

Inequality in Australia- Zoe Foggiato

Inequality has been an issue for centuries. People have been treated differently merely because of the way they are. Inequality has had a major impact in Australia, ordinary people deal with inequality in their everyday lives. It has affected everyone somehow which has changed their way of living and who they are. Although we have come so far as a society, changing our views and ways to treat everyone equally, there are still things we need to be aware of in our everyday lives.

Racial inequality has always been a major issue in society and has divided people for centuries. Throughout history, society has seen many racial divides - from the slave industry through to more modern examples such as apartheid in South Africa - and while we have come a long way, there still exists many examples of racial inequality today. To understand why these exist, we need to take a look at the history. In 1901, Australia introduced the White Australia policy. This legislation aimed to block people of non-European ethnic origin from entering Australia. People of Asian and Pacific Islander backgrounds were particularly targeted. Alfred Deakin, who was Attorney-General at the time, explained that the policy meant "That end, put in plain and unequivocal terms ... means the prohibition of all alien coloured immigration, and more, it means at the earliest time, by reasonable and just means, the deportation or reduction of the number of aliens now in our midst." The policy was dismantled in stages after the conclusion of World War 2. The encouragement of first non-white immigration, allowing for a large multi-ethnic post-war program of immigration. However, during the Second World War, Prime Minister John Curtin reinforced the policy, saying "This country shall remain forever the home of the descendants of those people who came here in peace in order to establish in the South Seas an outpost of the British race. The introduction of such legislation demonstrates that Australia has a history of excluding peoples based on race, ethnicity, or skin colour. This is just one example that helps us to understand the history of racial inequality in our country.

Even though we have come so far in society by changing our ways and views to see everyone equally, there are still racial problems that are still relevant today. People still deal with racism in their everyday lives. They are treated differently simply because of where they are from. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander have been affected by racism for centuries. They are still dealing with discrimination to this day. Research found that 30% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over the age of 15 reported experiencing discrimination in the last 12 months, in particular by the general public, in law and justice settings and in employment. Further research has found that three out of four Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples regularly experienced race discrimination when accessing primary health care, and that they were not being treated for diseases when treatment was most needed. Racism is very much still relevant to now in Australia. All races deal with it and we need to realise that everyone is equal no matter where they come from. We should be treating everyone as we would treat our family, as they are.

For centuries, Men have always been seen as above Women. It has always been Men in power, men with higher positions and better paying jobs. Women have also faced years of abusive and violent behaviour towards them based on their gender and/or

appearance. It is amazing to see how far we have come as a society with treating all genders equally as times were incredibly different to now. In the 19th century, Australian women had very few legal rights. Once married, these rights were lessened as they were transferred to her husband. Married women surrendered all property and any wages earned to their husbands.

Education was only available for women from early 1879, when South Australia's first secondary school, the Advanced School for Girls, opened and the highly certificated Jane Stanes was appointed headmistress. Before that, women had no authority in schools.

I interviewed the principal of Northcote High School, Sue Harrap, to learn about her understanding of equality in her life today and how it has changed over the years. We had spoken about her views on equality in the world and how it has changed throughout her life. Miss Harrap stated when she was in school, all the people in power were men. Although there were more teachers who were women, everyone who had a say in what happened was a Man. We also spoke about what makes her feel equal to the people around her. She said that she feels equal and appreciated when she is listened to when speaking at a meeting or important event where she is surrounded by men and other people in power.

Although we have come so far with gender equality, there are still things we all need to work on. There are still stories and events that happen every day and is the new norm as it happens so often. As many know the wage gap between Men and Women has always been relevant. Even though we have become more aware of it, it is still happening now. Australia's full-time wage gap is 13.9% with Women earning on average \$242.90 per week less than Men. We need to act on complete equality between Men and Women. It has improved drastically over the years but there are still things people need to become aware of. We need to break stereotypes and change our views so that we can all be equal.

Although we have improved so much with inequality and treating everyone equal over the years, there are still things we need everyone to become aware of. We have overcome so much, from allowing citizenship to Indigenous people to seeing Women as equal to Men. These awful and cruel events happened to shape society to what it is now. They were horrible but I am thankful that they happened as they opened so many people's eyes and showed them what is wrong with the world and what the world should be.