

TIATI
Truth
WANGKANTHI
Telling
KUMANGKA
Together

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A warning that some of the content within this exhibition may be considered confrontational.

The language used reflects the values and norms of times gone by and is reflective of quotes and documents written many years ago.

Spellings of Aboriginal words vary based on original extracts.

This exhibition contains references to, or images of, Aboriginal people who have died.

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This exhibition has been written in collaboration between the Kaurna Nation and the City of Holdfast Bay.

Tiati Wangkanthi Kumangka can be viewed in person at the Bay Discovery Centre Museum, Glenelg.

Watch our social media channels to stay updated on opening times:

holdfast.sa.gov.au/BDC

 /Bay Discovery Centre

"At the white man's school, what are the children taught?

Are they told of the battles our people fought?

Are they told of how our people died?

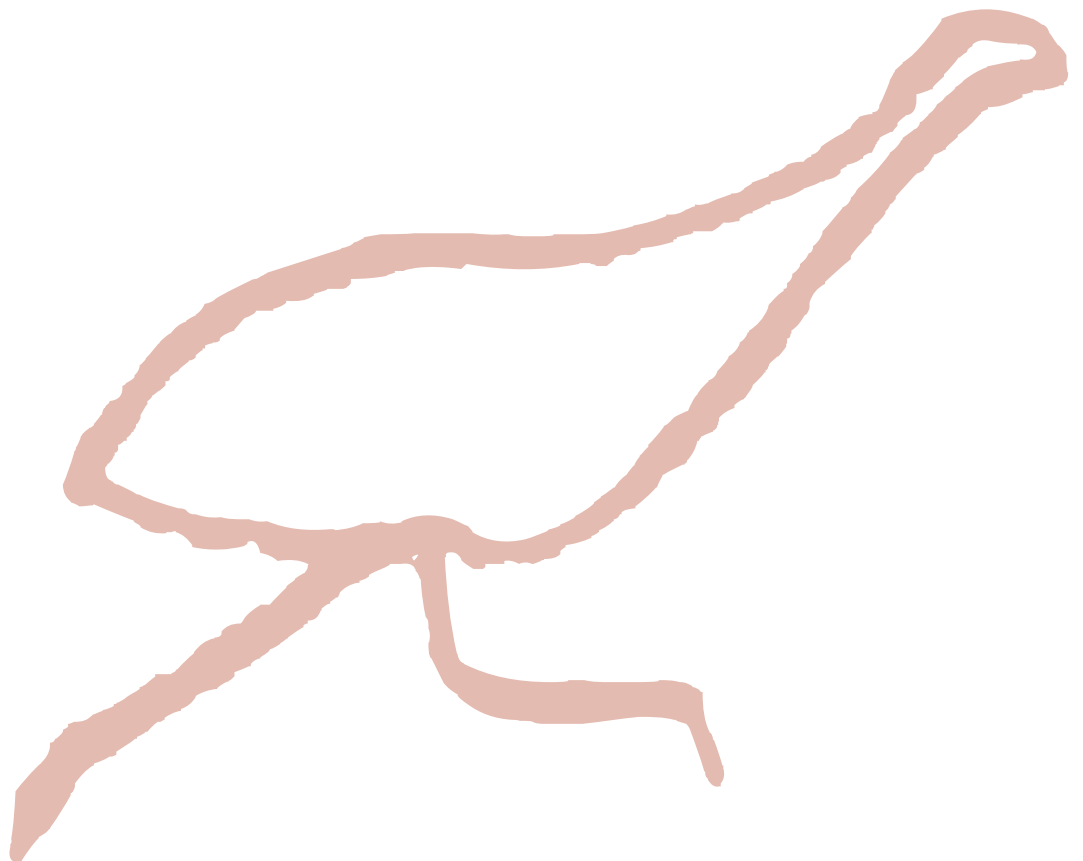
Are they told why our people cried?

Australia's true history is never read, But the blackman keeps it in his head".

