A “Foreign” Country?

Australia and Britain at Empire’s End.

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In July 1973, the Australian Ambassador to the United States, James Plimsoll, received a personal letter from the retired Australian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, Sir Alexander Downer. As an ‘exemplar of the Australian Briton,’ Downer fervently expressed his disbelief at the general direction of Australian foreign affairs under the new Labor government of Gough Whitlam.

Jovial in its tone, the letter described the South Australian countryside, commented on his wife’s health and proudly lauded his son’s recent achievements. Amidst such pleasantries, the letter was punctuated with sharp political interjections and moments of incredulity. Responding to the inarguably waning Anglo-Australian relationship, Downer’s emotion can be attributed to his ‘violently Anglophile’ outlook. He wrote to Plimsoll that ‘Heath,’ the British Prime Minister, ‘tells me that nearly every Australian minister he sees seems to be obsessed with colonialism, by imagining that we are still in a state of subjection to Britain!’ Later in the letter, with the same degree of astonishment, Downer noted that ‘there seems to be signs of xenophobia...even New Zealand is...

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3 Correspondence, Downer to Plimsoll, 5 July, 1973, M2203, Item # 115, National Archives of Australia [hereafter NAA].
now legislatively defined as a “foreign” country. These changes were profoundly at odds with the British outlook that had shaped Downer’s worldview and his political career.

Downer reflected the widespread refusal on the part of many Australians to part with the sense of Britishness which had long defined the Australian people and provided a unifying identity. For Downer, the changes occurring in foreign affairs were actively severing ties with what he considered as ‘home.’ He was struggling to come to terms with the diverging interests of the two countries. It was a question of self-interest verses sentiment, a distinction that was unclear to Downer as he stressed the ongoing importance of Britain for Australia. In The Sir Thomas Holland Memorial Lecture in 1967, he spoke of the influence of immigration on Australia’s national character. His concluding statement was telling. He remarked;

‘Any relationship, of course, must be a two-way one to survive. If the will persists in Britain to maintain close ties with Australia, and this will is expressed in overt and imaginative deeds, then Australians will respond, and no force or circumstance on earth will shatter our unity.’

Downer’s assessment seems at odds with the events of the 1960s. By 1967, Britain had withdrawn military support from East of Suez, Australia had committed troops to Vietnam – its first war without Britain – tension had built over the Confrontation in Malaysia, and Britain had indicated its desire to enter

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4 Correspondence, Downer to Plimsoll, M2203, Item # 115, NAA.
into the European Economic Community. Downer’s persistence in championing the Anglo-Australian relationship was indicative of an inability to surrender the imperial imagination and to accept the political, economic and military realities of the era.

This period marked a somewhat reluctant move by Australian leaders to forego the historically “special” relationship and assume normal bilateral relations with Britain. The truth was, as Prime Minister John Gorton bluntly discussed with Downer in 1969, that ‘Britain for Australians, had become a foreign country – sentiment alone could not sustain our association.’ The two figures of Gorton and Downer are crucial in symbolising the Australian contradiction – the desire for exclusive control of its own affairs coupled with the enduring emotional stronghold that Britain retained over both the people and their leaders. This paradox highlights the underlying issue of this thesis, which will address the difficulties faced by Australia during this tumultuous transitional period. The conceptual shift from “kith and kin” to the idea of Britain as “foreign” caused an uncomfortable vacuum, or at the very least the perception of a vacuum, for citizens and leaders alike. For years, Britishness had been the essence of Australian nationalism, and provided a sense of belonging to an organic worldwide community of the British Empire. The civic identity of the Australian

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people, expressed in Empire Day celebrations, the recital of pledges to Britain, Royal Tours and the development of private schools as imitations of English public schools, all served to strengthen the dual identity of the Australian people. Although proudly Australian, this identity co-existed with British race patriotism, the idea that all British people were part of a ‘single, indissoluble community through the ties of blood, language, history and culture.’

They viewed the world through the imperial imagination, and reacted to the world with an ‘imperial instinct.’

Even with the benefit of hindsight, the distinction is hazy. When did Australia officially become independent of Britain? Although there was an unquestionable decline in imperial sentiment and relaxation of strategic and economic ties, there appears to be no scholarly or societal consensus on when Australia became independent from Britain. As recently as 1999, the High Court judgment Sue V Hill rendered Britain a ‘foreign power’ for constitutional purposes, illustrating the ongoing difficulty of defining the Anglo-Australian relationship. Heather Hill, an Australian citizen, received sufficient votes in the 1998 federal election to win a Senate seat for the One Nation Party. Despite the Commonwealth Electoral Act

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of 1918 which declared that an Australian citizen who is eligible to vote, is also eligible to stand for Parliament, Hill’s dual citizenship status, as both a citizen of Britain and Australia, rendered her ineligible to assume her position as it contravened Section 44 of the Australian Constitution.\(^\text{10}\) Section 44(i) holds that a person cannot be chosen as a member of the Commonwealth Parliament if he or she ‘is a subject or a citizen or entitled to the rights or privileges of a subject or a citizen of a foreign power.’\(^\text{11}\) Hill’s counsel, Bob Elliot, QC, referred to the ‘special status of the United Kingdom...entrenched in the Australian Constitution,’\(^\text{12}\) declaring that Britain would only become a foreign power if Australia became a Republic. On the other hand, Justices Gleeson, Gummow and Hayne spoke of a process of evolution whereby the Constitution had to be viewed in light of ‘the march of history’\(^\text{13}\) and that Britain had been a ‘foreign country’ at least since the Australia Acts of 1986.\(^\text{14}\) The Sydney Morning Herald reported in 1999 that many Australian people ‘will be shaken by the idea of Britain as foreign.’\(^\text{15}\) This thesis will consider the process whereby Britain was


\(^{13}\) Sue V Hill and Another (S179 of 1998-1999) 163 Australian Law Reports 648 High Court of Australia.

\(^{14}\) “Nationality appears to be a Foreign Concept”, The Sydney Morning Herald, 5 July, 1999, p. 16. The Australia Acts revoked the power of Britain to intervene in Australian judicial systems, rendering the High Court of Australia the most authoritative legislative power in Australia.

redefined as a “foreign country” and how this problem has continued to shape the public debate surrounding the nature of the Anglo-Australian relationship.

To fully understand the implications of Australia’s conceptual shift to view Britain as “foreign”, one must return to the difficulty in defining nationalism. Theorist Ernest Gellner defines nationalism as the ‘invention of nations where they do not exist,’\(^\text{16}\) suggesting that it presents itself as ‘natural and self-evident and self-generating.’\(^\text{17}\) Benedict Anderson coins the useful phrase ‘imagined communities,’ articulating the significance of a unifying ethos, national myth and shared culture. As Gellner, Kohn and Anderson have shown, nationalism is both socially constructed and historically contingent. There is a sense that ‘common stock,’ and the fraternalism apparent within shared ethnicity, unified a nation.

Determined to maintain full control over its own policies and national interests, Australia’s desire for independence was tainted by its ongoing sentimental attachment to Britain, which was evident in the cultural and political life of the nation. Historian Mark McKenna suggests that the paradox of Australian nationalism lay in the cultivation of ‘White Australia.’ If being Australian meant being of white British stock, then the best way to nurture Australian sentiment was to maintain the connection with the ‘protective fountain of that racial stock.’\(^\text{18}\) Nationalism predicated on founding myths presented obvious difficulties for Australia as leaders in the post-imperial era tried to define a ‘new

nationalism’ free of the Britishness of the past. By viewing nationalism as ‘first and foremost a state of mind,’\textsuperscript{19} the task of rendering Britain ‘foreign,’ and thus finding a comfortable and cohesive Australian identity was undoubtedly a daunting one.

One of the overwhelming difficulties in defining nationalism for Australia is the lack of consensual opinion in both the public and historiographical domain of when, if at all, Australia achieved independence from Britain. As historian James Belich has asserted, ‘if asked when and how their country became independent, most Australians can only cough and stammer.’\textsuperscript{20} Some he says, point to Federation in 1901, others to Gallipoli in 1915, or even to the turn to America for protection in 1941.\textsuperscript{21} Historians W.J Hudson and M.P Sharp, suggest that Australia was granted independence on 11 November 1931 with the Statute of Westminster.\textsuperscript{22} The Statute, which established legislative equality to all the self-governing Dominions, is likened to ‘a son disowned before feeling an urge to grasp autonomy as an adult,’\textsuperscript{23} and was thus an ‘unwilling emancipation.’\textsuperscript{24} Hudson and Sharp suggest that after the Statute, ‘dependence...was all in the Australian mind.’\textsuperscript{25} However, historian Deborah Gare asserted, there is ‘no single event in Australia’s history which violently or dramatically revoked its former

\textsuperscript{21} Belich, “The Rise and Fall of Greater Britain”, p. 461.
\textsuperscript{23} Hudson, Sharp, \textit{Australian Independence}, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{24} Hudson, Sharp, \textit{Australian Independence}, p. 117.
\textsuperscript{25} Hudson, Sharp, \textit{Australian Independence}, p. 7.
Imperial relationship with the United Kingdom.' Instead, she suggests that Australia gained diplomatic, legislative and judicial autonomy at various stages throughout the 20th century, thus it cannot be said that Australia was fully sovereign until the passing of the Australia Acts in 1986, which signified judicial autonomy. Similarly, historian Geoffrey Bolton argues that defence, foreign policy and cultural ties with the United Kingdom dissolved intermittently from the ‘fall of Singapore’ in 1942, until the last vestiges of emotional loyalty all but vanished in the 1970s.

Due to such ambiguities, historical debate regarding the nature of Australian nationalism has been prevalent, particularly in the latter half of the 20th century. Neville Meaney suggests that the ‘nature of the dominant idea which gives national character to a people’ is revealed most authoritatively in the rhetoric of national leaders, the content of history curricula, oaths of loyalty, public rituals and in popular enthusiasm for symbols, anthems and ceremonial days. As such, he deduces that during the era of classical nationalism, that is from the late 19th century to the 1960s, ‘Britishness was the dominant cultural myth in Australia...giving meaning to the people,’ even suggesting that Britishness was

27 Deborah Gare, “Dating Australia’s Independence”, p. 266.
more pervasive in Australia than in Britain itself.\textsuperscript{30} However, perhaps the greatest indicator of the sense of a wider attachment to Great Britain is the nature of Australian immigration. The ‘Bring out a Briton’ Campaign of 1957 was aimed at bolstering the proportion of British migrants entering Australia, in order to maintain British culture in Australian society. \textsuperscript{31} The Australian Minister for Immigration Athol Townley, welcomed British migrants in 1957 proclaiming ‘Australia is a British Country... The great majority of native-born Australians are the descendents of British stock.’\textsuperscript{32} The pervasiveness of British race patriotism had its foundations in a sense of shared heritage and culture, which was in turn strengthened by economic and military ties.

An alternative understanding of the dominant myth of Australian Nationalism is offered by the ‘radical nationalist’ school. Historian Russel Ward's seminal work \textit{The Australian Legend}, argued that an authentic Australian nationalism had its roots in the nomadic working class of the bush.\textsuperscript{33} He suggested that the values


\textsuperscript{31} Andrew Hassam, “The ‘Bring out a Briton’ Campaign of 1957 and British Migration to Australia in the 1950s”, \textit{History Compass}, Vol. 5, 3 (2007), pp. 818-844, p. 818.


\textsuperscript{33} Neville Meaney, “‘In History’s Page’: Identity and Myth”, in \textit{Australia’s Empire}, Deryck Schreuder, Stuart Ward, (eds.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 363-387, p. 382. Also refer to Tony Stephens, ‘Mate, you’re a legend,’ \textit{The
embodied in the bush ballads drawn from the outback experience were uniquely Australian and owed nothing to British heritage.\textsuperscript{34} Ward described the typical Australian was ‘a practical man, rough and ready in his manners...willing to have a go at anything...hard working...fiercely independent.’\textsuperscript{35} This alternative ‘myth’ was advocated by the likes of Ian Turner, Brian Fitzpatrick and Geoffrey Serle.\textsuperscript{36} However, as Neville Meaney has suggested, ‘this typology was never invoked by Australian leaders,’ nor was it referred to on national days or at times of national crises.\textsuperscript{37} Instead, on these occasions the oratory, symbolism and rituals were ‘overwhelming British in character.’\textsuperscript{38} Similarly, Curran and Ward conclude that for all its bush folklore and outback balladry, Australians had never ‘been able to lay claim to a separate national identity based on a self validating, self-perpetuating and self-sufficient cultural heritage.’\textsuperscript{39} Even Geoffrey Serle, after praising Russel Ward’s demonstration of Australian patriotism resigns to the fact that ‘those who felt their first loyalty to Australia and not to Britain or the Empire, formed a small minority movement.’\textsuperscript{40}


\textsuperscript{37} For example: Brian Fitzpatrick, \textit{The Australian People, 1788-1945} (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1946).

\textsuperscript{38} Meaney, “Britishness and Australian Identity”, p. 83.


\textsuperscript{40} Curran, Ward, \textit{The Unknown Nation}, p. 13.

Amongst ‘radical nationalists’ there is a rich vein occupied by the ‘thwarted nationalism’ theory. Historians Humphrey McQueen, Geoffrey Serle and Stephen Alomes engage in the criticism of Australia’s ‘dependent mentality.’

These historians suggest that Australia’s subservience to Britain impeded the realisation of Australian nationhood, and that Australian nationalism was a ‘suppressed latent force, just waiting to be unleashed.’ As Serle surveyed in the early 1970s, ‘fear and the long habit of dependence on a great power held Australia back from full nationhood and inhibited the development of an identity.’ Similarly, McQueen is scathing in his attack of Australian policy makers and politicians lack of assertiveness on the world scale, describing the relationship as an ‘umbilical attachment’ resulting in a ‘derivative, dependent and closed society.’

Historian David Day’s *Reluctant Nation* exhibits a similar argument, suggesting that although given the opportunity to stand on its own two feet after the Fall of Singapore in 1942, Australia cowered at the possibility of independence, instead turning to America as a substitute for a flailing British military. However, there is evidence to suggest that Australia’s desire to

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maintain ‘great and powerful friends’ was based on pragmatism and self-awareness. As Carl Bridge and Bernard Attard argue, Australia’s external relations were neither characterised by ‘apathetic dependence nor nationalist self-assertion, but by their pursuit of Australia’s interests within the imperial system.’  

Australia’s ongoing search for security in its perceivably precarious geo-political location, dictated its diplomacy. Rather than being ‘a British sycophant,’ Australia pursued its own interests, acknowledging that these interests were at time divergent to those of Britain.

However, the trend to downplay the significance of Britishness in the social, cultural and political fabric of Australia has seen the rise of a phenomenon that historian Stephen Howe has articulated as ‘trying to escape the history of Empire.’ As Schrueder and Ward have suggested, the period of the 1950s and 1960s raised difficult questions about the moral foundations of Australia’s British history. However, instead of confronting such questions, ‘historians have generally sought to displace them by identifying and elaborating new myths of national distinctiveness.’

50 Schreuder, Ward, (eds.), Australia’s Empire, p. 5.
In determining how Australia came to view Britain as “foreign” it is useful to consider the demise of the Anglo-Australian relationship within the framework of the waning British Empire in the post-imperial world. Historian David Goldsworthy points to the dissolution of the French and Dutch empires and the ‘great wave of decolonisation’ in which imperialism came to be seen by London as a hindrance as it tried to define its new role in the world. Goldsworthy’s argument is convincing as it is evident that Britain’s own reconfiguration of its international outlook in a post-imperial era had a great impact on its interaction with Australia. Decolonisation, as David Lee suggests, caused a complete reconfiguration of the geopolitical landscape of the world, thoroughly transforming the character and organisation of the British Empire. The ‘enlarged association’ could no longer provide Australia with the same sense of belonging and identity, and the old notion of Empire loyalty and the indivisibility of the Crown could not be sustained in the new realities of the Empire.

