

First Nations Peoples cultural respect and awareness policy.


November 2024

Contents

Acknowledgement of Country	3
Australia says 'Sorry'...	4
Our cultural awareness and respect program	5
Traditional cultures	6
Traditional religion and beliefs	8
Modern population trends	11
Modern flags	16
First Nations Peoples journey and struggle	17

Warning:

Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (the First Nations Peoples) are advised that this document may contain images or descriptions of deceased persons and ancestors. Readers are warned that there may be words and descriptions that may be culturally sensitive, and which might not normally be used in certain public or community contexts.



PM Solutions acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging, of all First Nations Peoples, with an ever-lasting and enduring culture that has existed in Australia for over 65,000 years.

Australia says sorry...

On February 13, 2008, The Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia, Kevin Rudd MP, apologised for the hurt caused by decades of state-sponsored treatment of indigenous Australians.

“That today we honour the indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history.

We reflect on their past mistreatment.

We reflect in particular on the mistreatment of those who were stolen generations - this blemished chapter in our nation’s history.

The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia’s history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future.

We apologise...

for the laws and policies of successive parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians.

We apologise.

Especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country.

For the pain, suffering and hurt of these stolen generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry.

To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry.

And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry.”

Our cultural awareness and respect program

Our principles

Cultural respect:

Ensuring that the cultural diversity, rights, views, values and expectations of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (our First Nations Peoples) are respected in the delivery of culturally appropriate projects and professional services.

Holistic approach:

Recognising that the delivery of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander projects, consultancy works and professional services must include attention to physical, spiritual, cultural, emotional and social well-being, community capacity and governance.

Our goals

PM Solutions has made a commitment that all employees, contractors and consultants, will undertake cultural awareness knowledge transfer and be familiar with the PM Solutions Cultural Respect Policy document (this document), as well as providing basic cross-cultural information, this document aims to develop a knowledge base and understanding of First Nations Peoples peoples and their communities which will assist resources in their contracted duties.

Our vision

PM Solutions is committed to the employment, training and advancement of Indigenous Australia's in the project management, delivery and consultancy fields. We are committed to engaging First Nations Peoples in significant aspects of our consultancy and contract works, providing suitable training and support to achieve of goal of 15% to 25% of our workforce includes Indigenous Australians.

Where possible we would seek to populate over 25% of projects with First Nations Peoples and actively pursue training and support options to empower First Nations Peoples to occupy the upper levels of management and leadership within our organisation.

Our cultural awareness and respect program

Our process

Reconciliation is a fundamental step toward achieving PM Solution's commitment to promoting cultural integration, harmony and a stronger Australia. We recognise that this cannot be achieved until the past inequities experienced by First Nations Peoples are addressed.

Reconciliation has no single definition but it is generally understood to be a process in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous people work together to share their experiences, values and beliefs in order to build a common understanding of the many factors that underpin the general social, health and education status of all First Nations Peoples. PM Solutions has one major cultural respect strategy being this policy document.

The First Nations Peoples Cultural Awareness and Respect Policy is mandatory for all employees, contractors, sub-contractors and consultants of PM Solutions. The policy aims to increase contractors, subcontractors and consultants awareness of First Nations Peoples' culture, history and social issues.

Through this increased awareness, the policy aims to promote behavioural change amongst our employees, contractors, subcontractors and consultants, which will in turn contribute to better service delivery and improved project outcomes for First Nations Peoples, communities and stakeholders.

Our objectives

All PM Solutions management, consultants, contractors and partners will have an in-depth awareness and understanding of the history, culture and diversity of First Nations Peoples, including:

- awareness of the impact of government policy on First Nations Peoples since colonisation
- understanding First Nations Peoples people traditional cultures
- awareness of modern timelines and impacts on First Nations Peoples
- awareness of the unique ways in which First Nations Peoples communicate
- awareness of current First Nations Peoples people population trends
- awareness of difficulties and issues affecting First Nations Peoples in modern Australia
- developing approaches to providing culturally appropriate business services for First Nations Peoples
- developing strategies for increasing cultural awareness in the workplace

Traditional cultures

Traditional Australian Aboriginal cultures varies throughout the continent and people from different regions have different Ancestral Beings, different tools, weapons, basketry and different art styles. Since the arrival of Macassan (Indonesian) on northern Australian shores after 1700 AD, and later European colonisation in 1788, Aboriginal culture has evolved and changed further.

