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ANALYSING AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

From Custodianship to the Anthropocene

60 000 BCE—2010



**Richard Broome, James Grout, David Harris
and Geoff Peel**

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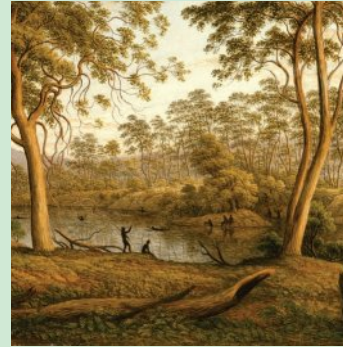
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Please be aware that this publication may contain images of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people now deceased. Several variations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander terms and spellings may also appear; no disrespect is intended. Please note that the terms 'Indigenous Australians' and 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' may be used interchangeably in this publication.

Cambridge University Press acknowledges the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which our company is located and where we conduct our business. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past and present. Cambridge University Press is committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.

About the cover



*Natives on the Ouse River, Van Diemen's Land, John Glover, 1838. In this book, you will study how humans have shaped the Australian landscape over time. *Natives on the Ouse River* depicts Aboriginal people living in an environment untarnished by European contact. Artist John Glover was a famous English landscape painter who emigrated to Tasmania in 1831. However, as the Art Gallery of New South Wales put it, his work 'stands in marked contrast to the actual situation of the Traditional Owners of Ouse River country – the Braylwyner people of the Big River nation – which was one of dispossession and violence at the hands of the colonists'.*

About the Indigenous Reading Project



All students, regardless of their background, need literacy skills to learn and grow as individuals. The Indigenous Reading Project aims to improve the reading ability of Indigenous students through working with school communities and families across Australia. For various reasons, the reading achievement gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students is still significant in Australia today. We want to change this. If you'd like to learn more about our work, please visit us at <https://irp.org.au>.

For the life of the *Analysing Australian History* series, the authors of the books will be donating their royalties to this very worthy cause, and Cambridge University Press will be matching this donation.

The Indigenous Reading Project acknowledges this generous support.

Foreword

History books, like all books, are creations that have their own history. This series began in Melbourne in September 2020 during the COVID-19 lockdown. It came out of a desire by some teachers, academics and publishers at Cambridge University Press to create a series of textbooks for the new VCE Australian History Study Design – due to start in 2022 and until September 2020, having no prospect of textbook(s). A rescue operation began to create four books to inform the four study investigations of the Study Design. Tight deadlines were needed to have the books designed, printed and distributed to be in students' hands for the start of 2022. All the books have been written with a heavily source-based approach so students can learn the craft of historical investigation and historical thinking.

Books owe many debts, and these are no different. Many historians gave permission for their words to be used as sources in the series. Newspaper organisations, publishers, and libraries also gave permission to use words and images in these textbooks. All are acknowledged in the appropriate places. The fifteen authors who worked on the series must be thanked for their creativity, hard and indeed excellent work in creating these magnificent textbooks. Two-thirds of the authors are practising teachers, as their biographies will show. No authors have received remuneration for this project, which they have done willingly, to assist the understanding of our history in this country. Indeed, the authors' royalties are being donated to the Indigenous Reading Project, to be matched by Cambridge University Press. Indigenous Literary Day is 1 September.

Special thank you to the following expert reviewers of the individual volumes, for their excellent and honest feedback.

From Custodianship to the Anthropocene: Ms Alison Quin & Professor Katie Holmes.

Creating a Nation: Dr Andrew Lemon & Dr Gwenda Tavan.

Power and Resistance: Professor Sean Scalmer & Professor Lynette Russell.

War and Upheaval: Hon. Assoc. Professor Judith Smart, Dr Bart Ziino, Mr Aleryk Fricker, Professor Noah Riseman & Ms Briony Parker.

Publishers Nick Alexander and Cameron Pikó must be thanked for all their enthusiasm and guidance for this project. The management at Cambridge University Press in both Australia and England must be thanked most profusely for supporting this project with no great immediate prospect of a financial return.

Richard Broome and Ashley Keith Pratt, May 2021

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Series introduction

AUSTRALIA'S REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY

When societies transplant themselves to new lands these fragments of the home societies are inevitably reshaped. The Romans in Britain or in Constantinople became different from those back at home in Rome. Likewise, from the fifteenth century onwards, after Europe began the process of colonisation during the Age of Exploration, the people and their ways of life in the colonies also changed from those at home. European peoples in these new lands were transformed by different environments and by clashing with original owners.

Australia's history is monumental because of how these transformations played out. It is also full of tragedy and drama, because these European immigrant peoples invaded new places with existing societies, except for the Pacific, far older than European agrarian society. In the case of Australia, the Indigenous population has been here since at least 60 000 BCE and Western scientific knowledge keeps pushing the date back. Many Indigenous people consider that they have always been here.

European colonists misread or misrepresented the facts before them and argued First Nations peoples were not owners, were without religion or culture, were impoverished because of their lack of physical possessions; and did not even deserve to own their land. The newcomers did not realise for generations that they were meeting a culture ten times older than their own agrarian societies, and one shaped by deeply spiritual ideas about custodianship of land.

The past is not one story, but many stories, interwoven and entangled. Misunderstandings, the injustices, the violence, the removals and dispossessions that took place for First Nations peoples created massive traumas, wrongs and human suffering that Australia is still addressing to this day. However, this European offshoot in other ways developed a magnificence of its own, which will be explored as well in this series.

Our history is not dead and gone but alive with the past, and it is this history that we must understand if we are truly to know ourselves. It is a history that must be studied by someone because of its importance in the human story – and if not by we Australians, who else then on this Earth?

This series, *Analysing Australian History*, investigates through documents the key themes in our past.

From Custodianship to the Anthropocene: 60 000 BCE to 2010 explores the ways humans have shaped, and been influenced by, the Australian landscape over tens of thousands of years. It investigates how peoples with very different ideas of the world clashed over the use of land and resources, which are the basis of all wealth and the source of our survival into the future. It also investigates how differences over the use of the environment have become a key theme of Australian society into the modern era.

Creating a Nation: 1834–2008 examines the ways in which immigrants and their Australian-born children transformed themselves into a nation. They debated how a nation was to be forged and who was to be included in that nation. These questions still play out today in a deep and often tense manner.

Power and Resistance: 1788–1998 investigates how power was wielded in the emerging Australian society. It explores how ideas of freedom and democracy played

out (and continue to play out) in Australia, and the implications for an imperfect society as groups struggled against those in power for justice and to be recognised as equal parts of the nation.

War and Upheaval: 1909–1992 investigates why and how Australia has been drawn into global conflicts throughout the twentieth century, as alliances shifted and new perceived threats to regional security emerged. It also explores how being drawn into these global conflicts has often led to turmoil and division within Australian society.

The four investigations in this series each have two halves: Foundations and Transformations. This recognises that Australia was settled by First Nations peoples in ancient times, then much later by colonists from Europe and in recent times immigrants from other continents. These foundations were transformed by interactions between people and land, and by the struggle by and between groups, to realise their ideas and ambitions.

Australian history is clearly revolutionary in several ways. The land was transformed by the presence of humans, both First Nations peoples and then Europeans and other newcomers after 1788. The British government usurped Aboriginal sovereignty and power after 1788, the consequences of which are still being resolved. Colonists forged a democracy, which was advanced in world terms. It was an imperfect democracy, created by ideas of the day, but one forced to be more inclusive by the actions of women, by newcomers from different backgrounds to the first colonists, by First Nations peoples, and by other groups seeking inclusion.

These are some of the great dramas of our history. They are astonishing stories of struggle, trauma and transformation that should not be missed or forgotten!

Richard Broome and Ashley Keith Pratt
Series Editors

A NOTE ON AUTHORS

The authors, a quarter of them retired academics and three-quarter of them practising teachers, are all non-Indigenous Australians, mostly of Anglo-Celtic descent. In these histories of Australia, the authors must write about all Australians, of all descents. They have tried to do this fairly and using historical methodology, which enjoins historians to try to understand, not judge, those in the past. The effort to understand others, to stand in their shoes so to speak, is done by seeking their voices in historical documents, if they can be found. The volumes are documentary based, so where possible the voices of First Nations peoples, immigrants and Australians of diverse backgrounds have been presented to readers. The authors have tried to be aware of their own ideas and values, and where possible to allow students to find their own meanings in the documents through questions and leaning activities. Each volume has been reviewed by First Nations educators.

The Victorian Year 12 Study Design 2022–2026, to which these volumes are closely matched, was devised by an expert educational team and checked by many people, including the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc and teacher forums.

A note on terminology

How people are defined or define themselves changes over time and within different contexts. We need to understand which terms to use and when. The four texts in the series *Analysing Australian History* will use ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ (as in the Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority History Study Design 2022–2026), where appropriate. However, in the nineteenth century few Torres Strait Islander people lived in mainland Australia, and less so in southern and western parts of the continent. They are more present in the second half of each book. Other words for Indigenous peoples will also be used in the books.

Local words: The original owners will be referred to where possible by their own local language group names that stem from traditional times, such as Eora, Wiradjuri and Woiwurrung. This is the preferred position, but of course the spelling of these names varies. Also, local names will be used that have been acquired, employed and accepted by Indigenous people since colonial contact, often from names of places where they have lived – for instance, Coranderrk, La Perouse or Palm Island people.

Regional words: When the need arises to describe those in wider regions, Aboriginal names that are widely, but not universally, accepted by original owners since contact may sometimes be used. These include names such as Koori, Murri, Yolgnu, Nyoongar and Nyungah for those of the south-east, north-east, north, west and southern parts of the continent respectively. Those in Tasmania now refer to themselves as Palawa.

National words: When all original owners are referred to, which is necessary in a continent-wide study, we must use European-derived words. No Indigenous word existed in pre-European contact times for all traditional owners across the country, as groups had no need for one.

Therefore, these books will use interchangeably: Aboriginal peoples, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, First Nations peoples, Indigenous peoples, original owners, traditional owners, Aboriginal Australians and Indigenous Australians, where the context is appropriate, to describe all those whom Canadians succinctly refer to as ‘First Nation’ or Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal people also sometimes refer to themselves as blacks, blackfellas or people of colour. However, some of these terms may be considered offensive by First Nations peoples if used by non-Indigenous people.

A NOTE ON THE WORDS ‘ABORIGINAL/ABORIGINE’

A frequently used term in these texts is Aboriginal people(s). The word ‘aborigine/aboriginal’ comes from the Latin phrase *ab origine* (meaning ‘from the beginning’). It emerged in seventeenth-century English to mean ‘the original inhabitants of a land’. As an English word of that era, it also became a colonial word to mean Indigenous people, as opposed to colonists.

The words ‘aboriginal’, ‘aborigine’ and their plurals did not become common until the 1840s and existed along with ‘blacks’ and ‘natives’ (see next page). The word ‘aboriginal’ and its other forms did not overtake ‘native’ in common usage until the late nineteenth century.

For much of its usage life, the word ‘aboriginal’ was used without a capital ‘A’, which gave it a derogatory edge. However, it has been capitalised conventionally since the 1960s,

revealing a new respect. It is now embraced by most Indigenous people, especially its derivative form 'Aboriginality', which relates to the politics of identity. 'Aboriginal people(s)', which is used most often in these texts, is now the preferred term over 'Aborigines' or 'Aboriginals' and is used interchangeably with 'First Nations' or 'Indigenous Australians'.

The word 'indigenous' means 'originating from' so anyone born in Australia is indigenous to the country. The capital 'I' is used to refer to First Nations Australians.

'NATIVE' AND OTHER UNACCEPTABLE WORDS

The word 'aboriginal' was not at first used in Australia. The English discoverer of the east Australian coast, James Cook, who claimed the continent for Britain in 1770, called the original owners 'natives' and occasionally 'Indians'. On 4 May 1816, a government proclamation used all three terms 'natives', 'black natives' and 'Ab-origines' in the one document, probably the first use of this last term. 'Native' came from the Latin word *nativus*, meaning an original inhabitant of a place. Early colonists mostly used 'natives', although 'the blacks' also came into use on the frontier, as the language of race intruded.

The word 'native' became derogatory but remained in common usage until the middle of the twentieth century, even in legislation. Like other unacceptable words, such as 'half-caste', it is deemed offensive today. The word 'native' will only appear where necessary in this book to show the language used and attitudes held by settlers, and only in historical sources quoted in the book. We need to see 'native' and other such words and ideas as settler terms of abuse, used to denigrate and silently argue in favour of settlers' claims to Australia.

There are other derogatory words that have been used against other minority groups in Australia, especially towards immigrants, which are also avoided in these books, except if necessary in a historical source to show attitudes. They are also terms of abuse used to assert dominance. The changing use of words reveals the journey all Australians are on to a more tolerant and accepting future.

WORD USE FOR NON-INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

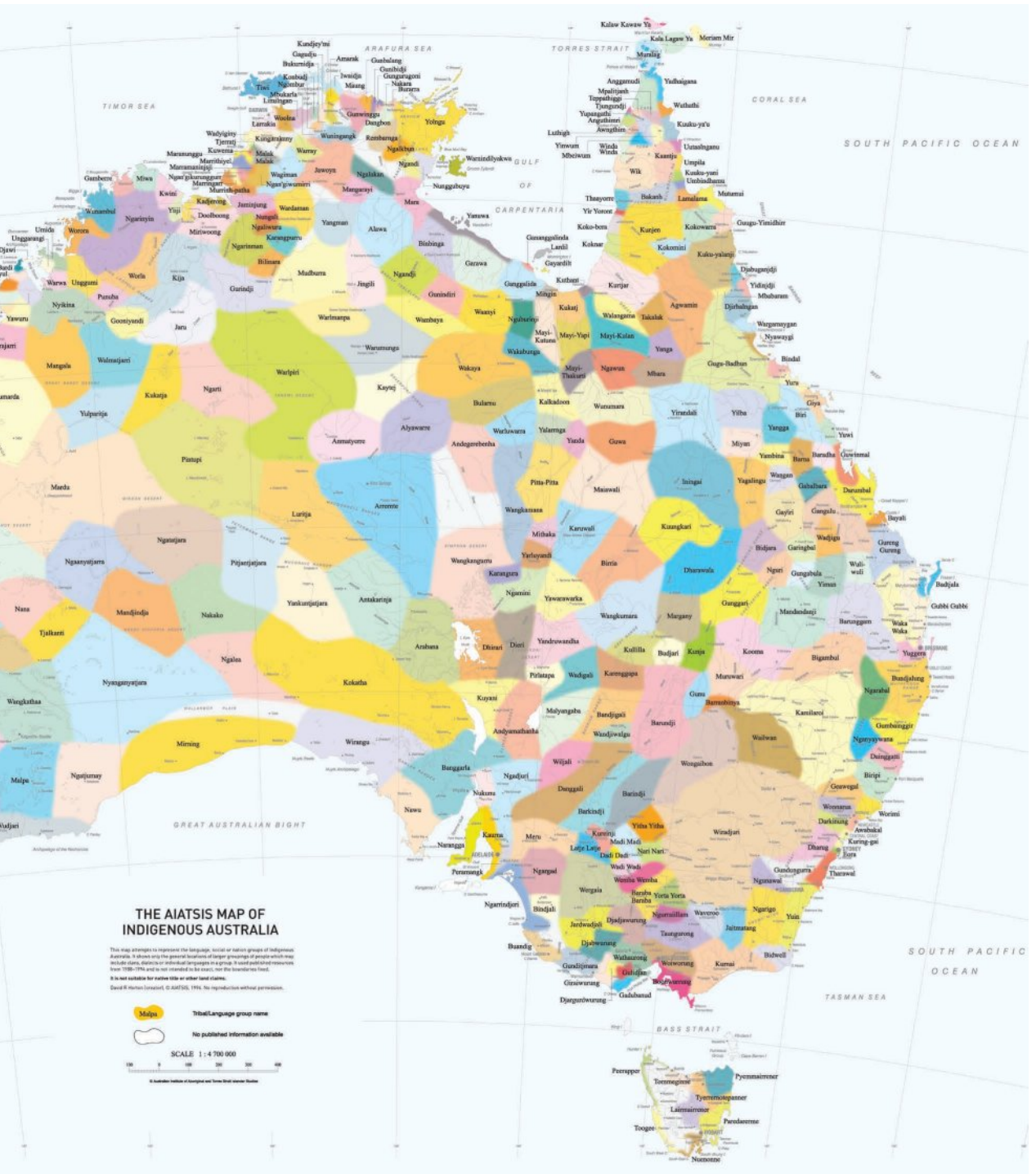
Those who came to this continent (called Australia from about 1813) to colonise will be called colonists or settlers, immigrants, whites, non-Indigenous people, Europeans, Asians, Africans, South Americans, or the name specific to the country from which they came, for instance British, Italians, Chinese, Sudanese and so forth, as the context demands.

The AIATSIS map of Indigenous Australia

Beneath your feet are layers of history. We all stand on the traditional lands of First Nations peoples, which were never ceded. This map shows the groups of custodians for all local regions across Australia.



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This map attempts to represent the language, social or nation groups of Aboriginal Australia. It shows only the general locations of larger groupings of people which may include clans, dialects or individual languages in a group. It used published resources from the eighteenth century-1994 and is not intended to be exact, nor the boundaries fixed. It is not suitable for native title or other land claims. David R Horton (creator), © AIATSIS, 1996. No reproduction without permission. To purchase a print version visit: <https://shop.aiatsis.gov.au/>

About the authors

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I thank my creative fellow authors, the very professional team at Cambridge and my wife, Margaret Donnan, and family for their patience and support.

ASHLEY KEITH PRATT (*author and series editor*) is a passionate history educator with extensive experience teaching history in addition to senior curriculum leadership roles. Ashley has completed postgraduate research in history education at the University of Melbourne and has contributed to curriculum design in Victoria through VCAA review panels for VCE History. Ashley is vice-president of the History Teachers' Association of Victoria (HTAV), a contributor to the HTAV journal *Agora*, a VCAA assessor for VCE History exams and a previous author for Cambridge University Press for Years 7 to 10 humanities projects.

Firstly, I would like to thank my co-editor Richard Broome for his enthusiasm, generosity, and passion for this project. I would also like to thank the entire team at Cambridge University Press, especially Nick Alexander and Cameron Pikó, without them this project would never have happened. Finally to my family, their support makes these small contributions I can make possible.

JAMES GROUT (*author*) has taught history and English for several years in public and private schools. He has an honours qualification in history from Monash University and was a contributing author for a previous VCE Australian History textbook. James is currently teaching junior and senior history at a school in Geelong.

I would like to acknowledge the passionate history educators who have guided and inspired me in my academic studies and teaching career.

DAVID HARRIS (*author*) has taught in regional and metropolitan Victorian Government high schools and technical schools. He has lectured in teacher education and contributed to federal and state humanities curriculum projects. He has tutored in environmental history at La Trobe and Monash Universities. His most recent publications concern the environmental history of the Gippsland Lakes. He is an honorary Research Associate in La Trobe University's Centre for the Study of the Inland.

I have been delighted to collaborate on this project, a daunting task during a pandemic but one made easier by staff at La Trobe University's Borchardt Library who retrieved and mailed books to borrowers during the COVID restrictions. I also acknowledge my

debt to the many students I have taught who were my imagined audience for this volume, and who remain a constant source of inspiration and optimism.

GEOFF PEEL (*author*) has been a teacher and Department Head in Australian schools and overseas for more than two decades. He was also education editor of a daily newspaper for five years and has authored a number of textbooks. Geoff has been a VCE assessor and an examiner for the IB and Cambridge International Examinations. His Masters thesis at the University of Melbourne focused on VCE curriculum design and he later spent time as a Research Fellow at Deakin University. He was also contracted to develop the first online curriculum resources for the Brunei Ministry of Education.

Thanks to my colleagues and the students at Kardinia International College, and to my family members Kate, Torin and Finn for their ongoing support.

How to use this textbook

TEXTBOOK STRUCTURE

Each book in the series is closely aligned to the VCAA's VCE History: Australian History study design for implementation from 2022. The books are broken into two Area of Study sections: Foundations and Transformations. Chapters are presented in a chronological narrative format. Each chapter covers the key knowledge from the curriculum, including the key events, ideas, perspectives and experiences specified in the study design. The final chapter of each Area of Study specifically covers the changes and continuities of the time period in question.

AREA OF STUDY AND CHAPTER OPENERS

Each Area of Study begins with an opener that contains an introduction and a timeline of key events. Chapters open with an introduction and timeline specific to the chapter.

NARRATIVE AND HISTORICAL SOURCES

Each chapter builds up a historical narrative for students. A wide array of primary and secondary sources are included throughout each book.

GLOSSARY TERMS AND ENDNOTES

Glossary terms are bolded in the text, and defined for you on the page in the print book. Endnotes are also included at the end of the book to give you additional information.

ACTIVITIES

Source analysis questions are provided for both textual and visual sources. Focus questions are included in the page margins to test student comprehension of the narrative by unpacking the content.

All activities within the book are available for download as Word documents.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES AND END-OF-CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

At the end of each chapter, you will find a dot-point chapter summary which outlines both the main ideas covered in the chapter and focuses on the various continuities and changes over the time period in question – a key theme of the study design. In addition, a range of activities which can be used for revision or assessment is included. A range of VCAA-style questions cover the curriculum’s ‘Key skills’ list, which helps you to develop particular historical skills and your understanding of historical concepts.

All **End-of-chapter activity questions** within the book are available for download as Word documents.

DIGITAL VERSION

There is a PDF version of the textbook available. Additional content such as downloadable worksheets, a curriculum grid and weblinks are also available for this title and are downloadable from Cambridge GO.

Introduction

Country the term Aboriginal people use for the land which the local group owns through tradition (and/or legal native title today) and for which they hold the stories and have rights of custodianship. It is capitalised to distinguish it from country (with a small ‘c’) as meaning a nation.

WHY STUDY THE MANAGEMENT OF LAND IN AUSTRALIAN HISTORY? BECAUSE LIFE IS SUSTAINED FROM NATURE.

As we will see in Chapter 1, many First Nations peoples believe that humans both own, and are owned by their environment. This means that they know they have a reciprocal relationship with **Country**, and are responsible for looking after it. Most non-Indigenous people consider that the land and environment is a commodity to be owned and exploited for profit.

These two views are often hidden from us who live in cities and suburbs away from the countryside, often indoors and glued to a computer. But the leather of our shoes comes from animal skins; the fabric of our clothes

is made from cotton, wool, bamboo and other natural fibres or synthetics made from petroleum siphoned from the ground. The desk we study at was once a tree; the food we eat once walked and sprouted forth from the earth; the screens we stare at all come from the earth’s resources. Everything, from the simplest to the most complex, is made from the products of nature.

Therefore, nature is the source of wealth and power. Throughout history people have struggled to control land and its natural resources: food, wood, minerals and even exotic animals. Land and power are key elements of our study and we will see many contests over the use and meaning of land.



↑ ‘Mount Abrupt, the Grampians’, Victoria, Eugene von Guérard, 1856

WHY STUDY HOW LAND USE IN AUSTRALIA CHANGED, OR REMAINED THE SAME? BECAUSE STUDYING CHANGE IS KEY TO UNDERSTANDING THE PAST.

Human use of land in Australia has a history in **Deep Time**, stretching back to 60 000 BCE (Before the Common Era) or over 2000 generations of 30 years each generation! Although it was not a changeless time, change was generally slow rather than rapid like the internet revolution in our own lifetime. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land use was marked by a sense of **custodianship**, as we will see as we explore First Nations' land management. First Nations peoples knew the land (which they termed as 'Country') intimately, as part of them and they part of it. This belief emerged over several thousand generations of management and working with nature rather than against it.

The Aboriginal world in Australia was drawn into the **Age of Empire** from the seventeenth century and dramatically so from 1770 with **British colonisation**. As European peoples expanded into new (to them) worlds and met indigenous peoples, they brought new thinking about human-nature/land relationships that were exploitative and intensive, rather than marked by custodianship.

Europeans were encouraged in this exploitative view by thinking that nature, its land and resources, were unlimited. As James Cook voyaged for months on end into the Pacific Ocean in 1770, he encountered many islands and lands. As Charles Sturt and a party of convicts rowed their way down the Murray River to the sea and back in a small rowboat in 1829–30, they saw vast lands beyond its banks. And as **explorers** such as Thomas Mitchell slowly trekked across southern lands of Australia in the 1830s, they were astonished by the vast resources they observed. Their descriptions inspired others.

These colonists, and the animals and plants they brought with them, created a revolution as vast and changing as any other revolution in human history.¹ You can see this for yourself right before your eyes, if you just look through any window. Your view will be a land radically transformed in a few generations. The landscapes of the Traditional Owners were reshaped against their will, built upon and veneered in many places by bitumen, concrete, wood, glass and more recently metal and plastic.

↓ Anti-nuclear demonstration in Sydney, 1983



Deep Time the long period of time before the arrival of Europeans on the Australian continent, stretching back as far as we now know to at least 60 000 BCE

custodianship in First Nations understandings, Country is a living entity that people must protect and ensure all living things on it thrive by managing resource use, ecosystems and human actions. Management involves ceremonial, spiritual and cultural obligations as well, and ensuring future generations have the skills and knowledge to care for Country.

Age of Empire the expansion of European powers into (for them) unknown places, led successively by the Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, British and French sea power. It began when Vasco Da Gama reached India via the Atlantic and Indian oceans in 1498.

British colonisation the act of invading, claiming, settling and changing so-called new world countries such as Australia and New Zealand with British people, culture, law and structures of government

explorers those who find something first. However, European explorers were only finding something new to themselves, as these 'new lands' were already known by Indigenous peoples.

WHY STUDY IDEAS, ATTITUDES AND PERSPECTIVES? BECAUSE WE CAN BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND PEOPLE WHO LIVED IN THE PAST.

How people use land is guided by their culturally informed understandings, values and practices. First Nations peoples managed the Country by ideas and cultures shaped over millennia. Newcomers who understood their presence on this continent as colonisers came with a different set of ideas, beliefs, attitudes and perspectives that guided their actions in relation to land use. Different methods of using land and resources resulted in changes to Australian environments. Thus, land use is determined by human cultures.

The cultural differences are also revealed by different word use. First Nations peoples had their own language terms for what they owned and used, but in post-1788 times adopted the word ‘country’, which is often capitalised to mean more than land. It included a web of ideas and living relations between humans and nature, which we will explore in Chapter 1. European settlers used the word ‘land’ in their descriptions of the environment, a usage devoid of deep human-nature connections as we will see in Chapter 2.

The American anthropologist Roy Rappaport argued all humans view nature ‘through a screen composed of beliefs, knowledge, and purposes, and it is in terms of their cultural images of nature, rather than in terms of the actual structure of nature, that men [humans] act’.² What some people took to be productive farming land because of how it looked to them, was actually unsuitable. For instance, colonists have seen what they take to be beautiful farming land only to find it is deficient in some vital minerals needed for farming. Culture informs the framework of understandings and values that construct how the land is seen and determines human actions.

Rappaport also reminds us that nature is not without its own power as it can limit human desires and actions. He emphasised the two-way relationship of the powers of nature and culture, saying simply: ‘cultures are imposed upon nature as well as nature imposed upon cultures’.³

↓ Brockman 4 iron mine located in the Pilbara, WA



The arrival of Europeans in Australia in 1788 with the first colony in Sydney, and their expansion to other bridgeheads of colonisation, created a clash of cultures and understandings about land and its uses leading to much conflict and change. Colonists became dominant, due to force of numbers, weaponry, and the diseases they brought with them, creating colonial control over the land and its use.

During the late nineteenth century there was some modification of the exploitation of nature by colonists influenced by overseas ideas and by seeing destruction before their eyes. In 1864, the American lawyer and diplomat George Perkins Marsh wrote *Man and Nature*, a sweeping survey of the loss of natural areas across the globe. Marsh argued that humans had modified the natural balance of plants, animals and forests through agriculture and pastoralism, concluding: ‘the importance of human life as a transforming power is, perhaps, more clearly demonstratable in the influence man has thus exerted upon superficial geography than in any other result of his material effort’.⁴

Marsh had in fact hinted at what became known 140 years later as the **Anthropocene**. A minority of Australians from the 1880s rethought their attitudes to nature, a view that was transformed into majority thinking a century later, when battles over nature became part of politics and social movements.

This investigation of the meanings and uses of land in Australia will challenge you to form **historical arguments** that will be both exciting and potentially life changing for you.

Anthropocene a term increasingly used to define a new planetary epoch: one in which humans have become the dominant force shaping Earth’s bio-geophysical composition and processes

historical argument an argument in history is not like a dispute based on emotion, as in ‘having an argument’. Rather it is building a point of view about a historical topic rationally, and carefully supported by evidence. A good historical argument is based on different types of evidence.



↑ The Pejar Dam in southern NSW, 2005

The background of the cover is a painting titled 'Natives on the Ouse River, Van Diemen's Land' by John Glover, 1838. It depicts a lush, hilly landscape with a river in the foreground. Several large, mature trees with thick, gnarled trunks and dense green foliage are the central focus. In the distance, a small boat is visible on the river, and a few figures can be seen on the banks. The sky is a mix of blue and white, suggesting a bright day with some clouds.

Area of Study **1**

**Foundations,
60 000 BCE–1901**

**By Richard Broome with
James Grout**

Natives on the Ouse River, Van Diemen's Land, John Glover 1838

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Cambridge University Press

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The background of the page is a rich, detailed painting of a river landscape. In the foreground, a large, gnarled tree trunk lies on the ground. The river flows through a dense forest of tall, thin trees. Several people are visible in the water, some standing on the banks, and others in the distance. The scene is bathed in a warm, golden light, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is serene and naturalistic.

Introduction

For at least 60 000 years, First Nations peoples lived with the Australian continent and its associated islands, Tasmania and the Torres Strait Islands. They developed the oldest continuous cultures in the world, in which they lived as part of the land, which they now call 'Country'. They managed the land in a sustainable manner and changed it too, as we will see. The degree of change was generally slow, although it gathered pace at times of technological advances.

First Nations peoples' balanced relationship with land was disrupted by European colonists, who invaded unannounced and certainly uninvited, bringing with them very different ideas of land use and management. Waves of immigrants, driven by the desire to succeed to justify their uprooting from their own homelands, sought land and independence from economic hardship and wage slavery. Some of their peers back in Europe had a sense of stewardship for their land, but most of these new arrivals did not and used the land carelessly. They believed it was vast and had unlimited resources.

Area of Study 1, Foundations, examines how these two very different views of land use and management – one sustainable, the other exploitative – clashed in the period from 1788 to 1901. It also explores the impact on land by European pastoralists and their sheep, gold miners, graziers, loggers and urban dwellers.

It is a story of great drama and considerable concern about how land and nature in Australia was used and often abused.

Timeline

World events	Date	Australian events
c. 2 000 000 BCE: Palaeolithic period (Old Stone Age) begins		
100 000 BCE		
c. 100 000 BCE: <i>Homo sapiens</i> begin to migrate from Africa		60 000 BCE: Earliest evidence of Indigenous presence
c. 10 000–3500 BCE: Neolithic period (New Stone Age) – the development of farming and the domestication of animals		6000–3000 BCE: Indigenous resource use escalated
c. 2700–2200 BCE: Pyramids built in Egypt		
1750		
1775–83: American Revolution		1770: Act of Possession – Aboriginal sovereignty is unrecognised in law
1776: <i>Wealth of Nations</i> published by Adam Smith, explaining capitalism		1770: James Cook's landfall – Cook claims east coast for the British Crown
1789: French Revolution begins		1788: Sydney established – colony of 1000 convicts and gaolers began
1800		
1814–15: Napoleon Bonaparte defeated		mid-1820s–1832: 'Black War' – conflict between colonists and Traditional Owners
1833: Slavery abolished across the British Empire		1834: Hentys settled at Portland – first European colony in Port Phillip District

World events	Date	Australian events
		<p>1835: Batman Treaty with Kulin Nation peoples – later denied by colonial authorities</p> <p>1836: Melbourne sanctioned – Port Phillip colony officially proclaimed</p> <p>1836: Foundation of Adelaide as a private company colony</p> <p>1836: Squatting regulations £10 annual licence to de-pasture sheep enacted</p> <p>1846: Waste land Act – pastoralists granted longer licences</p> <p>1847–53: Reserves declared – Governor La Trobe declares reserves for public interest</p>
	1850	
		<p>1851: Gold discovered in New South Wales and Victoria, causing population boom</p> <p>c. 1860: Australia's population reaches one million</p> <p>1861: Acclimatisation Society of Victoria formed</p> <p>1863: Kulin peoples select and pioneer the Coranderk Reserve</p> <p>1864: George Marsh's <i>Man and Nature</i> published</p>
1846: Irish Potato Famine begins		
1861–65: US Civil War		
1865: Slavery abolished in the United States		
1872: The world's first national park created at Yellowstone, Wyoming, United States		
		<p>1879: Field Naturalists Club of Victoria formed</p> <p>1879: First National Park formed near Sydney, boosting tourism</p> <p>1895: Federation Drought begins</p>
	1900	

CHAPTER 1

Aboriginal land management in Deep Time to 1788



Source 1.0 Aboriginal cave paintings in rock shelter dating back at least 17000 years: Gwion Gwion (formerly called Bradshaw) rock art, depicting a fish hunt. Raft Point Gallery, Kimberley Region, Western Australia.

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Chapter timeline

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1750		
		1770: Act of Possession – Aboriginal sovereignty is unrecognised in law
		1770: James Cook's landfall – Cook claims east coast for the British Crown

1.1 Introduction

INQUIRY QUESTION

How did First Nations' land and land use change over time?

This chapter will develop your understandings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander presence on this continent, including the intricate interplay between place and people. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are among the longest, continuous cultures in the world, passed on from generation to generation since the first people arrived here, or since the beginning. While we will be discussing past events and practices, these are also current knowledge and practices for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

This chapter will explore First Nations relationships to Country, including spiritual and ritual understandings, and land use and management practices. The following types of evidence can help us know Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land management practices in Deep Time.

1. Indigenous ideas and knowledge today can reveal traditional cultural ideas passed down through generations by oral tradition.
2. Conversations between Aboriginal peoples and European observers. In the early colonial period before Indigenous peoples were educated in English writing on missions, Aboriginal testimony took the form of short statements noted down by settlers.

3. Accounts and protests by Indigenous peoples written after the 1860s once they mastered written English.
4. Accounts by colonial observers, few of whom had sufficient cultural insights to understand what they observed.
5. Evidence of archaeologists and historians compiled from historical documents and fieldwork.

For generations, colonists and those who wrote about Indigenous peoples misunderstood them as brutish and inept, never in control of their environment. Research over the past 40 years turned that view on its head to recognise Indigenous peoples as deeply knowledgeable of their diverse environments – and for 2000 generations. The anthropologist Marshall Sahlins, using historical evidence and field research, argued that Aboriginal societies were ‘affluent’. People easily fulfilled all their desires because they had simple and achievable needs: daily food and shelter; a working religious view of the world; a viable pattern of kinship relations; and a philosophy of good living.¹ Geoffrey Blainey revealed this in *Triumph of the Nomads* (1975), as has Bruce Pascoe in *Dark Emu* (2014).



↑ **Source 1.1** *Native encampment*, John Skinner Prout and Charles Cousen, 1874

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples lived this way of life for tens of thousands of years. However, their way of life was not unchanged, for that would be impossible, given environmental conditions changed around them. (Remember that nature and cultures interact in a two-way process).

Global temperatures and rainfall levels rose and fell over thousands of years, affecting the distribution of food resources and gathering techniques. The seas rose and fell along with a changing climate, most notable around 25 000 BCE, when the world was 5°C cooler. Much sea

water became ice, dropping sea levels and exposing more land, making Victoria's landmass a fifth larger than it is now. Global warming then led to sea levels rising by 100–150 metres over 15 000 years, flooding the continent's coastlines and forming Bass Strait and Port Phillip Bay 9000 years ago. A shrinking land mass affected coastal tribal territories. Levels stabilised 6000 years ago to be near current sea levels.²

Technological change developed over time in response to a changing climate and human innovation. New local inventions emerged, such as the returning boomerang (no doubt perfected over long periods without the benefits of wind tunnel tests). Aboriginal tool kits diversified over time, adding more wood and bone implements, and tools became smaller and more refined. Strategies for hunting Australian animals that jumped, ran and burrowed were devised, including stealth, diversions, disguises and implements such as hooks, nets and traps. Massive fibre nets caught fish, ducks and emu.

Continuity was often more evident than change in Deep Time. However, at one stage, a vitality emerged that quickened the pace of change. **Archaeologists** have called this a period of 'intensification', and it seems to have happened in some regions around 6000 BCE. The intensification led to new resource strategies in favourable environments. But some older technology remained, as we will see, including the stone axe.

archaeologist one who studies the human and material remains of the past, especially the ancient past, rather than the written record which is more the preserve of historians
intensification a term used by archaeologists to mean a period of increased production of food and resources by new social and technological innovations

1.2 Significant events from Deep Time to 1788

INQUIRY QUESTION

What technologies and events shaped Indigenous land management in Deep Time?

Management by fire

From 30 million years BCE, the eucalypt family of trees slowly became dominant as the Australian continent became drier and more arid. Eucalypts adapted to fire. Indeed, 70 per cent of Australian plant species are fire tolerant, many needing fire to germinate.³ This arid climate set the parameters (limits) on what humans could do with the land.

For millions of years, lightning ignited fire on the Australian continent. However, about 60 000 BCE, Aboriginal people invented ways of making fire through friction. Mostly they carried a fire-stick as they travelled as an easy source of ignition. Each mealtime required a fire, and at night, people gazed at the night sky comforted by a campfire. Fire was a friend and used to better their lives. Historian Stephen Pyne wrote 'the constant interaction between firestick and landscape replenished both'.⁴

In Source 1.2, five non-Indigenous historians write about how Aboriginal peoples have used fire.

Source 1.2

Aboriginal people burnt the bush to signal, to clear the ground, to hunt, to regenerate plant food and extend the human habitat, and for fun. In the context of central and northern Australia, many scholars have extended this line of thought, noting that fire played and continues to play a significant part in domestic, social and ritualistic aspects of Aboriginal people's lives. The myriad uses of fire include ceremonial occasions (life, initiation and death); illumination; protection against bad spirits; cooking; provision of personal warmth; curative purposes; and the driving out of unwanted animals and insects.

Fred Cahir, Sarah McMaster, Ian Clark, Rani Kerin, and Wendy Wright, 'Winda Lingo Parugoneit or Why Set the Bush [on] Fire? Fire and Victorian Aboriginal people on the colonial frontier', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 47, issue 2, 2016, pp. 229–30.

Fire was a common tool of land management. James Cook saw cultural burnings from the deck of the *Endeavour* as he sailed along the east coast of Australia. John Septimus Roe, the Western Australian Surveyor General, encountered patches of burnt ground as he explored the southern parts of Western Australia. Many other Europeans saw the same thing, not realising its purpose.

RESEARCH TASK 1.1

Go to the Victorian Government Deadly and Proud website and watch the video 'The Power of Cultural Burning'. In it, Trent Nelson, a Dja Dja Wurrung man, talks about the continued power of fire as a land management tool. After watching the video, answer the following questions.

1. How does Nelson define cultural burning?
2. What benefits does Nelson attribute to cultural burning?

However, Friedrich Wilhelm Ludwig Leichhardt, an explorer who journeyed from Sydney in the 1840s, realised the burning was systematic. He wrote that Aboriginal peoples 'seem to have burnt the grass systematically along every watercourse and around every waterhole in order to have them surrounded with young grass as soon as the rain sets in'.⁵

In Source 1.3, Major Thomas Mitchell writes about witnessing similar burnings. He clearly sees its purpose.

Source 1.3

Fire, grass, kangaroos, and human inhabitants, seem all dependent on each other for existence in Australia. For anyone of these being wanting, the others could no longer continue. Fire is necessary to burn the grass, and form those open forests, in which we find large forest-kangaroo; the **native** applies that fire to the grass at certain seasons, in order that young green crop may subsequently spring up, and so attract and enable him to kill or take the kangaroo with nets. In summer, the burning of the long grass also discloses vermin, bird's nests etc., on which the females and the children, who chiefly burn the grass, feed.

W.T. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions in the Interior of Eastern Australia With Descriptions of the Recently Explored Region of Australia Felix and of the Present Colony of New South Wales*, Vol. 1, T. and W. Boone, London, 1839, pp. 412–13.

native a colonial word for First Nations peoples of Australia, which is no longer used as it has derogatory connotations



↑ **Source 1.4** *Aborigines using fire to hunt kangaroo*, Joseph Lycett, c. 1820

FOCUS QUESTION 1.1

Write down the key words and ideas used by Leichhardt and Mitchell about Aboriginal use of fire.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 1.1

Consider Source 1.4.

1. What is the historical context of this image?
2. What are the key elements of this image?
3. What message is this illustration giving? Is it positive or negative?

Occasionally, the words of Aboriginal peoples speaking about fire were written down by early colonial observers. In 1831, Captain Collett Barker, an officer at a British garrison at Albany in Western Australia, made a diary entry (reproduced in Source 1.5) of a conversation with some local Noongar Aboriginal men. The Aboriginal men hinted that permission was needed from local custodians to use Country.

Nakinah & several others asked for a boat to put them across in a few days to burn for wallaby at Bald Head. He did not know the exact day as it depended on Coolbun's arrival, whose ground it was, & their starting there without him would be considered stealing, 'Quipped'. They also required his presence or permission now to burn at King George's [Sound], as since Dr Uredale's death it had become his property. They might kill Wallabi but not burn for them.

Source 1.5

John Mulvaney and Neville Green (eds), *Commandant of Solitude: The Journals of Captain Collett Barker 1828–1831*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1992, p. 382.

In the 1870s, Ethel Hassell, a pioneer at Jarramongup station in southern Western Australia, also recorded what two young Aboriginal women told her about burning practices.

Source 1.6

... the natives burn large tracts of country each year, to ensure the grass and herbage coming up green and sweet at the first rains, also to drive out the game for hunting purposes. All the young of the birds that nest on the ground were hatched and able to fly, also all the young ground rats were running about, so it was quite time for the man carls [bushfires] ... in a few days the whole country was on fire and the smoke driving down on the station made life intolerable.

E. Hassell, *My Dusky Friends: Aboriginal Life, Customs and Legends and Glimpses of Station Life at Jarramungup in the 1880s*, C. W. Hassell, East Fremantle, 1975, pp. 110–11.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 1.2

1. Copy and complete the following table for Sources 1.5 and 1.6.

Category	Question	Answer
Author	Who made the source and what do you know about them?	
Context	When was the source made? What was happening during that time?	
Audience	Who was the source made for? Who was going to read it?	
Purpose	Why was the source created? What goal or purpose did it have?	
Significance	Why does the source matter? What changed because of it?	

2. From your reading of what Hassell and Captain Barker recorded, what ideas do you think shaped Aboriginal burning practices?

Most Aboriginal fires were shaped by cultural permissions and set in a way and time to produce a cool and controlled burn. Not all land was burnt, as the first Europeans encountered in the Otways and Gippsland in Victoria. There, the landscape featured immense forests, criss-crossed by Aboriginal pathways, but with dense timber all around.

It took 120 years for Europeans to begin to understand cultural burning. Archaeologist Rhys Jones wrote about this in 1969.

Source 1.7

In eastern Tasmania, human firing increased the extent of the mosaic pattern of open sclerophyll forest and grassland plains. This is the optimum habitat for some of the macropods, such as the Forester Kangaroo, and the plains provided extra food for the Kangaroos, wallabies, emus, and native hens on which the Aborigines fed ... It is interesting that, through firing, man may have increased his food supply and thus probably his population. At the most general level, firing of the bush, in the same way as clearing a forest to create a field, increased the proportion of solar energy per unit of the ground that man could utilize. Perhaps we should call what the Aborigines did 'fire-stick farming'.

Rhys Jones, 'Fire-stick farming', *Australian Natural History*, vol. 16, 1969, pp. 226–27.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 1.3

1. A 'thesis' is an argument supported by evidence. Write down the most important points Jones made about Aboriginal use of fire (see Source 1.7). What is his main argument or thesis?
2. What is the significance of Jones combining the words 'fire-stick' with 'farming'?

Researchers followed Jones' work, especially his idea of a 'mosaic pattern' (a combination of diverse pieces of land as in grass and adjoining forest). The archaeologist Sylvia Hallam, who studied explorer and settler accounts of Aboriginal burning in Western Australia, called these burnings 'patches' in that they were here and there and not continuous burnt Country. She argued importantly that 'the [Indigenous] land the English settled was not as God made it. It was as Aborigines made it'.⁶

Historian Bill Gammage also argued Aboriginal peoples 'made' the land.⁷ Like Jones, Gammage used the word 'mosaics' along with his own word for Aboriginal burning practices, 'templates' (meaning 'a pattern to be followed'). By 'templates', he meant that land was burnt into a pattern to create areas of Country that contained feed grass, adjoining scrub or forest for animal refuges and water to sustain them. In Source 1.8, Gammage explains how templates work.

Each template thus let its plants and animals flourish, but concentrated them in a known location as precisely as a farmer with paddocks. This could work because alone of continents, Australia had few big predators – mostly only humans frightened game. Templates were maintained for decades or centuries, and activated by fire in planned rotation for day-to-day working. People rarely needed to hunt or gather randomly or speculatively. They knew where to go.

Source 1.8

Bill Gammage, 'Fire in 1788: The closest ally', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 42, 2, 2011, p. 287.



← **Source 1.9** Crater of Mt Eccles, West from Mount Napier, Eugen von Guérard, 1858. This is a painting of Mt Eccles in the Western District. This artist was noted for his accurate and realistic painting. In mid-picture, we see grass areas and bush, like the fairways of a golf course, with water depicted below it.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 1.4

1. Copy and complete the table from Using Historical Sources as Evidence 1.2 for Sources 1.8 and 1.9.
2. Explain in your own words how Gammage thinks 'templates' worked.
3. Explain the significance of Gammage's words 'as a farmer with paddocks'.
4. Analyse Source 1.9 and explain if and how you can see templates.

ecologists those who study the science of ecology, which examines the way plant and animal communities interact and live with each other

Gammage argued Aboriginal people farmed without farms: 'making farm and wilderness one'.⁸ Some **ecologists** and others have criticised Gammage for making an argument for the whole of Australia, across many different environments.

Michael Clarke and other zoologists who studied birdlife of the Victorian Mallee, for instance, point out that Mallee Country, at least, was probably not regularly burnt. Iconic birds like the Mallee fowl require deep leaf litter built up over years to make large ground nests. Mallee eucalypts suffer years of reduced nectar production following fires, leaving less food for birds.

Clarke and his fellow researchers also found that, of 28 species of Mallee birds they studied, none positively benefited from landscapes burnt in the previous ten years. Some species favoured landscapes unburnt between 11 and 25 years. The black-eared miner preferred older Mallee scrubland not burnt for 35 years or more. Open country was regularly burnt by Aboriginal people, but it seems likely that the Mallee, the Otways and Gippsland's forests were not regularly burnt.⁹

Land management by fire continues as a major way First Nations peoples shape, protect and clean Country. With the current increase in mega fires (fires that are so massive they create their own weather patterns, as in the Black Summer of 2019–2020), understanding the techniques used in cultural burning is even more important. This form of burning creates 'cool burns' (fires that move slowly and at ground level) and are now being used in national park management across Australia. Some individual landowners are also seeking help from local Indigenous land managers. The National Indigenous Firesticks Workshop, begun at Cape York in 2008, was convened in the Shoalhaven District in 2018 at Bundanon. Local Indigenous groups met with the Rural Fire Service of NSW to promote cultural burning. See these 2017 trials in the Shoalhaven District of New South Wales at <https://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/9548>.

The Victorian Government funded the Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Fire Knowledge Group to advise on a fire strategy and to enable 'Traditional Owners to heal Country and fulfil their rights and obligations to care for Country'. The group was composed of 50 traditional owners across Victoria who sought a greater say in land management and emphasised 'cultural burns are used for cultural purposes – they are not simply about asset protection'. The Group, which discussed the meaning of fire in the Dreaming, established six principles:

1. Cultural burning is right fire, right time, right way and for the right [cultural] reasons
2. Burning is a cultural responsibility
3. Cultural fire is living knowledge
4. Monitoring, evaluation and research (MER) support cultural objectives and enable adaptive learning. MER will be used to build a body of evidence that allows cultural burning to occur and grow.
5. Country is managed holistically ... healing both Country and culture
6. Cultural fire is healing.¹⁰



↑ **Source 1.10** Fire management continuing to this day as young Indigenous people learn about cultural burns on the South Coast of New South Wales

FOCUS QUESTIONS 1.2

1. Why did Aboriginal people use fire?
2. How do some researchers disagree in their interpretation of Aboriginal use of fire?
3. Based on the evidence above, do you believe that Aboriginal use of fire could be considered as a form of farming?

Management by hydraulic engineering

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples gathered marine and freshwater resources such as fish, shellfish and crustaceans. They used hooks, nets and spears, tools perfected over millennia. Most European colonists were poor observers or too blinded by prejudices to appreciate Indigenous resource skills. Did they manage water resources using **hydraulic engineering**?

hydraulic engineering
the knowledge of how to use and control flowing water

Hydraulic engineering on the Murray River

Indigenous people managed waterways by various techniques. They increased fish and marine food supplies by placing dead trees in waterways or encouraging certain marine plants to thrive in billabongs to maximise food production. They knew how, when and where to catch fish as efficiently as any radar fishing system and weather forecast.

In *Dark Emu* (2014), Bruce Pascoe uses the reminiscences of two early pastoralists along the Murray River. Peter Beveridge settled at Swan Hill in 1846. Forty years later, Peter Beveridge wrote about the Wadi Wadi and Wemba Wemba people's fishing strategies, which he observed over many years (see Source 1.11). The Murray River was flanked by vast reed beds, its riverbank acting like a dike or dam. The reed beds were flooded annually for months from melted snow flowing from the Australian Alps. Beveridge described the Aboriginal use of this annual flood time.

Source 1.11

In the artificial looking banks at irregular intervals there are drains three or four feet wide, through which, when the river commences to fall, the waters of the plains find their way back to their parent stream. As a matter of course the fish instinctively return to the river with the receding water. At those seasons the aborigines are in their glory, and no small wonder either, as these times are actual harvests to them. They make stake weirs across the drains, the stakes being driven firmly into the soil within an inch of each other, so that anything having greater bulk than that space must perforce remain on the landward side of the weir.

Without any great stretch of imagination, the reader can easily fancy the shoals of fish which congregate behind these weirs when the river is falling, and what a very simple matter the taking of them must be. When the fish are required a native takes his canoe into the midst of one of these shoals, and harpoons as many as he wishes, or until he becomes tired of the fun. ...

When the waters have all receded from the reedy plain behind every weir, fish of all kinds are left by thousands to rot and fester in the sun, or to be devoured by crows and other carrion-feeding creatures which are attracted to those points in countless numbers.

Peter Beveridge, *The Aborigines of Victoria and Riverine As Seen By Peter Beveridge*, Lowden Publishing, Donvale, 1889/1908, pp. 89–90.

James Kirby also settled at Swan Hill in 1846. He wrote his reminiscences 50 years later. In Source 1.12, Kirby describes the same flooded reed beds.

Source 1.12

As soon as the water began to run back to the river the blacks used to make a fence across these channels of thin sticks stuck upright, and close enough to prevent the fish going through, but leave a space at one side, however, so that when the fish found they could not get through the fence, they naturally made for the opening. A black would sit near the opening and just behind him a tough stick about ten feet long [3 metres] was stuck in the ground with the thick end down. To the thin end of this rod was attached a line with a noose at the other end; a wooden peg was fixed under the water at the opening in the fence to which this noose was caught, and when the fish made a dart to go through the opening he was caught by the gills, his force undid the loop from the peg, and the spring of the stick threw the fish over the head of the black, who would then in a most lazy manner, reach back his hand, undo the fish, and set the loop again on the peg.

James Kirby, *Old Times in the Bush of Australia: Trials and Experiences of Early Bush Life in Victoria During the Forties*, George Robertson, Melbourne, (n.d.), p. 36.

Bruce Pascoe had this to say of Kirby and Beveridge's writings.

How did Kirby interpret this activity? After describing the operation in such detail and appearing to approve of its efficiency, he wrote, 'I have often heard of the indolence of the blacks and soon came to the conclusion after watching a blackfellow catch fish in such a lazy way, that what I had heard was perfectly true'. Kirby's perceptions of what he was going to find on this frontier are so powerful that he skews his detailed observations to that prejudice. ... his [Peter Beveridge's] work is crucial to what we know of the Wati Wati clan, and his list of words is one of the most significant, he can't disguise his contempt. He refers to the old women as hags, continually refers to the Wati Wati as savages, and appears to have completely ignored the moiety and totemic system of their society.

Source 1.13

Bruce Pascoe, *Dark Emu*, Magabala Books, Broome, 2014, p. 15.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 1.5

1. Copy and complete the table from Using Historical Sources as Evidence 1.2 for Sources 1.11–1.13.
2. Describe what Beveridge witnessed annually on the riverbank.
3. Write about or draw a sketch of how the fishing technique in Source 1.12 worked.
4. How does Pascoe critique the views of Kirby and Beveridge?
5. Had Aboriginal people created a machine? Explain your answer.
6. Why might Kirby and Beveridge devalue Aboriginal fishing skills?

Hydraulic engineering at Brewarrina

Almost 650 kilometres to the north-west of Swan Hill on the Barwon River, at present-day Brewarrina, is a unique hydraulic engineering site of the Ngemba people, the custodians who continue to use it and accord it great cultural significance. Also known as Baiame's Ngunnhu, the Brewarrina fish traps consist of a series of ponds and stone walls stretching over 400 metres along a rocky bar in the Barwon River bed which forms a series of rapids. Jeanette Hope and Gary Vines described the fish traps in Source 1.15.



↑ **Source 1.14** Brewarrina and the Murray–Darling river system, shown against modern state boundaries

Source 1.15

The construction methods display sophistication and economy with rocks placed tightly together, often with their length across the wall rather than along it. The result is a knitting of the courses together, a method that provides greater strength. Further stability is gained by the technique of placing large stones along the tops of the walls, like capping stones on a dry stone wall. The curved forms of individual traps are also probably designed to enhance stability. The teardrop-shaped curves act as arches against the weight of the water with the tail sections following the lines of the currents.

Jeanette Hope and Gary Vines, cited in Sam Rando, *Looking after Baiame's Ngunnhu: Conservation Management Plan for the Brewarrina Fishtraps*, 2007, p. 32.



↑ **Source 1.16** *Brewarrina fish traps*, Henry King, c. 1880–1900

W. C. Mayne, a government official, saw these fish traps in 1848 and later stated: ‘to form these must have been a work of no trifling labour, and no slight degree of ingenuity and skill must have been exercised in their construction’.¹¹

The age of these traps is unknown, stretching back into Deep Time, but are now much diminished. From the 1860s to the 1920s, European colonists removed stones to make foundations for buildings in Brewarrina and for road building. A concrete weir constructed in the mid-1960s further altered the original nature of the fish traps.

In 2000, the fish traps were listed on the NSW State Heritage Register. In 2006, they were listed on the National Heritage register under their Aboriginal name, Baiame’s Ngunnhu.¹²

Hydraulic engineering in Western Victoria

In 2019, Budj Bim became the third World Heritage site of Aboriginal Australia along with Kakadu and the Willandra Lakes.¹³ Gunditjmara Elder Denis Rose said this achievement, which had been pursued for decades, would bring economic development and heritage protection to this important site. The struggle for recognition built upon the handing back of Lake Condah mission land in 1988 after prolonged Gunditjmara protests, and the winning of non-exclusive native title in 2007 by the Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation. This body gained management rights to 133 000 hectares of land, centred on Budj Bim (also known as Mt Eccles). Budj Bim was a hydraulic engineering complex created about 6700 BCE. It contains the remains of 300 stone houses.¹⁴

FOCUS QUESTIONS 1.3

1. The *Macquarie Dictionary* defines ‘engineering’ as ‘skilful or artful contrivance, manoeuvring’. Were the Brewarrina fish traps engineering? Answer using Sources 1.15 and 1.16.
2. What does listing these traps on the NSW State Heritage Register achieve?



→ **Source 1.17**
Recreation of a weir at
Budj Bim

Eels living in coastal waterways were an important food supply for Aboriginal people. They were caught by many methods, including spears and hooks. William Buckley, the escaped convict who lived with Wadawurrung people (1804–35) in the Geelong region, described how they used worms and a rod to catch eels ‘the same way as boys catch the cray-fish in England. Some of these eels are very fine, and large’.¹⁵

Chief Aboriginal Protector
a government official whose job was to protect Aboriginal peoples from violence and injustice, all the while being part of colonisation

They had other methods which archaeologists label as ‘intensification’. In April 1841 George Augustus Robinson, the **Chief Aboriginal Protector** of Port Phillip, was travelling in western Victoria on official duties. He saw frequent catching, baking and eating of eels, of which ‘the flesh is snow white, skin peels off. The eels of Lake Bolak [Bolac] are delicious’. In Source 1.18, he describes constructions that he saw 40 kilometres north of Port Fairy and 100 kilometres north at Mt William (near the Grampians).

Source 1.18

I measured this weir with a tape, 200 feet, five feet high [65 metres long by 3.5 metres high]. It was turned back at each end and two or three holes in the middle were left for placing the eel pots as also one at each end. The eel pots are placed over the holes and the fisher stands behind the *yere.roc* or weir and lays hold of the small end of the arrabine or eel pot. And when the eel make its appearance he bites it on the head and puts it on the linger or small stick with a knob at the end, or if near the bank, throws them out. The fishing is carried on in the rainy season. Arrabine or eel pot made of bark or plaited rushed with a willow mouth and having a small end to prevent the eel from rappidly (sic) getting away.

These *yere.roc* or weirs are built with some attention to the principles of mechanics. Those erected on a rocky bottom have the sticks inserted in a grove (sic) made by removing the small stones so as to form a grove. The weir is kept in a straight line. The small stones are laid against the

Continued...

... *Continued*

bottom of the stick. The upright sticks are supported by transverse sticks, resting on forked sticks as shown above. These sticks are three, four and five inches [7–12cm] in diameter. Some of the smaller weirs are in the form of a segment of a circle. The convex side against the current.

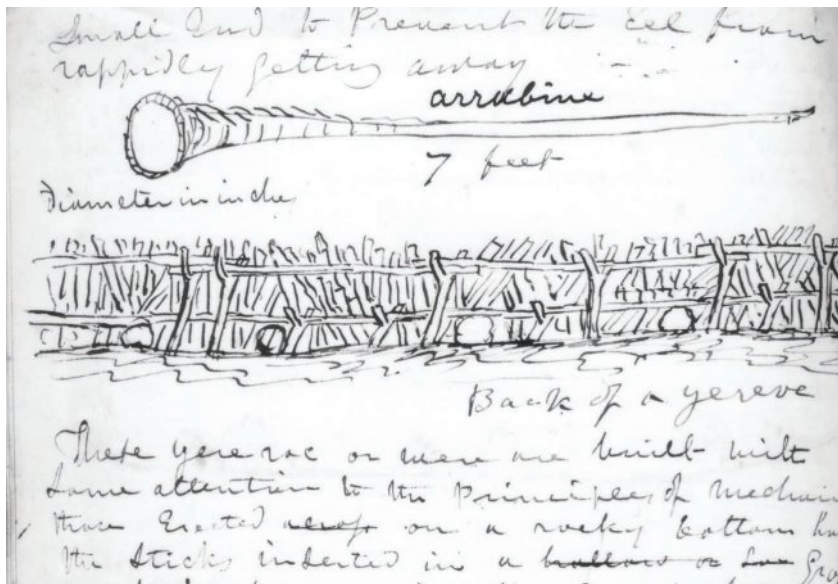
Ian D. Clark (ed.), *The Journals of George Augustus Robinson, Chief Protector, Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate, Volume Two, 1 October 1840–31 August 1841*, Heritage Matters, Melbourne, 1998, pp. 162–63.

At Mt William, he witnessed something more astonishing.

At the confluence of this creek with the marsh observed an immense piece of ground trenched and banked, resembling the work of civilized man but which on inspection I found to be the work of the Aboriginal natives, purposely constructed for catching eels. ... These trenches are hundreds of yards in length. I measured at one place in one continuous trepple (sic) line for the distance of 500 yards [550 metres]. These treble watercourses led to other ramified and extensive trenches of a most tortuous form. An area of at least 15 acres [6 hectares] was thus traced over ... These works must have been executed at great cost of labor to these rude people the only means of artificial power being the lever, the application and inventive of which force being necessity. This lever is a stick chisel, sharpened at one end, by which force they threw up clods of soil and thus formed the trenches, smoothing the water channel with their hands. The soil displaced went to form the embankment. ... The VDL native [Robinson's Tasmanian Aboriginal companion on the journey] was struck with amazement and exclaimed 'Tat is winem paner wrongwaly wornaddud' – 'oh dear, look at that! Black fellow never tired'. To me it was new and particularly interesting and evinced great perseverance and industry on the part of the Aborigines. The description of work is called by the natives *cro.cup.per* ... At intervals small apertures were left and where they placed their arabine or eel pots. These gaps were supported by pieces of the bark of trees and sticks. In single measurement there must have been some thousands of yards of this trenching and banking. The whole of the water from the mountain rivulet is made to pass through this trenching ere it reaches the marsh; it is hardly possible for a single fish to escape. I observed at a short distance higher up, minor trenching was done through which part of the water ran in its course to the more extensive works. Some of these banks were two feet in height, the most of them a foot and the hollow a foot deep by 10 or 11 inches wide. The main branches were wider.

Ian D. Clark (ed.), *The Journals of George Augustus Robinson, Chief Protector, Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate, Volume Two, 1 October 1840–31 August 1841*, Heritage Matters, Melbourne, 1998, p. 308.

Source 1.19



↑Source 1.20 Drawing by George Augustus Robinson of a yereoc (weir) and arrabine (basket)

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 1.6

Consider Source 1.17–1.20.

1. How would Robinson's position as Chief Aboriginal Protector influence his writing?
2. What is the key vocabulary used in these sources?
3. Robinson's initial impression of the traps is that they resembled 'the work of civilized man' and he seems surprised that Aboriginal peoples were responsible for creating them. Why?
4. In Source 1.20, Robinson wrote that the yereroc was built to the 'principles of mechanic engineering'. Do you agree? Why? Why not?

In 1980, the archaeologist Harry Lourandos wrote this about the channels and weirs.

Source 1.21

In the development of these water controls, which demanded a high expenditure of energy in construction and maintenance, we have a clear example of a shift (amplification) in one sub-system within the overall hunter-gatherer economic system. This change would have allowed for greater control over the local environment, certain of its resources, and by implication their yield. It can be seen as a form of artificial niche expansion.

[Lourandos then speculated why this intensification of resource use occurred.]

- 1 The emergence of drier conditions 3000 years ago that might have stimulated more efficient use of water and fish stock resources.
- 2 Increased use of eel stocks led to more sedentary living in houses with stone foundations and wickerwork tops, and a growing population, which in turn created pressures to maximise the food supply.

Continued...

...Continued

- 3 Increased competition and rivalries might have arisen between Aboriginal groups to hold large ceremonies that were prestigious, but which needed large food supplies to stage such events. For instance, the local community at Lake Bolac 45 kms to the south of Mt William, hosted large ceremonies that lasted for weeks due to the plentiful supply of eels.

Harry Lourandos, 'Change or stability? Hydraulics, hunter-gatherers and population in temperate Australia', *World Archaeology*, vol. 11, no 3, 1980, p. 255.

Short-finned eels (*Anguilla australis*) are born in the Coral Sea and migrate over 2000 kilometres to coastal rivers in Victoria and Tasmania before returning to the Coral Sea to spawn. Lourandos found that the Mt William system of trenches and those at nearby Toolondo lay between two major river systems – coastal and inland. By digging trenches to connect the two river systems, the Gunditjmara extended the range of the eels beyond their natural habitat. Increased eel numbers fed larger populations, encouraging people to remain for longer near the weirs before resuming hunting and gathering for other resources. Turf houses with stone foundations were built as semi-permanent dwellings.

Harry Lourandos explained how connecting trenches (one which was three kilometres long, two-and-a-half metres wide and one metre deep) worked:

The size and construction of these drains points to their operation as more than mere eel harvesting devices. As artificial water controls, the drainage systems operated as a form of swamp management, coping with excess water during floods and retaining water in times of drought. This would have served to counteract the effect of variations in water availability on the distribution, and therefore the availability, of eels in these marginal areas of their range. An extension of eel range, by providing access to further inland swamps and waterways, would have led to an increase in the annual production of eels.

Harry Lourandos, 'Change or stability? Hydraulics, hunter-gatherers and population in temperate Australia', *World Archaeology*, vol. 11, no 3, 1980, p. 154.

Source 1.22

FOCUS QUESTIONS 1.4

1. How old were these eeling complexes?
2. List the reasons why they were constructed.
3. Make an argument that these waterworks were resource management.

RESEARCH TASK 1.2

Estimate how many hours it would take one person to dig one metre of trench, measuring 2.5 x 1 metre, using the tools outlined in Source 1.19. Then, multiply that figure by 3000 to get an estimate for a three-kilometre long trench.

Seed harvesting

Just as eels and fish were harvested, so were plants and seeds. The extensive reed and bulrush beds along the Murray River were harvested by Aboriginal people, as Bruce Pascoe explains in Source 1.23.

Source 1.23

Kirby and Beveridge found vast acreages of rushes which the Wati Wati were harvesting and nurturing: 'the reeds looked like large fields of ripe wheat; and nearer, where they had burnt them, it had the appearance of a splendid crop just before it comes into ear'. This was a managed system and the management had produced a scene familiar to European eyes.

Kirby described the meal from this comping (cumbungi) rush as very similar to flour or potato meal. Mitchell said that the cakes made from the cumbungi flour 'were lighter and sweeter than those made from common flour'. Huge mounds were raised in these reed marshes near Swan Hill so that villages could be located at strategic locations within the swamp to manage the harvest of this valuable plant.

Bruce Pascoe, *Dark Emu*, Magabala Books, Broome, 2014, p. 45.

These roasted bulrushes were not just a food source, as the residual fibre was woven into large fishing, duck and emu nets. On average, twelve kilometres of twine had to be made each year by the group. Richard Broome estimated that 'the work effort of net making, from tuber harvest through the steaming, chewing, twining and knotting processes, was enormous and estimated to take about two thousand hours'.¹⁶

In Source 1.24, Thomas Mitchell writes about the use of millet grass. He wrote this in his journal during his journey near the Darling River in far western New South Wales.

Source 1.24

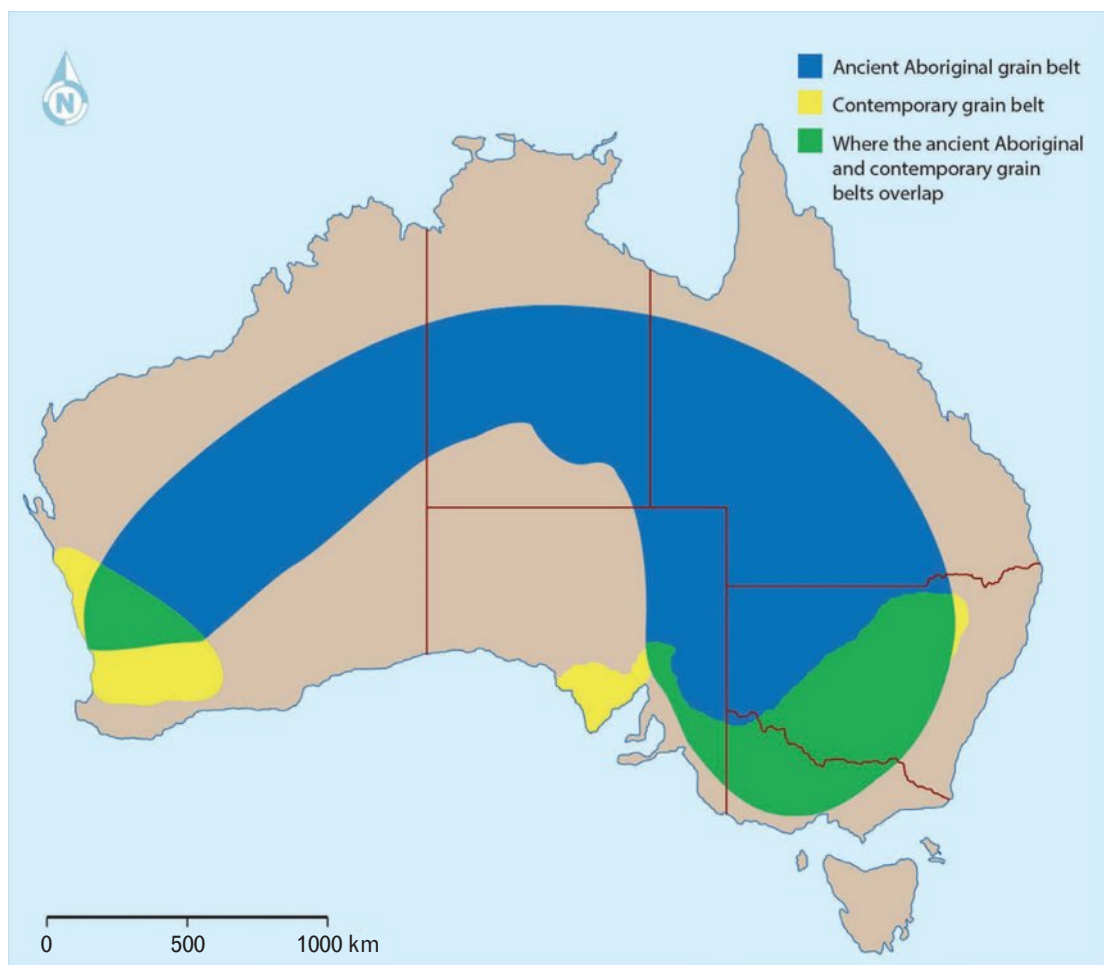
19 June 1835

In the neighbourhood of our camp the grass had been pulled, to a very great extent, and piled in hay-ricks, so that the aspect of the desert was softened into the agreeable semblance of a hay-field. The grass had evidently been thus laid up by the natives, but for what purpose we could not imagine. At first, I thought the heaps were only the remains of encampments, as the aborigines sometimes sleep on a little dry grass; but when we found the ricks, or haycocks, extending for miles, we were quite at a loss to understand why they had been made. All the grass was of one kind, a new species of *Panicum* ...

26 July 1835

We had this day noticed some of their huts, which were of a very different construction from those of the aborigines, in general, being large, circular, and made of straight rods meeting at an upright pole in the centre; the outside had been first covered with bark and grass, and then entirely coated over with clay. The fire appeared to have been made neatly in the centre; and a hole at the top had been left as a chimney. The place seemed to have been in use for years, as a casual habitation.

W.T. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions in the Interior of Eastern Australia With Descriptions of the Recently Explored Region of Australia Felix and of the Present Colony of New South Wales, Vol. 1*, T. and W. Boone, London, 1839.



↑ **Source 1.25** Adapted from Norman Tindale’s seed map of Australia

The stooks (sheafs of millet grass stood on their ends) that Mitchell observed allowed the millet grass to dry, dropping its seed, which was collected and ground for flour. This seed, and the Darling River’s other resources, allowed a semi-permanent living or, as Mitchell described it, a ‘casual habitation’. Mitchell saw other small clusters of substantial huts.

Seed gathering for flour was common across Australia (see Source 1.25). In *Dark Emu*, Bruce Pascoe made a case for a more complex food production, an ‘Aboriginal agricultural economy’.¹⁷ Some researchers, notably the anthropologist Ian Keen and more recently anthropologist Peter Sutton and archaeologist Keryn Walshe in their book *Farmers or Hunter-Gatherers? The Dark Emu Debate* (2021), argue that Pascoe has exaggerated his case for Aboriginal farming and used evidence loosely.¹⁸ But clearly in some areas, Aboriginal food production was intensified.



