5.1 Overview

5.1.1 LINKS WITH OUR TIMES

The idea of who or what is a typical Australian has been the subject of discussion for more than a century. While this is an impossible question to answer there is no doubt that ideas of the rugged bush worker as an Australian ‘ideal’ have been popular, even as Australian society has become much more urbanised, diverse and multicultural. Australia is the only modern country to occupy an entire continent, but it has only been a nation since 1901. Before that there were six separate British colonies on the continent. Nationhood was something that came along with other great changes in the late nineteenth century.

Looking at Australia in the late nineteenth century helps us to understand the society in which we live today. This period saw the growth of a strong labour movement that fought for workers’ rights, the emergence of political parties, the struggle of women to gain a share in political rights, and a growing sense of national identity. It was at this time that some people began to identify what they called ‘Australian values’ and characteristics of the ‘typical Australian’. Today there is ongoing debate about what it means to be Australian and whether it is possible to identify ‘Australian values’.

BIG QUESTIONS

1. What was it like to live and work in Australia between the 1850s and 1913?
2. How and why did people respond to circumstances they thought were unfair or unjust?
3. What ideas, people, events and circumstances led to the creation of the Australian nation?
4. What were the main characteristics of the Australian nation before the outbreak of World War I in 1914?

STARTER QUESTIONS

1. Do you think most people in Australia today regard it as home?
2. Explain what you think is meant by a ‘sense of national identity’.
3. Do you think most Australians have a sense of national identity?
4. How would you describe Australian values? Is it possible to define them?
5.2 Examining the evidence

5.2.1 How do we know about late colonial and early twentieth-century Australia?

In this topic we will investigate living and working conditions in Australia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. We will also explore the ideas, events and conditions that led to the creation of the Australian nation and the main characteristics of the nation before the outbreak of World War I in 1914.

Official sources
Just before the gold rush of the 1850s each of the Australian colonies gained responsible government. This meant they had parliaments that were accountable to the electors. From 1901 Australia had a national Parliament, whose official name is the Commonwealth Parliament, along with the six state parliaments that replaced the colonial parliaments. The records of debates held and laws passed in these parliaments tell us a lot about the issues that concerned Australians in that period.

Mass media and personal records
In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there were many more newspapers than there are today, even though we now have a much bigger population. This was because newspapers and magazines were the only form of mass media before the invention of radio, television and the internet. Libraries in Australia hold many issues of these old newspapers and some of them can now be read online. We can also learn a lot about this age through letters and diaries. Memoirs of people who lived at that time still exist.

Visual sources
There are many visual sources for this age. Artists have left a valuable record in their paintings and drawings. Cartoons and sketches were widely used in newspapers and magazines. Cartoons especially say a lot about popular attitudes and opinions.

SOURCE 1 A family in front of their house at Walloon, near Ipswich in Queensland, in 1885

This was the first period of history for which we have evidence from photographs. The first photographs in Australia were taken in 1841. They were called daguerrotypes. The images were printed on a silvered plate, and only still objects could be photographed because this method
of taking pictures needed an exposure time of 20 minutes in full sun. From the 1850s a new method called wet plate photography gradually replaced daguerrotypes. Wet plate photography did not need such long exposure times and enabled copies to be made from the originals. Taking pictures became even simpler with the development of dry plate photography from the late 1870s. Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, photographers were capturing images of gold rush scenes, colonial towns, buildings, ships, trains, parades, protest demonstrations, and people at work and play.

**SOURCE 2** A protest meeting of alluvial miners in Kalgoorlie, Western Australia, on 12 March 1898

**SOURCE 3** Soldiers of the Victorian Scottish Regiment No. 22 parading through Melbourne in 1899 on their way to the Boer War in South Africa

### 5.2 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**

1. Identify what **SOURCE 1** suggests about Australian families, their housing and their clothing.
2. Identify what **SOURCE 2** indicates about the miners’ protest at Kalgoorlie.
3. Explain what **SOURCE 3** suggests about Australians’ attitudes to sending troops overseas to fight for the British Empire.
4. Using all three sources, write a paragraph about Australian life and the values of average Australians. Use specific examples from all three images.
5.3 Towards democracy: Eureka and political rights

5.3.1 A golden avalanche
The Eureka Rebellion of 1854 is often seen as a milestone in the struggle for democratic rights and a more equal society. It was partly a conflict over what kind of society Australia should be and what rights each individual should have in the society. The rebellion took place during the gold rushes of the 1850s. The gold rushes marked a turning point in Australia’s history, prompting a massive scramble of people from overseas to the Australian goldfields. The population trebled in the first decade of the rushes and wealth from gold raised living standards. These developments also accelerated the demands for more democratic rights and influenced the political life of the colonies for the next 50 years. Australia came to be seen as a land of opportunity, but the rushes also had other consequences, including political protests, environmental damage and social upheaval. These consequences had the greatest impact in Victoria.

A quiet provincial town
After the first Europeans established a camp on the Yarra River in 1835, Melbourne experienced quite rapid expansion, growing to a substantial provincial town with a population of 23,000 by 1850. As the port for the pastoral industry, Melbourne was an essential link to the outside world. Robert Hoddle’s grid plan for the streets of Melbourne had been well established, and small suburban villages ringed the city. Rates of pay were good for labourers, clubs for the wealthy were founded, and the main churches were built (though only one in eight attended regularly). This is in contrast to the many hotels (one hotel for every 33 adult males), providing ample amounts of spirits that worried the more ‘sober’ residents. The presence of large numbers of ex-convicts and an alarming crime rate also concerned some Melburnians, though perhaps the filth in the streets and the irregular water supply were probably greater problems. Overall, most residents of Melbourne in 1851 enjoyed a settled, simple and relatively secure life and they marvelled at the progress they had achieved. Little did they realise the upheaval they were about to experience.

SOURCE 1 Melbourne from the south bank of the Yarra, 1840, painted by Eleanor (Nellie) McGlinn, c. 1875, oil on canvas
Early chaos

The discovery of gold near Ballarat in July 1851 created great excitement in all of the Australian colonies. By the end of the year, 20,000 diggers were hard at work on the fields. In some suburbs of Melbourne there was hardly a man left. In 1852 the flow continued from other colonies (half the male population from Tasmania and South Australia had migrated) and a further 33,000 had arrived from the United Kingdom by the end of the year. Between 1852 and 1854, Melbourne received an average of 259 migrants every day; by the end of 1854, migrants from these years made up 86 per cent of Victoria’s population of 284,000.

Such an increase in people caused a crisis as the Victorian government struggled to provide essential housing and services. The government established a tent city in South Melbourne to help with accommodation, but it was an unhealthy, crowded place. Women and children camped on the wharves while their husbands tried their luck on the diggings.
Pubs and theatres were full of noisy successful diggers as they spent their newfound wealth on entertainment, prodigious amounts of alcohol and lavish weddings. Because gold-digging favoured those used to hard labour, it seemed to many that society was turned on its head as the uneducated flaunted their success and gave little respect to their ‘superiors’.

**SOURCE 4** Diary of a Working Clergyman in Australia and Tasmania kept during the years 1850–1853 by Reverend J. D. Mereweather

This colony was the most desirable of all which the Crown possesses. How changed now! No more tranquillity and good fellowship between the grades of society. All is confusion, selfishness, license and subversion of all respect for worth, talent and education. Brawn and muscle are now the aristocracy, and insolently bear their newly assumed honours. In fact, we have here the French Revolution without the guillotine. When I arrived in Melbourne, I found the street full of dirty, disorderly mob of people, many of them tipsy, who seemed to take delight in setting the laws of decent behaviour at defiance.

5.3.1 Activities

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. Why might the residents of Melbourne have been proud of their achievements by 1851?
2. Make a list of the population figures given in this section for Victoria and Melbourne.

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**

3. What impression of Melbourne does **SOURCE 1** create? Identify the specific elements of the image that lead to this impression.
4. Examine **SOURCE 3**. What problems might newly arrived migrants experience in this environment?
5. Using both **SOURCES 1** and **3**, explain how Melbourne had changed by 1852.
6. Identify the concerns about changes to society expressed in **SOURCE 4**. Do you think the source is a reliable or accurate representation of the changes brought by gold? Discuss this question in class. Think about who produced it and what his purpose might have been.

5.3.2 Educated and ambitious

The great majority of gold rush immigrants were British and Irish, like the convicts and migrants who had come to Australia before the 1850s. But the new migrants also included people from many other countries, including the Chinese who you learned about in topic 4. The British, Irish and European gold rush migrants included many who had been involved in movements for workers’ rights and political reform in their own countries. Despite some concerns about changes to society they brought many positives. Some gold migrants were more educated and more skilled than the rest of the colonial workforce and consequently they had higher expectations of their rights and responsibilities in this new society. However, not all migrants were happy with what they found in Victoria. Many were unsuccessful. The gold rush experience was diverse and uneven.

**SOURCE 5** A visitor’s description of what was happening on the goldfields by the mid 1850s, from W. Howitt, *Land, Labour and Gold or Two Years in Victoria*, published in 1855

… hundreds have already gone back [from the diggings] again, cursing those who sent such one-sided statements of the goldfields . . .

**Growing discontent**

Life on the goldfields was hard, and for every digger who found riches there were many more whose backbreaking work yielded very little. From 1851 the New South Wales and Victorian governments passed laws to make anyone digging for gold buy a licence for 30 shillings a month.

**shilling** a unit of Australian currency until decimal currency was introduced. There were 12 pence to a shilling and 20 shillings to a pound.
This fee had to be paid in advance and gave a digger the right to work only a small area. Many diggers did not buy licences because they could not afford them, so the gold commissioners sent troopers to catch them.

**Licence hunts and protests**

Diggers caught without licences were fined and had their huts and equipment destroyed. Some were sent to jail. Following angry protests, in 1853 New South Wales reduced the fee to 10 shillings a month. Victoria reduced it to one pound (20 shillings), but this was still too high because diggers’ incomes were getting smaller as less surface gold was found. At Ballarat in Victoria miners had to dig more than 30 metres. This required greater expense and kept miners in the same place for longer, making tax collection easier to police. Miners disliked not only paying the licence fee but also the fact that it taxed both successful and unsuccessful diggers at the same rate. When caught without a licence respectable miners were often treated like criminals and they resented the harsh manner of many of the police. When Victoria’s governor, Lieutenant-Governor Sir Charles Hotham, ordered licence hunts twice a week in September 1854, digger anger in Ballarat became explosive.
5.3.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1. Identify the ways that the gold migrants were different to the rest of the colonial workforce in Victoria.
2. Explain why the miners disliked the gold licence system.
3. What made Ballarat different to other goldfields?

