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1997 HSC

**EXAMINATION
REPORT**

**General
Studies**

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1997 HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE

EXAMINATION REPORT

GENERAL STUDIES

General Studies raises issues of relevance to candidates and provides them with skills necessary to be responsible, participating citizens. In 1997, a total of 15 700 candidates presented for the examination in General Studies, indicating that this is still a subject which is valued by the students sitting for the Higher School Examination.

It is pleasing to note that a large number of candidates possessed a detailed understanding of the requirements of the General Studies Syllabus in regard to both content and skills. Many wrote convincingly on the three questions, supporting their responses and arguments with a wide range of relevant information.

As usual, the questions on the examination paper were directed towards testing the candidates' achievements of the Outcomes of the Syllabus. Each Syllabus topic was specifically covered by at least one question, but most could be answered by incorporating material gained from study of a number of different topic areas. The questions were structured in such a way as to encourage candidates to apply interdisciplinary perspectives. There was less evidence than in previous years of prepared answers and more indication that candidates were employing a critical and balanced approach to their analysis of complex contemporary issues. This was particularly so in the discussion of immigration and land rights, where the knowledge and balanced arguments used by the majority of candidates in answering these questions were quite impressive.

Question 1

The strength of democracy is that the majority view should prevail. The weakness is that the individual may not be heard. Comment on the place of individual rights in a democracy, with reference to at least TWO of the following:

- **gun control**
- **compulsory vaccination**
- **the right to euthanasia**
- **marijuana legalisation**
- **freedom of speech**
- **capital punishment.**

This question was primarily concerned with Syllabus Topic 10, *Society and the Individual*. It required candidates to consider the place of the rights of the individual in a democracy, with reference to at least two specified current issues.

Candidates were expected:

- to show knowledge of contemporary issues and problems, both national and international,
- to be able to identify key issues confronting the world, and
- to recognise the complexity of current issues in the world.

The majority showed knowledge of at least two of the given issues but appeared to be best informed on the areas of euthanasia and gun control.

Responses in the excellent range were characterised by candidates' ability to consider carefully the place of the individual's rights in a democracy. This was often discussed at some length before any reference was made to specific issues. These responses reflected awareness of the complexity of the issue of individual rights in a democracy, with many arguing the difference between *freedom of speech* and *right to action*. While focusing on the local scene, they also showed the candidates' ability to discuss democracy as a political philosophy and included frequent reference to overseas examples.

Above average responses contained less discussion on the place of individual rights in a democracy. These responses reflected a good knowledge of current issues, but often failed to consider the notion of democracy, choosing, for the most part, to contrast the rights of the individual with those of the majority. Candidates in this range showed some competence in recognising the complexity of the issues under discussion, but frequently the evidence presented represented only one side of the case.

Average responses were coherent but reflected the difficulty some candidates have with approaching the examination from the interdisciplinary perspective that the Syllabus demands. In average responses candidates provided factual detail concerning the issues selected but often this was of little relevance to the focus of the question. Little attention was paid to the concept of individual rights; usually it was mentioned in opening or closing paragraphs, but it was not dealt with in terms of its relevance to democracy. The notion of individual rights was sometimes confused with an egocentric perception of lack of fairness in government control, particularly in the areas of euthanasia and gun control. There was little acknowledgment of the complex nature of democratic processes and institutions such as parliament, committees, political parties, courts and legislative bodies.

Below average responses were poorly structured and relied largely on anecdotal evidence. Very little attention was paid to factual detail in these responses which were frequently quite lengthy.

Question 2

Is the impact of science and technology always good for everyone? Answer this question in relation to at least TWO of the following:

- **military related research**
- **performance enhancement in sports**
- **genetic engineering**
- **vaccine development**
- **information technology.**

This was a popular question, with most candidates writing at length on specific issues. These candidates showed a pleasing knowledge of current events, and their responses were noteworthy for including both a range of examples and sophistication of analysis. In 1997 there was less evidence of prepared answers on the topic of *Science and Technology* and the majority of candidates focused on the specified areas. Most candidates had something relevant to write about the issues involved and referred to a considerable range of examples from contemporary society.

