Nuestras Voces

Understanding the history, and the current needs, of the Spanish-speaking migrant community who arrived in Victoria between the 1960s and 1980s.

A powerful reflection on the strength and resilience of immigrants.

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LATIN
STORIES AUSTRALIA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Latin Stories Australia, is a not-for-profit organisation that delivers community engagement and support projects for the Spanish and Latin American migrant communities of Australia.

We aim to advance multiculturalism and social cohesion by providing platforms to increase the sense of belonging, acceptance and legitimacy of the Latin American and Spanish-speaking migrant community, build opportunities for social cohesion for migrants and create awareness of our community contribution to the wider Victorian community, and therefore Australia as a whole.

The "Nuestras Voces" project developed by Latin Stories Australia was funded by the Victorian Government with the aim of increasing understanding of the migrant and refugee experiences,[1] through the eyes of the Spanish-speaking communities' members who arrived in Melbourne between the 1960s and 1980s. This project is centred on social harmony and connection. It explores migrant and refugee settlement themes such as: settlement challenges, the refugee voice, multiculturalism, and the transformational experience of education and opportunities for migrants and the experiences of the seniors.

CONTEXT

Between the 1960s and 1980s, thousands of people from Spain and Latin America (mainly from Argentina, Chile, El Salvador, and Uruguay) migrated to Australia mostly escaping unstable and dangerous political situations, namely dictatorships and civil war. Some people from these countries experienced political persecution and human rights abuses, including torture, lengthy detentions, death threats and disappearances, among others. At that time, Australia's migration policies were changing. This allowed people from Spain and Latin America to start a new and safe life in Australia.

The Spanish-speaking communities lived the transformation of Australia, from a "White Australia" to a "Multicultural Country", which began in 1973 when the "White Australia Policy" was abolished by the Whitlam government. The difficulties experienced by those who arrived during the "White Australian Policy" and their contribution to the Victorian community is largely missing from the multicultural history of Victoria. Therefore, this project presents an opportunity to make the Spanish-speaking communities visible and showcase their contribution to the wider Victorian community.

This report illustrates the stories of thirty-two members of the Spanish-speaking communities who arrived during these decades. Twenty-three of these participants are community leaders, community activists and drivers of change who were selected by the Steering committee based on their contribution to the Victorian social fabric. They represent sectors including the arts, health, community services, politics, education, social justice, and transport. In addition to this, nine participants were selected to represent the current experience of the wider senior Spanish-speaking communities in order to gain a better understanding of the current challenges and gaps in support services. In addition to this, countries of origin and gender were considered to better represent the population of those who arrived between 1960s and 1980s. Whilst participants have been carefully selected with the purpose of telling a collective story, this initiative does not intend to represent every member of the community.

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[1] *For this report "migrants" includes the experiences of migrants and refugees.*

AIM

The aim of this report is provide insights into ways to better support senior migrant communities from a Spanish-speaking background, and new migrant and refugee communities. It is expected that this report will further inform the Victorian Government, Government departments, other jurisdictions and the broader community, about the refugee and migration experience through the perspective of the Spanish speaking communities who arrived during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. This includes the effects of government support and policies on the settlement experience; and the long-term impact of those experiences.

"We are the collateral damage of a dictatorship. At age 13 I did not have the option to decide, to say: no, I do not want to leave for that place".

—
ALEJANDRO VARGAS
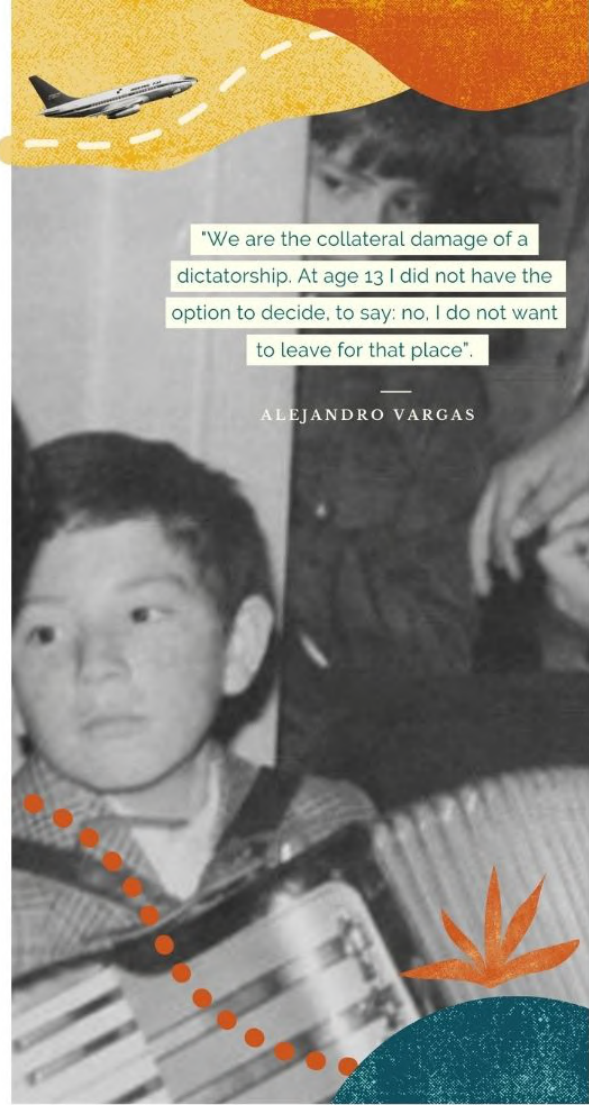
KEY FINDINGS

- Government policies had a great impact on how the migration experience was perceived. For example, those who arrived during the "White Australian Policy" experienced more racism than those who arrived in 1980s when multiculturalism was more established.

- From the 1960s and 1980s, Spanish-speakers migrated mainly for political reasons. However, other people also migrated for economic reasons and looking for better opportunities. The reasons to migrate had an influence in the way people perceived Australia and the way they integrated to the country – including how they built community.

- A comparison of experiences between those who arrived in the 1960s and the 1970s-1980s indicates the importance of Government engagement in the needs of the community. Those in the second group received more financial support, settlement services and social assistance[1]. These benefits allowed the communities to take up settlement and work opportunities. They established families, developed businesses, built homes, and shared their culture with the wider Victorian community.

- Language, racism, cultural differences, limited professional opportunities, limited culturally sensitive and specialised services (e.g. mental health), and being far from family and country of origin were the main challenges experienced by the Spanish-speaking communities. These challenges had an impact on confidence, social cohesion, and access to opportunities and relevant support services.

- However, these challenges motivated members of the communities to lobby and influence the system, and to contribute to Victorian society by creating important organisations which responded to the needs of the community. For example, Foundation House was created as a response to the need to support those with trauma derived from torture, political persecution, etc. experienced during the dictatorships and civil war. CELAS and the Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) were created as a response to the lack of relevant settlement services; and community radios had a vital role in the dissemination of vital information for new communities.

- The Spanish-speaking communities have also contributed to Victorian society by breaking the glass ceiling in a variety of areas such as arts, politics, education, transport, social justice, among others; and contributing to the development of multiculturalism.

- Key elements for the integration process of the Spanish-speaking communities include: Understanding and embracing Australian culture and way of life – while keeping their own culture alive-; building community resilience; developing support networks; and accessing relevant services and the support of relevant organisations (e.g. community radio, faith-based organisations).

- Social isolation, loneliness, mental health issues and the lack of culturally appropriated care are current challenges facing seniors from the Spanish-speaking communities who arrived between the 1960s and 1980s. These challenges are exacerbated by the trauma they experienced when they fled their countries and the lack of relevant cultural services available upon arrival. In addition to this, many people did not have the opportunity to fully learn the language and their support network is limited (their children and grandchildren might no longer speak Spanish). Finally, cultural beliefs regarding caring for seniors can hinder the process of accessing support services.

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[1] *For the most part, the cost of travelling to Australia as migrants (by boat or plane) was paid by the Federal Government.*

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

BASED ON THE KEY FINDINGS, LATIN STORIES AUSTRALIA TRUST THE VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT, GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS, OTHER JURISDICTIONS AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS, TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS:

SETTLEMENT SUPPORT

1. Understand the needs of the different communities arriving in Victoria and provide relevant and culturally appropriate services and support (including mental health support); and advocate for better treatment of refugees and asylum seekers. This report suggests that those who received more support were able to feel more integrated and contribute to the social fabric of the State.

2. Promote the Adult Migrant English Program. The findings suggests that the lack of proficiency in English can have negative impacts on a personal and societal level, which leads to marginalisation.

3. Supporting the harnessing of professional-vocational expertise so that there is a sense of personal and social engagement instead of losing creativity, skills, knowledge and the drive of the people to make a positive contribution to Australia.

SUPPORTING THE INTEGRATION PROCESS

1. Support initiatives that contribute to the development of support networks. These include, for example, projects for specific communities and intercultural activities. Projects within communities increase the sense of belonging and strengthen individual cultures. In addition, projects that increase connections between cultures – in particular those with similar migration experiences – increase empathy and understanding. This might support mental wellbeing and resilience at a community level.

2. Strengthen relationships with, and increase support to, organisations that work with Spanish-speaking communities (or other minority communities); and/or are relevant to the communities (e.g. faith-based organisations and community radio). These organisations are culturally safe and understand the particular needs of the communities.

3. Support projects and organisations that celebrate multicultural communities – in particular those who are minorities. This increases community pride and cultural connection, which contributes to multiculturalism and a sense of belonging.

SENIOR COMMUNITIES

1. Include the "Spanish" language as priority for services and resources. According to the 2016 Census, Spanish is within the top 10 languages other than English spoken at home (Victorian Government, 2018).

2. Support intergenerational initiatives that address social isolation and loneliness. By creating connections between different generations, mental wellbeing is supported, and a sense of belonging is reinforced.

3. Support mental health services that understand the needs and complexities of the Spanish-speaking communities – including the history of trauma.

4. Advocate and/or negotiate with the Federal Government to urgently address aged-care support needs for seniors, such as a linguistic and culturally appropriate residential facility in Victoria, aged-care packages, social support groups and the volunteer visitor scheme. This funding should also include capacity building to create culturally safe spaces and practices within mainstream aged-care organisation.

5. Provide culturally relevant support and information to family members who face the difficult decision of getting specialist support for their seniors.

6. Increase knowledge in the community in regard to understanding the system and how to access it.

1.
INTRODUCTION

Nuestras Voces" is a special project developed and delivered by Latin Stories Australia between September 2019 and June 2021 with the support of the Victorian Government. This project has engaged numerous members of the Spanish-speaking communities in Victoria who arrived between the 1960s and 1980s to develop a common narrative of our history, increase understanding of barriers to access adequate services and participation in society, and increase community pride and cultural connection between young people and the older generation.

The original project included a series of intergenerational interviews between the new migrant communities and those who arrived between the 1960s and 1980s. However, the COVID-19 pandemic emerged during the course of this project, and as such it had to be adjusted so that we could continue to deliver it. This project has resulted in the following deliverables:

This project has engaged numerous members of the Spanish-speaking communities in Victoria who arrived between the 1960s and 1980s to develop a common narrative of our history, increase understanding of barriers to access adequate services and participation in society and increase community pride and cultural connection between young people and the older generation.

Development and delivery of storytelling migration journals distributed to 90 seniors to reduce isolation during the pandemic. They had the opportunity to share their story with us to be part of this report (September – November 2021).

The documentary film "Nuestras Voces" (July 2021).

A findings report including the analysis of the stories of 32 members of the Spanish-speaking communities (July 2021).

"Nuestras Voces" podcast series covering 10 interviews with key members of the Spanish-speaking communities, in collaboration with SBS Radio Spanish (July – August 2021)

1.1
AIM OF THE PROJECT

The aim of this project was to increase understanding of the experiences and the Spanish-speaking communities who arrived in Victoria between the 1960s and 1980s and their current needs. In responding to this aim, the project explored:

- Reasons for migrating to Australia.
- Benefits and challenges during the settlement process.
- First experiences in Victoria.
- Contribution to Victoria.
- Current challenges for those who arrived between the 1960s and 1980s.

1.2
PROJECT CONTEXT

There have been three main waves of migration to Australia from Spanish-speaking communities. The first wave of Latin American and Spanish migration started in the 1960s. It was led by Spaniards, Chileans, Uruguayans and Argentinians – although there is record of Spaniards in the 1871 Victorian population census and of Latin Americans in the 1891 population census (Lopez, 2001). The second wave occurred during the 1980s and early 1990s with the arrival of refugees from El Salvador and other Central American countries, such as Guatemala (Lopez, 2001). The third wave started in the 1990s and continues today, mainly with skilled migrants or international students from Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Venezuela and Ecuador (Mejia et al., 2018). Those who arrived during the first and second waves (the target community for this project) have experienced a different integration process as they needed to learn the language; their work experiences and qualifications were not always recognised; and many of them experienced the changes in Government policies from assimilation to multiculturalism – in particular those from the first wave.

