 6 below provide short descriptions and stories of each participant in the research. A pseudonym was used to protect privacy. Direct quotations and my notes on the observations are provided in the tables for readers to understand context and interviewee background. Participants took part in the ethnographic interviews and mini-group discussions. The tables do not include the elite interviewees, as the names, information and views are directly presented in the chapter discussion below.

Table 5 below provides the findings from the interview participants from the Vietnamese community. All the interviewees of these ethnographic interviews are first-generation immigrants to Australia from Vietnam, while the two elite interviewees are second-generation immigrants from the community. The table presents views in their own words with selected direct quotations to present the readers with the key extracts from the discussion. This is followed by my observations and details of interviewee biographical background. Apart from Jamie and Andy, the others are non-participants in Australian

politics, and express little interest in doing so. Though Jamie and Andy are not directly involved in political participation, they are keen on the process and follow activities related to increased participation.

**Table 5. Participants from the Vietnamese Community — Ethnographic Interviews**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Migrant Generation in Australia</b>	<b>Participating/ Non-Participating in Political Activities</b>	<b>Views on Political Participation in Australia</b>	<b>Observation/ Story of the individuals</b>
Lam	1st gen	Non-participating	‘Came from poor country and need to work as needed money to settle, so no time for politics.’	Migrated as an international student and currently running family business, kids in school and hopeful about next-generation participation.
Andy	1st gen	Non-participating, but follows political activities	‘Schools must include political systems in their curriculum so that the students can understand the political party process, rather than learning biographies of heads of the state. This enhances political participation by youths and second-generation immigrants and ethnic communities.’	Anti-communist. Andy, along with his family, faced bitter experiences during the Vietnam War. His father had to escape Vietnam and came to Australia as a refugee, risking his life on a boat. Andy came on the first flight to Australia from Vietnam as a part of refugee family reuniting process.

				<p>Andy is living in Australia along with parents and his own children. He has a good job with skilled experience as a business analyst but feels like a ‘lost soul’.</p> <p>Andy describes himself as a silent and quiet observer of Australian politics.</p>
Lee	1st gen	Non-participating	<p>‘I am not knowledgeable about Australian politics, though my relatives, especially my cousins, are very keen on knowing about the processes and procedures. I didn’t feel much need to know what is happening politically until it enters my daily life. Work and looking after family are all that matters for me, basically.’</p>	<p>Came to Australia as a student. Lee could not complete her studies. She got into a relationship with an Australian citizen and got married. Lee applied for a partner visa.</p> <p>Lee settled permanently and has been working full time and looking after family. She is not interested in politics but feels that the second generation will participate more when it comes to political engagement.</p>
Jamie (Lam’s husband)	1st gen	Non-participating, but follows political activities	<p>‘Politics is something I am interested to know about but have been unable to get in myself due to</p>	<p>Arrived in Australia from Vietnam as a student and settled permanently here due to the political turmoil and</p>

			<p>own small business. I am aware about its importance and how it affects us in our lives. The political experience, especially being affected due to internal conflicts politically in Vietnam, could be the reason I did not want to go ahead with political engagement even in Australia. If I could handover my daily workload, then I would get involved in at least community activities, which is a beginning of the political journey.’</p>	<p>corrupt politics in Vietnam. Jamie does not feel like going back.</p> <p>He sponsored his parents via the family visa category, so he got his parents to settle permanently in Australia, which has made him fully devoted to Australia.</p>
Trace	1st gen	Non-participating	<p>‘I don’t know much about politics or anything to do with participation as I left Vietnam during in early young age, so I don’t remember there, nor I got interested here. I cast vote looking into the candidates but nothing before and after that.’</p>	<p>Very busy at work — owns a café.</p> <p>Trace not initially interested in an interview because of a low interest in politics.</p>
James	1st gen	Non-participating	<p>‘What does politics do in our daily life? I don’t care about it. I work my own and mind my own</p>	<p>Came to Australia around two decades ago and runs a business here. James has a negative attitude towards political parties. This could</p>

			business, nothing to do with politics here.’	be taken as his bitter experience of the Vietnam war. James is tired of the word ‘politics’; he sees politicians as self-serving.
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Table 6 below provides a summary of the ethnographic interviewees’ views and observations. They are from the Lebanese community, and they also used pseudonyms to protect their privacy as agreed. Five of the participants are first-generation immigrants from Lebanon, while the others, Hann and Josh, represent second-generation views on political participation. An elderly couple, Mohammad and Zainab, were interviewed together at their residence, while others were interviewed individually. Khalid, Josh and Aman are not directly engaged in political participation, but either donate to election campaigns or community programs, or express views on political discussions. They are also involved in community functions, supporting political activities in their community, while the rest are not politically active.

**Table 6. Participants from the Lebanese Community — Ethnographic Interviews**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Migrant Generation in Australia</b>	<b>Participating/ Non-Participating in Political Activities</b>	<b>Views on Politics in Australia</b>	<b>Observation/ Story of the individuals</b>
Khalid	1st gen	Participates in community activities	‘I came to Australia to visit and liked the country’s lifestyle and settled here. I am very interested in politics as I used to be active politically in Lebanon before coming here too. Currently, I am active in community activities, which are active for political support here, but due to not good English language I am afraid to speak and face people. I am okay for the basic language, which is fine for me to run business as I have not faced any problem yet.’	Khalid came Australia as a tourist in 1988 to visit family and friends. After he decided to stay, he applied for a visa to study, but before starting his formal studies, he joined language classes. After learning basic English language skills, he completed studies and started his own grocery shop. Gradually, with the expansion of his business, while bringing up children, Khalid got involved in community activities; he mainly advocates for public policy and community issues.
Hann	2nd gen	Non-participating	‘Daily life is running well, doing a good job, a family to support. Overall, everything going well and	Born and raised in Australia to Lebanese parents. Hann works day and night to meet family

			<p>frankly speaking, I do not even think that I needed to know about political involvement of the migrant and ethnic members in the politics and how it affects in everyday life.’</p> <p>‘Never thought from a migrant community perspective [of] activities, cast the vote consulting with parents and friends, but parents and older generation relatives talk about such topics frequently in family get-togethers.’</p>	<p>needs. Her father drives a taxi, at the age of 70, when the children have married and have their own families. Her father used to share the story of struggle to adapt to the Australian community, but Hann never felt this was an important story for her and her sibling. The second generations in her family circles have fully adapted to Australian culture, and Hann does not face any issues on representation, as she feels there are many from her community active in politics.</p>
Josh	2nd gen	Non-participating, but aware and interested in political activities	<p>‘Settled job, good education background, parents arrived in Australia from Lebanon that’s what my background is. I am not directly involved in politics in Australia but interested on it and very up to date on political information.’</p>	<p>Born and raised in Australia to Lebanese parents. Josh spent a decade in Lebanese schools, so he has a strong connection to Lebanon. Josh has relatives and friends there, so he tries to go to Lebanon at least once a year. He has fond memories and property there that connects him to home. Being a second-generation immigrant, Josh finds himself</p>

				<p>more connected to Lebanon than to Australia. He is very optimistic that the Australian parliament will be more diversified in the future, and states, ‘Australian democracy is still young, so with the passage of time more culturally and ethnically diverse parliamentarians will be in the parliament seats.’</p>
<p>Mohamed and Zainab (an elderly couple)</p>	<p>1st gen</p>	<p>Non-participating</p>	<p>‘We both husband and wife arrived in Australia by boat from Lebanon in the 80s risking our lives.’</p> <p>‘Language learning is the most important, but I could not learn it.’</p>	<p>Mohamed cannot speak English well. He only has basic communication and understanding, but Zainab is more proficient.</p> <p>They feel that political participation or the topic of politics is not for them. After arriving in Australia, they struggled to settle economically, personally and socially for at least 25 to 30 years. Initially, they didn’t think about things that weren’t crucial for survival. They continued working for others, so for them political participation is</p>

				<p>something for the people who are not committed to daily work and have leisure time to commit for the social relations. Those who don't have jobs to do and with no need to work for their daily bread and butter will take part in politics as they shared with me.</p> <p>They left Lebanon to avoid the civil war and 'corrupt government'. The internal conflict in the country forced them to risk their lives when leaving Lebanon. After a long voyage to Australia and since their arrival, they have seen four generations born and brought up in Australia. Their great grandchildren are also grown up.</p>
Aman	1st gen	Participates by providing financial contributions	'If we do not take interest and part in politics, then our voice will not be represented in the parliament.'	<p>Aman runs a big grocery shop, along with another company that provides accounting services.</p> <p>Very active in community activities. Aman sponsors</p>