Similarly, Curran and Ward point to the onset of global decolonisation as a catalyst for revision of the moral and racial assumptions of European imperialism. This trend exerted pressure on Australia’s White Australia Policy, which was abolished in 1973, thus marking the end of Australia’s overwhelmingly British character and heralding a move towards multiculturalism.

51 David Goldsworthy, Losing the Blanket: Australia and the end of Britain’s Empire (Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 2002), p. 6
53 Curran, Ward, The Unknown Nation, p. 15.
There are, however, alternative explanations for the demise of the Anglo-Australian relationship. Historians Neville Meaney, James Curran and Stuart Ward contest the ‘radical nationalist’ suggestion that ties with Britain were severed in the 1940s. These historians are concerned with the concept of British race patriotism, and the construction of nationalism in Australia based on this very ideal. Meaney, Curran and Ward suggest that sentiment was directly affected by the changing strategic and economic circumstances, however the process of disentangling from Empire was much more complex and gradual than that suggested by Waters and Day. Meaney attributes Australia’s inability to sever ties to the fact that, directly after World War II there was no serious alternative to replace the uniting sense of Britishness that Australians had so readily embraced as a defining part of their identity. Specifically, Meaney ascertains that ‘even under the testing circumstances of WWII, Australian could not think of themselves as other than a British people.’

The diminishing significance of colonial loyalties and the demise of the Anglo-Australian relationship has been a persistent theme in recent Australian historiography. Historians have sought to identify a definitive moment in which the Anglo-Australian relationship was fractured, and have tended to examine the problem through the strategic and economic aspects of the relationship. There is also a wealth of scholarly literature which details the process of Britain’s

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application into the European Economic Community.\textsuperscript{55} There is however, an absence of in-depth discussion regarding the process by which Australia placed Britain on a foreign footing. Although historians James Curran, Neville Meaney and Stuart Ward touch on the notion of ‘foreignness,’ in their recent historical works, this dramatic conceptual and ideological shift deserves more than a passing glance, for it reveals a deliberate decision by Australian leaders to alter the way in which they viewed their place in the world, and the way in which they wanted to be viewed by others.

The events of the 1960s and 1970s are indicative of the changing realities of the Anglo-Australian relationship. Stuart Ward suggests that ‘the dismantling of the British race patriot outlook in Australian politics can be identified, with a surprising degree of precision, in the United Kingdom’s first application to the EEC in the early 1960s.’ \textsuperscript{56} Similarly, in 1962 \textit{The Australian Financial Review} heralded the ‘end of an era’ and the ‘abandonment of Australia.’\textsuperscript{57} Britain’s entry into the EEC seriously undermined the core myth of ‘community in diversity’ that


\textsuperscript{57} Quoted in Stuart Ward, “‘Without a Friend in the World’: McEwen and the Defence of Australian Trade”, in \textit{Australia and the British Embrace}, p. 120.
had long sustained the Anglo-Australian relationship through imperial crises.\textsuperscript{58} Further Ward posits that the disentangling of cultural and traditional ties was directly related to the disentangling of political and economic ties between Britain and Australia, pointing to the period of EEC negotiations as the period whereby British race sentiment was irrevocably eroded.\textsuperscript{59}

Conversely, David Goldsworthy attributes a great degree of significance to the British Cabinet’s decision in 1968 to withdraw from East of Suez, which he suggests, ‘more than any other single event, signified the quietus of empire.’\textsuperscript{60} Similarly, Norman Harper highlights the importance of British military presence along what was regarded ‘as the jugular vein of the Commonwealth,’\textsuperscript{61} for maintaining security. Newspapers of the time conveyed an equally apocalyptic tone, as \textit{The Melbourne Herald} proclaimed ‘Waken to our peril,’ and the \textit{Daily Mirror} warned of a ‘far east death warrant.’\textsuperscript{62} As Stuart Ward suggests, the Wilson Government’s determination to withdraw its military presence from East of Suez was a clear indication of Britain’s diminishing sense of obligation to Australia and its Commonwealth partners, symbolising a ‘narrowing of Britain’s

\textsuperscript{58} Stuart Ward, \textit{Australia and the British Embrace}, p. 261.
\textsuperscript{60} Goldsworthy, \textit{Losing the Blanket}, p. 8
\textsuperscript{62} Quoted in Jeppe Kristensen, “Still in Essence a British Country”. p. 46.
horizons.’ However, Jeppe Kristensen has suggested, that despite the feelings of betrayal, Australia was still ‘in essence a British country.’ Prime Minister Harold Holt frankly admitted that although practical considerations were forcing Australia to turn to the United States, he was confident that sentimental ties would survive the disintegration of economic and defence ties, ‘and that these in no way stood as a barrier to Australia’s national self-realisation.’

Stuart Ward and James Curran examine the ‘fraying fabric of Britishness in Australian politics and culture.’ Specifically, the issue of a crisis in national identity following the collapse of the British race ideal forms the basis of their historical analysis, the realisation of Britain as a foreign country only occupying a brief segment. To borrow a phrase from historian Geoffrey Serle, there existed a ‘vacuum since the decline of standard imperial patriotic rhetoric in Australia.’ This remark captures the conundrum in Australia during the 1960s and 1970s. At this time the deeply embedded sense of Britishness, which had served as a cohesive political and cultural platform for Australian society was dwindling in resonance and urgently needed to be replaced by a ‘new nationalism.’

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67 This was the focus of Prime Minister John Gorton, but more specifically of Gough Whitlam, who came into power in 1972. Due to the attempts to instill a new set of cultural values which were meaningful to Australians at the civic community level, the idea of ‘new nationalism’ was the subject of the satires of Barry Humphries. See Anne Pender, “The Mythical Australian: Barry Humphries, Gough Whitlam and ‘New Nationalism’”, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*,
Curran’s examination of the Prime Ministerial rhetoric during this transition period, poses crucial questions regarding the outcome of the diminished relevance and the attempt to define a ‘nationalism stripped of its British underpinnings’. Comparisons between the public rhetoric used by national leaders, and the attitudes of Australian society as published in newspapers of the time reveal the disorientation of the Australian people as they grappled for an alternative to replace their British identity.

Evidently, there has been ample discussion regarding the shifting foundations of the Anglo-Australian relationship. Although briefly mentioned in more recent historiography, the manner in which Australia dealt with such changes, particularly the realisation that Britain must be seen as a “foreign” country, has not been investigated in depth. The thesis will explore this process by venturing into the essentially uncharted waters of Britain’s changing Immigration laws from 1962-1973, as well as the transfer of Australia House from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, to the Department of Foreign Affairs in 1972.

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70 Although Matthew Trinca has dedicated a chapter in his PhD to Britain’s immigration laws in the context of Australian Tourism. Matthew Trinca, “Part of the Pageant,” PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 2010.
Therefore, this thesis contributes to the existing historiography in two key ways. Firstly, it presents an analysis of the notion of Britishness in Australia in order to provide a comprehensive historical perspective on the difficulties faced by the Australia people when coming to terms with the shifting foundations of the relationship with Britain. Secondly, the thesis is an extension of the brief existing historiography, and a foray into the recently released archival evidence. It illuminates the overlooked outcry of the civic community, which was faced with an absence of a cohesive national myth as national leaders searched for a meaningful replacement for the British race ideal. Additionally, the thesis is situated in a wider historical study of the decline of the British Empire. The dilemma of waning British loyalties was not a uniquely Australian problem and was experienced throughout the Empire during the process of decolonisation, particularly amongst the Old Dominions, of which there exists much historical writing.\footnote{See for example Phillip Buckner, \textit{Canada and the End of Empire} (Canada: UBC Press, 2004) and Francine McKenzie, “Coming of Age: Independence and Foreign policy in Canada and Australia, 1931-1945” in \textit{Parties Long Estranged: Canada and Australia in the 20th Century}, M. Macmillan and F. McKenzie, (eds.) (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), pp. 34-61.}

The foundation of my primary research is formed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade’s recently released archival collection on Australian and the United Kingdom from 1960 to 1975. The collation of official policy briefings, official and unofficial correspondence between Australian and British ministers and inter-departmental memos, have not been widely available to historians until 2010, thus are invaluable to the historical accuracy of this thesis.

Significantly, the archives allow for insight into both an Australian and British
perspective, with confidential documents revealing the true viewpoint of
Australian and British politicians, as well as what they chose to reveal to each
other. From this collection, the decline in the relevance of the British connection
can be traced. However, as the collection represents only a selection from the
archives, documents from the National Archives of Australia collection have also
been integral to my research.

These documents will be supplemented with a wide array of primary sources,
particularly newspaper articles. In order to assess the public reaction to the
changed immigration laws and the transfer of Australia House, The Sydney
is especially revealing to compare public discussion with Parliamentary
discussion in both Australia and Britain. For this purpose the Hansard
publications of Australian Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates as well as the
British House of Commons Parliamentary Papers have been useful in
highlighting the great schism between rhetoric and reality that existed during
this period.

This thesis follows a predominantly chronological structure. Directly concerning
the events in the period of 1960-1975, the thesis naturally looks beyond these
years to situate Britishness in its political and social context. The first chapter
will assess the implications of the introduction of the United Kingdom's
Commonwealth Immigration Act in 1962. The legislation signified the first
restrictions on Australian entry into the United Kingdom, which was regarded as
a right under their British subject status. Although designed to curb the influx of immigrants from the West Indies, Africa and Asia, the changes coincided with Britain's first EEC application, thus perceived in the public as yet another 'betrayal' from Britain.

The second chapter examines the tightening of the regulations of the 1962 *Commonwealth Immigrants Act*. In 1968 and 1971, the Acts were amended firstly to deal more effectively with the increase of 'coloured migrants,' and secondly to align with the obligations accompanying Britain's impending EEC membership. Emerging from such changes was the implication that Australians were essentially treated as 'foreigners' or 'aliens.' Forced to wait in the 'Others' queue at Heathrow Airport, and to apply for work vouchers, Australians considered these regulations to be an assault on their history of Britishness. Moreover, this chapter will argue against the belief of a British indifference to the waning of Empire, examining the Tory backbench revolt which was a reaction from within Britain against the treatment of the old Commonwealth countries.

The third chapter discusses the transfer of Australia House from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet to the Department of Foreign Affairs. While this shift logistically represented an 'administrative convenience,' the historic significance and symbolism of Australia House as a beacon of the 'special' relationship between Australia and Britain meant that the transfer was fraught

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with difficulty. Here I seek to explore the conflict between sentiment and self-interest, between nostalgic senior ministers, and their more progressive, pragmatic counterparts. On both the immigration issue and the transfer of Australia House, Sir Alexander Downer in both his private memoirs and in archival records acts as a key point of resistance to change and is useful as a reflection of persistence of the imperial imagination.73

Based on the available archival evidence, I will argue that these incidents revealed deep cleavages in Australian society, both at a political and civic level. Those who yearned for the familiarity of their British-Australian identity were forced to revise the assumptions that had formed the basis of the relationship. The gradual and complex nature of the process of withdrawing from the ‘receding ebb of Empire,’74 reveals the undeniable affiliation with Britain, which is yet to be concluded.75 The 1990s Republican Movement was an attempt to sever the remaining constitutional ties to Britain, however its rejection by the Australian people reveals that the process of viewing Britain through a “foreign” paradigm remains an ongoing difficulty in Australia. Twenty years prior to the referendum on the Republic, this difficulty was exhibited by Gough Whitlam in a speech at Mansion House in 1974. Despite the attempts to mute the special historical relationship between Australia and Britain, Whitlam declared that ‘For an Australian Prime Minister, London can never be just another city, or Britain

just another country.\textsuperscript{76} Such rhetoric poses the question: have the attempts to view Britain as a “foreign” country been successful, or is Australia’s British heritage inescapable? As historian Andrea Benvenuti purports, the once intimate ties of Empire that had bound Australia and Britain, became, \textit{for all practical purposes}, inconsequential by the early 1970s,\textsuperscript{77} however, the sentimental ties continued to linger.

\textsuperscript{76} Speech by Gough Whitlam in London, Mansion House, 19\textsuperscript{th} December, 1974, UKNA: PREM 16/300, Doc. 496, \textit{Documents on Foreign Affairs}, p. 1083.

I.

‘The Myth of Civis Britannicus Sum’

The United Kingdom Commonwealth Immigration Act

In July 1964, former member of the Australian Ballet Company, Barry Moreland, was told bluntly that he could not enter Britain. With aspirations to work in London, but no work voucher, Moreland was escorted to Southend Airport and given 24 hours to leave the country. With friends and family in London and a deportation order stamped on his passport, he bitterly told The Sydney Morning Herald, that ‘my only other alternative is to swim the Channel.’ For Moreland, and for many disillusioned Australians, this unhappy state of affairs suggested that the British family had ‘closed the door’ and were treating them like foreigners.

At the heart of such disappointment was the feeling that the ties of Empire were unravelling and that the British citizenship status enjoyed by Australians was under siege. In 1948, Clement Attlee’s Labour government adopted the British Nationality Act, entrenching the right of all Commonwealth citizens to enter the United Kingdom and enjoy all the social, political and economic benefits of full citizenship. The Act represented the legislative expression of a worldwide

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80 Peter O’Loughlin, “Britain closes the Door”, p. 51.
community of Britons. The feelings of patriotism in Australia during this time, despite the tensions of the war and the immediate post-war era, were articulated by Robert Menzies in an address at the Empire Parliamentary Association in 1948. Proud of his British heritage, Menzies spoke of his ‘rank sentimentalism,’ citing Westminster Hall to be the centre of the world for ‘all of us who are British People the world over.’

This ideal of *Civis Britannicus Sum*, an expression of the British subjecthood’s indivisibility, was often invoked to conjure the sense of unity and as such British legislators ensured that changes in citizenship legislation did not impact on the status of British subjects. The *British Nationality Act* stated that each member of the British Commonwealth was a separate unit with its own laws and policies, particularly in regard to immigration and deportation. While the Act encouraged the Dominions to pursue their own internal policies, the common perception that Australians and Britons shared a special relationship, due to cultural and historic ties, pervaded the national psyche. The belief that a common British nationality strengthened the bonds of Empire was expressed in a nation-wide Gallup Poll in 1947, which indicated that an overwhelming 65 percent of Australians wished to retain their

82 For an explanation on the origins of the term, see Alistair Davidson, “Civis Romanus Sum” in *From Subject to Citizen 1901-1996* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Cambridge, 1997), pp. 13-40.
83 The *British Nationality Act* (BNA) was a reaction to the League of Nations requirement that all members define their nationals. Each member of the British Commonwealth was a separate unit with its own laws and policy, particularly in regard to immigration and deportation. For detail on the BNA see Randall Hansen, “The Politics of Citizenship in 1940s Britain: The British Nationality Act”, *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 10, 1 (1999), pp. 67-95.
British nationality, as opposed to establishing a separate Australian nationality.\textsuperscript{84}

This chapter will demonstrate how this "special" relationship was damaged by the introduction of the \textit{United Kingdom Commonwealth Immigrants Act} in 1962.

The Act essentially revoked the rights of British Subjects within the Commonwealth to gain free entry into the Motherland. This shift, more than anything, was symbolic and although the Act was designed to curb immigration from the 'new' Commonwealth countries, particularly from the Caribbean and South Asia and Africa, the legislation inevitably affected the way in which the Australian people perceived their relationship with Britain.\textsuperscript{85}

This chapter will also examine the way in which the Act signified the first popular reaction from the Australian people who felt alienated by the introduction of restrictions. The media gauged the widespread public disenchantment and feelings of neglect, adopting individual stories of refusal at the customs gates and entrenching the sentiment that Australians were being treated as 'aliens'. These sentiments reflected the over-arching concerns of the loosening of Imperial ties in the context of divergent Vietnam War policies and Britain's EEC applications from 1961-1963.\textsuperscript{86}

The non-interference stance of the Australian government, informed in part by the aforementioned \textit{British...}


\textsuperscript{85} The term 'New Commonwealth' refers to the colonial territories that achieved independence from Britain but were still members of the Commonwealth. These countries include India, Pakistan, Nigeria, Jamaica etc.

