



# ONE & FREE



# How Australia Was Made





As our national anthem proclaims, “We are one and free.” Australia has always been stronger when we as a community are united around our shared values of freedom, democracy, and egalitarianism.

It is these values which have bound us together in times of hardship, enabled us to overcome division, and which have attracted millions to our fair and tolerant society.

One & Free - How Australia Was Made is a short guide to the ten most significant events and achievements that make us proud to be Australian.



# 1 – EQUALITY REFERENDUM: 1967

In May 1967 Australians voted to change the Constitution to ensure all Australians regardless of their background enjoy equal political rights.

91% of those voters in the referendum voted 'Yes' to remove two parts of the Constitution that discriminated against 'People of the Aboriginal Race' (the language of the time).

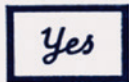
Section 51 (xxvi) was changed so the Commonwealth government could make laws for all people equally, and Section 127 was removed so that all Australians were to be counted in the census.

The referendum did not give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people the right to vote - they already had that right.

In 1962 the Menzies government passed a law giving all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people the right to vote at federal elections, and by 1965 every state government had similar rules for state elections.

**DO YOU APPROVE** the proposed law for the alteration of the Constitution entitled—

**“An Act to alter the Constitution so as to omit certain words relating to the People of the Aboriginal Race in any State and so that Aborigines are to be counted in reckoning the Population”?**



## 2 – EUREKA STOCKADE: 1854

On Sunday morning 3 December 1854 near Ballarat in Victoria, about 300 soldiers and police of the colonial government attacked a camp of 150 miners (the 'Eureka Stockade').

They were protesting that they paid taxes, but couldn't vote because they didn't own property.

In a fifteen minute battle at least twenty miners and six soldiers were killed. Thirteen of the protest leaders were put on trial for treason and were acquitted.

In the aftermath of the protest, the government cut the tax it imposed on the miners, new seats in parliament were created to give representation to workers on the goldfields, and miners were given the right to vote.

Mark Twain, who visited Ballarat in 1895 wrote about the Eureka Stockade: "It was a revolution - small in size, but great politically; it was a strike for liberty, a struggle for principle, a stand against injustice and oppression... It is another instance of a victory won by a lost battle."



### 3 – WOMEN GET THE VOTE: 1902

One year after federation the Australian Parliament passed the Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902 that gave all women over the age of 21 the right to vote in federal elections.

Australia was the first country in the world to give women the right to vote. (The United States introduced universal female suffrage in 1920 and the United Kingdom in 1928.)

In 1861 South Australia was one of the first places in the world to give women who owned property the right to vote, and in 1895 all women in the colony had the right to vote and stand for parliament.

In 1921 Edith Cowan was the first woman elected to any Australian parliament winning a seat in the Western Australian Legislative Assembly for the Nationalist Party. In 1943 the first women were elected to the Federal Parliament - Enid Lyons for the United Australia Party and Dorothy Tangney for the Labor Party.



## 4 – THE KABLE COURT CASE: 1788

Henry Kable and Susannah Holmes were convicts who arrived on the First Fleet in January 1788. Both had been convicted of burglary and their death sentences had been commuted to transportation to Australia. On their voyage from England their luggage which included books and clothing was stolen.

In July 1788 Kable and Holmes who had been married two weeks after their landing in Sydney, sued the Alexander's captain and were awarded £15 compensation - it was the first civil law action in Australia. In Britain convicts could not own property or commence legal proceedings. But Australia was different and was to be governed according to the rule of law under which convicts had legal rights.

Henry later became a successful businessman and the chief constable of the colony of New South Wales.

The Kable case enshrined the principle that all Australians were to live under the rule of law.



## 5 – THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM OF SPEECH: 1824

From the time of the publication of Australia's first newspaper in 1803, the government had controlled the printing and censored the content of newspapers.

The first newspaper published in Australia free of censorship was the Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser printed in June 1824 by Andrew Bent.

Bent, was transported to Hobart in 1812 after his conviction for burglary. He opposed the arbitrary and dictatorial policies of the government.

As a result of his criticism Bent was imprisoned for three months and fined the enormous sum of £500. On his release from jail Bent as a matter of principle, refused to apply for a government licence for his newspaper and he was again imprisoned.