People and traditional society

First Peoples lived day to day in family groups, banded together as hordes, and met at times of ceremony, when one to several hundred members of a single tribe came together. Members of different tribes met together at the largest ceremonies and gatherings, when there might be over 1,000 people at a single gathering.

Australia's First Peoples have complex social and marriage laws, based on the grouping of people within their society. They also have a complex kinship system where everyone is related to everyone else. In order to understand the complexities of their social organisation, it is best to consider it in the following way, dividing it first into three main aspects. First, the physical structuring of society in terms of numbers – family, horde, tribe, second, the religious structuring based on beliefs and customs, totems, and marriage laws, and these beliefs divide people into moieties, sections and subsections, totemic groups, and clans. Third, there is also a kinship system that gives a social structuring.

The social structuring and kinship system can become very complex and difficult to understand for non-indigenous people, but is a natural part of life for indigenous Australians, and its details vary from mob-to-mob. The following lists the three main aspects of First Nations Peoples social structure and then the details and grouping within these are given.

The physical or geographical structuring of the society - a tribe or 'language group' of perhaps 500 people is made up of bands of about ten to twenty people each, who join together for day to day hunting and food gathering. Each band of people can be called a 'horde'. Within each horde are several families.

The kinship system allows individual naming for up to seventy relationship terms in some tribes. That is, far more than the European terms "father/ mother", "grandfather/ grandmother", "uncle/ aunt" and so forth. It is also the system where brothers of one's father are also called, in one sense, "father", and cousins may be called "brother" or "sister".

A person knows, of course, who their real mother and father are, but under kinship laws, they may have similar family obligations to their aunts and uncles, the same as they would to their

Traditional cultures

mother and father, and this is reciprocated. The common terms of endearment amongst modern urban First Nations Peoples, "brother" or "sister", used when talking to people, are derived from these kinship terms and associations.

A person knows, of course, who their real mother and father are, but under kinship laws, they may have similar family obligations to their aunts and uncles, the same as they would to their mother and father, and this is reciprocated. The common terms of endearment amongst modern urban First Nations Peoples, "brother" or "sister", used when talking to people, are derived from these kinship terms and associations.

Hordes or bands

Is an economic group, consisting of a number of families who might band together for hunting and food gathering. It is a term for this group of people, seen through the eyes of non-indigenous people. A horde is not a distinct group in the minds of Aboriginal People, who more regard themselves as belonging to a particular clan, totemic group, or skin name (section or subsection kinship group). Different members of these groups may be contained within the horde. At the main camp, the horde separates into family groups who each have their own campfire and cook and eat separately, but who may share food between families.

Family groups

Can be quite large, consisting of a man and his wives, the children from each wife, and sometimes his parents or in-laws. In past times, a man often has from two to four wives, ranging from one to more than ten. Nowadays, most men have just one wife.

Traditional housing

With much of Australia having a mild climate, traditionally people often slept in the open, warmth and comfort provided by the campfire, and often people kept warm by sleeping between two small fires. The dingo, as a camp dog, also slept beside people providing warmth. Indigenous housing mostly consisted of simple shelters made from a framework of straight branches, then covered with leafy branches or sheets of bark. Larger, more elaborate shelters are made from frame of branches, covered with bark. The covering depended on locally available materials at the time. In some areas sheets of soft paper bark, easily pulled from trees, were available. In other areas stiffer sheets of thick stringy-bark were cut from trees, but if these were unavailable, then bushes and leafy branches were used. In the tropical north, where a richer environment allowed people to camp in the one area for longer, more elaborate structures were built, sometimes elevated platforms with a fire below designed to make smoke and repel mosquitoes.

Traditional cultures

Simple shelters

Made from bent over stringy-bark. In wet and cold conditions, closed dome-shaped shelters were made, commencing with a framework of sticks bent over and meeting in the centre. These were between one to two metres (three to six feet) high and this framework was covered with available materials – sheets of bark when available, but in desert regions, layers of spinifex grass, twigs and leaves. In the tropical north, broad palm fronds were sometimes used; the shelters had one or two entrances, and sometimes were as large as 3 metres across, allowing a small fire to be made inside. While a fire provided warmth in cold conditions, it was also used to make smoke to repel mosquitoes when they were bad. The shelters could be closed to prevent either rain or mosquitoes entering by placing bushes at the small entrance.

