

# Chapter 13

## FUTURE CHALLENGES: HUMAN RIGHTS AND RECONCILIATION

### INTRODUCTION

*As Australians, we enjoy a high standard of living compared to many countries, and our basic human rights and freedoms are protected. However, we face challenges that must be resolved if we wish to live in a fair and equitable society. These include the enormous loss of human rights suffered by Indigenous people and the treatment of refugees in the early part of the twenty-first century.*

### OUTCOMES

*A student:*

- 5.2** analyses, organises and synthesises geographical information
- 5.3** selects and uses appropriate written, oral and graphic forms to communicate geographical information
- 5.4** selects and applies appropriate geographical tools
- 5.7** analyses the impacts of different perspectives on geographical issues at local, national and global scales
- 5.8** accounts for differences within and between Australian communities
- 5.9** explains Australia's links with other countries and its role in the global community
- 5.10** applies geographical knowledge, understanding and skills with knowledge of civics to demonstrate informed and active citizenship.

### GEO skills TOOLBOX

- Collecting and using digital images (page 335)
- Recognising and accounting for change using statistical data (page 339)
- Practising active citizenship (page 342)
- Analysing a website, including the ethics of the site (page 353)



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples keep their traditions alive today in many different ways. This group of Warramiri boys in Arnhem Land enjoy re-enacting an evil spirits dance that they have learned at a recent ceremony.



## GLOSSARY

**asylum seekers:** refugees who seek official shelter or protection in a foreign country under international law

**AusAID:** the Australian Agency for International Development; manages the Australian Government's official overseas aid program

**bilateral:** interaction that involves only two countries

**customary law:** law based on tradition and the customary practices of traditional societies; usually passed on orally between generations

**detention centre:** camp established to hold asylum seekers until their applications to stay in Australia are processed

**excise:** to cut out or exclude an area of land

**genocide:** the planned killing of a whole national or racial group

**Human Development Index (HDI):** a measure of human development in three broad dimensions: a long and healthy life, knowledge and standard of living; published by the United Nations Development Program each year

**human rights:** the idea that all human beings are equal and deserve fair and equal treatment

**humanitarian crisis:** conflict or political situation that threatens people's human rights

**Indigenous people:** the descendants of the original inhabitants of an area

**life expectancy:** the average number of years a person can be expected to live; affected by nutrition, occupation, heredity and other factors

**multilateral:** interaction that involves more than two countries

**people smuggling:** bringing people into a country illegally

**reconciliation:** a process that strives to improve relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians

**refugee:** a person who, owing to religious persecution or political troubles, seeks shelter or protection in a foreign country

**self-determination:** the right of a nation or group of people to form their own government

**stolen generations:** refers to Aboriginal children who were removed from their families and communities by government or non-government agencies in order to enforce integration into society; the practice continued in some areas until the 1970s

**treaty:** a formal agreement between two or more independent countries, normally involving the signing of a document

**United Nations (UN):** an intergovernmental organisation that promotes world peace and fosters international cooperation

**visa:** a permit that allows the holder to enter a country for a specified period of time

# WHAT ARE HUMAN RIGHTS?

The concept that all humans are equal and deserve humane and fair treatment and basic freedoms is known as **human rights**. The idea does not have worldwide acceptance, and many countries allow people's basic human rights to be violated.

## THE UNITED NATIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Over time, individual countries have developed a range of laws to protect human rights. However, a major global breakthrough in human rights took place in 1948 when the **United Nations (UN)** adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

### UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS FIRST FIVE ARTICLES

**Article 1** All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

**Article 2** Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

**Article 3** Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

**Article 4** No-one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

**Article 5** No-one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

There are 30 basic human rights set out in the Declaration. These include:

- *social, economic and cultural rights*. The right to have enough food, clothing, medical care, welfare or social security, education and housing, and the right to enjoy the culture of one's people.
- *civil and political rights*. The right to choose how a country is run, to protection from wrongful arrest; the right to a fair trial, to own property, to work, to freedom of thought and religion, to freedom of expression, to hold meetings, to join groups, and the right to freedom from slavery and torture.



Hutu refugees leaving western Rwanda. Many refugees leave their own countries because of a basic loss of human rights.

## HUMAN RIGHTS TREATIES

A series of human rights **treaties** have also been developed. Countries can either ratify or sign international human rights agreements. Countries that ratify international agreements are bound to observe the provisions. Countries that only sign such agreements undertake not to act in any way that is contrary to the aims of the agreements.

The seven UN treaties on human rights are:

- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- Convention on the Rights of the Child
- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.

## THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

Towards the end of the bloodiest century in human history, in which there was constant and widespread abuse of human rights in many parts of the world, the United Nations developed a strategy to deal with these issues in the twenty-first century. The International Criminal Court (ICC) was established to try grave crimes such as **genocide**, other major crimes against humanity and war crimes. A treaty creating the world's first independent and permanent ICC was adopted by the international community in 1988. Australia was one of the 120 countries who voted to adopt the treaty. Only seven countries voted against it (including China, Israel, Iraq and the United States). Another 19 countries signed the treaty before the cut-off date in 2002; the ICC's jurisdiction began in 2002.

A major weakness of the ICC is the failure of the United States to ratify the treaty. The United States is seen by many states as having been very weak on international human rights at various times.

## HUMAN RIGHTS AND REFUGEES

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was founded in 1950 to help settle the many **refugees** created by World War II. But conflicts and other **humanitarian crises** (conflicts or political situations that threaten people's human rights) did not stop with the end of that war. The UNHCR has continued to protect refugees and to help them restart their lives in a normal environment. The organisation currently has staff in 120 countries worldwide and has helped over 50 million refugees in the last 50 years.



### Collecting and using digital images

Digital images are electronic pictures taken or scanned from documents such as photographs, graphs, maps and various forms of artwork, manuscripts and printed text. They are excellent sources of information for geographers. The Internet is the main source of digital images. Most can be downloaded while retaining very high quality reproduction for use in research and presentations.

Using websites (such as the United Nations website), collect digital images for a class PowerPoint presentation, or another form of report, on human rights. Concentrate on the use of graphics such as photographs, maps and diagrams. In your presentation, draw attention to:

- the role of human rights in society
- infringements of human rights in several places around the world
- human rights and refugees
- NGOs working for improved human rights.

Ensure that you cite your sources in your report.

## Activities

1. What are human rights?
2. Why was the Universal Declaration of Human Rights a major global breakthrough in human rights?
3. Study the first five articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
  - (a) Why is the first article so important?
  - (b) Explain what is meant by Article 3.
4. List the seven UN treaties covering human rights. What role do the treaties play in protecting human rights?
5. Describe the role of the International Criminal Court. Why is it potentially so important?
6. Several countries including the United States did not ratify the treaty on the ICC. Discuss this with a small group in your class and make a list of possible reasons for not supporting the ICC.
7. Using the resources of the Internet or library, describe how individuals and groups can respond to the challenge of human rights.

### Worksheets

#### 13.1 Modern slavery

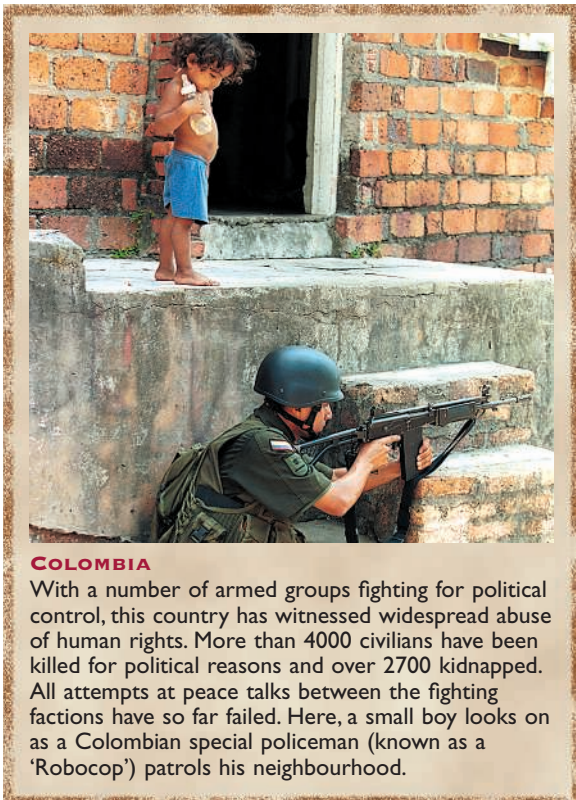
(LEFT) These Afghan refugees arriving in a Pakistan refugee camp are about to move into a UNHCR tent. They will be provided with clean water and food as well as a sense of security. Over the coming months, UNHCR officials will try to help them settle into a new country or return to their homes when the situation becomes safe for them to do so.

# ABUSES OF HUMAN RIGHTS: GLOBAL CONTEXT

In the struggle for power and control, human rights are frequently abused. This abuse can take many forms: people may be arrested and held without being charged for any crime, political opponents may 'disappear' or be tortured, civilians may be killed or executed, and police may treat prisoners with brutality.

## REPORT CARDS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Each year the worldwide voluntary human rights organisation, Amnesty International, publishes a report on human rights abuses around the world. The 2002 report recorded human rights abuses in 151 countries and territories. While human rights abuses and conflicts in Israel, Iraq and Afghanistan made global headlines, less well-known conflicts in places such as Ivory Coast, Colombia, Burundi, Chechnya and Nepal often involved greater loss of life and abuse of rights.



