2024 VCE Outdoor and Environmental Studies external assessment report

General comments

This year saw the introduction of the revised study design. Students handled the change of exam format (i.e. the introduction of Section B) and new content well, and most students attempted all questions.

The majority of students followed the exam instructions well: they completed most responses in the space provided and when extra space was required, they clearly marked where they had continued their response.

When the question directs students to refer to an outdoor environment that they have visited or studied, students should be able to name a specific location and relate all parts of that question to that specific location. Use of broad areas such as ‘Mornington Peninsula’ or ‘Bunurong Country’ without further reference to a specific location encompasses too wide a range of environments and uses for the area to attract marks. The use of Indigenous Peoples’ place names when giving a location is acceptable, but again, must include reference to a specific place/location rather than just a broad area. If a question asks for a comparison or similar between different time periods or factors, the same location must be used for all aspects of the question so a proper comparison can be made.

When approaching a question with the command word ‘compare’, students must be able to show similarities and/or differences. Some students simply provided two separate paragraphs, one for each point/factor they were comparing and then a word such as ‘whereas’ or ‘however’ to link the two paragraphs. While the use of these words acts as an effective signpost that the student is shifting to the other point/factor, students who only used this approach to compare could not gain full marks as the use of one word on its own is not a comparison. The response needs to cover similar themes or ideas in both points/factors, so that explanations and the significance of why they are the same and/or different can be unpacked. This can be done with the factors intertwined or separated out.

The study design has several key knowledge points where there is prescribed content. These include the use of specific time periods; historical environmental campaigns; conflicts over the use of outdoor environments; federal environmental policy; social debates on relationships with outdoor environments; impacts of threats on society and outdoor environments; acts and conventions; and community and individual actions to sustain outdoor environments. Students should know this content well, have specific knowledge related to outdoor environments that they have studied on the required topics, and have also practised the ability to apply this knowledge to hypothetical situations and other environments that they have not visited or studied (for example, Question 7a). It is expected that the students use the prescribed content in the study design when responding to related questions in the exam.

Specific information

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding resulting in a total of more or less than 100 per cent.

Section A

Question 1

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Average |
| % | 11 | 8 | 44 | 37 | 2.1 |

Students were required to identify two out of the three pillars of sustainability and outline how they are interdependent on each other. To access marks, students needed to accurately identify their chosen pillars.

Acceptable responses were:

* environmental
* social (or societal)
* economic.

Students then needed to demonstrate their knowledge of how each pillar relied on the other to contribute to sustainability.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

Social sustainability is the idea of an inclusive and just society where everyone’s needs are met. It involves access to affordable housing or clean drinking water. Environmental sustainability is ensuring the health of the environment for future generations and encompasses managing natural resources like water. The two pillars are interdependent as access to clean drinking water requires a healthy environment, and a healthy environment is reliant on peoples ability to participate in conservation and sustain healthy environments.

Question 2

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Average |
| % | 16 | 5 | 11 | 14 | 18 | 16 | 19 | 3.4 |

Students were required to analyse the change in relationship that non-Indigenous people experienced with a specific outdoor environment from the Pre-Federation to the Post-Federation time period.

Some students misread the question and talked about Indigenous people in their response, rather than non-Indigenous people. This made it difficult to gain marks.

Students had to demonstrate clear and succinct knowledge of relationships for both time periods specified, in relation to a specific environment that they had visited or studied. Some students found this difficult and provided a more general description of the relationship held in one specific time period.

Students were required to relate their response to a specific environment/location. Students who used broad areas with general or generic examples were unable to gain all available marks.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

During Pre-Federation 1860-1901, non-Indigenous people perceived the environment of Wilsons Promontory Nation Park (WP) as a resource to exploit for financial gain. They engaged in large-scale seal and whale hunting at Sealers and Refuge Cove as well as logging for timber at Sealers Cove to transport to cater for the mass population growth to Australia. This had detrimental impacts on the environment as the soil quality at WP decreased due to soil salinity and the logging caused habitat loss for species like Koalas which caused biodiversity loss. During Post-Federation (1901-1990) non-Indigenous perception of WP changed to see it more as somewhere to protect and a blank canvas to paint a nation on. This resulted in the construction of the Wilsons Promontory Road in 1930’s from Derby River to Tidal River which allowed increased visitation, an increase in environmental appreciation occurred and non-Indigenous Australians wanted to protect the environment for future generations.

