

asgmwp.net

Elimatta

Winter 2017

Aboriginal Support Group—Manly Warringah Pittwater

ASG acknowledges the Guringai People, the traditional owners of the lands and the waters of this area

What did the Uluru Convention call for?



See article on page 2

2017 marks the anniversaries of significant reconciliation milestones:



50 years since 27 May 1967 referendum

Aboriginal people become part of the Australian constitution



25 years since the historic *Mabo* decision

Resulted in the introduction of the doctrine of *Native Title* into Australian law



25 years since Paul Keating made his speech Redfern

The like of which had never been heard from a prime minister since the birth of the nation

20 years since 'Bring them home'

The report of the National Inquiry

The full story inside this issue



Explainer:

all the questions you were too afraid to ask about Indigenous constitutional recognition

Australia is on the verge of taking big, historic steps towards reconciliation with Indigenous people. But there are some potentially contentious and confusing elements. Here's what it all means.

What did the Uluru convention call for?

Hundreds of Aboriginal community leaders met at Uluru in late May to find common ground on a way forward. This capped off a dozen regional meetings around the country.

They then released a "Statement from the Heart", which called for:

"Substantive constitutional change and structural reform", rejecting minimalist and symbolic recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the constitution

A constitutionally enshrined "First Nations Voice", which would sit separately to the Parliament but seek to influence and advise government policy affecting Indigenous people

A pathway to treaties between Aboriginal people and the government. This would be overseen by a "Makarrata Commission", which would also guide a process of truth-telling about the treatment of Indigenous people.



Gumatj clan ceremonial leaders of Northeast Arnhem Land

What is constitutional recognition?

Broadly, it is the formal acknowledgement of continuous occupation of Australia by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for 50,000 years or more before European colonisation.

At minimum, this would be symbolic acknowledgement in the constitution or a preamble.

Indigenous people are largely rejecting such minimalist change, instead urging substantive action. Advocates of a First Nations Voice contend it is the form of recognition they want.

Advocates for significant change argue it is the only thing Aboriginal people support and the only thing worth doing. Others contend that any change should be minimal if it is to gain the support of the Australian public.

The constitution is the foundation document that underpins all laws made by the Australian government.

What would a First Nations Voice look like?

The exact form of the proposed Indigenous representative body is still to be decided.

It would likely sit separate to the Parliament and not have veto powers over legislation, but offer advice to governments.

Cape York leader Noel Pearson has suggested it could be made up of delegates elected from tribal groups across the country. He favours broad language in the constitution enshrining such a body but leaving the details to the Parliament.

University of New South Wales law professor and Cobble Cobble woman Megan Davis cites international examples to argue structural representation of Indigenous people results in better long-term outcomes in health, education and employment.

What is a treaty?

Treaties are legal agreements between Indigenous groups and governments that can formally recognise sovereignty over land, outline reparations and settlements, establish rules about coexistence and formalise the provision of services like education and health.

An agreement signed between the Western Australian government and the 30,000-strong Noongar people is considered by many to be a treaty. The Victorian and South Australian state governments are in the process of striking treaties with Aboriginal groups.

Australia is the only Commonwealth country that does not have a treaty with its Indigenous citizens.

It's important to note that treaties and constitutional recognition can co-exist. Some experts have actually observed that constitutional change is required for treaties to be viable.

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Explainer:

**all the questions you were too afraid to ask
about Indigenous constitutional recognition**

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What would a Makarrata Commission do?

“Makarrata” is a Yolngu word that means the coming together after a struggle, facing up to past wrongs and committing to peaceful relations.

In overseeing treaties between Aboriginal people and government, a Makarrata Commission would seek to perform the role of a truth and reconciliation commission. These have been conducted in South Africa and Canada as part of healing processes.

What other proposals do people want addressed in a referendum?

Removing or amending the race power contained in section 51 of the constitution, which empowers the government to make policy for a specific racial group. Experts have noted that the wording allows this power to be used to the detriment of a group.

Removing a power that allows governments to disqualify people from voting based on their race.

