

Chapter 2: Australia in the world

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Chapter 2: Australia in the world

Overview

Governments have responsibilities to their citizens. They have a responsibility to keep their constituents safe, to provide them with essential services and to protect their human rights. In a world characterised by the ease of global communication and movement, governments have become increasingly aware of their responsibilities to the global community. Nations may demonstrate their global citizenship in different ways:

- *Providing foreign aid.* Wealthier countries acknowledge that they have responsibilities to people beyond their own borders, and demonstrate that they are good global citizens, by providing foreign aid. This consists of money, food or other resources such as medical services or engineering know-how.
- *Becoming members of formal organisations such as the United Nations (UN).* The UN has assumed responsibility for many key global issues. Conflict resolution, the development of impoverished nations and the management of refugee movement are some examples of the roles played by the UN and its members.
- *Supporting non-government organisations (NGOs).* These are heavily involved in the provision of foreign aid and can operate in locations closed to government programs.

Given Australia's standing in our region, we can make significant contributions to the global community. Both through official government programs and the work of NGOs, Australia has been an active leader in the South-East Asia region for over 60 years. In this chapter, we investigate the role Australia plays in our region and in the world. We also discuss official groups such as the UN and look at some of the work carried out by NGOs.



FIGURE 1 A tent city for refugees in Kurdistan, Iraq. Wealthier countries have a responsibility to provide assistance to the citizens of countries suffering from poverty or war.

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eLesson

What is global citizenship?

Watch this video to learn more about what it means to be a responsible global citizen.

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STARTER QUESTIONS

1. Why should Australia's role in the Asia region be larger than that of other nations?
2. How does Australia contribute to foreign aid programs?
3. What is the role of the United Nations?
4. Why is there a gap between the development of countries around the world?
5. How do UN peacekeepers manage conflict?

2.1 Foreign aid from governments and NGOs

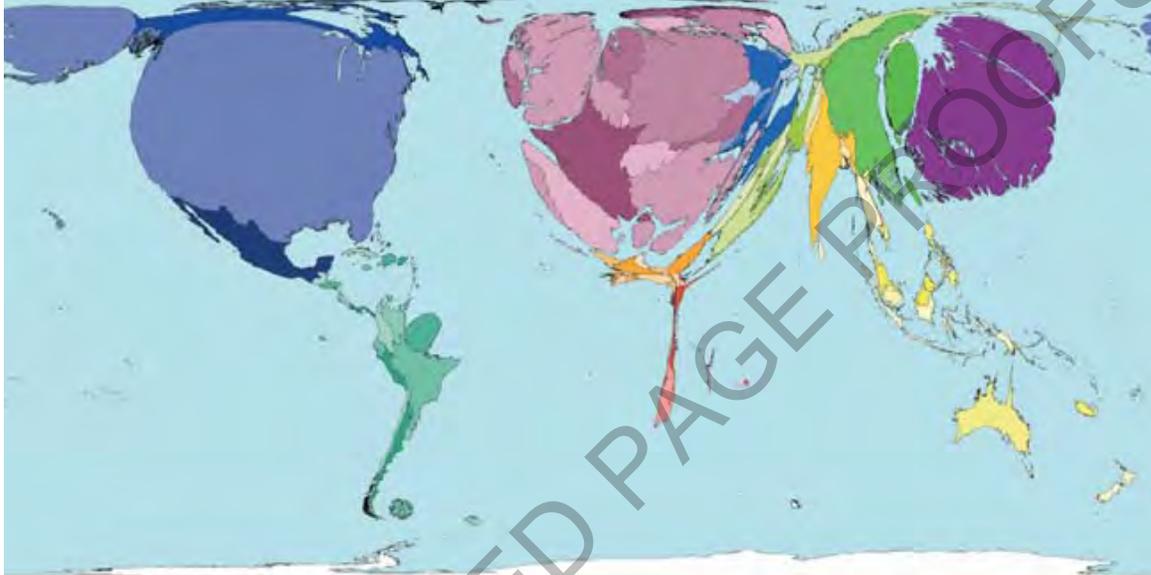
Picture this scenario: it is lunchtime at school when you suddenly realise that you have not brought any lunch and do not have any money to buy some. Your best friend says that they'll buy you lunch from the canteen so that you don't go hungry. They tell you that they're happy to do you a favour and there is no need for repayment. The provision of foreign aid is similar to this situation. Instead of one friend buying another lunch, richer countries assist poorer countries. They may do this for **humanitarian** reasons following a natural disaster or other crisis, or for development reasons (to encourage the long-term development of the recipient country). Australia provides foreign aid through both government and non-government bodies. In this section, we discuss Australia's past, present and future contributions to foreign aid programs.



