

Eddie Koiki Mabo

Eddie Mabo was born on the 29th June 1936 on the island of Mer in the Torres Strait. He is a proud Torres Strait Islander, born to the Piadram clan. Eddie Mabo is most well known for being an activist for the land rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Mabo decision was his main achievement.

Eddie Mabo was born in the village of Las in the Torres Strait. When he was born his name was Eddie Koiki Sambo and his parents were Robert Zesou Sambo and Poipe (Sambo) Mabo. He was the fourth child in his family. His mother died not long after he was born. He was adopted by his Uncle Benny and Aunty Maigo.

Eddie was married in 1959 to Bonita and they had ten children. Some of Eddie's first jobs were working as a cane cutter on pearling boats and on the railways as a fettler. After he worked as a gardener at James Cook University at the age of 31. At this time he began to fight and campaign for their land. He believed it was unfair that his family had owned the land of Mer for fifteen centuries but this was not recognised.

Eddie went to school at James Cook University and got an education. He also worked with his community so that Aboriginal kids could have an education and a school. Eddie Mabo worked with the Communist Party, because they were known for helping Aboriginal people.

For 18 years Eddie campaigned, worked and made speeches to get Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land rights. Finally on the 3rd of June 1992 the Government finally said yes to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land rights. The new law is now called the Mabo law.

Eddie Mabo died on 21 January 1992 from cancer. In 1993 Eddie Mabo was the Australian of the Year 1992 by the Australian Newspaper. In 2008, the James Cook University library was named after him. Eddie Mabo will always be remembered by the people for his involvement in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land rights.