5.3.3 The gathering storm
Even an unrelated incident could have provoked a riot. On 6 October 1854 a digger was bashed to death at the Eureka Hotel at Ballarat in Victoria. When charges against the hotel’s owner, James Bentley, were dropped, many miners concluded that this was because Bentley had done favours for the police. On 17 October around 4000 furious diggers protested against this ‘police corruption’. They rioted and burned the hotel to the ground. It seemed that the Ballarat diggers and the local police were on a collision course.

The Ballarat Reform League
On 11 November, at a further protest meeting at Bakery Hill, the diggers formed the Ballarat Reform League. Its demands included:
- abolition of licence fees
- parliamentary representation through voting rights for adult men
- payment for members of Parliament
- abolition of property requirements for members of Parliament.
These last two demands were made so men who were not rich could afford to serve in Parliament.

SOURCE 7 Swearing allegiance to the ‘Southern Cross’ by C. A. Doudiet
Digger resentment increased further when news came that on 27 November Governor Hotham had refused to release the men arrested over the hotel burning and instead had ordered more troops to be sent to Ballarat. By 30 November Bentley was no longer the issue, but feelings were running high when Commissioner Rede ordered another licence hunt.

On 30 November, 12 000 diggers gathered at Eureka, where many burned their licences in protest. They appointed an Irishman, Peter Lalor, as their leader. They created a new flag, the ‘Eureka Flag’, with stars on a white cross against a blue background, and swore a solemn oath to stand together. They built a stockade at Eureka and began collecting weapons.

SOURCE 8 Raffaello Carboni, a digger’s leader, describes events on 30 November 1854.

What’s up? A licence hunt . . . What’s to be done? Peter Lalor was on the stump, his rifle in his hand, calling on volunteers to ‘fall in’ into ranks as fast as they rushed to Bakery-hill, from all quarters with arms in their hands, just fetched from their tents. I went up to Lalor, and the moment he saw me, he took me by the hand saying, I want you, Signore: tell those gentlemen, pointing to old acquaintances of ours, who were foreigners; that, if they cannot provide themselves with fire-arms, let them each procure a piece of steel, five or six inches long, attached to a pole, and that will pierce the tyrants’ hearts . . .

The ‘SOUTHERN CROSS’ was hoisted up the flag-staff . . . There is no flag in Europe half so beautiful as the ‘Southern Cross’ of the Ballarat miners . . . Some five hundred armed diggers advanced . . . the captains of each division making the military salute to Lalor, who . . . exclaimed in a firm measured tone: — ‘WE SWEAR BY THE SOUTHERN CROSS TO STAND TRULY BY EACH OTHER, AND FIGHT TO DEFEND OUR RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES.’

5.3.3 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1 What were the demands of the Ballarat Reform League?
2 Identify the two immediate factors that spurred the miners to erect a stockade.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

3 What do SOURCES 7 and 8 suggest about the character of the miners and their demands?

5.3.4 The battle at the Eureka Stockade

Before dawn on 3 December there were just 150 diggers in the Eureka Stockade when a force of 270 well-armed soldiers and police attacked. The fierce battle lasted only 20 minutes and the diggers were defeated. At least 27 diggers and six troopers were killed, though recent estimates are as high as 60 diggers, including one woman who was killed while she was pleading for the life of her husband.

The outcome of Eureka

The diggers lost the battle at Eureka but they achieved many of their aims. Juries did not convict the 13 ringleaders who were tried for treason, finding instead that they had acted in self-defence. In 1855 the gold licence was replaced by a ‘miner’s right’ costing just one pound a year and giving its holder the right to vote. Peter Lalor eventually became a member of the Victorian Parliament and his grandson, Joseph Lalor, was killed at the landing at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915, fighting for the British Empire.

The enquiry into the goldfields also recommended changes favourable to the miners’ demands. Moves were made to restrict Chinese immigration with extra taxation, half of the goldfields police were sacked and running gold mining was left to mining wardens and locally elected courts of mines. Over time many have debated the significance of the Eureka Stockade. In 1897 the American author Mark Twain called it ‘the finest thing in Australasian history’.
5.3.4 Activities

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. Who started the attack on the Eureka Stockade on 3 December 1854?
2. How many people were killed or wounded?
3. Identify the consequences of the Eureka Stockade. Who do you think were the victors? Explain your answer.

### 5.3.5 Melbourne: ‘the wonder of the world’

By the end of the 1850s the wealth produced by the feverish work of thousands of miners had also transformed the city of Melbourne. Some observers compared Melbourne with London or Paris, one claimed that the city had a ‘superior radiance’ to San Francisco, while another declared Melbourne was ‘the overtopping wonder of the world’. Grand extravagant buildings, fashionable suburbs and a busy ‘go-ahead’ atmosphere gave the impression that Melbourne was destined to be one of the great cities of the world. The population had increased to 127,000 and businesses and manufacturing had grown to meet the local demand. The presence of different European groups gave Melbourne a cosmopolitan feel. A free public library, a university, a museum, several theatres and an extensive parliament house, along with a new water supply from Yan Yean, showed that Melbourne was a leader of Australian culture as well as business.

Victoria was also transformed and its population of nearly 540,000 was spread throughout the state. The gold rush migrants proved to be young, energetic and determined to make the most of their new lives on the other side of the world. Large towns like Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo and Castlemaine had permanent populations and a variety of businesses, clubs and institutions. Bendigo and Ballarat would be Australia’s largest inland towns for nearly a century. Local councils sought to build permanent communities with high standards of living, flourishing cultural lives and attractive facilities. Nevertheless, this development had a number of consequences. The Aboriginal communities continued to suffer as much of the population headed inland.
Some work opportunities as paid pastoral workers arose for Aboriginal people, and many of them continued to gather around Melbourne. Mining was also destructive of the environment: whole forests were cut down, streams and creeks were clogged and polluted, and clay heaps which were piled high around the goldfields made the landscape look like the surface of the moon.

**SOURCE 10** Recognised as one of the most significant nineteenth-century buildings in Australia, the Old Treasury Building at the top of Collins Street was built between 1857 and 1862 and is testament to Melbourne’s cultural boom during that time.

**SOURCE 11** Deserted diggings, Spring Creek

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**D** About 27 diggers were killed in the dawn raid and 30 wounded. Only six troopers were killed. The troopers were heavily armed with guns and bayonets; the diggers had only limited weapons.

**E** Diggers on the Ballarat goldfields included Germans, Americans, Italians and Canadians, as well as people from England, Ireland and France. The involvement of non-English diggers in this struggle was resented by some.

**F** Peter Lalor and another ringleader, George Black, escaped after the attack.
5.3 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
1 How useful are photographs as historical evidence? Consider how well SOURCES 10 and 11 represent Australian life and values. What other evidence might you need to improve your understanding of life in Australia in the nineteenth century?

2 What did other people think about the changes brought by the gold rushes? Using the internet, see if you can find some written and visual sources that provide evidence of the impact of the gold rushes on Melbourne and Victoria. Write a brief comment for each source that identifies what it reveals about changes at this time and comment on whether the source is useful or reliable in helping us understand the period.

You can start at Museum Victoria or SBS. The State Library of Victoria also has some good material on the gold rushes.

IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE
3 Draw up a ‘consequences chart’ like the one shown to set out the changes brought by the gold rushes. Write ‘discovery of gold’ in the large circle, then ‘significant’ and ‘minor’ in the next two. Then set out the various changes in the next group of circles. Draw up as many as you like or even change the headings. You could use ‘short term’ and ‘long term’ or ‘intentional’ and ‘unintentional’ instead of ‘significant’ and ‘minor’.

After listing as many consequences as you can, consider whether there were any aspects of Victorian society after gold that were similar to the society that had been established before the gold rushes.

Consequences chart

DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE
4 Evaluate the importance of the Eureka Stockade in Australian history. Find out what other people have said about it, how it has featured in films and articles and how it has been commemorated. Then give your own opinion on whether Australian school children should learn about Eureka.

5.4 Whose Australia? Free selectors vs squatters

5.4.1 Conflict over land

After the clash between the diggers and the Victorian authorities at the Eureka Stockade, the next conflict between social classes in colonial Australia was over land. It was a conflict with roots that went back to earlier times when wealthy free settlers had been granted big parcels of land and convict labour to work it, while poor immigrants and ex-convicts received small land grants on which most were unable to make a living. By the time of the gold rushes, squatters controlled most of the land and used it for grazing.

The gold rushes hugely increased the colonial population. As alluvial gold ran out, thousands of people, including ex-diggers, demanded that wealthy squatters be made to give up some of the land they leased. This would free up land so other people could become small farmers. Although laws were made for this purpose in each colony, Australia did not become a land of small farmers.
Free selection

Many ordinary people hated the inequalities that existed between rich and poor in Britain and Europe. Australia seemed to offer them the chance to gain independence as small farmers. In the 1850s a popular movement developed calling for ‘free selection’. The first free selection act was passed in the Victorian Parliament in 1860. In New South Wales free selection acts were passed in 1861 and similar laws were made in the other colonies.

The ambitions of ordinary people to own land were expressed in a popular song of the time by Charles Thatcher. Thatcher was well known on the Victorian goldfields.

### SOURCE 1  
Charles Thatcher, *The Colonial Minstrel*

**Hurrah for Australia the golden,**  
Where men of all nations now toil,  
To none will we e’er be beholden  
Whilst we’ve strength to turn up the soil;  
There’s no poverty here to distress us,  
’Tis the country of true liberty,  
No proud lords can ever oppress us,  
For here we’re untrammelled and free.  
Then hurrah for Australia etc…

Our dearest and greatest ambition  
Is to settle and cultivate land:  
Australia’s thousands are crying  
For a home in the vast wilderness,  
Whilst millions of acres are lying  
In their primitive uselessness.  
Then hurrah for Australia etc…  
Upset squatterdom’s domination,  
Give every poor man a home,  
Encourage our great population,  
And like wanderers no more we’ll roam.

These free selection laws allowed anyone to select land whether or not it was leased by a squatter. For example, in New South Wales a person could select from 40 to 520 acres (16 to 129 hectares) of land and buy it on time payment at one pound an acre. Free selectors could occupy the land they had selected after paying a quarter of its price, and they could lease three times as much land adjoining their selections. The only land they could not select was land on which squatters had made improvements.

### 5.4.1 Activities

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. Explain why there was a popular demand for land during the 1850s and 1860s.
2. What was the aim of the selection acts?

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**

3. According to Thatcher’s song in **SOURCE 1**, what will be the benefits of free selection?

### 5.4.2 Results of the free selection acts

In each Australian colony, squatters gained more from these laws than did the people whom the laws were designed to assist. Why did this happen? The squatters found many ways of defeating the aims of the laws. One method was called **peacocking**, which made the rest of the area useless to selectors. Another method was to use **dummies** who later sold land they selected back to the squatters.


It was also in the early ’sixties that the quiet of Hamilton was disturbed … The first Duffy Land Act, providing for free selection of Crown Lands, had just come into force, and the momentous question of parcelling out the fertile lands of the Western District had to be faced. It was an anxious time for the existing occupiers — the squatters … There was another crowd, too, of persons quite unknown in the neighbourhood, and who appeared to be acting under some sort of leadership … It seemed … as if the strangers held possession, and the squatters were shut out while being stripped of all they possessed.

But there were wheels within wheels … Communication passed between the squatters and the leaders of the strange crowd … with the result that the squatters continued in undisturbed possession of their holdings, while not a single stranger was known to settle in the district at this time … The first Duffy Land Act was a failure.
The result was that Australia did not become a land of small independent farmers. Large landowners continued to control most of the country. Many selectors who stayed on the land lived in poverty. In many places soils were too poor, rainfall too unreliable and the selections too small. Women often had to run these small properties while the men went away for much of the year to work for squatters as drovers or shearsers.
**5.4.2 Activities**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING</th>
<th>USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why did the selection acts fail?</td>
<td>1 What do SOURCES 2 and 3 suggest about the behaviour of squatters in response to the selection acts?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2 Study SOURCE 3.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a What are these men doing?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>b Why is it possible they might not be genuine free selectors?</td>
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**5.4 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 What do SOURCES 2 and 3 suggest about the behaviour of squatters in response to the selection acts?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Identify what SOURCES 4 and 5 show about the hardships faced by free selectors.</td>
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<th>IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE</th>
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<td>3 Explain whether the selection acts brought significant change to Australian society.</td>
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<th>DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE</th>
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<tr>
<td>4 Identify what this issue suggests about Australian society at this time. Consider how selectors might have felt about the strategies employed by the squatters.</td>
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**5.5 An Australian legend**

**5.5.1 The Kelly legend**

A nation under the British Crown was not the dream of everyone who came to Australia during the nineteenth century. Ireland was Britain’s oldest colony and about one-third of all convicts sent to Australia were Irish. Many had been transported for small crimes committed just to survive the grinding poverty in which they lived. Others had been sentenced for rebelling against British rule. Many free Irish immigrants were also fleeing poverty, especially during the terrible famine of the 1840s. Such people made up large numbers of the free selectors of north-eastern Victoria, and many of them sympathised with Australia’s most famous outlaw bushranger during what came to be called ‘the Kelly Outbreak’.

Australians complimenting someone’s courage used to say that person was ‘as game as Ned Kelly’. Kelly has been the subject of a play, a ballet, songs, poems and novels. Artist Sydney Nolan portrayed the Kelly legend in a series of paintings. Both Mick Jagger and Heath Ledger played his part in movies. Why did an outlaw win such a place in Australian folklore? The historian Geoffrey Serle declared that Kelly represented ‘the last protest of the mighty bush’. Kelly has also been compared to Robin Hood. Recently a Melbourne journalist, Martin Flanagan, wrote that Kelly was ‘like a bushfire on the horizon casting its red glow into the night’. Whatever you think about Kelly there is no doubt that many people think he is an important figure in our history.

**Early years**

Edward ‘Ned’ Kelly (born 1855) was the first son of John Kelly, an ex-convict from Ireland, and Ellen Kelly, whose family, the Quinns, had come from Ireland as poor assisted migrants. Ned grew up in north-eastern Victoria in a time of conflict between struggling selectors and squatters. The selectors viewed corrupt police as the squatters’ allies. In 1865 John Kelly was jailed for possessing a stolen cow hide. When he died in 1866 the family moved to a small selection near Greta, where they lived in poverty.

In 1869 and 1870 Ned faced three charges of robbery; all were dismissed through lack of evidence. But in late 1870, aged just 15, he received six months’ hard labour in Beechworth jail for assault and three years for horse stealing. Three years after his release, Ned joined his stepfather in horse and cattle stealing. In 1878 arrest warrants were issued for Ned and his youngest brother, Dan.
The turning point
On 5 April 1878 Constable Alexander Fitzpatrick visited the Kelly house. According to Fitzpatrick, he arrested Dan but Ellen Kelly assaulted him with a shovel and Ned fired a shot at him. Ned’s version of events was very different (see Source 3). Warrants were issued for the arrest of Ned and Dan for attempted murder. Ellen was sentenced to three years in prison, and this enraged Ned and Dan. They hid out in the Wombat Ranges but offered to give themselves up in exchange for their mother’s freedom.

Police parties were sent out to hunt for the Kellys. Constables Scanlan, Lonigan and McIntyre and Sergeant Kennedy arrived at Stringybark Creek in the Wombat Ranges in October 1878. When Ned attempted to capture and disarm them, three police were killed. Only McIntyre escaped alive.

Outlaws
The Kellys were declared outlaws who could be shot on sight. In December, the gang, now consisting of Ned, Dan and their friends Steve Hart and Joe Byrne, robbed a bank at Euroa without firing a shot. In February 1879 they raided Jerilderie, locking the police in their
own cell and robbing the hotel and bank. During these operations the gang entertained their
prisoners and Ned spent much time telling people how injustice had caused him to become
an outlaw.

**SOURCE 3** Part of an 8300-word statement (known as the Jerilderie Letter) handed over by Ned Kelly
during the hold-up at Jerilderie in 1879

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... there was never such a thing as justice in the English laws but any amount of injustice to be had . . .
If a poor man happened to leave his horse or a . . . calf outside his paddocks they would be
impounded.

I have known over 60 head of horses impounded in one day . . . all belonging to poor farmers . . .
The trooper [Fitzpatrick] pulled out his revolver and said he would blow her [Ellen Kelly's] brains out if
she interfered in the arrest [of Dan Kelly] . . . The trooper . . . invented some scheme to say that he got shot
which any man can see is false . . . the Police got credit and praise for arresting the mother of 12 children
one an infant on her breast . . . I heard nothing of this . . . I being over 400 miles from Greta when I heard I
was outlawed . . .

. . . they must remember those men [Kennedy, Scanlan, Lonigan and McIntyre] came into the bush with
the intention of scattering pieces of me and my brother all over the bush and yet they know . . . I have been
wronged . . .

I am a widow's son outlawed and my orders must be obeyed.

Edward Kelly

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5.5.1 Activities

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1 Explain why there were so many Irish people in Australia.
2 What did selectors think of the police?
3 Identify how Ned Kelly had been in trouble with the law before April 1878.
4 What did it mean to be called an outlaw?

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**

5 What does Ned say about Fitzpatrick's visit to his home in **SOURCE 3**?

5.5.2 The final showdown

Police imprisoned many Kelly sympathisers and announced that such people would be barred
from getting selections. The result was increased support for the outlaws. From June 1880, the
gang made suits of armour from ploughs and supplied firearms to their supporters. They planned
to lure the police to travel by train from their headquarters at Benalla to Beechworth. This would
take them through Glenrowan, where there were many Kelly sympathisers. The plan was to derail
the train, capture the police and demand Ellen's freedom in exchange for theirs.

On the evening of Saturday, 26 June, to set the police on the track to Beechworth, Joe Byrne shot
and killed his old friend Aaron Sherritt, a police informer. Meanwhile Ned and Steve forced railway
workers to remove a section of track almost 800 metres north of Glenrowan railway station. Joined
by Dan and Joe, they took over Mrs Jones's Glenrowan hotel and waited for the train.

Ned made two fatal mistakes. When Thomas Curnow, a schoolteacher, asked permission to
take his sick wife home, Ned agreed. Shortly after two o'clock on Monday morning Curnow
stopped the train, which was carrying ten police and several Aboriginal trackers. Ned had also
assumed that the police would not suspect an attempt to derail the train. But well ahead of the
engine pulling the police carriages there was another engine. Had it been derailed, the second
engine would have stopped safely. The gang could have retreated into the hills. Instead they chose
to stay and fight (see **SOURCE 4**).

**Trial and execution**

With Ned's capture, the police finally allowed civilians to leave the hotel. Left inside were Dan
and Steve and a badly injured Martin Cherry, who died later of his wounds. Shooting continued
until 3 pm, when police set fire to the hotel. Dan and Steve chose to commit suicide rather than
be taken alive.
**SOURCE 4 The siege at Glenrowan**

A Glenrowan railway station was about 100 metres in front of the hotel. The train was meant to be derailed 800 metres up the line.

B Around 3 am the outlaws, in heavy armour, first exchanged shots with the police at the railway station. Ned and Joe were wounded.

C The gang fell back to the hotel. During the 12-hour siege 35 men, women and children threw themselves onto the floor as police bullets crashed through the thin walls.

D Police fired on the hotel from a number of positions including a trench between the hotel and the railway station. They were reinforced through the night. Their fire killed a 13-year-old boy, and other people were wounded, including some who tried to flee. At 5 am Joe Byrne was fatally wounded.
Ned’s trial for the murder of Constable Lonigan commenced in Melbourne on 28 October. He was found guilty and sentenced to death by Justice Redmond Barry. No sympathisers had joined the fight at Glenrowan, but more than 30,000 people signed a petition to save Ned from hanging and thousands attended a protest meeting the night before his execution. Ned’s last words, at 25 years of age, as he stood on the gallows at 10 am on 11 November 1880, were ‘Ah well, I suppose it has come to this.’

5.5.2 Activities

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. What went wrong with Kelly’s plan at Glenrowan?
2. Describe how Ned was eventually captured.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Fearing fresh outbreaks among Kelly sympathisers, police reinforced stations throughout north-eastern Victoria. A royal commission investigated police handling of the Kelly outbreak. It resulted in several officers being dismissed or reduced in rank.
5.5 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
1 Explain what SOURCE 1 suggests about Kelly’s character.
2 Examine SOURCE 3. Identify Kelly’s attitudes to poor selectors, police and wealthy squatters.
   Explain why Kelly would have been popular amongst the rural poor of Victoria.

ANALYSING CAUSE AND EFFECT
3 What were the causes of the ‘Kelly outbreak’? Organise them into categories of short or long term, intended or unintended, significant or minor.

DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE
4 Is the life and death of Ned Kelly an important part of Australia’s history? Consider why Kelly’s life is remarkable and why so many people have been drawn to it.

5.6 Marvellous Melbourne: a city giant

5.6.1 Showing off: modern and grand buildings
In the major cities of the Australian colonies a world was emerging that was very different from the world of selectors, squatters and country towns. After the gold rushes of the 1850s many of Victoria’s population gradually drifted towards Melbourne and by 1881 Melbourne’s population had grown to 268 000. However, the prosperity of the city drew more people from country Victoria and overseas as Melbourne’s numbers pushed to nearly 500 000 by 1891, when 41 per cent of Victorians lived in the city and its suburbs. The growth of the city of Melbourne was often held up as a wonderful example of progress and prosperity. When the English journalist George Augustus Sala described Melbourne as ‘marvellous’ in 1885 it seemed that the city had reached its destiny as the greatest city of Australia.

