Main Topic: Social and Political

Sub Topic: Civil Rights (1967 Referendum)

The purpose of The 1967 Referendum was to make two changes to the Australian Constitution. These changes enabled the Commonwealth Government to:

a. make laws for all of the Australian people by amending s51 of the Constitution (previously people of the ‘Aboriginal race in any state’ were excluded) and;
b. take account of Aboriginal people in determining the population of Australia by repealing s127 of the constitution (formerly, Indigenous peoples had been haphazardly included in the census but not counted for the purposes of Commonwealth funding grants to the states or territories)

From 1967, Indigenous peoples were counted in the census and included in base figures for Commonwealth funding granted to the states and territories on a per capita basis.

Contrary to popular thinking the 1967 Referendum did NOT

- give Aboriginal peoples the right to vote
- give Aboriginal peoples citizenship rights
- give Aboriginal peoples the right to be counted in the census.

Taken from 1967 Referendum: important facts and interesting pieces of information. You can access the full document at Reconciliation Australia’s website: www.reconciliation.org.au under Reconciliation Resources – Significant Events & Anniversaries – 1967 Referendum

In 2007, the 40th Anniversary of the referendum, many great resources were produced, giving concise information with teaching and learning activities for all ages.

- Reconciliation Australia’s website has a section devoted to the 1967 Referendum under Reconciliation Resources, including some interesting video footage, a section on Women of the 1967 Referendum and a website put together by MacquarieNet with information for students and teachers of all levels.
- Video: A Fair Go - Winning the 1967 Referendum
- Video: Vote Yes for Aborigines is available for purchase and download and an ATOM Study Guide can be downloaded from Enhance TVs website

- Define and discuss the concept of a referendum with students. Identify a referendum subject with which the students would be most familiar, such as Sunday Trading or Daylight Saving, as a means of relating the 1967 Referendum to a topical experience for students.

- Set up your own school referendum related to issues relevant to your school or local community. Explain that each issue must only have a yes/no response as preferential voting is not allowed in a referendum

  - Discuss and decide what the issues are, such as: no school uniforms, longer lunch break, better heating and cooling for classrooms, water coolers for each classroom, day light saving, shorter school days, no homework.
  - Develop position statements from candidates
  - Students form their own political party based on their beliefs/issues
  - Develop placards and posters and place around school
- Develop how to vote cards
- Develop voting cards/slips
- Make polling booths
- Develop strategies for collecting and counting the votes
- Advertise the date for the day of voting
- Graph the voting results. Report on the response to the voting. Can the results change anything?
- After the vote, what now?
- Editorial of the voting process Langoulant style caricature
- Link to political activism (peaceful) as citizens have civil rights.

- Use the available resources to:
  - Research the significant events in Australian social history which led up to the 1967 Referendum such as past government policies, Freedom Rides, Civil Rights, Land Rights and the Pastoralist Strike.
  - Investigate and identify the ideological stance held by The Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders which existed from 1958-1972.
  - Investigate: Who was involved in FCAATSI? Did they go on to achieve Civil Rights for Aboriginal peoples in Australia? Where are they now?

- Use Google Images and elsewhere to find posters used in the campaign.
  - Analyse the graphics used as a viewing activity.

- What was achieved by the 1967 Referendum?
  - Debate: did the 1967 Referendum REALLY make a difference to Aboriginal people's lives? Did it make a difference to non-Aboriginal people's lives? Did Aboriginal people achieve any benefit from the referendum or was the referendum more symbolic in nature?

- What impact did the 1967 Referendum have on the national census?

**Resources:**

- Reconciliation Australia  [www.reconciliation.org.au](http://www.reconciliation.org.au)
- *The 1967 Referendum: important facts and interesting pieces of information* (Fact Sheet) Available on the Reconciliation Australia website
- *Vote Yes for Aborigines* (video). SBS. 2007. 60min.