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THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

THAILAND IN AUSTRALIA

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FOREWORD: DID YOU KNOW THAT...?

- *About one in ten residents of the Central Business District of Sydney was born in Thailand?*
The suburbs of Sydney City and Haymarket have a larger concentration of Thais than any other suburbs in Australia.
- *Two-thirds of Thai-born people living in Australia are women?*
This largely reflects intercultural marriage patterns.
- *The state/territory of Australia with the largest proportion of Thai-born people is Northern Territory?*
The largest number numerically live in New South Wales, concentrated mainly in Sydney.
- *We can identify Thais in Australia through census figures based on place of birth, reported ancestry and language spoken at home?*
There are slightly more Thais who report primary or secondary Thai ancestry (45636) than there are those who were born in Thailand (45465), and the smallest number is those who speak Thai at home (36681).
- *Whichever measure we take, the Thai population in Australia approximately doubled in size between the 2001 census and the 2011 census?*
The Thai-born population is one of the fastest growing in Australia.
- *One in six cars bought in Australia was made in Thailand?*
As the Australian car industry is finally disappearing after nearly a century of production, we can expect this proportion to increase further.
- *Thailand exports more than twice the value of merchandise to Australia than Australia does to Thailand?*
Most of Thailand's exports to Australia are manufactures, and most of Australia's to Thailand are primary commodities.
- *Australia is home to more than 3000 Thai restaurants, about one-quarter of which are in Sydney?*
Per capita, this gives Australia more than three times as many Thai restaurants as the United States, which has a much longer history of immigration by Thais.
- *Thai investments in Australia exceed Australian investments in Thailand by a factor of three to one?*
The Thai investments are concentrated in a few very large enterprises, mainly in the energy and agricultural sectors, while Australia's are more dispersed among many medium-size investments.
- *There are more than 20,000 Thai students studying in Australia?*
Of these, only 17% are studying at universities.
- *Sydney has the second largest Thai population of any city outside Thailand, after Los Angeles?*
Until recently, the Thai population has not been very visible, because Thais have not concentrated in particular areas to the extent that Vietnamese and others who migrated in concentrated periods have done.
- *Pharlap, Australia's best known racehorse that is still remembered from the 1930s, was named after the Thai word for "lightning" (ฟ้าแลบ)?*
Pharlap won most of the races he entered but came to a sad end on 5 April 1932, with allegations he had been poisoned, and his extraordinarily large heart is still displayed at the National Museum of Australia in Canberra.



PITT ST

CAMPBELL

Thai Town



Central
station



460m

HOTEL SYDNEY CENTRAL

bar

INTRODUCTION

Thailand has not traditionally been one of Australia's larger sources of migrants, investors or tourists. Recently, however, Thailand's demographic, economic and cultural presence in Australia has started to grow very quickly.

When the 3rd International Conference on Thai Studies was held in Canberra in 1987, very few Thais lived in Australia. It was rare to hear Thai spoken on buses or along the street in downtown Sydney. Two-way trade was modest, and only the wealthiest Thais travelled abroad for holidays, mostly to Europe and North America. Those Thais who lived in Australia were highly dispersed, in contrast to other Southeast Asian communities who had arrived over the previous decade and had a much more concentrated and visible presence. A handful of Thai restaurants served what was still considered an exotic, upmarket cuisine.

Today as we hold ICTS12 in Sydney 27 years later, Thailand has an altogether more robust presence in Australia. Official figures put the residential Thai-born population at more than 45,000. Certain suburbs have started to adopt a Thai character, due to the concentration of Thai speakers. Large Thai investors have become dominant in key industries, and some Thai manufactures now dominate the market in Australia. While numbers are still modest, Thailand's demographic, economic and culinary presence in Australia has grown faster over the past decade than that of almost any other country. Thai restaurants have become ubiquitous.

As the Thai presence in Australia has grown, so have the complexities associated with an understudied diaspora, an underestimated economic relationship and other little-known aspects of Thailand's engagement with its neighbour "down under". To date, there has been no single compendium of Thailand's overseas presence in Australia. In this booklet, we seek to provide a modest profile of Thailand in Australia as a contribution to the hosting of the 12th International Conference on Thai Studies at the University of Sydney 22-24 April 2014.

A SHORT HISTORY OF THAILAND IN AUSTRALIA

Thai immigration to Australia stretches back to the 1860s. However, there are few traces of the early years. Numbers were so small that they are grouped with Indo Chinese, Korean and 'other Asian' settlers in the census until 1901, when 37 Siamese were counted (Pollock, 2007). After Federation in 1901, migration to Australia was strictly governed by the Immigration Restriction Act (the White Australia Policy).

In 1911, the master of the Thai royal stables visited Australia and bought 126 horses. This started a trend of royal envoys from Thailand visiting Australia on horse-buying and other economic missions (Pollock 2007).

Melbourne's Museum Victoria (2013) reveals that the first notable Thai to arrive in Australia was Butra Mahintra, sent by King Rama VI during the early 1920s to purchase racehorses. Connections with Thai royalty developed further with the arrival of Prince Purachatra in 1927, leading a group to observe Australian agriculture and infrastructure (Museum Victoria Australia, 2013).

The number of Thais officially counted in New South Wales stayed under 50 until the 1950s. In January 1950, the Australian government launched the Colombo Plan, an aid program for sponsoring Asian students to study or train in Australian tertiary institutions. The main objectives of the plan were to dispel the negative impression of Asian countries toward the White Australia Policy (Pollock, 2007) and to counter communism in Asia. Students from developing countries were brought to Australia to study. The idea was that when they had finished their studies students would return to use the skills and knowledge they had acquired to help their own people. Approximately 450 Thai students travelled to Australia on the Colombo Plan between 1954 and 1989 (Laorujijinda, 2013). Most did not

settle in Australia permanently, but they increased awareness of Australia when they returned to Thailand. Between the 1950s and 1970s the majority of new arrivals from Thailand in Australia continued to be students, as well as spouses of Australians and those sponsored under military traineeships.

The number of migrants in Australia grew significantly when the Immigration Restriction Act was repealed in 1973. In 1975, Australia accepted many Vietnamese, Lao and Cambodian refugees for settlement. Included in this group of Indochinese refugees were non-Thais born inside Thailand. By 1986, the Thailand-born population in Australia had risen to 6998 people, but only half of these were of Thai ancestry (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011). This means that the Thai-born population of Thai ancestry in Australia at that time was less than one-twelfth of today's figure.

The latest Census in 2011 recorded 45,465 Thailand-born people in Australia, an increase of 48.8 per cent from the 2006 Census. The 2011 distribution by state and territory showed New South Wales had the largest number with 17,541, followed by Victoria (10,766), Queensland (7,022) and Western Australia (5,662). Among the total Thailand-born in Australia at the 2011 Census, 23.1 per cent arrived between 2001 and 2006 and 32.8 per cent arrived between 2006 and 2011.

DEMOGRAPHY

The Australian Census, held every five years, is the main means by which population numbers and characteristics are determined. In principle, the census counts all people resident in Australia on the census date. In practice, some people may be missed either accidentally, or because they do not follow the legal requirement to complete the census form, which collects information for every member of the residential household. It is likely that there is more under-enumeration of the Thai community than of the wider residential community, but nevertheless the census is our most reliable source of demographic data.

INTRODUCTION: COUNTING THE THAI POPULATION IN AUSTRALIA

There are three ways in which the census counts people by national or ethnic background. Each of these has advantages and limitations. The first way is by reported place of birth. For a relatively recently arrived and fast growing group such as the Thai community, this will count quite a large proportion of the population. Of course it will not count children born in Australia, even if one or both of the child's parents are Thai-born. On the other hand, it may also count some non-Thais who were born in Thailand, including the significant number of Indochinese refugees who were born in camps on Thai soil after their parents left Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia and before they arrived in Australia.

The second way of identifying Thais in Australia is to ask the main language spoken at home. This will count most Thai families in Australia, but it will also miss second and subsequent generation offspring. It may also miss the

significant number of Thai-born spouses of Australians who speak English at home with their partners.

The third way of identifying the Thai population is to ask about ancestry. While this will capture information on most of the Thais in Australia, it might miss those who are of Sino-Thai descent and who therefore choose Chinese as the answer to this question. It also misses the offspring of Australian and Thai parents, who may answer with the ancestry of the Australian parent first. However, respondents of mixed parentage are also given the opportunity to record a second ancestry, so that they can identify themselves as, for example, having both Anglo-Australian and Thai parentage.

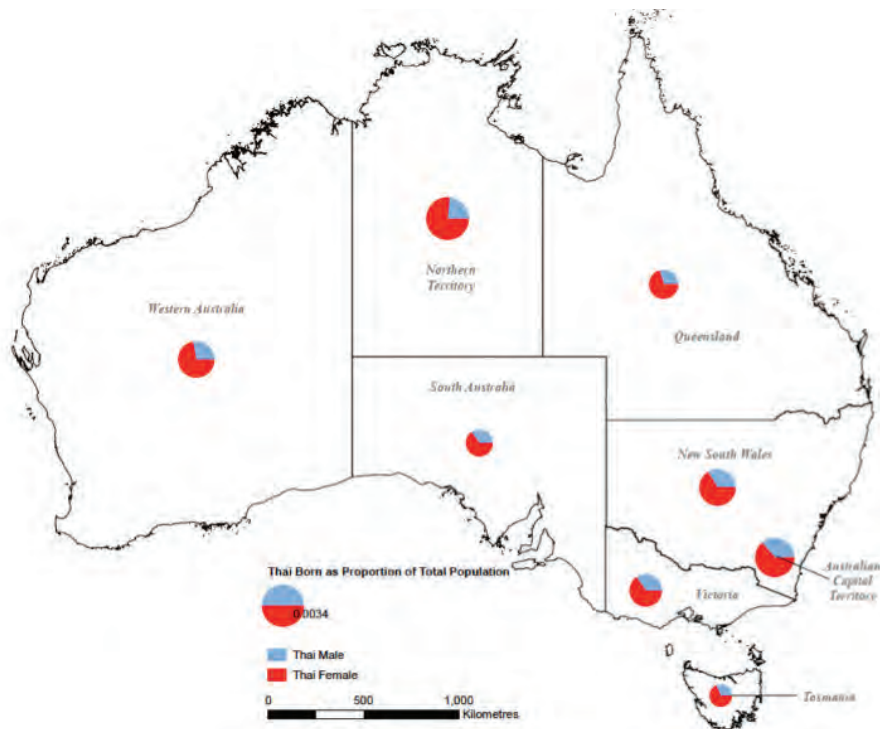


Figure 1: Distribution of Thai-born population in Australia by gender and as a proportion of the total population in each state.

POPULATION DISTRIBUTION AND GENDER

Figure 1 shows two interesting characteristics of the distribution of the Thai population between Australia's eight states and territories. First, it shows that, while the overall Thai population distribution is highly skewed to New South Wales and Victoria, and in particular to Sydney and Melbourne, this is mainly a reflection of Australia's overall concentration of population in these states and cities. Measured as a proportion of the overall population, we find that Thais are actually most prevalent in Australia's smallest and most remote jurisdiction, which is the Northern Territory.

The second key point of interest in Figure 1 is the extremely skewed numbers of women and men represented in Australia's Thai-born population. Overall, about two-thirds of Thai-born people in Australia are women. This primarily represents the pattern of migration for marriage. The proportions are different in different states. In Northern Territory, more than three quarters of the Thai-born population are women, whereas in inner Sydney the gender balance is much more even.

