

# Q&A - Change the Date 2018/19

## Table of Contents

<b>Key messaging tips</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Key resources</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>What is Amnesty's position?</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>How to get involved and show your support for changing the date?</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Background Information</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Potential comments and responses</b>	<b>4</b>

## Key messaging tips

*Following message testing and consultation, we encourage supporters to use the following tips when talking about this issue:*

- Note that there are many varied views on the issue, including in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community - talk about having a national conversation about our history and moving forward as a nation
- Look to our [2018/19 CTD messaging framework](#).
- Avoid using the term 'Australia Day', use instead '26 January' or 'Survival Day'.
- Note that some terms encourage controversy and may incite further negative comments (e.g. 'Invasion Day').
- Where possible, use 'move the date' or 'share the date' to emphasise that we should just pick a different date, not radically change the event itself. Use terms such as 'solidarity', 'unity' and 'inclusion'.
- Use the term colonisation rather than invasion.
- Try to focus on the future rather than the painful past.
- Frame in terms of inclusion and a date for all.
- Frame as a human rights issue.

**Update 21/01/19:** As the 26 January approaches, we are seeing many varied views, as we do each year. Over the past couple of years there have been growing calls from organisers of Invasion Day rallies to not change the date but rather bring attention to the many social justice issues being faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, some are calling for an abolition of Australia Day altogether, and there are other views. On the back of this we're encouraging people to speak about the need for greater awareness of the impact of colonisation, the history of 26 January and the need for change generally rather than a specific and simple message about changing the date.

# Key resources

Please take the time to read these key resources for more information - and familiarise yourself with our online action and how you can help (Leader article) this year

## 2018/19 Key Resources

- [2019 Events list](#)
- [Change the Date Leader article](#) (17 Dec 2018)
- [Online Action](#)
- [offline petition](#)

## 2017/18 Resources

- [Amnesty's 2018 Change the Date action](#)
- [2018 Survival Events](#)
- 2018 [Indigenous voices](#) video
- 2018 [Solidarity video](#)
- 2018 [Facebook live](#) from Yabun
- 2018 [Rodney's op ed](#)
- 2018 [Date for all meme](#)
- 2018 Facebook Profile pic
- [Amnesty logo change](#)

## 2016/17 Resources

- 2017 Blog post '[Showing your solidarity this Australia day](#)'
- 2017 Guest Blog post "[Why I didn't celebrate Australia day](#)"

# What is Amnesty's position?

In 2017 and 2018, (the date falls on a Saturday in 2019) Amnesty International Australia showed our support by allowing staff to work on 26 Jan in lieu of obtaining another day off.

In 2018 of National Board approved the following statement:

*"The anniversary of British colonisation of Australia on the 26th January has been formally marked as Australia Day since 1994, but celebrations and protests on that date go back to the 1800s.*

*Since colonisation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been subjected to violence including through the frontier wars and government policies that created harm including the removal of children, the removal of people from their ancestral lands, slavery and the denial of self-determination.*

*The 26th January is and will always be an important day for Australia - but there are better days to celebrate this nation. In solidarity with the call of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and groups, Amnesty International Australia supports Australia Day being held on a day other than 26 January so that all Australians can celebrate together.*

*Amnesty International calls on the Australian Government to start a consultation process to move towards a new date for Australia Day - one which is inclusive of all Australians and recognises the survival and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.”*

## How to get involved and show your support for changing the date?

- [Attend local Indigenous cultural / Survival Day event/s](#), or if you're in Perth head along to [One Day in Freo](#) on 27 January – these events are a great day out for you and your family
- Volunteer at local Indigenous cultural / Survival Day event, this is a great way to meet with and build relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities
- Where appropriate host a stall at local Indigenous cultural / Survival Day event with our our current Community is Everything [#RaiseTheAge](#) petition
- [Show your support in 2019 by attending alternative events on different days OR attending survival day events on 26 Jan.](#)
- Encourage your workplace to allow you to work on 26th Jan in lieu of taking another day off. For guidance, see <http://www.changeitourselves.com.au/>.