This question related to Topic 1 of the Syllabus, ie, *Science, Technology and Society*, with elements of Topics 4, 6 and 8 also being involved. Syllabus Outcomes particularly relevant were:

- knowledge of contemporary issues, nationally and, possibly, internationally
- knowledge of how different viewpoints/methodologies influence the analysis of problems.

The question contained a sweeping statement — *always good for everyone* — that invited challenge. The most detailed knowledge and understanding were shown in the areas of genetic engineering and information technology where a wide variety of examples were considered.

In discussing genetic engineering, the excellent and above average responses related the issues to such areas as the medical field, especially congenital disease control and organ transplants in the future, and to the improved production and quality of food, the potential benefit for the environment of crops that are both disease-resistant and pest-resistant. In these responses candidates also questioned some of the potential problems, such as the danger to biodiversity and man's inability to know all the implications of what is being changed.

Below average responses often confused genetic engineering with IVF, or made unsubstantiated statements about the benefits or problems.

When referring to information technology, the better responses referred to a range of areas, including computers, the internet, cable, satellite and interactive TV, examining both the present and future possibilities of each. They referred to the growth of electronic fraud and the problems that malfunctions cause in a society that has become so dependent on this technology. Average and below average responses were more limited in scope, often commenting only on the internet and the access to information that it affords, especially referring to pornography and information on bomb-making.

Military research was also a popular area. Many candidates brought their knowledge and understanding of the issue from their study of *Conflict and Conflict Resolution*. The majority saw military-related research as being entirely negative in its effects on society, though a few of the more perceptive responses referred to the benefits derived from an equal defence capability and the spin-off effects of such research. Occasionally the ability to monitor effectively, through the use of technology, what other countries are doing and so create a potentially more secure world was discussed.

The better responses examined our greater scientific knowledge of the human body and the effects of such knowledge on diet, training and equipment. Performance enhancement in sports was another popular area, though it tended to attract rather superficial analysis.

Most average and below average responses were restricted in both range and analysis, referring mainly to the use of drugs in sport as being a form of cheating. These responses often consisted of lengthy narrative examples which were not effectively linked to the question.

In discussing vaccine development, candidates recognised the life-saving effects of vaccines during this century, while questioning their availability to everyone. Some discussed again the problem of compulsory vaccination raised in Question 1 but needed, here, to be able to distinguish a different issue involved — not that of the rights of the individual in society — but that of the potential dangers for a few individuals that could arise from vaccine development and use.

Weaker candidates tended to see the issues in *black and white* and obviously did not understand the complex nature of the effects of scientific research and its technological application.

Question 3

Conflict resolution is most often attempted by the peaceful process of negotiation, mediation and conciliation. But sometimes force seems to be the only solution.

Examine an example of a peaceful attempt AND an example of a non-peaceful attempt at resolving recent national or international conflicts.

This question attracted candidates who appeared to be well versed in Modern History. Syllabus Topic 8, *Conflict and Conflict Resolution*, was the focus of the question, with an emphasis on types of conflict among and within nations and the means of achieving resolution of conflict at these levels. It was not popular — with only approximately 5% of the candidature choosing to respond.

Outcomes expected were a knowledge of contemporary issues, both national and international, ability to recognise possible solutions to problems arising from these issues and ability to determine the effectiveness of such policies.

Common faults lay in an imbalance between the treatment of the two examples chosen, or in many cases, instead of detailed examination of two conflicts, candidates provided a smorgasbord of examples with only a superficial treatment of each. Many also had difficulty in clearly distinguishing a peaceful and a non-peaceful resolution of particular conflicts.

As in previous examinations, weaker candidates attempted unsuccessfully to fit a prepared answer on conflict resolution to the question as asked. It was apparent that the choice of examples was important in fulfilling the requirements of the question. Those quoted in above average responses were international conflicts such as the Papua New Guinea/Bougainville, Iraq/Kuwait and the Israel/Palestine disputes and national disputes such as Land Rights and the gun ownership debate.