Bent's bravery was recognised throughout Australia and he became known as 'The Tasmanian Franklin' after the American revolutionary leader Benjamin Franklin.





## 6 – GALLIPOLI: 1915

On 25 April 1915, 16,000 soldiers of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps landed on the Gallipoli Peninsula in Turkey. The ultimate objective was to defeat the Ottoman Empire, an ally of Germany in the First World War.

60,000 Australians fought at Gallipoli, 18,500 were wounded, and 7,594 were killed. The campaign was a military failure and by the end of January 1916 all the Allied forces had been evacuated.

Gallipoli has come to represent the sacrifice of all Australians who fought in the First World War. 416,000 Australians served in the armed forces and 61,000 were killed or died of their wounds.

The First World War continues to define the Australian national character of mateship, courage, and sacrifice.

The last Australian to serve in combat in the war, William Allan died in 2005. Born in Bega, he enlisted in the Royal Australian Navy at the age of 14.



## 7 – CONSCRIPTION PLEBISCITES: 1916 & 1917

In the midst of the First World War, Australians committed themselves to what was an unprecedented experiment in democracy. The Australian public, not politicians, decided the most controversial and divisive issue in our history – military conscription.

In October 1916 and again in December 1917 Australians voted in plebiscites whether the federal government should conscript men for military service overseas.

The plebiscites were not binding and had no legal force, but had very significant moral and political influence. The prime minister Billy Hughes supported conscription to ensure Australia provided its 'fair share' of soldiers to the war.

In 1916 52% of voters said 'No' and then the next year 54% of voters said 'No'.

The results surprised politicians and the media who assumed that 'Yes' would win easily.



## 8 – THE CHURCH ACT: 1836

Religious freedom is a fundamental principle upon which the Australian way of life is built.

The foundations of the ideal that individuals should be free to practice their faith were established in Australia in 1836 under Richard Bourke, the Governor of New South Wales.

In that year the Legislative Council of the colony passed The Church Act that provided government funding and grants of land for churches and schools to the Anglican, Catholic, and Presbyterian denominations. Financial support was later extended to other Christian denominations and Jewish communities.

In a period of often bitter sectarian division between Christian denominations a measure such as The Church Act was unprecedented.

Not only did the law mean that different denominations were treated equally it also meant there would be no 'established' (official) religion as in Britain.



## 9 – ONE MILLIONTH MIGRANT: 1955

Australia is the most successful multi-ethnic country in the world.

Mass migration began in 1946 following the end of the Second World War and in 1955 the one millionth post-war arrival came to Australia, 21 year-old Barbara Porritt from Yorkshire in England.

The highest number of migrants came from Britain, Italy, and Greece. An objective of government migration policy in the 1950s and 1960s was to encourage newcomers to learn English, gain employment, integrate into the community, and see themselves first and foremost as 'Australian'.

The Snowy Mountains Scheme that commenced in 1949 and opened in 1972 employed over 100,000 workers from more than 30 countries and 70% of its workers were migrants.

The attraction of Australia as a free and democratic country offering the prospect of a better life to anyone prepared to have a go has grown over the decades.



## 10 – WHITLAM'S DISMISSAL: 1975

On 11 November 1975 the Governor-General Sir John Kerr removed the Labor Party's Gough Whitlam as prime minister, installed the Liberal Party's Malcolm Fraser as a 'caretaker' PM, and called an election.

This was because the Liberal Party-led opposition in the parliament had 'blocked supply' and the Labor government was therefore unable to get parliamentary approval to spend public funds.

After his dismissal Gough Whitlam on the steps of Parliament House told his supporters 'Maintain your rage and enthusiasm through the campaign for the election now to be held and until polling day.'

1975 was a grave political crisis. In other countries had something similar occurred there would have been civil unrest – or worse. But in Australia, as Whitlam acknowledged, we settle our differences peacefully and democratically.

At the election held on 13 December 1975 the Australian Labor Party was soundly defeated.



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The Centre for the Australian Way of Life is a program of the Institute of Public Affairs which has as its mission to:

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2. give a voice to timeless Australian values; and
3. educate young Australians about their own and their country's history.

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