

## Unit 1 Democracy and law in action

# Democracy in action

Australia is a democracy. In a democracy, each citizen has an equal right to influence the political decisions that affect their society. This means that each person may express their opinions to help decide how the society is governed. In a nation of over 24 million people, making sure everyone is heard can be quite tricky. For this reason, Australia has a voting system that allows us to elect politicians or political parties to represent us at local, state and national levels. This system of government, as well as our freedoms and responsibilities as citizens, is what defines democracy in Australia.



## chapter 15

**Source 1** Australia has a representative democracy in which people vote for a political party or politician that best reflects their opinions on most political issues.

### 15A

What are the freedoms and responsibilities of citizens in Australia's democracy?

- 1 Why do you think it is important to be able to express your political opinion?
- 2 What are some of the ways in which people can express their opinion?

### 15B

What does it mean to be an Australian citizen?

- 1 What do you think are the three most important values that Australians have?
- 2 Why do you think the cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is such an important part of our national identity?



# 15.1 The freedoms of Australian citizens

Australia has long been considered by many as the lucky country. This is largely because of our high living standards and financial opportunities, but it also has much to do with the freedom with which people can live their lives in Australia. Freedom allows people to act and express themselves in whatever way they feel, so long as it does not infringe upon the rights of others.

## Freedom of speech

A fundamental need of any democracy to function is freedom of speech. Freedom of speech allows a person to actively participate in Australia's democracy by voicing their opinions publicly about any topic within the bounds of the law. It is because of this freedom that our citizens can explore new ways of thinking and make changes that benefit our society. Interestingly, the Australian Constitution does not protect freedom of speech, rather it is a privilege encouraged by the culture of our society. A person can make any honest comment that is not intended to harm others. There are laws, however, to prevent freedom of speech from causing harm to others. People are not allowed to spread lies that could damage a person's reputation. People are also not allowed to spread hatred against others because of their religious, racial or cultural background.

## Freedom of association

People in Australia are free to join or form any group or organisation that they wish to, as long as the main activities of the group are legal. This means that a person can be a member of a political party, social club or workers' union without fear of persecution.

Like many of our freedoms in Australia, our freedom of association is not officially protected by the Australian constitution, although culturally it is considered a basic right.

**Source 2** Protestors in Perth rally against racism.



**Source 1** The French philosopher Voltaire is known for supporting freedom on speech and religion. He has been quoted as saying, 'I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it'. It is now thought that Voltaire didn't say these words, that they were, instead, said about him.

## Freedom of assembly

The freedom of assembly allows people to meet in groups for social or political purposes. A group of people can come together to express their opinions in a protest as long as it does not turn violent or break laws such as trespassing. The ability to assemble and protest freely is an important part of democracy in Australia because it allows us to influence political outcomes.



**Source 3** Students from different religions participate in a multi-faith day.

## Freedom of religion

Australia is a multicultural society without an official religion. Australians are free to practice their many different faiths or, to practice no religion at all. It is important to remember that the rules of any given religion cannot override Australian laws.

'terrorism' laws in Australia which prevent people from associating with organisations suspected of being terror groups. Unfortunately, the wording of these laws is not very specific and the definition of 'terrorism' is vague – leaving much of the interpretation and enforcement of this law up to the people in charge.

## Freedom of movement

Today, there are twice as many people arriving in Australia as there are leaving the country. Australia is considered by many as a land of opportunity but does not restrict those who wish to seek opportunities elsewhere. A citizen can travel freely to all states and territories in Australia and also leave and re-enter Australia freely. These rights are not available to people who are not yet Australian citizens, who must fulfil certain requirements to be allowed to enter the country.

In some ways, our freedoms are limited by 'the bounds of the law'. This basically means that we cannot break the law in order to express our freedom of speech, association, assembly, religion or movement. For example, we are allowed to assemble and protest in Australia, but if that protest becomes violent and people get hurt, it is no longer a legal activity. Another example would be the limitations on association. In recent years, several Australian states have introduced legislation to restrict members of criminal gangs, such as bikie gangs, from meeting as a group. This legislation was introduced to limit their criminal activity. There are also 'Counter-

## Check your learning 15.1

### Remember and understand

- 1 Why do you think freedom is so important to participating in a democratic society?
- 2 Explain how the bounds of the law can limit our freedoms.

