

Australian Croatsians at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century: A Changing Profile of the Community and its Public Representation

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Abstract

In this article the author presents a sociological study of the Croatian community in Australia, focusing especially on patterns of settlement and the diversity of factors which underpin or influence those patterns. Also taken into account are the differing views, perceptions and values of Croatian settlers (and their descendents) in relation to different 'waves of arrival' in Australia.

1. Introduction: Croatsians in Australia, some immigration facts and research issues

Croatsians are a large Australian migrant community and their presence can be traced back to the 1850s.¹ The first Croatsians to set foot on Australian soil were Dalmatian sailors in the mid-nineteenth century, and the most recent Croatian immigrants are highly skilled professionals. In the meantime, Australia has seen a number of smaller and larger 'waves' of Croatsians arriving: vigneron, gold-diggers, market gardeners, fishermen, wood cutters and labourers in the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries were followed by a wave of refugees from communism after the Second World War. There was another wave of 'economic migrants' in the 1960s and a 'brain-drain' from Croatia since the 1980s.

The early post-war arrivals in the late 1940s and early 1950s were people from all walks of life and were part of the wave of European 'displaced persons'. This was the first large intake of non-Britons to Australia, when 170,000 refugees arrived from eastern and central Europe, including about 23,000 people from the then Yugoslavia.² The largest wave of Croatsians was the one in the late 1960s and early 1970s, mainly from the rural

areas of Dalmatia and its rocky hinterland. They were part of the then predominant intake of the "multicultural factory proletariat"³ to industrialised Australian cities, looking for a better life for themselves and their children. This group is still predominant in numbers, as recent intakes of Croatians never reached the heights comparable to the late 1960s and early 1970s. A period of low immigration followed from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s. In the late 1980s and early 1990s another large group arrived, mainly consisting of professionally skilled people from Croatian cities as part of a brain drain triggered by the terminal crisis of communism and, later on, by the war in the 1990s. Some Croatians arrived on humanitarian visas in the 1990s, but contrary to a common perception, they did not amount to a large number of people.⁴ Australia-wide, all but 7.8% of Croatian-born persons live in major cities.⁵

Until recently, in most Australian and international statistics and studies Croatian migrants were subsumed under the category of 'Yugoslavs'. Croatia was a part of Yugoslavia, 'the land of South Slavs', from 1918 to 1991.⁶ Previously, they were officially counted as Italians or Austrians, because Croatia was part of larger political entities and empires, and unofficially referred to as 'Slavs'. From 1945 to 1991 Croatia was one of the six socialist republics that constituted the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Croatians were enumerated separately for the first time in the 1996 Australian Census. However, many Croatians remain hidden among 'Yugoslavs' in the census category 'former Yugoslavia nfd' (not further defined).⁷ If we add these, as well as the Australia-born children of Croatian families, we come to a number that is considerably larger than the officially counted 47,061 Croatian-born in the 1996 Census. The approximations of the number of people of Croatian background in Australia by Croatian-Australian scholars range from 200,000 to 300,000 people.⁸

Nowadays, researchers still have no other choice than to use data where Croatians are included into the category of 'Yugoslavs', and resort to rough estimates in order to determine the number of Croatians among them. The proportion of Croatians can be calculated by using the Census categories of 'language spoken at home' and 'religion'. There is consensus among researchers that Croatians were the 'Yugoslav' ethnic

group which emigrated from Yugoslavia in the largest numbers.⁹ In the post-WWII period Croats made up about 22% of the Yugoslav population, but contributed to more than a half of Yugoslav emigrants.¹⁰

Croatia, and particularly its coastal regions, was a typical emigration area throughout the twentieth century. The 'push factors' were multiple and complex. Croatia has been peripheral in European terms, but economic hardship in itself is not enough to explain the large numbers of Croats emigrating from Yugoslavia. Among the Yugoslav republics, Croatia was second only to Slovenia in terms of economic development. At the same time, Yugoslavia's rate of economic growth was one of the highest in the world during the 1950s and 1960s. It seems that at least as important as economic or political motives is the fact that emigration from Croatia has been an established social pattern with a long tradition. People usually migrated in 'chain migration' or 'cluster migration' patterns, whereby previous emigrants helped their relatives and friends to follow their path.

While economic reasons for emigration are rather straightforward, political reasons are somewhat more controversial. Most Croatian authors argue that Croatia was politically oppressed within communist Yugoslavia, and even more so within the previous inter-war kingdom of Yugoslavia.¹¹ Politically and economically, Yugoslavia was often seen as a mother for Serbs and a stepmother for Croats. The central cohesive 'grand narrative' of Yugoslav communism was its anti-fascist struggle during the Second World War as well as its 'proletarian democracy', which was supposed to transcend centuries-old 'ethnic divisions' and create a Yugoslav 'melting pot'. Many Croats felt they were disadvantaged and excluded in the country with such allegiances because Croatia's war regime was an ally to European fascist powers from 1941 to 1945. Owing to this unfortunate historical fact, Yugoslav communists often associated the Croatian national name with fascism (with 'Ustasis' as 'Croatian fascists').

Many Croats felt unjustly penalised for the past and dissatisfied with the status of Croatia within SFR Yugoslavia. Some authors argued that the political dissatisfaction was one of the important boosters for Croatian emigration. Croatian

national discontent culminated in 1971 during the 'Croatian Spring'. This political movement was suppressed at home, but Croatians abroad were able to freely express their political convictions and feelings. Because of this, the whole Croatian 'diaspora' was often denounced as the nationalist 'Ustashi emigration' by Yugoslav communist authorities. Croatians in Australia had an especially bad image in this respect.¹² They were usually referred to as 'fascists' and 'clerical fascists' who worked tirelessly to undermine 'socialist Yugoslavia'.¹³ Many Croatian migrants in Australia claim that the image of Croatian 'bombers and terrorists' was largely created by Yugoslav communist propaganda. According to personal accounts of some of my interviewees, they were persecuted by the Yugoslav secret police (UDBA), even if they did no more than call themselves 'Croats'.¹⁴ There was a nationalist stream in the community which did more than this, and ostentatiously refused to march under the Yugoslav flag on various multicultural occasions and celebrations. Their expressions of Croatian patriotism and nationalism occasionally caused public agitation and, (mis)interpreted by Yugoslav diplomacy, caused a considerable amount of bad press to the Croatian community in Australia during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.