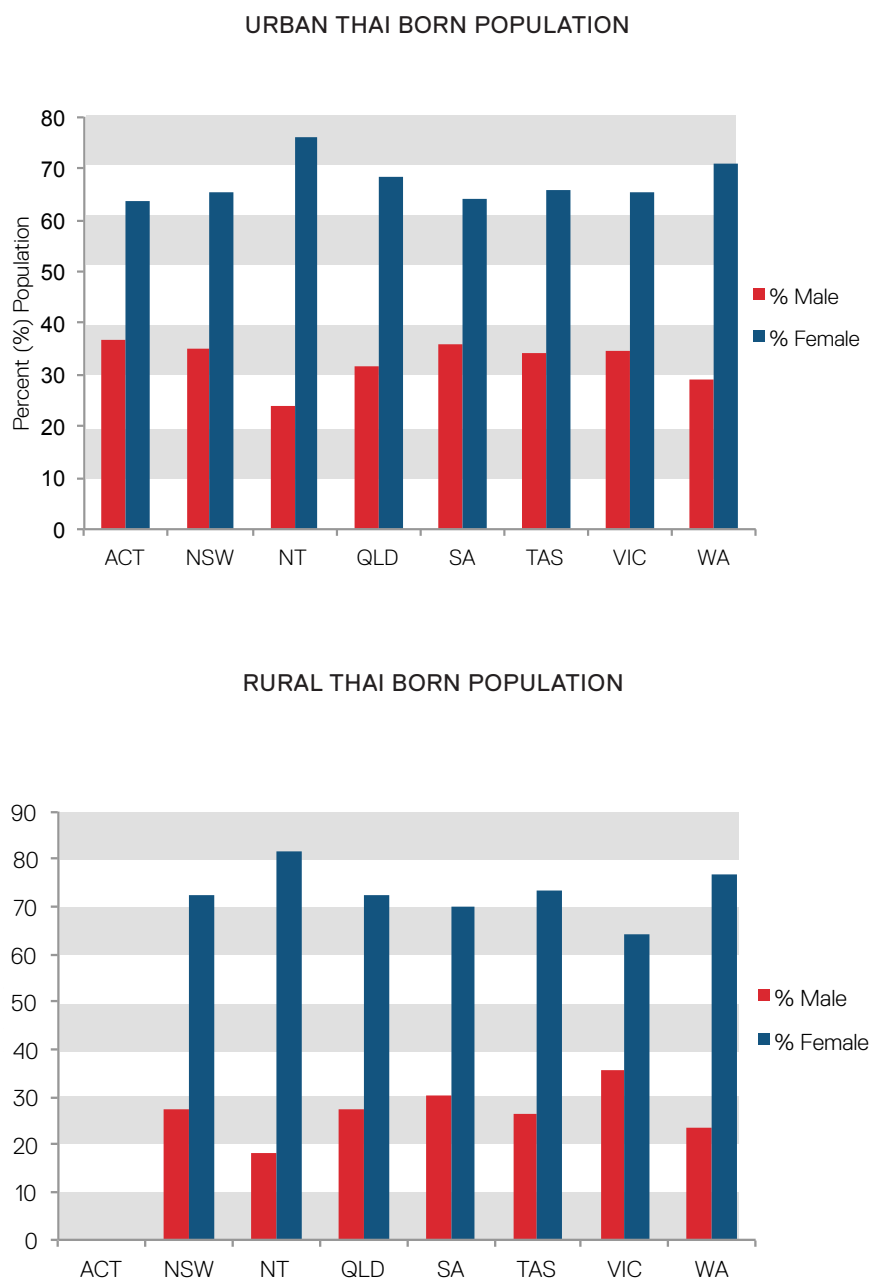


Figure 2: Gender balance of Thai born population by rural and urban areas of each state and territory

Within each state and territory, the difference in imbalance between Thai-born men and women is even more pronounced. In all cases, the imbalance is higher in rural areas – that is, Thai-born people living in rural Australia are most likely to be women married to Australians.

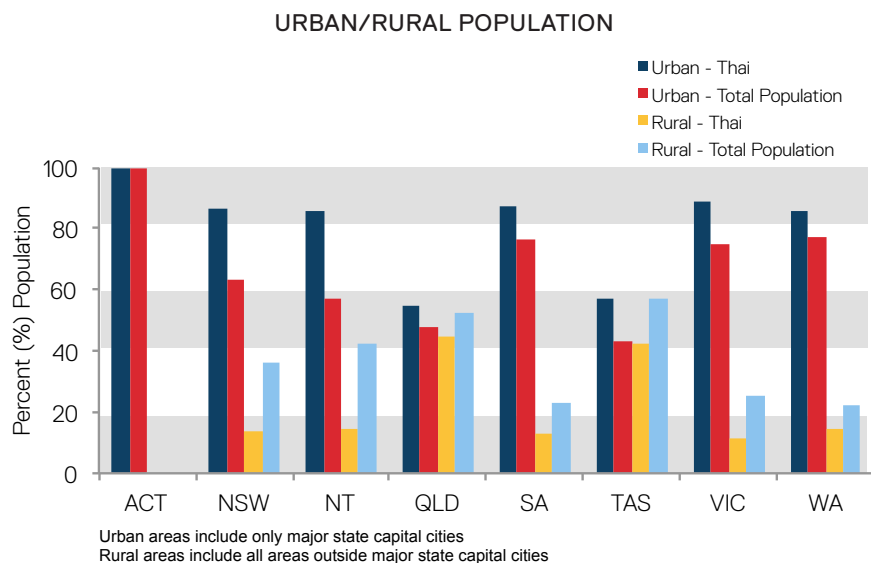


Figure 3: Urban-rural distribution of Thai-born people living in each state and territory compared with the total population

We can see from Figure 3 that, except in Queensland and Tasmania, the great majority of Thai-born people in Australia live in the big cities. In part this simply reflects Australia's overall concentration of people in these urban areas. However, it is clear that Thais are even more concentrated in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide, Hobart and Darwin than are the overall populations of the states and territories within which these capital cities are located.

Figure 4 shows that certain concentrations of the Thai-born population are starting to emerge in Sydney. Until recently, the Thai population had been distributed much more evenly than other Southeast Asian groups, particularly those whose main periods of migration were concentrated because of their refugee experience. This concentration also meant that many Vietnamese, Lao and Cambodian migrants settled together in particular suburbs. Thais moving to Australia more gradually, on the other hand, lived either with their Australian spouses or chose to live in the general community rather than congregating in any one place.

Recently, however, we have seen a distinct concentration of Thai-born people in particular suburbs. Moreover, these include some of the most iconic parts of Sydney – especially its Central Business District, where approximately one in ten residents was born in Thailand. This residential concentration gives Thai Town, which is discussed later in this booklet, more than just a business and food profile. The suburb of Haymarket has the highest residential concentration of Thais in Australia.

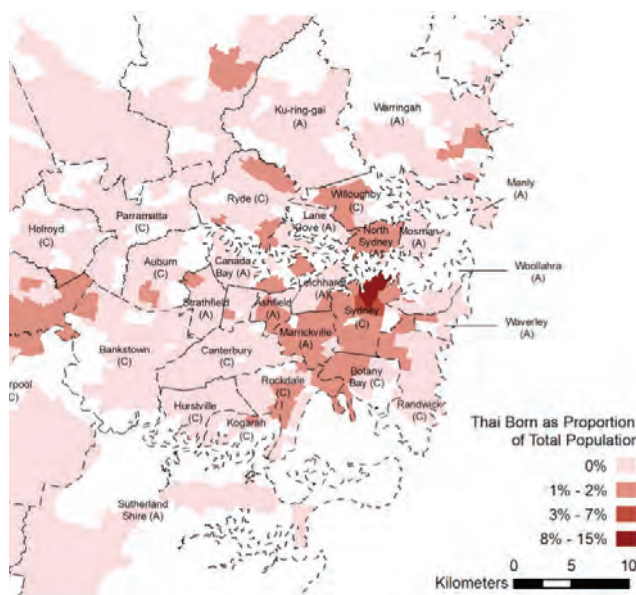


Figure 4: Distribution of Thai-born population in Sydney

POPULATION CHANGE

The Thai population of Australia has grown rapidly, but this growth is unevenly distributed. As Figure 5 shows, several parts of Sydney have seen very rapid growth, with a number of areas showing more than 2.5 times as many Thai speakers in 2011 than they had a decade earlier. For the most part, the growth has not been so great in the most affluent parts of the city, and two of Sydney's wealthiest Eastern Suburbs have even shown a slight decline in numbers of Thai speakers over this period. In contrast, the central part of Sydney now has more than 3.5 times as many Thai speakers than it did 10 years ago (i.e. the number has grown by more than 250%). Meanwhile, Figure 6 shows that the Thai born population is growing in all states, but that in percentage terms the growth is actually fastest in South Australia and Queensland rather than in the states with the largest Thai populations, NSW and Victoria.

