

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have been taken from their families since the start of colonisation in Australia.

Children were kidnapped, taken for labour and removed from their families through government policies of the day.

This timeline looks at some of the events, trauma and healing that's taken place in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities over the last two and a half centuries.

The dates in this timeline are a selection representing the breadth of events that have occurred. This is not intended to be a complete list. We encourage you to visit our website to view the latest interactive version of the timeline.



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**TIMELINE OF TRAUMA  
AND HEALING IN AUSTRALIA**



# TIMELINE OF TRAUMA AND HEALING IN AUSTRALIA

**60,000BC**

Australia has been inhabited by Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples for at least 60,000 years.

**42,000BC**

Mungo Man buried in a shallow grave.

**1770**

Captain James Cook declares possession of the east coast.

**1788**

The First Fleet arrives in Sydney.

**1789**

Smallpox decimates the Aboriginal population of Botany Bay, Port Jackson and Broken Bay.

**1794**

Colonists begin farming on the Hawkesbury and Aboriginal people are disposed from their lands. First recorded massacre of Aboriginal people occurred in Hawkesbury – see link to map of massacres.

**1814**

Governor Macquarie opens a school for Aboriginal children in Parramatta.

**1830**

The Black Wars begin in Tasmania.

**1838**

Myall Creek Massacre – first time colonists were punished in a court for their crimes.

**1848**

New Norcia Mission established in Western Australia.

**1865**

The Ballarat District Orphan Asylum is established. It hosted thousands of 'neglected' children and remained open until 1968. Under the Industrial & Reformatory Schools Act being Aboriginal was enough to be deemed as 'neglected'.

**1869**

Victoria becomes the first state to pass laws authorising child removal from Aboriginal parents. Similar policies and legislation were later adopted by other states and territories.

**1870**

The first Aboriginal children enrolled in public schools in New South Wales.

**1877**

The Hermannsburg Mission is established.

**1879**

Torres Strait Islands are annexed by Queensland.

**1883**

The New South Wales Aborigines Protection Board is established to manage the lives of 9000 people.

**1887**

Parramatta Girls Industrial School opens.

**1890**

Jandamarra, a resistance fighter in the Kimberley, declares war on Europeans and prevents settlement for six years.

**1897**

Queensland introduces laws allowing removal of Aboriginal people from their land and children from their families.

**1901**

The Commonwealth of Australia is formed.

**1904**

Torres Strait Islanders become subject to the Queensland Aboriginal Protection Act. Their islands become reserves. Cherbourg Mission is also established in Queensland.

**1905**

The Aborigines Act is passed in Western Australia, making the 'chief protector' the legal guardian of Aboriginal children.

**1908**

The Invalid and Old Age Pension Act is introduced, providing social security for all Australians except Aboriginal people. The Bomaderry Aboriginal Children's Home opens near Nowra.

**1909**

The Aborigines Protection Act is introduced in New South Wales, granting power to take 'neglected' children from their families.

**1911**

South Australia and the Northern Territory create laws to remove Aboriginal people from their land and separate families. Cootamundra Domestic Training Home for Aboriginal Girls is established in a disused hospital building.

**1912**

Maternity Allowance is introduced but does not include Aboriginal people.

**1913**

The Church of England Girls' Home opens in Carlingford, New South Wales.

**1915**

The Aborigines Protection Board in New South Wales is given powers to take children from their families without having to prove neglect.

**1917**

Yarra Bay House becomes the site of a number of government-run children's homes from around 1917 to the mid 1980s.

**1918**

The Palm Island Mission is set up in Queensland.

**1920**

Bidura, an historic house in Sydney, becomes a depot and receiving home for children while they await foster placements or transfers to other establishments.

**1923**

Kinchela Training Home for Aboriginal Boys opens near Kempsey in New South Wales.

**1928**

The Coniston Massacre, Australia's last documented massacre, takes place in Central Australia.

**1930**

William Cooper petitions the King to have an Aboriginal representative in Australian Parliament.

**1934**

The Arnhem Land Reserve is declared. Sister Kate's Children's Cottage Home is established in Perth.

**1936**

The Doomadgee Mission is set up in Far North Queensland.

**1937**

Australian Government convenes first 'native welfare' conference and states adopt assimilation policies for Aboriginal people.

**1938**

Day of Mourning held in Sydney to mark the 150th anniversary of colonisation.

**1939**

The South Australian Aborigines Protection Board is established.

**1940**

The Aborigines Protection Board in New South Wales is renamed Aborigines Welfare Board and loses power to remove Aboriginal children.

**1941**

The Child Endowment Act is passed but declares no endowment should be paid to dependent Aboriginal people.

**1942**

Darwin is bombed by the Japanese and many Aboriginal people are moved to 'control camps'.

**1947**

Torres Strait Islanders are allowed to travel to mainland Australia to pursue employment.

**1948**

All Australians, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are given 'Australian citizenship' for the first time.

**1949**

The Commonwealth Electoral Act is extended to Aboriginal ex-servicemen.

**1956**

Large nuclear tests are carried out at Maralinga – hundreds of Aboriginal people are forced to leave because of radiation poisoning.

**1961**

The Allambie Reception Centre opens in Burwood, as the Victorian Government's main reception centre for children.

**1962**

The Commonwealth Electoral Act is amended to give the vote to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Federal elections.

**1965**

The Freedom Ride takes place in New South Wales, protesting against racial discrimination.

**1966**

Around 200 Aboriginal stockmen, led by Vincent Lingiari, walk off in protest of pay and conditions at Wave Hill station.

**1967**

More than 90% of Australians vote yes in a referendum to give the Australian Government the power to make laws for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

**1969**

The New South Wales Aborigines Welfare Board is abolished. All states repeal Aboriginal child removal legislation.

**1971**

Aboriginal people are counted in the Census for the first time.

**1972**

The Tent Embassy is pitched outside Parliament House in Canberra.

**1975**

The Australian Parliament passes the Racial Discrimination Act to help ensure all Australians are treated equally.

**1980**

The first Link-Up organisation is set up in New South Wales, providing support for Stolen Generations members and their families.

**1985**

Uluru is handed back to its traditional owners. Yarra Bay House closes at Phillip Bay.

**1988**

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

**1991**

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

**1992**

The High Court hands down the Mabo decision. Paul Keating delivers historic Redfern Speech, acknowledging the negative impact of European settlement.

**1993**

The United Nations declares 1993 the International Year of the World's Indigenous People.

**1994**

The Going Home conference takes place in Darwin, bringing together over 600 Aboriginal people who were stolen from families as children.

**1996**

The first National Reconciliation Week is held.

**1997**

The Bringing Them Home report is tabled in Australian Parliament. Six states and the Australian Capital Territory issue formal apologies to Stolen Generations.

**1998**

The first National Sorry Day is held.

**2001**

Northern Territory Government apologises to Stolen Generations.

**2006**

Australia's first Stolen Generations compensation scheme is established in Tasmania.

**2007**

Northern Territory intervention in Aboriginal communities.

**2008**

National Apology to the Stolen Generations in Australian Parliament.

**2009**

The Healing Foundation is established. Australia supports the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

**2013**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Recognition Act 2013 passes in Australian Parliament.

**2017**

Commemorations held for the 20th anniversary of the Bringing Them Home report.

**2018**

10th anniversary of the National Apology to the Stolen Generations.