

**My Place for Teachers  
Decade Overview 1980s**

Decade Summary	1988
<p>After the social revolution of the 1970s, the 1980s witnessed an economic revolution that proved to be equally far-reaching. There was a growing political awareness of issues affecting the environment, and support for the Indigenous rights movement .</p> <p>Vietnamese immigrants began to change the demography in Australia and the effects were felt throughout society and influenced public policy.</p> <p>In April 1984, <i>Advance Australia Fair</i> was proclaimed as Australia's national anthem and green and gold became Australia's official national colours.</p> <p>In 1986, Halley's comet was visible in the night sky for the first time since 1910.</p> <p>In 1983, the Ben Lexcen-designed racing yacht with a winged keel, <i>Australia II</i>, was the first non-US contender to win the America's Cup. During this competition, the unofficial mascot was the green-and-gold clad boxing kangaroo.</p> <p>In December 1985, the <i>Australia Act 1986</i> (Cth) in federal parliament removed the right of Australians to appeal to the Privy Council, eliminating Australia's last remaining direct constitutional ties to Britain.</p> <p>In 1987, the New York stock market crashed and the Australian economy went into recession, causing unemployment to rise significantly. The treasurer at the time, Paul Keating, told the Australian people that it was a recession Australia 'had to have'. He had previously described the Australian economy as a 'banana republic'.</p> <p>In 1987, Sally Morgan's <i>My Place</i> was published and considered a breakthrough memoir for bringing Indigenous experiences to a wider audience.</p>	<p><b>January</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The first Aboriginal television station, Imparja, began transmission in Alice Springs.</li> <li>• Australia's Bicentennial celebrations began and the First Fleet re-enactment vessels arrived at Botany Bay. Concurrently, 15,000 Aboriginal people undertook a protest march for 'Freedom, Justice and Hope' in Sydney.</li> <li>• The new Parliament House on Capital Hill in Canberra was officially opened by Queen Elizabeth II.</li> </ul> <p><b>June</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kay Cottee became the first woman to sail single-handedly and non-stop around the world.</li> <li>• The \$2 coin goes into circulation replacing the old \$2 note.</li> </ul>

## History and Politics

### Bob Hawke's ascendancy

In September 1980, Bob Hawke resigned as president of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) to become a member of parliament for the Australian Labor Party (ALP).

In February 1983, prime minister Malcolm Fraser called a snap election. Bill Hayden was immediately replaced by Bob Hawke as leader of the Australian Labor Party. The ALP went on to a convincing win in the national election on 5 March.

In April 1983, Bob Hawke held a National Economic Summit in Canberra, aiming to reach agreement between unions, employers and government on the best way to proceed with fixing the economy. The Hawke government reached a historic agreement with the unions to keep wage claims down. This agreement became known as the Prices and Income Accord, or the Accord. In exchange for wage restraint, the government pledged to reduce inflation and to assist employment growth. Periodically renewed, the Accord lasted for the following 13 years.

Bob Hawke was prime minister for the rest of the decade, winning the 1984 and 1987 elections. He was eventually replaced in 1991 by the former treasurer, Paul Keating.

### Deregulation

In December 1983, the Australian dollar was allowed to float rather than remain tied to an artificially maintained value. Banks were deregulated in August 1984, and foreign banks were invited to compete with local banks.

In September 1986, Australia's credit rating in the USA was reduced from AAA to AA1. In the same year, Australia's gross foreign debt passed \$100 billion. A number of events led to economic instability and shook the optimism of Australians.

In October 1987, share prices on Australian stock exchanges made a record fall and in 1989, several large corporations collapsed, in particular, Equiticorp, Qintex, Hooker Corporation and Spedley Securities.

### Uranium

In July 1982, the ALP opposition reversed its policy disallowing any uranium mining. In the same month, the Northern Land Council representing traditional owners agreed to uranium mining at Jabiluka. The Hawke ALP government later restricted mining to two mines, but maintained export contracts.

In 1984, the newly-formed Nuclear Disarmament Party (NDP) won a Senate seat in the federal election.

In the same year, more than 76,000 square kilometres of land at Maralinga, some of which had been used for British nuclear tests in the 1950s, was returned to the traditional owners, while the government retained the right to veto decisions of land use. In the event of a dispute regarding whether the lands could be explored or mined, an arbitrator would assess the interests of the traditional owners against the economic importance of the venture to the state and to Australia.

In February 1985, New Zealand refused to allow nuclear-capable US warships to call at its ports, leading to the USA withdrawal from ANZUS naval exercises. New Zealand was shortly after suspended from the ANZUS treaty, but Australia remained within the treaty with the USA.

<b>Environment concerns</b>	<p>In 1981, the Cairns and Cormorant Pass sections of the Great Barrier Reef were proclaimed a National Marine Park. At this time, the crown-of-thorns starfish was destroying large areas of the reef, forcing the government to fund numerous measures to destroy the invader. In 1987, the Great Barrier Reef was accorded protection status.</p> <p>The cane toad pest continued to spread southwards. By 1982, it had reached Coffs Harbour, New South Wales and the Queensland–Northern Territory border.</p> <p>In a Tasmanian referendum about damming the Franklin River, 44.89 per cent of people voted 'No dams' or informal. In 1982, conservationists blockaded work on the Gordon River Dam. After coming to power, the Hawke federal government passed legislation to make the Franklin River area a World Heritage listed site, blocking construction of the dam. The Tasmanian government appealed the legislation in the High Court, but a narrow four to three majority overturned the appeal.</p> <p>In 1985, Uluru (Ayres Rock) was handed back to the traditional owners, the Anangu, who then leased it to the National Parks and Wildlife Service for 99 years. In 1989, Katherine Gorge was handed back to its traditional owners, the Jowoyyn people, who leased it to the Northern Territory government.</p>
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## Society and Culture

### Growth of the Vietnamese community

The year 1975 saw the fall of Saigon and victory to the North Vietnamese. Many thousands of South Vietnamese fled from the Vietcong communist government as refugees. From 1976, after arriving in small crowded vessels at Darwin, these refugees became known as 'boat people'.