FIGURE 1 An aid worker distributes food to a hungry crowd after the 2010 Pakistan floods.

How does foreign aid work?

A significant and unfortunate gap exists between the world's richer and poorer countries. Some countries have been blessed with an abundance of natural resources, while others are relatively barren. Some countries have been sheltered from the devastation of war, while others have been torn apart by bloodshed. As a result of these and other factors, global wealth is divided unequally. Richer countries have continued to develop steadily while poorer countries lag behind in terms of **infrastructure**, education and medical services. Foreign aid is provided with the aim of improving the living standards of people in less developed countries.



Source: Worldmapper.

FIGURE 2

GDP per country. Countries with a high GDP appear swollen, while countries with a low GDP are shrunken in size.

Australian governments and foreign aid

Foreign aid may be provided by governments or by independent bodies, such as NGOs. Both Australian government and non-government aid has been crucial to the development of many countries around the world, particularly those in the Asia region.

Aid can be divided into two categories:

- development aid — for long-term programs to support the general development of a country
- emergency aid — for natural disasters and other crises.

Development aid

Development aid is focused on alleviating poverty in the long term. As members of the global community and one of the most developed countries in our region, Australia has a responsibility to provide assistance to our less fortunate neighbours. Australian governments have been involved in

foreign aid programs since 1950, when development grants of \$100 000 were issued to Papua New Guinea.

Until recently, Australian foreign aid programs have been administered by AusAID (the Australia Agency for International Development). While AusAID has contributed to programs in Africa and the Middle East, Australian aid activities have centred on South-East Asia and the Pacific. The map in figure 2 provides the location of current aid programs administered by the Australian government through AusAID.



Source: Google maps.

FIGURE 3 The location of AusAID programs around the world

Many of these programs focus on the provision of medical care, such as vaccinations. Vaccinations against common diseases can be hard to find in some countries or expensive to buy. By organising mass immunisations, the Australian government has sought to improve the health and wellbeing of disadvantaged nations. AusAID has also been involved in development programs in locations such as Vietnam, contributing funds to education and infrastructure projects.

Recent events in Australian politics have resulted in dramatic changes in the provision of foreign aid. Shortly after being elected in 2013, the Abbott government announced it would cut approximately \$650 million from Australian foreign aid programs. The structure of AusAID has also changed, and it has been renamed Australian Aid. Some important aid programs have subsequently been left unstaffed and unfunded. This decision was met with widespread criticism from within Australia as well as abroad. Although foreign aid remains a stated priority of the Abbott Government, the impact of Australian aid programs in our region will be significantly weakened.

Emergency aid

Emergency aid is provided for humanitarian purposes in response to unexpected events such as natural disasters and other crises. Many of our neighbouring countries are located within geographically volatile areas. Countries such as Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and many Pacific Island nations often find themselves faced with the deadly consequences of natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes. Australian governments and their aid departments are well known for having swift and effective emergency aid responses. They send their staff to manage aid responses in these situations, both during the initial devastation and in the aftermath of the disaster.

In 2004, the Boxing Day tsunami ravaged much of western Indonesia as well as many countries in the surrounding area. Members of Australian aid and military departments were immediately sent to the affected areas of Indonesia to organise and staff temporary hospitals and emergency response centres. In the months after the tsunami, the Australian government pledged an aid package of \$1 billion to the Indonesian government for longer term redevelopment projects. This is a good example of how Australian governments respond to disasters through the provision of emergency aid.



FIGURE 4 When natural disasters strike, governments and aid agencies spring into action to provide emergency aid.

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Weblink

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Follow this weblink to learn more about the role of the Australian government in assisting the development of Vietnam.

eBook plus

Weblink

Anatomy of a tsunami

Follow this weblink to view an interactive model of the Boxing Day tsunami.

