



Genocide Watch
The Alliance Against Genocide

Australia Country Report October 2022

Indigenous Australians, despite inhabiting the continent for centuries, have been devastated by forced displacement and physical and cultural genocide. Government reparations have been insufficient to provide for their economic needs and health. Despite government apologies, genocide denial continues today.

During colonization in the late 1700s, Indigenous Australians were wiped out by [infections](#) from European settlers, such as cholera, smallpox, measles, and typhus. Colonizers also drove Indigenous communities off native lands. Genocidal tactics included violent forced displacement, starvation, sexual violence, and enslavement, which [decimated](#) native populations. For example, only 300 Indigenous Tasmanians survived government-sponsored extermination during the [Black War](#) in 1832.

Australia continued the genocide in the 1900s through forced assimilation and cultural genocide. The government portrayed children of mixed Aboriginal and white heritage as a [cultural threat](#). The [Half-Caste Act of 1886](#) mandated the '[dilution](#)' of Indigenous identity. The government could seize 'half-caste' children and forcibly remove them from their parents to provide them with 'better' (i.e., white) homes where they could grow up to work as domestic servants.

Between 1909 and 1943, the 'Welfare Acts' deprived Indigenous people of basic civil, political, and economic rights and made it illegal to enter public places or government institutions, freely marry, or meet relatives. The government also authorized the removal of Indigenous children from their families for upbringing in mission stations or with foster parents. These children - called the 'Stolen Generations' - were permanently [separated](#) from their families, prohibited from speaking their native languages, and stripped of their Indigenous cultures and identities. [100,000](#) Aboriginal children were stolen through these removal practices, which continued until the mid-1970s. These practices violate the Genocide Convention's Article 2, thus constituting genocide.

The genocide still impacts Aboriginal communities. Surviving members, parents, and descendants of the Stolen Generations remain [traumatized](#) by the forced removal and identity loss. Aboriginals suffer from high [rates](#) of substance abuse, mental illness, and suicide. They face greater socio-economic, political, employment, and health-related [struggles](#) than non-Indigenous Australians.

Australia is also under fire for the recent human rights [violations](#) against refugees. Thousands of asylum seekers have been forcibly transferred and [detained](#) in offshore camps, particularly in Papua New Guinea and Nauru. Refugees suffer abuse and inhumane treatment, with over a dozen refugees [dead](#) from murder, suicide, and medical neglect.

Genocide Denial is still dominant in Australia. The term 'genocide' remains [contested](#), with debate over the term dubbed as '[history wars](#)'. Some elected officials deny or [minimize](#) the number of kidnapped children.

Because of unremedied socio-economic inequities for Aboriginals, lack of reparations, and continuing genocide denial and human rights violations, Genocide Watch considers Australia to be at **Stage 3: Discrimination** and **Stage 10: Denial**. **Genocide Watch recommends the following:**

- The government should implement effective reparations to assist Aboriginal communities.
- The government should officially declare that the racist laws and policies that resulted in the Stolen Generations and forced displacement of Indigenous Australians constituted genocide.
- Aboriginal history should be taught in public schools to educate children about Indigenous culture, encourage public awareness of the genocide, and address ongoing inequalities affecting Aboriginals.