			<p>‘First needs to be stable socially and financially before raising a voice that’s the fact again.’</p>	<p>community programs and provides donations. He could not provide time personally, as he is fully occupied with his business. Aman’s contribution is financial support for community members. Until now, he has donated to many community programs during cultural festivals, and political campaigns for local and state members.</p> <p>Aman is interested in political participation, but now he works full time in business. He will hopefully contribute some time to politics in future.</p>
Chad	1st gen	Non-participating	<p>‘I have understood the power of politics and how it plays a role in transforming a society. In Lebanon also I used to take part in student unions and local youth elections before coming to Australia.’</p>	<p>Arrived in Australia as a student. Chad studied a few years but did not do well. He focused on working, so Chad now owns a tree-losing business in association with his siblings.</p> <p>After his studies, Chad married a second-generation Lebanese</p>

				<p>migrant woman and applied for a partner visa.</p> <p>For Chad, joining, or even thinking about political participation was not possible before obtaining permanent residency. Once his visa issues were solved, he started his own business. Chad takes part in major community events such as Christmas and New Year festivities, and even manages time to volunteer. For example, during COVID-19, through a community-based organisation, Chad provided financial assistance to help community members in need.</p>
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Note: The Vietnamese respondents were less detailed when talking about political participation than the Lebanese participants. This can be related to the political background of the community members (authoritarian vs non-authoritarian regime backgrounds). Though it did not affect the findings, less input came from the Vietnamese participants. This ‘non-political’ disposition is interesting as it gives an idea what immigrants from the that background feel and how their stories back home affect their present desire for political

participation in their host country. It also informs readers on Vietnamese immigrants' position and how it can be related to this topic. Therefore, this 'non-political' disposition can be seen as an interesting way in which participants characterised their political disengagement.

#### **4.1 Immigrant Settlement Patterns**

One of the core objectives of migration policy of most host countries is successful settlement and integration (Abood et al., 2021). This part of the thesis focuses on immigrant patterns of settlement that lead to political involvement. Immigrants initially require settlement services, along with linguistically and culturally suitable health and social facilities (Omidvar & Richmond, 2005). These services are critical for the effective settlement of immigrants as settlement patterns are key to political participation. Settlement patterns show how new migrants integrate into political and economic systems. The preliminary reception of immigrants in host countries relates to how financial benefits and assistance impacts political incorporation in such countries (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2013). If immigrants receive better support from host countries financially and support for basic settlement in the initial stage of the migration, then this support could make immigrant participation in political activities easier and faster.

Also, the initial settlement plans of immigrants to enhance the 'voting bloc' influence approaching the interest of the major political parties (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2013). A 'voting bloc' is a group of people who share similar voting preferences (Gormley & Murphy, 2008). Political parties focus on the number of voters in an electorate, so if a voting bloc comes into effect in the community, then political parties will have more people following their party agenda. For new immigrants, 'voting blocs' help in their understanding of the political

process, party policies and political systems in a new country. Immigrants can share ideas, policy discussion and feelings with people from similar backgrounds. Voting blocs arrange the immigrants to take political and social roles in a newly settled society, thanks to an exchange of ideas among people in their communities.

However, ethnic, and migrant communities do not always integrate or have similar understandings of any of the political characteristics over time as expected in the resource mobilisation process (Desipio, 2002; Gimpel & Tam Cho, 2004; Lie, 2004; Lien & Harvie, 2012; Samson, 2014). The resource mobilisation approach refers to the process of people sharing similar values (immigrant communities) with organisational management (community organisations), communicating and relationship building goal (understanding the new policies of newly settled country). Though immigrants might not have similar understandings of any of the discussion topics about politics and political participation, voting blocs provide the opportunity for socialisation and normalisation of social communications among new immigrants. Communication tools and relationship-building processes, along with organisational development, can aid discussion about political parties and policies among newly arrived immigrants in a voting bloc.

To explain, Mohammad lives in the Barton electorate where a good number of his own community resides. According to the recent census in 2021, the total number of Lebanese residing in Barton is 4,372, which is 2.4% of its population (ABS, 2021). However, Mohammad's views are very different to those of others he has spoken to. He wants to take the initiative and participate in the local election to address his community's needs. Others have different views, but at least Mohammad can have good discussions with people in Barton. This helps to build relationships, to communicate and form different social groups in the area, and in the organising and supporting of different local and state-level electoral campaigns. Mohammad's experience is a good example of social capital. 'Social capital'

comprises key elements such as social norms and networks, and trust within a group of people or organisations (Social Capital: Reviewing the Concepts and Its Policy Implications, 2003). Such resource mobilisation blends immigrants to social activities and to the host country's political system. Mohammad states, 'You need a leader who knows you and understands the context where you are from in the society, only then it's easy for immigrants to speak up and to share their views.' His understanding and experience in a voting bloc enhances the opportunities for ethnic and minority groups to express their views and needs. This could be a turning point when it comes to political participation.

#### **4.2 Settlement and Pre-migration Backgrounds of Immigrants**

Due to countries and their different stages of migration, combined with immigrants' political background in their home countries, settlement varies accordingly. World-wide, many people migrate to established democracies, leaving behind authoritarian regimes. These immigrants will have to come to comprehend democratic life and values (Bilodeau et al., 2010). After settlement, there are concerns about how new immigrants adapt to democratic norms and political practices. Established democracies are increasingly emphasising the integration of immigrants, with host country governments implementing wide ranges of programs to support immigrants to access services, such as welfare programs (Bratsberg et al., 2021).

Therefore, with new immigrants arriving in Australia from countries governed by authoritarian regimes, the concern of how these new citizens adapt to their new country's democratic system will become more salient in the future (Bilodeau et al., 2010). In their research, 'Adaptation to Democracy among Immigrants to Australia', Bilodeau et al. suggest that public officials and people in Australia and other countries that host large numbers of immigrants must work on making the new immigrants understand the principles of democracy. They clarified that the immigrants need to learn the new values and to leave the

old ones, assist with ethnic and immigrant networks in making immigrants full citizens of their new political systems. These earlier mentioned aspects of settler countries are needed to respond to the new reality of the host country's own society as per research's conclusion (Bilodeau et al., 2010). The first-generation immigrants have a greater understanding of the political gap regarding the basic underlying logic of the political system in Australia.

Jamie, one of the ethnographic interview participants, and a core supporter of immigrants and their participation in parliament, believes that only an inclusive parliament can represent a country's culturally and ethnically diverse people. He feels that the immigrants' background and the home country's political system, and the functions of the politics back home matters for the immigrants in earlier stage of settlement. He further adds that immigrants, especially the hesitation first-generation migrants to engage, is that knowing the new system of politics in a new country, and that communications, language fluency and understanding the locals of the host country are drivers of hesitancy. For example, Jamie himself has migrated from a country with an authoritarian regime, so his view on politics and public life have been so much of different to the participants who have migrated from the country with democratic views. He states that it took him a long time to learn and to come to terms with the political system in Australia, in acculturating and adapting to democratic values while in his earliest stages of settlement.

Alternatively, Chad (see Table 6), who had migrated from the deformed democratic country of Lebanon, found it easier and quicker to adapt and acculturate in the Australian society. He did not have difficulty in understanding the political beliefs of newly migrated country. However, it took a while to learn his new country's rules and regulations. Therefore, it can be said that migration from a democratic country has more advantages in acculturation compared to those from the authoritarian countries in the Australian context.

For second-generation immigrants, their families are often the primary source of socialisation when it comes to political activities and beliefs (Davies, 1965; Quintelier, 2015). The families play a vital role for non-migrants too, but it has a greater role on the second-generation immigrants. Hann in Table 6 had similar views. She was born in Australia of Lebanese immigrant parents who faced difficulties with social integration during their initial stages of settlement. Hann did not realise that she needed to understand her country's politics as she was just getting on with her everyday life, including work and family. She votes after consulting with family members, so her family is her primary source of political awareness.

