

## History

This historical timeline represents a snapshot of the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) people, showing the impact of European settlement.

### 40 000 years ago

Aboriginal people have lived in Australia for more than 1200 human generations, compared with eight generations since European settlement. Lake Mungo in New South Wales is a site that is well known for human fossils and artefacts that record Aboriginal occupation of the area from about 40 000 years ago. Concentrations of animal bones are evidence of hunting and fishing. Flake tools and sandstone grinders show that these people made tools to help with their hunting and gathering lifestyle.

#### Reference

Government of South Australia 2006, *Atlas of South Australia*, viewed 20 March 2006, <<http://www.atlas.sa.gov.au/go/resources/atlas-of-south-australia-1986/the-course-of-settlement/aboriginal-occupation>>.

### 30 000 years ago

A number of sites in the south-western region of Australia show evidence of hunter-gatherer people occupying the forests. Caves such as Devil's Lair have sandy floors that show layers of remains and artefacts, including hearths and stone tools.

#### Reference

Government of South Australia 2006, *Atlas of South Australia*, viewed 20 March 2006, <<http://www.atlas.sa.gov.au/go/resources/atlas-of-south-australia-1986/the-course-of-settlement/aboriginal-occupation>>.

### 12 000 years ago

Excavations at Wylie Swamp in south-eastern South Australia have revealed tools used by the local Aboriginal people, including boomerangs, spears, throwing sticks, stone knives and scrapers. The wood used to make these tools is the coastal sheoak and is so well preserved that the marks made by stone tools in their manufacture are still visible.

#### Reference

Australia, Department of the Environment and Heritage, Australian National Botanic Gardens 2003, *Aboriginal trail*, viewed 20 March 2006, <<http://www.anbg.gov.au/anbg/aboriginal-trail.html>>.

### 3000 years ago

Dugout canoes were being used in coastal areas. Evidence of this has been found along the northern coast of Australia.

#### Reference

Australia, National Oceans Office 2003, *Saltwater country Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interest in ocean policy development and implementation*, viewed 20 March 2006, <[http://www.oceans.gov.au/issues\\_paper\\_6/page\\_003.jsp](http://www.oceans.gov.au/issues_paper_6/page_003.jsp)>.

## 1606

Luis Vaez de Torres, a Portuguese seaman, was the first European to sail and name the strait separating Papua New Guinea from Australia.

In June 1606, Torres set sail, intending to follow a northerly route around Papua New Guinea. He went south instead, through the waters that now bear his name, discovering that Papua New Guinea was separated from the mainland of Australia. Scottish geographer Alexander Dalrymple read Torres's account in 1769, more than 150 years after the Portuguese sailor had sailed the strait, and named the waters after him.

### Reference

Naming Australia Incorporated 2006, *Luis Vaez de Torres*, viewed 20 March 2006, <<http://www.namingaustralia.org.au/torres.htm>>.

## 1642 – 1644

Abel Tasman was commissioned by Anthony van Diemen, Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies, to explore the south seas. He named the island that we now know as Tasmania, Van Diemen's Land. In a second voyage in 1644, he sailed the north coast of Australia from Cape York to North West Cape, completing a circumnavigation of Australia, known at that time as New Holland.

### Reference

Project Gutenberg of Australia 2005, *Abel Janszoon Tasman (c. 1603-1659)*, viewed 20 March, 2006, <<http://gutenberg.net.au/pages/tasman.html>>.

## 1688

William Dampier landed on the north-west coast of Australia. Australia was still known as New Holland and Dampier was the first English explorer to suggest that the British should further explore the land of New Holland.

### Reference

New South Wales Country Areas Program 2006, *Who was first?*, viewed 20 March 2006, <[http://www.cap.nsw.edu.au/bb\\_site\\_intro/stage2\\_Modules/who\\_was\\_first/william\\_dampier.htm](http://www.cap.nsw.edu.au/bb_site_intro/stage2_Modules/who_was_first/william_dampier.htm)>.

## 1770

Captain James Cook sailed up the eastern coast of Australia, mapping from Point Hicks to the tip of Cape York. On August 20 1770, standing on the highest point of Possession Island in the Torres Strait, he took possession of the whole Eastern Coast for Britain, under the doctrine of 'terra nullius', meaning 'empty land' or 'no man's land'. This act was probably meant to warn off the French and the Dutch, but it signalled the dispossession of the Aboriginal people, the British acting as if Australia was uninhabited.

### Reference

*Bulletin* 2005, 'Advance Australia', 5 April, viewed 20 March 2006, <<http://bulletin.ninemsn.com.au/bulletin/site/articleIDs/7D5CB7CBAF3A3FEACA256FF200128907>>.

## 1788

The English, under Captain Phillip, arrived first at Botany Bay and then at Sydney Cove where, on 26 January, the Union Jack was raised. Approximately 1000 convicts, officials, marines and dependents arrived with the first fleet.

Aboriginal resistance flared immediately with conflict arising between Europeans and Aboriginal people. On 29 May, two convicts were killed at Rushcutters Bay and in December, Arabanoo was the first Aboriginal to be captured by the Europeans.

### Reference

Australian Museum Online 2004, *Indigenous Australia: timeline – contact history 1500-1900*, viewed 20 March, 2006, <<http://www.dreamtime.net.au/indigenous/timeline2.cfm>>.

## 1789

A smallpox epidemic decimated the Aboriginal people around Sydney. These people were from the Cadigal group but became known to the British as the Eora people. This was because they used the word Eora (meaning 'here' or 'from this place') to describe where they came from and the British, thinking they were naming themselves, coined the word to identify all local Aboriginal people.

