

Mathematics Level 7

Chapter 3 — Citizenship, diversity and identity

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The cultural roots of Australia's secular, pluralist society

Civics and Citizenship 7 · Chapter 3: Citizenship, diversity and identity · Section 3A

Curriculum tracking

Owns	VC2HC8K09
Content description (remainder taught)	VC2HC8K09 — referenced by code only; see the note below
Draws on	.E01 · .E03 · .E04

A note on the content description. The full text of VC2HC8K09 names three streams of cultural origin. This book teaches two of them in this section — the Christian and Western heritage, and the cultures of migrant communities. The third stream is not covered on purpose; the notice at the front of the book explains why, and the series plan records the decision as an accepted exclusion rather than a gap.

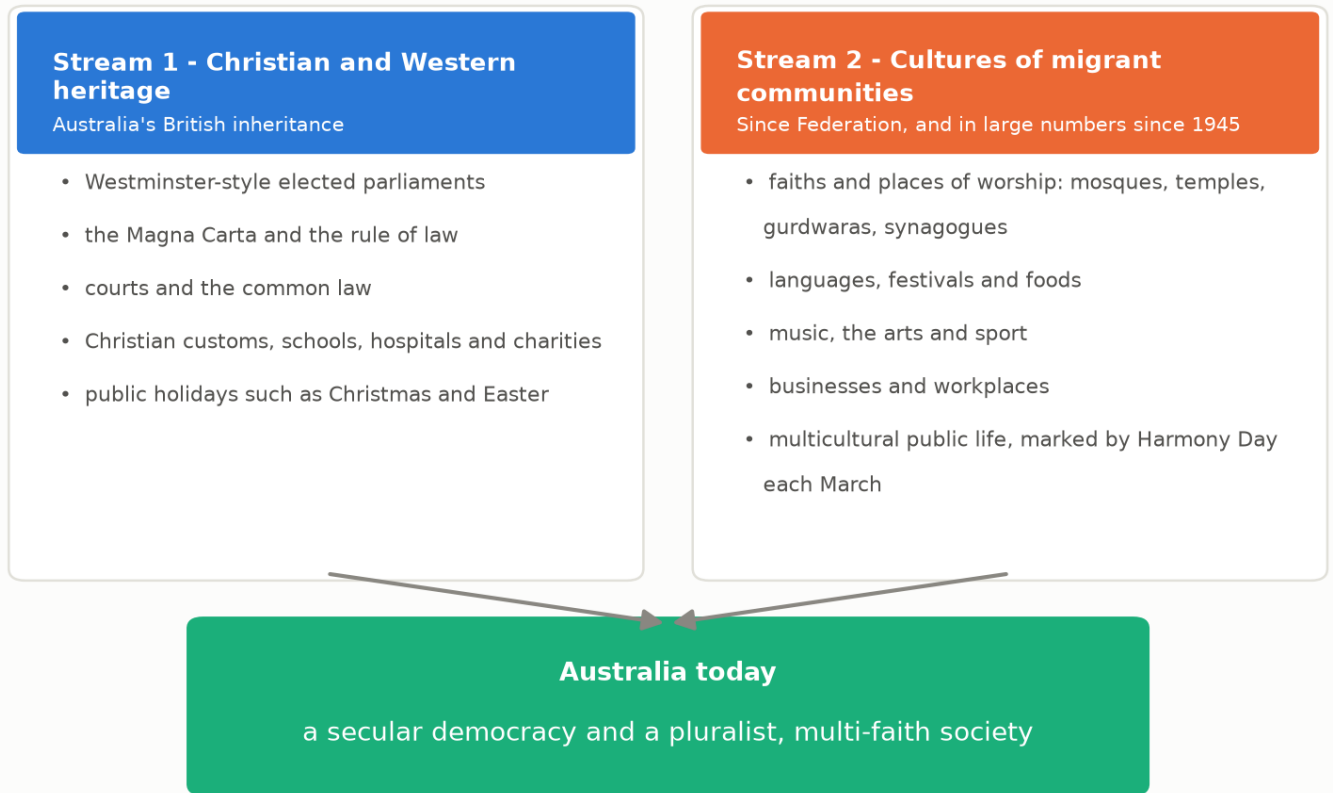
In this section

Australia is often described as a **secular democracy** and a **pluralist, multi-faith society**. Those are big words. This section unpacks them one at a time, and then asks: *where did these features of Australia come from?*

Two streams of cultural origin receive most of the attention:

1. the **Christian and Western heritage** carried to Australia chiefly through Britain — the parliament, the law, and many public customs; and
2. the **cultures of migrant communities** — the people who have made Australia home since Federation, and in very large numbers since 1945.

Two streams of cultural origin taught in this section



Concept diagram with two boxes feeding one result box. Stream 1, Christian and Western heritage (Australia's British inheritance), lists the Westminster parliament, the Magna Carta and the rule of law, courts and the common law, Christian customs, and public holidays. Stream 2, cultures of migrant communities (since Federation, and in large numbers since 1945), lists faiths and places of worship, languages, festivals and foods, music, the arts and sport, businesses, and Harmony Day each March. Both arrows point to 'Australia today: a secular democracy and a pluralist, multi-faith society'.

You will also read real numbers from the most recent national Census and use them to describe what Australian society looks like today.

Theory

1. Key words, defined first

The Victorian Curriculum uses the words below but does not define them. There is no single authority everyone accepts for these meanings, so this section uses the working definitions given here. Every question in this section can be answered using these definitions alone. Where people use one of these words in a different way, that difference is worth noticing — some of the tasks ask you to find it.

Key words for this section

Working definitions used throughout Section 3A

secular

Government is kept separate from religion: there is no official faith and no religious test for public office. Secular does not mean against religion.

multi-faith

A society in which people follow many different faiths - and many follow no faith at all.

pluralist

A society in which many different groups exist side by side, take part in public life and are treated with equal respect. No single group rules over the others.

culturally diverse

A society made up of people with different cultural backgrounds: different ancestries, languages, customs and beliefs.

diverse society

Another name for a culturally diverse society - one with many different cultural backgrounds living side by side.

Western and Christian heritage

The ideas, laws, institutions and customs that reached Australia mainly through Britain and Europe, together with the influence of the Christian churches.

These terms are defined at first use because the curriculum uses them without defining them.

Six key words for this section shown as cards: secular, multi-faith, pluralist, culturally diverse, diverse society, and Western and Christian heritage, each with a short working definition.

Word	Working definition used in this section	What it looks like in Australia
secular (say: SEEK-yuh-lur)	Government is kept separate from religion. A secular state has no official religion, does not prefer one faith over another, and does not require any religion of the people who serve it. <i>Secular</i> does not mean <i>against religion</i> — people of every faith, and of none, are free to believe and worship.	Section 116 of the Australian Constitution stops the Commonwealth from making a religion official or demanding a religious test for public office.
multi-faith	A society in which people follow many different faiths — and many follow no faith at all.	The 2021 Census recorded Australians who identified as Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jewish, and with many other faiths, as well as Australians with no religion.
pluralist	A society in which many different cultural, religious and political groups exist side by side, take part in public life, and are treated with equal respect — and in which no single group rules over the others.	Community groups run festivals, schools, places of worship and media in many languages. Citizens of every background may vote, join parties, and stand for parliament.
culturally diverse / a diverse society	A society made up of people with different cultural backgrounds — different ancestries, languages, customs and beliefs.	In the 2021 Census, 27.6% of people in Australia were born overseas, and more than 300 ancestries were reported.
Western and Christian heritage	The ideas, laws, institutions and customs that reached Australia mainly through Britain and Europe: the English language, Westminster-style parliaments, courts and the common law, the rule of law stretching back to the Magna Carta — together with the social and moral influence of the Christian churches.	Australia's parliament, courts, public holidays and many charities have British and Christian roots.

These words are the kind of words people argue about: reasonable people disagree about exactly where, say, *secular* ends and *religious* begins. That makes them worth defining carefully before using. Keep the table above close by while you work through the section.

2. Christian and Western heritage: Australia's British inheritance

When the six British colonies joined to form the Commonwealth of Australia on 1 January 1901, the new nation kept the British style of government. That inheritance is still visible in how Australia is run:

- **Parliament.** Australia uses the Westminster system: citizens elect the parliament, the party (or parties) with the most seats in the lower house forms the government, and an opposition questions and checks it. This pattern comes from Britain's parliament.
- **The rule of law and the courts.** The idea that everyone — even the most powerful — must obey the law has deep British roots. The Magna Carta, sealed by King John of England in 1215, is one of the first famous statements of it. Its clause 39 said that no free man could be punished “except by the lawful judgement of his peers or by the law of the land” — an early ancestor of trial by jury. A 1297 copy of the Magna Carta, one of only four surviving from that year, is on public display at Parliament House in Canberra.

- **The common law.** Australian courts apply law built up from judges' decisions over time, a system inherited from Britain.

The Australian Constitution, section 116

The rule that keeps the Commonwealth government separate from religion

"The Commonwealth shall not make any law for establishing any religion, or for imposing any religious observance, or for prohibiting the free exercise of any religion, and no religious test shall be required as a qualification for any office or public trust under the Commonwealth."

- Australian Constitution 1900 (Cth), s 116

In plain terms

In plain terms: the Commonwealth government may not create an official religion, may not force anyone to take part in a religious observance, may not stop anyone practising their religion, and may not require a religious test for any Commonwealth office.

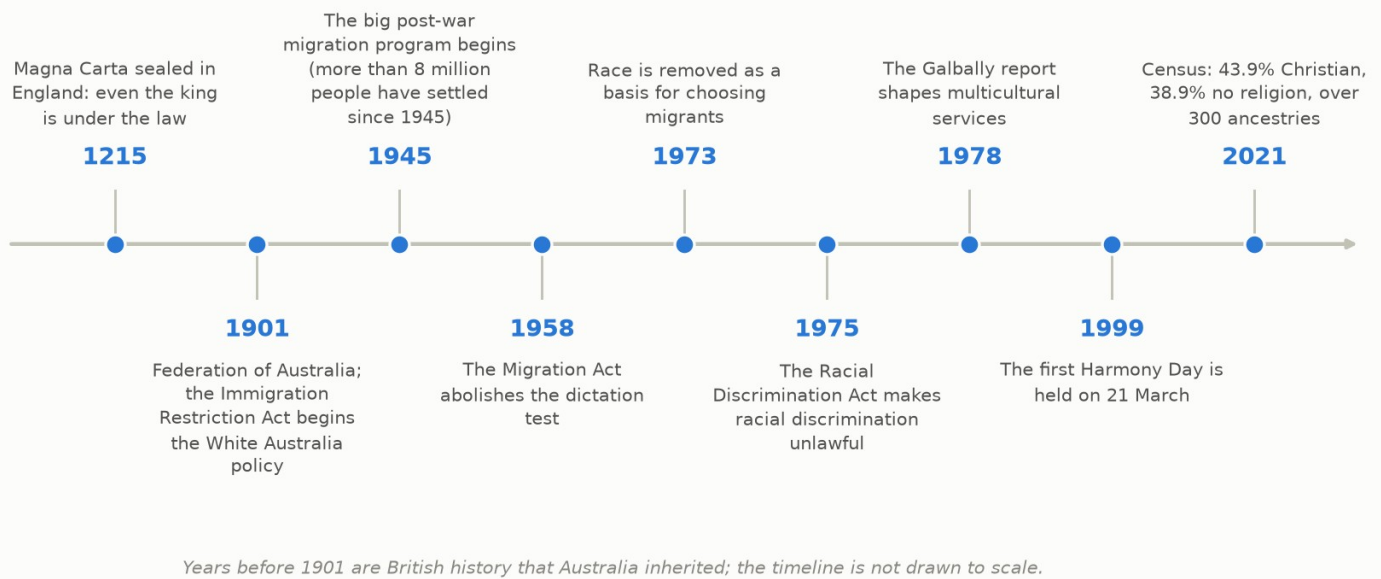
The text of section 116 of the Australian Constitution, which keeps the Commonwealth government separate from religion.

Christian heritage shaped the society too. Most of the early European settlers were Christian, and for much of Australia's history most Australians identified with a Christian church, especially the Anglican and Catholic churches. Churches founded many of Australia's schools, hospitals and charities, and some still run them today. Christmas and Easter are public holidays. Each new Commonwealth parliament is opened by the Governor-General, and the opening includes a prayer.

Yet Australia's government is secular. Section 116 of the Constitution (shown in the figure above) stops the Commonwealth from making any religion official, from forcing people to take part in religious observance, or from stopping people practising their faith. It also says that no religious test can be required for a Commonwealth public office. A person of any faith — or no faith — can serve as a member of parliament, a minister or a judge.

So there are two truths at once: Australia's public institutions carry a strong British and Christian stamp, and the written rules keep the government itself separate from religion. Some people point to the prayer that opens parliament and say Australia is not fully secular; others answer that section 116 and the freedom it protects are what make Australia secular. Both sides are worth hearing — Task U5 asks you to put each side at its strongest.

Key moments in Australia's cultural origins, 1215-2021



A timeline from 1215 to 2021 showing key moments in Australia's cultural origins, from the Magna Carta to the most recent Census.

3. The cultures of migrant communities

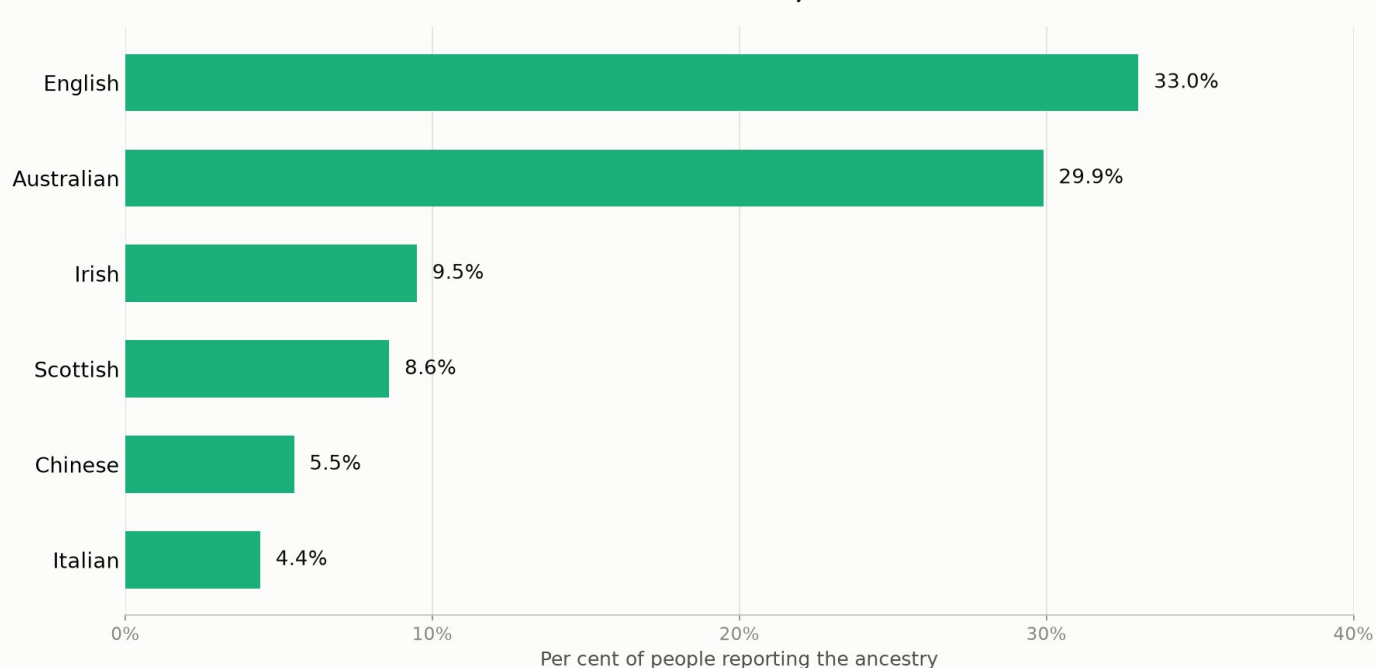
Migration is the second great stream shaping Australia's pluralist, multi-faith society. Since Federation, people from all over the world have come to live in Australia; according to the Australian Government, more than 8 million people have settled here since 1945 alone.

The rules changed, and so did the arrivals. The first Commonwealth parliament passed the Immigration Restriction Act 1901, which used a dictation test to keep out most non-European migrants — the set of laws known as the White Australia policy. Over the decades it was pulled apart piece by piece: the dictation test was abolished in 1958; in 1973 the government removed race as a basis for choosing migrants; and the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 made racial discrimination unlawful. From the 1970s, Australian governments adopted multiculturalism — the policy that people of different cultures can keep their heritage while sharing one society.

Post-war migration. After the Second World War, Australia invited large numbers of migrants, first chiefly from Britain, then from across Europe — the Netherlands, Italy, Greece, Germany and Poland among them. After the policy changes of the 1970s, arrivals came from everywhere: Vietnam, China, India, Lebanon, and many more countries besides.

What migrant communities brought. Migrant communities added new faiths and places of worship — mosques, temples, gurdwaras and synagogues stand beside churches. They brought languages, foods, music, festivals and businesses, and have shaped Australian sport and the arts. Australia's multiculturalism is marked in public life too: every year since 1999, 21 March has been Harmony Day, a day of cultural respect held on the same date as the United Nations' International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Schools and communities across Australia mark Harmony Week around that date.

The six most common ancestries, Australian 2021 Census

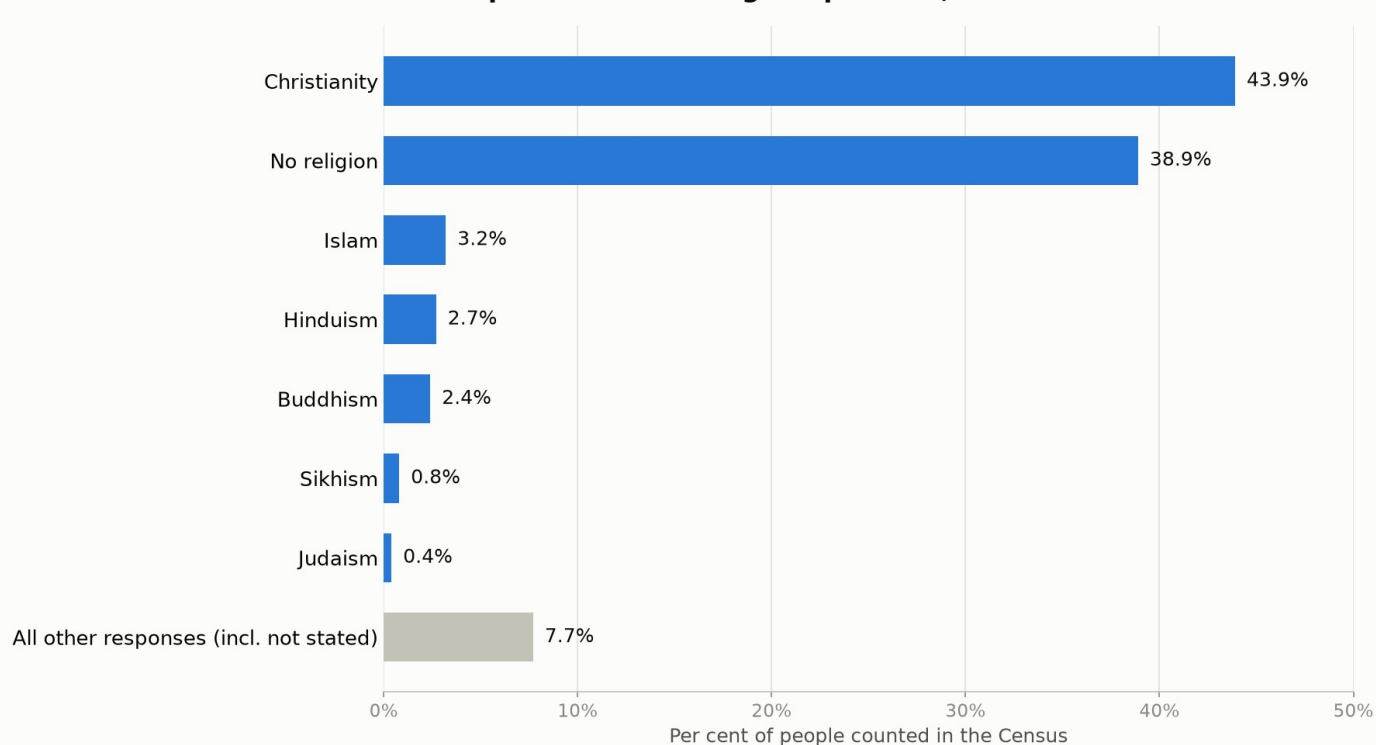


Bar chart of the six most common ancestries reported in the Australian 2021 Census.