## Background Information

26 January is the anniversary of British colonisation, the landing of the First Fleet and the first raising of the British flag. Colonial celebration of the date goes back to 1808 in New South Wales, but it was not until 1994 that the day was consistently nationally celebrated as Australia Day.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the 26th January is a day of mourning, invasion and survival. The date creates division, and alienates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Protests against the date have been documented since 1888, with notable protests since then including the 1938 Day of Mourning conference and march, the start of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy in 1972, the '88 protest on Sydney Harbour, and the 2012 protests in Canberra.

Recent years have seen increasing momentum towards changing the date of Australia Day,

with several local councils in Western Australia, Victoria and Tasmania amending their celebrations and extensive public and media debate.

Australia Day in 2017 and 2018 were marked with public protests in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Townsville, Hobart and many other locations.

### **Amnesty Involvement**

In 2016 and 2017 Amnesty International Australia, led by Indigenous staff and the Indigenous Rights Team took a position in support of changing the date on social media and our website, generating significant and largely positive social media response. Since that time, both major political parties in Australia have come out against changing the date (although there have been moves within the Labor party at state conferences to change their position), and the issue continues to generate mainstream media interest.

To date there is not a formal campaign coalition to make the change, and there is some diversity of views in the Indigenous community. No single alternative date is proposed.

In 2017/18, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), in consultation with the Line Management Team (LMT) considered a range of options for our level of engagement and recommended a solidarity approach in line with National Employment Standards, our Enterprise Agreement, our [Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan](#), and our Community Is Everything campaign goals. The decision as to the approach was then taken to the 2017 September AIA Board meeting, as it was considered a 'contentious issue'. The Board adopted the position statement as above for the Australian government to start a consultation process to move the celebration of Australia Day to a new date.

In 2019 due to growing calls from organisers of Invasion Day rallies to not change the date but rather bring attention to the many social justice issues being faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, we nuanced our messaging for 26 January to be more about truth telling and standing in solidarity with Indigenous people rather than a simplified message to change the date, and will watch to see how the movement evolves.

## Potential comments and responses

***\*Moderators the questions below are examples of what we have seen on social media. Please be aware that the comments or questions on social media may not be exactly the same as those below. They are likely to be in a similar vein.***

***The answers below may be used for a variety questions/comments. Please make yourself familiar with the responses below so you are able to respond to comments/questions with the most appropriate & sensitive response.***

***This is a controversial issue ... our goal is to ensure we don't inflame or offend. In some cases it may be best not to respond at all.***

### **Who has Amnesty consulted on this position?**

In 2017 Amnesty consulted with a number of Indigenous and advocacy organisations to find out what others had planned and to check that people were comfortable with our approach. Our consultations were overwhelmingly positive.

In 2019 we consulted with Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders and organisations who expressed a variety of views. We continue to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups on this important day of protest, mourning and celebration of survival for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

### **What date does Amnesty want it to be?**

Amnesty International's position is to acknowledge this long running human rights issue and urge the Government to start a consultation for a new date.

\*Moderators please don't refer to any specific days/dates, e.g. Wattle Day.

### **How is Amnesty involved in Jan 26 / Survival / Invasion day in 2019?**

We are continuing with our action to seek a consultation for a new date. We will attend and support Indigenous led events and rallies in our local areas. We will share stories about the impact of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to raise awareness on social media. We will continue to support allies in the 26 January movement. We will continue to support voices of Indigenous people on this issue

### **Why does AIA support changing the date as opposed to abolishing Australia Day entirely**

AIA appreciates that there are diverse views in the community on this sensitive topic. We stand with individuals who want to highlight the pain and suffering by the celebration of this date. There are lots of ways forward to resolve this issue which is why we have called for a national consultation on the issue..

**I'm an Amnesty supporter and I don't want my money wasted on changing the date of a public holiday, when there are other more important issues, such as stopping**

## **executions or false imprisonment in other countries.**

Thank you for helping with all the hundreds of ways we work to protect human rights in every country in the world - including working to end one of the gravest human rights violations in Australia, the imprisonment and abuse of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children as young as 10 years old.

Our call to have a national consultation about Australia Day is a tiny portion of the human rights work we do in the year, and it has not been at all difficult for Amnesty to take this public position. It's one of the most straightforward human rights issues - it is simply the right and fair thing to have a consultation about the date to of our national consultation so that we have a date that is inclusive.

### **Will all your staff be working on 26 January?**

In 2019 the 26 January falls on a Saturday, when Amnesty generally don't work though some may attend events and assist activists to attend events. Given that the public holiday falls on the 28 January this year, our staff do not need to be given the option of working on this day.

