

THE HOWARD LIBRARY

LESSON 2: EXPLORING SOURCES RELATED TO THE NATIONAL FIREARMS AGREEMENT

The following lesson is aligned to the Australian Curriculum for Year 9 Civics and Citizenship. Students critically evaluate a range of sources to identify perspectives held by political parties, interest groups, the media and individuals on gun control in Australia.

Materials Required: Howard Library's *National Firearms Agreement source collection* and Howard Library's *National Firearms Agreement source analysis sheet*.

Lesson Duration: This lesson is designed to run for approx. 60 – 70 minutes

LINKS TO THE YEAR 9 CIVICS AND CITIZENSHIP CONTENT DESCRIPTIONS

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| Knowledge and Understanding | How citizens' political choices are shaped, including the influence of the media (ACHCK076) The process through which government policy is shaped and developed, including the role of Prime Minister and Cabinet (ACHCK103-) |
| Civics and Citizenship Skills | Critically evaluate information and ideas from a range of sources in relation to civics and citizenship topics and issues (ACHCS084) Account for different interpretations and points of view (ACHCS085) |

LESSON GOALS

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| Students will understand How law-makers had to consider different perspectives on gun control and personal interests when shaping the National Firearms Agreement | Students will be able to Analyse visual and written sources to identify information and ideas relating to the National Firearms Agreement and perspectives on gun control |
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LESSON INSTRUCTIONS

Warm-up Discussion Questions (5 to 10 mins – whole class)

- 1) Recap what students learnt last lesson about the National Firearms Agreement. What is the National Firearms Agreement? Why was it developed, and how it did change the rules around gun ownership in Australia? What role did the Prime Minister and Cabinet play in developing in the policy?
- 2) Did everyone agree with the National Firearms Agreement when it was developed? What were the different perspectives on the new regulations at the time?
- 3) Law-makers often have to think about the different groups who are going to be impacted by a new law. Often, new laws will advantage some groups while disadvantaging others. Is a fair law one that everybody agrees with? Does a law become unfair if some groups are disadvantaged by it? If not, what makes a law 'fair' or 'unfair'?

Activity 1 – Source Analysis Activity (30 – 40 mins– small groups)

- 1) Divide students into mixed ability groups of 3-4 students per group. Give each group one copy of the Howard Library's *National Firearms Agreement source collection*.
- 2) Inform students that each group member will be asked to analyse two sources from the collection – one written and one visual: Source A and B; Source C and D; or Source E and F. (in groups of 4, two students can work together on the same pair of sources). The sources will illustrate different perspectives on the National Firearms Agreement and gun control.
- 3) Familiarise students with the **Source Analysis Worksheet**. You may wish to recap the difference between information and opinions in historical sources. Remind students that when analysing their sources, they can be informed by what they see as well as what they already know.
- 4) Allow students about 20 minutes to analyse their sources using the **Source Analysis Worksheet**.
- 5) Students pair up with someone from another group with the same sources as them. They discuss and compare their interpretation of the sources with their classmate's, adding further observations to their **Source Analysis Worksheet** if they want to.
- 6) Students return to their groups and report on their findings to their other group members. They introduce each of their sources to the group and briefly summarise their analysis of each of one.

Wrap-up Discussion Questions (5 – 10 mins – whole class)

- 1) Collectively, what do these sources tell us about the different perspectives in society towards gun control? When developing the National Firearms Agreement, how did law-makers – including the Prime Minister – respond to these competing perspectives?
- 2) There is an old adage that says, 'my right to swing my arms ends where your nose begins.' What do you think this saying means? How does this concept relate to decision-making around gun control in Australia?
- 3) In his autobiography, *Lazarus Rising*, Prime Minister John Howard wrote that he regrets wearing the bullet-proof vest when addressing the rally in Sales, Victoria, and feels embarrassment to this day when he sees the footage. Although he wore the vest after receiving a death threat, he wrote that he 'did not feel scared' and has 'great faith in the essentially non-violent character of the Australian people.'

If you were in the Prime Minister's position, would you have chosen to wear a bullet-proof vest or would you have addressed the rally without one? Do you agree that Australian people are 'essentially non-violent'? Why or why not?

- 4) What do these sources tell us about the influence of the media on people's political beliefs? Do you feel that your personal political beliefs are influenced by the media? If so, which media, and in what ways? Overall, in your opinion, is the media a positive, negative, or neutral force in shaping people's political beliefs?