The 1970s in context - Overview

The social upheaval and political drama of the 1960s continued throughout the 1970s. In many cases, these protests were part of wider social and political movements taking place in other Western countries.

Australian perspectives on immigration, war, sexual morality, the role of women and the environment were undergoing radical change. In 1974, the White Australia Policy was scrapped. Throughout the decade, women won the right to equal pay and maternity leave and Indigenous peoples made progress on land rights. In 1972, Australian troops were withdrawn from Vietnam and in 1975, the nation was rocked by the dismissal of Prime Minister Gough Whitlam.

1972 - Withdrawal from Vietnam

War had been raging between communist North Vietnam and democratic South Vietnam since 1959. Australian troops had been sent to serve alongside American forces in 1965, in an effort to help stop the spread of communism. Many of these troops were conscripted, which meant their military service was compulsory.

Opposition to the Vietnam War was high in the early 1970s. Many Australians began to doubt that the war would ever be won and strongly opposed the government's policy of conscription, or compulsory military service. On 8 May 1970, over 200 000 people around Australia gathered in cities to demonstrate against Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War.

Australian soldiers were withdrawn from Vietnam in 1972. In total, around 50 000 Australians had served in the conflict. Around 3000 were wounded and almost 500 were killed.

1972 - 1975: The Whitlam era

In 1972, Gough Whitlam's Labor government came to power. His range of radical reforms appealed to the millions of baby boomers who had grown tired of 23 years of conservative Liberal rule.

Gough Whitlam installed major changes across the fields of health, education, immigration, Indigenous rights, foreign affairs and industrial relations. He withdrew all Australian troops from Vietnam, abolished the White Australia Policy and increased funding for the arts. Whitlam also introduced free university education and lowered the national voting age from 21 to 18, giving Australia's youth a greater influence on the way their country was governed.

Despite his successful reforms, Gough Whitlam faced increasing opposition. Many people believed that he had mishandled the economy and was responsible for high levels of inflation and unemployment. The Whitlam government was also involved in a series of damaging scandals, including the Overseas Loans affair, in which the government was accused of attempts to fund its plans by illegally borrowing money from Middle Eastern countries.

In 1975, Prime Gough Minister Whitlam was dismissed by John Kerr, the Governor-General. The Governor-General is the Queen's representative in Australia. Many Australians had not realised that a British Head of State had the power to dismiss an Australian Prime Minister. The dismissal sparked widespread public outrage and became one of the most controversial events in Australian political history.

Malcolm Fraser comes to power

Following Whitlam's dismissal, an election saw Malcolm Fraser's Liberal National Party coalition sweep into power. Fraser served as Prime Minister until 1983. He campaigned to abolish apartheid in South Africa and was a strong supporter of Indigenous rights. Fraser also allowed more refugees and people from Asia to migrate to Australia and supported multiculturalism.

Indigenous rights in the 1970s
large proportion of Indigenous people lived in poor conditions throughout the 1970s. Indigenous rights campaigners did, however, make some major gains in their land rights struggle. In 1976, the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act* was established. It was a law which recognised that in some circumstances, Aboriginal people had a right to claim control of land.

In 1971, Indigenous people were counted in the national population for the first time. The census found that there were 115,953 Indigenous people living in Australia. In 1976, this number had risen to 160,915.

Several Aboriginal people reached political prominence in the 1970s. Neville Bonner, for example, became the first Aboriginal Australian to be elected to federal parliament.

**Multiculturalism and immigration in the 1970s**

Since 1901, the White Australia Policy had prevented non-white people from migrating to Australia. In 1974, the policy was abolished. As a result, tens of thousands of people from Asia and the Middle East were admitted into Australia throughout the latter half of the 1970s. Many of the new Asian immigrants were refugees from the Vietnam War. At around the same time, the number of people migrating to Australia from Britain and Europe declined.

The 1970s was the era of multiculturalism. This meant that Australian society embraced various cultural groups, with their distinct languages, religions and traditions and granted them equal status. This was in contrast to the previous policy of ‘assimilation’, which stipulated that migrants should abandon their cultures and languages and ‘blend in’ to the existing population.

