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1997 HSC

**EXAMINATION
REPORT**

**Aboriginal
Studies**

Acknowledgements

Extract: 'Much trouble has come ...', quoted courtesy
Nganyintja, Pitjantjatjara Council.

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1997 HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION REPORT ABORIGINAL STUDIES

In 1997 458 students sat for the Higher School Certificate examination in Aboriginal Studies and their answers showed that many had carefully examined the issues raised by the course.

While the number of students presenting for the examination was disappointing, schools are to be commended not only for offering the subject to small candidatures, but also for the thorough preparation of students and the evidence of links established between school and community. Such links are beneficial to both and continue long after the written examination is over.

The majority of students possessed a wide knowledge of the course, although many needed to develop specific detailed knowledge. In covering the course all issues–focussed questions need to be examined in the Aspects; in answering comparative questions the study of communities is essential.

Students need to practise examination skills, particularly the allocation of time and space according to marks, and also in developing sustained answers.

Section I Context

Question 1

SOURCE 1: An excerpt from a speech by Hon P J Keating in 1992.

SOURCE 2: A picture showing the Day of Mourning protest in Sydney, 26th January, 1938.

SOURCE 3: Quotation from an article by William Ferguson and Jack Patten.

Use the THREE sources and your own knowledge to answer the following questions.

- (a) **'We brought the diseases.'** List **TWO** diseases that the Europeans brought with them.
- (b) **'We practised discrimination and exclusion.'** Give **TWO** examples of the ways in which Aboriginal people have been excluded from Australian society.
- (c) **Give TWO examples of the justice that Patten and Ferguson were asking for in 1938.**

- (d) List **THREE** examples of Aboriginal protest over the last sixty years.
- (e) List **THREE** policies or acts of legislation which have affected Aboriginal people.
- (f) Explain why 26 January, 1938 was a 'Day of Mourning' for Aboriginal people.
- (g) Discuss whether the major issues central to Aboriginal people have changed since 1938.

This section was well answered by most students, with very few scoring less than half the marks allocated. Students are again reminded to read questions clearly in order to avoid writing too much for few marks since this wastes valuable time.

It is disappointing to see the lack of historical accuracy in some answers, particularly in regard to basic facts concerning the initial proclamation and the invasion of Australia. As a mark of respect the word *Aboriginal* should be written in full with a capital A and not abbreviated to Ab's, Ab'ls, or ATSICS. Words such as Koori, Goori, Murri and the like are acceptable.

On the whole, the better responses showed clear analysis of source material combined with a good knowledge of contact history and the ability to interpret the question. Poorer responses were inaccurate, lacked understanding or even careful reading of the question and showed little knowledge of this area of the course. They were often repetitive and confused the questions.

Too few students referred to the sources, thus indicating a need for more to examine them closely and to refer to them in answering the question.

- (a) This required only the listing of two diseases in order to gain two marks; no explanation was needed. The major diseases mentioned were small-pox, influenza, measles or sexually transmitted diseases (S.T.D.) Some secondary or lifestyle diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and alcohol-related diseases did not necessarily come with the Europeans. It was unnecessary to be specific regarding the sexually transmitted diseases. Other responses such as *cholera*, *typhoid*, *otitis media* and *malaria* were not accepted as there is no real evidence that they came with the Europeans.
- (b) A number of students provided repetitive answers, and many gave examples of *discrimination* rather than *exclusion*. The question required candidates to recognise the key words *ways* and *excluded from Australian society*. Some discussed exclusion from Australian society with exemption certificates and non-specific examples of exclusion from Australian society in general.

In order to gain 2 marks students should have provided two examples of exclusion as well as a brief explanation. Good answers were very specific in their examples, and an interesting response quoted the exclusion of any reference to Aboriginal people from early Australian histories. While the terms *discrimination* and *exclusion* did not require definition, examples given in above average responses strongly implied an understanding of each term.

- (c) The key word *justice* was often not identified well by students, some of whom did not refer to Sources 2 or 3 at all. The majority, however, gained full marks for this question.

In the better answers candidates spoke of citizen rights, recognising equality of treatment by the law and education. Many also spoke of the *Day of Mourning* and related this to *justice* as opposed to *charity*.

In poorer responses students attempted to give literal examples of *justice* and ignored the time-frame, 1938. Generalisations and vague conclusions were common.

- (d) Generally this part was quite well answered.

The better students were able to give specific examples of Aboriginal protest over the last 60 years, giving place, year and purpose of each eg, 1965 Freedom Ride through North-West New South Wales to publicise discrimination against Aboriginal people in the country towns.

