



## 2022 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Dates of Significant Events



**1 January 1993**

**Native title** denotes First Nations people's entitlement to land which has been stolen from them. Legislation requires them to prove that they had a continuous ownership with the land that they claim (which often proved difficult). Read more about [native title](#).

**January 2021**

The Commonwealth government releases draft proposals from the Indigenous Voice co-design process.

**25 January 2022** Aboriginal flag rights purchased by Commonwealth Campaigners who fought to “free” the Aboriginal flag have welcomed the federal government’s \$20m deal to buy out the private companies who held exclusive licences over its use and charged Aboriginal community groups for permission.

**26 January**

[Invasion Day \(Australia Day\)](#)

**26 January 1972**

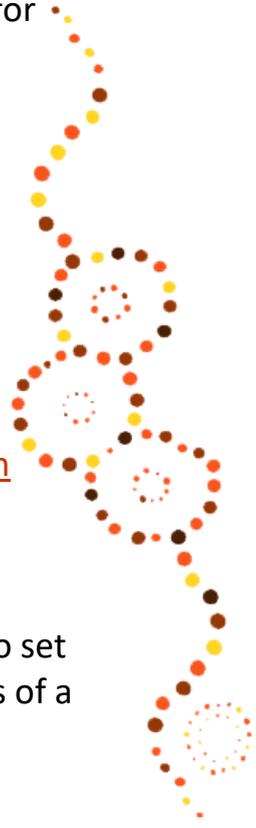
[Tent Embassy](#) established in front of Parliament House, Canberra.

**13 February**

National Apology Day: Prime Minister Kevin Rudd [apologised to the Stolen Generations in 2008](#).

**16 March 2021**

The federal government rejects a senate motion, led by Patrick Dodson, to set up an enquiry into truth-telling and treaty-making which are key elements of a Makarrata process as called for in the Uluru Statement from the Heart.





## 17 March

*On National Close the Gap Day, first organised in 2006, organisations come together to improve the health of First Nations people. Held on the third Thursday of March, Close the Gap day is an opportunity for organisations and community to hold events and raise awareness of the [Aboriginal health crisis](#).*

National Close the Gap Day is celebrated on the third Thursday in March each year. This year's theme is Leadership and legacy through crisis: keeping our mob safe. The Close the Gap campaign is the result of the Australian public's overwhelming support for improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Close the Gap campaign for Indigenous Health Equality is a highly regarded movement that has shaped government policy. It is led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and supported by mainstream health and advocacy organisations from around the country. See the 2021 campaign report [here](#).

Every year people are encouraged to hold their own event on National Close the Gap Day to bring people together, to share information — and most importantly — to take meaningful action in support of achieving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health equality by 2030.

## 21 March

**Harmony Day** started in 1999 and celebrates Australia's cultural diversity. It's about inclusiveness, respect and a sense of belonging for everyone.

See [www.harmony.gov.au](http://www.harmony.gov.au).

It is also the United Nations' International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

## 23 March

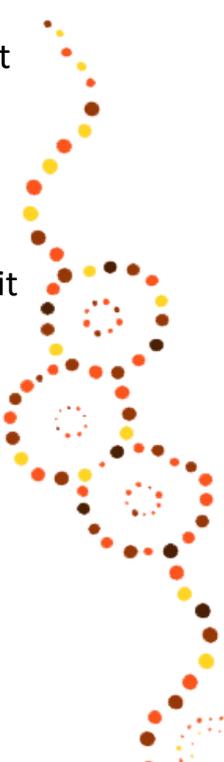
In 2005 the Australian government abolished the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC). It was established on 3 May 1990.

