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Introduction

This series traces Australia's colonial history, from the very earliest of times when **Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders** lived undisturbed on the Australian continent, to the arrival of the Europeans in 1788 to set up the first **colony**, to the turn of the century, when Australia became a unified nation and the colonies became states. Each book explores the history of a different colony, examining its **indigenous** people, European settlement, development and expansion, and the process of **federation** in the colony.

A Pivotal Moment in History

On 26 January 1788, a small fleet of British ships landed at Sydney Cove, establishing a permanent European settlement based on convict labour. Forces of change were unleashed by that relatively modest event that would reshape the continent.

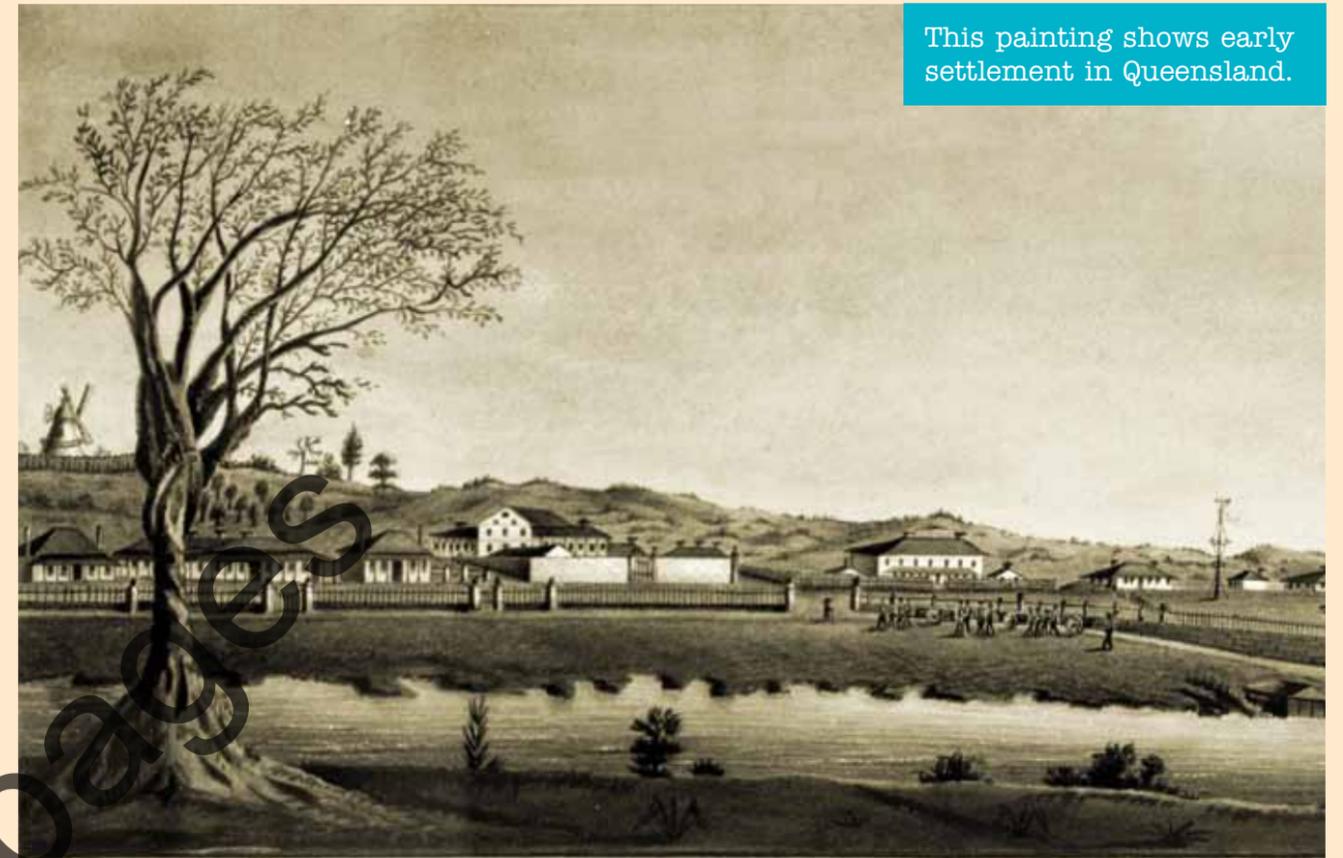
From that moment, the devastation of the indigenous people began, laying waste to tens of thousands of years of culture. At the same time, the Europeans started carving out a life in this strange place. The trees kept their leaves, but shed their bark. The seasons were reversed. Animals hopped rather than ran. The soil was thin and easily exhausted. Still, these Europeans and the ones who came after them forced themselves onto this country permanently.