SOURCE 1 A sketch of Melbourne in 1880 that was made from an engraving by Samuel Calvert. Despite its solid appearance here, much of the city would be rebuilt in the 1880s as the population continued to grow and new technology enabled taller buildings.
By the 1880s Melbourne’s skyline featured elegantly decorated domes and spires. Many major buildings, as well as private homes in Melbourne’s affluent suburbs, were extravagantly fashioned with wrought-iron lacework that symbolised the city’s wealth. Even today, Melbourne has more decorative wrought iron than any other city in the world.

The invention of the hydraulic lift enabled buildings to rise above the usual four or five storeys and only New York and Chicago had buildings as high as Melbourne’s. In 1887, 11 kilometres of pipes carried pressurised water around Melbourne to power hydraulic lifts. Melbourne was the fourth city in the world to have such a system.

Perhaps one of the greatest examples of the wealth and prosperity of Melbourne was the Royal Exhibition Building. This building was completed in 1880 and hosted the Melbourne International Exhibition in that year, where exhibits and inventions from all over the world were displayed. The exhibition ran for eight months and attracted more than a million people.

**SOURCE 2** The Federal Coffee Palace, Collins Street. Seven stories high with an ornate domed tower, this was a ‘temperance hotel’ that provided accommodation but did not sell alcohol. It was a grand building and a huge advertisement for the value of sober living; it was demolished in 1973.

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**5.6.1 Activities**

1. Why did Melbourne’s population continue to grow in the 1880s?
2. Examine SOURCES 1–3. What evidence is there that Melbourne was modern and prosperous in the 1880s? Rank these examples in order of importance.
3. Choose one of the sources and see if you can find out who made it, why it was produced and who the audience were. Comment on whether it is a reliable image of Melbourne at this time.

**5.6.2 Showing off: busy, fashionable and sophisticated**

The richness of the city was also displayed in the affluence of individual citizens and their tastes in clothing and entertainment. Retailing precincts were established around Swanston and Elizabeth streets. Fashionable residents became famous for parading their attire in a social promenade called ‘doing the block’ around Collins Street. Wealthier Melbourne ladies had access to the silks and satins of Europe while the men donned immaculate suits. Other parts of the city catered for specific businesses and professions. Legal practices were located around the main courts at the...
west end of Bourke Street while doctors went to the ‘Paris’ end of Collins Street. Wharves and merchants stood by the river. Many of these precincts still stand today. To bring everyone to the city, Melbourne also built a cable tram network and an extensive railway system to the growing suburbs. In addition to these established patterns of work and life there were major annual events like the Melbourne Cup at which Melburnians could show off their status and style. Some images of Melbourne at the time are shown in SOURCES 4, 5 and 6.

**SOURCE 4** Allegro con brio: Bourke Street West, by Tom Roberts, painted around 1886. The Italian phrase in the title is a musical direction meaning ‘quickly, with brilliance’ and the painting was intended to capture the energy and excitement of Marvellous Melbourne.

**SOURCE 5** Doing the block, Great Collins St, painted by S. T. Gill, 1880. The novelist Fergus Hume compared this scene to social life in London; even the dogs are socialising.
DID YOU KNOW?

Cup day
One of Melbourne’s premier sporting events, the Melbourne Cup, was first held in 1861. Today the Melbourne Cup Carnival is enjoyed as much for its party atmosphere as for the race itself. Visitors from interstate and around the world flock to Flemington to ‘have a flutter’, picnic on the lawn and parade their outfits, both fashionable and outrageous. Nothing much has changed since 1888, when over 100,000 people spread out their food and beverages underneath the gum trees to watch the race.

SOURCE 6 An artist’s impression of the Melbourne Cup, 1888

5.6.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1 In what ways did the people of Melbourne display their success and prosperity?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
2 How do SOURCES 1–6 in this section provide evidence of Melbourne’s progress and prosperity?
List specific elements of each source as evidence.
3 How reliable do you think these sources are as evidence of Melbourne’s progress? Explain the limitations of each source.

5.6.3 A darker side to the city
As you may have realised, not everything about life in Melbourne was wonderful. Gangs of young men, called larrikins, roamed the streets. Prostitution and crime also flourished and they, too, had their own areas of the city. For many working-class men and women life was still a struggle of low pay and hard manual labour, hand-me-down clothes and cramped living conditions. There were also some serious health and hygiene issues. By the 1880s over-crowded inner-city housing in areas like Little Lonsdale Street and some low-lying suburbs like Collingwood and Richmond experienced outbreaks of diseases like typhoid, tuberculosis and diphtheria. The death rate amongst babies and young children was higher than London’s for most of the 1880s. Both household and human waste were often dumped in the Yarra River; overflowing cesspits and open sewers in city streets caused one Sydney writer to name the city ‘Marvellous Smellbourne’ because of the city’s overwhelming odour of human excrement. It wasn’t until 1897 that the city finally had an operating and efficient sewer system.

cesspits pits into which householders with no toilets could empty their waste, which was later collected by workers known as nightmen
SOURCE 7 ‘A Bad Smell’, Australian Health Society, 1880. Two workmen are forced to hold their noses in disgust at the smell of the laneways outside their homes.

“A BAD SMELL.”

“What a bad smell!” said Carey to his fellow-workman, as they came up the right-of-way on their road home after the day’s work was done.

5.6.3 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1 What problems did Melbourne’s residents face in the 1880s?
2 Explain why Melbourne was also known as ‘Smellbourne’.
5.6 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

1. What do you think would make a city ‘marvellous’ to live in? Make a list of your top six qualities of a marvellous city and compare it with a classmate’s. Perhaps your class can agree on what a marvellous city might be like.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

2. Examine the sources in this section. For each source explain whether it supports or disputes the idea that Melbourne was a marvellous city. Compile a scrapbook of other sources and accounts about Melbourne in the 1880s and comment on their value in helping understand life in Melbourne.

3. Identify the source that you think is the most reliable or most revealing about Melbourne at this time. Explain your choice and compare your response with those of other members of your class.

IDENTIFYING CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

4. Create a table which lists the differences and similarities of life in Melbourne now compared to the 1880s. Rank them in order of importance and compare your table with those of other members of your class.

5. Research the lives of the poorer people of Melbourne in the 1880s. Draw up a graphic organiser to represent different features of the lives of Melbourne’s poor.

DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

6. Does Melbourne of the 1880s deserve to be known as a city of progress and prosperity?

7. As historians, what can we learn from studying Melbourne in the 1880s?

5.7 Working in cities and towns

5.7.1 An unequal society

After the 1850s many people who had tried their luck on the goldfields drifted to towns and cities to look for work. As a result, commerce, industry and investment grew, and the public service expanded. Developments in transport, technology and communication also contributed to changing work patterns.

Many nineteenth-century factories, mills and shops in the colonies were little more than ‘sweatshops’. Dressed in heavy, multi-layered clothing (then the fashion), workers of both sexes sometimes worked 10 to 16 hours per day, six days a week, in temperatures that could reach the high 30s. Many had to walk long distances to get home.

Employers had all the power, sometimes refusing to implement government directions to improve conditions. Employees were often afraid to object or to report employers for non-compliance, for fear of losing their jobs. Neither did they enjoy the entitlements workers do today, such as sick leave. Men could be expected to work until they were 65. It was not much of a life for many people in the working class.

Even children worked under these harsh conditions, sometimes 50 to 60 hours per week. Because they were smaller, they could often do tasks adults could not. As well, employers had to pay them only a fraction of an adult wage. In 1911, 46,169 children between the ages of 10 and 14 were in the workforce.

Social divisions

By the 1880s, apart from wealthy landowners and pastoralists, bankers and merchants were among the highest earners in the colonies. They established businesses close to the wharves to take advantage of the growing import and investment sectors. These businesses provided employment for accountants, clerks and shopkeepers.

Professionals such as doctors and lawyers also earned high wages. Most came from wealthy families, and had been educated at private schools and universities in the colonies and overseas.

High-wage earners tended to build spacious homes in leafy suburbs away from the grime and pollution of the inner-city areas. Domestic servants were employed to maintain these homes and the wealthy families who lived there.

Until the 1880s most domestic servants were poor Irish immigrant girls working to help support their families. Many men and women preferred factory work, though, because it often
paid better and it gave workers some independence. This preference led to a shortage of domestic workers in the 1880s. As the shortage grew, domestic workers were able to push for higher wages, more free time and better working conditions.

**SOURCE 1** An 1882 wood engraving depicting scenes at Beath, Schiess & Co’s Victorian clothing factories

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**5.7.1 Activities**

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. How hard were workers’ lives in the nineteenth century?

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**

2. Examine **SOURCE 1**. Describe what the engraving is telling us about factory work for men and women. Use as many of the panels in the image as you can.

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**5.7.2 New technologies**

By the 1880s new technologies meant the growth of new types of jobs. The expansion of manufacturing resulted in an increase of engineers, who helped to develop machinery for factories. In many trades (for example, bootmaking), mechanised processes replaced manual labour.

The typewriter created new office jobs. Up to the 1880s, typists were mainly men, although the number of female typists increased after this. New methods of copying and **bookkeeping** were also changing office work.
Television and telephone services became more common in the 1880s. The number of telegraph stations in the central business district of Melbourne doubled from 1880 to 1890. By 1890, there were almost 2000 telephone subscribers. New forms of communication required workers to develop new skills.

One of the most influential developments in the late nineteenth century was electricity. For some, however, electric lights just meant longer working hours.

Source 2 Inside the workshop of John Faul, Ironmonger at Bendigo in 1890

She is wanted at 6 am, or before, and keeps busy all day till bed time at 10 or 11 pm. 'No followers allowed', not even a brother or sister, lest they should eat or drink something, or take something home. The poor girl cannot sit with the ‘family’ — she is ‘only a servant’, and therefore has only the kitchen to sit in if she has any leisure. If there are any grown-up sons, she is liable to instant dismissal if one of them is seen speaking to her, and the daughters order her about as if she were a convict.

“Missus” — From Sarah Jane’s point of view’ in The Bulletin, 23 June 1883

Source 3 Most servant girls endured demanding, and often harsh, working conditions.

5.7.2 Activities

Check Your Understanding
1 What new jobs were created as a result of the new technologies that were introduced in this period?

Using Historical Sources as Evidence
2 Read Source 3. According to the writer, why is domestic service difficult work? Try to give four or five reasons in your own words.
5.7 Putting it all together

Using Historical Sources as Evidence
1. Based on Sources 1–3, explain what made workers’ lives difficult.
2. Locate some other sources and accounts of working conditions in Australian cities in the 1880s and 1890s. Do they support or contest the impression created by Sources 1–3?