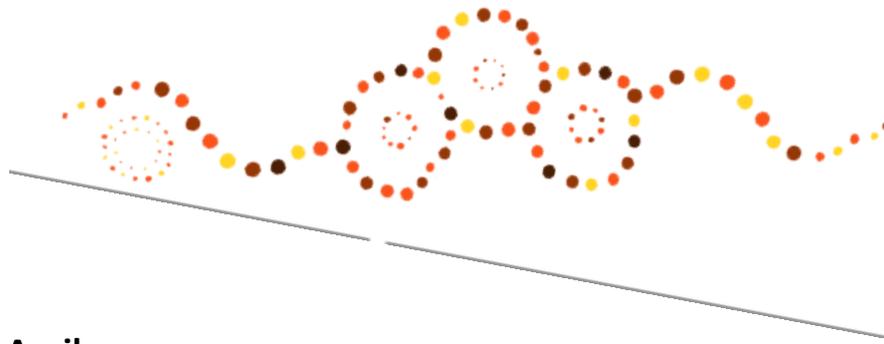
## 29 March

Torres Strait Islander flag was first launched in 1992. It was designed by the late Bernard Namok in 1992 as a symbol of unity and identity for Torres Strait Islanders.

## 5 April

The *Bringing Them Home* [Stolen Generations](#) report was released in 1997.





### **15 April**

The [Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Royal Commission](#) released its report in 1991.

### **1 May**

[Pilbara Aboriginal Stockmen's strike](#) in 1946 in Western Australia.

### **23 May 2017**

Aboriginal leaders from across Australia gather at Uluru from 23–26 May to identify amendments required for constitutional recognition of Aboriginal people, culminating in the Uluru Statement from the Heart. This is probably the first time that Aboriginal people presented a united position and a single key recommendation.

### **26 May**

National Sorry Day is a day to remember the removal of First Nations children from their families. A chance for all Australians to recognise the pain thousands of First Nations people went through. The children affected are now known as the [Stolen Generations](#).

The first 'Sorry Day' in 1998 was marked by hundreds of activities around the country. The Australian federal government does not take part in 'Sorry Day', saying people who removed First Nations children thought they were doing the right thing and people now should not have to say sorry for what people did in the past. More than one million signatures in thousands of Sorry Books speak a different language.

### **27 May**

The anniversary of the [1967 Referendum](#) recognises the 97% 'yes' vote in the Referendum of 1967. It changed the constitution to allow First Nations people to be counted in the census and to enable the Commonwealth government to make laws *for* First Nations people.

The day also marks the start of the annual [National Reconciliation Week](#). Since 2018, Reconciliation Day is a public holiday in the ACT, held on the first Monday on or after 27 May.





### 3 June

Mabo Day celebrates the [1992 High Court decision](#) that ruled in favour of Eddie Koiki Mabo and other claimants that their people had occupied the island of Mer in the Torres Strait prior to the arrival of the British. This historic decision effectively recognised the existence of native title rights and rejected the concept of *terra nullius*, which claimed Australia was a land belonging to no-one prior to British occupation.

The day also marks the end of [National Reconciliation Week](#).

### 10 June

On this day in 1838 the [Myall Creek Massacre](#) occurred in NSW, and every year a Myall Creek Massacre Memorial Ceremony is held in its memory.

### 12 June

First Nations people presented the Barunga Statement to Labor Prime Minister Bob Hawke affirms that the government is committed to working for a negotiated treaty with Aboriginal people.

A statement of Aboriginal aspirations is presented to Mr Hawke at the Barunga Festival ("The Barunga Statement"). The Prime Minister responds by calling for a treaty to be negotiated between the Aboriginal people and the government of Australia.

*There shall be a treaty negotiated between the Aboriginal people and the government on behalf of all the people of Australia.*

