

Giant outdoor sculpture aims to be a powerful conversation starter

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Josh Dye

Perched on the Barangaroo headland, punched from a sheet of steel 5.5m high, stands a single, powerful word: ALWAYS.

The 30-tonne, 28m sculpture is an unmissable, mute reminder of the time in Australia's history before the Europeans arrived.

For artist Jacob Nash it is a statement about truth, ownership and protest.



*Artist Jacob Nash with his sculpture ALWAYS at Barangaroo Reserve in Sydney.
CREDIT: DOMINIC LORRIMER*

"It is a declaration around the fact that this land always was and always will be Aboriginal land. And we didn't give our land – it was taken away," he says.

While challenging us to acknowledge the past, the sculpture also looks forward with hope.

"I really do have a strong emphasis on the future. *Always will be* is about the future," Nash says. "We have to be optimistic. As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, we're resilient people."

The sculpture has two distinct sides. The front appears rusty, while the back is a mirror.

"If you approach the word from the back side, you look through these letters and see a reflection of yourself and the city behind," says Nash, who understands some may interpret the work as divisive, but hopes it sparks a conversation and ultimately builds bridges.



Artist Jacob Nash hopes the sculpture sparks a national conversation. *CREDIT: DOMINIC LORRIMER*

"I've never really seen it as confrontational. I see it as a proclamation of truth," he says. "We're struggling with identity as a nation and how we deal with the past. The amazing thing about art is it gives people a way to talk about it."

As Australia Day nears and the 'change the date' debate simmers, Nash hopes people will engage with the sculpture with an open mind.



The 30-tonne, 5 metre high sculpture of the word "ALWAYS" at Barangaroo symbolises the declaration "always was, always will be Aboriginal land". Vision: Sydney Festival.

"For some people, it will be about discovery. Hopefully, it will engage them in a way that they understand more, that they can engage in Indigenous culture around this time of the year.

"You can't go forward without recognising the past. I hope it starts a conversation, a national dialogue. Let's talk about these issues."

<https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/art-and-design/giant-outdoor-sculpture-aims-to-be-a-powerful-conversation-starter-20190124-p50taz.html>