Australia's new multicultural policy challenged traditional ideas about what it meant to be an ‘Australian’. A small number of people opposed multiculturalism. They believed that allowing cultural groups to retain their own identity would create divisions in society. Most people, however, believed that multiculturalism would have a positive effect on Australian life - enabling people to share cultural traditions like music, food and religion, and enriching the Australian experience.

**Women's rights and working conditions in the 1970s**

Women's rights and wages were high on the public agenda throughout the 1970s. Women continued to challenge traditional gender roles that confined them to work as child bearers and housewives, or kept them in routine, low-status positions.

In the early 1970s, women constituted one-third of the workforce, but were still paid less than men. In 1972, the Whitlam Government ruled that women doing the same job as men should be paid the same wage. In 1979 women also won the right to paid maternity leave. Few women, however, were employed in managerial or high-status roles.

**1970s overview questions**

1. Why was there opposition to Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War during the early 70s?
2. What major reforms did Gough Whitlam introduce?
3. Why did Gough Whitlam face growing opposition towards the end of his term?
4. Who dismissed Gough Whitlam and what year did this occur in?
5. What developments were made in reference to Indigenous Australians during the 1970s?
6. How and why did Australia's immigration policy change in the 1970s?
7. What challenges were women facing in the work force during the 1970s?
Music and entertainment

1975 - Colour television

Colour television was introduced to Australia in 1975. By 1978, it was estimated that around 7 in 10 Sydney households owned a colour television set. Colour gave television programmes a new appeal, injecting them with vibrancy and depth. Sporting programmes, for example, became much more dynamic and music programmes were brighter and more exciting to watch.

The most popular music programme of the decade was Countdown. Making its debut in 1974, Countdown provided exposure to many up-and-coming Australian music acts. Using brightly coloured lights and flamboyant costumes, new bands used the technology of colour television to project themselves into the lounge rooms and record collections, of many Australians.

Australian television content in the 1970s

In the 1970s, Australians watched more local content than ever before. The success of Australian-made programmes in the 1960s, such as Homicide and The Mavis Bramston Show, had proven that Australians had a hearty appetite for home-grown productions.

The government also encouraged the production of more Australian programmes throughout the decade by increasing funding to the Australian television industry. In 1976, the government imposed a 50 percent local content quota on Australian television between 4pm and 10pm, which also helped spur the production of local programmes.

In the early 1970s, the government introduced tax breaks and funding assistance to the local film industry to help protect it from foreign imports. Australian films flourished as a result. Later in the decade, the funding increase had a positive flow-on effect on the television industry, as many high-quality, locally-made feature films, mini-series and documentaries were broadcast on the small screen.

Australian television programmes in the 1970s

Debuting in 1977, Cop Shop continued the police drama precedent set by Homicide in the 1960s. Comedies like Kingswood Country and The Norman Gunston Show explored Australian themes and helped define a distinctly Australian sense of humour, while soap operas like The Flying Doctors, The Sullivans and Prisoner told diverse stories of everyday life in Australia.

Number 96 (1972-1977) was a controversial Australian soap opera set in a Sydney apartment block. The series approached taboo topics never before seen on Australian television, such as sex, nudity, drugs, racism and homosexuality.

Australian cinema in the 1970s

Local film industries are generally considered an important way for people to examine and share their own culture and heritage. Australian films, however, had struggled to reach the screen throughout the 1950s and 1960s - floundering amid the influx of American and other foreign cinema. The social upheaval of the late 1960s had prompted many Australians to re-examine their national culture and embark on the search for a unique Australian identity. Starved of local stories, however, many people feared that Australia's cultural identity was at risk.
In the 1970s, the Australian government began to provide support to the flailing film industry. Various funds were established to provide finance for Australian films, and in 1973, the Australian Film, Television and Radio School (AFTRS) opened. A renaissance in Australian cinema ensued - between 1970 and 1985, around 400 films were made in Australia. These included *Picnic at Hanging Rock*(1975) and *Breaker Morant* (1979).

These films enabled Australian characters and stories to be played out against the backdrop of our unique landscape, and provided a forum for people to explore issues of national identity. Several dominant themes emerged throughout this period of film making. The image of Australians as stoic, rugged outdoor people was common and the vast, red outback became a familiar setting.

