



Australia's Indigenous People

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Why in News?

Recently, the Proponents for constitutional change in Australia and creating an **Indigenous Committee** conceded defeat in a referendum that aimed to create an **Indigenous Voice to Parliament**.

- The referendum required majorities in at least **four of the six Australian states**, as well as a **national majority, to pass**.
- The proposed referendum sought to amend **Australia's Constitution** to officially recognize the **First Peoples of Australia**, which includes both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.



Who are Indigenous Australians or Aboriginals?

- **About:**
 - Indigenous Australians are the Aboriginal and **Torres Strait Islander** people of Australia, **descended from groups** that existed in Australia and surrounding islands **prior to European colonization**.
 - Indigenous Australians are the **original inhabitants of the continent**, with a history **dating back at least 45,000 years**. However, European colonization in the 18th century had **severe and lasting impacts on these communities**.
 - These communities account for **only 3.8% of the Australian Population**.



- **Diversity:**

- In present-day Australia these groups are further divided into local communities. At the time of initial European settlement, over **250 languages were spoken**; it is currently estimated that 120 to 145 of these remain in use, but only 13 of these are not considered endangered.

- **Past Wrongs and Threats:**

- Historical policies, such as the forced removal of indigenous children (Stolen Generations), land dispossession, and discrimination, have resulted in **social and economic disparities**.
- Indigenous Australians often **face lower life expectancy, higher rates of disease**, and inadequate access to education and other services.

- **Australian Efforts and Recognition:**

- Australia has taken steps to address historical injustices, such as the "**Bringing Them Home**" report, which recognized and **apologized for the Stolen Generations**.
- National inquiries and apologies have **sought to acknowledge past wrongs**.
- Voting rights were granted to **indigenous Australians in 1962**, and the High Court's 1992 **Mabo decision recognized native title over certain lands**.
- Since 1995, the Australian Aboriginal Flag and the Torres Strait Islander Flag have been among the official flags of Australia.