Analysing Cause and Effect
3. Why would workers accept poor pay and conditions? Discuss this issue in class and write your own point of view.

5.8 Trade unions and political parties

5.8.1 Australian trade unions develop

Many people in nations across the world promote the idea that there are characteristics that make their people distinctive. In the late nineteenth century many Australians seemed to accept that the most important part of the Australian identity — the most typical Australian characteristic — was ‘mateship’, which was demonstrated by ordinary people standing by each other in the struggle to overcome tough conditions and injustice, particularly in rural areas. For those who thought this way, the development of trade unionism was a continuation of a tradition that went back to early convict days and was part of the ‘pioneering spirit’ of Australia’s white history. It also seemed to be reinforced by the rebels at Eureka and Ned Kelly.

Trade unionism has been a very important influence on Australian life. Trade unions are formed by employees within an occupation or industry to bargain with employers for improved wages and conditions. They also try to ensure that any previously gained social improvements are kept. Australia inherited its trade union traditions from Britain, and for much of the twentieth century Australia had one of the highest levels of trade union membership in the world.

Source 1 A banner for the United Operative Masons of Melbourne, commemorating this union’s achievement of an eight-hour working day
The first Australian trade unions were formed in the 1840s. They were temporarily disrupted by the gold rushes but were soon reorganised. By the 1850s many trade unions had been formed, strengthened by the ambitions of many gold rush migrants. This growth brought about the establishment of the Melbourne Trades Hall Committee, a central organisation of affiliated unions. Its first meeting in 1859 was held in Lygon Street in Melbourne at the site where the Victorian Trades Hall Council building now stands.

One of the first great victories of the Australian union movement was the winning of the eight-hour workday on 21 April 1856 by the Stonemasons Union. The eight-hour day was confined to the building trades and not extended to most workers until the next century but it continued to be celebrated with an annual procession. It was well attended. In 1879 the Victorian government declared it a public holiday and in 1934 it was renamed ‘Labour Day’. The celebration was renamed ‘Moomba’ in 1955.

### 5.8.1 Activities

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. Why are trade unions formed?

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**

2. Examine **SOURCE 1**. Identify the labels on the three sides of the central triangle.

3. Explain what **SOURCE 1** suggests about the importance of the eight-hour working day.

### 5.8.2 Tactics and policies

Unions used strikes and pickets to win their objectives. The first full-scale union picket was staged during the Bootmakers' Union strike in 1884. Unions also held strikes to protest against businesses employing Chinese workers, who were paid at much lower rates than Europeans. At its first meeting, in Sydney in 1879, the Inter-Colonial Trade Union Congress (later the **Australian Council of Trade Unions** or ACTU) unanimously opposed Chinese immigration.

**SOURCE 2** Trade unionists with their banner in Broken Hill, NSW, around 1911

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**Exploitation of women**

Women were exploited even more than men. They experienced harsh working conditions, long hours and lower rates of pay. The first colonial women's trade union was the Melbourne Tailoresses' Union. Founded in 1882, it campaigned against wage cuts for already poorly paid female workers in the clothing industry. Its campaign led to a parliamentary inquiry into **sweated labour**, and the establishment of boards to ensure that standards were in place for wages, working hours and conditions.
Factions and political parties

Workers could have improved their conditions by electing representatives to fight for their rights in the colonial parliaments. At first, however, factions and pressure groups dominated colonial politics. The main groups were the protectionists and the free traders. Both represented the interests of businesspeople. The issue of free trade versus protection of local industries (by charging duties on imports) deeply divided the colonies. In New South Wales there was strong support for free trade while Victoria supported protection.

Political parties began to emerge in the late 1880s as the protectionists and free traders became more organised. The most significant step in the development of political parties, however, was the birth of the labour parties. Since its inception, the Australian Labor Party (ALP) has had links with the trade union movement. Formed in 1891, it is the oldest political party in Australia, and one of the oldest labour parties in the world.

5.8.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1 Identify the economic reason that unions opposed Chinese immigration.
2 Whose interests did ‘Free Traders’ and ‘Protectionists’ represent?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
3 Describe the appearance of the unionists in SOURCE 2 and explain why they might be dressed this way.
4 The slogan on the banner in SOURCE 2 reads, ‘To Assist but not To Injure’. Explain why the union might have chosen this slogan.

5.8.3 The great strikes of the 1890s

Trade unions achieved many of their goals up until the end of the 1880s. However, when a severe economic depression began in 1890, employer organisations fought back. Employers said they were fighting for ‘freedom of contract’, the right to hire workers who were not union members and to pay them less than the wages that had been won by the unions.

The result was a series of great strikes between 1890 and 1894. The 1890 maritime strike affected all the eastern colonies and involved wharf labourers, seamen, ships’ officers, transport workers and shearsers. The 1891 shearsers’ strike saw armed clashes between shearsers on the one hand and strike-breakers, the army and police on the other at Barcaldine in Queensland. The strike ended after four months; thirteen of its leaders were arrested and sentenced to three years hard labour. These strikes were followed by the Broken Hill miners’ strike in 1892 and a further strike of shearsers and other bush workers in 1893–94.

SOURCE 3 A portrait of shearsers as ‘unionist prisoners’. This photograph was taken at Barcaldine, Queensland, in November 1893 to mark the gaoling of 13 shearer union leaders.

SOURCE 4 This news report describes what happened when unionists attempted to stop strike-breakers working at Port Adelaide during the 1890 maritime strike.

About 6 a.m. a large body of unionists had assembled on the wharfs, but nothing serious occurred until about 8 o’clock, when some non-unionists were returning from work along Maclaren wharf and proceeding to the labour bureau for breakfast. They were surrounded by a body of unionists, who commenced to hoot, jeer, and illtreat them. One of the men being rather roughly handled drew a revolver, which he pointed at the unionists, but happily did not fire. The police arriving on the spot arrested three of the unionists and took the weapon away from the non-unionist, but the owner [of the revolver] was not apprehended…

Published in The Advertiser (Adelaide), 29 October 1890
**E lecting workers’ representatives**

The strikes failed because the employers were able to find strike-breakers to carry out much of the work and could use the law against the strikers. The failure of the strikes, the support the employers had from governments and the gaoling of union leaders made unionists realise they needed new tactics. They now thought they would have to get workers’ representatives into parliament to change the laws. Labour parties were set up in each colony. Unionists believed that Labour party candidates elected to parliament would defend the interests of the workers who put them there.

**5.8.3 Activities**

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. How did employers try to lower wages in the 1890s? Explain why they might have done this.
2. Identify the results of the strikes of the 1890s. Explain why they failed.

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**

3. What does SOURCE 3 suggest about the attitudes of the shearsers in the photograph? Explain why you think this photo was taken.
4. Identify from SOURCE 4 why unionists felt the government was on the side of the employers.

**5.8.4 Forming the ALP**

Australia’s first labour government — indeed the first labour government in the world — was elected in Queensland in 1899. It lasted only seven days. A minority government had been formed, with Anderson Dawson as the state’s first labour premier. It ended a week later when motions enabling it to continue to govern were defeated.

In their formative years, the colonial labour parties were influenced by the trade unions, but were not restricted to only trade union interests. The parties also wanted the support of farmers, small business and non-union employees, including ‘white collar workers’. The influence of the trade unions on policy, however, remained high.

The Australian Labour Party entered federal politics at federation, following the first Commonwealth elections in 1901. It comprised 16 members who had been elected to the first sitting of the House of Representatives and eight Senators. It was not until 1908 that the spelling of the party’s name was changed to ‘Labor’. The American spelling recognised that many of the ideas of the American ‘labor’ movement were dominant internationally and influenced the early tactics of the ALP.

**SOURCE 5** Townsville Mounted Infantry in Hughenden, Queensland, during the 1891 shearsers’ strike
SOURCE 6 Wives of unionist miners attacking strike-breakers with sticks and broom handles during the re-opening of the Broken Hill mines in 1892

5.8.4 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1 Identify three significant things about the formation of the ALP and its early history.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
2 Compare Sources 5 and 6. Explain how they present very different views of the conflicts between workers and employers in the 1890s.

5.8 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE
1 Discuss in class whether the interests of employers and employees today are similar to those of the 1890s. You could also discuss whether workers should be able to go on strike for better pay and conditions.

ANALYSING CAUSE AND EFFECT
2 Identify the causes of the strikes of the 1890s and rank them in order of importance.

3 Evaluate whether the results of the strikes of the 1890s represent a step forward for Australian workers.

DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE
4 Evaluate the importance of the formation of the ALP and explain whether you think the ALP still supports Australian workers.

5.9 Nationalism and Australian identity

5.9.1 Radical and nationalist

Ideas of national identity and national types became popular in Europe, Canada and the United States in the 1800s, shaping and reshaping maps, alliances and culture.
By the late nineteenth century two very different kinds of nationalism existed in Australia. A majority of Australians were what historians have called ‘imperial loyalists’. They thought of themselves as Australian Britons and felt deep loyalty to Britain and the British Empire. A different kind of sentiment was felt by Australians whom historians have called ‘radical nationalists’. Such nationalists believed that Australia should be independent from Britain and should create a society that was fairer and more egalitarian than Britain’s.

Radical nationalists saw the typical Australian as a bush worker, like the gold rush diggers and the unionist shearsers and drovers. He was seen as independent, opposed to class distinctions and English snobbishness, and loyal to his mates. Women usually had very little part in this image. Many Australian short stories, poems and artworks of the 1880s and 1890s depict such ‘typical Australians’.

**SOURCE 1** Extract from Banjo Paterson’s 1889 poem *Clancy of the Overfow*. This section provides a rather romantic image of droving in contrast to the ‘foulness’ of city life.

In my wild erratic fancy visions come to me of Clancy
Gone a-droving ‘down the Cooper’ where the Western drovers go;
As the stock are slowly stringing, Clancy rides behind them singing,
For the drover’s life has pleasures that the townsfolk never know.
And the bush hath friends to meet him, and their kindly voices greet him
In the murmur of the breezes and the river on its bars,
And he sees the vision splendid of the sunlit plains extended,
And at night the wond’rous glory of the everlasting stars.
I am sitting in my dingy little office, where a stingy
Ray of sunlight struggles feebly down between the houses tall,
And the foetid air and gritty of the dusty, dirty city
Through the open window floating, spreads its foulness over all.

**SOURCE 2** *The golden fleece*, painted by Tom Roberts in 1894. You can compare this image to Roberts’ more famous work, *Shearing the rams*. 

egalitarian
believing in equality
5.9.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1. What are the qualities of the typical bush worker as seen in the radical, nationalist tradition?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
2. In SOURCE 1, identify the ‘pleasures’ of the drover’s life.
3. Describe how the work of shearing is presented in SOURCE 2.

