

Examples of Aboriginal armed resistance

In some form or another armed resistance by Aboriginal people to the invasion of their lands occurred soon after the arrival of colonists in every part of Australia.

There are numerous examples of Aboriginal resistance and the list below is only some of these:

In NSW:

- the attack on Phillip at Manly in November 1790
- the campaign of Pemulwuy, 1790-1802
- Windradyne's campaign around Bathurst in 1824
- the 1838 outbreak of violent incidents with colonists from Moreton Bay in Port Phillip

In Tasmania:

- the Black War of the 1820s and 1828-1831

In South Australia:

- repeated attacks on colonists and 'overlanders' along the Murray River

In Western Australia:

- the campaign of Yagan, 1831-1833
- the 1894 Windjana Gorge Rebellion
- the campaign of Jandamarra or 'Pigeon'

In Queensland:

- the Fraser massacre in 1857
- the Battle of Bowen in 1860
- the Wills massacre in 1861
- the war of the Kalkadoons from 1878-1884

In the Northern Territory:

- attacks on Flinders and other early explorers
- attacks on the early settlement at Port Dundas
- attacks on the Overland Telegraph Line

In Torres Strait:

- the resistance of Kebisu and others in the 1880s and 1890s

Segregation and “protection”

1880 - A Protector of Aborigines is appointed in NSW. The Protector has the power to create reserves and to force Aboriginal people to live on them.

1883 - The Aboriginal Protection Board is established in NSW and takes over the administration of reserves. Aborigines at Maloga Mission on the Murray River are moved to Cumeroogunga. By the end of the 1880s several reserves have been established in NSW. Reserves are set up far enough away from towns so that contact with Europeans is limited. Segregation is a key part of Aboriginal Protection Policy.

1909 - The Aboriginal Protection Act of 1909 introduces powers to move people away from towns and reserves and leads to the institutionalisation of Aboriginal people.

1910 - There are 116 reserves totalling 10,500 ha, 65 per cent of these are created as validation of Aboriginal occupation or in response to requests for land.

1911 - The Aboriginal Protection Board ceases to defend tenure on reserves, and by 1915, is seizing reserve land to lease to whites. Of the 27,000 acres of reserve land, 13,000 are lost by 1927.

1920s - A number of organisations lobby for civil rights, self-determination and the abolition of the Aborigines Protection Board. The Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association is formed in 1925. The Australian Aborigines' League and the Aborigines Progressive Association soon follow. Amongst other things, the League calls for self-sufficiency on land claimed by right or prior ownership.

1938 - January 26 sees the first major political rally by Aboriginal people who gather in Sydney on Australia Day, calling for a "Day of Mourning" and protest over discrimination against Aboriginal people.

1940 - The Aborigines Act of 1940 introduces a new policy of "assimilation". The Protection Board is abolished and replaced by the Aborigines Welfare Board. In the name of assimilation, the Board concentrates on the revocation of reserves and the relocation of residents into towns. This policy is opposed by white rural communities and leads to struggles over segregation. White residents refuse to sell land to the AWB, thus denying Aboriginal people even a house block in their own country.