Nationality Act, and in part due to their own exclusive immigration policies, did not serve to quell the uncertainties of a disgruntled Australian public. The disparity between the official Australian position and the public reaction, revealed how enduring the British connection was on a popular level, particularly the belief that Australians and Britons were equal within the Empire.

The timing of the Act was integral to the feelings of abandonment felt by some members of Australian society at both a political and civic level. Sir Alexander Downer, the Australian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, was particularly outspoken in his belief that such changes were irreversibly damaging to Australian and British relations. Part of Downer’s resentment that ‘our kinsfolk have a genius for affronting their best friends,’ was due to Britain’s bid to join the European Economic Community in 1961-1963. The Deputy Prime Minister and Country Party Leader, John McEwen, voiced the feelings of abandonment of the Australian people, particularly the rural sector, who would most keenly feel the impact of the new economic arrangements. Downer and McEwen, as suggested by Stuart Ward, were responding to what they believed to be a failure on Britain’s part to observe ‘unwritten rules of family conduct.’ The introduction of the Act also coincided with the Macmillan Government’s decision that the term ‘British’ should be used exclusively for the United Kingdom. As Bill Schwarz notes, ‘the differences between the settler communities and London intensified into outright antagonism’ as it undermined

the historical mutuality between the worldwide community of Britons. As historian Ezequial Mercua suggests, these ‘subtle initiatives’ promoted the ‘conceptual dissolution of Greater Britain.’

When viewed through the ‘radical nationalist’ paradigm, Australia’s indignation toward the introduction of restrictions to the privileges granted by their British subjecthood can be understood as an unwillingness to stand alone in the world. Indeed, Anne-Marie Jordens has commented that all Australians, including the officers of the Department of Immigration, had no concept of what being an Australian citizen, as distinct from being a British citizen actually meant. Similarly, Alistair Davidson comments on the ‘passive population of subjects’ who had a ‘weak sense of what they stood for politically as a ‘people.’ However, as this chapter will clarify, the reluctance to break with the familial and the familiar was due to the fact that Australians, at this point, equated Britishness with their own identity. The curtailing of the right of free entry into Britain that had instilled a sense of belonging to Britain, meant that ties of history and culture came under siege.

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90 Ezequial Mercau, “Abandoned Britons? The Sunningdale Agreement and Ulster Britishness”, MA, University College Dublin, August 2010, p. 16.
Coloured Immigration in Britain.

The ‘open door’ policies that had characterised British immigration laws were subject to dramatic revision with the introduction of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act in 1962. As suggested by The Sydney Morning Herald in 1963, Britain had accepted half a million immigrants in the past seven years and could no longer absorb unlimited numbers. The primary objective of the Act was to control the immigration of the so called ‘New Commonwealth’ citizens from the Caribbean, Africa and South Asia, into the United Kingdom. The imperial rhetoric of Civis Britannicus Sum had long advocated that “Commonwealth citizen” and “British Subject” were synonymous and thus all members of the world-wide British community were afforded the rights and privileges that accompanied this status. The Immigrants Act was the first legislation to regulate Commonwealth immigration and introduced entry restrictions by making primary immigration dependent upon the possession of a work voucher. Under the new Act, the categories of Commonwealth citizens eligible to enter Britain were limited to holders of employment vouchers issued by the Ministry of Labour, students, members of armed forces, and candidates who could demonstrate their capacity to support themselves and their dependents upon embarking on a working holiday.

However, to fully understand the Commonwealth Immigrants Act, the racial tension of the post-war era in Britain must first be revisited. The Act can be

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understood as a direct reaction to the social and political unrest generated by the influx of coloured migrants in the 1940s and 1950s. The 1948 *British Nationality Act* inevitably encouraged the immigration of British subjects to the United Kingdom. Additionally, the state of Britain's war-ravaged economy meant that migrants, particularly from the ‘New Commonwealth’ countries, were welcomed as cheap labour. Although superficially maintaining an ‘open door’ policy, the 1949 Royal Commission on Population indicated the inherent racial intolerance in British society. Concerned about the potential dangers that coloured people posed to local communities, the Commission stated that migrants would only be welcomed if ‘they were of good stock and were not prevented by race or religion from intermarrying with the host population and becoming merged with it.’

The subject of ‘coloured’ immigration was first raised by the Colonial Secretary Arthur Creech Jones, as a consequence of the public and parliamentary interest aroused by the arrival of the *SS Empire Windrush*, a vessel landing in the British Port of Tilbury from the Caribbean in 1948. Symbolic of the rising number of coloured immigrants, the arrival of the *SS Empire Windrush* initiated discussion surrounding race, migration and social cohesion. At this time, as historian Ian Spencer has identified, there was a stark disparity between the confidential correspondence of hostility and regret which focussed on the need to prevent the recurrence of a coloured immigration influx, compared to the British

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Government’s outward composure of tolerance, a trend which was reflected in the 1962 *Immigrants Act*.96

The legislation specified that restrictions were to be non-discriminatory, applying to ‘all citizens of all Commonwealth countries.’97 Essentially, as historians have widely agreed, the *Commonwealth Immigrants Act* in effect operated as a ‘White England Policy’ as colour and race had become an explosive political issue in British politics.98 Social problems were exacerbated by recession in some industries in the late 1950s, specifically textiles, meaning that many new migrants were unable to secure employment and therefore became reliant on National Assistance.99 The job voucher system therefore acted as a means to exclude coloured immigrants. There were three categories: all subjects seeking to enter the United Kingdom had to either have a job to come to, possess special skills which were in short supply, or be part of a large undifferentiated group whose numbers would be set according to the labour needs of the economy.100 As Home Secretary Rab Butler made clear in 1961, ‘although the scheme purports to relate solely to unemployment and to be non-discriminatory, its aim is primarily social and its restrictive effect is intended, and would in fact,

97 My emphasis. Her Majesty’s Government of the United Kingdom, “Admission of Commonwealth Citizens to the United Kingdom, a leaflet to help Commonwealth Citizens who are planning to travel to the United Kingdom and want to know how the Commonwealth Immigrants Act, 1962, will affect them”, State Library of NSW Collection, p. 6.
100 Spencer, *British Immigration Policy*, p. 129.
operate on coloured people almost exclusively.’ In this manner, the British Government was able to curtail the number of coloured migrants.

The increased rate of ‘coloured’ immigration from the Commonwealth changed the racial and cultural demographic in Great Britain. Between 1951-1966, ‘New Commonwealth’ immigration accounted for sixty percent of the foreign born population in Britain. Problematically, this large group of immigrants was unevenly distributed among the British populace, predominantly occupying London and the West Midlands. Thus when post-war employment opportunities in these areas declined considerably, alongside the issues of over-crowding of public housing and limited access to social services, racial tension was rife, most evident in the Nottingham and Notting Hill riots in mid 1958. Incidents of racial violence such as the case of a white woman involved in an inter-racial relationship in Nottingdale, who was attacked with stones, glass and wood, characterised the riots. It was the first time that the British public witnessed a display of anger from black communities as they responded to racial bigotry. One citizen, in a letter to the editor of The Times, suggested that if the reaction to racial violence was the enforcement of immigration restrictions, then the British

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101 Rab Butler on Immigration, UKNA: CAB 129/107, C(61) 153, 6 October 1961, cited in “the introduction of restrictions on Commonwealth immigration to the United Kingdom” in Documents on Foreign Policy, p. 759.  
103 Money, “No Vacancy: The Political Geography of Immigration Control in Advanced Industrial Countries”, p. 703.  
government will convey its desire for a ‘colour-bar.’ Instead, the incensed reader proposed, the United Kingdom required a radical searching of the conscience in order to totally eradicate colour-discrimination.105

Prior to the introduction of the Act, the British Government considered alternative measures to hinder the arrival of a bourgeoning coloured population. In an effort to limit immigration without imposing legislation, the Colonial Office sought to dissuade potential migrants through advertising. Posters heralded the lack of employment opportunities in Britain, as well as diminishing Britain’s appeal with phrases such as, ‘it’s cold in England, take warm clothes.’106 Indeed in February 1962, when the Act was being discussed in the House of Commons, Lord Balniel, the member for Hertford, suggested that the previously endorsed ‘open door’ policy, was of little value to immigrants if they could not be guaranteed a warm welcome or social and economic security.107 In the House of Commons it was, after much deliberation, decided that the control of immigration was ‘unfortunately, now necessary.’108 The need to control the rate, time and level of immigration so that immigrants could be absorbed without creating new social tensions and hatred was cited as a primary factor in the decision, as well as the fear of creating an ‘unprivileged class, marked by colour.’109 The primary concern, was the appearance of racial discrimination for,

‘as the mother country of a multi-racial Commonwealth we must be scrupulously careful – it behoves us to be so, in our interests – to ensure that there is not a scintilla or taint of colour prejudice in any action that we take.’110

The Government did not outwardly disclose that race was the underlying reason for the introduction of the initial Commonwealth Immigrants Act. The exception however, was Enoch Powell, a member of the Shadow Cabinet who was dismissed by the Prime Minister Heath in 1968, following his speech on immigration in Birmingham in the same year.111 Powell spoke of the detrimental changes to the character of England due to the influx of coloured migrants, in a way its people ‘neither chose, nor desired, nor expected.’112 He voiced the government’s unspoken fear that Britain would have a racial problem as big as that of the United States unless immigration policy was changed.113 While this was ultimately one of the deciding factors in the necessity of legislation on the

110 Balniel, HCPD, House of Commons, Vol. 653, 6 February, 1962, p. 239.
matter, the great lengths that Britain had gone to avoid the appearance of
discrimination, even excluding their kinsfolk, precipitated outrage within the
Heath Government.  

Cool Greeting for new “Foreigners” – Angry Australians.

British officials feared that restricting the rights of the Old Dominions to enter
the country which they still regarded as home threatened to undermine Britain’s
position as a metropolitan Motherland around which the empire rotated. The
Commonwealth Relations Office argued against a universal Act, suggesting that
the United Kingdom played an important role in binding the Empire together.
The genuine reluctance to alter the status quo was largely based on the ideal of
_Civis Britannicus Sum_ and the fear that this rhetoric would become hollow, as
well as the extreme sensitivity of both Ministers and civil servants to public
opinion and a possible backbench reaction. To continue to leave colonial
migration unchecked however, seemed too dangerous an option – thus the
solution was ‘universal in theory, but specific in practice.’ This racially specific
Act ultimately meant that the United Kingdom could legally exclude undesirable
coloured immigration while avoiding the appearance of discrimination. In fact, as
the British Home Secretary, Henry Brooke, highlighted in his response to

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114 Minutes of the Cabinet Commonwealth Migrants Committee, 17 May, 1961, quoted in Spencer, _British Immigration Policy_, p. 120.
Australian requests for leniency,\textsuperscript{118} only nine out of the 22,000 Australian citizens who came through the ports in the first three months of the Act were refused entry, ‘sufficient indication that genuine visitors and students are experiencing no difficulty in securing admission.’\textsuperscript{119} 

At a popular level, the concept of unrestricted entry into Britain went hand in hand with the romanticised idea of returning to the Motherland, and to the roots of British heritage. The omnipresence of British culture within Australian society reinforced the sentimental attachment to the imperial capital, London, and fuelled the desire of many Australians to embark on a journey to England. The significance of the ‘expatriate myth’ in Australian culture; the idea spawning from the settlers desire to return ‘home’ has been well documented.\textsuperscript{120} As such, when treated as ‘unwelcome strangers in an alien land,’ the Australian people

\textsuperscript{118} In a letter to the Home Secretary Henry Brooke, Australian High Commissioner to London Sir Eric John Harrison wrote: ‘I must ask for assurance that the provisions of the Act will be applied against Australian citizens with some discretion in the future, particularly in cases in which Australians arriving here unaware of the fact that, although they are British nationals, they are not regarded as such for the purposes of the Act.’ Letter, Harrison to Brooke, London, 19 October, 1962, NAA:A1838, 151/171, Part 1, Doc. 307, \textit{Documents on Foreign Policy}, p. 769.


felt ‘hurt and bewildered.’ Historian Matthew Trinca discusses the imperative for Australians to travel to London as being a ‘necessary validation of the known rather than the discovery of the unknown.’ For Australians, London was both familiar and exciting, while cultural similarities were apparent, the city also represented the centre of the Empire. Stuart Ward demonstrates the ongoing appeal of the British embrace, as ‘the ancestral “home” of most white Australians,’ and the ‘fount of their language and main focus of what they learned at school.’ The significance of London for Australians and the symbolism of the pilgrimage ‘home’ inevitably meant that changes in immigration laws were difficult to fathom. As The Sydney Morning Herald reported in 1969, the ‘right’ of free entry into the United Kingdom based on ties of culture and history was no longer a certainty. As it became more difficult, or was perceived by Australians to be more difficult, the idea of England as ‘home’ was in jeopardy.

The small number of Australians who failed to take note of changes to immigration laws and were turned away at the gates, were adopted by the press as symbols of injustice and alienation. With emotional outcries of ‘I will never visit this country again!’ and stories of young women shedding tears at the

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the stories were quickly turned into provocative headlines. Alexander Downer reported to Canberra his understanding that the primary aim of the Act was to secure control over the influx of immigrants from the West Indies, Pakistan and India, however, he also suggested that the break from traditional Commonwealth policies of unimpeded entry into Britain would 'bring home the extent to which Australia’s relationship with the United Kingdom was changing.' In a similar vein, the British High Commissioner in Canberra, Charles Johnston, conveyed a considered warning of the effect on the British-Australian relationship that was likely to be caused by the Act. He drew attention to Australian loyalty to the Crown, their 'direct and exceptionally personal attachment to Britain and all things British’ and the fact that they 'still consider themselves as a genuine extension of the British Community.'

The aspect of the Act that most keenly impacted upon Australians was the British Government's insistence that legislation should be impartial. The Home Office’s distribution of a leaflet intended to allay fears of the Act’s detrimental impact on Australians, served only to heighten disillusion that travellers would be treated as ‘aliens’ on arrival to London, passing through the hands of the immigration officers 'like any other visitor from abroad.' It was this non-preferential

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treatment that the Australian people had difficulty comprehending. Downer issued a formal complaint to the Secretary of the Commonwealth Relations Office, Joe Garner in 1966, warning of the ‘grave danger’ of alienating Australia, and re-enforcing that the majority of Australians still regarded Britain as home and as such ‘expected to receive a warm welcome.’\textsuperscript{130} Downer’s outlook was very much aligned with the words of the Lord Mayor of Melbourne, Sir Raymond Connelly, who had claimed in 1948 that ‘as long as members of the Empire refer to London as ‘coming home’ the Empire is safe.’\textsuperscript{131} Despite Joe Garner’s description of Downer’s ‘tirade’ and his ‘involved, emotional, repetitive harangue,’ he conceded in earlier correspondence with Neil Pritchard, of the Commonwealth Office, that the ‘incontrovertible facts’ were that ‘most Canadians, Australians and New Zealanders were in fact, the same people as ourselves,’\textsuperscript{132} Moreover, it was recommended by Johnston that Australians were a ‘touchy, prickly people, particularly resentful of officialdom and of any real or imagined injustice.’ As such, he suggested that a hostile reaction would result in a complete rethinking of attitudes and practices toward Britain as a result of being treated, in effect, as aliens.\textsuperscript{133} It is interesting to note Johnston’s inference that the injustice was ‘imagined,’ as it has been highlighted that the change was merely symbolic and impacted on only a few Australians who had failed to take note of administrative changes.

