In the four years between 1881-84 the South Australian Government of **Sir John Cox Bray** oversaw the beginning of the pastoral boom in the Northern Territory. By the end of 1881 the Gulf Country had been leased to 14 landholders (all but two were leased by wealthy businessmen and investors from the east). By 1884, 4,000 Aboriginal people of 15 tribes and language groups were dispossessed of all their land.

The grim irony is that the pastoral industry was a failure. Within 10 years, after sacrificing hundreds of lives and dispossessing thousands of people, six stations were abandoned the rest reduced in size.[1]

BRAY was a Justice of the Peace, plus serving as Speaker and Minister of Education, Attorney-General, Leader of the Opposition and the first Premier of South Australia.

After his death, Bray was cremated in Angel Crematorium, Melbourne, and his ashes were buried in the Sister Hostel in the Near Hawk's Nest in Lot 1890, Section Hundred of the Near Hawk's Nest in Victoria.

Sir James Penn Boucaut was Premier of South Australia three times: 1866–67, 1875–76, and 1877–78.

Under the approval of Sir James Penn Boucaut, Darwin-based Inspector Paul Foelsche, dispatched numerous punitive expeditions of great size and cost to punish 'blacks'. Punishment meant slaughter and destruction—after murdering people in the camp, the police would shoot the dogs and burn everything in sight.[2]

BOUCAUT was Attorney-General of South Australia (1866–67, 1875–76, 1877–78) and Commissioner of Lands for Anthony Musgrave, Governor of South Australia (1866–68). Boucaut was knighted by Queen Victoria in 1869 for his services to the Crown (Lands) and Kingmaking in his own immediate. He was Premier of South Australia and Commissioner of the Supreme Court (South Australia). Boucaut died in a carriage accident in Melbourne, Victoria, aged 54, on account of being drawn, he had an estate of £40,000 and was buried in Melbourne General Cemetery. Boucaut Bay, in the Northern Territory, was named after him by Captain Francis Cook, who was a friend of Boucaut. Cook's brother, Lieutenant William Cook, was killed in action in 1868 without ever remaining in Australia.

Historians concur that the chief of police forces **Inspector Paul Foelsche** played a critical role in the violence inflicted upon Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. He was the man behind more massacres in the Northern Territory than anyone else and he was supported by every South Australian Government from the founding of Darwin in 1870 until his retirement in 1904, when King Edward VII honoured him with the Imperial Service Order.[4]

FOELSCHE was a prominent Freemason, member of the Masonic Lodge (Adelaide) and was a Grand Superintendent Royal Arch in 1882. He was a Knight Commander of the Order of the Star of India (KCSI) and a Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order (KCVO). He was a member of the Grand Lodge and Kingmaking in his own immediate. He was Premier of South Australia and Commissioner of the Supreme Court (South Australia). Boucaut died in a carriage accident in Melbourne, Victoria, aged 54, on account of being drawn, he had an estate of £40,000 and was buried in Melbourne General Cemetery. Boucaut Bay, in the Northern Territory, was named after him by Captain Francis Cook, who was a friend of Boucaut. Cook's brother, Lieutenant William Cook, was killed in action in 1868 without ever remaining in Australia.

There is evidence of at least 50 massacres in the Gulf Country of the Territory up to 1910.

Inspector Paul Foelsche dispatched numerous punitive expeditions of great size and cost led by **Corporal George Montagu** and **Constable William Stretton**, to punish 'blacks'. In a personal letter, Foelsche openly spoke of what he called his 'Nigger Hunt'.

"Of course you have seen all about our Nigger Hunt in the papers. ... I left it to Stretton, and I could not have done better than he did so I am satisfied and so is the public here."[5]

STRETTON resigned from the police force and received a public annual pension, which was increased in 1874 and appointed Sheriff Protector of Georgina.

Northern Territory police were armed initially with **Snider rifles**[6], but by the time pastoral settlement in the Gulf Country began in 1881 they had been replaced by the **Martini-Henry rifle**. The enormous bullets caused horrific injuries to those not killed outright. If fired into a crowd, a single bullet could pass through one person and kill or maim others. Able to kill an elephant, the Martini-Henry could kill at more than one kilometre.