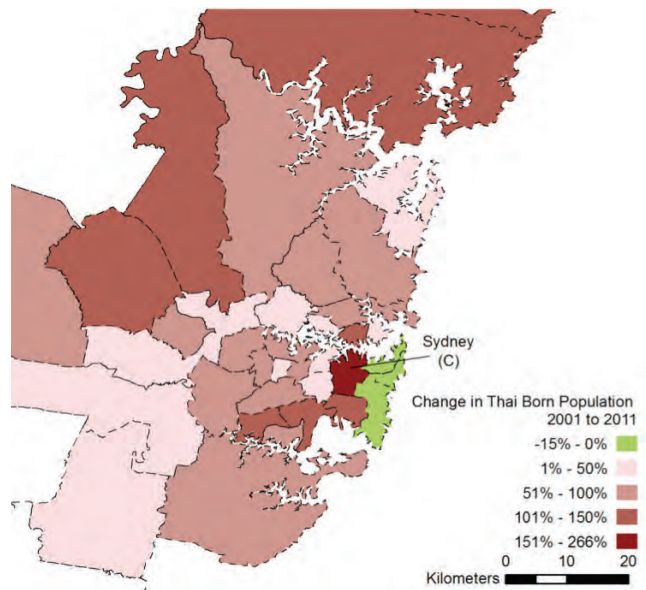


Figure 5: Thai born population change in Sydney by Local Government Area

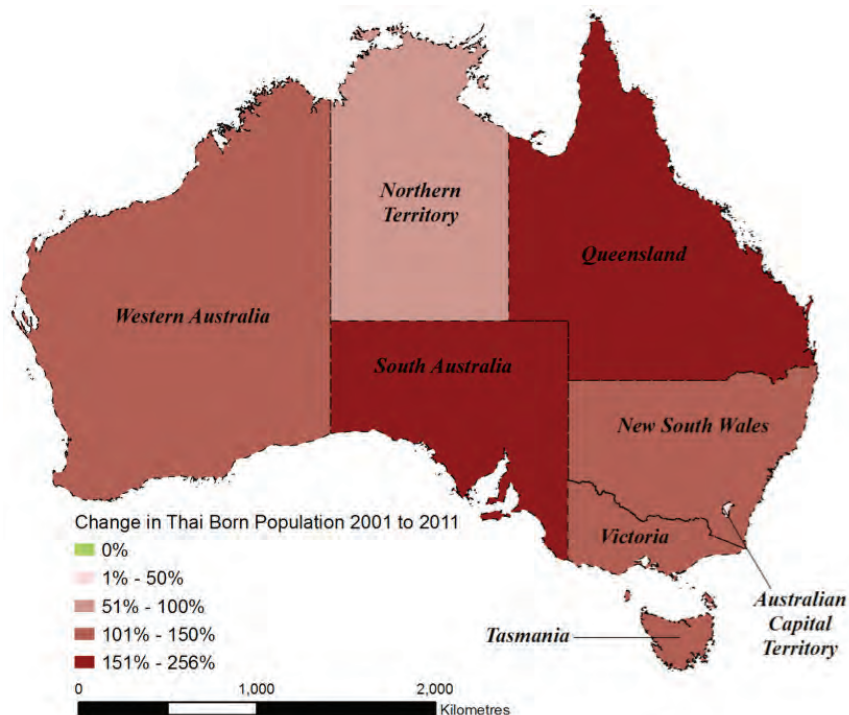
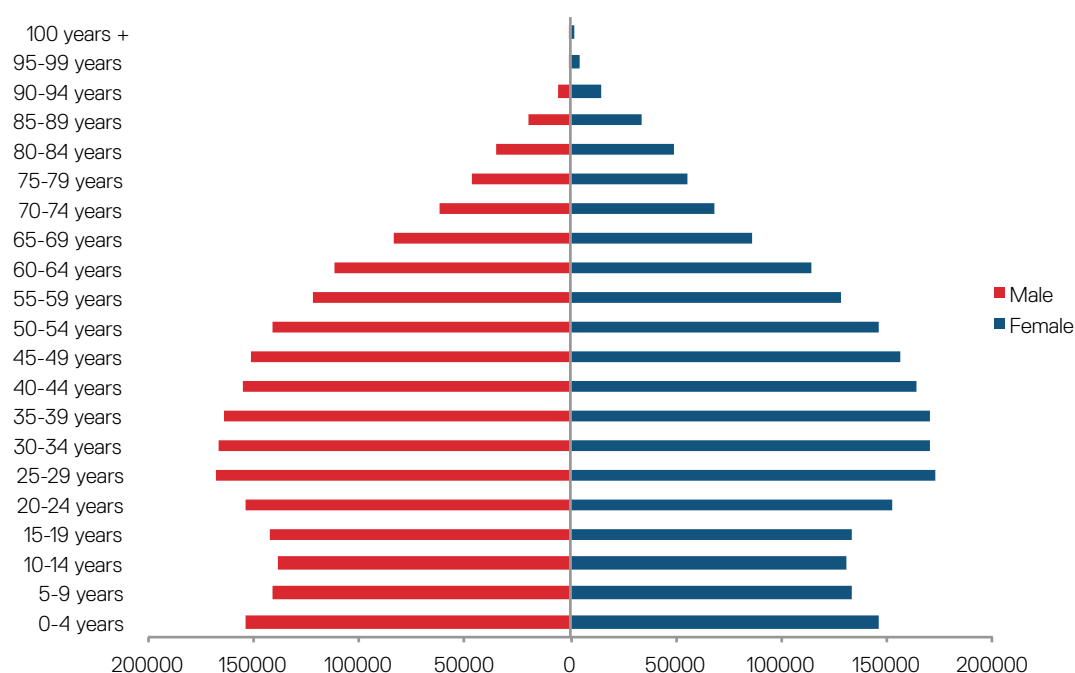


Figure 6: Thai born population change in Australia by State

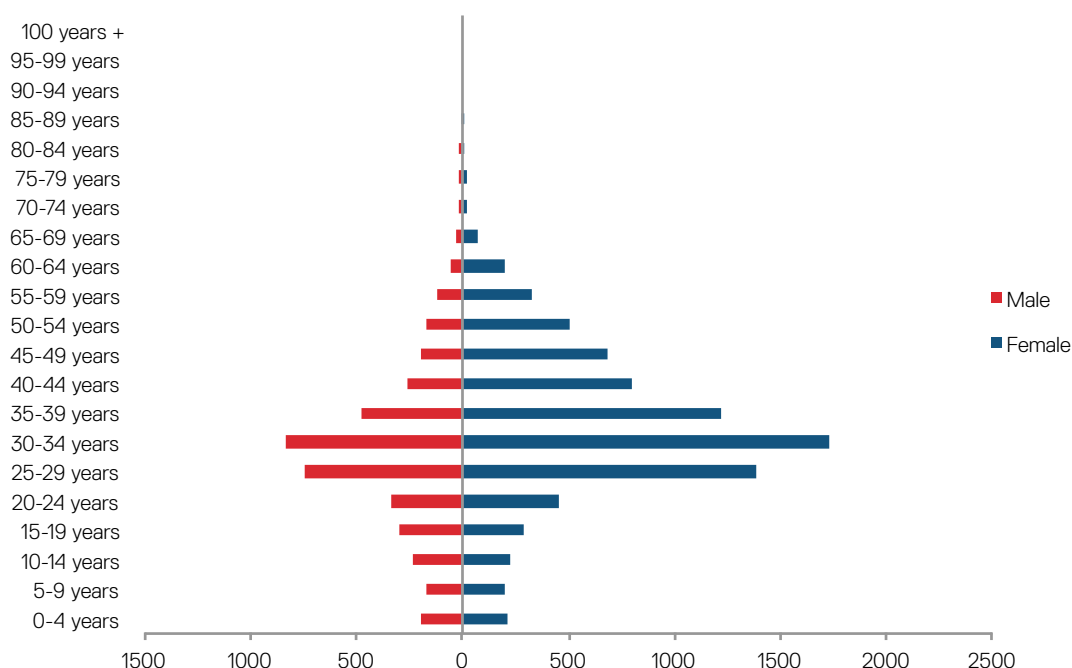
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

As is the case for many large cities, Sydney has an overall demographic structure that is somewhat skewed toward working-age population. Figure 7a shows that the largest age cohorts are between 24 and 54 years of age. While this is the case for the general population, it is especially true of the Thai-born population, who are overwhelmingly in the working age brackets (Figure 7b). Compared to other Southeast Asian groups whose main period of settlement occurred a generation earlier, for example Vietnamese (Figure 7c), the demographic structure of Thais in Sydney is particularly uneven.

A. TOTAL POPULATION FOR GREATER SYDNEY



B. THAI ANCESTRY (1ST RESPONSE) POPULATION FOR GREATER SYDNEY



C. VIETNAMESE ANCESTRY (1ST RESPONSE) POPULATION FOR GREATER SYDNEY

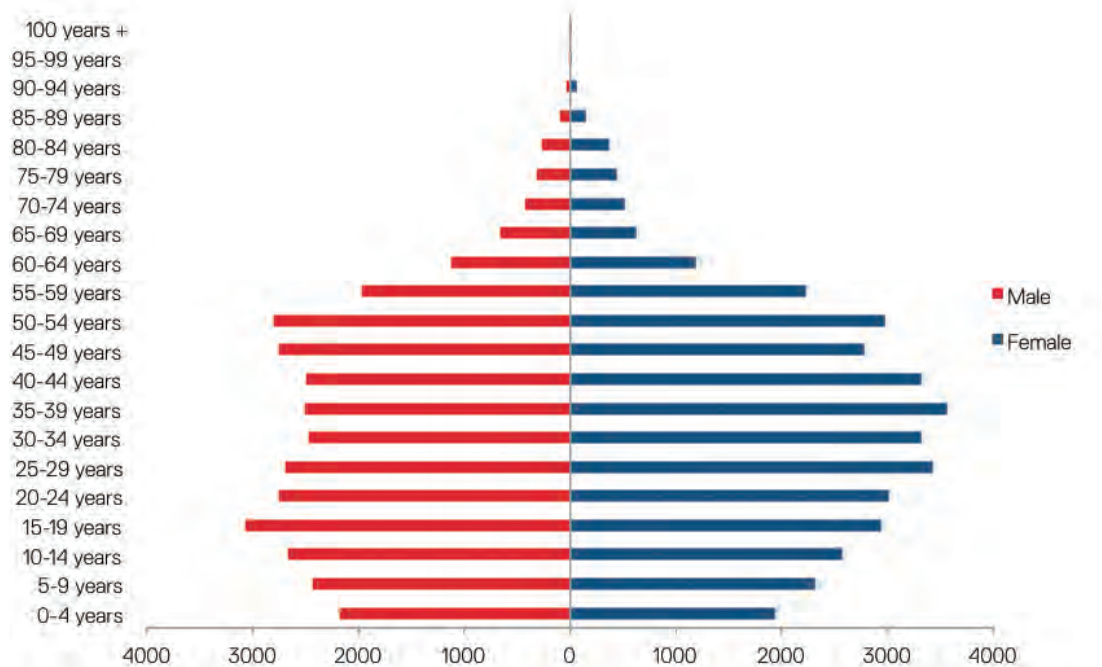


Figure 7: Age pyramids for Thai, Vietnamese and overall population in Greater Sydney

EDUCATION, OCCUPATION AND INCOME

Overall, the Thai-born population in Australia is more highly educated than the overall population if measured by number of years' schooling or level of educational attainment. Figure 8 shows, for example, that nearly twice the proportion of the Thai-born population has Bachelors or higher levels of university education than do the general population. Yet, the occupational structure of Thais in Australia shows that the Thai-born population is greatly under-represented in managerial and professional jobs and greatly over-represented in labouring work (Figure 9). Furthermore, while among Thailand-born people aged 15 years and over the participation rate in the labour force at 66.4 per cent was similar to that of the overall Australian population (65.0 percent), the unemployment rate among the Thai-born at 8.0 percent is significantly higher than the overall Australian rate of 5.6 percent.