### Apply and analyse

- 3 Refer to the caption of Source 1. Why do you think Voltaire was so passionate about defending the right of someone to express an opinion he disagrees with?
- 4 Explain how each freedom allows us to participate in Australia's democracy.
- 5 Refer to Source 3. Do you think that it is important for people to be able to practice whatever religion they choose in Australia? Why or why not?

### Evaluate and create

- 6 Create a poster describing the different freedoms that Australian citizens have. Your poster should include images that represent each of the freedoms that you describe.

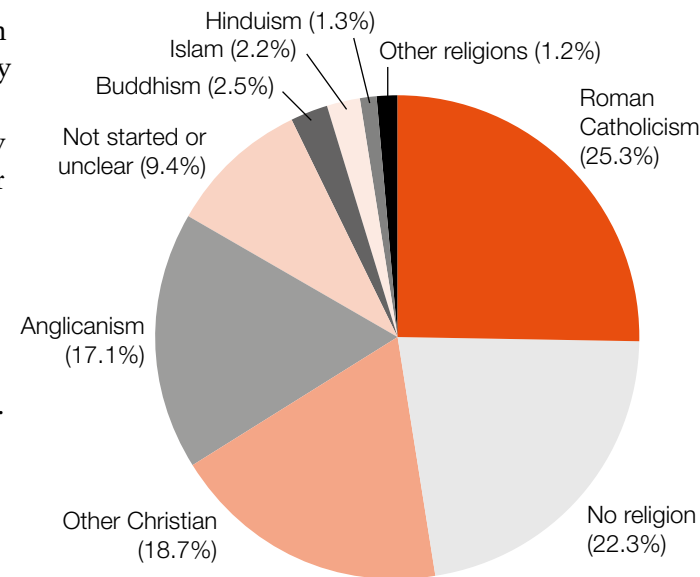


## 15.2 Australia as a secular state

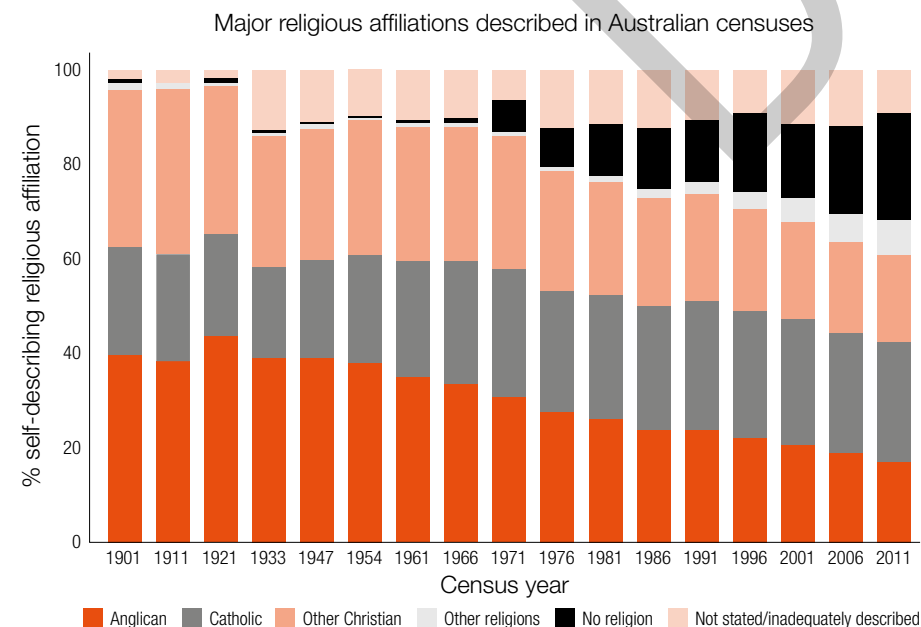
While Christianity is the most widespread religion in Australian society, the church has never been directly involved in running the country. This separation of church and state is known as **secularism** and is a key feature of Australia's identity as a nation. As a secular nation, Australia is able to encourage a diverse society that gives its people the freedom to choose their religious beliefs. However, while most nations around the world today adopt a secular system of government, some nations, such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, base their legal system on religious teachings.

