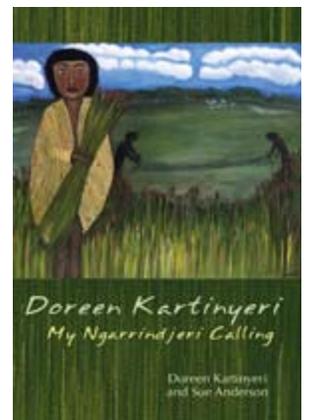
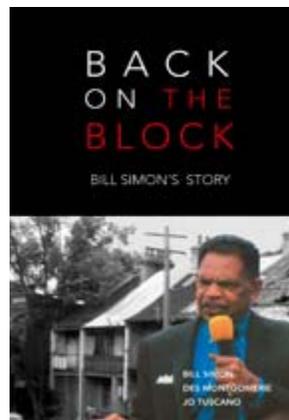
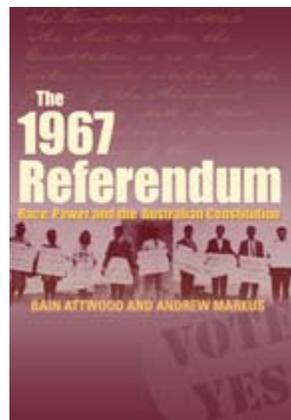
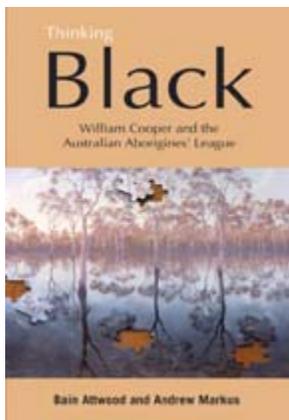


Teachers' Notes: Indigenous Voices (*Thinking Black*, *1967 Referendum*, *Back on The Block*, *Doreen Kartinyeri*)

Aboriginal Studies Press



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[Murray River Country](#)

[Palm Island](#)

[Singing the Coast](#)

[Aboriginal Identity: Legends, Country of the Heart and Auntie Rita](#)

[Indigenous Voices: Thinking Black, The 1967 Referendum, Back on the Block and Doreen Kartinyeri](#)

Indigenous Voices:

Student activities to support the Australian Curriculum Year 10 History depth study **Rights and Freedoms** (1945 — the present)

For Teachers

The aim of this teaching resource is to put the lived experience of Indigenous Australians at the centre of a study into a period of great social and political change in Australia. Too often the history of Indigenous Australia focuses on successive government policies and the hardships these inflicted on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; much focus is placed on the plentiful official records that reflect these policies. The purpose of this resource, however, is to provide an Indigenous voice and perspective of these events; exploring how Indigenous Australians interpreted and experienced the world around them at this time. We hope this approach will be useful to all students, including, as Rita Huggins put it, 'those white people who want to know what the story looks like from the Aboriginal side'.

Aboriginal Studies Press (ASP) is uniquely positioned to provide resources that reflect the Australian Indigenous experience. Four titles, available from ASP, have been selected to enable teachers and students to explore the Australian Curriculum depth study on Rights and Freedoms. With the exception of Activity 1, a copy of each of these titles is needed to complete the activities in this teaching resource.

Thinking Black: William Cooper and the Australian Aborigines' League, Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus, ASP, 2004

This title explores the life of an early Aboriginal activist, who lobbied Aboriginal people, politicians and the King in efforts to improve the situation of Aboriginal Australians. He was a key player in organising the Day of Mourning in 1938. This book provides an essay about Cooper which complements a collection of many years' worth of Cooper's speeches, letters and publications.

The 1967 Referendum: Race, Power and the Australian Constitution, Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus, ASP, 2007

This publication brings together an analysis of the 1967 referendum and an extensive collection of related source material. The sources explore the lead up to the referendum and provide a variety of perspectives on its significance and impact.

Back on The Block: Bill Simon's story, Bill Simon, Des Montgomerie and Jo Tuscano, ASP, 2009

This autobiography provides a concise and moving account of Bill Simon's life. A member of the Stolen Generations, Bill details his life at Kinchela Boys' Home, his decline into crime and addiction, and his later redemption helping others on the streets of Redfern.