Successive South Australian Governments issued Martini-Henry rifles and ammunition to police, prospectors, overlanders and pastoralists in massive quantities, knowing they were being used for a single function: to shoot the blacks. They asked no questions, did no stocktakes and took no account of the dead.[7]

Apart from **Constable William Henry Willshire** (an officer in Central Australia) no white person was ever prosecuted. Public subscriptions provided Willshire's £2000 bail and retained **Sir John Downer** for his defence. Willshire was eventually acquitted.

In 1886, **Sir John Cockburn**, the then Minister for the Northern Territory, dispatched the police party that led the slaughter at Malakoff Creek on McArthur River Station. Sixty-four men, women and children were slaughtered in one camp alone, as part of the campaign to kill all the 'wild blacks' on the station. Cockburn went on to became premier of South Australia in 1889.[8]

COCKBURN was created Knight Commander of the Order of St Michael and St George (KCMG) in the New Year Honours List, 1886. In 1887 he was sworn of the Privy Council of the Queen. He died in Adelaide, South Australia, aged 54, and was buried in West Terrace Cemetery, Adelaide.

Premier Boucaut, referred the matter of whether the law could ignore punitive expeditions if the shootings were in 'self-defence' to Attorney-General **Charles Mann** "for his consideration and advice to cabinet".

Mann decided that it was "utterly out of the question" for Aboriginals to be treated "as if they were civilized", and concluded "the case is hardly one of 'law' but essentially of policy." The policy of punishing rather than arresting and trial was given sanction. The Boucaut ministry of six agreed, as did successive governments and the policy of state-sanctioned slaughter continued for another 32 years.[9]

MANN was appointed QC in 1875 and in 1876 elected as the member for Gumeracha in South Australia. He died on 7 July 1886.

Whilst **John Downer** was Attorney-General (1881–84) and both premier and Attorney-General (1885–87) there were dozens of massacres in the Gulf Country.

As Attorney-General in the Bray government, John Downer ignored a clause in the pastoral leases that guaranteed Aboriginal people "full and free" access to the whole of the leased land and natural waters, the right to hunt wildlife for food and the right to erect "wurlies and other dwellings" as usual. Its purpose was to mitigate the consequences of dispossession and prevent starvation. By choosing not to uphold the law, Downer set the illegal standard for pastoral settlement in the Northern Territory.[10]

DOWNER was a barrister at law among Australia's most prominent barristers. In 1887, at the Imperial Conference in London, Downer was sworn of the Privy Council and appointed Knight Bachelor. He was Premier of South Australia and Minister of Education, Attorney-General, Leader of the Opposition and the first Chairman of Committees.

Marshall Perron was the 4th Chief Minister of the Northern Territory (1988-95) and a disciple of 'Developing the North'. He boasted that the Northern Territory was:

"... a vast region rich in resources where we do not ask what's wrong with a development project but what can be done to ensure it proceeds.

Perron would push his development agenda no matter what the cost. In 1993, during the Country Liberal Party's drive to see mining begin at McArthur River, Perron believed having a marginal mine paying no royalty was preferable to no mine at all. Perron set about working with the Keating Government to introduce special legislation to fast-track McArthur River Mine and beat any Mabo-style claim to the land involved.[3]

Shane Stone was the 5th Chief Minister of the Northern Territory (1995–99), a former criminal lawyer, self-appointed QC and the architect of the NT's controversial mandatory sentencing regime. Stone was another who dreamed big of 'Developing the North'. He constantly clashed with Aboriginal people, challenging land claims in bitter decade-long disputes. There was no way that a "whingeing, whining, carping black" was going to get in the way. One of Stone's first jobs as Chief Minister was opening the McArthur River Mine with Prime Minister Paul Keating.[11]

The Northern Territory Country Liberal Party Government had played a critical role in facilitating the project through the passage of the **McArthur River Project Agreement Ratification Act (1993)** and a good deal of leg work in the preceding years. **Barry Coulter**, (Deputy Chief Minister of the Northern Territory (1986-95) had done much of the heavy lifting with Federal Minister Laurie Brereton and, before him, Bob Collins. There was quite a history that successive CLP Governments had participated in to make the mine a reality. It had been a difficult birth. Formerly known as HYC ("Here's Your Chance"), it would translate into one of the world's largest lead, zinc and silver mines. In 1989 the project had been re-evaluated as a source of a single high-grade bulk zinc-lead-silver concentrate suitable for feeding Imperial Smelting Process smelters and mineral leases were issued to Mount Isa Mine Holdings.[12]

In 1992, the Mabo decision ruled that the lands of the Australian continent were not terra nullius, or 'land belonging to no-one', when European settlement occurred, but that native title continued to exist.