↑ **Source 1.26** Billibellary, Elder of the Wurundjeri Willam clan, drawn by William Thomas

Stone quarrying

Stone was another technique for managing nature. It was used to cut animal flesh, direct water, chop wood, skins and fibre, grind seeds, and make ritual items. Hard rock like greenstone or basalt was used for chopping; softer sandstone was used for grinding, and clays and ochres were used for pigments. Many quarries were small rock outcrops, but Victoria also had a dozen large Aboriginal quarries.

Early chopping tools were handheld, round, fist-sized stones with one sharpened edge called ‘choppers’. However, an unknown Aboriginal inventor in Deep Time placed a handle onto a stone chopper to increase its efficiency through greater leverage. See ‘Aboriginal Quarries’ at <https://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/9547>.

Alfred Howitt, a Victorian public servant and amateur ethnologist (one who studies other cultures), collected much evidence about Aboriginal traditional life from Indigenous informants. William Barak told Howitt about his uncle Billibellari, leader of the Wurundjeri Willam clan just north of Melbourne. Billibellari is also written as Billibellary. As with many Aboriginal words and names, for instance Wurundjeri/Wurrunjjerri and Barak/Berak, spelling varied in colonial times and into the present.

Billibellari’s family were custodians of an important axe-head quarry. In Source 1.27, Barak is telling Howitt about its operations.

Source 1.27

Such a place was the ‘stone quarry’ at Mt William near Lancefield, from which the material for making tomahawks was procured ... it was Billi-bellari, the head of the family whose country included the quarry, who lived on it, and took care of it for the whole of the Wurrunjjerri community. ... The enormous amount of broken stone lying about on this mountain shows that generations of the predecessors of Billi-bellari must have laboured at this work.

When neighbouring tribes wished for some stone they sent a messenger to Billi-bellari saying that they would send goods in exchange for it, for instance, such as skin-rugs. When people arrived after such a message they encamped close to the quarry, and on one occasion Barak heard Billi-bellari say to them, ‘I am glad to see you and will give you what you want, and satisfy you, but you must behave quietly and not hurt me or each other’.

If, however, people came and took stone without leave, it caused trouble and perhaps a fight between Billi-bellari’s people and them. Sometimes men came by stealth and stole stone.

Continued...

...Continued

[Barak related to Howitt a meeting called by Billibellari following theft of stone by some of the Wudthaurung/Wathaurong tribe.]

At the meeting the Wudthaurung sat in one place; and the Wurunjjeri in another, but within speaking distance. The old men of each side sat together, with the younger men behind them. Billi-belleri had behind him Bungeirim, to whom he 'gave his word' [meaning he was Billibellari's spokesman]. The latter then standing up said. 'Did some of your send this young man to take tomahawk stone?' The Headman of the Wudthaurung replied, 'No, we sent no one'. Then Billi-belleri said to Bungeirim, 'Say to the old men that they must tell that young man not to do so any more. When the people speak of wanting stone, the old men must send us notice'. Bungeirim repeated this in a loud tone, and the old men of the Wudthaurung replied, 'That is all right, we will do so'. Then they spoke strongly to the young man who had stolen the stone, and both parties were again friendly with each other. At such a meeting all the weapons were left at the respective camps, and each speaker stood up in addressing it.

A.W. Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South-east Australia*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1904/1996, pp. 311–12, 340–41.

The Mt William quarry of greenstone volcanic rock, called Wil-im-ee Moor-ring by the Wurundjeri, covered a kilometre of the mountain's slope. Isabel McBryde, an archaeologist, surveyed it in 1974 to determine whether the rock (which had been extensively worked) was mined by hammering or levering with wooden poles. Both techniques would have been heavy work for Aboriginal miners. One of the larger pits was 10 by 3 metres and a metre deep. McBryde describes this in Source 1.28.

In 1974 I recorded on the site over 250 circular or oval shallow mining pits, plus eighteen deeper, shaft-like pits cutting down into the bedrock.

Many of the circular mining pits are several metres in diameter and even now over a metre deep. Most have associated flaking floors, and often in the centre an undisturbed slab of outcrop, left to serve as an anvil stone for rough shaping of the mined material. Some larger flaking floors are discretely located down-slope of the main mining areas, suggesting separation of activities on the site. When I recorded and mapped the site in 1974 there were thirty-four distinct flaking floors, some forming impressive mounds up to twenty metres in diameter. ...

Even today the archaeology of this quarry testifies to sophisticated operations, based on sound knowledge of the form of the outcrop, the quality of the material and effective methods to acquire it. Areas where the rock is sheared or jointed have been avoided in selecting outcrops for mining. There is sophistication too in the separation of activities indicated by the discrete location of areas of mining waste and flaking floors resulting from pre-form production.

Isabel McBryde, Kulin Greenstone Quarries. 'The social contexts of production and distribution for the Mt William Site.' *World Archaeology*, vol. 16, no. 2, 1984, pp. 273–74.

FOCUS QUESTIONS 1.5

1. What does Howitt reveal about ownership rights in Aboriginal society?
2. Were Billibellari's rights over the axe-head quarry upheld? By what power?

Source 1.28



↑ **Source 1.29** Example of a stone axe from the Mount William area

Isaac Batey, a Melbourne colonist in the 1840s, met an Aboriginal man in southern New South Wales who had a stone axe. Batey asked about its origins.

Source 1.30

My query from where elicited the reply 'from a hill down in the Melbourne country' ... I learnt from him that our Aboriginals went inland carrying stone implements with other things. What they brought was exchanged with remoter tribes for what they produced ... From this Lachlan native it is clear that his people knew well where stone suitable for certain purposes was to be had in Victoria. Conjecturally his native place was 300 miles [480 kilometres] in a direct line from Melbourne and probably diorite with flints found their way hundreds of miles beyond where he was born. That part of Riverina, wherein the writer dwelt for five years was seen to be an absolutely stoneless region, not a pebble was to be met with, the only stone I saw was a disc like grindstone evidently brought from a long distance.

Isaac Batey, *Reminiscences of settlement of Melbourne and the Sunbury district (1840–1870)*, Unpublished manuscripts, MS000035, (box 016 [2–3]), Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Melbourne.

The distance this axe head travelled was not unique. Isabel McBryde studied axe heads in museum collections and mapped where they were found by European colonists according to museum records. Based on chemical analysis of quarries and museum axe heads, she proved that almost one-third of axe heads from Billibellari's Mt William quarry had been traded up to 300 kilometres away from the quarry site.

Clearly, Mt William was widely renowned in Aboriginal society for producing the best stone for axe-head blanks. McBryde called it ‘one of the world’s great archaeological quarry sites’.¹⁹ However, the Gunai/Kurnai of Gippsland preferred to use their own river stone pebbles for axe heads, and few Mt William axe heads have been found in the Otway Ranges or the north-east of Victoria. Why was this so, if they were so superior? The Gunai/Kurnai were not friends of the Kulin of Central Victoria, of which the Wurundjeri were a part. This hindered trade between them. The Kulin also had few contacts with Otways people. It is clear that axes were distributed not only because they were highly valued, but due to politics which shaped trade relations.

Colonisation ended Wurundjeri control of this important site. Billibellari lost his life in 1846 to influenza. By then, European steel axes were also undermining the use of stone axes. However, the Wurundjeri never relinquished their interest in this site. They were recognised as custodians in a management plan drawn up by Heritage Services, Aboriginal Victoria, in 1994. A few years later, the Macedon Ranges Shire Council, which owned the site, gave the title to the Wurundjeri in a gesture of reconciliation, thus renewing their custodianship for the site.

FOCUS QUESTIONS 1.6

1. Use Sources 1.27–1.30 to discuss how mining and its products were managed.
2. Consider how Aboriginal people historically mined material. How does this compare with the way in which non-Aboriginal people mine materials today?

1.3 Influential ideas from Deep Time to 1788

INQUIRY QUESTION

How did ideas shape Indigenous approaches to land management since Deep Time?

Creation knowledge

Traditional knowledge and beliefs evolved within Aboriginal society over millenia, explaining creation, and the relations between Country, species and people. Each local group or clan were the traditional custodians and recognised owners of their local Country, their title deeds being the knowledge and stories they owned. These stories were shaped by their spiritual relationship to their own Country and its local species.

Aboriginal peoples of Central Australia, the Anangu, call such knowledge Tjukurpa (pronounced çhook-orr-pa). Tjukurpa sets out the rights and responsibilities of being custodians of the land. In 1953, the anthropologist William Stanner popularised the term ‘**The Dreaming**’, the English word Aboriginal people used for Tjukurpa. Stanner wrote that a ‘central meaning of The Dreaming is that of a sacred, heroic time long ago when man and nature came to be as they are; but neither “time” nor “history” as we understand them is involved in this meaning’. The present and the past were one and the same, an ‘everywhen’ as Stanner described the timelessness of The Dreaming.²⁰

The Dreaming an English word to describe First Nations peoples’ knowledge and spiritual and cultural practices about Country bound together in a system of knowing and doing

In 2017, an exhibition at the National Museum of Australia, *Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters*, traced the story of Seven Sisters. In Deep Time, the Seven Sisters travelled through the lands of four language groups in Central and Western Australia, making a regional creation story or Tjurkurpa/Dreaming.

In Source 1.31, Kim Mahood describes the Seven Sisters.

Source 1.31

In Australia the activities of the Seven Sisters [Minyipuru] crisscross the continent. The names they are known by vary, as do the nuances of the story, depending on language group and country. Throughout the Central and Western deserts it's a tale of flight and pursuit, as the sisters flee the unwanted attentions of a sorcerer [Yurla] who pursues them relentlessly, spying on them, lying in wait for them, sometimes capturing one or several of them. ... The trajectory of the sisters across the country is a means of naming and remembering sites, their resources and their significance, as the Minyipuru dance, run and fly across the Martu landscape, zigzagging from waterhole to rock hole, fleeing Yurla, sometimes outwitting him, sometimes falling victim to him, they map the waterholes and mark the country, creating landmarks and enacting ceremonies, weaving a picaresque tale that is menacing and hilarious, cheeky, violent, transcendent – and, above all, memorable. Soaring together across the night sky, chased relentlessly by the priapic old man, the Minyipuru leave their traces everywhere.

Kim Mahood, 'The Seething Landscape', in Margo Neal, lead curator, *Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters*, National Museum of Australia, Canberra, 2017, pp. 32–33.



↑ **Source 1.32** Painting of the Seven Sisters Dreaming, Mona Mitakiki Shepherd, 2006

Tjukurpa still resides in sacred sites and vibrates with power, as the anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose explains of rock art sites in the Northern Territory.

Victoria River people say that many of the marks that outsiders called ‘rock art’ are not representations, but rather are the actual Dreaming beings. Because the presence at a sacred site is Dreaming, it is alive: it is conscious, it can be spoken to, it acts and reacts. Where the Dreamings travelled, and where they placed themselves in the country, there they are still, a living presence. Not confined by conventional laws of time and place, they exist in many places at once, and in the past, present, and future time. Images on the surface of rocks are Dreamings; so too many other marks, as well as many stones, trees, geomorphological features, and major celestial bodies. There is no necessary distinction between what Europeans refer to as art and all the other marks and things which are understood to be The Dreaming presence.

Source 1.33

Deborah Bird Rose, ‘The power of place’, in Sylvia Kleinert and Margo Neale (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Culture Art and Culture*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2000, p. 43.

Knowledge based in oral stories connected to particular Country was held by the Elders. The Elders taught younger members of the group the knowledge as they themselves gained status and proved worthy of knowing more of the Tjukurpa. There were various versions of these stories: those for the uninitiated youths, those for the initiated and more mature men and women, and simple or shallow versions shared only with outsiders.

Most early European colonists had no idea of Aboriginal knowledge systems. Even those who had an inkling of the systems only glimpsed simple versions of the knowledge – what they were allowed to know. In colonial Victoria, William Thomas and Alfred William Howitt were two men who knew a little, because they listened carefully to Aboriginal informants when gathering evidence.

Thomas, an English schoolteacher, became an Assistant Aboriginal Protector, employed in the government’s Aboriginal Protectorate. The Protectorate system was devised by evangelical reformers in England and established in Port Phillip in 1839. When it was disbanded in 1849, Thomas became Guardian of the Aborigines until his death in 1867. Thomas was friends with the Elder Billibellari and many of the Woiwurrung and Boon Wurrung people of Melbourne, who called him Marman (father). These two cultural/language groups were part of the **Kulin** nation of central Victoria, which also included people of the Wathaurong (Wada**wurrung**), Taungurung (Daung Wurrung) and Dja Dja Wurrung language groups. These groups believed Bunjil was the great creator.

Kulin means man
Wurrung means mouth
or language



↑ **Source 1.34** The approximate territories of the five groups of the Kulin Nation (shaded in light orange) and some other Aboriginal peoples of Victoria

Bunjil's creation acts

William Thomas, an English schoolteacher, became a government official in the Aboriginal Protectorate, created in Port Phillip in 1839. In 1854, Thomas who kept a journal daily, recorded this Aboriginal knowledge of Bunjil (Punjil).

Source 1.35

Creation of Man. Punjil one day cut, with his large knife, two pieces of bark, mixed up a lot of clay, and made two black men, one very black and the other not quite black – more like dirty red brick. He was from morning to night making them; it was not bright day then, but the sun was like blood all day. He began to make a man at the feet, then made legs, and so on to the head. He then made the other in a like manner, and, smoothing them both over with his hand from feet to the head, he put on one's head curly hair and named him Kookinberrook; on the other straight hair and named him Berrookboorn. After finishing the two men, Punjil looked on them, was pleased, and danced round them. He then lay on each of them, blowing into their nostrils, mouth, and navel, and the two men began to move. He bade them get up, which they did ([as] young men not pickaninnies [babies]); he told them their names; he showed his brother Pallian the two men he had made.

William Thomas, in Thomas Francis Bride (ed.), *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, Robert S. Brain, Government Printer, 1898, p. 422.



↑ **Source 1.36** A photo of Bunjil's cave. For more images and information on Bunjil's Cave, see <https://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/9550>.



↑ **Source 1.37** Bunjil (2002), a 25-metre, 20-tonne, white marble statue by Bruce Armstrong, erected in Wurundjeri Way, Melbourne.

Alfred Howitt, an explorer, natural scientist and public servant, who studied Aboriginal society for over 40 years, collected information from Aboriginal informants, including Barak (Berak), who was about 11-years-old when Melbourne was colonised.

In Source 1.38, Barak is telling Howitt about Bunjil.

Another legend relates that he [Bunjil] finally went up to the sky-land with all his people (the legend says his 'sons') in a whirlwind, which Bellin-bellin (the musk crow) let out of his skin bag at his order. There, as the old men instructed the boys, he [Bunjil] still remains, looking down on the Kulin. A significant instance of this belief is that Berak [Barak], when a boy,

Source 1.38

Continued...

... *Continued*

'before his whiskers grew', was taken by his Kangun (mother's brother) out of the camp at night, who, pointing to the star Altair with his spear-thrower, said: 'See! That one is Bunjil; you see him, and he sees you' This was before Batman settled on the banks of the Yarra River [that is, before 1835], and is conclusive as to the primitive [old] character of this belief.

The legend is that Bunjil held out his hand to the sun (*Gerer*) and warmed it, and the sun warmed the earth, which opened, and black-fellows came out and danced this corroboree, which is called Gayip. At it, images curiously carved in bark were exhibited.

A.W. Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South-east Australia*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1904/1996, pp. 491–92.

The Boon Wurrung elder Aunty Carolyn Briggs has carried this story to the present and into the future via the world wide web and on a plaque in Booran Park, City of Glen Eira, Melbourne. In 2016, she wrote that in former times, Port Phillip Bay was a 'large flat plain' on which the people hunted. However, their society fell into chaos until Bunjil saved the day. Briggs' telling of the story of Bunjil can be found on the Culture Victoria website.²¹

legend a non-historical or unverifiable story handed down by tradition from earlier times and particularly accepted as historical
religion a belief in a supreme supernatural power or powers thought to control the universe and all living things

FOCUS QUESTIONS 1.7

1. In your own words, list some of the deeds of Bunjil from Sources 1.35, 1.38 and from Briggs' story on the Culture Victoria website.
2. Compare these accounts of Bunjil's creation with the Book of Genesis from the Christian Bible. What similarities and/or differences do you notice?
3. Read the definitions of '**legend**' and '**religion**'. Was Howitt correct to use the word 'legend' in reference to stories of Bunjil?
4. Is Briggs' account a religious statement, a legend or a historical account?
5. Why might it be important to decide if it is a religious statement, a legend or a historical account?

Oneness with Country

totem a First Nations American word meaning 'a relative of mine'. The word refers to a custodian's relations to a natural plant, bird or animal species and determines their relationship to Country, people and all living things. In essence, it underpins Aboriginal custodial views of the world and spirituality.

Victorian Elders formed the Yulendj group to advise the *First Peoples* exhibition which opened in 2013 at the Bunjilaka Gallery, Museum Victoria, Melbourne. This exhibition shares basic cultural knowledge with all Australians. It tells the story of the Victorian creators, Bunjil the eaglehawk, and Waa the crow. William Barak told Alfred Howitt that the Kulin people were divided into two equal groups or moieties, Bunjil and Waang (Waa). Barak said 'Bunjil should marry Waang, and Waang marry Bunjil'. These were the people's main (but not only) **totem** that connected them intimately to Country and determined kin relations. Local custodians were all of the one totem – eaglehawk or crow – so marriage had to be into adjoining land-owning groups, thereby cementing relationships with neighbouring groups. This knowledge to marry beyond one's group made good genetic sense.



↑ **Source 1.39** Artist Simon Badari with a bark painting of his Kumoken (freshwater crocodile) totem, depicted along with barramundi, waterlilies and water plants

Aboriginal peoples gained personal totems at birth and initiation. These totems could be an animal or plant, which created a special relationship between the individual and that particular species, deepening their relationship to Country and their role as custodians of the land. Anthropologists call this relationship ‘totemism’. But few European colonists had any awareness of the deep connections between Indigenous people and the natural world.

Some Gunai/Kurnai people from Gippsland, who helped William Howitt understand this relationship, explained it to him as being like brothers.

Each Kurnai received the name of some marsupial, bird, reptile, or fish, from his father, when he was about ten years old, or at initiation. A man would say, pointing to the creature in question, ‘That is your *thundung*, do not hurt it’. In two cases I know of, he said, ‘It will be yours when I am dead’. The term *thundung* means ‘elder brother’, while the individual was the protector of the *thundung*, it also protected its ‘younger brother’, the man, by warning him in dreams of approaching danger, or, by coming towards him in its bodily shape, it assisted him, as in the case of the man Bunjil-bataluk mentioned elsewhere, or was appealed to by song charms to relieve sickness.

Source 1.40

A.W. Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South-east Australia*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1904/1996, p. 135.

Food avoidance rules were connected to totemism, which had the effect of establishing discipline and managing food resources. Ethel Hassell, a European settler in Western Australia in the 1870s, learned of food rules from Noongar informants.

Food restrictions were determined by age and sex. Young people were not allowed to eat wild dog or eaglehawk. Should they catch them they were required to bring them to camp and hand them over to the old people. Certain meats were eaten only by the men. Other meats were restricted to married folk.

Source 1.41

Ethel Hassell, ‘Notes on the ethnology of the Wheelman Tribe of Southwestern Australia.’ In D. S Davidson, ed., *Anthropos*, 31, September–December, 1936, p. 688.

Alfred Howitt also learned this about totemism from the Wotjobaluk of north-western Victoria and their neighbours, the Buandik of Mt Gambier.

Source 1.42

The Wotjobaluk would not harm his totem if he could avoid it, but at a pinch he would eat it in default of other food. ... a [Buandik] man would not kill or use for food any of the animals of the same subdivision with himself, excepting when compelled by hunger, and then he expresses sorrow for having to eat his *Wingong* (friend), or *Tumung* (his flesh). When using the latter word; the Buandik touch their breast to indicate the close relationship, meaning almost a part of themselves. ... One of the tribe killed a crow. Three or four days afterwards a Boorta (crow) man died. He had been ailing for some days, but the killing of his *Wingong* hastened his death.

A.W. Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South-east Australia*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1904/1996, pp. 145–46.

The story told by William Thomas in Source 1.43 is about a journey near Westernport taken in the 1840s. It reveals the strength of totemic ideas and shows the differences in Aboriginal and European world views about nature.

Source 1.43

The bear [koala] is a privileged animal, and is often consulted in very great undertakings. I was out with a celebrated Western Port black [Aboriginal man] tracking five other blacks. The tracks had been lost some days at a part of the country where we expected they must pass. We ran down a creek; after going some miles a bear [Koala] made a noise as we passed. The black stopped, and a parley commenced. I stood gazing alternately at the black and the bear. At length my black came to me and said, 'Me big one stupid: bear tell me no you go that way'. We immediately crossed the creek, and took a different track. Strange as it may appear, we had not altered our course above one and a half miles before we came upon the tracks of the five blacks, and never lost them after. The bear, too must not be skinned. [Thomas then related a belief concerning why.] The wombat (or warren) is also a scared animal, and must not be skinned. Many birds are also sacred; some may be eaten but by the aged only; others by the doctors [clever men] only.

William Thomas, cited in Thomas Francis Bride (ed), *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, Robert S. Brain, Government Printer, 1898, pp. 426–27.

FOCUS QUESTIONS 1.8

1. Describe in your own words what totemism is and how it might reinforce the idea of custodianship.
2. Is this a different way of thinking to your own? Is it hard to understand? Explain your answer.
3. Do you think that in modern societies, commercial brands or football teams play similar roles as totems?

1.4 Perspectives on custodianship and changes to land

INQUIRY QUESTION

How did First Nations peoples understand their connection to Country?

Custodianship

At public events, such as ceremonial occasions and large sporting events like the AFL Grand Final, Traditional Owners extend a Welcome to Country. These welcomes are the acts of custodians who have a spiritual connection to their land, a desire to care for it and to be its guardians and protectors. Aunty Joy Murphy, a senior Wurundjeri Elder, gives the warmest of welcomes at many Victorian events. Aunty Joy carries gum leaves with her as symbols of her custodianship of local Country and the resources to be shared with visitors. She has also written a picture book (illustrated by Lisa Kennedy) called *Welcome to Country*. A smoking fire is also often used as purification.



↑ **Source 1.44** Joy Murphy Wandin at the 2020 AFL Grand Final Welcome to Country Ceremony, Melbourne Cricket Ground

These acts of welcome by custodians have a very long history, as William Thomas revealed in the early 1850s. Thomas often travelled and camped with the Wurundjeri and the Boon Wurrung of the Yarra and Westernport areas, near Melbourne. In Source 1.45, he writes about their ritual of Tanderrum or freedom of the bush, whereby strangers or visitors were Welcomed to Country.

There is not, perhaps, a more pleasing sight in a native encampment than when strange blacks arrive who have never been in the country before. Each comes with fire in hand (always bark), which is supposed to purify the air – the women and children in one direction, and the men and youths in another. They are ushered in generally by some of an intermediate tribe, who are friends of both parties, and have been engaged in forming an alliance or friendship between the tribes; the aged are brought forward

Source 1.45

Continued...

... *Continued*

and introduced. The ceremony of Tanderrum is commenced; the tribe visited may be seen lopping boughs from one tree and another, as varied as possible of each tree with leaves; each family has a separate seat, raised about 8 or 10 inches [20–25 centimetres] from the ground, on which in the centre sits the male and around him his male children, and the female and her sex of children have another seat.

Two fires are made, one for the males and the other for the females. The visitors are attended on the first day by those whose country they are come to visit, and not allowed to do anything for themselves; water is brought to them which is carefully stirred by the attendant with a reed, and then given them to drink (males attend males and females females); victuals [foods and provisions] are then brought and laid before them, consisting of as great a variety as the bush in the new country affords, if come-at-able; during this ceremony the greatest silence prevails, both by attendants and attended. You may sometimes perceive an aged man seated, the tear of gratitude stealing down his murky, wrinkled face. At night their mia-mias [hut or shelter] are made for them; conversations ensue. The meaning of this is a hearty welcome. As the boughs on which they sit are from various trees, so they are welcome to every tree in the forest. The water stirred with a reed means that no weapon shall ever be raised against them. On Saturday, the 22nd March 1845, at an encampment east of Melbourne, near 200 strangers arrived. The sight was imposing and affecting, especially their attendance upon that old chief Kuller Kullup, the oldest man I have ever seen among the blacks; he must have been near 80 years.

William Thomas, cited in Thomas Francis Bride (ed.), *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, Robert S. Brain, Government Printer, 1898, pp. 426–27.

Thomas also described how ownership of country and resources were shared by those in the local land-owning group, which he observed in his daily travels with them.

Source 1.46

In each body are a few old men, who take charge of the small community, and give instructions in the morning where they will encamp at night. They seldom travel more than six miles a day. In their migratory moves all are employed; children in getting gum, knocking down birds, &c.; women in digging up roots, killing bandicoots, getting grubs &c.; the men in hunting kangaroos, &c., scaling trees for opussums, &c., &c.

... They hold that the bush and all it contains are man's general property; that private property is only what utensils are carried in the bag; and this general claim to nature's bounty extends to even the success of the day; hence at the close, those who have been successful divide with those who have not been so. There is 'no complaining in the streets' of a native encampment; none lacketh while other have it; nor is the gift considered

Continued...

... *Continued*

a favour, but a right brought to the needy, and thrown down at his feet.
... Wherever one is born, that is considered his or her country.

William Thomas, cited in Thomas Francis Bride (ed.), *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, Robert S. Brain, Government Printer, 1898, pp. 426–27.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 1.7

1. What does the Tanderrum ceremony tell us about custodianship?
2. What are the similarities and differences between Thomas' two excerpts (see Sources 1.45 and 1.46)?
3. What does Source 1.46 reveal about the nature of ownership in Aboriginal society?

Source 1.47, by historian Bill Gammage, shows how Aboriginal custodians managed the land in a careful way. In his book *The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines Made Australia* (2011), Bill Gammage explained how Indigenous peoples make and care for Country.

What plants and animals flourished where related to their management. As in Europe land was managed at a local level. Detailed knowledge was crucial. Each family cared for its own ground, and knew not merely which species fire on no fire might affect, but which individual plant and animal, and their totem and Dreaming links. They knew every yard [metre] intimately, and knew well the ground of neighbours and clansmen, sharing large scale management or assuming responsibly for nearby ground if circumstance required.

They first managed country for plants. They knew which grew where, and which they must tend or transplant. Then they managed for animals. Knowing which plants animals prefer let them burn to associate the sweetest feed, the best shelter, the safest scrub. They established a circuit of such places, activating the next as the last was exhausted or its animals fled. In this way they could predict where animals would be. They travelled to known resources, and made them not merely sustainable, but abundant, convenient and predictable. These are loaded words, the opposite of what Europeans once presumed about hunter-gatherers. ...

They (Europeans) did not see, but their own records show, how carefully made, how unnatural, was Aboriginal Australia.

Bill Gammage, *The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines Made Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2011, p. 3.

Source 1.47

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 1.8

1. What does the term 'hunter gatherer' suggest about how a person or group of people live?
2. How does Gammage's argument challenge the notion that Aboriginal people were 'hunter gatherers' (see Source 1.47)? What evidence does he use to support his argument?
3. What term do you think best describes the historical reality of Aboriginal economic life? Were they hunter gatherers? Farmers? Something else?



↑ **Source 1.48** Depiction of the yam daisy/murnong plant

Changes to the land in Deep Time

Aboriginal people in Deep Time managed land sustainably and as custodians, but their presence on the Australian continent since 60 000 BCE did bring changes to the land.

Women were the traditional and reliable food providers. Aided by their short digging sticks, they gathered small burrowing animals and reptiles, fruits and a great variety of roots and yams. The yam daisy or murnong (*Microseris scapigera*), marked by its single bright yellow flower, was a staple food grown on the plains. In Source 1.49, James Dawson, a Western District pastoralist (who knew the Dja Dja Wurrung of the Camperdown area well), describes murnong's use.

The muurang [murnong], which somewhat resembles a small parsnip, with a flower like a buttercup, grows chiefly on the open plains. It is much esteemed on account of its sweetness, and is dug up by the women with the muurang pole. The roots are washed and put into a rush basket made on purpose, and placed in the oven in the evening to be ready for next morning's breakfast. When several families live near each other and cook their roots together, sometimes the baskets form a pile three feet high. The cooking of the muurang entails a considerable amount of labour on the women, inasmuch as the baskets are made by them; and as these often get burnt, they rarely serve more than twice.

Source 1.49

James Dawson, *Australian Aborigines: The Languages and Customs of Several Tribes of Aborigines in the Western District of Victoria, Australia*, George Robertson, Melbourne, 1881, pp. 19–20.

Isaac Batey described murnong in this way in the 1840s.

Source 1.50

There is a sloping ridge at the lower end of what was originally known as Sideline Gully. The soil on the spot referred to is a rich basaltic clay evidently well fitted for the production of myrnongs. On this spot adverted to are numerous mounds with short spaces between each, and as all these are at right angles to the ridge's slope it is conclusive evidence that they were the work of human hands extending over a long series of years. This uprooting of the soil to apply the best term was accidental gardening, still it is reasonable to assume that the aboriginals were quite aware of the fact that turning the earth over in search of yams instead of diminishing that form of food supply would have had a tendency to increase it.

Isaac Batey, quoted in David Frankel. (1982). 'An account of Aboriginal use of the yam-daisy.' *Artefact*, vol. 7, no. 1–2, p. 44.

Beth Gott, a plant specialist and ethno-botanist at Monash University, added this to the description of murnong.

If murnong was gathered in such large quantities, does it follow that this resource would have become exhausted over the years? An examination of gathering practices and its effect on the plant indicates that its abundance and productivity would probably have been increased by Aboriginal activity.

The growth of new tubers and the proliferation of rosettes results in plants of murnong becoming clumped if left undisturbed. Breaking-up of the clumped tubers, with some parts of the clump inevitably remaining in the soil, equivalent to the well-known horticultural practice of thinning tuberous perennials, would have promoted the growth and spread of the plants.

Beth Gott, 'Murnong – *Microseris scapigera*: A study of a staple food of Victorian Aborigines.'
Australian Aboriginal Studies, no. 2, 1983, p. 13.



↑ Source 1.52 Native women getting tambourn roots, 27 August 1835, John Helder Wedge

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 1.9

Consider Sources 1.49–1.52.

1. Copy and complete the table from Using Historical Sources as Evidence 1.2 for Dawson, Batey, Gott and Wedge.
2. Compare what Dawson and Batey say about murnong gathering. Is this reflected in Sources 1.51 and 1.52?
3. Is Batey right to call it 'accidental gardening'? What words would you choose?
4. Do Gott's comments support Batey's view? Explain your answer.
5. Did the cultivation of murnong bring changes to the land? How?

Gott also suggested the yam daisy's growth might have been stimulated by fire. Let us briefly consider the impact on the land by long-term use of fire. Stephen Pyne, the historian of fire, pointed out that the presence of First Nations peoples on the Australian continent increased the source of fire. He stated: 'Lightning was a highly seasonal, episodic ignition source; the Aboriginal firestick was an eternal flame. The domain of fire expanded, not only geographically but temporally, for this inextinguishable spark obliterated even the seasons'.²²

Edward Curr, a European settler in central Victoria in the 1840s, listened to the local Bangerang people and wrote several books in the 1880s about Aboriginal life. He said this about their land use.

Source 1.53

I refer to the *fire-stick*; for the blackfellow was constantly setting fire to the grass and trees, both accidentally, and systematically for hunting purposes. Living principally on wild roots and animals, he tilled his land and cultivated his pastures with fire; and we shall not, perhaps, be far from the truth if we conclude that almost every part of New Holland [Australia] was swept over by a fierce fire, on an average, once in every five years. That such constant and extensive conflagrations could have occurred without something more than temporary consequences seems impossible, and I am disposed to attribute to them many important features of Nature here; for instance, the baked, calcined, indurated condition of the ground so common to many parts of the continent, the remarkable absence of mould which should have resulted from the accumulation of decayed vegetation, the comparative unproductiveness of our soils, the character of our vegetation and its scantiness, the retention within bounds of insect life (notably of the locust, grasshopper, caterpillar, ant and moth), a most important function, and the comparative scarcity of insectivorous birds and birds of prey. They must have also have had an influence on the thermometrical [temperature] range, and probably affected the rainfall and atmospheric and electrical conditions.

When these circumstances are weighed, it may perhaps be doubted whether any section of the human race has exercised a greater influence on the physical condition of any large portion of the globe than the wandering ... [Aboriginal people] ... of Australia.

Edward M. Curr, *Recollections of Squatting in Victoria then called the Port Phillip District (from 1841 to 1851)*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1883/1965, pp. 87–88.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 1.10

1. Research the life and writings of Edward Curr.
 - a. Where was he from?
 - b. Why did he write this source?
2. List some of the key vocabulary used in Source 1.53.
3. What did Curr believe was the impact of Aboriginal use of fire on the Australian continent?
4. Would Stephen Pyne agree? Justify your answer.
5. Evaluate Curr's evidence for his claim that no other human group had 'exercised a greater influence on the physical condition' of a large part of Earth.

1.5 Chapter summary

Here are some dot-points for you to consider and add to:

Continuities

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been living continuously in Australia for over 60 000 years.
- Over 250 different major language groups or nations existed prior to British colonisation in 1788, each maintaining custodianship over defined territories of land and sea.
- Over millennia, Indigenous peoples gradually developed sophisticated cultural, legal, economic, political and social systems.
- Although technological innovations to manage land were made over time, the way of life for most Indigenous peoples remained relatively stable until the European invasion in 1788.

Changes

- Indigenous peoples adapted as their territories were altered due to global temperature changes, which induced significant sea level rises and falls.
- Indigenous peoples transformed major sections of the Australian landscape through the intentional application of fire.
- Aboriginal technologies developed over time, including the invention of new tools, hunting and mining strategies and engineered structures for housing and resource management.
- Around 6000 BCE, there was an increase in the pace of technological and cultural changes that took place – a period archaeologists refer to as ‘intensification’.

1.6 End-of-chapter activities

The following tasks are designed to help strengthen your understanding of the material explored in this chapter and to encourage you to further analyse and evaluate the events, ideas, perspectives and experiences of Aboriginal land management from Deep Time to 1788.

Consolidating your understanding

Events

Answer the following questions to help consolidate your understanding of the events in this chapter.

1. How did Aboriginal peoples’ use of fire impact the environment?
2. Outline some of the ways in which Aboriginal people transformed the landscape through hydraulic engineering. Refer to specific places and groups of people where possible.
3. What does Source 1.27 suggest about how theft was dealt with in Aboriginal communities?

Ideas

Copy and complete the following table for your notes on the ideas in this chapter. An example has been completed for you.

Ideas	Summary	Evidence
Oneness with Country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal groups identified with elements of the ecology such as animals or plants according to which they organised their kin relations. Totems (an object serving as the emblem of a family or clan) were assigned at birth or through initiation, which also connected individual Aboriginal people to a particular animal or plant species, further reinforcing relationships of custodianship between people and their environment. Aboriginal peoples understood themselves as being an integral part of a whole living world in which they were intimately enmeshed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kulin peoples were divided into two equal groups or moieties, Bunjil the eagle and Waang (Waa) the crow (as stated by Howitt, see page 34) 'Bunjil should marry Waang, and Waang marry Bunjil' (as stated by Barak, see page 34). 'Each Kurnai received the name of some marsupial, bird, reptile, or fish, from his father, when he was about ten years old, or at initiation ... it protected the man by warning him in dreams of approaching danger.' (As stated by Howitt, see Source 1.40)
Custodianship		
Creation		
Sacredness of the land / Country		

Perspectives

For over two hundred years, most Australian colonists viewed Aboriginal people as 'hunter gatherers'.

1. Why do you think colonists formed and maintained this view of Aboriginal peoples?
2. Based on your reading of the sources in this chapter, do you think the 'hunter gatherer' view is justified or not?

Asking historical questions

Using the sources in this chapter, create your own source analysis activity following the instructions below:

- It should have three sources (with at least one visual component).
- It should have three or four questions that require different skills from comprehension to analysis.
- Some suggested command terms to use are below:
 - Identify, describe, outline
 - Explain, discuss, compare
 - Analyse, evaluate, examine.

Analysing causes and consequences

How did Aboriginal fire management transform the Australian environment?

Constructing an argument: essay writing

'Aboriginal peoples lived in a perfect state of harmony with the environment prior to British colonisation.' Discuss.

CHAPTER 2

European land use and changes to the land, 1788–1850



Source 2.0 *Looking for a run*, A. D. Lang, 1847

Chapter timeline

World events	Date	Australian events
<p>1775–83: American Revolution</p> <p>1776: <i>Wealth of Nations</i> published by Adam Smith, explaining capitalism</p>		<p>1788: Sydney established – colony of 1000 convicts and gaolers began</p>
<p>1789: French Revolution begins</p>		
1800		
<p>1814–15: Napoleon Bonaparte defeated</p>		<p>1834: Hentys settle at Portland – first European colony in Port Phillip District</p>
<p>1833: Slavery abolished across the British Empire</p>		<p>1835: Batman Treaty with Kulin Nation peoples – later denied by colonial authorities</p>
		<p>1836: Melbourne sanctioned – Port Phillip colony officially proclaimed</p>
		<p>1836: Foundation of Adelaide as a private company colony</p>
		<p>1836: Squatting regulations £10 annual licence to de-pasture sheep enacted</p>
<p>1846: Irish Potato Famine begins</p>		<p>1846: Waste Land Act – pastoralists granted longer licences</p>

2.1 Introduction

INQUIRY QUESTION

How did European settlers' land use change from 1788 to 1850?

Great Dividing Range

the mountain range that parallels the east and southern coasts of Australia, from Cape York to Mount Gambier in South Australia

economic staple the main commodity grown or extracted from nature in a specific area

pastoral industry or **pastoralism** a form of animal husbandry, where domesticated animals known as 'livestock' are released onto large, vegetated, outdoor lands for grazing

British expansion into the Pacific region in the Age of Empire began with landfall of a British naval vessel in Tahiti in 1763. In 1770, during Lieutenant James Cook's first of three Pacific voyages searching for the Great South Land that mariners believed must be there, he chanced upon the east coast of Australia.

A convict colony was established at Sydney Cove in January 1788. This also acted as a British sea-base in the Pacific region. Outposts were established at Norfolk Island in 1788 and in Hobart in 1804. As free (European) settlers trickled into the colony of New South Wales and into Van Diemen's Land (later called Tasmania) after 1813, they pushed their way into the hinterland of the Cumberland Plain just west of Sydney and the fertile land around Hobart. Once the barrier of the Blue Mountains, part of the **Great Dividing Range** was crossed in 1813, the drier Western Plains lay open to settlement. The same applied to the Midlands of Van Diemen's Land. However, to develop the drier inland plains, an **economic staple** was needed. This chapter allows you to explore the creation of a **pastoral industry** and the ideas that drove rapid settlement.

2.2 Significant events, 1788–1850

INQUIRY QUESTION

What events shaped the European settlers' land use from 1788 to 1850?



First Nations peoples observed and sometimes met European seafarers who reached the Australian coastline. In 1606, the Dutch vessel *Duyfken* made landfall in the Gulf of Carpentaria, and violence marked an encounter with the local custodians. Aboriginal people observed James Cook in 1770 sailing along the east coast. Two Eora men, who challenged Cook's party on the beach at Botany Bay, were drawn by the ship's artist, Sydney Parkinson (see Source 2.1). Cook fired on the men with buckshot to ward them off.

Similar confrontations occurred across the frontier as Indigenous custodians defended their sovereignty and land

← **Source 2.1** Two of the natives of New Holland advancing to combat, Sydney Parkinson, engraved by Thomas Chambers, 1773

from intruders. Early sightings were recorded as rock art paintings or passed down through oral tradition.

The Gunai/Kurnai sang these lines two generations after contact.

Mudahanna loornda kathia prappau
(There are white men long way off with great noise)
Muraskin mundhanna yea a main
(guns there sailing about)

Source 2.2

Recorded by the Lake Tyers missionary John Bulmer, cited in A. Campbell and R. Vanderwal (eds), 'Victorian Aborigines. John Bulmer's Recollections 1855–1908', *Occasional Papers*, no. 1, Museum of Victoria, Melbourne, 1994.

European settlement

The first British settlement in Australia at Sydney in 1788 grew slowly, challenged by distance from Britain, food supply problems, convict discipline and Aboriginal resistance. Early Sydney barely sustained itself and had limited impact on the land as the first NSW Governor, Arthur Phillip, explained.

I wish, sir, to point out the great difference between a settlement formed as this is and one formed by farmers and emigrants who have been used to labour, and who reaped the fruits of their own industry. Amongst the latter few are idle or useless, and they feel themselves interested in their different employments. On the contrary, amongst the convicts we have few who are inclined to be industrious, or who feel themselves anyways interested in the advantages which are to accrue from their labours, and we have many who are helpless and a deadweight on the settlement. ... sending out the disordered and helpless clears the gaols, and may ease the parishes from which they are sent; but, sir, it is obvious that this settlement, instead of being a colony which is to support itself, will, if the practice is continued, remain for years a burden to the mother country.

Source 2.3

A. Phillip to W.W. Grenville, 17 July 1790. In *Historical Records of Australia*, series 1, vol. 1, pp. 194–77.

By 1799, the NSW colonial population was only 4746 people, of whom 2426 lived in Sydney. The rest lived in the outlying districts of Parramatta, Toongabbie and the Hawkesbury. About 7000 acres of land were under wheat, maize and barley and small amounts were cultivated as kitchen gardens. There were just over 5000 sheep, 700 cattle, 140 horses and almost 3500 pigs.¹ Farming was still small-scale and rudimentary as George Caley, a botanist, described in September 1802.

The method of farming is conducted upon a bad principle, and is carried on in a slovenly manner. Nothing farther is done than to break up the ground with a hoe and throw in the wheat which again is chopped over with a hoe

Source 2.4

Continued...

... *Continued*

or harrowed. This is generally done in the months of March and April. The plough has been tried by some, but it does not seem to be preferred before the hoe. The stumps that yet remain in the ground are against it, and also the high price of cattle, but what appears to me to prevent its coming into frequent use is the want of workmen that know how to use it. ... The wheat is reaped in a slovenly manner, and a deal left scattered on the ground. ... When thrashed it is but badly cleaned ... In an English market it would fetch but an indifferent price.

G. Caley, cited in Frank Crowley (ed.), *Colonial Australia 1788–1840: A Source History of Australia, Volume 1*, Nelson, Melbourne, 1980, pp. 112–13.

Agricultural practices slowly improved but there was no export market. Seal and whale products provided exports until seals were almost hunted to extinction. In 1803, the *Sydney Gazette* lamented the lack of a staple industry to balance trade and further develop New South Wales.² In 1807, a few pastoralists sent small exports of wool to London. However, in 1814, John Macarthur wrote (from London) to his wife Elizabeth (who was back in Sydney) that their wool sold for a disappointingly low price. He urged that exported wool had to be cleaned, dried and sorted, and ‘the finest wooled Ewes should be selected to breed from’.³

In 1819, W. C. Wentworth, an Australian-born son of a convict, was optimistic about New South Wales. He wrote about land 50 kilometres west of Sydney that had:

Source 2.5

... the appearance of a country truly beautiful. An endless variety of hill and dale, clothed in the most luxuriant herbage, and covered with bleating flocks and lowing herds, at length indicate that you are in regions fit to be inhabited by civilized man. ... The plains, however, on the banks of this river [the Nepean], which are in many places of considerable extent, are of far greater fertility, being a rich vegetable mould, many feet in depth, and have without doubt, been gradually formed by depositions from it during the periods of its inundations. These plains gradually enlarge themselves until you arrive at the junction of the Nepean with the Hawkesbury, on each side of which they are commonly from a mile to a mile and a half in breadth. The banks of this latter river are of still greater fertility than the banks of the former, and may vie in this respect with the far-famed banks of the Nile. The same acre of land there has been known to produce in the course of one year, fifty bushels of wheat and a hundred of maize. The settlers have never any occasion for manure, since the slimy depositions from the river, effectually counteract the exhaustion that would otherwise be produced by incessant crops.

W.C. Wentworth, *Statistical, Historical, and Political Description of the Colony of New South Wales and its Dependent Settlements in Van Diemen's Land*, G. and W.B. Whittaker, London, 1819, pp. 47, 48–49.

Expansion into the interior

In 1807, Lieutenant Thomas Laycock was the first European to cross by foot from Launceston (on the north coast of Van Diemen's Land) to Hobart, via the valleys of the Lake and Clyde rivers. He found some 'fine grazing land'.⁴ Settlers slowly occupied these newly discovered areas, with the help of government land grants. In 1814, the Blue Mountains (west of Sydney), which are almost a hundred kilometres wide, were finally crossed by Europeans. Both of these events expanded the possibilities for wool growing.

However, these incursions did not go unchallenged. When European settlers moved to the Bathurst Plains – with about 30 000 sheep – in 1821, war erupted. The Wiradjuri, under their leader Windradyne, resisted the colonisers. When about 20 European shepherds were killed, the government retaliated in August 1822 by sending troops and declaring martial [military] law. This action led to the deaths of up to 100 Wiradjuri people. This shocked the Aboriginal peoples of the area into a more peaceful cultural resistance to the pastoralists.⁵

The delight of colonists in the new sheep country was expressed by W. C. Wentworth in Source 2.7. He wrote that at Bathurst, there were 60 000 acres [24 000 hectares] 'without any timber at all'.

FOCUS QUESTION 2.1

What farming and agricultural difficulties were faced by European colonists?



↑ Source 2.6 A c. 19th century painting believed to depict Windradyne, leader of the Wiradjuri

[The Western Plains country] ... is certainly much better adapted for all the purposes of grazing and rearing cattle. The herbage is sweeter and more nutritive, and there is an unlimited range for stock, without any danger of their committing trespass. There is besides, for the first two hundred miles, a constant succession of hill and dale, admirably suited for the pasture of sheep, the wool of which will without doubt eventually become the principal export of this colony, and may be conveyed across these mountains at an inconsiderable expense.

The discovery of this vast and as yet imperfectly known tract of country, ... has indeed already given a new aspect to the colony, and will form at some future day, a memorable era in its history.

W.C. Wentworth, *Statistical, Historical, and Political Description of the Colony of New South Wales and its Dependent Settlements in Van Diemen's Land*, G. and W.B. Whittaker, London, 1819, pp. 62–65.

Source 2.7

Thomas Mitchell, the explorer, realised that Aboriginal burning over millennia created ‘the open forests in which the white men now find grass for their cattle to the exclusion of the kangaroo’.⁶ However, Wentworth seemed ignorant about how First Nations land management had led this land to be excellent sheep country. By 1820, sheep numbers in New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land reached 200 000 animals, but the wool exports remained low. In 1821, Commissioner John Bigge arrived from England to report on colonial development, declaring: ‘The production and growth of fine wool has already been noted, and may be considered as the great staple article of its future exports’. However, obstacles remained:



↑ **Source 2.8** W. C. Wentworth was a leading figure in early colonial New South Wales. Here pictured c. 1867

Source 2.9

... they consisted of the difficulty and expense of transporting the wool from the interior to the coast; the prospective augmentation of duty that existed, until an act that was passed in the last session of [the British] parliament suspended the payment of any higher duty than one penny per pound on all wool that should be imported into England, from New South Wales or Van Diemen’s Land, for the next ten years; and the difficulty that had been experienced in obtaining the labour of convicts accustomed to agricultural occupations.

J.T. Bigge, Report of the Commissioner of Inquiry, on the State of Agriculture and Trade in this Colony of New South Wales. *Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers*, vol. X, no.136, 1823, pp. 16–18.

In the 1820s, the British Government solved the two problems outlined by Bigge by keeping import duties on Australian wool low and boosting convict numbers sent to the colonies. Wool itself solved the third problem, as the historian Geoffrey Blainey, explains in Source 2.10.

Source 2.10

The climate and limitless grasslands were ideal for woolly sheep; Aboriginals or carnivorous animals who lived on the grasslands were not numerous enough to check the invasion of sheep. Above all, the price of wool in England was normally so high that Australian sheep graziers could afford not only the high cost of sending their wool far overland to the nearest port but also the cost of sending wool from an Australian port to Europe. Wool was valuable enough to pay its own way across the world. ... Whereas a settler who grew wheat 150 miles inland from Sydney would have paid more than the wheat was worth to transport it merely to Sydney, let alone London, his wool was usually valuable enough to afford the freight across the world ...

G. Blainey, *The Tyranny of Distance: How Distance Shaped Australia's History*, MacMillan, Sydney, 1966/2001, pp. 128–29.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 2.1

Copy and complete the table from Using Historical Sources as Evidence 1.2 for Sources 2.7, 2.9 and 2.10.

1. What was Wentworth's view of the land west of the Blue Mountains? (See Source 2.7.) Why did he consider it so valuable?
2. According to Bigge (see Source 2.9), what were the main obstacles facing the pastoral industry in the colonies in the early nineteenth century?
3. How were those obstacles overcome, according to Geoffrey Blainey? (See Source 2.10.)

In the early 1820s, European settlers and their sheep had occupied land to Canberra in the south, Bathurst in the west and to the Manning River in the north. The surveyor-generals of New South Wales, John Oxley and Thomas Mitchell, had laid out five million acres (2.2 million hectares) in this colonised region. These were called the Nineteen Counties. This was deemed land enough for the 70 000 people in New South Wales, but European settlers still pushed inland to cultivate land and farm sheep to fulfil the growing demand for Australian wool in Britain.

In 1829, the NSW Government called a halt to this expansion, as it had neither the money nor manpower to control settlement. It drew a line on the map, called the Limits of Location, which comprised almost 90 000 square kilometres (see Source 2.13). European people who settled within these limits were given a licence to settle permanently and were able to freely use Crown land.

Stephen Roberts, the historian of the pastoral expansion, described what followed.



↑Source 2.11 View of Tasman's Peak, from Macquarie Plains, Van Diemen's Land, Joseph Lycett, 1825

To cross the Manning or the Lachlan [rivers] would be viewed as a dereliction as grave as scaling the walls of Buckingham Palace and grazing sheep on the King's lawns! In short, the Government erected a huge non-trespass sign over the interior. The counties were proclaimed in October 1829: already the southern flock-owners were at Yass and looking down the big river [the Murrumbidgee] flowing to the west, and already their northern colleagues were dreaming of New England and Oxley's lands [those found by John Oxley]! It was a curiously irresistible urge, which made the mandates [orders] of the Government seem very remote. The settlers could see only the new lands, only the purplish horizons and the plains stretching away from the tableland of the south and the sharp ranges of the north: and nothing else counted, when each dawn broke on the Great Unknown. Soldiers could not have stopped them, and certainly not the feeble proclamations of a Sydney Government. By 1835, then, the thick black line of the Nineteen Counties remained as solid as ever on the map as the legal limit of settlement, but, actually, it had been crossed in all directions.

Source 2.12

Stephen H. Roberts, *The Squatting Age in Australia 1835–1847*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1935/1964, p. 4.

In Van Diemen's Land, graziers had pushed along the valleys of the Midlands. By 1830, all of the available pastoral land was full – occupied by about a million sheep. Colonists who wanted to expand their capital and pastoral interests were forced to look elsewhere, that is, to the Australian mainland.



↑ **Source 2.13** A map showing the Nineteen Counties, which defined the Limits of Location (outlined in black). Adapted from Stephen H. Roberts. (1964). *The Squatting Age in Australia, 1835–1847*. Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, frontispiece.

FOCUS QUESTIONS 2.2

1. Why did the NSW Government attempt to limit the expansion of the colony?
2. Why was establishing the Limits of Location so ineffective?

Pastoralism

Those who pushed beyond the Limits of Location were called ‘**squatters**’, as they illegally used Crown land. (Aboriginal Traditional Owners were not considered as owners of the land: see Chapter 3). ‘Squatter’ was at first a derogatory term, as these colonists were seen as law breakers, using land without authority or payment. Before long, respectable landowners from Sydney joined the rush to use the free grass on distant Crown land. Landholders in Van Diemen’s Land looked to the southern coast of Australia, despite it being declared off-limits for colonisation. Until this point, only sealers and bark-cutters had (intermittently) visited the southern coast of Australia.

squatter a colonist who breaks the law by using land without the authority, permission or payment

In 1834, the Hentys – an English sheep-breeding and farming family originally from Sussex, England – settled at Portland in Port Phillip. They had already tried settling at the new Swan River colony (Perth) in 1829 and then Van Diemen’s Land, before coming to Port Phillip. They hoped to land, double their money, and ‘be placed in the first Rank of Society’.⁷ This family were the first European colonists in Victoria, and they later rose to great prominence.

In May 1835, John Batman representing a group of Launceston capitalists back in Van Diemen’s Land, explored at the head of Port Phillip Bay with a party of 10, including seven Aboriginal men from Sydney as guides. The Wurundjeri people observed Batman walking across their country and decided to meet Batman’s party. William Barak was about 11 years old at the time. In 1863, he told an Aboriginal youth, William Edmonds about this meeting. Edmonds wrote:

Batman came looking for the country. ... Then the blacks travel to Idelburge [Heidelberg]. All the blacks camp at Muddy Creek. Next morning they all went to see Batman, old man and women and children, and they all went to Batman’s house [camp] for rations, and kill some sheep by Batman’s order.

Source 2.14

William Edmonds, cited in Shirley W. Wiencke, *When the Wattles Bloom Again: The Life and Times of William Barak, Last Chief of the Yarra Tribe*, Author, Worri Yallock, 1984, p. 3.

At the meeting, an exchange of gifts was made. Batman believed he purchased the land around Melbourne, but we know Aboriginal custodians would not – and did not – sell their Country. Most likely, they offered Tanderrum to Batman, the use of the resources of their country during his visit (see Sources 1.45 and 1.46). In June, Batman returned to Launceston and spread the claim that ‘he was the greatest landowner in the world’. John Pascoe Fawkner mounted his own expedition and his party arrived at the Yarra River in August, followed by Batman, who returned in November 1835. They established rival claims and were soon joined by other pastoralists and their sheep. All disregarded any further Aboriginal rights to land.

Source 2.15 is an extract from John Batman’s journal, written while he was exploring the land known to the Kulin as Naarm and now known as ‘Melbourne’.

Source 2.15

Saturday, May 30 1835. –

... The land excellent, and very rich – and light black soil, covered with kangaroo grass two feet high, and as thick as it could stand. Good hay could be made, and in any quantity. The trees not more than six to the acre, and those small she-oak and wattle. I never saw anything equal to the land in my life. I walked over a considerable extent, and all of the same description. ...

Thursday, June 4 1835. –

... When on these plains, and where I now stand writing this, I think I can safely swear that I can see every way over plains twenty miles distance, with scarcely any timber, and covered with kangaroo grass eight and ten inches high. This, I think, is the average. Most beautiful sheep pasturage I ever saw in my life. I am sure I can see 50 000 acres of land in one direction, and not fifty trees ...

John Batman's journal, cited in James Bonwick, *Port Phillip Settlement*, Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, London, 1883, pp. 180, 184–85.

In late 1835, dozens of European colonists (with their sheep) crossed the Bass Strait from Van Diemen's Land to settle illegally in the Port Philip District. In Source 2.16, David Fisher recalls this journey.

Source 2.16

In the year 1835 I was a resident of Van Diemen's Land, when the rumour of this fertile land reached that place, and induced many of my fellow colonists to make a voyage to spy out the land. ... Mr Batman returned, and by his flattering accounts I was induced to forward to Port Phillip a flock of 750 sheep, with six freedmen as shepherds; and on the next voyage of the same vessel I sent 1100 sheep and seven men.

David Fisher, cited in Thomas Francis Bride (ed.), *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, Robert S. Brain, Government Printer, 1898, p. 11.

FOCUS QUESTIONS 2.3

1. What was John Batman's view of Port Phillip's lands?
2. How did other British colonisers in Van Diemen's Land respond to Batman's initial reports about the lands around Port Phillip?



↑ **Source 2.17** *The squatters' first home*, Alexander Denistoun Lang, 1846

In May 1836, the NSW Governor, Richard Bourke, ordered a census of this illegal Port Phillip settlement. To his dismay, he found that there were 177 European colonists (including 35 females) in the District, 26 000 sheep and £80 000 worth of property. By the end of 1836, squatters were overlanding sheep from New South Wales. Even more people left the United Kingdom for the sheep pastures of Port Phillip.

Governor Bourke was forced to proclaim Port Phillip as an official settlement in May 1836. Bourke visited the new settlement in 1837 and named it ‘Melbourne’ after the then Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Viscount Melbourne. In July 1836, he legalised squatting in order to control it, to derive some revenue from it, to end its primitive phase, and because ‘the sheep must wander or they will not thrive, and the Colonists must have sheep or they will not continue healthy’.⁸ Bourke introduced an annual £10 licence fee for a sheep run – a small amount for running a thousand sheep on several thousand hectares. It might cost £5000 to set up a sheep run properly, yet the licence fee was less than one per cent of this cost. Crown Land Commissioners were appointed to police the licence system.

What followed was the fastest land grab in the history of the British Empire. Source 2.18 is an extract from Geoffrey Blainey’s book, describing how much land was under sheep by 1850. The sheep numbers reached 2 358 000 in New South Wales and 3 146 000 in the Port Philip District.⁹

On the eastern part of the Australian continent there were sheep scattered nearly all the way from the moist country at the back of Bundaberg in Queensland to the dry hills near Port Augusta in South Australia. Shaped like an arc the sheep country occupied nearly one-quarter of the Australian coastline, with gaps only where desert or tumbled mountains or forests intervened. One side of the arc was the ocean and the other side was the vast dry core of the interior. The arc was widest in New South Wales, being 250 miles wide from coast to plain in most places, and along the lower reaches of the Darling River stood huts and bough yards which were more than 400 miles from the sea by the shortest sheep route. If a traveller of superhuman strength and patience had decided to see the full spread of sheep country in 1850 and had travelled through the centre of the pastoral arc from one end to the other he would have gone, by the shortest route, about 1400 miles without once having to dismount and open a gate; and on very few evenings would his camp fire have been out of earshot of the bleat of sheep. This arc or crescent of sheep land, if transposed onto a map of the United States of America, would have curved from Boston to New Orleans. ...

Wool enabled settlement to push profitably far from the Australian coast. Without the incentive of wool Australia in 1850 would have consisted of a few ports surrounded by a narrow belt of farmland, Wool not only opened much of the inland but also tied Australia to Europe.

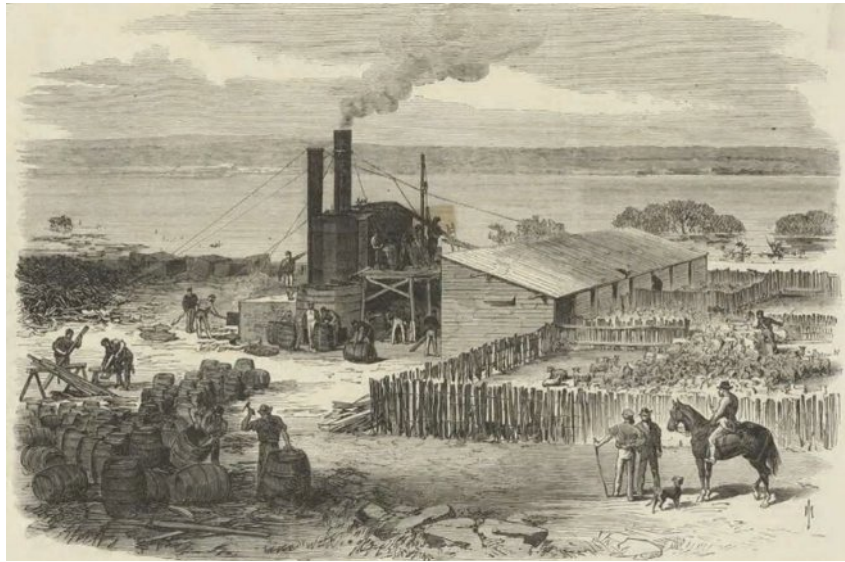
G. Blainey, *The Tyranny of Distance: How Distance Shaped Australia's History*, MacMillan, Sydney, 1966/2001, pp. 135–36.

Source 2.18

FOCUS QUESTIONS 2.4

1. Why did Governor Bourke proclaim Port Phillip as an official settlement in 1836?
2. Why did the NSW Government set such relatively low licence fees for running sheep?
3. Using Geoffrey Blainey's account in Source 2.18 for details, shade or colour in a map of the Australian continent to indicate the extent to which sheep were being farmed in the colonies by 1850.

The pastoral economy boomed in the late 1830s and so did the price of land in Melbourne, through which Port Phillip wool was shipped back to Britain. Indeed, so much British money flowed into the colonies looking for any outlet, that it caused the colonial economy to overheat. Economic confidence faulted in the early 1840s. Land and wool prices fell, causing some colonial banks to fail. The price of sheep collapsed from 60 shillings a head to one shilling. The value of sheep dropped so low, even with wool on their backs, that all the squatters could do was to boil them down for soap and tallow for candles (see Source 2.19). During the troubled years of 1841–44, many pastoralists failed and left the colony. Others came to replace them. However, some persisted and survived, including William John Turner Clarke.¹⁰



↑ **Source 2.19** Boiling down sheep in Australia, London Illustrated News, October 1868



Clarke was born in London in 1801. He became a drover boy in southern England and emigrated to Van Diemen's Land in 1829. He gained free land grants and became a pastoralist and meat supplier, before moving to Port Phillip where he made money in the 1840s depression. He did this by boiling down sheep for candles and buying stock and land cheaply. He purchased an astonishing 62 000 acres (25 000 hectares) at Sunbury at £1 per acre. This was equivalent to the annual wage of 1200 shepherds! Clarke became Australia's first millionaire, in an age when millionaires were rarer than billionaires are today.

← **Source 2.20** The man in possession, an illustration about about 'Big' Clarke. Courtesy Melbourne Punch cited in Geoffrey Dutton, *The Squatters*, Currey O'Neil, South Yarra, 1985.

Lieutenant General Godfrey Charles Mundy met Clarke on board a ship sailing from Launceston to Melbourne in 1850. Clarke carried £20 000 in a suitcase that he was going to use to buy more land. Mundy remarked:

He has no taste for the luxuries; cares little even for the comforts of life, as far as himself is concerned. He is bestowing on his children a liberal education, his sons studying with a clergyman in England. They will soon be able to share his labours – the labour of amassing money and property. This amount of wealth, the end of which is not easy to foresee, sprung from a small beginning. ... he seems to possess an innate power of quick calculations, which in matters of business is worth all the acquired powers in the world. Such men strike while the iron is hot; others ponder and waiver until it cools. ... Mr Clark was originally a butcher in Sydney. The nest-egg of his now immense possessions was probably – next to nothing. ... Mr Clark is one of those characters that are seldom met with except in young and wild colonies, and not often there. It is in the crash of social and financial chaos that such men elbow their way to the front rank – the greater the general confusion and dismay the more certain their success. ... In England there are instances of individuals especially amongst the manufacturing classes – who, in the course of one lifetime, have raised themselves and their families from moderate means to enormous wealth. But in Australia all the stages between adventurous beggary and inordinate possessions have, in some cases, being traversed in a quarter of man's usual term of existence.

Source 2.21

G.C. Mundy, *Our Antipodes, or, Residences and Rambles in the Australasian Colonies, with a Glimpse of the Gold Fields*, Vol. 3, Richard Bentley, London, 1852, pp. 261–17.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 2.2

1. Who was G. C. Mundy?
2. Identify some key vocabulary from Source 2.21.
3. Using Sources 2.20 and 2.21, determine what motives drove Clarke.
4. Why does Mundy think Clarke succeeded?
5. Was W. J. T. Clarke's experience typical of squatters during this era?

2.3 Influential ideas, 1788–1850

INQUIRY QUESTION

What ideas shaped European settlers' land use from 1788 to 1850?

When European colonists arrived in Australia, two ideas about nature and land formed part of their cultural or **ideological** baggage. These ideas shaped their actions in the colonies and differentiated them starkly from the way First Nations peoples saw the world.

ideological based on, or relating to, a particular set of ideas or beliefs

Humans and nature

The historian Keith Thomas wrote a classic book in 1987 called *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500–1800*. In this book, Thomas argued that a state of mind developed whereby Europeans placed themselves not only above nature, but apart from nature. This mentality was primarily informed by the philosophy of the Ancient Greeks: in particular, Aristotle (385–323 BCE), who was an eminent philosopher whose ideas laid some of the intellectual foundations of Western civilisation. Aristotle argued that humans were fundamentally different from animals and plants because of their intellectual or rational soul. Keith Thomas wrote:

Source 2.22

Nature made nothing in vain, said Aristotle, and everything had a purpose. Plants were created for the sake of animals and animals for the sake of men. Domestic animals were there to labour, wild ones to be hunted. ... At the start of our period [1500 CE], exploitation, not stewardship, was the dominant theme. A reader who came fresh to the moral and theological writings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries could be forgiven for inferring that their main purpose was to define the special status of man [humans] and to justify his rule over other creatures. Human civilization indeed was virtually synonymous with the conquest of nature.

Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500–1800*, Allen Lane, London, 1987, pp. 17, 25.

Thomas argued that religious ideas also influenced European attitudes to nature, especially those of the Bible's Old Testament.

Source 2.23

Human ascendancy was, therefore, central to the Divine plan. Man was the end of all of God's works ... It was with human needs in mind that the animals had been carefully designed and distributed ... Every animal was thus intended to serve human purposes, if not practical, then moral and aesthetic. ... Vegetables and minerals were regarded in the same way. ... Man's authority over the natural world was thus virtually unlimited.

Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500–1800*, Allen Lane, London, 1987, pp. 17, 25.

FOCUS QUESTIONS 2.5

1. How did the ideas of an Ancient Greek philosopher influence the ways in which Europeans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries viewed themselves in relation to the natural world?
2. In your own words, describe the relationship between humans and nature as set out in the Bible's Old Testament.

Most British and European colonists were Christian in general belief, if not practice, and their beliefs (until the late nineteenth century) were shaped by a literal belief in the Bible. In other words, they had a strong belief that the words of the Bible were the actual words of God and were factually

true and accurate. This form of thinking did not begin to change until well after the 1860s, when ideas about the age of the Earth and creation challenged this literal belief.

The Book of Genesis in the Bible (Genesis 1:27–28 and 9:1–2) declared God made covenants with the first people, Adam and Eve, and then with Noah (50 generations later, after the Flood).

Progress

In the eighteenth century, philosophers and others reflected on the nature of humans and their progress through historical time. A body of thought known as the Enlightenment, emphasised human progress as a product of education. A French mathematician Marie-Jean Antoine-Nicholas (also known as Marquis de Condorcet) reflected on this idea of human progress. He was elected to the Academy of Sciences in France at the age of only 26, and became its perpetual secretary in 1785. He published many scientific and philosophical papers on mathematics, social justice (including slavery) and the ill-treatment of Protestants in Catholic France.

During the French Revolution, de Condorcet was prominent in the attempt to make a constitution for the new Republic, before fleeing during the Reign of Terror. While in hiding, he wrote *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind* (1795), which summed up the Enlightenment view of human progress.



↑ Source 2.24 Marquis de Condorcet, Jean Baptiste Greuze, c. 1790

The first stage of civilization observed amongst human beings is that of a small society whose members live by hunting and fishing, and know only how to make rather crude weapons and household utensils and to build or dig for themselves a place in which to live ... The uncertainty of life, the difficulty man experiences in providing for his needs, and the necessary cycle of extreme activity and total idleness do not allow him the leisure in which he can indulge in thought and enrich his understanding with new combinations of ideas ... Later, a primitive form of agriculture developed; man was no longer satisfied with the fruits or plants that he came across by chance, but learnt to store them, to collect them around his dwelling, to sow or plant them, and to provide them with favourable conditions under which they could spread.

Property, which at first was limited to the animals that a man killed, his weapons, his nets and his cooking utensils, later came to include his cattle and eventually was extended to the earth that he won from its virgin state and cultivated. On the death of the owner this property naturally passed into the hands of his family, and in consequence some people came to possess a surplus that they could keep. ...

[de Condorcet argued this surplus was exchanged and Industry arose]
... the population grew as the means of subsistence became less

Continued...

Source 2.25

...Continued

dangerous and precarious; agriculture which could support a greater number of people on the same amount of land, replaced the other means of subsistence; it encouraged the growth of the population and this, in its turn, favoured progress; acquired ideas were communicated more quickly and were perpetuated more surely in a society that had become more sedentary, more accessible and more intimate. Already, the dawn of science had begun to break; man revealed himself to be distinct from the other species of animals and seemed no longer confined like them to a purely individual perfection.

Marie-Jean Antoine-Nicholas, Marquis de Condorcet, *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1795/1955, pp. 5–6.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 2.3

Consider Source 2.25.

1. Who was the Marquis de Condorcet?
2. List de Condorcet's stages of human development that created 'progress'.
3. Which stages did he say were the most progressive? Why?
4. Which stage to him was the least admirable? Explain your reasons.
5. What does he claim is the relationship between progress and property?
6. After studying Chapter 1 on Aboriginal land management, do you agree with de Condorcet's view of hunter fisher/gatherers?

The idea of progress also depended on the belief in abundance, that the resources of the world were limitless. Exploration underpinned this view. When colonists pushed into the American West, historian Donald Worster said they imagined they had found a new Garden of Eden so rich was the land in resources: animals, timber, minerals and grass lands. 'No other people in the world has ever believed, as Americans have, that they are actually living in Eden'.¹¹

Thomas Paine, an English-born American political activist and philosopher, marvelled:

Source 2.26

If we take a survey of our own world ... our portion in the immense system of creation, we find every part of it, the earth, the waters, in the air that surround it, filled, and as it were crowded with life, down from the largest animals that we know of to the smallest insects the naked eye can behold, and from thence to others still smaller, and totally invisible without the assistance of the microscope. Every tree, every plant, every leaf, serves not only as an habitation, but as a world to some numerous race, till animal existence becomes so exceedingly refined, that the effluvia of a blade of grass would be food for thousands.

Thomas Paine, cited in Donald Worster, *The Wealth of Nature. Environmental History and the Ecological Imagination*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1993, p. 11.

While Australia was more arid, and less watered than the United States, there was still the belief that the grass lands were unlimited. Sources 2.27 and 2.28 explore this idea further.

In 1819, the Australian colonist William Wentworth gave an astonishingly glowing and detailed report on the costings and revenue returns for a sheep station investment. He claimed that over three years, **interest** would equal 75 per cent, and **capital** would be doubled.

interest money that is charged by a bank, or broker, for borrowing money
capital money and possessions, especially a large amount of money, used for producing more wealth or for starting a new business

The extent to which capital might thus be invested is boundless; since if the breeder did not possess as much land as would feed the number of sheep that he might wish to keep, he would only have to send his flocks beyond the limits of colonization, and retire with them as the tide of population approached. His hurdles, and the rude huts or tents of his shepherds, might always be removed with very little difficulty and expense; ... There is, and will be for ages to come, whatever may be the extent of emigration, more land than can possibly be required. The speculation, therefore, of growing wool can meet with no checks from the want of pasturage in the colony, and it is equally improbable that it can be impeded by the want of a market in this country [England]. ... the world does not at present contain so advantageous, and I might also add, so extensive an opening for the investment of capital as the one in question.

Source 2.27

W.C. Wentworth, *Statistical, Historical, and Political Description of the Colony of New South Wales and its Dependent Settlements in Van Diemen's Land*, G. and W.B. Whittaker, London, 1819, pp. 416–17.

The Port Phillip colonist William Westgarth wrote this in 1848.

The extension of commerce [the activity of buying and selling] forms the conspicuous feature of our age and of our country. Its importance is equally pre-eminent. Compared to the past, the present attainments of human industry afford an astonishing spectacle. But even these are inconceivable when weighed against the estimates of the future. The progress is in geometrical ratio [as in 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128 ...] and repeated experience warrants the most enlarged expectations. ... Britain may now be regarded as possessing the entire extent of Australia. Our enterprising countrymen are already, with extraordinary rapidity, overspreading this ample territory.

Source 2.28

William Westgarth, *Australia Felix, or, A Historical and Descriptive Account of the Settlement of Port Phillip, New South Wales...*, Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, 1848, p. v.

