



# Reflection teaching resource for F–10 students (Learning 7–8)

This resource was created to educate students about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history through the website [reflection.servicesaustralia.gov.au](https://reflection.servicesaustralia.gov.au)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are advised the website contains names, images and words of people who have passed away.

## What is Reflection?

*Reflection: Experiences of First Nations people with social security and services from 1947 to 1997 (Reflection)* is a collection of over 100 primary sources (artefacts). It shows how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people fought to get social security payments over a 50-year period.

The collection includes a range of images, videos, letters and government documents. It shows the government decisions and public advocacy that helped change our society.

## Historical language and views

Some artefacts on the website use harmful language and express offensive views. Material from the past can continue to be harmful in the present. We ask viewers of this site to proceed with caution.

The language and views of people in positions of power influenced their treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The information provided about each artefact helps to explain these sources in historical context.

## What is social security?

In Australia social security is a system supporting individuals and families who are facing financial difficulties. It's also known as social services or welfare. The Australian Government manages and funds social security through the program, Centrelink.

Social security is crucial in providing a safety net for those experiencing financial hardship. It helps ensure all Australians have essential supports to meet their basic needs and improve their quality of life.

## Who gets social security payments?

Social security payments are given to people in need. People who may get payments include:

- families
- older Australians
- people with disability
- carers
- youth and students
- job seekers
- those affected by a crisis.

## History of social services

*Reflection* explores how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people advocated to get social security payments in the past. For more than half of the 20th century, most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were excluded by law from getting social security payments.

Changes to the *Social Services Act* granted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people eligibility for some payments in 1959. The government changed the *Social Services Act* again in 1966, removing race-based exclusions in law. In this way, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were technically granted equal rights to government payments.

However many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people encountered difficulties when trying to get payments. Older people often had no official records of their birth and struggled to prove their age to show they were eligible for Age Pension.

Governments didn't tell these communities what payments they were eligible for or help them if they didn't understand English. In some communities, recipients didn't get all of their payments. Non-Indigenous managers would control pension funds and distribute smaller amounts as 'pocket money'. State government authorities saw Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's federal government payments as a source of income and continued to try to control this money.

Sources in the collection show Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people didn't have equal access to government payments for a long time. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people also faced exclusion from education and from getting equal wages for their work. These exclusions were interconnected.

The collection also sheds light on how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people advocated for themselves, their families and their communities to get payments. It shows how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people took on leadership roles and pushed government services to proactively meet the needs of diverse communities.

## Government transitions

The government agency managing social security changed its name twice over the 50-year span of the collection. The names you'll see in the collection are:

- Department of Social Services (in use from 1939 to 1972)
- Department of Social Security (in use from 1972 to 1998).

Today Services Australia is the agency managing service delivery, including Centrelink and Medicare. The present-day Department of Social Services manages social policies, programs and research.

## Public perceptions of social security

In the past there were strong ideas about who was 'deserving' of help and who wasn't. Some Australians continue to hold negative opinions about people who get social security payments.

A study by Schofield and Butterworth (2015) found that a minority of the population held negative views towards the social security system. However many held much stronger negative attitudes towards welfare recipients themselves. Some respondents believe that welfare recipients need 'to have greater obligations to look for work ... that [they] could find jobs if they really wanted to ... [and] that welfare benefits make people lazy and dependent'.

Some further negative stereotypes of welfare recipients include that they're 'dole-bludgers' and 'do not contribute to society'. These views can add to stigma which can be harmful to people who get payments. Media discourse can also exacerbate negative views, focusing on the few who aren't eligible or appear to misuse social security.

Most recipients are in need of the system that's in place to help them.

## Social security after the pandemic

Recent estimates suggest of Australians aged 15 and over getting a government pension or allowance as their main source of income, 46% identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Venn, Biddle and Sanders 2020).

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of people accessing social welfare payments increased.

In June 2021, of Australia's working age population (people aged 15–64), 6.5% were getting unemployment payments, 4.0% were getting disability and sickness payments and around 3.5% were getting a payment for their caring and/or parenting responsibilities (Parliament of Australia 2022).

The experience of COVID-19 and increase in people getting payments may support a deeper understanding of the value of social security and potentially foster empathy towards welfare recipients. Learning about the history of social security and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advocacy for government services may also strengthen this understanding.

## Resources

### Other teaching tools

Before using sources from the collection it's important for educators to ensure they're prepared to teach histories and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in a culturally safe way.

Educators are recommended to review relevant guidelines, such as the SBS Learn resource '[Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocols Guide – for Teachers](#)', written by Shiralee Lawson and Jarin Baigent with Aunty Norma Ingram.

There are other online educational resources which can be used alongside *Reflection*. Some include:

- The National Museum of Australia hosts Digital Classroom which covers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories at different year levels. For more information, head to their website [here](#).
- The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) has a range of curriculum resources to help educate students about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. For more information, see their list of resources available [here](#).
- The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) has a wide range of online educational resources and videos related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and cultures available [here](#).

## References

Australia Bureau of Statistics (2016) *4714.0 – National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2014–15*, Australian Government, accessed 4 July 2023.

Parliament of Australia (2022) '[Social security and family assistance](#)', *Parliamentary Library Briefing Book: Key Issues for the 47th Parliament*, Australian Government, accessed 4 July 2023.

