The 1967 Referendum

Sample History Unit

Vote ‘YES’ for Aborigines

On May 27, a Referendum will be held at which all enrolled voters in the six States of Australia must answer “YES” or “NO” to each of two questions.

These questions are:

“Do you approve the proposed law for the alteration of the Constitution entitled ‘An Act to alter the Constitution so that the number of Members of the House of Representatives may be increased without necessarily increasing the number of Senators’?” and

“Do you approve the proposed law for the alteration of the Constitution so as to omit the words relating to the people of the Aboriginal Race in any State and so that Aborigines are to be counted in reckoning the population?”

The questions will be in the above order and must be answered separately by writing in “YES” or “NO” in the appropriate boxes. An informal vote on one question will not invalidate a formal vote on the other.

Unanimously Approved

The proposed Act on Aborigines would amend Section 51 of the Constitution and repeal Section 127. This has been proved unanimously by both Houses of the Commonwealth Parliament.

Section 127 reads: “In reckoning the numbers of the people in the Commonwealth or of a State or other political divisions, the numbers of Aborigines shall not be counted.”

This section was originally included in the Constitution for the following reason: 20 years ago there was genuine need for the Commonwealth Government to start counting Aborigines because many were nomadic. This is not the case today. Also, Aborigines were at that time not considered worthy of a vote. Today they are entitled to vote in all States and Territories of the Commonwealth, and therefore ought to be counted in the census which determines the size of the electorates. All Parties are agreed on the desirability of repealing this Section of the Constitution.

William Worsfold

[Image of an old newspaper clipping with a picture of a man and a child]
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The 1967 Referendum – Sample History Unit

Introduction

The 1967 Referendum was a significant milestone in the progress towards equal rights. It holds great symbolic importance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and much relevance for students today to assist their understanding of the complex society in which they live.

This sample History unit is a series of activities on the 1967 Referendum, which could form part of a unit of learning on ‘Rights and freedoms (1945-the present)’, Levels 9 and 10.

In The 1967 Referendum, students evaluate the significance of the 1967 Referendum by:

- reflecting on the civil, political and social rights enjoyed by citizens in a democracy
- analysing democratic values, including freedom, equality, and respect
- examining the Referendum’s historical, social and political context
- analysing the role of media in shaping political opinion
- understanding the importance of referendums as a process of constitutional change
- analysing a range of primary sources, including photographs, speeches, songs, slogans, pamphlets and statistical data
- analysing the different perspectives of people at the time and evaluate how these perspectives were influenced by significant events, ideas, location, beliefs and values in the progress towards equal rights
- constructing and communicating an argument about a significant past event including understanding the importance of context, audience, and purposes in presenting a point of view
- analysing the complexity of interrelationships within cultures.

This unit of learning supports the aims of the Victorian Curriculum F-10: History and Civics and Citizenship curriculums.

For History, these include students acquiring:

- an interest in, and enjoyment of, historical study for lifelong learning and work, including their capacity and willingness to be informed and active citizens.
- knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the past and the forces that shape societies, including Australian society
- an understanding and use of historical concepts and skills, including sequencing chronology, using historical sources as evidence, identifying continuity and change, analysing cause and effect and determining historical significance
- a capacity to undertake historical inquiry, including skills in the analysis and use of sources, and in the explanation and communication of arguments.
For Civics and Citizenship, the aim of the curriculum is for students to acquire:
- a lifelong sense of belonging to, and engagement with, civic life as an active and informed citizen in the context of Australia as a secular democratic nation with a dynamic, multicultural and multi-faith society
- knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the values, principles, institutions and practices of Australia's system of democratic government and law, and the role of the citizen in Australian government and society.

Learning about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures

The Victorian Curriculum F–10 includes opportunities for students to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. The knowledge and skills that students are expected to develop about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders histories and cultures has a particular and enduring importance and assists students to understand the uniqueness of these cultures and the wisdom and knowledge embedded in them.

The Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc. (VAEAI) has produced a number of resources for schools including “Protocols for Koorie Education in Victorian Primary and Secondary Schools”, to assist schools to provide a welcoming environment for Aboriginal community members and how to work respectfully with the Koorie community to enrich schools' teaching and learning programs.

The Department of Education and Training ‘Koorie Cross-Curricular Protocols for Victorian Government Schools’ have been developed to seek to protect the integrity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural expressions and enable all Victorian teachers and students to engage respectfully and feel connected to this identity.

Teachers should read the section ‘Background reading on the 1967 Referendum’ before beginning the teaching and learning activities.

What students will learn

The teaching and learning resources in this sample unit of learning are self-contained. However, the Resources section contains a list of resources that may be used to support student research.

Students will learn about:
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s rights in the 1950’s and 1960’s
- how referendums can change the Australian Constitution
- the methods used by civil rights activists to achieve change in the 1967 Referendum
- significant events and individuals who contributed to this change.

Unit structure

This sample unit contains seven learning activities:
- Activity 1: Rights for all Australians
- Activity 2: What is a referendum?
- Activity 3: The petitions
- Activity 4: The Referendum campaign leaflets
- Activity 5: Campaign songs and slogans
- Activity 6: The Referendum results and aftermath

**Teacher decisions**

Teachers will determine the duration of the unit on ‘Rights and freedoms (1945-the present)’, the degree of depth with which they treat content, the pedagogical methods they use and the resources they use in teaching this unit.

**Duration**

There is no prescribed time for these learning activities. Teachers determine the duration through the time devoted to specific areas and activities within the area.

**Pedagogy**

The unit content provides suggested teaching and learning activities, assessment tasks and resources to use, but teachers will make pedagogical choices about how students can best be engaged in the ‘Rights and freedoms (1945-the present)’, Levels 9 and 10. These pedagogical choices will be about individual or group or paired work, historical inquiry and the use student-generated or teacher-derived inquiry questions, use of resources, guided reading, scaffolded enquiry using questions, teacher-directed learning, the degree of teacher control over content and assessment tasks compared to the degree of student choice, and use of extension learning activities for interested students and those needing further challenges.

**Resources**

Teachers will decide which resources from the attached listing they use, and may also use resources not listed here. There is a vast and growing collection of 1967 Referendum resources. The resources listed here are predominantly web-based. This derives from the intent of these sample activities. It is not a kit or a package of pre-digested resources. The links to publicly available websites afford teachers and students with many opportunities to access and use information and multiple perspectives about the 1967 Referendum.
### Unit Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNIT NAME: Rights and Freedoms: The 1967 Referendum</th>
<th>BAND: Levels 9 – 10</th>
<th>TIME: 5 x 50 mins</th>
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#### STRAND/S:
- **History**
  - ‘Historical Concepts and Skills’
  - ‘Historical Knowledge’
- **Civics and Citizenship**
  - ‘Government and Democracy’

#### LEARNING INTENTION:
Students develop an understanding of the significant events, ideas, individuals and places that led to the 1967 Referendum and evaluate the change it brought to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Students use historical sources as evidence to examine a range of historical perspectives and interpretations of reasons, causes and effects of the 1967 Referendum. Students may consider the thoughts, feelings and reasons for action of people at the time and recognise the evidence used to support these interpretations.

#### PRIOR LEARNING:
This unit of learning assumes the following knowledge, concepts and skills have been taught in previous History and Civics and Citizenship lessons:

**History**
In Levels 9 and 10 students have in previous units of learning have already demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the following:

- **Historical Concepts and Skills**
  - Sequence significant events in chronological order to support analysis of the causes and effects of these events and identify the changes they brought about. *(VCHHC121)*
  - Analyse and corroborate sources and evaluate their accuracy, usefulness and reliability. *(VCHHC123)*
  - Analyse the long term causes, short term triggers and the intended and unintended effects of significant events and developments. *(VCHHC127)*.

- **Historical Knowledge**
  - Significance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including Australia’s involvement in the development of the declaration. *(VCHHK151)*
  - Causes of the struggle of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for rights and freedoms before 1965. *(VCHHK152)*
UNIT NAME: Rights and Freedoms: The 1967 Referendum | BAND: Levels 9 – 10 | TIME: 5 x 50 mins

- Effects of the US civil rights movement and its influence on Australia. (VCHHK153).

