

# Australia Day, Survival Day and the Great Debate

*A day off, a barbecue and fireworks? A celebration of who we are as a nation? A day of mourning and invasion? A celebration of survival?*

**The 26th of January** aka Australia Day, Survival Day, Invasion Day, Sovereignty Day and The National Day of Mourning marks an important time for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and for non-Indigenous Australians alike. For our first Australians this day essentially marks the survival of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and our cultures. For non-Indigenous Australians it marks the landing of the First Fleet, a group of eleven ships from Britain that landed on the shores of Botany Bay where the clash of two cultures and the fight for one land began. Australia Day officially became a public holiday for all states and territories only 28 years ago, in 1994.

From 1940 until 1955, the **National Day of Mourning** was held annually on the Sunday before Australia Day and was known as **Aborigines Day**. In 1955 Aborigines Day was shifted to the first Sunday in July after it was decided the day should become not simply a protest day but also a celebration of Aboriginal culture and survival.



Australians hold many different views on what the 26th of January means to them. Watch this special 2017 [BTN report](#) and discuss with your students what this day means to them.

Consider why there is continuing debate and [conflicting emotions](#) about our national day.

For an Aboriginal perspective read the [communiqué](#) from the National Peak body of Aboriginal Health organisations.

Watch the short video [Aboriginal People Respond To “Australia Day”](#)(2016).

A class poll could be taken on the topic ‘Alternative days to celebrate Australia Day’ with results analysed and presented as a graph.

Did you know that the celebrated Kurnai Gunditjmara world champion boxer [Lionel Rose](#) was the first Aboriginal person to be named **Australian of the Year** back in 1968?

How many Aboriginal Australians of the Year have there been? Who are they and where are they from?





# Curriculum Links

Victorian Curriculum: ([VCHHK076](#))

**History / Levels 3 and 4 / Historical Knowledge / Community, remembrance and celebrations.**

Significance of days and weeks celebrated or commemorated in Australia and the importance of symbols and emblems, including Australia Day, ANZAC Day, Harmony Week, National Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC week and National Sorry Day.



Australian Curriculum: ([ACHASSK064](#))

**Humanities and Social Sciences / History / Year 3 / Historical Knowledge and Understanding / Community and remembrance.**

Days and weeks celebrated or commemorated in Australia (including Australia Day, ANZAC Day, and National Sorry Day) and the importance of symbols and emblems.



## Victorian Curriculum

[VCHHC125](#) Evaluate different historical interpretations and contested debates: *History / Levels 9 and 10 / Historical Concepts and Skills / Historical sources as evidence.*

[VCHHC101](#) Explain different historical interpretations and contested debates about the past: *History / Levels 7 and 8 / Historical Concepts and Skills / Historical sources as evidence.*

[VCHHK160](#) The perspectives of people and different historical interpretations and debates from the period: *History / Levels 9 and 10 / Historical Knowledge / The modern world and Australia / The globalising world.*

[VCELY367](#) Participate in formal and informal debates and plan, rehearse and deliver presentations, selecting and sequencing appropriate content and multimodal elements for defined audiences and purposes, making appropriate choices for modality and emphasis: *English / Level 6 / Literacy / Interacting with others.*

[VCELT406](#) Recognise and explain differing viewpoints about the world, cultures, individual people and concerns represented in texts: *English | Level 8 | Reading and Viewing | Literature.*

