

Australia and Melbourne 1956



Melbourne city 1956 from the Yarra

Source: Official Report XVI Olympiad, p32.

The Australian generation which returned from World War II had experienced the Great Depression and fighting in the Asia-Pacific, Europe, the Middle East or the Mediterranean. They returned with a much widened world view and a greater appreciation of their own democratic country.

Australia's traditional ally was Britain but the Pacific war had brought it closer to the United States as a powerful ally. And Australia would not be isolated from the Cold War.

The early post-war years were austere but in general the 1950's became prosperous years for most Australians with strong primary industries and almost full employment. Technology had not significantly broken down distance barriers yet so country towns were the focus of rural life and most change was apparent in the major cities of Melbourne and Sydney.

The position and rights of women, indigenous Australians and minorities needed to improve and there was a post-war willingness to challenge past ideas and beliefs.

The impact of a new Australian immigration policy started with increased numbers and an expectation they would blend into the Australian way of life. Some of these new migrants were refugees from World War II and others were escaping from the new war – the Cold War.

Culturally, Australians in the 1950s were still dominated by British and American trends in music, film and fashion but often put their own style into the mix.

Australia and the Olympic Games

1956 Melbourne Olympics and 2000 Sydney Olympics



Historical Context

The Australian fascination with sport had been the reason for its participation in the previous 15 modern Olympics. After World War II working class Australians joined more sporting clubs and teams for their leisure time.

For Melbourne and Australia the Olympic Games were a turning point in their history. Harry Gordon puts it this way: *For a city and a nation which considered themselves worldly, but were in truth prisoners of their own geography, the Games offered a step towards maturity, and a gentle exercise in multiculturalism (long before that word ever entered the dialogue of politicians and academics).*

Harry Gordon, *Australia and the Olympic Games*, Queensland University Press, 1996 (3rd edition), p203.



Focus

A snapshot of Australia and Melbourne around 1956.

Activity



Investigate Australian society and culture around 1956 and capture a snapshot of its key features. For Australia this could include politics, the economy, media and popular culture, the role of women and minorities and sport. It should have an emphasis on Melbourne.

Imagine the web existed in 1956. This snapshot could be presented as a web page/s which visitors to the Melbourne Olympic Games would have explored.

Resources

Pictures of Australia from 1956 collection

<http://bonzle.com/pictures-over-time/pictures-taken-in-1956/page-1/size-3>

1950s in context: http://www.skwirk.com/p-c_s-14_u-189_t-506_c-1870/1950s-decade-in-context/nsw/1950s-decade-in-context/australia-s-social-and-cultural-history-in-the-post-war-period/social-and-cultural-features-of-the-1950s

Post-War Migration

Examine Fact Sheet 4 - More than 60 Years of Post-war Migration, and the Post war development notes

<http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/04fifty.htm#b>

Read more:

http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What_was_life_like_in_the_1950's_in_Australia#ixzz1XKnyna3B

Australia and the Olympic Games

1956 Melbourne Olympics and 2000 Sydney Olympics

Historical Context



1956 Defence policy

<http://www.defence.gov.au/strategicbasis/pdf/1956.pdf>

Attitudes to the Cold War and democracy

The Petrov Affair: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petrov_Affair

Australian Museum of Democracy: <http://moadoph.gov.au/exhibitions/online/petrov/the-affair.html>

1950 American and British cultural influences

http://www.skwirk.com/p-c_s-14_u-189_t-506_c-1875/nsw/history/australia-s-social-and-cultural-history-in-the-post-war-period/social-and-cultural-features-of-the-1950s/american-and-british-cultural-influence-1950s

Popular culture

http://www.skwirk.com/p-c_s-14_u-189_t-506_c-1872/nsw/history/australia's-social-and-cultural-history-in-the-post-war-period/social-and-cultural-features-of-the-1950s/music-and-entertainment

American influences on Pop Culture

<http://www.exampleessays.com/viewpaper/12238.html>

http://wiki.answers.com/Q/How_and_why_did_American_popular_culture_influence_Australia_society

Sport in Australian culture

http://www.skwirk.com/p-c_s-14_u-189_t-506_c-1874/nsw/history/australia-s-social-and-cultural-history-in-the-post-war-period/social-and-cultural-features-of-the-1950s/sport-in-the-1950s

Sport and Pop Culture

http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/australia/pdf/popular_culture.pdf

Topic book references:

http://library.nma.gov.au/libero/docs/Libopac/bibliographies_files/1950s.htm