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Australian History and Society: An Introduction 1788–2000

Section 3:
1901–2000

kultur- und
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Preface

British imperialism with all that it engenders and cataclysmic events like the two wars, had consequences for how Australians are seen by others and how they see themselves. This topic examines the external influence on Australian culture and the implications of this for a secure and prosperous future. In this final section of course we examine a number of historical turning points in the development of modern Australia during the twentieth century. We will look to the internal and external influences on the formation of an Australian culture. In the twentieth century Australian's national vision was shaped by catastrophes such as war and policy change in the area of immigration in the post war era. Furthermore, as Australian society moves towards multiculturalism in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries we will highlight the richness and diversity of Australian culture since federation.

Part 1

1.1 A New Beginning for All?

The new parliament

The first Parliament of the newly created Commonwealth of Australia was opened with due formality and pageantry in the temporary federal capital of Melbourne, on May 9 1901. Public enthusiasm for the event should not, as one historian has reminded us, "be allowed to disguise the fact that it was to the several States which replaced the six colonies, rather than to the superimposed Federal structure, that the rank and file of Australia's four million inhabitants gave their first thought and most of their loyalty, at least until after the outbreak of the Great War."¹ The people, who had been strongly divided on the issue of federation, had still to accept whole-heartedly the new system. The first Commonwealth parliamentarians, Government and Opposition alike, would be obliged to prove themselves and show considerable tact in the handling of the delicate subject of the States' rights.

An interim Government had actually been formed in December 1900, in advance of the elections, to prepare the work of the future parliament. Its leader was Edmund Barton, the New South Wales politician, who had carried on the difficult fight for federation from 1891. Barton, a former Speaker of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly, had won high respect as a politician. The choice of him as first national leader, a post he continued to hold after the election, was generally popular. The election campaign showed which tasks the major political groupings considered most important for the new Parliament to handle. Inevitably, the tariff issue loomed large. This was the matter which, more than any other, had split the colonies and set the lines of political division. Edmund Barton attempted to avoid a head-on clash on the question publicly proposing a compromise tariff as the aim of the first budget. But the leader of the free traders, George Reid, insisted that protectionism in any form was still protectionism and that fiscal policy was the major issue in the election. The Labour Party was itself divided on the question, largely along State lines.

Apart from taking a moderate line on the tariff question, Barton concentrated mainly upon matters relating to the machinery of government, such as the taking over of customs, defence and post offices, the selection of the federal capital site, the introduction of universal suffrage for federal elections, and the setting up of a High Court of Australia. He also promised to apply immigration restrictions to the

¹ A.C. Palfreeman and Rex Mortimer, "1901: Federal Parliament in action," in *Australia's Heritage: the making of a nation*, Paul Hamlyn, (Dee Why, 1971), p. 1465.

entry of non-Europeans, to introduce legislation for the conciliation and arbitration of inter-State industrial disputes, to start the building of a trans-continental railway, and to provide a national system of old-age pensions as soon as the financial situation permitted. George Reid made free trade his rallying cry. He also opposed old-age pensions and other proposals made by Barton, on the grounds of the expense involved.

The poll, held in late March 1901, returned 75 members of the House of Representatives and 36 Senators, and secured for the Commonwealth Parliament a remarkable number of able and politically experienced men. In the House of Representatives alone, no less than 58 had previously served in colonial parliaments, and of these 10 had been premiers and 12 more had held ministerial office. In origin and occupation, they formed a reasonable cross-section of the population at large. As is the case in many political assemblies, lawyers were somewhat over-represented. There were 15 barristers in the House. But there were also pastoralists, miners, manufacturers, journalists, merchants, trade union officials, teachers, a physician and a clergyman. Barton's Ministry reflected the high level of experience in the Parliament. Of the 8 members besides Barton himself, no less than 5 were former colonial premiers. It was indeed, as the newspapers dubbed it, "a team of captains."²

However, while the election results had proved satisfactory in terms of the quality of the nation's representatives, they had not ensured stable and effective government. Three broad groups could be discerned in the new Parliament: the free traders, who commanded 27 votes in the House of Representatives and 17 in the Senate; the protectionists, with 32 and 11 seats respectively; and the Labor Party, with 16 and 8. But the lines were by no means as clearly drawn as their breakdown suggests. Only the Labour Party formed a disciplined and cohesive group. The others were divided by a number of cross-cutting conflicts, some ideological and others concerned with State, regional and sectional interests, which marked conservatives from liberals.

Barton's team was protectionist in policy and predominantly liberal in outlook, although it included some thoroughgoing conservatives. Ranged against it was the redoubtable Reid and his free traders. The Government required the support of Labor to remain in office, and this was given only from day to day, without any formal alliance. Labor, in fact, was intent upon carrying on the tactics which it had used with considerable success in several colonial assemblies - of trading its votes to the party which would best cater for its interests.

The fact that Barton and his successors as Prime Minister, Alfred Deakin, survived the entire term of the first Parliament, in a situation which Deakin was to liken to a cricket match played with three sides, was due to the common political

² *Ibid.*

ground that existed between the liberals and the moderate Labor men who headed that party's parliamentary group. Both groups emerged in response to the problems posed by a society which was growing in size, complexity and diversity. New social currents were discernible, among them a greater sense of Australianess, a strident and often narrow nationalism, restiveness at Imperial control, and a vague recognition of the need to establish relationships with the outside world. The bitter industrial disputes of the nineties had shattered the complacent belief in uninterrupted and harmonious development, and had stimulated the trend toward a concern for social welfare and state regulation. This had been manifested in pre-federation days by a widening of the franchise, increased powers for elected legislative assemblies, the beginnings of social insurance, factory legislation and machinery for arbitrating industrial disputes, and the spread of compulsory secular education.

There were, nonetheless, differences of outlook between the liberals and the Labor Party. Firstly, the liberals did not share the Labor Party's belief in the virtues of centralised government, and their support for social reform was tempered by reservations about too much state interference in areas which should be the private citizen's responsibility. Above all, they recoiled at the disciplined character of the Labor Party, and its socialist objective to which all Labor men gave at least their nominal blessing. But, in the early years of Federation, these were not immediate issues of concern. As the election programmes indicated, the tasks facing the first Parliament were ones which liberals and Labor could approach in a similar spirit.

An added factor promoting unity of purpose between the Government and Labor was that both Barton and John Watson, the Labor leader, were men who tended towards the centre. They moderated their principles with strong doses of compromise and pragmatism. Personally courteous and restrained in manner, each man held his group together and earned the respect of the other by his moderate and tactful style of leadership. The situation was quite different where the liberals and George Reid were concerned. Their differences were sharpened by the personal animosity arising from Reid's "Yes - No" attitude towards the referendum on federalism in New South Wales in 1898.

The tariff question was the greatest hurdle confronting the Barton government to start with. Parliament's vote on this issue would be unpredictable but it would decide the fate of the Ministry. It was an issue which the Government could not evade, for it was obliged by the terms of the Federation to raise revenue for its own expenses from a quarter of the amount it collected, and to return to the States enough to make up for the loss of their own customs duties. Both major parties, but not the Labor Party, agreed that the whole amount must be raised through the customs, and that the Commonwealth must not engage in direct taxation. There were wide differences of opinion, however, on how this was to be done: whether by preserving the high degree of protection which had helped the new industries

in Victoria especially, or by spreading the duties as lightly and evenly as possible over a wide selection of consumer goods.

The Government's own proposals were inevitably a compromise between these two extremes. In the year-long debates that raged over the issue, further modification were made in the direction of reduced duties. But eventually, with Labor's support, the main lines of the Government's policy were adopted with relative ease. Though few at the time realised it, the tariff issue was never again to figure so largely in parliamentary affairs. Once the principle of protection had been established, further measures in that direction followed almost as a matter of course. When, from 1905 onwards, they became linked to guarantees of minimum wages and conditions for workers in protected industries. Labor as a whole gave its firm support.

In contrast to the tariff issue, the ending of the use of coloured labour in Australia, principally in Queensland's sugar industry, and the preservation of the country's identity as a white nation, were matters upon which all parties in Parliament agreed as a matter of principle. Hence, an Act for the gradual repatriation of indentured Pacific Island labourers was passed in 1901 without parliamentary opposition. The debate on the more general provisions of the Immigration Restriction Act brought out differences, concerned almost solely with why and how the ban on coloured immigrants should be enforced.

Closely linked to the White Australia Policy, at least in the minds of some parliamentarians, was the need for a defence policy for the Commonwealth. As an immediate step, the Government proposed amid general agreement to take over the small defence units maintained by the States and to unify them into one Australian force, supplemented by a voluntary militia. However, the debate on the Defence Bill turned into a discussion on the adequacy or otherwise of the prevailing arrangements Great Britain had undertaken for the security of the colonies, principally by maintaining a naval squadron in Australian waters.

Aroused national sentiment and a feeling that more energetic defence measures were called for prompted some members to press for a more comprehensive and far-reaching policy. The most outspoken representative of this was Labor's W.M. Hughes, whose views combined a real fear of Japan as a threat to Australia's security with opposition to a professional standing army, which he saw as an aristocratic institution dangerous to democratic liberty. Hughes's constructive proposals included the foundation of an Australian naval force and the introduction of universal military training. Although in advance of the nation's resources and thinking in 1901, the concepts he put forward were to be adopted before the decade was out.

The other major piece of legislation discussed by the first Parliament, and the only one of a distinctly social character, was the Conciliation and Arbitration Bill. There was substantial agreement on this matter, especially between the

government and the Labour Party. Both the liberals and Labor had reacted to the industrial turmoil of the 1890s, by looking to the State to intervene between employers and employees, and to impose reasonable restraints upon both. Opposition to the principles of the Bill mostly occurred outside Parliament, the more radical elements on both sides of the industrial fence finding its provisions objectionable. Nevertheless, the Barton Government's legislation, which provided for the establishment of a court with compulsory powers to arbitrate on inter-State labour disputes, did not become law during the life of the first Parliament. Labor succeeded in amending the Bill to extend its coverage to government employees, but this proved unacceptable to the Ministry and the Bill was shelved.

At the same time a great deal of unspectacular but essential work was undertaken to put flesh on the bones of the new Federal structure. The Judiciary Act authorised the Government to set up a High Court exercising original jurisdiction in most cases involving disputes between the Commonwealth and the States, or among the States themselves, and an appellate jurisdiction between the State Supreme Courts and the Privy Council in London. The High Court was to prove an immensely important institution, its interpretations of the constitution doing a great deal to define, if not actually to create in practice, the extent of the respective powers of the Commonwealth and the States.

Less noticed, but of equal importance, was the organising of an efficient and responsible civil service. The Federal Government took over the personnel of some State departments which had exercised functions now taken over by the Commonwealth body, but in the main an entirely new force of public servants had to be recruited. In the Public Service Act of 1902, current State practice was followed requiring that entry to the service should be by competitive examination. But the Commonwealth public service was to place greater emphasis on seniority as the basis for promotion, a practice which produced controversial results as far as efficiency was concerned.

Among the departmental heads appointed by the Barton Ministry, two in particular were to give hand and distinguished service to the Commonwealth. By their experience and strong personalities they came to exercise considerable influence upon successive governments. They were Robert Garran, Secretary to the Attorney-General's Department, and Atlee Hunt, Secretary to the Prime Minister and the first head of the Department of External Affairs.

In more indefinable ways, too, both Government and Parliament contributed to the consolidation of the new national democratic institutions. The standard of parliamentary conduct they set was one that later bodies were not always able to equal. Senator Groom, the oldest Member of Parliament and a veteran Queensland politician, wrote to his son after one month's experience of sitting in Federal Parliament: "The more I am here and sit in the House and hear the speeches of the Members, the more I notice the enormous contrast between us and the

mediocrities of Queensland. The tone of the House too is good. There is not class hatred or bitterness."³

Looking back after 40 years, W.M. Hughes was to say:

*The business of Parliament in the early years of Federation was controlled by its members to a very much greater extent than nowadays...Members took their duties very seriously, speeches were carefully prepared, authorities consulted, and every question considered on its merits...The times were spacious, parliamentary business moved with leisurely and even tread. Measures were not rushed through parliament without time being given for free and full discussion. These modern time-saving devices, limiting speeches, guillotining debates, were unknown....But this did not prevent the despatch of public business, for Parliament sat almost continuously. Sittings were longer and session extended over the greater part of the year.*⁴

At the same time the proceedings did not lack colour and liveliness. The presence of such members as the coarse, but witty, George Reid, the gnome-like and provocative Hughes, and the silver-tongued Deakin, regarded by some knowledgeable contemporaries as the greatest living orator of his time in Australia, were guarantees of that.

Edmund Barton resigned as Prime Minister in September 1903, to take a seat on the newly constituted High Court Bench. He was succeeded by Alfred Deakin, who saw out the short time remaining before the general elections in the following December. The achievements of the first Parliament of the Commonwealth may have fallen short of the election promises of the Government, and the hopes of many members as they took their seats in it for the first time. But, from a later vantage point, it is possible to recognise its positive merits. Despite the fluid state of party alignments, the Government managed to dispose of 38 Acts of major importance, as well as 21 routine financial measures. In less than three years, the enduring institutional basis of the Commonwealth was laid in a manner which later administrations could build upon.⁵

However, Federation did not carry advantages for all Australian people.

³ *Ibid.* p. 1467.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 1468

Aborigines begin to struggle for equal rights

Section 127 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth read: "in the 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." Thus, according to the founding fathers, the new-born Commonwealth did not recognise the existence of the original Australians. It would not make laws for them, give them a vote, or even count their heads.

When white settlement began in 1788, there may have been as many as 300,000 Aborigines scattered over the continent. But throughout the nineteenth century, their numbers decreased catastrophically. Deprived of their hunting grounds, they starved, or perished from the diseases of the white man. Many were killed in clashes with the settlers, who also on occasions poisoned their water holes or fed them poisoned wheat cakes. The Aborigines' resistance and their attempts at retaliation were regarded as criminal acts to be punished ruthlessly and indiscriminately. By 1969 there were only about 50,000 full-blood and 90,000 part-Aborigines on the mainland, and the full-blood Tasmanian Aborigines had long been hounded to extinction.

Not until the 1860s were attempts made by any of the self-governing colonies to set aside reserves for Aborigines, and to give them some protection. Aboriginal welfare was of little concern to the politician. There were no votes in it. Missions, rather than governments, tried to provide Aborigines with food, clothing, medical care, education, and, of course, religion. When the overlander Francis Birtles returned from Darwin to Adelaide in 1924, he wrote: "The blacks of central Australia are being starved to death. Their state in some areas is appalling and a national scandal."

Their traditional way of life largely lost to them, many Aborigines chose the protection of the station camp, where they could live in a semi-tribal state. While they were there, and worked, they were given paternalistic security. Many Aborigines became an indispensable and valued part of station life, and it sometimes seemed that these circumstances offered the best chance for the survival of Aboriginal cultural identity. But many of the black farm hands lived in virtual serfdom, with their traditions discarded and their freedom of movement curtailed. It was not uncommon for the Aboriginal labourer to be regarded as his master's property, and for absconders to be brought back by force and with police help. As late as 1949, Aboriginal hands on Western Australian cattle-runs received no wages, and five years later, the commissioner of Native Affairs in Perth reported that in most cases they were receiving "little better than pocket money and keep," a state of affairs he described as "traditional and time-honoured".

In 1972, it was estimated that about 70,000 of Australia's 140,000 Aborigines lived in or near the major cities and towns, about 50,000 in missions and

settlements mainly in Northern and Central Australia, and 15,000 on pastoral properties. Only a few hundred were living in independent communities. In the country, many occupied squalid shacks on the fringe of townships. In the cities they were generally huddled in shabby, overcrowded tenements in rundown suburbs. Not surprisingly, the Aboriginal infant mortality rate was ten times that of whites, and respiratory infections, gastro-intestinal diseases, and leprosy, were prevalent.

By 1951, there was general agreement that Aborigines should be equipped for equal citizenship. But the process had been slow. A turning point was the referendum held in 1967, when the people of Australia voted by a 10-1 majority to amend the outworn Constitution by giving power to the Commonwealth to make laws and plans for the Aboriginal people, and to include them in the national census.

After the referendum, the Federal Government set up a Commonwealth Office of Aboriginal Affairs to co-ordinate Government policies, and a three-member advisory Council for Aboriginal Affairs. But this did not mean that Aborigines were suddenly better off than they had been. Legislation could not substitute brick-and-tile homes for makeshift shanties, nor stamp out the prejudice and the subtle types of discrimination what had existed for generations. In the Northern Territory the Aborigines formed a council for Aboriginal Rights and organised demonstrations, and in August 1966 the Gurindji people on Wave Hill Station struck work in protest against low wages and poor conditions. This occurred some months after the Commonwealth Arbitration commission had ordered that Aborigines in the cattle industry should get equal pay with white workers, in three years time, but that "slow workers" were to be exempted. The principle of a "phased" increase of wages was unacceptable to the Aboriginal spokesmen, while employers were unwilling to pay full wages as well as "keep" for dependants. In March 1967 the Gurindji people occupied part of Wave Hill Station in an unsuccessful attempt to force the Government to return their tribal land. The Aboriginal Rights Council appealed unsuccessfully to the United Nations for help.

The appeal for land rights had become a serious issue in 1963 when 140 square miles of the 200 square-mile Yirrkala Mission at Gove on the Cape York Peninsula was revoked to make way for the activities of a bauxite mining company. The 500 Aborigines at Yirrkala presented a petition, stating their grievances. A select committee was set up to deal with the claims, and its report was tabled in October 1963. It recognised that the land was theirs in the deepest moral sense, but acknowledged that vesting them with title was obstructed by problems. It recommended that there should be a standby committee for ten years "to examine, from time to time, the conditions of the Yirrkala people and the carrying out of this committee's recommendations."

In 1971 the Yirrkala people's case was taken before the Northern Territory Supreme Court, which ruled that Aboriginal titles to land could not be recognised

under Australian law. At the same time the Federal government announced a plan for granting Aborigines general-purpose land leases in the territory. But this did not satisfy many Aboriginal activists, who demanded absolute ownership of the land. As Mr Paul Coe, a young Aboriginal law student at the University of New South Wales put it: "The Aboriginal people want complete control of their affairs. They don't want the white man telling them what to do. We are trying to break down this idea of being an inferior race. Why should we lease our own land?"

The debate over the position of the original Australians, and especially over land rights, has been lively. A major reason for the tenor of the debates is that land is tangible, and its value depends on many factors, including the minerals that lie beneath its surface. The arguments are intensified by emotional value judgements. The racist view has always been that the Aborigine was inferior to the white, did not make use of the land and thus did not deserve to hold on to it after 1788. Therefore, the questions asked were, why should land be returned to the Aborigines now and why should they gain from valuable land with minimal or no effort, while the white has to work for wages?

It has only been in the last twenty years that the view has taken root in the minds of ordinary white Australians that perhaps the Aboriginal people are owed something. There has been a recognition among sections of the white population of the intense relationship that Aborigines had with the land, of the fact that their culture had been developed, was intricate and subtle in its own way and thus was worthy of being accepted by whites as a culture. Some whites feel a sense of shame about collective neglect and abuse of the Aborigines; some feel that no existing generation can be held accountable for what happened in previous generations; and some feel that whether or not the Aborigine can, or should be invited to, assimilate, he is entitled to something, either in recompense or to help sustain them for the future.

Just what Aboriginal people are entitled to is the subject of the hottest debates. After the re-election of the Bob Hawke Labor Government in December 1984, the Federal Government's policy, so far as it related to the mining industry, boiled down to three essentials. These were: the protection of Aboriginal sacred sites; Aboriginal access to mining royalty equivalents; and Aboriginal control in relation to mining on Aboriginal land. It has been accepted by Federal governments of both Liberal-National and Labor complexions that to deny Aborigines the right to prevent mining on their land was to deny the reality of land rights, but the Federal government appeared to hedge this commitment when it proposed an arbitration system to handle Aboriginal complaints about mining proposals.

By mid 1985 the land rights picture was very blurred. New South Wales and South Australia enacted land rights legislation as did the Northern Territory. Significantly, in Queensland and Western Australia, rural and mining States, there was great dispute about land rights. South Australia handed over 72,000 square

kilometres of barren land on the edge of the Great Victoria Desert to the Pitjantatjare peoples in late 1984, which was a triumph of sorts for ancestral rights. But in Western Australia major groups in the mining and petroleum industries were in direct conflict with the land aspiration of the Aborigines. Forty per cent of Western Australia's total surface was eligible for land rights claims under the Western Australian Government's land rights proposals.

The Brian Burke Labor Government of Western Australia opposed the veto that the Federal Labor government had proposed to give to Aborigines in relation to all mining ventures on this land, and opposed provision of royalties as well. Even so, the WA Legislative Council rejected the legislation. This appeared to open the way for over-riding Federal legislation, but that was opposed by black leaders in New South Wales, South Australia and the Northern Territory, who regarded their State and territorial laws as more to their liking.

Instead of the introduction of land rights bringing blacks and whites together, the issue seemed to be widening the gap between them. The Western Australian Government, in introducing its legislation, had sought to encourage mining companies not to deter them. A Perth Lawyer appointed by the Government to investigate the situation had concluded that there was no compelling economic reason why Aboriginal communities should not have control over mining and petroleum activity on Aboriginal land. After the Legislative Council blocked the legislation, Sir Charles Court, the former Premier and elder statesman, pronounced: "It is now time we brought the land rights nightmare to an end. There is neither personal advancement nor moral justification for imposing on Australia such festering racial inequality."

In addition, relations had soured between the Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr Clyde Holding, and sections of the mining industry that he accused of using grossly distorted and exaggerated arguments against giving Aborigines some control over mining. At the same time, Aboriginal leaders from all over Australia met near Canberra and rejected out of hand the Government's Land Rights Bill. The Australian Democrats Party was refusing to vote for any bill that did not have the endorsement of black groups, and Western Australian ministers opposed a national bill, so it looked as if federal legislation would be relegated to the backburner, at least until the early 1990s.

The Mabo Decision

Australia remained *terra nullius*, a land belonging to no one, and a land whose indigenous peoples were taken to be so primitive in their social organisation that it was, specially speaking, unoccupied. There were, however, figures within Australian public life who could see beyond this legal fiction of Australia as empty, waste and desert. One of these people was anthropologist W E H Stanner. He spoke and wrote of how "living Aborigines" could demonstrate "beyond cavil" in an appropriate court the patent fact of their unbroken titles to

parcels of land into the times of their ancestors. In a prophetic statement he foretold of a time when this fact, buried within "the great Australian silence", would find "a suitable set of conditions to come to the surface and be very consequential indeed." That moment of consequence seemed to have arrived on 3 June 1992 when the High Court announced its decision in the case which has come to be known simply as *Mabo*. The group which demonstrated an unbroken line of title before a court were not Aboriginal people. They were a group of Meriam people: the Murray Islanders of the Torres Strait.

When the High Court of Australia decided to discard the legal fiction of Australia as *terra nullius* altogether, rather than limit its decision to the Murray Islands, it was making a statement about justice: the injustice as well as the illegality of English law in Australia over 200 years. In finding the resources to reclaim the integrity of common law, to dissociate themselves and the law from complicity in events which brought "unutterable shame" upon the Australian nation, the judges were speaking to the question of a "moral claim to nationhood". The Murray Island people became the bearers of this major break in the social and moral discourses. The Murray Island people differ "in culturally significant ways...from the Aboriginal peoples of Australia," Justice Toohey noted, but for the purposes of determining indigenous interests in land throughout Australia as a whole, the relevant principles are the same." In recognising the rights of the Murray Island people to land, the High Court reversed the legal position on which Australia as a political entity was founded. Recognition of "common law native title" placed Australia along side other former British colonies.

An expanded doctrine of *terra nullius* assumed that the Murray Island people, together with all other indigenous people in Australia, were primitive and uncivilised, without recognisable land laws or social organisation and hence lower in the scale of humanity than the European settlers and their descendants. The judgement strikes at the foundation upon which their inferior status rested. The Murray Islanders, Justices Deane and Gaudron concluded, undoubtedly possess "a local native system under which established familial or individual rights of occupation and use were of a kind which far exceed the minimum requirements necessary to found a presumptive common law native title."

In making a decisive break with the assumption of the exclusive operation of one law, which formed the everyday common sense of the majority of Australian citizenry, the High Court justices were completing a process that had been pursued in court for ten years. In their first decision on 8 December 1988, known in legal circles as *Mabo (No 1)*, a majority of the High Court allowed for the possibility that traditional Murray Islander's legal rights to land, still to be ascertained at this stage, may exist. This decision declared the Queensland Coast Islands Declaratory Act 1985, which extinguished any Murray Islander rights to land that may have existed prior to and been restored since annexation of the Torres Strait Islands in 1879, as inconsistent with the federal Racial

Discrimination Act 1975, which inscribed equality before the law in legal statute. On 3 June 1992, in *Mabo (No. 2)*, the High Court identified a second category of legal rights as "native" or "traditional" title, which Justice Brennan described as "interests and rights of indigenous inhabitants in land, whether communal, group or individual, possessed under the traditional laws acknowledged and the traditional customs observed by the indigenous inhabitants."⁶

The "native title era" in Australia begins with a dialogue of voices across the frontier: stilled voices speak out from *terra nullius*, engaging with those silenced by a belief in the universality of their own law and form of social being. Within a continuing interplay of contrasting standpoints and political engagements, changes in public consciousness have taken place. Even as sympathetic interpreters of the High Court decision wrote of the "death of the concept of *terra nullius*", resource-based industry spokespeople and their supporters in parliaments and public life gave strident expression to its absence as a meaningful reality. A softer version of disbelief in Aboriginal property rights grew of the need to balance moral ideals with resource developers' moves to reduce title rights to a bare minimum. Both responses rest upon the continuation of the *terra nullius* myth that Aboriginal and Islander societies are primitive and so lack any potential for self-initiated economic development. Running against this current of opinion are strong statements from those Aboriginal and Islander people who are calling a halt to dispossession and seek a self-determining future on traditionally owned land or on land re-acquired.

As the news of the decision reverberated across the world, it began to break apart the assumption of an Australian nation essentially without Aborigines and Islanders, a reality that had been consolidated ever since federation in 1901. The Murray Islanders were the carriers of that transformation because they had an especially strong case to argue before an Australian court of continuous possession, occupation and use of their islands. They were also "chosen" at a particular moment of history when the forces conducive to an outcome favourable to the rejection of *terra nullius* had generated a degree of moment.

In the first 48 hours following the judgement, emphasis was given in the public arena to the moral rectitude of the High Court's decision. Read the selection of articles from a variety of Australian newspapers.

In an overnight reversal from silence to shouting, recognition of the injustices associated with the old certitudes became part of everyday life. The refutation of the "outrageous notion" of *terra nullius* had removed "the greatest barrier" to the process of reconciliation between European Australians and indigenous peoples,

⁶ Nonie Sharp, *No Ordinary Judgement*, Aboriginal Studies Press, (Canberra, 1996), pp. 3-5.

the Prime Minister told parliament on 4 June 1992. The fundamental issue on which most non-indigenous Australians were totally ignorant became a common public theme: "few people really know how Aborigines came to lose Australia", the *West Australian* noted without the merest hint of explanation. With the "moral victory" and "moral advance" borne by the decision, the removal of "a solemn blot and insult on the judicial landscape", came the admission that *terra nullius* as an idea was "always known to be false." It was as though the shadowed side of the Australian nation had been illuminated by a new light.

The *Native Title Act* 1993 is the Commonwealth Government's legislative response to the High Court's 1992 decision in *Mabo vs State of Queensland* (No. 2) (1992). The Commonwealth Native Title Act became law on 1 January 1994. This legislation gives statutory effect to much of the decision in *Mabo* while also introducing new elements in relation to native title and providing a framework in which native title can operate. The Act is designed to achieve four main objectives: 1. the recognition and protection of native title to land, 2. the regulation of future dealings affecting native title, 3. the establishment of a means to deal with native title claims such as the Tribunal and court processes, and 4. the validation of past acts if they have been invalidated because of the existence of native title. The Act also included provision in Section 10 for a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Fund designed to assist in the indigenous purchase of land. The issues arising from the Land Fund were still a matter of political debate at the time of writing. The common law principle of "native title" as established by the High Court of Australia in *Mabo* is recognised by the *Native Title Act* 1993. The Act established a Native Title Tribunal, the functions of which include the determination of claims involving the existence of native title, the determination of compensation payable for extinguishment or impairment of native title, the ascertaining of whether a government may grant an interest in land held under or claimed for native title, and whether a government may compulsorily acquire land where native title exists.

