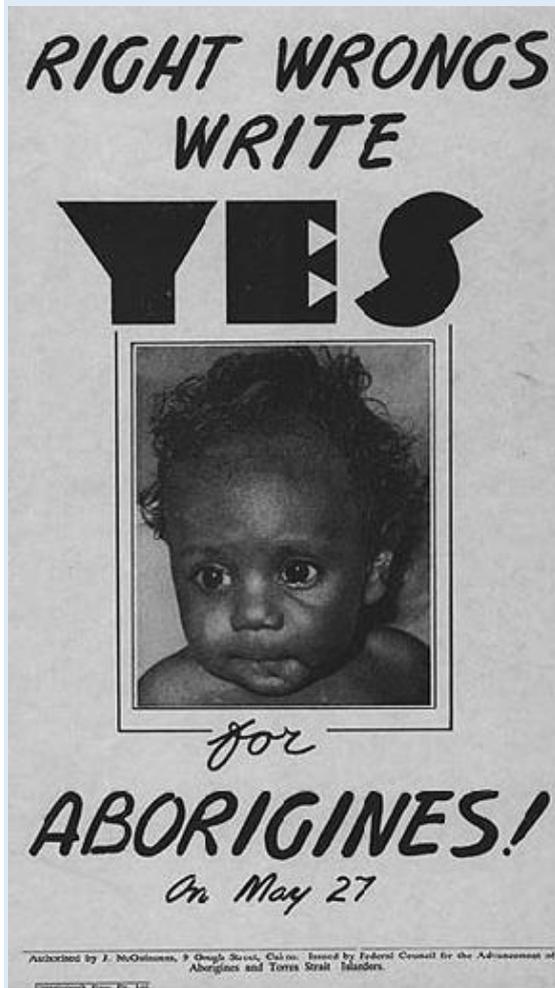


The 1967 Referendum

50th Anniversary



On Saturday May 27, 1967, the Australian Government held a referendum. This year, we celebrate the 50th anniversary of this historic event.

This was a momentous turning point in Australian history. **More than 90 per cent** of Australian voters chose 'Yes' to count Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the census and give the Australian Government the power to make laws for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The purpose of the **1967 Referendum** was to make two changes to the Australian

Constitution. These changes enabled the Commonwealth Government to:

(i) 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;

(ii) 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, Aboriginal people 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.

The Melbourne-based Bunjilaka Museum is launching a 50th Anniversary exhibition on the 27th May. School groups and teachers should check it out!

Download the NSW-AECG [teaching and learning activities](#) about the 1967 Referendum or Reconciliation Australia [fact sheet](#) for background and activities.

With older students study the highly readable novel *Digger J. Jones* by prominent Gunditjmara author Richard Franklin. [Teaching notes](#) offer a range of class discussion points. Told in diary form, *Digger J. Jones* tells the story of Digger - an Aboriginal boy caught up in the events of the 1960s and the lead up to the 1967 Referendum which officially counted Aboriginal people in Australia as citizens in the eyes of the Federal Government.

With upper primary school students set up a school [referendum](#) around issues relevant to

your school or local community and involve students in electoral processes as a prelude to discussions about the 1967 Referendum.

[Watch](#) the short video with Faith Bandler, former Secretary of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders talking about why it was so important to have a referendum and discuss with students.

With your students [watch](#) *Vote Yes for Aborigines* (2007) directed by Yorta Yorta woman Frances Peters-Little about the 1967 referendum and the campaign for Aboriginal citizenship rights that led up to it. [Download](#) the teachers' study guide to *Vote Yes for Aborigines* and design some lessons and activities suitable for your students.

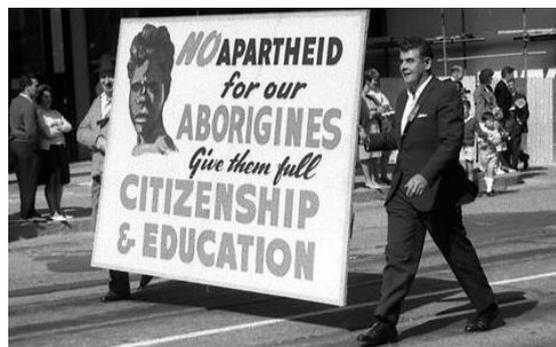
Investigate the role of the Victorian [Aborigines Advancement League](#) in the '67 referendum.



Bill Onus's protest banner in the 1940s.

With secondary students explore the excellent '67 [Referendum site](#) **Collaborating for Indigenous Rights** and teaching resources and incorporate suggested activities into your lessons.

With senior students download the [Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Constitution - school learning guide \(2014\)](#), work through the activities and discuss the case for recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our Constitution.



Victorian Curriculum:

[VCHHK094](#) The different experiences and perspectives of Australian democracy and citizenship, including the status and rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, migrants, women, and children: *History 5-6*

[VCCCG021](#) Describe the process of constitutional change through a referendum: *Civics and Citizenship 7-8*

[VCHHK154](#) Significance of the following events in changing society: 1962 right to vote federally, 1967 Referendum, Reconciliation, Mabo decision, Bringing Them Home Report (the Stolen Generations), the Apology and the different perspectives of these events: *History 9-10*

The Rights of the Australian Aborigines AND YOU

"All human beings are born free and equal . . . in dignity and human rights . . . and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

ARTICLE 1. United Nations Declaration on Human Rights

WHAT CAN AUSTRALIANS OF EUROPEAN DESCENT DO TO MAKE THIS A REALITY FOR THEIR FELLOW-AUSTRALIANS OF ABORIGINAL DESCENT ?

Vote YES

in the Federal Referendum on **Saturday, May 27, 1967**

Appeal by . . .

THE AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF SALARIED AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS