



COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT MIGRANT HOSTEL SCHEMES

A Migration Heritage Project Research Project



The Illawarra Migrant History Project is a research undertaking of the Migration Heritage Project to provide a comprehensive picture of the settlement of post-World War 2 migrants to the Illawarra. The MHP will collate and host this information in a central location to assist further research and understanding of migration patterns to the area.

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INTRODUCTION

At a 1946 conference between the Commonwealth Government and the State Premiers, it was agreed that the States would provide temporary accommodation for assisted British migrants for the first seven days after their disembarkation in Australia and the Commonwealth Government allocated funds to the States for this purpose. This continued until about 1957 when this agreement between the Commonwealth and State Governments ended. The State Governments continued to provide accommodation for British migrants they had nominated.

The migration schemes immediately after World War 2 were focussed on the British, particularly British ex-service tradesmen and ex-servicemen from allied nations. Under these early schemes the new British migrants had to provide their own accommodation in Australia or have their accommodation provided for them by a relative, sponsor or nominator. Before migration agreements or resettlement schemes were commenced for non-British migrants, 'alien' migrants were granted entry to Australia via landing permits. A condition of the landing permits was that Alien migrants also had to find their own accommodation or have it provided for them. This meant that the Commonwealth Government did not, at least in the early days of Australia's post-World War 2 immigration programmes, have to provide migrant workers' hostels or dependent holding centres.

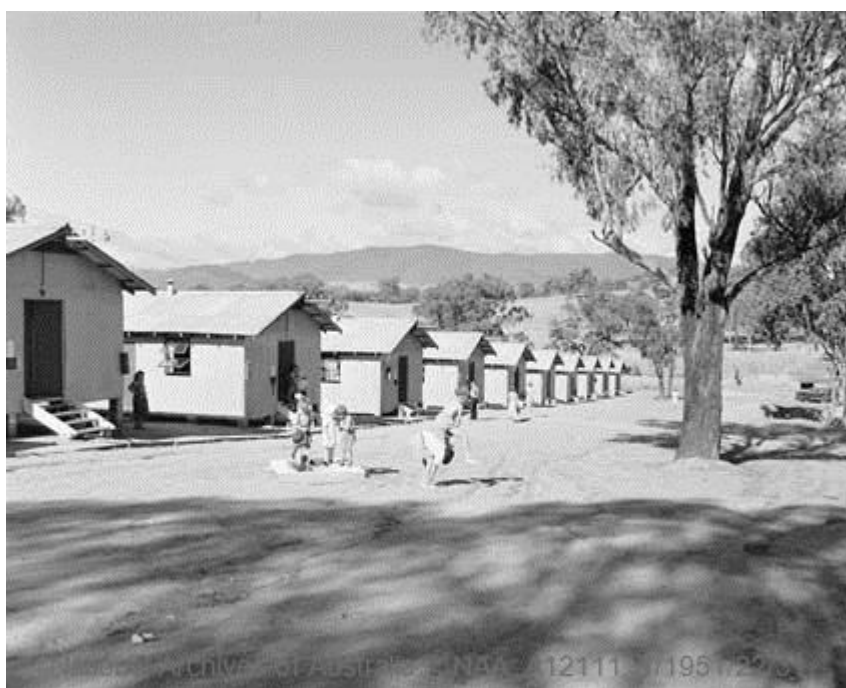
The signing of the International Refugee Agreement in 1947 forced the Commonwealth Government to become providers of accommodation for Displaced Persons. The sooner than expected arrival of the first group of Displaced Persons in December 1947 and the increased number of Displaced Persons than first agreed, had the Commonwealth Government scrambling to find suitable accommodation for them during a time of acute building material and labour shortages. Reception Centres needed to be operating to process the Displaced Persons and additional hostels for Holding Centres had to be acquired to address the accommodation needs of the Displaced Persons' families. At first the maximum amount of Displaced Persons were allocated to work in places that could provide accommodation with employment.

The Commonwealth Government provided reception centres to receive, process and accommodate the Displaced Persons on their arrival in Australia. An average stay at a reception centre was 4 weeks after which they were relocated to their employment destination as determined by Commonwealth Government authorities. These reception centres were established by the Commonwealth Government who acquired existing camps and buildings that were no longer used for their original purpose such as Army or Air Force camps. A reception and training centre was established at a former Army and Prisoner of War camp at Bonegilla near Albury, NSW. Other reception centres would be established in Bathurst and Cowra in NSW with temporary ones in South Australia and Western Australia. Hostels at Bathurst and Cowra would also be used as Holding Centres.

The Commonwealth Government did not want to increase the population in cities and embarked on a decentralisation programme and many of the first groups of Displaced Persons were sent to rural areas where private accommodation was available or was provided with employment. With Displaced Persons sent to rural areas this allowed the placement of these 'foreigners' in places away from the mainstream society and helped the Commonwealth Government implement a programme of migration without too much controversy, objection or exposure to the foreigners and placed no additional drain on housing or building materials and demonstrated to the Australian public that the new migrants would not adversely affect the availability of private or public housing. It also meant that for the time being the Commonwealth Government did not have to immediately provide large migrant hostel camps in industrial centres.



Bonegilla Migrant Reception and Training Centre, Albury Victoria
Courtesy of the National Archives of Australia, A12111, 1/1965/22/21



Bathurst Migrant Holding Centre
Courtesy of the National Archives of Australia A12111, 1/1951/22/31

The Commonwealth Government did try to remedy the acute housing shortages for the Australian population even before the immigration programme was implemented and developed a national housing programme in close collaboration with the States, building industry, trade unions and professional organisations and employers and a Commonwealth and State Housing Agreement was negotiated in 1945. The Commonwealth Government also believed that proper housing was an avenue into which the new migrants could quickly adapt to the "Australian way of life".

Apart from the expected benefit of a decentralisation programme, the Commonwealth Government remained committed to building up the agricultural industry first until about the latter half of 1948 when the NSW State Premier asked the Commonwealth Government to address the building material shortages by placing Displaced Persons to work in the manufacturing industries that produced building materials such as Port Kembla and Newcastle Steelworks and to provide accommodation for them. Most of these industries were located within metropolitan or regional cities which meant that the Commonwealth Government would need to build migrant workers' hostels or acquire former Army camps and other buildings to be converted into migrant workers' hostels. The Commonwealth Government would spend £2,500,000 in converting Service camps and building hostels. It was not possible to complete the entire building programme therefore £1,500,000 of that allocation was to be used during 1948-49 and the balance of the building programme carried out in the following year.

The Department of Works and Housing was responsible for the design and construction of hostels where surplus buildings were not available. The standard of hostel accommodation that was eventually provided for the British migrants was well below what the Commonwealth Government originally intended. The National Service Training Scheme had also been introduced and part of the funding that had been allocated for the building programme for British migrant hostels, was diverted to the preparation of camps for trainees.

Migrant hostels and centres were operated by two Commonwealth Government departments: The Department of Immigration and the Department of Labour and National Service. The Department of Immigration was responsible for reception and holding camps and the Department of Labour and National Service, as an agent of the Department of Immigration, was responsible for workers camps and hostels.

MIGRANT WORKERS ACCOMMODATION DIVISION

The Department of Immigration established the Migrant Workers Accommodation Division within the Department of Labour and National service to administer a network of migrant hostels that provided accommodation for up to 12 months if needed. The Division had regional offices in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. On 2 August 1948 Cabinet authorised the building of seven Government Hostels for the accommodation of Displaced Persons workers. Commonwealth Government Hostels were provided for Displaced Persons from 1947 to the end of the International Refugee Organisation Agreement in 1952. Displaced Persons were charged a tariff to cover the costs of food and accommodation at Commonwealth Hostels.

Hostels were to be designed to be able to accommodate an equal number of males and females and to accommodate family groups equally with married couples and single males and females interchangeably and consisted of three types:

1. Permanent type, for sites in settled areas.
2. Emergency type, for sites regarded as sufficiently remote from existing settlement.
3. Utilisation of existing buildings.

HOSTEL BUILDING PROGRAMME

Two Commonwealth Government migrant hostel building programmes occurred simultaneously. Stage One for Displaced Persons starting 1948-49 and Stage 2 for British migrants and families commencing in 1950.

