



MEDIA RELEASE

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A NEW SOLUTION FOR DIVISIVE AUSTRALIA DAY DATE

A new proposal for a three-day festival of Australia superseding Australia Day's divisive 26 January public holiday has launched, as the societal debate gains energy after Victoria's City of Greater Geelong and Strathbogie Shire Council formally endorsed next year's celebrations.

The *Australia Long Weekend* is a citizen-driven initiative seeking to create an extended and more inclusive celebration of the country. It would see the 26 January public holiday move to the second last Monday of January annually, establishing a long weekend that would always fall between 18 – 24 January.

The current Australia Day public holiday on 26 January is the date marking British settlement starting in Sydney Cove. It is the date when the dispossession of Australia's First Peoples commenced, with the devastating consequences still felt today.

Melbourne-based businessman and lawyer, James Woods, and Sydney-based former barrister and community activist, Phil Jenkyn OAM, as well as leading paediatric specialist, Dr Elizabeth Elliott AM, are championing the Australia Long Weekend campaign.

"Australia Day falls on a date that is divisive for many Australians. We need to choose a time to celebrate Australia that we can all support, whether we are of British descent, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, or have come to live in Australia from the many countries around the world," said Australia Long Weekend co-convenor, James Woods.

"We are all Australians and citizens with equal rights and obligations, equal before the law and all with one vote to elect our representatives. We need a celebration that is equally as inclusive, and who wouldn't want to do this over a long weekend during our iconic summer?"

According to 2024 data from research firm Ipsos, which drew participation from 1,000 people aged 18 and over, one in four Australian's agree with adjusting the date of Australia Day, with people aged under 40 more likely to support a change. Oppositely, the majority of Australians aged over 55 years are 'strongly against' changing the date.

Australia Long Weekend organisers envisage their proposed change to be more than just a celebration. It is intended to create an opportunity to further understand and reflect on the country's history, as well as consider where the community wants Australia to go in the future.

A long weekend two-thirds of the way through January is considered an ideal time to celebrate the nation, as it falls at the end of the Christmas holiday period and before schools, universities, courts and parliaments return for the new year.

The community-led initiative is envisaged to allow Australians to express how and when they want to celebrate the country into the future and put pressure for change on Federal and State governments. It is a simple decision for governments and does not require a referendum for this to happen.

An [online petition](#) to gauge participation rates is live and more information about the Australia Long Weekend can be found at www.australialongweekend.com.au.

Make the Change for a Better Australia

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About the Australia Long Weekend proposers:

James Woods is a businessman and lawyer based in Melbourne. He has established a website proposing that Australia Day be moved to the second last Monday in January as part of an Australia Long Weekend.

Elizabeth Elliott AM is a paediatrician and a professor at Sydney University. Her clinical work and research is focused on improving the health and well-being of disadvantaged children. She was awarded an AM for her services to paediatrics and child health.

Phil Jenkyn OAM is a retired barrister and community activist. He played a leading role in the successful battle to save Sydney Harbour's headlands. He has received an OAM for his service to the environment and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Trust.