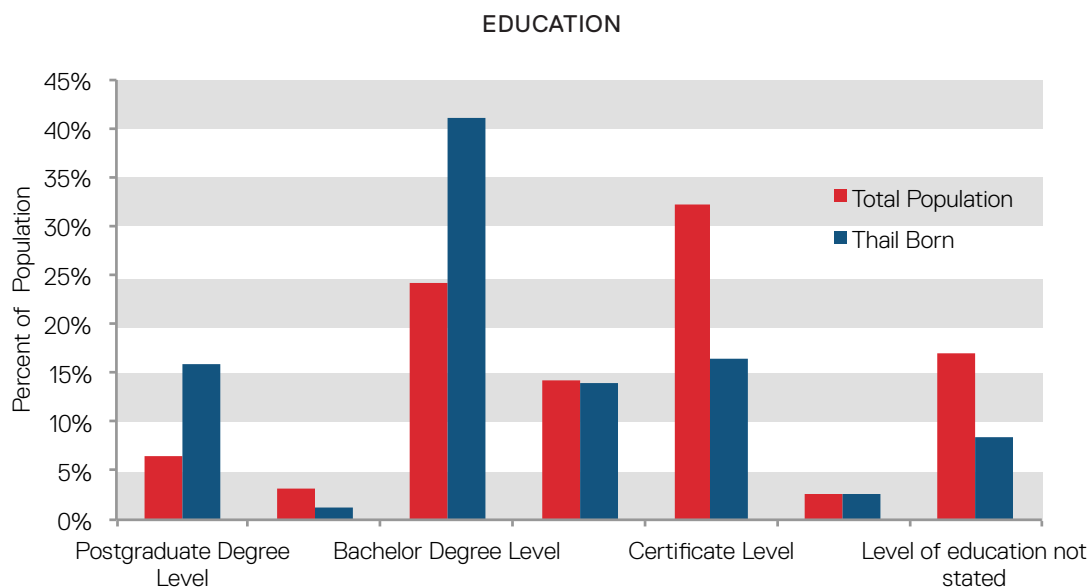


Figure 8: Education of Thai-born residents compared to the total population

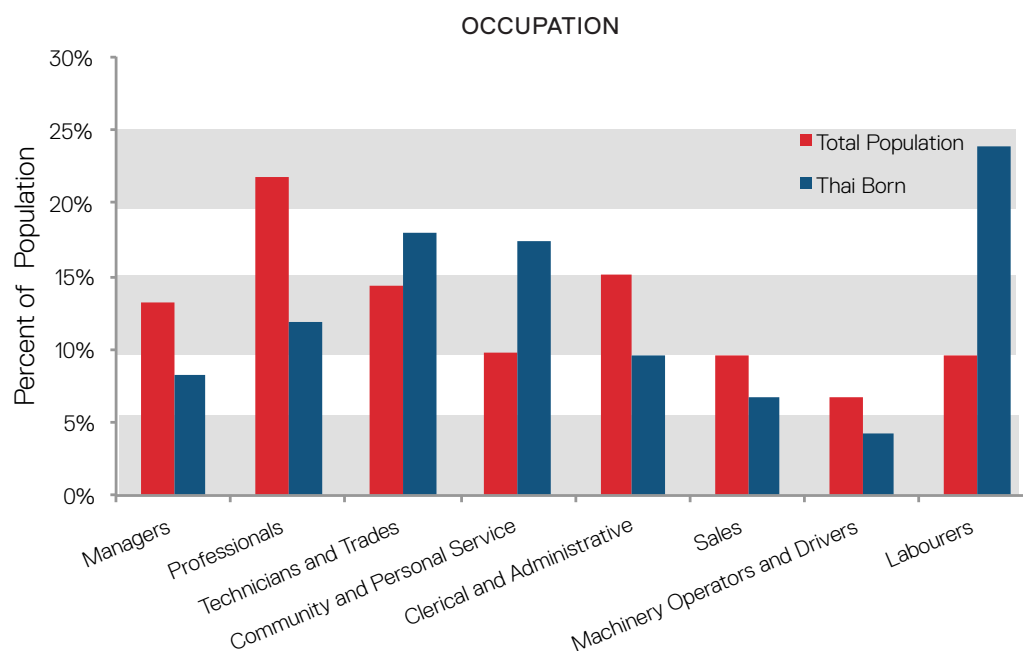
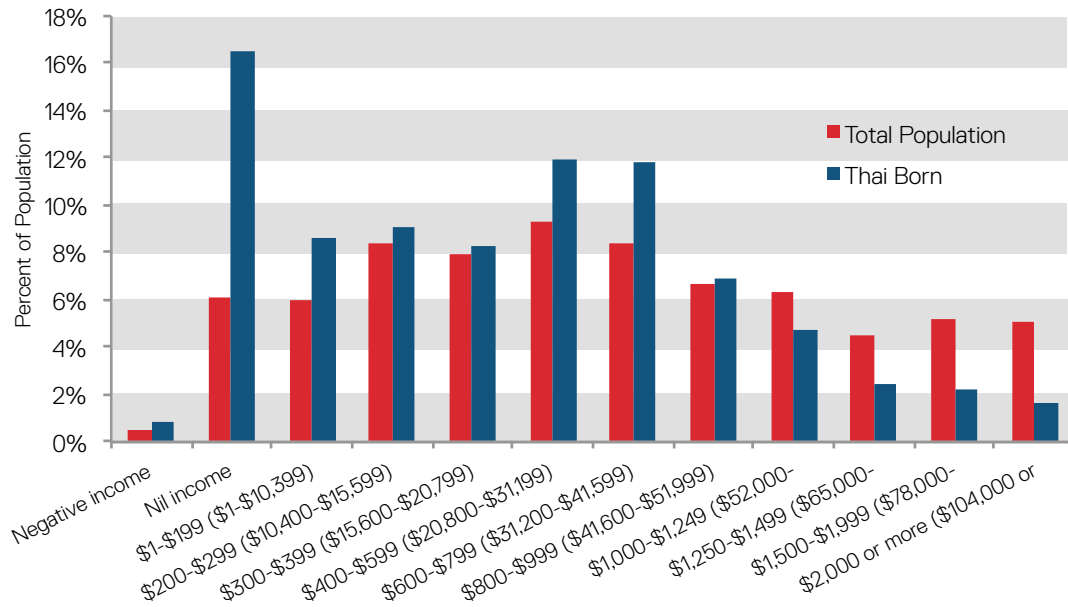
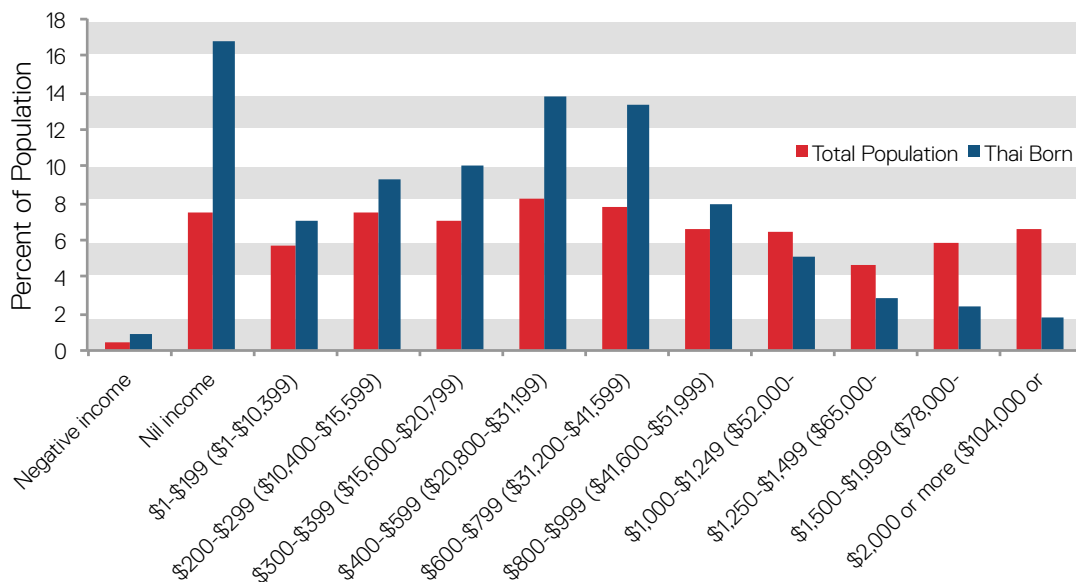


Figure 9: Occupation of Thai-born residents compared to the total population

A. AUSTRALIA



B. SYDNEY REGION



This discrepancy between education and job status is reflected in relative income levels achieved by Thais in Australia, which remain significantly below those of the overall population. Figure 10a shows the incomes of the Thai-born population in Australia compared to the overall population. We can see that Thais are over-represented in the lower income brackets and under-represented in the higher brackets.

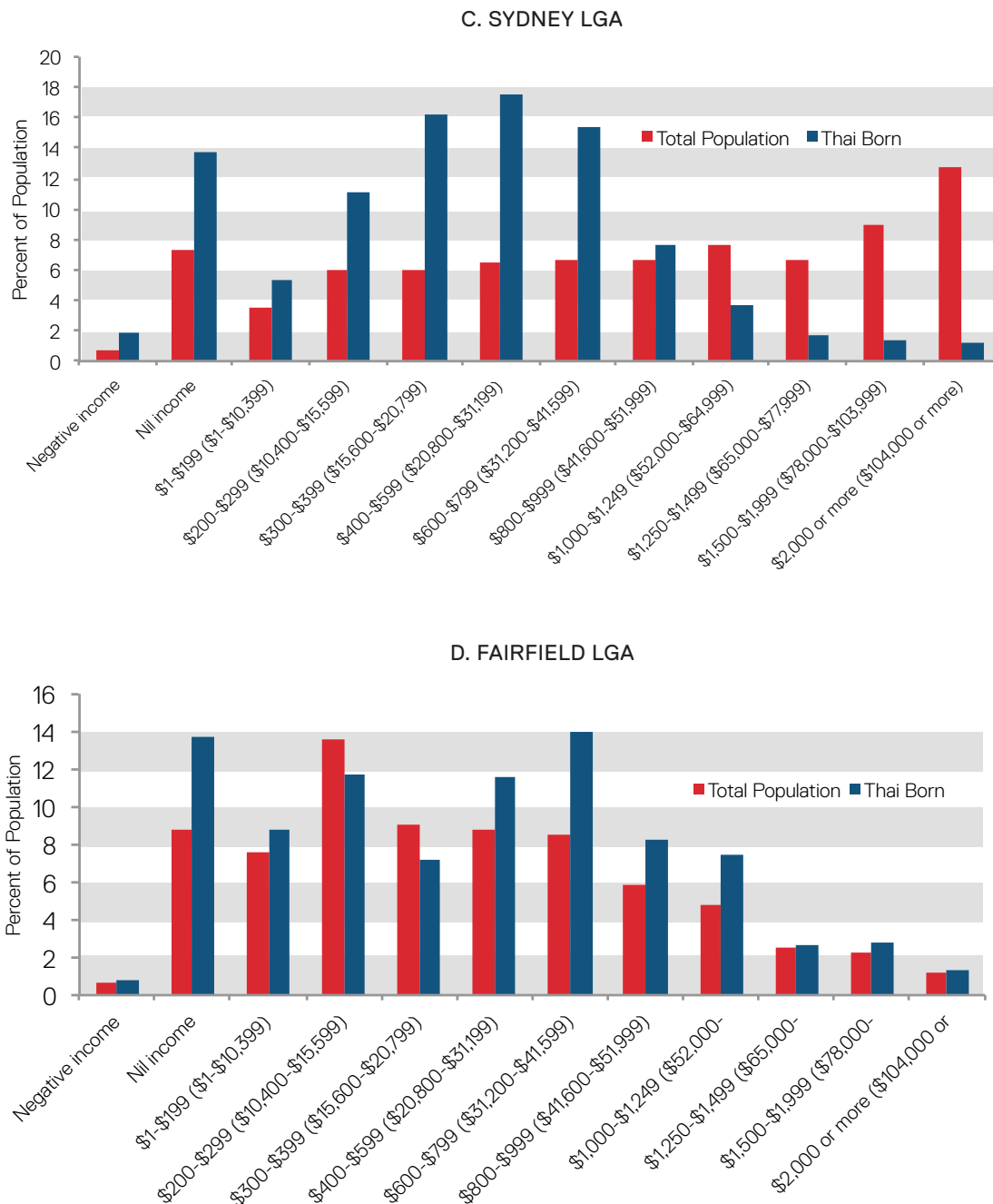


Figure 10: Weekly income of Thai-born residents compared to the total population

Figure 10b shows that this is also the case for the Sydney region overall, and Figure 10c shows that the pattern is even more pronounced in Sydney Local Government Area, i.e. the city centre. In the outer-suburb of Fairfield, on the other hand, which has a particularly large concentration of migrants from Southeast Asia, the Thai-born population is somewhat over-represented at the upper end of the income spectrum (Figure 10d). Interestingly, there is also over-representation at the bottom end.

What do these figures reveal? Overall, they suggest that in relative terms, at least, the migration move from Thailand to Australia represents downward social mobility. The preponderance of relatively low paid service jobs in central Sydney, combined with quite a high concentration of Thai students in this area, also helps explain why the gap is particularly high here. In a suburb that Thai-born share with Vietnamese, Cambodian and Lao migrants, Thai-born migrants can be seen to be doing comparatively well.

