

# Effects of the vietnam war on australian society assignment

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The Impact of the Vietnam War On Vietnam Veterans and their Families And the Impact of the Australian Culture The Vietnam War had a lasting impact on Vietnam Veterans, who although they fought their hardest for their country, they returned to a country who saw them as less than heroes. They suffered both psychological and medical problems from open battles, sniper attacks and chemical warfare, and stress from war-life. Although the Vietnam War had some negative impacts, the Vietnam War was the turning point in Australian society, changing to a multicultural community we are proud of today.

Vietnam veterans returned home in 1975 to a less than supportive Australia. They were seen as 'murderers', no parades were held for them, they were met with contempt rather than gratitude. This, coupled with the trauma of war, Vietnam veterans suffered untreated psychological problems. They felt guilty because they 'let the South Vietnamese people down' and the sight of civilians killed in crossfire caused them to be plagued by bad dreams. They developed anxiety disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder and found it hard to settle back into daily life.

This spilled over into their domestic life, with divorce rates higher than average and 38% reported that their marriage failed within 6 months of returning home. Suicide rates were also higher than average, almost 20- 25 % higher than the Australian average. The psychological impact of the traumas of war had a negative effect on their children, who were 3 times more likely to commit suicide than the general Australian population. Even with the obvious psychological and social problems being experienced by veterans, the government did little to help until after 1983.

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Vietnam veterans also suffered medical complications that hindered them from settling back into daily life. Vietnam veterans suffered horrific wounds from open battles and often losing an limb by accidentally walking on land mines. Many were injured by ' unfair tactics' such as sniping by unidentified Vietcong. However the worse injury inflicted were not by enemies but by a defoliation campaign by their own army. Agent Orange was a chemical readily used to fall surrounding forests and shrubbery so to deprive the Vietcong guerrillas of cover.

However veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange reported to have developed many serious medical complications, like cancer, toxic brain dysfunction and birth abnormalities. Still, the government turned a blind eye to the welfare of veterans. The Vietnam Veterans' Association of Australia was established in 1980, to try and petition the government for compensation and aid for health problems. It put pressure on the government to have a formal inquest into the Agent Orange.

When the Hawke government finally initiated an inquiry in 1983, the government did not acknowledge that Agent Orange was linked to the serious medical illnesses reported by veterans on the grounds that their was insufficient evidence. However they did find that veterans were entitled to compensation for psychological problems. For the next 9 years, the group lobbied for the governments admission that Agent Orange had a direct link to those illnesses and were successful in 1994.

This was an example of how normal citizens of democracy have the power to change the way things are fun. Multiculturalism was one of the few positive

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impacts of the Vietnam War. Up until 1970, the Australian immigration policy was assimilation, the idea that every person who come to Australia must become Australian. However with the influx of Indo-chinese refugees trying to escape the horrors of a war torn country, came a new attitude, the idea that everyone had a right to freely express and practice their own traditions.

Now our society is rich with a diverse range foods and festivals from every country, from Europe to Asia, Africa to America, all contributing to what it really means to be Australian. The Vietnam War has have both negative and positive impacts on Australia. Psychological and medical illnesses were the typical experiences of a Vietnam veteran, their crippling illnesses obstruct them from settling back into daily life. However, multiculturalism was a positive impact of the Vietnam War, it shaped our society today.