Doreen Kartinyeri: My Ngarrindjeri Calling, Doreen Kartinyeri and Sue Anderson, ASP, 2008

This title explores the life of Doreen Kartinyeri, a strong keeper of Ngarrindjeri culture. She became the spokeswoman for Ngarrindjeri women who became embroiled in the long and difficult story that surrounded the building of the Hindmarsh Island bridge in South Australia. Ngarrindjeri people call the area Kumarangk. This book will help students explore historical thinking and the disconnect between Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives.

This teaching resource incorporates five learning activities, which are complementary but can also be completed individually. The relevant Australian Curriculum History learning outcomes are referenced at the beginning of each activity

Activity 1: Ways of telling

Australian Curriculum Year 10 History depth study Rights and Freedoms (1945 — the present)

Historical skills:

- Identify the origin, purpose and context of primary and secondary sources
- Evaluate the reliability and usefulness of primary and secondary sources
- Identify and analyse different historical interpretations (including their own)

This context-setting activity explores the gathering, understanding, and significance of history to Indigenous Australians, and how this can differ from non-Indigenous perspectives and practices.

A. Black side of the story

Read the following quotations which relate to Indigenous perspectives on Australian history.

Source A: Aboriginal woman, Rita Huggins made this observation in the introduction to a book about her life:

We want the book to be a record for my children and their children and other members of my family. Hopefully it will speak to other people, too, including those white people who want to know what the story looks like from the Aboriginal side.

Aunty Rita, page 1, ASP, 2010

Source B: Non-Indigenous writer, Russell McGregor made this comment in the preface to his book focusing on political and social change in Australia:

I do not attempt to convey the lived reality of how Aboriginal people experienced their exclusion from, or inclusion in, the Australian nation. Exposition of these experiences may be best left to Indigenous writers.

Indifferent Inclusion, Preface, ASP, 2011

Source C: Aboriginal activist, William Cooper, argued the case for Aboriginal representation in the Commonwealth Parliament in a letter to the Minister for the Interior in 1938:

We are only too sensible of the White attitude in the North and, since you will have conferred wholly with [White attitudes] we fear that you may be unconsciously biased... You will not have got the mind of the native, and the White men will probably have given you to understand that the native has not got one. But he has. He is not vocal, yet, but he is very definitely properly sensed of the injustice of his position.

Thinking Black, page 101

Source D: Aboriginal woman, Doreen Kartiyeri, reflects on her experiences while researching Aboriginal geneologies:

There I was going into work that white people had written on Aboriginal people. I saw my Aunty Martha's name — Martha Isabel Rankine — and we got copies of the letters that were actually written by the superintendent concerning my aunt. I was shocked. The superintendent accused her of horrible stuff. I thought, 'No, no. That can't be my Aunty; it must be someone else with the same name'. I couldn't believe that they were

writing things like that about my lovely, kind, generous Aunty Martha. I was very, very upset. But I had to get used to it because I would read many more letters like this about lovely people I knew... These letters were the official record of how Aboriginal people's lives and bodies were being controlled and it was a shock to be witness to them.

Doreen Kartinyeri: *My Ngarrindjeri Calling*, page 124

Answer the following questions:

- Do you think it is important to consider Indigenous perspectives when studying Australian history? Why or why not?
- Why are Indigenous and non-Indigenous understandings and versions of Australian history so different?
- Why can it be difficult to get Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives on events from the past?

B. Oral traditions

What do these three quotations tell you about Aboriginal traditions and history?

Source A: In her book, Kartinyeri recounted:

[Aunty Rosie] had the most marvelous way of expressing herself, and as we worked together on the weaving or making feather flowers she would teach me many things. She started at that time to talk to me about kinship, all the people on Raukkan and other yarns. She taught me all about the old ways. She told me how they used to initiate the young girls to get them ready for sex... Just Aunty Rosie and me, weaving and yarning. She made it very, very clear I was not allowed to tell anyone else any of this information.