Civics and Citizenship

In Citizenship, ‘Diversity and Identity’ students have already demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the following:

- Discuss the role of political parties and independent representatives in Australia’s system of government, including the formation of governments, and explain the process through which government policy is shaped and developed. (VCCCG028)
- Explain how Australia’s international legal obligations shape Australian law and government policies, including in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. (VCCCL032)
- Analyse contemporary examples and issues relating to Australian democracy and global connections, including key aspects of citizenship in a pluralist society. (VCCCC035)

Discuss challenges to and ways of sustaining a resilient democracy and cohesive society. (VCCCC036).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRAND</th>
<th>CONTENT DESCRIPTIONS</th>
<th>ACHIEVEMENT STANDARDS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historical Concepts and Skills</td>
<td>• Analyse and corroborate sources and evaluate their accuracy, usefulness and reliability. (VCHHC123)</td>
<td>Students working at level 7-8 will be able to:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Analyse the different perspectives of people in the past and evaluate how these perspectives are influenced by significant events, ideas, location, beliefs and values. (VCHHC124)</td>
<td>(extract only)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Evaluate different historical interpretations and contested debates. (VCHHC125)</td>
<td>• identify the motives and actions of people at the time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Historical Knowledge</td>
<td>• Identify and evaluate patterns of continuity and change in the development of the modern world and Australia. (VCHHC126)</td>
<td>• evaluate the significance of individuals and groups and how they were influenced by the beliefs and values of their society</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rights and freedoms (1945- the present)</td>
<td>• Evaluate the historical significance of an event, idea, individual or place. (VCHHC128)</td>
<td>• evaluate different interpretations of the past</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Significance of the following events in changing society: 1962 right to vote federally, 1967 Referendum… and the different perspectives of these events. (VCHHK154)</td>
<td>• analyse the different perspectives of people in the past using sources.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Effects of methods used by civil rights activists to achieve change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the role of one individual or group in the struggle. (VCHHK155)</td>
<td>• explain different historical interpretations and contested debates about the past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Continuity and change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in securing and achieving civil rights and freedoms in Australia. (VCHHK156).</td>
<td>• construct an explanation using sources of evidence to support the analysis.</td>
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</table>

Students working at level 9-10 will be able to:
(extract only)

• explain the context for people’s actions in the past. Evaluate the significance of events and analyse the developments from a range of perspectives

• evaluate the different interpretations of the past and recognise the evidence used to support these interpretations

• analyse the different perspectives of people in the past and evaluate how these perspectives are influenced by the significant events, ideas, location, beliefs and values

• construct and communicate an argument about the past using a range of reliable sources of evidence.
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government and Democracy</td>
<td>Analysing how citizens’ political choices are shaped, including the influence of the media. (VCCCG030)</td>
<td>Students working at level 7-8 will be able to: (extract only)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Students working at level 9-10 will be able to:</td>
<td>Students working at level 9-10 will be able to:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• explain features of Australia’s system of government, and the purpose of the Constitution in Australia’s representative democracy</td>
<td>• evaluate features of Australia’s political system, and identify and analyse the influences on people’s electoral choices.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• analyse features of Australian democracy, and explain features that enable active participation.</td>
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### Historical Concepts and Skills strand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1, 2, 3, 5, 6</td>
<td>Analyse and corroborate sources and evaluate their accuracy, usefulness and reliability. (<a href="#">VCHHC123</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 3</td>
<td>Analyse the different perspectives of people in the past and evaluate how these perspectives are influenced by significant events, ideas, location, beliefs and values (<a href="#">VCHHC124</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5, 6</td>
<td>Evaluate different historical interpretations and contested debates. (<a href="#">VCHHC125</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 6</td>
<td>Identify and evaluate patterns of continuity and change in the development of the modern world and Australia. (<a href="#">VCHHC126</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3, 5</td>
<td>Evaluate the historical significance of an event, idea, individual or place. (<a href="#">VCHHC128</a>)</td>
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### Historical Knowledge strand, ‘Rights and freedoms (1945- the present)’

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Activity Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 7</td>
<td>Significance of the following events in changing society: 1962 right to vote federally, 1967 Referendum…. and the different perspectives of these events (<a href="#">VCHHK154</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - 5</td>
<td>Effects of methods used by civil rights activists to achieve change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the role of one individual or group in the struggle (<a href="#">VCHHK155</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 2, 6</td>
<td>Continuity and change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in securing and achieving civil rights and freedoms in Australia. (<a href="#">VCHHK156</a>)</td>
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### Government and Democracy strand

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<tr>
<th>Activity Number</th>
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<tr>
<td>2, 4</td>
<td>Analysing how citizens’ political choices are shaped, including the influence of the media. (<a href="#">VCCG030</a>)</td>
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**LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity 1: Rights for all Australians</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Warm up activity</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>In this activity, students will consider the notion of citizens’ rights drawing on their prior learning. Students initially complete a <a href="http://www.visiblethinkingpz.org/VisibleThinking_html_files/03_ThinkingRoutines/03d_UnderstandingRoutines/321Bridge/321Bridge_Routine.html">3-2-1 Bridge</a> on following statement: The 1967 Referendum give equal rights to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Rights we expect.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use a Think, Pair, Share strategy to have students brainstorm the human rights that we expect as citizens of Australia. (As a prompt, have students consider legal rights, political rights, workplace rights, rights to social security, social rights.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have students report back on their findings to the class and use the results to develop a class list. Ask students to sort and record that list under the headings ‘political’, ‘civil’ and ‘social’ rights.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Indigenous rights - 1950s and 1960s</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Students select three sources from the student materials and complete the Source Analysis Table on the worksheet. Have students work in groups to analyse three or more of the sources ensuring that all of them are covered. Students should discuss and write down answers to the following:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Describe what this source is about.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Identify what sorts of rights the source identifies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Explain what the sources tell us about the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the 1950s and 1960s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify the similarities and differences between sources and explain how the sources inform us about the period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Evaluate which source is the most useful in understanding the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the 1950s and 1960s. Students should come up with a set of criteria that they use to evaluate each source’s usefulness. Factors they could be encouraged to consider are the perspective of the source if it contains factual detail, and if it is supported by other evidence.</td>
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</tbody>
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**TEACHING NOTES**

Visible Thinking, Harvard Project Zero, [3-2-1 Bridge](http://www.visiblethinkingpz.org/VisibleThinking_html_files/03_ThinkingRoutines/03d_UnderstandingRoutines/321Bridge/321Bridge_Routine.html)

For further background information, students might also access [Collaborating for Indigenous Rights](http://www.nma.gov.au/indigenousrights/). See the menu Australia in the 1950s.

Visible Thinking, Harvard Project Zero, [Think Pair Share](http://www.visiblethinkingpz.org/VisibleThinking_html_files/03_ThinkingRoutines/03d_UnderstandingRoutines/ThinkPairShare/ThinkPairShare_Routine.html)

Read through the sources in Student Materials 1 with students and ensure...
## LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Have groups report back on their source analysis. As a class, vote on which source was the most useful, encouraging students to justify their selection with specific evidence.

Discuss with students:
- How does the pre-1967 rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples compare with the rights that students expect as Australian citizens today?
- Identify two changes to the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Explain the significance of these changes.
- Are there groups in today’s society that may feel disconnected from mainstream Australia?
- What are some of the positives about a pluralist society?
- What are some of the negatives? What role do we play as active citizens in uniting Australian society?

Students revisit their 3-2-1 Bridge from the beginning of the lesson and refine their thoughts as a result of their discussion, as well as Student Materials 1, to analyse the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the 1950s and 1960s.

Students will revisit their 3-2-1 Bridge at the end of Activity 6 to support their reflection.

## TEACHING NOTES

They are familiar with key terms used (such the right to ‘move around freely’, which refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s ability to move off missions and reserves in order to work or visit others.)
### Activity 2: What is a referendum?

In this activity, students will consider the pre-1967 Australian Constitution and its provisions covering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. They will also consider the way that the Constitution can be changed and shaped to reflect contemporary contexts.

Provide students with a copy of **Student Materials 2: What is a referendum?**

In student pairs ask students to read Section 51 and 127 and complete the following questions:

- What does [Section 51](#) say about the powers of the Federal Government to pass laws about “Aboriginal natives”?
- What are the implications of Section 127? (population demographics, census data and how governments at the time may have used census data).
- How might Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of the 1960s have felt about Section 127?
- Why is Section 51 and 127 historically significant?

Discuss with students the meaning and implications of each of the Constitutional provisions covering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Have students complete a flow chart which depicts and annotates the steps in passing a referendum in their notebooks.

Conduct a class referendum on a proposition that requires a ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ answer. Allocate students to a particular State/Territory (allocations of students should vary to reflect the different populations in States and Territories). Have students vote as individuals. Show students what a double majority means by counting:

- the class vote as a whole (representing all of Australia)
- the votes of each State (note that the Territories only count in the national vote).

Complete a Claim/Support/Question on why those who wrote the Constitution made it so difficult to change it and the implications on constitutional change in the past and the future.
# Learning Activities

## Activity 3: The petitions

In this activity, students consider the role of petitions and the ways they were used in the 1967 Referendum campaign. Provide students with copies of **Student Materials 3: The petitions**.

Have students in groups or pairs examine the two sources in detail and discuss the following questions:

- Identify who the petition is from and who it was sent to.
- Why are names and addresses needed on a petition?
- Why does the petition use expressions like “Your petitioners humbly pray”?
- List the reasons for the petition.
- What are the petitioners requesting?
- What simple message did Pastor Doug Nicholls convey?
- Using source 3.2 explain the methods used to encourage people to sign the petition.
- Why was it Pastor Doug Nicholls’ job ‘to lead ‘em to the table’ and Alick Jackomos’ job to collect signatures?
- Why do you think the campaigners were so successful in collecting signatures?
- Is Source 3.1 and 3.2 useful in understanding the reasons for a request to change the Constitution?

The petition is a traditional method of making a request to Parliament. If people today wanted to bring the Parliament’s attention to an issue:

- Can a petition still be used?
- What other strategies could they use?
- Why were the petitions significant to the campaign?

Students complete the **Jigsaw technique** task to compile fact-files on the following key individuals: Pastor Doug Nicholls, Stan Davey, Gordon Bryant, Shirley Andrews and Bill Onus.
**Activity 4: The Referendum campaign leaflets**  
In this activity, students evaluate how the media and other outlets may have shaped voter opinion.

Provide students with copies of [Student Materials 4: The Referendum campaign leaflets](#).

