



*Julia Suttor, widow of a New South Wales pastoralist, aged 58.*



*John McArthur, a Western District pastoralist, aged 31.*



*Annie Riddell (de Fegely), the newlywed daughter of a Melbourne pastoral family.*



*Thomas Guest, a Melbourne biscuit manufacturer, aged 55.*



*J.M. Hughes, a Melbourne mining agent and secretary of a medical benefits society, aged 47.*



*Henry Lawson, Sydney coach painter and poet, aged 20.*



*Agnes Rose Field, the daughter of a Victorian farming family, aged 28.*



*Fred Coneybeer, an Adelaide horse collar maker, aged 28.*



*Thomas Dobeson, an unemployed family man, Sydney, aged 34.*

*These are some of the people who recorded their experiences in life throughout the centennial year in letters, diaries, poetry and narrative. They are featured in this book.*

# PEOPLE

**L**ONG BEFORE it had been mapped and measured and given a name, Australia had been occupied by the human race. The Aborigines had a long and proud cultural tradition that had grown from their association with the land, and this tradition was passed on through the performance of ritual and the recounting of legend. The stories that gave form and meaning to the land had grown from the Dreaming, an ancient and unmeasured time of myth and imagination. The Aborigines lived with the land, they shared its secrets and respected its power. They merged so well with the country that to the European eye the centuries of human habitation were barely visible.

The new people who arrived from the north had no wish to merge with the land. They, too, had a long and proud cultural tradition, the product of a very different place and circumstance. The white people carried ashore their guns and Bibles, axes and clocks; they brought proverbs that said time was money and change was progress. They brought their own old stories to shape the land, stories about the power of knowledge, the magic of numbers and words. These were rational and scientific people who collected facts and objects, who measured and weighed and counted. They believed in order and took pride in imposing their forms, physical and mental, upon the natural world.

The old stories still hung somewhere in the memory but now they were pushed to the far corners of consciousness, just as the remaining Aborigines were pushed to the far corners of the continent. History was no longer a dream; it was as tangible as the books in the libraries and the changes on the face of the land. One hundred years after their arrival, the white people looked with satisfaction at the changes they had made, the buildings they had erected, the land they had cleared and sown. This was a time to look back at the progress of the people as a whole, a time to measure the growth and perhaps to count the cost. Now time was divided according to intricate arithmetic, and the people were ordered and classified according to the conventions of the nineteenth century.

When the statistician Timothy Coghlan looked back over the progress of 100 years, he was proud of the people and the society they had built. He saw a picture of the 'great Colonies'

Henry Hayter, first Victorian government statistician. In 1884 he published a pamphlet on crime, which suggested that the 'convict taint' had led to a greater criminal element in New South Wales than in Victoria. *Town and Country Journal*, 28 Sept 1889.



peopled with a race of hardy, enterprising and industrious colonists, with free institutions such as are enjoyed by few nations in the old world, and without those social and caste impediments which are in older countries so great a hindrance to the march of civilization.

Not everybody shared Coghlan's optimistic view of the way society was developing in the new land, but few disputed the value of gathering information about it. From the earliest days the colonial governments had collected statistics to measure births and deaths, immigration and emigration, imports and exports, crop yields and production, and had published the information in annual *Statistical registers*. Since 1851 the serial figures that made up the narrative of progress had been supplemented by elaborate colonial censuses, taken in the first year of every decade and giving a numerical account of society every ten years.

Coghlan was one of the latest in a line of fine Australian statisticians seeking to perfect the collection and classification of information. William Archer, working in Victoria in the 1850s, had produced statistics described by one admirer as 'the most perfect in the world'. Coghlan's older colleague, the Victorian statistician Henry Hayter, had been praised for bringing the statistics of his colony into an 'unusually perfect condition'. Now the younger men such as Coghlan and R.M. Johnston of Tasmania were continuing the quest for statistical perfection.

Timothy Coghlan had been born in Sydney in 1855, the third of nine children of Irish immigrant parents. He had left school at fourteen to become a pupil teacher, but then joined the public works department as a cadet. By 1884 he had become an assistant engineer with an interest in mathematics, and when the position of statistician of New South Wales was created in 1886, Coghlan obtained the post with the help of the prominent politician George Dibbs. He had no obvious qualifications for the job and his appointment was criticised in parliament at the time, but by 1888 Coghlan's ability and enthusiasm had justified his patron's faith in him and earned him the respect of his peers.



In 1887 Coghlan had issued his first yearbook, entitled *The wealth and progress of New South Wales*. One of its purposes was to portray New South Wales as the premier colony, but Coghlan was also interested in the position of Australasia as a whole. In an appendix to *The wealth and progress* he included figures for the six colonies and New Zealand, a country that he saw as the seventh colony, with people whose cultural values, political institutions and economic development were similar to those of Australians. From 1888 Coghlan began to expand the two basic sources of information, the annual statistics and the colonial censuses, into a statistical account of the seven colonies. The object of his work, he said, was 'to afford information by which the progress of these colonies may be gauged', and to show the position of 'the country as a whole, with regard to all the more important elements of moral and material welfare'.

