
1982 A majority of the High Court in *Kearova* hold that the 1967 referendum which extended the Commonwealth’s ‘race power’ to include the power to legislate on Aboriginal people was not limited to beneficial laws only. Further, the race power could not support the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth) as the legislation was of general application to all races.

1983 In *The Exclusive Dump Case* a majority of the High Court conclude that legislation protecting sites relics and artifacts in the Franklin River area was a valid exercise of the Native Power, as the legislation had the practical effect of protecting Aboriginal cultural sites. The special significance of these sites to Aboriginal people meant that the law was valid, even if there was a general interest to all Australians in preserving them.

1984 Commonwealth legislation is introduced to protect Aboriginal heritage where State and Territory laws are not made to provide adequate protection.

1985 The National Aboriginal Conference is disbanded following reports indicating its failure to develop and promote intergovernmental cooperation.

1989 Legislation is passed to create an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission.

1992 The National Apology to the Stolen Generations (Cth) is delivered.

1993 Commonwealth laws are passed to establish a scheme for determinations of Native Title. In *Mabo* (No 1) the High Court determine that the Aboriginal title rights extending to the Mabo lands were not extinguished by legislation making it an offence to hunt without a licence.

1998 Commonwealth laws are passed to establish a scheme for determinations of Native Title. In *Kearova v Spence* the High Court hold that legislation purporting to extinguish Aboriginal title rights extends to hunting, and these rights were not extinguished by legislation making it an offence to hunt without a licence.

2001 The Commonwealth laws are amended to allow for the extinguishment of Aboriginal title rights by legislation,” including dispossession.

2002 The High Court in *Wurridjal* held that legislation can operate to partially extinguish native title rights and interests, such as the granting of mining leases and pastoral leases.

2003 A Senate report is published on the issue of Patrol Sniffing in Indigenous Communities, examining the abuses and possible solutions.

2004 A Senate report recommends the payment of compensation to Indigenous people for wages unlawfully withheld be the Commonwealth from the 1980s.

2005 A Criminal inquiry finds that Indigenous man Mulanji Doonmedian died on Palm Island as a result of being assaulted by a Queensland police officer. This report is later set aside, with an inquiry in 2010 finding there was insufficient evidence to rule whether the injuries leading to Mr Doonmedian’s death were accidental or deliberate. The Coroner did conclude however that the Queensland Police failed to protect the officer who caused the injuries.

2006 The Northern Territory issues a consultant’s report on their legislation for recognising Aboriginal child welfare and abuse. The Final Report ‘Little Children Are Sacred’ makes 97 recommendations to address this situation.

2007 The Commonwealth Government announces an intervention in the Northern Territory in response to the Little Children Are Sacred report. Implementing only 2 of the 97 recommendations in the report, the Howard government introduce measures which prohibit alcohol, increase policing, ban pornography, and quarantine welfare payments. The legislation is passed with minimal consultation of Aboriginal communities affected by the changes.

2008 The Northern Territory introduces an alternative response to the Little Children Are Sacred report, setting targets to close the socio-economic and life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

2009 For the first time, an Australian Court successfully awards compensation to a member of the Stolen Generations. The Court held in *Trevorow v The Commonwealth* that the legislation purporting to extinguish native title rights of the Meriam people was inconsistent with the circumstances which could support a law operating to their disadvantage’ as the legislation had the practical effect of protecting Aboriginal cultural sites. The special significance of these sites to Aboriginal people meant that the law was valid, even if there was a general interest to all Australians in preserving them.

2010 Ken Wyatt becomes the first Indigenous member of the House of Representatives. The National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples is established as a representative body elected by the Indigenous community. It is an independent corporation controlled by its members.

2011 The Commonwealth Government introduces the Report Panels to consider the community on the issue of recognising Indigenous people in the Australian Constitution.

**Compiled by April Long and Kristyn Glanville**