

MULTICULTURALISM

I take you back to the innocent mind of a child during the Second World War. A child who is a fugitive from one of the Axis countries, who is so grateful to be at Roseville school after experiencing some harrowing treatment at my first school. Here teachers and fellow pupils warmly welcomed me. I especially liked the songs on Friday mornings; *There will always be an England, Rule Britannia and Land of Hope and Glory*. I marvelled at the confidence people had. Roseville taught me many things, but there was one thing they did not teach – discrimination ...

(George Verey (Vertesi), 1942-44)

Being at Roseville Public School throughout the war years, I clearly remember the school yard full of zig zag trenches, the glass windows being taped and the kits issued to students with equipment for use in possible air raids. During the war a new boy arrived from war torn Europe. Because he looked different to us, all the boys chased him around the school grounds. Very unkind, but he assured me recently it was much easier for him at Roseville than at the first school he arrived at in Sydney.

(John Moore, 1938-44)

The warmth and non-critical friendship shown to me, a virtually non-English speaking stranger, will always be one of my enduring memories of Roseville Public School.

(Helga de Jersey (Ermert), 1947-48)

I came to the school in Second Class as a migrant child with little English. I had a difficult experience at another school and was very relieved that I was well accepted at Roseville. We were a bit of a novelty. I had 'dark hair' - coming from Holland, it was supposed to be blonde. Because I had missed a lot of schooling I was also older, so that was hard but we all got on well and learned from each other.

(Marie Circuit (Theunissen), 1953-57)

In 1998, approximately twenty-five percent of the school children come from a non-English speaking background, and from twenty-one different countries, predominantly Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Taiwanese. A multicultural initiative of the past four years has been *Listening, Reading and Writing in Your First Language*. This reaffirms the students' cultural identity and improves their literacy skills in their own language, which in turn improves their learning of a second language. The programme also gives the parents a chance to participate in school activities by reading, playing games and doing craft activities in their first language.

(Robyn Spender, ESL Teacher, 1998)