

**COTTER DAM**  
**PEOPLE AND PLACE**  
**UNIT OF WORK**  
**EARLY ADOLESCENCE – YEAR 8**



## UNIT DESCRIPTION

'The Cotter' is the local name for the Cotter River, Cotter Dam, recreation and leisure area and the camping ground. The Cotter River and environs have been an important place for the people of the area for at least 21,000 years. The Cotter River corridor formed one of the many river corridor pathways for the Ngunnawal people and for the people from the surrounding tribes, on their annual migration to Tidbinbilla and the Southern Alps beyond.

In 1908 the location was chosen for the national capital of Australia. In 1913 the Australian Capital Territory was proclaimed with Canberra as the national capital city. One of the main reasons the location was chosen was because of the permanent supply of reliable, clean, fresh water from the Cotter River.

Work commenced on the damming of the Cotter River in 1912. The Cotter Dam was completed in 1915. The Cotter River is believed to have been named after a former convict, Garrett Cotter. There is evidence of 'The Cotter' becoming a focal recreation and leisure centre for the people of Canberra from about 1926. Since that time there have been modifications to the Cotter Dam and variations in the use of 'The Cotter' as a recreation and leisure area.

This unit of work focuses on the social history of the Cotter region and connections to the people of Canberra.

## BIG UNDERSTANDINGS

The Cotter River is an important part of the traditional life of Aboriginal people from the region.

The pristine nature and reliable flow of the Cotter River made a major contribution to the decision to locate the Nation's Capital, Canberra, in its current location.

Many understandings of the heritage of Canberra are centred on the stories and experiences of the people who have used 'The Cotter'.

'The Cotter' became a popular recreation and leisure destination for the people of Canberra after the Cotter Dam construction resulted in improved access to the area.

## ATTITUDES AND VALUES

In this unit students will have opportunities to:

- develop an interest in finding out about the history of Canberra and the surrounding areas over different periods of time
- appreciate the intrinsic value of the natural world through the use of the natural environment as a recreational and educational resource and
- act on their responsibility as consumers and citizens to conserve and manage environmental resources in ways that are fair to present and future generations.

## FOCUS QUESTIONS

- Where is the Cotter River?
- What part did the Cotter River play in the selection of the site of the national capital?



- How did Aboriginal people and early European settlers use the Cotter River prior to the construction of the Cotter Dam?
- How did the Cotter Dam projects enhance the recreational and leisure opportunities of the Canberra community?
- What opportunities does the Cotter Dam enlargement provide for the Canberra community to reconnect with 'The Cotter'?
- How will you apply your knowledge and understanding to a contemporary situation?
- How would you share your understanding of the use of the Cotter with the wider community?

## ESSENTIAL LEARNING ACHIEVEMENTS

### ELA 2 THE STUDENT UNDERSTANDS AND APPLIES THE INQUIRY PROCESS

**In the later childhood band of development, students have opportunities to:**

- 2.EA.3 formulate questions, predictions or propositions suitable for investigation and clarify the inquiry focus
- 2.EA.8 access and interpret a range of primary and/or secondary sources of information (e.g. historical documents, images, oral histories, biographies, articles, media sources, statistical data sets)
- 2.EA.9 evaluate the accuracy, relevance, completeness and credibility of data and information and their sources (e.g. recognise evidence, opinion, bias and perspective; identify credentials of authors or websites) and
- 2.EA.15 present the inquiry focus, problems, background, ideas and approaches and report on results, findings and conclusions using suitable representations and discipline-based terminology.

### ELA 21 THE STUDENT UNDERSTANDS ABOUT AUSTRALIA AND AUSTRALIANS

**In the later childhood band of development, students have opportunities to understand and learn about:**

- 21.EA.2 how the geography of Australia influences what people do to survive and prosper (e.g. where people live, the location of natural resources and the development of industries and cities) and
- 21.EA.4 past and contemporary people, movements, events and ideas, which shaped Australia as a nation with a sense of Australian identity.

**In the later childhood band of development, students have opportunities to:**

- 21.EA.9 use geographical language, tools and conventions to interpret and create representations of Australia's physical and human geography
- 21.EA.10 sequence key historical events to create a narrative of a key period in Australian history and
- 21.EA.11 find out about, discuss and evaluate historical events using appropriate genres, sources and evidence.



# FOUR C'S MODEL FOR UNIT OF WORK DEVELOPMENT

## Stages of learning sequence

### CONNECT

Students engage with the unit of work. They:

- establish the purpose
- identify prior knowledge and beliefs and address misconceptions and
- formulate questions for investigation.

### CONTEXTUALISE

The students discover new knowledge. They:

- develop skills and learning strategies
- engage in shared learning experiences and
- utilise primary and secondary sources of information.

### CONCEPTUALISE

The students develop understandings, make connections and apply learning. They:

- analyse, synthesise and plan areas for personal, group or whole class investigation
- develop and follow a research plan and
- provide evidence for conclusions.

### COMMUNICATE

Students review and share what they have discovered.

This model of Unit of Work writing has been developed by Maureen Bartle, Education Consultant.