4. What the Census shows: trends in religion and heritage

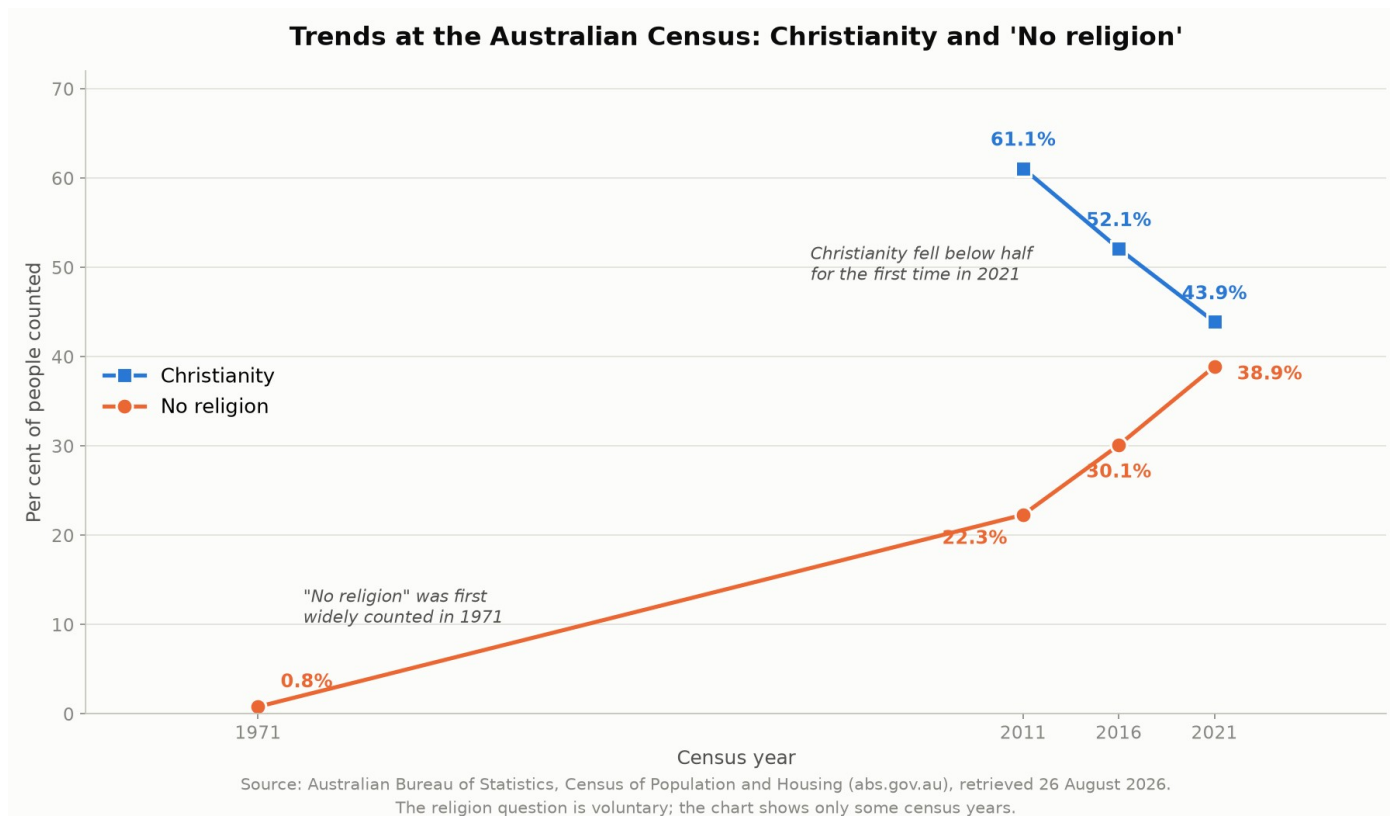
The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) runs the Census every five years; the most recent was held on Census Night, 10 August 2021. The religion question is voluntary — people may leave it blank.

Responses to the religion question, Australian 2021 Census



Bar chart of responses to the religion question in the Australian 2021 Census: Christianity, No religion, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Judaism and all other responses.

The 2021 results. Christianity remained the largest religion, reported by 43.9% of people — but for the first time it was below half of the population. “No religion” was reported by 38.9%, almost as many. Islam (3.2%), Hinduism (2.7%), Buddhism (2.4%), Sikhism (0.8%) and Judaism (0.4%) were the next largest groups.



Line chart showing the rise of “No religion” from 0.8% in 1971 to 38.9% in 2021 and the fall in Christianity from 61.1% in 2011 to 43.9% in 2021.

The trends. In 1971 — the first Census in which “no religion” was a widely used answer — only 0.8% of Australians chose it. By 2011 the figure was 22.3%, by 2016 it was 30.1%, and in 2021 it reached 38.9%. Over the same recent period, the share identifying as Christian fell: 61.1% in 2011, 52.1% in 2016, 43.9% in 2021. At the same time, the share of Australians born overseas has kept rising (27.6% in 2021), and more than 300 ancestries were reported.

What the trends mean for the key words. Australian society is becoming more culturally diverse and more multi-faith, while fewer people belong to any church. In a pluralist society, all of these groups — people of many faiths and of none — live together on equal terms. That is exactly why the secular rules in section 116 matter: the government does not take sides between them.

Data note: Census percentages are shares of everyone counted. Because the religion question is voluntary, some responses are “not stated”; the chart groups these with smaller faiths.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021 Census of Population and Housing — religion and cultural diversity data (abs.gov.au), retrieved 26 August 2026.

Worked case studies

Case study 1 — scaffolded: the 2021 Census counts Australia’s faiths

What happened. The ABS released the religion results of the 2021 Census in 2022. The headline numbers: Christianity reported by 43.9% of Australians — the first Census in which it fell below half — and “No religion” reported by 38.9%. The gap between the two answers, the largest in Australia’s history, was small enough that the ABS said “no religion” could overtake Christianity at the next Census.

Who was involved. The Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australia’s official statistical agency, collected and published the data. The numbers came from the forms filled in by households across Australia for the Census held on 10 August 2021.

Step	Working	Comment
1. Which key word fits the mix of faiths recorded?	Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh and Jewish Australians were all counted, together with Australians of no faith.	Multi-faith — many faiths, and none, in one society.
2. Which key word fits the range of backgrounds?	27.6% of people were born overseas; more than 300 ancestries were reported.	Culturally diverse — many different cultural backgrounds.
3. What does the voluntary question show about the state?	The Census counts every faith the same way and forces no one to answer.	A secular government treats all faiths and none equally.
4. Which CD concept does the case show overall?	The numbers let anyone identify trends in religious observance and heritage using ABS data.	This case study shows exactly what elaboration .E03 describes.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021 Census of Population and Housing — religion data (abs.gov.au), retrieved 26 August 2026.

Case study 2 — scaffolded: the Magna Carta at Parliament House

What happened. In June 1215, rebel barons forced King John of England to seal a document at Runnymede: the Magna Carta. Its clause 39 promised that no free man would be imprisoned or punished “except by the lawful judgement of his peers or by the law of the land”. The idea travelled: it flowed into the British system of courts and juries, and through Britain into Australia’s own legal system, where the rule of law means that no one is above the law. Today, one of only four surviving 1297 originals of the Magna Carta is displayed at Parliament House, Canberra — the building where Australia’s laws are made.

Who was involved. King John and the rebel barons (1215); later British parliaments and courts that built on the charter; and the Australian Parliament, which keeps the document on display.

Step	Working	Comment
1. What did the Magna Carta establish?	Even the king had to obey the law; punishment needed lawful judgement.	An early statement of the rule of law .
2. How did it reach Australia?	Australia inherited Britain’s parliament, courts and common law.	The Western heritage in action.
3. Why is it displayed in Parliament House?	Parliament makes laws; the charter reminds lawmakers that law rules over power.	A symbol connecting heritage to today’s institutions.
4. Which CD concept does the case show overall?	A British document of 1215 still shapes Australia’s political and legal systems.	This is the heart of elaboration .E04.

Source: Parliament House art collection, Parliament of Australia (aph.gov.au), retrieved 26 August 2026.

Tasks

Scaffolded

Q1. Copy the table below into your book. Without looking back at the theory, match each key word to its working definition (one has been done for you). Then check your answers against the definition table and correct any mistakes.

Key word	Definition letter
secular	b
multi-faith	
pluralist	
culturally diverse	
Western and Christian heritage	

Definitions: **(a)** a society made up of people with many different cultural backgrounds · **(b)** government kept separate from religion, with no official faith and no religious test for office · **(c)** the ideas, laws, institutions and customs that reached Australia mainly through Britain and Europe, together with the influence of the Christian churches · **(d)** a society in which many different groups exist side by side, take part in public life, and no single group rules the others · **(e)** a society in which people follow many different faiths, or none.

Q2. Look at the bar chart of the 2021 Census religion results (Figure 3a_religion_2021). Answer in full sentences:

1. Which response was the most common in 2021? Give the percentage.
2. Which response was second? Give the percentage.
3. Name three faiths other than Christianity that were reported.

Q3. Look at the trend chart (Figure 3a_religion_trend). Complete each sentence using numbers from the chart:

1. In 1971, only ... % of Australians reported no religion.
2. By 2021, that figure had risen to ... %.
3. In 2011, ... % of Australians identified as Christian; by 2021 that share had fallen to ... %.
4. The share identifying as Christian fell below half for the first time in the Census of ...

Q4. Read the text of section 116 (Figure 3a_s116) and answer:

1. What is the Commonwealth forbidden from doing, according to the first half of section 116? List the three things.
2. What does section 116 say about religious tests for public office?
3. Using the definition table, explain in one sentence why section 116 makes the Australian government *secular*.

Q5. Look at the timeline (Figure 3a_timeline). Copy these four events into your book and put them in order from first to most recent: *the Racial Discrimination Act is passed* · *the Magna Carta is sealed* · *the Immigration Restriction Act is passed* · *the first Harmony Day is held*. Then choose one event and write one sentence explaining why it matters for Australia's cultural origins.

Q6. The timeline says the dictation test was abolished in 1958 and race was removed as a basis for choosing migrants in 1973. Explain in two or three sentences how these two changes helped make Australia more culturally diverse.

Un scaffolded

Q7. Name two features of Australia's political or legal system that come from Britain's Western heritage, and for each one give a specific example mentioned in this section.

Q8. "Australia is a secular society." Do the 2021 Census results support this claim? Use at least two numbers from the section in your answer.

Q9. Migration rules changed in 1973 and 1975. Explain what changed and suggest one effect each change had on the kinds of communities now found in Australia.

Q10. The section says Australia is *pluralist*. Describe two examples of a pluralist society you can find in your own suburb, town or school community (real or likely ones are both fine). Explain why each example fits the definition.

Q11. Two students are arguing about the prayer that opens each new Commonwealth parliament.

- Student A says: “The prayer shows Australia is not really secular.”
- Student B says: “Australia is secular — section 116 and freedom of belief prove it.”

Put **each** student’s case at its strongest — give each side at least two good reasons a supporter of that side would actually use. Then say which side you find more convincing and why. You will be marked on the strength of your reasoning for both sides, not on which side you pick.

Q12. Look at the ancestry chart (Figure 3a_ancestry_2021). What do the six most common ancestries — and the fact that more than 300 ancestries were reported — tell you about the meaning of *culturally diverse* in Australia today? Write a short paragraph.

Extended response

Q13. “Australia is a secular democracy, and its society is pluralist and multi-faith. Both features trace back to a range of cultural traditions.”

Write an extended response of about two paragraphs explaining how **two** cultural origins taught in this section have shaped Australian society. Your response must:

- define the key words you use,
- give at least one piece of evidence for each cultural origin (a date, a law, a Census number or a named institution),
- explain the link between each origin and the Australia of today,
- finish with one limit or question your answer leaves open.

A planning scaffold is given below; a model paragraph is provided in the Answers.

Plan element

Your notes

Key words you will define

Cultural origin 1 + evidence

Cultural origin 2 + evidence

Links to Australia today

One limit or open question

Answers

Q1. multi-faith → e · pluralist → d · culturally diverse → a · Western and Christian heritage → c. (Secular → b was given.)

Q2. 1. Christianity was the most common response, reported by 43.9% of people. 2. “No religion” was second, at 38.9%. 3. Any three of: Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Judaism.

Q3. 1. 0.8% · 2. 38.9% · 3. 61.1%; 43.9% · 4. 2021.

Q4. 1. The Commonwealth may not make a religion official (“establishing any religion”), may not force anyone to take part in religious observance, and may not stop anyone practising their religion. 2. No religious test may be required for any Commonwealth office or public trust. 3. Sample: section 116 keeps the government separate from religion and stops it preferring any faith, which is exactly what *secular* means in this section.

Q5. Order: the Magna Carta is sealed (1215) → the Immigration Restriction Act is passed (1901) → the Racial Discrimination Act is passed (1975) → the first Harmony Day is held (1999). The explanation will vary; accept any accurate sentence linking the chosen event to Australia’s cultural origins.

Q6. Sample: the dictation test had kept most non-European migrants out. Once it was abolished in 1958, and especially once race stopped deciding who could migrate in 1973, people from many more countries could come. That is why Australia now records more than 300 ancestries and a population in which over a quarter was born overseas.

Q7. Sample pairs: the Westminster-style elected parliament (government formed from the lower house, an opposition that checks it) and the rule of law from the Magna Carta (clause 39, trial by jury); or the common law applied by courts; or the 1297 Magna Carta displayed at Parliament House, Canberra.

Q8. Sample: the Census counts every faith and “no religion” in the same voluntary question, which fits a secular state that takes no side between faiths. The results — 43.9% Christian, 38.9% no religion, plus Islam 3.2%, Hinduism 2.7%, Buddhism 2.4% and smaller groups — show a society of many faiths and none, which the government treats equally. Accept well-reasoned answers either way, including ones that note the Census measures society, not the rules of government.

Q9. In 1973 race was removed as a basis for choosing migrants, and in 1975 the Racial Discrimination Act made racial discrimination unlawful. Effects may include: arrivals from a much wider range of countries (for example Vietnam, China, India and Lebanon), new faith communities and places of worship, and the growth of a multicultural society. Accept any sensible effect linked to either change.

Q10. Answers will vary. Examples might include: a mosque, temple or gurdwara near a church; food shops or restaurants serving many cuisines; school events marking Harmony Day or different festivals; community radio in several languages. Award the mark where the example fits the working definition of *pluralist* — many groups sharing public life on equal terms.

Q11. Mark the reasoning, not the conclusion. Strong cases might include — **Student A:** the prayer is Christian in a parliament that serves people of all faiths and none; public ceremonies carry a religious element; section 116 binds only the Commonwealth, not every public body. **Student B:** section 116 stops an official church and any religious test for office; people of any faith or none sit in parliament and serve as judges; attendance at the prayer is not required to take part in public life. A good answer strengthens both sides before choosing.

Q12. Sample: the top ancestries are British (English 33.0%, Scottish 8.6%, Irish 9.5%) and Australian (29.9%), showing the strong British and Western stream; but Chinese (5.5%) and Italian (4.4%) are also in the top six, and over 300 ancestries in total were reported, showing that Australian society now draws on far more than one origin. That mix is what *culturally diverse* means in practice.

Q13 — marking guide (for the extended response). Marks are awarded for the reasoning steps, not for the conclusion reached:

1. Key words defined at first use (secular, pluralist, multi-faith, culturally diverse).
2. Two cultural origins clearly identified (Christian and Western heritage; cultures of migrant communities).
3. At least one dated, sourced piece of evidence per origin (for example Magna Carta 1215 and clause 39; section 116; Immigration Restriction Act 1901; the 1973/1975 changes; 43.9%/38.9% Census figures; 27.6% born overseas; more than 300 ancestries).
4. Each origin linked to a feature of Australia today (the parliament and courts; a multi-faith, multicultural society).
5. One limit or open question acknowledged (for example: whether the opening prayer sits comfortably with a secular state, or how future Censuses might change the picture).

Model response for the extended task (Q13)

Reasoning steps labelled - marks are awarded for the steps, not the conclusion

Australia's secular democracy draws on two main cultural origins. The first is Christian and Western heritage. 'Secular' here means the government is kept separate from religion: section 116 of the Constitution guarantees this by banning an official church and any religious test for public office. The institutions themselves have British roots. The Westminster parliament, the courts and the common law came from Britain, and the rule of law reaches back to the Magna Carta sealed in 1215, whose clause 39 promised that no free man could be punished except by lawful judgement. That heritage is visible today in Australia's parliament and courts, and even in the 1297 Magna Carta displayed at Parliament House.

defines key terms

origin 1 + dated evidence

The second origin is the cultures of migrant communities. 'Pluralist' means many groups share public life on equal terms, and migration made Australia exactly that. Since 1945 more than 8 million people have settled in Australia, and after race was removed from migrant selection in 1973, arrivals came from all over the world. The 2021 Census recorded more than 300 ancestries, 27.6 per cent of people born overseas, and a multi-faith society in which Christianity (43.9 per cent) sits beside 'no religion' (38.9 per cent), Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Judaism.

origin 2 + dated evidence

Together these origins make Australia a secular democracy and a pluralist, multi-faith society in which the state treats every faith and none equally. One question stays open, though: does a parliament that opens with a prayer sit fully comfortably with a secular state? That is a point Australians still discuss.

links to Australia today

admits a limit

Note the shape: define terms, give dated evidence for each origin, link to today, then admit a limit.