Excellent responses assessed the appropriateness of the methods used in resolving specific conflicts. In many cases candidates compared peaceful and non-peaceful methods used within one conflict — for example, Northern Ireland and Britain — thus providing a balance in assessing each method.

Excellent detail combined with analysis and understanding of the role of conflict resolution in relation to their specific examples was also a feature of the above average responses. Here candidates examined two different conflicts, showing their familiarity with the history and development of the conflict and displaying breadth and depth of knowledge of both of the issues involved and of the solutions attempted.

Average responses presented a general account of the two examples and, while fulfilling the requirements of the question, did so with less detail, tending to be descriptive rather than analytical and failing to give specific facts. In them some candidates misreported statistics, over-simplified the role of the United Nations or were confused about the leading players in the conflicts.

Below average responses tended to be very general, basic descriptions, often mentioning only one conflict. In many the term *conflict* was the trigger for a response on conflict resolution without reference to specific examples, peaceful or otherwise. These responses also lacked detail and any awareness of the difference between peaceful and non-peaceful methods of conflict resolution.

Question 4

Politicians often call for a *return to basic family values*, but is this possible in today's society?

In your answer, consider factors such as:

- the changing roles of men and women
- an upsurge in domestic violence
- an aging population
- chronic unemployment
- increasing substance abuse.

This question was based on Topic 7, *Social and Political Institutions*, but candidates could also draw on evidence from study of a combination of topics. These were:

Topic 7	<i>Social and Political Institutions</i>
Topic 10	<i>Society and the Individual</i>
Topic 3	<i>Culture</i>
Topic 8	<i>Conflict and Conflict–Resolution</i>

It afforded not only enough scope for average students to attempt it, but also for good candidates to link a wide range of material to the question and thus to highlight the interdisciplinary nature of the General Studies Course.

Successful candidates possessed a good knowledge of contemporary issues, ability to understand and analyse differing viewpoints and also to recognise the assumptions underlying different approaches to these issues.

Approximately 10% of the candidature attempted this question. This could be attributed to the structure of the question which provided a variety of alternative factors that acted as *triggers*. As a result, many students concentrated on these *trigger words* and therefore failed to link their responses to the question which required an examination of the concept of *basic family values* and the possibility of Australian society's *returning* to such values. This question was attempted by many candidates who drew upon their knowledge of issues from subjects such as General Studies, Society and Culture, Legal Studies, Life Management, PDHPE and their own general knowledge.

Excellent responses were characterised by the candidates' ability to identify *basic family values* or by their own questioning of the nature of basic family values. These candidates showed ability to question the motivation of politicians in calling for a *return to basic family values*. They gave a detailed examination of a variety of factors that affect the family unit and used current statistics and examples to link their discussions to the question.

Above average responses acknowledged the fact that family values have changed and that some previous features of families may not be desirable now. They also showed the ability to identify positive and progressive features of modern families and to examine their origins.

Average responses to this question comprised a superficial treatment of the factors chosen, stated how these have affected the family unit of today, but failed to link this discussion back to the question. They also used anecdotal information as corroborative evidence or attempted to modify prepared answers on gender roles to fit this question. Some candidates obviously did not realise that personal experience is not an adequate basis for generalisation.

Below average responses were characterised by their failure to show a clear understanding of what basic family values could be. In them candidates could provide no corroborative evidence when discussing their chosen factors and also failed to discuss how these factors, which have led to changes to the family unit, have made it either possible or impossible to return to basic family values. Many responses in this range totally ignored the focus question.

Question 5

Here two graphs were given to illustrate the pattern of Australian immigration between the years 1987/88 and 1997/98 and also the 1997/98 immigration targets.

