

Mathematics Level 7

Chapter 6 — Investigation: The globalising world since 1945

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How views of progress and the planet changed after 1945

Curriculum trace — Victorian Curriculum 2.0 History, Levels 9 and 10

Owns VC2HH10K36

Draws on — VC2HH10K36.E01, VC2HH10K36.E02, VC2HH10K36.E03

Builds on — section 1C (VC2HH10K03), which surveyed the technology revolution, population growth and the rise of environmentalism as a world movement, and section 1D (VC2HH10K04).

In section 1C you met the big developments since 1945: new technology, longer lives, rising populations and a growing environmental movement. This section looks at those same changes from a different angle. Instead of asking *what happened*, it asks *how people saw it*, and *how their seeing changed*. The development and the perspective on it are two different things, and historians study both.

The phrase that carries this whole section is **changing historical perspectives**. Since 1945 the world really did change — houses filled with machines, people lived longer, more people lived better lives, and the natural environment came under new pressure. But people have never looked at those changes in one fixed way. In the 1950s most people in wealthy countries saw new technology and economic growth as clear signs of **progress** — life was getting better and would keep getting better. By the 1970s and after, that confidence was being questioned: at what cost did the good life come, and who was it leaving out? Tracking that swing — from confident optimism to a more questioning, argued view — is the heart of this section.

By the end of it you should be able to explain how perspectives on each of five areas have changed over time — **technology, public health, longevity, living standards, and the environment** — and to use sources (advertisements, statistics, speeches and campaign materials) as evidence of those changing views.

Before we begin: what do these words mean?

Several words in this section are **contested** — people do not all agree on one fixed meaning, and which meaning you choose can change your conclusion. We state how each is used here, so every question can be answered on that meaning alone.

- **Perspective.** In history, a **perspective** is the point of view of a person or a group, shaped by who they are, where they stand, and what they value and believe. Two people can look at the same change — say, a new machine — and see it differently. This section is about those points of view, and about how they shift over time.
- **Progress.** The word *progress* is contested: it means different things to different people, and whether the modern world is “progressing” is one of the big arguments this section studies. Here, *progress* means the idea that life is getting better over time and will continue to improve. We will see both strong and questioning views of that idea.
- **Standard of living.** This means how well people are able to live — their income, and what it lets them have and do. Some of it can be measured (you can count income) but some of it is contested, because a good life is more than money, as part 5 explains.
- **Development.** In this section a **development** is a change or advance, such as a new technology or a rise in life expectancy. You may also hear the word used for rich and poor countries; that sense appears in part 5, where we look at how the way we *measure* development changed.
- **Public health.** The health of a whole population, and what governments and communities do to protect it — clean water, sanitation, vaccination and hospitals, not just individual medicine.
- **Longevity** means long life; **life expectancy** is the average number of years a person can expect to live.
- **Sustainability.** The Victorian Curriculum uses this term but does not define it. This section uses it in the sense given by the United Nations’ 1987 report *Our Common Future* — “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. Other definitions exist and are not interchangeable with this one.

Keep these meanings in mind as you read. Notice which questions ask about the *development itself* and which ask about *what people thought about it*.

1. What does it mean to say perspectives change? (VC2HH10K36)

A development is a change in the world. A perspective is a way of seeing that change. Historians need both, because the same fact looks different from different places and at different times.

Consider one example: a household buying its first washing machine in the 1950s. The *development* is the machine itself — a drum, a motor, running water. But the *perspective* is what the machine meant. To the family it meant freedom from hours of hand-washing. To the shop that sold it, it meant profit and a customer. To a later historian, the same machine is evidence of rising living standards and of changing ideas about housework and who did it. One object, several layers of meaning.

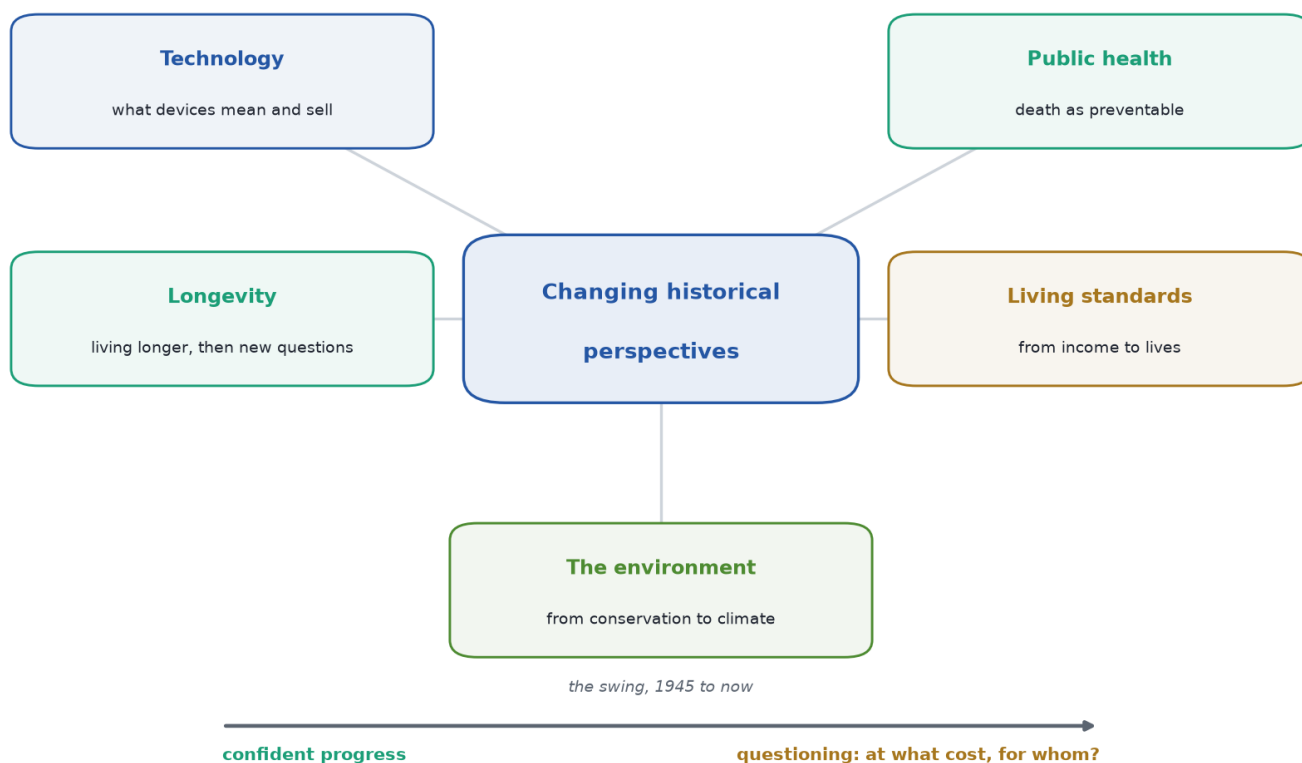
This section works through five areas where both the development and the perspective on it changed between 1945 and the present:

1. **Technology** — and how the way new devices were advertised reveals what people valued (part 3).
2. **Public health** — and how people came to see early death as something to prevent, not something to accept (part 4).
3. **Longevity** — living longer, and how that success later became a new set of questions (part 4).
4. **Living standards** — rising incomes, and the argument over how progress should be measured (part 5).
5. **The environment** — how concern grew, and in Australia shifted from protecting special places to acting on climate change (part 6).

A single thread links all five: the idea of **progress**. In the first decades after 1945, progress was the taken-for-granted frame — change meant improvement. Over time, that confidence became something people argued about. Figure 2 sets out the two strongest versions of that argument. Neither is a silly view; both have real evidence, and historians use both.

The big picture: five areas of change, one swing in perspective

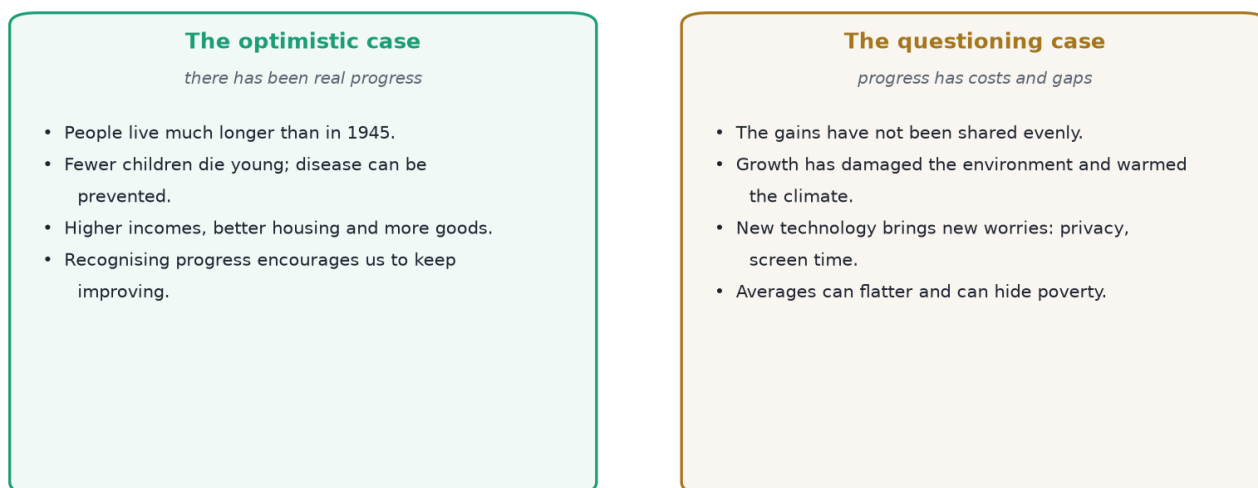
The developments are the changes in the world; the perspectives are how people saw them — and those kept moving.



Model diagram with the five areas of change around a central idea of changing perspectives, showing the swing from confident progress to a more questioning view

Is the modern world getting better? Two strongest cases

Both use real evidence. Historians weigh both rather than picking one by instinct.



Two strongest positions on whether the modern world is getting better, one pointing to rising living standards and longer lives, the other pointing to environmental damage and uneven gains

2. The post-war frame: confident progress (1945–1960s) (vc2HH10K36)

To understand how perspectives *changed*, first meet the perspective that was there to change. In the decades after World War II, the dominant view in wealthy countries — including Australia, the United States and western Europe — was confident, forward-looking optimism.

Three beliefs made up this frame:

- **Technology would make life easier.** New machines for the home, the farm and the factory were welcomed as labour-savers and signs of a modern age. Advertising treated every new gadget as a small miracle.
- **Growth meant better lives.** A growing economy was assumed to lift everyone's living standards. More jobs, higher wages and cheaper goods were seen as proof that society was moving forward.
- **Science would conquer disease.** New medicines, vaccination programs and cleaner cities made death from infection seem avoidable in a way it had never seemed before.

This was not naive: for millions of people these decades *did* bring real gains — better housing, paid holidays, cars, and a longer, healthier life than their parents had known. Australia's long post-war boom, with its rising home ownership and full employment, is a good example. But the confidence also had limits. It tended to assume the gains would keep coming, that nature was a store of resources to use, and that what was good for growth was good for everyone. Parts 3 to 6 show how each of those assumptions came to be questioned.

Continuity and change. The post-war frame is the “before” of this section. As you read on, track what stays the same — people still wanted better, healthier, easier lives — and what changes — the growing habit of asking *at what cost*, and *for whom*.

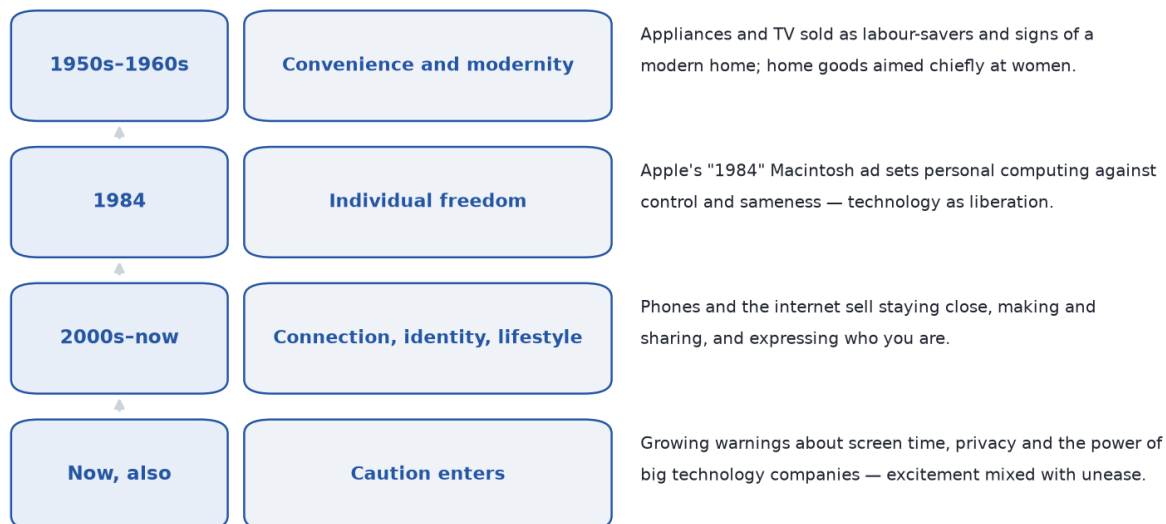
3. Technology: reading advertisements for changing perspectives (VC2HH10K36.E01)

One of the best ways to see how perspectives on technology changed is to look at how technology was sold. Advertisements are historical sources: they show what the makers believed people wanted, and what they thought would persuade them. Because advertising speaks to the values of its moment, comparing ads across time reveals a shift in values.

Figure 3 sets out the broad pattern across four moments.

How technology advertising has changed since 1945

Each era's ads show what the makers believed people valued — a direct source for changing perspectives (VC2HH10K36.E01).



the appeal moved from saving work, to freedom, to connection and identity — and lately to a mix of excitement and concern

Timeline table of technology advertising since 1945 showing how the appeal changed from convenience and modern life, to individual freedom, to connection and lifestyle, and now to convenience plus concern

The 1950s and 1960s — convenience and modern life. Early appliance and television advertising spoke mostly about saving effort and being up to date. Products for the home were aimed chiefly at women, promising to make housework faster and lighter. Television sets were sold as a window on the world and a mark of a modern household. The appeal was: *this is the future, and it will save you work*.

1984 — technology as individual freedom. A famous turning point is the Apple commercial known as “1984”, first shown widely in the United States on 22 January 1984 during the American football championship, the Super Bowl.

Directed by the film-maker Ridley Scott, it pictures a grey world in which rows of people watch a big screen showing a controlling leader, until a young woman hurls a hammer and smashes the screen. The message, spoken at the end, was that Apple's new Macintosh computer would be different — that personal computing would set people free rather than make them alike. Figure 4 is a source card for this advertisement. Notice how far the appeal had moved from “saves you work”: now technology was about freedom, individuality and rebellion.

The 2000s to now — connection, identity and lifestyle. From the spread of the internet and the arrival of smart phones, technology advertising increasingly sells not a machine but an experience: staying close to friends, making and sharing things, and expressing who you are. The device becomes part of a lifestyle and a personal identity, not just a tool.

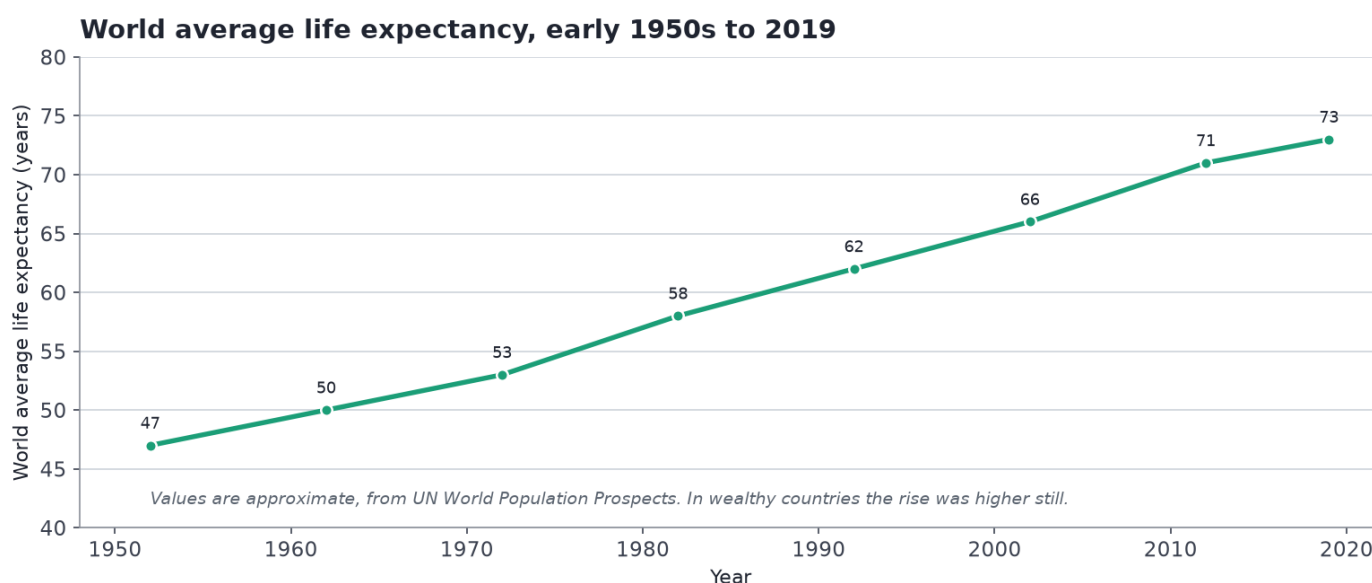
A note of caution enters. In the same recent decades, a different kind of message has grown louder too — warnings about too much screen time, about privacy, and about the power of the big technology companies. So today's perspective on technology is mixed: excitement and unease side by side. That mixture is itself a change from the untroubled confidence of the 1950s.

Why this matters for perspective. None of these ads tells the simple truth about the product; each tells the truth about what its makers thought people valued. The 1950s ad assumed you valued ease and being modern; the 1984 ad assumed you valued freedom and standing out; today's ads assume you value connection and self-expression. Comparing them is a direct way to *investigate and compare* changing perspectives, which is exactly what VC2HH10K36.E01 asks you to do. Worked source analysis 1 reads the “1984” ad in full.

4. Public health and longevity: from fate to prevention (VC2HH10K36.E02)

In 1945 most of the world's people still died young by today's standards, and deaths from infection were common. Over the following decades, public health improved greatly: cleaner water and sanitation, better food, and above all vaccination and new medicines. The World Health Organization declared smallpox wiped out in 1980 — the first human disease ever eradicated.

As a result, **life expectancy** rose fast. Figure 5 charts the world average. In the early 1950s a newborn could expect to live about 47 years on average; by 2019 the world average was about 73. In wealthy countries the rise was higher still: an Australian baby born around 1950 could expect to live into the high sixties, while one born today can expect to live into the early eighties.



Line chart of world average life expectancy rising from about 47 years in the early 1950s to about 73 years by 2019

The perspective change: death becomes preventable. The deeper change was in how people understood illness and early death. For most of history, early death was largely accepted as fate or bad luck. The public health movement changed that view: if disease spread through dirty water, crowded housing and lack of vaccination, then it could be *stopped* by clean water, better housing and vaccination. Illness moved from being something you endured to

something society could prevent. Governments took on new duties — providing clean water, sewers, school health checks and free or cheap immunisation — because the public came to believe that a long, healthy life was something everyone should have, not a matter of luck.

Longevity becomes a new question. Later, the very success of longer life produced new arguments. Populations with fewer children and more older people began to ask how they would care for the elderly and pay for their care and retirement. Some described population ageing as a problem to solve; others argued it was a triumph to be proud of, and that the real task was to help older people live well. This is a good example of a change producing a new perspective: the “problem” of an ageing society only exists because a great improvement already happened.

Whose perspective? The gains were not shared evenly. People in poorer countries, and poorer people within rich countries, gained later and less. A historian comparing sources from different places will find that “we all live longer now” is true on average but hides real gaps. Noticing whose voices are in a source — and whose are missing — is part of reading perspective.

5. Living standards: from counting income to measuring lives (VC2HH10K36.E02)

Living standards rose for many people after 1945: higher incomes, better housing, more goods and services. For a long time, the standard way to measure this progress was a country’s **income per person** (economists write this as GDP per person). The bigger a country’s income per head, the richer and more “developed” it was assumed to be.

The perspective change. From the late twentieth century, critics argued that income alone is a poor measure of how well people live. A country can have a high average income while many of its people are poor, sick or uneducated. Two of the most important voices were the economists **Amartya Sen** and **Mahbub ul Haq**. Working with the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**, they argued that development should be judged by what people are actually able to be and do — live a long, healthy life, gain knowledge, and enjoy a decent standard of living. Sen called these people’s **capabilities**.

In 1990 the UNDP published the first **Human Development Report**, and it opened with a line that stated the new perspective plainly: “*People are the real wealth of a nation.*” With it came a new measure, the **Human Development Index (HDI)**, which scores every country on three things rather than income alone. Figure 6 sets them out.

The Human Development Index measures three things, not income alone

UNDP, first Human Development Report, 1990 — ‘People are the real wealth of a nation.’ (VC2HH10K36.E02)

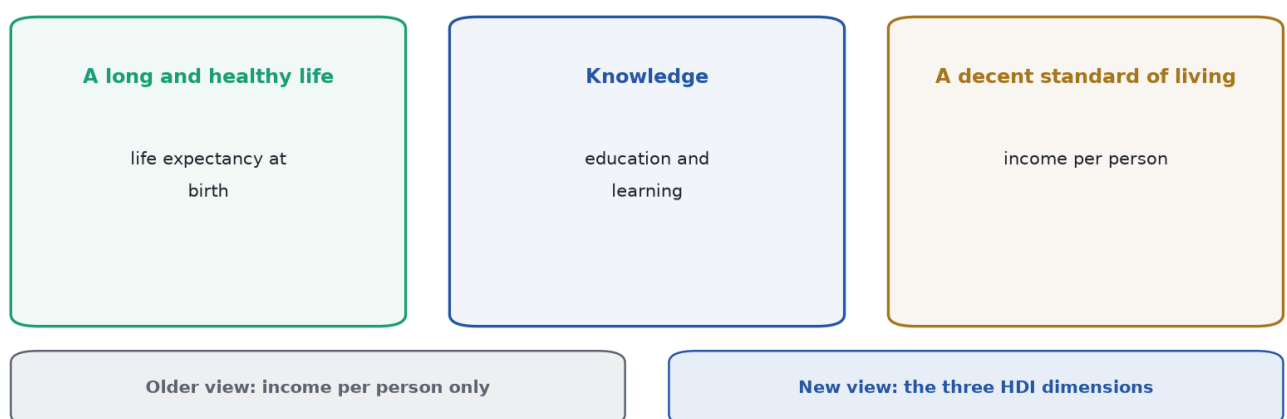


Table of the three Human Development Index dimensions — a long and healthy life, knowledge, and a decent standard of living — and what each measures

Why this is a change in perspective, not just a new statistic. The HDI changed what counted as progress. Two countries with similar incomes can have very different HDI scores if one spends its wealth on health and schooling and the other does not. The new measure pushed governments to show they were improving *lives*, not just growing *income*. It is a clear case of a perspective change becoming built into the way the world keeps score.

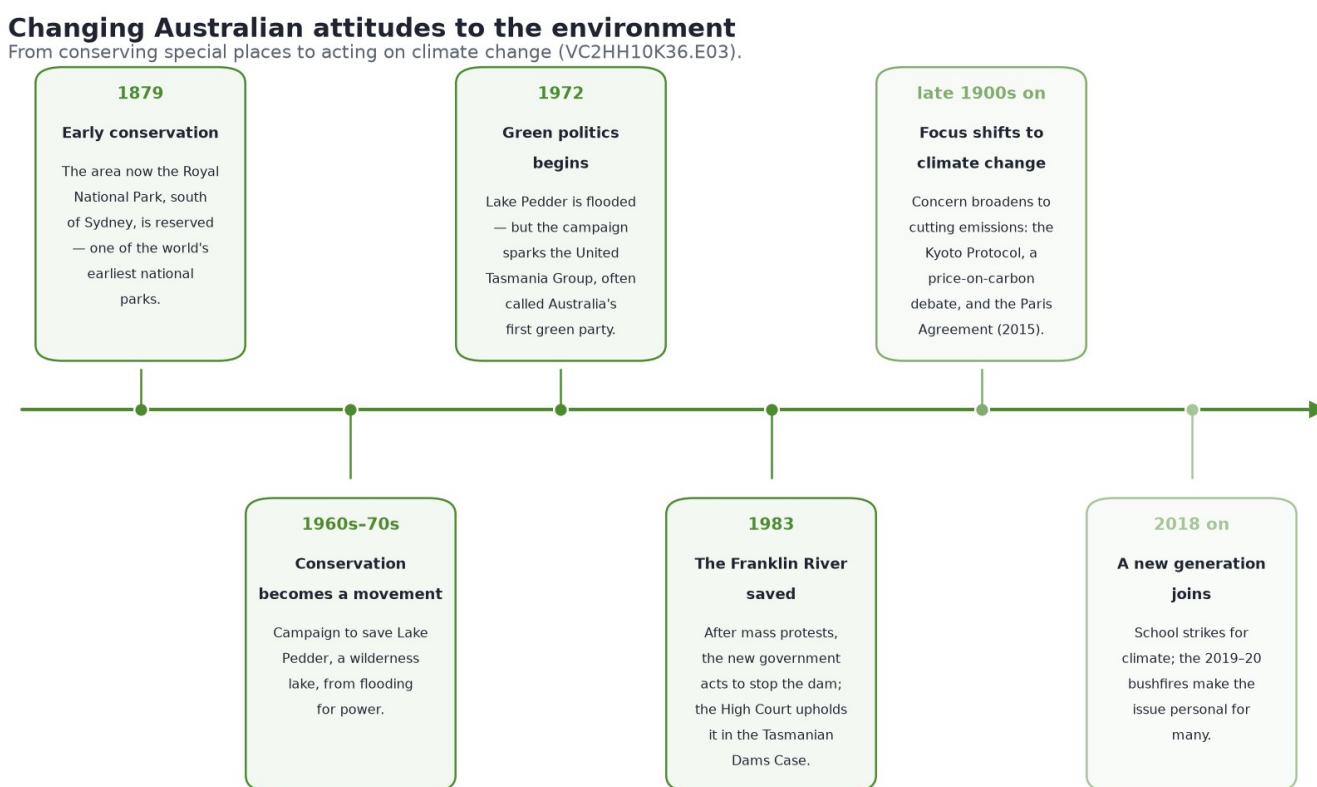
Tracking change with data. This is also the work that sources like the UNDP reports and the website **Our World in Data** do: they gather long-run statistics on health, education, poverty and living standards so that anyone can see how things have changed. Our World in Data, founded at the University of Oxford, makes a deliberate point of showing that on many measures — life expectancy, literacy, access to electricity, deaths of young children — the world has improved a great deal in living memory. Its purpose is to fight the common belief that everything is getting worse.

A fair hearing for both sides. The optimists argue that the data shows real, broad improvement and that recognising progress encourages us to keep at it. The critics answer that averages can flatter, that the gains are uneven, and that celebrating progress can be used to avoid fixing what is still wrong. Both positions use the same kind of evidence and reach different emphasis; a good historical answer weighs both rather than picking one by instinct. Worked source analysis 2 reads the UNDP’s opening line.

6. From saving wild places to facing climate change (VC2HH10K36.E03)

The fifth area is the environment, and here the perspective change is one of the clearest of the whole period. In Australia, concern for the environment grew through distinct stages, and its focus moved from **conservation** — protecting special natural places — toward acting on **climate change**.

Figure 7 sets out the Australian story as a timeline.



Timeline of changing Australian attitudes to the environment from early conservation and national parks, through the Lake Pedder and Franklin River campaigns, to the focus on climate change

Early conservation. Protecting nature has a long history. Australia set aside some of its first national parks before 1900 — the area now known as the Royal National Park, south of Sydney, was reserved in 1879 and is among the world’s oldest national parks. For much of the twentieth century, environmental concern mostly meant conserving scenery, wildlife and special places for people to enjoy.

The 1960s–70s: protecting places becomes a movement. From the 1960s, conservation became organised public action. In Tasmania, a campaign tried to save **Lake Pedder**, a wilderness lake, from being flooded to make electricity. The lake was flooded in 1972, but the campaign changed Australian politics: that same year campaigners formed the **United Tasmania Group**, often described as Australia’s first green political party and one of the first in the world. A decade later, the campaign to stop a dam on Tasmania’s **Franklin River** became a national cause. Protesters marched,

thousands were arrested, and the issue helped decide the 1983 federal election. The new government acted to protect the river, and the High Court upheld its power to do so in the famous *Tasmanian Dams Case*. Campaigners such as **Bob Brown**, later a founder and leader of the Australian Greens, became household names. In this stage, the environment was something specific and precious — a lake, a river, a forest — worth fighting for.

From conserving places to addressing climate change. From the late twentieth century, the movement’s centre of gravity shifted. As scientists gathered evidence that human activity was warming the planet, the focus broadened from saving particular places to cutting the emissions that cause global warming. Australia debated these questions hard: it signed the international **Kyoto Protocol**, later argued over a price on carbon in the early 2010s, and joined the **Paris Agreement** of 2015 to limit warming. Severe bushfires, droughts and floods kept the issue in front of the public; the devastating bushfire season of 2019–20 made it personal for many. Young people joined in large numbers, inspired by school strikes for climate that began overseas in 2018.

Continuity and change. The underlying goal — protecting the environment — continued throughout. What changed was the focus and the scale: from conserving a beautiful place for enjoyment, to understanding that human activity could change the whole climate, and that acting on it meant changing how the economy runs. The word *sustainability* came to capture this broader concern, in the sense defined in “Before we begin”.

Perspective note. Australians have not agreed about any of this. Some have argued that protecting the environment must come first; others that jobs and cheap energy must come first, and that change should be slow so communities are not hurt. Farmers, miners, scientists, young activists and governments have all seen the issue from different places. This section presents those views as a historian does — by whose perspective they are and why they hold it — not by picking a winner.

7. Bringing it together: what changed in people’s perspectives (vc2HH10K36)

The five parts of this section tell one story about how perspectives changed after 1945. Figure 8 summarises it: for each area, the earlier perspective and the later perspective.

What changed: earlier and later perspectives, side by side

The development changed the world; the perspective changed how people saw it.

Area	Earlier perspective	Later perspective
Technology	Labour-saving; a sign of being modern.	Freedom, then connection and identity; excitement mixed with concern.
Public health	Early death accepted as fate or bad luck.	Death from disease seen as something society can prevent.
Longevity	Living longer is a clear good.	Longer life also raises questions of care and ageing.
Living standards	Progress read mainly as more income and goods.	Progress also read as health, knowledge and equality (the HDI).
The environment	Nature as a store of resources; conserve special places.	Protect the whole climate; ask whether what we do can last.

one thread links all five: from confident progress to a more questioning view — at what cost, and for whom?

Summary table comparing earlier and later perspectives across technology, public health, longevity, living standards and the environment

Across all five areas, three shifts stand out:

- **From confidence to questioning.** The early post-war view was largely optimistic and uncritical; later views kept the hope of improvement but added hard questions about cost, fairness and limits.

- **From the individual to the whole.** Early perspectives often focused on one household's new machine or one person's health; later perspectives think in terms of whole populations, whole countries and, with the environment, the whole planet.
- **From one measure to many.** Progress was once read mainly as more income and more goods; it is now also read as health, knowledge, equality and whether what we do can last.

None of this means the earlier people were wrong and the later people are right. It means that each generation asks different questions of the same changes, and that historians use sources — advertisements, statistics, speeches, campaign posters — to recover those different ways of seeing. Recognising that perspectives change, and asking *why* they changed, is what it means to think historically about the modern world.

