

# Electoral milestones for Indigenous Australians

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Date	Milestone
Time before memory	Aboriginal society was governed by customary lore handed down by the creative ancestral beings.
1770	Captain Cook claimed the eastern half of the Australian continent for Great Britain.
1788	The first fleet arrives in Botany Bay, beginning the British colonisation of Australia. The British government did not recognise or acknowledge traditional Aboriginal ownership of the land.
1829	British sovereignty extended to cover the whole of Australia – everyone born in Australia, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, became a British subject by birth.
1843	First parliamentary elections in Australia (for New South Wales Legislative Council) were held. The right to vote was limited to men with a freehold valued at £200 or a householder paying rent of £20 per year.
	The Australian colonies become self governing – all adult (21 years) male British subjects were entitled

1850 +	to vote in South Australia from 1856, in Victoria from 1857, New South Wales from 1858, and Tasmania from 1896 including Indigenous people. Queensland gained self-government in 1859 and Western Australia in 1890, but these colonies denied Indigenous people the vote.
1885	Queensland Elections Act excluded all Indigenous people from voting.
1893	Western Australian law denied the vote to Indigenous people.
1895	All adult females in South Australia, including Indigenous females, won the right to vote.
1901	Commonwealth Constitution came into effect, giving the newly-created Commonwealth Parliament the authority to pass federal voting laws. Section 41 prohibited the Commonwealth Parliament from denying federal voting rights to any individual who, at the time of the Commonwealth Parliament's first law on federal voting (passed the following year), was entitled to vote in a state election.
1902	The Commonwealth Parliament passed its first law on federal voting (the Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902), granting men and women in all states the right to vote in federal elections. The Act did, however, specifically deny federal voting rights to every 'aboriginal native' of Australia, Asia, Africa, or the Islands of the Pacific (except New Zealand) who, at the time of the Act, did not already have the right to vote in state elections.
1915	Queensland introduced compulsory voting. This was later introduced in all other jurisdictions.
1920	Commonwealth Nationality Act denied the vote to people of South Sea Island origin despite being British Subjects.
	Regulations in the Northern Territory excluded

1922	Indigenous people from voting. Officials had the power to decide who was Indigenous.
1925	Natives of British India gained the vote in Australian federal elections.
1940s +	Professor AP Elkin, the Aborigines Friends Association, and others agitated for better conditions for Indigenous people and their right to vote.
1948	Nationality and Citizenship Act established that all Australian born people are citizens of Australia rather than British subjects.
1949	The right to vote in federal elections was extended to Indigenous people who had served in the armed forces, or were enrolled to vote in state elections. Indigenous people in Queensland, Western Australia, and the Northern Territory still could not vote in their own state/territory elections.
1957	Under the Northern Territory Welfare Ordinance, almost all Indigenous people in the Northern Territory were declared to be "wards of the state" and denied the vote.
1962	Commonwealth Electoral Act provided that Indigenous Australians should have the right to enrol and vote at federal elections, including Northern Territory elections, but enrolment was not compulsory. It was an offence for anyone to use undue influence or bribery to induce Indigenous people to enrol or to refrain from enrolling to vote. Western Australia extended the State vote to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Voter education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people began in the Northern Territory. 1,338 Indigenous Australians enrolled to vote in Northern Territory elections.
1965	Queensland allowed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to vote in State elections. Queensland was the last State to grant this right.

1967	<p>A Referendum approved Commonwealth Constitutional change. Section 127 of the Constitution was struck out in its entirety. This amendment allowed Indigenous Australians to be counted in the Commonwealth Census. Section 51 of the Constitution was amended to allow the Commonwealth to make special laws for Indigenous people. Both Houses of the Parliament passed the proposed Act unanimously; consequently a 'No' case was not submitted. More than 90% of Australians registered a YES vote with all six states voting in favour.</p>
1971	<p>Neville Bonner AO (1922–1999) was the first Indigenous Australian to be appointed to Federal Parliament in Australia. Neville Bonner was born on Ukerbagh Island in the Tweed River in New South Wales. He stood unsuccessfully as a candidate for the half Senate election in 1970. In 1971 Neville Bonner was appointed by the Queensland Parliament to replace the Queensland Liberal Senator, Dame Annabel Rankin, who had retired from Federal Parliament. At the 1972 election he was returned as a Liberal Senator for Queensland. Senator Bonner continued to represent Queensland as a Liberal Senator until 1983.</p>
1973	<p>First national elections for Indigenous people to elect 41 members of the National Aboriginal Consultative committee. More than 27 000 Indigenous people voted. Minimum voting age lowered from 21 to 18.</p>
1974	<p>Hyacinth Tungutalum (Country Liberal Party), from Bathurst Island was elected to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, representing the electorate of Arafura. Eric Deeral (National Party), became the first Indigenous Australian to be elected to the Queensland Parliament, representing the electorate of Cook.</p>
1977	<p>Neville Perkins (Australian Labor Party), was elected to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly. He became the first Indigenous Australian to hold a</p>