\textsuperscript{131} Richard White, “Australian Tourists In Britain”, p. 11.2.
\textsuperscript{133} Despatch – Johnston to Bowden, British High Commission, Canberra, 22 November, 1966, UKA: DO 175/163, Doc. 320, \textit{Documents on Foreign Policy}, p. 780.
The British Government’s emphasis on the non-discriminatory nature of the Act was an issue of contention amongst the House of Commons, primarily due to the apprehension surrounding the consequences for the ‘Old Commonwealth’ countries, especially Australia, New Zealand and Canada. In 1953 and 1958 the motions to implement restrictions were adjourned due to the ‘reluctance to depart from our traditional readiness to receive all citizens who have the status of a British Subject.’

Moreover, in the House of Commons Lord Balniel expressed his distress about the Act’s impartial application to those ‘tied to us by blood’. Although described as ‘a deplorable Act’, ‘wretched, unnecessary and misguided,’ a ‘betrayal in principle’ and ‘tactically misguided,’ no viable alternative was conceived. It is evident that the British government was not deliberately ostracising its Australian friends, but rather felt that they had no alternative than to regulate immigration in an impartial manner. In 1968, The Australian Women’s Weekly was still attempting to convey that the act was not in an anti-Australian vein. An article by Nicholas Tarsh, the chairman of the Overseas Visitor’s Club in London, proclaimed, ‘Britain still loves you, wants you and, in fact, needs you!’ It can be seen that the introduction was purely a matter of national interest, whereby Britain sought to pursue an altered immigration policy and Australian citizens in turn had to come to terms with

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some administrative changes which overall had little impact on their ability to enter the country.

The Acts were further tightened with the release of the White Paper on *Immigration from the Commonwealth* in 1965. This involved the abolition of non-priority vouchers and the reduction of the total number of vouchers issued to those with a job offer or special skills to a maximum of 8,500 per year. A stricter interpretation of who was to be admitted as a dependent was also introduced, with the exclusion of nephews, nieces, and children over 16.

> ‘The Laws of the United Kingdom are just as much its prerogative as our immigration laws are our prerogative’

Despite Britain’s concern about the impact that the new Act would have on the Old Dominions, the official Australian reaction was surprisingly muted. Although it was acknowledged that the legislation was a watershed for traditional immigration privileges for Australia, there was an acceptance amongst Cabinet Members that implementation of restrictions was important to the maintenance of British social cohesion. This stance had its foundations in the legislation emerging from the Imperial Conference of 1918, whereby it was decided that each state of the Commonwealth had the right to administer its own immigration control. On the grounds of this non-interference stance, the Cabinet agreed that Australia should not comment on the principles of the proposed

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139 Spencer, *British Immigration Policy*, p. 36.
141 Kathleen Paul, *Whitewashing Britain*, p. 171.
Amongst some political officials, there was a feeling that ‘the Commonwealth Immigrants Act is operating very lightly as far as we are concerned and that we should avoid doing anything unnecessary that might lose us sympathy with the British.’\footnote{Letter, Nimmo to Brown, Canberra, 20 November, 1962, NAA:A1838, 1965/1487 Part 1, Doc. 309, \textit{Documents on Foreign Policy}, p. 770.} Australia House in London was also very circumspect about the deportations, stating that ‘we don’t want to make a comment, because the way the British implement their immigration laws is their business and not ours.’\footnote{As discussed in Cooke, \textit{CPD}, Vol. S. 21, 1 May, 1962 (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1962) p. 989.}

Moreover, Australia’s own inherently racial immigration policies also meant that they had no firm ground to stand on to voice complaint. The \textit{White Australia Policy}, still active in the 1960s, indicated that ‘the essential racism of Australian nationality policy was stridently present, revealing that behind the vaunted legal \textit{jus soli} lay an ethno-blood notion of the national family.’\footnote{Davidson, \textit{From Subject to Citizen}, p. 67. \textit{Jus soli} is the rule that citizenship and nationality is determined by the place of birth.} For this reason, early requests that the provisions of the Act be applied against Australian citizens with discretion, fell on deaf ears.\footnote{Letter, Harrison to Brooke, Australian High Commission, London, 19 October, 1962, NAA:A1838 1531/171 Part 1, Doc. 308, \textit{Documents on Foreign Policy}, p. 769.} The façade of ‘scrupulous fairness’ that clamped restrictions on Canada, New Zealand and Australia, had the ‘convenient effect’ of allowing Britain to continue to lecture the world about its shortcomings, and not least to denounce the \textit{White Australia Policy} wherever possible.\footnote{“White Britain”, \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 1 March, 1971, p.6.} The Secretary
of the Department of Immigration, Sir Peter Heydon, voiced the opinion that by complaining to the British about their immigration laws, ‘we make a rod for our own backs.’ \(^{149}\) Later, in 1972, Robert Armstrong, the Secretary of the Department of Immigration issued a ‘timely reminder’ that his Department had always discouraged criticism of, or interference in, the immigration policies of other countries. \(^{150}\) Despite such precautions, *The Economist* identified Australia, ‘the white-Commonwealth country with the most illiberal immigration policy,’ as ‘making all the noise’ on the immigration issue. \(^{151}\)

The 1962 *Commonwealth Immigrants Act* has not been discussed extensively by historians. As such, it can be assumed that it has not been considered a determining factor in the unravelling of the Anglo-Australian relationship. Arguably, the changing immigration laws greatly contributed to the waning British identity in Australia, as it undermined their long-held belief that all British subjects were equal in status. As historian Matthew Trinca suggests, travel was both constitutive and determining in the changes in the British-Australian relationship at this time – impacting upon the nations broader cultural orientation and global relations. \(^{152}\) As such, it can be deduced that the

\(^{149}\) Letter, Armstrong to Waller, 22 November 1972, A446/165, 1973/95155, NAA.

\(^{150}\) Letter, Armstrong to Waller, A446/165, 1973/95155, NAA.

\(^{151}\) “False fears and real fears”, *The Economist*, Vol. 245, 6744, 25 November (1972) p. 17. For a detailed analysis of Australia’s immigration policy and how it was justified, see Vaughan Bevan, *The Development of British Immigration Law* (Kent: Croom Helm, 1986), p. 11, Bevan quotes Australian leaders in 1949 as accepting that discrimination on racial grounds is inevitable in a policy based on the concept that the homogenous character of the population shall be maintained.

\(^{152}\) Matthew Trinca, “Part of the Pageant”, p. 306.
implementation of restrictions acted as an impetus for reappraisal of the familial foundations of the relationship.

This chapter has demonstrated that the Commonwealth Immigrants Act was critical in the conceptual evolution of coming to view Britain as “foreign.” The feelings of alienation articulated by press, as well as in some of the private governmental correspondence, indicates that even at this late stage, Australians were not, as a whole, ready to depart from their sense of Britishness. The profound shift of being excluded, to a degree, from the Motherland, was not only difficult for the older generation who had grown up with a sense of pride in the Empire, but also for the younger generation seeking to work in Britain.

As historian Andrea Benvenuti has suggested, Britain’s initial EEC applications in 1961-63, as well as Britain’s military withdrawal from East of Suez generated a mindset of vulnerability in Australia. This vulnerability was intensified by legislative abolition of a privilege associated with British subject status. Ultimately, the introduction of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act in 1962 advanced the feeling of being seen as the ‘other’ and led to a considerable period of self-appraisal. What is most evident, is that the process of extracting from Empire was attended by ‘doubt, hesitation and internal divisions,’ as Australia tried to grapple with the realities of a rapidly changing relationship. As the next chapter will explore, amendments to the immigration laws in 1968, and then 1971, further eroded the ‘organic’ nature of the British worldwide community.

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Already declining in resonance, the sense of alienation espoused from the amendments of the Act, in turn pre-empted further revision of the way in which Australia conducted its relations with Britain.
II.

**Austr-aliens.**\(^{155}\)

*The Commonwealth Immigration Act, 1971.*

Will he convey to Her Majesty’s Government the profound regret of great numbers of people in this Commonwealth that for the first time in the 180 years of our existence we are to be treated as aliens when we return to the motherland of the people from whom we sprang?\(^{156}\)

In light of the changed Immigration laws in the early 1960s, the member for New England, David Drummond sought reassurance from the Prime Minister Robert Menzies, that he was adequately representing the abandonment felt by the Australian people to the British Government. The bewildering concept of being treated as ‘aliens’ by their British kin fuelled discontent at both a political and public level throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, and placed further strain on the rapidly unravelling British – Australian relationship. Even ‘radical nationalist’ firebrands resented the implications of Britain’s change of policy. In 1973, the prolific ‘radical nationalist’ historian Russel Ward discussed Australia’s misconception that ‘ties of kinship, culture, tradition and gratitude ensure the support of a great patron.’\(^{157}\) Undermining his calls for Australia to break free from the old habits of total and unconditional dependence on Britain, Ward expressed his bitterness towards Britain’s requirements for Australians to acquire work permits, residence permits and landing permits to gain entry into

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\(^{155}\) John Monks, “Austr-aliens”, *The Daily Express*, 26 October, 1972, p. 2


the United Kingdom. ‘Her Majesty’s Government,’ Ward writes, ‘was not so fussy about admitting more than half a million volunteers during two World Wars.’\footnote{Ward, “The End of an Ice Age”, p. 13.}

Ward was responding to Britain’s achievement of its long-term objective of entering the European Economic Community, and expressing his belief that Australians were not being treated as equals. Throwing off the ‘imperial hangover,’ this event not only marked an economic juncture in the Anglo-Australian relationship, but brought with it obligations that impacted on the \textit{Commonwealth Immigrants Act}.\footnote{Peter Cole-Adams, “London, ‘Canberra-on-the-Thames’”, \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 17 July, 1971, p. 21. In 1967 The term ‘British’ had been removed from Australian passports. However, the symbol of the British crown was retained to indicate that Australians were still British subjects. Under the crown was the Commonwealth Coat of Arms. Interestingly, in 1975, the control of passports was transferred to the Department of Foreign Affairs from the then Department of Labour and Immigration.} The Act, redrafted in 1971 into two separate parts, one dealing with Commonwealth Citizens and the other with the European Economic Community and other non-Commonwealth nationals, essentially categorised the majority of Australians as ‘aliens.’ This chapter will explore the 1971 \textit{Commonwealth Immigrants Act} as a critical turning point in Anglo-Australian relations.

At the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference in 1971, Australian Prime Minister John Gorton made the point to the British Prime Minister Edward Heath that one of the main causes of resentment for Australians was the separation into two channels of British passport holders and ‘other’ passport holders for the purposes of passing through immigration control at points of entry into
Britain.\textsuperscript{160} What Britain saw as an administrative practicality, caused resentment and friction ‘out of all proportion to its real significance.’ \textsuperscript{161} However, being asked to join the ‘aliens’ queue was an affronting concept for the Australian people due to the historical distinction between British subjects and the ‘other.’ In 1905, the \textit{Aliens Act} introduced the first set of peacetime British immigration controls and made the distinction between those who did not owe allegiance to the monarch – aliens – and those who did. The latter remained free to enter Britain as they wished.\textsuperscript{162} The usurping of these rights in 1962 under the first \textit{Commonwealth Immigrants Act}, which were further eroded in 1971, caused yet another period of stress and strain on the relationship.

Most significantly, Britain’s acceptance into the European Economic Community, meant that the \textit{Commonwealth Immigrants Act} was amended to fulfill the accompanying obligations and grant privilege to the members of Europe, essentially severing intimate ties with the Commonwealth and symbolising the British move into Europe. The mounting impression generated by newspapers in


\textsuperscript{161} Minute, Armstrong to Angel, UKNA: PREM 15/442, Doc. 324, \textit{Documents on Foreign Policy}, p. 787.

both Britain and Australia, which was clearly an exaggeration, was that
Australians were no longer welcome in the Motherland. More than anything, the
Act recognised that Britain’s role as the metropolitan centre of the
Commonwealth had expired and cemented the realisation that Australia must stand on its own in the world.

Within the context of Britain’s impending entry into the Common Market, and the burgeoning rhetoric of ‘new nationalism’\textsuperscript{163} in Australia, this chapter will examine one of the key contributors to the demise of the centrality of Britishness in Australian nationalism. Essentially, the 1971 \textit{Commonwealth Immigrants Act} provides a telling example of the conundrum of Australian nationalism. At the heart of Australian identity, at least until the mid 1960’s was the genuine attachment to the Mother Country as the root of ethnicity, culture and history. The exclusion from Britain resulting from immigration restrictions highlighted societal divisions regarding the relevance of Britishness for the Australian people. The traditional conservatives in Australia and Britain who clung to the imperial ideal, and the more progressive, realistic leaders such as John Gorton who had once described himself as ‘Australian to my bootstraps;’ and Gough Whitlam, both struggled to fill the void left by the decline of British race patriotism. This chapter will demonstrate, through the vehicle of the 1971

\textsuperscript{163} The term ‘new nationalism’ is used to describe the attempt by Australian Leaders, particularly Gough Whitlam but also John Gorton, in the 1960s and 1970s to define a distinctly Australian nationalism, distinct from the British race patriotism which had defined the Australian identity. Whitlam’s speech at Mansion House in 1974 outlined Australia’s moves to ‘look afresh at her relationship with Britain.’ See Speech by Whitlam in London, Mansion House, 19 December, 1972, UKNA:PREM 16/300, Doc. 496, \textit{Documents on Foreign Policy}, p. 1083-1087.
The difficulties faced by both parties in reconciling with a revised relationship.

The Right of Abode.

‘Patrials\textsuperscript{164} shall be free to live in, and to come and go into and from the United Kingdom without let or hindrance except such as may be required under and in accordance with this Act to enable their right to be established.’

Section 1 (1) of the Commonwealth Immigration Act, 1971.

The 1971 *Commonwealth Immigrants Act* marked an important stage in the process of statutory control over immigration. The legislation served to assimilate the legal position of aliens and Commonwealth citizens for the purposes of immigration and deportation, whilst preserving the rights of those already in the United Kingdom. The existing primary categories for immigration were superimposed by a new distinction between patrials and non-patrials. This reconstruction of British subjecthood essentially divided Commonwealth citizens into first and second class, a concept that was incongruous with citizenship laws of the United Kingdom in that it did not observe the ‘equality’ of British subjects worldwide.\textsuperscript{165} Those who could prove that one of their parents was born or naturalised in the United Kingdom were exempt from new controls over entry and residence and therefore had the ‘right of abode’ whereas

\textsuperscript{164} A patrial is defined as someone who has a parent or grandparent who is a UK citizen, that is, someone born or naturalised in Britain.

restrictions were applied to all other Commonwealth citizens and aliens alike.\textsuperscript{166} However, the new legislation blatantly discriminated in favour of those with white British heritage, a ‘concession’ which would be valueless and would in fact ‘mollify’ some Australians, New Zealanders and Canadians whose family had lived outside Britain for more than two generations.\textsuperscript{167} As historian Kathleen Paul suggests, the act legally differentiated between the familial community of Britishness composed of the ‘truly British,’ and the political community of Britishness composed of individuals who had become British through conquest or domination.\textsuperscript{168} Obviously, considering themselves as British stock, the Australian people were affronted by the implication that they were no longer considered part of the British family.

Ironically, it was specified that ‘the powers conferred by the Act are to be exercised without regard to a persons race, colour or religion.’\textsuperscript{169} However, as \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald} asserted in 1972, ‘not many Pakistanis of course, had grandparents from Yorkshire or the Highlands.’\textsuperscript{170} As in 1962 with the introduction of the first \textit{Commonwealth Immigrants Act}, the British government had again attempted to obscure the racially discriminatory intent behind their legislation. In 1972, \textit{The Economist} opined that there is ‘no pleasure in the


\textsuperscript{167} “White Britain”, \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 1 March, 1971, p.6.