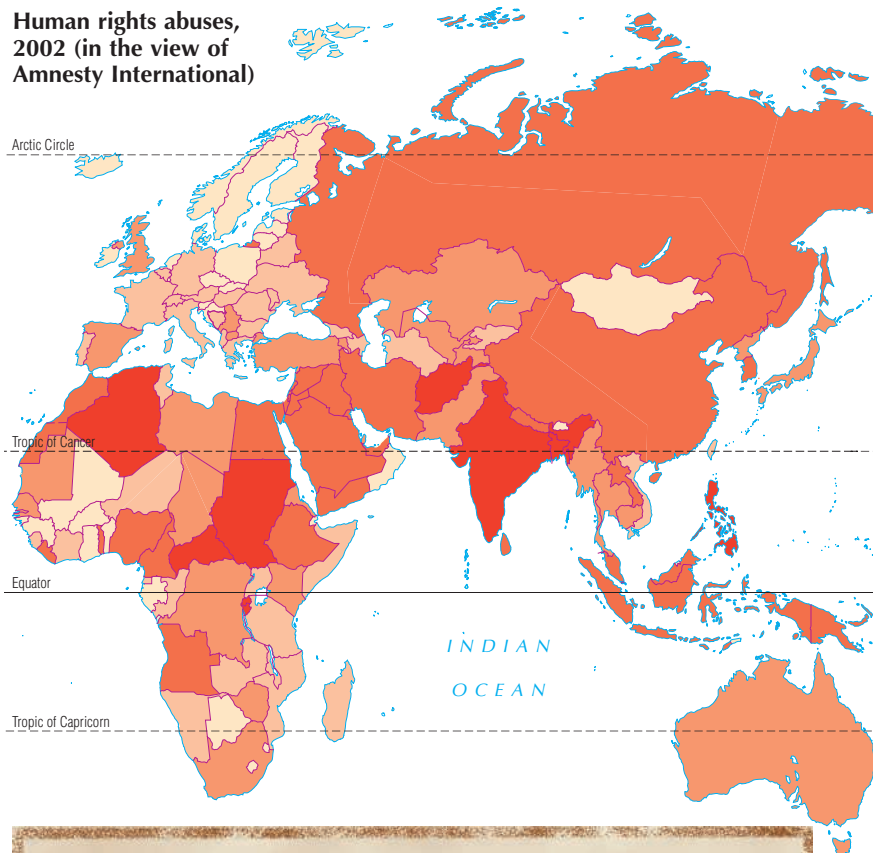
### COLOMBIA

With a number of armed groups fighting for political control, this country has witnessed widespread abuse of human rights. More than 4000 civilians have been killed for political reasons and over 2700 kidnapped. All attempts at peace talks between the fighting factions have so far failed. Here, a small boy looks on as a Colombian special policeman (known as a 'Robocop') patrols his neighbourhood.

### NEPAL

Conflict continues between the Communist Party of Nepal and the government security forces for political control of the country. Fighting has claimed the lives of hundreds of soldiers. There have also been claims of human rights abuses by both sides, including torture and hostage-taking.

Human rights abuses,  
2002 (in the view of  
Amnesty International)



### CHECHNYA

Chechen rebels are fighting Russian troops in a battle for independence. The Chechens have used terrorist tactics, including taking 800 hostages in a Moscow cinema and killing hostages in a school in Beslan. It is claimed that Russian troops have responded by cracking down on Chechen civilians by means of torture, kidnapping and imprisonment. This wounded Chechen fighter is visited by a comrade, while being guarded by a young boy.

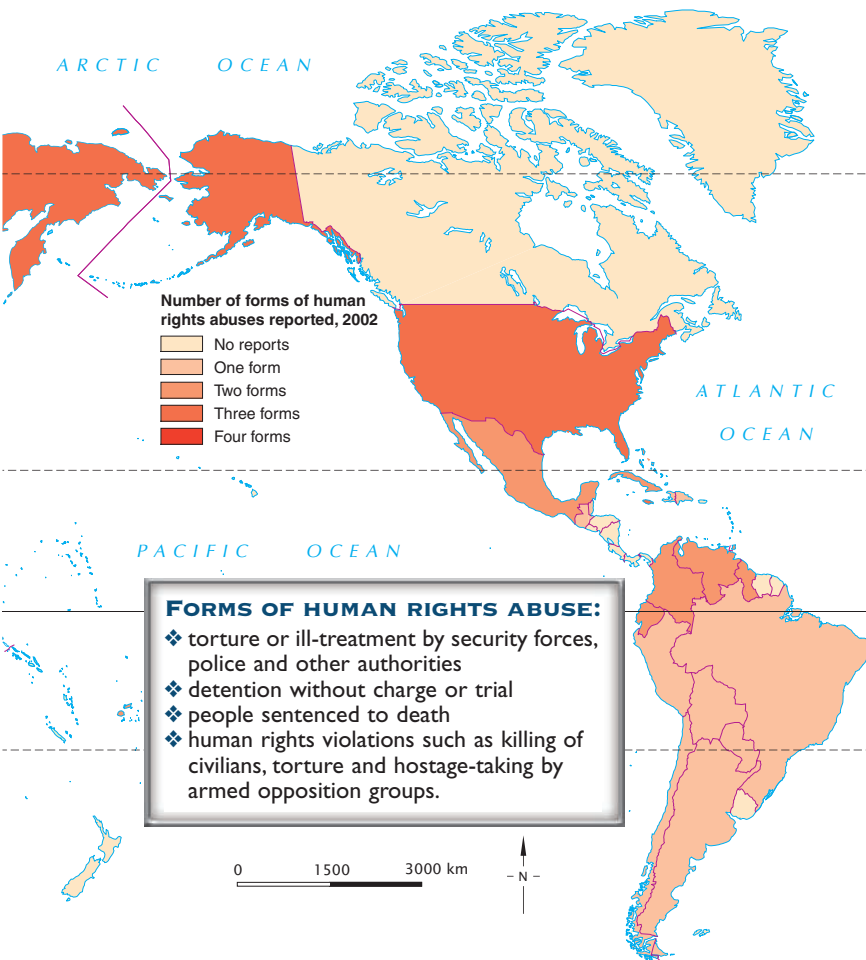


#### BURUNDI

The year 2002 was terrifying for many civilians in Burundi, with executions and property destruction reported. Thousands remained in long-term detention without trial and at least 52 death sentences were passed. While many fled to neighbouring countries, hundreds of thousands more (such as this woman) remained as internally displaced persons.

## Activities

- Write a short definition of what you think 'human rights' means. Create a 'class definition' by pasting all definitions on a large poster.
- List ten human rights that you believe you enjoy living in Australia.
- Discuss as a class why human rights organisations such as Amnesty International have an important role to play in today's world.
- Draw a diagram to explain how armed conflict and the abuse of human rights are connected.
- Study the map, together with an atlas.
  - Locate on the map each country mentioned in the boxed captions and use the key to identify its 'human rights score'.
  - Explain how you think the situation depicted in the four photographs is connected to the respective country's 'human rights score'.
  - Which countries received the 'worst report card' for human rights offences?
  - What score did Australia receive? What human rights abuses do you think occurred in Australia in 2002? Give reasons.
  - How do you feel about Australia's score? Why?
- Suggest reasons why few of the crimes committed by Russian troops have been investigated.
- Work with a partner to construct a concept map on the effects of armed conflict on civilians. Use some of the ideas on these pages as starting points and conduct further research. Remember that the format of the concept map is not as important as the ideas it contains.
- Examine the photographs on these pages.
  - What message do these convey about the effects of war on a civilian population?
  - Explain why these effects are often strong push factors in population redistributions.
- Go to [www.jaconline.com.au/geoactive/geoactive2](http://www.jaconline.com.au/geoactive/geoactive2) and click on the Amnesty International Report weblink for this chapter. Use this report to research the situation in various countries. Prepare a report card on one country and present it to the class.
- Research newspapers and the Internet for examples of human rights abuses in another country. Based on your information, draft a letter to the United Nations High Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) expressing your feelings on the issue and your ideas for future action.



#### BALI

On 12 October 2002, a series of car bomb explosions tore apart nightclubs on the Indonesian tourist island of Bali. Two hundred and two people died in this terrorist attack, including 88 Australians.

# AUSTRALIA, HUMAN RIGHTS AND REFUGEES

In general, Australia has a strong record on human rights. However, within Australia there are human rights issues to be resolved. These include the enormous loss of human rights suffered by Indigenous people and the treatment of refugees in the early part of the twenty-first century.

## WHAT IS A REFUGEE?

A refugee is a person forced to flee his or her homeland because of a well-founded fear of persecution due to race, religion, membership of a social group or political belief. A migrant, by contrast, has time to plan and choose where and when to leave. Often refugees risk their lives to flee their country, leaving behind loved ones and virtually all their possessions.

Since World War II, Australia has offered safe haven to over 600 000 displaced persons through humanitarian programs. As a member of the United Nations and a signatory to the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951), Australia is obligated to offer protection to refugees against their forced return and to consider their requests for asylum. It is also obliged to accept a reasonable number of refugees each year. For example, Australia has resettled:

- 170 000 displaced persons from Eastern Europe between 1947 and 1954
- more than 155 000 Vietnamese since 1975
- more than 8000 Sudanese since 1996.

