

South Australian Aboriginal History Timeline

Some terminology in this timeline is used in its historical context only and is not meant to cause offence. This terminology is not appropriate to use in the preparation of any documents, unless quoting the historical usage of it. Appropriate terminology can be found in the SA Health Aboriginal Culture and History Handbook.

This is only intended to be a brief history of Aboriginal South Australia post-colonisation. All specific legislation that is mentioned is South Australian, however similar Acts were passed nation-wide at similar times. Although most information is South Australian based, some nationally-occurring events are mentioned. It is also important to note that the Northern Territory was part of New South Wales from 1825 to 1863 and part of South Australia from 1863 to 1911.¹

Period	Date	Event	Details
Pre-colonisation	Approximately 40,000-100,000 years ago	Aboriginal Australians are the longest continuing culture in the world.	Approximately 200 language groups existed across Australia. Aboriginal people shaped the landscape with fire to create a bountiful supply of food to forage and hunt. Strict relationships were observed to look after Country, totems, and all living things. Society was strictly organised and roles and responsibilities set down by laws. History was passed down orally through the generations through Dreaming stories, songs, art and dance.
Colonialism and Control 1788-	1788	Australia is colonised by the British at Sydney Cove.	Policies and land laws were based on the belief that the colony was acquired by occupation of <i>terra nullius</i> (literally: land without owners). Land acquisition policies were justified by a belief that Aboriginal people were too “primitive” to be owners and sovereigns, and that there was no identifiable hierarchy or political order.
	1788-90s	European impacts	Whether or not brought with the First Fleet (or with Macassan fisherman traders who frequented northwest

¹ Information for this appendix has been drawn extensively from the following three resources:
Australian Indigenous Health InfoNet 2010, *Major Developments in National Indigenous Health Policy Since 1967*, viewed 2 April 2012, <<http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/health-systems/policies/reviews/health-policy-timelines>>
Raynes, C. 2002, *A Little Flour and a Few Blankets: An Administrative History of Aboriginal Affairs in South Australia 1834-2000*, State Records of South Australia, Gepps Cross, South Australia.
Reconciliation Australia 2012, *Resources*, viewed 2 April 2012, <www.reconciliation.org.au>

			<p>Australia) small pox heavily reduced the Aboriginal population around Sydney.</p> <p>The disease travelled down the Murray River infecting and killing many Aboriginal groups in Victoria and South Australia. It is estimated the Aboriginal population was halved by the disease.</p> <p>Firearms, alcohol and tobacco were introduced.</p> <p>Exposure to new social attitudes and culture.</p> <p>Destruction of natural environment, which lessened amount of food available.</p>
1880's	Settlement and Land Grab		<p>Settlers moved beyond Sydney to other areas around Bathurst, Blue Mountains and then beyond.</p> <p>Cattle and farming was introduced which significantly changed the food supply for Aboriginal people.</p>
1836	South Australia colonised		<p>The <i>South Australia Act</i> of 1834 proclaimed South Australia to be "waste and unoccupied lands...fit for the purposes of colonisation".</p> <p>Proceeds of the sale of land were to be used for the purposes of relocating labourers there, from Britain.</p> <p>Colonial Office (government structure at time) attempted to prepare for Aboriginal welfare and land rights prior to their colonisation.</p> <p>Captain John Hindmarsh claimed Aboriginal people should have the same protection as the rest of "His Majesty's Subjects".</p> <p>This culminated in the first employment of a "Protector" of Aboriginal people, the first public service appointment in South Australia.</p>
1839	Protector of Aborigines		<p>Matthew Moorhouse was appointed first full-time Protector, to promote understanding between settlers and Aboriginal people, to teach Aboriginal people "civilised" living skills (reading, building houses, making clothes), and to preach Christianity.</p> <p>In the same year it was made an offence to give alcohol to an Aboriginal person.</p> <p>Missionaries began to school Aboriginal people.</p> <p>Rations stations were set up across the state issuing small amounts and an often poor quality of flour, biscuits, tobacco and blankets to Aboriginal people.</p>

