

MONTHS IN REVIEW

JANUARY–MARCH

JANUARY

18/01

- MP Ken Wyatt, became the first Indigenous person to be promoted to the ministry as Minister for Aged Care and Indigenous Health

19/01

- The Queensland Police Service announced that they will be appealing against the Federal Court's landmark ruling in a discrimination case over a death in custody on Palm Island that awarded \$200,000 to Lex Wotton and his family.

26/01

- Invasion Day/Survival Day.
 - A record 35,000 people attended the Yabun Festival in Sydney.
 - 2000 people converged in inner Sydney for an Invasion day protest.
 - The peaceful protest turned violent after a small group began burning the Australian flag. The organiser of the protest, Laura Lyons, was saddened by the event, saying that flag-burning 'represents a violent act ... violence is not a part of our culture and we don't want to give our children the wrong impression'.
 - In Melbourne, a crowd of 50,000 people gathered at Federation Square for an Invasion Day protest. It is believed to have eclipsed the number of people who attended the earlier Australia Day march along Swanston Street.
 - The City of Fremantle replaced its Australia Day festivities for a 'culturally-inclusive alternative' celebration two days later.
 - In an independent poll, it was revealed that 54 per cent of Indigenous Australians were in favour of changing the date of Australia Day.

31/01

- Writer, director and actor Leah Purcell was announced as the winner of the Victorian Prize for Literature for her play 'The Drover's Wife'. The prize is Australia's most valuable literary prize.

FEBRUARY

02/02

- PM Malcolm Turnbull dissolved the Indigenous Advisory Council, the body established by Tony Abbott in 2013 to advise the prime minister on Indigenous issues.
- In *McGlade v Native Title Registrar* ('*McGlade*'), the Federal Court ruled that the Native Title Registrar does not have the jurisdiction to register an Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUA) unless it is signed by all registered Native Title Claimants. The decision put hundreds of ILUAs (representing billions of dollars for traditional owner groups) across the country at risk.

03/02

- The Australian National Audit Office released a scathing report of the Government's Indigenous Advancement Strategy, saying that its implementation was rushed and its processes did not meet minimum requirements.

09/02

- Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull appointed Australian of the Year finalist Andrea Mason and Indigenous education leader Chris Sarra to his Indigenous Advisory Council.
- June Oscar, a Bunuba woman from WA, who fought successfully for alcohol restrictions in remote communities and for the preservation of ancient languages, was announced as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner. She is the first Aboriginal woman to fill the role.

- Recordings of the last surviving fluent speaker of any Tasmanian Aboriginal language, Fanny Cochrane Smith, was inducted into the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World Register almost 120 years after the recordings were made.

10/02

- The Rugby League All-Stars game was held in Newcastle this year. Johnathan Thurston was awarded the Preston Campbell Medal as the best player on the field. The Indigenous All Stars team scored six tries to two in a convincing 34–8 win against the World All-Stars.
- Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull tabled the ninth *Closing the Gap* report. Only one of seven *Closing the Gap* targets to reduce Indigenous disadvantage was met.

15/02

- The Federal Parliament of Australia tabled the Native Title Amendment (Indigenous Land Use Agreements) Bill 2017, to resolve the uncertainty created by the Full Federal Court decision in *McGlade*, regarding Indigenous Land Use Agreements. The CEO of the National Native Title Council said ‘the bill reflects changes that the native title sector has been seeking for a number of years’.

24/02

- The Referendum Council held a First Nations Regional Dialogue in Darwin: delegates did not want the Constitutional reform process to be rushed and indicated they feel they are being rushed. Just as during previous Dialogues, agreement making or Treaty and Aboriginal governance was a dominant topic.

28/02

- The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights tabled its Freedom of Speech in Australia report. The inquiry focused on s 18C and 18D of the *Racial Discrimination Act*.

MARCH

05/03

- The Referendum Council held a First Nations Regional Dialogue in Perth: more than 100 Aboriginal leaders from across WA called for a Treaty between Aboriginal people and the Federal Government. They also agreed that a formal ‘voice to the Parliament’ would help address the lack of representation in government.

12/03

- The Federal Government announced its plan to amend s 18C of the *Racial Discrimination Act* to retain the offence of ‘intimidate’ on the basis of race, and replace the words ‘insult’, ‘offend’ and ‘humiliate’ with ‘harass’.
- The Referendum Council held a First Nations Regional Dialogues in NSW: The group agreed that a symbolic statement of acknowledgement in the Australian Constitution is not enough and that substantive reform is needed. A ‘voice to Parliament’ was identified as a strong priority by delegates.

19/03

- The Referendum Council held a First Nations Regional Dialogue in Melbourne: delegates warned that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will only accept substantive reform, not mere minimalism when it comes to constitutional recognition.

27/03

- The four teenagers who brought a civil case against the Northern Territory Government after they were tear gassed while being held at the Don Dale Detention Centre won their case, receiving compensation.