Over the years and decades that followed, the Europeans did what they could to tame the country and turn it into something they could call home. At the same time, the people living there came to think of themselves less as people from somewhere else who happened to be in Australia, and more as Australians.

About this book

This book covers the colony of Queensland from before the arrival of the First Fleet to Federation in 1901. You can read about:

- who the indigenous people were and how they lived
- when Europeans first arrived and what they did
- how Europeans spread across the colony
- the economic development of the colony
- how governance evolved into a representative democracy
- how Queensland joined the other colonies to create an independent nation, the Commonwealth of Australia.



This painting shows early settlement in Queensland.



The First Fleet arrived in Sydney Cove in 1788.

Australia Before Europeans

The first human inhabitants of Australia were **Aboriginal peoples**, who came from South-East Asia tens of thousands of years ago. They, along with those who settled in the Torres Strait Islands, became the land's **indigenous** people. Their hunter-gatherer societies, some of which exist today, are the oldest continuous societies on the planet.

The First Australians

No one knows exactly when people first arrived on the continent of Australia. Current estimates usually put it at about 60 000 years ago, although they range from 40 000 to 125 000 years. Even if it were only 40 000 years, that is still 180 times longer than Europeans have been on this continent.

Australia's indigenous people were generally nomadic hunter-gatherers. However, there was a wide variety of lifestyles. The **Torres Strait Islanders**, for example, were surrounded by water and lived a lifestyle based on the sea. Those people who lived in the heart of the desert lived an entirely different lifestyle. By the time Europeans arrived, the Aboriginal peoples, who numbered between 300 000 and one million, had spread across the continent and adapted to every kind of environment.

Sophisticated Societies

Aboriginal societies and cultures were rich and varied, emphasising kinship, oral history, spirituality and connection to ancestral lands. In the late 1700s, there were over 200 Aboriginal languages and hundreds more dialects, with intricate grammar and large vocabularies. Many people spoke several languages and **dialects**. It was not uncommon for a person's mother, father and partner all to speak different languages.

Aboriginal social groups were tied strongly to particular territories and rooted deeply in the Dreamtime. Their societies lived sustainably on the land and with each other for hundreds of generations.

The Dreamtime

The Dreamtime is a broad concept covering Aboriginal peoples' mythology and spiritual beliefs. It includes the time when mythic beings formed the land, plants and animals, and left behind rules of behaviour for people to follow.