Doreen Kartinyeri: *My Ngarrindjeri Calling*, page 91

Source B: In the introduction to a book about his life, Bill Simon explained his relationship with his co-authors:

In late 1999, I visited Casey's beach on the south coast of New South Wales when I met Des Montgomerie. We met in the water. I'm a talker. Des is a writer. Standing in the surf, we struck up a conversation and a friendship as well. Friends tell each other their life stories and I told Des mine. I had little formal schooling and did not have the skills to write down the story of my life. Des offered to write down my memories and so began many years of me talking and Des taping and writing. A few years later, I met Jo Toscano, also a writer, and Des, Jo and I worked together to bring about the story of my life's journey and work.

Back on The Block, page xii

Source C: This is an excerpt from a statement given to the 1995 Royal Commission into the building of the Hindmarsh Island Bridge:

The most common thread linking all Aboriginal peoples is the way in which we record our history. Aboriginal history is recorded orally. It is passed on orally. Does that fact invalidate our history?

Doreen Kartinyeri: *My Ngarrindjeri Calling*, page 176

Complete a PMI activity on oral traditions:

Create a chart, like the example below, to record the pluses, the minuses, and interesting issues or thoughts related to Aboriginal oral traditions.

Plus	Minus	Interesting

C. Reliability of sources

What factors influence the reliability of a source? Historians consider many issues when using source material from or about the past, including:

- Who created it: What personal situation, perspective, and skills did the creator bring to the material?
- When it was created: Was the creator a witness to the events? Was the source created at the time of the event or later?
- The purpose or context for which it was created: Who was the intended audience? Was it for personal or public use? What did the creator hope to achieve?

Reliability of sources is often raised as an issue in relation to the telling of Indigenous histories. Look at the following quotations and identify any issues around reliability that each one discusses or raises.

Source A: Kartinyeri reflects on non-Indigenous attitudes to Aboriginal oral traditions:

But our oral history, they can't take that away. They can't say the black fellas have no culture, because they have their stories, and they are reality, not myth. They are now trying to take them away, by demeaning and talking about our oral history as if it is nothing.

Doreen Kartinyeri: My Ngarrindjeri Calling, page 67

Source B: Simon makes this reflection in the introduction to his book:

This is my story the way I remember it. Telling this story has not been easy. There are times when speaking about my memories caused me great pain. I still have nightmares about the day I was stolen. I didn't see my mother again until well into my thirties, and by that time I had turned into someone that not many mothers would want for a son.

Back on The Block, page xii

Source C: Kartinyeri reflects on her own skills and practices:

I knew what I wanted to say. That's another thing I've always had. Just try to let anyone try and put words in my mouth. I never got much education in the white way and I won't take anyone using big words around me. I often say to people, 'Don't use them big jawbreakers. I don't know what you mean. Tell me what you're saying in words I can understand.' Same with writing a formal letter. It's hard for me to put it in the right way, so often I will get someone I trust to help me.

Doreen Kartinyeri: My Ngarrindjeri Calling, page 45

Source D: In their essay describing the life and work of William Cooper, historians Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus note:

Following the formation of the League, Cooper authorised and signed letters from it as its secretary but he wrote very few of these. As Cooper himself observed, his lack of education meant he found letter-writing a difficult task. The differences in handwriting, grammar, spelling and punctuation between the letters he wrote and those drawn up by others are obvious... However, there are no grounds for believing that the letters that appeared over Cooper's name do not basically represent his point of view.
Thinking Black, page 12

List the issues about reliability raised or discussed by each quotation above.

Activity 2: Early activism

Australian Curriculum Year 10 History depth study Rights and Freedoms (1945 — the present)

Knowledge and understanding:

- Background to the struggle of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for rights and freedoms before 1965, including the 1938 Day of Mourning and the Stolen Generations
- Methods used by civil rights activists to achieve change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the role of ONE individual or group in the struggle

Historical skills:

- Sequence events chronologically to demonstrate the relationship between events in different periods and places
- Use historical terms and concepts
- Process and synthesise information from a range of sources for use as evidence in an historical argument
- Identify and analyse the perspectives of people from the past

The 1960s are recognised as a time when significant advances were made in relation to the rights and freedoms of Indigenous Australians. However, the struggle for recognition and advancement of Indigenous people had been gathering momentum for many decades.

