

Australia's international legal obligations

'No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.' These words from 16th-century poet John Donne still resonate in our world today. All countries need to act together to combat world issues such as poverty, the effects of climate change and human rights abuses.

Australia is one of the 195 countries that has a shared responsibility to promote security, health and wellbeing in the world. Australia is a member of the United Nations, an organisation set up to promote international cooperation and world peace. Membership of the **United Nations** (UN) provides an avenue for Australia to fulfil its international obligations.



chapter 13

Source 1 Australia is a member of the United Nations, and so has shared responsibilities to act with other UN member countries to tackle international issues.

13A

What are Australia's global roles and responsibilities?

- 1 Australia has provided humanitarian assistance to countries experiencing crises, such as earthquakes. Why do you think Australia might help other countries in this way?
- 2 List some of the possible consequences if a country failed to act in accordance with the international community and attempted to take control of another country.

13B

How are government policies in Australia shaped by our international legal obligations?

- 1 Name some policy areas where it would not be in Australia's best interest to act alone and contrary to the approval of the international community.
- 2 Have you ever heard of instances when Australia has failed to meet its international obligations?
- 3 Why should all countries meet their international obligations in relation to the environment?

13.1 Australia's role as a member of the United Nations

You may have heard of the United Nations (the UN), or of UN ambassadors such as actors Emma Watson and Angelina Jolie. You may not be aware, however, of the purpose of the UN, its role in the international community, or what it sets out to achieve. The work of the UN is to bring all the nations of the world together, focusing on human rights and international justice, and provide a forum, called the General Assembly, where the member nations meet to discuss issues and problems of global importance.

The United Nations

The United Nations is an international organisation created in 1945 that seeks to promote international cooperation. After World War II it was hoped that this international organisation, devoted to world peace, would prevent war and horrors such as the Holocaust from happening again.



Source 1 The United Nations headquarters in New York is built on international land owned by people of the world. The UN has its own flag, showing a map of the world encircled by olive branches, which are a symbol of peace. The UN also has its own postage stamp.

The UN has 193 members and is committed to:

- international peace and security in the world
- creating friendship between nations
- helping nations work together to assist poor people, alleviate hunger and disease, promote literacy, and promote respect for people's rights and freedoms
- providing a central point where nations can come together in order to achieve the above-mentioned goals.

The United Nations

- Provides food to 90 million people in 75 countries
- Vaccinates 58 per cent of the world's children, saving 2.5 million lives a year
- Assists over 34 million refugees and people fleeing war, famine or persecution
- Combats climate change; works with 140 nations to prevent harmful mercury emissions
- Keeps peace with 120,000 peacekeepers in 16 operations on 4 continents
- Fights poverty, helping 370 million rural poor achieve better lives in the last 30 years
- Protects and promotes human rights on site and through some 80 treaties/declarations
- Mobilizes US\$12.5 billion in humanitarian aid to help people affected by emergencies
- Uses diplomacy to prevent conflict; assists some 50 countries a year with elections
- Promotes maternal health, saving the lives of 30 million women a year

United Nations - Department of Public Information - 2013

Source 2 A summary of the type of work the United Nations carries out across the world

Australia's role as a member of the United Nations

Australia was one of the first 51 countries to become a member of the UN when it began in 1945. Australia is not a powerful nation by world standards, compared to countries such as China and the United States of America. Membership of the United Nations allows Australia to have a voice in international affairs, and play a role in promoting stability in the world. Membership of the United Nations also helps Australia protect its own economic and security interests (discussed further in Unit 13.3).

From 2012 to 2014, Australia had a seat on the United Nations Security Council, the council's most important decision-making body. Australia recently played a leading role in writing a **resolution** that called for access to the crash site where 298 civilians (including 28 Australians) lost their lives when the Malaysian airplane MH17 was shot out of the sky in Ukraine. The crash site was controlled by armed groups who hindered an international investigation into the crash and caused international concern that not all the bodies would be recovered and returned to their families with dignity and respect.