Australian NGOs and foreign aid

A non-government organisation (NGO) is one that runs independently of any government control. Although NGOs may be partially funded by governments, they remain free to develop and implement their own policies and programs. Australia has a vast range of aid NGOs. Some of these, such as Care Australia and Oxfam Australia, are local divisions of large, **multinational** organisations. Other Australian NGOs, such as The Fred Hollows Foundation, were created locally.

Free from government and politics, NGOs often have the opportunity to reach and assist a broader range of people. For example, a government's aid priorities may be influenced by foreign policy, whereas an NGO is free to act in whatever community it sees as needing its assistance. NGOs often rely heavily on public donations to fund their operation and are staffed largely by volunteers. They also provide vital support to government aid programs and can often implement more effective programs.



FIGURE 5

The late Dr Fred Hollows working with children in Vietnam

ACTIVITIES

REMEMBER

1. What are the two categories of foreign aid?
2. What is an NGO and how does it differ from aid provided by governments? Use examples in your answer.

EXPLAIN

3. Explain how some countries are more economically developed than others.
4. Why does Australia have a larger responsibility to provide foreign aid than other countries in our region?

DISCOVER

5. Follow the **AusAID map** weblink in your Resources section to help you answer the following questions:
- Describe the geographic pattern of Australia's foreign aid programs.
 - Why do you think the majority of aid programs follow this pattern?
 - Select and then compare two locations shown on the map. By following the relevant links, use the information you find to describe the priorities of each aid program in your chosen countries.



2.2 Australia and the UN

The United Nations (UN) was born out of the pain and suffering of World War II. After witnessing the horrors of war for the second time within 30 years, the nations of the world were desperate to prevent another world war. For this reason, 51 countries united in 1945 with the goals of maintaining global peace and protecting the safety and rights of global citizens. At the time the UN was formed, Australia was still relatively inexperienced in global politics. Despite this, our country was one of the founding members of the UN and heavily involved in the organisation's establishment. Australia continues to play a significant role in this important **multilateral** organisation.



FIGURE 1

The United Nations was officially founded in 1945 with Australia as one of the original 51 member states.

Australia's role in founding the UN

Given Australia's relative inexperience in foreign policy, the significance of our involvement in the early years of the UN may appear surprising. Australia's delegation was led by Dr HV ('Doc') Evatt, who had previously held several high-profile legal and political positions in Australia. As the operational guidelines of the UN were being documented in its [Charter](#), Evatt recognised a problem. The larger and more diplomatically experienced countries (such as the United States, the United Kingdom, France, the Soviet Union and China) had started to dominate discussions. Evatt worried that the interests of smaller countries with less experience in foreign policy would be overlooked.

To overcome this problem, Evatt enlisted the support of the other smaller nations and successfully lobbied for the power of the UN General Assembly (consisting of all members of the UN) to be increased. This would act as a balance to the power wielded by the larger countries who ran the Security Council (consisting of only five members of the UN).

Evatt was also a key figure in the development of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. His leadership on this task led to Evatt being elected president of the General Assembly in 1948. To this day, no other Australian has ever held this position.

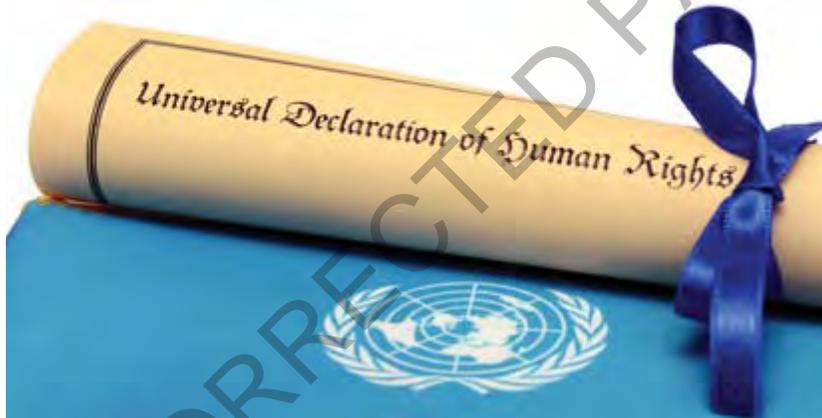


FIGURE 2 The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the UN in 1948.