1. **Ask students to complete the following, quoting from the leaflets.**
   - The campaign for a YES vote often referred to equal rights. We see this in … The picture … The words …
   - The emphasis on the future is seen in the emphasis on children and young people in the campaign. We see this in …
   - The campaign included the idea that special help might be given to Aborigines because of their special disadvantages. This is shown in the words … in …
   - The 1967 Referendum was affected by the feeling that other countries were judging Australians. This is shown in the words … in …
   - One reason for the Constitutional changes is that the Constitution as it stood did not belong in the modern world. We see this in the words … in …
   - The campaign included the notion that the different rules for Aborigines in different States needed to be replaced. We see this in the words … in …

2. **Discuss how the leaflets may use persuasive language. How may this have influenced people’s votes?**
**Activity 5: Campaign songs and slogans**

In this activity, students examine the persuasive techniques used in the popular campaign to support the Referendum.

Provide students with a copy of [Student Materials 5: Campaign songs and slogans](#). Have students create a table with the headings ‘Persuasive techniques used’ and ‘Possible impacts on readers/listeners’. Have them analyse Sources 5.1 and 5.2, recording their findings in the table.

- Ask students to select which one of the slogans from source 5.3 they think is most effective and explain their reasons why. Keep a tally of the students’ opinions and discuss the distribution of the results.
- How are these songs and slogans useful in understanding the point of view of people living in Australia at the time?

Discussion: Which campaign method (petitions, campaign leaflets or campaign songs and slogan) do you think was most significant in changing people’s views and supporting the referendum?

- Rank them in order of most significant to least.
- Give reasons for the most and least successful campaign method.
- Provide evidence to support your ranking.
**LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

**Activity 6: The Referendum results and aftermath**

In this activity, students analyse the Referendum results and consider what happened afterwards and how the Referendum was later seen.

Distribute **Student Materials 6: The Referendum results and aftermath**.

Have students discuss the following questions based on these sources in small groups:

**Source 6.1**
- What does the overall result tell us about the support for this Referendum?
- What do the State returns suggest about the support in Victoria? Can you suggest any reasons for this?
- Western Australia returned the highest ‘No’ vote. Suggest reasons for this.
- Of the ten electorates with the highest ‘No’ vote, nine were rural. Why might this be so?

**Source 6.2**
- Why might there be such variety in the views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples interviewed in 1997 (30 years after the Referendum)?
- Select one of the views and explain why it is the most accurate when compared to at least one other interpretation.
- Why do you think these views may or may not have changed?

**Interpreting the results**

Have students discuss the following interpretations which have been given of the results of the Referendum:

1. *It was a vote to better conditions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.*
2. *People voted for assimilation and equality.*
3. *Most people were confused about the Constitutional change but wanted Aborigines to be treated more fairly.*

Which of the above explanations seems most accurate? On what basis did you make this judgment? What other evidence might you need? What could be another interpretation?

Discuss the myths of the 1967 referendum.

- The referendum gave Aboriginal people citizenship rights and the right to vote.

**TEACHING NOTES**

The following resource is a useful summary of the myths.

ABC News, The three biggest myths of the 1967 referendum, 26 May 2017
### LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- The 1967 referendum changed the lives of Indigenous people.
- The Federal Government would use the races power benevolently.

Revisit all historical sources used in activities 1-6 and select two sources that are most reliable and two sources least reliable in understanding how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples secured and achieved civil rights and freedoms in Australia.

Students are to complete a 3-2-1 Bridge by revisiting their initial thoughts in the Activity 1 Warm-up.
Activity 7: Assessment Task: 1967 Referendum Historical Inquiry

For the remaining class time of this unit, students complete a historical inquiry that allows them to delve deeper into an element of the 1967 Referendum that interests them.

Distribute and explain the Assessment Task: 1967 Referendum Historical Inquiry Template. This task may be completed in pairs or individually.

Step 1 Define
- Students may select one of the suggested events/person listed or may choose another topic that is relevant to the 1967 Referendum.
- Students design five inquiry questions on how the event/person contributed to the success of 1967 Referendum.
- Students complete an initial brainstorm on the event/person.
- Students identify information and evidence they may need to locate sources of evidence to investigate their inquiry questions.

Step 2 Information gathering strategies
- Students list ways types of sources and evidence they intend to gather and where these sources of evidence may be located.
- Ask students to reflect on their inquiry questions and think of the types of evidence they may require to investigate each question.

Step 3 Locating
- Students locate a range of sources of evidence including books, journals, posters, digital, maps, cartoons etc.
- Students complete the two tables recording the sources of evidence gathered.
- Students make some initial summary notes and observations on the selected sources of evidence.

Assessment Task: 1967 Referendum Historical Inquiry
Student Materials 1: Indigenous rights - 1950s

Source 1.1: Five Basic Principles

The Victorian Aborigines Advancement League was founded in 1957 and built on the work of previous organisations. In 1958, the League united with other State-based groups to form the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement (FCAA). Five basic principles united the member organisations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIVE BASIC PRINCIPLES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principle 1 - Equal citizenship rights with other Australians for Aborigines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principle 2 - All Aborigines to have a standard of living adequate for health and well-being, including food, clothing and medical care not less than for other Australians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principle 3 - All Aborigines to receive equal pay for equal work and the same industrial protection as other Australians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principle 4 - Education for detribalised Aborigines to be free and compulsory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principle 5 - The absolute retention of all remaining reserves, with native communal or individual ownership.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This was published in *Smoke Signals*, the magazine of the Victorian Aboriginal Advancement League (VAAL).

Source 1.2: Aboriginal rights in the 1950s and 1960s

Before the 1967 Referendum, definitions of “Aboriginality”, and laws and regulations relating to “Aborigines”, varied from State to State.

The following table summarises the rights enjoyed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on settlements and reserves in five States and the Northern Territory.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>WA</th>
<th>NT</th>
<th>QLD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vote (State)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marry freely</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control own children</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move freely</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own property freely</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receive award wages</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drink alcohol</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source 1.3: Living conditions

‘END DISCRIMINATION – VOTE ‘YES’ ON MAY 27’

This was the front cover of the special Referendum issue of Smoke Signals, the journal of the Aboriginal Advancement League.

Source 1.4: Rules at Lake Tyers

Every [A]borigine on a reserve shall obey the instructions of the manager of such reserve...No person shall on a reserve: use profane, indecent or abusive language...harbour any person whose admission to the reserve is not permitted or approved...gamble or bet... [or] be under the influence of any intoxicant not bona fide administered to him as a medicine by a fully qualified medical practitioner (or his authorised agent)...

(1957 Aborigines Act, cited in Victims or Victors? page 29)
Source 1.5: Grazing and Pastoral Industry Wages 1964

Comparison of wages paid under the Station Hands Award and the Aboriginals’ Preservation and Protection Acts (Queensland).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Award Wage</th>
<th>Aboriginal wage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Station Hand</td>
<td>£ 15/17/6</td>
<td>£8/5/0 (from 18 – 45 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>£7/10/0 (over 45 ‘if active’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>£5/10/0 (over 45 ‘not active’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drover</td>
<td>£18/3/4</td>
<td>£10/0/0 (from 18 – 45 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>£5/7/6 (over 45 ‘not active’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worker under 18 years</td>
<td>£8/14/3</td>
<td>£5/0/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worker 20 – 21 years</td>
<td>£13/9/11</td>
<td>£6/0/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Cook</td>
<td>£15/7/6</td>
<td>£8/10/0 (if cooking for Europeans)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>£7/7/6 (if cooking for Aborigines)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Cook</td>
<td>£12/2/6</td>
<td>£7/7/6 (if cooking for Europeans)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>£5/12/6 (if cooking for Aborigines)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic servant under 19 years</td>
<td>£6/12/7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic servant over 19 years</td>
<td>£11/15/9</td>
<td>£4/15/0 (over 18 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Leave</td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
<td>One week</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from A. McDonald, Discrimination against Aborigines in the Grazing and Pastoral Industries, Smoke Signals, Volume 3, Number 4, December 1964)

Source 1.6: Timeline

1901  The Commonwealth Constitution excludes the Commonwealth Government from Aboriginal affairs (Section 51) and from counting “Aborigines” in the census (Section 127).

1902  The Commonwealth Franchise Act passed by the new Commonwealth Government takes away the right to vote for most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

1911  The Commonwealth Government takes control of the Northern Territory, so becoming involved in Aboriginal people’s affairs.