At a particular historical moment when the benefits of immigration are being questioned by some segments of the community, it is extremely important to hear the voices of migrants and refugees to highlight the long-term and continuous contribution of these communities. Therefore, this project attempts to give a voice to the Spanish-speaking communities that they have not had in the multicultural community of Victoria; situate the Spanish-speaking communities within Victoria's social tapestry and highlight their contribution to the State.

It is also considered important to empower these generations to tell their story as a way of healing; as a way of recording their experiences and learnings; and to understand their current challenges. This is important given that the lack of appropriate services in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s has had an impact on the lives of the now older adults of the Spanish-speaking communities. Currently, the lack of culturally sensitive aged care services continues to affect their wellbeing. Therefore, this report also aims to provide an understanding of the need to provide culturally appropriate support and residential services for the wellbeing of these now older communities.

1.3
HISTORICAL MIGRATION CONTEXT

After World War II, many European began to migrate to countries such as Australia and the United States of America (Migration Heritage Centre, 2010). Initially, migration policies in Australia were focused on increasing the population to strengthen the nation's defense capacity in case another war was to occur. It was subsequently necessary to take on migrants to improve economic competitiveness in line with other developed countries (Fairbrother, 2012). For example, between the 1950s and 1960s, migration programs focused on attracting workers to the manufacturing industry.

By 1967, it was decided that it would be more beneficial to attract migrants based on their skills and experience rather than for humanitarian reasons. At the same time, from the 1970s and with the abolition of the "White Australia Policy", new programs expanded that permitted migrants from other non-European countries (Fairbrother, 2012). By 1971, the percentage of migrants from Southern Europe, Asia and America had increased considerably. This led to the beginning of multiculturalism in Australia. Since the 1990s, programs have focused on reuniting families, providing humanitarian visas and improving the economy through skilled migration programs. Upon arrival, many migrants received support from the Australian Government and were placed in migrant hostels and training centres where they learnt English and were supported to find work (Migration Heritage Centre, 2010; National Archives of Australia, n.d.). Despite this being expensive for the Australian Government, the benefits were substantial (Fairbrother, 2012), not only economically speaking but also socially and culturally.

Between the 1940s and 1980s, approximately 61,000 immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries arrived in Australia (approximately 9,900 from Spain and more than 51,000 from Latin America, mostly from Chile, Argentina, El Salvador and Uruguay) (Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2011).

1.4
SPANISH-SPEAKING COMMUNITIES IN VICTORIA

There are records of the beginning of the Spanish-speaking communities in the 1871 Victorian population census (Lopez, 2001). This section provides an overview of the migration context for the largest Spanish-speaking communities in Victoria between the 1960s and 1980s.

SPAIN

After the Civil War in Spain (1936-1939), Franco's government adopted an autocracy policy which damaged the economy for more than three decades (Burano-Trimiño, 2013). Consequently, during the 1960s, there was large-scale migration from Spain (Lopez, 2001). While the majority of Spaniards migrated to other

countries in Europe, United States and Latin America, there was also a significant increase in the number of Spaniards who came to Australia. This aligned with the need identified, in the 1960s, by the Australian Government to increase its capacity in its thriving sugarcane industry. Therefore, 7,816 immigrants from Spain arrived in Australia between 1958 and 1963 through Operation Kangaroo, Eucalyptus, Emu, Karry and Torres. Further, they arrived through Plan Marta - which was the first group of single women to arrive to balance the number of single male immigrants that were provided with the opportunity to settle in Australia (Australian National Maritime Museum, 2020a; Australian National Maritime Museum, 2020b). According to the Census, the largest influx of migrants from Spain was between 1961 and 1970 (Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2011). After that, the rate of migration decreased, probably due to the new opportunities Spain provided to its citizens. These new opportunities came with the implementation of the policy known as the "Stabilisation Plan", which included the opening of Spain to international trade and foreign investment. This eventually meant that the Spanish economy grew and a significant number of industries were established, providing jobs and economic opportunities for Spaniards (Burano-Trimiño, 2013; Valero-Matas et al., 2020).

LATIN AMERICA

Although people from Latin American have been present in Australia since the mid-19th century, the first migration wave started in 1971 when people were forced to flee, escaping from the economic, social and political upheavals they were suffering in their countries of origin (Lopez, 2001). Latin America was experiencing a process of militarisation and military coups: Bolivia in 1971; Chile and Uruguay in 1973; Argentina in 1976; and El Salvador In 1979[2] (Serrano, 2010). According to the Census, during the 1970s and 1980s the highest numbers of Latin American migrants to arrive in Victoria came from Chile (5330), Argentina (2378), El Salvador (2308) and Uruguay (1342) (Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2011). The historical context of these countries is explained below.

CHILE

The Census indicates that some Chileans arrived during the late 1960s and early 1970s (Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2001). Their main motivation was economic and political instability; and they were mainly from middle class (Lopez, 2001). However, the vast majority of Chileans arrived after General Augusto Pinochet's military coup in 1973. During Pinochet's dictatorship (1973-1983) over a million people left Chile. Those who migrated to Australia arrived either under the Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program or under the Family Reunion Program. The peak periods for those arriving under the Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program coincide with the periods of extreme repression in Chile (1973 to 1977; and 1984 to 1988) (Lopez, 2001). Those who arrived after 1973 belonged to either the lower-middle class or the middle-middle class; and some of them had had some social activism, and/or political and union involvement – those were brutally persecuted by the Chilean government and were forced to leave the country (Lopez, 2001). It is important to point out that Pinochet's dictatorship is well known for human rights abuses, including torture, lengthy detentions, murder and disappearances (Kent, 2017). This has had long-term consequences associated with mental and physical ill-health, social isolation and economic disenfranchisement in the Chilean society (Kent, 2017).

ARGENTINA

Between 1976 and 1981, during the Videla Junta, Argentina experienced a period of violence and repression known as the "Dirty War", when thousands of people disappeared and large-scale human rights abuses took place (e.g. torture, and murder at secret concentration camps) (Lopez, 2013). A small number of Argentineans came to Australia escaping from these brutalities; however, the vast majority came as economic migrants, under the Assisted Passage Scheme, who had not been directly involved in political activities (Lopez, 2001). The majority of those who migrated to Australia came from urban areas and belonged to the middle class and the lower-middle class. It is important to point out that since 1816 Argentina has received millions of immigrants; hence they have a strong multicultural heritage (Lopez, 2001).

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[2] *El Salvador was embroiled in a civil war that lasted around twelve years.*

EL SALVADOR

People from El Salvador began arriving in Australia under the Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program in the early 1980s (approximately 8,000 Salvadorans arrived under this program) escaping from a violent civil conflict that lasted almost twelve years (Lopez, 2001). During the conflict, many Salvadorans experienced physical deprivation, torture, mutilation, forced disappearances, extrajudicial killing and mass rape (The Centre for Justice and Accountability, 2021). The Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program directed at El Salvador slowed down in the 1980s when Costa Rica's President Oscar Arias initiated and maintained a plan to bring peace to El Salvador and other Central American countries (Lopez, 2001). The Salvadoran migrant community was politically divided and mistrustful of itself and the wider Spanish-speaking community. This, in addition to experiences of torture and trauma, low levels of English, class, education, and urban/rural experiences made the Salvadorans' settlement difficult during the initial years (Lopez, 2001).

URUGUAY

Uruguay, like Argentina, experienced an economic and political crisis during the early 1970s, which culminated in the military seizing control in 1973 (Lopez, 2001) when the Uruguayan Congress was dissolved and all activity by political parties, trade unions and university groups was banned (Laber, 1976). From 1971 until 1981, the number of Uruguayans migrating to Australia increased dramatically, propelled by the political situation in Uruguay. Although the majority came as economic migrants, some came as refugees who experienced torture and trauma for being politically involved as students, teachers and unionists (Lopez, 2001). Those who migrated mainly belonged to the middle class.

1.5
SENIORS COMMUNITIES IN VICTORIA

According to the Census (2016), 15.6% of the Victorian population was aged 65 years and over; and it is projected that by 2042, over a quarter of the population will be over 65 years of age (Victorian Government, 2004). This has economic, social and cultural implications. In particular, when seniors from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities are growing faster – it has been estimated that Melbourne will have the largest proportion of its older population from CALD backgrounds among all the capital cities (Victorian Multicultural Commission, 2011). In fact, some of the Spanish-speaking communities in Victoria have a larger older community than the overall Victorian population (the median age is 37 years old). To illustrate, the median age of those born in Uruguay is 57 years of age; Spain, 53; Chile, 50; Argentina, 49, and El Salvador, 46 (UNITED, 2019).

Cultural factors, religion, ancestry and migration experiences have an impact on the way communities experience aging. It has been observed that communities with traumatic experiences (e.g. war, torture) will face additional challenges. This highlights the importance of not treating CALD seniors as a homogenous group (Victorian Multicultural Commission, 2011). It has been suggested that support services (e.g. aged care, transport and healthcare) need to develop appropriate service models that recognise the diversity of the seniors in CALD communities; respond to their needs; and understand their barriers to fully participating in society (Victorian Multicultural Commission, 2011). This report aims to provide an understanding of Spanish-speaking senior communities in Victoria, including their experiences with trauma which need to be considered when providing aged-care support.

2.
METHODOLOGY
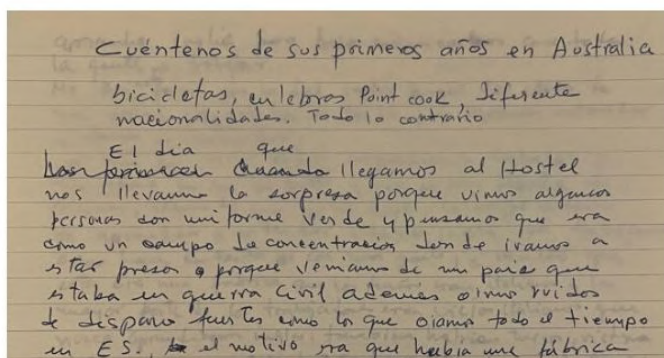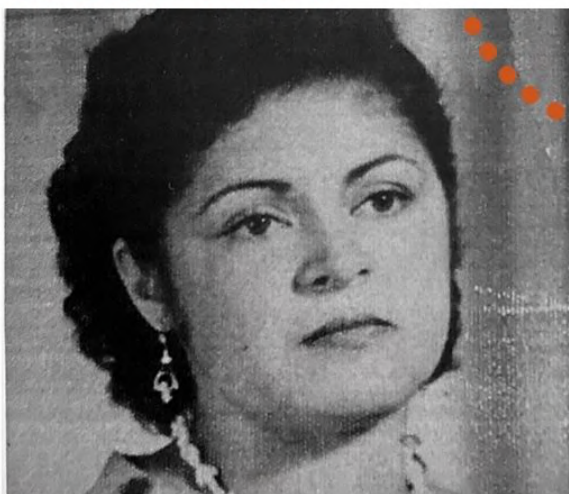
2.1
DATA COLLECTION

As noted at the outset of this report, this project aimed to understand the experiences of the Spanish-speaking communities in Victoria via a qualitative research approach. Between August and November 2020, Latin Stories Australia collected the stories of 32 members of the Spanish-speaking communities who arrived in Victoria between the 1960s and the 1980s using semi-structured interviews and a storytelling journal activity.

2.1.1. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with members of the communities (n = 23), with interview schedules developed to cover the key themes already outlined above in section 1.2. Several strategies were used to identify and invite people to participate in the project. First, the Steering Committee provided a list of key members of the community who were known for their contribution to the community and Victoria. Second, Latin Stories Australia invited the community using different communications strategies (online, radio and printed material). Finally, a snowball technique was used to identify sectors of the community that were not properly represented using the previous two strategies. This, for example, allowed us to invite people from El Salvador. In total, 97 people were initially invited to take part in intergenerational interviews, face-to-face sessions in which new migrants interviewed those who arrived between the 1960s and 1980s. But given the COVID-19 restrictions, this was no longer viable. Therefore, only those who were able and willing to take part in an online recorded interview using Zoom were part of this project (each interview had a duration of one to two hours). Preference was given to those who were identified as key members of the community by the Steering Committee. Balance and representation were considered in terms of gender, country of origin, year of arrival, and contribution.

The semi-structured interview method was selected to collect instant answers and to explore participant realities and experiences regarding the themes under investigation. The advantages of conducting semi-structured interviews include: multiple realities can be understood, they enable rapport and active participation, detailed information can be gathered (enabling further clarification and detail), queries can be clarified, and verbal and non-verbal cues can be recorded (Bailey, 1994).