The *Native Title Act* 1993 removes uncertainty that may have existed in relation to the validity of titles granted in the past. However, it does restrict the States and Territories in the management of land, waters and resources and the ability to grant licences, titles and permits in the future. While this legislation has done much to deal with the legal issues left unresolved by the High Court decision in *Mabo* there remain several areas that have not been addressed, namely: whether leases with reservation of rights in favour of Aboriginal communities extinguish native title; how to value the special relationship that Aboriginal people have for their land; whether the Aboriginal community's customary rules would allow transferability of title or whether commercial development of traditional lands would be permitted, and the precise content and nature of Aboriginal title; and the

nature of the traditional connection which needs to be proved.⁷ Read about land rights issues in the Australian Press in the articles provided.

However, land was not the only concern of Aboriginal people.

⁷ M.A. Stephenson (ed.), *Mabo: the Native Title Legislation: A Legislative response to the High Court's Decision*, University of Queensland Press, (St. Lucia, QLD, 1995), p. xx.

'Legacy of unutterable shame' on land rights

By BILL PHEASANT
and IAN HOWARTH

In a landmark ruling the High Court yesterday extinguished *terra nullius* — the doctrine that Australia could be regarded as uninhabited before colonisation — in one of the most important decisions in the history of Aboriginal land rights.

In its judgement in a case which began in 1982, the High Court ruled that the colonisation of Australia had not affected the continuing ownership of the Murray Islands in the Torres Strait by its indigenous inhabitants.

As a legal precedent it may, in effect, amount to a common law declaration of national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land rights.

The Australian Mining Industry Council said the High Court ruling in the Murray Islands land claim case may have some implications for the resources industry but it did not expect a dramatic impact.

However, AMIC assistant director, Mr Geoffrey Ewing, said yesterday the High Court ruling clearly distinguished the difference between Crown sovereignty over land and ownership of title to that land.

Aboriginal groups wel-

comed the decision and the Federal Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Mr Robert Tickner, said "the High Court has finally put paid to the notion of *terra nullius*".

He referred to parts of the judgement of Justices Deane and Gaudron who described the events involving the removal of Aboriginal people from their land "the darkest aspect of the history of this nation".

The two judges, in a detailed section on the dispossession of the original inhabitants, refer to an incident in 1804 on the Hawkesbury River, which "illustrates the first stages of the conflagration of oppression and conflict which was, over the following century, to spread across the continent to dispossess, degrade and devastate the Aboriginal peoples and leave a national legacy of unutterable shame".

The High Court's decision, by a majority of six to one, reversed a ruling in the last significant land rights case in Gove in 1971 which concluded that political sovereignty and ultimate title to all land in Australia vested in the first British representative of the King, Governor Phillip.

The ramifications of the 218-page judgement, with four separate judgements, will take some time to unravel. However, it may provide the basis for a common law right of communal title to Aboriginal people in the rest of Australia based not on British principles of "title in fee simple" but based on the traditional laws and customs of the indigenous people themselves.

It is possible that the High Court decision means that Aboriginal people with an historical link to an area of unclaimed Crown land will be given the right to obtain a court declaration of their common law title to the land.

The High Court has made it clear that such declarations would not affect freehold title to land — encompassing most urban and pastoral land — as the Commonwealth has the right to legislate in respect of land titles.

But the potential impact of the decision on existing or future mining arrangements on Crown or Aboriginal land is yet to be determined.

The judgement could give Aboriginal people in Western Australia a significant advantage as there is no existing Land Rights Act in that State.

The case, called *Eddie*

Mabo v The State of Queensland, involved a claim for land title by a group of Torres Strait Islanders, known as the Meriam people, who live on the islands of Mer, Dauer and Waier north-east of Cape York — the Murray Islands.

The Full High Court's final order declared "...that the Meriam people are entitled as against the whole world to possession, occupation use and enjoyment of the lands of the Murray Islands".

The chairman of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, Mr Pat Dodson, said last night the decision should not strike "panic" in the minds of Australians on the way land was held by normal title.

The AMIC's Mr Ewing said the judgement may provide some encouragement for traditional owners to pursue new land claims but he added that anything which increased the restrictions imposed in the mining industry in access to land for exploration was an undesirable development.

The chairman of the Northern Land Council, Mr Galarrrwuy Yunupingu, called on the Federal Government to negotiate a treaty and implement national land rights legislation or face a barrage of litigation under the decision.

Court removes a blot on the judicial landscape

Ruling a moral but not legal advance

By JACK WATERFORD

Yesterday's High Court Australian-settlement ruling is a famous victory for Aborigines, removing a solemn blot and insult on the judicial landscape. Whether, however, it provides much scope for the legal development of Aboriginal land rights or compensation claims is very doubtful.

The High Court has abolished an old and offensive fiction: the notion that when British settlers landed on these shores and claimed them in the name of George III of Britain, the land was either completely unoccupied and there for the taking or the inhabitants were of such a low level of civilisation that there could be said to be no pattern of law or custom operating.

It has also affirmed the continuing rights of one group whose possession of a number of islands in the Torres Strait has been continuous since white settlement, and over which — it held by 6-1 majority — no Acts by the Crown had had the effect of depriving it of continuing land-ownership rights.

But the pattern of reasoning provides little comfort for most Aborigines whose possession of land was rudely disturbed at some stage of settlement. It might give Aborigines who come from remote areas of Western Australia some hope, but provides little for most in NSW, Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania or in those settled parts of South Australia, Western Australia or the Northern Territory, where, since settlement, some legislative, executive or prerogative act had the effect of upsetting an original title.

Nor does the judgment provide much assistance for those for whom the primary claim has been Aboriginal sovereignty, and the insistence that it has never been disturbed. The High Court is quite clear that British sovereignty prevailed from settlement; what it says is that this did not wipe out the rights of Aborigines until the Crown intentional-

COMMENT

ly wiped them out.

The faint hope — a political one — comes from the word "compensation". Three of the seven judges believed that Aborigines whose rights were disturbed were entitled at law to compensation. The hitch is that the claim had to be made in time and, for most, that time has long expired. Even had these judges been in a majority, thus, there would have been no legal claim.

However, the concession of an old legal right lends powerful support to a claim for continuing moral rights.

How did the court come to its conclusion?

Previously, the proposition that British common law did not recognise Aboriginal land rights had rested primarily on the idea — always known to be false — that Australia, on British settlement, was *terra nullius* — unoccupied or vacant land. Accordingly, once possession was claimed on behalf of the King, he had ultimate title and could alienate it as he wished.

The British common law had recognised two other methods of coming into control of land. One had been the taking of possession of a settled colony; the other had been conquest. In either case, the common-law assumption was that although the taking of possession meant the ultimate title went to the King, that did not alter existing possession or ownership, which continued unless and until disturbed by the King. The law of the settled country — including laws about the ownership and control of land — continued in force at least to the extent that they were not in conflict with the applicable British common law or until it was specifically extinguished by later laws or executive Acts.

Six judges held that the old fiction of *terra nullius* was not and had never been the basis of white settlement. At the time the King took possession, the Aboriginal and Islander groups had rules and customs dealing with

the possession, or ownership of, and rights over land, and according to the court these rights continued at least until they came into conflict with lawful executive acts of the King.

All the judges agreed that the King, in the exercise of sovereignty he had assumed, could extinguish Aboriginal ownership, although they said that since doing so had the effect of depriving people of rights, the act of doing so had to be clear and unambiguous. In this particular case, the mere making of the Murray Islands a "reserve" did not operate to deprive the inhabitants of a continuing title, since it was not necessarily inconsistent with continuing recognition of their rights. On the other hand, giving a land grant to a group of missionaries was inconsistent with the recognition of continuing ownership. Once title had been extinguished, it could not be resumed by Aborigines.

All six judges in the majority agreed about the foregoing propositions. The effect is to severely limit the possible impact of the decision in fuelling Aboriginal land-rights claims, except possibly in remote areas of WA — where, it could be argued, the making of reserves and national parks have not necessarily extinguished rights.

As Justice Brennan put it, as the Governments of the various colonies and, more recently, the Commonwealth, the states and territories have alienated or appropriated to their own purposes most of the land in this country, the Aboriginal peoples have been substantially dispossessed of their traditional lands.

"They were dispossessed by the Crown's exercise of its sovereign powers to grant land to whom it chose and to appropriate to itself the beneficial ownership of parcels of land for the Crown's purposes. Aboriginal rights and interests were not stripped away by operation of the common law on first settlement by British colonists, but by

the exercise of a sovereign authority over land exercised currently by governments.

"To treat the dispossession of the Australian Aborigines as the working out of the Crown's acquisition of all land on first settlement is contrary to history. Aborigines were dispossessed of their land parcel by parcel, to make way for expanding colonial settlement. Their dispossession underwrote the development of the nation," he said.

The six judges divided over the impact of the Crown's extinguishing ownership.

According to three of the judges, Justices Deane, Gaudron and Toohey, extinguishing gave rights to compensation, at least provided claims are made within relevant time periods. For most Aborigines, such periods have almost certainly expired, but the nod to even an extinguished legal claim is very powerful support to a continuing moral claim.

But the other three judges disagreed, and on this point they were joined by Justice Darryl Dawson, the sole judge of the Court to hold, in effect, that any Aboriginal title had been extinguished on white settlement.

The majority view is thus that there is no and was never any legal right to compensation.

The decision underlines the tenuous nature of Aboriginal claims based on law alone. The law, we discover (since this had been denied by every court until now) has always recognised that Aborigines had title to their land. When the first squatters pushed beyond the bounds of settlement, it was open to any Aborigine whose rights were affected to go to the NSW Supreme Court for a writ to say he or she had better title to the land.

The moment, however, a Governor recognised the squatter by a land grant, the Aboriginal title was automatically extinguished and — according to a majority of the High Court — without any right of compensation. It's a moral victory, and a moral advance, but does not take the law much further.

Editorial. — Page 8.

Aboriginal justice: politics not law

THE HIGH Court of Australia righted yesterday a long-running and insulting injustice to Aboriginal Australians. It did so in two ways: by discovering one of the few possible groups of original Australians who could be said to have a continuous pattern of use and control of land, almost completely undisturbed (in any legal sense) by white settlement, and affirming that these people did own their land in law; and by removing from 200 years of Australian judicial reasoning the false and offensive doctrine that Australia, at the time of British settlement, was either an empty land there for the taking or, alternatively, was a barbarian nation subject to no law or custom capable of being recognised and dealt with by the courts.

Rather it admitted — for the first time in Australian common law jurisprudence — that Aboriginal Australians had a civilisation, laws, traditions and customs, including those governing the ownership and control of land. It also said, for what it turns out to be worth, that those rights over land had continued after white settlement. The qualification is necessary because the court went on to hold that those rights were extinguished once the Crown dealt with land in a way that was inconsistent with the idea of continuing Aboriginal ownership or control. On settlement, the root title of all Australian land went to the King. But the King, six of the seven judges held, could hold that base title without detracting from the continuing rights of the Aborigines; until, through his servants, there was a clear intention to take it away, any continuing rights persisted.

THE problem for Aborigines is that, for almost all of them, there since have been clear acts (by governors, government departments or legislatures) which have taken their lands out of their control and, thus, have extinguished their rights. Only in the most remote areas is there any land capable of being claimed under the High Court's rule. In most of such land, except, possibly, in the central desert areas of Western Australia, there is existing land rights legislation which has vested ownership in Aborigines. In most of the rest of Australia, however, the decision gives no legal basis for a land claim.

Nor, by a majority of four to three, does the ruling give rise to a right to compensation. Even the three who would acknowledge such a right recognised that it would have had to have been pursued within a limitation period long since expired. The court's canvassing the existence of such a right, however, helps give

rise to a powerful moral claim on behalf of Aborigines that they have never been compensated adequately for their rude and often violent dispossession from their land.

The decision, however, gives no help to those who would base a claim on any idea of a continuing Aboriginal sovereignty. The court declared unequivocally that sovereignty passed to the King on British settlement: what it allowed was that that passage of sovereignty did not extinguish all existing Aboriginal rights.

HAD SUCH a decision been handed down in, say, 1846 — on the first occasion in which a NSW Court proclaimed and enforced the *terra nullius* doctrine — the history of Australian settlement might have been quite different. It almost certainly would have led to treaty-style arrangements of the sort that the original inhabitants of America, Canada and New Zealand were able to make (by war rather than mutual benevolence) with settlers. Now, however, the decision has little legal impact, except for the few who might be able to fit within its confines.

Aborigines do have a claim for compensation for the effects of dispossession. Essentially, however, the claim must be regarded as a moral rather than a legal one (at least a legal one founded in common law). Much Aboriginal political energy, and money, has been spent in generally fruitless attempts to seek some form of legal vindication of the rights of Aborigines — whether continuing ones over land, claims of unextinguished sovereignty, or for various forms of compensation. In modern times, these claims have received sympathetic hearings from the courts, not least the High Court; progressively, many of the more offensive and inequitable concepts of old have fallen.

But those who believe that a little more chipping away will open the floodgates for Aboriginal justice are almost certainly deluded. One of the High Court's champions of Aboriginal rights, Justice Gerry Brennan, commented in yesterday's decision that the common law may move with the times, and adopt contemporary notions of justice and human rights, but it will not "fracture the skeleton of principle" which gives the law its shape and consistency. The common law, so far as Aborigines are concerned, is too rooted in the injustices of the past to ever be the vehicle for Aboriginal liberation. If new laws are desirable, and they are, they must be found in community education, politics and parliament.

Historic win after land rights battle

By WENDY PRYER and
STEVE MANCHEE

CANBERRA: A High Court decision yesterday has scrapped the concept of a "deserted land" which legitimised the colonisation of Australia.

The decision, which recognised the land rights of a group of Torres Strait Islanders to the Murray Islands, meant the original basis for European claims to Australia, known as terra nullius, was dead, said Northern Land Council chairman Galarrwuy Yunupingu.

He said the Federal Government would face a barrage of litigation unless it quickly negotiated a treaty with Aborigines and passed land rights legislation.

Greg McIntyre, the former principal legal officer for the Aboriginal Legal Service in WA, said the ruling could have a big impact on WA claims.

In Queensland in 1982, Mr McIntyre lodged the original claim by elders Eddie Mabo, David Passi and James Rice over the Murray Islands, the eastern-most Torres Strait Islands off the north-eastern tip of Queensland.

Although the High Court ruled



Mr Mabo

its six-one decision did not set a precedent, Mr McIntyre said it meant Aborigines would have a better chance of winning land-rights cases if they could prove links and rights to the land.

The High Court found Australia's common law recognised a form of native title which reflected the rights of indigenous inhabitants.

"The common law of this country would perpetuate injustice if it were to continue to embrace the enlarged notion of terra nullius and to persist in characterising the indigenous inhabitants of the Australian colonies as people too low in the

scale of social organisation to be acknowledged as possessing rights and interests in land," said Justice Brennan.

Justices Deane and Gaudron said the doctrine of terra nullius was "the darkest aspect of the history of this nation".

The court said its judgment only applied to the Murray Islands and it remained to be seen whether it could be used as a precedent for other land claims.

The decision ended a 10-year battle for the Meriam people who claimed their rights to the islands were never extinguished despite British settlement and Queensland's annexation in 1879.

Mr Mabo, the main litigant, was born on Murray Island, the biggest of the three islands, but died of cancer in January.

Mr McIntyre believed it would mean Aboriginal people would no longer have to wage legal wars about their entitlement to land and could spend more time proving claims to particular tracts.

The decision was important for Kimberley Aborigines who launched a High Court bid to claim 20,000ha in the Mitchell Plateau, Drysdale River national

park and the coastline from Derby to Kalumburu last year.

He said the claim by the WA Wunambul, Ngarinyin and Worora people had a good chance because it was based on the same arguments as the Mabo case.

The Aboriginal claim for the old Swan brewery land must be looked at closely because, although the WA Government granted it to builders, it was revested with the crown.

Federal Aboriginal Affairs Minister Robert Tickner welcomed the decision, saying it put Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians on an equal footing to negotiate reconciliation for the first time in 200 years.

"The High Court has finally put paid to the notion of terra nullius which asserted that the land was desert and unoccupied and by which the dispossession and oppression of the indigenous people of this country was justified," he said.

State Aboriginal Affairs Minister Judyth Watson said the impact on WA would not be known until the decision was analysed.

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Ruling boosts blacks' land claims

This had been ruled invalid in a majority full High Court decision on the ground that it was inconsistent with federal racial-discrimination legislation.

And lawyers involved in Aboriginal land-rights claims and other legal cases were clearly delighted with the reasoning of Mr Justice Brennan — with which the Chief Justice, Mr Justice Mason, and Mr Justice McHugh said they agreed — and that of Justice Gaudron and Mr Justice Deane. They said the judgments contained invaluable ammunition for future battles.

On terra nullius, Mr Justice Brennan said: "If it were permissible in past centuries to keep the common law in step with international law, it is imperative in today's world that the common law neither be, nor be seen to be,

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frozen in an age of racial discrimination.

"The fiction by which the rights and interests of indigenous inhabitants in land were treated as non-existent was justified by a policy which has no place in the contemporary common law of this country."

Mr Justice Brennan also made important observations on how indigenous peoples' links with the land should be viewed. Under the landmark Northern Territory land-rights legislation, Aboriginal groups have to demonstrate continuing traditional links with the land.

Mr Justice Brennan said: "Of course, in time, the laws and cus-

oms of any people will change and the rights and interests of the members of the people among themselves will change, too."

He said it was immaterial that the laws and customs had undergone some change since the Crown acquired sovereignty, provided the general connection between the indigenous people and the land remained.

Mr Justice Brennan indicated a wider application of his rulings: "Nor can the circumstances which might be thought to differentiate the Murray Islands from other parts of Australia be invoked as an acceptable ground for distinguishing the entitlement of the Meriam people from the entitlement of other indigenous inhabitants to the use and enjoyment of their traditional lands."

Key ruling boosts blacks' land claims

By CAMERON FORBES,
Canberra

A full High Court judgment in a legal battle by the people of tiny Murray Island in the Torres Strait is being hailed as being of sweeping significance for Australia's indigenous people and the death of the concept of terra nullius — that Australia was no one's land when Europeans arrived.

In a 6-1 majority decision on what has become known as the Mabo case, the full High Court found that Australian common law recognised a form of native title and declared that "the Meriam people are entitled as against the whole world to possession, occupation, use and enjoyment of the lands of the Murray Islands".

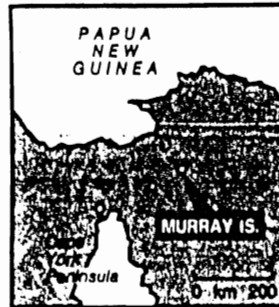
Lawyers involved in the Murray Island case say that the judgments as a whole have profound implications for present land-rights legislation, the process of reconciliation with Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, land claims by traditional Aboriginal communities, and relations between Aborigines and miners.

Two of the judges, in language they said might be thought "unusually emotive" for the court, described a process of dispossession, degradation and devastation of the Aboriginal people that left a national legacy of unutterable shame.

Justice Mary Gaudron and Mr Justice Deane said: "The acts and events by which that dispossession in legal theory has carried into practical effect constitute the darkest aspect of the history of this nation. The nation as a whole must remain diminished unless and until there is an acknowledgement of, and retreat from, those injustices."

The federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr Tickner, said: "History was made in the High Court today. The highest court in the land has taken the position that terra nullius is to be rejected and relegated to the dustbin of history."

Mr Tickner was guarded about the consequences. A battery of lawyers was considering the judgment, he said, but in the short term he could dismiss as unfounded alarmist speculation about possible outcomes.



The chairman of the Northern Land Council, Mr Galarrwuy Yunupingu, said "the pathetic excuse of terra nullius is now dead" and called on the Federal Government to move quickly to negotiate a treaty and implement comprehensive land rights legislation or face a barrage of litigation.

On Murray Island, Lillian Passi, the first to hear, cried: "Thank God, thank God." The Islanders immediately started preparing a victory feast.

And a Torres Strait leader, Mr George Mye, of neighboring Darnley Island, who is the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission representative for the region, said that all Islanders would now move for recognition of their traditional ownership of their lands.

"I'm overjoyed," Mr Mye said. "We want to be part of Australia, but we want autonomy."

The court pointed out that its formal order was cast in a form "which will not give rise to any possible implication affecting status of land" not considered in the case.

It also declared that the Meriam people's title could be extinguished by Queensland by a valid exercise of power, provided that this was not inconsistent with the laws of the Commonwealth.

However, lawyers for the Murray Islanders pointed out that in 1985 the Queensland Government had passed legislation expressly extinguishing all native rights to the Torres Strait Islands, retrospectively to 1879.

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PAGE 13: Editorial: A victory over white arrogance.

Mabo decision a victory over white arrogance

IT IS winter in Torres Strait, which means burnished sky, turquoise sea, the gentle wash of waves against the steady rhythm of the tides — the pleasant pattern of the centuries. But yesterday word came from Chill, land-locked Canberra to Murray Island, the most easterly of the Strait group, which changes everything. And nothing.

Ten years ago, five Murray Islanders set off on a legal marathon, challenging the Queensland Government administration, official white history and a doctrine regarded by Australia's indigenous people as the encapsulation of white arrogance: this land — their land — was conveniently deemed when Europeans arrived, to be terra nullius, no one's land.

The case came to carry the hopes of those who felt that a landmark decision on land rights, by Mr Justice Blackburn in the Northern Territory Supreme Court in 1971, compounded a searing historic injustice.

Mr Justice Blackburn dismissed a claim by three Aboriginal brothers from Gove Peninsula that their land had been unlawfully invaded by miners and by the Commonwealth Government. "It is dangerous," he said, "to attempt to express a matter so subtle and difficult by a mere legal aphorism, but it seems easier on the evidence to say that the claim belongs to the land than that the land belongs to the clan."

The Full Bench of the High Court yesterday delivered judgment on a statement of claim which begins: "Six time immemorial, the Torres Strait Islands of Mer (known as Murray) Dawar and Waler and their surrounding sea, seabeds, fringing reefs and adjacent islets by people called the Meriam people . . ."

What is known in legal shorthand as the Mabo case (after Eddie Mabo, the first plaintiff) has washed against various reefs, followed meandering channels and survived an all-out Bjelke-Petersen Government attempt to sink it.

AMELBOURNE barrister involved in the case, Mr Ron Caston, QC, has said litigation of this sort has been described as an awesome creature, mounted at gigantic cost. But for the Meriam people, it is simple: Murray Island was their ancestors' land, is theirs and will be their children's. Neither the white man's coming nor anything that the white man has done has changed that.

Yesterday the Full Bench of the High Court, in a six-one majority decision, went a great way to upholding the people's claim, declaring that "the Meriam people are entitled as against the whole world, to possession, occupation, use and enjoyment of the lands of the Murray Islands". It went on to declare that their title to land was subject to the power of the Queensland Parliament and Government to extinguish it by valid exercise of power "provided any exercise of those powers is not inconsistent with the laws of the Commonwealth".

Murray Islanders will be happy with this proviso. During the long, long legal battle, the Queensland Government passed legislation expressly extinguishing all native rights to the Torres Strait Islands retrospectively to 1878. In 1987 the Full High Court, by a majority decision, ruled this invalid under the Federal Racial Discrimination Act.

As for terra nullius, it came under vigorous attack. Mr Justice Brennan wrote: "The common law of this country would perpetuate injustice if it were to continue to embrace the enlarged notion of terra nullius and to persist in characterising the indigenous inhabitants of the Australian colonies as people too low in the scale of social organisation to be acknowledged as possessing rights and interests in land".

The news is being greeted on Murray Island with a mixture of excitement and satisfaction and lingering anger. A battle which should never have had to be fought has been won; rights which should never have been questioned have been upheld.

It has been a great victory for the Murray Islanders. Legally the clock has been turned back to 1879, when Queensland annexed the Torres Strait Islands, and those words of Captain Bligh in 1792, when he took possession of "all the islands in the strait for His Britannic Majesty, George III" have been negated.

A 10-year legal battle by Murray Islanders ended yesterday when the High Court ruled that their rights to the land had not been extinguished by white colonisation. CAMERON FORBES reports on the background to the case.

But they have to live with and struggle against the effects of more than a century of colonialism, paternalism and, at times, exploitation: being ruled, being used as cheap (to say the least) labor on the loggers, being effectively banished from their land for white-perceived misbehavior, being swallowed by a powerful and at times brutal society then relegated to its margins.

THERE are about 400 people on Murray Island — and perhaps almost three times that number living on the Australian mainland. Paradise may seem a fine place, but it can be difficult to live there.

There is not room enough, or jobs enough, for all Murray Islanders. Some fish or gather trochus shell, but many exist on unemployment benefits. Young teenagers play an interminable game of touch football on the one, sandy street. They are lost between school and meaningful work. They can also be lost between their traditional culture and the wider Australian world.

On Sunday one of the plaintiffs in the High Court case, Father David Passi, will deliver his sermon in his neat church by the sea. It will be an occasion for celebration, of course, but also for pointing out social and economic problems which cloud the island's present and future. All the learned words of learned judges will not blow them away.

He will also speak of the past and the spiritual life of Murray Island. He will speak of Malo, the man-octopus god. When Mr Justice Moynihan, of the Queensland Supreme Court, was making determinations of fact about the Murray Island case, on the instructions of the High Court, Malo did not fare very well.

Mr Justice Moynihan acknowledged the past power of the cult (which did lead to some unfortunate excess, such as head-bunting), but said: "The London Missionary Society moved swiftly to suppress (it), ultimately successfully, although the probability is that the cult continued in a clandestine way for some years. Remnants remain in the memory of the people."

Of Father Passi, Mr Justice Moynihan said: "I accept him as an essentially honest witness although he has a somewhat idiosyncratic view of some issues, not the least being the Malo story and Christianity, and a propensity for selective reconstruction — although no doubt he is persuaded by the truth of his vision."

That Father Passi is. He remains unrepentant. He maintains that the Malo tradition prepared the way for Christianity and he pays due respect to the Malo myth as providing the basis for the land-holding structure on Murray Island and the attitude of Murray Islanders to one another's property. The first among Malo's commandments was that people should keep their hands and legs from other people's land — not to trespass.

ONE OF his major worries is that young Murray Islanders are drifting into a spiritual terra nullius. "We have formed a council of elders. We want to revive the values of ours, to interpret them and to put them into a relevant, modern context."

The High Court victory will work its own miracle on the pride and self-esteem of the Murray Island people. For them it may help in the process advocated by the national commissioner, Mr Elliott Johnston, at the conclusion of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Deaths in Custody: "The thrust of this report is that the elimination of disadvantage requires an end of domination and an empowerment of Aboriginal people: that control of their lives, of their communities, must be returned to Aboriginal hands."

The sad footnote is that Eddie Mabo, the originating force for the claim, died in February of cancer. He was 52. For a great part of his life, he learned firsthand the lessons of powerlessness but refused to be crushed. The judgment is his monument.

Long road to win back the land

THERE has always been intense interest in the "Aboriginal question" but few people really know how Aborigines came to lose Australia.

Yesterday's High Court decision recognising the traditional land rights of the Murray Islanders in the eastern Torres Strait has focused attention on the concept of "terra nullius", in which Britain refused to recognise in law that Aborigines had prior occupation of Australia.

This partly explains how Aborigines were hunted and slaughtered and many others herded into camps and locked away like animals, although such activity really cannot be fully explained.

The only possible explanation is to say that things were different then, which is no excuse at all for the tragedy that is Aboriginal Australia.

In 1982, Eddie Mabo, David Passi and James Rice — three elders from Murray Island — brought an action in the High Court seeking to prevent Queensland's Bjelke-Petersen Government from making the island a native reserve on the grounds that this would deprive the occupants of traditional ownership rights which had not been extinguished.

The Mabo case was designed to test a 1971 decision of the Northern Territory Supreme Court in *Milirrpum v. Nabalco* and the Commonwealth, in which a judge ruled that Aboriginal systems of law did not contain notions of property recognisable by the Anglo-Australian legal system.