A model paragraph for the extended response task, with its reasoning steps labelled in the margin.

Teacher notes (not student-facing)

Teaching sequence (suggested: four lessons).

1. **The words first.** Teach the definition table and the terms figure; drill pronunciation of *secular* and *pluralist*. Establish that these are contested/stipulated words: define before use, and hold students to the working definitions in tasks (CONTESTED_TERMS Rules 1 and 1b). Use the “what kind of word is it?” framing.
2. **British and Christian heritage.** Magna Carta case study; the s 116 source figure; run the steelman task (Q11) as a structured debate — award reasoning on both sides.

3. **Migrant communities.** Timeline walk; post-war migration; the 1973/1975 changes; Harmony Day. Q6 and Q9 here.
4. **Reading the data.** Census figures; chart-reading tasks Q2, Q3, Q8, Q12; launch the extended response (Q13) with the model paragraph figure.

Scope note. This section carries the §2A exclusion at row 5 of the series plan (the excluded elaboration on the diversity of First Nations communities) plus the CD clause naming First Nations histories and cultures. The section teaches the CD's neutral remainder in full: the two retained cultural-origin streams, the terms elaboration (.E01), ABS trend data (.E03) and the British/Christian heritage elaboration (.E04). Per D5, nothing in this section — title, case study, task or these notes — supplies the excluded content, and no substitute material is written in its place; the front-of-book notice explains the omission to readers.

Links forward. 1C (Constitution's institutions) and 2A (rule of law, courts) provide the institutional detail this section names; 3B picks up values and cohesion; 4C exercises evaluating skills on exactly this content (its Christian-heritage elaboration is the E04 material taught here); 5C is the natural home for the extended response as a communication task. The MCQ bank holds three items keyed to VC2HC8K09.

Vocabulary. Student-facing text is held at or below the Yr7 ladder ceiling (WORD_LEVEL POLICY Rule 2, D4). Exempt by rule: the quoted curriculum texts above; subject terminology defined at first use (*secular, pluralist, multi-faith, culturally diverse, Western and Christian heritage, Westminster, rule of law, common law, multiculturalism*); and proper nouns (including *Magna Carta*). Gate result recorded in the build log.

Sources used (all retrieved 26 August 2026). Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021 Census of Population and Housing — religion and cultural diversity data (abs.gov.au); Australian Government Department of Home Affairs — Australia's Migration Program and Harmony Day pages (homeaffairs.gov.au); Parliament of Australia — Parliament House art collection, Magna Carta (aph.gov.au); Museum of Australian Democracy — Immigration Restriction Act 1901 (moadoph.gov.au); Federal Register of Legislation — Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (legislation.gov.au); Australian Constitution 1900 (Cth), s 116.

Shared values: the glue of a resilient democracy

Section 3B · Knowledge and Understanding — Citizenship, diversity and identity Owns: VC2HC8K10 · Draws on: .E01 .E02 .E03 .E04 · MCQs in bank: 6

Australia is one of the most mixed societies in the world — nearly one person in three living here was born somewhere else — and it is also one of the most stable democracies. This section asks **why**. The answer the curriculum points to is not wealth or luck, but *values*: shared ideas about what is important and right. You will meet the values the curriculum names, see how they are expressed in shared customs such as the national anthem, look at how they build **social cohesion** (the ties that hold a society together) and a **resilient democracy** (a democracy that can take hard times and disagreement without breaking), and finish with the reasons migrants and refugees choose Australia and become its citizens.

1 · What is a value?

A **value** is an idea a person or a group holds about what is important and right — a standard you judge choices against. *Fairness* is a value: so is *loyalty*. Values are not the same as facts. “The anthem changed in 2021” is a fact; “the change was a good thing” is a value judgement. That is also why “Australian values” is a **contested** phrase: sensible people can hold different lists of what matters most. This section therefore tells you plainly which lists it uses:

- the four values named by the Victorian Curriculum itself — **freedom, respect, fairness and equality of opportunity**; and
- the wider list the curriculum’s elaboration .E01 gives as things Australian values can include — **patriotism, inclusion, civility, compassion, personal and collective responsibility, equality and justice, and the ‘fair go’**. The Australian Government’s Australian Values Statement, which people sign when they apply for citizenship, runs along the same lines.

Other lists exist, and arguing about them is part of a healthy democracy. In the tasks that follow, marks go to the *quality of your reasoning* — defined terms, evidence, admitted limits — not to which side of a values argument you land on.

The four core values, in everyday language:

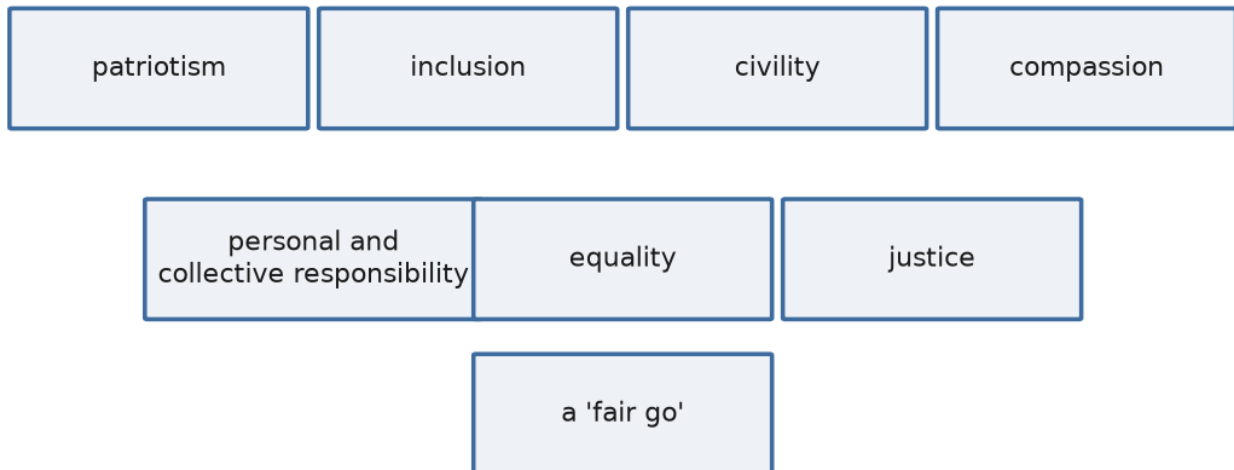
- **Freedom** — people may speak their minds, choose their religion and live as they wish, within the law. Example: you can support any party at election time, or none.
- **Respect** — treating people with dignity even when you disagree with them. Example: letting a classmate finish their point before answering it.
- **Fairness** — rules apply to everyone in the same way, and no one is above the law. Example: the same marking rubric for every student’s work.
- **Equality of opportunity** — every person gets a genuine chance to do well, whatever their background. Example: public schools open to all, and support for students who start with less.

What can count as an Australian value?

The four values named in this section's content description



VCAA's elaboration adds that Australian values can also include:



A map of the four core values named in the content description and the wider list of Australian values given in elaboration E01

The wider list from elaboration .E01, translated into everyday behaviour:

Values from this section, in everyday language

Value	What it can look like in everyday life
freedom	people can speak their minds, choose their religion and live as they wish, within the law
respect	listening to people you disagree with, and treating them with dignity anyway
fairness	rules apply to everyone in the same way; no one is above the law
equality of opportunity	every person gets a genuine chance to do well, whatever their background
a 'fair go'	not pushing ahead by knocking others down; letting everyone have a turn and a chance
inclusion	making newcomers and people who are different feel they belong
civility	disagreeing without insulting — keeping debate safe enough for everyone to join
compassion	helping people in hard times — neighbours, strangers, and people overseas

A table translating each value from this section into an everyday example

Two of these need unpacking because they are easy to muddle:

- **Civility** is not the same as politeness. It means keeping disagreement safe enough for everyone to stay in the conversation — arguing with the idea, not insulting the person. A debate run with civility can be fierce; it just never turns people into enemies.
- A **'fair go'** is the everyday Australian name for a mix of fairness and equality of opportunity: not pushing ahead by knocking others down, and giving everyone a real turn and a real chance.

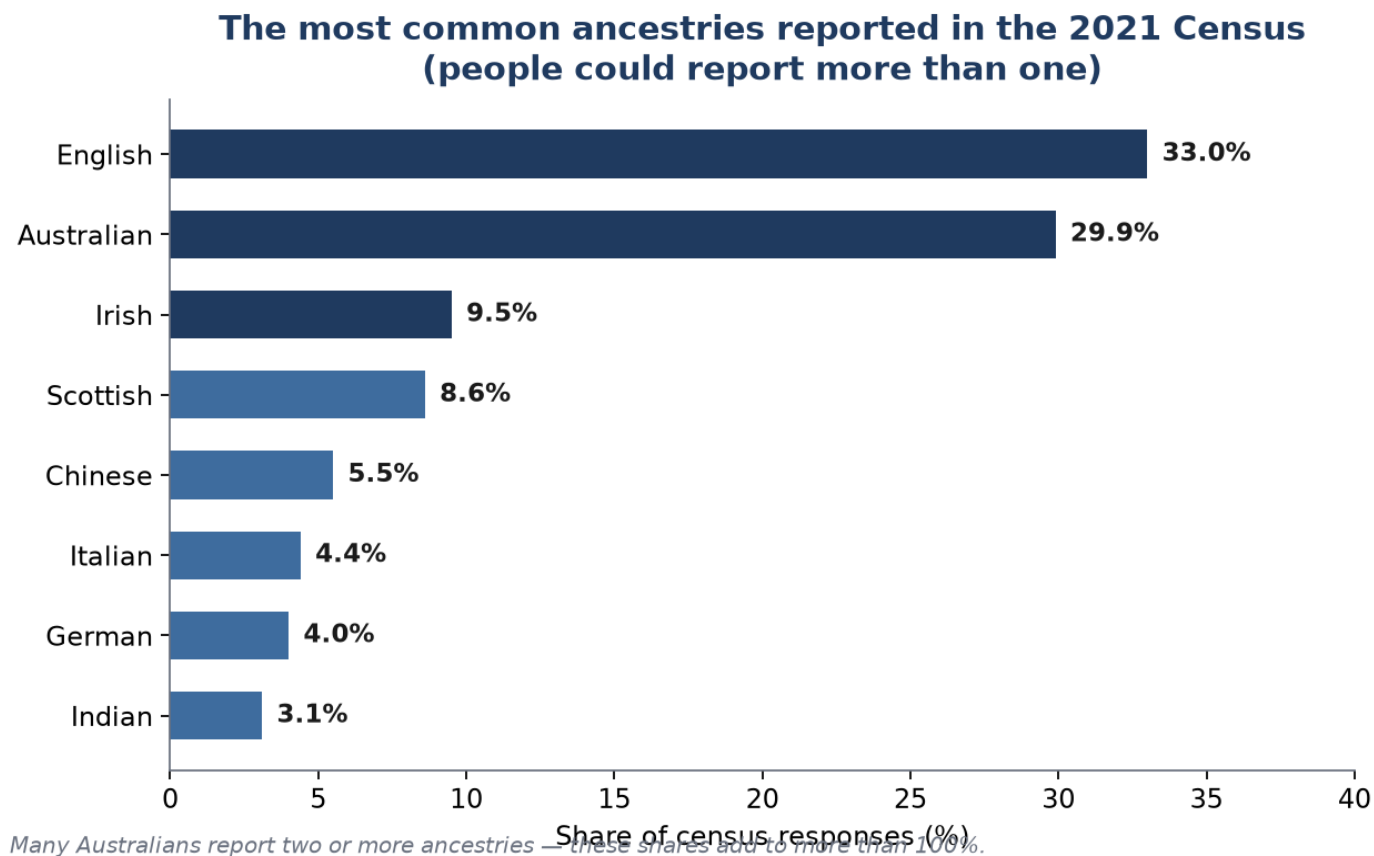
Think: elaboration .E01 also asks you to *judge how far these values actually show up in Australian society*. Two honest positions exist, and each has evidence behind it:

- **Position A — the values are alive in much of Australian life.** Most Australians expect the law to treat them equally, help strangers in trouble, and queue for their turn; charities and volunteers appear within hours of a bushfire or flood.
- **Position B — there is a gap between the values and the lived experience of some people.** Surveys and news reports regularly record Australians treated badly because of their background or religion, and people for whom equality of opportunity is not yet real.

A strong answer does not pick a side and cheer. It says: *here is evidence for A, here is evidence for B, and on this evidence the values are reflected strongly in some parts of Australian life and weakly in others.*

2 · One society, many backgrounds: shared values and customs

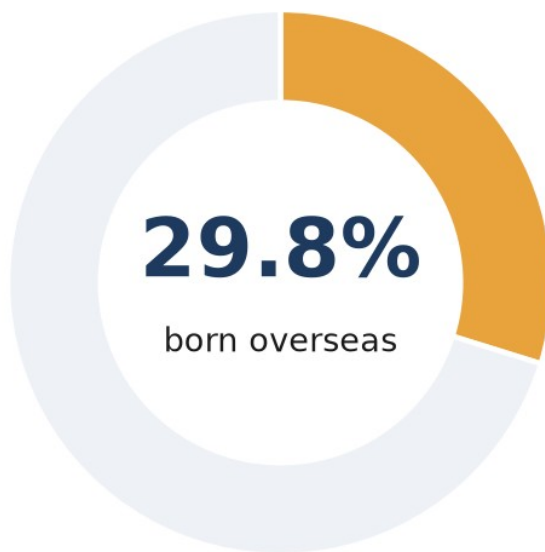
Start with how mixed Australia is. In the 2021 Census the most common ancestries people reported were:



Bar chart of the most common ancestries reported in the 2021 Australian Census

And migration keeps adding to the mix. As at 30 June 2020, **7,654,000 people living in Australia — 29.8 per cent, almost one in three — were born overseas:**

Almost one in three people in Australia was born overseas (as at 30 June 2020)

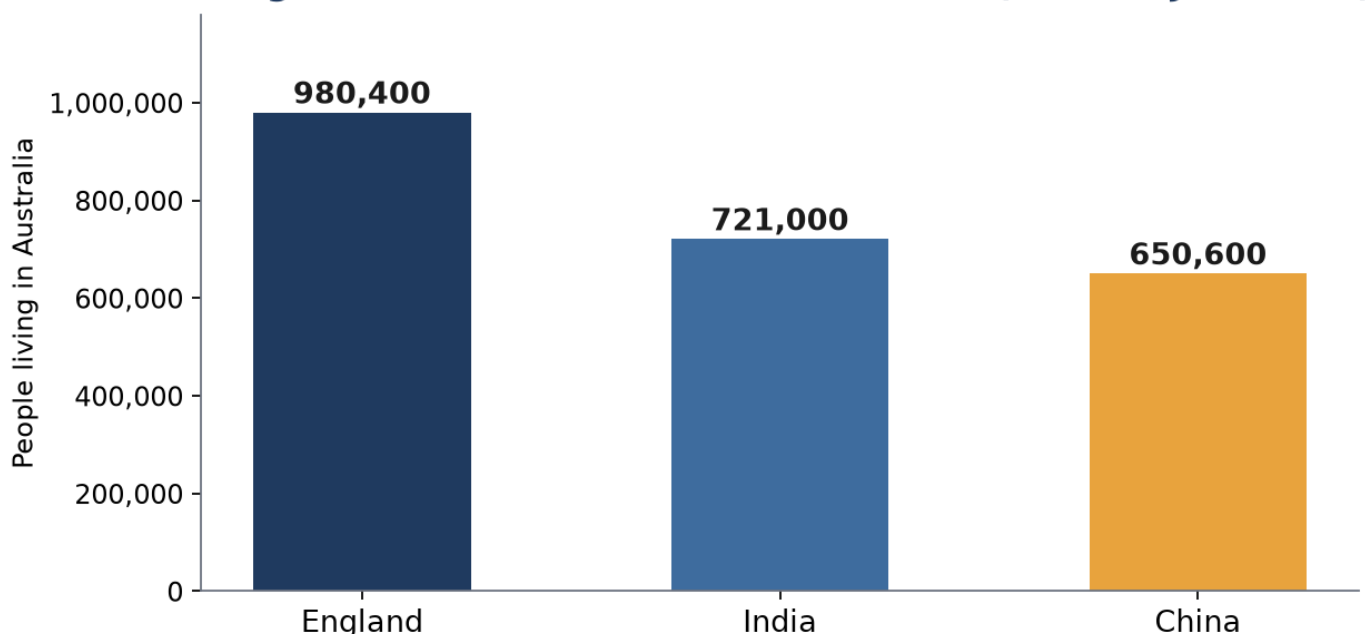


7,654,000 people born overseas out of about 25.7 million

Source lines in the book: src/wb03_3B.md

Donut chart showing 29.8 per cent of people in Australia were born overseas as at 30 June 2020

The three most common countries of birth for people living in Australia who were born overseas (as at 30 June 2020)



These three countries alone account for about 2.35 million of the 7.65 million people born overseas.

Bar chart of the three most common countries of birth for Australians born overseas: England, India and China

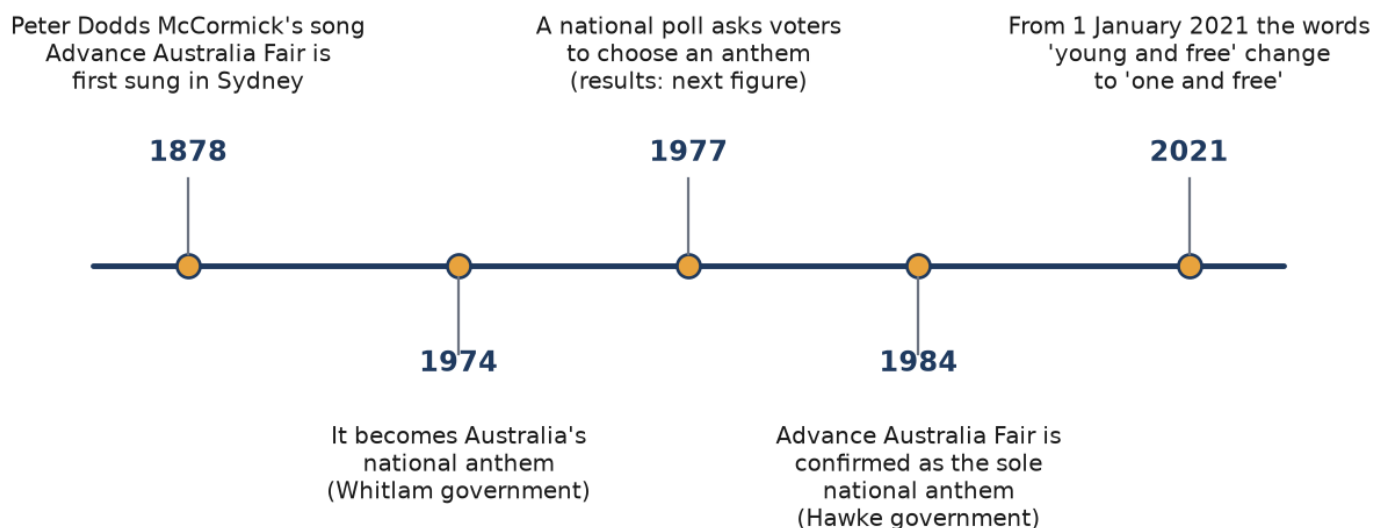
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021 Census ancestry data and Migration, Australia 2019–20, abs.gov.au, retrieved 26 August 2026.