### Australia's many faiths

Australia is a multicultural nation that has attracted people from all over the world. These people brought with them their different customs, beliefs and religions. Australia's commitment to the freedom of religion has allowed people to practise whichever religion they choose, so long as it does not interfere with the rights of others or our laws. This tolerance for many people's beliefs is a core value of Australian society, one that allows us to live in harmony with one another.



**Source 1** This chart shows the different religions or faiths of Australians according to the 2011 census.



**Source 2** This chart shows how many religions and faiths have been practised in Australia since 1901.

### Separation of church and state

One of the core principles of Australia's democracy is that it does not allow religious institutions to directly influence the decisions of government. Australia's public health, education and political institutions are all free from religious connections. This ensures that religious beliefs of one group of people are not forced onto Australians of other faiths. It also means that decisions about what is best for today's society can be made through open discussion. Despite being a secular nation, religions still influence the beliefs and decisions of many Australians who, as both voters and politicians, determine how the nation is governed.



**Source 3** The flag of Western Australia, like our national flag, reflects our loyalty to the Commonwealth, which has a strong Christian identity.



**Source 4** Unlike Australia, Saudi Arabia is a non-secular nation, in that their legal system is based on religious teachings.

### Check your learning 15.2

#### Remember and understand

- 1 What is 'secularism'?
- 2 Which two nations are examples of non-secular states?
- 3 Describe two benefits of having a separation of church and state.
- 4 What is the religion of the British monarchy?

#### Apply and analyse

- 5 What do you think it might be like to live in a non-secular nation of a different religion to your own?
- 6 Look at Source 1. List the faiths in order of highest to lowest number of followers in Australia.
- 7 Look at Source 2.
  - a Which affiliation has been increasing over the years?
  - b What has been happening to the proportion of Christian followers (including Catholic and Anglican) over the years?
- 8 Look at Source 3.
  - a What elements of the flag show Victoria's identity as part of the British empire?
  - b What part of the flag shows a distinctly Christian identity?

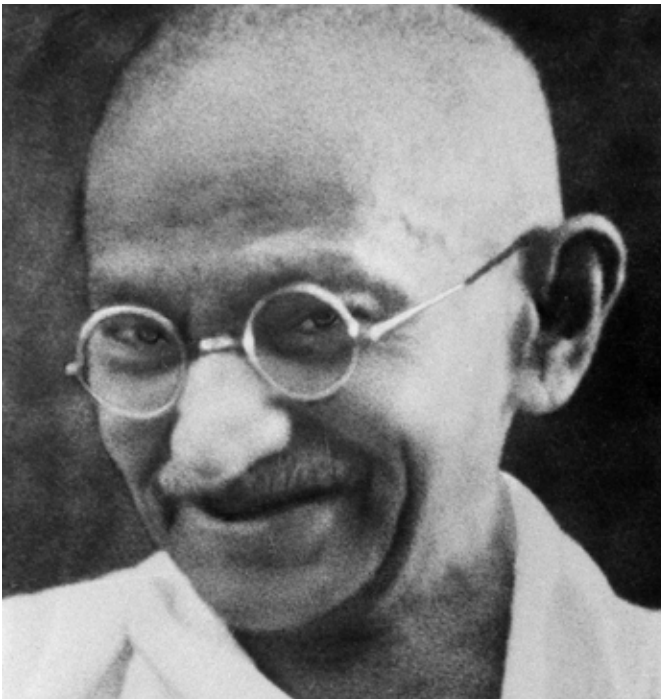


# 15.3 Active participation

In order for our democracy to function properly, it is important that people make their voices heard. While many people prefer to stay away from politics, it is important for us to make the most of our democratic rights. By ignoring politics or issues of national importance, people increase the chances of political decisions being made with outcomes that might go against their interests, values or beliefs.

## Become informed

Democracy can only work if the people know about the issues that they are voting on. This can often be difficult as there are many powerful people who wish to promote their own political agendas. People rely on mainstream media outlets for news, yet these outlets often show a biased representation of political issues. To become informed we must think critically and consider a variety of different sources before we form an opinion.



**Source 1** As a result of leading India to independence, Mahatma Gandhi inspired non-violent movements for civil rights and freedom all over the world.

