

## PRIMARY SOURCE DOCUMENTS

### NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF AUSTRALIA DOCUMENTS

The National Archives of Australia in Canberra and Perth hold a range of records relating to the 1967 Referendum, that were created by the government agencies that played key roles in the planning, delivery and reporting on the results. These include records documenting Cabinet discussions, records of the Departments' of the Prime Minister and Attorney-General, and records from the Chief Electoral Office. After analysing approximately 40,000 pages of archived records, a short summary of the most significant files in relation to Western Australia and the campaign more broadly have been provided in this section.

You can view these files online at the National Archives of Australia [NAA] website, or order them for viewing from the NAA at Victoria Park. <http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/fact-sheets/fs150.aspx>

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File Title	File Location	Key Words
Constitutional alteration bills – Procedure in Parliament and referendum, 1967	NAA: A463, 1965/ 5445	Draft speeches, Constitutional alteration bill, legislation, administrative
Referendum, 1967: Constitution alteration – report on conduct of referendum	NAA: A406, E1967/30 PART P	Post-referendum reports, challenges, divisions
Aboriginal Affairs – Suggested referendum to transfer responsibility to Federal Government	NAA: A432, 1961/3189	Recommendations, Attorney- General's Office, Office of the Prime Minister, letters, telegrams

<b>File Title</b>	<b>File Location</b>	<b>Key Words</b>
Aborigines - Commonwealth Policy and Administration	NAA: A4940,C4604	Post-referendum, implementation of policy, Aboriginal people, 'Yes' result, Cabinet minutes, statements from the Prime Minister, policy reforms, State vs Federal
Referendum, 1967: Constitution alteration - referendum results and general returns	NAA: A406, E1967/30 PART K	Administrative, running the referendum, processes, running tally totals, national and state
1967 Referendum - Constitutional alteration - Main file	NAA: A406, E1967/30	Administrative, Commonwealth Electoral Office in Canberra, practical organisation, printing shipping ballot papers, postal votes, polling locations, voter's rights and responsibilities
Constitutional amendments 1965- Referendum	NAA: A4940, C4257	Administrative, legislative information, correspondence, Prime Minister Harold Holt, the Attorney General's Office, politicians
Proceedings in Parliament and submissions of case	NAA: A1209, 1967/7251	Letters, cablegrams, speeches, formal statements, the Prime Minister's Office, promotional material, the nexus question, transcripts, comments, Prime Minister Harold Holt, the 'Case of YES'
Requests for submission to referendum - question of treatment of Aborigines	NAA: A432, 1953/2029	Recommendations, Referendum proposal, the Attorney- General's Department, Kim Edward Beazley, Gillespie Douglas, the Aborigine Uplift Society.
Referendum 1967 Polling Place & Referendums 1967 DROS Reports	NAA: PP631/1, WE1967/538 NAA: PP631/1, WE1967/559	Commonwealth Electoral Office, Result of Count, Divisions, post- referendum reports, polling results.
1967 Referendum - DRO's [divisional returning officers] returns [Commonwealth Electoral Office]	NAA: WE67/541	Results, referendum, WA, divisions, subdivisions, Canning, Curtin, Forrest, Fremantle, Kalgoorlie, Moore, Perth, Stirling, Swan.

# CONSTITUTIONAL ALTERATION BILLS – PROCEDURE IN PARLIAMENT AND REFERENDUM, 1967

**NAA: A463, 1965/5445**

**Number of Pages: 210**

[Link to file](#)

This file contains draft speeches written for Senator N.H.D Henty for the first and second reading of the two Constitution Alteration Bills. It also includes various transcripts from the Senate readings of the bills. Most of this text refers to the proposed amendments to the Parliament, however the intermittent references to Aboriginal rights express the wish to leave in Section 51 unchanged and only repeal Section 127 on the census.

