

Mathematics Level 7

Chapter 2 — Australia 1900–2000: Federation and the changing nation

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The road to Federation: people, events and ideas; the Constitution and democratic government

For the teacher — VC2 codes: VC2HH6K07, .E01, .E02, .E03, .E04

Teaching sequence (teacher notes): 1) Start with the map (Figure 1) and the problems six borders caused. 2) Tell the road to Federation as a story with real people (Figures 2–4), modelling source work with Worked example 1. 3) Read the referendum chart together (Worked example 2). 4) Mark Federation day and sort change from continuity (Figure 6). 5) Open up the Constitution and the system of government (Figures 7–9). 6) Show where the ideas came from (Figure 10), then set the presentation task (Question 12, elaboration .E01).

Theory

Part 1 - Six colonies, no Australia

In 1900 there was no country called Australia. Figure 1 shows what was there instead: six separate British **colonies**. A colony is a land ruled by another country far away. These six were ruled by Britain.

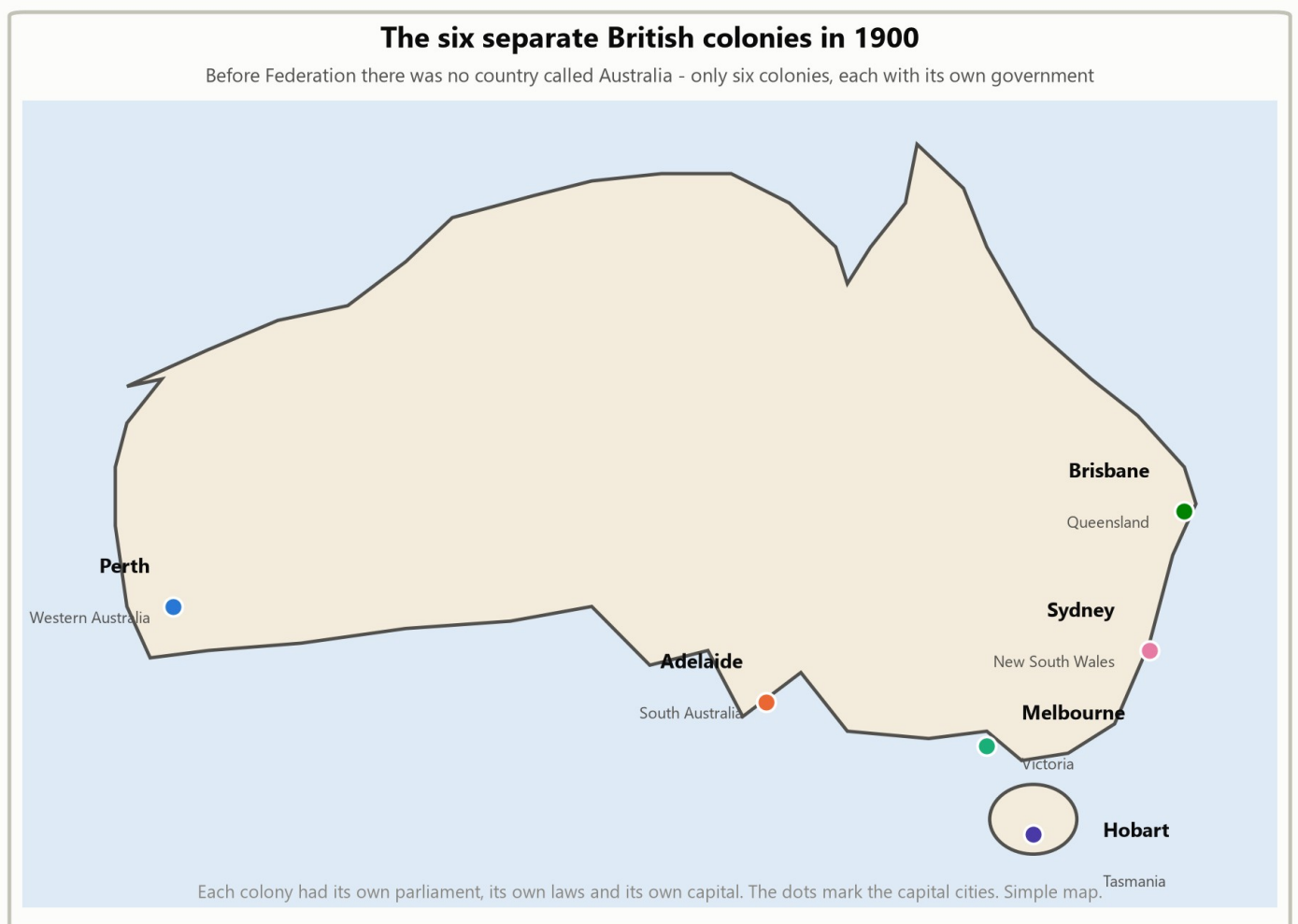


Figure 1. The six separate British colonies in 1900.

Each colony had its own governor, its own **premier** (the leader of a colony's government), its own parliament and its own laws. From the 1850s, most colonies had been allowed to run their own daily business, and by 1890 all six did.

But the six borders caused real problems:

- **Taxes at the border.** Each colony put a tax on goods coming in from the colonies next door, which made trade slow and dear.
- **Railways that did not match.** The colonies built their railway tracks to different widths, so a train from one colony could not run on the next colony's tracks. Goods and people had to change trains at every border.

- **Defence** (protecting the country from attack). Six small colonies could not protect their long coastlines as well as one country could.
- **One voice.** When the colonies wanted something from Britain, they asked for it six different ways, instead of asking as one.

Many people began to argue that the colonies would be stronger joined together as one country. Joining the colonies into one country is called **federation**. When we write about Australia's federation in 1901, we give it a capital letter: **Federation**.

Part 2 - The road to Federation

On 24 October 1889, Sir Henry Parkes, the premier of New South Wales, gave a famous speech in the country town of Tenterfield. Figure 2 shows part of that speech, as it was reported at the time.

SOURCE 1

Henry Parkes speaks at Tenterfield, 24 October 1889

"The time was close at hand when they ought to set about creating a great national Government for all Australia. ... They must appoint a Convention of leading men from all the colonies - delegates appointed by the authority of Parliament. This Convention would have to devise the Constitution ... for bringing into existence a Federal Government with a Federal Parliament for the conduct of national business."

What Parkes is saying: the colonies should choose delegates, the delegates should write a constitution, and the new national government should run the business of all Australia.

Henry Parkes, Tenterfield Oration, 24 October 1889, as reported in John Quick and Robert Garran, The Commonwealth of Australia, London, 1901, pp. 117-118.

Figure 2. Source 1 - Parkes calls for a national government (see Worked example 1).

Parkes's speech started the ball rolling. In 1890 the colonies agreed to send **delegates** - people chosen to speak and decide for others - to a meeting, and in 1891 those delegates met at a **convention** (a big formal meeting) in Sydney to write a first draft of a **constitution**. A constitution is a rule book for a country: it sets out how the country is governed and what the government may and may not do.

The 1891 draft owed a great deal to one man, Andrew Inglis Clark of Tasmania, who looked to the **United States** for an idea (Figure 10 shows this too). The American idea was **federal**: one national government for the whole country, while each state keeps its own powers - all set out in a written constitution.

Hard times in the 1890s put the draft away for a few years. Then, at a meeting in the border town of Corowa in 1893, John Quick put forward a new plan with a big democratic idea in it: let **the people** choose the delegates to the next convention, and let **the people** vote on the constitution at the end. A vote in which the whole people say yes or no to a big question is called a **referendum**.

Quick's plan worked. In 1897 and 1898, elected delegates met in Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne and wrote the final draft. Then the draft went to the people. Figure 3 gives the whole road, 1889 to 1901, and Figure 4 shows six of the people who shaped it.

The road to Federation, 1889-1901

From a country-town speech to a new nation in twelve years

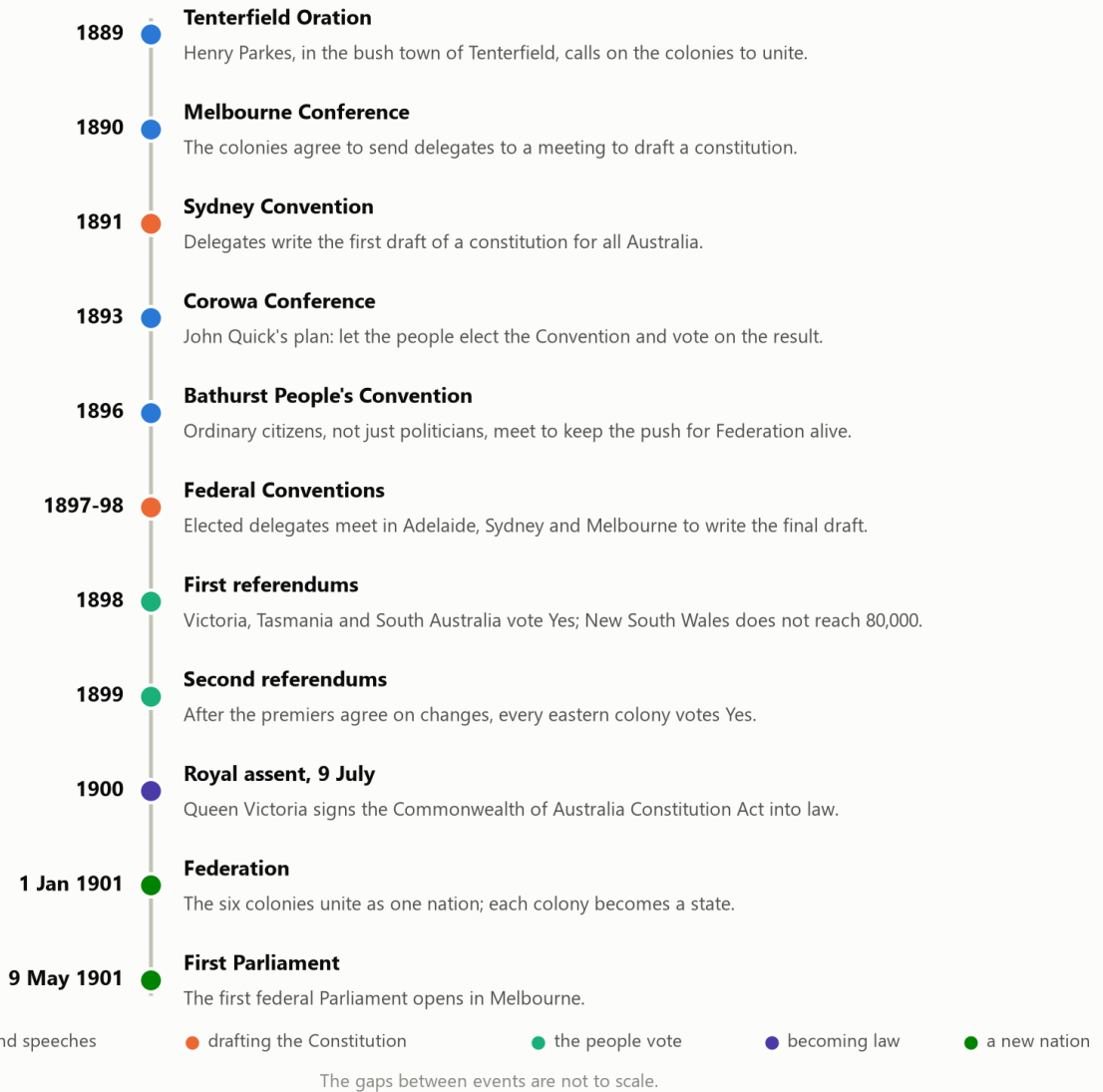


Figure 3. The road to Federation, 1889-1901.

Six people who shaped Federation

Real people, real choices - each colony had leaders who argued for (and about) uniting

HP

Sir Henry Parkes

1815-1896 - New South Wales

Premier of New South Wales. His 1889 Tenterfield Oration called on the colonies to unite. Many call him the father of Federation.

EB

Sir Edmund Barton

1849-1920 - New South Wales

Led the writing of the Constitution at the 1897-98 Convention. In 1901 he became Australia's first Prime Minister.

AD

Alfred Deakin

1856-1919 - Victoria

A powerful speaker from Victoria who argued strongly for Federation. He later became Australia's second Prime Minister.

GR

Sir George Reid

1845-1918 - New South Wales

Premier of New South Wales who was not sure about the draft - people nicknamed him 'Yes-No' Reid - but he accepted the people's vote.

JQ

John Quick

1852-1932 - Victoria

His plan, put forward at Corowa in 1893, said the people should elect the Convention and then vote on the Constitution themselves.

AC

Andrew Inglis Clark

1848-1897 - Tasmania

A Tasmanian judge who wrote the first full draft of an Australian Constitution, borrowing ideas from the United States.

Dates are birth and death years. 'Premier' means the leader of a colony's government.

Figure 4. Six people who shaped Federation.

Part 3 - The people vote

Each colony held a referendum in 1898, 1899 or 1900. Figure 5 shows how each vote went.

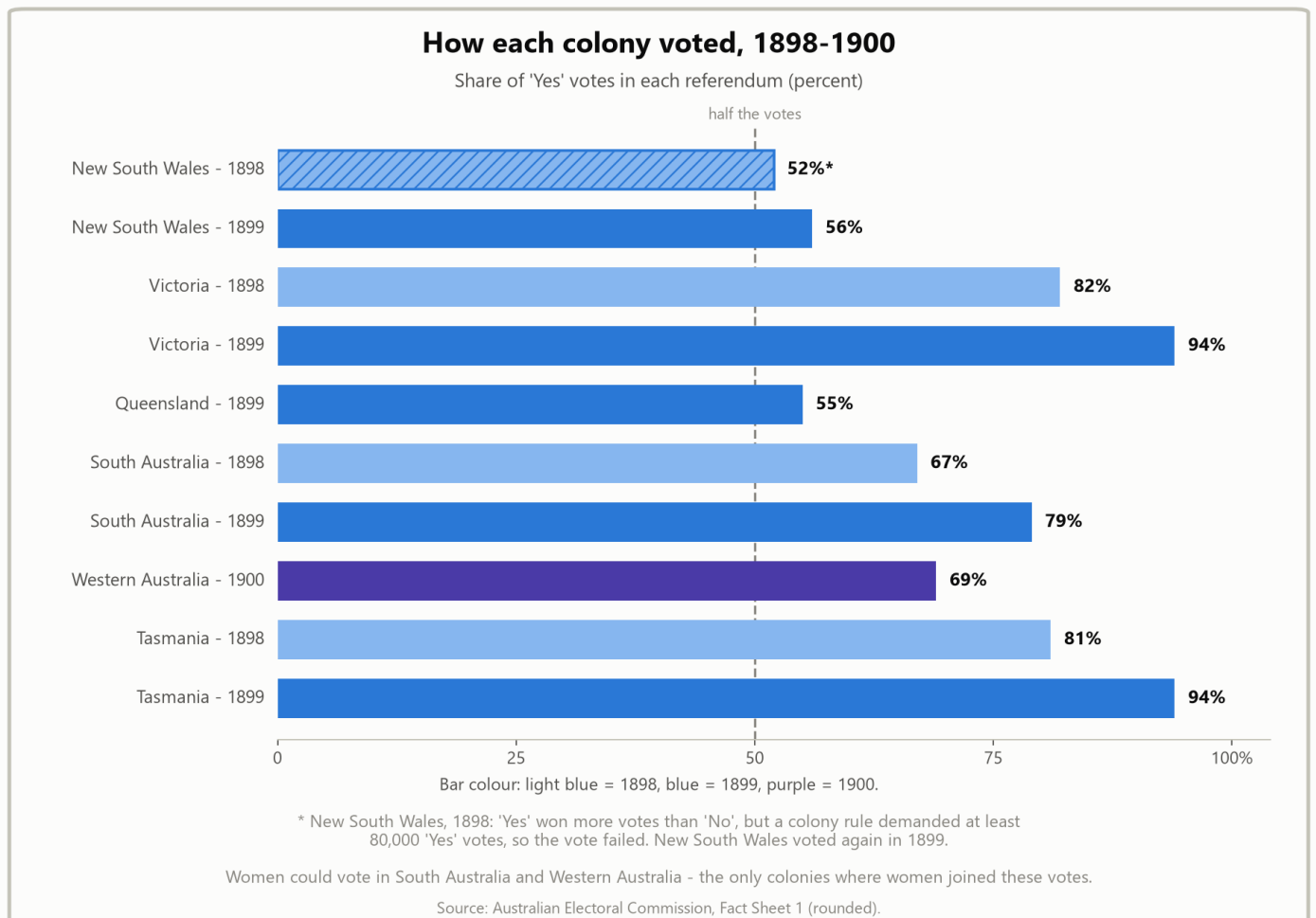


Figure 5. How each colony voted, 1898-1900 (source: Australian Electoral Commission).

Look carefully at New South Wales in 1898. More people voted Yes than No - but a colony rule said the Yes side also needed at least 80,000 votes, and it did not reach 80,000. So the vote failed, the premiers met and agreed on changes, and in 1899 every eastern colony voted Yes. Western Australia, far away and unsure, voted Yes last, in 1900.

In South Australia and Western Australia, women voted in these referendums. That was early by the standards of the world at the time - in most other places, women could not yet vote.

Not everyone was sure. People in the smaller colonies worried the two big colonies, New South Wales and Victoria, would out-vote them. Some people worried the new national parliament would take too much power from the colonies. Sir George Reid of New South Wales had doubts about the draft, and people nicknamed him 'Yes-No' Reid. These worries were listened to: the draft was changed before the second votes, and no colony joined unless its own people voted Yes.

When all six colonies had agreed, the draft became law. On 9 July 1900, Queen Victoria gave **royal assent** - the signing by the monarch that makes a Bill into a law - to the *Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act*.

Part 4 - Federation day

On 1 January 1901, at Centennial Park in Sydney, the new country was announced to a huge crowd: the Commonwealth of Australia. The six colonies became six **states**.

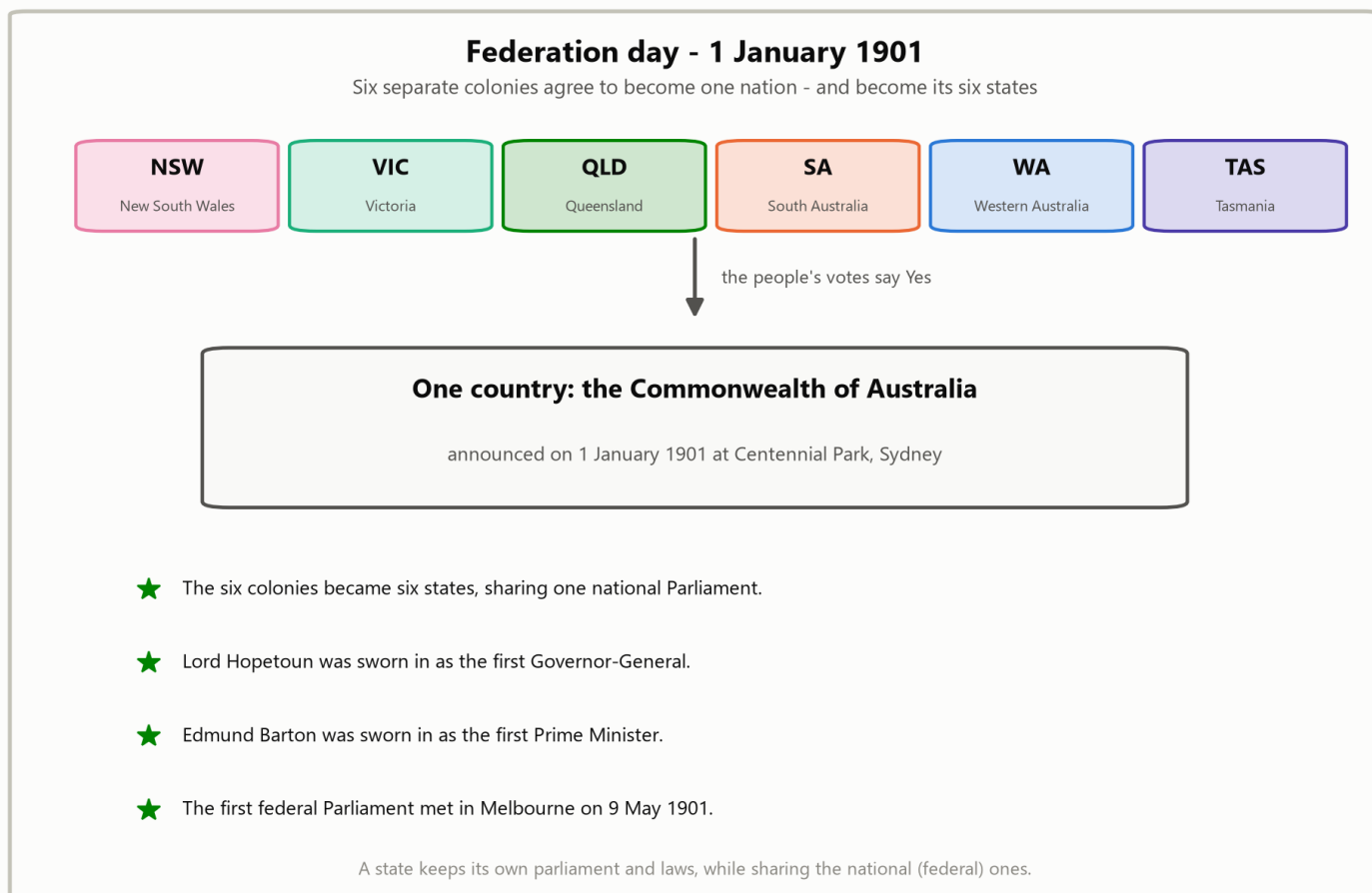


Figure 6. Six colonies become one nation - and become its six states.

Lord Hopetoun was sworn in as the first **Governor-General**, the person who represents the monarch in Australia. Edmund Barton was sworn in as the first **Prime Minister**. In March 1901 the people voted in the first federal election, and on 9 May 1901 the first federal Parliament met in Melbourne.