The addition of a prohibition against racial discrimination (though this did not win support at Uluru because it would be staunchly opposed by constitutional conservatives and free speech advocates).

What is the process from here?

A full report will now be finalised by the nonpartisan Referendum Council advisory group and delivered to the Parliament, which will then decide how to proceed. This will be handed over on June 30, after which the council will be dissolved.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and Opposition Leader Bill Shorten have maintained a bipartisan approach, although Mr Shorten has indicated more openness to bold change, including a treaty. Mr Turnbull has expressed caution, pointing to the low success rate for referendums.

This council's report will take into account a 2011 expert panel report, 2015 findings from a bipartisan parliamentary committee and the outcomes of the Uluru convention.

What did the 1967 referendum achieve?

Australia recently marked the 50th anniversary of the 1967 referendum, which removed two provisions in the constitution: one that prevented Aboriginal people from being counted in the Australian population; the other that excluded Aboriginal people from the Commonwealth's power to make special laws for the people of any race.

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Who are some of the organisations involved?



Recognise

The official, government-funded campaign founded in 2012 to rally public support for constitutional change. It has been criticised as unrepresentative by Aboriginal figures.



Referendum Council

A bipartisan advisory body established in 2015 to inform the progress towards a referendum. It is chaired by respected Aboriginal leader Pat Anderson and high-profile lawyer Mark Leibler.



National Congress of Australia's First Peoples

A non-government, representative body for Indigenous people.



RECONCILIATION AUSTRALIA

Reconciliation Australia

Non-government organisation established in 2001. It oversees *Recognise*.

*Fergus Hunter
smh.com.au*

Explainer:

**all the questions you were too afraid to ask
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Why the 1967 Referendum failed

Liberal backbencher W. C. Wentworth campaigned strongly for the amendment of section 51 of the Constitution. He argued that by enabling the Commonwealth to make laws for the Aboriginal people these would be for their advancement. State laws would not be affected by Commonwealth legislation and states could receive federal funding. Wentworth's bill was later supported by teachers of the Sydney University.

But Wentworth's efforts seemed doomed. A private member's bill Wentworth introduced to government in March 1966 was not put to a vote and subsequently lapsed.



*A campaign brochure
from the 1967 referendum*

The 1967 Referendum goes on its way

On February 23, 1967 the federal cabinet finally decided to hold a referendum in May that year. A few days later Prime Minister Holt announced that the referendum would go further than the previous draft. Now also clause 26 of section 51 should be amended and the words 'other than the aboriginal race in any State' dropped.

This must have come as a great victory of W C Wentworth's long campaign which seemed to have reflected the general public opinion that these words were discriminatory. But while Wentworth had argued for a replacement of these words with a new phrase that would advocate positive laws for the advancement of Aboriginal people, Holt went for a mere deletion.

"I would like to see spelt out in the Constitution the Commonwealth's power to help Aborigines and to see a prohibition against adverse racial discrimination towards the Aborigines or anyone else". —W C Wentworth, Feb 1967

On March 2nd 1967 Prime Minister Holt introduced legislation for a referendum to be held on May 27, 1967.

What was the effect of the 1967 Referendum?

Did the federal governments act to the expectations of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people who so passionately had fought for the Constitution to be changed?

Sadly, this hasn't been the case. Governments of all political colours continue to 'forget' to consult with Aboriginal people during law-making business.

Mick Dodson commented on the Native Title Amendment Bill, passed into law in 1998, that he saw "John Howard and [Tasmanian senator] Brian Harradine, discussing our native title when we're not even in the room. How symbolically colonialist is that?"

In 1998 the High Court had to decide on a case which addressed the changed sections of the Constitution. Despite the changes, the government was allowed to pass a law that was detrimental to, and discriminatory against, Aboriginal people. In the Hindmarsh Island High Court Decision Justice Kirby made it very clear that Section 51 (xxvi) can be used to the detriment and not always for the benefit of any race.

As Aboriginal people realised that the promises of the constitutional change were not going to be met, they started to organise and to protest: The Tent Embassy was established and the modern land rights movement was born. But these are other stories.

