

Native Title recognises the traditional rights and interests to land and waters of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by law. Many activists such as Eddie Mabo were very fervent about Native Title and fought to achieve legal rights in association with their land, along with other factors such as black community schools and education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders equal to that of the white community. Eddie was most passionate about traditional land ownership of Indigenous Australians and the inheritance system that his community followed on Mer Island (AISTSIS 2016). Eddie Mabo was an Indigenous Australian man who fought for Native Title, where his actions led to positive changes for Indigenous Australians.

Eddie Mabo won Native Title rights for the Indigenous people of Australia. In 1981, Mabo made a speech, where he explained his people's beliefs about the ownership and inheritance of land on Mer. A lawyer heard the speech and asked Eddie if he wished to challenge the Australian Government in the court system, to decide who the true owner of land on Mer was — his people or the Australian Government (Reconciliation Australian 2016). Mabo focused his energy to campaigning for Indigenous Native Title rights and is known his role in the landmark High Court "Mabo case", which led to the introduction of the Native Title Act, 1993. Native Title is the legal recognition that some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have rights to certain land because of their traditional laws and customs (Reconciliation Australian 2016). According to Reconciliation Australia, when the British arrived, they declared that Australia was *terra nullius* (empty land – or land that belongs to nobody). As a result, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' occupation of a unique connection with the land were not recognised, and the British took the land without agreement or payment (Reconciliation Australian 2016). Once Mabo discovered that the land didn't belong to his people he stated, 'No way, it's not theirs, it's ours' (AISTSIS 2016), in which Mer Islanders decided they would be the ones to challenge the legal principle of *terra nullius* in the High Court and that Eddie Mabo would be the one to lead that action. This decision recognised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have rights to the land – rights that existed before the British arrived and can still exist today (Reconciliation Australian 2016). The Mabo decision was a turning point for the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Native Title rights, because it acknowledged their unique connection with the land. It also led to the Australian Parliament passing the *Native Title Act* in 1993. (Australian Government 2017)

In 1967, the Townsville Aborigines and Islander Health Service was founded by Eddie, with the aim to give Indigenous Australians basic health facilities as well as education on diseases and other factors regarding remaining healthy. At the time only white people could access Health Services, Mabo stated that the facility was to ensure that the Indigenous people of this country could access health services as well (AISTSIS 2016). Mabo's belief goes into depth saying everyone in Australia should be able to access Health Services despite the colour of their skin. The program setup further demonstrated that all Australians have the same needs therefore should all have the same rights and privileges. Mabo's actions led to the founding of the Health Services for the Indigenous Australians allowing them to access same government facilities of those with white skin. (AISTSIS 2014)

Eddie Mabo co-founded and directed a black community school in Townsville. His zealous focus and work with the community further led to progressive changes for greater civil rights for Indigenous Australians and the rest of Australia. For the first time, indigenous Australian kids received the right to be educated about their culture, and European. Mabo's vision for the school was to bring