

# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Significant Dates

26 January	Survival Day
13 February	Anniversary of Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples
14 March	Esperance Nyungar Native Title Determination
21 March 2024	National Close the Gap Day
21 March	Harmony Day
22 May	Mudjar Aboriginal Corporation Registered
26 May	National Sorry Day
27 May	Anniversary of 1967 Referendum
27 May – 3 June	National Reconciliation Week
3 June	Mabo Day
6 June	Esperance Nyungar Native Title Lodgement
7 – 14 July 2024	National NAIDOC Week
4 August	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day
9 August	International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples
6 September	Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation Registered
4 September 2024	Indigenous Literacy Day
13 September	Anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People
21 November	Ngadju Native Title Determination

## 26 January - Survival Day

On 26 January 1788, Captain Arthur Phillip raised the British flag in Warrane (Sydney Cove) New South Wales to claim the land as a British Colony under the premise of Terra Nullis. In the early 1880's, this day was known as 'First Landing', 'Anniversary Day' or 'Foundation Day'. In 1946 the commonwealth and state governments agreed to unify the celebration and call it 'Australia Day'. The day became a public holiday in 1988 (its 30th anniversary), and since 1994 has been celebrated by all states and territories.

However, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people feel that this day marks the commemoration of a deep loss - loss of their sovereign rights to their land, loss of family, and loss of the right to practise their culture. This day is therefore also known as 'Invasion Day', 'Day of Mourning', 'Survival Day' or, since 2006, 'Aboriginal Sovereignty Day'. The name Survival Day emphasises that Aboriginal culture is still strong, and that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' identities are positive and alive, despite all that has happened since colonisation. Survival Day has become one of the biggest national Indigenous cultural events.

## 13 February - National Apology Day

This event marks the anniversary of the Apology in 2008 to Australia's Indigenous peoples in the House of Representatives. The apology was made by former Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, for past laws, policies and practices that have impacted on Australia's First Nations Peoples, particularly members of the Stolen Generations. The motion was supported by the Opposition and passed through both houses of Parliament. Many members of the Stolen Generations were present in the Chamber to hear the Apology and thousands more filled the Great Hall of Parliament House and flowed out onto the lawns to watch it on big screens.

## 14 March - Esperance Nyungar Native Title Determination

The Esperance Nyungar Native Title application was determined on 14 March 2014, following an application lodged on 6 June 1996 which claimed that native title rights and interests were held in an area of land and/or water, according to the local people's traditional laws and customs.

The determination area, being approximately 28,897.6060km<sup>2</sup>, encompasses parts of the Shire of Esperance and Shire of Ravensthorpe.



## 21 March 2024 - National Close the Gap Day

In 2006, more than 40 national organisations came together to form Close the Gap - Australia's largest ever campaign to improve the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Every year, Australians are encouraged to hold their own event on National Close the Gap Day to raise awareness about the life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Since 2006, the Close the Gap campaign has achieved an enormous amount through community support.

For more information visit <https://www.oxfam.org.au/what-we-do/indigenous-australia/national-close-the-gap-day/>

## 21 March - Harmony Day

Harmony Day is a day of cultural respect for everyone who calls Australia home – from the traditional custodians 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.

For more information visit <https://www.harmony.gov.au/>

## 22 May - Mudjar Aboriginal Corporation Registered

Mudjar Aboriginal Corporation (MAC) was registered with the Australian Government, Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations on 22 May 2002.

Previously known as Esperance Nyungar Aboriginal Corporation (ENAC), MAC is a not for profit, community purpose organisation with a focus on cultural education and preservation.

Their vision is to Celebrate Culture and Share Knowledge, and their goal is to Promote Learning and Wellness, by Connecting People, Ideas and Resources.



## 26 May - National Sorry Day

This is a significant day for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and particularly for Stolen Generations survivors. Commemorating 'Sorry Day' was one of the recommendations of the Bringing Them Home report, which was tabled in Parliament on 26 May 1997. This report was the result of a National Inquiry into the forcible removal of Indigenous children from their families, communities and cultural identity. The first 'Sorry Day' was held in Sydney in 1998 and is now held nationally with memorials and commemorative events that honour the Stolen Generations.

For further information visit: <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/national-sorry-day-2020/>

## 27 May - 3 June - National Reconciliation Week

This week is an ideal time for everyone to join the reconciliation conversation and reflect on shared histories, contributions and achievements. It is held annually and is a time to celebrate and build on the respectful relationships shared by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians. Preceded by National Sorry Day on 26 May, National Reconciliation Week is framed by two key events in Australia's history, which provide strong symbols for reconciliation:

- 27 May 1967 – the referendum date when more than 90 per cent of Australians voted to give the government power to make laws for Indigenous people and recognise them in the census.
- 3 June 1992 – the historic Mabo decision (see below).