	shadow portfolio, and was appointed deputy leader of the Northern Territory Australian Labor Party.
1979	Australian Electoral Commission began the Aboriginal Electoral Education Program. Cyril Kennedy (Australian Labor Party), was the first Indigenous Australian to be elected to the Victorian Legislative Council, representing the electorate of Waverley.
1980	Ernie Bridge (Australian Labor Party), became the first Indigenous member of the Parliament of Western Australian when he won the seat of Kimberley. He later became the first Indigenous Australian to hold a Ministerial office. Mobile polling first used in remote Northern Territory and Western Australia for state/territory election.
1983	Wesley Lanhupuy (Australian Labor Party), from central coastal Arnhem land was elected to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly representing the electorate of Arnhem.
1984	Mobile polling first used in remote Northern Territory and Western Australia for Commonwealth elections. Enrolment and voting in Commonwealth elections made compulsory for Indigenous Australians.
1987	Stanley Tipiloura (Australian Labor Party), from Bathurst Island, was elected to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, representing the electorate of Arafura.
1990	ATSIC (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission) was created – elected regional councils and a board of commissioners made decisions on policy and funding. ATSIC elections were conducted by the Australian Electoral Commission.
1992	Maurice Rioli (Australian Labor Party), from Melville Island was elected to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly representing the electorate of

	Arafura.
1993	The AEC's Aboriginal Electoral Education Program became Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Electoral Information Service.
1995	John Ah Kit (Australian Labor Party), from Darwin was elected to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly representing the electorate of Arnhem.
1996	Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Electoral Information Service was abolished due to withdrawal of Commonwealth funds. Paul Harriss (Independent) elected to the Legislative Council in Tasmania for the electorate for Huon.
1998	Aden Ridgeway was the second Indigenous Australian elected to the Australian Federal Parliament. He was born in 1962 at Macksville, New South Wales. Aden Ridgeway took his seat in the Senate as an Australian Democrat for New South Wales on 1 July 1999 following his election at the October 3, 1998 federal election. His term expired on 30 June 2005.
2001	Carol Martin (Australian Labor Party), became the first Indigenous female to be elected to a State Parliament when she won the seat of Kimberley in the Parliament of Western Australia. Matthew Bonson (Darwin), Elliot McAdam (Tennant Creek) and Marion Scrymgour (Melville Island), were elected to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly representing the electorates of Millner, Barkly and Arafura respectively. They join John Ah Kit as members of the first Labor Government in the Northern Territory.
2002	Kathryn Hay (Australian Labor Party), elected to the Tasmanian House of Assembly representing the electorate of Bass. Marion Scrymgour (Australian Labor Party) in the Northern Territory Assembly became the first Indigenous female minister in any government in the history of Australia.