Poor responses were vague, and gained no marks, simply saying, for example *Land Rights*, and *Mabo*. Some students also ignored the time frame, viz. *the last sixty years*.

- (e) A number of students were confused by the terms *policies* or *acts of legislation*. The difference between them should be clearly examined and examples of each provided.

The better responses differentiated between them and provided examples of each. Certainly, the more able students, although restricted by the instruction to *list THREE* policies or relevant acts of legislation accurately cited specific titles of legislation or policies, together with dates and brief explanations of each.

The poorest answers either could not cite three *policies* or *acts*, or vaguely referred to events or attitudes that were unacceptable as answers to the question.

- (f) Most students scored at least 2 marks in answering this question. In order to receive 4 marks two reasons should have been given, with a reasonable explanation for each, including an indication that candidates realised that 26 January is Australia Day, a national holiday. Many were able to give reasons for mourning, but did not clearly explain the significance of the date of the protest.

Many students, unfortunately, made mistakes with basic historical facts, saying, for example, *Capt. Cook invaded Australia in 1788*. The correct facts must be emphasised at all times in order to gain full marks.

In the better answers, students were able to discuss clearly the concept of 26th January's being Australia Day and, therefore, providing, for Aborigines, a reason for mourning because of the initial invasion.

In poorer answers candidates ignored Australia Day completely and/or simply listed a few of the things that have happened to Aborigines since invasion, without putting them into the context of mourning and, therefore, indicating their connection with Australia Day

- (g) This question generally differentiated between the more able and the less able students. Mind maps were used by a few to identify the issues and then discuss them. Such answers generally attracted good marks.

The better students discussed two major issues and showed clear understanding of the concept of change with regard to Aboriginal people. Whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement was irrelevant as long as they could justify their statements.

Less able students completely ignored the idea of change and often discussed only one issue or listed a few issues, without providing any real discussion.

Section II Aspects — Regional Studies

Question 2 Cultural Expression

- (a) List **FOUR** prominent Aboriginal people who express their culture through sport or the media.
 - (b) Describe ways that Aboriginal cultural expression contributes to Australian society.
 - (c) Explain how Aboriginal music and dance **OR** art and literature have contributed to Aboriginal cultural expression as a whole. In your answer, name and refer to a specific region.
- (a) Here the lack of knowledge of *national profiles* of prominent Aborigines in the field of sport or the media caused some concern.
- (b) Most candidates answered this part adequately, but many failed to show how Aboriginal cultural expression contributes to Australian society.
- (c) Candidates did not explain how, in music and dance, individuals or groups, from within a specific region, have contributed. They tended to use national profiles instead eg, Yothu Yindi, Sally Morgan etc.

Question 3 Economic Systems

- (a) List **FOUR** weapons or tools used in traditional Aboriginal land management.
 - (b) Describe ways Aboriginal people are achieving economic independence.
 - (c) Explain how European and Aboriginal land management practices have differed. In your answer, name and refer to a specific region.
- (a) This part was answered very well on the whole, in spite of the fact that it attracted many poorer candidates who felt confident of gaining an easy 4 marks.
- (b) Many of the less able candidates could not define economic independence or give any example.

- (c) This question did not really extend candidates or encourage a contemporary analysis. In answering this question the majority stated what *they*, ie the Europeans, did and what *we*, ie the Aborigines, did.

Question 4 Education

- (a) **List FOUR organisations or institutions that provide educational opportunities specifically for Aboriginal people.**
- (b) **Describe the role of the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc in education.**
- (c) **Explain the role of education in informing Australian students about the experiences of Aboriginal people. In your answer, name and refer to a specific region.**
- (a) Programmes rather than institutions were mentioned here, but if the response were linked to a named institution shown to be implementing a programme this was accepted.
- (b) Here candidates showed only vague understanding of the role of the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc, with little appreciation of its structure or of the mechanics of its operation.
- (c) Here many candidates discussed the traditional education of Aborigines without reference to the role of education in informing **all** Australian students about the experiences – educational and otherwise – of Aboriginal people.

Question 5 Law and Politics

- (a) **List FOUR roles of Aboriginal elders in traditional law.**
- (b) **Describe the impact of a key Aboriginal protest.**
- (c) **Explain the effect of government legislation on Aboriginal people this century. In your answer, name and refer to a specific region.**
- (a) The majority of candidates were able to answer this part accurately. The most commonly used examples included the roles of Aboriginal elders in traditional law dealing with the following areas:
- marriage
 - ceremonies and rituals
 - kinship rules
 - punishment
 - passing on knowledge of the Dreaming
 - handing down sacred knowledge

Some candidates, however, repeated one description for more than one area.