Schofield TP and Butterworth P (2015) *Patterns of Welfare Attitudes in the Australian Population*, PLOS ONE 10(11): e0142792, doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0142792, accessed 4 July 2023.

Venn D, Biddle N and Sanders W (2020) '[Trends in social security receipt among Indigenous Australians: Evidence from household surveys 1994–2015](#)', Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Australian National University, accessed 4 July 2023.

# Learning outcomes

## Curriculum mapping

The Australian Curriculum sets the national standard for improving learning outcomes for young people.

The curriculum has identified 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures' as one of 3 cross-curriculum priorities. There are 2 distinct needs in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students can see themselves, their identities and their cultures reflected in the curriculum of each of the learning areas, can fully participate in the curriculum and can build their self-esteem.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority is designed for all students to engage in reconciliation, respect and recognition of the world's oldest continuous living cultures.

In studying *Reflection*, students will gain some essential knowledge, understanding and skills outlined as part of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority.

## State-level learning

### New South Wales

The NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) incorporates learning about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history as part of its Human Society and its Environment (HSIE) learning areas, in the History K–10 and 7–10 Aboriginal Studies syllabi.

Studying *Reflection* will support students in achieving the following outcomes:

Stage 4 outcomes	A student:
HT4–2	Describes major periods of historical time and sequences events, people and societies from the past.
HT4–4	Describes and explains the causes and effects of events and developments of past societies over time.
AST4–6	Defines the concepts of self-determination and autonomy in relation to Aboriginal Peoples.

### Queensland

The Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) incorporates learning about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history as part of its P–10 Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS) and 7–10 History courses.

Studying *Reflection* will support students in achieving the following outcomes:

Years 7 and 8	Skills
AC9HH7S02, AC9HH8S02	Locate and identify primary and secondary sources to use in historical inquiry.
AC9HH7S03, AC9HH8S03	Identify the origin, content, context and purpose of primary and secondary sources.
AC9HH7S08, AC9HH8S08	Create descriptions, explanations and historical arguments, using historical knowledge, concepts and terms that reference evidence from sources.

Year 7	Knowledge and understanding
<b>AC9HH7K06</b>	The social organisation and cultural practices of early First Nations Australians, and their continuity and change over time.
<b>AC9HH10K09</b>	The causes of First Nations Australians' campaigns for rights and freedoms before 1965, such as discriminatory legislation and policies, the 1938 Day of Mourning and the Stolen Generations.
<b>AC9HH10K10</b>	The contributions of significant individuals and groups in the campaign for the recognition of the rights of First Nations Australians and the extent to which they brought change to Australian society.
<b>AC9HH10K11</b>	The significant events and methods in the movement for the civil rights of First Nations Australians and the extent to which they contributed to change.

## Victoria

The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) incorporates learning about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history as part of its History course.

Studying *Reflection* will support students in achieving the following outcomes:

Levels 7–8	Historical knowledge
<b>Historical sources as evidence</b>	Analyse the different perspectives of people in the past.
<b>Continuity and change</b>	Identify and explain patterns of continuity and change in society to the way of life.
<b>Historical significance</b>	Evaluate the role and achievement of a significant individual, development and/or cultural achievement that led to progress.

## Western Australia

The School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA) incorporates learning about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history as part of its Humanities and Social Sciences course.

Studying *Reflection* will support students in achieving the following outcomes:

Year 7	Knowledge and understanding
<b>ACDSEH029</b>	The range of sources can be used in an historical investigation, including archaeological and written sources.
Year 7 and 8	Communicating and reflecting
<b>WAHASS77</b>	Develop texts, particularly descriptions and explanations, using appropriate subject-specific terminology and concepts that use evidence to support findings, conclusions and/or arguments, from a range of sources.



## Educator guidelines

*Reflection* explores difficult parts of Australian history, with stories detailing discrimination against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Before you share the *Reflection* website with your students, make sure they're ready to explore the content. Please take care to ensure your lessons use appropriate and respectful language.

Check in with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Be mindful that some of your students will have family members getting social services payments.

<b>Teacher check-in</b>	Reflect on your own personal understandings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Assess your pre-existing biases and privileges.
<b>Preparation of the material</b>	Review the content before sharing it with your students. Some students may become distressed or the content may be re-traumatising.
<b>Understanding protocols</b>	There are several protocols you must abide by when observing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and practices. Please familiarise and educate your students about the importance.
<b>Country &amp; Kinship</b>	Review how the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander concepts of Country and Kinship work. Make sure you can explain these concepts to your students.
<b>Relationships</b>	We recommend you build relationships with your local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities. Offer them the opportunity to share their history and cultures to your students.
<b>Student wellbeing</b>	Some of the content included in <i>Reflection</i> is distressing. Debrief with your students before they leave your classroom. They may need help processing any emotions and reactions.
<b>Two-way learning</b>	Use a two-way learning process to connect with your Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Be respectful and recognise their knowledge of their cultures and traditions.
<b>Language and terminologies</b>	<i>Reflection</i> features many harmful and outdated terms to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. You must teach your students what language is and isn't acceptable.

## Example worksheets

Included from pages 7–22 are example worksheets based on each decade in *Reflection*.