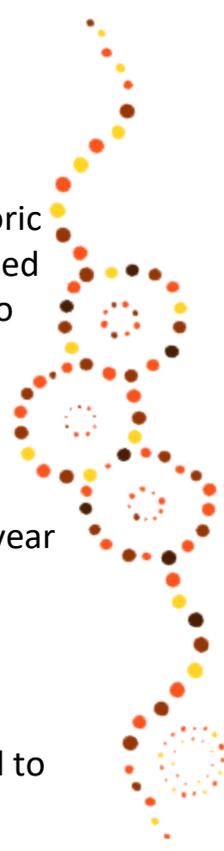
— Prime Minister Bob Hawke

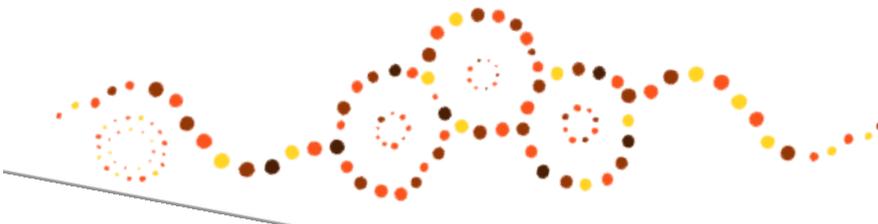
### 15 June 2021

The Queensland government establishes a \$300 million Path to Treaty Fund. It plans to use its returns "to progress Queensland's Path to Treaty and support the Government's response to the Treaty Advancement Committee report, expected to be provided to Government later in 2021"

### 21 June

Prime Minister John Howard declares the [Northern Territory intervention](#) in 2007.





## 1 July

### Coming of the Light

This is a particular day of significance for Torres Strait Islander community, as it marks the day the London Missionary Society landed at Erub Island in the Torres Strait in 1871. It recognises the adoption of Christianity through island communities during the late nineteenth century. In 2021, the 150th Anniversary of Coming of the Light was celebrated. Activities include church services and a re-enactment of the landing at Kemus on Erub Island. Hymn singing, feasting and Ailan dans to strengthen community and family ties. They celebrate the day with cultural and religious activities.

### 1st Week of July

[NAIDOC Week](#) is in the first full week of July and celebrates the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal people. NAIDOC originally stood for 'National Aborigines and Islander Observance Committee', which was responsible for organising national activities for NAIDOC Week. The acronym has now become the name for the week itself.

### 12 July 1971

The Australian Aboriginal Flag was designed by artist Harold Thomas and first flown at Victoria Square in Adelaide, South Australia, on National Aborigines Day, 12 July 1971.

### 4 August

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day (Children's Day) officially started in 1988 and is now the largest day to celebrate First Nations children. Authorities recorded the 4th August as the birthday of many [children they took away](#) from their parents. [2] Today the day focuses on First Nations children's themes like poverty, education access and celebrates their strengths, pride and culture. "We want [First Nations kids] to flourish, achieve their greatest potential and enjoy the same quality of life as all other Australian children," says the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) chair Murial Blamlett. [3] See [aboriginalchildrensday.com.au](http://aboriginalchildrensday.com.au). (World Children's Day is celebrated on 20 November, marking the anniversary of the United Nation's *Declaration of the Rights of the Child* in 1959.)





## 7 August 1979

Protesters at Capital Hill, Canberra, demand the the federal government to enter treaty negotiations with Aboriginal people. The Prime Minister advises that he would discuss the matter of a treaty with the National Aboriginal Conference, the elected body representing Aboriginal people. The NAC, aware of the government's opposition to the word 'treaty', chooses to use the Yolgnu word 'Makarrata', which was first published as meaning 'the resumption of normal relations at the end of a conflict', but later known to mean 'pay-back killings between families or tribes'.

## 9 August

First declared by the United Nations in 1994, the [International Day of Indigenous Peoples](#) aims to strengthen international awareness and cooperation for solutions to the problems faced by First Nations people in areas such as human rights, development, the environment, education and health. The day marks the first meeting of the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations, held in Geneva in 1982.

There are an estimated 370 million indigenous peoples in some 90 countries around the world. They make up less than 5% of the world's population, but account for 15% of the poorest. They speak an overwhelming majority of the world's estimated 7,000 languages and represent 5,000 different cultures. [4]

## 14 August

First Nations people present the Bark Petition from Yirrkala to Parliament in 1963.

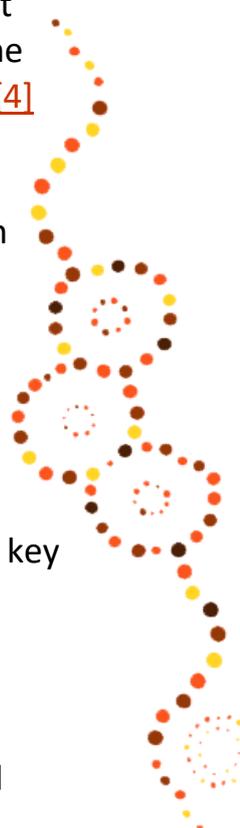
## 16–30 August

The Conniston Massacre occurs in the Northern Territory in 1928.