Winter shelters

Commonly these are covered in spinifex grass used throughout inland Australia. Very simple wind breaks and lean-tos were used during the day. These were temporary shelters to protect a person or their campfire from the wind, and made in various ways. Where bark was available, this could be curved and placed sideways, partially dug into the ground to fix it. Another way was to construct a simple frame of saplings and make a wall from branches and other vegetation.

Sometimes a pile of bushes was used as a low windbreak to protect a daytime fire. In many regions of Australia shallow caves below rock overhangs provided natural shelters from the weather. A bed of paper bark or leaves was used and sometimes the walls were adorned with paintings.

Stone housing is only known from two regions of Australia, on High Cliffy Island off the Kimberley coast and in one district of Victoria. In these regions, stone circles about two metres across and 1.5 metres high were erected forming the shelter walls. Branches and vegetation were placed over these to form a roof.

Traditional religion/ beliefs

Aboriginal religion, like many other religions, is characterised by having a god or gods who created people and the surrounding environment during a particular creation period at the beginning of time.

First Nations Peoples people are very religious and spiritual, but rather than praying to a single god they cannot see, each group generally believes in a number of different deities, whose image is often depicted in some tangible, recognisable form. This form may be that of a particular landscape feature, an image in a rock art shelter, or in a plant or animal form. Wandjina bring the Wet Season rains to the people of the Kimberley.

Landscape features may be the embodiment of the deity itself, such as a particular rock representing a specific figure, or they may be the result of something the deity did or that happened to the deity in the Creation Period, such as a river having formed when the Rainbow Serpent passed through the area in the Creation Period, or a depression in a rock or in the ground representing the footprint or sitting place of an Ancestral Being.

First Nations Peoples do not believe in animism. This is the belief that all natural objects possess a soul. They do not believe that a rock possesses a soul, but they might believe that a particular rock outcrop was created by a particular deity in the creation period, or that it represents a deity from the Creation Period. They believe that many animals and plants are interchangeable with human life through reincarnation of the spirit or soul, and that this relates back to the Creation Period when these animals and plants were once people.

There is no one deity covering all of Australia. Each tribe has its own deities with an overlap of beliefs, just as there is an overlap of words between language groups. Thus, for example, the Wandjina spirits in the northern Kimberley of Western Australia belong to the Ngarinyin, Worora and Wunambal tribes.

These Wandjina are responsible for bringing the wet season rains, as well as laying down many of the laws for the people. As one travels east, this function is taken over by Yagjagbula and Jabirringgi, The Lightning Brothers of the Wardaman tribe in the Victoria River District of the Northern Territory, then by Nargorkun, also known as Bula, in the upper Katherine River area, and by Namarrgun, the Lightning Man in the Kakadu and western Arnhem Land regions.

The deities of First Nations Peoples have many roles and no single description or term can describe all of these. Based on their primary role, they fall into three main categories, and any one deity may belong to one, two, or all three of these categories:

Traditional religion/ beliefs

Creation beings (or figure)

Many are involved with the creation of people, the landscape, and aspects of the environment, such as the creation of red, yellow or white pigments, so can be called 'Creation Figures' or 'Creation Beings'.

In many examples, these deities are regarded as the direct ancestors of the people living today and so they are 'Ancestral Figures', 'Ancestral Beings', 'Ancestral Heroes', or 'Dreamtime Ancestors'. Here, the one term 'Ancestral Being' is used to describe these deities. Ancestral Beings have taught the first people how to make tools and weapons, hunt animals and collect food, they have laid down the laws that govern their society, and the correct way to conduct ceremonies. Even though regarded as ancestors of the people, such deities may not appear in a human form, but may be plant or animal, for example. In Aboriginal religious belief, a person's spirit may return in human, animal or plant form after death. So an Ancestral Being may have the appearance of a plant or animal, but have done deeds similar to a human in the past.

Totemic Beings/ Totemic ancestors:

A Totemic Being represents the original form of an animal, plant or other object (totem), as it was in the Creation Period. The concept of a Totemic Being overlaps with that of a Creation Being and an Ancestral Being because the Totemic Being may create the abundance of species, and people see themselves as being derived from the different Totemic Beings.

