

Calendar of Significant Aboriginal Dates

National Events



JAN 26

Survival Day

On January 26 1788 Captain Arthur Phillip took formal possession of the colony of New South Wales and raised the British flag in Sydney Cove. In the early 1880s, this day was known as 'First Landing', 'Anniversary Day' or 'Foundation Day'. In 1946 the Commonwealth and state governments agreed to unify the celebration and call it 'Australia Day'. The day became a public holiday in 1818 and since 1994 has been celebrated.

However, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people feel that this day marks the commemoration of a deep loss - loss of their sovereign rights to their land, loss of family, loss of the right to practise their culture. This day is therefore also known as 'Invasion Day', 'Day of Mourning', 'Survival Day' or, since 2006, 'Aboriginal Sovereignty Day'. The name Survival Day emphasises that Aboriginal culture is still strong, and that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' identities are positive and alive, despite all that has happened since colonisation. Survival Day has become one of the biggest national Indigenous cultural events.*

MAY 26

National Sorry Day

Commemorating 'Sorry Day' was a recommendation of the Bringing them Home report, which was tabled in parliament on 26 May 1997. On this day memorials and commemorative events honour the Stolen Generations.

JUN 3

MABO Day

Mabo Day marks the anniversary of the High Court of Australia's judgement in 1992 in the Mabo case. The Mabo case, led by Eddie Koiki Mabo, argued that Terra Nullius should not have been applied to Australia as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a unique connection with the land.

AUG 4

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day

National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Children's Day celebrates the strengths and culture of Indigenous children.

SEPT 13

Anniversary of UN Declaration of Rights of Indigenous People

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly during its 61st session at UN Headquarters in New York City on 13 September 2007.

FEB 13

The anniversary of the National Apology

On 13 February 2008 the then Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd MP delivered a national apology to the Stolen Generations on behalf of the Australian Government for past laws, policies and practices that have impacted Australia's First Nations Peoples.

MAR 21

Harmony Day

Harmony Day celebrates the cultural diversity of Australia and the importance of inclusiveness, respect and sense of belonging for everyone who calls Australia home.

MAY 27

Anniversary of 1967 Referendum

In 1967, after 10 years of campaigning, a referendum was held to change the Australian Constitution. 90 per cent of Australians voted to give the government power to make laws for Indigenous people and recognise them in the census. This change was seen by many as a recognition of Aboriginal people as full Australian citizens.

JUL 1

Coming of the Light

The Coming of the Light is a holiday celebrated by Torres Strait Islander people. This day is marked by cultural ceremonies which are held on the anniversary of the day the London Missionary Society arrived in the Torres Strait on 1 July 1871.

AUG 9

International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

The day was proclaimed by the United Nations in 1994 to promote the protection and rights of Indigenous people and celebrate the achievements and contributions of indigenous people.

MID MAR

National Close the Gap Day

Every year the National close the Gap day aims to raise awareness of the gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and raise support for achieving Indigenous health equality.

APR 5

Bringing them home

On the 5 April 1997, 'Bringing them home' was launched as the final report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families.

The report is a tribute to the strength and resilience of many thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people adversely affected by forcible removal. We remember and acknowledge the sorrow of all the children who will never come home - for them, their parents, their communities and all Aboriginal people.**

MAY 27 - JUN 3

National Reconciliation Week

National Reconciliation Week is an opportunity for all Australians to join the reconciliation conversation and reflect on shared histories, contributions and achievements. The week is framed by two key events in Australia's history, 27 May which is the anniversary of the 1967 referendum and June 3 which marks the historic Mabo decision of the High Court of Australia to recognise native title.

MID JUL

National NAIDOC Week

NAIDOC (National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee) week celebrates the history, culture, contributions and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

SEPT 4

Indigenous Literacy Day

Indigenous Literacy Day raises funds to improve literacy levels and increase opportunities for Indigenous Australians living in remote and isolated regions. The day was proclaimed by the United Nations in 1994 to promote the protection and rights of Indigenous people.

*Sourced from

www.mccc.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Aboriginal-and-Torres-Strait-Islander-Significant-Dates-2019-with-explanation-002.pdf

**Sourced from

education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/aec/aboriginal-education-in-nsw-public-schools/aboriginal-significant-dates-calendar