

Cultural calendar and significant dates 2025



January 26 **Survival Day**

January 26 may be known as Australia Day to many people in this country, however for some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples it is referred to as Survival Day. This date marks the commencement of colonisation which has led to the marginalisation, discrimination, displacement and ongoing traumas of the First Peoples of these lands, waters and seas.

February 13 **Anniversary of the National Apology**

This year marks 17 years since Kevin Rudd's historic apology to the Stolen Generations. This date is significant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in their healing journey, especially those who are survivors of or hold family connection to the Stolen Generations. You can read the apology here - [Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples – Parliament of Australia](#)

March 20 **National Close the Gap Day**

Since 2007, National Close the Gap Day is a call to action for all Australians to advocate for equality and meaningful action to create better and more equitable health and socio economic outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

For more than a decade now, Australians from every corner of the country, in schools, businesses and community groups, have shown their support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health equity by marking [National Close the Gap Day](#) on the third Thursday in March each year.

March 21 **Harmony Day/International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UN)**

On this day in 1960, police opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration in Sharpeville, South Africa, against the apartheid "pass laws". Proclaiming the Day in 1966, the UN General Assembly called on the international community to redouble its efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination.

Against the alarming rise of xenophobia, racism and intolerance, the UN Human Rights Office has launched its #FightRacism campaign to foster a global culture of tolerance, equality and anti-discrimination. [International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination | OHCHR](#)

April 15 **Anniversary of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody**

The [Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody \(RCIADIC\)](#) 1987-1991, was established in response to growing public concerns that First Nations deaths in custody were far too common and poorly explained. The commission examined 99 deaths that occurred in custody between January 1980 and May 1989.

May 26 **National Sorry Day**

Every year on 26 May, National Sorry Day remembers and acknowledges the mistreatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were forcibly removed from their families and communities, 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 play a part in the healing process for our people and nation. While this date carries great significance for the Stolen Generations and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, it is also commemorated by Australians right around the country.

The **first National Sorry Day was held on 26 May 1998**, one year after the Bringing Them Home report was tabled in Parliament. [The Bringing Them Home](#) report is a result of a Government Inquiry into the past policies which caused children to be removed from their families and communities in the 20th century.

May 27 **Anniversary of the 1967 Referendum**

On the 27th May 1967, after 10 years of campaigning, a referendum on the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Australian Constitution was held. Australians voted overwhelmingly in favour of amending the Constitution to allow the Australian Government to make laws for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and include them in the census. [The 1967 Referendum | AIATSIS corporate website](#)

May 27 - June 3 **National Reconciliation Week**

The National Reconciliation Week (NRW) 2025 theme, Bridging Now to Next, reflects the ongoing connection between past, present and future.

[Bridging Now to Next](#) urges us to look ahead and continue the push forward as past lessons guide us.

At a time when Australia faces uncertainty in its reconciliation journey, this theme calls on all Australians to step forward together.



June 3 Mabo Day

Mabo Day is marked annually on 3 June. It commemorates Mer Island man Eddie Koiki Mabo and his successful efforts to overturn the legal fiction of terra nullius, or 'land belonging to no-one'.

What is the Mabo case?

Short for Mabo and others v Queensland (No 2) (1992), the Mabo case, led by Eddie Koiki Mabo, an activist for the 1967 Referendum, fought the legal concept that Australia and the Torres Strait Islands were not owned by Indigenous peoples because they did not 'use' the land in ways Europeans believed constituted some kind of legal possession.

Despite the fact that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples occupied the land, spoke their own languages and had their own laws and customs before the British arrived in 1788, 'Terra nullis' was an attempt to give 'legitimacy' for the British and Australian governments to allow the dispossession of all Indigenous peoples of their land.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people also had – and continue to have – a strong connection to 'Country' – the Australian land. [Commemorating Mabo Day - Reconciliation Australia](#)

July 1 Coming of the Light

The Coming of the Light is a holiday celebrated by Torres Strait Islanders recognising the arrival of Christianity on the Islands on 1 July 1871. Happy "Coming of the Light" or "Keriba Lagaw Buiya"!

July 6-13 NAIDOC Week

[NAIDOC Week](#) is a chance to participate in the celebrations and learn more about First Nations peoples here in Australia. This year's National NAIDOC Week marks 50 years of the week-long celebrations, and the theme, **The Next Generation: Strength, Vision & Legacy**, celebrates achievements of the past and the bright future ahead.