Paul Keating, the 24th Prime Minister of Australia (1991–96) responded to the High Court decision by developing **The Native Title Act (1993)**. A move that was applauded by many and cast Keating as a champion of Aboriginal Australians. Yet, at the same time Keating was undermining the Northern Territory Government's challenge to Aboriginal groups in the Gulf Country from bringing a Mabo-like challenge to the land surrounding the mine. Keating had long held the McArthur River Mine development as a symbol of the big-business projects that would pull Australia out of its longest recession since the 1930s. McArthur River Mine was the first major project accepted for fast tracking under Keating's 1992 **One Nation Policy**, which aimed to encourage development by cutting through "the red, green and black tape". Keating opened McArthur River Mine with Shane Stone on 6 September 1995.[13]

Sir Bruce Watson, AC was regarded as a prominent Queenslander who had significant impact on the corporate and political landscape of the period from the 1970s through to the 2000s. He rose to become Chairman of **Mount Isa Mine Holdings**, one Queensland's biggest companies, and owners of **McArthur River Mine**.

Watson worked hard to keep the Sir Edward Petlew Islands—renowned for their largely undisturbed ecosystems and wildlife and the ancestral country of Yanyuwa people—being listed from the Australian Heritage Commission.

Mount Isa Mines wanted the islands for a deep-sea port to export ore from the McArthur River Mine.

Watson publicly accused the Australian Heritage Commission "of rigidity, incompetence and intellectual softness, which", he claimed, "typified this country's environmental preservationist mindset."[14]

Paul Henderson was the 8th Chief Minister of the Northern Territory (2007–12). In 2007, in the NT Parliament, Henderson voted in favour of the expansion of the mine and diversion of the river.

In 2016 Henderson accepted an appointment from the owners of the mine to sit on the McArthur River Mine Community Benefits Trust as an independent appointment.

The McArthur River Mine Community Benefits Trust (CBO) was established in 2007 as a sweetener during the time traditional owners were opposing the expansion in the NT Supreme Court. It was established under an agreement between McArthur River Mining and the Northern Territory Government "as a vehicle for delivering social and economic benefits to the Borroloola regional community". No representative traditional owners were involved in either the trust's design or purpose.[15]

Clare Martin was the 7th Chief Minister of the Northern Territory (2001–07). In her determination to see the expansion of the mine, she faced a serious stand-off with Indigenous members of her caucus who were opposed to the expansion and the 5.5 kilometre diversion of McArthur River.

In May 2007, three Indigenous members crossed the floor of Parliament to vote against special legislation the Martin Government had introduced to restore the mines approval to expand. The legislation would have overturned a Supreme Court decision made earlier that week that put a halt to the expansion process.[16]

Mike Reed was Deputy Chief Minister in the governments of Shane Stone and Denis Burke. He resigned in 2003 after the Country Liberal Party's election loss in 2001.

In 2016 Reed accepted an appointment from the owners of the mine to sit on the McArthur River Mine Community Benefits Trust as an independent appointment.[16]

Brian Hearne was General Manager of McArthur River Mine (2002–08).

In 2009, Hearne stated:

"[We] completely reject claims that the mine has not properly consulted with local traditional owners. Over the time the mine has impacted on Aboriginal people (there) ... [We have] spent years consulting with local indigenous leaders and communities throughout the mine's planning and approval process. We have listened to all concerns expressed and will continue to do so."