Stage 1 Hostels for Displaced Persons Migrant Workers

In 1948 Cabinet approved the building of 7 Government Hostels for the accommodation of the Displaced Persons who were resettled in Australia as part of the International Refugee Organisation agreement. Following on from the 1948 Cabinet approval, in 1949 the Commonwealth Government embarked on its first migrant workers' hostel building programme: 3 in Sydney, 3 in Melbourne and 1 in Port Kembla, with each to accommodate 400 persons. These 7 hostels were in addition to the 2 hostels which had already been approved at Port Kembla and Newcastle, making a total of 9 hostels. The additional hostels for Port Kembla was because the Commonwealth Government at the request of the NSW State Premier was to place Displaced Persons in the iron and steel industries at Port Kembla to expedite and increase the manufacture of building and steel products which were in short supply and for the need to expand the areas of employment that Displaced Persons may be employed. The provision of £2,500,000 was made in the 1948-49 estimates to cover the cost of building and equipping the 9 hostels and for structural conversions needed on ex-Army and other buildings at Gawler, Parafield, Fishermen's Bend, Albert Park, Broughton, Warwick Farm, Meadowbank, Port Stephens and Brisbane. The Department of Immigration provided the finance to acquire sites and to erect and maintain hostels. State or Local Governments were asked to provide the land usually near industrial centres that were not designated for urban development.

The construction of the first Commonwealth Hostels occurred during labour, building materials and housing shortages and then the 1949 coal strikes which further impacted the shortages and sometimes interrupted the Commonwealth Governments Hostel building programme. Consequently, not all hostels were completed in time for the influx of migrants, particularly migrant families, with many Commonwealth Hostels built in stages. Militant Communist-led Unions also impacted on the speed of the hostel building programme protesting against the employment of Displaced Persons in the steel, iron and coal industries and the use of building materials when there was a shortage of housing for Australians.

In 1949 when Cabinet approved a Sub-Committee of Cabinet for further consideration into the matter of an accommodation scheme for the Displaced Persons it also included the establishment of holding camps for dependents of migrant workers. The first groups of Displaced Persons were deliberately chosen because they were single or married without children. The groups of Displaced Persons that followed, and at a more frequent pace, began to include married couples with children and/or with dependent parents. The first Migrant Workers' Hostels were primarily established for single male workers or unaccompanied married men from the Displaced Persons Resettlement scheme to work in the iron and steel industries vital to the production of building materials. For the maximum number of workers to be allocated to these industries, Migrant Workers' Hostels did not allow for the wives, children or other dependents to accompany them, therefore they were separated from their families and the Commonwealth Government had to find a way to accommodate the wives and children as they could not remain in the Reception Centres as Reception Centres needed to be vacated to allow for the next group of Displaced Persons to be received. Reception Centres functioned like a "revolving door".

After the Displaced Persons Agreement had ended these Holding Centres would continue to accommodate non-British families separated from their husbands and fathers. British migrants families were not subjected to separations.

Stage 2 Hostels for British Migrant Workers and Families

Since the British migrant numbers under sponsorship and nomination schemes were well below what the Commonwealth Government had planned, it instituted an Assisted Passage Scheme which included an obligation by the Commonwealth to provide accommodation for British migrants. Many British migrants had returned to the United Kingdom and one of the main reasons was the inability to secure housing. In 1950 the Commonwealth Government embarked on its second migrant hostel building programme and this time it was primarily for British migrants and their families. Twelve hostels had been constructed or were in the course of construction in NSW and plans were being prepared for others. Some had been constructed under contract and others by day labour employed by the Commonwealth Department of Works and Housing.

The Commonwealth Government was at first loathe to accommodate British migrants and ex-servicemen in huts as they believed the average British migrant should not be subjected to such a poor standard of housing nor should ex-servicemen be forced to live in huts after having done so for many years when they fought in the war. An exception was the first British ex-service tradesmen migrants who arrived in Australia in 1947 and were sent to Canberra to build the new national capital city. Special hostels were provided for them by the Commonwealth Government.

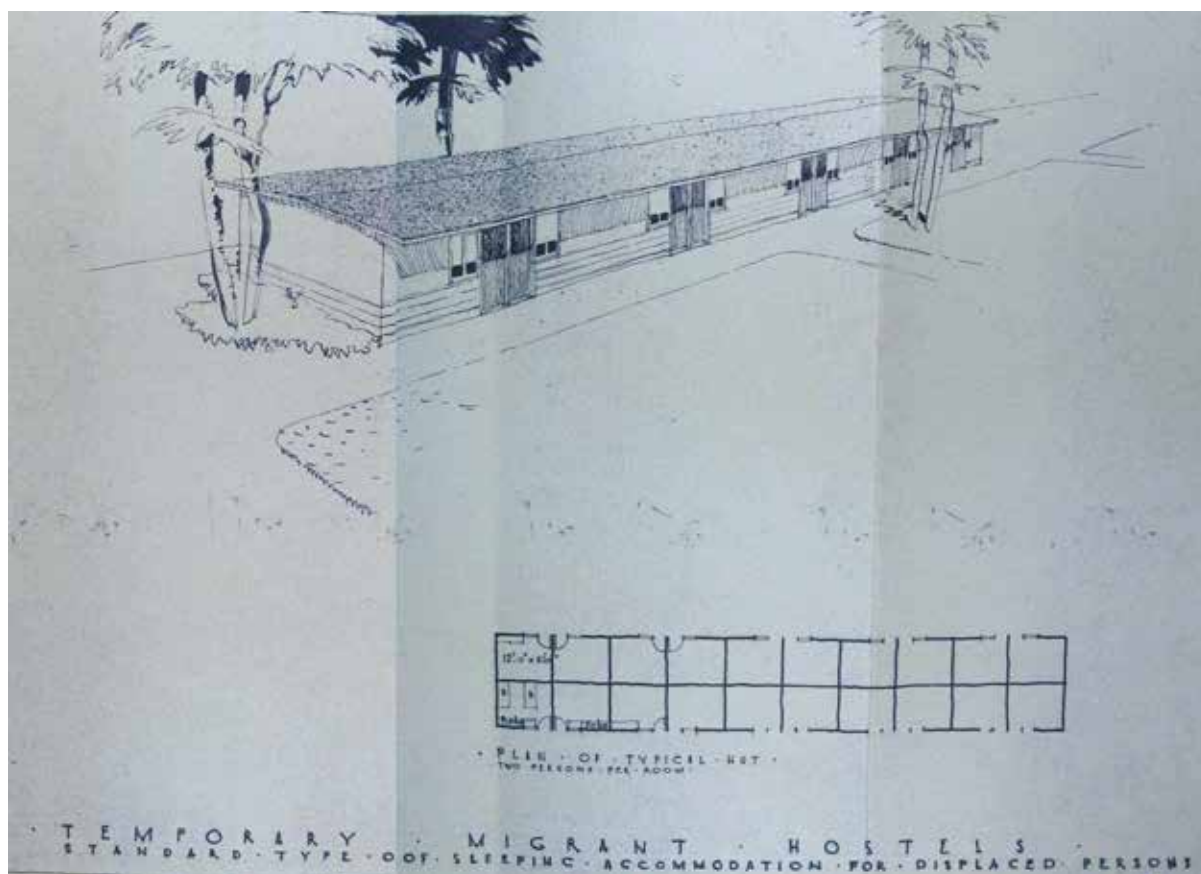
The economic recession of the early 1950s saw a reduction in Government spending that not only retarded the proposed hostel building programme for British migrants but also temporarily reduced the flow of overall migrant intakes. Decisions were made to close some hostels or not to proceed with building new hostels where it became uneconomic to operate them or employment prospects were low.

DESIGN, CHARACTER AND STANDARD

When the decision was made to step up the intake of Displaced Persons to 100,000 by 30 June 1950 considerable modifications of the design and character of the hostels was necessary if they were to be available to coincide with the programmed arrivals. The objective was to place the maximum possible number of Displaced Persons in employment with employers who normally provided accommodation. The residual would be the responsibility of the Commonwealth Government to accommodate. This was achieved by the adoption of minimum standards, use of materials that were not in short supply or were obtained from overseas and the Army making available additional Service accommodation even if only on a temporary basis.

Where Army huts were not available and permanent hostels were required the two types of hostels were:

1. Port Kembla Type (meaning Unanderra No 1 Hostel) which provided for the use of new timber and fibro in the construction of dormitories and kitchens and facilities.
2. Kembla Type for dormitories and Quonset Huts for staff quarters and administration and hostel facilities.