5.9.2 White and male

Racism was part of both kinds of Australian nationalism. Imperial loyalists believed that Britain had the right to rule over other races they believed were inferior to the British. Radical nationalists wanted to create a workers’ paradise in Australia, but they thought this dream could be achieved only by keeping out non-Europeans, who they believed did not share their values and whose cheap labour would be used to destroy the gains won by Australian workers. They were also thought to be insufficiently educated or intelligent to share in an Australian democracy.

Art and literature

Even before stories and poems about the bush were published, there were traditions of storytelling and singing among rural itinerant workers. These had developed from old convict ballads and Irish songs. Writers such as Andrew ‘Banjo’ Paterson drew on these traditions to create ballads about the bush and its heroic characters. Paterson’s works include *Waltzing Matilda*, *Clancy of the Overflow* and *The Man from Snowy River*.

Henry Lawson (see SOURCE 3) also wrote about people living in the bush. His mother, Louisa, was an early Australian campaigner for women’s rights, and her strong influence is seen in some of the female characters that feature in Lawson’s stories. The *Drover’s Wife* (see SOURCE 4) depicts a brave and resilient woman protecting her children while her husband is away for long periods. However, much of the art and writing of the period celebrates hard physical labour and masculine endeavour. Women were often associated with more passive, domestic roles. This is another reason why *The Drover’s Wife* is such an extraordinary story.

SOURCE 3 Henry Lawson

She is not a coward, but recent events have shaken her nerves. A little son of her brother-in-law was lately bitten by a snake, and died. Besides she has not heard from her husband for six months, and is anxious about him . . .

. . . She is used to being left alone. She once lived like this for eighteen months. As a girl she built the usual castles in the air, but all her girlish hopes and aspirations have long been dead. She finds all the excitement and recreation she needs in the Young Ladies’ Journal, and Heaven help her! takes a pleasure in the fashion plates . . .

. . . One of the children died while she was here alone. She rode nineteen miles for assistance, carrying the dead child.

SOURCE 4 Extract from The Drover’s Wife by Henry Lawson

Many of the works of art also told dramatic stories about the trials and hardships of rural living, though not all of these works portrayed this life as one of heroic struggle.
Paterson and Lawson both contributed to a literary journal called *The Bulletin*. It promoted political ideas such as **republicanism** and white superiority. Its slogan was 'Australia for Australians' until 1908, when it was changed to 'Australia for the White Man'.

**SOURCE 5** Tom Roberts' *A break away!* Painted in 1891, this picture shows a lone figure desperately trying to avert disaster as his herd of thirsty sheep rush for the water.

**SOURCE 6** Written by Henry Lawson, published in *The Bulletin* in 1887. It is Lawson’s first published poem.

**A Song of the Republic**
Sons of the South, awake! arise!
Sons of the South, and do.
Banish from under your bonny skies
Those old-world errors and wrongs and lies.
Making a hell in a Paradise
That belongs to your sons and you.
Sons of the South, make choice between
(Sons of the South, choose true),
The Land of Morn and the Land of E’en,
The Old Dead Tree and the Young Tree Green,
The Land that belongs to the lord and the Queen,
And the Land that belongs to you.
...
Sons of the South, aroused at last!
Sons of the South are few!
But your ranks grow longer and deeper fast,
And ye shall swell to an army vast,
And free from the wrongs of the North and Past
The land that belongs to you.

**5.9.2 Activities**

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**
1. Explain why non-Europeans were excluded from ideas of the ‘typical Australian’ at this time.
2. Explain why *The Drover’s Wife* is an extraordinary story.

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**
3. Identify what **SOURCE 4** suggests about the qualities of bush women.
4. Examine **SOURCE 6**. What is the main point of Lawson’s poem?

**5.9 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER**

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**
1. Locate some other works of art, stories and poems from this period and compare how they present the Australian characters. Identify the qualities that they share as well as ones that seem different.
2. Using all of the sources in this section, describe the vision of national character they express. Try to include contradictory elements if you can.
3. Examine **SOURCE 6**. Explain what Lawson might have meant by ‘old-world errors and wrongs and lies’ and the sort of future he predicted for Australia as a republic.

**DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE**
4. Evaluate the importance of the bush worker as a representative of the Australian character. Is it possible for any one idea to express a ‘national type’? Discuss this in your class.
5. Read Lawson’s poem *The Fire at Ross Farm*. Is this poem a better expression of national character than *A Song of the Republic*?

**republicanism** the belief that a country should be a republic (where the country has an elected or appointed head of state), not a monarchy (where the head of state is a king or queen)
5.10 SkillBuilder: Analysing cartoons

Using historical sources as evidence: analysing cartoons
Artworks, photographs and illustrations all give insight into the values, attitudes and beliefs of people in the past. Political cartoons can be powerful evidence of the ways that people thought and felt about their lives.

Go to your learnON course to access:
- An explanation of the skill (Tell me)
- A step-by-step process to develop the skill, with an example (Show me)
- An activity to allow you to practise the skill (Let me do it)
- Questions to test your application of the skill (Applying skills)

5.11 Voting rights for women

5.11.1 Women in the workforce
During the nineteenth century there was great social inequality between the sexes. Most rewarding jobs were closed to women, who usually had to give up their jobs when they married. Women were expected to devote their lives to their family, yet they had little power within marriage. Many people came to see that women's **suffrage** was needed as a first step towards overcoming such inequalities.

In the paid workforce, women were paid much less than men even for the same work. In the clothing trade, women worked up to 90 hours a week. Female domestic servants received very small wages, board and leftover food for working 14-hour days with only occasional weekends off. A skilled tradesman earned five times as much but even his wage was barely enough for rent, food and other essentials for a family.

Nevertheless, as one century closed and another dawned, women's participation in paid work began to change rapidly. By 1913 women accounted for nearly a quarter of all manufacturing employees and were enjoying better wages and more independence than those in domestic service. Administrative work, especially in using the new typewriters, became increasingly common. But pay rates continued to be low and, while a few women such as fruitpickers would receive equal pay for equal work, most women would receive only one-third of the wages of their male counterparts.

**Fighting for women's political rights**
Laws on marriage, divorce, property and custody of children all favoured men. Change could come only through political action. In the late nineteenth century women formed organisations in each Australian colony to campaign for the right to vote. Many hoped that women's votes would force governments to make better laws to protect the rights of women and children.
They believed their vote would bring about improved working conditions, equal pay, better education for girls and more opportunities in the professions. Women also thought that being entitled to vote would provide them with greater power within the home, protecting vulnerable women against violent abuse, giving them property and custody rights and raising the age of consent. A number of women’s groups campaigning for votes for women were also demanding restrictions on the consumption of alcohol (these were known as ‘Temperance’ unions), believing a more sober society would be a safer one. The Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was one such group, which was sometimes ridiculed in the media as the ‘Water, Coffee, Tea Union’.

**SOURCE 1** The front cover of *The Woman’s Sphere* 8 April 1903. A procession of men march past under the banner of manhood suffrage, a glass of beer and golf clubs. They include a boxer, men of all classes and even non-European and indigenous males. The noble Vida Goldstein, representing womanhood, is chained to the pole of ‘thou shalt not vote’, along with ‘madness’ and ‘criminality’. The rising sun of ‘women’s suffrage’ is in the background. One of the males in the foreground is a brewery owner.
Although Victorian women had been granted the right to vote in federal elections in 1902, they had to continue their campaign. State lawmakers were still the most significant level of government at this time and were responsible for the areas that concerned women the most.

In New South Wales in 1888 Louisa Lawson (the mother of Henry Lawson) founded a newspaper called *The Dawn* to make people aware of women’s issues. In 1889 she founded the Dawn Club to campaign for women’s suffrage. In 1891 women’s suffrage societies presented the Victorian Parliament with a petition with more than 30,000 signatures supporting votes for women. Vida Goldstein was an equally important campaigner for women’s rights. She was born in 1869 in Melbourne, where she worked for slum clearance, prison reform and votes for women. In 1899 she became president of the Women’s Suffrage League.

In 1894 South Australian women gained the vote. New Zealand women had led the way, gaining voting rights in 1893. Women won the vote in Western Australia in 1899, federal government elections and New South Wales in 1902, Tasmania in 1903, Queensland in 1905 and Victoria in 1908.

### 5.11.1 Activities

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. Identify the reasons that women campaigned for the right to vote.

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**

2. Describe the message of **SOURCE 1**. Is it convincing?

### 5.11.2 Slow progress

Only South Australia and the Commonwealth had given women the right to stand for election to Parliament as well as to vote. The right of women to stand for election to Parliament was won in New South Wales in 1918, Western Australia in 1920, Tasmania in 1921 and Victoria in 1923. In 1921, with her election to the lower house of Western Australia, Edith Cowan became Australia’s first female member of Parliament.

**Vida Goldstein fights on**

Vida Goldstein (see **SOURCE 2**) ran two magazines for women’s rights: *The Woman’s Sphere* (1900–05) and *The Woman Voter* (1909–19). She stood for election to the Senate on five occasions without success. However, she received many votes from men and women, and her election campaigns increased awareness of the unfair way women were treated. In 1903, she was guest speaker at a women’s meeting in the United States and, from 1911 to 1913, she helped the British women’s suffrage movement. In Britain the vote was not extended to all adult women until 1928.

During the First World War Vida championed pacifism as well as feminism. She founded the Women’s Peace Army in 1915 and was involved in a number of charitable works supporting vulnerable women. In 1919, she represented Australia at the Women’s Peace Conference in Zurich. She was away from Australia for three years. Vida described herself as a democrat working for the complete equality of women with men and decent standards of living for all.

Voting rights for women were opposed by a number of male politicians who argued that women were not sufficiently educated or intelligent to vote and that their vote would be too easily influenced by their husbands, employers or unscrupulous politicians. They also expressed the idea that women who were interested in politics would neglect their families, have fewer children and that the divorce rate would go up.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Vida Goldstein supported trade unions and **socialism**. During the First World War (1914–18) she campaigned for peace even though this lost her many supporters. She died in 1949. An electorate in Melbourne is now named after her.

**socialism** a political system in which governments control the economy to ensure greater equality

**learn on**

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**SOURCE 2** A portrait of Vida Goldstein, painted in 1944 by Phyl Waterhouse

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**did you know?**

Vida Goldstein supported trade unions and **socialism**. During the First World War (1914–18) she campaigned for peace even though this lost her many supporters. She died in 1949. An electorate in Melbourne is now named after her.
Some newspapers and publications portrayed women who campaigned for voting rights as ugly, unmarried and aggressive, suggesting in a rather obvious way that they were not really ‘feminine’. Others portrayed women as too innocent or naive to use their vote responsibly or simply made fun of the idea.

