

**Australian Parliament
Joint Standing Committee on Migration
Submission No. 483**

I am . I came to Australia on the assisted migration scheme as a "ten pound pom" on the *Australis* in 1972. I was phoned by the Australian High Commission in London on a Sunday afternoon and told there was a place on a boat the next day. Did I want it? On the boat out here one of the migration officials told us that we might be called a "Pommy bastard" and that it was to be taken as a term of endearment. I was and I do.

The ship came via Cape Town as the Suez Canal was blocked at the time and I got off the ship in Fremantle. I was met by an Australian friend whom I had first met in India some years before and he invited me to stay with his family for a week or two. The first weekend the family had Jack Davis, the Aboriginal playwright to dinner and afterwards we sat around a wood fire and listened to Jack's stories. I thought this was a commonplace event in Australia, but only some years later did I meet one other family who had Aboriginal guests to meals - and I married their daughter.

Jack and I became good friends, I was teaching maths at the University of West Australia and often had lunch with Jack in King's Park. One time he said as he put his arm around my shoulder, "you understand our fourth dimension" One of Jack's poems had that title. I was very moved and honoured by this. Jack's stories of being brought up on a cattle station encouraged my thinking to see more of Australia and I got a job on a wheat and sheep station some distance north of Perth. I was paid one tenth of what I was getting teaching at university and I know which was the harder work! Later I worked on a sheep station out of Broken Hill which was ten times the size and they had the same number of sheep.

I am immensely grateful for these early experiences which gave me a love of this wide brown land.

I married in 1974 and later we went to Fiji where the government had asked me to set up physics teaching in a Fijian school. I did this for almost six years. I introduced computers to schools there and amongst other things taught Sitiveni Rabuka, the man who led the 1987 coups, how to use a computer. Whilst in Fiji we adopted two girls of mixed ancestry. Both were 6 years old when we adopted them. They have brought much richness and happiness to our lives. We brought them to South Australia in 1988 as I did not want to work for a military government in Fiji after the coups. The second day in South Australia I went to pick up the girls from the local Primary school. As I was waiting a child said loudly "What's that bloody abo doing here?" I said "that is my daughter" - something he could not comprehend. Julie was often mistaken for being Aboriginal - {and when signing on at Centrelink after school years - she was advised to tick the box where it said of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander decent" as "You will get more money if you do". She was angered by this racism and did not go along with the suggestion.} My wife and I went to talk to the school, but our daughters eventually pleaded with us not to do it any more as it made the racism worse. It continued through High School and our younger daughter ran away from the school when in year 10 and we took our elder daughter out of school in year 11 and home schooled her because of the racism. Both girls said that "not a day went by in High School when some racist comment was made". They refused to drink much water as they did not want to go into the toilets where the abuse was worst.

Both got over it, but we pondered whether we had done the best things for the girls in bringing them here. We also became aware of the difficulty for Aboriginal children in schools here.

Our elder girl married a Dutch New Zealander, our younger girl, a Filipino, - their fifteen year old daughter was pushed to the ground and kicked by her peers recently on her school oval and called "a Muslim". I rang the school and related our experiences with our children. I received a sympathetic hearing from a councillor who did not seem surprised. I suggested that this should be heavily stamped on with all the anti-Muslim sentiment around these days. {Our granddaughter is of olive complexion and has a Christian upbringing}. I don't know what the school is doing about it.

I still am glad I came and grateful for all the experiences, but thought your committee might find my experiences useful!

17th July 2011