Society is divided into two groups, called moieties, each with specific Totemic Beings belonging to it. Every person belongs to one or the other moiety. These moieties are further divided into sections or subsections, sometimes based on Totemic Beings. Every individual has come from at least one Totemic Being, and these help define a person's origins and connections with the world, their relationships with the past, present and future.

For example, a person connected with a Yam (native potato) Totem, might believe that he was a yam in a previous life, that some yams are his relatives, and that a particularly prominent rock feature in his clan estate represents the embodiment of his yam ancestor. This, or another area nearby, might also be an 'increase centre' where rituals are performed to ensure the maintenance of this food supply. Each clan will have several totems, so this person will have a close human relative living on the same clan estate who is not of the Yam Totem. That person might belong to the Kangaroo Totem, and similarly be related to kangaroos and have another feature of the landscape representing their Kangaroo Totem.

Traditional religion/ beliefs

Ancestral beings

In order to keep the terminology manageable, the term 'Ancestral Being' is used here to describe all First Nations Peoples deities, rather than including the terms 'Creation Being' and 'Totemic Being'. There are hundreds of Ancestral Beings throughout Australia, recorded by First Nations Peoples in their stories, songs, body paintings and art. This includes recordings in the rock paintings and petroglyphs (rock carvings) dating back thousands of years. Some First Nations Peoples stories relating to Ancestral Beings were recorded by early Europeans and published as children's story books.

Ancestral Beings are an intrinsic part of First Nations Peoples belief and everyday thought. As one moves through the day, walking past a particular rock or creek, spearing a particular animal, catching a goanna, or collecting other bush foods, the Ancestral Beings who created these places and things come to mind. Even making tools and weapons will bring to mind the myths and legends of the Ancestral Beings who taught the First Nations Peoples these skills.

Each Ancestral Being has its own creation story, has performed specific activities in the Creation Period, and has played a specific role in relation to laying down the laws for people to follow or in creating the landscape. This information is contained in the body of songs, dances, stories and paintings for each clan or tribe, and is revered during certain ceremonies.

Creation period 'The Dreamtime'

Similar to other religions, there was a time in First Nations Peoples belief when things were created. This 'Creation Period' was the time when the Ancestral Beings created landforms, such as certain animals digging, creating lagoons or pushing up mountain ranges, or the first animals or plants being made.

The Aboriginal word for this Creation Period varies throughout Australia and each linguistic region has its own beliefs pertaining to that particular area. For example, it is known as Alcheringa (Aldjuringa) amongst the Aranda of Central Australia, as Lalai in the Kimberley, and as Nayuhyungki amongst the Kunwinjku (Gunwinggu) east of Kakadu National Park. First Nations Peoples often interpret dreams as being the memory of things that happened during this Creation Period. Dreams are also important because they can be a time when we are transformed back into that ancestral time.

This linking of dreams to the Creation Period has led people to adopt the general term 'The Dreamtime' in order to describe the time of creation in their religion. The term 'Dreamtime' in First Nations Peoples mythology, is not really about a person having a dream, but rather, a reference to this Creation Period.

Traditional religion/ beliefs

All aspects of indigenous Australian culture are full of legends and beings associated with this Creation Period, or Dreamtime. Each tribe has many stories, often with a lesson to be learned or a moral tale, about the Creation Period Deities, animals, plants, and other Beings. These stories are told to children, discussed around campfires, and are sung and acted out in plays and dances during the times of ceremony.

When an adolescent progresses through their phases of initiation, they learn the more important, senior and secret parts of these stories, and this knowledge is reinforced by the acting-out of more secret-sacred rituals, songs and dances. Archaeological studies currently show that First Nations Peoples people have been in Australia at least 60,000 to 80,000 years. In the 1970s that figure was thought to be 40,000 years, which is the limit of how far back carbon dating can go. This latter figure was widely publicised at the time and many Australian people, including First Nations Peoples, know the 40,000 year figure.

So, if you ask a First Nations person today, they will tell you the Creation Period (or Dreamtime) goes back before 40,000 years. But what was their concept before this knowledge? This question was put to people in the past, and the answer was about five or six generations of people previous to the existing time. In other words, a person would have a knowledge of their father, grandfather, great grandfather, and great-great grandfather, but the next generation or a few more before that was when their relatives lived in the Creation Period and were kangaroo people, plant people, or took on some other form.