Political integration leads to political participation in a newly settled country. Political integration is identified with unifying, uniting, and organising people in a group of two or more units while it also represents 'centralisation' (Hoppe 2007, p. 109). 'Centralisation' in a political context refers to the concentration of political power into a single core entity of the governmental administration. In this thesis's context the term refers to government accountability (Boffa et al, 2016). Government must be accountable in uniting and unifying immigrant and ethnic minorities, so that this unity and unification leads to political participation. Integration can be seen as social integration, cultural integration, and integration in a political sense (Ilievski, 2015). An immigrant's electoral participation plays a major role in accelerating integration into a host country (De Graauw et al. in Bratsberg et al., 2021). This highlights the importance of early-stage settlement when immigrants move to host countries, and enhances their abilities to understand, start and navigate the early settlement process. Hann's family has played a crucial role in her voting behaviour and decision-making. This tendency is 'common' with other second-generation immigrants. Khalid (see Table 6) shares that he makes his children listen to him when it comes to political participation and the important role every citizen plays. As he says, 'I make my kids (18 and 21 years old) sit with me and share what's happening in the society, community programs

and major political events as it is very important. They must be aware of these issues.’ He adds that he guides his children on voting, too, helping them to decide who to vote for. This intergenerational experience of migration is further discussed in Chapter 5.

### **4.3 Generational Differences in Participation**

The settlement process and related perspectives differ according to each generation. This researcher interviewed first and second-generation immigrants from the two communities whose differences were evident. According to first-generation interviewees recalling their own experiences, initial assistance to help with integration after arrival and their economic background affects political participation in the host country. After emigration, migrants face economic or social hardships due to their status. These factors can be alleviated through participation in associations that provide and supports immigrants with the basic needs when it comes to socio-political participation (Marzana et al., 2020). After first-generation immigrants arrive in their new country, many feel isolated socially. This can be overcome by joining organisations within their communities. In an Australian context, first-generation migrants are expected to be more focused on settlement issues than their children.

In the research, I investigated the types of settlement on the selected participants. When following the literature, I found that first-generation interviewees were concerned with solving the financial needs and with learning about the social and political system of their new countries. Lam (see Table 5), one of the participants from the Vietnamese community, states, ‘Immigrants are busy making money as the financial aspect is important, since we came from a poor country, so first settlement then business, so no time for politics. She mentioned that the need of basic settlement programs and assistance is first and foremost needed for immigrants in host countries, which is agreed to by other first-generation

immigrants. Out of 12 first-generation interviewees, eight mentioned that the early stages of settlement mattered, and the work immigrants initially get involved in and people they meet makes a huge difference on how the further socio-political life goes ahead for them in the new country.

When financial stability and initial career settlements are met, immigrants then only start to look for their belongingness (identity) in the host country. This motivation fits Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Needs' model of human needs setting. Maslow's theory comprises a hierarchy: physiological (food, drink, sleep, air, clothing), safety needs, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualisation (Bozyiğit, 2021). In this research context, the very first stage, physiological needs, is the initial settlement stage, which includes the visa process or permanent residency. Securing permanent residency clears the way to employment and securing resources such as housing is the second stage. Such basic resources lead to a sense of belonging in the newly settled country.

The third stage of Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Needs' model in relation to the research is the acquisition of Australian citizenship, which provides the base for involvement in the political process. 'Immigrants are more likely to shift political allegiance from home to host state once legal status is obtained' (Waldinger & Duquette-Rury, 2016). In our case, it should be noted that this is shaped by compulsion as Australia has a policy of compulsory voting.

The political transformation formally starts after gaining citizenship, with interested immigrants and ethnic community members taking part in community activities. If they further aim to be more active later then they start paving their way to the federal level. Immigrants invest more when they know they have a long-term future in a community and their status in the country is unambiguous. To exemplify, Chad (see Table 6) states:

‘I entered Australia in a student visa, in that period I feel in love with my current wife and later we got married. Then, I applied for Partner visa sponsored by my wife and after being the permanent resident of Australia then only I started joining own community organisations, started my business and got interested in Australian political system as well. Though I am not directly involved in political activities at present, but I am one of the observants of it. So, this political interest came to me only after I considered myself fully committed to this nation”.

The full commitment to the political participation or the unambiguous legal status of immigrants have different aspects particularly in Australian context. In the late 1990s, Evans and Jones (1996) studied new migrants’ attitudes to their new host country. The results are presented in Table 7 below.

**Table 7. Positive Identifications of What Is Truly Australian**

	<b>Very Important</b>	<b>Fairly Important</b>
Feeling Australian	72%	23%
Respecting Australia’s laws and political institutions	69%	26%
Having Australian citizenship	67%	23%
Being able to speak English	61%	27%

Having lived in Australia for most of one's life	27%	35%
Being born in Australia	29%	25%
Being a Christian	15%	17%

Source: Australian Parliament House, which derived from the results of the National Social Science study reported in M. D. R. Evans, 'National Identity: What Does It Take To Be "Truly Australian"', *Worldwide Attitudes*, 18 March 1996, pp. 1–8, and F. L. Jones, 'Ethnic Diversity, Social Distance and National Identity: Citizen Beliefs about Australian Institutions', 1996, *passim*.

Source material derived from Parliament of Australia, 1997.

Though Table 7 was published in the late 1990s, my interview participants expressed similar sentiments. Being Australian and being involved in Australian politics does not only mean having Australian citizenship and an Australian passport. The feeling of being Australian, and a respect of Australian laws and political institutions, and being able to speak English also play a crucial role, as shown in the above table. These all-important factors are the core aspects of involvement in Australian politics in recent times too, as per all first-generation migrant participants in this research. First-generation participants from both communities in the study shared that 'Feeling Australian' is the core characteristic of participating in political activities. 'Having Australian citizenship' is not directly relevant in my research's participants, as all interviewees are Australian citizens. This research is ahead of this stage of settlement as it focuses on the political participation of the immigrants. Zappala (1999, p 68) also supports the above statement as he states, "The initial years after migration are generally taken up with survival and settlement issues and forming a sense of community and 'space'". He further mentions the reasons for the non-participation of

immigrants at the initial stage of settlement is naturalisation, which takes at least four years in Australia. To be naturalised (to get the citizenship) in total of four years in Australia one must have been in the country for 12 months after getting permanent residency and the total absence of no more than 90 days out of the country (Doha, 2020).

Furthermore, we can refer to Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Needs' model to understand the importance of immigrant needs and their behaviours in a new country. Maslow's hierarchy has remained an important and influential tool in the study of people's motivations and can be used when looking at migration issues (Dohlman et al., 2019). Maslow's theory is presented in Figure 2:

**Figure 2. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**



Figure retrieved from (Dohlman et al., 2019).

Immigrant settlement stages are followed by social and professional security, then community integration for a sense of belonging, particularly within the immigrant's own community. Then comes the self-esteem stage, as in the above table, which we can relate to confidence in social esteem, the first step towards political participation. The final and top state (see Figure 2) is establishing oneself as an active political participant, which is about self-actualisation for politically interested immigrants. These staged hierarchies can be related to both first and second-generation immigrants to where the second generation basically relates from self-esteem to self-actualisation.

To elaborate, research conducted in 2016 by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS), 'Settlement experiences of recently arrived humanitarian migrants', found that 44% of participants 'always' felt a sense of belonging after arriving in Australia, while 25% felt a sense of belonging 'most of the time', a small number, 5%, said they felt a sense of belonging 'hardly ever' and 3% 'never' (AIFS, 2016). This research is based on immigrants who arrived in Australia on humanitarian visas. It is evident from this research that most of the immigrants felt a sense of belonging in their new country, which is a positive and motivating factor of successful settlement and adaptation. Though in my research none of the participants arrived on humanitarian visas, almost all first-generation participants from both communities stated that they either migrated due to civil conflict back home or due to the outcome of the Vietnam War, to settle in a politically secure and democratic country. Though this is not direct humanitarian entrance into the country, but the reasons of migration lie in the similar underlying motivations (civil war of the home country, and/or less opportunities due to internal political conflicts).