- (b) Once again, the majority of candidates were able to name and provide a general description of a key protest. The best answers, however, went further, and discussed the impact of the protest on both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, clearly outlining its effect on both.

In average responses candidates were able to provide a more detailed description of a specific Aboriginal protest as well as an outline of its impact on society.

- (c) Generally this question was answered well. Most candidates showed an understanding of the effects of a broad range of government legislation on Aboriginal people this century. The majority kept within the parameters of the question by discussing the effects of government legislation this century; others, however, discussed nineteenth century legislation, qualifying their statements with an explanation of how the effects were still being felt in this century. This was accepted as a valid point.

The best answers named and outlined specific legislation and provided a detailed, relevant and well-supported explanation of the effect of the government legislation with particular reference to a specific region.

In average responses candidates included specific government legislation as well as a summary of its effects. No reference was made to any specific region.

In below average responses candidates named specific government legislation but failed to include an explanation of its effects upon Aboriginal people in this century; a specific region was rarely mentioned.

Question 6 Land Rights

- (a) List **FOUR** Aboriginal people significant in the Land Rights movement.
- (b) Describe the impact of Native Title legislation on the Land Rights movement.
- (c) Explain the changes that Land Rights legislation has had on **EITHER** the mining **OR** pastoral **OR** tourism industries. In your answer, name and refer to a specific region.
- (a) This part presented difficulties since many candidates named only Aboriginal people from their local region who were playing a significant role in the Land Rights movement. These were frequently not nationally recognised or well-known figures. In their responses students were expected to name people, **not** titles or roles.
- (b) The majority of the candidates showed a sound understanding of the impact of the Native Title legislation on the Land Rights Movement as a result of the decision of the High Court in 1992, as well as that of 1993 as a result of that decision. Many, however, had difficulty in differentiating between case law and legislation. Few candidates successfully linked Native Title legislation to its impact on the Land Rights Movement.

- (c) The parameters of this question were very difficult for most students. In answering it, they were expected to discuss more than one change effected by Land Rights legislation on one of the specified industries, ie, the mining, pastoral or tourist industries.

Many students discussed the effect of Land Rights legislation on Aboriginal communities or discussed the participation of Aboriginal people in the tourist, mining or pastoral industries.

There were very few above average responses in which candidates showed not only a good understanding of Native Title legislation but also the link between it and the Land Rights Movement and the subsequent changes brought about in industries. These candidates made a clear distinction between case law and legislation, and showed that impacts could be either negative or positive.

In most average responses the majority of candidates discussed the Native Title *issue* rather than Native Title *legislation*. No distinction was made between case law and legislation; as a result, however, the Wik decision was very often confused with legislation. Although these candidates were able to provide detailed chronologies of the relevant events, no link was made to the impact or effect of such events.

In below average responses students showed some understanding of the 1993 Native Title Act and the implications of the Wik decision but made no reference to a specific region.

Question 7 Health and Medicine

- (a) **List FOUR Australian plants that are used in bush medicines today.**
- (b) **Describe programs that have targeted an improvement in the health of Aboriginal children.**
- (c) **Explain programs and strategies that have been introduced to address substance abuse in Aboriginal communities. In your answer, name and refer to a specific region.**
- (a) Most students were able to mention three or four Australian plants; many, however, named plants that were not specifically *Australian*. eg, Aloe Vera was commonly, but wrongly, named.
- (b) Most candidates were able to describe programs that have targeted an improvement in the health of Aboriginal children in a specific region and about which they have learned.
- (c) Many candidates had difficulty in differentiating between *programs* and *strategies*. As a result, many failed to answer the question satisfactorily.

The best candidates showed a thorough and up-to-date knowledge of their region. They were able to name and describe two programs dealing with substance abuse in Aboriginal communities and detailed outlines of the strategies currently being implemented in the community they had studied. They were very specific, often naming the rehabilitation centres and individuals involved in the program.

In average responses students provided a general description of programs but failed to link these to improvement in the health of Aboriginal children or to strategies for dealing with substance abuse.

Below average responses usually consisted of a brief list of the major Aboriginal health issues and some national schemes for dealing with them but did not refer to specific communities or regions studied. Such responses did not name the programs or distinguish between *programs* and *strategies*. In these responses some students confused the term *abuse* with other forms such as *violence* and *child sexual abuse*.