However in previous years when the 26 January public holiday fell on a weekday we have given staff the option to work. At least 50% of staff worked on 26 January on 2018 and took the public holiday off on another day. Many of those staff attended Survival Day or Invasion Day events that day, in solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

### **Is your call to change the date of a public holiday here distracting you from other more important work, such as stopping executions or false imprisonment in other countries?**

We work to protect human rights in hundreds of ways, in every country in the world - including working to end one of the gravest human rights violations in Australia, the imprisonment and abuse of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children as young as 10 years old. You can take action to stop that by signing here:

<https://action.amnesty.org.au/act-now/raise-the-age>.

Our call to move the date of Australia Day fits squarely with our human rights work, and it has not been at all difficult for Amnesty to take this public position. It's one of the most straightforward human rights issues - it is simply the right and fair thing to move the date to any of the other 364 days in the year on which we can all celebrate.

If this is not an issue you agree with Amnesty on, of course as always, we encourage you to focus on the campaigns you are passionate about. We don't expect our supporters to always support every campaign.

**You are calling for a consultation process - do you want to have another postal survey, plebiscite or referendum on whether we should change the date? What percentage of Australians do you think will vote to change the date?**

Our position is that Australia should keep Australia Day, and move the date to one that everyone can celebrate. We are calling for consultation about which new date would most unite Australians, a referendum is not needed - but it needs to be a national conversation. We opposed the marriage equality postal survey for being pointless, harmful and expensive, and we are certainly not calling for another postal survey. Consultation about the best new date could take many forms, such as community forums or an online survey.

**Aren't there more important issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples?**

The day represents the start of colonisation and the genocide of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Moving the day is an acknowledgement of this ongoing issue and a way for us to move forward in unity. Amnesty also campaigns on other human rights issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples including our primary Indigenous rights campaign Community is Everything which seeks to end the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in the justice system, for more information on this work see <https://action.amnesty.org.au/act-now/raise-the-age>

**We're apologising for something that happened 200+ years ago on a date that never even meant anything / Can't we just get over it?**

The day represents the start of colonisation and the genocide of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people so it's hardly a day that means nothing. Moving the day is an acknowledgement of this ongoing issue and a way for us to move forward in unity.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been protesting about 26 January being celebrated for over a century with notable protests on the day since 1888, including the 1938 Day of Mourning Conference, the day the Aboriginal Tent Embassy started in 1972 and the 1988 protests which attracted 40,000 people.

**It's a political correctness joke / this is not a human rights issue**

This is a human rights issue. The fact that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been protesting for so long, regardless of who is in political power, shows that it is a human rights issue. It's about genocide, self-determination, the right to participate in decision making and many other human and Indigenous rights. This is not unique to Australia either. Indigenous people in USA and Canada face similar issues with their national celebrations

including Columbus Day, which has been changed to [‘Indigenous Peoples Day’](#) in a number of US states and cities.

### **Moving Australia day is a pointless gesture / There are more important issues for Aboriginal people**

The 26 January represents the start of colonisation and the genocide of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Moving the day is an acknowledgement of this ongoing issue and a way for us to move forward in unity.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been protesting about the 26 January being celebrated for over a century with notable protests on the day including the 1938 Day of Mourning Conference, the day the Aboriginal Tent Embassy started in 1972 and the '88 protests which attracted 40,000 people.

### **Why should we change the date now? We celebrate Australia day to accept our history - both the good and bad / It is already a date for all Australians / You really are splitting hairs and pandering to a handful of activists and greenies**

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples 26 January will always be a day of mourning, it's not a day that can be celebrated.

Celebrating 26 January as a national public holiday was only recognised nationally from 1994 - it is relatively recent. The term ‘Australia day’ was only used from 1935. Prior to this, each state and territory recognised different days at different times of the year.

The day represents the start of colonisation and the genocide of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Moving the day is an acknowledgement of this ongoing issue and a way for us to move forward in unity.

### **Australia is a multicultural country, why should we move a day to recognise one culture only?**

Yes, Australia is a multicultural country - it recognises all cultures. The 26 January as a national celebration does not recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people or their culture. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people cannot and do not celebrate on 26 January. This is evidenced by the protest marches held every year and the protests going back a century.

