



Protocols and suggestions for how to approach 26th January respectfully

Among other roles, Reconciliation Victoria provides advice to local government and community members around how to approach 26th January respectfully.

We encourage local councils and organisations commemorating the day to recognise the honoured place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in our nation's history, to be sensitive to the feelings of Aboriginal people who may see the day as one of mourning, and to see the day as an opportunity to promote understanding, respect and reconciliation.

There are some simple ways to mark 26th January respectfully, and acknowledge members of the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community:

- Talk and consult with your local Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members to inform yourself of their views on the date and to help you develop a respectful approach;
- Invite Elders to play a special role in any Australia Day events you are organising, including conducting a 'Welcome to Country', but understand and respect their feelings if they do not wish to take part, and be prepared to respectfully hear their story of what this day represents for them;
- Suggest guest speakers acknowledge that, while Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People have great pride in their heritage, Australia Day reminds them of past loss, and these feelings are also a legitimate part of our national day;
- Acknowledge local Aboriginal communities and the honoured place of the First Nations in event programs and/or fliers;
- Incorporate into your event a special ceremony which acknowledges past injustices in our nation's history;
- One way of recognising the hurt and suffering that Jan 26 causes for Aboriginal people is to fly the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island flags at half-mast;
- Consider holding a moment of silence at the start of formal celebrations to acknowledge the past injustices in our nation's history;
- Consider holding celebratory events on an alternative date.

Other resources and ideas around 26th January:

- **Attend one of the 'Survival Day' or 'Invasion Day' events**, such as the 'Share the Spirit' or 'Belgrave Survival Day' Festivals (see our website www.reconciliationvic.org.au for details);

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- **Check out Maggolee** (www.maggolee.org.au) which provides resources for and about local government reconciliation efforts;
- **Be Curious and educate yourself** - Reading more about the history of Australia during colonial times, such as during the frontier wars, or about the experience of Aboriginal people can enhance our understanding. It is easy to connect with the history of the place in which you live and the connection to traditional lands that continues today. The information is there, and in most cases, it's a mere click away;
- **Share your new knowledge** and have a respectful conversation with family, friends, colleagues and neighbours about what you've learned and the different perspectives.