In addition to this, to capture the stories of those who were not identified as key members of the community and to support the senior community during the isolation caused by COVID-19 restrictions, Latin Stories Australia contacted UNITED-Spanish Latin America Welfare Centre – a service provider supporting the senior Spanish-speaking communities – to invite their senior clients to be part of this project. Given the COVID-19 context and the limited access to technology of this group of people, it was decided to develop a storytelling journal activity for the seniors to reflect on their story in Victoria using the same themes from the interview guide. In total, 90 journals were sent to UNITED-Spanish Welfare's clients with the option to return the completed journals to Latin Stories Australia be included in this report (9 were received back).

The importance of storytelling is well established as a method to increase understanding of personal experiences; increase awareness of (and reflection on) life circumstances; heal after painful experiences; and develop resilience by learning from participants' stories. Therefore, this method was considered a suitable method given both the COVID-19 context and the historical context of the participants.

2.2
DATA ANALYSIS

Underpinning the research design of this study was an exploratory approach, both to the collection and analysis of the data. Each interview was audio-recorded and hand-written notes were taken. Transcriptions of the interviews were later typed into word-processing documents and exported to Nvivo 12 qualitative software for coding. The transcripts were analysed using a thematic analysis.

A process of initial open-coding was undertaken to identify the key themes and patterns in the data collected during the semi-structured interviews, which supported the development of the findings grounded in the data. Themes were then classified on the core topics of this project: motivations for migration, settlement process, challenges during the integration process, contribution to Victoria and current challenges of the aging population. Then, data from the storytelling journal activities was later added to the identified themes. If new information was identified from this method, new themes were created.

2.3
INFORMED CONSENT

This community-based project is not intended to be classified as a research project. However, ethical protocols were followed as explained below:

All participants in the interviews were provided with an information sheet about the project and a consent form (in Spanish; however, an English version was also available for those who preferred it) prior the interview. They were given the option to provide the informed consent form signed before the interview or give verbal consent before the interview. Prior to the interview, a member of the team contacted the participant by telephone or email to confirm the interview date and time and answer any queries. Given the COVID-19 restrictions and the possible impact of telling their story, participants were provided with

details of appropriate support services irrespective of whether they presented as distressed. After the data analysis, participants were provided with an email including the quotes to be included in this report. They were provided with the option to review their quotes and decide if they would like their name to be included in this report or not.

Participants of the storytelling journal activity were provided with a consent form which they were required to sign. In addition, only those who were interested in their story being shared were instructed to send us their journal via post.

2.4
PARTICIPANTS PROFILE

This section shows some of the relevant characteristics of the participants in the interviews and storytelling journal activity. While for the interviews, balance and representation was considered in terms of gender, country of origin, year of arrival, and contribution, this was not possible for the storytelling journal activities given the low response rate. Therefore, all participants in this activity were included in the analysis.

2.4.1. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

As outlined in the previous section, 23 members of the community participated in the interviews.

In terms of gender, 59% were male and 41% female. Regarding country of origin and year of arrival, we sought to have a representation of participants based on the census data (see Figure 1 and 2 below). However, in some instances it was difficult to get people who arrived during the 1960s to participate given the interviews were undertaken via Zoom, and some people did not have the technology and/or the skills to connect to this platform.

Figure 1: Arrivals between 1960-1990 **(census data)**
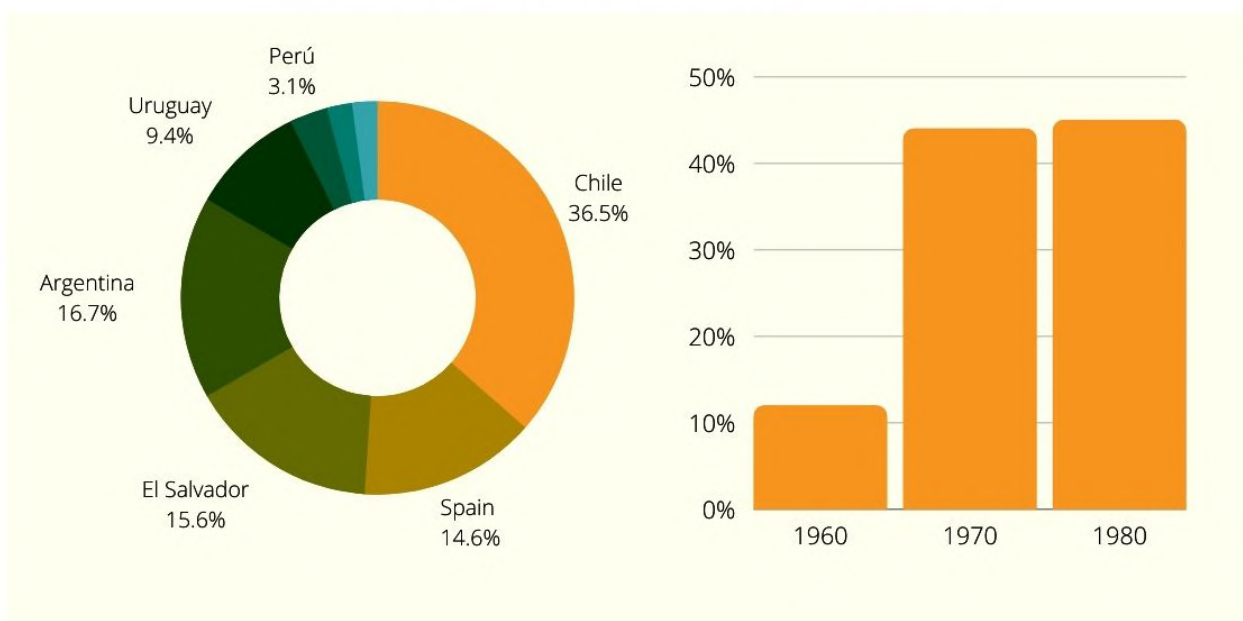
Figure 2: Arrivals between 1960-1990 **(participants data)**
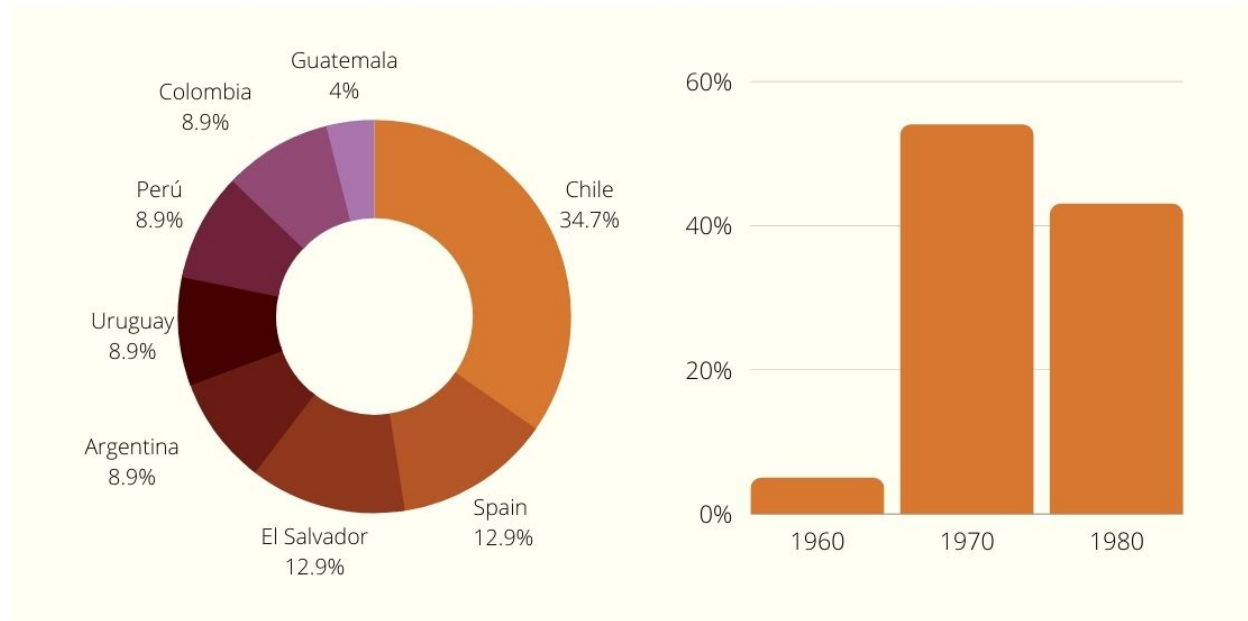
Regarding motivations to migrate, **the majority of people mentioned political reasons – including safety – (71%)**. Of these, several came under the Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program, or under the Family Reunion Program and they were supported by family members who were already in Australia. **Other reasons to migrate included: economic factors, adventure and love (29%).**

In terms of contribution, a variety of backgrounds were considered. These include: arts and culture, community, education, organisations, music, sports, folklore, infrastructure, politics, and family (see Appendix 1 for more information about the participants).

2.4.2. STORYTELLING JOURNAL ACTIVITY

As previously mentioned, current clients of UNITED-Spanish Latin America Welfare Centre were invited to participate in this project. From those who shared their storytelling journal with us, 56% were female and 44% were male. In terms of country of origin, 33% (n=3) were from Chile, 22% (n=2) from Argentina, and 11% (n=1) were from El Salvador, Uruguay, Peru and Colombia. Regarding year of arrival, 56% arrived during 1970s, 22% during 1980s and 22% after 1990.
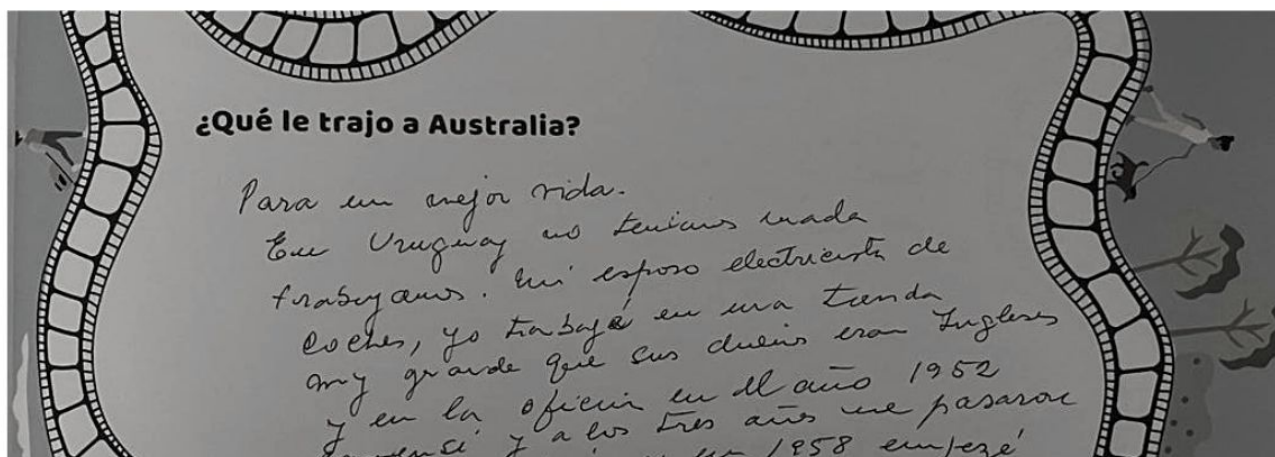
3.
FINDINGS

This section presents an examination of the participants' experiences in Victoria. The data presented here has been categorised into five main topics: settlement experience; challenges; key elements for the integration process; contribution; and current situation of seniors. In this section, we use direct quotes to provide the voice of the participants themselves, and as far as possible, made their perspectives available in their own words. The quotes were translated by an experienced translator.

3.1
SETTLEMENT EXPERIENCE

Participants were asked a series of questions about their reasons to migrate to Australia, support from the Australian Government, and their first years in Australia. The results of the analysis regarding these topics are presented in this section.