The Bjelke-Petersen Government reacted to the Mabo case by passing legislation to abolish all rights and interests of Murray Islanders — a move declared by the High Court in 1983 to be inconsistent with Commonwealth racial discrimination laws.

Eddie Mabo, now assured of his place in history, was born on Murray Island in 1936 and in accordance with island tradition was adopted by an island family, even though his parents lived together on the island.

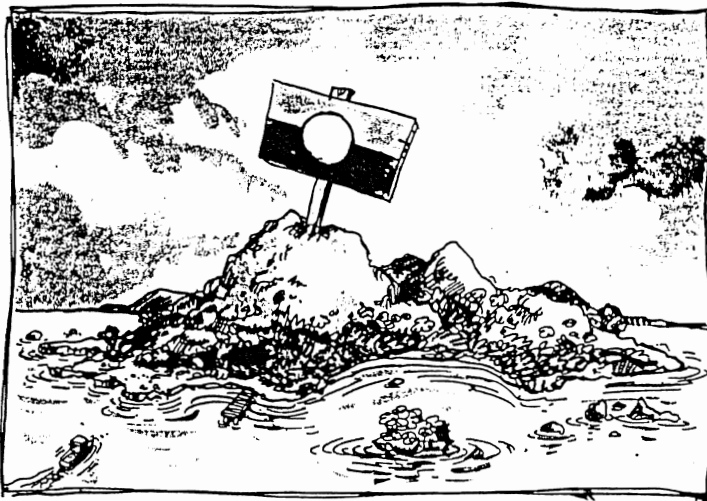
He left for the mainland in his late teens and did not return for 18 years because local authorities banned him from coming back, fearing he had been radicalised.

He held fast to his Murray Island, or Meriam, identity and learnt as much as he could about the region by talking to islanders and studying books.



□ The Meriam people of the Murray Islands in the Torres Strait were celebrating yesterday after the High Court recognised their traditional land rights.

□ ED SOUTHORN reports that the only sad factor about the decision was that Eddie Mabo, who helped start the claim 10 years ago, died from cancer earlier this year.



During the 1970s he was active in Aboriginal and Islander affairs in Townsville, where he lived with his wife, Netta, and their children.

He was the prime mover behind the establishment of a black community school in Townsville and helped manage it until government funds were withdrawn and the school closed.

He completed a teacher training course in Townsville and eventually returned to the island in 1981, where he persuaded the others to join him in going to the High Court.

By 1987, the legal parties to the Mabo case were unable to come to an agreed statement of facts and the matter was remitted to the Queensland Supreme Court for a determination.

The Supreme Court's Justice Moynihan delivered his findings in 1989, which were used by the High Court in deciding questions of law.

The Supreme Court findings included that the Murray Islanders had in the past lived and continued to live on the island in villages, make gardens there, fish in adjacent waters, recognise places on the island associated with myths, carry on religious life, trade and commerce and that their need for land was a continuing imperative.

The amazing thing about the Mabo case is that it was kicked around by lawyers and judges for 10 years without anyone finding a strong enough reason to throw it out of court.

Even Mabo's death from cancer in a Brisbane hospital this year did not stop the case rolling on. Clearly, it was an issue whose time had come, although many will argue that it is much too late now to be trying to right the wrongs of the past.

Ironically, it was the Privy Council which sounded the death

knell for Aboriginal land rights in 1889.

Long before then, representatives of the British crown in Australia had acknowledged Aboriginal rights but the Privy Council decided that Australia in 1788 had "consisted of a tract of territory practically unoccupied, without settled inhabitants or settled law."

THIS extraordinary claim ignored many things, including a letter in 1807 by Governor King to his successor, Bligh, in which King wrote that he had not been prepared to force Aborigines to work.

"I have considered them the real proprietors of the soil," he wrote.

An Aboriginal historian, Professor Henry Reynolds, of the James Cook University at Townsville, whose book "The Law of the Land" examines these matters in detail, says the colonial courts failed to protect Aboriginal rights which had been recognised by the early administrators and colonists.

It has been alleged that Queensland Premier Wayne Goss rushed through the State's land rights legislation because he feared a favourable decision from the Mabo case could somehow dictate the tone of the State legislation.

Mr Goss has consistently denied this and another school of thought is that a call by the State Aboriginal and Islander Affairs Department for all crown land in the Great Sandy Region to be given to Aborigines may have set off alarm bells in the Premier's office.

This departmental call was made to the Fitzgerald inquiry into Fraser Island, forcing the Aboriginal and Islander Affairs Minister, Anne Warner, to distance herself publicly from her department.

Ms Warner's exclusion from playing a big role in the preparation of the Queensland land rights legislation is well known, even though she was well qualified to contribute.

Queensland Aborigines feel that the State's land rights legislation has not delivered what the Goss Government promised and now, after the High Court decision on the Mabo case, the State Government will be under pressure to re-examine its obligations to Aborigines.

The Stolen Generation

[The following is based on Coral Edwards & Peter Read (eds.) *The Lost Children*, Doubleday, (Sydney, 1989)].

In Australia today there may be one hundred thousand people of Aboriginal descent who do not know their families or communities. They are the people, or the descendants of people, who were removed from their families by a variety of white people for a variety of reasons. They do not know where they came from; so do not even know they are of Aboriginal descent. Black children were raised by white people, some with love and some without love. As they grew up, they were expected to think white, to act white, and in the end to be white. These children are united by a common bond that, in doing so, began to find a new personality, identity and culture. The removal of Aboriginal children from their parents has been a policy in all states at different times. In New South Wales, the Cootamundra Home for Aboriginal Girls and Kinchela Home for Aboriginal Boys are the best known of several institutions. The Colebrook Home in South Australia and the "Half-caste Institution" in Alice Springs were similar institutions specifically designed to raise and socialise Aboriginal children.

Probably the origin of the practice of separating black children from their parents lay in the desire to turn them into "useful" citizens. The earliest Aboriginal institutions in Australia, where parents were at first allowed to live nearby, were set up to teach the Anglican virtues of obedience, punctuality, thriftiness and hard work. Below is the schedule for the institution in Blacktown near Sydney in 1827, which, though not excessive for those days of workhouse and poor relief, indicates that what missionaries wanted was a new generation of willing workers:

Schedule

1. To be up and dressed by 6 am and go to work.
2. To wash themselves, at half past 7 am go to prayers and breakfast at 8.
3. To work till 10 am.
4. To wash and go to school from 10am to 12 pm, write one copy, read half an hour, cypher 1 hour.
5. To dine at quarter after 12 and play till 1pm.
6. To school at 1pm, read and cypher till 2 pm.
7. To work from 2 till 6pm, the boys at carpentering the girls at sewing and knitting.
8. To play and wash and ready for supper at 7pm.
9. To prayers at half past 7 and to be in bed at 8pm.

This was the positive side of the missionaries' work. They wanted to create an Aboriginal working class and present it to those whites of the colony who thought Aborigines were little better than animals. "Useful" work demonstrated, so they thought, that Aborigines were capable of "civilisation". Like concerning most

institutions of the time, we know more about how the Blacktown institution started than how it finished, but it is likely that since the parents were allowed to see their children from time to time and the instructors were not unkind, a few children learned to sew or build.

But there was also a negative side which hardened when the missionaries were confronted by parents who wished to take their children away from the schools. The missionaries' answer was to separate the children, usually by trickery or force. Parents who allowed their children to go to the dormitory were allowed access to them only irregularly or never. By 1850 all the half-dozen missions which had come and gone in eastern Australia had, at one time or another, tried to raise Aboriginal children separated from their parents. They pursued the policy so hard that in some cases the black populations living at or near the missions simply went away. In 1838 at Wellington, in midwestern New South Wales, there was an ugly scene in which a missionary and two constables chased woman screaming and clutching her baby, into another missionary's house, then seized the child and took her off to the infants' dormitory. Next day the whole Aboriginal camp left and the work of the Wellington missionaries was never the same again. We know no more about most of the children of these institutions than their names and whether they physically survived the trauma of separation.

The separation of Aboriginal children from their families, therefore, was not an invention of the twentieth century, although its scale before this was modest. Probably by 1850 no more than 300 children had been separated and raised as white as a matter of formal policy. Whatever the effect on the children and the parents involved, enforced separation in the nineteenth century was not the catastrophe to Aboriginal civilisation that it was in the twentieth. For the first hundred years after the invasion the missionaries maintained that black children could be brought to the same level as white labourers and maids if they were trained properly, and the doubters maintained that it was best to let the Aboriginal population die out of its own accord. But most of the children stayed at home.

The turning point that divides the first hundred years of white settlement from the second, and the mostly humanitarian motivations of child separation from the mostly political, was this very question of Aboriginal population. The whites began to realise that the blacks, after all, were not dying out as they had expected. It is probable that the part-Aboriginal population - that is, the people of part-white descent who lived with and identified as Aborigines - began to increase after 1950, but because the whites were not well established in the rural regions, they didn't notice. It was not until the 1870s and 1880s that the whites who were vocal enough to complain to the government began to draw attention to the black populations gathering around the newly established towns. The middle class demanded that the government take measures to control what to them had suddenly become an increasing rather than a decreasing problem.

So the century of Aboriginal persecution which began with the establishment of the Aborigines Protection Board in 1883 was in many ways the answer to the complaints and demands of the whites who were confronted with Aborigines near their towns. Not all the Board members were persecutors; like those who established the early Sydney schools, their intentions were at first fairly benevolent. But by 1900 the parameters were set. The Board reasoned that if the Aboriginal population, characterised in some quarters as a "wild race of half-castes", was growing, then it would somehow have to be diminished. If the children were to be desocialised as Aborigines and resocialised as whites, they would have to be removed from their parents.

Thus to the first rationale of separation, a hundred years old and underpinned by the ambience of selfless missionary endeavour, was added the second, that it was in the interests of the state, as well as of the children themselves, that they be removed from their communities and raised as white. Child removal was seized upon as one administrative tool of a policy of dispersal, for it was much easier to whisk the children away into inaccessible places than to disperse a camp of a hundred adults who had nowhere to go. By 1910 it was politically less important that Aboriginal children become carpenters or maids. The vital purpose to the New South Wales administration was that, whatever else the children grew up to be, they should not be allowed to grow up as identifying Aborigines.

Little by little, child removal became a fundamental plank in the agenda of the Aborigines Protection Board. The argument rested on the supposed "idleness and immorality" of the reserves from which the children would somehow have to be "protected". A long-time official of the Board told the Australian Catholic Congress in 1909:

We have today 3,200 children growing up in our midst, three-fourths of whom range from half-castes to almost white, with no prospects ahead of the great majority, under the present system, but lives of idleness and vice...under the evil influences and bad examples of the adults, they almost invariably drift into an aimless, useless life of idleness and immorality... For adults we can only make their track as smooth as possible - they will soon pass away; but the children require our gravest consideration... Amongst all those who have had large experience with the aborigines, and who take a deep interest in their welfare, there is no difference of opinion as to the only solution of this great problem, - the removal of the children and their complete isolation from the influences of the camps. Under no circumstances whatever should the boys and girls be allowed to return to the camps, except on a short visit in an emergency, and then only by consent of the department... In the course of a few years there will be no need for the camps and stations; the old people will

*have passed away, and their progeny will be absorbed in the industrial classes of the country.*⁸

Two years after the passing of the 1909 Aborigines Protection Act the policy was made clear in the Annual Report:

The Board recognises that the only chance these children have is to be taken away from their present environment and properly trained by earnest workers before being apprenticed out, and after having once left the aborigines' reserves they should never be allowed to return to them permanently.

In 1916 the Act was amended so that "the Board may assume full custody and control of the child of any aborigine, if after due enquiry it is satisfied that such a course is in the interest of the moral or physical welfare of the child". This gave officials the power to remove any child under any pretext, for not even a court hearing was necessary. From that time the Board's officers were at work removing hundreds of children - 1500 by 1934 - from camps to which they were never to return.

By 1939 a new Child Welfare Act relating to all the state's children caused this section of the Aborigines Protection Act to fall into disuse, even though it remained on the books until 1969. A court hearing became the norm although it was often a formality. But by 1940 it didn't really matter. So deeply entrenched were negative attitudes towards Aboriginality that to the whites separation seemed preferable to almost any divergence from the European nuclear family model. On the missions, welfare officers had instructions to send any children light enough to pass as white to the ordinary child welfare homes, not the Aboriginal homes, presumably in the hope that they would never know that they were Aboriginal.

By the 1950s consideration of cost and new psychological theories which stressed the importance of the mother-child bond began to work against the Aboriginal Homes at Cootamundra and Kinchela. At the time when we might have expected a reduction in the number of separations, the statistics remained steady. The reason was the assimilation policy, officially in force throughout the Commonwealth, stated that every Aborigine should adopt the lifestyle, habits and thinking of white people. A baby placed with white parents would obviously be more quickly assimilated than one placed with black parents. So ran official thinking, but more importantly, so also ran the feelings of the majority of honest and conscientious white citizens. The popular image of Aboriginality was a run-down camp, devoid of truly Aboriginal culture, overrun with children and dogs. Drunks, broken windows, dirt and disease. Even those who blamed the government for the squalor thought it still might be best that the child, for its own

⁸ Quoted in Coral Edwards & Peter Read (eds.), *The Lost Children*, Doubleday, (Sydney, 1989), pp. xiii-xiv.

sake, should grow up in a comfortable suburban home. Therefore Aboriginal babies were not placed with Aboriginal foster or adopting parents, but with white.

White parents who adopted Aboriginal children were often applauded for their public-spirited action. The attitude of such parents towards their children covered a very wide spectrum. Some did their best, but, because of their own mental prison about the nature of Aboriginality, it was a best that fell far short of being good enough in their children's eyes. Some parents loved their adoptive children as passionately as parents can. It seems that, while being loved as a child can help to make a better balanced adult, it does not make it any easier to become an Aboriginal adult. Nor did a loving upbringing ensure that the adult would be shielded from being called "coon" or "boong". White society made very few concessions to black children raised among the whites.

Whatever their attitudes, substitute parents had to accept the prevailing view that Aboriginal children were to remain away from their community and culture as long as possible, preferably forever. Adopting parents were told to destroy any information they may have learned about their child's origins, so they might never find out who they really were. To the framers of the Adoption Act the phrase "who they were" had no meaning. The Act implied that when the original identity ceased to exist legally, it ceased to exist actually. This legal fiction has caused much harm to European adopters, but to Aboriginal children it has been devastating.⁹

It has only been in the last decade that Australia has attempted to recognise the pain and suffering the assimilation policy caused to many Aboriginal people. The establishment of a national inquiry was the governmental response to demands by Aboriginal people to have their voices heard.

Bringing Them Home

In 1995 the National Inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families was established by the Federal Attorney General. It was conducted by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. The inquiry visited every state and territory capital and most regions of Australia, from Cape Barren Island in the south to the Torres Strait and the Kimberly in the north. The Inquiry took evidence in public and private sittings from Indigenous people, government and church representatives, former mission staff, foster and adoptive parents, doctors and health professionals, academics, police and others. People also made written submissions. Most hearings were conducted by HREOC President, Sir Ronald Wilson, and the Aboriginal and

⁹ Coral Edwards & Peter Read (eds.), *The Lost Children*, Doubleday, (Sydney, 1989), *ibid.*, pp. ix-xviii.

Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Mick Dodson. In each region an Indigenous commissioner was appointed to assist with the hearings. An Indigenous Advisory Council, with representatives from every major region, also assisted the Inquiry. A total of 777 people and organisations provided evidence or a submission; 535 were Indigenous people who gave evidence or submissions about their experiences of forcible removal. Most had been removed as children; others were parents, siblings or children of removed children.

This is a summary of the recommendations of the Inquiry:

- That the Council of Australian Governments ensure the adequate funding of appropriate Indigenous agencies to record, preserve and administer access to the testimonies of Indigenous people affected by the forcible removal policies who wish to provide their histories in audio, audio-visual or written form.
- That, for the purposes of responding to the effects of forcible removals, "compensation" be widely defined to mean "reparation"; that reparation be made in recognition of the history of gross violations of human rights; and that the van Boven principles guide the reparation measures.

Reparation should consist of:

1. acknowledgement and apology;
2. guarantees against repetition;
3. measures of restitution;
4. measures of rehabilitation, and
5. monetary compensation.

- That reparation be made to all who suffered because of forcible removal policies including:
 1. individuals who were forcibly removed as children;
 2. family members who suffered as a result of their removal
 3. communities which, as a result of the forcible removal of children, suffered cultural and community disintegration; and
 4. descendants of those forcibly removed who, as a result, have been deprived of community ties, culture and language, and links with their entitlements to their traditional land.
- That all Australian parliaments officially acknowledge the responsibility of their predecessors for the laws, policies and practices of forcible removal.
- That churches and other non-government agencies which played a role in the administration of the laws and policies under which Indigenous children were forcibly removed acknowledge that role and in consultation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission make such formal apologies and participate in such commemorations as may be determined.

- That the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, in consultation with the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, arrange for a national Sorry Day to be celebrated each year to commemorate the history of forcible removals and its effects.
- That state and territory governments ensure that primary and secondary schools curricula include substantial compulsory modules on the history and continuing effect of forcible removal.
- That all professionals who work with Indigenous children, families and communities receive in-service training about the history and effects of forcible removal.
- That the Commonwealth legislate to implement the Genocide Convention with full domestic effect.
- That the Council of Australian Governments ensure that appropriate Indigenous organisations are adequately funded to employ family reunion workers to travel with clients to their country, to provide Indigenous community education on the history and effects of forcible removal and to develop community genealogies to establish membership of people affected by forcible removal.
- That monetary compensation be provided to people affected by forcible removal under the following heads:
 1. racial discrimination;
 2. arbitrary deprivation of liberty;
 3. pain and suffering;
 4. abuse, including physical, sexual and emotional abuse;
 5. disruption of family life;
 6. loss of cultural rights and fulfilment;
 7. loss of native title rights;
 8. labour exploitation;
 9. economic loss; and
 10. loss of opportunity
- That the Council of Australian Governments establishes a joint national Compensation Fund.
- That an Indigenous person who was removed from his or her family during childhood by compulsion, duress or undue influence be entitled to a minimum lump sum payment from the National Compensation Fund in recognition of the fact of removal. That it be a defence to claim for the responsible government to establish that the removal was in the best interests of the child.

- That no records relating to Indigenous individuals, families or communities or to any children, Indigenous or otherwise, removed from their families for any reason, whether held by government or non-government agencies, be destroyed.
- That the Council of Australian Governments ensure that Indigenous community-based family tracing and reunion services are funded in all regional centres with a significant Indigenous population and that existing Indigenous community-based services, for example health services, in smaller centres are funded to offer family tracing and reunion assistance and referral.
- That every Church and other non-government agency which played a role in the placement and care of Indigenous children forcibly removed from their families, at the request of an Indigenous language, culture and history centre, transfer historical and cultural information it holds relating to the community or communities represented by the centre.
- That every Church and other non-government agency which played a role in the placement and care of Indigenous children forcibly removed from their families identify all records relating to Indigenous families and children and arrange for their preservation, indexing and access in secure storage facilities preferably, in consultation with relevant Indigenous communities and organisations, in the National Library, The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies or an appropriate State library.
- That every Church and other non-government agency which played a role in the placement and care of Indigenous children forcibly removed from their families provide detailed information about its records to the relevant Indigenous Family Information Services.
- That church and non-government welfare agencies that provide counselling and support services to those affected by forcible removal review those services, in consultation with Indigenous communities and organisations, to ensure they are culturally appropriate.
- That the council of Australian Governments negotiate with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice commissioner, the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care and the National Aboriginal and Islander Legal Services Secretariat national legislation establishing a frame work for negotiations at Community and regional levels for the implementation of self-determination in relation to the well-being of Indigenous children and young people.

The Inquiry was of fundamental importance in validating the stories of generations of Indigenous people who until now have carried the burden of one of Australia's greatest tragedies. Indigenous families and communities have endured gross violation of their human rights. These violations continue to affect Indigenous people's daily lives. They were an act of genocide, aimed at wiping out Indigenous families, communities and cultures, vital to the precious and inalienable heritage of Australia. The Inquiry's recommendations were directed to healing and reconciliation for the benefit of all Australians. A commitment to the implementation of both the spirit and letter of the recommendations is essential to the future of unity, justice and peace of the nation. Read the sympathetic manner in which the Press reported on the Inquiry in the articles provided.

The forgotten kids of Kinchela

From Page 27

He has since discovered his real mother died not long after his birth. His brother, Clem, hit the grog after a stint in Jimmy Sharman's boxing troupe and is now in a mental institution. His sister, Irene, is dead.

In his submission to the inquiry this week, Burnum Burnum told how he was sexually abused by the man into whose care he was placed at Kinchela. He also spoke of physical abuse: "I once accidentally threw a ball through a window and for punishment I was taken to the engine room alone, ordered to drop my trousers and bend over a chair while he gave me 10 lashings of the stock whip, leaving an indelible imprint forever and an inability to sit down for months."

Kinchela took boys from the ages of about eight to 10. They were initially placed in local schools but by about the age of 14 most were indentured out to work until they were 18.

THE Government paid convicted prisoners in jail more than us — we only got 25 cents per annum, or \$2 in total for the eight years of my imprisonment," Burnum Burnum said. "Us stolen children became no man's land people. We are now non-tribal, non-initiated, non-reserve, non-community, non-status Aborigines. We went back home with polished accents, pompous attitudes, superior education and cash to buy our way back into the tribe, which alienated us even more.

"Like prisoners and early convicts, we were fed by government stores in bulk. We were fed on tons of white sugar, white bread of the worst quality, brains, tripe, the lot. We nearly all got diabetes."

There have been many complaints about all forms of abuse at Kinchela in the 46 years it operated between 1924 and 1970, according to Link-Up, an Aboriginal group charged with gathering together the stories of stolen children for the course of the national inquiry.

One inmate was locked in a shed for a week and told to eat hay, they said. There were also reports that boys were tied to trees and fences, whipped with hosepipe and deprived of food.

Two government inquiries into brutality at Kinchela failed to put an end to it. In 1935 a department inquiry into Kinchela showed that the manager, a Mr McQuiggan, was an alcoholic who used a stock whip on the boys and would starve them. The inquiry ordered that the harsh treatment and the practice of "loaning out boys" to local farmers was to cease. But the physical abuse continued well into the 1940s by the time Burnum Burnum, Danny Adams and Cecil Bowden got there.

This week, one Link-Up worker, Lola McNaughton, told the *Herald*: "People were killed there, we are sure of that."

McNaughton, who was taken from her family in northern NSW and sent to Cootamundra girls' home, has reason to believe her own brother may be one of the boys buried in the former boys' home at Kempsey. "No-one has seen him since Kinchela and there are others like him who have simply gone missing since they were taken by the Government," she said.

Following information from several men who were placed at Kinchela, Link-Up has called for an investigation of the former boys' home for possible burial sites. They deplored the poor state of Government records

TWO CENTURIES OF DISLOCATION

1788 Aboriginal children taken from families and used as guides by settlers.

1814 Governor Macquarie establishes Native Institution for Aboriginal Children to "educate and civilise" them.

1878 First Aboriginal reserves and missions created.

1883 Aboriginal Protection Board formed to oversee mass dislocation of Aboriginal people from traditional lands in NSW to reserves and stations.

1909 Aboriginal Protection Act gives legal sanction to the board to remove Aboriginal children from their families.

1915 Protection Act amended to give board power to remove any child without parental consent.

1923 Child Welfare Act allows for the adoption of Aboriginal children by white families.

1939 Definition of "neglected child" expanded to include children who do not regularly attend school.

1940 Aboriginal Protection Board replaced by Aboriginal Welfare Board to oversee policy of assimilation. All Aboriginal people expected to live like European Australians.

1943 Welfare Board sends children to foster parents.

1952 Fire destroys records relating to "stolen" children.

1962 Aborigines gain the vote.

1967 Referendum result recognises Aborigines as Australian citizens.

1969 Aboriginal Welfare Board is abolished.

1972 NSW school principals no longer have right to refuse Aboriginal children.

THE INQUIRY

More than 100,000 Aboriginal children believed taken from their families by Australian governments. Between 1903 and 1930, more than a third of Aboriginal children taken from their families: NSW Government admits it oversaw the removal of at least 8,000.

National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families set up last year to examine impact of past separation policies.

It has finished hearings in NSW, Qld, Tasmania, Victoria, SA and parts of WA. Its findings are due in December.

about the running of the home. "In our search for stolen children we have been able to find many more ex-Cootamundra girls than ex-Kinchela boys — there are some people we know were in Kinchela but we have no details of their whereabouts," she said.

□□□

IN its 200-page submission to the inquiry, Link-Up called for compensation to be paid to the Aboriginal children of Kinchela, as well as all children of the "stolen generation". Link-Up wants the establishment of a foundation, like the Jewish Shoah Foundation, to document the stories of people they call the "survivors of the Aboriginal holocaust".

Although the six Link-Up staff were overwhelmed by how much Aboriginal people had to say about the separation from their parents, they know many more simply still can't talk. The journey home to the truth is always the hardest, McNaughton says.

Danny Adams not only made that journey home, but last year he also went back to Kinchela. "I walked through the gates and it hit me all of a sudden. I just pictured myself there and I just spat on the ground — I thought this is what I think of you. I turned around and got back in my car and drove off. I just couldn't handle it."

He has had many jobs since Kinchela, from wharfie to used car salesman. He is married with three daughters and lives in Kurnell. When he went back to his home town of Collarenebri, he met a woman who had seen the Welfare Board and police take himself and his brother and sister.

"I have been there four times and every time she sees me she cries. She feels guilty. Everyone in town wanted to know what the hell they did with those kids they took away — us."

He first met his mother four years ago and has seen her only three times since. She is now 86. They first met on a park bench in the town where he was born.

"I said to her, 'I am your son.' 'Oh,' she said and her eyes just sparkled and then a second later she said, 'You're not my son.' Mate, the blinking pain. She didn't recognise me. The last time she saw me I was three. All that time she was searching for us. But how can you search for someone when you don't know who they are?"

SINCE Kinchela, Cecil Bowden has been in and out of jail. He spent five years inside for manslaughter and has been imprisoned on other minor charges. He had a wife and three children but he doesn't see much of them these days.

"I had a bad temper but when I left Kinchela I said I was not going to put up with any more crap," he said.

The time in jail made him realise he wanted to help others break the cycle of institutions of which he had become a part. He works with the Aboriginal Children's Service helping young convicted Kooris before they go to court. "I wanted to help them because I think Aboriginal children are still taken away today. When police pinch Koori kids off the street today, it is like what they did to us all those years ago. It's telling them they are no good."

In recent years he has discovered he has four natural brothers and four sisters — two tracked him down in a Redfern pub.

"When I found out my father was alive I went to Cowra to visit him. But I couldn't call him dad — there were just no ties there — the Government took all of that away."

□□□

The national inquiry into the "stolen children" has heard thousands of stories like these three. But on the last day of its Sydney hearings yesterday, the inquiry commissioner, Mick Dodson, read aloud Cecil Bowden's story on behalf of all those Aboriginal children in NSW who were "stolen".

"For any of us to be alive today is an achievement in itself. Most find it hard to come back to their families. Because of their upbringing a lot are ashamed of their heritage. To this day hundreds haven't gone back to their homes. Most have turned to alcohol and drunk themselves to death. A large proportion never find out where they are from and who are their families.

"The stolen generation is the forgotten generation."

HELEN PTT

THE young Aboriginal boys gazed for breath as the D36 locomotive belted smoke into the Hawkesbury tunnel.

It was 1946, and 10-year-old Harry Penrith was one of the boys aboard the steam train on his way to Kinchela boys home in Kempsey. He cried all the way.

Even 50 years later the details of that trip — the smell of the steam, the tunnel, the engine type — are marked indelibly on his mind.

Born under a sacred tree at Mosquito Bay, Wallaga Lake, on the NSW South Coast, he was taken by government order from his mother and traditional home-land at three months old.

He was brought up by nuns at a mission in Bomaderry, where most young Aborigines were sent when first taken from their parents. They were given new names, birth dates and histories. Before they had any chance to learn Aboriginal ways, the children were taught that to be black was bad; to be white was good.