The 'Croatian community' in Australia, with its ethnic clubs, cultural and sporting associations, churches, newspapers, symbols and paraphernalia, became more visible during the inter-war period. At that time, the community was known as 'Yugoslav' and had a leftist workers' orientation.¹⁵ In contrast, the early post-war arrivals from Croatia were mainly anti-Yugoslav refugees from communism, who wanted an independent Croatia. They created Croatian clubs in political opposition to Yugoslav and Dalmatian clubs where older Croatian migrants gathered. The largest of such clubs were established in Melbourne, Sydney and Perth.¹⁶ This development involved a considerable struggle for the Croatian name and identity. Many Croatians, who had a separate national consciousness, even when they called themselves 'Yugoslavs' for reasons of political correctness, joined Croatian clubs.

As a result of lobbying from the Croatian community in Victoria, Croatians were reluctantly recognised as a separate

ethnic group by Australian authorities in the late 1970s. In 1974 the Victorian government started printing publications for migrants in Croatian, thus acknowledging the existence of a separate Croatian community. In Western Australia, a Croatian radio program, separate from the Yugoslav program, started in 1978.¹⁷ The Victorian Ministry of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs explicitly acknowledged Croatsians as a separate ethnic group in 1980.¹⁸ The argument coming from community leaders was that the majority of Croatsians in Australia considered the name 'Yugoslav' inappropriate. However, there were political disagreements about this among Australian Croatsians who were divided into 'Yugoslav loyalists' and 'Croatian nationalists'. These two main political factions have continued to exist after Croatia seceded from Yugoslavia and when SFR Yugoslavia ceased to exist in 1991.¹⁹ An attempt to establish a separate Croatian Embassy in Canberra in 1978 was blocked by Australian authorities,²⁰ and had to wait until an independent and internationally recognised Croatia was established.

Australia is a country of immigration and, unlike Western European countries where many Croatsians migrated as 'temporary workers', encouraged permanent settlement and naturalisation.²¹ These policies, and the enormous distance between Australia and Croatia, contributed to the fact that many Croatsians who initially intended to stay temporarily, especially 'economic migrants' from the 1960s, stayed permanently. Australia's policies of immigration and settlement, changing from assimilation to integration and, finally, to multiculturalism during the post-war decades, influenced the settlement of the subsequent waves of Croatian migrants.

The shift in the type of immigration from Croatia that happened in the 1980s, when professionally educated people replaced previous working-class immigrants, is due to several factors, the main of which is the shift to the 'human capital' approach in the Australian immigration policy. The Australian economy experienced considerable restructuring during the 1970s and 1980s: the service sector expanded and the manufacturing sector shrank, which meant that the need for low-skilled labour diminished. Australian immigration authorities have favoured the skilled intake since.

2. The three post-WWII waves of Croatians in Australia

Croatians who nowadays live in Australia arrived in three large post-WWII 'waves': the first in the immediate post-war decades, mainly consisting of political refugees, the second in the 1960s and early 1970s, predominately as 'economic migrants' who took working-class jobs, and the third in the 1980s and 1990s, as a 'brain-drain' from Croatia. A small number of refugees from Croatia can be added to the third wave.

As mentioned, the early post-war wave of Croatians arrived in Australia as part of the Displaced Persons 1947-1953 immigration program.²² These were mainly young men, but there were also families and widows with children among them, arriving on ships which they boarded in Italian ports. Many were political refugees escaping from communism after the fall of the Independent State of Croatia in 1945. Some of them, who were soldiers in the Croatian army and fought against the victorious Tito's Partisans, had a well-founded fear of persecution. Others fled from the crudeness and oppression of early communism. One way or another, most of them were bearers of the anti-communist and Croatian nationalist ideas, and in the 1950s they started establishing Croatian clubs in opposition to already established Yugoslav ones, where most Croatians who arrived before the Second World War gathered (the majority of whom considered themselves either Yugoslav or Dalmatian). Croatian nationalists were welcomed to Australia during the Menzies' era,²³ in the late 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s, at the peak of the Cold War, as part of the anti-communist camp. Later, however, good political relations between Australia and Yugoslavia, as well as a large immigrant intake from Yugoslavia, especially after 1965, made it politically inopportune for Australian authorities to support the Croatian quest for a separate identity and its public expression. The Whitlam Labor government, which came to power in 1972, was more approving of Yugoslav socialism than the previous Liberal governments, and was consequently less tolerant of expressions of Croatian anti-communist separatism. The group of early post-war migrants, who first created the idea of a Croatian diaspora supportive of the homeland's interests, is nowadays declining in numbers, as most of them are in their sev-

enties or older. Their ideas, however, live on in a different form: after Croatia gained independence in 1991, their ideas shifted from the realm of political subversion and controversy into the ideological mainstream.

The second post-war wave reached its peak in 1970, when Australia set an immigration agreement with Yugoslavia in order to recruit unskilled and semi-skilled workers, usually from rural areas, to work in the Australian manufacturing industry. This group of Croatian migrants, nowadays reaching retirement age, is still predominant in numbers.

Nostalgia for their native communities seems to be an important support for the sense of identity and belonging in this group of migrants. Nostalgia is a shared feeling and it represents the emotional cement of the ethnic community.²⁴ Stories and myths about the homeland, often viewed through rose-tinted glasses, imbue the activities and events in Croatian and Dalmatian clubs. The life of ethnic communities substitutes for the 'lost' native communities, as well as for the mythical homeland itself.²⁵ For most people this substitute community 'cushioned' the transition to Australian suburban life when they first arrived.

In order to beat suburban isolation, many Croats from this second migrant wave chose to live close to each other. For example, some of my interviewees described the southern Perth suburb of Spearwood as 'little Dalmatia'. Most Croats who migrated to Australia during the 1960s did not move much: some stayed on the same property for thirty or forty years. This residential stability, atypical in Australia, was initially a consequence of their modest means, and although their financial circumstances improved with time, they did not follow the usual Australian pattern of moving to 'better suburbs'. Croats from this cohort felt safer in the well-known surroundings where their extended families and other Croats also lived. Most of my interviewees have stayed in the same suburbs for decades. For most of them, comfortable houses and spacious gardens seemed to have compensated for the relative loneliness of suburbia.