1912  Maternity allowances are introduced.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>War pensions are introduced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>First national native welfare conference agrees on assimilation policy. Aborigines’ Progressive Association formed in NSW and, led by Bill Ferguson and Jack Patten, fights for citizenship rights for Aboriginal people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Day of Mourning (marking 150 years of European settlement). Aboriginal people’s deputation to Prime Minister Lyons presents a ‘Long Range Policy for Aborigines’ which includes a Department of Aboriginal Affairs aimed at granting all Aborigines full citizenship status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>Child endowment is introduced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>‘Powers’ Referendum (concerned with granting the Commonwealth Government additional powers for implementing its post-war reconstruction program, including the power to legislate for Aboriginal people) is overwhelmingly rejected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>United Nations Declaration of Human Rights is proclaimed. Australia is one of the first signatories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Nationality and Citizenship Act formally defines the term ‘Australian citizenship’. Commonwealth Electoral Act extends voting rights to those Aboriginal people who had been, or continued to be, members of the Defence Forces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Second Aboriginal Conference confirms assimilation policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginals (FCAA) is established (later changed to FCAATSI to include Torres Strait Islanders).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Aboriginal people become eligible for pensions and maternity allowances if not ‘nomadic or primitive’, but group payments are often made to reserves and missions instead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Senate Select Committee on Aboriginal Voting Rights established. It investigates and recommends a full extension of voting rights to Aboriginal people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Commonwealth franchise extended to all Aboriginal people but voting not compulsory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>A protest is conducted over mining leases on Yirrkala Aboriginal reserve land. Bark petition is presented to the Prime Minister.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Freedom Rides though NSW country towns. Bill to change the Constitution by referendum is introduced in the House of Representatives.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Task: Source Analysis Table**

Using 3 of the sources above complete the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Number</th>
<th>Source No:</th>
<th>Source No:</th>
<th>Source No:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type</strong></td>
<td>What type of source is it?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Origin</strong></td>
<td>Who created the source? When was the source created? Where was the source created?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>Identify and describe the features/quote the source.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context</strong></td>
<td>What was happening at the time the source was created?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source Number</td>
<td>Source No:</td>
<td>Source No:</td>
<td>Source No:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Purpose**   | *Why was it made?*  
                | *What was the author's intent?*  
                | *Who was the intended audience?*  |
| **Reliability** | *How does the reader know the source is reliable?*  
                      | *Is the source accurate? Why?*  |
| **Usefulness** | *Is the source useful? How?*  |          |          |
A referendum is a national vote to change the Australian Constitution.

The Australian Constitution was drawn up at Federation. It is a written document adopted at Federation that outlines the structure and powers of the Federal Government. The basis of Australian governance since 1901, it can only be amended through referendums.

The pre-1967 Australian Constitution contained two references to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The pre-1967 Australian Constitution contained two references to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section 51 (xxvi) stated that:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘The Parliament shall, subject to the Constitution, have power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of the Commonwealth with respect to the people of any race other than the aboriginal race in any State, for whom it is deemed necessary to make special laws.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 127 held that:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘In reckoning the numbers of the people of the Commonwealth, or of a State or other part of the Commonwealth, aboriginal natives shall not be counted.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section 128 of the Constitution outlines the procedures which must take place to make a change in the Constitution.

A bill proposing a change to the Constitution must be passed by both the House of Representatives and the Senate, and a referendum of Australian voters must be conducted. The Constitution can only be changed if the referendum achieves a double majority vote.

A double majority means that any proposed change to the Australian Constitution must be approved by:

- A majority of votes in Australia as a whole; and
- A majority of voters in a majority of States.

Electors show they agree with the proposed change by writing ‘Yes’ in the appropriate square on the ballot paper.
Student Materials 3: The petitions

The Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines (FCAA) and other organisations felt that conditions for Aborigines would only be improved if the Federal government took control of Aboriginal affairs. This required a change to the Constitution through a referendum. To encourage the support of Federal Parliament, they organised a petition campaign. The campaigners collected over 100 000 signatures which were presented to the parliament in 94 separate petitions.

While many were prominent in the campaign in Victoria, those most prominent included Pastor Doug Nicholls, Stan Davey, Gordon Bryant, Shirley Andrews and Bill Onus. Douglas Nicholls was a prominent Victorian. He was a Church of Christ Minster and one of the founders of the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League. He was respected for his considerable activities on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples Australia-wide, and was also admired for his sporting prowess. He ran, boxed professionally and played football for Fitzroy for four seasons. This aided in his work in collecting signatures for the referendum petitions as outlined below.

Source 3.1: National Petition
Source 3.2

Alick Jackomos, the FCAA state secretary for Victoria recalled his efforts to collect signatures for petitions:

_We were given petitions and it was our job to get names on 'em. And Doug [Nicholls] and I - I was employed by the Advancement League then as a field officer. And we used to go up to Smith Street, Collingwood with a little card table outside of old Foy and Gibson's. It's not there anymore. And Doug'd be yelling out 'give Aboriginals citizenship rights!' And he'd be dragging people. And Doug was like chewing gum to anyone because if he put his hand on them they'd come right to the table, you know? He could mesmerise them, Doug and get them there. And it was Doug's job to lead 'em to the table, and there's me sitting at the table getting people to sign. But we signed those petitions there but we also had a good spot outside the Collingwood football ground on home matches - outside the Collingwood members' stand. Now Collingwood supporters are black and white one-eyed. Normally they'd just rush into the grandstand to get their seat. But this particular day Doug Nicholls, again as they were walking in - and everybody knew Doug. I mean Doug was a household name. He was better known than Henry Bolte who was the Premier at the time. Soon as they see Doug, they couldn't resist Doug. So he leads 'em to the table and we'd get these petitions. And we got a lot of petitions signed and so did all the other workers in Victoria._


It was Prime Minister Harold Holt who finally agreed to hold a referendum. When holding a referendum, the Parliament first prepares an official 'Yes' case by those in favour of the proposal, and an official 'No' case by those opposed to the proposal. Such was the unanimity in Parliament by 1967, all political parties agreed to the proposal, so there was no official 'No' case prepared.

As well as the official 'Yes' case, many leaflets were produced and letter-boxed by a range of organisations.
Student materials 4: 1967 Referendum campaign leaflets

Source 4.1: The ‘Yes’ case

1967 Referendum: The Official ‘Yes’ Case

Constitution Alteration (Aboriginals) 1967
Argument in favour of the proposed law
The Case for YES
The purposes of these amendments to the Commonwealth Constitution are to remove any ground for the belief that, as at present worded, the Constitution discriminates in some ways against people of the Aboriginal race, and, at the same time, to make it possible for the Commonwealth Parliament to make special laws for the people of the Aboriginal race, wherever they may live, if the Commonwealth Parliament considers this desirable or necessary.
To achieve this purpose, we propose that two provisions of the Constitution be altered which make explicit references to people of the Aboriginal race …

[On Section 51] The proposed alteration of this section will do two things. First, it will remove words from our Constitution that many people think are discriminatory against the Aboriginal people.

Second, it will make it possible for the Commonwealth Parliament to make special laws for the people of the Aboriginal race, wherever they may live, if the Parliament considers it necessary …

[On Section 127] Our personal sense of justice, our common-sense, and our international reputation in a world in which racial issues are being highlighted every day, require that we get rid of this outmoded provision.

Its modern absurdity is made clear when we point out that for some years now Aboriginals have been entitled to enrol for, and vote at, Federal Elections. Yet Section 127 prevents them from being reckoned as ‘people’ for the purpose of calculating our population, even for electoral purposes!

The simple truth is that Section 127 is completely out of harmony with our national attitudes and modern thinking. It has no place in our Constitution in this age.

All political parties represented in the Commonwealth Parliament support these proposals.

(From Australian Electoral Commission, Australian Referendums 1906-1999, CD-ROM)

Source 4.2: Vote ‘Yes’ for Aborigines

Leaflet authorised by Kath Walker, secretary of FCAA and the Queensland Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (QCAATI).
Vote ‘YES’ for Aborigines

On May 27, a Referendum will be held at which all enrolled voters in the six States of Australia must answer “YES” or “NO” to each of two questions.

These questions are:

"Do you approve the proposed law for the alteration of the Constitution entitled 'An Act to alter the Constitution so that the number of Members of the House of Representatives may be increased without necessarily increasing the number of Senators'," and

"Do you approve the proposed law for the alteration of the Constitution so as to omit the words relating to the people of the Aboriginal Race in any State and so that Aborigines are to be counted in reckoning the population?"

The questions will be in the above order and must be answered separately by writing in "YES" or "NO" in the appropriate boxes. An informal vote on one question will not invalidate a formal vote on the other.

Unanimously Approved

The proposed Act on Aborigines would amend Section 51 of the Constitution and repeal Section 127. This has been approved unanimously by both Houses of the Commonwealth Parliament.

Section 127 reads: "In reckoning the numbers of the people in the Commonwealth, or of a State or other part of the Commonwealth, Aboriginal natives shall not be counted."

This section was originally included in the Constitution for two reasons. Fifty or seventy years ago, there was genuine difficulty in counting Aborigines because many were nomadic. This is not the case today. Also, Aborigines were at that time not considered worthy of a vote. Today they are entitled to vote in all States and Territories of the Commonwealth, and therefore ought to be counted in the census which determines the size of the electorates. All Parties are agreed on the desirability of repealing this Section of the Constitution.

P.T.O.
Section 51 reads: “The Parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of the Commonwealth with respect to (xvi): the people of any race OTHER THAN THE ABORIGINAL RACE in any State, for whom it is deemed necessary to make special laws.”

It is proposed to delete the words, “other than the Aboriginal race in any State.” This will enable the Commonwealth to make special laws in relation to Aborigines anywhere in Australia.

Would Help States

This need not conflict in any way with State powers. Rather, it should result in the Commonwealth helping the States—for instance, with financial assistance for Aboriginal housing, vocational training, etc. This would particularly benefit Western Australia and Queensland, which have large Aboriginal populations.

In view of the special disadvantages of lack of capital, education and “know-how” suffered by the Aborigines, there is a strong argument for special Commonwealth legislation to enable Aborigines to overcome their disadvantages.

This principle is widely applied to other classes of peoples, for instance, ex-servicemen under the Repatriation Act.

World opinion holds Australians collectively responsible for the treatment and conditions of the Aboriginal people. Proper race relations is a national and international issue which therefore ought to be dealt with by Australia at a national level as well as at the State and local levels. At present there are six different Aboriginal administrations with six different policies.