A: A divided society

Read the following sources relating to the living conditions of Aboriginal Australians in the first half of the twentieth century:

Source A: *Thinking Black* document 74, page 106 — William Cooper, Secretary, Australian Aborigines' League, to the Chairman, Aborigines Protection Board, New South Wales, Sydney, 28 November 1938

Source B: *Thinking Black* document 57, page 83 — William Cooper, Secretary, Australian Aborigines' League, to Sir John Harris, Secretary, Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society, 22 December 1937

Source C: *Doreen Kartinyeri: My Ngarrindjeri Calling*, 'Child Endowment and the colour of your skin', pages 20-21

Source D: *Doreen Kartinyeri: My Ngarrindjeri Calling*, 'Exemptions', pages 35-36

Complete the following tasks:

- Using the sources above, list the rights, freedoms and protections that you enjoy today that Aboriginal Australians did not have in the first half of the twentieth century.
- How do these sources reflect the practice of assimilation?

B: Case study — William Cooper and the Australian Aborigines' League

The nature of the living conditions experienced by Aboriginal Australians, and their lack of rights and freedoms, were catalysts for members of the Aboriginal community to take action to seek change; a process that is going on today. One of the early activists was William Cooper.

Read the six sources listed below and identify the changes that William Cooper and the Australian Aborigines' League were trying to bring about and the strategies they adopted throughout the 1930s.

Source A: *Thinking Black* document 8, page 34 — William Cooper, 'Treatment of Aborigines', letter to the Editor, *Age*, 16 March 1933

Source B: *Thinking Black* document 11, pages 35-36 — Petition to King George V

Source C: *Thinking Black* document 17, page 39 — William Cooper to Mr A. E. Parker, 17 March 1934

Source D: *Thinking Black* document 31, pages 48-50 — William Cooper, Secretary, Australian Aborigines' League, to the Hon. The Minister for the Interior, 22 February 1936

Source E: *Thinking Black* document 63 (Letter from an Educated Black), page 90 — William Cooper, Secretary, Australian Aborigines' League, to the Prime Minister, Joseph Lyons, 31 March 1938

Identify and chart the significance of the sources above:

Using a chart similar to the example below, identify the methods that were adopted to bring about change and the specific changes that were requested.

Source	Method of activism	Issues and demands raised
A		
B		
C		
D		
E		

Now read Source F, which reports on a protest planned by the Australian Aborigines' League.

Source F: *Thinking Black* document 56, page 82 — *Argus*, 13 November 1937, 'Aborigines' Day of Mourning: Plan for 150th Anniversary'

Answer the following questions:

- In what ways did William Cooper's methods of activism change over time?
- In what ways did the Day of Mourning represent a change of strategy?
- Why do you think this change in strategy occurred?

Activity 3: Stolen Generations

Australian Curriculum Year 10 History depth study Rights and Freedoms (1945 — the present)	
<p>Knowledge and understanding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background to the struggle of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for rights and freedoms before 1965, including the 1938 Day of Mourning and the Stolen Generations • The significance of the following for the civil rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: 1962 right to vote federally; 1967 Referendum; Mabo decision; Bringing Them Home Report (the Stolen Generations), the Apology 	<p>Historical skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use historical terms and concepts • Identify the origin, purpose and context of primary and secondary sources • Process and synthesise information from a range of sources for use as evidence in an historical argument • Evaluate the reliability and usefulness of primary and secondary sources • Identify and analyse the perspectives of people from the past • Identify and analyse different historical interpretations (including their own)

It is estimated that 100,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were taken from their families and raised in homes or adopted by white families. These children became known as the 'Stolen Generations'. The policy of removing children, which operated until the 1960s, was designed to 'assimilate' Indigenous people. It has been fundamental in

shaping the ensuing history of Aboriginal communities and their relationships with the wider Australian community.

A: Taken away

The following sources all relate to the personal experiences of members of the Stolen Generations. Each set of sources provides two different versions of the same events.