As you move through the rest of this book, watch for these perspective questions returning. Section 6B looks at the origins of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, another case of people rethinking what progress should mean after 1945, and sections 6C to 6F investigate specific global developments and the perspectives of those who lived through them.

Sources for this section

Retrieval date for all online sources: **26 August 2026.**

1. Apple Inc., “1984” television commercial for the Macintosh computer, first shown widely in the United States on 22 January 1984 during the Super Bowl XVIII broadcast; directed by Ridley Scott (content described in Figure 4 and Worked source analysis 1).
2. United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 1990* (opening line “People are the real wealth of a nation”; first Human Development Index), hdr.undp.org.
3. United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Index — the three dimensions: a long and healthy life, knowledge, and a decent standard of living, hdr.undp.org.
4. Our World in Data, University of Oxford (long-run data on life expectancy, health, poverty and living standards; founded by Max Roser), ourworldindata.org.
5. World Health Organization, smallpox eradication declared 1980, who.int.
6. United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects* (world life expectancy estimates, early 1950s to 2019), population.un.org.
7. World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (1987) — the definition of sustainable development used in this section.
8. National Museum Australia and National Library of Australia (Trove) — Lake Pedder campaign and the United Tasmania Group (1972), nma.gov.au; trove.nla.gov.au.
9. High Court of Australia, *Commonwealth v Tasmania* (1983) — the Tasmanian Dams Case, upholding Commonwealth protection of the Franklin River area, austlii.edu.au.
10. Australian Government / United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change — Australia's participation in the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement (2015), unfccc.int.

Worked source analysis

Historians use **sources** to recover past perspectives. A **primary source** comes from the time being studied (an advertisement, speech, law or poster). A **secondary source** is made later by someone studying the past (a textbook or documentary). Let us analyse two primary sources together, one for technology and one for living standards.

Source 1 — a technology advertisement (VC2HH10K36.E01)

Source 1 — a technology advertisement (described)

Apple, "1984" television commercial for the Macintosh, first shown widely in the USA on 22 January 1984 during the Super Bowl; directed by Ridley Scott.

What the advertisement shows

A grey crowd sits in rows, watching a big screen on which a commanding leader speaks. A young woman, dressed in bright colours, runs in and hurls a hammer at the screen, smashing it in a burst of light. Closing words promise that Apple's new Macintosh computer will be different, and that 1984 will not be like '1984'.

What it asks you to believe

- Technology should free the individual, not make everyone the same.
- Buying this product is a way to stand out, not to conform.
- The real enemy is control and sameness, and the computer is on your side.

primary source (made in 1984) · persuasive source · read for what it assumes, not just what it says

Source card describing the Apple 1984 Macintosh advertisement: a grey crowd watches a big screen until a young woman smashes it with a hammer

Worked analysis. Here is how a historian works through this source.

1. **What kind of source is it?** A primary source — an advertisement made in 1984 to sell a new product, the Apple Macintosh computer. It is also a *persuasive* source, made to win people over, so we read it for what it assumes, not just what it says.
2. **Context.** It appeared in 1984, when personal computers were new to most homes and many people feared that computers meant being watched or controlled. The title and images play on a well-known novel about a future of total control.
3. **Content.** A grey crowd sits in rows watching a big screen that shows a commanding leader, until a young woman runs in and smashes the screen with a hammer. The closing words promise that the new computer will make 1984 “not like ‘1984’”.
4. **Perspective.** This is the perspective of a company that wants to sell computers, but it speaks to a wider 1980s view: that technology should free the individual, not make everyone the same. It sets up “freedom” against “control” and invites the buyer to see themselves on the side of freedom.
5. **Message.** Technology is a tool of personal freedom and rebellion against sameness; buying this product is a way to stand out, not conform.
6. **Usefulness and limits.** The source is highly useful for seeing how technology was being sold and what 1980s audiences were assumed to value. Its limit: it tells us about the *selling* of a perspective, not about what ordinary buyers actually thought, and a persuasive source always needs to be checked against other evidence. To understand real views, we would add letters, reviews and sales figures.

Source 2 — a new way to measure progress (VC2HH10K36.E02)

Source 2. Opening line of the United Nations Development Programme’s first *Human Development Report*, 1990.

“People are the real wealth of a nation.”

— United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 1990*, opening line.

Worked analysis.

1. **What kind of source is it?** A primary source for this topic: the opening statement of an official international report from 1990. It is an *argument* in one line — a claim about what development is for.
2. **Context.** It was written when most measures of progress used a country’s income per person. The economists Amartya Sen and Mahbub ul Haq, working with the UNDP, were arguing that this was too narrow.

3. **Content.** The line redefines wealth: a nation's true wealth is not its money but its people. The report that follows turns that idea into a measure — the HDI — scoring health, knowledge and living standards together.
4. **Perspective.** This is the perspective of development thinkers who wanted the focus moved from economic growth to human lives. It is a deliberate challenge to the older income-only view.
5. **Message.** Progress should be judged by how people live, not just by how much a country earns.
6. **Usefulness and limits.** The source is very useful for marking a turning point in how progress was measured, and the HDI it launched is still used today. Its limit: a single line is a slogan, not the full argument, and whether the HDI really captures a good life is itself debated. Weigh it against critics who say averages can still hide poverty and inequality.

Notice the shape of the reasoning in both: identify, give context, describe content, name the perspective, state the message, then weigh usefulness and limits. Use this shape for any source.

Practice questions

With help

Q1. Key ideas. (a) Define **perspective** and **progress** as this section uses them. (b) Give the five areas of change this section studies. (c) What is the difference between a development and a perspective on it? Use one example.

Q2. The post-war frame. (a) Name the three beliefs that made up the confident view of the early post-war decades. (b) Give one reason that view seemed justified at the time. (c) Give one limit of that confident view.

Q3. Technology and advertising (VC2HH10K36.E01). Use Figure 3. (a) Describe the main appeal of technology advertising in the 1950s and 1960s. (b) How did the appeal change by the time of the Apple “1984” ad in 1984? (c) Why is an advertisement a useful source for a historian studying perspectives?

Q4. Public health and longevity (VC2HH10K36.E02). Use Figure 5. (a) What was the world average life expectancy in the early 1950s, and what was it by 2019? (b) Give two reasons public health improved after 1945. (c) Explain what changed in how people understood early death.

Q5. Living standards (VC2HH10K36.E02). Use Figure 6. (a) Name the two thinkers and the organisation behind the Human Development Index. (b) List the three things the HDI measures. (c) Why is the HDI described as a change in perspective, not just a new statistic?

Q6. The environment in Australia (VC2HH10K36.E03). Use Figure 7. (a) What did early environmental concern mostly focus on? (b) Name one campaign from the 1960s–80s that helped build the Australian environmental movement and say what it aimed to protect. (c) Describe how the movement's focus changed from the late twentieth century.

On your own

Q7. Comparing perspectives. Choose one of the five areas. Describe the earlier perspective and the later perspective on it, and explain one cause of the change. Use evidence from this section.

Q8. Reading an advertisement. Find or recall an advertisement for a piece of technology (a phone, a game, a household device). State what it is trying to make you value, and say what a historian in the future could learn from it about your time.

Q9. Sources and measurement. “Income per person is enough to tell us how well a country is doing.” Do you agree? Use the HDI and at least one argument from part 5 to support your answer. Weigh both sides before you decide.

Q10. Continuity and change. Identify one feature of attitudes to the environment in Australia that **changed** between 1945 and the present, and one that **continued**. Justify each with evidence from part 6.

Q11. Significance. “Which change in perspective since 1945 mattered most — the way people came to see technology, health, living standards, or the environment?” State your choice, give two criteria you used to judge significance, and argue your case in one paragraph.

Q12. Progress debate. Using Figure 2, write one sentence stating the optimistic view and one sentence stating the questioning view. Then say which you find better supported by the evidence in this section, and why.

Answers

Q1. (a) A perspective is the point of view of a person or group, shaped by who they are and what they value; progress is the idea that life is getting better over time and will keep improving. (b) Technology, public health, longevity, living standards, and the environment. (c) A development is a change in the world; a perspective is how people see it. Example: the washing machine is the development; seeing it as freedom from housework is a perspective.

Q2. (a) Technology would make life easier; economic growth meant better living standards; science would conquer disease. (b) For millions, the decades did bring real gains — better housing, paid holidays, cars, longer and healthier lives. (c) It assumed the gains would keep coming, that nature was a store of resources to use, and that growth was good for everyone.

Q3. (a) It sold convenience, saving effort and being modern, with home products aimed chiefly at women. (b) It shifted to freedom, individuality and rebellion against sameness — technology as setting the individual free. (c) An ad shows what its makers believed people valued and what they thought would persuade them, so it is evidence of the values of its moment.

Q4. (a) About 47 years in the early 1950s; about 73 by 2019. (b) Any two: cleaner water and sanitation, better food, vaccination and new medicines, better housing. (c) Early death moved from being accepted as fate or bad luck to being seen as something society could prevent through clean water, housing and vaccination.

Q5. (a) Amartya Sen and Mahbub ul Haq, working with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (b) A long and healthy life; knowledge; and a decent standard of living. (c) Because it changed what counted as progress — from income alone to how people actually live — and pushed governments to improve lives, not just grow income.

Q6. (a) Conserving scenery, wildlife and special places, such as national parks, for people to enjoy. (b) Example: the campaign to save Lake Pedder (a wilderness lake) from being flooded; or the campaign to stop the Franklin River dam (a wild river). (c) It broadened from saving particular places to acting on climate change — cutting emissions and changing how the economy runs.

Q7. Answers will vary. Example (technology): earlier perspective — technology as labour-saving and a sign of being modern; later perspective — technology as freedom, then as connection and identity, mixed with concern about screen time and privacy. One cause: as devices moved into everyday life and became personal, advertisers and users began to value what they let people *be* and *do*, not just the work they saved.

Q8. Answers will vary. A strong answer names what the ad appeals to (for example, status, fun, connection, fear of missing out) and states what a future historian could infer about what people in this time valued.

Q9. Answers will vary. Award: a clear position; use of the HDI and its three dimensions; at least one argument from part 5 (e.g. averages can hide poverty; health and knowledge matter as well as income); and a fair treatment of the other side (income is a real and useful measure of living standards).

Q10. Changed (example): the focus moved from conserving special places to acting on climate change. Continued (example): the underlying goal of protecting the environment, and disagreement about how fast and at what cost to act. Justification must use part 6 evidence (for example, Lake Pedder and the Franklin River for the earlier focus; the Paris Agreement and school strikes for the later).

Q11. Answers will vary. Award: a clear choice; two stated criteria (for example, how many people it affected, how much it changed daily life, how many consequences it produced); and a paragraph arguing the case with section evidence.

Q12. Answers will vary. Optimistic view (example): life really has improved — people live longer and enjoy higher living standards than ever before. Questioning view (example): the gains have come with environmental damage and have not been shared evenly. The judgement should name which body of evidence is being weighed.

Fully-worked solutions

Q1.

- (a) A **perspective** is the point of view of a person or a group, shaped by who they are, where they stand, and what they value and believe. **Progress** is the idea that life is getting better over time and will continue to improve. Both words are contested, which is why the section defines them up front.
- (b) The five areas are technology, public health, longevity, living standards, and the environment.
- (c) A development is a change in the world; a perspective is how people see and value that change. Example: a household's first washing machine in the 1950s is the development. The family seeing it as freedom from hours of hand-washing, the shop seeing it as profit, and a later historian seeing it as evidence of rising living standards are three different perspectives on the same development.

Q2.

- (a) The three beliefs: that technology would make life easier; that economic growth meant better living standards for all; and that science would conquer disease.
- (b) The view seemed justified because the decades really did bring gains for millions of people: better housing, paid holidays, cars, home ownership, and a longer, healthier life than their parents had known. Australia's long post-war boom is one example.
- (c) Its limits: it assumed the gains would keep coming forever, that nature was a store of resources to use, and that what was good for growth was good for everyone. The later parts of the section show each of those assumptions being questioned.

Q3.

- (a) In the 1950s and 1960s, technology advertising sold convenience, saving effort and being up to date. Products for the home were aimed chiefly at women and promised to make housework faster and lighter; television sets were sold as a window on the world and a mark of a modern household.
- (b) By 1984 the appeal had shifted to freedom, individuality and rebellion against sameness. The Apple "1984" ad pictured a grey, controlled world being smashed open, and promised that personal computing would set people free rather than make them alike. Technology was now about what it let you *be*, not just the work it saved.
- (c) An advertisement is a useful historical source because it shows what its makers believed people wanted and what they thought would persuade them. Because advertising speaks to the values of its moment, comparing ads across time reveals how those values — and therefore perspectives on technology — changed. Its limit is that it is persuasive, so it must be checked against other evidence.

Q4.

- (a) World average life expectancy was about 47 years in the early 1950s and about 73 years by 2019.
- (b) Two reasons: cleaner water and sanitation, and vaccination together with new medicines. (Also accepted: better food, better housing, and the wider public health work of governments.)
- (c) For most of history early death was largely accepted as fate or bad luck. The public health movement changed that view: because disease spread through dirty water, crowded housing and lack of vaccination, it could be stopped by clean water, better housing and vaccination. Illness moved from something to endure to something society could prevent, and governments took on new duties to provide these things.

Q5.

- (a) The economists Amartya Sen and Mahbub ul Haq, working with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
- (b) The HDI measures a long and healthy life (life expectancy), knowledge (education), and a decent standard of living (income).
- (c) The HDI is a change in perspective, not just a new statistic, because it changed what counted as progress. Instead of judging a country by income per person alone, it judged it by how people actually live. Two countries with similar incomes can score very differently if one spends its wealth on health and schooling, so the new measure pushed governments to improve lives, not just grow income.

Q6.

- (a) Early environmental concern mostly focused on conservation — protecting scenery, wildlife and special places, such as national parks, for people to enjoy.
- (b) Example: the campaign to save Lake Pedder, a wilderness lake in Tasmania, from being flooded to make electricity; or the campaign to stop a dam on the Franklin River. Each aimed to protect a specific, precious natural place.
- (c) From the late twentieth century the movement's focus broadened from saving particular places to acting on climate change — cutting the emissions that cause global warming and changing how the economy runs. Australia's debates over the Kyoto Protocol, a price on carbon and the Paris Agreement, and the school strikes, are evidence of this later focus.

Q7.

Model answer (technology). The earlier perspective on technology, in the 1950s and 1960s, saw it as labour-saving and as a sign of being modern: advertising promised to make housework easier and to bring the future into the home. The later perspective, from the 1980s on, came to see technology as a matter of freedom, then of connection, identity and lifestyle — and, more recently, as something to be excited about and uneasy about at once.

One cause of the change: as devices moved from shared household machines into personal, pocket-sized ones, they became part of how people express who they are and stay close to others. Advertisers followed that shift, and so did users. At the same time, the growing power of technology companies and worries about screen time and privacy added the unease. The change in perspective was caused by the change in what the technology was *for* in everyday life.

Q8.

Model answer. Advertisement chosen: a smart-phone ad that shows friends sharing photos and video at a concert.

What it tries to make me value: connection, shared experience and not missing out. It does not sell the machine's parts; it sells the feeling of being close to other people and being part of a moment.

What a future historian could learn: that in this time people valued staying connected and sharing experiences, that social life was mediated by personal devices, and that companies believed belonging and fear of missing out were strong motives. The ad would be evidence of early twenty-first-century values, not just of the phone itself.

Q9.

Model answer. I disagree that income per person is enough. Income is a real and useful measure of living standards, but it does not tell the whole story of how well people live.

The Human Development Index was created exactly because income alone is too narrow. It scores three things: a long and healthy life, knowledge, and a decent standard of living. Two countries with similar incomes can have very different HDI scores if one spends its wealth on health and schooling and the other does not. So a country can look rich on income while many of its people are sick or uneducated.

The argument for income is that it is easy to measure and does capture a lot — higher incomes usually mean better housing, food and goods. That is a fair point, and income remains part of the HDI. But because averages can flatter

and can hide poverty and inequality, income alone is not enough. Measuring progress needs health and knowledge as well.

Q10.

Model answer. One feature that **changed**: the focus of Australian environmental concern. In the 1960s–80s it centred on conserving specific places — the campaign to save Lake Pedder from flooding and the campaign to stop the Franklin River dam. By the late twentieth century and after, the focus had shifted to acting on climate change — cutting emissions, through debates over the Kyoto Protocol, a price on carbon and the Paris Agreement, and through school strikes. The environment moved from a set of special places to save to a whole system to protect.

One feature that **continued**: the underlying goal of protecting the environment, and the disagreement about how fast and at what cost to act. Throughout the period, some Australians argued protection must come first, while others argued that jobs and cheap energy must come first. That tension between protecting nature and protecting livelihoods ran from the conservation era through to the climate debates.

Q11.

Model answer (one of several defensible choices). Choice: the change in perspective on the environment.

Criteria used: (1) how many people the change affects, and (2) how much it changes what societies decide to do.

Argument: the change in how people see the environment matters most because it is the only one that affects the conditions every other improvement depends on. Technology, health and living standards can all be undermined if the climate and the natural world are damaged. And this change in perspective has already forced societies to act — creating national parks, stopping dams, signing international agreements like the Paris Agreement, and beginning to change how energy is made. No other change in perspective has yet altered so many decisions at once, from what we protect to how we power our lives. Other choices — such as the new way of measuring living standards through the HDI — could be argued with equal care; on these two criteria, the environmental change in perspective has the widest reach and the deepest effect on what societies choose to do.

Q12.

Model answer. Optimistic view: life really has improved since 1945 — people live longer, fewer children die young, and more people enjoy higher living standards than ever before, so the world is getting better.

Questioning view: those gains have come at a cost — damage to the environment, including a warming climate — and they have not been shared evenly, so the story of progress is only true in part and can be used to avoid fixing what is still wrong.

Which is better supported: on the evidence in this section, both are right in part, but the questioning view is better supported as a guide to what still needs doing. The data on longer lives and higher living standards is strong and real, so the optimism is not false. Yet the section shows that every gain produced new problems — longer lives brought questions of care for the elderly, growth brought environmental strain — and that the gains were uneven. Recognising progress and questioning its cost and fairness are not opposites; the best-supported position holds both, which is exactly the perspective this section has traced.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: how it came about and why it matters

Curriculum trace — Victorian Curriculum 2.0 History, Levels 9 and 10

Owns VC2HH10K37

Draws on — VC2HH10K37.E01, VC2HH10K37.E02, VC2HH10K37.E03

Scope note — this section teaches the whole content description: the causes (.E01), the present significance (.E02), and the Australian story, including the movements and laws named in .E03. The Australian movements taught here are the women's, migrant and refugee, and disability movements, matching the rest of this book.

Builds on — Chapter 4 of this book and section 1F.

In December 1948, in a war-shattered world, the nations of the new United Nations agreed on one list of rights belonging to every human being on Earth: the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**. It was not a treaty and it created no court. Yet it became the starting point for most of the human rights law that exists today, in Australia and around the world. This section asks two historian's questions: **where did it come from?** (origins) and **does it matter?** (significance).

Before we begin: what do these words mean?

Some words in this section are **contested** or technical. We state the sense used here, so every question can be answered on that sense alone.

- **Human rights.** Rights that belong to every person simply because they are human — not gifts from a government, so not things a government can rightly take away. This is the sense given by the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) itself. Other definitions exist and are not interchangeable with this one.
- **Declaration, treaty, covenant.** A **declaration** is a formal statement of what states say they stand for; by itself it is not binding law. A **treaty** (also called a **covenant** or **convention**) is an agreement in writing that binds the states who agree to it in law. We state this distinction because the Declaration's power came mostly from what grew out of it.
- **Ratify.** When a state agrees to a treaty in law, after signing it. A signature starts the process; ratifying finishes it.
- **Abstain.** In a vote, to choose not to vote for or against.
- **The Holocaust.** The systematic mass murder of about six million Jews, and millions of others, by Hitler's regime during World War II. This is the sense used in Chapter 4 of this book; the curriculum uses the same term in elaboration VC2HH10K37.E01.
- **Displaced person.** Someone driven from their home by war or persecution, needing to rebuild life somewhere else.
- **Dignity.** The worth that the Declaration says every human being is born with; in this section, the idea that every person deserves to be treated as a person, not a thing.
- **Significance and criteria.** Historians judge **significance** (how much something matters) using **criteria** — stated tests such as: how many people did it reach, how long has it lasted, how deep does it reach, and is it still doing work today?

Keep these meanings in mind as you read. When a question asks whether the Declaration “matters”, notice *which criterion* the answer uses.

Theory

1. Causes: a world that had seen the worst (VC2HH10K37.E01)

The Declaration did not appear from nowhere. It was a response. Figure 1 sets out the road from world war to world standard, and Figure 2 groups the causes.

From world war to world standards: the road to the Declaration, 1939-1948

Each step from the war's destruction pushed the world toward a shared statement of human rights (Section 6B, parts 1-2).

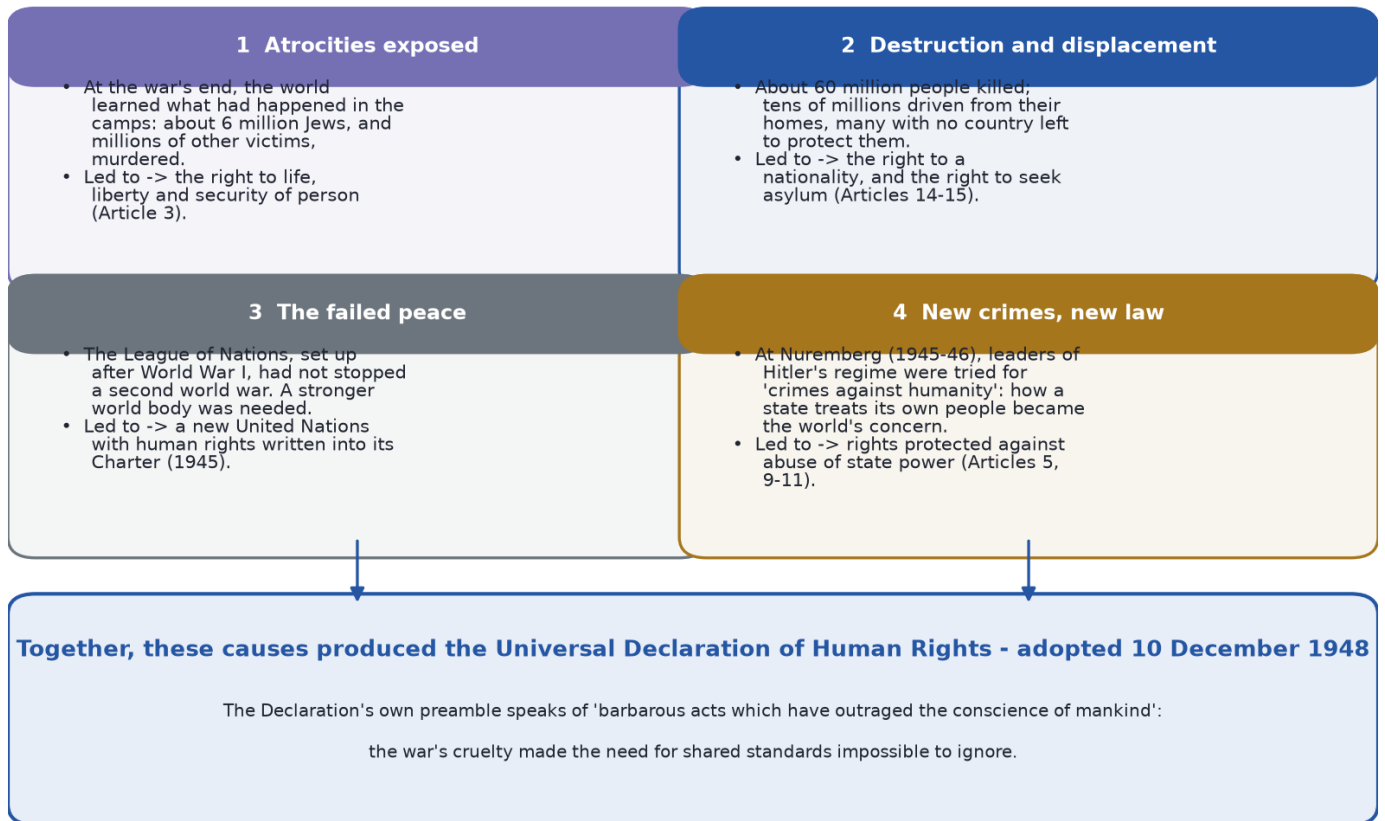


Dates per UN records and standard histories of the Declaration (see Sources for this section).

Vertical timeline from 1939 to 10 December 1948 showing World War II beginning, the Holocaust, the founding of the United Nations, the end of the war, the Nuremberg trials, the UN Commission on Human Rights, the drafting committee, and the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Paris

Why did the world write a declaration of human rights in 1948?

Four causes, and what each one wrote into the Declaration (Section 6B, part 1; elaboration VC2HH10K37.E01).



'Barbarous acts' wording: preamble, Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Article numbers as adopted.

Diagram of four causes of the Declaration - the Holocaust and war crimes, the scale of death and displaced people, the failure of the old system to stop it, and the new United Nations with human rights in its Charter - all pointing to one outcome, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1948

The elaboration names two causes directly. The first: the **atrocities of the Holocaust**. The second: **destruction and displacement on an immense scale**, the direct result of World War II. About six million Jews and millions of others had been murdered; about sixty million people had died in the war as a whole, most of them civilians; tens of millions were displaced, with no home to go back to. The war's winners asked a hard question: how had a civilised continent done this, and how could the world say, in one voice, *never again*?

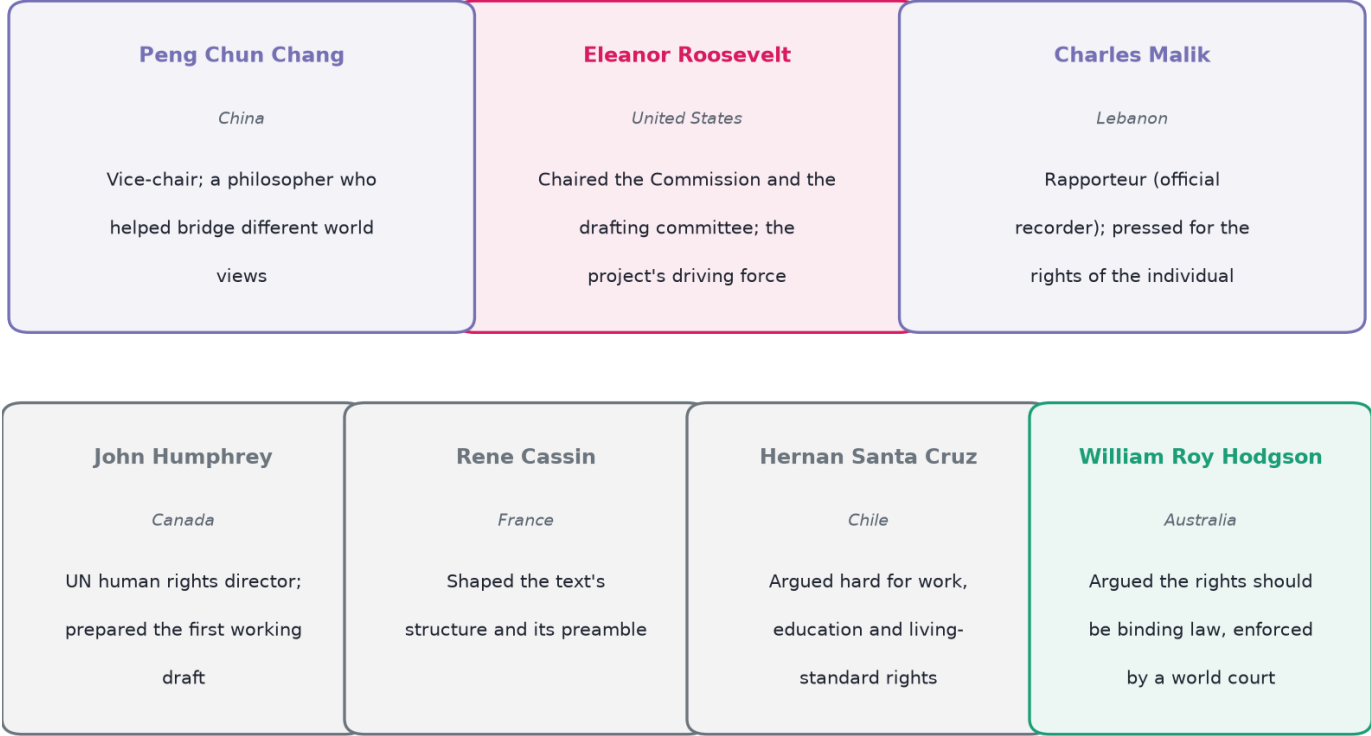
Two further causes sit behind the elaboration's words. First, the **Nuremberg trials** (from November 1945) put leaders of Hitler's regime on trial and named a new idea in law: **crimes against humanity** — acts so wrong that the world itself calls them crimes, even when a government orders them against its own people. Second, the **United Nations Charter** (signed June 1945 by 51 founding members, including Australia) already promised to promote "universal respect for, and observance of, human rights" — but never said what those rights were. The Declaration was written to fill that gap.

2. Writing the Declaration, 1946–1948 (VC2HH10K37.E01)

In 1946 the UN set up its **Commission on Human Rights**, and in 1947 a small drafting committee began the work. Figure 3 shows the key people. Notice that they came from many countries and many world views — the text was negotiated word by word.

The drafting room, 1946-1948

Key people behind the Declaration - and Australia's Colonel William Roy Hodgson among them (Section 6B, part 2).



The Declaration was negotiated word by word by the UN's member states; these people did the drafting work.

Australia's role ->

Roles per UN records of the Commission on Human Rights and its drafting committee (1946-48).

Diagram of the seven key drafters: Eleanor Roosevelt of the United States as chair, Peng Chun Chang of China as vice-chair, Charles Malik of Lebanon as rapporteur, John Humphrey of Canada who prepared the first draft, Rene Cassin of France who shaped the structure, Hernan Santa Cruz of Chile who argued for economic and social rights, and William Roy Hodgson of Australia who argued for binding law

The committee worked through more than a hundred votes on single phrases. The result was thirty articles. The whole document opens with its boldest claim, in Article 1. Study it as Source 1 (Figure 4) — you will analyse it in Worked example 1.

Source 1 - Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

A primary source: the document itself, exactly as adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948.

*"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.
They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards
one another in a spirit of brotherhood."*

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 1

Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, resolution 217 A (III), 10 December 1948, Paris

What to notice

- 'All human beings' - the rights belong to everyone, everywhere, not just citizens of one country.
- 'Born free and equal' - rights come with being human; no government gives them, so none can rightly take them away.
- 'Dignity' - the word that opens the whole Declaration, chosen after the war's cruelty.

Text verbatim from the adopted Declaration (United Nations, 1948).

Source card quoting Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights exactly as adopted on 10 December 1948 - all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, endowed with reason and conscience, and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood - with three things to notice

On **10 December 1948**, at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris, the UN **General Assembly** — meeting under the presidency of Australia's Dr H. V. Evatt — adopted the Declaration as resolution **217 A (III)**. Every 10 December since, the world marks **Human Rights Day**.

3. Australia's involvement (VC2HH10K37)

The content description names Australia's involvement specifically. Australia was at the table at every stage (Figure 5), and the final vote (Figure 6) shows how the world received the text.

Australia at the table

Four ways Australia helped shape the Declaration and its adoption (Section 6B, part 3; the content description's Australia strand).

Dr H. V. Evatt

Attorney-General and Minister for External Affairs

A leading voice at the 1945 San Francisco conference that founded the UN; in 1948-49 he presided over the UN General Assembly - the session that adopted the Declaration on 10 December 1948.

Colonel William Roy Hodgson

Australia's representative on the Commission on Human Rights and its drafting committee

Argued that a declaration of words was not enough: he wanted the rights set down as binding law, enforced by a world court where people could complain. He lost that fight in 1948 - but his push shaped what came next.