## AUSTRALIA'S STRATEGIES

On a global scale, Australians play a role in many humanitarian efforts. Government programs and non-government organisations (NGOs) take an active approach to improve human rights internationally. NGOs include CARE Australia, Amnesty International Australia, the Australian Council for International Development, and Community Aid Abroad. The Australian Government's strategies include:

- supporting the establishment of national human rights institutions
- providing **AusAID** programs

- encouraging **multilateral**, regional and **bilateral** discussions of human rights issues
- working to develop and strengthen the effectiveness of regional and international human rights institutions and instruments
- establishing the Humanitarian Program for immigration.

## THE HUMANITARIAN PROGRAM

The Humanitarian Program has two components:

1. *Offshore resettlement.* Australia shares the responsibility for refugee protection with the international community. Australia works with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to resettle identified refugees. These people are considered legal arrivals and are automatically given a permanent protection **visa** to stay in Australia.
2. *Onshore protection.* This applies to people already in Australia who seek protection under the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. They might be people with legal visas who have overstayed or illegal entrants such as boat people who are refugees seeking political asylum.

## ASYLUM SEEKERS

The offshore humanitarian immigration program has given many refugees a new life with new opportunities. However, there have been humanitarian problems with the onshore program, particularly during the early years of the twenty-first century:

- Australia's policy of mandatory detention of all refugees and **asylum seekers** who arrive by boat has been seen by many people as a gross infringement of human rights. It represented a radical departure from the usual response of other countries who signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Even though it is reasonable to detain asylum seekers for a short period, they are usually detained only if they pose a threat to national security, public order or public health. The policy has been seen as contrary to Australia's obligations

under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and UNHCR's guidelines on detention.

- Following the *Tampa* incident in 2001 (see page 340), many boat people were placed in offshore **detention centres**, established as part of the 'Pacific Solution'.
- The Australian Government issued temporary protection visas only — not permanent protection status — to onshore refugees who were recognised as genuine refugees by the UNHCR. Australia is the only signatory of the 1951 refugee convention (which sets out the obligations of countries to refugees and people who face serious abuses of their human rights) who refused to grant permanent protection status to such refugees.

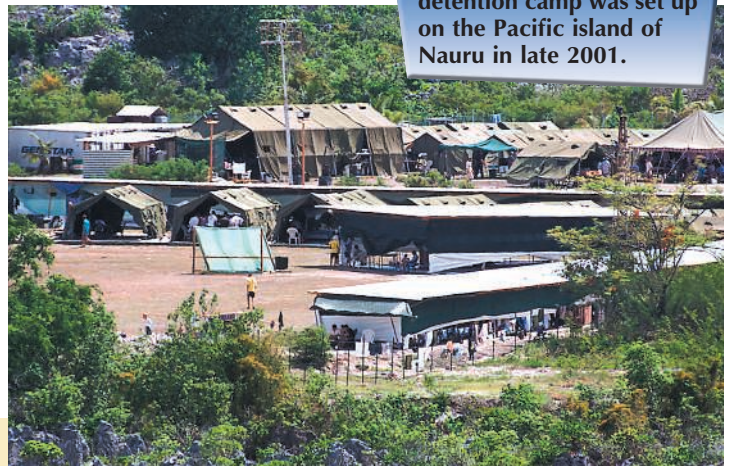
## Activities

1. Describe Australia's record of resettling refugees.
2. What are the two components of Australia's Humanitarian Program?
3. Explain how the offshore component of the Humanitarian Program works.
4. Many children were detained in detention centres in the onshore program. With a small group, discuss the problems associated with this for both children and parents. Develop an alternative way of providing more humane treatment for children that protects their human rights.
5. Describe the main differences between the way Australia treats asylum seekers and the treatment given by Sweden.

### Worksheets

#### 13.2 Who are our refugees?

Australia's first offshore detention camp was set up on the Pacific island of Nauru in late 2001.



## ASYLUM SEEKERS IN SWEDEN

Sweden has an 'open door' policy on asylum seekers and has been receiving about 16 000 a year (more than triple the Australian figure). The Swedish approach is that asylum seekers are vulnerable people seeking protection and security. During the application process for permanent residence, about 70 per cent of asylum seekers stay with family and friends, and the remainder stay in government-funded housing. The government grants allowances to those who have no other means of support

## GEOskills TOOLBOX

### Recognising and accounting for change using statistical data

Statistical data in the form of tables is a very useful tool and can be used by geographers to interpret and account for change over time.

Observe the table of offshore resettlement program, grants by region. This table allows you to compare statistical information for different years and different regions. Use the statistics in the table to answer the following questions.

1. Which three regions had the largest number of grants in:
  - (a) 1998–99?
  - (b) 2002–03?
2. Which year had the most number of grants for:
  - (a) Europe?
  - (b) Asia?
3. Which two regions had the greatest:
  - (a) increase over the period?
  - (b) decrease over the period?
4. Which years had the greatest number of grants? Account for this increase.

#### Offshore resettlement program, grants by region, 1998–99 to 2002–03

Region	1998–99	1999–00	2000–01	2001–02	2002–03
Europe	4736	3424	3462	2709	1 158
Middle East and south-west Asia	2919	2208	2155	2743	4 343
Africa	1552	1736	2032	2801	5 628
Asia	295	113	316	189	201
America	24	21	27	16	
Offshore processing centres (e.g. Papua New Guinea and Nauru)					311
Other (out of region)					15
<b>Total</b>	<b>9526</b>	<b>7502</b>	<b>7992</b>	<b>8458</b>	<b>11 656</b>

Source: 'Fact Sheet 60', Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, Canberra, 2004



# BORDER CONTROL AND THE 'PACIFIC SOLUTION'

The forces that create refugees are war, political and religious conflicts, economic hardship and environmental crises. Refugees have lost their homes, jobs, community and often family. They are not usually a threat but do need help until they can re-establish their lives. Australia has a long history of taking in refugees. In Australia, many former refugees have become a valuable asset to the community. Some of these have been 'boat people' — illegally entering Australian territorial seas and seeking political asylum.

In recent years, however, people have become concerned at the number of refugees seeking asylum in Australia, perceiving this to be a potential threat to security. Such fears have grown stronger with mounting terrorism around the globe.

## THE TAMPA INCIDENT

In August 2001, a Norwegian cargo vessel, *Tampa*, responded to an Australian coastal surveillance report that a boat was sinking west of the Australian territory of Christmas Island. The *Tampa* rescued 433 people from the overcrowded sinking boat. They were illegal refugees who were hoping to obtain political asylum in Australia. The ship's captain sailed towards Christmas Island and asked permission from the Australian Government to land the refugees there. This was refused. Instead, the ship was boarded by SAS troops and moved further offshore, outside Australia's territorial waters.

There was considerable criticism of the Australian Government for not allowing the asylum seekers to enter Australian territory and be processed as legitimate refugees. Prime Minister John Howard stated that as a sovereign nation, Australia had a right to protect its borders and decide who could come here. He argued that by not going through the formal refugee procedure, these people were 'queue jumping', and hence they would not be processed here. Many Australians opposed the government's position,

claiming it was inhumane and against international law. The government's actions were successfully challenged in the Federal Court, but the government won in a subsequent appeal.

## THE 'PACIFIC SOLUTION'

The deadlock on what was to happen to the refugees was resolved when New Zealand and the tiny Pacific island nation of Nauru offered to take them. After further negotiation, the Papua New Guinea government agreed to take a number on their island of Manus. This 'Pacific Solution' was seen as controversial by critics, because the asylum seekers were not to be allowed to be processed on Australian territory, even though they had reached Australian territorial waters on the *Tampa*.

Towards the end of 2003, there were over 1550 people (including babies and very young children) held in detention centres in the Pacific. Of the asylum seekers who were held offshore, about 700 were resettled in other countries including Canada, Sweden and New Zealand.



Asylum seekers on board the Norwegian freighter, *Tampa*. They were rescued when their fishing boat sank. The Australian Government refused to allow them to come ashore and they were eventually sent to refugee processing stations set up on Nauru and Manus Island (Papua New Guinea).

## BORDER CONTROL

After the *Tampa* incident, new legislation on entry to Australia was passed through Federal Parliament. Certain Australian island territories were **excised** from Australia under the Migration Act. Now any unauthorised person who arrives in an excised territory will not be able to apply for an Australian visa. The excised offshore places are:

- Ashmore and Cartier islands in the Timor Sea
- Christmas Island in the Indian Ocean
- Cocos (Keeling) Islands in the Indian Ocean
- offshore resources and other installations (such as oil rigs).

In November 2003, the Federal Government attempted to excise all Australian islands north of Mackay in Queensland and north of Exmouth in Western Australia following the arrival (on Melville Island, north of Darwin) of an Indonesian fishing boat carrying 14 Turkish asylum seekers. The government's move was overturned by the Senate.

## Activities

1. Outline why refugees have become an alarming problem in many countries.
2. Describe what refugees leave behind when they flee their native country.
3. What was the significance of the *Tampa* entering territorial waters?
4. Why do you think the *Tampa* incident was so important?
5. Describe how you might feel if you were one of the boat people aboard the *Tampa*.
6. Explain how the 'Pacific Solution' could be seen as an infringement of human rights.
7. Explain the reasons for the border control legislation.
8. How did the Australian Government change the map of Australia in an attempt to stop illegal immigration?
9. Observe the map showing the journey of the Basiri family. What kind of dangers and difficulties do you think they faced?
10. Using the resources in your library and/or the Internet, research a recent refugee crisis. Prepare a report, including diagrams and photographs, and present it to the class.
11. In teams, discuss and prepare an argument either for or against accepting refugees from other countries.
12. Conduct a class debate on the topic 'Australia should have done more to help the *Tampa* refugees'.