## Voting

As informed citizens, we can participate in democracy by voting to elect the people who we feel will best represent us. Nearly all Western Australians who are aged 18 and over are eligible to vote. In fact, Australia's compulsory voting system means that all those who are enrolled to vote must do so or pay a fine. While this might seem unfair, it reflects the idea that voting is not only a right but a responsibility of our citizens. We vote for people to represent our opinions and beliefs at local, state and federal levels.

When we vote in an election, we are voting for a person who will represent our **electorate**. In Australia, we divide the country into 150 electorates, or separate geographical areas of the country, so that people in different areas who have different needs can be represented more equally. These 150 electorates each have an elected Member of Parliament (MP) who represents the interests of the people in his or her region. It is up to these elected representatives to voice the opinions of their electorate and fight for key issues in their community. The responsibilities of an MP as an elected representative might include:

- acting as a spokesperson for their electorate
- prioritising government activities and funding for the electorate
- dealing with concerns in the electorate on government matters

One form of actively participating in our democracy is contacting our elected representatives. For example, you could write a letter to your local MP about an issue that you believe is important, such as equal rights or animal welfare, with the aim of convincing them to fight for the issue in parliament. You might even strengthen your argument by presenting your local MP with a petition with signatures of people who support you on the issue to show how much it means to the people the MP is representing.

## Direct action

Simply complaining about things that negatively affect our society does not achieve much. People can make a difference by raising awareness about political issues through more **direct action**, also known as non-violent resistance. This can include protests such as marches or demonstrations, boycotts of products or services and strikes. These methods of direct action have been used in the past to gain attention for many different causes, and to try to influence the decision making of people in power.

One of the benefits of direct action is that it makes a person feel good knowing that they are helping to make a positive change to their society. Furthermore, you do not have to be of voting age to make your voice heard through direct action. Direct action has proven to be a very effective way of raising awareness about political issues throughout history.

Mahatma Gandhi used direct action to free India from the rule of the British Empire. Gandhi was different to other freedom fighters in that he advanced the cause of his people through non-violent resistance.



**Source 2** Rupert Murdoch is a media magnate with strong political opinions that are often opposed to Labor party policies. His newspapers, which account for over half of all newspaper sales in Australia, attempted to influence the political opinions of their readers during the 2016 federal election.

## Lobby groups

Another way of raising awareness for issues is through lobby groups, sometimes referred to as interest groups. **Lobbying** involves working on behalf of a particular cause to influence political decisions. In Australia, there are many lobby groups who are working to influence public and government opinion on issues such as asylum seekers, domestic violence and animal cruelty.

Lobby groups might attempt to sway political decisions through media campaigns or by communicating directly with federal or state MPs and ministers.

## Check your learning 15.3

### Remember and understand

- 1 Why do you think being informed is an important part of a functioning democracy?
- 2 Explain three types of direct action.
- 3 How can lobby groups try to influence political decisions?
- 4 What are the responsibilities of an elected representative?

### Apply and analyse

- 5 Look at Source 2. What does the newspaper suggest the public should do at the next election?
- 6 Rank the listed forms of active participation from the one you think is most effective to least effective.
- 7 Do you see any problems with a newspaper presenting a biased opinion on political issues?
- 8 Gandhi used non-violent resistance. What do you think are the advantages of using non-violent resistance to advance a political cause?

### Evaluate and create

- 9 Use the internet to research Martin Luther King Jr or Mahatma Gandhi and prepare a 200-word report on how they used direct action to overcome social injustice.



15A rich task

Petitions

Even though you may not be old enough to vote, you can still make your voice heard about issues that matter to you. One method of direct action that can help raise political awareness is through the use of petitions. A petition is a collection of signatures, identifying people who share a stance on a particular issue.



Source 1 People in Sydney signing a petition in support of a free vote on marriage equality on 31 May 2015

Source 2 Direct action, such as online petitions and public protest played a major role influenced the Western Australian government to end shark culling.

Petitions have been used throughout history to show the large amount of support for a cause. Large numbers of signatures have often persuaded politicians or groups to take up the cause of the petitioners. A petition can be started by anyone and has been used for centuries by people who wish to make their voices heard. These days, handwritten and online petitions continue to help political causes gain momentum.

In recent years, online petitions have become a popular form of direct action. Websites such as Change.org allow people to create a petition and share it via social media or email to as many people as they can. This allows people from all over the world to see and sign a petition, gaining many more signatures than is possible with handwritten petitions.

