

# Australian and International Politics

2009 ASSESSMENT REPORT

Humanities and Social Sciences



Government  
of South Australia

**SACE**  
Board of SA

# AUSTRALIAN AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

## 2009 ASSESSMENT REPORT

### ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 1: EXAMINATION

A high standard of achievement was evident in student results and both students and schools should be congratulated for the continuing excellent standard of responses in this paper. This is the overriding comment for the 2009 examination.

Nevertheless, candidates are strongly advised to continually use the key words of the question in the answer. They are further advised that an argued case, an analysed position, is much preferred to lengthy description.

There was more of an evenness than for many years in the number of replies to the four sections of Section A: Australian Politics of this examination. The pattern of essay choice in Part B: International Politics continued from 2008 with a further narrowing of the overall range of topic choice in the option topics. Global media is now clearly the most popular option.

### SECTION A – AUSTRALIAN POLITICS

#### Topic 1: The Australian Constitution and Federalism

##### *Question 1*

This question attracted only a handful of responses. The better replies spent time setting out the basic principles and then looking to see where and if the High Court decisions have or have not supported them. On the other hand, others were side tracked by looking at a range of cases for detail but not seeing where the idea of 'basic principles' became involved. One marker noted that candidates had no knowledge of the Koowarta Case beyond its name and some mixed up referenda results with High Court decisions.

##### *Question 2*

Better answers focused on the key words 'critically examine' and took the question to task. Most candidates covered a range of examples from High Court cases. Markers noted a high level of detail in many of these and also the broad range of examples. Engineers, uniform tax, Tasmanian dam cases were, almost without exception, well covered. Often, many more were mentioned. Few noted that from 1901 to 1920 the power was not really with the Commonwealth. Some responses explored only two or three cases in great depth, yet were still very effective. Better papers looked to fiscal matters; the concept of vertical fiscal imbalance appeared in the more outstanding responses. Very few picked up on the idea that the changing interpretations over the past century reflects a number of matters, not the least is the personalities of the judges. The cover given to specific sections of the constitution was impressive. Specific sections – 51 [and an array of its subsections], 96, 109 and 128 were covered to good effect. A few noted that the states have handed power to the Commonwealth. Fewer referred to the impact of globalisation. The role of war was covered by most students.

## **Topic 2: Political Representation, Parliament, and the Executive**

### **Question 3**

This question attracted more responses than did question 4. The better responses argued that 'total' or 'even' representation was near impossible but some level of representation is what we need or can get. A few spent undue time looking at gender and ethnic imbalances. Others argued that there was no real reason why a person could not be adequately represented by somebody of a different background. Some students skillfully debated the broader notion of representation. Most gave good coverage to the federal situation before and after the 2007 federal election. Some candidates 'knew', and very effectively used, the numbers in the House of Representatives and numbers in the Senate both pre - and post-November 2007 [or July 1 2008]. Some mention was made of the marginally oblique subtopic of direct democracy.

### **Question 4**

The few responses were sound in overview, but lacked the detail and/or case studies to be comparable with the top level of the other replies in this section. In general, such key ideas as the overall parliamentary system and question time were not covered. A few of the minor processes such as adjournment debate, point of order and matters of public importance were mentioned. There was no mention of double dissolutions, nor little discussion of ideas such as the delegated legislation and guillotine all of which would seem to deny the claim. Clearly, a range of candidates have a good working knowledge of a number of the areas of standing orders.

## **Topic 3: Voting and Elections**

### **Question 5**

There were not as many replies to this question as was anticipated. What was fair and what was not fair was a moot point. One marker commented that most replies were either very good and most enjoyable to read or candidates spent too much time explaining the mechanics of two or three of the voting systems or subsystems. Most candidates had a sound overview of the debates surrounding the term 'compulsory' and the arguments around the fairness or otherwise of this idea as being 'fair.' Direct democracy usually came into a brief comment. As in years past, it seemed that some candidates had learnt much from excursions to the Australian Electoral Centre. Many candidates had knowledge of key dates in Australian democratic development and could meld them into an essay. Many commented on the range of ways to vote as an example of fairness. Secret ballot received less cover than hoped. Much lively debate was centred on topics such as bicameral and unicameral systems in Australia; preferential and proportional voting and also optional and compulsory preferential voting and referenda. Clearly the Hare Clark system in Tasmania had been well covered at a number of sites.