We all want to celebrate our nation, but it needs to be on a day that is inclusive of all Australians. Amnesty International's position is to acknowledge this long running human rights issue and urge the Government to start a consultation for a new date.



## **Most Australians want to [keep the date](#) as it is. Why are you forcing this issue?**

Amnesty's role is to promote human rights, and that means standing up for what's fair and just, even if we meet opposition to that. The genocide against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is very much a human rights issue, as are the many inequalities still faced by Indigenous people today. It is a source of grief and pain for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and an increasing number of non-Indigenous people, that, out of 365 days in the year, we choose to 'celebrate' this country on the one date that marks the start of genocide. It's only been since 1994 that we've held the Australia Day national public holiday on 26 January. We hope that Australians, in the spirit of inclusiveness, agree we should shift that celebration to a new date we can all enjoy.

### **According to polling**

(<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/most-dont-care-when-australia-day-is-held-poll-finds-20180116-h0j0w9.html>) many Australians don't care what day we celebrate on as long as we have a celebration.

## **Why are you calling for this when some Aboriginal people want the day to stay the same?**

Like all groups, not all Aboriginal people agree on this issue. Some want to keep the date, some want to abolish Australia Day altogether, some have no opinion, and many, over many years of sustained protest want another day for celebration. In our discussions with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities over many years, we've heard a range of views, but the overwhelming view is that many Indigenous people feel great pain on 26 January, and wish they could celebrate with everybody else, on a date that would include us all, not divide us.

## **Are you saying people who want to have Australia Day on 26 January are racist?**

Of course not, however it seems there is some misunderstanding around the call to move the date. Let's make clear we are in favour of keeping Australia Day - it's only the date of 26 January that should move to a date everyone can enjoy. It's an issue of fairness and inclusiveness. We hope that those people who like celebrating Australia Day will like celebrating it even more, when it is on another date when everyone can participate, a date that will unite us rather than divide us.

## **What hope do you have of changing the date, when the Government are adamant the date will stay the same?**

Throughout history, every human rights movement has met with opposition, until the time comes when society chooses the path of fairness and justice. This is no different.

Since at least the 1800s, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have protested 26 January as the anniversary of invasion. It has been a day of mourning much, much longer than it has been our gazetted national day, which only happened in 1994. In recent years, more and more non-Indigenous Australians have joined the call to hold Australia Day on any of the other 364 days in the year, so that we can all celebrate together.

We hope our elected leaders begin to see this an issue of fairness and justice, not an issue of politics. We hope they do the right thing by Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous people alike, and move the date to one that unites us, rather than divides us.

### **What is Amnesty's view on the Government's recent regulations which will force Local councils to hold citizenship ceremonies on 26 January?**

The decision to force local councils to make hold citizenship ceremonies on the 26 January is based on the premise of 26 January being a day of celebration. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples 26 January will always be a day of mourning, it's not a day that can be celebrated.

### **Does Amnesty support any proposed date to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, such as 25 January as proposed by Scott Morrison?**

Amnesty's position is to call for a public consultation on the issue. It is not up to anyone person to decide which date we move to or whether a new date is created, it needs to be a national conversation.

### **You state that the Indigenous people have been here for 65,000 years. Where on all earth do you get this figure from??**

Based on research from July finding stone tools 'at least' 65k years old and 'up to' (but not definitively) 80k years.

Sources:

<https://www.nature.com/articles/nature22968>

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2017-07-20/aboriginal-shelter-pushes-human-history-back-to-65.000-years/8719314>

[https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/jul/19/dig-finds-evidence-of-aboriginal-habitation-up-to-80000-years-ago?CMP=share\\_btn\\_link](https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/jul/19/dig-finds-evidence-of-aboriginal-habitation-up-to-80000-years-ago?CMP=share_btn_link)

### **How is this a human rights issue?**

See the [UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#):

**Article 3**

Indigenous peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

**Article 15**

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information.

2. States shall take effective measures, in consultation and cooperation with the indigenous peoples concerned, to combat prejudice and eliminate discrimination and to promote tolerance, understanding and good relations among indigenous peoples and all other segments of society.

**Article 19**

States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.

**Why not use the day to reflect and keep the date?**

The day is classified as a national day of celebration. When it is classified as a day of national celebration - it's not fair to expect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and supporters to instead mourn.