

# What have been the impacts of this result?

This activity helps students explore the material in the Aftermath section of the website <http://www.nma.gov.au/indigenoustrights/>













Once the Constitution was changed — what then? Would there be many real changes made to laws and policies affecting Aboriginal people? Some people thought that there would be no real change; others thought that the State Governments would now start meeting and plan uniform changes; some people thought that the Commonwealth would start to exercise its powers independently of the States and override their laws and policies.

There are several documents on the **Collaborating on Indigenous History** website showing different people's expectations of what would happen next.

- 1 Look at these, distribute them among groups in your class, and have each group report back on these questions:
  - What did this person/group want to happen now?
  - How were these changes to be managed — who was to control what happened?

In each case try to summarise your answer by completing the following sentences for each statement:

  - The person/group wanted ...
  - This would be carried out by ...

Document	Reference	This person/group wanted ...	This would be carried out by ...
	<p><b>SOURCE 7.1 Cabinet Submission, post referendum</b></p> <p>National Archives of Australia, A1209, 1967/1512  <a href="http://www.nma.gov.au/indigenoustrights/subsectione44b.html?ssID=30">http://www.nma.gov.au/indigenoustrights/subsectione44b.html?ssID=30</a></p>		
	<p><b>SOURCE 7.2 Coombs to head Aboriginal council</b></p> <p><i>The Australian</i>, 3 November 1967  <a href="http://www.nma.gov.au/indigenoustrights/subsectione44b.html?ssID=30">http://www.nma.gov.au/indigenoustrights/subsectione44b.html?ssID=30</a></p>		
	<p><b>SOURCE 7.3 Charles Perkins to Harold Holt, June 1967</b></p> <p>National Archives of Australia, A1209, 19671512  <a href="http://www.nma.gov.au/indigenoustrights/subsectione44b.html?ssID=30">http://www.nma.gov.au/indigenoustrights/subsectione44b.html?ssID=30</a></p>		
	<p><b>SOURCE 7.4 Charles Barnes to Acting Prime Minister</b></p> <p>National Archives of Australia, A1209/1512  <a href="http://www.nma.gov.au/indigenoustrights/subsectione44b.html?ssID=30">http://www.nma.gov.au/indigenoustrights/subsectione44b.html?ssID=30</a></p>		
	<p><b>SOURCE 7.5 Wentworth to Holt June 1967</b></p> <p>National Archives of Australia, A1209, 1967/1512  <a href="http://www.nma.gov.au/indigenoustrights/subsectione44b.html?ssID=30">http://www.nma.gov.au/indigenoustrights/subsectione44b.html?ssID=30</a></p>		
	<p><b>SOURCE 7.6 Queensland MPs to the Prime Minister, September 1967</b></p> <p>National Archives of Australia, A1209, 1967/1512  <a href="http://www.nma.gov.au/indigenoustrights/subsectione44b.html?ssID=30">http://www.nma.gov.au/indigenoustrights/subsectione44b.html?ssID=30</a></p>		

Now look at this document summarising what has happened.

**SOURCE 7.7** An assessment of the consequences of the Referendum

*Firstly, the changes enabled the introduction of 'benign discrimination'. Despite resistance from parts of the Government, [there were] several Federal programs specifically aimed at satisfying desperate Aboriginal needs ... in the area of employment, education, health, housing, and the administration of justice.*

*Secondly, the newly worded s.51 offered a head of power on which the Government was able to draw ... for enacting the Aboriginal Land Fund Act 1974, the Aboriginal Loans Commission Act 1974, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (Queensland Discriminatory Laws) Act 1975, Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act 1976, Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (Queensland Reserves and Communities Self-Management) Act 1978, Aboriginal Development Commission Act 1980, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage (Interim Protection) Act 1984, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Commission Act 1989 and the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Act 1991.*

*Thirdly, a new administrative definition of Aboriginal was introduced. [T]he Australian State Governments had ... created a raft of restrictive, technical or bureaucratic definitions of what constituted an Aboriginal person ... Definitions such as these were never accepted as meaningful by Aboriginal communities and the Commonwealth was easily able to introduce for its administrative purposes a fresh, more practical, definition based on community and self-identification.*

*Fourthly, the changes in the late 1960s heralded in a period characterised by the search for ways to facilitate 'self-management', 'self-sufficiency', 'self-determination' and, most recently, 'self empowerment'.*

*Fifthly, the changes offered the Federal Government a head of power (the so-called 'race power') to enact, in response to the 1992 Mabo High Court decision, the Native Title Act 1993 and Land Fund and Indigenous Land Corporation (ATSIC Amendment) Act 1995 and to defend the former from a High Court challenge by Western Australia in 1995.*

(Australian Parliamentary Library Background Paper 11 1996/1997)

2 In your own words how would you describe what has happened as a result of the 1967 Referendum?

**YOUR ASSESSMENT**

**Will you put the 1967 Referendum in the Australian 'Human Rights Hall of Fame'?**

You now have a great deal of information on aspects of the 1967 Referendum.