Anonymous

Bunji

1971



TIATI (TRUTH)

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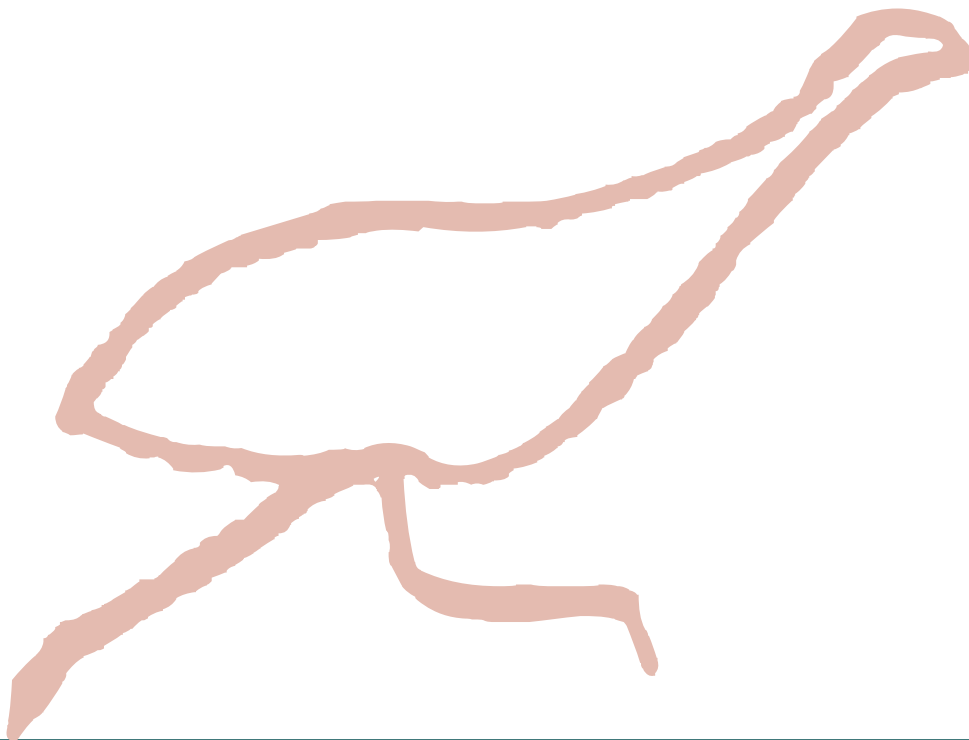
The quality or state of being true.

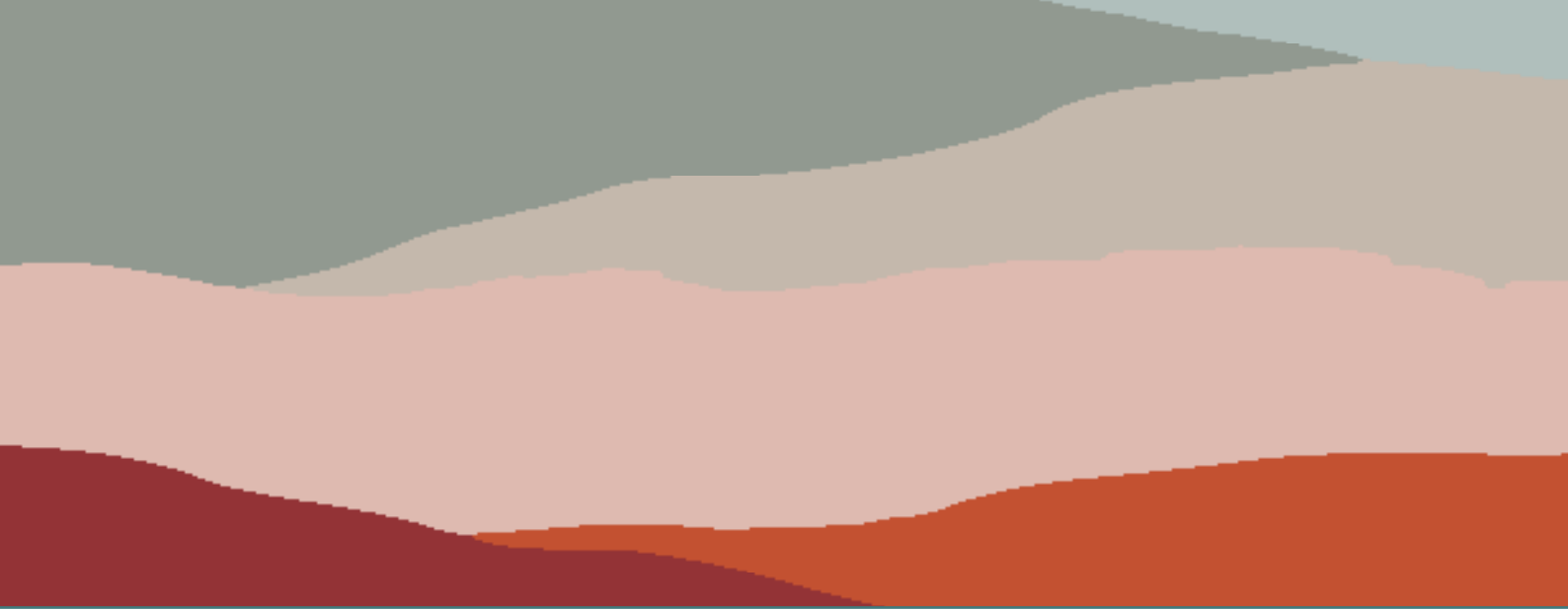
That which is true or in accordance with fact or reality.