Whether or not Australians identified with these depictions of themselves and their surroundings, local films proved popular with audiences during the 1970s.

**Australian radio in the 1970s**

FM radio was introduced to Australia in the mid 1970s. It provided a higher quality broadcast than the current AM radio technology, and created more space on the airwaves. A range of new public, commercial and niche radio stations would eventually spring up to fill this space.

Throughout the 1960s, Australia's large immigrant population had developed into a strong political force. Migrant groups demanded a radio service that allowed them to communicate in their own languages, and provided a forum for their distinct identity and culture to be fostered and celebrated.

FM radio technology provided this forum. In 1975, the Commonwealth Government funded the development of several multicultural radio stations. Two of these stations, 2EA in Sydney and 3EA in Melbourne, were eventually combined to form the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS). The new stations reflected the Government's shift in immigration policy from assimilation to multiculturalism, which encouraged migrants to retain ties to their country of origin.

In 1975, a new 24-hour youth rock station 2JJ (which later became Triple J) began broadcastng. Radio 2JJ gave unprecedented exposure to a number of Australian acts and promoted many styles of music otherwise ignored by commercial radio stations. In 1980, 2JJ moved over to the FM frequency.

**Radio and Australian music in the 1970s**

In the early 1970s, Australian music acts struggled to achieve sustained success, mostly due to a lack of radio airplay. American and other foreign acts continued to saturate the market.

In 1973, however, fears about the overwhelming volume of American music flowing into Australia led to an increase in local content quotas. In 1973, the Australian Broadcasting Control Board (ABCB) set down a code of practice that required radio stations to ensure that 10 percent of the music they broadcast was Australian. In 1976, this was raised to 20 percent.

The introduction of local content quotas led to a revival in the Australian music industry. Throughout the 1970s, the music programme *Countdown* and new 24-hour rock station 2JJ were also crucial in providing national exposure to many emerging local artists.

**Australian music in the 1970s**

In the early 1970s, it was generally considered overly-ambitious for an Australian musician or band to aim for international success. Instead, Australian acts were expected to concentrate on conquering the domestic market, before 'going international'. By the end of the decade, however, several Australian acts had broken into the international market as well as achieving domestic success. Bands like Sherbet and Skyhooks and artists like John Paul Young and Olivia Newton-John enjoyed hit songs in America and Europe and embarked on overseas tours.
Skyhooks

Glam rock outfit Skyhooks were one of the first distinctively Australian acts ever to achieve large-scale success on the domestic charts. Skyhooks challenged the norm with their flamboyant costumes and suggestive lyrics and many of their songs were banned from commercial radio. Their 1974 album *Living in the Seventies* soon became the highest-selling Australian album of all time.

A distinctive 'Australian pub rock' style of music also emerged in the 1970s, characterised by simple rhythms and melodies and heavy electric guitars and drums. It was made famous by acts like Cold Chisel and Midnight Oil. Local 'hard rock' outfit AC/DC went on to achieve major international success, selling 150 million albums around the world.

In January 1972, Australia held its first ever outdoor music festival in Sunbury, near Melbourne. It attracted around 30 000 people and featured many local musicians, as well as various big-name overseas acts. The Sunbury festival signified the growing strength of the Australian music industry and marked the changing tastes of music lovers towards classic rock.

Disco music

The American 'disco' craze filtered through to Australia in the mid 1970s. Disco fans dressed in fitted, shiny outfits and danced in nightclubs to upbeat disco music. Popular American disco artists include The Jackson 5 and Donna Summer. The disco-themed films like *Saturday Night Fever* (1977) also helped popularise disco culture.

Other entertainment pursuits in the 1970s

Australians enjoyed a range of leisure activities during the 1970s. Go-karts, BMX bikes and skateboards were popular and many new ten-pin bowling centres and roller skating rinks were opened.

Other entertainment pursuits took place at home - houses were extended to provide more room for leisure and many families built backyard swimming pools.