## UNIT DETAILS

<b>BAND OF DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>Early Adolescence</b>
<b>YEAR LEVEL</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>HOST KLA/S</b>	<b>History / SOSE</b>
<b>DURATION</b>	<b>8 weeks</b>

### Stage of learning sequence

#### CONNECT

#### Focus questions

- Where is the Cotter River?
- What part did the Cotter River play in the selection of the site of the national capital?

#### Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- identify key reasons behind the selection of the site for the National Capital in terms of its geography
- locate Canberra, the Cotter Dam, Cotter Road, the edge of suburbia, rivers and lakes of the area and other significant features on a map of Canberra
- recount the ways in which people have used the Cotter River area over time
- use current and historical evidence to demonstrate the relevance of the Cotter River in the choice of national capital city and
- use geographic terminology to describe the Cotter River and the enlarged Cotter Dam as places within the geographic landscape.

#### Summative assessment tasks

Students will:

- write a newspaper article from 1908, explaining why Canberra was chosen as the site for the national capital
- construct an overview of *The Uses of 'The Cotter' over time*
- develop an annotated map of the Canberra region showing the Cotter Dam and their suburb
- create a poster to encourage the people of Canberra to visit the revitalised recreation and leisure areas of the enlarged Cotter Dam and
- collect evidence and resources which will form part of the culminating project.

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## Teaching and learning experiences

Students to establish their personal link with the Cotter by sharing stories of periods when they have visited the region. Put a notice in the newsletter or interview parents, friends or local citizens about their personal connections to 'The Cotter'.

Examine a map of Canberra and ask students to identify the Cotter Dam, Cotter River and other dams, rivers and creeks.

Develop mapping skills by understanding the use of colour and symbols to identify geographic features. Identify the key features of the ACT: rivers, lakes, mountains, etc.

Construct a map with major roads, suburban edge and other sites of interest. Map and label the route from the school to the Cotter Dam. Investigate a map of the 'The Cotter'. Locate Casuarina Sands, Cotter Avenue, the camping ground, the Cotter Dam Discovery Trail, viewing platform, trout hatchery, suspension bridge, the Cotter River and Paddy's River. Make some observations about maps of large areas such as the ACT and smaller areas such as 'The Cotter'.

Research the reasons behind the selection of Canberra as the national capital. Include the importance of the environmental features of the landscape (weather, water location, ease to dam the river etc.). Write a newspaper article from 1908, explaining why Canberra was chosen as the site (explaining what they found during their research).

Brainstorm the relevance of a reliable, clean, safe river as a deciding factor in the choice of a site for an inland city. Classify and prioritise the suggestions. Develop a graphic organiser using text and images, to develop a presentation showing the importance of the Cotter River in the selection of Canberra as the national capital city.

Conduct an excursion to the Cotter Dam Discovery Trail. Focus for the excursion will be to collect evidence for a culminating project which looks at the historical and current uses of the Cotter River corridor. Take photo and video footage as primary source evidence of relevant places and objects of interest. Make notes and illustrations which can be used for the culminating project.

Create a poster encouraging the people of Canberra to visit the revitalised recreation and leisure areas near the enlarged Cotter Dam showing all the possible uses for the area from research to recreation and leisure.

Discuss the ways in which the Cotter is being managed and the issues involved. Explore the responsibilities of people who use the 'The Cotter' with regard to the care and maintenance of the area. Make entries into their journals of strategies which could be employed to raise awareness of care and maintenance of the area.



## Stage of learning sequence

### CONTEXTUALISE

#### Focus questions

- How did Aboriginal people and early settlers use the Cotter River prior to the construction of the Cotter Dam?
- How did the Cotter Dam projects enhance the recreational and leisure opportunities of the Canberra community?
- What opportunities does the Cotter Dam enlargement provide for the Canberra community to reconnect with 'The Cotter'?

#### Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- use geographical tools (such as maps, diagrams, images and data) to interpret and create representations of Australia's physical and human geography
- find out about, discuss and evaluate historical events using appropriate genres, sources and evidence
- provide evidence of the Cotter River as an important pathway for the Ngunnawal people
- describe and show understanding of the living conditions for the workers involved in the construction and modifications of the Cotter Dam
- retell the story of the Cotter School and compare and contrast it with social conditions in Canberra at the time
- demonstrate understanding of the factors such as social, economic and political influences on the lives and conditions of different groups of people
- give evidence of the evolution of 'The Cotter' as a recreation and leisure centre for Canberra
- outline the process of a historical inquiry
- understand what makes things significant or gives them heritage value
- discuss the implications of terms such as leisure and recreation
- discuss the effect of the 2003 bushfire on the Cotter from a range of perspectives and
- use evidence to discuss 'The Cotter' pre and post the construction of the Enlarged Cotter Dam.

#### Summative assessment tasks

Students will:

- Investigate and develop a flow chart for the historical inquiry process.
- be able to use geographical tools to create and interpret representations of the Cotter at various periods in time
- demonstrate an understanding of historical events at the Cotter which they have garnered from a wide range of appropriate sources
- list important heritage sites around the ACT and identify the reasons they are important to our history
- develop an illustrated document to show how the people of 'The Cotter' met their basic needs
- construct an annotated time line to identify and describe significant points in the social history of the Cotter Dam (including the story of the Cotter Tent School)
- construct a series of postcards showing 'The Cotter' as a significant recreation and leisure centre for the people of Canberra and
- identify the impacts of the 2003 Canberra bushfires on 'The Cotter'.