Aborigines are a national responsibility. We must see to it that the National Parliament is able to accept that responsibility. We can make this possible by voting “YES” for Aborigines on May 27.

Authorised by Hon. Keith Walker, QM, Secretary, Federal Council for Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAA) and Secretary, Qld Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Islanders (QCAATI).

Address: P.O. Box 215, North Brisbane, Queensland.
Student materials 5: Campaigns songs and slogans

The campaigners used newspapers, radio and television to persuade voters of the need for change. The following songs and slogans were used in the campaign for a ‘Yes’ vote at the 1967 Referendum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source 5.1 ‘Vote Yes’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This song was a version of a folk song written by Gary Shearston and based on a poem by the Aboriginal poet and leader Kath Walker, later known as Oodgeroo Noonuccul.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We are going  
We are going  
We are going  
To Freedom  
We are going  
We are going  
We are going  
To Freedom  
Equal Rights  
Equal Rights  
Together Unite  
For Freedom  
Children run  
Children run  
The time has come  
For Freedom  
We are going  
We are going  
We are going  
To Freedom  
We are going  
We are going  
We are going  
To Freedom  
27th of May  
Each one say  
YES YES YES  
For Freedom  
We need your vote  
We want your vote  
Vote YES YES YES  
For Freedom  
We are going  
We are going  
We are going  
To Freedom  
We are going  
We are going  
We are going  
We are going to freedom

(From FCAATSI Papers. MS 2999, box Y604)

(Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus: *The 1967 Referendum, or When Aborigines Didn’t get the Vote*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1997, page 43.)
### Source 5.2: 1967 Referendum song

Vote "Yes" for Aborigines’
‘Vote "Yes" for Aborigines, they want to be Australians too
Vote “Yes" to give them rights and freedoms just like me and you
Vote “Yes" for Aborigines, all parties say they think you should
Vote “Yes” and show the world the true Australian brotherhood.’

(Peter Best song released to radio stations throughout Australia, Sydney Morning Herald, 19/5/1967.)

(Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus: The 1967 Referendum, or When Aborigines Didn’t get the Vote, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1997, page 42.)

### Source 5.3: Slogans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slogan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Justice … end discrimination now’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Count us together: make us one people’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Right Wrongs Write YES for Aborigines on May 27th’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Don’t just count us: let us count’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Vote “Yes” for Aboriginal Citizenship rights’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘If to Aborigines you would be fair, put “Yes” in the bottom square’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Two sections discriminate: end the two’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Aborigines a national question’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(From a range of sources but several from Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus: The 1967 1967 Referendum, or When Aborigines Didn’t get the Vote, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1997, page 34.)
Student materials 6: The results and aftermath

Even while they were celebrating the results, the campaigners pushed for further action. They knew this was only part of a very long process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Result</th>
<th>Enrolled</th>
<th>Yes Votes</th>
<th>Yes %</th>
<th>No Votes</th>
<th>No %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2315828</td>
<td>1949036</td>
<td>91.46</td>
<td>182010</td>
<td>8.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1734476</td>
<td>1525026</td>
<td>94.68</td>
<td>85611</td>
<td>5.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>904808</td>
<td>748612</td>
<td>89.21</td>
<td>90587</td>
<td>10.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>437609</td>
<td>319823</td>
<td>80.95</td>
<td>75282</td>
<td>19.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>590275</td>
<td>473440</td>
<td>86.26</td>
<td>75383</td>
<td>13.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>199589</td>
<td>167176</td>
<td>90.21</td>
<td>18134</td>
<td>9.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6182585</td>
<td>5183113</td>
<td>90.77</td>
<td>527007</td>
<td>9.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Australian Referendums 1906-1999, Australian Electoral Commission.)

Source 6.2 Looking Back

The 1967 Referendum has been seen in many ways. Today we celebrate the strong community goodwill for Indigenous Australians that was first demonstrated in 1967. The annual Closing the Gap report provides a reminder on how much of that goodwill still needs to be translated into real change.

Chicka Dixon (39 years old in 1967)

‘The 1967 Referendum ended seven years of frustration of trying to force the Feds into changing the Federal Constitution, and with it ended one campaign for justice for Koories.’

Burnum Burnum (31 years old in 1967)

‘I participated in the ten-year campaign … When it finally did happen, we thought it was about time … The 1967 Referendum also ushered in basic anti-discrimination and human rights laws, as well as heralding the land rights era. It was a definite turning point in modern Australian political history and the conscience of the nation was expressed by the people.’

‘At the time, I definitely thought the 1967 Referendum had achieved something – personally, it made me lose my inferiority complex.’

John Maynard (13 years old in 1967)

‘At the time, the Referendum made no apparent difference to my life; however, in light of where I am today, I feel, as with most Aboriginal people, the ’67 Referendum was a very significant point. I also now believe that the Referendum meant that the volume and numbers of Aboriginal voices was beginning to unite, grow louder and begin to be heard by mainstream Australian society.’

Leisha May Evatts (27 years old in 1967)

‘It did make some difference to my life: we were allowed to go some places that we never went before, such as pictures, swimming pools, and have a glass of soft drink in shops. But basically we were still looked down upon. Racial prejudice was and still is very strong. Kellerberrin Shire [WA] took the toilet sign down that said “Native Women Only”. And next to it a toilet that said “Ladies Only”. I didn’t know I could vote in the Referendum and believed that it had to pass for us to vote. But I started to vote after the 1967 Referendum. I believed that we were nothing before that [the 1967 Referendum]; we did not have a vote or a say in anything – we were a none people.’
6.3 The results and aftermath

Elizabeth Hoffman (adult in 1967)

‘The ’67 Referendum didn’t really affect everyday life – you still now have to fight for things. We had to fight for anything we ever got and are still doing it.’

Greg Norria (14 years old in 1967)

‘I don’t really remember anything about the Referendum … Equality is still a long way off … It seems that the Referendum was like only the opening of one door and there are still many other doors to open.’

Dr Gordon Briscoe (29 years old in 1967)

‘At the time, the welfare structure did not extend to those who weren’t classified as Aborigines within the States: Aborigines were those who lived on missions and it didn’t include “half-castes”, “quarter-castes” etc. The focus of FCAATSI’s campaign were those Aborigines.’

Stephen R. Seiver (21 years old in 1967)

‘I was working and supporting my brothers and sisters at the time of the Referendum. I believed it meant citizenship rights and the end of “dog tags” and rules made just for Aboriginal people.’

Bill Humes (22 years old in 1967)

‘It was a great morale booster for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people around the country. The Referendum was also part of a world-wide awakening on civil rights, and as such Aboriginal people were becoming aware of their own worth and place in Australian society. For me, it reinforced my political struggles and those of people I knew … Many of the gains such as community organisations, education assistance, followed on from this. Other events such as street marches, protest and the Tent Embassy followed….’

Choose one of the following topics to conduct a historical inquiry.

You may also choose to inquire about another event or person that contributed to the 1967 Referendum. You should discuss this with your teacher.

- Freedom Rides
- Charles Perkins
- Faith Bandler
- Vincent Lingiari
- 1966 The Gurindji strike or Wave Hill walk-off
- Victorian Aborigines Advancement league
- Bruce McGuinness
- The role of petitions and the media.

Step 1- Define

Design and list five inquiry questions on the contribution of the person/event to the success of the 1967 Referendum:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

- Brainstorm any initial information or ideas on the person/event.
- What evidence may you need to locate?

Step 2- Information gathering strategies

With a partner brainstorm:
- types of sources you may use
- evidence you need to provide to address inquiry questions
- where you may locate your sources of evidence.
**Step 3- Locating**

Locate and identify three physical sources (books, journals, newspapers) that provide evidence for your inquiry questions.

Complete the following table:

**Physical or Hardcopy Resources**
(Books, Journals, Posters, Maps)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date Accessed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
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<td>P2</td>
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<tr>
<td>P3</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Take some initial notes from these resources (i.e., in your own words)
Locate and identify three digital sources (web sites, online videos) that provide evidence for your inquiry questions.

Complete the following table:

**Digital Sources**
(web sites, online videos)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Web Address URL</th>
<th>Title of resource</th>
<th>Author/Publisher</th>
<th>Date Accessed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D1</td>
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<tr>
<td>D3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Take some initial notes from these resources (in your own words)
Step 4- Organising and processing sources of evidence

Turn your information into a good set of notes that will make the writing process quicker and easier.

Using your notes about the event/person with the resources you have accessed, relate them back to your five inquiry questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inquiry Questions</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Find information within sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Eg. P1, D2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Step 5- Presenting

Choose an appropriate presentation method to communicate your findings, such as; essay, video, oral presentation, or Annotated Visual Display (AVD).

Make sure you address all inquiry questions.

The work should be appropriately referenced with an academically acceptable bibliography submitted.

Step 6- Evaluation

Why was my chosen inquiry historically significant?