Section III Aspects — Comparative Studies

EITHER

Question 8

Nganyinytja, an elder of the Pitjantjatjara Tribe, is quoted as saying:

Much trouble has come from people forgetting the land, the spirit. Many people are sick and have lost their spirit. The white government has cut their culture; we grieve for them. But we can learn and make our spirit strong

With reference to the quotation, compare how indigenous people are reaffirming their heritage and identity. In your answer, refer to one of your Australian regional studies and your international study.

Some candidates wrote on two Aboriginal communities, others on international communities and still others on either one Aboriginal or one overseas community. The question tended to elicit responses which either:

- discussed only the quotation and not the question
- did not address the *affirmation* of heritage and identity
- tended to be *past* and *not present* in orientation.

On the whole the question was handled well, with the real discriminator being how well the *reaffirming* of heritage and identity was handled.

Students are advised to practise using quotations in future as stimulus material and as *springboards* for their comparative analysis.

It was pleasing to see both a range and depth of discussion being achieved. Some candidates, however, still used generic groups, for example, the Maoris or the Great Plains Indians. Students are reminded to provide community-specific information in their responses, as well as sustained argument related directly to the question.

This question was handled in various levels, from those which referred to specific communities with sustained links between the quotation and the question, to those that dealt with the question in a very broad and superficial way.

In the very best responses candidates showed a comprehensive understanding of the question, including the relationship between the quotation and the question. They were able to focus on the question, referring to two specific regions and quoting wide-ranging regional-specific and contemporaneous examples. These responses were not only balanced in their comparative treatment but also detailed and well researched. In them candidates utilised the main issues/ideas from the quotation, relating them to the *reaffirming* of heritage and identity in a manner that was both analytical and integrated.

In above average responses candidates showed a good understanding of the question and were able to relate this to the quotation, either directly or indirectly. These candidates focused on the question throughout their responses, with only slight lapses. They referred to two particular regions and gave specific wide-ranging examples, although some of these tended to be generic rather than regional/community orientated. Although responses at this level were, for the most part, comparative and detailed, they failed to balance the two regions evenly. They tended to be contemporary yet, in some areas, applied only to the past. Candidates were able to outline most of the main issues by referring to the quotation, yet their treatment of the reaffirmation of heritage and identity by indigenous people tended to be descriptive rather than analytical.

In average responses candidates showed only a slight understanding of the question and dealt with the quotation in very general terms, while attempting to relate it to the question. These candidates referred to two regions, although reference to one of these tended to be very vague terms, for example, the Great Plains Indians. Their examples tended to be grouped according to the main areas of the course: education, health, law. Although these tended, for the most part, to be comparative, they lacked detail and balance - that is, they tended to make sweeping statements and concentrated on one region. At this level the responses also tended to focus more on the past than on the present.

In below average responses most candidates misunderstood the question and made no reference to the quotation. They referred to two generic groups or, in some cases, compared two Aboriginal or two overseas regions. In one case a candidate actually referred to three overseas regions. Such candidates were unable to provide specific regional examples or used examples which related to the past and included little or no areas of comparison. Their responses lacked a comparative balance and were generally too short.

OR

Question 9

Answer parts (a), (b), and (c).

- (a) What is 'colonialism'?
- (b) Explain how colonialism has impacted on TWO communities, In your answer, you must refer to one of your Australian regional studies and your international study.
- (c) Discuss how these TWO communities have responded to their experiences of colonialism, racism, and prejudice to maintain their cultural heritage. In your answer, you must refer to one of your Australian regional studies and your international study.

This question which comprised three distinct components, with clear divisions and requirements between them, was not as popular as the previous unstructured question. Answers were generally more detailed and comprehensive than those to Question 8.

- (a) This was handled reasonably well, yet there was a general misunderstanding of the concept of colonialism and its definition in relation to this course.
- (b) Here most students discussed what has happened rather than focusing on impact; that is, their responses often tended to be a general, chronological discussion of events rather than a specific discussion of their impact on the community. The best responses linked colonialism to specific impacts.
- (c) This part appeared to ask for specific community responses while directing candidates to refer to their Australian regional studies; students, however, failed to focus on the course theme of maintaining cultural heritage.

As in Question 8, some candidates did not refer to two communities or, if they did so, failed to refer to an overseas study. It is recommended that, in their opening sentence, candidates state specifically the two communities they are comparing.