Music & Entertainment questions

1. How did television change in Australia during the 1970s?
2. Why did the Australian government provide support to the film industry in the 1970s?
3. What benefits did the introduction of FM radio bring to Australia in the 1970s?
4. List two things you learnt about music from the text above in reference to Australia during the 1970s.
Fashion in the 1970s was daring, carefree, and diverse. For women, skirts ranged from extremely long to drastically short and fabrics were bright and boldly patterned. Men wore their shirts tight, their trouser-legs wide and their moustaches long. 'Hippie' styles of dress entered the mainstream and new ethnic-inspired fashion imitated styles from all corners of the world.

1970s fashion was varied and changed frequently, but always liked to shock - whether it was towering platform shoes, huge bell-bottom flares, or tight, shiny, disco-inspired hot pants.

'Hippie' fashion in the 1970s

The hippie movement of the late 1960s continued into the early 1970s. Many young people had become dissatisfied with the prevailing mainstream social values, considering them to be shallow and materialistic. Some strongly opposed Australian involvement in the Vietnam War and others were calling for a greater concern for nature. Whatever their motivation, many young people in the early 1970s adhered to the values of peace, love and freedom and sought an alternative, 'hippie' way of life.

Many people embraced communal living and a nomadic lifestyle, explored Eastern religions, experimented with drugs and adopted a rebellious style of dress.

Clothing styles and fabrics were inspired by non-Western cultures, such as Indian and African. Natural fabrics and tie-dyed and paisley prints were also popular. Many people handcrafted their own clothes and accessories and personal items were often decorated with beads and fringes. Bare feet or leather sandals were typical fashion and flowers and peace signs became symbols of the movement.

Women's fashion in the 1970s

As the women's liberation movement took hold in the 1970s, women's fashion broke free from convention. Bras and corsets were denounced as symbols of oppression and conformity, and were discarded by many women. Women also flouted their new-found freedom by wearing traditional male clothing like baggy trousers, men's jackets, vests, over-sized shirts, ties and hats.

Fashion trends like miniskirts, bell bottoms and long hair carried over from the 1960s, although some women in the 1970s preferred to wear 'midi' (knee length) or free-flowing 'maxi' (floor length) skirts.
Men's fashion in the 1970s

Men's fashion became more bold and daring throughout the 1970s. The hippie influence of the late 1960s crossed over into the fashion of both sexes. For men, this meant wide, colourful ties and bright, fitted shirts with big collars. Many men grew short beards, sideburns or moustaches and let their hair grow long.

Flared trousers were popular with both men and women throughout the decade - ranging from a subtle flare to huge, flapping bell-bottoms. By the end of the 1970s, however, trouser legs had gradually straightened again.

Popular culture and fashion in the 1970s

Television, film and music in the 1970s exerted a powerful force over fashion. The television program *Charlie’s Angels* spurred the demand for flared trousers and the rough, flicked-back hairstyle worn by the show's star, Farrah Fawcett.

The *Wonder Woman* series popularised knee-high boots, sometimes paired with daringly short hotpants. Later in the decade, movies like *Saturday Night Fever* popularised the showy ‘disco’ style of dress.

Music stars like David Bowie and the band T-Rex influenced the spangly, glittery style of glam rock.

Disco fashion in the 1970s

The popular disco music genre spawned its own fashion craze in the mid-1970s. Young people gathered in nightclubs dressed in new disco clothing that was designed to show off the body and shine under dance-floor lights. Disco clothing was usually only worn at night. It was often made from stretchy fabrics like lycra and spandex, or synthetic polyester and velour and decorated with sequins. Popular items of disco clothing for women included short ‘hotpants’, bodysuits and towering platform shoes. Men’s disco wear included open-necked satin shirts and flared trousers.

Fashion questions

1. How did female fashion change in the 1970s?
2. How did male fashion change in the 1970s?
3. Briefly summarise in your own words;
   A. ‘Hippie’ fashion
   B. ‘Disco’ fashion.
   C. The influence popular culture had on fashion.
Sport in Australian culture

Australia is often considered to be a 'sports mad' country. Our love of sport is reflected in the numbers of people who play sport, attend sporting events and watch sport on television. Australia leads the world in sports science and in the technical development of television sporting coverage.

Sport and our national identity

For a nation with a relatively small population, Australia performs remarkably well at an international level. Sporting success, particularly on the world stage, enables the creation of a distinct national identity. Victorious sports people often become national heroes and some, like legendary cricketer Donald Bradman, become revered as Australian icons.