Jessie Street

The only woman in Australia's delegation at San Francisco (1945)

First vice-president of the UN Commission on the Status of Women; worked with Eleanor Roosevelt so that the new UN's Charter and human rights work covered women as well as men.

Australia

Founding member of the United Nations (1945)

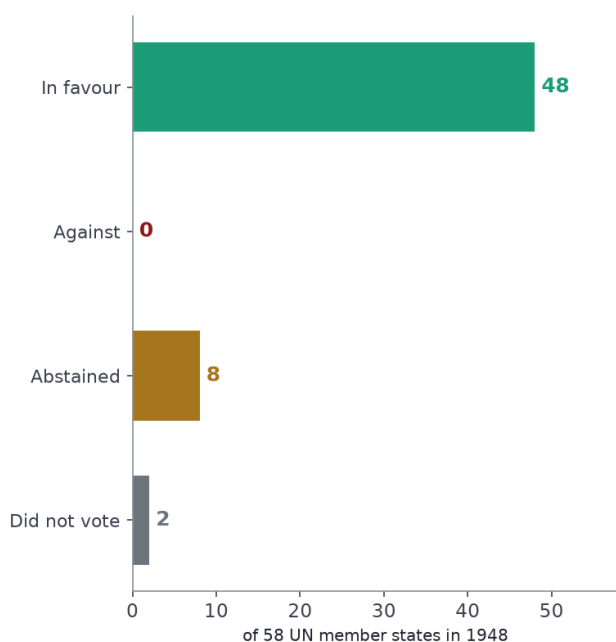
Voted in favour of the Declaration on 10 December 1948; later agreed to the binding treaties that grew from it (see Figure 8).

Roles per UN records and Australian Dictionary of Biography entries for Evatt, Hodgson and Street (see Sources for this section).

Diagram of four Australian roles: Dr H. V. Evatt, Attorney-General and Minister for External Affairs, who presided over the General Assembly session that adopted the Declaration; Colonel William Roy Hodgson, who argued for binding law enforced by a world court; Jessie Street, the only woman in Australia's delegation at San Francisco; and Australia as a founding UN member voting in favour

The vote, 10 December 1948 (UN resolution 217 A (III))

Not one state voted against - but eight abstained, for very different reasons (Section 6B, part 3).



The eight abstentions - and why

The Soviet bloc: USSR, Byelorussia, Ukraine, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia

They said the Declaration did not go far enough, and they guarded their own governments' power.

South Africa

Its new government was building a system of racial separation and did not want the equality articles applied to it.

Saudi Arabia

It objected to the right to change one's religion (Article 18) and to equal marriage rights (Article 16).

Honduras and Yemen did not vote at all.

Not one state voted against. Even the abstaining states would not openly reject human rights - evidence of how quickly the idea had become the accepted standard.

Ask: the three abstaining groups gave very different reasons - what does that tell you?

Vote record per United Nations General Assembly records for resolution 217 A (III), 10 December 1948.

Bar chart of the vote of 10 December 1948: 48 in favour, 0 against, 8 abstained, 2 not voting; with a panel explaining the three very different reasons of the eight abstaining states

Australia's own representative, Colonel Hodgson, also dissented in his way: he argued a declaration of words was not enough, and pushed for the rights to be written as binding law with a court to enforce them. He lost in 1948. Keep his argument in mind — part 5 shows how far it travelled.

Thirty articles is a lot; historians group them. Figure 7 shows the shape of the whole: two foundation articles, then two families of rights.

Selected articles, in plain words (Section 6B, part 4). The full text has 30 articles: these show the shape of the whole.

Many negotiators in 1948 - including Chile's
Hernan Santa Cruz - argued these rights
mattered as much as the first family.

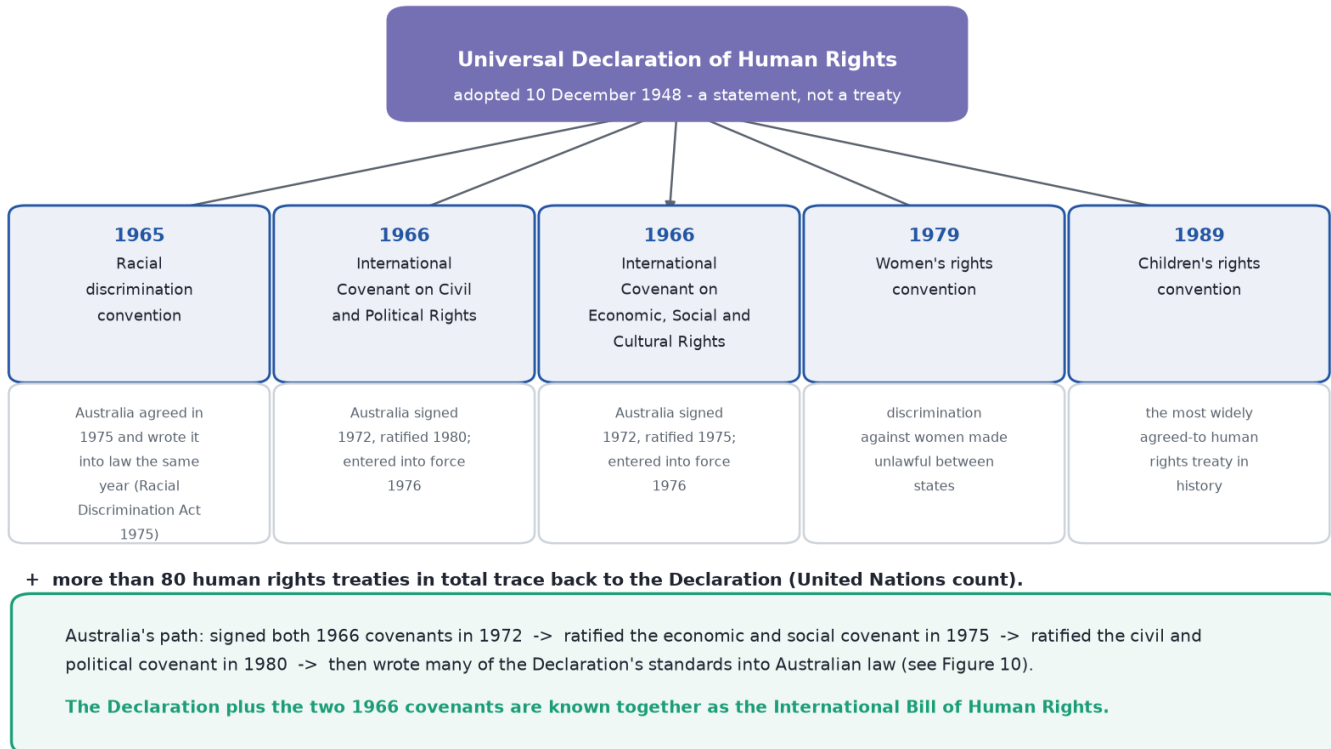
The **civil and political family** protects a person from abuse of power and gives them a voice: no torture, no arrest without lawful reason, freedom of thought and speech, the right to take part in government. The **economic, social and cultural family** protects the conditions for a life of dignity: work and equal pay, rest, a standard of living good enough for health, education. In 1948 these two families were agreed together as one list — and which family should come first has been a live argument between states ever since, which is exactly the kind of contested question historians analyse rather than take sides on.

5. From statement to law: present significance (VC2HH10K37.E02)

The Declaration was **not itself binding law**. So why does it matter? Because it became the seed from which binding law grew. Figure 8 traces the family tree.

From declaration to law: what the UDHR grew into

The Declaration was not binding law - but it became the foundation of international human rights law (Section 6B, part 5; elaboration VC2HH10K37.E02).



Treaty dates per United Nations records; Australia's signing and ratification dates per UN treaty records (see Sources for this section).

Family tree from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 to the 1965 racial discrimination convention, the two 1966 covenants, the 1979 women's rights convention and the 1989 children's rights convention, with Australia's signing and ratifying dates under each, and a note that more than 80 human rights treaties trace back to the Declaration

The two **1966 covenants** turned the Declaration's two families of rights into binding treaty law; together with the Declaration they are known as the **International Bill of Human Rights**. More than 80 human rights treaties in total trace back to the 1948 text. That is the core of the "it matters" case: a statement became law, treaty by treaty, over decades — a long-term consequence of exactly the kind the achievement standard asks you to analyse.

The Declaration's reach runs wider than treaties. It is quoted in courts around the world, it shaped national constitutions, and **Human Rights Day** keeps it in public memory. Campaigners for women's rights, for refugees, for people with disabilities, and against racial discrimination have all used it as a shared standard to hold their own governments to.

6. How significant? Two positions, each at full strength (VC2HH10K37.E02)

Significance is contested, so this section states both positions in their strongest form (Figure 9). Your job is not to pick a side on feeling, but to judge with criteria.

How significant is the Declaration? Two positions, each at full strength

Section 6B, part 6 (elaboration VC2HH10K37.E02). Both sides are stated as their holders would state them.

Why it matters	Why critics say it is limited
• First time nations agreed on one list of rights for all people. • It became law: the 1966 covenants, then 80+ later treaties. • It shaped Australian law - from the 1975 Act to the charters. • It gives campaigners and courts a shared standard to use. • Still the yardstick: Human Rights Day, every 10 December.	• A declaration, not a treaty: no police and no court behind it. • Serious abuses have continued since 1948 - words did not stop them. • Some states that voted for it broke the rights at home. • In 1948 the UN had 58 members; colonised peoples had no voice. • Each state decides whether to put the rights into its own law.

Your task as a historian is not to pick a side on feeling, but to judge with criteria: how many people has it reached, how long has it lasted, how deep does it reach - and is it still doing work today?

Both positions stated in their strongest form, as house rules require; stating a position is not endorsing it.

Two-panel diagram stating each position at full strength: why the Declaration matters - first agreed list of rights for all people, became binding law, shaped Australian law, gives campaigners and courts a shared standard, still the yardstick each 10 December - and why critics say it is limited - a declaration with no court behind it, abuses continued after 1948, some states that voted for it broke the rights at home, colonised peoples had no voice in 1948, and each state decides its own law

The strongest version of the critics’ case is not “it is worthless” — no serious historian says that. It is: *a declaration is only words; the test of rights is whether they are enforced, and enforcement came only where states chose to write the rights into their own law, which many never fully did.* The strongest version of the other case is: *judged by what flowed from it — the treaties, the national laws, the shared standard — it is one of the most consequential documents of the twentieth century.* Both are arguable. A response on either side earns marks by reasoning from defined terms and dated evidence (see Worked example 2).

7. Human rights in Australia (VC2HH10K37.E03)

The elaboration then turns to Australia itself: how rights grew **here**, through movements and through laws — the Victorian Charter of Human Rights among them. Figure 10 gives the Australian timeline after 1948.

Human rights law comes home: Australia, 1975-2006

Section 6B, part 7 (elaboration VC2HH10K37.E03). Most of Australia's human rights laws arrived in the decades after the Declaration.



Australia still has no national bill of rights - its protection of human rights remains a patchwork of separate laws.

Orange: Commonwealth laws and bodies; teal: state and territory charters. Dates per the acts themselves (see Sources for this section).

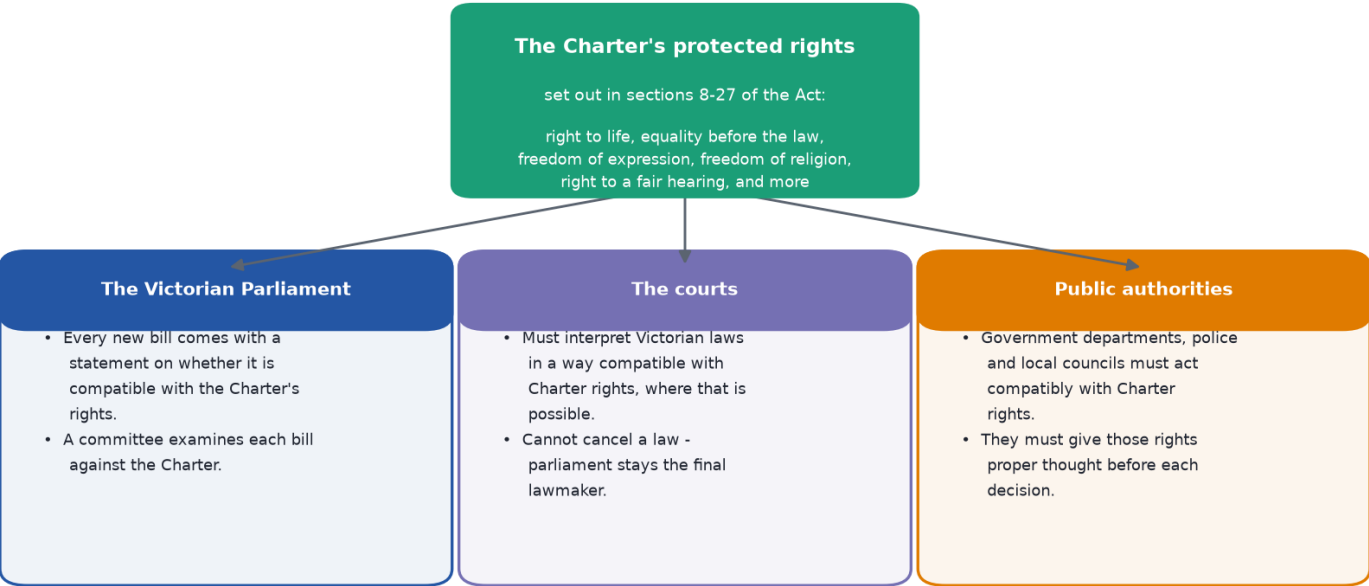
Vertical timeline of Australian human rights law: Racial Discrimination Act 1975, national Human Rights Commission 1981, Sex Discrimination Act 1984, Disability Discrimination Act 1992, Age Discrimination Act 2004, Human Rights Act 2004 of the ACT as the first Australian charter, and the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006; with the note that Australia still has no national bill of rights

Each of these laws stands on the shoulders of a **movement**: the long campaign for women's rights (section 1F), the push against race-based rules that ended with the **Racial Discrimination Act 1975** — Australia writing its 1975 agreement to the UN racial discrimination convention into national law — and decades of campaigning by and for people with disabilities, which produced the **Disability Discrimination Act 1992**. The pattern is continuity inside change, exactly as in section 1F: rights arrived step by step, pushed by organised people.

One fact surprises most students: **Australia still has no national bill of rights**. Protection here is a patchwork of separate laws, not one charter. Where a charter does exist, it works in a particular way. Figure 11 shows the Victorian model named in the elaboration.

How the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities works

Passed by the Victorian Parliament in 2006; fully in force from 1 January 2008 (Section 6B, part 7; named in elaboration VC2HH10K37.E03).



If a public authority fails its duties, a person affected can raise it through Victoria's human rights commission or the courts.

The Charter's duty-holder model: it does not just list rights - it gives specific jobs to parliament, courts and government bodies.

Duties per the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic) and the Victorian Government's guidance on it.

Diagram of how the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities works: protected rights set out in sections 8 to 27, then three duty-holders - the Victorian Parliament, which must check each new bill against the Charter; the courts, which must interpret Victorian laws compatibly with Charter rights but cannot cancel a law; and public authorities, which must act compatibly and give rights proper consideration

Notice the Australian design: parliament stays the final lawmaker (the courts cannot cancel a law), public authorities must act compatibly with the rights and give them proper thought, and every new bill comes with a statement on whether it is compatible. Passed in 2006 and fully in force from 1 January 2008, the **Victorian Charter** is the elaboration's named example of "human rights legislation" — and, with the ACT's 2004 Act, the closest Australia has come to Hodgson's 1948 argument that rights belong in binding law. (You will meet questions of rights and government again in Civics and Citizenship 9–10.)

Worked examples

Worked example 1 — Source analysis: Article 1 (VC2HH10K37.E01)

Question: Study Source 1 (the Article 1 card, Figure 4). (a) Describe what the source claims. (b) Explain the context that produced it. (c) Identify one perspective in the source. (d) What can and can't this source tell us about the Declaration's significance?

Step	What to do	Applied here
1. Identify	Say what the source is, who produced it, when.	Article 1 of the UDHR, adopted by the UN General Assembly, 10 December 1948 — a primary source, the document itself.
2. Describe content	Say what it claims, in the source's own words.	It claims all human beings are <i>born</i> free and equal in dignity and rights — the rights are present at birth, not granted by any government.
3. Explain context	Connect the source to its moment.	Adopted three years after the

Step	What to do	Applied here
		Holocaust and the war's end; the opening word "born" answers a world that had just treated millions as less than human.
4. Read perspective	Whose voice is in the source?	The voice of 48 states speaking as "the world" — a perspective of unity, and also of the victors and members of the UN of 1948.
5. Infer + limit	What follows, and what can't we conclude?	We can infer the drafters intended a universal standard. We cannot conclude from the text alone that the rights were enforced — a source states intentions, not consequences.

Answer: (a) Article 1 claims that freedom, equality and dignity belong to every human being at birth. (b) It was produced in 1948 as a direct response to the Holocaust and World War II — a world stating, after the worst, what every person is owed. (c) Its perspective is that of the UN member states of 1948 speaking universally — including states (as the vote in Figure 6 shows) that did not live up to the words. (d) The source shows the intended standard and its moral starting point, but cannot by itself prove significance; for that we need evidence of consequences — which is exactly what Figures 8 and 10 supply.

Worked example 2 — Judging significance with criteria (VC2HH10K37.E02)

Question: Assess the significance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights for Australia. Figure 12 shows a model response with margin notes; study it, then read why it works.

Model response - judging significance with named criteria

Question: 'Assess the significance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights for Australia.' Read the paragraph, then the margin notes.

Model paragraph

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is significant for Australia, judged by the criterion of how deeply it has shaped Australian law.

Adopted in 1948 with Australia's support - at the General Assembly session presided over by Australia's own Dr H. V. Evatt - it is not itself binding law.

Its significance lies in what followed: Australia signed the two binding 1966 covenants in 1972, ratified one in 1975 and the other in 1980, and then wrote the Declaration's standards into Australian law - the Racial Discrimination Act 1975, the Sex Discrimination Act 1984, and state and territory charters of rights from 2004.

A strong counter-view is that Australia still has no national bill of rights, so the Declaration's reach here is uneven - protection depends on which law you fall under.

Even so, on the chosen criterion, the Declaration is the root from which most of Australia's human rights law has grown - a change whose effects are still working today.

1 Opens with a clear judgement

2 Names the criterion at once

3 Dated evidence

4 A specific Australian link

5 Cause -> consequence, every claim dated

6 Steelmans the other side

7 Returns to the criterion to finish

Why this model works

- It judges significance using a named criterion (depth of effect on the law) - the achievement standard asks for criteria, not feelings.
- Every claim carries dated evidence, and the Australian links (Evatt, the covenants, the 1975-2006 laws) tie the world story to the national one.
- It meets the strongest counter-view head-on, and the last sentence returns to the criterion - the paragraph ends where it began.
- A response reaching the opposite conclusion can mark just as well if it reasons this carefully from defined terms and evidence.

Marking rewards the quality of the reasoning, not the conclusion reached (house rules).

Model paragraph judging the Declaration significant for Australia by the criterion of depth of effect on Australian law, with seven margin notes - opens with a judgement, names the criterion, dated evidence, Australian link, cause to consequence, steelmans the other side, returns to the criterion - and a box explaining why the model works

Step	What to do	Applied here
1. Name the criterion	State the test before judging.	"How far has it shaped Australian law?"
2. Open with the judgement	Answer first, then prove it.	Significant — on the named criterion.
3. Date the evidence	Every claim carries a date.	1948 adoption; 1972 signatures; ratifying in 1975 and 1980; 1975, 1984, 2004, 2006 laws.
4. Steelman the other side	State the strongest counter-view in full.	Australia still has no national bill of rights; protection is uneven.
5. Return to the criterion	End where you began.	On this test, the Declaration is the root of most Australian human rights law.

Answer: The model judges the Declaration significant for Australia on the criterion of depth of effect on the law: Australia voted for it in 1948 under Evatt's presidency, signed both 1966 covenants in 1972, ratified them in 1975 and 1980, and wrote its standards into the Racial Discrimination Act 1975, the Sex Discrimination Act 1984, and the ACT and Victorian charters. It meets the counter-view (no national bill of rights) in full, and returns to the criterion. A

response reaching the *opposite* conclusion would mark equally well if it reasoned this carefully — marking rewards the reasoning, not the side.

Practice questions

With help

1. Using Figure 1, name the two causes of the Declaration that elaboration VC2HH10K37.E01 names directly. (*recall*)
2. Using Figure 6, state how many states voted in favour of the Declaration, how many against, and how many abstained. (*recall*)
3. Using Figure 5, name the Australian who presided over the General Assembly session that adopted the Declaration. (*recall*)
4. Using Source 1, quote the words that show the rights belong to people at birth, not as a gift from government. (*source skill*)
5. Using Figure 7, place each right in its family (civil and political, or economic, social and cultural): (a) no torture; (b) the right to education; (c) the right to vote in genuine elections. (*classification*)
6. Using Figure 8, name the two 1966 treaties that, with the Declaration, form the International Bill of Human Rights. (*recall*)

On your own

7. Explain why the Holocaust and the scale of World War II destruction are treated as **causes** of the Declaration, not just background. Use one cause word (led to, produced, pushed). (*cause and consequence, VC2HH10K37.E01*)
 8. Colonel Hodgson argued in 1947–48 that a declaration of words was not enough — the rights needed binding law and a court. Explain his perspective, and one reason most states rejected it at the time. (*perspective*)
 9. The vote in Figure 6 shows 48 states in favour and none against, yet some of those states broke human rights at home. What does this tell you about the difference between a **standard** and its **enforcement**? Use one continuity-and-change idea. (*perspective; continuity and change*)
 10. Using Figure 8 and one named criterion, explain whether the Declaration was significant for the world. Date at least two pieces of evidence. (*significance, VC2HH10K37.E02*)
 11. Choose two Australian laws from Figure 10. For each, name the movement or world event behind it, and say which family of rights (Figure 7) it mostly protects. (*cause and consequence, VC2HH10K37.E03*)
 12. Using Figure 11, explain the three jobs the Victorian Charter gives to parliament, the courts, and public authorities — and why the courts' limit (they cannot cancel a law) matters in Australia's system. (*significance of the elaboration's named law, VC2HH10K37.E03*)
-

Answers

1. First, the atrocities of the Holocaust; second, destruction and displacement on an immense scale — the direct result of World War II.
 2. 48 in favour; 0 against; 8 abstained (Honduras and Yemen did not vote).
 3. Dr H. V. Evatt.
 4. “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.”
 5.
 - (a) Civil and political. (b) Economic, social and cultural. (c) Civil and political.
 6. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
 7. Cause, not background: the war’s crimes were the thing the Declaration was written to answer. The Holocaust showed what a state could do to its own people when no world standard named it wrong, and the trials that followed named “crimes against humanity” — so the destruction and the murder **led directly to** a world statement of what every person is owed.
 8. Hodgson’s perspective: rights on paper had just failed Europe, so only binding law with a court could protect people. Most states rejected it because they were not ready to let any outside court judge how they treated their own people — the Soviet bloc, South Africa and others all guarded that power, for different reasons.
 9. In 1948 the standard changed (a shared world list of rights now existed); enforcement stayed the same (each state still policed itself). That is continuity inside change: the words were new, the power arrangements were not — which is why the same vote can mean hope in one state and cover in another.
 10. Example: criterion — depth of reach into law. Significant: the Declaration’s articles became the two binding 1966 covenants (adopted 1966), then 80+ later treaties such as the children’s rights convention (1989), and national laws worldwide. A “not significant” response citing the lack of a world court also passes, if it uses a named criterion and dated evidence.
 11. Example pair: Racial Discrimination Act 1975 — behind it, Australia’s agreement to the UN racial discrimination convention (1965) and the long push against race-based rules; mostly protects the equality articles (both families). Disability Discrimination Act 1992 — behind it, decades of disability campaigning; mostly protects the economic and social family (work, education, standard of living).
 12. Parliament: every new bill comes with a statement of compatibility, and a committee checks each bill against the Charter. Courts: must interpret Victorian laws compatibly with Charter rights where possible, but cannot cancel a law — parliament stays the final lawmaker. Public authorities: must act compatibly with the rights and give them proper consideration. The limit matters because Australia’s system keeps parliament supreme: the Charter changes how law is made and read, without transferring final power to judges.
-

Fully-worked solutions

Q7 (model solution). A cause is something that made the outcome happen, not just something present at the time. The Holocaust and the war’s destruction qualify because the Declaration was written *as an answer to them*: its opening articles state that disregard for human rights “has resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind” — the drafters’ own words naming the cause. The scale mattered too: about sixty million dead and tens of millions displaced made the old idea — that rights were a domestic matter — impossible to keep, and **produced** the demand for a world standard. So the war’s crimes **led to** the Declaration the way a wound leads to a law: not the only cause, but the driving one.

Q10 (model solution). Step 1, name the criterion: reach into binding law. Step 2, judgement: on this criterion the Declaration is highly significant for the world. Step 3, dated evidence: the two 1966 covenants turned its families of rights into treaty law (in force from 1976); by the UN’s count more than 80 human rights treaties trace back to it, including the children’s rights convention of 1989, the most widely agreed-to human rights treaty in history; and national courts quote it daily. Step 4, steelman the other side: it created no world court, and abuses continued after 1948 — a declaration cannot enforce itself. Step 5, return to the criterion: enforcement was always left to states, but on the test of reach into law, the 1948 statement is the root of the whole modern system.

Q12 (model solution). The Charter gives three jobs. Parliament keeps the lawmaking power but must front the rights question: each new bill arrives with a statement of compatibility, and a parliamentary committee examines it against the Charter. Courts must interpret Victorian law compatibly with Charter rights where possible — but cannot cancel an Act, so parliament remains supreme. Public authorities (departments, police, councils) must act compatibly with the rights and give them proper consideration before decisions. The courts’ limit is the point of the Australian model: rights are protected by forcing government to think about them openly, while elected parliament — not judges — keeps the final word. That design is why the Charter counts as a real development in Australian human rights (the elaboration’s named example) without being a full bill of rights.

Key terms

Term	Meaning as used in this section
Human rights	Rights belonging to every person simply because they are human (the Declaration’s own sense).
Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)	The statement of 30 articles adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948 (resolution 217 A (III)).
Declaration	A formal statement of standards; not itself binding law.
Treaty / covenant / convention	A written agreement that binds the states agreeing to it in law.
Ratify	To agree to a treaty in law, completing a signature.
Abstain	To choose not to vote for or against.
Commission on Human Rights	The UN body (from 1946) that drafted the Declaration.
General Assembly	The meeting of all UN member states; adopted the Declaration in 1948.
The Holocaust	The systematic mass murder of about six million Jews, and millions of others, by Hitler’s regime (Chapter 4).
Displaced person	Someone driven from home by war or persecution.
Dignity	The worth the Declaration says every person is born with.
International Bill of Human Rights	The Declaration plus the two 1966 covenants together.
Charter of rights	A law listing protected rights and the duties of government toward them (e.g. the Victorian Charter, 2006).
Public authority	A government body — department, police, council — bound by the Charter’s duties in Victoria.
Significance / criteria	How much something matters, judged by stated tests (reach, duration, depth, present work).

Sources for this section

Retrieval date for all online sources: **26 August 2026.**

- *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 217 A (III), Paris, 10 December 1948 (United Nations).
- United Nations, General Assembly voting record for resolution 217 A (III), 10 December 1948.
- *Charter of the United Nations*, signed 26 June 1945 (human rights provisions).
- *Charter of the International Military Tribunal* (Nuremberg), 1945 (“crimes against humanity”).
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Commonwealth); *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Commonwealth); *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Commonwealth); *Age Discrimination Act 2004* (Commonwealth).

- *Human Rights Act 2004 (ACT); Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic).*
- Australian Human Rights Commission, commission history and complaints information.
- Victorian Government, guidance on the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.
- Wikipedia: *Universal Declaration of Human Rights; H. V. Evatt; William Roy Hodgson; Jessie Street; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.*

A world on the move: migration to Australia after 1945

Curriculum trace — Victorian Curriculum 2.0 History, Levels 9 and 10

Owns VC2HH10K38

Draws on — VC2HH10K38.E01–E17 (all five topic-family blocks remain valid link keys); taught here: VC2HH10K38.E09, VC2HH10K38.E10, VC2HH10K38.E11

Scope note — under this book’s TOC (chapter 6, decision D10), the taught topic family for VC2HH10K38 is **Migration experiences**, taught through .E09–.E11. The other blocks (.E01–.E08 and .E12–.E17) belong to the curriculum’s other topic families and remain valid link keys for other sections and other builds — they are **not** §2A exclusions, and VC2HH10K38 carries no §2A exclusions at all. The book’s Rule 1 register (no Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content) applies as in the rest of the book.

Builds on — section 1F, which traced Australia’s migration rules from the 1901 dictation test to the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* as a rights story, and section 1D. This section shares the post-1945 world stage with sections 6A, 6B, 6D, 6E and 6F.

The world did not stand still after 1945. A war ended, leaving millions of people far from home; uprisings were crushed; new wars began and ended; and each of these world events moved real people — some of them, eventually, to Australia. This section follows one chain of thinking: **world events** create **causes** (push and pull factors); causes move **people**; governments set **policy** that opens or closes the gate; and the arrivals leave **consequences** that change the country. Learning to separate those steps — and to tell intended consequences from unintended ones — is the historian’s skill this section builds.

Before we begin: what do these words mean?

Some words in this section are **contested** — people do not all agree on one fixed meaning. We state the sense used here, so every question can be answered on that sense alone.

- **Refugee.** Here we use the sense given by Article 1 of the United Nations *Convention relating to the Status of Refugees* (1951), in plain words: a person who is outside the country of their nationality and, because of a well-founded fear of being persecuted — harmed or treated badly — for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is unable or unwilling to return home. Other, looser uses of the word exist and are not interchangeable with this one.
- **Displaced person.** The label used after World War II for civilians left outside their home countries by the war — the people the new refugee system was first built to protect.
- **Push factor / pull factor.** A push factor is a condition that drives people away from a place (war, poverty, fear); a pull factor is a condition that draws them toward another place (peace, work, school). We use these terms in the sense of Everett S. Lee’s ‘A Theory of Migration’ (1966), the classic account of the frame.
- **White Australia policy.** Historians’ name for the bundle of race-based entry rules Australia inherited from 1901 — not a title the parliament chose for itself. It names the *effect* of the rules: sorting arrivals by race.
- **Assimilation / multiculturalism.** *Assimilation* is the old policy expectation that new arrivals would blend in and become the same as the existing majority. *Multiculturalism* is the later acceptance that difference can be kept and still belong. The turn from one to the other became official national policy in 1978, under the Fraser government.
- **Assisted passage.** A scheme in which the government paid most of the fare, so a migrant travelled for a small sum.

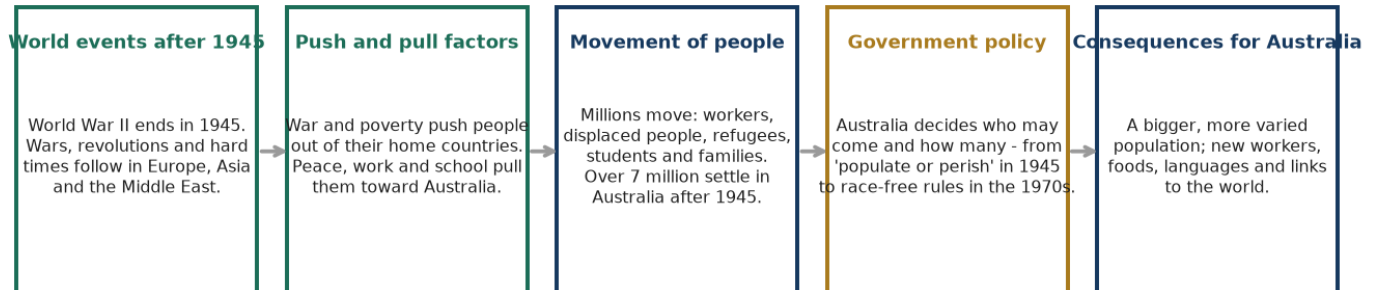
Keep these meanings in mind as you read. When a question asks about “consequences”, notice *who* was affected, *how long* the effect lasted, and whether it was *intended*.

