



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

UNDERSTANDING VICTORIA: DISCUSSION THREE

Thursday 21 November 2024

Acknowledgments

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Distinguished guests

I begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the unceded lands on which this House stands – the Wurundjeri and Bunurong people – and pay my respects to their Elders, past and present.

Welcome to the third instalment of the Understanding Victoria discussion series, titled: *'What do we want? When do we want it? Human rights and modern Victoria.'*

Today's discussion follows on from our first and second discussions, which explored the gold rush and Federation, respectively.

Our discussion on Federation was concerned with the 'progressive' ideals that shaped our nation.

We investigated the role of Victoria, particularly Melbourne, as a hub of thought and action as the identity of 'Australia' as a nation was formed.

Our speakers and participants identified and debated several influential factors, including the role of political leadership, regional and colonial loyalties, and the absence of a defining “war of independence.”

We delved into which “Australians” had a voice in this new country.

Every speaker and participant challenged the beliefs of others as much as their own were challenged.

Just as some of the threads of federation found their origins in the gold rush – the protest movements of the ‘60s and ‘70s, similarly, can be traced back to earlier trailblazers.

We wouldn’t have Zelda D’Aprano without Vida Goldstein.

Nor could there be Mollie Dyer, without William Cooper.

And while those two decades represent a time of great social change and uproar for many western nations – the breakthroughs were built on longer, often quieter, but determined campaigns.

Arguably, the catalyst that propelled protest movements from ‘slow reform’ to ‘radical change’ was the Vietnam War.

The *Congress for International Co-operation and Disarmament* (CICD) formed in Melbourne in 1959.

The CICD originated from the Australian Peace Council, an offshoot of the 1949 World Peace Council.

They were labelled communist sympathisers by some in the media.

In 1964, Melbourne University lecturer James Jupp penned an article on the CICD, titled *'The Communists lurk in the background,'* which he concluded by stating:

"Like most circuses, they involve a great deal of noise and illusion before they fold their tents and are forgotten."

Six years after this article, the CICD along with campaigns such as *The Youth Campaign Against Conscription* and *Save Our Sons*, would lead the largest public demonstrations ever seen at the time.

Recognising the impact of that protest movement, today's discussion will focus on three important causes that found their feet during this period of immense social change.

Throughout the '60s, what came to be known as 'second-wave feminism' started to gain traction across Australia.

The movement's first-wave had secured the most basic rights – including the vote.

Questions of equal pay, and the social, political and economic role of women now started to gain momentum.

Key Victorian groups, such as the *Women's Action Committee* and the *Women's Electoral Lobby* launched campaigns in the late '60s and early '70s.

In 1969, Zelda D'Aprano famously chained herself to the Commonwealth Building in Melbourne over the issue of unequal pay.

Supposedly, a journalist jeered at her, saying:

“What do you possibly hope to achieve here? You’re just one woman”.

Whether true, or urban myth, Zelda’s reply spoke to the growing significance of the movement:

“Today it was me, tomorrow there will be two of us, the next day four and it will go on and on and there won’t be any stopping it”.

Her actions, and the actions of countless women across Australia, led to the historic decision by the Arbitration Commission for “equal pay for work of equal value” in 1972.

As anti-war and women's movements gained momentum, the LGBTIQ+ community also began to mobilise.

In what was arguably Australia’s first organised movement for homosexuality, the Daughters of Bilitis formed in 1970 in Melbourne.

While short-lived, the bravery of the organisers inspired others to greater action.

Groups such as the *Campaign Against Moral Persecution* and *Gay Liberation* soon started organising across Australia.

Slowly, LGBTIQ+ rights began to shape not only the views of broader society, but also the nature of our laws.

The 1973 Australian Medical Association decision to cease regarding homosexuality as an illness had a wide-reaching impact – though it would not be until 1981 that Victoria would enact decriminalisation.

Throughout the '60s, The Victorian Aborigines Advancement League was similarly organising for rights, particularly around land.

Lake Tyers became a lightning rod for activism, with Pastor Sir Doug Nicholls leading a march in 1963 to Parliament House in protest at its closure.

This momentous demonstration led to Lake Tyers being declared a permanent Aboriginal reserve in 1965.

Campaigns continued around self-determination of Aboriginal Victorians, eventually leading to the *Aboriginal Lands Act 1970*.

Just as we've debated the legacies of the gold rush and Federation in our society today, we now turn our attention to this profound period in the development of human rights in Victoria.

The title of this series, 'Understanding Victoria,' underscores our aim to foster deeper comprehension of our State's past and present.

A thriving democracy's blood flows on open dialogue – where diverse perspectives are not just welcomed but actively sought.

I want to extend my gratitude to speakers Emeritus Professor Dennis Altman, Professor Gary Foley and Emeritus Professor Diane Kirkby for generously sharing their expertise and contributing to our understanding of Victoria's history.

And of course, thank you to Jon Faine for both facilitating and acting as an umpire for today's discussion.

Thank you.

