

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 <i>Endeavour</i> . The British Government does not recognise the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and special connection to land. Instead, they claim the land for the British Crown and declare that Australia is <i>terra nullius</i> – 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.
1932	William Cooper establishes the Australian Aborigines' League. During the 1930s, Mr Cooper and other leaders of the Aborigines Progressive Association gathered 1,814 signatures on a petition calling on Prime Minister Joseph Lyons and King George VI to intervene "for the preservation of our race from extinction and to grant representation to our race in the Federal Parliament".
1938	The Aborigines Progressive Association and the Australian Aborigines' League declare 26 January a day of mourning for Aboriginal people.
1948	The <i>Commonwealth Nationality and Citizenship Act</i> 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 <i>Commonwealth Electoral Act</i> is amended to give the vote to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at Federal elections.
1963	Yolngu leaders present the Yirrkala bark petitions to the Australian Parliament, protesting against the seizure of more than 300 square kilometres of Aboriginal land in Arnhem Land for mining.
1965	University of Sydney students, including Charlie Perkins, launch the Freedom Rides, travelling around NSW by bus to draw attention to discrimination against Aboriginal people.
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 peoples and to include Aboriginal people in the Census.

1971	Neville Thomas Bonner becomes the first Aboriginal parliamentarian following his election as Senator for Queensland.
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 <i>Racial Discrimination Act</i> 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. Australian Parliament passes the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (Cth), leading to the establishment of Land Rights legislation in most Australian states in the 1970s and 1980s.
1985	Uluru is handed back to its Traditional Owners.
1988	The Barunga Statement, calling for self-management and land rights for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, is presented to Prime Minister Bob Hawke, who indicates his support for a treaty.
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. The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation is established.
1992	The High Court recognises native title in the landmark <i>Mabo v Queensland (No.2) (1992)</i> , busting the myth of <i>terra nullius</i> . Prime Minister Paul Keating delivers the 'Redfern Speech' recognising the history of dispossession, violence and forced removal of Aboriginal children. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner position is created, with Professor Mick Dodson AM appointed to the position.
1993	The United Nations declares 1993 the International Year of the World's Indigenous People. Australian Parliament passes the <i>Native Title Act</i> . The first National Week of Prayer for Reconciliation is supported by Australia's major faith communities.
1995	The Australian Government officially recognises the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags.

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 National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families releases the <i>Bringing them Home</i> report. The Australian Reconciliation Conference is held in Melbourne.
1998	National Sorry Day is commemorated for the first time on 26 May.
2000	The CAR delivers its final report to Prime Minister John Howard and the Australian Parliament at Corroboree 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.
2006	The Close the Gap campaign for Indigenous health equality is developed following the release of the Social Justice Report 2005. Reconciliation Australia's Reconciliation Action Plan program begins.
2007	Australia celebrates the 40th anniversary of the 1967 referendum. June: The Australian Government, led by Prime Minister John Howard, begins the Northern Territory Emergency Response.
2008	Prime Minister Kevin Rudd formally apologises to the Stolen Generations on behalf of the Australian Parliament. COAG commits \$4.6 billion towards <i>Closing the Gap on Indigenous Disadvantage</i> for projects in health, housing, early childhood development, economic participation and remote service delivery.
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.
2010	The National Congress of Australia's First Peoples is established.

2011	The Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples leads wide-ranging public consultations and delivers its findings in January 2012.
2012	The campaign to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Constitution begins.
2013	The Australian Parliament passes the <i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Recognition Act 2013</i> to maintain momentum towards a referendum.
2015	The Referendum Council is established.
2016	Reconciliation Australia releases the <i>State of Reconciliation in Australia</i> report.