While it is difficult to estimate the Aboriginal population at the time, records note the population was reduced dramatically through the outbreak of disease. Reports also describe bodies floating in the harbour and found in shelters on the foreshore.

### Reference

Sydney City Council 2002, *Barani indigenous history of Sydney City: Aboriginal people and place*, viewed 20 March 2006, <<http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/barani/themes/theme1.htm>>.

## 1790 – 1802

Pemulwuy led an organised Aboriginal resistance to invasion for 12 years. He was a Bidjigal warrior and was believed to be about 30 when he began leading the resistance. Attacks were at first sporadic but after 1797, Pemulwuy led a force of over 100 warriors that engaged in persistent attacks on crops and towns in the Parramatta area. He was held in awe by the Eora people for his leadership, which continued despite him being frequently wounded and captured.

When he died, Pemulwuy was not buried on his own land, rather the British sent his amputated head to England. Governor Phillip King wrote of Pemulwuy that:

'Altho a terrible pest to the colony, he was a brave and independent character'.

### Reference

Gadigal Information Services n.d., *Pemulwuy the rainbow warrior*, viewed 20 March 2006, <<http://www.gadigal.org.au/main.php?option=pemulwuy&itemid=43&parentid=events>>.

### 1803

Tasmania was settled under an order from Governor King to establish another base for convicts and to ward off French interests. This settlement, founded on the Derwent River by Lt. John Bowen, was troubled by food shortages and convict unrest but within 50 years had grown to be a prosperous self-governing colony. During this time, the expansion of European settlement brought dispossession to the Aboriginal population, characterised by conflict with settlers over resources, abduction of Aboriginal women and exposure to disease.

#### Reference

Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006, *Statistics – Tasmania, 2005*, Cat. no. 1384.6, viewed 20 March 2006, <<http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/0d3893bee905ca98ca256c3200241894?OpenDocument>>.

### 1813

Bennelong, one of the most well known Aboriginal people during the early days of European settlement, died. Bennelong was captured in 1789 by Governor Phillip as part of Phillip's plan to learn the language and customs of the local people. He adopted European dress and customs and learned English, befriending the settlers in an effort to aid relations between the two groups.

Records from the period show that the British thought of their relationship with Bennelong as 'softening, enlightening and refining a barbarian'.

#### Reference

Sydney City Council 2002, *Barani indigenous history of Sydney City: significant Aboriginal people in Sydney*, viewed 20 March 2006, <<http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/barani/themes/theme7.htm>>.

### 1815

Governor Macquarie opened a school for Aboriginal children, situated at Parramatta and called the 'Native Institution'. It became clear to the Aboriginal people that one of the aims of the school was to distance the children from their families and communities, so they removed their children and the school closed in 1820.

#### Reference

Sydney City Council 2002, *Barani indigenous history of Sydney City: significant Aboriginal people in Sydney*, viewed 20 March 2006, <<http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/barani/themes/theme7.htm>>.

### 1823 – 1825

The Wiradjuri people, led by Windradyne, waged a two-year war of resistance as European settlement spread east of the Blue Mountains. The rapid settlement of the area around Bathurst with livestock destroyed food supplies and limited Aboriginal access to water. The settlers occupied and destroyed many sacred sites. The Aboriginal people retaliated with raids on settlements. Part of the settlers' response was to poison food and water supplies with arsenic.

The Wiradjuri resistance was so persistent that in 1824, Governor Brisbane declared martial law, giving the settlers the right to indiscriminately kill Aboriginal people. It is estimated that by December of that year, one third of the entire Aboriginal population of Bathurst had been killed. Windradyne was forced to accept this domination and did so peacefully.

#### Reference

National Museum of Australia n.d., *Schools.nma.gov.au: cabinet items*, viewed 20 March 2006, <[http://www.nma.gov.au/schools/school\\_resources/resource\\_websites\\_and\\_interactives/assessing\\_a\\_museum\\_display/bells\\_falls\\_gorge\\_interactive/cabinet\\_items/](http://www.nma.gov.au/schools/school_resources/resource_websites_and_interactives/assessing_a_museum_display/bells_falls_gorge_interactive/cabinet_items/)>.

### 1830

A military operation known as the 'Black Line' was launched against the Aboriginal people in Tasmania. All the able-bodied European men, convict and free, formed a human chain across the settled districts and moved south and east for three weeks, cornering the Aboriginal people on the Tasman Peninsula. This was part of an ongoing effort by the settlers to clear Tasmania of Aboriginal people.

Between 1829 and 1834, George Robinson, Chief Protector of the Australasian Aborigines, travelled in Tasmania, gathering together the remaining Aboriginal people and sending them to Flinders Island. His purpose was to save the people, but many died there of respiratory disease, poor food and despair.

#### Reference

Frog and Toad's Indigenous Australia n.d., *Land invasion*, viewed 20 March 2006, <<http://indigenoustralia.frogandtoad.com.au/land5.html>>.

### 1831

Yagan led a Nyungar resistance to settlement in Western Australia that lasted for three years. The establishment of a colony on the Swan River in 1829 was initially peaceful but conflict arose when the Nyungar took livestock as a replacement for the local game that was being hunted or displaced by the settlers.

Yagan was captured in 1832 but saved from execution by a settler, Robert Lyon who sympathised with his fight to protect his land and people and who argued that he should be treated as a prisoner of war. He was exiled on a rocky island off Fremantle but soon escaped and a reward was placed on his head. He was killed in 1833 and his head was preserved and taken to England.