The elderly couple, Mohamed, and Zainab (see Table 6), took a risky boat ride to Australia from Lebanon in pursuit of a peaceful life, leaving behind family property and Lebanon's political chaos and lack of security. According to Mohamed, 'I have the three

generations after me in this beautiful country. We came here to secure the future of our next generations, Also, we wanted to run away from the internal conflict and instability of the Lebanese government. We are happy now and do not regret that we left our country and friends behind.' Zainab adds, 'We are proud Australians, we have raised our generations of our kids in this land, and we are blended in this community totally.' The more time spent in host countries means the better people feel connected and that they are belonging there.

It is evident that settlement differs according to individual immigrant home country background. For instance, elite interviewee, Mohammad said that the basic need for him before entering formal politics was to learn English. He studied, obtained permanent residency, and started his own business, then strengthened his language skills to establish himself politically. He began to participate in Australian politics through involvement in Lebanese community activities, then secured party membership and ran for election at state level.

Mohammad studied English for four years before he joined a political party. He stressed the importance of understanding the language of the country he'd migrated to. Mohammad believes that basic communication in the language of the host country makes life much better and easier. This includes reading newspapers, going to the grocery and, most important, being able to ask for help when in the need. Mohammad states that one should think not only from a community perspective, but one must be involved in a multicultural and multi-lingual society when living in a settler country. For him, the English language is important for communication, so learning the host country's language is a key aspect for the settlement.

Turning to political participation, Tu Le, a second-generation immigrant from the Vietnamese community, shared with me that her parents came to Australia and struggled to meet basic family needs. She states:

‘It’s like putting your head down, and blend in and work hard. You make sure that your kids get a good education, and so beyond that I think it is a bonus to be able to engage in public life, I think it is something that they never really aspired to. Because it was just trying to build your life in Australia and that often comes from going to school, getting a good education, and having a secure, stable job.’

Tu’s views represent not only the story of her family, but they could be related to the perspectives of other immigrants from different cultural or geographical backgrounds, especially immigrants from developing countries. Immigrants from such countries normally do not get economic support back home, so they must meet their needs from their own end in the migrated country. Generational patterns are one of the major predictors of immigrants’ and ethnic communities’ political attitudes and behaviour, though such patterns vary according to ethnic and migrant groups (Ramakrishnan & Espenshade, 2001). The research finds that the initial settlement process favours some immigrants over others when it comes to political integration based on resources provided to them. If one is economically resourceful in the beginning of his/her migration stage, then political participation starts sooner, compared to less resourceful immigrants. First and second-generation immigrants can’t be compared to each other on this economic aspect of the meeting the economic resources. For the second-generation immigrants the economic needs are already met by their parents or their predecessors so they can focus on the further stage of other settlement.

#### **4.4 Transnational Politics and the Relationship with the Country of Origin**

From a transnational perspective, transnational migration can be defined as that migration is a transitional process, in which only some of the movers settle and many move back and forth, ongoing connections between “home” and “host” countries are a recurring feature (Waldinger, 2008, p.4). When immigrants settle in their host country, the relationship to their home country continues, and they maintain not only family relationships, but also political and social relationships — ‘here’ in the host country and ‘there’ in the home country. International migration is a political phenomenon, and the internal and external borders monitored by states that seek to regulate and access the movement across borders (Waldinger, 2008).

Initial settlement and connection to country of origin is a factor to consider in how migrants dedicate themselves to politics in a new community. Some new migrants divide their connections and social ties between host country and home country. ‘Loyalty’ towards the host country plays a critical role in political participation — ‘here’. This ‘here’ and ‘there’ relationship is studied for its importance to transnational political participation. ‘Immigrants are also emigrants, possessing social ties that link them to people and the places left behind’ (Waldinger & Duquette-Rury, 2016). This link between country of origin and country of migration sometimes makes migrants feel they are from ‘here’ or ‘there’. As Andy (see Table 5) mentioned during his interview, neither could he go back and stay in his home country forever, nor could he fully adapt here in Australia. He sometimes asks himself where he really belongs in the conflict between ‘here’ and ‘there’. Zapata-Barrero et al., observe that ‘[c]ontemporary migrants, and their predecessors, have maintained, and still maintain, a variety of links with their origin countries; while at the same time, they are incorporated into the countries in which they are settled’ (2013). This leads to different political activities across borders. During his interview, Josh (see Table 6) felt that family property, relatives, and the place he stays in Lebanon links him deeply to it, and he considers himself a ‘lost

soul' in Australia. His own family and business are going well here, but his heart and mind are in Lebanon, which is why he feels he is not fully dedicated to Australia politically.

Political involvement comes with challenges but develops at multiple stages even at the transnational level (Basch et al., 1994). Political participation does not come easily for immigrants, but those who are interested participate, overcoming all challenges. Koslowsky (2004) says that the democratisation process in origin countries relates to migrant participation in politics, enhancing their opportunities to influence host country politics. Participation in transnational politics and ties to country of origin are related to pre-migration socialisation and the home country's political principles of the government; for example, democratic or authoritarian or republic principles the home country follows. The next section looks at pre-migration socialisation and how it affects immigrant post-migration activities.

#### **4.5 Pre-Migration Socialisation on Post-migration Political Participation**

The political system of immigrants' country of origin, whether from a democratic or an authoritarian regime, plays a role in their political participation in the host country.

Immigrant' home country social ties yield modest political consequences, whereas the more important influence of sustaining connection to home-land polities stem from premigration political experiences' (Waldinger & Duquette-Rury, 2016). The first-generation participants of this research who were involved in political activities in their home country believed that their interest in politics got carried with them in the host country too as they wanted to learn and understand the new political system here as well. Immigrants' cross-border social ties and pre-migration political experiences reinforce their political activities.

Andy (see Table 5) states that he does not like Vietnam's politics. Due to its political system and political principles (referred to as Communism), many people have had to leave

their country and take refuge in other states. This bitter experience has always overwhelmed Andy and his family. Vietnam's political system is authoritarian, whereas Australia's is a constitutional monarchy with representative democracy. Andy has little democratic political knowledge, as he was raised under an authoritarian regime. Lack of understanding of democratic values could be one of the reasons why knowledgeable and strong-voiced immigrants are also not participating in politics here. Such immigrants from countries with authoritarian regimes take longer to acculturate to their host countries compared to those from the democratic countries.

Andy is politically aware and is keen to learn about the Australian political system, while he is not interested in direct political engagement. Both himself and his father are anti-communists as he told. It could be felt from his tone of voice that he relates to the politics of Vietnam because of his experience, he does not prefer to be active in the political environment here too. As a result, Andy prefers to stay in the background politically, but is very interested in political policy discussion. During the interview his views were very strong and captivating, but again he stresses that he is 'not interested in politics'. For him, the word 'politics' means to take an active political role that includes, but is not limited to, advocacy of party policy and to be known as a political activist. He is very interested in politics-as-policy, but not in politics-as-practised. The term, politics-as-policy is referred to by Andy as he talks about politics as theory and procedures, but he is not into politics-as-practised as he does not wish to get involved in political activities.

Like Andy, Josh is also active as politics-as-policy. Josh does not have strong political views, though he is optimistic about future improvements in immigrant participation. He compared the Australian context with that of the United States and Canada, and their immigration history. He believes that Australia is yet to be matured in the formation of the inclusive parliament. This shows that the immigrant's inability of full incorporation in the

host country's political system is one of the barriers to participation. When a migrant does not feel fully connected to the host country then he/she hesitates to come ahead politically in the front as Josh mentioned. Connection to the country of origin and the frequency of visits to home country plays a role in participation in the host country. This can be related to the ease of international travel in present time compared with past when there was no such easy access to international travels. In Josh's context, political interest is transferred along with him to the host country though the politics-as-policy level not as the politics-as-practice. Josh as 'politics-as-practised' is passive, though when it comes to 'politics-as-policy' he is active. However, he is the only one with a strong positive attitude with optimism towards inclusive parliament, while all others shared hopefulness, though sceptical of inclusiveness coming soon.

#### **4.6 Geographic Settlement of Immigrants and the Home Country's Political System**

Geographic settlement relates to the geographic concentration of new immigrants. One common characteristic of the immigrant groups studied is that they tend to live in geographically concentrated regions with other immigrants of similar origin, rather than spreading across different regions (Chiswick et al., 2001). Newly arrived immigrants not just focus only on the basic daily settlement but also think about the career, lifestyle, and employment in choosing the area of residence in the newly arrived country. Geographic concentration differs from countries of origin to cultural backgrounds of the immigrants as they prefer to live in the area where their own community people live.

