

2025 NATSICC Australia Day Statement

Every year, as January 26 approaches, Australians across the Country consider the day in different ways. For some, it is a time to celebrate our Nation's achievements, or the opportunity to enjoy a day off and gather with family and friends. NATSICC acknowledges and respects that many Australians hold a deep connection to this day and the pride they feel in our Country.

For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, however, January 26 is a day of mixed emotions—one that brings sadness, reflection, and a sense of unresolved history. Is it because we do not want to celebrate our connection with this Country? No. Is it because we seek division? Absolutely not. Rather, it is because January 26 marks a moment in history that profoundly changed the lives of Australia's First Peoples. As a Nation, we are yet to fully confront the realities of what colonisation meant in 1788 and how its legacy continues to impact the world's oldest living culture today.

NATSICC's desire has always been not to diminish anyone's experience of this day, but to invite all Catholics – indeed, all Australians - to walk together with open hearts and minds, fostering a deeper understanding of our shared history and collective future. We believe that genuine unity can only be achieved when all Australians feel included in our National celebrations.

It is for this reason that we have **long advocated for another date**—one that brings all Australians together in a spirit of unity and recognition. **The anniversary of the 1967 Referendum, 27 May, stands as a powerful symbol of National consensus, when over 90% of Australians voted YES to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the population count.** This moment in history represents a time when Australians came together with hope for a better future and made a practical step to begin that journey

We are acutely aware that simply changing the day we celebrate Australia Day will not address the many and varied challenges—including disparities in life expectancy, socio-economic disadvantage, and other long-standing issues—that affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. That is something that all of us must address, individually and collectively as a society.

Nevertheless, a willingness to change the date would signify a sense of shared National pride and empathy—'If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it' (1 Corinthians 12:26)— signalling to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples that the broader Community is prepared to stand with us, fostering deeper reconciliation, acceptance, and empowerment for shaping our own futures.

This year, Australia Day falls on a Sunday—our Holy Day—a time when we come together in faith to reflect, give thanks, and seek guidance from God. As we gather in our churches and homes, let us take this opportunity to reflect more deeply on what it means to celebrate our nation in a way that includes and respects all Australians, leading to meaningful actions that extend beyond the day itself.

The Gospel calls us to be peacemakers and to seek justice. In Micah (6:8) we are called to walk humbly with our God. In this spirit, we encourage you to use the newly created *Australia Day Reflection & Discernment Guide* to explore the complexities of this day, to listen with open hearts, and to discern how we, as a Nation, can continue the journey of reconciliation. **May our faith inspire us to build a future where reconciliation and unity allow all Australians to celebrate together with pride, respect and hope.**

The *Australia Day Reflection & Discernment Guide* is available online at:

<https://www.natsicc.org.au/assets/australia-day-reflection-and-discernment-guide-v2.pdf>.