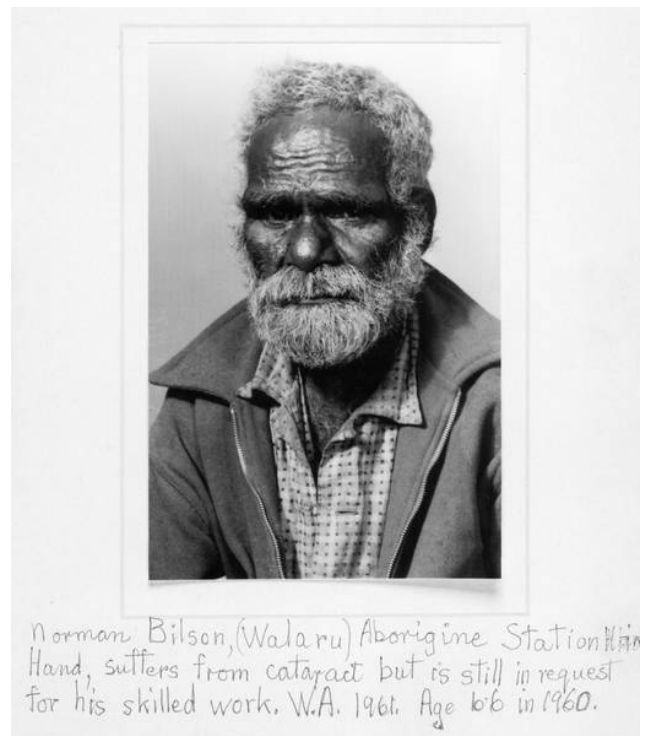**2**

COMPARE AND CONTRAST: FREMANTLE AND KALGOORLIE

Introduction

The result of the 1967 Referendum showed that Western Australians were least in favour of the proposed Constitutional amendments compared with the rest of the country.

Within the State itself there was also great disparity, with the division of Kalgoorlie returning the highest 'No' vote in WA, while the division of Fremantle cast one of the State's highest 'Yes' votes by percentage.

These two extremes were very much a reflection of the national trend where voters in regional and rural divisions were less supportive of the proposed constitutional changes in contrast to their city counterparts. This legacy, to some extent, lingers on.

Norman Bilson, (Walaru) Aborigine Station Man Hand, suffers from cataract but is still in request for his skilled work. W.A. 1961. Age 66 in 1960.

State Library of Victoria, Box 12/6, Council for Aboriginal Rights [Vic.] Papers, MS 12913|State Library of Western Australia: ACC8303A..

Mrs Lulu Bilson (Kowituku) wife of Alec Bilson. She was bitten on her right hand by a diamond patterned snake. The station manager cut her wrist, but kept the ligature on for 30 hours, so she lost her right hand.

State Library of Victoria, Box 12/6, Council for Aboriginal Rights (Vic.) Papers, MS 12913| State Library of Western Australia: BA2641/18.

Fremantle

In a close outcome the division of Fremantle cast the State's second highest 'Yes' vote, by percentage, with the nearby division of Curtin recording the highest. At the time, the division of Fremantle covered the entirety of the City of Fremantle, Cottesloe, Mosman Park, the Town of East Fremantle, Rottnest Island and parts of the City of Melville.

As an inner metropolitan electorate the division was created at Federation in 1901 and was one of the original seventy-five divisions that were contested in the first federal election. The total population of the area, according to the 1966 Census, was estimated to be around 94,000 people, of whom 55,491 were of voting age. Of the 57,734 enrolled voters, 59,283 votes were cast.

Kalgoorlie

In contrast to Fremantle the Kalgoorlie division cast the State's highest 'No' vote. Kalgoorlie's subdivisions included Boulder, Dundas, Gascoyne, Geraldton, Greenough, Kalgoorlie, Kanowna, Kimberley, Leonora, Mt Magnet, Murchison, Pilbara and Yilgarn. In terms of size these subdivisions represented over 90 per cent of the State's land mass and almost a third of the entire continent, an area greater than the size of France, Spain, Germany, Italy, Poland and Great Britain combined.

Before it was abolished in 2010 and divided into smaller divisions, Kalgoorlie was the largest single-member electorate in the world. Notwithstanding the vastness of this area's geographical spread, the population of this area at the time, according to 1966 Census data, was estimated to be approximately 70,300 people, almost 25 per cent below that of Fremantle. In the Kalgoorlie division 41,732 people were of voting age in 1966, but only 35,586 people were enrolled to vote. A total of 36,183 votes were cast in the Referendum within the division of Kalgoorlie.

WA is 'a racist state'

MELBOURNE: Western Australia was a racist state with the law geared only for whites, says Aborigines Advancement League of Victoria director Bruce McGuinness.