#### Reference

Cormick, Craig 1997, 'Yagan: an Aboriginal resistance hero', *Green left weekly*, issue 289, 10 September, viewed 20 March 2006, <<http://www.greenleft.org.au/back/1997/289/289p12.htm>>.

### 1838

In June of 1838 an encampment of about 40 Kwiambal people was killed by Europeans in the Myall Creek Massacre. They were killed by a group of stockmen and squatters who were seeking revenge for cattle losses. Despite the fact that this group of old men, women and children had no involvement in attacks on stock, the men killed them in cold blood.

Governor Gipps ordered an investigation and seven of the men were found guilty of murder and sentenced to hang. There was much anger among the settlers over the government decision to prosecute and many further massacres went unreported to the authorities. The Myall Creek Massacre was the only one for which Europeans were charged and punished.

#### Reference

New South Wales Country Areas Program n.d., *Myall Creek massacre*, viewed 20 March 2006, <[http://www.cap.nsw.edu.au/bb\\_site\\_intro/specialPlaces/special\\_places\\_st3/uluru\\_BarrReef\\_Myallcrk/myall\\_creek.htm](http://www.cap.nsw.edu.au/bb_site_intro/specialPlaces/special_places_st3/uluru_BarrReef_Myallcrk/myall_creek.htm)>.

## 1860

The government of Victoria established the Central Board Appointed to Watch Over the Interests of Aborigines, also called the Aborigines Protection Board, which functioned until 1869. This followed a history of a state-appointed guardian or protector of Aborigines, with George Robinson being the first appointed in 1838. This Board was succeeded by the Board for the Protection of Aborigines in 1869, and the Aborigines Welfare Board in 1957. The protectors had a major influence on the lives of Aboriginal people, with control over such things as distribution of rations and child protection issues.

Under the direction of these bodies, missions were established by a number of churches and sanctioned by the government as a means of 'domesticating' and 'civilising' Aboriginal people. The missions survived until the early 1900s when the churches handed them over to the Board for the Protection of Aborigines as reserves.

### Reference

Public Record Office Victoria 2005, *Koorie heritage – Aboriginal records at PROV*, viewed 20 March, 2006, <<http://www.access.prov.vic.gov.au/public/PROVguides/PROVguide067/PROVguide067.jsp>>.

## 1868

The Polynesian Labourers Act was passed. Since the 1860s, Islanders had been brought in to Australia to provide labour in the tropical industries, because white labour was scarce at the time and also because it was commonly believed that white people could not labour safely in the tropics. This Act established a system of indentured labour and was designed to give labourers surety of payment for their contract plus rations.

### Reference

Australia, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2003, *A history of South Sea islanders in Australia*, viewed 20 March 2006, <[http://www.hreoc.gov.au/racial\\_discrimination/Erace/history.html](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/racial_discrimination/Erace/history.html)>.

## 1868

The first Australian cricket team to tour overseas was an Aboriginal team that went to England. They were led by English entrepreneur, Charles Lawrence, who gathered the team from sheep shearing stations in Victoria and smuggled them out of the country against the wishes of the Aborigines Protection Board. The team played 47 matches between May and October, winning 14 of them.

Because the English were unable to distinguish between the different players, they had to wear coloured sashes when playing and at the end of the day's play they changed into native costume and gave demonstrations of spear and boomerang throwing. In England, they were treated as a racial curiosity but when they returned to Australia they were forced to live on reserves, under new Victorian legislation that forced Aboriginal people and whites to live separately.

### Reference

European Network for Indigenous Australian Rights 2002, *Early tour of sideshows and insults*, viewed 20 March 2006, <<http://www.eniar.org/news/cricket1.html>>.

## 1871

The London Missionary Society arrived in the Torres Strait and set up operations on Darnley and Dauan Islands, eventually extending to all the Torres Strait Islands. The Torres Strait, initially inhabited by people who migrated from the north, was later settled by fishermen from Indonesia and then from Europe. During the 1860s fishing outposts were set up on the islands. The communities were subjected to forced labour and abductions.

The influence of Christianity and colonisation brought to an end the cycle of warfare, headhunting and abductions that had existed in the islands for thousands of years, and also protected the island people from mistreatment by the white settlers. The government left the protection of the Indigenous people to the missionaries, setting up reserves that were controlled by the missions.

### Reference

Australia, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2005, *Bringing them home – the history: Queensland*, viewed 20 March 2006, <[http://www.hreoc.gov.au/bth/text\\_versions/map/history/qld.html](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/bth/text_versions/map/history/qld.html)>.

## 1879

The Queensland Government annexed the Torres Strait through the passage of legislation by the Queensland and British parliaments. Of the 100 islands in the region, about 20 are currently occupied, each with its own name and language. The people living on the islands are of Melanesian origin and have occupied the islands for thousands of years.

### Reference

Government of Queensland 2006, *History: indigenous people*, viewed 12 April, 2006, <[http://www.qld.gov.au/about\\_queensland/history/](http://www.qld.gov.au/about_queensland/history/)>.

## 1880

The Queensland state government introduced the Pacific Island Labourers' Act, the first legislation regulating all aspects of the employment of labour from the Pacific Islands. This allowed for a licence to import labourers, but only for agricultural work, protecting the more skilled jobs for white workers.

During the 1870s, kidnapping in the Pacific Islands was common with islanders being forcibly taken from their homes or fishing boats to work in Australia. The Act imposed minimum living standards and directed ship masters to return the labourers to their own island when their contracts were completed. However, many of them were left on the nearest islands in the Torres Strait.