	1840 and onwards	Land use	<p>Land was cleared for grazing and cattle herding, resulting in a decrease in native plant and animal-based food.</p> <p>Grazing animals contaminated waterholes which had provided invaluable fresh water.</p>
	1840s	Frontier conflict	<p>Although not widely documented, frontier conflict between settlers and Aboriginal people occurred continually throughout the first decades of settlement.</p> <p>Settlers purchased land from the state which was offered regardless of Aboriginal occupation.</p> <p>One of the most documented examples of frontier violence in South Australia is the alleged murder of the passengers of Maria. Maria was navigating the waters around Goolwa and the Coorong where it was alleged Aboriginal people murdered all the passengers. The government responded by executing two Aboriginal people allegedly involved.</p> <p>More frontier violence occurred with the overlanding of cattle down the Murray River from New South Wales to Adelaide.</p> <p>There are documented reports of settlers poisoning flour and waterholes.</p> <p>This frontier conflict, coupled with introduced diseases and illnesses, significantly and quickly reduced the Aboriginal population.</p> <p>Despite the Aboriginal population bearing the brunt of deaths due to frontier conflicts, only one European settler was convicted for a capital offence against an Aboriginal person in the nineteenth century.</p> <p>In the far north and in isolated areas of the state, settlers were reported to have shot and murdered Aboriginal people and mistreated Aboriginal women, well into the 1890s.</p>
	1840s	Employment	<p>Many Aboriginal people were employed in labour and farming, as porters and store keepers. Many of these people, however, were paid in rations, board, or promised wages (which were often never received).</p> <p>In the far north of the state it is well known that the pastoral industry could not survive without Aboriginal labour, yet reports document that Aboriginal employees had horrendous working and living conditions.</p>
	1870s	Land and rations	<p>Continual requests from Aboriginal people for land were made to the Crown.</p>

			<p>Non-Aboriginal people in country regions of SA made continual complaints about the lack of rations available to Aboriginal people and that many were dying of starvation.</p> <p><i>Ad hoc</i> missions were established across the state, usually run by German missionaries.</p> <p>Aboriginal people were forced to live at the fringes of towns in town camps, and were not able to enter cafés, hotels, certain shops, hospitals, theatres, church dances and social functions.</p>
	1880	Protector Hamilton	<p>Hamilton's period was characterised by a public sentiment of 'survival of the fittest', that is, that the Aboriginal population would soon be extinct due to being an "inferior race". The phrase "smooth the dying pillow" epitomises Government attitudes in this period (i.e. let Aboriginal people live comfortably as they will not live much longer.)</p> <p>The growth of this public idea during Hamilton's appointment may have been due to the worsening state of Aboriginal Affairs under his inactive and tardy administration.</p> <p>This sentiment was simultaneously used as an excuse for Hamilton to not act.</p>
	1909-1969	Forced removal of children from their families	<p>Forced removal was official government policy during this period but also happened before and for some time after.</p> <p>Governments, churches and welfare bodies all took part.</p> <p>Started officially with the State Children's Council removing allegedly neglected children to school and educate them in Christianity.</p> <p><i>Aborigines Act 1911</i> made it lawful for the Aboriginals Department to have total control of the welfare of all Aboriginal people; to distribute rations as needed; to have custody, institutionalise, and educate Aboriginal children as needed; as well as have control over the movement or location of any Aboriginal person in the state.</p> <p>The Act also restricted Aboriginal people to camp at the fringes of towns and allowed the Chief Protector of Aborigines to restrict any Aboriginal person to an Aboriginal reserve or institution and move them from one to another.</p>

			<p>Mission life meant restrictions on practicing aspects of Aboriginal culture and language, including hunting, ceremonies and no access to sacred sites.</p> <p>Despite the government wanting all working-age Aboriginal people to work, employment was often sporadic and rare, resulting in a lot of idleness and feelings of uselessness in missions.</p> <p>Children were taught to reject their Aboriginality.</p> <p>Children were expected to become labourers or servants.</p>
	1920s-1940s	Early Aboriginal activism and protest	<p>Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association and the Aborigines Progressive Association (NSW) were NSW groups formed to campaign for full citizenship rights for Aboriginal Australians, Aboriginal representation in Parliament and abolition of the New South Wales Aborigines' Protection Board.</p> <p>The Australian Aborigines League, established in Victoria, had membership nation-wide and combined with the Aborigines' Progressive Association to publicise these demands at such events as the 'Day of Mourning' - the Aborigines' counterpoint, in January 1938, to the colonists' celebration of 150 years of white settlement.</p>
Assimilation and Integration 1934-1972	1939	Aborigines Protection Board	<p>Under the <i>Aborigines Act Amendment Act 1939</i>, Aboriginal people could receive an unconditional and limited exemption from the Act. This began an era of Exemption Certificates. These certificates meant that any Aboriginal person the Government deemed appropriate to participate in the wider community could do so. It also meant, however, that they were no longer considered Aboriginal for the purposes of the Act; that is they were forced to forego their Indigenous identity and culture, their family and their homelands, in exchange for living and participating in the wider community.</p> <p>It also made it an offence for a non-Aboriginal male to have a sexual relationship with an Aboriginal woman.</p> <p>This period (and also beforehand) is characterised by poor attempts at education for people in missions. Missionaries attempted all they could despite no financial resources or equipment.</p>