Barbara Wueringer began a petition on Change.org in response to the Western Australian state government's plan to catch or destroy sharks in close proximity to beachgoers as a strategy to reduce the number of fatal shark attacks in Western Australian waters. The petition asked the Australian senate to use their powers to prevent the killing of white sharks in Western Australia. By 2014, the petition had received over 90,000 signatures and was presented to the senate by elected representative, Senator Rachel Siewert. The public pressure behind the petition played a major role in convincing the state government to end their strategy of culling sharks.



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Creating a petition

Before starting a petition you must become well informed on the issue at hand. You can expect that many people will only sign up to your petition if you can explain why it is an important cause. This will require you to research the issue indepth, as you explore all sides of the argument.

- Step 1** Select a title: The title should be a simple and strong statement explaining exactly what you want to achieve with the petition.
- Step 2** Identify who you are petitioning: Is your petition directed at a local politician, prime minister, CEO of an organisation or school principal? You need to clearly state the title and name of the person who you wish to receive the petition.
- Step 3** Reasons for signing the petition: Your petition should outline the main reasons for why people should sign the petition. This can be done in bullet points or a few short paragraphs.
- Step 4** Getting signatures: These days, a great way of getting signatures is by using social media to support your petition. Another traditional way is to approach people who you believe may be interested in signing the petition. A stand with a sign in a public place is an effective way of drawing people to you. Just make sure that you have the approval of your parents and teacher before you make any decisions about where to look for signatures.

Apply the skill

- 1 Use the internet to research an issue that you wish to raise support and awareness for.
- 2 Create a petition using the steps above and see how many signatures you can get from the students at your school.

Extend your understanding

- 1 Use the internet to research and write a 200-word report on one of the following historical petitions:
  - Yirrkala Bark Petitions 1963
  - Petition for Reprieve of Ned Kelly 1880
  - Bendigo Goldfields Petition 1853
  - Women's Suffrage Petition 1891 (Victoria, Australia)



Source 3 Online petitions are an easy way to reach lots of people.



## 15.4 Australian values

Values are the beliefs, ideals and behaviours that we consider important. While we each have our own personal beliefs, our society as a whole has values that guide our behaviour. As Australia has developed, its people have fostered values such as freedom, equality, compassion, inclusion, responsibility and giving people ‘a fair go’. These values are reflected by our laws, and the ideals of the majority of people within our society, allowing us to live in harmony.

### Freedom

Freedom is being able to make our own decisions, without being controlled. In Australia, we can make decisions about our lives such as where we will live or what job we will do. Australians enjoy freedom

of speech, whereby people can openly express their thoughts and opinions. However, this freedom is not protected by law in Australia; it is a privilege rather than a right written into the **Australian Constitution**. Australia also promotes the freedom of religion, allowing people to practise their religions within the boundaries of the law. Unlike freedom of speech, this freedom is protected by our laws.

Yet we are not completely free to do anything we like. There is a lot of debate about what freedoms we should be allowed so that we do not harm other people. For instance, even though we are free to get new clothes for summer, we are not allowed to steal those new clothes from someone else. While Australians enjoy many freedoms, we have laws to guide us that help us live together in peace.

### Equality

Equality is when we treat everyone the same. It is an important part of any fair society that cares about making sure no one is discriminated against. Yet equality is difficult to achieve. While the government tries to treat all of its citizens equally in the eyes of the law, it has received criticism for discrimination against certain groups of people, such as same-sex couples. Economic inequality has increased in Australia as fewer and fewer people control more and more of the country’s wealth. Nevertheless, giving everyone an equal opportunity to succeed is a value held dear by many Australians. This is why the government and many organisations aim to help the disadvantaged in our society.

**Source 2** Each year on 21 March, Australians celebrate Harmony Day. On this day, we celebrate our diversity and send a powerful message that everyone belongs in our society regardless of how different they are.

**15B** What does it mean to be an Australian citizen?

### A ‘fair go’

A ‘fair go’ means that everyone deserves a fair chance to succeed. It is meant to apply to all people. This applies to access to education and health care, and the opportunity to work and earn a sufficient living, regardless of gender, race or socioeconomic status. It means that discrimination on any of these grounds is not acceptable.