Terra nullius

Aboriginal peoples challenged intruders on their land and often made their views very clear. Edward Parker (who set up a Protectorate station at Mount Franklin in the early 1840s) was asked by Elders of the Dja Dja Wurrung:

FOCUS QUESTIONS 2.6

1. In your own words, describe Wentworth's view of pastoralism's opportunities in the Australian colonies.
2. What is Westgarth's view of commerce in the colonies?

‘Why do you sit down with black fellows? You were not born of a black woman! Why don’t you go back to your own country’.¹² Edward Curr established a pastoral run on the Moira River in central Victoria in 1842. However, he was met by an angry Elder of the local custodians. Curr recorded the man’s fury at invasion:

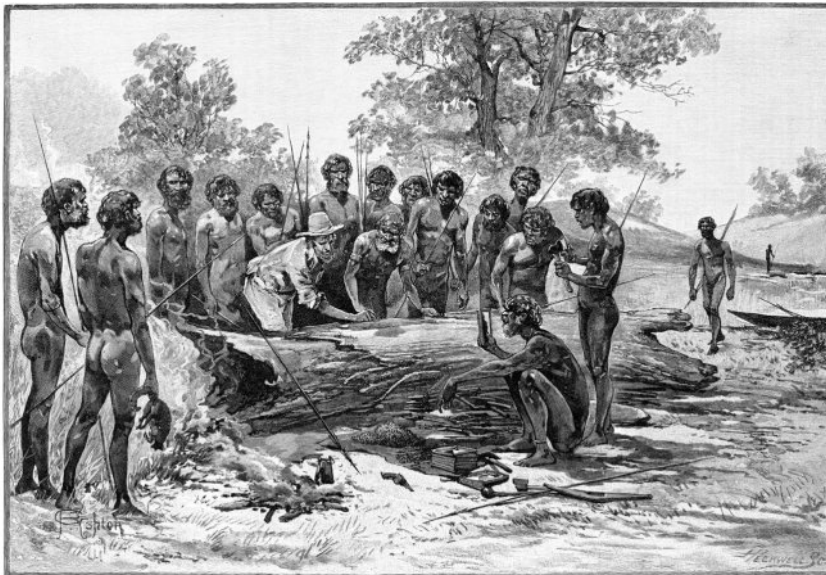
Source 2.29

Somewhat emaciated and bent, with bald head and a long white beard, he stood naked and defiant by the stream on whose banks he had seen the best part of a century pass by. He had never before seen a white man. His fishing gear quivered in his hand, and, after an abortive attempt at a warlike caper, he howled, abused, and spat at me, in senile fury, asking, as Tommy [Curr’s Aboriginal guide] afterwards explained, why I came to the Moira? What I wanted? That I was a demon from the grave! That the water, the fish, and the ducks belonged to his tribe. That he spat at me and hated me. That I was Pekka (a ghost), but that man or devil he would spear me!

Edward M. Curr, *Recollections of Squatting in Victoria then called the Port Phillip District (from 1841 to 1851)*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1883/1965, p. 81.

Despite these protests, the British Government had already claimed the land as belonging to the British Crown. But by what right? No treaty was offered by the British.

However, a private treaty was drawn up by John Batman in 1835 on behalf of the Port Phillip Association, a group of Tasmanian investors seeking land in Port Phillip. The Kulin peoples who met with Batman and made their mark on a so-called treaty deed were probably offering Tanderrum (temporary use of country), but Batman claimed it was a purchase. However, Governor Bourke immediately declared it ‘null and void’. Aboriginal peoples, he stated, had no right to treat in land, as it belonged to the Crown not to them.



BATMAN TREATING WITH THE BLACKS.

↑ **Source 2.30** Representation of the signing of the Batman Treaty from *Picturesque Atlas of Australasia*, Andrew Garran ed., 1886

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 2.4

Consider Source 2.30.

1. What is the historical context of this image?
2. What are the key elements of this image?
3. What message is this illustration giving? Is it positive or negative?

Why was Aboriginal ownership not recognised by the British in 1835? Indeed, why was it not recognised throughout Australian history – until the Mabo land rights decision in 1992? We need to understand both prevailing international law on territories in the 1770s and what Cook *thought* he saw in 1770.

In the eighteenth century, leading jurists of international law (such as Friedrich Karl von Savigny, Christian Wolff and Emerich de Vattel) made these points about ownership of territory:

1. Possession was the foundation of the right of property.
2. People had to have a presence on the land to be in possession.
3. People had to have a desire or will as well as a presence to be in possession.
4. Nomadic people had ownership by way of their use of the land and were thus not in a state of nature.
5. Vattel in particular said: Europeans finding new land occupied by nomadic peoples had a limited right of settlement ‘within just bounds’ and could not possess the whole.

Source 2.31

Cited in Henry Reynolds, *The Law of the Land*, Penguin, Melbourne, 1987, pp. 14–18.

Why then did James Cook (who ‘discovered’ the east coast of Australia, then called New Holland; that is, he was the first European to see the east coast) decide to take possession of the land? He did so on 22 August 1770 at what is now called Possession Island.

His instructions from the British Government about what to do regarding any lands he might find were certainly clear. They are reproduced in Source 2.32.

[Cook was] with consent of the Natives to take possession, in the name of the King of Great Britain, of convenient situation in such countries as you may discover, that have not already been discovered or visited by any other European power ... But if you find the Countries so discovered are uninhabited, you are to take possession of them for His Majesty.

Source 2.32

Cited in Henry Reynolds, *The Law of the Land*, Penguin, Melbourne, 1987, p. 52.

Clearly, Australia was not uninhabited – even Cook saw that. And we know he did not ask the consent of the inhabitants. So why did he take possession against orders? He was not a law-breaking kind of man. Other writings show that he admired Aboriginal people. We must remember he had to decide what he had to do on his own, with no ability to seek advice from the far-away British Government. To get an official answer, Cook would have to sail to the East Indies and wait a further nine months (or more) to get an answer to his question before sailing back to Australia, then if the answer was ‘yes’, he would be able to take possession. This was a seemingly impossible task. So Cook made the decision to take possession of the land.



↑ **Source 2.33** James Cook, Sir Nathaniel Dance-Holland, c. 1775

Why did he decide to take possession? His journal entry the day after gives us a clue. Based on limited knowledge of Aboriginal peoples, Cook wrote:

Neither are they very numerous, they live in small parties along the Sea Coast the banks of Lakes, Rivers creeks &c. They seem to have no fix'd habitation but move about from place to place like wild Beasts in search of food, and I believe depend wholly upon the success of the present day for their subsistence. ... In short these people live wholly by fishing and hunting, but mostly by the former for we never saw one Inch of Cultivated land in the Whole Country, they know however the use of Taara [yams] and sometimes eat them. We do not know that they eat anything raw but roast or broil all they eat on slow small fires. Their Houses are mean small hovels not much bigger than an oven, made of pieces of sticks, Bark, Grass &c. and even these are seldom used but in the wet seasons for in the dry times we know that they as often sleep in the open air as any where else. ... We are to Consider that we see this Country in the pure state of nature the Industry of man has had nothing to do with any part of it and yet we find all such things as nature hath bestowed upon it in a flourishing state. In this extensive Country it can never be doubted but what most sorts of Grain, Fruits, Roots, &c of every kind would flourish here were they once brought hither, planted and cultivated by the hand of Industry and here are Provender for more Cattle at all seasons of the year than can be brought into this Country.

Source 2.34

Journal of the First Voyage of Captain James Cook, cited in M. Clark (ed.), *Sources of Australian History*, Oxford University Press, London, 1957, pp. 52–54.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 2.5

1. According to Cook (see Source 2.34), how did Aboriginal peoples use the land?
2. How would de Condorcet have viewed Aboriginal peoples in terms of the stages of human social progress? (See Source 2.25.)
3. In your view, based on the international law of the era (see Source 2.31) and given Cook's observations, was he justified in taking possession of eastern Australia?
4. How do Cook's views of Aboriginal peoples and their land use compare with what you learned in Chapter 1?

Cook considered the 'country was in a pure state of nature' and that 'we never saw one Inch of Cultivated land'. As the son of a farmer and coming from an agricultural country, his observations (which were nonetheless limited) led him to believe that Aboriginal peoples were not using land in a European way and thus were not in possession of their land. In his tradition, 'possession' came from using the land by farming it. The British philosopher John Locke had said blending one's labour with the land gave possession. For Cook, this was achieved by farming. Hunter-gathering to Cook was to 'move about from place to place like wild Beasts in search of food'. The Marquis de Condorcet thought the same thing (see Source 2.25).

Therefore, to Cook, New Holland was ‘waste’ land, unused and ungoverned, and – despite it being inhabited – *terra nullius*, a land belonging to no-one. In terms of international law at the time, this was an incorrect view (see Source 2.31 to recap the four points that eighteenth-century jurists established regarding ownership of territory). First Nations peoples *were* present on their land; they had an *intent* to possess it (as shown by the image in Source 2.1 of two Eora men at Botany Bay resisting Cook’s landing); they *used* their land; and they had a *sense of property* or custodianship over land. (See Chapter 1 for a further discussion on how Aboriginal peoples lived on the land.) Nevertheless, Cook took possession. Then, despite some debate in England in 1787 over the rights and wrongs of colonisation by the British, the First Fleet sailed. Possession of the land was legally confirmed by the Act of settlement at Sydney Cove on 26 January 1788.

terra nullius and **waste**
terra nullius is a legal term derived from a Latin phrase meaning ‘land belonging to no-one’. This term was not used in the 1700s, but was applied later to the colonisation of Australia. The term used by Cook’s contemporaries was ‘waste’, meaning ‘unused’ (in a European way) land.

↓ **Source 2.35** Sydney Cove, Port Jackson, 1788 by Lieutenant William Bradley, c. 1802. Bradley was an officer on the First Fleet.



European colonists thereafter continually confirmed this view of Australia being a ‘waste’ land and therefore being available for the taking by the British. William Hull, a settler in Melbourne, wrote in 1846:

It is an **axiom** of civil life, that no nation or tribe can acquire or maintain a right to the soil, unless it profitably occupies or tills it. Admitting such a rule – the nomadick [sic] tribes of Australia cannot be said to be dispossessed of their country.

William Hull, *Remarks on the Probable Origins and Antiquity of the Aboriginal Natives of New South Wales*, William Clarke, Melbourne, 1846, p. 21.

Source 2.36

axiom a recognised truth; an established or universally recognised principle or rule

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 2.6

1. What is the historical context of Hull's writing in Source 2.36?
2. Was Hull right to call his views an 'axiom' (a rule)?
3. Why do you think Hull felt compelled to make an argument against the notion that Aboriginal peoples had been 'dispossessed of their country'?
4. What is the significance of describing Aboriginal peoples as 'nomadic'? Why did the colonisers emphasise this aspect of Aboriginal society?

2.4 Diverse and competing perspectives, 1788–1850

INQUIRY QUESTION

What perspectives shaped European settlers' land use from 1788 to 1850?

The view that land in the Australian colonies was unlimited and that it was the Crown's to grant or lease stimulated the colonists' burning desire to own land. Land ownership was desired for three reasons:

1. It was the origin of all wealth until the Industrial Revolution (which happened in the early nineteenth century) generated new sources of wealth through industry.
2. Land was the basis of prestige and influence. The social elite, or 'blue bloods' of England, were members of the great landed families of the United Kingdom.
3. Land was also the basis of political power, as only landowners could sit in parliament.

The land in the United Kingdom owned by the powerful fell into fewer and fewer hands by 1800. The Enclosure Movement, where village commons were expropriated by numerous separate Acts of Parliament, passed the common lands into the hands of large landowners. The Agrarian Revolution, achieved through the use of technology and newer farming techniques, also created a shift from small holdings to large holdings of land. For instance, by the 1870s, 80 per cent of the lands of England was owned by just 7000 men!

When emigrants left the United Kingdom and Ireland, they went from countries where access to land was severely restricted to places that they saw as a new world, where land was seemingly unlimited.

British colonisation and land improvement

The British invasion, which began with Sydney in 1788 and Hobart in 1804, advanced to other coastal ports: Perth in 1829, Melbourne in 1835, Adelaide in 1836 and eventually the Moreton Bay penal colony in 1842 (once it was opened to free settlement in 1838). The process of colonisation followed as the Australasian colonies, like those in North America and southern Africa, were not places where empires extracted resources and then left, but they became places of settlement. The historian Alfred Crosby noted that in the past 200 years about 60 million Europeans (20 million from the United Kingdom and Ireland alone) 'swarmed' like bees and colonised new lands (including Australia). He called this 'the lands of demographic [population] takeover'.¹³

The historian David Day had a similar idea when he referred to empires, like the British Empire, which came to take resources and also to stay, calling them ‘supplanting societies’.¹⁴ These colonies controlled new lands by imposing their own language, religion, systems of law, education, government, ways of building and settlement. David Day, in his book *Conquest* (2005), argued that colonisers needed to establish and legitimise their ownership by various methods. They made declarations of possession of Australia in 1770 and tried to establish control by exploring, surveying, mapping and naming the land. Then they planted crops, ran sheep and cattle, fenced it, built houses upon it and transformed it where possible into an English landscape.



↑ **Source 2.37** Hentys' Wool Store. In *Historical Sketch of Victoria*, 1886.

Three historians – Katie Holmes, Susan Martin and Kylie Mirmohamadi – have commented on the significance of gardening.

There was an integral relationship between colonisation and gardening: the latter had a practical role to play in providing food for the colonists, but it was also a way in which settlers left their imprint on the land they claimed. It was a sign of Imperial power, a mark of possession and ownership.

Source 2.38

Katie Holmes, Susan Martin and Kylie Mirmohamadi, *Reading the Garden: The Settlement of Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2008, p. 8.

David Day emphasised that colonists made moral claims to the land as well, in order to give their ownership claim a sense of legitimacy. They claimed they introduced civilisation, Christianity, development and progress to the colonies, and that they improved and made the land more productive. In short, they boosted their own importance and denigrated the First Nations peoples whose land they took, using cruel and ignorant words and images. Conquerors often write history in this way: falsely boosting themselves and belittling those they dominate.

Albert Memmi, a Tunisian who endured French colonialism in Tunisia, explains what he calls the ‘usurper complex’ and how it connects to racism.

Source 2.39

As was stated before, accepting the reality of being a colonizer means agreeing to be a non-legitimate privileged person, that is, a usurper.

How can usurpation try to pass for legitimacy? ... He [the usurper] never forgets to make a public show of his own virtues, and will argue with vehemence to appear heroic and great. At the same time his privileges arise just as much from his glory as from degrading the colonized. He will persist in degrading them, using the darkest colors to depict them. If need be, he will act to devalue them, annihilate them ... The distance which colonization places between him and the colonized must be accounted for and, to justify himself, he increases this distance still further by placing the two figures irretrievably in opposition; his glorious position and the despicable one of the colonized. ...

Racism appears then, not as an incidental detail, but as a consubstantial [essential] part of colonialism. It is the highest expression of the colonial system and one of the most significant features of the colonialist. Not only does it establish a fundamental discrimination between colonizer and colonized, a *sine qua non* [basic requirement] of colonial life, but it also lays the foundation for the immutability of this life.

Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1967, pp. 52, 53, 54–55, 74.

FOCUS QUESTIONS 2.7

1. In your own words, describe what Memmi means by the 'usurper complex.' (See Source 2.39.)
2. What is the connection between racism and the 'usurper complex'? Why, according to Memmi, is racism such an integral part of colonialism?

Sources 2.40 to 2.43 reveal a range of responses to colonisation. The words of Aboriginal peoples are powerful, but often they remained buried in a diary or an archive, whereas European colonists' views were set down in books, which were more available to shape attitudes.

Aboriginal peoples, of course, resisted a process that was wresting their country from them and condemned its brutality. Yagan, a Noongar man from Perth, told a colonist in 1843:

Source 2.40

The wild black fellows do not understand your laws, every living animal that roams the country, and every edible root that grows in the ground are common property. A black man claims nothing as his own but his cloak, his weapons, and his name ... He does not understand that animals or plants can belong to one person more than to another.

Yagan, cited in R. Evans et al, *Exclusion, Exploitation and Extermination: Race Relations in Colonial Queensland*, Australian and New Zealand Book Co., Sydney, 1975, pp. 380–81.



← Source 2.41 Yagan, Robert Hitchcock, 1984, situated on Heirisson Island, Western Australia.

Dalaipi, an Aboriginal man from the Brisbane region, explained this to an early settler named Tom Petrie (who he worked for).

We were hunted from our ground, shot, poisoned, and our daughters, sisters, and wives taken from us. ... What a number were poisoned at Kilcoy. ... They stole our ground where we used to get food, and when we got hungry and took a bit of flour or killed a bullock to eat, they shot us or poisoned us. All they give us now for our land is a blanket once a year.

Source 2.42

Constance Campbell Petrie, *Tom Petrie's Reminiscences of Early Queensland*, Watson, Ferguson and Co., Brisbane, 1904, pp. 182–83.

In 1943, Billibellari told his friend William Thomas (who was the Assistant Aboriginal Protector):

Blackfellows all about say that no good have them pickaninneys [children] now, no country for blackfellows like long time ago.

Source 2.43

William Thomas, *Quarterly Report September–November 1843*. Victorian Public Record Office Series 4410, 1843.

FOCUS QUESTIONS 2.8

1. Examine Sources 2.40–43. List the key points made by First Nations peoples about the invasion of their lands.
2. Are these the thoughts of custodians? How?

In 1819, William Wentworth, giving a different view, wrote this of Aboriginal people:

The Aborigines of this country occupy the lowest place in the gradatory scale of the human species. They have neither houses nor clothing; they are entirely unacquainted with the arts of agriculture. ... Thirty years intercourse with Europeans has not affected the slightest change in their habits; and even those who have most intermixed with the colonists, have never been prevailed upon to practise one of the arts of civilized life. Disdaining all restraint, their happiness is still centered in their original pursuits; and they seem to consider the superior enjoyments to be derived from civilization, (for they are very far from being insensible to them) but a poor compensation for the sacrifice of any portion of their natural liberty.

Source 2.44

W.C. Wentworth, *Statistical, Historical, and Political Description of the Colony of New South Wales and its Dependent Settlements in Van Diemen's Land*, G. and W.B. Whittaker, London, 1819, pp. 44–45.

Charles Griffith, a Port Phillip settler, wrote this in 1845:

Source 2.45

The question comes to this: which has the better right – the savage, born in a country, which he runs over, but can scarcely be said to occupy, the representatives of a race, which for ages have left unimproved the splendid domains spread out before them, as if to tempt their industry, but of which they may be deemed to have refused the possession; or, the civilized man, who comes to introduce into this unimproved and, hitherto, unproductive country, the industry which supports life, and the arts which adorn it, who will render it capable of maintaining millions of human beings more clearly in that position, which it was intended that men should hold in the scale of creation? I conceive that the original right, whatever it may have been, which the savage possessed, that right, by his lacks [sic], he has forfeited. The Commission to ‘go forth and replenish the earth, and possess it’, implies something more than the mere obtaining a precarious subsistence from the casual bounty of nature; the thorn and the briar were to be uprooted, and the herb yielding food to be planted in its place ... The duties the savage has for centuries neglected, and thus, in my mind, abandoned his inheritance ...

If the white man had a right to occupy the country, the native, by opposing no vain resistance to his doing so, acquires no fresh rights; and the indulgence which he is entitled to at the hands of civilized man, is that of an ignorant, and therefore weak being, from one superior to him in knowledge and power, and not as an equivalent for any property that he has given up, or any rights that he has surrendered.

Charles Griffith, *The Present State and Prospects of the Port Phillip District of New South Wales*, William Curry Jr, Dublin, 1845, pp. 169, 171.



↑ **Source 2.46** Richard Windeyer, 1840s by an unknown artist

Richard Windeyer, a Sydney barrister, gave a lecture in Sydney in 1842 entitled ‘On the Rights of the Aborigines of Australia’. Despite the title, Windeyer rejected that Aboriginal peoples had any rights to land, arguing it did not belong to them, they just ranged over it.

That they have never tilled the soil, or enclosed it, or cleared any portion of it, or planted a single tree, or grain or root, is acknowledged ... the consideration of the rights of the Aborigines to the enjoyment of their laws and customs, to the soil of the country, to its wild animals is done. That argument is sound, the chain of reasoning is complete! How is it our minds are not satisfied? What means this whispering in the bottom of our hearts?

Richard Windeyer, cited in Henry Reynolds, *This Whispering in Our Hearts*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1998, pp. 20–21.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 2.7

1. List the essential arguments of Wentworth, Griffith and Windeyer and see where they are the same or where they differ.
2. Describe the 'original right' of the 'savage' to which Griffith refers in Source 2.45. Why has this right been forfeited? Does Windeyer agree?
3. Are Sources 2.44, 2.45 and 2.47 examples of Albert Memmi's 'usurper complex' (see Source 2.39)? Explain.
4. How does Griffith say occupation took place? Did the British settle or invade? How do his comments shape how you read Sources 2.44, 2.45 and 2.47?
5. What does Windeyer mean by 'this whispering in the bottom of our hearts'?
6. How do the Aboriginal views in Sources 2.41–43 alter how you read the colonists' arguments?

A minority of colonists and observers saw things differently. An Assistant Aboriginal Protector James Dredge (a schoolmaster from Salisbury, England, who later became a Methodist missionary) had this to say in a pamphlet in 1845:

It matters but little that we attempt to establish a right to take possession of their territory on the allegation that they were unable to turn it to the same productive account as we; – that they derived their *living* from it is a fact which cannot be denied – and surely nothing can justify our taking that subsistence from them and withholding, instead, other means of support ...

Themselves are proclaimed to be British subjects, and entitled to the immunities of such, yet they are placed under no control, but wander about as they like; no suitable efforts are made to instruct them in the nature of their new relations, whilst such attempts as have been made to ameliorate [better] their condition have been either grossly misdirected or abortively inefficient.

Where, it may be asked, throughout the wide spread dominions of Britain, does there exist a people so helplessly situated, so degraded, so neglected, so oppressed?

James Dredge, *Brief Notes of the Aborigines of New South Wales, including Port Phillip*, James Harrison, Geelong, 1845, pp. 12, 29, 31.

Source 2.48

James Backhouse, a Quaker visitor to Australia, had this to say in 1843.

If Europeans occupy the country of savages, the former must act justly, from principle, if they would act as Christians. The untutored natives, forming a thinly scattered and unorganized population, can neither assert nor defend their own rights. It is in cases like this, that principle is put to the Test; and it is lamentable to see, how little principle, in this respect, has been exhibited, in these cases, either by the British Government, or by its European subjects. People in England, maintaining a good character, are little aware, how much of what gains them their character, they owe to

Continued...

Source 2.49

...Continued

the oversight of those, by whom they are continually surrounded, and how little with principle. When they emigrate to a country, where this oversight is withdrawn, too generally, but little that has the appearance of principle remains, especially in their conduct toward the defenceless Aborigines.

James Backhouse, *A Narrative of a Visit to the Australian Colonies*, Hamilton Adams, London, 1843, p. 503.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 2.8

Copy and complete the table from Using Historical Sources as Evidence 1.2 for Sources 2.48 and 2.49.

1. How do Dredge and Backhouse answer Griffith's arguments in Source 2.45?
2. Was Dredge right to use the word 'oppressed'?
3. What does Backhouse mean by 'principle'? What is his view on how European colonists are behaving in the Australian colonies?

Competing ideas of land

All people attribute a value to nature and the land, but as we have seen in Chapters 1 and 2, the value given to it by First Nations peoples and Europeans was extremely divergent. This became more evident as colonisation proceeded, settlement expanded and a battle for the land developed.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples attributed a religious value to their Country. This created rights and obligations to Country as custodians in partnership with the great ancestors and sanctioned in the Tjukurpa. As custodians, they were obligated to care for Country, to clean the land by fire and to keep its plant and animal species in good health. They performed ceremonies to maintain plants and animals and followed rules to make their numbers sustainable. First Nations peoples did not view land as a commodity to be traded, taken or conquered. Richard Broome wrote: 'Land was owned and mutually recognised as owned, the title deeds being the stories told and the paintings emanating from those stories. The land of others was not coveted, for without ownership of the story, ownership of land was meaningless'.¹⁵



↑ Source 2.50 Woolloomooloo, the residence of Edward Riley Esqr., J. P., near Sydney, New South Wales, Joseph Lycett, c. 1822

On the other hand, Europeans colonised Australia with a desire to control land, by leasehold if necessary, but as private property if possible. They were willing to move to another parcel of land if it was thought to be more productive and valuable. Many were influenced by Adam Smith's *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), in which he explained how capitalism worked. He argued that individual self-interest drove the economy, but it also added to social benefit by stimulating growth. Surplus production was sold through a market, operating on the principles of supply and demand. Smith's ideas strengthened individualism and the value of individual effort and private property.

Therefore, far from being custodians, European colonists saw land as property from which to profit. For instance, in 1844, Thomas Browne, a young squatter who took up a leasehold near Port Fairy, declared on arrival:

Pride and successful ambition swelled my breast on that first morning as I looked round on my run. My run! My own station! How fine a sound it had, and how fine a thing it was that I should have the sole occupancy – almost ownership – of about 50 000 acres of 'wood and wold', mere and marshland, hill and dale. It was all my own – after a fashion – that is, I had but to receive my squatting licence, under the hand of the Governor of the Australias, for which I paid ten pounds, and no white man could in any way disturb, harass, or dispossess me.

Source 2.51

Thomas Browne, cited in Rolf Boldrewood, *Old Melbourne Memories*, George Robertson, Melbourne, 1884, p. 35.

In his book *Frontier* (1987), historian Henry Reynolds discussed where this desire for ownership of property evolved:

White settlement was more like revolution than war. ... Perhaps the single most important element in a complex situation was the revolutionary concept of private property, which the settlers brought with them from Britain along with the will and the weapons to impose it in Australia. For 200 years before the great expansion of settlement in Australia traditional concepts of property had been undermined in Britain both by parliament and the courts. The open fields had been enclosed, as had many of the commons. The ancient, customary rights to hunt and gather had been progressively restricted. ...

Source 2.52

Settlers arrived in the colonies with the desire to own the land and everything on it 'in the most absolute manner'. Most of them preferred to drive the blacks away whenever they were seen, both for security and to consummate that burning passion for property. Typically they prevented, as far as they could, Aboriginal hunting and gathering, stopped their burning of the country, shut off their access to water and punished with severity any attacks on the sheep or cattle. All this took place on land that was often only held under lease or license from the Crown. But the idea of absolute and exclusive property rights has taken such deep root in Australia.

Henry Reynolds, *Frontier*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1987, pp. 189–90.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 2.9

Copy and complete the table from Using Historical Sources as Evidence 1.2 for Sources 2.51 and 2.52.

1. What are the claims the authors are making?
2. Why did Thomas Browne use the phrase 'almost ownership'?
3. Explain what Henry Reynolds means by 'absolute and exclusive property rights'.
4. Why does Henry Reynolds think the frontier conditions are best explained by the word 'revolution' not 'war'?

Changes to the land

As land was finite in the United Kingdom, many landowners there developed a sense of stewardship over their land, using care and best practice to ensure it was in 'good heart', and productive. The great manor houses and their surrounding lands were generally well managed by stewards, who cared for and protected the estates of their masters to keep them in good order. Stewards, game keepers and the game laws protected the landlord's property in trees, red deer, hare and rabbits, and fish in ponds. In 1723 the 'Black Act' was passed to further protect the property of landlords, increasing the death penalty to cover 50 offences under the game laws.¹⁶

However, while colonists imported to the idea of absolute ownership of property, the idea of stewardship faltered in the colonies when new settlers were faced with unlimited land and the need to make a rapid success of their emigration. Their goal in the colonies was to make money and set themselves up for life. Squatters used leased land carelessly, as they were not owners, and used timber and native animals in the same manner.

This attitude would have caused great pain for surviving First Nations custodians of Country they still considered theirs. As Aboriginal people today say of land: 'Always was, always will be, Aboriginal land'.

Initially, Aboriginal peoples' food supplies were affected by settlers occupying Country. In 1841, William Thomas wrote that the Wurundjeri camped near the Bolin Swamp (in modern-day Bulleen, Melbourne) were moved off their land after complaints by a pastoral leaseholder, denying them 20 kilometres of river and lagoon frontage:

Source 2.53

I could not but feel for the poor blacks. They had till this visit and undisturbed range among the lagoons and supplied themselves for a month or five weeks, now one side of the Yarra is forever closed to them.

William Thomas, *Quarterly Report, March to May 1841*, VPRS 4410.

Thomas recorded these Aboriginal views in August 1844.

Source 2.54

The Mt Macedon Blacks have the same tale as the Western Port [the Boonwurrung] that no good bush too much hungry. And I do not think that of the 5 Tribes who visit Melbourne that there is in the whole 5 Districts enough food to feed one tribe.

William Thomas, cited in Marguerita Stephens, *The Journal of William Thomas ... Volume Two: 1844 to 1853*, Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages, Melbourne, 2014, p. 37.

DISCUSSION ACTIVITY 2.1

In pairs, discuss how colonisation affected people from a First Nations perspective.



↑ **Source 2.55** *Pioneering the land, The restless years*, artist unknown, 1968

Aboriginal custodians, who fostered resources by rules of Tjukurpa, saw pastoralists wasting enormous amounts of timber. Fences, huts, sheds, workshops, sheep yards, storerooms, shearers' quarters and woolsheds were all made of wood; the huts, storerooms and woolsheds having slabs of timber for flooring as well. Fireplaces in the huts burnt wood continuously in the winter months.

Using wood was necessary, but waste was unnecessary, as Foster Fyans, a Crown Lands Commissioner in the Portland District, wrote in 1844.

The destruction of fine timber in every part where it is to be found in the District continues. This is caused by barking trees to cover all sheds and huts. Good timber is not common in many parts of the District, & becoming scarce. Many have to send 40 miles for hurdles; therefore I conclude if some protection is not afforded, that in some few years the greater part of the useful timber will be all barked and left standing to rot. One shed, 500 trees barked to cover it, whereas 10 trees or les[s] would have shingled it for years. This is really worthy of notice.

Philip L. Brown (ed.), *Memoirs of Captain Foster Fyans*, Geelong Advertiser, Geelong, 1986, p. 272.

While pastoralists often kept or planted trees around their houses to beautify and cool their homes, they adopted the opposite approach on their paddocks. The historian Geoffrey Bolton commented: 'the main enemy of Australia's trees were the pastoralists'.¹⁷ In the 1820s, European settlers invented a new and quick way to bring land into pastoral production, by 'sapping', 'girdling' or (to use the more popular term) 'ringbarking' trees.

Source 2.56

ringbarking or **girdling**
the complete removal of the bark from around the entire circumference of either a branch or trunk of a woody plant, resulting in the death of the plant above the ring or girdle

James Bonwick, a writer and school inspector, explained why pastoralists used these methods on trees in 1857.

Source 2.57

The quantity of stock maintained in timber [country] is far below that fed on the plains. The growth of good nutritive grass is prevented; first, by the shadow of the trees preventing the sun from developing the saccharine juices of the grass; secondly, by absorption of food for the trees themselves; thirdly by the increase of scrubby and rough vegetation fostered in the shade; and fourthly, by the accumulation of the wreck of fallen leaves and bark, which are, also, injurious in affording sustenance to, and being the existing cause of, our bushfires. All sheep and cattle farmers admit the force of the argument. The only practical remedy proposed is that of girdling the trees. By this simple process we cut off communication between the root and the branches. ... The sap ceases to run, the leaves fall but once more, and the grass is open to sun and air.

James Bonwick, *Western Victoria: Its Geography, Geology, and Social Condition*, Heinemann, Melbourne, 1857/1970, p. 160.

**FOCUS
QUESTION 2.9**

What changes to the Australian landscape occurred up until 1850?

Fauna

Surviving Aboriginal custodians also saw the needless slaughter of animals, which was totally alien to First Nations peoples, as they believed they were part of Country and Country part of them. Clive ‘Bidja’ Atkinson, a graphic designer and businessman from Echuca, simply said: ‘the land is your mother. You are born to the land and go back to the land’.¹⁸

There were no game laws in the colonies, so colonists killed native animals and birds in great numbers. This was not often for food, but for fun and the sense of freedom that no fences and no game laws gave them. This killing attitude often began on the voyage out when sea birds, which tagged the ship, were shot for sport. The historian William Lines commented:

Source 2.58

The early settlers, enthusiast eradicators, also baited and shot anything they thought troublesome – wombats, red kangaroos, wedge-tailed eagles, all hawk species, ravens, dingoes, native cats and lizards. Hunting and habitat destruction drove many animals in the eastern colonies to near extinction. The platypus, bustards and even emus and kangaroo were becoming rare in the Murray District by the late 1850s.

William Lines, *Taming the Great South Land: A History of the Conquest of Nature in Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1991, p. 117.

Colonists quickly outnumbered First Nations peoples as colonisation created a population or ‘demographic takeover’ as Alfred Crosby, an environmental historian, termed it (see Source 2.59). He also called this process ‘ecological imperialism’, and used this term as the title of his 1986 book. Crosby argued that colonisers did not achieve dominance all on their own.

European and Old World human beings, domesticated animals, varmints [an objectionable animal], pathogens [disease producing organisms], and weeds all accomplished demographic takeovers of their own in the temperate, well-watered regions of North and South America, Australia and New Zealand. They crossed oceans and Europeanized vast territories, often in informal cooperation with each other – the farmer and his animal destroying native plant cover, making way for imported grasses ... many of which proved more nourishing to domesticated animals than the native equivalents; Old World pathogens, sometimes carried by Old World varmints, wiping out vast numbers of Aborigines, opening the way for the advance of the European frontier, exposing more and more native peoples to more and more pathogens ...

The demographic triumph of Europeans in the temperate colonies is one part of a biological and ecological takeover that could not have been accomplished by human beings alone, gunpowder notwithstanding. We must at least try to analyze the impact and success of often mutually supportive plants, animals, and microlife, which in their entirety can be accurately described as aggressive and opportunistic ...

Alfred Crosby, *Germes, Seeds and Animals: Studies in Ecological History*, M.E. Sharpe, New York, 1994, pp. 40–41.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 2.10

1. What is the historical context of Source 2.59?
2. What is the key vocabulary used in this source?
3. Argue whether you agree or not with Alfred Crosby's view that ecological change 'could not have been accomplished by human beings alone'.



↑ **Source 2.60** *Shepherd with flock near Yarrayne River, Australia*, by Italian artist Migliavacca, c. 1840

The following sources will allow you to investigate the impact of sheep, which numbered almost 15 million in Australia by 1850, two-thirds of them located in Victoria and New South Wales. Cattle farming made an impact as well, but in the nineteenth century, sheep outnumbered cattle ten to one. Sheep adapted better than cattle on the semi-arid grass lands of inland Australia as they were able to survive the dry and hot conditions. The sheep were often able to survive on saltbush, mulga and other native plants when grass was not available.

A pastoralist, James Malcolm, ran sheep 30 kilometres north of Melbourne. In 1845, he gave this evidence about murnong (also known as ‘yam daisy’) to a NSW Select Committee.

Source 2.61

There is a nutritious root which they eat and are fond of; and that, I think, has greatly diminished, from the grazing of sheep and cattle over the land, because I have not seen so many of the flowers of it in the spring as I used to see. It bears a beautiful yellow flower. The native name of this root is ‘murnong’. ... I have eaten of it many a time ... I have eaten it roasted, but I prefer it raw.

James Malcolm, Evidence to the ‘Report from the Select Committee on the Condition of the Aborigines’, New South Wales Legislative Council Select Committee, 1845, p. 13.

Edward Curr, a pastoralist living near Echuca in the 1840s, later wrote:

Source 2.62

Yams were so abundant, and so easily procured, that one might have collected in an hour, with a pointed stick, as many as would have served a family the day. The wheels of our dray [cart] used to turn them up by the bushel as it went over the loose ground. Indeed, several thousand sheep, which I had at Colbinabinn, not only learnt to root up these vegetables with their noses, but for the most part lived on them for the first year, after which the root began gradually to get scarce.

E.M. Curr, *The Australian Race ...*, Vol. 1, John Farnes, Government Printer, Melbourne, 1886–87, p. 240

Aboriginal people told William Thomas, the Assistant Protector of Aborigines, why the yams disappeared:

Source 2.63

In the isolated parts of the country and such other places as have not been visited by the flocks and herds of the settler these roots are obtained in great abundance but like other natural supplies of the Aborigines they diminish and soon disappear when sheep and cattle are depastured. Nor are the natives insensible of the cause of such diminution – conversing with one of them respecting this kind of food in the neighbourhood of Melbourne, he said in the best English he was master of, ‘Boras Param, Borak Tarook, Port Phillip; too much big one Bulgann, I ... mbuk white fellow gone Param -’, which being interpreted as ‘no murnong, no yam at Port Phillip too much by one white man bullock and sheep, all gone murnong’.

William Thomas’ notebook. Brough Smyth Papers, State Library of Victoria, p. 97.

Beth Gott, an ethno-botanist, concluded in her 1983 botanical study of murnong:

The abundance of murnong had been maintained by Aboriginal gathering practices, but due to the changes brought about by European settlement and the importation of sheep and cattle, it rapidly became scarce. The decline of this important staple vegetable food exemplifies the drastic dietary changes which must have contributed to the high mortality amongst Victorian Aborigines. ... murnong is almost entirely absent from the western and northern plains of Victoria [by 1983], and in the open forest areas is found only where grazing is not continuous, often alongside roadsides and in small separated patches.

Source 2.64

Beth Gott, 'Murnong – *microseris scapigera*: A study of a staple food of Victorian Aborigines'.
Australian Aboriginal Studies, ii, 1983, p. 13.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 2.11

1. After reading Sources 2.61–2.64, write your own brief historical account of the murnong/yam daisy in the first years of European settlement, paying attention to the different voices in the sources, and ranking them in importance as evidence.
2. Which voice is muted by a lack of sources?



↑ Source 2.65 Shearing sheep in Victoria, Frederick Grosse, c. 1873

The historian Geoffrey Bolton reminded us that until 1788 ‘no hoof had ever been imprinted on Australian soil’.¹⁹ He added:

Source 2.66

This transformation of much of inland Victoria and New South Wales into a cleared and paddocked landscape went with marked changes in the native vegetation. Sheep prefer to graze not more than five kilometres from water, so that as flock numbers increased they tended to concentrate on favoured areas along the rivers and natural water courses. This sometimes led to complete defoliation. The constant padding of sheep’s feet on soil which had never before felt a hoofed animal made for erosion and the creation of dust. It took about twenty years of grazing before erosion was noticeable enough for concerned comment among pastoralists, but sometimes the effects of stocking could be discerned much more rapidly.

Geoffrey Bolton, *Spoils and Spoilers: Australians Make their Environment 1788–1980*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1981, pp. 83–84.

Sheep and cattle depend on the quality of pasture. In 1854, John Robertson, a squatter at Wando Vale (near Casterton, Victoria), gave this assessment.

Source 2.67

When I arrived ... the grasses were about four inches [30 centimetres] high, of that lovely dark green; the sheep had no trouble to fill their bellies; all was eatable; nothing had trodden the grass before them. I could neither think nor sleep for admiring this new world to me who was fond of sheep. ... The few sheep at first made little impression on the face of the country for three or four years; ... [after that] ...

Many of our herbaceous plants began to disappear from the pasture land ... The consequence is that the long deep-rooted grasses that held our strong clay hill together have died out; the ground is now exposed to the sun, and it has cracked in all directions, and the clay hills are slipping in all directions; also the sides of precipitous creeks – long slips, taking trees and all with them. ...

Over Wannon country is now as difficult a ride as if it were fenced. Ruts, seven, eight, and ten feet deep, and as wide, are found for miles, where two years ago it was covered with tussocky grass like a land marsh. And for pastoral purposes the lands here are getting of less value every day, that is, with the kind of grass that is growing in them, and will carry less sheep and far less cattle.

John G. Robertson, cited in Thomas Francis Bride (ed.), *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, Robert S. Brain, Government Printer, 1898, pp. 167–69.

Historian Geoffrey Bolton added further thoughts on pasture.

It was not just that the grazing of livestock suppressed seedling regeneration, so that nutritious natives such as the kangaroo grass (*Themeda australis*) gave way to poorer species, but also that they yielded to introduced plants. Some, such as the buffalo grass and the white clover, were attractive and nourishing. Others were of little use to man or beast. It has been estimated that over 1300 plants have been introduced to Australia during the last two centuries, including all the sown pasture plants and some of the worst weeds. Undisturbed plant communities can usually repel the invasion of aliens, but along the stock routes, the sheep camps and the river frontages where the ground was heavily trampled and manured, exotics thrive.

Source 2.68

Geoffrey Bolton, *Spoils and Spoilers: Australians Make their Environment 1788–1980*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1981, pp. 85–86.

Sheep, cattle and other introduced farm animals also ‘mined’ the land, of which European settlers seemed unaware. Alex Hamilton wrote about how sheep mine the land in 1892:

With regard to sheep, the enormous quantity of wool yearly taken from the soil, and in lieu of which nothing is added but the droppings of the animals, must result in a change in the composition of the soil such as will render it less suited for the growth of the original vegetation. And with cattle and sheep alike, the same is the case with regard to the flesh consumed by the inhabitants of the colony (and indeed many outside of it) and the skins, etc., exported. In the case of the native animals, most of the substances removed from the ground are returned to it again in their excreta, or in the bodies of the animals themselves at their death. But now, taking wool into consideration, we have some hundreds of millions of pounds of wool sent out of Australia annually. For instance Mr. T. A. Coghlan gives 306 308, 699 lbs. [138 939 288 kilograms] as the total export of wool for 1890 for the six colonies. And this goes on, and increases year after year, while little or nothing is added to replace the valuable constituents which in the economy of the animal are converted into wool.

Source 2.69

Alex G. Hamilton, ‘On the effect which settlement in Australia has produced upon Indigenous vegetation’. *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales*, vol. 26, 1892, pp. 215–16.

Hamilton estimated that 95 million kilograms were also taken from the soil in the form of meat (not including horns, hoofs, hides and offal), further depleting the soil of nutrients. In 1924, an agricultural scientist A. E. V. Richardson commented on the same ‘mining’ process. He estimated that over 60 years, 360 000 tons of phosphoric acid (which is essential to plant and animal life) had been removed from the soil by the farming of animals. This is the equivalent to 1.8 million tons of superphosphate.²⁰

FOCUS QUESTION 2.10

Make a list of the changes brought to the land by the presence of sheep and cattle.

Here are two perspectives on the pastoral period. The economic historian Ronald Hartwell wrote about the pastoral period.

Source 2.70

Sheep growing gave Australia its only persistent source of international purchasing power, and, moreover, enabled the development of the coastal entrepôts [ports], which became, even before 1850, the centres of population and industry. ... Before 1850 the Australian Colonies rid themselves of convictism, made heavy inroads on the wilderness, forced the earth to yield great wealth, developed into self-governing communities, and laid the cultural and social foundations for an Australian nationality. ... The vastness of the colonial lands impressed the English in their crowded island, ... The rate of economic progress in Australia between 1820 and 1850 far exceeded that of any other British Colony, and approached that of Britain herself.

R.M. Hartwell, The pastoral ascendancy, 1820–50. In Gordon Greenwood (ed.), *Australia: A Social and Political History*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1955, pp. 47–48.

Historian William Lines also wrote about the effects of pastoralism on the land.

Source 2.71

Private property triumphed over this landscape, not only because of the Aborigines' military defeat, but also because the business of sheep raising changed the very nature of the country. It subverted the environment, destroyed the material basis of an Aboriginal culture inextricably bound to topography, flora and fauna, and delivered the land into the hands of the pastoral pioneer. The squatters and their flocks drove away the game, and the sheep ate the plants and killed the roots upon which the Aborigines lived. But the transformation did not stop there. The grazing of sheep first opens then kills forests, first converts grassland to wealth then reduces them to indigence [poverty]. ... biological impoverishment now began in Australia.

William Lines, *Taming the Great South Land: A History of the Conquest of Nature in Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1991, p. 82.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 2.12

Copy and complete the table from Using Historical Sources as Evidence 1.2 for Sources 2.70 and 2.71.

1. Do you think Ronald Hartwell or William Lines provides the better understanding of the impact of pastoralism?
2. To what extent did European pastoralism make an impact on Aboriginal peoples and their lands?

2.5 Chapter summary

Here are some dot-points for you to consider and add to:

Continuities

- The establishment of British colonies in Australia was part of a broader phenomenon of European expansionism and colonisation across the globe which had begun in the fifteenth century.
- Colonial attitudes about nature, humans and social progress were derived from a combination of European philosophical thought and religious beliefs, which stretched back to the Ancient Greeks.
- As they did in other colonial contexts, British colonisers in Australia justified their dispossession of Aboriginal peoples by appealing to Enlightenment ideas of human progress as well as religious ideas from the Bible.
- The British attempted to remake the land they took over on the Australian continent in the image of the European landscape that they originated from, transplanting ideas, agricultural and pastoral practices, plants and animals into the new colonies. British colonists wanted to continue a European lifestyle in the new land.

Changes

- From a relatively small initial settlement in 1788, British colonisers rapidly expanded their control over territory and seized land across the coasts and interior regions of the continent for the primary purpose of pasturing their sheep and cattle.
- European pastoralism was profoundly disruptive to the environment, destroying and displacing native flora and fauna, restricting Aboriginal peoples' access to food resources and resulting in the depletion and erosion of soils.
- While Aboriginal peoples maintained a subsistence economy in relation to land and marine resources, British colonisers introduced the economic ethic of individual gain based on the accumulation of capital.
- Unlike other British colonial contexts (where private settlers often pioneered the establishment of colonies and relied on forms of treaty-making with the First Nations populations in order to secure control over territory), the powerful British state was present at the forefront of colonisation in Australia, which gave less impetus for the need to negotiate.

2.6 End-of-chapter activities

The following tasks are designed to help strengthen your understanding of the material explored in this chapter and to encourage you to further analyse and evaluate the events, ideas, perspectives and experiences of European land use and changes to the land from 1788 to 1850.

Consolidating your understanding

Events

Complete the following table to help summarise the key events that happened in this chapter. Remember to have one or two pieces of evidence for each event from the sources.

Event	Summary of what happened	Example/s or evidence from sources
Britain establishes a colony called 'Sydney' in 1788		
Expansion into the interior of New South Wales		
The Batman Treaty		
Port Phillip colony established		

Ideas

1. Source 2.22 asserts that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Europe, 'Human civilization indeed was virtually synonymous with the conquest of nature'. What ideas informed this European view of civilisation?
2. What message does the Bible seem to convey about the main relationship between human beings and nature?
3. Explain how the idea of 'progress' enabled Europeans to justify their imperialism and colonisation of foreign lands.
4. Why did Lieutenant James Cook take possession of the Australian continent, despite the instructions he had received from the British Government to only act 'with the consent of the Natives'?

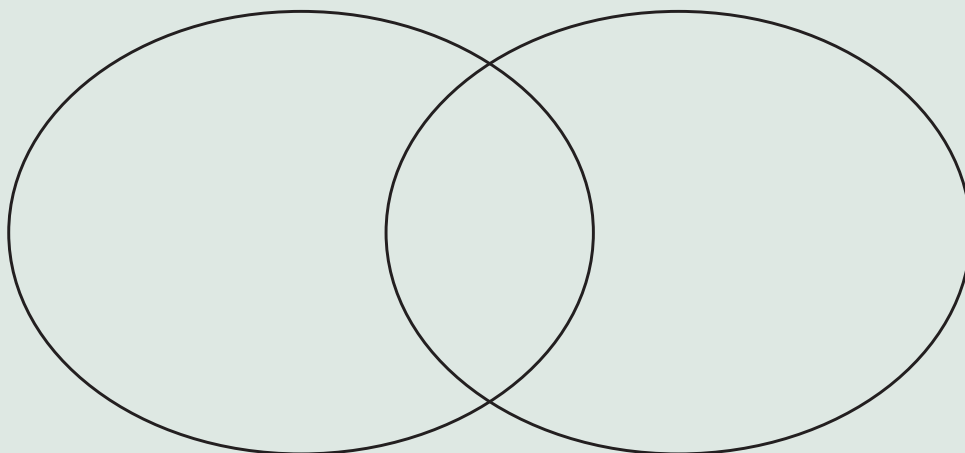
Perspectives

Complete the following questions to help consolidate your understanding of this section of the chapter.

1. Why was land so desirable for European colonisers?
2. Research the definition of 'private property' and explain it in your own words.
3. How did the idea of private property influence how European people conceived of and then managed land?
4. Who benefited and who lost the most from the institution of private property?

Experiences

Complete the following Venn diagram to help you compare how Aboriginal people and British colonisers viewed and managed the land.



Evaluating historical significance

Complete the following table. Use this information to determine which European factor contributed most to changing the Australian landscape between 1788 and 1850.

Factor	Summary	Evidence/example
Agriculture		
Pastoralism		
Construction		
Mining		
Hunting/culling		
Other		

1. Rank the factors you have identified in your table in order of significance from being most responsible for transforming the environment to the least.
2. Compare and contrast your table and rankings with a peer in your class. What are the similarities and differences in your responses?

Constructing an argument: debating

Choose one of the following topics and debate it in small groups or pairs. Refer to the source material available for evidence in support of your argument.

1. Sheep were the most influential factor transforming the environment in Australia between 1788 and 1850.
2. European colonisers treated Aboriginal peoples as inferior and with contempt.
3. Non-Indigenous Australians continue to demonstrate an 'usurper complex' today.

CHAPTER 3

Aboriginal responses to colonisation, 1788–1901



Source 3.0 Corroboree, William Barak, c. 1880s. Barak paints ceremonial scenes from his childhood.

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Chapter timeline

World events	Date	Australian events
1833: Slavery abolished across the British Empire		mid-1820s–1831: 'Black War' – conflict between colonists and Traditional Owners in Tasmania 1830s and 1840s: 'Black War' in southern Australia and New South Wales 1847–53: Reserves declared – Governor La Trobe declares reserves for public interest
	1850	
1861–65: US Civil War		1863: Aboriginal peoples select and pioneer the Coranderk Reserve

3.1 Introduction

INQUIRY QUESTION

How did Aboriginal peoples maintain connection with their land from 1788 to 1901?

First Nations peoples faced the greatest threat of their long history in Deep Time with the coming of European settlers to their lands. First Nations peoples made a great diversity of responses to maintain their custodial connection to Country and to fight for their survival and the maintenance of their cultural ideas. They fought physically as we shall see, but more importantly, they resisted culturally – and continue resisting to the present day. They were victims of colonisation, but more importantly, they were voyagers in a new world; one that was created by the invasion and intrusion into their lands by Europeans since 1788. The Australian anthropologist William Stanner (who first referred to First Nations peoples as 'voyagers' in an essay in 1958) wrote of their zest and vitality that made them not just victims of colonisation. Stanner remarked 'the Aborigines claimed, coaxed and fought an opening into an incomprehensible new world'.¹ We will explore some of the ways in which this was done.

3.2 Aboriginal reactions, adaptations and responses to European land ideas, and perspectives on land use

INQUIRY QUESTION

In what ways did Aboriginal peoples respond to European appropriation and uses of land?

As colonists occupied Aboriginal lands by leasehold or purchase, Aboriginal peoples acted, reacted and adapted – through their own power and inventiveness – to find new ways of maintaining connections to traditional lands.

Fighting for land

Throughout history, most people fought for their land. Aboriginal peoples were no different and generally resisted the invasion and occupation of their lands. European colonists often used the term ‘Black War’ to describe the conflict.

Source 3.1

The black-white warfare was sporadic, barbaric and guerrilla in style. It was also largely an unofficial war, although at times colonial administrators committed troops and police against the Aborigines, declared martial law against them and gazetted them as ‘open enemies’. All this despite the fact that by dint of the British claim to sovereignty over Australia, Aborigines were theoretically black British citizens with equal rights to the protection of the law. The outcome of the fighting hinged on the usual determinants of war including terrain, the numbers of combatants, the existence or absence of alliances and the commitment of both sides to the war, but above all, it hinged on technology. The change from muzzle-to-breech loading firearms around the 1850s and other later ancillary advances in weaponry overwhelmed the spear and Aboriginal fighting skills, which until then had proved the equal of the musket, wielded often by Europeans unskilled in warfare. The frontier war in Australia was in this sense, like many wars, dependent upon human intervention far from the front.

Richard Broome, ‘The Struggle for Australia: Aboriginal-European Warfare, 1770–1930’. In M. McKernan & M. Browne, (eds), *Australia. Two Centuries of War & Peace*. Canberra: Australian War Memorial in association with Allen & Unwin, 1980, p. 120.

Historian Henry Reynolds made an ‘intelligent guess’, based on some regional studies, about the death tally.

Source 3.2

There is now enough regional accounting to make an intelligent guess about the country as a whole. It seems reasonable to suggest that Aborigines killed somewhere between 2000 and 2500 Europeans in the course of the invasion and settlement of the continent. There were many hundreds of others who were injured and carried both physical and psychological

Continued...

... *Continued*

scars for the rest of their lives. Calculating the Aboriginal death toll is much more difficult. ... The figure of 20 000 Aboriginal deaths in frontier conflict will be thought too high by some, too low by others. However, the evidence concerning the ubiquity of conflict is overwhelming. It can be found in almost every type of source – official reports by public and confidential, newspapers, letters, reminiscences. ... Some will think a figure of 20 000 dead too low considering the alarming decline of the Aboriginal population from about 300 000 in 1788 to not much more than 50 000 in a little over a century.

Henry Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier: An Interpretation of the Aboriginal Response to the Invasion and Settlement of Australia*, James Cook University, Townsville, 1981, pp. 99–101.



massacre the indiscriminate and deliberate killing of many, generally defenceless, people

↑ **Source 3.3** Natives attacking shepherds' hut, Samuel Calvert, c. 1860s

In a series of articles in the journal *Quadrant* in 2000, Keith Windschuttle criticised Reynolds' figures of Aboriginal deaths by white violence on the colonial frontiers across Australia as being far too high. Windschuttle also accused historians of 'colluding' with Reynolds by coming up with similar figures and by overemphasising **massacres**. Windschuttle called for more regional studies, which he believed would show far lower Aboriginal death tallies than the 20,000 deaths claimed by Reynolds.

Windschuttle argued strongly that the British Empire was a civilised empire, and its Australian colonies were 'governed by both morality and laws that forbade the killing of the innocent'².

He added that most colonists were Christians who would have rejected such behaviour and others uninfluenced by Christian morality would have been too fearful of being reported for crimes punishable by death to act violently.

However, few colonists were even prosecuted for killing Aboriginal people on the frontier and even fewer were sentenced or let alone punished by death. Historians answered many of Windschuttle's criticisms in a national conference in December 2001, the papers being published as *Frontier Conflict: The Australian Experience* (2003)³.

In his book *The Forgotten War* (2013), Reynolds gave new estimates of 30 000 Aboriginal peoples and 3000 Europeans and their allies killed in the frontier wars. Considerable lives were lost through massacres alone. Lyndall Ryan and a team at the University of Newcastle are compiling a website of massacre sites, which so far have identified 361 sites with 8400 deaths from massacres between 1788 and 1930. Ryan's team notes the characteristics of frontier massacres.

Source 3.4

- A frontier massacre of Indigenous people usually takes place in reprisal for: the Aboriginal killing of a colonist (usually a male); in response to the abduction and sexual abuse of an Aboriginal woman; or for the alleged Aboriginal theft of colonial property such as livestock which have occupied Aboriginal hunting grounds.
- The act of massacre is usually a planned rather than a spontaneous event.
- It takes place in secret. No witnesses are intended to be present.
- The assassins and victims often know each other.
- It is a one-sided event in that the victims lack self-defence.
- Its purpose is to eradicate the victims or force them into submission.

Lyndall Ryan et al, *Colonial Massacre*, University of Newcastle, 2020. Retrieved from <https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/introduction.php#method>.

RESEARCH TASK 3.1

1. Go to the Colonial Massacres Map on the University of Newcastle's website, and choose one site on the map to investigate. Note down the incident's characteristics including where and when it took place, the number of people killed, who the perpetrators were, who the victims were, what the evidentiary basis of the information is, and any other significant details.
2. Compare your findings with the findings of other members of the class, noting similarities and differences between them.

You can also explore the details of massacre events through *The Guardian's* online project 'The Killing Times', which draws upon the work of scholars such as Ryan to document frontier violence. It is available at <https://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/9551>.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 3.1

1. Why do you think historians such as Reynolds find calculating the Aboriginal death toll 'much more difficult' than calculating the death toll of the British colonisers?
2. What are the main reasons Windschuttle cites in his criticism of Reynold's estimates?
3. Consider the positions of Broome, Reynolds, Windschuttle and Ryan on the subject of colonial frontier violence and form your own opinion about the severity and extent of this violence.
4. How does Ryan's massacre map influence your views?
5. What kinds of evidence are the documented incidents from the map based on?
6. Why do you think it is difficult for historians to establish with certainty whether and how particular massacres on the colonial frontier occurred?



↑ **Source 3.5** *The Avengers*, S.T. Gill, 1869

RESEARCH TASK 3.2

Aboriginal peoples were not simply victims who were killed or massacred. They also actively fought for their land. Go to the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* website and look at one of the single-page biographies for one of the following Aboriginal warriors:

- Pemulwuy, 1750–1802, by J. L. Kohen, Darug man, Sydney
- Windradyne, 1800–1829, by David Roberts, Wiradjuri man, Bathurst
- Jandamarra, 1870–1897, by Howard Pedersen, Bunuba man, Kimberley District.

Using the above information, explain what the actions of figures such as Pemulwuy, Windradyne or Jandamarra reveal about Aboriginal attitudes towards their land and their views of the British colonisers.

Using land

Aboriginal peoples' custodianship over their land was challenged by European invasion. They often fought back. How else did they react?

Mahroot the Boatswain – a Gadigal man born at Cook's River in Sydney around 1795 – gave evidence on 8 September 1845 to a NSW Select Committee. He gave brief answers to 209 questions about his life. Source 3.6 lists some of the questions and his answers.

Source 3.6

14. When you first recollect, how many black fellow were there in the tribe who spoke your language, men, women, and children? Four hundred I think in my recollection.

44. How many black fellows are there now living, men, women, and children where you used to know four hundred? I should say fifty, but not belong to Botany [tribe] mind you Sir, different people raised up here in former times come.

45. How many are there do you think alive, who were born there, who belong to the old tribe who speak your language, not the Liverpool language? Only four, three women and I am the only man.

55. And do the black fellows in your district live upon now, all the black fellows about Botany how do they get their living? They can pick up fish about the rocks, and opossums inland.

56. What you used to do when there were four hundred of you, there are the same fish there now as before? Just the same.

57. By Dr. Lang: Do you always find plenty of food? Yes if we can forage about the rocks and inland in the wood just the same way.

116. Have you got land at Botany? A little.

117. How did you get that? General [Governor] Bourke gave it to me.

118. Do you understand that it belongs to you for yourself and your children after you, and that nobody can take it away? Yes.

126. How much rent have you got coming in? A shilling a week from the land.

127. How many people pay you that rent? Five.

128. That makes five shillings a week? Yes.

129. Is the land fit to grow anything or has it only got house on it? It is fit to grow cabbages, or what you like to put in.

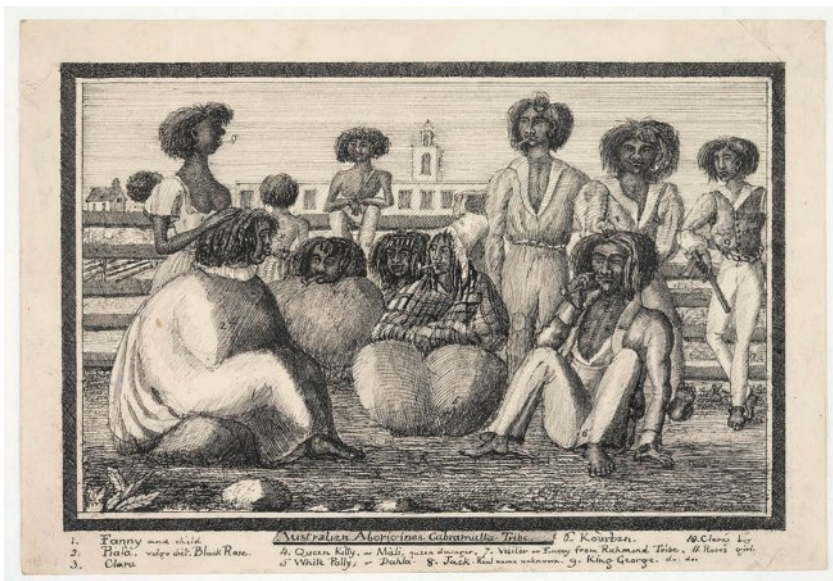
130. Have you grown any cabbages there? Yes, and pumpkins, but then the cows come and knock down the fence and destroy it when I am away fishing.

Mahroot's evidence, 'Report from the Select Committee on the condition of the Aborigines', *Votes and Proceedings of the New South Wales Legislative Council*, 1845, pp. 1–5.

Historian Paul Irish discovered that Mahroot asked for land, chose his own plot and resisted European efforts to take it from him.⁴ Irish also uncovered William Proctor's journal who, in 1834, went fishing at Camp Cove on Sydney Harbour.

He [Proctor] found the smoke emanating from the fires of a settlement of around a hundred Aboriginal men, women and children, next to a large lagoon tethered to the cove by a small tidal creek. They were living as family groups, each in their own gunyah (bough shelter) with the fire at the entrance, surrounded by their dogs. ... By the 1840s, there were between fifty and a hundred Aboriginal people living across coastal Sydney at any one time, in a number of settlements like the one at Camp Cove. ... fishing provided them with a crucial means of survival ... Although Aboriginal people were not uniformly welcome everywhere they went, the broad European acceptance of their presence allowed them to regroup and develop the blended existence of new and old ways that was so characteristic of their way of life by the 1840s.

Paul Irish, *Hidden from Plain View: The Aboriginal People of Coastal Sydney*, NewSouth, Sydney, 2017, pp. 32–33, 49–50.



↑ Source 3.8 Australian Aborigines. Cabramatta Tribe, P H F Phelps, c. 1840

Historians Heather Goodall and Allison Cadzow wrote of three Aboriginal families living around the Georges River in south-western Sydney.

There were many people along the river trying to hold on to patches of their land in the mid-to-late nineteenth century. ... these three situations each involved a different type of hold over land in the official sense: the Goggey family at Voyager Point was squatting on private but undeveloped land; the Malones and others at Towra Point were living on some unalienated Crown land as well as lands which may have been permissive occupancy, or in dispute. The Leanes at Holsworthy were living on farming land of

Continued...

... *Continued*

which Lucy [Leane] was an owner. Together they indicate the varied ways in which Aboriginal men and women might be successful in securing a foothold along the river despite the pressures of settlement.

Heather Goodall and Allison Cadzow, *Rivers of Resilience: Aboriginal People on Sydney's Georges River*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2009, pp. 78–79.

FOCUS QUESTIONS 3.1

1. Did Mahroot try to remain a custodian? Explain.
2. What does the work of Irish, Goodall and Cadzow reveal about the impact of colonisation on Aboriginal peoples' lives and their responses to colonisation?

Desiring land

In October 1843, William Thomas (the Assistant Aboriginal Protector) recorded the words of his friend Billibellari, the leading Woiwurrung Elder.

Source 3.10

If Yarra blackfellows had a country on the Yarra ... they would stop [on it] and cultivate the ground.

William Thomas. *Quarterly Reports, 1 September–1 December 1843*, Victorian Public Records Office, Series 4410, unit 3.

Similar requests followed. Thomas recorded these Aboriginal voices in his journal.

Source 3.11

4 January 1849: Get us a country.

5 January 1849: Why not give them a station.

28 February 1849: They press me very hard for a country to locate themselves upon.

20 March 1849: Benbow [an elder of the Boon Wurrung] informs me that he means to see the Governor [Fitzroy] this day & ask him for a country for Western Port Blks, ... saw Benbow as good as his word Standing well trimmed up in Commissariat uniform standing at the entrance of Royal Hotel awaiting his turn to be called to see the Governor, I endeavord (sic) to dissuade him from troubling his Excellency & gave him 6d [a small amount of money] to go his way but he coolly pocketed the 6d and & said that he would send up his brass plate (meaning as a [calling] card) ... I observed 3 Black fellows on the opposite side of the way awaiting the result of Benbow's interview, seeing me parley with him, they came to meet me I tried to bribe them to get Benbow away from the Hotel but to no purpose. At the Close of office Hours he still stood before the door nor could I prevail upon him to stir.

Continued...

...Continued

21 March 1849: find that Benbow was not successful the past day & and he was not admitted. I told him if he had consulted me & had giving me instruction what he was upon I would have endeavored (sic) to have gain'd him an interview ...

William Thomas, cited in Marguerita Stephens (ed.), *The Journal of William Thomas, Assistant Protector of the Aborigines of Port Phillip & Guardian of the Aborigines of Victoria 1839–1867, Vol. 2, 1844 to 1853*, Victorian Aboriginal Corporation of Languages, Melbourne, 2014, p. 370.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 3.2

1. Think about Billibellari's request in Source 3.10. What does it tell you about his view of land? Does it indicate change? How?
2. Examine Source 3.11. What is Benbow attempting to do at the Royal Hotel (public meetings were often held in hotels)?
3. What is Thomas's response to Benbow's actions? Does Thomas's response seem consistent with his official role as the Assistant Aboriginal Protector?

Working on the land

Aboriginal peoples also worked for British colonisers on the land and when labour was scarce it was valued. George McCrae, who grew up on a Mornington Peninsula pastoral property, wrote about Aboriginal workers in the area.

We found the Aborigines about us docile, tractable, and highly intelligent. Both the young men and women became efficient and willing station servants. The youths, always fearless riders and fond of horses, made good stock-keepers, and took great pride in their long, heavy whips and spurs. The young women washed and ironed well, sewing and mending also with great neatness. Men and women alike were perpetually honest. I have known them even after a day's fishing to cut the hooks off their lines and return them, under the impression that we had only lent them.

Being sober, they were the more to be trusted, and we found the boys very useful, not only in the management of cattle, but also in riding with messages to a distance, and quite to be depended upon in services of that nature.

George McCrae, 'Early settlement of the eastern shores of Port Phillip: With a note on the Aborigines of the coast', *Victorian Historical Magazine*, vol. 1, no.1, 1911, pp. 24–25.

Source 3.12

George Robinson, the Chief Aboriginal Protector of Port Phillip, reported in 1845:

Source 3.13

The Aborigines are employed chiefly as shepherds, bullock drivers and hut keepers, messengers, domestics, sheep washers, whalers, collectors of skins, police, and guides; in this latter capacity, they are, from their knowledge of the locality, quickness of perception, endurance of fatigue, their facility in procuring water and sustenance, found of infinite service to travellers generally, and have merited their approbation; females are occasionally employed, and as respectable settlers and their families are now removing to the bush, it is to be hoped this class of labour will be more encouraged. The natives receive in return for their labour, food, clothing, trifling articles of luxury, as tea, sugar, tobacco, and in some instances, money.

George Robinson's evidence to the Select Committee on the Condition of the Aborigines, NSW, 1845, p. 46.



↑ **Source 3.14** *Native police encampment, Ballarat, Victoria*, William Strutt, 1853

Hugh Jamieson, a pastoralist at Yerre station near Mildura, wrote a letter (dated 10 October 1853) to Bishop Perry in Melbourne describing the Aboriginal workers he employed.

Source 3.15

We have exclusively employed them, and successfully, for some years in shepherding and in the usual routine of the management of sheep on a station, in sheep-washing, and also in sheep-shearing to a limited extent. Their services have, during the recent scarcity of labour consequent on the gold discoveries of Australia, been to us and other settlers on the Murray and Darling of great value. ...

They have now no more wish than formerly to adopt even the first elements of civilization and abandon their unsettled and roving life. In these districts, during the summer months, nearly all, from the oldest to the youngest in the various tribes, have the greatest desire to abandon every employment, and indulge in the roving life of naked savages. The tribes on the Lower Murray and Darling are, generally speaking, on friendly terms;

Continued...

... *Continued*

they not infrequently during their annual migrations travel over 200 or 300 miles of country, increasing in numbers as they proceed, alternately hunting, fishing, and levying contributions on both sheep and cattle, as they slowly and indolently saunter along the banks of the Murray and Darling. ... during these migrations we always experience considerable difficulty in retaining out of the whole tribe the necessary number for shepherding alone.

Hugh Jamieson, cited in Thomas Francis Bride (ed.), *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, Robert S. Brain, Government Printer, 1898, pp. 379–80.

Living and working on the land

In March 1859, William Thomas led a deputation of Kulin men to meet Gavin Duffy, the Minister for Lands (see Source 3.16). They successfully requested land and maintained their pressure by attending the Governor's levee bearing gifts (see Source 3.17). Some members of the Kulin nation soon settled at Coranderrk Reserve, near Healesville east of Melbourne.

These men were attired much in the same manner as sailors or laborers of an inferior class. They wore coarse jumpers and trousers: three of them had coats, and the remainder were without this article of dress. They were all robust and well made men, apparently equal in physical power to the average of Europeans ... Their countenances were intelligent and animated. Their entrance into the Board room was made in an unembarrassed and quiet manner and at a sign from Mr Duffy they seated themselves with an air of grave courtesy, and listened attentively to what went forward and the interpretations of Mr W. Thomas. ...

The chief of the Goulburn tribe explicitly made known their request, that the tribe were anxious to secure a tract of land on both sides of a creek which falls into the Goulburn River, named Nak-krom, which the blacks stated was of little use to white people, but kangaroos and opossums were abundant there. ... That blackfellows and lubras go look out food, but some always stop and turn up ground, and plant potatoes and corn.

The Argus, 8 March 1859

FOCUS QUESTIONS 3.2

1. What did McCrae, Robinson and Jamieson think of the abilities of Aboriginal workers?
2. Why do you think Aboriginal peoples were willing to work for British colonisers?

Source 3.16



↑ **Source 3.17** Deputation of Victorian Aboriginal peoples at the levee of the Governor of Victoria, Sir Henry Barkly in 1863, *Illustrated Melbourne Post*, 18 June 1863

Historian Bain Attwood wrote this of the Coranderrk community established in 1863:

Source 3.18

The Woiworung and Taungurong were determined to farm this land and have their children educated in a European fashion. Most of all they wanted to be free and to govern themselves ... They set about the work of clearing, cultivating and building, and quickly made considerable progress even though they were handicapped by a lack of capital and labour. The population grew as other Kulin moved to the station and children were born. The station soon came to be seen by white settlers as an orderly community of Christian agriculturalists who worked hard and had attained a reasonable standard of living. The Kulin acquired a sense of themselves as pioneer farmers who could manage their own affairs and prosper. Moreover, Coranderrk came to be seen as home, not only by the Woiworung, whose traditional land it was, but also other Kulin, as they worked and lived alongside each other.

Bain Attwood, *Rights for Aborigines*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2003, p. 10.

A few Aboriginal individuals requested and gained land in Victoria in the 1860s and 1870s. Some of the requests were granted from the Aboriginal Protection Board. Others were granted in the same way as other European colonists, through the land selection Acts. These Aboriginal individuals included Colin and Nora Hood at Hexham; Jimmy Uncles at Castlemaddie in the

Wimmera; Jackson Stewart at Fishpoint and Hamilton Orr at Lake Boga in the Mallee. A number of these people succeeded as small selectors.⁵

In the early 1880s, the Wurundjeri people, led by William Barak, successfully lobbied the Victorian Government to save Coranderrk from closure by the Aboriginal Protection Board. Barak said the land was in ‘my father’s country’. In 1886, a Coranderrk deputation met with Graham Berry, the Victorian Premier, who had helped save Coranderrk from closure in 1884. He was leaving to become the Agent General for Victoria in London and was presented with Aboriginal artefacts as gifts and an address of thanks dictated by Barak.

We have come to see you because you have done a great deal of work for the Aborigines. I feel very sorrowful, and first time I hear you was going home I was crying. You do all that thing the station when we were in trouble, when the Board would not give us much food and clothes, and wanted to drive us off the land. We came to you and told you our trouble, and you gave us the land for our own as long as we live ... We had a trouble here in this country, but we can all meet up long ‘Our Father’.