Although the 1967 Referendum has failed politically, historically it was, and remains, a triumph of the human spirit that continues to inspire generations of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike. It is one of the glowing coals that keep the fires burning.

Did you know?

The Constitution of Australia never has, and to-date still does not, protect basic human rights or offer protection against racial discrimination.

Source: <https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/history/australian-1967-referendum#ixzz4j5prZ4rV>



The ongoing legacy of the **Mabo decision**

Mabo forced us to confront the convenient fiction upon which Australia was built.

Saturday was the 25th anniversary of the High Court's *Mabo* decision. The impact of this landmark case still reverberates today in debates on Indigenous recognition and disadvantage. It is rarely far from the surface as we struggle to come to grips with our colonial past.

After the British settlers arrived in Australia in 1788, the so-called "barbarian" theory of law was applied. It treated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as being so "low in the scale of social organisation" that they were not entitled to have their laws or customs recognised. As one judge said, it is "idle to impute to such people some shadow of the rights known to our law".

Solicitor Greg McIntyre, barrister Ron Castan, Eddie Mabo and barrister Bryan Keon-Cohen at the High Court of Australia 1991.



Solicitor Greg McIntyre, barrister Ron Castan, Eddie Mabo and barrister Bryan Keon-Cohen at the High Court of Australia 1991

The system treated Indigenous peoples as if they did not exist. Australia was regarded as *terra nullius*, meaning an empty continent in which the land belonged to no one. It was a convenient approach because it permitted the British settlers to strip Aboriginal people of their lands without compensation.

Mabo changed this. After a protracted 10-year struggle, Eddie Mabo succeeded against the odds in convincing the High Court that Australian law was based on racial discrimination and false understandings. The court instead set down a radically different perspective of Australia's first peoples.

As Justices William Deane and Mary Gaudron stated, it may be "accepted as beyond real doubt or intelligent dispute" that the Australian continent in 1788 was occupied by up to a million or more Aboriginal people.

They lived under local laws and customs that were "elaborate and obligatory". It was also accepted that the boundaries of their tribal lands were "long-standing and defined".

In short, despite centuries of denial, Aboriginal peoples had rights and interests that could and should be accorded protection under the common law. The court did so by recognising the continuing rights of the Indigenous people to their ancestral lands and waters.

The *Mabo* decision was handed down on June 3, 1992 in the High Court's grand courtroom in Canberra. I was there as a young associate working for a judge, and saw the jubilation and relief of Aboriginal peoples whose rights had been recognised after more than two centuries. This though was tinged with sadness as Eddie Mabo had died just months before.

Prime minister Paul Keating responded to the court's decision by seizing the opportunity to legislate for a national native title act. It engendered a long-running, and often bitter, political debate that culminated in 1998 in prime minister John Howard's 10-point plan. In the words of then deputy prime minister Tim Fischer, this sought to pour "bucket-loads of extinguishment" on the native title rights of Indigenous Australians.

The *Mabo* case gave rise to great expectations and fears. Some people produced maps showing how swathes of the Australian continent would be transferred into Aboriginal hands. Others foresaw that the courts would recognise further Aboriginal rights. None of these has occurred.

One reason for this is that the High Court has refused to extend the *Mabo* decision. Soon after, Chief Justice

Sir Anthony Mason rejected any notion that Aboriginal peoples were sovereign nations. Native title existed only because these rights were recognised by the law of the colonisers. He also rejected an attempt to recognise the customary criminal law of Aboriginal peoples.

Native title has also produced mixed results. Some Aboriginal people have made large gains, while for others the process has been lengthy, unwieldy and unproductive. A key problem is that native title is hard to prove. The High Court has said that a claimant must show a continuous observance of traditional law and customs since the British arrived. However, the dispossession and dispersal of Aboriginal peoples can make this impossible, meaning that native title rights have been lost.

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Paul Keating and the 'THE SPEECH WE HAD TO HAVE'

25 years ago, the prime minister of Australia went to Redfern to launch the International Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples. He gave a speech the like of which had never been heard from a prime minister since the birth of the nation.