A society that mixed usually has to *work* at staying one society. Elaboration .E02 points to the glue: **shared values**, and the **customs and protocols** that express them. A **custom** is a way of doing things that a group has kept up long

enough that members know it and expect it; a **protocol** is the agreed order of doing things on a formal occasion. Singing the national anthem at a school assembly and standing while it is sung is a custom with a protocol. So is the pledge at a citizenship ceremony, a minute's silence on Anzac Day, and even letting every speaker have their turn in a classroom debate. Shared customs do three jobs at once: they *show* a shared value out loud, they give strangers a moment of belonging, and they remind everyone that the society is bigger than any one of its groups.

The national anthem as a case of a custom changing. *Advance Australia Fair* has a longer and more argued-over history than most people expect:

A short history of Australia's national anthem

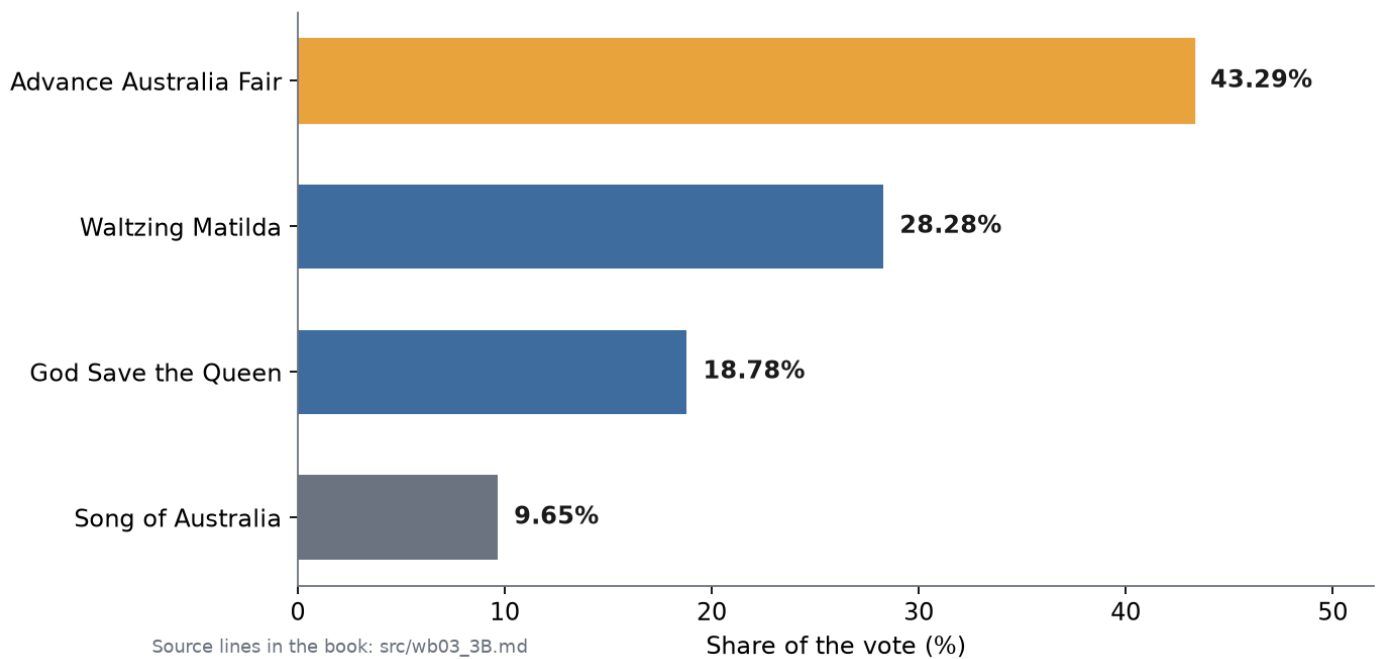


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Timeline of Australia's national anthem from 1878 to the 2021 word change

Notice the 1977 poll. When voters were asked to choose an anthem, *Advance Australia Fair* won clearly — but with less than half the vote:

The 1977 national poll — which song should be the anthem?



Bar chart of the 1977 national poll: Advance Australia Fair 43.29 per cent, Waltzing Matilda 28.28 per cent, God Save the Queen 18.78 per cent, Song of Australia 9.65 per cent

Source: the anthem history follows the Australian Government's official account (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, "Australia's National Anthem") as reported in the Wikipedia article "Advance Australia Fair", retrieved 26 August 2026.

The most recent change is a live example of a shared custom being re-argued. From **1 January 2021** the official second line of the anthem changed from "*For we are young and free*" to "*For we are one and free*". The change was announced by Prime Minister Scott Morrison in late December 2020. The stated purpose was inclusion: to make the anthem speak for **all** Australians, and for a country whose story is deeper and more varied than "young" suggests.

Steelmanned, both sides of the change are serious:

- **For the change:** words carry meaning. A line that left some Australians feeling the anthem was not quite *theirs* made a shared custom weaker, not stronger; "one and free" lets more people sing it with their whole heart, which is exactly what a unifying custom is for.
- **Against the change:** a shared custom works because it is stable and familiar; changing the words of a song people learned as children can feel like tinkering with something that was doing its job, and can make national symbols feel less settled rather than more.

Both positions value social cohesion; they disagree about *how* customs build it. That is what a values debate looks like when it is run well — and .E02 wants you to be able to hold both sides in view before judging.

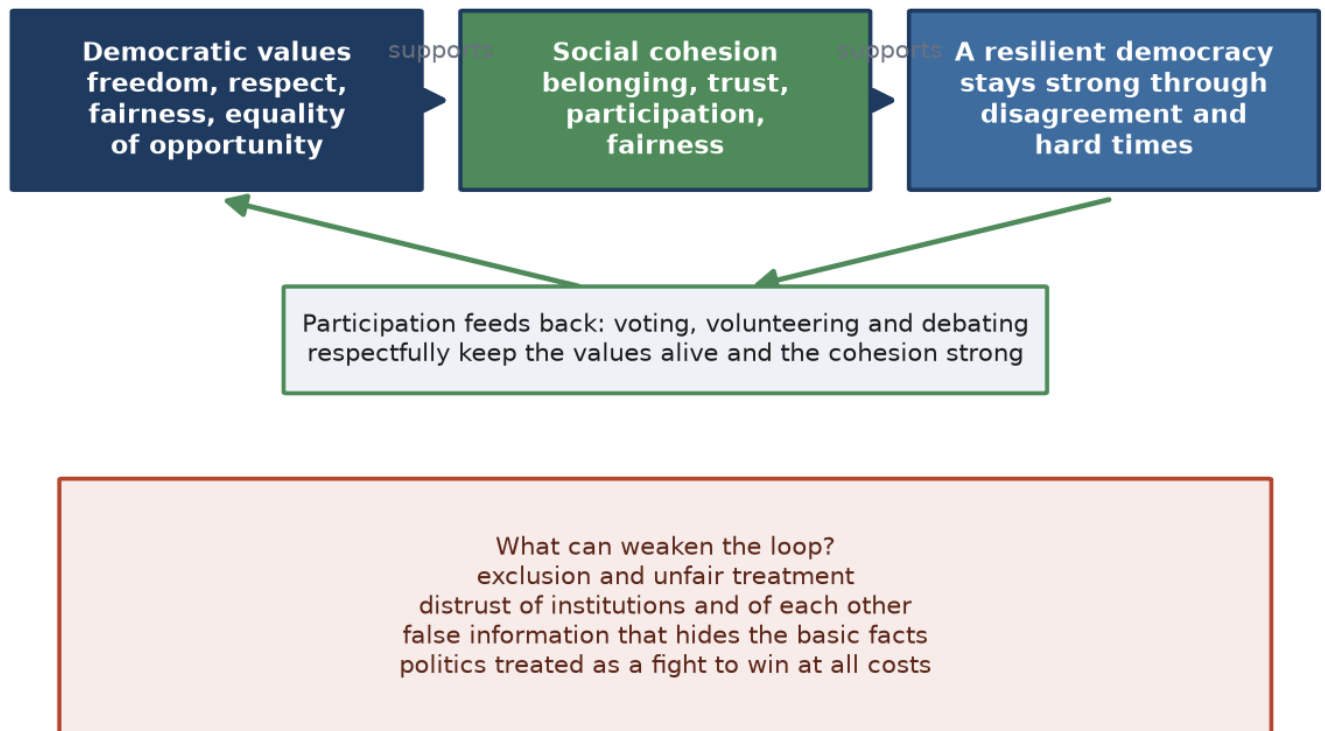
3 · Social cohesion, resilient democracy: how they connect

Elaboration .E03 asks you to examine a relationship. First, the two terms, defined for this section:

- **Social cohesion** is the strength of the ties that hold a society together. In this section it means four things you can actually look for: people **feel they belong**; people **trust each other and their institutions** (courts, parliaments, the police, the vote); people **take part** (voting, volunteering, joining in); and people **believe society is fair for most people**.
- **A resilient democracy** is a democracy that can take disagreement, bad news and hard times without breaking its own rules or turning its groups against each other — and that repairs itself after a fight, so that the losers of one argument stay part of the society and get another turn.

The relationship between the two is the heart of this section:

How values, cohesion and democratic resilience connect



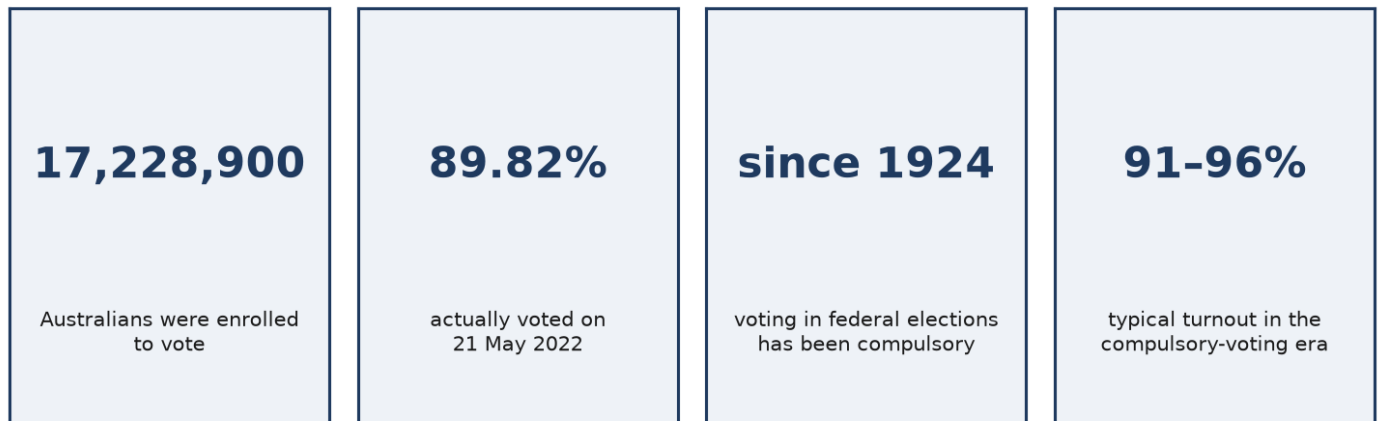
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Model diagram: democratic values support social cohesion, social cohesion supports a resilient democracy, and participation feeds back to keep the values alive; a panel lists what weakens the loop

Read the model in both directions. Values such as fairness and respect make people feel they belong and that the system is worth trusting; that feeling is social cohesion; and a cohesive society can disagree loudly at an election and still accept the result — which is what makes the democracy resilient. The arrow running back the other way matters too: cohesion is not stored up like money, it is *renewed by participation* — by voting, volunteering, and debating with civility.

The evidence: participation in Australia is very strong.

The 2022 federal election — a resilient democracy at work



Labor won 77 seats and formed government; the result was accepted and power changed hands peacefully.

Source lines in the book: src/wb03_3B.md

Four stat tiles for the 2022 federal election: 17,228,900 enrolled; 89.82 per cent voted; voting compulsory since 1924; typical turnout in the compulsory-voting era 91 to 96 per cent

Two facts behind those tiles are worth understanding:

- **Voting in federal elections has been compulsory since 1924**, and so has enrolment. Australia was one of the first democracies in the world to make voting compulsory. Compulsory enrolment means nearly every adult is inside the system before polling day, so politicians have to speak to *everyone*, not just to people who already turn out.
- Because of it, **turnout has rarely dropped below 90 per cent** in the compulsory era — a share most democracies only dream of. At the 2022 federal election, on 21 May 2022, 17,228,900 people were enrolled and 89.82 per cent voted. The government of the day lost, Labor won enough seats (77) to form a majority government, the result was accepted, and power changed hands peacefully. That last sentence is the quiet definition of a resilient democracy: the losers accept the result and stay in the game.

Source: Australian Electoral Commission election results and the history of compulsory voting as reported in the Wikipedia articles “2022 Australian federal election” and “Compulsory voting”, retrieved 26 August 2026.

What weakens the loop? The bottom panel of the model names four weakeners, and each has an everyday face:

1. **Exclusion and unfair treatment** — when a group learns that the rules will not be fair to them, belonging dies first and trust dies next.
2. **Distrust** — of institutions (“the system is rigged”) and of each other (“people like them cannot be trusted”). Some questioning of power is healthy in a democracy; blanket distrust is not questioning, it is giving up.
3. **False information (misinformation)** — a society can argue about values only while it roughly agrees on the facts. When rumours and made-up stories spread faster than corrections, people stop arguing about *what to do* and start arguing about *what happened*.
4. **Politics as a fight to win at all costs** — when winning becomes more important than the rules, every election starts to feel like a battle to survive rather than an argument to settle.

Every one of these has an opposite that a citizen can *do*: include, verify, and argue with civility. That is the “participating” half of civics, and it is why the skills chapters of this book keep returning to this section’s values.

4 · Why migrants and refugees choose Australia

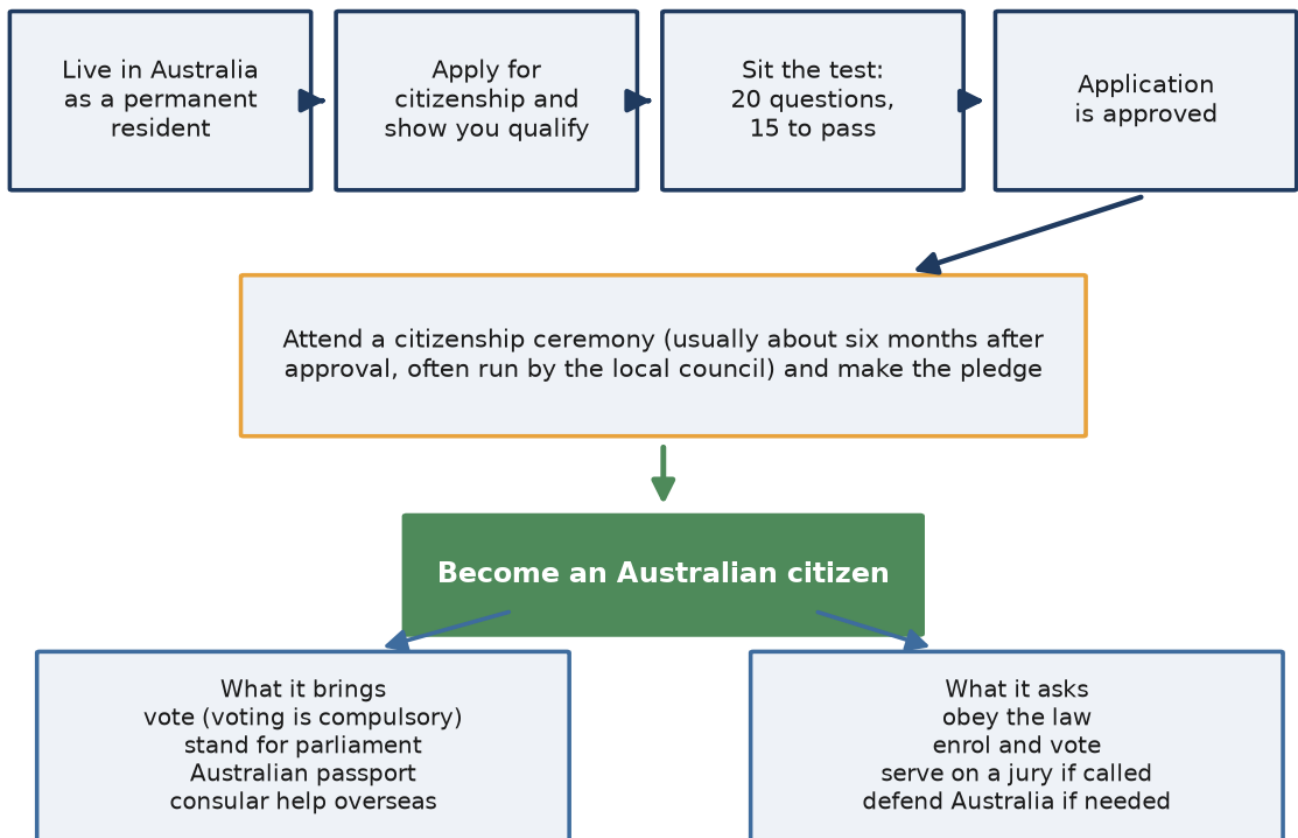
Two terms first:

- A **migrant** is a person who chooses to move to another country to live.
- A **refugee** is a person who has had to leave their country because they were not safe there — for example because of war, or because they were targeted for who they are or what they believe.

The two groups arrive for different reasons, and elaboration .E04 asks you to investigate both. Refugees are choosing **safety first**: a country where the law protects people, where the police answer to the law, and where children can go to school without fear. Migrants more often name **family** (joining relatives already here), **work and study**, and the same values this section has been listing — freedom, fairness, and the ‘fair go’: the belief that effort will be given a genuine chance. The data in Part 2 shows the results: over 7.6 million people born overseas have made that choice, and the mix keeps widening — England, India and China lead the birthplace list, with large communities from New Zealand, the Philippines, Vietnam, Italy, Greece and many more.

Becoming a citizen. Many migrants and refugees go one step further and apply for Australian citizenship. One common path looks like this:

One path to Australian citizenship



Source lines in the book: src/wb03_3B.md

Flow diagram of one path to Australian citizenship: permanent resident, application, the 20-question citizenship test, approval, the citizenship ceremony and pledge, then the rights and responsibilities of a citizen

Details worth knowing: the **citizenship test** (in place since 2007) is 20 multiple-choice questions in English, with 15 correct answers needed to pass; the **citizenship ceremony** is usually about six months after approval and is most often run by the local council; and at the ceremony new citizens make the **pledge** — a promise of loyalty to Australia and its people. (Some swear an oath, a promise made before God; others make an affirmation, the same promise without religious words. Both count the same.)

Source: Department of Home Affairs citizenship rules — the test, ceremonies and pledge — as reported in the Wikipedia articles “Australian citizenship” and “Citizenship test”, retrieved 26 August 2026.