The Australian statisticians had inherited the form of the census, and many of their ideas about its purpose, from their British predecessors. Coghlan believed in the power of the intelligent list; he believed that by patient collection and imaginative ordering of facts he could build a true and general image of society. The statisticians saw themselves as scientists, and the British statistician William Farr had explained the common process. 'Classification', he noted, 'is another name for generalization, and successive generalizations constitute the laws of the natural sciences'.

Speaking of Timothy Coghlan's appointment as statistician, Sir Henry Parkes said: 'None can be better pleased than I am that a man born in the country should be found to fill this important appointment, without having to resort to material in other countries... I believe that a better appointment could hardly have been made.' *Town and Country Journal*, 13 Oct 1888.

As Coghlan worked with intelligence and imagination to draw the statistical picture of the seven colonies, he knew that his 'successive generalizations' were built on the varied lives and experiences of the 'hardy, enterprising and industrious colonists', as well as on the misfortunes and failures of the less enterprising and industrious. But by ordering Australians into categories, adding and dividing to find the average, his mathematics could formulate accurate general statements about the wealth and progress of the people.

The census measured material and moral welfare. Many of its categories had been devised to discover the problems of society in order that they might be solved. The statisticians were men of mathematical mind; they were also men of high moral seriousness. The census measured the intellectual and spiritual condition of the people as well as the growth of wealth and population. If there was a possibility of reaching human perfection, it would come through building and maintaining an ordered society, where, just as in the census, there was a place for everything and everything had a place. The British poet, critic and educational reformer Matthew Arnold expressed this belief when he maintained that 'without order there can be no society, and without society there can be no human perfection'. The growth of education and religion measured progress towards a society ordered by the values of the successful and respectable people, those committed to a program for civilisation.

Despite the acclaim for the Australian statisticians, statistical perfection was still a distant goal. For one thing, accurate statistics were difficult to collect. Ann Currie, the busy wife of a Gippsland farmer, recorded in her diary that the collector of agricultural statistics had arrived while her husband (Daa) was away. 'Mr Bradley

*Cooktown, Queensland.*  
*Many such towns had grown up around hotels and staging posts that served the traveller. Buildings were made of easily transported materials, and houses collected around the main street of hotels and shops.*  
 OXLEY LIBRARY



here taking the statistics', Ann noted. 'Daa was not in, so I had to give them to him. I don't suppose they were right.' Many people could not or would not give the census taker exact information.

In 1888 there were other, larger problems in gaining accurate figures. The last census had been taken in 1881, and between censuses some things could not be known precisely, including the most important number, the size of the population. The colonial statistician could only make an estimate by taking the figure from the last census, adding births and subtracting deaths, adding immigrants and subtracting emigrants. There was no record, however, of people who arrived from or departed to other colonies. Not everyone registered births and deaths as they were required to do by law. Not until the next census, due in 1891, could statisticians check their estimates.

In 1888 the statisticians estimated that there were just over three million Australians. Census tables showed that they were, culturally and racially, a fairly homogeneous group. More than 60 per cent had been born in Australia, and most of these had British or Irish ancestors. Thirty-four per cent of the total population had been born in the British Isles, and most of the remaining 6 per cent had come from Europe, mainly from Germany and Scandinavia.

The people might have looked similar in the census tables, but they themselves were aware, and often proud, of differences between groups. Immigrants had not spread themselves evenly across the land and their clustering reflected the distinctive contribution of each group to various colonies and regions. Tasmania and South Australia had a higher proportion of English-born people, Victoria more Scottish-born than other colonies. The Irish were most likely to have settled in New South Wales, Queensland or Victoria. Within the colonies there were regional differences because immigrants gathered near families and friends and settled in areas where they could use the skills they had brought with them. On the Darling Downs, where many early pastoralists had employed German people as shepherds, nearly 10 per cent of the population was now made up of German-born Lutherans. A larger influx occurred on the Newcastle coalfields, where the population increased tenfold between 1862 and 1888. Most of the newcomers had come from the coalfields of Yorkshire and Northumberland and they brought with them their attitudes and patterns of life and reproduced them in the new setting.

In some places, land and climate had dictated that people should develop a new Australian style. Simple and beautiful Queensland houses were built with the easily transported materials of wood and galvanised iron and were designed for the hot climate. Many were built on stilts to catch the prevailing breezes and surrounded with wide verandahs to shelter their occupants from the elements. All over the continent, Australian country towns looked very different from the villages of Europe. Shops and hotels were strung in straight lines along the wide main streets, which at each end led the traveller out to the empty spaces and on to the next town. On both sides of the roads the galvanised iron awnings, supported by posts at the edge of the footpaths, shielded the townspeople from the sun or the rain.

While people shaped the land according to the demands of land, climate, economic needs and available technology, they also shaped it according to their memory of the past and their aspirations for the future. To the new country, people had brought memories of distant homelands and the skills and talents of their ancestors and by 1888 there were distinctive buildings to show where different groups of people lived, worked and worshipped. In Adelaide, where the sober and practical Methodists were busy working in the city, they built their offices and factories square and solid. According to tradition, most had built their churches in



*The Gothic-style Archer Street Methodist church had been built in North Adelaide in the 1850s, and in 1887 the organ used at the Adelaide exhibition was installed.*

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN ARCHIVES

the shape of the cross, with high arching roof beams pointing to heaven. In the wine-growing districts of South Australia, people of German descent tended the vineyards in the manner taught to them by their ancestors. They built houses according to old German designs and erected distinctive Lutheran churches with high square towers, often topped with spires. In copper-mining districts Cornish miners had come to dig into the earth and on the surface Cornish masons planted houses for steam engines, built to traditional Cornish designs. The small and plain Wesleyan chapels where the people gathered on Sundays looked very like the wayside churches of Cornwall.