Theory

1. The big picture: a chain from world events to Australia (VC2HH10K38)

Across this section, one chain keeps appearing. World events set up causes; causes move people; policy decides who may enter; and the arrivals change Australia. Figure 1 maps the chain.

The shape of this section: world events, movement, policy, consequences



Read left to right: causes on the left, consequences on the right. The middle step - government policy - is where Australians argued about how the country should answer the world's events.

Flow diagram of five boxes reading left to right - world events after 1945, push and pull factors, movement of people, government policy, consequences for Australia

You will meet every link of the chain below. As you read, ask two questions: *is this a cause or a consequence?* and *was it intended, or did it take people by surprise?* Those two questions are the historian's tools for this whole section.

2. Australia in 1945: the conditions at home (VC2HH10K38.E09, .E10)

Causes work in pairs: the world pushes, and something at home makes Australia willing to pull. Four facts about Australia in 1945 explain why the gate was about to open.

Australia in 1945: why leaders wanted a bigger population

A small population

About 7,347,000 people lived in Australia at the end of 1945 - fewer than many single cities in other countries today.

The war came close

Singapore fell to Japan in February 1942 and Japanese planes bombed Darwin. Australians feared invasion.

Workers were needed

Factories, farms and public works were short of hands after six years of war. A 1945 report urged growth of 1 per cent a year, in part through migration.

A new minister

In 1945 Arthur Calwell became the first Minister for Immigration. He launched a mass migration program, summed up in the slogan 'populate or perish'.

These four facts are the CAUSES side of the story: a world full of displaced people met a country that believed it needed more people. Sources: ABS historical population series; Wikipedia, 'Populate or perish'; 'Demographics of Australia' (all retrieved 26 August 2026).

Four fact cards about Australia in 1945 - a small population of about 7,347,000 people; the war came close when Singapore fell and Darwin was bombed; workers were needed after six years of war; Arthur Calwell became the first Minister for Immigration and launched a mass migration program

Read the four cards as one argument. A small population, a recent fear of invasion, and a shortage of workers made the leaders of 1945 believe the country needed people, fast. That belief — a condition at home — met a world full of displaced people. Elaboration .E09 is about exactly that: the causes and the conditions behind the rise in migration.

3. A policy with two faces: 'populate or perish' and the inherited gate (VC2HH10K38.E10)

Elaboration .E10 asks you to set out how one government migration policy worked. The policy after 1945 had two faces. The **new face** was the mass migration program launched by Arthur Calwell, the first Minister for Immigration, summed up in the slogan "**populate or perish**". Its features: assisted passages for British migrants (over one million came between 1946 and 1972 — the "Ten Pound Poms"); agreements to take displaced Europeans (in 1947 Calwell agreed to take 12,000 a year from the Baltic states; by the end of 1954 the International Refugee Organization had sponsored 182,159 displaced people to Australia); and big work to put them to, like the Snowy Mountains Scheme from 1949. The **old face** was the inherited 1901 system: the dictation test still sorted arrivals by race until 1958 (you studied it as Source 2 in section 1F). Read Source 1.

Source 1 - 'Populate or perish': the argument for mass migration (1945-1947)

After World War II, Australia's new immigration program was summed up in the slogan 'populate or perish'. Arthur Calwell, the first Minister for Immigration, promoted mass migration from 1945. He argued that Australia needed many more people, fast - for defence after the attacks of 1942, and for the jobs a growing economy needed. In 1947 Calwell stated:

*"We have 25 years at most to populate this country
before the yellow races are down on us."*

Arthur Calwell, Minister for Immigration, 1947.

Reading this source as a historian

The defence fear was real - Japan had bombed northern Australia in 1942. But Calwell's words also show that the fear was wrapped in the racist thinking of the time: the program aimed to keep Australia British and European, and people from Asia were largely kept out. Historians record what people in the past said and thought; recording a view is not the same as agreeing with it. This source is evidence of both a real security worry and of the race-based policy Australians later chose to end.

Slogan and quotation: Wikipedia, 'Populate or perish' (retrieved 26 August 2026). See also section 1F for the dictation test.

Source card for 'populate or perish' with the words Arthur Calwell spoke in 1947, and a panel on reading the source as a historian

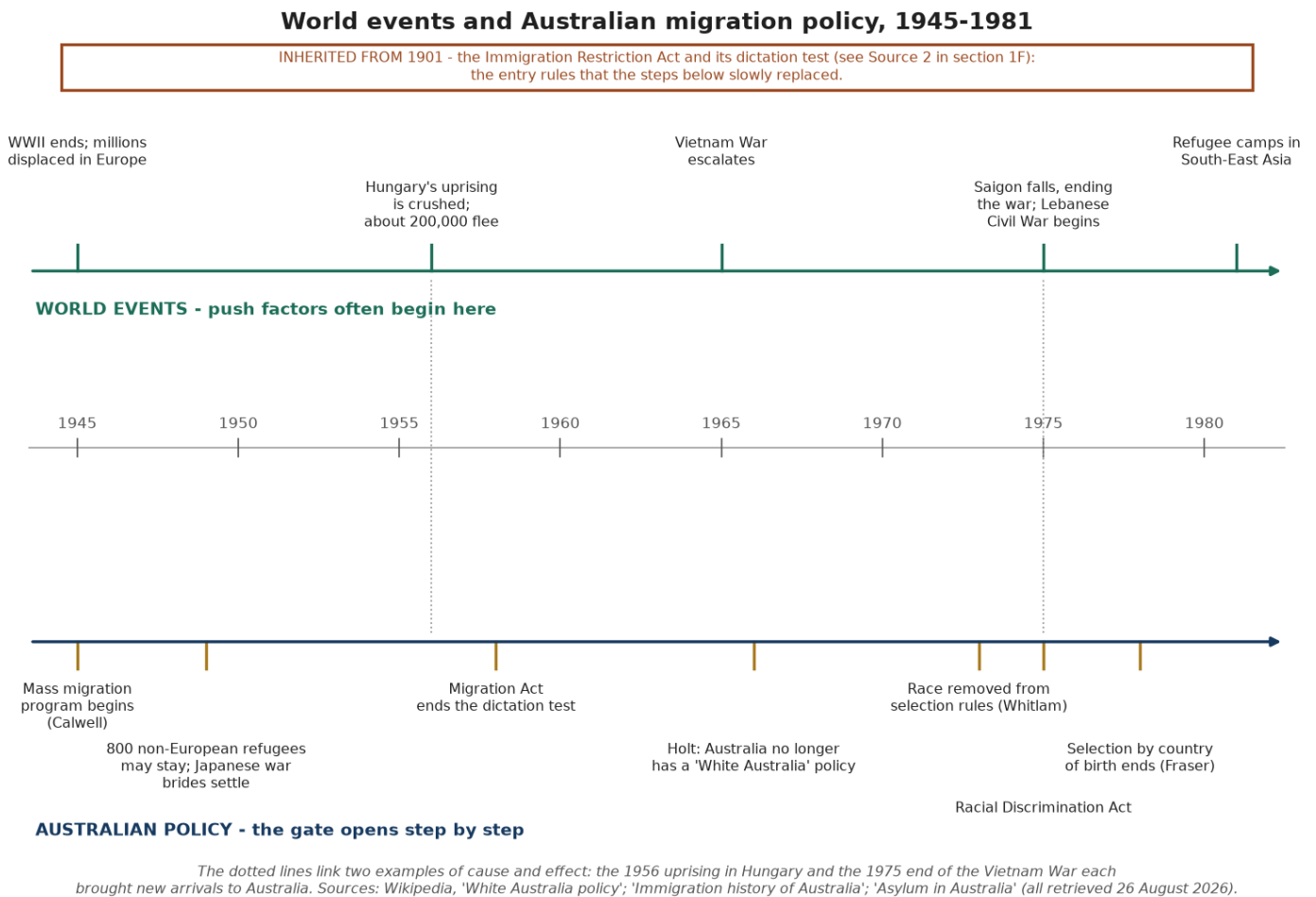
Hearing past views — steelmanned. Historians try to understand why people in the past acted as they did, even when we judge their actions harshly. In the late 1940s, supporters of a big-but-restricted program argued that a small country, recently threatened with invasion, needed population for defence and workers for growth, and that taking migrants who would “fit in” quickly — as they saw it, British and European migrants — was the safest way to grow without strain. Opponents — some churches, traders with links to Asia, and neighbours in Asia itself — argued that a program sorted by race was unjust in principle, insulted Australia’s nearest neighbours, and betrayed the very freedom the war had been fought to defend. Both positions are stated here in the strongest form their holders would recognise; stating them is not endorsing them. The effect of the policy was real either way: for its first decades, the program welcomed Europeans and largely kept out people from Asia.

4. Causes and conditions: the world pushes, Australia slowly opens (VC2HH10K38.E09)

Now the world side of .E09. Three world events after 1945 each sent people toward Australia:

- **The end of World War II (1945)** left millions of civilians displaced across Europe. Australia’s displaced-persons intake — 182,159 people by the end of 1954 — came directly from this.
- **The crushing of Hungary’s uprising (1956).** People in Hungary rose against their communist government; the uprising was crushed and about 200,000 fled the country. Australia took about 14,500 of them — a sudden wave created by one event.
- **The Vietnam War and its end (1975).** When Saigon fell, people who had worked with Australia and its allies feared persecution under the new government. The first refugee boat reached Darwin in April 1976; Australia went on to resettle more than 108,000 boat people. In the same year, 1975, civil war broke out in Lebanon and drove families abroad for the next fifteen years.

Set against these pushes, Australian **policy** changed step by step, and **public opinion** moved more slowly behind it. Figure 4 tracks both tracks at once.



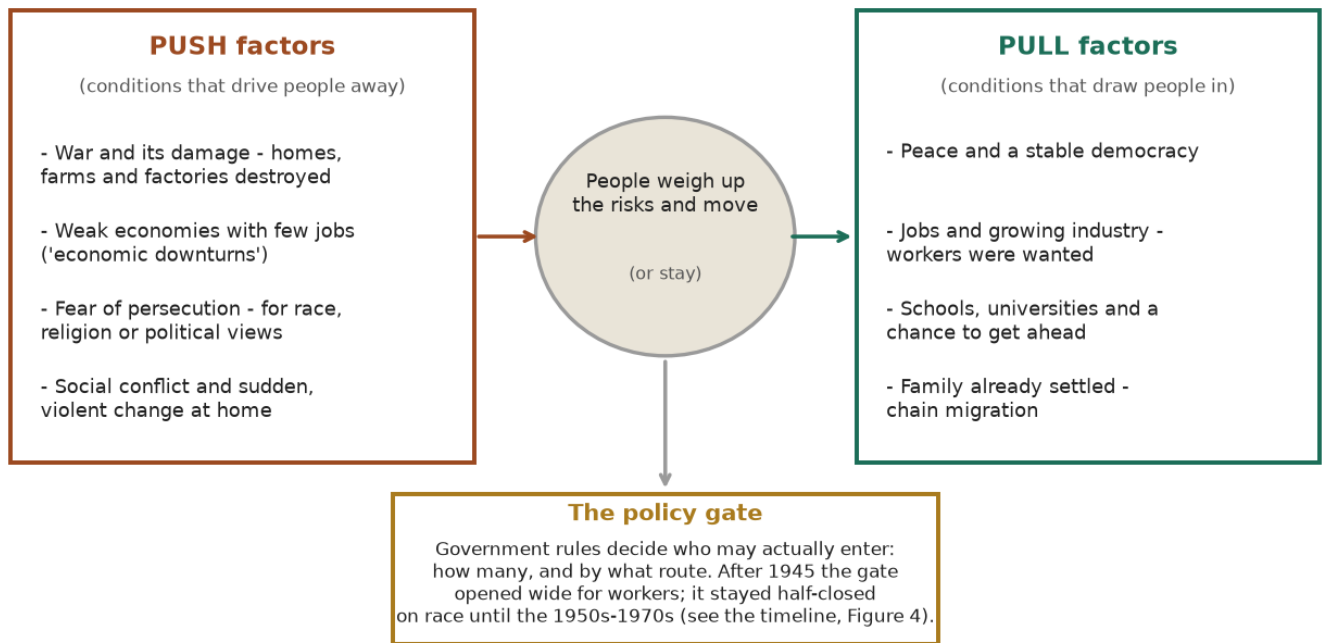
Two-track timeline from 1945 to 1981 - world events above (the war ends and millions are displaced; Hungary's uprising is crushed; the Vietnam War escalates; Saigon falls and the Lebanese Civil War begins; refugee camps fill in South-East Asia) and Australian policy below (mass migration begins; 800 non-European refugees may stay and Japanese war brides settle; the Migration Act ends the dictation test; race is removed from selection; the Racial Discrimination Act; selection by country of birth ends), with dotted lines linking the 1956 and 1975 world events to new arrivals

Read the two tracks together. The dotted lines are the point: a world event (1956, 1975) becomes an Australian consequence (new arrivals). And read the policy track as a slow opening — 1949, 1958, 1966, 1973, 1975, 1978 — with each step made by a government responding both to world events and to changing opinion at home. By the 1970s, both major parties kept the opening going: that is **continuity inside change**, and it tells you the change in opinion had become real.

5. The language of causes: push and pull factors (VC2HH10K38 . E11)

Elaboration . E11 frames the move in terms of push factors (war, hard times and upheaval at home) and pull factors (Australia's stable democracy, its jobs and its chances to study). Figure 5 turns that sentence into a picture — and adds one extra box the elaboration implies but does not name: the **policy gate**. Causes explain why people *want* to move; policy decides who *may*.

Push and pull factors: why people moved after 1945



The push/pull frame is a classic way of explaining migration (Everett S. Lee, 'A Theory of Migration', 1966). Push examples named in curriculum elaboration VC2HH10K38.E11: effects of war, economic downturns, social upheaval.

Diagram with push factors on the left and pull factors on the right, people weighing up the risks in the middle, and a policy gate below that decides who may actually enter

Use the picture's grammar in every answer this section asks for: name the push, name the pull, and — where policy mattered — name the gate.

6. The waves of migration since 1945 (VC2HH10K38.E11)

.E11 also asks for the **nature** of the waves, the **numbers**, and the **reasons**. Figure 6 gives all three, wave by wave, exactly as the elaboration lists them.

The waves of migration to Australia after 1945 (elaboration VC2HH10K38.E11)

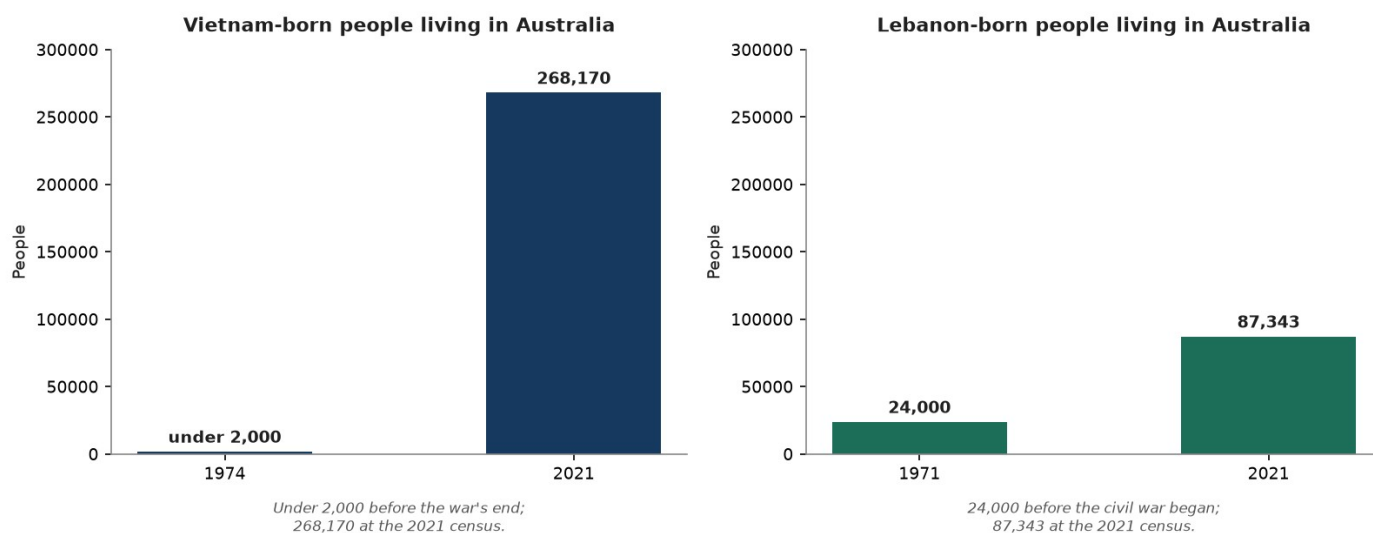
Wave and years	Main source regions	Key push factors (causes)	Evidence in this section
1. Europe, late 1940s-1960s	United Kingdom, Italy, Greece, the Netherlands, Germany, Malta, Poland, Yugoslavia; Hungary after 1956	World War II left cities and farms in ruins; jobs were scarce. Cold War crises: Hungary's uprising crushed in 1956.	Over 1 million assisted British migrants, 1946-1972; 182,159 displaced people sponsored by the IRO by the end of 1954; about 14,500 arrivals from Hungary after 1956.
2. Asia, 1970s-2000s	Vietnam, then the Philippines, China and other countries; students from many Asian countries	End of the Vietnam War in 1975: allies of the old South feared persecution. Later waves came for work and study (pull-led).	First refugee boat reached Darwin in April 1976; over 108,000 boat people resettled in Australia; Vietnam-born residents: under 2,000 (1974) to 268,170 (2021).
3. Middle East, 1980s-1990s	Lebanon above all	Lebanese Civil War, 1975-1990: fighting destroyed Beirut and drove families abroad.	Over 30,000 civil-war refugees from Lebanon, 1975-1990; Lebanon-born residents: 24,000 (1971) to 87,343 (2021).
4. India, 1990s-2000s	India	Mostly pull-led: skilled work and university places in Australia; a growing Indian economy also freed people to move.	India-born residents reached 673,352 by the 2021 census - now one of the largest groups.
5. Africa, 2000s	South Sudan, Somalia and other countries	War and insecurity; many arrived through Australia's refugee and humanitarian program.	Settled through the humanitarian program; community groups and schools in every state grew.

Sources: Wikipedia, 'Immigration to Australia'; 'Immigration history of Australia'; 'Vietnamese Australians'; 'Lebanese Australians'; 'Indian Australians'; 'Vietnamese boat people'; 'Asylum in Australia'; 'Colombo Plan' (all retrieved 26 August 2026).

Table of the five waves of migration to Australia after 1945 - Europe in the late 1940s to 1960s; Asia in the 1970s to 2000s; the Middle East in the 1980s to 1990s; India in the 1990s to 2000s; Africa in the 2000s - with source regions, key push factors and the evidence used in this section for each wave

A “wave” is not a metaphor; it is visible in the census. Figure 7 shows two waves as numbers before and after their world event.

What a wave looks like in the census

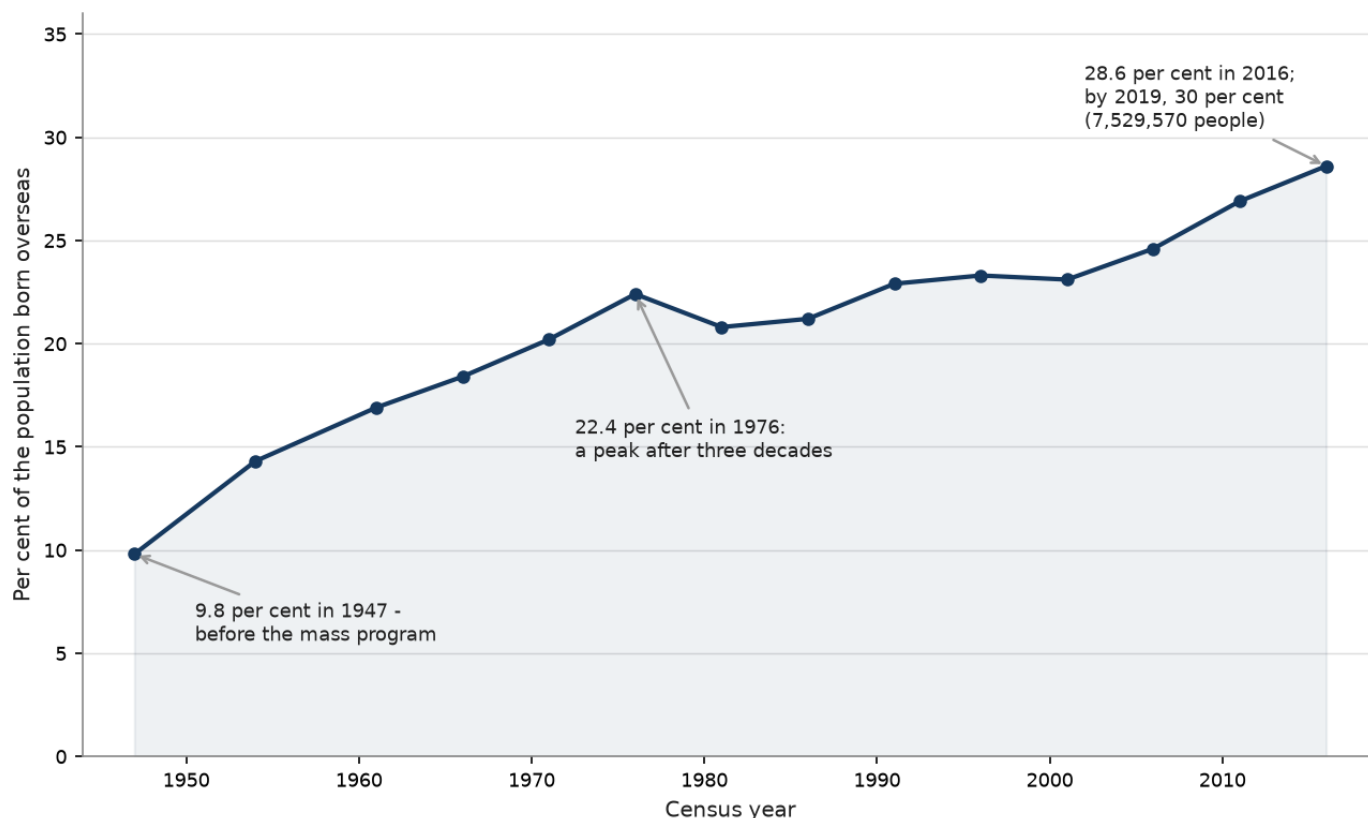


Sources: Wikipedia, 'Vietnamese Australians'; 'Lebanese Australians' (both retrieved 26 August 2026).

Two bar charts showing what a wave looks like in the census - Vietnam-born residents rising from under 2,000 in 1974 to 268,170 in 2021, and Lebanon-born residents rising from 24,000 in 1971 to 87,343 in 2021

And the waves add up. Figure 8 shows the share of Australia's population born overseas, census by census, from before the mass program to after it.

Overseas-born people as a share of Australia's population, 1947-2016



Nearly every year of growth follows the mass migration program that began in 1945. The small dip in 1981 reflects people leaving during a weak economy, not a change of rules.

Source: ABS, Migration, Australia, 2019-20 (cat. 3412.0), overseas-born share series; 2019 figure via Wikipedia, 'Immigration to Australia' (all retrieved 26 August 2026).

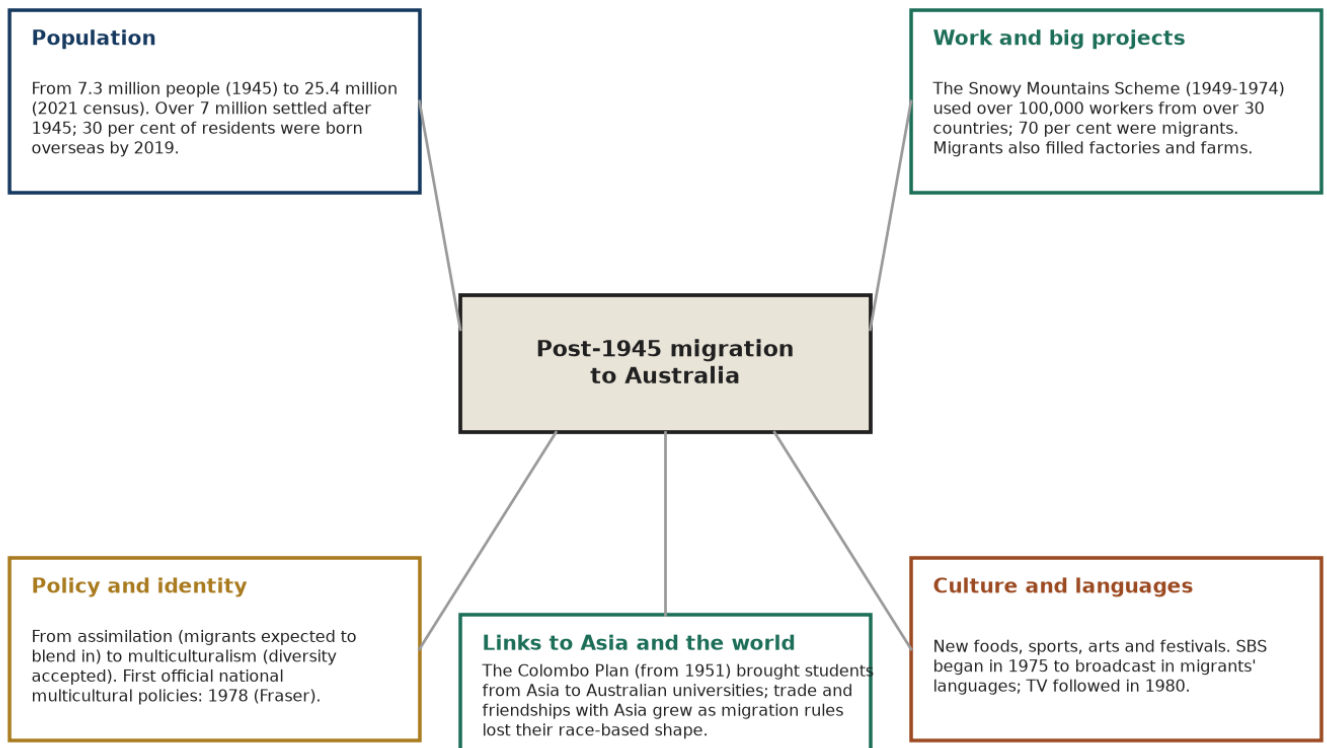
Line graph of overseas-born people as a share of Australia's population, rising from 9.8 per cent in 1947 to 22.4 per cent in 1976 and 28.6 per cent in 2016, with a note that by 2019 the share reached 30 per cent (7,529,570 people)

Read the line as a consequence of the chain: nearly every step of growth follows from the program that began in 1945. The small dip at 1981 reflects people leaving during a weak economy — a change in the numbers, not in the rules.

7. Consequences: the influence on Australia (VC2HH10K38)

The chain ends where the content description ends: the **influences on Australia**. Figure 9 gathers the consequences into five groups.

Consequences: how post-1945 migration changed Australia



Sources: ABS census and population series; Wikipedia, 'Snowy Mountains Scheme'; 'Special Broadcasting Service'; 'Multiculturalism in Australia'; 'Immigration to Australia' (all retrieved 26 August 2026).

Hub-and-spoke diagram of the consequences of post-1945 migration for Australia - population growth from 7.3 million to 25.4 million; work and big projects such as the Snowy Mountains Scheme; the turn in policy and identity from assimilation to multiculturalism; new cultures and languages including SBS; and links to Asia and the world through the Colombo Plan

Sort the five groups into intended and unintended. The **intended** consequences were the ones the 1945 program aimed at: more people, more workers, more defence. The **unintended** ones grew out of them: a society far more varied than the program's first designers planned; a policy identity that turned from assimilation to multiculturalism (first official national policies, 1978); public broadcasting in many languages (SBS radio from 1975, television from 1980); and thicker ties to Asia — begun, in part, by the Colombo Plan bringing students from Asia to Australian universities from 1951. A policy made to keep Australia British ended, over forty years, by making Australia something else. That gap between intention and outcome is exactly what "consequences" means in this content description.

Worked examples

Worked source analysis 1 — with help

Question. Read Source 2 (Figure 10). Why did the world write this definition in 1951, and who was it first meant to protect?

Source 2 - Defining a 'refugee': the 1951 United Nations Convention

After World War II, millions of people were outside their home countries and afraid to return. The United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951) gave them a legal definition. In plain words, Article 1 says a refugee is a person who:

- is outside the country of their nationality, and
- has a well-founded fear of being persecuted - that is, harmed or treated badly - for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, and
- is unable, or because of that fear unwilling, to return home.

United Nations, Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951), Article 1, summarised.

Context for this source

Australia became a party to this convention on 22 January 1954. At first it applied only to 'events occurring before 1 January 1951' - that is, to people displaced by World War II. The 1967 Protocol removed those time and place limits, and Australia joined it on 13 December 1973. Australia's own refugee and humanitarian program grew out of these agreements: about 297,000 refugees were accepted from 1947 to 1975.

Sources: Wikipedia, 'Convention relating to the Status of Refugees'; 'Asylum in Australia'; UN treaty records (all retrieved 26 August 2026).

Source card summarising Article 1 of the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees in plain words, with context noting that Australia became a party on 22 January 1954 and joined the 1967 Protocol on 13 December 1973

Working

Comment

Step 1: Identify the source. It is Article 1 of the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, summarised in plain words — the world's agreed definition of a refugee.

Start with what the source *is*: a legal definition, agreed by countries after World War II.

Step 2: Describe the content. A refugee is a person outside the country of their nationality, with a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, who cannot or will not return home.

Use the definition's own parts: outside, fear, persecution, five grounds, unable or unwilling to return.

Step 3: Explain the context. The war had left millions of displaced people outside their home countries and afraid to return; the definition exists because that happened.

A definition this precise is written after a catastrophe, not before one.

Step 4: Read the perspective. The definition sees the refugee through the lens of *fear of harm* — not poverty, not ambition. It draws a line between a refugee and a migrant choosing to move.

That line is exactly why the word is contested today; here we keep the Convention's sense.

Step 5: State an inference and a limit. We can infer that the world of 1951 meant to protect people displaced by

The 1967 Protocol (which Australia joined on 13 December 1973) later removed the time and place limits,

Working	Comment
the war and its aftermath — Australia became a party on 22 January 1954, and at first the Convention applied only to events before 1 January 1951. The limit: a legal definition does not, by itself, tell us how many people any country chose to take.	because new world events kept making new refugees.

Answer: the world wrote the definition in 1951 because World War II had left millions displaced and afraid to return; it was first meant to protect exactly those people, and Australia's 1954 signature put the country inside that new system.

Worked cause-and-consequence analysis 2 — with help

Question. Using the timeline (Figure 4), follow the dotted line at 1975. Explain that link in the language of cause and consequence, naming one push factor, one pull factor, and one intended and one unintended consequence.

Working	Comment
Step 1: Name the world event and date it. In 1975 the Vietnam War ended (Saigon fell), and in the same year the Lebanese Civil War began.	Causes must be dated events or conditions, not vague forces.
Step 2: Name the push factor. People who had worked with Australia and its allies in South Vietnam feared persecution under the new government; in Lebanon, fighting destroyed Beirut and drove families abroad.	Fear of persecution is the Convention's ground — the push factor and the legal definition match.
Step 3: Name the pull factor. Australia was peaceful, democratic and growing, and by 1975 it had a refugee and humanitarian program in law and practice.	Pull factors explain why Australia, of all possible destinations.
Step 4: Trace the movement. The first refugee boat reached Darwin in April 1976; Australia resettled more than 108,000 boat people; Vietnam-born residents grew from under 2,000 in 1974 to 268,170 in 2021.	Consequences need numbers with dates — that is what turns a story into an analysis.
Step 5: Separate intended from unintended, and note continuity and change. The intended consequence was safety for refugees. The unintended consequences were a more varied Australia, and a census that changed — and these arrived in the very years (1973-1978) when Australia was removing race from its rules, a continuity of opening across two world events.	The same discipline as Step 5 in source analysis: inference plus limit, intention plus surprise.