Australia's increasing role in the UN

Since the founding of the United Nations, Australia has been a small but significant contributor to the organisation and its various programs. Involvement in peacekeeping missions, participation in policy development and donations to the UN budget are all examples of Australian contributions. As Australia's standing and influence have increased, so too has our role in the UN.

One of the most powerful and influential arms of the UN is the Security Council. It is responsible for the organisation of peacekeeping missions, the imposition of [international sanctions](#) and the authorisation of military action. The Security Council consists of five permanent members — the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia and China — and ten non-permanent members

who serve two-year terms. Including our most recent term (2013–14), Australia has served as a non-permanent member of the Security Council five times in the history of the UN. Australia's membership of the UN Security Council can be seen as evidence of our increasing role in the global community.



FIGURE 3 Bob Carr was the foreign minister when Australia won a seat on the United Nations Security Council in 2012.

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Weblink

Australia and the Security Council

Follow this weblink to learn more about the importance of Australia's position on the Security Council.

Australia's contribution to global citizenship

Australian representatives to the United Nations have used our country's increased standing to call for change regarding a number of global issues. One specific Australian focus has been gender equality and the rights of women. Australia was heavily involved in UN forums addressing these topics and continues to promote true gender equality. Whaling is another issue on which Australia has taken a stance, leading a case which successfully convinced one of the UN's highest courts, the International Court of Justice, to ban Japan from conducting its annual whale hunt.

Despite these positive actions, there are still many ways in which our country can further contribute to the global community. Recent years have seen issues such as climate change slip down our nation's list of priorities. Despite ratifying the Kyoto Protocol in 2007 and introducing a carbon tax in 2013 (and then scrapping it the following year), Australia's efforts to reduce the impact of climate change have stalled. Our treatment of refugees and asylum seekers has also received widespread criticism from the global community. These issues have been documented in the United Nations Association of Australia report card (see figure 4). Such criticisms need to be viewed constructively and used to make positive changes for Australian and global citizens alike.



FIGURE 4 The United Nations Association of Australia report card rates Australia's performance from A to F in nine key areas, from participation in the General Assembly (A) to action on climate change (D⁺).

ACTIVITIES

REMEMBER

1. The United Nations was formed after which global event?
2. What issue worried 'Doc' Evatt during the development of the UN Charter?

EXPLAIN

3. Describe Australia's involvement in the early years of the United Nations.
4. Explain the responsibilities of the UN Security Council.

DISCOVER

5. Find out which countries are currently non-permanent members of the UN Security Council.
6. On its 2013 UN report card, Australia received an F grade for its policies and actions on refugees and asylum seekers. What was the basis for this low mark?

THINK

7. Do you believe Australia needs to be a member of the UN? Justify your response.

2.3 Keeping the peace

In many ways, the League of Nations can be seen as the first version of the UN. Formed after World War I, the League of Nations was charged with the responsibility of maintaining global peace. Its major shortcoming, however, was that it lacked mechanisms through which it could fulfil this role. After watching the failure of the League of Nations — ultimately it could not stop the outbreak of World War II — the founding members of the UN sought to avoid similar criticism. The UN discharges its responsibility of maintaining global peace through the use of peacekeepers and military observers.

Australia has been involved in UN peacekeeping missions from the first envoy sent in 1948. In this section, we examine the role of UN peacekeepers and the contribution Australians have made to these missions.

Role of UN peacekeepers

The role of United Nations peacekeepers is exactly that — to develop and maintain peaceful interactions between social, ethnic or political groups. Since 1948, the UN has deployed peacekeeping missions across the globe. The specific activities of the mission depend on the nature of the conflict. Missions may involve enforcing a **ceasefire** between previously warring parties; or peacekeepers may be asked to conduct democratic elections that would otherwise be problematic.



FIGURE 1 UN peacekeepers on a mission in Lebanon

Peacekeepers are instructed to operate using non-violent methods wherever possible. According to the UN Charter, peacekeepers are allowed to use military force only in self-defence or if the essential goal of the mission is under threat (see figure 2). Often known as Blue Berets, due to their distinctive blue hats and helmets, UN peacekeepers can include soldiers of national armies as well as police officers and political staff. Australia has sent 65 000 personnel to various UN peacekeeping missions. Australian doctors, engineers, diplomats, and military servicemen and women have all played their part in the establishment and maintenance of peace in countries around the world.