The Liberal prime minister Malcolm Fraser initiated a refugee program to speedily process and accept them, as Australia felt an obligation to assist with their resettlement. These people became the first large Asian community in Australia since the Chinese immigrants of the mid- to late 19th century.

In 1971, there were only 717 people in Australia of Vietnamese descent. By 1981, this had risen to 52,299 people, and by 1991, 124,800.

### Multiculturalism

Amendments to the *Migration Act 1958* (Cth) replaced the term 'alien' with 'non-citizen' and ended the favoured treatment of British nationals as immigrants to Australia. In the 1980s family reunion was the most common criteria for migrating to Australia. Professor Geoffrey Blainey proposed to limit immigration from Asia and sparked a public debate on immigration policy.

In the 1980s, multicultural radio stations were operating in many states and territories. SBS television began broadcasting as Channel 0/28 multicultural television in Melbourne and Sydney.

In 1987, the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) was established and two years later, the National Agenda for a Multicultural Society was released.

In 1989, the first significant numbers of refugees arrived from Africa, most of them from Ethiopia.

### Arts and entertainment

In the 1980s, the Australian film industry produced a number of acclaimed films stimulated by tax concessions in the late 1970s. In 1980, *Breaker Morant* was released followed by *Gallipoli* in 1982 and *The Man from Snowy River* in 1983. The box-office hit *Crocodile Dundee* starring Paul Hogan appeared in 1986 in both Australia and the USA.

In 1980, the band AC/DC released their *Back in Black* album, which became the second biggest-selling album of all time. In 1988, two other Australian bands, INXS and Midnight Oil, achieved widespread international success with their albums *Kick* and *Diesel and Dust*.

By the mid-1980s, the boom in video cassettes resulted in a dramatic fall in attendance at cinemas. Many drive-in cinemas began to close.

In 1981, Olivia Newton-John's single *Physical* went to number one in the US charts. In 1989, Kylie Minogue's debut album, *Kylie*, sold more than 12 million copies in 20 countries.

In March 1985, the long-running *Neighbours* TV series made its debut on Channel 7 and was voted the most popular program.

In 1986, NSW celebrated their last 'cracker night'.

## Science and Technology

### Medical advances

In 1980, Candice Reed, Australia's first ever test-tube baby, was born at the Royal Women's Hospital, Melbourne.

In 1982, a bionic ear, developed at Melbourne University, was successfully implanted for the first time.

In September 1981, Australia's first death from Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) occurred when a 72-year-old man died in Sydney's Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. In November 1982, the first case was diagnosed. In 1984, a federal task force was set up to coordinate the campaign against AIDS.

In February 1981, the antivenene for funnel-web spider bites was developed by Struan Sutherland in the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories. In the same year, a national genetic engineering centre was established at the Research School of Biological Sciences at the Australian National University in Canberra. CSIRO's radioastronomers discovered pulsars in the Magellanic Clouds.

### Archaeology finds

In 1983, the fossil of a mammal that had lived during the Cretaceous Age, between 110 and 120 million years ago, was found at Lightning Ridge in NSW.

In 1984, an area of 15-million-year-old fossils was discovered on a cattle station 200 km south of Mount Isa in Queensland.

In 1985, a still-living stand of Huon pine trees with an estimated age of 10,500 years old was discovered on a Tasmanian mountain top by a Forestry Tasmania forester.

In 1987, ancient artifacts found near Penrith, NSW, were carbon-dated to 47,000 years ago.

### Industry

High external tariffs to protect Australian industries and economic sectors had been in place since the early 1900s. It was the 1983 Labor government under the leadership of prime minister Bob Hawke that began to change this protective landscape. Barriers to international trade were removed. The Australian dollar was floated on the stock exchange. Government-owned companies such as Qantas, the Commonwealth Bank and eventually Telecom were privatised. Manufacturing industries such as automobiles, clothes, footwear and textiles that had flourished in the post-war period now began to decline.

In 1980, the first Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs) were introduced for bank customers in Sydney. Two years later, the first EFTPOS (Electronic Funds Transfer at Point Of Sale) terminal began operating in Western Australia.

In April 1980, Mitsubishi took over Chrysler Australia Ltd. A year later, the 4-millionth Holden came off the assembly line. By 1988, the number of motor vehicles on Australian roads reached 9.3 million.

In 1984, the first stage of the North-West Shelf natural gas project began operation, with gas piped to Perth and industrial areas of Western Australia.

In September 1986, a sealed road around the continent was completed when the last section between Fitzroy Crossing and Halls Creek in north-west WA was opened.

**Dick Smith adventures**

Dick Smith is an entrepreneur and businessman with a lifelong interest in science, exploration and technology. On the 22 July 1983, he completed the first solo flight around the world in a helicopter, just under a year after setting out. As the Soviet Union refused him permission to land in their territory, he had to arrange a ship landing and refuelling.

In 1986, he launched *Australian Geographic* as a quarterly geographic journal that would focus attention on Australia. In the same year, he was declared Australian of the Year.

In 1987, Dick Smith became the first person to reach the North Pole by a solo helicopter flight.