ECONOMY

AN UNEQUAL RELATIONSHIP

Thailand and Australia have quite a strong, rapidly growing, but also a highly asymmetrical economic relationship. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade factsheet on Thailand shows a number of additional interesting patterns (see https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/thailand/thailand_brief.html). Two-way trade between Thailand and Australia is higher than between Australia and any other ASEAN country (Figure 11), but the balance of trade is greatly in Thailand's favour by a factor of 2.3 to 1 in 2012-2013, and this was during a year when Thai industrial output was affected significantly by the 2011 floods.

In the five years after the Thailand-Australia Free Trade Agreement was signed in 2005, two-way trade more than doubled. Thailand is now Australia's eighth largest trading partner measured by two-way trade.

BI-LATERAL TRADE IN GOODS AND SERVICES BETWEEN AUSTRALIA
AND SELECTED ASEAN, 2012-2013 (A\$ BILLIONS)

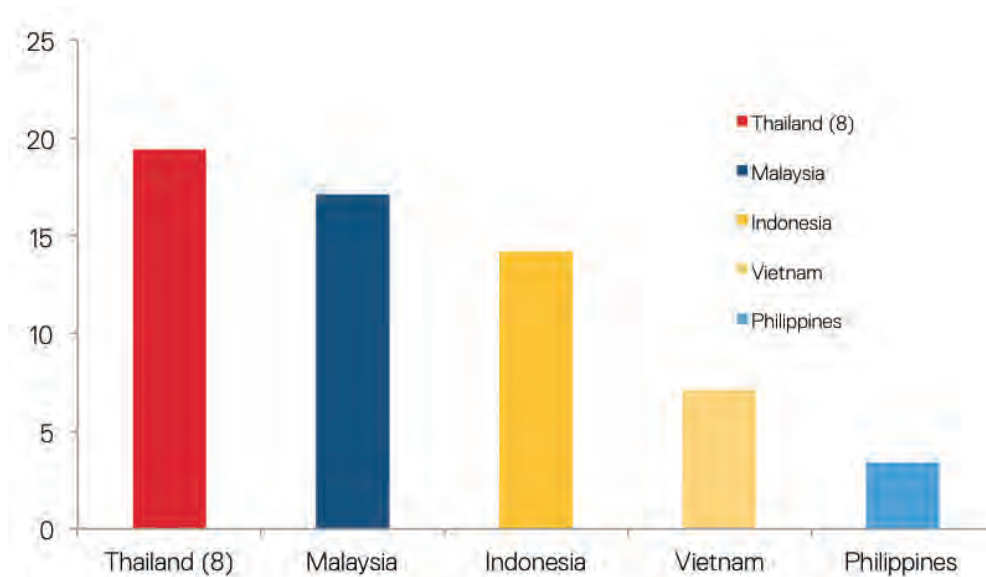


Figure 11: Bilateral trade between Australia and selected ASEAN countries
Source: DFAT cited in Greg Wallis, Senior Trade Commissioner, Australian Embassy, Bangkok at Australian Business Forum 'An Analysis of Australian FDI in Thailand', 11 February 2014

Cross-investment is also highly skewed. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from Thailand in Australia is nearly three times as high as Australian investment in Thailand. Most Australian investments in Thailand are relatively modest in size, whereas Thai investment in Australia is dominated by a few very large projects in the energy, resources and agricultural sectors. Thailand ranks below Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam in terms of annual FDI from Australia. While investment in these other ASEAN countries has grown steadily since 2001, investment in Thailand from Australia has stagnated (Figure 12). Meanwhile, Australia is Thailand's seventh largest destination for outgoing FDI.

AUSTRALIAN FDI STOCK IN SELECTED ASEAN 2001-12 (A\$ BILLIONS)

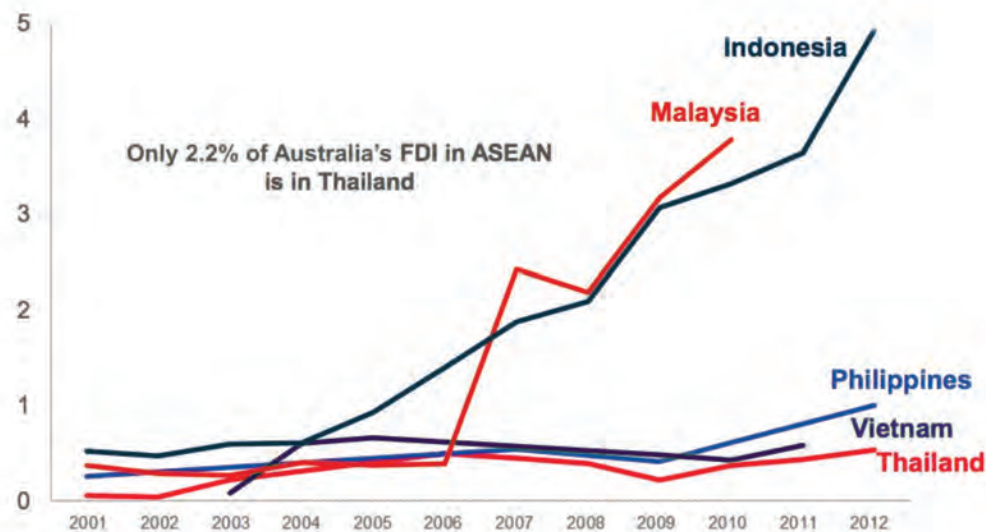


Figure 12: Australian investment in selected ASEAN countries
Source: ABS 53520 – International Investment Position, Australia: Supplementary Statistics, 2012, Table 5

TRADE

The structure of trade between Thailand and Australia is asymmetrical, not only in terms of the balance of trade in Thailand's favour, but also in the types of goods traded. Australian exports to Thailand are largely primary products, notably gold, petroleum, aluminium and copper (Figure 13). Thai exports to Australia are largely manufactured goods, mainly vehicles and industrial parts (Figure 14).

Thailand is the second largest exporter of cars to Australia after Japan (Figure 15). More than twice as many cars were imported from Thailand in 2013 than were imported from Korea. One reason for the relative invisibility of this fact is that cars made in Thailand for export to Australia are mainly Japanese brands, whereas cars from Korea are more readily identifiable as Korean due to their Korean brand names.

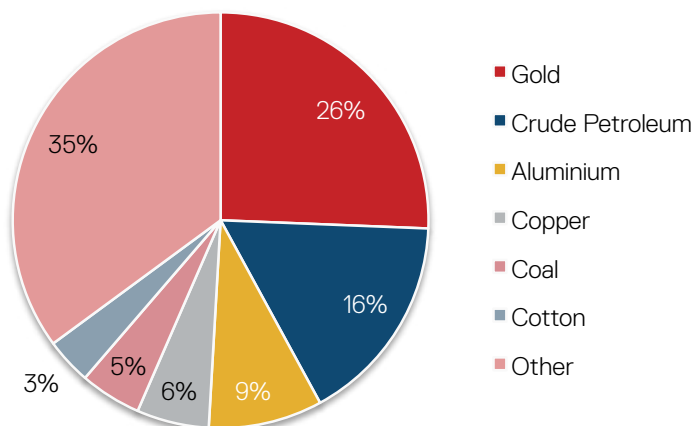


Figure 13 Composition of Australian exports to Thailand
Source: Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Composition of Trade, Australia 2012-13

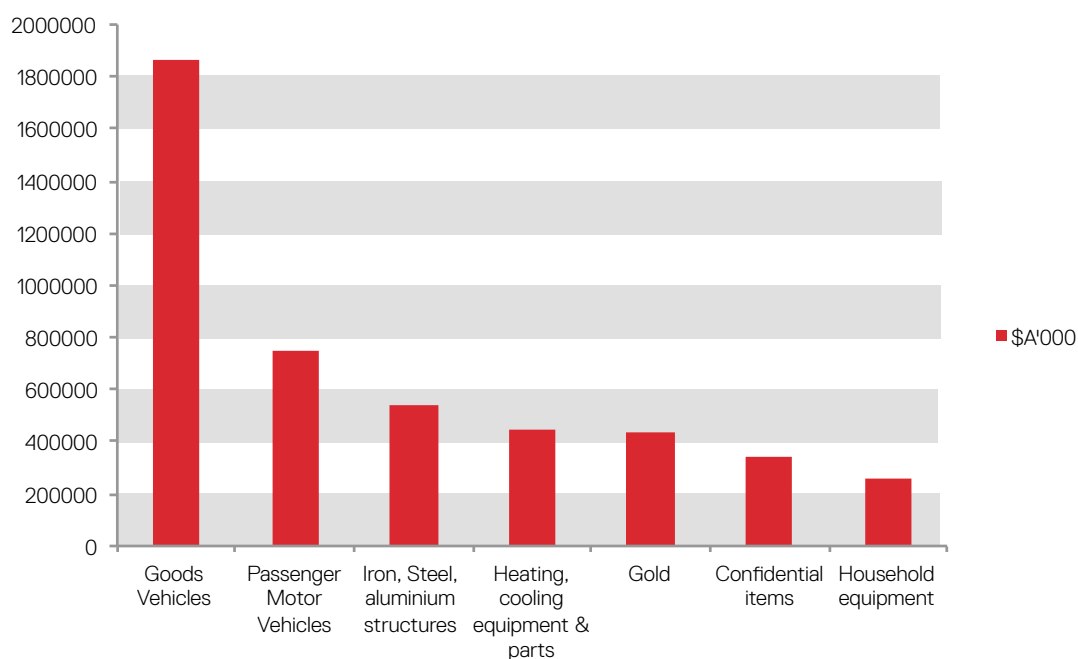


Figure 14. Composition of Australian imports from Thailand
 Source: Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Composition of Trade, Australia 2012-13

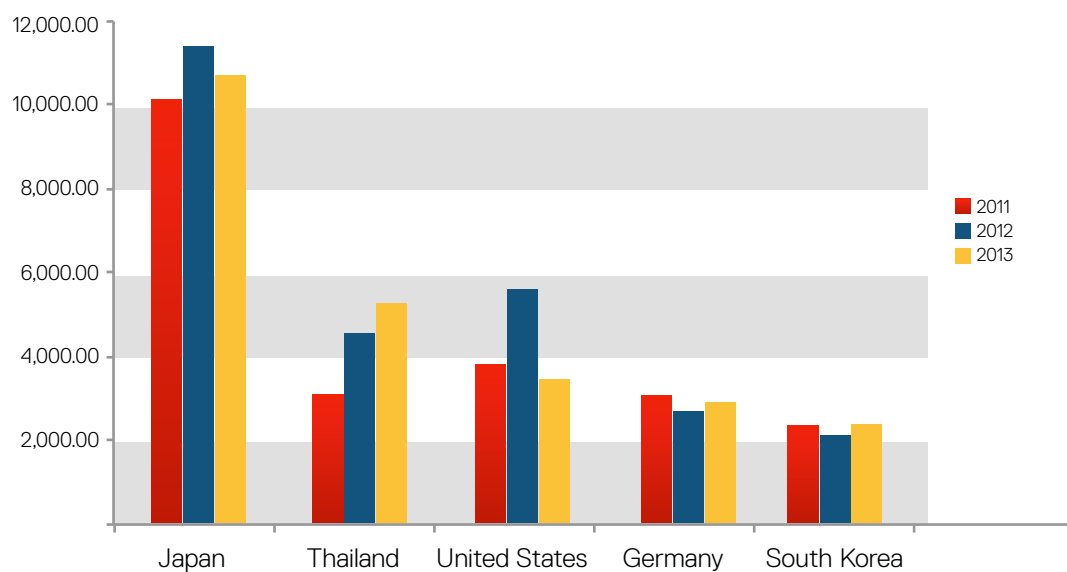


Figure 15: Number of vehicles imported into Australia from selected countries
 Source: http://www.gtis.com/english/GTIS_WTA.html, data provided by Thailand Board of Investment, February 2014.
 See Excel spreadsheet for detailed figures

Investment from Thailand has had by far the fastest growth amongst Australia's top 20 investor countries. The stock of Thai investment in Australia grew more than 20 times between 2007 and 2012, from \$338 million to \$7.3 billion.