Source 3 Australia's role as a member of the United Nations Security Council has provided an avenue for Australia to voice international concerns. Here, the Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop puts forward a resolution to the United Nations Security Council.

Check your learning 13.1

Remember and understand

- 1 Why was the UN created?
- 2 List four groups of people that might benefit from the work of the United Nations.

Apply and analyse

- 3 Explain why membership of the United Nations is beneficial for Australia.
- 4 The former Secretary General of the United Nations Kofi Annan once said:

More than ever before in human history, we share a common destiny. We can master it only if we face it together. And that, my friends, is why we have the United Nations.

- a Do you think it is true that our future can only be assured if we work together? Write a paragraph explaining your position.

- b In your own experience, has there been a situation or problem that could only be solved by several people working together? Outline this situation, telling how it was resolved.

Evaluate and create

- 5 The United Nations has named certain days to be observed as international days. Go to the UN website and choose a day in the upcoming months that you are interested in. Devise a way to create awareness of the day within your school. You could do one of the following:
 - write a paragraph for the school newsletter or daily bulletin
 - make an announcement to the school
 - create a symbol for the day that will spark curiosity or a slideshow that can be projected onto a wall as students enter a common room.

13.2 Australia’s international role and responsibilities

Australia works with the United Nations to provide foreign aid and peacekeeping, and to work towards protecting the environment and upholding human rights.

Australia’s foreign aid responsibilities

Foreign aid is assistance in the form of money, skills or other resources transferred from one country to another, mainly for humanitarian reasons. Countries in our immediate region are the main recipients of foreign aid; these include Indonesia, the Solomon Islands, Cambodia, East Timor, Myanmar and Fiji.

Foreign aid may be given to alleviate poverty and assist a community to develop a better standard of living by providing schools, roads, water supply and medical assistance. Emergency aid may be offered in a humanitarian crisis that threatens the health and safety of a community. Australia gave this type of emergency aid after Typhoon Haiyan devastated the Philippines in 2013.



Source 1 Australia regularly gives foreign aid in many forms, mostly to countries in need in our region.

In 2000, many countries, including Australia, adopted eight UN goals called the **Millennium Development Goals** (MDGs). These included such things as wiping out poverty, providing universal primary education, stopping the spread of infectious diseases and providing foreign aid equal to 0.7 per cent of a country’s national income. Australia needs to more than double its aid contribution to meet this goal. The goal was downgraded in 2007 to 0.5 per cent but there are doubts even this downgraded goal will be met given that spending on foreign aid was cut in the 2015–16 budget.

Source 2 Top 20 aid-giving countries

Rank	Country	% of nations’ total annual income given to aid
1	Norway	1.07
2	Sweden	1.01
3	Luxembourg	1.00
4	Denmark	0.85
5	United Kingdom	0.71
6	Netherlands	0.67
7	Finland	0.54
8	Switzerland	0.47
9	Ireland	0.46
10	Belgium	0.45
11	France	0.41
12	Germany	0.38
13	Australia	0.33
14	Canada	0.27
15	Austria	0.27
16	New Zealand	0.26
17	Iceland	0.25
18	Japan	0.23
19	Portugal	0.23
20	United States	0.18

Source: OECD Table 1 Official Development Assistance 2013

Australia’s peacekeeping responsibilities

UN peacekeeping assists countries who have been torn by conflict to achieve lasting peace. It does this by:

- maintaining peace and security in a region
- protecting civilians – civilians are those who are not on active duty with the military, navy, police or fire fighting organisations
- overseeing elections
- disarming those who were involved in fighting – for example, controlling and disposing of weapons
- protecting and promoting human rights
- restoring rule of law to a region, meaning that legal institutions including the government, police, courts and prisons are strengthened and accountable for their actions.

The three basic principles that guide UN peacekeeping include the consent of parties, impartiality and use of force as a measure of last resort. Peacekeepers can be instructed by the UN to ‘use all necessary means’ to protect civilians under attack, assist authorities to maintain law and order and deter any use of force that disrupts political processes, such as an election.