3.1.1. REASONS TO MIGRATE

According to the Census (2011), between the 1960s and 1980s around 2,400 Spaniards arrived in Victoria. Participants from this project suggest that they migrated to Australia **in search of a better quality of life and for adventure:**

> "My father decided that we would move when I was 13 years old. This was as a result of Spain's political situation and for the adventure. Australia was looking for people for industry. I arrived with my parents and five siblings".
> ——
> RAFAELA TORRES

Others indicated that they migrated for personal reasons, like love:

> "I came to marry an Australian woman I met in Spain when I was 22. I arrived and she was with someone else. I decided to stay anyway, out of pride, to learn English and go back later. I ended up spending my whole life here".
> ——
> ALFREDO MUÑOZ
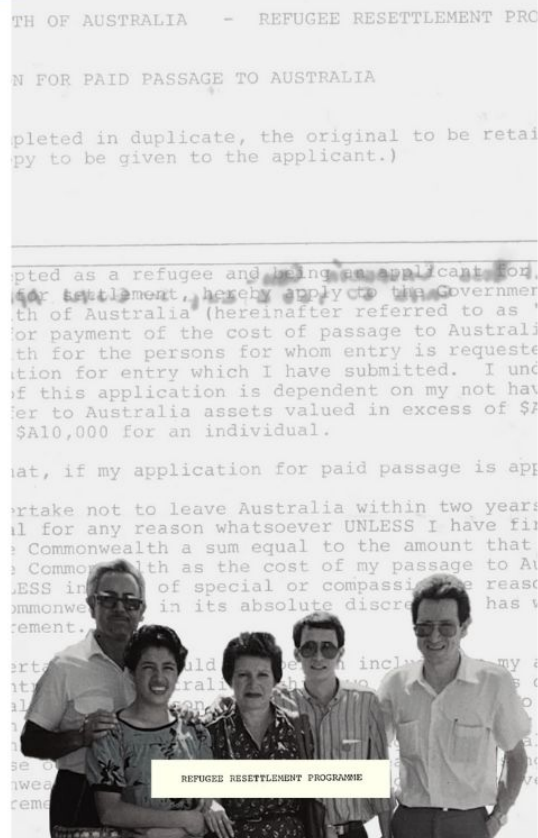
Many more people from Latin America arrived during the 1970s and 1980s. According to the Census, around 11,000 people mainly from Chile (5,330), Argentina (2,378), El Salvador (2,318) and Uruguay (1,342) arrived in Victoria (Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2011). The majority of those from Latin America who participated in this project suggested that their **motivation to migrate to Australia was political.** A few of them left **due to the fear of either socialist or communist ideals** emerging in some countries. This is illustrated by the following quote:

"My parents were from Austria and Germany and refugees from World War II. They arrived in Chile through the Red Cross and met there. They saw Chile as a refuge. As a result of Allende's narratives, they felt they were under attack, vulnerable and that they had to leave".
——
PETER LOCHERT

However, the majority of them had to leave their country **to escape from dictatorships, civil war, and violence,** as explained below:

"My family/mother was known as from 'the left'… I clearly remember the day after Pinochet had seized power, someone came to our home at 10 pm. That was the curfew. There was a knock on the door and someone told us they were coming for my mother. We had to put away records, photos and books. I had a photo of Che Guevara and Fidel Castro, which we had to burn. Books by Pablo Neruda as well. In the end, no-one came for my mother. That is how our story began".
——
MARITZA THOMPSON

"We are the collateral damage of a dictatorship. At age 13 I did not have the option to decide, to say: no, I do not want to leave for that place"
——
ALEJANDRO VARGAS

"The situation in Colombia was one of the most dangerous due to the war with Pablo Escobar. There was a lot of unease, a lot of violence. Many people from Latin American emigrated because we had to, not because we wanted to".
——
CARLOS SÁNCHEZ

Since the end of World War II, Australia has accepted refugees and people for humanitarian reasons. However, it was not until 1977 when Indochinese asylum seekers, fleeing conflict during the Vietnam War, began to arrive by boat that the Australian Government developed the first refugee policy and planned a Humanitarian Program designed to deal with refugees and humanitarian claims (Phillips, 2017). Data suggests that from 1947 to 1975, there were 297,053 people coming to Australia under these categories; and from 1975 to 1990, 204,543 people were supported under these programs (Phillips, 2017).

As previously mentioned, many people from the Spanish-speaking communities arrived under the Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program. Several participants who arrived under this program mentioned that they came to Australia as the approval process was quicker than from other countries offering similar support and warranties as to legal migrants. For example:

> El Salvador entered into a civil war. Some countries provided humanitarian programs for El Salvador… The shortest process was for Australia, and they accepted me as a refugee from an armed conflict"
> —
> WILFREDO ZELADA

> "Australia offered us guarantees to live in peace and legally."
> —
> NORA RAMÍREZ

However, in 2001, Australia radically modified the national refugee law by adopting the "Pacific Solution" scheme to allocate asylum seekers to Pacific islands for the processing of their claims (Mathew, 2002). This legislation has been widely criticized. The main issues of concern include: the conditions of the offshore processing centres; the lack of independent scrutiny; the mental health impacts; and the lengthy periods of time that asylum seekers spent on the processing centres while their claims were being processed (Phillips, 2012). Some participants reflected on how the support for refugees and asylum seekers has changed in comparison to how they were previously treated. The following quote illustrates this:

> "Sometimes governments have lost respect and human recognition for the way in which refugees are treated today. Refugees have been demonised. They have to keep proving over and over again that they have been persecuted; and we have imprisoned them"
> —
> TELMO LANGUILLER

3.1.3 GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

Between 1945 and 1985 more than four million people arrived in Australia. At a systems level, it could be argued that migrants were well received and supported (Migration Heritage Centre, 2010). Participants have suggested that depending on which visa individuals were granted, the Government provided different support such as: **flights, transfers, clothing, accommodation, food, interpreters, English language classes, economic support and other social benefits such as unemployment insurance, child support, and social assistance.** The support received is illustrated by the following quotes:

"They took us to the Springvale hostel. We had every guarantee, an interpreter for everything, food. They took the children to school. Employers came to offer us work. The service was excellent. We were in the hostel for nine months. The government offered us a Housing Commission apartment in South Yarra for $19 per week and we stayed there until we could get a house"
——

OFELIA SOSSA

""I felt like I was in heaven. I remember that they told me I was going to have an allowance and I was amazed. [There were] other benefits like being able to go to the library and borrow a book and even a VCR. They provided you with financial support, somewhere to live, health. And it was up to the individual how to get ahead".
——

ÁNGEL CALDERÓN

As mentioned above, Australia offered many economic benefits and social security. However, participants suggested that some of those benefits were not necessarily required on a long-term basis as there were many working opportunities available at the time:

"Australia was the land of milk and honey"
——

IVANA CSAR

"The next day my husband began to work 12 hours a day and eight hours on Saturdays. We could not believe it, and without speaking English"
——

SHIRLEY ABREU, STORYTELLING JOURNAL ACTIVITY

Participants in this project suggested that there have been changes to the benefits migrants and refugees now receive (see quote below). This is aligned to the previous reflection on the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees in section 3.1.2.

"In Australia, the government's policies have changed; they no longer focus on the people… One can start to see a lot of poverty, homeless people, and health services have been reduced. The facilities the migrants of the 1980s had were better than those of today".
—
CARLOS SÁNCHEZ

3.1.4. FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF AUSTRALIA

For the majority of people interviewed as part of the Nuestras Voces initiative, arriving in the state of Victoria amazed them in many ways – not surprising given the political, economic and social situation that they were living in their country of origin, the cultural contrasts, and the lack of knowledge they had about Australia. Participants used terms such as **"abundance", "order", "cleanliness", "security", "legality" and "respect"** to describe their perceptions of Victoria, as can be seen in the reflections below.

"There was a lot of abundance. Suddenly we could afford so many things. Our daughters could have buckets of ice cream. We were finally happy that our daughters could eat anything they wanted".
—
DELICIA VILLELLA, STORYTELLING JOURNAL ACTIVITY

"Learning how Australia is a democracy that is not based on idealistic concepts but in which all individuals respect the law and it is equal for everyone".
—
WILFREDO ZELADA

"I found the wilderness so healthy. Because in Chile, the constant battle of the young people in the towns to change Chile's political systems had led to nature and the trees all being mangled. When I arrived in Australia, I found the wilderness so healthy and so beautiful that it impressed me".
—
FERNANDO GALLARDO

For those who were fleeing armed conflict, dictatorships and violence, Australia also gave them a **sense of freedom, peace and the right to choose,** as described by these participants:

"The Australian Government gave us everything. The Whitlam government recognised the need for Latin Americans to leave their countries. They allowed us to study and work in peace, they gave us freedom, the chance to choose what we wanted to study and what area we wanted to work in, they gave us the right to choose. They gave us the chance to be free".
—

ALEJANDRO VARGAS

"Australia has given me the opportunity to be able to salvage my life, to rebuild my life. Australia embraced you like a foster mother, healed the wounds that you carried and gave you a new beginning by teaching you a new language, a new culture, an opportunity to work, to build a home if you wanted"
—

CESAR CISNERO

However, some participants also used terms such as "desolation", "under-development", and "boring" to describe Victoria. The population of Victoria in the 1960s was around 2.8 million while in other places, such as Buenos Aires (Argentina), the population was around 7 million (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012; Macrotrends, n.d.). These numbers might explain the migrants' perceptions of Australia as a place of **"desolation" and "under-development"**, as described below:

"It was like landing on the moon, a dormant country, no-one sang in the street".
—

ALFREDO MUÑOZ

"The city was ugly; at that time Chile was much nicer, more developed".
—

ARUN MUÑOZ

"It was a city that was too quiet, you could say depressing. Nothing happened in the streets".
—

CARLOS SÁNCHEZ

The perception of those who arrived in the 1980s was different. They describe Victoria as a **"developed"** place (see quote below). This could be linked to the changes that were happening at the time given the globalisation of the Australian economy, which commenced in the 1980s (Kelly, n.d.).

> "When we began to enter [the city], we saw buildings. It was a surprise because we thought that we came to populate Australia as there was no population. The image we had was that there were only kangaroos and koalas. I had a perception of Australia that was very rural".
> ———
> CESAR CISNERO

Regarding cultural differences, the Spanish-speaking communities are characterised by what Hofstede (2011) defines as a "collectivist society", in contrast to the Australian community, which is identified as an "individualistic society" –see the "individualism" dimension of the Hofstede index (Figure 3) by country of origin of those represented in this report.

In a collectivist society, people are integrated into strong and cohesive groups; while in an individualistic society everyone is expected to look after themselves and their immediate family. These differences were perceived by the Spanish-speaking communities as Australian people being **"impersonal"** and **"private"**, which had a negative impact on their **sense of belonging** as illustrated below:

Figure 3: Hofstede index
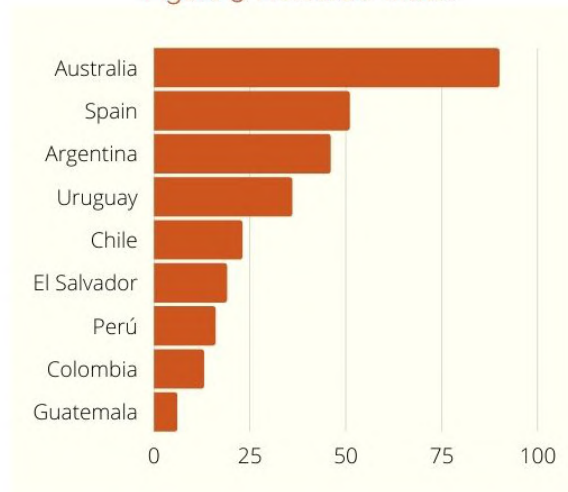
Note: This dimension refers to the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members. The larger the number, the more focus is on the individual and their immediate families.

> "[In Latin America] if your neighbour was sick, you went and helped; here one is sick and your neighbour would not even know. If you pass by them, they do not even greet you".
> ———
> GLADYS NOVOA

> "In our countries your neighbour is also your friend. Not here. One feels very lonely. At the time there were very few of us. The world in which one has to live becomes very narrow".
> ———
> NORA RAMÍREZ

3.2
CHALLENGES

Participants were asked a series of questions regarding challenges they encountered during their integration process in Australia and difficulties during their first years. The challenges mentioned by the participants include: language, racism, cultural adaptation, identity, career opportunities, nostalgia and homesickness, and lack of opportunities for women. These are further explored in this section.