Why take the final step? Permanent residents already live, work and study here. What citizenship adds is the formal tie and its bundle of rights and responsibilities — see the two bottom boxes of the figure. The most important is the **vote**: only citizens vote in Australian elections and referendums, and only citizens can stand for parliament. Taking citizenship is therefore the clearest single answer to .E04’s question: migrants and refugees become citizens because they want not just to live *in* Australia but to be *part of* Australia — to share the right to vote, the duty to serve on a jury, and the belonging that the pledge says out loud. And their choosing to join is, in turn, one of the renewals of social cohesion that Part 3 described: a society that people keep choosing is a society that holds.

Worked case studies

Case study 1 — the 2021 change to the anthem’s words

What happened. On 1 January 2021 the official second line of *Advance Australia Fair* changed from “*For we are young and free*” to “*For we are one and free*”, after Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced the change in late December 2020. Schools, sporting events and ceremonies across the country began singing the new words.

Who was involved. The Australian Government (the Prime Minister announced it; the change was made official through the Governor-General), and — in practice — every Australian who sings or hears the anthem, from school assemblies to international sport.

Which concept it shows (.E02). Shared values are expressed through customs and protocols — and this case shows that a custom is not a museum piece: a society can *re-argue and update its own symbols* to include more of its people. It also shows the other side of the steelman: some Australians saw the change as unnecessary tinkering with a settled custom. Both readings are about the same concept — how shared customs build (or fail to build) social cohesion.

Case study 2 — the 2022 federal election

What happened. On 21 May 2022, of 17,228,900 enrolled voters, 89.82 per cent voted. The government of the day lost; the Labor Party won 77 seats and formed a majority government; the result was accepted by the losers, and power changed hands peacefully.

Who was involved. The voters; the Australian Electoral Commission, which ran the vote; the parties and candidates who accepted the count; and the new and old governments that handed over without dispute.

Which concept it shows (.E03). A resilient democracy is not one without disagreement — this election was fiercely argued — but one where **participation is broad, the rules are trusted, and the result is accepted**. Compulsory enrolment put almost every adult inside the system before polling day; the accepted result renewed trust for the next round. Read against the model in Part 3: participation built cohesion, and cohesion made the democracy resilient.

Teaching sequence (teacher-facing — not vocabulary-gated)

1. **Warm-up (5 min):** sort ten short statements into “fact” and “value judgement” (e.g. “the anthem has two official verses” vs “the anthem change was a good idea”) to set up Part 1.
2. **Part 1:** work through the four core values with classroom examples; use the values-in-action table; run the Position A / Position B evidence sort (the evaluating half of .E01).
3. **Part 2:** read the three diversity figures as a data story (“how mixed are we?”), then the anthem timeline and 1977 poll; teach custom/protocol; run the anthem steelman as a two-side discussion. **Dated case:** the 1 January 2021 word change.
4. **Part 3:** define social cohesion and resilient democracy from the model; use the 2022 election tiles as the participation evidence; match each weakener to an opposite action. **Dated case:** the 21 May 2022 federal election.
5. **Part 4:** define migrant/refugee; walk the citizenship path figure; close with the question “what does citizenship add that permanent residence does not?”

6. **Tasks:** scaffolded set in pairs, unscaffolded set individually; extended response drafted in class and peer-marked against the reasoning rubric in the Answers block.
-

Tasks — scaffolded

- Q1.** Using the definitions in Part 1, match each scenario to the value it best shows (freedom, respect, fairness, equality of opportunity): a. A new student is welcomed into the team and given the same chances as everyone else, whatever their background. b. You let a classmate finish their point before you answer it, even though you disagree. c. The same marking rubric is used for every student's work in the class. d. You can support any party at election time, or none, without fear.
- Q2.** Read the ancestry chart (Part 2). a. Which two ancestries were reported most often in the 2021 Census, and what share did each get? b. Why do the shares in that chart add to more than 100 per cent? c. What does that tell you about how Australians describe their backgrounds?
- Q3.** Using the anthem timeline and the 1977 poll chart: a. In which year did *Advance Australia Fair* first become the national anthem, and which government did that? b. In which year was it confirmed as the *sole* national anthem? c. What share of the 1977 poll did it win, and was that more or less than half?
- Q4.** The model in Part 3 says social cohesion has four parts you can look for. Name them. Then name two things an ordinary citizen can do that renew cohesion, according to the model.
- Q5.** Using the citizenship path figure: a. List the five steps in order, from permanent resident to citizen. b. How many questions are on the citizenship test, and how many must be correct to pass? c. Who usually runs the citizenship ceremony?
- Q6.** “Not pushing ahead by knocking others down; letting everyone have a turn and a real chance.” Which value from Part 1 is this describing? Give one example of it from school life and one from sport.

Tasks — unscaffolded

- Q7.** Evaluate the extent to which the value of **fairness** is reflected in Australian society today. Give one piece of evidence that it is reflected and one piece of evidence that it is not yet fully reflected, and end with a judged conclusion.
- Q8.** Explain two ways a shared custom — the national anthem, for instance — can support social cohesion, and one reason a person might feel left out by the same custom.
- Q9.** Use the 2022 election figures (Part 3) to explain how broad participation supports a resilient democracy. Your answer must use at least two of the figures and the definition of a resilient democracy from this section.
- Q10.** One refugee family and one migrant family both settle in Australia. Explain two reasons for each family's choice, making clear which reasons are about safety and which are about opportunity.
- Q11.** Pick two of the four weakeners from the Part 3 model. For each, describe one action a school or a local community could take that would push against it, and say which part of social cohesion (belonging, trust, participation, fairness) your action strengthens.
- Q12.** Test this claim with a substitution: “*Changing the words of the national anthem weakens national unity.*” Substitute the subject — “*Keeping the words of the national anthem unchanged weakens national unity.*” Does the original claim survive its own test? What evidence from this section would each side need to make its case about the 2021 change?

Extended response

Q13. “*When freedom, respect, fairness and equal opportunity are widely shared, Australian society holds together and its democracy weathers hard times.*” Discuss this statement using at least **two** pieces of evidence from this section (for example: the 1977 poll, the 2021 anthem change, the 2022 federal election, or the migration and citizenship data). Define your key terms, present the strongest case you can for the statement and one serious limit of it, and finish with a judged conclusion. (Your teacher will mark the reasoning, not the side you take.)

Answers

Q1. a. equality of opportunity (inclusion and a fair go also accepted with reasons). b. respect. c. fairness. d. freedom.

Q2. a. English (33.0%) and Australian (29.9%). b. People could report more than one ancestry. c. Many Australians carry more than one background at once — the society is mixed *within* people, not just between them.

Q3. a. 1974, Whitlam government. b. 1984 (Hawke government). c. 43.29% — less than half, so a majority of voters chose something else; the winning song was still the clear first choice.

Q4. Belonging; trust (in each other and in institutions); participation; a belief that society is fair. Renewals: any two of voting, volunteering, debating with civility (from the feedback loop in the model).

Q5. a. Live in Australia as a permanent resident → apply and show you qualify → sit the citizenship test → application approved → attend a citizenship ceremony and make the pledge. b. 20 questions, 15 correct to pass. c. Usually the local council.

Q6. A 'fair go'. Examples vary; award the mark for a genuine school example (e.g. team selection by turn and effort, not by friendship group) and a genuine sport example (e.g. equal time for junior players, shaking hands after a hard game).

Q7–Q12. Open responses. Mark on the reasoning rubric below, not on the conclusion reached.

Q13 marking rubric (and the guide for Q7–Q12): 1 mark each for — key terms defined (values, social cohesion, resilient democracy); evidence named with its source or figure; the strongest case *for* the statement stated in a fair way; one serious limit or opposing case stated in a fair way; a judged conclusion that weighs the two. Two students reaching opposite conclusions can both score full marks.

How groups show their identity — and how others see them

Civics and Citizenship 7 · Chapter 3 — Citizenship, diversity and identity · Section 3C

You are learning: VC2HC8K11. Links: .E01 .E02 .E03.

Teaching sequence (for the teacher)

- **Curriculum links.** This section owns VC2HC8K11 (Knowledge and Understanding — Citizenship, diversity and identity) and draws on .E01, .E02 and .E03. The elaboration codes are the join key for MCQ and coverage linkage, not a teaching order.
 - **Contested terms (house rule).** *Identity, community, perception* and *citizenship* are contested or multi-sense terms the curriculum uses without one fixed definition. The student-facing boxes below state the meanings this section reasons with, following the house model: notice the term is contested, state the frame, reason inside it, and note that other meanings exist.
 - **Step 1 — hook.** Ask students to list every group they were part of in the last seven days. Compare lists. Steer toward the idea that one person holds several identities at once, and that some of those identities can be *seen* by others.
 - **Step 2 — the words.** Work through Part 1’s word boxes before any figure. Students reason inside the stated meanings for the rest of the section.
 - **Step 3 — multiple communities and expression.** Figure 1, then Figure 3. Connect each way of expressing identity to a group on the students’ own lists.
 - **Step 4 — collective identity and the Census.** Figure 2. Use the two dated case studies (Figures 4 and 6) as the two worked case-study treatments: what happened, who was involved, which CD concept each one shows.
 - **Step 5 — perception.** Figure 5. Stress the CD’s two directions: how a group sees others, and how others see that group.
 - **Step 6 — three citizenships.** Figure 7 with Figure 8 as the legal anchor. The citizenship *test* is taught in Section 3D; do not re-teach it here.
 - **Step 7 — two views and tasks.** Run the Two views box as a think–pair–share, then S1–S6 with support, U1–U6 on their own, and the extended response with Figure 9 as the planning frame.
 - **Assessment note.** Open answers are marked on the quality of reasoning — terms used in the stated sense, evidence given, both directions of the loop addressed — never on which side of the Two views question a student prefers.
 - **Sources and retrieval.** Every real-world fact carries a source line with a retrieval date of 26 August 2026. See the curriculum-trace comment for the access route of each figure.
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1. Getting started — the words of this section

Words we use

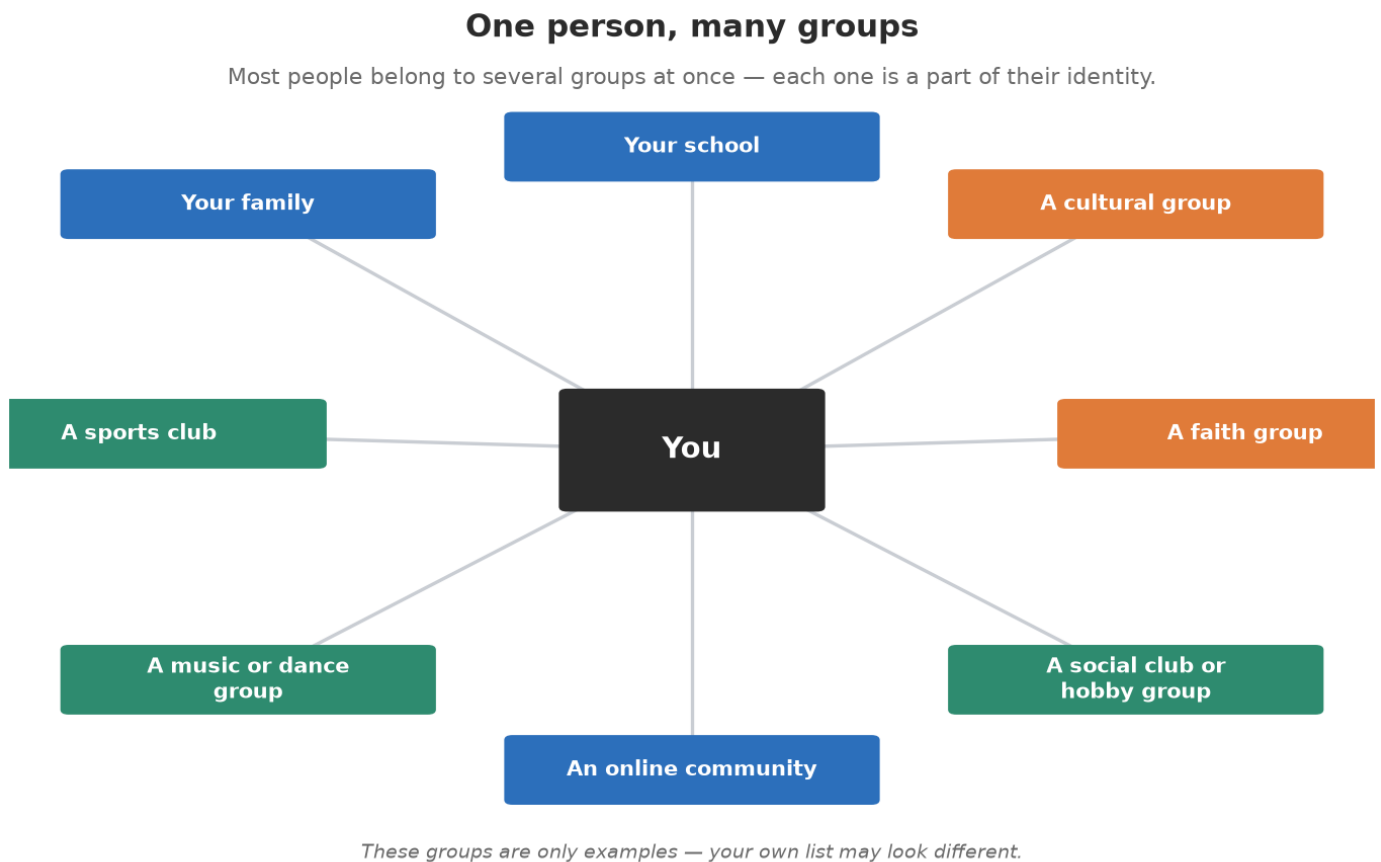
- **identity** — the collection of qualities, beliefs, connections and group memberships that make a person or a group who they are. The Victorian Curriculum — the official plan for what schools teach — uses the word *identity* but does not give it one fixed meaning. This section treats it in the sense above. Other meanings exist, and they are not the same as this one.
- **community** — a group of people who share something: a place, an interest, a culture, a faith, or an experience.
- **perception** — the picture or judgement a person forms about someone or something. A perception can be fair, or it can be wrong.

Your identity is not one thing. You are a student, a friend, a family member, maybe a team mate, maybe a member of a faith group or a cultural group. Each of these is one part of who you are.

A **collective identity** is the shared identity of a group — the “we” that its members feel, and the things the group does and shows that say who it is.

2. One person, many groups

Most people belong to several communities at the same time. Figure 1 shows one person and eight possible groups. Different parts of your identity come from different groups, and the same group can be part of many people's identities at once.



A hub-and-spoke diagram. A dark box labelled “You” sits in the centre, joined by lines to eight group boxes: your family, your school, a cultural group, a faith group, a sports club, a music or dance group, an online community, and a social club or hobby group.

Figure 1. One person, many groups — each membership is one part of your identity.

Some groups in Figure 1 are for adults, and they matter for the same idea:

- A **trade union** is an organisation of workers that speaks and acts for its members' pay and conditions at work.
- A **professional association** is a body for people in one line of work — for example, the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation for nurses and midwives.
- A **faith group** is a community of people who share a religion, such as a church, a mosque, a synagogue or a temple.

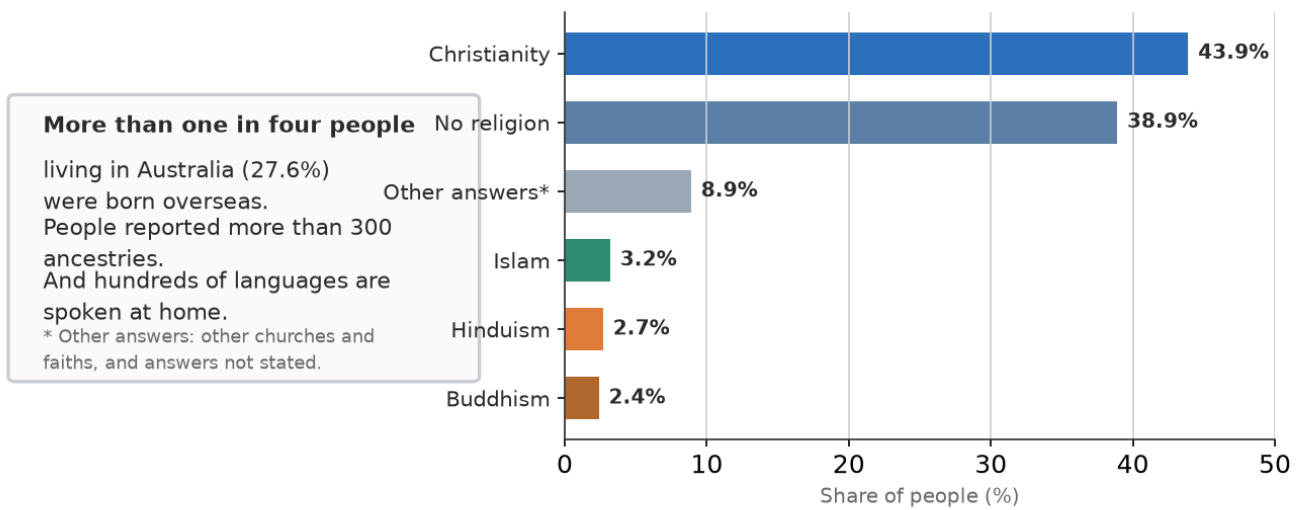
When people act for their community through these groups, their identity shows up as **citizenship in action** — for instance, raising money for community services, or backing people dealing with health concerns. A union collecting for a food appeal, a faith group running a charity stall, or a sports club coaching junior teams: each is a group expressing who it is by giving something to the community.

3. Collective identities in a diverse Australia

Australia's society is made of many groups, each with its own collective identity. The 2021 Census — the official count and survey of everyone in the country — shows how varied those groups are.

Religion in Australia — answers from the 2021 Census

What people in Australia reported about religion.



Australia is a culturally diverse society — and that diversity is part of its identity.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2021. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

A bar chart of what people in Australia reported about religion in the 2021 Census: Christianity 43.9 per cent, no religion 38.9, other answers 8.9, Islam 3.2, Hinduism 2.7, Buddhism 2.4. A side panel adds that more than one in four people (27.6 per cent) living in Australia were born overseas, that people reported more than 300 ancestries, and that hundreds of languages are spoken at home.

Figure 2. Australia's diversity in numbers. Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2021. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

Groups express their collective identities in many ways. Figure 3 gives six of them.

Six ways groups express their identities

Festivals and celebrations Harmony Week events, Lunar New Year, Eid, Christmas	Food, music, dance and art Recipes, songs, dances and artworks that are shared and passed on	Language and stories Community languages, stories, radio and media
Dress and symbols Clothing, colours, flags and emblems that show belonging	Faith and ceremony Places of worship, ceremonies and special days	Service Volunteering, fundraising and helping people in need

One group can express its identity in all six ways at once.

Six cards showing six ways groups express their identities: festivals and celebrations; food, music, dance and art; language and stories; dress and symbols; faith and ceremony; and service, meaning volunteering, fundraising and helping people in need.