## Interesting Points

*“What should be aimed at, in view of the Government, is the integration of the Aborigine in the general community, not a state of affairs in which he would be treated as being a race apart.”*

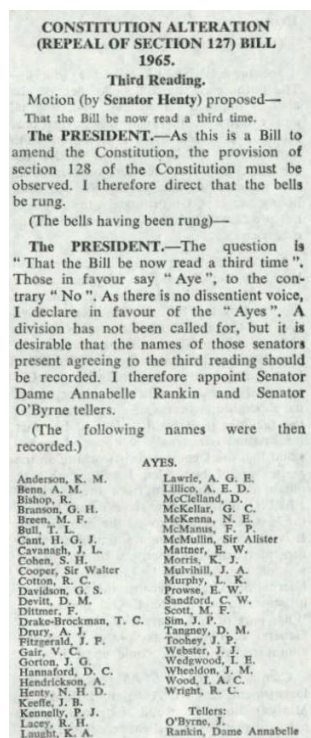
Constitution Alteration [Repeal of Section 127]  
Bill 1965 Second Reading Speech, Hon. N.H.D Henty, Page 29

*“As 50 senators have agreed to a third reading, I certify that the third reading has been agreed to by an absolute majority.”*

Constitutional Alteration [Repeal of Section 127] Bill 1965, Third Reading, Motion by Senator Henty, Page 189

## Pages of Interest

Page 189: Constitutional Alteration [Repeal of Section 127] Bill 1965, Third Reading, Motion by Senator Henty.



A transcript from the third Senate reading of the Constitutional Alteration [Repeal of Section 127] Bill 1965.

## REFERENDUM, 1967: CONSTITUTION ALTERATION – REPORT ON CONDUCT OF REFERENDUM

**NAA: NAA: A406,  
E1967/30 PART P**

**Number of Pages: 262**

[Link to file](#)

This file contains the post-referendum reports sent from each division in the nation. The pages referring to Western Australia are located from 208 to 229. These discuss the challenges faced by each division, such as missing ballot papers, difficulty recruiting staff and the costs of the referendum to each division. Each report also includes praise for the Commonwealth Electoral Office for implementing new provisions, such as wooden voting screens, that increased the efficiency of the voting process in the lead up to, and on the day of the Referendum.

### Interesting Points

Reports from the division of Curtin revealed that it rained on the day of the Referendum.

### Pages of Interest

Pages 208 to 229 are the WA Divisions results.

# ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS – SUGGESTED REFERENDUM TO TRANSFER RESPONSIBILITY TO FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

**NAA: A432, 1961/3189**

**Number of Pages: 38**

[Link to file](#)

This file contains recommendations to the Attorney- General's Office and the Office of the Prime Minister, in regards to the economic and social implications of amending the Constitution. These letters and telegrams range from 1961 to 1964, and include exchanges from the Anti-Slavery Society, The Methodist Church of Australasia, the Cattle Industry of Northern Australia and the Original Australians Progress Association.

## Interesting Points

*"... social, cultural and economic equality, are matters of great and current concern to all Australian Governments..."*

