DAISY CHAIN
Daisy Chain

(A Stage Play)

Written by Esme Bamblett
This play was written during my PhD for Gurwidj Neighbourhood House to celebrate the ‘History of Victorian Aboriginal Women’s Suffrage’. It incorporates historical events that are relevant to my Gurranyin Borinya Kit on identity.

Workshopped by Helen Kennedy, Georgia Bamblett, Sarah Bamblett, Tanya Weston, Jan Muir, Marg Clarke, Cindy Bamblett, Sharon Bamblett, Jasmine Wright, Ellie Jean Singh, Julie Williams, Emma Bamblett, Linda Bamblett, Lisa Zabadal, Alisha Warden, Deidre Atkinson, Glen Peters, Khile Bamblett, Cienan Muir and Leigh Saunders.


Esme Bamblett © 2010
Daisy Chain

**Word** | **Meaning**
---|---
Booris | Babies
Gungis | Policemen
Homes | Children’s Homes
Doulagahs | Spirits
Moieties | Two divisions
Totems | Particular animals or birds having importance for Aboriginal nations
The Board | The Board for the Protection of Aborigines

**SYNOPSIS OF SCENES**

The play has eleven Acts covering ten time periods that begin and end with 2008. Each time period contains a significant event for Aboriginal people. While some parts of actual speeches made by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island leaders are used in the play, the names of the people who made the speeches have been changed because the play is in essence fictitious.

The Narrator reads the Preamble and at the beginning of each Act.

**PREAMBLE:** Setting the scene.

**ACT I:** 2008 – The National Apology to the Stolen Generations by the Prime Minister the Honourable Kevin Rudd MP on the 13th February, 2008.

Scene 1: A local Aboriginal Elder, Judy, stands out the front of the room to give a traditional ‘Welcome to Country’ to the crowd. Many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people sit watching a televised broadcast of the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd to the Nation.

**ACT II:** 1918 – Children being taken from a mission.

Scene 1: The scene opens with 12 year old girl Jane and her mother Jean. The backdrop shows young Aboriginal girls running with their mothers.

Scene 2: Two non-Aboriginal men (the Manager of the Mission and a policeman) are standing beside two cars talking. In the car three Aboriginal girls are crying. May, an Aboriginal woman is standing beside the car crying too.

Scene 3: Three Aboriginal women, Jean, Jenny and Leanne are sitting outside a hut on the mission talking.

Scene 4: Jean, Jenny and a young Koorie boy Joey sit at a kitchen table.

Scene 5: Jean and Jenny are sitting at the kitchen table when Joey comes running in the door with a letter in his hand.
**ACT III: 1938 – The Day of Mourning in Sydney**

**Scene 1:** The scene takes place in a car. In the front two women, Doreen (non-Aboriginal) who is driving and Mavis (Aboriginal), are seated. In the back are two Aboriginal men, Joey and Tim.

**Scene 2:** In this scene they are in a cafe having a pot of tea. Joey, Tim and Mavis are all nervous about the two crows they have hit on the trip. They have been reared up on stories about the doulagahs (spirits) and they don’t think that the crows flying for the car are accidental.

**Scene 3:** They are back in the car resuming the trip to Sydney when the car is hit by another crow. It freaks the three Aboriginal people out.

**Scene 4:** At the front of the Australian Hall where the Aboriginal Congress is about to take place, Joey, Mavis, Doreen and Tim stand together talking.

**Scene 5:** In the Australian hall many Aboriginal people sit listening to James and Wade who are standing out the front addressing them.

**ACT IV: 1939 – Cummeragunja Walkoff**

**Scene 1:** A crowd is gathered at the edge of Cummeragunja Mission ready to walk off the mission because of the Manager. Mavis, Jean and Jenny are with them. The Manager is trying to talk them out of leaving because he fears the repercussions.

**ACT V: 1963 – Lobbying for the Referendum**

**Scene 1:** Three non-Aboriginal women, Jeanie, Sandra and Doreen discuss the campaign to lobby for a Referendum on Aboriginal Rights.

**ACT VI: 1967 – The 1967 Referendum**

**Scene 1:** Bob (Aboriginal) and Patricia (Aboriginal) sit in the lounge room waiting for the results of the Referendum. Jan (Aboriginal) rushes into the room screaming really excited. She dances around them.

**Scene 2:** A local pub. Music is playing in the jukebox and the bar is full. People are celebrating the results of the 1967 Referendum.

**Scene 3:** A lounge room the next morning. Bob and Max are sitting on a couch. Bob is holding his head moaning because he has a hangover.

Scene 1: A Courthouse with seven judges, the plaintiff (for the Meriam people) and the defendant (for the State of Queensland).

Scene 2: The Courthouse one month later with the seven Judges handing down their determination to the Plaintiff and the Defendant.

ACT VIII: 1987 – Kath Walker handed back her MBE in protest of the Bicentennial Celebrations prior to the celebrations.

Scene 1: A Press Room. Two Aboriginal women, Katelyn and Julie are standing together in a room with two reporters waiting for the announcement.

ACT IX: 1988 – Bi-Centennial Celebration Protest.

Scene 1: Three Aboriginal girls, Mavis, Tanya and Julie (aged in their early 20’s) and 1 male, Fred (aged 25) are in deep conversation after listening to the speeches.

ACT X: 1992 – The MABO decision.

Scene 1: A Courthouse with 7 Judges, the plaintiff and the defendant.

Scene 2: The Courthouse with the same people four weeks later.

ACT XI: 2008 – The National Apology by the Prime Minister, the Honourable Kevin Rudd to the Stolen Generations and the response by Dr. Brendon Nelson.

Scene 1: Back at the Aboriginal organisation where the play started. A DVD of Kevin Rudd provides the backdrop showing Aboriginal people crying with a haunting song playing in the background. KATIE and Dan reflect on their past hurts.
**CHARACTERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narrator</td>
<td>Aboriginal male or female</td>
<td>Any</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judy</td>
<td>Aboriginal woman</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>Aboriginal woman</td>
<td>47</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joey</td>
<td>Act 1: Old Aboriginal man</td>
<td>70’s</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Act 11: Aboriginal boy</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Act 111: Aboriginal man</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean</td>
<td>Aboriginal woman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>Young Aboriginal girl</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Aboriginal woman</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Non-Aboriginal man</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policeman</td>
<td>Non Aboriginal man</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leanne</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jenny</td>
<td>Aboriginal woman</td>
<td>late 30’s</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doreen</td>
<td>Non-Aboriginal woman</td>
<td>early 40’s</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mavis</td>
<td>Aboriginal woman (activist)</td>
<td>late 30’s</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tim</td>
<td>Aboriginal man</td>
<td>early 40’s</td>
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<tr>
<td>Julie</td>
<td>Aboriginal woman</td>
<td>early 20’s</td>
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<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>Aboriginal man (activist)</td>
<td>late 40’s</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wade</td>
<td>Aboriginal man (activist)</td>
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<td>Jeannie</td>
<td>Non-Aboriginal feminist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>Non-Aboriginal feminist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan</td>
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<td>Patricia</td>
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<td>MC</td>
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<td>Tanya</td>
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<td>Bob</td>
<td>Young Aboriginal man</td>
<td>30’s</td>
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<tr>
<td>Max</td>
<td>Young Aboriginal man</td>
<td>30’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janet</td>
<td>Aboriginal woman</td>
<td>early 30’s</td>
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<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>Aboriginal man</td>
<td>early 60’s</td>
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PREAMBLE

NARRATOR

This story is about a daisy chain. When we were young on the missions we didn’t have any money and therefore couldn’t buy jewellery so we would sit and make daisy chains and pretend they were necklaces.

