

This list has been compiled by the National Museum of Australia, in consultation with an advisory panel of leading historians. It is intended to be a starting point for discussion. We invite you to help shape the list by visiting nma.gov.au/definingmoments.

at least 52,000 years ago	Archaeological evidence of first peoples on the Australian continent	1915	Australian troops land at Gallipoli
about 28,000 years ago	Earliest known Australian rock art engraved and painted	1916	Federal–state agreement for Soldier Settlement
about 20,000 years ago	Earliest evidence of the boomerang in Australia	1916–17	Conscription for military service overseas defeated in two referendums
about 12,000 years ago	Sea level rises, separating Tasmania from mainland	1917	Completion of Trans-Australian Railway linking Western Australia and the eastern states
about 5000 years ago	Arrival of the dingo, Australia's first domesticated species	1920	Country Party founded at national level
1606	Dutch explorer Willem Janssen becomes first European to map parts of the Australian coast	1920	Qantas established
about 1700	Makasar from Sulawesi visit northern Australia and trade with Aboriginal people	1924	Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association formed
1770	Lieutenant James Cook claims east coast of Australia for Britain	1932	Height of the Great Depression, with 32 per cent unemployment
1788	Captain Arthur Phillip establishes convict settlement at Sydney Cove	1932	Foundation of the Australian Broadcasting Commission
1792	Aboriginal warrior Pemulwuy leads resistance against Sydney colonists	1932–33	England cricket team in Australia on 'Bodyline' Ashes tour
1797	Introduction and improvement of merino sheep	1936	Tasmania's thylacine becomes extinct
1802–03	Matthew Flinders circumnavigates continent, which he names 'Australia'	1938	Sydney celebrates 150th anniversary of British settlement; Aboriginal leaders hold Day of Mourning
1813	Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth cross Blue Mountains	1942	Japanese bomb Darwin but are halted on Kokoda Track
1830	The 'Black Line' — settler force attempts to corral Aboriginal people on the Tasman Peninsula	1943	First women elected to Australian federal parliament
1836	Governor Richard Bourke funds Protestant and Catholic churches in New South Wales on equal basis	1944	Formation of Liberal Party of Australia
1838	Myall Creek massacre, New South Wales	1945	Florey, Fleming and Chain win Nobel Prize for developing penicillin
1851	Gold rushes in New South Wales and Victoria begin	1945	National introduction of unemployment and sickness benefits
1854	Rebellion of goldminers at Eureka Stockade, Ballarat, Victoria	1945	Australia plays a leading role in founding United Nations
1854	Australia's first railway line opens in Victoria	1945	Australian Government announces post-war migration drive
1856	Secret ballot introduced and all adult men given the vote, South Australia	1948	Australia's first locally made car, the Holden 48-215, launched
1856	Melbourne building workers win an eight-hour day	1949	Chifley government begins Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme
1858	First organised game of Australian Rules football	1949	Election of the Menzies government — the longest serving in Australian history
1859	Rabbits successfully introduced into Australia	1951	Australia signs ANZUS treaty with New Zealand and the United States
1861	First Melbourne Cup horse race	1954	Visit of Queen Elizabeth II, the first by a reigning monarch
1868	Convict transportation to Australia ends	1955	Split within Australian Labor Party; formation of the Democratic Labor Party
1868	Aboriginal cricket team tours England	1956	Television introduced in time for Australia's first Olympic Games, Melbourne
1872	Free, compulsory and secular education introduced, Victoria	1960	Australian Government lifts restrictions on export of iron ore
1872	Completion of the Overland Telegraph from Darwin to Port Augusta, South Australia	1961	Introduction of the oral contraceptive pill
1879	Australia's first national park created — (now Royal) National Park, Sydney	1966	Holt government effectively dismantles White Australia Policy
1880	<i>The Bulletin</i> established	1966	Gurindji strike (or Wave Hill walk-off) led by Vincent Lingiari
1880	Ned Kelly's last stand at Glenrowan, Victoria	1967	Australians vote overwhelmingly to alter the Constitution, allowing Aboriginal people to be counted in the Census and subject to Commonwealth laws
1885	Victorian Employers' Union formed	1970	Moratorium to protest Australian involvement in Vietnam War
1885	BHP begins mining silver, zinc and lead at Broken Hill, New South Wales	1972	Aboriginal tent embassy established in front of Parliament House, Canberra
1887	Chaffey brothers introduce irrigation on Murray River	1972	Conciliation and Arbitration Commission grants equal pay for men and women
1889	<i>9 by 5 Impression Exhibition</i> shows paintings by Tom Roberts, Arthur Streeton and Charles Conder, Melbourne	1973	Sydney Opera House opens
1890–91	Depression and strikes; formation of the Labor Party	1974	Cyclone Tracy hits Darwin
1894	Legislation introducing women's suffrage, South Australia	1975	Governor-General dismisses Whitlam government
1901	Inauguration of the Commonwealth of Australia	1976	Australian Government passes Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act
1901	White Australia policy enshrined in law	1978	First Gay Mardi Gras march, Sydney
1902	Commonwealth Franchise Act gives women the vote in federal elections	1978	Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) established
1903	William Farrer begins distribution of 'Federation' wheat	1983	Floating of the Australian dollar
1906	Australia takes control of Papua as an 'external territory'	1983	Protests against Franklin Dam in Tasmania lead to formation of the Greens
1907	Justice HB Higgins hands down 'Harvester Judgement'	1984	Australian parliament passes Sex Discrimination Act
1908	Legislation introducing national age and invalid pensions	1991	Port Hedland immigration detention centre opens
1911	Douglas Mawson leads Australasian expedition to Antarctica	1992	High Court decision in Mabo case establishes native title
1912	Australian Government introduces a maternity allowance	1996	Port Arthur massacre leads to tighter gun laws
1913	Foundation of Canberra as national capital	2000	Walk for Reconciliation across Sydney Harbour Bridge
1915	New South Wales Government gains unfettered power to remove Aboriginal children from their families	2001	Australian troops take control of <i>Tampa</i> carrying rescued asylum-seekers
		2002	Bali bombing kills 88 Australians
		2004	Australia signs Free Trade Agreement with the United States
		2008	National Apology to the Stolen Generations
		2009	'Black Saturday' bushfires kill 173 people in Victoria