### **Question 6**

This was a popular question with some very good replies. Generally, candidates covered a range of elections and the role of economic factors within these. The better papers either focused on the word 'most' or mused over the words 'the crucial factor' and looked to argue whether the term 'a crucial factor' may not be more applicable. Many able candidates made reference to several elections, a few going back as far as 1972. Lesser responses simply listed factors that determine electoral outcomes without arguing the point adequately enough.

Some candidates looked at the simple short term as against the long term debate about political socialisation.

As in the past, the success of Howard from 1996 to 2004, was well covered and the defeats of Howard in 2007 and 1987 were the examples best known. The exception was the 'birthday cake' incident with John Hewson. The level of knowledge of the details relating to the 2007 federal election were outstanding as was the detail of the 2001 'Tampa' election. Some, it could be contended, looked to a question from previous years and spent time arguing the point about the role of leadership. This, though important, was not the focus of this question.

## **Topic: 4 Political Parties**

### **Question 7**

The words 'conservative ideologies' were part of the run of federal politics this year. They were clearly part of the discussion in a number of schools. Lesser responses usually started with everything they knew about Liberals since Menzies and/or the quasi liberals of the post 1910 era and followed it up with the history of the ALP since 1891. A few candidates were determined to prove that they knew about the Barcaldine Tree of Knowledge. This was not needed in this answer.

The term 'successful' stressed a few. There was much clever argument around the term 'now' and how 'far back' an answer could go. Some seem confused by the notion that parts of the Party platform may well be conservative but not all planks in the platform. The notion of what was conservative to some was not conservative to others was given some cover. Much debate centered on the 2007 federal election. The better responses took time to look at Work Choices to Fair Work Australia, the refugee debate and Kyoto. Some mused that some of the current government's popularity is centered on a non-conservative approach to the environment. Others argued that the problem with the environment was that all governments, the current included, have been too conservative with the environment. Much debate centered on the 2001 election and whether it was conservative policies or racism that won the day.

Candidates are advised to avoid vitriolic attacks on political parties or politicians in their essays. It is the question that needs to be debated not an attack on the person, or party.

### **Question 8**

This question was well answered. It was the most popular question in Section A.

Significantly, most papers referred to minor parties and independents at both state and federal level. Some answers briefly covered the situation at both bicameral and unicameral levels.

Most could cite an impressive range of minor parties and independents in the few years. Without exception, Nick Xenophon received extensive coverage. Almost all mentioned the 'money for the Murray' from earlier in this year. A majority referred to Senator Harradine in some form or another. Case studies involving the DLP, appeared more than in the past. One marker noted that few candidates referred to the National Party. The same marker was surprised that some candidates implied that Natasha Stott Despoja was still in the Senate and others seemed to think that Alexander Downer was now an independent. The playing with the semantics of the question was done well by a few who spent moments musing on 'good' and 'bad' significant impacts. The better responses noted that there were periods of time when government majorities in the upper houses proved troublesome for the government. That said, the study of the Green preferences in the 1990 federal election was well presented. Again some candidates were keen to discuss the story of Peter Lewis and his role in the formation of government in South Australia in 2002. The idea that minor parties and independents could have impacts outside parliament was given some coverage. The poorer replies were keen to spend too much time explaining who were the minor parties and independents and on occasion lampooning them.

## SECTION B: INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

### Global Citizenship

**Question 9:**

There was only one response to this question.

**Question 10:**

There were no responses to this question.