Weblink

Peace is a full-time job

Follow this weblink to learn more about what the UN is doing to keep the peace.

A UN peacekeeping operation should only use force as a measure of last resort. It should always be calibrated in a precise, proportional and appropriate manner, within the principle of the minimum force necessary to achieve the desired effect, while sustaining consent for the mission and its mandate. The use of force by a UN peacekeeping operation always has political implications and can often give rise to unforeseen circumstances.

Judgments concerning its use need to be made at the appropriate level within a mission, based on a combination of factors including mission capability; public perceptions; humanitarian impact; force protection; safety and security of personnel; and, most importantly, the effect that such action will have on national and local consent for the mission.

Source: United Nations.

FIGURE 2 Principles of UN peacekeeping: Non-use of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate

Australian peacekeeping missions

Australians have been involved in UN military observations and peacekeeping missions since 1948. Although civilian personnel have contributed to peacekeeping missions, military and police officers have traditionally played a more significant role. Australian peacekeepers have served in several key conflicts around the world including:

- Indonesian War of Independence (1947)
- prelude to the Korean War (1953)

- various conflicts in Israel and the Middle East (since 1956)
- Iran-Iraq War (1988–91)
- Rwandan Civil War (1993–96)
- East Timorese independence crisis (since 1999).

One of the best-known examples of Australian peacekeeping efforts was our involvement in the East Timor independence crisis. A small country located to Australia's north-west, East Timor has endured a volatile history. Unlike much of the area which was settled by the Dutch, East Timor was colonised by the Portuguese. In 1975, East Timor became an independent state, although it was soon invaded by neighbouring Indonesia in the same year. The Indonesian rule over East Timor was brutal and unjust, but Australian governments during this time were reluctant to criticise Indonesia. They feared such a move would damage political relations between the two countries.

After decades of civil unrest, two UN programs were launched to deal with the East Timor crisis. Australia had considerable involvement with both the UN mission in East Timor (UNAMET) and the International Force for East Timor (INTERFET). The former mission successfully organised and conducted a referendum which resulted in East Timorese independence. Organised and led by Australian forces under Major General Peter Cosgrove, INTERFET then helped develop more effective military and law-enforcement strategies in East Timor. The Australian contribution to East Timorese independence is an excellent example of the positive contributions Australia has made to our region.



FIGURE 3

An Australian peacekeeper greets an East Timorese child in Dili.

ACTIVITIES

REMEMBER

1. What was the major criticism of the League of Nations?
2. What is the key role of UN peacekeepers?

EXPLAIN

3. Construct a flowchart which explains East Timor's journey towards independence.

THINK

4. List three challenges you might face as a UN peacekeeper.
5. Which of these challenges do you believe would be the most difficult to overcome and why?

DISCOVER

6. Choose one of the six conflicts listed in bullet points in the section 'Australian peacekeeping missions'. Research the conflict and provide a summary paragraph which includes these points:
 - a. a brief summary of the conflict
 - b. the role played by Australia
 - c. the number of Australian peacekeepers involved
 - d. the outcome of the event.

SkillBuilder: Civic action in the classroom

Tell me

The theme running through this chapter is Australia's place in the world. More specifically, we have investigated the ways in which Australia exercises its civic responsibility on a global scale. Through government and non-government agencies, Australia is directly involved in humanitarian projects across the world. How do these agencies decide which country, which community and which project will be their focus? These decisions are not easy and require the consideration and evaluation of a range of factors. The criteria involved in making this decision may include the demand for the project, the significance of its expected outcomes, the duration of the project and of course its cost. Once an agency has made its decision, it can begin planning and then implementing the aid project.

In this SkillBuilder, your class will choose an issue relating to Australia's global civic responsibility. As a class, you will use democratic processes to reach a consensus. Once this has been achieved, you will plan for the action relating to your chosen issue.