There were other reminders that this was a land of immigrants. Throughout the colonies, place names indicated the origins of the first homesick inhabitants and many people still spoke with the accent and dialect of a far-off birthplace. People brought with their technology the accompanying terminology and many groups donated words to the Australian vocabulary. As well as knowing the meaning of words such as 'billabong' and 'brumby', people had come to know that a good vein of ore was, in Australia as in Cornwall, a 'champion lode', and that a winding device was a 'whim'.

Well over half the population had been born in Australia, but a high proportion of the native born were still children. More than half the adults had been born overseas, and much of the wealth and political power still rested in the hands of this older generation, especially those who had come from England and Scotland. By 1888 there had still not been one Australian-born premier of Victoria, and the great majority of other premiers had been born overseas.

Australia's population had grown unevenly as successive waves of immigrants arrived, settled and had children. The gold rush of the 1850s—'one of the most remarkable population movements of modern times', according to Coghlan—left an enormous bulge in the population of the eastern colonies. The rush had been largely an influx of young men, a time when 'thousands of men in the prime of life' had come in search of gold. By 1888 the young gold seekers were growing old, and their children, the toddlers of the 1860s, had families of their own. The

*Frederick McCubbin, Self portrait. Frederick McCubbin was born in Melbourne in 1855, the son of British immigrants. His father was a baker from Ayrshire, his mother the daughter of a Yorkshire farmer. In his youth, McCubbin worked by day carting bread or painting designs on carriages, and in the evenings he studied art at the School of Design and later at the National Gallery Art School. By 1886 he had been appointed drawing master at the school and with Tom Roberts and Louis Abrahams was painting bush and beach scenery around Melbourne. His love of philosophising led friends to call him 'the Prof'. Oil, 1886.*

ART GALLERY OF  
NEW SOUTH WALES



children of the 1880s would be the first generation of Australians blessed with grandparents who lived close by. It could be a mixed blessing. These grandparents had lived in times of golden opportunity and many had prospered, sometimes through luck but more often through hard work and discipline. The stories they told were becoming part of legend and history. But they were stories of another time, and sometimes the younger generation found it hard to live up to the expectations of parents and grandparents who insisted that drive and ambition were the only things important for success.

Now, however, adults who had never known any home but Australia were increasing in influence. Like Timothy Coghlan, most of them were the children of immigrants and were strongly committed to the values and customs of their parents' old world. But the new land had tempered and subtly altered these customs and traditions and there was a growing pride in being Australian. Some members of this rising generation were beginning to write stories to give new form to the land, others were painting pictures to reframe the landscape with new ideas of light and space. In Sydney the young writer Henry Lawson had published his first poems in the *Bulletin*, in Melbourne and elsewhere artists were painting pictures to celebrate the heat and light of the golden summers that had seemed so strange and tiresome to their parents.

The artist Frederick McCubbin, born in Melbourne in 1855, recalled the stories told to him in his youth by people who saw Australia as an alien land.

My earliest memories are full of suggestions of England and Ireland and Scotland. Everybody who was grown up spoke of Home, the Old Country. Memories of strings of immigrants coming up from the wharves ... people from Home staying with us each bringing the quota of romantic stories of the Old World ... and people said this was a dreadful country and why did they ever come to such a dreary land and then the awful Hot Winds that blew in summer—and the fearful dust storms, and the dreary monotonous bush, all the same, no variety, so sad and sombre. They were a Home sick people ...

McCubbin was at home in his world, and did not find the place of his birth at all dreary.

I remember being taken somewhere one lovely Sunday, and all the boats on the Yarra were decked with flags. A lovely south wind blowing, and later on a picnic in Studley Park.

Frederick McCubbin and Timothy Coghlan, born in the same year, were members of the new Australian generation. In 1886, the year Coghlan was appointed to his position of influence in Sydney, McCubbin became drawing master at the National Gallery school in Melbourne. Each man would shape the world in his own way.

Not everyone, however, would be allowed to share in the emerging Australian identity; some groups of people had been given a separate and lower place in the ordered hierarchy of society. Some could not even be counted. In the censuses of 1881, the Aborigines were estimated to number 31 700. However, only 'civilized blacks' were counted in New South Wales, and South Australia did not count the Aborigines of its Northern Territory. In Western Australia the census included only those Aborigines employed by colonists, and the Queensland figure was an estimate. Coghlan thought there could have been as many as 200 000 Aborigines living in Australia in the 1880s. There were also 8200 Pacific Islanders working in Queensland.