### Reference

National Archives of Australia n.d., *Documenting a democracy: Pacific Island labourers act 1901 (Cth)*, viewed 12 April, 2006, <<http://www.foundingdocs.gov.au/item.asp?dID=15>>.

## 1888

The phrase 'White Australia Policy' appeared for the first time in the *Boomerang* newspaper in Brisbane. This marked the beginning of overt policy by state and federal governments to make Australia a country for white people only. At this time, the Aboriginal population of Australia was estimated at 80 000, reduced by 220 000 from the estimated population of 300 000 prior to European settlement. In comparison to this, the total number of Australians killed or wounded in World War II was 50 500.

### Reference

Sydney City Council 2002, *Barani indigenous history of Sydney City: government policy in relation to Aboriginal people*, viewed 12 April 2006, <<http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/barani/themes/theme3.htm>>.

## 1894

Jandamarra, a Pnuba Aboriginal who lived in the Napeer and Oscar Ranges in the West Kimberley, led a campaign of resistance to the white settlers that lasted for six years. Jandamarra had contact with Europeans early in his life and became a highly skilled horseman and marksman. He spent some time in gaol for spearing a sheep and due to this, his tribal education was interrupted and his relationship with his own people was strained.

Jandamarra became friendly with the Europeans and worked as an unofficial tracker for the police, helping to track down and capture some of his own people. However, his tribal loyalties came to the fore and he set the captives free, going on to lead a number of organised attacks against the settlers. He was one of the first Aboriginal leaders to use guns. He was legendary for his ability to avoid capture, but was eventually tracked down by Micki, a tracker from the Pilbara.

### Reference

Government of Western Australia, Department of Conservation and Land Management 2006, *Nature base: the story of Jandamarra*, viewed 12 April 2006, <[http://www.calm.wa.gov.au/national\\_parks/previous\\_parks\\_month/jandamarra\\_feature.html](http://www.calm.wa.gov.au/national_parks/previous_parks_month/jandamarra_feature.html)>.

## 1901

Australia became one nation when the six self-governing colonies united. The Commonwealth of Australia was inaugurated on 1 January, 1901 in Sydney.

At this time, the Australian Constitution stated that ‘...in reckoning the numbers of the people in the Commonwealth, or of a State or other part of the Commonwealth, aboriginal natives shall not be counted’ (The Australian Constitution, s 127, 1900). This statement remained in place until it was repealed in 1967.

Also in 1901, the Immigration Restriction Act was put in place. This Act was one of the main methods of maintaining the White Australia Policy and was introduced because of racial tensions between white and Chinese miners in Victoria and New South Wales in the 1850s. Applications for immigration were restricted to mainly European countries and these restrictions were extended to indentured Pacific Islander labourers.

### Reference

Government of Western Australia, Department of Conservation and Land Management 2006, *Nature base: the story of Jandamarra*, viewed 12 April 2006, <[http://www.calm.wa.gov.au/national\\_parks/previous\\_parks\\_month/jandamarra\\_feature.html](http://www.calm.wa.gov.au/national_parks/previous_parks_month/jandamarra_feature.html)>.

## 1904

The Queensland Government took control of the Torres Strait Islander communities under a ‘Protection’ policy. This policy controlled every aspect of island life and removed the influence of the London Missionary Society. During this time the islanders lost their citizenship and became wards of the state.

Between 1904 and 1908 thousands of Islanders were forcibly repatriated from Queensland to the island of Moa in the Torres Strait where the government had set up a reserve. After a royal commission into repatriation of Islanders in 1906, some Islanders were exempt from repatriation. However, those remaining on the mainland suffered discrimination, such as restrictions on employment and union membership and segregation from white people in public places such as hospitals.

### Reference

Australia, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2003, *A history of South Sea islanders in Australia*, viewed 12 April 2006, <[http://www.hreoc.gov.au/racial\\_discrimination/Erace/history.html](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/racial_discrimination/Erace/history.html)>.

## 1905

The government of Western Australia brought in the Aborigines Act, created to ‘...make provision for the better protection and care of the Aboriginal inhabitants of Western Australia’ (Aborigines Act, 1905). Under this Act the Chief Protector of Aborigines was the legal guardian of all Aboriginal children up to the age of 16 and was able to control where all Aboriginal people lived.

The protectors, who were most often police officers, could remove children from their homes. Many of these children were held in institutions that were distant from their homes and were trained in domestic service, providing a cheap labour force. Not only were they removed for alleged neglect, they were removed to attend school in distant places, to receive medical treatment and to be adopted out at birth.

Under the Aborigines Act Aboriginal people had to get written permission before marriage and were not permitted to own any property. The Aborigines Act was repealed in 1963.

### Reference

State Records Office Western Australia 2006, *Aboriginal records*, viewed 12 April 2006, <<http://www.sro.wa.gov.au/collection/aboriginalrecords.asp>>.

## 1910

Between 1910 and 1970, more than 100 000 Aboriginal children throughout Australia were forcibly taken from their families and placed in church or state-based institutions. They are known as the Stolen Generations.

This was in response to federal and state government policies to assimilate Aboriginal people and particularly ‘half-caste’ people into white society. Children were taken far from their homes and their parents were unable to trace or contact them. The consequences for the whole Aboriginal community were devastating, with loss of language and cultural and family ties leading to a sense of powerlessness and distrust in government.