Question 3a.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Average |
| % | 16 | 16 | 28 | 39 | 1.9 |

In Question 3, students were required to look at environmental issues and how they have shaped politics during the Post-Federation period and in the last decade.

To achieve marks in Question 3a, students had to describe one historical environmental during the Post-Federation time period and reference specific examples. Students were required to use a campaign listed in the study design. This includes the Lake Pedder, Franklin River or Little Desert environmental campaigns.

Students needed to provide information such as the years the campaign occurred, the origin/location and the parties involved. They also had to link the campaigns to the environment in which they occurred, by demonstrating specific knowledge of that area.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

The Franklin River Campain began in 1978 when the Tasmanian Government announced plans to dam the Franklin River for its hydro-electrical scheme. An environmental activist group led by Dr Bob Brown called the Tasmanian Wilderness Society (TWS) was formed from members of the former South-West Action Committee who unsuccessfully campaign against the flooding of Lake Pedder in 1977. The TWS engaged in peaceful protests including a human blockade of the construction site which attracted nation -wide attention and was eventually successful in preventing the daming of the Franklin in 1983.

Question 3b.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Average |
| % | 37 | 15 | 26 | 21 | 1.3 |

Students were required to explain how one environmental policy of a major political party in the last decade has influenced an environment that they had visited or studied.

This question had wide-ranging responses. High-scoring responses demonstrated a clear understanding of a relevant policy linked to an environment that the students had studied. Some students wrote about political action taken after the environmental campaign they had discussed in Question 3a. This did not gain marks because these campaigns did not occur in the last decade. Other students did not discuss a policy in detail and provided general comments about the impact political parties and their policies can have on environmental issues. Some students were able to accurately explain a policy but were unable to link it to an environment that they had visited or studied.

The Paris Agreement also featured highly in student responses. To access marks using this example, students had to demonstrate an understanding of the agreement and be able to link it back to an environment that they had studied.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

The Liberal National Coalition have a Net Zero Co2 emissions policy with no time stamp. They will do this with investing $1.5 billion into hydrogen energy but will continue to find $10 billion into the coal industry with opening new coal mines + funding coal exports.

This impacts the climate change issue of increasing extreme weather events like floods + bushfires, higher temperatures + less rain + increasing sea levels from Co2 emission by humans.

This will contribute to increasing Co2 emission from continuing coal burning which will continue to increase temperatures in alpine regions like Mt Baw Baw resulting in less snow fall.

Question 3c.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Average |
| % | 34 | 16 | 21 | 15 | 10 | 4 | 1.7 |

Students were required to compare how the selected environmental campaign from Question 3a and the selected environmental issue from Question 3b have impacted the policies of political parties.

It was expected that some students would be challenged by the demands of this high-order question, which was supported by the statistics.

Students had to avoid repeating information from Questions 3a and 3b and correctly apply the command word ‘compare’ to access marks. Many student responses provided vague information about how political parties are influenced and why they change their policies.

Students should have demonstrated their knowledge of how both the campaign and current-day environmental issue have impacted policies and explained how this response was the same or different over time.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

The campaign used the photography of Peter Dombrovskis of the river in national newspapers. These photos were able to remind people of the beauty of Australian environments + how these environments make up so much of our natural identity prompting people to care for them + see them as more than just for energy so they began to perceive the environment as a beautiful thing like art work which needs caring + preservation. This made people across the nation value the environment meaning politicians had to adapt to this change to retain voters. This is why Bob Hawke of Labor also implemented policy to reduce use of ozone depleting hydrocarbons.

Whereas political parties use climate change policy [to] prevent voters leaving their parties as people already care for the environment party due to the Franklin campaign so they already have an expectation to have climate change policies, also the campaign showed people they had a voice which is powerful if they want to influence decision which we saw in the climate change rallies.