Neither of these groups posed much threat to the people who counted. City dwellers found the Aborigines only a minor irritation: when they thought of them



*Joss house, Breakfast Creek, Brisbane. Often scorned and feared, the Chinese brought their old cultural values and traditions to Australia. Here, five of the almost 50 000 Chinese in Australia pose outside their joss house or temple.*

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at all, their main complaint seemed to be that they were sometimes visible. One newspaper correspondent complained of the presence of Aborigines in railway carriages and thought that they were 'totally unfit to come in contact with or be in the same compartment as their more cleanly and sensitive white sisters and brothers'. The Pacific Islanders of Queensland were too far away for most people to worry about and they were seen as a convenient labour force for the tropical north, where they worked in conditions too harsh for the more 'cleanly and sensitive' white man.

In 1888 the Chinese numbered just under 50 000. Of all non-European people they assumed the greatest importance, an importance out of all proportion to their numbers in the census. Like white people, they made permanent dwellings and used the land for profit, and hence could be easily counted by the census-taker. They also knew how to count and could calculate the value of land and of gold. In the eyes of white Australians they were a threat, not only to jobs and profits, but to the moral order of society. They were not Christians and were therefore seen as a pagan and immoral race. A newspaper correspondent claimed that an influx of 'Celestials from the Flowery Land' would 'result in the permanent degradation of the Australian nation', creating enormous damage, 'moral, social and financial'. They were also a political danger, for the newspapers predicted invasions by the 'yellow hordes', and detected a plot to 'flood the country with Mongolians'.

Australians had only to compare the crowded countryside of China with the empty land revealed in the colonial census tables for their fears to be confirmed. China had 114 people for every square kilometre. Australia, with an area of just under eight million square kilometres, had more than two and a half square kilometres for every person counted in the census. Europe, with roughly the same





Gossip, Fernshaw, Victoria. This idyllic scene by J.W. Lindt, photographic artist, expressed the popular idea that women brought civilisation to country areas. With the introduction of dry plate photography in 1885, it was no longer necessary to develop negatives immediately, and photographers such as John Lindt and Nicholas Caire could take much less equipment when they travelled to rural places such as Fernshaw, 80 kilometres north of Melbourne on the Watts River.

LA TROBE LIBRARY

area, had a population density of 34 people per square kilometre, the United Kingdom had 119. Much of Australia was empty, for the interior was arid and people were concentrated in the more fertile areas that had been settled first. Victoria had the highest population density, Western Australia the lowest. A large proportion of the people lived in major cities close to the coast.

The growth of cities was an important part of the 'march of civilization', and the census showed that in only 100 years, Australia had become one of the most urbanised societies in the world. Over one-third of the people lived in the six capital cities, earning their livings in different ways from the country people and organising their lives according to different timetables. Country life was ruled by the seasons, the planting and harvesting, shearing and lambing. In cities, the hours of factories and shops, railways and offices determined the rhythms of workers. Other human rhythms were influenced by location on the continent, for not only work routines but life and marriage chances were affected by country or city living. Men outnumbered women more heavily in the country than in the city.

In 1888 Australia had about 1.6 million males and 1.4 million females. The imbalance could be explained in part by the largely male immigration of the gold-rush period and in Western Australia by the male convict legacy. In the western colony, men over twenty-one outnumbered women by two to one, and the proportion was similar in outback regions and more recently settled areas of the eastern colonies, such as east Gippsland and the Mallee. Life was hard for women on the frontier and many male workers were constantly on the move, with no accommodation for wives and families. The masculine tradition of the outback was now celebrated in story and poetry and mateship took the place of family ties for many single men of the bush.

In the cities, Australians had built an environment that imitated many of the

fashions and comforts of the old world. Here men were more likely to settle down and provide a home for wife and family, although many men anxious to succeed waited until they could afford a house of their own before they married. The cities also provided paid work for women in shops and factories and in domestic service. In the cities the balance of the sexes was more even and in Adelaide and Hobart women actually outnumbered men. Women who had never married and widows were found more often in the city than the country, many living in poverty and becoming figures of sympathy, sometimes even disdain.

Most young Australians grew up to expect marriage and family life. During the 1880s the marriage rate per thousand of population was 7.6, higher than in most European countries, and the birth rate was 34.8 per thousand, about the same rate as in England. Since the peak of the 1860s the birth rate had declined, mainly due, Coghlan thought, 'to the increase in the proportion which persons under marriage age bear to the whole community'. One-third of the population was aged under fourteen; at the other end of the scale the women who had been the young mothers of the gold-rush generation were now past childbearing age. Many people saw the growth of population as a sign of progress and considered any deliberate attempt to reduce the size of families as an indication of moral decline. Yet perhaps the very progress the centenary celebrated could create conditions favourable to smaller families. Efficient technology and farming methods meant that children were now less often required to help in businesses and on farms. A growing preoccupation with material welfare might lead parents to limit families in order to give their children better chances of education and advancement. More information about birth control was available, and women could gain knowledge that would free them from the burden of constant childbearing.

