

**2006**  
**Assessment**  
**Report**

VICTORIAN CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT AUTHORITY



**2006**

**Australian History GA 3: Written examination**

**GENERAL COMMENTS**

This was the second year of the revised *Australian History VCE Study Design* and it is important to revisit the purpose and intent of the November written examination. The paper examined students on a range of historical skills including depth of knowledge, critical analysis, reflective scrutiny and essay writing. The marking scheme rewarded students for their study throughout the year and provided a clear indication of how the paper was to be interpreted.

The overall quality of papers this year was pleasing and students generally made a reasonable attempt to answer the questions asked. Most students displayed a considerable amount of knowledge that, in many cases, demonstrated significant research and wide reading. It was clear that many students had been well taught in the use of historical evidence and many were able to use quotes extensively and attribute the source of their evidence. Most students made a genuine effort to demonstrate an awareness of all areas of the study design and appeared familiar with the examination layout.

Unfortunately, poorer students often repeated material within sections and across sections. Often their responses lacked depth, sophistication and evidence.

**SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

**Section A**

**Question 1**

Document chosen	none	A	B	
%	0	78	22	
Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	11	6	83	1.7

i.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	11	6	83	1.7

ii.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	1	3	16	29	51	3.3

iii.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	3	2	8	19	25	26	17	4.1

iv.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	4	2	6	12	14	18	19	14	12	5.0

Some students took too long to establish the crux of their answers in this section. They need to be reminded to get to the point quickly for questions worth two or four marks, but realise that a more thoughtful and thorough response is required for questions worth more marks. Teachers are encouraged to teach their students that each question in this section requires a different response.

**Document A**

Once again, this document was by far the more popular of the two choices.

i.

Students were rewarded for their ability to relate the information presented in the written piece to the question asked. The maximum score of two marks was awarded if the student was able to identify either that nothing could be done to change conditions back to what they were before European settlement or that the ‘savage’ did not want to be civilised.

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**ii.**

Students responded to this question reasonably well. They needed to identify that the process began immediately once European settlement was started. They then needed to explain this in the context of land use, introduction to European vices and diseases, introduction of European crops and livestock, law and customs or land ownership.

**iii.**

Again, this was a reasonably well-answered question. It required students to identify the introduction of firearms (to get food) and liquor as the advantages of European settlement. Most students argued that such things were not an advantage to the Aborigines because they led to a breakdown of their traditional lifestyle, caused conflict with Europeans and resulted in numerous deaths.

This question was a reasonable discriminator as many students struggled to provide specific support material here. The 'advantages' of European settlement were often an imaginary response and were seldom substantiated with any hard evidence. One mark was awarded for stating each advantage and four marks were awarded for the quality of the explanation.

**iv.**

In this question, marks were awarded based on the response to the question, the level of knowledge and information, and the relevance and sophistication of the evidence used. The key to scoring highly was to refer to how Aborigines responded to the spread of civilisation. Many students spoke about the Aboriginal response in light of loss of food, loss of land, depopulation, disease, alcoholism, lost of cultural identity, loss of hunting grounds and the exploitation of women. Better students cited positive responses such as Aborigines adapting to European culture through employment and other lifestyle changes.

### **Document B**

**i.**

Students were rewarded for their ability to relate the information presented in the written piece to the question asked. The maximum score of two marks was awarded if the student was able to identify two of the following improvements: water works, railways, telegraph, gas works, cleaning up the river and/or population increase.

**ii.**

This question required students to provide two reasons for the rapid growth of the colony by 1854. Most students cited gold, the availability of land, and immigration as the major reasons for the growth. In order to obtain the maximum of four marks, students needed to provide some explanation to support their selections.

**iii.**

Students needed to specifically identify two cultural, political or social changes that had occurred in the colony up to 1860. One mark was awarded for identifying each change and two marks for the quality of the explanation surrounding each. Generally, the range of responses to this question was disappointing. Most responses tended to concentrate on demographic changes in Melbourne (for example, more Chinese) and how the Aboriginal population was affected. However, a range of other changes could have been discussed, including cultural (the establishment of libraries, university, orchestras, theatre, entertainment and the Botanic Gardens), political (separation, self-government and parliamentary reforms) and social (urbanisation, population growth, architecture and building design) aspects. Teachers should note that this aspect of the area of study should cover more than just demographic changes.

**iv.**

In this question, marks were awarded based on response to the question, level of knowledge and information, and the relevance and sophistication of the evidence used. Most students argued that the colonists' views had changed because it was no longer a one dimensional pastoral view. Better students pointed out that original visions of the colony were fairly limited and that gold had indeed altered that vision. The very best students argued that those who came due to the discovery of gold had different visions of what the colony would be and that, in some regard, this vision was fulfilled.