A commission was established in 1995 to investigate the Stolen Generations and the ‘Bringing Them Home’ report, published in 1997, found that the practice had been a violation of human rights. The federal government has neither apologised nor paid compensation.

In 2002, the ‘Restoring Identity’ report, published by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), the National Sorry Day Committee and the Northern Territory Stolen Generations groups proposed a reparations tribunal. This has received widespread support from Aboriginal people and has the support of the governments of Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland.

### Reference

European Network for Indigenous Australian Rights 2002, *Stolen generations*, viewed 12 April 2006, <<http://www.eniar.org/stolen.html>>.

## 1914

Over 400 Aboriginal soldiers served in Australian forces during World War I, representing all states in Australia and with a large representation from Cape Barren and Flinders Island off Tasmania. Army regulations at the time barred anyone not of European origin from enlisting. In 1917 the army officially allowed ‘half-castes’ to enlist because of a shortage of volunteers and heavy casualties.

During the period of World War I, Aboriginal children continued to be removed from their families, including children whose fathers were overseas at war.

### Reference

European Network for Indigenous Australian Rights 2002, *Aboriginals’ significant role in WWI revealed*, viewed 12 April 2006, <<http://www.eniar.org/news/WWI.html>>.

## 1931

Eddie Gilbert, an Aboriginal cricketer, bowled Donald Bradman out for a duck, Bradman saying that he had never faced a faster bowl. Gilbert was born in 1905 or 1906 at Durundur Reserve and was later separated from his parents, growing up on Barambah reserve near Murgon. He played for Queensland from 1930 – 35. Taking only three or four steps before bowling his ferociously fast balls, he opened the bowling for Queensland in the first match of the 1931 – 32 season and in his first over bowled both Bill and Bradman out, each for a duck. Gilbert was also known as the only fast bowler to knock the bat from Bradman's hand. Despite his talent with the ball Gilbert was never selected to play for Australia.

### Reference

Queensland Newspapers Pty Ltd n.d., *Our Queensland: top talent*, viewed 12 April 2006, <<http://thecouriermail.com.au/extras/oq/book7talent.html>>.

## 1932

William Cooper from Cummeragunja formed the Australian Aborigines League to protest against the living conditions of Aboriginal people. This followed on from the Australian Aborigines Progressive Association (AAPA) formed in 1924 under the leadership of Fred Maynard. The AAPA had tried to raise awareness about Aboriginal issues but had been forced to disband in 1927 because of police harassment. The aims of the League were to gain human and civil rights for Aboriginal people.

### Reference

Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2003, *Message stick: NAIDOC week 2003*, viewed 12 April 2006, <<http://www.abc.net.au/message/naidoc/naidoc2003/history.htm>>.

## 1936

Frustration over working conditions and paternalistic government policy led Torres Strait Islanders to band together in the All Island Maritime Strike. The strike was about the right of the Islanders to control their own wages and their own affairs – equity and autonomy. This strike helped the Torres Strait Islander people to establish their own identity as a nation.

One of the outcomes of the All Island Maritime Strike was the introduction of locally elected councils. From 1939, Islanders were able to elect their own representatives to control their own affairs, although the Queensland Government continued to have a veto control over councils.

### Reference

Government of Queensland, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Development 2005, *Traditional Torres Strait Island society: 1.1 Contact history*, viewed 12 April 2006, <[http://www.datsip.qld.gov.au/pdf/mm1\\_1.pdf](http://www.datsip.qld.gov.au/pdf/mm1_1.pdf)>.

## 1937

A new government policy called the Assimilation Policy was officially agreed to by heads of State and Territory Aboriginal Affairs authorities, although many of the practices of the policy were already being implemented. The policy was aimed at creating a single Australian community, with the expectation that all Aboriginal people would live in the same manner as other Australians, sharing their customs and beliefs. Aboriginal reserves were broken up and Aboriginal people were encouraged to live and work on large rural stations as a stepping stone to becoming absorbed into the general community.

### Reference

Australasian Legal Information Institute 1998, *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody: National report: volume 2: The assimilation years*, viewed 12 April 2006, <<http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/special/rsjproject/rsjlibrary/rciadic/national/vol2/278.html>>.

## 1938

On 26 January 1938, on the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of British arrival in Australia, the first National Day of Mourning was held. This was organised by William Cooper of the Australian Aborigines League and Jack Patten from the Aborigines Progressive Association. A meeting was held in the Australian Hall after they were refused use of the Sydney Town Hall. This meeting was the first meeting for Aboriginal civil rights and attracted about 1000 Aboriginal people.

The National Day of Mourning led to the establishment of the National Aboriginal and Islander Observance Day Committee (NAIDOC) that has unsuccessfully lobbied the government to announce a public holiday as a national day of observance for Aboriginal people. However, Australia does celebrate NAIDOC week, a time of recognition of Aboriginal culture and achievements.

### Reference

Sydney City Council 2002, *Barani indigenous history of Sydney City: significant Aboriginal events in Sydney*, viewed 12 April 2006, <<http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/barani/themes/theme6.htm>>.

## 1939

During World War II, about 3000 Aboriginal and Islander people served as formally enlisted Australian servicemen. During this time the policy of assimilation continued to be enforced with children, including children of servicemen, being removed from their families.

Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in 1941, Australian forces fought against the Japanese across the Pacific and South East Asia. It was only towards the end of World War I that 'half-castes' had been allowed to serve in the armed forces and even during World War II, many Aboriginal people served by claiming Maori or Indian descent.