**Source 1** In November 2015, anti-racism protestors clashed with anti-Islam protestors in Melton, Victoria.



## Compassion

Compassion is a human response to the suffering of others that makes us want to help or relieve that suffering. As people living in ‘the lucky country’, the majority of us live very comfortable lives compared to most of the world. Some Australians feel a responsibility to help those less fortunate and pressure the government to fulfill its responsibilities to people suffering in Australia and overseas. Our government can assist Australians in need by providing accessible medical services, education and aged care and disability services.

People’s different levels of compassion and willingness to act on it have sparked great debate over what Australia’s responsibility is in the global community. For instance, there are opposing views about how Australia should manage **asylum seekers**, people in extreme poverty and others in similarly desperate situations. Compassion is perhaps the most important value of any healthy society, as it influences people to help others who are experiencing extreme suffering.



**Source 4** Many people risk their lives to come to Australia, but can then spend years in detention centres.



**Source 3** Rallies against discrimination are often peaceful protests for a fair go for all people regardless of race, gender or socioeconomic status.

## Inclusion

Everyone is different, but some people’s differences are more noticeable, or harder for others to understand. Unfortunately, it is easy to fear what we do not understand. Failing to overcome such fears can cause us to exclude people simply for being different, leaving them feeling isolated and ashamed of their uniqueness. It is important to celebrate our differences and include all kinds of people in our society, no matter what they look like or how differently they might choose to live. By including everyone, we are able to live in harmony together rather than in conflict or isolation.

## Responsibility

Learning to be responsible means we must take ownership of our decisions and ensure that others do not suffer as a result of our behaviour. This is what holds people accountable for their actions. In Australia, the legal system is one way in which people are made to act responsibly. If a person commits a crime, they are likely to be fined or imprisoned. But often, it is our own understanding of what is right and wrong that makes us act responsibly. For example, after eating our lunch, if we throw our rubbish on the floor for someone else to pick up, we would feel guilty, so we place it in the bin. This is an example of being responsible, as we are considering the effects that our decisions have on others as well as ourselves.



**Source 4** The failure of people to take responsibility for their effect on the environment is causing a great many problems for the planet and its people.

## 15B What does it mean to be an Australian citizen?

### Check your learning 15.4

#### Remember and understand

- 1 What are values, and how are they reflected in our society?
- 2 Describe three values that are important to Australian society.

#### Apply and analyse

- 3 Why do you think Australia is called ‘the lucky country’?
- 4 Do you think people should be free to do whatever they please? Why or why not?
- 5 How might values such as freedom, equality, a fair go, compassion, inclusion and responsibility make it is easier for us to live together?
- 6 Which Australian values do you think might also be valued by the rest of the world? Why?
- 7
  - a In source 1, what freedom are these people exercising?
  - b What freedom are they fighting for?
- 8
  - a People are different in many ways. Describe one difference that you have often observed.
  - b How do you think you can help to make all kinds of students feel included at school?
- 9
  - a Why do you think responsibility is such an important value for our society?
  - b List five things that you are responsible for at home and at school (such as making your bed or bringing the correct books to class).
  - c For each of the responsibilities mentioned above, write what you think would happen if you did not fulfil your responsibilities.

#### Evaluate and create

- 10 Source 3 shows a detention centre for asylum seekers, many of whom have fled from war zones. Write a short story about the journey of a boy or girl your age who has fled from war-torn Syria in an attempt to start a new life in Australia.



# 15.5 Multiculturalism

Australia is one of the most culturally diverse nations in the world. It is made up of Indigenous Australians, **migrants** who were born overseas, and the descendants of those who migrated to Australia over the past two centuries. All of these people carry with them a rich heritage and culture that has helped shape Australia’s identity.

## A history of multiculturalism in Australia

Up until the arrival of Europeans in 1788, Australia had been inhabited solely by Indigenous Australians for more than 50000 years. Since then, we have seen waves of migrants come to Australia from all over the world.



**Source 1** This postage stamp was issued to commemorate Australia Day in 1982. It shows an Indigenous Australian, a British colonist, and a Muslim Australian.

