

**UNPACKING  
INDIGENOUS ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT**

**100,00 YEARS AGO – 1788 –  
CURRENT DAY**

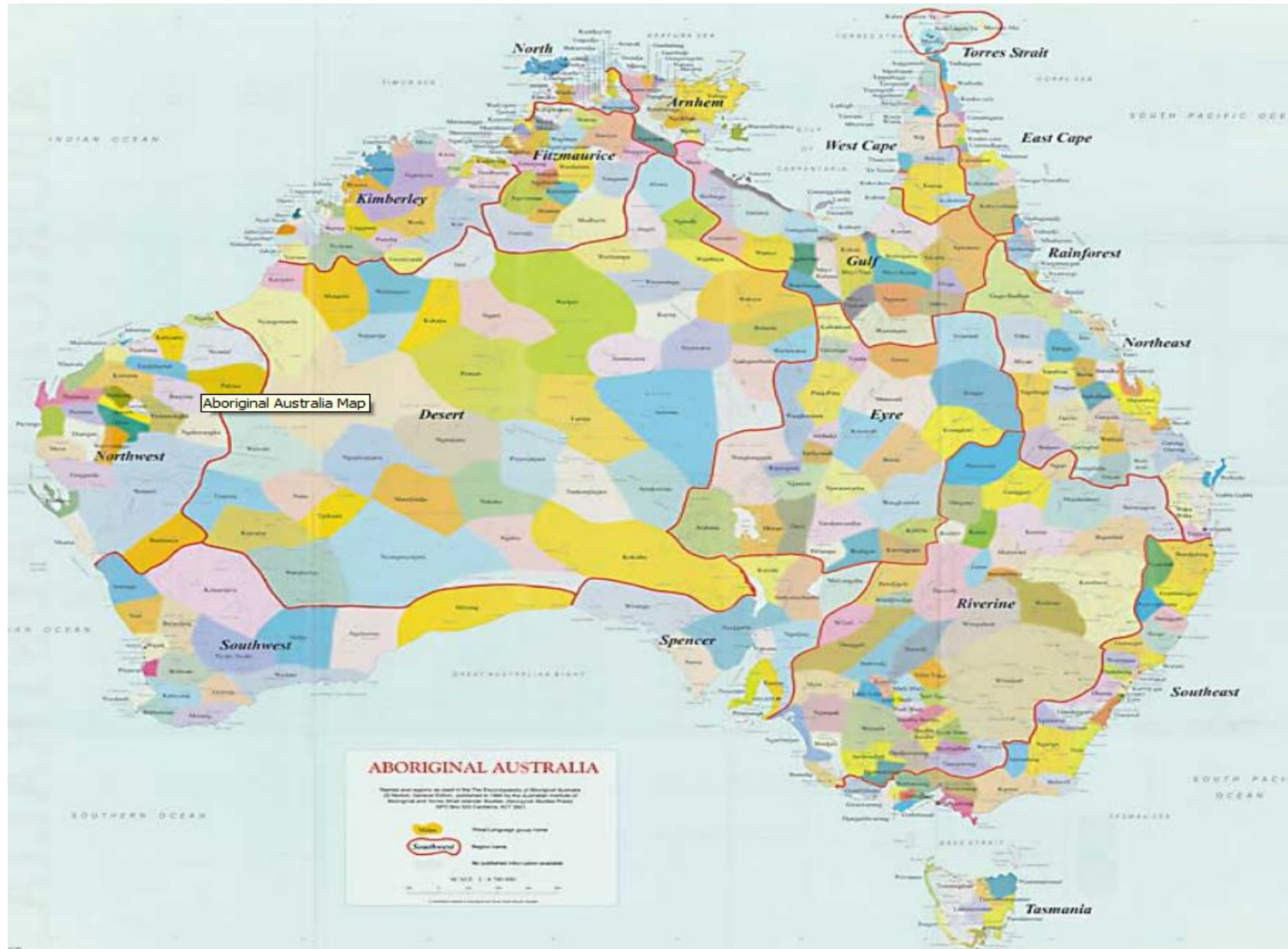
# **100,000+ YEARS AGO TO 1788**

- **Based on archaeological evidence Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been in Australia for between 50,000 and 120,000 years.**
- **Aboriginal people inhabited the whole of Australia and Torres Strait Islanders lived on the islands between Australia and Papua New Guinea, in what is now called the Torres Strait.**
- **There are over 500 different clan groups or 'nations' around the continent, many with distinctive cultures, beliefs and languages.**