SOURCE 3 The Victorian woman: ‘We demand our votes. We will have ‘em.’ The Conservative Party: ‘I assure you they’re very unbecoming, ma’am. Just look at Miss South Australia there!’ ‘A question of propriety’, The Critic, 26 August 1899

SOURCE 5 Here, you man! Where’s that vote you promised me? This cartoon was published in The Worker, a Queensland trade union newspaper, on 17 November 1900. The woman probably represents Emma Miller, a prominent Queensland feminist of the time, while the man she is intimidating is the unsympathetic Robert Philp, the Queensland premier.

SOURCE 4 One of the opponents of votes for women was the Queensland premier, Robert Philp. Here he is being portrayed as a butcher of democracy, published in The Worker, 11 August 1900.
5.11.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1 Identify the ways that Vida Goldstein worked to improve Australian society.
2 Explain why some people opposed giving women the vote.

5.11 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
1 Examine SOURCES 3, 4 and 5. Explain how the campaign for women’s votes has been represented in these cartoons.
2 Identify what these sources reveal about attitudes at the time. Explain how each source might help us understand the debate over women’s suffrage. Locate three more sources from the time that address the issue of votes for women. How do they add to your understanding?

IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE
3 Locate some modern sources about women’s wages and political representation in Australia. Has Vida Goldstein’s vision of ‘complete equality of women with men’ been achieved?

5.12 Federation

5.12.1 Why federate?
By 1880, the six British colonies were getting closer to merging as one nation. For the next 20 years, the issue of federation dominated political discussion between the colonies until, on 1 January 1901, the Commonwealth of Australia was proclaimed.

Between 1855 and 1860 all colonies except Western Australia had their own governments. However, they governed independently of each other. For instance, laws concerning trade and tariffs, postal services, railway line widths, internal telegraph systems and defence forces differed from colony to colony.

These differences caused many frustrations, especially for those conducting business. Mindful of this, politicians began debating the pros and cons of having a government for the whole country that had some common functions and laws, while allowing certain powers to remain with the colonies.

The reasons for federation are quite complex and certain factors were important at different stages of the process. Historians disagree about what was really important in moving Australia towards nationhood. Some argue the process is still going.

National defence
By the 1880s, three security issues worried the colonial governments in Australia.
1. The French had been interested in the country from the 1770s, and had a colonial presence in New Caledonia. This was close enough to the Australian east coast for French warships to create problems if relations between Britain and France ever worsened.
2. Germany had established colonial outposts in Northern New Guinea and Samoa, posing a potential threat to colonial sea routes.
3. Russia’s Pacific Fleet was especially a potential threat after the Crimean War. Fortifications had been built to protect many Australian ports and harbours.

A unified defence force seemed to offer advantages, though most Australians (and the government) looked to Britain to defend Australia in time of danger.

Immigration concerns
There was continued concern about the possibility of a large number of non-Europeans coming into the country. The experience of the gold rushes had made many wary of the Chinese. When South Sea Islanders were brought into Queensland, many colonists feared this meant they would lose jobs or have reduced wages. This unrest allowed politicians to argue for a national policy controlling immigration. Different groups promoted the idea of a white Australia for different reasons. The newly formed labour parties were particularly strong in their opposition to non-European migration, fearing that anyone willing to work for lower wages (or anyone able to be easily exploited by employers) would drive down wages for all working Australians.
This 1891 newspaper cartoon (with colour added) summed up the way many people saw the colonies at the time. The ‘stone walls’ were more than just custom duties, though. There were many other factors separating the colonies.

**Vision of unity**

Some Australians believed that federation was a national destiny. One of the leaders of the movement was the young lawyer Alfred Deakin. It was his view that each Australian was an ‘independent Australian Briton’ and that federation represented ‘the highest development of the possibilities of self-government.’ Without unity, he argued, ‘we find ourselves hampered in commerce, restricted in influence, weakened in prestige’. Another leader was the ambitious and talented Isaac Isaacs from Victoria who claimed that he looked forward to the day when he could say, because of federation, ‘I am an Australian’. The impending new century promised a new age of improvement, modernity, and optimism. Australian nationhood was influenced by those ideals.

**Other benefits**

There were also practical concerns, many of them offering economic benefits. The width of railway lines differed between colonies. This meant people had to change trains and goods had to be transferred from one train to another at the borders. Also, it was argued that a common railway gauge would be vital in any military crisis. Custom duties at state borders were also inconvenient, time-consuming and costly. The 1890s depression had been particularly severe in some states (like Victoria) and some believed that a united economy would be stronger.

As the population grew, the demand for reliable, coordinated postal and telegraph services strengthened. Only a national government could guarantee this.

**5.12.1 Activities**

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. Make a list of the reasons for the move to federation.

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**

2. Explain whether **SOURCE 1** is supportive or critical of the federation movement.
5.12.2 Countdown to federation

A Federal Council meets 1886
- The Federal Council of Australasia was set up, and a meeting attended by delegates from all six colonies, and from New Zealand and Fiji.
- The main purpose of the meeting was to agree to ask Britain to guarantee it would defend the colonies if they were ever threatened.

B Henry Parkes talks to Tenterfield locals 1889
- Sir Henry Parkes (1815–1896), an outspoken and controversial politician, was a prominent supporter of federation.
- He was premier of New South Wales five times.
- In August 1889, en route to Sydney from Brisbane by train, he stopped in Tenterfield. He spoke to a hall full of locals at a function, challenging them (and all colonists) to think ‘national’.

"... I do see very clearly that there may come a time and that time not very remote, when the Australian colonies may be brought more into the position of one great and united people. We should have an outline of Empire, such as we could never hope for as isolated colonies, and our place would be admitted in the rank of nations."

C A national constitution drafted 1891
- By the 1890s, it was increasingly apparent to politicians and businessmen that colonists shared a common language and values. A national identity was emerging.
- An Australasian Convention was held, attended by leading politicians from the six colonies and from New Zealand. The purpose was to draft a national constitution.
- The draft for a constitution proposed a federal government and state governments, free trade between the colonies and a national defence force. However, due to the 1890s depression and strikes, the federation issue was put aside.

D The Corowa conference 1893
- Economic issues were the focus at this conference of politicians and businessmen.
- The issue discussed most fiercely was the import/export tariffs each colony imposed. People and goods on trains were searched at borders, as a change of train was required, to ensure no smuggling was taking place and that appropriate customs duties were paid.
- Delegate Quick from Victoria proposed that colonial governments ask their voters to elect representatives for a Federal Constitutional Convention.

E Federal Constitutional Convention 1897–98
- From this convention (attended by representatives from colonies chosen by the people), a draft constitution was taken back to the five colonial governments. The draft plan saw a two-house federal parliament with an upper house of review that would represent states equally and protect rights.
- Delegates re-assembled in Sydney in September (and again in January 1898 in Melbourne) to consider amendments from the colonial parliaments. Free trade between states, and the national management of immigration and defence were key issues.
- On 16 March 1898, the convention agreed on a draft constitution to be put to the voters of all colonies. (Western Australian and Queensland parliaments were still to agree at this point.)

F The referendum April 1899 to July 1900
- Votes were cast. After some revotes and a delayed vote in Western Australia, the referendum was completed by July 1900. The majority of voters gave their support for a national government, the Commonwealth of Australia, to be set up in line with the terms laid out in the draft constitution.
- State (formerly colonial) constitutions were recognised in the proposed federal constitution; however, federal laws would overrule any state law where there was a common issue.

Referendum vote on the Commonwealth bill, 1899–1900

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of colony</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>20.6.1899</td>
<td>107420</td>
<td>82741</td>
<td>190161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>27.7.1899</td>
<td>152653</td>
<td>9805</td>
<td>162458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>13437</td>
<td>791</td>
<td>14228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>29.4.1899</td>
<td>69990</td>
<td>17053</td>
<td>83043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>6.5.1899</td>
<td>38488</td>
<td>30996</td>
<td>69484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>2.10.1899</td>
<td>44800</td>
<td>19691</td>
<td>64491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>31.7.1900</td>
<td>161077</td>
<td>583865</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The referendum result
- A majority of votes were cast for federation but only 61% of those who had the right to vote took part. So, in fact, less than half the colony’s voters actually voted for federation. This demonstrates that many Australians were confused or uncertain about its meaning.
G Australia becomes a nation

1900

A group of delegates (one notable politician from each colony) travelled to London to have the draft constitution passed by the British Parliament. The British State Secretary responsible for colonies wanted to make amendments but the delegates stood firm.

The Australian Constitution was passed by the British Parliament, with the British monarch, Queen Victoria, giving it royal assent on 9 July 1900. It set out the rules and principles for governing Australia and outlined the powers of the federal parliament and some powers of state parliaments.

H Federation

1901

The Governor-General representing Queen Victoria swore in Sir Edmund Barton and eight chosen ministers on 1 January 1901. (They would act as a caretaker government until the first national elections could be held in March 1901.)

After this swearing in, the Commonwealth of Australia was proclaimed by Sir Edmund Barton in Centennial Park, Sydney.

All over Australia on 1 January 1901 there were celebrations. Public buildings were decorated and special arches built over city thoroughfares. There were parties, dances and sports meetings. In the evening, the action continued with fireworks displays.

The Commonwealth of Australia now existed. However, it was still a British Dominion. Australia’s allegiance to the British monarch was indicated by the role of the Governor-General, who represented the monarch.

5.12.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1 Explain why Henry Parkes was important in the movement for federation.

2 Explain why so few people voted in the final referendum. Why did it still pass?

3 Who authorised the Australian Constitution?

4 What does the Constitution actually do?

5.12.3 Values of a new nation

The movement towards federation is interesting because Australians at the time had to think carefully about who they were and what was important for them. You can see this thinking in many of the sources and accounts from the period.

SOURCE 2 The badge of the Australian Federation League of New South Wales between 1898 and 1901

SOURCE 3 The opening of the first Commonwealth Parliament at the Exhibition Building, Melbourne, 9 May 1901
Since 1901

Australia ceased being a British Dominion in 1941, and the last legal ties were severed with Britain in 1986. But Australia still has the British monarch’s representative, the Governor-General, giving royal assent (approval) to all federal laws.
The Australian Constitution can be changed only by a referendum and then only if the majority of voters and the majority of states vote for the proposed change to the Constitution.

One of the important challenges for Australians in the future is whether our country will become a republic, with possibly a new constitution, flag and bill of rights.