Answer: the end of the Vietnam War (1975) pushed people who feared persecution toward a peaceful, prosperous Australia (pull); the intended consequence was their safety, and the unintended consequences were a larger, more varied population and a changed national identity — an influence on Australia exactly as the content description asks.

Practice questions

With help

Q1. Using Figure 2, state Australia's population at the end of 1945 and the name of the first Minister for Immigration.

Q2. Read Source 1 (Figure 3). In your own words, give the two reasons Calwell's program gave for wanting a bigger population fast, and say what the historian's panel adds to the source.

Q3. Using Figure 4 and section 1F, name the inherited 1901 rule that the *Migration Act 1958* ended.

Q4. Using Figure 4, place these in order: the Racial Discrimination Act; Hungary's uprising is crushed; mass migration begins; Saigon falls.

Q5. Using Figure 5, sort these into push factors and pull factors: fear of persecution; jobs and growing industry; war and its damage; peace and a stable democracy.

Q6. Using Figure 6, name the wave that brought people from Lebanon, its push factor, and the change in Lebanon-born residents between 1971 and 2021.

On your own

Q7. Analyse what caused, and what fed, the rise in migration to Australia after 1945. Use two world events and two conditions at home, and label each as a cause or a condition.

Q8. Describe the main features of the ‘populate or perish’ policy (elaboration .E10). Then use Source 1 to show one feature of who the program at first favoured, and who it kept out.

Q9. Choose ONE wave from Figure 6. Explain its reasons with at least one push factor and one pull factor, and support each with a number from the figure.

Q10. Explain why historians describe the change in public opinion and government policy as gradual rather than sudden. Use two dated policy steps from Figure 4 and one sign of continuity.

Q11. Using the language of cause and consequence, explain how ONE world event from Figure 4 influenced Australia. Use Figure 11 as your guide to the shape of a strong paragraph.

Q12. Significance. “The end of World War II influenced Australia more than the end of the Vietnam War.” State your view, name the criterion you used (for example, how many people it affected, or how long it lasted), and defend it with evidence from this section.

Answers

Q1. About 7,347,000 people; Arthur Calwell.

Q2. Defence after the attacks of 1942, and workers for a growing economy. The panel adds that the fear was real but was wrapped in the racist thinking of the time: recording the view is not the same as agreeing with it.

Q3. The dictation test, from the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*.

Q4. Mass migration begins (1945); Hungary's uprising is crushed (1956); Saigon falls (1975); the Racial Discrimination Act (1975, after Saigon falls in the same year).

Q5. Push: fear of persecution; war and its damage. Pull: jobs and growing industry; peace and a stable democracy.

Q6. The Middle East wave of the 1980s-1990s (Lebanon above all); push factor: the Lebanese Civil War, 1975-1990; Lebanon-born residents rose from 24,000 (1971) to 87,343 (2021).

Fully-worked solutions

Q7. A strong answer labels its parts. *Conditions at home*: a small population (about 7,347,000 in 1945) that had just feared invasion, and a shortage of workers after six years of war — conditions, because they made Australia willing to receive people. *World events (causes)*: the end of World War II leaving millions displaced in Europe, and the crushing of Hungary's uprising in 1956 sending about 200,000 people fleeing. The conditions explain the open gate; the events explain the people at it. Together they produced the increased migration. EO9 asks about.

Q8. Main features: a mass migration program from 1945 with assisted passages (over one million British migrants, 1946-1972); agreements to take displaced Europeans (12,000 a year from the Baltic states from 1947; 182,159 sponsored by the International Refugee Organization by the end of 1954); and big public works such as the Snowy Mountains Scheme to give arrivals paid work. Source 1 shows the second feature of the same policy: Calwell's 1947 words tie the urgency to a fear of Asia, and the program at first favoured British and European arrivals while largely keeping out people from Asia — the inherited 1901 gate still at work.

Q9. A strong answer picks one wave and keeps the grammar of Figure 5. For example, the Asia wave of the 1970s-2000s: push — the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 left people fearing persecution (evidence: under 2,000 Vietnam-born residents in 1974, 268,170 in 2021); pull — Australia's peaceful democracy and its new refugee and humanitarian program (evidence: more than 108,000 boat people resettled). One number per factor is the habit that marks a Year 9-10 analysis.

Q10. Gradual, because the change came in dated steps, not one act: for example, 1958 ended the dictation test and 1973 removed race from selection — fifteen years apart, under different governments. A sign of continuity: both major parties kept the opening going (1966, 1973, 1975 and 1978 fall under different governments), which shows opinion had shifted enough that neither side reversed it.

Q11. Figure 11 shows the model paragraph for the Vietnam War. The same shape works for any event; here it is for 1956: “Hungary’s uprising influenced Australia by sending refugees to it. When the uprising was crushed in 1956, about 200,000 people fled their country - a push factor of fear - and Australia, with its new mass migration program, was willing to receive them: about 14,500 came. The intended consequence was safety for people who had lost their homes; the unintended consequence was one more step in making Australia European in a new way, in the middle of a program that was only slowly opening beyond Europe. A European crisis therefore changed, a little, who Australia was.” Notice the shape: dated event, push factor, gate, numbers, intended and unintended consequences, and a last sentence naming the influence.

Model paragraph: how did the Vietnam War influence Australia?

MODEL ANSWER

The Vietnam War influenced Australia by changing who came to the country. When the war ended in 1975, many people in South Vietnam who had worked with Australia and its allies feared persecution under the new government - a strong push factor. The first refugee boat reached Darwin in April 1976, and Australia went on to resettle more than 108,000 boat people. The intended consequence was safety for refugees; the unintended consequences were bigger. Vietnam-born residents grew from under 2,000 in 1974 to 268,170 in 2021, and these arrivals came in the very years when Australia was removing race from its migration rules (1973-1978). A war fought on the other side of the world therefore reshaped Australia's population, its workforce and its policy.

Why this paragraph works

- Names the world event and dates it (the Vietnam War; ended 1975).
- Identifies a push factor and links it to the event.
- Uses dated evidence and exact numbers from the section.
- Separates intended consequences (safety) from unintended ones (a more varied population).
- Connects the world event back to change inside Australia - the 'influence' the CD asks about.

Model paragraph card answering 'how did the Vietnam War influence Australia?', with a checklist of why the paragraph works

Q12. A strong answer names a criterion and applies it. For example: “Using the criterion ‘how many people it affected’, the end of World War II was the bigger influence: it produced the whole mass migration program, over 7 million settlers after 1945, and the rise from 9.8 per cent overseas-born in 1947 to 30 per cent by 2019 — while the Vietnam War’s end, though dramatic, reshaped one community and one debate.” A student defending the Vietnam War could also score full marks on a different criterion, such as “it changed how Australia saw itself, by arriving in the very years race left the rules”. Marking rewards the quality of the reasoning, not the conclusion.

Key terms

Term	Meaning used in this section
Cause / consequence	Why something happened / what flowed from it
Intended / unintended consequence	What the policy aimed at / what it produced by surprise
Continuity / change	What stays the same / what becomes different across a period
Push factor	A condition that drives people away from a place (per Lee, 1966)
Pull factor	A condition that draws people toward a place (per Lee, 1966)
Refugee	A person meeting the 1951 Convention definition: outside their country, with a well-founded fear of persecution on five grounds
Displaced person	A civilian left outside their home country by World War II
Assisted passage	A scheme in which the government paid most of the fare
White Australia policy	Historians’ name for the race-based entry rules inherited from 1901
Assimilation	The old expectation that new arrivals would blend into the existing majority
Multiculturalism	The later acceptance that difference can be kept and still belong (official national policy from 1978)
Census	The national count of people and homes, held every five years
Perspective	A particular person’s or group’s view of events
Primary source	Evidence from the time studied (a speech, law, photo, letter)

Sources for this section

Retrieval date for all online sources: **26 August 2026.**

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics, historical population estimates (population at end of 1945: about 7,347,000) and the 2021 census (25,422,788).
2. Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Migration, Australia, 2019-20* (cat. 3412.0), overseas-born share series 1947-2016; and the 2019 overseas-born count of 7,529,570 (30 per cent).
3. United Nations, *Convention relating to the Status of Refugees* (1951), Article 1, summarised; Australia became a party on 22 January 1954; *1967 Protocol*, joined 13 December 1973.
4. Everett S. Lee, ‘A Theory of Migration’ (1966), the push/pull frame.
5. Arthur Calwell, words spoken as Minister for Immigration in 1947, as quoted in Wikipedia, ‘Populate or perish’.
6. Wikipedia: ‘Populate or perish’; ‘Immigration to Australia’; ‘Immigration history of Australia’; ‘White Australia policy’; ‘Asylum in Australia’.

7. Wikipedia: 'Vietnamese Australians'; 'Vietnamese boat people'; 'Lebanese Australians'; 'Indian Australians'; 'Snowy Mountains Scheme'; 'Special Broadcasting Service'; 'Colombo Plan'; 'Multiculturalism in Australia'; 'Demographics of Australia'.

After Vietnam: how one war's end reshaped Australia

Curriculum trace — Victorian Curriculum 2.0 History, Levels 9 and 10

Owns VC2HH10K39

Draws on — VC2HH10K39.E01, VC2HH10K39.E02, VC2HH10K39.E03, VC2HH10K39.E04, VC2HH10K39.E05, VC2HH10K39.E06, VC2HH10K39.E07, VC2HH10K39.E08, VC2HH10K39.E09, VC2HH10K39.E10, VC2HH10K39.E11, VC2HH10K39.E12

Scope note — this book's taught topic family for this chapter is **Migration experiences** (TOC §2 D10). This section teaches the content description through the migration block, elaborations .E06–.E08. The other elaborations (.E01–.E05, .E09–.E12) belong to the curriculum's other topic families; they remain valid link keys for other builds but are not this book's taught case. No §2A exclusions apply to this content description.

Builds on — section 1F and section 6C. **Builds forward to** — section 6E and section 6F.

In 1975, a war on the other side of the world ended with a victory that changed Australia too. The Vietnam War finished with the communist victory in the South, and in the years that followed, hundreds of thousands of people fled the region. Some of them came to Australia — first by boat, then through organised resettlement. Their arrival sat inside one of the biggest changes in Australian history: the end of the White Australia Policy and the building of a culturally diverse society. But not everything changed. Migration itself continued, the parliament kept its power over who enters, and Australians kept debating how many people should come and from where. This section uses one question pair to study all of it: **what changed, and what stayed the same?**

Before we begin: what do these words mean?

Some words in this section are **contested** — people do not all agree on one fixed meaning — or are **stipulated** — defined by an authority. We state the sense used here, so every question can be answered on that sense alone.

- **Refugee.** This is a stipulated term. In this section, *refugee* is used in the sense given by the *Convention relating to the Status of Refugees* (adopted 28 July 1951): a person who is outside the country of their nationality and has a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion. Other definitions exist and are not interchangeable with this one. Australia is a signatory to this convention.
- **The White Australia Policy.** The Victorian Curriculum uses this term but does not define it. This section uses it as historians use it: the system of laws and policies — including the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* — that restricted non-European immigration to Australia from Federation in 1901 until the 1970s. The phrase itself was used as a slogan at least as early as 1911, when it appeared on a badge made by the Australian Natives' Association.
- **Assimilation.** Here, the policy expectation that operated in Australia from 1945 into the 1960s: that migrants should shed their own cultures and languages and quickly become indistinguishable from the mainstream population.
- **Multiculturalism.** This is a contested term. In this section, *multiculturalism* is used in the sense given by the *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* (1989): a way of describing a society in which people of different cultural backgrounds maintain their cultural heritage while sharing common institutions, built on three dimensions — cultural identity, social justice, and economic efficiency. Other definitions exist and are not interchangeable with this one.
- **Cultural heritage.** Here, the practices a group keeps and hands on — language, food, faith, stories, festivals and places.

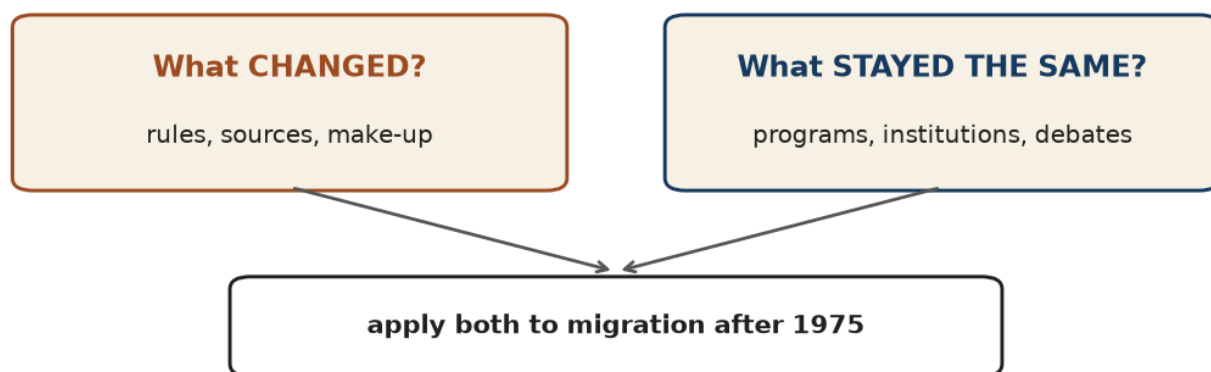
Keep these meanings in mind as you read. When a question asks about “change”, notice *what* changed, *how fast*, and *who* it affected. When it asks about “continuity”, notice what kept going through the change.

Theory

1. One global event, one long change (VC2HH10K39)

The content description for this section is about **what one big world event after 1945 changed — and what it left the same**. In this book’s migration case, the major global event is the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, and the change it helps us trace is the end of the White Australia Policy and the growth of Australia’s culturally diverse society. Historians study this with two questions. Figure 1 sets them out.

The historian's two questions about any development



Change and continuity can exist at the same time.

The rules changed - but the habit of taking in migrants continued.

Diagram of the two questions historians ask about any development - what changed, and what stayed the same - applied to migration to Australia after 1975, with a reminder that change and continuity can exist at the same time

Change and continuity are not opposites that cancel each other out. The same event can produce both at once: the rules changed, while the habit of taking in migrants continued. Hold both questions in mind as you read.

2. The global event: victory and flight (VC2HH10K39.E06)

The Vietnam War ended on **30 April 1975**, when the capital of South Vietnam, Saigon, fell to the forces of North Vietnam. In 1976 the two halves of the country were joined into one nation under a communist government. Many people who had worked with or supported the old South Vietnamese government, or who feared the new one, decided to leave.

The scale of the flight was huge. The United Nations refugee agency, UNHCR, records that between 1975 and 1995 almost **800,000 “boat people”** reached safety by sea from Indochina (Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos). UNHCR also estimates that between **200,000 and 250,000 people died at sea** making the attempt. Many who survived spent months or years in refugee camps in South-East Asia before being resettled in other countries.

Australia’s part began on the doorstep. The first refugee boat reached Australia in **April 1976**, arriving at Darwin. Between 1976 and 1982 an estimated **2,000 Vietnamese** people arrived directly by boat. Far more came through the orderly channel: the Fraser government worked with UNHCR to resettle refugees from camps, and more than **50,000 Vietnamese** people came from camps in the Indian Ocean region alone. By **1997**, a total of **108,808 Vietnamese** refugees — boat and land arrivals — had been resettled in Australia. Figure 2 gives the whole sequence.

From victory to resettlement: Vietnam and Australia, 1975-1997



Vertical timeline from 1975 to 1997 showing the fall of Saigon, Vietnam's reunification, the first refugee boat at Darwin in April 1976, the growth of organised resettlement from 1977, and the total of 108,808 Vietnamese refugees resettled in Australia by 1997

3. The change it helped complete: ending the White Australia Policy (VC2HH10K39.E06)

You met the policy timeline in section 1F. The White Australia Policy was dismantled step by step over nearly three decades, and most of the formal steps came **before** the refugee boats arrived: in **1973** the Whitlam government removed race as a factor in migrant selection; in **1975** the *Racial Discrimination Act* made race-based discrimination unlawful. The final step came in **1978**, when the Fraser government ended selection by country of origin — the same government that was responding to the refugee crisis. Read Source 1.

SOURCE 1

The Whitlam government's migration announcement, 1973

(as reported in a secondary account)

The selection of migrants would 'disregard race as a factor',
and citizenship would be available to all migrants after three years.

In the same year, Immigration Minister Al Grassby published the
discussion paper 'A multi-cultural society for the future',
bringing the word 'multicultural' into official Australian discussion.

Source: Wikipedia, 'White Australia policy' and 'Multiculturalism in Australia'
(retrieved 26 August 2026).

Source card quoting the Whitlam government's 1973 announcement that migrant selection would disregard race as a factor, and naming Al Grassby's discussion paper *A multi-cultural society for the future*

So how did the refugee arrivals **contribute** to the ending of the policy, as elaboration .E06 says? Historians point to two links:

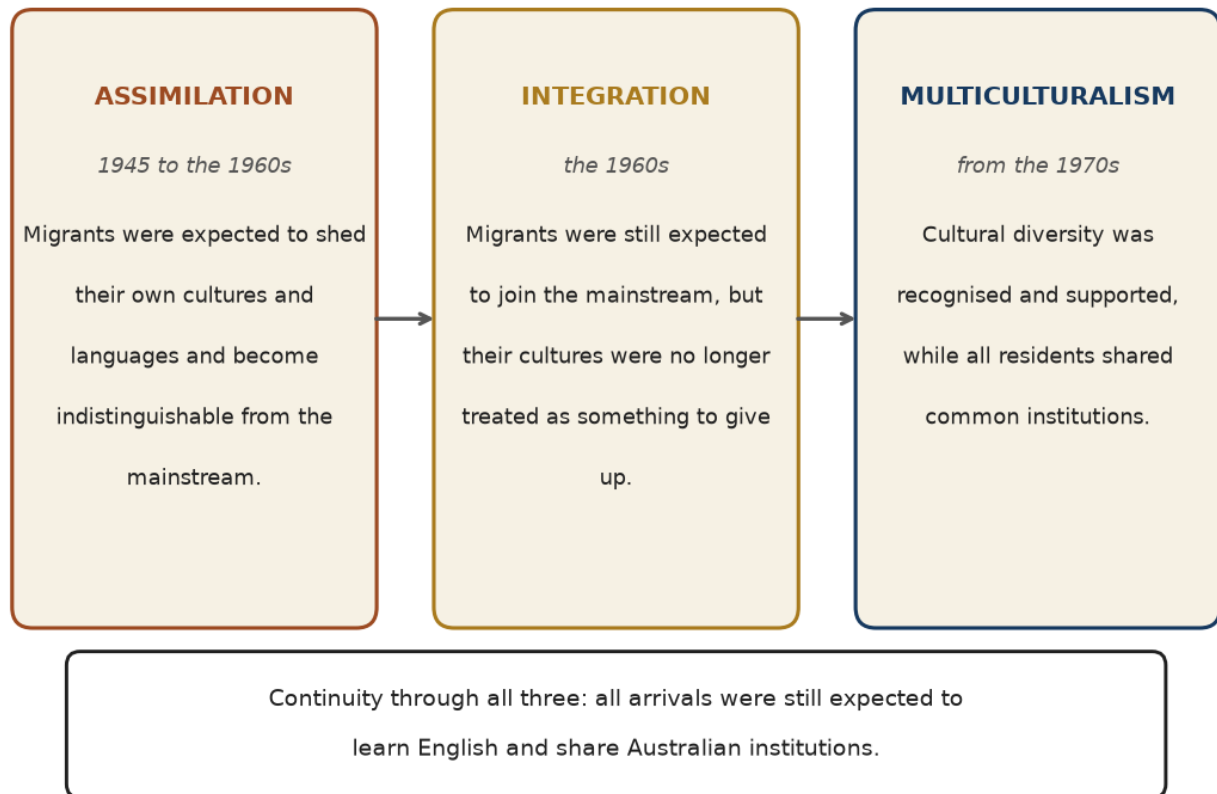
- **In practice.** The Vietnamese intake was the first large-scale resettlement of non-European refugees in Australia. It put the new, non-racial rules into practice and showed they could work.
- **In politics.** The crisis made the final step urgent. The country-of-origin rule was removed in 1978, in the middle of the refugee response, and the large Asian intake that followed made a return to the old system unthinkable.

Notice the honesty needed here: the formal dismantling began before the boats, so the refugee arrivals did not *start* the change. They helped *finish* it, and they changed what the change meant in daily life. Whether they mattered more than the laws themselves is a judgement historians debate — you will weigh it in Q8, and section 6F examines the wider debates.

4. From assimilation to multiculturalism (VC2HH10K39 .E07)

The second big change was in **how** Australia expected new arrivals to live. Figure 3 sets out the three ideas in sequence.

Three ideas about how new arrivals should live



Three labelled boxes showing assimilation from 1945 to the 1960s, integration in the 1960s, and multiculturalism from the 1970s, with one row beneath noting the continuity that all arrivals were expected to learn English and share Australian institutions

- **Assimilation (1945 to the 1960s).** Migrants were expected to shed their cultures and languages and become indistinguishable from the mainstream population.
- **Integration (the 1960s).** Migrants were still expected to join the mainstream, but their cultures were no longer treated as something to be given up at the door.
- **Multiculturalism (from the 1970s).** Cultural diversity was recognised and supported, while all residents shared common institutions.

The policy milestones came quickly in the 1970s and 1980s. Figure 4 gathers them.

Multicultural policy milestones, 1973-1989

Year	What happened
1973	Whitlam government removes race from migrant selection; Immigration Minister Al Grassby publishes <i>A multi-cultural society for the future</i>
June 1975	Ethnic radio stations 2EA (Sydney) and 3EA (Melbourne) begin broadcasting
1975	Racial Discrimination Act makes race-based discrimination unlawful (see section 1F)
1978	Galbally Report reviews services for migrants; SBS formally established 1 January; Fraser government introduces first official national multicultural policies
1980	SBS television begins full-time broadcasting on 24 October
1989	Hawke government publishes the <i>National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia</i> , with support from both major parties

Table of multicultural policy milestones from 1973 to 1989: the 1973 Whitlam changes and Grassby discussion paper, the ethnic radio stations of 1975, the Racial Discrimination Act 1975, the Galbally Report and the Special Broadcasting Service in 1978, SBS television in 1980, and the National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia in 1989

Key people and documents to remember:

- **Al Grassby**, Immigration Minister in the Whitlam government, published the discussion paper *A multi-cultural society for the future* in **1973**. The paper brought the word “multicultural” into official Australian discussion.
- The **Galbally Report** of **1978**, chaired by Frank Galbally, reviewed services and programs for migrants and argued that migrants should be helped to keep their culture while learning English and joining Australian life. The Fraser government then introduced the first official national multicultural policies.
- The **Special Broadcasting Service (SBS)** grew out of ethnic radio: stations 2EA in Sydney and 3EA in Melbourne began broadcasting on **9 June 1975**. SBS formally came into existence on **1 January 1978**, and its television channel began full-time broadcasting on **24 October 1980**. SBS broadcast news and programs in community languages — a direct rejection of the assimilation idea.

- The **National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia** was published by the Hawke government in **1989**, with support from both major parties. It set out the three dimensions used in this section's definition: cultural identity, social justice and economic efficiency.

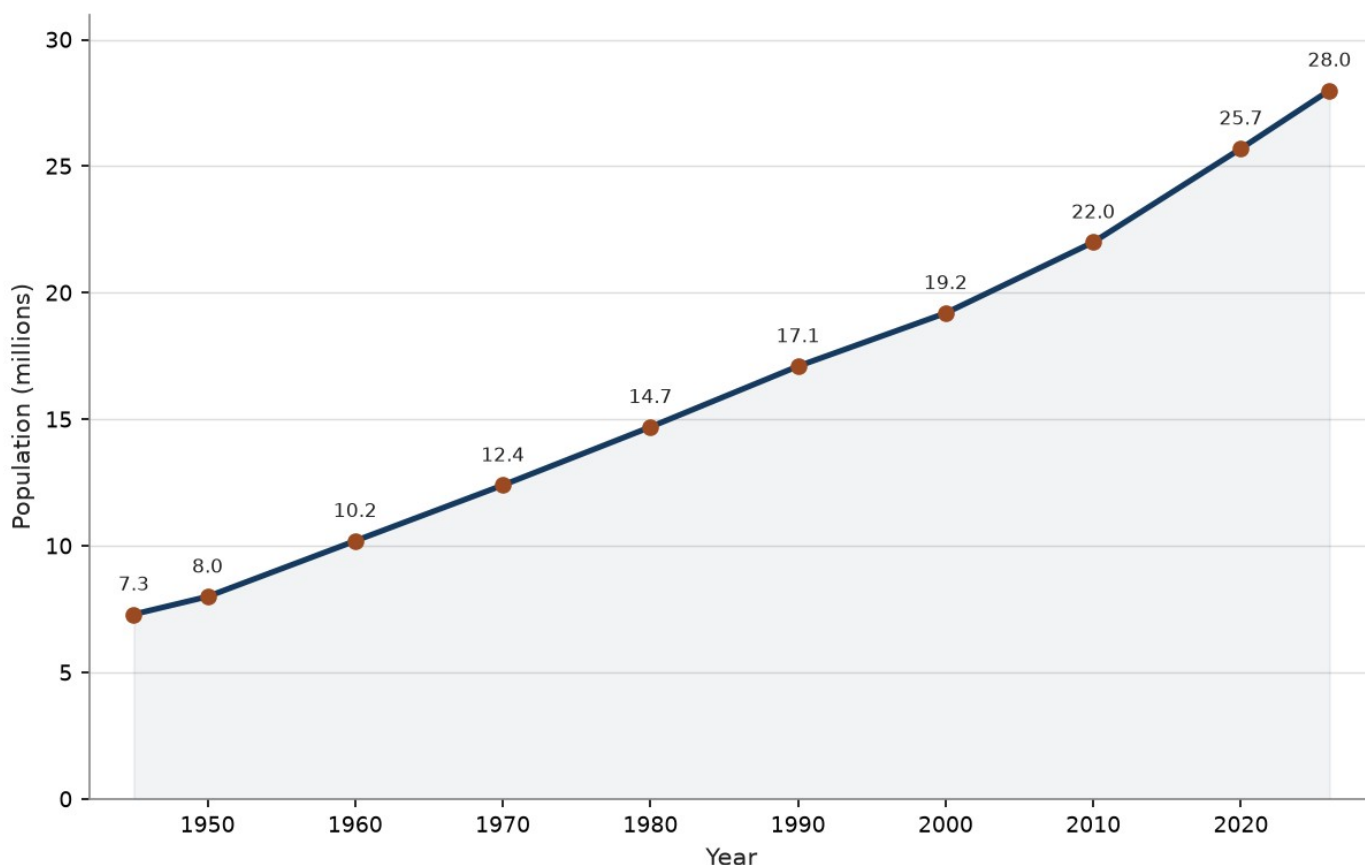
Hearing past views — steelmanned. Multiculturalism has been debated since the day it was named, and historians present both sides in their strongest forms. Supporters argued that recognising culture made settlement easier, let migrants take part fully, and made society stronger because no one was asked to give up who they were to belong. Critics — the historian Geoffrey Blainey was the best-known voice in the 1980s — argued that too much emphasis on separate cultures could slow the growth of a shared national identity. Both positions are stated here in the strongest form their holders would recognise; stating them is not endorsing them. Section 6F examines this debate in depth.

5. Measuring the change with graphs (VC2HH10K39.E08)

Population figures let us measure the change instead of just describing it. This part practises reading **different types of graphs** — a skill the achievement standard expects of you.

A line graph shows growth over time. Australia's population has grown almost four-fold since the end of World War II, and migration drove a large part of that growth.

Australia's population, 1945-2026

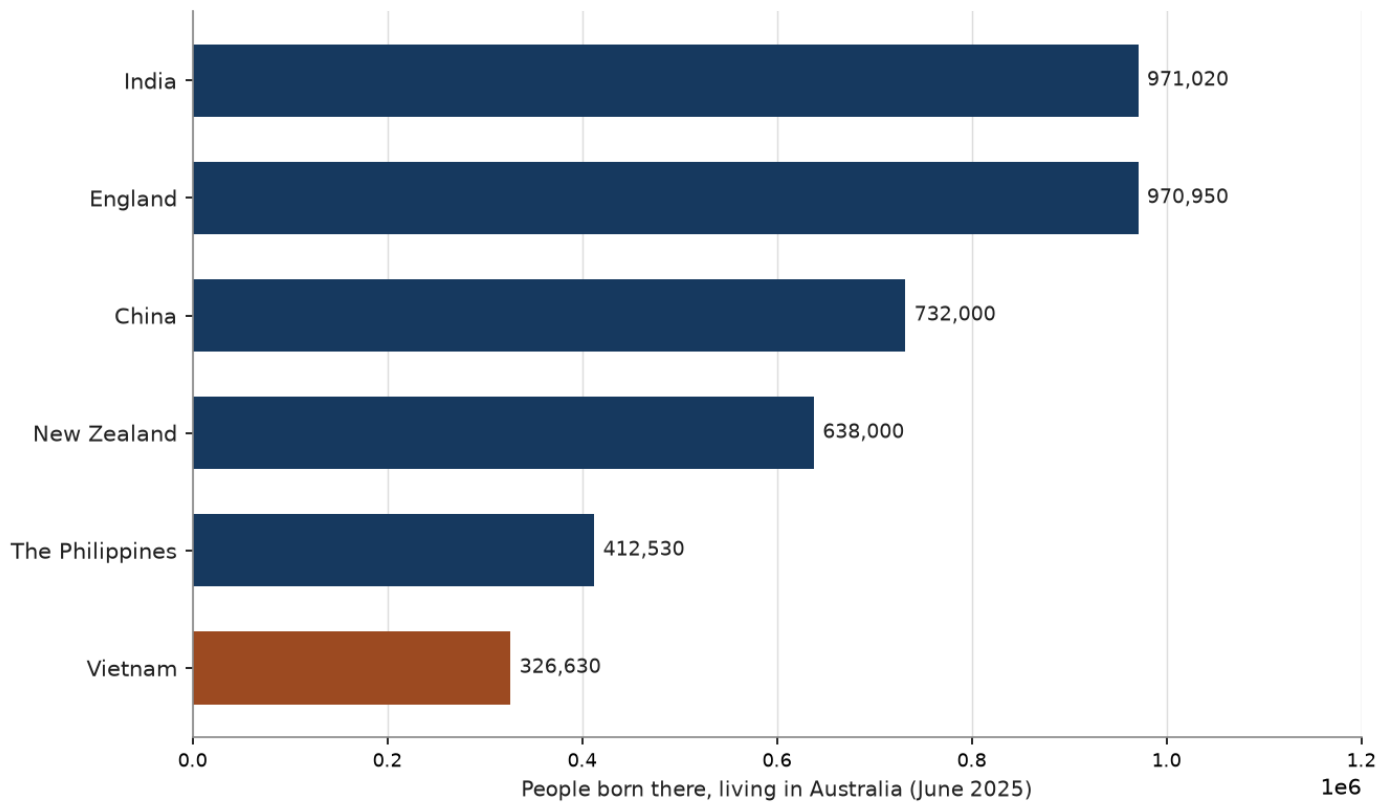


*The population grew almost four-fold after World War II, and migration drove a large share of that growth.
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, estimated resident population; Wikipedia, 'Demographics of Australia' (retrieved 26 August 2026).*

Line graph of Australia's population from 1945 to 2026, rising from 7.3 million to nearly 28 million, with decade markers and a note that migration drove a large share of the growth

A bar chart compares groups at one time. In June 2025, the Australian Bureau of Statistics counted **8.8 million** overseas-born residents — **32 per cent** of the population. India had just overtaken England as the largest birthplace group, and Vietnam ranked sixth.