To make a daisy chain, you had to have a decent size stem so you could put a hole in it. Then you would loop the daisy through the hole. As long as you had enough daisies, you could loop them around until they made a necklace.

With the daisy chain on we would look at ourselves in the lids of old tins we found because we didn’t have mirrors and we would think we were ‘it and a bit’. This story is about a daisy chain made with significant Aboriginal cultural events.

When I say significant events, I mean they are significant for Aboriginal people. They may have passed the rest of Australia by without so much as a murmur, but for Aboriginal people they put a dent in the racist attitudes, led to freedom from rigid government control, and contributed to the struggle for equality. This play contains parts of actual speeches that were made at each of these significant events by great Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders. The characters, while they are fictitious, are based on real characters and real events. Their names have been changed.
ACT 1

NARRATOR

The first Act is set at an Aboriginal organisation that is packed out with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people gathered around a big screen television to hear the Prime Minister, the Honourable Kevin Rudd at 9.00a.m on Wednesday 13 February 2008 issue a formal National Apology to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians who were removed from their families and communities as children.

Scene one: Aboriginal organisation – 2008

A local Aboriginal Elder, JUDY, stands out the front of a hall to give a traditional ‘Welcome to Country’ to the crowd.

JUDY

Today I want to welcome you all to the land of the Wurundjeri people. We are here today to hear an apology from the Government. To all our community members who have experienced the pain of forced removal from their families, know that we share your pain. There is a long way to go, but this is one of those momentous steps toward final peace for our people. We can only hope the Government takes the next step in adequately resourcing those persons still looking for their family.

An audiotape1 of KEVIN Rudd is heard.

KEVIN

“Mr Speaker I move: That today we honour the indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history.

We reflect on their past mistreatment.

We reflect in particular on the mistreatment of those who were stolen generations – this blemished chapter in our nation’s history.

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1 Reconciliation Victoria, 2008, Apology to the Stolen Generations, 2008 DVD.
The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page, a new page in Australia’s history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future”.

KATIE

(Weeping)

I’ve waited so long to hear that. I think back to my great grandmother, May Dempsey. They took her and her sisters from the mission.

JOEY

I remember. I was there when it happened. They tried to get me too but I hid under a bed.

An audio of Brendan Nelson is then heard.

BRENDAN

... In some cases Government policies evolved from the belief that the Aboriginal race would not survive and should be assimilated. In others the conviction was that half-caste children in particular should for their own protection be removed to Government and church run institutions where conditions reflected the standards of the day. Others were placed with white families whose kindness motivated them to the belief that rescued children deserved a better life.

Our responsibility, every one of us, is to understand what happened here, why it happened, the impact it had not only on those who were removed, but also those who did the removing and supported it.

Our generation does not own these actions, nor should it feel guilt for what was done in many, but not all cases, with the best of intentions. But in saying we are sorry – and deeply so – we remind ourselves that each generation lives in ignorance of the long term consequences of its decisions and actions. Even when motivated by inherent humanity and decency to reach out to the dispossessed in extreme adversity, our actions can have unintended
outcomes. As such, many decent Australians are hurt by accusations of theft in relation to their good intentions.” 2

The whole room stands up and turns their back on the television as the opposition leader speaks. The President of the organisation walks over and turns the sound down. There is obvious disappointment on the people’s faces. Some people cry.

MAREE
How could he say that? It was a terrible time for the old people. It affected so many of our families. My nan moved everywhere so we wouldn’t be taken.

KATIE cries loudly, this time for a different reason

KATIE
I can’t believe it. My family didn’t deserve to be treated like that. They were stolen. Their parents didn’t want them to go. The police just came and took them.

JOEY
It makes you wonder how much will change when the Leader of the Opposition can stand up and say that. If I didn’t hide under the bed I would’ve been taken too.

KATIE
It proves that there’s a long way to go yet. It was awful for Nan’s mother. Nan told us how she cried and cried. She told me what happened…

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Daisy Chain

ACT 11

NARRATOR
The year is 1918 at an Aboriginal mission. Aboriginal people are under the Protection Act and the Aborigines Protection Board has control over every part of their life. “On this particular day the Manager of Cummeroogunga arranged with a Moama police sergeant that the Aboriginal men would be away from the station for the day shooting and trapping rabbits. There was some gratitude expressed at the time, as jobs were short... On the morning the Aboriginal men left for the forest, the sergeants real interest in matter was explained, when two police cars arrived at the station and two policemen took away a number of girls who were sent to Cootamundra for domestic training at the girls home.”3

Scene one: Aboriginal mission – 1918
The scene opens with 12 year old JANE with her mother, JEAN who has a terrified look on her face. The backdrop is a photo of young Aboriginal girls running.

JEAN
Quick, Jane, go’ne and get Lucy.

JANE
They back?

JEAN
Yeh. See the dust. It’s them alright. Go’ne then.

JANE
Rightio

JANE runs quickly screaming as she goes.

Lucy, quick.

She runs to a young girl sitting on the ground making daisy chains. The young girl looks at her with a complete lack of interest. She is obviously day-dreaming. JANE grabs her and LUCY gets a fright.

What?

They’re back. C’mon, down the river.

Who?

Gungi’s. C’mon, or they’ll get ya.

Wait, let me get my daisy chain.

She grabs the daisy chain and puts it around her neck. Both girls run off as JEAN comes back onto the stage. They run back onto the stage to JEAN

Got her.

Quick, into the river.

They all go off and in a few seconds come back onto the stage, wet, shivering and exhausted, from fear as well as from swimming the river. LUCY sighs and then appeals to her mother
LUCY
Mum my chain’s gone. It broke in the river when we swam across. Please, let’s go and live somewhere else.

JANE
Can we mum?

JEAN
Nah, we’re not allowed off the mish. The Board won’t let us. It’s bad enough we come across the river. They’d soon hunt us down if we took off. Besides, there’s nowhere to go. This is our country.