Compare and contrast the two sources relating to the removal of Bill Simon and his brothers in set 1:

Source A: *Back on The Block* — 'Taken away', pages 14-20

Source B: *Back on The Block* — letter, page 21

Answer these questions:

- What story do both these records tell?
- How do these records differ?
- What emotional response did you have on reading each of these records?

Compare and contrast the two sources in set 2, about the removal of Doris Kartinyeri from her family:

Source C: *Doreen Kartinyeri: My Ngarrindjeri Calling* — 'My father's grief, my pain', pages 29-33

Source D: *Doreen Kartinyeri: My Ngarrindjeri Calling* — letter, reproduced in the sources section following page 50

Answer these questions:

- Do you think that Source C is a reliable source?
- Do you think that Source D is a reliable source?
- Which do you think is more useful? Why?

Compare and contrast the two sources, portraying Kinchela Boys' Home, in set 3:

Source E: *Back on The Block* — 'The new boys', pages 20-31

Source F: *Back on The Block* — poster, page 26

Answer these questions:

- What is the context and purpose of Source E?
- What is the context and purpose of Source F?
- What do these sources tell us about Aboriginal and non-Indigenous versions of Australian history?

B. Lasting impact

Australian government policies in regard to the taking of Indigenous children still impact significantly on many aspects of Australian society.

In this activity you will consider the impact that this policy has had by focusing on Bill Simon's story.

Source A: *Back on The Block* — 'Reunion', pages 69-73

Source B:

It took two years with [my second wife] before I felt that I could talk about my past. I told her about my brothers' removal and mine from Platts Estate. And then I told her about Kinchela. Not too much at first, but enough that she understood. I needed her to understand that my time there was the reason that I had problems, many of them I still struggle with even today. After gradually telling her about my whole past I felt guilty; it all sounded so horrible that I wasn't sure just how she would take it all. I was compelled to be truthful, and I felt as my wife she had a right to know all about me.

Back on The Block, page 127

Source C:

Many ex-Kinchela boys are living on The Block and have absolutely no hope of changing their prospects, because they haven't the required skills to do so. There is a fella there whose dad had been a Kinchela boy long before my time there. The father felt so tainted by white man that he went straight from Kinchela to The Block so that he would only come into contact with Aboriginals. He has spent the remainder of his life there, raising his son to be bitter. The son raises the grandchildren in the same way.

Back on The Block, page 143

Source D:

I'm at a certain stage now regarding Kinchela, and because of that, I am now in a position to help those who haven't yet reached that stage. Some will never reach it. I don't mean I'm over it; I just deal with it in ways that are not self-destructive. I'm also at the point where I can forgive. That doesn't mean that I don't have a sense of outrage and injustice regarding what happened to my people. I've experienced the horror that was Kinchela, like so many who came before and after me, and I believe I can assist my brothers and sisters of the Stolen Generation to put this degrading and humiliating part of our lives behind us.

Being taken from my parents at such an early age has had its consequences. I wonder where I'd be had I remained under my father's guidance. It's impossible not to go

through the list of 'ifs'... This period in the lives of stolen boys dominates to a different degree in each of us, depending on the afflictions while incarcerated, our character development, our opportunities and behaviours since our release. I still carry painful memories from that period of incarceration, and try as may I can't get it out of my system. Perhaps one day I will be completely free of that part of my life.

Back on The Block, page 153-4

Using the experiences of Bill Simon, identify and list some of the impacts of the government policies relating to the taking of Indigenous children:

- for the stolen children;
- for the Indigenous families involved;
- for the Australian community.

Research task:

Research and define the purpose of the 1997 *Bringing Them Home* report and the national Apology to the Stolen Generations delivered by the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, in 2008.

- What was the impact of each of these events for Indigenous Australians?
- In what ways do you think that these national responses contribute to reconciliation?