Source 3.19

The Argus, 25 March 1886.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 3.3

1. Examine Source 3.16. What were the Kulin peoples so eager to obtain from the Victorian Government?
2. According to Attwood (see Source 3.18), what did the Kulin peoples of the Coranderrk community desire most?
3. Why did William Barak express gratitude towards the Victorian Premier Graham Berry?
4. Did the Kulin peoples’ adoption of European agricultural practices, religious ideas and sedentary living at Coranderrk constitute a complete break with their Aboriginal cultural traditions? Explain your answer.



← Source 3.20 Fred Kruger, *Group of Aborigines in hop gardens, Coranderrk* 1876 albumen silver photograph 13.3 x 20.2 cm (image), National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne Gift of Mrs Beryl M. Curl, 1979 (PH220-1979). Image courtesy of the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

The success of the Coranderrk people spread to other reserves. Barak visited Maloga, a mission on the banks of the Murray River, in 1881. He told the Yorta and Bangerang people of the farming at Coranderrk, inspiring them to request land in a petition to the NSW Governor of 1881, which was signed by 42 male residents.

Source 3.21

That all the land within our tribal boundaries has been taken possession of by the Government and white settlers. Our hunting grounds are used for sheep pasturage, and the game reduced, and in many places exterminated; rendering our means of subsistence extremely precarious, and often reducing us, and our wives and children, to beggary.

We, the men of our several tribes, are desirous of honestly maintaining our young and infirm, who are in many cases the subjects of extreme want and semi-starvation; and we believe we could, in a few years, support ourselves by our own industry were a sufficient area of land granted us to cultivate and raise stock.

We have been under training for some years, and feel that our old mode of life is not in keeping with the instructions we have received, and we are earnestly desirous of settling down to more orderly habits of industry, that we may form homes for our families.

We more confidently asked this favour of a grant of land, as our fellow natives in other colonies have proved capable of supporting themselves where suitable land has been reserved for them.

The Maloga Petition, 1881, sent to Lord Augustus Loftus, cited in Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus (eds), *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights: A Documentary History*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1991, p. 51.

Later, as a result of an 1887 petition, some Indigenous families gained land near Cummeragunja, a government-run Aboriginal reserve on the Murray River, which superseded the Maloga Mission.

Resisting and adapting to British colonisation played out amidst a massive Aboriginal population decline. In Victoria, the Aboriginal population fell from an estimated 10 000 or possibly 15 000 people in 1834 to 1907 people in 1853, a fall of 60–80 per cent due to disease, the disruption of colonisation, and violence (in that order).⁶ In New South Wales, the Aboriginal population declined by 75 per cent by 1861, down from 48 000 people to 16 000 people.

During this period of population decline, many Aboriginal traditions, ceremonies and practices were lost, creating great trauma. The regular cultural burning of the Country ceased as many European pastoralists pushed Aboriginal peoples from their lands. For over a decade, there was a fuel load build-up in the bush, which helped to alter the fire regime of south-east Australia. Alfred Howitt discussed this in a paper to the Royal Society of Victoria, the most learned scientific Victorian society of its day.

The influence of settlement upon the Eucalyptus forests has not been confined to the settlements upon lands devoted now to agriculture or pasture, or by the earlier occupation by a mining population. It dates from the very day when the very first hardy pioneers drove their flocks and herds down the mountains from New South Wales into the rich pastures of Gippsland. Before this time the gramminivorous [grass-eating] marsupials had been so few in comparative number, that they could not materially affect the annual crop of grass which covered the country, and which was more or less burnt off by the Aborigines, either accidentally or intentionally, when travelling, or for the purpose of hunting game. These annual bushfires tended to keep the forests open, and to prevent the open country from being overgrown, for they not only consumed much of the standing or fallen timber, but in a great measure destroyed the seedlings which had sprung up since former conflagrations. ...

The occupation of Gippsland by the white man has absolutely caused an increased growth of the Eucalyptus forests in places. ... in spite of the clearings which have been made by selectors and others ... the forests are now more widely extended and more dense than they were when Angus McMillan first descended from the Omeo Plains into the low country [in 1839].

A.W. Howitt, 'The eucalypts of Gippsland', *Transactions, Royal Society of Victoria* 2 (1), 1890, pp. 109, 112.

Black Thursday, 1851

On Thursday 6 February 1851, Victoria was in the grip of drought. The temperature was 47°C and a dry furnace-like north wind blew over the land. Over the course of the day, a fire storm erupted. It burnt land from Portland to Gippsland, an area of 500 by 100 kilometres (approximately a quarter of the entire Victorian territory). Twelve people died, including Bridget McLelland and her five children John, James, Joseph, Mary Anne and William, while her husband Richard was seriously burnt at their hut at Dandenong. It is estimated a million sheep were burnt and many more native animals and birds. One colonist near the Barrabool Hills encountered 800 horses running wildly before the wind to escape the fire.⁷

This is what historian Margaret Kiddle wrote about the fires.

Those who lived through that time were never to forget the sufferings of the animals and birds. For days after the flames flickered out, horses, cattle and sheep lay dying on the blackened land. Whenever a man came insight their cries were heart rendering. The roasted bodies of kangaroos and emus had to be pushed aside from the roads; birds had dropped from the trees killed by heat rather than fire; the track by the Baraboo Hills to Melbourne was carpeted with dead magpies and parrots, and two lost children were found sheltering beneath a coverlet of stricken birds which had saved their lives. Birds flew desperately out to sea; a few found refuge on ships.

Margaret Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday: A Social History of the Western District of Victoria, 1834–1890*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1961, p. 182.

Kiddle estimated that wool production dropped significantly the next year. She quoted one Western District pastoralist saying that half a million lambs would be lost or not born due to the fire.⁸ In 1864, William Strutt's dramatic painting captured the terror of this day (see Source 3.24).⁹ (See Sources 3.25 and 3.26 for further information via the weblinks provided.)



↑ **Source 3.24** *Black Thursday, February 6th, 1851*, William Strutt, 1864

Source 3.25

www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/black-thursday-bushfires

National Museum of Australia website: Defining Moments – Black Thursday Bushfires

In 1924 – 73 years after the fires roared through the land – Edward Howard recalled the fire. He had been 12 years old in 1851.

Source 3.26

<https://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/9552>

National Library of Australia website: Edward Howard article. Edward C.O. Howard, 'Black Thursday', *The Argus*, 28 June 1924, p. 6.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 3.4

1. Using Sources 3.23, 3.25 and 3.26, list some of the specific impacts of the Black Thursday fire on the British colonisers.
2. Examine Source 3.24. How useful is William Strutt's painting as a historical source, given it was painted 13 years after the fire?
3. Do you consider Source 3.24 or 3.26 to be more valuable? Explain your answer.
4. What does Howitt's evidence (see Source 3.22) suggest about the underlying causes of the Black Thursday fire outbreak?

3.3 Chapter summary

Here are some dot-points for you to consider and add to:

Continuities

- Aboriginal knowledge of land and sea Country was actively cultivated and developed over millennia, communicated across the generations through verbal, visual, musical and theatrical forms of story-telling sometimes called Tjurkurpa or Dreamings.
- Aboriginal peoples maintained a strong sense of connection and custodianship towards their traditional Country despite the disruptions caused by colonisation.
- British colonisers expanded their pastoral industry across the Australian continent during the nineteenth century.

Changes

- The British introduction of the concept of private property into the Australian continent was a radical break with the communal forms of property ownership which had been maintained for generations among Aboriginal people.
- The Aboriginal population in Australia declined from approximately 800 000 people (some researchers say more) to 50 000 people between 1788 and 1901, mainly due to the British colonisers' introduction of diseases, restriction of access to resources and frontier violence.
- Aboriginal peoples adapted their way of life in order to survive colonisation with some adopting European agricultural practices and religious ideas, as well as labouring for the British colonisers.
- Despite land clearing by pastoralists, the disruption of traditional Aboriginal burning practices created a major build-up of fuel loads across some land which contributed to catastrophic fire events, such as the 1851 Black Thursday bushfires.

3.4 End-of-chapter activities

The following tasks are designed to help strengthen your understanding of the material explored in this chapter and to encourage you to further analyse and evaluate the events, ideas, perspectives and experiences that shaped Aboriginal responses to colonisation between 1788 and 1901.

Consolidating your understanding

Creating revision or flash cards is a great way to summarise content when studying for an assessment or exam. Students and teachers have many different approaches to this technique; however, your aim should be to ensure all cards are well-organised and concise. You may also wish to colour-code your cards, as many students find this useful in helping commit information to memory.

Create one card per heading listed below. Some cards will have more information than others. For those topics with more sources, use both sides of the card. You may find the templates below helpful.

Events

- Black War
- Reserves declared
- Coranderrk reserve opened
- A specific massacre you have investigated in Research Task 3.1

Perspectives

- Aboriginal people were a nuisance but should be tolerated
- Aboriginal people should be exterminated
- Aboriginal people were useful
- Aboriginal people should be protected

Experiences

- Resistance
- Accommodation
- Adaptation

Template examples:

Events: Black Wars

Key date/s:

Summary information: (see Sources 3.1 to 3.5)

Key quotes:

Perspectives: Aboriginal workers

Key date/s:

Summary information: (see Sources 3.12 to 3.15)

Key quotes:

Experiences: Aboriginal landholders

Key date/s:

Summary information: (see Sources 3.6 to 3.11)

Key quotes:

Evaluating historical interpretations

1. In Source 3.1, historian Richard Broome suggests that technology was the most influential determining factor of the 'black-white warfare'. What does he mean by this?
2. Re-examine Windschuttle's argument at the start of the chapter, which expresses scepticism over the extent and severity of frontier violence. What evidence can you find within the chapter which challenges this argument?

Constructing an argument: essay writing

1. 'Aboriginal peoples violently resisted the British colonisers.' Discuss.
2. Why were Aboriginal peoples ultimately unable to effectively prevent the British invasion and takeover of their lands and resources?

CHAPTER 4

Colonial land use and changes to the land, 1851–1901



Source 4.0 Eagle-Hawk Gully, Bendigo, John Allan, c. 1852

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Cambridge University Press

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Chapter timeline

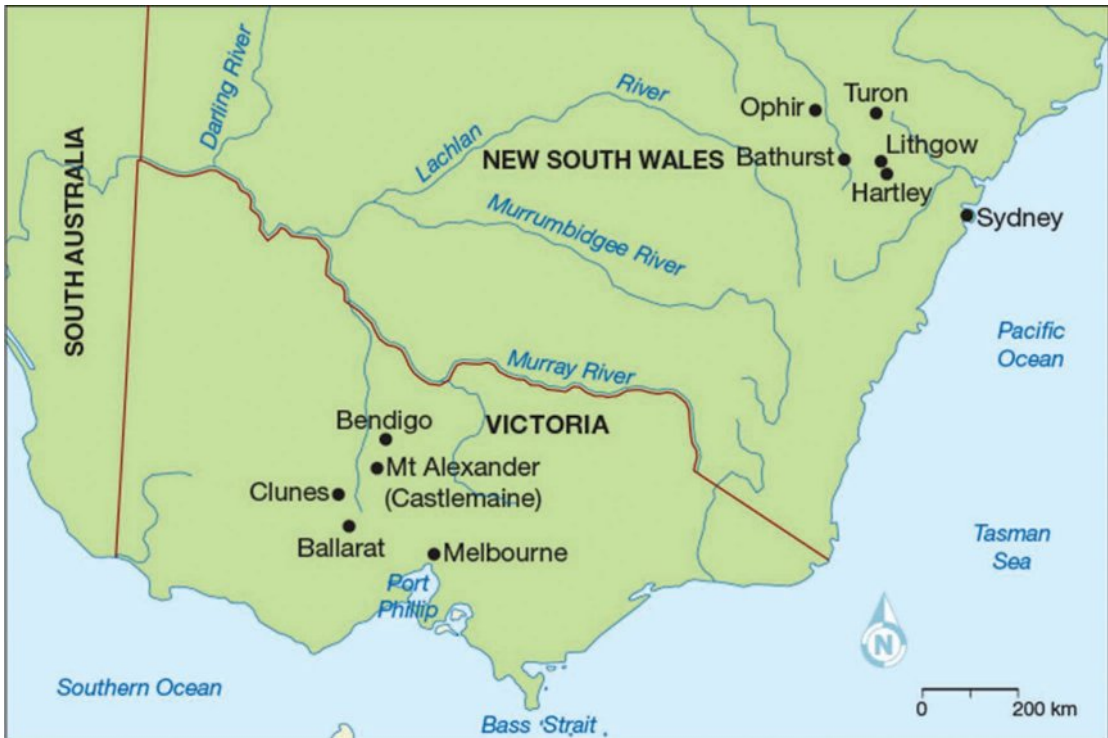
World events	Date	Australian events
	1850	
	↓	
		<p>1851: Gold discovered in New South Wales and Victoria, causing population boom</p> <p>c. 1860: Australia's population reaches one million</p> <p>1861: Acclimatization Society of Victoria formed</p> <p>1863: Aboriginal people select and pioneer the Coranderrk reserve</p> <p>1864: George Marsh's <i>Man and Nature</i> published</p>
1861–65: US Civil War		
1865: Slavery abolished in the United States		
1872: The world's first national park created at Yellowstone, Wyoming, United States		
	↓	
	1900	<p>1879: Field Naturalists Club of Victoria formed</p> <p>1879: First National Park formed near Sydney, boosting tourism</p> <p>1895: Federation Drought begins</p>

4.1 Introduction

INQUIRY QUESTION

What major changes occurred to land between 1851 and 1901?

Land use continued to underpin the wealth of the new colonies after 1850, as the pastoral industry grew, and gold discoveries after 1851 brought incredible wealth and prosperity to the colonies. The ancient geological nature of Victoria, in particular, had gifted colonists with great opportunities for wealth. But economic expansion was not without cost to the land. Most colonists in this period supported unending progress in the form of developing the productive capacities of the land and its resources, but a small minority thought about the costs of development and saw the need for conservation. However, any realisation that a new era of the Anthropocene was dawning was, by 1901, evident to very few people.



↑ **Source 4.1** Map of major gold rush sites in Victoria and New South Wales

4.2 Significant events, 1851–1901

INQUIRY QUESTION

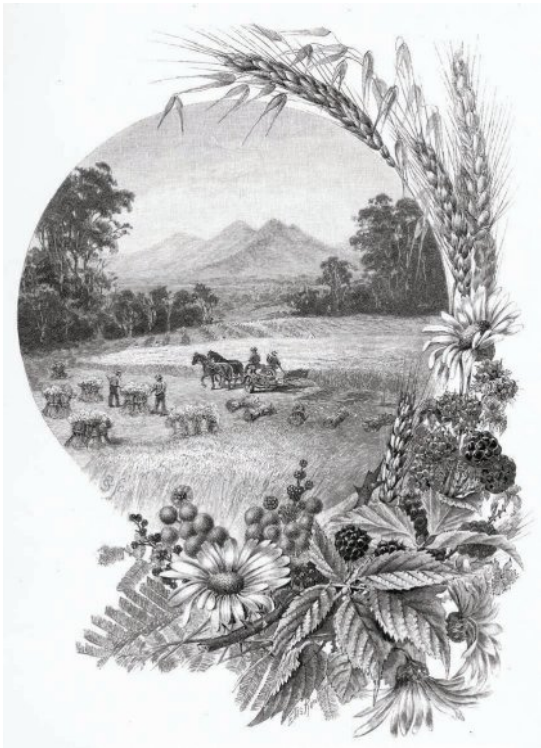
What events shaped European land use between 1851 and 1901?

Population growth

Sources 4.2 and 4.3 indicate the changing population figures of colonists and First Nations peoples from 1788 to 1901.

The pre-1788 Aboriginal population was estimated to be over 750 000, with 250 000 in New South Wales and Victoria alone.¹ However, smallpox outbreaks in 1790 and 1828 likely halved the Indigenous population of New South Wales and Port Phillip in 1790 and again in 1828 before settlement began to expand.² This is reflected in the lower Indigenous population numbers recorded in Source 4.3.

Growth of food production



Land Acts in New South Wales and Victoria in the 1860s opened the land to small scale settlement which promoted agriculture. Source 4.5 will allow you to gauge the extent and speed of land cultivation by the colonists.

← **Source 4.4** Haymaking near the You Yangs, outside Geelong. Courtesy of Andrew Garran (ed.). *Picturesque Atlas of Australasia*, 1886.

↓ Source 4.5

Land cultivated in Australia by colony for crops, 1850–1900 (in thousands of acres)

Year	NSW	TAS	VIC	SA	QLD	WA	Total
1850	86	67	24	35		3	195
1860	116	60	107	218		14	515
1870	189	62	289	532	3	26	1101
1880	233	45	707	1458	4	26	2473
1890	420	49	1179	1843	8	36	3534
1900	1426	64	2166	1821	53	84	5614

Bruce Davidson, 'Agriculture', in Wray Vamplew (ed.), *Australians Historical Statistics*, Fairfax, Sydney, 1987, p. 74.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 4.2

Examine Source 4.2 and Source 4.5.

1. When did each colony experience a significant increase in population?
2. What could you infer from these statistics about the relationship between the amount of land cultivated and the population size?

The gold rushes

In early 1851, gold was discovered in New South Wales. In July 1851, it was also discovered in Victoria at Clunes and Warrandyte. As news of these discoveries spread, people rushed into New South Wales and Victoria from neighbouring colonies – and then from Europe, North America and Asia. Until 1900, gold production exceeded the value of all other minerals extracted from the soil in Australia, including silver, tin, copper, zinc, coal and iron ore. Yet the gold rushes were just one part of the Australian mining story, as historian Geoffrey Blainey explains in Source 4.6.

This was the last continent found in Europe's long search for treasure and perhaps in no other continent has European colonization being so affected by the winning of metals. In two periods metals were Australia's most valuable export. New mining regions virtually rescued every Australian colony at least once from depression. They influenced racial policies, unionism, religious life, equalitarian laws, and politics. ...

Source 4.6

G. Blainey, *The Rush that Never Ended: A History of Australian Mining*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1969, pp. 1, 2.



↑ Source 4.7 Group of diggers, Richard Daintree and Antoine Fauchery, c. 1858

Everyone in society participated in the gold rushes in some way. Even those back in the towns received benefits from the economic stimulus of gold, including Indigenous peoples. In Source 4.8, Fred Cahir discusses how this happened.

Source 4.8

Victorian Aboriginal people demonstrated a great deal of agency, exhibited entrepreneurial spirit and eagerness to participate in gold-mining or related activities and, at times, figured significantly in the gold epoch. Their experiences, like those of non-Indigenous people, were multi-dimensional, from passive presence, active discovery, to shunning the goldfields. There is striking and consistent evidence that Aboriginal people, especially those whose lands were in rich alluvial gold bearing regions, remained in the gold areas, participated in gold mining and interacted with non-Indigenous people in a whole range of hitherto neglected ways, whilst maintaining many of their traditional customs. There is also evidence that Aboriginal people from Tasmania, New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia were present on the Victorian goldfields.

Fred Cahir, *Black Gold: Aboriginal People on the Goldfields of Victoria, 1850–1870*, Australian National University, Canberra, 2012, p. 1.

Source 4.9 illustrates where and when gold's impact on land was the greatest.

↓ **Source 4.9**

Gold production in tonnes in Australia by colony, 1851–1900

Year	VIC	NSW	QLD	WA	Total
1851	6.52	3.43			9.95
1860	65.14	10.73	0.09		75.96
1870	38.20	6.82	3.58		48.63
1880	24.28	3.25	6.92		36.51
1890	17.24	3.37	15.98	0.63	38.52
1900	23.65	7.84	21.03	43.99	99.43

Adapted from Hugh Saddler, 'Minerals and Energy', in Wray Vamplew (ed.), *Australians Historical Statistics*, Fairfax, Sydney, 1987, p. 88.

We will now focus on gold's impact on the land in Victoria. Source 4.10 is a description of the Mount Alexander (Castlemaine) field in February 1852 by Edward Snell, an English engineer who tried his luck on the gold fields.

Source 4.10

After walking about 3 miles through a stringybark forest we came upon the spot and saw a scene which beggars all description. Thousands upon thousands of tents extending through the gullies for about 10 miles in every direction, lots of stores distinguished by flats, and slaughterhouses which might be nosed a mile off, enough to breed a fever in the place – the ground full of immense holes, many of them 30 feet deep, and the surface cut up by carts and midleg deep in dust. ... and the creek thronged with cradles and tin pans, and fellows washing in every direction. We were informed

Continued...

... *Continued*

that some new diggings much surpassing Mt Alexander had been discovered at Bendigo 25 miles to the Northward and as we walked back to our camp decided to go there.

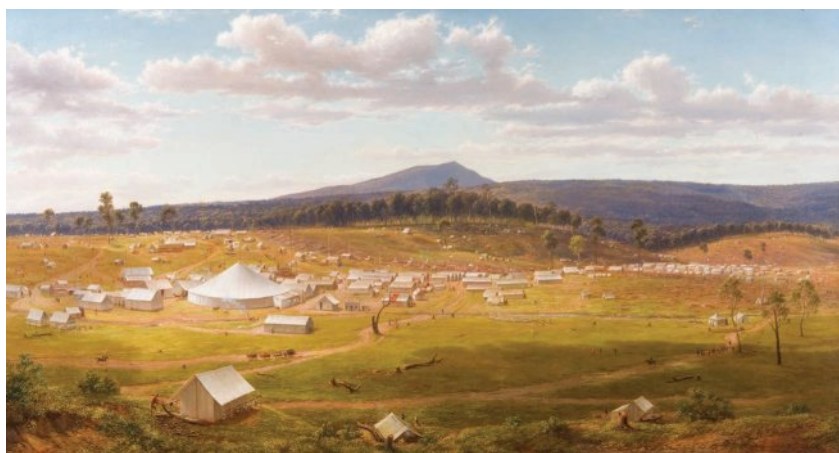
Edward Snell, cited in Tom Griffiths and Alan Platt (eds), *The Life and Adventurers of Edward Snell: The Illustrated Diary of an Artist, Engineer and Adventurer in the Australian Colonies 1849 to 1859*, Angus & Robinson, Sydney, 1988, pp. 277–78.

Source 4.11 is an account written by William Howitt, who spent time on the Victorian goldfields, in 1855.

The diggers seem to have two especial propensities, those are firing guns and felling trees. ... No sooner have they done their day's work than they commenced felling trees ... In fact the stringybark is the most useful tree conceivable ... these make the sides and roofs of huts. They make seats and tables ... and spouts and shoots for water. ... it has the property of easy cleaving, and splits up readily into posts and rails, into slabs for the walls of huts, or into anything else you want. Therefore there is great destruction of this tree.

Source 4.11

William Howitt, *Land, Labour and Gold or Two Years in Victoria*, Lowden Publishing, Kilmore, 1855/1972, p. 98.



↑ **Source 4.12** *Old Ballarat as it was the summer of 1853–54*, Eugene von Guérard, 1884

The gold towns, of which there were many, also thronged with activity and despoliation. Source 4.13 is an account written by the historian Weston Bate about Main Street, Ballarat. He describes how the street resembled a ‘cowyard’ once the rain came and the mud became ‘the consistency of hasty pudding’.³

Source 4.13

Everything they [the diggers] needed could be supplied (perhaps many times over) along what was probably the most boisterous mile and a half of road that has ever existed in Australia. It was one of the strangest places in the world – as noisy, smelly, bustling, and congested as an Asian market, as wild as an American frontier town, as wealthy as London’s Lombard Street, and as seamy as the back alleys of Naples. Set on a flood-plain and subject to sudden inundations, it was the most unfortunately situated shopping street imaginable. Yet for many years it was the backbone, chief artery, heart and symbol of Ballarat. ... For two years the leads kept about ten thousand miners within half a mile of this spot and another ten thousand could reach it after at most half an hour’s walk ... What a Street! Subject to constant excitement, it was a stage for personal and public dramas, fights, robberies, fires, floods, elections, circus processions and an unwearying flow of traffic gave it abundant life.

Weston Bate, *Lucky City: The First Generation at Ballarat, 1851–1901*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1978, pp. 96, 108.



↑ Source 4.14 View of Victoria Hill, Bendigo, taken from Old Chum Hill, Nicholas Caire, c. 1876

sluicing a method where water was piped into successively narrower pipes leading to hoses which sprayed jets of water at extremely high pressure capable of shifting gravel from rock faces

Miners pot-holed large areas digging shafts and covering the topsoil with infertile clays they dug up. They turned creek beds upside down looking for gold. They sank deep shafts lined with wood in some areas; pounded gold bearing quartz rock with steam-driven and wood-fuelled stamping machines; and washed away hillsides with powerful steam driven **sluicing** hoses.

Another method for winning gold was the puddling mill, in which a horse turned a large stone to grind rock, which was then washed to separate gold and earth. In 1859 at Bendigo, 2000 puddling mills, employing 6000 to 8000 miners and 4000 horses, produced three-quarters of the town’s gold. Source 4.15 is an extract from a Royal Commission that considered solutions to the problems caused by the run-off from the puddling mills called ‘sludge’.

... large areas may be seen of partially worked ground which have been overflowed by the sludge and rendered almost worthless. ... in some instances it has risen to so great a height that the machines themselves have been totally submerged. ... At Kanagabilly station, a distance from Sandhurst [Bendigo] of about thirty miles in a direct line, or of about forty-five miles as the sludge travels, an area of many square miles is partially covered by the sludge to a depth of several inches ... at Patterson's station, a distance of about forty miles, we found that the creek was filled up to within two feet of the banks by the sludge, the cattle consequently refusing to drink, and having to be driven to other and more distant waters ... In fact, the entire course of the sludge through those plains is marked by filled up watercourses and flooded pasture lands. ... the injury caused to the pastoral lands by the loss of the only water frontage is very great.

Source 4.15

John Ferres, Report of the Royal Commission, Appointed to Enquire into the Best Method of Removing the Sludge from the Gold Fields, Government Printer, Melbourne, 1859, pp. 3–5.

For more on sludge at Bendigo, watch Gerry Gill's video *The Bendigo Creek Story* (2015), available on the Culture Victoria website.

FOCUS QUESTION 4.1

How did the gold rush alter the Australian landscape?

Perspectives on gold

Source 4.16 is an account of the effects of the gold rush by the historian Geoffrey Blainey.

Possibly no other country in the world had been so quickly transformed by metals. The normal growth and achievement of several decades were crammed into one. ... The swift growth of population widened the market for Australian manufactures and foodstuffs. It stimulated farms and factories and workshops and cities. Gold drew population into the interior and attracted railways from the ports; ... gold mines were a vast market for timber, candles, boilers and engines and pumps, and even in the 1880s Victorian mines used more horsepower than all its factories, and were the mainstay of the engineering industry ... Whereas Australia's first natural asset, the sheep lands, well accessed by a few thousand men, its second rich natural asset the gold lands was divided among hundreds of thousands of men. The hope of gold was shared by every man, and Australian society became more optimistic, individualistic, and fluid than it ever was in the era of jailers and pastoralists. ... There is evidence that California and then Australia had such purchasing power that they largely revived the sick economy of Britain, which in turn sent a chain reaction of prosperity around much of the civilised world.

Source 4.16

G. Blainey, *The Rush that Never Ended: A History of Australian Mining*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1969, pp. 61–2.

Source 4.17 shows a differing view of the effects of the gold rush, written by historian Don Garden.

Source 4.17

The environmental perspective does not promote a story of progress, but unveils the profound negative impact of mining on local ecosystems and the rapidly increased pressure upon flora and fauna. It was an environmental cataclysm ... As humans swarmed across the landscape in numbers never previously experienced, they began the transformation. The sites of the rushes were soon turned into wasteland as vegetation was removed, the soil turned over and shafts dug. Great volumes of clay and rock were brought to the surface and spread around in mullock heaps. Streams were diverted, their water utilised and polluted and the resultant silted muck was released back into their beds to flow downstream. Once beautiful areas were soon turned into moonscapes. Disturbed land erodes easily and is invaded by weed species.

Don Garden, 'Catalyst or cataclysm? Gold mining and the environment', *Victorian Historical Journal*, vol. 72, no. 1–2, 2001, pp. 28, 30.

DISCUSSION TASK 4.1

Form two teams, one to argue for Geoffrey Blainey's view of the goldrushes (see Source 4.16) and one for Don Garden's view (see Source 4.17). Use evidence from Sources 4.1 to 4.17 to support your argument.



Resource extraction

The diggers mined wood as well as gold. In November 1861, *The Argus* newspaper declared: 'The trees are disappearing in a rapidly widening radius around all our centres of population'.⁴ Wood was used for most things in the countryside and towns, including fuel. It was the core of construction for houses, buildings, factories, bridges, fences, farm buildings, shearing sheds, vehicles, and in mining as we have seen, which continued unabated.

← **Source 4.18** Felling timber in the Dandenongs, Albert Charles Cooke, 1873

The historian Ray Wright gives an account of these statistics in Source 4.19.

In the late 1860s and early 1870s domestic firewood consumed 3 500 000 tons annually throughout Victoria, while £2 500 000 worth of timber (measurement unspecified) was used in building and construction. A further 1 500 000 tons was used for non-mining industrial purposes. Railway expansion saw 180 miles of new tracks absorb 1 131 250 cubic feet in sleepers and 1 086 000 cubic feet in fencing in 1873; steam engines required 8000 tons of wood a year; railway stations 800 tons for firewood. Wattle- and bark-stripping consumed 12 000–15 000 tons of acacia annually while exports of timber (quantity unknown) varied in value from £7411 to £68 717 in the 1870s. And such imprecise figures take no account of that general land clearance positively encouraged by the Land Acts, of bushfires, and of the many other needs that would serve in this pioneer society. From the mid-1860s, therefore, the question of timber preservation was topical.

Source 4.19

Ray Wright, *The Bureaucrats' Domain: Space and the Public Interest in Victoria, 1836–84*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1989, p. 154.

Besides these massive official figures, illegal extraction occurred in the 1870s. Ray Wright explains this further in Source 4.20.

Timber reserves and state forests were perhaps the most abused of the many sites. It was impossible for bailiffs to patrol such large tracts of land, let alone check to see whether timber-fellers, when they could be located, held current licences. It was even more difficult to secure a prosecution for illegal timber-felling. To lay a charge a bailiff or forester had to catch the culprit in the act of felling a tree or stripping bark. ... Trees were ringbarked or felled indiscriminately, bark stripped, wood removed and trunks left unburned to litter the forest floor, either in complete ignorance or deliberate violation of the law. In the state forests licenced sawmillers would send out their employees to cut huge swathes of timber in order to forestall their competitors. Access tracks, creeks and clearings were likewise covered or blocked by trees to prevent competition. In the Victoria State Forest, for example, it was estimated that only one tree in every eight felled was used. Indeed, in every region where timber was needed, only the very best was removed, the rest was simply left. ... As a result the state forests, far from being sanctuaries for the protection and preservation of colonial timber resources, mocked the attempt.

Source 4.20

Ray Wright, *The Bureaucrats' Domain: Space and the Public Interest in Victoria, 1836–84*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1989, pp. 191–92.

denuded removed the covering of something, especially of land

The Argus newspaper reported on 16 December 1876 that of 19 reserves in the goldfields area, half were completely **denuded** of trees and the other half of reserves were from a quarter to two-thirds denuded.⁵ There were four failed attempts to make forest legislation between 1879 and 1892, but a Royal Commission in 1898–1901 led to the *Victorian Forest Act, 1907*.

The story was the same in all colonies. In 1892, Alex Hamilton listed the amount of timber ringbarked and cleared for crops and grazing, timber used for mining, and timber used for transport (see Source 4.21). Across Australia, there were 16 000 kilometres of railways laid on wooden sleepers and 60 000 kilometres of telegraph lines supported by wooden poles.

Source 4.21

In New South Wales alone, probably one-third of the total forests have been swept away since the colony was founded. Of course, there is some amount of reforestation going on, but up till the present time, the area can only be small, and may be left out of consideration.

Alex Hamilton, 'On the effect which settlement in Australia has produced upon indigenous vegetation', *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales*, vol. 26, 1892, pp. 180–81.

FOCUS QUESTIONS 4.2

1. List how timber was used by the colonists.
2. Examine Source 4.20. Why do you think so much timber was wasted? Why were so many trees felled – but not used – in places like Victorian state forests?
3. Why did the colonial authorities fail to punish those colonists who abused the available timber resources?

Urbanisation

Compared to nations in Europe and the Americas, cities in Australia were always important. This was because British colonisation formed by British sea power was centred on the Australian coast. Furthermore, the inland contained a great deal of poor quality land for farming and the success of sheep raising made wool growing the dominant economic staple. This in turn led to a smaller inland population, although mining provided some inland population growth.

urbanisation the process by which more and more people leave the countryside to live in large towns and cities

From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, **urbanisation** took place in each colony. Cities formed a place for many colonists to live comfortably, Melbourne growing massively from 283 000 people in 1880 to 482 000 people in 1890 – a whopping 67 per cent increase!⁶ Source 4.23 shows the increasingly strong preference of colonists for city living. Melbourne's 1851 percentage of 38 per cent (see Source 4.23) is high because the Victorian rural population was small in 1851 as it was still a pastoral economy, while

Melbourne as a wool export port was relatively large. This quickly changed in 1852 with the arrival of many immigrants who flocked to the gold fields, greatly boosting the rural population.



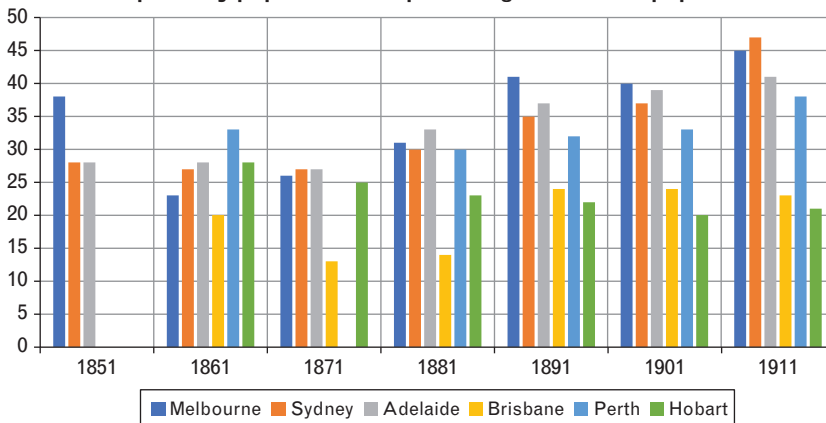
↑ **Source 4.22** Princes Bridge, Melbourne, courtesy of Andrew Garran (ed.). *Picturesque Atlas of Australasia*, 1886.

↓ **Source 4.23**

Capital city population as a percentage of colonial population

Year	Melbourne	Sydney	Adelaide	Brisbane	Perth	Hobart
1851	38	28	28	–	–	–
1861	23	27	28	20	33	28
1871	26	27	27	13	–	25
1881	31	30	33	14	30	23
1891	41	35	37	24	32	22
1901	40	37	39	24	33	20
1911	45	47	41	23	38	21

Capital city population as a percentage of colonial population



J. W. McCarty, 'Australian Capital Cities in the Nineteenth Century', *Australian Economic History Review*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1970, p. 21.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 4.3

1. Examine Source 4.23 and determine which cities have higher population percentages and when.
2. How would you explain the significant decrease in urbanisation in Melbourne between 1851 and 1881?
3. Why do you think that Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide had significantly higher rates of urbanisation than Brisbane and Hobart by 1901?

Source 4.24 is a description of Melbourne in 1886 written by James Smith (a journalist and literary figure in Melbourne who was a prominent cultural figure of his day).⁷

Source 4.24

Forty-five years ago the streets of Melbourne were bush tracks, and after a heavy rain a roaring torrent ran down a gully, following the course of what is now Elizabeth Street. At this moment there is nothing to differentiate the city from one of the capitals of Europe. Its streets are as well paved, as well channelled, as well lighted and as well watched as those of London, Paris, or Vienna and much of the credit of the remarkable transformation the city has undergone in four decades and a half, is due to the efficiency and integrity with which the municipal rulers of Melbourne have performed civic duties. The boast of Augustus Caesar that he found Rome a city of brick and left it a city of marble, described a state of things which has almost been paralleled in the metropolis of Victoria within the memory of men who were acquainted with it before the discovery of the goldfields.

James Smith, *Historical Sketch of Victoria*, Picturesque Atlas Publishing, Sydney, 1886, p. 69.

The Australian statistician Timothy Coghlan reflected uneasily on Australian city growth. Source 4.25 shows how he was troubled in 1900, viewing cities as parasitic.

Source 4.25

The progress of the chief cities of Australasia has been no less remarkable than that of the colonies themselves, and has no parallel among the cities of the old world. Even in America the rise of the great cities has been accompanied by a corresponding increase in the rural population but in these [Australian] colonies, perhaps for the first time in history, was presented the spectacle of magnificent cities growing with marvellous rapidity, and embracing within their limits one-third of the population of the states of which they are the seat of government. The abnormal aggregation of the population into their capital cities is a most unfortunate element in the progress of the colonies, and one which until recently seemed to become every year more marked.

T.A. Coghlan, *The Seven Colonies of Australasia 1899–1900*, Sydney, 1900, p. 294.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 4.4

Copy and complete the table from Using Historical Sources as Evidence 1.2 for Sources 4.24 and 4.25.

1. How do James Smith and Timothy Coghlan's perspectives on Australian cities differ?
2. Why did Coghlan think this capital city growth was 'unfortunate'? Explain.
3. Who does Smith consider largely responsible for Melbourne's growth.
4. Why do you think Smith invokes other European cities and Ancient Rome in his description of Melbourne?

Cities like Melbourne were cosmopolitan, but from 1840 the authorities tried to exclude Aboriginal peoples. However, some Indigenous people insisted on visiting Melbourne thereafter and several worked as servants or gardeners in Melbourne households. In the 1880s some Aboriginal peoples from Maloga Mission on the Murray River camped at Green Point, Brighton, each Christmas. They attracted thousands of visitors by playing in cricket matches and conducting religious and choir services.



← **Source 4.26** *A Camp of Aboriginals, Brighton, AD 1885, Australasian Sketcher, 11 February 1885*

An Aboriginal camp occupied by some stalwart natives from the Mologa [sic] mission station, has been pitched at Brighton Beach, and has attracted thousands of visitors who have admired the clean and healthy appearance of the occupants. The camp is under the supervision of Mr James, who in a pleased and friendly manner gives information to those inquisitive enough to ask questions or require information. The object for which the blacks have come to town is a twofold one, namely to pay a visit to the Centennial Exhibition and enable the residents of Marvellous Melbourne to gaze upon an Aboriginal encampment. During the week they have paid several visits to the grand show, and seemed on returning to have been delighted at their outing.

Source 4.27

Oakley Leader, 22 December 1888

Cities brought changes to the lands on which they stood, covering most within their boundaries with roads, housing blocks and business districts. Land in cities was a commodity and in Melbourne in the 1880s its value boomed as people bought and sold land for profit.⁸ Cities also impacted on the countryside. Source 4.28 is from the historian Graeme Davison writing about the energy that cities used, focusing on Melbourne.

Source 4.28

Throughout the industrialising world the 1880s saw a sharp increase in the use of energy for light, heat and motive power and a decisive shift away from the traditional forms of man, animal, wind, wood and water power and toward the use of coal, oil and electricity. ... the ways in which a society appropriates, distributes and uses energy exposes the relationship between human beings and a material environment in one of its most basic aspects.

[Davison then listed Melbourne's energy uses.]

Australians ate better than most others in the world, enjoying a generous diet of animal protein and cereals, supplied from increasing distances as Melbourne expanded.

Wood was all or part of all Melbourne's houses; tens of thousands of wooden railway sleepers and blocks lay beneath hundreds of kilometres of rail and tram tracks. Tens of thousands of heaters ran on wood sourced from the countryside.

Melbourne consumed over 4 000 000 tons of firewood per annum, all cut from Victoria's dwindling forests.

Coal fuelled steam engines in ships, trains and factories and powered the growing number of gas works, which provided heat and light for the capital cities. Victoria's coal was transported from New South Wales's black coal deposits, 225 000 tons a year alone, just to run Victoria's trains.

About 20 000 horses moved most goods and people around Melbourne, munching 100 000 tons of chaff and hay annually, grown and delivered from the countryside.

Graeme Davison, 'The Australian energy system in 1888', *Australia 1888*, bulletin no. 10, 1982, pp. 3–37.

DISCUSSION TASK 4.2

In two teams, adopt a position either for or against the growth of cities in Australia during the colonial period. Use what you have read so far to support your argument.

The introduction of non-native species

Farm animals, so useful to colonial society but often detrimental to the structure of Australia's soils and the livelihood of its native flora and fauna, were all imported to Australia. Many food plants were also imported such as grains, vegetables, fruit trees, berries and grasses for introduced animals. Some plants provided wind breaks or hedges.

Others were purely ornamental such as the rose and many annuals. Ornamentals mostly stayed in gardens but some like the blackberry broke free. In 1853, the Victorian government

botanist Ferdinand von Mueller wrote a *Systematic Index to the Plants of Victoria*. He listed 57 introduced plants that were ‘not only naturalized beyond the possibility of extirpation, but even overpower the more tender indigenous plants’.⁹

The Australian Government’s Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment’s website lists invasive species: see <https://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/9553>.

Thistles were prominent early among rogue introduced plants. By 1849, thistles had taken hold around Melbourne on cleared land, building allotments, grazing land and riverbanks. Their seeds were spread by the wind and they soon colonised much of Victoria, reducing the value of land. The *Thistle Prevention Act* was passed in Victoria in 1856.

For decades, farmers swapped remedies for eradicating thistles, by cutting, ploughing and burning at seed time. Some landowners were taken to court and fined for not eradicating thistles, which remained out of control in some areas by 1901.



↑ **Source 4.29** *Onopordon acanthium* (the thistle), Ferdinand von Mueller, *Illustrated Description of Thistles*, 1893

Mr. Frank McCullough, of Tourello ... was one of the unfortunate defendants fined. ... In Mr McCulloch’s opinion it will take him fully three months to clear his leased land of 500 acres at Smeaton of thistles, and then he will have to resort to ‘ringing’ them; that boys are of no use to employ; and that the recently introduced thistle scythe, though a very formidable implement, has very little effect on the weed. The overrun of thistles on the farms at Tourello, Mr McCulloch attributes to negligence on the part of the Talbot shire council, as on the boundary alone between that shire and Ballarat shire there is such a forest of them that a farmer located in Tourello cannot with all his endeavours keep his land clean.

Source 4.30

The Age, 12 February 1873, p. 4

The difficulties with thistles did not stop other species being introduced to the colonies. In 1857, Edward Wilson called for British songbirds to be introduced to Victoria.

There is a peculiar charm about the song of the sky-lark on a fine spring morning, or that of the nightingale during one of its own calm summer nights, that cannot be adequately described, but can never be forgotten by those who have once heard these birds. ... The corn field and the grove we have already spreading around us. Why should we delay the attempt to furnish them with their most agreeable inhabitants?

Source 4.31

Edward Wilson, ‘On the introduction of the songbird’, *Transactions of the Philosophical Institute of Victoria*, vol. 2, 1858, p. 78.

In 1861, an Acclimatization Society of Victoria was formed to oversee ‘the introduction, acclimatisation, and domestication of all innoxious [harmless] animals, birds, fishes, insects and vegetables, whether useful or ornamental’.¹⁰ In other words, to make Australia like England. In Source 4.32, historian Tony Dingle outlines the work of the Society.

Source 4.32

The Acclimatisation Society tried to please everyone. It offered alpacas, llamas, angora and cashmere goats and the ostrich to the pastoralist wishing to diversify out of sheep. For the sportsman it provided deer, hares, quail, pheasant, ducks, salmon, trout, carp and other fish. Cottage industries could be formed around bees and silkworms. Farmers and orchardists would benefit from the grub-eating habits of the thrush, starling, skylark, sparrow and Indian myna. No attempt was made to investigate what might be noxious; even monkeys and boa-constrictors were only half-jokingly put forward as candidates for acclimatisation. Governments concerned at the decline of alluvial gold and acutely aware of the need to diversify the economy, offered every encouragement to the Society’s activities by providing money and land. Eleven reserves were established ...

Tony Dingle, *Settling*, Fairfax, Sydney, 1984, p. 142.



↑ **Source 4.33** The front and back of a silver medal awarded by the Acclimatization Society of Victoria, depicting imported animals

While the Acclimatization Society did not successfully introduce the rabbit, one of its members, Thomas Austin of Barwon Park near Winchelsea, did so in 1859. After a slow start, the rabbit reached the Wimmera by 1866 and the inhospitable Mallee by the mid-1870s. Rabbits pushed into South Australia, New South Wales and beyond, despite the erection of rabbit-proof fences and bounties on rabbits. Rabbits crossed the Nullabor Plain in the 1890s.

Alex Hamilton recorded their numbers: over four million rabbits were caught on just 15 stations in western New South Wales in 1891–92. Rabbits were shot, poisoned and gassed, but still they overran properties. In Source 4.34, Hamilton describes their destructiveness.

In an ordinary season when grass is fairly plentiful, their ravages are chiefly confined to that, and they do little harm in that way. But when a dry season comes, and food is scarce, hunger drives them to courses they do not ordinarily take. Their habits change under the pressure of starvation, which bears out what has been said by Charles Darwin of the innate plasticity of constitution in organisms becoming active when they are removed to new habitats and surroundings. They have been accused (I am not prepared to say with how much truth) of swimming rivers and climbing over wirenet fences in their migrations in search of food. It is certain that in the western plains, the scrub over large areas has been killed by their gnawing the bark off (a habit which has been taken advantage of in killing them, poisoned twigs being scattered about their haunts) and it is well known that they climb bushes to get at leaves, young twigs and bark, an addition to their powers since they reached Australia, as a climbing rabbit was never heard of in England. In numerous localities, areas of many square miles have been denuded of all grasses and herbaceous plants, the roots dug up and devoured, and the bushes killed as above mentioned.

Alex Hamilton, 'On the effect which settlement in Australia has produced upon indigenous vegetation', *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales*, vol. 26, 1892, p. 207.



← **Source 4.35** Two men and a youth with rifles, dogs and dead rabbits, Kalgoorlie in WA, c. 1905

CREATIVE TASKS 4.1

1. Imagine you have been engaged by Victoria's colonial government to produce a public service announcement warning colonists of the dangers of the thistle or rabbit and highlighting the need to control it. Aim to write around 50–100 words.
2. Consider yourself an enthusiastic and active member of the Acclimatization Society of Victoria. Choose a non-native animal or plant and promote it your fellow colonists, highlighting its potential benefits for them and the colony. Again, aim to complete this task in 50–100 words.

The decline of native plants and animals

Alex Hamilton's survey of 1892 recorded the loss of native plants.

Source 4.36

The pasturing of sheep and cattle damages the indigenous flora in much the same way as the rabbits do. Given a few good seasons and owners let their flocks and herds increase to the verge of the carrying capabilities of their holdings. When drought comes, the starving animals devour every vestige of green herbage, pull the roots out of the ground and eat them, and even lick the seeds off the surface. ... our forage plants (and they are our most valuable plants, since our chief wealth lies in our sheep and cattle) are likely, if not to become extinct, at least to get scarcer and scarcer every year. All practical and experienced men are agreed that during the past twenty years the plains have diminished in stock bearing capability twenty or thirty per cent, and that the diminution continues year by year.

The above remarks apply more particularly to the plains, where the pressure of dry seasons is felt more severely than in either the coast district or the table-lands. But even in these districts many fodder plants are becoming rarer, and numerous settlers have felt the necessity of laying down artificial pastures with foreign grasses to make up for the diminished grazing capabilities of their holdings.

Alex Hamilton, 'On the effect which settlement in Australia has produced upon indigenous vegetation', *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales*, vol. 26, 1892, pp. 209, 211.

The historian Geoffrey Bolton comments on species loss:

Source 4.37

If around 1900 some naturalist had attempted a summing up of the impact of white settlement on Australian fauna, he would have found considerable carnage among the smaller species, but the larger marsupials showed little trouble in surviving and adapting. In some cases it could even be that the partial clearing of the forests by pioneer axeman improve the habitat for such animals. The red-neck scrub wallaby of Tasmania, for instance, probably became more numerous after clearing. ... But the smaller wallabies and rat kangaroos were decimated with the gradual destruction of their native habitat. ... Droughts, overstocking and rabbits all played their part in hastening the extermination.

Geoffrey Bolton, *Spoils and Spoilers: Australians Make their Environment 1788–1980*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1981, pp. 99–100.

4.3 Influential ideas on appreciation and representations of the environment

INQUIRY QUESTION

What ideas influenced European land use between 1850 and 1901?

Colonists' ideas about nature and the land we investigated in the period 1788–1850 (see Chapters 2 and 3) did not change much before 1900. Most still desired progress and thought nature's resources were vast and theirs to develop. Land remained a commodity whose value was determined by the market in terms of what economic benefit it could be exchanged for.

A minority always appreciated nature and some even sought to defend it, but this number grew later in the century as they saw over-exploitation. Overseas, George Perkins Marsh wrote *Man and Nature* (1864), which encouraged some to see the bigger picture of forest and species loss. Others were drawn to nature in search of the picturesque, encouraged by the new emphasis on tourism. Scientists also began to popularise their knowledge in books, journals and newspapers. Sources 4.38 and 4.39 allow you to explore these newly emerging ideas.

In Source 4.38, historian Julia Horne writes about tourism.

By the end of the nineteenth century many scenic attractions were being recommended for travellers to see for themselves – magnificent views from mountain tops, such as Mount Buffalo in Victoria and Mount Kosciuszko in New South Wales and, if lucky, rainbows playing on slender waterfalls reminiscent of bridal veils. ... Many people will be moved by these sights. ... those who are moved have crossed the line into wonder. The pursuit of wonder was one of the driving forces of early tourists ...

Source 4.38

In the second half of the nineteenth century substantial local guidebooks were published, newspapers ran regular columns on 'the tourist', the railways conducted promotions about tourist destinations within the colonies, and hotel and boarding houses ran (modest) campaigns to encourage people to stay in one region for longer periods.

Julia Horne, *The Pursuit of Wonder: How Australia's Landscape was Expanded, Nature Discovered and Tourism Unleashed*, The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2005, pp. 5, 7, 18.

In Source 4.39, historian Tony Dingle writes about scientists in the 1880s.

By then there was a growing number of naturalists and scientists, both amateur and professional. They became increasingly vocal in their demands for wildlife protection and the establishment of reserves and national parks to preserve areas of unspoilt nature. New societies were formed and acted as their mouthpiece. The Field Naturalists Club of Victoria began in 1880. Its members, predominantly middle-class Melbourne office workers, were devoted to the 'domestication and popularization of science'. On their regular weekend field trips by railway to places such as Box Hill,

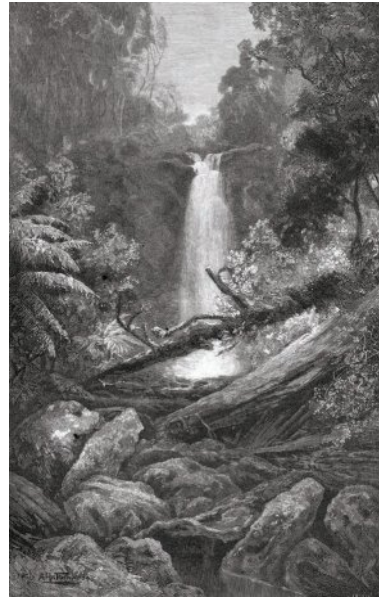
Source 4.39

Continued...

... *Continued*

Heidelberg and Mordialloc, they tried also 'to look into the deep quiet face of nature'. By 1890 the club had over 200 members.

Tony Dingle, *Settling*, Fairfax, Sydney, 1984, p. 145.



→ **Source 4.40** Erskine Falls, Lorne, courtesy of Andrew Garran (ed.). *Picturesque Atlas of Australasia*, 1886.

CREATIVE TASK 4.2

Create a poster promoting the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria to colonists in the 1880s.

4.4 Perspectives on national parks, irrigation and changes to land

INQUIRY QUESTION

What were the perspectives on European land use between 1850 and 1901?

The ideas to care for nature, to look at nature and understand nature, led to perspectives that pushed for conservation efforts and attempts to remake and improve the environment through irrigation.

The creation of national parks

In Source 4.41, Julia Horne describes the outcomes of tourism.

Source 4.41

But nature also shaped people. The object of these travels, expressed over and over again, was to achieve personal enlightenment, to return a changed person, touched by one's encounters with nature. The pursuit of wonder also became a matter of civic pride, evident in attempts to

Continued...

... *Continued*

reserve and provide greater access to places of magnificent and unusual scenery for use and enjoyment by the people. Colonial views of the natural environment not only saw the land in economic terms, with its copious supplies of wood, pasture and minerals, but also as a source of inspiration and enlightenment. Colonists believed in the power of natural attractions as an antidote to modern existence, where the mystery of existence lay hidden. Moves to preserve these natural attractions were democratic in spirit so that all, conceivably, may one day experience for themselves the feeling of wonder at the way nature worked.

Julia Horne, *The Pursuit of Wonder: How Australia's Landscape was Expanded, Nature Discovered and Tourism Unleashed*, The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, p. 300.

The interest in viewing nature as a tourist and scientific interest in the environment led in 1879 to the formation of a national park south of Sydney by the NSW Government. It was the first in Australia, the second in the world after the formation of Yellowstone in the United States, and the first in the world to use the words 'national park'. It was renamed the Royal National Park in 1954. Victoria created its first national park at Tower Hill in 1892 from an older reserve, but its development was uneven.



↑ **Source 4.42** A postcard from 1899 of National Park. The description on the back reads: 'Audley has always been the hub of the National Park. Hire boats were available from 1893, and introduced freshwater fish were "acclimatised" in the waters above the dam for the benefit of anglers.'

In 1866 some areas of Tower Hill were reserved as public land and the government appointed the Tower Hill Acclimatisation Society to manage the reserve. However, in order to raise funds the Society allowed timber extraction, grazing and clearing, and let people live on parts of the reserve, further contributing to the degradation of the vegetation. In pursuit of their ideals they also planted exotic trees and introduced rabbits, goats and other animals.

Commentators have identified at least six families living on the volcano's banks in 1883 ... In 1878 the Borough of Koroit granted a licence to remove gravel, and by 1894 there were seven quarries within the Tower Hill reserve. Although the Board of Works had sacked the committee of management, this did not stop the environmental deterioration as land was cleared for pine plantations. By the early 1880s Tower Hill was in a state of neglect and the reserve was on its third committee of management.

Continued...

Source 4.43

... *Continued*

Attempts were made to make Tower Hill look ‘better’ by planting pines and cypress trees, privet hedge and elderberry.

Tower Hill was declared Victoria’s first national park in 1892 but still the decline continued, and by the 1950s the once-lush vegetation had gone, replaced by bare hillsides. At this point, however, the local community started to draw attention to the poor state of the reserve and investigations started into its suitability as a wildlife reserve. Finally in 1961 Tower Hill was declared a State Game Reserve. ... beginning of a major effort to re-vegetate Tower Hill, using as a starting point an 1855 painting (‘Outlook’) by Viennese artist Eugene von Guérard, known for his attention to detail.

Parks Victoria, Tower Hill Reserve – History and Heritage. Retrieved from the Tower Hill website.



↑ **Source 4.44** Outlook, Eugene von Guérard, 1855

FOCUS QUESTIONS 4.3

1. What seemed to be the goal of the Tower Hill Acclimatization Society?
2. What was the state of Tower Hill in 1892?
3. Did becoming a national park change Tower Hill’s land management?

By 1890, there were successful moves to protect certain species. The Victorian *Game Act, 1890* protected 10 bird species and platypuses during the whole year, emus, black swans, geese and quails for six months and over 30 species of birds during the nesting season from August to December, but only in national parks and public gardens. Aboriginal peoples were exempt from these restrictions. Swivel and punt guns that could kill many birds at once were outlawed.¹¹

Murray River irrigation

The desire for closer settlement of the land by small farmers (which underpinned the Land Acts in New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria after 1860) continued to 1900.

Yet another drought in 1884 urged some people to try irrigation along the Murray River. In December 1884, Alfred Deakin (the Victorian Minister for Public Works and Water Supply) travelled to California to

investigate irrigation practised by the Chaffey brothers. In 1886, Deakin created an Act to begin irrigation schemes in Victoria. Deakin declared they would increase population, increase railway traffic and transform 'barren wildernesses'. Source 4.45 is an extract from Deakin's report to the Victorian Parliament.

In all these ways the State is certain to reap an enormous benefit, and in the future when this colony forms part, as I hope it will, of a federated Australia that will be renowned, I trust, all round the world for the richness of its soil, the enterprise of its people, and the freedom of its government, I believe that in those days this small Victoria will be in many senses the greater garden than it is now. I believe that if we are able to seize our unparalleled natural advantages, as compared with the rest of Australia, even our small territory may bear a population that will compare with some of even the greatest of our neighbours. ... And those who visit us then will, like the explorer who first penetrated to the heart of our great plains and grassy Hills 30 or 40 years ago, be led to confess that if there is any spot meriting the proud title of Australia Felix [fortunate or happy Australia] it is the colony of Victoria.

Source 4.45

Alfred Deakin, *Victorian Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 51, 1886, p. 445.

George and William Chaffey were granted 50 000 acres at Mildura in 1886 with options to buy another 200 000 acres at £1, in return for spending £0.3 million over 20 years. The Mallee scrub around Mildura was cleared, and by 1893, 8000 acres of fruit trees were being irrigated and the population climbed to 3500. However, the onset of the Federation Drought (1895–1902) lowered the Murray River levels, preventing river boats from transporting the fruit, and the nearest rail link to Melbourne was inconveniently at Swan Hill.

The Chaffeyes became insolvent in 1894 and the Mildura experiment suffered a severe setback. A Royal Commission in 1896 blamed them for being under-capitalised and making mistakes. However, in reality, Mildura's first years were marred by drought, depression and the lack of a rail link.¹²

Changes to the land

In Chapter 2, we saw how sheep changed the land. Earlier in this chapter, we saw how gold mining changed the face of the goldfields region. Unchecked timber getting also deforested much of eastern Australia as we have seen. Australia had experienced drought on and off for millions of years, but introduced animals, deforestation and mining made the experience of drought different.

The Federation Drought

Colonists experienced drought from their first years in the colony, at least every decade. However, the so-called Federation Drought (1895–1902) was the deepest yet experienced by colonists and covered all of eastern and central Australia.¹³ Despite some patchy rain, drought-breaking rain did not come until December 1902. Source 4.46 is written, by historian Richard Broome, about New South Wales. Sources 4.47 and 4.48 further reveal the impact of drought on land and people.

Source 4.46

[Almost] two-thirds of all stock in the state died. Forty million sheep* alone perished, some by design, like the 7,000 emaciated beasts slaughtered at Wagga in November 1902 for their pelts. The grain yield had dropped by over sixty per cent, and in 1902 not a sheaf was harvested in some areas. The leader of the state opposition, Mr J. H. Carruthers, commented that ‘in some of the country towns half the shops are closed. In parts of the interior the settlers, large and small, are leaving their homes and temporarily abandoning their holdings until a change comes. The water supply for domestic purposes has become exhausted in many places’. He claimed that quite a few people were forced to eat the bran sent to them for stock relief, tempered with treacle. In the western division of the state the conditions were the worst. The stock losses were heavy and here alone, seventy-three crown tenants had walked off the land and left six million acres to any rabbits that may have survived the drought. Business firms in Burke and other western towns had only a third of their turnover of 1890, and as a result, land sales, construction, farm and station work and general employment were down by a similar degree.

* The figure of forty million sheep was based on newspaper reports at the time.

Richard Broome, *Treasure in Earthen Vessels: Protestant Christianity in New South Wales 1900–1914*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1980, p. 64.

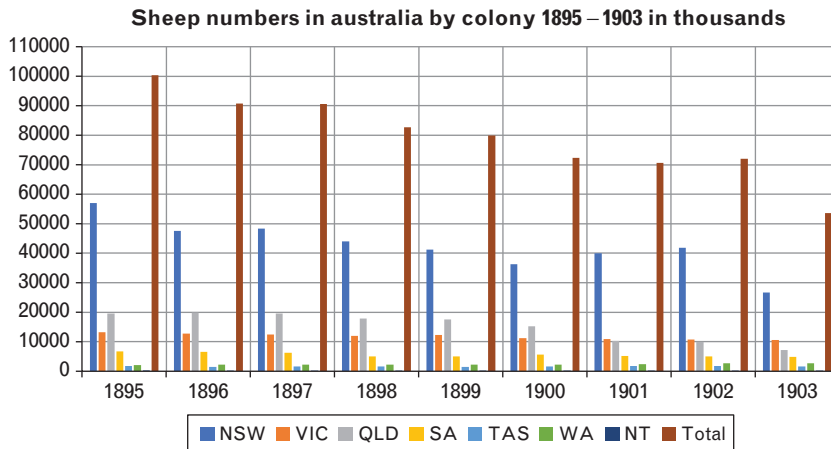


← **Source 4.47** In drought time, John Anthony Commins, 1897

↓ **Source 4.48**

Sheep numbers in Australia by colony, 1895–1903 (in thousands)

Year	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	TAS	WA	NT	Total
1895	56997	13181	19588	6738	1727	2132	68	100441
1896	47618	12791	19857	6531	1524	2296	73	90690
1897	48319	12401	19594	6324	1651	2249	79	90616
1898	43953	12011	17798	5033	1589	2211	60	82654
1899	41241	12300	17553	5013	1494	2252	64	79917
1900	36214	11232	15226	5667	1672	2282	54	72348
1901	40021	10842	10339	5235	1684	2434	48	70603
1902	41857	10673	10031	5012	1792	2626	48	72040
1903	26649	10505	7214	4881	1680	2705	42	53675



Bruce Davidson, 'Agriculture', in Wray Vamplew (ed.), *Australians Historical Statistics*, Fairfax, Sydney, 1987, p. 81.

FOCUS QUESTIONS 4.4

1. How extensive was the Federation Drought and which areas were hardest hit? Give evidence to support your view.
2. Which areas seemed least affected by the drought based on sheep numbers?
3. List the range of impacts of drought on the colonists and the colony.

The Murray and Darling Rivers dried up, which was not unusual for the Darling but almost unique in colonial experience for the Murray. In northern Victoria, the drought bit hard as rainfall dropped between 50 and 90 per cent of normal. Wheat yields fell by 85 per cent in 1902 at the height of the drought, forcing half of the farmers in the Mallee to walk off their properties. Many others left to find work, travelling as far afield as the Western Australian gold mines. Trains delivered water for domestic use to drought areas, farmers queuing with their carts to collect their share.¹⁴ The first of the twentieth century trend of Mallee dust storms occurred at the height of the drought in November 1902, as historian Jenny Keating explains in Source 4.49.

A very hot fine day was suddenly broken in the early afternoon by violent winds – northerlies and westerlies – which blew incessantly and brought 'suffocating dense' dust. In Melbourne 'every building was coated with thick layers of dust'. In Hobson's Bay the dust was so thick 'that large objects could not be seen at a distance of 100 yards'. Reports came in from all over Victoria of even more dramatic events. A number told of complete darkness mid-afternoon – the north-west being most affected. At Kerang 'people in the streets had to grope their way along the walls of buildings ... and people in the houses had to strike matches to assure themselves of their positions'. At Wycheproof 'children returning home from school had to seek shelter, and some stood crying in the streets'.

Continued...

Source 4.49

... *Continued*

The weirdest phenomenon was at Boort where ‘small balls of fire fell in the street’. Apparently these ‘were due in some way to friction between dust particles’. The *Argus* [a Melbourne newspaper] drily summed up the storm: ‘while the state has spent many years considering how to put the people on the land, Nature contrived yesterday to put enough land on the people to satisfy any craving in this direction for a long time’.

Jenny Keating, *The Drought Walked Through: A History of Water Shortage in Victoria*, Department of Water Resources Victoria, Melbourne, 1992, p. 77.

Charles Bean, who later became the celebrated Australian war historian, visited western New South Wales in 1909 to report on the wool industry for the *Sydney Morning Herald*. In Source 4.50, he compares the Cobar District in 1880 to what he witnessed during the Federation Drought.

Source 4.50

Man, the raw white man, his sheep and his rabbit, were let loose upon a land on which a million years of freedom had stored a great forest of slender Australian shrubs and a great carpet of delicate Australian grass. ... Australia has been shut off from the rest of the world ever since the grasses and trees and animals began their fight for a living. And the worries of their life was so few that the delicate ones survived. If anything ever needed tender, scientific handling, it was this dainty covering of grass and trees.

So when the white man, raw, inexperienced, ignorant, struggled out onto those apparently rich plains and proceeded to manhandle the scrub and the grass, in less than twenty years he succeeded, too often, in destroying much of the wealth that had been gradually stored there from the beginning of the world. It was a wealth which had painfully fought and survived the diseases of Australia itself. Drought did not kill it. ...

That fresh green grass, with the salt-and cotton-bush, was the one thing that Australians might pray their hearts out to obtain – a plant life which had survived all the Australian droughts since the beginning. That enemy it had fought and overcome. Millions of droughts had come down upon it; but after ‘one inch of rain, then, in spring or autumn it sprang up luxuriant, fresh and green’. Ten years later twenty inches of rain might fall, but that vegetation sprang no more. ... by 1895 the rabbits and the sheep had got to their work, and the drought was over the land. A series of terrible, lean years saw the West turn into nothing else than a desert. ... Such scrub as the sheep had left, the rabbits ringbarked. Every station was reduced to a tithe [a tenth] of its stock ...

[Bean wrote of three million rabbits being poisoned in a week around one waterhole in the far west of New South Wales in 1902. Despite such huge rabbit numbers, he believed sheep had caused more damage than the rabbit.]

It was clear that someone had yet to invent a way of using this delicate Australian country so as to obtain its true worth. The nearest that men had so far come to such a method was to crowd sheep on to the paddocks when

Continued...

... *Continued*

there was grass, and hurry them away the moment it began to give out. it is not that the desert is encroaching on its delicate border lands; it is that we are turning parts of them into desert because we have adopted as the basis of their treatment, not 'how can the grass and scrub be preserved for settlement'? but 'how many sheep and settlers can we place there'?

Charles Bean, *On the Wool Track*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1910/1963, pp. 47–48, 52.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 4.5

1. Using Sources 4.46–4.50, list the range and impacts of the Federation Drought.
2. Examine Source 4.50. Identify and explain Charles Bean's argument about the degradation of the land.
3. Does Bean's argument support Alfred Crosby's thesis of 'ecological imperialism' and 'demographic takeover' (see Source 2.58) or not? Explain.

4.5 Chapter summary

Here are some dot-points for you to consider and add to:

Continuities

- Throughout the nineteenth century, most European colonists continued to view land through the lens of a commodity, valuing it in terms of its exchange value determined by the market.
- Colonists' land management practices continued to be primarily extractive and exploitative, guided by the profit motive.
- Aboriginal populations across the continent continued to be violently displaced and marginalised as European colonisation progressed, although some managed to adapt and survive.
- Sheep from the pastoral industry remained the most disruptive environmental force in the colonies, destroying native flora and fauna habitat.

Changes

- New species of plants and animals were introduced by organised groups of colonisers and individuals who sought to remake the Australian landscapes in a European manner.
- The land began to show signs of major degradation due to the exploitative use by the colonisers, compounded by major events such as the devastating Federation Drought.
- Some colonisers began to develop and promote an appreciation of nature.
- Governments in the colonies began to make efforts to respond to environmental degradation by regulating introduced species and establishing national parks.

4.6 End-of-chapter activities

The following tasks are designed to help strengthen your understanding of the material explored in this chapter and to encourage you to further analyse and evaluate the events, ideas, perspectives and experiences of colonisation and use and changes to the land from 1851 to 1901.

Consolidating your understanding

Events

Complete the table below to help you strengthen your understanding of how European colonisation evolved during the second half of the nineteenth century.

Events	Summary	Evidence
Gold discovered and rushes begin		
Population boom		
Acclimatisation societies formed		
Conservation movement emerges		
Murray River irrigation		
Tourism boom		
National parks created		
Federation Drought		

Ideas

What were some of the European ideas which emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century that challenged the prevailing view of developing the environment for economic gain?

Perspectives

1. Geoffrey Blainey and Don Garden are both professional academic historians. How were their views on the impact of the gold rushes different? You may wish to complete this question using a Venn diagram.
2. Consider the respective dates of publication for Blainey and Garden's views. How might their respective time periods influence their perspective?
3. Which would you say is the dominant perspective on the gold rushes in Australian society today? Why do you think this is?

Experiences

1. Explain what urbanisation is and how and why it occurred in the Australian colonies.
2. How might urbanisation influence the ways in which the population in the colonies thought about and related to the environment?

Analysing causes and consequences

Complete the table below. What were the causes and consequences of the Federation Drought?

Causes	Consequences

Extension reading for Part 1

Bill Arthur and Frances Morphy (eds), *Macquarie Atlas of Indigenous Australia*, Macquarie University, Sydney, 2019.

Geoffrey Bolton, *Spoils and Spoilers: Australians Make Their Environment 1788–1980*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1981.

Richard Broome, ‘Changing Aboriginal landscapes of pastoral Victoria, 1830–1850’, *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes*, vol. 31, no. 2, April–June, 2011 pp. 88–96.

Richard Broome, Charles Fahey, Andrea Gaynor and Katie Holmes, *Mallee Country, Land, People, History*, Monash University Press, Melbourne, 2020.

Tony Dingle, *Settling*, Fairfax, Sydney, 1984.

Marcia Langton, *Welcome to Country: A Travel Guide to Indigenous Australia*, Hardie Grant Travel, Melbourne, 2018.

Susan Lawrence and Peter Davis, *Sludge: Disaster on Victoria’s Goldfields*, Black Inc, Melbourne, 2019.

William Lines, *Taming the Great South Land: A History of the Conquest of Nature in Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1991.

Bruce Pascoe, *Dark Emu*, Magabala Books, Broome, 2014.

Petter Sutton and Keryn Walsh, *Farmers or Hunter-Gathers? The Dark Emu Debate*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2021.

Ian Keen, ‘Foragers or farmers: *Dark Emu* and the controversy over Aboriginal agriculture’, *Anthropological Forum*, 2021. doi: 10.1080/00664677.2020.1861538.



Area of Study **2**

Transformations, 1950–2010

**By Richard Broome, David Harris
and Geoff Peel with James Grout**

An aerial view of the Newcrest open cut Telfer gold and copper mine

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Introduction

By the 1880s, a minority of people living in Australia began to push for national parks to protect nature, and pursue action to moderate environmental losses. This was in part responding to concern overseas about the destruction of nature, and in part responding to their own observations. These concerns grew throughout the first half of the twentieth century. By 1950, when Part 2 of our investigations, *Transformations*, begins, such concerns were growing stronger.

The period from 1950 to 2010 saw an increasing battle between those seeking to profit from nature and those trying to forge new relationships with nature. The latter group were often inspired by overseas ideas plus the actions of First Nations peoples to protect Country.

These battles played out in the struggles to prevent nuclear testing and the use of nuclear energy. It was fought over many other environmental campaigns, four of which are featured here: the battles for Lake Pedder, Little Desert, Kelly's Bush and the Franklin River. Immigration and natural population increase significantly grew the size of Australia's population, reaching a crescendo by 2010 with the highest annual immigration intakes in our history. Cities boomed, leading to higher rates of consumption and further challenges to the environment. Mining proposals and operations, especially on Aboriginal land, led to intense debates as well.

In the 1980s, politics was transformed by the creation of the Greens Party, which emerged from these environmental battles. New movements such as Landcare and Sustainability also emerged, further changing environmental thinking and land use. Overseas ideas including that of the Anthropocene – a new geological age in which human actions affected nature – and First Nations' practices in Caring for Country began to change Australians' relationships with nature.

Many of the movements examined in Part 2 paralleled similar global debates. Sometimes international debates (such as those about wilderness or urban decline) influenced actions or protests in Australia. In some instances, influences went the other way, with strategies of protest or direct action influencing similar movements in other countries. Australia set an international precedent with the Green Bans in Sydney and action in the International Court of Justice over French nuclear testing in the Pacific Ocean.

