



# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 2021

## Significant Dates Information

### **26 January - 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 (its 30th anniversary) and since 1994 has been celebrated by all states and territories.

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.

### **13 February - National Apology Day**

This event marks the anniversary of the Apology in 2008 to Australia's Indigenous peoples in the House of Representatives. The apology was made by former Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd for past laws, policies and practices that have impacted on Australia's First Nations Peoples, particularly members of the Stolen Generations. The motion was supported by the Opposition and passed through both houses of Parliament. Many members of the Stolen Generations were present in the Chamber to hear the Apology and thousands more filled the Great Hall of Parliament House and flowed out onto the lawns to watch it on big screens. For more information visit the [National Sorry Day Committee Inc.](#)

### **19 March - National Close the Gap Day**

In 2006, more than 40 national organisations came together to form Close the Gap - Australia's largest ever campaign to improve the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Every year, Australians are encouraged to hold their own event on National Close the Gap Day to raise awareness about the life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Since 2006, the Close the Gap campaign has achieved an enormous amount through community support. For more information visit [Oxfam](#)

### **21 March - Harmony Day**

Harmony Day is a day of cultural respect for everyone who calls Australia home – from the traditional owners of this land to those who have come from many countries around the world. By participating in Harmony Day activities, people can learn and understand how all Australians from diverse backgrounds equally belong to this nation and enrich it. For more information visit [Harmony Day](#)





### **26 May - National Sorry Day**

This is a significant day for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and particularly for Stolen Generations survivors. Commemorating 'Sorry Day' was one of the recommendations of the *Bringing Them Home* report, which was tabled in Parliament on 26 May 1997. This report was the result of a National Inquiry into the forcible removal of Indigenous children from their families, communities and cultural identity. The first 'Sorry Day' was held in Sydney in 1998 and is now held nationally with memorials and commemorative events that honour the Stolen Generations.

For more information visit [National Sorry Day Committee](#)

### **27 May - 3 June - National Reconciliation Week**

This week is an ideal time for everyone to join the reconciliation conversation and reflect on shared histories, contributions and achievements. It is held annually and is a time to celebrate and build on the respectful relationships shared by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians. Preceded by National Sorry Day on 26 May, National Reconciliation Week is framed by two key events in Australia's history, which provide strong symbols for reconciliation:

- 27 May 1967 – the referendum date when more than 90 per cent of Australians voted to give the government power to make laws for Indigenous people and recognise them in the census.
- 3 June 1992 – the historic Mabo decision (see below).

For more information visit: [National Reconciliation Week](#)

### **3 June - Mabo Day (part of National Reconciliation Week)**

Mabo Day marks the anniversary of the High Court of Australia's judgement in 1992 in the Mabo case. This is a day of particular significance for Torres Strait Islander Australians. Eddie 'Koiki' Mabo's name is synonymous with native title rights. His story began in May 1982 when he and fellow Murray (Mer) Islanders David Passi, Sam Passi, James Rice and Celuia Salee instituted a claim in the High Court for native title to the Murray (Mer) Islands in the Torres Strait.

The claim was made against the State of Queensland, which responded by seeking to legislate to extinguish retrospectively any native title on the Islands. This was challenged in the High Court on the grounds that it was inconsistent with the 1975 Racial Discrimination Act. On 3 June 1992 the High Court accepted the claim by Eddie Mabo and the other claimants that their people (the Meriam people) had occupied the Islands of Mer for hundreds of years before the arrival of the British and found that the Meriam people were 'entitled as against the whole world to possession, occupation, use and enjoyment of lands in the Murray Islands.' The decision overturned a legal fiction that Australia was terra nullius (a land belonging to no one) at the time of British colonisation.

For more information visit: [Mabo Day](#)

### **4-11 July - National NAIDOC Week**

NAIDOC (National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee) week celebrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and recognises the contributions of Indigenous Australians in various fields. Its origins can be traced to the emergence of Aboriginal groups in the 1920s which sought to increase awareness of the status and treatment of Indigenous Australians. All Australians are encouraged to participate.





The 2021 National NAIDOC theme is 'Heal Country'. This theme calls for all of us to continue to seek greater protections for our lands, our waters, our sacred sites and our cultural heritage from exploitation, desecration, and destruction.

For more information visit: [NAIDOC](#)

#### **4 August – National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day**

National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day (NAICD) is a celebration of Indigenous children. NAICD was first observed by the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) in 1988. Each year SNAICC produces and sends out resources to help celebrations for NAICD.

For more information visit: [National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day](#)

#### **9 August – International Day of the World's Indigenous People**

The United Nations' (UN) International Day of the World's Indigenous People was first proclaimed by the General Assembly in December 1994 and is observed on 9 August each year to promote and protect the rights of the world's indigenous population. This event also recognizes the achievements and contributions that indigenous people make to improve world issues such as environmental protection. For more information visit: [United Nations](#)

#### **1 September – Indigenous Literacy Day**

Indigenous Literacy Day is an opportunity to fundraise and advocate for remote communities to have equal access to literacy resources. Many remote families own fewer than five books and live nine hours from the nearest public library.

#### **Additional Notes:**

*This is only a brief listing of some of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Significant Dates in 2020. There are other dates and significant local events that have not been specified in this listing. Please feel free to let us know if you have any additional dates to add to this listing.*

#### **How to Use This Resource**

Banyule Community Health encourages all member agencies to distribute this information and the attached Calendar to the relevant people within your organisation. This listing could also be placed on your agency website/intranet or added to a calendar of events and printed and displayed for staff and the general public. If you have any questions or feedback about this information, please contact the Banyule Community Health at [banyule@bchs.org.au](mailto:banyule@bchs.org.au)

#### **Thanks**

Thank you to Leo Dynevov at Sector Connect in NSW for permission to use their information/format. Thanks to Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet for use of their information found on their webpage. Thanks to Gary Saunders at Indigital for development of the locally designed digital artwork, which has been incorporated into this document.

Banyule Community Health acknowledges the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation, their Elders past and present on whose land the offices are located.