Most Croats who settled in large Australian cities during the 1960s live in outer metropolitan suburbs close to industrial areas. In Western Australia, for example, at the time

a large number of Croatians settled in Spearwood, Midland and Osborne Park, where there were affordable areas to settle, and most people bought spacious blocks of land there. Some established impressive market gardens.²⁶ Nowadays, new spacious homes, often built on the same block of land, have replaced the old houses. The architectural style of these houses often features Mediterranean balustrades, classical pillars and statuettes as symbols of the family's material well-being beyond the fulfilment of basic needs. Having in many cases escaped from a poverty-stricken youth, working-class Croatians from this migrant cohort often measure their status and success against their material possessions, among which the family home is of central importance. They took pride in being able to establish themselves materially with their own home, car and garden, and to provide adequately for their children.

The language barrier has been part of life for many working-class Croatians who migrated to Australia in the 1960s. Many people learned English from other Croatians at work. Learning informally and orally at the workplace usually resulted in speaking 'broken English'. People 'picked up' and remembered words and phrases essential for survival in the English-speaking environment, but many did not feel that they had an opportunity to learn English in a formal and systematic way. Further education, as a way of relinquishing hard manual labour, was thus inaccessible because of the language barrier. Blue-collar jobs were readily available in the 1960s, and several of my interviewees explained that, in those circumstances, attending language courses and pursuing further education appeared to be a 'waste of time' and 'unmanly behaviour'. Men, who usually migrated on their own and later brought their wives and families, were expected to work and earn money rather than go to school. Limited formal education in their native language was an additional difficulty in acquiring English proficiency and literacy.²⁷ Low-skilled work in brickyards, abattoirs, factories and building sites did not require much language sophistication. Upon arrival in Australia, men from this wave sought to earn enough to bring over their families, buy a home and reach a degree of financial security. Many helped their aged parents and extended families in Croatia. Migrants

from this wave were well aware of the limitations placed on them by the fact that they were low-skilled immigrants from a non-English-speaking background: most were doomed to stay put in the jobs they took on arrival.²⁸ Using data from the 1981 Census data, Jupp classified 'Yugoslavs' in Australia as a typical 'working class' migrant group, with only about 10% of people in professional, administrative and clerical occupations, while other researchers reported an even lower proportion of Yugoslavs in "professional, technical and related services" (3.1% for men and 4.2% for women).²⁹

The third, most recent post-war wave of Croatians mainly consists of young professionals who completed their education in Croatia during the 1970s and 1980s. This urban and 'Westernised' generation expected their professional skills to be a foundation of a good life, but their expectations were frustrated by prolonged economic and political crises in Croatia, then part of communist Yugoslavia. As they finished their studies and were ready to enter the labour market, social circumstances in their homeland were rapidly deteriorating. During the 1980s, high unemployment and inflation were coupled by the crisis of communism and the multinational federal Yugoslavia riddled by nationalist tensions. Many young professionals chose to emigrate. Croatian 'yuppies' scattered all over the world during the 1980s and 1990s, but mostly to overseas countries: Australia, Canada and the USA. The social profile of those who settled in Australia was markedly different from the previous waves of Croatian immigrants. Most people from the recent wave came as either 'independent' (skill-based) or 'concessional family' migrants (where relatives in Australia supported their application, but they still had to pass the 'points test' for a visa). Although it can be said that motives for migration are always complex and inevitably personal, my interviewees repeatedly stated the following motives: a better standard of living as a way to improve the quality of life, and chances of personal and professional fulfilment and growth. A more meritocratic and stimulating professional environment featured highly among the motives.

As my informants told me, even if they were reasonably proficient in English before migration and could score points for an Australian visa, 'living in English' and communicating with English native speakers was a somewhat unpleasant surprise: it turned

out that their English required much 'polishing' and adjustment to local circumstances. A specific Australian accent, which they rarely encountered before migration, was another hurdle they had to negotiate. Professionals need a sophisticated level of English in order to do their jobs, and for some this meant investing considerable additional efforts into learning and perfecting the language. Croatian professionals had to transfer and 'translate' their education and skills into English, as well as into the new 'Anglo' cultural context. This was a complex, and in some cases, long process, but at the same time it was the crucial part of their successful settlement in Australia. Most people from this migrant wave successfully transcended this practical level of difficulty and established themselves in Australia. An important point is that most of them spoke at least some English before migration.

Due to their language proficiency, professionals did not need a protective ethnic bubble, as was the case with the previous working-class wave. Soon upon arrival, most professionals ventured into the social space of mainstream Anglophone Australia. Since they worked in the English-speaking environment, but also socialised with English speakers, they had many opportunities to learn the subtleties of the language. For most Croatian professionals, being linguistically indistinguishable from the Australian-born would have been a necessary condition to be able to say that they 'felt Australian'. However, this condition was hardly ever fulfilled: they were recognised as migrants by their foreign accent which hampered the development of their 'Australian identity'. Many of my respondents said they felt that they had no right to claim Australian identity as long as they were recognised as migrants. This was sometimes an obstacle to the development of a genuine feeling of belonging to the Australian community.

For migrants who arrived in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s, their profession was a locus of their social status, affiliation and identification. Getting an appropriate job seemed to be a critical point in their Australian life. Once this hurdle was overcome, settling down in other domains was less problematic. What usually followed was buying a home, creating new social networks, acculturating into new life rhythms and customs and higher levels of consumption, and

reinventing themselves in the sphere of leisure. Professional affirmation was the acid test of their 'migration success'.

Unlike in the previous migrant cohort, the 'ethnic community' had little importance in the settlement process of professional migrants. In this group, the minority identification was entirely absent. Minority status is usually a sign of a disadvantaged social position; also, the minority is normally defined by the collective identity of its members.³⁰ Due to the dominance of their professional over ethnic identification, the middle-class Croatians I interviewed perceived and defined themselves as independent individuals. Ethnicity – 'Croatian-ness' – did not constitute the *central* principle of their identity. In addition, they wanted to dissociate from the nationalist image of the previous migrant cohort. Their social networks in Australia could hardly fit into the idea of an 'ethnic community'; they also included people of mixed ancestry and many non-Croatians. Status seemed to be the main qualifier of their social networks, and the group boundaries were class-based rather than ethnic. The opportunity to socialise in their native language was not crucial for this group.

