

Truth Factsheet

“... a nation cannot recognise people they do not know or understand. The Aboriginal experience in Australian history is critical to recognition. From pre-contact to invasion, from conciliation to the frontier wars and killings, from compulsory racial segregation to assimilation, from self-determination to the return to neo-paternalism, it is time now to make peace and the Uluru reforms are the road map to peace.” (Professor Megan Davis)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have long called for a comprehensive process of truth telling about Australia’s history that not only encompasses the periods of colonial conflict and dispossession, but also acknowledges the strength and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures. A number of significant commissions have been established and reports released over the last thirty years that encompass truth telling or articulate the need for the nation to develop a shared understanding of our history and its contemporary impacts. These include the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, the Bringing Them Home report, the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation’s final report, and the Referendum Council’s final report. The recommendations of these reports share a common message that there is a need to understand the truths of the past to avoid repeating the wrongs of the past.

Historical acceptance means that Australians recognise, understand, and accept the wrongs of the past and the impact of these wrongs on First Peoples. It also means employing the truth to generate justice and healing and ensure that the wrongs of the past are never repeated. Truth telling was a major driver of a report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) and commissioned by The Healing Foundation that found that there is a direct link between the forced removal of tens of thousands of children from their families and the lived experience of Intergenerational Trauma.

Truth telling processes explore both our shared history and its impacts today to further healing and reconciliation. Processes may include official apologies, truth and reconciliation commissions, other inquiries or commissions, memorialising and public art, museums, cultural or educational healing centres and institutions, local councils, and academia, among other areas. In Australia there is growing momentum to explore truth telling, including at a local, state and national level.

Over the last few years, there has been an increase in memorials established in major cities and local areas, in the documenting of massacres that occurred around the country; local communities have come together to mark previously untold and unrecognised parts of our history, the renaming of places, while museums and cultural centres are thinking about how to better take account of our shared history. We have also seen consideration of a national truth telling commission that could seek to uncover an honest and full understanding of colonisation, dispossession, forced removal, and trauma that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been subjected to.

Excerpt above is taken from Reconciliation Australia’s [Truth Telling Symposium Report](#)