Let me venture two preliminary points. First, such formal speeches attach to the office of prime minister, and are not merely a speech of a political leader who happens to be prime minister. When Paul Keating spoke at Redfern, he did not do so as the leader of the Labor Party which formed the government of the day.

He did so as the 24th prime minister of Australia. As such, he carried the mantle of that office, and spoke for it. We in Australia are apt to think of the utterances of our national leaders as their own personal effusions.

We forget they speak for something beyond their personal tenure, they speak for an enduring office.



Illustration: Eric Lobbecke

The dismal quality of the great bulk of Australian speech-making does not help things, but our democracy is the poorer for our failure to recognise, like the Americans, that the office of national leader transcends the personal.

Secondly, therefore, unlike the Americans, we have not established the important formal occasions for our prime minister to speak to the country, such as the inaugural addresses following the national election, and the State of the Union address delivered by the president annually.

Such formal opportunities as there are in our country, are dull and uninspiring. Without proper occasion it is little wonder the general standard of Australian political rhetoric is so pedestrian.

The breakthrough speeches in Australia have been the consequence of leaders making or using an occasion.

Keating's Redfern speech used the occasion of the launch of the International Year of Indigenous Peoples to speak to a matter that had long been gnawing at his soul, which he had now formulated as a cornerstone of his prime ministerial program.

Facing history was the starting point. The words are well-known but bear repetition: "Recognition that it was we who did the dispossessing. We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. We brought the diseases. The alcohol. We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers.

"We practised discrimination and exclusion. It was our ignorance and our prejudice. And our failure to imagine these things being done to us.

"With some noble exceptions, we failed to make the most basic human response and enter into their hearts and minds. We failed to ask - how would I feel if this were done to me? As a consequence, we failed to see that what we were doing degraded all of us."

This passage resonated across the continent and roiled the national soul, and gave fodder to the culture and history wars.

The rhetorical device used by Keating in using personal empathy for the actions of his own ancestors and of those on whose part he spoke, gave rise to the complaint contemporary Australians could and should not be held responsible for what happened in the past.

While electorally useful to Keating's political opponents in the emerging cultural war, this complaint ignored the plain words later in the speech: "Down the years, there has been no shortage of guilt, but it has not produced the responses we need. Guilt is not a very constructive emotion. I think what we need to do is open our hearts a bit. All of us."

The profundity of Keating's subject and the directness with which he chose to confront it meant that it would not be taken lightly. This was strong medicine. While searching for its soul, he was probing the central nervous system of the nation. Of course there would be convulsions.

Keating gave the speech that Edmund Barton never did. That Alfred Deakin never did. That John Curtin and Ben Chifley never did. That all our prime ministers up to and including Robert Menzies and Gough Whitlam never did. That Malcolm Fraser and Bob Hawke never did.

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Paul Keating and the 'THE SPEECH WE HAD TO HAVE'

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It was not that Paul Keating made this speech out of some idiosyncratic motivation. It was that some prime minister at some point in Australia's history had to give this speech. Keating's genius was to recognise the time had long fallen due for it.

The nation needed these words. This is the sense in which the words of a speech are not just words: they are words that make (or diminish) a nation.

We little appreciate the extent to which Australia has changed these past 20 years. Indigenous people were present in the national policy concerns before then, but always at the margins.

Keating brought indigenous Australians and the challenge of reconciliation to the main table of national priorities.

His recognition that the opportunity provided to the nation by the High Court's *Mabo* decision, to make land justice the cornerstone of a new relationship was correct and Keating seized it with great alacrity.

The following year he staunchly defended native title against even his own party, and set up the Indigenous Land Fund to buy land for those groups who were dispossessed of their traditional lands.

Keating made it possible for Australians to imagine a reconciled nation. If the word "reconciliation" is so tired to Australian ears, we need only look the conflict in the Middle East to hear the word afresh in its true imperative meaning. Reconciliation is not just a launch, it's a journey to a real destination.

On December 10, 1992, the prime minister said some words that started that journey, without which we could never start.

Noel Pearson, The Australian

Noel Pearson is the Chair of the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership



'BRING THEM HOME'

Report of the National Inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families

Released on 26th May 1997, the *Bring Them Home* report made 54 recommendations.