JANE
Did they get anyone this time mum?

JEAN
Hope not. Lucky your brothers are quick. They’re gone before the car gets in the gate.

LUCY
I wish Dad was alive. He wouldn’t let ‘em do it.

JEAN
Neither would the other men, if they were here. No wonder the Manager got them work today.

JANE
It’s not fair hey mum?

JEAN
Nah, it’s not. Lucy, check for the signal.

*She sighs as LUCY goes over to the other side of the stage, looking and listening intently. They hear a gum leaf playing and see smoke curling up in the sky*
JANE

*She points to the other side.*

There!

JEAN

Okay let’s go.

LUCY

Alright.

Tears well up in her eyes because she is scared of swimming the river again. JEAN pats her on the back.

JEAN

You’ll be alright love.

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**Scene two: the Manager of the mission and a Policemen stand near a car**

Two non-Aboriginal men, the MANAGER of the Mission and a POLICEMAN, are standing beside a car talking. Three young Aboriginal girls are in the car crying and an Aboriginal woman, MAY is standing near the car crying hysterically. As she cries the children panic and cry louder. The POLICEMAN looks at the children and points to the gun in his holster to shut them up. They stop crying. MAY is unable to contain herself and continues to cry.

MAY

Please, let my kids go.

MANAGER

Now May, you know better than to do this. Go back to your hut.

*Two women come over and take MAY away. She goes off still crying.*

POLICEMAN

It was a good idea to send the men away working.
MANAGER
Shh, someone might hear you. They won’t like it if they find out.

POLICEMAN
We only got three girls this time. Couldn’t get any of the boys. Better luck next time.

MANAGER
They see the dust from the car and take off. Some of them swim the river.

POLICEMAN
Maybe you should find some way to distract them next time.

MANAGER
Yeh, I’ll try to think of something.

POLICEMAN
Next time we’ll get more kids.

Pointing at MAY.

POLICEMAN
What’ll you do about her?

MANAGER
She’ll get over it. They always do. They’re not white you know. They don’t have the same feelings as we do about their kids. Besides she’ll have more kids – they average ten.

The POLICEMAN laughs and digs him in the ribs.

POLICEMAN
More for us to take, hey?
MANAGER

Yeh.

*The POLICEMAN gets into the car and drives off while the MANAGER looks thoughtfully after him with a slight smile on his face.*

**Scene three: three Aboriginal women sit outside a hut.**

JEAN

There’s got to be something we can do.

LEANNE

What?

JENNY

Let’s talk to the Manager.

JEAN

He did it.

LEANNE

We could write a letter to the Board.

JENNY

It’s worth a try, I s’pose.

JEAN

We’ll ‘ave to get Joey to do it. No one else can write.

LEANNE

Someone ‘as to help us.

JENNY

Yeh, I heard they’ve been taking kids from the other missions and sending them way away. They train them to work for white people.
There is a commotion as MAY comes in the door crying and wringing her hands in desperation.

MAY
They took my kids. I’ve gotta get my kids back.

Jenny puts her arms around her to comfort her

JENNY
We’re trying to figure out how to get them back, May.

MAY
Help me. They’ve been gone too long. I can’t sleep without ‘em.

JENNY
Maybe the Managers wife could help?

JEAN
We tried that when they took Aunty Fran’s kids. She said she was sorry.

MAY
Sorry. What about my kids?

She screams hysterically.

JENNY
Yeh, sorry don’t bring them back.

The scene closes with MAY sobbing and the women gathering around comforting her.
Scene four: kitchen at the mission.

Jenny, LEANNE and JOEY (a young Aboriginal boy) sit at the kitchen table. JOEY has a pencil in his hand and is writing as JEAN dictates to him.

JEAN

JOEY, write can you please help Mrs Dempsey to see her booris. They were taken by the policeman a long time ago and she hasn’t seen them since.

JOEY

Yeh aunt, I hid under the schoolhouse that day. I was too scared to come out so I stayed there ‘til dark.

Jenny is indignant at the thought and raises her voice.

JENNY

Rotten mongrels! Write this is against the law and we want our booris back.

JOEY writes laboriously.

JOEY

Will this do any good aunt?

JOEY points at the letter.

JEAN

We can only try because I think if she doesn’t get her kids back, May’s gonna die of a broken heart. She’s been down the bush crying for days.

JENNY

Write that.

JEAN

Tell them can we get another Manager?

JOEY continues to write as the women talk.
JOEY
Ok. It’s finished. But aunt how ya gonna post it?

JENNY
You’ll have to sneak it out.

JOEY
What if I get caught?

JEAN
You won’t.

JENNY
Alright that’s it. Come on JEAN, let’s take something for May to eat.

JEAN
Rightio.

She looks at JOEY pointedly.

JEAN
Get that letter out.

JOEY
I’ll take the dinghy across the river.

JEAN
Get the boys to help ya.

JOEY
Right.

*He goes out.*
JENNY

C’mon then.

*She points to a pot on the stove.*

JEAN

Grab that stew.

*They walk off the stage, with Jenny carrying the pot.*

**Scene five: At a kitchen table**

*JEAN and Jenny are sitting at the kitchen table when JOEY comes running in the door with an envelope in his hand.*

JOEY

Aunty Jean, a letter.

JEAN

Quick read it.

*JOEY opens the envelope and reads the letter slowly labouring over each word.*

JOEY

We received your letter about Mrs Dempsey’s children being taken off the mission. You must understand that these children are being taken care of better than they would be on the mission. They are not sick and tell Mrs Dempsey not to worry about them. We will keep in touch with her and let her know how they are.

JENNY

What about giving them back?

JOEY

That’s all it says except if you want to know anything else, ask the Manager.
JENNY
We can’t tell May. It’s gonna kill her to find out that she can’t get her booris back.

JEAN
There’s got to be something else we can do.

JENNY
It’s no good, none of our mob ever got their kids back. We’ve just got to try to protect them while we can.

JEAN
We can’t even go to the gungis because they take our kids.

JENNY
What about the government?

JEAN
From what the Manager says they tell the gungis to come and get the kids.

JENNY
Maybe one day someone will help us.

JEAN
Maybe? (sarcastically)

*Scene finishes with song by Archie Roach ‘Took the children away’* 

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4 Roach, Archie. 1992, ‘Took the Children Away’ from the Album “Charcoal Lane”.
ACT 111

NARRATOR

The ‘Day of Mourning’ occurred on Australia Day, the 26th January, 1938 in Sydney. Instead of celebrating the Sesquicentenary, the Aborigines Progressive Association members William Cooper, William Ferguson and Jack Patten called for a ‘Day of Mourning’ for all Aboriginal people and held an Aboriginal Conference. A Manifesto ‘Aborigines Claim Citizen Rights’ was published.