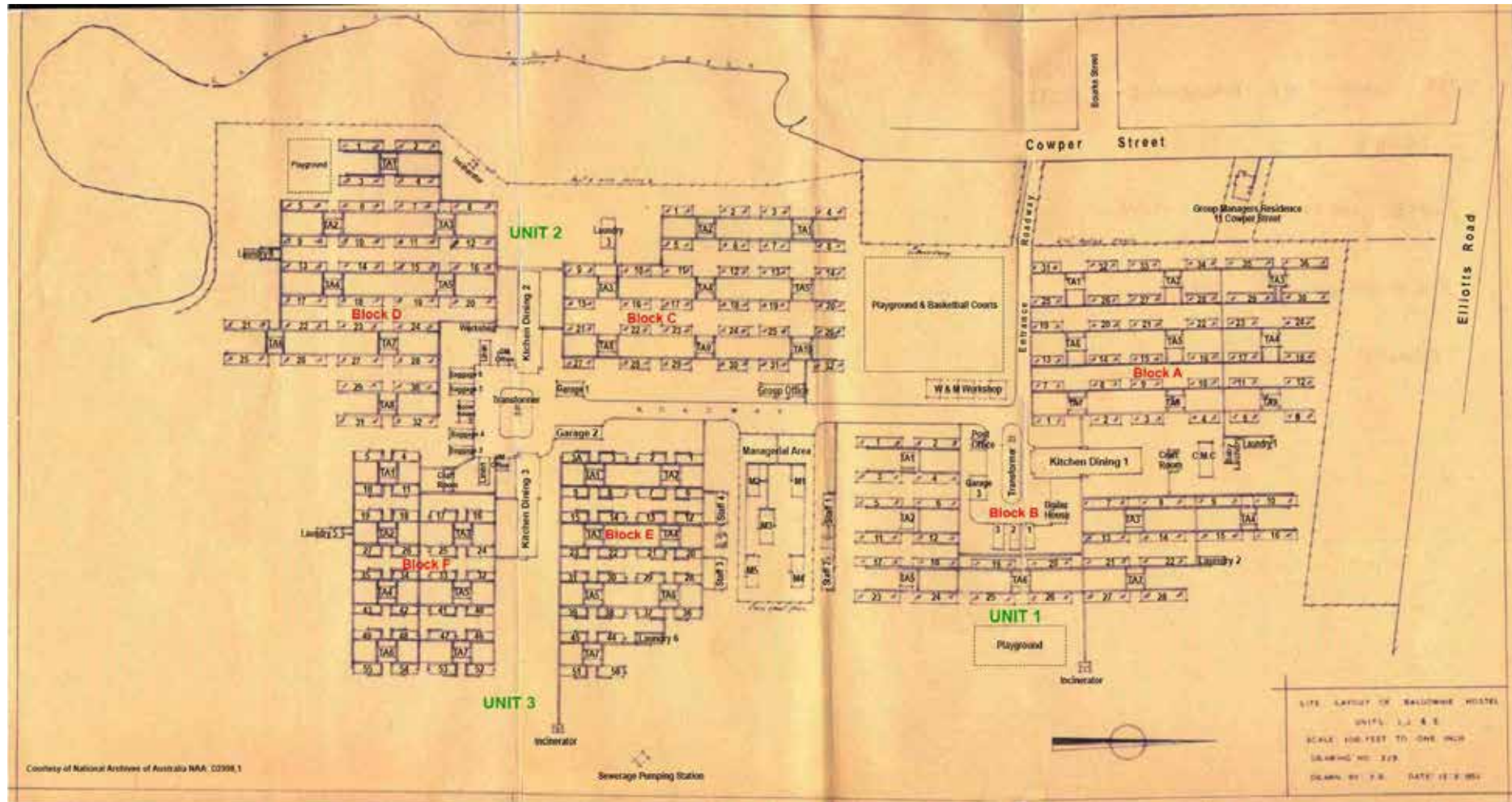
Drawing of Modified Port Kembla Hut as Temporary Migrant Hostel Standard Type of Sleeping Accommodation for Displaced Persons. Courtesy of the National Archives of Australia NAA: A3306,1

The Government had designed the hostels on the basis of 400 residents per unit, plus staff. Hostels could consist of anywhere from one to seven units. At first, timber-framed dormitories sheeted with bituminous felt and built to a minimum standard were used. Partitions were lined on one side only and the concrete floors covered with bituminous felt.

A common setup was for four 12-person dormitories arranged around the toilet and ablutions block and these dormitory groups arranged around the dining room and canteen and recreation room. Laundries were adjacent. Offices and stores were situated near the entrance and staff and manager's quarters were set slightly apart. Heating was only provided in recreation rooms. The kitchens were of a cafeteria-style but to be able to feed the large numbers they were fitted with modern cooking and hot-storage equipment available for this period in time.

Where there was more than one unit per site the kitchen and dining-room facilities were combined to service two units and the administrative services and main recreation hall were centralised to service the whole hostel site. Recreational halls were capable of seating one-half of the hostel population except where two or more units were located within a hostel the recreation hall was to be increased in size but not proportionately.

Nissen and Quonset Huts were then used in lieu of timber framed huts for expediency and to avoid a drain on building materials in short supply and eventually because of a reduction in available Commonwealth Government funds. Nissen Huts were used for dormitories and lavatories, ablutions and laundries and the Quonset Huts usually for dining rooms, recreation rooms or lounges.



Site Layout of Balgownie Hostel Units 1, 2 & 3 dated 15 September 1953 provides a good example of how accommodation units were planned in relation to amenities (buildings & areas marked by author). Image courtesy of National Archives of Australia NAA: D2998, 1

The intention was to provide accommodation to approximately the same standard to that provided for war workers during the war, which were of timber and fibro cement but the decision to increase the numbers of Displaced Persons by 30 June 1950 it was immediately apparent that considerable modifications of the design and character of the hostels was necessary if hostels were to be ready to receive the new arrivals and not place even more drain on the already acute shortage of building materials.

The Commonwealth Government use of Quonset and Nissen Huts was below the acceptable standard, being what was commensurate with that provided in Australia for war workers. Quonset Huts were used for administrative, dining, kitchen and recreational purposes and Nissen Huts as emergency type of dormitory accommodation using malthoid (reinforced chicken wire) for external walls and roofing and bituminous flooring. It was estimated that the malthoid walls and roofs would be impervious to weather conditions for eighteen months without maintenance and it was hoped that at the end of that time the malthoid would be replaced by more permanent material.

The locations of Commonwealth Hostels were dictated by the geographical location of permanent employment and placing Displaced Persons into that employment provided it would not be to the detriment of Australian workers.

DESEGREGATION OF HOSTELS

The provision of better accommodation for British migrants proved too costly and in 1951 the decision was made to desegregate Commonwealth Hostels. After migration agreements had been arranged with countries from Continental Europe, non-British migrants were accommodated at hostels originally intended solely for the British migrants. It was thought that this would be a better way for the alien migrants to learn English and the British outlook and thereby improve assimilation. The Dutch were the first of the alien migrants placed into British migrant hostels as an experiment. By 1953 it was agreed that the same standard of accommodation be provided for European migrants as for British migrants. One method in achieving equality in standards was to remove the sitting rooms from the British migrant's hut which were not provided in hostels for alien migrants. Desegregation of hostels was gradual but not without protest from the British migrants, Balgownie hostel in particular.

Once construction was completed responsibility for the operation of hostels was transferred to the Department of Labour and National Service. The Commonwealth Government paid a subsidy to bridge the gap between the tariffs paid and the running costs of the hostels. This was the Australian taxpayer's contribution to the immigration scheme, of which the migrant themselves were taxpayers. State and Local Governments had little governance over the construction and management of Commonwealth Migrant Hostels.

TARIFFS

When the first of the hostels that were operated by the Department of Labour and National Service were established a tariff of £2/2/6 was charged for board and lodging which was reviewed after six months. Tariff rates, which were subject to reviews and increases, were charged according to a migrant family's size and circumstances and the ages of the children. For larger families in the lower income groups there were concessional tariffs. Overtime, bonuses and child endowment were disregarded in the calculation of tariff rates.

