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Rebuilding nations through partnership, indigenous identity & reconciliation in Jesus Christ

Khesed Ministries Khesed Education Khesed Productions

We have researched and written this document in the hope that the effects of past history can be addressed and a better future for all Australians will result. Please read it and share it as widely as possible.

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8th November 2017

Taking Possession of Australia

BACKGROUND

1095 The leader of the Christian Church, Pope Urban II, decided to 'Christianise' the world. He made a Papal Bull called ***Terra Nullios*** (meaning 'empty land'). A Papal Bull is a very serious public decree made by a Pope that cannot be changed easily. It gave the kings and princes of Europe the right to 'discover' or claim non-Christian lands.

1095 The Crusades: Pope Urban II preached against Muslims, and exaggerated their anti-Christian acts. He urged Christians to go to war 'for the Sepulchre'. Over 60,000 Crusaders went through Europe 'converting' people to Christianity at the point of the sword. Thousands were killed. The campaign was completed in July, 1099, when they took over Jerusalem, and massacred many of the city's Muslims and Jews. (*The Columbia Encyclopedia, 6th ed*).



Crusades Image: Wikimedia Commons

1452 Pope Nicholas V issued a **Papal Bull** called ***Dum Diversas*** that granted Portugal and Spain "full and free permission to invade, search out, capture and subjugate unbelievers and enemies of Christ wherever they may be ... And to reduce them into perpetual slavery".

1492 Columbus reached the **Americas** and performed a ceremony to 'take possession' of all lands 'discovered' (meaning all territory not occupied by Christians). This led

to massacres and theft of land from Native Americans and others right across the world. While later popes denounced the dehumanization of Native Americans, none of the Papal Bulls have been repealed which declared all 'discovered' lands now belong to Europeans.

1537 Pope Paul III issued bulls condemning **New World slavery** strongly. The European colonisers claimed that the natives were animals without souls, but the Pope wrote in *Subliminus Dei*: "...the Indians themselves indeed are true men ... [We] decree and declare ...that the same Indians and all other peoples – even though they are outside the faith ... are not to be reduced to slavery."

In the 1430s Pope Eugene IV had already issued a papal bull that gave Spanish merchants just 15 days to release everyone they had enslaved or face excommunication.

Thomas Aquinas regarded slavery as an 'unmitigated evil'.

EUROPEAN DISCOVERY of AUSTRALIA

1605 Willem Janszoon sailed the *Duyfken* to the coast of western New Guinea. Then he crossed into the Gulf of Carpentaria, without being aware of the existence of Torres Strait. On 26 February 1606, Janszoon landed on the western shore of Cape York in Queensland, near the place where the town of Weipa is today. He is the first recorded European to land on Australian soil. He was searching for gold for a Dutch company, but reported that the country was "full of savage, cruel, black barbarians" who killed some of his men.

During the period from 1606 to 1770, a number of other Europeans visited the west and north of Australia, as well as Tasmania and the east coast. These included Dirk Hartog, Abel Tasman and LaPerouse.

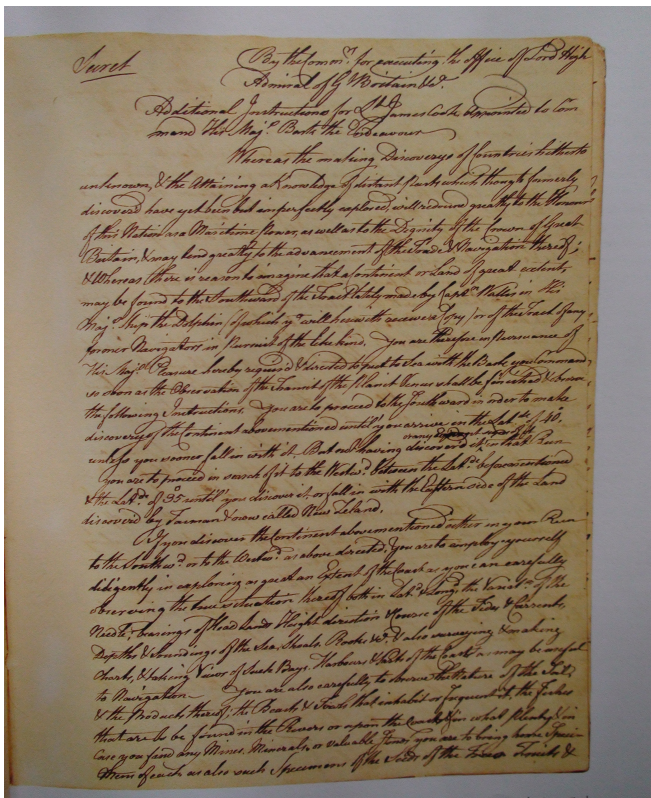
But Macassan tribesmen from Indonesia visited the north of Australia almost every year for over 400 years, staying for months at a time and sharing and trading with Aborigines.

Australian governments banned this trade early in 20th century because they couldn't tax it in these remote locations. Malay tribesmen also visited the land.

But none of these people claimed possession of any part of Australia.

What is particularly significant for Australia is that King Henry VII adopted the Doctrine of Discovery granting his explorers the right to assert dominion and title over all non-Christian lands with the Church's blessing.

1769-1770 Lt James Cook sailed from England on 13 April 1769 to take scientists to Tahiti to observe the transit of Venus across the sun. Then Cook opened sealed orders from the Admiralty for the second part of his voyage: to search the south Pacific for signs of the rich southern continent of *Terra Australis* that was thought to exist.