The day started with a march through the streets of Sydney, attended by both Aboriginal protestors and non-Aboriginal supporters and finished at the ‘Day of Mourning’ Congress, a political meeting for Aboriginal people only.

Many Aboriginal leaders attended including Pearl Gibbs and Margaret Tucker. The protesters were going to hold the Congress in the Sydney Town Hall, but were refused access, and held it instead at the Australian Hall in Elizabeth Street. The Congress was open to only Aboriginal people, and 1,000 attended, making it one of the first mass civil rights gatherings in Australia.  

Scene one: a car on the way to the day of mourning

In the front seat of a car are two women, DOREEN (non-Aboriginal) and MAVIS (Aboriginal) and, two men JOEY and TIM (Aboriginal), in the back. DOREEN is driving.

DOREEN

We are approximately halfway to Sydney. Do you want to stop and get something to eat?

---

JOEY

In the next town.

MAVIS

Yeh, I’m hungry.

TIM

Me too.

They continue driving along the road when a crow dives straight for the car. DOREEN ducks her head in a reflexive action. The three passengers scream when the crow is hit. DOREEN then realises what has happened and straightens up. She looks at the windscreen but the crow is gone.

JOEY

What was that?

MAVIS

A crow.

TIM

It came straight for the windscreen.

DOREEN

For a minute I thought I was outside the car and ducked automatically because I thought it was going to hit me.

MAVIS

I thought you were going to crash the car and kill us all.

Everyone in the car goes silent. They drive along a bit further when another crow flies straight at the car. DOREEN swerves the car to try to avoid it but it hits the crow and it falls dead on the side of the road.
JOEY
Another one?

TIM
Yeh.

DOREEN
I didn’t do it deliberately. It came straight at us.

MAVIS
Yeh, I saw it. What do you think it means JOEY?

JOEY
I don’t know, but the crow is my totem and I’m taking this as a sign. Maybe we shouldn’t be taking this trip.

TIM
Well we can’t stop now that’s for sure. We’re nearly there.

JOEY
Yeh, but we had better pull up at the next town and have a break.

DOREEN
Okay.

*Scene two: In a cafe*

They are now seated in a cafe having a pot of tea. JOEY, TIM and MAVIS are all nervous about the crows. They have all been reared up on stories about the doulagahs (spirits) and they don’t think the crows flying at the car are accidents. DOREEN doesn’t realize how they feel.

DOREEN
We’re nearly there.
Daisy Chain

JOEY
Just as well.

MAVIS
What time will we get there?

DOREEN
About 10.

TIM
Couldn’t come quick enough for me.

MAVIS
There’s gonna be a lot of our mob up here.

JOEY
Yeh, the Association sent out enough letters to get them there.

TIM
I heard that mobs are coming from all over Australia. It’s so important.

DOREEN
Yes, I would imagine that a lot of your people will be there if they are able to go.

JOEY
We better hit the track.
Scene three: Back in the car resuming their trip to Sydney.

DOREEN
They said James and Wade will address the Conference today. Can you tell me everything they say Mavis. I know I can’t attend the Conference because I am not Aboriginal, but I’ve heard they are both charismatic speakers and I’d love to hear them speak.

MAVIS
They are both great speakers. They’ve been involved in the struggle for a long time and have done a lot of good work in the community.

JOEY
Without Wade we would not be able to do what we’ve done for the community.

TIM
He is one of the organisers of the Conference. He said it was only for our people. Joey’s speaking too you know Doreen.

At that moment another crow flies over the car. It comes round and hovers above the car for a minute. This time DOREEN keeps the car straight but as she does so the crow hits the windscreen with a sickening thud. It looks at the occupants of the car and then gets pushed off the windscreen onto the road by the wind. JOEY and MAVIS automatically duck down in the car.

DOREEN
That poor creature. I couldn’t avoid it. What on earth got into it to do that?

JOEY
I don’t know Doreen, but how can you hit three crows on one trip?
TIM
Yes Doreen. You should’ve swerved. You killed the poor thing.

MAVIS
C’mon you two. Doreen didn’t do it deliberately.

JOEY
Sorry Doreen.

He mumbles under his breath.

TIM
Me too.

DOREEN
Honest, I thought if I swerved again I would hit it. That’s why I didn’t swerve.

JOEY
We know but there are certain birds we have to look after and the crow is one of them. We have a cultural responsibility for it. It’s one of our moieties you know.

TIM
Yeh, if we look after it, it looks after us.

He turns to Joey.

TIM
What do you make of it Joey?

JOEY
Dunno, but it can’t be good.
DOREEN
Oh look, we’re on the outskirts of Sydney. We’ll be at the Conference in half an hour.

_The three passengers have a relieved look on their faces and all go quiet as they are thinking about the consequences of hitting three crows on the trip._

**Scene four: Front of a building.**

*Mavis, Doreen, Joey and Tim are standing at the front of the hall.*

**Mavis**
That was a trip and a half.

**Joey**
You can say that again.

**Doreen**
It has been a long and weary trip and I am going to freshen up.

**Mavis**
I’ll come with you.

**Tim**
We’ll go and see what’s happening in the hall.

**Joey**
I have to go and settle my nerves with a cup of billy tea.

**Tim**
Yeh, mate that last crow was a bit too much for me too.
JOEY
Three crows in one trip.

*He shakes his head.*

TIM
Them crows are my moiety too.

JOEY
I can’t go back with her. I’m off back on the train.

TIM
Me too. We’ll send Mavis with her.

*The two women return.*

DOREEN
I have booked into a local B&B. I’ll see you after the conference

*JOEY clears his throat.*

JOEY
We won’t be going back with you Doreen. We have to stay for a few days after the conference because we have some business to take care of.

TIM
Important business.

MAVIS
You go ahead Doreen. We’ll meet up later.

DOREEN
Okay then, see you later.

*She walks off.*
MAVIS
What business we got? I thought we were going back home with Doreen.

JOEY
You can, but I’m not. I can’t see any more crows killed like that. When she hit that last crow, I nearly had a heart attack.

Grabbing his heart.

TIM
Me too. How can anyone hit three crows in one trip?

JOEY
Yeh, I started to think they were after us.

MAVIS
Must admit it made me think something was going on.

TIM
Anyway, (emphatically) we’re off back by train

MAVIS
Well I’ll go back with her then. Poor thing, she’s got to have some company for that long trip.

JOEY
Alright, you do that. C’mon then let’s get into the meeting.
Scene five: A hall

Many Aboriginal people are sitting in a hall listening to JAMES and WADE who are standing out the front addressing them.

