



CURRICULUM CONTEXT

Level: Middle years

Curriculum area: SOSE / Citizenship

Defending a nation

This resource encourages students to explore attitudes towards conscription. Students begin this process by taking part in a role play focussing on the referendum on conscription held on 28 October 1916. Students are then given the opportunity to vote 'yes' or 'no' in their own referendum and to reflect on Australia's changing place in the global community.

The resource complements the curriculum development work on citizenship that ACSA completed during 2009 for the Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship. The learning activities in this IDEAS resource are from *Building a Nation in your Classroom* by Jennet Cole-Adams and Judy Gauld, 2001 — an educational resource written with assistance from a National Council for the Centenary of Federation grant.

Background

The role play is based on a fictional public meeting held prior to the 1916 referendum on conscription. All characters and speeches in this role play are fictional.

Australia's allegiance to Britain and the Empire was extremely strong in 1916. The transformation from British colonies to the Commonwealth of Australia had only been achieved in 1901. Australians were still keenly aware of their close relationship to Britain. Australia went to war to defend the Empire as soon as the First World War commenced. The need for men to replace the huge numbers who became casualties of the war led to Prime Minister Billy Hughes deciding that Australia needed conscription for overseas military service. When he visited Britain early in 1916, Hughes promised the British government that Australia would provide troop reinforcements. He returned home determined to use conscription to bolster the number of men available to go to war. He had the support of groups such as the Universal Service League and Chambers of Commerce.

The 1916 referendum on this issue was defeated, as was a second referendum in 1917. Several factors contributed to this outcome. The union movement was strongly opposed to conscription; it argued that workers would not be available for work in Australia and that freedom of choice needed to be protected. Farmers feared that conscription would cause a labour shortage, and conscientious objectors and peace activists became vocal in the debate. Catholic archbishop Daniel Mannix was also a fierce opponent of conscription and he rallied the Irish Catholic community, playing on anti-British sentiment to encourage a 'no' vote in the referendum.

Conscription for overseas service did not become an issue again in Australia until the Second World War. In 1942 the perception of direct threat to Australian shores was much greater. At that time the Australian Parliament passed a law allowing conscription for service overseas in areas close to Australia.

In 1964, with Australian troops already in Vietnam, the Menzies government introduced conscription through legislation to support the United States which had become its most powerful ally. There was much public outcry in Australia about both conscription and Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. When the Whitlam government came to power in 1972, one of its first acts was to end conscription. Since then there has been no compulsory military training or service in Australia.

References

Jennet Cole-Adams and Judy Gauld, *Building a Nation in your Classroom*, Dellasta Publishing, 2001

DIAC Citizenship resource *I am Australian: Exploring Australian Citizenship*

<http://www.citizenship.gov.au/learn/schools/>

Discovering Democracy units: *Making a Nation*, and *Getting Things Done*

Exploring Citizenship kit, Australian Archives, Commonwealth of Australia, 1997

Learning outcomes

Students will:

- explore changes to Australia's international alliances and defence obligations
- develop an understanding of community attitudes to conscription
- analyse the reasons for governments compelling citizens to defend their nation
- appreciate the impact of international conflicts on Australia's policy on conscription
- reflect on the responsibilities of citizenship

LEARNING SEQUENCE

Getting started

Read the Background and the President's script to familiarise yourself with the overall structure of the role play. Ensure that your students understand the term 'conscription'. Assign roles to all students — the role cards can be found on reproducible worksheets 1 and 2. Worksheet 1 is for the Mayor, who runs the meeting, and worksheet 2 needs to be cut up and distributed to the other students. Distribute scripted roles and as many unscripted roles as you need. Explain the function of each of the participants to the class.

Distribute or read out reproducible worksheet 3: *Set the scene* to all students. It is important that students adopt a historically appropriate role before the role play begins. Allow students to discuss their role and develop their character. Students with unscripted roles need to think about the ideas that their character will have about compulsory military service for all men. Emphasise to your students that there is no one right answer. As a class, discuss students' responses to the questions on the worksheet.

