

**My Place for Teachers
Decade Overview 2000s**

Decade Summary	2008
<p>The year 2000 began with the celebration for the new millennium. Later in the year, Sydney hosted the Summer Olympics and was launched on the international stage as a sporting capital. The opening ceremony featured the best and unique Australian showcased through a multitude of performing arts.</p> <p>The centenary of Federation was celebrated on 1 January 2001, featuring a parade in Sydney celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Proclamation of the Commonwealth of Australia.</p> <p>In August 2001, the Norwegian vessel MV <i>Tampa</i> picked up 433 asylum seekers from a boat sinking in international waters between Australia and Indonesia. This incident tested the resolve of the Howard-led government to impose harsher penalties for illegal immigration. The captain of the <i>Tampa</i> defied the order not to enter Australian waters and moved towards Christmas Island. The Government rushed through legislation to obtain greater powers to stop the asylum seekers.</p> <p>On 11 September 2001, terrorist attacks on the New York World Trade Center and the Pentagon signalled the beginning of what would be known as the 'War on Terrorism'. Australia, under prime minister John Howard's leadership, became a key ally in the USA's subsequent 'coalition of the willing'. The government agreed to sending Australian military personnel to Afghanistan in October 2001 and to Iraq in 2003 and 2005.</p> <p>In 2008, the Global Financial Crisis triggered an international recession, more severe than anything experienced since the Great Depression. Australia, now a key trading partner of China and India, seemed to avoid the worst of the economic fallout.</p>	<p>January</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The United Nations General Assembly chose 2008 to be the United Nations International Year of Planet Earth. <p>February</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An official apology by the new Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, to the Stolen Generations was made the first order of business of the new federal parliament. <p>June</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australia ended its combat operations in Iraq, withdrawing approximately 550 troops from the region. <p>July</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World Youth Day (WYD), the largest youth event in the world, attracted 223,000 pilgrims to the event held in Sydney. <p>September</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Global Financial Crisis began having serious effect on the Australian economy. • Quentin Bryce was sworn in as the first female governor-general of Australia.

History and Politics

2002 Bali Bombing

On 12 October 2002, Islamic militant extremists carried out a terrorist attack in Kuta, the tourist district of Bali, an island in the Indonesian archipelago. An initial bomb went off inside Paddy's Bar, and shortly afterwards a car bomb exploded outside on the street where many people had run after the first bomb had detonated. The severity of the bomb left a 1-metre deep crater where it had been detonated.

Human loss was considerable and the hospital was soon overwhelmed with casualties. Of the 202 killed, 88 were Australians, the highest number of any nationality. Many burn victims were kept submerged in local hotel swimming pools, and then flown to special burns units in Perth and Darwin.

Six years later, on 9 November 2008, three men convicted of organising and carrying out the bombings were put to death.

The Liberal-National Coalition politics

The Liberal-National Party coalition government led by John Howard became the second-longest serving government under a single prime minister. The government was in power from 11 March 1996 until 3 December 2007. During this time, it oversaw an economic surplus, which positioned Australia as one of the top-ranking economies in the world.

On 1 July 2000, the federal treasurer, Peter Costello, introduced a reform titled *A New Tax System (Goods and Services Tax) Act 1999*. The GST replaced the former Wholesale Sales Tax.

In 2001, the Howard government implemented a new policy on border protection and asylum seekers called the 'Pacific solution', which saw an offshore processing of asylum seekers on the Pacific islands of Manus Island (Papua New Guinea) and Nauru.

In 2006, the government's new industrial relations policy, Work Choices, passed unamended in the Senate. It proved unpopular with the electorate and the unions. At the 2007 election, the Liberal-Country Party coalition government was defeated, with John Howard losing his seat in parliament. He was beaten by ex-journalist and Labor challenger Maxine McKew.

Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples

The term 'Stolen Generations' refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians who were removed from their families by federal and state governments between the years 1869 and 1969.

The establishment of Aboriginal Protection Acts giving Boards and Protectors control over Indigenous people's lives, including the right to forcibly remove children from their families, has had ongoing devastating effects on generations of Indigenous peoples, giving rise to the term 'Stolen Generations'.

In the 1990s and 2000s, there was growing public sentiment by many Australians in favour of an official apology. However, John Howard and others strongly opposed it, and the Howard government disputed the validity of the term 'Stolen Generations' and rejected any government apology. When the Rudd government was elected to power in December 2007, it declared an apology would be one of the first orders of business in the new parliament.

The federal parliament's apology was given by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd at 9:30 am on 13 February 2008.

Afghanistan and Iraq Wars

In 2001, as a result of the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks in the USA, the Liberal-National Party coalition government declared Australia would join the US-led coalition forces in an invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq. In October, Australia provided 1,550 troops to Afghanistan for Operation Enduring Freedom, a conflict that ousted the Taliban government.

In 2003, in Operation Falcone, Australia provided one of the four main combat force contingents for the invasion of Iraq. Three navy ships, 500 special forces soldiers and various patrol aircraft, transport aircraft and F/A-18 Hornet fighters were deployed.

In 2005, combat troops were redeployed in Operation Catalyst, and supported Iraqi security forces in Iraq's southern provinces. They were finally withdrawn between June 2008 and July 2009 under the Rudd Labor government.

