

## Indigenous Australians and the Law Post Apology: Lessons Learned from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody

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I would like to start by doing two things: first, acknowledging the Kurna people, the traditional owners of this land, and, second, by saying something about the honour that has been bestowed upon me tonight in being asked to give this lecture which is held in tribute to my good friend Elliott Johnston.

The land upon which we meet tonight forms part of the traditional lands of the Kurna people. I count myself amongst the number that considers it important that we acknowledge them and that we come together on their lands.

May I just take a moment to say something about why I consider acknowledgment of the traditional owners of our lands is so important.

You will appreciate that my views are those of a new Australian as opposed to a First Australian. Of someone whose thinking and whose identity continues to evolve, particularly as my knowledge of the first Australians grows.

As a new Australian, the history of this country and its first people forms part of my identity. As it does to every other Australian.

It is a history and people about which I learn more and more every day and to which I am extremely proud to be connected.

For me, although I am a new Australian, the history of this country's first Australians and their rich culture plays an important part in defining my identity as an Australian and our national identity.

When we acknowledge the first Australians we bring to the forefront of our consciousness the contribution they have made and continue to make to our national identity. We acknowledge their relationship with the land and the care they have taken of it.

We commit ourselves to them in the future and remind ourselves, that is, we new Australians remind ourselves, of the treatment we have meted out to the First Australians and of our commitment to addressing past wrongs.

In this way we grow. It is in this way that we reaffirm our commitment to reconciliation and to moving forward as one.

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\* This lecture was delivered in 2009. This chapter is an edited version of the written lecture text. The views expressed in this lecture are mine and mine alone. I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Nerissa Schwarz in its preparation.

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