

empty land



1788 Convict transportation to Australia begins

1833 Port Arthur convict prison opened in Tasmania, one of the first sensory deprivation prisons in the world.

1861 Law passed banning the ‘naturalisation’ of Chinese people who wish to become citizens of NSW.

1868 Convict transportation to Australia ends.

1897 Aborigines Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act allows the controlled use of Aboriginal people for pastoral labor.

1901 Immigration Restriction Act and the Pacific Islander Labourers Act are some of the first laws to pass the new Australian Parliament implementing the White Australia Policy.

1911 A Commonwealth act places Aborigines and ‘half castes’ 18 years and under automatically under the protection of the Aboriginal Protector. They are forbidden to marry non-aborigines.

1914 Internment of ‘enemy aliens’ in camps around Australia begins. Initially only those born in countries at war with Australia are classed as enemy aliens, but later this is expanded to include people of enemy nations who were naturalised British subjects, Australian-born descendants of migrants born in enemy nations and others who are thought to pose a threat to Australia’s security.

1917 Referendum to introduce military conscription fails.

1918 Palm Island Aboriginal settlement established on the advice of Chief Protector J.W. Bleakley as a reserve that would be ideal for the confinement of ‘the individuals we want to punish’.

1929 A number of Commonwealth Ministers publicly propose their departments should construct a complex formal caste system based on categories: ‘full blood’, ‘mulatto’, ‘quadroon’, and ‘half caste’.

1933 A proposal for Aborigines to be represented in the Commonwealth parliament is tabled in the form of a petition from South Australian churches and public organizations. A

1938 Cabinet submission from the Minister for the Interior, J. McEwan, recommends that no action be taken.

1936 NSW Aborigines Protection Act amended to give the Aboriginal Protection Board the power for the first time to confine people against their will. After previously defining only those who are of 'predominantly Aboriginal blood' as Aboriginal, the board now states that anyone who was deemed to have 'any Aboriginal blood' could be placed under its control.

1937 A.O. Neville, Western Australian Protector of Aborigines, declares: 'Are we to have a population of 1,000,000 blacks in the Commonwealth or are we going to merge them into our white community and eventually forget that there were any Aborigines in Australia?'

1939 National security internment begins again. Most of those interned are of German, Italian and Japanese origin including many born in Australia. Others classed as enemy aliens include people from Palestine, Iran, the Straits Settlements, the Netherlands East Indies and New Caledonia.

1951 The United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees is approved at a special United Nations conference on July 28 1951.

1969 Court rules that abortion is considered legal if necessary to preserve the woman from a serious danger to her life or health – beyond the normal dangers of pregnancy and childbirth – that would result if the pregnancy continued, and is not disproportionate to the danger being averted.

1980 The world's third IVF baby, Candice Reed born on June 23 in Melbourne.

1987 Jika Jika, a climate control pre-formed concrete high security unit in Pentridge Prison, is closed after the prisoners set it on fire, four of whom died.

1990 Gary David indefinitely detained under the preventive detention provisions of the Community Protection Act 1990 (Vic).

1992 The Migration Act requires that all unlawful non-citizens should be detained and should be held in detention until granted a visa or removed from the country.

1993 Gary David dies of peritonitis caused by self-inflicted wounds after 33 years of internment.

1994 David Kang fires a starter pistol at Prince Charles protesting the indefinite detention of Cambodian boat people. Kang described immigration detention as 'concentration camps'.

1995 Rights of the Terminally Ill Act 1995 legalises Euthanasia in the Northern Territory, subsequently vetoed by the Federal Government.

Between 1995 and 2000, women prisoners provide \$5 million in labour for various projects in western Queensland communities.

1996 High Court finds the preventive detention of Greg Kable under the Community Protection Act 1994 (NSW) to be unconstitutional.

1997 The Bringing them Home report finds that a 'stolen generation' exists amongst Australian indigenous people who were subject to forced removal from their families by authorities.

1999 Woomera Immigration Detention Centre in the South Australia desert opens. By the time of its closure in 2003 over 3000 people are imprisoned; the size of each room 8 ft by 10 ft.

2001 Military Special Forces board and detain refugees on Norwegian vessel Tampa rescued at sea from their sinking vessel. The refugees are subsequently taken to Nauru and Manus Island, PNG and detained.

2002 Protesters and detainees break down fences at Woomera Immigration Detention Centre and 11 detainees escape.

2002 Australia votes against the strengthening of the United Nations Convention Against Torture.

2002 Anti-Terror laws inscribe terrorism into law and allow the banning of terrorist organizations

2003 Intelligence agencies given powers to detain people for 7 days for the purposes of collecting information.

2003 Number of un-sentenced female prisoners in Australia increases from 15% (1993) to 25%.

2005 Preventive detention powers given to police to detain people for up to two weeks to prevent a terrorist threat. Control orders allow indefinite house arrest.

2005 public debate on torture takes place with academics, military spokespeople and police officials discussing the merit of torture.

2006 Local shires are encouraged to submit expressions of interest in establishing a female prison work camp for northern Queensland.

2006 Bill to remove the power of the health minister to veto the use of abortion drugs passes Parliament.

2006 Parliament debates embryonic stem cell research.