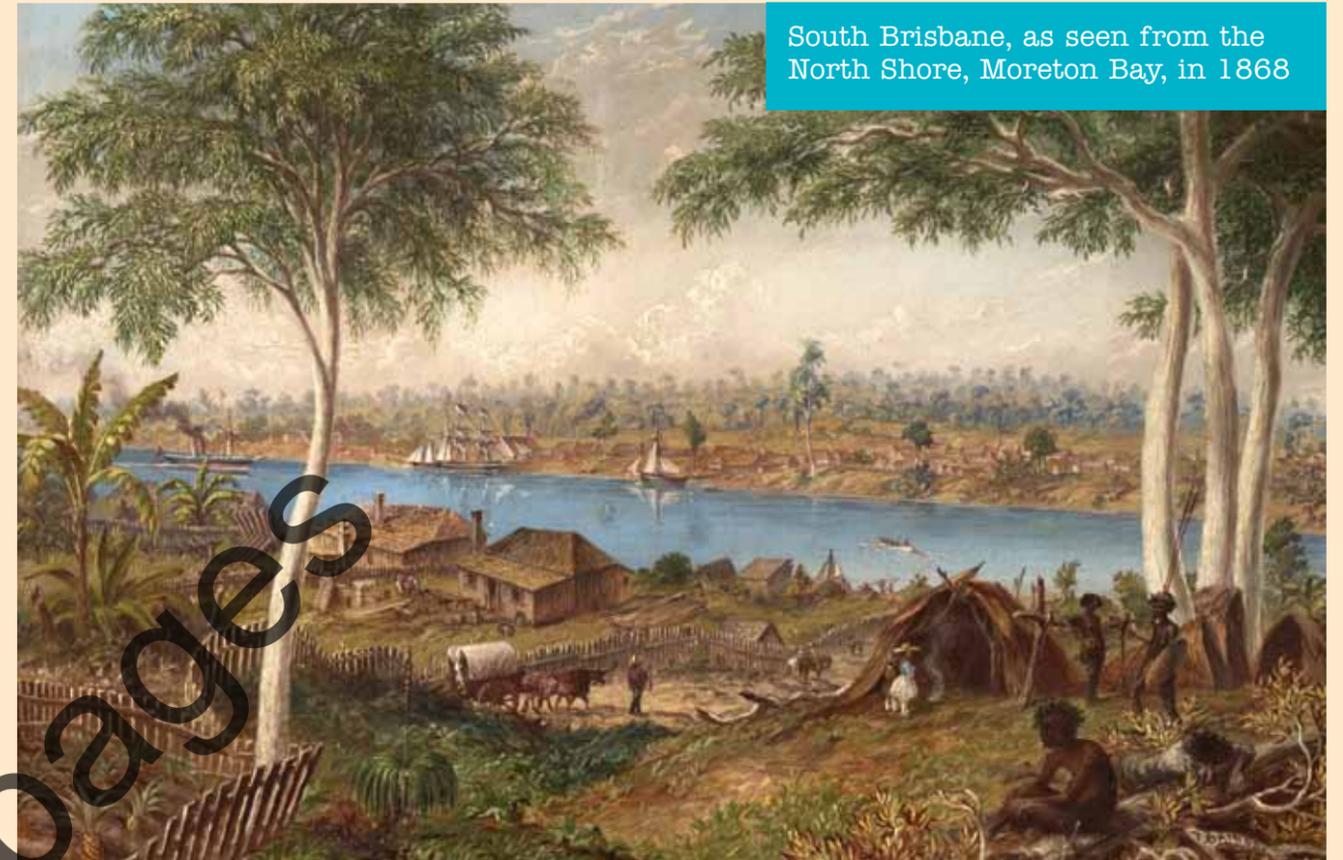
Archaeology at Lake Mungo

Lake Mungo, 760 kilometres west of Sydney, is the site of several important archaeological finds. The Mungo Man skeleton, which is about 46 000 to 50 000 years old, is the oldest known remains of a human in Australia. Mungo Lady is 20 000 to 26 000 years old.