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"Once you start that journey with accepting each other's truths, accepting the truths of the past, then you start that journey of talking together, walking together".

Kaurna Elder Jeffrey Newchurch, 2019





History shows that we must understand the truths of the past to avoid repeating the wrongs of the past.

In 1836 in South Australia, land was appropriated by the British without treaty or compensation. This was despite clear instruction from the British Monarch that the Aboriginal population were to be recognised under the rule of law.

Aboriginal Australians have long called for an inclusive process of truth-telling about this history.

Tiati Wangkanthi Kumangka explores these truths.

Truths that must be shared to be understood.



FIRST AUSTRALIANS

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The history of occupation in Australia is one of the greatest stories of early human achievement. The earliest travellers drift navigated across large stretches of water as they left Asia for the Australian continent.

At least 65,000 years ago, Aboriginal ancestors first occupied parts of northern Australia before spreading out across the continent.

The Aboriginal population of South Australia was around 15,000 when European explorers first arrived. Two-thirds of these people lived in the fertile south-eastern part of the state. Forty-eight native territories existed, each with a distinct language and lands. Each population was linked to its neighbours by intermarriage, ceremony and trade.

KAURNA COUNTRY

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The Kurna people of the Adelaide Plains are people rich in culture and spiritual links to nature and the land. Corroborees, ceremonies, music and story-telling form a way of life.

Traditionally, the Kurna lived across the Adelaide Plains and hills in family groups called 'yerta' that shared common spiritual and defence concerns, economic patterns and language traits.

MUNAINTYA (DREAMING)

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The Australian continent is covered in an intricate web of 'dreaming'.

'Dreaming' is an English word used to describe narrative journeys telling of Munaintyerlo (ancestral) Birko Mangkolankola (beings) that travelled within the formative world in both meyu (human) and meyutti (non-human) forms. They informed and shaped the landscape, creating people and providing laws of social behaviour and spiritual connection.

Munaintya is an indefinite concept, linking the past to the future and defining the present.



The Emu in the Sky, Wardlipari (Milky Way).
A complex and multi-layered story that tells of creation, lore and human relationships.