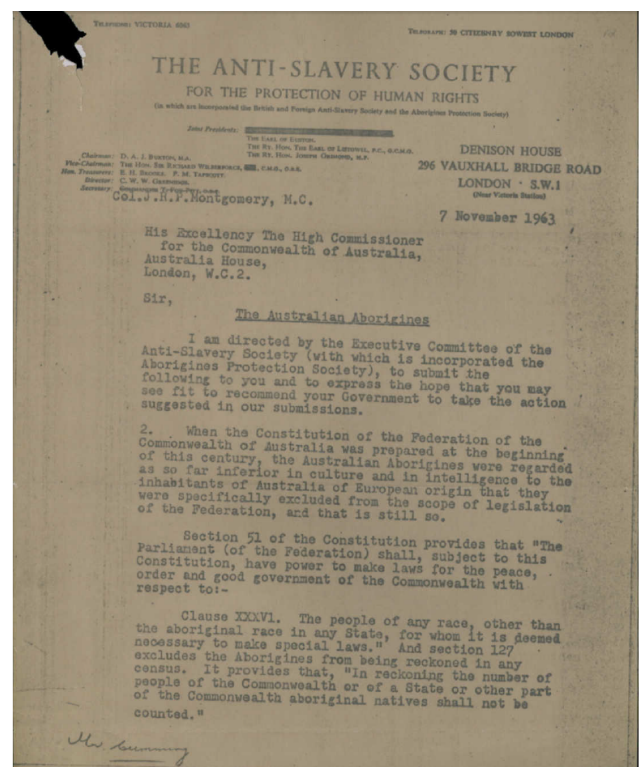
E.J. Bunting, 1964, Page 3

*"Members of our group were unanimous in condemning the injustices in the Constitution which discriminate the original inhabitants of this continent."*

E.A. Brotheridge, Page 34

## Pages of Interest

Page 35: The Anti-Slavery Society, London, 7 November 1963



A letter from the Anti- Slavery Society in London to the High Commissioner to the Commonwealth, seeking immediate action on Section 51 of the Australian Constitution.

## ABORIGINES - COMMONWEALTH POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION

**NAA: NAA: A4940, C4604** Dating post-Referendum, this file contains documents that discuss the implementation of policy for Aboriginal people, in light of the Referendum's 'Yes' result. This includes Cabinet minutes and statements from Prime Minister Harold Holt, on the possible policy reforms that could be made to satisfy the changes to the Constitution. It is debated whether formulating national policies would remove power from the state government.

**Number of Pages: 63**

[Link to file](#)

### Interesting Points

In the time between the Referendum and the next sitting of the Cabinet, a two yearly conference of Ministers was held in Perth. Their main point of business was discussing the impending constitutional amendment. They agreed that Aboriginal Affairs should be expanded into a joint Commonwealth-State responsibility, but that each state be responsible for developing and meeting small development targets to ensure advanced welfare of the Aboriginal people, page 16.

In 1972, the Whitlam Government upgraded the Office of Aboriginal Affairs to the Aboriginal Affairs Department (ADD) and introduced 'self-determination' as a key guiding principle in Aboriginal Affairs policy-making.

[Indigenous Affairs](#)



## REFERENDUM, 1967: CONSTITUTION ALTERATION – REFERENDUM RESULTS AND GENERAL RETURNS

**NAA: A406, E1967/30  
PART K**

**Number of Pages: 52**

This file contains the logistical information on the running of the referendum and the processes by which results are to be transmitted back to the head tally room in Canberra's Albert Hall. It also includes running tally totals on a national and state level.

[Link to file](#)

REFERENDUM – 27 MAY 1967												
Proposed Law—"Constitution Alteration (Aboriginals) 1967"												
Tally Sheet												
State	RESULTS UP TO—				RESULTS UP TO—				RESULTS UP TO—			
	Yes	No	Informal	Total	Yes	No	Informal	Total	Yes	No	Informal	Total
New South Wales <sup>16</sup> / <sub>67</sub>	1,949,036	182,010	38,461	2,166,507	54.17	7.86	1.53	93.52				
Victoria <sup>20</sup> / <sub>67</sub>	1,525,026	85,611	19,959	1,630,594	57.94	4.94	1.15	94.02				
Queensland <sup>19</sup> / <sub>67</sub>	748,612	90,587	9529	848,728	82.71	10.00	1.05	93.77				
South Australia <sup>13</sup> / <sub>67</sub>	473,440	75,383	12,021	560,844	80.21	12.77	2.04	95.02				
Western Australia	319,523	75,282	10,561	405,666	78.09	17.20	2.41	92.71				
Tasmania <sup>18</sup> / <sub>67</sub>	167,176	18,134	3,935	189,245	88.78	9.09	1.97	94.84				
Totals	5,183,113	527,007	91,464	5,801,584	88.84	8.52	1.48	93.84				

A tally sheet recording the vote count of the six states. This is one of many running tally sheets involved in the counting of votes for the 1967 Referendum.