The popularity of sport in Australia can partly be attributed to a warm climate that encourages people to get outdoors and be active. Sport also enables well-loved national values like 'mateship', 'having a go', and 'egalitarianism' (the assumption that that all people are equal), to be played out. Australians also revel in the expression of 'fair play' on the sporting field - hence, sports cheats are often chastised for being 'un-Australian.'

Sport as a reflection of social change

A close examination of sport can yield other important discoveries about changes in our culture over time. As Australian society became more commercialised and globalised, so too did our sport. From an amateur, locally-based pastime, sport in Australia gradually evolved into a professional, highly lucrative industry with international scope.

The development of sport in Australia also reflects the gradual movement of our culture away from its British roots, towards a more Americanised, yet distinctly Australian cultural hybrid. While sports like cricket and the various codes of rugby point to our British heritage, modern sports like basketball demonstrate the penetration of American influence into our culture. At the same time, local sports like Australian Rules football continue to thrive.

It was also interesting to note that an international sports boycott was instituted against South Africa to voice global disapproval of their racist selection policies and apartheid in general. Australia was one of the countries involved in this boycott.

Sport in the 1970s

Australia achieved several outstanding sporting results throughout the 1970s. In some areas, however, the nation struggled to retain the sporting supremacy it had enjoyed over previous decades. Australia's sports system was considered by some to be amateur and outdated in comparison to the sophisticated sporting regimes of Europe and America. This sparked strong debate on how Australia should go about regaining its sporting dominance and in the process, restoring its national pride.

Sporting success in the 1970s

Australia's netball team won the World Championships three times in the 1970s.

The Australian swimming team also brought home eight gold medals from the 1972 Munich Olympics. Fifteen-year-old swimmer Shane Gould was a standout performer, taking home three gold, one silver and one bronze medal.
In 1974, Australia qualified for the World Cup finals in West Germany. Until that time, many Australians had considered soccer to be a marginal sport played only by migrants. Suddenly, it was propelled to the status of a 'serious' game worthy of much media interest. The Australians performed admirably at the championships. A new national soccer league was established in 1977, riding on the wave of new interest in the game.


Many of these strong performances went unnoticed, however, among a string of seemingly disappointing results in other sports.

1970s - Sporting decline

The 1976 Montreal Olympics yielded little joy for Australia. The team failed to win a single gold medal, taking home just five medals overall and finishing in 32nd place.

Many reasons were put forward to explain this sporting decline. Australia’s geographic isolation had always made international competition difficult and expensive and forced Australian athletes to compete during their off-season.

The biggest problem, however, was that Australian sport was relatively amateur and unstructured and Australian athletes received very little government funding. Many of them worked full-time and trained on weekends and after work. Equipment, travel expenses and entry to competitions were often financed from an athlete’s own pockets.

Australia's amateur sports system was in stark contrast to the rigorous, professional sporting systems that had been developed in Europe and America during the 1970s. As well as supporting and developing elite sportspeople, these systems actively encouraged sports participation in the community.

To many Australians, sporting success was integral to our national identity. By the late 1970s, however, it was becoming clear that Australian sport would require government support if it were to retain its international dominance.

A government-funded national sports system

Increasing public concern prompted the Commonwealth Government into action and construction began on Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) in Canberra. Completed in 1981, the AIS aimed to help talented athletes reach their potential, by providing specialised training, expert coaches, sports science and sports medicine services, as well as state-of-the-art facilities across many different sports.

Through the Australian Sports Commission, the government also established funding and scholarship schemes that allowed athletes to devote more time and energy to training. Programmes were also set up to encourage better sports participation in the wider community.

In the coming decades, these measures would prove extremely successful in restoring the international success rate of Australian athletes.

Life. Be in it.

In 1975, the Victorian government conducted a study into people's attitudes towards fitness. It found that 60 percent of people considered exercise to be boring, unappealing and too much hard work.

As a result, the Life. Be In It. media campaign was launched. The campaign encouraged people to become involved in any kind of physical activity. It centred around an average man called Norm, who got up off the couch and went to fly a kite. The campaign created massive public awareness of the
importance of exercise and also improved sports participation rates. The *Life. Be In It.* campaign was so successful in Victoria that in 1978, it was expanded to all other States.