\textsuperscript{168} Kathleen Paul, \textit{Whitewashing Britain}, p. 181.


\textsuperscript{170} Helen Frizell, “Why Should Grandpa take the blame?” \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 4 March, 1971, p. 17.
thought of Australians not being able to move freely amongst us, rather what is still much more worrying is the 250,000 Asians with British passports in Kenya, Tanzania and India.\textsuperscript{171} Despite the introduction of Britain’s first \textit{Race Relations Act}, passed in 1965, which prohibited incitement to racial hatred and attempted to combat acts of discrimination based on race, ethnicity or nationality, immigration laws maintained an underlying theme of racial exclusion.

The 1971 Act was passed in an effort by the Conservative Government to curb the continued influx of primary and secondary immigration. Despite a series of legislation concerned with immigration, which involved the use of quota systems, passport controls, criteria for dependency, vouchers and permits, the Home Office reported a total of 710,835 Commonwealth Immigrants entering the country in the period of 1970-1971.\textsuperscript{172} The 1968 \textit{Immigrants Act} established that the status of British Subject was obtained by descent of grandparents born in Britain, thereby excluding non-whites in the former Empire from the right of settlement in the United Kingdom. This tightening of Commonwealth immigration controls was a reaction to the increase in the number of Kenyan Asians with British passports, a demographic on the rise in Britain. The ‘Kenyan Asians Crisis’ saw an immigration rate of approximately 1000 per month in early 1967.\textsuperscript{173} Fearing a popular backlash, the Heath Government decreased the

\textsuperscript{173} The background of the Kenyan Asians’ Crisis reveals the desire for homogeneity which was expressed through immigration restrictions in many independent nations. Gaining independence from Britain in 1963, Kenya altered
number of work vouchers available to ‘New Commonwealth’ citizens, summarily depriving Kenyan Asians with British passports of the right to settle in Britain.\textsuperscript{174}

As a result of increased restrictions, the number of Commonwealth immigrants had decreased by 20 percent by 1970,\textsuperscript{175} thus appeasing a ‘racial British public.’\textsuperscript{176}

The erosion of Commonwealth citizenship and the drive for an exclusive “Britishness” was powered by the apparently implacable and widespread popular hostility to immigration to which successive governments since 1962 had paid obeisance. The 1971 \textit{Immigration Act} set out to appease this racist sentiment by terminating ‘primary’ immigration from the Commonwealth, in essence grasping the nettle that earlier legislators had avoided and finally casting adrift those who previously held citizenship of the United Kingdom and

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its nationality laws. The large population of Asian migrants who had contributed to Kenya as labourers and traders, and then expanded to all commercial areas. Their prosperity bred suspicion and resentment. Following independence, individuals of African descent were granted citizenship automatically, whereas the majority of Asians were given two years to apply – an acquisition which required the renunciation of all other citizenship, even their British subject status. Many opted to retain their British status, thus their place in post-independent Kenya was resented and mistreatment ensued. As a result, Kenyan Asians began to migrate to England. For an overview of how the Crisis was played out in the press, and in the British parliament, see Randell Hansen, “The Kenyan Asians, British Politics and the Commonwealth Immigrants Act, 1968”, \textit{The Historical Journal}, Vol. 42, 2 (1999), pp. 809-834. Also see Alan Chester, “Invasion by Kenyan Asians, New Headache for U.K”, \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 14 January, 1969, p. 2.
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\textsuperscript{175} “Commonwealth Immigrants cut by fifth”, \textit{The Times}, 22 January, 1971, p. 2.

Colonies. Henceforth, British citizenship would belong to patrials – that is anyone born in Britain, or with a British born or naturalised parent or grandparent.\textsuperscript{177}

‘Patriality and all that’.\textsuperscript{178}

Ever the Anglophile, the Australian High Commissioner to London, Sir Alexander Downer, was concerned by the pace at which the ties of kith and kin were dwindling in significance. In a letter to Home Secretary Reginald Maudling, discussing the ‘contentious subject’ of the administration of the \textit{Immigration Act} insofar as it affected Australians, Downer expressed his dismay at the situation at hand:

\begin{quote}
It will not merely be calamitous, but an act of great political folly, if through lack of knowledge, careless handling and ignorance of the profound ties that bind Britain and Australia, Australians come to regard Britain as a foreign land.\textsuperscript{179}
\end{quote}

Maudling however blamed the press for presenting an unbalanced criticism of British immigration practices, as Australians continued to arrive in Britain in increasing numbers, and rarely encountered difficulty.\textsuperscript{180} In his memoirs, Sir Alexander Downer reflects on the administration of the Act as a source of

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\textsuperscript{178} Sub-title from T. S. Monks, “Patriality and all that”, \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 26 October, 1971, p. 7.


\end{footnotesize}
friction. The complaints regarding the ‘clumsy’ segregation of passport holders and the ‘coldness’ and ‘arbitrary decisions’ of immigration officials, all suggested that Australians gained the overall impression that they were no longer welcome.\(^{181}\)

*The Daily Express* grasped the emotive word ‘aliens’ and broadcasted to Britain the dejected sentiment of the Australian people. In an interview with Sir John Pagan, the New South Wales Agent General in London, from his office in The Strand, ‘itself a monument to Australia’s commitment to this [Britain] country,’ *Express* reporter Roy Blackman recounted Pagan’s definition of ‘alien,’ as ‘not one’s own, extraneous, repugnant, estranged….a foreigner.’ Shaking his head he said, ‘do you know what that means for Australians? It’s an outsider...You’re nothing.’\(^{182}\) The emotionally loaded piece articulated the disappointment of the likes of Alexander Downer who felt that a ‘change in direction for Britain should be allowed to destroy so much of what has gone before.’\(^{183}\) Pagan’s public exposure of Australian views was of a different persuasion to the low-key approach assumed by the Australian Government. While Pagan viewed the publicity as an opportunity to advance the position of Australian citizens under the new regulations, the Government maintained that the issue was a domestic British matter, and therefore that it was inappropriate to comment.\(^{184}\)


\(^{184}\) Minute, Bunting to McMahon, Canberra, 22 November, 1972, NAA:A1838, 67/1/3 Part 6, Doc. 348, *Documents on Foreign Policy*, p. 812.
The crusade of The Daily Express indicated that amongst the British people, the
ties of blood and kinship were not dead. Indeed as historian Geoffrey Bolton
asserted, in light of 'the absence of Australian press comment on the issues, it
may be that the greatest concern was felt among sections of the British.'
However, the official position taken by Prime Minister Heath, particularly when
coupled with the entry into the Common Market, resulted in an extensive re-
examination of Australia's relations with Britain. Most damaging, however, was
the concept of the 'aliens' queue. Although the majority of Australians were
legally considered 'aliens' under the Commonwealth Immigrants Act, the playing
out of such a term through the physical segregation of the 'truly British' and the
'other' caused considerable resentment.

'The Gateway of Shame': Laying out the welcome mat for the EEC.

At the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference in Singapore, 1971, when
Gorton expressed his unease at the idea of Australians being treated as 'aliens,'
he suggested to Prime Minister Heath that the practice should be changed. As
Ward and Curran suggest, when designating Britain as a 'foreign country,' Gorton
suggested the need to assume normal bilateral relations with the mother

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185 Geoffrey Bolton, "The United Kingdom" in Australia in World Affairs 1971-
216.
186 Sub-Title from John Ezard, "Immigration rules lay out welcome mat for
country. However, when the concept was reciprocated by Britain in the form of such a ‘blunt legislative instrument,’ it aroused anxiety and irritation.\textsuperscript{187}

The crux of the issue was that Australians felt that their loyalty to the crown, particularly in World War I and World War II, was being undermined by new regulations which essentially gave preference to European Nations who Australia had fought against alongside Britain. Britain’s new EEC obligations meant that, under the Treaty of Rome, Common Market citizens were able to freely enter Britain and seek work without any form of permit of entry certificate. The Act specified that for the nationals of Belgium, France, Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, ‘no condition is to be imposed on restricting his employment or occupation in the United Kingdom.’\textsuperscript{188} On the other hand, Commonwealth citizens, with the exception of patrials, would be treated in effect as aliens and given work vouchers valid for an initial period of 12 months, with the opportunity for review and subsequent extension to three years.\textsuperscript{189} The differentiation between Common Market citizens and Commonwealth citizens effectively placed Australians as ‘third class citizens.’\textsuperscript{190} The breakdown of familial ties was further advanced when, given the new EEC regulations, jobs could not be filled by bringing workers from overseas until 18 days after Common Market nationals

\textsuperscript{187} James Curran, Stuart Ward, “Australia looks around’: Foreigners” in \textit{The Unknown Nation}, p. 132.
\textsuperscript{190} “New rules make Aust workers third in UK”, \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 23 November, 1972, p. 2.
had a chance to fill them, essentially making it difficult for Australians to secure full time jobs.\(^{191}\)

Discussing the new immigration control point which catered specifically for the residents of Common Market countries, *The Daily Express*, labelled the operation as a ‘Gateway of Shame’.\(^ {192}\) However, despite the grievances of the Australian people, in practice they were treated more liberally than those coloured Commonwealth citizens who were seeking admission. In 1971, 13,817 Australians were admitted for working holidays, whereas only 487 Indians were accepted. \(^ {193}\) This comparatively preferential treatment, however, did not diminish the insult of the assimilation of Commonwealth citizens and aliens status under the new immigration regulations. The assurances that Australians retained their civic rights, such as their ability to vote or stand for Parliament, as well as the concession that Commonwealth citizens would not have to register with the Police as aliens did, was not much comfort for Australians who resented what the ‘aliens’ queue symbolised.\(^ {194}\)

The plight of Australians was cast out into the public sphere through various media outlets, particularly amongst newspapers. The ‘dreadful story’ of retired

Grenadier Major William Spowers was cited to emphasize the injustice of the situation. Disembarking at Heathrow Airport, Spowers refused point blank to join the non-British queue when instructed to do so by an Indian immigration officer. Finally ushered through the customs gates by a more senior officer, the ‘Indian snapped at him,’ ‘the trouble with you Australians is that you want it both ways!’ To which Spowers tartly replied, ‘and the trouble with you Indians is that you’ve got it both ways!’ In a letter to the British Home Secretary Carr, Spowers accused the British Government as having ’lost all sense of honour and obligation to those who laid no limit to your demands on them.’ So offended by being treated as an ‘alien’ on his return to England he wrote a telegram to the Queen, about the ‘deprivation of rights which we have fought and suffered for’ and his intention ‘to fight as bitterly for this right as we fought against those who are now preferred in your kingdom.’ As Curran and Ward suggest, the ‘humiliation at being snubbed’ upon arrival in the United Kingdom, particularly at Heathrow, was deemed ‘irreconcilable with the history of Australian sacrifice for empire on the battlefields.’ The Daily Express conveyed its opposition to the restrictions, describing the ‘shocking’ situation whereby ‘the relatives of

197 Letter, Spowers to Carr, 17 November, 1972, NAA: M1002, Doc. 343, Documents on Foreign Policy, p. 805.
198 Telegram, Spowers to the Queen, Undated, NAA: M1002, Doc. 344, Documents on Foreign Policy, p. 806.
those who died for us visit our country and we tell them, in effect ‘you are foreigners!’

Perhaps the most influential article published by The Daily Express was by the editor, Sir Max Aitken, which called, ‘Make way for our friends Mr. Heath, or reap the whirlwind,’ asking the public, ‘what is the matter with us in Britain? Do we not know or care what is proposed for people of our stock overseas?’ Aitken incited the public to consider Mr. Heath’s betrayal of those who have been so ‘casually disowned’ after ‘pouring their blood and money into two World Wars.’

The responding opinion pieces spoke of the ‘rights of our people’ and the ongoing affinity with the old Commonwealth as ‘simply an extension of the British race overseas.’ In a poll on immigration issues by The Daily Express in November, 1972, 64 percent believed that people from Old Commonwealth countries should be allowed completely free entry to Britain, while 58 percent believed that workers from these same countries should be given priority over Common Market members for employment. In a letter to Aitken, Downer expressed his gratitude, as a ‘man who loves England’ for the initiation of a campaign on behalf of Australians and other old Commonwealth citizens, ‘you

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are just so right to warn of the ultimate consequences,’ he wrote. At this stage, Downer was no longer the High Commissioner, and was expressing his views as a private citizen. Well aware of the government's non-interference stance, Downer was essentially acting as a renegade, illustrating an inability to accept the new realities of the Anglo-Australian relationship.

The Australian Government felt as though their non-interference stance had been severely violated by the Australian and British newspapers. In a cablegram to Sir Keith Waller, Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Deputy High Commissioner to London William Pritchett sought clarification on the official Australian position. He suggested that while the government had avoided commenting on the issue, continual failure to comment would result in a ‘serious misinterpretation of the Australian position, in particular that Australia welcomes and supported the campaign against the new rules.’ He asserted that the campaign had been ill-informed, and was causing unnecessary alarm, uncertainty and hostility among Australians. Pritchett went on to suggest that the anti-EEC sentiment underwriting the press campaign was not a clear reflection on Australia's position. In fact, Australia had accepted, ‘or not challenged’ the need for non-discriminatory immigration control, and the inevitability of a preferred position for EEC nationals. Pritchett's frustration with Downer’s rogue comments, reflected his anxiety to revise the Australian

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207 Cablegram, Pritchett to Waller, NAA:A1838, 67/1/3 Part 6, Documents on Foreign Policy, p. 809.
image projected by the campaign as a 'people concerned about betrayal and desertion, anxious to hold on to the traditional features of the Old Commonwealth relationship.'

The immigration rules, designed to govern the operation of the provisions of the Act were laid before the House of Commons in October 1972. The combination of the immigration rules consequent to the 1971 Act and those relating to EEC nationals due to Britain’s Treaty of Rome obligations, accumulated to form a contentious issue. The intervention of The Daily Express ensured that the issue was made public, thus making it difficult for Members to adopt a low-key approach. Moreover, the public response to Max Aitken’s initial article which spelled out the limitations that were to be introduced, highlighted the necessity for the issue to be discussed at a parliamentary level. Within the British Government, ‘vociferous right-wing MP’s with a deep attachment to colonial order,’ gave clear warning to Heath that they wished to change the immigration laws which gave priority to Europeans over the Old Commonwealth. The Sydney Morning Herald reported that Heath was in ‘grave danger of defeat’ due to the dissident party members that were standing fast on

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208 Cablegram, Pritchett to Waller, NAA:A1838, 67/1/3 Part 6, Documents on Foreign Policy, p. 809.
the ‘aliens’ issue. The ‘white-Commonwealth Tories’ were against the rules because they claimed it discriminated against the kith and kin from the Old Commonwealth, the anti-EEC Tories were against the rules due to the consequential relations arising from Britain’s membership, and the Labour civil libertarians regarded the rules as a damaging blow to civil liberties. There was no call from Australian leaders urging for changed regulations. Indeed *The Age* asked in November 1972, ‘why did 40 or 50 Conservative backbenchers take it on themselves to stick their political necks out on our behalf, particularly when there has been not a bleat of protest against the new rules from any Commonwealth governments concerned?’ In concurrence, the Home Secretary Mr. Carr commented that there had been ‘absolutely no representation’ to Britain from the Governments of Australia, New Zealand and Canada over the issue. Journalist Peter Cole-Adams attributed the revolt to the built up frustration stemming from the ‘remorseless’ push towards a European Community they neither trusted nor understood. The Conservative MP’s were representative of the traditional, White British ideal, their affection towards the Commonwealth ‘old-fashioned, slightly patronising but utterly genuine.’ Their nostalgia for old certainties in the face of change lead to the political controversy that was played out in the House of Commons on the 23rd November, 1972.