- (a) **What does this information indicate about Federal Government decisions on immigration?**
- (b) **Discuss some of the issues considered by the Government before making decisions on immigration.**
- (c) **In your opinion, what factors should be considered when planning Australian immigration policy?**

This question related to most issues in Topic 5, *Prejudice and Discrimination*, as well as some issues raised in Topics 3, 7 and 10. Syllabus Outcomes targeted were:

- knowledge of the strengths and limitations of methods of investigation
- deducing information from graphs and charts
- knowledge of contemporary issues
- comparing different approaches to the same issue
- ability to express a personal viewpoint about contemporary issues
- ability to express an argument clearly and succinctly.

The question did not attract a large percentage of the candidature, but there was evidence that many of those who attempted this question were well prepared to discuss the issue of Australian immigration.

The breakdown of the question into parts (a), (b) and (c) seemed to assist candidates in answering all sections of the question. It was possible to produce an excellent response by using either an integrated essay style or by responding to each part of the question separately. The stimulus material provided a reasonable source of information that could be developed in some depth.

Excellent and above average responses interpreted the stimulus material accurately and recognised the fact that specific outcomes were the result of a conscious effort on the part of government to alter the pattern and level of immigration. These responses did not restrict themselves to the criteria contained in the stimulus material but explored economic, social, political and humanitarian issues thoroughly. Issues considered included sustainable economic growth, impacts on the labour market, population pressure, the age and well-being of immigrants, demands on infrastructure and the environment, urbanisation, education and oral and written communication, social justice and harmony, cultural diversity, the possibility of increased crime, the influence of particular lobby groups and the moral obligation to assist those fearing political persecution. These responses also successfully expressed an informed opinion on what might be considered an appropriate plan for future immigration.

Average responses examined all aspects of the question but were less detailed in their development of issues and often restricted themselves to the themes contained in the stimulus material. Here discussion tended to be more limited in depth and, in section (c), personal opinion was not always based on solid argument, but, rather, on prejudice.

Below average responses restricted comments to a description of certain parts of the stimulus material and made no effort to identify the influence of Federal Government decision-making on levels and patterns of immigration. The diagram on Immigration Targets was often completely ignored in these responses which, in many cases, presented views on immigration which were obviously not based on careful consideration of fact. The opportunity to present a personal opinion of an appropriate immigration policy was either ignored or poorly developed.

Question 6

A picture of three mascots selected for the Sydney Olympic Games was included here.

- (a) **What image of Australia do these mascots present to the world?**
- (b) **Is this an appropriate image of Australia?**
- (c) **Does the support for the Sydney Olympic Games detract from support for other cultural activities?**

This question related to issues in Topic 3, *Culture*, and sections in Topic 4, *Language and Communication*. Syllabus Outcomes particularly relevant to this question were:

- knowledge of support for cultural activities
- understanding of the role of mass media in society and its influence on imagery, attitudes and human behaviour
- understanding the role and influence of advertising.

The question attracted around 10% of the candidature, but responses indicated that many of these candidates had either not studied Topics 3 and 4, or did not realise that the question related to these topics.

The breakdown of the question into (a), (b) and (c) seemed to assist the candidates in dealing with all parts of the question. The weaker responses, however, treated part (c) superficially or ignored it completely. There were many brief responses, which is a reversal of trends in this subject in recent years.

Excellent responses were rare. Those in this category dealt with all parts of the question and went beyond the *Cute, cuddly and friendly* description of the mascots presented in weaker responses. Some discussed how they represented the uniqueness of Australian fauna, our isolation from the major land masses of the world and how the mascots stand for air, water and land. Whilst some presented the opinion that they represent multicultural Australia, others espoused the opposite opinion. A number of candidates considered that they represent an image of the *Larrikin* in the Australian character. Some, who were critical of the image presented by the mascots, considered them to be of the highly Americanised *Disneyland* style. Others, however, mentioned the fact that these mascots could be successfully marketed. Candidates in this range often presented a sophisticated understanding of sponsorship and other means of financing cultural activities.