# **100,000+ YEARS AGO TO 1788**

- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clans and nations lived within defined territory's and boundaries.**
- **Boundaries are validated by sacred Dreaming songlines and creation stories.**
- **Nations established relationships with other nations and clans based on social, ceremonial and trade purposes.**
- **Gatherings of many clans took place from time to time to conduct social, marriage and religious business.**

# 100,000+ YEARS AGO TO 1788



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- **The Torres Strait Islands are within 60 nautical miles (97 kilometres) of the Australian coast were annexed in 1872, the remainder in 1879. At annexation, the Islanders became British subjects and their islands became Crown lands.**
- **Traditionally subsistent life style, seafood and gardening**
- **Trading goods with neighboring Indigenous nations**
- **One of the biggest pearling industries in the world 1850s-1950s**
- **A mass exodus of Torres Strait Islanders to the mainland in the 1950-1960s in search of employment and access to better education main industries railway, sugar cane and other trade/laboring and community work.**

# **100,000+ YEARS AGO TO 1788**

- **The social and economic organisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations varied greatly throughout Australia.**
- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people developed a complex and thriving bartering and exchange system by using sacred songlines and pathways and to guide trade exchanges.**
- **There was a flourishing economy that existed between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations trading commodities**
- **For example, physical items such as spears, wooden shields, ochres, fish hooks, Spinifex gum resin, stone axes or boomerangs were traded**

# **100,000+ YEARS AGO TO 1788**

- **The land and sea are both fundamental to the way of life for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, both individually and collectively and to support the social and economic systems in place across the nations.**
- **Over the past 100,000 years Australian continent has sustained thousands of generations of First Peoples.**

# 100,000+ YEARS AGO TO 1788

- **Concepts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land and sea ownership were, and are, different from current day Non-Aboriginal/Western economic, legal and political systems.**