JAMES

“We representing the Aborigines of Australia, assembled in conference at the Australian Hall, Sydney, on the 26th day of January, 1938, this being the 150th Anniversary of the Whiteman’s seizure of our country, hereby make protest against the callous treatment of our people by the whitemen during the past 150 years, and we appeal to the Australian nation of today to make new laws for the education and care of Aborigines, and we ask for a new policy which will raise our people to full citizen status and equality within the community.”

WADE

“I second the motion. Let us be aware that this motion affects all men and women with Aboriginal blood. We have been waiting all our lives for the white people of Australia to better our conditions, and we have waited in vain. We have been living in a fool’s paradise... Surely the time has come at last, for us to do something for ourselves and make ourselves heard... We are backward only because we have no real opportunity to make progress. We have been denied the opportunity”.

JOEY

“We’re not chickens – we’re eagles”.

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We are going to continue our struggle together.

Everyone stands up and applauds loudly, yelling their assent to these statements. They all go off the stage except for MAVIS and JEAN who are left standing together.

MAVIS
They’re right. It’s not fair that we can’t even vote in our own country. White women got the vote thirty years ago. And kids are still being taken off their mothers.

JEAN
Maybe the ‘Manifesto’ will help.

MAVIS
One day we’ll be counted as equals, you wait and see. We have to be. This is our country and no one can deny it. Even our men can’t vote.

JEAN
Maybe the women’s movement can help us get our rights. They worked hard to get the vote for women and it happened. I know a woman who might help us. Her name’s Jeannie. She’s interested in getting involved with us.

MAVIS
Doreen’s in the Women’s movement too. She’s arranging for me to speak to them.

JEAN
When youse going home?
MAVIS
Later on in the week. I’m going with Doreen, but JOEY and TIM are going by train, the cowards.

JEAN
How come? Didn’t you all come with Doreen?

MAVIS laughs as they walk off.

MAVIS
It’s a long story. Tell you about it later.
Daisy Chain

ACT IV

NARRATOR
In the 1930’s, conditions on Cummeragunja Mission had deteriorated. Residents were confined to the station and many of their relatives were forced off. They did not receive decent rations and supplies and residents were forced to share blankets and live in rag huts. Tuberculosis and whooping cough hit the station dramatically affecting the elderly and young. Fed-up with the conditions and treatment, over 150 residents left the Reserve in protest, in the Cummeragunja Walk-off. This was the first mass strike of Aboriginal people in Australia.8

Scene one: The boundary of the mission
A crowd of people are gathered at the boundary of Cummeragunja Mission ready to walk off. MAVIS, JEAN, and Jenny are in the crowd. The MANAGER is trying to bully them out of going because he is afraid of the consequences. He is irate and yells into the crowd

MANAGER
Once you go you can’t come back.

MAVIS
We don’t want to come back. You’ve been helping them take our kids off us for years.

MANAGER
I told you all before I didn’t have anything to do with the police taking the kids.

JENNY
You’re a liar. You told them gungis to come and take the kids. You sent our men away deliberately and when May’s kids were taken away you didn’t do anything to help her get ‘em back.

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8 ABC Mission Voices – Cummeragunja: www.abc.net.au/missionvoices
JEAN
You're cruel. You’ve starved us and made us work for nothing. We want another Manager. We don’t want you.

JENNY
We don’t have to be treated like this anymore. The ‘Manifesto’ says we’re entitled to equal rights.

MANAGER
That ‘Manifesto’ is not taken seriously by the Board. You people are fooling yourselves.

MAVIS
You may think that, but our voice is being heard at last. We are in a time of change and people like you will be gone from our lives forever.

MANAGER
You’ll have nowhere to go except the riverbank.

JENNY
We camped on the riverbank a long time before you came and stole our country and we’ll be camping on it long after you’re gone.

MANAGER, talking to himself as he walks off.

MANAGER
They’ll come back and when they do, I’ll show them who’s boss.

The group get together and begin walking with all their swags.
The scene finishes with the song ‘Cummeragunja’.9

ACT V

NARRATOR

In 1963, four years before the 1967 Referendum three women from the Women’s Movement lobbied for the 1967 Referendum to be held to give rights to Aboriginal people.

Jessie Street had began to lobby for Aboriginal people in the 1940s in the Australian Women’s Charter movement when she pushed for the status of Indigenous Australians to be a core principle of the Charter. She believed that an urgent task would be to petition the Federal government to amend those sections of the Australian Constitution which referred to Aboriginal Australians, so that the Commonwealth would have the power to legislate directly for them.

Jessie called on her networks among feminists, socialists and the peace movement to stimulate an environment in which the push for the formation of a national body and the call for greater Commonwealth responsibility could take place.10

Shirley Andrews also contributed to the goals of the Aboriginal Civil rights movement when she campaigned for Equal Wages for Aboriginal stockmen and the National Petition Campaign for the Referendum.11 Doris Blackburn the third woman was Co-founder of the Aborigines Advancement League.12

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Scene one: A room where three non-aboriginal women are seated.

JEANNIE, SANDRA and DOREEN are discussing the possibility of a Referendum being held.

JEANNIE

The National Petition Campaign for the referendum is doing well. We have collected thousands of signatures. The government will have to call a Referendum now.

DOREEN

The Equal Wages for Aborigines committee of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines is campaigning well too.

SANDRA

Yes it is. I remember when I went to Cairns. Two young stockmen came and told us they didn’t get any wages, they got five dollars to spend and even then they couldn’t get the money out of their bank to spend it how they wanted to. That was shocking.

JEANNIE

When I went around the country I found out how unfair Aboriginal people are being treated.

SANDRA

You don’t realise unless you travel around and talk to the people do you?

DOREEN

I didn’t realise how bad it is for Aboriginal people until I became involved with the Aborigines Advancement League.
JEANNIE

By the way, the Referendum campaign is going better since you produced that state by state comparative chart showing the different ways Aboriginal rights are being infringed by different state Aboriginal Acts. 13

SANDRA

A lot of people didn’t seem to take much notice though.

JEANNIE

I think it did make the government think they should do something to stop it because there are a lot of civil rights infringements.

DOREEN

It’s been good having Mavis and the others to talk to our Movement. She has told them how bad it is for Aboriginal people.

SANDRA

The sooner they have a Referendum the better!
“Our people have left us an unpaid debt to these people, and we must make a special effort to carry out our responsibilities, not with any spirit of ‘doing good’, but as a duty long neglected”.

JEANNIE

Imagine how Aboriginal people feel Sandra if we are frustrated and impatient. They have to be the most resilient people in the world to put up with they’ve had to endure. I would have been a basket case if someone stole my children.

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SANDRA
We’ll just keep campaigning until the government calls a referendum.

DOREEN
A lot of Australian people are behind us.

JEANNIE
That’s right, so we’ll keep the fight going and we will win!