### Worksheets

#### 13.3 Through refugee eyes

## A hard journey, a warm welcome

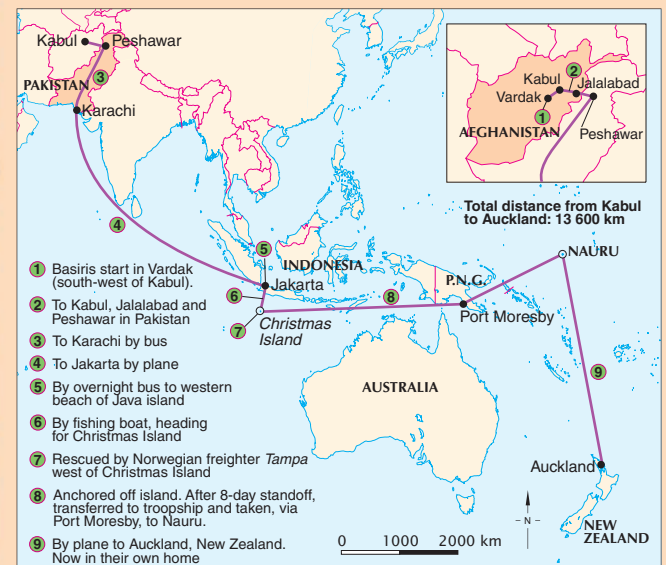
Volunteers and donations rather than government largesse are the keys to the settlement of New Zealand's *Tampa* boat people.

Of the 128 issued with refugee status, 88 are in families that have been provided with government houses in either Auckland or Christchurch. Each family has been given a government grant of NZ\$1200 (\$980) to buy big-cost items such as fridges and washing machines. The rest of their furniture, bedding and clothes has been donated after general appeals in both cities.

Their settlement is being handled by the non-government, non-profit Refugee and Migrant Service, which has allocated each family between five and ten volunteers to support them. In Christchurch, the service was worried that few people would turn up for a volunteer's training night. Instead there were more than 100.

Among the 131 boat people originally accepted by New Zealand were 37 unaccompanied teenage boys. Just one has yet to be granted refugee status — the others are in the care of the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services while foster families are found.

This leaves just two other *Tampa* travellers awaiting a decision on whether they'll be able to become New Zealanders.



The Basiri family (below) were among the refugees rescued by the *Tampa*. They were fleeing from the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and hoped to find safety in Australia. Their 13 600-kilometre journey (above) eventually ended in New Zealand, where they now live in Auckland.



Source: adapted from *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 January 2002

# DEVELOP AN OPINION

Many refugees leave their own countries, often risking their lives, because of a basic loss of human rights and freedoms. However, they are not always welcome in other countries because large numbers of asylum seekers are seen as a potential threat to security. Terrorism has increased these fears.

Attitudes about the Australian Government's response to refugees — especially those coming here unofficially — varies widely. Political analysts suggest that this issue, prompted by the *Tampa* incident, was a key factor in the Liberal win in the 2001 federal election.

Government policy under Prime Minister John Howard recognised two categories of refugees:

- Those selected overseas under official humanitarian programs and who enter Australia with a visa, which entitles them to permanent residency and to apply in due course for citizenship



In October 2001, the Australian Government claimed that parents had thrown their children overboard as 'a stunt' while attempting to gain illegal entry to Australia. The claims were never substantiated. Australian navy personnel rescued the refugees when the boat sank off Christmas Island.



Former detainee Ebrahim Samaki with daughter Sara and son Safer in Howard Street, Brunswick, where residents have shown support for refugees by displaying coloured hearts in their gardens.

- Those who arrive unofficially, such as those who arrived on the *Tampa* in August 2001.

The Australian Government said it did not want to encourage the practice of 'queue jumping' (that is, people seeking to come to this country without authority to do so), and saw its attempts to stamp out **people smuggling** and to discourage unauthorised arrivals as key elements in its efforts to protect Australia's borders. People arriving in Australia without authority were detained in detention centres while their claims for asylum or refugee status were investigated. This process could take several months.

Many people saw Australia's policy of detaining asylum seekers while their refugee status was determined as a breach of Australia's international obligations. The policy was criticised by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR), Amnesty International and other human rights organisations.

## GEO skills TOOLBOX

### Practising active citizenship

When forming your own opinion about a controversial issue, it is important to consider all of the relevant facts, not just those supporting a particular view. To develop your own opinion about the treatment of refugees in Australia, study the information on these pages and then follow each of the steps below.

1. Jot down some notes about what you think about each. For example, do you think it is probably factual? Does it seem fair? Does it seem unreasonable? Can you think of how else the situation may have been dealt with? What might have been the result if things were done differently?
2. Discuss your responses with a classmate. It is important that you clearly outline your point of view

and listen carefully to his or her point of view. You are not trying to change your partner's mind. Rather, you are testing your own ideas by stating them out loud. You may find it useful to list, in point form, your opinion and your partner's opinion.

3. In the light of this discussion, consider whether you think you have enough information to form your own opinion. Opinions formed on a small or selective amount of information often fail to take into account both sides of an issue.
4. Clearly state your opinion on the treatment of refugees in Australia by writing a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. Back your opinion with relevant facts.

### Worksheets

- 13.4 Let's talk about it!

‘ The cost to the taxpayer of this damaging system of [mandatory] detention is spiralling out of control ... The total cost to the taxpayer in 1999–2000 was an incredible \$96 650 701. It is costing around \$730 per week to keep each asylum seeker imprisoned. ’

Source: Marc Purcell, Executive Officer of the Catholic Commission for Justice Development and Peace, *The Age*, 30 August 2001

‘ Some of the measures that the government has introduced are tough — but let me tell you, they are by no means as tough as measures introduced overseas — they are tough, but they are fair ... Australia is one of the very few countries [besides Canada, the United States, New Zealand, Sweden, the Netherlands and Norway] which has a planned resettlement program for refugees ... Our response is generous but, as I have said, our capacity is not unlimited. ’

Source: Philip Ruddock, former Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, address to Victorian Press Club, 26 March 1998

‘ There are major concerns about how the detention system affects the mental and physical health of the detainees. There is a growing body of evidence that prolonged detention of unspecified duration, particularly when people are already traumatised by past persecution and do not know what the future holds for them, can lead to serious, physical and psychological damage. ’

Source: Amnesty International, press release, 3 May 2002

#### FACT SHEET 71: new measures to strengthen border control

The Australian Government is firmly committed to ensuring the integrity of Australia's borders and to the effective control and management of the movement of people to and from Australia.

This commitment stands beside Australia's absolute commitment to meeting its international obligations under refugee-related conventions.

Underlying these commitments is the fact that Australia is a sovereign country which decides who can and who cannot enter and stay on its territory.

Only Australian citizens have the unrestricted right to travel freely in and out of the country — all other people must have a legal authority in the form of a visa.

Reinforcing the commitment are Australia's migration laws and regulations which set the criteria and standards that foreign nationals must meet if they wish to travel to and remain in Australia for a period of time.

Each year a substantial number of people seek to enter or remain in Australia by circumventing immigration laws.

They may overstay their visas, obtain visas by fraudulent means, or try to enter without legal authority by air or sea.

Australia has recently experienced an influx of illegal boat arrivals, mainly from the Middle East. They are being transported to Australia by organised criminal gangs of people smugglers.

Under the law, all non-citizens who are in Australia unlawfully must be detained and removed as soon as practicable, unless they are granted a visa authorising their stay.

Source: adapted from Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, 8 August 2002

## We're here, get used to it: students give refugees younger voice

Merlin Luck, the contestant on television's *Big Brother* program, took his protest yesterday to the World Refugee Day rally in Hyde Park — where many people thought he could not compete with schoolchildren from Holroyd High.

The two girls and a boy had fled their homelands for a new life in an unknown country, learning new ways and a new language. Yesterday they stood in front of several hundred people and spoke up for refugees.



Maryam Alzubaidi, 15, from Iraq, said she was lucky — she was now an Australian citizen. ‘And I want to contribute to making Australia a better country.’

Sayed Reza, 18, who had not been to school when he fled the Taliban in Afghanistan four years ago, said: ‘We thought Australia a place of humanity. That's why we came. But detention is a horrible place.’

Najeeba Wazefadost, 16, said she felt fortunate to have been detained for only two months and called on the government to free the 162 children still in detention.

Another Holroyd High student, Azeena Nuhmaan, 17, who came from Sri Lanka, now speaks with an Australian accent and is Auburn Council's Young Citizen of 2004, asked: ‘Why are we still saying “No” to asylum seekers? They have been through so much in their homeland and we lock them up. These children are our future doctors, teachers, our future leaders.’

Half of Holroyd High's 700 students are from refugee families.

Australia-wide rallies coincided with the attempt by the NSW Refugee Action Coalition's ‘Flotilla of Hope’ to deliver teddy bears and other gifts to the 74 children detained on the Pacific island of Nauru.

The Australian Democrats leader, Andrew Bartlett, called on Nauru to issue visas to the human rights advocates but the Nauru authorities held the yachts offshore.

The Sydney rally was attended by a variety of groups, including Catholics, trade unions, Greens and Bennelong for Refugees, from the Prime Minister's electorate.

