



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 approach 26th January respectfully, and acknowledge members of the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community:

- Talk and consult with 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; this could include consulting with local Elders to see if they would feel comfortable providing a 'Welcome to Country' at official council events;
- Invite Elders to play a special role in any Australia Day events you are organising, 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;
- Include a personalised Acknowledgement of Country in the day's speeches, programs and promotional materials. This could also involve acknowledging that Australia Day is not a day of celebration for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and that these feelings are also a legitimate part of our national day;
- 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 Peoples in event programs and/or fliers;
- Incorporate into your event(s) 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 or a separate service to acknowledge the past injustices in our nation's history and legacy of ongoing impact;
- Consider holding celebratory events on an alternative date.

And remember to put cultural safety at the forefront of all decision making related to this 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 or 'Invasion Day Dawn Service' (see our website www.reconciliationvic.org.au for details);
- **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.