When young Harry heard he was to be sent to Kinchela, he ran and hid. He was scared. It

was not just the thought of the train ride, though that was terrifying enough. Kinchela kids told Bomaderry boys of the beatings and lack of food at Kempsey.

A year before the train trip, he remembered newspaper headlines had screamed of train rides on the other side of the world where the German Government had rounded up Jews and sent them to their deaths. The NSW Government was not sending these boys to their deaths; at least, that was not the intention.

But of the 45 who made the trip to Kinchela with Harry Penrith, only five are alive today. Some claim the boys who went killed as a result of "foul play" and want the grounds of the former home searched for grave sites. Others, scarred by years of abuse in government institutions, came to early deaths from alcoholism, diabetes or at their own hands. This is the story of three stolen children who survived that journey to Kinchela.

And those who never made it home.

Danny Adams also remembers the voyage from Bomaderry to Kinchela as if it were yesterday. He remembers lining up at Central Station and the trip to the zoo, before they left.

"They just told us we were going on a train trip," he said. They never told us where we were going. A real long train trip like you might even know when you were coming back. We all lined up there with our little ports with a Bible inside. That was all that was inside. I think it was an old man from La Perouse who took us on the train trip. He brought us up to Sydney and we went to the zoo.

That was the last time I saw an animal until we got to that place. Kinchela

was a place where they thought we were the animals. It was a place where they kicked us like dogs."

Until he left Bomaderry for Kinchela, Danny Adams had no idea he was Aboriginal. He was born in Collarenebri, but is not sure in which year; no record exists of his birth. Other people tell him he was taken from his

parents at the age of three. He has no memory of his parents from his childhood.

"We thought the nuns were our parents. We thought they were our mothers. I was definitely not told that I was Aboriginal. What the sisters told us was we had to be white."

That process of denial of his heritage continued when he arrived at Kinchela. When they got to Kempsey railway station the manager came to meet them in a red truck and told all the boys to get in the back like cattle. When they arrived at Kinchela their "ports" with the Bibles inside were set ablaze.

"They then took us to a room and shaved our hair off and gave us clothes made in Long Bay Jail and stamped a number on them. My number was 43. Number 43 stuck to me until I was 12. They never called you by your name, they called you by your number. The number was stamped on everything — even your toothbrush. It was just like a prison."



Brothers in arms... Danny Adams, Burnum Burnum and Cecil Bowden, part of a lost generation of Aboriginal children, reunited this week. In the top photo, Mr Adams is second from left in front and Burnum Burnum is second from right. Photo/pen by NICK MOIR

This week these three men came together for the first time in years in an Anglican church hall in Redfern. It was the NSW hearings of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Chil-

dren from their Families, and the three had come to retell their tales. It was 1994 before Danny could talk about Kinchela, and this week was the first time Cecil had spoken of those years.

The three, reminiscing about Kinchela while the inquiry's three commissioners heard the NSW Government admit it had sanctioned the systematic removal of at least 8,000 Aboriginal children from their families, in front of an Aboriginal flag flanked by a Christian cross in the church hall, the three porled over photos and memories of those years on the 13-hectare institution downstream from Kempsey towards South West Rocks. Were it not for the tragic reason for their gathering, it could have been like any school reunion. But the memories were of shared adversity, sad tales of survival. At times each one had to leave the room to have a cry.

Harry Penrith, now 69, lives in a western Sydney suburb, where he is the only Aborigine. For reasons he cannot explain, he has been back to his traditional homeland only three times in 40 years.

Harry Penrith has changed his name back to his tribal one — Burnum Burnum — and received a grant for Federal Parliament pre-selection in the seat of Baramba.

Continued Page 37

Over 8,000 black children 'stolen'

By HELEN PITT

The State Government admitted yesterday that police, welfare and health authorities worked together in the separation of at least 8,000 Aboriginal children from their parents between 1940 and 1969.

That figure was likely to be much higher, but could not be verified because the majority of individual files kept in government records during this period have been either lost or

destroyed, a government representative conceded yesterday.

In the second day of Sydney hearings in the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families, the inquiry heard evidence from representatives of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, the Archives Authority, NSW Health and police.

The inquiry was told that State Government legislation made the systematic removal of Aboriginal

children from their families legal from 1909 until 1969.

But no records exist of the workings of the Aboriginal Welfare Board — the body deemed responsible for the separation — between 1938 and 1948, the manager of collection services of the Archives Authority of NSW, Mr Richard Gore, said.

Most records kept on adopted Aboriginal children before 1950 were also destroyed, either by the Government's "record-culling policy" or in the 1952 fire at the

Government Stores in Petersham, the inquiry was told.

One of the inquiry's commissioners, Mr Mick Dodson, called on the State Government to waive the administrative fee for gaining access to the remaining personal files during the course of the inquiry.

"I am putting you [the Government] on notice that there should be some commitment to cut through the red tape so that Aboriginal people can access their records," Mr Dodson said.

The inquiry was also told that principals of all NSW government schools had the right to refuse enrolments to Aboriginal students until 1972, when the regulation was withdrawn from the NSW Teachers' Handbook.

The director-general of the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Mr Geoff Scott, told the inquiry complaints by parents of non-Aboriginal children to a school head was reason enough to refuse enrolment of an Aboriginal child. Aboriginal

children were either placed outside the school or forced to sit alone or in outside sheds, Mr Scott said.

"A consequence of the principal refusing to educate an Aboriginal child meant the child became 'neglected' and could be taken from the parents and placed as a ward of the NSW Aboriginal Welfare Board," he said.

The acting director of NSW Health's Centre for Mental Health, Professor Marie Bashir, said there was an urgent need to

provide trauma counselling for NSW Aborigines taken from their families, similar to the service the State Government provided for refugees.

Of the 99 deaths examined in the 1987 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, nearly half — 43 — had been stolen children, the inquiry heard.

"We need to be looking at the trauma of these Aboriginal children which has been affecting one generation after the other," Professor Bashir said.

Aborigines to Protest At Ceremony in Sydney

Group Will Try to Drown Out Prime Minister

By Michael Richardson
International Herald Tribune

PERTH, Australia — Prime Minister John Howard of Australia and other political and civic leaders will attend a ceremony in Sydney on Saturday that is intended to advance proposals for reconciliation between the country's indigenous black minority and its predominantly European majority.

But Peter Yu, executive director of the Kimberley Land Council, which represents Aborigines living in the northwest of Australia, says that he and several other Aboriginal leaders will boycott the event because Mr. Howard heads a government that "cannot find the generosity of spirit to say 'sorry'" for the mistreatment of indigenous people since European settlement of Australia started in 1788.

Angered by the government's recent refusal to make an official apology and its attempt to downplay the significance of the forcible removal of Aboriginal children from their families under an assimilation policy between the 1920s and 1960s, other Aboriginal activists say they will turn their backs and chant Mr. Howard down when he speaks at the Corroboree 2000 ceremony.

"It was wrong then to steal our children, to move our communities around for administrative convenience, to deny us the right to practice our law and culture, to keep us excluded from the benefits of a prosperous nation," Mr. Yu said. "It is wrong now to deny that those things happened."

Numbering about 353,000 in a population of 19 million, Aborigines are the most disadvantaged group in Australian society in terms of health, life expectancy, education, housing and job prospects.

Mr. Yu said that partly as a result of colonization, Aboriginal communities were filled with damaged people.

"It is, tragically, of no surprise that so many Aborigines are drug addicts, drunks and people without hope or resources, many of them dying before their time — in custody or through alcohol abuse or suicide," he said.

Deteriorating relations between Aborigines and the government are tarnishing Australia's image ahead of the summer Olympic Games in Sydney, which start in September. Aboriginal groups have announced plans to stage protests during the Games to show that Australia is a "racist nation."

A Corroboree is a ceremonial aboriginal dance and the event Saturday was organized by a council of indigenous and nonindigenous Australians that was formed in 1991 by a previous government to advance black-white reconciliation.

The council will formally present its Declaration Toward Reconciliation and a program of practical measures needed to sustain it.

But Mr. Howard said this month that the government could not accept the council's call for an apology for injustices or its proposals to recognize Aboriginal customary law and the right to self-determination.

The prime minister said previously that it was unreasonable to expect the current generation of Australians to apologize for abuses they had nothing to do with.

He said Thursday that past injustices should be recognized, but that it was more important to look forward than backward.

Previous governments headed by the Labor Party, which is now in opposition, had set 2001, the centenary of Australia's federation, as the deadline for achieving formal black-white reconciliation. Mr. Howard, who leads a conservative coalition, abandoned the commitment in March, saying the deadline was artificial and had been a mistake.

1.2 Suggested Further Reading

Colin Bourke, Eleanor Bourke & Bill Edwards, *Aboriginal Australia: an introductory reader*, University of Queensland Press, (St. Lucia, QLD, 1998).

Andrew Markus, *Australian Race Relations 1788-1993*, Allen & Unwin, (St Leonards, NSW, 1994).

Henry Reynolds, *Aboriginal Sovereignty: three nations, one Australia?* (Sydney, 1996).

1.3 Review Questions

Was the assimilation policy in regard to Aboriginal children racist?

How did authorities justify their actions?

What impact would the *Bringing Them Home* inquiry have had on the reconciliation process between white and black Australians?

Despite the recommendations, the Prime Minister, John Howard refused to say sorry on behalf of the Federal Government even though State premiers has done so. Should the Prime Minister have said sorry to the Aboriginal people of Australia for the Stolen Generation?

Do you think the recommendations of the National Inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families go too far? Do they not go far enough?

Why was the Press so sympathetic to the Aboriginal cause?

1.4 Epilogue

The problems of the Aboriginal people of Australia are an historical issue as much as an issue for today. In the areas of health, education and unemployment Aboriginal people suffer more than white Australians. While there have always been humanitarians who have championed the cause of Aboriginal people, their voices, until the late twentieth century, were little more than cries in the wilderness. Land rights and the Stolen Generation are the issues for Aborigines today. Until these problems are solved, whatever advances are made in the areas of health and education will be meaningless. Without self-determination there will be little hope that Aboriginal people can take their rightful place as equal participants in the rich tapestry that is Australian culture.

Aborigines have not figured in the determination to find an Australian national identity. This has been the province of the white male. The remainder of this course turns to the impulses that forged Australia's national identity. It examines how Australians see themselves and how they would like to be seen by others. It takes into account the influences on Australia's sense of identity and examines the influences on Australian culture brought on by war and its aftermath.

Part 2

2.1 Australians at War:

"baptism by fire"

The major social political and economic events of the twentieth century have contributed to Australia's national identity. Some historians have said that the history of a nation is the history of its wars. In the case of Australia in the first half of the twentieth century, this was partially true. Australians' involvement in war was one of the key factors in the development of the nation's identity. Australia was a part of the British Empire. As such, she was likely to be involved in Britain's imperial wars.

Khartoum.

When General Charles Gordon was killed in Khartoum by the fanatical followers of Mohammed Ahmed, the Mahdi (or Messiah), patriotic sentiment rippled through the colonies. Emotional accounts of the fighting, and poems appeared in newspapers. William Dalley, the Acting Premier of New South Wales, cabled London, offering a force of artillery and infantry. The contingent raised was small. Once it landed at Suakin, on the red Sea, in 1885, it played no part in deciding the outcome of the war. The men who went there were more like mercenaries than regular troops. Their pay was 5 shillings per day and their duty was to shoot the enemies of Queen Victoria (in this case Arabs, Abyssinians, Egyptians and Negroes).

The Boer War 1899-1902

By the middle of 1899, it was clear to most people in the world that there was going to be a war in South Africa. The issue seemed simple enough. Britain requested and then demanded that the quasi-independent Boer Republics of Transvaal and the Orange Free State should give British aliens, who were paying taxes there, the right to vote. But the Boers refused. Australian opinion was overwhelmingly pro-British, for it was obvious that the fundamental point at issue was not one of electoral rights but of British supremacy.

Even before hostilities began, Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria had offered to supply troops for England. Late in September, when it was clear that war was inevitable the military commandants of the various colonies met in Melbourne and agreed that Australia should send a joint contingent of 2,500 men, more than half of them mounted. The Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, welcomed the offer as an expression of Empire solidarity. When war broke out on October 11 1899, Australian patriotic enthusiasm was overwhelming. Moved by a desire to do their bit for the "old country" and by a longing for adventure, thousands of young men volunteered for service.

Although much of the initial enthusiasm in Australia had faded during the war's duration of two and a half years, there was never much opposition to it, and most Australians continued to believe that it had been right to come to Britain's aid in time of need. Altogether Australia sent 850 officers and 15,600 other ranks with 16,300 horses, to South Africa. Total casualties were about 1,400 of whom 38 officers and 480 other ranks were killed or died of illness. Six Victoria crosses and many other decorations were won by Australians.

Boxer Uprising

While the Boer War was being fought, Australia was involved in yet another imperial conflict. This was the Boxer Uprising in China. New South Wales and Victoria sent a contingent of 451 naval volunteers. These men did not take part in the famous defence of the foreign legations in Peking, but helped to police that city and Tienstin for nine months after the fighting. Many British troops were impressed with the loyalty to the imperial cause.

The First World War

Britain entered the Great War on August 4, 1914. Australia announced her intention of supporting Britain, and declared war in the same month. The Prime Minister, Joseph Cook, announced that: "Whatever happens, Australia is part of the Empire to the full. Remember that when the Empire is at war so is Australia at war." The leader of the Labor Party, and former Prime Minister, Andrew Fisher said: "Turn your eyes to the European situation, and give the kindest feelings towards the mother country at this time...Australians will stand beside our own and defend her to our last man and our last shilling." Although there had been times when Australia had resented Britain's interference in her affairs, once war had become a reality such feelings were washed away in a flood of patriotism and solidarity with the Mother Country.

Australians everywhere rallied to the cause. Everywhere people waited for the latest news from Europe. Crowds formed outside newspaper offices. The National Anthem and "Rule Britannia" were sung in music halls, theatres, lecture theatres, and school halls. Composers and poets helped as well. W.W. Francis wrote the Chorus:

Rally round the banner of your country,
 Take the field with brothers o'er the foam;
 On land or sea, wherever you be,
 Keep your eye on Germany.
 But England, home and beauty, have no cause to fear;
 Should old acquaintance be forgot?-
 No!No!No!No! Australia will be there....
 Australia will be there.

Frank Johnstone, a *Bulletin* poet, wrote in *Sons of Australia*:

For Britain! Good old Britain!
Where our fathers first drew breath,
We'll fight like true Australians,
Facing danger, wounds or death.

The Australian Government had a small, but modern navy. It now decided to raise a specially recruited military force of 20,000 men. The rush to enlist was a nation-wide phenomenon. It was the young men who had been the babies of the early 1890s who were most affected. But the excitement and the anticipation and the social pressures induced men of all ages and occupations to turn up for the medical examination. A vivid account was given by T.W. Heney, Editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*:

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The young men of the universities, the lads of the greater public schools, of the state high schools, and of the primary schools, the students in private and religious houses of education, rushed to the colours. From many of these institutions both pupils and masters enlisted, and the work of the schools was interrupted or dislocated. It proved necessary to frame special official regulations to prevent the enlistment of minors without their parents' knowledge and consent. From the factories and shops groups of comrades enlisted in a body. Fathers and sons, brothers, uncles and nephews, brothers-in-law came up to the barracks, and some of the bitterest moments of those early days of war, previous to the graver tragedies of death and disablement, were those when the medical examination, then extremely exacting, parted fathers and sons, or other comrades. Many a man stumbled oft to the barrack gates unable to answer the greetings of his friends, with unaccustomed tears in his eyes, as he knew himself rejected, while he left behind to the chances of war a son or some mate dearest to his heart. The public services and the professions were suddenly embarrassed by the enlistment of their members. Trades, manufactures, businesses suffered in the same proportion. From station and farm, from camps of drovers, shearers, tanksinkers, and fencers, from survey parties and gangs of railway labourers, from mining camps and prospectors' parties, from river-men and opal-gougers, from groups of rabbiters and kangaroo-shooters, from carriers and motor-men, from all sections of the distant and isolated labour of the Australian back country, the enlistment offices received splendid material, but in such quantity as endangered harvest and wool-clip. Numbers of pastoralists sent not only as many of their sons as could pass the doctors, but also numbers of their employees, often equipping them. Numbers of young men, rejected under the then exceptionally rigorous medical tests, but refusing to rest under the stigma of cowardice or indifference, formed an association, and wore on

their coat-lapels a badge to show that they had volunteered. More than a few young men who appeared indifferent received white feathers by post, or the cold shoulder in public, from girls or women who had been their friends. In some instances clubs and athletic bodies barred out members of military age who showed no disposition to shoulder military duty. Unhappily, many an injustice was thus committed, and frequently young men who would have given much to have been able to serve, but for some genuine reason were unable, silently endured long misrepresentation and affront. Therein lay one of the defects of the voluntary system; another - as it was to be discovered - lay in the disproportionately heavy toll of the young and patriotic.

Both the navy and military force would be placed at the disposal of the British High Command. The military force, or AIF (Australian Imperial force), was placed under the command of Brigadier-General W.T. Bridges. He was responsible for its early development. He thought that it should comprise three brigades of infantry and one Light Horse (or cavalry) brigade. It was hoped that many men who had undergone military training in the nation's militia, and who had served in the Boer War, would enlist. Volunteers would make up the balance. High physical standards were set and good pay offered. Privates received six shillings, or "six bob" a day.

The Government had no need to worry about a lack of volunteers. They almost jammed the recruiting offices. City men enlisted first. As news spread to the country, country men enlisted too. Many were swept away on a wave of patriotism. Many thought that the war would be a romantic adventure in their lives, and quickly over. By the end of the first year, 50,000 men had enlisted, and a second division was formed. Men were trained on sports grounds in cities and camps in the country. While they trained, wagons harnesses, saddles, uniforms, tents, and other supplies were manufactured, food and medical supplies were collected, and ships refitted as troop transports. This was the beginning of the ANZAC Corps - a corps of Australian and New Zealand army personnel. The ships left on 1 November for Britain, via the Suez Canal. British and Australian warships formed an escort. On the way, the Australian cruiser, HMAS Sydney engaged the Emden, a German raider, which had been sent to destroy the radio station on the Cocoas Islands. The Emden was disabled and captured within an hour. Three Australians were killed, and fifteen wounded in the action.

While the ANZACS waited in Egypt, plans were being made in Britain. Turkey had entered the War in October 1914. The Turks menaced two points - one on the border of the Russian Empire, and the other on the east bank of the Suez Canal. Lord Kitchener, the Secretary of State for War, hoped to defeat the Turks quickly, and remove this menace. So did Winston S. Churchill, the First Lord of the Admiralty. He believed that an Anglo-French fleet could force an entrance through the Dardanelles, and sail to Constantinople. The fleet could then bombard the ancient city, which hopefully would surrender quickly. With the

capital seized, the rest of Turkey would also collapse. This would open a route through to Russia, and allow the allies to attack the enemy in Europe from another angle. Churchill saw Constantinople as the soft underbelly of the Central Powers.

Churchill's naval action was tried, but failed miserably. Nearly all the ships used were old and, in many cases, needed a refit. The command situation was poor, and the Turks had laid minefields in the narrows and dug in batteries on both shores overlooking the mines. The gunners aboard the ships smashed some to the Turkish batteries, but three ships were lost on a minefield in one day and the attack had to be called off. By this time, it became obvious that troops would have to be used in an amphibious assault on the Gallipole Peninsula. Once landed, these troops could fight their way eastwards, across the peninsula, and take the coastal forts and guns from behind. The ships would then be able to clear the minefields and sail through to Constantinople. General Sir Ian Hamilton was placed in command of a Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, consisting of some 70,000 British, dominion and French troops.

On 1 April 1915, the ANZACS were informed that all leave had been cancelled. On 3 April the men were ordered into trains and taken to the port of Alexandria. There they boarded ships again, and these ships sailed north, towards the Greek Island of Lemnos. There they met with other Allied ships, to form a formidable armada of 200 warships and transports. These ships set sail for Gallipole on the evening of 24 April.

Before dawn on 25 April, the ANZACS climbed down into small rowing boats, clutching their rifles and equipment. These boats were then towed by steamboats over 4 kilometres to shore. The ANZACS were supposed to land in a small cove one and a half kilometres north of a small promontory called Gaba Tepe, establish a beachhead, and move inland, overcoming the Turks. Unfortunately, there were strong currents, and these currents swept the boats into another cove, later to be named Anzac Cove. Here there was a beach, and behind that a steep hill rising about 100 metres straight up. It was a spot which had been designated impossible for landing. As the boats came in, the men tumbled into the water, and ran up onto the beach. As they came ashore, they were met by rifle and machine-gun fire from the heights above. The Turks were comfortably entrenched, and could pick their marks. For the first time in their history, Australian and New Zealand troops fell wounded and dying together, in the boats, in the water, on the beach, and amongst the scrub upon the hill.¹⁰

A representative of the London Daily Telegraph described the initial assault in emotive language:

¹⁰ Ronald Laidlaw, *The Land They Found*, Macmillan, (South Melbourne, 1979), pp. 214-19.

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The Australians rose to the occasion. Not waiting for orders, or for the boats to reach the beach, they sprang into the sea, and, forming a sort of rough line, rushed at the enemy's trenches.

Their magazines were not charged, so they just went in with cold steel.

It was over in a minute. The Turks in the first trench were either bayoneted or they ran away, and their Maxim was captured.

Then the Australians found themselves facing an almost perpendicular cliff of loose sandstone, covered with thick shrubbery. Somewhere, about always up, the enemy had a second trench, strongly held, from which they poured a terrible fire on the troops below and the boats pulling back to the destroyers for the second landing party.

Here was a tough proposition to tackle in the darkness, but those colonials, practical above all else, went about it in a practical way.

They stopped for a few minutes to pull themselves together, got rid of their packs, and changed their magazines.

Then this race of athletes proceeded to scale the cliffs without responding to the enemy's fire.

They lost some men, but did not worry.

In less than a quarter of an hour the Turks were out of their second position, either bayoneted or fleeing.

There has been no finer feat in this war than this sudden landing in the dark and storming the heights, above all holding on whilst the reinforcements were landing....¹¹

The men gained a foothold under the guns but were then stopped by the Turks, and could go no further. Meanwhile, more men landed on the beach below. By nightfall, thousands of troops had come ashore. The landing was achieved at tremendous cost. Generals Birdwood and Bridges wanted to withdraw the men, but General Hamilton, aboard the Queen Elizabeth, refused, and ordered the men to "dig in" and "stick it out". Hence the term "digger" was coined to describe Australian soldiers in the First World War. In August, the ANZACS were reinforced by British troops. Attempts were made to move further inland. Some ground was covered, but could not be held. On Sari Bair, there was bitter hand-to-hand fighting, and 4, 000 men died. By September, the beach and foothills were jammed with some 105,000 men, 20,000 mules, and 3,000 horses, plus stores and provisions. By this time men were huddled in a complex of trenches and dug outs. After eight months the troops were withdrawn from Gallipoli and taken back to Egypt. The Australians had lost 7,600 men and sustained 19,000 wounded. The New Zealanders lost 2,500 men and 5,000 were wounded. The French lost as many as the ANZAC force combined. The British lost nearly three times as many.

¹¹ Quoted in *Ibid.* pp. 219-20.

Back Home

From the horror of war the spirit and legend of the ANZAC was born. Australians came to believe that they had proven themselves to be first-rate soldiers. From a race of bushmen and pioneers a new national image was born and there was a new national day to celebrate. Every April 25 Australians celebrate ANZAC Day. This is an annual day of remembrance of those who did not return. But it also is a commemoration of a battle they did not win. At Suvla Bay on the Gallipoli Peninsula in Turkey a national identity was formed and that was drawn upon in all subsequent wars in which Australians fought. Andrew Fisher, sent a cable to the Secretary of State for the Colonies:

The government and people of Australia are deeply gratified to learn that their troops have won distinction in their first encounter with the enemy. We are confident that they will carry the King's colours to further victory.¹²

Kind George V sent a message to the Australian Prime Minister:

I heartily congratulate you upon the splendid conduct and bravery displayed by the Australian troops in the operations at the Dardanelles, who have indeed proved themselves worthy sons of the Empire.¹³

Conscription

Meanwhile, at home lists of casualties were received. Ministers and priests visited relatives to the news of soldiers' deaths before their names were published in newspapers. Australians saw their young men return home limbless, sightless, crippled from mustard gas, and "shell shocked". There was no "glory" in this. The horrors of Gallipoli, the Western Front, and the desert were brought home to the Australian people, and many began to question the validity of the war. Only a small percentage of the population had opposed the war at the outset. Now the number opposing it grew. Even "respectable" people began to voice criticism.

However, towards the end of 1915, the Labor Prime Minister, Billy Hughes, was invited by the British Government to visit Europe. There he could study the war at close hand. In England, he attended meetings of the British War Cabinet, and was impressed with Lloyd George, the new Prime Minister, who was all for ending the war as quickly as possible. In France he met Georges Clemenceau, the French Premier, and visited troops in the trenches.

Hughes returned to Australia determined to involve more Australians in the war. One sure way to do this was to introduce conscription. Late in August, cable

¹² Quoted in *Ibid.* p. 221.

¹³ Quoted in *Ibid.*

were received from the British Army Council and Australian Headquarters in London, asking for reinforcements. The AIF had suffered 28,000 casualties in seven weeks on the Western Front, and there were only 7,000 reserves available in Britain. The British authorities were now threatening to break up the ANZAC force and place its soldiers in other British units. Hughes would have to do something, or Australians would not have their own military force to represent them. 32,000 men were demanded immediately, plus a further monthly recruitment of 16,500. During June, July and August, only 6,000 men had enlisted. This was not nearly enough. Hughes was thus forced into action.

When Hughes announced his intention to introduce conscription to make up troop numbers, he divided his own party and the people of Australia. He was supported by W.A. Holman, the Labor Premier of New South Wales, most newspapers, Protestant churches, the Universal Service League (organised to promote conscription), capitalists, patriots, and conservatives. He was opposed by Dr. D. Mannix, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne, T.J. Ryan, the Labor Premier of Queensland, unionists, the Industrial Workers of the World, the Australian Freedom League, Irish nationalists, conscientious objectors, pacifists, socialists, and others. Dr. Mannix led the anti-conscription forces in the south, and T.J. Ryan led them in the north. Speeches were made, letters written to newspapers, posters posted, and large meetings voiced protest. Hughes, also known as the "Little Aussie Battler" battled on.

Hughes agreed to two referenda, to let the people of Australia decide the issue. These referenda were held on 28 October, 1916, and 20 December, 1917. The wording of the first referendum was:

Are you in favour of the government having, in this grave emergency, the same compulsory powers over citizens in regard to requiring their military service, for the term of this War, outside the Commonwealth, as it now has in regard to military service within the Commonwealth?

The wording of the second referendum was:

Are you in favour of the proposal of the Commonwealth Government for reinforcing the Australian Imperial Force overseas?

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The citizens of Australia will decide on Saturday the greatest issue ever put before a free people. From out the fog lies with which the opponents of the Government deliberately sought to obscure it the great issue shines out clear and distinct. We are part of the British Empire; that is, we are one of the family of free British nations that engirdle the earth. While the Empire stands, we and all that we hold dear, the many privileges that self-government has enabled us to secure, the White Australia policy, are safe. If the Empire falls

we fall with it. The Empire is fighting for its life. Britain has asked us to do our share. The question is - Are you going to do it? By your answer the world will judge you. By your answer, you will decide the testing of Australia, if not that of the Empire. Is Australia going to prove true to herself, to the traditions of our race, to the men of ANZAC; or stand out before the world as degenerate and unworthy?

The need for men is obvious and imperative. Germany is not beaten. The fury of her onslaught upon Rumania and her great counter-attacks upon the western front prove indeed that her strength is till enormous. The Commanders of the Allies' armies, the great statesmen of the Empire, and the leaders of Labor in Britain and France, all tell us plainly that we cannot win decisive victory without more men...

