

# Significant Dates for First & Second Peoples



The following is a list of significant dates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and also to Second peoples of Australia. The dates below are intertwined between celebration, commemoration and lament. Where there are days remembering trauma, the resilience and strength of First Nations' people in the face of injustice is also remembered.

19 January 2025 and 25 January 2026

## **Day of Mourning (First Sunday before Invasion Day/Australia Day)**

On the Sunday before Australia Day, Uniting Church congregations hold worship services to reflect and lament the invasion of Australia, as the effects of colonisation still impact First Peoples. The observance of a 'Day of Mourning' was endorsed by the 2018 15<sup>th</sup> Assembly at the request of members of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC).

26 January

## **Australia Day/Invasion Day or Survival Day**

Australia Day is a contested public holiday. Some call it Invasion Day or Survival Day to highlight the injustice of colonisation as a counter narrative to the Australia Day commemoration of Captain Arthur Phillip taking possession of the NSW colony 1788 on behalf of the British Crown.

13 February

## **National Apology Day**

The anniversary of the 2008 Apology to Australia's Indigenous peoples. The apology was given in Parliament by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd with an emphasis on the Stolen Generations who were subjected to forced child removal and Indigenous assimilation policies. The Apology's origins are grounded in the **Bringing them Home** report. See also 26 May: National Sorry Day

16 March

## **ATSIC Abolished**

In 2005, the Australian Parliament abolished the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC). ATSIC was the government mandated body which formally gave a voice to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on government decisions affecting their lives. It was originally established under the Hawke government on 3 May 1990.



Uniting Church in Australia  
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA



equipping Leadership for Mission  
Justice & International Mission



UNITING ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER  
CHRISTIAN CONGRESS

# Significant Dates for First & Second Peoples



20 March 2025 and 19 March 2026

## **National Close the Gap Day (Third Thursday in March)**

National Close the Gap Day is an opportunity to raise awareness about the life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. It is a day of action advocating for equality as a fundamental right for all.

21 March

## **International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, or 'Harmony Day'**

Founded by the United Nations to remember the struggle against the racist and brutal agenda of South African Apartheid. Harmony Day, also Harmony week, is held in Australia as a response to racism, and promotes cultural respect for everyone who calls Australia home.

15 April

## **Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody**

A royal commission formed in 1987 investigated **Aboriginal deaths in custody** over a 10-year period, and made 339 recommendations in its final report signed on this day in 1991. Its recommendations are still relevant. Aboriginal people continue to be disproportionately overrepresented in the criminal justice system.

26 May

## **National Sorry Day**

Commemorating 'Sorry Day' was one of the recommendations of the **Bringing Them Home** report. It remembers and acknowledges the Stolen Generation of mistreated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were forcibly removed from their families and communities. The day also celebrates their strength and resilience.

26 May

## **Uluru Statement from the Heart**

The First Nations Constitutional Convention wrote the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* on this day in 2017. The statement invites all Australians to build a better future by establishing a First Nation's Voice to Parliament enshrined in the Constitution, and a Makarrata Commission for the purpose of treaty making and truth-telling.



Uniting Church in Australia  
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA



equipping Leadership for Mission  
Justice & International Mission



UNITING ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER  
CHRISTIAN CONGRESS

# Significant Dates for First & Second Peoples



26 May

## Release of the 'Bringing them Home Report' (Stolen Generation)

In 1997, the report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families, titled Bringing Them Home, was tabled in Parliament. A key recommendation in the report was that reparation be made to Indigenous people affected by policies of forced removal.

27 May

## 1967 Referendum

The successful 1967 referendum saw more than 90 percent of Australians vote to give the Australian federal government powers to make laws for Indigenous people, and to also recognise their existence within the Australian national census.

27 May-3 June

## National Reconciliation Week

The week begins on 27 May to mark the 1967 Referendum, and ends on 3 June to mark Mabo Day. This week reflects on shared histories, contributions and achievements between First and Second peoples. It is a forward-looking time seeking to build meaningful relationships between First and Second peoples in Australia.