Cook's secret instructions from the British Admiralty

So Cook sailed around New Zealand and mapped it, then reached the south-eastern coast of Australia, **landing at Botany Bay on 29 April 1770**. His crew were the first recorded Europeans to land on the eastern coastline of Australia.

Cook's secret instructions from the Admiralty told him to "*cultivate a Friendship and Alliance*" with the 'Natives', "*shewing them every kind of Civility and Regard... You are also with the Consent of the Natives to take possession of Convenient Situations in the country in the name of the King of Great Britain... If you find the Country uninhabited take possession for His Majesty... as first discoverers and possessors.*" (Additional Instructions for Lt James Cook, 30 July 1768).

But the Botany Bay Aborigines tried to prevent Cook and his men from landing. After about 15 minutes of making signs to each other, Cook fired his weapon to force their way ashore to get fresh water and

explore their village and the area. One of the Aboriginal men was hit in the thigh from the musket shot.

So the nation of Australia was founded in violence and bloodshed.

Cook then sailed up the east coast of Australia to Cape York.

Cooktown: When they arrived near the Endeavour River, the ship ran aground on the Great Barrier Reef and was badly damaged, so they spent several months repairing it. During this time the crew had considerable interaction with the local Aborigines and some of the local Aborigines came on board the ship. There was some good and some negative interaction between the two races.

6 pm, 22 August 1770, Possession Island (Entries from Cook's Ship's Journal from the Endeavour) *"...I now once More hoisted English Colours, and in the Name of His Majesty King George the Third **took possession of the whole Eastern coast ... by the Name of New Wales together with all the Bays, Harbours, Rivers, and Islands, situated upon the said Coast...**"*

Cook also wrote in the ship's log that same day: *"We saw upon all the Adjacent Lands and Islands a great number of smokes—a certain sign that they are inhabited—and we have daily seen smokes on every part of the Coast we have lately been upon."*



*Captain Cook raises the Union Flag
on Possession Island,
22 August 1770*



So the nation of Australia was founded on lies and theft of land.

The Constitution used as the foundation of the Federation of Australia in 1901 is now seen as flawed by many people because of the way it regarded the native inhabitants as being non-human 'flora and fauna'. They were not included in drafting that Constitution.

In the same way, Afghan people came to Australia listed in ship's logs as 'cargo' along with their camels.

COMMENTS

There were actually **about 500 nations of Indigenous people already living in this land** for thousands of years before Cook claimed possession of the land. He took possession of the whole east coast of Australia from a single island off the north-west coast of Cape York. He made no formal agreement or treaty with any tribe or nation or clan, based on the **assumption that this land was 'terra nullius' – land belonging to no-one**, even though he had seen native people there earlier that same day and throughout the months of his travels up the eastern coast of this land.

In doing this, he disobeyed the King's orders, but when he returned to England he was not criticised for doing that, and eighteen years later (1788) the British invasion of Australia began, with massacres and theft of land right across mainland Australia and Torres Strait and Tasmania.

In 1975 a prominent Aboriginal activist wrote to the editor of *Today* magazine: "...Christianity has brought more misery and suffering to the people of the world than any other single disease in the history of mankind."

Many crimes have been committed in the name of God by people in the church. But **true Christianity is a spiritual, supernatural force that comes from God Himself, and is often misrepresented** by church leaders and people who claim to be Christians. Christianity is not just man's religious rules and actions in the church and society.

In the Book of Books, Jesus did *not* tell his followers to *force* people to become Christians or kill them if they resisted. That is what happened in the Crusades, and today terrorists are doing the same thing to Christians and people of other religions and races as a result of what happened to their ancestors in the Crusades.

What Jesus told His followers is this: *"I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you."* (Matthew 28 Verses 18-20)

MOVING ON

So, whatever has happened in the past, and whatever claims are being made from both sides of the story, we need to admit the past and act to put things right so we can move on together to make Australia the great land God created us to be.

Teams from a grass-roots recognition movement have been working on informing the whole of Australia of this history. They have asked Indigenous leaders and their representatives to come together to discuss plans for *A National Act of Recognition (NAR)*. (This is not connected to the Australian Government's Constitutional Recognition that started in 2010.) Teams from this grass-roots recognition movement have been travelling all over the land and consulting with Indigenous Australians for twenty years – beginning in June 1997 - without any government assistance. This is a people's movement based on factual records and aimed at making a change of heart in the whole nation.

Plans are underway for a national gathering of First Peoples leaders and representatives in Botany Bay in the coming months. If the First Peoples at this gathering give approval for holding *A National Act of Recognition*, planning will then begin **for a national gathering of all Australians to renounce the forced entry to the land at Botany Bay, and to renounce the lie of *terra nullius*** that was the basis for the British claiming possession of the east coast of Australia. If the First Peoples national gathering agree, this *National Act of Recognition* could take place in 2020 – 250 years after Cook claimed the land.

We have begun discussions with First Peoples in the Cape York region about also holding a **gathering on Possession Island** to refute the lie of *terra nullius* that Cook used as his authority to take possession of the east coast of Australia.

We expect that there will be a lot of interest from around the world in these gatherings at Botany Bay and Possession Island.

We invite all Australians to join in this process as a basis for moving on together with respect and unity.

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