The 7th recommendation was to hold a National Sorry Day each year for the *Stolen Generation*.

26th May 1998 marked the first National Sorry Day

The *Bring Them Home* report is a tribute to the strength and struggles of many thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people affected by the forcible removal of their children.

We acknowledge the hardships they endured and the sacrifices they made.

We remember and lament all the children who will never come home.

We dedicate this report with thanks and admiration to those who found the strength to tell their stories to the Inquiry and to the generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people separated from their families and communities.





Um, that's not the right way to fly an Aboriginal flag



The flag was spotted flying upside down over WA's Government House.

The Aboriginal flag was designed in 1971 by Harold Thomas, a Luritja man from Central Australia, who intended it to inspire, delineate and unsettle.

According to Thomas, the black section represents indigenous people, the red corresponds to the ochre colour of the Earth and the yellow disc is the Sun, the giver of life.

He created the flag so his people would have greater visibility at public protests, namely the land rights marches of the 1970s, where they were usually outnumbered by non-indigenous people waving banners and placards.

Thomas, the first Aboriginal to graduate from an Australian art school, defied artistic convention with the arrangement of colours in his design, and explained his reasons to the Federal Court in a 1997 copyright case involving the flag.

"I wanted to make it unsettling," he said.

"In normal circumstances you'd have the darker colour at the bottom and the lighter colour on top and that would be visibly appropriate for anybody looking at it.

"The other factor why I had it on top was the Aboriginal people walk on top of the land."

Thomas wasn't kidding when he said his design was counterintuitive — how else do you explain the Aboriginal flag flying upside down over WA's Government House yesterday?

Ben O'Shea, 'The West Australian'
Saturday, 3 June 2017

THANK YOU

to all who attended
ASG Sorry Day 28th May

A special thanks to Alan and Helen for the sausages, and Laurie with the BBQ.

Also to those bringing afternoon tea to share and the helpers in the kitchen and those that helped with the setting up of the hall and cleaning up after.

Scott and Matt on the didgeridoo, Carol for her reading Auntie Nancy's poetry, Karleen with her basket weaving, the three Wassell sisters for entertaining us during lunch, Bree Bimson for singing and the *Jannawi Dancers* who performed traditional dances.

John and Gary for the Aboriginal artefacts display.

Not to mention Steve for making the Boomerangs for the kids to paint.

ASG also gratefully acknowledges the generosity of the Elanora Scouts for giving us their hall, Woolworths Mona Vale and the Northern Beaches Council for their financial assistance.



Jannawi Dancers



Right Wrongs: '67 Referendum – WA 50 Years On exhibition at Maritime Museum

For more than half of the short 116-year history of this country, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders were not considered Australians.

It took until 1967 for Australians to finally vote to amend the constitution, allowing Indigenous people to be counted in the census and to be subject to Commonwealth laws.

With a yes vote of 81.8 per cent, Fremantle residents were among the biggest supports of the cause, which still holds the record for the largest yes vote of any Australian referendum at 90.77 per cent.

The Western Australian Museum will bring the cause back to Fremantle and will mark the 50th anniversary of the vote with a new exhibition at the Maritime Museum and State Library of WA called Right Wrongs: '67 Referendum-WA 50 Years On.

Western Australian Museum chief executive Alec Coles said the exhibition aimed to give local context to the vote and its influence on WA at the time and since.

"The central exhibition is on display at the State Library of WA in Perth, telling Western Australian stories that explore the long history of Aboriginal activism from Aboriginal peoples' perspectives," he said.

"Through local voices, the satellite exhibitions at the WA Maritime Museum...look to the past and the future, exploring personal reflections of the 1967 referendum's significance and meaning.

"The exhibition recognises the many aspirations that have been met since the referendum but acknowledges that social disadvantage still exists."

Aboriginal Affairs minister Ben Wyatt said that referendum meant Aboriginal people were afforded the same rights as non-Aboriginal Australians.

"The referendum was pivotal in highlighting the inequalities faced by the Aboriginal community and in securing legislative changes," he said.