The Australian Democrats senator Aden Ridgeway pointed out that nearly all Australians were boat people or descended from boat people.

Merlin Luck suggested a new reality TV show: allowing the media into Australia's detention centres.

‘You don't put your family on a leaky boat unless you're desperate’, he said.

Dr Helen McHugh, co-founder of Rural Australians for Refugees, said that of 21 million refugees in the world, Australia took ‘a measly 12 000’ a year.

The Labor MP for Sydney, Tanya Plibersek, said Labor would release detained children.

‘What a contribution refugees have made to this country, and what a contribution these young people will make.’

Source: Tony Stephens, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 June 2004

# INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND THE LUCKY COUNTRY

Australia is called the 'lucky country' because of its great wealth in minerals and other natural resources. It could also be called the 'liveable country' because of its high living standards. Australia is ranked as the fourth most liveable country in the world according to the United Nations 2003 **Human Development Index (HDI)**. Unfortunately the 'liveable country' does not apply to all Australians, especially the **Indigenous people**.

## Human Development Index

Rating	Country	Life expectancy index	Education index	GDP index	HDI index
1.	Norway	0.90	0.99	0.95	0.944
2.	Iceland	0.91	0.96	0.95	0.942
3.	Sweden	0.91	0.99	0.92	0.941
4.	Australia	0.90	0.99	0.92	0.939
7.	United States	0.86	0.97	0.97	0.937
9.	Japan	0.94	0.94	0.92	0.932
104.	China	0.76	0.79	0.62	0.721
169.	Ethiopia	0.34	0.38	0.35	0.359

Note: Indexes for each dimension are used by giving a value for countries from 0 to 1. The higher the index, the higher the performance.

Source: United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report, 2003*

## NOT SO LUCKY

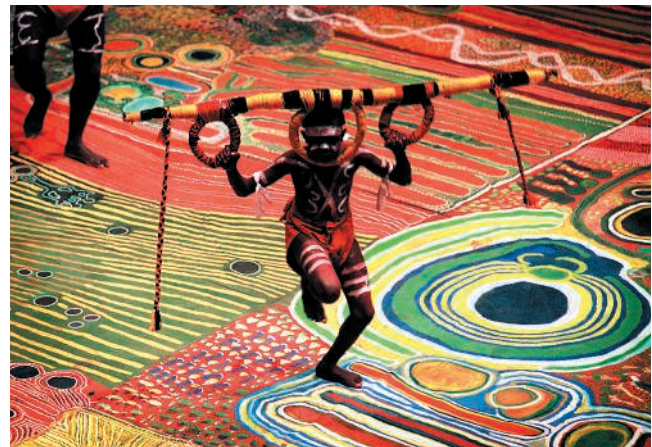
Following the arrival of Europeans in 1788, Indigenous peoples gradually lost their land and their way of life. They suffered an incredible abuse of human rights with massacres, torture, sexual abuse, loss of culture and human dignity. They also suffered from introduced diseases and malnutrition.

For over 150 years they were not recognised as citizens of Australia, and treated by many as inferior peoples — perhaps worthy of sympathy, but not human rights. Even now, they are still disadvantaged in many ways.

It wasn't until the 1920s when the first Indigenous political organisations were formed that steps were taken to ensure that Indigenous people would enjoy the same rights as European Australians. Indigenous people have had the right to enrol and to vote since 1962 only; until 1967, Indigenous people were not even included in the national census.

Today there is still a divide in our own backyard:

- Indigenous people make up 2 per cent of the population, yet they comprise 12 per cent of Australia's homeless.
- Around 40 per cent of children in corrective institutions are Indigenous.
- There are 18 Indigenous people to every 1 non-Indigenous person in Australian jails, and 100 Indigenous people have died in custody since 1989.
- Nearly half of all Indigenous people have a formal education below Year 10 level.



Walmjarri dancers on 'the big ngurrurra painting' in Canberra. It is the largest Aboriginal painting ever done on canvas and was painted as evidence for a native title claim.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

As a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Australia is committed to promoting and respecting the specified rights, and receives assistance from international agencies to promote these rights. This assistance comes from organisations such as the United Nations, non-government organisations

and individuals. As well, Australia is subject to international scrutiny and, at times, criticism of the success of its programs.

Many of the articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are relevant to improving the rights and wellbeing of Indigenous people. The most relevant article is Article 25: 'Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and wellbeing of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control'.

## INDIGENOUS HEALTH

Indigenous people have the poorest health of all Australians. They are far more likely to suffer chronic disease and disability, and to be admitted to hospital. They have a **life expectancy** much lower than the rest of the population. Some of the contributing issues are the remoteness of the communities, exposure to health risks, and social and cultural factors.

### Remoteness of communities

Whereas most Indigenous people live in the major cities of Australia, more Indigenous than non-Indigenous Australians live in remote areas of Australia. In the 2001 Census, 26 per cent of Indigenous people lived in remote areas, compared with 2 per cent of non-Indigenous Australians. More than half of these people lived in communities of less than 20 people. In remote areas of Australia, services are often limited and are less reliable than in regional towns and major cities. These include services ranging from supply of good quality water, power, sewerage and communications, to health and community infrastructure.

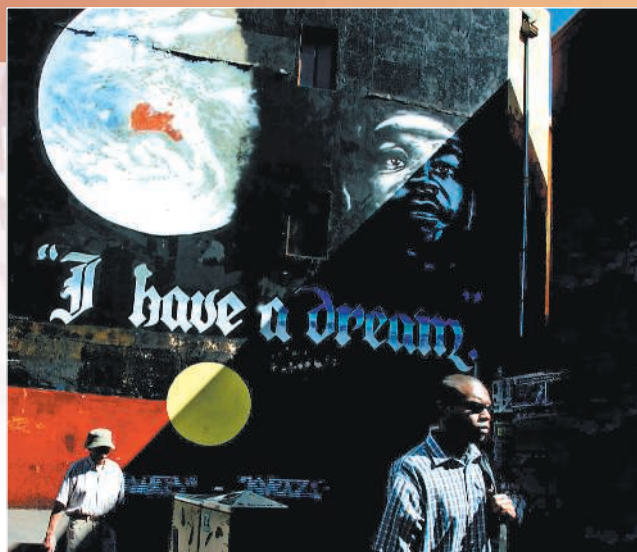
### Exposure to health risks

Health risks include smoking, obesity, physical inactivity and high blood pressure. Alcohol also leads to health problems. The percentage of Indigenous people who drink alcohol is no higher than for the non-Indigenous community, but some Indigenous people consume alcohol at more dangerous levels and are consequently more likely to be admitted to hospital.

### Social and cultural factors

Social and cultural factors include:

- dispossession, dislocation and discrimination
- disadvantages in education, housing, income and employment
- physical environment factors.



Mural quoting Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream' speech, Sydney

## GEOfacts

- **Life expectancy of Indigenous males is 56.0 years (76.6 years for all Australian males) and of Indigenous females is 62.7 years (82.0 years for all Australian females).**
- **Deaths from respiratory disease are six times more common for Indigenous people than for non-Indigenous Australians.**
- **The incidence of tuberculosis is 15.3 per 100 000 for Indigenous people, compared with 1.2 per 100 000 for Australian-born non-Indigenous people.**

## Activities

1. Outline what is meant by the Human Development Index.
2. Observe the table.
  - (a) List the seven countries in order of life expectancy.
  - (b) List the seven countries in order of education.
3. Describe how Indigenous people lost their human rights following the arrival of Europeans.
4. List three of the reasons Indigenous people are considered disadvantaged when compared with the rest of the Australian population.
5. Outline five health problems of Indigenous peoples.
6. Explain why many Indigenous people have poor health.
7. Suggest reasons why Indigenous people often live in remote communities. Why do you think this makes the delivery of health services difficult?
8. Explain why the Australian Government is committed to respect the health and rights of Indigenous people.

### Worksheets

13.5 Language groups in New South Wales

# MEETING THE CHALLENGES

## THE FUTURE CHALLENGE

Australian Indigenous people are still suffering from the dispossession of their land and the destruction of their traditional way of life. There is a long way to go if Indigenous health is to reach the standard of non-Indigenous people. Mainstream services are not always accessible to Indigenous people who may live in remote areas or find it difficult to access Medicare and pharmaceutical benefits. Improvements are needed in:

- health education programs
- identification of health conditions before they become serious
- expansion of primary health care services.

The challenge for the future is to make these programs work.

## GOVERNMENT STRATEGIES

Federal, state and territory governments fund a variety of programs designed to improve the living standards and human rights of Indigenous people. These include programs in health, education and housing. Several programs are funded in partnership with Indigenous communities, including:

- Indigenous community controlled health services
- remote communities initiative
- the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Substance Use Program
- funding to assist healthcare professionals and Indigenous communities to treat diabetes and renal disease.

## SAMPLE STUDY

### The Papunya community and World Vision

Papunya is a remote Aboriginal community located 270 kilometres north-west of Alice Springs in the Northern Territory. The community has approximately 400 permanent residents and an additional transient population of about 100. It was established around 1959 under the Federal Government's assimilation policy. Under this policy, different groups were moved to one settlement, and the Indigenous people lost their traditional land to pastoralists. They were unable to pursue traditional activities and were forced to rely on government handouts.

