



Since 2003 Ellen Jose, a Torres Strait Islander Elder who has lived in Melbourne for over 40 years and whose family comes from Mer, Darnley and Horn Island in the Torres Strait, has organised a yearly Mabo Commemoration in Melbourne at Federation Square to mark the end of the historical fiction this land was uninhabited before it was colonised by the British Crown in 1788 – Terra Nullius.

This year the Federation Square Authority and the Koorie Heritage Trust has organised a Mabo Day Community Picnic and Celebration at Birrarung, River Terrace (next to Federation Square) from midday to 3:00pm on Saturday 3rd June.

After the Federation Square event at 11:30am we encourage you to walk with us to Birrarung, River Terrace to enjoy a fantastic program of live Torres Strait Islander performances including music and entertainment, hosted by MC Lisa Maza, and featuring the Liz Cavanagh Ensemble, The Jess's (Jessie Lloyd and Jessica Hitchcock), Zenedth Kes Les (John Wayne Parsons, Luke Captain and Fred Gesha), Lisa and Rachael Maza, and many more. Artist Clinton Nain will lead kids activities, with a painting workshop and a colouring-in table of Torres Strait Islander designs. Local Meriam chef, Nornie Bero will also be giving a cooking demonstration throughout the afternoon, making traditional Torres Strait Islander sweets.

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RECONCILIATION WEEK BEGINS ON SORRY DAY 26th MAY AND ENDS ON MABO DAY 3rd JUNE

WHY CELEBRATE ON MABO DAY

When Australia was invaded and colonised on the 26th January 1788, the British colonisers acted as if this land was uninhabited. Over forty thousand years of civilisation was swept aside in an orgy of destruction that resulted in the violent dispossession of people who had a long and fruitful association with the land.

For 204 years the legal fiction of **TERRA NULLIUS** – the land of no one, was used to legally reward the murderers who colonised this land although the original inhabitants had never ceded their sovereignty over their lands.

In 1982 three traditional land owners from the Island of Mer in the Eastern Torres Strait, Eddie Koiki Mabo, Father Passi and Grandfather Rice, set in train a series of events that began in the Queensland Courts and ended in the High Court of Australia that overturned the doctrine that Australia was unoccupied (terra nullius) at the time of the British invasion. The High Court of Australia on the 3rd June 1992 ruled that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interests in land and water survived the assertion of sovereignty by the Crown.

The judgement caused consternation among Australian land owners. It didn't take long for the spirit and the letter of the judgement to be buried in bucket loads of extinguishment by successive Federal Governments.

Twenty five years after the High Court judgement gave Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders rights to land in law, the question of sovereignty, the extent of native title and a need for a treaty between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians continues (despite attempts by successive Federal governments to bury the issue) to be the single most important impediment to reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians.

HAPPY MABO DAY 25th ANNIVERSARY!!

Bring your family and friends to celebrate Mabo Day at midday at Federation Square next year.

Ellen Jose / Torres Strait Islander Elder whose family comes from Mer. Now living in Melbourne.