We recommend you refer to your syllabus and choose questions or activities that suit the learning capabilities of your students. You may want to explore the website with your class and workshop a couple of questions.

An answer rubric is included at the end of this document from pages 23–33.

## 1940s and earlier

### Key information

The *Social Services Consolidation Act 1947* shifted social services from being a state responsibility to being a federal responsibility. It also consolidated government payments under one Act.

However the Act explicitly excluded most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from payments.

These artefacts show Aboriginal activists challenging racial discrimination set out in law.

#### 1. Look at the [Social Services Consolidation Act 1947 article](#).

a. How did this Act change who managed and administered social services in Australia?

b. What did Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to do to access social services under this Act?

c. If they did the extra steps required of them, did Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the same access to social services as other Australians? Why or why not?

2. Look at the sources in the timeline under '[1940s and earlier](#)'.

- a. Name 3 people who campaigned for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social services rights in the 1940s.

- b. What did each person campaign for and what was one reason each person provided for their argument?

3. Look at the 1938 newsletter *[The Australian Abo Call](#)* by Jack Patten. Download either the [artefact](#) or [plain text](#) version and read 'Our ten points'.

- a. Consider the full statement. Try to summarise these 10 points under keywords.  
b. Go through the rest of the collection and see if you can identify at least 3 things related to your keywords that changed over time.



## 1950s

### Key information

In the 1950s the states tightly controlled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's lives. Many people couldn't access government payments and those who could were often paid indirectly.

The law changed in 1959 however, accessing payments remained challenging and the *Social Services Act* continued to discriminate based on race.

These artefacts show the impacts of living with the *Social Services Consolidation Act* of 1947 and the work of activists campaigning for wider eligibility.

1. Read the **entry** on Torres Strait Islander people's access to Unemployment Benefit.

- a. Where is the Torres Strait and how many islands does it include? You can use information from the **Torres Strait Regional Authority** to help you.

- b. Who has the power to make decisions about Torres Strait Islander people in 1957?

- c. Why was it hard for Torres Strait Islander people to access Unemployment Benefit?

- d. What arguments were made about whether the rules of Torres Strait Islanders were fair?

2. Read the entry about the *Social Services Act 1959*.

a. How did this Act remove discrimination that existed in the **1947 Act**?

b. What are 3 ways that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were still discriminated against in the 1959 Act?

3. There are excerpts from 3 autobiographies included in the '**1950s**'.

a. Who is each autobiography about?

b. Identify a way in which each person (or their families) fought against discrimination in their life.

- c. Select one autobiography and read the artefact excerpt. Write a short reflection piece on how their life was different to yours and your family's today. You could also do some further research online about your chosen author and find out more about their life.

## 1960s

### Key information

The 1960s included landmark moments such as changes made under the **Social Services Act 1966** and the outcome of the 1967 Referendum.

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were now eligible for government payments for the first time. However, eligibility was confusing. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people still had their finances controlled and they were often expected to accept low wages.

These artefacts show activists fighting for fair wages and direct payments amidst a continued government push for assimilation.

1. The **1960s** has many more artefacts than the previous 2 decades. Have a read through the decade and suggest 3 reasons why this might be the case.

2. Artefacts from this decade show continued debates between state and federal government bodies.

- a. Why was it contentious whether state or federal governments should run social services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

- b. When did government responsibility of Aboriginal affairs change?

3. The Federal Council for Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI) was an important activist organisation in the 1950s and 1960s.

a. Look through this decade. Can you identify 3 sources about FCAATSI?

b. Choose one source and write a short explanation of the cause FCAATSI was focused on. What strategy did they use in their activism? Do you think this approach was successful? Why or why not?

4. Payment of Unemployment Benefit was contentious in the 1960s.

a. Look through this decade. Can you find 3 sources about Unemployment Benefit?

- b. What was the point of view of the Department of Social Services about providing Unemployment Benefit to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

- c. How was Unemployment Benefit related to work and equal wages?

5. Consider the **Social Services Act 1966**.

- a. How did this differ from the 1947 and 1959 Acts?

- b. Did this Act remove discrimination against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people? Why or why not?



## 1970s

### Key information

Throughout the 1970s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander activists fought for self-determination for their communities and continued to highlight discrimination in government policies and servicing. As some civil rights had been achieved, the focus of many activists was drawn to land rights.

The government began to introduce targeted programs to meet Aboriginal people's needs, including ABSTUDY, Aboriginal Liaison Officers and the Community Development Employment Program. However access to Unemployment Benefit was contentious.

1. The **1970s** saw the introduction of ABSTUDY.

a. Why was this payment considered important?

b. Find one person who got ABSTUDY. Research them outside of the *Reflection* website and write a paragraph about their life.

2. There are a few examples of research and reports written in the 1970s. Select one example to focus on.

a. Who are the authors and why are they doing their research?

b. How were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people involved in the research?

c. Outline the argument/s the authors make in their report.

3. There are autobiographies and oral histories included in this decade. Choose one to focus on.

a. Where was this person born and what nation do they belong to?

i. Look up their Country. See if you can find out where their Country is on a map in relation to the Country you are on.

- b. What did this person think about social service payments? Was their experience of payments positive, negative or mixed?