The anti-conscriptionists leaders, on the other hand, tell us that no more men are needed, that the war is won, that Germany is beaten. Whom will you believe? Whom will you follow? Whom? Who amongst you will hesitate for a moment to accept the word of these great leaders on the spot, men who know the facts, who see daily the evidence of the mighty power of the enemy, who know at one his strength and his deadly purpose? In the face of these plain declarations of the men who know; in the face of the stern facts that meet our eyes daily in the war cable which prove only too plainly that Germany is not beaten, that indeed Rumania is in grave danger of being crushed by Serbia - how can any man or woman vote against the Government proposals? What is the alternative? There is none. Voluntarism has failed.

The anti-conscriptionists put forward no alternative except that Australia should cravenly desert the Empire and its Allies. Neither sophistry nor gross misrepresentation can hide this appalling fact. The greatest war of all time is raging, the fate of the Empire, of Australia, of democracy, is at stake, and the anti-conscriptionists tell us that we have done enough; that we should leave the fighting to Britain and the Allies. They attempt to cover up their motives and the true import of their counsels by outrageous misrepresentations, by slander; but the issue is too great. Nothing can or must cloud it. Britain has asked us to do our share. She has asked us to increase the number of our reinforcements so that we may keep our five divisions up to their full fighting strength. Germany can only be beaten by a supreme effort on the part of the Empire and its Allies.

This is the question before you. What is your answer to be? Do not be deceived by those foolish or cunning and malicious stories invented by men whose motives are obvious, whose records are known, whose enmity to Britain and the Empire is apparent. Do not believe these stories about industrial conscription, about invasion of coloured labor, about the need for men to stay here to safeguard the White Australian policy. The men who invent these stories do so in the deliberate hope of blinding the eyes of the people to the plain facts. There will be no industrial conscription, no weakening of the White Australian policy, unless the Empire is beaten in this struggle.

The great enemy of Australia, of Labour, of liberty, is military despotism, of which Germany is the living embodiment. If we turn tail, and, like cravens, desert the Empire, to whom we owe everything, abandon the Allies who have suffered such awful losses and horrors, and made such great sacrifices - but who still fight gallantly on - if we refuse to reinforce the heroic ANZACS, then, indeed, will fall upon us the doom we deserve, and before the tribunal of the nations we shall stand condemned.

*Fellow citizens, be true to yourselves, to Australia, to the Empire, and vote YES.*¹⁴

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A "Vote NO!" leaflet:

THE BLOOD VOTE

Why is your face so white, Mother?
 Why do you choke for breath?
 O I have dreamt in the night, my son,
 that I doomed a man to death.

Why do you hide your hand, Mother:
 And crouch above it in dread?
 It beareth a dreadful brand, my son,
 With the dead man's blood 'tis red.

I hear his widow cry in the night,
 I hear his children weep,
 And always within by sight,
 O God!
 The dead man's blood doth leap.
 They put the dagger into my grasp,
 It seemed but a pencil then,
 I did not know it was a fiend agasp,
 For the priceless blood of men.

They gave me the ballot paper,
 the grim death-warrant of doom,
 And I smugly sentenced the man to death,
 In the dreadful little room.

I put it inside the Box of blood
 Nor thought other man I'd slain,

¹⁴ W.M. Hughse, *Daily Telegraph*, Sydney, 27 October 1916, quoted in Frank Crowley, *Modern Australia in Documents*, vol. 1, Wren Publishing Pty Ltd, (Melbourne, 1973), pp. 267-9.

Till at midnight came like a whelming flood
 God's work - and the Brand of Cain.

O little son! O my little son!
 Pray God for your Mother's soul,
 that the scarlet stain may be white again
 In God's great judgement Roll.¹⁵

Hughes lost both referenda.

Effects of the War

At 11 am on the 11th day of November 1918, the Great War - as it was known to contemporaries - came to an end. The loss of human life had been on a scale unknown to mankind. The victorious Allies and their associates had mobilized forty-two million men : Germany and her allies had mobilized twenty-three million. The victors lost five million dead, the vanquished three million; other casualties numbered more than twenty-one million. Civilian deaths from military action, massacre, starvation and exposure have been estimated at twelve-million. The Australians reckoned themselves among the victors. They had sent the finest of their youth and manhood to stem the tide of German militarism. They had excelled in battle. If sacrifice was the anvil of nationhood, the Australians had amply proven their fitness for their new status. Australia had sent to war 329,883 troops, and on Armistice Day 7,442 more were in training in Australia; half the total number of all men aged eighteen to forty-five served in the AIF. In the years 1914-1918, 59,342 Australians died in action, or from wounds, or as prisoners of war; 166,819 suffered from wounds or gas, and half that number were sick or invalided at one time or another. Proportionately, the Australian contribution of volunteers was greater than that of any other of the victorious Allies.¹⁶

The first anniversary of the day which the Australian and New Zealand forces landed at Gallipoli was celebrated as an occasion of profound solemnity and national sorrow. Memorial services and Church parades expressed the grateful thanks of a nation to those ANZACS who had given their lives for King and Country, or who had returned home forever scarred by the experience. Anzac Day was also a day of rejoicing, a day which celebrated the achievements, the gallantry and the heroism of Australian fighting men wherever they served. Anzac Day came to signify the birth of a new nation in the Pacific: the word Gallipoli came to

¹⁵ Quoted in Frank Crowley, *Modern Australia in Documents*, vol. 1, Wren Publishing Pty Ltd, (Melbourne, 1973), p. 272.

¹⁶ Frank Crowley, *Modern Australia in Documents*, volume 1, Wren Publishing Pty Ltd, (Melbourne, 1973), pp. 309-10.

be treasured as signifying the real baptism of fire of the Australian soldier. A great national mystique grew quickly around ANZAC and Gallipoli. Australian's oldest Roman Catholic newspaper contributed to the making of the Anzac Legend:

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The price of nationhood must be paid in blood and tears; there is no country that truly loves its flag which has not made the supreme sacrifice - which has not freely offered up the lives of its best and bravest for a dream, for an ideal, for a solemn purpose. It is the fortune of Australia to find her true soul in a great and glorious struggle to preserve the liberties of the smaller nations, to crush a despotic militarism which would awe and subjugate the rest of the world. Anzac Day, which we have celebrated for the first time, and celebrated, we hope, in a solemn and thoughtful mood, means more to us than an immortal charge up the cliffs of Gallipoli. Whilst it reminds us of the valour of our dead heroes, who live in lonely graves on classic ground, it reminds us, too, in a much greater degree, of the day Australians really knew themselves. Before the Anzacs astonished the watching nations, our national sentiment was of a flabby and sprawling character. We were Australian in name, we had a flag, but we had been taught by our politicians not to trust ourselves - we were constantly admonished by our daily journals to remember that we were nothing better than a joint in the tail of a great Empire. There were patriots who protested against the slavish and sycophantic doctrine. But, generally speaking, it was assumed that Australia only lived by the grace of England, and the Empire Day orators has a better hearing than the faithful souls who clung to Australia Day and gave special honour to their own starry banner.

Anzac Day has changed all that. The Australian flag has been brought from the garret and has been hoisted on a lofty tower in the full sight of its own people. No matter how the war may end - and it can only end one way - we are at last a nation, with one heart, one soul, and one thrilling aspiration. There is mourning in our homes and grief in our hearts, and the flower of our youth will not return to us; but there runs through the Commonwealth a lifting spirit such as it never knew before, Australia is no longer merely a prosperous country in which it is good to live. The blood of our dead heroes was shed afar from us, but their spirit has come home across the seas to dwell for ever among us, to whisper that we have taken our place among the nations, and to inspire us to be ever faithful and ever true to the land that gave us birth and to the glorious banner which waves over it. Anzac Day and Australia Day, honoured by hundreds of thousands of deeply-stirred people - what a great change this is! What a miracle it seems to those who not so long

*ago noted with sadness that the name of our country practically had no meaning.*¹⁷

A spirit and legend of "Anzac" was born. Australians came to believe that they had proven themselves to be first-rate soldiers. They had been brave, and they had been tough. They had also been on the winning side. Before the War, Australians thought of themselves as a race of bushmen and pioneers. From the time of the Great War, they were to think of themselves, and promote themselves, as both good bushmen and tough soldiers. A whole new national image was born. C.E.W. Bean, an official war historian, wrote:

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The arms were handed in. The rifles were locked in the rack. The horses were sold. The guns were sheeted and parked in storage for other gunners. The familiar faded-green uniform disappeared from the streets.

But the Australian Imperial Force is not dead. That famous army of generous men marches still down the long lane of its country's history, with bands playing and rifles slung, with packs on shoulders, with dust on boots, and bayonet scabbards and entrenching tools flapping on countless thighs - as the fellaheen of Egypt and the French countryfolk knew it.

*What these men did nothing can alter now. The good and the bad, the greatness and the smallness of their story will stand. Whatever of glory it contains nothing now can lessen. It rises, as it will always rise, above the mists of ages, a monument to great-hearted men, and for their nation, a possession for ever.*¹⁸

Australians were brought closer together by the sacrifice they had made. In every town and city, in every rural district, were families who had suffered anxiety, pain, and loss. The Great war strengthened the nationalism that had been growing during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

¹⁷ *Freeman's Journal*, Sydney 27 April 1916, quoted in Frank Crowley, *Modern Australia in Documents*, volume 1, Wren Publishing Pty Ltd, (Melbourne, 1973), pp. 255-6.

¹⁸ Ronald Laidlaw, *The Land They Found*, Macmillan, (South Melbourne 1979), pp. 225-6.

The Second World War

At Home

At 1.15 pm on September 3, 1939, Prime Minister Robert Gordon Menzies announced over the radio:

It is my melancholy duty to inform you officially that, in consequence of a persistence by Germany in her invasion of Poland, Great Britain has declared war upon her and that, as a result, Australia is also at war.

Thus, the war in Europe revived feelings of kinship with Britain consistent with those inspired by World War One.

For Australians at home, the Second World War was clearly divided into two separate phases. It was almost as though the nation fought two wars. The first was an overseas war, thousands of miles away, in which Australian forces joined in the British Empire's struggle against Germany. The second phase of the war was against Japan in a conflict that came perilously close to Australian shores. The confidence that Australians had felt at the beginning of the Second World War, quickly evaporated and turned to fear and alarm as the Japanese rapidly achieved their down ward thrust towards Australia. The numerous small quibbles over civilian rights all but disappeared as the nation prepared, for the first time, for total war. In Parliament on December 11 1941, Prime Minister John Curtin spoke of "a complete revision of the whole Australian domestic and industrial life." He warned: "In order to achieve defence requirements, the Government will act ruthlessly."

He appealed to the workers - particularly in the much-troubled coal industry - to forget their differences and concentrate solely on the war effort. A few months later, he was able to point to a 205,000-ton increase in coal production in New South Wales. The Government also intervened in stoppages on the waterfront, in road transport and in the munitions industry. Because of the need to preserve coal and oil, travel and lighting were restricted. The number of reserved occupations (those whose members were allowed to remain in their own industries rather than be diverted to the war effort) was reduced. The nature of the trades no longer excluded indicates how little the war had interfered with civilian life previously. They included the entertainment industry, brewing, clothing and confectionery trades and jewellery manufacture.

The response of the Government's call far exceeded expectations. The monthly recruitment figure jumped from 4,016 in October 1941 to 12,543 in January 1942. When the Government asked for 2,000 additional women for the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force and 1,600 for the Australian Women's Army Service, there was a rush of applications. In Victoria, an advertisement for 100 women for aircraft production brought 500 applications in the first two days.

Some citizens rushed ahead with their own defence forces. A federal Member of Parliament, Major-General G. Rankin, enthusiastically suggested forming a civilian cavalry to harass any invading Japanese. Farmers of Victoria formed unarmed combat companies. Fifty women from Sydney took to the scrub on horse-back to train their own cavalry movement. "People's armies" sprang up everywhere. Although the government welcomed this display of eagerness, it believed it would be more advisable to direct individual energies into the Voluntary Defence Corps. In February 1942, Curtin banned all private armies. The VDC benefited from the move and, by the end of 1942, its strength had doubled from 50,000 to 100,000. Many recruits were used to keep a 24-hour watch on aircraft movement and coastwatching.

New Guinea: stepping stone to Australia

With devastating rapidity, the Japanese advanced across the South West Pacific, invading islands, capturing bases and destroying an Allied fleet off Java. On March 6 1942, three months after the attack on Pearl Harbour, Japanese troops landed in New Guinea. The invasion of Australia seemed imminent. In the middle of 1942, the Japanese made two attempts - by land and by sea - to capture Port Moresby in New Guinea. Both times they were defeated. The famous battles of the Coral Sea and of the Kokoda Track have gone down in Australian history as the two vital struggles which saved the country from certain invasion by the Japanese.

Since early March 1942, when the Japanese had seized various bases in northern New Guinea, Australian forces had been attempting to drive them out: the militia had played a significant role in this action. The Japanese captured the inland village of Kokoda from the Australians at the end of July 1942, and then pushed across the southern ridges of the Owen Stanley Range towards Port Moresby. On 28 September, ten days after their arrival near the southern coast, they were forced to retreat, and by 2 November the Australians had pushed them back to Kokoda.

Fighting took place under nightmare conditions. The Kokoda Track stretched for about 100 miles, but distances were to be counted in hours of walking and climbing, often on hands and knees, rather than in miles. The historian of the 2/14th Australian Battalion said of it: "It became a matter of sheer determination, forcing the body to achieve the impossible." Colonel Kingsley Norris, assistant Director of Medical Services in the 7th Division, gave this description:

Imagine an area of approximately 100 miles. Crumple and fold this into a series of ridges, each rising higher and higher until 7,000 feet is reached, then declining in ridges of 3,000 feet. Cover this thickly with jungle, short trees and tall trees, tangled with great, entwining savage vines. Through this, cut a little native track, two or three feet wide. Pour water over the forest so that the steps

become broken and continual yellow stream flows downwards and the first few level areas become pools and puddles of putrid black mud.

Troops also had to contend with the humid heat of the day and the bitter cold of the night. Supplies were hard to get through and a myriad of insects plagued the troops. Malaria, dysentery and jungle rot took a heavy toll. Before long, the men fighting on the Kokoda Track were emaciated and gaunt, their clothes perpetually wet from either the humidity or the heavy topical rain.

Fighting continued throughout September and, in the second half of the month, more reinforcements arrived. On September 28, the Australians again pushed forward from Imita Ridge and found little opposition from the Japanese, who had retreated pending operations in Guadalcanal. The enemy had also outrun his supply lines and many troops were sick and starving. The fighting was brutal as desperate Japanese troops flung themselves time and again on to the Australian lines to try to batter a way through to safety. About 600 Japanese soldiers were killed and the survivors reached the Kumasi River only to find the bridge across the river had been destroyed by Allied aircraft. Many drowned as they tried to cross. Others were shot or speared by native soldiers from the Papuan Infantry Battalion. The Australians had now put the mountainous country behind them and were filing down into the Papuan lowlands towards Buna, Sanananda, and Gona on the coast.¹⁹

The recapture of the Kakoda Track became an important symbol of Australian military prowess, and the incident was used to boost national morale. The press helped to build the image:

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Kokoda in our hands affords a geographic measurement of Australian achievement since the change from defensive to offensive in the New Guinea area beginning with the storming of the Ioribaiwa Ridge at the end of September. This advance over forty miles of the worst mountain and jungle country in which fighting has yet taken place on any front, is a military achievement adding to the renown of the Australians as fighters, but these Australians are the same Australians as were forced to retreat before the Japanese onslaught that at one stage came close to imperilling Port Moresby. The valour of the now advancing Australians is no less than those thousands of good Australians who are pent somewhere in Malaya, in Java, and in other Japanese-occupied territory. The only difference between the troops now pressing on towards Buna and these others is that now our men have the

¹⁹ Rex Rienits and Peter Breen, *Australias Heritage: the making of a nation*, Paul Hamlyn, (Dee Why West, 1970), p. 2059.

equipment and air support essential to cope with an enemy long prepared and backed with tremendous military resources.

Another measure of the change in the New Guinea campaign is in the psychological approach. We have now abandoned completely our awe of or trust in the Owen Stanley Range as a defensive barrier. This range of mountains has ceased to be a military term, and has been relegated to being a mere geographical name. It remains, however, a big factor in our lines of supply and communication, but by no means as seriously as when our men had to fight without air superiority

Pressing on beyond Kokoda, our forces are between 60 and 70 miles from Buna, but we must brace ourselves for serious fighting before Buna can be restored to our hands. Behind those Japanese troops who have been dislodged from Kokoda is the might of Japan, a country with more than ten times the manpower of Australia. By bombing their supply line forward from Kokoda, we have enabled our forces to turn the tables on the enemy, but in the country now ahead, the enemy will undoubtedly put up fierce resistance. The clearing of Japanese forces from New Guinea is one of the tasks that must be accomplished, but it will not be made easy for us by the enemy. To those materials that have been given to our forces to enable them to advance to Kokoda must now be added without stint all that Australia can throw into the fight.²⁰

The war in the Pacific drove Australia into a defensive alliance with the USA. American forces saved Australia from invasion by the Japanese and governments were forever grateful. Not surprisingly, after the war Australia began to look more and more to America than Britain for security and defence. This was an important turning point in Australian history.

New Alliances

The knockout to British naval power in South-east Asia made it clear that Australia could no longer count on her traditional guardian. Prime Minister Curtin spelt this out in a press statement at the end of 1941 when he stated:

Without any inhibitions of any kind, I make it quite clear that Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom.

We know the problems that the United Kingdom faces. We know the constant threat of invasion. We know the dangers of dispersal of strength, but we know, too, that Australia can go and Britain can still hold on.

We are, therefore, determined that Australia shall not go, and we shall exert all our energies towards the shaping of a plan, with the United States as its

²⁰ Quoted in Frank Crowley, *Modern Australia in Documents*, vol. 2, Wren Publishing Pty Ltd, (Melbourne, 1973), pp. 71-2.

keystone, which will give to our country some confidence of being able to hold out until the tide of battle swings against the enemy.

Summed up, Australian external policy will be shaped toward obtaining Russian aid, and working out, with the United States, as the major factors, a plan of Pacific strategy, along with British, Chinese and Dutch forces.

This displeased many traditionalists, but was irrefutable considering the numbers at Australia's disposal. Most of the 8th Division became prisoners-of-war when Singapore fell, and spent the next three years in hardship at Changi concentration camp or on the Burma "death railway". It was decided to call home the 6th and 7th divisions who were with the British Ninth Army in Syria. This brought the Australian Government into head-on collision with Winston Churchill, who wished to throw these divisions into the shaky Burma campaign, for which the Australians were the only available reinforcements. Curtin firmly refused, wisely, as it was probable that the Australians could have stemmed the Japanese advance, and it was essential to find seasoned troops for New Guinea. Churchill gave way, though with a bad grace, and only after America's president Roosevelt had also tried unsuccessfully to shift Curtin. This clash was almost immediately followed by another when the British government invited R.G. Casey, Australia's representative in Washington, to accept appointment as British minister of state in Cairo. Casey accepted, but the Australian government gave publicity to its protests against the British poaching a man who could usefully serve Australia's interests. These episodes showed a growing independent-mindedness in Australia. It was not surprising (though there were also other legal and constitutional reasons) that later in 1942 the Australian parliament decided to adopt the State of Westminster of 1931, thus spelling out Australia's autonomy in a way which previous governments had not chosen to stress.

If the American alliance was now essential to Australia, Australia because of its location and its industrial and agricultural capacity became scarcely less important to the Americans as a base. Once the Philippines were in danger of conquest, the Americans quickly decided to defend Australia. By turning Australia from her traditional dependence on the British Empire and cementing the American-Australian alliance, the war produced a favourable climate of opinion for the future American interest and investment in Australia. And by forcibly reminding Australia of the existence of her Asian neighbours, the Japanese thrust may have kindled interest in the possibility of trade and other contacts with the Near North once peace was restored.

These new developments in Australian foreign policy had been foreshadowed in the early years of the war. Until 1940 Australia had been slow to expand the scope of her Department of External Affairs by the recruitment of career diplomats and the appointment of overseas envoys. In that year the Menzies government broke new ground by appointing a senior cabinet minister, R.G. Casey, as Australian representative in Washington; the United States reciprocated

by the appointment of a career diplomat to Canberra, Mr. Clarence Gauss. During the next twelve months two more distinguished Australians, Sir John Latham and Sir Frederic Eggleston, were appointed to Tokyo and Chungking respectively.

It was significant that the United States and East Asia were chosen as the first three positions, since these were the quarters which Australia most needed to cultivate. Casey at Washington did much to promote the role of Australia as a bridge and mediator between Great Britain and the United States. Although this role was thought promising, it was rather lost sight of during the later states of the war. Instead, Australia's attitude towards the United States was oddly ambivalent. Profoundly grateful for American help in repelling the Japanese, the Australian government was yet rather suspicious of "dollar imperialism", and showed considerable wariness about encouraging a continued American presence in the South-west Pacific after the war. There was even a tendency, particularly after the victory of a Labor government in Britain in 1945, to draw closer once more to the British Commonwealth in any issue which raised a potential clash of interests with the United States.

Instead of pushing her claims as a bridge between Britain and America, Australia in the years between 1944 and 1949 seemed to concentrate on playing the role as a bridge between the Western powers and the newly emerging nationalist movements of South-East Asia, especially India and Indonesia. There were even times when Australia seemed desirous of figuring as a "middle power" between the Soviet Union and the West in the "cold war" which developed after 1945. It was certainly Australia's aim in those years to stand apart from any of the great powers, and to star as a spokesman for the smaller nations of the world whose numbers in the new United Nations Organization might make up for their lack of military strength. This marked an unusual departure from Australia's customary reliance on close ties with a great and powerful ally, such as Britain or the United States. It was only possible because for a few years Australia was relatively free from any menace, real or imaginary, from the Near North. Between 1945, when Japan was defeated, and 1949, when China went Communist, it was hard to envisage the possibility of menace from an Asian power, and easy for Australia to overrate her ability to stand on her own feet in world affairs.²¹

Korea

On June 25 1950, the army of North Korea marched across the 38th Parallel into South Korea. The world was stunned: offers of help flooded Seoul. Australia despatched warships and a squadron of jets to the area.

²¹ G.C. Bolton, "1939-1951," in Frank Crowley (ed.), *A New History of Australia*, William Heinemann, (Melbourne, 1974), pp. 464-70.

The outbreak of the war in Korea did not initially have a big effect in Australia. Indeed, it failed to make an appearance in the Sunday papers at all. Australia was fully occupied with troubles of her own, for, on the coast of New South Wales, there had occurred some of the most devastating floods in Australia's history. River, overflowing their banks because of cyclones, had forced thousands of people to evacuate their homes in addition to causing many millions of pounds of damage. The majority of Australians knew little about Korea and cared even less about what happened to her.

Yet it seemed the Australia was becoming involved in the Korean War. Australia's Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, had immediately placed two of the Royal Navy's ships - the destroyer *Bataan* and the frigate *Shoalhaven* - at the United Nations' disposal. In addition, Australia decided almost immediately to supply United States General Douglas MacArthur with air support. This was annexed to MacArthur's own 5th Airforce. Even so, the question on everyone's mind was: "Will Australia send an expeditionary ground force to Korea?" The answer was given by Arthur Fadden on July 26. Fadden, acting Prime Minister while Menzies was visiting America, said in a country party address at Brisbane: "We were asked to give ground support in Korea and we said we would in principle."

The following day, Fadden elaborated on his statement and declared that the ground forces supplied by Australia would be a brigade of volunteers drawn from the permanent Army, the British Commonwealth Occupation Force and Second World War veterans. Soon after Fadden made this announcement, recruiting offices were opened. Almost immediately, there was a flood of volunteers. They came from all over the country, from the cities and the outback - clerks, swagmen, farmers, old men and boys too young to shave. They volunteered for a bewildering variety of reasons, but mostly for a fight, any fight so long as they could get into the action. And these were not all the starry-eyed and the adventure-seeking. Many had been veterans of the Second World War. They had seen the grim side of war.

In the United States, Robert Menzies declared that Australian troops would be combined with New Zealand forces to form a small but highly effective fighting unit. The plan was agreed to because it meant that a unit could be sent to Korea within six weeks while a large force would take months to train and equip. The first troops consisted of a battalion of volunteers from the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces, strengthened by men of the Australian army then serving in Australia. The battalion was to have a total strength of 900 troops. Volunteers would enlist for a maximum of three years service in any part of the world and payment would be 13 shillings 9 pence a day - 2 shillings a day more than ordinary regular army privates - with 4 shillings 9 pence extra for married men.

Vietnam

During the early 1960s, Australia became embroiled in the savage war in Vietnam. At home few people understood the reasons for Australia's sudden involvement or the origins of the war itself. No overseas military operation in which Australia has been involved has caused as much controversy and bitterness as the war in Vietnam. For probably the first time in Australia's history, the country as a whole could not find the burning sense of right and fervent patriotism with which she had face two world wars and the carnage of the Korean war which ended in 1952. Both service personnel and civilians held grave doubts over the morality of Australia's commitment to Vietnam. This was reflected in the widespread dissension among a large section of the population on the "home front".

As the war in Vietnam dragged on and more and more Australian soldiers were being killed and wounded, people at home began to question the basic assumptions for Australia's continued participation. This prompted anti-war demonstrations throughout the country. People began to question the motives of Australian involvement and, by the late 1960s, a protest movement was challenging the validity of the Australian commitment to South Vietnam. Although Australia had become involved in South Vietnam in an advisory capacity as early as 1962, it was not until she finally committed herself in 1965 that the uneasiness in the public mind began to surface.

In retrospect, the Australian government's decision in November 1964 to implement a record programme of defence expansion can possibly be seen as a preparation for military involvement in Vietnam. Under a three-year programme, the services were to be increased by nearly half and the controversial national service training for young men of 20 was introduced. Yet, only six months later, the announcement by the Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, that Australia was to send the first full combat unit to Vietnam took the vast majority of Australians by complete surprise. Even Federal politicians, both in the Opposition and in Menzies's own party, were unaware of the impending announcement, made to a half-empty House on April 29 1965.

Both the Leader of the Opposition, Arthur Calwell, and his deputy, Gough Whitlam, had left Canberra a few hours before the announcement to help campaign for the forthcoming state elections in New South Wales. Twice during the day, Calwell had approached Menzies to ask if there would be any major statements during his absence. Both times, Menzies replied that it was possible but he could not say for sure. In the Senate, on the afternoon of the announcement, Senator John Grey Gorton, then Minister representing the Minister for External Affairs in the Upper House and later Prime Minister, was asked a question without notice - whether the Government was planning to send a battalion to South Vietnam. Gorton's reply was: "I know nothing about the matter which the honourable Senator has raised."

The manner in which the Menzies announcement was made became almost as controversial as the actual commitment. The government's position became even more compromised when the Treasurer, Harold Holt, returned from America two days later to announce that he had successfully dissuaded the American Government from placing severe restrictions on American investment in Australia. These restrictions, aimed at encouraging American businessmen to keep their capital and profits in their own country had threatened to cut American investment in Australia by 15 to 20 per cent. Holt stressed upon his arrival that "in no sense was Australia's dispatch of the battalion introduced as a matter of negotiation."

The timing of the Prime Minister's statement and Holt's American success, however, quickly led the critics of the new troop commitment to denounce it as blatant bargaining of Australian lives for American economic concessions. "Diggers for Dollars" became the slogan of the anti-Vietnam forces within Australia. Holt's speech before the President Lyndon Baines Johnson in America during his 1966 visit, arguably bears out any suspicion:

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The outcome of this struggle is critical for the hopes that you and we share for a better and more secure way of life for the free people of Asia. But it does not take war to bring Americans and Australians close together. We like each other. Friendships form quickly between us. We have many mutually beneficial links. Our trade with each other, the investment that you make with us with your capital...You know that in Australia you have an understating friend. I am here, sir, not asking for anything - an experience which I am sure you value at times when it is not so frequent as it might be. You have in us not merely an understanding friend but one staunch in the belief of the need for our presence with you in Vietnam. We are not there because of our friendship, we are there because, like you, we believe it is right to be there and, like you, we shall stay there as long as seems necessary to achieve the purposes of the South Vietnamese Government and the purposes that we join in formulation and progressing together. And so, sir, in the lonelier and perhaps even more disheartening moments which come to any national leader, I hope that there will be a corner of your mind and heart which takes cheer from the fact that you have an admiring friend, a staunch friend that will be all the way with LBJ.²²

The President of the United States reciprocated in October 1966. The main purpose of his speech was to ensure that Australian troops stayed in Vietnam.:

22 *Ibid.* p. 513.