Use the following question to help you evaluate your inquiry process:

- Did I learn anything new from the inquiry process?
- How could I improve my historical inquiry?
- Which source of evidence was most helpful? Reliable? Useful? Why?
- Which source of evidence was least helpful? Reliable? Useful? Why?
- Why is it important to follow a research process when completing a historical inquiry?
**Level 9-10 Rights and Freedoms**

**TASK:** 1967 Referendum Historical Inquiry

The following is designed as a tool to develop a rubric for assessment of learning. Teachers may choose to add descriptions of student learning as indicators of progress as students work towards ‘Level 9 and 10 Achievement Standard.’ Teachers may also opt to allot a numerical score to each level or achievement description. Teacher may use this to assess individual students or ask groups to self-assess.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Descriptions</th>
<th>Achievement Standards</th>
<th>Achievement Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analyse and corroborate sources and evaluate their accuracy, usefulness and reliability.</td>
<td>Develop a description of what a student would be expected to do/demonstrate as they move from one achievement standard to the next.</td>
<td>(extract only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyse the different perspectives of people in the past and evaluate how these perspectives are influenced by significant events, ideas, location, beliefs and values.</td>
<td>Explain the context for people’s actions in the past.</td>
<td>Identify the motives and actions of people at the time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate different historical interpretations and contested debates.</td>
<td>Evaluate the significance of events and analyse the developments from a range of perspectives.</td>
<td>Evaluate the significance of individuals and groups and how they were influenced by the beliefs and values of their society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify and evaluate patterns of continuity and change in the development of the modern world and Australia.</td>
<td>Evaluate the different interpretations of the past and recognise the evidence used to support these interpretations.</td>
<td>Evaluate different interpretations of the past.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate the historical significance of an event, idea, individual or place.</td>
<td>Analyse the different perspectives of people in the past using sources.</td>
<td>Analyse the different perspectives of people in the past using sources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the following events in changing society: 1962 right to vote federally, 1967 Referendum… and the different perspectives of these events.</td>
<td>Construct and communicate an argument about the past using a range of reliable sources of evidence.</td>
<td>Construct an explanation using sources of evidence to support the analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effects of methods used by civil rights activists to achieve change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the role of one individual or group in the struggle.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity and change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in securing and achieving civil rights and freedoms in Australia.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Background reading on the 1967 Referendum

What is the significance of the 1967 Referendum?

On May 27, 1967, Australians voted overwhelmingly to change the Australian Constitution. Provisions which prevented the Federal Government from making laws for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and excluded Aboriginal peoples from being counted in the census were removed from the Constitution.

The ‘Yes’ vote of 90.77% remains a record in the history of Australian referendums. Of the 44 Constitutional proposals put to a vote since Federation, only eight have been passed, and none with such an overwhelming majority.

The 1967 Referendum is extremely significant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It represented the end of official discrimination and the promise of full and equal citizenship. The overwhelming ‘Yes’ vote also signalled that white Australians were ready to embrace social and political reform, and expected the Federal Government to take the lead.

What did the Australian Constitution say about Aboriginal people?

The Australian Constitution was part of an Act passed by the British Government in 1900 to create a Federation of States: Australia. Until that time, the continent consisted of six separate colonies. These colonies became the States in the new nation.

The Constitution outlines the structure and powers of the Federal Parliament, the Executive Government and the Judiciary.

The Constitution contained two provisions that mentioned Aboriginal people. Sections 51 (xxvi) and 127:

51. The Parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have power to make laws for the peace, order, and good government of the Commonwealth with respect to: (xxvi.) The people of any race, other than the aboriginal people in any State, for whom it is deemed necessary to make special laws.

127. In reckoning the numbers of the people of the Commonwealth, or of a State or other part of the Commonwealth, aboriginal natives shall not be counted.

As historian John Hirst explains, these provisions reflected attitudes to Aborigines at the time of Federation, when Australia thought of itself as a white society. Section 51 meant that the Commonwealth (as opposed to the States) had no power to make laws for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Section 127 excluded Aboriginal peoples from being counted in the census. Since each State’s population determined how many seats it would hold in the new Parliament, it was felt that counting Aboriginal people might distort the numbers. There was also a belief that Aboriginal people were dying out and incapable of voting. To Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, this meant that their citizenship status was equivalent to ‘flora and fauna’.
In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the civil liberties of Aboriginal people were increasingly undermined.

This was when the idea of breeding out the Aboriginal blood and keeping Aborigines separate from the rest of society took hold. Under State law, Aborigines could be told where they were to live; they had to seek permission to marry; and their children could be taken away from them. The managers of Aboriginal reserves became like mini-dictators.


The Commonwealth Franchise Act passed in 1902 specifically excluded Aborigines from the vote unless they had been on the electoral roll before 1901. Indigenous Australians were also denied social security benefits (such as aged pensions and maternity allowances) that were provided to other Australians by the Commonwealth Government.

**What is a referendum?**

In Section 128, the Australian Constitution sets out the procedures for amending the words of the Constitution. The process requires that a Bill proposing an alteration must be passed by the Commonwealth Parliament and a referendum (vote) of Australian voters must be conducted. The Constitution can only be changed in the event of a ‘double majority’ vote.

A ‘double majority’ means that the proposed change must be approved by:

- A majority of votes in Australia as a whole, AND
- A majority of voters in a majority of States (at least 4 of the 6 States).

Electors show they agree with the proposed change by writing ‘Yes’ in the appropriate square on the ballot paper.

The Constitutional requirements for successful referendums are difficult to achieve and this difficulty makes the success of the 1967 Referendum even more remarkable.

**What rights did Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have in the 1950s and 1960s?**

By the 1950s, the policy of Governments in Australia towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples was assimilation (also commonly known as the White Australia policy). ‘Assimilation’ refers to the process by which Aboriginal people were to be absorbed into the culture and norms of Australian society, leaving behind their own culture and traditions. Assimilation policies regarding Aboriginal people were formally endorsed by all State Governments from the 1930s to the 1960s.

Assimilation policy was firmly rejected by Aboriginal organisations who pointed out the paradox of expecting Aboriginal people to become like the rest of the Australian community and at the same time imposing regulations about wages, living conditions and access to social security benefits which meant that Aboriginal people could never live like other Australians. Writing in *Smoke Signals*, the journal of the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League, Shirley Andrews explains this paradox:
A great deal of pompous nonsense is talked about the Aborigines being encouraged to “improve” his way of life until he will become completely acceptable to the rest of the community, but at the same time, wage discrimination against Aborigines is continued so that a large section of Aboriginal workers do not receive sufficient wages to maintain anything but a very sub-standard of living.


Even through assimilation was ‘official’ policy, there were many barriers between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Many Aboriginal people were still legally wards of the State, like children who needed care. Many were still on reserves and missions, their lives at every level controlled by those in charge. Aborigines in rural areas were often discriminated against as to where and how they could marry, work, live and mix with others, and their movements were restricted. Although Aboriginal activists had struggled for citizenship rights in the 1930s and 1940s, and there had been some changes, Aboriginal people generally were still not able to exercise political rights. These included voting (this varied in each state), civil rights like freedom of movement, or social rights to education and a decent standard of living.

However, times were changing. In 1948, the newly formed United Nations adopted the Declaration of Human Rights. Written in the wake of Nazism, the document condemned racism and outlined rights that all citizens should have. Australia was one of the first signatories to the Declaration and yet Indigenous Australians were still denied many of these rights. In 1938, Aboriginal civil rights activist William Cooper led a delegation from the Australian Aboriginal League to the German Consulate in Melbourne to submit a petition to the German Consulate in Melbourne. The petition condemned the Nazi’s for their actions of the 6th December 1938 ‘Kristallnacht’. In the 1950s and 1960s, civil rights movements were beginning to occur overseas and Australia’s treatment of Aboriginal people was beginning to be noticed internationally.

Some changes also occurred in Australia. From 1949, the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1949 confirmed that all those who could vote in their states could vote in federal elections. This gave the right to vote to Aboriginal people in all states except Queensland and Western Australia. Also, those who had served in the military were expressly entitled to vote. In 1960, some social benefits (like pensions and maternity allowances) had been extended to include Aboriginal people. However, such changes were not promoted by the States and payments were often made indirectly to missions and reserves, as officials argued that Aboriginal people were not yet ready to manage their own affairs. In 1962, the Federal Government amended legislation to enable Aboriginal Australians to enrol to vote in federal elections. However, voting was not made compulsory and there was little effort to inform or educate Aborigines, so many remained unaware of the change. In 1965, Queensland became the last state to remove restrictions on Aboriginal voting in state elections. As a consequence, Aboriginal Australians in all states and territories had equal voting rights at all levels of government. By 1967, enrolment numbers were low, even on Government settlements. (Gordon Bryant, ‘The Economic and Political rights of the Australian Aborigine’, Smoke Signals, Vol. 6, No 2, May 1967.)
The role of Aboriginal organisations

The Aborigines Advancement League (AAL)

The forerunner to the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League (VAAL) was the Australian Aborigines League (AAL) founded in 1932 by William Cooper, an ex-resident from Cummeragunja. The AAL was an all-Aboriginal organisation open to Aboriginal people for the price of one shilling per year. Other foundation members included Shadrach James, Kaleb Morgan, Pastor Douglas Nicholls and Eric and William Onus.

In 1932, the AAL prepared what was to have been an Australia-wide petition to be presented to King George V. The petition asked for direct representation in the Commonwealth Parliament in order to give them a real link to political power. On the 26th of October 1937, the petition containing 1814 signatures was forwarded to Prime Minister Lyons, with the request that it go to the King. The petition was never forwarded, the Prime Minister arguing that the Constitution did not give the Commonwealth government authority to pass legislation for Aboriginal people.

The League also engaged in more direct action and in 1935, a deputation headed by William Cooper presented Interior Minister Paterson with a list of demands. These included direct Aboriginal representation in Federal and State parliaments and the establishment of a Federal Department of Native Affairs to co-ordinate the work of the States. This department would eventually produce a unified Aboriginal people’s policy. The deputation had limited success but in 1937, influenced the calling of a conference of Commonwealth and State officers concerned with the protection of Aboriginal people.