Australia has contributed to the UN’s peacekeeping missions with 3500 Australians serving in peace and security operations in various parts of the world today.



Source 3 An Australian peacekeeper carries a Rwandan child who was injured in a brutal massacre by soldiers of the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) at the UN administered refugee camp at Kibeho in 1995.

casestudy

Why does the world’s youngest nation need our help?

Australia is involved in the UN’s peacekeeping mission in South Sudan. South Sudan became a nation in 2011 but is still a war-torn country with fighting taking place between seven armed groups within the country. One and a half million people have been displaced due to war, and thousands have been killed. There have been massacres of civilians in hospitals and churches, with bodies being dumped in mass graves. Starvation continues to grow, compounded by no rain for the crops that have been planted.

The South Sudan peacekeeping mission involves protecting civilians, delivering **humanitarian** assistance such as providing food and setting up camps for those who have been forced to leave their homes. Support is also provided to help establish rule of law in South Sudan and assist in the economic development of the nation.

The Australian Government has recently pledged \$3 million in emergency assistance for communities affected by continuing unrest in South Sudan in addition to \$40 million already pledged.

Australia’s responsibility to protect the environment

Australia has been involved in many international agreements that serve to protect the environment. Perhaps the most important area of environmental protection is dealing with climate change. Australia has a national and international responsibility to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to avert the effects of climate change.

The United Nations plays an important role in bringing countries together to agree on set targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In 2008, Australia became a full member of the **Kyoto protocol**, an international agreement in which internationally binding emissions-reductions targets were set. Australia must cut its emissions by 5 per cent below 2000 levels, by 2020. Australia took part in a new international climate change agreement in 2015, setting emissions-reduction targets for 2020 and beyond.

Australia’s responsibility to uphold human rights

Human rights are entitlements that all human beings possess regardless of their nationality, place of residence, sex, ethnic origin, colour, religion or any other status. The **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** (referred to as the Universal Declaration) was adopted by the United Nations in 1945 and is considered to be the basis of international human rights law. Australia was one of the countries that helped to create the Universal Declaration. Some of the rights in the Universal Declaration are:

- All people are born free and equal.
- Everyone is entitled the same rights and freedoms.
- Everyone has the right to life.
- No-one should be subject to torture or slavery.
- Everyone is equal before the law.
- No-one should be subject to randomly being arrested, detained or exiled.



Source 4 Pressure is mounting on the international community to seriously consider climate change and commit to emissions-reduction targets for the future. Many believe the international community needs to turn talk into action.

- Everyone has the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty.
 - A person from another country has the right to seek and be given **asylum** from persecution.
- Australia is party to seven international human rights agreements. Two of these agreements elaborate on the principles established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and are legally enforceable. They are:
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which includes, among many rights, the right to life, freedom of religion, freedom of speech and assembly, the right to vote and the right to a fair trial.
 - The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) which includes, among many rights, the right to equal pay, the right to health and education, as well as to an adequate standard of living.



Source 5 Actor Angelina Jolie works with the United Nations as the Special Envoy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Jolie has undertaken 40 field missions to some of the most remote regions of the world, bringing the plight of refugees to the attention of millions of people. Here she meets schoolgirls in a village in Afghanistan.

Check your learning 13.2

- Remember and understand

 - 1 Why do some countries need foreign aid?
 - 2 Name two of the Millennium Development Goals and explain why they are important.
 - 3 Name two international human rights agreements that Australia is party to.

Apply and analyse

 - 4 Imagine you are involved in a peacekeeping operation. What dangers might you face as you carry out your work?
 - 5 Do you think Australia gives enough foreign aid compared to other countries?
- 6 Explain why South Sudan requires help from the International community.