The 'Australian orientation' led recent Croatian arrivals to create and maintain their Australian networks. In order to be accepted among the Australian-born they were interested in learning the subtleties of the local idiom and acquiring transcultural social skills – anything from partying the 'Australian way' to learning politically correct attitudes. Apparently, the Australian-born need to perceive migrants as 'similar enough' or 'acculturated enough' in order to accept them informally. Such acculturation did not seem to present too big an obstacle for the urban professional group of Croatians. Their language and urban social skills enables them to be, if not inconspicuous, then at least not too outlandish in the context of middle-class Australia.

Their lifestyle is also typically middle class: leisure activities included keeping fit, dining out (while avoiding fast-food outlets), consumption of 'high-culture', weekends away from home and holiday travel. Securing a good education for their children, usually in private schools, is a symbol of social status. In this respect, professional Croatian migrants' conspicuous consumption corresponded to 'mainstream' middle-class status-seeking.

The family patterns of the recent professional wave of Croatian migrants seem somewhat less uniform than is the case with the earlier working-class wave. Although the intact nuclear family with children is a prevalent pattern of family life, and the one considered the norm, single people and childless couples are not rare. Women in this migrant group had fewer children on average than Australian-born women, and their fertility followed a Croatian rather than an Australian pattern.³¹

3. A diverse community: political and class lines of separation among Australia Croats

As shown, people who migrated from Croatia to Australia during the last six decades arrived in different eras, for different reasons, from different regions and circumstances, and with different motives and ideas. Nowadays they do not constitute a single migrant community in any meaningful sense. There are two main lines of separation: a political line and a 'class' line.

The political line of separation runs along the ethnic/national identification: migrants from Croatia are still divided into 'Croats', 'Dalmatians' and 'Yugoslavs', and although those who identify as Croats are the most numerous, the other two groups are still clearly noticeable. As mentioned, in the late 1940s and 1950s Croatian refugees encountered an intensely pro-Yugoslav and pro-communist community in Australia. The earlier inter-war arrivals usually identified as Yugoslavs, Dalmatians or 'Slavs', and many were members of leftist workers' unions and the Australian communist party.³² The arrival of the new nationalist-minded wave created political tensions within the community. Weak at the beginning, the nationalist stream grew stronger and the balance of power in the community gradually shifted during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. On the one hand, many sympathisers of communist Yugoslavia returned enthusiastically to the homeland in the late 1940s, but later re-emigrated to Australia disappointed; on the other hand, displaced persons grew in numbers and established their separate Croatian clubs and associations, vocally expressing their views. In the 1960s, Croatian clubs existed alongside Yugoslav and Dalmatian ones, while the patrons of all three political factions were mainly Dalmatians who spoke the

same, or very similar, regional dialects, and played the same card games and *bocce*. Anti-Yugoslav sentiment intensely permeated one segment of the Croatian ethnic community in Australia in the decades preceding Croatian independence.

The three types of clubs – Dalmatian with regional identification, Croatian with a ‘proper’ national identification, and Yugoslav with a ‘supranational’ identification – still exist in Western Australia in 2003 (at the time of writing this article). What an outsider might perceive as a singular ‘Croatian community’ is really a conglomerate of diverse groups.³³ There is a gradation of Croatian patriotic feelings, or the lack of them, and an array of political and national symbols in the existing clubs. The pictures of A. Pavelić and J. B. Tito, the two leaders who led opposing armies during the Second World War, and who still symbolise politically opposed ideologies, can be found in different clubs, alongside various flags, official maps of Croatia as well as maps of ‘greater Croatia’, and other symbolic paraphernalia. More than a decade after Croatia gained independence and Yugoslavia ceased to exist, part of the community stuck to their old Yugoslav affiliations, denying political reality in order to emphasise their disagreement with nationalist politics. People who gather around the Dalmatian club (‘Dalmatinac club’) in Spearwood, in the words of one of my interviewees, “just cannot let the word Croatia descend from their lips.” The remaining ‘Yugoslavs’ are, today, a diaspora of a phantom country and represent a graphic illustration of the imagined nature of diaporas.³⁴

As political developments in the homeland settled down and reached a degree of stability at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the political differences among Croatians abroad ceased to be intense or hostile, as was the case in the earlier decades, and could instead be described as persistent. However, the generational change in the leadership of clubs and associations may considerably change these dynamics, as for the second generation these different political positions are not so deeply felt, and the incoming new migrants, apart from perhaps some ethnic Croatian refugees from Bosnia, do not harbour national feelings as their main identity focus.

Class differences between the numerically predominant second and the smaller third wave present themselves to a

researcher with great clarity, although many members of the second wave are unaware of this distinction. The recent migrants do not residentially concentrate and rarely attend Croatian clubs and churches, and therefore remain largely invisible not only to mainstream Australians, but also to the earlier, much more community-minded and residentially concentrated Croatian migrants. The younger professional group is not satisfied with the image of Croatian-ness as it has been construed on the basis of the public image of the previous working-class wave. They seemed burdened by a non-flattering stereotype attached to the 'Croatian community', which has included low occupation status, broken English and fierce nationalism. My respondents approved of the fact that my research recognised them as a distinct migrant wave different from the previous working-class one. They often referred to the earlier wave in order to emphasise differences between the two waves.

