

A LONG FIGHT

Aboriginal people have lived in Australia for more than 60,000 years, and Torres Strait Islander people have lived on the Torres Strait Islands for more than 9000 years. They have cared for their lands and lived under their own laws.

When Captain James Cook visited Australia in 1770, he believed that Aboriginal people did not own the land because they did not build houses, grow crops or fence areas of land.

In 1788, when the **First Fleet** arrived in Australia, the British people brought their own laws, language and culture. These laws said that Aboriginal people did not own the land. Within a short time, many Aboriginal people were forced from their traditional lands. This was the start of a long history of **discrimination**.

Australia and the
Torres Strait Islands. ✓



After British settlement, **Indigenous** Australians lived under different laws and did not have the same rights as non-Indigenous Australians. Most Indigenous Australians could not choose where and how they lived.

For many years, Indigenous Australians have been fighting for equal rights. They have protested, written **petitions**, spoken at public meetings, set up their own organisations and much more. These **activists** have had the courage and passion to stand up for the rights of their people.

In this book, you will read about activists such as William Ferguson, Pearl Gibbs, Eddie Koiki Mabo and many others. Their hard work has meant that today everyone has equal rights under Australian law.