- c. After reading or listening to this person's experiences, write a paragraph about why it's valuable for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to tell their stories.

4. Select one source you've looked at already. Read the online content about the source and the original artefact.

- a. Is there anything in the original artefact that isn't covered in the written entry?

- b. How would you have written the entry differently? What information might you have included?

## 1980s

### Key information

In the 1980s the Department of Social Security established new remote offices and expanded the Aboriginal Liaison Officer program. These artefacts include early examples of the department communicating in language and through videos.

In this decade key reports evaluated the effectiveness of services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Researchers found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural practices and family structures remained unaccounted for in policy.

1. Read an entry about a review or report written in the 1980s.

a. What does the report say about social security?

b. Use the **tags** function at the bottom of each page to find another source which talks about the same theme discussed in your report.  
How does each source talk about the selected theme? Are there any similarities or differences? Can you identify any changes over time?

**2. Select a video from the 1980s to review.**

- a. Who is featured in the video? Who is the video intended for? What are the main messages of the video?

- b. Video (VHS) and video players were new technology in the 1980s. What are some advantages of this new technology for the government's communication with staff and people in the community? Refer to your selected video.

## 1990s

### Key information

In the 1990s the Department of Social Security reflected on its history and further researched the effectiveness of its programs. These artefacts show the broad changes happening to social security policy at the time. The government made many changes to social security programs and payments, including replacing Unemployment Benefit with Newstart, setting up the Support Network for Aboriginal Parents Program and establishing Centrelink.

This decade includes artefacts which show how the department communicated using Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led videos and designs.

#### 1. Read the entry about the *Social Security Act 1991*.

a. What was the intention of introducing this new Act?

b. Why do you think the government of the day chose to introduce a new Act, rather than *amend* the Act? What are the benefits of each approach to changing the law? You may wish to look at some information about **bills and laws** from the Parliamentary Education Office to help.

c. This Act instructed the Secretary for the Department of Social Security to be 'responsive to Aboriginality and to cultural and linguistic diversity'. Can you find 2 sources from the **1990s** which are good examples of the department doing this? Why do you think these are good examples?



2. Look at the entry titled 'DSS uses comic to explain a new payment'. Download the artefact and read the comic.

a. Why would a government department use a comic? Who do you think they are trying to communicate with?

b. Provide a brief description of the payment described in the comic, who it is for and how people should apply. Is there any information you think is missing?

c. Compare and contrast the comic from 1991 with the 'Commonwealth Social Services handbook' from 1956. What are 3 things you can see changed over time by looking at these sources together?

## Reflection

### Reflecting on the collection

Write a short reflection on how important equity and fair access to government services is. Your reflection should be at least 3 paragraphs. Remember to use culturally sensitive language.

To guide your response consider what kind of valuable services government provides to people. You might wish to focus on specific artefacts from the collection. You could compare events from some of the decades to your present-day experiences. You might also make some suggestions about how government services could better help people in Australia in the future.

# Answer rubric

## 1940s and earlier

### 1. Look at the [Social Services Consolidation Act 1947 article](#)

- a. How did this Act change who managed and administered social services in Australia?

*Students will need to identify that prior to the Consolidation Act, many payments were administered by state governments. More payments were brought under federal government control during the Second World War.*

*The results from a referendum allowed for the government to formally continue control over these payments. The Consolidation Act granted the federal Australian Government the ability to manage the range of social services payments.*

- b. What did Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to do to access social services under this Act?

*Students may include in their answer:*

- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had to seek exemption from state authorities to be eligible for payments.*
- *They had to agree to no longer identify as Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander.*
- *They could not associate with any non-exempt people and must cut ties with family and community*
- *They could not speak in language or engage in cultural practices.*
- *In Victoria, while an exemption system was not used, similar standards set by state officials still applied.*

- c. If they did the extra steps required of them, did Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the same access to social services as other Australians? Why or why not?

*Students will need to identify that even if Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people followed the steps to achieve exemption, they were still unable to access certain payments like Unemployment Benefit or Sickness Benefit. Exemption could be withdrawn at any time.*

*People without exemption may have been able to access payments but these were often controlled, and sometimes withheld, by authorities. Other non-white people were also excluded from access to social services on the basis of race and citizenship. Many white Australians, presuming they could meet eligibility criteria, were able to access payments.*

### 2. Look at the sources in the timeline under ['1940s and earlier'](#).

- a. Name 3 people who campaigned for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social services rights in the 1940s.

*Students may identify activists like Jack Patten, Bill Ferguson, Pearl Gibbs, Shadrach Livingstone James, Robert McKenzie Wanganeen, Harold James Weetra or Alex 'Ned' Ridgeway.*

- b. What did each person campaign for, and what was one reason each person provided for their argument?

*Students may identify a range of campaign purposes, including:*

- *advocating for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' labour and citizenship rights*

- for access to full payments, like Invalid and Old-age Pensions, and Unemployment Benefit, regardless of where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people lived
- for federal government control of Aboriginal affairs
- for federal representation of Aboriginal communities
- for more educational and training opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- for land to be granted to Aboriginal servicemen returning from the war.

3. Look at the 1938 newsletter *The Australian Abo Call* by Jack Patten. Download either the **artefact** or **plain text** version and read 'Our ten points'.