INVESTMENT

Thai power companies have bought into the energy sector in a big way. One of the largest investments is by Ratchaburi Electricity Generating Holding Public Company Limited, a company 45 percent owned by the state enterprise Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT). In 2011 Ratchaburi bought an 80 percent stake in Transfield's Services Infrastructure Fund, which owns coal-fired power stations at Collinsville in the state of Queensland and Loy Yang in the state of Victoria. The company has since sold its stake in Loy Yang. It is investing in several wind farms in Australia.

Meanwhile, other Thai companies have invested in Australia's fossil fuel sector at the extraction end. Ban Pu bought Centennial Coal in the state of NSW for \$2.5 billion in 2010, making it a significant coal miner in Australia. PTT Exploration and Production Public Company (PTTEP), meanwhile, has become a major player in Australia's oil and gas industry off the northwestern coast of Western Australia. PTTEP is majority-owned by the Thai government. It has not had a problem-free ride in Australia, however. In August 2009, Australia's worst oil spill in more than a quarter of a century occurred at PTTEP's Montara oil and gas field when a well blew out. The 30,000 barrels of crude oil that

flowed into the sea before the spill was contained resulted in a very large oil slick that affected the coastline and also fishing grounds. The spill has been costly not just because of the \$510,000 fine the company had to pay, but also because of the \$40-50 million spent in dealing with the environmental impact. Potentially most costly of all, the Indonesian government is claiming \$2.4 billion in compensation for damaged fishing grounds in the Timor Sea.

Another high-profile investment in Australia has been in Queensland's sugar industry. Mitr Phol Sugar acquired MSF Sugar for \$313 million in 2012, and it operates four sugar mills in Queensland. It also owns 5,800 hectares of land used to cultivate sugar and has a refining capacity of 4.7 million tons per year.

The other significant sector for Thai investment in Australia is in the tourism and hotels sector. Minor International acquired Oakes Hotels and Resorts Ltd in July 2011, which manage 39 hotels in Australia and New Zealand with a total of 4300 rooms. Meanwhile, TCC Hotels Group bought Novotel Rockford Sydney, Hyatt Hotel Canberra and Intercontinental Hotel Adelaide between 2008 – 2009.



Image: Source - Wikimedia Commons http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Loy_Yang_A_power_station.jpg

Thailand is a significant tourist destination for Australians. In 2013, more than 900,000 Australians visited Thailand. There are up to 25,000 Australian visitors per month to Phuket alone (“Thailand: dream destination or nightmare?,” 23 July 2012). Specialty travel such as medical tourism has become increasingly popular and is advertised in Australia.

TOURISM BETWEEN THAILAND AND AUSTRALIA

Meanwhile, Australia is also an increasingly popular tourist destination for Thai people. While the number of Thai tourists in Australia has fluctuated, the trend has been slowly but steadily upward (Figure 16). The number of Thai tourists in Australia rose from 62,000 in 2000 to reach more than 80,000 in 2013.

Popular Australian destinations for Thai tourists include the coastal cities of Sydney and Melbourne. Out of 80,000 Thai tourists visiting Australia in 2011, about 35,671 Thais came to Sydney and 20,217 Thais went to Melbourne.



Image: Source – Philip Hirsch

NUMBER OF THAI TOURISTS VISITING AUSTRALIA

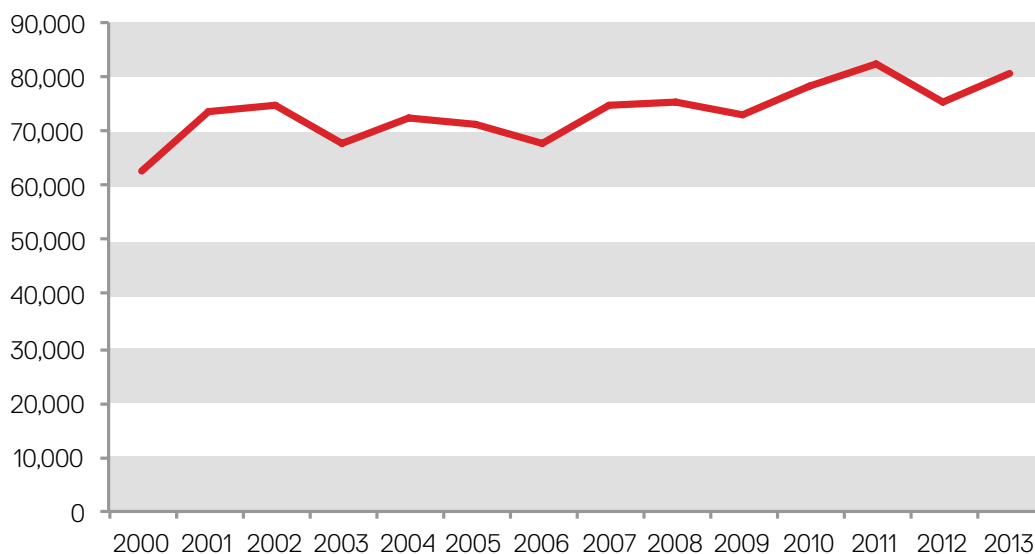


Figure 16: Thai tourists visiting Australia. Source: Australian Government (2014)

FOOD AND CULTURE

Ask any Thai living in Sydney where to find fresh ingredients needed for Thai cuisine, and they will point in the direction of Campbell Street, not far from China Town. The area has been called 'Thai Town' by the Thai residents of Sydney as well as by business owners such as Thai grocery shops, DVD shops, restaurants and Thai-focused travel agencies that have proliferated in this area.

THAI TOWN

In October 2013, Sydney City Council approved the installation of three street signs that officially mark Thai Town at the corners of George and Campbell Streets, Pitt and Campbell Streets, and Pitt and Goulburn streets. Sydney's Thai Town is the second in the world to be officially recognized by its host municipality after the first creation in 1999 in Los Angeles, where many of California's Thai community live and work.



Image: Source – Soimart Rungmanee



Image: Source – Philip Hirsch

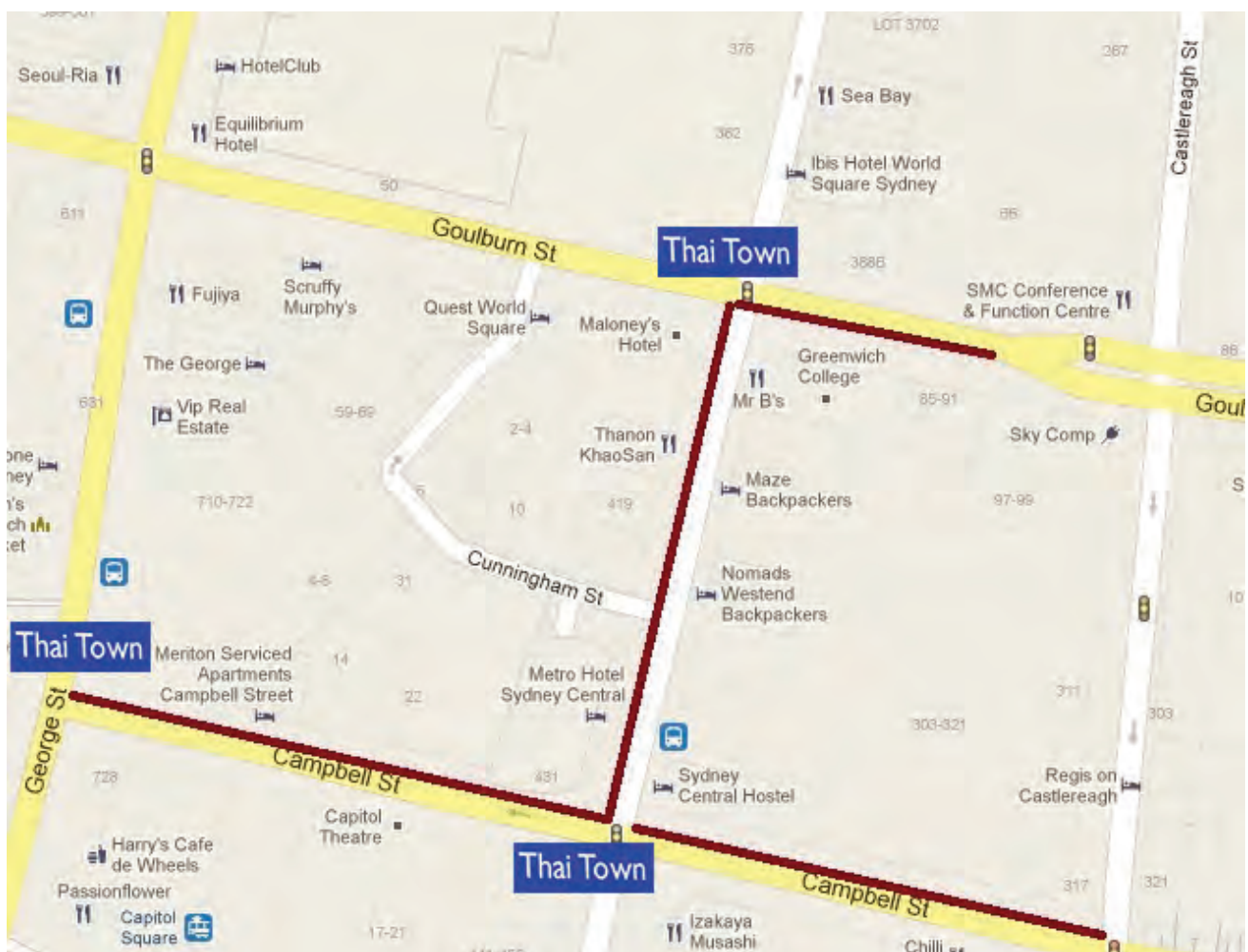


Figure 17: Map of Thai Town in Sydney showing locations of signage
Source: <http://www.weekendnotes.com/thai-town-sydney/>

Thai restaurants have become an integral part of Australian society. This, in turn, has helped build awareness of the Thai community among the wider society. The Thai presence in Australia is perhaps at its most visible through its restaurants.

RESTAURANTS

In 1975, there were no Thai restaurants in Sydney. The first Thai restaurateur arrived in Sydney in 1976 and opened the restaurant 'Siam' (Thai Restaurant Association of Australia, 2013). By 1986, there were over 40. By 1999, there were more than 400 in Sydney alone (Taneerananon, 2001, p. 704). Embersic and Connell (2002) discussed the development, expansion and evolution of Thai restaurants in Sydney, how they offer a distinctive experience, and the cultural and economic significance of this. They argued that the Thai food in Sydney in the 2000s was presented as exotic, inexpensive and authentic food. It was rare to find Thai customers in the Thai restaurants at that time.

Thai food at present is very popular and can be found in most districts in Greater Sydney. Some Western restaurants also serve Thai fusion food, and other restaurants specializing in Southeast Asian food often have Thai dishes on the menu. Among 2922 restaurants in Greater Sydney listed in the Australian Restaurant Directory website, 678 are Thai restaurants – nearly one quarter of the total. In 2000, a survey conducted in Newtown, the suburb of Sydney's inner west that is renowned for its restaurants (and close to the

ICTS12 conference venue!), recorded nine Thai restaurants out of 65 restaurants (Bridge & Dowling, 2001, p. 100). Recently in 2013, more than 100 restaurants and cafés in Newtown are listed in the Australian Restaurants Directory. Of these, 38 are Thai restaurants. Several Thai restaurants in Sydney specialize in regional cuisine, notably southern and northeastern Thai food. These restaurants tend to attract a Thai clientele.

