



Let's talk...

26 January



What does 26 January mean to you? A day off, a barbecue and fireworks? A celebration of who we are as a nation? A day of mourning and invasion? A celebration of survival?

Australians hold many different views on what 26 January means to them.

For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, it isn't a day for celebration. Instead, 26 January represents a day on which their way of life was invaded and changed forever. For others, it is Survival Day, and a celebration of the survival of people and culture, and the continuous contributions Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make to Australia.

On the eve of 26 January, and in the spirit of reconciliation, we would like to recognise these differences and ask you to reflect on how we can create a day all Australians can celebrate.

On this day in...



From around 40,000 BC the continuing culture and traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples flourishes across the country.

1788 The First Fleet lands on Australian shores, and Captain Phillip raises the Union Jack as a symbol of British occupation.¹

1818 26 January is first recognised as a public holiday in NSW to mark the 30th anniversary of British settlement.²

1938 Re-enactments of the First Fleet landing are held in Sydney, including the removal of a group of Aboriginal people. This practice of re-enactment continued until 1988, when the NSW government demanded it stop.³

¹ <http://www.australiaday.org.au/australia-day/history/timeline/>

² <http://www.australiaday.org.au/australia-day/history/timeline/>

³ <http://www.australiaday.com.au/about/history-of-australia-day/1889-1938-2/#.UsT1GtIW3bM>

1938 Aboriginal activists hold a 'Day of Mourning' aimed at securing national citizenship and equal status for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.⁴

1968 Lionel Rose becomes the first Aboriginal Australian to be named Australian of the Year. At the time he noted "One hundred and eighty-two years ago one of my mob would have been a dead cert for this."⁵

1972 The Aboriginal Tent Embassy is established on the lawns of Parliament House, Canberra, in reaction to Prime Minister William McMahon's Aboriginal policy.⁶

1988 The Aboriginal community stage a massive march for *Freedom, Justice and Hope* in Sydney, followed by the Bondi pavilion concert that preceded the Survival Day Concerts. 1988 was named a "Year of Mourning" for Aboriginal people, and also regarded as a celebration of survival.⁷

1992 The first Survival Day concert is held in Sydney.⁸

2000 Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue, a member of the Yunkunytjatjara peoples of Central Australia, delivers the annual Australia Day address and calls for a conversation on changing the date of Australia Day.⁹

2014 Townsville Council officially celebrates both Survival Day (on 24 January) and Australia Day (on 26 January).¹⁰

Some quick statistics...

15,000 Australians attended the *Freedom, Justice and Hope* march in 1988 to celebrate the survival of Aboriginal people and culture.¹¹

Around **16,000** people attend the Yabun festival—the single largest Indigenous festival in Australia, and one of the most important music events in the country—in Sydney to mark 26 January each year.¹²

9 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been awarded Australian of the Year since the award began in 1960.¹³

In 2014, there are **14** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander state and territory finalists for the Australian of the Year Awards.¹⁴

⁴ <http://www.australiaday.org.au/australia-day/history/timeline/>

⁵ <http://www.australianoftheyear.org.au/honour-roll/?view=fullView&year=1968&recipientID=68>

⁶ <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2012/07/05/timeline-aboriginal-tent-embassy>

⁷ <http://www.australiaday.com.au/about/history-of-australia-day/1939-1988-world-war-ii-bicentenary/#.UsT2PdIW3bM>

⁸ <http://www.australiaday.org.au/australia-day/history/timeline/>

⁹ <http://svc050.wic027p.server-web.com/whatson/australiadayaddress2.aspx?AddressID=10>

¹⁰ <http://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/invasion-day-here-to-stay/story-fnjfzs4b-1226771688379>

¹¹ <http://www.australiaday.com.au/about/history-of-australia-day/1939-1988-world-war-ii-bicentenary/#.UsT5idIW3bM>

¹² Source: Gadigal Information Service

¹³ <http://www.australianoftheyear.org.au/honour-roll/?view=landing&year=2014>

¹⁴ <http://www.australianoftheyear.org.au/>

Watch...

[Watch Mick Dodson](#) accepting his 2009 Australian of the Year award and [Adam Goodes](#) accepting his Award in 2014, espousing his hope for all Australians to work for reconciliation.

What they said...

“For me, the most important first step to reconciliation is dialogue. For me, this means participating in mainstream national events and ensuring that the Indigenous voice is heard...I would however make a strong plea for a change of date. Let us find a day on which we can all feel included, in which we can all participate equally, and can celebrate with pride our common Australian identity.”

Dr Lowitja O’Donoghue, Australian of the Year 1984

“The great majority of Indigenous people want to live in one Australia; want to share in its destiny; want to participate in and contribute to its progress; but at the same time, want the recognition and respect that their status and millennia-old civilisation so clearly warrant.”

Sir Gustav Nossal, Australian of the Year 2000



“It is one thing to acknowledge the fact of invasion; it is quite another to celebrate it.”

Michael Mansell, Lawyer and Indigenous rights activist, upon refusing his Senior Australian of the Year 2014 nomination

“For [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders], it must be a day of disaster.”

Manning Clark, Australian historian

Take action...

Change your view on Australia Day by seeing an event different to the traditional barbeque or fireworks, such as attending the [Yabun Festival](#) in Sydney, or a Survival Day concert in Melbourne, Adelaide or Perth.

[Read Dr Lowitja O’Donoghue’s Australia Day address in 2000](#), discussing how it is possible to both celebrate being Australian, while acknowledging and seeking to address the wrongs done to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the past.

[Check out the nominations for the 2016 Australian of the Year](#), or nominate someone for the 2017 Australian of the Year Awards.

Register your support for [reconciliation in Australia](#) and [sign up to support the Recognise campaign](#).

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