Many of the above average responses were well expressed, stating that the mascots are not appropriate and fail to represent the indigenous and multicultural aspects of Australian culture. Such responses were characterised by a perceptive treatment of part (c) of the question. In them candidates examined how the massive financial commitment to the Olympic Games would affect other cultural activities and organisations within the nation, often mentioning the ABC, the visual and performing arts, exhibitions, opera and music. Others argued that the Cultural Olympics, starting with the Dreaming as the first of the four stages of the cultural events, indicated the general support for culture.

Average responses described the mascots and usually dealt at length with the appropriateness of the image and frequently treated part (c) as a comparison between support for the Olympics with that for other sporting events.

The weaker responses were usually very brief and superficial, describing the mascots as being *cute, cuddly and friendly*. They rarely indicated whether the image they portray is appropriate and virtually ignored part (c).

Question 7

Books, films and magazines are all subject to censorship laws. However computers and the Internet allow users to find and share information on every possible subject without censorship.

Evaluate the difficulties this lack of censorship creates for at least TWO of the following.

- **parents of young children**
- **students**
- **schools**
- **media owners**
- **governments**
- **religious institutions.**

This question addressed Topic 4 in detail and issues from Topics 1, 6, 7 and 10 could also have been used in the response. The relevant Outcomes were:

- knowledge of contemporary issues
- ability to identify key issues and outline the differing analysis of issues
- ability to compare different approaches to the same issue
- ability to evaluate the options.

Although the question attracted a wide range of responses, it was not dealt with well by many candidates.

Excellent responses dealt with the concept of censorship and discussed its relevance in a democratic society, debating the need for it. These responses also tended to look at the political implications for governments created by an uncensored, and thus uncontrollable, source of public information. They also considered the effect of lack of censorship on the monopoly and bias of media ownership, the problems of copyright abuse and the issue of privacy.

Above average responses used pertinent examples as well as specific factual material to support their arguments. There was a pleasing attempt on the part of such responses to analyse and evaluate their choices.

Average responses tended to focus on the difficulties arising from lack of censorship for sole parents of young children and students, generally ignoring the other groups targeted by the question. Some attempt was made at evaluation, but many responses in this range turned into diatribes against pornography, violence, information about bomb-making and suspect *chat* sites. Here candidates listed the problems involved, but generally failed to show how they were problems for the groups nominated in the question.

Below average responses restricted their discussion to the issues pertinent to parents of young children and to students. The material presented was generally superficial and often anecdotal, with little or not attempt at evaluation.

Question 8

From toxic waste to plastic bags, waste disposal is a serious environmental problem.

Identify ways in which the problem can be addressed by each of the following:

- **individuals**
- **manufacturers**
- **governments**
- **environmental organisations.**

This question focused on Syllabus Topic 2 — The Environment, and could have incorporated issues from Topics 1, 3, 4, 7 and 10.

It proved to be extremely popular and related strongly to the outcomes:

- to think critically about contemporary issues and problems
- to determine the effectiveness of policies linked to key issues confronting the world today.

This popularity was probably a reflection of the clear-cut and prescriptive nature of the question which struck a chord with a large number of the candidates. Whilst most responses succeeded in dealing with each of the four target groups, the better candidates suggested a range of remedies for the problems of waste and presented telling arguments.

Excellent responses called upon individuals not only to control their own waste but also to restrict their consumption of environmentally unfriendly products. They pointed out that manufacturers could seriously examine their current practices and embrace production methods which would either result in no waste or, even better, would utilise their waste within the manufacturing process. Governments at all levels, from international to local, were seen to be the principal agents or catalysts for initiating changes. Environmental organisations were accorded the role of *watchdog* and were seen to play a leading part in mediating the debate on waste issues as well as having the all-important task of working with Governments to monitor the results of waste policies.

Above average responses possessed many of the qualities of the previous group, but tended to lack a concentration of purpose. Some of these responses dealt at length with individual strategies but discussed the role of manufacturers or government rather less stringently. Although these students had a good grasp of the issues raised by the question, their suggested remedies were occasionally repetitive and often assumed that good intentions, especially on the part of manufacturers and governments, were enough to solve the problem.