"This is recent history; my family was part of this experience.

"In 50 years we have moved to a point where Aboriginal people are now central in determining their future and it is important that this history, and the WA stories of this time, be shared."

Right Wrongs: '67 Referendum-WA 50 Years On is at the Maritime Museum until July 16.

Right Wrongs: '67 Referendum-The WA Story is at the State Library of WA until September 3.

*Jessica Nico
Fremantle Gazette NEWS*



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The ongoing legacy of the Mabo decision

A quarter of a century on, *Mabo* was a necessary and important step in our development as a nation. It forced us to confront the convenient fiction upon which Australia was built and lands taken for development. The decision has brought about important processes of agreement making, and enabled a new generation of Indigenous leaders to come to the fore.

However, the case has not proved to be the panacea that many had hoped. It has not borne out the inflated expectations of the time, with native title often proving elusive and no further rights beyond land being recognised.

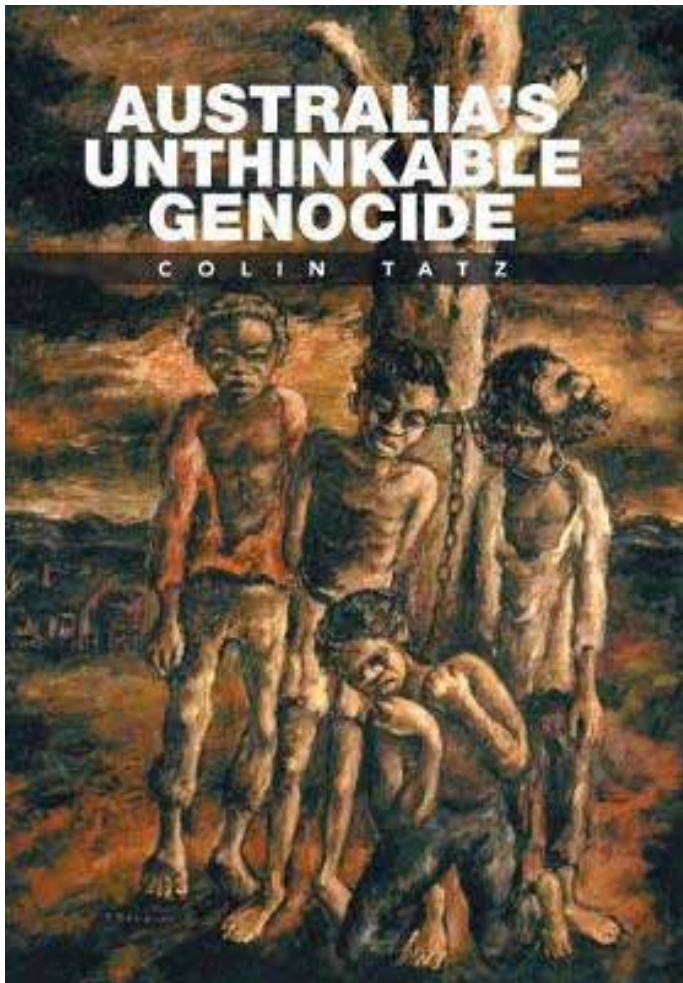
One legacy of the *Mabo* case has been to shift the debate back to the political realm. For the time being, there is little appetite in the courts to further develop Aboriginal rights. Given this, it is no surprise that Aboriginal people are instead seeking justice and political empowerment through constitutional change and negotiated agreements such as treaties.

*George Williams
Dean of Law – University of New South Wales*



Australia's Unthinkable Genocide by Colin Tatz

Within a few score pages of his newest treatise on race, political scientist Colin Tatz presents an anecdote about the treatment of Aboriginal people in Australia that chills to the bone.



It was 1962. He and his wife Sandra were visiting the Retta Dixon Home for Aboriginal children in Darwin.

The superintendent, Ms Shankleton, pressed a six-month-old baby boy into Sandra's arms. Seeing the couple's enchantment, she said they could have him if they donated 50 guineas (now \$150) as down-payment.

