

## Australia: Fighting to Save Our Islands from Climate Change

By [Makiba](#)

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*Did you know that one of Australia's First Nations people are preparing to evacuate from their islands due to climate change?*

[Eddie Mabo](#) did not fight for land only to lose it to climate change.

*Zenadth Kes*, also known as the Torres Strait Islands, are experiencing climate change first-hand with the threat of rising sea levels.

Losing a piece of land would affect every Island nation across the waters and on the mainland. The devastation caused by climate change would spread throughout Indigenous communities across Australia.

Our culture seeps into the land.

The food, dances and songs, tradition and ailan kastom (island custom) are based on the ecosystem and environment. Ceremonies, rituals and cultural events were given birth on the islands. To lose the land would be extremely traumatising for all *Zenadth Kes* Islanders.

We refuse to abandon our homes as our tradition and culture are meaningless without our mother. We are spiritually woven into the land. The islands play a significant role in our lives: they provide food, shelter, comfort and love. These islands are viewed as our libraries: they contain ancient wisdom, knowledge and stories.

The Queensland government must be held accountable as this matter is serious. Climate change is badly affecting my people. The constant burning of coal and other fossil fuels is melting the polar ice caps that, in turn, allow my islands to be eaten by the ocean.

Our islands are our home even though they are sinking. Coconut trees are no longer able to withstand king tides.

The government can do so much more to prevent further damage.

I'm a city boy, born and raised on Yuggera and Turrubul lands of *Meanjin* (Brisbane). Late last year, at 16 years old, I made my journey home for the very first time.

The moment I planted my feet onto the sand, I felt a strong sense of connection. It was as if my ancestors were calling on me to return home to witness the destruction of climate change, hoping that I may become a voice to advocate for them.

Despite being brought up in the city, I remind myself that my elders walked upon the sacred lands of Masig and Poruma and that they were fearless seafarers and warriors.

Even though they are gone, I hear them still calling through my prayers and island songs.

As I did, I would want other *Zenadth Kes* mainlanders to travel home and discover their identity and for those that live there to continue preserving it as best they can.

I do pray that sometime, sooner rather than later, the Queensland government will step in and help my people of *Zenadth Kes* take on the struggle and fight the rising of seas.

In truth, I fear losing my island.

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*Makiba is a proud man from the islands of Masig and Poruma in the centre of the Torres Strait. Visit his website [here](#).*

*Featured image: The Torres Strait is under threat from climate change, exacerbated by governments' support for fossil fuels. Masig Island. Photo: Makiba*

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