Activity 4: 1967 Referendum

Australian Curriculum Year 10 History depth study Rights and Freedoms (1945 — the present)

Knowledge and understanding:

- The significance of the following for the civil rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: 1962 right to vote federally; 1967 Referendum; Mabo decision; Bringing Them Home Report (the Stolen Generations), the Apology
- Methods used by civil rights activists to achieve change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the role of ONE individual or group in this struggle

Historical skills:

- Use historical terms and concepts
- Identify the origin, purpose and context of primary and secondary sources
- Process and synthesise information from a range of sources for use as evidence in an historical argument
- Identify and analyse the perspectives of people from the past
- Develop historical texts, particularly explanations and historical arguments that use evidence from a range of sources

The 1967 referendum is considered to be a turning point in the ongoing struggle for rights and freedoms for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. In this activity, you will explore the work of some early activists and how some Indigenous Australians assess the impact of the referendum.

A: Building the momentum for change

Read the following sources to explore some of the ideas and actions that influenced the government to conduct a referendum in 1967.

Source A: *The 1967 Referendum* document 14, pages 99-100 — Henry Wardlaw, Secretary, Council for Aboriginal Rights, to Rt Hon. Paul Hasluck, Minister for Territories, 28 August 1951

Source B: *The 1967 Referendum* document 17, page 101 — Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship, Leaflet, 1957

Source C: *The 1967 Referendum* document 40, page 124 — 'Appeal for Yes Vote to Realise Dream', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 May 1967

Source D: *The 1967 Referendum* document 46, pages 130-132 — Chicka Dixon, 'I Want to be a Human Being', *Sun-Herald*, 21 May 1967

Analyse the purpose and effectiveness of each of the four sources above and record your findings in a chart like the one below.

Source	Date created	Arguments raised in the source	Is this text a persuasive text? Why or why not?
A			
B			
C			
D			

Take on the role of an Aboriginal activist in 1967:

Create a short speech to address a 'Vote Yes' rally in the week prior to the referendum. Highlight the need for action to advance the rights and freedoms of Aboriginal Australians. Structure your speech using words and strategies that will persuade the audience of your argument.

B. What change?

Read the following background material about the referendum:

Legislation had been passed by the Commonwealth parliament in 1962 enabling all Aboriginal adults to vote in Commonwealth elections from that date. In the years immediately following this change, many Aboriginal people were unaware that they had the right to vote and some proponents of the 'Yes' case suggested to Aboriginal people that the referendum would give them the vote.

Prior to the 1967 referendum, however, Aboriginal people were not counted in the national census and their lives were controlled by state laws. The following table was published as a leaflet by the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement in 1962. It listed some of the legal restrictions applying to Aboriginal people in the mainland states and the Northern Territory.

Rights enjoyed by Aborigines on settlements & reserves in five States & the Northern Territory

	N	V	S	W	N	Q
	S	I	A	A	T	L
	W	C				D
Voting rights (State)	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N
Marry freely	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N
Control own children	Y	Y	N	N	N	N
Move freely	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Own property freely	Y	N	Y	N	N	N
Receive Award Wages	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Alcohol allowed	N	N	N	N	N	N

From *The 1967 Referendum*, page 27

The referendum was held on 27 May 1967. The question relating to Aboriginal people that was put to the voters was, in accordance with other Australian referenda, worded in terms of the proposed change to the Constitution. It read:

Do you approve the proposed law for the alteration of the Constitution entitled — 'An Act to alter the Constitution so as to omit certain words relating to the People of the Aboriginal Race in any State and so that Aborigines are to be counted in reckoning the Population'?

This proposed change would allow the Commonwealth government to enact laws to empower Aboriginal people.

All states voted in favour of the change and 90.77% of formal votes were 'Yes'. This was the strongest endorsement of a referendum in Australian political history. In fact, prior to 1967, only four referenda had been passed.

Read the following sources that document a range of Aboriginal Australians reflecting on the impact of the 1967 referendum.

Source A: *The 1967 Referendum* document 58, page 141 — Lowitja O'Donoghue, Chairperson of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, 'One Nation: Promise or Paradox', in ATSIIC, *Twenty Five Years On: Marking the Anniversary of the Aboriginal Referendum of 27 May 1967*, ATSIIC, Canberra, 1992

Source B: *The 1967 Referendum* document 76, page 160 — oral testimony by Leisha May Eatts, 27-years-old in 1967, who was living in Narrogin, Western Australia

Source C: *The 1967 Referendum* document 89, page 164 — oral testimony by David Mowaljarlai, 42-years-old in 1967, who was working as an orderly at Derby Hospital and living at Old Mowanjum, Western Australia

Source D: *The 1967 Referendum* document 92, pages 165-66 — oral testimony by Bill Humes, 22-years-old in 1967, who was living in suburban Sydney and working in a bank. He was married and had a one-year-old child. He spent his weekends playing Aussie Rules football.

