

Before the first settlers arrived in Australia, decisions about the law in Australia were made and enforced by Aboriginal Elders. Their laws had been passed from one generation to another for thousands of years. Understanding them and knowing how to punish a person who broke one, took Elders many years to learn.

After British settlement, different rules were needed. Although a penal colony, it was decided the law would be guided by what was fair and the principles of **trial by jury** and **innocent until proven guilty**. Later, these two guiding principles were written into Australia's constitution.

Today there are many different state and federal courts in Australia. The highest court and the one that deals with constitutional matters is the High Court of Australia. It is located in a specially-constructed building near Parliament House in Canberra. There are seven justices, including the very important Chief Justice, appointed to the High Court. An important part of their job is to interpret and make judgements about what is written in the Constitution.

Over the years, changes have had to be made to Australia's Constitution, but this is a very serious and complex matter. First parliamentary approval is needed, then a referendum must be held to find out if Australian voters agree.

1. Complete the similarities and difference chart about laws and punishments in Australia today and before settlement.

	Before settlement	Today
Venue		
Type of judge or jury		
Example of law broken		
Possible punishment		

2. Watch the documentary about Australia's High Court at <<http://tinyurl.com/oa8hpzj>> with your class. Complete the activities and discuss them.

- (a) Describe the location of the High Court building.

- (b) Write one interesting fact you learnt about the High Court.

- (c) What is one feature of this building you think is impressive?

- (d) Should so much money have been spent building it? Why/Why not?

- (e) Write an interesting question about the High Court.

Researching **A** Analysing **EB** Evaluating and reflecting
 Questioning **R** Researching **A** Analysing **EB** Evaluating and reflecting