This shortened concept of time may be universal within the origin of religions. For example, in the religions of Judaism and Christianity, their bible's old testament tells how their god created the entire universe, including the four major rivers local to Babylon (now Iraq and Iran), in six days. It then goes to great lengths to describe many of the people who lived following "Adam and Eve", the first people. The earliest bible stories may have only been in oral form, later becoming written in Aramaic and Hebrew possibly around 1700 BC, and read as though the time of creation was about 4000 B.C. However, since modern dating techniques have placed the earth's age at about 3,600 million years, many people embracing those religions today still believe that god created mankind and the universe, but imagine this happening over a different time scale to that described in their bibles. For all of us, the concept of a million years of humanity and thousands of millions of years of existence for our planet is beyond our comprehension.

Traditional religion/ beliefs

Ceremonial life

To this day, ceremonies play an important part in Aboriginal life. Small ceremonies, or rituals, are still practiced in some remote parts of Australia, such as in Arnhem Land and Central Australia, in order to ensure a supply of plant and animal foods. These take the form of chanting, singing, dancing or ritual action to invoke the Ancestral Beings to ensure a good supply of food or rain. The most important ceremonies are connected with the initiation of boys and girls into adulthood. Such ceremonies sometimes last for weeks, with nightly singing and dancing, storytelling, and the display of body decoration and ceremonial objects. During these ceremonies, the songs and stories connected to each of the Ancestral Beings are told and retold, some being “open” for women and children to see and hear, others being restricted or secret-sacred, only for the initiates to learn.

Funeral ceremonies

Another important time for ceremonies is on the death of a person, when people often paint themselves white, cut their own bodies to show their remorse for the loss of their loved one, and conduct a series of rituals, songs and dances to ensure the person’s spirit leaves the area and returns to its birth place, from where it can later be reborn.

Burial practices vary throughout Australia, people being buried in parts of southern and central Australia, but having quite a different burial in the north. Across much of northern Australia, a person’s burial has two stages, each accompanied by ritual and ceremony. The primary burial is when the corpse is laid out on an elevated wooden platform, covered in leaves and branches, and left several months for the flesh to rot away from the bones. The secondary burial is when the bones are collected from the platform, painted with red ochre, and then dispersed in different ways. Sometimes a relative will carry a portion of the bones with them for a year or more. Sometimes they are wrapped in paper bark and deposited in a cave shelter, where they are left to disintegrate with time. In parts of Arnhem Land the bones are placed into a large hollow log and left at a designated area of bush land. The hollow log is a dead tree trunk which has been naturally hollowed out by the action of termites.

First nations Peoples rock art records ceremonies dating back tens of thousands of years, yet still continued to this day. A man dances a pose with his arms outstretched, holding a short stick in each hand, this photo being taken in Darwin in about the 1920s. Early Kimberley rock art in Western Australia records the same pose with a person holding short sticks in each hand.

Modern population trends

At 30 June 2021, there were 983,700 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, representing 3.8% of the total Australian population. Among the First Nations Peoples population in 2021, 91.7% of people identified as being of Aboriginal origin only, 4% were of Torres Strait Islander origin only, and 4.3% were of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin.

Key statistics

- Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is projected to reach between 1,171,700 and 1,193,600 people by 2031.
- From 2016 to 2021, the average annual growth rate of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Australia is between 1.8% and 2.0% per year.
- Between 2011 and 2021, Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population increased by 2.0% (from 806,100 people) per year on average.
- As at 30 June 2021, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory are projected to have the fastest average annual growth rate over the projection period of between 2.2% and 2.4% per year.
- In 2021, the median age (24.0 years) is projected to increase to between 25.4 and 25.7 years.
- In 2021, 40.8% (401,700 people) lived in major cities of Australia; and
- 43.8% (431,200 people) lived in inner and outer regional Australia; and
- 15.3% (150,900 people) lived in remote and very remote Australia.
- In 2021, the national average life expectancy at birth is 71.9 years for males and 75.6 years for females.

Modern flags



Australian Aboriginal flag

Designed by Harold Thomas in 1971, was first flown at Victoria Square, Adelaide, on 'National Aborigines Day' on the 12th of July 1971. It was used later at the 'Tent Embassy' in Canberra in 1972. The Australian Aboriginal flag is divided horizontally into equal halves of black at the top, red at the bottom, and a yellow circle in the centre. The black symbolises the people, the yellow represents the sun (the constant renewer of life), and the red depicts the earth, and also represents ochre, which is used by Australian Aboriginal Peoples in ceremonies.