Department of Aboriginal Affairs archives: Consignment 1724 1960/0144.

Census data and polling results

The table below shows a comparative analysis of the estimated voting population of WA against the total number of voters.

	Est. Voting Population (1966 Census)	Enrolled Voters	'Yes' Vote	'No' Vote	Informal Votes	Postal Votes	Absent Votes	Total Vote Count
Division of Kalgoorlie	**41,732**	**35,586**	**21,719**	**8,888**	**960**	**1,121**	**3,495**	**31,567 (*36,183)**
[Boulder]	2,971	3,668	2,107	872	141			3,120
[Dundas]	4,546	3,870	2,239	814	85			3,138
[Gascoyne]	5,474	2,508	1,028	464	47			1,539
[Geraldton]	6,547	6,307	3,539	1,269	182			4,990
[Greenough]	4,797	4000	2,288	928	79			3,295
[Kalgoorlie]	3,749	7,335	3,825	2,001	179			6,005
[Kanowna]	NO DATA	214	40	11	2			53
[Kimberly]	4,885	2,726	1,227	435	73			1,735
[Leonora]	798	531	157	74	6			237
[Mt Magnet]	1,195	786	326	198	28			552
[Murchison]	910	523	144	107	2			253
[Pilbara]	5,395	1,873	684	255	33			972
[Yilgarn]	465	1,245	729	252	39			1,020
Division of Fremantle	**55,491**	**57,734**	**43,868**	**8,423**	**1,310**	**1,335**	**4,347**	**53,601 (*59,283)**
[Cottesloe]	9,198	9,658	6,603	1,188	129			7,920
[Fremantle]	4,368	7,886	4,893	1,196	262			6,351
[Applecross]		9,547	6,987	974	101			8,062
[Melville]	26,463	8,127	5,732	1,022	14			6,868
[Palmyra]		8,420	5,967	1,052	110			7,129
[S Fremantle]	15,462	14,096	8,959	2,041	513			11,513
Totals	**97,223**	**93,320**	**65,587**	**17,311**	**2,270**	**2,456**	**7,842**	**95,466**

* Postal and absentee votes were not included in the original return but are included in the above table totals to assist in gaining a more comprehensive understanding of the outcome.

DID YOU KNOW?

- 215 people voted whilst receiving treatment at the Royal Perth Hospital.
- The division of Stirling in the metropolitan area reported one of the State's highest number of non-voters.
- Polling booths were open from 8am to 8pm on the day of the Referendum.
- Half the counting centres in the division of Canning had completed the count by 10.30pm on the day of the Referendum.
- Rain fell in the division of Curtin on the day of the Referendum.

Quick Facts: Statistics
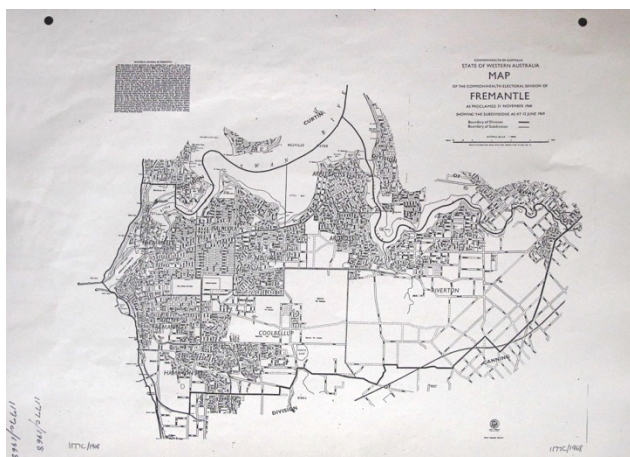
Division of Fremantle

Yes Vote: 83.89%

No Vote: 16.11%

9 out of 43 polling places lost ballot papers, between them losing a total of 16 papers.

The division reported 767 postal votes and 4178 absent votes.

In contrast to Kalgoorlie, the final polling report from Fremantle made no mention of Aboriginal voters.