Answer the following question:

The 1960s saw a move from a policy of assimilation to one of integration. In what ways did the 1967 referendum consolidate this change?

Creative response:

The ongoing significance of the referendum is demonstrated by the attention that is given to it in the media on subsequent anniversaries of the date on which it was held.

Using the sources above, create a cartoon for a newspaper that explores the impact of the 1967 referendum. Specify which anniversary your cartoon reflects on e.g. 1st anniversary in 1968, 40th anniversary in 2007.

Activity 5: The continuing struggle

Australian Curriculum Year 10 History depth study Rights and Freedoms (1945 — the present)

Knowledge and understanding:

- Methods used by civil rights activists to achieve change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the role of ONE individual or group in this struggle
- The continuing nature of efforts to secure civil rights and freedoms in Australia and throughout the world, such as the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)

Historical skills:

- Use historical terms and concepts
- Identify and select different kinds of questions about the past to inform historical inquiry
- Process and synthesise information from a range of sources for use in an historical argument
- Evaluate the reliability and usefulness of primary and secondary sources
- Identify and analyse the perspectives of people from the past
- Identify and analyse different historical interpretations
- Develop historical texts, particularly explanations and historical arguments that use evidence from a range of sources

Indigenous activists have struggled for many decades to gain greater rights and freedoms for Indigenous Australians. However the policies that prevailed for many generations have left a legacy of economic and social disadvantage that motivates a continuing struggle to achieve equality of opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

In addition, in recognition of their status as the Indigenous people of this country, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians now see a need for special rights, including recognition of land rights.

A: Case Study — Doreen Kartinyeri and the Hindmarsh Island Bridge

The controversy over the building of the Hindmarsh Island Bridge in South Australia attracted huge media attention in the mid-1990s. It also highlighted the gulf between Aboriginal notions of land and heritage and the perspective brought by the Australian political and legal system.

Doreen Kartinyeri, a Ngarrindjeri woman, with ancestral ties and knowledge of the area, played a central role in this long running dispute. In this activity, you will focus on her perspectives as events unfolded.

Begin by reading this background information:

Background briefing: the Hindmarsh Island Bridge controversy

In May 1994 it was announced that a bridge would be built to link Hindmarsh Island, just south of Adelaide, to the mainland at Goolwa. The developers, Tom and Wendy Chapman, owned a marina on the island and hoped to attract more tourists. The proposal was supported by the South Australian state government.

Doreen Kartinyeri and other Aboriginals with ancestral links to the area opposed the development, believing it would have a detrimental impact on culturally significant land. Kartinyeri, as spokesperson for a group of Ngarrindjeri women, began a campaign to prevent the bridge being built on the grounds that the area held great significance for Ngarrindjeri women.

Kartinyeri wrote a letter to the Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Robert Tickner, asking that he intervene to stop the bridge development. Tickner ordered a temporary ban on the building of the bridge and established an inquiry. To assist with this inquiry, Kartinyeri provided some envelopes containing 'secret' ancestral knowledge about the area. At the completion of the inquiry, these envelopes were passed to Tickner with the official report. On the front of each envelope it was indicated that the contents were only to be read by women. Tickner, on the advice of the inquiry, put a 25-year ban on the building of the bridge.

This ban was controversial and when the envelopes mistakenly ended up in the office of Ian McLachlan, the Shadow Environment Minister, he allowed the envelopes to be opened, copied and tabled in Parliament. McLachlan was later forced to resign from his shadow ministerial position as a result of this incident.

In the meantime, several other Aboriginal women, with ancestral links to the area, came forward stating that they had no knowledge of the site being significant to local Aboriginal women. These doubts led the SA Government to announce, in June 1995, a Royal Commission into the Hindmarsh Island Bridge. The Commission found that the claims by Kartinyeri and others, of restricted women's knowledge relating to the area, had been fabricated to prevent the bridge being built.