Torres Strait Islander flag

Designed by the late Bernard Namok, stands for the unity and identity of all Torres Strait Islanders. The flag features three horizontal coloured stripes, with green at the top and bottom and blue in between, divided by thin black lines. A white Dhari (headdress) sits in the centre, with five pointed white star underneath. The colour green is for the land and the Dhari is a symbol of all Torres Strait Islanders. The black represents the people, and the blue is for the sea. The five pointed star represents the island groups, used in navigation, the star is also an important symbol for the seafaring Torres Strait Islander people. The colour white of the star represents peace.

Journey and struggle

55,000 BC

Australia was inhabited as far back as 55,000 BC or 100,000 BC by latest reports, by its proud Indigenous People.

7,000 - 5,000 BC

Earliest visible evidence of Aboriginal belief connected with the Rainbow Serpent. This becomes the longest continuing religious belief in the world.

1451 - 1900 AD

Trade with Asia-Dutch documents, record trade between Macassan (Indonesian) sailors and Aborigines living on the northern coast of Australia.

1600's

Parts of the Australian coast become known to European explorers including the Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, British and French.

1788

Britain invasion (the British called it an 'exploration force') established its penal colony in Port Jackson, Sydney. The Indigenous population was at least 750,000 although estimates range between 300,000 to 1 million.

1790

Protectionist policies implemented, restricting Aborigines' right to 'free movement' to specific areas, such as reserves or missions. This is justified by the 'harmful effects' of contact with Europeans.

1819

A 14 year-old Aboriginal takes first prize in an annual school examination, scoring higher than 100 'white' children, thus challenging myths about the mental capacity of Indigenous people.

1820 - 1929

The 'Black Wars'. The struggle for land between Indigenous groups and Europeans along settlement frontiers. Over 100 Aboriginals killed in the Bathurst Massacre. Other instances of bloodshed include Gravesend 1837 with 200 dead; Waterloo Creek in 1838, with 100 to 300 dead; Long Lagoon 1840 with 100 massacred, wiping out an entire community; Rufus River 1841 with 30 dead.

1830 - 1934

Colonies are established based on British law and practices. No treaties are made with the original owners of the land. South Australia is proclaimed a colony in 1836, with the arrival of Captain John Hindmarsh. Despite the appointment of a protector for Indigenous People, the Kaurna community near Adelaide is almost destroyed by 'white' settlement and dispossession.

Journey and struggle

1835

John Batman arrives at Port Phillip Bay and attempts to make a so called 'treaty' with Indigenous people. Blankets and goods are exchanged for 24,812 hectares of land. The 'treaty' is later declared void by Governor Bourke.

1850s - 1970s

The policy of removing Aboriginal children is practised. At its peak from 1910 - 1970, between 1 in 3 and 1 in 10 children are forcibly removed from their families.

1851

The development of the system of pastoral leases. Governor Henry Young insists that all pastoral leases in South Australia should include reservations in favour of the Aborigines, allowing them access to pastoral lands. The law stated that if a "pastoral lessee did not recognise indigenous land rights" his lease would be revoked. Adelaide historian, Dr Robert Foster expressed surprise at the uproar over the Wik decision "as though this was something new [...] Aboriginal land rights in South Australia have been there since 1851. [...] The pastoral leases never set out to exclude Aborigines from the land. [...] Early pastoralists were never referred to as the owners, but as 'occupiers' of the land" (The Advertiser, 28/11/97)

1867 - 1868

All-Aboriginal cricket team tours England.

1880

About 200 Aboriginal children enrolled in public schools. In the 1900s, however, Aboriginal schools are established following requests by the 'white' community to exclude Aboriginal children from public schools.

1901

Commonwealth Federation. Indigenous people are not included in any census, nor regarded as citizens, thus excluding them from civil liberties like Commonwealth voting rights, unless, as in South Australia, they already had the vote in State elections. Exceptions were Queensland and Western Australia where Indigenous people were specifically excluded.

1911

Aborigines Protection Act passed "to make provision for the better Protection and Control of the Aboriginal and half-caste Inhabitants." The Act effectively confines Indigenous people to reserves and bans them from towns.

1914 - 1918

First World War. Australian troops at Gallipoli, including Aboriginal soldiers.

Journey and struggle

1920s

Allbeit ignored, the national Indigenous population declines from at least 750,000 to around 60,000 to 70,000.