	1950s	Assimilation policies	<p>The policy of the Protection Board is to have Aboriginal people, especially those of “mixed blood” assimilated into the general community.</p> <p>The <i>Police Act 1869-70</i> was still in effect and prohibited social interaction between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. It also prohibited non-Aboriginal people from ‘habitually consorting’ with an Aboriginal person without reasonable excuse. This was amended in 1958 due to Don Dunstan’s influence.</p>
	1956	Nuclear Bomb Testing	<p>Nuclear bomb testing occurred during this year on the Maralinga Tjarutja Lands, on the far west coast of South Australia. This resulted in much hardship for Aboriginal people of the area.</p>
	1962	<i>Aboriginal Affairs Act 1962</i>	<p>Introduced to remove all restrictions and restraints on Aboriginal people, although Don Dunstan pointed out in parliament that there were still restrictions on “full-blood” Aboriginal people.</p> <p>It was no longer the state’s responsibility to provide for Aboriginal children.</p> <p>Aboriginal Reserve boundaries could still be altered, but not abolished.</p> <p>Exemptions from the Act were dropped.</p> <p>The practice of appointing protectors of Aboriginal people was abolished, as was all reference to ‘protection’ of Aboriginal people.</p> <p>Detention of Aboriginal people with contagious diseases in lock-ups ceased.</p> <p>The Board, Minister and Governor could no longer prohibit Aboriginal access to certain towns or municipalities.</p> <p>It was no longer an offence for a non-Aboriginal man to ‘habitually consort with’ an Aboriginal woman and a non-Aboriginal man with an Aboriginal woman..</p> <p>The Education Department took over control of Aboriginal education.</p> <p>However, Aboriginal people still had no security relating to the provisions of their employment, leaving them at the mercy of their employers in the pastoral industry.</p> <p>Don Dunstan was subsequently appointed Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.</p>

	1966	<i>Aboriginal Lands Trust Act</i>	In 1967 the first transfers of land were made. By the end of 1967 the ALT had acquired 474 000 hectares of Aboriginal reserves.
	1966-75	Wave Hill Walk off (Northern Territory)	In 1966 Aboriginal pastoral workers walked off Wave Hill station due to low wages, poor conditions and disrespectful treatment. The protest turned to land rights, as the workers moved to a site near Wattie Creek (Daguragu) and erected a sign reading 'Gurindji', the name of their Aboriginal group. After years of protest, in 1972 Daguragu was acquired by the Aboriginal Land Fund Commission and, on 16 August 1975 at Daguragu, Prime Minister Gough Whitlam transferred leasehold title to the Gurindji, symbolically handing soil to Vincent Lingiari. This event historically spurred on the handing over of land to traditional owners nationally.
	1966	<i>Prohibition of Discrimination Act 1966</i>	Prohibited to discriminate against anyone on the basis of their race and/or country of origin.
	1966-67	<i>Aboriginal Affairs Amendment Act</i>	Made regulations to provide for the establishment of Aboriginal reserve councils at each reserve, and gave them the right to refuse permission for entry. Each council was to have nine elected Aboriginal members.
Self-Determination and Self-Management 1970's-	1967	Referendum for Constitutional reform (National)	Aboriginal people are recognised as Australian citizens. Majority agreed Aboriginal people should get the same freedoms as non-Aboriginal people. This is still Australia's most successful referendum with 90% of all Australians voting 'yes'.
	1969	Commonwealth Office of Aboriginal Affairs	Having recently been established, the office identified health as one of four main priorities for their work.
	1971	Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS)	The first Aboriginal Medical Service was initiated in Redfern, Sydney, on a voluntary basis. Nunkuwarrin Yunti, an Aboriginal community-controlled health service in the Adelaide metropolitan area, was

	(NSW)	incorporated.
1972	<i>Community Welfare Act</i>	<p>Represented a shift in thinking to promote the cultural, social, economic and political welfare and development of Aboriginal people.</p> <p>To encourage Aboriginal people to preserve and develop their own language, traditions and arts.</p> <p>To foster development of Aboriginal councils and organisations.</p> <p>To foster the establishment of any business, trade, or industry by Aboriginal people.</p>
1972	Tent Embassy (ACT)	<p>On Australia Day in 1972, a number of Indigenous activists erected a beach umbrella on the lawns of Old Parliament House. Michael Anderson, Billy Craigie, Bertie Williams and Tony Koorie set up the protest and placed a sign that said 'Embassy' to represent a displaced nation.</p> <p>The activists were protesting against the McMahon Liberal Government's statement in which land rights were rejected in favour of 50-year leases to Aboriginal communities.</p> <p>Around this time saw a 'Black Power' protest movement in areas around the country.</p>
1981-1984	Other Land Rights	<p><i>Pitjantjatjara Land Rights Act (1981)</i> provided secure land tenure to Anangu people in the far north-west of the state and created the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankuntjatjara (APY) Lands.</p> <p><i>Maralinga Tjarutja Land Rights Act</i> provided lands to Anangu people in the far north-west of the state below the APY Lands.</p>
1989	National Aboriginal Health Strategy (NAHS)	The NAHS was implemented, and continues to be drawn on by policy makers today. The strategy is comprehensive of all aspects of Aboriginal health and remains a landmark government document. The NAHS attracted additional government funding.
1990s	Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody	<p>The Royal Commission was established in response to a growing public concern that deaths in custody of Aboriginal people were too common and poorly explained.</p> <p>The report found that police officers were not at fault, but that high numbers of deaths in custody were correlated with the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in the prison system.</p> <p>The report made many recommendations, one of the most powerful being the recommendation of a formal</p>