But one major question remains: was it a great triumph for Indigenous citizenship and human rights, or was it much less than that?

To decide this you need to look at the opinions of a range of people, and you need to have a set of criteria to apply to see if the Referendum met these.

To make your decision in an interactive way go to [www.australianhistorymysteries.info](http://www.australianhistorymysteries.info)

... and see if you will place the Referendum in the 'Human Rights Hall of Fame' with the other Human Rights documents you will find there.

**WWW** Further references

<http://www.nma.gov.au/indigenoustrights/sectionb92d.html?SID=39> (Reading)

<http://www.nma.gov.au/indigenoustrights/section7e7b.html?SID=41> (Web links)

From page 18:

The slogans suggested for the 1967 Referendum campaign were:

Towards an Australia free and equal

Vote yes

Vote 'Yes' for Aborigines

LET'S BE COUNTED - VOTE 'YES'

Vote 'yes' for equality

Remove discrimination - Vote 'yes'

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ABORIGINES

I raise for discussion the question of the stand we are to take on policy and what our administrative arrangements are to be in relation to the new Commonwealth power to legislate for the people of the Aboriginal race.

2. In our Cabinet discussions before the referendum, we decided, if it were successful, that we would have talks with the States directed to future arrangements. It was in our minds to leave responsibility for administration largely with the States - except in those areas of the Commonwealth Government where we have our own direct responsibilities - but with the Commonwealth having a role in policy in co-operation with the States. Our original purpose was to remove apparently discriminatory references to Aborigines from the Constitution, and not to wrest power from the States. We were conscious that our amendments in the form we presented them did provide the Commonwealth with additional power in this field should we choose to exercise it.

3. Since the referendum with its remarkably large "YES" vote, pressures have come on the Government from various quarters for a rather more active Commonwealth role. The pressures come from spokesmen for Aborigines, from some of our own parliamentary colleagues, from the press, and from the Opposition as the result of the special Federal Conference decision in Adelaide last week.

4. The most detailed representations from the Aborigines have come from Mr. Charles Perkins, who is himself an Aborigine University graduate, and is acknowledged to be one of their most articulate spokesmen. He sought an interview with me in New York because of a visit he was making to the United States and other countries to study how minority racial problems were handled by them. I told him we would be giving thought to the Commonwealth's role and consequential administrative arrangements. I invited him to let me have any suggestions he would like us to consider. In response to this he has proposed the establishment of a Federal Aboriginal Affairs Bureau responsible to a Minister and with access to funds for:-

- (a) the assumption of national responsibility for Aboriginal people;
- (b) the formulation of national policy;

# Coombs to head new Aboriginal council

*Aust*  
*3/11/67*



**DR COOMBS**

Dr H. C. Coombs yesterday announced his retirement as governor of the Reserve Bank, and the Prime Minister, Mr Holt, named him as the first chairman of the Council for Aboriginal Affairs.

Dr Coombs was also named the first chairman of the Australian Council for the Arts.

He will start work immediately on his new appointments, although his retirement from the bank will not be finalised until the middle of next year, Mr Holt said in the House of Representatives.

The decision to set up an office of Aboriginal affairs was announced in September, following the referendum on the status of Aborigines.

"The Government wishes to have continually available to it the best advice on Aboriginal affairs it can get on a national level, and it has decided the new office should serve a Council for Aboriginal Affairs, which will have two particular func-

tional policies for the Aboriginal citizens of Australia.

"It will consult with the Commonwealth departments and authorities whose activities have a bearing on Aboriginal welfare," the Prime Minister said.

The new council will consist of a chairman and two members.

The chairman's will not be a full-time appointment, but he will devote a large part of his time to its affairs, he said.

Some time ago, Dr Coombs had told Mr Holt and the Treasurer, Mr McMahon, that he wanted to step down after 18 years as governor of the Reserve Bank.

Mr J. G. Phillips, at present deputy governor of the bank,

To.  
The Honourable H. Holt,  
Prime Minister of Australia



Dear Mr. Holt,

Enclosed is my submission as requested. It is my sincere and honest effort. I feel sure, after having that conversation with you in New York, that you will accept this submission in the spirit given.