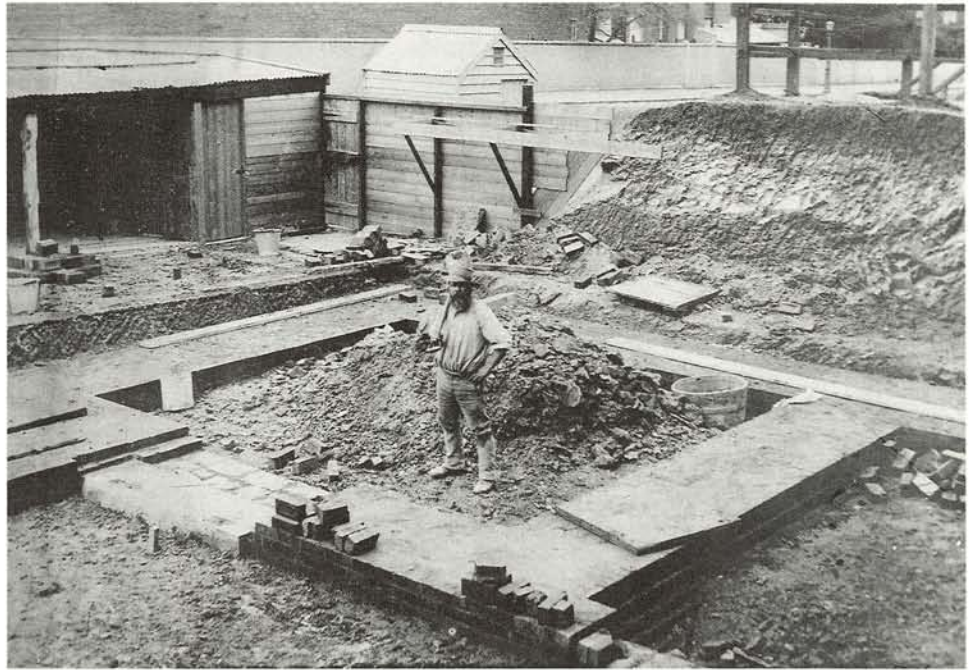
*A stylised family in a stylised house. Claremont House, the residence of George Bashford and family at Limestone, near Ipswich, Queensland in 1881. From a watercolour by C.G.S. Hirst.*

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*A working man pauses to have his photograph taken on the site of the Working Men's College in Melbourne. Rear Admiral Sir George Tryon, lecturing in London in February 1888 after commanding the Australian station of the Royal Navy, observed that in Australia wages were high, but that 'the men give a good day's work'. 'It is true that they put down their tools the very instant the dinner bell rings, but they do not dawdle and prepare for that event half an hour before.'*

ROYAL MELBOURNE  
INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY



Yet most women married and spent their lives looking after husbands, children and households. The average age of women at marriage was twenty-three, and three-quarters of women were married by the time they were twenty-nine. Most women stopped working for wages after they married; young single women were most likely to be found in the occupation tables of the census. Many young women worked in domestic service and two-thirds of Australia's 30 000 domestic servants were under twenty-five. Some married women had to work as tailoresses, cleaners and seamstresses in order to support their families, while older unmarried women often worked as governesses, dressmakers or schoolmistresses. One in four women worked for pay, and Coghlan thought that this proportion, low compared to other countries, showed the superior lot of women in Australia. The low wages paid for women's work reinforced the pressures applied by a society that saw a woman's natural place as the home.

Almost every Australian male over the age of fifteen was in the workforce. Men's work was valued not only for the wealth it brought to society but also for its own sake. Through work, a man developed his talents and revealed his character. Thomas Carlyle, the British essayist and historian, had explained the prevailing attitude.

Whatsoever of morality and of intelligence; what of patience, perseverance, faithfulness, of method, insight, ingenuity, energy; in a word, whatsoever of Strength the man has in him will lie written in the Work he does. To work: why, it is to try himself against Nature, and her everlasting unerring Laws; these will tell a true verdict as to the man.

The census had no category for 'retired' working men, and most of those too old to work still described themselves by their previous occupations. A man was a carpenter or labourer or farmer until his death.

While work might have been important in giving a 'true verdict as to the man', it was also vital for most in terms of survival. In a society without any government assistance, a man who had neither savings nor a family to support him soon became

destitute if he was too old to do hard physical work and could find no other light employment. In Queensland, the superintendent of the Dunwich Benevolent Home reported that the place was full in the second half of 1888. 'The occupation of shepherding', he observed, 'which enabled many old men to support themselves after they were unfit for harder work, owing to the fencing-in of the country is almost gone'. The drought had further reduced the work available for shepherds.

Coghlan had inherited the occupation tables from the British census and he noted that the classification in the 1881 census was not satisfactory. The occupations were listed in 'comprehensive classes', which, he said reprovingly, were 'not scientific'. The categories had been devised by Farr to group workers according to materials used. This had served Farr's purpose at the time, as he wished to show how the workplace and materials used related to causes of death among workers. But these comprehensive classes made it difficult to distinguish the status of workers: 'A man calls himself a baker whether he were a journey man baker or a master baker, and so with other trades; it is impossible to distinguish them', an English expert noted. In Australia, a country that lacked inherited wealth and status, the 'social and caste impediments' of the old world, it was often a man's work which decided his place in society.