			process of reconciliation.
1990	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC)		ATSIC was established and took over a lot of the responsibility for Aboriginal health nation-wide. ATSIC was seen by many in the community as a step in the right direction, towards Aboriginal control over Aboriginal affairs.
1991	Mabo and the <i>Native Title Act</i>		The High Court made its historic Mabo judgment after a case lasting eight years in which Eddie Mabo and four other Torres Strait Islanders from Mer (Murray Island) asked for legal recognition of their traditional Native Title rights to their island and overturned the concept that Australia was <i>terra nullius</i> or 'empty land'. Native Title can exist over particular kinds of lands - Crown Lands, national parks and reserves. In 1992 South Australia passed the <i>Native Title Act (South Australia)</i> .
1996	Wik Judgement		On 23 December, The High Court found that pastoral leases did not necessarily extinguish Native Title and that both could co-exist but, where there are conflicts, Native Title rights are subordinate to the rights of the pastoral lease holder.
1997	National Enquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families		In 1997, the <i>Bringing Them Home Report</i> was launched, demonstrating in stark detail the suffering of the stolen generations. One of the recommendations was for Premiers and the Prime Minister to apologise for the wrongdoings of the past. All Premiers across the nation apologised on behalf of their states, however the Prime Minister did not at this time.
1998	<i>Native Title Act Amendment Act</i>		Incorporated Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan in response to the Wik Native Title judgement. Ten Point Plan clarified that Native Title does not exist on any land with commercial leases, if it is privately-owned and that the existence of a pastoral lease does not necessarily extinguish Native Title.

	2002	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce National Strategic Framework	The <i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce National Strategic Framework</i> was released by the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Group (AHMAC).
	2003	National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health	<i>National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health: Framework for Action by Governments</i> (NSFATSIH) was a ten year commitment that built on the NAHS.
	2005	ATSIC abolished	ATSIC was abolished and Aboriginal affairs at a Commonwealth level were restructured.
	2007	Oxfam Close the Gap Report	Oxfam released its report <i>Close the Gap: Solutions to the Indigenous Health Crisis Facing Australia</i> , which outlined the disparities in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The report called for Federal and State and Territory Governments to commit to 'closing the gap' in a generation.
	2007	Northern Territory Emergency Response	Prime Minister John Howard and Indigenous Affairs Minister Mal Brough announced a dramatic intervention into the Northern Territory Aboriginal communities in response to the findings of a report about sexual abuse. August 2007, 6 weeks after the announcement in response to what the Government deemed a 'national emergency'; the <i>Northern Territory Emergency Response Act</i> was passed. This gave the Government power to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Acquire Aboriginal land and communities for up to 5 years; 2. Hold back 50% of all welfare payments, so as to control how money is being spent by Indigenous people and; 3. Ban all alcohol.

			Pat Anderson, co-author of the <i>Little Children are Sacred Report</i> , expressed a uniform view that the intervention was not supported and did not adhere to any of the recommendations laid out in the report.
	2007	COAG	At COAG's December 2007 meeting, members committed to closing the difference in life expectancy within a generation, reducing the mortality gap of children under five, as well as the gap in reading, writing and literacy.
	2008	National Apology to Stolen Generations	On 13 February 2008 the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, made a formal apology to the Stolen Generations in the House of Representatives. <i>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.</i> <i>We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country.</i> <i>For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry.</i> <i>To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry.</i> <i>And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry.</i>
	2009	National Congress	The Australian Government announced the establishment of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, the new national representative body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
	2010	SA Health Aboriginal Health Care Plan 2010-2016	Companion document to South Australia's Health Care Plan, specifically focusing on addressing the health issues facing Aboriginal South Australians.
	2012	Stronger Futures Legislation	The senate passed the Stronger Futures Bill, which secured the continuation of the Northern Territory Emergency Response for another ten years.
	2013	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health	Holistic plan aimed at honouring the commitment of the Australian Government to close the gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

		Plan 2013-2023	
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