**Question 11:**

There were no responses to this question.

**Question 12**

This was a popular question that overall was well done and produced some outstanding responses. Most were keen to point out that concentration may reduce the quality of information available. Almost all papers made reference to Rupert Murdoch and argued about what they claimed to be his conservative bias and then cited the reporting of the Iraq War as evidence of this. The reverse argument that Packer, Murdoch and Fairfax cared about journalism and content was missing. Some made reference to the right wing bias of The Advertiser and the notion of a one paper town. Some bemoaned that post Packer, The Bulletin and Channel Nine Sunday programme has been lost. The quality of the responses relating to Hannity and more so 'the O'Reilly Factor' were outstanding. Few papers missed the opportunity to make some reference to the 'fair and balanced' and the 'some people say' debates centred on 'O'Reilly.' The instance where he referred to Obama as a terrorist was dotted in many answers. Markers were impressed by the analytical style of the top flight of papers but were keen to point out that this did not extend to all papers. Most made reference to Berlusconi and often mentioned his relationship with the teenage actress. Comparisons using examples from the geographically diverse sites of Venezuela, Zimbabwe and China almost always were from the better papers. The notion that owners were gatekeepers was given a wider cover this year. A few noted that movements on the stock exchange can rapidly change concentration patterns.

Candidates might do well to consider that in this section of the examination there needs to be a stronger international flavour to the answers.

**Question 13**

This was the most popular question in the paper and produced many quality results. The better papers argued that politicians and the media work off one another and in fact need each other. The term symbiotic appeared in many replies. That said, at the other end of the spectrum, some just gave a run-down of a number of matters but did not mention a politician by name. Few seemed to consider the idea that influence is hard to measure. Many of the same individual, proprietor and country examples were used as in the previous question. The better papers looked to compare David Letterman and the links with the Washington Post to The Daily Show and the work of Jon Stewart. Lively debate was centred on the way that some would argue that Fox defeated Al Gore. The role of the Free Press Index and Aung San appeared in a number of answers. For the first time reference was made to the role of the 'Sun' in Britain and the banner 'Labour's lost it'; likewise the bias in the role of The Guardian commenting about Blair throughout 2006. It was interesting to note the

reappearance of the term 'political stooge' in these answers. Some fine comparative writing used examples from China.

#### **Question 14**

There were many definitions and interpretations of the terms 'alternative media.' The better papers mused over the term 'honest.' Some, as last year, incorrectly suggested that political opposition was a form of alternative media. Many papers made mention of the situation in China and underground opposition in and around the Falun Gong, Henry Wu, Tiananamen Square and the Olympic shutdown. The statement that 'News Limited' represent 'Limited News' was yet again used to good effect.

Some students briefly referred to the Green Left Weekly and the use of portals as alternatives. Some cover was given to social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook, but on occasions did not stress how they can be effective. Many papers argued that the only way any news can come out of countries under repression was via the alternative media. One lively oblique paragraph with a historical bent, made mention of the role of radio during the years of the Cold War in the 'airwaves fight' between Deutsche Welle and Radio Berlin International. Again, blogs received excellent coverage but yet again Flickr photosharing did not. Some were unable to distinguish between alternative media and opposition to the government which is not the same thing. Some argued that the ABC and SBS offered alternative programs and thus were alternative media because some programs they air can be considered alternative. Care is needed here, as this can be an exaggeration.

### **Australian International Relations**

#### **Question 15**

There were few answers to this question. Some took the long term view and looked at a range of examples over many decades while other replies were centered on the past twenty years. One marker identified that the candidates were too keen to be critical of the alliance per se rather than to consider the term 'evaluate' and work from there. Most looked at ANSUS, if only briefly. Few forgot 1942. Some argued that in times past the alliances were more significant. Phrases like 'dog like devotion' and 'deputy sheriff' dotted papers. Most referred to alliances in which both countries were part and most made mention of alliances other than those with an overt military bias.