**SOURCE 5** Federal government and state governments in Australia today, as described under the Constitution

### FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
- Governor-General
- House of Representatives
- Senate
- High Court
- Federal Courts
- Family Court of Australia

### STATE AND TERRITORY GOVERNMENTS
- Governor
- Legislative Assembly (House of Assembly in SA and Tas.)
- Legislative Council (neither Qld nor the ACT have an upper house)
- Supreme Courts
- County or District Courts
- Magistrates’ Courts
- Special courts
- Tribunals

**State responsibilities include:**
- Health (hospitals)
- Police services
- Tourism
- Housing
- State roads
- Education (primary and secondary schools)
- Aboriginal welfare
- Environment protection

**Federal responsibilities include:**
- Employment
- Trade
- Defence
- Airports
- Immigration
- Pensions
- Taxation
- Shipping
- Aboriginal welfare
- Foreign affairs
- Health (Medicare)
- Education (universities, colleges, grants to schools)

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**5.12.3 Activities**

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**
1. Identify three important responsibilities of state governments.
2. Identify three important responsibilities of the federal government.

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**
3. Examine SOURCES 2, 3 and 4. Explain what each source reveals about how Australians thought of themselves.

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**5.12 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER**

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**
1. Compile a scrapbook of sources about how Australians celebrated the achievement of federation. For each source, identify what it reveals about Australians’ attitudes and values and explain why you have chosen it. Then answer the question, ‘What does the celebration of federation tell us about Australia in 1901?’ Use the sources in your answer.

**ANALYSING CAUSE AND EFFECT**
2. Examine the ‘Countdown to federation’ and identify three of the most important events in the move towards federation. Write two or three sentences for each event that explain why you chose it.
3. Locate some other sources and accounts related to federation. How important were ideals of unity and progress? Use evidence to support your point of view.

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**Topic 5** Australia (1750–1918): From colonies to nationhood 211
5.13 The early Commonwealth

5.13.1 Working-class living conditions

The naming of the Australian nation as a ‘Commonwealth’ was initially controversial. Many Australians did not understand what it really meant but the writers of the Constitution certainly did. It evoked the ideal of working for the common good. All citizens and their governments would be committed to the pursuit of a kinder, fairer and safer Australia. It would be a nation free of racial or religious conflict; it would be a nation that resolved disputes between workers and their employers fairly and justly; it would be an innovative and optimistic nation. These ideals can be seen in the actions of the early Commonwealth.

One of the highest priorities for the new nation was improving the living and working conditions of most Australians. In 1901 Australia’s population of less than 4 million was mostly concentrated in New South Wales and Victoria. Thirty-six per cent of the New South Wales population lived in Sydney and forty-one per cent of Victoria’s population lived in Melbourne. In working-class inner-city suburbs many people lived in rows of cramped slums near factories. Semi-skilled and unskilled workers rarely earned enough to buy houses, so most paid rent all their lives for cramped dwellings that were overcrowded and unhealthy. In contrast, wealthier suburbs had large houses with spacious grounds. There was an equally wide disparity in living standards in the bush. People talked about Australia as a ‘working man’s paradise’ but for many the harsh realities of their lives were a long way from the Garden of Eden.


Forty cramped terraces ranged on each side . . . their balconies overhanging the absurdly narrow footpaths . . . Each day began with the sloshing of the houses’ sills with buckets of water. This cleansed away the sooty factory outfall . . . A good meal could be made with the addition of waste vegetables — outsize cabbage leaves and such, salvaged from the markets and brought home in billy-carts . . .

The shopkeepers adjusted to the sale of commodities in the smallest amounts. Deftly-folded paper cones held the [small] weightings of sugar, salt, flour, rice, sago and the quarter-pound package of tea, butter, cheese and cold meats comprising one meal at a time . . .

At the end of the day a sickly street lamp lit the stage for each night’s unpredictable drama. Invariably, arranged fights took place in the lanes.

SOURCE 2 Slum housing in Gloucester Street, Sydney, in 1900
Despite such inequalities, skilled workers enjoyed better pay and conditions than workers in Britain, Europe or America. Many less skilled employees worked long hours for low pay but Australia led the world in working conditions, industrial relations and social welfare.

5.13.1 Activities

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. What is the meaning of the term ‘Commonwealth’?

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**

2. Identify three details from **SOURCE 1** that could be used to demonstrate the hardships experienced by some Australians.
3. Explain how **SOURCE 2** supports **SOURCE 1**.

5.13.2 A safer, kinder and fairer Australia?

Reforms were possible because this was a time of economic growth. Australia was a big exporter of primary products such as wheat, wool and frozen meat. Manufacturing was a small part of the economy except in Victoria and New South Wales, where the factory workforce grew from 132 000 to 239 000 between 1901 and 1913. This contributed to the growth of cities. But Australian manufacturing could not compete with cheaper imported goods and depended on government tariffs for protection against foreign competition.

**SOURCE 3** Protesting workers in Albert Square, Brisbane, during the 1912 general strike. The strike lasted 18 days. It began when the Tramways Company refused to permit workers to wear their union badges.
After federation, a series of different governments tried to bring about industrial and welfare reforms. Such reforms included:

- the creation of the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration in 1904 to solve disputes between workers and employers
- the establishment in 1907 of the principle of a basic wage or minimum wage, to which any male worker should be entitled (see ‘Did you know?’ below). Australian wages were based on this principle for the next 60 years.
- the introduction of Commonwealth old age and invalid pensions in 1908
- the payment of compensation for federal government employees injured at work (from 1912)
- the Maternity Allowances Act 1912, or ‘Baby Bonus’, which provided a payment roughly equal to two weeks’ pay to a mother on the birth of her child to make sure she could afford proper medical attention.

However, workers still suffered disadvantages and there were many industrial disputes. Rising prices resulted in several big strikes. In some cases the unions won their demands, but the experiences of these years left many workers disillusioned.

**Political parties and reforms**

The ALP was one of the main influences behind these reforms. The two non-Labor parties were the Protectionists and the Free Traders (who changed their name to Anti-Socialists in 1906). The Protectionists provided Australia’s first two prime ministers, Edmund Barton and Andrew Deakin. These parties differed over the issue of free trade versus protection. Until 1908 the Protectionists supported the ALP to achieve social reforms and Labor supported the Protectionists when they wanted to increase tariffs on imported goods. Both Labor and the Protectionists linked protection of Australian manufacturing employers to protection of Australian workers.

This cooperation ended in 1909 when the Anti-Socialists combined with the Protectionists to form the Liberal Party. The new party opposed further social reform. Reforms carried out between 1910 and 1913 were the work of a federal Labor government.

**SOURCE 4** From Albert Metin, a Frenchman who visited Australia at the turn of the century

The Australian workman has become a Gentleman . . . He changes out of his working clothes at the end of the day, he lodges well, he behaves like a member of decent society. If he has to go to a meeting he will be freshly shaved, neatly dressed and conscious of his appearance . . . Many keen Labour men say grace at every meal . . . Everyone can read and libraries are plentiful . . . Cricket, football, sports of all kinds have their exponents . . . I was in Melbourne and Sydney at the time of one test [cricket] series and the crowds waiting for the results were nearly as large as those waiting for the result of a federation referendum which was being decided at the same moment.

**5.13.3 Lifestyles and leisure**

There were enormous differences between the early 1900s and the way we live today. Most working-class people had little time or money for recreation, and there were few labour-saving devices for housework. The main recreation of many men was drinking in hotels.
More respectable forms of entertainment included family picnics, short train and ferry trips, dancing, sing-songs around the piano and sporting events, especially cricket and football.

One recreational pursuit that became increasingly popular in the new century was going to the beach. As nineteenth-century Australians looked towards the bush and its characters for inspiration, the ‘modern’ citizen turned to the sand and the surf. While ‘surf-bathing’ was initially seen as a loutish or vulgar pastime, in the early 1900s the beach became the place where city dwellers might be endowed with life, health and vigour. In 1907 one Sydney paper described bathers at Bondi Beach as ‘decidedly handsome, Roman centurions’. The beach also represented a democratic recreation, free and open to all; a kind of sandy egalitarianism.

Some technological changes were also starting to affect Australians’ lives. People with enough money could send telegrams, have gas lights in their homes, travel by steamship and even ride in motor cars. Air travel was only just beginning, with experiments in 1903. The film industry was also in its infancy but the world’s first feature film, *The Story of the Kelly Gang*, was made in Australia in 1906. Another popular pursuit had begun.
5.13.3 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Describe how leisure activities were changing for Australians in the 1900s.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

2. Examine Sources 5 and 6. Identify at least one element in each source that reveals that more Australians were able to enjoy an increasing number of leisure activities in the early 1900s.

5.13.4 Federal laws and white Australia

One of the first laws passed by the federal government was the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901. It was designed to regulate non-European migrants from coming to Australia. Under this law, anyone the government wanted to keep out could be given a dictation test in any language. No matter how many languages an intending migrant knew, officials could always give the test in another language the person did not know. Non-Europeans continued to be admitted to Australia but the Act gave the government important powers to restrict number or refuse individuals.

The Pacific Island Labourers Act was also passed in 1901. It allowed the Commonwealth Government to deport Pacific Islanders. Only those who had lived in Australia since 1879 and those born in Australia were allowed to stay. About 10,000 Islanders were living in Australia in 1901. At the end of 1909 only 1,654 had been granted permission to remain, though the actual number still in Australia was nearly 2,500.

Fear of Asia

Most Australians feared Asia’s vast population and closeness to Australia. Australia’s small numbers and isolation from its British ‘motherland’ fuelled these fears. World events such as the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05 added to these fears. During this conflict Japan defeated Russia. To many white Australians this defeat of a white nation by Asians was unthinkable, even though Japan was Britain’s ally. Some wondered whether Britain could be trusted, but they also felt they needed Britain’s protection.

5.13.4 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Identify the powers of the Immigration Restriction Act 1901 and the Pacific Island Labourers Act 1901.

2. Explain why Japan’s victory over Russia was significant for Australians.

5.13 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

1. Using all of the sources in this section, examine the extent that Australian society was changing at this time. Locate four more sources or accounts from the period and comment on whether they contest or corroborate your point of view.

ANALYSING CAUSE AND EFFECT

2. Evaluate the extent that the new Commonwealth government was responsible for any changes to Australian society. Try to identify other factors that caused change.

DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

3. Was Australia really a ‘working man’s paradise’ by 1914? Give reasons to support your point of view.
5.14 Review

This final subtopic provides a range of opportunities for you to review and respond through:

i. revising and checking your historical knowledge
ii. demonstrating your ability to apply historical concepts and skills.

Go to your learnON course to access:

• A key chronology of events relevant to the topic
• A summary of the key knowledge presented in the topic
• A ‘Big Questions’ activity
• A multiple choice topic test
• Short answer or extended writing responses

Interactivity
Australia: From colonies to nationhood timeline
Use this interactivity to create a visual timeline of key events in Australia in the nineteenth century.