The six largest countries of birth among overseas-born residents, June 2025

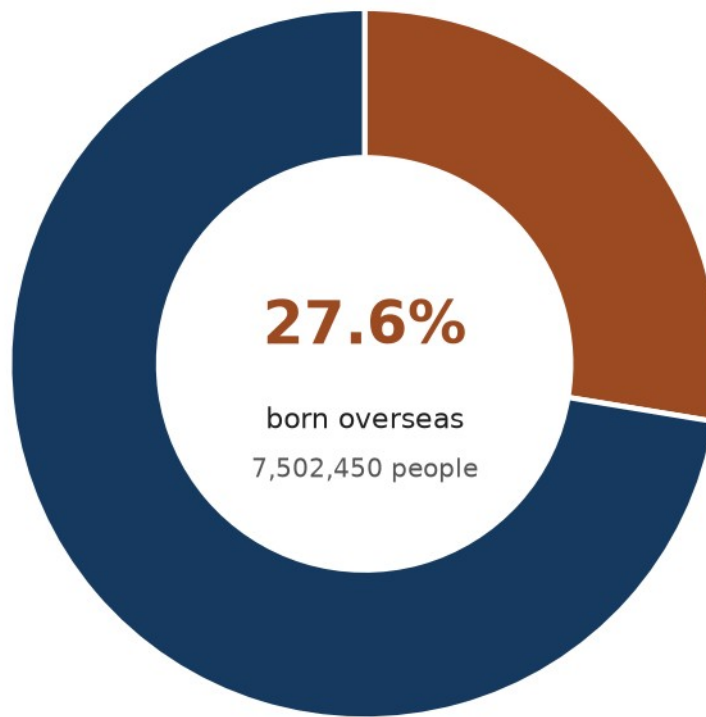


Overseas-born residents totalled 8.8 million - 32 per cent of the population. India had just overtaken England as the largest birthplace group; Vietnam (highlighted) ranked sixth. China, New Zealand, the Philippines and Vietnam figures are rounded. Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australia's Population by Country of Birth, June 2025 (retrieved 26 August 2026).

Horizontal bar chart of the six largest countries of birth among Australia's overseas-born residents in June 2025, with India at 971,020 just ahead of England at 970,950, then China, New Zealand, the Philippines and Vietnam, highlighted

A donut chart shows shares of a whole. At the 2021 census, 27.6 per cent of people counted were born overseas — 7,502,450 people.

Share of the population born overseas, 2021 census



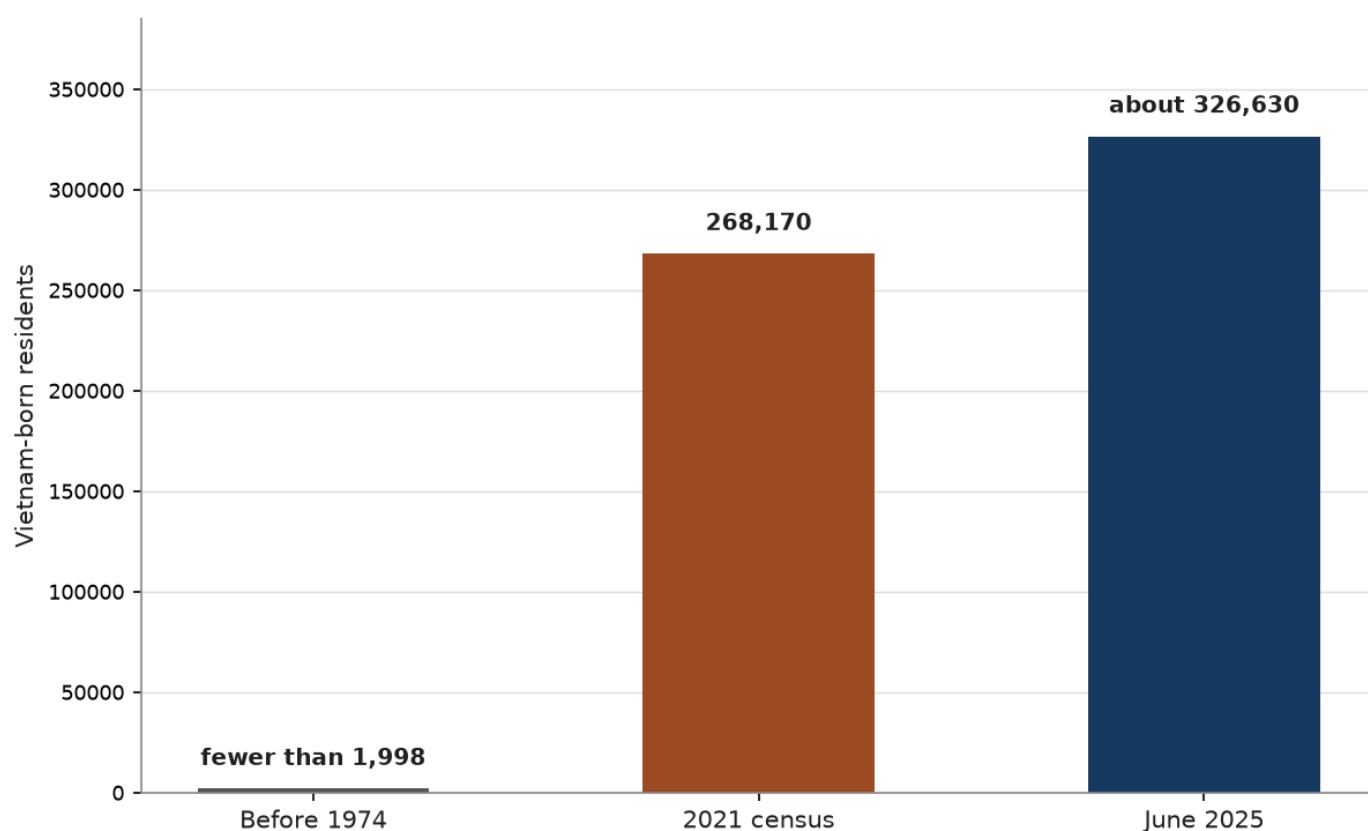
■ Born overseas ■ Born in Australia

Source: Australian census 2021, as reported in Wikipedia, '2021 Australian census' (retrieved 26 August 2026).

Donut chart of the 2021 census showing the overseas-born share of the population at 27.6 per cent (7,502,450 people) and the Australian-born share at 72.4 per cent

The story of one group. The growth of the Vietnamese-born community shows the change at close range (Figure 8). Before 1974 there were fewer than 1,998 Vietnam-born people in Australia; at the 2021 census there were 268,170, and by June 2025 about 326,630.

Vietnam-born residents in Australia



*From fewer than 2,000 before 1974 to one of Australia's largest birthplace groups today.
Sources: Wikipedia, 'Vietnamese Australians'; Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australia's Population by Country of Birth, June 2025 (retrieved 26 August 2026).*

Bar chart of Vietnam-born residents in Australia at three dates: fewer than 1,998 before 1974, 268,170 at the 2021 census, and about 326,630 in June 2025

Each graph type does a different job: the line graph tracks change over time, the bar chart compares groups, and the donut chart shows a share of a whole. Choosing the right type for your data is part of the skill.

6. Continuity inside change (VC2HH10K39)

Figure 9 gathers the section's findings into one organiser. Study it, then try adding one item of your own to each side.

Australian migration after 1975: change and continuity

What CHANGED

- Source countries: from mostly Britain and Europe to groups from all over the world, led by Asia
- Selection rules: race and country of origin removed; discrimination by race made unlawful
- Policy: multicultural programs replaced the expectation of assimilation
- Media: SBS broadcast news and programs in community languages from 1975
- Society: languages, food, festivals and faiths grew more diverse
- The Vietnamese-born community grew from fewer than 2,000 to more than 326,000

What STAYED THE SAME

- Every post-war government kept a large migration program
- The parliament kept its power to decide who enters Australia
- English remained the shared national language
- Migrants kept coming for work, safety and family
- Australians kept debating how many migrants should come, and from where

Add one item of your own to each column - and name the evidence for it.

Graphic organiser with two columns: what changed after 1975, including source countries, selection rules, the rise of multicultural policy and SBS and the growth of the Vietnamese-born community, and what stayed the same, including the large migration program, the parliament's power over entry, English as the shared language and the continuing public debate

The pattern to take away: after 1975 the **rules** of migration changed fundamentally, the **sources** of migrants changed, and the **make-up** of society changed — but migration itself as a nation-building project continued, the institutions that controlled it continued, and the arguments about it continued too. That mix is what historians mean by **continuity inside change**. Figure 10 is a model paragraph that puts this evidence together in answer to one question — use it as a guide for your own writing.

Model paragraph: change and continuity after the Vietnam War

MODEL ANSWER

The end of the Vietnam War changed who came to Australia, and how they were received. After the communist victory in April 1975, hundreds of thousands of people fled the region, and Australia took in refugees first by boat - the first arrived at Darwin in April 1976 - and then in far larger numbers through organised resettlement, so that by 1997 a total of 108,808 Vietnamese refugees had made Australia home. These arrivals helped complete the end of the White Australia Policy: selection by country of origin ended in 1978, and multicultural programs replaced the old expectation of assimilation. Yet much stayed the same. Every government since 1945 has kept a large migration program, the parliament kept its power over who enters, and Australians kept debating how many should come. Judged by how wide its effect on society was, the end of race-based selection was the bigger change, because it changed who Australia could be, not just who arrived.

Why this paragraph works

- Names the global event and dates it (communist victory, April 1975).
- Gives both a change (rules, sources, policy) and a continuity (program, power, debate).
- Uses dated evidence from the section (first boat 1976; 108,808 by 1997; 1978 rule change).
- Uses the language of the concept: changed, stayed the same, continuity inside change.
- Applies a stated criterion (how wide the effect was) to reach a judgement.

Model paragraph card: a worked answer describing change and continuity in Australian migration after the Vietnam War, followed by five notes explaining why it works - it names and dates the global event, gives both a change and a continuity, uses dated evidence from the section, uses the language of the concept, and applies a stated criterion to reach a judgement

Worked examples

Worked example 1 — reading a line graph (with help)

Question. Using Figure 5 (Australia’s population 1945–2026), describe the trend shown and give one cause of it.

Working	Comment
Step 1: Read the title and the axes. The graph shows Australia’s population in millions, from 1945 to 2026.	Always start with what is measured and its units.
Step 2: Describe the trend. The population rose steadily in every decade, from about 7.3 million in 1945 to nearly 28 million in 2026 — almost four times as large.	Name the direction (rose) and the scale (four-fold).
Step 3: Check for turning points. There is no sudden jump: growth was continuous, though faster in some decades than others.	A trend description should say whether growth was steady or uneven.
Step 4: Link to a cause. From 1945 the Australian government ran a mass migration program (“populate or perish”), so migration drove a large share of the growth.	Link the graph to what you know from the section.
Step 5: State the graph’s limit. This graph shows how many people there were, not where they came from — you need Figure 6 for that.	Every graph leaves something out; naming the limit is part of reading it.

Answer: Australia’s population rose steadily from about 7.3 million in 1945 to nearly 28 million by 2026, an almost four-fold increase. A major cause was the post-war migration program, which brought millions of new residents. The graph cannot show where those residents came from.

Worked example 2 — analysing a source (with help)

Question. Read Source 1 (the 1973 policy announcement). What can historians learn from this source about the direction of Australian migration policy?

Working	Comment
Step 1: Identify the source. It is a government announcement of 1973, reported in a secondary account, about the Whitlam government’s new migration rules.	Start with what the source <i>is</i> .
Step 2: Describe the content. Selection of migrants would “disregard race as a factor”, and citizenship would be available to all migrants after three years.	Use the source’s own words.
Step 3: Explain the context. It came 72 years after the <i>Immigration Restriction Act 1901</i> , mid-way through the dismantling of the White Australia Policy you studied in section 1F.	Context explains why the announcement mattered.
Step 4: Read the perspective. This is the government’s own account of its decision — an official perspective that presents the change as deliberate policy.	Official sources show policy direction, not community feeling.
Step 5: State an inference and a limit. We can infer that by 1973 the government no longer saw race as a lawful ground for selection. The limit: the source does not show how the public responded — for attitudes, historians need other sources (see section 6E).	An inference rests on the source plus context; a limit names what is missing.

Answer: The source shows that by 1973 the Australian government had removed race from migrant selection and shortened the wait for citizenship — clear evidence that the White Australia Policy was being dismantled from the top. As an official statement, it shows policy direction well, but not public attitudes.

Practice questions

With help

- Q1.** Using Figure 2, name the month and year the first refugee boat reached Australia, and the city where it arrived (part 2).
- Q2.** How many Vietnamese refugees had been resettled in Australia in total by 1997 (part 2)?
- Q3.** Using Figure 4, name the 1978 report that reviewed services for migrants, and one policy development that followed from it (part 4).
- Q4.** Using Figure 6, name the two largest countries of birth among overseas-born residents in June 2025, and say which was slightly ahead (part 5).
- Q5.** Using Figure 7, state the percentage of the population born overseas at the 2021 census, and the number of people this represented (part 5).
- Q6.** What two changes did the Whitlam government make to migration rules in 1973 (part 3, Source 1)?

On your own

- Q7.** Explain how the communist victory in Vietnam led to change in Australia. Use the language of cause and consequence, and give one intended and one unintended consequence (parts 2–3).
- Q8.** “The arrival of Vietnamese refugees mattered more for ending the White Australia Policy than the laws of 1973–1975.” Discuss this claim. Give evidence on both sides before you reach your own judgement, and name the criterion you used to judge (part 3).
- Q9.** Using Figure 9, describe one change and one continuity in Australian migration after 1975, and give evidence from the section for each (part 6).
- Q10.** Why is a line graph the right type for showing population change over time, but a bar chart better for comparing countries of birth? Use Figures 5 and 6 in your answer (part 5).
- Q11.** Using Source 1, write one inference about migration policy in 1973 and one limit of the source as evidence. Follow the steps of Worked example 2 (part 3).
- Q12.** Significance. Which post-1975 development was the most important for Australian society: the refugee resettlement program, multicultural policy (such as the Galbally Report), or SBS? State your choice, name the criterion you used (for example, how many people it affected, or how long its effects lasted), and defend your choice in two or three sentences (parts 2, 4 and 5).
-

Answers

Q1. April 1976; Darwin.

Q2. 108,808 Vietnamese refugees (boat and land arrivals).

Q3. The Galbally Report; acceptable follow-on developments: the Fraser government's first official national multicultural policies, or expanded migrant services and programs.

Q4. India (971,020) and England (970,950); India was slightly ahead.

Q5. 27.6 per cent; 7,502,450 people.

Q6. Race was removed as a factor in migrant selection, and citizenship became available to all migrants after three years.

Fully-worked solutions

Q7. A strong answer uses cause-consequence language. *Cause:* the communist victory in April 1975 and the reunification of Vietnam in 1976 led hundreds of thousands of people to flee the region; Australia accepted refugees first by boat (from April 1976) and then in far larger numbers through UNHCR channels. *Intended consequence:* the resettlement program gave protection to refugees and met Australia's obligations under the 1951 convention. *Unintended consequence:* the intake helped complete the end of the White Australia Policy and changed the cultural make-up of Australian cities in ways no 1975 decision-maker had planned. Both consequences flowed from the same cause.

Q8. A strong answer weighs both sides. *For the claim:* the laws of 1973–1975 changed the rules on paper, but it was the refugee intake — the first large-scale non-European resettlement — that put the new rules into practice and made a return to the old system unthinkable; by 1997 over 108,000 Vietnamese refugees had made the change visible in daily life. *Against the claim:* without the laws there would have been no lawful path for the refugees to come; the 1973 changes and the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* came first and made the intake possible, and the final rule (country of origin) was removed by an act of government in 1978, not by the arrivals themselves. A reasoned conclusion might be that the laws were the necessary condition and the arrivals were the sufficient one — so judging “mattered more” depends on the criterion. Using the criterion “how many people it affected in daily life”, the arrivals score higher; using “what made the change lawful”, the laws do. Marking rewards the reasoning, not the conclusion.

Q9. *Change:* the sources of migrants changed. In 1945–1970 most arrivals came from Britain and Europe; by June 2025 the largest birthplace groups were India and England, with China, New Zealand, the Philippines and Vietnam behind them (Figure 6), and overseas-born residents made up 32 per cent of the population. *Continuity:* migration itself continued. Every government after 1945 kept a large migration program, and the parliament kept its power over who enters — the population line (Figure 5) shows uninterrupted growth across the whole period. Both points come straight from the section's evidence.

Q10. A line graph is right for Figure 5 because its job is to show one quantity (population) moving across time — the slope of the line *is* the growth rate. A bar chart is right for Figure 6 because its job is to compare separate groups (countries of birth) at one moment (June 2025) — the lengths of the bars can be compared side by side. Using the wrong type would hide the message: bars by year would hide the trend, and a line across countries would be meaningless.

Q11. *Inference:* because the announcement says selection would “disregard race as a factor”, we can infer that by 1973 the government no longer treated race as a lawful ground for choosing migrants — the core of the White Australia Policy was being removed from the top. *Limit:* the source is an official government statement; it shows the policy direction the government wanted to present, but it does not show how the public, the parliament's opposition, or migrants themselves responded. A historian would need other sources (newspapers, interviews, parliamentary debates) to test public attitudes.

Q12. A strong answer names a criterion and applies it. Example: “Using the criterion ‘how many people it affected and for how long’, the refugee resettlement program was the most important, because it brought over 108,000 Vietnamese refugees by 1997, helped finish the end of the White Australia Policy, and created communities whose children and grandchildren are part of Australia today.” A student choosing the Galbally Report could argue it shaped settlement services for every migrant group after 1978; a student choosing SBS could argue it changed the media all Australians consume, in languages the assimilation era had ignored. Any defended choice earns full marks — the reasoning, not the conclusion, is what counts.

Key terms

Term	Meaning used in this section
Continuity	What stays the same across a period of change
Change	What becomes different across a period
Refugee	A person outside their country of nationality with a well-founded fear of persecution (per the 1951 <i>Convention relating to the Status of Refugees</i>)
White Australia Policy	The system of laws and policies restricting non-European immigration, 1901 to the 1970s
Assimilation	The expectation (1945–1960s) that migrants shed their cultures and languages
Integration	The 1960s idea that migrants join the mainstream without giving up their culture
Multiculturalism	A diverse society sharing common institutions, per the <i>National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia</i> (1989)
Cultural heritage	The language, food, faith, stories, festivals and places a group keeps and hands on
Resettlement	The organised transfer of refugees from camps or first countries of asylum to a new country
Cause / consequence	Why something happened / what flowed from it
Primary source	Evidence from the time studied (a law, speech, photo, letter)
Perspective	A particular person’s or group’s view of events

Sources for this section

Retrieval date for all online sources: **26 August 2026.**

1. *Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*, adopted 28 July 1951, in force 22 April 1954, Article 1 (definition of a refugee). Australia is a signatory.
2. Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australia’s Population by Country of Birth*, June 2025 release: overseas-born residents 8.8 million (32.0 per cent of the population); India 971,020; England 970,950; China about 732,000; New Zealand about 638,000; the Philippines about 412,530; Vietnam about 326,630.
3. Australian census 2021: overseas-born 27.6 per cent of the population (7,502,450 people); England the most common birthplace (927,490). As reported in Wikipedia: “2021 Australian census”.
4. Australian Bureau of Statistics, estimated resident population series 1945–2026 (7.3 million in 1945; nearly 28 million in 2026). As reported in Wikipedia: “Demographics of Australia”.
5. Wikipedia: “Vietnamese Australians” — Vietnam-born residents fewer than 1,998 before 1974; 268,170 at the 2021 census.
6. Wikipedia: “Vietnamese boat people” — UNHCR figures: almost 800,000 boat people reached safety 1975–1995; an estimated 200,000–250,000 died at sea; Australia resettled 108,808 Vietnamese boat and land arrivals through 1997.

7. Wikipedia: “Asylum in Australia” — the first recorded boat arrival in April 1976; an estimated 2,000 Vietnamese arrived by boat between 1976 and 1982; more than 50,000 Vietnamese resettled from Indian Ocean refugee camps.
8. Wikipedia: “White Australia policy” — steps of dismantling 1949–1978; the 1911 Australian Natives’ Association badge carrying the slogan; Whitlam government changes of 1973.
9. Wikipedia: “Multiculturalism in Australia” — Grassby’s 1973 discussion paper; the Galbally Report and the Fraser government’s first official national multicultural policies (1978); the *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* (1989); the assimilation-era expectation that migrants shed their cultures and languages.
10. Wikipedia: “Special Broadcasting Service” — 2EA and 3EA broadcasting from 9 June 1975; SBS formally established 1 January 1978; full-time television from 24 October 1980.
11. F. Galbally, *Migrant Services and Programs* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1978).
12. *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1989).

Through their eyes: people who lived through global change

Curriculum trace — Victorian Curriculum 2.0 History, Levels 9 and 10

Owns VC2HH10K40

Draws on — VC2HH10K40.E01, VC2HH10K40.E02, VC2HH10K40.E03, VC2HH10K40.E04, VC2HH10K40.E05, VC2HH10K40.E06, VC2HH10K40.E07, VC2HH10K40.E08, VC2HH10K40.E09, VC2HH10K40.E10, VC2HH10K40.E11

Scope note — this book’s taught topic family for this chapter is **Migration experiences** (TOC §2 D10). This section teaches the content description through the migration block, elaborations .E04–.E06: how attitudes to migrant arrivals changed over time, the case for keeping — and for ending — the White Australia Policy in its closing years (1964–1973), and the community interview. The other elaborations (.E01–.E03, .E07–.E11) belong to the curriculum’s other topic families; they remain valid link keys for other builds but are not this book’s taught case. No §2A exclusions apply to this content description.

Builds on — section 1F, section 6C and section 6D. **Builds forward to** — section 6F.

One event, many stories. When a Vietnamese family stepped off a boat in Darwin in 1976, the minister who changed the rules, the union official who once backed those rules, the student who marched against them, and the family themselves all saw the same moment differently — and some of them had changed their minds along the way. That is what this section studies: not just **what happened** after 1945, but **how it looked and felt from the inside**, to the people who made the rules, the people who argued about them, and the people who moved. Historians call these inside views **perspectives**, and tracking how they change over time is one of the historian’s core skills.

Before we begin: what do these words mean?

Some words in this section are **contested** — people do not all agree on one fixed meaning — or are **stipulated** — defined by an authority. Figure 2 states the sense used here, so every question can be answered on that sense alone. The two most important words for this section are:

- **Perspective.** A particular person’s or group’s view of events — shaped by what they lived through, what they believed, and where they stood. Two people can watch the same event and honestly see it differently.
- **Oral history.** History collected by interviewing people about their own lives. An interview is a historical source: rich, personal, and — like every source — needing to be checked against wider evidence.

Words that carried the debate: five terms defined

These words do the work in this section. Each is defined here so every question has one shared meaning.

White Australia policy	The name historians give to the set of laws and policies, starting in 1901, that restricted non-European immigration and aimed to keep Australia's population mainly British. Naming it is not support for it.
Assimilation	The official expectation for migrants after 1945: settle in, adopt the existing Australian way of life, and leave your old culture behind.
Integration	The idea that replaced assimilation from the mid-1960s: migrants take part fully in Australian life but may keep some of their own culture.
Multiculturalism	The idea, in Australian policy from the 1970s, that cultural diversity is a normal part of Australia and that migrants may keep their cultural heritage. Definitions differ; this section uses this sense.
Refugee	In the sense of the 1951 United Nations convention: a person forced to leave their own country because they fear for their safety, who cannot safely go back.

Table defining the five terms that carry the debate - White Australia policy, assimilation, integration, multiculturalism and refugee - each with the single sense used in this section

Keep both in mind as you read. When a question asks about a perspective, always say **whose** view it is, **what** shaped it, and **whether it changed**.

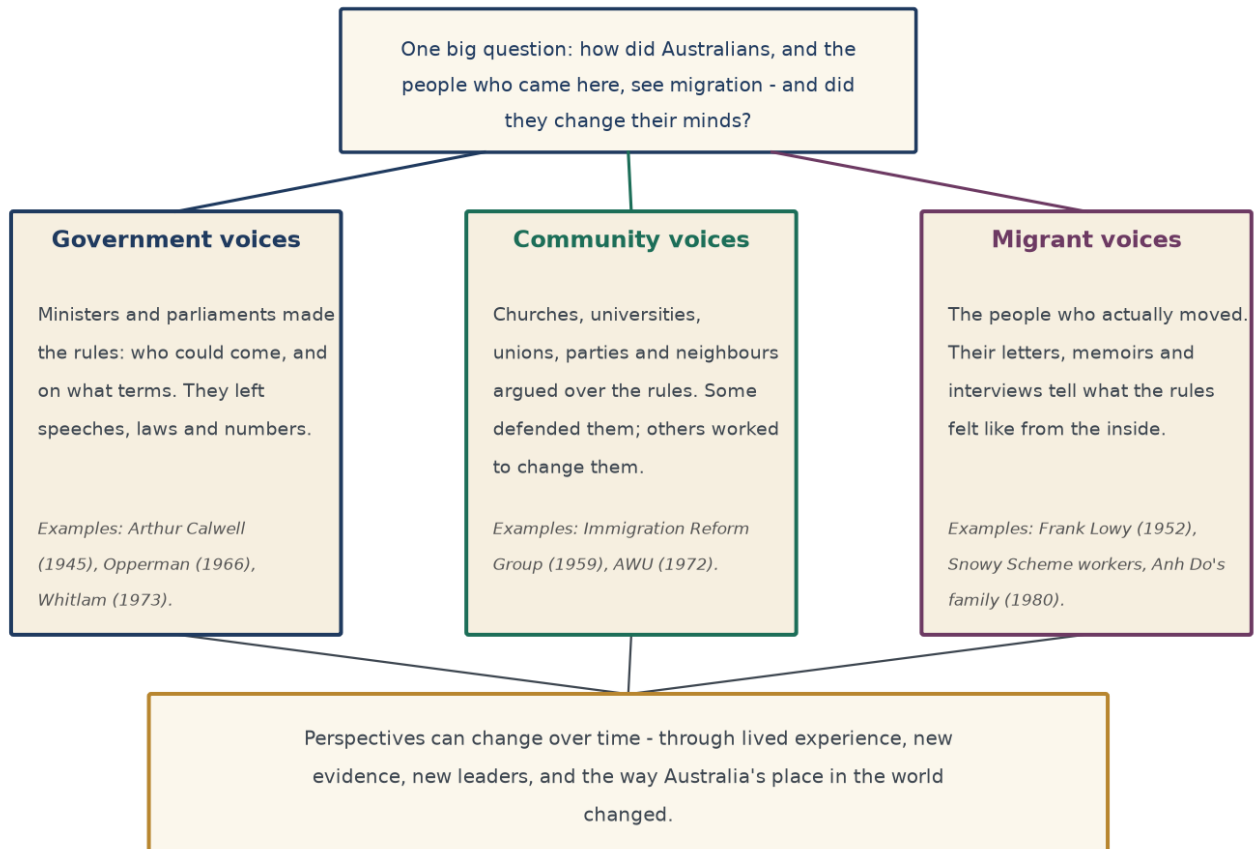
Theory

1. Whose story? Three kinds of voices (VC2HH10K40)

The curriculum content for this section asks for the perspectives of the people who actually lived through a major global development, and for how those perspectives may have shifted over the years. In this book's migration case, the development is the great movement of people to Australia after 1945 — more than one million British arrivals on assisted passages, hundreds of thousands of displaced Europeans, and, after the rules changed, large numbers of Asians and refugees. To study it, historians listen to three kinds of voices: **government voices** (the ministers and parliaments who made the rules), **community voices** (the churches, universities, unions and parties who argued over the rules), and **migrant voices** (the people who actually moved). Figure 1 maps the three.

Whose voices shaped Australia's migration story after 1945?

Every group below saw the same events differently. This section reads each view.



A big-picture diagram asking whose voices shaped Australia's migration story after 1945, with three tracks - government voices such as Calwell, Opperman and Whitlam; community voices such as the Immigration Reform Group and the AWU; and migrant voices such as Frank Lowy, Snowy Scheme workers and Anh Do's family - all feeding into the idea that perspectives can change over time

The same three voices organise this section. Notice as you read that no voice is fixed: governments, communities and migrants all changed their minds across the decades.

2. Government voices, 1945: we need people — but only some people (VC2HH10K40 . E04)

In 1945 Australia appointed its first Minister for Immigration, **Arthur Calwell**. The war had just ended, and Calwell's case for a big migration program was simple: a small population could not defend a large continent, and the economy needed workers. His program, summed up in the slogan “populate or perish”, brought more than one million British people on assisted passages — the “Ten Pound Poms” — plus hundreds of thousands of displaced Europeans. Read Source 1.

SOURCE 1

The case for a big migration program - a summary of the aims of Arthur Calwell, Australia's first Minister for Immigration, from 1945

After World War II, Australia had to grow. The war had shown that a small population could not defend a large continent, and the economy needed workers.

Calwell's program, summed up as 'populate or perish', brought in over one million British people on assisted passages (the 'Ten Pound Poms'), plus hundreds of thousands of displaced Europeans.

But Calwell's view of who should come was limited. British migrants came first, and the laws restricting non-European arrivals stayed in place.

One perspective, two messages: Australia needed people - yet only certain people were wanted.

Summarised from the public record of the post-war migration program; see the Sources list for this section (retrieved 26 August 2026). This is a summary of a position, not a quotation.

Source card summarising the 1945 case for a big migration program made by Arthur Calwell, Australia's first Minister for Immigration: the need to grow after the war, the assisted passages that brought over one million British people, and the limit that British migrants came first while the old restrictions on non-European arrivals stayed in place

Source 1 holds one perspective with two messages: Australia needed people — yet only certain people were wanted. The old restrictions on non-European migration, which you met in section 1F, stayed in place through the 1940s and 1950s. The government's perspective in 1945 was therefore **welcome and bar at the same time**: a proud open door for the British, a closed one for almost everyone else.

3. Migrant voices: four arrivals, four starting points (VC2HH10K40.E04)

The people who moved saw the same national story from very different starting points. Figure 3 puts four migrant voices side by side.

Four migrant voices, four different arrivals

Each person or group below experienced the same national story from a different starting point.

Frank Lowy, arrived 1952

Born in Czechoslovakia in 1930; as a Jewish child in wartime Europe he was persecuted, and his father died in the camp at Auschwitz. He reached Sydney in 1952, joined the family's small delivery business, and in 1953 met John Saunders, another migrant. Together they built the Westfield shopping company, listed in 1960.

His perspective: Australia was a place where people who had lost everything could build again.

The 'Ten Pound Poms', from 1945

More than one million British people came on assisted passages after the war. Among them, in 1966, was the family of Julia Gillard, later Australia's Prime Minister, who arrived from Wales as a child.

Their perspective: for many, Australia meant work, a house and a fresh start - the reasons behind the slogan 'a better life'.

Snowy Scheme workers, 1949-1974

Over 100,000 people built the dams, tunnels and power stations of the Snowy Scheme; about two thirds of them were migrants, from more than 30 countries. For many Australians, the work camps were the first place they met and worked beside people from across Europe.

Their perspective: migration was effort and pride - building the country, literally.

Anh Do's family, arrived 1980

One of tens of thousands of Vietnamese families who left Vietnam after the war that ended in 1975. Australia resettled 108,808 Vietnamese refugees between 1975 and 1997; the Do family came by boat in 1980 and settled in Sydney.

Their perspective: arrival was a rescue - safety first, then a new life.