Think about **continuity and change** - what stayed the same, and what changed. What changed on 1 January 1901? There was now one nation, with one national Parliament for things like defence and trade between the states. What stayed the same? The monarch was still the head of the country, each old colony kept its own parliament and laws for its own business, and the way of governing - an elected parliament that the government must answer to - carried straight over.

Part 5 - The Constitution and how government works

The Constitution is Australia's rule book. Figure 7 shows its opening words, called the **preamble**.

SOURCE 2

The opening words of the Constitution Act, 1900

"WHEREAS the people of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland, and Tasmania, humbly relying on the blessing of Almighty God, have agreed to unite in one indissoluble Federal Commonwealth under the Crown of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland."

In today's words: the people of the five named colonies have agreed to join together in one Commonwealth that cannot be broken up, under the Crown.

Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900 (UK), preamble - the opening words of the law passed by the United Kingdom Parliament and signed by Queen Victoria on 9 July 1900.

Figure 7. Source 2 - the opening words of the Constitution Act (see the plain-language note under the quote).

Notice two things in those opening words. First, it is **the people** who 'have agreed to unite' - the new country rested on the people's Yes votes. Second, the Commonwealth is 'under the Crown'. Australia did not become a republic - a country with no king or queen as its head - in 1901. It became a **constitutional monarchy**: a country whose head of state is a king or queen, but whose power is limited by the Constitution and by parliament.

Figure 8 shows how the system set up by the Constitution works. It follows the **Westminster system**, named after the place in London where Britain's parliament meets: an elected parliament, and a government that must keep the support of the lower house, the house the people elect. That rule - the government must answer to the elected parliament - is called **responsible government**. Because the people choose the parliament, and the parliament supports the government, Australia is a **democracy**: a country where the people hold the power, through their vote.

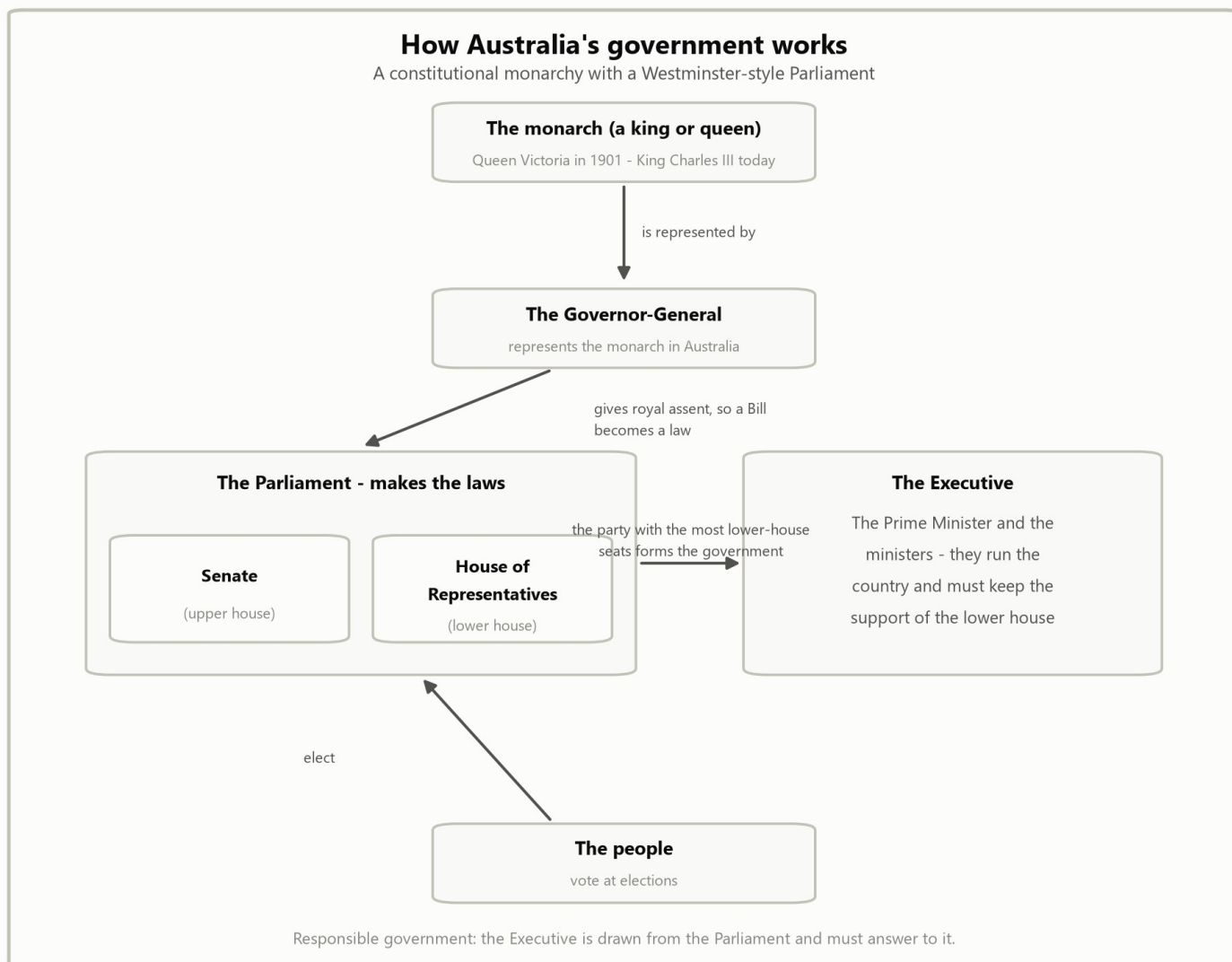


Figure 8. How Australia's government works.

The Constitution also splits power three ways, so that no one group holds it all. This is called the **separation of powers** (Figure 9).

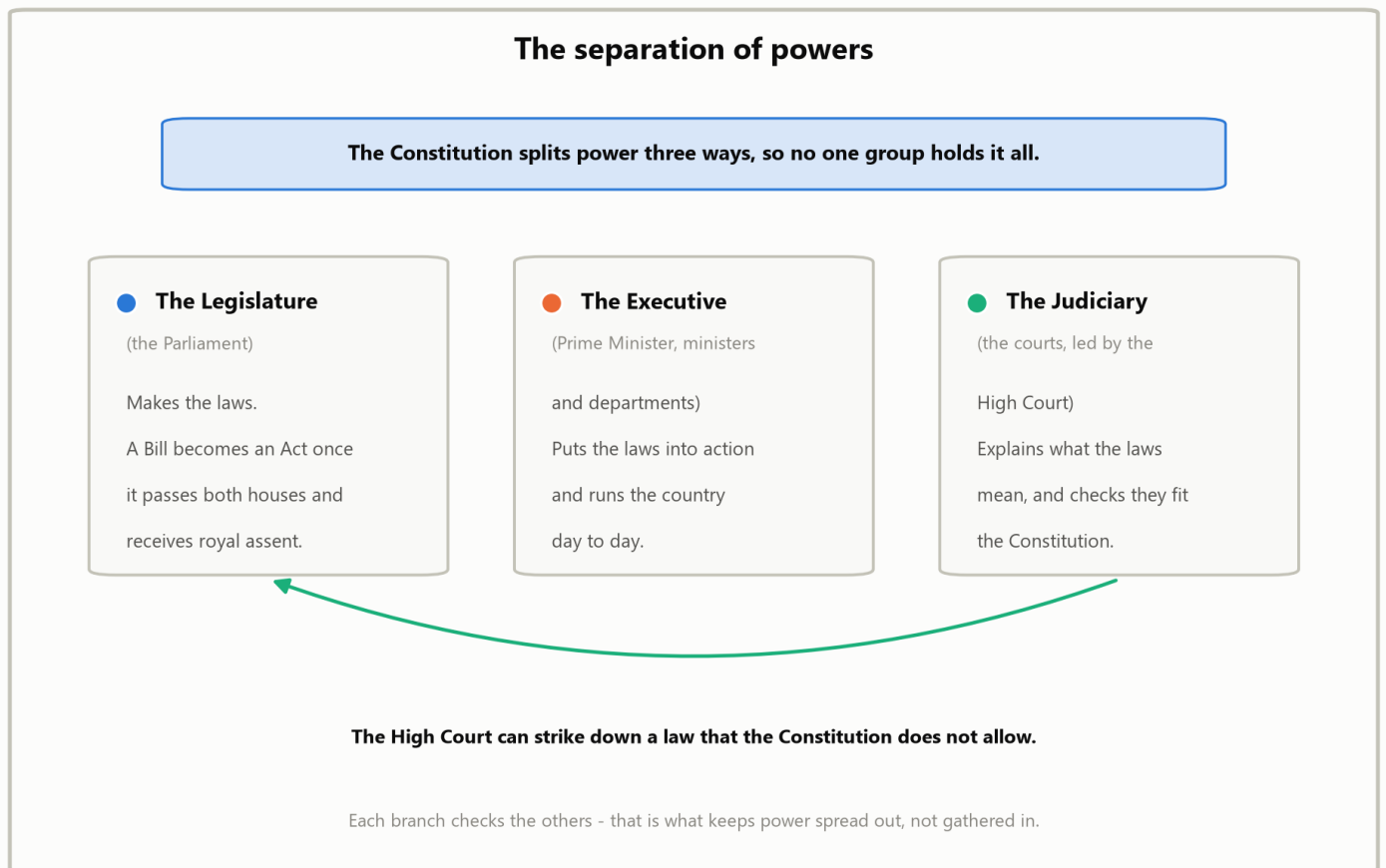


Figure 9. The separation of powers.

One last democratic idea: the Constitution even says how it may be changed - by a national referendum of the people (section 128). The rule book can be updated, but only if the people agree.

Part 6 - Where the ideas came from

Australia's system of government did not appear from nowhere. It grew from two streams of ideas (Figure 10).

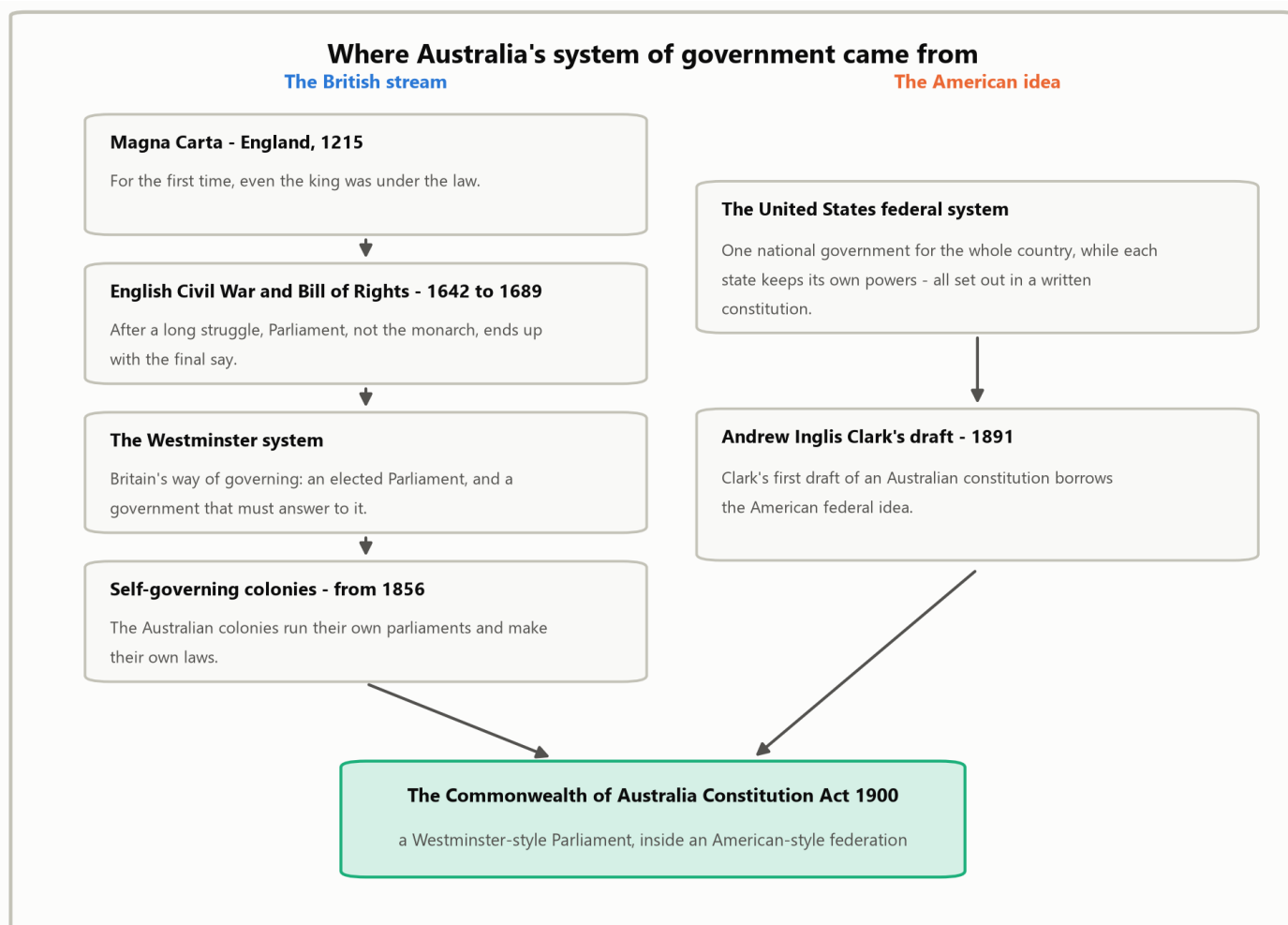


Figure 10. Two streams of ideas flow into one constitution.

The **British stream** is the older one. In 1215, in England, **Magna Carta** set down, for the first time, the rule that even the king was under the law. After the **English Civil War** and then the **Bill of Rights** of 1689, parliament, not the monarch, ended up with the final say. Britain's way of governing - an elected parliament with a government that must answer to it - became the Westminster system, and the Australian colonies copied it when they became self-governing from the 1850s.

The **American idea** is the federal one: one national government for the whole country, while each state keeps its own powers, all written down in a constitution. Andrew Inglis Clark put that idea into his 1891 draft.

The Constitution of 1900 joined the two: a Westminster-style parliament, inside an American-style federation.

Words to know - colony, federation, premier, delegates, convention, constitution, referendum, royal assent, Governor-General, Prime Minister, state, constitutional monarchy, Westminster system, responsible government, democracy, separation of powers, legislature, executive, judiciary. Every one of these is explained where it first appears above.

Sources used in this section (all real, and each one is named where it is used): the referendum figures come from the Australian Electoral Commission's Fact Sheet 1; the Tenterfield speech is quoted as reported in John Quick and Robert Garran, The Commonwealth of Australia (London, 1901); the opening words are from the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900 (UK); the explanations of government terms follow the Parliamentary Education Office.

Worked examples

Worked example 1 (with help) - reading Source 1 like a historian

Task: Use Source 1 (Figure 2) to answer: what was Parkes calling for, and why is this source useful to a historian?

Historians read a source in three steps: **who and when, what it says, why it matters.**

Step 1 - who and when. The source note under the quote tells us: Henry Parkes, premier of New South Wales, speaking at Tenterfield on 24 October 1889. That is eleven years *before* Federation, so this source comes from the start of the road.

Step 2 - what it says. In the quote, Parkes says the colonies 'ought to set about creating a great national Government for all Australia', chosen by 'a Convention of leading men from all the colonies'. In my own words: the colonies should choose delegates, those delegates should write a constitution, and the new national government should run the business of all Australia.

Step 3 - why it matters. A cause has consequences. Parkes's call led to the 1890 meeting and the 1891 Sydney Convention, so this source shows us the moment the push for Federation gathered speed.

Your turn (with help): Was Parkes speaking before or after the colonies became one country? Point to the evidence in the source card that tells you.

Worked example 2 (with help) - reading the referendum chart

Task: Use Figure 5 to answer: (a) What share of Tasmanian votes was Yes in 1899? (b) New South Wales had more Yes than No votes in 1898 - so why did the vote fail?

- (a) I find the row 'Tasmania - 1899'. The bar is dark blue, which means 1899, and the label at the end of the bar says 94%. So 94 out of every 100 Tasmanian votes were Yes - nearly everyone.
- (b) The bar 'New South Wales - 1898' is hatched (cross-hatched) and labelled 52%*. The star note explains the rule: Yes needed at least 80,000 votes, and it did not reach 80,000. So even though Yes beat No, the vote failed under the colony's own rule. The consequence? New South Wales voted again in 1899 - and that time the Yes side won clearly, with 56%.

Your turn (with help): Which colony had the closest vote in 1899 - the one nearest to half? Explain how the chart shows you.

Practice questions

With help

Q1. Fill in the blanks using the word bank. *Word bank: colonies, states, federation, referendum, Constitution.* (a) Before 1901, Australia was six separate British _____. (b) A vote in which the whole people say yes or no to a big question is a _____. (c) The joining of the colonies into one country is called _____. (d) After 1 January 1901, the colonies became _____. (e) The rule book for the new country is the _____.

Q2. Match each person to what they did. *People: 1 Parkes, 2 Barton, 3 Deakin, 4 Reid, 5 Quick, 6 Clark.* (a) Wrote the first full draft of an Australian constitution, borrowing the American federal idea. (b) Gave the Tenterfield speech calling on the colonies to unite. (c) Was nicknamed 'Yes-No' because he had doubts about the draft. (d) Put forward the 1893 plan to let the people choose the delegates and vote on the result. (e) Led the writing of the final draft and became the first Prime Minister. (f) Argued strongly for Federation and later became the second Prime Minister.

Q3. Put these five events in order, 1 to 5. *Date bank: 1889, 1891, 1893, 1900, 1901.* () Queen Victoria gives royal assent to the Constitution Act. () Parkes gives the Tenterfield speech. () The six colonies become one nation on 1 January. () Delegates at Sydney write the first draft of a constitution. () John Quick puts forward his plan at Corowa.

Q4. Use Figure 5. (a) Which two colonies voted Yes by the biggest shares in 1899? (b) Which colony voted in 1900, and what was its Yes share?

Q5. True or false? Fix the false ones. (a) Before 1901, the six colonies shared one parliament. (b) Women could vote in the South Australian and Western Australian referendums. (c) The first federal Parliament met in Sydney. (d) The High Court can strike down a law that the Constitution does not allow.

Q6. Match each term to its meaning. *Terms: democracy, constitutional monarchy, separation of powers, Westminster system.* (a) A country whose head of state is a king or queen, but whose power is limited by law and parliament. (b) Power split three ways - legislature, executive and judiciary - so no one group holds it all. (c) A country where the people hold the power through their vote. (d) Britain's way of governing: an elected parliament, with a government that must keep the support of the lower house.

Q7. Give two problems the six borders caused before Federation. *Starter: One problem was ...*

Q8. Use Source 2 (Figure 7). (a) List the colonies named in the opening words. (b) Using the plain-language note under the quote, say in your own words what the people agreed to.

On your own

Q9. In 1898, more New South Wales voters said Yes than No, yet the colony did not pass the draft that year. Explain why the vote failed, and what happened between 1898 and 1899 that led to a Yes vote the second time.

Q10. Name two things that **changed** and one thing that **stayed the same** when the Commonwealth of Australia began on 1 January 1901.

Q11. People disagreed about Federation. Give one reason a voter might have said Yes, and one honest reason a voter might have been unsure or said No.

Q12. Presentation task (use the evidence). Prepare a 2-3 minute talk for your class answering: *How does Australia's system of government work, and where did its ideas come from?* You must: use at least two figures or sources from this section as evidence (for example, Sources 1 or 2, or Figures 8, 9 or 10); use at least three of the words *democracy, constitutional monarchy, parliament, separation of powers, Westminster system*; and name one British and one American idea that flowed into the Constitution.

Answers

Q1. (a) colonies (b) referendum (c) federation (d) states (e) Constitution. **Q2.** (a) 6 Clark (b) 1 Parkes (c) 4 Reid (d) 5 Quick (e) 2 Barton (f) 3 Deakin. **Q3.** Order: Tenterfield speech (1889) = 1; Sydney first draft (1891) = 2; Corowa plan (1893) = 3; royal assent (1900) = 4; one nation (1901) = 5. **Q4.** (a) Tasmania (94%) and Victoria (94%). (b) Western Australia, 69%. **Q5.** (a) False - each colony had its own parliament. (b) True. (c) False - it met in Melbourne. (d) True. **Q6.** (a) constitutional monarchy (b) separation of powers (c) democracy (d) Westminster system. **Q7.** Any two of: taxes on goods crossing the borders; railway tracks of different widths, so trains had to change at the border; weak defence as six small colonies; no single voice when asking Britain for things. **Q8.** (a) New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland and Tasmania. (b) Any fair rewording, e.g. 'The people of the five named colonies agreed to join together in one Commonwealth that cannot be broken up, under the Crown.' **Q9.** The Yes vote did not reach the colony rule of at least 80,000 Yes votes, so it failed; the premiers then met and agreed on changes to the draft, and in 1899 New South Wales voted again and Yes won with 56%. **Q10.** Changed (any two): one nation with one national Parliament; the colonies became states; a national government for things like defence and trade between the states. Stayed (any one): the monarch remained head of the country; each old colony kept its own parliament and laws; the Westminster way of governing carried over. **Q11.** Yes reason (any): stronger defence; no border taxes or changing trains at borders; one voice; the smaller colonies were protected by the federal deal. Unsure/No reason (any): fear the big colonies would out-vote the small ones; fear the new national parliament would take too much power from the colonies; distance and doubt, as in Western Australia. Both sides had sensible reasons - the draft was changed to answer the worries, and every colony joined only after its people voted Yes. **Q12.** Check that the talk: answers how the system works (people elect parliament; government must keep the lower house's support; monarch represented by the Governor-General; power split three ways); names where the ideas came from (British: Magna Carta / Bill of Rights / Westminster; American: federal system with states keeping powers); uses at least two figures or sources and names them; uses at least three of the five terms correctly.

Solutions with every step

Worked example 1, your turn. Parkes spoke *before* the colonies became one country. Evidence: the source note dates the speech to 24 October 1889, and Federation day was 1 January 1901 - the timeline in Figure 3 shows the speech as the first event on the road. A second clue is the words themselves: Parkes says the colonies ‘ought to set about creating’ a national government, which only makes sense if it did not exist yet.

