

King Charles heckled by Indigenous senator Lidia Thorpe at Australia's Parliament House

King Charles has been heckled by an Indigenous Australian senator, who called for a treaty and accused the crown of stealing Aboriginal land, as he concluded a speech at Parliament House in Canberra. Charles, on a five-day visit to Australia with Queen Camilla, addressed MPs and senators in the Great Hall of Parliament House on Monday. It was a key moment of his inaugural visit to Australia as monarch.

As he finished the speech – which covered his time as a school student in Australia, the Covid pandemic and Australia's vulnerability to the climate crisis – Lidia Thorpe, an independent senator from Victoria, approached the stage yelling “this is not your country”.

“You committed genocide against our people. Give us our land back. Give us what you stole from us – our bones, our skulls, our babies, our people,” shouted Thorpe, who is a fiercely outspoken advocate for Indigenous rights. “You destroyed our land. Give us a treaty. We want a treaty in this country. You are agenocidalist.”

As security officers escorted her to the doors, she shouted: “This is not your land. You are not my king. You are not our king.” Earlier, as Thorpe waited among invited guests inside the Great Hall before the royal couple entered, the senator turned her back on a large video screen when it showed King Charles standing to attention outside during the official welcome and the playing of the national anthem. Before the king's speech, Albanese and the opposition leader, Peter Dutton, welcomed Charles and Camilla to Parliament House, thanking them for standing with Australians in good times and bad. Albanese called it one of the honours of his life to have led the Australian delegation attending the king's coronation and praised the king's engagement on issues including the climate crisis and reconciliation.

“You have shown great respect for Australians, even during times where we've debated the future of our own constitutional arrangements and the nature of our relationship with the crown,” Albanese said. “Nothing stands still.” (...) Abbott is an avowed royalist, who caused widespread national outrage in 2014 for reintroducing the knights and dames honours system to Australia and then awarding the title to Prince Philip. Businessman Dick Smith, another guest at the reception, said the disruption was an illustration of Australian democracy. “That's the wonderful part of our democracy – that she's not going to be put in jail,” he said.

Kate Lyons and Karen Middleton, *The guardian*, 21 Oct 2024