

# Worldviews

## Foundations - Unit 318



### Week 2 – Stories

## Session 1 – An Introduction to Worldviews

Weekly Objective:

- To examine the different types of stories that play into the development of a worldview

### **Introduction:**

As we discussed last week the way in which a person's worldview is developed over time has much to do with the stories that they enter into. The story of the country in which they live, their ethnic story, their faith story and their own family stories.

### **Australia's Story:**

These are the words for the first 2 verses of the Australian national anthem. What ideas do they speak about in regards to how the author of the song understood Australia? Do you think Australians think about Australia in these terms today?

*Australians all let us rejoice,  
For we are young and free;  
We've golden soil and wealth for  
toil;  
Our home is girt by sea;  
Our land abounds in nature's gifts;  
Of beauty rich and rare;  
In history's page, let every stage  
Advance Australia Fair  
In joyful strains then let us sing,  
Advance Australia Fair*

*Beneath our radiant Southern Cross,  
We'll toil with hearts and hands,  
To make this Commonwealth of ours  
Renowned of all the lands,  
For those who've come across the  
seas  
We've boundless plains to share,  
With courage let us all combine  
To advance Australia fair.  
In joyful strains then let us sing,  
Advance Australia fair.*

### ***How do people see Australia's beliefs and values?***

The following quotes come from a speech given at the Lowy Institute by Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Mr Peter N Varghese AO, on 20 August 2015, titled *An Australian world view: A practitioner's perspective*.

Australia's liberal democratic, secular and multicultural character is fundamental to our sense of self.

And we need to start from the premise that values are not there to be imposed on others. They should define who we are, not what we insist others become.

Australia's national interests are frequently asserted but rarely defined. At their core, they are timeless: to advance

security and prosperity and to contribute to the shaping and running of international institutions which reinforce the rule of law and international norms of behaviour.

**Our aid program** has a key role to play in promoting private sector led economic growth and assisting developing countries to address constraints to development and attract investment.

Ours is a society shaped by the values and institutions of the west, intimately connected to Asia, with economic interests across all regions and a community which has found unity in the principles of a multicultural liberal democracy.

### *Australian Cultural Assumptions*

- “Cutting down the tall poppy” - bringing down those who (try to) stand out above the rest to a more common level
- “Fair go” for everyone
- Laid back & easy going; slow pace of life
- Frequent use of humour
- Irreverent and profane
- Resist control and resent superiors, little identification with authority
- Strong sense of equality & egalitarianism
- Friendship important: “mateship”
- Strong sense of national pride
- Optimistic: “she’ll be right”
- Determination highly valued
- Sportsmanship and athletics important to society
- Manual and intellectual labour viewed equally

### *Waltzing Matilda*

- Australia’s popular folk song—far more important to Australians than the national anthem—celebrating a thief as a hero and policemen as the villains

*“Once a jolly swagman camped by a billabong...  
And he sang as he watched and waited ‘til his billy boiled  
Who’ll come a-Waltzing Matilda with me?”*

***Symbols and Praxis:***

What symbols and praxis flow from this story of Australia? What are the symbols and the actions, the praxis, which happen automatically because of the way the story of Australia is presented?

Do we have any praxis similar to the one described by Tom Wright and the celebration of Thanks Giving in the USA?

***An Ethnic Story: Basic Precepts of the Aboriginal World View:***

The following are from a paper published in the Australian Humanities Review, [Issue 45, November 2008](#) titled, *Some Thoughts about the Philosophical Underpinnings of Aboriginal Worldviews*, By [Mary Graham](#).

**A Western Question: What's the meaning of life?**

**An Aboriginal Question: What is it that wants to know?**

'The white man's law is always changing, but Aboriginal Law never changes, and is valid for all people.' Mr. Bill Neidjie, 'Kakadu Man'

\* The Land is the Law

\* You are not alone in the world

Aboriginal people's culture is ancient, and certain observations have been made over many millennia about the nature of nature, spirit and being human. The most basic questions for any human group, despite advances in technology, have not changed much over time; they include:

- how do we live together (in a particular area, nation, or on earth), without killing each other off?
- how do we live without substantially damaging the environment?
- why do we live? We need to find the answer to this question in a way that does not make people feel alienated, lonely or murderous.

***Eight differences between Indigenous and Western worldviews:*****Indigenous worldviews (I) vs Western worldviews (W)**

**1. (I)** Spiritually orientated society. System based on belief and spiritual world.

**1. (W)** Scientific, skeptical. Requiring proof as a basis of belief.

**2. (I)** There can be many truths; truths are dependent upon individual experiences.

**2. (W)** There is only one truth, based on science or Western style law.

**3. (I)** Society operates in a state of relatedness. Everything and everyone is related. There is real belief that people, objects and the environment are all connected. Law, kinship and spirituality reinforce this connectedness. Identity comes from connections.

**3. (W)** Compartmentalized society, becoming more so.

**4. (I)** The land is sacred and usually given by a creator or supreme being.

**4.(W)** The land and its resources should be available for development and extraction for the benefit of humans.

**5. (I)** Time is non-linear, cyclical in nature. Time is measured in cyclical events. The seasons are central to this cyclical concept.

**5. (W)** Time is usually linearly structured and future orientated. The framework of months, years, days etc. reinforces the linear structure.

**6. (I)** Feeling comfortable is measured by the quality of your relationships with people.

**6. (W)** Feeling comfortable is related to how successful you feel you have been in achieving your goals.

**7. (I)** Human beings are not the most important in the world.

**7. (W)** Human beings are most important in the world.

**8. (I)** Amassing wealth is important for the good of the community

**8. (W)** Amassing wealth is for personal gain<sup>1</sup>

## Personal Family Story:

The history of your family, going back many generations, has led to members of the family holding on to particular points of view.

One place where this is seen in perhaps extreme ways is in Northern Ireland. The following is a section from a short documentary produced by VICE News in 2014.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> adapted from *Working with Aboriginal Worldviews*, by Anne Mead

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86nLtVleoMc>

## The Foundation on Which We Live.

It is important to note that our own worldview may not be what we think it is. **It is rather what we show it to be by our words and actions.** Our worldview generally lies so deeply embedded in our subconscious that unless we have reflected long and hard, we are unaware of what it is. Even when think we know what it is and lay it out clearly in neat propositions and clear stories, we may well be wrong. Our very actions may belie our self-knowledge.

James Sire<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.christianity.com/theology/other-religions-beliefs/8-questions-every-worldview-must-answer.html?p=0>