Worked example 2, your turn. ‘Closest to half’ means nearest the dashed 50% line. The 1899 rows are: New South Wales 56%, Victoria 94%, Queensland 55%, South Australia 79%, Tasmania 94%. The smallest gap above half is Queensland at 55% - only five votes in every hundred above the No side. So Queensland had the closest 1899 vote.

Q9. Step 1 - read the 1898 row: New South Wales voted 52% Yes, so Yes beat No. Step 2 - read the star note: a colony rule demanded at least 80,000 Yes votes, and the Yes side did not reach 80,000, so the vote failed. That is the cause of the delay. Step 3 - what happened next: the premiers of the colonies met and agreed on changes to the draft (this answered some of New South Wales’ worries). Step 4 - consequence: at the 1899 referendum New South Wales voted Yes with 56%, and the colony joined the Commonwealth. So one rule, one failed vote, one meeting and one re-vote - a clean cause-and-consequence chain.

Q10. Step 1 - list what was new on 1 January 1901: one nation, the Commonwealth of Australia; one national Parliament; the colonies renamed as states. Pick two as your changes. Step 2 - list what carried over: the monarch stayed head of the country (a constitutional monarchy, not a republic); each state kept its own parliament and laws; the Westminster way of governing continued. Pick one as your continuity. Step 3 - check yourself against Figure 6: the six chips keep their own colours inside the one new card, which is exactly the change and continuity idea in a picture.

Q11. Step 1 - put the strongest fair case for the Yes side: a voter could say one country means stronger defence, no border taxes, trains that run through, and one voice when dealing with Britain. Step 2 - put the strongest fair case for the unsure side: a voter in a small colony could honestly fear being out-voted by the two big colonies; a voter who loved their colony could fear the new national parliament taking too much power; a Western Australian could feel the whole plan was far away and not meant for them. Step 3 - weigh it: both views were reasonable, which is why the draft was changed between 1898 and 1899 and why each colony joined only after its own people voted Yes. A good answer gives each side a fair reason, not a silly one.

Democracy for whom? Women, children and migrants after Federation

Section 2B · Chapter 2 — Australia 1900–2000: Federation and the changing nation **Owns:** VC2HH6K08 · **Draws on:** VC2HH6K08.E03, VC2HH6K08.E04 (trimmed), VC2HH6K08.E05 (trimmed), VC2HH6K08.E06

Teaching sequence (teacher)

Teacher-facing — not vocabulary-gated. This sequence maps to VC2HH6K08 (what the CD asks for) as trimmed by TOC §2A: the First Nations strand of this CD is excluded (CONTENT_POLICY Rule 1); .E01 and .E02 are not taught, .E04 is taught without its First Nations voting-rights example and .E05 without its First Nations timeline strand. Do not supplement this section with excluded material. The three retained groups — women, children, migrants — carry the CD.

1. **Set the scene (10 min).** Define the three anchor terms at first use (*democracy, citizen/citizenship, suffrage* — all defined in the student text). Establish the starting point: Federation, 1 January 1901; Australia was a democracy, but not everyone was treated the same way.
2. **Women's vote (20 min).** Work through Part 1 with figures `2b_suffrage_dates.png` and `2b_women_firsts.png`. Run Worked demonstration 1 (reading the dataset). Surface the two-views box: both sides of the 1890s–1900s suffrage argument are stated in strong form; ask students which argument they find stronger and why, before revealing the outcome.
3. **Women at work + the minimum wage (25 min).** Parts 2–3 with figures `2b_women_work_rules.png` and `2b_harvester_card.png`. Land the vocabulary: *marriage bar, minimum wage*. Worked demonstration 2 (reading the dictation-test source) belongs to Part 5 but can be taught here if you prefer a sources-first lesson.
4. **Children (20 min).** Part 4 with figure `2b_institution_life.png`. This is difficult history: keep the student text's pitch — the Senate inquiry's four aspects (food and shelter, protection, education, contact with family) and the 2009 apology — and do not add graphic detail.
5. **Migrants and citizenship (25 min).** Part 5 with figures `2b_dictation_test_source.png`, `2b_dictation_test_flow.png` and `2b_citizenship_timeline.png`. The dictation-test excerpt is a verbatim primary source; use the Egon Kisch case as the concrete example of the test being rigged.
6. **Timeline + debate (30 min).** Figure `2b_rights_timeline.png` models the .E05 visual timeline (women, children, migrants lanes only — the §2A-trimmed form). Then run the Part 7 debate from figure `2b_debate_cards.png`; the writing task (Q12) is the assessed evidence-based response.

Assessment hooks: Q12 (evidence-based paragraph) links the CD's focus to the achievement standard's explain/construct expectations; Q9–Q11 are the unscaffolded checks. All items join to VC2HH6K08 and the drawn-on elaboration ids for the future MCQ coverage join (TOC D9).

Sources used in this section are listed in the student-facing Sources panel; every one is a real, citable artifact with its holding body or publication and retrieval date (2026-08-24).

Key terms

These words do important work in this section. Each is defined the first time it appears, and all definitions are collected here for reference.

Term	Meaning in this section
democracy	a way of running a country in which the people choose their leaders by voting
citizen	a person who is an official member of a country, with rights (such as voting) and duties (such as obeying the law)
citizenship	the status of being a citizen
parliament	the group of people elected to make a country's or state's laws
suffrage	the right to vote in elections for parliament
Federation	the joining of the six Australian colonies into one nation on 1 January 1901
minimum wage	the lowest pay that the law allows an employer to give a worker
marriage bar	an old rule that forced women to leave their jobs when they married
discrimination	treating a person unfairly because of who they are, such as their sex or the country they come from
dictation	a test in which someone reads words out loud and you must write them down
institution	a large home, such as an orphanage, where children lived and were cared for away from their families
multicultural	made up of many different cultures
Constitution	the rulebook that sets up how Australia is governed
inquiry	a careful look into something, often ending in a formal report

Part 1 — Women win the vote

On 1 January 1901, the six Australian colonies joined together to become one nation. This is called **Federation**. The new nation was a **democracy** — a way of running a country in which the people choose their leaders by voting. But in 1901, Australia's democracy did not treat everyone the same way. In this section you will follow three groups — women, children and migrants — and see how their rights changed during the 1900s.

A **citizen** is a person who is an official member of a country. Citizens have rights, such as voting, and duties, such as obeying the law. The status of being a citizen is called **citizenship**. At Federation, the rules about who counted as a citizen — and who could vote — were very different from today.

Start with women. The right to vote in elections for parliament is called **suffrage**. The movement to win votes for women is called the suffrage movement. In Australia, the campaign began in the colonies, before Federation.

- **1894** — South Australia passed a law giving women the right to vote *and* the right to stand for parliament. Mary Lee and Catherine Helen Spence had worked for years to make this happen. South Australian women cast their first votes in 1896. (*Constitutional Amendment (Adult Suffrage) Act 1894*, passed 18 December 1894.)
- **1897** — Catherine Helen Spence stood for election to the meeting that helped write the new **Constitution** — the rulebook that sets up how Australia is governed. She became the first woman in Australia to stand as a candidate.
- **1899** — Western Australia gave women the right to vote.
- **1902** — the new federal parliament passed the *Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902*. Women across Australia could now vote in federal elections — and they could stand for federal parliament too.

- **1903** — Vida Goldstein stood for the Senate in Victoria. She became one of the first women in Australia — and in the countries then ruled by Britain — to stand for a national parliament. She stood five times between 1903 and 1917, but she was never elected.
- **1921** — Edith Cowan won the state seat of West Perth and became the first woman elected to any Australian parliament. Edith Cowan had spent her life working for the rights of women and children.
- **1943** — Enid Lyons became the first woman elected to the House of Representatives, and Dorothy Tangney became the first woman elected to the Senate. Both were elected on the same day: 21 August 1943.
- **1949** — Enid Lyons became the first woman to serve in federal Cabinet. Cabinet is the small group of ministers — members of parliament chosen to lead parts of the government — who make the government's biggest decisions.

Figure 1 shows when women won the vote in each colony and in the new federal parliament.

When women won the vote

Each bar shows the year women won the right to vote, colony by colony.
The red bar is the new federal parliament (1902).

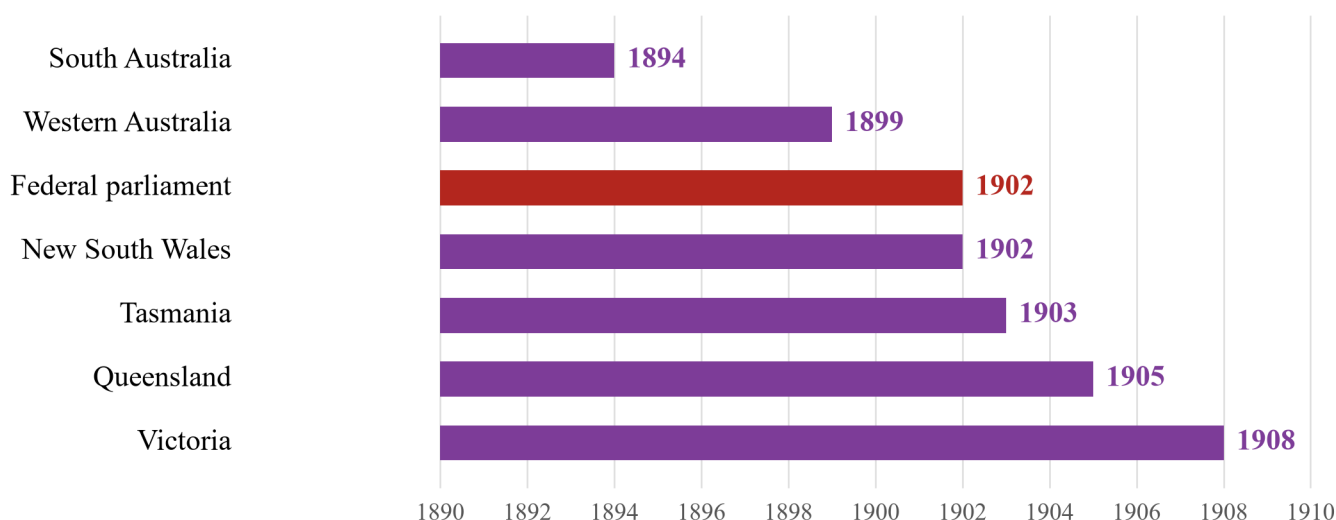


Chart showing when women won the right to vote, from South Australia in 1894 to Victoria in 1908, with the federal parliament shown in 1902

Figure 2 sets out the “firsts” won by women in Australian parliaments.

Five firsts for women in Australian government

From the first woman candidate in 1897 to the first woman in Cabinet in 1949.

Year	Name	What she achieved
1897	Catherine Helen Spence	First woman in Australia to stand as a candidate - she stood for the meeting that helped write the new Constitution.
1903	Vida Goldstein	First woman to stand for Australia's federal parliament - she stood for the Senate in Victoria, and stood five times by 1917.
1921	Edith Cowan	First woman elected to any Australian parliament - she won the state seat of West Perth in Western Australia.
1943	Enid Lyons and Dorothy Tangney	First women elected to the federal parliament - Lyons to the House of Representatives and Tangney to the Senate, both on 21 August 1943.
1949	Enid Lyons	First woman to serve in federal Cabinet - the small group of ministers who make the government's biggest decisions.

From the records listed in the Sources section of this workbook.

Table listing five firsts for women in Australian government between 1897 and 1949, with the woman's name and what she achieved

Two views on women's suffrage

In the 1890s, people argued about whether women should vote. Both sides believed they were arguing for what was best for Australia.

For: women in the suffrage movement said that laws affect everyone, so everyone should have a say in choosing the people who make the laws. They pointed out that women paid taxes and obeyed the law, so it was unfair that they had no vote.

Against: opponents said that parliament decided matters such as the armed forces and money, and that women's most important work was raising children at home. They worried that giving women the vote would divide families by putting members of one family on different sides in elections.

One of these views won. Which evidence in Part 1 tells you which one?

Part 2 — Women at work

Winning the vote changed how women took part in democracy. But women's experiences at work changed more slowly. Three changes stand out.

The marriage bar. For most of the 1900s, a rule called the **marriage bar** forced women to leave permanent jobs in the Commonwealth public service when they married. The rule came from the *Public Service Act 1902*. It was based on the idea that married men should earn the family's money while married women stayed home. The rule ended on 18 November 1966.

Equal pay. In 1907, a judge set a "basic wage" for Australian workers (see Part 3). But for decades, women were often paid less than men for doing the same jobs. In **1969**, Australia's national pay body ruled that women doing the same work as men must be paid the same. This was called *equal pay for equal work*. The rule helped only some women: by 1972, only about 18 women in every 100 were getting equal pay. Most were teachers and nurses, because they did the same jobs as men. In **1972**, the pay body went further and ruled that women must get equal pay for work of equal *value*, even when their jobs were different from men's.

The Sex Discrimination Act 1984. In 1984, the federal parliament passed the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*.

Discrimination means treating a person unfairly because of who they are. This Act made it unlawful to discriminate against people because of their sex or whether they were married — at work, at school, and in many other parts of life. A body called the Australian Human Rights Commission looks into complaints under this law.

Figure 3 sets out the three rules that changed for working women.

Three rules that changed for working women

From the end of the marriage bar in 1966 to the Sex Discrimination Act of 1984.

The old rule	The change that ended it	When
The marriage bar - women had to leave permanent jobs in the Commonwealth public service when they married (Public Service Act 1902)	The rule ended; married women could keep their government jobs.	18 November 1966
Unequal pay - women were often paid less than men for doing the same jobs	Equal pay rulings by Australia's national pay body: equal pay for equal work (1969), then equal pay for work of equal value (1972).	1969 and 1972
No law against sex discrimination - people could be treated unfairly because of their sex or whether they were married	The Sex Discrimination Act made such discrimination unlawful at work, at school and in many other parts of life.	1984

Table showing three old rules that affected working women in Australia and the change that ended each rule, from 1966 to 1984

Part 3 — A fair day's pay: the minimum wage

One of the new federal parliament's most famous decisions was about wages. A **minimum wage** is the lowest pay that the law allows an employer to give a worker. Australia's story of the minimum wage begins in 1907.

In that year, a machine-maker named Hugh Victor McKay asked the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration to rule that he paid "fair and reasonable" wages at his Harvester factory in Sunshine, Victoria. The judge, Justice H. B. Higgins, looked at what a worker needed to live on. On **8 November 1907**, he ruled that a fair and reasonable wage for an unskilled labourer was **7 shillings a day**, or **42 shillings for a six-day week**. (Shillings were the coins Australians used before dollars replaced them in 1966.) Justice Higgins decided that a wage was not fair just because an employer chose it. A fair wage had to cover the ordinary needs of a worker and a family: food, a home and the small comforts of life.

The Harvester Judgment, as it became known, shaped Australia for the rest of the century. The "basic wage" idea became the minimum wage. It also matters for this section because it set a standard that women and migrants could point to when they asked for fair treatment.

Figure 4 is a source card for the Harvester Judgment.

The Harvester Judgment	
Australia's first famous ruling on fair pay	
Date	8 November 1907
Judge	Justice H. B. Higgins
Court	Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration
The case	Machine-maker Hugh Victor McKay asked the court to rule that he paid "fair and reasonable" wages at his Harvester factory in Sunshine, Victoria.
The ruling	A fair and reasonable wage for an unskilled labourer was 7 shillings a day - 42 shillings for a six-day week. Shillings were the coins Australians used before dollars replaced them in 1966.
Why it mattered	It became the "basic wage" - later Australia's minimum wage. A fair wage had to cover a worker's ordinary needs: food, a home and the small comforts of life.

Source card for the Harvester Judgment of 8 November 1907, showing the judge, the court, the wage it set and why it mattered

Part 4 — Children

The 1900s changed childhood itself. Around 1900, many children left school early and took paid jobs in factories, shops and farms. School was not the same as it is for you. Victoria's *Education Act 1872* had already made school free and required by law for all children from 6 to 14 years old. During the 1900s, the school-leaving age rose in every state, and more laws were passed to protect children at work.

Children in institutions. An **institution** is a large home, such as an orphanage, where children lived and were cared for away from their families. Some children had no parents to care for them. Some families were too poor to keep their children. Others were sent away for other reasons. In 2004, a Senate inquiry — a formal investigation by the upper house of the federal parliament — reported that about **500,000 children** in Australia spent part of their childhood in children's homes, orphanages and other institutions during the 1900s. People who grew up in this kind of care are often called the **Forgotten Australians**.

The inquiry looked at four parts of daily life, the same parts you would notice in any child's day:

- **food and shelter** — the food children got and where they slept;
- **protection** — whether adults kept children safe;
- **education** — whether children went to school and learned;
- **contact with family** — whether children could see, or write to, their parents.

The inquiry found that some children were cared for well. But it also found that many children went hungry, missed out on schooling, and could not see their families, sometimes for years.

Child migrants. Some children in institutions had travelled from overseas as migrants. From 1913, groups of children were sent from Britain, Ireland and Malta to Australia under child migration schemes. In **January 1913**, the first party — 13 boys — landed at Fremantle in Western Australia and travelled to a farm school at Pinjarra, set up by Kingsley Fairbridge. The boys slept in tents while the school was being built. In time the school had cottages, a dining hall and farm buildings, and about 1,200 children passed through it before it closed in 1981. In all, about **7,000 child migrants** came to Australia under schemes like these, which ran into the 1970s.

The apology. In 2001 and 2004, Senate inquiries listened to people who had grown up in institutions and as child migrants. On **16 November 2009**, the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, made a formal apology in parliament, speaking for the whole nation, to the Forgotten Australians and to the people who had come to Australia as child migrants. An apology is a public statement that says sorry for past wrongs.

Figure 5 shows the four parts of daily life the inquiry investigated.

Four parts of daily life - the 2004 Senate inquiry

The inquiry looked at these four parts of life for children who grew up in children's homes, orphanages and other institutions.

Part of daily life	What the inquiry looked at
Food and shelter	The food children got, and where they slept.
Protection	Whether adults kept children safe.
Education	Whether children went to school and learned.
Contact with family	Whether children could see their parents, or write to them.

Source: Forgotten Australians, Senate Community Affairs References Committee, Parliament of Australia, 2004.

Table showing the four parts of daily life that the 2004 Senate inquiry investigated for children who grew up in institutions, with a short description of each

Part 5 — Migrants and citizenship

The new parliament of 1901 passed laws about who could come to Australia and about who counted as a citizen. Both sets of laws changed a lot during the 1900s.

The dictation test. One of the first laws passed by the new federal parliament was the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*. It used a test called the **dictation** test. Dictation means someone reads words out loud and you must write them down. Figure 6 shows the exact words of the test from the Act itself.

The dictation test - the law's own words

The Immigration Restriction Act 1901 listed who was a “prohibited immigrant” - that is, who was not allowed to stay. Section 3(a) said:

Any person who when asked to do so by an officer fails to write out at dictation and sign in the presence of the officer a passage of fifty words in length in an European language directed by the officer;

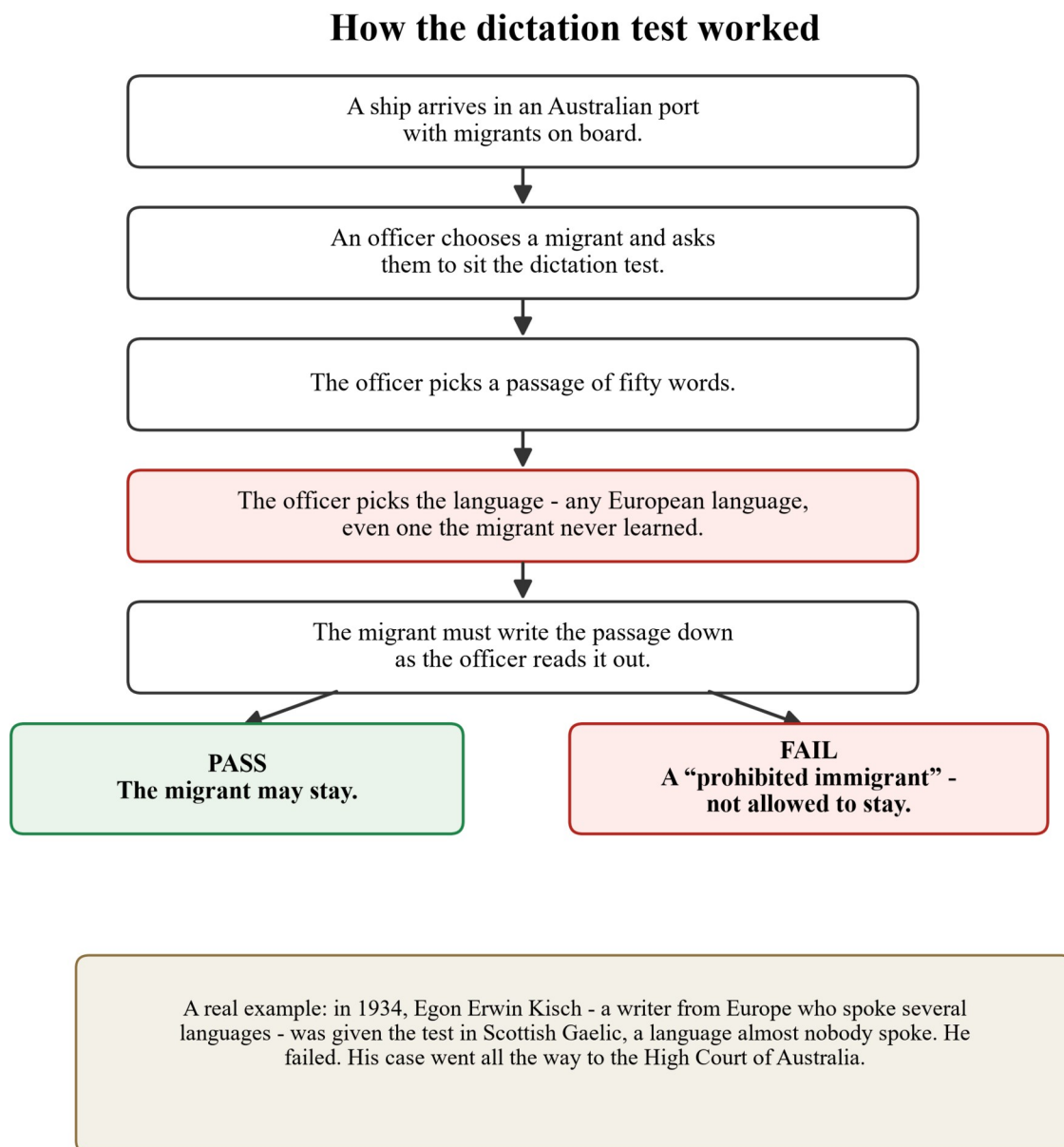
Source: Immigration Restriction Act 1901 (Act No. 17 of 1901), section 3(a) - National Archives of Australia. Quoted word-for-word, spelling as in the original.

