

Religion and belief systems in australia post 1945



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Question 1: Aboriginal religion is based on land. Land is the heart of Aboriginal Dreaming and provides the assurance needed for the continuation of rituals and ceremonies (king, 2010, p. 213). The effect of Dispossession on Aboriginal spiritualities related to the separation from their land was enormous and overwhelmingly detrimental. The impact of British colonisation resulted in Australia being declared 'terra nullius' 'land belonging to no-one' and Aboriginal peoples were subject to policies of dispossession and protectionism in a bid to the eventual demise of all facets of their traditional culture.

The policy of 'terra nullius' saw many Aboriginal peoples driven off their land as squatters, pastoralists, settlers and farmers occupied traditional Aboriginal land for agricultural purposes. For Aboriginal peoples, dislocation from their land stripped them of their culture and language. To the Aborigines land is a source of teaching that provides answers to the universal questions of man, the origins of the universe, laws of nature, family life, death and life after death.

Separation/protection resulted in the Aborigines being removed from traditional lands and herded into holding camps in order to keep them out of sights of white colonists. This loss of land of the Aboriginals also resulted in the loss of traditional authority structures, oral tradition and language. "When the land, being the basis of the elders teaching is lost, respect for elders decreases, Question 1 continued: language groups break down and belief systems are devalued." ([http://www. bookrags. com/essay-2005/3/2/5583/41950](http://www.bookrags.com/essay-2005/3/2/5583/41950), 2005) Removal from the land causes a loss of spiritual identity and loss of purpose in life.

By losing their land, they have lost a part of themselves that can never be replaced. The removal of their land destroyed their kinship system and went against what they believed in. Dreaming is inextricably linked to the land, the land rights movement is an important movement in helping Aboriginal people re-establish spiritual links to the land. The Aboriginal land rights movement is a religio-political movement that seeks to secure the inherent rights of aboriginals to their land, and to ensure that their religious, spiritual and cultural integrity is preserved (king, 2010, p. 13).

The importance of Mabo to the Aboriginal people was huge as it overturned the notion of “ terra nullius” in establishing Native Title and therefore the Indigenous Australians have claimed native title based on the stories of the Dreaming, the location of totems and sacred sites, and the elders customary possession of the land. According to Patrick Dodson (source 1) he saw Mabo as an opportunity for all Australians to come to an understanding of their shared history and realign the distorted relationship and come together as “ one shared nation”.

The Native Title Act that came into force on January 1 1994, established a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land fund for the purpose of enabling dispossessed Aboriginal people to acquire land which gave Aboriginals the right to Question 1 continued: gain economic and social independence, thus enabling them to preserve their culture in a way that is deemed appropriate by them. In December 1996, in another landmark judgement known as the Wik Decision, the high court determined that native title may coexist with pastoral leases, and that, where there is conflict between the two, pastoralists’ rights will prevail. king, 2010, p. 216).

In conclusion, The Native Title, Mabo and Wik decision are only the first steps towards addressing the injustices of over 200 years of European subjection of aboriginal people. " However, Aboriginal people still struggle for more than words on paper. They require the enactment of visible justice, where aboriginal people have a pride of place and heritage that can be shared as well as respected. " (king, 2010, p. 216). Question 2: In the period 1947-2006, the Australian population grew from about 7. 6 million to about 20 million.

During this time there was an overall decline in the percentage of people identifying with a religion (frost course notes, 2010). According to source 2 Christianity remained the dominant religion in Australia, although non-Christian religions continued to grow at a much faster rate. Since 1996, Christianity grew from around 12. 6 million to 12. 7 million, but compared to the other religions and the total population this number fell from 71% to 64%. Within Christianity, Anglicans dropped from 22% of the population to 18. 7%, and therefore resulted in a decrease growth of -4. 7 within the time period of 10 years.

Over the same period of time non-Christian religions increased from around 0. 6 million to 1. 1 million people, and collectively accounted for 5. 6% of the total population in 2006" (king, 2010, p. 221). Australia's three most common non-Christian religious affiliations were Buddhism (2. 1% of the population), Islam (1. 7%) and Hinduism (0. 7%). Of these groups, Hinduism experienced the fastest proportional growth since 1996, more than doubling to 150 000, followed by Buddhism, which doubled to 420 000 (king, 2010, p.

221) The most common reasons for such growth in these faiths is due to immigration and denominational switching.

The decrease of growth in the Uniting Church (-14.9%) and Presbyterian and Reformed (-11.7%) between 1996-2006, can usually be a result of those religions “dying” off. Members of these religions either conform to denominational switching or the members pass on without any new member joining the church. Question 2 continued: In 1945 Australia was a very difficult country to what we see today. The country was effectively monocultural, monoreligious, monoethnic and focused on the “mother country” for its international viewpoint (frost course notes, 2010).

Although Australia is rapidly becoming a multi-faith society, the majority religious affiliation is still strongly Christian, as can be seen in source 2. Today 12.7 million Australians or 64% call themselves Christian and significantly fewer attend church regularly. In comparison to the statement above, we now live in a society which is generally considered to be multifaith, multiethnic and multiracial. Although immigration is the most significant reason for the change in the Australian religious landscape since 1945, denominational switching is also a huge contributor to the change in the religious landscape of Australia.

Denominational switching refers to the transfer of followers from one Christian denomination to another. This is mostly predominate in Protestant denominations. Protestants, especially younger ones, will often ‘shop around’ for a new denomination based on factors such as liking the minister, style of worship and music, proximity to home, sense of community and

activities provided by a particular congregation (frost course notes, 2010). People no longer remain in a particular denomination simply because their parents and grandparents belonged to it or because they share the same cultural background with other church members. In conclusion today's society individuals focus on their personal needs rather than the needs of their traditional communities ("I'm an individual- I can do what I want"). Also in today's society loyalty is to parish first and denomination second, especially among the younger members.