Average responses tended to focus on what the individual should do and were often superficial, stating, for example, *Don't drop papers*, rather than discussing what happens after they are put in a bin. Manufacturers were dealt with in a similar fashion, with responsible waste disposal being emphasised, rather than the issue of waste production. Although it was recognised that governments have the legislative capacity to deal effectively with the problem, in average responses candidates were generally vague about the nature of the laws needed and were able to mention only anti-littering and anti-dumping. Treatment of environmental organisations was equally hazy, with candidates in average responses naming a couple of such organisations — sometimes correctly — and giving unsubstantiated testimony of their alleged good works.

Below average responses treated the issue of waste disposal very superficially and frequently failed to discuss one or more of the required groups.

Question 9

Religion provides some people with a purpose for peace; it provides others with a purpose for war.

By reference to at least TWO examples, discuss the role of religion in situations of conflict.

This question related to Topic 6 of the Syllabus, *Religion and Society*. The issue specifically referred to is the role of religion in situations of conflict. Study of other issues within the topic, however, could also provide relevant material for answering this question. These other issues include the function of religion in society, freedom of religious practice and civil liberty, religion and morality, and religion and politics. Discussion of the question can also be related to Syllabus Topic 8, *Conflict and Conflict Resolution*, specifically the issue of conflicting ideologies. In addition supporting material could be drawn from other Topic 8 issues such as types of conflict among nations, moral issues arising from conflicts and means of achieving resolution of conflict.

Outcomes particularly relevant to this question were:

- outline of the differing analyses of issues
- critical examination of contemporary issues and problems
- comparison of the results of using different approaches to the same issue.

Although the question was attempted by a relatively small percentage of the candidature, those who did respond showed a sound understanding of comparative religious creeds, philosophies and practices. Despite this, a significant number failed to deal with the key concept of *role* in their discussion of religion in conflict situations. While the majority did refer to the stimulus material provided in the statement box, most of these candidates failed to create an adequate, balanced response, preferring to centre their discussions on religion and war. This led either to candidates' completely dismissing the first part of the statement and thus failing to discuss religion and peaceful conflict resolution, or to superficial attempts to incorporate peace into the response. Such responses provided generalised comments such as *Religions are meant to promote peace*, but then failed to discuss which religions were meant to do this or what actions, if any, religious leaders or groups might be taking to bring about, or not bring about, peace. A small percentage of candidates made no reference to the statement and their responses concentrated discussion on conflict between religions and moral, social or cultural attitudes and beliefs. These responses generally included abortion, euthanasia and homosexuality. As the question did not specifically direct candidates to use the statement provided, such responses were valid. Most of these interpretations of the question remained very narrow, however, and tended to be in the average to lower range of responses.

The question did not elicit a wide variety of responses. It was generally agreed that religion can be a cause of war, but many failed to acknowledge other contributing factors which might be linked to, or masked by, religious considerations. The same general set of examples tended to occur. These included the Crusades, the Catholic versus Protestant conflict in Ireland, Germany and the Jews and the Arab–Israeli conflict. Those who did broaden their discussion tended to give a wider diversity of examples, including Martin Luther King, Ghandi and Buddhist practices, linking these to the concept of peaceful resolution of conflict.

Excellent and above average responses were characterised by candidates' ability to assess the concept of roles critically. In them candidates acknowledged religion as being merely one of a set of contributing factors in many conflict situations. Racial, cultural, political, economic and historical factors were identified. Typical responses dealt with the stimulus material and weighed up the relative importance of religion in their discussion of specific conflict situations. These responses were not limited to a discussion of war, but produced a balanced answer, acknowledging the part religion may play in peaceful resolution. Here candidates produced a sound factual basis for their analyses and developed a logical and coherent argument. Many used an historical analysis in support of their arguments but remained strongly focused on contemporary events. Responses in this range examined two conflicts in detail but often drew on a number of others to support the development of their arguments.