Society and Culture

The Black Saturday bushfires

The Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria were the result of extreme temperatures and weather conditions on 7 February 2009. The eighth-deadliest bushfire ever recorded spread across inaccessible forest, killing 173 people and injuring 414. Over 2,000 houses were destroyed and more than 500 people displaced. About 430,000 hectares was affected by the fire.

In early 2009, south-eastern Australia experienced an extreme heat wave that exacerbated a ten-year drought. Several places in Victoria recorded their hottest day since 1859 and Melbourne's 46.6 degrees Celsius was the hottest temperature ever recorded in an Australian capital city. The bushfires were caused by lightning, fallen power lines, arson, cigarette butts and sparks from power tools and other machinery.

Several large firestorms devastated the Kinglake and Marysville areas. In the early evening, a cool change arrived in the state. Winds swung and blew at 120 km/h from the south-west. This caused long flanks of fire to turn north-east and become extensive fire fronts, which took days to finally extinguish.

The Cronulla riots

In December 2005, a series of racially motivated disturbances, assaults and riots took place in Cronulla and the surrounding suburbs of south-western Sydney.

Early in December, a group of predominantly Middle Eastern youths assaulted three off-duty surf lifesavers. Police said the attack was partly racially motivated. Members of the local community called for a public demonstration in response.

This call rapidly spread via SMS text and talk-back radio. On Saturday 11 December 2005, up to 10,000 people gathered in response. Initially peaceful, violence subsequently broke out and individual passers-by were ethnically targeted and assaulted. That night, subsequent police action locked down Sydney beaches and nearby areas in surrounding suburbs.

On the following days, retaliatory assaults took place, with cars and windows being vandalised across other Sydney suburbs of Bankstown, Punchbowl and Ashfield.

Sydney 2000 Olympics Games

The 2000 summer Olympics were held in Sydney, costing more than \$6.6 billion. The Games involved 199 nations, more than 10,000 athletes and 300 events across 28 sports. There was an official estimation of 46,967 volunteers who helped at Olympic venues and throughout the city of Sydney to ensure the event passed harmoniously.

The opening ceremony, held on 15 September, was a significant cultural event. The ceremony drew on Australia's pastoral heritage, using Sidney Nolan's rural and bush paintings, while hundreds of tap-dancers evoked the construction industry. The ceremony also featured 200 Indigenous Australian women dancing to represent the heart of the continent, while other components emphasised the coastal-dwelling nature of most of Australia's population. Performers included Nikki Webster, John Farnham, Olivia Newton-John, Vanessa Amorosi and Tina Arena. The Indigenous athlete Cathy Freeman lit the flame of the Olympic Torch.

Australia achieved its best ever result on the medals' table with 16 gold, 25 silver and 17 bronze.

Science and Technology

Asbestos	<p>Asbestos is a naturally occurring silicate mineral. In the 20th century it was frequently used in construction in Australia, generally as a form of Fibros Asbestos Cement that was commonly known as Fibro. Fibro was particularly useful in building prefabricated dwellings as it was a material made of fibers that had been cemented into rigid sheets.</p> <p>In 1991 a complete ban on asbestos-containing material in Australia was introduced. Unfortunately, the extent of toxicity inherent in asbestos had a culminative effect in those who inhaled the fibres. A lung cancer called mesothelioma was the result. Bernie Banton led a civil case against Hardies Industries for compensation for employees affected by asbestos toxicity. He died in 2007 not long after winning the case which set a precedent for asbestos victims in all industries and three days after the election of Kevin Rudd.</p> <p>Australia has one of the highest rates of asbestos-related disease in the world. Estimates of between 30,000 and 40,000 people will have contracted an asbestos-related cancer by 2020. The majority of these victims will not have worked directly with asbestos but have been home renovators who have come into extensive contact with asbestos fibres.</p>
Australia and the Internet	<p>In 1983, the first internet connection to Australia was made from the University of Hawaii to Darwin. After this connection, the access to internet spread relatively slowly, being generally confined to academic institutions.</p> <p>In the 1990s, the internet began to be used in a broader social context, and by the end of 1999 more than 22% of Australians were accessing the internet. By 2000 Australia ranked seventh in the world in Internet use, with 43% of Australians having access to the internet at home.</p> <p>During the decade, the use and function of the internet jumped dramatically. It was mainly used for education and study, business and personal recreation. The introduction of social networking sites, YouTube, online shopping, and the large-scale downloading of content for entertainment have been significant in internet take up.</p> <p>A National Broadband Network was constructed by the Federal Government connecting up to 90% of Australian households and businesses. The introduction of digital and wireless technologies revolutionised delivery of communications, information and entertainment.</p>
Science Awards	<p>At the end of October 2009, two CSIRO scientists, Dr Amanda Barnard and Dr John O'Sullivan, shared the Prime Minister's Prizes for Science. Amanda Barnard was awarded for major contributions in the field of nanoscience. Her research focused on how nanoparticles interact with the environment and how environmental changes may affect their stability. Nanoparticles are particles which are millionths of a meter in size, and are the building blocks of the newly developing field of nanotechnology.</p> <p>John O'Sullivan was recognised for his work in leading a CSIRO team which solved a multipath problem in informational networks. The solution of this problem has been crucial to the development of fast wireless networks for internet users. There are now an estimated one billion wireless devices around the world that utilizes the technology made possible by O'Sullivan's work.</p>