A November 1967 Commonwealth Hostel Limited brochure explained that the tariff at the hostels covered 21 meals a week. School children were given cut lunches. Adult workers and weekend

picknickers were also provided with cut lunches if they wished. If workers did not take cut lunches, a reduction of 85 cents per week per person was made in the tariff. The accommodation huts were furnished rooms with a divan-type double bed convertible to settees by day and two-decker beds for children as well as dressing tables, wardrobe units, chairs mats and curtains. Linen service was included in the tariff. Child minding Centres operated between 7am and 5pm during the week for pre-school children of working mothers. The childcare charge in 1967 was \$1.50 for one child and \$1.00 for each additional child, with supervised midday meals at the Centre. Youth Centres equipped for sports and recreation were staffed by qualified youth leaders. Most hostels had sports ovals and floodlit basketball courts.

HOSTELS FOR BRITISH MIGRANTS

Until 1950 migrant workers' hostels were mainly used to accommodate Displaced Persons whose dependents lived separately from them in Holding Centres which were controlled by the Department of Immigration. When the Commonwealth Nominated British Migrant Scheme was launched in 1950, the Government made provisions to accommodate the British families together and a programme for building special hostels for British families commenced. To prevent even further delay to the British migrants wanting to come to Australia, existing hostels that were still in use for European migrants, married and single, were used until accommodation of a higher standard could be built. In Illawarra the only hostel built of a superior style and standard that used timber and fibro was Unanderra Hostel Unit No 1 which commenced operation in 1949. This standard of building was referred to as the "Port Kembla type hut". Unanderra No 1 Hostel was the first and the only purpose-built of the Commonwealth Hostels in the Illawarra but to the superior standard using the Port Kembla type hut. It was first used to accommodate male Displaced Persons and later was used to house British migrants and their families after the Displaced Persons were moved out to accommodate them. British migrants were also accommodated in Nissen Huts at Balgownie and Berkeley which were at first built for British migrants but with the introduction of other assisted migration schemes all nationalities would be accommodated at all three of the Migrant Hostels in the Illawarra.

LENGTH OF STAY

Hostel accommodation was only meant to be temporary with an average stay of 9 to 12 months. Some stayed less, some stayed more than the average duration which quite often was determined by factors out of the migrant's control such as a drop in employment, recession or shortage of public housing. Non-British migrants were at first excluded from eligibility for public housing nor were in a position to obtain housing loans, despite this, they tended to spend less time in a hostel than the British migrants. Some of the migrants self-determined a lengthier stay as it was cheaper to live in a hostel than to rent or pay off a mortgage.

All hostels attracted criticism ranging from the standard of accommodation, hygiene conditions, costs and mostly about the food. Many migrants complained with some louder and more militant than others.

ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMONWEALTH HOSTELS LIMITED

Commonwealth Hostels Limited was created in 1951 and in January 1952 undertook responsibility for the management of hostels which had been transferred from the Department of Immigration. Commonwealth Hostels Limited was a Commonwealth company owned by the Department of Labour and National Service. Commonwealth Hostels Limited was a non-profit company and operated hostels and guest houses throughout Australia and not just for migrants. The Company provided meals and accommodation in every State, except Tasmania, and Cocos Island. Responsibility for policy matters

such as standards of accommodation, admissions and tariff charges, remained with the Minister for Labour and National Service. At the time of the transfer there were 44 hostels Australia-wide. Commonwealth Hostels Limited operated until 1978. In 1978 the company changed its name to Commonwealth Accommodation and Catering Services which reflected its changing role in catering and accommodation in a range of government facilities for both migrants and non-migrants.

ROLES OF MIGRANT HOSTELS, CAMPS OR CENTRES

Each migrant hostel, camp or centre had a particular function such as migrant reception and training centres, dependent holding centres and migrant workers' hostels. Some were called camps which indicated they were not of a fixed structure but rather emergency accommodation for incoming migrants and were later removed or decommissioned as a migrant hostel.

Migrant Reception Centres and Migrant Training Centres

Migrant Reception Centres and Migrant Training Centres were first established for the processing upon arrival in Australia of Displaced Persons as a place to assess skills, arrange employment and provide basic training in English and Australian customs. Provision had also been made to conduct general medical examination including x-rays and issued clothing if necessary. The Department of Social Services made payments of special benefits to Displaced Persons, from which the Department of Immigration deducted a contribution towards the cost of board and lodging provided. Bonegilla in Victoria was the largest Migrant Reception and Training Centre and would continue its role to process migrants from countries other than Britain after the Displaced Persons Agreement ended and when assisted migration agreements were signed with countries from Continental Europe. By 1969 Bonegilla was the only reception centre operated by the Department of Immigration that provided in-transit accommodation for migrants.

Immigration Dependents' Holding Centres

Immigration Dependents' Holding Centres were used to accommodate the wives and dependents when there was no accommodation for families at the head of the family's allocated employment location. Efforts were made to place the head of the family in employment areas that could accommodate families. Employment locations that included hostel accommodation for families were not plentiful and it was found necessary to establish additional centres known as Dependent Holding Centres for a large proportion of family groups of Displaced Persons, including children. At first, Displaced Persons had either been single men and women or married couples without children, so the provision of family accommodation was secondary to the need to house the first groups of Displaced Persons. This meant that many non-British migrant families were often forced to live separately. British families were not forced to separate. Bathurst No 2 Hostel was ready to commence operation as a Dependent Holding Centre by October 1948. Additional establishments in NSW for accommodating dependents after passing through Reception Centres were set up at places such as Cowra, Parkes, Greta, Scheyville and Uranquinty in late 1948. With the exception of Scheyville they were all former Service establishments. These centres also were used as emergency holding centres during the 1949 Coal Strike when the lack of employment and rail transport caused a backlog in the processing of Displaced Persons.

Dependents were able to reside at the Holding Centres for longer than the initial 3 or 4 weeks while the head of the family was sent to employment and endeavoured to find accommodation for his family. Processes, mostly unsuccessful, were in place to find the head of the household employment in districts where it was likely he would be able to find housing for his family. Organisation at Holding Centres was different in that there was no processing as that had taken place at the Reception Centres

on arrival. Schools were established at the Holding Centres and staffed by teachers from the Education Department of NSW. All children between the ages of 6 and 15 had to attend school. English language evening classes for mothers and other dependents over school leaving age were also conducted. Payment for child endowment was also arranged by the Department of Social Services. At Holding Centres, Displaced Persons ceased to be a Commonwealth charge and were required to pay for board and accommodation. Heads of families were responsible for the payment of the maintenance of their dependants and accommodation costs both for himself and his family took up most of his pay making saving for a home of their own almost impossible. Families were reunited when hostel accommodation that could take dependents had been built or alternative accommodation had been found. After Displaced Persons Agreement had ended Holding Centres were still used primarily for non-British migrant families. Under the agreement to migrate to Australia British migrants were promised they would not be separated and family accommodation would be provided for them in Commonwealth Migrant Hostels.

Migrant Workers Camps and Hostels

Migrant Workers Camps and Hostels were built or acquired in areas near places of employment opportunities in cities, industrial centres, rural or large regional centres. These hostels accommodated families, unaccompanied married men or single male and female migrant workers. British migrants far outnumbered alien migrants in Hostels. The Commonwealth Government gave priority to the building of hostels for workers in the coal, steel, agricultural machinery and fertilizers industries to demonstrate the effectiveness of post-war immigration.

Generally, when referring to migrant reception, training, holding, centres, hostels or camps the generic term used, even today, is hostel. For example, the Migrant Reception and Training camp located at Bonegilla in Victoria is still called Bonegilla Hostel. Furthermore, for some camps the locals would also give them a generic name, for example, the Commonwealth Migrant Workers' Hostel at Unanderra was known by a variety of names such as the Government Hostel, Port Kembla Hostel, or the Balts Hostel.

COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT MIGRANT HOSTELS IN THE ILLAWARRA

In the Illawarra region there were no Reception or Dependent Holding Centres only Commonwealth Worker's Hostels: Unanderra, Berkeley and Balgownie (later to be called Fairy Meadow).