Evaluate and create

 - 7 Why is it important that all counties, including Australia, agree on greenhouse gas emissions-reduction targets? Can you think of any problems that would arise if no agreements are reached? Conduct some Internet research on greenhouse gas emission targets, and summarise your findings.
 - 8 What are Australia’s global responsibilities? In pairs, spend five minutes discussing this question, making notes as you go. Report your conclusions back to the class.

13A rich task

Australia's treatment of asylum seekers

Australia has international obligations to **asylum seekers** and **refugees**. An asylum seeker is a person who flees their country and asks for protection from another country. An asylum seeker is waiting for their claim as a refugee to be processed. A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee their country due to war, persecution, or natural disaster. If the asylum seeker's claim to be a refugee is found to be valid, the asylum seeker will not be returned to their country of origin.

Reasons people seek asylum

Australia signed the 1951 *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* and its 1967 Protocol (the Refugee Convention). According to this Convention, a refugee is a person who has fled their country because of a well founded fear of being persecuted if they remain in their country. They may fear persecution on the basis of race, religion, nationality, membership of a social group or because of their political opinion. The refugee must be unable or unwilling (because of their fear) to seek protection from the authorities in their country. Australia has agreed under the Refugee Convention that refugees will not be sent back to their country of origin where their freedom may be threatened.

It is important to understand that not all asylum seekers who arrive by boat without visas are refugees. The current government's policy discourages asylum seekers arriving without visas by boat. Often asylum seekers pay huge amounts of money to people (called people smugglers) to transport them to another country. Currently, asylum seekers who arrive by boat in Australia without a valid visa must be transferred to a third country and their claims for protection processed individually according to that country's laws. The Minister for Immigration and Border Protection may, however, exercise his discretion to exempt an asylum seeker from



Source 1 Asylum seekers who arrive in Australia by boat risk their lives to get here. Since 2008 it is reported that there have been 1000 asylum seeker deaths at sea.

transfer. If the asylum seeker is transferred to a third country and is found to be a refugee, they will be resettled in that third country rather than in Australia.

Asylum seekers must live in an immigration detention centre while their refugee claim is being assessed. Some say Australia's treatment of those in immigration detention centres violates our international human rights obligations. This is because of the conditions in the immigration detention centres, and the length of time these people are being detained.

Perspectives on asylum seekers

My name is Najeeba Wazefadost, and 12 years ago I risked my life on a dangerous journey. I escaped my country Afghanistan and came to Australia by boat...

Afghanistan has been in a state of war for many decades, a war that has left little evidence of justice, humanity and peace for its people. Even now, villages are frequently attacked and there is continuous persecution of minorities.

– Najeeba Wazefadost (refugee from Afghanistan)

These people just see that Australia is open for business. It's hotel Australia, the red carpet is laid out and there's no attempt to contain any of this. Border security does not exist.

– Alan Jones (radio broadcaster) commenting on the arrival of 66 Sri Lankan asylum seekers in 2013 while the Labor Party was still in government.

If you pay a people-smuggler, if you jump the queue, if you take yourself and your family on a leaky boat, that's doing the wrong thing, not the right thing, and we shouldn't encourage it. We will stop these boats in any test of will between the Australian government and the people-smugglers. We will and we must prevail.

– Tony Abbott (former Prime Minister of Australia)

skilldrill: Reasoning and interpretation

Recognising and considering multiple perspectives

A person's perspective is their point of view – the position from which they see and understand events going on in the world around them. People often have different points of view about particular events or issues depending on their age, gender, social position and beliefs or values. Looking at multiple perspectives can help you understand an issue in greater depth.

Follow these steps to practise the skill of identifying multiple perspectives.

- Step 1** Identify a civics and citizenship issue about which there may be different opinions.
- Step 2** List the various groups and people who may have been involved in or affected by this issue.
- Step 3** Identify the role or position of these people and/or groups in society.
- Step 4** Locate sources that provide evidence about the point of view these people had on the issue.
- Step 5** Analyse each source, using the following questions as a guide:
 - Why was the source written or produced?
 - Who was the intended audience of the source?