In an Australian context, distributions of immigrants' residence differ from distribution patterns of Australian-born people (Chiswick et al., 2001). The census in 2021 states that 268,170 Vietnamese-born people were living in Australia, which is 29.2% more than the

previous decade (Department of Home Affairs, 2023). And among the Vietnamese speakers the three states with the largest numbers are Victoria with 118,801 people, New South Wales with 117,907 people, which accounts for about 37% of the total, and Queensland, with around 10% of Vietnamese speakers (ABS, 2021). The suburbs of Springvale in Victoria and Cabramatta and Bankstown in New South Wales have more of the Vietnamese expats (Vietnamplus, 2022). According to 2016 data in New South Wales, most Vietnamese were in the outer western suburbs of Fairfield (17%) and Bankstown (8%) (Pietsch, 2017).

Similarly, the 2021 Census shows that 87,340 Lebanese-born people are in Australia. Earlier Census of 2016 had counted 78,653 of the population which was an increase of 2.9% from the 2011 Census (Department of Home Affairs, 2018). The Lebanese population are distributed state-wide, among them the largest number of Lebanese immigrants in New South Wales is 57,381 followed by Victoria with 16,684, which is more than three times lower than New South Wales. The tendency for immigrants from minority backgrounds to cluster together is drastically lower in South Australia and Queensland with 1535 and 1418 inhabitants (Department of Home Affairs, 2018). These figures back the claim made above in relation to geographic concentration of immigrant settlement. The Vietnamese community is more geographically dispersed than the Lebanese community, the latter is mainly concentration is New South Wales.

I argue that immigrant political participation depends on immigrant geographic settlement. Vietnamese immigrants in my sample who live in Cabramatta, Fairfield, Bankstown, Canley Vale and in the surrounding suburbs of Sydney, where a majority of Vietnamese people reside, are more politically active than community members in other suburbs where there are fewer people of Vietnamese origin. The politically active participants of the Vietnamese community reside mainly in Sydney south-western suburbs.

Another fact in my data is that more of the Lebanese immigrants are involved and interested in joining the formal politics in Australia compared to Vietnamese immigrants. Out of the eight participants from the Lebanese community in my interviews, only three were not interested in political participation and did not feel the need of to be aware politically. Thus, geographical concentration plays a part in political participation. This can be linked to immigrant background, Vietnam having an authoritarian government, while Lebanon is a democratic republic. On contrary, out of nine interviewees from the Vietnamese community only two were politically active. Two were only active in ‘politics-as-policy’ and not at ‘politics-as-practised’.

The recruitment of more ethnic and migrant candidates to the federal parliament will enhance the parties’ appeal to ethnically diverse electorates and the overall acceptability of the political system (Pietsch, 2017). Pietsch’s view is justified in the recent federal election of 2022, as none of the major political parties recruited local (ethnically diverse) candidates from the electorate to represent them in Fowler. The current independent candidate who was an ex-Liberal member decided to challenge the political parties. This resulted in her victory, thanks to the majority Vietnamese community-based population in Fowler. Fowler contains many ethnically and culturally diverse communities. Dai Le created history as she became the first Member of Parliament from the Vietnamese community. Therefore, geographic settlement is also one of the enablers for ethnic and migrant communities to take part in politics.

#### **4.7 The Party Preselection Procedure, how it is Practised and its Effects**

Australia follows a system of ‘party government’ and ‘party democracy’, so the importance of parties to Australian electoral politics is pivotal. There are three major parties involved in

Australian government and in opposition: the Australian Labor Party, the Liberal Party of Australia and the Nationals which is commonly known as the Coalition or the Liberal-National Coalition.

This section discusses the party pre-selection process and how it relates to the political participation of ethnic and minority communities in the parties. Kevin Lam, one of the elite interviewees of this thesis from the Vietnamese community feels that change must be seen in practice when preselecting candidates for electorates. Members of Parliament (MPs) are expected to work for their constituency during election campaigns and to raise the voice of their voters as they seek re-election (Sally & Hanses, 2020).

The relationship between the MP's involvement in the grassroots level and their work in the parliament plays important role. People expect that the MPs focus on the needs and the issues of their constituency with importance which will be vital for their connection with locals. MPs use local resources for campaigning. Also, MPs with strong local connections refer to their constituency more often in their parliamentary speeches, compared with MPs with fewer local connections (Sally & Hanses, 2020). Therefore, selecting candidates to represent constituencies plays an important role in political participation too. The Kristina Keneally and Tu Le's matter of pre-selection in Fowler is relevant, seeing that a local representative not chosen to be selected in favour of a parachuted candidate, which resulted in the loss of the seat by the parachuted candidate.

Evans and Duncan (2022) noted three major ways in which candidates are parachuted. Among the three reasons, the foremost reason found through interviews with ALP candidates by Evans and Duncan is the party senior figures' 'tap on the shoulder'. Second, the parties ask the communities (in Evans and Duncan's research it is Indigenous communities and organisations) for someone who will help them to win the seat. Third, a candidate approaches a political party with the intention and wish to stand for election or to join it. They are swiftly

put forward. We can relate Kristina Keneally's case with the above mentioned 'tap on the shoulder' perspective as she was asked by senior ALP officials to run in the electorate of Fowler. This high-profile individual in the Labor party became successful in soliciting for running the election from Fowler.

The recruitment of election candidates depends on candidate popularity with voters and the service that candidates have provided to their parties (Fennema & Tillies, 2001; Inglis & Model, 2007; McAllister, 2003). Factional alignment also plays a role in recruiting candidates. It is emphasised by parties that candidates must work for them and develop good networks to be considered for selection. Parties assess a potential candidate's abilities for public office from their professional background, awareness of the political process and media skills, along with persuasive abilities during debates (Muller 2000, p. 328). As noted by Sheaffer and Tzionit (2006) in Norris's *Passage to Power (1973)*, are four levels of analysis concerning recruitment theories: the political system, which includes party and electoral systems; the recruitment process, which is one of the core processes as it includes candidate selection methods within parties; the political and personal resources of candidates, and demand-side factors; that is, party's demands from candidates. As per Norris, these four key components are the crucial part in the recruitment process and to get these above-mentioned attributes to be fulfilled beforehand to get selected to run for the seat is more challenging for the aspirants. This challenge is mainly related to the first-generation immigrants as all the participants in the interviews mentioned too.

Mohammad and Zainab (see Table 6) agreed that legislative requirements to take part in political activities are barriers to participation for the first-generation immigrants. 'Being first-generation immigrants, we could not reach the participation level, fulfilling all the legislative requirements and understanding the political principles of the new country is a greater barrier at first. Then, financial stability and the rapport with community members also

takes a while.’ When it comes to increased diversification in the Australian parliament in the future, they are hopeful.

Migrants and ethnic communities must meet those four party legislative components of Norris’s *Passage to Power* (1973) as discussed earlier for the candidacy at least. So, fulfilling those party legislative requirements if an ethnic minority candidate gains victory in election to the national legislature, that win is seen as an important political achievement by the entire ethnic community. An important priority for elected representatives is to be engaged with their local communities and to fulfill their members’ needs (Johns, 1999). Local communities expect their representative to understand their needs, so they choose their candidate accordingly. When Tu Le was not preselected to run for the seat of Fowler, as the ALP picked Kristina Keneally, the topic of ethnic and immigrant community inclusion in parliament raised a debate not limited to social media. The national media covered the topic of Tu Le being not selected to run for the election with importance too. Media including newspapers and online news channels gave this issue prominence. After the election, when the ALP had lost a ‘safe’ seat, the media and important national political figures commented on the issue. Such moments are important when it comes to discussing ethnic minorities and immigrant political participation.

As this research’s targeted population is ‘Non-European’ and ‘Non-white’, so the participants feel that the political party’s set selection attributes, and characteristics for the candidacy selection come as the barrier in the first stand.

Researchers have identified that there are two different stages in selection; party-level factors (Norris & Levenduski, 1993; Bloemraad 2013) and district-level factors (Saggar & Geddes, 2000; Casellas, 2009; Smith, Reingold & Owens, 2012). These affect differences in ethnic minority nominations in some political parties and in legislative districts. Each party has its own principles and guidelines about candidate nomination processes and procedures.