3.2.1 LANGUAGE

For those who arrived between the 1960s and 1980s, the biggest challenge was language. This was a hindrance to people's ability to express themselves freely and to fully be themselves. For example, Alejandro explains that:

> "For me, as a very talkative person, I felt blind and mute upon arrival; for me communication through the spoken word is essential".
> —
> ALEJANDRO VARGAS

The language also had a negative impact on people's academic and professional performance as they were not able to enroll and/or excel in their education, and had limited access to jobs:

> "One day a nun at school said to me, "oh you are stupid" because I did not know how to communicate in English, and that was so painful that from then on I decided that the education system was not for me and I left school".
> —
> RAFAELA TORRES

> "I had to repeat two years of high school. In Chile I was always an excellent student, but when I arrived in Australia my performance seriously deteriorated, especially because my English was not very good".
> —
> ARUN MUÑOZ

Despite the fact that Australia offered **interpreter services** to new migrants, there were many occasions when this service was not able to be accessed or it was limited. In fact, those who arrived before 1973 were not able to access this service as a free emergency telephone service did not exist (Australian Government, n.d.). Research suggests that professional interpreter services increase the delivery of health care to limited-English-speaking patients (Jacobs et al., 2001). This was noted by participants suggesting that the lack of professional interpreter services impacted on their daily life, access to health, and other services. This is illustrated by the quotes below:

"My mother asked me to go to the dentist with her to be her interpreter as she had to get a tooth taken out. I got the wrong tooth and the dentist took out a good tooth. When mum's anaesthetic wore off, we realised with great horror that the dentist had not realised what he was doing"

——

RAFAELA TORRES

"My brother had an accident. He and his wife died and my parents remained in a coma for months. At the hospital I began to reflect on what was to come. I realised that my parents were going to need a lot from me. There I met people who spoke Spanish and I recognised the need for interpreters and I decided to study community services"

——

CECILIA HERNÁNDEZ

3.2.2. RACISM

Racism is a central theme in the stories of the participants. Due to the increase in non-British European migration from the 1960s, racism was increasingly directed at newly arrived migrants. It is important to remember that in the 1970s the "White Australia Policy" was still in place. Policies of this type strengthened the idea of Australia as a mono-culture – which rejected the presence and acceptance of other cultures. This policy was abolished by the Whitlam government in 1973. **Many Spanish-speaking migrants experienced racism** at school, in the workplace and in their personal and social lives as illustrated below:

"In maths class the teacher made us sit facing behind the blackboard. We had to look at the wall. We did not participate in the class. Obviously, that was somewhat racist, discriminatory. In the schoolyard, there was another level of discrimination. The youngsters pulled my hair. There were even some Latin American children who had already been in Australia for a while and did not seem to want to identify with us. At swimming lessons, someone pushed me into the water and as I had long hair, kept me underwater. After that, I never wanted to swim or even feel the water on my face".

——

MARITZA THOMPSON

"In Footscray, every time we used to go to a pub, there was always a problem. If we ordered a glass of wine, they would call us 'girls'... In the work cafeteria, you arrived in a communal room with 2000 people and you could not sit wherever you wanted; you had to look for a table with Latin Americans – behaviour like that found in jails".
—

TELMO LANGUILLER

"With my in-laws (my first wife's parents) there was a major difficulty; they did not accept my culture. That was difficult because in those days Australians were very insular and believed there was nothing better than Australia in the whole world."
—

ALFREDO MUÑOZ

The term WOG (Western Oriental Gentlemen) was used as a pejorative term to describe any foreign person who was not white and mainly from a southern European or Middle Eastern background (Moore, 2010). Some people interviewed for this project commented on the fact that they experienced racism by people using this term towards them. For example, see Ofelia's quote:

"One went to a doctor and they said to you: 'go back you wogs, what are you doing here?'
—

OFELIA SOSSA

Currently, the meaning of this term seems to have a less degree of taboo; probably due to theatre and television comedies such as Wogs out of Work and Acropolis Now (Moore, 2010). Simon Palomares, a member of the Spanish-speaking community and one of the creators of these shows, explains how they achieved this:

We had problems with advertising due to the name of the show, 'Wogs out of Work'. We were told that it was racism against the spectators. But, in fact, it was giving migrants an identity. It was like a revelation in recognising that they were not the only ones who lived in such a particular way... After everything we did, the Australian National Dictionary added another definition to the word 'WOG'. Now it is a term that can be used as an expression of endearment among people of a specific group. Changing an insult to a term of affection was a great achievement".
—

SIMÓN PALOMARES

Others involved in the project recognised that racism existed (and still exists) within the Anglo-Saxon society; however, they felt that the Spanish-speaking communities have not been the central focus of racism like other communities – see quote below:

> "Spanish speakers have not been a main focus of attention or discrimination. We have been well received and we have not been subject to criticism or attack like other communities. This is due to our combination of cultures and languages and socio-political mix".
> —
> ÁNGEL CALDERÓN

In addition to this, some recognised that racism is not unique to Australia, and/or all segments of society; as illustrated by the following reflection:

> "There is a part of Anglo-Saxon society that is racist – that is also present among Latin Americans – and another that is open and wants to integrate".
> —
> ARUN MUÑOZ

This realisation allowed some to accept the society they were living in, and empowered them to be agents of change – as illustrated below:

> "I accepted that there was no perfect society – in Spain there was also a lot of racism– and that I had to contribute anyway I could in order to change things".
> —
> RAFAELA TORRES

3.2.3. CULTURAL ADAPTATION

Cultural adaptation was one of the biggest challenges for the Spanish-speaking migrants, in particular those who arrived during the 1960s and early 1970s, mainly due to cultural differences described above and the assimilation policies which sought to create a unique and homogenous culture in Australia (Australians Together, 2020). This battle to adapt to the Australian culture is illustrated below:

> "They expected that you would become 'Australian'. It was extremely difficult for me. The radical change from one culture to another was very painful".
> —
> RAFAELA TORRES

> "Adapting to this country was a constant struggle: you had more opportunities for growth, workers benefits; but the idiosyncrasy was different, the music, the humour, the mannerisms".
> ――
> FERNANDO GALLARDO

Many of the interviewees agreed that they found this adaptation very difficult as people needed to start a new life from zero, in a foreign country, with a different language, and without support networks:

> "I remember when we got off the bus and we had some trunks and suitcases. Everything we had and everything we were was on that footpath".
> ――
> SIMÓN PALOMARES

> "I was young, I left all of my friends, social connections. In Chile we had a comfortable (middle-class) life and we basically arrived here without anything; we lost everything. We started from the bottom, without the language. The culture was fairly difficult to understand and to integrate in cultural and social life. Compared to Chile, where we had a rich social life and culture, Australia seemed sterile to me. That was difficult at that age".
> ――
> PETER LOCHERT

3.2.4. IDENTITY AND SENSE OF BELONGING

Identity is an evolving concept that is comprised of personal characteristics such as age, gender, occupation as well as created through life experiences. Therefore, the migration experience has an influence on people's identities. The exploration of this concept is important as it is linked to a sense of belonging. In fact, it has been pointed out that the concept of "Australian Identity" is different for people who are born in Australia, for migrants and for Aboriginal communities (Arasaratnam, 2014). Some of the people who were interviewed for this project felt that the migration process creates a feeling of not belonging anywhere, as illustrated below:

> "Once we have immigrated, we are neither from here nor there".
> ――
> NORA RAMÍREZ

For others, the migration process provided an opportunity to re-define their identity:

"Arriving here at age 17 was difficult because one already has references from other places. The challenge is when one is left like a ghost, from neither here nor there, and it is important to live with that… I would never have been able to find my identity if I had continued to live in Chile… I do not identify with a nationality but as a human being that embraces the difference of thought, music, art, food".
—
ARUN MUÑOZ

"There is a diversity even within Australia itself. I see myself however I like because I live in a place that allows me to be whatever I want, Spaniard or Australian".
—
SIMÓN PALOMARES

However, for others, the fact that they no longer live in their country of origin, does not involve a change of identity:

"We have a culture and a personality. We are who we are; we are not going to stop being who we are because we live in Australia. If you know who you are, you are always going to get by. We need to learn to respect and be respected in the context of multiculturalism. We should not be discriminated against because we have provided our labour and all of our solidarity in Australia".
—
GLADYS NOVOA

3.2.5. PROFESSIONAL OCCUPATION

Although before the 1980s there were many job opportunities in Australia, the majority were in manufacturing (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1997). Most of the members of the Spanish-speaking communities were relatively well-educated; however, they faced difficulties in having their qualifications recognised, and many were forced to work in employment that fell short of their qualifications (Lopez, 2001). The abandonment of professional skills and/or having overqualified migrants in some jobs has been regarded as an economic loss to Australia (Kaur, 2020). The following quote exemplifies the story of many adults who had to put aside their professional occupations in order to support their families:

"Upon migrating, you gain something and at the same time you lose something. Parents change their lives so that their children have a better life. They put aside their professions to go to work in factories".
—
ARUN MUÑOZ

On many occasions, it was not possible for migrants to validate their degrees or this process was often complicated. These barriers can negatively affect the creativity, skills, knowledge and drive of the people to positively contribute to Australia:

> "The organisation that controls these competencies has to accept you. It was very difficult; it was very fragmented and specialised".
> ──
> WILFREDO ZELADA

Additionally, many did not have the language skills to be able to practice in their profession and there was a **lack of support from the Government to integrate skilled migrants into their professions**. Mario's quote exemplifies how he had to overcome these barriers without support:

> "I initially worked in jobs that were unrelated to my profession, but one had to survive. It was a period of many sacrifices. It was not easy the first three years: many hours of study, many hours of work to overcome the limitations of the language".
> ──
> MARIO RODRÍGUEZ

Another challenge in the professional area was the **domination of Anglo-Saxon culture** in certain professional spheres:

> "Opening up career pathways in the midst of a White Australia. To work in journalism, one had to have a British accent; they still saw themselves as an English colony".
> ──
> SIMÓN PALOMARES

> "The Parliament was super Anglo-Saxon. As a political activist and social campaigner – for me parliament is one way of bringing about transformation, not the only way. I decided to study the language obsessively and to be able to express the same in Spanish and English, their idioms, colloquialism, etc."
> ──
> TELMO LANGUILLER

and the **stereotypes** held about the Spanish-speaking communities:

> "I was only called to cover stereotypes of gangsters. I always fight for respect and to break down stereotypes. For the migrant, these stereotypes can lead to serious situations of harassment".
>
> ──
>
> CARLOS SÁNCHEZ

3.2.6. NOSTALGIA AND HOMESICKNESS

Being separated from family (especially in such a faraway place like Australia) has been very difficult for the Spanish-speaking communities – which, as previously mentioned, are characterised as collectivist:

> "I was 17 years old and I was going to leave my family. My family was so important to me. The night before my trip we had a special farewell dinner with the whole family, aunts, cousins. Everyone tried to hide their sadness. That night I did not sleep. I was in a lot of pain. The day I boarded the plane was terrible".
>
> ──
>
> ARUN MUÑOZ

> "Like all immigrants, upon leaving their country, one feels nostalgia because one is leaving everything behind: your family, friends, most of your memories".
>
> ──
>
> CESAR CISNERO

This challenge was exacerbated between the 1960s and 1980s, when long-distance communication was difficult and expensive. However, some people found a way to keep connected with their families back home:

> "Communicating with the family abroad was done by cassette; calling was very expensive at $2 a minute. Back then, letters were the best way of communicating but they took a month to arrive. We recorded our life on cassette to make the family in Argentina feel involved".
>
> ──
>
> MARIO RODRÍGUEZ

As previously mentioned, many of those who came to Australia between the 1960s and 1980s were fleeing difficult, and dangerous, political situations in their home countries. For many of them the dream was to return home once the situation improved. However, people began to integrate and re-create their lives here, so for many it was difficult to go back to their country of origin. This created a sense of nostalgia and homesickness, as exemplified by the following reflections:

"At some point, we all dreamt of leaving our countries, escaping the turmoil. And later returning in a better position, more comfortable. But later you start to put down roots and it is no longer so easy to leave. For those who have never migrated this is difficult to understand: it is not that one does not want to return or cannot return; the decision to stay is not yours to make, life makes the decision. There are moments when you feel like you want to leave, that you do not belong, but life makes you belong, gives you children, a family".

——

ALEJANDRO VARGAS

"Distance rekindles nostalgia, regret, sighs and sometimes uncontrollable crying. But it brings contrast and it is there we find a satisfactory trade-off".

——

JESÚS VÁSQUEZ, STORYTELLING JOURNAL ACTIVITY

3.2.7. LACK OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN

Historically, women have not had the same rights as men and have been excluded from public and political life worldwide. In Australia, for example, during the 1960s, women that worked in the public sector, and in many private companies, were forced to resign from their jobs when they married; and until 1965 Australian women didn't have the right to drink in a public bar (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2020). See below a quote that illustrates the treatment of women before the 1970s:

"In those days, there were not many opportunities for women and I witnessed the exploitation of migrant women in the factories."

——

RAFAELA TORRES

In the 1970s, legislation and policies began to change to be more inclusive of women. Some of these changes included: equal pay, child-care centres for working parents, child benefits for single mothers and maternity leave arrangements (Victorian Women's trust, 2021). The reflections of some female participants provide us with insights into a changing and evolving Australia from a female perspective. These include for example, the creation of institutions to support women, education opportunities, and social security:

"In the 1970s university became free. So, I decided to study. There was also a change of government (prior to that it was conservative) and the Ministry for Women was created".