With the threat of the Japanese coming through Papua New Guinea, the Commonwealth government allowed 750 Islanders and 60 mainland Aboriginal people to serve alongside white troops to defend the Torres Strait. By the end of the first year of the war in the Pacific almost every man of eligible age had volunteered to fight and the Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion was formed, the only Indigenous battalion in Australian military history.

### Reference

Seekee, Vanessa 1998, *Island defenders*, viewed 12 April 2006, <[http://www.anzacday.org.au/history/ww2/bfa/island\\_defenders.html](http://www.anzacday.org.au/history/ww2/bfa/island_defenders.html)>.

## 1947

The islanders of Saibai in the Torres Strait experienced growing hardships including lack of water and flooding from monsoonal tides. In 1947, the first families to leave the island settled at Muttee Heads. Eventually the entire island was evacuated with islanders settling at towns today known as Bamaga and Seisia, the northernmost towns on the mainland of Australia.

### Reference

State Library of Queensland 2006, *Footprints before me: Torres Strait Island missions and communities*, viewed 12 April 2006, <<http://publib.slq.qld.gov.au/footprints/communities/torresmap.htm#saibai>>.

## 1948

The Commonwealth government passed the Nationality and Citizenship Act under which all Australians were granted citizenship of their country of Australia. This Act was the first to recognise Aboriginal people as natural-born Australians rather than as 'aliens'. However, all Australian citizens were also British subjects and had to declare their nationality as British.

### Reference

National Archives of Australia n.d., *Documenting a democracy: Nationality and citizenship act 1948 (Cth)*, viewed 12 April 2006, <<http://www.foundingdocs.gov.au/item.asp?dID=26&aID=2&pID=20>>.

## 1955

The pearl and trochus shell industries in the Torres Strait were in the final stages of collapse due to the introduction of plastic substitutes for pearl shell products. This forced many Islanders to move to the mainland looking for employment. These Islanders were free from the controls of the Queensland government that regulated their movements and earnings on the islands, and had the same civil rights and privileges as Aboriginal people. In practice, this still meant that they suffered discrimination.

Torres Strait Islanders who moved to the mainland maintained a strong identity by keeping close ties with their home communities.

### Reference

Cape York Peninsula Development Association 2001, *History of the Cape York Peninsula: Aboriginal history*, viewed 12 April 2006, <<http://www.cypda.com.au/capeyork/history.htm#torres>>.

## 1955

In 1955 the first Moomba festival was held in Melbourne. The name for the festival came from Aboriginal people at Cormanderk who suggested the name 'moomba', telling officials it meant 'let's get together and have fun'. The word actually means 'up your bum' but continues to be used as the title of this annual carnival.

### Reference

Australian National University, Faculty of Arts, Australian National Dictionary Centre 2005, *Australian words: H-R*, viewed 12 April 2006, <[http://www.anu.edu.au/andc/res/aewords/aewords\\_hr.php](http://www.anu.edu.au/andc/res/aewords/aewords_hr.php)>.

## 1962

The Commonwealth Electoral Act was amended so that Aboriginal people could vote. Enrolment was voluntary but once enrolled, voting was compulsory. Despite the amendment to the Electoral Act, it was illegal under Commonwealth legislation to encourage Aboriginal people to enrol to vote.

### Reference

Australian Electoral Commission 2005, *When have elections been held: electoral milestones: timelines for indigenous Australians*, viewed 12 April, 2006, <[http://www.aec.gov.au/\\_content/when/history/ab\\_time.htm](http://www.aec.gov.au/_content/when/history/ab_time.htm)>.

## 1966

Charles Perkins led the Freedom Ride through northern New South Wales protesting against discrimination, including segregation in public places such as swimming pools. The Freedom Ride was a group of about 30 students from Sydney University and their trip took them on a 3200-kilometre tour of NSW country towns. The students gathered information about discrimination and in some places held protests; for example at Walgett where they protested outside the Returned Services League (RSL) club which barred Aboriginal returned servicemen from entering.

The Freedom Ride is considered to be the beginning of awareness by non-Aborigines of the extent of the issues facing Aboriginal people. The tour also raised the awareness of Aboriginal people who had resigned themselves to accepting discrimination.

### Reference

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies n.d., *Freedom riders*, viewed 12 April 2006, <<http://www1.aiatsis.gov.au/exhibitions/freedomride/start.htm>>.

## 1967

A referendum held in 1967 saw 92 per cent of Australians vote to have Aboriginal people included in the Australian Census. For the first time since settlement by the British, Aboriginal people were given the same citizenship rights as other Australians. Torres Strait Islander people were also included under the legislation, which meant that they had more avenues for action against some of the discriminatory Queensland laws.

Many international influences during the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century also led to the 1967 Referendum. The League of Nations and the International Labour Organisation were created: organisations set up to advance human rights. In 1945, the United Nations was formed, one of its primary aims being to aid human rights, and Australia was one of the founding members. In 1956, the Olympic Games were held in Melbourne and this drew international attention to Australia and the treatment of its Indigenous people.

At the same time, Aboriginal people were becoming more active, politically. In 1957, Jessie Street campaigned for a referendum for Aboriginal people to be included in the Australian Census and her petition was read to the House of Representatives.

In 1966, the United Nations' General Assembly approved the second stage of the International Bill of Rights and Harold Holt, as the newly elected Prime Minister of Australia, signed the International Accord for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. He was in a position to dismantle the White Australia Policy and to call the 1967 Referendum.

The win in the Referendum meant that Aboriginal people not only had citizenship but they also had a voice in government for the first time, through the Council of Aboriginal Affairs. Assimilation was discarded as the key term in Aboriginal policy in favour of integration.