Each party is very specific in selecting ethnic and minority candidates. Political parties give importance to some issues over others, creating expectations and a brand name for each party (Cox & McCubbins, 2007; Egan, 2013; Greene & O'Brien, 2016). As mentioned in the previous sentence, meeting these expectations, and promoting the party brand are also taken as the barriers for ethnic minorities and immigrants to reach the federal level. New communities find it harder to get along in the political parties. They find it difficult at the first stage to 'get on the ladder' as there are already established interests in parties that have pre-existing expectations for preselection positions. Jamie (see Table 5) states: 'For first-generation immigrants like me, we are not too sure from where and how the process begins in this new system. So, I feel that political parties should be open in letting people know what they are looking for in candidates so we can think about those aspects.'

Likewise, Kevin Lam, one of the elite interviewees is curious to know the parties' search behind the criteria and process of candidate selection. He finds the candidate selection process mysterious because it is not transparent. He at the same time says that a party selects candidates from different perspectives whether a candidate can carry forward established party interests or not. So, when choosing a minority candidate there could be a concern about winning the electorate seat which is also one of the reasons for ethnic candidates are not chosen firsthand, Kevin further mentions. His view on the selection process in which parties doubt and question the selection of ethnic and minority candidates sensed as 'taking a risk' for the party, means that political parties prefer not to 'take a risk'. On the same question about the selection of ethnic and migrant communities, Jamie said, "If ethnic and migrant communities are knowledgeable and aware of the political system, along with the party's political principle and agenda then the party's doubt would be eliminated".

Kevin, along with other interview participants, stressed on the need for transparency in the candidate selection process, which will help to motivate and encourage more people of

ethnic and migrant communities to participate. When any of the electorates have more density of the ethnic and migrant communities then the role of routine and habitual voting based on party agenda will be undermined over the local candidate. The voters favor the candidate's ethnic background (descriptive representation) rather than party policies.

#### **4.8 Community Involvement and Community Members' Roles in Elections**

As discussed in Chapter 2.4 of Literature Review earlier about the relationship between informal community activities that lead towards formal roles in political participation, this section, the analysis of participant data, provides the link between voting, party membership, communal activities, and the contact between electors and their representatives. The initial stage for immigrants is to come out in the community to get involved in their own community activities and programs. Social capital theory drives the discussion in this chapter. Social capital, here in this context of the thesis refers to the networks of immigrants with their own community background people to work together in a group to have an effective combined community goal. When immigrants demonstrate their development of social capital that is useful and needed in political participation when they will be ready to represent the community through political participation. The essence of social capital lies in its capacity to mobilize, facilitate, and transfer other forms of capital that are advantageous to any of the persons and associations (Luoma-aho, 2016). Luoma-aho (2016) further adds that trustworthy networks and social relations enable collaborations as a core of the social capital.

Immigrants and ethnic community members often have difficulty finding the right path to political involvement. Pan-ethnic mobilisation is crucial for ethnic groups. Such groups are dispersed and relatively smaller in number in terms of political participation and in representation (Pietsch, 2017). Pan-ethnic mobilisation helps in lobbying and achieving the

common needs of ethnically diverse communities, as in Tu Le's case. Tu Le represents the migrant communities not limited to her own Vietnamese community, but a wider range of ethnic and migrant communities from all spheres of life who connect to her. Not only is she practising law, but also aiding the diverse communities through her legal expertise to people of migrant communities.

Tu said that she used to lobby her Member of Parliament about basic needs and issues concerning her electorate. In the process of political lobbying, she came up with the idea that she could enter mainstream politics and be in a decision-making position. This helped her to participate in the preselection for candidacy. Tu Le became a political actor without being in office. She was a role model for minority candidates who aspired to participate in political activities. Tu's social networks and trustworthy relations helped her to become a political actor.

Tu's community-based work and experience motivated her to be politically active rather than to lobby others about local her area's basic needs. She realised that she better understood the electorate's problems, so why not run for parliament? She put herself forward as the aspirant of the pre-selection with the ALP, as she had worked for former MP of her electorate, Chris Hayes. Tu felt confident about entering federal politics with the support and involvement into community activities. Such engagement in the community is indeed one of the core enablers for migrants or ethnically diverse people to be an effective political representative. However, she was not pre-selected for party candidacy.

Earlier in this chapter we discussed Mohammad and his immigration story. Once he gained confidence in his language skills, he started being involved in Lebanese community programs. People participate in social movements not only to be influential to others but also to seek for their self-identity needs (Simon et al., 1998). Mohammad sought his self-identity goal as mentioned by Simon et al in the previous statement by participating in social

activities within social networks, showing trust and loyalty towards his community.

Mohammad met many good people and through them, he was motivated to enter Australian politics. In Australia learning the English language played a vital role in his social adaptation and social connections led him to political involvement.

In this quest for identity, social embeddedness and participation in social organisations play a vital role in addition to identity, efficacy, and emotions (Klandermans et al., 2008).

There is a positive correlation between active engagement in voluntary organisations and political competence. By being engaged in voluntary organisations people learn how political institutions work, as observed in early 1965 by Almond and Verba. For Mohammad, community activities drove him to take part in politics up to the state level. This was only possible after his involvement in moving from the individual to the social sphere played an important part in political participation. Mohammad is dedicated to serving people in the community, not just the Lebanese community. This makes him more confident about the Australian electoral system. His social capital resource helped him to gain his political goal. He wishes to serve his community people and other ethnic and immigrants in the community, rather than from parliament. He does not feel that he needs to know or comment on the political party's federal representative selection process in the election. Also, he is confident on his motive on not getting involved in politics at the federal level.

Similarly, Kevin Lam also expressed a similar experience on the topic of involvement in federal politics. Kevin has a professional background of town planning and through during his work period, he met different politicians from his local area. Listening to the politicians' stories on how they got into politics had an influence on him participating in politics.

However, Kevin did not join any party when he ran for councillor in 2016 in Fairfield, NSW.

Community presence and good networks enhance the possibility of entering politics.

Volunteering for political parties is a conventional form of taking part. That this is open to

immigrants is an essential element to be taken into consideration (Ortensi, 2020). During the research interviews, community members from both the Lebanese and Vietnamese communities who run businesses said that due to their business commitments they did not have the spare time to get involved in community activities, although they wish to do so. They are aware that the community plays an important role with the support especially for the newcomers in the country to be socialised and adapted to this new place. On this topic, Andy said that he maintains the formal membership of the community organization though he could not attend the community programs on a regular basis.

According to Tu Le, networking is crucial in the party selection process. She believes that if she had not worked for the former MP for Fowler, she would not have aimed for the candidacy. She became a party member and worked closely with top officials in her electorate, so she could think of aiming in pre-selection process. However, she was not selected ahead of the 'Anglo' candidate. Tu's experience shows networking plays important role in party-political systems for candidacy selection. So, it can be understood from her experience that the one who exercises their social capital gains trustworthy relations in community and later that relationship is helpful in political use. While the ones who do not maintain social relations or have the social capital therefore face a barrier to their political participation.

Jamie believes in the importance of community (local) support in winning elections. If the local community does not support the running candidates, they will not be elected to the federal parliament. Gaining the trust of local voters is important, though most voting is according to party recognition. The role of individual candidates is important in seats such as Fowler. But in this research, we are looking more like Fowler electorate's case of 2022 election where ethnic and migrant candidates are not pre-selected, and a high-profile Labor candidate came in to run for the election. Candidates with local experience manage to gain

more support from their electorates than those who do not have prior community experience (Tavits, 2010). Local experience directly connects a candidate to voters. This suggests to voters that such candidates understand local needs (Marsh, 1987; Shugart et al., 2005). In Fowler, local voters did not have confidence that the parachuted candidate understood their needs and context, so they voted for the local candidate, ignoring party recognition. This example strongly justifies Marsh's and Shugart et al.'s findings that when ethnic candidates run for election to represent the locals then party principles get ignored. The voters in Fowler did not stick to party principles in choosing a candidate, they chose the one who will be their representative from their own community in federal parliament.