TERRA NULLIUS

(Latin, meaning land belonging to no one)

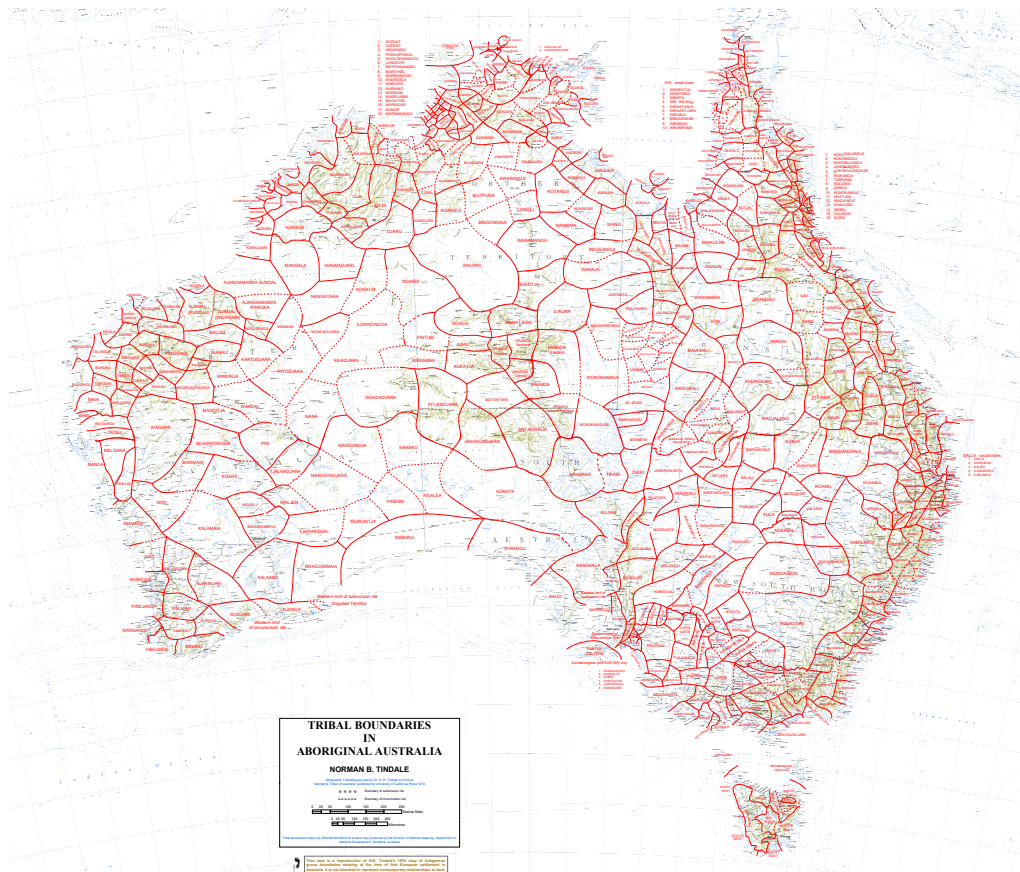
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The premise of British colonisation was terra nullius, a term that in international law describes territory belonging to no one.

TIATI:

Terra nullius was a claim that denied the existence of Aboriginal Australians as human beings. At the time of colonisation, Australia was not terra nullius.

Australia has been inhabited by Aboriginal Australians for 65,000 years.



Tribal Boundaries in Aboriginal Australia, 1974
Norman Tindale Collection
South Australian Museum

Colony

A country or area under the control of another country and occupied by settlers from that country.

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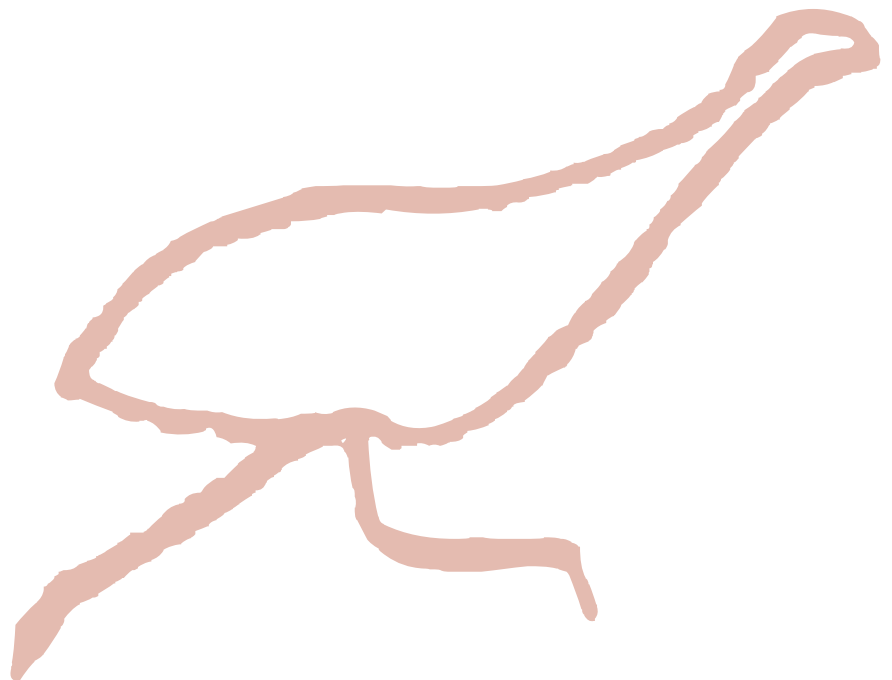
VOYAGE