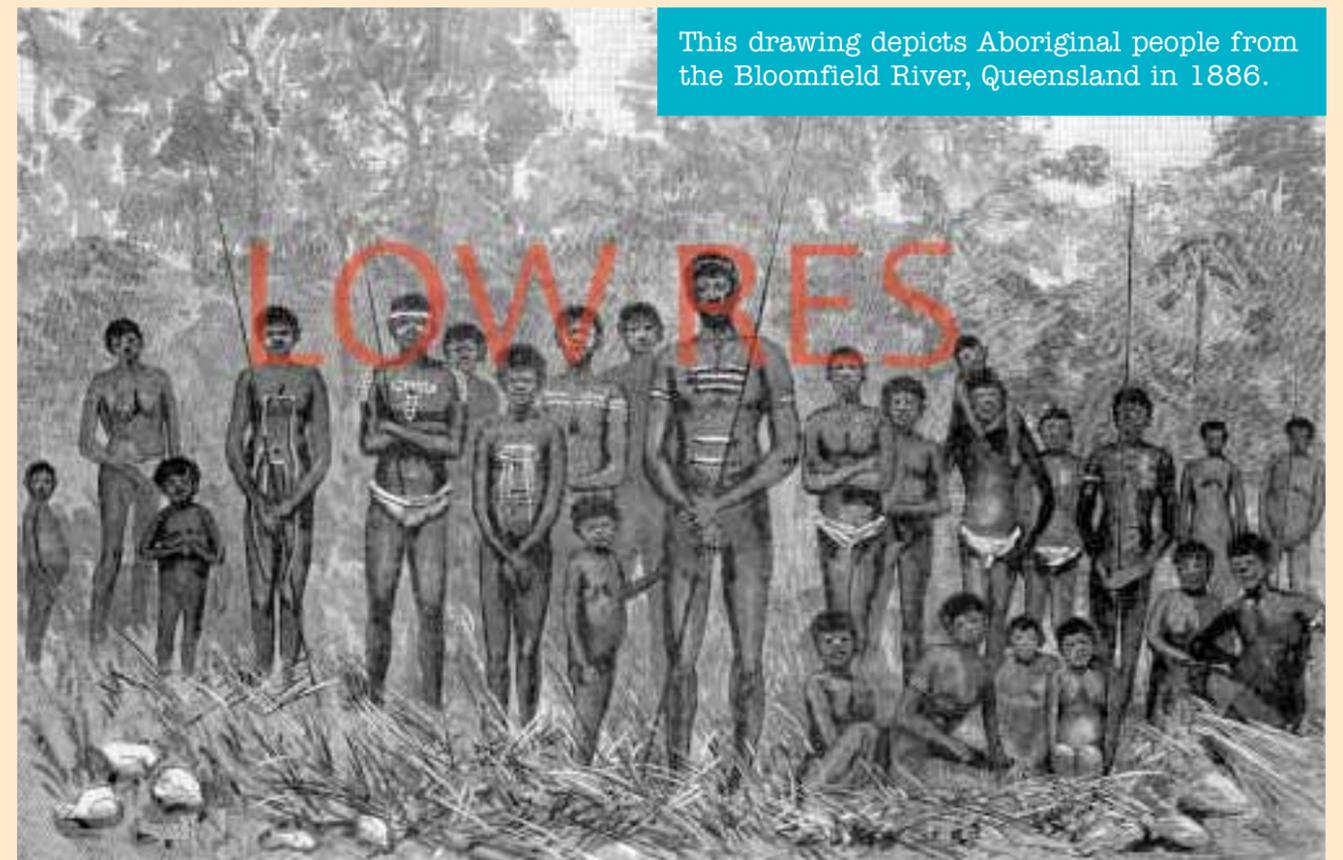
Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders

The term 'Aboriginal peoples' refers mainly to the indigenous people of mainland Australia and Tasmania. The term 'Torres Strait Islanders' refers to the indigenous people of the Torres Strait islands in Far **North Queensland**.

South Brisbane, as seen from the North Shore, Moreton Bay, in 1868



This drawing depicts Aboriginal people from the Bloomfield River, Queensland in 1886.



Indigenous People in Queensland

For thousands of years, **indigenous** people lived diverse lives across the area of Australia that is now Queensland. Some groups lived by the coast, like the **Torres Strait Islanders**, while other groups lived around rivers, like the Kuuku Ya'u. Other groups lived in rainforests, in mountains or in the desert.

Language groups

When Europeans arrived, the population of what is now Queensland was approximately 250 000 people. These people spoke more than 100 different languages and **dialects**. Aboriginal people were identified by their language groups. In addition to having a distinct language, these groups would also have their own beliefs, ceremonies, customs and laws. The language groups would also have their own dialects. For example, the Kuuk Thaayorre language is part of the Paman language family spoken by the Thaayorre people of Pormpuraaw, western Cape York Peninsula. It had three distinct dialects: Kuuk Thaayunth, Kuuk Thayem and Kuuk Thanon.