Figure 3. Six ways groups express their identities.

Case study 1 — Harmony Week

Harmony Week is a real, dated example of a collective identity being expressed in public.

Case study 1 · Harmony Week — celebrating cultural diversity

What is it?	A national week of events celebrating Australia's cultural diversity and the idea that everyone belongs.
When?	Every year, in the week that includes 21 March. It began in 1999 as Harmony Day and grew into a full week in 2019.
Who takes part?	The Australian Government leads the national program. Schools, councils and community groups run local events — often with orange, the week's official colour.
The message	"Everyone belongs." Orange was chosen because it stands for communication and meaningful conversations.
What it shows	A shared Australian identity, expressed through public events — and a chance to shape how Australians perceive cultural diversity.

Source: Australian Government, Harmony Week (harmony.gov.au); Wikipedia, "Harmony Day". Retrieved 26 August 2026.

A case-study card about Harmony Week: a national week of events celebrating Australia's cultural diversity and the idea that everyone belongs; held every year in the week that includes 21 March; begun in 1999 as Harmony Day and grown into a full week in 2019; led nationally by the Australian Government, with schools, councils and community groups running local events; message "Everyone belongs", with orange as the week's official colour.

Figure 4. Case study 1 — Harmony Week. Source: Australian Government, Harmony Week (harmony.gov.au); Wikipedia, "Harmony Day". Retrieved 26 August 2026.

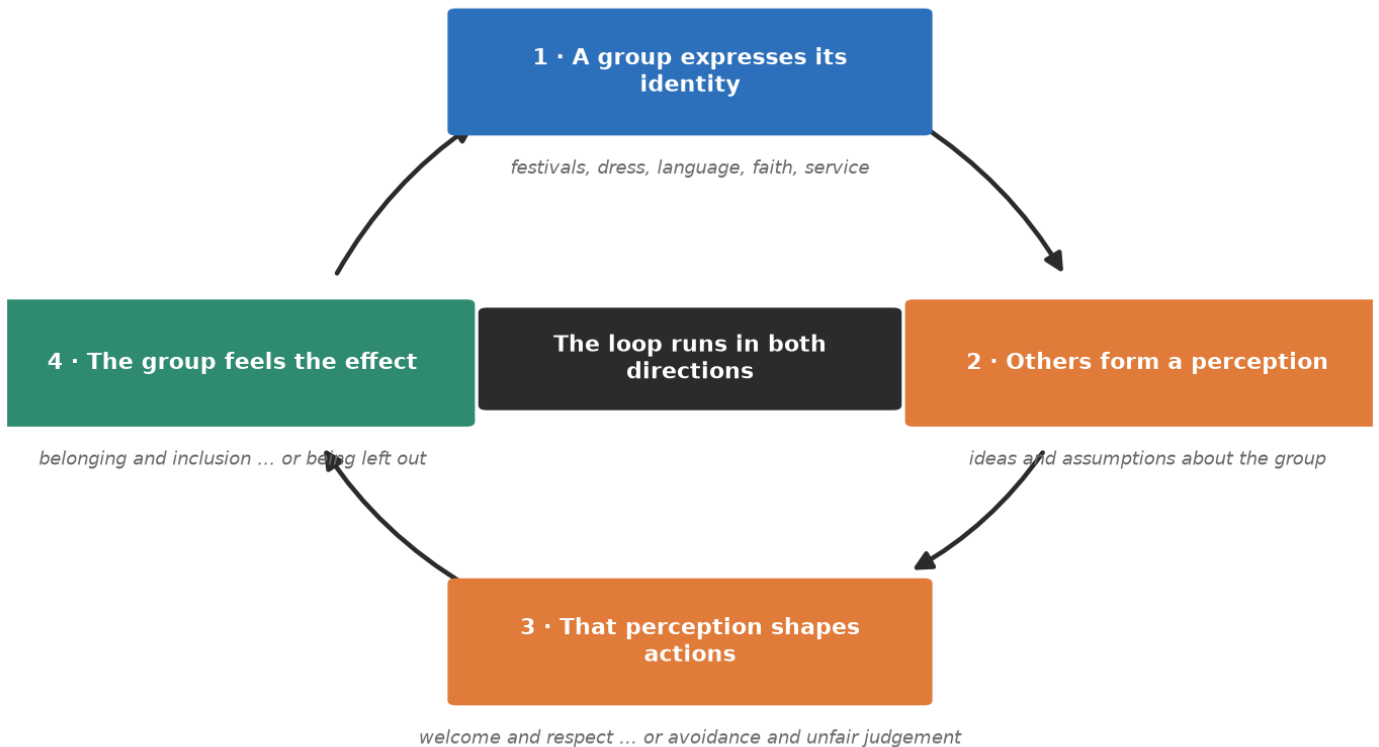
- **What happened:** in March 2026, as in every year, schools, councils and community groups across Australia ran Harmony Week events — shared meals, music, stories and conversations about belonging.
- **Who was involved:** the Australian Government leads the national program, and local communities run the events.
- **Which CD concept it shows:** a collective identity — being part of Australia's culturally diverse society — expressed through public events. The events also shape perception: they present cultural diversity as something that belongs to everyone.

4. How expression shapes perception

The CD for this section has two halves. A group's expression of its identity can influence **others' perception of that group** — and it can influence **the group's own perception of others**. Figure 5 puts the two halves in one loop.

The expression-perception loop

You form perceptions of other groups too — the same loop runs from you.



A four-step loop diagram. Step 1: a group expresses its identity (festivals, dress, language, faith, service). Step 2: others form a perception (ideas and assumptions about the group). Step 3: that perception shapes actions (welcome and respect, or avoidance and unfair judgement). Step 4: the group feels the effect (belonging and inclusion, or being left out). Arrows close the loop, and a centre box states that the loop runs in both directions.

Figure 5. The expression–perception loop.

Perceptions are not always fair. A **stereotype** is a fixed and unfair idea about a whole group — the judgement that every member must be the same. When a group’s visible identity (dress, language, a place of worship) meets a stereotype, people can be treated for the group they appear to belong to, not for who they are.

The loop also runs in the other direction. The groups you belong to shape the picture *you* form of other people — who counts as “one of us”, who seems familiar, who seems strange. Naming that loop is the first step to checking it.

Case study 2 — the Red Shield Appeal

Case study 2 · The Salvation Army's Red Shield Appeal — faith in action

Who?	The Salvation Army — a Christian group that has worked in Australia since 1880, and one of the country's biggest providers of community services outside government.
What?	The Red Shield Appeal: the Salvos' big annual fundraising appeal. Volunteers knock on doors and collect in the street, and the money raised supports their community services.
When?	Every year, usually in May and June. The appeal has run for more than 50 years.
Where the money goes	Services for people without a home, disaster relief, aged care and support for families in hard times.
What it shows	A religious identity expressed through service — and a recognisable symbol (the red shield) that shapes how people perceive the group.

Source: The Salvation Army Australia (salvationarmy.org.au); Wikipedia, "Salvation Army in Australia". Retrieved 26 August 2026.

A case-study card about the Salvation Army's Red Shield Appeal: the Salvation Army is a Christian group working in Australia since 1880 and one of the country's biggest providers of community services outside government; the appeal is its large annual fundraising drive, with volunteers knocking on doors and collecting in the street, usually in May and June, for over 50 years; the money supports services for people without a home, disaster relief, aged care and families in hard times; the card notes that a religious identity is expressed through service, and that the red shield is a recognisable symbol shaping how people perceive the group.

Figure 6. Case study 2 — the Red Shield Appeal. Source: The Salvation Army Australia (salvationarmy.org.au); Wikipedia, "Salvation Army in Australia". Retrieved 26 August 2026.

- **What happens:** each year, usually in May and June, Salvation Army volunteers knock on doors and collect in the street for the Red Shield Appeal.
- **Who is involved:** the Salvation Army — a Christian group that has worked in Australia since 1880 — and the households and businesses that give.
- **Which CD concept it shows:** a religious identity expressed through *service* (one of the six ways in Figure 3). The money raised supports community services, and the red shield has become a symbol most Australians know. That symbol shapes perception: for many people, the sight of the red shield says "help is here".

5. Three kinds of citizenship

The word **citizenship** is used in three different senses in this section. This section therefore treats them as three distinct ideas, and every question can be answered on these meanings alone.

Three ways to be a citizen

Legal, active and global citizenship — the same word, three senses.

Kind of citizenship	What it is	How it is lived	A real example
Legal citizenship	A formal status in law: you are a citizen of Australia.	By birth, by descent (an Australian citizen parent), or by application. New citizens make the pledge at a ceremony.	Australian Citizenship Act 2007 (Cth); the right to vote at 18+; an Australian passport.
Active citizenship	Taking part in the civic life of your community and your country.	Voting, volunteering, fundraising, joining a group, writing to your member of parliament.	About one in three Australian adults volunteers through an organisation (ABS, 2020).
Global citizenship	Seeing yourself as part of a world community — and acting on it.	Learning about world issues; supporting human rights, aid and care for the environment.	Australia helped to found the United Nations in 1945.

The three overlap: the same person can hold legal citizenship, live it actively, and think globally.

A comparison table with three rows. Legal citizenship: a formal status in law, gained by birth, by descent or by application, with the pledge made at a ceremony; example: the Australian Citizenship Act 2007 (Cth), the right to vote at 18 and over, an Australian passport. Active citizenship: taking part in the civic life of your community and country; lived by voting, volunteering, fundraising, joining groups and writing to your member of parliament; example: about one in three Australian adults volunteers through an organisation (ABS, 2020). Global citizenship: seeing yourself as part of a world community and acting on it; lived by learning about world issues and supporting human rights, aid and care for the environment; example: Australia helped to found the United Nations in 1945.

Figure 7. Legal, active and global citizenship — the same word, three senses.

Legal citizenship is a status in law. Under the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007 (Cth)*, a person is an Australian citizen by birth (with a citizen or permanent resident parent), by descent (born overseas with a citizen parent), or by application. New citizens make a pledge at a citizenship ceremony.

Source · The Australian citizenship pledge

*From this time forward, under God,
I pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people,
whose democratic beliefs I share,
whose rights and liberties I respect,
and whose laws I will uphold and obey.*

New citizens make this pledge at a citizenship ceremony.

Australian Citizenship Act 2007 (Cth), section 27. There are two forms of the pledge: the words "under God" may be left out. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

A source card reproducing the Australian citizenship pledge: "From this time forward, under God, I pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people, whose democratic beliefs I share, whose rights and liberties I respect, and whose laws I will uphold and obey." A note adds that new citizens make this pledge at a citizenship ceremony.

Figure 8. Source — the Australian citizenship pledge. There are two forms of the pledge: the words "under God" may be left out. Source: Australian Citizenship Act 2007 (Cth), section 27. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

Legal citizenship carries rights — enrolling and voting in elections from age 18, holding an Australian passport, and standing for parliament — and responsibilities: obeying the law, serving on a jury if called, and voting.

Active citizenship is participation, not paperwork. A person can act as an active citizen long before 18, and without any legal status at all: volunteering, fundraising, joining a community group, writing to a member of parliament. The ABS's 2020 General Social Survey found that about one in three Australian adults had volunteered through an organisation in the previous year — active citizenship on a national scale.

Global citizenship is not a legal status — there is no world government to grant it. It is the sense of being part of a world community, and acting on it: caring about world issues, and supporting human rights and aid. Australia itself acts as a global citizen when it joins world agreements — it helped to found the United Nations in 1945, and in 1990 it formally agreed to the UN agreement on the rights of the child.

The three overlap: one person can hold legal citizenship, live it actively, and think globally — all at once.

6. Two views — should group identity be shown in public life?

Schools, workplaces and councils sometimes decide whether to make time and space for groups to express their cultural or religious identity — festivals, special dress, quiet rooms, community events. People who all want a good shared life disagree about this, and both sides have real points.

- **One view:** open expression makes shared life stronger. When people can bring their identity with them, they feel they belong and take part more fully; and when others see real festivals, food and faith up close, stereotypes lose their grip, because the loop in Figure 5 turns toward welcome instead of avoidance.

- **Another view:** shared life works best when public space keeps group identity private. On this view, highlighting difference can sort people into boxes and invite unfair judgement, so schools and councils should stress what everyone holds in common and treat every person the same, with identity expressed at home and in their own community groups.

Both views come from people who value a fair and united society. When you answer questions about this debate, what matters is the strength of your reasons, not which side you pick.

Practice tasks

With help

S1. Fill the gaps using the word bank: *community · identity · perception*

- The picture or judgement a person forms about someone is a _____.
- A group of people who share a place, an interest, a culture or a faith is a _____.
- The collection of qualities, beliefs, connections and memberships that make a person or group who they are is their _____.

S2. Match each expression (1–6) to its way of expressing identity (A–F) from Figure 3.

Expression	Way of expressing identity
1. A temple opens its doors for a special day	A. Dress and symbols
2. A club cooks its traditional food for a street fair	B. Service
3. Volunteers knock on doors for a charity appeal	C. Faith and ceremony
4. A team wears its colours and flies its flag	D. Festivals and celebrations
5. A community radio hour in a community language	E. Food, music, dance and art
6. A parade of lanterns for a new year	F. Language and stories

S3. Look at Figure 1. List three groups you belonged to in the last seven days, and for each one, name the part of your identity it gives you.

S4. True or false? If false, correct the statement.

- Harmony Week began in 1999 as Harmony Day.
- The Australian citizenship pledge is found in the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* (Cth).
- The Red Shield Appeal is run by a trade union.
- In the 2021 Census, more people reported “no religion” than reported being Anglican.

S5. Put the steps of the expression–perception loop (Figure 5) in order, starting with “A group expresses its identity”. Then write one sentence for the centre box: what does “the loop runs in both directions” mean?

- The group feels the effect — belonging and inclusion, or being left out.
- Others form a perception — ideas and assumptions about the group.
- A group expresses its identity — festivals, dress, language, faith, service.
- That perception shapes actions — welcome and respect, or avoidance and unfair judgement.

S6. Match each real example to the kind of citizenship it shows best (legal, active or global).

- A 19-year-old enrolls and votes in a federal election.
- A class runs a stall to raise money for a community service.
- Australia joins a UN agreement on the rights of the child.
- A new citizen makes the pledge at a ceremony.

On your own

- U1.** Explain how membership of several communities can show up as citizenship in action. Use one example from this section (for instance, fundraising for community services, or supporting people experiencing health concerns) or one from your own community.
- U2.** Choose one of the six ways of expressing identity in Figure 3. Explain how that expression can shape *others'* perception of the group — give one perception that could be positive, and one that could be an unfair stereotype.
- U3.** Figure 2 shows part of the 2021 Census. Using two numbers from the figure, explain what the figure tells us about the collective identities in Australia's society.
- U4.** Choose Case study 1 (Harmony Week) or Case study 2 (the Red Shield Appeal). Explain (a) which identity is expressed, (b) how it is expressed, and (c) one perception of the group that this expression can shape.
- U5.** Compare legal citizenship and active citizenship. Give one difference and one way they connect. Can a person be an active citizen without being a legal citizen of Australia? Give a reason for your answer.
- U6.** Return to the Two views box in Part 6. Give one strong reason for each view, then say which reason you found stronger and why. You are showing that you understand both sides, not just picking one.
-

Extended response

Your planning frame for the extended response

- 1** Choose one group and one way it expresses its identity — a festival, a service, dress, a language, a faith practice.
- 2** Describe what the group does. Include at least one real, checkable detail: a name, a place, a date or a number.
- 3** Explain how that expression can shape others' perception of the group — one positive perception, and one that could be unfair.
- 4** Explain the other direction: how belonging to the group can shape how its members perceive people outside it.
- 5** Close with a conclusion built on evidence from this section, and use the section's defined meanings of identity and perception.

A five-step planning frame for the extended response: choose a group and one way it expresses its identity; describe what the group does with at least one real, checkable detail; explain how the expression can shape others' perception of the group, one positive and one possibly unfair; explain the other direction, how belonging shapes how members perceive outsiders; close with a conclusion built on evidence and the section's defined meanings.

Figure 9. Your planning frame for the extended response.

Question. “Groups express their identities in public, and that expression shapes perception.” Using at least **two** real examples from this section (for instance: Harmony Week, the Red Shield Appeal, the 2021 Census, or the citizenship pledge), explain how the groups you choose express who they are, how that expression can shape the way others see them, and how belonging can shape the way members see people outside the group.

Plan and write your response with the frame in Figure 9. Your response must:

- (a) name at least two real examples, each with one checkable detail (a name, a place, a date or a number);
- (b) explain at least two ways of expressing identity from Figure 3;
- (c) explain both directions of the loop in Figure 5; and
- (d) use *identity* and *perception* in this section’s stated meanings.

Marking note. Marks are awarded for the reasoning steps: terms used in the stated sense, evidence given, both directions of the loop explained, and one limit of your own answer acknowledged. Two students reaching different conclusions can both receive full marks if both reason well.

Answers

S1. (a) perception; (b) community; (c) identity. **S2.** 1 → C; 2 → E; 3 → B; 4 → A; 5 → F; 6 → D. **S3.** Answers will vary; check that each group named gives a named part of the student's identity. **S4.** (a) True. (b) True. (c) False — it is run by the Salvation Army, a Christian group. (d) True — 38.9 per cent reported no religion, against 9.8 per cent Anglican. **S5.** Order: (c), (b), (d), (a). The centre box means that your own groups also shape the picture you form of other people. **S6.** (a) legal; (b) active; (c) global; (d) legal.

U1. Sample: a faith group runs a charity stall and gives the money to a community service; its members express their religious identity by helping, and that help is citizenship in action. **U2.** Sample: dress and symbols — a positive perception: “this group is proud and organised”; an unfair stereotype: “everyone in that group must be the same”. **U3.** Sample: 43.9 per cent Christian and 38.9 per cent no religion show that belief and non-belief are both large parts of Australia's shared identity; 27.6 per cent born overseas shows many cultural roots in one society. **U4.** Sample (Red Shield Appeal): a Christian identity; expressed through service and an annual appeal; it can shape the perception that the group is one that helps people in hard times. **U5.** Difference: legal citizenship is a status in law, active citizenship is participation. Connection: legal citizens vote, which is also active citizenship. Yes — a person can volunteer and take part without holding Australian citizenship; active citizenship needs no legal status. **U6.** Answers will vary; award one strong reason per view plus the student's own choice of the stronger reason with a real “because”.

Extended response. A strong response names two real examples with checkable details (for example: Harmony Week, week of 21 March, “everyone belongs”; the Red Shield Appeal, Salvation Army, since 1880 in Australia); explains at least two ways of expressing identity from Figure 3; runs the loop in both directions; and uses *identity* and *perception* in the stated meanings. Marks go to the reasoning, not the conclusion.

Answers explained

S1. The three words are the section's defined terms: perception is the picture formed about someone, community is the shared group, identity is the whole collection of what makes a person or group who they are.

S2. A temple opening its doors is faith and ceremony (C). Traditional food at a fair is food, music, dance and art (E). Volunteers collecting for charity is service (B). Team colours and a flag are dress and symbols (A). A community radio hour is language and stories (F). A lantern parade for a new year is a festival and celebration (D).