Panel of four migrant voices: Frank Lowy, who arrived in 1952 after a childhood of wartime persecution in Europe and built the Westfield company; the Ten Pound Poms, including the family of Julia Gillard, who saw Australia as work, a house and a fresh start; Snowy Scheme workers from more than 30 countries, who saw migration as effort and pride; and Anh Do's family, who arrived by boat in 1980 and saw arrival as rescue

Four perspectives, four meanings for the same word, "migration": for Lowy, a place to build again after losing everything; for the Poms, a better life of work and home ownership; for the Snowy workers, pride in building a country with their hands; for Anh Do's family, safety after danger. Read Source 4 for the Do family's own account.

SOURCE 4

A family's escape - the story told by author and artist Anh Do in his

2010 memoir *The Happiest Refugee* (summarised)

Anh Do was born in Vietnam in 1977. In 1980 his family fled the country as refugees.

They spent five days in a leaky fishing boat. Pirates attacked them twice; the second group stole the boat's second engine, and one pirate threw a container of water aboard - the thing that kept them alive.

The family reached Australia and settled in Yagoona, a suburb of Sydney. Anh Do grew up there, and went on to become an author, comedian and painter.

His book looks back at the journey with thanks and humour - one refugee family's perspective on what Australia offered them.

*Summarised from Anh Do, *The Happiest Refugee* (2010); facts cross-checked via Wikipedia, 'Anh Do' (retrieved 26 August 2026).*

*Source card summarising the story told by Anh Do in his 2010 book *The Happiest Refugee*: born in Vietnam in 1977, fleeing by leaky boat in 1980, two pirate attacks at sea, settling in Yagoona in Sydney, and looking back on the journey with thanks and humour*

A memoir like Do's is a **primary source** for the migrant experience — written later, but by someone who was there. Its value is the inside view: what the journey felt like, and what Australia came to mean. Its limit is the same as every personal source: it is one family's story, told with hindsight and humour, not a measurement of everyone's experience. You will weigh that value-and-limit pair in Q10.

4. Attitudes change: the door opens, 1950–1966 (VC2HH10K40.E04)

Attitudes to arriving migrants did not stand still. Three pressures worked on the old rules:

- **Lived contact.** From 1950 the **Colombo Plan** brought students from Asia to Australian universities; after the Hungarian uprising of 1956, about **14,500 Hungarians** were welcomed as refugees. Australians met, taught and worked beside people the old rules had kept out.
- **Trade and region.** Australia's future lay in Asia, and the racial bar was widely read there as an insult (part 5).
- **What migrants proved.** Displaced Europeans and Hungarians settled fast and worked hard; the Snowy Scheme was built largely by migrant hands. The fear that newcomers could not “fit” kept failing the test of experience.

The rules followed the attitudes. The **dictation test** was removed in 1958; entry conditions were eased in 1964; and in **March 1966** the Minister for Immigration, **Hubert Opperman**, announced that applications would now be judged on the person, whatever their origin. Read Source 2.

SOURCE 2

The announcement of March 1966 - Hubert Opperman, Minister for Immigration, opens the door to 'well qualified' applicants of any background

Opperman announced that applications would now be judged on the person, whatever their origin:

- ▶ “their suitability as settlers”
- ▶ “their ability to integrate readily”
- ▶ “their possession of qualifications positively useful to Australia”

The same change let non-European residents become citizens after five years, and removed the rules that had made family reunion harder for them.

It was not full equality, but birthplace was no longer the main test. In July 1966 Prime Minister Harold Holt said Australia now had a 'restricted immigration policy', not a White Australia policy.

Quoted phrases and dates cross-checked via Wikipedia, 'White Australia policy' (retrieved 26 August 2026).

Source card quoting the March 1966 announcement by Hubert Opperman, Minister for Immigration, that applications would now be judged on the person, whatever their origin; with the note that non-European residents could now become citizens after five years, and that Prime Minister Harold Holt called it a “restricted immigration policy”

Birthplace was no longer the main test — though the 1966 change still asked for “well qualified” applicants, so it was not full equality. In July 1966 Prime Minister **Harold Holt** said Australia now had a “restricted immigration policy”, not a White Australia policy. The government’s perspective had moved from **which race?** to **which skills?** — a big change, and an unfinished one.

5. The debate, 1964–1973: each side at its strongest (VC2HH10K40.E05)

Between 1964 and 1973 Australians argued openly about whether the White Australia Policy should survive. Elaboration .E05 asks you to analyse the arguments **for and against** — which means taking each side in good faith before judging it. Figure 5 states each position in the strongest form its own holders would recognise.

The debate over the White Australia policy, 1964-1973: each side at its strongest

Steelman rule: each position is stated in the strongest form its own holders would recognise, before any judgement.

Keep race-based selection

Wages and jobs

Supporters argued a large intake of newcomers would push wages down and cause unemployment; most unions agreed until the early 1970s.

Society holding together

They argued the post-war intake had worked because migrants settled in and became Australian quickly; a large intake of people who were visibly different, they feared, would strain housing and services and split society.

Change slowly, if at all

Many accepted some easing - but wanted it controlled and gradual, so the country could absorb each step.

Who held it

Arthur Calwell defended the policy into old age, calling reformers “cranks, long hairs, academics and do-gooders”; and John Gorton, prime minister until 1971, said he still saw a risk of social strain.

End race-based selection

Fairness

Selection by birthplace was discrimination. It sat badly with the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (see section 6B) and with the 1965 United Nations convention against racial discrimination.

Australia's place in Asia

Australia needed friends and trade in its own region, and the policy was widely read there as anti-Asian. From 1950 the Colombo Plan brought Asian students to Australian universities - exclusion at home sat oddly with welcome in the classroom.

What migrants had already built

Migrants had built the Snowy Scheme and staffed the factories. Skill and usefulness should matter more than birthplace.

Who held it

The Democratic Labor Party opposed it from 1957; Melbourne University's Immigration Reform Group from 1959; the Labor Party dropped it in 1965 after Dunstan and Whitlam pushed; the Australian Workers' Union let go in 1972.

Where a line quoted here would be judged harshly today, historians still ask what evidence each side offered at the time.

Two-column steelman diagram of the debate over the White Australia policy in the years 1964 to 1973: the case to keep race-based selection (wages and jobs; society holding together; change slowly if at all; held by Arthur Calwell and John Gorton) set against the case to end it (fairness under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1965 United Nations convention; Australia's place in Asia and the Colombo Plan; what migrants had already built; pushed by the Democratic Labor Party, the Immigration Reform Group, the Labor Party and the AWU), with the reminder that historians ask what evidence each side offered at the time

Change did not come from one group but from many at once — parties, students, unions, governments. Figure 6 gives the sequence.

Pushing the door open: who worked for change, 1957-1973

Change came from many directions at once: parties, students, unions and governments.



Vertical timeline of the push for change, 1957 to 1973: the Democratic Labor Party opposes the policy in 1957; the dictation test goes in 1958; the Immigration Reform Group forms at Melbourne University in 1959; the 1963 paper Immigration: Control or Colour Bar? proposes ending race-based selection; the Menzies government eases entry in 1964; the Labor Party drops the policy in 1965 after Dunstan and Whitlam push; Opperman's 1966 reform; the AWU lets go in 1972; and the Whitlam government removes race from the rules entirely in 1973

The end came in **May 1973**, when the Whitlam government ordered that selection of migrants would “totally disregard race as a factor”, and citizenship became available after three years, whatever a person’s origin (Source 3). Two years later the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* made race-based treatment unlawful across Australian life — the law you met in section 1F.

SOURCE 3

The end of race as a criterion - the Whitlam government's migration announcement, May 1973

The new government ordered that selection of migrants would “totally disregard race as a factor”.

Citizenship became available after three years of permanent residence, whatever a person's origin.

Australia confirmed the international agreements it had signed against racial discrimination.

Two years later, the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 made race-based treatment unlawful across Australian life (you met this law in section 1F).

Quoted phrase and dates cross-checked via Wikipedia, 'White Australia policy' (retrieved 26 August 2026).

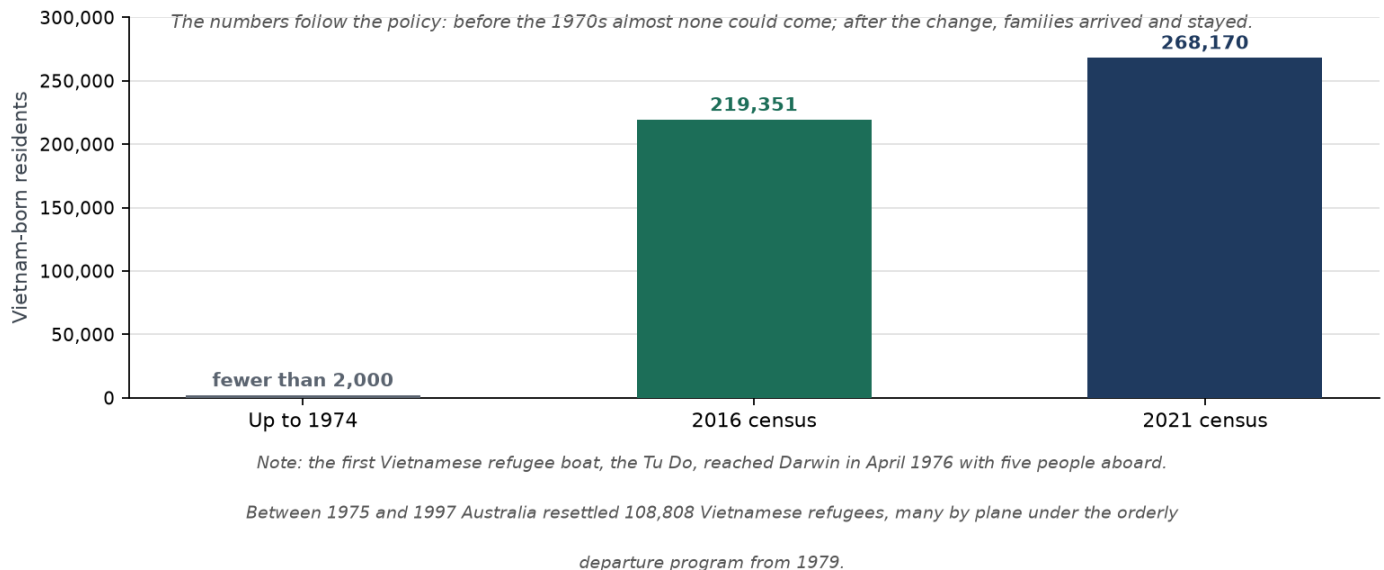
Source card quoting the Whitlam government's May 1973 announcement that selection of migrants would “totally disregard race as a factor”, that citizenship became available after three years of permanent residence, and that Australia confirmed the international agreements against racial discrimination, with the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 following two years later

One honesty rule applies to this debate, and it is the same rule used in section 6D: some lines in Figure 5 would be judged harshly today. Historians still ask **what evidence each side offered at the time**, and they mark your reasoning — how well you can state a view you may not share — not the conclusion you reach. Q8 asks you to do exactly that.

6. After the change: what Australia became (VC2HH10K40.E04)

Perspectives are tested by what follows. After 1973 the new rules met their first big test: the refugee arrivals that followed the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 (section 6D). The first refugee boat, the **Tu Do**, reached Darwin in **April 1976** with five people aboard; between 1975 and 1997 Australia resettled **108,808 Vietnamese refugees**. Figure 4 shows what the change in the rules made possible.

Vietnam-born people in Australia: from fewer than 2,000 to a quarter of a million



Bar chart of Vietnam-born people in Australia: fewer than 2,000 up to 1974, rising to 219,351 at the 2016 census and 268,170 at the 2021 census, with a note that the first refugee boat Tu Do reached Darwin in April 1976 and that 108,808 Vietnamese refugees were resettled between 1975 and 1997

The numbers follow the policy: before the 1970s almost no Vietnamese could come; after the change, families arrived, stayed, and grew. And the wider picture changed too: by **2019**, nearly **30 per cent of Australians were born overseas** — about 7.5 million people. A society that had once written a racial bar into law had become one of the most mixed societies in the world, and most Australians had come to see that mix as normal. That is the largest perspective change in this section: the attitude of 1945 — welcome for some, a bar for the rest — was replaced, law by law and arrival by arrival, by the attitude of the 2019 numbers. Whether that change went far enough, or was truly believed, is a debate for section 6F.

7. Doing history: interview your community (VC2HH10K40.E06)

Elaboration .E06 makes you the historian: **interview people in your community about their own migration stories, then evaluate what they tell you against wider research.** An interview is an oral-history source, so it gets the same treatment as Sources 1 to 4: collect it carefully, then check it against the record. Figure 7 gives the steps.

Collecting a perspective: an oral-history interview, step by step

For the community interview task: a person's own words are a historical source - treat them like one.

1. Choose

A relative, neighbour or community member who migrated to Australia - or whose family did. Their story can come from any decade.

2. Ask consent

Explain what the interview is for. They may choose what to share, skip any question, or stop at any time. Get their okay in writing or on tape.

3. Prepare open questions

Ask 'what was it like...' and 'how did you feel when...' rather than questions answerable with yes or no. Write eight to ten questions in order.

4. Listen and record

Let silences sit; follow up with 'can you tell me more about that?' Note dates, places and names as they come up.

5. Check it against the record

Back in class, test the perspective: what shaped this person's view? Where does it agree with other sources in this section - and where does it differ?

Handle hard stories with care

Some people left war, danger or poverty behind. If a memory is painful, do not press. Offer to turn the recorder off, or to leave that part out of your write-up. Thank them well when you finish - and offer to share what you write.

Question starters

- ▶ What made your family decide to move?
- ▶ What do you remember of the journey?
- ▶ What surprised you when you arrived?
- ▶ Who helped you settle in?
- ▶ What should Australians today understand about your experience?

Step-by-step oral history interview guide: choose a person or family with a migration story; ask consent and let them skip or stop at any time; prepare eight to ten open questions; listen and record, following up with can you tell me more about that; and check the perspective against the wider record in class - alongside a care panel for hard stories and a list of question starters

The last step is the one students most often skip, and it is the heart of .E06: a perspective is **evidence**, not the final word. Ask what shaped this person's view — their age, their language, the decade they arrived, the suburb they settled in — then test it: where does it agree with the sources in this section, and where does it differ? Figure 8 shows what a finished evaluation looks like.

Model paragraph: evaluating a community perspective with wider research

Model paragraph (illustrative; written for this workbook)

My grandmother came from Greece in 1956, and in our interview she said that in her first years 'nobody wanted to rent us a room'. Her perspective is shaped by her experience as a young arrival with little English in a city that expected migrants to fit in quickly. Wider research backs up her memory of the times: official policy then was assimilation, and many arrivals from southern Europe did face wariness from some landlords and employers. But her view is one person's, not the whole story: the same years saw the Snowy Scheme employing over 100,000 people, about two thirds of them migrants. So her perspective is valuable evidence of how the arrival years felt from the inside, while wider sources remind me that experience differed from person to person.

Why it works

- Names the perspective and who holds it
- Explains what shaped it (age, place, language)
- Checks it against wider research
- Finds where it agrees with the record
- Names its limit - one person's view
- States its value as evidence

Your turn

Write one paragraph of your own evaluating the perspective you collected in your interview. Follow the six moves above: name the perspective, explain what shaped it, check it against at least two facts from this section, name its limit, and state its value as evidence.

Model paragraph evaluating an illustrative community perspective - a grandmother who arrived from Greece in 1956 and remembered that nobody wanted to rent her a room - by naming the perspective, explaining what shaped it, checking it against wider research on assimilation and the Snowy Scheme, naming its limit as one person's view, and stating its value as evidence; with a checklist of the six moves and a your-turn instruction

Notice what the model does **not** do: it never says the grandmother is “wrong”. A perspective cannot be wrong — it can only be narrow or wide, and its value is as evidence of how the times felt from the inside.

Worked examples

Worked example 1 — analysing a perspective source (with help)

Question. Read Source 2 (the March 1966 announcement). What does this source show about the government's attitude to migrant arrivals in 1966, and what limit does it have as evidence?

Working

Comment

Step 1: Identify the source. It is a government announcement of March 1966, by Hubert Opperman, Minister for Immigration, reported in a secondary account.

Start with what the source *is* and who made it.

Working	Comment
Step 2: Describe the content. Applications would be judged on “their suitability as settlers”, “their ability to integrate readily” and “their possession of qualifications positively useful to Australia”; non-European residents could become citizens after five years.	Use the source’s own words.
Step 3: Explain the context. It came 65 years after the <i>Immigration Restriction Act 1901</i> , and after the easing steps of 1958 and 1964 you met in part 4.	Context shows why the announcement mattered.
Step 4: Read the perspective. This is the government’s own account: birthplace is no longer the main test, but the door opens widest to the “well qualified”. The attitude has moved from race to skill — a real change, and an unfinished one.	A perspective can contain both a change and a limit.
Step 5: State an inference and a limit. We can infer that by 1966 the government no longer defended the old racial bar in its own words. The limit: an announcement shows policy as the government wants to present it — not how migrants experienced it, nor what the public thought (parts 3–4).	A limit names what the source cannot show.
Answer: Source 2 shows that by March 1966 the government judged applicants on suitability, integration and useful qualifications rather than birthplace alone, and opened citizenship after five years to all — clear evidence that official attitudes had moved from race to skill. As an official statement, it shows the government’s own perspective well, but not the migrant experience or public opinion.	

Worked example 2 — evaluating a community perspective (with help)

Question. Using Figure 8, list the moves the model paragraph makes to evaluate the grandmother’s perspective, and say why each move matters.

Working	Comment
Step 1: Name the perspective and who holds it. A grandmother, arrived from Greece in 1956, who remembered that “nobody wanted to rent us a room”.	A perspective always belongs to someone.
Step 2: Explain what shaped it. Her youth, her little English, and a city that expected migrants to fit in quickly (assimilation, part 4 of section 6D).	Views are shaped by position and by policy.
Step 3: Check it against wider research. Official policy then was assimilation, and many southern-European arrivals did face wariness — her memory fits the record.	A perspective is tested against other evidence.
Step 4: Name its limit. One person’s view: the same years saw the Snowy Scheme employing over 100,000 people, about two thirds of them migrants — other migrants’ memories differ.	Honest evaluation names what a single voice cannot show.
Step 5: State its value. Evidence of how the arrival years felt from the inside — something no law or statistic can give.	A limit never cancels a source’s value.

Answer: The model names the perspective and its holder, explains what shaped it, checks it against the assimilation policy and migrant work programs, names its limit as one person’s view, and states its value as inside evidence. Those five moves turn a family story into a historical evaluation.

Practice questions

With help

- Q1.** Using Figure 1, name the three kinds of voices historians listen to in this section, and one example of each (part 1).
- Q2.** Read Source 1. State the two messages the source holds at the same time (part 2).
- Q3.** Using Figure 3, match each perspective to its voice: (a) “a place to build again after losing everything”; (b) “effort and pride — building the country”; (c) “safety first, then a new life” (part 3).
- Q4.** Read Source 2. List the three tests Opperman said would now be applied to applications, in the source’s own words (part 4).
- Q5.** Using Figure 4, state how many Vietnam-born people lived in Australia at the 2021 census, and how the figure stood up to 1974 (part 6).
- Q6.** Using Figure 6, name two groups that worked to end the policy **before** 1966, and the year each did so (part 5).

On your own

- Q7.** Explain why Australian attitudes to arriving migrants changed between 1945 and 1973. Use the language of cause and consequence, and draw on at least **two** of the three pressures in part 4 (parts 4–5).
- Q8.** “The White Australia Policy should have been kept.” Imagine you must present the strongest case **for** that line to a class debate, then the strongest case **against** it, before giving your own view. Use Figure 5, give at least two arguments per side, and name the test you used to reach your own judgement. Your mark rests on how well you state the side you disagree with (part 5).
- Q9.** Compare two migrant voices in Figure 3 (choose any two). Explain what shaped each perspective — starting point, decade, experience — and give one way the two perspectives agree (part 3).
- Q10.** Evaluate Source 4 (the Do family’s story) as evidence of the refugee experience. State one thing it shows better than any graph or law could, and two limits a historian must remember when using it (parts 3, 6).
- Q11.** You are preparing your community interview (. E06). Draft **three** open questions and **one** consent step, and explain in one sentence how you will check the person’s perspective against wider research after the interview (part 7, Figure 7).
- Q12.** “Between 1945 and 2019, Australians changed their minds about migration.” Discuss this claim using evidence from this section. Give one piece of evidence that supports it and one piece that complicates it, then reach a reasoned conclusion (parts 2, 4–6).
-

Answers

Q1. Government voices (for example Arthur Calwell, Opperman or Whitlam); community voices (for example the Immigration Reform Group or the AWU); migrant voices (for example Frank Lowy, Snowy Scheme workers or Anh Do's family).

Q2. Australia needed people (a proud open door for the British and displaced Europeans) — yet only certain people were wanted (the old restrictions on non-European arrivals stayed in place).

Q3. (a) Frank Lowy; (b) Snowy Scheme workers; (c) Anh Do's family.

Q4. “their suitability as settlers”; “their ability to integrate readily”; “their possession of qualifications positively useful to Australia”.

Q5. 268,170 at the 2021 census; up to 1974, fewer than 2,000.

Q6. Any two of: the Democratic Labor Party (1957); the Immigration Reform Group (1959); the Labor Party (1965).

Fully-worked solutions

Q7. A strong answer chains causes to consequences. *Cause 1 — lived contact:* the Colombo Plan students from 1950, the welcome for about 14,500 Hungarians after 1956, and the shared work of the Snowy Scheme let Australians meet people the old rules had kept out; the consequence was that the fear that newcomers could not “fit” kept failing the test of experience. *Cause 2 — region and trade:* Australia's future lay in Asia, and the racial bar was read there as an insult; the consequence was pressure on governments from 1964 on. *Cause 3 — what migrants proved:* displaced Europeans and Hungarians settled fast and worked hard; the consequence was that skill, not birthplace, came to look like the sensible test (Source 2). A conclusion might be that attitudes changed because experience outgrew the old fear — which is why the rules followed in 1958, 1966 and 1973.

Q8. A strong answer steels both sides before judging. *For the line (as its holders argued):* a large intake of newcomers would push wages down and cause unemployment — most unions agreed until the early 1970s; and the post-war intake had worked, they argued, because migrants settled in quickly, so a visibly different intake would, they feared, strain housing and services. *Against the line:* selection by birthplace was discrimination, sitting badly with the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (section 6B) and the 1965 United Nations convention; the policy insulted Australia's Asian neighbours while the Colombo Plan welcomed their students; and migrants had already built the Snowy Scheme and staffed the factories. *Own judgement:* any defended conclusion is acceptable; the test named might be “which side's claims were tested by experience?” — the against side's were (the Hungarians and displaced Europeans settled fast), while the for side's fears were not borne out. Marking rewards the fairness of the stating and the naming of the test, not the conclusion.

Q9. A strong answer compares starting points. Example: Frank Lowy and the Ten Pound Poms. *Lowy:* a Jewish child whose family was persecuted in wartime Europe, his father killed at Auschwitz; he reached Sydney in 1952 with little — his perspective is migration as a place to build again after losing everything. *The Poms:* British families who came on assisted passages to a country that wanted them; their perspective is migration as a better life of work, a house and a fresh start. *What shaped the difference:* one group fled catastrophe and had to win its place; the other was carried by the rules' open door. *Where they agree:* both saw Australia as a place where effort could rebuild a life — the same belief, from opposite starting points.

Q10. *Value:* Source 4 shows what the refugee experience felt like from the inside — five days in a leaky boat, two pirate attacks, and then a new start in Yagoona — and what Australia came to mean to one family: rescue, then a life. No bar chart or act of parliament can give that inside view. *Limit 1:* it is one family's story, told with hindsight and humour in a 2010 book; other refugees' experiences differed (not every boat survived, and not every arrival found an easy welcome). *Limit 2:* a memoir is memory, so dates and details are checked against wider sources — here the census and resettlement figures in part 6 (108,808 resettled 1975–97). Value and limit together make it a strong, well-handled source.

Q11. A strong answer follows Figure 7. Example open questions: “What made your family decide to move?”; “What do you remember of the journey?”; “What surprised you when you arrived?” Consent step: explain the interview's

purpose and get their okay in writing or on tape, with the right to skip any question or stop at any time. Checking sentence: after the interview I will test the perspective against at least two facts from this section (for example the policy steps of part 4 or the census figures of part 6) and note where it agrees and where it differs.

Q12. A strong answer holds two truths at once. *Supporting the claim:* the law-by-law dismantling of the racial bar (1958, 1966, 1973, 1975) and the 2019 figure — nearly 30 per cent of Australians born overseas, about 7.5 million people — show a society that replaced the attitude of 1945 with a mixed society most Australians see as normal; the union movement itself let go of the policy in 1972 (Figure 6). *Complicating the claim:* the change was slow and argued every step of the way — Calwell defended the bar into old age, the 1966 change still asked for the “well qualified”, and each step needed a push from reformers (Figure 6); and whether the change was fully believed is exactly the debate section 6F examines. *Reasoned conclusion:* Australians changed their minds **in law and in numbers** between 1945 and 2019, but the change was driven by experience and by reformers rather than arriving all at once — so the claim is true of the country’s rules and make-up, and not yet true of every mind.

Key terms

Term	Meaning used in this section
Perspective	A particular person’s or group’s view of events, shaped by what they lived through and where they stood
Attitude	A settled way of thinking about something, shown in words and rules; attitudes can change over time
Oral history	History collected by interviewing people about their own lives
White Australia Policy	The system of laws and policies restricting non-European immigration, 1901 to the 1970s
Assisted passage	A government-helped fare, such as the “Ten Pound Pom” scheme for British migrants after 1945
Assimilation	The expectation (1945–1960s) that migrants shed their cultures and languages
Integration	The mid-1960s idea that migrants take part fully in Australian life but may keep some of their culture
Multiculturalism	The idea, in Australian policy from the 1970s, that cultural diversity is normal and migrants may keep their cultural heritage
Refugee	A person forced to leave their own country because they fear for their safety, in the sense of the 1951 United Nations convention
Primary source	Evidence from the time studied, or from someone who was there (a law, speech, memoir, interview)
Steelman	Stating a position in the strongest form its own holders would recognise, before judging it

Sources for this section

Retrieval date for all online sources: **26 August 2026.**

1. Wikipedia: “White Australia policy” — the post-war program and its slogan; the steps of dismantling 1949–1978; the dictation test removed in 1958; the March 1966 Opperman announcement and its quoted tests; Harold Holt’s July 1966 “restricted immigration policy” line; the Whitlam government’s May 1973 changes (“totally disregard race as a factor”, citizenship after three years); Arthur Calwell’s “cranks, long hairs, academics and do-gooders” line; John Gorton’s 1971 view that he still saw a risk of social strain; the Democratic Labor Party’s opposition from 1957; the Immigration Reform Group formed at Melbourne

University in 1959 and its 1963 paper *Immigration: Control or Colour Bar?*; the Labor Party dropping the policy in 1965; the Australian Workers' Union letting go in 1972.

2. Wikipedia: "Ten Pound Poms" — more than one million British arrivals on assisted passages after 1945.
3. Wikipedia: "Julia Gillard" — her family arrived from Wales in 1966 on an assisted passage.
4. Wikipedia: "Frank Lowy" — born 1930, a childhood of wartime persecution in Europe, his father's death at Auschwitz; arrival in Sydney 1952; meeting John Saunders 1953; Westfield listed 1960.
5. Wikipedia: "Snowy Mountains Scheme" — over 100,000 workers 1949–1974, about two thirds of them migrants, from more than 30 countries.
6. Wikipedia: "Hungarian Australians" — about 14,500 Hungarians arrived after the 1956 uprising.
7. Wikipedia: "Colombo Plan" — Asian students in Australian universities from 1950–51.
8. Wikipedia: "Vietnamese boat people" — the Tu Do reaching Darwin in April 1976 with five people aboard; Australia resettled 108,808 Vietnamese refugees between 1975 and 1997.
9. Wikipedia: "Vietnamese Australians" — Vietnam-born residents fewer than 2,000 up to 1974; 219,351 at the 2016 census; 268,170 at the 2021 census.
10. Wikipedia: "Anh Do" — born 2 June 1977; family fled by boat in 1980; five days at sea; two pirate attacks; settlement in Yagoona; A. Do, *The Happiest Refugee* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2010).
11. Australian Bureau of Statistics, estimated resident population by country of birth, 2019: overseas-born about 7.5 million, nearly 30 per cent of the population. As reported in Wikipedia: "Demographics of Australia".
12. *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* — as studied in section 1F.

Arguing about migration since 1945

Curriculum trace — Victorian Curriculum 2.0 History, Levels 9 and 10

Owns VC2HH10K41

Draws on — VC2HH10K41.E01–VC2HH10K41.E09; taught here: VC2HH10K41.E03 (**the block this section teaches; the book’s taught topic family is migration experiences**)

Builds on — sections 6C to 6E, which told the migration story itself, and section 1F, which set out the policy timeline from the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* to the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*. This section does not retell that story; it examines the interpretations and debates historians build about it.

Sections 6C to 6E told the migration story: who came, in which waves, under which rules, and how those rules changed between 1945 and the late 1970s. Section 1F set out the policy timeline that story rests on. This section takes one step up from the story. It does not retell what happened. It looks at what historians *do* with what happened — the interpretations they build, the debates those interpretations create, and the legacies they argue about.

The phrase that carries this whole section is **interpretations and debates**. The facts of migration since 1945 — the numbers, the laws, the dates — are largely settled. But the answers to *why* and *so what* are not. Why was the White Australia policy taken apart? What has migration left behind in Australian society? And have the debates Australians have about migration themselves changed over time? On each of these questions, historians offer more than one reasoned answer. That disagreement is not a weakness in history; it is what makes history an argument worth studying.

By the end of this section you should be able to: tell a fact from an interpretation; set out two or more interpretations of the same change and give each its strongest case; test an interpretation against its hard questions; and construct your own measured interpretation of how far the debates about migration have changed since 1945.

Before we begin: what do these words mean?

Several words in this section are **contested** — people do not all agree on one fixed meaning, and which meaning you choose can change your conclusion. We state how each is used here, so every question can be answered on that meaning alone.

- **Interpretation.** In history, an **interpretation** is a historian’s reasoned account of the past, built from evidence. It selects facts, weighs them, and explains them. Two historians can share the same facts and still offer different interpretations, because they select and weigh differently. An interpretation is not a guess: it is judged by its evidence and its reasoning.
- **Perspective.** A **perspective** (which you met in sections 6A and 6E) is the point of view of a person or group *inside* the past, shaped by who they are and what they value. An **interpretation** is the view of a historian *looking at* the past. Keeping those two apart is the first skill in this section.
- **Debate.** Here a **debate** is not a quarrel. It is a disagreement between interpretations, carried on with evidence and reasons. When this section says historians debate a question, it means that strong, reasoned positions exist on more than one side.
- **Legacy.** A **legacy** is what a past change leaves behind — its intended and unintended consequences, and what later people inherit. Legacies are contested: whether a legacy counts as good or bad depends on who is judging, so we always say *whose* judgement we are using.
- **Change and continuity.** **Change** is what becomes different over a period; **continuity** is what stays the same. Most real stories hold both at once, and the skill is sorting which is which, with dates as evidence (you practised this in sections 1F and 6E).
- **Assimilation, integration, multiculturalism.** Three official answers to the question *how should new Australians belong?* **Assimilation** expected new arrivals to give up their own culture and become like the existing, mostly British-descent, Australians. **Integration** let them join Australian society while keeping some of their own culture. **Multiculturalism** recognises cultural diversity as a feature of Australian society to be

valued and maintained. All three labels are contested — people disagree about what each meant in practice — so we define them as policy approaches, not as praise or blame.

- **White Australia policy.** The name given to the laws and practices, from 1901, that sought to keep Australia British and European by excluding or limiting non-white migration. Its dismantling is covered in sections 1F and 6D; here it is the *subject* of interpretations and debates.

Keep these meanings in mind as you read. Notice, in every part, whether a sentence is reporting a fact, building an interpretation, or taking part in a debate.