3 June

## Mabo Day

In 1992, the High Court of Australia accepted Eddie Koiki Mabo's claim that the Meriam people had occupied the Islands of Mer (Murray Island) before the arrival of the British. The decision overturned a legal fiction that Australia was land belonging to no one (terra nullius) at the time of British colonisation in 1788.

12 June

## Barunga Statement

In 1988, the Barunga Statement was presented by the Northern and Central Land Councils to Prime Minister Bob Hawke. The statement was written on tree bark and called for self-determination, land rights, compensation, an end to discrimination, respect for Aboriginal identity, and the granting of social, economic and cultural rights.



Uniting Church in Australia  
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA



equipping Leadership for Mission  
Justice & International Mission



UNITING ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER  
CHRISTIAN CONGRESS

# Significant Dates for First & Second Peoples

21 June

## **Northern Territory Intervention**

2007-2022, the Federal Government mounted a highly paternalistic emergency intervention campaign (The Intervention) into the Northern Territory to “protect Aboriginal children” in response to widespread claims of abuse based on questionable validity. Aboriginal peoples’ lives were heavily regulated and disempowered, leaving many to feel ashamed and angry.

6-13 July 2025 and 5-12 July 2026

## **NAIDOC Week (First Full Week of July, Sunday to Sunday)**

NAIDOC (National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee) week celebrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and recognises the ongoing contribution of Indigenous Australians to Australia and the world. Its origins stem from Aboriginal groups in the 1920s seeking to increase awareness of, and treatment of Indigenous peoples.

10 July

## **Uniting Church Covenant between First and Second Peoples, and Revised Preamble**

Statements were read between the President of the Uniting Church and the UAICC National Chairperson at the Uniting Church’s 7<sup>th</sup> Assembly in 1994. This marked the beginning of an intentional relationship between First and Second Peoples in the Uniting Church known as the Covenant, or Covenanting. This day also marks the adoption of the **Revised Preamble** of the Uniting Church in Australia Constitution and Regulation (Basis of Union) in 2009.

9 July

## **Australian Aboriginal Flag First Flown**

The flag was first flown at Tarntanyangga/Victoria Square in Adelaide during a land rights rally in 1971. The following year it became the official flag for the Aboriginal Tent Embassy located in Canberra. As time passed, it has become a widely recognised symbol of unity for Aboriginal people.



Uniting Church in Australia  
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA



equipping Leadership for Mission  
Justice & International Mission



UNITING ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER  
CHRISTIAN CONGRESS

# Significant Dates for First & Second Peoples



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, who continue to publish resources to assist celebrations.

9 August

## **International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples**

The United Nations' International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples is to promote and protect the rights of the world's indigenous populations. This event also recognises the achievements and contributions indigenous people make to improve global matters, such as environmental protection and collective Human rights.

14 August

## **Bark Petition from Yirrkala**

On 14 August 1963, the Yirrkala bark petitions were presented by the Yolgnu people of the Northern Territory to the Australian Parliament's House of Representatives. The petitions were the first formal assertion of Indigenous native title acknowledged by Parliament.

5 September 2025 and 2 September 2026

## **Indigenous Literacy Day (First Wednesday of September)**

Indigenous Literacy Day celebrates the diversity of First Nation stories, cultures and languages. It is an opportunity to fundraise and advocate for remote Indigenous communities to have equal access to literacy resources.

14 October

## **Voice to Parliament Referendum**

In 2023, a referendum was held on enshrining an Australian Indigenous Voice to Parliament within the Australian Constitution to provide a mechanism for First Peoples to inform government decisions that directly impact their lives. The referendum failed, with two-in-three Australians voting against it.

26 October

## **Uluru Returned to Traditional Owners**

The Hawke government handed back the title deeds for the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park to the Anangu people in October 1985, which ended decades of determined lobbying by the Traditional Owners to have their rights recognised.

Resource available online at: <https://victas.uca.org.au/resources/covenanting/>



Uniting Church in Australia  
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA



equipping Leadership for Mission  
Justice & International Mission



UNITING ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER  
CHRISTIAN CONGRESS