2003	Linda Burney (Australian Labor Party), is the first Indigenous Australian elected to the New South Wales Parliament. She represents the electorate of Canterbury.
2005	Following the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly election, Barbara McCarthy (Territory Labor) was elected to represent the electorate of Arnhem, and Alison Anderson (Territory Labor) was elected to represent the electorate of Macdonnell. They join Matthew Bonson, Elliot McAdam and Marion Scrymgour in the Northern Territory Government. One fifth of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly electorates are represented by Indigenous Australians. Legislation was enacted to dissolve the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and Regional Councils at the end of the 2005 financial year.
2006	Ben Wyatt (Australian Labor Party) elected in a by-election to the Western Australian parliament for the electorate of Victoria Park. He was re-elected in 2008.
2008	Marion Scrymgour (Australian Labor Party), in the Northern Territory Assembly became the first Indigenous female deputy chief minister. Adam Giles (Country Liberal Party) was elected to represent the electorate of Braitling in the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly.
2010	Ken Wyatt (Liberal Party of Australia) was elected as the first Indigenous member of the House of Representatives, representing the electorate of Hasluck in Western Australia. The Australian Electoral Commission established the Indigenous Electoral Participation Program (IEPP) in 2010 to close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage in electoral participation. The objectives of the program are to increase enrolment, voter turnout, formality and knowledge of electoral processes for Indigenous Australians.

2011	Chris Bourke (ACT Labor) was the first Indigenous Australian elected to the ACT Legislative Assembly, representing the seat of Ginninderra in Australian Capital Territory.
2012	Bess Price (Country Liberal Party) was elected to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, representing the seat of Stuart. Francis Kurrupuwu (Country Liberal Party) was also elected to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, representing the seat of Arafura. Larisa Lee (Country Liberal Party) was elected to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, representing the seat of Arnhem. Ken Vowles (Territory Labor) was elected to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, representing the seat of Johnston.
2013	Adam Giles (Country Liberal Party) was appointed the Northern Territory's Chief Minister in March 2013 becoming Australia's first Indigenous head of government. Nova Peris (Australian Labor Party) became the first Indigenous female elected to the Australian Parliament and was sworn in as a Senator representing the Northern Territory on 12 November 2013. Josephine (Josie) Farrer (Australian Labor Party) was elected to the Western Australian Legislative Assembly, representing the seat of Kimberley in Western Australia. Jacqui Lambie (Palmer United Party) was elected Senator for Tasmania.
2015	Ken Wyatt (Liberal Party Australia), was appointed the Assistant Health Minister in September 2015 to become the first Indigenous Member of Parliament to reach the frontbench. Joanna Lindgren (Liberal National Party), was appointed a Senator by the Parliament of Queensland to fill the casual vacancy caused by Queensland senator Brett Mason's resignation. Leeanne Enoch (Australian Labor Party), was the first Indigenous female elected to the Queensland Legislative Assembly, representing the seat of Algester in Queensland. Leeanne has since been appointed the Minister for Housing and Public Works and Minister for Science and Innovation in



	<p>Queensland. William (Billy) Gordon (Australian Labor Party), was also elected to the Queensland Legislative Assembly, representing the seat of Cook in Queensland. Linda Burney (Australian Labor Party), was the NSW Labor Deputy Leader of the Opposition from 2011-2016.</p>
<p>2016</p>	<p>Linda Burney (Australian Labor Party), was elected as the first Indigenous female member of the House of Representatives representing the seat of Barton, NSW. Malarndirri McCarthy (Australian Labor Party), was elected to the Senate for the Northern Territory, and as a Territory Senator, will serve for the same term as the House of Representatives. Patrick Dodson (Australian Labor Party), was selected under Section 15 of the Australian Constitution to represent WA in the Senate to fill the casual vacancy caused by Senator Joe Bullock's resignation. Lawrence Costa (Territory Labor), was elected to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, representing the seat of Arafura. Yingiya Mark Guyula (Independent), was elected to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, representing the seat of Nhulunbuy. Chansey Paeche (Territory Labor), was elected to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, representing the seat of Namatjira. Selena Uibo (Territory Labor), was elected to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, representing the seat of Arnhem. Ngaree Ah Kit (Territory Labor), was elected to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, representing the seat of Karama. John Ah Kit and his daughter Ngaree Ah Kit are the first Indigenous father and daughter to serve in any state parliament, having both been elected to the Northern Territory Parliament.</p>
<p>2017</p>	<p>Lidia Alma Thorpe (Victorian Greens) was the first Indigenous female elected to the Parliament of Victoria in November 2017, representing the seat of the Northcote.</p>

Note: Individuals listed include those who have self-identified as Indigenous Australians, are recognised as Indigenous Australians by the relevant State Parliamentary Library, or are acknowledged as Indigenous Australians by their local community.