State Library of Western Australia, 46/2/FRE (1969).
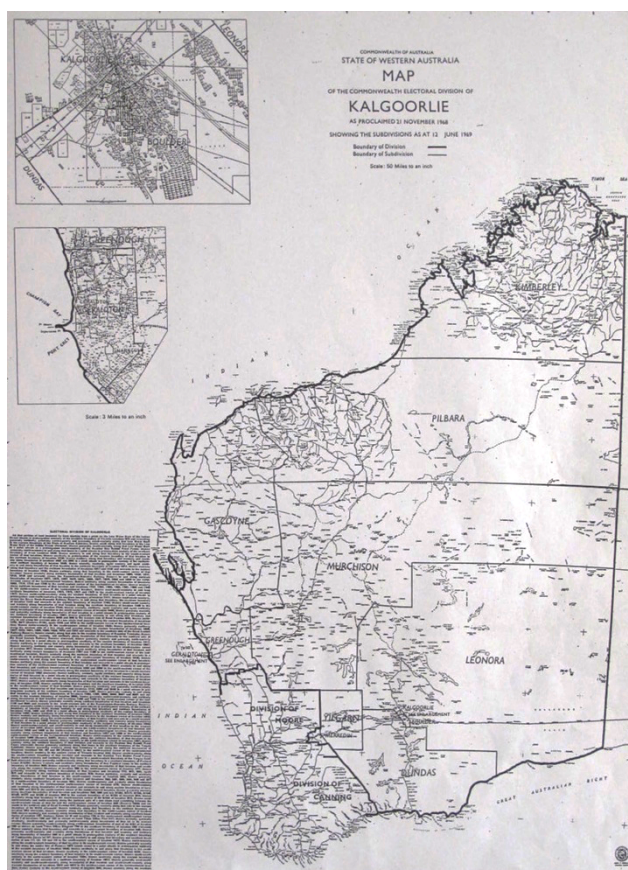
Division of Kalgoorlie

Yes Vote: 70.96%

No Vote: 29.04%

The division reported a decline in Aboriginal voters.

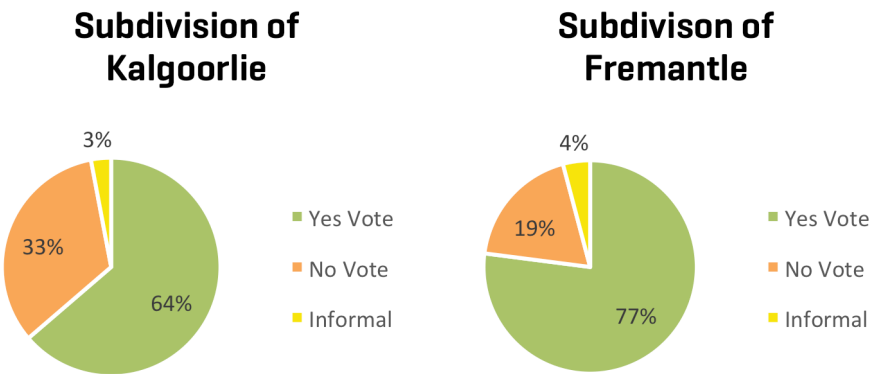The division had 1121 postal votes and 3495 absent votes.

In the post-referendum report from the Kalgoorlie division, it was identified that up to 75% of Aboriginal voters enrolled at missions or stations were no longer living at their listed address.

State Library of Western Australia, 46/2/KAL (1969).

The following graphics are the number of votes cast in the subdivisions of Kalgoorlie and Fremantle (A), the respective division counts (B), and the State and National vote counts (C).
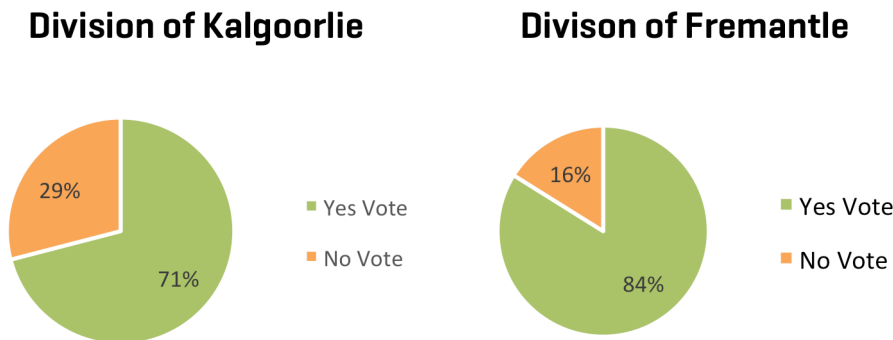
(A) Votes Cast: Subdivisions

Subdivision of Kalgoorlie

■ Yes Vote	64%
■ No Vote	33%
■ Informal	3%

Subdivison of Fremantle

■ Yes Vote	77%
■ No Vote	19%
■ Informal	4%

* Informal vote count has been shown here.

Data retrieved from the National Archives of Australia: '1967 Referendum- Poling Place Figures', PP631/1, WE1967/555.
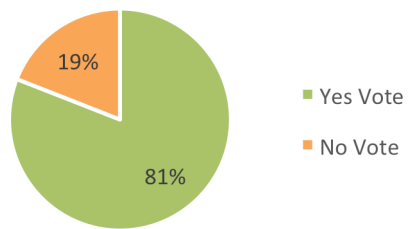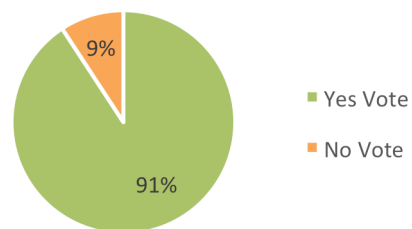
(B) Votes Cast: Divisions

Division of Kalgoorlie

■ Yes Vote	71%
■ No Vote	29%

Divison of Fremantle

■ Yes Vote	84%
■ No Vote	16%

Data retrieved from the National Archives of Australia: '1967 Referendum – DRO's returns, PP631/1, WE1967/541.