To get local support, candidates should be in the community or at least have prior connection to the community. Relations with community people gives them more power and influence within the political process to decide the candidacy. Candidates are active in different community organisations and activities that broaden their visibility and gather more votes (McAllister, 2015). Various researchers have found that there has been a significant decline in party membership and intra-party activism (Scarrow & Gezgor, 2010; van Biezen, Mair & Poguntke, 2012; Whiteley, 2011). This has led to changes in organisational dynamics within parties. Despite this, the roles parties play in Australian representative democracy have remained the same, with a deterioration in their procedural functions (Van Biezen, 2014). This has led to the development and emergence of 'memberless' parties (Cross & Gaujga, 2014). The 2022 election saw the wave of 'teal' independents, which moved voters away from the two major parties towards independent and Greens candidates. These candidates strongly responded to the climate crisis. In the 2019 election, independent candidate Zali Steggall succeeded in winning by defeating former prime minister Tony Abbott in the Warringah electorate.

The Labor Party's mishandling of the Kristina Keneally–Tue Le's issue in Fowler made Dai Le's winning the seat with ease. Dai Le is ex-liberal party member, but she registered herself being an independent candidate for the 2022 election. Her win in the election proves the role a community plays in choosing their representative. If she had not been supported by a wider range of ethnic and migrant communities, she would not have got that backing from peer support, organisations help in campaigning, advertising, promoting candidacy.

In my research, Jamie felt that culture, language, and basic everyday social routines hinder immigrant's participation in politics. 'Though Australia is known as multicultural, but their own culture dominates, but I believe that that our kids learn Aussie culture and then they could join the politics but not the first-generation immigrants,' Jamie said. For him not being able to accumulate and adapt fully in Australian culture is one of the major reasons for staying behind the political involvement. He feels that one must be fully blended in the society to take part in political activities which he says he is lacking in.

#### **4.9 Pan-ethnic Coalitions**

The traditional indicators of political participation are socio economic condition of the immigrants and ethnic communities. While the racial and ethnic characteristics might surpass traditional indicators of political incorporation where some groups of people face different and greater barriers than others (Pietsch, 2017). Every ethnic or racial group is different due to background, culture, and factors such as economic and pan-national boundaries. Pan-national and pan-ethnic groups motivate and enhance opportunities for immigrants to participate in politics. Occupational and regional segregation could also foster networks that lead groups to participate in pan-national activities (Okamoto, 2003). This relates to class voting, which is in decline phase as compared to the traditional approach which is challenged

by new concept of economic assets and socio-cultural possession (McAllister & Makkai, 2019).

Tu Le stated that one of the barriers to the political involvement of socially diverse representatives is that one migrant community does not support the other community member from different origins. So, when there is no pan-ethnic consciousness among the ethnic and migrant communities then the third party comes in that is not from both communities who do not have support amongst themselves. Tu Le added, that from her experience due to non-coordination among the different ethnic backgrounds, the 'white' candidate is chosen to represent a widely diverse electorate. She states that this non-coordination between the different communities is also one of the reasons for less immigrant participation in Australian politics. Coordination among ethnic and migrant communities is crucial in increasing the number of participants from diverse cultures and geographies in politics.

Lam, hopeful, said that the second-generation immigrants will participate more, as they have good language skills. Tu Le accepts that language plays a pivotal role in political engagement, but, as she feels, it is also a self-imposed barrier.

On the similar note, Andy highlighted the importance of educating children in school about the political system, rather than just teaching them history and about prime ministers or presidents. If children know about the political process and how it affects the running of the political system in a country, then that country will have more youths from diverse communities in its representation through parliament. For Andy, the education system should navigate the policy of politics by teaching politics and its procedures. Practising politics at school level via internships and other community programs like UN model which are being practised in many schools will help, he adds. Andy feels that his children are not prepared by studying theories of the political system by which he meant such practice models must be done in schools practically like model parliament to take the lesson in a society once they are

out of the school. If the school curriculum includes the practical knowledge approach in political process too then it motivates second-generation immigrants for political socialisation later in life. For Andy it is important to teach youths about the political system. *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Civics and Citizenship* (2012) includes the definitions and importance of civics education in its curriculum.

In relation to teaching politics to youths, Australia has been characterised by two features like other countries for example, Canada, England, and the United States — about official policy related to education for citizenship. These two features are: ‘(1) a sense of crisis in young peoples’ political knowledge and action, and bold intentions at policy and (2) curricular level that fail to turn into widespread effective practice in schools’ (Hughes, Print & Sears, 2010; Leighton, 2012). These two features indicate a much needed and highly important topic of citizenship education and schooling in Australia (Peterson & Brendan, 2017). Being a parent, Andy focuses on educating young people from ethnic and migrant communities to enhance their opportunities for inclusion and participation. He keenly looks forward to this.

Regarding youth participation, Australia continues to shape young citizens as apprentice citizens but still it has not been able to adapt the worldwide rhetoric of participation (Collins, 2015). Collins found that the Australian young people experience significant inconsistencies in approaches to youth participation, particularly between the federal and state-level governments, but also between different states and territories. Therefore, immigrant perspectives of politics in host countries vary because of generational differences.

#### **4.10 Views on Participation in Federal Politics through Local and Community**

##### **Involvement**

This chapter puts forth the views of both elite and ethnographic interviewees concerning localism, community mindedness and, broadly, federal politics. The interviewees' perspectives on federal politics differs within communities. Most interviewees from the Lebanese and Vietnamese communities who are active in politics are not ready to go to 'Canberra' (the national Parliament). Kevin feels that there's an internal mess within the parties at the national level, so he does not want to get into federal parliament. He prefers to be politically active at the local level. 'Internal mess' for him indicates that the party selection policy does not seem transparent and fair. Multiculturalism in the Australian context is accepted by a wide range of communities and ethnicities. However, being politically aware citizen Jamie feels that much work on participation programs need to be done from the major political parties. "Even though officially multiculturalism in Australia was never about incorporating migrants with the political system, unlike in Canada" (Bolemard, 2006). Funding and support for ethnic organisations are needed to facilitate and encourage candidates to participate in national politics (Pietsch, 2017). Kevin Lam is a local community leader, but he is not sure whether he can be a party leader in federal politics. We can relate the above with both writers Bolemard (2006) and Pietsch (2017) as mentioned above who focuses on political participation that if ethnic and migrant communities would have been well incorporated, facilitated and encouraged, there would have been more participations from the diverse communities by now. If that would be the case, Kevin would have also been optimistic about being the political leader in federal politics and not limiting himself to the local level as he said.

When it comes to getting ahead in state and local politics, Mohammad says, “if you really want to contribute to the community, serving in the local and state only gives you this opportunity as you are directly involved within the locals”. He further added, “And if are going to federal parliament then you need to leave house to be in Canberra for about 16 weeks in a year or even more and that creates distance between community and the local issues with you”. He says that the federal parliament focuses on issues related to health, foreign matters, national security and education and he wanted to concentrate on the grassroots issues in serving people. Joining federal politics is good at retirement, Mohammad believes, so he is not positive about joining federal politics, skipping local and community issues that ethnic communities face on daily basis. As he says, if one wants to work for the community, one needs to see community members at least two to three times a year. As a result, Mohammad has decided to stay away from mainstream politics.

Tu Le, on the federal political system, feels that First Nations people are displaced in their own land, and they don’t have a voice in parliament. As this research was being conducted in July 2022, there were eight senators and three members of the House of Representatives who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders, as per the Parliamentary Education Office, 2022. This figure increased from 4 senators and 2 members of House of Representatives as per the 2022 election result. Tu Le said that she doesn’t expect the second generation of immigrants will get the chance easily because of the political agenda and priorities of the major parties. She feels that at the local and state levels there is good diversification, which reflects the presence of diverse communities, but this is in no way similar at the national level. Kevin Lam is not far from Tu’s view. He feels that there’s a huge gap between the local and state levels to federal politics in Australia. Kevin is a councillor and is active at the local level, but he is not confident of seeing himself in federal politics. His

view is that it takes longer for ethnic and migrant communities to cross from state to federal political participation.

Josh has colleagues who are active in national politics, while he himself is staying behind and observing. He supports his friends with campaigning and provides financial support during federal and state elections. He does not want to run or actively participate in electoral politics. Josh believes there is much discrimination and less acceptance of diverse communities within parliament. His friend in parliament has felt isolated on many occasions and has had many difficulties. Josh believes that if such discrimination continues, it will discourage other potential candidates to enter national-level politics. His complaint against the major political parties concerns their lack of enthusiasm and initiative on encouraging ethnic and migrant community members to present themselves as prospective candidates.