In 1770, during his first Pacific voyage, Lieutenant James Cook claimed possession of the East Coast of Australia for the British Crown.

Upon his return to Britain, Cook's reports inspired authorities to establish a penal colony in the newly claimed territory. The new colony was intended to alleviate overcrowding in British prisons, expand the British Empire, and establish a British base in the global south.

On 26 January 1788, eleven ships – the First Fleet – arrived on the shore of Sydney Cove, Port Jackson, Australia having sailed half way around the world from England.

1500 men, women and children - convicts, officers, crew, marines and their families – landed ready to clear the land, grow crops, farm, build homes, towns and cities and establish law and order as they believed it should be.



TIATI:

Cook took possession of Australia knowing it was already inhabited. In 1770, Sydney Cove was the home of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. Its name was Warrane (War-ran, Warrang, Wee-rong).

TIATI:

At the time of invasion, Aboriginal people across the continent had homes, farmed the land, cared for crops, and embraced trade with neighbouring territories. They were advancing with technologies, sharing language, oral traditions and ceremony.

TIATI:

Colonial powers never entered into negotiation with Aboriginal Australians. Invasion occurred without treaty or acknowledgment of their proprietary rights (those rights which go with ownership of property)



Aboriginal camp near Glenelg
Circa 1880

Colonisation

The act or process of settling among and establishing control over the indigenous people of an area.

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COLONIES AND COLONISING

There were two major convict colonies established in Australia: New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land (later Tasmania). Eventually, Swan River in Western Australia became a third. At the time, New South Wales stretched along the eastern coast of Australia encompassing territories that became the modern-day states of Queensland and Victoria. Smaller convict establishments were developed at Moreton Bay near Brisbane and Port Phillip, south of Melbourne.

The Northern and Australian Capital territories gained independent existences

TIATI:

More than 250 Aboriginal languages including 800 dialectal varieties were spoken on the continent at this time. Each group had boundaries extending over the land. To travel across boundaries, into another's 'country' called for diplomatic protocols. To cross without permission was an offence punishable by death.

In Adelaide, the territory of the Kaurna people stretched from Cape Jervis at the bottom of the Fleurieu Peninsula to Port Wakefield on the eastern shore of Gulf St Vincent, and as far north as Crystal Brook in the Mid North.



WAKEFIELD

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In London in 1830, talk of a new colony in Australia was in the air.

People were wanting to escape an overcrowded Britain, left impoverished by the Industrial Revolution.

'A Letter from Sydney', published a year earlier by politician Edward Gibbon Wakefield, talked of a radical method of establishing a new colony. Previous methods based on convict labour or free land grants had failed, costing the British Government dearly.

The Wakefield Scheme promised to be self-supporting, with land sold at a minimum price and in an ordered fashion. The proceeds were to be used to pay for workers and their families to emigrate to the new colony.

Based on Wakefield's scheme (ironically developed whilst he was imprisoned in Newgate Prison), South Australia would not receive convicts directly.



The Colonial Office

A department of the United Kingdom government that oversaw the increasing number of colonies of the British Empire. When the colonisation of South Australia was under consideration, men with progressive humanitarian beliefs had full control of the Office.

