



RECONCILIATION AUSTRALIA

Five Fast Facts – NAIDOC Week

NAIDOC Week celebrates the achievements and culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

NAIDOC Week is a celebration of the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Every year NAIDOC Week celebrations are centred on a theme chosen by the national organising committee. This year the theme **‘Unsung Heroes- Closing the Gap by Leading Their Way’** aims to recognise the quiet achievers in Indigenous communities and illustrate how Indigenous people themselves are taking ownership of closing the gap.

2. NAIDOC Week’s origins can be traced back to 1938.

The origins of NAIDOC Week can be traced back to the Aboriginal rights movement. On Australia Day 1938, protestors marched through the streets of Sydney about the status and treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. This protest was one of the first major civil rights gatherings in the world and it became known as the “Day of Mourning”. Between 1940 and 1955 the Day of Mourning was held annually on the Sunday before Australia Day and was commonly known as “Aborigines Day”. In 1955 it was decided that Aborigines Day should include a celebration of Aboriginal culture, heritage and achievement. This is now celebrated as NAIDOC Week, which highlights the achievements of Indigenous people all over Australia.

NAIDOC stands for ‘National Aborigines and Islanders day Observance Committee’ which was the name of the committee that was originally responsible for organising the national NAIDOC Week activities and over time the acronym has become the name for the entire festival.

3. NAIDOC Week is celebrated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

NAIDOC Week is primarily celebrated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in recognition of their culture, history and achievements. These celebrations are often open for other Australians to participate in too. NAIDOC week is a great time for Australians of all different ethnic backgrounds to learn more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Many schools, government offices, universities, churches and businesses organise their own cultural and learning NAIDOC Week activities.

4. The NAIDOC Week Awards recognise the achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Each year during NAIDOC week, communities all over Australia celebrate and recognise the achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders within their local communities. Local councils often present awards to people who have made a contribution to the community.

National awards are presented at the National NAIDOC Week awards ceremony. The awards are presented to inspirational Indigenous people in ten different categories including: Person of the year, Elder of the year, Artist of the year, Apprentice of the year, Scholar of the year, Youth of the year, Sportsperson of the year and the Caring for Country award. In 2009 Professor Larissa Behrendt, a lawyer and author was awarded Person of the year for her leadership in Indigenous rights advocacy.

NAIDOC Week celebrations also include a national poster competition which provides an opportunity for Indigenous artists to showcase their work across Australia. Indigenous artists are invited to submit artwork based on the national NAIDOC theme. The winning artist has their work reproduced on the NAIDOC Week poster which is distributed and displayed right across Australia.

5. All Australians can participate in NAIDOC Week celebrations.

Capital cities and most towns organise public celebrations for NAIDOC Week. The national NAIDOC Week website lists some of these events at naidoc.org.au

Here are some other ways to celebrate NAIDOC Week and learn more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: