

Calendar of Significant Aboriginal Dates

26 JANUARY

Survival Day

On 26 January 1788, Captain Arthur Phillip claimed possession of New South Wales and raised the British flag at Sydney Cove. In 1946, this date was officially marked as "Australia Day." However, for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, it is recognised as "Invasion Day," symbolising the colonisation and dispossession of First Nations peoples. Others observe it as a "Day of Mourning," reflecting on Australia's violent colonial history. "Survival Day" highlights the resilience of First Nations peoples and the enduring strength of their cultures despite the ongoing impacts of colonisation.

13 FEBRUARY

Anniversary of National Apology Day

On 13 February 2008, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd delivered a formal apology on behalf of the Federal Government to the Stolen Generations. This historic apology acknowledged the forcible removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, which caused deep intergenerational trauma. It remains a pivotal moment in Australia's reconciliation journey.

MARCH

National Close the Gap Day

Observed on the third Thursday of March, National Close the Gap Day raises awareness of health inequalities faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It advocates for improvements in healthcare, education, employment, and wellbeing to reduce the life expectancy gap between First Nations and non-Indigenous Australians, highlighting the urgent need for systemic change.

21 MARCH

Harmony Day

Harmony Day celebrates Australia's cultural diversity, promoting inclusivity, respect, and belonging for everyone who calls Australia home. Established in 1999, the day encourages appreciation for the contributions of multicultural communities and fosters national unity.

5 APRIL

Bringing Them Home Report

On 5 April 1997, the Bringing Them Home report was tabled in Parliament. This landmark document detailed the devastating impact of the Stolen Generations on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It shared their stories of pain and resilience and called for government action to address the intergenerational trauma caused by these policies.

26 MAY

National Sorry Day

National Sorry Day, first observed in 1998, acknowledges the impact of policies that forcibly removed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families. Stemming from a recommendation in the Bringing Them Home report, the day is an opportunity for reflection, healing, and a commitment to reconciliation.

27 MAY

Anniversary of the 1967 Referendum

On 27 May 1967, over 90% of Australians voted "yes" in a historic referendum to amend the Constitution. This change recognised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the census and empowered the Federal Government to make policies addressing systemic inequalities. For many, it marked a critical step toward equity and inclusion.

27 MAY – 3 JUNE

National Reconciliation Week

National Reconciliation Week is framed by two key milestones: the 1967 Referendum (27 May) and the High Court's Mabo decision (3 June). The week encourages all Australians to reflect on the shared histories and ongoing journey towards reconciliation, fostering understanding and unity.

3 JUNE

Mabo Day

Mabo Day commemorates Eddie "Koiki" Mabo's landmark victory in the High Court in 1992, which recognised Native Title rights and overturned the false doctrine of terra nullius. This decision acknowledged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners of the land and remains a defining moment in Australia's history.

1 JULY

Coming of the Light

Coming of the Light marks the arrival of the London Missionary Society in the Torres Strait in 1871, which introduced Christianity to the region. Torres Strait Islander peoples celebrate this day with hymns, feasts, and gatherings, reflecting its cultural and spiritual significance.

MID-JULY

National NAIDOC Week

Held in the first full week of July, NAIDOC Week celebrates the history, culture, and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is an opportunity for all Australians to engage with local events, learn about First Nations cultures, and honour the contributions of First Nations communities to the nation.

4 AUGUST

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day celebrates the strength and culture of First Nations children. The date was historically used to mark the birthdays of Stolen Generations children who did not know their birthdates, symbolising resilience and hope for the future.

9 AUGUST

UN International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

Celebrated internationally, this day acknowledges the contributions of Indigenous peoples to the world's cultural and environmental heritage. It raises awareness of the challenges faced by Indigenous communities globally, including discrimination, poverty, and human rights violations, while celebrating their enduring resilience and achievements.

4 SEPTEMBER

Indigenous Literacy Day

Indigenous Literacy Day promotes equal access to literacy resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in remote communities. The day also celebrates and advocates for the preservation of Indigenous languages, ensuring cultural knowledge is passed down to future generations.

13 SEPTEMBER

Anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) outlines a framework for recognising and protecting the rights of Indigenous peoples globally. It emphasises self-determination, cultural preservation, and the importance of eliminating discrimination.

4-7 OCTOBER

NSW Koori Knockout

The NSW Koori Knockout, held annually over the October long weekend, is one of the largest gatherings of Aboriginal peoples in Australia. Established in 1971, this grassroots rugby league tournament brings together hundreds of teams from across the state, celebrating community, culture, and sporting excellence. The event is a significant occasion for fostering connections and showcasing First Nations talent on and off the field.

26 OCTOBER

Uluru Returned

On 26 October 1985, Uluru was officially returned to the Anangu people, its Traditional Owners, by the Australian Government. This landmark moment acknowledged the deep cultural and spiritual significance of Uluru to the Anangu. The handback remains a symbol of Indigenous land rights and cultural recognition. Today, Uluru stands as a powerful icon of First Nations resilience and connection to Country.

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