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### Section B

#### Question 2a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	8	5	15	33	38	2.9

This was a straightforward knowledge question taken directly from the dot points in the study design. Students were required to name and date two specific pieces of legislation. Possible responses included:

- *Women's Franchise Act 1902*
- *Invalid and Old Age Pension Act 1908*
- *Maternity Allowance Act 1912*
- *Conciliation and Arbitration Act 1904*
- *Defence Act 1909*.

The Harvester Judgement was often cited incorrectly as an Act of parliament.

#### Question 2b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	5	4	11	19	22	19	20	3.9

Although this question once again called for knowledge specifically related to the dot points outlined in the study design, many students were challenged by the requirements of the question. Better students wrote about Australians being white, British, and either male or female. Many students appeared to have a clear knowledge of 'exclusion' but could not match this with an explanation of 'inclusion'. Teachers are urged to consider this area of study from a range of perspectives: exclusion/inclusion, hopes/fears and pre-1901/post-1901 to enable students to argue from a variety of starting points.

#### Question 2c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	5	2	4	5	9	11	13	16	15	10	11	6.2

Again, students' responses were assessed based on response to the question, level of knowledge and information, and relevance and sophistication of the evidence used. The very best answers argued that the desire to be white and British led to the creation of laws that protected/created the ideal of an Australian.

'Hopes and fears' as a concept in effect from 1888–1914 proved difficult for many students. In part, they were able to talk about fears of external threat being a motivation for national identity, and better students made connections between this fear and the economic need for unity. There were some excellent references to nationalist literature, such as that of Henry Lawson, that helped shape national identity.

Better responses argued that the sense of 'Australianism' became more apparent as the emerging situation in Europe created a greater sense of being British, which remained at the core of our national identity and culture.

### Section C

Question chosen	none	a.	b.	c.
%	1	25	41	33

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	3	4	5	4	7	8	12	11	10	8	7	3	4	13.0

Students were assessed according to the argument, relevance, evidence and knowledge gained from a variety of sources. It was again pleasing to note that there were few essays that were not awarded marks for knowledge and relevance. Most responses were at least two pages in the question and answer booklet. In general, students knew their topic well, although too often their responses were fairly accepting of the question's assertion. A number of students used the key words of the question consistently in their essays, which was pleasing. Teachers should be applauded for their work in this area.

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Students who engaged in the complexities of the question were aptly rewarded. The very best essays considered the contention from a range of perspectives and were brimming with specific evidence. Responses that presented a coherent argument, provided evidence to support the contention and remained relevant to the question asked were rewarded. There were no set responses expected in this section.

### **Question 3a.**

This question asked students to examine the degree of division in Australian society during World War I and the extent to which these divisions remained unresolved. By implication, the question suggested that the divisions were deep and permanent.

Generally, students agreed with the statement and many talked about conscription, the disputes within the Labor Party, sectarianism, unrest amongst the unions, divisions within the Catholic Church and the unrest caused by the issues of alien interments. Better students argued that the war did bring unity through a sense of Australians fighting together, and discussed the Gallipoli campaign, the nationalist spirit, patriotism and a sense of the common threat. They then speculated on the degree to which these divisions remained after the crisis.

Those who scored highly examined the issue of division across time, gender groups, and politics and were extremely reflective on what was finally resolved. Weaker students simply provided a chronological description of how certain groups coped with the crisis.

### **Question 3b.**

This question presented a pessimistic view of the Great Depression by suggesting that the crisis challenged the cohesiveness of Australian society and caused it to alter.

The majority of students agreed with this statement and middle range answers cited poverty, equality of sacrifice (or lack of) and uncertainty about how to deal with the crisis on a local/state/federal level as evidence of the breakdown of society. Weaker answers simply listed these changes and did little to engage in any debate concerning their longevity. These students tended to generalise about 'upper class', 'working class', etc. which often detracted from their central argument.

The very best students offered a balanced response to the question. In these instances, there was often reference to the idea that the cohesiveness of society was strengthened (with people providing assistance to others), the part played by private charities and the increased role of the government in providing aid and support.

### **Question 3c.**

This question explored the issue of crises challenging accepted beliefs and whether groups during World War II were pushing for change.

Generally students argued that by and large society was not changed significantly by this crisis. Most students discussed the changing role of women, but better students argued that these changes were not sustained. The very best students presented arguments that showed an awareness of the complexities of societal change. Examples cited included the alignment of co-operation with the US and the subtle changes in Australian foreign policy. The defiance of Churchill by Curtin, in insisting that Australian troops come home and defend the home front, was used to illustrate a change in accepted beliefs. Better students provided evidence which suggested that, because Australia was under direct threat, society was prepared to accept the necessity of certain government decisions.