The deepest meaning of Croatian-ness for the first and the second waves – for those among them who identified as Croatians rather than Dalmatians or Yugoslavs – was the fulfilment of a need for identity and belonging. They often expressed patriotic pride and felt a part of the 'ethnic community'. This was partly a reaction to a relative exclusion they experienced among Australians. During the war in the 1990s, many Croatians engaged in helping their homeland. For many older migrants feeling and acting 'nationalist' was an expression of nostalgia for their native shores, their fishing boats and nets, and the smell of rosemary bushes and lavender. The linguistic and cultural barrier that has separated them from Anglophone Australia amplified their ethnic identification, which thus became an answer to the threatening anomie of migration. Despite the political disagreement between Croatians, Dalmatians and Yugoslavs among the first and second wave of Croatians, using their ethnicity – whether local, regional, national, or supra-nationally defined – to meet their identity needs was in essence the same for all of them. When these older migrants talked about home, they usually referred to their community of origin and people they knew personally rather than to the 'home country' as an imagined community of Croatians.³⁵ For most people from the first and second post-war waves, migration to Australia meant the violent severing of their cherished

local ties. The identity tied to a concrete place and a concrete community of people was difficult to reinterpret after migration to Australia. No matter how long they had been in Australia, they always remained Dalmatians or *Korčulani* or *Blaćani*, and being Croatian was for many people secondary in their 'identity formula', even for those people who expressed their pride about being Croatian. For rural migrants, there was a firm link between ethnicity and territory. The same locality of origin meant that they shared a common local dialect, common ancestors, common social experiences, common memories, and common knowledge about the environment, customs, food and pastimes. However, they did not always share the same political idea about their appropriate ethnic label.

Most professional people who arrived in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s accepted their Croatian-ness as a fact of émigré life, but for them being Croatian did not have the intense emotional value it had for older migrants. Catholicism and associated religious traditions, as crucial ingredients of Croatian-ness, were largely lost for this generation brought up in the spirit of atheism that dominated Croatian cities during their formative years within communist Yugoslavia. Many people from this group transferred their Croatian-ness from the emotional domain, from the 'longing for one's homeland', to a more pragmatic domain, whereby being Croatian meant being bilingual and bicultural. This transfer was facilitated by the fact that they arrived in the multicultural, and rather tolerant, Australia of the late 1980s, where biculturalism was encouraged much more than in earlier 'assimilationist' times, so the defensive ethnic identification was not triggered.

Rather than hanging onto their Croatian-ness, as already argued, recent migrants considered their education and profession central to their sense of identity. When my respondents among recent migrants spoke about themselves or mentioned their acquaintances, they tended to emphasise the professional element of their identity. They would say, for example: "A friend of mine, who is an engineer..." For most rural migrants, their ethnic belonging was central to their sense of identity, often in a specific 'localised' sense.³⁶ When they identified themselves or people they knew, they usually made reference to their particular village, town or island of origin. For example: "I am *Korčulan* [a man

from the island Korčula]" or "My neighbour is also *Blaćanka* [a woman from the town of Blato on Korčula]." Trlin, who wrote about Croatians (from Dalmatia) in New Zealand under the title 'Yugoslavs', made a similar point about the importance of local identity as opposed to the broad category of 'country of birth' or 'nationality'.³⁷

Political and class lines of separation are not a Croatian specialty, or a particular Croatian misfortune of discord and disunity, as is sometimes alleged by community leaders. Such divisions exist in every migrant community, and indeed in every other community, as no community of a considerable size can be homogeneous. These lines of separation can be said to 'weaken' the community only if the community is imagined as having one singular goal. The nationalist stream in the community used to claim that the establishment of an independent Croatian state was such a goal. Nowadays, when this goal has been achieved, it is hard to imagine such a conspicuous common goal. Therefore, the diversity of socio-economic backgrounds, regional allegiances and political views among Croatians in Australia may be seen as indicative of richness and diversity within the community, rather than of strife and disharmony.

4. The image and public representation of the Croatian community in Australia

The meaning of being Croatian in Australia has changed during the post-war decades and it keeps changing; what has changed is not only how Croatians experience Australia, but also how others perceive them in the pandemonium of Australian multiculturalism. One of the values often associated with Croatians in Australia has been their 'nationalism' or the high value they place on their Croatian-ness. This is about as much most Australians would be able to say about Croatians in Australia, relying on the public image created by the media, where headlines such as "Balkan Politics in Australian Soccer"³⁸ have not been rare. What the Australian media have reported about Croatians over the past decades has usually been bad news: anti-Yugoslav rallies and other public expressions of separatism; disorderly crowds at soccer matches and brawls with members of the Serbian commu-

nity; and, finally, reports from the war in Croatia, from 1991 to 1995, when Croatia fought for its independence from Yugoslavia. These media images created a stereotype of a highly politicised ethnic community dominated by nationalist leaders.

There are views that the negative stereotype of Croats in Australia has been created by a 'media frenzy' and 'political campaign' in the 1960s and 1970s, when Croats were portrayed as terrorists who worked against not only Yugoslavia, but also against Australia.³⁹ In the 1970s Australian Croats were accused of terrorism, but their 'crimes' remained alleged.⁴⁰ Some Australian authors mention a "media-driven deviant stereotype" of Croats.⁴¹ The Yugoslav secret police, UDBA, has often been blamed for infiltrating *agents provocateurs* among Australian Croats.⁴² I heard such claims from several of my interviewees who were long-term migrants. My own research into the newspaper reporting on Croats from the 1950s to the 1990s does not confirm the view that the bad image had been created deliberately. Australian newspapers were balanced in their reporting and let both sides, Croatian and Yugoslav, to be heard; however, the nature of media and their audiences is such that crimes are often equated with 'alleged crimes' and bad publicity seems to be more memorable than good publicity. It is certain that UDBA (referred to among Australian Croats as 'Yugoslav secret police' or 'communist secret police') had a role in planting evidence against Croatian community leaders who were seen and publicly presented as 'hostile emigrants', 'separatists' and 'terrorists', but the magnitude of UDBA's role has not been clearly established.

This decades-old stereotype of Croats as hot-headed nationalists has been created, in the same way as for many other ethnic groups in Australia, on the basis of isolated incidents, and by people who knew little about the group in question. As shown in the above, upon taking a closer look at the 'Croatian community' we can see a diverse agglomeration of people for whom the intensity and meaning of Croatian-ness varies enormously. There were tremendous individual variations within each group as well. The most politically articulate would qualify as true 'Croatian Zionists', for whom support for Croatian independence became the meaning of their émigré life, while some others opted out of this political-diasporic mode of migrant existence entirely.