When approached for interview, most community members from the Lebanese and Vietnamese communities felt hesitant. Several approaches were denied due to my use of the word 'politics'. Two Vietnamese community members denied my requests, saying 'I know nothing about politics', 'I don't have any interest in political topics, and I don't have time to talk', 'I don't care about participation as it will not affect me and my business directly'. However, Lebanese community members did not express such a rigid or hesitant views, though they wanted to avoid commenting on the topic. Also, some members differ from others due to socio-economic status, language and the duration of their stay in Australia.

During interviews, it was found that there was a great difference between Vietnamese and Lebanese community member answers. For example, Lebanese community members were found to be more confident in talking and agreeing to talk about the topic, while it was tough to convince Vietnamese community members to take part in interviews. Most interviewees agreed that migrant socio-economic background and status when settling in host countries played a role in their view about political participation in such countries. These

differences are evident as Vietnam is governed by an authoritarian regime, while Lebanon is a democratic republic. This gives us insight into how immigrant pre-migration background matters as mentioned earlier in the thesis.

Immigrant settlement and differences between immigrant generations play a pivotal role in national political participation. Overcoming barriers, as mentioned in this thesis, is a challenge for first-generation immigrants. Understanding the political party system helps immigrants and ethnic communities to define the roles they would like to play in host country politics. The next chapter analyses my findings and evaluates the topic with relevance to, and discussion of, this chapter.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

The thesis concludes with the view that immigrant and ethnic communities are becoming more interested in Australian political activities, even though they face social and political barriers. It is undeniable that Australia remains behind when it comes to the inclusion of ethnic and migrant representatives in federal politics compared to other settler countries, such as Canada and the United States. My research not only broadly talked about this fact but analysed the reasons of participation and non-participation in federal politics by immigrants in Australia.

Given that Australia has a compulsory voting system, participation in this research study does not include voting rights. Second-generation immigrants are more confidently interested and want to get involved in politics. The Australian parliament is diversifying, but slowly and steadily only as we discussed in the earlier chapter that the very few numbers are increasing but in proportion to the population diversity.

In relation to multicultural policy and practice it is found that ‘staged’ participation by migrants (first local, state, then national) is more of a process whose transformation of inclusiveness from state up to the national level politics is highly needed. When talking to members of the Lebanese and Vietnamese communities it was evident that federal politics seemed inaccessible to them and that the gap between the federal sphere and the local community is large. Given the length of this thesis, the research primarily focused on federal-level political participation, where there is a more evident gap in the representation of parliamentarians from diverse backgrounds. That said, it is clear that the three levels of government are not conceptually distinct, and that participation achievements in local and

state-level politics are part of the wider story of migrant participation in Australia. Those politicians interviewed who are involved in local and state politics in Australia also identified a step-up gap to reach the federal level (discussed by Kevin, Tu and Mohammad, as well as the ethnographic interviewees who contributed to this thesis).

A few community members did not appear to be bothered by the gap in political participation. They have attained a good standard of living, a peaceful environment to work or run a business in, compared to opportunities in their countries of origin. They appear to be happy with this. However, elite interviewees and some community members expressed their dissatisfaction with the national political approach towards inclusiveness in the federal parliament. Josh expressed optimism about the inclusion of culturally diverse and migrant community members in the Australian parliament, saying:

‘The United States has got such a long history of politics and is one of the developed countries in the world but is still celebrating the success of the election win of the country’s first Vice President from the migrant community and the lady of the colour. Our young nation is still young in its politics, so there will be more representatives in the future’.

Josh’s optimism shows a positive attitude towards an increase in the diversified parliament in Australia in the future.

For Lebanese and Vietnamese community elite interviewees, this research topic is very important and necessary to enhance the opportunity to make the political parties and communities aware of the barriers that migrants face politically. One of the reasons why people are not aware is that within the main political parties there is no data collection. According to Tu Le, further and extensive research is required.

In relation to the focus of my research questions concerning the lack of political participation of immigrants in federal parliament, I have analysed the reasons for this, and the enablers and barriers to such participation. I found that first-generation immigrants are mainly focused on settlement, which includes the visa process of permanent residency to citizenship, career/business considerations and family needs. These processes keep immigrants occupied. Those who moved beyond settlement issues face language barriers, even though immigrants are interested in politics they choose not to participate. Those immigrants who do not have the issues of basic settlement or language problems also face barriers in the party selection process later. For example, Tu Le, an aspirant preselection candidate, was replaced by a 'white' candidate to represent the electorate of Fowler.

While research interviews were being completed and in the process of analysis, the Federal Election was held on 21 May 2022. Some of the results were discussed in the literature review and in the analysis. The results of the election included significant changes to multicultural representation in the Australian parliament. For me, most importantly, the Vietnamese community, which had no representatives in the national parliament regardless of a long immigration history to Australia, obtained its first representative, an independent candidate, Dai Le, who came to Australia as a refugee at a young age. Importantly, after the 2022 election, Australia's first two Muslim federal members, Anne Aly and Ed Husic, were sworn in, holding a Koran, the Muslim holy book, though both of them were the members of the House before 2022 election. More young candidates, women candidates from the big parties, culturally diverse representatives and a wave of independent candidates made their way to Canberra. After the 2022 election, 13 members of parliament represent people of non-Indigenous, non-European backgrounds. There were nine in the earlier parliament, which made 6% of MPs with non-indigenous and non-European background. When we compare the

Australian parliament with other settler countries, Canada has 16% and Britain 11% of parliamentarians from ethnically diverse backgrounds (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 2022).

It is suggested by the interviewees that the two major Australian political parties should acknowledge and work out how diverse community members can be increasingly included in national politics. Major political parties should also take the role in promoting young candidates with recognition of their culture and expertise to the Parliament. Immigrants come into the country with different culture, so it must be accepted and implemented paving the way to the second-generation immigrants too. It is also recommended that immigrants be aware of politics in their host countries. It is expected that second-generation immigrants will do better in politics as first-generation immigrants mainly focus on career and other initial settlement needs.

Further research and data collection is needed to identify where the gap in participation is. Without research it is not possible to understand the facts, so data collection gives insight into the current situation. Also, a quota system in federal parliament promoting cultural diversity and coalitions among ethnically diverse communities could be considered. An elite interviewee, Tu Le recommended that quota system will help in promoting immigrants and the culturally diverse communities to come ahead at least till the participation levels improve. Immigrants from the Lebanese and Vietnamese communities want more diverse representatives in the federal parliament, even if they themselves aren't the ones. However, they are ready and enthusiastically support those who come after them so that they will participate in politics. They want change, and they wish to see an Australian parliament with a wide variety of faces from different ethnic backgrounds. Most of them are very optimistic about second-generation immigrant involvement in politics.

There are very important aspects of migration and political participation for future research that can be built upon this study. One important area of future research would be to

interview people from a wide range of immigrant communities — ‘non-European’ and ‘non-white’ — to better understand their reasons for participation and non-participation. For this master’s degree research only a handful of interviews were conducted. Therefore, broader research is needed to understand and highlight the importance of this topic in Australian social science.

## **Immigrants' Participation in Australian Politics**

### **Discussion Topics: Focus Groups**

Note: each question will likely trigger follow-up questions and interaction questions from other participants in the focus group.

**1. Introduction, including discussion of the participants' roles in the community activities or political participation (if any)**

- a. What was your motivation to become involved in politics? If not, what made you choose not to participate?

**2. Contextual Question: When, and for what reason, did you initially come to Australia?**

- a. Did you think of joining political party when you came here? If not, when did you start paying attention to Australian politics? Or why did not you follow the politics here in Australia?
- b. Do you have a political background back home in your country of origin?
- c. What were the initial challenges you faced after migrating? Did they have any role in shaping or constraining your political participation/community activities?

**3. Immigrants' Participation Question: Why do you think immigrants' participation in electoral politics in Australia is comparatively lower for non-migrants?**

- a. What could be the reasons for this be? To what extent did you face these issues (if any)?

**4. Concluding Questions: Do you have any suggestions/feedback for regarding migrants' participation in politics in Australia?**

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