1936

Beginning of Assimilation policies, later officially adopted by Native Welfare Ministers in 1950. 'Assimilation means, in practical terms, that it is expected that all persons of Aboriginal birth or mixed blood in Australia will live like white Australians do.' In practice, assimilation policies lead to the destruction of Aboriginal identity and culture, justification of dispossession and the removal of Aboriginal children. In practice, assimilation policies lead to the destruction of Aboriginal identity and culture, justification of dispossession and the removal of Aboriginal children.

1937

Pastoral expansion in South Australia reaches the boundaries of north-western Aboriginal reserves. The associated problems are noted by Adelaide surgeon Dr Charles Duguid, who establishes the Ernabella Mission, where training and services are provided to equip remote Aboriginals with inevitable increasing contact with 'white' society.

1938

The Aborigines Progressive Association observed 150 years of European occupation and colonisation, by declaring a day of mourning and protest.

1939 - 1945

Although Aborigines were not recognised as citizens, many enlisted in the Second World War, fighting - and falling - side by side with other non-indigenous Australians. They served in Europe, Middle East, Pacific and New Guinea conflicts with great distinction and a true 'ANZAC' spirit, and they loved their Country. Lest we Forget.

1940s

Discrimination against Aborigines begins to raise community disquiet. South Australia's Premier, Tom Playford, writes to Canberra asking for maternity benefits and the old age pension for Aborigines. A Canberra public servant noted that "...this is the first occasion on which a State Government has interested itself in this matter."

1942

Darwin is bombed by the Japanese; Aboriginal people make up a special reconnaissance unit in defence of Australia.

Journey and struggle

1966

Charles 'Charlie' Nelson Perkins AO, an Elder of the eastern Arrernte people, and Margaret Valadian AO MBE, a proud Bundjalung woman, become the first two Aboriginal university graduates. Charlie Perkins goes on to lead the 'Freedom Ride' protest against discrimination and living conditions. Gurindji stockmen at Wave Hill (Northern Territory) walk-off in protest against intolerable living conditions and unequal wages. The strike lasts 9 years and culminates with some land being returned to the Gurindji People by Prime Minister Gough Whitlam.

1967

The Constitutional Referendum on Aboriginal Rights is held. An overwhelming 90% of the Australian population vote to eliminating Sections 51 and 127 from the Commonwealth Constitution, 1901. Section 51 excluded "the Aboriginal race in any State", whereby Indigenous people were rendered non-existent in relation to children, marriage, movement, property, receiving award wages and voting in State elections. Section 127 instructed that in population censuses, "Aboriginals shall not be counted" (i.e.: not just the rights of Indigenous People themselves were rendered non-existent).

1971

Neville Thomas Bonner AO, a Jagera elder, is elected to Parliament as a Queensland Senator. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs is established. Principals of schools in NSW are no longer able to exclude Aboriginal children because of home conditions or opposition from the community.

1972

The policy of 'self-determination' is adopted by the Government, replacing earlier policies of 'protectionism and assimilation'. The change meant having a decisive voice and greater control over how to live now and in the future, including the right to cultural and linguistic maintenance and the management of natural resources on Aboriginal land.

1974

Justice Woodward of the Aboriginal Land Commission delivers a report saying that "to deny Aborigines the right to prevent mining on their land is to deny the reality of their land rights."

1976

Census establishes the national indigenous population at 160 000. The Aboriginal land rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 is passed the most significant land rights legislation in Australia, the Act transfers reserve land to Aboriginal ownership and administration to Land Councils. Laws are also enacted, primarily in Victoria, providing title to small parcels of land.

Journey and struggle

1976 - 1977

Sir Douglas Nicholls KCVO OBE, of the Yorta Yorta people, serves as the first Aboriginal Governor in South Australia.

1979 - 1981

Coe versus The Commonwealth in High Court of Australia: unsuccessful challenge to the legal concept of terra nullius. Paul Thomas Coe was a very proud Wiradjuri man, who acted on behalf of the Wiradjuri Tribe. First Aboriginal oral history course is launched at Macquarie University (NSW).

1982

The Pitantjarra Land Right Act is passed. Anangu Pitantjatjara, a corporate body, is established under the Act to administer some 100,000km of land to the Anangu People.

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 First Nations Peoples in Australian state jails. The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation is established.