# 1967 REFERENDUM – CONSTITUTIONAL ALTERATION – MAIN FILE

**NAA: A406, E1967/30**

**Number of Pages: 262**

[Link to file](#)

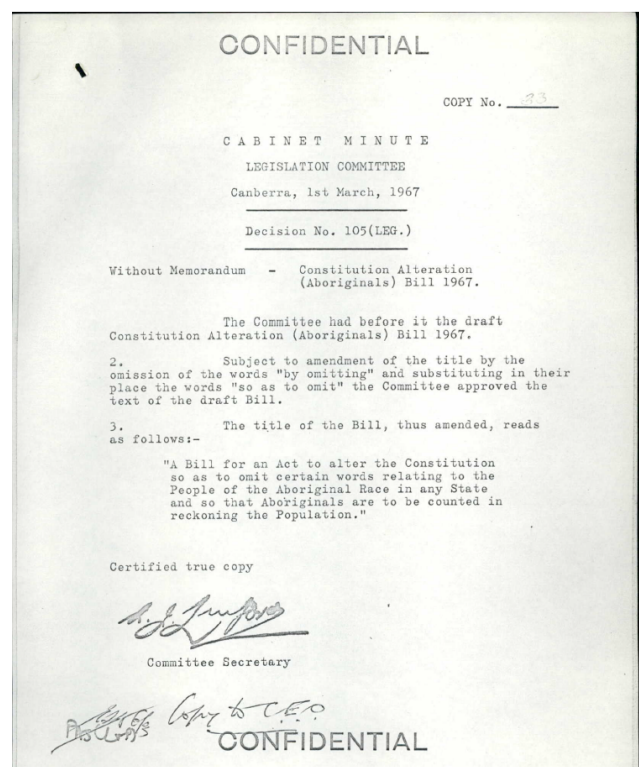
Mainly containing administrative information, this file holds material sent to and from the Commonwealth Electoral Office in Canberra in regards to the logistical organisation of the Referendum, including printing and shipping ballot papers, organising postal votes and polling locations, and ensuring electors were informed of their rights and responsibilities. These communications are dated from the Referendum year, 1967.

## Interesting Points

A telegram sent from the Commonwealth Electoral Office for Western Australia 17 April 1967 confirmed that seven reams of pink ballot-paper, which had been shipped from Sydney the day before, arrived in Perth on the 11 April, Page 24.

## Pages of Interest

Page 106: Cabinet Minutes: Ad Hoc Committee, Canberra 28<sup>th</sup> February 1967



An excerpt from Cabinet minutes, dated 1 March 1967. It details the Australian Cabinets amendments to the language of the Constitutional Alteration [Aboriginals] Bill 1967.



# CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS 1965- REFERENDUM

**NAA: A4940, C4257**

**Number of Pages: 360**

[Link to file](#)

Largely an administrative file, the contents are mostly legislative information in regards to the most successful way to achieve a 'Yes' vote on the nexus question, and the legal capacity for the Commonwealth to legislate for the Aboriginal people. This is shown primarily through correspondence between Prime Minister Harold Holt, the Attorney General's Office, and various other politicians.

## Interesting Points

The following was debated:

### **Which proposal shall accompany the Constitutional amendment in regards to Aboriginal rights?**

The 'nexus question' was attached to the referendum, as they knew that the amendment in regards to Aboriginal rights would pass, and they wanted to pass legislation to increase the number of seats in the House of Representatives with it.

### **The date for the Referendum**

The Chief Electoral Officer stated that the earliest the polling date would be 17 June, the Ad Hoc committee decided to keep the preferred date before 30 May.

*"Before these proposals could become law, they would have to be approved by a referendum of the people."*

Prime Minister Harold Holt page 202.

30. In explaining to the Parliament in March of last year the Government's decision not to proceed at that time with a referendum on the repeal of section 127 of the Constitution, the Prime Minister expressed the belief that the section should be taken out of the Constitution on the ground that it is outmoded and misleading and gives unwarranted cause for criticism both inside and outside Australia by people unaware of the actual situation.