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The foundations of the friendship between our two peoples are deep, and they are increasing.

We live at a time when foreign affairs go beyond their traditional scope. They now have strong new ties with the domestic life of all our countries.

Since 1945, the United States has been found where freedom was under attack, or where world peace was threatened. The state has shifted many times. The stakes have grown as man's capacity for destruction increased.

Of course, our policies are shaped with proper regard for our security and welfare, but much of the energy of our efforts has come because we believe it is right that the strong should help the weak defend their freedom; that the wealthy should help the poor overcome their hunger; that nations, no matter how small or fragile, or young, should be free from the coercion of others.

We have steadily resisted communist efforts to bring about by force and intrigue a world dominated by single ideology.

Our convictions, our interests, our life as a nation demand that we oppose, with all of our strength, any effort to put the world in a straitjacket.

On continent after continent, in dozens of countries, hundreds of millions of people struggle to exist on incomes of scarcely more than a dollar a week. Many people have less to spend each day on food and on shelter and on clothing, on medicine, on all of their needs, than the average Australian spends for a packet of cigarettes.

They live in shacks hardly worth the name. They live without heat or water or sanitation, or promise...

So we must deal today with these urgent drives, the drive for security, for the defence of freedom, for the preservation of independence; and the drive for satisfaction, for self-respect, for equality of justice and opportunity.

This is what is happening today in Vietnam, where the demands of security and the urge for satisfaction mingle in a single crucible.

There our men stand together - as they have stood before - to check aggression and there they serve - as they have served before - to help build and preserve and protect freedom.

The raw conflict of one, and the elusive attainments of the other, make their duty more difficult - and more essential.

I would like every Aussie who stands in the rice paddies of Vietnam on this sunny day to know that every American and LBJ is with Australia all the way.

I believe there is light at the end of what has been a long and lonely tunnel. I say this not just because our men are proving successful on the battlefield.

I believe it for this reason: there is a widening community of people who feel responsible for what is happening in Vietnam.

This is the Asia to which I journey...

The challenge of the new Asia comes to Australia at a conspicuous time in your history. You have already shown that your commitment is a matter of policy and action - not rhetoric.

You have brought tens of thousands of Asian students to your universities.

You have joined eight other nations who, on their own initiative, have formed the Asian and Pacific Council.

The man who sent me to Australia - Franklin Delano Roosevelt - once prophesied that "one day a generation may possess this land, blessed beyond anything we now know, blessed with those things - material and spiritual - that make man's life abundant.

"If this is the fashion of your dreaming, then I say: Hold fast to your dream. America needs it"

Well, I would amend his vision somewhat.

For Franklin Roosevelt belongs to the world, and so does his faith in what lies ahead.

I would say, therefore, to the people of the Pacific and of Asia: "If that is the fashion of your dreaming then I say: Hold fast to your dream. The world needs it."

and the world needs Australia at this critical hour - all the way.²³

Protest

Initially, the anti-Vietnam forces in Australia were slow to organise themselves. The reason was simple. The Australian people and their politicians knew very little about the country to which they had committed troops. Perhaps nothing summed up the initial confusion over Vietnam more than the ambiguous and uncertain line originally taken by the Australian Labor Party. During the two day debate which followed the announcement, Calwell first admitted that North Vietnam was guilty of aggression and that American intervention might be justified. He then proceeded to argue that Australia's military involvement was morally questionable. As Australians grew to know more about Vietnam and the issues involved, the stand points of the varying factions polarised into simplistic arguments for and against Vietnam. At the same time, Australian involvement was rapidly escalating and changing in character. Between April and July the number of Australian troops in Vietnam increased from 800 to 1,350. Troops sent there for defensive and guard duties found themselves carrying out offensive operations by the end of 1965.

The resignation of Sir Robert Menzies as Prime Minister and his replacement by Harold Holt was a new phase in the war. In his first major policy statement to Parliament in March 1966, Holt announced that the number of Australian troops would be increased to 4,500 men. By the time the First Battalion had completed

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 517-8.

its tour of duty in June 1966, a Task force with its own logistic support was formed with its own area of responsibility in Phuoc Tuy province, south-east of Saigon. At home, Australian involvement in Vietnam was mushrooming into a major political issue. Protest movements began, primarily in the universities and to some extent in the churches. In Federal Parliament, Vietnam became a central issue as the parties became better informed.

It was at this point that the Labor Party under Calwell undertook a comprehensive and effective campaign against Australian involvement in Vietnam. The war, said Calwell, was "unwinnable." The ALP if elected would withdraw all Australian troops after prolonged consultation with the American Government. As public protests spread to all capital cities, clashes between demonstrators and police became more and more frequent and increasingly violent. These were early days - before what was later to become known as the radicalisation of Australian youth, which was to spread to issues other than Vietnam. To the general public, the protesters were commonly regarded as "ratbags" or "commies." To Sir Robert Menzies, now in retirement and in England, the protests were not to be taken seriously. "There has not been a peace rally in my own country for years that was not organised by the Communists," he said.

Holt, in the meantime, was firmly in control of his own election campaign. The election proved to be an overwhelming success for the pro-Vietnam forces. The Liberal-Country Party Coalition was returned to office with the biggest majority since Federation - 82 seats to Labor's 41. To Holt, it was a mandate to continue his Vietnam policy and, within a year, the Australian commitment had increased to more than 8,000 men. However, the 1966 election was far from being the end of the battle between the pro and anti-Vietnam factions. Demonstrations, clashes with the police and arrests became commonplace. As Australian involvement reached its peak in 1968, the protest movement grew to include a broader spectrum of the community.

By the time it culminated in the two nation-wide moratorium marches in April and October 1970, no one could have claimed that it was youth alone who made up the 100,000 or demonstrators against Australian involvement in Vietnam. In Melbourne particularly, men and women of all ages and from all sections of society made up the 70,000 who marched in the first moratorium and the 50,000 in the second. The protesters represented a wide, and sometimes conflicting, range of opinion - a factor that many politicians failed to realise. They were, however, united on two issues - the immorality of Australian involvement in Vietnam and the matter of conscription.

Conscription had been traditionally a controversial issue in Australia. During the First World War, it had bitterly divided the nation and two referenda on conscription for overseas service had been defeated. Even during the Second World War, successive Australian Governments had been reluctant to bring in

conscription for service outside Australia and New Guinea. When the government finally did so in 1943, conscripts could be sent no farther north than the equator. Now, under the new law, conscripts could be assigned to overseas duty in peacetime for the first time in Australia's history. Not unnaturally, the public reacted strongly against the re-introduction of conscription. This feeling grew as conscripts fighting in Vietnam were killed and wounded, particularly when, in 1968, the number of conscripts killed exceeded the number of regulars. Gough Whitlam, who became Leader of the Opposition in 1967, attacked conscription as "unjust and unjustifiable defence on the cheap."

Early in the dispute, the courts ruled that the only acceptable grounds for conscientious objection would be opposition to all wars and that "selective" conscientious objection, or objection to a specific war such as Vietnam, was not legally valid. The government, aware of the political explosiveness of having a large number of young men jailed for their opposition to serving in the war, was reluctant to prosecute young men who refused to do national service.

Despite the sizeable and vocal opposition to conscription and involvement in Vietnam, there can be no doubt that the majority of Australians supported the Government policy at all stages. This was revealed in the results of the elections of 1966 and 1969 and through opinion polls conducted regularly throughout Australia. The reasons for mass support for the government were complex, but basically they came down to three issues - anti-communism, Australia's geographical position, and her traditional reliance on powerful allies.

Australia had always been worried about her personal position as a sparsely populated and affluent European society in the midst of an over-crowded and poverty-stricken Asia. This fear had been greatly heightened by the very real threat of Japanese invasion during the Second World War. The founding of communist China in 1949 served to combine the traditional Australian fear of the "yellow peril" with the new and growing fear of communism. The "red scare" and the "yellow peril", the bogeys that had haunted Australia for years, became indivisible in the public mind once the Australian commitment to Vietnam was complete. Menzies, and later Holt, continually justified the war in Vietnam as an attempt to stop "the downward thrust of China".

Another issue, and the one that became most widely accepted during the last years of the conflict, was Australia's need for a powerful ally. In the past, Britain had always supplied this need and in return Australian troops had joined British forces thousands of miles from their own homeland. Now, for the first time, Australia was in a war without Britain - but in the place of Britain was America, now a more powerful ally. From 1967, the realistic, if cynical, belief that "if we help there they'll help us here" gained popular support. The Australian-American alliance was actually strengthened in economic and strategic terms (particularly with the building of secret American nuclear bases in Australia).

By the end of 1968, however, American opinion was changing dramatically. In October, President Johnson opened the way for peace talks in Paris. His successor, Richard Nixon, soon afterwards announced the first withdrawal of American troops. Australia similarly planned to recall her forces and by November 1971 the last of the Australian troops had been withdrawn from combat zones in South Vietnam. The Prime Minister, William McMahon, then announced that discussions with the South Vietnamese Government would be held on maintaining a small force of military training and advisory personnel in the country.

Strangely, the failure of the American and Australian involvement in Vietnam produced in Australia very little of the soul-searching it did in America. A sizeable number of Australians were unable to accept that the war had not been won, preferring to believe instead that the allies' aims had been achieved. Even those who admitted defeat saw it as an American defeat. Australia after all had only made a small contribution; a token force to an American war effort. The attitude was perhaps best summed up by an article in *The Melbourne Age* in November 1971 by foreign affairs commentator Creighton Burns. Headed "The War We Didn't Win" the article asked: "When have you ever heard a member of the Australian Government admit that something must just have gone a little wrong in South Vietnam? The way the leaders of our Government talk one might easily believe that the Vietnam war was the 'Free' world's greatest triumph against international communism. We are not only, it seems, among the most conservative people in the world. We are obviously the most self-deluding. And that, apart from the terrible and unforgivable casualties on both sides, is one of the saddest things about the Vietnam War as I see it."²⁴

While Australia has participated in many wars, the causes were exclusively foreign. However, Australia's traditional, cultural and economic links with Great Britain meant that what affected the "Mother Country" affected Australia too. In this context whether Australia should send troops to foreign lands to fight enemies of whom they knew very little was a surprisingly straight forward decision. Australian troops were committed to battle in both world wars because Britain was. This was a decision that most Australians felt was right and proper. Many believed the defence of Britain was a duty to be borne proudly and unquestionably. As a result thousands volunteered to fight for the crown in foreign lands. It was not until Australia was trying to forge new alliances that such a premise was questioned. Not until the 1960s was there serious consideration among a section of the Australian people that a war, even though in their region, could be none of their business.

²⁴ Malcolm Andrews, *Australia's Heritage, the making of a nation*, vol. 7, no. 10, Paul Hamlyn, (Dec Why, 1972), pp.2394-2400.

2.2 Suggested Further Reading Reading

Kate Darian-Smith, "War and Australian Society," in Joan Beaumont, *Australia's War 1939-45*, Allen & Unwin, (St. Leonards, NSW, 1996), pp. 54-81

2.3 Review Questions

Why did Australia become involved in wars that were many miles away from home?

Why do Australians still celebrate Anzac Day?

Why were the events of the Second World War an important turning point in Australian history?

Why did Australia join the Vietnam War? Were the reasons different from previous conflicts?

Why did Creighton Burns write that Australians were deluded in regard to the Vietnam War?

2.4 Epilogue

Historically wars, among other things, have been responsible for large movements of people. In Australian history wars have precipitated a steady increase in immigration. The first significant wave of immigration occurred after the Second World War. However, after the Vietnam War immigration became a potent issue for the Australian people and the Government. The maintenance of Australia's cultural identity, Anglo-Saxon was seen by some to be under threat. At this time Australia was not in the business of welcoming other cultures to enrich and diversify Australian culture. Assimilation was the catch word of immigration policy at this time. Australia as multicultural society was not embraced and the prospect of cultural diversity not considered. The next part examines the impulses and constraints on immigration since the end of the Second World War.

Part 3

3.1 Immigration

Post war Immigration and Australian's New Ethnic Balance

The consequences of the European war for the economic development of Australia is impossible to overlook. In the post war period Australia experienced another wave of mass immigration. With the number of British immigrants insufficient to fulfil Australia's industrial requirements, displaced persons and refugees from central Europe were encouraged to think of Australia as their new home. While the British were offered generous concessions central Europeans were often used as indentured labour on large engineering projects such as the Snowy Mountain Scheme. With the White Australia Policy in operation immigrants could not appear too different for their fellow Australians. At this stage the policy was based on the potential for immigrants to assimilate.

In March 1945 the Australian and British governments signed an agreement which inaugurated a free and assisted passage scheme for British residents wishing to emigrate to Australia. The scheme was to begin in March 1947, but only if economic conditions were favourable. This marked a sharp break with Labor's political tradition, as the party and the trade union movement had previously opposed all forms of government-aided immigration, believing that they were designed to flood the market with cheap, docile and/or foreign labour. Arthur Calwell, Minister for Immigration and Information, was the Labour Party's chief protagonist of the policy of populating Australia by government aid, and in August 1945 he explained why the Government wished to revive assisted immigration:

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If Australians have learned one lesson from the Pacific war now moving to a successful conclusion, it is surely that we cannot continue to hold our island continent for ourselves and our descendants unless we greatly increase our numbers. We are but 7,000,000 people and we hold 3,000,000 square miles of this earth's surface. Our coastline extends for 12,000 miles and our density of population is only 2.5 persons per square mile. Much of our land is situated within a rain belt of less than 10 inches per annum and this area is, therefore, largely uninhabitable. In those parts more favourably situated, much development and settlement have yet to be undertaken. Our need to undertake it is urgent and imperative if we are to survive. While the world yearns for peace and abhors war, no one can guarantee that there will be no more war. A third world war is not impossible, and after a period of fitful peace, humanity may be faced to face again with the horrors of another period of total war.

It would be prudent for us, therefore, not to ignore the possibility of a further formidable challenge within the next quarter of a century to our right to hold this land. We may have only those next 25 years in which to make the best possible use of our second chance to survive. Our first requirement is additional population. We need it for reasons of defence and for the fullest expansion of our economy. We can increase our 7,000,000 by an increased birth-rate and by a policy of planned immigration within the limits of our existing legislation.

Immigration is, at best, only the counterpart of the most important phase of population building, natural increase. Any immigration policy, therefore, must be intimately related to those phases of government policy that are directed toward stimulating the birth-rate and lowering the infant mortality rate in Australia itself. It must, further, be related to the whole social service programme of creating greater economic security and a higher standard of living, as an inducement to young couples to have larger families. In this connection, the work of the new department must and will be closely integrated with the work of the Department of Social Services, the Department of Health, and the Department of Labour and National Service.

We make two things clear, first to the British people, and then to other peoples who might make good Australian citizens. The one is that Australia wants, and will welcome, new healthy citizens who are determined to become good Australians by adoption. The second is that we will not mislead any intending immigrant by encouraging him to come to this country under any assisted or unassisted scheme until there is a reasonable assurance of his economic future.²⁵

The Labor Government, in its new role as an advocate of Government-aided immigration, was much influenced by the conviction that only increased numbers of people would bring security from further aggression by Asian nations and prosperity for an economy starved of consumer goods. Arthur Calwell never tired of telling Parliament and the people that numbers would bring salvation, and that Australia must welcome migrants from Europe. To do so, and remain a member of the ministry, called for a good deal of courage, as trade unionists had traditionally shown stern anti-foreigner prejudices. In March 1945 he had announced the Government's new policy: in November 1946 he explained the details:

Document

There was a time just four years ago when Australia faced its gravest peril. Armies recruited from the teeming millions of Japan threatened to overrun

²⁵ Quoted in Frank Crowley, *Modern Australia in Documents*, vol. 2, Wren Publishing Pty Ltd, (Melbourne, 1973), pp. 125-6.

our cities and broad hinterland. They were so many. We were so few. Today we are at peace. But, while all of us must work to perpetuate that peace, let us not forget that armed conflict remains a grim possibility, both in the New World and the Old - a possibility against which we must guard with all the intelligence, all the realism, and all the energy that we can muster. Realizing, therefore, the crucial importance to Australia of a policy of planned immigration, it is with great pleasure that I am today able to review, for the benefit of honourable members, the substantial progress that has already been made in bringing our plans to fruition.

In the forefront of our entire immigration programme are the free and assisted passage schemes designed to bring to these shores a steady flow of the best possible immigrant types from the United Kingdom...However, we are not unmindful of the fact that many thousands of desirable people on the European continent are anxious to settle in our land. It is hoped that the governments of these countries will be prepared to participate in plans on the lines of the free assisted passage schemes which have been entered into between the governments of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth...

Then there is the tragedy of Europe's army of displaced and persecuted people. As honourable members are aware, the various Allied governments have been subjected to strong pressure at international conferences to accept larger quotas of these unfortunate men, women, and children. The Government, having regard to its responsibilities to Australian ex-servicemen, and having in mind the grave housing shortage still persisting throughout the Commonwealth, is not under present conditions in a position to commit itself in this matter; nevertheless, it considers that Australia should on humanitarian grounds make some contribution to the relief of certain of the distressed peoples of Europe. Approval has therefore been given for the admission of relatives in Australia who are in a position and willing to accommodate and maintain them...

While on the subject of foreign migration, I would like to emphasise that the Government's immigration policy is based on the principle that migrants from the United Kingdom shall be given every encouragement and assistance. It is my hope that for every foreign migrant there will be ten people from the United Kingdom. Only time will tell how far this hope can be realized. We have already given indubitable evidence of our preference for the United Kingdom migrant by entering into agreements with the United Kingdom government for the granting of free and assisted passages to suitable people for the United Kingdom. Aliens are and will continue to be admitted only in such numbers and of such classes that they can be readily assimilated. Every precaution is taken to ensure that they are desirable types, and they must satisfy consular or passport officers and security service officers that they are people of good character before their passports are visaed for travel to Australia...The days of isolation are over. We live in an age when the earth's surface seems to be contracting under the influence of scientific discoveries that almost baffle our imagination. The call to all Australians is to realize that

*without adequate numbers this wide brown land may not be held in another clash of arms, and to their maximum assistance to every effort to expand its economy and assimilate more and more people who will come from overseas to link their fate with our destiny.*²⁶

So popular was Calwell's mass migration programme that the new Labor Prime Minister, Ben Chifley, squeezed £1 million out of an over-stretched post-war budget to enable Calwell to buy a comfortable passenger ship to ensure fast and efficient transit for the growing stream of "new" Australians. In fact, the Calwell migration scheme was to be adopted in its entirety by the Menzies Government when Labor lost power in 1949, and it was to remain as a lasting tribute to his foresight.

The "new Australians"

The British and European immigrants of the immediate post-war years had come in an atmosphere of high hopes for economic expansion. The economic recession of the early 1950s caused some in Australia to have second thoughts over the advisability of long-term, large-scale immigration. For those in power, doubts meant a slight review, but not a full-scale dismantling of the immigration programme. In August 1953, Howard Beale, the acting Minister for Immigration announced that the federal government would reduce its projected intake of immigrants from 150,000 to 80,000 a year. Half would arrive from the United Kingdom. Of the other half, 20,000 would be "landing permit holders", most of whom would be relatives nominated by southern Europeans living in Australia. The remaining 20,000 would come under agreements signed with a number of European governments.

This particular government statement has been described as "a milestone in Australian immigration policy." It set the pattern for government policies for much of the next two decades. With an overall target of 2% population growth, immigration was to contribute 1%. As a result there was a shift towards encouraging families, particularly from Britain, and of allowing non-British males to bring out wives and dependants. This policy was generally framed on the hope that a bigger population would stimulate consumer demand and thereby help create jobs.²⁷

The most noticeable thing about the new refugee immigrants was the variety of their origin and background. What most of them had in common was a lack of familiarity with anything Australian. A general cross section of much of pre-war European society was represented. Amongst the refugee from central, eastern and

²⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 157-9.

²⁷ Geoffrey Sherington, *Australia's Immigrants 1788-1978*, George Allen & Unwin, (Sydney, 1980), pp. 138-9.

south-eastern Europe were many young, single persons conscripted for forced labour during the war. Many came from rural backgrounds and they had few formal qualifications. Other east Europeans, particularly from Hungary and Czechoslovakia, came from a more sophisticated pre-war society, many with university training and professional qualifications. Many of the Baltic peoples had left home off their own free will, often in family groups. Some had worked in Germany during the war. Others had fled before the armies of the Soviet Union. A large proportion of them came from middle class or skilled working class occupations.

Australia gained greatly by the post-war influx of refugee immigrants. In the first place, the United Nations arranged the shipping of displaced persons. Secondly, the refugees were required to spend two years in employment selected by the Australian government. Many were sent to newly developing centres of heavy industry. At Port Kembla on the south coast of New South Wales, employment in the steel works grew from 3,690 in 1948 to 6,800 in 1952. Professional trade qualifications were not always of much use in Australia. For example, medical doctors amongst the refugees were denied registration and placed in other work. After serving their compulsory two year labour contract they had to re-do university courses before being allowed to practice. Such injustices gave rise to ill-feeling. Others had a training that was simply not wanted in Australia. Some 75,000 former officers of the Polish Army and 33,000 women and children had been interned in Russia during the war. Released after the war, some eventually made their way to Australia. Dispersed into the Australian countryside under the terms of their two year contract, they often found that they had exchanged one form of forced labour for another. Few in Australia could understand or sympathise with their situation.²⁸

Different national groups often adapted in different ways because of the skills they had on arrival in Australia. In the period of economic growth in the 1950s engineers and skilled tradesmen were in demand. As a result, those with such qualifications often did get good jobs and were thus able to move out into the wider Australian community. By the late 1960s, most of the former Baltic immigrants in Adelaide, many of whom came from middle class or skilled tradesmen backgrounds, were no longer living in ethnic concentrations. With the general urban growth in the post-war years, they were now scattered throughout the suburbs, although they still maintained informal social contact with each other. In contrast, it seemed much more difficult for those of rural and peasant background to come to terms with the emerging industrial civilisation in post-war Australia. The eastern Europe refugees in Adelaide more often lived together in neighbourhoods. Similarly, while many of the former Baltic people took out

28 *Ibid.* pp. 135-6.

Australian citizenships, those from eastern Europe accepted naturalisation far more slowly.

The growing diversity in the origin of the Australian population was accompanied by a change in what had for so long been the basis of Australian immigration - the "White Australia Policy". Alteration to the policy had come slowly in the post-war years. In 1956, it was agreed to grant permanent residence to both Asian refugees who came to Australia during the Second World War and to others who had been in Australia for a considerable period. It was also established that a few "highly qualified and distinguished" non-whites might be allowed in for settlement; by the mid 1960s such categories included technicians and teachers. As a result, by 1969-71, the intake of non-whites into Australia had reached 10,000 a year.

These changes were carried out under a Liberal Party government. During the 1960s, the Labor Party began also to change its views. The large post-war immigration had started in the 1940s under a Labor government committed to promoting immigration as a basis for population and economic growth and yet maintaining the principle of "White Australia". The federal Labor Party of the late 1960s was beginning to accept that its egalitarian philosophy could not be reconciled with a policy of racial discrimination. Simultaneously, there were growing concerns that large-scale immigration could create as many social and economic problems as solving them. After a quarter of a century of fairly continuous immigration, Australians were becoming conscious not only of the strains being created through population pressures on cities, and the associated social services of schools, housing and health, but also of the many social disadvantages which immigrants suffered.²⁹

Australian post-war immigration has never neatly fitted the hopes of the planners. In the twenty years from 1945 to 1965, net immigration (arrivals in excess of departures) has fluctuated above and below the projected figure of 1% annual population growth from migration. Economic recession in the early 1950s and 1960s changed government priorities and discouraged immigrants. Despite fluctuations, immigrants nonetheless played a dominant role in Australian economic growth from the 1950s to the mid 1960s. In the years 1947 to 1966, the total Australian workforce increased by almost one million, from 2,479,269 to 3,421,808. Of this increase, 59% came from the overseas-born. In the female workforce 293,760 or 41% of the increase came from the overseas-born. Most industrial growth has been centred in the cities. As in the late nineteenth century, urban growth in Australia has been much the result of continuous immigration.³⁰

²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 151.

³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 140.

Asian Migration

Migration from all countries was not welcome. Arthur Calwell was reported to have said: "Japan, India, Burma, Ceylon and every African nation are fiercely anti-white and anti one another. Do we want or need any of these people here? I am one red-blooded Australian who says no and who speaks for 90% of Australians." Since the nineteenth century, Asia has been a pre-occupation of those who desire greater restriction on migration to Australia. The colonial immigration restrictions acts and the White Australia Policy of the Federation demonstrated this.

Demands by the United States and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees that Australia should take in significant numbers of Vietnamese refugees rekindles traditional sensitivities about Asian migration. While there had been substantial refugee immigration since the Second World War and more recently a significant increase in Asians migrants, for the first time in Australia's history migration combined political and racial factors.³¹

Furthermore, the arrival on the shores of some refugees in small boats had a complex and far-reaching impact on Australian perceptions of the vulnerability of their country to Asian penetration.³² At the end of 1977 nearly 5000 Vietnamese refugees had been permitted to enter Australia including 1000 who had made their own way. These unannounced arrivals raised questions about the exercise of Australian sovereignty over the entry of persons to this country. But the Government's acceptance of them had indicated its adherence to one of the norms of international law - that refugees should not be turned back at a country's borders. Australia had become a country of first refuge and this change had a profound impact on Australian opinion. One effect of "unannounced" arrivals was to reduce the willingness of many Australians to accept significant numbers of Indochinese refugees.³³

The government had hardly come to terms with such complexities when changes in Vietnam's domestic policy meant that the size and composition of refugee migration became suddenly different. The closing down of the business activities of Ho Chi Ming City's Chinatown, the establishment of a new currency, more vigorous efforts to move population to New Economic Zones, nationalisation of the fishing fleet and severe shortages of food and many consumer goods provided incentives for people involved with the trading sector, mainly Chinese, to leave Vietnam. Subsequently, the impact of events in Vietnam was felt in Southeast Asia in the form of a dramatic increase in refugees. Several

³¹ Nancy Viviani, *The Long Journey*, Melbourne University Press, (Melbourne, 1984), p. 54.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.* p. 82.

boats reached Darwin on Australia's northern coastline in April 1978 and in May, 321 people arrived, the worst month ever for unauthorised arrivals. The Government in broadcasts through Radio Australia to Southeast Asia spoke sharply about "queue jumpers" and "strong action" but the voyagers were not deterred.³⁴

Not only did the refugees keep coming, they came in larger boats. The appearance of the *Hai Hong* in the South China Sea with about 2,500 Vietnamese aboard brought a new dimension to the boat issue. A United Nations High Commission on Refugees statement that questioned the "motive of the owners, agents and captain of the ship concerned" set the tone for discussion about its status. Mackeller, Minister for Immigration, alarmed at the number aboard the *Hai Hong*, quickly issued a statement claiming the boat as evidence of profiteering in the Indochinese refugee situation. He said that the ship had recently been bought by Hong Kong businessmen who took Vietnamese on board for a very substantial per capita fee. He warned that Australia would not accept "cases involving subterfuge."³⁵

The debate about the *Hai Hong* people centred on the genuineness of their refugee status given that they had plainly paid for their escape passages. It was also not clear that these people could satisfy the refugee criterion of having "a well-founded fear of being persecuted." Eventually the UNHCR declared that the people should be treated as refugees. The United States government supported this view, putting it at odds with the position of Australia. It was not surprising that any front-line receiving country should have shied from the prospect of large shiploads of people claiming refugee status, particularly because of the precedent involved. The idea that the exchange of money should disqualify boat people from refugee status was challenged in Australia by editorials in the Press, but Mckeller stuck to his position. The alarming prospect that the ship, or others like it, could conceivably continue on to Darwin, doubling the numbers of boat arrivals in Australia in one fell swoop, appeared good reason for his silence. Further, some remarks by ex Prime Minister then retired from politics, which disputed the status of the boat people and claimed that the numbers of "so-called refugees" were causing social tension, in Australia, were a reminder of the vulnerability of the recent policies that had developed with such difficulty. Eventually resettlement arrangements for the *Hai Hong* passengers were worked out between the United States, Malaysia, with Canada and France also agreeing to take some of the 2,500 on board.

