

Australia Day

Australia's national day is 26 January. It is a holiday in every State and Territory of the Commonwealth, and commemorates the arrival of the First Fleet at Sydney Cove in New South Wales on 26 January 1788. Many Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people do not feel that this event should be commemorated. They would prefer to celebrate the Australian nation on another day of the year.

On 26 January 1938, two Aboriginal groups decided to hold a Day of Mourning to mark the 150th anniversary of the First Fleet's landing at Sydney Cove. In recent years, many Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people celebrate Survival Day instead.

For those who celebrate Australia Day, the Governor-General (who represents the English king or queen) makes a speech to Australians. An Australia Day Honours List is published. This is a list of names of people who are to be given a special award for their contributions to their community.

State governments also hold citizenship ceremonies, where people from other countries become Australian citizens. They make a serious promise to be loyal to Australia and to obey the laws of Australia.

Australia Day is also marked by many types of sporting events in all states. Families gather at free concerts in parks and gardens. There are usually special firework displays in the evening.

The Australian Citizenship Pledge

From this time forward, under God,*
I pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people,
whose democratic beliefs I share,
whose rights and liberties I respect, and
whose laws I will uphold and obey.

*The words 'under God' are optional.