The deputation included Pastor Douglas Nicholls who was to become a co-founder of the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League (VAAL) and the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI). Pastor Nicholls, who was born in Cummeragunja in 1906, was an outstanding athlete, a Christian evangelist and a tireless worker for his people. He became the first Aboriginal person to be awarded an MBE, the first Aboriginal knight and the Governor of South Australia. (Victims or Victors?: the Story of the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League, pp.32-33).

In 1937, William Cooper called for an Aboriginal Day of Mourning to coincide with the 150th Anniversary of the landing of the first fleet on January 26, 1938. William Ferguson, the organising secretary of the New South Wales Aborigines Progressive Association pledged his organisation’s assistance. The Day of Mourning, aimed to publicise the plight of Australian Aboriginal people to the Australian people, and put pressure on the Commonwealth and State governments to consult with Aboriginal people in order to formulate unified policies for Aborigines. The following resolution was passed:
We, representing the ABORIGINES OF AUSTRALIA, assembled in Conference ... on the 26th day of January, 1938, this being the 150th Anniversary of the whitemen's seizure of our country, HEREBY MAKE PROTEST against the callous treatment of our people by the whitemen during the past 150 years, AND WE APPEAL to the Australian Nation of today to make new laws for the education and care of Aborigines, and we ask for a new policy which will raise our people to FULL CITIZEN STATUS and EQUALITY WITHIN THE COMMUNITY.

(Leaflet produced by the Aborigines Progressive Association on the Day of Mourning and Protest, 26/1/1938. cited in Discovering Democracy Lower Secondary Units, p.93)

The AAL issues a manifesto which read:

You are the new Australians, but we are the old Australians. You have almost exterminated our people, but there are enough of us remaining to expose the humbug of your claims as white Australians to be a civilized, progressive, kindly and humane nation... We do not wish to be regarded with sentimental sympathy or ‘preserved’ like the koala bear as exhibits, but we do ask for your real sympathy and understanding.

(Victims or Victors? p.35).

William Cooper died in 1941 and it was Pastor Douglas Nicholls who continued his legacy. During World War II, he worked for the improvements in living, health and educational standards for Victorian Aborigines. Other prominent campaigners included Alick Jackomos and the families - the Briggs, Coopers, Atkinsons, Morgans, Clarks, James and Onus.

As an Australian Rules footballer, Nicholls travelled to Western Australian where he saw first-hand the poverty, malnutrition and disease among that State's Aboriginal people. In 1946, he protested against the impact of the proposed rocket range and the impact it would have on Aborigines in the Warburton Ranges in Western Australia. Concerned citizens formed a Rocket Range Protest Committee which included Doris Blackburn later to become a founding member of the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League and Dr Charles Duguid who became the first president of the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement and of course, Douglas Nicholls.

The rocket range went ahead. The Warburton Ranges Aboriginal people were moved onto a crowded reserve and ten years later the reaction of the public to the poverty, malnutrition and poor living conditions resulted in the setting up of a Select Committee. It was Douglas Nicholls who was invited to inspect the area with representatives of the Western Australian government. The films of their inspection showing graphic images of Aboriginal disease and starvation had a strong impact in Melbourne and led to the development of a formal organisation which would have a strong political and social voice and a sound financial base. This was the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League. Gordon Bryant was the first president, Stan Davey was secretary and Doug Nicholls was field officer. (Victims or Victors? p.31)
The Victorian Aborigines Advancement League (VAAL) and the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement (FCAA)

From its beginning in 1957, the Victorian Aboriginal Advancement League (VAAL) grew rapidly. Within four years there were 28 active branches of the VAAL. The AAL became the all-Aboriginal branch of the VAAL. The VAAL worked on a diverse range of issues both local and national and its journal *Smoke Signals* kept the public informed of issues concerning Aboriginal people all over Australia. It organised a legal campaign to support famous Aboriginal artist Albert Namatjira who was sentenced to prison for providing liquor to an Aboriginal ward of the state. It acted to stop Cummagunja being leased to farmers and instead turned over to its traditional owners. (Cummagunja was technically in NSW but part of tribal territory that extended into Victoria). It provided support and finance for education and housing. It waged a campaign to gain land rights for Lake Tyers Aboriginal people and support for Framlingham. It supported Aboriginal people in dispute with mining companies and strikes for fair wages. (*Victims of Victors?, Chapters 3–5*)

But one of the first important initiatives to come out of the VAAL was the formation in 1958 of the Federal Council of Aboriginal Advancement (FCAA later to become FCAATSI to include Torres Strait Islanders). The objectives of the FCAA were:

- Equal citizenship rights with other Australians for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- All Aborigines to have a standard of living adequate for health and well-being, including food, clothing and medical care not less than for other Australians.
- All Aborigines to receive equal pay for equal work and the same industrial protection as other Australians.
- Education for detribalised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to be free and compulsory.
- The absolute retention of all remaining reserves, with native communal or individual ownership.

(*Victims or Victors?* p.59).

Gordon Bryant founding president of the VAAL came back from the inaugural meeting of the FCAA in Adelaide with a renewed determination to achieve full citizenship rights for Aboriginal people and a national and unified Aboriginal policy. To achieve this, constitutional change to give the Federal government power over Aboriginal affairs was necessary. And so the campaign to hold a referendum began.

Leaders

FCAA and its affiliated organisations included both Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people. While many were active in working for Aboriginal causes in Victoria, those most prominent in this campaign included Pastor Doug Nicholls, Bill Onus, Stan Davey, Marge Tucker, Gordon Bryant, William Cooper, Jack Patton and Shirley Andrews. In other States, Indigenous leaders like Faith Bandler, Kath Walker and Joe McGinness devoted themselves to the campaign. FCAA involved many Aboriginal communities, students, church groups, unions and service clubs in the campaign.
The Petitions

The campaign began with a series of petitions calling for a referendum. This had the effect of informing the public about the issues and mobilising support for a change to the Constitution. The campaigners collected over 100,000 signatures, which were presented to the Parliament in 94 separate petitions.

The 1962 FCAA petition leaflet noted inconsistencies regarding Aboriginal rights to vote, marry freely, control their own children, move freely, own property and receive award wages, as well as the general prohibition of alcohol. It noted that the complications caused when an individual moved interstate were absurd, so federal authority over Aboriginal affairs looked much more efficient. The campaigners also stressed the links between the census, the allocation of funds for basic services and the fixing of electoral boundaries in keeping with their new voting rights.

In September 1963, Prime Minister Robert Menzies met a delegation of Aboriginal representatives from all mainland States. He offered them alcoholic drinks and was reportedly amazed to discover that such an act was illegal. Some delegates thought of this meeting as a turning point, but when the Government prepared the first bill it only referred to Aboriginal people being counted in the census, and reflected the government’s assimilation policies.

The campaigners continued to lobby politicians, who were also influenced by the growing public awareness of Aboriginal disadvantage after the Freedom Rides. In 1965, Charles Perkins led a group of university students on Freedom Rides through NSW country towns. The Freedom Rides showed that racial discrimination existed in communities at every level: segregated seating in cinemas, a lack of access to swimming pools and even being made to wait in a shop until white people were served first. The Freedom Rides received widespread publicity and made Australians better aware of Aboriginal disadvantage.

When Menzies retired in January 1966, Harold Holt announced that the referendum scheduled for May that year would be postponed. In February 1967, the Cabinet broadened the scope of the vote to include a second change relating to the Federal Government being able to make laws for Aboriginal people. The Referendum was set for May 1967.
The 1967 Referendum campaign

The legislation proposing the changes was adopted unanimously in both the House of Representatives and the Senate, so the official ‘Yes’ case was presented by the Government without a ‘No’ case. The ‘Yes’ case stated ‘We have yet to learn of any opposition being voiced … from any quarter.’ There was a general lack of argument about this Referendum, but there were some cautious voices who suggested that the changes would achieve little and that in some future time the ‘special laws’ could be used against Aboriginal people.

As well as the official ‘Yes’ case, many leaflets were produced and letterboxed, and there were many newspaper articles, letters and editorials expressing support for the ‘Yes’ vote. The campaigners used radio and television to persuade voters of their cause. Because it was the first big national campaign, it was very important that it be successful.

In arguing for a ‘Yes’ vote, the campaigners emphasised issues of inequality, the anomalies between States, and Australia’s international reputation. The campaigners also argued that being counted in the census would lead to better funding for Aboriginal people. The campaign also built on the publicity and goodwill generated by the Freedom Rides to encourage national awareness of Aboriginal living conditions and the discrimination they faced. Photographs of lean-to housing with the caption ‘End discrimination – Vote “Yes” on May 27’ in a Victorian Aboriginal Advancement League campaign leaflet illustrated this point.

The campaigners also highlighted the problems of State policies. Implicitly, there was recognition that the States had failed. The campaigners stressed the anomalies existing for individuals who moved from one State to another and were therefore classified differently and subject to different regulations. In 1967, definitions of Aboriginality varied from Victoria’s simple ‘any descendant of an aboriginal native’ to Queensland’s more complex inclusion of ‘person(s) of full-blood’, people with a ‘preponderance’ of Aboriginal blood, ‘part-Aborigine(s)’ living as the spouse of Aborigines, and ‘resident(s) of a reserve who have some Aboriginal blood’.