### Reference

Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2004, *Message Club: didj 'u' know – stories: 1967 referendum*, viewed 12 April 2006, <<http://www.abc.net.au/messageclub/duknow/stories/s888141.htm>>.

## 1968

Lionel Rose beat the bantamweight boxer 'Fighting' Harada in Tokyo and became the first Aboriginal World Boxing Champion. Rose was born in 1948 near Warragul in Victoria. He had started as an amateur boxer, needing prize money to support his family, but became one of Australia's best all-round boxers.

Rose was a Gunditjmara man from Victoria and his rise from impoverished circumstances to world renown made him one of the most inspirational leaders of his people. At the end of his boxing career he was troubled by a period of alcoholic dependence and depression but overcame this to work with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, travelling the country to encourage Aboriginal people to achieve their ambitions.

### Reference

National Australia Day Council 2006, *Australian of the Year awards 2006: Australian of the Year: Lionel Rose MBE (b. 1948), 1968 award: world champion boxer*, viewed 12 April 2006, <<http://www.australianoftheyear.gov.au/pages/page103.asp>>.

## 1970

In 1970, the Torres Strait Islander people united in a campaign to protest against a proposal by the government of Papua New Guinea to extend its borders to control islands above the latitude of 10 degrees south. The 'Border No Change' campaign saw the Queensland government oppose the Commonwealth government, which eventually drew up the Torres Strait Treaty with Papua New Guinea. Under this treaty the border remained as it was.

1970 also saw one of the worst environmental disasters in the Torres Strait with the grounding of the Liberian tanker, Ocean Grandeur. About 4000 litres of oil was lost into the sea and this brought the pearling industry to a close in the area.

### Reference

Australian Broadcasting Corporation/Cinemedia 2005, *Charting the Pacific: Torres Strait Islands*, viewed 12 April 2006, <[http://www.abc.net.au/ra/pacific/places/country/torres\\_strait\\_islands.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/ra/pacific/places/country/torres_strait_islands.htm)>.

Australian Maritime Safety Authority 2005, *Maritime environment protection: Major oil spills in Australia: 'Oceanic Grandeur', Torres Strait, 3 March 1970*, viewed 12 April 2006, <[http://www.amsa.gov.au/Marine\\_Environment\\_Protection/Major\\_Oil\\_Spills\\_in\\_Australia/Oceanic\\_Grandeur/index.asp](http://www.amsa.gov.au/Marine_Environment_Protection/Major_Oil_Spills_in_Australia/Oceanic_Grandeur/index.asp)>.

## 1971

The Aboriginal Flag was flown for the first time in Adelaide. Luritja artist, Harold Thomas, designed the flag to be an eye-catching symbol of Aboriginal race and identity. The black represents the Aboriginal people, the red the earth and the yellow the sun, giver of life.

The flag was first flown on National Aboriginal Day in Victoria Square and was adopted nationally in 1972 after it was flown above the Aboriginal 'Tent Embassy' outside the old Parliament House in Canberra. The flag was officially recognised under Federal legislation, as was the Torres Strait Islands flag, in 1995.

### Reference

Ausflag Ltd 1995, *Aboriginal flag*, viewed 12 April 2006, <<http://www.ausflag.com.au/flags/ab.html>>.

## 1971

In 1971 Evonne Goolagong won the Wimbledon Women's Singles tennis title. She came from the Wiradjuri people in New South Wales and went on to become a successful tennis coach. She was appointed Member of the Order of the British Empire for services to tennis in 1972 and Officer of the Order of Australia in 1982.

### Reference

National Foundation for Australian Women 2003, *Cawley, Evonne Fay Goolagong (1951 -)*, viewed 12 April 2006, <<http://www.womenaustralia.info/biogs/IMP0070b.htm>>.

## 1975

The Racial Discrimination Act was passed in Federal Parliament. This Act makes racial discrimination unlawful in Australia and ensures that all Australians have the right to be treated equally in areas including employment, provision of goods and services and accessing public places.

Also in this year, Senator Neville Bonner, an Aboriginal senator, put forward a resolution acknowledging prior ownership of the land of Australia by Aboriginal people and seeking compensation for their dispossession. The Australian Senate endorsed the resolution unanimously. Neville Bonner was born on Ukerebagh Island in the mouth of the Tweed River and was the first Aboriginal person to serve in the Senate.

### Reference

Australia, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2005, *Racial discrimination: What is racial discrimination?* viewed 12 April 2006, <[http://www.hreoc.gov.au/racial\\_discrimination/index.html](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/racial_discrimination/index.html)>.

## 1976

Pat O'Shane, born in Mossman Queensland, graduated from the University of New South Wales, becoming the first Aboriginal person to be admitted to the Bar. She was also the first Aboriginal person and the first woman to be the head of a government department in Australia, when the New South Wales government set up the Ministry for Aboriginal Affairs in 1981. This appointment was part of a wider move to self-determination for Aboriginal people. It enabled Aboriginal people to make decisions about their own development, where they would take real and effective responsibility for their own affairs and to begin the task of social, economic and political reconstruction of their communities.

### Reference

Sydney City Council 2002, *Barani indigenous history of Sydney City: significant Aboriginal people in Sydney*, viewed 20 March 2006, <<http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/barani/themes/theme7.htm>>.