The 1996 federal election brought the Coalition government, led by John Howard, into office. The new government passed the *Hindmarsh Island Bridge Act* in 1997, which allowed the bridge to be developed. The bridge was completed in 2001.

The legal dispute did not end until August 2001 when, in a case bought by the Chapmans, Justice von Doussa ruled that he was not convinced that the restricted women's knowledge had been fabricated.

Read the following sources to explore Kartinyeri's perspective on this contentious set of events.

Source A: *Doreen Kartinyeri: My Ngarrindjeri Calling*, 'May 1994', pages 114-115.

Kartinyeri recalls her response when she first heard about the proposal to build the Hindmarsh Island bridge.

Answer the following questions:

- Why was Kartinyeri upset about the proposal to build the bridge?
- In what ways does Kartinyeri's response to the proposal to build the Hindmarsh Island bridge reflect the notion of self-determination for Aboriginal people?

Source B: *Doreen Kartinyeri: My Ngarrindjeri Calling*, letter, page 152

This letter was written to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs after Kartinyeri and other community members held initial meetings about the proposed development.

Answer the following questions:

- What did Kartinyeri hope to achieve by writing to a minister in the Commonwealth parliament?
- Analyse the letter. What techniques have been employed to persuade the minister of Kartinyeri's argument?

Source C: *Doreen Kartinyeri: My Ngarrindjeri Calling* 'Monday, 6 March 1995: the envelopes', pages 1-2.

This source describes Kartinyeri's response to the actions of the Shadow Minister for the Environment in the Commonwealth Parliament.

Answer the following question:

How does this incident demonstrate different perspectives and practices in regards to cultural knowledge and history?

Source D: *Doreen Kartinyeri: My Ngarrindjeri Calling*, speech, pages 161-162.

This speech was delivered by Kartinyeri to the International Women's Day Committee luncheon in Adelaide in March 1995.

Answer the following question:

How did Kartinyeri's sense of conviction and obligation change throughout the Hindmarsh Island bridge controversy?

Source E: *Doreen Kartinyeri: My Ngarrindjeri Calling*, 'First dissidents', pages 165-168

Kartinyeri reflects on the motivations of members of the community who cast doubts on the authenticity of the restricted women's knowledge.

Answer the following questions:

- What does the source convey about Kartinyeri's perspective on events within her community at this time?
- What does this division within the Aboriginal community tell you about the oral tradition and its use as a historical source?

Looking around the issue:

Through the sources provided, you have explored Kartinyeri's perspective on the events surrounding the building of the Hindmarsh Island bridge. Now consider the events from different perspectives.

Create a chart like the one below, and complete it to show how a range of other people might have viewed this controversy. Note the perspectives they may have brought throughout the events.

The developers	The media
An Aboriginal person from another SA region	A regular visitor to the island from Adelaide

B: Contemporary perspectives

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander activists working to improve the rights and freedoms of their people have achieved significant success. As the conditions under which Indigenous people live have changed over the decades, so too have the nature of the activists' demands.

Read the following comment by Professor Larissa Behrendt and reflect on what the changes from a policy of assimilation to one of reconciliation have meant to the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The campaign for the 1967 referendum highlighted the importance of ensuring equality for Aboriginal people. The posters showed a portrait of a black child and appealed to the electorate to give Aboriginal children the same opportunities that other Australian children enjoyed. In a country that has been reluctant to make changes to the Constitution, the 1967 referendum was an overwhelming success.

Forty years on, while much has improved, Aboriginal people still have poorer health, lower levels of education, higher unemployment and lower incomes than all other Australians. Clearly, the vision for a new era of opportunity and non-discrimination has not followed the constitutional change.

Professor Larissa Behrendt, *The 1967 Referendum*, page 167

Answer the following question:

Do you believe that there is a continuing need for activism around Indigenous rights and freedoms?

Historical inquiry:

Select and research one example of contemporary Aboriginal activism. Using a range of sources, identify the ways this example relates to earlier struggles by Aboriginal activists. Reflect on this relationship in a written or visual response.