By the end of the 1970s, Australians were generally much more interested in keeping fit and healthy. Many joined gyms and thousands participated in fun runs, marathons and triathlons.

**World Series cricket: Sport meets business**

Throughout the 1960s, cricket's popularity in Australia had waned. The game was injected with life in 1977 when Australian businessman Kerry Packer established a new competition called World Series cricket.

World Series cricket was custom-made for television. Players wore bright uniforms, used a white ball and played matches under flood lights at night, when the networks would gain the largest audience. Cricketers were offered large amounts of money to forego their places in Test cricket matches to play in his new competition and many leading international players took up the offer.

With most of the world's superstar players absent, crowds at Test matches dwindled. Worried about the future of the game, cricket officials were forced to negotiate with Packer. By the end of the 1970s, players were permitted to take part in both World Series cricket and Test cricket matches.

World Series cricket only ran for two years, but it had a lasting influence on the sport. Players were paid more and the standard of television coverage improved markedly. Importantly, World Series cricket also marked the beginning of Australian sport being big business.

**Football in the 1970s**

Contrary to the fears of many officials in the 1960s, the televising of football matches did not lead to reduced crowd numbers. Quite the opposite, in fact - interest in all codes of football increased in the 1970s. In 1970, for example, the Australian Rules football grand final between Carlton and Collingwood pulled a record crowd of 121,696 people.

**Football, television and sponsorship**

The trend towards 'professionalism' penetrated further into all codes of football throughout the 1970s. With finance from higher gate takings and television rights, clubs could increasingly afford to offer generous salary packages. In greater numbers throughout the 1970s, players and coaches began to shop themselves around to the highest bidder, rather than staying loyal to one club for their entire careers.

Television provided many new ways for businesses to profit from Australian sport. As a result, many sports in the 1970s made changes to maximise commercial opportunities. In Australian Rules football, the rules were altered to make the game more attractive and in rugby league, sponsors began advertising on players' jerseys.

**Women and sport**

The study of sport can yield valuable information on the status and roles of particular groups in society as a whole. Traditionally, groups like Indigenous people, ethnic minorities and women have been discriminated against, or treated unequally in relation to sports participation. This treatment is thought to reflect the prevailing cultural attitudes towards these groups.

In the past, social traditions and a dominant masculine culture had confined women to 'refined' sports like croquet and tennis. In the 1960s and 1970s, however, women demanded equal status to men in many areas of social, political and cultural life. This included the sporting sphere, where some women challenged society's expectations by taking up sports like horse racing, football, long-distance running and even weight lifting.

Prior to the 1970s, women were not permitted to become fully-fledged members of many golf clubs. They were granted only 'associate member' status, meaning they were allowed to use the golf course
only on particular days, mainly during the week. This form of discrimination was banned, however, with the introduction of various State and Commonwealth equal opportunity laws in the 1970s and 1980s. These laws made it illegal to discriminate against people on the grounds of a number of things, including sex, marital status or pregnancy.

While women were gradually accepted into almost all kinds of sport, history has shown that they would continue to struggle to achieve true sporting equality with men, particularly in the areas of funding and media coverage.

According to some critics, this discrimination and marginalisation of certain groups within sport goes against fundamental Australian values like 'egalitarianism', or equality for all.

**Sport questions**

1. Why was sport part of the Australian national identity in the 1970s?
2. Is sport still a large part of the Australian national identity in 2014? Why?
3. What sporting success did Australia enjoy in the 1970s?
4. When and did Australia’s sporting decline become evident and what were the reasons for this?
5. List two sports during the 1970s which could be considered national sports.
British influence on the Australian culture

White British settlers arrived in Australia in 1788 and the extent of the British influence is still evident today. The British Union Jack features predominantly on our national flag, and the Queen is Australia's Head of State. British models also form the basis of Australia's legal and political systems, as well providing our national language.

Up until World War II, Britain remained the dominating cultural influence in Australia. Britons also dominated the make-up of Australian society - most of Australia's citizens were either born in Britain, or had British descendants. In the years following the war, British subjects were encouraged to migrate to Australia under an 'assisted package' scheme, which helped with the cost of migrating to Australia and provided housing and employment options upon arrival. Between 1945 and 1972, over one million British migrants settled in Australia.