Unanderra, Balgownie and Berkeley Hostels

The Commonwealth Government commenced construction of its first hostel in Wollongong at Five Islands Road Unanderra in 1948 and it commenced operation in September 1949. Unanderra No 1 Hostel was erected first and consisted of purpose built timber framed huts and housed 400. Unanderra No 2 Hostel was erected with Nissen huts and this increased the Unanderra Hostel accommodation capacity to 800 people. Displaced Persons migrant workers were the first tenants at Unanderra No 1 but were moved in 1951 into the Nissen Huts installed at Unanderra Hostel Unit No 2 to allow an intake of British migrants and their families to be accommodated in the timber huts. Unanderra No 1 Hostel was the only purpose-built hostel accommodation built with timber in Illawarra. The remainder of the Commonwealth Hostels in Illawarra used Nissen and Quonset Huts.

Construction commenced at Berkeley Hostel at Flagstaff Road, Berkeley in 1950. Accommodation capacity was 800. Balgownie Hostel, later re-named Fairy Meadow Hostel, on Squires Road, Fairy Meadow also commenced construction in 1950 and provided accommodation for up to 1200 migrants. Balgownie Hostel was the largest and longest running Commonwealth Hostel in the area.

Both Berkeley and Balgownie Hostels used Nissen and Quonset Huts. Balgownie Hostel commenced operations on 19 April 1951 and Berkeley Hostel on 27 December 1951. Berkeley Hostel also experienced temporary closures.

After the post-World War 2 migration schemes had ended the remaining or upgraded hostels were used to house refugees and in response to humanitarian crises.

Table 1: Commonwealth Migrant Hostels in the Greater Wollongong Area

Hostel	No of Units	Commenced	Ceased
Unanderra No 1	1	13 September 1949	5 September 1970
Unanderra No 2	1	19 March 1951	5 March 1963
Balgownie	4	19 April 1951	14 May 1967 (2 units) 15 July 1967 (2 units)
Berkeley	2	27 December 1951	11 November 1967 (1 unit) 14 May 1967 (1 unit)

Source: House of Representatives Official Hansard, No 46, 1957, Tuesday 12 November 1957, pp2086-2087 and No 39, 1967, Wednesday 27 September 1967, pp1440.

Nissen Huts at Helensburgh

Commonwealth Cottages, using prefabricated Nissen Huts, were also erected in Helensburgh. There were about 42 erected and at first housed returned soldiers and Navy personnel. When they were moved to other more suitable housing, these huts were used to accommodate migrants.

HOSTELS IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

From 1965 improvements were made in the standard and type of hostel accommodation offered to migrants. This was, in part, owing to the inability to attract skilled British and European migrants and as well encouraged migrants to stay and not return to their homeland because of poor living standards. European migrants now also had different expectations vastly different from the Displaced Person Refugees who occupied flimsy cubicles in Nissen Huts many of which now had fallen into disrepair and did not meet State health and building regulations. Between 1967 and 1970 \$19 million was spent on improving migrant accommodation. Many hostels closed down and were replaced by blocks of family units or brand new hostel complexes were constructed. These hostel units were brick buildings with private toilet and showers, covered walkways from living quarters to communal areas and improved laundry facilities. Self-contained flats were also constructed as transitory accommodation with limited stays that averaged 19 weeks. New Brick units were constructed at Fairy Meadow Hostel as part of the hostel replacement and improvement programme. They replaced the Nissen and Quonset Huts that had been in use but had fallen into disrepair.

COMMONWEALTH COTTAGES & NSW HOUSING COMMISSION

In addition to the Commonwealth Migrant Workers' Hostels, Nissen Huts or prefabricated cottages had been erected at Dapto, Unanderra, Bulli and Helensburgh for the accommodation of migrants and Displaced Persons or migrant families. Commonwealth Cottages were provided to British migrant

miners. The NSW State Housing Commission established commission homes in housing estates. Non-British migrants were subject to discrimination in applying for publicly funded housing and had to reside in Australia for at least 3 years before competing with British migrants, who in turn were at a disadvantage in comparison to Australians.

HERITAGE OF REMAINING NISSEN AND QUONSET HUTS

In 2003, learning of the likely demise of all the huts remaining at the former Balgownie/Fairy Meadow Migrant Hostel, the Migration Heritage Project convened a public forum and lobbied for their inclusion on the NSW State Heritage Register as nothing had been done to protect this valuable historical site and the remaining buildings. They are the last example of migrant workers accommodation in situ in the Illawarra region. Through the combined efforts of the Migration Heritage Project, the Wollongong City Council, The University of Wollongong and members of the local community, the huts were placed on the NSW State Heritage Register in 2009.

Everyone refers to the remaining huts at the Balgownie/Fairy Meadow site as the "Nissen Huts" but they are listed in the NSW Heritage Register as one Nissen hut and two Quonset Huts.

Building 204 is a Nissen Hut and was the former Balgownie Hostel Laundry Exchange. It is currently in use as the University of Wollongong Alumni Bookstore.

Building 210 is a 21 x 53 foot Quonset Hut and was once used as a residence for migrant hostel staff.

Building 201 is a 100 x 41 foot Quonset Hut and is currently in use as a child-care centre. Previously Building 201 was a kitchen/dining room.

The three remaining huts had been conserved, refurbished and relocated by the University of Wollongong. The huts were also placed on berms due to the area being prone to flooding.

EVOCATION OF MEMORIES OF LIVING IN MIGRANT HOSTELS

For those who lived at Commonwealth Migrant Hostels or Centres, the huts can evoke memories of their lived experience, mostly happy ones for the children but often sad ones for their mothers.

There is a lot of mixed feelings about the huts.

LOCATION AND LISTS OF MIGRANT HOSTELS, RECEPTION AND TRAINING CENTRES FROM 1949

The difficulty in determining the names and operational dates of migrant hostels is that the information is spread over many different departments. When researching operational dates it was evident that there were conflicting dates. The information for tables provided was drawn from documents obtained through the National Archives of Australia, Official Hansards of the House of Representatives and newspaper articles. Every effort was made to ensure the accuracy of the data in the tables provided in this section.

Table 2: Reception and Training Centres as at 27 June 1949

Reception and Training Centres	
Bathurst	NSW
Bonegilla	VIC
Woodside (temporary to end of 1949)	SA
Reception Centre	
Graylands	WA
Holding Centres	
Cowra	NSW
Uranquinty	NSW
Greta No 1 & 2	NSW
Scheyville	NSW
Parkes	NSW
Rushworth	VIC
West Sale	VIC
Somers	VIC
Mildura	VIC
Benalla	VIC
Wacol	QLD
Stuart	QLD
Enoggera	QLD
Cairns	QLD
Woodside	SA
Northam	WA
Cunderin	WA

Source: National Archives of Australia, NAA: A6006, 1949/04/07

Table 3: Hostel Programme of the Department of Labour & National Service as at 12 April 1949

Hostels in Operation	
Colmslie	QLD
Gawler	SA
Smithfield	SA
Hostels Available or Under Construction	
Burwood (Broughton Hall)	NSW
Meadowbank	NSW
Port Stephens	NSW
Kingsford Smith Aerodrome (Mascot)	NSW
Cronulla	NSW
Penrith (existing hostel)	NSW
Wallgrove	NSW
Hostels to be Built at Approved Sites	
Villawood	NSW
Newcastle	NSW
Sydney	NSW
Dundas	NSW
Liverpool	NSW
Cabramatta	NSW
Sunshine	VIC
Williamstown (Race Course)	VIC
Port Melbourne	VIC
Geelong	VIC
Finsbury	SA
Guildford	WA
Hostels Sites Being Investigated	
Port Kembla	NSW
Fairfield	NSW
Ballarat	VIC
Bendigo	VIC
Moe	VIC
Clayton	VIC
Mitcham	VIC
Tottenham	VIC
Hendon	SA
Adelaide Aerodrome	SA

Source: National Archives of Australia, NAA: A6006, 1949/04/07

Table 4: 1950 Commonwealth Hostels Programme

Reception and Training Centres	
Bonegilla	VIC
Bathurst	NSW
Greta No 2	NSW

Holding Centres				
NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA
Greta No 1	Rushworth	Wacol	Northam	Woodside
Cowra	Mildura	Enoggera	Graylands	Mallala
Parkes	Somers	Stuart	Holden	
Scheyville	Benalla	Cairns	Cunderdin	
Uranquinty	Sale			