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## Teaching and learning experiences

Investigate and develop a flow chart for the historical inquiry process. Research using primary and secondary evidence. Examine a source of evidence for bias and understand the complexities of subjectivity versus objectivity. Apply modified conventions for referencing sources of information.

Identify examples and advantages of primary and secondary evidence. Discuss objectivity and subjectivity and explore examples of each. Retell a recent relevant incident and explore focal points of interest and perspectives. Work out appropriate referencing conventions for use in the project.

Research historical texts and other sources of information such as the National Library website <http://www.nla.gov.au> to find out why Canberra was chosen as the final site for the national capital. Consider the importance of the Cotter River in the selection.

Make an illustrated poster of some of the recorded early comments about the significance of the Cotter River to final national capital site selection.

Investigate the story of Garrett Cotter, his role in exploring the Cotter River region and the gradual utilisation of the area by non-Aboriginal settlers. Retell the story as an illustrated picture book or digital presentation.

Brainstorm how and why the Cotter River region may have been important to people throughout history. Sort these into categories such as: traditional Aboriginal people, early European Settlers and people of the modern day. Discuss basic survival needs common to all people. Develop a list of common needs. Use these headings to develop a series of illustrated and written descriptions of how the people of 'The Cotter' would have met these needs.

Research the term 'heritage' using a wide range of resources (books, internet, etc). Replicate and explain the criteria for listing a place on the heritage list and what that then entails. List important heritage sites around the ACT and identify the reasons they are important to our history.

Develop a brochure of historic and heritage sites at 'The Cotter'.

Construct an annotated time line to identify and describe significant points in the social history of the Cotter Dam.

Investigate the story of the Cotter Tent School and the living conditions of the workers at the time. Compare this to the living conditions and lifestyles of people living in Canberra at the same time. Draw conclusions.

Identify the dates which are important in the story of 'The Cotter' as a recreation and leisure centre for Canberra. Use Expert Groups to create a Jigsaw of the conditions at the time. Include roads and transport, types of recreation and leisure activities that were popular, and other social aspects of interest.

Research the impact of the 2003 bushfires on the Cotter River corridor. Develop a list of impacts. Document the impact this event had on the connectedness of the Canberra community to 'The Cotter' as a recreation and leisure centre (e.g. visual impacts, loss of pub, negative feelings/memories of the event, publicity over water quality).

Examine documents, images and footage of 'The Cotter' today, focus on the pre and post Enlarged Cotter Dam construction. Formulate a list of questions such as: what is the same/different? How do you think you can be involved in the area? What would you do to the area in the future? How will this dam construction change the way our community uses 'The Cotter' in the future? Develop a response to these questions.



## Stage of learning sequence

### CONCEPTUALISE

#### Focus question

- How will you apply your knowledge and understanding to a contemporary situation?

#### Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- identify a topic and define the requirements of a historical inquiry
- research, analyse and synthesise material relevant to their needs and
- develop a document showing the past and the present.

#### Summative assessment tasks

Students will:

- use historical evidence to develop an annotated timeline of the significant events in the Cotter story over a specified period of time, such as the last three hundred or the last one hundred years and
- the timeline will culminate with a recent event aimed at reconnecting the people of Canberra with 'The Cotter'.

#### Teaching and learning experiences

Understand the requirements and conventions of conducting an historical inquiry.

Utilise primary and secondary evidence.

Research and use historical evidence and current publications.

Research from a variety of print and digital sources.

## Stage of learning sequence

### COMMUNICATE

#### Focus questions

- How will you share your understanding with the wider community?

#### Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- present their timeline of the Cotter project, describing the historical inquiry process
- discuss the problems and solutions they experienced in accessing evidence
- use appropriate geographic and historical terminology and
- make useful observations about the Cotter Dam enlargement process and contribution to the recreation and leisure opportunities for the people of Canberra.

#### Summative assessment tasks

Students will:

- present their timeline to a range of audiences including peers and adults (this may be as a Learning Journey in the Exhibitions style) and
- use evidence to present their personal reflections on the Enlarged Cotter Dam project as the reconnection of the people of Canberra to 'The Cotter'.

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## Teaching and learning experiences

Awareness of the implications of audience and purpose in making presentations.

Developing an appropriate style and structure for making key points.

How to develop a set of criteria for a personal reflection on a project of this nature.

## Teacher reflection and comments

What have I learnt from this Unit of Work?

What worked well?

What would I change next time?

## Resources and tools

Cotter: Nature's gift to Canberra by Michael Jones

Map of Canberra showing the Cotter region, dam etc.

Important sites within the Cotter environment work sheet

What is heritage? work sheet

Pre, during and post construction original dam photos

Modern day dam photos (includes general area and before and post fire)

Newspaper articles about the region during dam construction (from National Library archiving project)

Garrett Cotter jigsaw work sheet