The US environmentalist Paul Ehrlich and the leader of the German Greens Petra Kelly were impressed with the Green Bans of the NSW Builders' Labourer's Federation (NSWBLF) in urban environmental protest. This tactic brought together diverse groups of people who might otherwise not participate together in environmental action. The BLF influenced protest in the United Kingdom as well. During Jack Munday's visit to Birmingham in 1975, unionists formed a Green Ban Committee. Construction workers saved the Birmingham Post Office from destruction after Munday spoke to the British Labour Party Conference.


Gough Whitlam's Labor Government took France to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) over nuclear testing. Although France ignored the ICJ, the action was the first involving environmental law in this Court. Australia combined with Fiji and New Zealand to protest the French nuclear tests, making it a regional issue. Australian trade unions also played a part, and like the Green Bans, pushed beyond the union movement's traditional concerns with workers' rights.

Timeline

World events	Date	Australian events
1945: Bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki		1945: Australia sets 2 per cent population growth target
	1950	
		1950: Australia's population reaches nine million 1952: British nuclear weapons tests begin in Australia
	1955	
1958: Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) launched in London		1956–63: British Government conducts nuclear testing at Maralinga, South Australia 1959: Miscellaneous Workers Union demands monitoring of radioactive fallout from nuclear testing
	1960	
1962: Rachel Carson's book <i>Silent Spring</i> kickstarts environmental awareness worldwide 1963: Partial ban on atomic testing 1963–1966: Landmark legislation on clean air, water quality and endangered species protection passed in the USA		1961–62: Hamersley & Tom Price iron deposits discovered 1963: Little Desert proposal
	1965	
1966: French nuclear testing begins in the Pacific		1967: Little Desert plan dropped 1967: Tasmanian HEC plan hydro-electric scheme 1967: Save Lake Pedder National Park Committee formed



World events	Date	Australian events
		<p>1968: Victorian Government's Little Desert Scheme</p> <p>1969: Campaign by Save Our Bushlands Committee</p> <p>1969: Victorian Government ends plans to create farms in Little Desert</p>
1970		
<p>1971: Greenpeace founded as an international organisation of environmental activists.</p> <p>1973: Australia takes France to the International Court of Justice</p>		<p>1971: Lake Pedder Action Committee (LPAC) Hobart</p> <p>1971–75: Green Bans at Kelly's Bush, Eastlakes, Woolloomooloo, the Rocks, North Newtown, Glebe</p>
1975		
		<p>1975: Ranger Inquiry appointed by the federal Labor Government</p> <p>1976: Movement Against Uranium Mining (MAUM) formed</p> <p>1976: Tasmanian Wilderness Society formed</p> <p>1977: Kutikina cave rediscovered</p> <p>1977: Tasmanian HEC plans dam site on the Franklin River</p> <p>1977: MAUM anti-uranium rallies in Melbourne and Sydney</p>
1980		
<p>1980: The German Green Party formed, inspiring similar political parties worldwide</p>		<p>1981: Referendum in Tasmania on the two dam location options</p>



World events	Date	Australian events
		<p>1982: Robin Gray's Liberal Party wins Tasmanian election; dam construction begins</p> <p>1983: High Court rules the Federal Government had the power to halt the building of the dam</p>
1985		
<p>1986: Fire at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant</p> <p>1987: World Commission on Environment and Development presents the concept of 'sustainable development'</p>		<p>1986: Landcare established in Victoria, and nationally in 1989</p>
1990		
<p>1992: Rio Earth Summit held</p>		<p>1991: <i>Aboriginal Land Act 1991</i> (Qld)</p> <p>1991: Australia demands Britain clean up Maralinga test site</p> <p>1991: Guratba/Coronation Hill decision</p> <p>1992: Australian Greens Party established</p>
1995		
<p>1997: Kyoto Protocol</p>		<p>1996–2010: The Millennium Drought</p> <p>1998: Jabiluka Protest</p> <p>1999: <i>Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i></p>
2000		
<p>2000: Term 'Anthropocene' popularised by scientist Paul J. Crutzen</p>		<p>2007: Australia implements Kyoto Protocol</p> <p>2008: Australia's highest net immigration recorded</p>
2010		
	↓	<p>2011: Australia's population approaches 22 million</p>



CHAPTER 5

Nuclear energy debates, 1956–1986



Source 5.0 A collection of nuclear disarmament protest badges

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Chapter timeline

World events	Date	Australian events
1945: Bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki		
1950		
1958: Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) launched in London		1952: British nuclear weapons tests begin in Australia 1956–63: British Government conducts nuclear testing at Maralinga, South Australia 1959: Miscellaneous Workers Union demands monitoring of radioactive fallout from nuclear testing
1960		
1962: Rachel Carson's book <i>Silent Spring</i> kickstarts environmental awareness worldwide 1963: Partial ban on atomic testing 1963–1966: Landmark legislation on clean air, water quality and endangered species protection passed in the USA 1966: French nuclear testing begins in the Pacific		
1970		
1971: Greenpeace founded as an international organisation of environmental activists. 1973: Australia takes France to the International Court of Justice		1971: Lake Pedder Action Committee (LPAC) Hobart 1971–75: Green Bans at Kelly's Bush, Eastlakes, Woolloomooloo, the Rocks, North Newtown, Glebe 1975: Ranger Inquiry appointed by the federal Labor Government 1976: Movement Against Uranium Mining (MAUM) formed 1977: MAUM anti-uranium rallies in Melbourne and Sydney
1980		
1980: The German Green Party formed, inspiring similar political parties worldwide 1986: Fire at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant		
1990		
	↓	1991: Australia demands Britain clean up Maralinga test site

5.1 Introduction

INQUIRY QUESTION

What were the implications of the new nuclear age for Australia?

In August 1945, the United States used nuclear weapons on two civilian targets in Japan – the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The action was ordered by President Truman, ostensibly to hasten the end of the war in the Pacific. However intense controversy remains about the underlying motives of the United States, with many people arguing, both then and now, that it was unnecessary at that point to defeat Japan and, in fact, the bombing was primarily carried out in order to intimidate the Soviet Union. In any case, the US nuclear bombing of Japan opened a new era in human history. Nuclear weapons, nuclear energy, nuclear testing and the mining of uranium became central to international politics and to the national politics of many countries in the post-war era. Sections of the Australian trade union movement debated the dangers of nuclear weapons in the 1950s, but there was no widespread debate in Australia about nuclear matters until the 1970s.

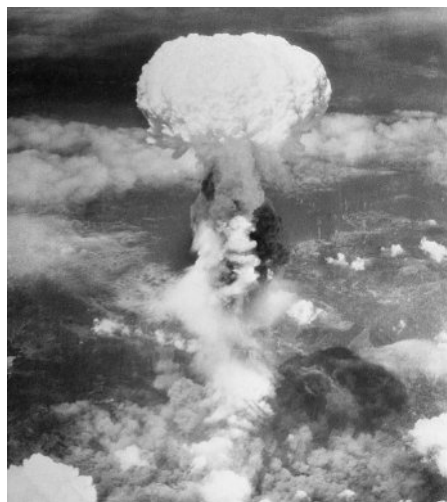
In the 1950s, senior members of the Australian Government readily agreed to a British Government request to use sites in South Australia and Western Australia for nuclear testing. This was a time of heightened tensions between the West and the Soviet Union. No discussion about the tests took place either in the Government or in the wider community due to national security concerns. The test sites were generally remote from centres of white population in South Australia or Western Australia.

However, radiation from the Maralinga test site in South Australia was particularly serious. A later government inquiry found that some of the local Anangu people, on whose land the tests took place, possibly died or were exposed to deadly amounts of radiation. The same inquiry suggested effects of radiation were also possibly evident among some of the military and scientific personnel associated with the tests.¹

Debate and protests at the time of testing were stifled by national security legislation. Much later, when the consequences of the tests became apparent, there were calls for compensation and for the British Government to remove radioactive contaminants from the soil at Maralinga.

From the 1970s, opposition to uranium mining became part of a widened focus for the anti-testing movement. Uranium mining provided the raw materials for nuclear testing and also for nuclear weapons that were opposed by the international peace movement. Over time, the anti-nuclear movement became part of the environmental movement amidst growing concerns about the potential danger of nuclear power stations, the dangers of uranium mining and nuclear fallout from atmospheric atomic testing.

Australia had no nuclear weapons and neither did it have any nuclear power stations. The concern for Australian anti-nuclear activists was the large reserves of uranium in Australia that



↑ **Source 5.1** The atomic bomb dropping on Nagasaki in August 1945

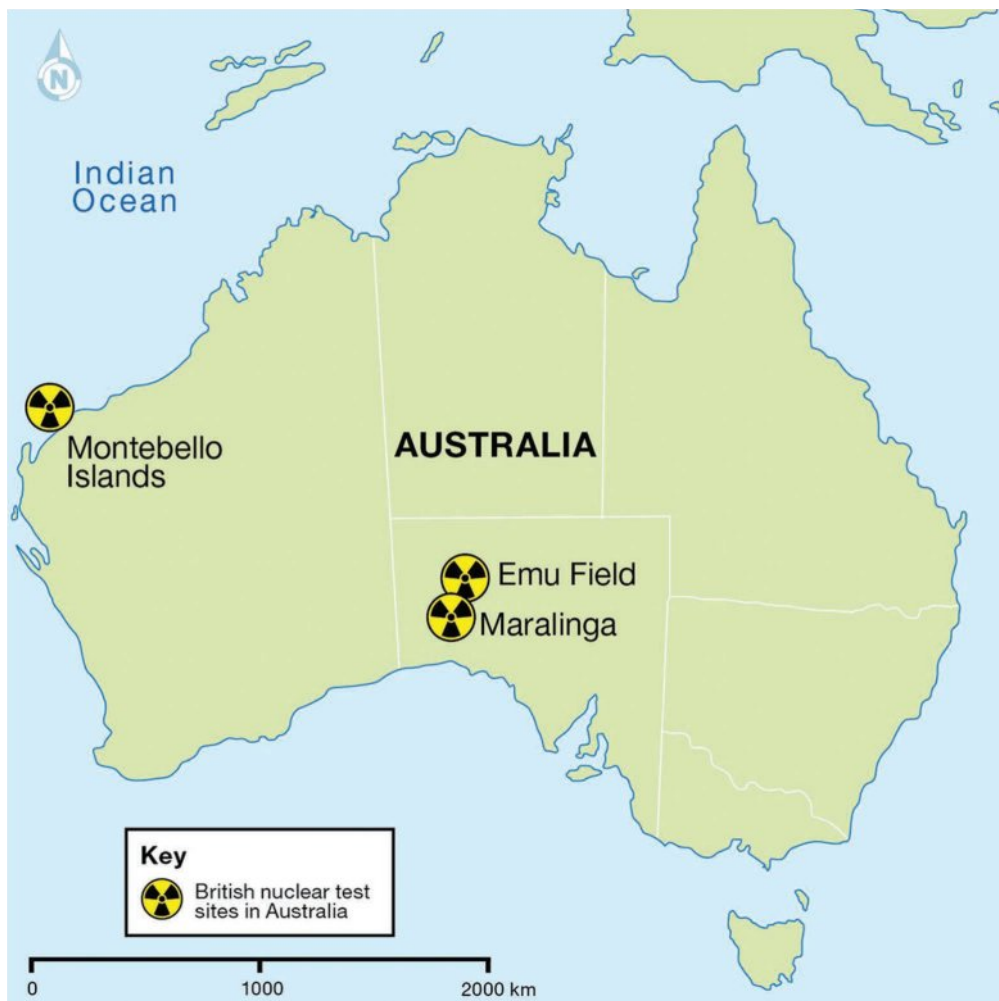
remained unmined. Accordingly, events such as French atomic testing in the Pacific and the environmental catastrophe arising from the Chernobyl nuclear power station disaster were significant for the Australian anti-nuclear movement.

5.2 Significant events of the nuclear age

INQUIRY QUESTION

How did events connected to nuclear testing and uranium mining shift social and political attitudes towards nuclear issues?

The 30-year period between the 1950s and the 1980s was remarkable for the rapid change in public attitudes to nuclear energy, uranium mining and atomic testing. This happened in part because a broad cross-section of Australian society became involved in opposition to uranium mining and to other aspects of the anti-nuclear debate.



↑ **Source 5.2** Map of Australia showing nuclear test sites

A further distinctive aspect of the Australian anti-nuclear movement was its international focus. Writing in the early 1980s, the author Jim Falk commented that Australia was an unusual place to find an anti-nuclear debate occurring: ‘No commercial nuclear reactors are established inside or outside [Australia’s large coastal] cities, and none is ordered or under construction. It might seem the last place to expect a nuclear debate to penetrate, yet for the last five years that debate has ebbed and flowed across the country’.²

British atomic testing in Australia, 1952–63

An arms race had begun during the Cold War (see Ideas on pages 159–162) as both the United States and the Soviet Union sought to gain the upper hand in weapons development. Source 5.4 is an extract from a ‘top secret and personal message’ from the British Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, on 16 September 1950 to the Australian Prime Minister, Robert Menzies. Attlee was searching for a place to conduct British atomic tests, and approached Australia.



↑ **Source 5.3** Robert Menzies

Source 5.4

I am telegraphing to you now to ask first whether the Australian Government would be prepared in principle to agree that the first United Kingdom atomic weapon should be tested in Australian territory and secondly, if so, whether they would agree to our experts making a detailed reconnaissance of the Monte Bello Islands so that a firm decision can be taken on their suitability. It will clearly take some little time for the survey to be organized and for its results to be studied and if reconnaissance is to be really useful and effective we should like it to be put in hand at once. If you agree that the survey may be made we can then work out with your authorities the detailed arrangements for it; these would include special arrangements for safeguarding secrecy ...

Message from British Prime Minister Clement Attlee to Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies, 16 September 1950. Commonwealth of Australia (Mr. Justice R. McLelland), *The Report of the Royal Commission into British Nuclear Tests in Australia*, vol. 1, 1985, pp. 10–11.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 5.1

1. Copy and complete the following table for Source 5.4.

Question	Answer
AUTHOR Who made the source and what do you know about them?	
CONTEXT When was the source made? What was happening during that time?	
AUDIENCE Who was the source made for? Who was going to read it?	

Question	Answer
PURPOSE Why was the source created? What goal or purpose did it have?	
SIGNIFICANCE Why does the source matter? What changed because of it?	

2. What appears to be the main concerns about the tests from the British Government's point of view?
3. Was Attlee offering a partnership to Menzies or not? Should he?
4. How would you describe the tone of the message – is it formal or informal? Is it persuasive or forceful?
5. Given it is discussing exploding a nuclear weapon, is the tone surprising or is it as much as you would expect under the circumstances?

For more background information, look at the webpage for 'British nuclear weapons testing in Australia' on the the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) website (<https://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/9556>).

Emu Field, 1953

British journalist James Cameron witnessed atomic tests on Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands and a British explosion at a secret location in South Australia. Now known as Emu Field, this site was, two-and-a-half hours of flying time from Woomera. The blast produced a heat of a 100 million degrees, hotter than the Sun's centre.

The atomic bomb X200, the first in history to be exploded over land by Britain, yesterday blew the top off the down in a South Australian desert with a crack that was heard 200 miles away and with overtones that echoed across the world ...

The familiar mushroom column climbed unsteadily for 15 000 feet, leaned and dropped and the world stumbled one more step towards the twilight ...

The sky caught fire. The welders' goggles we wore changed the landscape to a bleak coppery green of the horizon, where the thing stood on its tower 15 miles away.

The fireball turned it momentarily to gold and flung a brief wave of brilliance over the entire sky ...

So far the whole performance had held one especial aspect of fantasy: its utter silence. It seemed that the gigantic release of forces produced no vestige of sound. Even as we relaxed and studied the growth of the column the noise was surging toward us until – 57 seconds later by my quite unofficial count – it arrived. An abrupt and violent double crack, a suggestion of blast, and a rumbling that crawled away and was lost in the plains. ...

When a little later we flew over the place where it had all happened there was nothing, no relics of any note at all to the unexpert mind – a

Continued...

Source 5.5

...Continued

great and horrible black scar on the face of the claypan, a circular burn a quarter mile in diameter, with a pattern of blast extending all around, a tank on the ground nearby, and a few aircraft, the guinea pig Mustangs of the target area. No tower, no wreckage, only a great stark black thumbprint among the mulga trees and the saltbush. ...

The site of the explosion is not to be revealed. It was somewhere in the abandoned hinterland to the far north-west of Adelaide. It was repeatedly emphasized – [this was] not a bomb, but a WEAPON ...

James Cameron, 'When the desert skies caught fire',
The Age, 16 October, 1953, p. 2.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 5.2

1. Copy and complete the table from Using Historical Sources as Evidence 5.1 for Source 5.5.
2. Examine James Cameron's description and consider how his readers might have reacted to his description.
3. Is Cameron critical or supportive of the test?
4. Why do you think the authorities claimed it was not a 'bomb' but a 'weapon'?

Maralinga

Howard Beale, Liberal Member for Parramatta and Minister of Supply, spoke to inform the House of Representatives that Australia had agreed to British nuclear tests at Maralinga from 1956.

Source 5.6

The whole point of this matter is that Australia has in this interior, desert, uninhabited region wide areas of land which are suitable for this sort of scientific experiment, so, on the best advice, we have agreed to make this area available. The overriding consideration, as I said before, was that of safety. We stipulated, and, of course, it was freely agreed from the beginning and at all times, that the Australian Government and its advisers should determine what constituted safety in the circumstances ...

Howard Beale, *Hansard*, 7 March, 1956.

FOCUS QUESTIONS 5.1

1. How did the Australian Government assist the British in conducting atomic tests in Australia?
2. What natural advantages does Howard Beale believe Australia possessed for atomic testing?

French nuclear tests in the Pacific, 1972–73



↑ **Source 5.7** French nuclear weapons testing in Moruroa (French Polynesia), September 6, 1970

In Source 5.8, historian Stephen Henningham explains the background to the conflict over French nuclear testing in the Pacific and explains what happened when the Whitlam Labor Government came to power in December 1972.

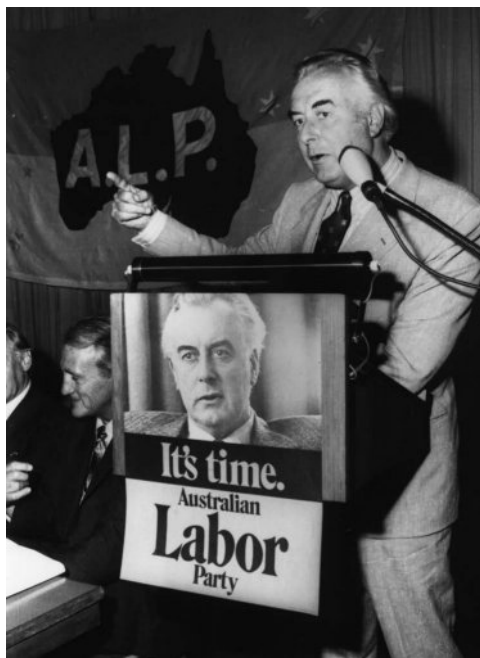
France began atmospheric nuclear tests in French Polynesia in 1966. In the following years, as each series of tests was held, popular protests ebbed and flowed in Australia. But successive Liberal–Country party coalition governments made only formal protests, and bilateral relations proceeded as normal. ... In 1972, Whitlam pledged that, if elected, his government would ‘take the question of French nuclear tests to the International Court of Justice (ICJ)’ ... Australia and New Zealand, later joined by Fiji, mounted an ICJ case in May 1973. As the first raising of an environmental issue at the ICJ, the case was important in the development of international law. ... In an interim ruling, the court called on the parties to refrain from actions that would exacerbate the dispute, and in particular on France to suspend its tests until a final ruling was made. France, however, continued its tests.

Source 5.8

Stephen Henningham, ‘Whitlam and Australia’s relations with France, 1972–75: conflict and cordiality’, *History Australia*, vol. 14, n. 3, 2017, pp. 416–18

FOCUS QUESTIONS 5.2

1. How did the election of the Whitlam Labor Government in December 1972 change Australia's official response to the French nuclear tests in the Pacific?
2. Why do you think Australia changed its position on the French nuclear tests in the Pacific?
3. Why was the International Court of Justice ruling important and what was France's response?



← Source 5.9 Gough Whitlam, campaigning for election in 1972

Source 5.10 is an article from the *Canberra Times*, reporting on the international protests against French nuclear testing in 1973.

Source 5.10

International opinion has condemned France's explosion of a nuclear device early yesterday at Mururoa Atoll, in the South Pacific. Leading the condemnations were Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Indonesia, Canada, Sweden and Chile.

The test, apparently of a small device of about five kilotones, took place at 8am Mururoa time (4am AEST). It was observed and reported by the New Zealand protest frigate *Otago*, 22 miles from Mururoa. The French Government remained silent about the test.

The Prime Minister, Mr Whitlam, asked the Ambassador in Paris, Mr Renouf, to deliver a strongly worded letter to the French Government as soon as an appointment with the Foreign Minister, Mr Jobert, could be arranged.

Mr Whitlam said the explosion demonstrated the disregard of the Government of France for the well-being of the peoples of the Pacific region and for the repeated expression of world opinion through the United Nations and other international bodies. The action also showed open disregard for international law and for the International Court of Justice which had ordered that the Government of France should avoid nuclear tests in the Pacific which would cause the deposit of radioactive

Continued...

... Continued

fallout on Australia and New Zealand until the court made a decision on the substance of Australia's and New Zealand's case against such tests, Mr Whitlam said.

It was a betrayal of France's traditions of respect for law and of its historic contributions to the formulation and development of international law. The Australian Government, with like-minded governments, would continue to work for the cessation of such tests, by France or any other country, through all proper means available to it. The Australian Government would have to consider most seriously the implications of the action of the French Government.

Canberra Times, 23 July 1973, p. 1

FOCUS QUESTIONS 5.3

1. Nuclear testing had become a much more international issue by the 1970s. What criticisms does the Australian Government make of the French action?
2. How does Australia's response to these tests reflect a changed attitude from those evident in the 1950s?

The anti-uranium and anti-nuclear movements



↑ **Source 5.11** On 6 August 1995, approximately 15 000 people marched through the streets of Sydney during the Hiroshima Day rally to mark the 50th anniversary of the dropping of the first atomic bomb.

Australia hosted huge anti-nuclear rallies around the country strongly condemning France's decision to resume nuclear testing in the South Pacific.

Unlike the wilderness and environmental movements – discussed in Chapter 6 – the anti-uranium movement was unable to draw on beautiful images to capture the attention of new supporters. Images of mushroom cloud nuclear explosions were usually indistinguishable and often frightening, rather than inspiring a sense of protectiveness and action. Accordingly, the protest messages were often conveyed in words and symbols, not pictures.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 5.3

1. Analyse the messages used in the protest badges in Source 5.0 and the posters in Source 5.11. Which do you think would be the most effective? Why?
2. Compare the methods used to attract attention or persuade between the two sources.

Although organised political street protests against the threat of nuclear war occurred in the 1970s, these were not the first rallies. Most of the badges shown at the beginning of the chapter come from the 1970s and many of the photographs you will see in books on the anti-nuclear movement are taken from this period or from subsequent decades. It is easy to understand how the popular assumption is that these were the first rallies. But the photograph in source 5.12 suggests an alternative interpretation about anti-nuclear rallies. Taken on 29 April 1962, the photograph is the record of one day in two days of protest over the weekend of April 28 and April 29. Organised by the NSW Peace Committee in Sydney, the rally and march were in support of nuclear disarmament. The marchers were also voicing their protest over the arrest of six people in Britain who had been sentenced to 18 months gaol after being arrested at a rally protesting nuclear war.



FOCUS QUESTION 5.4

Compare the participants, the slogans and the symbols used in this 1962 rally with the larger protests held more than a decade later.

↑ Source 5.12 'Ban-the Bomb' marchers leave Victoria Park for a disarmament rally, 29 April 1962.

Chernobyl, 1986



↑ **Source 5.13** The damaged nuclear power plant in Chernobyl, Ukraine, in the Soviet Union, May 1986

In late April 1986, a disaster unfolded at a nuclear power plant in the Ukraine. An international news service reported a fire at the Chernobyl nuclear plant.

The Soviet Union has admitted that an accident at one of its nuclear power stations has caused a number of casualties. ... The official Tass news agency carried a brief report last night saying one of the reactors at the Chernobyl plant near Kiev had been damaged in the accident but did not say when it happened.

Source 5.14

It said measures were being taken to help the injured and a government commission had been set up to investigate the cause of the disaster. However, Soviet newspapers failed to report the accident today.

Earlier yesterday, officials in Sweden, Norway and Finland reported that a wave of radioactivity was sweeping across Scandinavia, apparently from a nuclear leak in the Soviet Union. Radiation levels 10 times greater than normal were recorded in parts of Finland and the higher levels set off alarms at two Swedish nuclear power plants.

Scientific experts in Moscow said that while there was no cause for alarm in Scandinavia, the situation in Chernobyl, 1000 kilometres to the south, would be considerably worse.

‘If radiation is being registered so far away, it leads one to think there has been a serious accident’, one specialist said.

The United States and West German Governments offered yesterday to help the Soviet Union clean up after the accident.

Continued...

FOCUS QUESTIONS 5.5

1. What were the immediate consequences of the fire beyond the Soviet Union?
2. What was the response of the Soviet Union's official news agency, Tass, to the incident? Why might this be of concern to neighbouring countries?

... *Continued*

Tass said the accident was the first of its kind in the Soviet Union. Western experts believe a major military nuclear accident took place in the Urals in the late 1950s.

'Fire at Soviet nuclear station', *Canberra Times*, 30 April, 1986, p. 1.



↑ **Source 5.15** A Swedish farmer wearing an anti-atomic suit moving fodder contaminated by the radioactive Chernobyl cloud, 1 June 1986

The historian Kate Brown found this extract in a pamphlet issued by the Ukrainian Ministry of Health.

Source 5.16

Dear Comrades!

Since the accident at the Chernobyl power plant, there has been a detailed analysis of the radioactivity of the food and territory of your population point. The results show that living and working in your village will cause no harm to adults or children. The main portion of radioactivity has decayed. You have no reason to limit your consumption of local agricultural produce

Please follow these guidelines:

- Do not include in your diet berries and mushrooms gathered this year.
- Children should not enter the forest beyond the village.
- Limit fresh greens. Do not consume local meat and milk.

Continued...

...Continued

- Wash down homes regularly.
- Remove topsoil from the garden and bury it in specially prepared graves far from the village.
- Better to give up the milk cow and keep pigs instead.

“Instructions for local communities”, 25 August 1986, cited in Kate Brown, *Manual for Survival: A Chernobyl Guide to the Future*, W.W. Norton, New York, 2019, p. 1.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 5.4

1. Copy and complete the table from Using Historical Sources as Evidence 5.1 for Source 5.16.
2. Do the instructions given in this pamphlet seem contradictory? If so, in what ways?
3. Why would contradictory instructions be issued?

5.3 Influential ideas of the nuclear age

INQUIRY QUESTION

What appeared to be the most significant political, scientific or social ideas discussed in this section that contributed to a change in thinking about nuclear testing and uranium mining?

Nuclear weapons can be understood not only in military terms of an explosive device capable of mass destruction, but also as cultural expressions of ideas and ideologies. During the post-World War II period, some of the key beliefs and attitudes reflected in the development of nuclear arms include the following.

Nationalism

Despite the catastrophe of World War II and the atrocities committed by governments intent on asserting their nation’s dominance on the world stage, **nationalism** continued to resonate in the post-war period. While the extreme nationalist rhetoric of the defeated fascist regimes dissipated and was countered with a discourse of **internationalism** embodied in the establishment of the United Nations, the victorious Allied powers continued to jostle with one another for geopolitical power, influence and self-preservation.

The letter in Source 5.17 is from Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies, written to his British counterpart Harold Macmillan in 1961. It illustrates how nations such as Australia were intent on acquiring nuclear weapons capabilities in order to bolster their own military strength for the purposes of ‘national security’.

nationalism an idea and movement that promotes the interests of a particular nation (as in a group of people) over all other nations, especially with the aim of gaining and maintaining the nation’s sovereignty (self-governance) over its homeland

internationalism the belief that countries can achieve more advantages by working together and trying to understand each other than by arguing and fighting wars with each other

Source 5.17

My dear Harold ... I must ask you to accord full recognition of the potentially serious security situation in which Australia could find herself placed as a result of having accommodated United Kingdom testing ...

One solution would be for the United Kingdom to agree, before the conclusion of a treaty, to meet a request from any future Australian Government which was bound by treaty not to test, and which had decided that a nuclear capability was essential to Australian security, for full manufacturing data for the production of operational weapons ... a more practical arrangement would be for the United Kingdom to agree, before the conclusion of a treaty [to make provision for] the supply of ready-made weapons ...

These are large matters. They have certainly not been raised by us without anxious consideration. But the issue at stake here is Australia's security. In essence, the question is whether Australia should be expected to accept a possibly crucial limitation on its own freedom of action in its own defence – a limitation essentially imposed by its having assisted the United Kingdom to achieve a nuclear capability – without being given an assurance that it could acquire from the United Kingdom nuclear means of self-protection if Australia ever judged it necessary in the future.

Yours sincerely, Bob.

Letter from Prime Minister Robert Menzies to British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, 29 June 1961, 'Nuclear Capability in Australia', British National Archives.

Cold War a period of geopolitical tension between the Soviet Union and the United States and their respective allies, the Eastern Bloc and the Western Bloc. It lasted from the end of World War II until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. The term 'cold' is used to describe this period because the Soviet Union and United States did not engage in any direct conflict during this period, but rather competed for global political influence by opposing each other through proxy wars.

The Cold War and its causes

The post-World War II period was characterised primarily by a political contest between the newly emerged superpowers of the United States and the Soviet Union. Their conflict, while never erupting into direct warfare, dominated international relations and much domestic policy as well, including the nuclear issue. As Menzies' letter in Source 5.17 reveals, it forced Australia to look more closely to its allies, the British and US governments.

Historians have identified several causes that led to the outbreak of the **Cold War**, including the desire of both the United States and Soviet Union for geopolitical dominance at the end of World War II, the ideological conflict between these superpowers, the emergence and existential threat of nuclear weapons, the fear of communism in the United States and the concomitant fear of capitalism in the Soviet Union.

The historian Timothy White said this on the origins of the Cold War:

Despite the divergence of opinion concerning the origin and nature of the Cold War, there is an increasing consensus that shapes Cold War historiography. While scholars may have been blinded by loyalty and guilt in examining the evidence regarding the origins of the Cold War in the past, increasingly, scholars with greater access to archival evidence on all sides have come to the conclusion that the conflicting and unyielding ideological ambitions were the source of the complicated and historic tale that was the Cold War.

Source 5.18

Timothy White, 'Cold war historiography: New evidence behind traditional typographies',
International Social Science Review, vol. 75, no. 3/4, 2000, p. 42.

Peace movements

In response to the various geopolitical tensions and conflicts during the Cold War period, social movements emerged which were critical of nationalism and the competition and conflict it caused. Instead, opponents of nationalism sought to promote cooperation and peace between nations, or 'internationalism'.



← Source 5.19 The peace symbol was designed by Gerald Holtom for the British nuclear disarmament movement

Once a war ends, peace activism tends to shift toward prevention. With the horrors of war fresh on people's minds, peace activists advocating working toward positive peace are briefly granted greater legitimacy. However, even during 'peacetime', many peace movements tend to concentrate on the weapons of destruction rather than on the political and economic arrangements that are conducive to war. Whether their goal is terminating a weapon system (negative peace) or eliminating the causes of war (positive peace), opponents often accuse peacetime activists of being idealists, well-meaning but naive.

Source 5.20

Robert D. Benford, Frank O. Taylor IV, In *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, and Conflict*. San Diego: Elsevier, Science & Technology, 2008, p. 1501.

Fear of nuclear war

After the American bombing of Hiroshima in 1945, the world for the first time in human history entered a radical new phase in the conduct of warfare. After that date, humanity was able to unleash weapons of mass destruction upon itself, making warfare total. No-one would be exempt from the consequences of a nuclear warfare between nations. Leading nations and world rivals scrambled to get access to nuclear arms through feverish research, weapons testing and even espionage. Nations argued that they needed nuclear weapons to counter the advantage of others. The balance of power became a familiar argument. Moments of heightened tensions during the Cold War, often led to unsettling nuclear brinkmanship as threats were made by each side in the Cold War. It was a background tension that all people had to endure, and this fear leaked into popular culture, including film as revealed later in this chapter. Film critic Don Kaye said the spectre of nuclear conflict ‘hung over the human race like a massive guillotine blade’.³

RESEARCH TASK 5.1

In the immediate aftermath of the US bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a group of scientists concerned about the dangers of nuclear warfare formed and began publishing their views through a magazine called *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. The scientists developed an innovative way of conveying their assessment on the potential likelihood of global nuclear annihilation, which they called the ‘Doomsday Clock’. Visit the Bulletin website (<https://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/9557>) and answer the following questions.

1. What does the time on the clock symbolise?
2. How has the time changed over the years? What does this reflect about the events of this period?
3. At what time has the Doomsday Clock been set at most recently? Why has it been set at this time?

5.4 Diverse and competing perspectives of the nuclear age

INQUIRY QUESTION

What were the different political, social and scientific perspectives that were involved in the debate about the safety or hazards of atomic testing and nuclear power?

Reactions to Montebello Island tests

As UK Prime Minister Clement Attlee proposed to the Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies in 1953, the Montebello Islands (then often referred to as Monte Bello Islands) off the coast of Western Australia were the site of three nuclear weapons tests in the 1950s. The *West Australian* newspaper reported on the first British test on Australian soil in 1952.

The reaction to the Monte Bello operation must be one of profound satisfaction at an immense potential strengthening of the British Commonwealth, with a strong sense of pride in British achievement. Britain is herself dreadfully exposed to atomic attack from the continent in a war involving Russia, especially as she [Britain] is providing a base for American aircraft equipped for strategic bombing and must always be a bastion in the defence of Western Europe. Her capacity for atomic warfare and for the development of the foreshadowed tactical atomic weapons in anti-aircraft offence are of vital importance. Australia, as an increasingly significant source of uranium and an active partner in the perfection of guided missiles within her territory, has very good reason to welcome the British advancement in atomic research since enemy eyes must already be turning this way with entirely new interest.

Source 5.21

West Australian, 4 October 1952. Cited in F.K. Crowley (ed.) *Modern Australia in Documents 1939–1970*, Wren Publishing, Melbourne, 1952, p. 265.

The *Sunday Herald* had this to say:

British genius has developed the atomic weapons ... as part of the free world's efforts to defend itself. It so happens that we in Australia have the uninhabited spaces where they can be tried out. In placing the rocket range area at Britain's disposal, we are aiding in our own protection and that of the whole British Commonwealth. This provision of a site is a contribution we are in a unique position to make, and nobody abroad should suppose that we are not making it freely and cheerfully ...

Source 5.22

'Atom Bombs in our Arid Lands', *Sunday Herald*, 4 October 1953. p. 2. Cited in Elizabeth Tynan, 'Maralinga and the journalists: covering the bomb tests over generations', *Literature in North Queensland*, vol. 38, 2011, p. 135.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 5.5

1. According to Source 5.21, what is the importance of the Montebello nuclear tests?
2. In what ways does the *West Australian* article in Source 5.21 argue that Britain is a nuclear target?
3. The *West Australian* article in Source 5.21 suggests Australians should be pleased about Britain's 'advancement in atomic research'. Why?
4. In the *Sunday Herald* article in Source 5.22, which international effort is Australia considering joining by allowing the British to test atomic weapons?
5. In both Source 5.21 and Source 5.22, what attitudes or ideas are the articles attempting to appeal to in the readers of their articles?

In 1956 Labor Member for the federal seat of Hughes in New South Wales, Les Johnson, spoke in Federal Parliament against the nuclear testing taking place on the Montebello Islands. The nuclear tests were soon to move to Maralinga on the mainland, and Johnson would witness some without wearing protective clothing.

Source 5.23

It is a matter of great regret that the foreign policy of Australia and many of the major powers of the world is considered to be unrealistic without the fearful and threatening support of modern methods of war, without well-tested and proved nuclear weapons of mass annihilation. It is no *wonder* that international prejudice and distrust are so rampant when we approach delicate international problems, not with the conciliatory wisdom of Solomon, or with the spirit of compromise, understanding and cooperation, which is so necessary, but with the dove of peace perched precariously on our shoulder and the menacing snub of an atom bomb protruding threateningly from our hip pocket.

... Very worthy international pacts, agreements and plans designed to alleviate hardship, to eradicate illiteracy and disease and to raise the living standards of the people of Asia and others in the world, lose value in circumstances where democratic foreign policies are based on the degree of success attained with nuclear weapon tests.

There was a time when world tension was great. Tremendous national differences threatened to ignite a spark in highly inflammable controversies and so to plunge the world into yet another war ... To-day, in the face of our new problems, there is tremendous scope for Australia to lead again – not to gain the futile, nerve-racking race for supremacy in the field of nuclear means of mass murder, but to lead the crusade for lasting peace through the outlawing of atomic and hydrogen bombs and the total abolition of war.

... Professor Messel, who is the head of the Sydney University School of Physics, has said:

‘There is a very real danger of radioactivity affecting the human race if too many atomic bombs are exploded. Too much radioactivity will probably cause long or short-term effects on genetics – by that I mean it may make women sterile or it could result in malformed children.’

The Rev. Alan Walker, leader of the Mission to the Nation, has said:

‘The world is in an awful dilemma over the H-bomb. But I do believe that Christians must repudiate hydrogen bomb manufacture and warfare.’

The Most Reverend Dr. James Duhig, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Brisbane has said:

‘We should try to get the nations of the world together to utterly ban nuclear warfare. We cannot allow ourselves, the little children and those yet unborn to be slaughtered.’

I contend that the crystal-clear voice of the people is worthy of expression in Government policy.

Les Johnson, *Hansard*, 28 February, 1956.

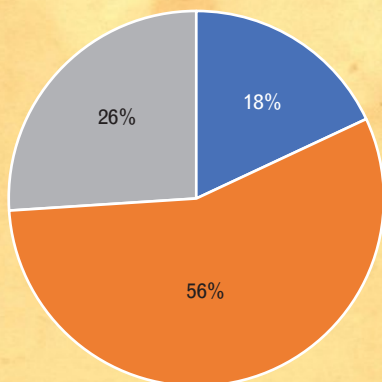
USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 5.6

1. In Source 5.23, what is Les Johnson’s point of view on nuclear warfare and testing?
2. What are the main supporting points of Johnson’s argument?
3. What ideas and fears shape his thinking?
4. How does he propose the world should act?

Opinion polls can indicate public thinking about nuclear weapons and testing. Here are some results for polls taken in Australia during the 1950s.

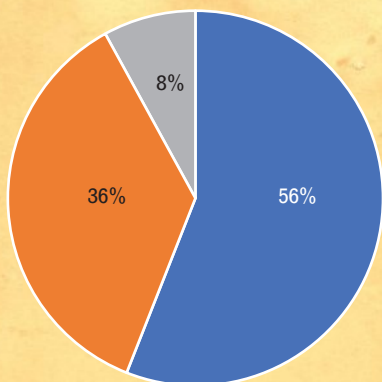
1. Do you think the hydrogen bomb [H-bomb] has made another world war more likely or less likely? (Taken 24 April 1954)

Source 5.24



■ More likely ■ Less likely ■ Don't know

2. Do you think the United States should stop making tests with nuclear weapons and H-bombs or not? (Taken in Melbourne, 11 May 1958)

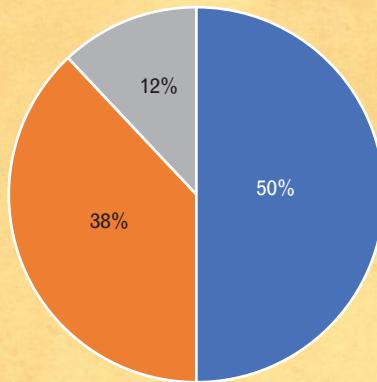


■ In favour of tests
■ Opposed to tests
■ Don't know

Continued...

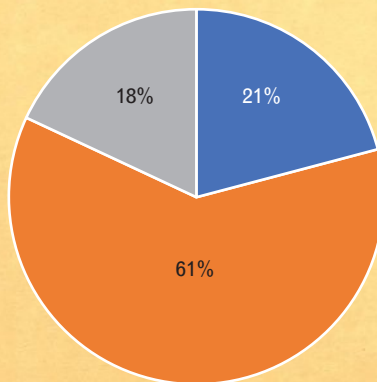
...Continued

3. Russia has proposed suspending H-bomb tests for a two-year period. Do you think this Russian proposal should be accepted by other nations or not? (Taken 25 October 1957)



■ Accept ■ Reject ■ Don't know

4. If we did accept the proposal to suspend H-Bomb tests for two years, do you think the Russians would keep their promise to stop their own H-bomb explosions? (Taken 25 October 1957)



■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know

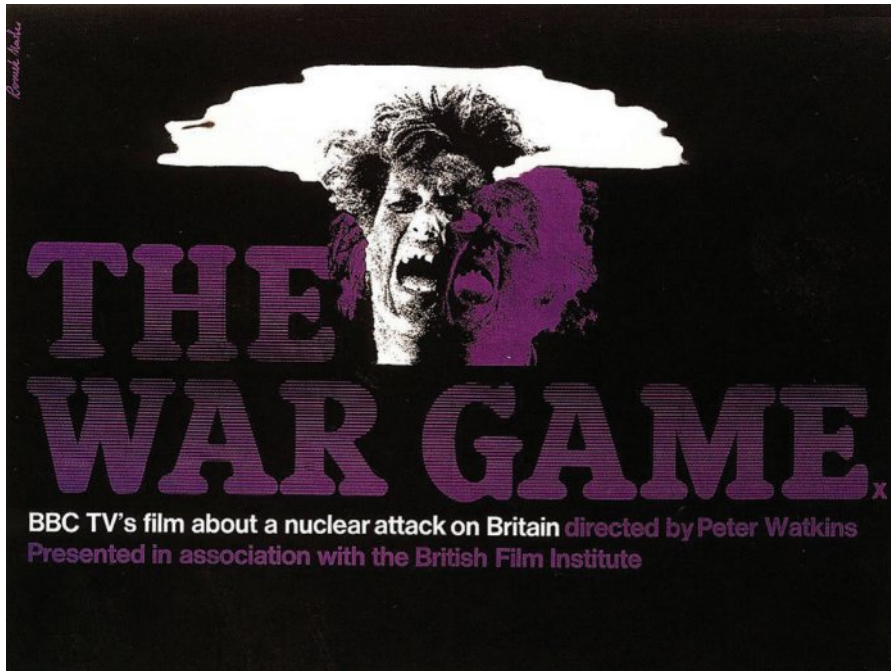
Adapted from Hazel Gauder Erskine, 'The polls: Atomic weapons and nuclear energy', *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol. 27, no. 2, Summer, 1963, pp. 170, 183, 185, 187.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 5.7

1. Examine the poll results in Sources 5.24 and analyse what they mean for people's attitudes to nuclear testing.
2. What do the survey responses to the Russian proposal to suspend H-bomb testing suggest about Australians' attitudes towards the Soviet Union?
3. How might that affect Australian attitudes to nuclear testing?

Other perspectives on nuclear war

From the 1960s, films were made which imagined the various outcomes of nuclear war. In 2018, the journalist Don Kaye listed his assessment of the 14 most frightening films about nuclear destruction. Three of his top 14 were made in the 1960s and two were made in the early 1980s. One film, *On the Beach*, was made in Melbourne and released in 1960. Here are Kaye's top five most frightening films about nuclear war made before 1984. (Many of these films can be viewed online.)



↑ Source 5.25 Poster for *The War Game*.

1. ***Threads* (1984) – Director: Mick Jackson**

Set in Sheffield, England, *Threads* shows the outcomes of a nuclear attack, from the initial blast to starvation, radiation sickness and poverty, as society is reduced to basic technology and standards of living due to the destruction.

2. ***The War Game* (1965) – Director: Peter Watkins**

This short film shows what happens at the time of a nuclear blast and the fire storms that follow. It reveals the chaos in the aftermath of a nuclear war; as lawlessness erupts, looters and the dreadfully injured are shot, hospitals and services are overwhelmed, and society teeters on the edge of breakdown. It was made for the BBC but not shown in Britain for 20 years due to its horrific content.

3. ***The Day After* (1983) – Director: Nicholas Meyer**

This film, set in Lawrence, Kansas, also shows the horrendous aftermath of nuclear exchanges between the US and the Soviet Union. President Ronald Reagan was one of its 100 million viewers and apparently it helped to shift his reliance on nuclear deterrence in US defence policy.

4. ***On The Beach* (1960) – Director: Stanley Kramer**

Set in Melbourne, we don't see the horrible impact of nuclear war, but rather how the characters prepare for their inevitable death from a slowly encroaching radiation cloud that will extinguish their lives within weeks.

5. ***Panic in Year Zero!* (1962) – Director: Ray Milland**

This film reveals the chaos after a nuclear attack and how some individuals will stop at nothing to protect themselves and their families in the subsequent lawlessness of society and scramble for food.⁴



↑ Source 5.26 Poster for *On the Beach*.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 5.8

1. Read the film outlines above and, if possible, view several trailers of the films listed. Discuss the impact of films on public knowledge and perception of nuclear war.
2. Do you agree with the decision not to show *The War Game* in Britain until 1985, 20 years after it was made? (Note that it was shown in Australia in the late 1960s.)
3. How do you think these films might have made people feel about nuclear war when they were first released?
4. How do you think your response to viewing these films might compare to the responses of those who saw them when they were first released?

Anti-nuclear activists

A loose coalition of people and groups opposed the testing and use of nuclear weapons. Their action developed into opposition to the peaceful use of nuclear energy as well.

In 1958, the union newspaper *The Tribune* reported this:

Sydney: The Annual Conference of the Miscellaneous Workers' Union, which met here last week, hammered out progressive policy for the next 12 months, and resolved to struggle around issues of benefit to the people generally.

On the vital question of banning nuclear weapons in the interests of world peace, the conference said that the Menzies Government would be held responsible for any disaster which befell the Australian people through continuation of nuclear tests. It demanded that the Menzies Government immediately establish 'check stations' to measure radioactive fallout from any nuclear tests, and that the findings be broadcast by the ABC.

Source 5.27

The Tribune, 1 October 1958, p. 10.

The Movement Against Uranium Mining held large rallies in capital cities. The one in Melbourne in October 1977 attracted 20 000 people. Source 5.28 is a photograph of Sydney Hiroshima Day demonstration, 1984. Patrick White (at the front wearing dark glasses) and Tom Uren (seen next to White, wearing dark shirt) both attended. White was the 1973 Nobel Prize winner for literature. He was also a peace and environmental activist, who had served in World War II. Tom Uren was a respected federal Labor politician, who was also active in the peace and environmental movements. Uren – as a prisoner of war in Japan in 1945 – personally witnessed the distant glow in the sky from the atomic blast that destroyed Nagasaki.



↑ **Source 5.28** Patrick White (at the front wearing dark glasses) and Tom Uren (next to White wearing dark shirt). Photograph, Simon bullard.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 5.9

1. Analyse Sources 5.23 and 5.28. What do these sources reveal about which individuals and groups were involved in the anti-nuclear and anti-uranium movement?
2. Identify the range of people, interests, concerns, ideas and demands that are evident in the two sources.
3. What do you think these protestors were hoping to achieve by staging these public demonstrations?

Nuclear testing and health and environmental issues

Nuclear testing raised concerns about the impact of radiation on humans and the environment. Many of those concerned were also worried about the impact of nuclear war.

Howard Beale, Liberal Member for Parramatta and Minister of Supply, reflected on radiation hazards in 1956.

Source 5.29

There is ... this matter of safety. That is the question of radiation generally ... This concerns the long-term effect of raising the level of radiation throughout the world. This is a problem that does not arise in connexion with atomic experiments in Australia or, indeed, anywhere else for a long time to come. It is, however, something to which attention should be directed ...

Australia was, indeed, one of the promoters of a committee of the United Nations to study the subject of radiation throughout the world and, in particular, the results of the fluctuations in the level of radiation resulting from atomic experiments.

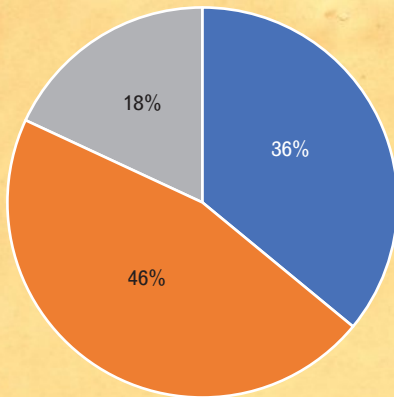
I said in the House the other day that the best advice that the Government had from people such as Sir John Cockcroft was that if one took all the atomic experiments which had so far taken place in the world and lumped them together, one would have to multiply their radiation effects by about a thousand before any anxiety would be necessary. However, this is a long-term matter and scientists and statesmen throughout the world will be giving attention to it.

None of these things is a reason why the free world should cease to conduct atomic bomb tests, and leave the field of experiment to what might be regarded as the potential enemy.

Howard Beale, *Hansard*, 7 March 1956.

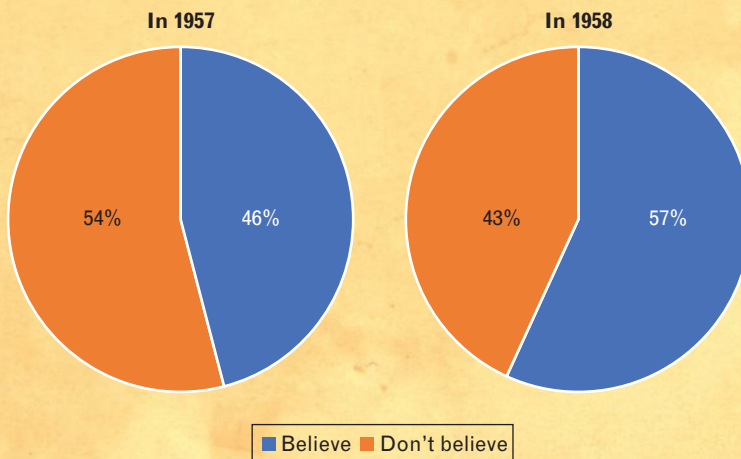
Opinion polls also reflected on the health issues of the testing of nuclear weapons and the use of nuclear energy.

1. Do you think that in the long run, atomic energy will do more good than harm? (Taken 10 November 1948.)



■ More good ■ More harm ■ Don't know

2. Some people claim that H-bomb explosions are endangering the health of future generations. Do you believe this or not?



■ Believe ■ Don't believe

Adapted from Hazel Gaudet Erskine, 'The polls: Atomic weapons and nuclear energy', *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol. 27, no. 2, Summer, 1963, pp. 164, 179.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 5.10

1. How does Howard Beale in Source 5.29 argue for the safety of atomic testing?
2. What does Beale mean in his reference to 'the potential enemy'?
3. Do the opinion polls in Source 5.30 indicate public support or scepticism about Beale's views on radiation?

In Source 5.31, Helen Caldicott, a doctor and leading environmental campaigner, reflects on how the French nuclear tests in the Pacific motivated her to become involved in nuclear politics.

Source 5.31

In 1972 the Australian countryside was bombarded with radioactive fallout from French atmospheric nuclear tests in the South Pacific. A document leaked from the Adelaide Water Supply stated that radiation in rain was significantly elevated as a result of the tests. Rain should be radiation free. Learning this, I wrote a letter to the *Adelaide Advertiser* stating that strontium 90 in the radiation-laced rain could concentrate in milk, and young children, who are ten to twenty times more radio sensitive than adults, could drink this milk and developed bone cancer or Leukaemia later in life. Radioactive iodide in the fallout also concentrates in food and causes thyroid cancer. Publication of my letter marked my first involvement in nuclear politics, and since then I have written, lectured and made my mission to explode the myths about the ‘safety’ of nuclear power and nuclear weapons proliferation.

Helen Caldicott, *Nuclear Power is Not the Answer to Global Warming or Anything Else*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2006, p. ix.

**FOCUS
QUESTIONS 5.6**

1. Explain the motivating factors that influenced Helen Caldicott to become an anti-nuclear campaigner.
2. In Source 5.31, Caldicott mentions that confidential data was made public about the Adelaide water supply and that this triggered her first involvement in nuclear politics. What aspects of her story involve politics rather than science?



↑ **Source 5.32** Helen Caldicott in 1979 holding her book *Nuclear Madness: What You Can Do!*

Maralinga



↑ **Source 5.33** Foundations of buildings remaining at the Maralinga test site, 1984

In recent years, the secrets surrounding the Maralinga test site have begun to be revealed. Previously confidential government papers have been released, histories have been written, and stories told by the people affected by the nuclear tests have been heard. A touring exhibition called *Black Mist Burnt Country* visited Australian museums and art galleries between 2016 and 2019.

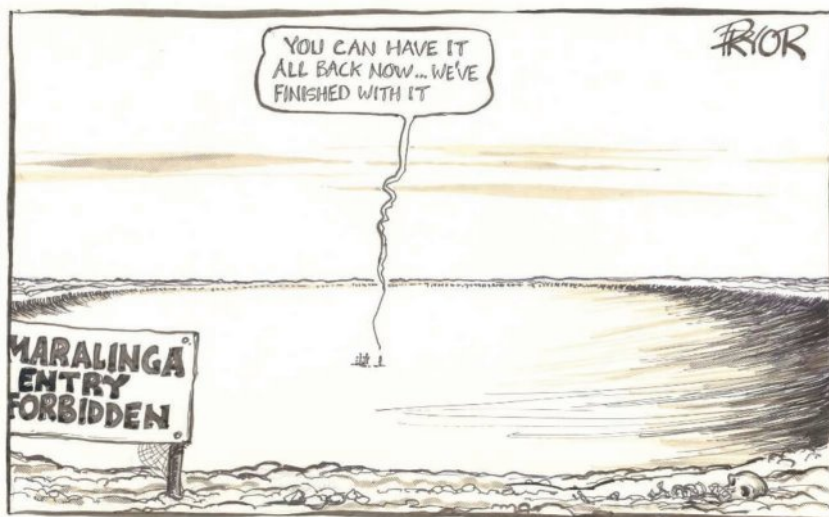
There are many perspectives now on Maralinga and it is difficult to capture all the stories in this short introduction. One powerful story is told in Source 5.34, by Iluwanti Ken, an elder and artist from the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) lands in South Australia.

This story has framed everything in my life and the life of my younger sister Mary. We lost our parents and were raised by a new family ... I know the sicknesses that have come from the Black Mist. I know the bomb has affected the younger generation as well, that trauma has gone down the family line. We elders have lived with this illness in our bodies, and the sadness in our hearts. Many Anangu lost their lives. It has been hard for many of us to take our minds back to these painful memories. It is only now we can share these stories, and it is a painful process. We are doing so because we know it is important to record our memories. It is important that this story is known.

Source 5.34

Iluwanti Ken, 'The Kulata Tjuta Project', in Nici Cumpston (ed.), *Tarnanthi: Festival of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 2017.

Another aspect of the British atomic tests at Maralinga was captured by cartoonist Geoff Pryor.



↑ **Source 5.35** Geoff Pryor, 'You can have it all back now ... we've finished with it', *The Canberra Times*, 1984

In Source 5.36, historian Mikalea Borg discusses the health and cultural effects of the tests at Maralinga.

Source 5.36

Two major tests were conducted at the Maralinga site; however, the hundreds of minor trials (many of which were not documented) proved the most destructive, in terms of their long-term health effects. The radiation devastated Maralinga's previously beautiful, red landscapes, dotted with olive green shrubby saltbush. Prior to this reckless period of atomic colonisation, the traditional owners, the Maralinga Tjarutja people lived a mostly peaceful existence on this land for tens of thousands of years carrying out their cultural practices and speaking their traditional languages. Radioactive exposure from the fallout affected both military personnel and members of the Anangu community, who also suffered from a loss of culture and identity after being displaced from their traditional lands.

Some communities witnessed the death of many of their elders, consequently leaving the younger generations to figure out their cultural responsibilities on their own. Many cultural connections have also been lost due to the death of many young people caused by intergenerational radioactive poisoning. Project officials denied having caused their suffering, blaming the victims for their own negligent behaviour. Victims, however, fought to expose the truth, entering a lengthy battle with the British Government notably over agreement to compensation funds.

A Royal Commission was set up by the Australian Government to investigate measures taken to protect workers and residents and whether

Continued...

...Continued

these measures were adequate for such purposes, and whether the health effects reported to the commission were a result of the tests. The evidence was clear, however, agreements to compensation were difficult to obtain due to the project being a mostly secretive mission. Such factors also impeded the processing of claims whereby the victim developed sickness as a result of access to contaminated sites after the bombings, for instance, working on clean up projects carried out during the 1980s. The fight continues however, as descendants try through various means to make this story known to current and future generations.

Mikalea Borg, 'Little known South Australian History: Uncovering the truth behind the nuclear weapons project at Maralinga'. *Oral History Australia Journal*, 39, 2017, p. 23–24.



↑ Source 5.37 *Maralinga*, Yvonne Edwards (Pitjantjatjara, 1950–2012), 2009

In 1991, journalist Craig Cormick outlined the repeated attempts to make the British Government pay for its clean-up.

An Aboriginal delegation is already in Britain lobbying for a clean up, and this month the Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, Simon Crean, will follow them. According to Mr Crean's office, he will be raising the issue of a clean up with British authorities ...

Paul Malone, a former *Canberra Times* journalist who was instrumental in making public much of the previously secret information about the British tests, says the British have a moral obligation to clean up the land.

Continued...

FOCUS QUESTIONS 5.7

1. How were local Aboriginal people affected in the short term and in the long term by the atomic tests at Maralinga?
2. What were some of the barriers with gaining compensation for the health effects of the Maralinga tests?
3. Why do you think the Australian and British governments were so willing to perform such dangerous testing in such close proximity to Aboriginal communities?

Source 5.38

...Continued

'Many of the tests were conducted in extreme secrecy, with Australians kept in the dark. For example, highly radioactive cobalt-60 was sprayed around the Tadge site [Maralinga] and the Australian health physicists who were working in the area were not even told of its presence until they found it accidentally'.

The local Aborigines were supposedly removed from the area during the tests, but the 1985 Royal commission into the tests found that many were in the prohibited test area and were exposed to radiation during and after the tests.

Yami Lester, who was a director of the Institute for Aboriginal Development at Alice Springs, was 10 years old in October, 1953, when a test code-named Totem 1 was exploded in the desert. The desert people heard the explosion, and Yami Lester remembers the Black Mist that engulfed his family that evening.

'I can't say how many died. All I can remember is that we moved camp many, many times after the Black Mist came. In our culture, we always move camp when someone dies'. Yami Lester later became blind and blamed his blindness on the Black Mist.

Likewise, many thousands of British and Australian soldiers were exposed to radiation as a part of the tests ...

In 1984 the Maralinga Aboriginal people were granted title to their lands, but consequent tests, outside the testing range, found radiation contamination, including highly dangerous plutonium.

Three Maralinga tribal elders are in Britain hoping to pressure the British Government to contribute to the clean up. They also want compensation for long-term loss of about 400 square kilometres of land.

The Maralinga people accept that some areas of Maralinga will never be able to be safely cleaned up, and prefer the fencing option for these areas. But even if their campaign is successful and the British Government agrees to a full clean up, some large areas of their land will still remain dangerously radioactive for a quarter of a million years.

Craig Cormick, 'Convincing Britain to pay to clean up test sites', *Canberra Times*, 3 November, 1991, p. 10.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 5.11

1. Why do you think the British Government was so reluctant to pay compensation to victims of radioactive poisoning or to fund the clean up of the contaminated cleaning sites? (See Source 5.38)
2. How does the discussion of the clean up represent a change in the ideas that originally promoted and supported the atomic tests?
3. A further indicator of change is evident in the three tribal elders seeking compensation. What changes in Australian society have amplified the voices of these people?

The clean up of the Maralinga test site was a complicated matter that did not conclude until 2000. Some areas remain dangerously radioactive. In 1986, following the report of the Maralinga Royal Commission, the Federal Government planned compensation for Commonwealth employees, members of the Anangu community, graziers and construction workers who may have been exposed to radiation. The British Government still argued that it had neither a legal nor moral responsibility for the clean-up operations.⁵

By 1993, Australia was demanding that the British Government pay at least A\$75 million to decontaminate Maralinga and compensate the Maralinga Tjarutja community with a payment of A\$45 million for the 3000 square kilometres of land that remains contaminated.⁶ Britain agreed to make a £20 million ex gratia payment towards the estimated \$101 million cost of cleaning up Maralinga. In 1994, the Australian Government paid \$13.5 million to the Indigenous people of Maralinga as compensation for contamination of the land. By 2000, the Australian Government declared the clean up completed but it remains a matter of argument whether the site will ever be adequately cleaned.⁷

Chernobyl, 1986

Dr Susan Wareham is active in the Medical Association for Prevention of War (Australia); the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons; and the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War. She wrote the letter in Source 5.39 to the *Canberra Times* in 1986 as a response to the Chernobyl disaster and the secrecy she observed surrounding the disaster and the activities of the nuclear industry in general.

A US Congressional report, previously classified but made public after the Chernobyl accident, stated that there had been 151 'significant nuclear-safety incidents' in 14 countries over a 10-year period and that the problem was likely to worsen (*Canberra Times*, May 30). The deception began many years ago when we were told that nuclear energy was cheap and safe. Wrong on both counts.

The nuclear industry exists because of massive public subsidies (\$40 billion over the last 30 years in the US alone), and any figures which purport to show otherwise ignore the enormous cost of incorporating safety features in reactors to lessen – but not eliminate – the risk of accidents, and the cost of decommissioning reactors after their 30 to 40 years of working life – and the cost of waste disposal.

As to the safety of nuclear-power production, we now know that that is a myth too. An unknown number of people dead and injured from Chernobyl, an unknown number of children to develop leukaemia, and an unknown number of cancers and genetic deformities in this and future generations from the unpredictable spread of irradiation. (A 1957 report of the US Atomic Energy Commission estimated 43 000 deaths from a major reactor accident. This report also was locked away for many years. More recent reports have higher estimates of numbers of casualties.)

In addition, there is the problem of 49 000 people evacuated from areas surrounding Chernobyl, with no prospect of returning to their homes

Continued...

Source 5.39

...Continued

in the immediate future. We are also told that with the development of Synroc [a synthetic rock to encase radioactive waste], and the vitrification process, the problem of nuclear waste disposal is solved. Neither process has been proven safe, effective and economic, and many questions about them remain unanswered. Radioactive waste continues to pollute our land and seabeds.

The final myth is that safeguards prevent diversion of uranium from nuclear-power plants to nuclear weapons production. In 1975 Fred Ikle, former director of the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, had this to say: 'Today, the spread of nuclear weapons capability is riding on the wave of peaceful uses of the atom.'

This is the industry which Australia continues to support with supplies of uranium, meanwhile, development of solar, wind and other technologies lags sadly behind.

In 1980 the people of Sweden voted to phase out their 12 nuclear reactors early next century. The Danish Parliament recently shelved plans to build nuclear plants and in 1978 Austrians voted not to turn on their only reactor. May the world not await an even greater catastrophe than Chernobyl before rethinking its energy options.

Susan Wareham, 'Letters to the editor', *Canberra Times*, 12 May 1986, p. 2.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 5.12

1. What concerns does Susan Wareham (see Source 5.39) appear to share with Helen Caldicott in Source 5.32 in her comments on Chernobyl?
2. Wareham quotes Fred Ikle who claimed 'Nuclear weapons capability is riding the wave of peaceful uses of the atom'. Explain the argument Wareham is making.

In recent years, Chernobyl has become a tourist place. Tour operators bring tourists in small groups to explore certain portions of the exclusion zone. The HBO TV mini-series *Chernobyl* (2019) depicts the nuclear power disaster's aftermath, including the clean-up operation and subsequent inquiry. The screening of the mini-series has driven a boom in tourists travelling to see the site of nuclear disaster. Tour agencies have reported up to a 40 per cent increase in bookings since the mini-series first aired in May 2019. Other commentators have been concerned about the historical inaccuracies of the series.⁸

Between the 1950s and the 1980s, the political and social trends appeared to be away from support for nuclear power and uranium mining, yet the possibility for a return to previous attitudes always remained. One of the startling changes to emerge from the Chernobyl disaster is that it is now a tourist destination. And in Australia, Maralinga underwent a similar, though different transformation after the land was handed back in 2009, as visits there are by arrangement with the Maralinga Tjarutja people. It remains to be seen whether these different visits heighten or soften memories of the past.

FOCUS QUESTION 5.8

Explain the circumstances that led to growth of the anti-nuclear movement and the way it challenged existing attitudes and government policies to nuclear issues from the 1950s to the 1980s.

Epilogue

In the context of climate change, discussion in support of nuclear energy has re-emerged but the polls do not seem too dissimilar to those of the 1950s. A poll in 2019 found that 44 per cent of Australians support nuclear power plants while 40 per cent oppose them.⁹ In 2018, the Minerals Council of Australia and others who support the use of nuclear energy acknowledged it was unlikely to happen. As Warwick Grigor, who had been involved in the industry, said in 2018:

I think nuclear energy is great, but we've missed the boat in Australia, no one is going down that path in the foreseeable future ... When Fukushima [the 2011 nuclear accident in Japan] occurred, that was the closing of the door to our nuclear power possibilities.

Source 5.40

Quoted in Cole Latimer, 'Australia has 'missed the boat' on nuclear power', *The Age*, 11 January 2018.

In 2017, 120 nations signed a United Nations treaty to ban nuclear weapons, but none of the nine nuclear powers (the United States, Russia, Britain, China, France, India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel) signed it. Many of their allies, including Australia and Japan, also refused to sign it. In October 2020, the 50th signatory country ratified the treaty, which came into effect on 22 January 2021. This was the first global treaty to ban nuclear weapons in the same way that previous treaties banned landmines, cluster munitions, chemical and biological weapons. Further information can be found at <https://icanw.org.au>.

5.5 Chapter summary

Here are some dot-points for you to consider and add to:

Continuity

- As nuclear issues arose after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the emergence of the Cold War, there are no continuities from the past.

Change

- British atomic tests in Australia occurred without a great deal of discussion either within government or publicly. Tests were reported in the media usually with an emphasis on Australia's links to Britain and the loyalty that was owed. Absent from the reports was the Australian Government's interest in becoming a nuclear power.
- Tests at Maralinga in South Australia had long-lasting effects on the personnel involved and the Anangu Community. The British Government completed a partial clean up of the site after considerable pressure from the Australian Government and the Traditional Owners.

- Support for British nuclear testing in Australia by the Australian Government was justified at the time as part of Australia's support for Britain in the context of Cold War politics. Other reasons given were to do with loyalty to the British Commonwealth and to Britain as a wartime ally. A further reason that was not made public was the Australian Government's ambition to be a nuclear power.
- An anti-nuclear movement in Australia existed on a small scale between the 1950s and the 1970s where it involved trade unions, some Labor politicians, church groups, peace activists and some local members of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. It grew into a larger movement during the 1970s following on from the movements against conscription, the anti-Vietnam war moratoriums, the environmental movement, the feminist movement and the movement for Aboriginal land rights.
- French tests in the Pacific continued among world-wide protests during the 1970s. Australia successfully took the issue of the French nuclear testing to the International Court of Justice with New Zealand and Fiji. A ruling was made that testing should cease until the Court had made a decision but France continued its testing program until the 1990s.
- Health effects of atomic testing became more widely discussed. The fallout from French atomic tests in the Pacific were evident in the rain containing strontium-90 that polluted Adelaide's water supply. Other health affects became apparent during the inquiry into atomic testing at Maralinga and following the Chernobyl disaster.
- Chernobyl revealed the potential health and environmental dangers associated with nuclear power and the secrecy surrounding nuclear politics. The consequences from this disaster continue to the present day.

5.6 End-of-chapter activities

The following tasks are designed to help strengthen your understanding of the material explored in this book and to encourage you to further analyse and evaluate the events, ideas, perspectives and experiences of the nuclear debates between 1956 and 1986.

Consolidating your understanding

Events

Create a timeline using images and numbers only to illustrate the major events that occurred between 1945 and 1986 in relation to nuclear issues.

Ideas

Complete the following table for your notes on the ideas in this chapter.

Ideas	Summary	Evidence
Nationalism		
Cold War		
Fear of nuclear war		

Perspectives

Conflicting perspectives on the issue of nuclear weapons and power have existed since the technology was first developed. Complete the following table to outline the reasons for these perspectives and to identify examples of those who held these views.

	Reasons for the view	Evidence/examples of the view
Pro-nuclear weapons/ power		
Anti-nuclear weapons/ power		

Asking historical questions

Using the sources in this chapter create your own source analysis activity following the instructions below:

- It should have three sources (with at least one visual).
- It should have three or four questions that require different skills from comprehension to analysis.
- Some suggested command terms to use are below:
 - Identify, describe, outline
 - Explain, discuss, compare
 - Analyse, evaluate, examine.

Analysing causes and consequences

How did the Chernobyl nuclear disaster influence Australian public opinion on nuclear weapons and power?

Constructing an argument: essay writing

1. Why did the Australian Federal Government support Britain's nuclear testing?
2. What factor was most significant in changing Australian public opinion on nuclear weapons testing and nuclear power development?

Extended reading

Helen Caldicott, *Nuclear Power is Not the Answer to Global Warming or Anything Else*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2006.

Jim Falk, *Global Fission: The Battle over Nuclear Power*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1982.

Kingsley Palmer, 'Dealing with the legacy of the past: Aborigines and atomic testing in South Australia', *Aboriginal History*, 14:2, 1990, pp. 197–207.

Elizabeth Tynan, 'Maralinga and the journalists: Covering the bomb tests over generations', *Literature in North Queensland*, vol. 38, 2011, pp. 131–145.

CHAPTER 6

Four environmental campaigns, 1950–1983



Source 6.0 No dam rally at Chifley Square, 14 December 1982

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Chapter timeline

World events	Date	Australian events
1960		
<p>1962: Rachel Carson's book <i>Silent Spring</i> kickstarts environmental awareness worldwide</p> <p>1963: Partial ban on atomic testing</p> <p>1963-1966: Landmark legislation on clean air, water quality and endangered species protection passed in the USA</p>		<p>1963: Little Desert proposal</p> <p>1967: Little Desert plan dropped</p> <p>1967: Tasmanian HEC plan hydro-electric scheme</p> <p>1967: Save Lake Pedder National Park Committee formed</p> <p>1968: Victorian Government's Little Desert Scheme</p> <p>1969: Campaign by Save Our Bushlands Committee</p> <p>1969: Government ends plans to create farms in Little Desert</p>
1970		
<p>1971: Greenpeace founded as an international organisation of environmental activists.</p> <p>1973: Australia takes France to the International Court of Justice</p>		<p>1971: Lake Pedder Action Committee (LPAC) Hobart</p> <p>1971-75: Green bans at Kelly's Bush, Eastlakes, Woolloomooloo, the Rocks, North Newtown, Glebe</p> <p>1976: Tasmanian Wilderness Society formed</p> <p>1977: Kutikina cave rediscovered</p> <p>1977: Tasmanian HEC plans dam site on the Franklin River</p>
1980		
<p>1980: The German Green Party formed, inspiring similar political parties worldwide</p>		<p>1981: Referendum in Tasmania on the two dam location options</p> <p>1982: Robin Gray's Liberal Party wins Tasmanian election; dam construction begins</p> <p>1983: High Court rules the Federal Government had the power to halt the building of the dam</p>

6.1 Introduction

INQUIRY QUESTION

How did environmental controversies change attitudes and politics in Australia?

This chapter deals with four environmental campaigns that were among the most significant conservation battles in Australia during the 1960s and the 1970s. A shared idea about the importance of environmental conservation united groups of people from very different social, economic and political backgrounds. In their own way, each of the disputes contributed to the beginning of the modern environmental movement.