These events pointed to further pressure on Australia to raise substantially its intake quota. This was firmly established by Makellar who spoke of a possible

34 *Ibid.* p. 83.

35 *Ibid.* p. 83-4.

backlash if large numbers of refugees were allowed into Australia. At the Geneva consultations in December 1978 Mackellar announced a modest increase in the 1978-9 target, from 9000 to 10,500 with an undertaking to accept a further 10,500 during 1979-80, the first time Australia had accepted a longer-term commitment. The Minister also announced a \$3 million contribution to the UNHCR for its work with Indochinese refugees.

The inundation of the Australian media with human-interest stories and interpretative reporting on the crisis raised the temperature of the debate on entry of Vietnamese to Australia considerably during June and July of 1979. There was a crisis, and this was fully reflected in the emotional treatment of the issue in the Australian media. Most newspaper editorials were firmly in favour of increasing the numbers of refugees Australia should take, chiefly for humanitarian reasons, although the *Financial Review* bluntly stated that Australia needed a new supply of "industrial cannon fodder." The arguments for an increase were a mix of altruism and self-interest, with *Sydney Morning Herald* quick to point out that despite the growth of racism in Australia, we would need to take more refugees so as to avoid that political folly of offending our ASEAN neighbours who carried the largest load. Newspapers gave good coverage to the arguments of the "refugee lobby": the Indochinese Refugee Associations, the Vietnamese Associations, the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and the Anglican Synod all called for the Government to admit more refugees.³⁶

However, it was clear from the polls of June 1979 that a majority of Australians were against even maintaining the current intake of refugees. This was a major constraint in preventing the government from increasing the refugee target. Public attitudes also constrained the ALP, which could call for neither an increase nor a decrease in numbers because of the political costs of either choice, and thus found itself in implicit agreement with the Government's line to stand firm on the present target.

In the meantime, Mackellar prepared the ground for change. In a widely reported statement on 28 June he argued that an increased refugee intake from Asia would be dependent on an increase in the total migration programme, thus maintaining "an Australian population with a composition much the same as at present." Mackellar reassured those Australians concerned about a rapid change in Australia's racial composition that this was not contemplated. To those urging a significant increase in the number of Indochinese refugees, he argued that this was only possible if they accepted a much increased total immigration programme, implicitly maintaining the racial balance. For those in the business community who urged increased immigration, he offered the first hope of a substantial increase that any government had held out for nearly a decade. Though refugee

³⁶ *Ibid.* p. 101.

and immigration targets would remain as set for 1980, an "enhanced immigration programme would be in Australia's economic interests."³⁷

Increases in resettlement quotas for Indochinese have been constrained generally by government perceptions of domestic opposition and fears of a racist backlash. The parameters of migration policy have also restrained the levels of refugee entry. The economic situation in Australia, and a perception by ethnic groups that refugee entry was constraining migrant entry under the family reunion scheme meant that refugee entry could not expand easily. In the same way, the government's desire not to change Australia's racial composition too quickly meant that Indochinese entry had to be kept in proportion to levels of other migration. Nevertheless, the migration to Australia of significant numbers of Vietnam refugees in the aftermath of the war in the mid 1970s, forced the Government to re-evaluate its immigration policy. For Australians, Vietnamese refugee entry was the first real test of the disestablishment of the White Australia Policy.

Towards a Multicultural Society

In the first decades of post-war immigration, assimilation was the dominant philosophy of migrant settlement. This was a "non-policy", the "new Australians" were expected to conform to Australian cultural norms, including language, and quickly discard their "cultural baggage". Billy Snedden, who was an immigration selection officer in Italy and England from 1952 to 1954 and subsequently Minister for Immigration in the Conservative Coalition government, commented as late as 1969: "We must have a single culture. If immigration implied multicultural activities within Australian society, then it was not the type Australia wanted. I am quite determined we should have a monoculture with everyone living in the same way, understanding each other, and sharing the same aspirations. We don't want pluralism."³⁸

Initially assimilation was a reassurance for Australians that non-British immigration would not undermine their way of life. When 180,000 Displaced Persons arrived in the late 1940s, promises to retain a British/White Australia could no longer be guaranteed, but as Harold Holt, Immigration Minister in 1952, stated in an address to the Third Citizenship Convention: "Australia, in accepting a balanced intake of other European peoples as well as British, can still build a truly British nation on this side of the world. I feel that if the central tradition of a nation is strong this tradition will impose itself on groups of immigrants."³⁹

³⁷ *Ibid.* p. 102.

³⁸ Quoted in Jock Collins, *Migrant Hands in a Distant Land*, Pluto Press, (Leichhardt, NSW, 1991), p. 228.

³⁹ *Ibid.* p. 228.

One way of maintaining the Australian tradition was to expect all "new Australians" to adopt Australian culture completely. This entailed a break with the "Old Country", its language, traditions of dress, dance, cultural ceremonies and social relationships. The ideology of assimilation not only helped reduce public antagonism to an immigration programme that, in terms of ethnic composition, had failed as soon as it had begun, but also absolved the state of the responsibility to introduce services to help "new Australians" settle. Assimilation asserted that migrants had no problems with Australian settlement, and assimilation was rapid and trouble-free. To provide "new Australians" with special services was an anathema to the ideology of "sameness". Treating migrants no differently from other Australians was at the heart of assimilation.

The ideology of assimilation permeated all government services and programmes. In areas such as health, welfare and the law there were no provisions for translation, no bilingual material produced, no special resources allocated to overcoming migrant difficulties in settlement and no recognition of the problems that migrants' cultural pasts incurred. However, contradictions between the official, confident pronouncements of successful assimilation and the experiences of those who worked with migrants began to emerge. Rather than successful settlement, it was a case of disadvantage and difficulty, particularly among those migrants from non-English speaking countries. By the mid 1960s special migrant assistance in areas such as education, health and welfare was being demanded.

With the influx of Vietnamese refugees in the 1970s the concept of assimilation and difference was given new focus. The Australian Population and Immigration Council's Green Paper on immigration said:

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Until recently there was an expectation in both government and the community that they [migrants] should be assimilated as quickly as possible. The most desirable migrant was considered to be the person who was most nearly Australian. Gradually this gave way to a general policy of integration which accepted the principle of cultural diversity and which acknowledged that the entry of migrants into Australian society necessarily involved adjustments in that society as well as in the culture and outlook of the migrants themselves

This was followed by discussion of pluralist approaches with emphasis on the multicultural nature of society and the desire of ethnic groups to retain and foster their own cultures and languages. More recently there has been concern that cultural diversity should occur in a way which is consistent with maintaining the cohesiveness of Australian society. Clearly, the goals of developing a cohesive society and encouraging the maintenance of traditional cultures need not be alternatives. There is no good reason why migrant groups and the Australian-born community should not form an harmonious

*and integrated society while at the same time enjoying a diversity of traditional cultures.*⁴⁰

The term "multiculturalism" has come to mean much more than an empirical description. It refers to the officially-sanctioned philosophy of the place of migrants in their new country. Put simply, multiculturalism is the belief that Australia is, culturally, a pluralist society, that this should be recognised, and fostered to an extent by various means, including the use of government funds. As an example of what multiculturalism means to some people, proponents of it have claimed that a truly multicultural society would make provision for the use of all languages in everyday affairs, including official transactions. The preservation of cultural links with the "Old Country", including the use of the native language, is seen as valuable to the migrant and his children, while the diversity of cultures would strengthen and enrich Australia. Thoughtful advocates of multiculturalism have been careful to frame suggested policies that recognise and assist minority cultures within the Australian community while stressing that this should not be at the expense of the core culture - the teaching of minority languages should not be at the expense of English.

Asian immigration pre-occupied the debate over quotas for more than twenty years. The increasing cultural diversity of Australia's immigrant intake has gratified many but horrified some. Member for Oxley, Pauline Hanson, in her maiden speech before Parliament on 10 September 1996 said:

Immigration and multiculturalism are issues that this government is trying to address, but for far too long ordinary Australians have been kept out of any debate by the major parties. I and most Australians want our immigration policy radically reviewed and that of multiculturalism abolished. I believe we are in danger of being swamped by Asians. Between 1984 and 1995, 40% of all migrants coming into this country were of Asian origin. They have their own culture and religion, form ghettos and do not assimilate. Of course, I will be called racist but, if I can invite whom I want into my home, then I should have the right to have a say who comes into my country. A truly multicultural country can never be strong or united. The world is full of failed and tragic examples, ranging from Ireland to Bosnia to Africa and close to home, Papua New Guinea. America and Great Britain are currently paying the price.

However, in purely empirical terms Australia is one of the world's most multicultural nations. Post-war migrants and their Australian-born children account for four out of ten Australians and despite the plans of Arthur Calwell,

⁴⁰ Australian Population and Immigration Council, *Green Paper: Immigration Policies and Australia's Population*, Canberra 1977 quoted in Nancy Viviani, *The Long Journey: Vietnamese Migration and Settlement in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, (Melbourne, 1984), pp. 157-8.

less than 40% of the migrant population is British born. The end of the White Australia Policy and the introduction of a non-discriminatory immigration policy with bi-partisan political support will ensure that Australia's diverse "ethnic mix" will continue. Thus, it is arguable that the promotion of large-scale immigration after the Second World War was the most eventful and beneficial change of the course in Australia since Federation.

Australia is a nation whose immigrants have brought with them diverse histories and cultures. From 1788 the Anglo-Saxon culture dominated. In the years that followed the racial and cultural mix gradually broadened. It was not until the end of the Second World War that a concerted drive to populate Australia brought a wave of European migration and the dominance of the Anglo-Saxon culture was weakened. When these later migrants succeeded beyond all expectation the personal respect they won began to be extended to their cultures. Australian culture broadened. But the plight of the Aborigines, from that broader perspective, shows that as a civilised nation we still have some way to go.

3.2 Suggested Further Reading

Andrew Markus, *Australian Race Relations 1788-1993*, Allen & Unwin, (St Leonards, NSW, 1994)

John Rickard, *Australia: a cultural history*, second edition, Longman, (London, 1996), chapter 9.

3.3 Review Questions

Was the White Australia Policy a racist policy or just sound planning?

How do you account for Australia's dependence of immigration?

Has Australia benefited from mass immigration?

Can Australia only be truly multicultural when its society understands indigenous culture, acknowledges past wrongs and makes a concerted attempt at reconciliation?

Australian society truly multicultural?

Was Australia a racist society? Is it now?

3.4 Epilogue

It is a curious paradox that when the Immigration Department was established after the Second World War its purpose was to foster immigration to a country that had always feared invasion by foreign legions, but which had hitherto been considered relatively unattractive by tens of millions of peaceful people who had been forced to cast around for a country to emigrate to. In other words, Australia had been seen by Australians as attractive to invaders but had been relatively unattractive to peaceful settlers, the people we really needed even if we did not really desire them.

In the immediate post-war years the reality was becoming more and more obvious that British migrants were not coming here in a flood. Furthermore, all those American servicemen who had grown used to the Australian way of life, were leaving and taking Australian wives with them. That put paid to the idealistic notion that almost all the immigrants would be English speaking. And with each year that passed, as Britain and the countries of continental Europe began to rebuild their economies, immigration would become less attractive. Even the millions of displaced persons in Europe were going back to their homelands. Only the hard core remained in Germany.

Australia, even when it opened its gates, was missing its opportunity. Calwell quietly revised his ethnic table. He had been saying that ten out of eleven immigrants would be British. He marked that down to 75%. Calwell was merely being pragmatic. Otherwise his immigration programme would never have been the success that it was. It is important to consider just how much the programme might have suffered if he and his Government had stuck firmly by the 10:1 or even the 75:25 formulae. Just on 1.25 million people from Britain and British colonies arrived in Australia between October 1945 and June 1981, intending to settle permanently or remain here long term. This is 23% of the 5.3 million people who arrived to settle or to stay for a long period. It is safe to assume that the number who made the decision to leave Britain might have been smaller than it was, had there not been so many non-British migrants, particular in the 1940s and 1950s, to help build the economy and make the country more attractive as a strong haven or a place where people could make a new start. Australia's internal struggles with its past while attempting to secure a prosperous future continue in the next part.

Part 4

4.1 Australia Today

The Australian Republic

At seminal moments in its history, Australian political life has been propelled by idealists and grand visions for the future. This was certainly the case in mid-nineteenth-century New South Wales when three politically minded men debated what former Prime Minister Paul Keating would call the "big issues". John Dunmore Lang arrived in Sydney in 1823 at the age of twenty-four as a minister of the Presbyterian Church with a Doctor of Divinity degree and an ardent conviction that the British colonies in Australia and New Zealand would eventually be great and independent nations, exercising fruitful commercial intercourse and moral power in the Southern Pacific and the civilised world. His belief in the freedom and integrity of the educated, responsible individual conscience is seen in all his publications and in the way he conducted his religious and secular offices until his death in 1878.

Charles Harpur, born in Windsor in 1813, the son of respectable emancipist parents, acquired by less formal means an education almost as extensive as Lang's and, from a similar exposure to European and American Liberal humanitarianism and moral enlightenment, the same burning belief in the future greatness of Australia. Circumstances forced Harpur to earn an arduous and uncertain livelihood for his family which excluded him from public life in Sydney. But as a poet and prose writer he contributed prolifically to newspapers from 1834 to his death in 1868.

Daniel Henry Deniehy, although like Harpur born of emancipist parents in Sydney in 1828, had social and formal opportunities for education which were denied to Harpur. With great personal charm and a sensitive brilliant mind, Deniehy constructed some practical policies for New South Wales. But he was an idealist too - a man ultimately found to be unsuited to the expedient politics which characterised the early days of self-government in the colonies. Deniehy lacked the toughness needed to survive as a political and public figure, and his criticism and journalism, always liberal and ethical, came to an end with his premature death in 1865.

Lang, Harpur and Deniehy also represent a class of men and women found in all the towns and districts of the Australian colonies by 1850. Studies of these early activists and their work reveal a great deal about the intellectual roots of contemporary Australian culture. For every liberal republican there was a conservative monarchist, for every religious humanist there was a committed Anglican or Roman Catholic. There were colonial born men and women who were linked to Britain with the strongest of emotional ties and who found their self-image in identifying with England. There were also immigrants like Lang,

who had little respect for Britain as "father-land" or "Mother-country", and currency lads and lasses like Harpur and Deniehy, who valued English literature as a priceless inheritance, but who categorically rejected the imperial claims of the "stepmother country". They advocated an Australian Republic, one conscious of American precedents but never mimicking them.

The debates that established the political and cultural life of the Australian colonies may well have washed over the heads of many citizens. Nevertheless, they were accessible to the general public. There were newspapers and journals like the *Sydney Morning Herald*, which George Burnett Barton, Barrister and Reader in English Language and Literature at the University of Sydney, described in 1866 as a paper "brought into existence by men who knew nothing of literature, and cared nothing for politics except as they affected business." But even the *Herald* which, according to Barton, always avoided giving offence "to men of property" and maintained the cause of "good old English Toryism in all its glory", published letters, speeches and articles, including Deniehy's that enlarged on the pressing moral issues of the day. There were, moreover, other journals, like E.J. Hawksley's *People's Advocate*, William Augustine Duncan's *Weekly Register*, Lang's *Colonist* and *Colonial Observer* and Deniehy's *Southern Cross*, which actively sought and promoted these formative debates. The bourgeoisie in colonial New South Wales was not solely concerned with the export price of mutton, wool, tallow and gold. Some imagined freedom and independence for the "Golden Lands of Australia".

A belief in republicanism as the only form of government fit for free men and women was the strongest belief shared by Lang, Harpur and Deniehy; yet they also shared a conviction that Australia's future depended on the success of a yeomanry of small farmers, fully enfranchised and, as in the United States of America, with access to the offices of government. Although Lang and Deniehy had influential political careers, they were not professional politicians. Like Harpur, they wanted a government which fully represented the people and in which the people participated. They realised, however, such a populace required education and a sense of moral and civic responsibility. While at time this seemed an impossible ideal, it was an ideal for which they consistently strove. In the 1990s, Australia's image of itself as a liberal, socially and culturally mature society is due in no small way to our first courageous republicans.⁴¹

There had been a republican spirit in the late nineteenth century but it broke the surface only rarely. A Republican Union, made up of "the debating society, and hard reading crowd", had formed in 1887 in Sydney in opposition to the Imperial Federation League which had formed the drive to keep Australians "loyal" to Queen Victoria. That was the year in which republicans had twice

⁴¹ David Headon & Elizabeth Perkins (eds), *Our First Republicans: Selected Writings 1840-1860*, The Federation Press, (Sydney, 1998), pp. x-xi.

defeated attempts in Sydney Town Hall to pass a loyal resolution congratulating Queen Victoria on her jubilee - the resolution was passed at the third meeting only after excluding the republicans. In 1888, when the Republican Union was replaced by the Republican League, branches were extended to Melbourne and Adelaide; there were calls to Australia to achieve greatness by following the United States. But politicians stayed clear of republicanism, and so did most trade unionists - even if taking a crack at the British was sometimes irresistible. The Bulletin was both anti-British and republican and lampooned both the British and Queen Victoria in doggerel, satire, invective, caricatures and cartoons.

The modern Australian republican movement began with an article by the Adelaide writer, and at the time university lecturer, Geoffrey Dutton, that appeared in the intellectual fortnightly, *Nation*, in April 1963. His article began by describing how the day after he made a speech at the Founder's Day Convocation of the Kansas State University there appeared on the front page of the local paper a photograph captioned: "Professor Geoffrey Dutton offers congratulations from England." That set him thinking. He realised that most people in Kansas would think that, geography apart, Australia and England were much the same. Genially, they would say to him, "It's a real pleasure to hear that English accent of yours, even if it is a bit hard to understand."

His article went on (this is a condensed version):

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The oddities of our system will baffle foreigners in Kansas or Kermanshah, but what matters more than this is that Australians continued to refuse to discuss the system in public. It is the most monumental tribute to our national intellectual indolence that in public nobody, high or low, left or right, ever questions whether we are all in fact true-blue royalist and British. Recent body-blows from the dear old Mother-Country, like her zigzags over the Common Market or her requiring her so-called children to visit her through the aliens' gate when they arrive in Britain, did absolutely nothing to shake the public image of Australia's loyalty to the Crown and Great Britain. The syrup of a Royal visit comfortably oozes over any awkward cracks.

And the crowning paradox is that we accept this patronising pseudo-patronage at a time when our national identity is at last emerging in full adult strength. Despite a few chauvinists, one can now look around the country with pride and at the same time feel how dated and doomed are the attitudes which Alan Seymour summed up in Alf's catchcry, "I'm bloody Australian and proud of it."

About a hundred years ago my great-grand-uncle was Premier of South Australia while at the same time being a republican. Imagine any State Premier now being a republican! The issue is taboo to right or left. On the right, genuine, if sentimental, affection allied to snobbery keeps the knee bent

Queenwards; on the left, many a secret republican would not dare confess to his beliefs. If one raises the republican issue, the identical arguments appear from right and left. The Queen is above politics and therefore the ideal of head of State; better her for the women's magazines and the mob than Jackie Kennedy or Marilyn Monroe; Australia's traditions are with England; the Queen is a fairly cheap luxury; the whole issue is not really an open issue at all, so let's forget all about it.

How much longer are we going to swallow the official sedative, that we are "British to the bootsoles"? The point is not to pick a quarrel with the English but to reach an adult relationship with them. Our newspapers, without exception, merely give us the very moth-eaten robes and tatty silks that should be stripped away from the organism that is Britain today. For Australians, Britain is still the royal Family, good and gracious; the traditions and the ceremonials; the cricket and the weather. The tough England of Leeds or Birmingham, grubby, gambling and sick of old Empires, scarcely ever rates a mention. The comments that I heard about the royal Family from Yorkshire working people in 1960 would be denounced as seditious if uttered in Australia.

The Queen, however, is only at the top of a system which degrades us as much as it puzzles foreigners. The Governor-General and the State governors are, apart from their rubber stamps, as fundamentally unnecessary to Australia as they are absurd in their rituals, and it is appalling to think that most V.I.P.s are introduced to Australia through this stucco portal of ancient pomposities. In some capitals, notably Melbourne, high society scorns the tenants of Government House, but the institution remains there all the same. I often wonder what overseas visitors must think as they watch some English subaltern Aide-de-Camp telling Australians that his Excellency would be pleased to have them talk to him, while the Australians are only too pleased to be told.

Together with an acceptance of the irrelevant anachronism of royalty goes a completely unanalytical regard for the English and things English. It begins with the very pact, puzzling to Persians and Kansans, that we call ourselves "British". It continues with the thousands who trek to what is still amongst older generations called "Home". Our businessmen go to Japan and our research scientists to the USA, but the family ties, we believe, run "Home". The traffic in affection is, however, one way.

We are largely to blame for the difficulties English migrants encounter in Australia. We tell them we are no different and, of course, they speedily found out that we are very different, and they are disappointed. In non-professional intellectual affairs we often make false orientations to English taste, and we are pathetically grateful when London approves of our art. We look to Britain for the staffs of our universities, for radio and TV producers, sometimes even for newspaper editors. A few years ago in Adelaide, when one by one Australian colleague was on leave, I was the only Australian in the English Department at the university; everyone else being from Great Britain.

The remedies I would advocate would loose me half my friends and provoke nothing more than a cynical smile from politicians of either side. They are simple; declare Australia a republic; elect our own Governors; abolish the use of the word British and substitute Australian. The Americans took much the same steps in 1776.⁴²

Despite the existence of a republican movement in Australia since the mid-nineteenth century, republicanism as a "big issue" did not become such until the early 1990s. In 1993 the then Prime Minister of Australia, Paul Keating, addressed the Evatt Foundation on his belief in a Federal Republic of Australia:

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I believe...the time has come to start the process of creating an Australian republic. There have been some who have said that this is not the right time - that there are more important things to do right now. People might well have said the same during the movement for Federation. I take the view that, far from being the wrong time, there has never been a better time.

It is not simply because we are approaching the centenary of Federation, but rather because we are undergoing a revolutionary change both in our consciousness and in our situation in the world. It is important that the reality of our having to go it alone is matched by our ability to go it alone: and our ability depends to no small extent on our confidence, our self-esteem, our reputation, our faith in each other, our cohesion, our shared consciousness of the task before us, our belief in our democracy, our sense of responsibility to the nation.

Australia therefore has very clear domestic reasons for wanting to define more clearly and in more confident terms its national identity. But we should not underestimate the importance this also has for Australia's engagement with the Asia-Pacific region. The fact is Australia will be taken more seriously as a player in regional affairs if we are clear about our identity and demonstrate that we really mean to stand on our own feet practically and psychologically. These things will help us to succeed. It is important to get our democracy right at the same time as we get our economy right. That is why I think we should start now on the journey to the creation of an Australian Republic.

Last year my canvassing of this subject was frequently described by our opponents as a diversion. It was said to be not the right time. My argument has always been that if the creation of a republic served to heighten our confidence and our sense of ourselves, if it helped create a new and stronger sense of identity, then it would be a material aid to our economic future and

⁴² Quoted in Donald Horne et al, *The Coming Republic*, Sun Australia, (Sydney, 1992), pp. 6-8.

lifting the quality of our national life - and that alone made it an important subject of discussion. Whether or not it was for these reasons I do not know, but it is plain now that there is increasing interest in, and support for, a proposal to amend the current constitutional arrangements so that our affairs are no longer presided over by the King or Queen of the United Kingdom.

Our Head of State, the British monarch, cannot in the nature of things ever be a purely Australian head of State since she holds that office in relation to a range of other countries. And the monarchy being hereditary, gives us no choice about who the person might be. It implies no criticism of the monarch to question whether this arrangement remains meaningful and relevant to Australia today:

- *where a growing proportion of the population has few if any ties with the*

United Kingdom;

- *where our future increasingly lies within our own region; and*

- *where our identity as a nation is no longer derivative but our own.*

Clearly, the debate has come a long way in recent months. Many of those who might have been expected to oppose change in this area have indicated support for a change. Others, while not advocating change, agree that debate is desirable. John Howard, three weeks ago and running hard for the Liberal leadership, said that debate on the republic was desirable. In fact he went further, bless him, and said: "I think the Liberal Party has got to be part of that debate, and I would bring my contribution to it. I think there are strong intellectual arguments that can be made on both sides of the Republican issue and I think what the Liberal Party ought to do is to become part of the debate." We do, of course, welcome the debate. And we particularly welcome John Howard's willingness to put the conservative view - though, like many others, I am sorry that since making those remarks he has sounded rather more like a spoiler than a true voice of conservatism.

At any rate, my position is clear. I would like to see the Australian people demonstrate our social and political maturity by voting at a referendum for the establishment of a republic. I am an advocate of what has become known as the minimalist approach. My view is that the Constitution should be changed sufficiently to replace the hereditary monarch with a non-hereditary, Australian Head of State. But I do not know what the details of such changes would be, and what range of options might exist within this minimalist approach. And although commentators and constitutional forums have dealt with many of the issues in reports and learned papers over time, there has not yet been an officially sponsored study devoted solely to this question. In my election policy speech, therefore, I pledged that the Government would establish a broadly-based committee of eminent Australians, including representatives of the States, to develop a discussion paper which considers the options for a Federal Republic of Australia.

I said it would be the intention that as a result of this committee's deliberations and the public discussion that would follow, the Australian

people would be in a position to decide by referendum later in the decade whether Australia should become a republic by the year 2001. We have now taken the first steps in this process...I expect the committee to start its work by the end of May with my department providing the necessary secretariat support. After discussion with constitutional and legal experts I am confident that such a paper could be completed by early September.

The terms of reference of the committee ask it to prepare an options paper which describes the minimum constitutional changes necessary to achieve a viable Federal Republic of Australia, without examining options which would otherwise change our way of government.

The establishment of an Australian republic must be an inclusive process which involves all Australians. The Government does not seek to include any other constitutional changes with the republic proposal. This is no to say the Government is opposed to other proposals for reform but they should be considered separately and on their own merits. Even with this relatively limited purpose, however, it will be necessary to examine a variety of practical possibilities. The terms of reference therefore require the committee to describe these, and the main arguments for and against them, but without indicating or recommending preferred choices.

Before I go into the reasons for not seeking recommendations from the committee, and the further steps which might follow the committee's report, let me briefly describe the things we are asking the committee to address. The first is removal of all references to the monarch and the Governor-General as the Queen's representative in the Constitution. The second is the creation of the new office of Head of State and consideration of what the office might be called. Heads of state of republics are generally called "president", but the committee will be at liberty to identify other possibilities for Australia. The third question is that of provision for appointment and removal of the Head of State. As matters stand, we do not have to worry about the appointment of the Head of State. The Governor-General, as the Queen's representative, is appointed, and could be dismissed, by the monarch on the recommendation of the government. If we are to have non-hereditary Head of State, there are a number of possible methods of appointment, nomination and selection. There are also questions about the length of an appointment, such as whether the appointment should be for a fixed term and what the term might be, and the removal of a Head of State.

The next matter about which the committee will report is the powers of the Head of State. At present the Constitution is silent about the so-called reserve powers of the Governor-General. The committee will be asked to consider how the powers of the new Head of State, and the exercise of these powers, can be made subject to the same principles and practices as apply to the Governor-General. The committee will identify the nature of the necessary constitutional amendments required to implement the options it lists.

I do not expect all Australians to agree with the view that a republic is a desirable goal. What I do hope for is a mature and sensible debate, in which

both supporters of the current system and those who would advocate change will explain positively, clearly and honestly the benefits of their preferred system. If that happens, then whatever the end result, we will at least be seen to have conducted ourselves with the maturity we are entitled to claim after a century of living together as a nation...

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is a crucial decade. The prospect of success is real: I mean success in carving out a prosperous future. Tonight I have said very little about the economic future. I could quote you the evidence, the unmistakable evidence of the seachange which has occurred in Australia. It's enough to say now that we are becoming a different country - a manufacturing nation; a nation exploiting its intellect; and exporter of things we invent, develop and make. The dream some of us had in the late 1970s show many signs of coming true. Already the sceptics and the cynics have begun to lose their doubts about our ability to find our feet in Asia. And now many of them are losing their doubts about the not unrelated subject of becoming a republic.