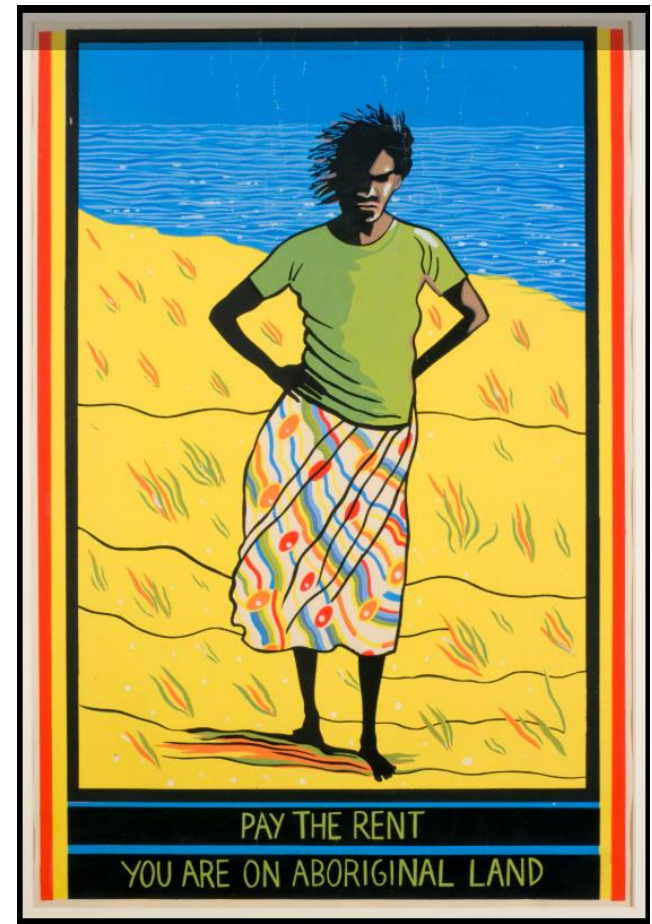
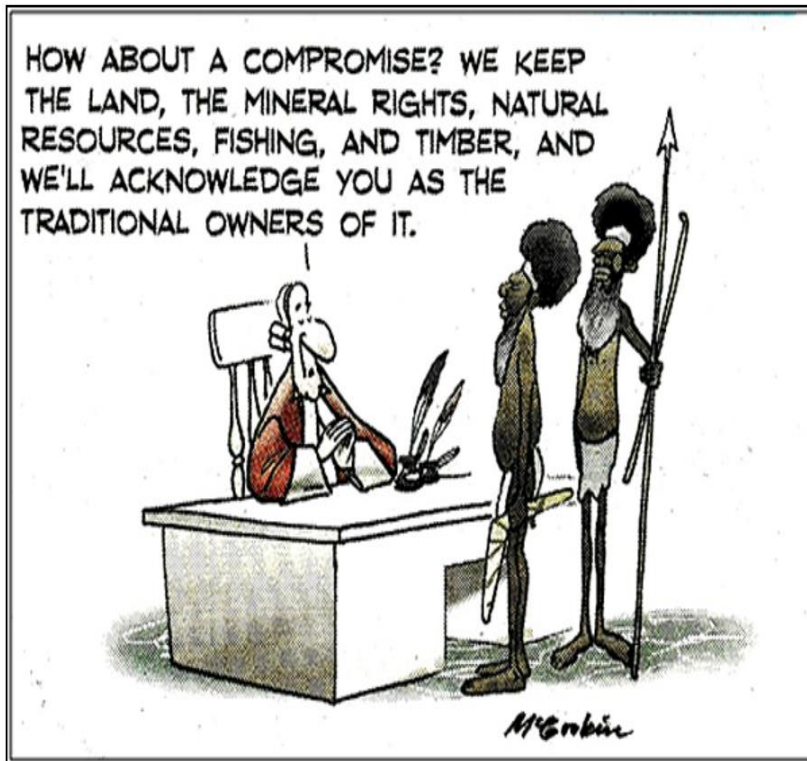
| <b>Aboriginal</b>   | <b>Non-Aboriginal/Western</b>   |
|---|---|
| Economics based on environmental sustainability                               | Economics based on production and consumption   |
| Spirituality based on the land and waters                                     | Spirituality (in most cases) based on sacred, written texts                                 |
| Law 'written' in the land, passed through ancestral story telling, unchanging | Law established by common law (past judicial judgements) or parliament, constantly changing |
| Politics based on consensus of Elders   | Politics based on representative democracy and power elites                                 |
| Child rearing involves extended family and whole community                    | Child rearing based on nuclear family   |
| Disadvantaged by process of colonisation                                      | Advantaged by colonisation  |
| Minority cultures   | Dominant culture  |



# ECONOMIC MARGINALISATION 1788 – 1970'S

- To understand the current economic status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, we must to acknowledge the lasting impact of early colonial activities:
  - Founded upon racist assumption of Australia as an empty land
  - Colonial societies intention either establish trade or settlement
  - Colonial powers focused on land to creation industries
  - Massacres and marginalisation facilitated this expropriation
  - Aboriginal people slowly began to absorbed into the labour force
  - Occupied unpaid roles (racial superiority)
  - Aboriginal servants – cheap source of labour (Stolen Generation)
- Racist view of Aboriginal people limited the capacity for economic participation up until and during the 1970s, 80s and 90s when debates around land rights and Native Title began to emerge (Byers, 2017).

# LAND RIGHTS – 1970'S 80 AND 90'S



- Marie McMahon (1981)

# **ECONOMIC MARGINALISATION 1788 – CURRENT DAY**

**Stages shaping the relationship and economic marginalisation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia:**

- **Invasion and early colonisation – 1788 to 1850s**
- **Protection and segregation – 1850s to the 1950's**
- **Assimilation – 1940's to the 1960's**
- **Integration, self determination & management – 1967 to mid 1990's**
- **Reconciliation – 1990's to 2000's**
- **ATSIC – Establishment in 1990 to abolishment in 2005**
- **Closing the Gap – 2008 to present day (Federalism – whole of government Indigenous Service Delivery)**
- **Intervention (Northern Territory) – 2008 to present day**
- **Constitutional Recognition & Treaty – 2015 to present day**
- **Rejection of the Uluru Statement – 2017**