

Space Careers Wayfinder

Space: The legal, the ethical and the moral

Background

Australia is a country with a democratically elected government (parliament). The Australian Constitution contains the rules by which the country is governed. The constitution covers the structure, powers, and responsibilities of the federal parliament which includes the law-making powers of the parliament. For new national laws or amendments to existing national laws, Members of the Parliament prepare and enter a bill in the form of a draft Act. The bill becomes an Act or law only after it has been passed by both Houses of Parliament (the Senate and the House of Representatives) and has been assented to by the Governor-General.

The task

- ❖ In his video, Deen mentions law, ethics and morals. Complete the table with a definition and example of each of the listed obligations.


	Definition	Example
Legal Obligation		
Ethical Obligation		
Moral Obligation		

Background

Shortly after World War II in 1945, representatives from 50 countries gathered in San Francisco to sign the United Nations Charter, with Australia playing a key role. Today, the 193 member states uphold the objectives of the United Nations (UN). In 1967, appointed government officials from the Russian Federation, the United States of America and the United Kingdom were all signatories to a UN Outer Space Treaty. As of March 2023, 113 countries are parties to the treaty, with another 23 countries signing the treaty but yet to complete ratification¹.

The task

- ❖ How would you summarise the Outer Space Treaty?




Background

Countries around the world are defined by international borders. Borders can be determined by international agreements or treaties and may be based on geographical features, cultural, religious or historical factors. A country's sovereign right to the airspace vertically above its territory is governed by international law. However, the vertical height above sea level (altitude) to which sovereignty extends is not clearly defined.

The task

- ❖ If the airspace vertical height relating to sovereignty is not defined, how is it possible for signatories to comply with underlying principles of the Outer Space Treaty?



¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Outer_Space_Treaty#cite_note-unoda-1

For over 50 years, the Outer Space Treaty has worked well with very few challenges to the status quo. Arguably the two most serious challenges occurred just over a decade apart. The first was in 1976 in what was later referred to as the 'Bogota Declaration', and then again in 2007 when China was thought to have violated the treaty.

- ❖ What was the basis of the Bogota Declaration?



- ❖ How was China thought to have violated the treaty?




Background

During Deen's video, he talks about space belonging to all of us and at the same time belonging to none of us, "Space belongs to all of us, and it belongs to none of us. It is something that every single human being on this planet sees every single night. It's one of the few things that we genuinely share. We don't always share the same country. We don't always share the same language. We all of us share the same skies. And those stars that tell us their stories, they belong to all of us."

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have used the night sky for over 50,000 years. They have used the night sky to predict seasonal changes to the environment, the availability of native foods and the behaviour of plants and animals.

The task

- ❖ Choose an area of the night sky which has a particular relevance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and describe the feature and its relevance.




Background

To many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, the Sun and the Moon have a place in the Dreaming Stories. To some, the Moon is a powerful man. To the people of the Nuenonne territories of Southeast Tasmania, the Sun is a man named Puywin and the Moon his wife Venna². The associated rise and fall of the seas and oceans with the phases of the Moon was recognised by the Yolngu people of East Arnhem Land.

According to the Outer Space Treaty, 'No country has a unique ownership of the Moon, and all nations are accorded equal rights and access.' The treaty also states, 'The Moon and other celestial bodies shall be used exclusively for peaceful purposes.'

The task

- ❖ Imagine a well-developed nation with an established space program is proposing to build a settlement on the Moon and mine the mineral resources there. They plan to ship the minerals back to Earth for use in consumer goods. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have a strong cultural connection to the Moon and the stars. What do you think their reaction might be to a settlement on the Moon and mining of the Moon?



A large rectangular box for writing the response to the task. In the top-left corner, there is a small purple icon of a hand holding a pen, indicating that this area is for writing.

² <https://cosmosmagazine.com/space/lunar-traditions-of-the-first-australians-2/>