Reproduced extract from section 3(a) of the Immigration Restriction Act 1901, showing the wording of the dictation test, with a caption giving its source

Notice the words “in an European language directed by the officer”. The officer chose the language. In 1903, Atlee Hunt, a senior official in charge of running the policy, wrote to officers that they should choose “some other language of which he [the migrant] is ignorant” — in other words, a language the person could not know. The test was designed so that people the government did not want would fail it, even when they spoke English well. People who failed were called “prohibited immigrants” — that is, they were not allowed to stay. This set of laws became known as the **White Australia policy**.

In 1934, a famous case showed how the test was used. Egon Erwin Kisch, a writer from Europe, arrived by ship in Melbourne. He spoke several European languages — but he was given the test in Scottish Gaelic, a language almost nobody spoke. He failed. His case went all the way to the High Court of Australia.

Figure 7 is a labelled diagram showing how the dictation test worked in practice.



Labelled flow diagram showing the steps of the dictation test from a ship arriving in port to the officer choosing a language the migrant could not write, and the outcome

Becoming Australian citizens. Before 1949, Australians did not hold Australian citizenship. The law said they were British subjects. On **26 January 1949**, the *Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948* came into effect, and Australian citizenship began. For the first time, people could become citizens of Australia itself.

The laws change. During the 1900s, the White Australia policy was slowly ended.

- **1958** — the *Migration Act 1958* ended the dictation test.
- **1966** — in March 1966, the Minister for Immigration, Hubert Opperman, announced that skilled people from any country could apply to settle in Australia.
- **1973** — the Whitlam government announced that race would no longer be used to decide who could migrate. Migrants from all backgrounds were welcomed, and waiting times for citizenship became the same for everyone.
- **1975** — the federal parliament passed the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*, making it unlawful to discriminate against people because of their race.

- **1978** — the Fraser government introduced Australia's first official national **multicultural** policy. Multicultural means made up of many different cultures. The new policy followed a big review of migrant services led by Frank Galbally. It said that people could come from any country and keep their culture while sharing in Australian life.
- **1984** — British subject status was removed from Australia's citizenship law. Being an Australian citizen now stood on its own.

Figure 8 shows these changes to migration and citizenship laws as a timeline.

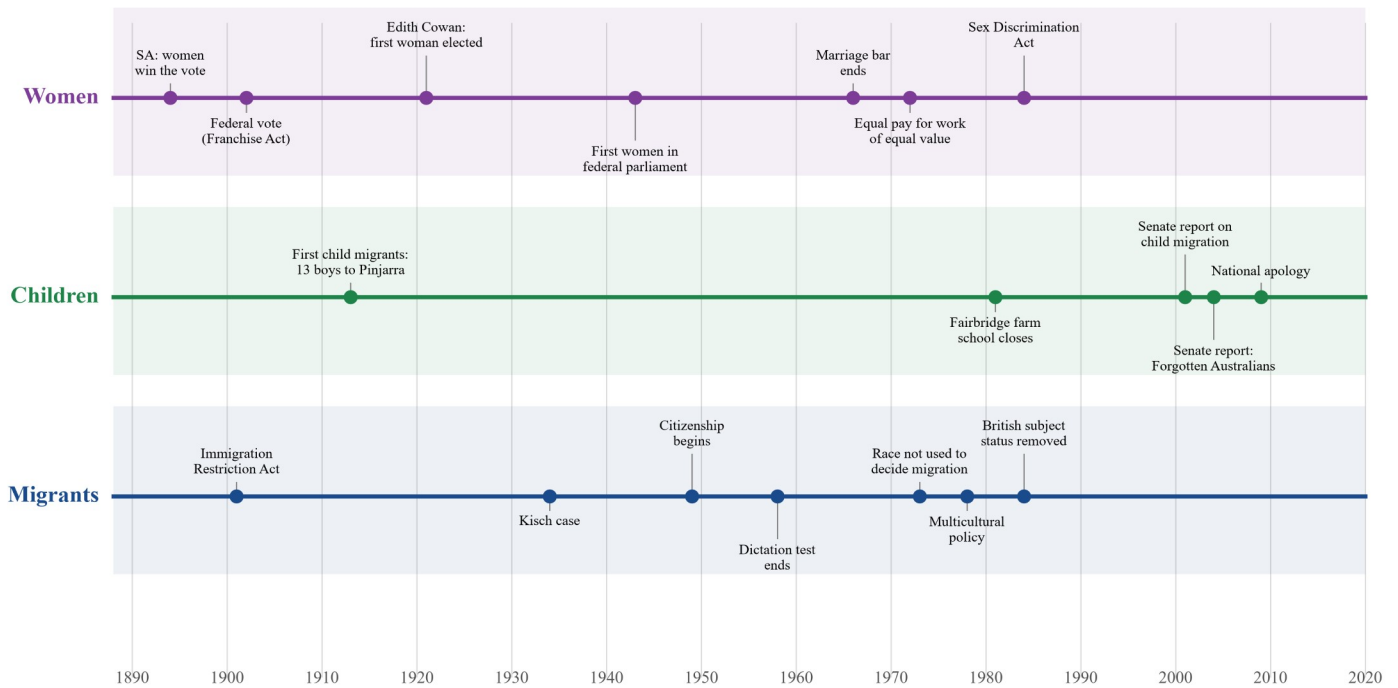


Timeline chart of eight changes to Australia's migration and citizenship laws from 1901 to 1984, each labelled with the year and a short description

Part 6 — One timeline: women, children and migrants

A timeline helps you see change over time at a glance. Figure 9 puts the milestones of this section onto one visual timeline with three lanes — one for women, one for children and one for migrants.

One timeline, three groups: rights changed over time



Large visual timeline with three coloured lanes for women, children and migrants, showing milestones from 1894 to 1984 such as women winning the federal vote in 1902, Australian citizenship beginning in 1949, the dictation test ending in 1958 and the national apology in 2009

Look at how the three lanes sit side by side. Some changes happened for two groups at nearly the same time. Others are far away from each other. Historians read timelines like this to spot patterns of change and to ask questions, such as: *why did so many rights change after the Second World War?*

Part 7 — Debate: which change mattered most?

Historians describe a development as **significant** when it changed many people's lives, when its effects lasted a long time, and when it changed what came after. Using that definition, here are four developments from this section that advanced democracy and citizenship.

1. **Women win the federal vote (1902)** — half the adult population could now vote and stand for parliament.
2. **The minimum wage (1907)** — the law set a floor under workers' pay, based on what a worker needed to live on.
3. **Anti-discrimination laws (1975 and 1984)** — the law made it unlawful to treat people unfairly because of their race or their sex.
4. **Official national multicultural policy (1978)** — Australia said officially that people of all cultures belong, and could keep their culture while sharing in Australian life.

Each has strong claims. Figure 10 sets out the strongest evidence a student could use to argue for each one.

Which change mattered most? Strongest claims for each development

1. Women win the federal vote (1902) • Half the adult population could now vote and stand for parliament. • The new federal parliament acted before four of the states did. • Women used the vote to win seats - from Edith Cowan in 1921.	2. The minimum wage (1907) • It set a floor under every worker's pay: 7 shillings a day. • The idea lasted all century and became today's minimum wage. • It gave women and migrants a standard to ask for fair treatment.
3. Anti-discrimination laws (1975 and 1984) • They made it unlawful to treat people unfairly because of race or sex. • They still protect people today, through the Human Rights Commission. • They built on earlier wins: the equal pay rulings of 1969 and 1972.	4. Official multicultural policy (1978) • It said officially that people of all cultures belong in Australia. • People could keep their culture while sharing in Australian life. • It followed the 1973 end of race-based selection of migrants.

Four debate cards, one for each development, each listing the strongest evidence a student could use to argue that it was the most significant change

How to run the debate: choose the development you believe was the most significant. Use at least two pieces of evidence from this section. Also show that you understand the strongest claim for one of the *other* developments — a good debater can state the other side's best point in a fair way before explaining why their own choice still wins.

Worked demonstrations

Worked demonstration 1 — reading the dataset (Figure 1)

Figure 1 is a dataset: the years when women won the vote in each colony and in the new federal parliament. Here is how a historian reads it, in three moves.

Move	What we do	What it shows
1. Read the data	List the years in order: 1894 (South Australia), 1899 (Western Australia), 1902 (federal), 1902 (New South Wales), 1903 (Tasmania), 1905 (Queensland), 1908 (Victoria).	The change happened in steps, colony by colony, over 14 years.
2. Look for the pattern	Compare the federal year (1902) with the state years.	The new federal parliament gave women the vote in 1902 — <i>before</i> four of the states gave it for their own elections.

Move	What we do	What it shows
3. Ask a question	Notice what surprises you and turn it into a question.	Why did the new nation act ahead of its own states? What were the women in the suffrage movement doing between 1894 and 1902?

Source of the data: the dates come from the colonial and Commonwealth laws themselves — the *Constitutional Amendment (Adult Suffrage) Act 1894*, the *Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902*, and the matching state laws — as recorded by the Parliamentary Education Office and the National Archives of Australia (retrieved 2026-08-24).

Worked demonstration 2 — reading a primary source (Figure 6)

Figure 6 is a **primary source** — a real document made at the time: the exact words of section 3(a) of the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*. Here is how to read it.

Question	Answer from the source
What does it say?	Anyone who fails to write 50 words dictated by an officer is a “prohibited immigrant”.
Who had the power?	The officer. The officer chose the passage <i>and</i> the language.
Why does the language matter?	Because the officer could pick a language the migrant had never learned — so even a well-educated person could be made to fail.
What does this tell us about the policy?	The law did not test real skill. It was built so the government could pick who it wanted to keep out.
What are the limits of this source?	One law clause shows how the test was written, not how often it was used, or how migrants felt about it. Historians need more sources to answer those questions.

Practice tasks

Guided tasks

Q1. Copy and complete the table. Use Part 1 to help you.

Year	What happened
1894	South Australia gave women _____ and the right to stand for parliament.
_____	The <i>Commonwealth Franchise Act</i> let women vote in federal elections.
1921	_____ became the first woman elected to any Australian parliament.
1943	Enid Lyons became the first woman elected to the _____.

Q2. Finish each sentence with your own words.

- The suffrage movement worked to ...
- Vida Goldstein is remembered because ...

Q3. Look at Figure 1. Name the four states where women won the vote for state elections *after* the federal parliament gave women the vote in 1902.

Q4. What was the marriage bar? Write one sentence about the rule and one sentence about when it ended.

Q5. Match each year to its ruling. Write 1969 or 1972 next to each.

- a. Women must get equal pay for work of equal value. _____
- b. Women doing the same work as men must get the same pay. _____

Q6. Use Part 3 and Figure 4. Answer in full sentences:

- a. Who made the Harvester Judgment, and in what year?
- b. What wage did it set for an unskilled labourer — per day and per week?

Q7. Read the source extract in Figure 6 again. Underline or list two phrases that show the officer held the power in the test.

Q8. List the four parts of daily life that the 2004 Senate inquiry investigated for children who grew up in institutions.

Tasks on your own

Q9. Draw a timeline from 1901 to 2009. Place and label these six events: the Immigration Restriction Act; Australian citizenship beginning; the dictation test ending; the *Sex Discrimination Act*; the Senate report on Forgotten Australians; the national apology.

Q10. Imagine a migrant arriving by ship in 1920 who spoke English well. Using evidence from Part 5, give two reasons why this person might have described the dictation test as unfair.

Q11. Explain one way children's lives changed during the 1900s. Give at least one dated piece of evidence from Part 4.

Writing task (using evidence)

Q12. "Which development did the most to advance democracy and citizenship in Australia: women winning the federal vote in 1902, the minimum wage in 1907, the anti-discrimination laws of 1975 and 1984, or the official multicultural policy of 1978?" Write one paragraph of 6–10 sentences. You must:

- state your choice clearly in the first sentence;
 - give at least two pieces of evidence from this section;
 - state the strongest claim for one of the other developments, and explain why your choice still matters more.
-

Answers

Q1. 1894: *the right to vote*. 1902: the Commonwealth Franchise Act. 1921: *Edith Cowan*. 1943: *House of Representatives*.

Q2. Sample answers. a. The suffrage movement worked to win votes for women. b. Vida Goldstein is remembered because in 1903 she became the first woman to stand for Australia's federal parliament, and she stood five times between 1903 and 1917.

Q3. New South Wales (1902), Tasmania (1903), Queensland (1905) and Victoria (1908) — their state elections came after the federal vote of 1902. (South Australia and Western Australia were already ahead of the federal date.)

Q4. The marriage bar was a rule that forced women to leave permanent jobs in the Commonwealth public service when they married. It ended on 18 November 1966.

Q5. a. 1972. b. 1969.

Q6. a. Justice H. B. Higgins of the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration made the Harvester Judgment on 8 November 1907. b. It set a wage of 7 shillings a day, or 42 shillings for a six-day week.

Q7. Any two of: “when asked to do so by an officer”; “a passage of fifty words ... directed by the officer” (the officer chose both the passage and the language).

Q8. Food and shelter; protection; education; contact with family.

Q9. Check that students place: Immigration Restriction Act 1901; Australian citizenship begins 26 January 1949; dictation test ends 1958; *Sex Discrimination Act* 1984; Senate report on Forgotten Australians 2004; national apology 16 November 2009. Order matters more than exact spacing.

Q10. Sample answer. The migrant might say: (1) the officer could choose any European language — including one the migrant had never learned — so speaking English well did not make sure they would pass; (2) Atlee Hunt's 1903 instruction told officers to pick a language the migrant was “ignorant” of, which shows the test was meant to be failed, not passed.

Q11. Sample answer. One way children's lives changed is that more of them stayed at school instead of working. Victoria's *Education Act 1872* made school free and required by law for children from 6 to 14 years old, and during the 1900s the school-leaving age rose in every state, so by the end of the century almost all children spent their day learning, not working.

Q12. Marking guide. Award marks for: a clear claim (1 mark); two accurate pieces of dated evidence from the section (2 marks); a fair statement of the strongest claim for another development, followed by a reason the student's choice still matters more (2 marks). Reasoning is marked, not the choice itself: any of the four developments can earn full marks if the evidence is used well.

Sources

All sources below are real artifacts that you can check. Government documents are held in the National Archives of Australia (NAA) and on the federal register of laws; parliamentary reports and the apology are held by the Parliament of Australia. Retrieved 2026-08-24 unless noted.

1. *Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902*, Act No. 8 of 1902 — women's federal vote and right to stand. NAA series A6587, item 1902/8.
2. *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*, Act No. 17 of 1901, s 3(a) — dictation test wording quoted word-for-word in Figure 6. NAA series A1559.
3. Atlee Hunt, Secretary, Department of External Affairs — 1903 guidance to officers on how to give the dictation test, as quoted in NAA records of the White Australia policy.
4. *Public Service Act 1902* — the law behind the marriage bar; the rule ended 18 November 1966 (the Boyer Report of 1958 had said it should go).

5. Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration, *Ex parte H.V. McKay* (the Harvester Judgment), 8 November 1907 — basic wage of 7 shillings per day / 42 shillings per week.
6. Equal pay rulings of the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission: 1969 (equal pay for equal work) and 1972 (equal pay for work of equal value).
7. *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*; *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*, Act No. 4 of 1984.
8. *Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948*, in force 26 January 1949; renamed the *Australian Citizenship Act* in 1973; British subject status removed in 1984.
9. *Migration Act 1958* — dictation test ended; March 1966 announcement by the Minister for Immigration, Hubert Opperman; the Whitlam government's 1973 policy that treated migrants from all countries the same way.
10. Galbally Report — *Report of the Review of Post-Arrival Migrant Services and Programs* (1978), chair Frank Galbally; the review that led to the first official national multicultural policy (1978, Fraser government).
11. Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Forgotten Australians: A report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children*, Parliament of Australia, 2004 — the figure of about 500,000 children and the four aspects of daily life.
12. Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record — Report on Child Migration*, Parliament of Australia, 2001 — child migration schemes; about 7,000 child migrants.
13. House of Representatives, *Hansard*, 16 November 2009 — National Apology to the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants, made by the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd.
14. Fairbridge Farm School, Pinjarra (Western Australia) — first party of 13 boys arrived January 1913; about 1,195 children passed through the school before it closed in 1981 (Senate inquiry records and Fairbridge heritage records).
15. *Constitutional Amendment (Adult Suffrage) Act 1894* (South Australia), passed 18 December 1894; first votes cast by South Australian women, 1896.
16. Records of the people in this section: Mary Lee and Catherine Helen Spence (South Australian suffrage movement); Vida Goldstein (stood for federal parliament 1903, 1910, 1913, 1914, 1917); Edith Cowan (West Perth, 1921); Enid Lyons and Dorothy Tangney (elected 21 August 1943; Lyons to Cabinet 19 December 1949) — as recorded by the National Archives of Australia and the Australian Dictionary of Biography.

Coming to Australia in the 20th century: why people moved from Europe and Asia, and what they changed

For the teacher — VC2 codes: VC2HH6K09 (Historical Knowledge and Understanding · Australia (1900–2000))

Drawn on (illustrations of learning, not extra syllabus — TOC D10):

VC2HH6K09.E01, .E02, .E03, .E04, .E05, .E06

Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia is a priority content area for this section. This section is the 20th-century continuation of Section 1D: the same push–pull machinery, with new programs — post-war migration from Europe, migration from South-East Asia driven by conflict, and the Assisted Passage Migration Scheme.

For the teacher — teaching sequence

Place in the series. Single-year book, Levels 5&6 band; Level 5 is the entry year and the whole band is taught. This section is 2C of Chapter 2 and follows 1D (19th-century migration). The achievement standard is stated at the end of Level 6 and is not reproduced here.

Suggested sequence (10 lessons of about 50–60 minutes).

1. **Recall the machinery.** Revisit push and pull factors from 1D using the push–pull model figure. Sort the 2C word cards (war, jobs, family, cheap fares, fear, adventure) into push and pull. (VC2HH6K09.E02)
2. **Who could come in 1901?** Introduce the Immigration Restriction Act 1901 and the dictation test through Worked demonstration 1. Define the White Australia policy plainly and honestly: a set of laws and practices designed to keep non-British migrants, especially people from Asia, out of Australia. Q1. (VC2HH6K09.E01, .E02)
3. **Why change after 1945?** Post-war Europe, displaced people, “populate or perish”. Introduce Arthur Calwell as first Minister for Immigration. Read the migration programs table together. Q2. (VC2HH6K09.E01, .E02)
4. **Arriving: Bonegilla.** Camp life, two-year work agreements, learning English, food, kindness and unkindness. Family-history and oral-history prompts are natural here — invite students to think of someone they could ask. Q3. (VC2HH6K09.E02, .E06)
5. **Working together: the Snowy Mountains Scheme.** Use the schematic figure; note the workforce came from 32 countries. Briefly link pearling in Broome (Japanese and Malay divers) and cameleers to show Asian labour before the policy changes. Q4. (VC2HH6K09.E03)
6. **Reading real numbers.** Worked demonstration 2 with the ABS overseas-born series. Students complete Q5. Discuss what changed and what stayed the same (England stays top; Asia rises). (VC2HH6K09.E04)
7. **Fairer rules.** Walk the timeline figure: 1958 dictation test ends; 1966 rules relaxed; 1973 race no longer counts in selection; 1975 Racial Discrimination Act. Hungarian refugees (1956) and Vietnamese refugees (from 1976) as case studies of conflict-driven migration. Q6. (VC2HH6K09.E02)
8. **Impacts.** Food, festivals, shops, workplaces, language. Students complete Q7 using the birthplaces chart. (VC2HH6K09.E03, .E04)
9. **Building narratives.** Work through the model narrative figure (it is clearly labelled as written for this book, not a historical source). Students label its parts (Q8), then plan their own. (VC2HH6K09.E05)
10. **Writing task.** Evidence-based migration narrative or oral-history project. Students with family migration stories may interview a family member with caregiver permission; all students can also write from the sources in this section. (VC2HH6K09.E05, .E06)

Difficult histories — age-appropriate handling. The White Australia policy is taught honestly and plainly: it was unfair, it deliberately excluded people because of race, and Australia later changed these laws. Do not repeat Arthur Calwell's racist statements; they are not age-appropriate and are not needed to teach the policy. Refugee experiences (Hungarian 1956, Vietnamese from 1976) should be taught with care: focus on safety, arrival and rebuilding, not graphic detail. No Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content is included in this section (excluded per series policy); do not add it in class materials derived from this section.

Vocabulary. Ceiling for authored student text is Year 5 (gate rank 5). Subject terms defined at first use in the student text: migrant, migration, push factor, pull factor, refugee, policy, dictation test, primary source, pearling/pearl, oral history. Proper nouns and numerals are exempt: Bonegilla, Snowy, Broome, Calwell, Cabramurra, Eucumbene, Liverpool, Geelong, Darwin, Hungary, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, and the real names Immigration Restriction Act, Migration Act, Racial Discrimination Act, Department of Immigration, Australian Bureau of Statistics. The teacher-facing codes block is marked with gate-exclude comments. The verbatim quotation of the Immigration Restriction Act 1901, section 3(a) (a real, cited historical source reproduced for source-analysis practice) is checked by the gate and passes at or below Year 5.