When Australian historian Geoffrey Bolton wrote about this period in his book *Spoils and Spoilers*, he argued that although governments thought transforming society was one of several important priorities, ‘few saw the care of the environment as an urgent priority, and many thought conservation stood in the way of progress’.¹ The environment became the new battleground where different groups fought over the competing ideas about how to create a good society. The conservation victories in the Little Desert, in suburban Sydney and the Sydney CBD and in southwest Tasmania demonstrated to anyone taking notice that a transformation was taking place in Australian society that could not be ignored. Those groups which Geoffrey Bolton mentioned as believing progress was more important than conservation now faced considerable opposition.

Not all Australians understood progress in the same way. Some believed there should be a balance between progress and conservation. The tension between progress and conservation would be a significant characteristic of Australian society and politics in the decades after the end of World War II.

6.2 Significant events: The four campaigns

INQUIRY QUESTION

How did events bring about change or challenge existing ideas about progress, the environment or conservation?

Historians interpret past events. What are they looking for in these events? They want to explain more than what happened. They are also interested in how and why particular events took place. This section explains the events and will give you examples of how historians have written about these four events.

Given that the environment is a matter of current political debate, many environmental historians write with a view of the present in their minds. Some of the historians who wrote the following accounts were participants in the events they are discussing, while others remain active in environmental politics. Often the language they use and the issues they discuss reflect their own political activity. This does not devalue their accounts, but it is something that makes them different from the way historians write about a period that existed before they were born. It often means they see their work as providing a context to current debates about climate change. One way of understanding history is that it is a continuing discussion about the past. It is a discussion that will change over time and into the future. The research and writing by these historians are contributing to the ongoing discussion about the environment.



↑ **Source 6.1** Sites of the four environmental campaigns: Little Desert, Lake Pedder, the Franklin River and Sydney

The Little Desert

The Little Desert in Victoria, close to the South Australian border had been Crown Land since colonisation. In 1951, the Australian Mutual Provident (AMP) Society, a large insurance firm, initiated a development plan to open the land for agriculture. AMP had undertaken similar schemes in South Australia. The plan was for the Victorian Government to sell the land to AMP who would then subdivide the land and sell the holdings to farmers. When the scheme fell through before it began, the Victorian Government attempted to resurrect it. That action – against scientific advice – initiated a statewide protest movement that gathered public opposition to reject any plans to farm the Little Desert.

In Source 6.2, historian Tony Dingle contrasts two views of the Little Desert.

Source 6.2

The Little Desert is a 120 000 hectare strip of scrub-covered Crown Land running from the South Australian border eastward towards Dimboola and embracing a rich variety of habitats. It was a wonderland for nature lovers but of little interest to farmers. However, new techniques of soil enrichment opened the possibility that it might be cultivated. In 1949 the Wimmera Regional Committee, with the support of the Shire of Lowan, asked that its potential be investigated by the Department of Agriculture. A favourable report led to the issuing of improvement leases to eleven farmers in 1957. The Australian Mutual Provident Society (AMP) had been developing similar country in South Australia and in 1963 unveiled a plan to open up 100 000 acres of the Little Desert for farming.

Tony Dingle, *Settling*, Fairfax, Sydney, 1984, p. 248.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.1

1. List the different groups interested in the Little Desert according to Tony Dingle in Source 6.2 and suggest what the interest of each might be.
2. Why was AMP, an insurance company, interested in developing the Little Desert?



↑ **Source 6.3** Little Desert, 2017

Source 6.4 is an extract from a Select Committee of the Victorian Parliament that took evidence between 1969 and 1970 into the Little Desert scheme. AMP is referred to as ‘the Society’.

On the 22nd February, 1965, a conference took place between representatives of the Society, the Soil Conservation Authority and the Department of Crown Lands and Survey ...

The Society representatives said that if the Government required the Society to provide roads at its own cost, to bear the full costs of survey and pay \$1 per acre for the land, *it was not a proposition for them on the then prices for wool ...*

Finally, on the 22nd March, 1967, the Australian Mutual Provident Society advised the Government by letter that it had decided not to seek a development lease in the Little Desert area.

Soon after the Honorable Sir William McDonald, M.P., took up his appointment as Minister of Lands on the 5th May, 1967, an approach was made by the Kaniva Shire Council for him to visit the Shire and receive a deputation from the Council concerning the settlement of the Little Desert.

Sir William did not mince words at a public meeting convened by the Kaniva Shire Council on Wednesday, the 28th June, 1967.

According to the Departmental Report of the meeting, Sir William said he was of the opinion that land in the Little Desert could be successfully developed and brought into economic production. Both as a member of Cabinet and as Minister of Lands, Sir William well knew that the Australian Mutual Provident Society had turned the Little Desert down.

If an experienced large scale developer with all the advantages that attach to large scale development did not regard the Little Desert as an economic proposition, the Minister of Lands must have been aware that the small developer could look forward to nothing but hardship and ruin.

The Minister's misconception was clearly not supported by any Departmental investigation or other economic appraisal, or by the experience of farmers who had gone there in 1958. It was misleading and calculated to raise false hopes in the minds of his audience. Regrettably, the rash judgment of the Minister became Government policy, stubbornly maintained ever since ...

The Government's proposals were put to Parliament without taking advice from the one Department (Agriculture) that knew all that was known about the soils of the Little Desert, considered to be about as poor as any land that could be found in Victoria, if not the whole of Australia.

Victorian Parliament, 'Report from the Little Desert Settlement Committee Upon The Proposal to Open the Little Desert to Settlement Together with Appendices', 1969–70, pp. 6–7.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.2

1. Examine Source 6.4. Why did the AMP Society decide to not proceed with the scheme?
2. What criticism is made in Source 6.4 of the part played by the Minister for Lands?

Green bans

In the post-war era, the redevelopment of inner city areas led to protests by residents who were losing their houses or seeing their neighbourhoods destroyed. There were protests against the building of flats, the construction of freeways or the development of high-rise office blocks. Both governments and private developers were the targets of protests. The most significant bans occurred in Sydney and Melbourne but it was Sydney that claimed the attention with a movement known as the green bans.



↑ **Source 6.5** An image with its caption used in a poster from the Australian Building and Construction Employees and the Builders Labourers' Federation from the Nittim Collection. In Jill Roe (ed), *Twentieth Century Sydney: Studies in Urban and Social History*, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1980, p. 236.

Housing, still in a reasonable condition, is destroyed by developers [sic] so they can make their profits – meanwhile residents are forced out into suburbs where there are no facilities.

The term 'green ban' was a clever reworking of a traditional union industrial tactic called a 'black ban'. Jack Munday, secretary of the Builders Labourers' Federation (BLF) in New South Wales, used the term to describe the BLF's campaigns against particular commercial and residential developments in Sydney. Developments targeted with 'green bans' were usually identified by local resident action groups and then the BLF would step in to assist by banning work on the construction site. The 'green' aspect of the ban appealed to the media as the term attached to the broader environmental movement of the 1970s. More broadly, it appealed to some resident action groups who might not have approached the BLF for assistance if the action was termed a black ban. Resident action groups included people supporting the conservative side of politics, and it was unique to Australia that they should make strange bedfellows with radicals such as the BLF and Jack Munday, who was a member of the Communist Party of Australia. While most of the green bans were not successful, one concerning Kelly's Bush succeeded.

In Source 6.6, three historians explain the historical origins of the green ban movement at Hunters Hill.

Source 6.6

The first green bans imposed in Sydney by the NSW BLF [Builders' Labourers' Federation] were in the fashionable area of Hunters Hill in 1971. Jack Munday responded to the pleas of a group of women residents committed to saving Kelly's Bush, the last remaining bushland on the Parramatta River. The green bans successfully prevented development in the area and the Kelly's Bush women, described by Munday as 'very politically skilled', went on to endorse candidates on an environment and anti-flat policy, winning a majority of seats on Hunters Hill Council at the next election.

Renate Howe, David Nichols and Graeme Davison, *Trendyville: The Battle for Australia's Inner Cities*, Monash University Publishing, Melbourne, 2014, pp. 89–90.



↑ **Source 6.7** The Hunters Hill green ban leaders. *Left to right:* Kath Lehany, Jack Munday and Monica Sheehan.

In Source 6.8, Jack Munday recounts what happened after the BLF passed a resolution to boycott the AV Jennings new housing project at Kelly's Bush. Building had not commenced at Kelly's Bush, so the BLF chose to take immediate action at a different Jennings' project, an office building site in North Sydney.

... we took a vote among the union membership, and they decided to go off the job at the Jennings office building site. We told Jennings that if as much as one blade of grass at Kelly's Bush was touched, his office block would stand half-empty forever as a monument to what once was Kelly's Bush and their role in destroying it.

Jack Munday, cited in Richard Roddewig, *Green Bans: The Birth of Australian Environmental Politics*, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1978, p. 12.

FOCUS QUESTIONS 6.1

1. What was the purpose of the first green bans?
2. How did the green bans and the resident action groups challenge unwanted developments in residential areas?

FOCUS QUESTIONS 6.2

1. Why would this action (see Source 6.8) have been a significant test for the BLF in the Kelly's Bush campaign?
2. The action was reported widely in the media. What would have been the appeal of this type of action for newspaper and television organisations?

Source 6.8

The Tasmanian environmental campaigns

The Tasmanian environmental campaigns involving Lake Pedder and the Franklin River were important in the broader environmental movement. They were the starting point of several political careers, they launched a political party and, thanks to the extraordinary scenery, they captured media attention. Those activists involved in the campaigns are now much older or have passed away. Whether these Tasmanian environmental campaigns remain the touchstone for future environmental activists remains to be seen.

Lake Pedder

In 1967, the Tasmanian Hydro-Electric Commission (HEC) recommended additional electricity generation by the flooding of Lake Pedder.

→ **Source 6.9** Lake Pedder, prior to flooding in 1972, showing the shimmering sandy lake base



→ **Source 6.10** Lake Pedder after flooding, 1972



Historian Geoffrey Bolton reflects on the power of the HEC in Source 6.11.

In a state as deprived of alternative sources of energy as Tasmania, hydro-electricity held an obvious appeal as a cheap and clean use of resources, and for many years over 90 per cent of Tasmania's electricity was generated by this means. Since the 1930s, control of the system was vested in a Hydro-Electricity Commission, which as a body of engineer-administrators outside party politics commanded great public prestige and a reputation for sound judgement which defied challenge by any but the expert. The Commission's advice was thus accepted faithfully by both political parties in Tasmania when in 1967 it recommended that another dam would be needed to meet the state's growing energy needs and nominated Lake Pedder as the most desirable site. ... Lake Pedder, fringed by a beach of pinkish-white sand, was the centre of a mountain region of remarkable natural beauty. Besides, south-west Tasmania contained what was probably Australia's largest and least developed area of high-rainfall natural bush, and conservationists feared damage from the proposed developments. Neither the Labor Government in Tasmania nor the coalition [of opposite parties] which temporarily ousted it between 1969 and 1972 took the slightest notice of protest. The word of the Hydro-Electric Commission ruled all.

Source 6.11

Geoffrey Bolton, *Spoils and Spoilers: Australians Make Their Environment 1788–1980*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1981, p. 162.

In Source 6.12, historian Peter Read outlines the reaction and outcome.

Lake Pedder was inundated in 1972 by the Hydro-Electric Commission of Tasmania. Thousands of people fought to save it, and thousands more tried to reverse the decision after inundation began. Dodges, posters, clothing, newsletters, books, poems, public meetings, political parties, committees, films, scientific reports, inquiries, stickers, vigils, depositions and petitions were among the measures employed to halt the inundation. All failed. The Tasmanian government felt itself slighted by the mainland. Despite the facts that only a small proportion of the water would be used for power generation, that the power would not be required for more than a few decades, and that the Commonwealth government had offered to pay for a cheaper alternative, the Tasmanian government refused to negotiate. The gates on the Serpentine Dam closed in December 1971. The process which would eventually engulf Lake Pedder and the Serpentine River to form one much larger lake had begun.

Source 6.12

Ten months after Lake Pedder rose above its winter level and began to flood the valley, the Whitlam federal government established an inquiry into the circumstances of the inundation. It seemed possible that the inundation might be reversed [but this was not to be]... Pedder was lost, but the more important point is that Pedder was almost saved, and eleven

Continued...

...Continued

years later the Gordon-below-Franklin was saved. In 1995 the possibility of draining the Serpentine-Huon impoundment to ‘release’ Lake Pedder was actively discussed.

Peter Read, *Return to Nothing: The Meaning of Lost Places*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1996, pp. 126–27.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.3

1. Copy and complete the table from Using Historical Sources as Evidence 5.1 for Sources 6.11 and 6.12.
2. Analyse how political pressure was applied on this issue and what responses occurred.
3. Why was Tasmania’s HEC such a powerful force in the state?
4. What does Geoffrey Bolton see as the two sides to the argument over the flooding of Lake Pedder?

The Franklin River

The Franklin Dam project in the south-west Tasmanian wilderness was proposed by the HEC seven years after Lake Pedder was flooded. This time opposition was stronger and spread nationally, and even internationally. It became a Federal political and First Nations issue, and then a legislative and constitutional issue when the High Court ruled in favour of the Federal Government having the power to stop the Tasmanian government from proceeding with construction.



↑ **Source 6.13** Franklin River at Pine Camp, Peter Dombrovskis, 1979

Historian Stefan Petrow considers some of the issues involved with the Franklin River project in Source 6.14.

In 1979 a Hydro [HEC] report of 1700 pages recommended an integrated scheme based on the King, Franklin and Lower Gordon Rivers at an estimated cost of \$1400 million. This sum dwarfed expenditure on previous projects and clearly required careful thought. Would the proposed scheme guarantee Tasmania's future or plunge it into debt? Building a dam on the Franklin was only one part of the Hydro's South West strategy. It had plans for five additional hydro sites and for developing the timber and mineral resources of the area. That was why the Franklin Dam had to be stopped. The South West was the centre of Tasmanian wilderness and possessed a mysterious beauty. It was steep and rugged country. The forests were dense and tangled. The torrential rivers were narrow and rocky. Bushwalkers had largely avoided the area and settlement was meagre. The Franklin was the longest and last wild river left in Tasmania. It had to be saved, declared the environmentalists.

Source 6.14

Stefan Petrow, 'Saving Tasmania? The anti-transportation and Franklin River campaigns', *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, vol. 14, 2009, p. 111.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.4

1. What was the appeal of building a dam on the Franklin River for Premier Reece and for the HEC?
2. Stefan Petrow suggests that, unlike Lake Pedder, the Franklin area was largely avoided by bushwalkers, yet environmentalists argued that the river had to be saved from another HEC dam. Why?

In Source 6.15, historian Tom Griffiths explains why the Kutikina Cave was significant to protestors on the Franklin River.

Kutikina Cave ... rediscovered in 1977 ... is a huge, deep Limestone Cave and one of the richest archaeological sites in Australia. Its occupation has been carbon dated to 15–20 000 years ago. For the Hydro-Electricity Commission, its timely discovery seemed trumped up. Even in its first name, 'Fraser Cave', after the then Prime Minister, smacked of cynical politics. For [archaeologist] Rhys Jones after eighteen years of searching, it was 'the site I have been looking for'. For Tasmanian Aborigine Michael Mansell 'it was like coming home, the most important cultural thing that's ever happened to us'. For Jim Everett [from the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre] it was a satisfying 'spanner in the works' for the environmentalists. But, for one environmentalist at least, Bob Brown, 'the significance of the find left us speechless'. He was one of the party

Source 6.15

Continued...

... *Continued*

that revisited the cave with its modern discoverer Kevin Kiernan in 1979. Brown had been searching for a reputed convict skeleton on [nearby] Goodwin's Peak with the aim of putting recent history to the service of the wilderness cause. A lone skeleton would have been a powerful symbol of the awesome majesty of the south-west, good publicity for the campaign. But, instead, he happened upon far more ancient bones, those of ice age marsupials that Aborigines had hunted for food and cooked in a cave. These bones told not of an anguished death in an isolated wilderness, but of hearth and home in a populated landscape. It was not quite the history he had been looking for, but he embraced its message with awe.

Tom Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1996, pp. 266–67.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.5

1. According to Tom Griffiths in Source 6.15, how did this cave find contribute to the protestors' case in their struggle over the Franklin?
2. Why did the HEC question the authenticity of what the archaeologists found in the cave?

6.3 Influential ideas around the campaigns

INQUIRY QUESTION

How did conservation ideas about protecting the environment challenge established ideas about progress and continuity?

conservation the act of preserving a species or the place where many species live

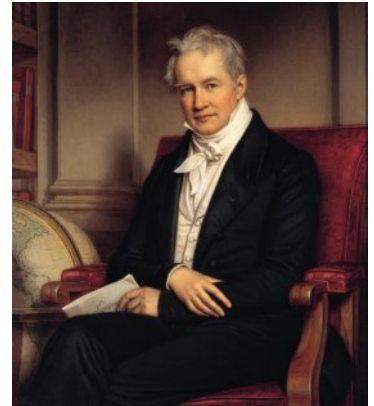
development changing a place by human action for a supposed human benefit

Changing ideas about **conservation** and **development** are an important part of the story about the four campaigns we are discussing. Development was considered essential to creating the economic wealth of the country. It involved many aspects, but it included the growth of cities or the use of land to create wealth through activities such as mining or agriculture. It measured the success of a society by these things. Conservation was concerned with the relationship between people and the environment. It was an old idea in human societies.

Overseas environmental writing and philosophies

These were some of the most influential thinkers on nature and the environment.

Friedrich Wilhelm Heinrich Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859) was a German geographer, naturalist and explorer. He was one of the most famous people of the nineteenth century and his 36 books and 25 000 letters to fellow scientists connected him across the world. Von Humboldt travelled in the Americas for five years around 1800, writing a seven-volumed *Personal Narrative of Travels*, which was Charles Darwin's favourite book and also influenced Henry David Thoreau and John Muir. His multi-volumed work *Kosmos* (1845–65) inspired a generation in which he collated many branches of scientific knowledge. He recognised extinctions, saw the impact of deforestation, and theorised that continents floated on tectonic plates – all ahead of his time. In essence, he saw the unity of everything, an insight that underpins modern **ecology**.



↑ **Source 6.16** Alexander von Humboldt, Joseph Karl Stieler, 1843

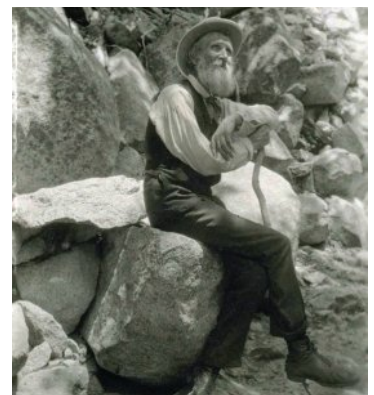
Henry David Thoreau (1817–62) was an American naturalist, essayist, poet and philosopher. He was a leading transcendentalist, who believed in the essential goodness of humans and nature. His book *Walden* (1854), a reflection upon simple living in natural surroundings, anticipated later environmental thought and ecology. He inspired generations about the value of wilderness. He saw the exploitation of people and nature as linked issues. He decried American society of the 1850s as an economic and political system that allowed both human bondage and the destruction of nature. His essay 'On Civil Disobedience' influenced both Gandhi and Martin Luther King.



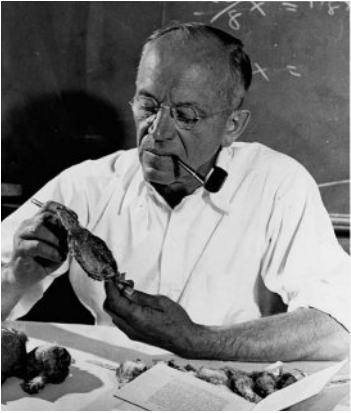
↑ **Source 6.17** Henry David Thoreau, 1856

ecology the branch of science named after two Greek words: 'ology' meaning 'study', and 'ikos' meaning 'the place where we live, our home'. Ecology deals with the relationship of organisms to one another and to their environment.

John Muir (1838–1914) was a Scottish naturalist, conservationist and activist who migrated to America in 1868. He wrote 300 articles and 12 books about the wonders of nature, 'inventions of God' and he preferred wild nature over human culture. His readers were shown the wonders of the natural world. His book *The Mountains of California* (1894) began: 'Go where you may within the bounds of California, mountains are ever in sight, charming and glorifying every landscape'. He co-founded the Sierra Club (1892) and inspired President Theodore Roosevelt to establish the first national parks in the United States.



↑ **Source 6.18** John Muir, 1907



↑ Source 6.19 Aldo Leopold, 1942



↑ Source 6.20 Rachel Carson, 1962



↑ Source 6.21 Charles Sutherland Elton

Aldo Leopold (1887–1948) was an American expert on wildlife management and conservation. He wrote the influential *A Sand Country Almanac* (1949), which argued that humans had a moral responsibility to the natural world, and a duty to care about land and nature and build relationships of cooperation with it. He wrote that a ‘land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community’ to include not only humans, but also soils, waters, plants, and animals. These ideas originated in his childhood spent exploring the woods and rivers around his home in the American Midwest. He joined the US Forest Service and developed the first management plan for the Grand Canyon. Later at the University of Wisconsin he became a founder of the science of wildlife management.

Rachel Carson (1907–64) was an American marine biologist and writer. She wrote popular books about environmental pollution. Her most famous book, *Silent Spring* (1962), grabbed worldwide attention and led to a ban on the chemical DDT. This pesticide was linked to the weakening of birds’ eggshells, causing death. Carson argued: ‘Only within the moment of time represented by the present century has one species – man – acquired significant power to alter the nature of the world’.

Charles Sutherland Elton (1900–91) was an English zoologist and animal ecologist. Inspired by American animal ecologist Victor Shelford, Elton helped pioneer the systematic study of ecology, writing *Animal Ecology* (1927). He turned natural history writing into science. He argued that animals under stress changed their habits and migrated in a ‘process which may be called the selection of the environment by the animal, as opposed to the natural selection of the animal by the environment’. Elton’s *The Ecologies of Invasions by Animals and Plants* (1958) created a new field of study.

Australian ideas about conservation

In the period from the 1950s, ideas about conservation began to challenge the accepted confidence in development. The green bans and the Franklin River campaign saw sharper divisions between development and conservation.

The challenge is to find a path through all these ideas and understand their significance. We need to identify how they challenged accepted ideas about humans and the natural world. We should also assess how they questioned established attitudes to the uses of the environment and who controlled it.

Jack Munday and the Green bans



↑ **Source 6.22** Jack Munday carried away by police during a demonstration by the BLF and residents at The Rocks in Sydney

Richard Roddewig was an American lawyer visiting Australia at the time of the green bans. He was a land-use attorney who was in Australia as a research associate for the Conservation Foundation's International Comparative Land Use Program in Australia. The Conservation Foundation was a Washington-based non-profit organisation interested in land use, conservation and other areas. He was impressed with the BLF and Jack Munday, as we see in Source 6.23.

Torn to shreds on the editorial page for advocating 'social disruption and the overthrow of democratic government', [the BLF] somehow managed to get front-page stories written in a style which was neutral at worst. ... [Jack Munday] coined the phrase 'green ban' as *the* term for this new environmental unionism ... all previous strikes and boycotts over nonwork-related union matters had been called 'black bans'. To the vast majority of Australians, a black ban had unsavoury connotations. The word triggered in the public consciousness the image of the union strike for indiscriminate radical and communist activities, the real purpose of which was simply industrial disruption. By turning black bans green, reflecting their new environmental as well as social significance, Jack Munday hoped to make Australians take a fresh look at the reason behind nonwork-related union boycotts.

Source 6.23

Richard Roddewig, *Green Bans: The Birth of Australian Environmental Politics*, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1978, p. 12.

In Source 6.24, William Lines presents a less favourable assessment of Jack Munday's contribution.

Source 6.24

[Jack Munday] believed the struggle for the built environment and the natural environment were the same struggle. But the links were imaginary ... the only connection was in the word *environment* ... In contrast, and contrary to Munday's self-declared success 'in the ecological area', few Green Bans involved nature conservation. Primarily urban and mostly initiated in response to people's concerns with their city surroundings – neighbourhoods threatened by redevelopment and roadworks – Green Bans saved only a small amount of bushland. They commonly preserved amenity and promoted quality of life. These were hardly revolutionary outcomes. Human welfare, not nonhuman nature, remained paramount.

William Lines, *Patriots: Defending Australia's Natural Heritage*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 2006, pp.133–34.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.6

1. Examine Source 6.23. Why would it be surprising that the BLF were able to gain favourable media coverage for the green bans?
2. What was the broader purpose for using the term 'green ban'?
3. What criticism does William Lines make of Jack Munday's interpretation of the green bans campaigns in Source 6.24?
4. Why does Lines question the environmental achievements of the BLF's green bans?

Conservation



↑ **Source 6.25** Children from Wakehurst Public School, New South Wales, taking part in conservation activities around the school playground, 1972

In 1969, Geoff Downes, an agricultural scientist and chair of the Victorian Soil Conservation Authority, discussed the idea of conservation.

Conservation is a word which is being much more commonly used today, but it has a different meaning from what it had 30 years ago. At that time conservation of natural resources was interpreted to mean preservation. Today it means the proper understanding of our resources and how they can be used and managed to provide not only what the community needs now but also what the community will need in future.

Source 6.26

Geoff Downes, cited in Libby Robin, *Defending the Little Desert: The Rise of Ecological Consciousness in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1998, p. 108.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.7

1. Geoff Downes' approach to conservation in the 1960s reflected his scientific background. Examine Source 6.26 and analyse the changes he saw in the meaning of conservation.
2. Does Downes' view of conservation accord or not with that of William Lines in Source 6.24?

In Source 6.27, Peter Attiwill, a botanist at the University of Melbourne, discusses the origins of the conservation movement.

[The] recognition of the need for conservation is part of a worldwide movement which, in essence, appears to be related to the problem of over-population and greatly increased mobility. We now recognise that a finite world can support a finite population. The goal of 'the greatest good for the greatest number' is simply not possible – we cannot maximise two variables at the same time. I believe we must maximise 'goodness', or the quality of life. It is the desire to maximise the quality of life – to make the world a fit place in which to live – that has brought to our attention problems of pollution, of contamination, and conservation. The need to control the quality of our environment is, I consider, part of the new morality which is now man's urgent responsibility.

Source 6.27

FOCUS QUESTIONS 6.3

1. In Source 6.27, what does Peter Attiwill consider to be the reason for the worldwide need for conservation?
2. What is the 'new morality' and why does Attiwill consider it be so important?
3. How does this approach to land sustainability compare to those of Indigenous people as read about in Area of Study 1?

Peter Attiwill's 1969 evidence to the Select Committee on the Little Desert. Cited in Libby Robin, *Defending the Little Desert: The Rise of Ecological Consciousness in Australia*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1998, pp. 72–73.

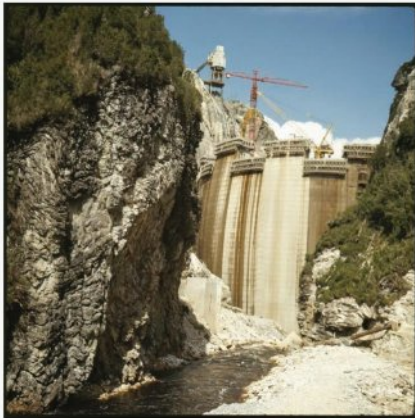
Development

In Source 6.28, Sir William McDonald, the Minister for Lands in the Victorian Government in 1968, discusses the importance of economic development.

Source 6.28

How anybody in their senses could believe that the development of land to carry more stock was wrong is beyond my comprehension ... If the people who founded Australia had adopted that point of view, Australia would be a pretty miserable place today. Most of it is due to development. In one way or another the outback has been developed by putting water points on it. The inside country is being developed, originally by the use of phosphate, laterally by trace elements.

Sir William McDonald, cited in Libby Robin, *Defending the Little Desert: The Rise of Ecological Consciousness in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1998, p. 11.



← **Source 6.29** *The Gordon Dam under construction*, John Russell Ashton, 1973

Source 6.30 is the view from the Tasmanian Hydro-Electricity Commission on the importance of the scheme that would also flood Lake Pedder.

Source 6.30

Lake Pedder – Tourist Attraction?

It is argued that the power development will destroy a tourist attraction. This is demonstrably false ... Lake Pedder never was a tourist attraction. Before the opening of the Gordon River Road in 1967 it was hardly known and it was visited only by small numbers of bushwalkers. It was accessible only by a long and arduous trek on foot with all camp equipment or, in favourable weather conditions in a short summer season, by light aircraft. Such means are not acceptable to tourists ... Since the belated eruption of an intensive ‘Save Lake Pedder’ campaign in the summer of 1969–70, it has become widely known to the general public and visited by hundreds of enthusiasts, on foot or by air, but it remains out of reach for all but a few. ... It is true that Lake Pedder in its present form will disappear but is false to describe this as the destruction of a tourist attraction. The beauty of the scene as a whole will not be marred – many hold it will be even finer with the Frankland Ranges mirrored in the much enlarged lake surface. One thing is certain: thanks to the access by road, it will be a greater tourist attraction than it is even now.

Statement by the Hydro-Electric Commission, in Australian Conservation Foundation, *Pedder Papers: Anatomy of a Decision*, Australian Conservation Foundation, Melbourne, 1972, pp. 53–54.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.8

1. How does William McDonald argue the case for development in Source 6.28?
2. Analyse the HEC's case in Source 6.30 that Lake Pedder is not a tourist attraction. Is this a sound argument in favour of development?

Nature and national character

Source 6.31 is an extract from the first annual report written by Crosby Morrison, Director of the National Parks Authority in Victoria, in 1957.

The National Parks of this State are reserved as samples of the Victorian countryside as Nature made it. They are the living and only true portrayal of the National Character ... Our parks and unique living things they contain are the show windows of the Australian bush, and as the years pass, with the advances in soil science and technology, the unspoilt bush will become more confined more and more to the places which, in words of the Act, 'we protect, preserve and maintain'.

Source 6.31

Crosby Morrison, cited in Libby Robin, *Defending the Little Desert: The Rise of Ecological Consciousness in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1998, p. 39.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.9

1. Crosby Morrison was seeking extra funding for the National Parks Authority when he made the appeal quoted in Source 6.31. How does that influence what he says of the Australian bush?
2. What is the threat to the 'unspoilt bush' that Morrison identifies?
3. Do you agree that nature made the Victorian countryside? What argument could be made against this claim?

Source 6.32 is a quote from Prince Phillip, who was the President of the Australian Conservation Foundation in 1972.

There is no doubt at all the saga of Lake Pedder will go down in Australian history ... This case simply reflects the rather sudden awakening of the Australian people to what is happening to their natural environment ... In a pioneering society the principal problems are to survive, to exploit and to develop. The Lake Pedder case marks the end of Australia's pioneering days and it ushers in a new phase of conscious concern by all sections of the community for the long-term future of the natural environment.

Source 6.32

Prince Phillip, Foreword in Australian Conservation Foundation, *Pedder Papers: Anatomy of a Decision*, Australian Conservation Foundation, Melbourne, 1972, p. 5.

FOCUS QUESTIONS 6.4

1. In Source 6.32, what does Prince Phillip mean when he describes Australia as a 'pioneering society'?
2. How does Prince Phillip interpret the significance of the campaign to save Lake Pedder?



↑ **Source 6.33** Prince Phillip speaking at the Second International Congress of the World Wildlife Fund, 18th November 1970

Source 6.34 is a quote from Dr Smith, Director of the National Parks Authority of Victoria, on the concept of national character.

Source 6.34

... the thing that makes this nation, an Australian nation, is the fact that we have little bits of Australia left in which we can move about and see and enjoy. Now you can convert a nation into fields of corn and you can convert a nation into wide strips of concrete, but you won't build a national character that way. You might build a bank balance but you won't build a national character. The people must have portions of their own country; they must have their own wildflowers, their own native birds and animals; they must have their own natural environment in which they can move ...

Dr Smith, cited in Tony Dingle, *Settling*, Fairfax, Sydney, 1984, pp. 248–90.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.10

1. Dr Smith made the comments in Source 6.34 during the campaign to save the Little Desert. Why does he challenge the value of economic development?
2. How does this link between national character and the natural environment differ from later campaigns to save Lake Pedder and the Franklin River?

Wilderness

Beverley Dunn, an actor who narrated a film on Lake Pedder and visited the area once in 1971, gave evidence (quoted in Source 6.35) to the Burton Committee. It is a testimony about the value of the wilderness to her.

I was not prepared for the enormous dynamic of the place, the combination of grandeur and intimacy, the silence and the sounds of silence, the gradations and subtlety of colour and the unbelievably vast beach ... The texture and temperature of the sand seemed to merge for some yards and even after walking for five minutes the water was still only ankle deep, and the colour of the water, influenced by the sand and sky, changed in marvellously subtle ways. With no beach there to refract the light, the colour must be uniform and dark because the button grass water has a golden brown tint. To see it how we did, for ten of our twelve days under a clear blue bowl of light, the colour of the water was a combination of cobalt blue and a rich claret paling to the most delicate shades of rose at the large and articulate edges of the lake where water meets beach ...

Source 6.35

Those of us who have stayed there, knew what the experience has done to our inner selves – our souls, our psyches. It was a time one felt privileged to be part of and at one with the universe. Its influence on one's life is intangible, indefinable, but it is there. Must this place of infinite beauty ... be lost to this generation, and of all generations to come?

Beverley Dunn, cited in Peter Read, *Returning to Nothing: The Meaning of Lost Places*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1996, p. 129.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.11

1. According to Beverley Dunn in Source 6.35, what appeared to be the special qualities that Lake Pedder possessed more than other scenic places?
2. Analyse the impact Lake Pedder had on Dunn.
3. How would you assess this type of perspective in the campaign to save the Lake? In Dunn's view, what was the main reason that the Lake should be conserved?

In Source 6.36, William Lines suggests a further definition of 'wilderness'.

In the face of the continent's continuing degradation, conservationists had to reinvent conservation, stressed the value and special character of nature in Australia, and clarify the incompatibility between conservation and exploitation. The idea of wilderness offered one means of heightening awareness and urgency about the need to defend the country ... wilderness suggested a world that came into being without human intervention and gave rise to all life.

Source 6.36

William Lines, *Patriots: Defending Australia's Natural Heritage*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 2006, p.163.

FOCUS QUESTIONS 6.5

1. In Source 6.36, what does William Lines regard as the challenge facing conservationists?
2. According to Lines, why is the concept of wilderness so important to conservationists?

In Source 6.37, historian Melissa Harper identifies a NSW Government definition of ‘wilderness’.

Source 6.37

**FOCUS
QUESTIONS 6.6**

1. In Source 6.37, how does Melissa Harper describe how ‘wilderness’ is defined in the Wilderness Act?
2. What did the Act attempt to balance? Suggest why this could be beneficial.

In New South Wales in 1987, Labour’s Planning and Environment Minister Bob Carr, introduced Australia’s first Wilderness Act. ... The Act defined wilderness as land that had not been substantially modified by humans. One of its guiding principles was that wilderness should be allowed ‘to evolve in the absence of significant human interference’ with the aim being to maintain it in its ‘natural state’. But in an effort to balance conservation with recreation the act made it possible for the declaration of areas of bush that would ‘permit opportunities for solitude and appropriate self-reliant recreation’. This included bushwalking, caving, climbing, rafting and skiing. The act heralded similar legislation in all other states except Tasmania.

Melissa Harper, *The Ways of the Bushwalker: On Foot in Australia*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2008, p. 279.

In Source 6.38, historian Tom Griffiths looks to some of the tensions over the concept of ‘wilderness’.

Source 6.38

Where ancient Aboriginal occupation draws attention to a history of massive landscape change, or where their present land rights claims threaten future landscape change, wilderness supporters confront political and philosophical difficulties. Both of these sources of uneasiness were evident in the battle to save the Franklin River in Tasmania’s southwest in 1982–3 Archaeologists working in the south-west found themselves and their discoveries marginalised by many supporters of the Wilderness Society. ... Some Tasmanian Aborigines were openly critical of what they saw to be the Wilderness Society’s hypocrisy: that it was prepared to use the existence of early Aboriginal occupation of the South West to support preservation of the Franklin, yet was reluctant to actively support land rights claims. ‘[T]he wilderness mob continually wanted to push us to the back, to quieten our struggle and keep the conservation alone upfront’, claims Tasmanian Aboriginal, Jim Everett.

Tom Griffiths, ‘History and natural history: Conservation movements in conflict?’ in D.J. Mulvaney (ed.), *The Humanities and the Australian Environment*, Australian Academy of the Humanities, Canberra, 1991, pp. 94–95.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.12

1. Why did some Tasmanian Aboriginal people consider the Wilderness Society to be hypocritical?
2. How did the Wilderness Society treat Aboriginal people, according to Jim Everett in Source 6.38?
3. How might Tom Griffiths (in Source 6.38) make you reassess what Crosby Morrison (in Source 6.31) argues of nature?



↑ **Source 6.39** Jim Everett (who also goes by the name puralia meenamatta), 2019

6.4 Diverse and competing perspectives on the campaigns

INQUIRY QUESTION

What were the differences between the four campaigns in the way they attempted to achieve their aims?

Historians of the campaigns outlined below have identified different elements that have made a significant contribution to the broader campaign about environmental protection. As these are recent events, participants involved in the campaigns have often been the authors of the histories. They have identified the historical significance of the battles and, in the process, they reflect on the contributions they and their friends made to these events. Often, they see the conflicts as a story of resistance against their more powerful opponents. Many of these accounts are written as though from the perspective of a participant. For the reader, this makes these accounts attractive. They might provide potential deep insights, yet there is equally the possibility of exaggeration, self-justification and neglect of critical perspectives.

Therefore, while they might be written about a conservation campaign that is in the past, they are also written with an eye on current and future campaigns and to alert activists to what has gone before. As the reality of climate change continues, the environment remains a political issue, its history is still being written and activists will remain central to future campaigns.

In contrast, the historian Libby Robin writes about more than just the events surrounding the Little Desert campaign. She, like other careful historians, is interested in the significance of events and with the context in which those events occur. Significantly, she titled her book *Defending the Little Desert: The Rise of Ecological Consciousness in Australia*.² She is suggesting that the arguments

against using the Little Desert for agriculture were the beginning of a new way of thinking about the environment. This is important because it means that she is writing from a much broader perspective.

Robin is interested with how science – the ecological part of the title – became mixed up in a political battle. Why does this matter? At the same time as Robin was examining what happened in 1963 at the Little Desert, she is also offering other insights (see Source 6.40). If you want, you might like to take up the challenge to think beyond the obvious part of her analysis. She is also giving you a way to think about the more recent battles between science and politics occurring as a result of climate change.

Source 6.40

The Little Desert dispute was one of the first ‘wilderness’ battles that did not focus on a scenically remarkable area. Indeed, one of the challenges faced by campaigners was to raise the consciousness of the general public to see beauty in the Little Desert’s landscape, to create the sense of loss that agricultural development would bring to the region and to the city that depended spiritually on it ... The desert was seen as stereotypically Australian, but was not the harsh, forbidding landscape of waste, but rather the land that is deserted, free of people and their problems. The Little Desert’s human past was forgotten by many ‘wilderness’ campaigns. It was reimagined without its former roles as a home and hunting ground. Its European history was also overlooked: travellers’ tracks, early pastoral ventures and clearance for military purposes were brushed aside in the creation of an idealised ‘national park’. For many wilderness advocates, the opposite of the city was still the bush, but by this they no longer meant the ‘country’, but rather the non-human ecosystem. ... [they] did not want to choose between ‘the city or the bush’; they wanted both. They wished to ... relocate themselves in nature rather than society, if only part-time.

Libby Robin, *Defending the Little Desert: The Rise of Ecological Consciousness in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1998, pp. 142–43.

FOCUS QUESTIONS 6.7

1. In Source 6.40, why are inverted commas around the word ‘wilderness’?
2. What does Robin mean by saying the Little Desert’s human past was ‘reimagined’?



↑ **Source 6.41** Salt Lake in Little Desert National Park, 2017

In Source 6.42, historian Tony Dingle also gives a broader view of the Little Desert dispute.

The fight over the Little Desert is a watershed in Victoria's settlement history. [Sir William] McDonald had argued that the government had an obligation to use land efficiently. This view, which had guided Victoria's development for a century, was decisively rejected. The fight revealed a far greater depth and breadth of support for conservation than anyone had suspected and helped to give shape to new attitudes. It also provided a focus for those concerned to defend the natural environment, and they gained greater strength and unity from their victory. The ideas and ideals of an emerging conservation movement were clarified and the techniques of applying political pressure through investigative journalism and protest meetings were developed. These were very different tactics from those adopted by the early naturalists and reflected the growing popular support for what had become a 'grassroots' movement. The community opposed the development-inspired intentions first of the AMP and then of the government. This pattern was to be repeated in many subsequent conservation battles when communities saw bureaucracies as the enemy and challenged them accordingly.

Source 6.42

Tony Dingle, *Settling*, Fairfax, Sydney, 1984, pp. 249–50.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.13

1. In Source 6.42, why does Tony Dingle call the Little Desert campaign a 'watershed'?
2. What view of land use did the Little Desert campaign decisively reject?
3. What does Dingle see as the key difference between the tactics of the Little Desert campaign and those of earlier naturalists?

In Source 6.43, historian Geoffrey Bolton reflects on tactics used in the Little Desert campaign.

The Australia Conservation Foundation spoke out in opposition. The Melbourne *Age*, then under the editorship of the great crusading journalist, Graham Perkin, took up the cudgels. Day after day the *Age* featured the threat to the Little Desert, drawing the anger of the Victorian minister for lands by revealing that two of his close relatives stood to benefit from the proposal. Grudgingly the Victorian government first modified the plan and then dropped it. At the next election the minister for lands was one of the very few members of his party to lose his seat; but the premier, Sir Henry Bolte, heeded the lesson, campaigned on a 'quality of life' platform, and later introduced an environmental protection act.

Source 6.43

Geoffrey Bolton, *Spoils and Spoilers: Australians Make Their Environment 1788–1980*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, p. 160.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.14

1. According to Geoffrey Bolton in Source 6.43, what part did *The Age* newspaper play in the debate over developing the Little Desert?
2. According to Bolton, why did Sir Henry Bolte introduce an environmental protection Act?

The environmental historian William Lines writes about the Little Desert controversy.

Source 6.44

In March 1967, the Australian Mutual Provident Society (AMP) abandoned its plan to exploit and transform Victoria's Little Desert area for agriculture. Within months, Premier Henry Bolte appointed farmer William McDonald Minister for Lands. An energetic, experienced developer with properties on both sides of Victorian–South Australia border, one of which abutted the Little Desert, McDonald believed in production for production's sake. Land existed to be exploited and used, not wasted. Previous failures in marginal country were irrelevant. Technology would overcome soil deficiencies. He saw the Little Desert as the last frontier. Shortly after his Ministerial appointment he revised the Little Desert scheme and told a public meeting at [the town of] Kaniva, 'We can't afford *not* to develop this land'. Early in 1968 he announced a government development scheme for the Little Desert.

William Lines, *Patriots: Defending Australia's Natural Heritage*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane 2006, pp. 84–85.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.15

1. In Source 6.44, how does historian William Lines describe William McDonald, the Minister for Lands in the Victorian Government?
2. Do you think McDonald could make ethical decisions on land, including his 1968 development announcement? Why or why not?

Perspectives on green bans



← **Source 6.45** Wendy Bacon and Sasha Soldatow stand in the doorway of a house in Victoria Street, Potts Point, 1973. They are protesting against plans to demolish the building to make way for a proposed development.

Green bans brought groups together to fight development. Source 6.46 is taken from a Resident Action poster, printed during the Victoria Street campaign. The author or authors are unknown.

People of the Inner City!***Stop Developers and Corrupt Councils***

This week, yet another developer will be demolishing yet another Street in the inner city to make way for offices, businesses and high-cost apartments. This time it is VICTORIA STREET, and the developer is FRANK THEEMAN.

Since the 1890s, Victoria Street has been a low rent housing area. Last April, Theeman hired a private army to evict the 400 tenants. Again on Thursday, January 3rd, he used this army, now protected by NSW state police, to evict the squatters who occupied the buildings for the last six months. The squatters aims were to prevent further vandalism of the buildings and to preserve the street for low and medium income earners.

For too long, developers, speculating and inflated land prices, have demolished houses; landlords have raised rents; businesses have charged higher prices. In their destruction, they have been aided by businessmen's city council (Civic Reform?) and State Government.

The only way for the city to be saved is for residents themselves in the unions who support them to take action. When this happens it is not surprising that the developers and politicians beat the 'law and order' drum. But the question which must be asked is:

WHO ARE THE VICTIMS?

Businessmen and the private companies

or

the 100s of lower income residents who have been evicted?

Theeman has announced that he will begin demolition this Thursday (18th) WITH UNION LABOUR!!! We have learnt through 9 months experience not to take Theeman's threats too seriously, but this time the indications are that he means business, so when you hear the demolition is taking place, COME TO VICTORIA STREET AND SUPPORT THE RESIDENTS.

Support Resident Action

Demand a Say in Your City

We MUST stop being pushed around!

Resident Action poster from the Spearritt Collection, in Jill Roe (ed.), *Twentieth Century Sydney: Studies in Urban and Social History*, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1980, p. 236.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.16

1. Examine Source 6.46. Who does the Victoria St Resident Action Group see as a threat to the housing in Victoria Street?
2. According to the residents, what type of threat do those you have identified in the previous answer represent to the people living in Victoria Street?
3. What tactics are being used by the opposing sides in this dispute?

Historian Leonie Sandercock presents a critical analysis of the barriers to reform during the green bans in Source 6.47.

Source 6.47

... property owners and polluting industries do exert a disproportionate influence on government, especially on those local governments in relation to which they are major employers or taxpayers. They do not always stop at lobbying; bribery and blackmail have been used. They have large funds at their disposal with which to buy media space. They belong to a network of cross-connected institutions. *Reformers and large corporations do not therefore compete on equal terms* ... Social reform, anti-pollution campaigns – in general, movements to make the world a better place – depend on the energy of a dedicated few who don't always have the patience to wage a long campaign.

Leonie Sandercock, *Cities for Sale: Property, Politics and Urban Planning in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1977, p. 227.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.17

1. In Source 6.47, how does Leonie Sandercock explain the disproportionate influence of some groups involved with disputes over the green bans?
2. According to Sandercock, what is an essential requirement for social reform movements to be successful?

Source 6.48 is a political poster from the Australian Building and Construction Employees and the Builders Labourers Federation.

Source 6.48

PEOPLE BEFORE PROFITS

'4 million square feet of un-let office space in Sydney.' (*Financial Review* 3rd August 1973)

While there is a shortage of labour, materials and finance for houses, flats and units, developers, with [NSW Premier] Askin's support, ravage parkland (Kelly's Bush and Eastlakes – banned), destroy historical buildings (ANZ Bank in Martin Place – banned, CML – now retained because of ban), rob the city of cultural expression (Theatre Royal – replaced in new building because of ban, and Regent Theatre – banned) and [decimate] residential

communities (Woolloomooloo, the Rocks, and Darlinghurst – banned).

All this in the interests of the fast-buck with no thought to the future of the city.

People need protection — builders labourers support their needs by placing Green Bans.

POLITICAL PROVOCATION IN RECENT WEEKS.

13 BL's have been arrested (5 officials and 8 rank and file workers) insisting on traditional union rights to enter sites the award has been breached and safety is unsatisfactory.

Continued...

...Continued

Dishonest full page ads have been inserted in daily papers and BL's wage packets by the Master Builders Association designed to confuse and mislead workers in industry.

Once again the MBA has banned weekend overtime.

On the same day as the Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority, set up by Askin, tried to use scabs to break the green ban on the Rocks, and the state-controlled Department of Main Roads try to break the band in Glebe, the MBA launched an application to have the union deregistered. Hardly a coincidence. ASKIN IS ATTEMPTING TO DESTROY THE INFLUENCE

OF BUILDERS LABOURERS –THE BLF'S CONCERN FOR PEOPLE HAS STOOD IN THE WAY OF HIS DEVELOPERS.

DON'T BE DIVERTED BY HIS PROVOCATION FROM WHAT SHOULD BE THE REAL ISSUES IN THE COMING STATE ELECTION –THE RIGHT OF LOW INCOME EARNERS TO LIVE IN THE INNER CITY AND HOUSING FOR THE 40,000 FAMILIES ON THE HOUSING COMMISSION WAITING LIST.

THE ASKIN GOVERNMENT MUST BE DEFEATED.

Adapted from a poster by the Australian Building and Construction Employees and the Builders Labourers Federation, from the Nittim Collection, in Jill Roe (ed.), *Twentieth Century Sydney: Studies in Urban and Social History*, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1980, p. 236.

In Source 6.49, historians Meredith Burgmann and Verity Burgmann discuss the characteristics of the Kelly's Bush protestors.

The [Battlers for Kelly's Bush] committee had been formed in September 1970 at a meeting of concerned residents after local people have been aroused by the publication of Betty James's article, 'The Battle to save Kelly's Bush', in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. It was deliberately representative of a range of political parties, churches and other organisations, but it could not help but reflect the generally higher socio-economic status of residents of the Hunters Hill area. These 'housewives' (whom Kylie Tennant described as 'the descendants of the first white settlers turning out to defend the last of the green foreshores') eloquently pleaded their case for conservation. That the Battlers were all females was not surprising: they both lived and worked in the area and had some flexibility in their working hours. Betty James recalls the influence upon the Battlers of Mary Campbell of the National Trust: 'Mary impressed on us how important it was for us as housewives to be concerned about the environment. She believed we could do more about the fight for the environment because we were there all day'.

Meredith Burgmann and Verity Burgmann, *Green Bans Red Union: The Saving of a City*, NewSouth, Sydney, 2017, pp. 170–71.

FOCUS QUESTIONS 6.8

1. Why is the poster in Source 6.48 headed 'people before profits'?
2. In the view of the poster writer, who is against 'the people' and who is for 'the people'?
3. What criticisms does the poster make of Premier Askin?

Source 6.49

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.18

1. According to Source 6.49, why was it mainly women who were involved in the first green ban?
2. What groups were involved in the green ban?
3. The two historians who wrote Source 6.49 suggest the Battlers for Kelly Bush 'deliberately' involved a range of people with different views in their protest. Consider what may have been the point of this tactic in their campaign.

In Source 6.50, three historians consider the influence of Resident Action Groups.

Source 6.50

Jack Munday dismissed criticisms of the imposition of so-called 'bourgeois bans', arguing that the union should support new political alignments that were emerging in response to large-scale development ... Such political alignments emerged as the pro-development North Sydney Council, representing real estate agents, businessmen and developers, pushed ahead with large commercial and residential development in the 1970s. RAGs (Resident Action Groups) were formed to run independent community candidates for election to the council, who would oppose high-rise developments, increased traffic volumes and neglected community services ... The residents' groups were influential in bringing new social groups into politics and in challenging the entrenched party alignments. Their tactics and politics varied, but in the 1970s they achieved more open government, greater participation of women and more socially conscious policies.

Renate Howe, David Nichols and Graeme Davison, *Trendyville: The Battle for Australia's Inner Cities*, Monash University Publishing, Melbourne, 2014, pp. 89–90.

In Source 6.51, Verity Burgmann and Meredith Burgmann write of the significance of the green bans movement.

Source 6.51

The residents of Sydney in the Green Bans period had already despaired of public debate and had found that dissenting voices and alternative experts were simply ignored, – until the builders labourers entered the scene and withdrew their labour. The power of these builders labourers at the point of production prevented the destruction and inappropriate development of large areas of environmental and cultural significance in the city. ... Our beautiful Sydney is much more beautiful because of the BLF and their Green Bans. The bans saved our historic Rocks, Woolloomooloo, Victoria Street and the suburb of Glebe. They preserved parks and green space like Kelly's Bush and Centennial Park. ... The legacy of their bold action endures. To avoid ongoing green bans, governments responded with better laws and regulations around environmental and heritage issues, in particular the 1978 New South Wales Heritage Act and the 1979 Environmental Planning and Assessment Act ... The Green Bans movement was immensely significant.

Meredith Burgmann and Verity Burgmann, *Green Bans Red Union: The Saving of a City*, NewSouth, Sydney, 2017, p. xiv.



↑ **Source 6.52** Woolloomooloo Resident Action Group at a protest in Sydney, 1974

FOCUS QUESTIONS 6.9

1. According to Sources 6.50 and 6.51, how did the BLF contribute to a change in what had happened previously when there was opposition to unwanted or unnecessary developments?
2. What was the legacy of the BLF green bans?

Perspectives on the Lake Pedder campaign

In Source 6.53, historian Stefan Petrow writes about Premier Eric Reece.

... virtually all Tasmanian politicians – especially long-serving Premier Eric Reece – supported the pro-development policy as expressed by the Hydro, even though there were signs that demand was dropping and the cost of new dams would far outweigh the economic benefits. Reece saw the damming of Lake Pedder as creating a new ‘scenic’ beauty: ‘Our engineers have changed contours, with the aesthetic achievement of landscape gardeners’, he said.

Source 6.53

Stefan Petrow, ‘Saving Tasmania? The anti-transportation and Franklin River campaigns’, *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, vol. 14, 2009, p. 111.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.19

1. According to Source 6.53, how were Premier Reece’s claims for development undermined by the commentary that Stefan Petrow presents?
2. What additional benefit did Premier Reece argue would come from damming Lake Pedder? Do you agree with him or not? Why?

Historian Greg Buckman considers the legacies of the Lake Pedder fight in Source 6.54.

Source 6.54

Despite the loss, the flooding of Lake Pedder left some positive legacies for Tasmania and Australia. One ... was the Whitlam Government's signing of the World Heritage Convention in 1974, which played a pivotal part in saving the Franklin River. And a further significant legacy was the unprecedented public scrutiny the Pedder campaign exposed the HEC to. The commission had been used to never having to defend its development proposals but after the Pedder fight it had to make a public case for any new scheme. The flooding of the lake also left a number of specific positive legacies for the environment movement. Probably the most significant one was the part played by the Pedder campaign in forever changing conservation battles in Australia. They went from polite, discreet meetings with officials to major campaigns to win the hearts and minds of voters. ... As Bob Brown said: 'The difference between the Lake Pedder campaign ... and the Franklin campaign ... was that we moved from black-and-white television images to colour television images and everyone could see it'. After Lake Pedder the environment movement made much greater use of imagery in its campaigns. The switch to a more public and assertive environmental campaign style ended up having major consequences for Australia's major national conservation organisation: the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF). During the Pedder fight, many felt both it and the Tasmanian Conservation Trust had not been sufficiently involved and had taken a fairly 'hands off' approach. ... The tension came to a head at the 1973 annual general meeting of the ACF, chaired by Prince Philip, where a number of Pedder activists successfully led a charge to remove the group's conservative hierarchy.

Greg Buckman, *Tasmania's Wilderness Battles: A History*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2008, pp. 33–34.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.20

1. According to Source 6.54, what positive legacies did the Lake Pedder battle leave?
2. How did the defeat of the campaign to save Lake Pedder change the approach to future environmental campaigns?

→ **Source 6.55** The Gordon Dam



William Lines writes on the lessons from the Lake Pedder campaign in Source 6.56.

Pedder's loss completely disheartened some conservationists, who withdrew from activism. Others responded with a sturdy resolve to prevent similar destruction in the future. They believed the Pedder campaign failed because there had been insufficient time to mobilise support from the mainland and because the ACF (Australian Conservation Foundation) old guard served its own interests rather than those of conservation. They believed that a small number of dedicated activists could command public attention and sympathy through the media ... These insights suggested an organisation entirely devoted to conservation. In 1974, with Pedder's fate sealed, activists ... formed the South West Action Committee (SWAC) ... SWAC activists worked full-time, often seven days a week, campaigning uncompromisingly for the whole southwest as a national park. They concentrated on forming branches rather than recruiting members and opened a branch in Melbourne.

Source 6.56

William Lines, *Patriots: Defending Australia's Natural Heritage*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 2006, p. 131.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.21

1. According to William Lines in Source 6.56, what impact did the loss of Lake Pedder have on the environmental movement?
2. What criticism did some conservationists make of the ACF in the aftermath of the Lake Pedder defeat?

Drew Hutton and Libby Connors analyses the lessons of the Lake Pedder campaign in Source 6.57.

At the state political level both major parties had closed their doors to the environmentalists. When elections were called in April 1972, the Lake Pedder supporters found that they had no choice but to set up their own party, the United Tasmania Group, which became the world's first Green Party. The group's candidates came within a hundred or so votes to get elected. ... Feelings were bitter in late 1972 and early 1973. ... They could not save Lake Pedder now, but they could try to ensure that an environmental defeat on this scale would never happen again. ... In the early 1970s, the battle between developers and environmentalists was still a David and Goliath struggle. 'Even in the conservation camp', [the poet] Judith Wright noted, 'there was caution, temporising, playing for advantage, and attempts to come to terms with, rather than face, opponents whose enormous power discouraged many'. The lesson of Lake Pedder was that industrial development would not wait for gentlemanly agreements to be reached. Environmentalists had to learn how to fight and fight with commitment.

Source 6.57

Drew Hutton and Libby Connors, *A History of the Australian Environmental Movement*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, pp. 121–24.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.22

1. How do Drew Hutton and Libby Connors assess the significance of the formation of a green political party in Source 6.57? As a success or another failure for conservationists, or something else?
2. What do Hutton and Connors see as the lessons learned by environmentalists from the Lake Pedder defeat?

Perspectives on the Franklin River campaign

FOCUS QUESTIONS 6.10

1. Examine Source 6.58. Why do you think the photo *Morning Mist* was so appealing to segments of the Australian public at the time it was published?
2. Why might this image have been more influential on public opinion in the 1970s compared to today?



↑ **Source 6.58** *Morning Mist*, Rock Island Bend, Franklin River, Peter Dombrovskis, 1979. This photograph became an important part of the political campaign fought by several conservation groups to oppose the construction of a dam on the Franklin River in the early 1980s.

The photograph of Rock Island Bend on the Franklin River in Source 6.58 was considered so important that it was used repeatedly in the Franklin campaign. It also featured on calendars, on large posters and in diaries. It was not a digital photograph – but now, with our capacity to enhance digital images, it is possible that some of its impact has been lost or that it is taken for granted.

In Source 6.59, historian Greg Buckman discusses the Franklin blockade.

Source 6.59

The [Franklin] blockade was successful not because it significantly slowed dam construction work but because it drew national attention to the threat facing the Franklin. Bob Brown summed up its coverage-garnering importance by saying: ‘The Franklin blockade did not stop one bulldozer. But it did stop the dam. It allowed the beauty of the river to speak through TV screens in millions of living rooms to every Australian. And it elevated the environment

Continued...

... *Continued*

to national thinking.’ ... The blockaders deservedly got most of the plaudits for making **direct action** the success it was but the person who allowed it to happen was Strahan tourist boat operator Reg Morrison. Originally TWS [the Tasmanian Wilderness Society] had planned a blockade away from the dam site at a location accessible by road but Morrison’s intervention made a much more ambitious direct action possible. Morrison was from a longstanding Strahan family and in the 1930s had joined a gang that logged the unique Huon pines that line the major rivers of the area. In 1940 he and his brother Ron achieved the near-impossible when they hauled a loggers’ punt upstream on the Franklin through its largest gorge, the Great Ravine. After the Second World War, Morrison’s connection with the area’s wilderness spurred him to start the first regular tourist boat trips on the Gordon River. When the HEC’s plans to dam the Franklin became known, he was horrified and started circulating anti-dam petitions on his boat, despite pressure from parts of the conservative tourism industry. During TWS’s planning for the blockade he made the extraordinary offer that he would take all the blockaders from Strahan to a camp near the dam site on the Gordon River, some 50 kilometres away by water, without reimbursement. He told TWS: ‘if you bring the people I’ll run them up for free’. His offer was crucial to the blockade; it was worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. Without it, the blockade would not have been the success it was, as [Bob] Brown acknowledged: ‘if Reg had decided to call it off we would have had no choice but to call it [the blockade] off’.

Greg Buckman, *Tasmania’s Wilderness Battles: A History*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2008, pp. 37–60.

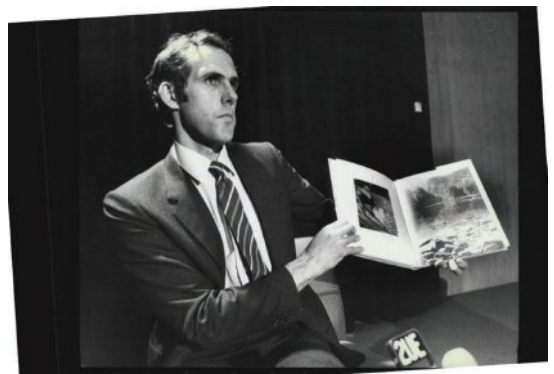
direct action the use of demonstrations, blockades and other forms of public protest, rather than using negotiation, to achieve demands

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.23

1. Examine Source 6.59. What was the importance of the blockade in Greg Buckman’s view?
2. What was the original blockade plan of the Tasmanian Wilderness Society (TWS)?
3. Why did Reg Morrison decide to support the TWS on this issue?



↑ **Source 6.60** Rubber dinghies line up in protest across the Franklin River, 15 December 1982



↑ **Source 6.61** Bob Brown, showing images of the Franklin River at a news conference, 15 April 1983

In Source 6.62, Bob Brown, a doctor turned environmental campaigner, reflects on the struggle to save the Franklin River. He later became leader of the Green Party (see chapter 8).

Source 6.62

The Franklin River campaign makes a complex and exhilarating story, but the reality was never easy. Our phones were tapped. The phone lines to our blockade headquarters at Strahan were cut the night the authorities brought the first bulldozers through the town. There was a call for the army to be brought in. Ros Jones, a Tasmanian Wilderness Society worker, just nineteen, drowned on a rafting trip on the Denison River. Her death in itself was immeasurably dreadful; she meant so much to us and our embattled world. The movement suffered dissension and distress, as well as warm-hearted get-togethers, unexpected generosity and thoughtfulness from supporters. But the wild rivers bound our energies and, giving us more than we could give them, sustained the effort of the untold thousands, until that mid-winters' day in 1983 when the High Court ruled that the wild rivers would be left free to run to the sea.

Bob Brown, 'Ecology, economy, equality, eternity', in Cassandra Pybus and Richard Flanagan, *The Rest of the World is Watching: Tasmania and the Greens*, Pan MacMillan, Sydney, 1990, p. 255.

Many of those who tried to blockade the river were arrested. This led to a wave of support across the country and beyond. Source 6.63 is from a letter Bob Brown wrote to his parents while he was imprisoned in Risdon Prison (near Hobart).

Source 6.63

Mr and Mrs JH Brown 31 Bonville St Coffs Harbour, 18 12 1982

Dear Mum and Dad,

All my love to you both

... there are 48 in the yard where my cell is, all arrested on the river and all fine people from all walks of life. I am one of the older ones [Bob Brown was then 43]. My cell looks over to Peter Storey's, he is a retired businessman (in his forties) and an old friend; his wife is still down in our Strahan office ... A couple of the youngest men here have had some tears, especially because their families oppose them and favour the dam so they are being brave getting jailed for their beliefs – but they are getting a lot of support from their friends in here (and from me). After all my months in the office, planes and meetings of this campaign recently, it was very pleasant to be back at the Gordon River rainforest – even if for one day. I was copped [arrested] on the opposite side of the river to where they expected: the young policemen found me sitting with two others near a waterfall, enjoying the view. ... Before being nabbed [arrested], I thought about you both as I sat in the forest. It must be very hard to understand me at times. But I believe in what I am doing and so do the others I mix with. It was good to hear Prince Charles's comments tonight ... I have had plenty of visitors, and a pile of letters already.

Bob Brown, *Optimism: Reflections on a Life of Action*, Hardie Grant, Melbourne, 2014, pp. 55–56.

FOCUS QUESTIONS 6.11

1. In Source 6.63, what facts about the Franklin River campaign are disclosed by Bob Brown that were not necessarily well known to the public at the time?
2. According to Brown, what held the movement together?

In Source 6.64, historian Frank Bongiorno gives his assessment of the campaign.

The battle for the Franklin remains the single greatest environmental struggle in Australian history. It signalled for white Australians a new way of relating to place, a love of country that amounted to something more complex – and attractive – than classical nationalism’s appeal to ‘blood and soil’. It was a fundamentally visual and emotional appeal, one driven by a sense that the future of humanity required a new and more spiritually meaningful way of relating to the environment; that the country was something other than a resource to be exploited for material gain. Yet this remained a fundamentally white and European vision. There were Aboriginal sites of great significance on the Franklin and, although they were part of the reason for the World Heritage listing and the High Court decision, they barely figured in the mainstream campaign to save this ‘untouched’ or ‘pristine’ wilderness from destruction. That, too, might mark this moment as a product of the late 1970s and early 1980s, rather than of the different world made by the cultural politics of the Bicentenary.

Source 6.64

Frank Bongiorno, *The Eighties: The Decade that Transformed Australia*, Schwartz Publishing, Melbourne, 2015, pp. 72–73.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.24

1. Examine Source 6.64. According to Frank Bongiorno, how did the Franklin River campaign reflect a change in how Australians related to the natural environment?
2. In what way did Bongiorno think the Franklin campaigners’ vision was flawed or limited?

In Source 6.65, historian Greg Buckman has the final say on the campaign.

Even now, the fight to save the Franklin River remains Australia’s biggest environment campaign ... Its success was due to a combination of good management and, like so much of life, good luck. Campaigners learnt from many of the mistakes of Lake Pedder and the result was a well-managed campaign carried by one organisation, which was bold, tackled the economic case against the dam and went national early on in the fight. ... A major enduring downside of the Franklin victory, however, was the further polarisation of Tasmanian society, a trend that started with the Lake Pedder controversy but got much worse during the Franklin

Source 6.65

Continued...

... *Continued*

campaign; the Government of Robin Gray [Liberal Premier of Tasmania from 1982–89], in particular, never seemed to resile [stop himself] from using the issue to divide the state. However the victory is analysed, its significance remains with us today by forever putting mass environmental consciousness on the Australian map.

Greg Buckman, *Tasmania's Wilderness Battles: A History*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2008, pp. 37–60.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.25

1. According to Greg Buckman in Source 6.65, why was the Franklin River campaign such a significant event?
2. Buckman refers to a 'downside' to the victory. Explain what he means by this.
3. Consider whether this 'downside' is unique or whether it has occurred in other campaigns.

6.5 Chapter summary

Here are some dot-points for you to consider and add to:

Continuity

- In the decades following World War II, most Australian politicians, political parties and businesses continued to view the natural environment in terms of economic resources which were valuable in so far as they could be exchanged for profit in a marketplace.
- For most Australians, the idea of 'progress' tended to mean the economic development and exploitation of the natural environment for the purposes of increasing the material wealth of the society.
- Aboriginal people remained marginalised during the early decades of the conservation movement and the historical impact these cultures had exerted on the landscape was unknown, ignored or even downplayed.
- The union movement, led by more militant unions such as the Builders' Labourers Federation (BLF), played a key role in challenging the powerful vested interests in Australian society in relation to economic development.

Change

- Conservation became an important political and social issue in Australia between the 1960s and the 1980s.
- The four campaigns we have analysed made a significant contribution to the birth of the modern conservation movement.
- The Little Desert campaign was an expression of a growing scientific understanding of the environment.

- The Little Desert campaign mobilised local communities, scientists, public servants, state media and urban-based conservationists.
- The loss of Lake Pedder forced a reassessment of strategies, of political action among environmental groups and it marked a beginning of a new path to environmental protection in Australia.
- The campaigns involving green bans, then conservationists at Lake Pedder and environmental activists on the Franklin River marked the linking of Australian environmental concerns with similar movements overseas.
- The green bans also brought together a cross-section of society as well as groups from different political backgrounds.
- Although there were later attempted connections with movements in other countries, the combination of a communist-led trade union engaging in industrial action with Resident Action Groups (RAGs) over quality of life issues and urban development was unique to Australia.
- The final campaign over the Franklin River exposed the way that early environmental campaigns marginalised Aboriginal people from discussions about their land. The awareness of this failure would occupy the environmental movement in subsequent years.
- The four campaigns also drew critical attention to Indigenous perspectives on predominately western notions of 'wilderness'.
- The Franklin River campaign led to the creation of a political party devoted to protecting the environment, which is examined in Chapter 8.
- The environmental campaigns led to new alliances and divisions within Australian society and politics that are still evident in the present.

6.6 End-of-chapter activities

The following tasks are designed to help strengthen your understanding of the material explored in this chapter and to encourage you to further analyse and evaluate the events, ideas, perspectives and experiences of environmental campaigns between 1950 and 1983.

Consolidating your understanding

Events

Complete the table on the following page to help summarise the key events that happened in this chapter. Remember to have one or two pieces of evidence for each event from the sources.

Event	Summary of what happened	Example/s or evidence from sources
Little Desert proposal		
Save Lake Pedder campaign		
Green bans		
Franklin River campaign		

Ideas

In your own words, outline the following ideas which were influential during this period.

- Green bans
- Conservation
- Development
- Nature and national character
- Wilderness.

Perspectives

1. What are some of the potential benefits of reading historical accounts of past events by authors who also participated in those events?
2. What are some of the potential problems with those historical accounts?
3. Why does Libby Robin (see Source 6.40) challenge the perspective of activists who campaigned to save the Little Desert from economic development?

Evaluating historical significance

Rank the environmental campaigns according to their significance in transforming how settler Australians thought about and managed the land.

Campaign	Significance (+ evidence)
Little Desert	
Lake Pedder	
Green bans	
Franklin River	

Constructing an argument: debating

Choose one of the following topics and debate it in small groups or pairs.

1. The concept of 'wilderness' at best neglects and at worst erases Aboriginal culture from Australia's history and should be abandoned entirely by environmentalists.
2. Jack Munday was an environmental hero.
3. The flooding of Lake Pedder demonstrates the ultimate futility of environmental campaigns in Australia.

4. The main reason the Franklin River was saved from being dammed was due to the intervention of the Hawke Federal Government.

Extension reading

Greg Buckman, *Tasmania's Wilderness Battles: A History*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2008.

Meredith Burgmann and Verity Burgmann, *Green Bans Red Union: The Saving of a City*, NewSouth, Sydney, 2017.

Drew Hutton and Libby Connors, *A History of the Australian Environmental Movement*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999.

William Lines, *Patriots: Defending Australia's Natural Heritage*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 2006.

Libby Robin, *Defending the Little Desert: The Rise of Ecological Consciousness in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1998.

Richard Roddewig, *Green Bans: The Birth of Australian Environmental Politics*, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1978.

CHAPTER 7

Growth, land and mining, 1950–2010



Source 7.0 Super Pit gold mine at Kalgoorlie, WA, 2012

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Cambridge University Press

Chapter timeline

World events	Date	Australian events
1945: Bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki		1945: Australia sets 2 per cent population growth target
1950		
1958: Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) launched in London		1950: Australia's population reaches nine million
1960		
1962: Rachel Carson's book <i>Silent Spring</i> kickstarts environmental awareness worldwide		1961–62: Hamersley & Tom Price iron deposits discovered
1963: Partial ban on atomic testing		
1963–1966: Landmark legislation on clean air, water quality and endangered species protection passed in the USA		
1966: French nuclear testing begins in the Pacific		
1990		
1992: Rio Earth Summit held		1991: <i>Aboriginal Land Act 1991</i> (Qld)
1997: Kyoto Protocol		1991: Guratba/Coronation Hill decision
		1996–2010: The Millennium Drought
		1998: Jabiluka Protest
		1999: <i>Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>
2000		
		2008: Australia's highest net immigration recorded
2010		
	↓	2011: Australia's population approaches 22 million

7.1 Introduction

INQUIRY QUESTIONS

How did population growth and the mineral boom impact on the Australian environment?

What were the costs of the loss of biodiversity in Australia?

In the early nineteenth century, settlers believed Australia's resources were unlimited but by the end of that century this view was beginning to fade. The pasture lands of eastern Australia were being degraded, the gold resources of Victoria and New South Wales were depleted, timber reserves in these colonies were being overused, and the Federation Drought, the biggest among many, revealed the limits of land use.

However, there were still many Australians in the period beyond 1950 who thought Australia's mineral resources were unlimited and maintained that the nation could be the main food supplier of Asia, even taking rice to the region. And with the passing of each decade Australia's population grew, placing more pressure on Australia's natural resources and land.

