

6. The results and aftermath



Student Materials

Even while they were celebrating the results, the campaigners pushed for further action. They knew this was only part of a very long process.

Source 6.1: National summary

State		Enrolled	Yes		No	
			Votes	%	Votes	%
New South Wales	Yes	2315828	1949036	91.46	182010	8.54
Victoria	Yes	1734476	1525026	94.68	85611	5.32
Queensland	Yes	904808	748612	89.21	90587	10.79
Western Australia	Yes	437609	319823	80.95	75282	19.05
South Australia	Yes	590275	473440	86.26	75383	13.74
Tasmania	Yes	199589	167176	90.21	18134	9.79
Total	Yes	6182585	5183113	90.77	527007	9.23

(Source: *Australian Referendums 1906-1999*, Australian Electoral Commission)

Source 6.2

Cartoon, *The Australian*, 29 May 1967

(Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus: *The 1967 Referendum, or When Aborigines Didn't get the Vote*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1997, page 123)

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Source 6.3 Looking Back

The 1967 Referendum has been seen in many ways. Today we celebrate the strong community goodwill for Indigenous Australians that was first demonstrated in 1967. However, the current inequalities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians remind us how much that goodwill still needs to be translated into real change.

Chicka Dixon (39 years old in 1967)

'The 1967 Referendum ended seven years of frustration of trying to force the Feds into changing the Federal Constitution, and with it ended one campaign for justice for Kooris.'

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Burnum Burnum (31 years old in 1967)

'I participated in the ten-year campaign ... When it finally did happen, we thought it was about time ... The 1967 Referendum also ushered in basic anti-discrimination and human rights laws, as well as heralding the land rights era. It was a definite turning point in modern Australian political history and the conscience of the nation was expressed by the people.'

'At the time, I definitely thought the 1967 Referendum had achieved something – personally, it made me lose my inferiority complex.'

John Maynard (13 years old in 1967)

'At the time, the Referendum made no apparent difference to my life; however, in light of where I am today, I feel, as with most Aboriginal people, the '67 Referendum was a very significant point. I also now believe that the Referendum meant that the volume and numbers of Aboriginal voices was beginning to unite, grow louder and begin to be heard by mainstream Australian society.'

Leisha May Evatts (27 years old in 1967)

'It did make some difference to my life: we were allowed to go some places that we never went before, such as pictures, swimming pools, and have a glass of soft drink in shops. But basically we were still looked down upon. Racial prejudice was and still is very strong. Kellerberrin Shire [WA] took the toilet sign down that said "Native Women Only". And next to it a toilet that said "Ladies Only". I didn't know I could vote in the Referendum and believed that it had to pass for us to vote. But I started to vote after the 1967 Referendum. I believed that we were nothing before that [the 1967 Referendum]; we did not have a vote or a say in anything – we were a none people.'

Elizabeth Hoffman (adult in 1967)

'The '67 Referendum didn't really affect everyday life – you still now have to fight for things. We had to fight for anything we ever got and are still doing it.'

Greg Norria (14 years old in 1967)

'I don't really remember anything about the Referendum ... Equality is still a long way off ... It seems that the Referendum was like only the opening of one door and there are still many other doors to open.'

Dr Gordon Briscoe (29 years old in 1967)

'At the time, the welfare structure did not extend to those who weren't classified as Aborigines within the States: Aborigines were those who lived on missions and it didn't include "half-castes", "quarter-castes" etc. The focus of FCAATSI's campaign were those Aborigines.'

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Stephen R. Seiver (21 years old in 1967)

'I was working and supporting my brothers and sisters at the time of the Referendum. I believed it meant citizenship rights and the end of "dog tags" and rules made just for Aboriginal people.'

Bill Humes (22 years old in 1967)

'It was a great morale booster for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people around the country. The Referendum was also part of a world-wide awakening on civil rights, and as such Aboriginal people were becoming aware of their own worth and place in Australian society. For me, it reinforced my political struggles and those of people I knew ... Many of the gains such as community organisations, education assistance, followed on from this. Other events such as street marches, protest and the Tent Embassy followed....'

(Source: Excerpts from oral testimony collected by Dale Edwards and Kath Schilling in January-February 1997, available fully in Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus: *The 1967 Referendum, or When Aborigines Didn't get the Vote*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1997, pages 136-145)