Show me

Before your class can decide on its civic focus, you will need to consider on what basis to make your decision. Consider these examples:

- For the non-government agency Oxfam Australia, this decision is made by using its guiding principles and goals. If a prospective project meets one of Oxfam's six key goals, the project progresses to the next stage of the process. Oxfam then considers secondary criteria such as the cost of the project and the resources needed to enable its completion.
- The Direct Aid Program (DAP) is a small grant program run by the federal government. Like Oxfam, it uses a selection program based on set criteria. The most important of these criteria is the correlation between the proposed project and the goals of the DAP. Sustainable projects that do not require additional funding are also preferred by the DAP.

Both of these examples show you the importance of using agreed criteria to decide on the suitability of a project.

Once a suitable project has been chosen, the planning process can begin. For agencies such as Oxfam and DAP, this process is extensive. Developing an understanding of the problem the project seeks to address is the first step in the planning process. By understanding the problem, a clear solution is often easier to identify. Stakeholders must also be involved, ensuring that proper community consultation takes place.

You must take similar steps for your class project. You must also determine the roles to be played by members of your class in the development and implementation of your civic project.

Let me do it

Class goals

The first step in this process is to establish a set of class goals. Your answers to these questions will help determine your goals:

- What are the global issues with which you are most concerned?
- What are the most serious threats to the global community?

Discuss these questions in a group, document the various responses and formalise these into a set of clear goals.

You can use Oxfam Australia's strategic plan to assist you. Follow the **Oxfam strategic plan** weblink in your Resources section to find out more.

The logo consists of the text "eBook plus" in a white, sans-serif font, centered within a green rounded rectangular button with a slight gradient and a shadow effect.

Assessment criteria

Your class now needs to design assessment criteria. As you saw from the Oxfam and DAP examples, one of these should be the correlation of the proposed project and the stated goals of your class. What other criteria will you use to make your decision? Will cost be an issue? Is the length of time you have to plan and implement your project a concern? Again, a group discussion is a simple way to develop your assessment criteria.

The task

Working in pairs or groups of three, select a potential aid project for your class. After choosing your project, your group will need to prepare a five-minute presentation on the project and why it should be chosen as the focus of the class's civic action. Make sure that you address the key goals and assessment criteria which have just been established.

The decision

Once all groups have presented their proposals, the class will decide which one best fits the goals and assessment criteria. The best and most democratic way to do this is to hold a secret ballot. Once the winning proposal has been identified, your class can begin the planning stage and, by doing so, actively participate in the global community.

Review and reflect

Review

The world's nations have experienced uneven rates of development. This has created substantial gaps between economies and given rise to numerous humanitarian issues. In an attempt to alleviate the pressures caused by this gap, foreign aid is provided by wealthier countries to those countries which are less developed. As one of the strongest economies and most developed countries in its region, Australia finds itself with tremendous responsibilities to assist its neighbours. One way that the fulfilment of these responsibilities takes place is through Australia's involvement in the United Nations. Since the founding of the UN, Australia has played a significant role in developing UN policies and participating in its programs. Non-government organisations also play a critical role in the provision of foreign aid.

- A substantial gap exists between the development of the world's nations.
- Foreign aid programs attempt to solve the problems caused by this disparity.
- Australia has a significant role to play as one of the wealthiest economies in our region.

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Interactivity

Multiple choice

Searchlight ID: INT-5521

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Interactivity

True/false

Searchlight ID: INT-5522

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Interactivity

Crossword

Searchlight ID: INT-5523

Reflect

In 2007, the United Nations Association of Australia (UNAA) began reporting on Australia's participation with the UN and its various programs. The UNAA's report cards are a self-reflection compiled by a group of academics, diplomats and high-profile NGO officials. The report cards critically assess Australia's contribution to UN programs and evaluate this contribution in light of broader UN goals and objectives.

1. Using the information in figures 1 and 2 below, provide a brief summary of the 2007 and 2013 UNAA report cards.
2. Outline the key differences between the 2007 and 2013 UNAA report cards. For example, has Australia's performance in any of the criteria changed?
3. Do you disagree with any of the UN's assessments on either report card? If so, explain your reasons.
4. Out of all the policy areas assessed, which area do you believe requires the most immediate change and why?
5. Describe the changes you would make to the policy area you've identified in question 4.