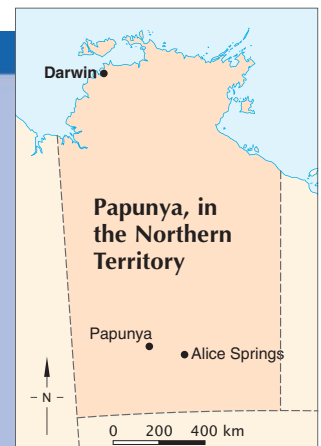
The Papunya community invited World Vision, a non-government organisation, to help the community resolve their health problems. World Vision's community health study in 1996 showed serious health problems, including:

- low birthweights and high rates of 'failure-to-thrive' among children
- high rates of infections and diseases
- poor nutrition
- inadequate housing and water supplies
- low levels of school attendance and education
- substance abuse, including alcohol, tobacco and petrol sniffing
- resultant vandalism, domestic violence, accidents and injury.

The study highlighted a serious lack in health education and illness prevention. The community and World Vision responded by developing new programs

with a focus on health (maternal and child), youth issues, aged care, education and leadership skills.

Community care workers and aged-care workers receive training, and World Vision has helped provide services for elders such as meals on wheels, laundry services and food shopping. Community members can take courses in arts and crafts, carpentry, sewing and cooking.



The Papunya community now has tables for school lessons. They were built and painted by local Papunya women after they completed a carpentry course.

## INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Indigenous people around the world have suffered serious abuses of human rights. Many have lost their traditional lands and livelihoods and now live in poverty. Many suffer serious health problems. It is really only in recent years that serious attempts have been made to tackle these problems. Programs in the United States, Canada and Sweden have been notable for improvement in indigenous health, but the challenge is to achieve much more. For example, serious health problems still exist for the estimated 43 million indigenous peoples living in the Americas.

## Activities

1. Read the sample study about the Papunya community.
  - (a) Where is Papunya located?
  - (b) What problems did the loss of their traditional land and way of life create for the Indigenous people?
  - (c) Outline the health problems suffered by the community.
  - (d) How did World Vision help the community?
  - (e) Imagine you are a healthcare worker at Papunya. Describe some of the problems you might encounter.
2. Outline the strategies that need to be taken to resolve the health problems facing Indigenous people in Australia.
3. Read the article on the health of indigenous people in the Americas.
  - (a) Outline how diversity presents a challenge for public health in the Americas.
  - (b) Explain why serious health and social problems exist for indigenous people in the Americas.

## Health of indigenous people: a challenge for public health

Although the term indigenous people in the Americas is widely used, that generalisation encompasses more than 400 different ethnic groups, with different beliefs and different health practices. This diversity presents a challenge for public health in the Americas, where indigenous peoples are among the most excluded.

The response of the Pan American Health Organization is its Health of Indigenous Peoples Initiative, started in 1993, which signifies a commitment by PAHO and its member states to work with indigenous peoples to improve their health and wellbeing. It is also a recognition of the value and need to conserve indigenous cultural heritage and knowledge.

Serious health and social problems still exist for the estimated forty-three million indigenous peoples living in the Americas. Recent studies have indicated that these peoples are among the most poor and disadvantaged, and each of the more than 400 ethnic groups 'has its own beliefs and practices with regard to health, as well as their own community resources for health promotion, disease prevention or cure of common ills,' explains Dr Sandra Land, PAHO's regional adviser in local health services.

The initiative for health of indigenous peoples was launched due to the inequalities that existed in health status and in access to basic services between those communities and other social groups. Indigenous communities have higher rates of avoidable mortality and morbidity and lower life expectancy at birth, and many of them do not have regular access to essential health care due to economic, geographical or cultural barriers.

'Indigenous communities frequently experience higher rates of infectious diseases and maternal and child mortality. In some countries with a different epidemiological profile they have higher rates of accidents and diabetes [within the indigenous communities]. The solution to these problems requires strategies that improve their access to basic services while incorporating community resources (indigenous healers) in local efforts to improve health,' said Dr Land.

Special considerations in the PAHO initiative included the aspirations of indigenous peoples to assume control of their own institutions and ways of life, the need to strengthen their own identities, as well as respect for their rights with regard to health and the environment. There was also a need to recognise the contribution of indigenous peoples to the maintenance of the ethnic and cultural diversity of the Americas, to biodiversity and ecological balance and, especially to the health and nutrition of society.

*Source:* Pan American Health Organization, adapted from press release, 15 August 2002



Food and medical supplies are delivered to areas affected by terrorism in Peru.



# WALKING TOGETHER: THE GOAL OF RECONCILIATION

The path towards **reconciliation** has been slow and difficult, as the timeline shows. There are signs, however, that progress is being made towards healing the wounds of the past and dealing with issues that have been the cause of the disadvantages suffered by Indigenous people.

## COUNCIL FOR ABORIGINAL RECONCILIATION

A formal structure was given to the reconciliation movement in 1991 when the Federal Government established the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation. Its brief was to promote reconciliation over the Council's ten-year life up to 1 January 2001, and to produce a document containing principles and strategies for putting the reconciliation process into action. The preamble to the Act establishing the Council stated:

- Australia was occupied by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who had settled for thousands of years before the British settlement at Sydney Cove on 26 January 1788
- many Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders suffered dispossession and dispersal from their traditional lands by the British Crown
- to date there has been no formal process of reconciliation between Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders and other Australians
- by the year 2001, the centenary of Federation, it is most desirable that there be such a reconciliation.

The Council was made up of 25 community representatives from Indigenous groups and from industries that have an impact on Aboriginal people, business and other sectors. The Council focused on the task of defining and explaining the core elements of reconciliation and raising awareness of and support for the process.

By the end of 2000, the Council had consulted with thousands of Australians in what had become the largest consultation process undertaken in Australia. The Council presented its final report 'Reconciliation: Australia's Challenge' to the Australian Parliament in December 2000.

The Report included the 'Australian Declaration Towards Reconciliation' (see opposite) and the 'Roadmap for Reconciliation' (see page 351).

### TIMELINE OF SOME OF THE ISSUES AFFECTING INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

1911	Commonwealth Government assumes legal guardianship of Aboriginal people in parts of Australia. Some part-Aboriginal children taken away from their parents and placed in institutions. This practice persisted even until the 1970s and victims of it have become known as the 'stolen generations'.
1962	Aboriginal people granted Commonwealth and NT voting rights.
1967	Referendum amends Australian Constitution to allow Indigenous people to be included in the census.
1972	Woodward Land Rights Royal Commission. Aboriginal tent embassy established outside Parliament House, Canberra.
1975	First legally recognised Aboriginal lease in Australia granted to the Gurindji people in the Northern Territory.
1988	Representatives of Indigenous groups present the Barunga Statement to Prime Minister Hawke, expressing hopes and expectations for the future. Prime Minister suggests aiming for full reconciliation through a pact or treaty.
1991	Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation established.
1992	Mabo judgement overturns concept of 'terra nullius' (land belonging to no-one). The High Court of Australia acknowledges that Australia was occupied by Indigenous people prior to colonisation.
1993	The Commonwealth Government passes the <i>Native Title Act 1993</i> as a result of the historic Mabo case. Under this Act, traditional Indigenous owners were given the opportunity to make a claim for certain lands.
1996	The High Court found, in the decision now known as Wik, that native title could co-exist with the interests of pastoral leaseholders. The Court asked black and white to find a way to share the land, while giving primacy to pastoralists' rights.
1997	Release of 'Bringing them home', report of the stolen generations inquiry. Commonwealth Government releases a ten-point plan in response to Wik decision, which has the effect of weakening the position of Indigenous people in land rights claims.
1998	The Federal Government passed legislation that reduced native title rights and strengthened the rights of pastoral leaseholders. The changes in the legislation were strongly criticised by the United Nations human rights committee.
1999	Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation releases a draft document for reconciliation for public consultation and the National Strategies to Advance Reconciliation.
2000	Thousands of people across Australia participated in the People's Walk for Reconciliation. The Council presented its final report to the Commonwealth Government.

The Aboriginal tent embassy served for a long time as a symbol for a people who had yet to win full recognition and reconciliation.



The People's Walk for Reconciliation, 2000

### *Australian Declaration Towards Reconciliation*

*We*, the peoples of Australia, of many origins as we are, make a commitment to go on together in a spirit of reconciliation.

*We* value the unique status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original owners and custodians of lands and waters.

*We* recognise this land and its waters were settled as colonies without treaty or consent.

*Reaffirming* the human rights of all Australians, we respect and recognise continuing customary laws, beliefs and traditions.

*Through* understanding the spiritual relationship between the land and its first peoples, we share our future and live in harmony.

*Our* nation must have the courage to own the truth, to heal the wounds of its past so that we can move on together at peace with ourselves.

*Reconciliation* must live in the hearts and minds of all Australians. Many steps have been taken, many steps remain as we learn our shared histories.

*As* we walk the journey of healing, one part of the nation apologises and expresses its sorrow and sincere regret for the injustices of the past, so the other part accepts the apologies and forgives.

*We* desire a future where all Australians enjoy their rights, accept their responsibilities, and have the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

*And* so, we pledge ourselves to stop injustice, overcome disadvantage, and respect that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the right to self-determination within the life of the nation.

*Our* hope is for a united Australia that respects this land of ours; values the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage; and provides justice and equity for all.