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Enoch Powell, the notoriously outspoken Member of Parliament, reported the public dismay that had crystallised around the position of the citizens of Australia, Canada, and New Zealand.\(^{217}\) The Government’s failure to allay the opposition resulted in a defeat, 275 votes to 240 against the regulations.\(^{218}\) As *The Times* described, the assurances of Mr. Carr, the Home Secretary, and Sir Alec Douglas-Home, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, ‘failed to prevail against the tidal wave of feeling that the Government was deserting kith and kin in the Commonwealth in favour of the new links with the EEC.’\(^{219}\) In response to the debate, *The Daily Express* declared ‘Welcome home, friends, Hallelujah!’ The result was described as a ‘triumph for *The Daily Express* campaign to “open the door” to the citizens of the Old Commonwealth.’\(^{220}\)

The rejection of the immigration rules that had been laid before the House in order to bring into effect the 1971 *Commonwealth Immigrants Act* meant that the British Government was required to seek consultation with the leaders of Old Commonwealth governments on the issue. However, meeting with the Australian


Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam on the 20th December, 1972, Sir Morrice James, the British High Commissioner in Canberra, reported two major considerations. Firstly, consistent with the previous government’s non-interference policies, Whitlam did not want the Australian Government to be drawn into what was clearly a domestic dispute in the Commons between the Labour and Conservative Parties, and within the Conservative Party itself. Secondly, Whitlam did not want to give rise to the impression that Australia was so akin to Britain that it should automatically become involved in solving imperial legacies. At this time, internal pressures in Britain lead to the amendment of the 1971 Commonwealth Immigrants Act. In 1973, the principle changes included the re-definition of patrials to include Commonwealth Citizens who have a grandparent born in the United Kingdom, and the extension of the maximum period for a working holiday from three to five years.

Interestingly, despite the tightening of regulations on Australians wanting to embark on working holidays, the late 1960s saw an increase in the number of Australian tourists entering Great Britain. Robert Duffield of The Australian, suggested that, despite the growing sense of independent nationalism and our isolation from the Common Market, identification with the British myth was increasing. While this can be attributed to the introduction of cheaper fares on chartered airlines in the late 1960s, Duffield suggests that it is also indicative of the desire ‘of a great number of young ones, to have a look at where their

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221 Record of conversation between Whitlam and James, Canberra, 20 December, 1972, NAA:A1838, 67/1/1 Part 7, Doc. 366, Documents on Foreign Policy, p. 840.
ancestors came from."²²³ Writing in 1973, Duffield indicates that amidst the fervor of ‘new nationalism’ was the residue of the imperial past.

Conversely, in a telegram to Waller, Pritchett described a young Conservative MP who commented on the war having been over 27 years ago. ‘Why,’ he asked, ‘was Australia still harping on it and looking for gratitude? Did we [Australia] really believe that the old Commonwealth association was a viable, realistic basis for our or Britain’s national development?’²²⁴ Indeed The Guardian reported that amongst Australia, New Zealand and Canada, the reaction to the Act’s amendment was one of indifference. One Canadian official was quoted dismissing the significance of changes as ‘not really having a meaningful effect on the situation.’²²⁵

This chapter has indicated the process by which Australia came to accept this difference of interests. The Commonwealth Immigrants Act, 1971, in the midst of a time of great change for Anglo-Australian relations, advanced the belief that ‘Australia and Australians must grow up a bit more.’²²⁶ Despite Whitlam’s advocacy of an independent Australian nationalism, in an address at Mansion House in London, he still spoke fondly of Britain, which could, in his eyes, ‘never

²²⁶ Record of conversation between Whitlam and James, Canberra, 20 December, 1972, NAA:A1838, 67/1/3 Part 7, Doc. 366, Documents on Foreign Policy, p. 840.
be just another country.’ Whitlam’s rhetoric reveals the contradictions of ‘new nationalism.’ The ‘crisis of meaning for Australian leaders’ from the mid 1960s is reflected in the Commonwealth Immigrants Act. The conflicting sentiments emerging from different social sectors revealed the difficulties in establishing an holistic nationalism. As Curran identifies, the ‘double edged’ nature of the British connection posed a complex conundrum for leaders, who on the one hand, had to ‘accommodate the lingering attachment’ to Britain, while on the other hand, discard their British centered past in a bid for an independent Australian identity. The equally divergent attitudes emerging from Britain, served to intensify these complexities.

As this chapter has illustrated, the task of disentangling from Empire was fraught with difficulty. While the significance of history and culture was seemingly indispensible, the incompatibility of British and Australian interests in economic and defence engendered a move to place Britain on a foreign footing. The various reactions to the reconfiguration of immigration laws and the subsequent classification of Australians as ‘aliens’ enabled a popular reaction, however, the ostensibly indifferent Australian government suggests an embrace of a new international outlook, cemented by closer engagement with their immediate Asian geo-political region and the United States of America.

227 Speech by Whitlam in London, Mansion House, 19 December 1974, UKNA: PREM 16/300, Doc. 496, Documents on Foreign Policy, p. 496.
III.

‘Another Australian tie is loosed’.\textsuperscript{230}

*The transfer of responsibility for Australia House, 1972.*

On 12 October 1966, Liberal backbencher Harry Turner, the Member for Bradfield, delivered a speech to the House of Representatives describing the administration of Australia House as ‘a throwback to the past, a historical accident, an anachronism,’ concluding ‘it is high time it was altered.’\textsuperscript{231} Unlike Australia’s diplomatic representation elsewhere which was administered by the Department of Foreign Affairs, Anglo-Australian relations were seen as the special preserve of the Prime Minister, and therefore remained under the auspices of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. As Australia’s oldest diplomatic post, the Australian High Commission’s administrative arrangements reflected an ongoing dedication to the vision of Australians as ‘one people’ with their British counterparts.\textsuperscript{232} The Australian High Commissioner to the United


Kingdom liaised between states as a ‘kinsman rather than a stranger,’ and provided what was seen as a vital diplomatic link between the Australian and British Governments. Representing Australia ‘in his own country as it were,’ the High Commissioner was seen as an insider who felt at home in Britain and could therefore influence British opinion in a way that no foreigner could. Most importantly, the Prime Minister’s responsibility for Australia House reflected the ‘special relationship’ between Britain and Australia that existed at the level of political, economic, cultural and historical ties, and therefore was not categorically considered as part of Australia’s ‘external’ relations. It was, after all ‘the nation’s foyer,’ and a ‘home for Australia’s people in London.’ In a similar manner to the aforementioned reactions to the changes in immigration laws, this “special” relationship became subject to revision.

Responding to Turner’s allegations in 1966, Prime Minister Harold Holt, suggested that although the relationship between Australia and Britain had ‘matured into a partnership of equals,’ it was still ‘all-embracing’ extending through ties of family, culture, religion, tradition and government. As such, Holt determined that a special institutional arrangement ‘was warranted.’ The reluctance to relinquish the post from the Prime Minister’s control was indicative of the lingering assumptions about Australia’s standing in the world as

an integral part of the British Empire. For many, the concept of rendering Britain “foreign” undermined the age-old historical and cultural ties that had bound Australians to their sense of Britishness. Foreign Affairs officials continued to agitate for change on the basis that although in the past Australians had thought of themselves primarily as British, ‘now most identified themselves as Australians’. As such, the changing conceptual foundations of the relationship brought about a difficult period of adjustment as Australia attempted to reconcile with the new realities of the Commonwealth. This chapter will examine the ‘agonising process’ whereby the administration of Australia House was transferred from the responsibility of the Prime Minister, to the responsibility of the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Following the crises in the 1960s and 1970s, the issue of immigration, and as Australia’s bilateral relations grew to be more extensive and overseas representation of Australia’s Department of External Affairs increased, it was no longer viable to maintain the “special” post for Australian and British relations.

The foundation stone of Australia House was laid by King Edward V on 24 July, 1913. Officially opened in 1918, Australia House was naturally placed under the administration of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, as it functioned as a ‘key conduit of Australia’s economic and political relations with Britain’.

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239 James Curran and Stuart Ward, *The Unknown Nation*, p. 133.
240 S.R Ashton, Carl Bridge and Stuart Ward, (eds.) “The Designation of Anglo-Australian relations as ‘foreign affairs’”, in *Documents on Foreign Policy*, p. 849. For a comprehensive overview on the significance of the position of High Commissioner amongst the Commonwealth countries, see Lorna Lloyd, ”’What’s
reflecting the centrality of the British connection in the early twentieth century.

On 1 November, 1972, the McMahon Government officially transferred the Australian High Commission in London into the realm of foreign policy, reflecting the move in the early 1970s to regard Britain as one of Australia’s many foreign partners. Strengthening relations with its geo-political neighbours, Australia responded to Britain’s move into Europe and the changing international climate, subsequently revising the ‘powerful sentimental assumption that the interests of Australia and Britain in the world ought ultimately to coincide.’

However, the revision of Australia’s approach to British affairs was met with opposition from those who still fervently clung to the imperial ideal of ‘kith and kin.’ This chapter will trace the debate which occupied the McMahon Government’s final months of tenure, illustrating the reluctance to surrender the concept of the unity of the British family, against the conviction that Australia’s place in the world as a British outpost had expired. Moreover, I will examine the transfer in light of historian Stuart Ward’s argument that Britain’s accession into the Common Market ‘performed the function of extracting British race patriotism ideology from the deeply embedded roots in Australian political culture.’ The Australian Government was adamant that the transfer did not appear to be in reaction to the move into the Common Market which was occurring

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simultaneously. However the diplomacy surrounding the EEC’s economic impact on Australia suggests that there was some animosity towards Britain, thus fuelling the idea that Britain must assume a position equal to Australia’s other, now equally important bilateral relationships.

*Australia House: 'A lasting monument to the importance of the Commonwealth.'*

Australia House was constructed as a symbol of how Australia wished to be perceived by Britain. As historian Olwen Pryke suggests, the Australian Government was motivated by the desire to position the Commonwealth both physically and metaphorically within the greater British Empire. The move from the periphery to the metropolitan centre brought Australia ‘clearly to the mind of the British public and officials, to place before the British a particular view in order to influence opinion and action.’ Pryke recalls the disappointment of a special correspondent from *The Sydney Morning Herald* arriving in London in 1910, and finding that the offices of the Commonwealth

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244 The building was designed by Scots Architects, A. Marshal Mackenzie and Son, following an architectural competition. The judges included Bertram Mackenna, John Longstaff, George Lambert, Fred Leist and Arthur Streeton. The judges reported "we are united in the opinion that this building will be a lasting monument to the importance of the Commonwealth and a splendid addition to the architecture of London". Australian High Commission, United Kingdom, “The History of Australia House,” [online] available at www.uk.embassy.gov.au/lhlh/History.html accessed on August 28, 2011
Governments to be marked only with a brass plaque. In 1911, Alfred Deakin, then Leader of the Opposition and former Prime Minister, articulated Australia’s approach to its representation abroad, conveying that ‘it was always recognised that we should be represented in London, and on a fitting scale.’ The grandeur of the building reflected the desire to project an image of prosperity and importance, but also to claim some space in London as their own. The stately Roman-cum-French building, rich red-carpeted interior and leather lounges, costing the Australian taxpayer an estimated 1,500,000 pounds per year to run, certainly conveyed the desired image.

Just another diplomatic post?

The calls for change from the mid 1960s were based on the ‘anomalous’ situation that had been retained in Britain, despite Australia House being only one of Australia’s 70 overseas posts. Harry Turner MP insisted that the Australian High Commission was not a diplomatic post due to its administration under the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, as opposed to the Department of External Affairs. Turner proposed to the House of Representatives in 1966 that ‘the time had long gone by when the post in London should be regarded as other

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than a diplomatic post.'\(^{251}\) Turner identified further reasons for change, asking, ‘Why should it cost well over $4m per annum to run Australia House – four times as much as the embassy in Washington and one third of the cost of running all overseas embassies?’\(^{252}\) In answer to Turner’s provocative questions, Prime Minister Harold Holt attributed these anomalies to historical reasons, adding that Australia’s over-representation in London could be explained by the large scale migration efforts, which meant that there was a greater need for administration.\(^{253}\)

Later, in a memorandum to Prime Minister William McMahon in July 1971, the Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Sir John Bunting, in collaboration with the Chairman of the Commonwealth Public Service Board, Sir Frederick Wheeler and Sir Keith Waller of the Department of Foreign Affairs, proposed to work towards the objective of transferring responsibility for Australia House to the Department of Foreign Affairs.\(^{254}\) Bunting further indicated that, ‘We believe it is your policy objective that Australia House should

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be transferred. In the margins of the document, McMahon minuted random exclamations, ‘No Way!’ and ‘Go Easy!,’ indicating his initial opposition to such a move. The Prime Minister was adamant that he had not given any policy direction that Australia House should be transferred to Foreign Affairs, indeed suggesting that Bunting and Waller had assumed a prior policy decision on his behalf. McMahon would see no change until a submission listing the pros and cons was compiled. Additionally, in Parliament in October, 1971, the Prime Minister motioned that he would not agree to change until he had discussed the matter with the British Prime Minister, Mr. Heath.

The divisive nature of the proposition for the transfer of responsibly is evident in the papers prepared by Waller and Bunting, in comparison to the argument presented by Robert W. Boswell, the Deputy High Commissioner in London. The discrepancies arose from the different value attributed to historic ties, and it fell upon Ministers to determine whether the vitality of Britishness in Australia was so pervasive that British relations should be kept outside the realm of foreign affairs.

In a letter to Keith Waller, John Bunting identified the crux of the matter. He stated that the United Kingdom was involved in a number of issues of importance to Australia, which were essentially of a foreign policy nature.

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258 Letter, Yeend to Bunting, undated, A1209, 1971/9449, Part 1. NAA.
Moreover, the relationship had evolved into a ‘more usual bilateral relationship rather than the all-pervading almost father and son relationship which existed before the war.’ In a similar vein, Bunting wrote to Sir Alexander Downer, expressing the need to deal more with the United Kingdom, ‘not on the basis of special ties, but rather on the basis of the United Kingdom as a very important country, with national interests separate from our own.’ It was suggested that a change of control would not result in a loss of access at high levels nor weaken historic ties with Britain. After consulting with the British Prime Minister, Mr. Heath, McMahon was under the impression that the change would give Australian diplomats in London wider access to a variety of ministerial and other sources and ‘bring them into the total diplomatic world.’ Additionally, he felt that all Australia’s international relationships should be co-ordinated in the one centre, under the Department of Foreign Affairs.

