



# Grappling with Slavery and Genocide

AN UPDATE ON RECONCILIATION IN AUSTRALIA

PRESENTED BY RON HEINRICH

# Introduction

- ▶ Slavery was never legal, but coercion and forced labor existed.
- ▶ Over 400 recorded massacres between 1788 and 1930.
- ▶ Stolen Generations led to cultural suppression and abuse.
- ▶ The current and recent efforts by the legislature, executive and judicial branches towards reconciliation and reparations to Indigenous Australians.

# Legislative Progress – Treaty

- ▶ Treaties would agree to:



- ▶ Recognize Indigenous ownership



- ▶ Establish fair negotiations between *equals*



- ▶ Provide a commitment to responsibilities, promises and principles.



- ▶ Provide financial compensation.

# Treaty Efforts by State

The following states have engaged distinct processes towards establishing treaties:

**Victoria:** Treaty framework since 2018, negotiations ongoing.

**Queensland:** Path to Treaty Act (2023), later repealed.

**Northern Territory:** Barunga Agreement (2018), local control restoration.

**ACT:** Treaty discussions ongoing since 2019.

# Self-Represented Advocacy

Since the proposition of an Indigenous Voice to Parliament (2017, Uluru Statement from the Heart) many states have worked to introduce systems fairer for indigenous Australians

**South Australia:** The first Australian state to establish a voice body in March 2023.

**Victoria:** introduced a permanent state voice in treaty negotiations.

**ACT:** Two non-government bodies that work directly within the ACT government on issues of policy, heritage and land conservation.

# Specialised Indigenous Courts

- ▶ Indigenous-specific courts began emerging in the early 2000's.
- ▶ Elder's are often involved in advising on cultural context to ensure a better understanding of the individual's sentence.
- ▶ Northern Territory and Tasmania are the only states that do not have specific indigenous focused courts.

# Land Rights Cases

- ▶ ***Ngaliwurru and Nungali peoples'* claim against Northern Territory Government**
  - ▶ Awarded \$2.53 million in compensation for the loss of native title rights
  - ▶ Determined that extinguishment of title event had occurred, but the indigenous population were nonetheless still entitled to compensation for this loss.
  - ▶ Significant in its acknowledgment of both cultural and economic losses resulting from colonisation.

# Land Rights Cases

## ▶ ***Bigambul Native Title Aboriginal Corporation***

- ▶ In 2024, 2010 hectares of land in Toobeah, QLD were awarded to Bigambul.
- ▶ Conferred entirely freehold.

## ▶ ***Gia and Ngaro Peoples' native title claim***

- ▶ Ongoing litigation for native title claim in the area covering Airlie Beach, the Whitsunday Islands and the surrounding maritime areas.
- ▶ If successful, would cover both land and sea and would provide title to engage in commercial fishing and tourism.





# Thank you for listening

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