The theme celebrates a movement that endures, grows, and evolves—driven by the unwavering strength of our communities, the shared vision of our people, and the enduring legacy we pass on to those who will shape our future. Together, we walk forward, honouring where we've come from and looking boldly to the next generation who will carry NAIDOC and their communities into the future.

July 9 Anniversary of the Aboriginal Flag Being Flown

The Australian Aboriginal flag was designed by artist Harold Thomas in 1970. The colours of the flag represent the Aboriginal people of Australia and their connection to the land. The flag was first raised on 9 July 1971. In 1995, the Aboriginal flag was recognised by the Australian Government as an official 'Flag of Australia' under the Flags Act 1953.

In January 2022, the Commonwealth of Australia acquired the copyright of the Aboriginal Flag. Carroll & Richardson-Flagworld Pty Ltd is the exclusive licenced manufacturer and provider of the [Australian Aboriginal Flag](#) on flags and pennants, banners and bunting. The Commonwealth allows the design of the Australian Aboriginal Flag to be freely reproduced by the public on all other mediums.

August 4 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day

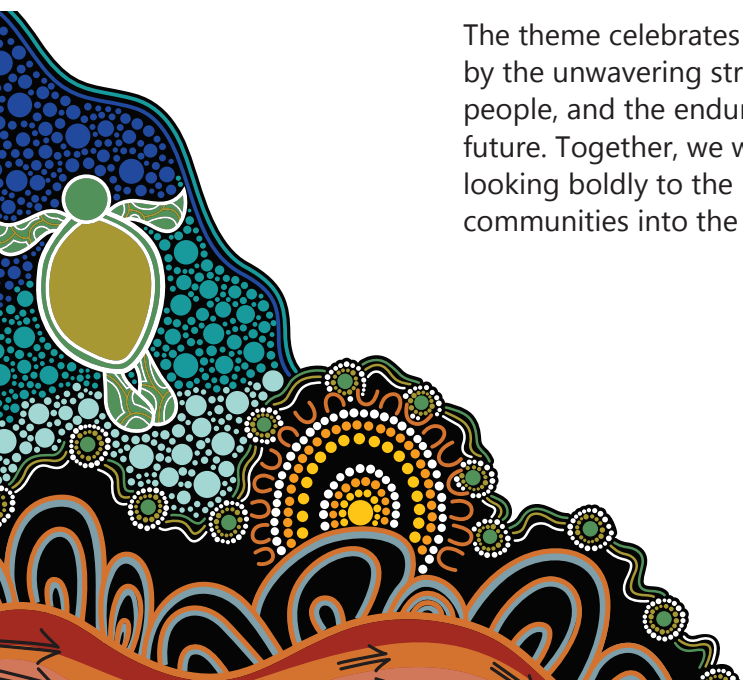
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day (Children's Day) is a time to for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to celebrate the strengths and culture of their children. The day is an opportunity for all Australians to show their support for Aboriginal children, as well as learn about the crucial impact that community, culture and family play in the life of every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child.

Children's Day is an initiative of SNAICC – National Voice for our Children and we organise a national launch event annually for Children's Day to be held at a different location each year. These events also see the wider community take the lead in celebrating Children's Day with amazing and diverse celebrations across the country. SNAICC produces and distributes resources to help local communities and organisations around the country celebrate the day, including 15,000 Children's Day bags and other resources to support more than 500 community events across Australia.

History of Children's Day

On 4 August 1988, the first National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day was established, amid protests led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their supporters during the bicentennial year.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples felt that a day was needed to celebrate our children, to instil confidence in them and to make them feel special and included. The date 4 August was chosen as the day to celebrate as it has historically been used to communally allocate the birthdays of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were taken from their families at a young age, without knowing their birthday – the Stolen Generations.



August 9 International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

The United Nations (UN) [International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples](#) is a reminder of the global Indigenous community and peoples including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, who are inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures, sharing common ground related to the protection of Indigenous rights as distinct peoples.

This year's focus on International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples is on Protecting the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation and Initial Contact.

This focus acknowledges the more than 200 Indigenous groups who remain uncontacted and continue to protect and preserve their unique cultures, tradition and languages.

The date, 9 August, was the first meeting of the United Nations (UN) Working Group on Indigenous Populations in 1982. This Group drafted the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which asserts Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination and was formally adopted in 2007.

September 4 Indigenous Literacy Day

Takes place annually on the first Wednesday in September to raise awareness about the educational struggles facing First Nations communities. It is important to note that Indigenous Literacy Day is about more than just struggle. It is also a celebration of Indigenous culture, with an emphasis on the stories that make up this country's rich heritage and history. [The Indigenous Literacy Foundation](#) focuses on instilling a love of reading from an early age.