7.2 Influential ideas on growth, land and mining

INQUIRY QUESTION

What ideas contributed to changing thoughts on land and population growth from 1950 to 2010?

Many of the ideas about nature and the desire to exploit it remained the same as in the nineteenth century, as outlined in Area of Study 1. But new ideas were emerging about conservation and protection of the environment to challenge them, as outlined in Area of Study 2.

Engines of growth

In the late twentieth century, there was also less faith in the unlimited nature of Australia and its resources. Historian Geoffrey Blainey observed this in his first Boyer Lectures in 2001 for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (extracted in Source 7.1).

Source 7.1

For the first time, Australians don't see undeveloped land as a sin and rapid population growth as a saviour.

For much of my lifetime – and long before it – there was one dominant vision for Australia. Expressed in a short sentence: all of the vast continent had, somehow, to be filled with people. Australia had to become if possible, a second USA, populous and powerful.

This goal of national development is now in decline. Its decline is one of the main ideological changes within Australia in the past 30 years. Parallel with the decline of this faith in national development, the green movement has become influential and Aboriginal land rights have made

Continued...

... *Continued*

headway, thus permitting large areas of tropical Australia to be set aside for new purposes. Likewise the tensions between city and country have been sharpened by the decline of this belief in nationwide development. ...

Natural resources for long were the dynamo of Australia. They were expected – even during the vigorous mineral boom of the 1960s – to remain a dynamo of national development. That faith, that period, is rapidly passing away. Minerals, fibres, food and other primary products will no longer determine the peopling of Australia. No longer will they fill the waste spaces. Moreover, these old staple industries now employ only a tiny fraction of the working population.

For Australia as a whole, knowledge and skills are now more important than natural resources. Even in exploiting the natural resources, the human resources, such as ingenuity and precision and hard work, are at least as vital. But all that space out there will continue to occupy and worry many minds, especially people who know almost nothing about Australia. Is all this space a potential prize or a burden? This question probably will not be answered in our lifetimes. ...

In recent decades the green and the Aboriginal movements have claimed large amounts of this space. Their success owes much to their powers of persuasion. Their success has also depended on the decline of the belief, among Australians generally, that the vast interior holds economic promise. Gone – gone temporarily or permanently – is the old faith in national development.

Geoffrey Blainey, 'The death of a dream', *The Age*, 9 November 2001.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 7.1

1. Examine Source 7.1. In your own words, list and describe the change in Australian attitudes that Geoffrey Blainey is discussing here.
2. Which factors does Blainey identify as being responsible for bringing about or encouraging this change?
3. Is Blainey observing or lamenting the changes he describes?

Blainey ascribed this change in thinking to the fact that mining no longer created eye-catching cities like a Ballarat, Kalgoorlie or Broken Hill; that agriculture did not rely on small farming, but now on farms getting bigger; and on the decline of the defence argument that unless we populated the vast empty spaces we would lose them to an invader. It might have also been due to changed thinking about the environment, as evident in Chapters 5 and 6. And as we will see in Chapter 8, a growing belief that the Anthropocene was a reality, and human activity was changing the environment.

The Australia Government publishes a report called the ‘State of the Environment’ every five years, which is prepared by independent experts using the best available information. A report is also prepared by the Victorian Government, including a ‘Future Focus on Actions to 2030’.

Source 7.2 is an extract from the Federal Government report, which identified the forces that now shaped the environment. It was first published in 2011.

Source 7.2

The principal drivers of Australia’s environment – and its future condition – are climate variability and change, population growth and economic growth.

Our challenge is to mitigate the degree and potential impacts of climate change, and to decouple national growth from increased pressures on our environment. We have opportunities to decouple population and economic growth from pressure on our environment. There is ample historical evidence of a strong correlation between population and economic growth, and increased resource use and waste production. However, we are not necessarily bound by this history. The opportunities to decouple this relationship through innovation and improved efficiency are many and varied.

Australia. State of the Environment, 2011. Retrieved from <https://soe.environment.gov.au/key-findings-all>.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 7.2

1. Examine Source 7.2. What are the three key forces shaping Australia’s environment according to the report?
2. In your own words, what is the main challenge for Australians in relation to their environment?
3. Is the report optimistic or pessimistic about the capacity of Australia to deal with the environmental challenges it faces? Explain your answer.

Population

The size of the population of a nation is related to many factors: the age structure of the existing population; the number of children couples are prepared to have (which is related to their levels of education and economic wellbeing); the availability of natural resources locally or through trade to sustain that population; and the level of immigration to that country. Australia’s population grew steadily from about 0.5 million in 1851 to 3.8 million in 1901, 9 million in 1954 and 21.5 million in 2011. The growth was not even, but affected by war and depression, economic booms and busts, and trends in family size and immigration.

While Australian governments have never tried to limit the number of children to whom women give birth, when more modern methods of contraception became available in the mid-twentieth century governments did not quickly or actively support them. However, at times governments have encouraged women to have children by offering ‘baby bonuses’, implementing maternal welfare policies and, since women have entered the paid workforce in greater numbers, introducing childcare policies.

Australia's population grew by natural increase and immigration throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. From the 1830s, colonial/state and, after 1901, federal governments encouraged immigration by offering selected immigrants assisted passages to come to Australia and boost its population. In this next section we will focus on just one part of the population debate: immigration in post-war Australia, as well as note the rate of natural increase.

RESEARCH TASK 7.1

Create a bar or line graph to illustrate Australia's non-Indigenous population growth. You can find additional data on population at www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/historical-population/2016.

Review the available data on Australia's Aboriginal population growth/decline and add this to your graph. You can also find this information on the ABS website.

7.3 Significant events and differing perspectives on growth, land and mining

INQUIRY QUESTION

What events and perspectives affected land and population growth from 1950 to 2010?

We will now examine the policy and numbers of post-war immigration to evaluate its impact on population. In 1942 during World War II, Australia's north was bombed by the Imperial Japanese Airforce. Many Australians feared an invasion was possible and politicians were concerned that Australia's population was too small to defend the nation and provide a workforce for growth.

Source 7.3 was written in 1942. W. D. Forsyth (a research fellow at the University of Melbourne at the time) considers the future of Australia's population of seven million.

The future of the Australian and NZ populations is doubtful. In both countries fertility has declined for a long period, and the younger age-groups are obviously inadequate to produce greatly increasing numbers in future, and perhaps even to provide for replacement. ... Thus on any of these assumptions [he had made various population projections based on different rates of birth], the Australian population would never reach nine millions, and by the end of the twentieth century would be considerably less than that figure. This is the outlook in Australia unless the people have larger families; and the position of NZ is similar. ... Without a sustained improvement of birth-rates, the middle-aged and older people will predominate by the end of the coming generation.

Source 7.3

W.D. Forsyth, *The Myth of Open Spaces: Australian, British and World Trends of Population and Migration*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1942, pp. 145–46.

Forsyth's findings were well known, especially to Arthur Calwell, Australia's first Minister for Immigration. As we shall see in Source 7.4, Calwell was influenced both by Forsyth and the attacks by Japan when he established a national population policy in 1945.

Source 7.4

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 surface. Our coastline extends for 12 000 miles and our density of population is only 2.5 persons per square mile. 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. ...

It has been proven by hard experience over long periods that the maximum effective population absorption capacity in any expanding country is usually somewhere about 2 per cent of its numbers. This figure includes the net increase of population, either by the excess of births over deaths, or the excess of arrivals over departures, or a combination of both. Two per cent of the present Australian population is approximately 140 000. The net increase, being the excess of births over deaths, has averaged, during the last five years, approximately 70 000 a year. This would leave, therefore, a migration ceiling of 70 000 a year, assuming that the economy was fully expanded to take the maximum number.

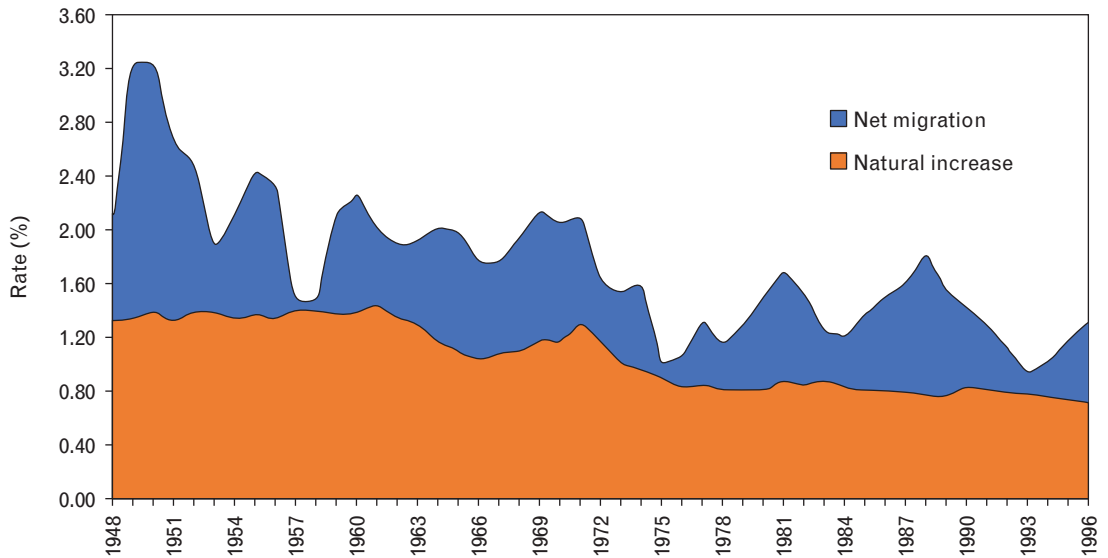
Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, vol. 184, 1945, pp. 4911–15.



↑ **Source 7.5** Arthur Calwell greeting immigrants from Egypt, 1947

Australia made great efforts through immigration agreements with a diversity of countries and assisted immigration programs that became less selective in the next 25 years. In 1975, the Whitlam Government ended assistance, made immigration non-discriminatory, and reduced immigration numbers. Australia did not reach the two per cent target after 1972, not even reaching one per cent from immigration, as Source 7.6 shows.

↓ Source 7.6



‘The natural increase and net migration components of population growth rates, Australia, 1948–1996’. Adapted from Gavin Jones, *Australian Population Policy*, Australian Parliament, Canberra, 1997, p. 6.

However, as Gavin Jones pointed out in 1997 (see Source 7.7), immigration had a greater effect than just the net number arriving each year.

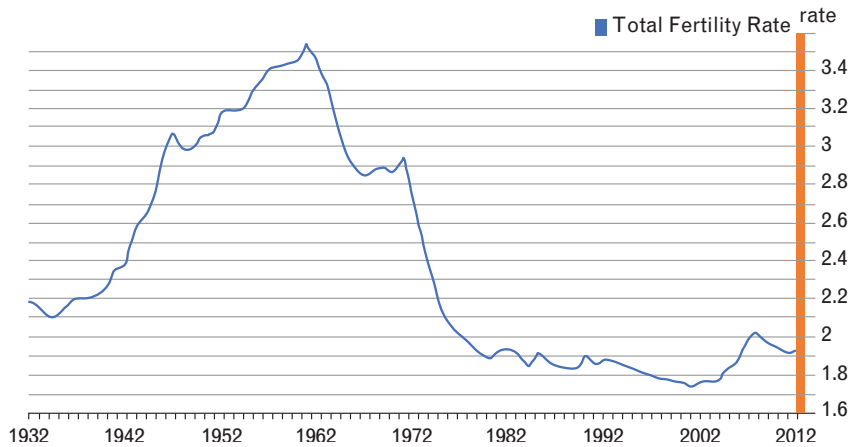
The contribution of migration is more profound than is apparent from ... [see Source 7.6]. Migration builds up the population on which natural increase is based. Natural increase, then, would be much lower were it not for the migrants who have become part of the population in earlier years; the contribution of migration, in this sense, is greater the longer the period we are considering. For example, immigrants and their children born in Australia were responsible for almost 60 per cent of national population growth between 1947 and 1973.

Source 7.7

Gavin Jones, *Australian Population Policy*, Australian Parliament, Canberra, 1997, p. 7.

The following graph (Source 7.8) is a description of Australia’s fertility rates over 80 years, beginning with a low point in 1932. This was due to smaller family formation because of the economic stresses of the Great Depression. A total fertility rate of 2.1 for a woman is judged to be at replacement level for a population.

↓ Source 7.8



Adapted from Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2012). 'Australia's total fertility rate 1932–2012'. *Births, Australia*. Cat no. 3301.02002; cat no. 3301.0.

Source 7.9 is an extract from an Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) publication explaining the graph in Source 7.8.

Source 7.9

The first peak of Australia's baby boom occurred in 1947 with 182 400 babies born to couples resuming family lives disrupted by the war. Men left the armed forces and returned to civilian employment. Women relinquished wartime occupations in agriculture and industry and returned to more traditional roles as wives, mothers and homemakers. The two years immediately after the war were characterised by high marriage rates and increasing fertility. Having reached a low of 2.1 during the Great Depression, the total fertility rate peaked at 3.1 in 1947.

Following a brief decline, the number of births increased steadily throughout the 1950s and peaked again in 1961 when 240 000 babies were born. The total fertility rate also peaked in 1961 at 3.5, then fell sharply during the early 1960s, as social and economic changes led to a wider acceptance and use of oral contraceptives.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *Australian Social Trends*, Cat no, 4102.0, 2004.

Therefore, while birth rates have fallen, as indicated in a lower 'natural increase' in Source 7.8, population has risen as revealed in Source 7.10.

↓ Source 7.10

Australia's population, 1947–2011 (by millions)

1947	1954	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2008
7.579	8.986	10.508	12.719	14.516	18.310	19.413	21.644

Australia Bureau of Census and Statistics.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 7.3

1. Examine Source 7.3. What was Australia's future population as predicted by W. D. Forsyth in 1942?
2. What was the response of the Australian Government in 1945 to the population problem?
3. Was natural increase sufficient to grow Australia's population during the second half of the twentieth century?
4. What role did natural increase and immigration play in Australia's population growth by 2008?

Perspectives on population growth

As you can see from Source 7.10, Australia had grown by more than double what Forsyth had predicted. This growth continued to 2011 and beyond – today's population is around 25 million. Such growth has caused public debate.

Australia has never set a population ceiling, although some inquiries have suggested a population maximum. Source 7.11 outlines a description of Australia in a parliamentary enquiry led by Barry Jones, Member of the House of Representatives, in 1993.

In physical terms the Continent of Australia may be conceived of as two highly habitable segments or 'islands' separated by an enormous 'sea' of arid and semi-arid landscapes of mainly salty and sandy soils occupying some 70 per cent of the Continent's 7.7 million sq. km. The 'islands' are the southwest corner of Western Australia, and the Cairns-to-Adelaide seaboard. Tasmania is a third 'island'. The 30 per cent of Australia with rainfall in excess of 250–300 mm per annum ... contains over 90 per cent of the Australian population and most of the country's 750 000 sq km of arable land, comprising almost 10 per cent of the Continent. Arable land is defined as land having both soils and rainfall suitable for growing rain-fed crops. ... Even within Australia's 'ecumene', defined as the habitable area, the population distribution is enormously skewed with over 50 per cent living in Sydney and Melbourne alone and most of the rest in the other capitals. Of these, only Canberra and Hobart have populations of less than one million.

Source 7.11

Report by the House of Representatives Standing Committee for Long-term Strategies (the Jones' Committee), *Australia's Population 'Carrying Capacity', One Nation – Two Ecologies*, Australian Government Printing Service, Canberra, 1994, pp. 22–23.

Professor Jonathan Stone (then Professor of Anatomy at Sydney University) spoke to a conference on 'Population 2040: Australia's Choice' in 1994. He also appeared before the Jones' Committee. Source 7.12 is a report by the committee about Stone's views.

Source 7.12

He [Professor Stone] presented an eloquent argument for stabilising population at 23 million in the year 2040, assuming that current levels of fertility persist and that immigration is set at the low end of the post-War range (50 000 net per year). He emphasised the fragility of Australia's soils 'continent-wide', and the fact that the continent's flora and fauna evolved in a low energy using environment. 'Every biologist ... has been impressed by the energy-saving strategies of Australia's unique fauna; energy-inefficient species have not survived here'. 'Homo sapiens ... a large, energy-hungry mammal ... the largest carnivores on the Australian continent' have not yet adapted to our environment. Our cities have huge 'footprints' which cover large areas of non-urban land – the areas needed for water supply, waste disposal, energy production and farms for food supply. Contamination of the Hawkesbury River is attributed to population growth, as is the algal development in the Murray/Darling system. Professor Stone urged that stabilisation of Australia's population by 2040, would 'align Australia with global policies endorsed by international bodies'. ... Western Europe had population densities, such as in the Netherlands or Switzerland, far higher than Australia's. He pointed out that these societies depended on the importation of non-renewable resources, especially energy and that the Netherlands had suffered a tremendous loss of species about 200 years ago. He also conceded that many problems such as river contamination were functions of management, not just population.

Report by the House of Representatives Standing Committee for Long-term Strategies (the Jones' Committee), *Australia's Population 'Carrying Capacity', One Nation – Two Ecologies*, Australian Government Printing Service, Canberra, 1994, p. 16.

Professor John Caldwell, a demographer from the Australia National University, thought Australia could support 50–60 million people, perhaps more, as Source 7.13 shows. However, he wondered if it might indeed happen.

Source 7.13

In a world which is becoming even more attuned to both men and women being educated, to both husbands and wives working, there are many reasons why a proportion of women will not marry and will not bear children. As a result, I think there is a very good chance of fertility remaining below replacement level in Australia and in most other developed countries. Incidentally, on that issue I should add that, given this, Australia's future growth rate after the next 20 or 30 years will probably be determined entirely by immigration. This in many ways is very fortunate. It gives us the ability to turn immigration on or off as we see fit.

Report by the House of Representatives Standing Committee for Long-term Strategies (the Jones' Committee), *Australia's Population 'Carrying Capacity', One Nation – Two Ecologies*, Australian Government Printing Service, Canberra, 1994, p. 16.

Source 7.14 shows what happened to immigration in the period before and after the 1994 report quoted in Sources 7.11 to 7.13.

↓ **Source 7.14**

Net immigration to Australia by decade, 1976–2008

Decade	Number
1976–1985	748 884
1986–1995	976 376
1996–2005	1 074 367
2006–2008	640 070 (for only three years)

Adapted from Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *Australian Historical Population Statistics*, Cat. No. 3105.0.65.00, table 7.1, 2019.

annual net immigration
the difference
between arrivals and
departures in a year

Indeed, the highest net immigration number ever recorded in Australia's history in one year was in 2008, when the **annual net immigration** number reached 315 700.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 7.4

1. Why was the 1994 government report quoted in Sources 7.11 to 7.13 subtitled *One Nation – Two Ecologies*?
2. Create a table with two columns. In each column, list the reasons or factors supporting or opposing the argument for increasing Australia's population.
3. When the 1994 Jones' parliamentary inquiry was conducted, the total Australian population was 19 million. By 2011, it was 21.644 million. Explain this increase, identifying the most significant factors.

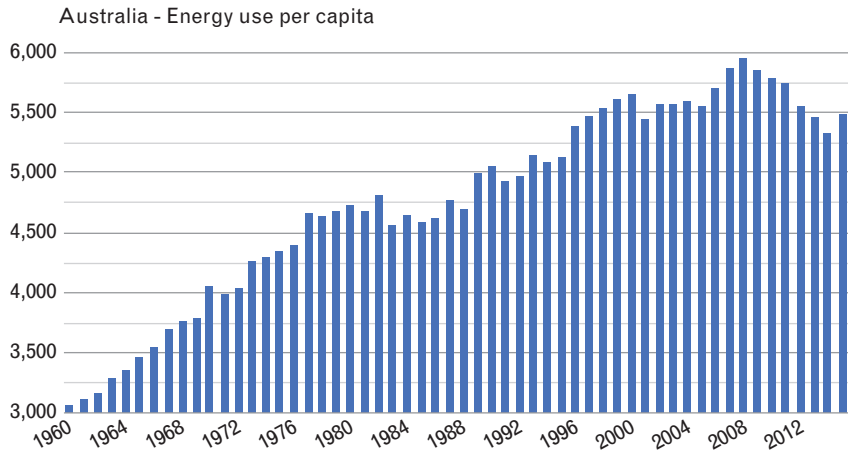
Consumption and urbanisation

Events

Australia's growing population consumed more food resources and fossil fuels in the form of wood, oil, coal, gas, although in recent decades the use of renewable energy like hydro, solar and wind power has begun to increase. Source 7.15 reveals the growing energy use of Australians between 1960 and 2015, the highest level being in 2008.

Australia had the fifth highest energy consumption of 25 countries as listed by the World Bank in 1960 and the seventh highest use per capita of energy of 34 countries listed in 2015. The measure used is 'kilograms of oil equivalent'. While the average energy use of these 34 countries in 2015 was 4180 kilograms of oil equivalent, Australia's per capita use was 5483 kilograms of oil equivalent.¹

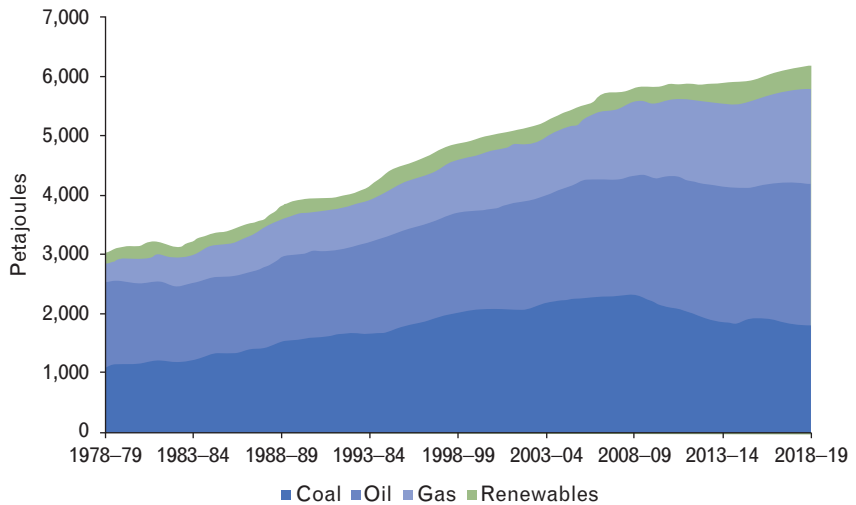
↓ Source 7.15



Adapted from World Bank. Per capita energy use in Australia, 1960–2015. Data expressed in kilograms of oil equivalent.

Source 7.16 indicates the origins of this annual per capita energy use.

↓ Source 7.16



Adapted from Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources, Per capita Australian Energy Consumption – Fuel Type 1978–79 to 2018–19. In *Australian Energy Update Report*, Data in petajoules 2020.

Energy consumption is not only a product of the size of the population, but also of lifestyles, transport and car use, and modern conveniences such as air-conditioning. It is also affected by where people live. City living is dominant in Australia as we will see in the next section, but what does this mean for energy use and the environment? Source 7.17 outlines what a report by Infrastructure Australia had to say.

Human settlements and their populations place pressure on the environment through the demand for water, energy and land, and through the production of wastes including greenhouse gas emissions. These impacts can be direct, through the use of water, energy and land, or indirect, through the production and distribution of goods and services that households and businesses consume. Urban communities are feeling the impacts of these pressures through, for example, extensive water restrictions across several of our major cities, air pollution, and the loss of productive land, open space and habitat on urban fringes. We are increasingly aware of our vulnerability to a changing climate, with many cities experiencing unprecedented high temperatures, fires and storms in recent years. There is evidence that our way of living and direction of development is not ecologically sustainable. A recent analysis has demonstrated a high degree of variability in the environmental impact between locations, and overall Australia's major cities are having a greater environmental impact than regional and rural locations. Yet Australian cities provide many opportunities to lead the nation towards a more sustainable future. The way in which cities are planned, built and function can promote more efficient use of resources including water, energy and land, minimise the production of waste and encourage more reuse and recycling, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and support biodiversity in and around urban areas through better management of open and green space.

Source 7.17

Infrastructure Australia, *State of Australian Cities*, 2010, p. 69.

How much energy do cities use relative to other living areas? Source 7.18 shows what Infrastructure Australia reported.

Energy is vital for economic growth and the high standard of living enjoyed by all Australians. Although economic growth is progressively becoming more energy-efficient, Australia remains one of the highest consumers of energy per capita in the world. Although robust data are not available on the contribution of Australia's cities to energy consumption, it is estimated that cities consume around 75 per cent of the world's energy. Around 97 per cent of energy used in Australia in 2007–08 was sourced from non-renewable sources, including coal, petroleum products and natural gas. This particular mix of energy sources and high rates of energy consumption has implications for the environment, including greenhouse gas emissions, resource depletion, and other pollution associated with the production and consumption of energy.

Source 7.18

FOCUS QUESTIONS 7.1

1. How does Australia's energy use compare with other countries since 1960?
2. Do city or country people use more energy? Why do you think this is the case?
3. Are there possibilities for a reduction in energy use? What might they be?

Infrastructure Australia, *State of Australian Cities*, 2010, p. 74

Source 4.23 in Area of Study 1 revealed Melbourne and Sydney in 1911 comprised 45 and 47 per cent of the colonial population of Victoria and New South Wales respectively. Adelaide and Perth were not far behind,

making Australia a significant urban nation in global terms. Source 7.19 reveals the degree of urbanisation one century later.

↓ Source 7.19

Region	1971	1976	1981	1986	1990	1991
Mega metro	73	73	73	73	74	74
Major regional centre	9	9	9	9	9	9
Small towns	2	2	2	2	2	2
Coastal Qld/NSW/Vic	5	6	6	6	7	7
Rest of the country	8	7	7	7	6	6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total by millions	12.694	13.474	14.921	16.032	17.037	17.250

Report by the House of Representatives Standing Committee for Long-term Strategies (the Jones' Committee), *Australia's Population 'Carrying Capacity', One Nation – Two Ecologies*, Australian Government Printing Service, Canberra, 1994, p. 6, table 3.

Perspectives on consumption and urbanisation

Many Australians living in cities, did not reside within walking distance of the city centre like those living in European cities. Rather, they live further out in suburbs in free-standing houses, each with their own front and backyard. It was part of the immigrant dream, which arose in the nineteenth century, to own land even if it was a suburban block. Source 7.20 is from an 1888 Melbourne real estate (sales) brochure, issued by the Coburg and Somerton Junction Estate Company. It played upon the Australian dream of home ownership, which was then over 40 per cent and one of the highest levels in the world.

Source 7.20

The people are alive to the great benefits of possessing land, and when the land is the birthright of a people, depend upon it the people are free and independent. The old country is hampered by traditions, heredity, primogeniture [rights of the first-born male], and thousand effete [weak] and worn out associations, sapping the prosperity and warping the independence of an otherwise industrious shrewd and hardy race. Here we are under more favourable auspices [conditions] and every thrifty man and woman can, if they choose, become a landowner. 'The possession of land is a people's greatness'.

Cited in Geoffrey Serle, *The Rush to be Rich: A History of the Colony of Victoria 1883–1889*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1974, p. 257.

Some Australians were unhappy with the suburban dream. In his novel *My Brother Jack*, Australian novelist George Johnston wrote about David Meredith. He lived in Elsternwick in the late 1930s and the book describes his rebellion against the expectations of conformity, suburban living and his wife. In the extract from the novel in Source 7.21, Meredith has climbed onto his roof and discovered 'there was not one tree on the whole estate'.

Yet there must have been trees once ... The place could have been really beautiful at one time in a tranquil sort of way, I thought – before Bernie Rothenstein came in with his bulldozers and graders and grubbed out all the trees and flattened everything out so that the subdivision pegs could be hammered in and his lorries could move about without hindrance ... It was only about a mile to Goodenough's Nursery.

[Meredith bought a sugar gum from the nursery and planted it into in the middle of his front yard. He tells his wife Helen about the tree.]

... it'll grow into a tree forty feet high in two years. *A real tree!* And what this damned place needs is a good firm far-sighted policy of reforestation!

George Johnston, *My Brother Jack*, Collins, London/Sydney, 1964, pp 287–91.

Source 7.21

Overseas visitors were also undecided. Source 7.22 is by Jeanne MacKenzie, an English writer who travelled to Australia in 1960. She is writing about the Australian suburb.

Seven out of ten Australians live in urban centres, and half of the country's 10 million live in one or other the capital cities. Sydney and Melbourne, the two largest capitals, each have a population around two million.... And both of them are expanding rapidly. ... The basic dwelling is a five-roomed bungalow, made of brick, veneered with cement or stucco, or timber frame with fibro, weatherboard or corrugated iron, and set on its own plot of land, quite distinct and separate from its neighbor. In fact, 82 percent of Australian houses are detached buildings. The result is that these big cities sprawl over an enormous and seemingly limitless area ... Cities which are spread in this way raise enormous technical and cultural problems. When houses are built at low density on remote blocs of land public authorities are faced with the immense and expensive programme of new roads, sewerage, water, electricity and gas supply. And then there is the problem of transport ... Most Australian suburban families have a car – sometimes even two – a radio and, where possible, a television. ... It is in fact, for many, a paradise of material prosperity. But the lives people lead are curiously the same, and those who would have it otherwise cannot easily escape without moving away altogether – and then, where would they move to? Most Australians, whether they like it or not, are caught in the suburban net ... Suburbia can only offer a hollow utopia. Perhaps this is what a young Czech migrants meant when in, reply to a question about how she liked Australia, she said: 'It is very nice, but there is something missing'.

Jeanne MacKenzie, *Australian Paradox*, F.W. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1961, p. 127.

Source 7.22

→ **Source 7.23** The Donnan family were proud of their new suburban home on a tree-cleared block. Margaret and her mother Esmé are pictured in Camp Hill, outer suburbia Brisbane, 1951. The family lived there until 2017.



A decade later, Hugh Stretton, a young professor of history from Adelaide, wrote *Ideas for Australian Cities* (1970) in his spare time and published it himself. It became the most influential book ever written about Australia's cities. Stretton differed from Jeanne MacKenzie, as we will see in Source 7.24.

Source 7.24

FOCUS QUESTIONS 7.2

1. What was the Australian housing dream?
2. What did George Johnston (see Source 7.21) think of suburbs and how did he act?
3. What did Jeanne McKenzie (see Source 7.22) say of the strengths and weaknesses of suburban living?
4. List Hugh Stretton's arguments about the suburbs.
5. From the images and information of the Donnan's Camp Hill home in Source 7.23, which commentator on suburbs best matched their experience?

Why *do* so many Australians choose to live in a way so unfashionable with intellectual urbanists – twelve or twenty to the acre, halfway between real bush and real city?

It's no problem why they prefer the suburbs to the bush. The cities offer most of the jobs, and most services ... But why do so many live sparsely in suburbia instead of densely in a real city? Some don't have much choice. There are only small and diminishing quantities of *cheap* dense accommodation, mostly with bad reputations and worse schools ... But of the majority who *can* still choose freely, who do most still choose the suburbs? ... People need city centres, crowded with opportunities for fun and profit; but as long as they are there within forty minutes' travel, people will be freer and happier in proportion as they also have a generous tract of privacy at home, and steady friends at work. ...

So – to sum up – you don't have to be a mindless conformist to choose suburban life. Most of the best poets and painters and inventors and protesters choose it too. It reconciles access to work and city with private, adaptable, self-expressive living space at home. Plenty of adults love that living space, and subdivide it ingeniously. For children it really has no rivals. At home it can allow them space, freedom and community with their elders; they can still reach bush and beach in one direction and in the other, schools to educate them and cities to sophisticate them. About half the lives of most of us are spent in growing up and then bringing others up. Suburbs are good places to do it, precisely because they let the generations coexist, with some continuing independence for each. These are the gains our transport costs buy for us.

Hugh Stretton, *Ideas for Australia Cities*, 3rd edn, Transit Publishing, Sydney, 1970, pp. 13–14, 20–21.

Source 7.25 outlines what journalist Tony Collins observed about the suburban ideal in 1993.

After two centuries on the rise, the tide has turned against the suburban idea. The physical form has survived the ideologies that gave it birth. The suburbs continue to grow, although more slowly than before. The forces that sustain them are economic and pragmatic and they now have to swim against the tide of public opinion rather than with it. The most desirable styles of living in Sydney and Melbourne are increasingly dense, urban and cosmopolitan rather than sparse, mono-cultural and suburban. The suburban fringe has become the refuge of the new poor rather than the new rich. Not only must their residents endure the disadvantages of inferior public transport and services but the disdain of the inner-city intelligentsia. ... The suburban idea is more like a marketing stratagem than the powerful ideology it once was. Its day is not yet over but its heyday has passed.

Source 7.25

Tony Collins, cited in Graeme Davison, *City Dreamers: The Urban Imagination in Australia*, NewSouth, Kensington, 2016, pp. 102–03.

In Source 7.26, historian Graeme Davison writes about the modern suburb.

The suburban idea was the product of an era when religious, aesthetic [a sense of beauty], scientific and social ideals combined to create a distinct semi-rural zone, set against the city. By the late twentieth century, however, most of those ideals had faded. ...

Source 7.26

Even the idea of the suburb, as zone distinct from the city, may seem outmoded [out of date] in the diverse, polycentric, post-industrial cities that have emerged over the past three decades. In the land of malls and freeways, multiplex cinemas and festival markets, science parks and industrial estates, it's no longer quite clear what's city and what's suburb, much less than anything we could call 'the suburban way of life'. The new estates springing up on the fringes of the city, such as Melbourne's Caroline Springs and Adelaide's Golden Grove, are built at much higher densities than most traditional suburbs. Their two-storied town houses, with family rooms, entertainment centres, triple bathrooms and garages, sit behind a thin ribbon of lawn, just a few metres from their neighbours. In their marketing campaigns, the old suburban appeals to peace and privacy of the home and garden are blended with more traditionally urban themes: a 'vibrant' and 'thriving' town centre and the sophisticated 'lifestyle' of the inner city. 'Latte by the lake' promises one advertisement, suggesting that in the future suburb you can have the best of both worlds. The suburb was always a compromise between the values of city and country life. Now the question is: has too much of each been sacrificed to make the compromise worthwhile?

Graeme Davison, Suburbs. In Peter Beilharz and Trevor Hogan (eds), *Sociology: Antipodean Perspectives*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2012, pp. 30–31.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 7.5

1. What does Tony Collins (see Source 7.25) say about suburbs?
2. Is Graeme Davison (see Source 7.26) in agreement with him? Explain.
3. How and why did attitudes to suburbia change?
4. Do you think Davison is right to say the suburban idea might be 'outmoded'?
5. Do you think the shift from suburban living is positive or negative in environmental terms?

In Source 7.27, Richard Broome outlines Melbourne's growth, 2000–2010.

Source 7.27

The city's population climbed in the decade from 3.340 million to 4.077 million, a rapid 22 per cent increase. By the 2011 census, 37 per cent of Melburnians were born overseas and 58 per cent had one or both parents born overseas. The city's population growth and increasing multicultural nature was partly driven by increased arrivals of international students, which doubled over the decade to exceed 200 000 in 2010. Students came from most countries of the world, almost half from China and India. This inflow intensified Melbourne's apartment building, which surged from 2007, especially in the CBD, Southbank and Docklands, where approvals exceeded those in the inner and middle suburbs.

In 2001, the Bracks Labor Government instituted *Melbourne 2030* to shape the city's growth by reducing the proportion of low-density development on the urban fringes; creating urban boundaries and green wedges; redirecting growth to inner and middle suburbs; and creating high density hubs around public transport nodes. Population and housing pressures modified this plan in 2008 with *Melbourne@fivemillion* extending the urban boundaries and intensifying the metropolitan multi-centre idea.

FOCUS QUESTION 7.3

What were the drivers of Melbourne's rapid expansion between 2000 and 2010?

Richard Broome, 'Global city the 2000s', in Richard Broome, Richard Barnden, Elisabeth Jackson & Judith Smart, *Melbourne's 20 Decades*, Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Melbourne, p. 123.



↑ Source 7.28 Caroline Springs, 2000



↑ Source 7.29 Melbourne CBD, 2009

A key element of the modern city is the automobile. They are vital in Australian cities that are spread out so far from each other, and are often available to people in advance of public transport being developed in their area. From the 1950s, car numbers soared in Australia. Historian Graeme Davison writes about the influence of the car in Source 7.30.

Cars are everywhere. They take us to work, shop and play. They monopolise our streets and roadways and mould the landscape to their insistent demands. They are homes away from home, little oases of privacy, where drivers sit alone with their thoughts amidst the hum of traffic or couples clinging together in dark side streets. In the battle of sexes, cars are also powerful weapons. They are love objects and status symbols; also symbols of danger and sudden death. ...

Terrace dwelling intellectuals occasionally sneer at the delight of suburban Australians in their cars. Yet it does no service to the cause of environmentalism or better cities to suggest that most people can give up their cars and take public transport – even if good public transport were on offer – and experience no significant loss in personal wellbeing. Automobility – the liberty promised by the car to travel where, when and as often as we like – maybe ultimately self-defeating and unsustainable. It may have to be curbed in the interests of our children and the health of our planet. But there is no point in trying to tell those who will suffer their limitation that it is really no loss at all. ...

The car was not only an object of desire, but a subject of sometimes bitter conflict. ... It was through the struggle to resolve these conflicts that the modern metropolis was shaped.

Graeme Davison, *Car Wars: How the Car Won our Hearts and Conquered our Cities*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2004, pp. ix–xi.

Source 7.30

FOCUS QUESTIONS 7.4

1. Do you agree with Graeme Davison (see Source 7.30) that the car shaped the modern city? What implications did that have for the environment?
2. Examine Sources 7.31 and 7.32. What were some of the reasons given by opponents of the freeway construction around Melbourne in the late 1960s and early 70s?

One of these battlefields was over freeways. In particular, the 1969 Melbourne Transportation Plan that was to cover the city with a freeway network, was controversial. Source 7.31 shows one response to the plan.

Citizens against freeways is calling for a moratorium on all freeway constructions including F19 [the Eastern Freeway from Ringwood to Hoddle Street, Collingwood], until a new strategy for Metropolitan transport has been devised, and is accepted by the public. There are currently three freeways under construction and 13 more planned by the CRB [Country Roads Board]. All but one point to the centre of Melbourne. These are freeways without endings. If they are preceded with they will funnel a growing number of motor vehicles into the inner suburban area in central city area creating chaos and congestion. Communities will be disrupted and levels of noise and air pollution will become intolerable, and chaos will reign in the streets, over wide areas.

Source 7.31

Melbourne needs a transport plan, *Freeway Fighter*, 6 October 1977.

In 1975, protest meetings were held in inner Melbourne, complete with maps of proposed freeways.



↑Source 7.32 'The freeways are coming!', *The Melbourne Times*, 29 October 1975

How many cars were there in Australia in 1950 and 2010?

Source 7.33

Following World War II, town planning focused on a suburban, low-density design, and the subsequent improvement in road systems contributed to Australia becoming a nation reliant on cars. While the growth in vehicle registrations stalled during the Great Depression and World War II, the number of passenger vehicle owners has continued to grow since the 1950s. Over the 58 years from 1955 to 2013 the number of passenger vehicles registered in Australia increased from 1.4 million to 13.0 million, an average annual growth of 4 per cent. In 2013, passenger vehicles accounted for over three-quarters (76 per cent) of all registered vehicles.

In 1955, there were 153 passenger vehicles per 1000 people in Australia. By 2013, this rate had increased to 568 per 1000 people. In 2012, approximately 7 in 10 people (71 per cent) aged 18 years and over travelled to work or full time study primarily by passenger vehicle, similar to 2009 (72 per cent). This could have been either as a passenger or a driver. Only 16 per cent of Australians used public transport, while 4 per cent walked and 2 per cent cycled.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *Car Nation*. Cat. No. 4102.0 – Australian, Social Trends, 2013.

As Source 7.19 revealed, almost three-quarters of the population lived in mega-cities in Australia. By implication, about three-quarters of cars and vehicles were garaged in cities.

Mining

In the nineteenth century, mining was important to Australia's development. This continued in the twentieth century with gold mining at Kalgoorlie, coal mining across the continent and silver, lead and zinc mining at Broken Hill and uranium in the Northern Territory. The mines at Broken Hill led to the creation of one of Australia's modern mining giants, BHP.

Events

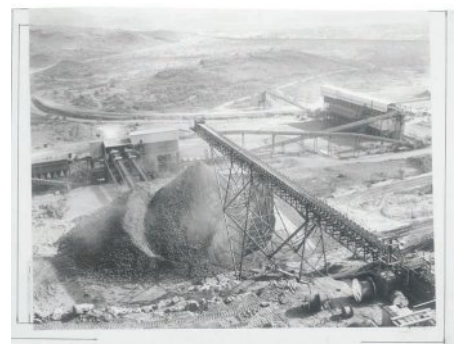
Australia also produced iron ore for steel making. However, in 1938, an embargo was placed on iron ore exports to protect the supposed small reserves and to prevent Japan from accessing supplies for defence reasons. In 1960, the export embargo was lifted to encourage mineral exploration, and because iron ore reserves looked larger than expected. In 1961, some huge finds were made in Western Australia. In Source 7.34, Senator Spooner, Minister for National Development, announces the finds.

Vast iron ore deposits had been discovered in Western Australia ... the deposits could total more than 2 500 000 000 tons – four or five times Australia's present know reserves [estimated recently at 380 000 000 tons]. Two finds have been made, both in the Pilbara district, in the north-west of WA. One group is in the Hamersley range area to the east and south-east of Port Hedland. 'Preliminary reports suggest that these deposits are of the greatest significance for the future of Australian industry. If the early promise of the deposits is fulfilled, Australia's iron ore position could be transformed'.

Source 7.34

Senator Spooner, Minister for National Development, *West Australian*, 13 November 1961, cited in F. K. Crowley (ed.), *Modern Australia in Documents, 1939–1970*, vol. 2, Wren Publishing Melbourne, Melbourne, 1973, pp. 419–20.

Work soon began. Over time, huge mining sites developed. More and more iron ore deposits were found as exploration continued. Geoscience Australia reported that from 1975 to 2005, Australia's deposits were estimated at 15 billion tons, but further assessment tripled this to 45 billion tons of economic demonstrated resource (EDR), meaning it was economic to mine. This equals 25 per cent of the world's known iron ore deposits, enough for Australia's export needs for more than 50 years.²



↑ Source 7.35 Hamersley iron mine, 1968

Australia's geological history meant that about 91 per cent of EDR iron ore is in Western Australia and eight per cent in South Australia. Black and brown coal deposits are centred on eastern Australia.³ In the early 1950s, oil and gas were discovered in Exmouth Gulf in Western Australia. In late 1961, Senator Spooner announced the discovery of oil at fields in Moonie Queensland, 350 kilometres west of Brisbane.⁴ More oil and gas were found in Bass Strait in 1967 and other areas.

A mining boom occurred in the late 1960s as iron ore, gas, nickel, uranium and manganese exports ramped up and foreign capital flowed into the country.⁵ The Fitzgerald Report revealed who benefited from this boom. The Report showed the mining industry paid \$263 million in royalties to the government from 1966–67 to 1972–73, but five times that amount went overseas in profits to parent companies.⁶ The same thing occurred during Australia's most recent mining boom in the early twenty-first century. Government fuel subsidies, equipment tax deductions and other benefits led to high profits from mining, amidst record high metal commodity prices, boosted by high rates of growth in China from infrastructure.

Perspectives on mining

Mining is important to human development and livelihood. Historian Geoffrey Blainey outlined the importance of the mining industry to Australia's economy. Source 7.36 shows what he said of the new mining age after World War II.

Source 7.36

The sudden boom in iron ore exports in the 1960s embraced a string of harbours spaced along one-quarter of the coast of Australia. The iron ports ran from Geraldton on the Indian Ocean to Darwin on the Timor Sea; they extended from a port so far south that it shipped wheat, to a port so far north that it shipped crocodile skins and pearl shell. ...

[Blainey then told the story of Lang Hancock discovering iron ore on his Hamersley pastoral station, and how Haddon King, an American geologist, through hard work and perseverance found Mount Tom Price. By 1968 the massive deposits found in the Pilbara region were being mined by seven mining syndicates, the ore being shipped to port by newly emerged train lines.]

The long boom has made the mining industry again one of the dynamos of the economy. Minerals seemed likely to surpass wool as the most valuable export in the early 1970s; and it is iron ore which seems likely then to earn more than any other mineral. Australia's long dependence on many imported minerals, ranging from petroleum to aluminium, has either diminished or ended. Not since the first years of the twentieth century have Australian mines been so important. Never before have they been so productive.

Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush that Never Ended: A History of Australian Mining*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1969, pp. 349, 356.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 7.6

1. Examine Source 7.36. How would you describe Geoffrey Blainey's overall attitude towards mining?
2. Note the publication date of Blainey's history of mining. How might this have influenced his attitude towards mining?

Mining is also destructive of the environment and the Aboriginal peoples' custodianship of the land. Iron ore, bauxite and some coal mining is done by open-cut mining. The existing vegetation and topsoil are bulldozed aside, the fauna is destroyed or retreats, and large excavations are made to expose the minerals, often resulting in water and dust pollution. The holes and trenches expand as mineral extraction increases. In the late twentieth century, owing to pressure from Aboriginal communities and environmentalists, governments began to mandate land rehabilitation as part of mining licences. However, such restorative practices were not always successful. Comalco Aluminium has mined bauxite at Weipa in far north Queensland since 1963. In 1966, the company began site rehabilitation. Three environmental researchers discuss the outcomes in Source 7.37.

Early rehabilitation efforts investigated the suitability and viability of commercial pasture, forestry, and horticultural crops, but since the early 1980s the focus has been on the establishment of native species. The company's stated aim is to produce a self-sustaining maintenance-free vegetation comprising a variety of native plants [which] will in turn support native fauna. Although considerable progress has been made towards these goals, rehabilitated areas occasionally require further maintenance in the form of labour (re-planting, weed control) or nutrients (additional fertiliser application) when sown plant species fail to establish or grow poorly.

Although soil handling techniques have developed considerably since 1966, several researchers at Weipa have noted a large decline in surface-soil organic matter during routine land rehabilitation operations. ... the importance of soil organic matter for aggregate stability, water retention, and soil aeration means that organic matter decline may affect seedling emergence and root penetration in some rehabilitated areas.

Source 7.37

G.D. Schwenke, D.R. Mulligan and L.C. Bell, 'Soil stripping and replacement for the rehabilitation of bauxite-mined land at Weipa: Initial changes to soil organic matter and related parameters', *Australian Journal of Soil Research*, 38, 1999, pp. 346, 364.



← Source 7.38 Bauxite mine, Weipa, 2005

FOCUS QUESTIONS 7.5

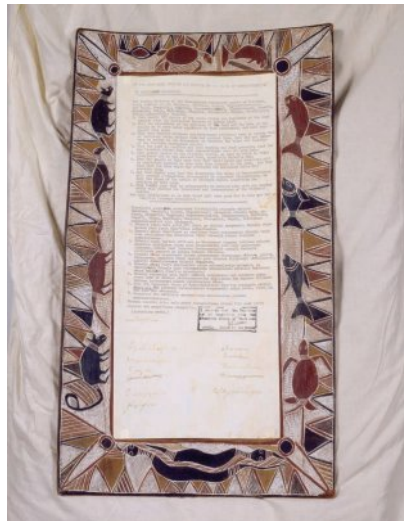
1. Who would you say benefited most from Australia's ongoing mining boom?
2. In your own words, why is land rehabilitation of a former mining site so challenging?

Mining Aboriginal land

The mineral boom of the 1960s put Aboriginal people under pressure for they had no legal rights over land. Mining on Aboriginal land was often very controversial. In 1963, 17 clans of the Yolngu people of Yirrkala sent a famous bark petition to the Federal Parliament over land taken from their reserve for bauxite mining by Nabalco. In part it protested: 'That the land in question has been hunting and food gathering land for the Yirrkala tribes from time immemorial: we were all born here. That places sacred to the Yirrkala people, as well as vital to their livelihood, are in the excised land, especially Melville Bay'.⁷ The petition still hangs in the foyer of Parliament House, Canberra (see Source 7.39). The Yolngu pursued land rights and compensation in court, but in 1971 Justice Blackburn in the Federal Court found that Native Title was not part of the common law and therefore could not be recognised. (This view was finally overturned in the 1992 Mabo decision.)

Native Title the words used in common law which recognises First Nations peoples have rights and interests in their traditional lands and waters derived from their traditional laws and customs. This was recognised for the first time in the High Court decision in the Mabo case ruling, 3 June 1992, and made into law in the *Native Title Act 1993*

royalties payments made in exchange for the right to use another party's property



↑ Source 7.39 Yirrkala Bark Petition, 1963

Therefore, Aboriginal people had few rights over mining on their land until the Fraser Government passed the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*, which had been drafted by the Whitlam Government before it was dismissed in 1975. That Act, which applied only to the Northern Territory, gave Aboriginal people the right to make claims in a Native Title Tribunal. If they gained title, they had the right to a veto over mining on their land, unless it was deemed by the government to be in the 'national interest' to proceed. They also had rights to royalties from mining. First Nations peoples outside the

Northern Territory did not gain the right to make a Native Title claim until the 1992 High Court Mabo decision and the subsequent *Native Title Act 1993*.

Mining on Aboriginal land led to many controversies over mining, most of which First Nations people lost. One of the most important battles was the long-running, nine-year dispute over mining at Guratba/Coronation Hill adjoining Kakadu National Park, 90 kilometres east of Pine Creek in the Northern Territory. Coronation Hill, Jawoyn country, had been a pastoral station in the 1930s. It had then briefly been a small uranium mine before gold was discovered. In 1984, Guratba was designated a sacred site. The controversy involved the clash between the right to protect a sacred site and the environment of a national park, against the right for mining development. It was viewed as an important test case.

In Source 7.40, environmental historian William Lines opens the story.

When the Hawke Government proclaimed Stage II of Kakadu National Park in 1983, large areas of the eco-region still lay outside the park. A possible Stage III [was contemplated], encompassing the South Alligator River, included tidal flats, mangroves, open woodland, tall forests, and Coronation Hill, where exploration had revealed major deposits of gold, platinum, and palladium. The local Jawoyn people claimed Coronation Hill as a sacred site.

Although Hawke's Ministers supported Kakadu Stage II, several sought to ensure Stage III did not preclude mining ... [and] mining proponents argued that a mining ban would constitute a negligent disregard of the possibility of vast mineral wealth. Australia could not afford to forgo mining. [The Minister for Resources and Energy, Gareth] Evans, recommended that only 65 percent of the proposed Stage III be dedicated to national park. The remaining 35 percent should be available for exploitation.

Campaigners from the ACF [Australian Conservation Foundation], TWS [Tasmanian Wilderness Society] and the Northern Territory Environment Centre argued the South Alligator River country was a magnificent transitional zone between monsoonal ecosystems and land further south. It was a necessary and essential part of an enlarged park, especially crucial for Kakadu mammals. Mining would undermine the area's integrity, contaminants would leak into the watershed, wildlife would drink the cyanide-contaminated water stored in the tailings dam, and buildings, roads, traffic, noise, earthworks, pits, and dust would spread expanding zones of disturbance. Furthermore, because the mining industry had such a huge stake in Coronation Hill conservationists realised that access to Kakadu would open every national park in the country to mining. It had to be opposed.

William Lines, *Patriots: Defending Australia's Natural Heritage*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 2006, pp. 273–74.

As negotiations ground on, the Hawke Labor Government compromised. In 1986, it proposed to declare Stage I and Stage II mining free, and recommend Stage II for World Heritage listing. It also expanded the park by 4000 square kilometres. However, it also allowed about half of it (2150 square kilometres) to be a Conservation Zone around Coronation Hill that would be open to mining.

Conservationists lobbied harder. In 1988, Senator Graham Richardson (the Labor powerbroker) proposed to reduce the Kakadu Conservation Zone to 47.5 square kilometres around Coronation Hill, but to allow mining

Source 7.40

FOCUS QUESTION 7.6

Examine Source 7.40. Why did environmentalists consider the Guratba/Coronation Hill issue to be so important for their broader conservation cause?



↑ Source 7.41 A protest against the mining of Kakadu, 1989

in that area including Coronation Hill itself. Richardson hoped this compromise might gain preference votes from supporters of the Greens in the upcoming election. Conservationists won a victory and then formed a green-black coalition with Jawoyn people to stop any mining in Kakadu.

The Hawke Cabinet approved the 47.5 square kilometre Kakadu Conservation Zone (KCZ), but established a Resource Assessment Commission to settle disputes, based on the economics of the case. Pro-mining Labor ministers hoped that this Commission might curb the influence of conservationists, and the miners thought it might advantage them in the future. The Hawke Government returned to power in 1990.

In 1991 the Resource Assessment Commission reported on the KCZ. Here are some findings:

Source 7.42

Environmental and Cultural Values

Several archaeological sites in and around the Conservation Zone retain significance for local Aboriginal people. (4.68) ... The abundance of mammals is greater than in any other surveyed area in north-western Australia. The very high species richness for mammals correlates with the great geological, topographic and vegetational diversity of the Zone. (4.72)

Mining Impact

The existing evidence suggests that a single mine, properly managed and monitored, would have a small and geographically limited direct impact on the known biological resources of the Conservation Zone. The impact would be restricted principally within the project area of the mine, and to a smaller extent the transport corridors, and would be unlikely to have an impact on the biological resources of Kakadu National Park. (5.167)

National Economic Impact for the Nation and the Northern Territory

The cost-benefit analysis of data based on the existing plan for the Coronation Hill project indicated that, in present value terms, the project is likely have a net benefit to Australia of approximately \$82 million ... The analysis indicates that the project would represent an efficient use of resources. (6.54)

The Northern Territory's real gross product, disposable income, consumption and investment levels are estimated to be between 4 and 5 per cent higher than they would be if tourism in Kakadu National Park did not exist. Direct and indirect employment is estimated to be more than 6 per cent higher as a consequence of tourist activities in the Park as a whole. At present, such activities in the Zone make only a small contribution to the Park's recreation and tourism values and therefore to economic activity in the Northern Territory. (4.84)

Aboriginal People

Three senior men are widely acknowledged by Jawoyn people, and by senior Aboriginal people in neighbouring groups, to have the primary right to speak for the Jawoyn about the significance of the Zone and about mining. The Inquiry has consequently paid particular attention to the views of these three custodians. (7.117)

Continued...

...Continued

In 1989 senior Jawoyn people applied to have an area known as the Sickness Country registered as a sacred site. Although not defined precisely, the Sickness Country includes the entire Conservation Zone. (7.124) The Bula tradition is primarily a Jawoyn tradition, although people in neighbouring Aboriginal groups are aware of Bula's reputation. According to the belief, Jawoyn people are physically and morally identified with Jawoyn country and with Bula, who is an 'essence' within the earth. The consequences of disturbing Bula are believed to be catastrophic. (7.125)

A number of Jawoyn people are in favour of mining at Guratba and exploration elsewhere in the Conservation Zone. They do not consider Guratba or the Sickness Country as significant culturally or religiously, although they express concerns about disturbance to certain sites outside the Zone. These pro-mining Jawoyn people appear to be motivated by a desire for personal and community advancement in a context of limited alternative employment opportunities and welfare dependency. (7.131)

Conclusion

[The Commission gave a number of scenarios: to mine or not to mine and concluded:]

The dilemma facing the Australian Government is clear: should it set aside the environmental risks that cannot be eliminated and the strong views held by the Aboriginal people responsible for the Conservation Zone in favour of securing increases in national income of the order that seems likely from the Coronation Hill project and possibly from other mineral resources in the Zone?

In reaching a conclusion on this matter, the Government may wish to take account of the ramifications of its actions. One important matter to be considered relates to the possible adverse effects of its decision on investment in the mining industry. In the case of the Aboriginal people, a decision to permit mining may be seen as a further instance of reluctance on the part of Australian governments to take decisions in favour of retaining Aboriginal cultural and religious values in the face of potential economic gains from mining. (pp. xxiii–xxiv)

Resource Assessment Commission, 'Kakadu Conservation Sone Inquiry Final Report Volume 1–2',
Parliamentary Paper no. 110 of 1991.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 7.7

1. What did the Commission's report (see Source 7.42) conclude about the likely impact of the mine on:
 - a. The environment, flora, fauna and its archaeological values
 - b. Aboriginal people
 - c. Australia's national economy.
2. Explain in your own words the dilemma (difficult decision) facing the government.
3. What were the ramifications of a decision to mine or not to mine?



← **Source 7.43** Prime Minister
Bob Hawke, 1985

It became once again a political question and one of leadership at a tumultuous time. The Treasurer Paul Keating who supported mining was challenging Hawke for the leadership of the Labor Party. The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody was holding its dramatic daily hearings, the Roxby Downs uranium mine dispute was current, and Prime Minister Bob Hawke had, in 1988, momentarily promised First Nations peoples a **treaty**.

treaty an agreement between two sovereign nations

Aboriginal people's views of the sacredness of country over which they were custodians was also publicly questioned at this time. Mining interests doubted the Jawoyn's claims about Guratba and the ancestral being Bula, whose disturbance by mining would cause disruption and sickness. This sceptical view had been building through the 1980s, as miners saw a threat to their livelihood from land rights.



↑ **Source 7.44** Kakadu National Park

In 1984, Hugh Morgan, the Director of the Western Mining Corporation, argued at a Mining Industry Council seminar that traditional Aboriginal culture ‘demanded vengeance killings and in the past had involved cannibalism’ (see Source 7.45). He added that 2000 years of Christian tradition supported the rights of companies to mine.

While land rights was identified by Government spokesman with spirituality, sacredness, anti-materialism, with the opposition to profits, with the essence of being Aborigines ... Christianity is a religion which celebrates work and the physical world and which is universal, which transcends time, race and geography.

Source 7.45

Hugh Morgan, *The Age*, 3 May 1984.

Source 7.46 is another claim made by Morgan in 1987.

The people of Melbourne and Sydney are each one of them paying over \$200 per annum, to keep Kakadu a vast national park with quasi [fake] religious status, to keep over 30 per cent of the NT landmass already locked up as Aboriginal land, inaccessible to the mining industry, by way of subvention [grant]. In addition they are also forgoing an even greater sum of export income in lost mineral sales. A country facing bankruptcy cannot afford these fantasies.

Source 7.46

Hugh Morgan, quoted in Liz Young, ‘Rhetoric and strategy: Australian mining and the conflict over Coronation Hill’, *Policy, Organisation and Society*, iss. 11, 1995, p. 18.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 7.8

1. What points did Morgan make in Sources 7.45–7.46 to support the mining proposal at Guratba/Coronation Hill?
2. Do you agree with Morgan’s use of the words ‘quasi religious’ and ‘fantasies’?
3. What might have contributed to Morgan’s views on Aboriginal peoples and Christianity?

Source 7.47 outlines how the decision over Coronation Hill played out, as revealed in the release of Cabinet papers for public scrutiny 25 years later. After a five-hour debate in Cabinet on 18 June 1991, a majority of ministers favoured mining at Coronation Hill, but Prime Minister Bob Hawke disagreed. However, Hawke told journalist Gabrielle Chan that at the start of their government, the Labor Cabinet had agreed that in the event of a policy stalemate, the Prime Minister’s will would prevail. Hawke continued:

One of the things I hope I was able to do in this period was address head on, rather brutally the innate prejudice that existed, unconsciously I think in some cases, in the minds of so many of my colleagues. I was annoyed beyond measure by the attitude of many of my colleagues and their cynical dismissal of the beliefs of the Jawoyn people and I think I made one of

Source 7.47

Continued...

FOCUS QUESTIONS 7.7

1. What was the main reason Prime Minister Hawke opposed the mining proposal?
2. Why did Hawke accuse some of his fellow government ministers of hypocrisy?

...Continued

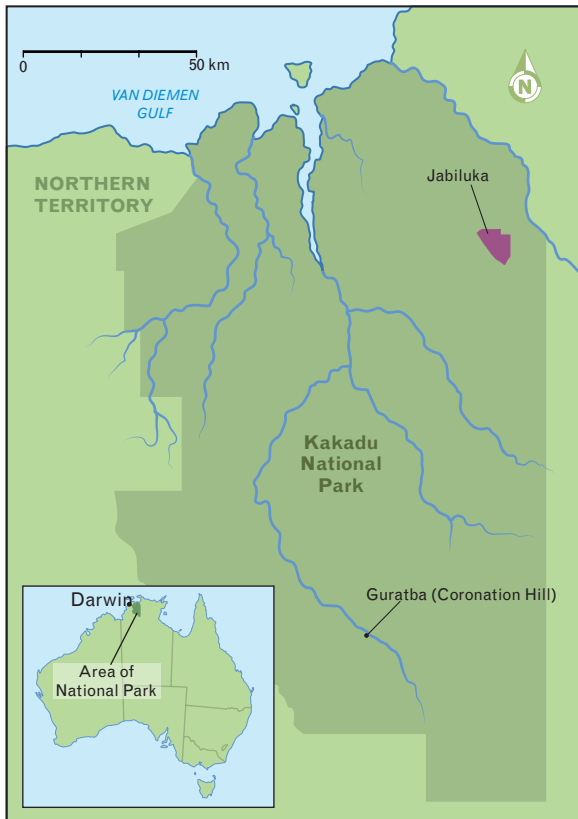
the strongest and bitterest attacks I ever made on my colleagues in the Cabinet when I was addressing this issue. There is no doubt this was one element in my loss of leadership as there was a great deal of antagonism amongst my colleagues as to the intensity of the remarks I made. But this was something I felt very deeply about.

The monumental hypocrisy of this position [of doubting Aboriginal sacred beliefs] is mind boggling. The same people who denigrate blacks in this way can easily accommodate and embrace the bundle of mysteries that make up their white Christian beliefs. The virgin birth, the holy trinity, God in his question mark heaven. Where is he? This supercilious supremacist discrimination is abhorrent to everything I hold most important and what in the end, this party stands for. We can argue about some things but surely in the end we are at one against discrimination.

Gabrielle Chan, 'Cabinet papers 1990–91: Hawke's fight to keep mining out of Kakadu helped unseat him', *The Guardian*, 1 January 2016.

Hawke won the battle on Guratba/Coronation Hill – mining did not go ahead. However, he lost the leadership to Paul Keating some months later.

Jabiluka mining protest



The successful campaign against the proposed Jabiluka uranium mine in the Northern Territory has been described as a 'game changer' in the environmental movement. Occurring only five years after Prime Minister Bob Hawke had vetoed the development of the Guratba/Coronation Hill mining operations, the campaign to prevent mining around Jabiluka was this time primarily spearheaded by the local Aboriginal community and their environmentalist and social justice activist allies.

The Jabiluka deposit adjoins the World Heritage-listed Kakadu National Park on the traditional lands of the Mirarr people. With a push for uranium mining after the 1996 election of the Howard Liberal Government, Jabiluka became the site for planned development by the ERA (Energy Resources Australia) corporation.

← **Source 7.48** A map of Kakadu National Park, showing Jabiluka and Guratba/Coronation Hill



↑ **Source 7.49** The Jabiluka protest, 1998

Led by senior traditional owner Yvonne Margarula, the Mirarr people garnered support from activists throughout Australia and the world to stage protests and also to physically blockade the construction of the mine. More than 500 people were arrested during the eight-month blockade in 1998.

The protest was supported by a range of environmental groups and by sections of the union movement. An Australia-wide Jabiluka Action Group was established to support the Mirarr cause and to generate active protest in the wider community. Protests occurred overseas, including by Australian and South Korean environmental activists outside the Australian Embassy in Seoul. A multifaceted approach of legal actions, shareholder protests, direct action and appeals to international bodies was successful in preventing development of the Jabiluka mine.



↑ **Source 7.50** Yvonne Margarula at Magela Creek in Kakadu National Park, 2010

In 2005, the Mirarr Gundjeihmi people, Energy Resources of Australia (ERA) and the Northern Land Council (NLC) announced the signing of a landmark agreement on the long-term management of the Jabiluka lease area in the Northern Territory.

The protest had been successful in protecting the traditional lands against future development. The Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation (GAC) was established by the Mirarr to assist them in ongoing management of the balance between sustainable development, traditional practice and living culture on their land. In Source 7.51, the Corporation reflects on the Mirarr people's struggle.

Source 7.51

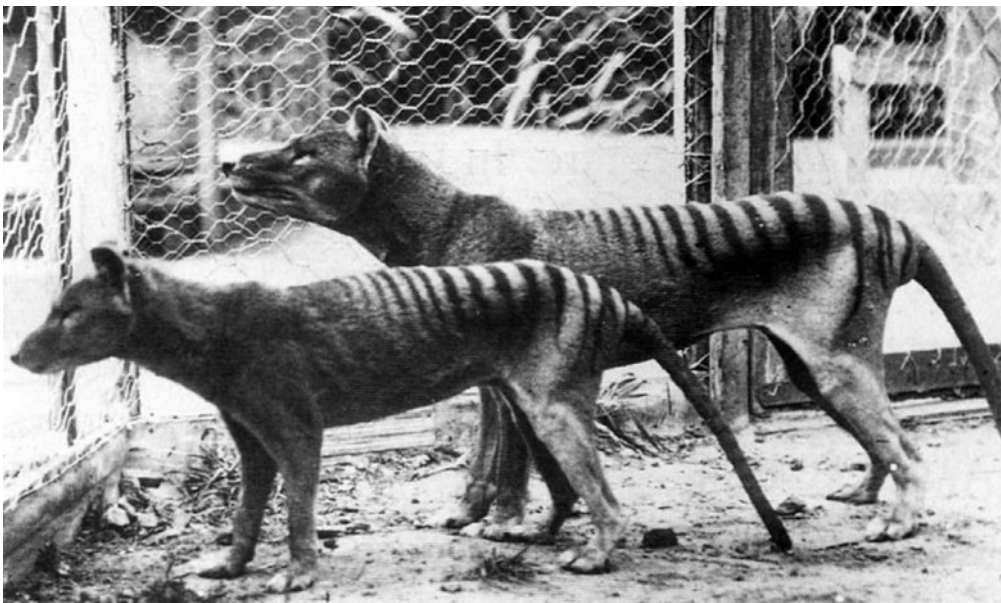
Over the years of the Jabiluka campaign the Mirarr remained firm in their resistance to unwanted development despite persistent pressure and confidence from the government and mining company that a mine at Jabiluka was inevitable. In their struggle to protect their country and culture Traditional Owners made it crystal clear that Jabiluka was not a sustainable option for one of the world's largest resource companies. The outcome at Jabiluka demonstrates the role that Indigenous people everywhere should be able to have in determining what happens to their country and their community.

Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation. Retrieved from www.mirarr.net/uranium-mining.

FOCUS QUESTIONS 7.8

1. Why was the Jabiluka protest a turning point?
2. In what ways did various groups contribute to the decision to stop uranium mining at Jabiluka?

Biodiversity and protection of native species
Extinctions



↑ **Source 7.52** Tasmanian Tigers (*Thylacinus cynocephalus*), Hobart Zoo, 1933

Any discussion of biodiversity must face the question of extinctions. Source 7.53 is a recent description of extinctions in Australia since the beginning of European settlement.

Source 7.53

We concluded that exactly 100 plant and animal species are validly listed as having become extinct in the 230 years since Europeans colonised Australia:

- 38 plants, such as the magnificent spider orchid
- 1 seaweed species
- 34 mammals including the thylacine and pig-footed bandicoot
- 10 invertebrates including a funnel-web spider, beetles and snails
- 9 birds, such as the paradise parrot
- 4 frogs, including two species of the bizarre gastric brooding frog which used its stomach as a womb
- 3 reptiles including the Christmas Island forest skink
- 1 fish, the Pedder galaxias.

The 100 extinctions are drawn from formal lists. But many extinctions have not been officially registered. Other species disappeared before their existence was recorded. More have not been seen for decades, and are suspected lost by scientists or Indigenous groups who knew them best. We speculate that the actual tally of extinct Australian species since 1788 is likely to be about ten times greater than we derived from official lists.

And biodiversity loss is more than extinctions alone. Many more Australian species have disappeared from all but a vestige of their former ranges, or persist in populations far smaller than in the past.

The 100 recognised extinctions followed the loss of Indigenous land management, its replacement with entirely new land uses and new settlers introducing species with little regard to detrimental impacts. Introduced cats and foxes are implicated in most mammal extinctions; vegetation clearing and habitat degradation caused most plant extinctions. Disease caused the loss of frogs and the accidental introduction of an Asian snake caused the recent loss of three reptile species on Christmas Island.

The causes have changed over time. Hunting contributed to several early extinctions, but not recent ones. In the last decade, climate contributed to the extinction of the Bramble Cay melomys, which lived only on one Queensland island.

The prospects for some species are helped by legal protection, Australia's fine national reserve system and threat management. But these gains are subverted by the legacy of previous habitat loss and fragmentation, and the ongoing damage caused by introduced species. Our own population increase is causing further habitat loss, and new threats such as climate change bring more frequent and intense droughts and bushfires.

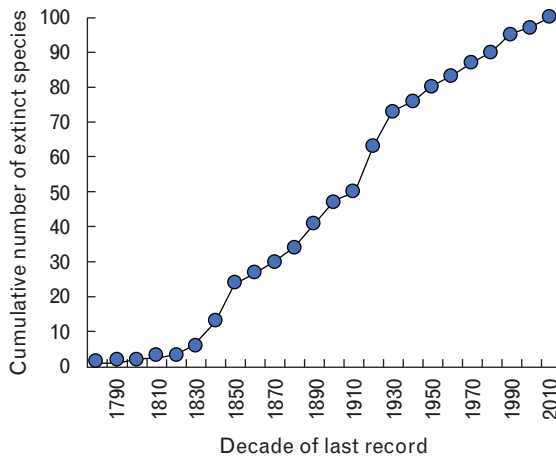
John Woinarski, Brett Murphy, Dale Nimmo, Michael F. Braby, Sarah Legge and Stephen Garnett, 'Scientists re-counted Australia's extinct species, and the result is devastating', *The Conversation*, 2 December 2019.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 7.9

1. Examine Source 7.53. What are the main causes of extinctions in Australia?
2. Why do the scientists think that the true extinction figures in Australia are greater than 100 since 1788?
3. What measures have been helpful for species preservation in Australia?
4. How are current conservation measures being undermined?

The research revealed in Source 7.53 is represented graphically in Source 7.54.

↓ Source 7.54



Adapted from John Woinarski, Brett Murphy, Dale Nimmo, Michael F. Braby, Sarah Legge and Stephen Garnett, Scientists re-counted Australia's extinct species, and the result is devastating, *The Conversation*, 2 December 2019.

Extinctions reduce biodiversity and both processes not only impoverish and weaken our ecosystems but carry massive economic costs as well. In Source 7.55, climate scientist Joëlle Gergis defines biodiversity and explains its economic importance.

Source 7.55

Biodiversity is made up of a combination of animals, plants and micro-organisms, their genetic variation, and their organisation into populations that function collectively as ecosystems. Aside from their intrinsic value, living organisms provide the foundation of the ecosystem services that make up the Earth's life support system that humans depend on. An ecosystem functions by continually cycling energy and materials through living organisms that grow, reproduce and then decay. This cycling of resources has evolved in response to a mix of disturbances like fires, droughts, diseases and ecological processes of competition or predation over millions of years. Together, these processes generate well-functioning ecosystems that are essential to a range of key services such as clean water and air, storage of carbon, and the production of topsoil.

For example, the rivers, wetlands and floodplains of the Murray–Darling system are estimated to provide \$187 billion worth of ecosystem services each year. Similarly, Australian terrestrial ecosystems are worth \$325 billion annually. Biodiversity related industries also contribute significantly and directly to the Australian economy. It has been estimated

Continued...

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that Australia's commercial fisheries contribute \$2.2 billion, kangaroo harvesting \$2.45 million, bushfood production \$100 million, and wildflower exports another \$30 million to our economy each year.

Australia's national parks and protected areas form the foundation of nature-based tourism experiences that underpin our tourism industry. The sector is heavily dependent on our spectacular natural environments and unique biodiversity. For example, in the year up until March 2017, the tourism dollars spent by local and international travellers in Australia reached a record high of \$100 billion. Australians spent \$61.7 billion on domestic travel, while 8.4 million foreigners chipped in an additional \$39.8 billion. ... The koala alone was estimated to be worth over \$3.2 billion to the Australian tourism industry in 2014, generating around 30 000 jobs.