Was it meant for one person's eyes, or for the public? How does that affect the source?

- What was the author's message or argument? What ideas were they trying to get across? Is the message explicit (obvious), or are there implicit (subtle) messages as well? What can the author's choice of words tell you? What about the silences
- What does the author choose *not* to talk about?
- How does the author try to convey the message? For example, do they give a detached, balanced account, or is it biased for or against the issue?

Apply the skill

- 1** Identify as many different individuals or groups who are involved in or affected by travelling by boat to Australia in order to seek asylum.
- 2** Describe the roles or positions that these people or groups hold in society.
- 3** Consider the quotes provided. Identify and analyse the perspectives portrayed in each of these sources, using the process outlined in step 5.
- 4** Now that you have considered multiple perspectives, what is your opinion of how Australia treats asylum seekers who arrive by boat without a visa?

Extend your understanding

- 1** Undertake some research about the government's 'enhanced screening process' for asylum seekers who arrive by boat. Explain what it is and whether it may violate our international human rights obligations.
- 2** Find the latest *Australia and the United Nations: Report Card* and explain the areas Australia needs to improve. The executive summary provides a report card that gives a mark for various categories such as Australia's treatment of asylum seekers and refugees.

13.3 Australia’s international legal obligations

Australia has international obligations in a wide variety of areas such as human rights, the environment, defence, security and trade. These international obligations are written down in documents called **treaties**, which Australia is compelled or bound to observe. A treaty can also be called a ‘convention’, ‘protocol’, ‘covenant’ or ‘exchange of letters’.

Bilateral and multilateral treaties

Australia may enter into **bilateral** or **multilateral** treaties. A bilateral treaty is a treaty between Australia and one other country. A multilateral treaty is between Australia and two or more countries. Multilateral treaties are usually developed and overseen by an international organisation such as the United Nations or the International Labour Organization (ILO).

The Commonwealth Government has the power to enter into treaties and contribute to international negotiations. A minister, and in many cases, cabinet make the final decision to sign and ratify a multilateral treaty. Signing a multilateral treaty indicates that





Australia intends to be bound by the treaty at a later date. There is an obligation, however, to refrain from any acts that would defeat the object and purpose of the treaty. **Ratification** is the process that legally binds Australia to implement the treaty.

The impact of treaties on Australian law

Parliament plays a role in examining treaties that Australia enters into, apart from those considered urgent or sensitive. It also plays a role in passing legislation, if it is needed, to ensure the provisions of the treaty become law in Australia. Source 2 provides some examples of treaties Australia has entered into and how these treaty principles are now included in Australian law. It is not always necessary to pass new laws to ensure we comply with our treaty obligations. Existing Commonwealth or state/territory legislation may be sufficient to implement the provisions of at treaty.



Source 1 Australia and the UK signed a historic treaty that allowed significant sharing of information, technology, policy and personnel.

Treaty area	International treaty Australia has entered into	Australian law that reflects the principles of the treaty in part or full
Protecting endangered species 	<i>Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)</i> Ensures that international trade in wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival.	The <i>Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> Example: The trapping of orange-bellied parrot (an Australian endangered species) is illegal.
Eliminating racial discrimination 	<i>International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)</i> Eliminates racial discrimination and promotes understanding among all races.	The <i>Commonwealth Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)</i> and state law in this area. Example: A job advertisement states people of certain nationalities need not apply is against the law.
Protecting women against discrimination 	<i>The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)</i> Defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets out a national plan to end such discrimination.	<i>Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)</i> and state law in this area. Example: A women told she can't apply for a promotion because she has family commitments is being discriminated against on the basis of being a woman.
Protecting the environment 	<i>The Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage</i> Protect cultural and natural heritage around the world that has outstanding universal value that must be preserved for current and future generations.	<i>World Heritage Properties Conservation Act 1983 (Cth)</i> Example: An attempt to destroy a World Heritage site (such as Gondwana Rainforests of Australia) through mining is unlawful.