Average responses tended to be based on a historical description of conflict. In them candidates examined religions in detail but, often, either confused religious factors with political or racial ideologies, or failed to acknowledge these as contributing factors. Such candidates presented a simplified discussion that included general argument that religion can be a cause of war. Few candidates in this range acknowledged the role of religion in peaceful resolution of conflict, or did so in only a very superficial way. The majority of these candidates examined either two or three examples in detail and their responses tended to be long. Unfortunately, a popular response was to include Hitler and the Jews as representing a purely religious conflict. Some candidates in this range did not refer to the given statement but discussed religion and societal issues. They tended to describe religious attitudes or opinions about religion but failed to analyse the role that religion plays in various situations.

Below average responses ranged from prepared answers on religion which did not answer the question to those which simply described a variety of religions. These responses were often quite long but showed no understanding of the concepts involved and failed to analyse the key issues. Others in this range were unable to identify more than one conflict, or used inaccurate factual material.

Question 10

A cartoon by Wilcox of the Sydney Morning Herald was presented here.

- (a) What are the key issues that the artist is presenting in the cartoon?
- (b) Examine how ONE of these issues has been addressed through legislation, or government action, or by education programs.

This question related specifically to Syllabus Topic 5, *Prejudice and Discrimination*, emphasising the issues of *government policies towards Aboriginal and Islander peoples in Australia including health, justice and land rights, and attempts to eliminate discrimination through legislation, government policy and education.*

The question could also be considered relevant to issues from one or more of the following Topics:

Topic 2	The Environment
Topic 3	Culture
Topic 4	Language and Communication
Topic 7	Social and Political Institutions
Topic 8	Conflict and Conflict Resolution
Topic 9	World Development and Inequality
Topic 10	Society and the Individual

Candidates were expected to:

- identify key issues facing the world today and presented in pictorial form,
- discuss issues pertinent to their interpretation.

The majority responded to the question in one of two ways:

- (i) From the point of view of Land Rights issues relative to the indigenous peoples of Australia, and/or
- (ii) from that of exploitation of LDCs by DCs.

A number of candidates saw the main issues from an environmental perspective — land degradation, deforestation and depletion of natural resources. The majority showed an optimistic and positive attitude to whichever of the issues they identified and debated.

Any one of these interpretations was acceptable in responding to part (a) of the question; the more astute candidates had little difficulty with the range of issues.

Part (b) directed candidates to examine ONE of the issues identified in part (a) and to evaluate whether this issue has been dealt with through legislation or government action or by educational programs.

Many chose to ignore these directives and attempted to discuss a range of issues using all three methods of redress. Such responses could treat each aspect in only a superficial manner and were generally within the average range. Those in the excellent and above average range identified issues from the cartoon, discussed them in their historical context and explained in detail how one such issue was being dealt with by one of the three methods stated. As an illustration of this, those who identified the issue of Land Rights were able to give a detailed and rational explanation of such legislation as the Land Rights Act, the Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islanders Act (which led to the formation of ATSIC) and the Native Titles Act, as well as displaying an understanding of the Mabo decision and the implications of the Wik debate.

Below average responses either ignored or observed only briefly the directives within the question and immediately launched into a diatribe against racism, prejudice and/or discrimination, or interpreted the cartoon as referring to issues relating to sexism, jingoism, chauvinism, using obviously prepared responses on the Prejudice and Discrimination topic. Others simply described the cartoon.

Question 11

A number of international institutions and corporations claim to be working to reduce the inequality between developed and developing countries.

Identify TWO of these international institutions or corporations AND evaluate their efforts to reduce inequality between developed and developing countries.

This question required candidates to evaluate the effectiveness of two international institutions or corporations which claim to be implementing strategies to bridge the gap between developed and developing countries.

Although clearly relating to Syllabus Topic 9, as well as drawing on aspects of Topics 8 and 10, it was not a popular question.

Outcomes particularly relevant to this question were:

- a knowledge of contemporary issues, both national and international
- the ability to recognise possible solutions arising from these issues
- assessing the appropriateness of decisions about such issues and problems
- determining the effectiveness of policies.