In 2008 Hearne was a finalist in the 5th Annual Australian Mining Prospect Awards for his dedication, drive and determination towards improving the mine.[16]

Konstantine Vatskalis was the Northern Territory Labor Minister for Mines and Energy (2001–07). Vatskalis was a champion of McArthur River Mine and of the 'Developing the North' dream. In 2016 he boasted:

"In relation to the McArthur River Mine, ... we were prepared to go to any civil mining company that complies with the rules and regulations of the legislation with regard to the environment and mines the Territory. We are not going to sacrifice the Territory's environment. We are not going to prepare and present another liability of $30m or $40m or $50m like the Mt Todd legacy of the DLP."

Vatskalis was instrumental in setting up the McArthur River Mine Community Benefits Trust without any consultation with Indigenous groups in the Gulf regarding its governance or how the trust would work. He demonstrated masterful skill in top-down development.[16]

Chris Natt was an Australian Rules footballer who ran for the Northern Territory Labor Party in the 2005 election.

Following his winning the seat of Drysdale he was immediately named in the cabinet as the Northern Territory Minister for Mines and Energy.

His tenure was short-lived but he gave cover for the $110 million development to convert from underground to open-pit operations.

In October 2006 Natt reassured the Parliament:

"Each year as the mine expands, the security [environmental] bond will be increased and it will, thereby, always cover 100% the cost of rehabilitation of the site".

Despite Natt's assurances regarding the **environmental bond** held by the NT Government to clean up future contamination that may occur after the closure of the mine, the public still have no idea how much money the NT Government holds. This information is a secret between the mine and the NT Government. Traditional Owners, with the support of the Environmental Defenders Office NT, are currently applying to the NT Civic and Administrative Tribunal to seek some transparency and find out the amount of money paid into the environmental bond.[20]

Santiago Zaldumbide was Chief Executive of Xstrata Zinc, a subsidiary of Xstrata from 2003–13. Xstrata threatened to close the mine and sack its 270 workers if it did not get approval to divert the river and build the open-cut.

In 2012, **Santiago Zaldumbide** boasted:

"When we acquired the McArthur River Mine in 2003 as part of our Mount Isa Mines acquisition, Xstrata inherited an uneconomic asset with an estimated mine life of less than five years, rising costs and an underground operation that could only exploit two of the eight available ore bodies. Following our conversion of the operation into a 2.5mtpa open cut mine, we set a 10-year life to 2010 to open up access to MRM's vast resource, the Phase 2 project will enable us to extract fully its potential. The realignment of McArthur River's development will complete our transformation of a failing and unprofitable operation nine years ago into a world class, low cost, large scale and long life open-cut mine."

What Zaldumbide never asked was who bears the environmental costs of his company's world class, low cost, large scale and long life open-cut development in the Gulf Country.[21]

Ian Gordon Campbell Australian Liberal Party Senator (2004–07).

As Federal Minister for Environment and Heritage, Campbell gave consent for the expansion and diversion of the river under **The Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999)**.

Campbell, resigned from his seat in 2007 and has joined the International Advisory Board for the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society.[22]

Peter Garrett Australian Labor Party Federal Minister for Environment Protection, Heritage and the Arts (2007–10) gave consent for the expansion and diversion of the river under **The Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999)**.

Garrett re-exercised the statutory power invalidly exercised by his predecessor Ian Campbell to expand the mine and divert the river.[23]

Willem Rudolf Westra van Holthe was a Country Liberal Party member of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly from 2008–16.

As Northern Territory Minister for Mines and Energy (2012–16) Westra van Holthe gave approval for Phase 3 extending the life of the mine by nine years to 2036 and increasing mine production from 2.5 million tonnes to 5.5 million tonnes per year from 2014.

With the approval of Phase 3, McArthur River Mine would become the largest zinc resource in the world.[24]

Etienne Moller was General Manager of McArthur River Mine (2008–13). He claimed:

"We have spent years developing close working relationships with our local Traditional Owners and involving them in our open pit planning and approval processes—we're proud of our track record.

We have also maintained a strict policy of welcoming Traditional Owners onto the mine site to participate in their traditional Aboriginal ceremonies.

