

Indigenous activist Robbie Thorpe leads Camp Sovereignty at Kings Domain 30

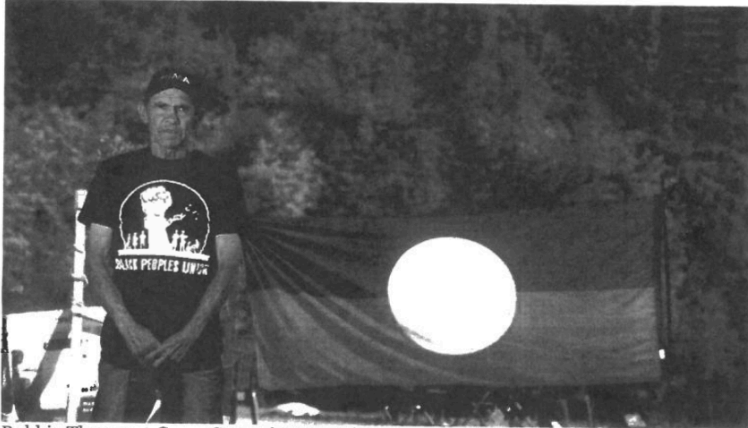
A group of dedicated Indigenous activists are calling for Kings Domain to be returned to the Aboriginal community, setting up camp at the site until their demands are met.

Brittany Busch
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Prominent Aboriginal activist Robbie Thorpe has set up camp at Kings Domain, and intends to remain “forever” — or until the area is returned to the Indigenous community.

A small but dedicated group of protesters led by Mr Thorpe — the uncle of Independent senator Lidia Thorpe — is calling for the land to be given back to the people of the Kulin nation, and become a place for education and healing.

Known as the Kings Domain Resting Place, the site is a burial ground for the remains of 38 Aboriginal people repatriated by the Museum of Victoria in 1985.



Robbie Thorpe at Camp Sovereignty at Kings Domain. Picture: Andrew Henshaw



Camp Sovereignty set up at Kings Domain. Picture: Andrew Henshaw

The Gunaikurnai man organised a 60-day sit in at the location 18 years ago, but this time plans to remain “forever”.

“They’re exactly the same issues back then as there are now,” Mr Thorpe said.

“Nothing’s changed.

“We’re making people aware of the issues as peacefully as we can.

“We want a stone house built here, a cultural interpretation centre.

“(People) can take part in a ceremony or learn what these places are about.

“This whole area is full of Aboriginal culture.”

The group is also demanding the area be renamed, removing any reference to the King or the “Windsor crime family”.

"We want to call it Camp Sovereignty, or its proper name, Yalukit Willam," Mr Thorpe said.



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Camp Sovereignty at Kings Domain in 2006. (L—R): Robbie Thorpe, Kevin Buzzacott, Robert Corowa, Ringo Terrick and Robbie Thorpe Jnr around the sacred fire.

Chairs and cushions encircle a ceremonial "ceasefire peace fire" that has been burning since January 26, after the activists made their way to the site at the conclusion of the "Invasion Day" march.

The group are sleeping on mats and in sleeping bags, there are tables for communal food preparation, and piles of firewood to keep the fire burning.

"We're about peace, healing, teaching, education and cultural awareness," Mr Thorpe said.

"We're the proper custodians... The land needs us and we need our land.

"If we don't win here, we got nothing to go to.

"Where do you go for a dose of Aboriginal culture close to the CBD?"

He said the group wanted to work with the City of Melbourne, and had complied with orders to remove tents and marquees from the space.

A meeting took place on Wednesday morning between the protest organisers and council members.

The Aboriginal elder said similar fires were burning in Brisbane, Sydney and Canberra, and if he was moved along, he would set up somewhere else.

"We're not going away," he said.