1788	The first fleet arrives from Britain carrying Europeans to a continent inhabited by more than half a million Indigenous Australians.
1788–1868	Britain transports more than 160 000 convicts to Australia in order to ease their own overcrowded prisons.
1793–1850	Around 200 000 mainly English, Irish and Scottish people migrate to Australia voluntarily.
1850	The gold rush begins, attracting thousands of Chinese migrants.
1901–58	The ‘White Australia policy’ encourages migration to Australia from European nations (particularly English-speaking nations), while restricting migration from Asia.
1945	The government promotes the importance of migration through its ‘populate or perish’ attitude, under which it accepts more than 3 million European migrants in the fears that Australia will not survive with such a small population spread across an entire continent.
1970s	The first waves of refugees arrive from Asia, most of whom are people fleeing the war in Vietnam. To this day, the treatment of asylum seekers is a hotly debated political issue in Australia.
Today	There are more than 24 million people living in Australia, half of whom were either born overseas or have at least one parent who was born overseas.

**Source 2** Timeline of migration to Australia

## Expressing cultural identity

Australia’s core values of freedom and inclusion allow for people to respectfully express their cultural identity without being persecuted. This has resulted in vibrant cities and towns across the nation, bustling with a diverse range of music, food, beliefs and customs that one would otherwise have to spend several lifetimes travelling the world to explore. From pizza to pho, Australia has slices of culture from more than 200 nations. As a result of our diverse society, Australia is also given the opportunity to learn about other cultures through community events such as food festivals, film festivals and traditional celebrations from other countries like Lunar New Year. It is this ever-changing and exciting mix of cultures that forms the Australian identity. We live in a multicultural nation that people from all walks of life can call home.

**Source 3** Each year, many Asian Australian communities across the nation celebrate Lunar New Year with colourful festivities that entertain large crowds of people.



### Check your learning 15.5

#### Remember and understand

- 1 When did the first Europeans settle in Australia?
- 2 How long have the Indigenous Australians inhabited Australia?

#### Apply and analyse

- 3 Look at Source 1.
  - a How does the stamp portray the Australian identity?
  - b Why do you think the stamp shows the three individuals standing in that particular order?
  - c When was the stamp released? Do you think it is still representative of Australia’s multicultural identity?

#### Evaluate and create

- 4 Create a poster celebrating one of Australia’s many cultures. You could use the internet and the library to research information about the culture. You may wish to include:
  - customs
  - food
  - music
  - language
  - religion
  - famous Australians of that cultural background
  - significant historic events that caused that group of people to migrate to Australia
  - any other interesting information.



# 15.6 Indigenous Australians and the Australian identity

Australia’s national identity is one that is marred by controversy. While some celebrate the legacy of the first Europeans as **pioneers** and **settlers**, others are more disturbed by the crimes that these Europeans committed against the Indigenous populations of Australia.

## Acknowledging the past

The saying goes, ‘History is written by the victors’. British Australia has often ignored the injustice done to the Aboriginal peoples through **colonisation**. Before the arrival of Europeans, Australia had long been inhabited by Indigenous Australians who were later killed or forced from their sacred lands and into servitude. Acknowledging this past has not been easy, while ignoring it has caused great suffering to the surviving Indigenous Australians. This has resulted in two very different perspectives on our nation’s identity.



**Source 1** Since the arrival of the Europeans in 1788, police frequently used neck chains and other restraints to arrest the Indigenous peoples in the event of an offence. The use of neck chains was not completely banned until the 1940s.



**Source 2** Governor Arthur Phillip hoists the British flag over the new colony at Sydney in 1788.

## Reconciliation

For many people, truly recognising this part of our history is a necessary step towards properly defining the Australian identity. They argue that until we confront this issue, we will never be able to honestly promote the values that we want for our nation. In recent decades, efforts have been made by the Australian government, notably when former prime minister Kevin Rudd made a formal apology to the Aboriginal peoples on behalf of the Australian Government, to achieve reconciliation.

1975

The Racial Discrimination Act is passed to help ensure Australians of all backgrounds are treated equally by the law.

1985

Uluru is handed back to its Indigenous owners.

February 1992

The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation holds its first meeting in Canberra.

June 1992

The High Court hands down the Mabo decision, recognising the special relationship that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with the land. The Court rules that Australia was never *terra nullius* (land belonging to no-one).

1996

National Reconciliation Week is launched.

