



Australia Day: If not January 26, then when?

It's a question we get asked all the time. And honestly - it's a tricky one to answer.

But, what about an *Australia Long Weekend*? Let us know what you think!

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There are a lot of opinions and emotions wrapped up in this day. Many people love this country deeply, and want to celebrate what it means to be Australian. They see Australia Day as a time to come together with family and friends, to reflect on shared values and to feel proud of the place we call home.

But for First Nations people, January 26 carries very different meanings. It's important to remember that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities are diverse and so are our views.

Some people call Jan 26 Invasion Day, others Survival Day, or perhaps a Day of Mourning. What is clear though, is that it is a date that marks the beginning of invasion, dispossession, colonisation and ongoing injustice. For some First Nations people, the idea of celebrating 'Australia' at all, no matter what the date, is not where they stand.

"Australia" Day


Alternative dates for the national holiday

As momentum gains to change the date here are some alternative dates that our national holiday could be celebrated.

Learn more about Australia Long Weekend

When should we celebrate Australia Day?

January 1 - when Commonwealth of Australia came into being
January 26 - don't change the date
Australia Long Weekend - second last Monday in Jan falls between 18 and 24 Jan
First Monday in February - we all just want a long weekend
May 8 - because it looks like "M8"
May 9 - when we became a self-governing federation in 1901
May 26 - National Sorry Day
May 27 - when Indigenous people were included in the census
July 30 - the first Australia Day celebrated in 1915
September 17 - last trace of White Australia policy removed
No date - we should scrap Australia Day altogether



It's also important to note that this is not a new conversation. We often reflect on the act of courage from Willian Cooper, a member of the Aboriginal Progressive Association, who declared [January 26 a Day of Mourning in 1938](#). This move by William Cooper marked one of the first organised national protests by Aboriginal people, calling for equality and recognition. This work stands on the shoulders of giants.

Despite the truth about this date being known for generations, in 1994, the government officially made January 26 the 'Australia Day' national public holiday across all states and territories.

Out of 365 possible dates, this was the one chosen to celebrate the nation 30 years ago.

Australia is the only country in the world that celebrates its national day on the date it was colonised. Over time, the choice to move Australia Day to this date has turned January 26 into a day that divides us as a nation, rather than unites us.



Learn more about the campaign and take action.

Time for change

It has been 87 years since William Coopers declaration about Jan 26. First Nations people have been protesting this date for a long time.

Every year, thousands of people both First Nations and allies come together at Invasion Day rallies, community events, and gatherings across the country. These moments are about more than protest; they're about truth-telling, reflection, connection and respect. They're powerful acts of unity and resilience that call for justice and change.

More and more Australians and workplaces are beginning to reconsider what this day represents for them. Instead of getting caught up in debate or defensiveness, many are quietly choosing to do things differently spending the day learning, reflecting or simply treating it as another working day.

Even though the [government has so far rejected calls to change the date](#), it's clear that the national conversation is evolving. The fact that more people are asking questions, having conversations, making their own changes and thinking critically about January 26 shows that the shift is already underway. It has already been [eight years since Triple J](#) announced it would move the Hottest 100 away from the Jan 26 date.

At Clothing The Gaps, we believe real change starts with truth-telling and courageous conversations.

For us, keeping the [Not a Date to Celebrate campaign](#) momentum currently means continuing to explore meaningful next steps that are better alternatives to the current date of 'Australia Day', ideas that people can sit with, reflect on and yarn about together. We're focussing on actionable and tangible change around Jan 26 that is better than where we are now.

Petition

Not A Date To Celebrate

Support by signing this petition which puts pressure on the Labour Party to reconsider and recognise the profound significance of this date and to acknowledge the harm that celebrating "Australia Day" on January 26 continues to cause Indigenous Communities.

Australia Day - Jan 26 - Not a date to celebrate



72,990[✓]
Verified signatures ▼

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Movement: [Australia Day Debate](#) ▼

What about an Australia Long Weekend?

Every year, as January 26 approaches, we see the same debate, the same division and the same racism resurface. It's exhausting. Something really needs to change.

One idea that has been gaining traction is the idea of an '[Australia Long Weekend](#)'. It's a small but meaningful shift. Instead of marking "Australia Day" on January 26, the public holiday could move to the second-last Monday in January each year.

This would create a consistent long weekend that would always fall between January 18th and 24th and most importantly, would never land on January 26.

When you consider other suggestions for an alternative date for 'Australia Day', many of these alternative dates still connect back to colonial history, politics or ideas that don't bring everyone together.

And as much as we'd love to see a national day that truly centres and celebrates First Nations people, the reality is that Australia might not be ready for that level of change just yet - the failed referendum reminded us of that.

The Australia Long Weekend feels like a step in the right direction and maybe even an idea the government could get behind. After all, who wouldn't want a guaranteed long weekend in January? It's still summer, it's not a huge change and it helps address the ongoing issues around celebrating 'Australia Day' on January 26.

Moving the date of Australia Day might seem like a small change but, small shifts can create big ripples. Sometimes, progress begins with the willingness to rethink the way things are and to imagine what could be better - not perfect, but better.



A Small Change With Significant Meaning

Australia Day will move from 26 January to the Australia Long Weekend and will always fall on the second last Monday in the month, which in the calendar is between 18 and 24 January.

The change from a fixed date to the Australia Long Weekend means that:

- we can still celebrate Australia Day in January,
- we can still have all the same events and ceremonies and more,
- we will now always have a long weekend
- we will have more time to not only celebrate, but to reflect on the past, present and future, and enjoy the benefits of being in a multicultural society.

It is simply the best time of the year to honour our nation when considering holidays, school and work.

Join the conversation

We're still having yarns about this every day, listening, reflecting, and trying to figure out a way forward.

Because honestly, who would've thought the government would expect *us* to suggest a solution as well? We've spent years campaigning and building grassroots support to

show that January 26 is not a date to celebrate adding to the generations of advocacy around the truth of this date.

The [Not a Date to Celebrate petition](#) has more than 72,000 supporters and counting, and over [150 businesses and organisations](#) who have signed on as supporters, yet it still feels like we're at a standstill.

So here we are, sparking another conversation about one possible idea, an Australia Long Weekend that could help shift us toward something better. **Because figuring out *if not January 26, then when?* is a conversation worth having.**

Clothing The Gaps – Not A Date To Celebrate – Blog ‘Australia Day: If not January 26, then when?’ – see <https://www.clothingthegaps.com.au/blogs/blogs/australia-day-if-not-jan-26-then-when>