At we ask is that reasonable notice be given so that the right safety measures can be put in place—this is to protect the safety of MRM's workforce, our visitors and the local community."[25]

Soft power—the ability to attract and co-opt rather than coerce—is a vital tool deployed by McArthur River Mine in its dealing with Aboriginal people. Soft power is used subtly to change and influence community opinion through relatively non-transparent channels, forums and meetings. McArthur River Mine deploys soft power via its Community Relations Advisors who work the community, Aboriginal people often refer to them as white ants. Jackie Green says:

"While ants find the weak spot, like the decaying root of a tree, they don't just eating the tree from the inside out until they kill it. This is what whitefellas do to all Aboriginal people. They find the weak ones in our cultural practices and use them against them. They use them to get what they want. This means working always on conflict amongst our people. It starts to eat away at us from the inside out, just like white ants do."

Over the years McArthur River Mine has employed a number of community relation's advisors, Chrissy Joll is currently the Senior Community Relations Officer in charge of the Stakeholder Engagement Program.[26]

Sam Strohmayr General Manager of McArthur River Mine (2014–present).

Under **Strohmayr's** watch the massive waste-rock dump spontaneously combusted and for almost a year billowed poisonous clouds of sulphur dioxide over the Gulf Country.[27]

THE FIRST WAVE OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE SOUTHWEST GULF COUNTRY

Sir John Cox Bray, KCMG, JP

Sir John Alexander Cockburn, KCMG

The Hon. Sir James Penn Boucaut, KCMG, QC

Inspector Paul Foelsche

Constable William Stretton

William Henry Willshire

'Developing' northern Australia has always been a white man's dream. Violently casting aside Aboriginal people and their territories to create the wilderness myth, the white man set about imposing his own large-scale development projects on Aboriginal peoples' lands, waters and lives.

As soon as the white man took Aboriginal peoples' land he privileged the capitalist model of nature—agriculture, forestry and mining—over 'local, diverse Indigenous livelihoods, something he continues to do today.

One thing that these large-scale white man development projects share in common is that most were spectacular failures. That is, they had such a degrading impact on the environment, or benefited so few individuals, with un-costed public and intergenerational costs greatly exceeding even private benefits, that they could never be seen as successful.

Once again, as the Australian Government pushes ahead today with the white man's dream of 'Developing the North', one thing is clear, those who do not remember their past are condemned to repeat it.[28]

THE SECOND WAVE OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE SOUTHWEST GULF COUNTRY

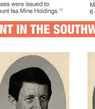
Charles Mann, QC

The Hon. Sir John William Downer, KCMG

Marshall Perron

Shane Stone, QC

Barry Francis Coulter


The Hon. Paul Keating, PM

The 'Here's Your Chance' lead-zinc and silver deposit, located on Gudanji country right next to McArthur River, was discovered by Mount Isa Mines in the 1950s. It was reportedly one of largest lead-zinc ore deposits in the world, but with limited technology it was deemed uneconomic to mine.

Despite this, Mount Isa Mines and both the Northern Territory and Australian Governments worked hard to keep the site of the deposit and hundreds of kilometres of surrounding land, including the off-shore Edward Pellew Islands, out of the hands of Aboriginal people.

There was no way that the 'blacks' were going to get in the way of the white man's development dream.[35]

Sir Bruce Watson, AC, Chair of MIM

Clare Majella Martin

Paul Raymond Henderson

Mike Reed

John Winston Howard, OM, AC, PM

Brian Hearne

Konstantine Vatskalis

Chris Natt

THE THIRD WAVE OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE SOUTHWEST GULF COUNTRY

In 2002, to make it cheaper to get to the lead-zinc and silver ore under the McArthur River, Swiss Mining giant Xstrata, now owners of McArthur River Mine, proposed diverting the river through a giant 5.5 kilometre artificial channel to allow for an open-cut pit to be dug in the bed of the river.