The scene finishes with the song: ‘We are going to freedom’ by Gary Shearston.14
ACT VI

NARRATOR
This Act is set on May 27th, 1967 when the Commonwealth Referendum granted Civil Rights to all Aboriginal people. It approved two amendments to the Australian constitution relating to Indigenous Australians, giving Aboriginal people the right to be counted in the Census, and granting the Commonwealth Government the power to take control of Aboriginal Affairs throughout Australia, overriding the States if necessary.

Technically it was a vote on the Constitution Alteration (Aboriginals) 1967 Act, which after being approved in the referendum became law on 10 August 1967. The amendment was overwhelmingly endorsed, winning 90.77 per cent of votes cast and carrying all six states. 15

Scene one: A room in a house

The Referendum jingle is playing. 16 Two young Aboriginal woman, JAN and PATRICIA are sitting in the lounge room waiting for the results of the Referendum when JOEY comes into the room with a satisfied look on his face.

JOEY

We got it.

JAN

Got what?

JOEY

The referendum. Haven’t you been listening to the radio? We won. Over 90% of people voted for us to be citizens and get the vote.

JAN

I can’t believe it.

JOEY

Yeh, it is hard to believe, but we did a lot of work to get it.

JOEY


PATRICIA

Yeh, FCAATSI did a lot of work to get the Referendum in the first place. They lobbied the Government for years and got those petitions signed by all those people, thousands they reckon.

JOEY

More than that. Altogether they had over a million signatures. That’s a lot of people.

PATRICIA

I reckon the Government had their hands tied and had to have the Referendum hey?

JOEY

You know it’s hard to believe that in 1901 when they wrote the Constitution they never intended to count us in the census. That gives you some idea about their attitude to our people?

JAN

It makes us feel like we’re not people. I reckon they thought we were animals they could do anything to.
PATRICIA
Yeh, we lost our rights when the white man came here and never got them back.

JAN
Oh well, that’s all gonna change now. We have the right to vote and to be counted as citizens. The Commonwealth Government can change any state laws about us.

JOEY
We had the right to vote in 1962 before the Referendum but a lot of our mob didn’t know it. This makes things more clear. Let’s hope the Government takes this seriously and does something about it.

PATRICIA
Hey they’re having a celebration at the pub. Comin?

JOEY
No, going to see Wade and James at the APA.

Scene two: A pub
The song ‘We set the ball in motion’ by the band Black Lace is playing in the jukebox and the bar is full of people. MAX comes up to BOB who is standing with JAN and PATRICIA.

MAX
Bruz.

MAX gives him a Koorie handshake.

BOB
How you feeling tonight?
MAX
I’m feeling good. We got a great victory today. We won!

BOB
‘bout time hey?

MAX
Hey, there’s some good looking women here tonight. Want me to hook you up?

BOB
I can do it myself bruz. Don’t worry about me.

He does a little dance to show how cool he is

MAX
Right. See you later then.

PATRICIA
Where’s he off to?

BOB
He’s after some sheila.

JAN
Thinks himself don’t he?

JAN and PATRICIA walk to the dance floor singing ‘All Blacks Play the Game’ by Black Lace. They are dancing and celebrating. BOB walks on the dance floor and starts to dance with them. Everyone is having a good time. The scene closes with the celebrations on the dance floor

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17 Black Lace. (1981) We keep the ball in motion, Rock Against Racism Concert.
Scene three: A lounge room

It's morning and BOB and MAX are sitting on a couch. BOB is holding his head moaning

BOB
Damn I feel crook.

MAX
Any wonder, you poured that much grog down your throat last night.

BOB
S’pose so, but everyone was in a good mood. Not everyday we get a win hey?

MAX
I heard on the radio the Government don’t know what to make of the results of the Referendum. They said it was the first time a Referendum was ever won by so much.

PATRICIA walks into the lounge room looking seedy.

PATRICIA
What time youse get home?

BOB
Dunno.

MAX
Me neither. Too drunk.

PATRICIA
We left way before you two. Youse were still dancing when we left.
BOB
Couldn’t get Max off the dance floor. He was dancing with some white chick from Uni. Reckons she voted for us.

MAX
She nearly came home with me too except her friend came over and dragged her off home. Pity, she was good looking.

BOB
Oh well look on the bright side. We got the vote and no one can take it back.

PATRICIA
Yeh, and the Commonwealth Government can now override the States if they’re racist. Some States are really bad to our mob. They can’t get away with it now.

BOB
Yeh, some of our mobs are under some terrible Acts, like in Queensland. Those poor fellas are not allowed off the missions. They’ve even got them working without pay.

MAX
At least that ended here for us a while ago.

BOB
I reckon this is gonna be a new start for our mob. Wait and see.
In 1985 the Queensland Government attempted to terminate the Native Title proceedings that began in 1982 by Eddie Mabo and others. They attempted to enact the Queensland Declaratory Act 1985.

This Act declared that on annexation of the islands in 1879, title to the islands was vested in the State of Queensland “freed from all other rights, interests and claims whatsoever”.

However, the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 makes racial discrimination unlawful in Australia and overrides inconsistent States and Territory legislation, making the State or Territory law ineffective to the extent of the inconsistency. The power of the national Parliament to pass this over-riding law arises under the “external affairs” power contained in section 51 (xxix) of the Australian Constitution. The power arose from the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination to which Australia is a signatory. 18

Scene one: A courthouse

There are 7 Judges, a PLAINTIFF (for the Meriam people) and a DEFENDANT (for the State of Queensland)

PLAINTIFF

We are arguing for a possessory title by reason of long possession. As you are aware the Murray Island people have never left off possession of their land and therefore should hold possessory title.

DEFENDANT

Your honors it is unlawful for this case to go ahead because “when the territory of a settled colony became part of the Crown’s dominions, the law of England became the law of the colony and, by that law, the Crown acquired the “absolute beneficial ownership” of all land in the territory”.

PLAINTIFF

But your honors, we have already presented evidence to this court to prove that the Meriam people have always been in possession of their land. To agree to this legislation would be against the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 because it would be treating Torres Strait Island people differently from other people in Queensland.

DEFENDANT

However, I remind your honors that when Queensland annexed the islands in 1879, title to the Torres Strait Islands was vested in the State of Queensland.

PLAINTIFF

I repeat it is against the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 to take land that belongs to the Meriam people.

DEFENDANT

The land was annexed before Australia signed the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination.

PLAINTIFF

But the Queensland Government is trying to enact the Queensland Coast Islands Declaratory Act in 1985, ten years after the legislated 1975 Racial Discrimination Act.
JUDGE

We have heard both sides of this matter and we will now retire and determine our verdict on the matter. Court will resume in four weeks.