Question 4

This question revolved around conflicts over the use of outdoor environments. Students were required to select a conflict from the list provided from the study design. The conflict list was updated with the release of the revised study design so students’ learning should now centre around this updated list.

When demonstrating their understanding of their selected conflict, students needed to include:

* background
* interest groups
* methods used by interest groups to influence others
* processes used by decision-makers to resolve the conflict.

Care must be taken when selecting a relevant conflict to study as it is essential that the previous points can all be addressed.

It should be noted that while Parks Victoria can be used as an interest group for some conflicts, it does not carry out methods to influence others as it is a government body, and therefore acts under the government’s direction.

Question 4a.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Average |
| % | 10 | 9 | 14 | 23 | 43 | 2.8 |

Students were required to summarise their selected conflict and identify two opposing parties. They were generally able to provide a basic summary of their selected conflict, but some students did find it challenging to name two opposing parties.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

The conflict of feral species in the alpine national park arose with the growing number of feral horses, scientifically observed to be causing a threat to Alpine National Park. The first party is the Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA). They believe feral horses should be removed through the most efficient means whereas, the opposing parties are the Australian Brumby Alliance (ABA) and Victorian Brumby Association (VBA). They believe brumby numbers have grown as apart of the evolutionary process and should not be removed.

Question 4b.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Average |
| % | 18 | 13 | 33 | 36 | 1.9 |

Students needed to explain one method that could be used by one of the parties mentioned in Question 4a to influence decisions about the outdoor environment concerned.

This question was generally answered well, with most students able to identify a suitable method linked to the interest group and conflict.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

The ABA and VBA can manipulate the media. They can create a website, uploading videos of the inhumane culling of feral horses conducted by Parks Victoria to their website. This sends a message to the public, sharing the cruel ways conducted by PV appealing to the emotional aspect and gaining more support.

Question 4c.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Average |
| % | 39 | 15 | 27 | 19 | 1.3 |

Students were required to explain one process that could be used to resolve the selected conflict from Question 4a.

Students found this question more challenging. Many students were unable to identify a formal decision-making process used by governments to resolve environmental conflicts, or to accurately explain one. Acceptable processes include implementation of legislation, litigation or court action, community consultation, mediation, environmental effects statement/management plans or referendum.

It is important to note that ‘having a vote’ or ‘round table conversations/discussions’ are not formal processes and therefore did not gain marks.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

A process used is the creation of management plans. They are a formal plan used to mitigate threats from environments and ensure that the ecosystem is health and conserves its traditional and cultural values. A management plan is constructed by Parks Victoria after assessing the impacts caused at the Alpine National Park and is regularly reviewed and updated.

Question 4d.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Average |
| % | 36 | 13 | 23 | 20 | 8 | 1.5 |

Students were required to evaluate the effectiveness of the process explained in Question 4c.

Students who found Question 4c challenging also found this question difficult. They had to ensure that they did not repeat their response from Question 4c and that they provided an evaluation of how effective the process was.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

The advantage of Parks Victoria creating the feral horses management plan 2021 is it is highly consultative, evidence and principle based plan to reduce the number of feral horses through humane means. Another advantage is it preserves the ecological importance of Alpine National Park, minimize risks to native flora and fauna and ensure the land can thrive efficiently again. Overall, it is effective as it adheres to the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, 1999 conserving and sustaining alpine ecosystems.

Question 5a.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Average |
| % | 4 | 8 | 20 | 30 | 38 | 2.9 |

Students were required to select an environmental threat from the list provided from the study design (land degradation, introduced species, urbanisation, climate change, flood and fire). They had to analyse the potential impact that the threat could have on an outdoor environment that they had visited or studied.

Most students were able to respond well to this question. Students had to ensure that their description of the impact of the threat matched the one they had selected. To achieve full marks, they also needed to ensure that they did not blend two threats together to strengthen their response. This was a common response when writing about introduced species, with many students focusing more on land degradation than introduced species. While land degradation can be caused by some introduced species, if selecting introduced species, students should have focused their answer on points such as competition for habitat and food sources, impact on the food chain and overgrowing native vegetation.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

Introduced species such as hog deer at Tidal River, Wilsons Promontory National Park (WPNP) pose as a threat as they complete with native fauna for food and shelter. The effects of hog deer cause vegetation trampling, pollution of waterways and antler rubbing on trees. This harms Tidal River taking away food sources and habitats and impact biodiversity which is needed to thrive and further reduces its aesthetic value.