S3. Any three real groups with a matching part of identity — for example, “football club: I am a team mate”, “choir: I am a singer”, “family: I am a big sister”.

S4. (a) and (b) are true on the sources in Figures 4 and 8. (c) is false: the Red Shield Appeal belongs to the Salvation Army, not to a union. (d) is true on the 2021 Census: no religion 38.9 per cent, Anglican 9.8 per cent.

S5. The loop goes: expression (c) → perception (b) → action (d) → effect on the group (a). “Both directions” means the same loop runs from you: your groups shape the picture you form of other groups.

S6. Voting at 18+ and the ceremony pledge are legal citizenship; the fundraising stall is active citizenship; joining a UN agreement on children's rights is global citizenship.

U1. Check for: a named group, the identity it expresses, and the link to citizenship in action (giving time, money or help to the community).

U2. Check for: one way from Figure 3, one positive perception, and one perception named as a stereotype (a fixed and unfair idea about a whole group).

U3. Check for two numbers used from Figure 2 and a claim about collective identity that follows from them. The numbers describe a varied society, not a single shared background.

U4. Check for the three parts: the identity named, the way it is expressed (from Figure 3), and one perception it can shape.

U5. The difference is status versus participation. The connection is that rights of legal citizenship (such as voting) are exercised actively. Active citizenship needs no legal status, so the answer is yes, with a reason such as volunteering or joining a community group.

U6. Both views are real ones held by people who value a fair society. Marks go to the reasoning: one strong point per side, then the student's own choice of the stronger reason with a real “because”. No side is the “right” side.

Extended response. The frame in Figure 9 is the marking frame: two real examples with checkable details, two ways of expressing identity, the loop in both directions, and the defined terms used in the stated sense. A response that also names one limit of its own answer shows the section's habit of checking its reasoning.

Australian identity and citizenship: different experiences, different views

Curriculum focus — VC2HC8K12. (One clause of this content description is not taught in this book — see the note at the front of the book.)

Elaborations drawn on: .E01 · .E02 · .E03 · .E04

Two terms we use carefully in this section

National identity is a *contested term* — a term that sensible people disagree about. Australians hold different, reasonable views about what makes Australia Australia: some point to shared values like a ‘fair go’, some point to history and place, some point to symbols and sport. Nobody can measure national identity the way we measure height, so in this section we treat it as a frame: we look at the *evidence* people point to (symbols, laws, data, stories) and we judge answers on the quality of the reasons, not on which side they pick. **Working definition for this section:** national identity means the shared ideas, symbols and stories a community points to when it describes what kind of nation it is.

Citizenship is a *legal term with a fixed meaning* — its meaning is set by a law, the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007*: citizenship is a legal status a person holds, with rights (such as voting in federal elections) and duties (such as jury service). In everyday talk, people also use ‘citizenship’ for a wider feeling of belonging and taking part. We use the legal meaning unless we say otherwise.

Teaching sequence (teacher notes)

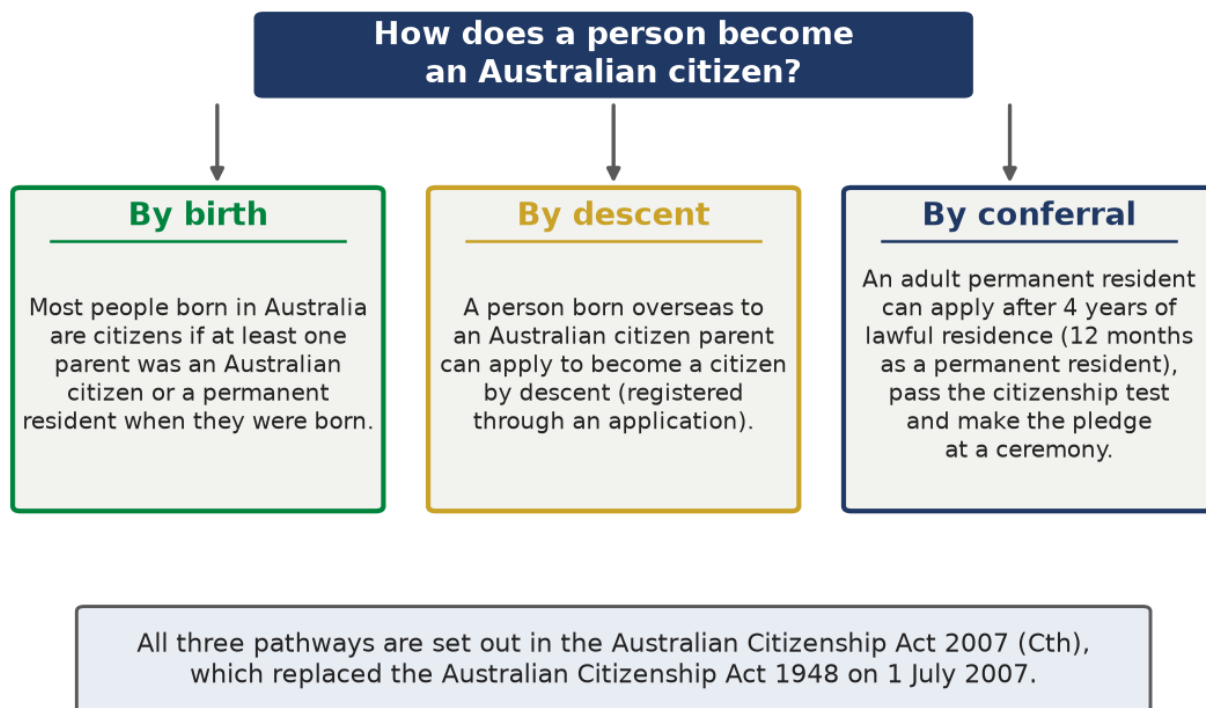
1. **Hook — one word, one dated change.** On 1 January 2021 the second line of the national anthem changed from ‘young and free’ to ‘one and free’. Ask the class: why would a country edit one word of its own song? Use the answers to introduce *national identity* as a contested term (Part 1).
2. **The legal core.** Work through the three pathways to citizenship and the pledge (Part 1, Figures 1–2). Students see that ‘Australian’ has a precise legal meaning as well as a wider cultural one.
3. **Representations, then and now.** Use the symbols table and the timeline (Part 2, Figures 3–4). The dated contemporary case here is the 2021 anthem change; the historical case is the shift from the White Australia policy to multiculturalism.
4. **The data.** Use the Census and migration figures (Part 3, Figures 5–8). The dated contemporary case is net overseas migration falling from a record 536,000 in 2022–23 to an estimated 340,000 in 2024–25 — a real, current debate about immigration and national identity.
5. **The test.** Use Figure 9 and the practice questions (Part 4), then ask: what does Australia choose to ask about, and what does that say about us?
6. **Close with the extended response**, marking on reasoning and evidence, not on the side chosen.

Part 1 — What does national identity mean? (.E01)

Every nation tells itself a story about what kind of nation it is. That story — the shared ideas, symbols and stories a community points to — is its **national identity**. It is the answer to the question ‘what do we, as a country, have in common?’

Because it is a story a community tells, it can be told in different ways by different people. An Australian born in Melbourne to Vietnamese-Australian parents, an Australian who migrated from England as a child, and an Australian whose family has lived in the same farming district for five generations may all feel strongly Australian and yet point to different things when they explain what that means. That is why the term is contested: the disagreement is not a mistake to fix, it is part of what national identity is.

What Australian citizenship legally means. The legal side is clearer. Under the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* — the law that replaced the old 1948 Act on 1 July 2007 — there are three pathways to citizenship, shown in Figure 1.



ClassBasics original figure. Source: Australian Citizenship Act 2007 (Cth); Wikipedia, 'Australian Citizenship Act 2007', accessed 26 August 2026.

Figure 1. The three pathways to Australian citizenship.

Citizenship brings rights and duties. Australian citizens can vote in federal and state elections, stand for Parliament, hold an Australian passport, and are expected to serve on a jury when called. Citizens also share a promise, made out loud at a citizenship ceremony: the **pledge of commitment**. Figure 2 shows the two forms of the pledge, exactly as set out in Schedule 1 of the Act.

The Australian citizenship pledge — a model text

Form of pledge No. 1	Form of pledge No. 2
<i>From this time forward, under God, I pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people, whose democratic beliefs I share, whose rights and liberties I respect, and whose laws I will uphold and obey.</i>	<i>From this time forward, I pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people, whose democratic beliefs I share, whose rights and liberties I respect, and whose laws I will uphold and obey.</i>

The two forms are identical except that Form No. 1 includes the words 'under God'. New citizens choose which form they make.

Reproduced from Schedule 1, Australian Citizenship Act 2007 (Cth), 'Pledge of commitment as a citizen of the Commonwealth of Australia'. Source: Federal Register of Legislation (legislation.gov.au), accessed 26 August 2026.

Figure 2. The pledge of commitment — the promise new citizens make.

Read the pledge like a summary of Australia's national identity in legal form. New citizens promise loyalty to Australia and its people; they say they share Australia's democratic beliefs; they say they respect Australians' rights and liberties; and they promise to obey Australia's laws. In four lines, the law states what the country says it stands for: democracy, rights, and the rule of law. New citizens choose which form of the pledge they make — the form with the words 'under God', or the form without them — which is itself a small statement about the kind of country Australia is: one where people of religious faith and people of no faith make the same promise side by side.

National identity in a connected world. The world Australia sits in today is closely connected: people, goods, ideas, sport and media cross borders every day. Many Australians hold **dual citizenship** — citizenship of Australia and of another country at the same time, which Australian law has allowed since 4 April 2002. As the Census data in Part 3 shows, more than a quarter of Australia's residents were born overseas.

What does national identity mean in a world like that? Two strong views sit in this debate:

- **View A — identity is stretched thin.** Some people argue that when sport, media and shopping are global, national identity matters less: a teenager in Perth and a teenager in Perth's sister city overseas may watch the same videos and wear the same shoes, so the 'national' part of identity is fading.
- **View B — identity matters more.** Others argue the opposite: in a connected world, a clear sense of who 'we' are is what lets a very diverse country pull together. On this view, national identity is the shared ground — the pledge, the flag, the 'fair go', the national teams — that lets Australians of many backgrounds act as one community.

Both views are reasonable, and both point to real evidence. In this section we judge answers on the strength of the reasons and the evidence used, not on which view is chosen.

Part 2 — Representations of Australian identity, past and present (.E02)

A **representation** is anything that shows or pictures an identity: a symbol, a song, a uniform, a poster, a team. Representations matter because they are how a nation's story is made visible. Figure 3 lists Australia's official national symbols and when each was adopted.

Australia's official national symbols — and when they were adopted

Australian National Flag 1901–1953

Chosen in 1901; the current design dates from 1908; formally recognised by the Flags Act 1953

Commonwealth Coat of Arms 1912

Granted in 1912; supported by a kangaroo and an emu

National anthem 1984

'Advance Australia Fair', adopted 19 April 1984; written by Peter Dodds McCormick in 1878

National colours 1984

Green and gold; worn by Australia's sporting teams

National floral emblem 1988

The golden wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*)

National gemstone 1993

The opal

On 1 January 2021 one word of the anthem changed: 'young and free' became 'one and free'.

ClassBasics original table. Source: Wikipedia, 'National symbols of Australia'; Wikipedia, 'Advance Australia Fair', both accessed 26 August 2026.

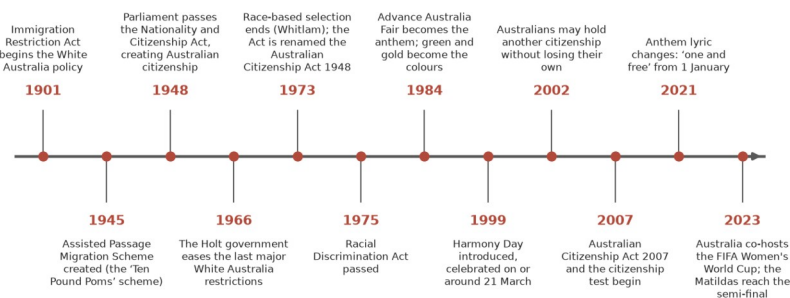
Figure 3. Australia's official national symbols — and when they were adopted.

Notice the dates. Most of the official symbols are younger than Federation itself (1901): the anthem only became official in 1984, and the national colours, floral emblem and gemstone were all named in the 1980s and 1990s. Representations of national identity are not fixed forever; each generation adds and adjusts them. The anthem is a good example. 'Advance Australia Fair' was written by Peter Dodds McCormick in 1878, but it only became the official national anthem on 19 April 1984 — and on 1 January 2021 one word of it changed, when 'young and free' became 'one and free'.

Historical representations. Representations also show what a country believed about itself at different times — including beliefs Australia has since rejected. When the six colonies federated in 1901, the first law the new Parliament passed was the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*, the base of the **White Australia policy**: migration was controlled by a dictation test used to keep out people who were not white. That law was a representation of national identity too — a story of Australia as a British, white country. Over time Australia moved away from that story: the policy was dismantled step by step between 1949 and 1973, race was removed from migration selection in 1973, and the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* made racial discrimination against the law. From the late 1970s, governments of both sides supported **multiculturalism** — the view that Australians of many cultures and backgrounds form one national community, and that this diversity is a strength, not a threat.

Current representations. Today's representations look different: the green and gold worn by national sporting teams; the Matildas' 2023 World Cup run (Case study 2); Harmony Week each March, which grew out of Harmony Day, first held on 21 March 1999; and unofficial favourites like 'Waltzing Matilda', the 1895 song by Banjo Paterson that many Australians still call the 'unofficial national anthem'. Figure 4 puts the whole story of this section on one line of time.

A changing nation: key moments in Australian citizenship and identity

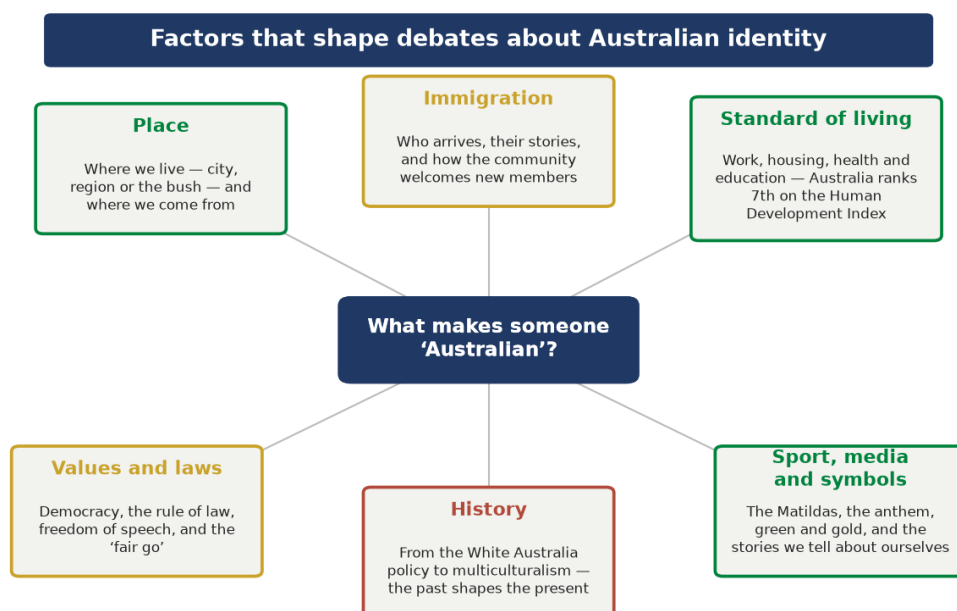


ClassBasics original figure. Events dated from: Wikipedia, 'White Australia policy'; 'Ten Pound Poms'; 'Australian Citizenship Day'; 'Advance Australia Fair'; 'Harmony Day'; 'Australian citizenship'; 'Australian Citizenship Act 2007'; '2023 FIFA Women's World Cup'; accessed 26 August 2026.

Figure 4. A timeline of citizenship and identity in Australia, 1901–2023.

Part 3 — What shapes the debates? (.E03)

Debates about 'who we are' do not happen in a vacuum. Figure 5 maps six factors that shape them.

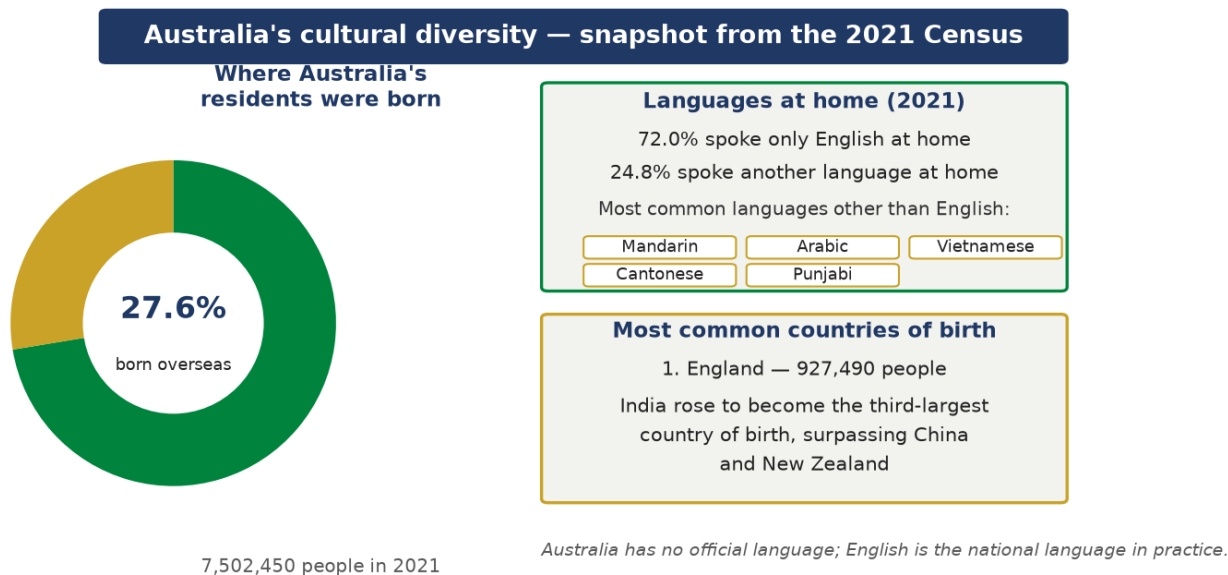


ClassBasics original concept map. The HDI ranking is from the United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report (via Wikipedia, 'Human Development Index'), accessed 26 August 2026.

Figure 5. Factors that shape debates about Australian identity.

Place. Life in a capital city and life in a remote farming district are different experiences of the same country, and people in each place can tell the national story in different ways.

