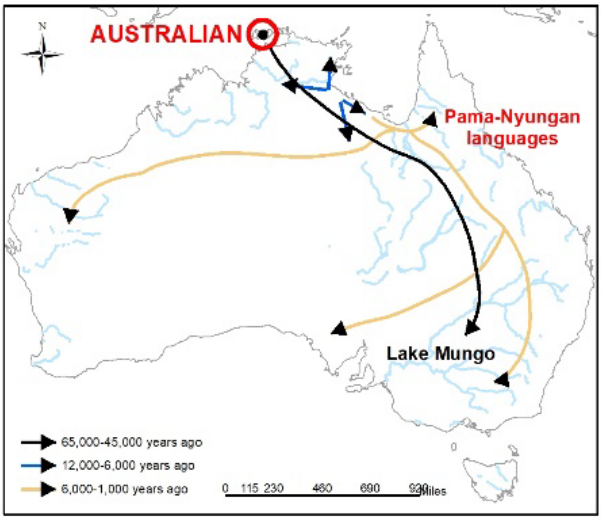
7.Australian

Homeland. Australia was settled, of necessity, by sea. Genetic analysis suggests that there were several settlements of Sahul (now Australia and New Guinea) from Sunda and its archipelago. The most obvious landing point for settlers of Australia – across the strait from Timor – remains a region of dense settlement, and I adopt it as the proposed homeland for Australian languages. Nevertheless, settlers in Australia quickly explored the vast space of the continent: the Lake Mungo site of the earliest known human remains in Australia is in today's New South Wales, far away to the southeast.



Linguists have confirmed that the Pama-Nyungan languages arose somewhere in northeast Australia, 5000 years ago, and spread to over 90% of Australian territory. But no linguistic consensus has developed over the subdivision of the Pama-Nyungan languages or the subdivision among other language groups formed earlier.

Concise Spreadsheet: recognized genetic groups within Australian

Australian		
	Arandic	
	Gngalakgan	
	Gunwinyguan	
	Mirndi	
	Ngumpin-Yapa	
	Nyulnyulan	
	Yarli	
	Pama-Nyungaan	
		(numerous subgroups)

Full Spreadsheet: see "7.Australian," listing Australian languages by groups and subgroups.

Pleistocene Changes.

65,000–45,000 years ago. Genetic and archaeological records suggest human occupation of Australia as early as 60,000 years ago and no later than 50,000 years ago.

45,000–21,000 years ago. Population appears to have been densest in the northern, more well-watered regions of Australia.

21,000–12,000 years ago.

Holocene Changes.

12,000–6000 years ago. Pama Nyungan languages spread from northeast Australia to the south and west, overlaying the great majority of previous languages except in the north of Australia.

6000 years ago–1000 CE.

Commentary and Debates. Specialists are in consensus that there exists a single phylum of all Australian languages, but they have not agreed on subfamilies within the phylum. R. M. W. Dixon announced a subclassification of Australian in 1980: he has since disavowed it but continues to agree that Australian is a single phylum.

The Pama–Nyungan languages are agreed to have spread from northeastern Australia across most of the continent within the past 5000 years: they are thus assumed to have overlaid most previous language groups. Ongoing efforts to classify the earlier language groups of northern Australia plus the Pama–Nyungan languages have yielded partial results, which are indicated in the Concise Spreadsheet for Australian.

Bowern argues that "Australia must have been settled via New Guinea" (Bowern 2010, 3850). This thesis argues that Sahul was settled only once, through New Guinea, and that settlers spread rapidly through the continent. Bowern and others agree that the Australian phylum separated from Indo-Pacific roughly 37,000 years ago.

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