(C) Votes Cast: State and National

Western Australia

19%

81%

- Yes Vote
- No Vote

National

9%

91%

- Yes Vote
- No Vote

Data retrieved from the National Archives 'Referendum results'
via http://vrroom.naa.gov.au/records/?ID=19281.

Contemporary Fremantle and Kalgoorlie

The Referendum results of Fremantle and Kalgoorlie must be seen in the context of the time. The following section of this toolkit will compare the historic results, seen as two extremes, to the cities they are today.

Fremantle

- Is in Noongar country, of which the Noongar people reside.
- Prior to the advent of European settlement the area where Fremantle now stands was called Walyalup (pronounced 'wal-Iya-lup'), a place of significance within Beeliar country.
- The Town of Fremantle Council was founded in 1871 and gained city status in 1929.
- Fremantle was named after Captain James Fremantle, an English naval officer, who established camp at the site in 1829.

Kalgoorlie

- Is in Wongatha country – a generic name of the language that was and is currently spoken throughout the area.
- Kalgoorlie derives its name from the Aboriginal word Karlkurla (pronounced 'gull-gurl-la'), an edible 'silky pear' that grows throughout the arid interior of the continent.
- The Kalgoorlie townsite was gazetted in 1894 within a year of the discovery of gold in 1893.
- Kalgoorlie-Boulder together is recognised as Australia's largest outback city.

Courtesy Fremantle City Library History Centre [1623].

Courtesy NAA: A1200, L16416.

On 26 January 1788, the first fleet landed in Sydney Cove with around 1,400 people to establish a British penal colony. At the time Australia was deemed to be 'terra nullius' meaning 'land belonging to nobody,' a ruling that was overturned 204 years later with the 1992 Mabo decision. Earlier that year, Australia Day was formally established as the national public holiday, replacing Federation Day.

Fremantle

In 2017 Fremantle attracted international attention with a decision to move Australia Day celebrations to an alternative date as a mark of respect to the Aboriginal community, who commonly refer to it as Survival or Invasion Day.

Opening of Walyalup Aboriginal Cultural Centre, Fremantle (2013). © City of Fremantle.

Noongar cleansing ceremony, Bathers Beach, Fremantle (28 January 2017). © City of Fremantle.

Kalgoorlie

In August 2016 following the death of a young Aboriginal boy a large number of the community called for government action by active protesting in the town. The event attracted media attention nationwide and was diffused by Aboriginal Elders in conjunction with government agencies to address racial tensions and growing social unrest.

Protestors outside the building where the summit is being held. © Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

Brave teenager sought to diffuse tensions at the Kalgoorlie riots by standing in between police and protesters. © Nine News Perth.

Research Questions:

If a referendum on the same issues was to be held today, would you expect the result from your town to be any different? Why? Why not?

What does Australia Day mean to you? Do you support Fremantle's decision? Why or why not?

If you were elected as the WA Premier, what possible solutions could you offer towards providing better services for Aboriginal people in Kalgoorlie?

Why do you think Western Australia recorded such a high 'No' vote?

Activity:

Debate. Stage a debate in your classroom arguing 'for' or 'against' moving the celebration date of Australia Day.

Please see 'Teachers Resource' section for more resources and project suggestions.

Sources:

ABC Online, 'Protestors Arrested in Kalgoorlie Riot After Tean's Death', 31 August 2016, accessed April 2017

Amy McQuire and Lizzie O'Shea, *The New York Times*, 'White Australians Celebrate, Aboriginal People Mourn', 25 January 2017, accessed April 2017

Bianca Soldani, *SBS*, 'Powerful image encourages calm amid Kalgoorlie protests', 31 August 2016. accessed April 2017

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Claire Moodie, *ABC Online*, 'An act of betrayal against Australia': Fremantle divided over cancellation of Australia Day festivities', 26 January 2017, accessed April 2017

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National Museum of Australia, 'The older generation of Bilsons: workers on pastoral stations', accessed April 2017

Ryan Emery, *SBS*, 'Healing ceremony kicks off Fremantle's alternative Australia Day', 28 January 2017. Accessed April 2017

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WA State Library: BA2756/10

State Library of Victoria: Box 12/6, Council for Aboriginal Rights (Vic.) Papers, MS 12913