Students at work

1. Set up the room for a public meeting. You will need a table at the front of the room for the Mayor, David Allen and Geoff Hamilton. The Mayor starts and runs the role play using the script provided. Encourage students with unscripted roles to participate in the meeting.
2. At the end of the meeting distribute ballot papers (reproducible worksheet 4) to all students. These ballot papers are adapted from the original 1916 voting papers. Remind students that they should remain in role for the voting activity. Ask them to vote 'yes' or 'no' and place their papers in a box. Assign two students to be electoral officers and count the votes.
3. After the role play is finished, take your students out of role and bring them back to the present time and place. Explain the outcome of the referendum in 1916 (see Background). Explore the following questions with the class:
 - Did the outcome of the vote following your public meeting differ from the result of the referendum in 1916? If so, why do you think this happened?
 - How have attitudes to conscription changed since 1916? Why do you think that they have changed?
4. Encourage your students to imagine that they are a 21-year-old man living in Australia and that it is the night before the 1916 referendum. Ask them to write a letter to their sweetheart explaining how they feel as they wait for the result.
5. Ask your students to design, implement and analyse the results of a survey. It should gauge the attitudes of people in your local community towards conscription.
6. Ask your students to research Australian government policy with regard to conscription during the Second World War and the Vietnam War, and community reaction to conscription during each of these periods.

7. Conscription is a contentious issue. Some people argue that citizens have a right to choose whether to take part in military service. Others argue that citizens have a responsibility to serve. Ask your students to list the rights and responsibilities that they believe Australian citizens have.
8. Ask each student to take on the role of Australia's Minister for Defence. They need to develop a defence policy to take Australia into the future. They will need to consider the following questions:
 - Who will be Australia's defence allies?
 - Will Australia go to war when our allies ask, or only if Australia is threatened?
 - What sort of support will we offer? Troops, or supplies like weapons? Aid?
 - How will you encourage people to enlist in the defence forces?
 - Will Australia use conscription? If so, under what circumstances?
 - Will Australia commit troops to United Nations Peacekeeping Forces?
 - Will women be allowed to take on combat duties?

WORKSHEET 1

Mayor

You start the role play by saying:

Ladies and Gentlemen, attention please!

I am the Mayor. I would like to welcome you to this public meeting on 27 October 1916. I hope that this meeting will help you decide how you will vote at the referendum.

Since 1909 it has been compulsory for young men to register for military service here in Australia. Now we are at war. We must vote to decide whether we will make it compulsory for these men to join the fighting overseas.

To help you decide how to vote we have invited two speakers to this meeting. When they have finished you will have a chance to make comments.

Our first speaker is Mr Geoff Hamilton, a member of the Universal Service League.

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Thank you, Mr Hamilton. We will now hear from Mr David Allen, a member of the Australian Peace Alliance.

•••••

Thank you Mr Allen. The meeting is now open for members of the public to speak. If you are called please stand to speak and sit down when you are finished. We will start with Mr Harry Hudson.

•••••

Thank you, Mr Hudson. Mr Douglas Williams, would you please address the meeting?

•••••

Thank you, Mr Williams. I now call on Miss Pauline Sherman.

•••••

Thank you Miss Sherman. I now call on Mrs Doreen Davison.

•••••

Thank you Mrs Davison. If anyone else would like to speak please raise your hand.

Choose from those with their hands up. Introduce them by saying: Mr or Mrs ... (use student's name).

•••••

When everyone who wants to speak has had a turn, say:

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for coming to this meeting. I hope it has helped you all to decide how you will vote in the referendum. I declare this meeting closed.

WORKSHEET 2

On the following five pages are cards that can be photocopied and cut up before being distributed to students for the role play.

Those with the black band at the top are for scripted roles. All of these need to be distributed.