Sources reproduced in this section (all real; retrieved 24 August 2026). Immigration Restriction Act 1901 (Cth), s 3(a) (dictation test wording); Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Migration, Australia* (2019–20), released 23 April 2021 (overseas-born share; top birthplaces, 2020); Migration Act 1958 (Cth); Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth). Holding/publication details appear with each use. All figures are original, generated for this book by the scripts in `src/gen_2c_*.py`.

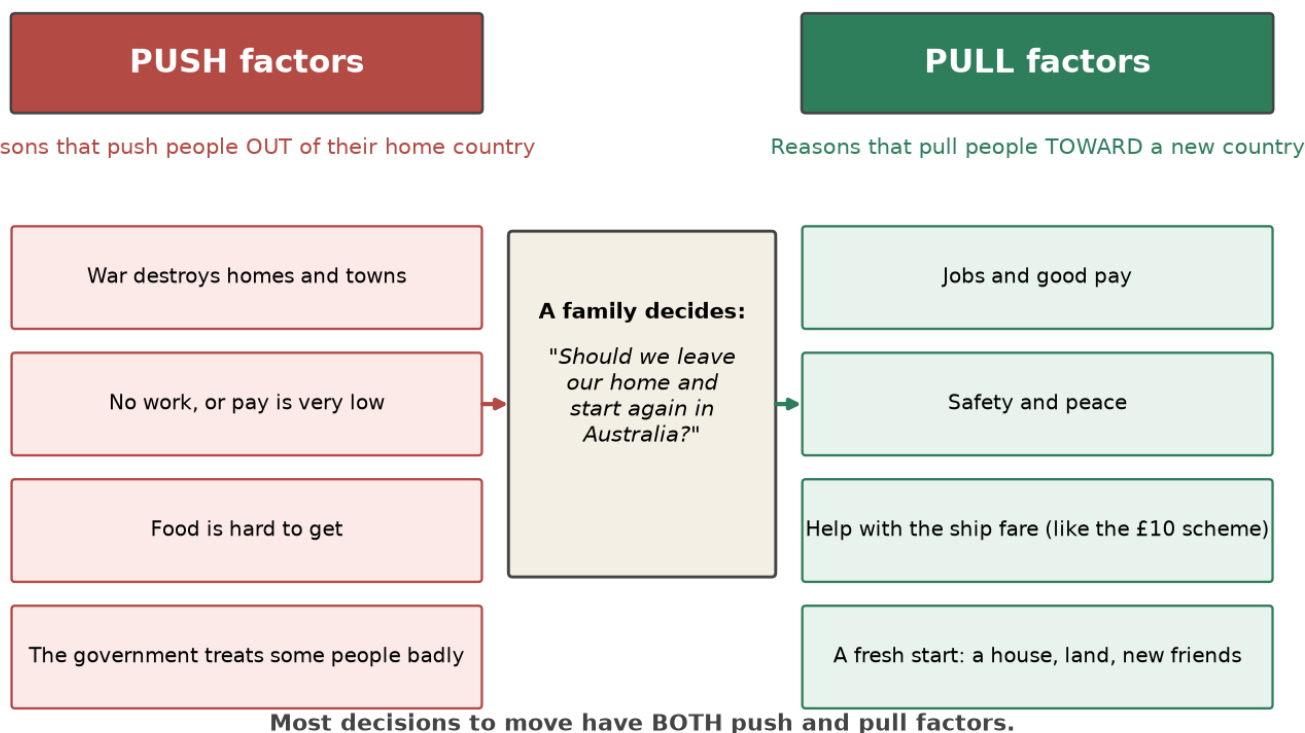
Key ideas

1. Migration: push and pull

Migration means people moving from one place to another to live. A **migrant** is a person who makes that move. In Section 1D you learned the big idea that still works for the 1900s:

- **Push factors** are the bad things that push people away from home — war, poverty, fear, or having no home.
- **Pull factors** are the good things that pull people to a new place — jobs, safety, family, or cheap fares.

Every migrant's story mixes pushes and pulls. As you read this section, keep asking: *What pushed them? What pulled them?*



A two-column model. The left column lists push factors such as war, poverty and fear pushing people away from home. The right column lists pull factors such as jobs, safety and family pulling people to a new place. A box in the middle shows a person deciding whether to move.

2. A new nation chooses who can come (1901)

In 1901, Australia's separate colonies joined to become one nation. In that same year, the new federal parliament passed the **Immigration Restriction Act**. This law did not say *no Asian migrants*. Instead it used a trick: the **dictation test**. A migration officer could make any new arrival write out 50 words in any European language the officer chose. If the officer wanted to keep someone out, they picked a language that person did not know. Almost everyone who sat the test in an Asian language group failed on purpose.

These laws, together with other rules and habits of the time, are called the **White Australia policy**. A **policy** is a plan a government follows. This one was designed to keep Australia British. It worked: in 1901, about 98 people in every 100 in Australia had family from Britain, and very few people from Asia were allowed to stay.

The White Australia policy was unfair. It judged people by race, not by who they were. Australians took 74 years to completely end it — and this section shows how they did it.

3. After World War II: Australia needs people (1945–1960s)

World War II ended in 1945. Europe was wrecked: cities bombed, farms ruined, millions of people with no home. At the same time, Australia felt unsafe. It was a huge country with few people, and the war had shown how hard it was to defend. Leaders said Australia must *populate or perish* — bring in people, or risk being unable to defend itself.

In 1945, Australia set up a Department of Immigration. Its first leader was **Arthur Calwell**. He set migration programs running:

Program	Who came	When
Assisted Passage Migration Scheme (the £10 scheme)	Migrants from Britain and Ireland; adults paid only £10 for the ship fare, children sailed free	Started 1945; more than 1 million people by the early 1970s
Displaced persons program	People left homeless by World War II, collected from camps in Europe	From 1947; first arrivals late 1947
Work agreements with European countries	Workers from Italy, the Netherlands, Greece, Poland, Yugoslavia and others, many for big projects	Late 1940s to 1960s
Refugee program	People forced to flee danger, e.g. Hungarians after the 1956 uprising; Vietnamese after the Vietnam War	Hungarians from 1956; Vietnamese from 1976
Family groups	People joining family already settled in Australia	Across the whole century

A program is a plan run by the government to decide who may come and how.

A table of 20th-century migration programs to Australia. Rows cover the Assisted Passage Migration Scheme from Britain and Ireland, a program for people left with no homes after the war from 1947, work agreements with Italy, the Netherlands, Greece, Poland and Yugoslavia, the refugee program including people from Hungary from 1956 and people from Vietnam from 1976, and family reunion.

One row of that table is the refugee program. A **refugee** is a person who must leave their country to be safe. Australia's refugee program gave such people a new home.

The most famous program was the **Assisted Passage Migration Scheme**, started in 1945. Adults from Britain and Ireland paid just £10 for the fare — children came free. Migrants who came this way were nicknamed “Ten Pound Poms”. By the early 1970s, more than one million people had arrived under this scheme. Australia also signed

agreements with Italy, the Netherlands, Greece, Poland and Yugoslavia to bring in workers, and from 1947 it took in people left without homes by the war.

Pull factors here were strong: jobs, cheap fares, safety. **Push factors** pushed too: ruined homes, hunger, and fear of another war.

4. Arriving: the camp at Bonegilla

Many new migrants from Europe had nowhere to live when they arrived. From 1947, the government housed them in camps. The biggest was **Bonegilla**, in north-east Victoria. Between 1947 and 1971, about 309,000 migrants stayed there.

Life at Bonegilla was safe but strange. Families lived in small huts and had their meals together in big dining halls. The food tasted new and odd to many. Children went to school and learned English fast; parents often learned more slowly. In return for their keep, most migrants agreed to work for the government for two years, taking whatever job they were sent to — building railways, working in factories, or cutting sugar cane.

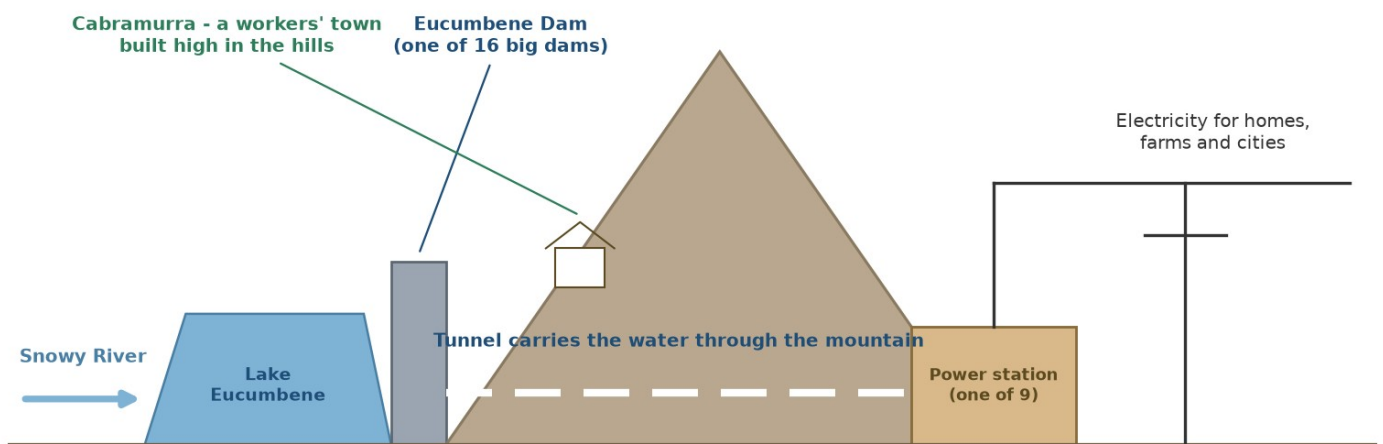
Many migrants found Australians friendly. Some did not: they were called unkind names or told to “go home”. Most stayed, worked hard, and slowly built new lives. Today, part of Bonegilla is a museum where you can see the huts.

5. Working together: the Snowy Mountains Scheme

The biggest job the new migrants did was the **Snowy Mountains Scheme**, started on 17 October 1949 and finished in 1974. The plan: dam the Snowy River, send the water through tunnels in the mountains, and use it to make electricity and irrigate farms.

The Snowy Mountains Scheme, 1949-1974

A model drawing (not to scale) showing how dams, tunnels and power stations work together



The real scheme: 16 big dams, 9 power stations and 225 km of tunnels, pipes and channels.

More than 100,000 people worked on it. They came from 32 countries - about 7 in every 10 workers were born overseas.

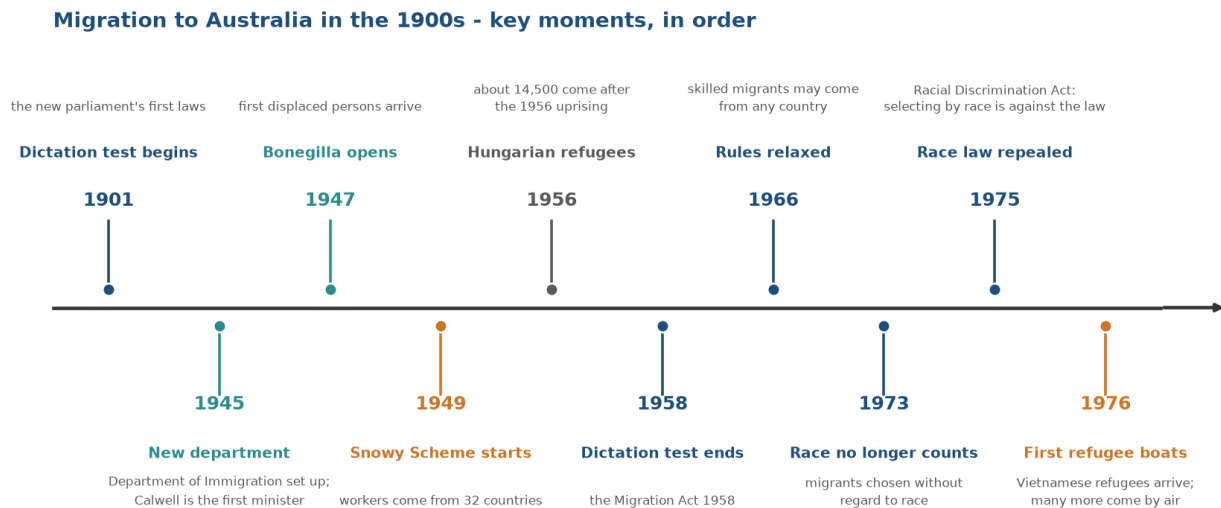
A labelled model drawing of the Snowy Mountains Scheme. Snowy River water is stored behind Eucumbene Dam, flows through a tunnel in the mountain to a power station, and becomes electricity for homes, farms and cities. It notes 16 big dams, 9 power stations, 225 kilometres of tunnels, and workers from 32 countries.

Building it took more than 100,000 workers — and about 7 in every 10 were born overseas. They came from 32 countries. In the workers’ town of **Cabramurra**, high in the hills, you could hear Italian, Greek, Polish, German and English all in one street. Migrants built the dams, moved goods by truck, cooked the food, and ran the shops. The Snowy became a symbol of people from many countries working side by side.

Asian migrants had already helped build Australia too. From the 1880s, **Broome** in Western Australia was the world's great **pearling** town. Pearling means diving to the sea floor to collect shells that hold **pearls** — small, shiny jewels that grow inside some shells. Japanese divers were the heart of this work, with Malay and Filipino workers beside them. By about 1910, around 3,500 of Broome's 5,000 people worked in or for the pearling trade. Cameleers from Afghanistan and what is now Pakistan had hauled goods across the dry inland before trucks took over. These stories show that even while the White Australia policy stood, Asian workers had shaped the country.

6. Fairer rules: the policy comes down (1956–1976)

Change came step by step.



A timeline of key moments in 20th-century Australian migration: 1901 dictation test begins; 1945 new migration department; 1947 Bonegilla opens; 1949 Snowy Scheme starts; 1956 refugees from Hungary arrive; 1958 dictation test ends; 1966 rules relaxed; 1973 race no longer counts; 1975 selecting people by race becomes against the law; 1976 first boats of refugees from Vietnam arrive.

- **1956** — Fighting broke out in Hungary, and about 14,500 refugees from Hungary came to Australia.
- **1958** — The Migration Act 1958 scrapped the dictation test at last.
- **1966** — The rules relaxed: skilled people could now come from any country, whatever their race.
- **1973** — Race stopped counting altogether when choosing migrants.
- **1975** — The Racial Discrimination Act made selecting people by race against the law. The White Australia policy was over.
- **1976** — A boat carrying Vietnamese refugees reached Darwin. It was the first of its kind. About 2,000 Vietnamese refugees came by boat over the next six years — but many more came by plane through the refugee program, and Australia took in more than 50,000 people from South-East Asia in this period.

Why did Vietnamese refugees come? The Vietnam War ended in 1975, and many people in South Vietnam feared for their safety. **Push factor:** war and fear. **Pull factor:** safety, family already here, and a refugee program that now accepted people from Asia.

7. How migration changed Australia

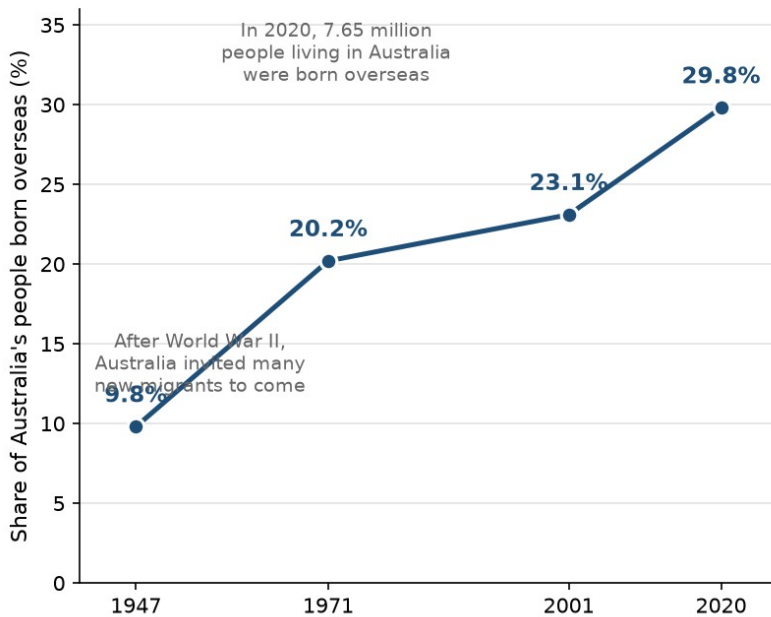
Migrants changed almost everything about Australian life:

- **Food.** Pizza from Italy, souvlaki from Greece, pho from Vietnam, dumplings from China — once strange, now everyday.
- **Festivals and faith.** Greek and Italian festivals, Vietnamese Buddhist temples, mosques, and Chinese New Year parades became part of the calendar.
- **Work and business.** Migrants built roads, dams and railways, then opened shops, farms and factories.

- **Sport and music.** New players, new supporters, new sounds.
- **People.** Migration made Australia far bigger and far more mixed in where its people were born.

Look at the two charts below. They use real numbers from the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

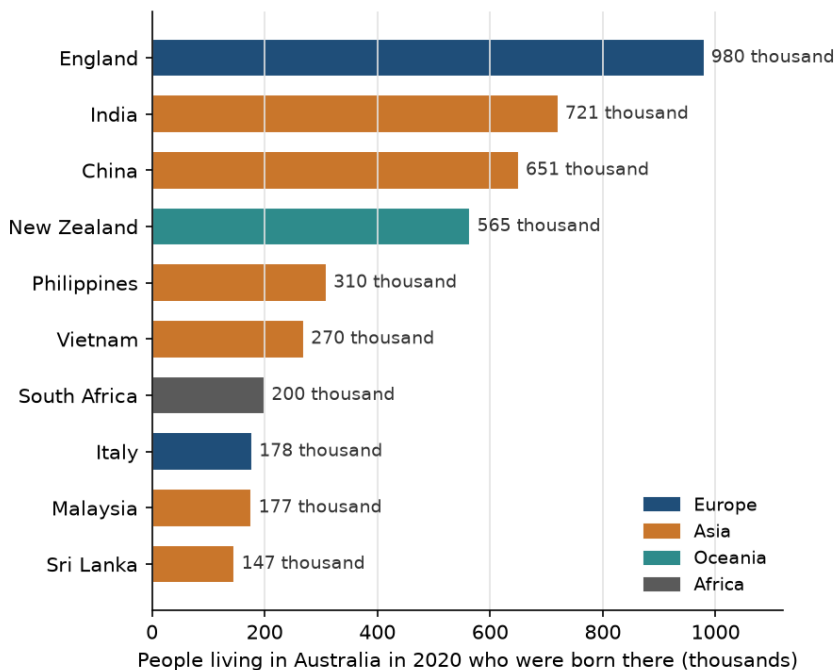
How many of Australia's people were born overseas?



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Migration, Australia (2019-20), released 23 April 2021. Retrieved 24 August 2026.

A line chart showing the share of Australia's people born overseas: 9.8 per cent in 1947, 20.2 per cent in 1971, 23.1 per cent in 2001, and 29.8 per cent in 2020. Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Where were people living in Australia born? (2020)



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Migration, Australia (2019-20), released 23 April 2021. Retrieved 24 August 2026.

A horizontal bar chart of the top ten birthplaces of people living in Australia in 2020: England 980 thousand, India 721 thousand, China 651 thousand, New Zealand 565 thousand, the Philippines 310 thousand, Vietnam 270 thousand, South Africa 200 thousand, Italy 178 thousand, Malaysia 177 thousand, and Sri Lanka 147 thousand. Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics.

In 1947, almost all overseas-born people in Australia came from Britain or Europe. By 2020, six of the top ten birthplaces were in Asia or the Pacific. That is the biggest change in this story: the same push–pull machinery you met in 1D, still running in the 1900s — but with the gate open to everyone at last.

Worked demonstrations

Worked demonstration 1 — Reading a real law from 1901 (a primary source)

A **primary source** is something made by people at the time being studied. This is real wording from a real law — the **Immigration Restriction Act 1901**, section 3(a). It is written in grown-up law language, so read it slowly.

“Any person who when asked to do so by an officer fails to write out at dictation and sign in the presence of the officer a passage of fifty words in length in a European language directed by the officer”

— Immigration Restriction Act 1901, section 3(a). Real source, reproduced for study. Retrieved 24 August 2026.

How a historian reads it:

Question	Thinking
What kind of source is this?	A law passed by Australia’s new federal parliament in 1901 — a primary source.
What does it say, in my words?	An officer can make a new arrival write 50 words in any European language the officer picks.
Where is the trick?	The officer chooses the language. To keep someone out, pick one they do not know.
Who does this hurt most?	People the government wanted to exclude — especially migrants from Asia.
What does this law hide?	It never says <i>race</i> . The unfairness is hidden inside the trick.

Notice the skill: you did not need to know every word. You asked *who made it, what it says, what the trick is, and who it hurts*.

Worked demonstration 2 — Reading real population data

Numbers are sources too. These are real figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the government body that counts Australia’s people.

Year	Share of Australia’s people born overseas
1947	9.8%
1971	20.2%
2001	23.1%
2020	29.8% (7.65 million people)

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Migration, Australia* (2019–20), released 23 April 2021. Retrieved 24 August 2026.

How to read it, step by step:

1. **What is being counted?** The share of people living in Australia who were born overseas.
2. **What changed?** The share tripled between 1947 and 1971 — from about 1 in 10 to 1 in 5.
3. **Why then?** After 1945, Australia ran big programs to bring in migrants (Section 3 above). Programs cause numbers.
4. **What stayed the same?** Growth slowed after 1971, but the share never dropped — migration stayed part of Australian life.

5. **Careful now:** the chart shows *where people were born*, not where their grandparents were born. Many more Australians than 29.8% have family born overseas.

Practice questions

Practice with help

Q1. The dictation test trick. Imagine it is 1902. Use the words in the box to finish each sentence.

officer · fail · 50 words · European language

- The Immigration Restriction Act said a migrant had to write out in a
- The chose which language to use.
- If the officer wanted to keep a migrant out, they chose a language the migrant did not know, so the migrant would
- Why was this unfair? Finish the sentence: *It was unfair because ...*

Q2. Match the program. Use the migration programs figure to complete the table.