- Consider the full statement. Try to summarise these 10 points under keywords.
- Go through the rest of the collection and see if you can identify at least 3 things related to your keywords that changed over time.

Students may identify keywords for each of the ten points, including:

1. national policy, federal government control/representation
2. dedicated federal ministry in parliament to Aboriginal affairs
3. Aboriginal advisory board, Aboriginal representation
4. equality, advocacy, citizenship, equal opportunity, equal benefit, Old-age Pension, Invalid Pension, land ownership, wages
5. recognising marriage practices, interracial marriage
6. home ownership rights
7. land settlement, land rights
8. rights of nomadic groups
9. access to maternity and hospital treatments, discrimination
10. segregation, reserves, sanctuaries.

Student's responses will vary depending on what else they select from the collection.

## 1950s

1. Read the **entry** on Torres Strait Islander people's access to Unemployment Benefit.

- Where is the Torres Strait and how many islands does it include? You can use information from the **Torres Strait Regional Authority** to help you.

Students must identify that the Torres Strait is located north of Cape York Peninsula, between Australia and New Guinea.

Students must include in their answer that there are over 274 islands in the Torres Strait, as well as the communities on the mainland. They may also identify the 5 main island groups.

- Who has the power to make decisions about Torres Strait Islander people in 1957?

Students must identify the Queensland Government was responsible for Torres Strait Islander people under state-based 'protection' acts.

- Why was it hard for Torres Strait Islander people to access Unemployment Benefit?

Students must identify Torres Strait Islander people weren't mentioned in the Social Services Consolidation Act 1947. Aboriginal people were excluded in the Act. Whether or not Torres Strait Islander people were considered exempt by Queensland government authorities wasn't always clear.

Students may include in their answer:

- Lack of clarity about whether seasonal industry workers were eligible for Unemployment Benefit.

- There was a requirement for proof they had 'taken reasonable steps to obtain work', which was interpreted as leaving home islands where no paid work was available.
- Long distances and no federal government presence meant Queensland authorities held important information about Torres Strait Islander people.

d. What arguments were made about whether the rules of Torres Strait Islanders were fair?

Students must identify some people at the time argued these rules for Torres Strait Islanders were unfair. Arguments were made about distance from government offices and inability to secure work on their home islands.

Students might discuss Queensland Premier Frank Nicklin's arguments about the federal government's 'moral duty' to support Torres Strait Islander men. These lines of argument were about Torres Strait Islander men being more 'deserving' of payments, based on their service to the country during the Second World War, as well as stereotypes about their behaviours and values.

2. Read the entry about the Social Services Act 1959.

a. How did this Act remove discrimination that existed in the **1947 Act**?

Students must identify the discriminatory aspects in the 1947 Act:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people could only get payments if they sought exemption from state-based Acts.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had to deny their Aboriginality and separate themselves from their communities and culture to be considered 'exempt' and eligible for payments.
- Even if they met all the criteria, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people struggled to get certain payments.

Students must then identify how the 1959 Act removed some discriminatory passages:

- The new Act removed passages about requiring exemption for most payments.
- The 1959 Act added terms that excluded people considered to be 'nomadic or primitive' from payments, which continued discrimination against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

b. What are 3 ways that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were still discriminated against in the 1959 Act?

Students may identify the factors including:

- The Act still distinguished eligibility on the basis of race.
- The Act still required Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to assimilate, that is, to not be considered 'nomadic or primitive', in order to get payments.
- The Act didn't make changes to who payments were made to and many people living on stations, reserves and missions did not get their payments in full.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people still encountered many issues with proving eligibility for payments (e.g. proving age for Old-age Pension).

3. There are excerpts from 3 autobiographies included in the **'1950s'**.

a. Who is each autobiography about?

Students must identify each autobiography in their answer:

- My Ngarrindjeri Calling, by Doreen Kartinyeri
- Bittersweet journey, by Ruth Hegarty
- Son of Alyandabu, by Joe McGinness.

- b. Identify a way in which each person (or their families) fought against discrimination in their life.

*Students may identify several ways each individual fought against discrimination. Answers may include:*

- *advocating and lobbying the government to grant access to payments*
- *fighting against stolen wages and payments and for equal wages and better employment conditions*
- *participating in movements to seek equal access to payments.*

- c. Select one autobiography and read the artefact excerpt. Write a short reflection piece on how their life was different to yours and your family's today.
- d. You could also do some further research online about your chosen author and find out more about their life.

*Students will need to identify the differences between their lives and the life experiences outlined in one of the autobiographies. Successful answers will effectively compare and map the change between historical periods, cultures and privileges that existed then and now.*

## 1960s

1. The **1960s** has many more artefacts than the previous 2 decades. Have a read through the decade and suggest 3 reasons why this might be the case.

