

Pedro Fernandez de Quiros was born in Evora, Portugal in 1563. A devout Catholic, he had a vision to see the Indigenous people of the South Pacific become Christians. He also had a passion to find the large unknown south land (Terra Australis Incognita) that was believed since ancient times to cover an area between South Africa and South America and balance the northern and southern hemispheres. I believe it was actually God's heart for the souls of Indigenous people to be saved that rested on de Quiros and became his lifelong passion.

Outfitted with 3 ships, de Quiros left Peru, a Spanish colony, in December 1605. Having visited a number of islands, he landed at Matantas or Big Bay on what is now called Espiritu Santo, the largest island of Vanuatu, formerly the New Hebrides. He thought he'd found the unknown south land. He waited 2 weeks before declaring an Act of Possession of all the lands south of there to the South Pole for the Trinity, the Catholic Church and the King of Spain so he could time it for Pentecost, 14 May 1606. It was done with great pomp and ceremony and he called the land *Australia del Espiritu Santo*, the South Land of the Holy Spirit. *Australia* referred to Austria as the King of Spain was a Hapsburg but I have seen a translation that says *Austral del Espiritu Santo*, *Austral* meaning south.

This Act of Possession is often regarded by Christians in Australia and the Pacific as a prophecy that they would be the South Lands of the Holy Spirit and prayers have gone up for revival etc. However what de Quiros said was not really a prophecy but a declaration. You could call it a prophetic declaration as it was declaring the future or an apostolic declaration because de Quiros had the authority of King and Pope behind him.




Unfortunately, it was declaring ownership of land over the top of the rights of Indigenous people to their land. Also de Quiros set up a government and appointed his men to government positions. As the Indigenous people defended their land when the Spanish conquistadors took land for a stockade and church by force, the chief and other Indigenous people were killed. This grieved de Quiros as he often expressed his love for the Indigenous people in his travels.

De Quiros' expedition might look like a failure as he did not find the unknown south land and he did not evangelise the Indigenous people. He kidnapped two boys from Espiritu Santo and they died at sea having declared themselves Christians. Despite this, others came after them and the nations of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific are nominally Christian nations, though not predominantly Catholic. Maybe de Quiros' declaration has had some effect in the spiritual realm in achieving this.

My book *The European Quest to Find Terra Australis Incognita: Quiros, Torres and Janszoon* covers the Spanish and Dutch quest predominantly as this has been left out of Australian history books. Dutchman Willem Janszoon in the *Duyfken* or *Little Dove* was the first European to make contact with Australian soil in March 1606 at Mapoon on West Cape York and my book covers his contact with Aboriginal people there. Janszoon was sent out from present day Indonesia by the Dutch East India Company looking for spices and gold. This was 164 years before Captain James Cook explored the east coast of Australia. I cover some of the English and French exploration. I also cover reconciliation events for the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of de Quiros' declaration and in recent years.


De Quiros and his second in command, Torres, got separated in a storm and there was talk of mutiny. In ill health, de Quiros returned, sailing to Mexico. Torres went on to find a strait, later named after him between New Guinea and what in 1824 became known as Australia (after Mathew Flinders' recommendation). Torres sailed through the Torres Strait 6 months after Janszoon's landing in 1606. Neither Janszoon nor Torres realized that they had found the elusive South Land.

In a tale of drama and suspense, the true story of the quest to find the Unknown South Land – Terra Australis Incognita is told. It has fascinated people since ancient times.

Many Australians were taught Englishman James Cook discovered Australia but Cook came 164 years later than the Dutch and Spanish explorers. The Indigenous people were there from time immemorial. Quiros thought he'd discovered the south land when he landed at today's Vanuatu. Torres continued and found the Torres Strait separated New Guinea from the south land. Despite all the passion of the Spanish quest, the Dutch under Janszoon beat Torres to Australia by about six months in 1606. They had deadly encounters with the Aboriginal people of western Cape York, Queensland.

Barbara Miller is married to Norman, an Aboriginal Australian. They live in Cairns, Australia with son Michael. Her recent book "William Cooper, Gentle Warrior: Standing Up for Australian Aborigines and Persecuted Jews" has been widely acclaimed. Barbara is a pastor, mediator, psychologist, sociologist and teacher with an active interest in social justice.



"This is a highly insightful coverage of the main historical characters in the early European exploration of the South West Pacific, a topic which is virtually unknown to most Australians. Miller deftly contextualises the men: Quiros ('the Don Quixote of the South sea'), Torres and Janszoon with their voyages in the 16th and 17th centuries. Similarly, she places the actions of these adventurers in the context of the respective Indigenous responses to contact. From the Wik at Aurukun and the Tjungundji and others around (Old) Mapoon on the west coast of Cape York Peninsula, to the descendants at Big Bay on Vanuatu and other Melanesian groups, the author brings the reader up-to-date with the reconciliation process and the Indigenous perspective on these early European contacts. This is a valuable contribution to not only understanding Australian history, but is also relevant to the Islands of Melanesia, Papua New Guinea and Indonesia."

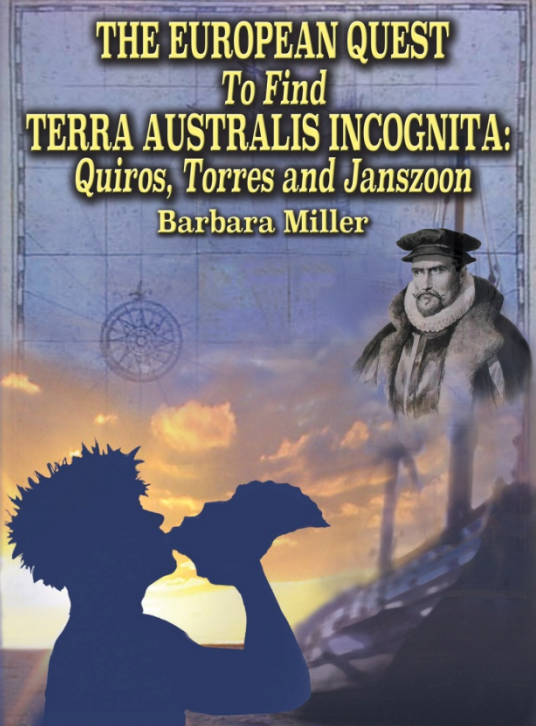
Dr Timothy Bottoms, author of Conspiracy of Silence – Queensland's frontier killing times (Allen & Unwin 2013)

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## THE EUROPEAN QUEST

### To Find TERRA AUSTRALIS INCOGNITA: Quiros, Torres and Janszoon

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...I take possession of all this part of the south as far as the pole in the name of Jesus- which from now on shall be called The Southern Land of the Holy Spirit ...

Captain Pedro Fernandez de Quiros 1606

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