Our success in the world does depend on our strength as a nation, on our faith in ourselves and the way we represent that faith - the way we symbolise it. It might not be too much to say that the faith is spreading. Armed with it, I believe we can in this decade marry a new era of economic success to a new era of social justice. It will take an act of courage, as all these things do - but we won't be found wanting, and the reward will be all the richer because we Australians will thereafter always know that we rose to meet the challenge.

In 1997 a Republican Convention was held. At the convention it was decided that there would be a referendum on whether changes to the constitution should be made to allow the appointment of an Australian Head of State. The Republican Movement, lead by Malcolm Turnbull, campaigned hard for a "Yes" vote. The main thrust of the argument for a "yes" vote was that it was time for a change and a Federal Republic of Australia was inevitable. Australia was a mature nation that had earned the right to install its own Head of State and not be tied to Britain in an out-dated constitutional arrangement. Republicans urged that the hereditary monarchy was an undemocratic system and not befitting a modern nation like Australia. But it was on the events of November 1975 that the Republicans drew on as their strongest argument for the change.

"Well may we say God save the Queen. Because nothing will save the Governor-General."

The above quote is arguably the most recognisable ever spoken by an Australian. It refers to the most dramatic event in Australia's political history. It was spoken from the steps of Parliament House on the 11th of November 1975 by Gough Whitlam, who had just been dismissed as Prime Minister of Australia by the Governor-General, Sir John Kerr. Kerr had dissolved the Whitlam Labor

Government and installed a caretaker government to be headed by the Opposition Leader Malcolm Fraser.

The reasons for the dismissal were clear. Under the Commonwealth of Australian Constitution the Senate has equal powers with the House of Representatives in respect of all proposed laws, with one exception. Under section 53, the Senate may not amend nor originate a Money Bill. In effect, this means that the Senate has constitutional power to refuse to pass any Money Bill and hence has the power to refuse financial supply to the government of the day. Under section 53 of the constitution, then, the Senate, which may or may not be of the same composition as the House of Representatives, has the power over and above that of the governing party and its Prime Minister. It is conventional governmental practice that a Prime Minister who cannot obtain "supply", that is cannot secure funds to carry out the ordinary services of government, must either advise a general election or resign. Under Section 57 of the Constitution, in the event that a government resolves to rule despite the Senate's rejection of supply, the Governor-General may dissolve both Houses of Parliament by the process known as double dissolution, effectively withdrawing the Prime Minister's commission to rule.

The morning of 11 November came after the two leaders had met at around 9 am, the impasse which existed between the opposing sides remained unresolved. Whitlam offered Fraser a half-Senate election which Fraser refused, stating that "there'll be no deal." Following the meeting Whitlam called the Governor-General to advise him of his intentions and scheduled a meeting for 1 pm. The Governor-General, convinced that neither Whitlam nor Fraser would relent, foresaw only one solution, one which he termed "democratic and constitutional." He stated:

It has been necessary for me to find a democratic and constitutional solution to the current crisis which will permit the people of Australia to decide as soon as possible what should be the outcome of the deadlock which developed over supply between the two Houses of Parliament and between the Government and the Opposition parties. The only solution consistent with the Constitution and with my oath of office and my responsibilities, authority and duty as Governor-General is to terminate the commission as Prime Minister of Mr Whitlam and to arrange for a care taker government able to secure supply and willing to let the issue go to the people.⁴³

As expected, when Parliament resumed Fraser spoke in a censure motion against the government and soon Whitlam left the sitting to fulfil his prior engagement with the Governor-General. Upon arrival, Whitlam was asked whether he would call an election, a question to which he responded in the negative. Unbeknownst to him, the Governor-General had foreseen the Prime

⁴³ *Age*, Melbourne, November 4, 1975.

Minister's response and had made up his mind to the course of action that was to follow. Kerr, the Governor-General, handed Whitlam a letter informing him of his demise and the deal was done. Fraser was informed of his ascension to Prime Minister, in the proviso that he would secure supply and seek an election, which he did and the first chapter in the most controversial political story of Australia's political history had been written.

The protest which ensued was of a scale never before seen in Australia. People took to the streets in their thousands, marching in protest of what they saw as a usurping of their rights as the electorate. The Governor-General, the Australian Head of State and representative of the Australian Monarch, Queen Elizabeth II, had removed the government that the people of Australia had elected twice in the space of three years. This by a man who was not directly elected by the people. The dismissal was an injustice of unfathomable proportions. The dismissal was not surprisingly front page news. "Day of Crisis" was the headline in the *Australian*. The British Press also carried the story on the front page - *The Evening News* ran with: "The Queen's Man Sacks a Premier".

In Australia there was outrage. People took to the streets. Only hours after the Parliament had been recessed nearly 1000 people gathered on the steps of Parliament House in Canberra, Australia's capital. Within an hour the crowd had swelled to 2000, many of them massed outside the entrance in the hope that they would get a glimpse at some of the major players in this extraordinary course of event. The people's wish was granted and the first form of response they were able to convey was one of disgust, as Fraser made his way down the steps. The crowd jeered as the new Prime Minister made his escape. *The Australian* reported that several protesters tried to punch him. When Mr Whitlam stood outside parliament the contrast was astonishing with the crowd calling out, "We Want Gough."⁴⁴ In another symbolic gesture of protest, the Australian flag was lowered to half mast. Whitlam, never one to miss the opportunity to arouse a response, addressed the crowd. He said:

Malcolm Fraser will go down in history as Kerr's cur. Maintain your rage and enthusiasm. You will have a Labour Government again.

(cur: worthless dog or contemptible person)

The crowds deafening cheers was a demonstration of their approval. Scenes were similar throughout the country. Many protesters converged on Liberal Party offices. In Adelaide over 100 Australian Labor Party supporters assembled outside the Liberal Party Office. 3000 protesters, many of them students, took to the streets of Sydney. In Melbourne the response was even more vigorous. The *Australian* reported "Protesters in Fierce Brawls with Police." The paper told that:

⁴⁴ *Australian*, Sydney, November 12, 1975.

"A Labor Party rally in Melbourne yesterday erupted into one of the most violent demonstrations ever seen in the city with police and protesters brawling in the streets." After massing outside government House, the estimated several thousand protesters, marched on the Liberal Party headquarters in South Melbourne. En route fierce fighting broke out, "police and demonstrators fell as kicks and punches were freely exchanged."⁴⁵ The level of resentment felt by some Australians suggests a degree of schame for the state of the Australian parliamentary system and its Constitution. A Constitution maintains a Queen who lives 10,000 miles away as its sovereign and Head of State.

Despite this controversy, in 1999 there were those who sought to maintain the constitutional arrangement that allowed such a controversy to occur. The campaign for a Constitutional Monarchy, the "no" campaign, lead by Kerry Jones, also campaigned hard. The main argument for no change was that the existing arrangements had served Australia, the dismissal aside, for well over 200 years and there was no need to interfere with them. In addition, there was the question over the model. One thing was certain, Australia didn't want an American style Presidency. Nor did it want to dispense with the Westminster system of government - the system Australia had inherited from Britain. The "no" campaigners saw no sense in voting for a republic without an acceptable model in mind.

In fact the model was to be the greatest stumbling block to a change in the Constitution. The Republican Movement put forward its preferred model. If the referendum was passed, the new Head of State would be elected by a two thirds majority of Parliament. Many Australians objected to this model and in doing so became tangled up with the monarchists' cause. Direct elections refused to vote for a Republic unless the model was changed. As a result there was a split in the "yes" vote and the referendum was soundly defeated. In fact, the "no" vote dominated in every State.

Such a result can be understood as a reflection of anti-political sentiment especially since 1975. The fiasco of the constitutional crisis of 1975 diminished respect for and the dignity of politicians, the parliament and the office of Governor-General. The process widened and deepened voter cynicism. Thus the result of the November 6 1999 referendum should not be misconstrued. The Australian people did not reject change, they rejected the involvement of politicians in the selection of a President. It has subsequently been estimated that if the question gave the voter the power to choose the President, the vote may have been about 70% "yes".⁴⁶

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Keith Suter, "Australia's Deadlock Over a Republic", *Contemporary Review*, Vol., 276, No. 1610, (2000), p. 144.

Read how the Press reported the result in the newspaper articles provided.



Republicans have to come together, they will never win when they are divided.

Senator AMANDA VANSTONE

Disunity cost us historic chance, say republicans

CAROLYN COLLINS
Staff reporter

REPUBLICANS across the country rued an opportunity lost yesterday, while monarchists hailed their win as a victory for the common people.

Justice Minister and republican, Senator Amanda Vanstone said the lesson was that republicans would not win until they were united.

"Maybe there are ways that we can devise to make a safe direct-elect system, maybe there aren't," she said. "But republicans have to come together. They will never win when they are divided."

South Australian Liberal and staunch monarchist Nick Minchin said the result sent a clear message that the majority of Australians were not hungry for a republic, but happy with the Constitution as it stood.

"I don't see any national government putting this back on the agenda for some time. Foreign Affairs Minister Downer said the poll was a traditional Australian result

strings of the monarchy when they had a safe and sensible republic to vote for," he said.

Victorian baptist minister and yes campaigner Reverend Tim Costello said he was deeply disappointed and doubted that any republican model would be successful in the near future.

"It was a historic moment I had hoped we would seize because it is going to be extra difficult to get this up again," he said. "We are going to have a generation of politicians who are referenda shy."

Attorney-General Darryl Williams blamed division among republicans for the defeat of the referendum.

"Overall, I think the vote could be seen as encouraging for the republican side but it is not likely to be put back to the people in a hurry," he said.

Queensland Council of Unions secretary John Thompson said the yes campaign had been elitist and had failed to win over working people.

"I reckon there would have been a lot of people crying in their chardonnay last night, and there would have been a lot of people like myself who had a beer and wouldn't be missing too many tears," he said.

of sensible, cautious people".

Aboriginal leader, Lewjia O'Donoghue also called on republicans to unite but doubted she'd see a republic in her lifetime. "Our only hope is really a change in government and Kim Beazley as a prime minister, who has actually promised a plebiscite, which is what we should have had in the first place," she said.

Democrats leader Meg Lees said Australia would not become a republic until it had a prime minister prepared to lead the country in terms of sensible, safe and constructive constitutional change.

ACTU president, and yes campaigner Jennie George said working-class people had voted against the republic in droves because they never connected with the yes-case campaigners, and had been turned off by television advertising featuring politicians.

Victorian Republican Movement, Frank McGuire, described the defeat as a "historic opportunity that has been missed".

"I think people overseas cannot believe that Australians who are regarded as rugged and independent individuals, could have yielded on to the apron

The reaction The verdict

The subject is Australia: what the British papers say



No wild colonial joy for royalty

TRUDY HARRIS
J London
AAP

BRITAIN'S press presented the referendum result as a clear victory for the monarchy, but some papers warned that royal sighs of relief might be premature.

"The Queen won her first-ever election yesterday," said the Sunday Express. "But while the poll of 12.3 million people produced a clear result, it was far from a heart-felt vote of confidence."

The Observer said the result had only bought the monarchy time, in Australia and Britain.

The Sunday Times said: "It is hardly the time for the Palace to put out the bunting." There was bound to be another referendum push in Australia, it said, suggesting the British royals should offer to "go quietly before they appear to be pushed".

Many contrasted the republic's defeat with Australia's victory in the rugby World Cup. Photographs of the Queen handing the trophy to Wallaby

captain John Eales, a republican, carried headlines such as "She's Queen of Australia. He's King of the World". For some newspapers, the defeat of the republic showed the monarchy was secure for another generation.

"The Queen remains monarch of Australia today," the Mail on Sunday told its readers.

"The result made it clear that Australians would even prefer an unpopular King Charles III to continue ruling over them than a politically appointed president."

OZ DOESN'T GIVE A XXXX FOR QUEEN
(But we'll keep her anyway)

Australians vote to save the Queen
Enjoy! grei

THE SUNDAY TIMES
Queen 'hurt' by No vote despite win

NO AUSTRALIANS VOTE TO STICK WITH QUEEN

Voters spare Queen from the axe
Warning that she might close to home

THE SUNDAY TELEGRAPH
Australians vote to keep monarchy

Mirror
The Queen's first election

THE SUNDAY EXPRESS
The Queen's first election

THE SUNDAY EXPRESS
The Queen's first election

Daily Star
The Queen's first election

THE SUNDAY TIMES
The Queen's first election

Mirror
The Queen's first election

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Mirror
The Queen's first election

THE SUNDAY EXPRESS
The Queen's first election

Daily Star
The Queen's first election

THE SUNDAY TIMES
The Queen's first election

Mirror
The Queen's first election



As the Australian people have spoken, the Government has been forced to retreat to the position of a minority.

The Verdict

Howard forbids talk of republic

CLARE HARVEY
The republic debate is over, John Howard said yesterday in a warning to senior Liberal republicans Peter Costello and Peter Reith they must now stop actively campaigning for change.

A jubilant Prime Minister said in Sydney he was not surprised by the referendum's failure, congratulating Australians for constitutional monarchy on running a strong grassroots campaign in the face of media "barracking" for a republic.

Mr Howard said he was not concerned by the strong yes vote in his electorate of Bennelong, pointing out the majority no vote in Opposition Leader Kim Beazley. He said the mood of Australians was now clear.

He criticised the Labor Party for "polluting the republic debate, saying former prime minister Paul Keating had originally proposed a referendum in 1993 as a tactic to advance his bid for power."

"In many ways yesterday's defeat of the republic could be laid at his door," Mr Howard said. "It was conceived out of political ambition, a desire to divide the Liberal Party."

Mr Howard rejected criticism of the model put to the referendum which was opposed by republicans supporting the direct election of a president.

"I have followed to the letter the wishes of the people," he said. "I believe the model had emerged from the Constitutional Convention."

"This referendum would not have been held but for the facilitation by the Government I lead."

"The Liberal Party has demonstrated to Australia that on certain issues the sensible thing, the only thing is to have a free vote."



It will always be No



CUT LOOSE: Kerry Jones and her daughter, Shannon, at the No campaign celebrations after their resounding victory in the referendum.

Monarchists vow to stick with the current system

By ANNABEL CRABB
in Canberra
and AAP

MONARCHISTS might support another referendum on the republic but would always endorse the current system, according to No campaign leader Kerry Jones.

After siding with direct-election republicans during the campaign to defeat the proposed republic, Ms Jones cut them loose yesterday, saying she did not have to comment on whether there should now be a second referendum on the direct-election model.

"I believe they will continue to work to get that model tested," she said, referring to the republicans who sided against the proposed model. "But that will be a battle for us, for another day."

Ms Jones, the executive director of the Australians for Constitutional Monarchy, said she would support another referendum "if it comes along".

"But that's very different from saying I'd support a model of

republic versus our very good working constitutional arrangements," she said.

A disappointed Australian Republican Movement chairman, Mr Malcolm Turnbull, said the republic campaign would now have to adopt direct election as the preferred model for change - as long as people understood its ramifications.

Asked if direct election had to be on the agenda for republicanism to go forward, Mr Turnbull said: "Oh, absolutely."

Ms Jones also threw the weight of the monarchists behind the Governor-General, Sir William Deane, to open next year's Olympic Games. But she said she would not challenge Prime Minister John Howard's decision to perform the ceremony.

Ms Jones said the republic would have led to conflict between the Prime Minister and president on the Games issue.

"Under this republic model you actually would have had a real bunfight," she said, although the republic would not have been in place in time for the 2000 Games.

Mr Turnbull said the republic process should have started with a plebiscite to allow people to vote on the principle of a republic.

"A lot of people say, 'It's blindingly obvious, you'll get an overwhelming vote, we're bothered'."

"I think there is a very important symbolism in people saying 'Yes, we want an Australian citizen as our head of state instead of the Queen,'" Mr Turnbull said.

"That having been done, the way we need to have a proper, informed debate, well-resourced with information from Government so people do have their information on different models addressed."

Mr Turnbull was in favor of debating a direct-election model and another referendum, as long as people understood what would deliver.

He said the method of appointment always needed to be considered in the context of what the president's powers would be.

Mr Turnbull planned to take back seat in future debate and "get back to the rest of his life".

It won't go away, says Lees

AUSTRALIA'S move toward a republic would remain on the political agenda, but would not make or break the Prime Minister at the next election, Australian Democrats Leader Meg Lees said yesterday.

"John Howard will move on to other issues, such as Australia's economic situation, health and education, and they still will be the big issues at the next election," she said.

"However the republic is certainly higher up the political agenda than it was six months ago, and it will stay there. It will come back a lot quicker than the No supporters think, particularly among the small 'l' liberal voters in the Coalition-held electorates."

Senator Lees said it was clear Australia would not become a republic until it had a Prime Minister prepared to lead the country in "sensible, safe and constructive constitutional change".



DISAPPOINTED: Australian Republican Movement chairman Malcolm Turnbull at the Yes campaign party on Saturday night.

Direct election lobby back in fray

WITH the nation's rejection of a republic less than two days old, backers of a directly elected President are already drafting a campaign to lobby national support for their cause.

Real Republic Victorian director Mr Phil Cleary said yesterday his group would lobby senior MPs from both major parties who had supported a republic to back his group's model.

Mr Cleary said it was the Real Republic push, not the monarchists, which on Saturday

"knocked out" the Australian Republican Movement's model of an appointed President.

"We said to the people 'you shouldn't vote on this model', and we got enough support to vote the model down," Mr Cleary said.

"In the end, we became the key player."

He said federal Opposition Leader Kim Beazley, Treasurer Peter Costello, and Workplace Relations Minister Peter Reith would be among those called on

to actively support the direct-election model.

"We will play a key role because we articulated the issue," he said.

"We are in a much better position than when we started. We have captured the imagination."

He said it was too early to say what strategies would be used to gain a republic with a directly elected President, but he raised the possibility of a plebiscite at the next federal election and said another referendum could be "just around the corner".

Applause, but the anger still burns

Put the debate on hold: Olsen

By Political Editor MILES KEMP

AUSTRALIA would not become a republic in the next "decade or two", Premier John Olsen predicted yesterday.

Mr Olsen - a republican - rejected a plan by Opposition Leader Kim Beazley to revive the issue of the war office at the next election. "It is with reluctance that government of any political persuasion would move to have this debate again," he said.

Mr Olsen said Australians should put the divisions behind them for some time.

He defended the idea of a parliamentary election for President. "I thought it was the right model and still do..." he said.

Opposition Leader Mr Rann said he had not been a "spoiler" for the republican cause by advocating direct election at the 1999 Constitutional Convention. Mr Rann, Western Australian Opposition Leader Geoff Gallop and others split the republican vote at the convention when they proposed the people be given a chance to vote for the President.

Mr Rann and Mr Gallop campaigned for a Yes vote on Saturday, but other direct electionists supported a No vote.

Mr Olsen said it was "unfortunate" the republican vote was split. "I am disappointed that the split republican vote has brought about the status quo and has stopped this step forward," he said.

Monarchist rapt in victory

● From Page 1

"I think they are going to have to debate it extensively to get a model which meets with the approval of the majority of people," he said at his North Adelaide home.

As for the future of the divisions in the Liberal Party over the republic, Mr Bonython is also optimistic.

"I think those divisions will be healed," he said.

"I can't imagine politicians will jeopardise their chances of re-election by not joining forces again."

"It would be fatal, would think, for the Coalition if they persisted with their divisions."

While the republic model put forward was defeated, Mr Bonython said he would continue to push to retain the Queen and her heirs as Australia's head of state.

"I have a lot of other things that I can do - won't be pulling a rug around my knees and waiting for the end," he said.

"Now this has been defeated, as far as I'm concerned I'm going back to the fact that I think the present system is worth preserving."

"Rightly or wrongly, that's going to be my attitude from now on."

THE NO MAN

THE win by the No campaign on Saturday was a clear message the people of Australia were happy with the current system, Liberal senator Nick Minchin said yesterday.

"I think what we have seen is a victory for the common sense of the Australian people," he said at his Rose Park home. "They have rejected what was very clearly a very flawed model for a republic."

"They have expressed a vote of confidence in our current constitutional arrangements by a very clear majority, and if we are ever to become a republic it should not be one in which the Parliament chooses the President."

"The country has been debating republicanism for probably 150 years and it may well go on for another 150 years."

"We have debates in this country over a whole range of different issues and there is nothing wrong with that."

"However, I think the nation

That ends the debate about their model

has, after a seven-year push by the Australian Republican Movement, now expressed a clear view that it wishes to retain our current system in preference to their very flawed model.

"So I think that ends the debate about their model."

In the run-up to the vote, Senator Minchin was critical of the role the media played in the debate, claiming they were biased toward the Yes vote.

"There was a big push by the republican forces during the final week, you had most of the media in this town (Adelaide) strongly advocating a Yes vote and, of course, a number of Liberals," he said. "It didn't surprise me they (Yes campaign) got 44 per cent, but it was still a pretty comprehensive defeat for the Yes vote in this state."

- Huw Morgan



CLEAR MESSAGE: Senator Nick Minchin basking in the referendum result at his Adelaide home yesterday. Picture: RUSSELL MILLARD

THE YES MAN

PRIME Minister John Howard will face a divided party after strongly supporting the No case, former Liberal Party president Martin Cameron predicts.

Mr Cameron - also South Australia's ARM president - yesterday launched a scathing criticism of his colleagues who supported the No campaign.

He called for the resignation of high-profile SA No campaigners Senator Nick Minchin and Foreign Affairs Minister Alexander Downer while warning Mr Howard would struggle to unite the party.

"I don't know how he is going to hold the party now in terms of discipline," Mr Cameron said.

"People like me are so angry... I don't know how he will hold it together."

"I think Bob Hawke summed it up when he said the Prime Minister is now the President of the Republic of Bennelong."

Mr Cameron said politicians who supported the No campaign, such as Senator Minchin and Mr Downer, should resign because their

The behavior of some... has been outrageous

campaign was based on a distrust of politicians.

He said a campaign that politicians could not be trusted to elect the President was "disgusting."

"They (Mr Downer and Senator Minchin) have cast a slur on all politicians, including their own comrades-in-arms, by declaring all politicians untrustworthy," Mr Cameron said. "That is in all their propaganda - you can trust politicians to run the country, foreign affairs and everything in the world except the President."

"That is the most ridiculous thing to say - dishonest, deceitful and demeaning for their colleagues."

"The behavior of some Liberal politicians that have been promoting monarchy has been outrageous."

Mr Cameron said Mr Downer and Senator Minchin should name other No-campaign Liberal MPs so that they could be disendorsed when candidates were selected for the next state and federal elections early next year.

- Miles Kemp

Crown rule for a decade after No vote

● From Page 1

Another plebiscite would be held to choose the model and a referendum to vote for it, meaning a final vote could take up to 10 years.

However, the push for a directly elected President was torpedoed yesterday when prominent monarchists who told people to vote No if they wanted to elect the President, deserted their direct-elect allies.

Cabinet will meet in Canberra tomorrow.

All senior ministers, including republicans such as Treasurer Peter Costello, Attorney-General Daryl Williams and Arts Minister Peter McCauley have indicated they have accepted the will of the people.

Mr Howard dismissed calls

by direct-electionists such as former federal independent MP Phil Cleary to keep pushing for their version of a republic.

"In the end you only know how the Australian people think when they vote through the ballot box and they voted to reject this proposition and they voted to reject it very solidly," he said.

Counting will continue today. The 79 per cent of votes counted on Saturday night showed 45.3 per cent for Yes and 54.7 per cent for No.

The republic was defeated in every State except Victoria where the Yes vote was marginally ahead. Results showed mainly high-income Liberals voted for the republic.

while it was overwhelmingly rejected by blue-collar Labor seats and rural electorates.

Mr Howard's preamble to the Constitution was also soundly defeated in every State and recorded a national Yes vote of 39.4 per cent.

In other developments yesterday: QUEEN Elizabeth said she respected and accepted the decision and would continue to faithfully serve as Queen of Australia.

FORMER Labor prime minister Paul Keating launched a bitter attack on Mr Howard, accusing him of wilfully manipulating the republic referendum to ensure its defeat through a campaign of lies.

Mr Beazley said many re-

publicans, especially Labor voters, voted No on Saturday because they did not have enough information or wanted a directly-elected President.

"I think it is possible to devise a directly-elected model that will work," he said.

He said he preferred Saturday's model "with variations" to a directly-elected President but the people should have an informed say.

Mr Beazley said Workplace Relations Minister Peter Reith should resign from Cabinet if necessary to keep pushing for his direct-elected model which he promised supporters.

"If that slippery eel is faintum, that is what he must do," he said.

Mr Reith said he would put his views to Cabinet but toe the Government line. He said there was no timetable when he believed Australia would have another vote.

"The political process responds to public opinion. Governments in the end don't control these issues," he said. The executive director of Australians for Constitutional Monarchy, Kerry Jones, said she would oppose a directly-elected President.

A disappointed Australian Republican Movement chairman, Malcolm Turnbull, said the campaign by direct-elect crusaders Mr Cleary and Ted Mack had seriously affected the pro-republic vote.

● PAGE 16: Editorial; Bateup's view

4.2 Suggested Further Reading

Stuart MacIntyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, Cambridge University Press, (Cambridge, 1999), chapter 9.

4.3 Review Questions

Should Australia become a Republic?

Why did Australians vote to maintain the monarchy?

Do you think Australia will ever become a Republic?

If so, what changes would need to happen for this to take place? If not, why?

4.4 Epilogue

In its short history, Australia has been faced with many challenges. Beginning at the end of the end of the eighteenth century, the history of Australia's white settlement has been one fraught with conflict. Conflict arose between whites and blacks, between convicts and their gaolers, between Catholic and Protestant, and between labour and capital. That these conflicts never boiled over into violent confrontation, anarchy or civil war, as had occurred in some countries in Europe and America, is extraordinary. While at time no love was lost between combatants, little blood was spilled. However, in the case of conflict between Aborigines and whites this assumption does not bear up to scrutiny. But it must be said, where things could have been very much worse, they were not.

But should Australians congratulate themselves on their past? It must be acknowledged that Australia persisted with policies, such as the White Australia Policy and those that saw the break up of Aboriginal families, well into a period of history when such responses were considered by many countries anachronisms. Nevertheless, some historians may answer yes. For example, in 1994 Geoffrey Blainey wrote in *A Shorter History of Australia*:

Australia is more productive, more important to the world, than its own population would suggest. It feeds more people in other lands than in its own. In a bumper year Australia might feed not only its own people but the equivalent of more than 80 million people living in nations as far apart as Egypt and China. Australia also supplies other nations with much of their energy and minerals and fibres. One of its achievements in the last 200 years

is to multiply enormously, for the benefit of much of the world, the annual produce of a difficult continent. So we return full circle to that insoluble dilemma: how do we weigh the loss suffered since 1788 by Aborigines with the gains made by perhaps one hundred times as many human beings?

Is there really an "insoluble dilemma" as Blainey suggests? Can the suffering of the few be offset by the gains of the many?

The problem of Australia's racial past is one that continues to preoccupy the many who believe in social justice for all. Some political commentators and black leaders have suggested that it is the Howard Government that is slowing down the process of reconciliation. One of the main problems for the government in acknowledging the wrongs of the past is that if responsibility was accepted, then compensation claims from members of the Stolen Generation could run into millions of dollars. In the view of the present Government, Australia cannot afford to accept responsibility for previous policies which were not of its making. In the late twentieth century, Australia is being asked to confront the wrongs of earlier generations. Some Australians feel that they are not responsible for the injustices of the past while others suggest that unless there is acknowledgement and reconciliation with Australia's indigenous people, the country cannot move into a united future. As long as the debate continues the process of reconciliation between black and white Australians cannot be completed.

This course has been an overview of aspects of Australian history that remain important today. In our journey from convictism to republicanism we have taken in several themes in Australian history. Immigration, national identity, nationhood and reconciliation are themes that have permeated through the course. While we have looked at these themes historically, they are themes that remain important to Australians today. Australia and her place in the world is also key issue for Australians. How the rest of the world sees us and our significance as a world power with increasing globalisation keeps our themes to the forefront. Of course there are many aspects of Australian history that have been left out here. But this is only an introduction to the issues that concern historians and Australians at large. I hope you have enjoyed the course.

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