Scene two: A courthouse

The same courthouse one month later. The same people are present

JUDGE

We have listened to arguments made for and against this case where the Meriam people versus the State of Queensland. We have considered all the evidence before us and we have made our determination.

This determination has been made five to two that the 1985 Queensland Declaratory Act is inconsistent with the Commonwealth Racial Discrimination Act, 1975 which states in 10(1) that:

If, by reason of, or of a provision of, a law of the Commonwealth or of a State or Territory, persons of a particular race, colour or national or ethnic origin do not enjoy a right that is enjoyed by persons of another race, colour or national or ethnic origin, or enjoy a right to a more limited extent than persons of another race, colour or national or ethnic origin, then, notwithstanding anything in that law, persons of the first-mentioned race, colour or national or ethnic origin shall, by force of this law, enjoy that right to the same extent as persons of that other race, colour or national or ethnic origin.

(2) A reference in sub-section (1) to a right includes a reference to a right of a kind referred to in Article 5 of the Convention. The particular rights in question, under Article 5(d) of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination are:
(v) The right to own property alone as well as in association with others;
(vi) The right to inherit. 19

PLAINTIFF
Thank you your honor.

Bowing to the judges.

DEFENDANT
Thank you your honor.

Bowing to the judges. The judges walk off.

PLAINTIFF
Looks like I’ll be seeing you in court.

DEFENDANT
Yes. This could take some time.

They walk off in opposite directions.

ACT VIII

NARRATOR

The year is 1987 and Australia is getting ready for the Bi-Centennial Celebrations. The Government is funding Aboriginal organisations for programs to celebrate the Bi-Centenary but Aboriginal Australia is gearing up for one of the biggest protests to take place in Sydney. It is expected that thousands of people including white supporters, will protest against the celebrations. Kath Walker decides to hand back her MBE in a protest about the Bi-Centennial Celebrations.20

**Scene one: A press room**

*Two Aboriginal women, KATELYN and JULIE are standing together talking in a room with a MC while two reporters who are waiting for the announcement.*

JULIE

Are you really gonna do this?

KATELYN

I can’t in good conscience celebrate the Bicentennial celebrations next year. It would be doing the wrong thing by my ancestors.

JULIE

Alright then sis, I’ll stand by you no matter what.

KATELYN

I knew I you would. I didn’t want to accept it in the first place you know, but I honestly thought it would ‘open doors that were still closed to the Aborigines’. Didn’t turn out that way though.

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JULIE

Well we live and learn hey?

*The MC comes over to them.*

MC

We will be ready to start in a moment. Could you please come to this side and get prepared. After you have made your announcement, there will be time for the reporters to ask questions. Are you okay with that?

KATELYN

Yes.

MC

Alright let’s move over to the podium.

KATELYN

Thank you.

*They walk over to the podium and KATELYN stands at the microphone to speak.*

KATELYN

“Since 1970 I have lived in the hope that the parliaments of England and Australia would confer and attempt to rectify the terrible damage done to the Australian Aborigines. The forbidding us our tribal language, the murders, the poisoning, the scalping, the denial of land custodianship, especially our sacred sites, the destruction of our sacred places, especially our Bora Grounds...

Next year, 1988, to me marks 200 years of rape and carnage, all these terrible things that the Aboriginal tribes of Australia have suffered without any recognition even of admitted guilt from the parliaments of England. From the Aboriginal point of view, what is there to celebrate?... I have therefore decided that as a protest against what
the Bicentenary ‘Celebrations’ stand for, I can no longer, with a clear conscience, accept the English honour of the MBE and will be returning it to her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II of England, through her representative, the Queensland State Governor, Sir Walter Campbell”.21

REPORTER 1
But what purpose will it serve to give back this medal?

KATELYN
It gives me a clear conscience. I can look at my people and know that I have not sold them out and also “I have renounced my English name because the House of Commons and Lords in England have neglected us for 200 years. They could not spell the Aboriginal names so they gave us English ones”.22

REPORTER 2
But surely you realise how important this medal is? After all, it was bestowed upon you by our sovereign, the Queen of England.

KATELYN
It means nothing unless the Queen of England wants to recognise all the terrible things that have been done to my people in her name.

REPORTER
I’m sure the people of Australia will be disappointed that you have done this.

KATELYN
I have to stay true to myself and to my people. As long as they are not ashamed of me, I’ll feel right. Tell me young man, has anything ever been stolen off your family?

REPORTER 2
_Hesitantly._

Well no.

KATELYN
Our land was stolen off us. It was never given back and even today my people are still trying to get it back. When that happens we can celebrate!

MC
Alright that is all the questions allowed. You will have the opportunity to talk informally now. Thank you for your honest and open speech. Thank you all for attending this Press Conference. This Press Conference is now over.

_KATELYN walks over to JULIE._

JULIE
That was an inspirational speech Katelyn. As I listened to you I realised how deeply you feel about the Bicentennial Celebrations. I have decided that none of my family will celebrate either.

KATELYN
There is a river of blood flowing through this country. It will not dry up until justice has been done. I only hope I see it in my lifetime.

JULIE
Me too sis!
ACT IX

NARRATOR
The year is 1988. The Australian State and Federal Governments named the festivities around the Bicentenary of the invasion of Australia on 26 January 1788 by the British the ‘Celebration of a nation’. Various communities took a dissenting view, notably many Indigenous groups who united on 26 January 1988 to stage the largest Indigenous protest in the history of colonised Australia. This took the form of a peaceful march of 100 000 Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Sydney. It was part of a history of Indigenous observations of this day inaugurated by the 1938 Day of Mourning.

Scene one: At the march
At the end of the march, MAVIS, Tanya, JULIE and Dan are in deep conversation after listening to the speeches

MAVIS
Hey sister wasn’t that a great march.

TANYA
Man, you sure are right. 100 000 people like rolling hills marching down the streets of Redfern. I’ve never seen anything like that before.

JULIE
Yeh, when the march started and the dancers started doing ‘shake a leg’ out the front, shivers went down my spine.

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TANYA
I loved it when we all got to Redfern park and JOEY started to speak. Everyone went quiet and I got goose bumps. There were so many people we could hardly fit.

MAVIS
I never felt more proud of being black.

DAN
That speech about not celebrating because it would be like dancing on our ancestors graves was inspiring.

TANYA
I loved it when the Elders got up and told their stories. They made me cry.

JULIE
Yeh, I thought how could people be so cruel?

MAVIS
They don’t care. That’s why they are having the Bi-Centenary Celebrations. This celebration is against our people. It celebrates the past 200 years and everything bad that happened to our mob. They don’t care what happened to our people.

DAN
How they killed the men.

TANYA
And raped our women and stole our children.
DAN
Maybe white Australians will take notice now we that haven’t celebrated with them. They must know we want our human rights recognized.