September 13 Anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)

This was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on Thursday 13 September 2007. On April 3 2009, Australia shifted its position in support of the UNDRIP. The UNDRIP is a framework for better recognising and protecting the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. [UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples | Australian Human Rights Commission](#)

October 26 Grandparents Day

In Queensland, Grandparents Day is celebrated every year on the last Sunday in October. In 2025, it will be Sunday 26 October. [Grandparents Day](#) recognises the contribution grandparents make to families, communities, and the economy. It's a day to thank grandparents for their care and support and for sharing their knowledge, experience, and traditions with younger generations. Their history, stories and life experiences are a true resource for all of us to learn from and value.

October Indigenous - Business Month

In various areas it recognises the power of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' contribution to the economy, showcasing the powerhouse businesses employing, creating, innovating and getting on with business across the states. [Indigenous Business Month](#)

November Men's Mental Health Awareness Month

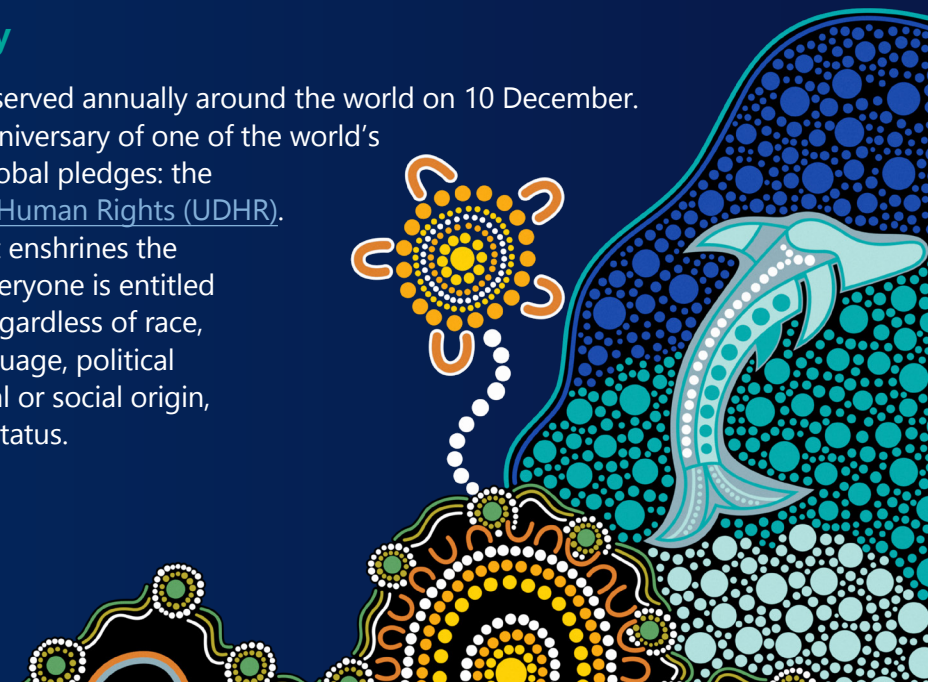
November is men's mental health month. Around one in eight men has a common mental health problem. **13YARN** [Thirteen YARN] on 13 92 76 is the first national crisis support line for mob who are feeling overwhelmed or having difficulty coping. They offer a confidential one-on-one yarning opportunity with a Lifeline-trained Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Crisis Supporter who can provide crisis support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. [13YARN](#) empowers the community with the opportunity to yarn without judgement and provide a culturally safe space to speak about their needs, worries or concerns.

December 3 International Day of People with a Disability

We acknowledge this day to increase awareness, understanding and acceptance of people with disability. The [First Peoples Disability Network of Australia](#) is an organisation governed by First Peoples with lived experience of disability.

December 10 Human Rights Day

[Human Rights Day](#) is observed annually around the world on 10 December. It commemorates the anniversary of one of the world's most groundbreaking global pledges: the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights \(UDHR\)](#). This landmark document enshrines the inalienable rights that everyone is entitled to as a human being - regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.



The culture, history and experience of First Nations Peoples varies across Australian mainland and Torres Strait Islands.

We strongly encourage everyone to read up on the history and culture of your own area.

And reach out to First Nations communities in your area who might celebrate and/or remember significant dates/events unique to your area.

apm.net.au/RAP

Artwork – 'Boodja', by Kevin Bynder 2022