#### **Question 16**

There were a few responses to this question but all were of high quality. While it was not possible to cover too many examples, nor was it expected, the candidates demonstrated that the complex concept of 'national security' was well understood. A range of bilateral and also multi lateral agreements were covered and assessed. Candidates confidently used a range of well known and less well known acronyms – examples such as APEC and JSCOT were seen. Candidates clearly understood that we only have dialogue status with ASEAN. Some made mention of the upcoming Copenhagen talks.

#### **Question 17**

This question was more popular than the previous two. There was some fine work in the top few papers. The idea of 'critically examine' was taken to task in an impressive fashion. Ideas such as language, ethnicity, geography and colonialism, were covered to a high level. Most shied away from the term 'alien,' but the more bold wrote with skill and in a critical manner. Some argued that we are no longer a European nation and thus there are other matters to

consider. Others briefly considered the notion that we can no longer ignore Asia, and that our future is in that region, and that we dare not appear 'alien.'

## **The United Nations and Human Rights**

### **Question 18**

The initial history, dates, numbers and groups within the United Nations were well documented and used to good effect. References to Doc Evatt often appeared. Examples from a diverse range of studies such as Rwanda, the Sudanese Civil War, southeast Europe and the Union of Myanmar were used to sound effect. The term 'intentions' was not attacked as vigorously as it might have been by some candidates. Specific quotes from a range of documents dotted the papers. A clear enunciation that noble intentions will often fail would have enhanced some papers. Some candidates were keen to provide evidence to prove the statement rather than looking at the instructive term 'how accurate' and taking both sides of the argument. Much was made of the idea that the United Nations has no real authority. Some argued that Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has a near impossible task.

### **Question 19**

Most contended that war is a constant challenge and that in war time the United Nations is a very tense place more because of what they can not do than because of what they can do. The veto powers of countries with ideological differences were well covered. Case studies of subsets of the Cold War were very well handled. The inability of the UN to deal with issues such as slavery, discrimination and torture was well noted once conflicts start. Generally the measurement of the term 'success' was avoided or only alluded to in the papers. The poor track record of some United Nations workers was not lost on a number of candidates. Some viewed that if all countries paid the money that they owed the United Nations then it would be more effective. Case studies looking at the Korean situation were usually of quality.

### **Question 20**

The few responses were well written. A wide range of case studies were given. Replies generally suggested that the United Nations had successfully protected only a few minority groups. Lively debate was often centered on Sri Lanka and the LTTE group, Darfur, Bosnia and the Baha'i's in Iran. More consistently, the recent activities of the Uighurs in Western China received good coverage. This example was used particularly well. Some other well documented examples referred to the Sunni, Shi'ite and Kurd clash and also to Fatah and Hamas. The recent activities of Nick Griffin in Britain appeared in carefully worded language.

## **The Politics of the Asia-Pacific Region**

### **Question 21**

The better papers focused on matters such as religion, language and ethnicity. Sometimes the coverage was between nations and other times the coverage was within nations. The comment that there are more than 200 countries on earth with 5000 ethnicities and some two thirds of these are in the Asia Pacific region appeared in most responses. Better replies mentioned the cultural collision that globalisation can provide and the many points of discussion had a double edged sword. The depth of discussion in many examples impressed markers with the details of the problems facing the Uighurs in China and also the Karen people in both Thailand and Burma being covered. These two examples were particularly well covered. The Desmond Tutu quote that 'we should delight in our differences' was used

to good effect. Issues such as trade, comparative wealth and historical mistrust were seen in some papers.

### **Question 22**

This was much less popular than the previous question. The crucial word 'evaluate' determined whether or not the candidate understood the focus of the question. In general, most responses gave a list of examples without making the point about the role of tyranny. An array of case studies had been covered but the knowledge was not applied to the question set.

### **Question 23:**

There were no responses to this question.