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CONVICT FREE

South Australia is the only British colony with a foundation that rests on an Act of Parliament.

The *South Australia Act*, passed in August 1834, enabled the Crown to establish the new colony known as the Province of South Australia. Under the Act, a number of public appointments were taken out of the government's hands, as was the right to sell the colony's land.

Under the terms of the Act, a governor would make laws, but a body of commissioners would have responsibility for the survey and sale of lands. Money raised from the sale would create a fund to support the migration of respectable people to the colony – men and women under the age of thirty and in equal proportions. No convicts were to be permitted.

When the colony reached 50,000 people, self-government was to be established.

The Act further specified that the province was to be self-sufficient – £20,000 surety had to be created and £35,000 worth of land had to be sold before any settlement was permitted.

In October 1835 the South Australian Company was formed by wealthy English businessmen to ensure the essential financial obligations of the *South Australia Act* 1834 were met.

TIATI:

No mention of South Australia's Aboriginal inhabitants was made under the Act. The land for which the new province was to be established was declared 'waste' and 'uninhabited'.

TIATI:

Lore, a complex system of Aboriginal law, already existed in Australia long before the establishment of British law. Lore refers to the customs and stories which helped to govern all aspects of Aboriginal life and were passed down from one generation to another.

The terms 'lore' and 'law' are sometimes used interchangeably, but 'law' refers to written European law.

Lore has been shared by Elders (custodians of knowledge) through generations.

TIATI:

Following the enactment of the *South Australia Act* 1834, great debate ensued about the rights of Aboriginal people and their lack of representation within the new legislation. The Colonial Office, having now dealt with the violent fallout of colonisation across Australia, was pushing for the consideration of Aboriginal rights.

The Colonization Commissioners, seeking to establish the province, disputed that such rights existed, believing Aboriginal people did not 'occupy' the land in a way that could be recognised by British institutions.

PROVIDED ALWAYS

By the power given to him by the *South Australia Act* 1834, King William IV issued the Letters Patent establishing the Province of South Australia on 19 February 1836.

The document set out the geographical boundaries of the colony and allowed for the appointment of the Colonization Commissioners to oversee the founding of the colony.

Following heated debate after the enactment of the *South Australia Act* 1834, the Colonial Office insisted that the new colony could only proceed subject to land being purchased from the Aboriginal population. They demanded that transactions were to be supervised by a government-appointed Protector of Aborigines. To meet this expectation, the Letters Patent included recognition of Aboriginal people and their proprietary rights to land;

“Provided Always that nothing in those our Letters Patent contained shall affect or be construed to affect the rights of any Aboriginal Natives of the said Province to the actual occupation or enjoyment in their own Persons or in the Persons of their Descendants of any Lands therein now actually occupied or enjoyed by such Natives”.

To ensure compliance with the directive within the Letters Patent, Governor Hindmarsh, South Australia’s first governor, was made aware of the provision – a commitment he honoured when reading the Proclamation at Glenelg on 28 December 1836.

The Resident Commissioner, James Hurtle Fisher, received instruction by an Order in Council that “no land which the natives may possess in occupation or enjoyment be offered for sale until previously ceded by the Natives to yourself”.

TIATI:

Note the wording within the provision;
'and their Descendants'.

TIATI:

When the Letters Patent were issued in 1836 it was the first time Aboriginal rights were legislatively acknowledged and granted in Australia's colonial history.

TIATI:

In their First Annual Report to the Colonial Office the Colonising Commissioners called for the Protector of Aborigines to provide evidence that "cessions of territory" by Aboriginal people were "perfectly voluntary". They demanded the Executive Government of the Colony protect Aboriginal people "in the undisturbed enjoyment of the lands over which they may possess proprietary rights".

There was clear commitment in enforcing the Letters Patent from the Crown, the Colonial Office and the Colonizing Commission.

TIATI:

"The evident good faith of the intentions of His Majesty in the promise of the Letters Patent was for the legal inauguration of Magna Carta to be coupled with the foundation of South Australia for all the inhabitants on the sound basis of treaties with all our ancestors.