—

RAFAELA TORRES

"Upon arriving in Australia after a lengthy process I was reunited with my family and my two children who live here in Melbourne. As the days passed the economic situation began to worry me and I asked my brother to help me find work because I did not speak English. He took me to [the Department of] Social Security to request assistance. The social worker said to me: 'You do not have to work because you are a single mother and you will receive a payment for being a single mother. You will be paid a salary to be with your son'… You have to deal with a different world, but it is easier [to be in Australia] than other countries. There is more support for women. They do not leave you on your own: there was assistance and there still is".

—

GLADYS NOVOA

A participant described that this social change, and many others, was possible due to mas demonstrations, grassroots action, and political changes (Sydney Living Museums, n.d), which contributed to the awakening or transformation of Australia (e.g. women's rights, Aboriginal rights, gay rights) (Arrow, 2020):

"At that time in Australia –today many people do not know about that part of Australia– there were also protests against uranium mining, Aboriginal rights, the rights of Chile, Turkey. People came in masses. There were protests with music, not seen today".

—

MARITZA THOMPSON

3.3
INTEGRATION PROCESS: KEY ELEMENTS

Some of the interviewees acknowledged that the Spanish-speaking people integrated well into the Australian society. This aligns to the conclusions Lopez (2001) reached, which suggest that despite the difficulties, the Spanish-speaking communities appear to be settled permanently and quite satisfactorily. Those interviewed provided insights into the elements that helped to achieve this. These are: understanding and embracing Australian culture and way of life, community resilience, family and community, relevant services and faith-based organisations. This section explores participants' views regarding these concepts.

3.3.1. EMBRACE AUSTRALIAN CULTURE AND WAY OF LIFE

Participants acknowledged that to integrate into Australian society, they had to accept the cultural differences as a way to overcome them, as explained below:

> "Respect and discipline make them [Australians] seem like a refrigerator, a cold box, and this is somewhat difficult for our Latin-American culture. But it was key to comprehending them and accepting them to be able to break through those cultural barriers".
> ——
> MARIO RODRÍGUEZ

For others, a way to actively participate in Australian society meant to distance themselves from other members of the Spanish-speaking communities:

> "Our greatest driving force was to see our daughters thrive and have opportunities. That is why we never tried to be close to Latin Americans. We did what we could to belong to the Australian community".
> ——
> MARGARITA AND IGNACIO QUINSACARA

For those who did not have access to relevant services, they had to create organisations to support each other to understand the Australian society and learn how to navigate the Australian system:

> "The inexistence of services in our own language helped us to form part of a community that spoke English. We created a community organisation –the Central American Association of Communal Development– to offer legal advice in integrating as new Australians. At the Neighbourhood House they provided interpreters to understand Australian society. That helped us to understand how the system works. We understood that we needed to integrate into services that already existed. We were just another Australian, limited by language but going through the processes like a local".
> ——
> WILFREDO ZELADA

3.3.2. SUPPORT NETWORKS

As a collectivist society, the concepts of **family and community** are very important for the Spanish-speaking communities, and these were crucial for the integration process, as explained below:

> "The concept of family, as we know it, is important to make us a more cohesive, harmonious and less divided society".
> ——
> WILFREDO ZELADA

Since the early 1990s migration programs have focused on reuniting families, humanitarian visas and improving the economy through skilled migration. However, the current program related to Family Reunion is quite different to the way it operated in the mid to late 1980s. As previously mentioned, a large number of people migrated under the Family Reunion Program; this means that they had support from their family who were already in Australia. The example below illustrates how this program helped some migrants to bring their family and increase their support network:

> "We met the Minister for Immigration, and as a result, we could help to bring families from Peru with the program of family reunification"
> ——
> ÁNGELA AND PABLO BARRA

Others had to create their own "family". It was in this way that they began to build their community, as illustrated below:

> "When one leaves their home, one has to learn to look for family wherever one goes, because sometimes your own family is not your family"
> ——
> ARUN MUÑOZ

> "At the Housing Commission in Kensington, where there were many Latin Americans, there was less solitude. There was a community with events, a church community. There, one began to integrate, to live in both environments: my Spanish-speaking world and the multicultural setting".
> ——
> NORA RAMÍREZ

However, it is important to mention that some people – mainly from El Salvador, Spain and Chile – who arrived during that time had contrasting political ideologies and there was mistrust within the community, as explained by Lopez (2001, p. 76): "That mistrust was not exactly misplaced. There have been accounts of Salvadorans refugees who had been victims of torture forced to come face-to-face with the perpetrators of these acts, not only in the wider community but also in the Migrant Hostels themselves shortly after their arrival in Australia". Therefore, **for political reasons and different social beliefs, it was difficult, at that time, to have a unified Spanish-speaking community in Australia.**

> "There were two Spanish clubs, divided due to political reasons like the dictatorship".
>
> ——
>
> SIMÓN PALOMARES

> "I preferred not to form part of the Chilean community as they made my life impossible for being gay"
>
> ——
>
> ARUN MUÑOZ

3.3.3. FAITH-BASED ORGANISATIONS

A study of migrants and refugees from Latin American backgrounds suggest that high levels of religiosity and faith are used as a coping strategy to give meaning to their hardship and suffering and build resilience (Lusk et al., 2019). The majority of Spanish-speaking communities in Australia describe themselves as Catholic (Lopez, 2001). Hence, the important role that religion and faith-based organisations played during the integration process. In Victoria, for example, the Melbourne Catholic Church provided a property in Melbourne's western suburbs in which Salvadorans established a Pastoral House to deliver community activities (Lopez, 2001). Through these organisations many people created a community to belong to, as illustrated below:

> "One of my uncles was the pastor of a Spanish-speaking church. The first thing my siblings and I did was join the church youth group".
>
> ——
>
> CECILIA HERNÁNDEZ

It has been pointed out that these organisations, around the world, have responded to humanitarian needs and provided substantial relief, and were essential to the functioning of the refugee-serving community (Ferris, 2005; Wilson, 2011). Some participants commented on the important role faith-based organisations played in helping refugees from Latin America:

> "I have seen very nice things and horrendous things. I have seen people who arrived in the 1980s as refugees and who could be persecuted and how unions and churches met in secret to help those refugees and we did not say anything for twenty years".
>
> ——
>
> IVANA CSAR

3.3.4. RESILIENCE

According to the American Psychology Association, resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress. **Resilience and hard work** helped the Spanish-speaking communities to overcome the challenges they faced throughout the integration process, as described below:

"One day at school the English teacher put on a record that was called 'I am a Rock' by Simon and Garfunkle. He asked us to write a poem... When I wrote the poem, I was thinking about how I felt: I felt like a remote island, but at the same time I defined myself as a 'rock' and no-one could break me"

—

MARITZA THOMPSON

"It was very sad for me. My husband working all day from 6 am to 9 pm... Pablo working so hard. Pablo had to work two jobs: [the] factory and cleaning".

—

ÁNGELA AND PABLO BARRA

3.4
CONTRIBUTION

Migration has contributed significantly to Australia's population, with almost one quarter of the current Australian population born outside Australia (Australian Government, 2006). It is widely recognised these migrants have made, and are still making, a vast contribution to Australian society and to the economy – see quote below. This section describes the contribution the Spanish-speaking communities have made to society, such as through the creation of organisations, contributing to multiculturalism, and through community and economic activities.

"Today there is a greater awareness of migrants. But I have not always seen that people understand that it is not a question of viewing the migrant as 'disadvantaged', but that they understand that we are contributing".

—

IVANA CSAR

3.4.1. ORGANISATIONS

Many of the challenges that the Spanish-speaking communities faced became a source of motivation to improve the system. One of the ways to influence the system was through the creation of organisations, many of which have had a big impact not only on their own communities but also on the broader Australian society.

One of these organisations is CELAS (for its name in Spanish: Centro Español Latino Americano de Asistencia Social) which was founded in 1977 to respond to the needs of the Spanish-speaking communities in Victoria and provide relevant support in their language (UNITED, 2019). The creation of CELAS is explained in the following quote:

> "CELAS, which was created by 25 Spanish speakers and an Australian, was born out of the necessity for interpreters and services in our language".
>
> ───
>
> RAFAELA TORRES

The positive impact of CELAS[3] on some members of the community is illustrated below:

> The first person that helped me was a person to whom I will always be grateful. I can only say that she worked for an institution known as CELAS. If she had not helped me with her advice and her moral and sometimes financial support, I think I would not have survived".
>
> ───
>
> ERNA MENDEZ, STORYTELLING JOURNAL ACTIVITY

Foundation House is a not-for-profit organisation that specialises in supporting survivors of torture and other traumatic events. Since 1987, this organisation has supported more than 50,000 survivors of torture or other traumatic events to rebuild their lives (Foundation House, 2020). Foundation House was created with the support of CELAS and other members of the Spanish-speaking communities (among others) to respond to the needs of those who were arriving in Victoria with trauma from experiences of torture, violence, persecution, etc., as explained below by some of those involved in its creation:

> "CELAS accepted many people who had been tortured. We brought in experts in the field to train ourselves. This led to the emergence of Foundation House, which has not only helped migrants who arrived with trauma but Australians to reintegrate after a traumatic experience".
>
> ───
>
> RAFAELA TORRES

> "At the time the Salvadorans also began to arrive. I could tell that these people who were arriving were arriving with trauma, the scars of their past life and that it was necessary to give them support… A meeting with the Latin American Welfare Centre (CELAS) was held and we formed a committee, with my husband as secretary, which today is known as the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (Foundation House)".
>
> ───
>
> MARITZA THOMPSON

Some members of the Spanish-speaking communities have been very active in creating and working in organisations that support migrants during the settlement process. This includes, for example, the establishment of the Migrant Resource Centre (MRCs) in 1976, which were created through funding from the Federal Government in Sydney and Melbourne to begin with, due to evidence gathered through research and the very strong political advocacy of community organisations, including -of course- migrant groups and individuals. The MRS provide settlement services for migrants and

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[3] *Today is called UNITED-Spanish Latin American Welfare Centre.*

refugees. Currently there are several of these centres around Australia supporting the wider migrant community. The quote below illustrates the participation of one of those individuals who strongly advocated for this type of support:

> "Aware of the needs, we knew that we had to form an institution to be able to ask for assistance from the government and other organisations… We wrote to the Federal Government to say that the services were minimal and that we needed to create another type of service…The first Migrant Resource Centre was created on Elizabeth Street and I belonged to the Committee of Management".
>
> ⎯
>
> IVANA CSAR

Finally, the creation of an Ethnic Broadcasting service was necessary to explain the Australian system to the growing number of migrants in their own language (Colina, 2020). The Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), a Federal Government funded radio and later television service was established on January 1978 to assist in the settlement process by providing information and programing in a variety of community languages. In 1975 the Federal Government commissioned Radio Ethnic Australia and the new radio stations of 2EA in Sydney and 3EA in Melbourne (now SBS) to provide information originally about the new Medibank scheme. The development of the community radio sector has had a vital role in the dissemination of vital information for new communities. Several members of the Spanish-speaking communities have contributed to create these organisations and keeping them alive, as illustrated below:

> "When I was at the Migrant Resource Centre someone told me that we should start 'ethnic broadcasting' and in conjunction with other people we started what is now SBS (3EA in Melbourne)".
>
> ⎯
>
> IVANA CSAR

> "I worked in radio for 25 years. I had a health and cultural program called "Tertulia". I love radio. It is the best medium to understand those from abroad and that you cannot see (man has a fascination for the unknown). SBS has done a lot for the Hispanic community and in general for the Australian community".
>
> ⎯
>
> CARLOS SÁNCHEZ

> "In 1990 we started the radio program 'Proyección Sur' at 88.3 Southern FM with romantic Latin American music, tango, pop. That kept me in contact with the community. When we began that radio project there were also newspapers in Spanish and they were the only way of maintaining contact with information in our own language".
>
> ⎯
>
> MARIO RODRÍGUEZ

The concept of multiculturalism was introduced in 1973 when the "White Australia policy" was abolished and the government began to review how the policy of "assimilation" had a negative impact on the migrant population (Department of Home Affairs, 2021). These issues led to the development of an Australian multicultural policy. Today, every State and Territory has policies and programs related to multiculturalism (Koleth, 2010). The Spanish-speaking communities have lived through this transition period, as illustrated below:

> "When I started university, I understood how Anglo-Saxon Australia was. There we were only two migrants in the classes and the rest of the students were Anglo-Saxons. Many came from Victorian [rural] towns and they were not used to seeing people from other countries either"
> ——
> SIMÓN PALOMARES

> "The 80s was a period of a lot of change. I remember the opening of the first Vietnamese restaurant. And later Asian restaurants began to pop up. There was a Chilean restaurant when we arrived in Nunawading"
> ——
> ARUN MUÑOZ

The Spanish-speaking communities have **contributed to multiculturalism by maintaining and sharing their culture** with the rest of the Australian community. Participants in this project acknowledge that the multiculturalism provided opportunities to maintain their culture and identity:

> "It was important to integrate into this country: a success as a community and individually. To learn bilingualism and biculturalism. In this country one can genuinely feel Latin American and Australian".
> ——
> TELMO LANGUILLER

> "Although we could not learn the language well, in this very multicultural country we could be ourselves without having to change our culture much and to obtain everything we wanted very easily".
> ——
> DELICIA VILLELLA, STORYTELLING JOURNAL ACTIVITY

However, despite the significant changes over the years, and contributions from the Spanish-speaking migrants, some consider that the Spanish-speaking communities are still not well represented in all facets of the Australian society, as per the following reflexion:

"I think that multiculturalism is not well represented in the Australian community. Much is said about diversity and acknowledging the skills of other people; but the Australian community looks towards Asia, China and the US. And it sees Latin America more with a view towards tourism but not productivity, business, etc. I do not see many Spanish-speaking people as directors of large companies".