Migrant Workers' Hostels - New South Wales			
Location	Type of Resident	Progress in Construction	Estimated Date of Completion
Albury	British Families	Site selected, acquisition proceeding	June 1951
Cessnock	British Families	Site selected, acquisition proceeding	May 1951
Cooma	British Families	Site selected, acquisition proceeding	August 1951
Dundas	Diverted to British	Construction in hand	November 1950
Goulburn	Diverted to British	Construction proceeding	February 1951
Gunnedah	British Families	Site selected, acquisition proceeding	June 1951
Lithgow	Diverted to British	Site selected, acquisition proceeding	August 1951
Maitland	British Families	Construction in hand	July 1951
Newcastle	DP Workers	Fully Occupied	-
Orange	DP Workers	Construction proceeding	February 1951
Penrith	British Families	Site selected, acquisition proceeding	August 1951
Unanderra No 1	Diverted to British	Fully Available	-
Unanderra No 2	DP Workers	Construction proceeding	March 1951
Berkeley	British Families	Site selected, acquisition proceeding	July 1951
Balgownie	British Families	Site selected, acquisition proceeding	June 1951
Nelson Bay	DP Workers and Families	Construction in hand	December 1950
Shoal Bay	DP Workers and Families	Construction in hand	December 1950
Schofields	DP Workers	Fully Available	-
South Grafton	British Families	Site selected, acquisition proceeding	June 1951
St Mary's	DP Workers and Families	Partly Available	February 1951
Bankstown No 1	DP Workers	Fully Available	-
Bankstown No 2	Diverted to British	Construction in hand	December 1950
Burwood	DP Workers	Fully Available	-
Bradfield Park No 1	DP Workers	Accommodation Available but still under construction	-
Bradfield Park No 2	Diverted to British	Construction in hand	June 1951
Bunnerong	Diverted to British	Partly occupied, construction in hand	February 1951
Cabramatta	British Families	Site acquired, construction in hand	July 1951
Cronulla	DP Workers	Partly occupied, construction proceeding	December 1950
Dundas	DP Workers	Partly occupied, construction proceeding	December 1950
East Hills	British Families	Construction proceeding	June 1951
Mascot	DP Workers	Available for 200, construction in hand	-
Meadowbank	DP Workers	Fully Available	-
Matraville	DP Workers	Partly occupied, construction proceeding	December 1950
Villawood	DP Workers	Available for 1600, construction proceeding	March 1951
Wagga Wagga	British Families	Site selected, acquisition proceeding	September 1951
Wallgrove	DP Workers and Families	Available for 1200, construction proceeding	March 1951
Wingham	British Families	Site selected, construction in hand	April 1951
Young Wallsend	British Families	Site selected, acquisition proceeding	July 1951

Source: National Archives of Australia, NAA: MT105/8, 2/71/1146

Table 5: Migrant Workers Hostels – Victoria

Migrant Workers' Hostels - Victoria			
Location	Type of Resident	Progress in Construction	Estimated Date of Completion
Ararat	DP Workers	Partly Available	February 1951
Ballarat	Diverted to British	Partly Available	December 1951
Bendigo	Diverted to British	Construction in hand	June 1951
Castlemaine	British Families	Site selected, acquisition proceeding	July 1951
Dandenong	British Families	Site acquired, construction in hand	August 1951
Geelong No 1	DP Workers	Fully Available	-
Geelong No 2	Diverted to British	Construction in hand	February 1951
Geelong No 3	British Families	Site acquired, construction in hand	September 1951
Geelong No 4	British Families	Site acquired, construction in hand	September 1951
Horsham	British Families	Site acquired	June 1951
Maryborough	British Families	Site acquired, construction in hand	July 1951
Broadmeadows	DP Workers and Families	Accommodation fully available, but some construction proceeding	March 1951
Brooklyn	Diverted to British	Available for 800	August 1951
Burwood	British Families	Site acquired, construction in hand	August 1951
Coburg	DP Workers	Fully Available	-
Fishermen's Bend	DP Workers	Fully Available	-
Holmsglen	Diverted to British	Construction proceeding	January 1951
Maribyrnong	DP Workers and Families	Fully Available	-
Nunawadding No 1	British Families	Construction Proceeding	June 1951
Nunawadding No 2	Diverted to British	Construction Proceeding	June 1951
Preston	Diverted to British	Construction Proceeding	March 1951
Royal Park	DP Workers	Partly Available	March 1951
Williamstown	DP Workers	Available for 1900, construction proceeding	March 1951
Shepparton	British Families	Site selected, acquisition proceeding	July 1951
Stawell	British Families	Site selected, acquisition proceeding	June 1951
Traralgon	British Families	Site to be selected	September 1951
Wangaratta	DP Workers	Partly available, construction proceeding	February 1951
Yallourn No 1	Diverted to British	Construction proceeding	February 1951
Yallourn No 2	Diverted to British	Available for 400, construction in hand	January 1951

Table 6: Migrant Workers Hostels – South Australia, Queensland, Western Australia, Tasmania

Migrant Workers' Hostels - South Australia			
Location	Type of Resident	Progress in Construction	Estimated Date of Completion
Enfield	British Families	Construction proceeding	June 1951
Finsbury 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5	Diverted to British	Available for 2000, construction in hand	March 1951
Glenelg North No 1	DP Workers	Available for 480, construction proceeding	-
Glenelg North No 2	DP Workers	Construction proceeding	February 1951
Rosewater	Diverted to British	Fully Available, construction proceeding	March 1951
Gawler	DP Workers	Fully Available	December 1950
Mannum	British Families	Site selected, acquisition proceeding	July 1951
Mt Barker	British Families	Site selected, acquisition proceeding	July 1951
Smithfield	DP Workers	Reconstruction proceeding	January 1951
Migrant Workers' Hostels - Queensland			
Location	Type of Resident	Progress in Construction	Estimated Date of Completion
Banyo	British Families	Site being selected	October 1951
Rocklea	British Families	Site selected, construction in hand	September 1951
Virginia	British Families	Site acquired, construction in hand	August 1951
Colmslie	DP Workers	Fully Available	-
Redbank	British Families	Site selected, construction in hand	September 1951
Toowoomba	British Families	Site selected, acquisition proceeding	August 1951
Migrant Workers' Hostels - Western Australia			
Location	Type of Resident	Progress in Construction	Estimated Date of Completion
Albany	British Families	Site selected, acquisition proceeding	August 1951
Collie	British Families	Site selected, acquisition proceeding	August 1951
Dunreath	DP Workers	Fully Available	-
Graylands	British Families	Site acquired, construction proceeding	-
Migrant Workers' Hostels - Tasmania			
Location	Type of Resident	Progress in Construction	Estimated Date of Completion
Burnie	British Families	Site selected	August 1951
Devonport	British Families	Site selected	August 1951
Hobart	DP Workers and Families	Fully Available	-
Launceston	Diverted to British	Construction in hand	March 1951