JULIE
You know every kid got a Bicentennial medallion at school but mum made my little brother give his back to the teacher. The Principal was really wild and tried to make a big deal about it but she wouldn’t change her mind. She said it was because of the bad things that happened to her grandmother. She said she’d never let her kids celebrate.

TANYA
We’ve only had the vote for 21 years you know, since the 1967 Referendum. Maybe we should be having a 21st Birthday celebration instead of the Bicentenary celebration.

MAVIS gives her a high five.

MAVIS
Good one!

DAN
I’m off to the pub tonight. There’ll be different mobs there and it’s gonna be the biggest celebration Redfern’s seen in a long time.

They all laugh.

JULIE
You can bet on that.

TANYA
I’m with you brotha boy. Let’s have some fun. There’ll be some good looking blackfellas there.
Daisy Chain

JULIE
What you talking about girl? You’re taken.

TANYA
Yeh, but I can look, can’t I?

DAN
Yeh, I saw some good looking sheilas here already. I was talking to a couple of them and they’re gonna meet us at the pub.

MAVIS
We better go and get dressed then.

They all go off the stage arm in arm. The scene closes with the song, ‘Black Boy’ by Coloured Stone.24

ACT X

NARRATOR

On 3rd of June, 1992, the High Court of Australia handed down the Mabo decision rewriting Australian common law and boosting the struggle for the recognition of Aboriginal land rights.

By a majority of six judges to one, the High Court of Australia ruled that Native Title to the land is recognised by the common law of Australia, thus overthrowing the legal fiction that Australia was ‘discovered’ by Captain Cook in 1788 because it was terra nullius, an empty wasteland.

The case centred on the Murray Islands of Torres Strait. The Meriam people, led by Eddie Koiki Mabo, took the action to the High Court to overturn the doctrine of terra nullius. Judge Brennan said that the “... Meriam people are entitled as against the whole world to possession, occupation, use and enjoyment of the lands of the Murray Islands.” [And that] native title has its origin and is given its content by the traditional laws acknowledged by and the customs observed by the Indigenous inhabitants of a territory.”25, 26

Scene one: A pub

The Native Title Decision has been handed down. BOB comes over to MAX slaps him on the back and gives him a Koorie handshake. The Jukebox is playing Stray Blacks song, ‘Melbourne Blacks’.27

BOB

Hey bruz good news hey?

Say that again.

27 Stray Blacks Album, 1998, 'Melbourne Blacks'
BOB
We finally have Land Rights. No one can take it off us now.

MAX
Yeh, that Terra Nullius bullshit has been kicked in the head at last.

BOX
Thanks to Eddie Mabo and his mob from Murray Island.

MAX
Well I don’t know about anyone else, but I’m sure gonna celebrate tonight.

PATRICIA comes over to him.

PATRICIA
Fantastic hey? ‘Rise up Black Children on your feet, get out of the gutter and into the street. Marching for freedom, for justice and for our land!’ Gerry Bostock’s poem is what it is all about.

BOB
That’s for sure. Want a drink Trish?

PATRICIA
UDL. Man I feel good tonight. All those Land Rights marches have finally paid off.
MAX

Yeh, we’ve been marching for long enough, that’s for sure and there’s been lots of protests before now. My granddad was one of the Maloga men who put a petition in for land rights back in 1886. Been plenty of others since then. The Stockmen’s Strike ‘46, Yolngu Bark Petition in ’63, Wave Hill Walk-Off ‘66, Gove Land Rights case ’71.

BOB

Listen to the encyclopedia here. Did you work at Mirimbiak?

MAX

Nah, studied at TAFE.

PATRICIA

You got a good memory hey?

MAX

About some things I s’pose. I had to do a presentation on Land Rights for my studies.

BOB

What was the decision anyway?

PATRICIA

That the Meriam people are entitled to their land.

BOB

But how does that affect us in Victoria?
PATRICIA
Well if the Murray Islanders are entitled to Native Title then so are we. Basically the judges recognised traditional law before the white man came and because the Murray Islands are part of Australia, the same law applies to us. C’mon let’s dance.

\textit{JANET grabs the two men and dances onto the floor with. The crowd in the pub goes wild singing.}

CROWD
“Those so called drunken blacks. They know that they’ve done no wrong. And the message to society is strong”. 28

\footnotesize{28} Stray Blacks Album. (1997) Melbourne Blacks
ACT XI

NARRATOR
The daisy chain is finally joined together. We are back where we started in 2008 at the local Aboriginal organisation where the group of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people are listening to the National Apology to the Stolen Generations by the Honourable Kevin Rudd, MP Prime Minister.

Scene one: An Aboriginal organisation
The scene begins with the DVD of Kevin Rudd finishing the speech he started at the beginning of the play. We see Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people crying including KATIE and JOEY who are watching the DVD.

KEVIN RUDD
We”... Apologise for the laws and policies of successive parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians.

We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country. For the pain, suffering and hurt of these stolen generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry.

To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry.

And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry.

We the parliament of Australia respectfully request that this apology be received in the spirit in which it is offered as sections of the healing of the nation.
For the future we take heart; resolving that this new page in the history of our great continent can now be written. We today take this first step by acknowledging the past and laying claim to a future that embraces all Australians. A future where this never happens again.

On behalf of the government of Australia, I am sorry. On behalf of the parliament of Australia, I am sorry and I offer you this apology without qualification.

We apologise for the hurt, the pain and suffering that we, the parliament, have caused you by the laws that previous parliaments have enacted. We apologise for the indignity, the degradation and the humiliation these laws embodied.

We offer this apology to the mothers, the fathers, the brothers, the sisters, the families and the communities whose lives were ripped apart by the actions of successive governments under successive parliaments.

So let us turn this page together: indigenous and non-indigenous Australians, government and opposition, Commonwealth and state, and write this new chapter in our nation’s story together”.29

At the end of Mr Rudd’s speech, the crowd cheers and gives him a standing ovation. Women all around the room cry and hug each other during his address. Many people appeared overwhelmed by the occasion and impressed with Mr Rudd’s words. KATIE and JOEY hug each other.

KATIE

My great grandmother would have been so proud to be here today.

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29 Reconciliation Australia, 2008, The Apology to the Stolen Generations DVD.
Daisy Chain

JOEY
Yeh, I always felt bad about her. I couldn’t help her though ‘cos I was just a kid myself. In one way this makes things a bit right. At least this Government has got the guts to apologise to us.

PRESIDENT
I want to thank you all for coming here today. Despite anything negative that was said, “It is a glorious day. Make sure you take these memories with you (forever),” 30

Each actor stands in a circle holding a photo of men and women who have contributed to the Aboriginal struggle, forming a daisy chain.

NARRATOR
That completes our daisy chain!

Music and DVD


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Daisy Chain