Question 5b.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Average |
| % | 22 | 9 | 17 | 19 | 19 | 14 | 2.5 |

Students needed to suggest a mitigation strategy and analyse how it could be used to lessen the impact of climate change on the outdoor environment that had been identified in Question 5a.

This question received a wide range of responses. Most students correctly applied the use of the command term ‘suggest’. However, some students continued to focus on the threat they had identified in Question 5a rather than climate change, while other students simply wrote about the Paris Agreement with no reference to their selected environment.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

A mitigation strategy on a national level is the renewable energy expansion. They aim to expand solar and wind energy, reducing reliance on fossil fuels as renewable energy generates energy through an infinite source of the sun or wind. For example, 400 community batteries will be implemented across Australia. This can improve the health of Tidal Ri[v]er as it can reduce rising sea levels and the severity of natural disasters such as bushfires which can cause significant damage to biodiversity and habitats at Tidal River.

Question 6a.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Average |
| % | 3 | 2 | 7 | 88 | 2.8 |

Students were required to identify three different stakeholders from the stimulus provided.

Most students were able to gain full marks on this question, with the key being to ensure they had read the stimulus material thoroughly.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

Economic: A person who recently bought the historic hotel, the magpie arms

Conservation: The Magpie Landscape Alliance

Recreational: Local Mountain Biker

Question 6b.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Average |
| % | 7 | 7 | 12 | 23 | 16 | 12 | 22 | 3.6 |

Students were required to describe how the views from Question 6a represented economic, conservation and recreational relationships with Magpie Heights.

Most students gained marks by demonstrating the different types of relationships held by each group. However, some students did not make the link back to either Magpie Heights or the proposed mountain bike park, which meant they were not able to access all available marks.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

Economic: An economic relationship of purchasing the magpie arms would perceive it is an opportunity to earn profits. They believe the increased number of tourists and recreationalists can bring more customers to Magpie Heights, generating more revenue.

Conservation: A conservationist group such as the Magpie Landscape Alliance see it as a museum to protect. They would aim to preserve and protect the species of flora and fauna from habitat loss at Magpie Heights.

Recreational: A local mountain bike rider would view Magpie Heights as a place for adventure to perform recreational activities and escape from the pressures of everyday life, enjoying the serenity and relaxation Magpie Heights has to offer.

Question 6c.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Average |
| % | 6 | 26 | 55 | 13 | 1.8 |

Students needed to assess one possible environmental impact on species or ecosystem biodiversity that may occur if the bike park was to proceed.

Most students described a type of environmental impact, but many students did not make the link back to ecosystem or species biodiversity so therefore could not access all available marks.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

From the parks construction this would result in land having to be cleared + the paths would result in soil compaction along the tracks which reduces the available habitat for the species in the area (effectively removing 20km of available space) which gives them less shelter + food resources from flora eg wattle (prevented from growing due to bald roots) which may reduce the population of small marsupials resulting in species biodiversity loss.

Question 7a.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Average |
| % | 48 | 7 | 14 | 10 | 21 | 1.6 |

Students were required to describe two community actions that could be used to sustain the health of the Hopkins River, including the surrounding farmland.

Questions such as this ask students to apply knowledge about (in this case) community actions that they have acquired studying environments other than the environment stipulated in the question. It is not expected that students have visited the specific area used. Students need to gain confidence in applying their knowledge to hypothetical situations and other environments that they have not visited or studied. Teachers can help strengthen this by demonstrating how the information learnt about one specific environment can be applied to another.

Given there are four community actions listed as prescribed content in the study design, these were the acceptable actions as all students should have studied at least two of these. These actions include regenerative farming, Trust for Nature, Landcare and community groups such as ‘Friends of …’.