Before 1945, many people, including Australians themselves, considered Australia to be nothing more than a white British colony; a nation whose national identity was relatively indistinct from the British. During this period of Australia's history, our modes of entertainment, food, fashion, sporting culture and our social values and attitudes were largely dictated by British culture.

American influence on the Australian culture

One of the most significant changes to have taken place in Australian society since the end of WWII, however, has been its drift towards American, rather than British culture. As the American way of life was projected further into Australia via popular culture, it would rapidly alter the ways we spent our money, entertained ourselves, dressed and socialised. Eventually, many of our British cultural legacies would give way to new American ideals.

In the decades since World War II, however, the penetration of American popular culture into Australian society has raised ongoing concerns about Australia's ability to carve out its own national identity. Local cultural products like films and music are an important way for people of a country to explore and share their common culture and heritage. Australian characters, themes and issues, however, are often outweighed by representations of the American way of life.

American films and television programs depict American people in American settings and American music deals with American, not Australian concerns. Many people have feared that if Australians are starved of distinctly Australian cultural products, the national identity will be at risk.

Introduction - British and American influence in the 1970s

Australian society in the 1970s was a fusion of many cultural flavours - European, Asian, Indigenous Australian and British to name a few. From the 1970s onwards, however, the pervading influence of American popular culture would shift Australia further away from its traditional British ties, towards a more Americanised society.

A new national anthem

In 1977, Advance Australia Fair became the Australian national anthem. It replaced the previous official anthem God Save the Queen.
A 1977 national poll found that 43 percent of Australians preferred *Advance Australia Fair* as the national anthem, while just 19 percent chose *God Save the Queen*. This reflected a marked shift in public attitude - Australia’s nostalgic bonds to Britain were rapidly dissolving.

**Music and radio in the 1970s**

The influence of foreign acts on the Australian music charts carried over from the rock 'n' roll era into the following decades. Popular American acts of the decade include folk rock artists Bob Dylan and Joni Mitchell and disco acts like Donna Summers and the Jackson 5. British acts like the Rolling Stones and T-Rex and European groups like ABBA also enjoyed huge success in Australia.

In 1973, the government introduced a code of practices to prevent the Australian music industry from being swamped by foreign products. It set down a minimum requirement for the amount of Australian music to be broadcast on radio. The resulting increase of local music on radio play lists saw acts like John Paul Young, AC/DC and Olivia Newton-John achieve chart success.

At the close of the decade, however, the industry remained dominated by foreign, mostly American, music.

**Cinema in the 1970s**

In the face of stiff competition from foreign, mostly American, products, very few films shown in cinemas during the 1950s and 1960s were Australian. In the 1970s, amidst fears that Australia would soon lose its national cultural identity, the Australian Government helped kick-start the Australian film industry by actively supporting local film and television producers.

Between 1970 and 1985, around 400 films were made in Australia. Even at the height of the Australian film resurgence, however, local cinemas continued to be dominated by American films like *Jaws* (1975), *Star Wars* (1977) and *Rocky* (1978).

American programmes like *The Brady Bunch* and *Happy Days* enjoyed widespread popularity in Australia during the 1970s. British programmes like *Fawlty Towers* and *Dr Who* were also popular.

The overwhelming dominance of foreign, mostly American, programmes on Australian television was, however, facing mounting public opposition in the early 1970s.

**Reasons for American dominance of Australian television**

Since the advent of television, America had been able to produce television programmes much more cheaply than they could be produced in Australia. This was largely due to America’s large population, strong economy and huge entertainment industry.

American television companies could then afford to sell these programmes to Australian TV networks at an extremely low price. This discouraged the production of much more expensive locally-made television programmes and led to a flooding of the domestic market by less expensive, imported content.

**Resurgence of Australian television in the 1970s**

Television plays a significant role in forming the culture, beliefs and values of a nation, and the overwhelming dominance of American content on Australian television was becoming a great concern to many.