——

PETER LOCHERT

The multiculturalism policies supported organisations and social groups to maintain their culture, language and cultural history and to be recognised at the system level (Department of Home Affairs, 2021). The Spanish-speaking communities have been very active in creating community groups, organisations and activities that keep our culture and history alive and allow us to share it with the wider society. For example:

"We created the 'Summation' (Sum of nations) festival, which was held annually for 12 years. When the Commonwealth Games were held, this festival was one of the platforms for teaching the teams… My daughter was one of the first who founded a dance group, and now she is the director of Maya Dance, which has been going for four generations. Most of the girls are now no longer 100% Salvadoran".

——

WILFREDO ZELADA

"We created a soccer club. Different nationalities were part of this. This sport was not important in Australia during the 1990s. It became a family club. We created what is, still today, the folkloric group Perú de danza, together with two other couples. We have travelled all around the country and introduced Latin culture to many Australians".

——

ÁNGELA AND PABLO BARRA

One aspect of the Spanish-speaking cultures that has been well received by the Australian community is the music. Music has also been key to increasing sense of belonging, keeping our culture alive, helping the community, and as a form of expression regarding political situations at the time (for example, against the dictatorship in Chile). The quotes below illustrate the experiences of members of the community who have achieved all of this through music:

"The music my group played was very new; we were very well received. We played with very famous bands. We travelled all over Australia… Something I am proud of is the music group I formed with my siblings. This allowed us to become part of a community, to cooperate, to support the needs of other people and to do our bit. When harsh natural phenomena struck in Chile, we were able to collect money to send and support the people affected … We also played at the concert for Nelson Mandela".

—

ALEJANDRO VARGAS

"There was a strong music movement in Australia. Those were the years of dictatorships in Latin America; soirees were held and folkloric clubs formed, where we fought for change. When democracy was restored to Latin America, the music we performed changed. Folklore gave rise to salsa, bolero and tango. We performed our music in parades as part of the most important festivals in Melbourne: Moomba, the St Kilda Festival, the Melbourne International Festival, suburbs and many towns. With Grupo Bahía I visited almost all the states and we toured Singapore. Several children of the first generations of Latin musicians in Australia are making music today".

—

FERNANDO GALLARDO

"I joined a band –the first Latin music band that came on the Australian market– and Latin music began to take off there. I sang with Sonora Dinamita and other artists… When I was President of the Colombian club there was an earthquake in Colombia. We applied to the government and they gave us $50,000 to help. That was a lot of money back then and they let us use a town hall to hold a party without charging and we danced opposite Myer – over $150,000 was collected and sent to Colombia".

—

OFELIA SOSSA

3.4.3. COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Many members of the Spanish-speaking communities developed community activities to increase their sense of belonging, to support others, and to understand the system. As explained by Lopez (2001, p. 32): "community leaders with a history of leadership and social activism worked intensively for the integration and cohesion with their communities". Some of these activities were done through sporting, social, folklore and/or cultural clubs and groups. See for example, the experiences cited below:

"There were two Spanish clubs… These spaces were a large community, where there was a lot of support and that was wonderful. We had the same experience as all the other migrant children: parents working in factories, all learning English. The early years were easy because our lives always revolved around migrants".

—

SIMÓN PALOMARES

> "We gave people food, we paid for enrolments for those who could not afford it. We received many new migrants and, in some ways, we cared for and adopted them".
> ———
> ÁNGELA AND PABLO BARRA

Some of these groups also advocated for social justice, as illustrated by the following quote:

> "Here in this country, we have worked for Latin America, forming committees that encompassed Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, El Salvador and Nicaragua; reporting in radio programs; informing about the realities of our countries, stolen by military dictatorships".
> ———
> GLADYS NOVOA

3.4.4. BREAKING THE GLASS CEILING

The Spanish-speaking communities have contributed to important transformations in the state of Victoria and within a diverse range of fields such as: arts and culture, education and science, gastronomy, entrepreneurship, manufacturing, public sector, and sports, among others. While we recognize this wide contribution, this section only illustrates the contribution of those who were interviewed for this project.

Some of those who participated in this project mentioned the impact they had within the **"arts and culture"** field. This is particularly relevant in the Australian Media field given the previously mentioned challenges regarding the "Anglo-Saxon" dominated fields – which are still prevalent today (Arvanitakis et al., 2020). The following quote illustrates the work of Simon Palomares to have representativeness in this field using comedy:

> The comedy festival began as a proposal from many artists who gathered together at a bar in St Kilda in 1985. The objective was to do all the shows at the same time, 40 shows. Today it is the third biggest comedy festival in the world. 'Wogs out of work' was created there. It was the first show we took on tour around the whole country… Later I did television. I was the only Spaniard on television for decades. We decided not to go to SBS, because it would be very easy for someone who did not want to see migrants to simply change the channel. So, we went with the two biggest commercial channels"
> ———
> SIMÓN PALOMARE

The "arts and culture" field also allowed the Spanish-speaking communities to influence iconic organisations, such as the Arts Centre, and contribute to the development and diversity of the arts by showcasing other cultures, as described below:

> "I was arts coordinator at the Victorian Arts Centre. I broke through the glass ceiling as my predecessors were all 'Anglo-Saxon'. I was able to connect people from India and China through a mini-festival at the Arts Centre… I did theatre in English and Spanish. In one work I integrated the Arab and Jewish communities".
> ──
> CARLOS SÁNCHEZ

> "Dance, ballet, Hindu dance. After three years we toured Malaysia. I worked with the Hindu dance company for ten years. I did a postgraduate qualification in choreography. I lived in Sydney and worked as an independent choreographer. The Bell Shakespeare Company was one of my clients. Now I am a photographer"
> ──
> ARUN MUÑOZ

Some of those who participated in the project have contributed to the "**Education**" field, both in the Vocational and Higher Education systems. Their impact has gone beyond Australia and have expanded their contribution internationally. They have been key to deepening Australia's bilateral relations, as explained below:

> "In the TAFE system, I had the opportunity to engage many people from the Latin American community who were not familiar with the system. Vocational training was something that the community embraced. At Swinburne, I had the opportunity to take the TAFE model to Latin America".
> ──
> PETER LOCHERT

> "I succeeded in influencing higher education in this country and on a global level in the efficiency and effectiveness of universities… We have worked collectively on relations between Australia and Latin America. We are attracting students from other places and educating, transforming the education process for the lives of millions of people. Australia benefits from education".
> ──
> ÁNGEL CALDERÓN

Another important area of contribution to the Victorian state is "**Infrastructure**". The quote below illustrates the important contribution one member of the community made to the Victorian transport system:

> "I worked on major projects that have changed Victoria and Melbourne and peoples' lives: the first computerised railway control centre in Melbourne; the implementation of the City Loop tunnels, the Regional Fast Rail, Regional Rail Link, the Rail Skills Centre Victoria and the early stages of the Melbourne Metro Tunnel, among other projects".
> ——
> MARIO RODRÍGUEZ

Several members of the Spanish-speaking communities have started businesses. This has contributed not only to the economy but also to multiculturalism (e.g. the opening of restaurants). The following quote illustrates an **"entrepreneur"** who also contributed to **"innovation"**:

> "I was the only jeweller at the time making jewellery in the way I make it: pressed jewellery, not melted wax… I had a business that had as many as 34 employees at one stage. We sold products that were imported – I still have the business, although now we only have three employees".
> ——
> ALFREDO MUÑOZ

Having representation in Government is important to understand and cater for the needs of everyone (The McKell Institute, 2021). Therefore, participating in the "**public sector**" is a very important accomplishment, especially for the Spanish-speaking communities that have been historically under-represented in Victoria. The following quote is illustrative of this achievement:

> "Today migrant work is much more recognised. The battles that were won, such as having Latin American representatives in the upper echelons of government, like the parliament".
> ——
> ALEJANDRO VARGAS

Although not many members of the Spanish-speaking communities have been politically active within Australian political institutions, those who have been have made significant contributions to the wider community. This is illustrated below by the former Speaker of the Lower House of the Parliament of Victoria:

> "When I retired from parliament in 2018, the Premier and my colleagues paid tribute to me in recognition of my work. I received an autographed framed Disability Act, 2006's cover by the Premier. One of my passions is the issue of human rights and I was responsible for almost all the 'Disability Law 2006', which is based on human rights and the needs of disabled people".
> ——
> TELMO LANGUILLER

Others have seen the public sector as a way to directly support the Spanish-speaking communities, as explained below:

> "I worked in politics from 2006 to 2018. I reached parliament. I have been lucky enough to work with many people for the good of the Hispanic community, helping with housing, Centrelink, different support that the elderly, especially, do not have access to".
> ───
> **CESAR CISNERO**

The Spanish-speaking communities have contributed to **"social justice"**. Some suggested that this is part of who we are as community:

> "The Latin American community has contributed greatly to this society. We have something in common across the different nationalities, because we are supportive within the Latin community, because we love our people, because we care for the elderly, young children".
> ───
> **GLADYS NOVOA**

For others, social justice is about responding to the emerging needs of specific sectors of the community. For example:

> "I started helping at church. I have helped with United (CELAS) for years. I have also helped children who are in foster care for many years, which has been very gratifying. I started this when a grandfather told me that his dream was to help his grandchildren who were in foster care. From then on we have ensured that the children have a Christmas and Easter present"
> ───
> **CECILIA HERNÁNDEZ**

Overall, the impact of the Spanish-speaking communities in the social justice field goes beyond our communities. For example, Maritza helped to support refugees and asylum seekers by increasing the understanding of the impact of torture, and by advocating for the release of asylum seekers from detention:

> "My thesis explored the effects of torture on Latin Americans. I was unhappy that all those who arrived were immediately given a diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)… The result equated to a sum of money ($100,000), which was invested at the University of Melbourne to study the effects of torture, focusing on political refugees who were not permanent residents… At the same time, I worked with the detention centres. Finally, in 1998 I was given permission to take people out of the centres to a clinic where they did artwork.

This resulted in an art exhibition in 1998 in which they protested against detention centres. The result of the protest was that the refugees from Timor were set free with permanent residency in Australia".

———

MARITZA THOMPSON

Another example of a wider and long-term contribution in this area are the achievements of Telmo Languiller during his role as Speaker of the Lower House of the Parliament of Victoria:

"I was the Speaker of parliament on the 15th of September 2015, a historic day in Victoria, when the Aboriginal flag was raised at the top of Parliament House to fly permanently alongside the Australian and Victorian flags. This event was most important in the journey of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, a recognition of common and shared history, and for me as a Latin American-Australian to be the Speaker of the parliament, who together with Indigenous leaders, the Premier, all members of parliament, the diplomatic corps and the public, witnessed this first flag raising of the Aboriginal flag in the history of the state".

———

TELMO LANGUILLER

3.4.5. FUTURE GENERATIONS

The Spanish-speaking communities are very proud of their success in providing their children with a good education and having passed on important life values. At the same time, they have contributed to society more broadly through creating responsible citizens who are actively participating in Victoria's economy and society. See examples of this below:

"When they brought us here, Australian needed to be populated, because at the time it was full of adults. They saw that we had three children who were going to help the country. My children are professionals and they hold important positions at work. They have made a significant contribution to the economy because they work in international companies. I am proud of my children. They are making a great contribution to Australia and that gives me a lot of satisfaction".

———

OFELIA SOSSA

"My greatest achievement is to have built a family that is united, stable and with very good principles and ethical, moral and social values. I have a daughter who was born in Australia and has inherited all of these good principles and moral values. Our daughter graduated as an Occupational Therapist in March 2011, a very popular career throughout the healthcare area in Australia".