## **A**ctivities

1. What is reconciliation? Explain what the process of reconciliation is based on.
2. When did the formal reconciliation movement begin?
3. Observe the photograph of the tent embassy.
  - (a) Describe the scene in the photograph.
  - (b) Why do you think the Aboriginal people used a 'tent embassy' to draw attention to their cause? Suggest other methods that could be used.
  - (c) Imagine you were a tourist from a European country on a visit to Canberra when the tent embassy was there. You have seen the tent embassy and read information on the reconciliation issue. Write a postcard to a friend at home describing what you saw and learned, and how it affected you.
4. Outline the role of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation in the reconciliation process.
5. Take turns in class to read aloud a sentence each in the Australian Declaration Towards Reconciliation. Then hold a brainstorming session about how this declaration can be used to assist reconciliation.

# THE ROADMAP FOR RECONCILIATION

## RESPONSES TO RECONCILIATION

Many individuals have embraced the concept of reconciliation. This became obvious in 2000 when hundreds of thousands of people across Australia participated in a People's Walk for Reconciliation. In many communities, these walks have become an annual event. Many groups have also shown their support for reconciliation — from non-government organisations to business groups such as the Business Council of Australia.

There has been a mixed response from governments. On 27 May 2000, the Council presented the 'documents for reconciliation' to the Governor-General and assembled parliamentary leaders of Australia. Key elements of the documents proved

unacceptable to the Federal Government, in particular the call for an apology to Aboriginal people for past practices, the concept of **self-determination** and the acceptance of **customary law**. All state and territory governments have issued an apology to members of the **stolen generations** and other Indigenous Australians who were discriminated against or suffered disadvantage as a result of government policies. The Federal Government remained the only government that refused to apologise.

With the end of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation in 2001, the state-funded New South Wales Reconciliation Council took over this role in New South Wales. It supports and initiates projects to further the reconciliation process at the local, community and state level.



Reconciliation Walk in Melbourne, 3 December 2003

## THE ROADMAP

Four national strategies to achieve reconciliation were put forward in the 'Roadmap for Reconciliation'.

### National Strategy to Sustain the Reconciliation Process

This set out ways to build on the progress already made towards reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community. The strategy aims to consider practical, cultural and spiritual dimensions of reconciliation and includes leadership, education, a people's movement for reconciliation and formal recognition of the documents of reconciliation.

### The National Strategy to Promote Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Rights

This strategy proposes some constitutional and legislative processes, including changes to the Australian Constitution, to ensure:

- that all Australians enjoy, in daily life, a fundamental equality of rights, opportunities and acceptance of responsibilities
- the status and unique identities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as the first peoples of Australia, achieve recognition, respect and understanding in the wider community.

### National Strategy to Overcome Disadvantage

The aim of this strategy is a society where Indigenous people can enjoy a similar standard of living to that of other Australians, without losing their cultural identity. The strategy focuses on education, employment, health, housing, law and justice. Priority must be given to achieving comparable outcomes in health and education. No person should be disadvantaged by the inability of governments and service providers to communicate and cooperate in the delivery of services.

### National Strategy for Economic Independence

This strategy aims to ensure that Indigenous people can share the same levels of economic independence as the wider community. For most Australians, economic independence includes getting a job or running a business. An education substantially improves the likelihood of success. For some Indigenous people, however, economic independence will be defined in terms of their traditional economy and lifestyle.

## THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Many countries are responding to the challenges of reconciliation and are working towards establishing rights for indigenous peoples. For example:

- New Zealand's founding document, the Treaty of Waitangi, was written in Maori and English and signed by both Maori chiefs and the Crown in 1840. Maori traditional law is an integral part of the treaty, which influences all aspects of Maori affairs including political representation. There are reserved seats for Maoris in Parliament, land claims, mining, education, health and broadcasting rights. The original 1840 texts of the treaty were incorporated into New Zealand law by the Treaty of Waitangi Act of 1975. This Act also established the Waitangi Tribunal, which has the power to investigate Maori claims against the New Zealand government dating back to 1840.



A Maori man registers a protest at a Waitangi Day celebration.

- Canada has a long history of treaties between the government and the country's indigenous Indians: the Metis and Inuit peoples. Canada's Constitution was amended in 1982 to recognise the status and rights of indigenous peoples and to affirm the 'Aboriginal and treaty rights of the Aboriginal people of Canada'.



The Inuit people of Canada practise traditional hunting in remote areas.

## MEETING THE CHALLENGES

There are three main strategies Australia can adopt for a satisfactory reconciliation with Indigenous peoples:

1. Make a commitment to the Australian Declaration Towards Reconciliation. Such a commitment is the start of the future reconciliation journey.
2. Follow the Roadmap for Reconciliation. The roadmap recognises that all of us have a role to play in making recognition a reality.
3. Make a treaty between the government and Indigenous peoples that recognises the prior occupation and ownership of Australian land by Indigenous peoples, dispossession and the rights of Indigenous peoples. This treaty should be protected as part of the Constitution and would not create a separate Aboriginal nation. It would, instead, acknowledge the truth of Australia's history and enshrine the rights of Australia's Indigenous peoples within the limits of the existing Australian nation.



The 'Sea of Hands' at the Yeperenye Festival, Alice Springs, 2001. The plastic hands are a symbol for Australians who support native title and reconciliation.

## Advocates regroup for last leg of the journey

Four years after thousands walked across the Harbour Bridge in support of reconciliation, attempts are being made to put the issue firmly back on the national agenda.

State MP Linda Burney and Democrats Senator Aden Ridgeway have been appointed ambassadors for reconciliation, a new program has been launched drawing on grassroots support, and Senator Ridgeway has called for May 27 to be a national public holiday — Reconciliation Day.

Jackie Huggins, co-chairwoman of Reconciliation Australia, said yesterday Pathways to Reconciliation would be the biggest community reconciliation program since the Bridge walk, which was part of Corroboree 2000.

At the unveiling of plaques on the bridge to honour the May 2000 walk, the Premier, Bob Carr, said the event had seen the 'dislodged, displaced and dispossessed' original Australians and the 'colonisers and invaders' reaching out to one another. 'It was a great, happy and generous statement about Australian people and what they wanted for their nation.'

Sir William Deane, co-patron of Reconciliation Australia, said it was an unfounded dream to believe that reconciliation had been achieved with the bridge walk. Since then, reconciliation seemed to have hit a blind alley, although it remained strong at the grassroots. It was time to start a new push, he said.

Helping to launch Pathways to Reconciliation at the Opera House, Sir William said the first stage of reconciliation culminated in the 1967 referendum that removed discrimination from the constitution; the second ended with Corroboree 2000.

'Here we are again, setting out on the third, and hopefully final, stage of the national journey,' he said. 'It's not enough to walk and talk together but time to work and achieve together.'

Evonne Goolagong-Cawley, the other co-patron, said: 'The great news is that people across Australia are getting on with reconciliation.'

Ms Burney said the events of 2000 left unfinished business. It was necessary to move now to urgent business because 'we are losing so many important people' — the death on Wednesday of a senior elder of the Wangurri people, Mr Djerrkura, cast a pall over yesterday's events — and because young Aboriginal people deserved it.

Senator Ridgeway said May 26 was national sorry day in Canada, and Australia should have a public holiday for Reconciliation Day. He was encouraged at St Joseph's College yesterday to find 17 Indigenous boys attended the school.

Source: Tony Stephens, *The Sydney Morning Herald*,  
28 May 2004

## Activities

1. Outline the responses of individuals and groups to the reconciliation process. Describe how the Federal Government responded.
2. List the four strategies in the Roadmap for Reconciliation.
3. Compare the response of New Zealand (or another country) to reconciliation with the response of Australia.
4. Imagine you are a journalist. Your task is to write a report on 'Possible strategies Australia can implement to achieve reconciliation'. Using resources from the Internet, your library and newspapers, prepare your report and present it to the class.

## Analysing a website, including the ethics of the site

The accuracy and reliability of websites varies enormously because anyone can publish material on the Internet without having to prove its validity. Websites can also be biased or lack ethics in the way that information is selected or presented. Judging the reliability of websites has become an important skill now that we have instant access to so much information. Educational (.edu), government (.gov) or well-known organisations (for example, the United Nations) usually provide accurate information, but even these should be cross-checked if possible with another reliable site. Cross-checking with other reliable sources (for example, books and newspapers) is also a good idea.

To help you analyse whether or not a website is accurate and reputable, ask the following questions.

1. Who is responsible for the website? Is it:
  - a private individual?
  - an educational institution?
  - government?
  - business or some other organisation?

2. How reliable is the information?
  - Are there any indications of bias or exaggeration?
  - Can the information be verified from another source?
  - How current is the information? Has it recently been updated?
  - Can you contact the organisation by email?
3. How relevant is the information? Can you use it in your work?
  - Are the pages well set out and easy to read?
  - Can you follow the prompts and links on the site?
  - Is the information up-to-date?
4. What is the country of origin of the website?
5. How well has the website and the information been organised and designed?
  - Is the page easy to understand and use?
  - Is the page organised in a way appropriate for the content and purpose?
  - Are there too many graphics making it difficult to download?

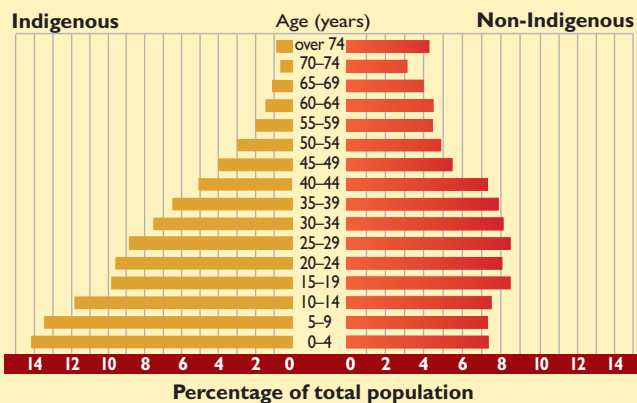
Go to the [www.jaconline.com.au/geoactive/geoactive2](http://www.jaconline.com.au/geoactive/geoactive2) and click on the Aboriginal Reconciliation weblink for this chapter. Analyse the site using the questions above. Use a search engine to locate another site about indigenous people and use your skills to analyse it. Compare your results.



