

My Story ~ Foreword ~ Chinese in Australia, 1980 -



There are many features in this book that offer a distinctive contribution to our knowledge and understanding of Chinese in Australia from the 1980s, a time coinciding with the opening up of China to increased business and personal travel

experiences. Historically there have been different waves of Chinese, from the early period of indentured labour and gold-seekers, to the contemporary period where there is a more varied mix of commerce, small businesses, investment, educational, and travel.

This book focuses on the period from 1980. There are many pivotal and distinctive features in this study, which focuses on the personal stories of selected Chinese people, predominantly in Western Australia.

The interviews of men and women reveal poignant details of their personal feelings and experiences. They have varied backgrounds, some entered on 457 visas, most have, or sought education, professional employment or business opportunities.

Importantly, many reveal a glimpse into their personal life in China, or other countries, prior to arriving in Australia. These details provide the backdrop to exposed mixed feelings of cultural loss in Australia. We learn about the difficulties of language, of unfamiliarity of employment and the workplace, not only on their arrival, but as a continuing theme.

Cultural differences and the difficulty of adaptation are revealed sensitively. There is courage in the openness to talk with feeling, and often humour, of Australian habits, and although they appreciate the orderliness and opportunities in Australia, most expressed a preference to continue Chinese eating, family and cultural habits. Central to this sensitive discussion is the discussion of 'home' of loyalty; of sense of place; of country. The strength of this book is the honesty and sensitive approach to these difficult questions of identity, culture, family and

'home'.

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