Coghlan and R.M. Johnston of Tasmania were planning to reorganise the important occupation classifications for the census of 1891. The model was scientific and workers were to be 'arranged in the natural classes of primary producers and distributors, and these again into their various orders and sub-orders'. Australian society, although numerically small, was economically complex, with a large variety of 'orders and sub-orders'. It was a society that valued production, yet most of the workforce fell into the category of 'distributors'. Workers on farms and in factories were outnumbered by people who provided services. Far more were employed in such tasks as lifting and carrying, serving and preparing meals, collecting facts or teaching in schools than were engaged in making goods or growing food.

For every 100 men who worked in Australia, 70 were wage earners, 12 were employers, 14 worked on their own account and 4 assisted in a family shop, farm or other business. Many women, not listed as workers in the census, assisted husbands and fathers on farms or in shops. In the division between employer and worker, country and city differed markedly. In the country, four out of ten men were wage earners, in the cities the proportion was eight out of ten.

Coghlan's tables showed that most workers lived well, and he noted that high wages and low food prices

have induced a greater degree of comfort, if not of luxury, amongst a class in Australia which in other parts of the world has little of comfort and knows nothing of luxury.

Australians ate better and did less laborious work than people in other countries, even the USA, and few countries, Coghlan remarked, 'approach Australasia in the small proportion of income absorbed in providing food for the people'. Coghlan reflected that 'a high standard of living is not conducive to thrift', but was pleased that 'nevertheless the progress of saving has gone on with great rapidity'. Deposits in savings banks per head of population exceeded those in the mother country, a sign that most workers were aiming at becoming comfortable and self-respecting members of society.

Some, of course, in spite of all their efforts, were not sharing in the prosperity. In Sydney Thomas Dobeson, an English immigrant, was tramping the city looking for work. He lamented:

The New South Wales Government fit up ships to bring us out here and feed us on the voyage and all that and to help to civilize the folks and then when we get here there is no work for us to do . . .

I have been out of work eleven weeks and earned 2/9 in that time and I don't know how many miles I have walked in that time and I am sorry to say there are hundreds worse off than us. There is a public park called the Domain where hundreds sleep at nights in the open air and remember the days are hot and the nights are cold.

And he noted bitterly of his new home, 'You say we are in a splendid country and we have a beautiful harbour. That's so but we can't eat harbours'.

Coghlan could demonstrate, however, the general level of material welfare and he also thought that moral welfare was sound. In the census of 1881 over one million people had been recorded as members of the Church of England and 600 000 listed themselves as Roman Catholics. The census report recorded 47 562 people as pagans, but Coghlan noted that under this heading the Chinese had 'for the most part been erroneously classed'. By 1888 about 86 per cent of the population claimed to be members of one of the four major denominations; Church of England, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian or Wesleyan. A smaller number were Baptists, Congregationalists or Lutherans, and the Salvation Army had arrived in 1881 and was campaigning vigorously. While most Australians who counted claimed affiliation with one of the respectable denominations, this did not necessarily mean that they attended church regularly. Coghlan estimated New South Wales church attendances at about 34 per cent of the adult population, and thought that attendances were slightly higher in Victoria and South Australia.

One function of the churches had been the building and running of schools. Some people had hoped that the Church of England could establish public schools of the calibre of Eton or Harrow, Rugby or Winchester, preferably with an Oxford or Cambridge graduate as headmaster. Public and private schools based on

*The Salvation Army, originating in London, reached Australia in 1881 and by 1888 was generally accepted as an agent of moral welfare. Bands such as this one at Mount Morgan, Queensland, were used not only to accompany vigorous hymn singing, but to advertise the Army's presence and to drown out the heckling of larrikins.*

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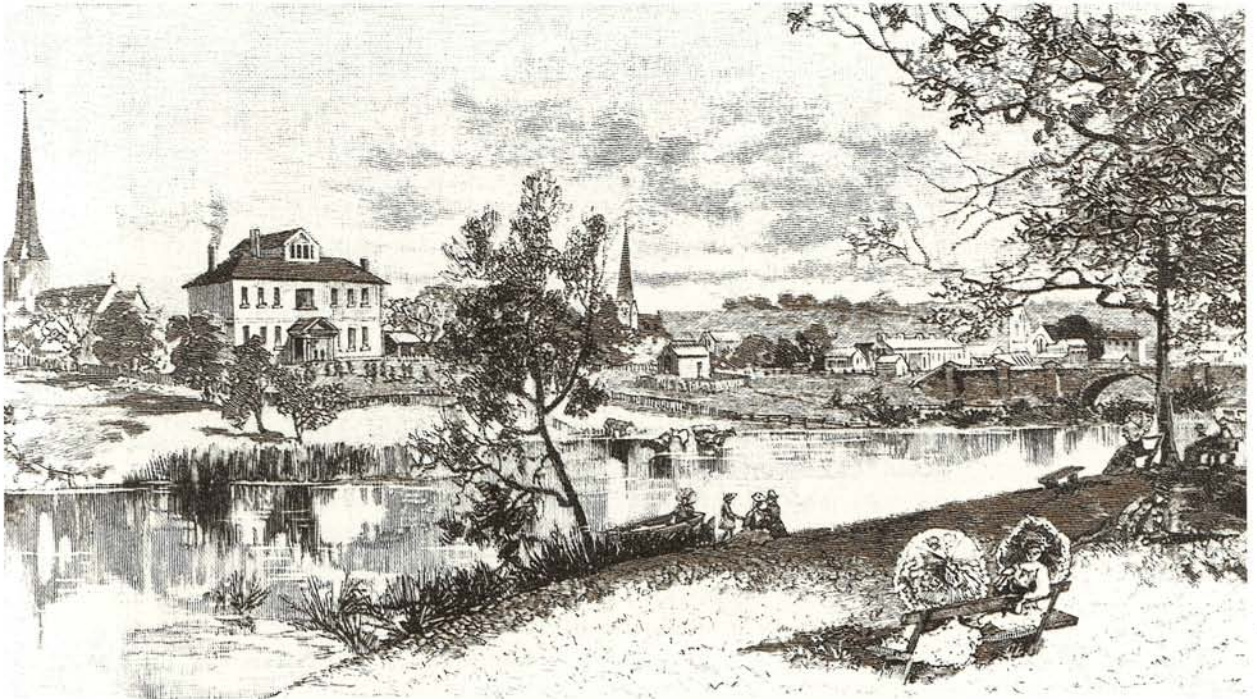


