



ourcommunity.com.au

A musical performance

Musical performance by

Ziggy Ramo

Musician

Communities in Control Conference
Moonee Ponds, Melbourne, and online,
Monday–Tuesday, May 23–24, 2022

Video and audio versions of this presentation are available at
www.communitiesincontrol.com.au

About the presentation

Ziggy Ramo is a singer and songwriter known for his lyricism and storytelling ability. The son of an Aboriginal and Solomon Islander father and a mother of Scottish heritage, Ziggy's experiences with racism in Australia have led him towards activism, both in his music and in the wider world. Through his music, Ziggy aims to tell the story of Australia's true race history, so that we can move forward and find answers that will help us improve. Ziggy captured the attention of the Australian public with his single "Little Things", a heartfelt update of Paul Kelly's "From Little Things Big Things Grow" which put forward a First Nations perspective on invasion, intergenerational trauma and deaths in custody.

Denis Moriarty

I like to say [Communities in Control] is so much more than a conference, it is a movement. I always say that a vital piece of a movement is good music, and we're lucky enough to be blessed by the presence of a great musician, artist and activist – and the community sector loves activists, as the only ones to change the world. I'd like to invite Ziggy Ramo to the stage. He's just there, and his offsider, Abbie von Bertouch.

Ziggy Ramo is a singer and songwriter known for his lyricism and storytelling ability. The son of an Aboriginal and Solomon Islander father and a mother of Scottish heritage, Ziggy's experiences with racism in Australia have led him towards activism, both in his music and in the wider world. Through his music, Ziggy aims to tell the story of Australia's true race history, so that we can move forward and find answers that will help us improve. Ziggy captured the attention of the Australian public – and myself – with his single "Little Things", a heartfelt update of Paul Kelly's "From Little Things Big Things Grow" which put forward a First Nations perspective on invasion, intergenerational trauma and deaths in custody.

Ziggy and his partner had a baby last week, so big congratulations on that, and also on your activism. Please make Ziggy and his amazing partner – not partner in life but music partner – Abbie von Bertouch. Thank you.

Ziggy Ramo

Thank you so much for your warm welcome. My daughter actually is in the NICU [Neonatal Intensive Care Unit] department at the moment, so that's been very challenging. She's a week old today and I think it's given me a lot of perspective of what I have lived through and what I'm sure will be ahead of her to endure. And it's not something I want her to live through, but I'm also not naive to the space in which we occupy. And a lot of the time when I think I speak of an acknowledgement of country, there is reflection on what has been done. But I think I would also like to acknowledge what is continued and what we have allowed to continue, because we are at the precipice of talking about a treaty. But that hasn't happened. Not to say that we don't remain hopeful and we don't keep our



position of carers for both people and country. But I'd like to acknowledge that that optimism also has to be followed with action. And we need to be at the centre of that action, because good intentions don't always equate to good outcomes, especially when our voices, our self-determination and autonomy has been removed. It's heavy. Because the truth is our history is heavy. To deny that weight is to deny the truth. And I hope that we as a people and as countries have the strength to deal with that heaviness, because the longer we ignore it, the heavier it becomes. And that weight on individuals like myself and people within my community becomes almost unbearable. And it is not something that I would like to pass down to my daughter.

This song that I'm going to play for you is called "Little Things". It is a perspective that I have both had the privilege and burden of carrying, but I hope that by sharing it, it allows an insight or a alternative to maybe things you have been taught otherwise. Because this change that I desire for my daughter is one that we collectively must come together and address.

[Sings]

Gather 'round people, and I'll tell you a story

Two hundred years of history that's falsified

British invaders that we remember as heroes

Are you ready to tell the other side?

We started our story in 1493

With a piece of paper called the Doctrine of Discovery

Invoked by Pope Alexander the sixth

Without this good Christian, our story don't exist

From little things, big things grow

From little things, big things grow



Captain James Cook, he boarded a fleet
And he was armed with the Doctrine of Discovery
The same tactics were used by Columbus
It's how today Australia claims Terra Nullius
Cause on that paper, the pope did write
That you're only human if you've been saved by Christ
And if there are no Christians in sight
The land you stumble on becomes your God given right
From little things, big things grow
From little things, big things grow
Is that your law? Cause that's invasion
That's the destruction of five hundred nations
That's the genocide of entire populations
Which planted the seeds for the Stolen Generation
And grew into my people's mass incarceration
Now we pass trauma through many generations
But your Lord can't discover what already existed
For two hundred years, my peoples have resisted
From little things, big things grow
From little things, big things grow



The wars continued since Captain James Cook
And this side of history, you don't write in your books
You don't want the truth and you don't want to listen
But how can you stomach Australia's contradiction
'Cause we went to war in 1945
We were allies against a terrible genocide
And I know it's uncomfortable but the irony I see
Is that you fought for them, but you don't fight for me
From little things, big things grow
From little things, big things grow
We should move on
Move on to what?
'Cause I still remember. Have you forgot?
That Vincent Lingiari knew others were rising
Gurindji inspired us to keep on fighting
So call it Australia, go on call it what you like
I just call it how I see it and I see genocide
Now that you hear me, can you understand?
There can never be justice on our stolen land
From little things, big things grow



From little things, big things grow
This is the story of your so-called Australia
But this is the story of so much more
How power and privilege cannot move our peoples
We know where we stand, we stand in our law
From little things, big things grow
From little things, big things grow
From little things, big things grow
From little things, big things grow
From little things, big things grow
From little things, big things grow
From little things, big things grow
From little things, big things grow
From little things, big things grow
From little things, big things grow
From little things, big things grow
Since 1991, four hundred and forty-one
Indigenous Australians have died in custody
The casualties of a war that never ended

But we are not yet defeated
Always was, always will be
Sovereignty was never ceded.



[Speaks]

Thank you all so much for holding space for me to be able to share that. Although at times it can be a lot to carry, what we carry, being able to share it sometimes alleviates a little bit of that weight. The one thing that I would ask of you leaving is to have a quick look at the number of deaths in custody. I wrote this song kind of at the end of 2020, start of 2021. And when I wrote that song, the number was at 441. So to be under the illusion that things have stopped is one I would ask you to consider. So if you wouldn't mind becoming an active member, I ask you to educate yourself on what that number is now.

Thank you all so much. I hope you have a lovely and nourishing time here. It's been a privilege to be able to share with you, so thank you so much.

Denis Moriarty

And likewise, what a privilege for us. Thank you very much.

ENDS

MORE INFORMATION

For reports, audio, transcripts and video from the 2022 Communities in Control conference and from previous years, visit www.communitiesincontrol.com.au.