The Government ‘Yes’ case referred to ‘our international reputation in a world in which racial issues are being highlighted every day’ and the campaigners also frequently referred to Australia’s international image. At times, the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights was cited, and the situation here was likened to that in the United States or even South Africa’s Apartheid policy. Newspapers repeatedly referred to the embarrassment the country would suffer internationally if the Referendum was not passed.
The Result

The Referendum was held on 27 May 1967. To the delight of the campaigners, 90.77% of Australians voted ‘Yes’. This was an amazing achievement and represented a high level of community goodwill towards Aboriginal Australians. However, there were significant variations in voting, with Victoria returning the highest ‘Yes’ vote (94.68%, compared to Western Australia’s 80.95%) and the highest ‘No’ votes being recorded in the rural areas with the largest Aboriginal populations. This suggests that, in day-to-day life, attitudes of discrimination were continuing unchanged.

The Aftermath

Immediately afterwards, those who had worked so hard for Constitutional change pressed for practical change as well. The result created a huge mandate for the Federal Government to act – if it chose to. The Government was slow to act but gradually more money was allocated to Aboriginal affairs and the Council for Aboriginal Affairs was set up. However, the achievement of equal citizenship rights took many more years and the quest for equal social and civil rights is ongoing to this day.

Aboriginal people who had participated in the campaign went on to take stronger positions in their struggle for rights, especially land rights. The skills and confidence gained through the campaign were significant, as was the morale boost from its end result. The 1972 Tent Embassy was made possible because of the campaign.

Since the 1970s, many Australians have hailed the 1967 Referendum as a watershed in the Indigenous struggle. It is celebrated as ‘black and white together’, a model for the reconciliation movement of the 1990s, and a reflection of strong community goodwill. However, the current inequalities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians remind us how much that goodwill still needs to be translated into real change.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Timeline</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1901</strong></td>
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<td><strong>1912</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1914</strong></td>
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<td><strong>1937</strong></td>
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## Timeline

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Day of Mourning (marking 150 years of European settlement). Aboriginal deputation to Prime Minister Lyons presents a ‘Long Range Policy for Aborigines’ which includes a Department of Aboriginal Affairs aimed at granting all Aborigines full citizenship status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>Child endowment is introduced.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>‘Powers’ Referendum (concerned with granting the Commonwealth Government additional powers for implementing its post-war reconstruction program, including the power to legislate for Aborigines) is overwhelmingly rejected.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Unemployment and sickness benefits are introduced.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td><em>United Nations Declaration of Human Rights</em> is proclaimed. Australia is one of the first signatories.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Nationality and Citizenship Act formally defines the term ‘Australian citizenship’. Commonwealth Electoral Act extends voting rights to those Indigenous people who had been, or continued to be members, of the Defence Forces.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Second Aboriginal Conference confirms assimilation policy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>The establishment of the Victorian Aboriginal Advancement League (VAAL).</td>
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<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginals (FCAA) is established (later changed to FCAATSI to include Torres Strait Islanders).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Aboriginal people become eligible for pensions and maternity allowances if not ‘nomadic or primitive’, but group payments are often made to reserves and missions instead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Senate Select Committee on Aboriginal Voting Rights established. It investigates and recommends a full extension of voting rights to Aborigines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Commonwealth franchise extended to all Indigenous Australians but voting not compulsory.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>A protest is conducted over mining leases on Yirrkala Aboriginal reserve land. Bark petition is presented to the Prime Minister.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Freedom Rides though NSW country towns. Bill to change Constitution by Referendum is introduced in the House of Representatives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission grants equal wages to Aboriginal pastoral workers but with a three-year delay. Gurindji strike and walk off Wave Hill cattle station in the Northern Territory, starting start a seven-year fight to obtain title to their land.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Referendum held to change Sections 51 and 127 of the Constitution, and give the Commonwealth Government power to make laws for Aboriginal people and include Aborigines in the national census.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Commonwealth Office of Aboriginal Affairs set up, along with a Council of Aboriginal Affairs comprising Ministers from all States and Territories and the Commonwealth, to recommend policies and coordinate programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
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<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>First Aboriginal legal service is established in Redfern, NSW.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1971 | Neville Bonner becomes the first Aboriginal Member of Parliament.  
Aborigines are included in the census for the first time.  
Northern Territory Supreme Court confirms *terra nullius* doctrine in Yirrkala land case decision.  
Queensland Aborigines no longer able to be forced to live on reserves. |
| 1972 | Prime Minister Billy McMahon rejects the idea of Aboriginal land rights in a speech.  
Tent Embassy established outside Parliament House, Canberra, lasting from January until July.  
Labor Government elected in December and sets up a Department of Aboriginal Affairs under Gordon Bryant. |
| 1975 | Commonwealth Racial Discrimination Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, colour, descent or ethnic origin.  
Aboriginal people in Queensland become able to control their own property. |
| 1992 | Mabo judgement in High Court rejects concept of *terra nullius* and recognise native title. |
| 1993 | Native Title Act introduced. |
| 1997 | National Inquiry completed into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their families (*Bringing Them Home Report*).  
Wik judgement acknowledges the possible existence of Native Title rights on land under pastoral leases. |
| 1998 | Native Title Amendment Act (following the Wik debate). |
| 2000 | On 28 May more than 300,000 take part in the People’s Walk for Reconciliation across the Sydney Harbour Bridge. |
The first member of the Stolen Generations is awarded compensation. |
| 2007 | The Little Children are Sacred report is released.  
The Federal Government announce the Northern Territory intervention. |
| 2008 | On the 13 February the Australian Parliament apologises to the Stolen Generations. |
References


Resources

Digital resources

**Behind The News - Explaining the Constitution and the 1967 Referendum**
*Behind the News explains the Australian Constitution -* [http://www.abc.net.au/btn/story/s3939299.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/btn/story/s3939299.htm)

**National Archives of Australia**

**National Library of Australia**

**National Museum Australia**

**Right Wrongs: 50th Anniversary of the 1967 Referendum**

**Splash ABC, Faith Bandler on Voting Yes in the 1967 referendum**

**Splash ABC, 1967 Referendum**
*A short video explaining the 1967 Referendum with a focus on why the results of the 1967 Referendum have had a lasting symbolic significance. Faith Bandler talks about the significance of the Yes Campaign -* [http://splash.abc.net.au/home#!/media/29241/australia-s-1967-referendum](http://splash.abc.net.au/home#!/media/29241/australia-s-1967-referendum)

**State Library of Victoria**

**AIATSIS ’67 Referendum**
*A useful website that provides primary sources, short biographies on the campaigners and reactions -* [http://aiatsis.gov.au/exhibitions/referendum-australia-had-have](http://aiatsis.gov.au/exhibitions/referendum-australia-had-have)
Vote yes for Aborigines:
A documentary that interrogates the success of the Referendum and addresses current debates about what is meant by Australian citizenship and values and how they relate, if at all, to Aboriginal history, identity and culture -

Books


**Glossary**

**Aboriginality** is the term used in the national movement among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders people in the late 1960s and 1970s to assert Aboriginal identity and highlight and celebrate what is specific to Aboriginal culture.

**Assimilation** refers to the process by which a dominant cultural group absorbs another group which eventually ceases to exist. Assimilation policies regarding Aboriginal people were formally endorsed by all State Governments from the 1930s to the 1960s. The removal of Aboriginal children of mixed descent was part of this process.

**The Australian Constitution** was drawn up at Federation. It is a written document adopted at Federation that outlines the structure and powers of the Federal Government. The basis of Australian governance since 1901, it can only be amended through referendums.

**Civil rights** refer to the shared political, legal and social rights of citizenship that are provided for by Commonwealth and State laws.

**Discrimination based on race** was a focus of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Australia also signed a United Nations convention on the elimination of racial discrimination in 1966.

**Double Majority** means that, any proposed change to the Australian Constitution must be approved by: a majority of votes in Australia as a whole; and a majority of voters in a majority of States.

**FCAA** (later FCAATSI) refers to the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement (1958 – 1973). The first national organisation for Aborigines, it included Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal leaders and a range of affiliated organisations.

**Freedom Rides** refers to the awareness-raising bus rides through rural NSW undertaken by Sydney University students in 1965. Led by Charles Perkins, and inspired by the US Civil Rights Movement, the rides highlighted the inequality in country towns where segregation was practised.

**Integration** was the term preferred by many Aboriginal people to describe their relationship to other Australians in the late 1950s and 1960s. In contrast to assimilation, it implies both Aboriginal peoples choice and the retention of cultural identity.

**Land rights** is an umbrella term covering Aboriginal rights to livelihood, the special relationship Aboriginal people have with the land, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders prior ownership of Australia. It can refer to the land rights based on native title recognised after the Mabo decision in 1992.
**Referendum changes** to the Australian Constitution require a ‘double majority’ – the support of the majority of voters, and of a majority of voters in a majority of States. In 1967, voters from the States, but not from the Northern Territory or the Australian Capital Territory, took part.

**Segregation** refers to the policy of separating Aboriginal people from the general public in missions and reserves. Other forms of segregation especially common in rural communities include the different treatment of Aboriginal people and their exclusion from public facilities.

**Self-determination** is the process by which a distinct people gain control over their lives as a people.

**Sovereignty** is the term for the exclusive rights exercised by a distinct group of people over a particular territory.

**Tent Embassy** usually refers to the Tent Embassy set up to protest about land rights on the lawns of Parliament House, Canberra, on Australia Day 1972.