- (a) The very best candidates were able to show here a comprehensive understanding of the notion(s) of process, practice, land and political control; that is, they defined *colonialism* and did not merely deal with the concept of a *colony*.
- (b) In answering here candidates referred to two specific communities, giving wide-ranging examples from each. Responses were balanced and comparative, with a strict focus on impact being maintained throughout.
- (c) Here comprehensive knowledge and understanding of all aspects of the question were shown. Candidates used two specific communities, giving contemporary examples which they discussed in a balanced and detailed fashion. The focus of the response was the maintenance of cultural heritage and candidates were able to link this to the theme of the course. They also located and related broad issues to specific communities in a contemporary context.

The best candidates were able to show:

- (a) A comprehensive understanding of the term *colonialism* as appropriate to the course.
- (b) Here they referred to two specific communities, giving some examples from each. Responses at this level tended to be balanced and, for the most part, centred on impact while including descriptive and/or generalised elements.
- (c) A wide knowledge was displayed, including reference to two specific communities and examples of their responses to their experiences of colonialism and racism and prejudice in trying to maintain their cultural heritage. These tended to be a mixture of both the general and the specific. At this level one community was discussed in more detail than the other. Candidates, however, showed good understanding of cultural heritage, although many responses tended to deal with broad issues.

- (a) In average responses candidates showed some general understanding of the term *colonialism*. Here the focus tended to be on the notion of a *colony* rather than *colonialism*.
- (b) Here, in average responses, candidates referred to two communities, of which one tended to be discussed in very general terms as, in some cases, both were. A few of these generalised examples lacked both a community-specific and a contemporary focus. These responses were not balanced between both the communities, i.e. the Australian regional community and the international community.
- (c) In this part average candidates referred to two communities and the same problem existed as in Part (b). Responses lacked community-specific examples and tended to describe issues without relating them to the question. They lacked both balance and understanding of cultural heritage and maintenance.

In below average responses candidates showed a fundamental misunderstanding of all parts of the question. Their responses dealt with one community only, and failed to answer the question; many at this level also tended to be too brief.

Section IV The Synthesis

Question 10

Discuss the differing Australian points of view towards 'Terra Nullius' since the High Court decision on Native Title.

OR

Question 11

A statement from “Obstacle Race” by Colin Tatz was included here.

Discuss this statement in relation to racism in sport. In your answer, outline how sport at all levels can be used by Aboriginal people to express their political and social views.

OR

Question 12

In 1996, the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation identified ‘Addressing Disadvantage’ as one of the eight key issues of reconciliation. This council stated that there is a need for a greater awareness of the causes of disadvantage that prevent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from achieving fair and proper standards in health, housing, employment, and education.

- (a) **What are the major causes of disadvantage for Aboriginal peoples?**
- (b) **Outline government initiatives that address forms of disadvantage.**
- (c) **With reference to the above statement, discuss the extent to which Aboriginal community control is important in achieving economic and social equality for Aboriginal people.**

In this section, students were required to bring together their broad knowledge and understanding of the main issues of concern for Aboriginal people. They were required to analyse questions, and express their responses clearly and fluently.

This year this section comprised a structured essay.

Students should practise analysing questions; they need to be aware of the pitfalls of over-analysis and, consequently, of presenting over-long, and largely irrelevant, answers.

Again, it was obvious that this part of the paper was either rushed or unfinished. It is important to allocate time according to the marks allocated here; it cannot be stressed too often that this part of the paper need not be done last.

Question 10

This was the least popular question in this section.

In above average answers students obviously realised the time-frame required, understood the term *Terra Nullius*, and, more importantly, the High Court decision on Native Title. In their responses they incorporated aspects of the cartoon given. They understood that there are a wide range of opinions within both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities and that such points of view were not racially based.

In average answers candidates discussed the term *Terra Nullius* and the High Court decision on Native Title, but provided a fairly basic discussion of the differing Australian points of view.

In below average answers, which were too brief, candidates could not discuss both major terms of the question, presented only one point of view.

Question 11

This was the most popular question in this section.

Above average answers were well integrated and, in them, candidates carefully noted the key phrase *sport at all levels* and political and social views of Aboriginal people.

Average students tended to concentrate on a local situation or national players and their responses were mainly anecdotal, quoting political and social incidents.

In below average answers candidates related anecdotes about racism in sport, and failed to relate their responses to the question, except in the most general way.

Question 12

This answer required careful allocation of both space and time.

In above average answers candidates allocated time carefully. They answered (a) and (b) in general terms and related Aboriginal community control in the areas of health, housing, employment and education to the achievement of economic and social equality.

Average answers tended to be competent in parts (a) and (b) but here candidates did not discuss the importance of Aboriginal community control in the areas mentioned in the opening statement.

Below average answers tended to be brief, dealing with the question at only the most superficial level.