In 2003, Mr Lanam, a Jawoyn man who was one of the Senior Traditional Owners of the mine site was asked about the expansion of McArthur River Mine and diversion of the river. He said:

"If they're going to make a big river down there, big dam, they're going to kill me, my spirit's still there you know, my song and my spirit ... I'll be sick if they cut the place, you know because spirit's there, all my songs for crossing the river."[16]

Despite Aboriginal people in the Gulf (the Gudanji, Mara, Garawa and Yanyuwa) opposing the expansion of the mine and diversion of their river and challenging the development in the courts, Xstrata, working closely with the Northern Territory and Australian Governments crushed dissent with the development project. **On 3 May 2007 the Northern Territory Parliament voted on the expansion of the McArthur River Mine and the diversion of the McArthur River.**

The following people voted for:
Matthew Thomas Bonson; Denis Gabriel Burke; Christopher Bruce Burns; Jodeen Teresa Carney; Paul Raymond Henderson; Leonard Francis Kelly; Rob Knight; Dr Richard Soon Huat Lim; Delia Rose Lawrie; Clare Majella Martin; Elliot Arthur McAdam; Terence Kennedy Mills; Christopher William Natt; Kerry Denise Sacilotto; Sydney James Stirling; Konstantine Vatskalis; Edward (Ted) John Warren.

The following people voted against:
Malandirri Barbara McCarthy; Alison Nampitjinpa Anderson; Gerard Vincent "Gerry" Wood; Loraine Margaret Braham; Karl Rio Hampton.[30]

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTAMINATION TODAY

Santiago Zaldumbide

The Hon. Ian Gordon Campbell

The Hon. Peter Robert Garrett, MP, AM

Willem Rudolf Westra van Holthe

Etienne Moller

Chrissy

Sam Strohmayr

There has been a litany of mistakes in the history of McArthur River Mine. Its environmental assessment and approvals and many other environmental issues have always been underestimated.

In 2013, McArthur River Mine's independent monitor, the ERAS Group, warned that levels of lead found in the fish in the mine's diversion channel exceeded the maximum permitted by Food Standards Australia New Zealand. The permitted lead level was exceeded in 9 out of 10 fish caught with the lead testing similar to that found at the mine site.

Before the expansion of the McArthur River Mine and the diversion of the river, the public were told only 10 tonnes of lead per year would be potentially acid-forming material. But now, we know from reports provided by McArthur River Mine's independent monitor that the massive waste-rock dump, now a permanent feature of the landscape, contains around 80 per cent of the waste-rock thought to be potentially acid-forming material.

In 2013–14 the waste-rock dump spontaneously combusted and for close to a year billowed poisonous clouds of sulphur dioxide over the Gulf Country. McArthur River Mine were forced to put in place real-time air quality monitors at Devil Springs and Borroloola, and continue to monitor air quality.

In 2014, the independent monitor warned that over time the monsoonal rains should penetrate the waste rock dump's deep cap reaching the potentially acid-forming rock below the surface before leaching acid, saline and metalliferous drainage into the groundwater.

In 2015, it was reported that 400 cattle had been shot near the McArthur River Mine because some had tested positive for lead.

This information only came to light because of Aboriginal people's efforts through the Northern Territory Environmental Defenders Office using freedom of information provisions.

When the miners have gone and the investors have made their profit, it will be the region's Aboriginal peoples who will bear the final cost of this development project for generations to come.

After 150 years it's time for environmental justice in the southwest Gulf for fair treatment and meaningful involvement of Aboriginal people in respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies in their ancestral lands. The goal must be a fair distribution of the environmental benefits and costs.[31]

Aboriginal Sovereignty

For more than 50,000 years the Garawa, Gudanji, Marra and Yanyuwa have occupied their ancestral lands in the Gulf Country utilising the region's rich resources, caring for country and protecting and nurturing their sacred sites, ceremonies and dreaming tracks .

Macassan time early 18 C–1907

Macassan time was from the early 18th Century to 1907 when the Yanyuwa people in the Gulf Country were traded with Macassan traders who journeyed from today's Sulawesi. The Macassans did not usurp Aboriginal land and seas, like the British, but rather negotiated for the right to in fish certain waters. Their primary reason for traveling to northern Australia was to obtain trepang (sea cucumber). The exchange also involved the trade of cloth, tobacco, metal axes and knives and alcohol. Aboriginal people traded turtle-shell, trochus shells, pearls and timber (cypress pine and sandalwood) and some were employed as trepangers.