The cards with the white band are for unscripted roles. Distribute as many of these as you need so all students have a role.



ROLE CARD**SCRIPTED 1**

Mr Geoff Hamilton

Ladies and Gentlemen,

When this war began our brave boys enlisted in large numbers. Australia can be proud of these heroes. But we have been fighting for two years now and we are yet to defeat Germany. To win this war we need more men. We must crush Germany once and for all and make sure our boys have not died in vain.

Our Prime Minister, Mr Hughes, has promised Britain that we will help them in their hour of need. We must remember that Britain helped Australia to become a nation and we are still a part of the British Empire. Our duty as Australians, and as members of this Empire, is to vote 'yes' in the referendum.

ROLE CARD**SCRIPTED 2**

Mr David Allen

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Australia has done more than her fair share for Britain in this war. Many Australians chose to go to war. Many gave their lives at Gallipoli. The Prime Minister now wants to force more men to fight. He wants to take away their right to choose.

Men have good reasons for not going to this war. Some have responsibilities to their family or business. Some have religious or moral reasons. Australians must be allowed to choose.

ROLE CARD**SCRIPTED 3**

Mr Harry Hudson

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I will vote 'yes' in this referendum. Germany must be defeated and Australia must do its share. There are many single men in Australia who should be sent to do their bit. Don't forget that family men will not be conscripted. This call up will apply to men without wives and kiddies.

ROLE CARD**SCRIPTED 4**

Mr Douglas Williams

Thank you Ladies and Gentlemen,

I know the Empire is at war, but we need to think about Australia. I own a large farm and produce food to feed this nation. Without the help of my sons I will not be able to harvest my crops. I am going to vote 'no'.

ROLE CARD**SCRIPTED 5**

Miss Pauline Sherman

Thank you Mayor,

This war is not our war. It is Britain's war. It would be OK to ask men to fight here in Australia. But we should not tell men to fight overseas and risk their lives for Britain.

ROLE CARD**SCRIPTED 6**

Mrs Doreen Davison

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My boy died in this war. We need more men to replace him and his dead mates. Even the cowards who don't want to go to war should be made to fight. We need to crush the evil Germans.

ROLE CARD

UNSCRIPTED

Gun factory owner

How do you feel about men being conscripted to fight overseas? If you want to speak, begin by saying:

I own a gun factory...

ROLE CARD

UNSCRIPTED

Clothing factory worker

How do you feel about men being conscripted to fight overseas? If you want to speak, begin by saying:

I make uniforms for our boys...

ROLE CARD

UNSCRIPTED

Journalist

How do you feel about men being conscripted to fight overseas? If you want to speak, begin by saying:

I write for the newspaper...

ROLE CARD

UNSCRIPTED

Mother

How do you feel about men being conscripted to fight overseas? If you want to speak, begin by saying:

I have five daughters but only one son...

ROLE CARD

UNSCRIPTED

Nurse

How do you feel about men being conscripted to fight overseas? If you want to speak, begin by saying:

I have nursed many injured soldiers...

ROLE CARD

UNSCRIPTED

Parent

How do you feel about men being conscripted to fight overseas? If you want to speak, begin by saying:

My son was killed in France...

ROLE CARD

UNSCRIPTED

Anglican minister

How do you feel about men being conscripted to fight overseas? If you want to speak, begin by saying:

I am an Anglican minister...

ROLE CARD

UNSCRIPTED

Farm hand

How do you feel about men being conscripted to fight overseas? If you want to speak, begin by saying:

I am a sheep shearer...

ROLE CARD

UNSCRIPTED

Father

How do you feel about men being conscripted to fight overseas? If you want to speak, begin by saying:

Both my sons are overseas fighting...

ROLE CARD

UNSCRIPTED

Pacifist

A pacifist is a person who believes that we need to find non-violent ways of solving problems. If you want to speak, begin by saying:

I believe that we need to find a peaceful solution to this conflict...