An excerpt from a paper drafted for Cabinet by officers of the Attorney- General's Department, the Department of the Interior and the Prime Minister's Department, outlining various matters regarding the proposed constitutional amendments.

"The Prime Minister expressed the belief that [Section 127] should be taken out of the Constitution on the ground that it is outmoded and misleading and gives unwarranted cause for criticism both inside and outside Australia by people unaware of the actual situation.",

Page 143.

## REQUESTS FOR SUBMISSION TO REFERENDUM – QUESTION OF TREATMENT OF ABORIGINALS

**NAA: A432, 1953/2029**

**Number of Pages: 25**

[Link to file](#)

This file contains recommendations and comments in regards to the Referendum proposal, made from various stakeholders to the Attorney-General's Department. Such stakeholders include West Australian politician Kim Edward Beazley and Gillespie Douglas, President of the Aborigine Uplift Society. These correspondence range in date from December of 1945 to August 1951.

### Interesting Points

*"In West Australia the conditions are deplorable."*

Gillespie Douglas, Page 15

*"May I as President of the Aborigines Uplift Society appeal to your deep humanitarianism to help me to obtain common justice for the Aborigines of Australia who have been for 150 years so cruelly treated by our own white race."*

Gillespie Douglas, Page 18

### Pages of Interest

Page 12: RE Referendum on power to legislate respecting Aboriginal People, Kim Edward Beazley, on 2 September 1947.

Page 143.

## REFERENDUM 1967 POLLING PLACE FIGURES AND REFERENDUMS 1967 DROS REPORTS

**NAA: PP631/1,  
WE1967/538 and NAA:  
PP631/1, WE1967/559**

[Link to NAA: PP631/1](#)

[Link to NAA: WE1967/559](#)

These files contain the polling tallies for the Western Australian divisions. These tallies have been included for your interest. The second file contains post-Referendum reports from the divisions which cover information such as absentee votes, lost ballot papers, administrative challenges, or any issues faced during the undertaking of the referendum. The information provided in these papers is explored in greater detail in the Introduction and Compare and Contrast sections of this toolkit.

## 1967 REFERENDUM - DRO'S [DIVISIONAL RETURNING OFFICERS] RETURNS [COMMONWEALTH ELECTORAL OFFICE]

**NAA: WE67/541**

**Number of Pages: 46**

[Link to file](#)

This file contains the tally counts for the subdivisions of WA's federal divisions. These subdivisions are Canning, Curtin, Forrest, Fremantle, Kalgoorlie, Moore, Perth, Stirling and Swan. Each of the tally counts in this file has been broken down into the tally count for their respective subdivisions. This information is analysed in greater detail in the Compare and Contrast section of this toolkit.

## STATE RECORDS OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA FILES

**The State Records Office of Western Australia (SROWA) delivers archival services to State and Local Government agencies and the general public. The SROWA holds the largest archival collection in Western Australia and is one of the most important historical and cultural resources belonging to the people of WA.**

The SROWA are the custodians for the archival records relating to the Aboriginal people of WA, dated 1886 – 1972 and administered by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and its preceding agencies. These files contain invaluable information relating to legislation enacted and policies affecting Aboriginal people in WA. After analysing the vast number of documents under the custodianship of the SROWA relating to the Referendum, the most relevant have been extracted and summarised.

You can view these files at the State Records Office in Perth.

### Table of Contents

File Title	File Location	Key Words
Amendments to Legislation Dealing With Natives	Cons993 1965/242	Legislation, Western Australia, Northern Territory, Commonwealth, liquor laws , constitutional amendments, newspaper clipping
Departmental News Sheets	Cons1733 1967/51	Newsletter, Western Australia, Native Welfare Department, newspaper clippings