———

GERMAN PONCE, STORYTELLING JOURNAL ACTIVITY

3.5
CURRENT SITUATION OF SENIORS

As previously mentioned, the Spanish-speaking communities are ageing faster than the average Victorian population (the median age in Victoria is 37 years old). In particular, this is the case with migrants who were born in those countries that were part of the main migration waves during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s: Uruguay (median 57 years of age), Spain (median 53 years of age), Chile (median 50 years of age), Argentina (median 49 years of age), and El Salvador (median 46 years of age) (UNITED, 2019). This section provides an overview of the current situation of this sector of the communities and highlights the long-term impact of government support, policies and settlement process.

3.5.1. CURRENT SITUATION OF SENIORS

Seniors lose social networks due to illness, death, retirement or residential relocation (Rook, 2009). Given the Spanish-speaking communities' population is small - in comparison to other migrant groups; they are located in different areas around Metropolitan Melbourne, and are ageing faster than other communities, they have greater probabilities of losing their support network sooner (see quote below).

> "The difficult times were the loss of my husband 14 years ago and of my daughter, who passed away over a year ago"
>
> RITA AGUILAR, STORYTELLING JOURNAL ACTIVITY

It seems that some of the challenges experienced during the settlement process hindered the possibility of creating strong networks with the wider society. This is negatively impacting the senior members of the communities, as illustrated below:

> "For our elderly, the hardest thing to cope with is the solitude of this country. The system did not allow the elderly to be able to build a strong community due to the very individualism of this culture".
>
> ALEJANDRO VARGAS

The decrease in support networks and the ability to access services – such as public transport – due to their age and physical conditions increase the risk of loneliness and social isolation, as explained below:

> Solitude and the tyranny of distance. In Melbourne we are very dispersed. The community is located in the west or the south-east. Many of their adult children are moving into new areas, far away from their parents and that is when the distance becomes a tyranny. It is not easy to visit. Older people no longer drive, they do not use public transport"
>
> ——
>
> RAFAELA TORRES

> "One of my current challenges is to use public transport and to walk part of the way to get somewhere, after driving my own car for 45 years. I no longer have a car".
>
> ——
>
> IRIS OCHOA, STORYTELLING JOURNAL ACTIVITY

3.5.2. MENTAL HEALTH AND AGEING

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2019), social isolation and loneliness can be harmful to both mental and physical health. Loneliness increases the likelihood of experiencing depression by 15%; and the likelihood of experiencing anxiety conditions by 13%. This is highlighted by the current Chair of UNITED-Spanish Latin America Welfare Centre[4]:

> "There is a great need for mental support. The elderly feel lonely… We [at UNITED-Spanish Latin American Welfare Centre] have access to home care packages to help with doctors, transport, etc. But they are limited… There also needs to be social connection, people who speak Spanish. We need more money so that we can give people training".
>
> ——
>
> CECILIA HERNÁNDEZ

Additionally, illnesses like dementia and Alzheimer's are common in older people and might trigger previous experiences of trauma. As previously mentioned, many people who came to Australia from Spanish-speaking countries between the 1960s and 1980s arrived in order to escape violence, political persecution and torture. The lack of access to culturally relevant mental services at the time meant that the trauma experienced is now having long-term effects associated with mental and physical ill-health, and social isolation (Kent, 2017). Therefore, there is a current urgent need to further assist this minority group. This is explained by a psychologist who has worked extensively with refugees and asylum seekers:

> "I am concerned about the elderly, the process of loss, mourning, not only in relation to country but the people around them. At this age they are telling their story for the first time. They are in their homes, reflecting on their story, what has been… perhaps they are alone because their children and grandchildren do not speak the language, they have lost the ability to speak Spanish… The loneliness, dementia, Alzheimer's in connection with the trauma. One remembers the traumatic part that was never spoken about".
>
> ——
>
> MARITZA THOMPSON

[4] *UNITED-Spanish Latin America Welfare Centre. Previously CELAS – is currently the only government funded organisation that responds to the needs of the Spanish-speaking community in Victoria and provides relevant support in their language.*

Some age-related illnesses require specialised support; however, traditionally, in the Spanish-speaking culture, family members care for their seniors. This creates conflict in regard to what is the best way to care for our senior community. Families facing this difficult decision need culturally relevant information and support services to facilitate this transition. The examples below illustrate the cultural conflict that arises when deciding the best ways to care for our seniors:

> "We gradually discovered my wife's loss of memory and other behaviours. My daughter and I had to accept my wife's progressive illness lovingly and bitterly. Her dementia and other complications required a great deal of attention and constant treatment. It was very difficult to continue on my own. We had the help of another person for a few hours while I attended English class. On medical advice, my daughter and I made the very painful and distressing decision to put my wife into a nursing home".
>
> ——
> VICTOR AVILES, STORYTELLING JOURNAL ACTIVITY

> "On the other hand, the community has to make the decision as to whether to care for our elderly in an aged-care home or in our own homes. This conflict that arises with the culture"
>
> ——
> MARTIZA THOMPSON

> "It is not that our children are bad or do not love us (if they do not have us at home). It is difficult to care for people at home, as we do and we did in Latin America with the elderly".
>
> ——
> NORA RAMÍREZ

3.5.3. RELEVANT SERVICES FOR THE SENIOR COMMUNITY

Currently, in Victoria, there are some group activities and services in Spanish for the seniors. Most of these are provided by UNITED-Spanish Latin America Welfare Centre and/or other community groups, such as Ventana Hispana Inc. in Melbourne South East. These activities are very valued by the members of the Spanish speaking communities, as illustrated below by some senior clients of UNITED- Spanish Latin America Welfare Centre:

> "Very happy with the social groups [organised by UNITED], where we paint, do exercise, theatre and other activities. All of this helps me to laugh and to share moments".
>
> ——
> RITA AGUILAR, STORYTELLING JOURNAL ACTIVITY

> "We have been lucky enough to meet people who work with the elderly. They take care of us and give us advice and information about how to access government assistance. They look out for our well-being and they provide entertainment, trips to different places and meetings with people of our age and of course that speak the same language. They treated us fondly and with a great deal of care"
> ——
> CARLOS DURAN, STORYTELLING JOURNAL ACTIVITY

The above highlights the importance of relevant services in different languages that support social connection and wellbeing. However, relevant services are also needed for the professional care of seniors when more specialised support is required. While it is acknowledged that the Translating and Interpreting Service is available for free when discussing care needs, fees, care plans and budgets (Australian Government, 2021), the care of seniors goes beyond that. The quotes below illustrate the need for culturally relevant services in Spanish:

> "When we get old, we go back to our mother tongue because that is how we learnt to feel; we go back to our roots. We need a place or a part of a place where the elderly can communicate in Spanish, eat Latin American food".
> ——
> NORA RAMÍREZ

> "Now there are elderly people who need nursing homes but never learnt the language. These services do not have people that speak Spanish. As one gets older, one needs more care and to be understood. One goes back to one's childhood. The interpreter's service is more limited than during the 1980s and 90s because it is assumed that we all have to speak English. The Latin American community does not have strongly established communities that provide services in their own language for their communities".
> ——
> WILFREDO ZELADA

Unfortunately, there is only one government-funded organisation for all the Spanish-speaking seniors across the state: UNITED-Spanish Latin American Welfare Centre which is located in Melbourne's west. They provide Aged Care Services throughout most metropolitan areas. However, most of their clients are living in the west, north and south-east of Melbourne. Due to the large and growing size of the metropolitan areas, some regions are beyond UNITED-Spanish Latin American Welfare Centre's services. To be able to access services like that offered by UNITED-Spanish Latin American Welfare Centre, the community needs to know the system and understand how to access it. In addition to this, given the limited number of packages approved and provided by the Federal Government, the waiting list is very long, as a client of UNITED-Spanish Latin American Welfare Centre explains:

> "We are already old. The most difficult thing is that the services to help the elderly are not forthcoming. We have to wait a year and a half at least to receive aged-care services".
>
> ——
>
> DELICIA VILLELLA, STORYTELLING JOURNAL ACTIVITY

There is a scarcity of aged care residential services across the whole of the metropolitan area that consider the language, culture and experiences of Spanish-speaking and other multicultural communities when providing options. This has a negative impact on the wellbeing of our seniors, as illustrated below:

> "A Cuban friend had to go to a nursing home while his wife recovered in hospital. When we went to visit him he begged us to get him out of there. He did not understand the language or the food. He said, 'help me'. He died 48 hours after that visit".
>
> ——
>
> CECILIA HERNÁNDEZ

> "People of my generation are already reaching an age that we need aged-care services and in this respect, because we are a very small community, we have less opportunities to obtain services that are culturally appropriate, the language. These services are needed".
>
> ——
>
> PETER LOCHERT

To conclude, the Spanish-speaking communities are aging faster than the average Victorian community. This brings challenges that come with the age, however, given the migration journey illustrated in this report, additional challenges arise. These include, for example: language; support networks; the lack of access to relevant mental health support during arrival; the long-term effects of trauma; cultural beliefs regarding caring for seniors. Therefore, particular considerations need to be considered when providing relevant support to our senior community.

4.
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This report illustrated the journey of the Spanish-speaking communities in Victoria who arrived between the 1960s and 1980s. The report demonstrates that the community encountered challenges such as language, policies of assimilation that led to racism, cultural contrasts, identity, limited career opportunities and homesickness. However, they overcame those challenges and integrated well into the Victorian social fabric. To achieve this, they decided to embrace the Australian culture – without losing their own; created their own support networks and organisations; received the support of organisations relevant to them (e.g. community support, ethic radio broadcasting and faith-based organisations); took the opportunities offered during their migration journey; were resilient and worked hard to break the glass ceiling.

The report also demonstrates that the Spanish-speaking communities have contributed significantly to the Victorian and Australian communities in different fields such as social justice, education, politics, infrastructure, arts and culture, among many more. However, one of the most important areas of contribution has been the creation of organisations that support not only the Spanish-speaking communities but the wider society, such as Foundation House, Migrant Resource Centre, and SBS radio. In addition to this, the communities have contributed to the success of a multicultural society in Australia.

Finally, the findings of this community research suggests that although Government support exists, those who arrived between the 1960s and 1980s currently need extra and relevant support services, as they face growing challenges related to ageing. These include, for example: experiences of trauma both, before migration (e.g. torture in their own country) and/or during the first years of settlement (e.g. racism); understanding of the communities as a collectivist society, the lack of opportunities for some to learn the language (given they came as adults or they had to work in factories to support their families without the opportunity to learn the language); and the impact of social isolation on their mental health.

Based on the key findings, Latin Stories Australia trusts that the Victorian Government, Government departments, other jurisdictions and other organisations, will consider the recommendations included in the executive summary.

5. APENDIX

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEWS' PARTICIPANTS PROFILE

NAME	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	YEAR OF ARRIVAL	CONTRIBUTION
Alejandro Vargas	Chile	1975	Musician
Alfredo Muñoz	Spain	1971	Jeweller and poet
Angel Calderon	Guatemala	1985	Principal Advisor Institutional Research and Planning, RMIT
Angela Y Pablo Barra	Peru	1974	Community leaders and sports coaches
Arun Muñoz	Chile	1977	Dancer, choreographer and photographer
Carlos Sanchez	Colombia	1989	Journalist, actor and theatre director / Former Arts Centre Coordinator
Cecilia Hernandez	Chile	1986	President, UNITED-Spanish Latin American Welfare Centre.
Cesar Cisnero	El Salvador	1988	Public service
Fernando Gallardo	Chile	1985	Musician
Gladys Novoa	Uruguay	1982	Community leader / Centro Hispano Americano de Ayuda a la Familia
Ivana Csar	Argentina	1974	Community leader / Pioneer of 3EA (today SBS Radio) / Co-founder of CELAS
Margarita and Ignacio Quinsacara	Chile	1972	Family / Community members
Mario Rodrigues	Argentina	1980	Railway Signaling Engineer
Dr. Maritza Thompson	Chile	1974	Psychologist and activist
Nora Ramirez	El Salvador	1989	Nurse
Ofelia Truque de Sossa	Colombia	1974	Musician / Family
Peter Lochert	Chile	1971	Secretary of the Department of Parliamentary Services and Education leader
Rafaela Lopez (nee Torres)	Spain	1963	Community leader / Historian & Anthropologist / Former president of CELAS
Simon Palomares	Spain	1972	Comedian, actor and director / Co-creator of Wogs Out of Work and Acropolis Now
Telmo Languiller	Uruguay	1974	Former MP-Speaker Legislative Assembly-Parliament of Victoria
Wilfredo Zelada	El Salvador	1987	Community leader / Finance officer, Victorian Women's trust

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