Many candidates could provide a range of statistical information to support their argument; some, however, did not apply their information to discussing all components of the question. The United Nations, or one of its agencies such as UNESCO, was the most discussed institution. Also commonly evaluated was the UN Agency, the World Bank, although few candidates made mention of its bailouts during the economic crises in South East Asia through the International Monetary Fund.

Excellent responses were factual, and included well prepared statistics and examples. These comprised detailed, concise arguments on the various causes and solutions for inequality, without losing sight of the main focus of the question. In this range, candidates also presented descriptions of the various strategies for decreasing inequality and were able to evaluate their effectiveness. They possessed a clear understanding of the concept of development and could describe the procedures used in dealing with specific problems in certain countries.

Above average responses also used statistics to distinguish what corporations and institutions *claimed* to be doing and the reality of *what was being achieved*, but did not develop their arguments to the same degree as those in the excellent range. Strategies were not evaluated to the same degree.

Average responses tended to discuss in general terms the differences between developed and developing countries and contained little factual detail. Candidates referred to international institutions and corporations in general, rather than identifying specific corporations. Those who did identify specific institutions or corporations failed to develop their arguments sufficiently, sometimes giving some details of the institution but failing to link such information to the question. Few strategies were included and candidates had difficulty in evaluating any of these.

Below average responses contained little, if any, factual material, and failed to develop any argument. They mentioned corporations or institutions which made no claim to attempting to bridge the gap between developed and developing countries and there was little evidence that some candidates understood these concepts. They were unsuccessful in pinpointing any specific strategies implemented, and so failed to present any evaluation of these.

Question 12

A photograph of three male models was included here.

- (a) Is the increasing use of male models an indication of changing sex roles?
- (b) Is changing of sex roles the same as sexual equality?
- (c) What do you think sexual equality means in the 1990s?

This was a fairly popular question dealing primarily with issues in Syllabus Topics 5 and 7, with some relevance to Topic 10. It tended to attract a broad cross-section of the candidature, but many of the candidates responded to the stimulus material without showing evidence of any depth study of the relevant Syllabus Areas. The format of the question — which was divided into three parts (a), (b) and (c) — provided candidates with an alternative answer structure to the more conventional essay form if they wished to use it.

Syllabus Outcomes particularly targeted were:

- recognition of the values and assumptions behind different approaches to the analysis of problems and issues
- ability to interpret information presented in pictorial form
- ability to think critically about contemporary issues
- ability to determine items of knowledge relevant to an issue
- ability to express a personal viewpoint about a contemporary issue.

Excellent responses often focused on changing legislative initiatives, education patterns and work-place reforms. They showed candidates' ability to discuss the historical development of equality through areas ranging from Equal Employment Opportunity, Affirmative Action and Anti-Discrimination Legislation to the inclusion of Women's Water Polo as a sport to be contested at the Sydney 2000 Olympics. These candidates gave a perceptive, succinct and well supported analysis of the meaning of sexual equality in the 1990s.

Above average responses often discussed areas such as marketing strategies, noting that the recent awareness of male fashion has developed a need for an increase in the number of male models. Many of these candidates were able to demonstrate a clear understanding of the concepts and terms in the question and then evaluate their social ramifications.

Average responses tended to focus mainly on the use of male models with a superficial and basic analysis of sex roles and sexual equality. Often these responses failed to evaluate adequately changes in the 1990s in society's attitudes to sexual equality.

In many responses in the below average range candidates were side-tracked by the issue of male models and made little use of concrete examples to support their opinions which were largely generalisations. In many cases the choice of examples was anecdotal and a reaction to the phrase *sex roles* led to over-simplified descriptions. Other candidates in the same range chose to restrict their responses to part (a) or part (b) or part (c), or a combination of two parts, rather than dealing with all three parts of the question as was required. Many candidates seemed to have considerable difficulty in coming to terms with part (b).