## AMENDMENTS TO LEGISLATION DEALING WITH NATIVES

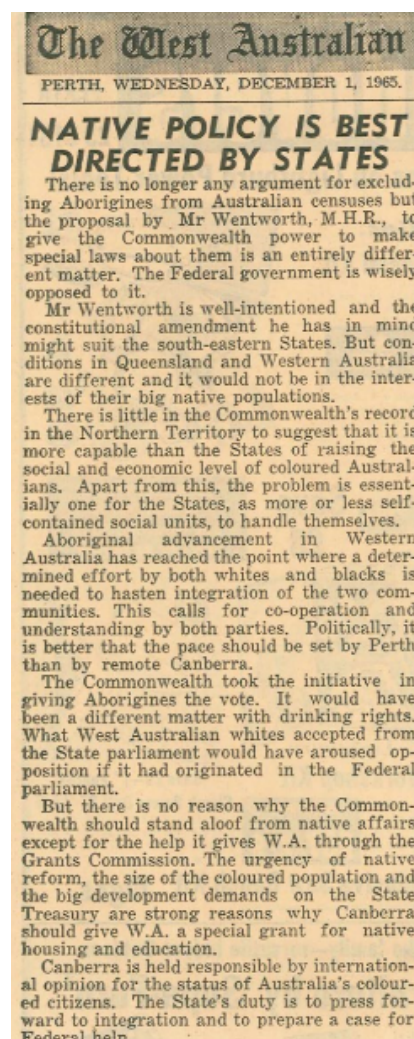
**Consignment 993; Item 1965/242**

**Number of Pages: 260**

This file contains documentation on the amendments made to various legislation regarding Aboriginal people in Western Australia, the Northern Territory and at a federal level. The vast majority of this information is related to liquor laws and the legal definition of a person from the Torres Strait Islands. However, towards the end of the document, between pages 221 and 228, the file adopts a focus on the Constitutional amendments. The file contains historical clippings from newspapers that have reported on the progress towards the Constitutional amendments.

### Pages of Interest

Pages 221- 228: Various newspaper articles from The Australian, The Sunday Times and the West Australian



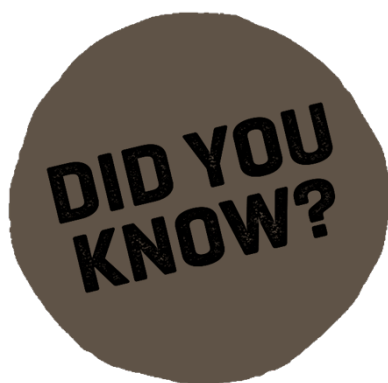
Newspaper article from the West Australian circa 1965, titled 'Native Policy is Best Directed by States'  
Image: Department of Aboriginal Affairs: Consignment 993 1965/242

## DEPARTMENTAL NEWS SHEETS

**Consignment 1733;  
Item 1967/51**

**Number of Pages: 419**

This file mostly contains documentation on the distribution of the Department of Native Affairs newsletter. This includes correspondence from the Department of Native Affairs and various schools, church groups, businesses and other stakeholders about receiving their newsletter. This correspondence dates after the Referendum and includes newspaper clippings on Aboriginal affairs. The discourse used within the Native Affairs Newsletter symbolises the beginning of the governmental transition away from assimilationist policy, and towards self determination policy.



### Self Determination Policy

This policy can be described as *'the fundamental right of Aboriginals to retain their racial identity and traditional lifestyle or, where desired, to adopt wholly or partially a European lifestyle'*, and has encouraged Aboriginal participation or control in local or community government, and in other areas of concern. This approach has been accompanied by government support programs managed by Aboriginal organisations.

### Integration Policy

The term 'integration' was used to denote a policy that recognised the value of Aboriginal culture and the right of Aboriginals to retain their languages and customs and maintain their own distinctive communities. It heavily involved the government developing new approaches for Aboriginal people.



## Research Questions:

**Why is the keeping of historical records like these important?**

**How many times is a bill traditionally read in Parliament?**

**How many Electoral Divisions were in WA at the time of the Referendum? Is this different now? If so, how?**

## Activity:

The document 'Proceedings in Parliament and submissions of case' contains Referendum propaganda from the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. They were encouraging people to write campaign slogans to the tune of Waltzing Matilda. Thinking about the 1967 Referendum, try and come up with a new verse.

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