

WHO ARE ENIAR?

The European Network for Indigenous Australian Rights (ENIAR) formed in May 1998 from the Australian and European based work of individuals and organisations, committed to human rights and social justice for Indigenous Australians.



ENIAR's aim is to promote awareness on indigenous issues and to provide information for Indigenous Australians about Europe and international organisations. We are not affiliated to any government or commercial bodies, are non profit-making and run entirely by volunteers.

- To find out more see our website, which has extensive clippings and other information, at <http://www.eniar.org>.
- To subscribe to our mailing list send a blank email message to eniar-subscribe@green.net.au

WHY SHOULD BRITAIN BE INVOLVED?

- Australia is one of our trading partners, and fellow member of the Commonwealth and ally;
- It is obscene that in the rich 'lucky country' of Australia, Aboriginal people are suffering and dying in third world conditions;
- It is wrong that the special status and rights of the original inhabitants are not fully recognised;
- Britain granted full independence to Australia in 1900/1901 without ensuring proper recognition of or safeguards for Aboriginal people; and
- We believe Britain has a moral and legal responsibility towards Indigenous Australians.

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

At the beginning of the 21st century and after 210 years of colonisation, the Aboriginal struggle against disadvantage and inequality continues today.

Indigenous Australians have:

- Infant mortality rate three times that of non-Indigenous children;
- Unemployment rates four times that of the general population;
- Health standards similar to the third world;
- Life expectancy 15 - 20 years lower than non indigenous Australians;
- Education standards similar to the third world;
- Less than a quarter completing their secondary education; and
- Over-representation in custody and arrest figures.

These Australian Bureau of Statistic figures suggest that successive Australian Governments have not provided the same levels of public service to Indigenous People as to other citizens.

Indigenous people want their status and rights defined and recognised in a lasting way that will not allow Australian State Governments or the Australian Federal Government to backtrack.

Two possible ways of doing this are:

- An amendment of the 1901 Australian Constitution;
- A Treaty, opposed by the present Government.

LAND RIGHTS

When the British occupied Australia they called the country 'terra nullius' - belonging to no-one - and for nearly 200 years the law recognised no indigenous rights to land.

In 1992, the Australian High Court agreed that the Mer Islanders in the Torres Straits had a right to traditional lands. Subsequent Federal legislation in 1992 created the Native Title Act.

In 1999 after the High Court Wik decision, which recognised further land rights of Aborigines, the Australian Government made amendments to the Native Title Act making the land claim process more complicated and racially discriminatory (United Nations CERD Report 2000).



ENIAR protest at Westminster

STOLEN GENERATIONS

Between 1910 and 1970 up to 100,000 Aboriginal children (between 10 and 30%) were taken forcibly or under duress from their families by police or welfare officers. They are known as the 'stolen generations'. There was rarely any judicial process - to be Aboriginal was enough.

Most were raised in institutions. Some were fostered or adopted by white parents. Many suffered physical and sexual abuse. Food and living conditions were poor. They received little education, and were expected to go into low grade domestic and farming work. The main motive was to 'assimilate' Aboriginal children by denying and destroying their Aboriginality. Children were told that they were orphans. The physical and emotional damage to those taken away was profound and lasting.

The Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission (HREOC) set up a National Inquiry in 1995, it resulted in the 'Bringing them Home' report that contained harrowing evidence. The report found that forcible removal was a gross violation of human rights which continued well after Australia had undertaken international human rights commitments.

Statements by Government Ministers denying the 'Stolen Generations' caused distress and anger. A recent report by the Public Interest Advocacy Centre 'Restoring identity - achieving justice for the stolen generations' calls on governments to meet their promises and provide an alternative to protracted, painful and expensive litigation by establishing a Reparations Tribunal.

STOLEN WAGES

From 1904 to 1987, the Queensland Government withheld or underpaid wages earned by Aboriginal workers estimated at over A\$100m. The Queensland State Government has offered a settlement but this is only a fraction of the stolen wages. ENIAR is supporting the "Stolen Wages" Campaign in support of Indigenous Queensland workers. Your assistance would be greatly appreciated. Find out what you can do here <http://www.eniar.org/action/stolen.html>

Other useful links: Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Commission <http://www.atsic.gov.au> | Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission <http://www.hreoc.gov.au> | Public Interest Advocacy Centre <http://www.piac.asn.au> | Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies <http://www.aiatsis.gov.au>