

First Nations Guide

NDVR
Endeavour
Foundation

Culturally Significant Events
Internal Protocols



Culturally Significant Events

Importance of understanding and acknowledging key events

Many key events in First Nations history are intertwined with colonialism, dispossession of land, forced assimilation policies, and ongoing struggles for rights and recognition (including legal and political implications).

By understanding and acknowledging significant key events and injustices, individuals and societies can help foster empathy, respect, and ways in which we can work towards recognition and reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous peoples.

This guide is an educational tool which will also provide resourceful ideas beyond acknowledgment which you can implement that can help make a positive impact where we can shape a more inclusive and equitable future.

13 February – Anniversary of National Apology Day

On 13 February 2008, former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd offered a formal apology to Australia's Indigenous peoples, particularly the Stolen Generations who suffered trauma because of past government policies of forced child removal.

Some of the ways you can contribute are raising awareness, attending commemorative events, engaging in dialogue and reflecting on the apology and its importance.

16 March – National Close the Gap Day

National Close the Gap Day aims to close the health, life expectancy, educational and employment outcomes gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians within a generation.

Some of the ways you can contribute are by raising awareness, supporting Indigenous artists and businesses, volunteering and donating, investing in community development and promoting opportunities in the workplace.

Remember that closing the gap is a complex and ongoing process that requires long-term commitment and collaboration across sectors and communities. Every effort, no matter how small, can contribute to making a difference.

26 May – National Sorry Day

National Sorry Day provides an opportunity to remember and acknowledge the mistreatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are affected by forced removal policies, which we now know as 'The Stolen Generations'. National Sorry Day is a day to acknowledge the strength of Stolen Generations Survivors and reflect on how we can all share in the healing process.

You can contribute by raising awareness and listening to testimonies of those affected to better understand the detrimental impact this may have caused.



BTH.HumanRights have access to written, video and audio testimonies that you can access: <https://bth.humanrights.gov.au/our-stories>. There are many more available resources online.

27 May – 1967 Referendum

The Australian Constitution sets out the laws of Australia and the only way the Australian Constitution can be amended is through a referendum.

After 10 years of campaigning, the 1967 Referendum, aimed to change two sections of The Constitution (section 51 and section 127). Section 51 of the Constitution outlines the powers of the federal government, while section 127 stated that Indigenous Australians should not be included in the national census.

In the 1976 Referendum, the Constitution was amended to allow the Commonwealth to make laws for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and include them in the Census of Population and Housing conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, commencing with the 1971 Census.

27 May to 3 June – National Reconciliation Week

National Reconciliation Week is celebrated across Australia each year between 27 May and 3 June. The dates commemorate two significant milestones in the reconciliation journey—the anniversaries of the successful 1967 referendum and the High Court Mabo decision.

Keep an eye out for events that might include cultural performances, art exhibitions, panel discussions, film screenings, or community gatherings. Participating in these events can deepen your understanding and connection to reconciliation efforts.

3 June – Mabo Day

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples occupied Australia for 40,000 to 60,000 years before the British arrived in 1788.

When the British arrived, they declared that Australia was *terra nullius* (land belonging to no-one). As a result, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' occupation of, and unique connection with, the land was not recognised, and the British took the land without agreement or payment.

The *Mabo* case ran for ten years. On 3 June 1992, the High Court of Australia decided that *terra nullius* should not have been applied to Australia. This decision recognised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have rights to the land – rights that existed before the British arrived and still exist today.

Every year on 3 June we celebrate Mabo Day, which commemorates the life of Eddie Koiki Mabo and marks the anniversary of the historic June 3 1992 Mabo.

You can celebrate Mabo Day by supporting community events, learning about Eddie Mabo, reading the case of Mabo v Queensland and by reflecting on Indigenous Land Rights.



7 July to 14 July – NAIDOC Week

The acronym NAIDOC stands for National Aborigines' and Islanders' Day Observance Committee. NAIDOC Week celebrations are held across Australia to celebrate history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

You can get involved by volunteering at local events, engaging with Elders and community members, attending flag raising ceremonies, sharing and promoting Indigenous stories, participating in cultural activities as appropriate and supporting and sharing Indigenous Artists and Businesses.

13 September – Anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was adopted by the General Assembly on Thursday, 13 September 2007.

The journey towards Indigenous reconciliation is multifaceted and ongoing, requiring sustained commitment, empathy, and action from all members of society.

A recognition of historical injustices is a crucial starting point towards the reconciliation journey. True reconciliation necessitates not only acknowledging the past but also actively working towards the ongoing education of key events and inequalities, listening, addressing systemic inequalities, building relationships and personal reflection and growth.

By embracing the principles of reconciliation, we can strive towards a future where we help heal and build relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and advance social justice and equity.

Other Resources:

<https://karda.curtin.edu.au/news-events/significant-dates/>

<https://www.qld.gov.au/firstnations/cultural-awareness-heritage-arts/dates>

<https://www.lwb.org.au/news/six-facts-you-need-to-know-about-mabo-day/>

<https://digital-classroom.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/indigenous-referendum>

<https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-social-justice/history-aboriginal-and-torres-strait>

<https://www.reconciliation.org.au/reconciliation/>

<https://healingfoundation.org.au/apology-2/>

<https://indigenousartcode.org/about-us>