1998

National Sorry Day is marked on 26 May.

2004

A memorial is built for the Stolen Generations in Canberra.

2008

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd formally apologises on behalf of the Australian Parliament to the Stolen Generations.

**Source 3** Timeline of significant reconciliation events.

## 15B What does it mean to be an Australian citizen?

Despite such efforts, many people have different opinions about what more needs to be done in the way of reconciliation. Some people believe that Indigenous people should receive **reparations**, or payment, for the crimes they endured, while others believe that today’s Australians are not responsible for these crimes and should not have to pay for them. There is a lot of debate around Australians icons, such as the flag and Australia Day, which ignore our nation’s pre-British history.



**Source 4** Some people believe that the Australian flag should include Aboriginal symbolism. This flag, designed by Brendan Jones, is one example of what that may look like.

## Check your learning 15.6

### Remember and understand

- 1 What are the two different perspectives of our past that have affected our nation’s identity?
- 2 What was one significant event that helped move Australia towards reconciliation?
- 3 What was one significant event that helped move Australia towards reconciliation?

### Apply and analyse

- 4 Compare the flag in source 4 to the official flag of Australia.
  - a What are the differences and similarities?
  - b Using the internet, research what the symbols used in the two flags represent.
  - c Which flag do you think better represents Australia today? Why?

### Evaluate and create

- 5 Design an alternative to the Australian flag that you think best represents our nation’s values.



## 15B rich task

## #ChangeTheDate

Australia Day is the most significant day of Australia's national identity. It is marked by a public holiday in all states and is a time when many people get together to celebrate the wonderful lifestyle this country has to offer. For some, however, celebrating Australia Day on 26 January is both offensive and wrong. They form part of a growing number of people who are demanding that we change the date of Australia Day.

The date, 26 January, is the anniversary of the arrival of the First Fleet of British ships at Port Jackson, New South Wales in 1788. It marks the beginning of British rule of the Australian continent, and as a result, it is a day of great sorrow for Indigenous people in Australia. It was first celebrated in 1934 when people of European ethnicity formed a vast majority of the Australian population. Today, however, Australia is a far more multicultural society and has recognised many of the injustices experienced by the Indigenous Australians as a consequence of the First Fleet's arrival. Many people believe that the date should be changed to something more respectful to the Aboriginal peoples. They also believe that celebrating 'Invasion Day' goes against the values we want for our society.

People opposed to changing the date argue that it has become an important tradition that forms part of the Australian identity. Many of them believe that the nation we live in today was shaped by this historic event and should be remembered. People across Australia are exercising their democratic rights to voice their opinion on this divisive debate.



**Source 1** People who are sympathetic to the plight of Indigenous Australians feel that 26 January represents British invasion of the continent.



**Source 2** Many Australians are happy to celebrate Australia Day public holiday on 26 January with a great sense of patriotism.

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## Civic engagement: writing a letter to your local Member of Parliament or Prime Minister

In our democracy, the role of politicians is to represent the people's opinions, concerns and interests. One way of ensuring your opinion is heard is by directly contacting your local Member of Parliament or Prime Minister through an email or letter. Here are some tips:

- Before you write, research the topic that you are concerned about and make note of really important facts that will support your view.
- Make sure you use the correct title, for example, Ms Joanna Smith MP.
- Introduce yourself and the reason why you are writing.
- Politely write in your own words the main points you wish to share with the politician.
- Explain what you would like them to do about the issue.

- Sign off the letter with 'Sincerely', and your full name below it.
- Wait for a response and contact them again if you have not heard from them in more than a month.

## Apply the skill

Write a letter to your local Member of Parliament or Prime Minister discussing why you feel that the date on which we celebrate Australia Day should or shouldn't be changed. You may also wish to include whether 26 January should be recognised as a day of mourning, or propose a new date on which to celebrate Australia Day.

## Extend your understanding

- 1 Using the Internet or an Australian calendar, make a list of all of the public holidays celebrated in Western Australia.
- 2 Research the historic significance of the days and identify how they are portrayed in the media and in popular culture..
- 3 How do these days form part of our national identity?.



**Source 3** Soldiers march through Melbourne on ANZAC Day in memorial uniform each year on 25 April, a public holiday that is celebrated nation wide.