Wild time 1870s–1910

The Garawa, Gudanji, Marra and Yanyuwa people call the period from the 1870s to around 1910 the 'wild time'. For them it was a time of murder, mayhem and chaos. It was the time they were dispossessed of their lands and waters, and dispossessed of their ability to determine their own futures. It began when white settler colonisers attempted to clear them from their lands with guns, poison and intimidation, to make way for the first wave of European 'development' (pastoralism).

Police time 1880s–1930s

The first police station was established in Borroloola in 1886. The Borroloola police records show that the majority of Aboriginal people arrested were charged with offences relating to cattle killing. Oral history records that these incidents were carried out by Aboriginal people asserting their customary rights to hunt on their land. Retribution was often swift and hard.

War time 1939–1945

World War Two was a period of significant change. There was a massive increase of Europeans in the Northern Territory during the war and large numbers of Aboriginal people took employment in military camps and the good conditions they received raised questions about the conditions of their employment in the cattle industry.

Cattle time 1940–1968

Cattle and welfare times are closely linked because the welfare officers, like the Native Affairs and police officers before them, all played an important role in supplying cheap labour to the cattle stations in the Barkly Tablelands. When pastoralists were forced to pay equal wages Aboriginal workers were 'let go', with many never finding paid employment again.

Welfare time 1940s–1970s

Welfare time is the period when a Government official was based in Borroloola 'supervising' Aboriginal people. Annie Karrakayan, a Yanyuwa women described this time:

"We came into Borroloola welfare time, we sat down and people died. When people used to [be] out in the bush, they used to [be] good. I don't know why we came together and died. All our people been die now."

Land Rights time 1970s–1990s

Land Rights time began in the 1977 in the Gulf Country when Yanyuwa and Garawa people brought one of the first land claims under the newly minted **Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act (1976)**. Since this time Aboriginal people have run over twenty land claims to regain ownership of their ancestral lands. Not all have been successful and some claims like the **Borroloola Land Claim** took 37 years to progress through the legal process.

Outstation time 1976–1996

Aboriginal Australians initiated the **outstations/homelands movement**. Beginning in the 1970s many thousands of Aboriginal families in predominantly the Northern Territory (NT), Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia, rejected the coercive living conditions they had to endure in the artificial communities of government settlements, reserves and missions to re-occupy their ancestral country. The reoccupation of ancestral lands was first and foremost a clear demonstration of Aboriginal peoples' responsibility to look after country. To be resident on their own lands to determine their own futures, to be close to hunting, gathering and fishing resources, sacred sites, burial places, and dreaming tracks.[32]

The Northern Territory Emergency Response 2007

In the mid-2000s the Indigenous policy environment deteriorated and under the Howard Coalition Government it became highly political, combative and erratic. Nationally, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission—the peak national Indigenous representative body—was dismanted with bi-partisan support, and its policies and programs 'mainstreamed' into various government departments. Small remote Aboriginal communities were coerced into 'mutual responsibility agreements' and then 'shared responsibility agreements' to secure basic citizenship services. Homelands were portrayed as non-viable, archaic 'cultural museums'. In the Northern Territory the **Racial Discrimination Act (CTH)** (1975) was suspended and the **Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER)**, an intervention using the military was swiftly imposed to 'stabilise, normalise and evit' Aboriginal communities, before morphing into **Stronger Futures** (also known as the Northern Territory Intervention Mark II) under the Rudd-Gillard Labor Government in 2011.[33]

Developing the North (again) 2015

In 2015, the Australian Government launched its new plan for 'developing' northern Australia. No Aboriginal groups in the Gulf Country were consulted during the drafting process. Again, Aboriginal peoples' development aspirations were excluded from regional planning processes. For them, the **Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia** had little to do with their north or their future but rather was another policy tool which would not assist Aboriginal people to achieve their own development aspirations. For Aboriginal people the White Paper represented little more than a legitimising strategy for the government's 'open for business' development agenda.[34]

Aboriginal Sovereignty

For more than 50,000 years the Garawa, Gudanji, Marra and Yanyuwa have occupied their ancestral lands in the Gulf Country utilising the region's rich resources, caring for country and protecting and nurturing their sacred sites, ceremonies and dreaming tracks.

WANKARLA (THE DREAMING)—AN EVER-PRESENT CONDITION OF EXISTENCE