*Students may identify several reasons for the significant number of artefacts in the 1960s. They may include the following reasons in their answer:*

- *more visible advocacy and activism by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including the 1965 Freedom Rides, in the lead up to the 1967 Referendum and around changes to equal wages entitlements*
- *increased amount of government discussion and debates*
- *more information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's access to payments following the 1959 changes*
- *increased amount of press and media attention and interest from non-Indigenous people*
- *broader political activism and international protest.*

2. Artefacts from this decade show continued debates between state and federal government bodies.

- a. Why was it contentious whether state or federal governments should run social services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

*Students should identify during the 1960s the federal government only managed social services. Before the 1967 Referendum and the change to the Constitution, individual states and territories managed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs. The federal government was not meant to create laws about Aboriginal people.*

*This created tension between governments about how payments would be managed and distributed. Laws across states and territories which affected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were all slightly different. In this decade, the federal government was often making payments to state and territory officials, rather than directly to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.*

- b. When did government responsibility of Aboriginal affairs change?

*Students should identify following the 1967 Referendum result, which resulted in a change to the Constitution, Aboriginal affairs could be a federal responsibility. However, many states retained their powers over Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into the 1970s.*



3. The Federal Council for Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI) was an important activist organisation in the 1950s and 1960s.

- a. Look through this decade. Can you identify 3 sources about FCAATSI?

Students should identify 3 of the following artefacts:

- the FCAA '**A summary of their situation**' leaflet
- the **Yinjilli leaflet**
- **Joe McGinness' report** to the Equal Wages for Aborigines Committee of FCAA
- **Stan Davey's letters** to the Department of Social Services on behalf of FCAATSI.

- b. Choose one source and write a short explanation of the cause FCAATSI was focused on. What strategy did they use in their activism? Do you think this approach was successful? Why or why not?

Students should choose one of the sources listed in the above question and discuss the cause outlined in the artefact's article. Their answers may include:

- publishing information for increased transparency that was previously not available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- publishing information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' rights
- writing to the government on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- campaigning for change against discrimination
- writing reports detailing exclusionary passages in government legislation
- encouraging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to send letters of protest to the government
- publicly calling out the government for discrimination against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- running letter-writing campaigns.

4. Payment of Unemployment Benefit was contentious in the 1960s.

- a. Look through this decade. Can you find 3 sources about Unemployment Benefit?

Students should identify 3 of the following artefacts:

- **1961 Native Welfare Conference**
- the FCAA '**A summary of their situation**' leaflet
- the **Yinjilli leaflet**
- the **Tribune article** about Cabbage Tree Island workers
- **Stan Davey's letters** to the Department of Social Services on behalf of FCAATSI
- **Department of Territories letters** to the Department of Social Services
- **Social Services Act 1966**
- **House of Representatives Hansard** dated 18 May 1967
- Western Australia's Department of Native Welfare **pamphlet on Unemployment and Sickness Benefits**.

- b. What was the point of view of the Department of Social Services about providing Unemployment Benefit to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

Students may identify:

- The government was concerned that Unemployment Benefit was more money than most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were able to earn, because employers were able to legally pay these workers at lower rates than non-Indigenous workers.
- Federal government officials thought this might impact industries which relied on this low-cost labour or impact legal cases about equal wages which related to those industries.

- Officials assumed that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people would not pass the 'work test', especially if they lived in remote areas.
- Department of Social Services officials claimed that they didn't discriminate applicants for Unemployment Benefit on the basis of race.
- An implied fear was that granting the payment would have effects on the behaviours of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

c. How was Unemployment Benefit related to work and equal wages?

Students might identify that Unemployment Benefit was created for workers, presumed to be white male breadwinners, who were out of work for short periods of time. The amount paid was originally calculated to be less than what a male worker could earn doing full-time work. This was at a time in which wages in most industries were set rates.

Additionally, following the Second World War, the federal government had a policy of 'full employment' and tried to ensure all working age white men had a job. However, employers were able to legally pay Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers at lower rates than non-Indigenous workers. This meant that Unemployment Benefit was more money than most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were able to earn through waged labour. State and territory officials often controlled how much Aboriginal people were paid and even withheld part of their wages. This was a common practice in Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory.

5. Consider the **Social Services Act 1966**.

a. How did this differ from the 1947 and 1959 Acts?

In this Act, all references to Aboriginal people were removed. Previous Social Services Acts had clauses which explicitly discriminated against Aboriginal people.

b. Did this Act remove discrimination against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people? Why or why not?

Students should identify the new Act removed all references to Aboriginal people. However, it didn't change government processes or stop government officials from continuing to discriminate against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Practices like making payments indirectly or preventing access to Unemployment Benefit continued.

## 1970s

1. The **1970s** saw the introduction of ABSTUDY.

a. Why was this payment considered important?

Students should identify payments like ABSTUDY and ABSEG were intended to support higher education levels for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This is by providing them with financial resources to be able to complete high school and continue into vocational or tertiary education.

It was an important payment because Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children had been denied the same educational opportunities given to non-Indigenous children for decades. (In general, prior to the 1970s, children being able to continue their education wasn't financially possible for many families once children were considered old enough to work.) During the 1960s only a few Aboriginal people were able to attend university.

- b. Find one person who got ABSTUDY. Research them outside of the *Reflection* website and write a paragraph about their life.

*Students may choose to write about one of the 3 ABSTUDY recipients discussed in the **Kunmanggur article**: Patrick Dodson, John Moriarty or Roslyn Watson.*

## 2. There are a few examples of research and reports written in the 1970s. Select one example to focus on.

- a. Who are the authors and why are they doing their research?