Subject	Grade	Comment
UN General Assembly	B	Lacks the idealism of many members of the Australian public
Human rights	C	Failed to show any desire for improvement
Millennium development goals	C	Has done the minimum and used the term MDG when it suits
Climate change	D	Fallen far short of the expectations of the people of Australia, the business community, and the international community
Peacekeeping and peacebuilding	B	A strong supporter of UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding but tainted by its relationship with the US-led intervention in Iraq in defiance of the United Nations
Disarmament	C+	Could make a stronger contribution to disarmament by ceasing to rely on the protection of a nuclear weapons umbrella
Global movement of people	D	Continued to violate fundamental human rights in the detention and treatment of asylum seekers/unauthorised arrivals
Status of women	B-	Has taken a number of steps to address gender inequity, but further effort is needed
Sexual and reproductive health	B	Could be performing much better in its global engagement towards population health initiatives
Youth	B+	Has done well in the areas of youth employment and education, but more effort needed to improve education, employment prospects and housing situation for Indigenous youth

Source: United Nations Association of Australia, *Australia and the United Nations: Annual report card 2007*, p. 3.

FIGURE 1 2007 report card on the Australian government's performance in the United Nations

SECURITY COUNCIL AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was significant, and a credit to Australia’s diplomacy, that we were elected to the Security Council on the first ballot with 140 votes in October 2012. • Australia plays a positive and constructive role in the UN General Assembly. Of particular note is the role that Australia played with the <i>Arms Trade Treaty</i>. 	A
HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND DEVELOPMENT AID	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australia’s record on overseas aid is very mixed. • In 2012–13 Australia’s official development assistance as a percentage of Gross National Income stood at 0.37%, with Australia ranking 13th out of the 28 countries that make up the OECD Development Assistance Committee. 	B
CLIMATE CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Australian economy’s dependence on fossil fuel exploitation has grown, and is projected to grow further. • Australia must raise its mitigation ambition, increase its share of international climate finance and develop a transformative national energy policy that can orchestrate a shift towards a low carbon economy. 	D+
DISARMAMENT AND NON-PROLIFERATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australia has had a mixed history with nuclear weapons and has demonstrated a lack of consistency both internationally and domestically. • The root of Australia’s reluctance to follow through on its commitment to nuclear disarmament is undoubtedly its relationship with the United States. • Australia has been an important player in other areas of arms control, including in particular its efforts on this year’s <i>Arms Trade Treaty</i>. 	B
PEACEKEEPING AND PEACEBUILDING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australia’s contribution to UN peacekeeping has dwindled since the 1990s. • More recently, Australia has demonstrated a clear preference for deploying forces outside the UN framework. • Australia is the 12th largest donor to the UN’s Peacebuilding Fund and served as a member of the UN Peacebuilding Commission in 2010. 	B

HUMAN RIGHTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australia has been a strong advocate across a broad range of issues including promoting the unique and valuable role of national human rights institutions. • The treatment of refugees and asylum seekers in Australia remains one of the most significant human rights challenges. • The unacceptable level of disadvantage experienced by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is another issue of concern. 	B
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of positive steps have been taken toward implementing the <i>United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples</i>. • The passing of the <i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Recognition Act 2013</i> unanimously through both houses of parliament in February 2013 indicates strong bipartisan support for constitutional recognition of Indigenous peoples. 	C+
GENDER EQUALITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australia is an active participant in UN forums on gender equality, including the Commission on the Status of Women and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women Committee. • Gender equality is now a critical cross-cutting theme of Australia's aid program. • Australia continues to face challenges in the advancement of gender equality. In particular, women still face significant challenges with respect to economic security, leadership opportunities and living free from violence. 	B
REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new Pacific Solution began in August 2012. Australia has been legislatively excised from its own migration zone, so that anyone arriving by boat without a visa is liable to be sent (against their will) to Nauru or to Manus Island in Papua New Guinea. • Australia's response to asylum seekers in the past 12 months has been marked by increasing hostility and a near-total absence of any concern by the major political parties to put the matter into perspective. 	F

Source: United Nations Association of Australia, *Australia and the UN: Report card 2013*, p. 5.

FIGURE 2

2013 report card on the Australian government's performance in the United Nations