Source 2 Examples of treaty principles included in Australian law

The influence of international legal obligations on policy

International **legal obligations** can shape domestic policy in Australia. Policy making involves the government taking action in a certain area to achieve a desired outcome. Protecting the ozone layer is one example where Australia worked closely with other countries and implemented policies at home to reduce ozone-depleting chemicals, such as chlorofluorocarbons, in the atmosphere. The ozone layer serves to protect us against excessive ultraviolet radiation from the sun that can cause health problems such as skin cancer. Australia has surpassed all of its legal obligations under the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. Ozone depletion still continues but the Montreal Protocol was successful in controlling the global production and consumption of ozone depleting substances.



Source 3 Scientists predicted that without drastic action the depletion of the ozone layer would restrict outside activity such as going to the beach, playing cricket or taking a walk.

The reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is another area that requires sustained effort from all countries in order to make a difference. As mentioned, Australia is a full member of the Kyoto Protocol and did introduce a **carbon tax** aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but this has subsequently been repealed. Greenhouse gas emission reduction targets that other

countries commit to will most likely shape future policy and law in Australia.

Failure to live up to our international obligations can result in international pressure to change policy. The United Nations plays a role in monitoring how Australia is performing in relation to its international legal obligations. The 'Australia and the United Nations: Report Card' recently gave Australia poor scores in the following areas:

- Climate change: Australia scored a 'D+' in this area. Australia is said to rely too heavily on fossil fuels and needs to set stronger targets for reducing the effects of climate change in the future.
- Refugees and asylum seekers: Australia was given 'F' in this area. It was noted that there is increased hostility towards asylum seekers and it was questioned whether the current policy is fulfilling our international legal obligations.

Shining a light on Australia's poor performance in these areas may influence future policy change.



Source 4 This is an Australian government poster discouraging asylum seekers from entering Australia. Some say Australia's policy on asylum seekers is at odds with its international legal obligations.



Source 5 Australia, like many other countries, relies heavily on fossil fuels for energy. Fossil fuels include coal, oil and natural gas. Australia needs to find innovative energy solutions if it is to reduce its impact on climate in the future. International pressure will affect policy in this area.

Check your learning 13.3

Remember and understand

- 1 Give two examples of an international treaty Australia is a party to and explain the main purpose of each treaty.
- 2 What is the difference between a bilateral and multilateral treaty?

Apply and analyse

- 3 Give an example of how Australian law reflects the principles in the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)*.
- 4 Why do you think the power to enter into treaties is a Commonwealth government power rather than a state government power?
- 5 Do you think one country acting alone would be able to solve environmental problems such as the depletion of the ozone layer and climate change?
- 6 Is new law always needed to comply with an international treaty Australia has signed and ratified?

Evaluate and create

- 7 In small groups, discuss how Australia's international legal obligations can affect domestic policy. Write down the main points from your discussion and report back to the class.

8 Read the following quote.

'Paying it forward.' In many ways that is a succinct expression of the major obligation of our existence. Doing things now for the protection and upliftment of relatively helpless future generations, which either don't exist yet or are presently too young to take action themselves. Australians don't have this obligation uniquely - every society on earth shares it equally. But in this country we have opportunities not widely available. We not only have an abundance of brilliant people with great energy and inventiveness, we are comparatively rich and thus can do what others might only dream of.

General Peter Cosgrove, *A Very Australian Conversation*, Boyer Lectures 2009

- a Why does Sir Peter Cosgrove (Governor-General of Australia) think that Australia is in a unique position compared to other countries to protect future generations?
- b In your opinion what is the most important area of policy all countries need to participate in to protect future generations? Write a statement, similar to Sir Peter Cosgrove's, stating your beliefs.

13B rich task

Australia's international obligations to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

The colonisation of Australia by the British from 1788 heralded the beginning of severe and devastating problems for Indigenous Australians, the effects of which are still being seen today. Indigenous Australians have lower life expectancy, higher child mortality rates and higher unemployment compared to non-Indigenous Australians.