Migrant	Which program brought them?	One thing that was true about it
A British carpenter, 1951		
A Polish factory worker, 1950		
A family from Hungary, 1957		
An Italian farmer, 1952		

Q3. Arriving at Bonegilla. Finish each sentence stem using the Key ideas (Section 4).

- Bonegilla was a migrant camp in north-east (name the state).
- Between 1947 and 1971, about migrants stayed there.
- Families lived in and had their meals in
- In return for their keep, most migrants agreed to
- One hard thing about camp life was One good thing was

Q4. The Snowy Mountains Scheme. Using the Snowy figure and Section 5:

- Put these in the right order (1–4): water goes through a tunnel · water is stored behind a dam · electricity travels along power lines · water spins machines in a power station.
- How many workers built the Snowy?
- About what share of the workers were born overseas?
- Name one other job, besides the Snowy, where Asian workers helped build Australia:

Q5. Reading the overseas-born chart. Use the line chart.

- What share of Australia's people were born overseas in 1947?
- In which year did the share first pass 20%?
- Between which two years did the share grow the fastest?
- Finish: *The share grew fastest then because ...*

Q6. Sort the causes. Sort these into **Push**, **Pull**, or **Both**: *war in South Vietnam · jobs in Australian factories · the £10 fare · fear of unsafe government · family already in Australia · ruined cities in Europe after 1945.*

Push	Pull
.....	
.....	
.....	

Q7. Birthplaces, 1947 vs 2020. Using the birthplaces bar chart:

- (a) Which country was the top birthplace in 2020?
- (b) How many of the top ten birthplaces in 2020 were in Asia or the Pacific?
- (c) Name them:
- (d) Finish: *Compared with 1947, by 2020 far more of Australia’s overseas-born people came from ...*

Q8. Label the model narrative. The model narrative figure is a made-up story written for this book, but each part does a real historian’s job. Match each part to its job by writing the right letter.

Part of the story	Job
“In 1957, Mary Walker was ten years old.”	A. the journey and what it felt like
“Her father read that Australia needed workers.”	B. the start: who, when, where
“The ship took five weeks.”	C. a change that lasted
“Their first home was a hut at Bonegilla.”	D. why they left (push and pull)
“Mary’s grandchildren still cook her English roast.”	E. arrival and the first experience

Practice on your own

- Q9.** Explain why so many Europeans migrated to Australia after World War II. Name at least two push factors, two pull factors, and one real program that brought them. (4–6 sentences.)
- Q10.** Choose ONE group: refugees from Hungary (1956), or refugees from Vietnam (1976). Explain (a) what pushed them from home, (b) how they got to Australia, and (c) one way they changed Australia. Use at least two facts from this section.
- Q11.** “Migration changed Australian society in the 20th century.” Do you agree? Write a short answer (5–7 sentences) using evidence from at least TWO parts of this section — for example the Snowy, Bonegilla, food and festivals, or the population charts.

Writing task — build a migration narrative

Task. Write one page telling the migration story of ONE person or family who came to Australia between 1900 and 2000. Choose **Option A** or **Option B**.

- Option A — write from sources.** Use the sources in this section (the programs table, the timeline, the charts, the Bonegilla and Snowy facts). You may write about a real person you can find evidence for, or a made-up person whose story only uses real facts. Label your story: *This story is written for school and is not a historical source.*
- Option B — oral history** (an oral history is a person’s story of the past, recorded by asking them about it). With a caregiver’s permission, ask a family member or someone your family knows well about a migration story in their family, and record their answers. Plan your questions using the planner below, then write down what you learn. If their story is private, you may change the names.

Plan an oral history interview

1. Ask, then listen carefully

- Choose one person whose story you can ask about.
- Ask them first, and explain what you will do with the story.
- They can say no — and that is fine.

2. Get ready

- Write 5 open questions you cannot answer with just 'yes' or 'no'.
- Test your recorder, and pick a quiet place to talk.

3. Good questions to try

- Where were you (or your family) born?
- Why did you (or they) decide to move?
- What was the journey like? What did you bring with you?
- What surprised you when you arrived? What do you miss?

4. While you interview

- Listen more than you talk.
- Ask follow-up questions: 'And then what happened?'
- Write down words you want to check later.

5. Afterwards

- Say thank you — and show them your story when it is written.
- Use your notes to tell the journey and the arrival in order.
- Add one thing you found out that surprised you.

A five-step planner for recording a person's story by asking them questions: ask permission and listen; get ready with five open questions; examples of good questions; how to listen and follow up while you talk; and saying thank you and writing the story afterwards.

Use the model below to see how each part of the story earns its keep — every part rests on a real fact, a feeling, or a detail.

A model migration narrative — written for this book, NOT a real historical source

Notice how each part of the story is backed by a real fact, a feeling, or a detail.

In 1957, Mary Walker was ten years old. Her family lived in Liverpool, England.	→ The start: who, when and where.
Her father had a job, but the pay was small. He read that Australia needed workers.	→ Why they left: a push factor, then a pull factor.
Under the £10 scheme, her parents paid ten pounds each and Mary sailed free.	→ The program that brought them — real evidence.
The ship took five weeks. Mary watched the sea from the deck every day.	→ The journey — what it felt like.
Their first home was a hut at Bonegilla. The food tasted strange, but other families shared their stories.	→ Arrival — the first experience.
Mary's father worked for the government for two years, as agreed. Then the family moved to Geelong, where Mary became a nurse.	→ Building a new life — the impact.
Today, Mary's grandchildren still cook her English roast on Sundays — and call it their Australian tradition.	→ A change that lasted — linking past to present.

A model migration narrative written for this book and labelled as not a real historical source. It tells the story of Mary Walker from Liverpool in 1957, with side notes showing the job each part does: the start, why they left, the program, the journey, arrival, building a new life, and a change that lasted.

Checklist — your narrative must include:

- ☐ who migrated, from where, and when
- ☐ at least one push factor and one pull factor
- ☐ the journey — how they travelled, and one detail of what it was like
- ☐ their arrival — where they lived first, and one experience
- ☐ one impact: something they gave Australia, or that changed for them
- ☐ at least two real facts from this section, marked in the margin
- ☐ a source line or label saying where your facts came from

Answers

Q1. (a) 50 words; European language. (b) officer. (c) fail. (d) Accept any answer along these lines: the officer chose the language, so the test could be rigged — a migrant could know English perfectly and still be made to fail, because the law let the officer pick any European language.

Q2. British carpenter → Assisted Passage Migration Scheme (fare £10). Polish factory worker → the program for people left with no homes after the war, or the work agreement (accept either for Poland in 1950). Family from Hungary → refugee program. Italian farmer → work agreement with Italy. One-true-thing column: accept matching facts from the programs figure (e.g. £10 fare; from 1947; after the 1956 fighting in Hungary; late 1940s–1960s).

Q3. (a) Victoria. (b) 309,000. (c) huts; big dining halls. (d) work for the government for two years. (e) Hard: accept strange food, small huts, learning English, missing home, unkind names. Good: accept safety, school, new friends, sharing stories.

Q4. (a) $2 \cdot 1 \cdot 4 \cdot 3$ (stored behind a dam → through a tunnel → spins machines → power lines). (b) More than 100,000. (c) About 7 in 10. (d) Accept pearling in Broome (Japanese and Malay divers) or the cameleers.

Q5. (a) 9.8%. (b) 1971. (c) 1947 to 1971. (d) Accept: after 1945 the government ran big programs (the £10 scheme, the work agreements, and the program for people with no homes), so hundreds of thousands of Europeans arrived.

Q6. Push: war in South Vietnam; fear of unsafe government; ruined cities in Europe after 1945. Pull: jobs in Australian factories; the £10 fare; family already in Australia. (If a student argues the £10 fare is also push-side relief from poverty, accept with reasoning.)

Q7. (a) England. (b) Six. (c) India, China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Sri Lanka (New Zealand is in the Pacific — accept students who count it as a seventh with that reasoning). (d) Accept: ... Asia (and the Pacific) rather than almost only Britain and Europe.

Q8. B, D, A, E, C.

Worked answers

Q9 (model answer). After World War II, Europe was wrecked: cities were bombed, food was short, and millions of people had no home — these were strong push factors. Australia had jobs in factories and on big building jobs, cheap fares under the £10 scheme, and safety far from the war — these were strong pull factors. Programs such as the Assisted Passage Migration Scheme and the work agreements with Italy, Greece and the Netherlands brought hundreds of thousands of people out. That is why the share of Australia's people born overseas nearly tripled between 1947 and 1971.

Q10 (model answer — Vietnamese refugees). In 1975 the Vietnam War ended, and many people in South Vietnam feared for their safety — that was the push. Some reached Australia by boat, the first arriving in Darwin in 1976, but most came by plane through the refugee program; about 2,000 came by boat in the first six years. They changed Australia in lasting ways: pho and other Vietnamese food became everyday, and by 2020 Vietnam was one of the top ten birthplaces of Australia's overseas-born people.

Q11 (model answer). I agree. Migrants built the Snowy Mountains Scheme, which still makes electricity for homes and farms today, and about 7 in 10 of its workers were born overseas. At Bonegilla, about 309,000 migrants started their Australian lives, then moved out to work all over the country. Migration also changed everyday life: food such as pizza and pho, festivals, temples and mosques became part of Australia. The numbers prove it: the share of people born overseas grew from 9.8% in 1947 to 29.8% in 2020. Migration did not just add people — it changed what Australia looked, sounded and tasted like.

Writing task (model opening — Option A, clearly labelled as written for school).

This story is written for school and is not a historical source. Its facts come from this section.

In 1951, Anna Kowalski stood on a wharf in Poland with one suitcase. The war had taken her family's home, and Poland was not safe for people like her — that was the push. Australia offered work, safety, and a place in the program for people left with no homes — that was the pull. The ship took weeks. When Anna finally stepped onto the wharf in Melbourne, an officer pointed her to a train: Bonegilla, hut 14. The food was strange, but a Greek family two huts down shared their bread, and Anna learned her first Australian word: *mate*.

Notice what earns its keep: the program for people with no homes, Bonegilla, the hut, the work agreement — all real facts from this section, marked as the checklist asks.

Sources

All real data and quotations in this section are drawn from the following, all retrieved 24 August 2026:

- Immigration Restriction Act 1901, section 3(a) — dictation test wording.
- Migration Act 1958 — ended the dictation test.
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Migration, Australia* (2019–20), released 23 April 2021 — share of people born overseas (1947–2020) and top birthplaces (2020).
- Snowy Mountains Scheme facts (1949–1974; 16 dams, 9 power stations, 225 km of tunnels; more than 100,000 workers from 32 countries) and Bonegilla facts (1947–1971; about 309,000 migrants; in north-east Victoria) as recorded by the National Museum of Australia and the Migration Heritage Centre.
- Refugee arrivals from Vietnam (first boat, Darwin, April 1976; about 2,000 boat arrivals 1976–1982) and refugee numbers from Hungary (about 14,500 after 1956) as recorded by the National Archives of Australia and the Migration Heritage Centre.

All eight figures are original artworks made for this book by original computer scripts. No figure is copied from another book or website.

Australians who made a difference: contributions to a changing nation

In the 1900s, Australian society changed a great deal. Some changes began with one person. Some began with a whole group working together. In this section we meet well-known Australians who came as migrants or were born into migrant families, and groups whose work changed life for many people. We use real sources, and we ask: who changed what, and how do we know?

Big question: **How did individuals and groups, including migrants, change Australian society in the 1900s?**

CURRICULUM TRACEABILITY — teacher reference, not student text

Section 2D · Chapter 2 (Historical Knowledge and Understanding)

Book: History Level 5 (entry year of the Levels 5 and 6 band)

Owns: VC2HH6K10

Draws on: VC2HH6K10.E02 in whole and VC2HH6K10.E03 trimmed (First Nations examples cut per §2A). Elaborations are linkage keys, not teaching order (TOC decision D10).

First Nations content: per TOC §2A, .E01 (First Nations biographies) is EXCLUDED from this book and is not taught here; the First Nations element of the CD is noted in this traceability record only. The section teaches the neutral remainder: migrants and other well-known Australians, and Australians from many cultural and social groups (TOC decision D5).

Vocabulary ceiling: Yr5 (TOC decision D4). Curriculum words (contribution, significant) and subject terms (society, migrant, refugee, governor, field, evidence) are defined at first use in "Words we will use".

Difficult history: the Second World War and the Holocaust are handled age-appropriately ("had to hide during the Second World War", "his father was killed in the war") with no graphic detail.

Cross-refs: 2C seeds change-and-consequence thinking; 1D sequences twentieth-century events; the significance questions in Step 6 feed the judgement work of 4C.

Volume: 1 teaching sequence (Steps 1–6) · 2 worked demonstrations (Show 1–2) · 8 scaffolded tasks (Tasks 1–8) · 3 unscaffolded tasks (Tasks 9–11) · 1 evidence-based writing task scored against the band achievement standard (Show what you know).

Words we will use

These words do real work in this section. We define them here and we use them carefully.

contribution — something a person or group does that helps other people or makes life better. Building a dam, starting a club, helping patients get well: all of these are contributions.

significant — a contribution is significant when it changed many people's lives and we still feel it today. Historians use evidence to decide, and historians can disagree.

society — the people of a country and the way they live together: their food, languages, festivals, work and laws.

migrant — a person who moves to a new country to make a life there.

had to leave home to be safe — some people in our stories could not stay in their home country, often because of a war. They had to leave to be safe. (Your teacher will tell you the one-word term historians use for people in this position.)

governor — each Australian state has a governor. The governor carries out the state's most important formal duties, like opening parliament and signing the state's laws.

field — an area of work or life where people make a contribution, like sport, science, the arts, education, business or community work.

evidence — facts and sources that show something is true: dates, numbers, places, photos, letters.

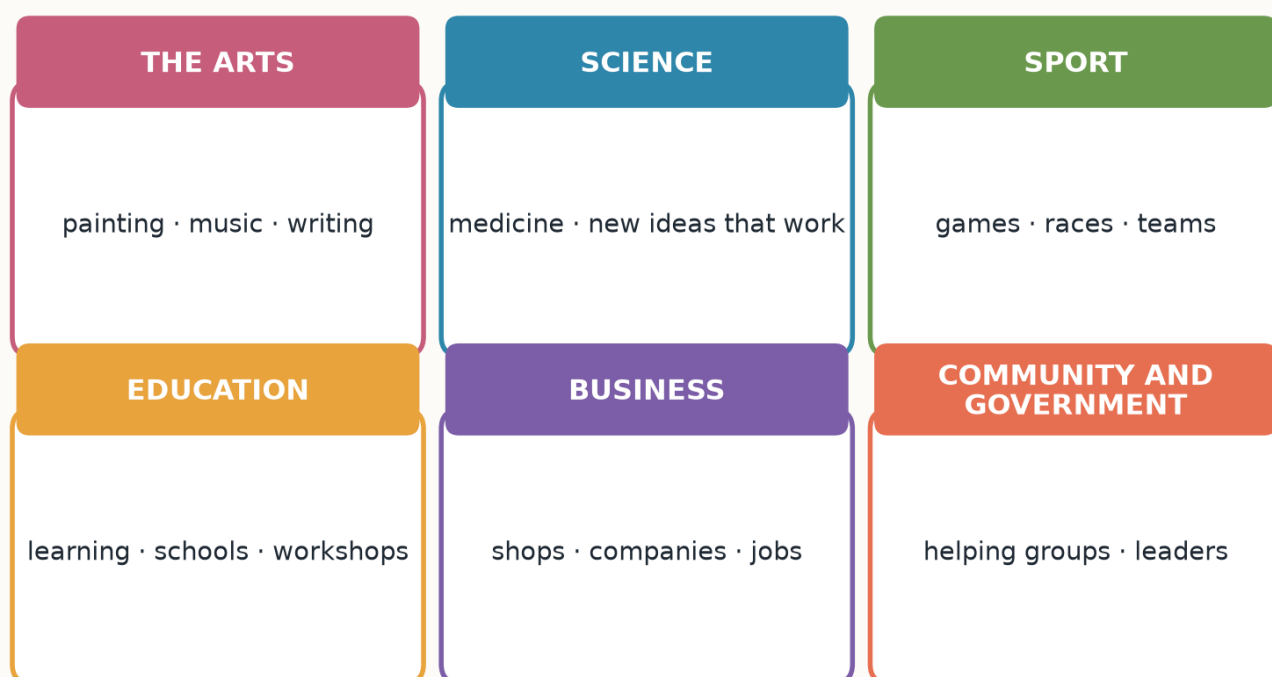
Our teaching sequence — we read, we look, we talk

Step 1 — *Many fields, many contributions*

A contribution can happen in any field. Look at the board in the figure below. The arts is where people make paintings, music, books and murals. Science is where people find things out and make things that help, like new medicines. Sport is where people play, train and win. Education is where people teach and learn. Business is where people start shops and companies and make jobs. Community and government is where people help others and carry out the country's formal work.

Which field is that contribution in?

A field is an area of work or life where people make a contribution.



A board showing six fields where people make contributions: the arts, science, sport, education, business, and community and government.

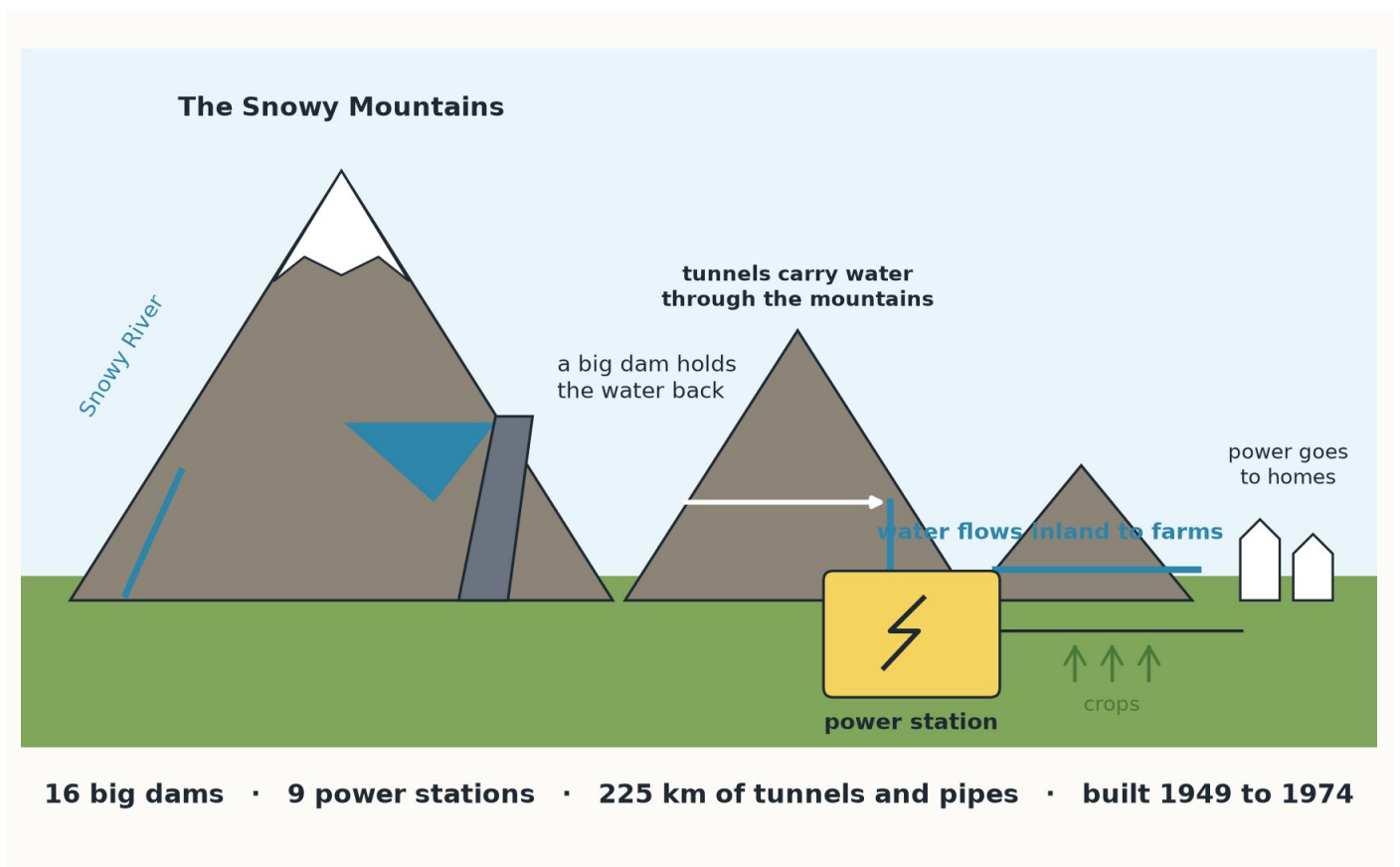
Talk with a partner: name one person or group you already know who helped other people. Which box on the board do they fit in?

Step 2 — *Australia in the 1900s: a society that changed*

In 1901, most Australians had family from Britain and Ireland. By 2000, many Australians had family from Italy, Greece, Vietnam, China, Lebanon, Latvia and many more places. Two world wars, and the need for workers, brought new people. New people brought new food, new languages and new festivals. Australian society changed.