Students could use any one of these four actions, with two possible examples being regenerative farming and Trust for Nature could be applied to the farmland, and Landcare and community action groups could be applied to the river.

Many students responded with generic individual actions, such as not leaving rubbish behind or not letting cattle into the river. These did not gain marks.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

Trust for Nature (TFN) is a not-for-profit community organization that work to protect endangered plants and wildlife in cooperation with private landowners. TFN could protect the health of Hopkins River environment by using conservation covenants to protect species of flora and fauna such as native fish in the river and birds that surround it on private land forever by law. Community groups such as “Friends of the Hopkins River’ could also sustain the health of the Hopkins River environment by working with management authorities on public land such as Parks Victoria to manage the health of the river and improve water quality and adequacy by collecting rubbish pollution from floating in the river and disrupting aquatic life.

Question 7b.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Average |
| % | 40 | 23 | 21 | 15 | 1.2 |

Students needed to justify how one of the two actions from Question 7a would be more effective at sustaining the health of the Hopkins River and surrounding farmland.

Students who did not access marks on Question 7a were still able to access marks in this question if their response included reference to one of the community actions listed. Students handled the requirements of the command term ‘justify’ well, and provided sound reasoning as to why their chosen action was most effective.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

Trust For Na[tu]re would be effective at sustaining the health of the Hopkins River and surrounding farmland that is privately owned through its use of conservation covenants which are legal agreements placed on a lands title to ensure ongoing protection of its flora and fauna by law. Also, through its stewardship program, it can provide ongoing support through revegetation programs (which where clearing is needed, there is a law about the number of trees to remain) and weeding by volunteers.

Question 7c.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Average |
| % | 37 | 14 | 19 | 14 | 10 | 6 | 1.7 |

Students were required to compare the effectiveness of one community action from Question 7a with a non-Indigenous peoples’ management strategy that could be used to sustain the health of the Hopkins River and surrounding farmland.

A common error was responding with an Indigenous peoples’ management strategy rather than a non-Indigenous peoples’ management strategy. This did not gain marks and students need to read the question carefully to ensure they are responding with the correct group. Students were also challenged by the command term ‘compare’, which requires students to provide similarities and or differences.

Higher-scoring responses used their second group from Question 7a and not the one used in Question 7b. This made it a simpler response, because if students used the same action for both Questions 7a and 7b, they had to ensure that they did not repeat information.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

One non-Indigenous peoples’ management strategy is zoning. This refers to the creation of a geographical framework which divides an area into sections which may have different levels of appropriate use. This differs to Landcare, because the goal of Landcare is made so sustainable land management strategies and soil health, whereas zoning is to balance the different needs of user groups in the area (for example farmers, conservation groups and recreational users). One similarity between the two is that they both may help decrease erosion of the Hopkins River area. Zoning can protect certain areas by limiting interaction in certain regions, which could help to reduce erosion in particularly vulnerable/sensitive sites. Landcare’s strategies for sustainable land use, like reducing silage in the surrounding farmlands of Hopkins River could also help reduce soil erosion.

Question 8a.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Average |
| % | 42 | 10 | 16 | 11 | 22 | 1.7 |

Students were required to describe two individual actions that could be used to sustain an outdoor environment.

Students were again required to draw on two of the four individual actions listed in the study design (environmental activism, environmental advocacy, ethical and sustainable consumerism, and green home design). Individual actions used in responses outside of these did not gain marks and generally lacked specific detail.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

One individual action that could be used to sustain an outdoor environment is environmental activism. Environmental activism refers to expressing support of caring for and protecting environments, which could raise awareness and generate public interest, while also pressuring policies makers to take action.

Another individual action is green home design. This refers to utilizing environmentally sustainable and resource efficient processes, materials and designs when constructing infrastructure like offices, factories or homes. For example, this was utilised in the Penguin Parade visitor building, on Philip Island which has double glazed windows, floor and wall insulation, 666 solar panels and recycled rainwater for non-portable use.

Question 8b.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Average |
| % | 34 | 21 | 23 | 13 | 10 | 1.5 |

Students needed to explain how both individual actions from Question 8a could be used to help address Australia’s waste problem.