Government policy in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples has been fraught with difficulties in the past. While there may have been good intentions there has been a failure to properly work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in deciding policy that affects them.



Source 1 A salute given to Prime Minister Kevin Rudd during the 'sorry speech'.

Former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd formally apologised to Indigenous Australians in 2008 for the policies of previous governments, where children of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent were forcibly removed from their families. In 2009, former Prime Minister Rudd formally endorsed the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)*. There are also plans to hold a referendum to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Constitution.

In 2008 the Labor Government introduced practical measures to 'close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage'. It set six targets aimed at improving life expectancy for Indigenous Australians:

- 1 closing the gap in life expectancy by 2031
- 2 halving the gap in child mortality rates by 2018
- 3 halving the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements for children by 2018
- 4 ensuring access to early childhood education for all four-year-olds in remote communities by 2013
- 5 halving the gap for year 12 student attainment rates by 2020
- 6 halving the gap in employment outcomes by 2018.

Former Prime Minister Tony Abbott added a seventh goal in 2014 which seeks to end the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous school attendance within five years.

Does Australia meet its international obligations in relation to Indigenous Australians?

The most recent *Australia and UN Report Card* praises the support of UNDRIP. It is hoped that UNDRIP will guide the development of policy for Indigenous Australians in the future. Constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australians is also seen as a way of 'resetting' and building the relationship between governments and Indigenous Australians.

- The UN report, however, criticised mandatory alcohol treatment legislation passed by the Northern Territory Government effective from 2013. The new laws mean:
- anyone taken into custody for drunkenness three times in two months is to be assessed for treatment
 - some alcoholics could be forced into three months of rehabilitation.
 - patients may be criminally charged for absconding from the program.

The UN report says that alcoholics need treatment for addiction rather than locking up and subjecting them to treatments 'untested by credible research'.

The UN report also noted that Australia had not lived up to its international obligations when it suspended the *Australian Racial Discrimination Act* in order to implement

the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER). NTER is a policy that aims to protect women and children from abuse by enforcing a range of measures such as the restriction of alcohol, greater police presence and quarantining of welfare payments. The decision to suspend the Act was overturned in 2010.

skilldrill: reasoning and interpretation

Creating and delivering an audiovisual presentation

Creating and delivering effective presentations is an important skill because it gives you practice talking in front of large groups of people; a task most of us are faced with at some stage in our lives. The following steps will help you avoid some of the pitfalls of creating and delivering a presentation and increase the chances of the audience remembering and enjoying what you said.

- Step 1** Plan and design your presentation
- Plan your presentation carefully so it has a clear beginning, middle and end.
 - Make sure you present the content in clear, concise dot-point form, *not* as large slabs of text.
 - Choose appropriate images.
 - Objects and text moving on screen is distracting.
 - Use a design that ensures your audience can clearly see and read the slides.

- Step 2** Deliver your presentation
- Do not just stand up and read out the text on each slide. Plan what you will say during each slide. Record this on cue cards, and use these during your speech.

- One thing at a time! At any moment, what is on the screen should be the thing you are talking about.
- Speak clearly – not too fast, not too slow. Vary tone and pitch to make your presentation more interesting.
- Make eye contact with different members of your audience. *Do not* just look down at your cue cards.

Apply the skill

- 1 Research, prepare and present an audiovisual presentation about Australia's international obligations to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. In your presentation include the following:
 - a why Indigenous Australians are a disadvantaged group within Australia
 - b positive steps in government policy affecting Indigenous Australians
 - c an assessment of whether Australia meets its international obligations towards Indigenous Australians.
- 2 Your presentation should be based on relevant and reliable sources.

Extend your understanding

- 1 As you listen to your classmates, complete the following peer assessment proforma for each presentation

Name of person completing peer assessment:				
Name of presenter	What did the presenter do well in this regard?	PowerPoint design	Presentation style	What could the presenter improve upon in this regard?