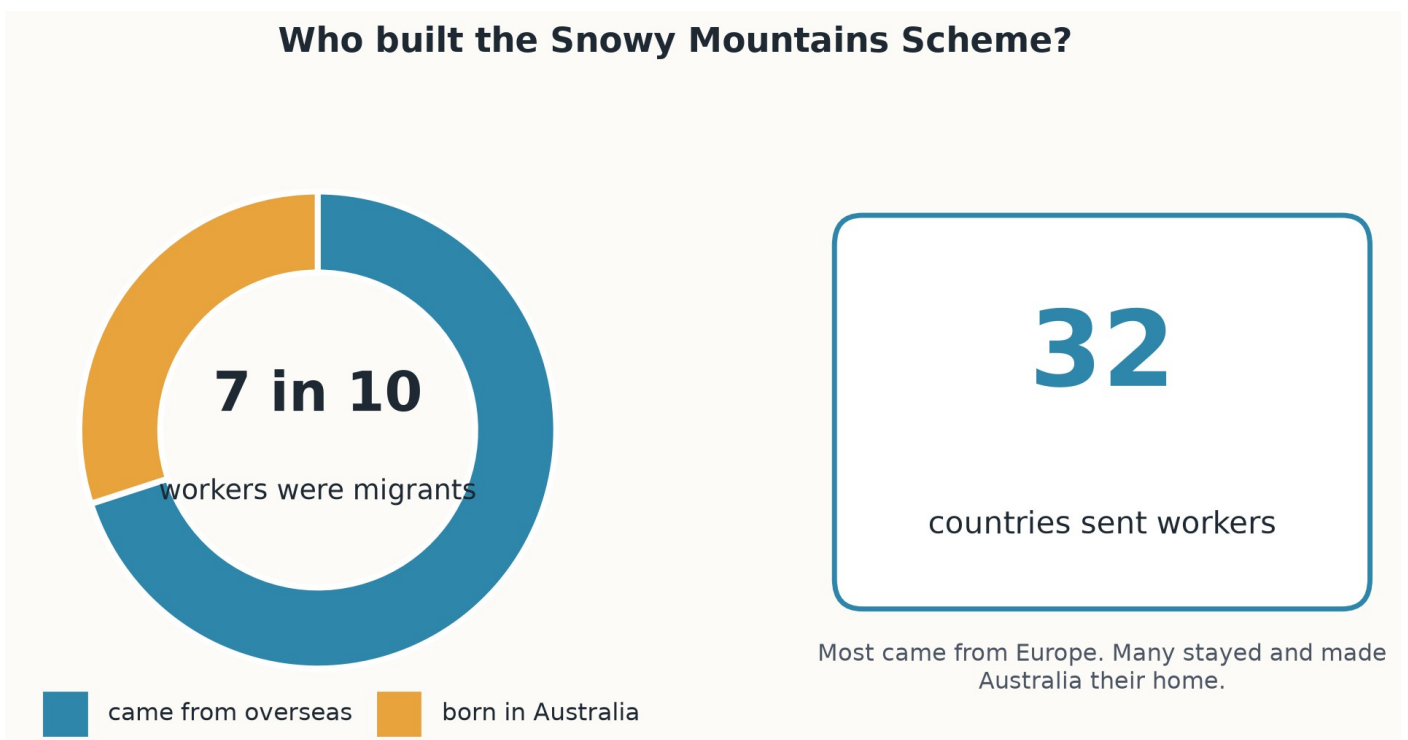
Step 3 — *Group study: the Snowy Mountains Scheme*

In 1949, Australia's leader Ben Chifley started a huge job high in the Snowy Mountains: the Snowy Mountains Scheme. Workers built 16 big dams, 9 power stations and 225 km of tunnels and pipes. The scheme does two jobs. Water drops through tunnels and turns machines that make electricity — electricity made from moving water. That power goes to homes and factories. Other water flows inland to the Murray and Murrumbidgee rivers, so farms in dry country can grow food. Follow the labels in the figure below.



A labelled picture of the Snowy Mountains Scheme: a dam holds water high in the Snowy Mountains, tunnels carry water through the mountains to a power station, power goes to homes, and water flows inland to farms.

Who built it? More than 100,000 people worked on the scheme, from 32 countries. Seven in ten of the workers were migrants. Most came from Europe, and many had lived through the Second World War. Many stayed and made Australia their home. Their food, their languages and their clubs became part of Australian life. The scheme changed what Australia made, and it changed who Australians were.



A circle chart showing that 7 in 10 Snowy Scheme workers were migrants, and a card saying workers came from 32 countries.

Step 4 — Four notable Australians

Now meet four well-known Australians who came as migrants or were born into migrant families. The cards give two facts each; the sources at the end of this section carry the full stories.

Four Australians from migrant families

H Hieu Van Le

Family from: Vietnam

Had to leave Vietnam to be safe.
Came to Australia by boat in 1977.

In 2014 he became the 35th governor of South Australia — the first governor of an Australian state from a Vietnamese family.

S Sir Frank Lowy

Family from: Czechoslovakia

Came to Australia in 1952.
With a friend, he started a small shop.

That shop grew into Westfield, one of Australia's biggest shopping companies.
He gave money to art, sport and learning.

M Marita Cheng

Family from: China

Born in Cairns in 1989. She loved maths and building things.

In 2008 she started Robogals, which gets girls into robots and technology. In 2012 she was named Young Australian of the Year.

D Dame Marie Bashir

Family from: Lebanon

Born in Narrandera, NSW, in 1930.
She became a doctor.

She helped young people and families with their feelings and worries. In 2001 she became the first woman governor of NSW.

Four cards about Hieu Van Le, Frank Lowy, Marita Cheng and Marie Bashir, with where their families came from and what they did for Australia.

Hieu Van Le had to leave Vietnam to be safe, and came to Australia by boat in 1977. He worked as an accountant and helped welcome new arrivals. In 2014 he became South Australia's 35th governor — the first governor of an Australian state from a Vietnamese family.

Frank Lowy was a boy in Europe during the Second World War. He had to hide, and his father was killed in the war. He came to Australia in 1952 and, with a friend, started a small shop. That shop grew into Westfield, one of Australia's biggest shopping companies. He gave money to art galleries, sport and learning, and in 2017 he was given the title "Sir".

Marita Cheng was born in Cairns in 1989, into a family from China. Her mother cleaned hotel rooms and raised her alone. Marita loved maths and building things. In 2008 she started Robogals, a group whose volunteers run robot workshops for school girls. In 2012 she was named Young Australian of the Year.

Marie Bashir was born in Narrandera, NSW, in 1930, into a family from Lebanon. She became a doctor who helped young people and families with their feelings and worries. In 2001 she became the governor of NSW — the first woman to do that job — and she was given the title "Dame".

Step 5 — More fields: the arts, science, sport, education, community

The same story plays out across the fields. Use the model table below, and add rows of your own as you learn about more people.

Notable people and groups, across a range of fields		
Field	Person or group	What they did for Australia
the arts	Mirka Mora	Paintings and big wall pictures (murals) that made Melbourne bright. Her family also ran eating places where art and food came together.
science	Fiona Wood	A doctor who grew new spray-on skin to help people with bad burns get well.
sport	John Konrads	A swimmer who came from Latvia as a child. At the 1960 Olympics he won gold in the 1500 m freestyle.
education	Robogals	A group started by Marita Cheng. Its volunteers run robot workshops for girls at schools.
community	the CWA	The Country Women's Association, started in 1922. Its members help country women, children and families.

A model table. Add rows of your own as you learn about more people.

A model table with rows for the arts, science, sport, education and community, naming a person or group and what they did for Australia.

The arts — Mirka Mora. Mirka had to hide in the forests of France during the Second World War. She came to Melbourne in 1951. Her bright paintings, murals and mosaics made the city colourful, and her eating places brought art and food together.

Science — Fiona Wood. Fiona was born in England and moved to Perth in 1987. She is a surgeon who helped grow spray-on skin for burns patients, so bad burns can heal better. In 2005 she was named Australian of the Year.

Sport — John Konrads. John came to Australia as a child, in a family that had to leave Latvia to be safe. At the 1960 Olympics he won gold in the 1500 m freestyle, and he set 26 world records. Later he taught swimming as a coach.

Education — Robogals. Marita Cheng started Robogals in 2008. Its volunteers run robot workshops so that more girls choose science and technology.

Community — the CWA. The Country Women's Association started in 1922. Its members help women, children and families in country towns: food and clothing in hard times, and scholarships so students can keep learning.

Step 6 — From contribution to change

A contribution is only the start of the story; the change is the rest of it. Follow one story down the chain in the figure below.

How does a contribution change society?

Follow one story — the Snowy Mountains Scheme — down the chain.

THE CONTRIBUTION

From 1949 to 1974, workers from 32 countries build the Snowy Mountains Scheme: dams, tunnels and power stations.

▼ led to

FIRST CHANGES

Power goes to homes, towns and factories. Water flows inland to the Murray and Murrumbidgee rivers, so farms in dry country can grow food.

▼ led to

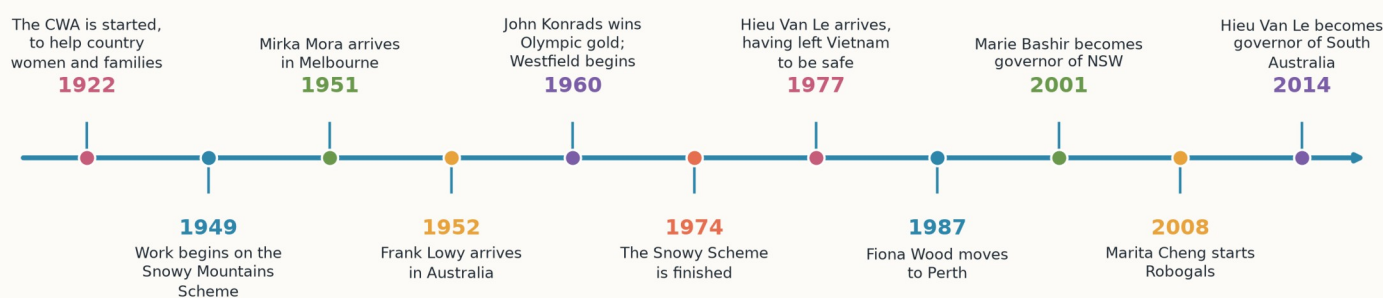
AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY CHANGES

New jobs bring new towns. Many migrant workers stay. Their food, languages and festivals become part of life in Australia.

A three-box chain showing how the Snowy Mountains Scheme led to first changes and then to changes in Australian society.

How do we know when a contribution is significant? Historians ask three questions: How many people's lives changed? How much did they change? Do we still feel the change today? They answer with evidence — and they can disagree. That disagreement is part of history.

When did these contributions happen?



Some of these stories keep going after the year 2000 — the people shown above kept making contributions.

A timeline from 1922 to 2014 showing when the contributions in this section happened.

Show and learn — the teacher shows how

Show 1 — Filling in the organiser: Fiona Wood

The teacher thinks aloud from a fact file, using the four-step organiser.

FACT FILE — Fiona Wood: born England, 1958 · moved to Perth, 1987 · surgeon · spray-on skin for burns patients · Australian of the Year, 2005.

1. **WHO?** Fiona Wood — a surgeon, born in England, who moved to Perth in
2. **WHAT DID THEY DO?** She helped grow spray-on skin so that people with bad burns can heal better.
3. **WHAT IS YOUR EVIDENCE?** She moved to Perth in 1987. She was named Australian of the Year in 2005.
4. **HOW DID IT CHANGE SOCIETY?** Burns patients get well better than before, and Australians see that a migrant woman can lead in science.

Show 2 — A model paragraph, with its moves labelled

The teacher reads the model paragraph in the figure below. Every sentence does one job, and the colours show which job. Point to the evidence sentence: it is a counted number from a real source, not an opinion.

A model paragraph, with its moves labelled

Every sentence does one job. The colours show which job.

WHO	From 1949 to 1974, over 100,000 people from 32 countries worked on the Snowy Mountains Scheme.
WHAT	Together they built big dams, long tunnels and power stations high in the Snowy Mountains.
EVIDENCE	Seven in ten of these workers had come from overseas.
CHANGE	Their work sent power to towns and water to dry farms, and many workers stayed. Their food, festivals and clubs helped make Australia the mix of cultures it is today.

A model paragraph about the Snowy Scheme workers with each sentence labelled WHO, WHAT, EVIDENCE or CHANGE.

Let's do it together

Task 1 — Sort the fields

Put each name into a field on the board (Step 1 figure): Mirka Mora · John Konrads · Robogals · Fiona Wood · the CWA · Frank Lowy.

Task 2 — Label the scheme

Use the word bank to finish the sentences about the Step 3 diagram. Word bank: **dam · tunnels · power station · farms · homes**

1. A big _____ holds the water back high in the mountains.
2. _____ carry water through the mountains.
3. Dropping water turns machines in the _____.
4. Power goes to _____.
5. Water flows inland to _____.

Task 3 — Fix the wrong facts

Each sentence below is wrong. Rewrite it so it is right.

1. The Snowy Mountains Scheme was built in five years.
2. The scheme has 16 power stations and 9 dams.
3. Seven in ten Snowy workers were born in Australia.

Task 4 — Match the person to the fact

Draw a line from each person to their fact.

1. John Konrads · a · murals and mosaics in Melbourne
2. Mirka Mora · b · governor of South Australia in 2014
3. Hieu Van Le · c · gold in the 1500 m freestyle, 1960
4. Fiona Wood · d · started Robogals in 2008
5. Marita Cheng · e · spray-on skin for burns patients

Task 5 — Finish the frames

Finish both frames about one person and one group from this section.

- _____ made a contribution to _____ because _____.
- My evidence for this is _____.

Task 6 — Put the cards in order

Use the timeline figure to put these six cards in time order: Hieu Van Le becomes governor of South Australia · the CWA starts · work begins on the Snowy Scheme · Marita Cheng starts Robogals · John Konrads wins Olympic gold · Marie Bashir becomes governor of NSW.

Task 7 — Read the circle chart

Look at the Step 3 chart and answer.

1. What does “7 in 10 workers were migrants” mean, in your own words?
2. In one work camp of 100 Snowy workers, how many would be migrants?
3. Most Snowy workers came from which part of the world?

Task 8 — Fill the chain

Put each sentence into the right box of the Step 6 chain: **the contribution** · **first changes** · **society changes**.

1. Workers from 32 countries build dams, tunnels and power stations.
 2. Power reaches homes, and water reaches dry farms.
 3. New foods, languages and festivals become part of life in Australia.
-

Your turn

Task 9 — Your organiser

Choose one person or group from this section. Fill in the four boxes of the organiser with real facts — at least one date, one number or one place.

Plan your paragraph with this organiser



A four-step organiser to plan a paragraph: Who? What did they do? What is your evidence? How did it change society?

Task 10 — Two changes

Write two sentences: one about a change a person brought to Australian society, and one about a change a group brought. Underline your evidence words (dates, numbers, places).

Task 11 — Judge a claim

“One person can change a society more than a group can.” Do you agree? Use one example of a person and one example of a group from this section, and give your reasons.

Show what you know

My paragraph, with evidence. Choose one individual or one group from this section. Plan with the organiser, then write one paragraph of five to seven sentences that:

1. names who they are and where they came from;
2. says what they made, built, won or started;
3. gives at least two pieces of evidence (dates, numbers, places);
4. says how Australian society changed because of them.

TEACHER GUIDE — scoring against the band achievement standard
(not student text; written for the adult professional)

Score the paragraph against the Levels 5 and 6 band achievement standard. In short, its opening sentences ask students to explain causes and effects of colonisation, and how people, events and ideas changed the nation to 2000 (see TOC chapter note).

At Level 5 pitch:

BEGINNING – the student names a person or group and says what they did, with at least one fact (identifies a contribution).

GROWING – the student gives two or more evidence facts (dates, numbers, places) and links the contribution to a change in people's lives (explains a contribution to change, using sources as evidence).

GOT IT – the student also explains a society-level change (how many people's lives changed, and whether the change is still felt today), and notes that historians may judge significance differently (explains the contribution of significant individuals and groups, including migration between 1900 and 2000).

Deliberate scope notes:

- Per TOC §2A and decision D5, VC2HH6K10.E01 is excluded from this book; the paragraph choices are the neutral remainder (migrants and other well-known Australians, and Australians from many cultural and social groups). First Nations contributions are taught nowhere in this book.
 - "Significant" is taught operationally per CONTESTED_TERMS.md: changed many people's lives, still felt today, decided with evidence; historians may disagree.
-

SOURCES – real, named, checkable referents (TOC decision D4).

Not student text. All web sources retrieved 2026-08-24.

1. Content description VC2HH6K10 and elaborations .E01-.E03: Victorian Curriculum F-10 Version 2.0, Humanities: History, Levels 5 and 6 – checked against the VCAA export (retrieved 2026-07-29; re-read 2026-08-21), via the chapter's CD-coverage table.
2. Hieu Van Le: born 1954 in Vietnam; arrived by boat in 1977 as a refugee; 35th Governor of South Australia 2014-2021; first person of Vietnamese background in an Australian vice-regal role.
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hieu_Van_Le
3. Frank Lowy: born 1930 in Czechoslovakia; had to hide in Europe during the Second World War and his father was killed at Auschwitz; arrived 1952; co-founded Westfield (listed 1960); knighted 2017.
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frank_Lowy
4. Marita Cheng: born 1989 in Cairns; founded Robogals in 2008; 2012 Young Australian of the Year.
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marita_Cheng
5. Marie Bashir: born 1930 in Narrandera NSW to a family from Lebanon; psychiatrist; 37th Governor of NSW 2001-2014, the first woman in the role.
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marie_Bashir
6. Snowy Mountains Scheme: begun 17 October 1949; completed 1974; 16 dams, 9 power stations, 225 km of tunnels and pipes; over 100,000 workers from 32 countries; about seven in ten workers were migrants.
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snowy_Mountains_Scheme

7. Mirka Mora: born 1928 in Paris; survived the Holocaust by hiding in France; arrived in Melbourne 1951; artist, muralist and mosaicist; ran cafés.
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mirka_Mora
8. Fiona Wood: born 1958 in England; moved to Perth 1987; burns surgeon; developed spray-on skin; 2005 Australian of the Year.
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fiona_Wood
9. John Konrads: born 1942 in Riga, Latvia; arrived as a child in a refugee family; 1960 Olympic gold in the 1500 m freestyle; 26 world records.
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Konrads
10. Country Women's Association: first body formed 20 April 1922 in Sydney; works to improve conditions for women, children and families.
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Country_Women's_Association
11. All nine figures in this section are original drawings made for this book (TOC decision D4).

Different views of a changing Australia: migration, politics and “the lucky country”

In this section we look at what happened after World War II ended in 1945, when millions of people made a new home in Australia. We do two things that historians — people who study the past — do. We compare two readings of the same story, and we explain why sensible people can disagree. Then we debate one big claim: is Australia “the lucky country”?

For the teacher — VC2 codes: VC2HH6K12; drawn on: VC2HH6K12.E01, VC2HH6K12.E03. **.E02 is not taught here (see the TOC, §2A).**

Theory

Teaching sequence (for the teacher) 1. Teach the key words below with the event-and-readings card. Keep the event fixed; change the reading. 2. Build the fact base from the four source cards (settler numbers, the £10 ticket, the Snowy workers, the timeline). Students copy six facts into their books. 3. Set the two readings of migration after the war side by side (Worked example 2). Ask: which facts does each side use? Which does each side leave out? 4. Add the political strand: the rules about who could come changed between 1901 and 1975 because people argued about fairness. Two readings again. 5. Bring in Horne’s 1964 book. Teach “lucky” as a value word that needs a frame (frame card). 6. Run the debate in Q12 — one contested claim, argued with evidence. Score the reasons, not the side. This closes the knowledge strand the way 1F closed the first: one genuinely contested claim, debated with evidence.

Key words

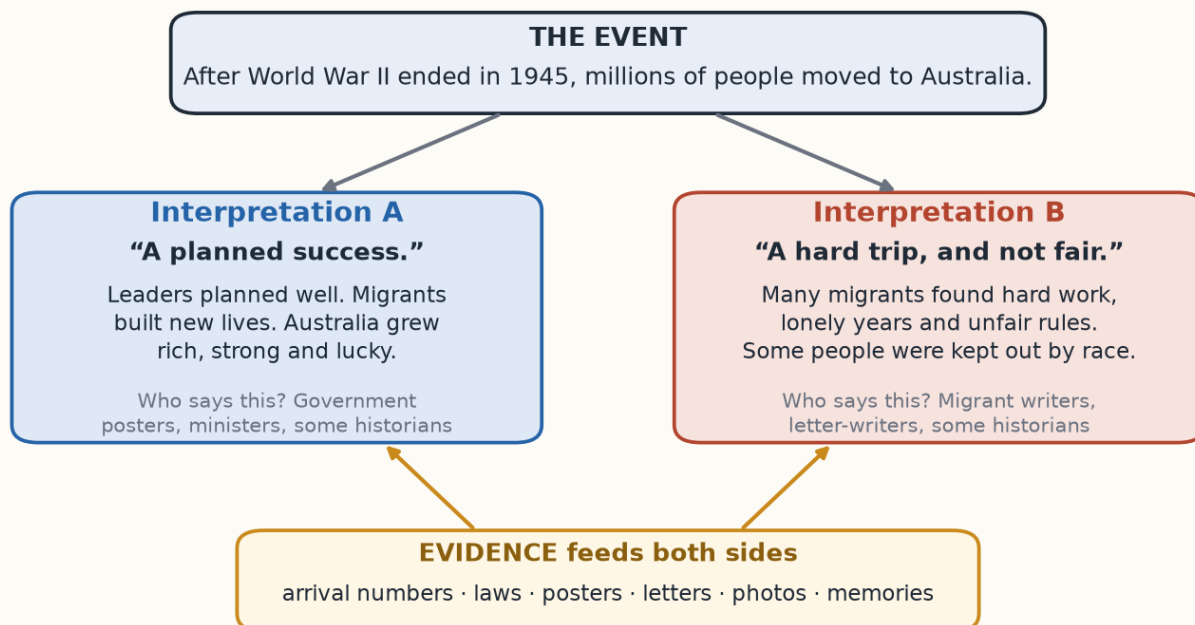
- **interpretation** — the way a person or group explains what something means, or why it happened. The same event can carry two interpretations.
- **contested** — openly argued about. A contested claim is one thoughtful, kind people can disagree about, with evidence on both sides.
- **migrant** — a person who moves to a new country to live.
- **refugee** — a person who flees their home country because it is not safe, and seeks safety in another country.

- **historian** — a person who studies the past and writes about it.

Same event, two readings

One event — two interpretations

An event is what happened. An interpretation is what someone says it means.



Same event, different meanings. When people argue about the meaning, the interpretation is contested — and historians must give reasons and evidence.