I do not claim to have all the answers to the Aboriginal question in Australia. However, my experiences as an Aboriginal and my following University training does give me some suitable background.

Brochures to supplement my submission will be forwarded through the High Commission in London. They are not in any definite order. Special consideration should be given to the address by the Honourable Arthur Dainig.

I apologise for the paper on which the matter is outlined.

Yours Faithfully  
Charles Perkins

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MINISTER FOR TERRITORIES

CANBERRA. A.C.T.

31 MAY 1967

My dear Acting Prime Minister,

Cabinet Decision No. 79 on the constitutional amendment concerning Aborigines directed that if the referendum was successful the Commonwealth would hold discussions with the States to formulate a joint policy with respect to Aborigines whereby the States will be responsible for administration but the Commonwealth will have a role of policy participation.

In 1951 and again each two years from 1961 onwards Commonwealth and State Ministers responsible for Aboriginal affairs have met to discuss matters of common interest in the field of Aboriginal advancement. The results of the conferences have on each occasion been reported to the Federal Parliament.

I attach a copy of the report of the 1965 conference held in Adelaide. On page 9 of the pamphlet is set out the statement of the policy of assimilation first agreed to by the Commonwealth and all States in 1961 and slightly varied at the Adelaide conference.

The revival of the Commonwealth and State conferences in 1961 was at the initiative of my predecessor who chaired the conference in Canberra in that year and in Darwin in 1963. The Minister for Social Services attended the 1961 and 1963 conferences. The Minister for Health attended the 1963 conference and was represented at the 1965 conference. Officers of those Departments and also of the Department of External Affairs have participated in the meetings of Commonwealth and State officials arranged in association with the Ministerial meetings. The Department of Territories has accepted some responsibility for national publicity on Aboriginal welfare and in co-operation with Australian overseas posts for the overseas distribution of the publicity material. The Department of Territories also acts as a central secretariat for the Commonwealth and State Ministers' and officers' meetings.

The next regular meeting of Commonwealth and State Ministers of Aboriginal Welfare is to be held in Perth on 21st July next.

.../2

*Miss G. Conway  
Approved this letter to me  
She did not want to  
retain a copy for  
the Library P.M.  
R.J.P. 2/6.*



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

1 REDMAN ROAD,  
DEE WHY, N.S.W.  
TEL. 98 0287.

19th June, 1967.

CONFIDENTIAL



Dear Harold,

As you know, I am considerably interested in the Aboriginal question on its own merits. Could I draw your attention to its subsidiary Electoral importance.

In any group, Aborigines tend to vote in a block, and the way in which their vote will go is as yet undetermined in most cases. Many of them are as yet unenrolled, but I suppose most of them will enrol in the next couple of years.

As it happens, they form important groups in certain swing seats, which are unlikely to be much changed by the redistribution. In these seats the Aboriginal vote might be decisive.

Seats held by us with a Narrow Majority.

Kennedy  
Herbert  
Grey  
Northern Territory

Seats held by Labour, which have at some time been held by us.

Leichhardt  
Capricornia  
Kalgoorlie

I think you will agree with me that seven seats may be enough to determine Government. I suggest some such scheme as the following :

1. Include in the Budget a subvention to the States - say 25% of their annual expenditure on Aborigines.

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PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PARLIAMENT HOUSE,  
CANBERRA, A.C.T.  
TEL. U 05.

5 September 1967.

CONFIDENTIAL

The Rt. Hon. H.E. Holt, C.H., M.P.,  
Prime Minister,  
Parliament House,  
CANBERRA. A.C.T.

My dear Prime Minister,

We would very much appreciate it if you could spare the time to see us for a few moments this week before the House rises.

We feel that the initiative on the Aboriginal question is passing out of the Government's hands, and that there may be serious repercussions if we do not take some immediate action to follow up the Referendum result. The Government has friends among the Aborigines, but it could lose them soon unless something tangible is done.

We could then get a mass Aboriginal vote against us in electorates such as Herbert, Kennedy, Grey and Northern Territory, where our margin is small: and the sentimental appeal of this question could cost us votes right throughout Australia.

We have a definite plan to put before you, which we believe could be implemented without delay.

We hope you will give us an opportunity to discuss this with you.

Yours sincerely,

Seen by the Prime  
Minister  
RS  
6/9.

*[Handwritten signature]*  
Mr. [unclear]  
Stephen [unclear]  
Bob. K. [unclear]  
[unclear]