## 1982

Mark Ella, an Aboriginal Australian rugby player from Sydney, was named Young Australian of the Year. He had represented Australia in international competitions and was the Test captain from 1982 – 1984. In recognition of his outstanding sportsmanship he was also made a member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 1983 and has been inducted into the Australian Sports Hall of Fame and the International Rugby Hall of Fame Inaugural XV.

### Reference

Sydney City Council 2002, *Barani indigenous history of Sydney City: significant Aboriginal people in Sydney*, viewed 20 March 2006, <<http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/barani/themes/theme7.htm>>.

## 1982

Eddie Mabo commenced proceedings in the High Court of Australia. Mabo came from Mer Island in the Torres Strait and he and four other Torres Strait Islanders wanted to establish their traditional ownership of their land.

### Reference

National Library of Australia n.d., *Treasures: Papers of Edward Koiki Mabo 1988–1992*, viewed 12 April 2006, <<http://www.nla.gov.au/worldtreasures/html/theme-people-2-mabo.html>>.

## 1988

In January 1988, while white Australia was celebrating the bicentenary of European settlement, thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people marched through the streets of Sydney to voice the Aboriginal perspective on Australian history. They renamed the day 'Survival Day' and were joined by many non-Aboriginal people in their march.

As an alternative to Australia Day celebrations, Aboriginal people began the annual Survival Concert in 1992 and this is now one of the biggest Aboriginal cultural events of the year.

### Reference

Australia Day Council of New South Wales n.d., *Indigenous*, viewed 12 April 2006, <<http://www.australiaday.com.au/indigenous.html>>.

## 1992

In 1992, six months after the death of Eddie Mabo, the High Court ruled on the Mabo case, recognising that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a special relationship with the land. The court recognised the fact of Indigenous ownership before European settlement and found that the people of Mer were entitled to possession, occupation, use and enjoyment of their land.

This judgement refuted the concept of 'terra nullius' and led to the determination of many Aboriginal groups to claim ownership of their traditional lands.

In this year also the Torres Strait flag was introduced. The design of the flag is attributed to Bernard Namok of Thursday Island. It bears the symbol of the dari headdress worn by Islanders, with a five pointed star symbolising the five major island groups. The green stripe represents the land, black, the people and blue, the sea. Along with the Aboriginal flag, the Torres Strait Islander flag was proclaimed a flag of Australia in 1995.

### Reference

Northern Land Council of the Northern Territory 2003, *Land & sea rights*, viewed 12 April 2006, <[http://www.nlc.org.au/html/land\\_native.html](http://www.nlc.org.au/html/land_native.html)>.

Ausflag Ltd 1995, *Torres Strait Islander flag*, viewed 12 April 2006, <<http://www.ausflag.com.au/flags/torres.html>>.

## 2000

Corroboree 2000 took place in Sydney during Reconciliation Week to mark the end of a 10-year official reconciliation process between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. This process had started in 1991 with the establishment of the Council of Reconciliation with the aim of building bridges between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. As part of the celebrations, about 250 000 people walked over Sydney Harbour Bridge in support of Reconciliation. This event saw the launch of a campaign for a treaty with Aboriginal people that has yet to be established.

Reference: Ausflag Ltd 1995, *Torres Strait Islander flag*, viewed 12 April 2006, <http://www.ausflag.com.au/flags/torres.html>

## 2000

Catherine Freeman won gold in the women's 400 metres race at the Sydney Olympic Games. She had a prominent role in the opening ceremony of the games, in lighting the Olympic torch. Freeman is recognised as one of the world's greatest 400 metre runners and followed her silver medal in Atlanta with the gold medal in Sydney.

Cathy has always acknowledged the support of her people, her heritage and her culture in her journey to sporting greatness. She showed this by carrying the Aboriginal flag on a lap of honour after winning the 200 metres at the 1994 Commonwealth Games in Auckland. Criticised for this, she carried both the Aboriginal and Australian flags after winning the 400 metres at the same Games, a gesture that was received enthusiastically.

### Reference

National Gallery of Australia n.d., *Federation: Australian art & society: 1901 – 2001*, viewed 12 April 2006, <<http://www.nga.gov.au/federation/Detail.cfm?WorkID=27708>>.

## 2001

The Myall Creek Massacre Memorial was established, bringing together descendants of the victims, survivors and perpetrators, in reconciliation. The memorial is a large granite boulder with a plaque overlooking the site of the massacre. A number of smaller boulders lead up to the large boulder, each holding part of the story. On 10 June each year there is a commemoration ceremony held at the site.

In 2005, the memorial received the inaugural Innovative Reconciliation Prize awarded by Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR).

### Reference

Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation n.d., *Reconciliation prize*, viewed 31 March 2006, <[http://www.antar.org.au/rec\\_prize\\_05.html](http://www.antar.org.au/rec_prize_05.html)>.

## 2004

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) was disbanded. This Commission was established under legislation introduced in 1988 by the Hawke Labor government to advise and advocate on Indigenous issues and to encourage Indigenous self-management and economic, social and cultural development.

Under legislation introduced in 2004, the Commission was disbanded, with the intention of the government being to 'mainstream' policy relating to Indigenous people. From this time, responsibility for Indigenous affairs has resided with the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, who provides whole-of-government leadership on directions and priorities and reviews Indigenous programs.

### Reference

Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation n.d., *Reconciliation prize*, viewed 31 March 2006, <[http://www.vibe.com.au/vibe/corporate/celebrity\\_vibe/showceleb.asp?id=461](http://www.vibe.com.au/vibe/corporate/celebrity_vibe/showceleb.asp?id=461)>.

This history timeline has given you a snapshot of the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people up until the year 2004.