

selling

Australia

extension activities

national identity discussion questions

What is national identity?

Briefly defined, national identity is a claim made about the collective personality of a country's people. It derives from their history and culture and is exhibited in nationally distinctive attitudes, values and forms of behaviour.

How is a national identity acquired? What are its characteristics?

National identity is acquired gradually; is stronger among the native-born; tends to be incorporated in nation-sustaining myths or legends; can be distorted into stereotyped images of national "character".

Why is an Australian national identity difficult to define? Are there so many diverse influences that we can no longer have a single Australian identity?

Australian national identity has an elusive quality, partly because it is constantly changing and partly because of variations of cultural loyalty in Australia at any one time and from one generation to the next.

In groups, discuss the following quotations. To what extent to you agree with each statement? Prepare a response to share with the class.

"We Australians have trouble identifying ourselves, in saying what we are, and what we are coming to be." – Manning Clark, *The Quest for an Australian Identity*, 1980

"When we look at ideas about national identity, we need to ask, not whether they are true or false, but what their function is, whose creation they are, and whose interests they serve." – Richard White, *Inventing Australia*, 1981

"Australians want to believe that being an Australian should imply something more than simply living here: the notion of shared culture seems fundamental to any concept of an identifiable society." – Hugh Mackay, *Reinventing Australia*, 1993

"There never has been and never will be something called the Australian national identity. Australia is a diverse society like any other." – Donald Horne, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 Feb 1994

A Film Australia National Interest Program in association with Prospero Productions Pty Ltd. Produced with the assistance of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. © NFSA

Executive Producer: Stefan Moore Producers: Ed Punchard, Julia Redwood Director: Julia Redwood
Writers: Julia Redwood, Lawrie Silvestrin Narrator: Sigrid Thornton

Year: 2001 Duration: 4 x 26 min

For information about Film Australia programs, contact:

National Film and Sound Archive of Australia
Sales and Distribution | PO Box 397 Pyrmont NSW 2009
T +61 2 8202 0144 | F +61 2 8202 0101
E: sales@nfsa.gov.au | www.nfsa.gov.au