# Broadsheet: Indigenous challenges facing Australia

Use the population pyramid to answer the following questions.

- When compared to the non-Indigenous population, the Indigenous population is much
  - richer.
  - poorer.
  - younger.
  - older.
- When comparing the 0–4 age cohort, the percentage of non-Indigenous Australians is approximately
  - double that of the Indigenous population.
  - half that of the Indigenous population.
  - one-quarter of the Indigenous population.
  - three-quarters of the Indigenous population.

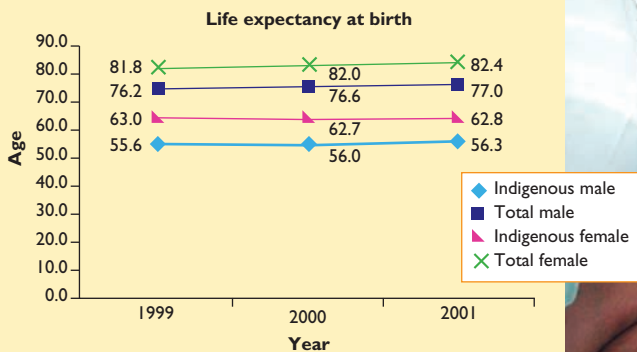


Population pyramid of Indigenous and non-Indigenous population

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

Use the line graph of life expectancy to answer the following questions.

- Since 1999, the life expectancy of Indigenous females has
  - rapidly increased.
  - rapidly decreased.
  - slowly decreased.
  - decreased then slowly increased.



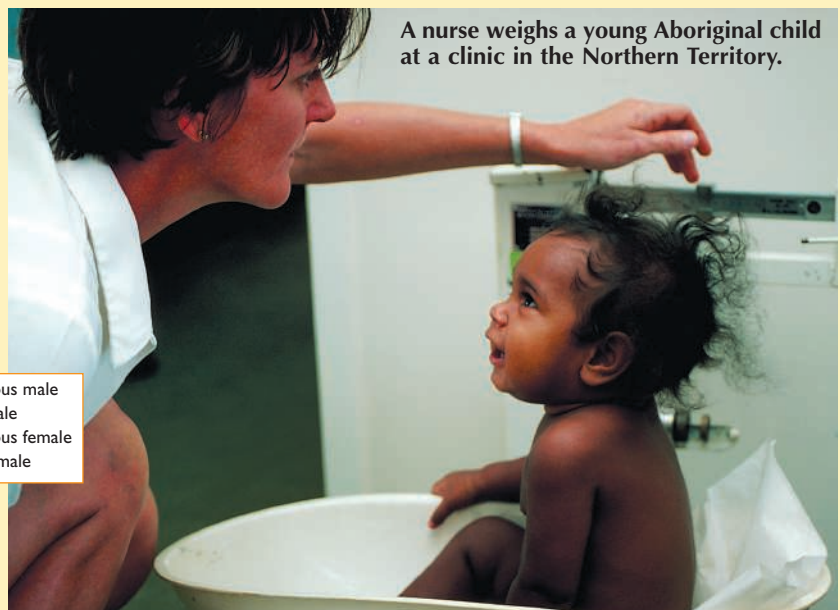
Life expectancy at birth

Source: data from Australian Bureau of Statistics

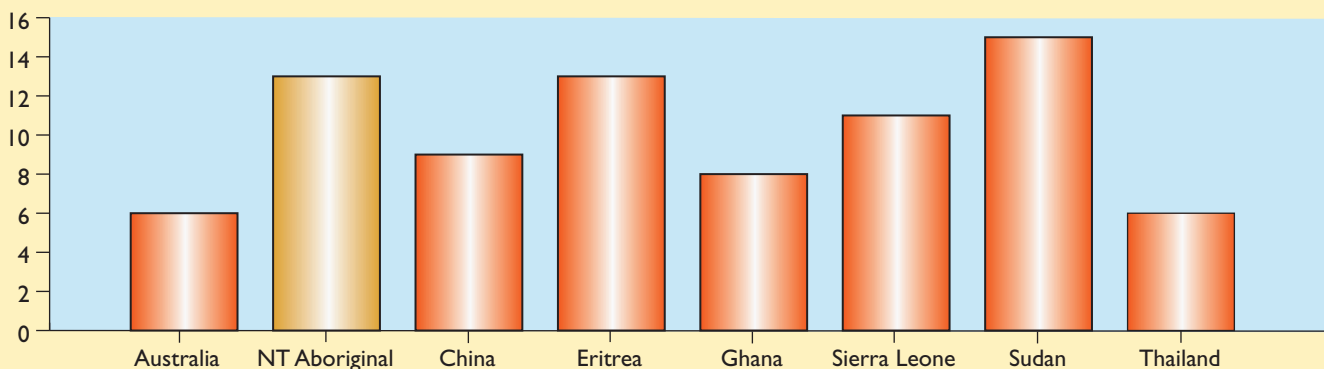
- The life expectancy gap between all Australians and Indigenous Australians is
  - growing most quickly between females.
  - growing most quickly between males.
  - shrinking most quickly between females.
  - shrinking most quickly between males.

Use the bar graph of birthweights and the Northern Territory healthcare photograph to answer the following questions.

- Why is it particularly important to monitor the birthweights of Northern Territory Aboriginals?
  - To ensure the infants don't eat too much junk food
  - Because Northern Territory Aboriginals are twice as heavy as average Australian infants
  - Because there is twice the incidence of low birthweights in Northern Territory Aboriginals when compared to the Australian population as a whole
  - Because there is half the incidence of low birthweights in Northern Territory Aboriginals when compared to the Australian population as a whole
- Between 1990 and 1997, the rate of low birthweight infants in the Northern Territory was
  - higher than the rate for China.
  - lower than the rate for Sudan.
  - the same as the rate for Sudan.
  - all of the above.



A nurse weighs a young Aboriginal child at a clinic in the Northern Territory.



Percentage of infants with low birthweights 1990-97

Use the table showing school retention rates to answer the following questions.

- In 2002, the retention rate for non-Indigenous Year 12 students was
  - half that of Indigenous students.
  - double that of Indigenous students.
  - the same as Indigenous students.
  - 28 per cent more than Indigenous students.
- The retention rate for Indigenous students
  - decreased with each additional year level and each calendar year.
  - decreased with each additional year level and increased in the period 1998-2002.
  - decreased with each additional year level and increased in every year in the period 1998-2002.
  - both b and c above.

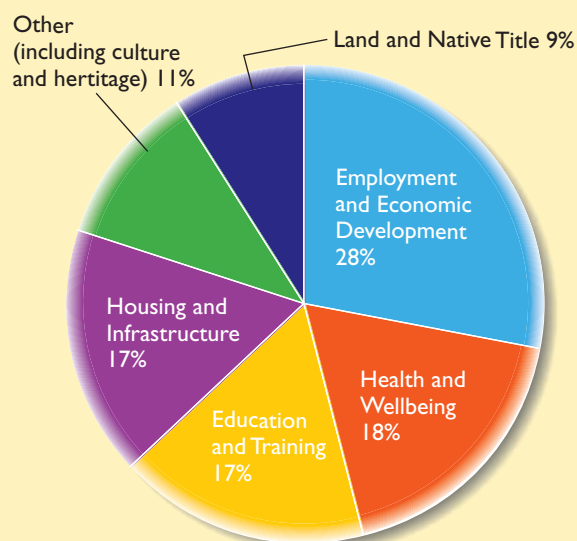
#### Apparent retention rates of full-time students (percentage)

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
<b>To Year 9</b>					
Indigenous	95.0	93.9	95.7	96.5	97.8
Non-Indigenous	99.7	99.9	99.8	100.0	99.8
<b>To Year 10</b>					
Indigenous	83.1	82.0	83.0	85.8	86.4
Non-Indigenous	97.5	97.9	98.0	98.2	98.5
<b>To Year 11</b>					
Indigenous	52.5	56.0	53.6	56.1	58.9
Non-Indigenous	85.4	86.4	86.2	87.6	88.7
<b>To Year 12</b>					
Indigenous	32.1	34.7	36.4	35.7	38.0
Non-Indigenous	72.7	73.2	73.3	74.5	76.3

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

Use the pie chart showing government funding for Indigenous Australians to answer the following question.

- Eighty per cent of the total funding budget for programs and services for Indigenous Australians in 2004-05 was allocated to the four priority areas of
  - culture, housing, education and employment.
  - health, housing, land rights and employment.
  - health, housing, education and land rights.
  - health, housing, education and employment.



#### Government funding for Indigenous Australians

Source: 'Budget 2004 — Indigenous Affairs', Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs

Select resources to help you answer the following questions.

- Give two examples of responses to help improve the welfare of Indigenous Australians. For each example identify the individual, group or government responsible for the change.
- From the resources shown here, give two examples of social inequality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. For each example suggest a strategy Australia could adopt to make the situation more equitable.