We, Kurna, call this Warrirrkuttinya, which means respecting the original owners for always, and as their Descendants, by honouring the spirit of the Letters Patent to the core of the law of the land already here, which the King recognised to uphold for all time".

Senior Kurna Elder Lynette Crocker



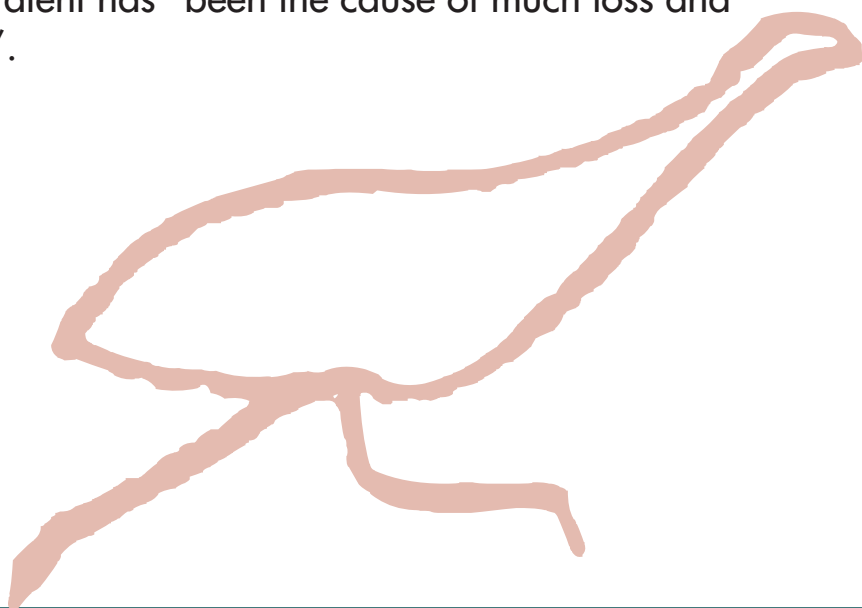
TIATI:

The issue of the Letters Patent has never been resolved, nor a binding decision issued by the State or the highest of our courts. This is despite past South Australian Governments having acknowledged both the wording within the Letters Patent and the long-lasting consequence of inaction for Aboriginal Australians.

Sir Donald Dunstan, former Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, justified the creation of the Aboriginal Lands Trust Act upon the basis of the unfulfilled Letters Patent;

“I intend to trace the history of Aboriginal land rights in South Australia, because on examination it is clear that Aborigines were wrongfully deprived of their just dues. We must, as far as we can, right the wrongs done by our forefathers”.

In 2015, Jay Weatherill, former Premier of South Australia and then Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, recognised that the continuing failure of South Australia to meet the promise in the Letters Patent has “been the cause of much loss and suffering for Aboriginal people”.





1. **Identify the main components of the system.** What are the inputs, outputs, and internal processes?

Dispossession

The action of depriving someone of land, property, or other possessions.

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FIRST ENCOUNTERS

In Britain in the 1830s, several different schools of thought contributed to the ways in which Australian Aboriginal people were perceived. Some took the traditional Christian view that all people were descended from Adam and Eve and therefore all 'brothers before God'. Others believed that the Aboriginal race was located near the bottom of a hierarchical 'great chain of being', while the European race was at the top.

Most settlers would have arrived in South Australia with a preconceived notion of Aboriginal people. Initial contact in those first days and months is recorded as non-violent, driven mainly by mutual curiosity.

TIATI:

The non-violent meetings from the early days of settlement did not last. Despite orders from the King and Governor, Aboriginal South Australians were to suffer the same systematic and violent dispossession from their lands and culture as had those on the rest of the continent.

TIATI:

Thousands of Aboriginal people across Australia fought colonisers for their homelands, families and way of life. This violent period in Australian history is known as the frontier wars.

More than 150 massacres of Aboriginal people occurred across Australia during this time.

At least 40,000 Aboriginal lives were lost.

The cost in settler lives was around 2,500.

WASTE LAND

In 1840, Governor George Gawler upheld Aboriginal people's proprietary rights, but refused to agree to land cession treaties, claiming that Aboriginal people would be disadvantaged by such negotiations. Instead, he argued that reserves of land should be held in trust until Aboriginal people showed a willingness to use the land in a European manner.