Torres Strait Islanders

The Torres Strait Islands are a group of more than 100 islands in the waters between Cape York and Papua New Guinea. Its indigenous people are linked both by genetics and culture to the Melanesian people of Papua, rather than to the **Aboriginal people** of the Australian mainland. So they made a distinct indigenous group and had languages of their own.

Lives of Hunting and Gathering

Like other Aboriginal peoples around Australia, those in Queensland survived on the resources available where they lived. Some groups were nomadic, while others lived more settled

lives, staying in the one place. River, coastal or island groups ate a lot of fish or shellfish. Inland groups ate more kangaroo and emu meat. Depending on what was in their area and what the season was, indigenous people might also eat birds, eggs, bulbs, shoots and fruits.

Fire-stick Farming

Some people say that Aboriginal peoples did not farm, but that is not strictly accurate. While they may not have grown rows of sown crops the way Europeans did, they used fire in a method called "fire-stick farming".

Fire-stick farming involved deliberately burning areas of land in a controlled way. This had many effects. It kept paths clear, snakes at bay and stimulated fresh growth, which in turn attracted kangaroos and other meat sources. Fire was also used to preserve open woodlands, to recycle nutrients into the ground and to encourage the growth of particular kinds of edible plants. For Aboriginal peoples, fire was a tool they could use to shape the land to their needs—clearly a kind of farming.



Torres Strait Islanders in traditional dress

First Europeans

In 1788, the First Fleet arrived in New South Wales and immediately began changing Australia forever. It took several decades for Europeans to begin settling Queensland, but the spread was inevitable.

First Contact by Europeans

The first recorded encounter between European explorers and **Aboriginal people** was in 1606. The Dutchman, Willem Jansz, in his ship the *Duyfken*, explored the western coast of Cape York and landed near what is today Weipa. There, he had an unfriendly meeting with 200 **indigenous** people. Fighting broke out and lives were lost on both sides.

In 1770, the explorer Captain James Cook raised the flag for the British monarch, King George III, and thereby claimed the eastern part of Australia for England. Cook called this new land New South Wales and it included the area that is now Queensland. Cook spent several months charting the eastern coast, including seven weeks at a place that is now named Cooktown, while repairs were made to his ship.

The Worst Offenders

Queensland was established as a **penal colony** for **recidivists** and repeat offenders. Settlement in Queensland began when John Thomas Bigge was sent to New South Wales in 1819 to lead a royal commission into whether or not **transportation** effectively deterred **felons**. If it didn't, he was to recommend harsher penal settlements.

Bigge's reports led to important changes, including setting up the New South Wales Legislative Council, establishing Van Diemen's Land as a separate colony, making legal reforms and allowing more convicts to be transported from Britain. Bigge's reports also called for more penal settlements, including

one at Moreton Bay for the worst offenders. It would be remote, harsh, tighter with rations and therefore cheaper to run, and hard to escape from.

In October 1823, John Oxley was sent to survey possible sites for penal settlements. At Moreton Bay, shipwrecked timber gatherers showed him the mouth of what he called the Brisbane River. His favourable report to the governor led to Lieutenant Henry Miller, accompanied by Oxley, being sent to Moreton Bay. They arrived on 13 September 1824, where they settled 30 convicts plus guards at Humpy Bong, now called Redcliffe. This was Queensland's first settlement.

The Redcliffe site was abandoned the following year because of illness, poor crops and friction with the local Aboriginal people. The settlement relocated to what is now the Brisbane central business district.

Devastation by Disease

European settlers brought diseases that Aboriginal people had no immunity against, such as colds, influenza and measles. Smallpox, or possibly chickenpox, wiped out half of Sydney's indigenous people in 1789. These diseases spread overland and certainly affected the Queensland population.



A map showing William Jansz' exploration in Queensland.



John Oxley, who surveyed the Moreton Bay site for a penal settlement.