It was also reported that the practical function of Australia House was inadequate. In a Policy Planning Paper in 1972, it was suggested that the transfer of Australia House was one of the major steps which could be taken to improve relations with Britain. The paper presented the argument that the existing arrangements had acted as a defect, with ‘unavoidable disadvantages’ whereby

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259 Letter, Waller to Bunting, Australian representation in London, 7 October, 1971, A3211/1, 1971/2388, NAA.
260 Letter, Bunting to Downer, Undated, A3211/1, 1971/2388, NAA.
263 Department of Foreign Affairs Policy Guidance Paper, Canberra, 28 August 1972, NAA:A1838, 67/1/1 Part 5, Doc. 438, Documents on Foreign Affairs, p. 965.
Australia House has not reported on political, social and economic affairs in Britain in the same manner that other posts have reported on other countries. The Department of Foreign Affairs had therefore not been given sufficient information to give the London mission direction equivalent to other posts.²⁶⁴

Waller, the Secretary for the Department of Foreign Affairs complained that in terms of practical day to day arrangements, the ‘time has probably come when we need to deal with the United Kingdom in much the same way as we deal with other countries of real importance to us, like the United States and Japan.’²⁶⁵

The resistance to the transfer was primarily grounded in the sentimental attachment to Britain. The idea of Australia House becoming ‘just another post’ was profoundly at odds with Sir Alexander Downer’s British outlook.²⁶⁶ ‘Britain,’ he said, ‘is a special place. It is not a foreign country to Australians and it is silly to talk as though it were.’²⁶⁷ This sentiment echoed the words of former Prime Minister, the late Harold Holt who, in 1967, had confidently asserted that the arrangements whereby the Australian High Commission was attended to by the Prime Minister, ‘adequately take into account both the broad range of interest

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²⁶⁶ In a letter to Bunting, Downer wrote ‘I think you know my views, but for the official record, I wish to state that I disagree with the what the government is doing.’ Cablegram, Downer to Bunting, 9 May, 1972, NAA: M1003, Doc. 384, Documents on Foreign Policy, p. 864.
Australia has in Britain and the special interests of Australia's external policy.'  
As historian Andrea Benveunti suggests, 'to liken Australia’s relationship with 
Britain to its relationship with other countries, would have seemed almost 
sacrilegious:' Moreover, as the largest and most costly overseas establishment, 
comparisons were drawn with Canada’s more modest representation. Alexander 
Downer, unapologetic for Australia's heavy representation in London, 
emphasised that 'we have a more intimate relationship with Britain than Canada 
does.' In concurrence, Boswell suggested that Canadians are bilingual and 
therefore are 'required to suppress, to some degree the affairs of their 
connection with Britain.' Boswell, whose outlook was shaped by a similar 
British mould to Downer, also argued that the Office of High Commissioner was 
chosen for his role as a man who moves into the inner circles of political London, 
to which there is 'no comparable facility for any of our ambassadors elsewhere in 
the world.' Reflecting on diplomatic life, Boswell recalled his attendance at a 
concert of the Australian Musical Association, a lunch with the UK Delegation to 
the OECD Science and Technology Committee, and the first Australian cricket 
match at Arundel. These 'extra mural links,' Boswell believed, were fostered by 
the unique arrangements of Australia House which should 'certainly not be

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268 Letter, Holt to Turner, NAA:A1209, 1971/9449 Part 1, Canberra, 4 October 
1967, Doc. 373, *Documents on Foreign Policy*, p. 853.
*Documents on Foreign Policy*, p. 860.
272 Memorandum by Boswell, NAA:A1209,1971/9449, Part 1, *Documents on 
Foreign Policy*, p. 860.
altered merely to give uniformity with other posts." Moreover, Boswell dismissed the lack of reporting coming out of Australia House, suggesting that ‘quite authoritative newspapers’ gave a ‘broad survey of the English scene’ and that ‘these were available in Australia.’ The sentimental nature of Boswell’s reasoning points to his belief that Australia House could never be ‘just another post,’ as he feared for the passing of a way of life.

However, despite the declining relevance of the British race patriot myth, the Australian Government exhibited an inability to completely break free from the binding ties of Britishness. The habitual rhetoric of imperial loyalty continued to rear its head throughout the negotiations of the transfer. While acknowledging that the move was ‘a rational thing to do at this point of our history,’ the emphasis of the Crown as a poignant symbol of the ‘special’ relationship was a reoccurring concern. Although ‘normal foreign policy’ matters were to be directed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Prime Minister made known his belief that in order for the relationship between the Palace and the Government to be continued with ‘undiminished strength,’ responsibility for the relations with the Sovereign would remain within the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. In a press statement in October 1972, McMahon announced that the

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transfer ‘ does not in any way change the special relationship which the
Australian people and their successive Governments have with Britain – a
relationship symbolised and exemplified by the link with the Crown.’ 278
Moreover, it was repeatedly emphasised that ‘there will always be a special
relationship between the Prime Minister and the High Commissioner in
London.’ 279

One of the greatest difficulties in the practicalities of the transfer was the
responsibility for appointing the High Commissioner, an issue which caused a rift
between the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Department of
Foreign Affairs. The post of High Commissioner, which had been established in
1909 to provide a direct link to the British Government served to highlight and
sustain the special relationship between the two countries. 280 Some critics,
however, have suggested that the post of High Commissioner had been
maintained to provide Prime Ministers with an agreeable prize with which to
reward Cabinet colleagues who had outlived their usefulness, or to buy off
potential rivals. 281 Four former Prime Ministers – Reid, Fisher, Cook and Bruce –
were translated from Australian politics to represent their country in London.

278 Press Statement to be made on the 25th October 1972 by the Rt. Hon. William
McMahon, Prime Minister of Australia, Australia House, included in Cablegram,
McMahon to Downer, NAA:M1003, Doc. 407, Documents on Foreign Policy, p. 891.
McMahon was careful to explicitly confirm that the channels of direct
communication between Prime Minister and High Commissioner would not be
affected.
279 Letter, Bowen to McMahon, Canberra, 22 September, 1972. NAA:A1209,
280 E. A Lyall, “Australia’s overseas representation and government patronage”,
281 Peter Cole-Adams, "Lonely days in a special place" The Sydney Morning Herald,
John Gorton, however, refused the ‘distant dignity’ of Australia House, indicating the diminished prestige of the role, as well as the acknowledgement of the decreasing significance of Britain for Australian affairs.\textsuperscript{282}

In April 1972, Bunting reported pressures from the Department of Foreign Affairs, which was pressing him to agree that they should appoint the occupants of the most senior post under the High Commissioner, who it was assumed would still be a political appointee.\textsuperscript{283} Bunting, however, was adamant that the senior of the two Deputy High Commissioners should be appointed by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, whereas the junior would be appointed by the Department of Foreign Affairs. This arrangement was deemed essential to maintain a ‘due sense of control by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet over the operation of what was after all, a microcosm of the government here in Canberra.’\textsuperscript{284} Bunting believed that Australia House should be looked at as a ‘special case’ and that due to similarities in civil service systems, ‘experience with this matter lay in the Australian Departments and not in Foreign Affairs exclusively and perhaps, except for one or two cases, not in Foreign Affairs at all.’\textsuperscript{285} Moreover, the Government insisted that it was paramount for the Prime Minister himself to select the High Commissioner to London, who must be a former member of the Ministry. In doing so, he ensures

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\item \textsuperscript{282} Geoffrey Tebbut, “Another Australian tie is loosed,” \textit{The Guardian}, 19 May, 1972, A3211/1, 1971,2388. NAA.
\item \textsuperscript{283} Minute, James to Home, 28 April, 1972, UKNA: FCO 24/1369, Doc. 381, \textit{Documents on Foreign Policy}, p. 861.
\item \textsuperscript{284} Minute, James to Home, UKNA: FCO 24/1369, Doc. 386, \textit{Documents on Foreign Policy}, p. 861.
\item \textsuperscript{285} Note for file by Bunting, Canberra, 14 August, 1972, NAA:A1209, 1971/9449 Part 2, Doc. 393, \textit{Documents on Foreign Policy}, p. 873.
\end{itemize}
\end{flushright}
that there is ‘full contact and exchange at the political level between Australia and Britain.’

On the other hand Nigel Bowen, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, could not accept this. In a heated discussion, he suggested that his position would be ‘invidious’ if he was given Australia House to run and then required to hand over the power of appointment for the top posts. Overruled by the Prime Minister, McMahon retained control of three key spheres: ties to the Palace, ties to the Commonwealth Secretariat and the appointment of the High Commissioner and Deputy High Commissioner, both of whom should continue to report directly to the Prime Minister. This decision was based on his views that Australia House should continue to reflect the ‘broader and deeper links between the two countries and not as an unwelcome derogation from the full ‘foreign affairs’ relationship with Britain.’ The Department of Foreign Affairs would be responsible for appointing its own career officers to the post of Deputy High Commissioner, thereby securing effective responsibility for the mission. So incensed by the Prime Minister’s ‘blatant backsliding,’ Waller, of the Department of Foreign Affairs ‘reared up and stormed out of the meeting.’ Evidently, the relationship with Britain was an issue which each department had invested considerable emotion.

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287 Note for file by Bunting, Documents on Foreign Policy, p. 873.
290 Curran, Ward, The Unknown Nation, p. 133.
Britain’s accession into the European Economic Community.

The longevity of the administrative arrangements of Australia House is indicative of the resilience of the British connection in Australia. Surviving the many ‘turning points,’ the imperial imagination remained at the core of Australian nationalism, a “special” relationship embodied in the unique post in London.292 In 1971, The Australian Financial Review reported that Britain’s entry into the European Economic Community ‘seems likely to bring about significant structural changes in Australia’s diplomatic representation in Europe.’293 Confirming such predictions, McMahon affirmed that the transfer ‘takes place against the background of Britain’s entry into Europe.’294 Further, he highlighted the interaction between Britain’s policies and those of her European partners as a causative factor in the transfer, as it would require a greater understanding by Australia in areas ‘which are in large part the concern of the Minister and Department of Foreign Affairs.’295

Although symbolic of Britain’s move away from their historical ties with the Commonwealth and into closer political and economic relations with Europe,

295 Press Statement, McMahon, NAA: M1003, Documents on Foreign Policy p. 891.
Australia exhibited an outwards stance of acceptance of Britain’s accession into Europe. As British High Commissioner to Australia, Morrice James suggested, the overwhelming reaction gauged from the Australian press was that joining Britain was ‘simply something we [Britain] had to do.’ On the other hand, The Sydney Morning Herald suggested that Britain had ‘slammed the door of protective parenthood in Australia’s face,’ meaning that ‘both symbolically and literally, Australia is going to be on its own.’

In 1971, Britain released a White Paper outlining the effects of their membership into the European Economic Community. The paper indicated that less than 12 percent of Australian exports were being distributed to the United Kingdom, and that at most, 7.5 percent of Australian exports would be put ‘at risk’ by British entry. Senior British Cabinet Minister, Geoffrey Rippon, was sent to Australia to explain current British policies in September 1970. Rippon intended to offer assurances that as much as possible would be done to safeguard the interests of the Commonwealth countries. Although no special deal could be expected for Australia, Britain would bargain for the longest possible transition period for phasing out existing preferences for Australian primary produce. Throughout the latter half of 1970, Britain entered negotiations with the EEC, informing Australia of the gradual phasing out of Commonwealth

preferences, especially butter, sugar and cheese. In May 1971 however, Britain agreed to the EEC’s terms of admission without consulting Australia and subsequently failed to honour its promised provisions for special transitional arrangements for Australia.\(^{300}\) Despite the denial of the Australian government, the EEC negotiations clearly drove a wedge between Britain and the Commonwealth in a manner that inflicted more damage to the viability of the “special” British connection.

Additionally, the date that the transfer was to take place was significant as the Government did not want to come under fire for reacting negatively to Britain’s EEC entry. As Stuart Ward has articulated, although Britain’s entry into Europe was not the fundamental rationale behind the decision to transfer, it ‘certainly provided an appropriate occasion to make the symbolic switch.’\(^{301}\) Deputy Secretary K.O. Shann advised that for the sake of Anglo-Australian relations, it would be preferable to avoid the interpretation (and criticism) that the decision to transfer Australia House was a reaction to Britain’s entry into the Common Market.\(^{302}\) Deputy High Commissioner to London Boswell shared Shann’s apprehensions, suggesting that the general relations with the UK, both at a

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\(^{300}\) Geoffrey Bolton, “The United Kingdom”, p. 212. Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the Country Party Doug Anthony was made aware of Britain’s breach of their assurances that there would be a transitional period for Commonwealth Countries, when he visited Brussels in 1971. Cablegram, Anthony to Foreign Affairs, Australian Embassy, Brussels, 4 June, 1971, NAA:A1838, 727/4/2 Part 12, Documents on Foreign Policy, p. 716. Doug Anthony recalls having a ‘real donnybrook’ with Rippon, as ‘he just wouldn’t listen to us.’ As a result, in September 1972, Anthony announced the withdrawal of preferences granted to British imports, as well as the termination of the United Kingdom-Australia Trade Agreement. Doug Anthony, Personal Interview, 10 September, 2011.

\(^{301}\) Stuart Ward, “Sir Alexander Downer and the embers of British Australia”, p. 159.

\(^{302}\) Letter, Shann to Bunting, 18 October, 1971, NAA:13211/1, 1971/2388. NAA.
governmental and popular level were healthy, however ‘there seems now to be a sympathetic backlash resulting from the proposed UK entry into the Common Market and I would like to see anything done which would give the impression we are organising in pique.’\textsuperscript{303} The contradictions evident in the process of the transfer highlight the conundrum of Australia nationalism. As historian James Curran certifies, despite the formal renunciation of British ties, the nations ‘political culture maintained at its core the British heritage as it had been modified by Australian experience.’\textsuperscript{304}

The period of the late 1960s and early 1970s was fraught with difficulty for the Anglo-Australian relationship. Alongside the issues arising from Britain’s quest to join the Common Market, were the divergent defence policies regarding the Vietnam War and the Malaysian Confrontation.\textsuperscript{305} In a time when Australia was still reeling from the impact of Britain’s handling of immigration matters, British sentiment was evidently diminishing. As Sir Alexander Downer reflected, ‘if the immigration restrictions for Australians had not been so great, ‘the lasting damage to the traditional feelings towards Britain would not have been so heavily inflicted.’\textsuperscript{306} Indeed as historians Geoff Spenceley and Catherine Welch assert, the ‘kith and kin relationship had been greatly damaged well before


Britain commenced formal negotiations with the EC in June 1970. Against this background, the impetus for Australia to officially place Britain on a foreign footing through the transfer of Australia House illustrates pragmatism and realism. Although in terms of practicality the transfer functioned as an ‘administrative convenience,’ the symbolising of Australia releasing her grip on the idea of a "special" relationship is of great significance.

The historical validation of the administration of Australia House on the basis of ties of intimacy, was less convincing in the 1970s than it was in the immediate post-war period. The sharp decline in Anglo-Australian trade and Britain’s diminished forces in Asia revealed that politically and economically, the British government had opted for Europe just as Australia was becoming increasingly occupied with affairs in its own region. Moreover, the relations had been ‘particularly icy’ following Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Douglas Anthony’s visit to ask for ‘or rather demand’ a better deal for Australian farmers if Britain entered the European Economic Community. All of these factors, contributed to mark the end of the necessity of a “special” post in Britain, and indicated the need to assume normal bilateral relations.

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From’ cousins to close friends’: The shifting relationship.

The popular reaction against the introduction of the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, was not matched by the announcement that henceforth Anglo-Australian relations would be designated as foreign affairs, which caused ‘little stir.’ The move followed the reorientation that had seen the Department of External Affairs changed to the Department of Foreign Affairs in 1970, revising the old terminology that indicated that Commonwealth nations were ‘external’ but not ‘foreign.’ Earlier, in 1968, in a similar move from Britain, the Commonwealth Relations Office was merged into the Foreign Office, catering for the increasing ‘New Commonwealth,’ who were essentially of a foreign nature.

Aligned with the dawning ‘new nationalism’ of the impending Whitlam era, Deputy High Commissioner to London, William Pritchett, sought clarification on what constituted the Anglo-Australian relationship at the close of 1972. It was suggested that a requirement of the revised relationship would be to modernise the perception of Australia, and that talking of Britain as ‘close friends’ rather than ‘cousins’ would sufficiently address the shift. As in 1909 with the construction of Australia House, the preoccupation with how Australia was perceived in Britain was a central concern.

312 Geoffrey Tebbut, “Another Australian tie is loosed”, NAA: A1209, 1971/9449 Part 1. NAA.
The ‘irreversible changes in the ideological foundations of Australian political culture’ were formally recognised by Gough Whitlam’s election in 1972. With an emphasis on Australian independence, Whitlam considered the transfer as effectively ‘bringing home to the British the view we now have of our relations.’ Moreover, Whitlam suggested that ‘we certainly do not want any breach with Britain, but we most certainly do want to face up to realities and stress our attitudes and policies as Australians.’