Joëlle Gergis, *Sunburnt Country: The History and Future of Climate Change in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2008, pp. 236–37.

FOCUS QUESTIONS 7.9

1. Examine Source 7.55. Put the meaning of 'biodiversity' in your own words.
2. What are 'ecosystem services' and what are their importance?
3. Do you think average Australian citizens understand the economic costs and benefits of biodiversity today? Explain your view.

Protection legislation

Since 1970, wildlife has declined by two-thirds across the globe. In Australia, protection of native species operates under both state and federal laws. For example, Victoria passed a Wildlife Act in 1975 based on the older *Game Act, 1958*. However, such Acts have since been criticised by environmentalists such as Nicola Beynon, a spokesperson for Humane Society International. In January 2021, she argued that the 1975 Act was inadequate and needed reform. Beynon added the existing 1975 legislation was geared more towards issuing permits to destroy wildlife, than to protect it.

The Victorian Environment Minister Lily D'Ambrosio has promised a review of the Act in the light of the recent illegal killing of hundreds of wedge-tailed eagles in Gippsland, and the death of dozens of koalas during the bulldozing of a timber plantation.



↑ Source 7.56 National Parks and Wildlife Service Education Officer, Sue Crick cares for Jedda, the wombat, and Willie, the six-month old galah, at the Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park, New South Wales, 1977

In 1992, 150 countries, including Australia, signed and ratified the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity at the Rio Earth Summit, aimed at ‘the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources’.⁸

The Howard Government enacted the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* to maintain the diversity of Australia’s unique ecosystems. Source 7.57 outlines research by seven scientists from the University of Queensland. They used Federal Government forest and woodland maps derived from satellite images to evaluate the Act’s performance.

Source 7.57

Threatened species habitat larger than the size of Tasmania has been destroyed since Australia’s environment laws were enacted, and 93 per cent of this habitat loss was not referred to the Federal Government for scrutiny, our new research shows.

The research published today in *Conservation Science and Practice*, shows that 7.7 million hectares of threatened species habitat has been destroyed in the 20 years since the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999 came into force.

Some 85 per cent of land-based threatened species experienced habitat loss. The iconic koala was among the worst affected. More than 90 per cent of habitat loss was not referred or submitted for assessment, despite a requirement to do so under Commonwealth environment laws.

Our research indicates the legislation has comprehensively failed to safeguard Australia’s globally significant natural values, and must urgently be reformed and enforced.

Michelle Ward, April Reside, Hugh Possingham, James Watson, Jeremy Simmonds, Jonathan Rhodes and Martin Taylor, ‘Environment laws have failed to tackle the extinction emergency. Here’s the proof’, *The Conversation*, 2019.

A 2019 Federal Government inquiry called for change. It recommended that if the protection powers were passed to the states, better compliance measures and federal funding needed to be in place. To this date, the power is still being transferred without the recommended necessary checks in place.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 7.10

1. What does the report in Source 7.57 suggest about the efficacy of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999*?
2. Why might there be problems with the Federal Government delegating environmental protection powers to the states and territories? Consider the example of the Guratba/Coronation Hill mining proposal in the Northern Territory or the Juukan Gorge destruction in 2020 by iron ore mining giant Rio Tinto.

The Millennium Drought, 1996–2010



← **Source 7.58** An exhausted sheep searches for food on a farm near Ivanhoe, New South Wales, 2002

Area of Study 1 of this book analysed the Federation Drought. This Area of Study examines another momentous drought. The Millennium Drought might not have been the most severe, but it was a long drawn out affair as Source 7.59, a 2015 Bureau of Meteorology report, confirms.

From late 1996 to mid-2010, much of southern Australia (except parts of central Western Australia) experienced a prolonged period of dry conditions, known as the Millennium Drought. The drought conditions were particularly severe in the more densely populated southeast and southwest, and severely affected the Murray–Darling Basin and virtually all of the southern cropping zones.

While this episodic dry spell contributed to a long-term statistical decline in southern cool-season rainfall, it is also partially distinct from those drying trends – most particularly in the southwest, where winter drying has persisted for more than four decades.

During the Millennium Drought, Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Hobart, Canberra, Sydney and Brisbane were all affected by persistent or periodic drought episodes.

The Millennium Drought was essentially a cool season feature in southern mainland Australia, with warm season (November to March) rainfall above average in most parts of Australia, and anomalously high in tropical areas. Note that for Tasmania, the dry conditions were present in both seasons, but even stronger during the warm season. The effects of poor rainfall during the cool season was cumulative, meaning that the drought took hold through a series of increasing hydrological [water runoff] impacts over a series of years, with long-term drying of vegetation, the landscape and a drawdown on water resources. For example, Melbourne water storages dropped from almost full in October 1996 (97.5 per cent) to only one-third full by June 2010.

Source 7.59

Bureau of Meteorology, 'The Millennium Drought', in *Recent Rainfall, Drought and Southern Australia's Long-term Rainfall Decline*, 2015. Retrieved from www.bom.gov.au/climate/updates/articles/a010-southern-rainfall-decline.shtml.

The Millennium Drought had a huge impact on Australia as Matthew Heberger reveals in Source 7.60. The impacts he detected are outlined mainly in dot points, and his conclusion in words.

Source 7.60

- Lakes and riverbeds ran dry
- Agricultural production fell, in 2002–03 alone agricultural losses were \$7.4 billion, with 70 000 jobs lost
- Sheep numbers were halved to 72.7 million, their lowest number since 1905
- Dairy cow numbers fell by 25 per cent
- Rice harvest fell from 1.6 million tonnes to 18 000
- Wheat crops were halved
- In the worst years 2001–06, 10 636 families gave up farming
- Post drought surveys reveal only 29 per cent of farm families expect their children to take up farming
- Farm debt tripled during the drought
- 400 bushfires on Black Saturday in 2009 claimed 173 lives, injured 414 and burnt out 450 square kilometres.
- On 22 September 2009 a dust cloud 500 x 1000 kms wide enveloped Sydney

FOCUS QUESTIONS 7.10

1. According to Matthew Heberger in Source 7.61, what were some of the detrimental impacts of the Millennium Drought on Australia?
2. According to Heberger, how has this most recent major drought influenced Australian attitudes towards the environment and land management?

The Big Dry [Millennium Drought] will be remembered as the longest and most serious drought in Australian history. It has had a lasting effect on Australians' attitudes toward water, climate change, and the environment. It has profoundly affected rural economies, stimulated changes in the agricultural sector, and prompted critical thinking about how to modernize Australian agriculture and make it sustainable. The drought has set off a building spree of desalination plants on the nation's coasts and has increased Australians' awareness of water conservation. It has turned the humble rainwater tank into a fixture of more and more homes and has made newfangled dual-flush toilets the norm. Finally, it has set Australian water management on a new course, the success of which will not be fully understood until the next major drought.

Matthew Heberger, Australia's Millennium Drought: Impacts and responses. *The World's Water*, vol 7, 2011, pp. 97–125.

7.4 Chapter summary

Here are some dot-points for you to consider and add to:

Continuity

- Australia's population continued to grow in the second half of the twentieth century.
- Governments continued to encourage rather than hinder population growth by promoting natural increase and immigration.
- The profit motive informed land management practices after World War II.
- Mining remained an important sector in the Australian economy, providing profits for businesses, jobs for citizens and revenue for state and federal governments.
- Major droughts continued to devastate vast regions of the Australian landscape.

Change

- In 1945, Australia developed its first ever population policy of a two per cent target.
- This target was dropped in 1973 and no new population policy was put in its place and immigration intakes were lowered.
- Australia's economy experienced a long boom of economic growth after World War II, which was led largely by the mining sector.
- The mineral boom of the 1960s increased pressure on Aboriginal land and undermined Aboriginal custodianship.
- In 1976, the first land rights legislation was granted by the Federal Government in the Northern Territory, giving specific Aboriginal communities in the Territory some say in mining on land to which they had gained Native Title.
- Governments introduced legislation to protect the environment and biodiversity, although it has not effectively prevented the overall national trend in Australia of major environmental degradation and species loss.

7.5 End-of-chapter activities

The following tasks are designed to help strengthen your understanding of the material explored in this chapter and to encourage you to further analyse and evaluate the events, ideas, perspectives and experiences of growth, land and mining from 1950 to 2010.

Consolidating your understanding

Create one flash card per heading listed on the following page. Some cards will have more information than others. For those topics with more sources, use both sides of the card.

Events

- Post-war immigration policy
- Population growth post-World War II
- Iron ore deposits discovered
- Guratba/Coronation Hill mining proposal and counter-campaign
- UN Convention on Biological Diversity
- *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*
- Millennium Drought

Ideas

- Natural resources
- Population growth (natural)
- Population growth (immigration)
- Aboriginal land rights
- Biodiversity

Perspectives

- Natural resources are unlimited versus natural resources that are limited
- Aboriginal land rights versus mining rights

Evaluating historical interpretations

1. In Source 7.1, Geoffrey Blainey argues many Australians have lost faith in Australia unlimited. Do you find his reasons convincing? Discuss.
2. In Source 7.17, Infrastructure Australia observed 'There is evidence that our way of living and direction of development is not ecologically sustainable'. Do you agree? Justify your response with evidence from Chapter 7.

Constructing an argument: essay writing

1. Australia's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* is inadequate. Discuss using historical evidence to support your point of view.
2. The Millennium Drought that occurred from 1996 to 2010 demonstrates that settler Australians have still not learned how to sustainably manage the Australian environment. Discuss.
3. In Australia, profit will always be valued more highly than the health of the population and environment. Discuss.
4. To what extent did Australia's environmental awareness change during the twentieth century?

CHAPTER 8

Environmental movements contest the Anthropocene, 1986–2010



Source 8.0 Marchers led by Federal MP and Labor's environment and climate change spokesman Peter Garrett start the Walk Against Warming in Sydney, 11 November 2007

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Chapter timeline

World events	Date	Australian events
	1980	
1986: Fire at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant 1987: World Commission on Environment and Development presents the concept of 'sustainable development'		1986: Landcare established in Victoria, and nationally in 1989
	1990	
1992: Rio Earth Summit held 1997: Kyoto Protocol		1991: <i>Aboriginal Land Act 1991</i> (Qld) 1992: Australian Greens Party established
	2000	
2000: Term 'Anthropocene' popularised by scientist Paul J. Crutzen		2007: Australia implements Kyoto Protocol

8.1 Introduction

INQUIRY QUESTIONS

What movements emerged in the 1980s and 1990s to address environmental issues?

How did debates about environmental protection lead to changes in awareness, practices and outcomes?

The previous chapters have explored the growing environmental awareness, debates and activism in the decades after 1950. The rise of environmentalism from the 1960s is illustrated through examples such as the campaigns to save the Little Desert, Lake Pedder and the Franklin River. Similarly, the controversies over nuclear testing at Maralinga and in the Pacific harnessed increasing environmental concern. More recently, the Millennium Drought and debates about Australia's participation in international agreements saw environmental issues emerge as a key focus in politics, science, economics and community.

From the mid-1980s, environmental movements continued to grow and develop a louder voice across an increasing range of local and global issues. Indigenous groups advocated for a greater understanding of their perspectives, and protests by them at times had an impact on environmental outcomes. This chapter explores the extent to which these various groups contributed to change.

The rise of environmental issues played an increasing role in politics during this period, particularly with the evolution of the Australian Greens into a formal political party. A key focus of this chapter is how government policy and practice developed to deal with Australian environmental issues. On the world stage, Australia's responses to global environmentalism varied during the 1986–2010 scope of this chapter. All nations grappled with the conflict between

environmental sustainability and economic development. International awareness provided an opportunity to foster global agreements, with the degree of Australia's support for such being both inconsistent and debated.

While the notion of environmentalism magnified in the decades on either side of the year 2000, so too did developments in communication and media. This enabled popular culture to reach (and be used by) the same demographic cohort as was being engaged in environmental issues and protest. Formal and informal green-focused movements could broadcast their causes to an increasing audience as media channels embraced technological advances. Similarly, the arts were seen as an avenue through which awareness and support could be garnered for environmental issues through film, music, literature and visual arts.

During this time, the notion of the **Anthropocene** was developed – proposing the definition of a new geological interval to describe the current period when the activities of humans have substantially altered the Earth's surface and atmosphere. Movements emerged to address this impact.

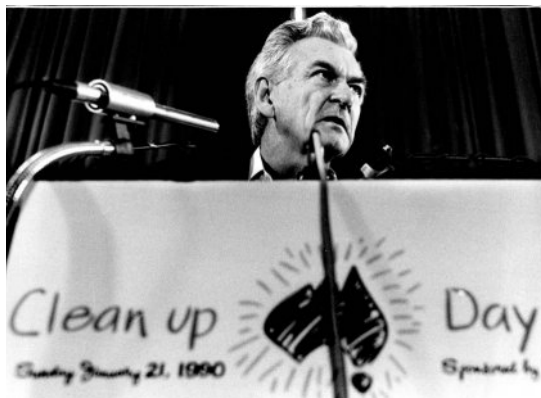
Anthropocene the current geological age, viewed as the period during which human activity has been the dominant influence on the Earth's climate and environment, increasingly acknowledged as beginning in 1950.

8.2 Significant environmental events, 1986–2010

INQUIRY QUESTIONS

What were the key Australian environmental events between 1986 and 2010?
What role did they play in creating change?

The establishment of Landcare



← **Source 8.1** Prime Minister Bob Hawke at the launch of the Clean Up Australia Day campaign in 1989

In 1989, the establishment of the national Landcare program was announced by Prime Minister Bob Hawke as a model to protect the Australian landscape for the future, building on what Premier Joan Kirner created in Victoria in 1986. This movement was distinctive in three ways.

First, Landcare was created through the joint efforts of two very different organisations in the Australian Conservation Foundation and the National Farmers' Federation. Environmental and farming groups had often seen themselves as having competing views – and so their common mission to address local issues was a milestone in the overall movement.

Second, it was a movement that encompassed the grassroots of the community and in this way drew on the strength of community and added to it. Volunteers were the backbone of the program and were involved in hands-on work to address specific land degradation problems. Those actively involved could witness the local outcomes of their work and also spread the message about the broader issues. Junior Landcare groups harnessed the interest of young people in environment protection.

Third, Landcare provided a formal framework in which projects could be funded, administered and monitored to ensure consistent and appropriate methods were being implemented within the projects.

Landcare quickly grew to include hundreds of groups around the nation and with a broadening focus on aspects such as habitat protection, restoration and education. A similar coastal environmental program, known as Coastcare, emerged in the mid 1990s. These movements can be understood as part of the Australian green revolution that stimulated new ways of thinking and new practices in environmental management.

As we see in Source 8.3, Prime Minister Bob Hawke's comments in 1989 at the launch of Landcare showed a recognition of environmental change and the need for action.



↑ **Source 8.2** A Landcare constructed native bee hotel in Tarcutta, NSW

Source 8.3

Environmental problems today, more than ever, are global. In just over 200 years since the Industrial Revolution, human activity has significantly increased the Earth's temperature, threatening the onset of the greenhouse effect. Huge areas of the world's tree cover have been destroyed and we are obliterating thousands of living species. We have polluted the world's oceans, seas and rivers, degraded the Earth's soils, damaged the fragile Arctic and Antarctic environments.

We have even managed to punch a hole through the ozone layer. It would have taken all our scientific ingenuity to do that deliberately, but it has taken no effort at all to pull off that spectacular accident. Australia is one of the most fortunate countries, escaping some of the world's greatest environmental traumas – acid rain, persistent eye-watering smog, the disasters at Chernobyl and Bhopal, the blight caused by population pressures. We have many magnificent environmental treasures – the Great Barrier Reef, the Queensland rainforests, the Tasmanian forests, Kakadu National Park. And we have many proven successes in protecting the environment. The Franklin runs free. Our World Heritage sites are a source of national pride. Greenhouse research is being funded. We are, with industry, phasing out ozone-depleting chlorofluorocarbons. But we have our environmental problems, and many of them are serious. With today's statement the Federal Government is providing new impetus and new directions in tackling those problems. And we're asking the community to join us in these efforts ...

Prime Minister Bob Hawke at the launch of the Statement on the Environment, 20 July 1989, p. 1.



↑ **Source 8.4** Revegetation by young Landcare and Catchment Management volunteers on a creek bank in Queensland, 2001

The Aboriginal Land Acts, 1991

The South Australian and Victorian Governments had handed back specific pieces of land to First Nations peoples in 1966 and 1970. In 1976, the Federal Government had passed the *Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* (see Chapter 7). However, no state governments had passed meaningful legislation until the Queensland Government's 1991 *Aboriginal Land Act* and *Torres Strait Islander Land Act*. These two Acts transferred existing community and reserve lands into Indigenous ownership, enabling Indigenous peoples to manage this land in line with their customs and traditions.

In the same year, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups met on Cape York with various conservation groups to formulate an accord covering land management issues, effectively conveying their perspectives on traditional environmental management.

Meanwhile in Victoria, the *Aboriginal Lands Act 1991* vested small areas of land into Aboriginal hands for cultural and burial purposes, which provided some recognition of environmental issues. However, at this same time, the Upper House in Tasmania rejected land rights legislation for Aboriginal peoples.

The landmark Queensland Acts had been developed by Wayne Goss's Labor Government after input from various Indigenous groups, environmental organisations and government departments. The Act was based on a broad community understanding of the expertise which Aboriginal groups could bring to environmental management.

Graeme Neate, Chairperson of the Land Tribunals established under the Queensland *Aboriginal Land Act 1991*, has explained:

Source 8.5

Aboriginal people see themselves as caretakers of a relationship of trust deriving from the Dreaming and passed on to them by their immediate forebears. The discharge of responsibilities in the numerous ways just summarised maintains the people and the country. The relationship is reciprocal. The country cares for its people. Some Aboriginal claimants have said that in their own country they will never go hungry and the dangerous places will not harm them, provided they exercise the proper care. Just as they know and care for their country, they believe that country knows and cares for its people.

Graeme Neate, 'Looking after Country: Legal recognition of traditional rights and responsibilities for land', *UNSW Law Journal*, September, 2017, pp. 194–95.



↑ **Source 8.6** Demonstration for land rights in Sydney, 1990

The following year saw the landmark High Court Mabo decision, which recognised the traditional rights of the Meriam people of Torres Strait over their land. The High Court also found that Native Title could, in theory at least, be recognised under Australian law for all First Nations peoples. The Australian Government's resultant *Native Title Act 1993* opened the door for broader access to traditional lands, and, as a consequence, provided greater opportunities for Indigenous management of the environment on these lands.

However, Native Title could only be claimed over land that had not already been granted as freehold title by the Crown, massively restricting the land over which First Nations peoples could claim. Moreover, Native Title could only be granted to those First Nations peoples who were able to show a continuous and traditional connection to land, called 'repressive authenticity' by the historian Patrick Wolfe. This meant those pushed off their land and onto missions and reserves in the past separating them from Country had little hope of winning a case. For example, the Native Title claim by the Yorta in the 1990s was finally lost in the High Court after a decade of litigation. Also, the Howard Government reduced rights in the *Native Title Amendment Act 1998*, including the right to negotiate over mining on pastoral leases to which they had co-terminus (overlapping) rights.

By 2010, the Native Title Tribunal reported the number of successful claims to that date. The figures below do not include the 30 per cent of the Northern Territory handed back under the 1976 Act.

At 30 June 2011, there were 160 registered determinations of Native Title, including 119 determinations that Native Title exists. The determinations covered a total area of about 1 228 373 sq km [square kilometres] or approximately 16 per cent of the land mass of Australia. A further three conditional determinations, all that Native Title exists, have also been made. These will increase the area to about 1 253 161 sq km or 16.3 per cent.

Source 8.7

National Native Title Tribunal, *Annual Report 2010–11*, p. 48.

By 2019, the National Native Title Tribunal reported there were 457 determinations by the Tribunal, 380 of them successful which found that Native Title existed over 2.8 million square kilometres, or 39 per cent of the Australian continent. One-third of the area was granted exclusive title, while two-thirds were under non-exclusive Native Title, meaning they shared rights with other Australians. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples remain sceptical of the value of Native Title as a form of land rights given the difficulty of obtaining it combined with the limited substantial ownership rights it provides its holders. Indeed, the historian and activist Gary Foley describes it as ‘the most inferior form of land title under Australian law’. Others, such as Nyangumarta Elder Janet Stewart, argue that Native Title has contributed to some extent towards the restoration of their custodianship over traditional lands:

Before Native Title we knew that we owned the country, but nobody else recognised that. As part of the Native Title process we have developed a good relationship with the pastoralists so that in the future we can both look after the country together.

Source 8.8

‘Nyangumarta get their country back’, *Koori Mail* 453, p.6

RESEARCH TASK 8.1

Identify a Native Title claim that has been made in a region close to where you live. You can find a register of claims here: <https://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/9558>.

1. What does this Native Title enable the Aboriginal holders to actually do with the land over which they have title?
2. In your view, does Native Title effectively restore Aboriginal custodianship over their historical land and sea country? Why or why not?

Earth Summit, 1992

A significant event on the global environmental stage was the United Nations (UN) Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. This became known as the Earth Summit. It was the first collaborative UN meeting to address issues such as sustainability, climate change, pollution and water supply.

Australia joined 153 other nations (from the 161 that were present at the summit) to sign (and ratify) the *UN Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC) which aimed to stabilise the growth of greenhouse gas emissions. The UNFCCC led to the Kyoto Protocol of 1997 that sought to place targets for emissions on industrialised countries.

The Earth Summit also established the *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development*, which proclaimed 27 principles around sustainability and environmental management.

Source 8.9 lists the key principles.

Source 8.9

Principle 7

States shall cooperate in a spirit of global partnership to conserve, protect and restore the health and integrity of the Earth's ecosystem. In view of the different contributions to global environmental degradation, States have common but differentiated responsibilities. The developed countries acknowledge the responsibility that they bear in the international pursuit of sustainable development in view of the pressures their societies place on the global environment and of the technologies and financial resources they command.

Principle 22

Indigenous people and their communities and other local communities have a vital role in environmental management and development because of their knowledge and traditional practices. States should recognize and duly support their identity, culture and interests and enable their effective participation in the achievement of sustainable development.

Extract from Rio Declaration of Environment and Development, *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development*, Rio de Janeiro, 3–14 June 1992.

FOCUS QUESTIONS 8.1

1. What was the significance of the Rio Earth Summit?
2. What was the aim of the 1992 *UN Framework Convention on Climate Change*?
3. Discuss why Prime Minister Paul Keating and then Prime Minister John Howard refused to commit Australia to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by a particular target.

The principles articulated in the *Rio Declaration* provided the framework for environmental policies developed in Australia at this time. The *National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development* was released in December 1992 and the underlying tenet of this strategy was that environment protection should be taken into account when making development decisions.

Nonetheless, despite incorporating such environmental concerns into strategic documents in principle, the Keating Labor Government refused to formally commit Australia to any policy of addressing climate change. These policies were perceived to be detrimental to Australia's economic growth and development. Furthermore, the subsequent Howard Liberal/National Government opposed reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions by a particular target by refusing to ratify the Kyoto Protocol in 1997. This left Australia isolated alongside the United States as the only two developed countries which rejected the international agreement.

Thus, while Australian governments were agreeing to consider environmental/greenhouse gas emission problems in principle or rhetorically, they were simultaneously determined to avoid any nationally coordinated state action which would involve economic costs associated with decarbonising the society.

Australian Greens party formed

The previous chapters have examined instances where individuals, groups and movements advocated in various ways over environmental issues. However, despite some legislation being passed which partially acknowledged the concerns of environmentalists, Australian state and federal governments were overwhelmingly reluctant to enact changes that might jeopardise economic growth for the purposes of conservation. The creation of a formal political party with



↑ **Source 8.10** Logo for the Australian Greens party

a focused environment platform was a key event in bringing this perspective into the national political agenda. The Australian Greens were established in 1992 and played a major role in state and federal parliaments over the ensuing decades.

The forming of the national Greens party was the culmination of many smaller groups and local political candidates coming together under a common umbrella after many years of working on separate fronts and in different areas.

The origin of the Australian Greens can be traced back to early environmental movements and the 1972 creation of the United Tasmania Group – which is generally regarded as the first green political party in the world after running candidates in a state election in that year. Other

state-based Greens parties emerged during the 1980s (see Chapter 6).

Tasmanian Dr Bob Brown had been a high-profile environmentalist and Green member of that state parliament and in 1996 was elected as a Tasmanian senator in the Australian Parliament. When the state-based party merged with the Australian Greens, Brown became that party's first federal member.



↑ **Source 8.11** Michael Organ hands out how to vote cards during the 2004 federal election

In 2002, the Greens won their first lower-house federal seat with the election of Michael Organ at a by-election in the NSW seat of Cunningham. This was the first minor party to win a House of Representative seat in more than 50 years and demonstrated the growing support for the party.

By the time of the 2004 federal election, the Greens fielded candidates in every House of Representatives seat in Australia. That election saw them increase the number of Greens senators to four, with a nationwide primary vote of 7.2 per cent.

Over time, the Greens developed socially-conscious policies beyond environmental issues, but maintained its initial strong focus on conservation matters. Its platforms have continually advocated matters such as recycling, water management, habitat loss, species extinction, deforestation and pollution, but above all, democracy.

In 2012, Bob Brown retired from the Senate. Source 8.12 is the declaration he made at the Hobart Town Hall on 23 March 2012.

Source 8.12

We people of the Earth exist because our potential was there in the Big Bang, 13.7 billion years ago, as the Universe exploded into being.

So far it seems like we are the lone thinkers in this vast, expanding universe. [If not, why are they not communicating with us?] ... They have extincted themselves. They have come and gone. And now it's our turn ... Just as we are causing that destruction, we could be fostering its reversal. Indeed nothing will save us from ourselves but ourselves ... So democracy – ensuring that everyone is involved in deciding Earth's future – is the key to success.

Bob Brown, *Optimism: Reflections on a Life of Action*, Hardie Grant, Melbourne, 2014, pp. 193–94.

**FOCUS
QUESTIONS 8.2**

1. Why was the Greens originally formed as a political party?
2. How many Australians cast a primary vote for the Greens in the 2004 federal election?
3. What does this figure suggest about Australian attitudes towards the environment at this point in time?
4. What is Bob Brown's basic solution for the world's environmental problems?



↑ **Source 8.13** Greens activists dressed as surf lifesavers march through the city to condemn Prime Minister John Howard's inaction on climate change during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) leaders' summit in Sydney, 7 September 2007

The Kyoto Protocol

A 1997 conference in Kyoto, Japan, aimed to address Article 2 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change that had been developed in Rio. This objective was to stabilise the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere 'at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic (human) interference with the climate system'.

The agreement which emerged from that conference was to manage and reduce carbon dioxide emissions and greenhouse gases. The lengthy document covered a wide range of elements related to this area of environmental protection. In short, the Kyoto Protocol committed industrialised countries and economies in transition to limit and reduce greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions in accordance with agreed individual targets.

Even though Australia had been a participant at both Rio and Kyoto conferences, Prime Minister John Howard did not ratify (sign) this treaty. His justification was that it did not cover developing countries and that the United States had not signed the agreement. The Howard Government said it did intend to meet its Kyoto target, but without ratification.

This stance created some community division. On the one hand, major opponents of the Kyoto Protocol were companies representing the energy and resources sectors who argued that they would be disadvantaged given the lack of emissions controls on developing country competitors. On the other hand, there was strong political support for the Kyoto Protocol from the ALP and Greens. Many environmental organisations also strongly advocated that Australia should play its part in global environmental management by ratifying the agreement. Nations who were signatories also voiced concerns about Australia's lack of support for the international pact. Despite this pressure, Prime Minister Howard refused to sign the protocol for the remainder of his term in office, aligning Australia with the United States, which was the only other developed nation that refused to ratify the international agreement.

By contrast, when the Howard Government was voted out of power in November 2007, the incoming Labor Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's first major action on assuming office was to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. Rudd had been a long-time supporter of the Kyoto treaty and it had been a central issue leading up to the election. Australia's target in ratifying the agreement was to limit its emissions to 8 per cent above 1990 levels over the next five years.

FOCUS QUESTIONS 8.3

1. What was the perspective of the Howard Liberal Government on the Kyoto Protocol and how did this translate into its responses?
2. Describe the contrasting perspective of the Australian Labor Party during this time.
3. Analyse how and why Labor Prime Minister Kevin Rudd acted in relation to the Kyoto Protocol upon his election in 2007.

8.3 Influential ideas on environmental movements, 1986–2010

INQUIRY QUESTION

How did new ideas emerge that focused attention on environmental change both in Australia and globally?

A Green Revolution

John Briggs, a professor of Geography of the University of Glasgow, defined the Green Revolution in this way:

Source 8.14

The Green Revolution is the term applied to the major advances in crop breeding genetics made in the 1960s which significantly raised the yields of some grain crops. Although crop experimentation is something that takes place continually, and has done so since the earliest settled agriculture about 8000 years ago, there are nonetheless step-like advances made from time to time in producing new seed varieties, and the Green Revolution can be seen as one of these. However, rather than the full range of crops experiencing rises in yields per hectare, it was only really wheat in particular, and rice to a lesser extent, which experienced the dramatic yield rises characterizing the Green Revolution. Between 1961 and 1971, the advances of the Green Revolution can be clearly seen, as, in that decade, yields per hectare of wheat increased by about two-thirds, and those of rice by about one-third. In all the selected regions, it can be seen that yields of both wheat and rice have continued to rise in each subsequent decade, including in Africa, such that between 1961, before the benefits of the Green Revolution, and 2005, the last year for which figures were available at the time of writing, wheat yields per hectare have increased by over 200 per cent in Asia, Africa, and India, although the overall increase in rice yields over the same time period has been rather more modest. It can be argued that the term 'Green Revolution' was very much a product of its time ... The political consequences of the Green Revolution were seen, particularly by the United States, to be very important as a solution to food shortages and famine in Asia in particular, and therefore a bulwark to the spread of socialism in that continent at the height of the Cold War.

J. Briggs, 'Green Revolution', in *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, Elsevier, Amsterdam, 2009. pp. 634–38.

From this definition, the idea emerges as one more applicable to agriculture practised in less agriculturally scientific countries than Australia. It was termed 'green' to make it seem good for the land, unlike some of the farming problems caused by chemical fertilisers like DDT. The revolution depended on imposed practices, heavy use of water and chemical fertilisers to get the most out of the new high yielding seeds. The impact could be quite dramatic. John Briggs revealed that in 40 years since 1961, India increased its wheat production by 555 per cent, although rice production grew by a less impressive 141 per cent. But famine was averted in India and elsewhere by these crops.

Australia had a green revolution, not so much by high yield seeds, but by Landcare, reforestation and more sustainable farming. Agronomists, farmers and environmentalists have pursued this, as revealed in an alliance between the National Farmers Federation and the Australian Conservation Foundation in 1989. It is reflected in thoughtful books by farmers like Peter Andrews' *Back from the Brink* (2006) and Charles Massy's *Call of the Reed Warbler: A New Agriculture, A New Earth* (2017), among others on regenerative farming.

In 1982, the International Year of the Tree, the United Nations Association of Australia and the Nursery Industry Association of Australia founded Greening Australia to protect, restore and conserve Australia's native vegetation. In 1997, the registered charity Greenfleet was created with the aim to re-forest Australia by planting trees, which also offset carbon emissions.



↑ **Source 8.15** Charles Massy on his 4500 acre property in Cooma, New South Wales

Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD)

In the twenty-first century, the notion of 'sustainable development' is widely understood and accepted. However, this concept was only defined in the early 1980s as a term to describe how resource protection needs to be a determining factor when making development decisions.

In 1987, the United Nation's World Commission on Environment and Development released its *Brundtland Report* that recognised the world's existing pattern of economic growth was not ecologically sustainable. Principles developed at the Rio Earth Summit were specifically aimed at addressing **ecologically sustainable development (ESD)**.

ecologically sustainable development (ESD) development which aspires to meet the needs of people today, while conserving our environment and resources for the benefit of future generations

In Source 8.16, economist John Dermott explains this new concept.

A dilemma facing every productive society in the world in the twentieth century is the conflict between economic gain and environmental preservation. The mass stripping of natural resources for use in industry has been a hallmark of modern society since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, when Britain's forests were stripped to supply fuel for the first iron furnaces ... Governments and other decision-makers must weigh up the short-term economic gain of resource use against the longer-term perspective of conserving the natural environment.

Source 8.16

John Dermott, 'A healthy economic performance is essential in a productive society', in G. Peel and N. Fairbairn (eds), *Australia: A Changing Culture*, Coghill, Melbourne, 1991, p. 126.

Indeed, Australian governments did respond quickly to the *Rio Declaration* with the development of a *National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development* by the Hawke–Keating Labor governments, endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in December 1992. This reflected the necessary role of the ensuring the principles of ESD were considered in future planning.

A UN World Summit on Sustainable Development was held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002. This conference adopted a *Declaration on Sustainable Development* that also included recognition of the social impact of development. It affirmed a commitment to ‘assume a collective responsibility to advance and strengthen the interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development – economic development, social development and environmental protection – at the local, national, regional and global levels’.



↑ **Source 8.17** Professor Paul J. Crutzen, 2010

The Anthropocene

The idea of the Anthropocene describes the notion of a new recent geological era shaped by the impact on nature and the environment by humans.

Nobel Prize winning chemist Paul J Crutzen is credited with first popularising this term at a conference in Mexico in 2000, based on a 1980s definition by biologist Eugene F. Stoermer. Crutzen proposed that given the massive and rapid changes to the Earth since the Industrial Revolution, that this period of time should be seen as a distinctive geological era.

In Source 8.18, Crutzen and two colleagues elaborate on what the Anthropocene means for human history.

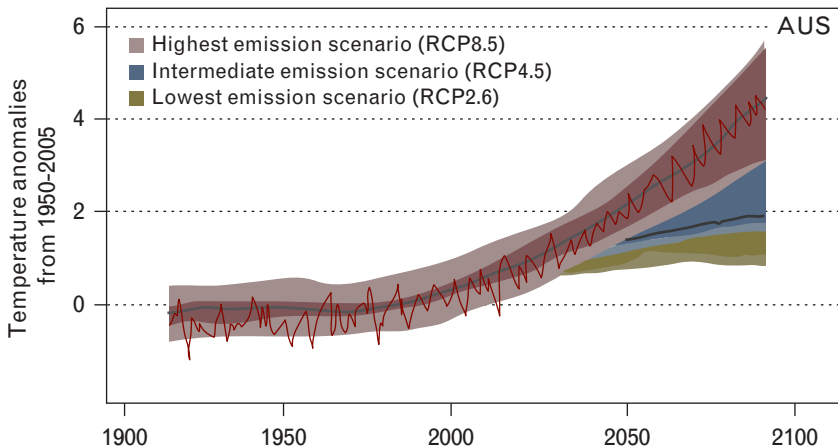
Source 8.18

The Anthropocene began around 1800 with the onset of industrialization, the central feature of which was the enormous expansion in the use of fossil fuels. We use atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration as a single, simple indicator to track the progression of the Anthropocene. From a preindustrial value of 270–275 ppm, atmospheric carbon dioxide had risen to about 310 ppm by 1950. Since then the human enterprise has experienced a remarkable explosion, the Great Acceleration, with significant consequences for Earth System functioning. Atmospheric CO₂ concentration has risen from 310 to 380 ppm since 1950, with about half of the total rise since the preindustrial era occurring in just the last 30 years. The Great Acceleration is reaching criticality. Whatever unfolds, the next few decades will surely be a tipping point in the evolution of the Anthropocene.

Will Steffen, Paul J. Crutzen, and John R. McNeill, ‘The Anthropocene: Are humans now overwhelming the great forces of nature?’, *AMBIO: A Journal of the Human Environment*, 36(8), 2007, pp. 614–21.

As the term became more widespread in the scientific community, the definition of the Anthropocene was gradually tightened and a later starting point determined at around the middle of the twentieth century. In 2016, the Anthropocene Working Group of the International Union of Geologic Sciences (IUGS) voted to recommend the Anthropocene as a formal geologic epoch at the 35th International Geological Congress. This body recommended that the year 1950 be regarded as the starting point of the Anthropocene era.

↓ Source 8.19



Climate model projections of increases in average temperature across Australia based on low (light green), intermediate (blue) and high (pink) greenhouse gas emissions scenarios, with Bureau of Meteorology ACORN-SAT instrumental temperature observations (brown). Adapted from CSIRO and Bureau of Meteorology, *Climate Change in Australia*, www.climatechangeinaustralia.gov.au; Joëlle Gergis, *Sunburnt Country*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2018, p. 218.

In the context of this chapter, the environmental changes since the start of the Anthropocene have resulted in various responses by governments, individuals and organisations. The ways in which environmental movements have contested the impact of human activity have ranged from global and national political responses to public awareness campaigns, as well as through localised hands-on approaches.

Popular culture and the arts

The contributions of artists to the environmental movement grew strongly during the period 1986–2010. Creating a broader awareness of environmental issues and support for the movement was achieved through the visual arts, music and other forms of popular culture.

Distinctive visual art, for example, informed posters on issues such as the Tasmanian wilderness, woodchipping and the Jabiluka protest.

In literature, the Australian novelist George Turner's 1987 **dystopian** work *The Sea and Summer* depicted a Melbourne of the future drowning

dystopian relating to a very bad or unfair society in which there is a lot of suffering, especially an imaginary society in the future

under rising seas of climate change. Perspectives of Indigenous writers in the *Yarning Strong: Land Anthology* were aimed at informing young Australian readers about environmental and other land issues.

Source 8.20

The miner rapes
The heart of Earth
With his violent spade
Stealing, bottling her black blood
For the sake of greedy trade.

Time is Running Out, Oodgeroo Noonuccal.

Indigenous poet Oodgeroo Noonuccal (Kath Walker) tackled a range of environmental issues in her extensive range of works, with *Time is Running Out* as an example:

An awareness of the Australian environment was stimulated by movies from the 1980s such as *Crocodile Dundee* and *The Man from Snowy River*. Although unashamedly commercial in intent, city audiences were being exposed to the natural landscape through these films at a time that allowed them to gain an appreciation of what the environmental movements were trying to save. Australian TV series during this period also tapped into the population's increasing affinity for the land and environment with programs such as *Fields of Fire*, *Alice to Nowhere*, *The Dirtwater Dynasty* and *The Flying Doctors*.

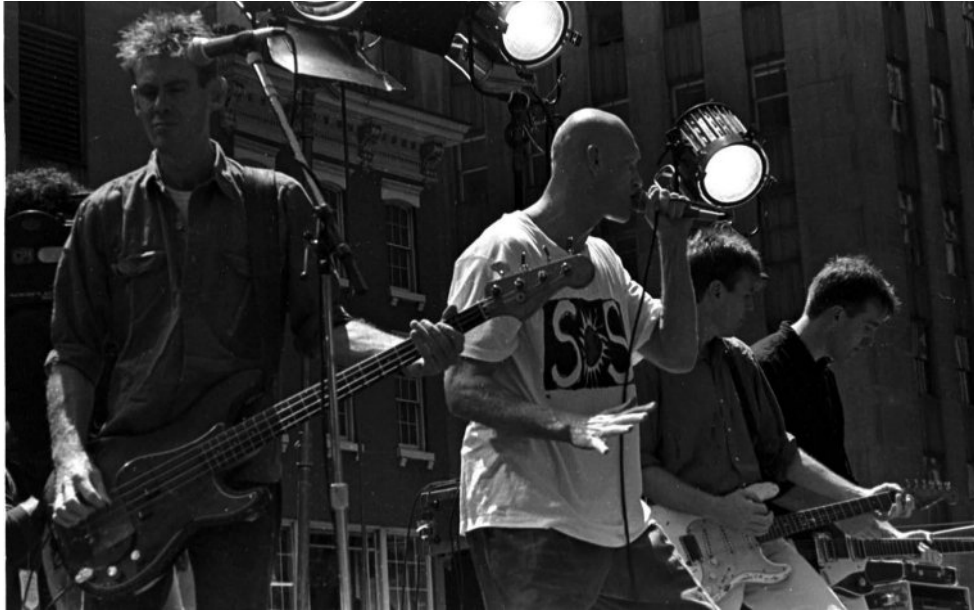
The most significant and intentional field of the arts to contribute to the environmental movement was that of music. The impact of *Let the Franklin Flow* as a protest song against the damming of the Franklin River led to further popular music releases in the following decades. Its writer Shane Howard and his band Goanna created a list of songs – including *Solid Rock* and *Common Ground* – that resonated with the environmental movement and Indigenous communities.

Paul Kelly examined the ongoing environmental and human effects of the nuclear testing on the lands of the Maralinga people in the lyrics from his 1986 work, *Maralinga (Rainy Land)*.



↑ **Source 8.21** Paul Kelly (second from right) and the Messengers, 1988

Midnight Oil and its lead singer Peter Garrett (who later became Federal Environment Minister in the Rudd Labor Government) also brought social and environmental issues to the attention of the Australian community. Works such as *Beds are Burning*, *The Dead Heart*, *Blue Sky Mine* and *Power and the Passion* were all commercial and popular successes, with the band also working closely with the Aboriginal Warumpi Band during this period as they gained further understanding of Indigenous perspectives in their music.



↑ **Source 8.22** Midnight Oil playing outside the Exxon building in New York City to protest the Exxon Valdez oil spill, considered one of the world's worst oil spills



↑ **Source 8.23** John Williamson, 1987

John Williamson wrote the song *Rip Rip Woodchip* in 1989 and donated \$1 from each record sale to the Australian Conservation Foundation.

What am I gonna do – what about the future?
Gotta draw the line without delay
Why shouldn't I get emotional – the bush is sacred
Ancient life will fade away

Over the hill they go, killing another mountain
Gotta fill the quota – can't go slow
Huge machinery wiping out the scenery
One big swipe like a shearer's blow

[Chorus]

Rip rip woodchip – turn it into paper
Throw it in the bin, no news today
Nightmare, Dreaming – can't you hear the screaming?
Chainsaw, eyesore – more decay

Source 8.24

Rip Rip Woodchip, Words and music by John Williamson © Copyright EMUSIC Pty Ltd.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 8.1

1. Identify specific ways in which the lyrics in Source 8.24 suggest that the environment is being destroyed.
2. How do the first two lines represent the broader environmental movement's concerns in the late 1980s?
3. Consider the first two lines of the chorus and explain the environmental waste that John Williamson is highlighting.
4. The song won Most Performed Australasian Country Work at the 1990 APRA Awards. Why do you think this song resonated with society?

FOCUS QUESTIONS 8.4

1. How significant was the Australian Government's accepting the idea of ecologically sustainable development?
2. Evaluate the significance of the scientific community's adoption of Crutzen's idea of the Anthropocene.
3. Identify and discuss one musical work of this period that impacted society with its environmental themes.

8.4 Diverse and competing perspectives on the environmental movement, 1986–2010

INQUIRY QUESTION

What were the perspectives of conservation movements, political parties and other organisations on land use and environmental issues?

Major political parties

The establishment and growth of the Australian Greens as a political party has been seen as a hallmark of this period – and its environmental platform was clearly its primary perspective. The perspectives of the two major political parties in Australia should also be considered and noted.

This chapter has noted some key decisions during the respective Labor and Liberal governments during the 1986–2010 period.

Labor Prime Minister Bob Hawke's establishment of Landcare in 1986 and his 1989 statement on Ecologically Sustainable Development were significant developments acclaimed by the environmental movement at the time. We saw in Chapter 7 that he also decided to ban mining from Kakadu and Guratba (Coronation Hill). Hawke was also instrumental in convincing world leaders in 1989 to make the significant decision to ban mining in Antarctica. Furthermore, in 1990, he announced that his government wanted the country to cut greenhouse emissions by 20 per cent by 2005. In contrast, despite overseeing the introduction of several pieces of environmental legislation, the refusal to ratify the Kyoto Protocol by subsequent Prime Minister John Howard brought his Liberal government ongoing criticism by environmental groups.

Prime Minister Bob Hawke said this in 1989:

Environmental problems today, more than ever, are global. In just over 200 years since the Industrial Revolution, human activity has significantly increased the Earth's temperature, threatening the onset of the greenhouse effect. Huge areas of the world's tree cover have been destroyed and we are obliterating thousands of living species. We have polluted the world's oceans, seas and rivers, degraded the Earth's soils, damaged the fragile Arctic and Antarctic environments ...

We will be taking the lead in developing international conventions on greenhouse gas emissions and on biological diversity. Australia will do everything in its power to ensure Antarctica remains free from mining. We will be seeking a global ban on the barbarous practice of driftnet fishing which indiscriminately kills dolphins, seals and small whales.

Prime Minister Bob Hawke, *Statement on the Environment*, Wentworth, NSW, 20 July 1989.

Fifteen years later, Prime Minister John Howard said this:

Australia will not ratify the Kyoto Protocol until the ratification of that protocol will protect the long-term national interest of this country. We have a very simple proposition. We are not blinded by some mythical belief that by ratifying the Kyoto Protocol you are going to bring untold benefits to Australia ...

The problem with the Kyoto Protocol as presently cast is that developing countries such as Russia and China would not be subject to the same strictures as developed countries such as Australia. And if we adhered to the protocol, as requested by the Leader of the Opposition, that would disadvantage the resource industries of Australia because they

Continued...

Source 8.25

Source 8.26

...Continued

would incur burdens that the resource industries of countries like Russia and China would not incur. That is the reason why we will not sign ...

We will continue to work towards a more effective global response, but that global response has to include all the major emitters, and until it does it is not in the interests of Australia to ratify the protocol. It will cost jobs – it will cost the jobs of unionists and non-unionists alike – and it will do very great damage to the resource sector of Australia, which is not in the national interests of this country ...

Prime Minister John Howard, 26 May 2004.

As Sources 8.25 and 8.26 illustrate, a shift in the rhetoric of Australia's political leadership occurred during the mid-1990s. The Hawke/Keating Labor Government and subsequent Howard Liberal/National Party Governments began to place more emphasis on economic development over environmental concerns. As journalist Maria Taylor argued:

Source 8.27

From the mid-1990s, the political narrative moved away from a story about risk and global good citizenship along with domestic opportunity for new industries and cost saving through efficiency. The story became a drama of national self-interest, said to be threatened by outside forces like the United Nations – explaining some of the disdain for the UN-sponsored IPCC reports. The national interest was framed as being synonymous with the interests of industries that extract mineral resources and fossil fuels, notably coal.

Maria Taylor, *Global Warming and Climate Change: What Australia Knew and Buried... Then Framed a New Reality for the Public*, Australian National University, Canberra, 2014, p. 175.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 8.2

1. See Sources 8.25 and 8.26. How would you explain the different approaches of the Hawke and Howard Governments towards the issue of climate change?
2. In Source 8.27, how does Maria Taylor explain the change that occurred in the mid-1990s in relation to how Australia dealt politically with climate change?

Indigenous perspectives

First Nations peoples have a long history of collaboration with the environmental movement in Australia. In cases such as the Jabiluka mine, there were successful outcomes as environmental groups supported Indigenous campaigns.

At other times, however, there have been tensions between Indigenous groups and others when there are different perspectives on political, legal and economic matters and approaches. For example, the notion of 'wilderness' espoused by the conservation movement was taken by some as contradicting First Nations' knowledge that the Australian landscape was traditionally a managed environment (as we saw in Area of Study 1 of this book). And while National Parks worked to protect the physical environment, this has sometimes been at the expense of precluding Indigenous peoples and their land practices in those areas.



↑ **Source 8.28** A tent and sign at the Mutawintji blockade, 1983

Local Aboriginal groups had success in specific environmental protest movements during this period. Local groups in the remote west of New South Wales, including Barkindji, Malyangapa and Wanyawalku peoples, blockaded the Mutawintji National Park during 1983 in a successful move to stop the removal and destruction of rock art by tourists. On the NSW south coast, the Yuin people were to eventually regain control of areas after extended protests against the logging of sites that held cultural significance.

On Cape York in 1991, a partnership was formed to develop an accord covering land management, fishing rights, ranger training and mining guidelines. That this partnership included a dozen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups, along with nine conservation groups, demonstrated a common cause could overcome differences in perspectives.

The best-known example of Indigenous environmental protection is the case of Uluru. From the late 1970s, the traditional Anangu custodians appealed to governments for the rights to their land amid concerns over the destructive impact of commercialism and tourism of the area. In 1985, the Governor-General of Australia returned the title deeds of the park to the Anangu in a handback ceremony. The Anangu leased it back to the government as a national park for 99 years, under a board of management established in December 1985 on which the Anangu had a majority. The board undertook a joint project with Parks Australia to oversee the sustainable environmental management of the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park.

The handback brought great joy, but over the years joint management has not always gone smoothly, as Anangu traditional owners declared to reporter Kathy Marks at the 40th anniversary at Mutitjulu in 2015:

Rene Kalitja, an Indigenous artist

Everyone was dancing and singing. We were so happy that we got our land back.

Leroy Lester, a former Anangu ranger

The old ladies taught the whitefellas about the animals and the plants and the seasons, and then the whitefellas went off and got doctorates, and the old ladies – the real professors – got nothing.

Barbara Tjikatu, an Anangu elder

I want the park to respect the importance of us working as equals together, and not lose sight of that. I'm from the bush, and I don't want all the things done in the whitefella way.

Source 8.29

Kathy Marks, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 October 2015.



↑ **Source 8.30** Traditional Owners with Sir Ninian Stephen, Mr Holding, Mr Cohen and the special poster marking the handback of the title to Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park in 1985

During the period in question, there seems in retrospect to have been an increase in political awareness of Indigenous perspectives of the environment. The 1996 National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity stated 'The close, traditional association of Australia's Indigenous peoples with components of biological diversity should be recognised, as should the desirability of sharing equitably benefits arising from the innovative use of traditional knowledge of biological diversity'.

Environmental groups

In addition to the Green political movement that developed during this period, there were many other environmental groups that emerged. These ranged from small community groups concerned with local issues to global organisations with large-scale goals (such as Greenpeace and the World Wildlife Fund). In Australia, among those environmental groups with a high profile were The Wilderness Society, the Australian Conservation Foundation and Friends of the Earth Australia.

The Wilderness Society has its roots in Tasmania in the 1970s (with Dr Bob Brown as one of its early directors). Its early focus was on the Franklin Dam protests (as we saw in Chapter 5). Over the ensuing decades, its campaigns spread across Australia and included protecting old growth forests from logging and the protection of endangered species. While The Wilderness Society has worked with the Australian Greens on campaigns, it maintains its status as politically unaligned environmental non-government organisation (ENGO).

The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) is another ENGO that has asserted its non-partisan and independent status since its formation in 1965. During the 1970s, the ACF was a major voice in the successful campaign to ban whaling in Australian waters. It was later involved in the development of Landcare and also supported the Mirrar people in their Jabiluka mine protest.

ACF strongly advocated for the 1989 Hawke government's proposal to ban mining in Antarctica, which after two years of Australian diplomacy was finally agreed to by all Antarctic Treaty states.

Friends of the Earth Australia grew from a protest against a proposed nuclear reactor on French Island in Victoria in 1974. From the outset, it identified itself as a 'radical ecology group that recognised the need to move to sustainable and equitable social systems to be able to protect the environment in the long term'. The organisation developed into a network of groups around the nation focused on specific issues and based on the concept of radical grassroots environmental action. In 1990, it launched a National Waste Strategy, while in 1996 more than 50 direct action protests were organised by its Melbourne arm – including rolling blockades of trains carrying woodchip exports to the Geelong Port.

Protests by the Friends of the Earth against woodchip exports continued. The group issued this media release in 2006:

Fifteen conservationists have entered Victoria's largest export woodchip facility this morning, preventing the loading of a shipment of Victorian native forest woodchips bound for Japan.

The conservationists have 'locked on' to the conveyer belt and have boarded the ship.

Spokesperson Mark Tyler said, 'The Bracks government must act by protecting native forests from the export woodchipping industry before it's too late.'

'Desperate times call for desperate measures. These woodchips were once eastern Victoria's precious native forests, our water catchments and homes to endangered wildlife such as the Sooty Owl and Tiger Quoll.'

Spokesperson, Danya Bryx said, 'State Labor governments in New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia have recently moved to protect large areas of forests, yet the Bracks government allows this needless destruction and export of our native forests for a pittance.'

'Sawmills across eastern Victoria cannot even get quality sawlogs, yet here they are in their thousands bound for Japan as woodchips.'

'It is time the Bracks government responded to community sentiment and protected these irreplaceable forests.'

Source 8.31

Friends of the Earth, Media Release, 25 July 2006.

The Otway Ranges Environment Network (OREN) provides one example of the many local environmental groups that emerged during this period. A major campaign of this group was to prevent Otway forests being used in the manufacture of tissue products. The group was effective in harnessing media exposure to generate public support, largely by contrasting the beauty of the native environment with toilet paper. The following source from 1997 presents the OREN perspective, which is then contrasted with the corporate response from the paper manufacturer Kimberley-Clark. The company withdrew from the Otways the following year.

Clearfelling and Kleenex: How Kimberly-Clark contributes to the destruction of native forest in the Otways region

Every year about 300 ha of Otways forests are *clearfell logged* by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE) to produce woodchips and sawlogs. Clearfelling is the process whereby virtually all the forest trees in a given area are removed and the forest understorey is bulldozed and burnt. The process is similar to clearing forest for agricultural purposes. What is replanted by the DNRE [is] an even aged crop of selected trees (i.e. native forest becomes plantation).

Clearfelling is killing the Otways native forest. The habitat for forest birds and animals is being systematically destroyed. An even aged crop of trees replanted by the DNRE is replacing an original forest rich in biodiversity.

Kimberly-Clark, the manufacturer of Kleenex tissues, has a licence to buy 44,000 tonnes of whole trees from the Otways each year. This represents about 40 per cent of all the Otway forest destroyed by clearfell. Kimberly-Clark claims that it requires hardwood woodchips to make Kleenex tissue paper soft and smooth.

Clearfelling and Kleenex, Otway Ranges Environment Network campaign material, 1997.

In response to the campaign by the Otway Ranges Environment Network, the Kimberly-Clark company prepared an advertisement for the local press stating that they wished to set the “record straight” about log harvesting in the Otway Ranges region. Ads to this effect appeared in both the *Colac Herald* and the *Geelong Advertiser* in early 1997.

The Kimberly-Clark advertisement rejected the implication that all Otways logging was conducted solely for the commercial benefit of the company. It pointed out that logging had been going on in the Otway Ranges for more than a century, with local sawmills producing timber for the construction industry and furniture making.

Timber that was unsuitable for these purposes had always been either burnt or converted to woodchips for export markets.

Kimberly-Clark had stepped in to “utilise this residual wood in the manufacture of high quality tissue products”. The company had previously had to import eucalyptus pulp for tissue manufacture but could now maximise use of locally-grown timber that was not suitable for sawmill use.

Furthermore, in the previous six years Kimberly-Clark had developed its own eucalyptus plantation. This would extend to 7000 hectares by the end of the century – at which time it would no longer need to use residual Otways timber – to sustainably fulfil its requirements.

At that point, Kimberly-Clark would no longer require logging operations to meet its needs. Other logging would continue in the Otway Ranges to provide for the construction industry as it had for the previous 100 years.

The advertisements concluded by telling readers that Kimberly-Clark had pride in its environmental record. In light of this information from the company, local readers would now “know the facts” when presented with “calls to boycott products” made from Otway Ranges timber.

Residents wanting more detail were invited to call a consumer hotline telephone service. This advertisement can be read on the OREN.org website.¹

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 8.3

1. Analyse the contrasting perspectives of environmental groups and commercial organisations throughout this section.
2. Compare and contrast the environmental perspectives of Australia’s two main political parties.
3. Analyse how Indigenous perspectives played an increasing role in environmental issues during the period 1986–2010.

Business

While environmental groups worked towards protecting the environment, commercial interests often saw the land and its resources as providing scope for economic development. Often these two perspectives were diametrically opposed, as seen in the previous Otway forest example. The Franklin River protests of the early 1980s and the Coronation Hill mining debate had also graphically shown the schism between environmentalism and profit making.

While Australian colonists of the nineteenth century had aimed to tame the land for their pastoral and agricultural use, by the later stages of the twentieth century, land use had extended to the point of environmental domination in instances of unchecked mining, forestry and industry. The wider community was becoming aware of the issues that environmental groups had been raising. The authors Geoff Peel and Nigel Fairbairn noted in 1993 that:

resource extraction and other industries were using the land to the point of exploitation in some cases. The counterforce to such exploitation has surfaced, however, in the form of the increasingly powerful conservation/preservation movement.

Source 8.33

G. Peel and N. Fairbairn, *Australia: A Changing Culture*, 2nd edn, Coghill Publishing, Melbourne, 1993, p. 32.

Other examples of commercial development in this chapter demonstrate how it was perhaps inevitable that the conflict between environmentalism and commercialism would come to a head – which it did with the notion of sustainable development.

David Downes commented:

Source 8.34

Environmental policy in Australia in the late 1980s was characterised by conflict between pro-environment and pro-development interests concerning developing projects such as the Wesley Vale Pulp Mill and mining on Coronation Hill ... In 1989 Prime Minister Hawke, in his Statement on the Environment, acknowledged the need to consider the environmental implications of development decisions through the notion of sustainable development ... This signposted a shift by the Federal Government from a piecemeal and reactive response to environmental policy making towards a more consensual approach, aiming to integrate both environmental and development objectives ...

D. Downes, 'Neo-corporatism and environmental policy', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 31, no. 2, 1996, p. 175.

Business interests continue to exert pressure on governments over the environment. In January 2021, it was reported by the Centre for Public Integrity that the resource industry's political donations amounted to \$136.8 million over the previous two decades, making 'the sector the biggest donor in Australian politics'.

Media perspectives

The mainstream media also played an influential role in the environmental debates of the 1990s and early 2000s. Newspapers and television were far more important sources of information for people in the era prior to the internet and social media. Moreover, several large media organisations pursued editorial lines that were supportive or critical of environmentalism. As journalist Maria Taylor noted:

Source 8.35

Lobbyists from resource, energy-intensive and agricultural business sectors and market-oriented think tanks have had unparalleled access to government decision-makers in a revolving door of professional advisers. Great influence was also exerted by News Limited, with a virtual monopoly in Australian print media circulation. The Murdoch media shared the notion that accepting climate science is unwarranted and a threat to business and has spent the last 20 years conducting a 'culture war' on this issue. Through politics and media these reasserted beliefs and values had taken over the whole society by the early 2000s and have returned in force in 2014.

Maria Taylor, *Global Warming and Climate Change: What Australia Knew and Buried... Then Framed a New Reality for the Public*, Australian National University, Canberra, 2014, p. 177.

Community perspectives

The years 1986–2010 that we have covered in this chapter witnessed considerable changes in how Australians viewed and responded to environmental issues. By the end of this period, climate change had emerged as the most significant environmental debate in both politics and the community.



← **Source 8.36**
 Protesters raising awareness of climate change outside Parliament House in Canberra, 2009

In 2010, a Gallup Poll reflected the perspectives of the Australian community on this topic.

Australians' attitudes about global warming could be a factor later this month in the general election where climate change has emerged as an issue. The percentage of Australians who are aware of climate change and say it results from human activities fell from 52 per cent in June 2008 to 44 per cent in March 2010, while the number attributing it to natural causes increased 10 percentage points. ...

Source 8.37

Such a shift is particularly noteworthy among a population that follows the global warming debate closely. Awareness of climate change in Australia remains among the highest measured in the world – 97 per cent say they know 'a great deal' (24 per cent) or 'something' (73 per cent) about the issue. ...

Global warming also lost traction as a perceived direct threat to Australians. Twenty-two percent of Australians currently describe its threat to themselves and their families as 'very serious,' down from 31 per cent in 2008. Although fewer Australians perceive it as a serious threat, the majority (69 per cent) continue to believe that climate change poses a very or 'somewhat serious' personal threat.

Anita Pugliese and Linda Lyons, *Australians' Views Shift on Climate Change: Fewer Believe Climate Change Results from Human Activities*, Gallup Poll, 2010.

Historian John Rickard has reviewed responses to the issue of climate change at the end of this period:

If there is one issue which represents the frustrations of policy making in the contemporary political environment it is climate change. Both major parties promised an emission trading scheme before the 2007 election, and Rudd, who had famously called climate change 'the greatest moral, economic and social challenge of our time', negotiated with the opposition leader Malcolm Turnbull to introduce such a scheme. The Liberals,

Source 8.38

Continued...

...Continued

however, were divided on the issue, and Tony Abbott, who had allegedly described climate change as ‘absolute crap’, exploited this division to successfully challenge Turnbull for the leadership. The Coalition changed tack and opposed the scheme in the Senate where they were joined by the Greens who thought it too timid. Rudd was in a position to call a double dissolution on the issue, but later claimed he was dissuaded from doing so by Gillard and treasurer Wayne Swan. In the campaign for the 2010 election Gillard promised not to introduce a price on carbon, but, as noted, faced with a hung parliament, negotiated an agreement with the Greens to do just that. Abbott campaigned relentlessly against ‘the carbon tax’ for three years, and abolishing it was an early priority when elected. Abbott, while saying now that he accepted climate change science, showed no enthusiasm for policies acting on it.

John Rickard, *Australia: A Cultural History*, Monash University Publishing, Melbourne, 2014, p. 272.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 8.4

1. Analyse the poll numbers in Source 8.37. What can historians determine from this poll?
2. After reading John Rickard’s account in Source 8.38, why do you think climate change may be more controversial than other environmental issues such as sustainability, waste management policy or pollution issues?



↑ **Source 8.39** Protesters hold placards outside a luncheon for the Centre for Economic Development of Australia, in Sydney, 17 July 2006. Australian Prime Minister John Howard made a major energy speech inside the luncheon, as protesters outside accused him of looking after the interests of the coal industry rather than finding energy alternatives for Australia.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 8.5

1. What is the group depicted in Source 8.39 specifically protesting against?
2. What do they believe will be the global consequence of relying on coal as an energy source?
3. What future direction is the group advocating in terms of government energy policy?
4. Analyse how this photograph represents different environmental perspectives in Australia at the time it was taken in 2006.

Conclusion: continuity and change

INQUIRY QUESTION

To what extent did movements successfully challenge human actions and responses to the environment of the Anthropocene?

The quarter-century from 1986 to 2010 saw great changes to the global environment to confirm the notion of the Anthropocene as a new age where human activity was greatly impacting the world. The effects of this saw responses from individuals, groups, organisations and governments.

These responses ranged from raised awareness, to expressing concerns, to protests, to direct action, to legislative change. Conversely, corporate interest groups and their political representatives sometimes reacted by non-action or even pushing back against environmentalism – wanting to maintain their perspective of the importance of continuity of development – rather than adopting any form of change.

Environmental movements that did contest the Anthropocene were involved at all levels – from small-scale local Landcare projects such as revegetation, through to lobbying nations at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit and subsequent conferences.

In Australia, changes in governments saw changes in responses to environmental issues. The Hawke government's adoption of the principle of sustainable development was contrasted by subsequent Prime Minister John Howard's refusal to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, and then Labor Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's immediately signing of this on his election in 2007. The rise of the Australian Greens as a political party led to environmental issues finding a greater voice and influence in national parliament.

The success of environmental movements in creating legislative change was also seen in the abandoning of the Jabiluka uranium mine, the reduction in native forest wood chipping and ongoing wilderness protection in Tasmania. Such campaigns were complemented by artists and performers, whose messages could be broadcast and engender support in the wider community.

The custodianship of the land by First Nations peoples was more widely recognised as this period progressed. Their expertise, understanding and links with the environment was appreciated, as opportunities opened up for returning areas of land to traditional custodians.

Studying the period 1986–2010 through the magnifying lenses of local, national and international perspectives provides an insight into the nature of the Anthropocene and the breadth of responses to this.

8.5 Chapter summary

Here are some dot-points for you to consider and add to:

Continuity

- Industry continued to prioritise commercial interests over environmental impact during this period.
- Fossil fuels continued to be a predominant energy source, with corporations exerting effective influence on governments to prevent restrictive regulations on emission intensive industries.
- There was ongoing public resistance from a significant proportion of the population to pro-environmental policies, including opposition to climate action.
- Aboriginal peoples remained substantially marginalised from environmental debates and policy formation at the state and national level.
- Plant and animal species continued to experience significant decline across the continent.
- Land clearing and habitat destruction for logging and agriculture continued.
- Ecosystems such as the Great Barrier Reef, the Murray–Darling river system and the Otway Ranges rainforests remained in a state of ecological decline.
- Australia's mineral industry was expanded, accelerating growth in mining, burning and exporting brown coal.
- Australia's greenhouse gas emissions grew from 15 metric tonnes of carbon per person in 1980 to 18 metric tonnes in 2010.

Change

- The mid-1980s saw the growth of environmental groups as climate, land and ocean issues became significant.
- The concept of the Anthropocene was presented as a geological age denoting the dominant environmental changes created by human activity and industry.
- Government recognition of sustainable development and the establishment of Landcare in the late 1980s saw the Australian population gain awareness and involvement in environmental issues.
- Indigenous perspectives began to be recognised by governments with state and federal legislation in some areas.
- Globally, Australia was involved in conferences such as the United Nation's Rio Earth Summit of 1992 that resulted in agreement on the need for joint environment action.
- Environmental targets were developed in the Kyoto Protocol. Liberal Prime Minister John Howard refused to ratify this on Australian's behalf; however, Labor Prime Minister Kevin Rudd immediately signed when the Labor Party was elected in 2007.

- Key events focused the nation’s attention on environmental issues, uniting movements and Indigenous peoples with common issues.
- Public awareness of environmental issues was heightened through public protests, direct actions and the exposure created by popular music, the arts and the media.
- Hands-on local environmental programs created a grassroots avenue for involvement alongside a growing global consciousness.
- The growth of the Australian Greens political party kept environmental issues at the forefront of parliamentary debates and also formalised avenues for electorate support of their goals.

8.6 End-of-chapter activities

The following tasks are designed to help strengthen your understanding of the material explored in this chapter and to encourage you to further analyse and evaluate the events, ideas, perspectives and experiences of environmental movements which contested the Anthropocene from 1986 to 2010.

Consolidating your understanding

Events

Complete the table below to help you strengthen your understanding of how European colonisation evolved during the second half of the twentieth century.

Events	Summary	Evidence
Establishment of Landcare		
<i>Aboriginal Land Acts</i> , 1991		
Earth Summit 1992		
Australian Greens formed		
Kyoto Protocol		
Jabiluka Mining Protest		

Ideas

In your own words, explain the following concepts:

- Conservation
- Ecologically sustainable development
- The Anthropocene.

Perspectives

Based on sources available in this chapter and additional research, compare the environmental policies and achievements of the major and minor political parties in Australia from the 1980s to 2010.

	Achievement 1 summary + evidence of effect	Achievement 2 summary + evidence of effect	Achievement 3 summary + evidence of effect
Australian Labor Party			
Liberal Party of Australia			
The Australian Greens			
Other			

Analysing causes and consequences

What were the causes and consequences of the Kyoto Protocol?

Causes	Consequences

Constructing historical arguments: essay writing

- Why did environmental issues emerge as an increasing area of debate from the 1980s?
- What forms of responses emerged to contest the effects of the Anthropocene?
- How successful were environmental movements in their efforts between 1986 and 2010?

Extended reading

A. Talberg, S. Hui & K. Loynes, *Australian Climate Change Policy to 2015: A Chronology – Research Paper Series 2015–2016*, Department of Parliamentary Services, Canberra, 2016.

M. Howes, 'A brief history of commonwealth sustainable development policy discourse', *Policy, Organisation and Society*, 19(1), 2000, pp. 65–85.

A. Mason, *Overland: Unions, Aboriginal Rights and the Climate Movement*. Retrieved from <https://overland.org.au/2020/01/unions-aboriginal-rights-and-the-climate-movement>.

A. McGregor, *A Brief History of the Australian Environment Movement*, Australian Environmental Grantmakers Network, Melbourne, 2014.

W. Steffen, P. Crutzen & J. McNeil, The Anthropocene: Are Humans Now Overwhelming the Great Forces of Nature? *AMBIO: A Journal of the Human Environment*, 26(8), 2007, pp. 614–21.

CHAPTER 9

Continuities and changes, 60 000 BCE–2010



Source 9.0 Kangaroos seek a tree for shade amidst a drought affected paddock, 2019

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Our study of land management in Australia's past – from Custodianship to the Anthropocene – is now complete. It is time to remind ourselves of some ideas set out in the Introduction and elsewhere in this book about these Areas of Study.

- **Land use is key to understanding our past.** We have seen how everything comes from Nature. Recall, for instance, Source 4.28 in which Graeme Davison described the resources needed for Melbourne to function in the 1880s.

Question: What other examples can you think of that reveal our dependence on nature in this study?

- **Nature and culture are intertwined.** Roy Rappaport argued that humans view nature through a cultural screen, which shapes their actions regarding land use. In Sources 2.5, 2.7 and 2.27, William Wentworth viewed land through the lens of what would be good for sheep and agriculture and made calculations accordingly.

Question: List three other examples of how Aboriginal or European culture shaped actions towards land and country and analyse them. What attitudes, beliefs or ideas influenced how these cultures related to the non-human world?

- **Australia was shifting from Custodianship to the Anthropocene in the way its inhabitants dealt with and managed land.** Consider again the struggle between First Nations peoples and colonists over land and the different views each had of land outlined in Chapters 2 and 3.

Question: Write down some dots points of the differences between First Nations and European peoples' ideas of land found in the ideas sections of Chapters 1–3. Then try to explain the underlying essence of the difference.

- **While this shift to the Anthropocene is an overwhelming trend (see Chapter 7), there has been increasing resistance to it in the past 70 years (see Chapters 5, 6 and 8).** As Geoffrey Blainey noted in Source 7.1, the view that the land and its resources are unlimited is no longer dominant in Australia.

Question: Why do you think there has been this basic shift in thinking? (Use ideas in Chapters 5–8 to assist you.)

- **Alfred Crosby's concept of 'ecological imperialism' and 'demographic takeover' (see Source 2.59) explains how environmental change took place between continents.**

Question: Does Crosby's concept also help explain the rise of the era of the Anthropocene in Australia? Does Crosby's argument about animals, plants and pathogens as agents in the process go against the idea of the Anthropocene or not?

Book summary

Continuities

- The Australian continent continues to be a dry, semi-arid land still shaped by fire, drought and flooding rains.
- Humans have occupied this continent over the past 60 000+ years.
- First Nations and non-First Nations peoples have relied on the land, seas and skies for their survival and prosperity.
- Cultural ideas have influenced how humans have related to and managed the land over time.

Changes

- Two peoples with very different cultural ideas of land have changed the surface of Australia over the past 60 000 years, but in different ways and at different speeds.
- Australia's dominant human population has shifted from a form of land management marked by hunting and gathering and some sedentary and agricultural living to one based on pastoralism, farming, mining, industrialisation and urban living. This shift was one from custodianship of Country and the sustainable use of its resources to exploitation of the land and all it contained.
- Since 1788, the population of Australia has risen from less than one million to 25 million, with consequent pressures on the environment.
- Since the arrival of European colonisers in 1788, at least 100 native plant and animal species have become extinct; this figure may possibly be as many as 1000.
- Australia's CO₂ emissions have increased from approximately 5 tonnes per capita in 1947 to 18 tonnes per capita in 2010, making it one of the highest per capita greenhouse emitters in the world.
- Inhabitants of Australia are now part of a global population, which is the most influential factor shaping the Earth's environment, including its climate.

Sample exam/SAC essay questions

1. 'Aboriginal peoples managed the Australian environment more sustainably than European colonisers.' Discuss.
2. 'The campaign to save the Franklin River contributed more to Australian public awareness of environmental issues than any other event.' Discuss.
3. 'From 1950, Australian society became conscious of the impact of human activity on the environment and determined to conserve it.' Discuss.
4. 'To what extent did environmental movements contribute to change in Australia?'
5. 'Aboriginal peoples have been central to the environmental movements in Australia.' Discuss.
6. 'In more recent decades, Australia has established itself on a pathway towards sustainable development.' Discuss.

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