1992

The High Court recognises native title in the landmark Mabo (lead by Edward Koiki Mabo, a very proud Meriam man, from Mer (Murray Island), in the Torres Strait nation) versus The State of Queensland (No.2) (1992), busting the myth of terra nullius.

Then 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 Michael 'Mick' James Dodson AM FASSA, of the Yawuru People, is appointed to the position.

1993

Australian Parliament passes the Native Title Act. The first National Week of Prayer for Reconciliation is supported by Australia's major faith communities.

1995

The Australian Government officially recognises both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags.

Journey and struggle

1996 - 1997

Following on from the National Week of Prayer for Reconciliation, the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (CAR) launches Australia's first National Reconciliation Week. The National Inquiry into the 'Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families' releases the 'Bringing them Home' report.

1998

National Sorry Day is commemorated for the first time on the 26th of 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. 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 - 2008

National Reconciliation Planning Workshop is held; attended by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the opposition party. The Close the Gap campaign for Indigenous health equality is developed, following the release of the Social Justice Report 2005. Reconciliation Australia Reconciliation Action Plan program begins. The Australian Government, led by Prime Minister John Howard, begins the Northern Territory Emergency Response. Prime Minister Kevin Rudd formally apologises to the Stolen Generations on behalf of the Australian Parliament. COAG commits \$4.6 billion towards Closing the Gap on Indigenous Disadvantage 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.

Journey and struggle

2010 - 2016

The National Congress of Australia's First Peoples is established. 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. The Australian Parliament passes the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Recognition Act 2013 to maintain momentum towards a referendum. Reconciliation Australia releases the State of Reconciliation in Australia report. Adam Giles became the first Indigenous Australian to head a state or territory government when he became Chief Minister of the Northern Territory.

2017

The NSW Parliament introduces the Aboriginal Languages Bill 2017. After more than 40 years of being discovered at Lake Mungo, the oldest Australian Indigenous Peoples remains (named Mungo Man) begin their final and emotional journey home to eventually be buried 'on Country'. The National Constitutional Convention is held at Uluru, and the process ratifies the decision making of the 'regional dialogues'. The Uluru Statement from the Heart is issued to all Australian people. This calls for a constitutionally entrenched First Nations Voice to Parliament, and a Makarrata Commission to oversee a process of 'treaty-making' and 'truth-telling'. The Referendum Council hands down its final report, which endorses the Uluru Statement from the Heart and its call for Voice, Treaty and Truth. The Australian Government, lead by Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, rejects the call for a Voice to Parliament.

2018

A Joint Select Committee of Parliament to consider the work of the Referendum Council, chaired by Senators Patrick Lionel Djargun Dodson, a Yawuru elder, and the then Shadow Attorney-General and Shadow Minister for Indigenous Australians, Julian Leeser, undertakes its work. In the final report, it finds the Voice is the only viable recognition proposal and recommends that the Government should "initiate a process of co-design [of the Voice] with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples".

2019

Australian Labor Party member Cynthia Lui, a proud Lamalaig woman from the Kulkalgau Clan of Lama (Yam Island) and the Kulkalgal Tribe of the Torres Strait, becomes the first Torres Strait Islander elected to office. The Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park board closes the Uluru climb on 26 October 2019.

2020

All Australian governments committed to a new "National Agreement on Closing the Gap" between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in their life outcomes. However, by 2023 Indigenous people still experienced entrenched inequality.

Journey and struggle

2021-22

The interim report on the Indigenous Voice Proposal is released. Stage two of the 'co-design' process commences, inviting feedback on the proposals on the design of the Voice. The Uluru Statement wins the Sydney Peace Prize, with co-laureates Pat Anderson, Megan Davis and Noel Pearson.

2023

On the 14th of October 2023, 60.1% the Australian population voted "no" to alter the Australian Constitution that would recognise Indigenous Australians in the document through prescribing a body called the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice that "may make representations to the Parliament and the Executive Government of the Commonwealth on matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples".

2024...

The struggle and work toward constitutional reform and equality continues.

Committed to all First Nations Peoples.

PM Solutions has an organisational wide focus on First Nations Peoples inclusion, and openly strives to incorporate First Nations Peoples within its workforce, which is empowered and championed by the PM Solutions CEO's indigenous heritage and special relationship to the Nunukul Peoples of Minjerribah and the broader Quandamooka Peoples.