Students who did not gain marks in Question 8a were still able to access this question if they provided relevant links to listed actions or the stimulus.

In their response, students were expected to use their actions from Question 8a and link them to the stimulus provided to demonstrate their knowledge of how these actions contribute to reduced waste.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

Environmental activism could be utilized to raising awareness about Australia’s ‘waste problem.’ By making individuals aware about their own waste habits (on average producing 2.95 tonnes per annum), through means such as demonstration. People may be inclined to change their own waste habits and prioriti[se] waste reduction. It may also put pressure on policy makers like governments to take action towards reducing waste, especially in building and demolition materials.

Moreover, green home design could reduce the amount of waste generated, especially in the building of infrastructure. By building in a resource efficient manner, less waste is generated. Moreover, recycled materials, like metals, could be used to build infrastructure further reducing waste, and becoming more environmentally sustainable.

Section B

Question 1

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | Average |
| % | 4 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 10 | 10 | 9 | 7 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 7.7 |

Students were required to write a letter to the editor describing the concept of custodianship, analysing how Indigenous peoples’ ability to care for country was impacted by colonisation. They then needed to describe a management strategy used by Indigenous people and link it to custodianship and the stimulus provided and provide specific references to outdoor environments and specific Indigenous communities throughout.

Most students were able to provide some level of response. The main area that students found challenging was providing sufficient detail with links to the stimulus, specific Indigenous communities and outdoor environments. Some students focused on non-Indigenous people’s management strategies or forgot to address a dot point in the question stem.

Students are encouraged to write a simple plan for their response as this will ensure that they have covered all aspects of the question.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

The term ‘if you look after Country, Country will look after you’, is a key pillar of Indigenous custodianship. It refers to the reciprocal relationship that Indigenous Australians have with the environment, that by nurturing, protecting and caring for Country, it will in turn provide for them. This care for Country, and inherent guardianship of it is referred to as the concept of Indigenous Custodianship. It also refers to Indigenous Australians kinship with country and all living things it stems from First Nations people’s traditional and belief that Country is a living entity, and must be treated with mutual respect, which has occurred in the “over 50,000 years,” in which the Australian Indigenous community cared for land. This can be seen through the Wadawurrang traditional owners, many of whom would still maintain this relationship as custodians of the Victorian Surf Coast.

Indigenous people’s abilities to act as custodian of the land was greatly restricted by colonisation. The non-Indigenous people (NIP) who colonised the land greatly restricted Indigenous peoples interactions with the land, largely out of fear and lack of understanding of the landscape. For example, they restricted First Nations people semi-nomadic and nomadic practice through their fencing and permanent infrastructure. They also moved many Indigenous people into reserves, which prevented them from moving seasonally, which was common practice for groups like the Jardwadgaii and Djab Wurrung. Be restricting this semi-nomadic practices, areas of Country no longer had the opportunity to regenerate or recover from use, constantly being utilised by the NIP for resources, like timber.

Another example of this, was how prior to colonisation Indigenous groups would hunt for and gather food. An example of this was the Yam Daisy (Murnong) a staple food source for the Djab Wurrung and Jarwaddgaii. However, after colonisation, the sheep and cattle form NIP would trample Yam daisy and cause soil compaction and erosion which caused the eradication of the Yam Daisy. This prevented the ability of Country to look after its Indigenous People.

A management strategy used by Indigenous People is cultural burning. This refers to low, cool controlled burns conducts in a mosaic pattern. It helps to reduce dense undergrowth which can act as fuel to uncontrollable bushfires and makes land easier to traverse. The mosaic burning leaves room for animals to escape, which is an example of look after Country. Moreover, it allows for species like the Bottlebrush Banksia, (which utilises cues from fire to germinate). Cultural burns are a management strategy which aligns with the concept of custodianship, showing care for Country by mitigating key threats to it. This management strategy may be utilised by indigenous people, like the Djab Wurrung in cooperation with management authorities like Parks Victoria to manage areas like the Grampians (Gariwerd) region, which is prone to bushfires.