the English model had been established. Some, such as King's, Melbourne Grammar, Scotch and St Peter's were run by the churches; others, such as Sydney and Brisbane grammar schools were run by corporate bodies with the help of a government subsidy. But only the well-to-do could afford to send their sons to these schools and on to one of the three colonial universities at Sydney, Melbourne or Adelaide. Only the rich could send their sons to be educated in England. Few could afford to send their daughters to a Methodist or Presbyterian ladies' college to gain academic training and social polish. While it was now possible for women to attend university, only an exceptional girl did so.

By 1888 the colonial governments had taken over the responsibility for primary education and schooling was compulsory for children in every colony but Queensland where, Coghlan explained, 'the compulsory clause has not been adopted, as it would be a very difficult thing to enforce its provisions in the scattered and sparsely populated districts of the interior'. In the cities, new state schools existed beside the many elementary schools run privately or by the Catholic Church. There were few state high schools, in some colonies none, and a state school pupil who won a scholarship to a grammar school often found the transition hard. Timothy Coghlan won a scholarship from the National school at Redfern to Sydney Grammar in 1868 but left two years later, 'chiefly owing to his dislike of the headmaster'. Others found it difficult to make the leap from basic training in reading and writing skills to subjects provided at grammar schools to fit pupils for university and the professions.

Every child, however, was now to be given an elementary education. Coghlan noted that one in five Australians was enrolled at school, 'a proportion as favourable as that of any European country'. Eighty per cent of people over five could read and write. While higher education was still the province of the privileged, there were few dwellings in Australia, even if they were shanties on the edges of civilisation, where no one could be found to read aloud extracts from papers such as the *Bulletin* or the *Town and Country Journal*. In the centennial year, 93 million

*The King's School was established in 1832 by William Broughton, head of the Church of England in Australia, and an old boy of the King's School in Canterbury, England. The school at Parramatta received government support at first, but this ceased by 1838. A. Garran (ed), Picturesque atlas of Australasia, Sydney 1886-88.*



newspapers passed through the post offices, an average of about thirty for every person in Australia. Some were English journals, but people also had a myriad Australian newspapers and magazines to read, many purchased directly and not included in Coghlan's figure. The *Sydney Morning Herald* was proud to be the oldest existing Australian paper, and the Melbourne *Argus* had the reputation of being one of the world's great newspapers. Many proprietors of city dailies published weeklies specially adapted for country readers. The *Bulletin* was independent, but the *Sydney Mail* was companion to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Town and Country Journal* was associated with the *Sydney Evening News*, the *Argus* published the *Australasian*, the *Brisbane Courier* published the *Queenslander* and the *West Australian* sent out the *Western Mail*.

Once material and moral progress had been measured, it was still necessary to count the costs. Against the success of the thrifty working man, Coghlan set the fact that in 1881 about thirteen people in a thousand were declared insolvent. In spite of a pious population, crimes were still being committed, although Coghlan was happy to note a decrease in serious crime in proportion to population, and expressed a 'confident expectation' that the steady improvement would continue. Suicide, however, was increasing, with more than 10 people in 100 000 taking their own lives in 1888, a figure that was probably understated and that compared unfavourably with the United Kingdom suicide rate of 7 in 100 000. Illegitimate births were recorded as more than 4 per cent of total births, a ratio slightly lower than in England. Eighty-four divorces were granted in the centennial year.

The numbers in the census hid a world of varied human experience. Some also hid a world of human misery, which only became real when the victims of the 'march of civilization' were given a name. Albert Wright, a New England pastoralist, gave a name to one of them in the diary he kept for 1888. On 8 February he was out riding when he received 'a note from Frank that Teenie has broken out and is violent. Met Frank soon afterwards going in for a straight waistcoat.' Teenie, a relative, was Albert's responsibility, and he hurried home. He 'passed a miserable night, but Teenie did not get violent until the afternoon, when we had to tie her down'. Albert took her to the doctor and got a certificate, and with great difficulty took her on the train to Maitland. Five months later, Albert and his wife went to visit Teenie among the 700 inmates at the asylum at Gladesville. Teenie was one of about 3 people in 1000 who were classified insane.