There are many Thai restaurants within walking distance of the University of Sydney. Figure 15 shows the concentrations of Thai restaurants along King Street in Newtown, Glebe Point Road in Glebe, and the cluster of restaurants, food shops and other Thai service outlets in Thai Town. It also shows the two temples, both named Wat Buddharamsee, in Stanmore and Annandale.

The Thai Restaurants Association of Australia (TRAA) was formed in 1995 with the purpose of improving purchasing power and quality control. From 2000 onwards, the association, with support from the Thai and Australian Governments, has hosted an annual Thai Food Festival at Darling Harbour in order to promote Thai food, culture, and products from Thailand.



Image: Source – Philip Hirsch



Figure 18: Thai places within approximately 30 minutes' walk from the University of Sydney



Image: Source – Philip Hirsch

Temples or Wats play an important role in everyday life for Thai Buddhists. Following Buddhist belief and practise, people go to the temple for merit making, and to pray to the Buddha for such things as good health, good fortune and wealth. For Thais living in foreign countries, temples are important as centres of ethnic identity, places where Thai language and customs are kept alive, and to make migrants feel more at home.

TEMPLES

The opening of Wat Buddharangsee in Stanmore in 1975 was a significant milestone. The Crown Prince officiated at the opening during his studies at the Royal Military College at Duntroon in Canberra. This was the first Thai temple in Sydney and in Australia. Also in the Inner West is Wat Buddharangsee in Annandale. As Sydney's Buddhist community is growing, more temples have been established including Wat Pah Buddharangsee (Buddharangsee Forest Monastery) at Leumeah, opened in 1988, and Sunyataram Monastery, at Bundanoon, opened in 1989. These temples serve spiritual needs, not only for Thai-Australians but also for the Lao, Cambodian, Vietnamese and other Buddhist communities.

The growing number of Thais in Australia has given rise to the expansion of Thai temples to other states. New South Wales, with the highest concentration of Thais in Australia, presently has seven Thai temples. The second

largest Thai community is in Victoria where there are six Thai temples. There are five Thai temples in Queensland and two in Western Australia. South Australia, Australian Capital Territory (ACT), Tasmania, and Northern Territory each has one Thai temple.

The Thai temples in Australia offer extensive activities and services. An example is Wat Buddharangsee in Stanmore, which is located in a suburb approximately five kilometres from Sydney CBD. The temple has a meditation class every Saturday, a Buddhist service every Saturday and Sunday, wedding blessing ceremonies and funeral services, and many special or holy days are held throughout the year. The temple also has a school that provides a Thai language class for second generation children and others every Sunday. It also hosts culture classes including teaching how to play Thai musical instruments and to perform classical Thai dances.



Image: Source – Soimart Rungmanee

Thailand's cultural presence in Australia has extended to other areas of economic and leisure activities that are becoming an ever more normal part of Australia's multicultural way of life. Two of these are increasingly ubiquitous around the country: Thai boxing (muay Thai) and Thai massage.

THAI BOXING AND THAI MASSAGE

Muay Thai

In Australia, Thai Boxing has its enthusiasts and practitioners, both male and female. Most fitness centres provide Thai boxing as a cross-training activity. Thai boxing is a major part of Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) and self-defence. One of the fifteen best non-Thai Muay Thai fighters of all time is John Wayne Parr. Parr is an Australian who trained in a Muay Thai camp and fought at Lumpini Stadium in Thailand for four years. He was voted the Best Farang Fighter of the year in 1997 and was a ten-time World Champion who gained popularity in both Thailand and Australia.

To promote Thai boxing in Australia, the non-profit organisation Muay Thai Australia was established. The organisation is officially recognised in Australia as a member of the Australian Sports Commission.

Muay Thai Australia regulates, controls and supervises professional and amateur Muay Thai events in Australia. It is affiliated with the World Muaythai Council (WMC) and the International Federation of Muaythai Amateurs (IFMA).

Muay Thai events are held in many cities around Australia, including Sydney, Brisbane, Canberra, and Perth. These events are popular with crowds of several thousand people attending regular Saturday night fights. In Queensland, there

is a monthly event named 'the Gold Coast Fight Night' as a prelude of WBC Muaythai World Series.

Thai massage

Thai massage is very popular all over the world and is regularly added in any spa menu. In Australia, the traditional Thai massage centers and spas are located all across the country, with no sign of diminishing in popularity. The popularity of Thai massage can be seen in the Australian Yellow Pages website, which lists 851 Massage Therapy Centres in Sydney that provide Thai massage run by both Thai and other nationalities. Thai massage therapy is known among the Thais who are interested in working overseas as an occupation in high demand. While a large number of Thai migrants tend to work in Thai restaurants, some also seek to have Thai massage training before leaving Thailand.

However, among the Thai health spa and massage centres, there are also a lot of illegal brothels offering both legitimate treatments and sexual services. In 2013, Fairfax Media revealed there were at least 34 illegal brothels operating within a five kilometre radius on Sydney's north shore - the majority of which were disguised as remedial health clinics (Duff, 2013). These illegal brothels discredit the larger number of legitimate Thai massage centres.



Image: Source – Philip Hirsch



Image: Source – Philip Hirsch

THAI FESTIVALS

Loy Krathong

The water festival - Loy Krathong - is one of the events celebrated in Thailand on a full moon night in the twelfth lunar month in November. In Australia, the festival takes place every year in many cities. In Sydney, the first Loy Krathong festival was held in 1983 at Sydney's Taronga Zoo. After two years the festival moved to Auburn, and since 1990 has been one of the annual festivals held in Parramatta Park. Loy Krathong is also marked at Thai temples in Melbourne and Brisbane, and in a public park in Perth. The festivities always include many performances, demonstrations, activities and food stalls for people to enjoy during the festival.

Thai Culture & Food Festival

The Thai culture and food festival has been held in Melbourne since 2003. Over two days of the festival, there are lively street events and Thai food, drink, and other products, Thai massage, entertainment, and various performances such as Thai dance (Rum Thai and Khon) and Muay Thai. There are also cultural shows such as cooking demonstrations.

For the past several years in Sydney, Tumbalong Park at Darling Harbour has been transformed during one weekend every March into a Thai festival space for Sydney's Thailand Grand Festival. This has developed from the annual food festival into a wider celebration and promotion of Thai culture, in which the Royal Thai Consulate plays a significant role. There is a variety of cultural shows and folk crafts from the four regions of Thailand, with a lot of Thai food stalls set up by popular Thai restaurants in Sydney.



Image: Source – Philip Hirsch

COMMUNITY, SOCIETY AND POLITICS

The Thai Welfare Association (TWA) was established in August 1990 by a group of Thai migrants and has a welfare focus aimed at assisting Thai people with their settlement issues, particularly women. The founding members were motivated by the isolation of many women in the community, many of whom were married to Australian-born men and faced problems ranging from cross-cultural communication to domestic violence.

THAI WELFARE ASSOCIATION

Initially TWA was run by volunteers out of very basic premises at the Thai Consulate General in Sydney. Eventually they were given a small dedicated space at the Consulate and now have their own offices in the city. TWA provides low-cost translation services, English language classes, immigration advice and welfare assistance. It has been successful in securing funding from the New South Wales Government, especially from the Department of Community Services.

Another important organisation that has a focus on Thai women is the Sydney Sexual Health Centre. Opened in 1991, the Centre runs a Thai clinic twice a week with a Thai nurse and interpreter services. The health professionals educate Thai sex workers on health issues such as HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. Thai sex workers often feel ostracised by the mainstream Thai migrant community. The Thai sex worker population has decreased in recent years, an effect of immigration policy.



Image: Source – Philip Hirsch



Image: Source – Soimart Rungmanee

Many Thai immigrants to Australia wish their children to be bilingual in Thai and English. However, many parents have found that their children's Thai language skills decline when they begin school because the opportunity to learn Thai is limited and the peer pressure to assimilate means that children prefer to use English. The Thai community established the first Thai Community Language School for the children of the Thai immigrants at Wat Buddharangsee in 1991. Since then, the school has taught not only Thai language, but also Thai culture, manners, classical dancing and music.

THAI SCHOOL

As the number of Thais in Sydney has been increasing, Thai language and cultural classes are provided in the Thai temples around Australia. In addition, as Thailand is popular as a main tourist destination, many non-Thai people in Australia have sought to learn Thai. These include the many non-Thai Australians who are married to Thais and wish for themselves and their children to become familiar with their spouse's language and culture. Around Australia, there are a number of private tutors, evening classes at adult education facilities, as well as University level study options in Thai language and literature.

In higher education, only the Australian National University has a long running degree program in Thai. Financial pressures faced by Universities have made it extremely difficult to open and maintain programs in second- or third-tier language such as Thai at tertiary level. The Sydney Southeast Asia Centre at the University of Sydney is currently exploring pathways for a combination of Sydney-based and in-country Thai language learning that will depart from the standard three-year degree model, in connection with the University's Diploma of Languages.



Sydney has a wide range of Thai media options. These media range from local publications and free newsletters to websites, TV programs, and radio stations.

THAI MEDIA

Established by Thai migrants who have lived in Australia for some time, the Thai language media in Sydney were formed in response to the rapid growth of the Thai community and to enable Thais in Sydney to access current affairs and other services. The first Thai newspaper in Australia, Thai-Oz News, began in 1989, giving information on Thai and international news. Following that, Thai Press newspaper started in 1997. These newspapers are also distributed beyond New South Wales, notably at Thai shops in Melbourne.

There are now four free Thai newspapers and magazines distributed in Thai Town, Sydney. Thai-Oz News and Thai Press remain and have developed their own websites. At the same time, new magazines including VR-Thai and Huahom are emerging. Each edition contains columns on Thai and international news, questions and answers relating to law and regulations in Australia, food and travel, entertainment, fashion, and classified advertisements of Thai businesses and services including immigration attorneys and related professional assistance.

There are two main web-boards developed by Thai migrants to relate their experience on how they adapt to life in Sydney such as <http://aussiethai.com/home.php> and <http://www.aussietip.com/>. In 2006, Amonrat Chanta, known as "Na Tui", a prominent Thai business woman and the owner of Thai restaurants, developed the substantial website www.natui.com.au in Thai language aiming to share information on many subjects such as classified job advertisements, housing, events, and other services. In 2009, she developed Thai TV on YouTube to update news and events relevant to the Thai community. Following this, a group of Thai teenagers also developed

Thai Smile Radio station, which plays Thai songs 24 hours per day. These communication technologies have made Thai media accessible to the now extensive Thai audience in Australia.

There are also Australian radio and television programs in Thai language from Australia's Special Broadcasting Service (SBS). Funded by the Australian government, SBS radio and TV is the multicultural and multilingual public broadcaster that provides programs in 75 languages of migrants in Australia. The main purpose of SBS is that all Australians, regardless of geography, age, cultural background or language skills should have access to high quality, independent, culturally-relevant Australian media. Thais in Australia can visit the SBS Thai program at <http://tunein.com/radio/SBS-Thai-p191653/>



Image: Source – Philip Hirsch



Image: Source – Philip Hirsch

There are strong ties between the diaspora and Thailand that include political engagement in the current era of information technology. This is enhanced by the near-ubiquitous online connectivity of society in Thailand, and the effects of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and blogs. Thai people in Australia can easily access Thai media on a daily basis. Furthermore, they can consume the native-language media in particular Thai newspapers, and Thai television programs that are available in the Thai grocery stores in Thai Town. These factors maintain intimate ties to the homeland and shape long-distance nationalism among many Thais in Sydney.

