

Dates of Significance for First Nations People

	Events	Dates
1.	Australia Day / Survival Day	26 th January
2.	The Freedom Ride	12 th February
3.	Anniversary of the Apology (2008)	13 th February
4.	International Mother Language Day	21 st February
5.	National Close the Gap Day	3 rd Thursday in March
6.	Harmony Day	21 st March
7.	Bringing Them Home	5 th April
8.	National Sorry Day	26 th May
9.	Anniversary of the 1967 Referendum	27 th May
10.	Reconciliation Week	27 th May – 3 rd June
11.	Mabo Day	3 rd June
12.	Coming of the Light	1 st July
13.	NAIDOC Week	3 rd – 10 th July
14.	National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Children's Day	4 th August
15.	International Day of the World's Indigenous People	9 th August
16.	Indigenous Literacy Day	1 st Wednesday in September
17.	Anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples	13 th September
18.	NSW Aboriginal Rugby League Knockout / Koori Knockout	29 th September – 1 st October

Event Description

1. Australia Day / Survival Day

While January 26 is a day of celebration for many Australians, it's a day of mourning for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. January 26 marks the day that New South Wales was established as a colony in 1788. For many people in NSW, January 26 is a day of contemplation that marks the survival of Aboriginal Peoples, cultures and traditions.

2. The Freedom Ride

On 12 February 1965, University of Sydney students inspired by equal rights activism in the United States started a bus tour of western and coastal NSW with three key goals in mind:

- draw attention to the poor state of Aboriginal health, education and housing
- focus and attention on the social discrimination experienced by Aboriginal people to effect positive change
- encourage and support Aboriginal people themselves to resist discrimination.

The Freedom Ride was led by Charles Perkins, an Arrente man born in Alice Springs who dedicated his life to advocating for Aboriginal rights. The Freedom Ride has an important place in the history of Australia and is remembered every February for fostering Aboriginal activism and raising much needed public attention on issues Aboriginal people continue to face today.

3. Anniversary of the Apology (2008)

Anniversary of the formal apology made by then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, on behalf of the Parliament of Australia, on 13 February 2008 to Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for the forced removal of children from their parents and community over generations. This period, (and those affected) is referred to as the Stolen Generation.

4. International Mother Language Day

International Mother Language Day recognizes that languages and multilingualism can advance inclusion, and the Sustainable Development Goals' focus on leaving no one behind. UNESCO believes education, based on the first language or mother tongue, must begin from the early years as early childhood care and education is the foundation of learning.

The threat of language loss poses a serious risk to Australia's cultural inheritance, and to the wellbeing of many First Nations people. In Australia, there are estimated to be 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

languages, but only around 120 are still spoken. Of these languages approximately 90 per cent are endangered. Australians can take action to improve the preservation, promotion and learning of First Nations languages across Australia. As a nation we can work towards an Australia where First Languages are respected nationally and spoken by community members across our country.

5. National Close the Gap Day

Closing the Gap is the Australian Government strategy in response to the Close the Gap campaign, and includes policy responses to health, education and socio-economic development.

National Close the Gap Day is an annual event held to raise awareness about the differences in the health outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can expect to live 10–17 years less than other Australians. Babies born to Aboriginal mothers die at more than twice the rate of other Australian babies, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience higher rates of preventable illness such as heart disease, kidney disease and diabetes.

The National Close the Gap Day is an initiative of the Close the Gap campaign. The Close the Gap campaign is a social justice campaign launched by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and general non-government organisations that helps shape government policy and action to improve the health outcomes for Aboriginal people around the country.

6. Harmony Day

Harmony Day is a day of cultural respect for everyone who calls Australia home – from the traditional owners of this land to those who have come from many countries around the world. By participating in Harmony Day activities, people can learn and understand how all Australians from diverse backgrounds equally belong to this nation and enrich it.

7. Bringing them Home

On 5 April 1997, 'Bringing them Home' was launched as the final report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families.

The final report holds and honours the many personal stories shared by members of the Stolen Generations with the inquiry. The report is a tribute to the strength and resilience of many thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people adversely affected by forcible removal. This is day to remember and acknowledge the sorrow of all the children who will never come home - for them, their parents, their communities and all Aboriginal people.

8. National Sorry Day

National Sorry Day in 2018 marked the 20th anniversary of this special Australia-wide commemoration acknowledging more than 150 years of the forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families and culture and to think about the victims of these misguided actions by government.

Holding a National Sorry Day was one of the recommendations made by the 1997 Bringing Them Home inquiry. The first National Sorry Day was held on 26 May 1998.

National Sorry Day helps people come together to reflect on the past but also talk about what is needed to bring healing to the Stolen Generations, their families and communities.

9. Anniversary of the 1967 Referendum

In 1967, after 10 years of campaigning, a referendum was held to change the Australian Constitution. The result was the removal of two negative references to Aboriginal Australians giving the Commonwealth the power to legislate for them as a group. This change was seen by many as a recognition of Aboriginal people as full Australian citizens.

10. Reconciliation Week

National Reconciliation Week was initiated in 1996 to provide a special focus for nationwide activities all Australians can take part in to promote the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The dates of 27 May to 3 June encompass important milestones, namely the successful 1967 referendum and the High Court Mabo decision.

Reconciliation Australia describes the week as a time for all Australians to learn about our shared histories, cultures and achievements and to explore how each of us can join the national reconciliation effort.

11. Mabo Day

Mabo Day marks the anniversary of the High Court of Australia's judgement in 1992 in the Mabo case, that Australia was not 'Terra Nullius' (no man's land) when British colonists arrived in 1788. This is a day of particular significance for Torres Strait Islander people, but also for Aboriginal people too as the decision opened up a new wave of land rights.

12. Coming of the Light

The Coming of the Light is celebrated annually by Torres Strait Islander peoples. It marks the adoption of Christianity through island communities during the late nineteenth century.

13. NAIDOC Week

NAIDOC celebrations are held around Australia each July to celebrate the history, culture, and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. NAIDOC stands for National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee.

Its origins can be traced to the emergence of Aboriginal rights groups in the 1920's that sought to increase awareness in the wider community of the status and treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

14. National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Children's Day

Children's Day and the week leading up to it, 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 and Torres Strait Islander 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.

15. International Day of the World's Indigenous People

The United Nations' (UN) International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples was first proclaimed by the General Assembly in December 1994 and is observed on 9 August each year to promote and protect the rights of the world's indigenous population. This event also recognizes the achievements and contributions that indigenous people make to improve world issues such as environmental protection.

16. Indigenous Literacy Day

Indigenous Literacy Day, which takes place annually on the first Wednesday in September, aims to raise awareness about the educational struggles faced by Australia's First Nations communities. Indigenous Literacy Day is an opportunity to fundraise and advocate for remote communities to have equal access to literacy resources.

17. Anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly during its 61st session at UN Headquarters in New York City on 13 September 2007. The Australian Government gave its support on 3 April 2009.

18. NSW Aboriginal Rugby League Knockout / Koori Knockout

NSW Koori Rugby League Knockout Carnival is one of the biggest Indigenous gatherings in Australia. The first knockout was held at Camdenville Park, St Peters, on the October long weekend of 1971 with seven participating teams. The winning team gains the right to host the next knockout.