## **The United States of America and World Affairs**

### **Question 24**

This was a very popular question that produced many fine answers. Better responses examined a range of interpretations of the term 'empire'. To repeat from last year, the knowledge of the geopolitical situation during and since the Cold War was outstanding. Few concentrated only on the military aspect. Most seemed to argue that it may be in decline in some senses, but not in all senses. None took the view that it was not without challenges nor challengers. Most referred to hegemony in a range of forms. There was a vast spread of accurate and significant statistical information. Most papers used Afghanistan and Iran in their answers to mount an argument. Others were dismissive of North Korea. Astute comments suggested that the Georgian situation may signal a return of Russian power. Others looked to mount the case around the global financial crisis and the Chinese challenge in this area. The level of information went well beyond the 'Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae coverage' of the past. More than one implied that post George Bush there will be less of a challenge. There was less of a cover of the cultural impacts than in past years. That said, few missed the opportunity to make reference to the Islamic challenges.

### **Question 25**

Students responded in an intelligent manner to this question with the better candidates looking to attack the question word 'sole' and base their answers around this point. Is it the sole aim? Was it the sole aim? Others honed in on the question word 'the' and debated whether or not 'a' would have been a more adequate descriptor. Some, quite justifiably, took a historical bent and moved through a range of examples from Monroe to isolationism, World War I and II and then to the Berlin Wall and onto Iraq and then the last decade. While the Bush doctrine was central to some papers, candidates should not see this as the touchstone to criticise George Bush with vitriol over Iraq. Other candidates, quite justifiably, started in about 1980 and moved through to the present times with a stronger emphasis on the twenty first century. A few made some interesting arguments around the change that the Obama administration was making claiming that his less confrontational approach was more conducive to spreading democracy. Some referred to the writings of contemporary authors, both within and beyond the USA, with great skill.



### **Question 26**

This was the least popular question in this section. There seemed to be little doubt as to whether the shared challenges did or did not lead to closer cooperation. Cooperation examples were often centred on matters of war such as Curtin and World War II, Cold War and moreover Korea and Vietnam and more recently the last decade and on peace such as ANZUS and APEC. Many references to the quote 'All the way with LBJ' from last year did appear. Matters other than military matters did not receive as much cover as the question invited. Again some mused with the idea that the relationship between Obama and Rudd was likely to lead to a different level of cooperation than the Bush and Howard era. One marker commented that the changing perceptions in the Whitlam years received little coverage.

## **Comparative Political Systems**

### **Question 27:**

There were no responses to this question.

### **Question 28:**

There were no responses to this question.

### **Question 29:**

There were no responses to this question.

## **ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 3: SOURCES ANALYSIS**

The high standard of work continued this year.

Areas to consider include:

- attaching a cover sheet to both sources analysis tasks
- a range of instructive terms such as 'what' and 'describe' mixed with such terms as 'critically examine' and 'analyse'
- attaching the assignment task to each copy of each piece of work submitted
- numbering each part of each question
- inappropriate use of past short answer questions in examinations as they focus on the past and this section is about contemporary issues.

## **ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 4: INVESTIGATIVE REPORT**

Some candidates made sound use of their investigative reports and/or direct contacts with a range of the community and also community leaders. This is to be encouraged as an entity in itself, but moreover because it is a sound investigative tool. Candidates might look to better reference this material.

Schools are reminded that:

- they need to check the learning area manual regarding the number and range of examples of work that need to be sent in
- they are to attach a cover sheet from the learning area manual to each report
- the cover sheet needs to be completed in its entirety.

Students are reminded that:

- they should 'attack' a smaller rather than a larger topic; one assessor referred to the phrase 'attack the barn door not the barn'
- they might look to internet sources as the best method to present a bibliography
- appendices are not to be attached to the report
- the curriculum statement refers to 'including primary sources.'

Much lively debate came from a diverse range of new topics. There were more international topics this year than in the recent past. Candidates might look at variations on the traditional written style of report. There was more use of statistics, graphs and cartoons this year.

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