THAI POLITICS IN SYDNEY

Living in Australia where freedom of expression about the government in public is protected by law, Thai migrants, no matter what their political attitude or “colour”, can freely engage in public rallies. On the one side, in April and May 2010, the Thai Red Australia group marched from Hyde Park to the Thai Consulate to protest the killings at Ratchadamnoen and Ratchaprasong and to question the legitimacy of the government of the time. Then in June 2013, on the other side, the anti-government white mask members of the V for Thailand movement rallied at Belmore Park and Central Railway Station. Following that, several hundred Thai students and residents from Sydney, New South Wales, and from the states of Queensland and

Victoria protested in front of the Thai Consulate-General in Sydney against the parliamentary Amnesty Bill in November of the same year. Even more recent mobilization has given support to the People’s Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC)’s occupation of Bangkok on 13 January 2014, aiming to pressure the current Prime Minister to resign and to carry out national reform before elections, and there have been ongoing such demonstrations in downtown Sydney centred on Thai Town. To date there has been little study of the ways in which political alignments and divisions are formed among the Thai diaspora in Australia or elsewhere, nor of the social basis for different political positions and allegiances.



Image: Source – PDRC Sydney Facebook Page

EDUCATION

In the past five years, the numbers of Thai students coming to study in Australia have increased significantly. In 2005, there were approximately 16,000 Thai students enrolled in Australian education institutions (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007), and this had risen to 20,000 by 2013 (Australian Government, 2013). In 2013, Thailand ranked sixth in terms of foreign students in Australia, after China, India, South Korea, Vietnam and Malaysia (Australian Government, 2013). The largest number of Thai students are enrolled in vocational education and training (VET) from one to four years. The providers of VET include Technical and Further Education (TAFE) Institutes, adult and community education providers and agricultural colleges, as well as private providers, community organisations, industry skill centres, and commercial and enterprise training providers. VET enables students to gain specific skills and qualifications for all types of employment.

Australia is also popular for universities and higher education. Thailand's Office of Education Affairs reported that in 2013, the three most popular destinations for higher education of Thai scholarship students are the US (35%), UK (22%), Japan (22%), and Australia (18%). Australian Education is

attractive for Thai students in terms of the shorter studying period (in comparison to the US), the sole requirement of English Language (IELTS) score (American Universities require both TOEFL and GRE/GMAT), and the closer location to Thailand than the US and UK.



Source: Sydney Thai Student Association Facebook Page

THAI MIGRANT LIVES

Thais have moved to live in Australia for many reasons. The Thai community is diverse, and this diversity is growing with its size. A few migrant stories from Sydney reveal the different motivations and experiences of Thai migrants to Australia.



Image: Chalio Tongsinoon, source – Soimart Rungmanee

Chalio Tongsinoon, son of a village headman in Phattalung Province, is 67 years old and migrated from Thailand in 1973, initially on extended tourist visas. Chalio is also one of the first group of Thais who opened Thai restaurants in Sydney in the early 1980s. He served as the first President of the Thai Restaurant Association in 1990. At present, Chalio owns a Thai restaurant named 'Caysorn'.

"In 1973, Sydney did not have any Thai businesses. I had to buy food from Chinese grocery stores around Paddy's Market. Not many people knew Thailand. People thought I came from Taiwan. In the late 1970s, I was so excited to find the first Thai product, the Thai brand Pickled Sour Mustard, sold in a Chinese store. It sold out in

one day because all Thais here bought a dozen each to stock.

I worked in a restaurant in Bangkok but there were not many job opportunities in Thailand in the 1970s. My brother came to Sydney in 1971 and encouraged me to follow since there were more opportunities here. I started my career in Sydney from cleaning offices and toilets to many jobs relating to hospitality such as a kitchen hand and hotel staff. I could easily move from one job to another because Sydney at that time really needed labour. Before starting my own business, my final job was a chef/manager at Cahill Nestle Group.

In the early 1980s, I opened the first Thai restaurant but it failed. Then, I had a joint business with my Thai friends and opened my own restaurant again in the late 1980s. I have continued the business until present. Thai restaurant business is a right job for myself as I loved to cook and serve people.

I missed Thailand and went to visit Thailand annually but I wanted to settle down in Sydney. The government here treats retired people very well. The welfare is better than the Thai system."



Image: Petchara Nastys, source – Petchara Nastys

Petchara Nastys migrated from Nong Khai Province to Auckland, New Zealand in 1986. In 1990, she moved to Sydney and six years later opened a Thai restaurant named 'Thai Naan' with her husband.

"My parents are farmers in Nong Khai province. We have more than 100 rai of rice land and hire villagers to cultivate our land.

When I graduated from high school, I enrolled for an undergrad degree in Financial Administration at Ramkhamhaeng University in Bangkok. During the second year of university, my relatives in New Zealand encouraged me to visit them. They migrated there by joining the immigration scheme for Indochinese refugees during the Indochina War. I

went to New Zealand with my elder sister planning to visit for a holiday. However, we ended up working in a seafood factory for three years. I also started my own business to import cloth from Thailand to sell in New Zealand, but my business failed.

In 1993, I met my husband, a British man who moved from the UK. We planned to open our own restaurant so I worked in Thai restaurants for approximately two years to gain more experience. Thai restaurants in the 1990s were decorated in traditional Thai style with staff wearing national dress. We opted for a more contemporary look and more casual outfits for staff.

We opened a second restaurant on in 2000 but now maintain just the original premises. There are many styles of Thai restaurant in Sydney. Their menus have become more fusion in presentation. The heart of the restaurant business is good food and service. Sydney is a great city for Thai food. The weather here is not too cold so I can grow many herbs in the garden at home.

There are now other members of my family that have migrated to Australia.. The business over the years has been good and we hope it continues into the future. My Mum and family members are doing well in Thailand and we are able to assist them financially. My father always wanted to build a temple in my village and with the help of customers, friends and family we have been able to contribute substantially to it's construction.

My husband and I, and our three children regularly visit my family in Thailand. My Mum has also visited us in Sydney a few times.

Although Sydney is home for myself, my husband and children, we envisage sharing our time, in the future, between Australia and Thailand."



Image: Suwannee Promchatree, source – Suwannee Promchatree

Suwannee Promchatree is 32 years old and comes from Songkla Province, Thailand. Suwannee obtained her Masters Degrees from Thailand in 2007. She came to Sydney in 2008 intending to develop her English language skills. She chose to come to Sydney because she had relatives living here and she heard from friends that there are plenty job opportunities to enable her to work and study at the same time. She initially enrolled in a six month English course, however decided to further her studies by enrolling in a Diploma of Business Management. This allowed her to obtain a two year visa extension. In 2011, Suwannee met her boyfriend, an Australian police officer who sponsored her to be a Permanent Resident (PR).

"Before coming to Sydney, I was a Credit/ Financial Controller in a company in Bangkok and earned approximately 30,000 baht/month. Just wanting to improve my English, I borrowed 200,000 baht from my mom to come here and promised to return the money.

I got a waitressing job in a Thai restaurant and earned 50 AUD/ shift. I worked from 4.30 pm to 10.30 pm. It was tiring job since I had to do everything from cleaning the toilet to serving food. But, I did not have any other choice than labouring jobs. Stopping work means no income. My

Masters Degree was useless as I held a student visa and was permitted to work only 20 hrs/week.

Six months later, I got a job with a catering company. My wage increased to 20 AUD/hr. I worked in a catering job 20 hrs/week. However, I still kept the waitress job at the Thai restaurant on Friday and Saturday nights. I finally could return money to my mom.

I still could not get myself out of labouring jobs because my English skill, especially writing, is yet not good enough and I did not have experience working in any office job. If I were in Thailand, it would be easier for me to get a good job. However, working here is good because the wage is very high. Many Thai people work like crazy because of the wage rate too. In only a week, I could earn enough money to buy brand-named stuff. If I worked in Bangkok, I would have to save money for several months for it."



Image: Sally Ing, source – Sally Ing

Sally Ing is 30 years old and was born in Australia. She is the third generation of a Thai-Chinese family that migrated to Australia in the early 1980s. Her parents got married and initially relocated to Adelaide. They also brought her grandparents and other family members such as her uncles and aunties. In 1991, Sally's father got a job in Sydney so her family moved without her grandparents.

"Dad did some business in Thailand. He has a friend who migrated to Australia in the early 1980s. His friend recommended Australia as being prosperous and full of opportunity. My dad came first. And then my mom came. And then all of my family came. We lived in the Asian communities so I have several Asian friends. My grandparents did not have problems although they could not speak English.

My mom used to be an interpreter at the United Nations. Moving to Australia, my parents started off whatever they could find. Any labouring job, working on farms, working in retail. And then later on they moved to business.

I was only twelve when we moved to Sydney. We live in Fairfield, a suburb comprised of Thai, Lao, Cambodian, and Vietnamese migrants. However, we did not know anybody. My parents kept telling me to focus on study. I did so because I saw them working very hard for my education.

My mom is a strict person. She does not allow me to go out at night. She also teaches me to pray and to meditate. My Thai language is good because I speak with my mom and always watch Thai dramas. When I was young, Thai VDOs could be found in Asian grocery stores. Presently, I can buy DVDs or even watch Thai drama on Youtube.

I have only been to Thailand once in my life, just three years ago. The real Thailand was different from the Thai drama. In comparison to Australia, the quality of life in Thailand is poor. I feel thankful that I live in Australia. I find myself as an Aussie from a Thai family. I might be humble and polite but I am also straight forward."

"Upon arrival, I stayed with my brother in the city and tried several jobs, such as cleaning, dish washing, and home delivery. Two years ago, I found a job announcement in a Thai website that a driver was needed. I called to apply and found out later that I had to drive a small truck to collect scrap metal. The business owner provided the car and petrol. That is how I start to be a scrap metal collector and this job became my career for two years. I collected the scrap metal five days a week and also worked as a home delivery person in a Chinese restaurant from 4 to 9 PM.

Now, I have bought my own car and can manage my working hours. I can work 2-3 hours/day. When I go to deliver food in the evening, I can also collect scrap metal along the way. I can earn approximately 1,500 AUD/week.

Since I hold a student visa, I had to enroll for some courses. I am now doing a diploma in accounting because the course allows me to extend my visa up to eight years. Although I work in labouring jobs here, I think my life quality is better than when I was in Thailand. I was a salaryman working in an office without leisure time in Bangkok. In Sydney, I have my life back. I control my working hours. The life is more relaxed. At the same time, it is easy to earn a lot more money in Sydney. After three years, I could afford to buy a house and a car in Thailand.

I am still not sure about returning to Thailand. Many Thai people who went to work in Australia for a few years and collected money to take back to Thailand could not get a job. Labouring jobs in Sydney provides good money without professional experience. If I want to return to Thailand, I would have to think about running my own business".



Image: Tong, source – Suwannee Tong

Tong is 35 years old, from Khon Khaen Province, Thailand. Tong came to Sydney in 2010. He obtained a Bachelors Degree in Mechanical Engineering from one of the best universities in Thailand in 2001. Having been working as a mechanical engineer in motor companies in Thailand for seven years, Tong quit his job and came to Australia following his brother who came five years earlier and had already got Permanent Residence.

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