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**DEBATE KIT: THAT  
AUSTRALIAN HISTORY  
UNITES US**

**TEACHING RESOURCE**

**DEBATING**

# DEBATE KIT: THAT AUSTRALIAN HISTORY UNITES US

## TEACHING RESOURCE

### Introduction

Australian history is shaped by diverse events and cultures. From the ancient Indigenous history, which spans over 60,000 years, to the impact of colonisation in 1788, events of the past can be viewed from more than one perspective. While colonisation led to the development of modern Australia, it also caused deep harm to First Nations peoples. The World Wars brought Australians together through shared sacrifice, but Australia's involvement in other international conflicts has been met with protest and opposition. And while migration has shaped the country into a vibrant, multicultural nation, many new Australians have struggled to claim their place in society due to racism and exclusion.

Those who believe that Australian history unites us may draw on expressions of shared identity and experiences that have emerged in the face of challenges to Australia and its people. On the other side of the argument, some suggest that a unified view of Australian history can only be achieved when some voices and experiences are left out or given no prominence in the national narrative.

*To help develop debate topics, this kit provides key points and website references to assist as starting points for research and planning. This kit is to accompany the 'Debate Guide' available at [seriouslysocial.org.au](https://seriouslysocial.org.au).*

## Example arguments

### Debate topic: That Australian history unites us

#### Affirmative arguments

- There is room for all perspectives in the process of recording historical events. Including as many perspectives as possible can allow for a more unifying approach to historical narrative that reflects Australia's constantly changing society.
- Australia has a history of facing and overcoming difficulties, such as the Great Depression, World Wars, and natural disasters. These events show the resilience and solidarity of Australians. Events like these demonstrate that Australia is united across history and that adversity brings people together in times of crisis.
- Australian history is filled with stories of immigration and multiculturalism. Over time, Australia has welcomed people from around the world, and these shared histories of migration help unite the population through the idea of a "fair go" for everyone.

#### Negative arguments

- People will have different perspectives about historical events due to their background, prior knowledge, attitudes and many other factors. Agreement on history as unifying or otherwise will be difficult to reach because of this.
- Australian history has been taught with a bias, focusing more on the achievements of European settlers while downplaying or ignoring other parts of history, such as Indigenous cultures and events like the Stolen Generations. This selective approach creates history as a source of conflict rather than unity.
- The colonisation of Australia led to the displacement and suffering of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The ongoing impact of this history, including debates around reconciliation and recognition, shows that history can be a source of division rather than unity.

## Web links

Topic	Web link
The Conversation News article <i>The national history curriculum should not be used and abused as an election issue</i>	<a href="https://bit.ly/4fWz9Qi">bit.ly/4fWz9Qi</a>
National Museum Australia Interactive timeline <i>Defining moments in Australian history</i>	<a href="https://bit.ly/4f382Sm">bit.ly/4f382Sm</a>
The Guardian Editorial <i>Change the date? Let's change the history curriculum first to address a widespread ignorance of Australia's history</i>	<a href="https://bit.ly/3ViVtLF">bit.ly/3ViVtLF</a>
Insider Guides <i>A Brief Guide to the History of Australia</i>	<a href="https://bit.ly/3Ze8x66">bit.ly/3Ze8x66</a>
BTN News Video <i>Waves of Australian Migration</i>	<a href="https://bit.ly/3VodlVg">bit.ly/3VodlVg</a>
National Museum of Australia <i>Defining Moments: Australian history</i>	<a href="https://bit.ly/4iuY2Eq">bit.ly/4iuY2Eq</a>
ABC News Survey results explainer <i>Australia Talks Survey: What makes Australians...Australian?</i>	<a href="https://bit.ly/3OGfjg6">bit.ly/3OGfjg6</a>
ABC News in-depth Retro Focus Historical vox pop <i>Should refugees come to Australia? (1979)</i>	<a href="https://bit.ly/41iQePR">bit.ly/41iQePR</a>

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<p>ABC News in-depth Retro Focus                      Historical vox pop                      Should foreigners be allowed to live in Australia? (1985)</p>	<p><a href="https://bit.ly/3ZllpGj">bit.ly/3ZllpGj</a></p>
<p>Fierce Girls Podcast                      Alma Mary Wang – the girl who spoke up for Chinese people in Australia</p>	<p><a href="https://bit.ly/3ZCwiGv">bit.ly/3ZCwiGv</a></p>
<p>Fierce Girls Podcast                      NAIDOC – Daisy Bindi: the girl who fought for more</p>	<p><a href="https://bit.ly/3OBKkSi">bit.ly/3OBKkSi</a></p>
<p>Fierce Girls Podcast                      Fanny Finch – the girl who voted</p>	<p><a href="https://bit.ly/4eYMsyf">bit.ly/4eYMsyf</a></p>
<p>Australian National Museum                      1970: Moratoriums to protest Australian involvement in Vietnam War</p>	<p><a href="https://bit.ly/4icKFIR">bit.ly/4icKFIR</a></p>
<p>The Guardian                      Commentary                      The absurd 26 January debate overlooks that many on both sides want the same thing: a day of unity</p>	<p><a href="https://bit.ly/41djveP">bit.ly/41djveP</a></p>
<p>Monash University                      Video Explainer                      The Australian Identity Debate – A Different Lens</p>	<p><a href="https://bit.ly/3Zi3AcC">bit.ly/3Zi3AcC</a></p>
<p>Monash University                      Opinion article                      Invasion or reconciliation: What matters in the Australian curriculum?</p>	<p><a href="https://bit.ly/41guJPw">bit.ly/41guJPw</a></p>



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