ROLE CARD

UNSCRIPTED

Young woman

How do you feel about men being conscripted to fight overseas? If you want to speak, begin by saying:

My fiancé went to war last year...

ROLE CARD

UNSCRIPTED

Farmer

How do you feel about men being conscripted to fight overseas? If you want to speak, begin by saying:

I own a farm...

ROLE CARD**UNSCRIPTED**

Widow

How do you feel about men being conscripted to fight overseas? If you want to speak, begin by saying:

The Germans killed my husband...

ROLE CARD**UNSCRIPTED**

Railway worker

How do you feel about men being conscripted to fight overseas? If you want to speak, begin by saying:

I work on the railway...

ROLE CARD**UNSCRIPTED**

Farm worker

How do you feel about men being conscripted to fight overseas? If you want to speak, begin by saying:

My husband is at the war...

ROLE CARD**UNSCRIPTED**

Teacher

How do you feel about men being conscripted to fight overseas? If you want to speak, begin by saying:

I teach at the local school...

ROLE CARD**UNSCRIPTED**

University student

How do you feel about men being conscripted to fight overseas? If you want to speak, begin by saying:

I am training to become a doctor...

ROLE CARD**UNSCRIPTED**

Wounded soldier

How do you feel about men being conscripted to fight overseas? If you want to speak, begin by saying:

I lost the use of my arm at Gallipoli...

ROLE CARD

UNSCRIPTED

British migrant

How do you feel about men being conscripted to fight overseas? If you want to speak, begin by saying:

I moved to Australia from England five years ago...

ROLE CARD

UNSCRIPTED

Doctor

How do you feel about men being conscripted to fight overseas? If you want to speak, begin by saying:

I am a doctor at the hospital...

ROLE CARD

UNSCRIPTED

Priest

How do you feel about men being conscripted to fight overseas? If you want to speak, begin by saying:

I am a Catholic priest...

ROLE CARD

UNSCRIPTED

Food factory worker

How do you feel about men being conscripted to fight overseas? If you want to speak, begin by saying:

I pack boxes of food at the factory...

ROLE CARD

UNSCRIPTED

Parent

How do you feel about men being conscripted to fight overseas? If you want to speak, begin by saying:

Our 22-year-old son lives with us...

ROLE CARD

UNSCRIPTED

Conscientious objector

A conscientious objector is a person whose beliefs do not allow them to support war. If you want to speak, begin by saying:

It is against my beliefs to support war...

WORKSHEET 3

Set the scene

It is 28 October 1916.

Australia is at war.

Last year thousands of ANZAC soldiers died at Gallipoli, and thousands are continuing to die in France.

Mother England has asked for our help. They need more men to help defeat the German enemy in this 'war to end all wars'. At present military training is compulsory in Australia, but the only men to go overseas and fight are volunteers. Prime Minister Hughes wants all able men to join the war effort overseas.

Soon you and other Australians will be asked to vote in a referendum. You will decide whether the government should be given the power to conscript men to fight overseas.

A public meeting in your Town Hall is about to begin. This meeting will help you decide whether to vote 'yes' or 'no'.

Think about the role that you will take on at the meeting, and then answer the following questions.

What might you be wearing?

Describe what you think the Town Hall might look like.

How do you think the war is affecting your community and nation?

WORKSHEET 4

The following "Ballot paper" has been adapted from Australian Archives A1, 1917/2131

BALLOT PAPER

Commonwealth of Australia
The Military Service Referendum Act 1916

Directions to voter:

If you are in favour of the question hereunder make a cross in the square opposite the word 'Yes'.

If you are not in favour of the question hereunder make a cross in the square opposite the word 'No'.

Question: Are you in favour of the government having, in this grave emergency, compulsory powers over citizens in regard to requiring their military service for the term of this war?

YES NO

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YES NO

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YES NO