Idea card: one event card — “After World War II ended in 1945, millions of people moved to Australia” — splits into two reading cards, “A planned success” and “A hard trip, and not fair”, with an evidence card feeding both

The top card is the event. The two lower cards are interpretations. Both sides must use evidence — but they pick different evidence and ask different questions. That is why the claim is contested, and why we can study the disagreement itself.



Bar chart of settlers who arrived in Australia: 1,253,083 in July 1949–June 1959; 1,445,356 in July 1959–June 1970; 956,769 in July 1970–June 1980, with a note that about 1.6 million arrived in October 1945–June 1960

These are settlers — people who came to stay. In the 15 years straight after the war (October 1945–June 1960) about 1.6 million arrived, the biggest wave of all. Australia's people grew from about 7 million in 1945 to about 10 million by 1959.

The £10 ticket

Australia paid most of the ship fare. Migrants paid ten pounds.

ASSISTED PASSAGE TO AUSTRALIA

run by the Australian Government, 1945–1982

Adult fare £10 (ten pounds)

Real fare more than £120

Children free

The rule stay 2 years or pay it back

Open to British first; later the Netherlands,
Italy, Greece, West Germany, Turkey

1945–1972 1,000,000+ came from Britain

FARE

£10

per adult

Their nickname: the TEN POUND POMS

A real scheme, drawn for this book as a card. Facts: Wikipedia, "Assisted Passage Migration Scheme", retrieved 24 August 2026 (£10 was worth about £373 in 2025 money).

Ticket-style card for the assisted passage to Australia, run by the Australian Government 1945–1982: adult fare £10, real fare more than £120, children free, the rule “stay 2 years or pay it back”, open to British first and later the Netherlands, Italy, Greece, West Germany and Turkey; more than 1,000,000 came from Britain in 1945–1972; nickname “the ten pound poms”

Most settlers came on a scheme run by the Australian Government. A British adult paid just £10 for a ship fare that really cost more than £120 — the government paid the rest. Children came free. The catch: stay two years or pay it back. For years the scheme picked the British first; only later did it open to the Netherlands, Italy, Greece, West Germany and Turkey. Australians had a nickname for the British who came: the “ten pound poms”. One of them was a girl from Wales who was four when she arrived in 1966 — Julia Gillard, later Prime Minister of Australia.

Who built the Snowy Mountains Scheme?

Australia's biggest building job, 1949–1974: dams and power stations in the mountains — and a migrant story.



Share of the workers:



Many new Australians went straight from the ships to the mountains, living in work camps and learning English on the job.

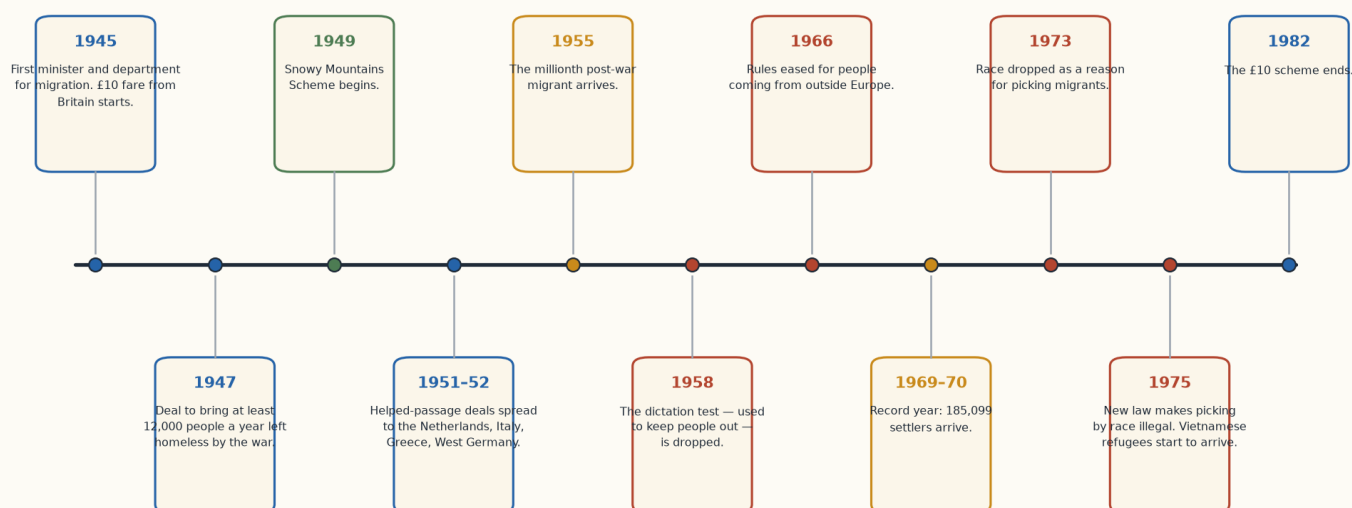
*Facts: Wikipedia, "Snowy Mountains Scheme", retrieved 24 August 2026
(the article gives both "about two thirds" and "seventy per cent" as the migrant share).*

Stat card for the Snowy Mountains Scheme, 1949–1974: more than 100,000 workers, more than 30 countries of birth, and 2 in 3 workers born overseas, shown as one bar in two parts

Where did the new Australians go? Many went straight to the Snowy Mountains Scheme — dams and power stations built in the mountains from 1949 to 1974. Of the 100,000+ workers, more than two in three were born overseas, in more than 30 countries.

Migration and politics, 1945–1982

Big moves in who could come to Australia — and how



The pattern: more people were welcomed bit by bit — but the unfair race rules only ended in the 1970s.

Drawn for this book from dated facts: Wikipedia articles "Assisted Passage Migration Scheme", "Postwar immigration to Australia" and "White Australia policy", retrieved 24 August 2026.

Timeline, 1945–1982: 1945 first minister and department for migration, £10 fare starts; 1947 deal for 12,000 people a year left homeless by the war; 1949 Snowy Mountains Scheme begins; 1951–52 helped-passage deals spread to the Netherlands, Italy, Greece, West Germany; 1955 migrant number one million arrives; 1958 the dictation test is dropped; 1966 rules eased for people from outside Europe; 1969–70 record year, 185,099 settlers; 1973 race dropped as a reason for picking migrants; 1975 new law makes picking by race against the law, Vietnamese refugees start to arrive; 1982 the £10 scheme ends

The timeline joins migration and the political story. The rules about who could come were political choices, and they changed as people argued. Notice the pattern: the door opened bit by bit — but the unfair race rules only ended in the 1970s. The rules did not begin in 1945. In 1901, the first national parliament passed the Immigration Restriction Act, which used a dictation test to keep non-Europeans out — the “White Australia” policy.

Two readings of migration after the war

Reading A — “A planned success.” This was the government’s line at the time, and it is still a common reading. After the war, Australia felt too small and at risk. The old cry “populate or perish” — first used by Billy Hughes in the 1930s and pushed hard by Arthur Calwell, the first Minister for Immigration — meant: fill this country with people, or lose it. The schemes brought workers for the farms, the factories and the Snowy. The number of people grew from 7 million to 10 million in 14 years. On this reading, migration was a plan that worked.

Reading B — “A hard trip, and not fair.” This is the migrants’ line, then and now. The schemes picked favourites: for years the British came first, and people from Asia were kept out by race rules. Many new arrivals did hard, low-paid work, lived in camps, and missed home and family. Some came as refugees, like the Vietnamese families who fled by boat after 1975 — among them Anh Do, born in 1977, who reached Australia in 1980 on a leaky fishing boat with his mother and family. On this reading, the same story is about hard times and unfair rules — and the “success” was earned by the migrants, not handed to them.

Why are the readings contested? Not because one side made things up. Both sides use true facts. They differ in three ways: (1) the question asked — what did the country get, or what did each person pay? (2) the evidence picked — totals and schemes, or letters and memories. (3) the values held — safety and growth, or fairness and kindness. When the facts are agreed and the readings still disagree, the claim is contested. That is the skill in VC2HH6K12.E01: compare the readings, and explain the disagreement.

The political strand: two readings here too

The rules about who could come are Australia's political development across the 20th century. Start at 1901 and the dictation test, then follow the timeline: the test dropped in 1958; rules eased in 1966; in 1973 race was dropped as a reason for picking migrants; in 1975 the Racial Discrimination Act made picking by race against the law.

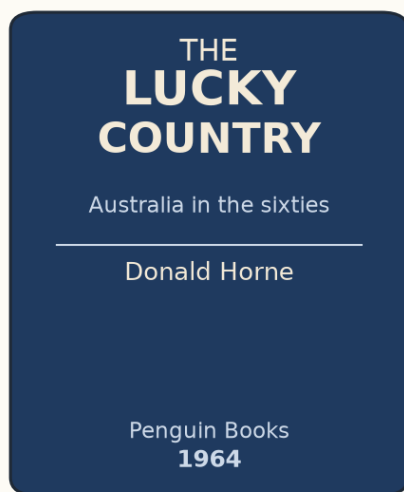
Reading A — “Fairness slowly won.” Australia's democracy fixed its own mistake: parliament changed the law step by step, as more people argued for fairness.

Reading B — “For 70 years, the rules were unfair.” The same timeline shows a democracy that kept race rules for most of the century, and only let them go late.

Same dates, two readings. The dates are facts. What the dates add up to is an interpretation.

“The lucky country”

Reading a real source from 1964



“Australia is a lucky country run mainly by second rate people who share its luck.”

— Donald Horne, *The Lucky Country* (1964)

Looks like praise at first glance.

But “second rate people” is a criticism.

Horne said the words were used the wrong way later.

How many people heard it

“We are lucky!” — a warm nickname for a good country.

What Horne meant

“We got ahead on luck, not wise choices.” A warning.

One sentence, two readings. Which reading is right? Check the whole book, the writer, and the time it was written. That is how historians test an interpretation.

Real source: Donald Horne, *The Lucky Country: Australia in the Sixties* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1964). Horne's life: 26 December 1921 – 8 September 2005.

*Source card: the cover of Donald Horne's book *The Lucky Country* (Penguin, 1964) beside the quote “Australia is a lucky country run mainly by second rate people who share its luck”, with two readings — a warm nickname, or a warning*

In 1964 the writer Donald Horne brought out a book about Australia, *The Lucky Country*. His key line is on the card. Most people heard only the first four words and turned them into a warm nickname. Horne meant the whole sentence as a warning: Australia gets by on luck, not on wise choices. He later said his words had been used the wrong way.

What kind of word is “lucky”?

Some words can be measured, like a length or a weight. Two people can check and agree. “Lucky” is not that kind of word. It is a value word — people can honestly disagree about it. So we must state our frame first.

Lucky for whom?

All Australians? New migrants?
People in one city or one year?

Lucky compared with where and when?

With Europe in 1945,
after its big wars?
With other countries today?

Luck — or effort, planning and rules?

Did good things happen
by chance? Or did people
work and plan for them?

Before you debate “Is Australia the lucky country?”, pick your frame.
Then argue with reasons and evidence — not just feelings.

A contested word is not a bad word. It just needs a frame before you argue about it.

Contested-word card: “What kind of word is ‘lucky’?” with three frame questions — Lucky for whom? Lucky compared with where and when? Luck, or effort, planning and rules?

“Lucky” is a value word, so a debate about it needs a frame first. Say what you mean by it. Say who you are counting. Say what you are comparing. Then argue with reasons and evidence — not just feelings.

Worked examples

Example 1 — with help: reading Horne’s sentence twice

Task. Split Horne’s sentence into the part that sounds like praise and the part that is criticism. Then say which reading the evidence supports.

Step 1 — the praise part. “Australia is a lucky country.” On its own, that sounds like praise — a warm nickname for a good country.

Step 2 — the criticism part. “... run mainly by second rate people who share its luck.” The words “second rate” carry the criticism. Horne is saying: the country does well even though its leaders do not plan well, because the land and the luck carry it.

Step 3 — test the two readings against the evidence. The book as a whole criticises Australia for thinking it did not need to plan. Horne himself later said the nickname use was wrong. So the historian’s reading is: the sentence is criticism, and the praise reading grew up later, against what Horne meant.

Part of the sentence	Sounds like	On the evidence, is
“Australia is a lucky country”	praise	the setup for a criticism
“run mainly by second rate people who share its luck”	(easy to miss)	the criticism: luck, not wise choices

Example 2 — with help: two readings of migration after the war, side by side

Task. Use the fact base to fill the table, then explain in one sentence why the readings are contested.

	Reading A — a planned success	Reading B — a hard trip, and not fair
Question asked	What did Australia get?	What did each person pay?
Evidence used	“Populate or perish”; about 1.6 million settlers in 15 years; Snowy workers building dams and power stations	The £10 scheme British-first; race rules until the 1970s; camps, hard work, missing home; Anh Do’s boat trip
Values held	Safety and growth	Fairness and kindness
Explains well	How fast the country grew and what got built	Why many people call the rules unfair
Leaves out	The hard trip and the unfair picking	The big picture: a country that grew and took people in

Model closing sentence. The readings are contested because both sides use true facts but ask different questions, pick different evidence, and hold different values — so agreeing on the facts does not end the argument.

Practice questions

Practice with help

Q1. Fill each gap with a key word: *migrant*, *refugee*, *contested*, *interpretation*. (a) A person who moves to a new country to live is a _____. (b) A person who flees an unsafe home country is a _____. (c) When thoughtful people can disagree, with evidence on both sides, the claim is _____. (d) One side’s reading of why something happened is an _____.

Q2. Look at the settlers chart. Which period brought the most settlers? Give the number.

Q3. How many more settlers arrived in July 1959–June 1970 than in July 1970–June 1980? Show your working.

Q4. Look at the £10 card. (a) What did a British adult pay? (b) What did the fare really cost? (c) What happened if a migrant left Australia before two years?

Q5. Look at the timeline and the 1901 note in the theory. (a) Name two changes that made the rules fairer. (b) Name one rule or scheme that was unfair, and say who it helped most.

Q6. Fact or interpretation? Say why for each. (a) About 1.6 million settlers arrived between October 1945 and June 1960. (b) Australia’s migration story after the war is one of its great success stories. (c) A British adult paid £10 for a fare that really cost more than £120. (d) The scheme was unfair because it picked favourites for years. (e) More than two in three Snowy Mountains Scheme workers were born overseas.

Q7. Look at the Horne card. (a) Which words in the sentence carry the criticism? (b) What did most people hear instead? (c) Did Horne agree with that use?

Q8. Look at the Snowy card. (a) What share of the workers were born overseas? (b) What does that tell us about who built the scheme?

Practice on your own

Q9. The political strand has two readings: “fairness slowly won” and “for 70 years, the rules were unfair”. Explain how both sides can use the same dates (1901, 1958, 1966, 1973, 1975). Then say which reading you find stronger, and why.

Q10. A ten pound pom family from Britain in the 1950s, and Anh Do’s family from Vietnam in 1980, are both part of Australia’s migration story. One story, or two different stories? Use at least two pieces of evidence from this section.

Q11. One sentence, two meanings. Explain how Horne’s sentence came to be heard as praise when it was meant as a warning — and say which reading the evidence supports.

Q12. Debate (speaking task with evidence): *That Australia is “the lucky country”*. Work in threes — one speaker FOR the claim, one AGAINST, one judge. Plan with the debate map. Every speaker must: state their frame; use at least two pieces of evidence and name the source; answer the other side at its strongest. The judge scores the reasons, not the side, and writes a two-sentence judgement: which reasons worked, and why.

Debate map

THE CLAIM BEING DEBATED:
Australia is “the lucky country”.

FOR — at its strongest

- Mild weather, rich land and gold, wool and wheat to sell
- No big war was fought on Australian soil in the 20th century
- Democratic rules: voting, free schools, help for the sick and the old
- After 1945, a fresh start and work for millions of migrants and refugees
- Migrants like Anh Do’s family found safety and a new life

AGAINST — at its strongest

- Horne meant it as criticism, not praise — the words are used the wrong way
- Good things came from effort, planning and laws, not luck
- Not lucky for everyone: hard years, loneliness and low-paid work for many
- Unfair race rules kept some people out until the 1970s
- Calling it luck hides the people who built the country

Every speaker must:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 Say what “lucky” means in your frame | 3 Answer the other side at its strongest |
| 2 Use evidence — name your source | 4 The judge scores reasons, not sides |

Steelman rule: show each side as strongly as its own supporters would.

Debate map: the claim “Australia is ‘the lucky country’”, a FOR column and an AGAINST column each shown at their strongest with five reasons, and a four-point checklist every speaker must meet

Answers

Q1. (a) migrant (b) refugee (c) contested (d) interpretation.

Q2. July 1959–June 1970, with 1,445,356 settlers.

Q3. 488,587 ($1,445,356 - 956,769$).

Q4. (a) £10. (b) More than £120. (c) They had to pay back the money the government had paid.

Q5. (a) Any two of: 1958, the dictation test dropped; 1966, rules eased for people from outside Europe; 1973, race dropped as a reason for picking migrants; 1975, a new law made picking by race against the law. (b) The 1901 dictation test, which kept non-Europeans out — or the £10 scheme, which picked the British first.

Q6. (a) fact (b) interpretation (c) fact (d) interpretation (e) fact.

Q7. (a) “second rate people” (and “share its luck”). (b) Praise — a warm nickname. (c) No — he said his words had been used the wrong way.

Q8. (a) More than two in three. (b) New Australians did most of the building — the scheme is a migrant story, not only an Australian one.

Q9–Q11. Answers will differ. A good answer names the frame, uses dated evidence, and answers the other side — see the solutions at the end of this section for models.

Q12. Judgements will differ. The judge must score with the checklist: frame stated, evidence named, other side answered at its strongest, reasons over side.

Fully-worked solutions

Solution to Q3. Line the numbers up by place value and subtract: $1,445,356 - 956,769$. Ones: $16 - 9 = 7$ (borrow). Tens: $4 - 6 \rightarrow 14 - 6 = 8$ (borrow). Hundreds: $2 - 7 \rightarrow 12 - 7 = 5$ (borrow). Thousands: $4 - 6 \rightarrow 14 - 6 = 8$ (borrow). Ten-thousands: $3 - 5 \rightarrow 13 - 5 = 8$ (borrow). Hundred-thousands: $3 - 9 \rightarrow 13 - 9 = 4$. So 488,587. Check by adding back: $488,587 + 956,769 = 1,445,356$. ✓

Solution to Q6. The rule: a **fact** can be checked against a record — a count, a card, a law. An **interpretation** is a reading of what the facts mean, and thoughtful people can disagree with it. (a) Fact — it is a count, checkable on the settlers chart. (b) Interpretation — “great success” is a value word; someone else can read the same facts as unfair (Reading B). (c) Fact — checkable on the £10 card. (d) Interpretation — “unfair” is a judgement about the facts; a supporter of the scheme would use the same facts to say it built the country. (e) Fact — checkable on the Snowy card.

Solution to Q9 (model). Both readings use the same dates. Reading A points at the direction of travel: each change (1958, 1966, 1973, 1975) made the rules fairer, and parliament did it by law — a democracy fixing itself. Reading B points at the length of time: from 1901 to 1973 race rules ran for over 70 years, so for most of the century the democracy was not fair. I find Reading B stronger, because the dates show the fair changes came late and only after long argument — but a classmate could pick Reading A by weighing the same dates in another way, and that is exactly what “contested” means.

Solution to Q11 (model). The first four words — “Australia is a lucky country” — sound like praise, and most people stopped there. The rest of the sentence — “run mainly by second rate people who share its luck” — is the criticism Horne meant. The evidence supports the warning reading: the whole book criticises Australia for living on luck, and Horne later said his words had been used the wrong way. The praise reading is real too — but as a story about what people chose to hear, not about what the sentence says.

Solution to Q12 (model plans). FOR, frame “lucky compared with Europe in 1945, after its big wars”: evidence — about 1.6 million settlers found safety and work after 1945 (settlers chart; Wikipedia, “Postwar immigration to Australia”); Vietnamese refugees like Anh Do’s family escaped by boat and built new lives (Anh Do, *The Happiest Refugee*). Answer the other side at its strongest: yes, migrants worked hard — but a country that opens its door to the unlucky is lucky in the only way that matters. AGAINST, frame “luck, or effort, planning and rules?”: evidence — the Snowy Mountains Scheme was built by the work of 100,000+ people from 30+ countries, not by luck (Snowy card); the unfair race rules until the 1970s show that good things had to be fought for, and were not shared by all (timeline;

Racial Discrimination Act 1975). Answer the other side at its strongest: yes, Australia took people in — because governments planned schemes and, late, fairer laws, which is effort and rules, not luck. Model judgement (judge): “The AGAINST speaker wins on reasons: they named sources and answered the FOR side at its strongest. The FOR side had strong evidence but never stated a frame, so ‘lucky’ was never pinned down.”

Sources for this section

All web sources retrieved 24 August 2026.

- Wikipedia, “Postwar immigration to Australia” — settler numbers by period; about 1.6 million settlers October 1945–June 1960; population about 7 million (1945) to about 10 million (1959); “populate or perish” credited to Billy Hughes and pushed by Arthur Calwell.
- Wikipedia, “Assisted Passage Migration Scheme” — £10 adult fare, real fare over £120, children free, two-year rule; British first, later the Netherlands, Italy, Greece, West Germany, Turkey; more than 1,000,000 from Britain 1945–1972; scheme ends 1982; £10 ≈ £373 in 2025 money.
- Wikipedia, “Julia Gillard” — born in Wales, arrived in Australia in 1966 at age four, later Prime Minister.
- Wikipedia, “White Australia policy” — Immigration Restriction Act 1901 and the dictation test; test dropped 1958; rules eased 1966; race dropped 1973; Racial Discrimination Act 1975.
- Wikipedia, “Snowy Mountains Scheme” — 1949–1974; over 100,000 workers; over 30 countries; about two in three born overseas.
- Donald Horne, *The Lucky Country: Australia in the Sixties* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1964) — the key sentence; Wikipedia, “The Lucky Country” and “Donald Horne” — the later mishearing; Horne’s life, 26 December 1921 – 8 September 2005.
- Wikipedia, “Anh Do” and “Vietnamese Australians”; Anh Do, *The Happiest Refugee* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2010) — Anh Do born 1977, boat journey 1980; almost no Vietnamese-born settlers before 1975, more than 100,000 Vietnamese refugees made a new home in Australia by 1985.