In 1842, the Waste Lands Act was introduced, which provided that land could be exempt from sale or reserved "for the use or benefit of the Aboriginal inhabitants of the country".

Throughout the nineteenth-century reserves were set aside, and sections granted to Aboriginal people on the understanding that they would farm the land, while legal title remained with the crown.

TIATI:

From the last decades of the nineteenth century to the 1970s, a system of reserves and missions isolated, confined and controlled Aboriginal people.

Reserve laws gave governments regulatory powers over all aspects of Aboriginal people's lives. They lost basic human rights including their freedom of movement and labour, custody of their children and control over personal property.

Kaurna people were forbidden to speak and transmit their languages within the missions. The Kaurna language was believed to have last been spoken in a day-to-day context in the 1860s and was declared extinct as early as 1850. We know today that this is not true.

TIATI:

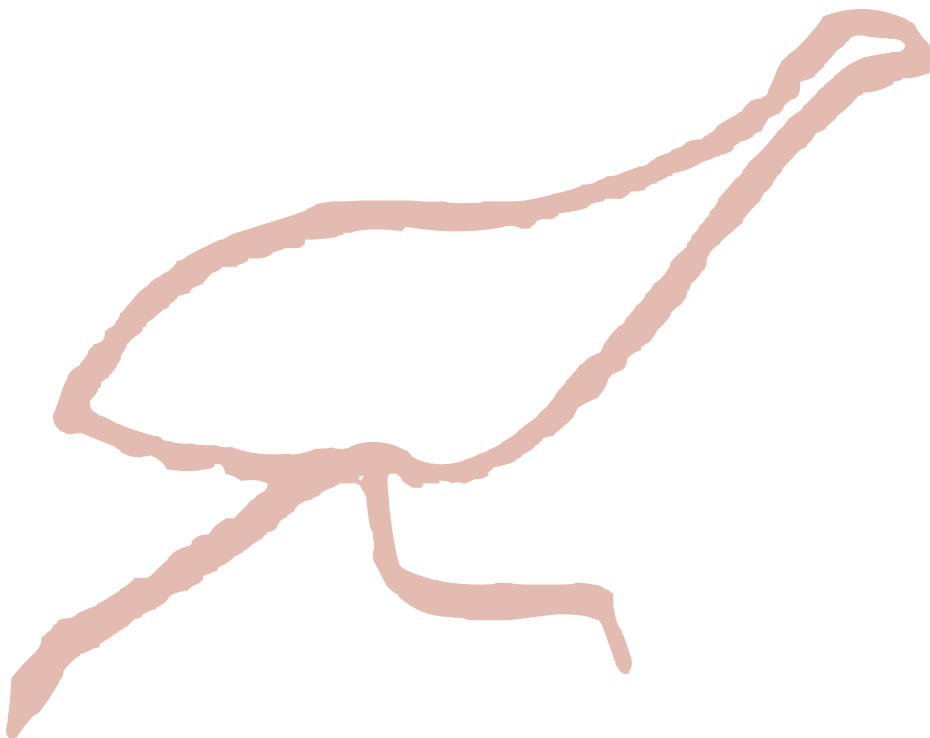
Within a generation of European settlement, the Kaurna were systematically dispossessed of their lands and their culture was decimated. Those who survived became fringe dwellers or were relocated to the missions at Burgiyana (Point Pearce, York Peninsula), Poonindie (Eyre Peninsula) and Raukkan (Point McLeay, Lake Alexandrina).



TIATI:

The system of dispossession, displacement, exploitation and violence that started at first contact continues to have an impact on Aboriginal Australians every day.

It is amplified by the denial of legislation that was enacted to protect their legal rights.



"The dispossession of Aboriginal land in early South Australia can be expressed simply:

at the beginning of the year 1836 Aboriginal people owned all of the land;
by the end of that same year they owned none of it".

Shaun Berg, 2010

"We're here today and we'll be here tomorrow".

Kurna Elder Jeffrey Newchurch, 2019