The current public image of Croatians in Australia is still informed by the ideas of Croatian-ness created and spread by the first post-war wave that immigrated in the late 1940s and 1950s, and is dominated by visible social and cultural practices of the second, working-class wave that gathers in Croatian clubs and churches. The recent third wave, which mainly consists of professional people, acculturated quickly into the mainstream English-speaking Australian society and is residentially scattered, and therefore remains largely invisible. The ideas of proud Croatian-ness and the Croatian diaspora, as well as its political and cultural mission, still dominate the ranks of the Croatian community. Croatian community leaders and activists, mainly members of the 1960s wave, argue that they are the ones who rightfully represent Croatians in Australia, unlike the renegade 'Yugoslavs' and Dalmatians. The gist of their idea of what it means to be Croatian in Australia is contained in the following quote by M. S. Despoja, who acted as 'Croatian ambassador' in the 'Croatian embassy', established in Canberra back in 1977 and banned soon after. The quote is taken from the epilogue to Tkalčević's book:

Nowadays, after a sovereign and free Croatian state has been established, the Croatian community in Australia faces two significant tasks. The first is to support the Croatian state for the establishment of which we worked tirelessly and which we awaited passionately. The second task is to preserve Croatian national features in our people who will continue living on this continent... All in all, Croatians in Australia are on their way to become a role model to the whole Croatian diaspora with their successful initiatives. Working along these lines, they will again justify the title they held so far: the fortress of Croatian-ness in diaspora.⁴⁴

Migrants who arrived in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s, mainly professionals, left Croatia at a time when old communist myths were deconstructed and new nationalist myths were replacing them. Many left their troubled, myth-saturated country in search of a more stable and rational environment, and many were reluctant to accept another grand mythology, this time the mythology of the diaspora. Some of my interviewees from this group helped with fundraising or attended protest rallies and vigils during the war in

Croatia. Some were emotional about independent Croatia, but their emotional investment was not as great as was the case with long-term migrants. For the recent urban wave, the idea of homeland was not bound to the mythical place of childhood and youth where 'one should return one day', and they did not see themselves as part of a 'diaspora' conceived in nationalist terms. Their idea of the meaning of migration was more pragmatic: *ubi lucrum, ibi patria*, rather than seeing migration as separation of the soul, which remains in the homeland, and the body, which lives abroad.⁴⁵

While making these generalisations about Croatian 'waves' it is important to keep in mind that the waves and political factions are not internally homogeneous either. The issue of public representation is always contentious, even in the case of democratically elected leaders, and even more in the case of ethnic leaderships, where strict democratic election procedures are seldom followed. Therefore, publicly expressed 'views of the community' are usually views of its leadership, which often do not represent the views of every rank-and-file member. Indeed, during my fieldwork I noticed a gap in the strength of nationalist identification between the leadership of the community and the rank-and-file members. Some of my interviewees confirmed that ultra-nationalist paraphernalia and symbols displayed in some clubs might not have reflected the feelings of the majority of its patrons. The membership of Croatian clubs seemed to have accepted that 'fiercer Croats' have more right to assume leadership. The leaders were then in charge of 'image management' and they articulated the nationalist-driven idea of Croatia and Croatian-ness to the wider public.

Turbulent developments in the homeland in the late 1980s and the early 1990s re-established Croatian ethnic communities (as opposed to Dalmatian and Yugoslav) as part of 'Croatian diaspora'. The issue of ethnic identity came to the fore as never before, and a Croatian identity gained a new authority after Croatia became independent in 1991. However, this was not a straightforward and singular process. In some people, the sense of Croatian-ness was strengthened and in others, who claimed leadership, it was brought to a climax; some others, however, experienced emotional confusion and conflicting loyalties.⁴⁶ One of my 'Dalmatian' interviewees explained that people who gathered around the Dalmatian club felt under pressure to 'become Croats' dur-

ing the war, but "our people do not like to be pressured and if they are, they do not give in, just out of spite." After they had been 'Dalmatians' or 'Yugoslavs' most of their lives, re-imagining themselves as 'Croatsians' was difficult for some people. In addition, for rural people with a strong local affiliation, the idea of the nation as a locus of belonging may have been somewhat abstract and remote. Therefore, the intensity and type of feelings attached to the 'new' and now 'legitimate' Croatian identity varied. As Croatia gained independence, the Croatian identity became 'official' and Croatian clubs could rightfully represent the community: the atmosphere in Croatian clubs was celebratory. Yet, for many people, a national identity seemed to have been created *for them* 'from above' by political activists and ideologues.

The issue of public visibility definitely privileges working-class Croatsians who arrived in Australia *en masse* in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. They are not only more numerous, but are also more residentially 'compact' and visible through clubs and associations. They are the people who represent the Croatian community in Australia at multicultural events, usually through folkloric music and dance. However, this generation of migrants is gradually giving way to younger Croatsians, the second generation migrants and the recent arrivals who are likely to change this public representation and, consequently, the public image of Croatsians. These two groups are upwardly mobile and much better integrated into mainstream Australia, and are likely to represent Croatsians in a way that can be better understood and accepted in the mainstream society. They are likely to make a more substantial cultural contribution to Australian culture through creative, professional and sporting pursuits than older migrants, trapped in their ethnic bubble and traditional pastimes, ever could. A critical mass of Croatian professionals, artists, academics and sporting personalities is gradually emerging and becoming visible in Australia and, through them, Croatsians in Australia are likely to 'go mainstream' more than before and be noticed by pursuits other than political ones. The Croatian presence will be felt in Australian society more than before, although it may become less ostentatiously Croatian than it was before: given that Croatia is now independent, the main reason driving an intensely political diaspora has been lost. The political diaspora may now demo-

bilise and a different diaspora may establish itself the twenty-first century, which can only benefit the Croatian image, and thus indirectly the members of the Croatian community in Australia.

5. Conclusion

My research, conducted from 1996 to 2002, captured Croatsians in Australia in flux, in a process of change and transformation, and also in a specific moment of their 'diasporic' history that reflects the history of their homeland as well as the social developments of Australia. The history of their homeland was especially turbulent in the last decade of the 20th century and this changed the Croatian community in Australia. Of course, the lives of Australian Croatsians and the life of their communities are even more influenced by developments in the Australian society, where they represent a part of the country's immigration and social history.