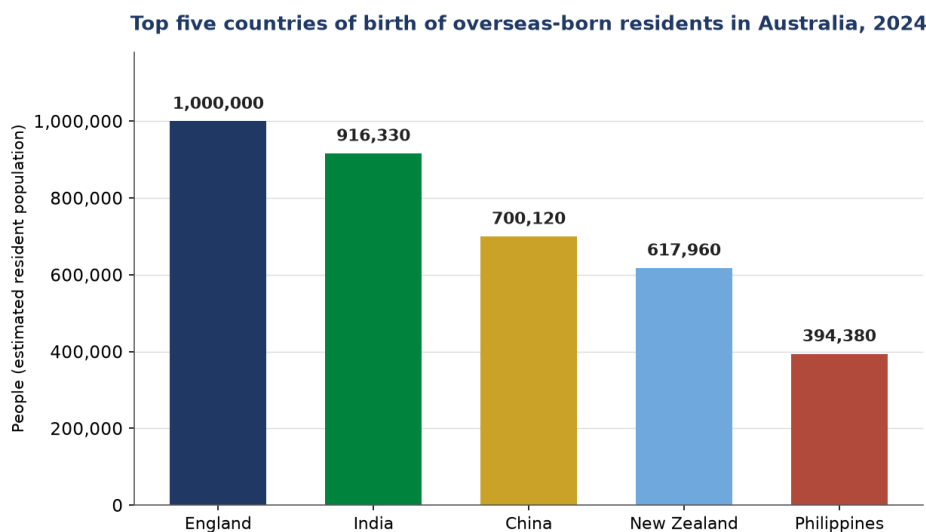
Immigration. The numbers are striking. At the 2021 Census, 27.6% of Australia's residents — 7,502,450 people — were born overseas, and more than a quarter spoke a language other than English at home (Figure 6).



ClassBasics original figure. Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021 Census of Population and Housing (via Wikipedia, '2021 Australian census'), accessed 26 August 2026.

Figure 6. Australia's cultural diversity — snapshot from the 2021 Census.

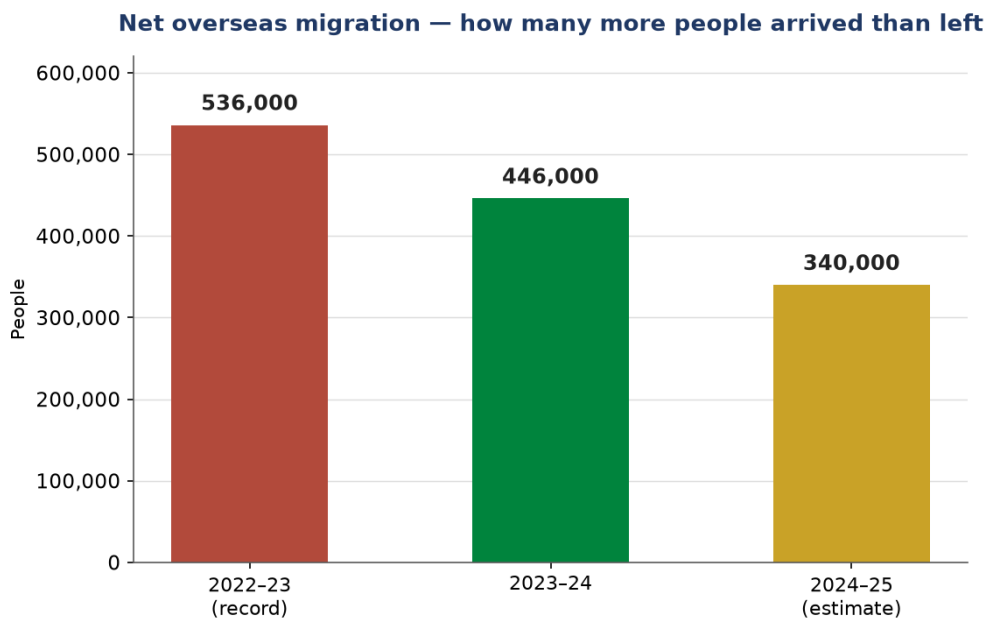
The mix of birthplaces has also changed over time. In 2024 the five largest overseas-born groups were from England, India, China, New Zealand and the Philippines (Figure 7) — a very different list from the 1950s, when most newcomers came from Britain and Ireland.



ClassBasics original chart. Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated resident population, overseas-born population by country of birth, 2024 (via Wikipedia, 'Immigration to Australia'), accessed 26 August 2026.

Figure 7. Top five countries of birth of overseas-born residents, 2024.

How many people should arrive each year is one of Australia's live debates. Net overseas migration — how many more people arrived than left — hit a record 536,000 in 2022–23, then fell to 446,000 in 2023–24 and an estimated 340,000 in 2024–25 (Figure 8).



ClassBasics original chart. Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, net overseas migration (via Wikipedia, 'Immigration to Australia' and 'Albanese government'), accessed 26 August 2026.

Figure 8. Net overseas migration, 2022–23 to 2024–25.

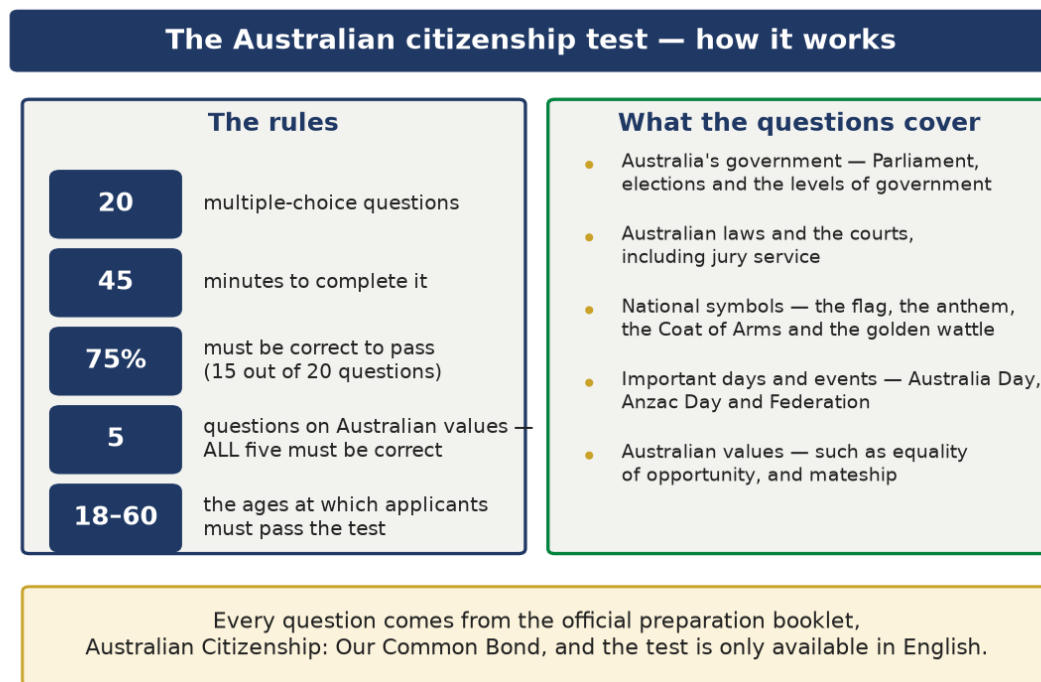
Both sides of the migration debate argue from evidence. One side says high migration brings workers, skills and new businesses to a country with an ageing population. The other side asks whether housing, roads and services can keep up when arrival numbers jump this fast. This is a real, current argument about national identity: it is a debate about who joins the national community, and how fast.

Standard of living. Part of the story Australians tell about themselves is quality of life. On the United Nations' Human Development Index — a combined measure of health, education and income — Australia ranks 7th in the world. 'The lucky country' is a representation of identity too.

A migrant group's experience: Vietnamese Australians. The CD for this section asks us to look at the experiences of different migrant groups. One powerful example is the Vietnamese-Australian community. After the war in Vietnam ended in April 1975, Australia accepted tens of thousands of refugees from Vietnam over the following decade. Many arrived with little more than what they could carry, and built new lives, businesses, temples, churches and festivals, especially in Sydney and Melbourne. At the 2021 Census, 334,793 people in Australia claimed Vietnamese ancestry (about 1.3% of the population), and 257,997 had been born in Vietnam. Vietnamese-Australian life — from pho restaurants to Tet festivals — is now part of the everyday fabric of Australian cities, and part of the story Australia tells about itself: a country that took in refugees and whose national identity grew because of it.

Part 4 — The citizenship test (.E04)

Since 2007, most adults applying for citizenship (ages 18 to 60) must pass the Australian citizenship test. Figure 9 shows how the test works and what it asks about.



ClassBasics original figure. Source: Australian Department of Home Affairs citizenship test information (via Wikipedia, 'Australian citizenship test'), accessed 26 August 2026.

Figure 9. The citizenship test — how it works.

How the questions reflect national identity. Look at the topic list in Figure 9: symbols, values, laws, days of meaning, and how government works. A citizenship test is a country choosing what a new member must know — so the test is a portrait of the identity Australia states for itself. A question about the anthem asks about a symbol; a question about jury service asks about a duty; a values question about mateship or a 'fair go' asks about the character Australians claim to have. When the test asks these things, it is saying: *this* is what we stand for.

Practice questions. The questions below are ClassBasics practice questions written in the style of the test (they are not official test questions). Every official question is drawn from the booklet *Australian Citizenship: Our Common Bond*, and the real test is only offered in English — which is itself a statement about national identity.

PQ1. What is the name of the Australian national anthem? A) 'Waltzing Matilda' B) 'Advance Australia Fair' C) 'God Save the King' D) 'Song of Australia'

PQ2. To pass the citizenship test, an applicant must answer at least how many of the 20 questions correctly? A) 10 B) 12 C) 15 D) 18

PQ3. Which of these is an Australian value named in the official test booklet? A) obedience B) mateship C) wealth D) fame

PQ4. The pledge of commitment is made by new citizens: A) in a court B) at a citizenship ceremony C) by email D) at a polling place

Worked case study 1 — The 'Ten Pound Poms' (1945–1982)

After the Second World War, Australia feared it had too few people to defend and develop a huge continent — the slogan of the time was 'Populate or Perish'. Under the Assisted Passage Migration Scheme, which began in 1945 and ended in 1982, migrants from the United Kingdom paid only £10 each for the fare (children travelled free), so they were nicknamed the 'Ten Pound Poms'. More than one million British migrants arrived between 1945 and 1972; about 250,000 later returned home. Among the arrivals were families who became famous Australians: the Gibb brothers — later the Bee Gees — arrived in 1958, and the Young family, including future AC/DC guitarist Angus Young, arrived in 1963.

Step	Working	Comment
What happened?	Australia paid most of the fare so that British people would migrate here: over one million arrivals, 1945–72, under a scheme that ran 1945–82.	A dated, real migration program — evidence of the <i>experience</i> side of the CD.
Who was involved?	The Australian and UK governments, which designed the scheme, and British families such as the Gibbs and the Youngs, who lived it.	Migration policy is a government choice; identity is also lived by ordinary families.
Which CD concept does it show?	The scheme shows a <i>perspective</i> on national identity: in the 1950s Australia imagined itself as a British country and chose its newcomers accordingly — at the same time the White Australia policy still shut others out. The end of the scheme (1982), after the end of that policy (1973), marks the turn toward the multicultural, many-backgrounds Australia of Figure 6.	One policy, two readings: an experience for the migrants, and a representation of how Australia saw itself at the time.

Worked case study 2 — The Matildas at the 2023 Women’s World Cup

In August 2023, Australia hosted the FIFA Women’s World Cup together with New Zealand. The Matildas — the Australian women’s national football team, captained by Sam Kerr — reached the semi-final for the first time and finished fourth, their best result ever. The semi-final was the most-watched television broadcast in Australia since national audience records began in 2001, with an average audience of 7.13 million people. Fans packed fan parks in green and gold, and the team — whose players themselves come from many cultural backgrounds — was celebrated as a picture of modern Australia.

Step	Working	Comment
What happened?	A home World Cup in August 2023; a first-ever semi-final; a record TV audience of 7.13 million.	A dated, real, contemporary case — and a neutral one (sport, not a culture-war topic).
Who was involved?	The Matildas and their captain Sam Kerr, Football Australia, the hosts Australia and New Zealand, and millions of Australian viewers and fans.	National identity is felt collectively: 7.13 million people shared one moment.
Which CD concept does it show?	A <i>current representation</i> of Australian identity (.E02): green and gold, a team of many backgrounds, and values like a ‘fair go’. It also shows national identity in a connected world (.E01): a global tournament, hosted at home, made Australia feel like one team.	The same CD idea as the flag or anthem — a symbol that lets a diverse country act as one — but a 2023 version of it.

Scaffolded tasks

S1 (pathways). Use Figure 1. Match each person to a pathway, and copy the words from the figure that tell you so. (*Hint: each pathway matches one person.*) a) Priya was born in Mumbai to an Australian citizen father. b) Tom was

born in Brisbane; his mother was an Australian citizen when he was born. c) Mei moved to Australia as a permanent resident, lived there lawfully for four years, passed the test and made the pledge.

S2 (pledge). Use Figure 2. a) Write down the exact words that appear in Form No. 1 but not in Form No. 2. b) Underline the line of the pledge that promises to follow Australia's laws. (*Hint: read the last line of each form slowly.*)

S3 (symbols). Use Figure 3 to complete: a) The anthem became official in _____. b) The national floral emblem is the _____, named in _____. c) Which symbol in the table is oldest? (*Hint: compare the green dates.*)

S4 (Census). Use Figure 6. a) What share of Australia's residents were born overseas in 2021? b) Name the three most common languages at home other than English. c) True or false, with a reason: 'Australia has an official language.' (*Hint: read the small italic note at the bottom of the figure.*)

S5 (test rules). Use Figure 9. Fill the gaps: The test has _____ questions; you get _____ minutes; to pass you need _____%, which is _____ out of 20; and the _____ questions about Australian values must all be correct. (*Hint: the navy boxes on the left of the figure.*)

S6 (factors). Use Figure 5. Put each statement under the factor it best fits: a) 'My suburb is full of languages and smells from many countries.' b) 'We worry whether hospitals and roads can keep up with a growing population.' c) 'Our team wore green and gold and the whole street watched together.' (*Hint: immigration, standard of living, sport/media/symbols.*)

Tasks

U1. In two or three sentences, explain what 'national identity' means, and give one reason why it is a contested term.

U2. Choose one historical representation and one current representation of Australian identity from this section (Figure 4 will help). For each, say what kind of Australia it pictures.

U3. Using Figure 8, describe what happened to net overseas migration between 2022–23 and 2024–25. Then give one reason a person might welcome the 2022–23 number and one reason a person might worry about it.

U4. Choose one migrant group from this section (for example, the 'Ten Pound Poms' or Vietnamese Australians). Using at least two facts or figures, explain what their experience adds to Australia's national identity.

U5. Answer practice questions PQ1–PQ4, then choose two of them and explain how each one reflects Australia's national identity (what does Australia think a new citizen should know?).

U6. Australian law has allowed dual citizenship since 4 April 2002. Explain, in your own words, how dual citizenship shows national identity operating in a connected world.

Extended response

'Australia's national identity used to be mainly about its British past. Today it is mainly about its multicultural present.' Using at least **three** pieces of evidence from this section (for example: the flag, the Ten Pound Poms, the end of the White Australia policy, the 2021 Census data, the citizenship test, the Matildas), discuss this claim. Before you judge it, put each side of the argument in its strongest form. **You will be marked on the quality of your reasoning and your use of evidence — not on which side you choose.** (10 marks; about one page)

Answers — scaffolded tasks and practice questions

S1. a) By descent. b) By birth. c) By application (the third pathway). **S2.** a) ‘under God’. b) ‘and whose laws I will uphold and obey.’ **S3.** a) 1984 (19 April 1984). b) The golden wattle, 1988. c) The flag — chosen in 1901 (the Coat of Arms, 1912, is next). **S4.** a) 27.6% (7,502,450 people). b) Mandarin, Arabic, Vietnamese. c) False — the figure notes that Australia has no official language; English is the national language in practice. **S5.** 20 questions; 45 minutes; 75%; 15 out of 20; five values questions. **S6.** a) Immigration — a migrant suburb (accept ‘place’ with a reason). b) Standard of living. c) Sport, media and symbols. **PQ1.** B. **PQ2.** C. **PQ3.** B. **PQ4.** B.

Solutions — tasks and extended response

U1 (model points). National identity = the shared ideas, symbols and stories a community uses to describe what kind of nation it is. Contested because reasonable people weigh different evidence (values vs history vs symbols), and there is no single measure that settles it. **U2 (model points).** Historical example: the White Australia policy / the Union Jack in the flag / the Ten Pound Poms picture a British, white Australia. Current example: the Census data, Harmony Week or the Matildas picture a multicultural, many-backgrounds Australia. Credit any pair with a clear ‘what it pictures’ line. **U3 (model points).** Fell from a record 536,000 (2022–23) to 446,000 (2023–24) and an estimated 340,000 (2024–25). Welcome: workers and skills for an ageing population, new businesses. Worry: pressure on housing, roads and services. **U4 (model points).** Ten Pound Poms: over one million British migrants 1945–72; famous families (Bee Gees, Angus Young); shows the British-era identity and its later change. Vietnamese Australians: refugees after April 1975; 334,793 claimed Vietnamese ancestry at the 2021 Census; food, festivals and business now part of Australian city life. Credit two accurate facts plus a clear link to identity. **U5 (model points).** PQ1 reflects identity through symbols (the anthem is a representation Australia chooses). PQ2/PQ4 reflect identity as a promise (the pledge, the rule of law). PQ3 reflects identity as values (mateship). Credit any two with a clear ‘what it says about us’ line. **U6 (model points).** People can belong to Australia and another country at once; migration, work and family ties cross borders; national identity becomes one layer of identity among several, yet the shared ground (the pledge, the teams, the symbols) still works. Credit a clear own-words explanation. **Extended response (marking guide).** Award marks for: (1) accurate evidence — at least three dated, specific pieces (e.g. Immigration Restriction Act 1901; scheme end 1982; 27.6% overseas-born in 2021; anthem official 1984, word changed 2021; test since 2007); (2) steelmanning — each side stated at its strongest before being judged (British past: the flag’s Union Jack, the 1901 Act, the Ten Pound Poms; multicultural present: Census data, the Racial Discrimination Act 1975, the end of race-based selection in 1973); (3) judgement tied to reasons, not asserted; (4) awareness that national identity is contested and that the answer is marked on reasoning. A response that argues either side well, or that says both layers coexist, earns full marks with strong reasoning.

Sources (all accessed 26 August 2026)

- *Australian Citizenship Act 2007*, including Schedule 1 (the pledge), Federal Register of Legislation (legislation.gov.au).
- Wikipedia: ‘Australian citizenship test’; ‘Australian Citizenship Act 2007’; ‘National symbols of Australia’; ‘Advance Australia Fair’; ‘2021 Australian census’; ‘Immigration to Australia’; ‘Albanese government’; ‘Human Development Index’; ‘Assisted Passage Migration Scheme’; ‘2023 FIFA Women’s World Cup’.
- Underlying primary data as reported by those pages: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021 Census; estimated resident population by country of birth, 2024; net overseas migration); UN Development Programme, Human Development Report; OzTAM audience data for the 2023 Women’s World Cup semi-final.
- All figures in this section are ClassBasics original figures drawn from the sources above; practice questions PQ1–PQ4 are ClassBasics original questions written in the style of the test, not official test questions.