On the surface, the transfer of Australia House appears to be little more than a simple bureaucratic shift with ‘few if any direct policy implications.’ However as Curran and Ward have suggested, the decision was attended by ‘doubt, hesitation, and deep internal division,’ thus becoming a wider example of the shifting sands of the Anglo-Australian relationship. The transfer of Australia House reflected a further ‘cool change’ in Australia’s ‘special relationship’ with Britain, as it signified the declining importance of the London post with the expansion of diplomatic representation elsewhere. As this chapter has illustrated, the resistance to the transfer was founded in an inability to accept the realities of the 1960s and 1970s whereby diverging interests resulted in a less extensive flow of information, and ‘the old mutual trust…had been marred with

314 Stuart Ward, *Discordant Communities*, p. 376.
guardedness.’ The 1972 Policy Planning Paper’s intonation that ‘we [Australia] should endeavour to ensure that our relations with Britain are no less close than those with other major allies,’ suggests the revision of deeply ingrained assumptions regarding the nature of the Anglo-Australian relationship. However, the Paper exhibited the contradictions inherent in the relationship. Citing Sir Alec Douglas-Home, who had ‘affirmed that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office intended to maintain the most intimate relationship it could manage with Australia,’ the Paper suggests that ‘these statements go beyond the normal polite references that are required of such occasions.’ Moreover, it was determined that ‘we should not seek to return to the former special relationship with the United Kingdom; but equally, nor should we reconcile ourselves to thinking of the United Kingdom as just another country with who we must attempt to cultivate our relations as well as possible.’ The resistance exhibited by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet to fully relinquish control over a symbol saturated in history and sentiment, further reflects the reluctance to completely normalise relations with Britain. In response to the Department of Foreign Affairs Policy Planning Paper, Deputy High Commissioner to London, William Pritchett voiced his belief that the document expressed ‘serious misconceptions and underestimations’ of the

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320 Department of Foreign Affairs Policy Guidance Paper, NAA:A1838, 67/1/3 Part 5, Documents on Foreign Policy, p. 961.
321 Department of Foreign Affairs Policy Guidance Paper. NAA:A1838, 67/1/3 Part 5, Documents on Foreign Policy, p. 963.
322 Department of Foreign Affairs Policy Guidance Paper, NAA:A1838, 67/1/3 Part 5, Documents on Foreign Policy, p. 963.
complex and extensive relations between Australia and Britain.\textsuperscript{323} Evidently, amongst different Departments, and indeed amongst individuals, the idea of viewing Britain as ‘foreign’ was problematic as there remained varying degrees of attachment to the idea that Australia and Britain would always have a ‘special’ relationship. The strength in the belief in a wider Britishness that transcended distinctions between centre and periphery, colony and metropole,\textsuperscript{324} had inarguably waned, however the historical and sentimental links appeared to be harder to break.


\textsuperscript{324} Frank Bongiorno, “Appendix 3: Who were the agents-general?” in \textit{The High Commissioners}, pp. 241-245, p. 245.
- Conclusion -

‘There is a commendable emptiness in Australians about their place in the world, the need for a new rhetoric, a new approach, as if Australia were beginning all over again.’


Donald Horne’s identification of the void left by the demise of Britishness in Australia identifies the fundamental shift in Anglo-Australian relations. The call to British race patriotism had been at the core of nationalistic rhetoric, a cohesive and binding national myth from the late 19th century down to the 1960s. As Britain came to be seen more as a “foreign” country in economic and political terms, the need to define nationalism ‘stripped of its British underpinnings’ occupied Australian leaders in the 1960s and 1970s. As this thesis has demonstrated, there appeared to be either an inability or simply a lack of desire to completely break free from the historical and cultural British roots in Australia, thus the issue of conceptualising Britain as “foreign” maintains an unresolved quality. It seemed, in the 1970s, that despite the callings of ‘new nationalism’ Australia would forever be in the shadow of its imperial past. As historian Jeppe Kristensen asserts, ‘it is proof of the power of the British founding myth in Australia that, even in the moment of realisation that

Britishness could have no practical meaning, it was still possible for Australians to imagine a vague “essence” underneath the rubble of empire."^{327}

The introduction of new immigration laws in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the transfer of Australia House in 1972, shed light on these broader questions within the Anglo-Australian relationship. The strong undercurrent of British sentiment engendered difficulties in distinguishing between an ideological and practical commitment to British heritage. As each chapter has illustrated, the emergence of a strong line of advocates for the normalisation of relations, versus those reluctant to dispense with the familiarity of old, highlights the conundrum which continues to exist in Anglo-Australian relations, as well as within the wider issue of Australian nationalism. These conflicting ideologies have translated into the contemporary Republican debate.

Despite the High Court ruling in 1999 that for constitutional purposes Britain should be considered a “foreign” country, the symbol of the Crown as the Australian Head of State presents an ongoing problem for Australia’s independence. As such, as *The Sydney Morning Herald* suggested, the idea of Britain as “foreign” has maintained the power to ‘startle.’^{328} In reaction to the High Court ruling, some Australians believed that calling Britain a ‘foreign power’ was a 'long bow,'^{329} others believed the decision highlighted the

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‘absurdity of the Queen remaining our Head of State.’330 One reader posed a question to all ‘who are so upset that Britain is now classified as foreign,’ asking ‘whether they are aware that when Australian citizens visit Britain they enter through a customs gate labelled ‘Aliens’?’331 Another lamented that he ‘had always thought of Australia as England with sunshine.’332 Such confusion over the nature of Anglo-Australian relations can be attributed to the different value that national leaders have placed on the British connection in the closing years of the 20th century, and indeed into the 21st century.

The symbolic and constitutional changes that occurred with ‘breakneck speed’333 during the tenure of the Whitlam Government brought the question of Australian independence and the British connection to the fore. As historian Mark McKenna suggests, for most Australians, at least until the mid-sixties, the notion of Australian ‘independence’ was rarely viewed in absolute terms, instead naturally limited and shaped to coexist with overall loyalty to the Empire.334 For this reason, the phrase ‘independent Australian Britons’ was considered as an accurate expression of Australian nationality.335 However, from 1972 to 1975, reflecting a commitment to ‘new nationalism,’ Whitlam attempted to give practical expression to the idea of Britain as “foreign” by removing ‘colonial

332 “Nationality appears to be a foreign concept”, The Sydney Morning Herald, 5 July, 1999, p. 16.  
333 Ashton, Bridge, Ward, (eds.) “Removing the ‘relics of colonialism’,” Documents on Foreign Policy, p. 905.  
335 Mark McKenna, “The Imperial Mardi-Gras,” p. 217.
relics’ which stood in the way of an exclusive Australian identity. This process included the naming of ‘Advance Australia Fair’ as the national anthem, the restyling of the monarchal relationship as the Queen of Australia and the renaming of ‘Her Majesty’s Government’ to the ‘Australian Government.’ Additionally, Whitlam moved to abolish appeals to the Privy Council, as well as to establish a separate Australian Honours system. Despite these attempted amendments, Whitlam, in his widely quoted speech at Mansion House in 1974, ‘claimed for himself the mantle of principal Australian Anglophile.’ ‘I don’t suppose,’ Whitlam intoned, ‘there is anyone in Australia, certainly no-one else who is still in public life, who has a greater love for Britain than I have.’

Similarly, in the 1972 Policy Guidance Paper on Anglo-Australian relations, the Department of Foreign Affairs which had, as Chapter Three illustrates, campaigned for the relationship to be put on an equal footing, suggested that ‘at the very least we should still be left with a body of natural or historical advantages...that should remain strong enough to set our relations with Britain apart from those we enjoy with the nation-in-the-street.’ As James Curran

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asserts, ‘this affirmation of Britain’s significance to the Australian self-image was all the more remarkable for having been expressed in the midst of an era of supposed ‘new nationalism.’”342

The question of Australia’s independence from Britain was again under scrutiny in 1986, with the passing of the Australia Acts, whereby Whitlam’s recommendations on the Privy Council were finally legislated. As an ‘Act to bring constitutional arrangements affecting the Commonwealth and the States into conformity with the status of the Commonwealth of Australia as a sovereign, independent and federal nation,’343 the Australia Acts marked the end of the power of the Parliament of the United Kingdom to legislate for Australia. The Act also severed all remaining avenues of appeal to the Privy Council from Australian courts, rendering the High Court of Australia as the most authoritative national legal power. At the core of the issue was how Australia wished to be perceived. Gone were the days in which Australia projected an image of, to quote John Curtin and Ben Chifley, a ‘citadel for the British speaking race.’344 As historian Garfield Barwick notes, the maintenance of the Privy Council as the ultimate Court of Appeal for Australia carried the obvious disadvantage that it appeared to make less credible the assertion of its complete independence, an assertion which was already viewed with some scepticism by other countries due to the

monarchy centered in London, and the use of the Union Jack in the Australian flag.\textsuperscript{345}

The Republican Movement of the 1990s further reflected the divergent attitudes of the Australian people towards Britain. In his \textit{Republican Manifesto}, John Hirst declared that ‘Australia was born in chains and is not fully free,’\textsuperscript{346} whereas the current Leader of the Opposition and one time Executive Director of Australians for Constitutional Monarchy, Tony Abbott, suggested that ‘Australian consciousness and monarchy were entirely compatible, even if Australian and British nationality were utterly distinct.’\textsuperscript{347} Another one time Liberal Leader Malcolm Turnbull, refused to partake in Bicentenary celebrations due to the ‘national humiliation’ of having a Royal ‘presiding over every event.’ Turnbull expressed his disappointment that ‘when the world was looking at Australia in a way that it never had before, we demonstrated to the world that we were not yet a nation.’\textsuperscript{348} As the thesis has shown, such strong views on the nature of the Anglo-Australia relationship has meant that the task of becoming totally independent of Britain should never be described as a ‘severing,’ but more as a slow and gradual process of disentangling, marked by resistance and opposition at every step of the way.

However, as Stuart Ward suggests, the ‘tentative Republicanism’ of the 1990s is just one example, albeit the most striking, of the difficulty in finding meaningful, consensual national alternatives to the worn out emblems of Empire.\(^{349}\) Similarly, the question of Australian independence and the British connection provides an ongoing dilemma for leaders who attempt to define the Australian identity. Former Prime Minster Paul Keating, a fervent ‘radical nationalist,’ was quick to establish links between republicanism and the potent Anzac myth, expressing clear disdain at that fact that ‘we are still borrowing the monarchy of another country.’\(^{350}\) More recently, another former PM John Howard, on the other hand, was openly hostile to the Republic,\(^{351}\) defending Australia’s monarchy as it gives the nation ‘immense stability.’\(^{352}\) Keating, a self described ‘notorious Pom-basher,’\(^{353}\) recalled the words of historian W. J. Hudson, who suggested that Australia was ‘thrust into an independence which she did not want and which...she pretended had not happened.’\(^{354}\) Speaking in 1992, Keating noted that ‘some symbolic vestiges and attitudes suggest that the nation is still pretending...we must go into the world independent or we will not succeed.’\(^{355}\) Similarly, Keating asserted that recognising the ‘great wealth of culture we have


\(^{351}\) Ben Wellings, “Britishness and the Failure of Australian Republicanism”, p. 45


\(^{354}\) Keating, “Protecting our Identity,” p. 40.

\(^{355}\) Keating, “Protecting our Identity,” p. 40.
inherited cannot obscure or deny the fact that culture is built in large on the experience of the last 200 years of living on this continent...a set of recognizably Australian values."^356 Central to this notion of uniquely Australian values was the discourse of mateship, a defining characteristic which has often been identified as one of the traditional qualities of the Australian bushman, as well as the Australian digger. The writing of late 19th century Australian poet Henry Lawson did much to cement the concept of mateship within the self-consciousness of Australia as a mark of personal nobility, which superseded class and advocated egalitarianism, characteristics which were seen as at odds with traditional British values.^357

Keating advocated that British heritage and the values that had emerged from Australia’s past were a source of shame, stressing the particular episodes of Anglo-Australian antagonism as the driving force in Australia’s progression towards independence.^358 On the other hand, Howard, in a manner reflecting his deep affection for the Menzies legacy and for British heritage,^359 believed that there was a ‘latent sentiment in the community that legitimate expressions of pride about the past have been stifled, allegedly to show tolerance towards minorities.’^360 Howard signalled his response to the ‘guilt’ of the Keating era, announcing that the Australian flag would be enshrined in legislation, therefore

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ensuring that it could not be changed without a referendum.\(^\text{361}\) Reflecting on the rhetoric of John Howard, James Curran asserts, 'it may be said that no other Prime Minister has retained an affection for and acceptance of British heritage as the indispensable ingredient of national cohesion.'\(^\text{362}\) However, at the same time, Howard strongly identified the Anzac legend as a vestige for national patriotism, and emphasised the value of ‘mateship’ as a uniquely Australian ideal, even suggesting that there should be a specific reference within the Australian Constitution to the defining ‘ideology’ of mateship.\(^\text{363}\)

In the early 20\(^{\text{th}}\) century, Australians have embraced the Anzac legend as their most powerful myth of nationhood.\(^\text{364}\) However, in 2011 the royal marriage of Prince William and Kate Middleton has prompted a revival of the question of the British connection. *The Age* captured the post wedding sentiment that for Australia, the occasion was a ‘swell party, but what happens now?’\(^\text{365}\) Although the notions of a ‘fair go’ and ‘mateship’ are continually invoked to ‘define the spirit of our nation,’\(^\text{366}\) the response to the wedding was interpreted by the *Australian Conservative* as an indication that young Australians ‘embrace mainstream conservative values and beliefs….recognising the need for


\(^\text{364}\) Mark McKenna, “Anzac Day: How did it become Australia’s National Day?”, p. 111.


acknowledging the past.\textsuperscript{367} Similarly, The Newcastle Herald wrote of the monarchy that ‘this arcane institution overcomes all the cold logic of modernity to touch us with its familiarity,’ even suggesting that unlike Australian politicians, we can forgive them for their mistakes, ‘like our own families.’\textsuperscript{368} However, there was also a refocus on the irrelevant nature of symbolic royal attachment to Australia.

As such, the thesis has challenged the claims by historians that the relationship was irrevocably ‘fractured’ following WWII, instead demonstrating that the significance of Britishness in Australia is still contentious and thus alive in the minds of the Australian people. Moreover, the whig interpretation that Australia embarked on a progressive march to inevitable independence is refuted, as the thesis has illustrated that the process of rendering Britain “foreign” was coloured by both uncertainty and reluctance, as well as determination and pragmatism.

On 7 January, 1969, Australian Prime Minister John Gorton frankly told his British counterpart Harold Wilson that ‘Australia would come increasingly to treat her relations with Britain in the same way as those she had with any foreign country,’\textsuperscript{369} as a consequence of increasing difference in interests and activities. Wilson did not agree, suggesting that ‘these differences were more


\textsuperscript{369} Andrea Benvenuti, Anglo-Australian relations and the ‘Turn to Europe’, p. 1
apparent than real, the result of the geographical separation of the two countries.\textsuperscript{370} He held that ‘when the chips were down, Australia and Britain were bound to find themselves as one.’\textsuperscript{371} This exchange illustrated that the question of whether Britain is a ‘foreign’ country presents an ongoing dilemma. As a nation steeped in British traditions, with its own national interests and identity, the question of Britain’s place in the Australian psyche, in both a political and public sphere will continue to be examined. As Australia moves forward with multiculturalism and grows in its role in the Pacific, the sentimental ties which linger will undoubtedly weaken, but perhaps will never disappear entirely.

\textsuperscript{370} Benvenuti, \textit{Anglo-Australian relations and the ‘Turn to Europe’}, p. 2.\textsuperscript{371} Benvenuti, \textit{Anglo-Australian relations and the ‘Turn to Europe’}, p.1.
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