

## Peace & conflict resolution in Australia: A timeline for reconciliation

One way to explore peace and conflict resolution in an Australian context is to look at history relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, including conflict with colonisers, dispossession and oppression, fights for rights, and movements for reconciliation. Studies of these historical events are important in helping students gain an understanding of the experiences of Aboriginal people, of conflicts and injustice that have occurred, and how movements for change have made a difference. These themes cover content present in the *Australian Curriculum: History* and also in the *Cross Curriculum Priorities*. The following activity looks specifically at the chronology of movements for reconciliation in Australia.

### Curriculum Links

#### *Year 6: Historical Knowledge and Understanding*

- Experiences of Australian democracy and citizenship, including the status and rights of Aboriginal people and/or Torres Strait Islanders, migrants, women, and children. (ACHHK114)
- The contribution of individuals and groups, including Aboriginal people and/or Torres Strait Islanders and migrants, to the development of Australian society, for example in areas such as the economy, education, science, the arts, sport. (ACHHK116)

#### *Year 6 Historical skills*

- Sequence historical people and events. (ACHHS117)
- Locate information related to inquiry questions in a range of sources. (ACHHS121)

### Activity Instructions

On the following page are 11 significant events relevant to the history of reconciliation in Australia to be printed out onto cards for students to use for this activity.

Students work in groups to try and place the cards in chronological order. Depending on their level of knowledge, they could try and do the ordering first, and then check their answers by research, or begin with the researching to find out the dates of each of the events, and recreate a timeline showing the events in order. Take the opportunity to discuss the events in a more detail as a class.

Uluru is handed back to its traditional owners

John Batman, a grazier and businessman, attempts to make a 'treaty' with Aboriginal people for Port Phillip Bay. This is the only time colonists attempt to sign a treaty for land with Aboriginal owners.

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd formally apologises to the Stolen Generations on behalf of the Australian parliament and the Australian people. The Apology is the first item of business for the newly elected Government.

Vincent Lingiari leads a walk-off from the Wave Hill cattle station in the Northern Territory, protesting inadequate wages and poor conditions and demands the return of traditional lands. The protest lasts for eight years and eventually results in the passing back of land to its traditional owners.

The Australian Parliament passes the *Racial Discrimination Act* which aims to ensure that Australians of all backgrounds are treated equally and receive the same opportunities

High Court hands down its Mabo decision, recognising the special relationship that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with the land. The court decrees that Australia was never terra nullius (empty land).

300,000 people walk across Sydney Harbour Bridge as part of National Reconciliation Week, demonstrating their support for reconciliation. Thousands of others then walked across bridges in cities all over Australia

British colonisers arrive in Australia and claimed sovereignty over the land on the basis that it was unoccupied. It is estimated that at the time there were about 750,000 people living in independent groups or nations, speaking over 250 languages and many more dialects.

A referendum is held to remove elements of discrimination against Aboriginal people from the Australian Constitution, and to ensure Aboriginal people would be counted in the census. This is the most overwhelming 'Yes' vote in a referendum in Australia's history.

The 'Freedom Riders' led by activist Charles Perkins, undertake a bus tour through New South Wales to draw attention to Aboriginal disadvantage and discrimination.

The 'Aboriginal Embassy' is pitched outside Parliament House in Canberra, demonstrating for land rights.

#### Further resources:

- ★ *There are many other events that could have been included. For more ideas, see the Reconciliation Australia website: [www.reconciliation.org.au](http://www.reconciliation.org.au)*
- ★ *For a brief account of Noongar history see the website of the South West Land and Sea Council: <http://www.noongar.org.au/noongar-people-history.php>*
- ★ *The One World Centre Library has a reconciliation kit available for borrowing which contained a resource file of lesson ideas, books and other teaching materials.*