My research, unlike previous studies, identified the third post-war wave of Croatian immigrants, conspicuously different from the rural people who arrived in the previous largest wave during the 1960s. The third post-war wave of urban professionals did not feature in previous research for at least two reasons. First, they only started coming in larger numbers in the late 1980s, but still in considerably smaller numbers than the previous wave. Secondly, the authors that recently studied Croatsians in Australia started their research from community clubs and venues where the recent migrants could not be found or identified. In addition, middle-class Croatsians are scattered through the suburbs of Australian cities, and have not acquired the demographic density and visibility of the previous wave.

The 'diasporic' connection to the homeland of the recent wave, although invariably present, is in most cases removed from the immediacy of daily life and non-political; it does not resemble the collective patriotic loyalty of the older migrants. For Croatian professionals the connection to the 'old place' and its cultural peculiarities is an individual experience. Their shared feeling of belonging, rather than being a sense of belonging to the same place and blood, is embedded in the shared sphere of cultural knowledge and a shared discursive approach to reality through that knowledge.

The ability of urban professionals to relate to their host culture using their globally valid 'cultural tool kit' is a crucial part of the modern and postmodern transformation of the traditional homeland/diaspora allegiances. In bicultural migrants the homeland and hostland 'cultures' go through a process of creative osmosis and transformation, during which the idea of homeland loses its emotional impact (loss, pain, nostalgia) and becomes a cultural legacy that upholds the individual and collective creativity, as well as everyday practices. Instead of being disadvantaged cultural 'others', these migrants may experience their transculturality as their advantage. The 'multiculturalisation' of Australian society over the past decades contributed to this possibility.

The opening of the Croatian community towards mainstream society and culture seems imminent. This will enable Croatians to contribute more substantially to 'Australian culture', which is the best way of being multicultural and is probably representative of what the best-intentioned ideologues of multiculturalism had in mind. This process will also modernise the Croatian identity in Australia. I saw Croatians working towards such an ideal through the Festivals of Croatian Culture in Perth in 1998 and 1999. These festivals featured a number of events accessible to mainstream audiences. The 1999 Festival moved out of ethnic venues into popular mainstream venues and was bilingual. This was accomplished by the collaborative efforts of recent migrants and second-generation Croatians in Australia, who had the expertise in cultural entrepreneurship as well as access to cultural resources. In December 2002 Croatians took part in celebrations around the opening of the new Maritime Museum in Fremantle, and a symposium was organised by Australian-Croatian academics to recognise the early presence (in the 1870s) of Croatian sailors in the north of Western Australia.⁴⁷ In April 2003 a Croatian conference in Sydney marked the twentieth anniversary of the establishment of Croatian Studies at Macquarie University in Sydney. These events signify a generational shift in the community which will inevitably change its traditional style, modify its public representation beyond traditional folklore and soccer, and enable it to 'go mainstream' more than ever before.

- ¹ Z. Darveniza, *An Australian Saga* (Marrickville, NSW: Southwood, 1986).
- ² J. Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera: The Story of Australian Immigration* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2002), p. 180.
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 30.
- ⁴ Refugees from Croatia were only counted in handfuls during the 1991-1995 war. It is hard to estimate the actual number of people who arrived from Croatia to Australia as refugees in the 1990s on the basis of official immigration statistics, which registered refugee from ex-Yugoslavia during the 1990s according to the following 'birth countries': Former Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR of Macedonia, Slovenia and the Former Republics of Yugoslavia. (*Settlement Database, Migration Stream by Birth Country, by Calendar Year of Arrival*, Report No. PRLSPA01, 16 Dec. 2002.) My estimate from combined sources is several hundred people until the end of the war in 1995. Only parts of Croatian territory were affected by direct warfare and many Croatian refugees stayed within the country as 'internally displaced'. Most returned to their homes after the war. Refugees from Croatia, mainly ethnic Serbs who fled the regions repossessed by the Croatian army at the end of the war, starting arriving in Australia in larger numbers in the second half of the 1990s. This larger influx may count several thousand people.
- ⁵ DIMA, Statistics Section, (C. McMurray), *Community Profiles, Croatia Born, 1996 Census, 2000*, p. 6.
- ⁶ From 1918 to 1929 called 'The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes'. See D. Rusinow, "The Yugoslav Peoples," in: P. Sugar, *Eastern European Nationalism in the 20th Century* (Lanham, Md.: American University Press, 1995).
- ⁷ *Community Profiles, Croatia Born, 1996 Census, 2000*, p. 42.
- ⁸ V. Drapač, "Croatian Australians Today," in: J. Jupp (ed.), *The Australian People, An Encyclopaedia of the Nation, Its People and Their Origins* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 246; B. Škvorc, "Croatian Community in Brief," *Croatian Studies Review* 1, 1997.
- ⁹ See, for example, B. Banović, "Potisni i privlačni faktori u iseljavanju iz Hrvatske u Australiju od konca 19. stoljeća do recentnog vremena" ["Push and Pull Factors in Emigration from Croatia to Australia from the End of the 19th Century to the Present"], *Migracijske teme* 1, 1990, pp. 7-17; C. A. Price, *Southern Europeans in Australia* (Canberra: Research School of Social Sciences, ANU, 1963); I. Živković, D. Sekulić, Z. Sporer, *Asimilacija i identitet [Assimilation and Identity]* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1995).
- ¹⁰ V. Mikačić, "Comparative Analysis of Demographic and Socio-Economic Characteristics of Yugoslav and Other Immigrants in Australia," in: M. Jurak (ed.), *Australian Papers* (Ljubljana: University of Ljubljana, 1983). Mikačić states that "73.5 per cent of Yugoslavs in Australia come from Croatia and Macedonia" (p. 25), Dalmatia being the main source.
- ¹¹ The oppression of non-Serbs in inter-war Yugoslavia (1918-1941) was an official view during socialist Yugoslavia (1945-1990). Tito argued that [inter-war] "Yugoslavia was just a cover for Serbization." See J. B. Tito, "The National Question in Yugoslavia in the Light of the National Liberation Struggle," tr. D. Rusinow, in: P. Sugar, "The Yugoslav Peoples," *Eastern European Nationalism in the 20th Century* (Lanham, Md: American University Press, 1995), pp. 309-316, originally published

in J. B. Tito, *Sabrana djela* Vol. 13 [Belgrade: Komunist, 1982]). The oppression of Croats and the hegemonic position of Serbs within socialist Yugoslavia is argued in F. Tadjman "The Sources, Changes and Essence of the National Question in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia," originally published under the same title as part 3 of *Nationalism in Contemporary Europe* (Boulder, Co.: East European Monographs, 1981); see Rusinow, 1995, pp. 322-332.