Tatz, then still comparatively dewy-eyed about Australia's reputation as the "land of the fair go," dismissed this as the action of a foolish old missionary. Like so many others at that time, he could not know the full extent of Australia's Aboriginal child removal policies, subsequently exposed by the Human Rights Commission in the 1990s.

Already a scholar and a disaffected Jewish son of apartheid-era South Africa, he went on to become an active supporter of indigenous rights. He went further than most; he used the "G word" – genocide – to describe several aspects of the treatment of indigenous people, including the policies and practices that produced the "stolen generations."

Author of more than 20 books, in this new work, Tatz documents the many ways in which he believes Aborigines faced genocide as a result of colonisation.

Right up-front, he asserts that he has the right to speak out about Aboriginal issues. Sensitive to criticisms about white people writing on race, he declares that it does not hold true that only victims can write about their victimisation.

Given the sins of denial and omission that mark race matters in Australia, it is refreshing to see that declaration. Indigenous people need additional voices raised too on their behalf, given that the "tyranny of the majority" can oppress within a democracy, as we see in Trump's America.

With methodical recounting of massacres, incarceration, segregation, assimilation and now, intervention, using policy statements, and the words of eyewitnesses and participants, Tatz unscrolls a grim roll call of evidence that is indeed distressing to read.

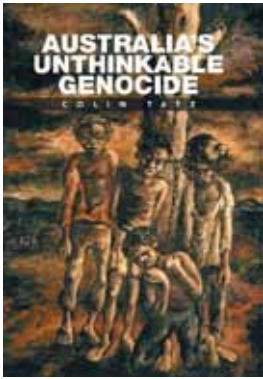
He lists 70 known sites of massacres between 1804 and 1928 and, using primary sources, concludes that in this era, Aborigines were not accidentally killed as a by-product of settlement – rather, it was because of who they were.

He speaks of "child-stealing" and reveals how he once tried unsuccessfully to help two Arnhem Land parents placed in a Darwin leprosarium have their three children returned. He interlaces details that expose the crushing eccentricities of racist attitudes and policies.

For instance, in 1867 there was a Queensland law against Aborigines looking after diseased sheep. In 1934 South Australia, which then administered the Northern Territory, made it a criminal offence for female Aborigines to dress as men – to stop stockmen from keeping women disguised as so-called drovers' boys. In 1909 Western Australia's Chief Protector, C.F. Gale, said that when Aboriginal children were taken from their families, they forgot them in 24 hours and were "glad to be rid of them."

Tatz does not pretend to be detached. It is impossible to be dispassionate about genocide, he says. Beneath the scholarly analysis, the emotion ripples. You could almost make a sad poem of some of his lines.

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"The history of failure is all about us and we don't see it..."

"Genocide is never spontaneous..."

"Genocide memory is ... different and special ... Decades, or even centuries later, the echoes and shadows are audible and visible by an 'atmospheric

osmosis', an absorption of something momentous, an overwhelming sadness that has seeped into the sitting room, the cuisine, the wall hangings, the music played or not played."

The forensic examination of racism has been Tatz's passionate lifelong project since he fled his homeland, which he describes as an "abnormal" country. The final trigger for his migration to Australia was the white label affixed to a jar containing his donation of his rare AB+ blood, "signifying the start of transfusion apartheid."

He arrived as a kind of innocent in matters Aboriginal. Because of what he calls our nation's "wilful amnesia," which by the 1960s had produced little scholarship in the area, it took him a while to grasp the extent of what had happened to the indigenous peoples.

Now he calls it "our genocide," denied by most because of the wish to believe in Australia as a benign nation, an essentially humanitarian country.

"Australianness, by birth or naturalisation, is adjudged a prophylaxis, an inoculation against bad behaviour," Tatz writes.

Tatz has plumbed the meaning and application of the word "genocide" since studying at Yad Vashem, the Jerusalem Holocaust documentation centre, in 1986.

The term "genocide" was only coined in the 1930s by the Polish-Jewish jurist Raphael Lemkin, as Nazism rose in Europe, Tatz explains. He combined the Greek genus (a race or tribe) with the Latin *cedere*, meaning to kill.