Weaker students were not able to provide adequate evidence to support their view and their responses tended to be a description of what different groups did during the war.

## **Section D**

### **Question 4**

Representation chosen	none	A.	B.	C.	D.
%	2	6	72	4	16

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### Identification

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	4	4	15	35	42	3.1

### Evaluation

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	8	6	9	11	14	14	17	11	11	4.4

### Analysis

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	18	5	6	7	12	13	15	12	12	4.2

Once again, the representation on Vietnam (B.) was by far the most popular choice.

Unfortunately, similarly to last year, many students failed to score well in this section because they did not refer to the other significant point in time in their analysis of the document. Teachers must stress this point when instructing students on how to respond to this part of the examination. When students are evaluating the extent of the changes in attitudes over time, they must refer explicitly to dates to identify both points in time. Their understanding of both points in time must be thorough and evidence-based.

There is an increasing tendency for students to deal with the parts of this question in three separate sections. While this has resulted in some outstanding responses, it must be noted that the very best students integrated their discussion of the three requirements throughout their response.

### Attitudes to Indigenous rights

This document reflects attitudes such as opposition to giving Aborigines citizenship rights, paternalism, reluctance to accept change and racial supremacy. Students who attempted this question were mostly able to identify these and generally commented that these views would not have been the accepted view because the referendum under discussion was passed by over 90 per cent of the population.

It was expected that students would comment that by 1972 the general attitude of the white Australian community and politicians was critical and unsupportive of the Aboriginal movement. Some students showed that this lack of sympathy reflected opposition to the way the Aboriginal movement was protesting. Better students were able to explain that the passing of the 1967 referendum merely illustrated support for superficial change and thus attitudes had not altered by 1972. However, several excellent responses argued that the success of the referendum in 1967 gave impetus and confidence to Aboriginal and white activists to campaign for future change and that much had changed in the pursuing years.

### Attitudes to the Vietnam War

This was the most popular question in this section, and nearly all students who selected it were able to identify attitudes such as the potential of the war to blow out to global proportions, the right to protest (indeed the responsibility of the community to protest) and the apathy of many Australians to take a stand on moral issues. The very best responses commented that this representation suggested that thinking individuals were more inclined to protest and that if people thought very carefully about the issue of war they would come to the logical conclusion of where it would lead.

Students commented that these attitudes increasingly reflected the attitudes of the time. Most students provided evidence showing a major swing against conscription and the war, with better students provided more than just poll statistics to show why more people were questioning the war and its brutality. Many discussed the increased concern about the morality of the war and the government decisions made to sustain it.

Nearly all responses argued that there were significant changes in attitude since 1965, citing the mild opposition to conscription and the war as the chief evidence of this. Most were able to show that in 1965 there was little challenge to the role of government in the debate, and that there was general acceptance that waging a war was the way to fight the threat of communism. The very best students produced a variety of evidence to support their view.

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### **Attitudes to the environment**

Once again, this was the least popular question in this section and few students responded to this representation. Those who did commented on attitudes such as environmental impact (in particular, the amount of damage being done), the immorality of decisions being made without proper study and the deliberate exclusion of opposition voices to the debate.

Students generally recognised that these attitudes were not reflected by society at large, and some provided evidence to support the lack of public support for environmental issues. The idea that the government ignored the protest and continued with its actions was used to support this view. Some responses argued that the protest movement was relatively small and that the Pedder campaign was really the first to push it along.

Clearly, attitudes had changed by 1983 and better students provided evidence to show that it was public sentiment that pushed the Federal Government to start the process of World Heritage nomination. Students showed, with the use of poll data, that this issue dominated the 1983 election.

### **Attitudes to immigration**

Generally, the responses to this representation were pleasing. Most students identified attitudes of race over potential contributions to society, the importance of immigration in determining the security of Australia, white superiority and the questioning of bureaucrats' capacity to make decision about immigrants. Essentially, this cartoon suggested that immigration was about keeping Australia white.

Most students commented that the attitudes presented reflected prevailing views of the time. Better responses identified that prior to 1965 non-whites would not even have been considered for immigration.

In comparing this representation to the other point in time (the 1970s), most students showed that racism and white superiority were clearly evident in society's attitudes toward the Vietnamese boat people. However, better students also cited examples which showed compassion and a sense of responsibility to these immigrants. These students argued that by 1977 there was an increasing acceptance of people from different races and, indeed, the electoral success of the progressive Labor party in 1972 reflected a view of immigration that was not about exclusion but inclusion.