## 17 August 1979

Aboriginal activist Kevin Gilbert writes to the Prime Minister identifying the key issues of Aboriginal Nations' sovereignty, the need for a treaty, and a Bill of Rights. [2]

In his reply, the prime minister concludes that he and his government are prepared to consider a treaty with the elected body the National Aboriginal Conference.





*I shall be pleased to discuss the concept of a treaty with the National Aboriginal Conference — Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser*

## **24 August**

First Nations people organise a [Gurindji walk-off](#) from Wave Hill Station, NT in 1966.

## **1 September**

In 1998 ally group Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR) displays a [Sea of Hands](#) at Uluru, NT.

## **7 September**

### **1st Wednesday**

**Indigenous Literacy Day** is a national celebration of culture, stories, language and literacy. This day raises awareness of the disadvantages experienced in remote communities and advocates for more access to literacy resources. [\[5\]](#)

## **13 September**

### **Anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

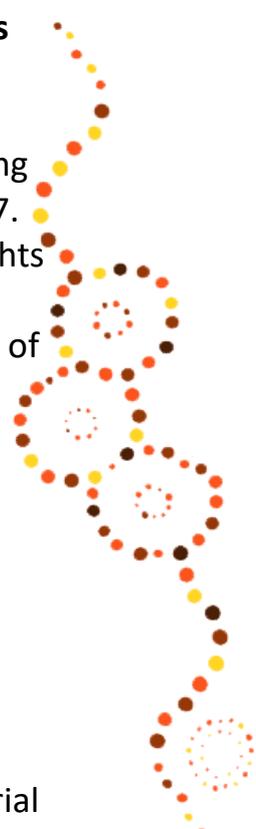
The Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (A/RES/61/295) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly during its 61st session at UN Headquarters in New York City on 13 September 2007. The UNDRIP is the most comprehensive international instrument on the rights of Indigenous 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.

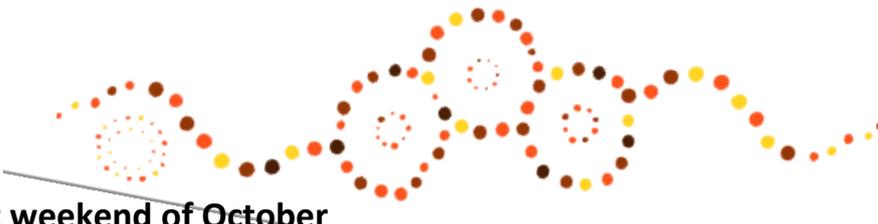
## **25 September**

Cathy Freeman wins two gold medals at the 2000 Olympic Games.

## **28 September**

First Nations youth John Pat [dies in police custody](#) in 1983. Each year, First Nations people remember his and other cases on John Pat Day with memorial services or protest marches.





## 1st weekend of October

NSW Aboriginal Rugby League Knockout (at varying venues).

## 26 October 1981

The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr. Peter Baume, writes to the then Chairperson of the National Aboriginal Conference, Mr. Bill Bird, in response to a letter advising him of the 27 items that had emerged as a preliminary list of matters that were being considered for inclusion in the Makarrata/Treaty.

## 26 October

Uluru is returned to traditional owners in 1985.

## 28 October

The Battle of Pinjarra happens in 1834 in Western Australia.

## 30 October

The Racial Discrimination Act takes effect in 1975.

## 26 November

Pope John Paul II addresses First Nations people in Alice Springs in 1986.

## 10 December

Human Rights Day commemorates the day in 1948 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

## 16 December

Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act passed in 1976.

**Source:** 2022 Aboriginal calendar of significant events - Creative Spirits, retrieved from

<https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/history/aboriginal-calendar>

**Source:** MEDIA RELEASE 25 Jan 2022

Prime Minister, Minister for Indigenous Australians

<https://www.pm.gov.au/media/free-use-aboriginal-flag-secured-all-australians>

**Source:** Culturally important dates

Culturally important dates that celebrate or recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and culture <https://www.qld.gov.au/firstnations/cultural-awareness-heritage-arts/dates>