Table 7: Commonwealth Migrant Hostels in NSW 1949 - 1971

NSW	Commenced Operation	Additional Units or New Hostels Under Construction	Closed Down	Construction Suspended	Construction Cancelled	Disposed or Sold	Replaced on Existing Sites	Constructed on New Sites
Balgownie 1, 2, 3 & 4	19 April 1951		14 May 1967 (two units)					
Balgownie 1, 2, 3 & 4	19 April 1951	Between 19 Dec 1949 - 12 November 1957	15 July 1967 (two units)					
Bankstown No 1	Between 1 July 1945 - 19 Dec 1949		2 May 1953			1953 Returned to RAAF		
Bankstown No 2	8 December 1950		2 May 1953			1953 Returned to RAAF		
Berkeley No 1	27 December 1951		11 November 1967					
Berkeley No 2	Between 1951 and 12 Nov 1957	Between 19 Dec 1949 - 12 November 1957	14 May 1967	19 Dec 1949 - 12 Nov 1957 (one unit)				
Bradfield Park	Between 1 July 1945 - 19 Dec 1949		21 August 1971					
Broughton (Burwood)	Between 1 July 1945 - 19 Dec 1949							
Bunnerong	1 April 1950		24 June 1970					
Cabramatta	10 April 1952						13 August 1971	
Cronulla	Between 1 July 1945 - 19 Dec 1949		14 January 1967					
Dundas	Between 1 July 1945 - 19 Dec 1949		21 August 1971					
East Hills Unit 1 & 2	1 May 1951	Between 19 Dec 1949 - 12 November 1957		19 Dec 1949 - 12 Nov 1957 (half a unit)		1953 Disposal incomplete buildings	1 July 1968	
East Hills Unit 3	Cancelled				19 Dec 1949 - 12 Nov 1957			
Goulburn	23 March 1951		1 May 1954			1953 Notified available for Disposal		
Heathcote Road	1 May 1951	Between 19 Dec 1949 - 12 November 1957	19 December 1970	19 Dec 1949 - 12 Nov 1957 (one unit)		1953 Disposal incomplete buildings		
Kyeemagh (Mascot)	Between 1 July 1945 - 19 Dec 1949		1 November 1952			1953 Sydney Airport Construction		
Matraville	7 June 1950		3 October 1970					
Mayfield	22 December 1949							
Meadowbank	Between 1 July 1945 - 19 Dec 1949		8 November 1952			1953 Education Dept/balance sold		
Nelson Bay	Between 1 July 1945 - 19 Dec 1949		27 August 1955			1953 Disposal		
North Head	15 October 1951		4 October 1952			1953 Returned to Army		
Orange	15 February 1951		17 May 1958					
Schofields	Between 1 July 1945 - 19 Dec 1949					1951 Returned to RAAF		
South Coogee	6 January 1970							6 January 1970
St Mary's	Between 1 July 1945 - 19 Dec 1949		11 February 1954			1955 Returned to Dept of Defence		
Unanderra No 1	late 1948/early 1949		5 September 1970					
Unanderra No 2	19 March 1951		5 March 1963					
Villawood	29 December 1949		14 May 1967 (one unit)				19 August 1958	
Wallgrove	Between 1 July 1945 - 19 Dec 1949		25 March 1962					

Notes: Modern blocks of family accommodation were built on a number of existing hostel sites. Plans and specifications were being drawn up for a new hostel at Randwick (NSW) tenders called in 1968. Programmes of modern blocks of family accommodation on exiting hostel sites continued during 1 July 1967 to 30 June 1968 at Villawood and East Hills in NSW. Source: House of Representatives Official Hansard, No 46, 1957, Tuesday 12 November 1957, pp2086-2087 and No 39, 1967, Wednesday 27 September 1967, pp1440.

Table 8: Commonwealth Hostels in Victoria 1949 - 1971

VIC	Commenced Operation	Additional Units or New Hostels Under Construction	Closed Down	Construction Suspended	Construction Cancelled	Disposed or Sold	Replaced on Existing Sites	Constructed on New Sites
Altona								
Arat	17 July 1950		18 October 1952			1957 Sold by Dept of Interior		
Ballarat	16 November 1950		24 October 1953			1957 Transferred to PMG		
Bendigo	Between 19 Dec 1949 - 12 November 1957					1954 Transferred to State Health Dept		
Broadmeadows	Between 1 July 1945 - 19 December 1949		21 August 1971					
Brooklyn	29 December 1949		29 August 1967 (one unit)					
Brooklyn	29 December 1949		26 August 1970					
Coburg	4 March 1950		15 November 1952			1954 Transferred to State Education Dept		
Fisermen's Bend	Between 1 July 1945 - 19 December 1949							
Geelong (Belmont)	17 October 1950		28 September 1956					
Geelong (Norlane)	14 July 1950							
Holmesglen	5 January 1951		23 December 1968					
Maribyrnong	Between 1 July 1945 - 19 December 1949						18 December 1968	
Nunawading	20 September 1952						24 April 1968	1 July 1967
Preston	30 July 1951		10 July 1971					
Royal Park	Between 1 July 1945 - 19 December 1949		15 November 1952			1953 Returned to Army		
Springvale	29 October 1970							
Wangaratta	3 November 1950		20 December 1952			1953 Sold by Dept of Interior		
Williamstown	Between 1 July 1945 - 19 December 1949							
Yallourn	12 August 1950		10 January 1953			1953 Sold by Dept of Interior		

Notes: Modern blocks of family accommodation were built on a number of existing hostel sites. Plans and Specification were being drawn up for new hostels at Springvale tenders called in 1968. Programmes of modern blocks of family accommodation on exiting hostel sites continued during 1 July 1967 to 30 June 1968 at Altona and Maribyrnong. Source: House of Representatives Official Hansard, No 46, 1957, Tuesday 12 November 1957, pp2086-2087 and No 39, 1967, Wednesday 27 September 1967, pp1440.

Table 9: Commonwealth Migrant Hostels Western Australia, Queensland, Tasmania, South Australia and Australian Capital Territory 1959 -1971

WESTERN AUSTRALIA	Commenced Operation	Additional Units or New Hostels Under Construction	Closed Down	Construction Suspended	Construction Cancelled	Disposed or Sold	Replaced on Existing Sites	Constructed on New Sites
Dunreath	between 1 July 1945 - 19 December 1949		25 August 1956			1951 Dept of Interior notified for disposal		
Graylands	9 May 1952						15 November 1967	14 March 1967
Point Walter			21 August 1971					

QUEENSLAND	Commenced Operation	Additional Units or New Hostels Under Construction	Closed Down	Construction Suspended	Construction Cancelled	Disposed or Sold	Replaced on Existing Sites	Constructed on New Sites
Comslie	between 1 July 1945 - 19 December 1949		14 January 1967					
Wacol		31 October 1966					22 July 1968	

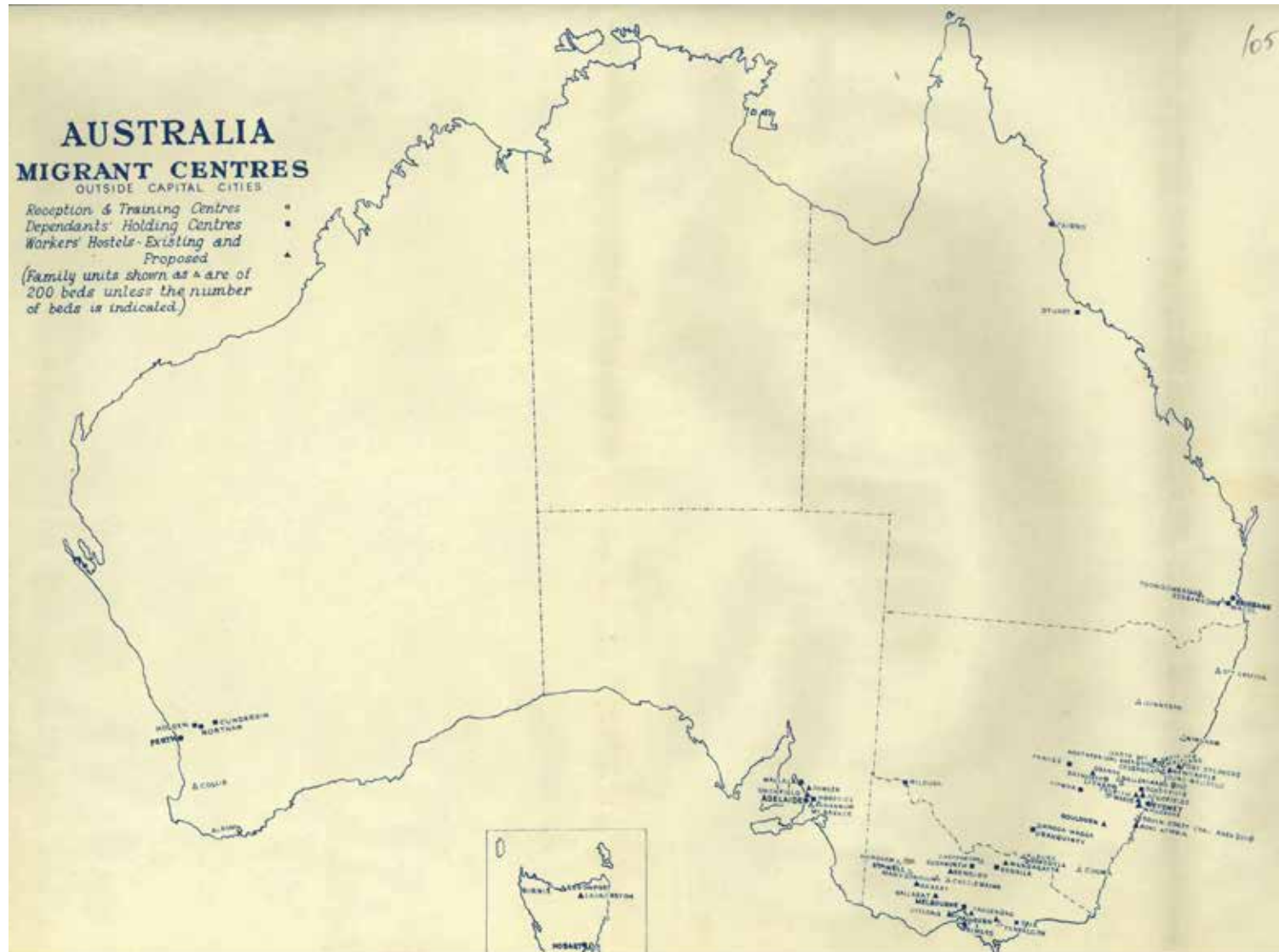
TASMANIA	Commenced Operation	Additional Units or New Hostels Under Construction	Closed Down	Construction Suspended	Construction Cancelled	Disposed or Sold	Replaced on Existing Sites	Constructed on New Sites
Brighton	between 1 July 1945 - 19 December 1949		9 November 1951			1951 Returned to Army		
Launceston		between 1 July 1945 - 19 December				1953 Transferred to State Housing		

