

Reconciliation timeline

This timeline looks at events that have made an impact on the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

1770

Captain Cook enters Botany Bay on the *Endeavour*. The British Government does not recognise the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their special connection with the land. Instead, they claim the land for the British Crown and declare that Australia is *terra nullius* – land belonging to nobody.

1788

The First Fleet arrives and builds a settlement at Port Jackson in Sydney, New South Wales.

1901

The Commonwealth of Australia is formed.

1948

The *Commonwealth Nationality and Citizenship Act* gives the category of 'Australian Citizenship' to all Australians, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, for the first time. However, at a state government level Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples still suffer legal discrimination.

1962

The *Commonwealth Electoral Act* is amended to give the vote to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at Federal elections.

1967

On May 27, more than 90 per cent of Australians vote 'Yes' in a referendum to give the Australian Government the power to make laws for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

1972

January: The Aboriginal Tent Embassy is pitched outside Parliament House in Canberra, campaigning for the recognition of Aboriginal land rights.

December: The Australian Government establishes the Department of 1975 Aboriginal Affairs.

1975

The Australian Parliament passes the *Racial Discrimination Act* to help ensure that Australians of all backgrounds are treated equally and receive the same opportunities.

1976

Patricia (Pat) O'Shane becomes Australia's first Aboriginal barrister.

1985

Uluru is handed back to its traditional owners.

1988

The Barunga Statement, calling for rights for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, is presented to Prime Minister Bob Hawke.

1991

The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody presents its final report into the deaths of 99 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australian jails.

1992

February: The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation holds its first meeting in Canberra.

June: The High Court hands down the Mabo decision, recognising the special relationship that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with the land. The Court rules that Australia was never *terra nullius*.

1993

The United Nations declares 1993 the International Year of the World's Indigenous People. September: The first National Week of Prayer for Reconciliation is supported by Australia's major faith communities.

1996

Following on from the National Week of Prayer for Reconciliation, the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation launches Australia's first National Reconciliation Week.

1997

The Bringing them Home Report on Australia's Stolen Generations is launched at the National Reconciliation Conference.

1998

National Sorry Day is commemorated for the first time on 26 May.

2000

Reconciliation Australia is set up as an independent, not-for-profit organisation.

May: Approximately 300,000 people walk across Sydney Harbour Bridge as part of National Reconciliation Week, showing support for the reconciliation process.

2004

The Commonwealth Government establishes a memorial to the Stolen Generations at Reconciliation Place in Canberra.

2005

National Reconciliation Planning Workshop is held; attended by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition.

2007

Australia celebrates the 40th anniversary of the 1967 referendum. June: The Australian Government, led by Prime Minister John Howard, begins an intervention into Northern Territory Aboriginal communities.

2008

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd formally apologises to the Stolen Generations on behalf of the Australian Parliament.

2009

Australia supports the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Previously, Australia had been one of only four nations to oppose the Declaration.