In the face of increasing public opposition, Australian television stations began to give local programmes a greater platform throughout the 1970s. Many programs, such as *Homicide* and *Kingswood Country*, held their own against foreign programmes and were consistently listed in the nation's top ten most-watched shows.

**Food and shopping in the 1970s**
American fast food chains rapidly extended their reach across Australia during the 1970s. In 1971, McDonald's opened their first restaurant in Australia and by the end of the decade there were 105 stores throughout the country.

These food outlets offered fast, affordable food that could be consumed in-store or at home. This convenience, combined with greater numbers of stores and aggressive promotional campaigns, meant that fast food quickly became an established part of the diets of many Australians.

Throughout the 1970s, the trend towards American-style foods was echoed in the supermarket sector. Many new kinds of snacks and drinks were offered and the range of existing foods, like breakfast cereal and confectionery, was expanded to include new American products. The range of American-style pre-packaged and frozen foods also increased as part of a general trend towards convenient, time-saving foods.

**Impact of changing food habits**

The influence of America on food consumption in Australia has had significant social and economic repercussions.

The supermarket explosion, for example, meant that consumers could save money and satisfy all of their shopping needs in one place. On the other hand, smaller vendors like butchers, bakers and greengrocers were unable to compete with the convenience and low prices offered by large supermarkets and were forced to close.

As well as changing the kinds of foods Australians consumed, the trend towards American convenience foods also affected the amount of time people spent preparing food. During the 1940s, it was estimated that Australians spent around six hours per day purchasing and preparing food. By the 1970s, this had dropped to two hours.

**Sport and our British heritage**

Since the early days of the Australian colony, sport has been a fundamental aspect of Australian cultural life. Sport is one area of Australian society that, for decades, resisted American influence and retained a strong British influence.

Popular contemporary sports like cricket, horse racing, and rugby union were all originally transferred to Australia from Britain. Australia and Britain also share many great sporting traditions like rugby internationals and The Ashes cricket matches. Australians still relish beating England 'at her own game'.

**Sport and the American influence in the 1970s**

From the 1970s, American culture was changing the nature of Australian sport. This was accelerated by advances in communications technology, which enabled more widespread, frequent and up-to-date broadcasts of American sport into Australian homes.

From the 1970s, the American influence also changed the way sport was presented. Many Australian sporting matches began to feature American-style glitz and glamour, such as football games where players and the crowd were boosted by cheerleaders and mascots. The World Series Cricket tournament, developed in the late 1970s, was inspired by American baseball. It featured brightly-clad players, night games and shorter match times - all designed to appeal to a modern television audience.

**The quest for an Australian identity**

While the British and American influence has played a major role in defining the shape of Australia that we know today, a number of other influences have contributed to the development of the Australian identity.

As settlers in an unfamiliar land, the Australian identity was long bound to the stereotype of the tough, heroic bushman who fought to tame a difficult landscape. Australian values like 'mateship', 'fair go'
and the 'Aussie battler' emerged as a result of this myth. Throughout the prosperous post-war years, however, a new Australian ideal emerged. Australians were thought to be part of a more laidback culture that enjoyed the 'good life'.

As migrants moved into Australia over the decades, they introduced new stories, traditions and perspectives to Australian culture. The traditional concepts of an Australia as a white British colony, or a land of struggling bush-dwellers, no longer seemed to fit with the diverse new reality of society. As Aboriginal people were finally acknowledged as the original owners of the land, the role of Indigenous values in the construction of a true Australian identity had also become apparent.

Australian society has absorbed many cultural influences across the decades - not just British and American, but Indigenous, Asian, European and many more. As such, the Indigenous and migrant influence has intervened in the American and British effect on Australian culture.

In the face of globalisation, however, the future of Australia's unique national identity was increasingly challenged by the development of a global culture.

**American & British influence questions.**

1. What British influences on Australian culture are still evident today?
2. How did American culture influence Australia?
3. What does Australia changing the national anthem from “God Save the Queen” to “Advance Australia affair” signify?
4. What were the reasons for American dominance of Australian television and how did the Australian government try to combat this in the 1970s?
5. How did food and shopping change in the 1970s and what impact did this have on Australia?
6. What impact did American influence have on sport in the 1970s?
7. In your own words summarise “The quest for an Australian identity”