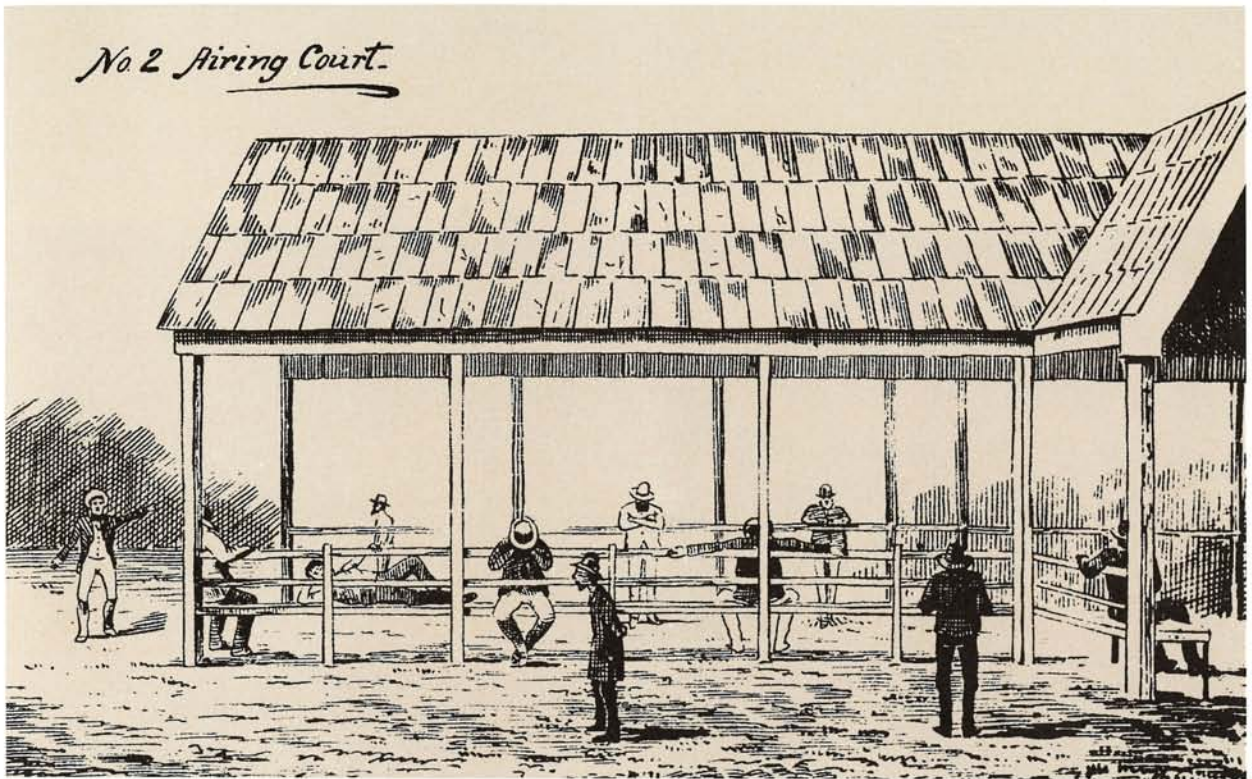
Such failures were, however, statistically few, and in the grand design of progress they were an acceptable cost. This did not mean that Coghlan accepted them with equanimity. He knew that in the world beyond the census people had names instead of numbers, and that they measured time in terms of the span of their own lives and not in decennial averages. The individual men and women stood hesitantly in a present that was ever-changing, that did not yet have a form, not even the comfort of precise statistics.

People thought of themselves not as material for the statistician but as the makers of the society in which they lived; the authors as well as the products of the church, the family, the city or the farm. They did not have the comfort of category or the security of history; they did not need the death rates of the census to convince them that they could not measure their own lives in terms of centuries. When they looked back to the arrival of white Australians 100 years before, they thought of a time that had preceded their own arrival; when they looked forward to the next centenary, they knew it was a time which they would not survive to see.

There was comfort, however, in being part of Timothy Coghlan's historical people who would go on forever. Being a man of his time and place, Coghlan could look back with pride and ahead with confidence.



Newspaper readers.  
Illustrated Sydney News,  
15 June 1887.



It is impossible for a reflective mind to survey the progress made by Australasia in one century without asking the question 'What will the future be?' It scarcely requires the gift of prophecy to find an answer. Here is an enormous territory, with illimitable resources implanted by Nature, without taking into account the possibilities of development by culture and acclimatisation. Here is a people who one hundred years ago found Australasia a desert, but who have already begun to make it blossom like the rose.

*Inmates of the Parkside lunatic asylum, Adelaide, take the air. Pictorial Australian, Mar 1888.*

Coghlan looked back at the people of the first hundred years and forward to those of the next hundred. By all the tests of statistical science his people were doing well and their carefully measured achievements gave him every reason to believe that their progress would continue.

It is not to be supposed that they will rest content with what they have done, but rather that the progress they have already made will stimulate them to further advance.

Timothy Coghlan's people were marching firmly and confidently into their ordered and perfectible future.