

The Queen's Birthday

The Queen's Birthday, celebrated in the first week of June each year (held in October in Western Australia) is a public holiday in each State and Territory. The date is not the real birthday of Queen Elizabeth II – the present Queen of England – because one date was chosen to save changing it whenever a new king or queen is crowned.

Many people make bonfires and watch firework displays (although this is not allowed in some States and Territories because of the danger of fire). These activities used to be part of Empire Day celebrations on 24 May, which are no longer held. Awards for helping the community, called the Queen's Birthday Honours, which used to be announced on this day, have been replaced by the Order of Australia awards.

Labour Day

Labour Day is commemorated in all States and Territories of Australia, but on different days. It is an important day for workers, particularly those who are members of a trade union.

Before 1856, most people had to work very long hours. Their unions struggled to reduce the hours people must work. Their slogan was 'Eight hours labour, Eight hours recreation, Eight hours rest'. When the unions won a shorter working day for workers, they celebrated with a holiday called the 'Eight-hour Day'. This has since been renamed Labour Day.

In some cities there are Labour Day parades, where workers march under union flags and banners. Workers' picnics are also held for the whole family.