¹² See *Iseljeništvoo naroda i narodnosti Jugoslavije*, Zavod za migracije i narodnosti, Zagreb, 1978 (*The Emigration of Yugoslav Peoples and Ethnicities*, Institute for Migration and Ethnicity); D. Kolar-Panov, *Video, War and the Diasporic Imagination* (London, New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 85; J. Hughson, "Football, Folk Dancing and Fascism: Diversity and Difference in Multicultural Australia," *ANZJS* Vol. 33, No. 2/1997, pp.167-186; M. Brown, "The Croatian Bombings," in: *The Australian Crime, Chilling Tales of Our Time*, Lansdowne, Sydney, 1993.

¹³ *Iseljeništvoo naroda i narodnosti Jugoslavije*, Zagreb, 1978, p. 10.

¹⁴ See D. N. Winland, "We Are Now an Actual Nation: The Impact of National Independence on the Croatian Diaspora in Canada," *Diaspora*, Vol. 4., No. 1, 1995, pp. 3-29.

¹⁵ M. Alagich and S. Kosovich, "Early Croatian Settlement in Eastern Australia" and N. Smoje, "Croats in Western Australia," in" Jupp (ed.), 2001, pp. 235-243.

¹⁶ See M. Tkalčević, *Povijest Hrvata u Australiji* [*The History of Croats in Australia*], Croatian World Congress in Australia (Melbourne: Cross Colour Printing, 1999); N. Smoje, "Croats in Western Australia," pp. 241-243; Parić *et al.*, 1996.

¹⁷ J. Grgurić, unpublished memoir, 1989.

¹⁸ Tkalčević, 1999.

¹⁹ See Tkalčević, 1999, pp. 218, 241-242, 265, 270-271. On political disagreements see also Winland, 1995.

²⁰ G. B. Biršić, "Croatian Settlement Since 1960," in J. Jupp (ed.), *The Australian People, An Encyclopaedia of the Nation, Its People and Their Origins* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1988), pp. 343-344.

²¹ See J. Collins, *Migrant Hands in a Distant Land: Australia's Post-War Immigration*, second edition (London and Sydney: Pluto Press, 1991); T. Hammar, *Democracy and the Nation State: Aliens, Denizens and Citizens in a World of International Migration* (Aldershot, England: Gower Publishing, 1990); S. Castles and M. J. Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World* (London: MacMillan, 1993); J. Jupp, *Immigration*, 1998.

²² See Jupp, 2001, p. 56.

²³ Robert Menzies was Australia's longest serving prime minister, being in the top job for seventeen years (1939-41 and 1949-66). He led the Australian Liberals to seven election victories. Menzies was anti-communist and, in 1951, he held an unsuccessful referendum to ban the communist party in Australia.

²⁴ By 'ethnic community', I mean people who regularly see other Croats, socialise in Croatian (or Dalmatian) clubs, churches, and sporting and folkloric

associations, and who identify with the Croatian community or their regional community of origin.

²⁵ See Z. Skrbiš, *Ethno-Nationalism, Immigration and Globalism, with Particular Reference to Second Generation Croats and Slovenians in Australia*, unpublished PhD thesis, Flinders University of South Australia, 1994, p. 131.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

²⁷ R. Borković, "The Needs of Elderly Yugoslavs in the Melbourne Metropolitan Area," *Migracijske teme* 1, 1990, p. 32; Evans, 1990, p. 46.

²⁸ Johnston, 1979, p. 81.

²⁹ Jupp, 1988, p. 170; S. Castles *et al.*, *Mistaken Identity* (Sydney: Pluto Press, 1992), p. 27.

³⁰ Martin, 1972, p. 10.

³¹ The Australian crude birth rate (live births per 1000 of population) during the last two decades was about 15 (B. Coppel, *Australia in Facts and Figures*, 1994, p. 98); the Croatian figure is 9.8. The Croatian rate of natural population increase was negative in 1992 (-1.0). See *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1992 Yearbook.

³² M. Alagich and S. Kosovich, "Early Croatian Settlement in Eastern Australia" and N. Smoje, "Croats in Western Australia," in: Jupp (ed.), 2001. See also M. Alač, *Into the World*, 1992, and B. Srhoy, *Journey Beyond Origin*, 1998.

³³ Winland, 1995, found a similar set-up among Croats in Canada.

³⁴ See B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983.)

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ See E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth and Reality*, 1990, ch. 2.

³⁷ A. D. Trlin, "The Yugoslavs," in: K. W. Thompson and A. D. Trlin (eds.), *Immigrants in New Zealand*, 1970, p. 97.

³⁸ P. Mosely, in: *Studies in Sports History* 10, pp. 33-43.

³⁹ L. Parić, "Croatian Migration Since 1970" and V. Drapač, "Croatian Australians Today," in J. Jupp, (ed.), 2001.

⁴⁰ See J. Jupp, 2002, p. 27.

⁴¹ E. G. J. Hughson, "The Boys in Blue and the Bad Blue Boys: A Case Study of Interactive Relations Between the Police and Ethnic Youth in Western Sydney," *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, May 1999; Z. Skrbiš, *Long Distance Nationalism*, 1999.

⁴² Parić, 2001, p. 245.

⁴³ I am grateful to Joe and Domena Grgurić for letting me use, during my research, their collection of press-clippings on Croats from the early 1950s to the present day.

⁴⁴ M. Tkalčević, *Povijest Hrvata u Australiji*, 1999, p. 242; my translation from the Croatian.

⁴⁵ Branka Čubrilo, a Croatian writer who lives in Australia but writes in Croatian, expressed this nostalgic attitude on migration in her interview, entitled "Duša u potrazi za tijelom" ["The Soul in Search of a Body"], in: *Žena 21* magazine (published in Sydney), No. 10, Jan-Feb 2002, p. 4.

⁴⁶ See Winland, 1995.

⁴⁷ Symposium: "The Wreck of the Barque Stefano off the North West Cape of Australia in 1875," organised by Murdoch University's Screen Academy Research Group and the WA Maritime Museum, 7 December 2002.