For more information visit: <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/national-reconciliation-week/>

## 3 June - Mabo Day (part of National Reconciliation Week)

Mabo Day marks the anniversary of the High Court of Australia's judgement in 1992 in the Mabo case. This is a day of particular significance for Torres Strait Islander Australians. Eddie 'Koiki' Mabo's name is synonymous with native title rights. His story began in May 1982 when he and fellow Murray (Mer) Islanders David Passi, Sam Passi, James Rice and Celuia Salee instituted a claim in the High Court for native title to the Murray (Mer) Islands in the Torres Strait.

The claim was made against the State of Queensland, which responded by seeking to legislate to extinguish retrospectively any native title on the Islands. This was challenged in the High Court on the grounds that it was inconsistent with the 1975 Racial Discrimination Act. On 3 June 1992 the High Court accepted the claim by Eddie Mabo and the other claimants that their people (the Meriam people) had occupied the Islands of Mer for hundreds of years before the arrival of the British and found that the Meriam people were 'entitled as against the whole world to possession, occupation, use and enjoyment of lands in the Murray Islands.' The decision overturned a legal fiction that Australia was terra nullius (a land belonging to no one) at the time of British colonisation.

For more information visit: <http://www.aboriginalheritage.org/news/2013/mabo-day/>



## 6 June - Esperance Nyungar Native Title Lodgement

On 6 June 1996, a native title claim application was made to the Federal Court under the Native Title Act on behalf of the Esperance Nyungars.

Lodgement of the claim requested that a determination be made that native title exists, so the local people's rights and interests would be recognised by the common law of Australia. This application was determined on 14 March 2014.

## 7-14 July 2024 - National NAIDOC Week

NAIDOC (National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee) week celebrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and recognises the contributions of Indigenous Australians in various fields. Its origins can be traced to the emergence of Aboriginal groups in the 1920's which sought to increase awareness of the status and treatment of Indigenous Australians. All Australians are encouraged to participate.

For more information visit: <https://www.naidoc.org.au/>

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

National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day (NAICD) is a celebration of Indigenous children. NAICD was first observed by the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) in 1988. Each year SNAICC produces and sends out resources to help celebrations for NAICD.

For more information visit: <https://aboriginalchildrensday.com.au/>

## 9 August - International Day of the World's Indigenous People

The United Nations' (UN) International Day of the World's Indigenous People 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.

For more information visit: <https://www.un.org/en/observances/indigenous-day>



## 6 September - Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation Registered

Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation (ETNTAC) was registered by the Federal Court of Australia as the Native Title Body Corporate for the Kepa Kurl Wudjari people on 6 September 2016. ETNTAC are the first point of contact for government and other parties who want to conduct business with traditional custodians in Esperance.

## 4 September 2024 - Indigenous Literacy Day

Indigenous Literacy Day aims to help raise funds to raise literacy levels and improve the lives and opportunities of Indigenous Australians living in remote and isolated regions.

The Indigenous Literacy Foundation aims to improve literacy levels in remote Indigenous communities. We provide remote Indigenous communities and service organisations with access to new, culturally appropriate books and literacy resources. These books are gifted to communities with no obligation.

For further information visit: <https://www.indigenousliteracyfoundation.org.au/indigenous-literacy-day>

## 13 September - Anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was adopted by the General Assembly on Thursday, 13 September 2007, by a majority of 144 states in favour, 4 votes against (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States) and 11 abstentions (Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burundi, Colombia, Georgia, Kenya, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Samoa and Ukraine).

Years later the four countries that voted against have reversed their position and now support the UN Declaration. Today the Declaration is the most comprehensive international instrument on the rights of indigenous peoples. It establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the indigenous peoples of the world and it elaborates on existing human rights standards and fundamental freedoms as they apply to the specific situation of indigenous peoples.

For further information visit: <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/un-declaration-rights-indigenous-peoples-1>

## 21 November - Ngadju Native Title Determination

On 24 December 1998, an application was made to the Federal Court under the Native Title Act on behalf of Ngadju. The determination area encompasses parts of the Shires of Esperance, Kalgoorlie-Boulder, Dundas, Coolgardie and Lake Grace. This application was determined on 21 November 2014.

Additional Notes:

*This document is only a brief listing of some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Significant Dates. Please email [RAP@esperance.wa.gov.au](mailto:RAP@esperance.wa.gov.au) to let us know of any additional dates to add to this listing.*