1. Fact, interpretation, debate: the historian's toolkit (VC2HH10K41)

A **fact** is a statement about the past that the evidence settles. An **interpretation** is a historian's reasoned account built from facts. A **debate** is what happens when two or more interpretations of the same facts disagree.

Consider one example from this section's topic. That the 2021 census counted 257,997 Vietnam-born residents of Australia is a fact. Saying "the end of race-based selection transformed Australia" is an interpretation — a reasoned claim built on facts like that one. And saying "that transformation was a great gain for Australia" against "it changed the country faster than communities could adjust" is a debate: two reasoned positions, each with evidence, neither a mere opinion.

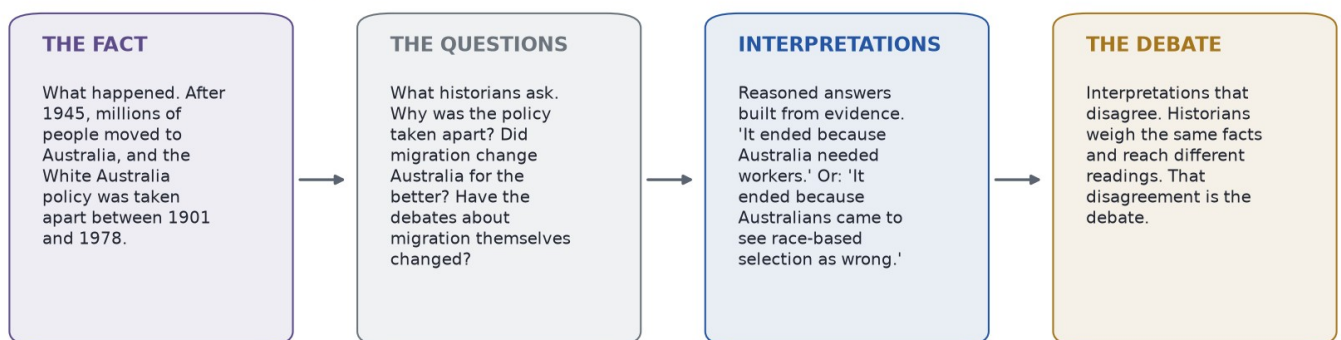
Why do historians disagree, even about settled facts? Four reasons cover most cases:

1. **They select different evidence.** No account can use every fact; what a historian chooses to foreground shapes the story.
2. **They ask different questions.** "Why did the policy end?" and "What did its end leave behind?" produce different accounts of the same events.
3. **They weigh causes differently.** One historian gives most weight to the economy, another to ideas, a third to pressure from other countries.
4. **They write at different times.** The present asks new questions of the past, so each generation offers a new interpretation of it.

None of this means "anything goes". Interpretations are tested against the evidence, against logic, and against hard questions. Figure 1 shows the whole toolkit as one flow.

From fact, to interpretation, to debate

How a historical disagreement is built



The facts stay the same; the readings differ. This section is about those differences, and how to judge them.

Flow diagram from the settled facts about migration since 1945, to the questions historians ask, to the interpretations built from evidence, to the debate when interpretations disagree

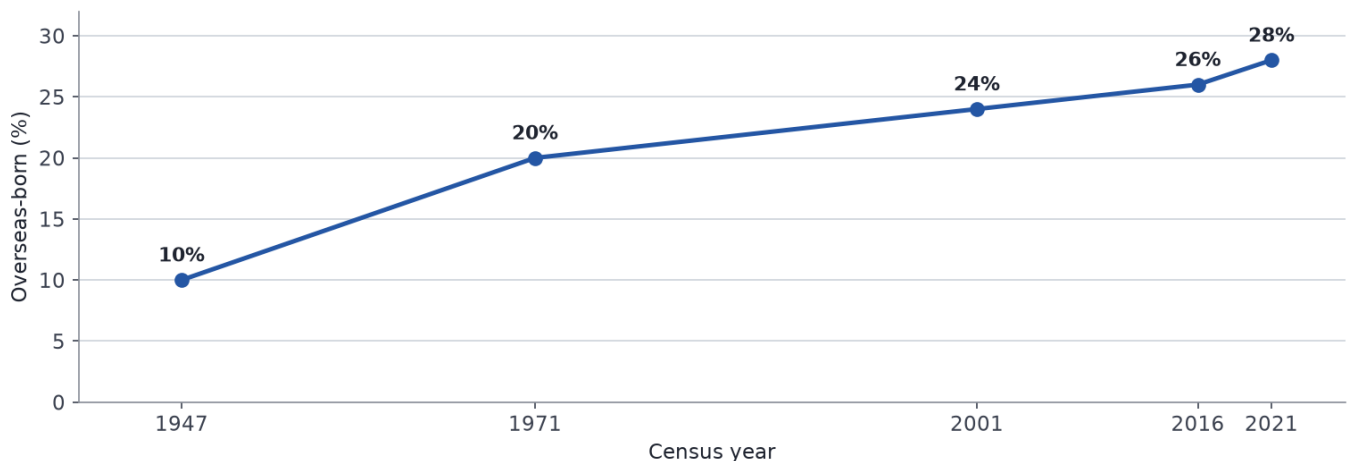
2. The shared facts: migration since 1945 in brief (vc2HH10K41)

Interpretations rest on shared facts, so here is the brief version of the story told in full in sections 1F and 6C to 6E. After 1945, Immigration Minister Arthur Calwell launched a mass migration program under the slogan “populate or perish” — first British migrants (the “Ten Pound Poms”), then displaced Europeans, then, as the rules eased, migrants from southern Europe and, from the late 1970s, from Asia and the wider world. The White Australia policy was taken apart in dated steps — 1949, 1958, 1966, 1973, 1975, 1978 — until race was no longer a factor in selection and racial discrimination was unlawful.

The result shows in the numbers. Figure 2 charts the overseas-born share of Australia’s population at selected censuses: about 10 per cent in 1947, about 20 per cent by 1971, and about 28 per cent by 2021.

A growing share of Australia's people were born overseas

Overseas-born share of the population at selected censuses, rounded to the nearest per cent



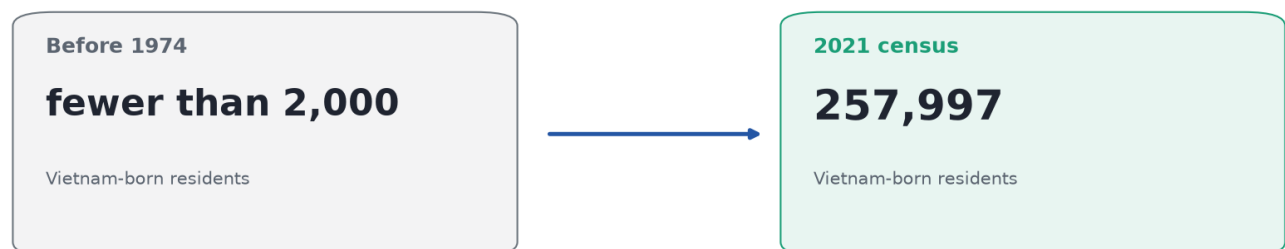
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, censuses of population and housing (figures rounded). Retrieved 26 August 2026.

Line chart of the overseas-born share of Australia’s population rising from about 10 per cent in 1947 to about 28 per cent in 2021, at selected censuses

Figure 3 shows how large one policy change could be. Before 1974, fewer than 2,000 Vietnam-born people lived in Australia; the 2021 census counted 257,997. Once race was removed from selection, whole communities that the old rules had excluded could arrive.

The end of race-based selection changed who could come

Vietnam-born residents of Australia



Once race was removed from migrant selection, people from Vietnam and across Asia could come. Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics; 2021 census of population and housing. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

Comparison panel showing fewer than 2,000 Vietnam-born residents of Australia before 1974 and 257,997 at the 2021 census, after the end of race-based selection

These facts are the shared ground: almost every historian agrees on them. The debates begin when we ask *why* the rules changed, and *what* the change left behind. Those two questions are the subject of the next two parts.

3. Debate 1: why was White Australia taken apart? (VC2HH10K41 .E03)

This is one of the real debates among historians of Australia, and it is exactly the kind of debate VC2HH10K41 asks you to study. Figure 4 sets out the three strongest interpretations. Notice the shape of each: an interpretation, its strongest case, and a hard question it must face.

Why was White Australia taken apart? Three interpretations

Each reading selects different evidence and stresses different causes

The interpretation

Its strongest case

A hard question for it

Practical needs

White Australia was taken apart because it stopped serving Australia's needs: a growing economy wanted workers and skills.

After 1945 there were labour shortages, and from 1949 the rules were quietly eased to admit workers and skills.

If it was only about practical needs, why were race-based limits kept for so long after the war, when workers were wanted?

International standing

It was taken apart because race-based rules became hard to defend after 1945, as new Asian neighbours and the United Nations grew in importance.

Australia wanted good relations with Asia and standing in the world; race-based selection embarrassed its diplomats.

These pressures were present from the 1940s. Why did the decisive change come in the 1960s and 1970s?

Changing attitudes

It was taken apart because Australians came to see racial discrimination as wrong.

The experience of the Second World War, the civil-rights era, and anti-racism activism shifted values; the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 reflected the new view.

Did attitudes lead, or did politicians change the rules first and attitudes follow?

Historians weigh all three. Your task is to judge the weight of the evidence, not to pick a side in advance.

Table of three interpretations of why the White Australia policy was taken apart - practical needs, international standing, and changing attitudes - each with its strongest case and a hard question it must face

Reading 1: practical needs. The policy was taken apart because it stopped serving Australia's needs: a growing economy wanted workers and skills, and from 1949 the rules were quietly eased to admit them. Its strongest case is that the policy's own managers adjusted it again and again for economic reasons, long before anyone admitted a change of principle.

Reading 2: international standing. The policy was taken apart because race-based rules became hard to defend after 1945, as new Asian neighbours and the United Nations grew in importance and Australia signed the 1965 international convention against racial discrimination. Its strongest case is that Australian diplomats kept warning, for decades, that the policy damaged the country's standing in its own region.

Reading 3: changing attitudes. The policy was taken apart because Australians came to see racial discrimination as wrong — an attitude shifted by the experience of a world war fought against racist regimes, by the civil-rights era, and by anti-racism activism at home, and written into law in the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*. Its strongest case is that the law of 1975 would be hard to explain if values had not moved.

None of the three is a silly view; each selects real evidence. That is what makes it a genuine debate rather than a right answer versus a wrong one. The skill is to weigh them — and to notice that they are not mutually exclusive. The historian **Gwenda Tavan**, in *The Long, Slow Death of White Australia* (2009), makes exactly that move. She argues that the policy was not ended suddenly by one reform but taken apart gradually and unevenly over the post-war decades — through administrative changes, international pressures, Australia's need for migrants, and shifting attitudes working together. In her reading, the Whitlam government's 1973 reforms are the culmination of a long

process, not the whole story. Source B and Worked source analysis 2 show how to read her account as an interpretation.

A measured conclusion to this debate does not pick one reading and discard the others. It asks which mix of the three best fits the dated evidence, and which reading explains the *timing* — why the decisive changes clustered in the 1960s and 1970s — most convincingly.

4. Debate 2: what did migration leave behind? (VC2HH10K41 . E03)

The second debate is about **legacies**: what the changes since 1945 left behind in Australian society. Three legacies are usually weighed.

Legacy 1: a more diverse society. The overseas-born share rose from about 10 per cent in 1947 to about 28 per cent in 2021 (Figure 2), and the mix of origins shifted from Europe toward Asia and the wider world (Figure 3). This is a legacy in the plain sense: something later Australians inherited.

Legacy 2: a new official answer to belonging. Figure 5 sets out the shift from assimilation to integration to multiculturalism. Two documents mark the turn: the 1978 review of migrant services chaired by Frank Galbally (*Migrant Services and Programs*), which argued that services should meet migrants' needs rather than expect them simply to blend in, and the 1989 *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia*, which named multiculturalism as official policy.

Three answers to one question: how should new Australians belong?

Australia's official approach to migrants since the 1940s



These three words name three different answers to the same question. Debates about migration are often debates about which answer is right.

Timeline of Australia's three official approaches to migrants - assimilation from the 1940s to 1960s, integration from the mid-1960s to 1970s, and multiculturalism from the 1970s to today

Legacy 3: an ongoing debate about identity and cohesion. The arguments about how many migrants is right, and about how fast change should come, did not end in 1978. They are the continuities examined in part 5.

Historians interpret these legacies differently, and the same strongest-form test applies here as in part 3:

- **Reading A: diversity as strength.** Multicultural Australia is read as a success — a skilled, diverse society, at home in its own region, in which the end of race-based selection was both a moral gain and a practical one. Strongest case: the overseas-born share rose for fifty years while Australia remained a stable, wealthy society. Hard question: does this reading give enough weight to the people who felt left behind by change, or to the racism that did not disappear with the policy?
- **Reading B: change came fast, and cohesion was strained.** Some Australians argued that the pace and scale of change put pressure on a shared identity and on housing, jobs and services, and wanted slower, smaller intakes. Strongest case: concern about pace is a sincere, recurring feature of the debates (part 5), and governments have repeatedly adjusted intake numbers in response to it. Hard question: is a given argument

really about pace, or is it the old preference about *who* should come, in new language? Historians note that “cohesion” language was used to defend race-based selection before 1975 — so every cohesion argument has to be checked against that history.

- **Reading C: diversity managed from above.** Some historians argue that official multiculturalism was less a celebration of diversity than a way of managing it — a government program to keep social peace and keep new arrivals productive, which left deeper questions of power and prejudice untouched. Strongest case: multicultural policy arrived through government reviews and agendas (Galbally, the National Agenda), not through a popular movement. Hard question: does a reform being government-led mean it was not also a real gain for the people it protected?

These readings can all hold in part; a society’s legacy is rarely one thing. What VC2HH10K41 requires is that you can set each out in its strongest form before you weigh them — and that you mark the reasoning, not the conclusion.

5. The core question: have the debates themselves changed over time? (VC2HH10K41.E03)

The elaboration this section teaches asks you to examine the debates about migration across the period — and how far those debates themselves changed as they ran. So the final move is to treat the debates themselves as the historical subject. Figure 6 sorts the evidence into changes and continuities.

How much have the debates about migration changed over time?

Weigh the changes against the continuities, and give evidence for each

What CHANGED

- The official goal: from assimilation to multiculturalism.
- The rules of selection: race was removed as a factor in 1973 and made unlawful as a ground of discrimination in 1975.
- Who the debates are about: source countries shifted from Europe to Asia and the wider world.
- How 'Australian' is defined: from a British-descent ideal to a multicultural civic identity.

What CONTINUED

- How many is right: from 'populate or perish' in 1945 to debates about numbers today.
- Deserving and undeserving arrivals: refugee and boat-arrival debates have recurred since the 1970s.
- Concerns about social cohesion and the pace of change.
- The tension between the economy's need for migrants and community anxiety about change.

A strong answer names both changes and continuities, dates them, and reaches a measured judgement about which mattered more.

Two-column diagram weighing what changed in the debates about migration - the official goal, the rules of selection, the source countries, the definition of Australian - against what continued - arguments about numbers, refugee and boat-arrival debates, cohesion concerns, and the tension between economic need and community anxiety

What changed. The official goal moved from assimilation to multiculturalism. The rules of selection changed their very principle: race was removed as a factor in 1973 and made unlawful as a ground of discrimination in 1975 — a change of kind, not degree. The debates’ subject changed as source countries shifted from Europe to Asia and the wider world. And the definition of “Australian” shifted from a British-descent ideal toward a civic, multicultural one.

What continued. The argument about *how many is right* ran from “populate or perish” in 1945 to today’s debates about intake numbers. Debates about deserving and undeserving arrivals, and about refugees and boat arrivals, have recurred since the 1970s. Concerns about cohesion and the pace of change appear in every decade of the period. And

the underlying tension — between the economy’s need for migrants and some communities’ anxiety about change — never left.

Weighing the two columns gives the section’s central judgement: **the debates changed a great deal in form and content, while several of the questions underneath them continued.** The language of race was removed from official debate; the habit of arguing about numbers, pace and belonging was not. That is the pattern a strong answer should hold in view — change and continuity at the same time, each with dated evidence.

Figure 7 shows a model paragraph answering the core question, with a checklist of why it works. Study it as the shape of your own answer to practice question 8.

A model interpretation

Question: How much have the debates about migration in Australia changed since 1945?

Model answer

Debates about migration in Australia have changed in important ways since 1945, but some of the questions underneath them have continued. The clearest change is in who the debates are about and how migrants are expected to belong. After the war, arrivals came mostly from Europe and were expected to assimilate; by the 1970s, race had been removed from migrant selection (1973) and made unlawful as a ground of discrimination (1975), and the official goal became multiculturalism. Yet other questions have continued. Australians still argue about how many migrants is right, from 'populate or perish' in 1945 to debates about numbers today, and debates over refugee and boat arrivals have recurred since the 1970s. So the debates have changed a great deal in their form and content, while several of the questions underneath them have stayed much the same.

Why this works

- It answers the question in the first sentence.
- It names a change and a continuity, each with dated evidence (1973, 1975, 1945, 1970s).
- It uses the language of change (changed, removed, became) and of continuity (continued, recurred, stayed).
- It reaches a measured judgement rather than picking a side on migration itself.

Notice: the paragraph takes no position on whether migration is good or bad. The marks go to the reasoning and the evidence, not to a side.

Model interpretation paragraph answering how far the debates about migration have changed since 1945, with a checklist of why the paragraph works: it answers the question, names a change and a continuity with dated evidence, uses the language of change and continuity, and reaches a measured judgement

The same toolkit travels to every other topic family this content description covers — popular culture, the environment movement, political crisis, and conflict. Wherever the topic, the work is the same: hold the facts, give each interpretation its strongest form, test them against their hard questions, and build your own reasoned account. That is what it means to recognise that history is contested, and to use that recognition well.

Sources for this section

Retrieval date for all online sources: **26 August 2026.**

1. Australian Government, 1973 migration policy statement (Whitlam government; Al Grassby, Minister for Immigration) — Australia would from then on “disregard race as a factor in selecting migrants” (short quotation, abridged), and migrants could become citizens after three years of residence whatever their origin.
2. Gwenda Tavan, *The Long, Slow Death of White Australia* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2009) — the gradual, uneven dismantling of the White Australia policy over the post-war decades.

3. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021 census of population and housing — overseas-born share of the population, and Vietnam-born residents (fewer than 2,000 before 1974; 257,997 in 2021).
4. *Migrant Services and Programs: Report of the Post-Arrival Programs and Services Review* (the Galbally Review), 1978.
5. Office of Multicultural Affairs, *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia*, 1989.
6. *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Commonwealth), s 9(1), summarised.
7. Wikipedia: “White Australia policy”, “Immigration to Australia”, “Multiculturalism in Australia”. All retrieved 26 August 2026.

Worked source analysis

Historians use **sources** to build and test interpretations. A **primary source** comes from the time being studied (a law, speech, letter or photograph). A **secondary source** is made later by someone studying the past — and a historian’s book is the classic secondary source. Let us analyse one of each, together.

Source 1 — a government changes the rules (VC2HH10K41.E03)

PRIMARY SOURCE

Source A: A government changes the rules (1973)

In 1973 the Whitlam government announced that Australia would, from then on, 'disregard race as a factor in selecting migrants' (quotation abridged). It also allowed migrants to become citizens after three years of residence, whatever their origin.

This is a statement of change made from inside politics. It tells us what the government did, and how it wanted the change to be understood.

Whitlam government migration policy, announced 1973; Al Grassby was Minister for Immigration. Short quotation, abridged and summarised. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

Source card: in 1973 the Whitlam government announced that Australia would disregard race as a factor in selecting migrants, and allowed citizenship after three years of residence whatever the origin

Worked analysis. Here is how a historian works through this source.

1. **What kind of source is it?** A primary source — a statement of government policy from 1973, made from inside politics.
2. **Context.** It came at the end of the dated steps you met in section 1F (1949, 1958, 1966), and two years before the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*. The Whitlam government was acting after decades of quiet easing, not in a vacuum.
3. **Content.** Australia would, from then on, “disregard race as a factor in selecting migrants” — the quotation abridged — and migrants could become citizens after three years of residence, whatever their origin.
4. **Perspective.** This is the perspective of a government announcing a new principle — and telling the country how it wants the change understood. It is evidence of the official view in 1973, not of what every Australian thought.
5. **Message.** Race is no longer a lawful criterion for selection; belonging is open to all origins on equal terms.
6. **Usefulness and limits.** Highly useful for dating the official end of race-based selection and for seeing how the change was announced. Its limit: a policy statement tells us what was declared, not what attitudes were, and it cannot tell us *why* the change came when it did. For the *why*, we need interpretations — Source 2.

Source 2 — a historian interprets the change (VC2HH10K41 .E03)

HISTORIAN'S INTERPRETATION

Source B: A historian interprets the change (2009)

In *The Long, Slow Death of White Australia* (2009), historian Gwenda Tavan argues that the White Australia policy was not ended suddenly by one reform. Instead, she argues, it was taken apart gradually and unevenly over the post-war decades, through administrative changes, international pressures, Australia's need for migrants, and shifting attitudes.

This is a secondary source: an interpretation built by a historian from many primary sources. Notice which evidence she selects and what she stresses.

Gwenda Tavan, *The Long, Slow Death of White Australia* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2009). Summary of the central argument. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

Source card: in The Long, Slow Death of White Australia (2009), historian Gwenda Tavan argues the policy was not ended suddenly by one reform but taken apart gradually and unevenly through administrative changes, international pressures, the need for migrants, and shifting attitudes

Worked analysis. This source is analysed differently, because it *is* an interpretation.

1. **What kind of source is it?** A secondary source — a historian's account, published in 2009, built from many primary sources.
2. **Context.** Tavan wrote decades after 1973, able to trace the whole arc from 1901 to the 1970s and to use records that were closed to people at the time.
3. **Content.** Her central claim: the White Australia policy died slowly — taken apart gradually and unevenly by administrative changes, international pressures, Australia's need for migrants, and shifting attitudes, with 1973 as a culmination rather than a single killing blow.
4. **What she selects and stresses.** She selects the long run of small steps (1949, 1958, 1966) that a “one reform” story skips, and she stresses process over moment. That selection is what makes her reading different from a simpler “Whitlam ended it” account.
5. **Where it sits in the debate.** Her reading is a weighing of the three interpretations in part 3: practical needs, international standing and changing attitudes all appear as forces in one slow process. It is a strong example of historians combining readings rather than picking one.
6. **Usefulness and limits.** Highly useful for explaining the *timing* that each single-cause reading struggles with — why pressure existed from the 1940s yet decisive change came in the 1960s–70s. Its limit: a “slow death” account can underweight the moments that mattered to people at the time — for many, 1973 and 1975 *were* the change. Test her reading against sources from those years, like Source 1.

Notice the shape of the reasoning in both: identify, give context, describe content, then — for a primary source — name the perspective and message, or — for a secondary source — name what the historian selects, stresses and leaves out. Use this shape for any source.

Practice questions

With help

Q1. Key ideas. (a) Define **interpretation** and **perspective** as this section uses them, and say how they differ. (b) Define **legacy** as this section uses it. (c) What is a **debate** in the historian's sense?

Q2. The shared facts. Use Figures 2 and 3. (a) What was the overseas-born share of the population in 1947 and in 2021? (b) How many Vietnam-born residents were counted before 1974, and at the 2021 census? (c) Which policy change explains the contrast in (b)?

Q3. Debate 1. Use Figure 4. (a) Name the three interpretations of why White Australia was taken apart. (b) Give the strongest case for ONE of them. (c) Give a hard question for a DIFFERENT one.

Q4. Approaches and legacies. Use Figure 5 and part 4. (a) Name the three official approaches to migrants, in order. (b) Which review and which agenda marked the turn to multiculturalism as official policy? (c) In one sentence, how does assimilation differ from multiculturalism?

Q5. Changed and continued. Use Figure 6. (a) Give two things that CHANGED in the debates about migration. (b) Give two things that CONTINUED. (c) Which continuity shows that the debates never fully settled?

Q6. Sources. Use Sources A and B. (a) Which source is primary and which is secondary? (b) How can you tell? (c) What does Source B give that Source A cannot?

On your own

Q7. Testing an interpretation. Choose ONE reading from Figure 4. State its strongest case in one sentence, then press its hard question in one sentence, and judge in one or two sentences how well the reading survives. Mark the reasoning, not the conclusion.

Q8. Constructing an interpretation. Answer the core question — *How far have the debates about migration in Australia changed since 1945?* — in one paragraph. Use Figure 7 as your model: answer the question in your first sentence, give dated evidence for one change and one continuity, and close with a measured judgement.

Q9. Comparing sources. What does Source B add to Source A, and what does Source A give that Source B cannot? Use the words *primary* and *secondary* in your answer.

Q10. Continuity and change. Using Figure 6, explain why one historian could say the debates changed a great deal and another could say they changed little. Give evidence for both views, then give your own weighed judgement in one sentence.

Q11. Significance. “The removal of race from selection in 1973, together with the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*, was the most important turning point in Australia’s migration story since 1945.” Do you agree? Name the criterion you use to judge significance, and defend your answer in three or four sentences.

Q12. The legacy debate. Set out Reading A (diversity as strength) and ONE other reading from part 4, each in its strongest form. Then say which is better supported by the evidence in this section, and why. The marks go to the fairness of your setup and the quality of your weighing.

Answers

Q1. (a) An interpretation is a historian's reasoned account built from evidence; a perspective is the point of view of a person or group inside the past. The historian looks at the past; the perspective belongs to someone in it. (b) A legacy is what a past change leaves behind — its intended and unintended consequences, and what later people inherit. (c) A debate is a disagreement between interpretations, carried on with evidence and reasons.

Q2. (a) About 10 per cent in 1947; about 28 per cent in 2021. (b) Fewer than 2,000 before 1974; 257,997 at the 2021 census. (c) The removal of race as a factor in selecting migrants (1973), which let whole communities the old rules had excluded arrive.

Q3. (a) Practical needs; international standing; changing attitudes. (b) Example (practical needs): from 1949 the rules were quietly eased to admit workers and skills a growing economy wanted. (c) Example (changing attitudes): if attitudes led, why did politicians change the rules ahead of much of the public — or did the law lead and attitudes follow?

Q4. (a) Assimilation, then integration, then multiculturalism. (b) The 1978 Galbally review of migrant services (*Migrant Services and Programs*) and the 1989 *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia*. (c) Assimilation expected new arrivals to give up their own culture; multiculturalism recognises cultural diversity as a feature of Australian society to be valued and maintained.

Q5. (a) Any two of: the official goal (assimilation to multiculturalism); the rules of selection (race removed in 1973, unlawful in 1975); the source countries (Europe to Asia and the wider world); the definition of “Australian” (British-descent ideal to civic, multicultural one). (b) Any two of: arguments about how many is right; refugee and boat-arrival debates since the 1970s; cohesion and pace-of-change concerns; the tension between economic need and community anxiety. (c) The argument about how many is right — it ran from “populate or perish” in 1945 to today's intake debates.

Q6. (a) Source A is primary; Source B is secondary. (b) A comes from the time being studied (a 1973 government statement); B was made later (2009) by a historian studying the past. (c) B gives an explanation of the whole process — why the change was gradual, and which forces drove it — which a single statement from inside the moment cannot give.

Q7–Q12. See the fully-worked solutions below.

Fully-worked solutions

Q7.

Model answer (Reading 2: international standing). Strongest case: after 1945, Australia wanted good relations with its Asian neighbours and standing in the United Nations, and its diplomats kept warning that race-based selection damaged both. Hard question: those pressures were present from the 1940s, so the reading struggles to explain why the decisive change came only in the 1960s and 1970s. Judgement: the reading survives as one strong force in the mix — it explains the direction of change well — but on its own it does not explain the timing well, so it is strongest when combined with the other readings, as Tavan does.

Q8.

Model answer. Debates about migration in Australia have changed in important ways since 1945, but some of the questions underneath them have continued. The clearest change is in who the debates are about and how migrants are expected to belong: after the war, arrivals came mostly from Europe and were expected to assimilate; by the 1970s, race had been removed from migrant selection (1973) and made unlawful as a ground of discrimination (1975), and the official goal became multiculturalism. Yet other questions have continued: Australians still argue about how many migrants is right, from “populate or perish” in 1945 to debates about numbers today, and debates over refugee and boat arrivals have recurred since the 1970s. So the debates have changed a great deal in their form and content, while several of the questions underneath them have stayed much the same.

Q9.

Model answer. Source A is a primary source: a statement made in 1973, from inside the moment. Source B is a secondary source: a historian's interpretation, built in 2009 from many such moments. B adds what A cannot give — an explanation of the whole process, naming the forces (administrative changes, international pressures, the need for migrants, shifting attitudes) and explaining why the end was gradual rather than sudden. A gives what B cannot give in the same way — the exact words a government used at the turning point, and evidence of how the change was announced and meant to be understood. A historian needs both: the primary source as evidence, the secondary source as an interpretation to test against it.

Q10.

Model answer. A historian saying the debates changed a great deal would point to the change of principle in the rules: race removed from selection in 1973, made unlawful in 1975, the official goal moved from assimilation to multiculturalism, and the definition of "Australian" shifted from a British-descent ideal to a civic one. A historian saying they changed little would point to the continuities: the argument about how many is right ran from 1945 to today, refugee and boat-arrival debates have recurred since the 1970s, and cohesion concerns appear in every decade. Weighed judgement: the debates changed a great deal in form and content — a change of kind, not degree — while the underlying questions of numbers, pace and belonging continued, so both historians are right about half the picture and the full picture holds both halves.

Q11.

Model answer. Using the criterion "how many people it affected, for how long", I agree. The 1973 removal of race from selection changed who could become Australian, and the 1975 Act changed daily life for everyone already here by making race-based discrimination unlawful; together they reshaped the society's composition (Figure 2 and Figure 3 show the scale) and its legal principles at once, and their effect has lasted to today. A student disagreeing could score full marks on a different criterion — for example "how long the policy lasted", which would elevate 1901, or "how many arrived", which would elevate the 1945 program — but on the stated criterion, 1973–75 is the turning point. Marking rewards the named criterion and the defended reasoning, not the choice itself.

Q12.

Model answer. Reading A, in its strongest form: multicultural Australia is a success — the overseas-born share rose from about 10 per cent to about 28 per cent while the society remained stable and wealthy, the end of race-based selection was a moral and practical gain, and diversity became a source of skill and of closeness to the region. Reading B, in its strongest form: the pace and scale of change strained cohesion and services, concern about pace is sincere and recurring, and governments have adjusted intakes in response to it. Weighing: Reading A is better supported by the long-run evidence in this section — fifty years of rising diversity without the breakdown Reading B fears — while Reading B's strongest evidence is that the *debate* about pace never ended, which is real but is evidence about anxiety, not about harm. The fairest conclusion holds both: the legacy is a more diverse society that worked, and an argument about pace that continues. Marks go to the fairness of the setup and the quality of the weighing.

Key terms

Term	Meaning used in this section
Fact	A statement about the past that the evidence settles
Interpretation	A historian's reasoned account of the past, built from evidence
Perspective	The point of view of a person or group inside the past
Debate	A disagreement between interpretations, carried on with evidence and reasons
Legacy	What a past change leaves behind: intended and unintended consequences, and what later people inherit
Change	What becomes different over a period

Term	Meaning used in this section
Continuity	What stays the same across a period of change
Assimilation	Policy approach expecting new arrivals to give up their own culture and become like existing Australians
Integration	Policy approach letting new arrivals join Australian society while keeping some of their own culture
Multiculturalism	Policy approach recognising cultural diversity as a feature of Australian society to be valued and maintained
White Australia policy	The laws and practices from 1901 seeking to keep Australia British and European by excluding or limiting non-white migration
Primary source	Evidence from the time studied (a law, speech, letter, photograph)
Secondary source	An account made later by someone studying the past (a historian's book)