*Students may choose to write about one of the following reports:*

- **Fay Gale and Joan Binnion's report on 'Poverty among Aboriginal families in Adelaide'.**  
*The authors were non-Indigenous University researchers in the social sciences. Their report was part of a broader government inquiry into poverty in Australia.*
- **The Interdepartmental Working Party on Aboriginal Employment's 1976 report.**  
*The authors were non-Indigenous government officials from different departments. The intention of the report was to consider the impacts of social security payments and find ways to encourage education and employment opportunities for Aboriginal people.*
- **Dr Elspeth Young's report to the Department of Social Security and Department of Aboriginal Affairs.**  
*Dr Young was a non-Indigenous University researcher who focused on Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory.*
- **The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs 'Report on the present conditions of Yirrkala People'.**  
*The authors were government officials. They were following on from a 1963 report into impacts of mining on people in the community of Yirrkala in the Northern Territory.*

- b. How are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people involved in the research?

*Students' answers may vary but all 4 reports are concerned Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Most research methods involved interviewing Aboriginal people to gain better understandings about the issue they were researching. However, except for the Working Party's report, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were not part of developing or leading the research.*

- c. Outline the argument the authors make in their report.

*Students' answers may vary. Each of the reports highlighted discrepancies between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander access to basic needs in remote and rural communities (housing, income, work experiences, payments, and government support) in comparison to non-Indigenous people in cities. Students will need to identify the key arguments in their chosen report and provide sufficient evidence.*

## 3. There are autobiographies and oral histories included in this decade. Choose one to focus on.

- a. Where was this person born, and what nation do they belong to?
- i. Look up their Country. See if you can find out where their Country is on a map in relation to the Country you are on.

*Students may choose to write about one of the following people:*

- **Shirley Coleen Smith** AM MBE, known as Mum Shirl. A Wiradjuri woman, Mum Shirl was born in 1924 in Cowra, NSW. She lived in Redfern, NSW, on lands of Gadigal people of the Eora Nation.
- **Joyce Clague** MBE: A Yaegl woman, Joyce Clague was born in 1939 in Maclean, NSW. She spent time in Sydney, on Arrernte Country in Mparntwe/Alice Springs, NT and Yaegl Country.

- **Dr Dawn Casey** PSM: A Tagalaka woman, Dr Dawn Casey was born in 1950 and grew up in Cairns, QLD, on Yindinji Country.
- **Jimmie Barker**: A Muruwari man, Jimmie Barker was born in 1900 on Kunja Country in Cunnamulla, NSW. Barker spent most of his life on Country in Brewarrina, NSW.

- b. What did this person think about social service payments? Was their experience of payments positive, negative, or mixed?

*Students' answers may vary but most experiences of the people above were mixed. They should refer to quotations from the original artefact to back up their claims.*

- c. After reading or listening to this person's experiences, write a paragraph about why it is valuable for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to tell their stories.

*Students' answers may vary. They should be able to identify the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people telling their own stories as a way to share culture and history, to undertake truth-telling and to ensure young First Nations people are connected to their ancestors and Elders.*

4. Select one source you've looked at already. Read the online content about the source and the original artefact.

- a. Is there anything in the original artefact that isn't covered in the written entry?

*Students' answers will vary depending on the selected artefact.*

- b. How would you have written the entry differently? What information might you have included?

*Students' answers will vary depending on the selected artefact.*

## 1980s

1. Read an entry about a review or report written in the **1980s**.

- a. What does the report say about social security?

*Students may select one of the following for their response:*

- The **Miller Report**: the focus of the report was education, training and employment. The authors said many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to rely on social security as there are few opportunities. The authors recommended expanding the CDEP program to give communities greater control over funding and meeting their own needs. The authors also recommended increasing ABSTUDY payments to support people who wanted to study.
- The **Remote Area Task Force** report: the authors looked at how well the Department of Social Security was meeting the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in remote areas. They made lots of recommendations for service delivery and policy to be communicated and implemented better. The authors recommended government policy be more responsive to cultural ways and family structures.
- The **Cass review**: the author looked closely at Unemployment Benefit. They suggested a lot of changes to the payments that were more targeted to a person's circumstances. The report argued there should be better employment opportunities, especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in remote areas. If this was improved, the author suggested there would be less need for social security payments.

- The **NADU report** on marriage practices and social security: this report looked closely at policy and practice for Aboriginal people who were part of polygamous (multiple partner) marriages. The author found the Department of Social Security was aware its rules about payments didn't account for cultural marriage practices and might have meant some Aboriginal women missed out on payments. The author proposed a better approach to payments.

- b. Use the tags function at the bottom of each page to find another source which talks about the same theme discussed in your report.  
How does each source talk about the selected theme? Are there any similarities or differences? Can you identify any changes over time?

Students may select tags including themes, 'ABSTUDY', 'Aboriginal Liaison Officers', 'Family supports', 'Government discussions', 'Reports and research', 'Self-determination', 'Sharing payments' or 'Unemployment Benefit'.

Students' answers will vary based on the selected tags and source. Successful responses will identify changes over time which relate to their chosen theme, using examples from their selected sources.

## 2. Select a video from the 1980s to review.

- a. Who is featured in the video? Who is the video intended for? What are the main messages of the video?