SOUTH AUSTRALIA	Commenced Operation	Additional Units or New Hostels Under Construction	Closed Down	Construction Suspended	Construction Cancelled	Disposed or Sold	Replaced on Existing Sites	Constructed on New Sites
Finsbury (Pennington)	20 December 1949		22 September 1966 (one unit)					
Finsbury (Pennington)	20 December 1949		28 May 1967 (one unit)					
Gawler	between 1 July 1945 - 19 December 1949		9 December 1956					
Gepp's Cross	7 July 1951		31 March 1953			1953 Transferred to State Housing Trust		
Glenelg	20 December 1949							
Rosewater	20 August 1950		28 February 1953			1953 Returned to Australian Wool Bureau		
Smithfield	between 1 July 1945 - 19 December 1949		31 July 1971					

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY	Commenced Operation	Additional Units or New Hostels Under Construction	Closed Down	Construction Suspended	Construction Cancelled	Disposed or Sold	Replaced on Existing Sites	Constructed on New Sites
Ainslie	11 February 1955							

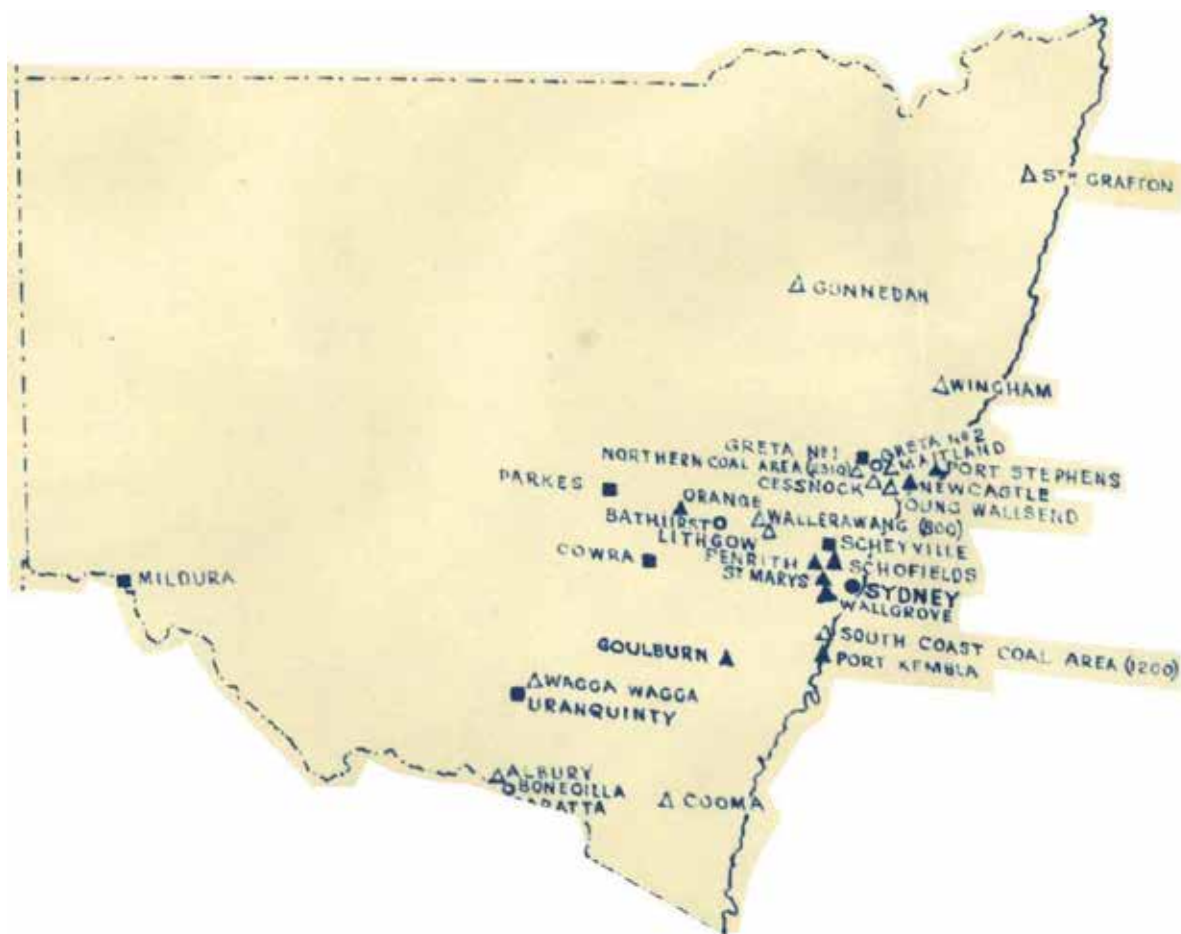
Notes: Modern blocks of family accommodation were built on a number of existing hostel sites. Programmes of modern blocks of family accommodation on exiting hostel sites continued during 1 July 1967 to 30 June 1968 at Wacol in Queensland, Graylands in Western Australia.

Source: House of Representatives Official Hansard, No 46, 1957, Tuesday 12 November 1957, pp2086-2087 and No 39, 1967, Wednesday 27 September 1967, pp1440



Migrant Centres Reception and Training Centres, Dependent Holding Centres, Migrant Workers' Hostels Existing and Proposed, 1950

Source: National Archives of Australia, NAA: MT105/8, 2/71/1146



Migrant Centres Reception and Training Centres, Dependent Holding Centres, Migrant Workers' Hostels Existing and Proposed, NSW, 1950
Source: National Archives of Australia, NAA: MT105/8, 2/71/1146

NON-GOVERNMENT HOSTELS IN THE ILLAWARRA REGION

The other types of hostels were non-government and were usually men-only hostels run by employers which helped alleviate the demand on hostel accommodation from the Commonwealth Government. They were often known as the single-men's hostels but they also provided accommodation for married men with their wives and children staying in holding centres elsewhere in NSW (usually non-British families).

Employer hostels in the Greater Wollongong area were, but not limited to:

- Australian Iron & Steel who built Karingal Hostel in Cringila and acquired Steelhaven Hostel in Port Kembla.
- Metropolitan Water & Sewerage Board who built a camp that was known locally as the "Balts" camp on Old Springhill Road, Coniston.
- Open Hearth Hotel in King Street, Warrawong which was built in 1936 as a boarding house for AIS Workers.
- Lysaghts Hostel at Hill 60 in Port Kembla for its employees acquired in about 1946. Originally a former Army Camp that was purchased by Lysaghts.
- Raneleigh in Wentworth Road, Port Kembla.
- Newbold Bricks Hostel in Wollongong Road, Port Kembla.
- Others in Port Kembla for employees of AIS.
- EPT Workers Camp, Five Islands Road, Unanderra.
- Transfield Workers Camp, Springhill Road, Coniston.

Privately run boarding houses include, but were not limited to:

- Breadalbane, Kembla Street Wollongong.
- Sorrento, Smith Street Wollongong
- Inglebah
- Elbon House, Flagstaff Road Berkeley.
- Keswick, Austinmer
- Current site of the MCCI office in Corrimal Street Wollongong

Many migrants chose other types of accommodation such as living with family and friends, living in boarding houses, houses divided in to flats or shared with other families.