Currently, at one extreme, Tatz writes, it is seen as "megadeath" of the Auschwitz kind. At another, its use is flippant – as in the Melbourne newspaper that headlined a story on the opening of the hunting season as "Duck genocide begins."

But the lens through which we should see genocide he believes, is still that of the United Nations Genocide Convention, which Australia signed in 1948, defining it as "acts committed with intent to destroy... a national, ethnical, racial or religious group..."

That includes "forcibly transferring children of the

group to another group" – hence the Human Rights Commission finding that the stolen generations episodes amounted to genocide.

That transfer has been documented, but where some Australians still have problems with the definition applying here is the intent. Say the people removing the children from their families and those who raised them thought they were "rescuing" them from harm and giving them a better life? Apparently, many did.

Genocide, he argues, can be committed without malevolence. It can be committed "with good faith or with benevolent intent."

His arguments are relentless and confronting and he contends that even in the self-determination era, Aborigines were told to "get on with it" themselves without, in many cases, having been given the means or education to do so.

He is a harsh judge of Australian governance and singles out bureaucrats as particular culprits. This is a sweeping generalisation and needs backing up. I do not doubt, however, that there is plenty of evidence of specific bureaucratic failure in indigenous affairs. It is a rich research area for those able to obtain the data.

Tatz also speaks of the deep dysfunction in many indigenous communities, which he argues has resulted from the treatment they have suffered. But he could have made a little more of the many ways in which Aboriginal people have survived and even thrived despite their oppression.

This book is a plea to read the distressing stories that support his case and to not just turn the page and forget. It is meant to disturb and disrupt. It is about history and also the present day.

Only a day after I read Tatz's discussion of the common catch cry that people should "move on and get on with it," I saw those very words in a newspaper article about the stolen generations. They are so commonplace, we barely flinch.

Debra Jopson

Australia's Unthinkable Genocide, Xlibris 2017, is available from, among others:
Xlibris, Amazon, Booktopia, Barnes & Noble
and Abbey's Bookshop, Sydney.

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Sunday June 11
10am to 2pm

Bushwalk in the Narrabeen Catchment – Free event
Allow 4 hours. BYO Lunch and Water.
Start at 2-10 Cromer Road – 300 metres after entrance to Cromer Golf Club.
For bookings or more details: Conny Harris 0432 643 295

Wednesday June 14
10am to noon

JASPER JONES
A Free screening at **Collaroy Cinema**
1097 Pittwater Road, Collaroy. All welcome.

Sunday June 25
10am to 1pm

Walk the BasinTrack with Uncle Lauri Bimson
West Head Road, Ku-Ring-Gai Chase National Park
At the site you will be told stories of times long gone by. Bring your camera for the view from West Head – Amazing! Festival special \$20pp - maximum 30 persons.
Bookings essential: guringaitours.com.au



Our Languages Matter

Monday July 10
7.30pm start

ASG-MWP Information Night
2017 National NAIDOC – Our Languages Matter
Keeping the Language alive - how can you help. Guest Speaker David Tribe
Mona Vale Memorial Hall, 1606 Pittwater Rd, Mona Vale. Free event – All welcome.

Monday Sep 11
7.30pm start

ASG-MWP Information Night
FAQs on Native Title with guest speaker Michael Bennett
What is Native Title? – What is a Future Act?
What are Land Rights in NSW?
Mona Vale Memorial Hall, 1606 Pittwater Rd, Mona Vale. Free event – All welcome.

ASG-MWP would like to thank Dee Why RSL, Pittwater RSL, Forestville RSL, and Avalon Beach RSL for their continued support in 2015



An Invitation to join us

**Aboriginal Support Group
Manly Warringah Pittwater**

Founded 1979

Membership is \$25 per year

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Elimatta is the newsletter of the Aboriginal Support Group Manly Warringah Pittwater.

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Contributors to **Elimatta** are from many different cultures and backgrounds. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Editors or members of the ASG.

Please email articles where possible to the.elimatta@gmail.com

If you use any of the material it would be appreciated if the extract is set in context and the source acknowledged.



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