Students' answers may include:

- **'Iti witiwiti'**: features Department of Social Security Aboriginal Liaison Officer (ALO), Andrew Thomas talking about a typical busy day at work. The video could be shown to other people working for social security or to people in the community to explain the ALO role.
- **'A message from the Department'**: features Senator Neville Bonner, a Jagera and Ugarapal man. The video is intended for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who might be applying for payments or already getting them. It gives the audience clear instructions about what to do to keep their payments and encourages them to talk to Aboriginal Liaison Officers.
- **'Aboriginal Liaison Unit in the Top End'**: features 3 Aboriginal Liaison Officers in Darwin, Ben Cubillo, Ray Nagas and Glenn Castillon. The video is intended for Aboriginal audiences, especially those living in remote areas. It gives the audience clear instructions about what to do to keep their payments and encourages them to talk to Aboriginal Liaison Officers.
- **'I remember my first day...'**: features Aboriginal Liaison Officers Joe Flick and Ollie Smith. The video is intended for Department of Social Services staff, especially other Aboriginal Liaison Officers.
- **'Cultural crossroads'**: was presented by Yamatji man Ernie Dingo and includes staff at Department of Social Security offices. The video is intended for Department of Social Services staff, especially those who are unfamiliar with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, cultures and history. It provides clear instructions about how to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in a culturally respectful way.

- b. Video (VHS) and video players were new technology in the 1980s. What are some advantages of this new technology for the government's communication with staff and people in the community? Refer to your selected video.

Students' answers may vary. They should be able to identify how their chosen video communicated messages.

Students may be able to identify that video cassettes (Videotapes, VHS or Video Home System) technology allowed people to record, store and re-watch video content in a more accessible and affordable way. Before VHS was in popular use, it was more difficult to record and share film. The new format had a big impact on people's experiences of TV shows and movies, as people could watch these on demand in their own homes.



Students might note that government departments could use video to record visuals and audio of real staff in offices or different locations. They could share training videos for staff or for people in communities as the format was easier to copy, transport and re-watch. Different film techniques could be used to make engaging content for viewers. Videos could show Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on Country or with community, speaking their own language. As an audio medium, video could be more appropriate for sharing information with people who prefer to speak and listen rather than read and write in English.

## 1990s

1. Read the [entry](#) about the Social Security Act 1991.

a. What was the intention of introducing this new Act?

Students' answers should identify the intention was to simplify the social security system and write the law in plain English, so it would be easier for everyday people to understand. It didn't change any rules around the existing payments and programs.

b. Why do you think the government of the day chose to introduce a new Act, rather than *amend* the Act? What are the benefits of each approach to changing the law? You may wish to look at some information about [bills and laws](#) from the Parliamentary Education Office to help.

Students' answers may include the following points. The Social Services Act 1947 had been in place for over 40 years. It had been amended many times and it became difficult to keep track of all the amendments. The original Act didn't match the needs of people living in the 1990s. The intention was to simplify the structure and language of the Act.

Amending a law might be the best approach when only making small changes. Introducing a new Act is better when an old law needs to be replaced and most of the details need to be changed or updated or when there's no existing law in place.

c. This Act instructed the Secretary for the Department of Social Security to be 'responsive to Aboriginality and to cultural and linguistic diversity'. Can you find 2 sources from the [1990s](#) which are good examples of the department doing this? Why do you think these are good examples?

Students may select any sources, but they should be able to articulate why they think these are good examples. More successful responses might identify sources using Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander languages, sources which feature Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in leadership roles or sources which are examples of strong consultation and collaboration with families and communities.

2. Look at the [entry](#) titled 'DSS uses comic to explain a new payment'. Download the [artefact](#) and read the comic.

a. Why would a government department use a comic? Who do you think they are trying to communicate with?

Students' responses might identify that a comic book format is a fun and appealing way to communicate. It provides information through a story featuring Aboriginal characters. It's colourful, with pictures that help readers follow the story even if they're not confident reading in English. It also uses Pertame language and familiar scenarios.



*The comic is trying to communicate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, especially people who are caring for kids, who might be eligible for the new payment.*

- b. Provide a brief description of the payment described in the comic, who it is for, and how people should apply. Is there any information you think is missing?

*The payment is 'Top up money for Kids' or Family Allowance Supplement. It's meant for families who have parents or carers who are working but might not be earning a lot of income and aren't already getting another government payment.*

*The comic suggests people should apply by asking their Community Agent or Aboriginal Liaison Officer, by asking a trusted family member or friend for help, or by visiting their nearest Department of Social Security office. The comic shows the person applying will need to fill out a written form and give some information about the kids in their care.*

*Students' answers about missing information may vary.*

- c. Compare and contrast the comic from 1991 with the '**Commonwealth Social Services handbook**' from 1956. What are 3 things you can see changed over time by looking at these sources together?

*Students' answers may vary. They should be able to identify:*

- *information about payments was very general in the 1950s*
- *information about payments was more targeted to specific audiences in the 1990s*
- *new targeted family payments had been introduced in the 1990s*
- *people who appeared in the images were from diverse backgrounds, communities and family structures in the 1990s*
- *simpler language was used to explain payments and how to apply in the 1990s*
- *in the 1950s, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were excluded from payments*
- *in the 1990s, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were actively encouraged to apply for payments*
- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were authoring content about and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.*