



Approaching 26 January Respectfully

Among other roles, Reconciliation Victoria provides advice to local government and community members, on how to approach 26 January respectfully.

We encourage local councils and organisations commemorating the day to recognise the honoured place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in our nation's history, to be sensitive to the feelings of First Peoples who may see the day as one of mourning, and to see the day as an opportunity to promote understanding, respect, and reconciliation.

Here are some suggestions and protocols to follow to mark 26 January respectfully, and acknowledge members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community:

- Prioritise cultural safety of First Peoples staff and community members when planning, organising and hosting an event for 26 January. Ensure discussions around how to commemorate this day are handled sensitively and be mindful of [cultural loading](#);
- Talk and consult with Traditional Owners and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members to inform yourself of their views on the date and to help you develop a respectful approach;
- Include Elders in any 26 January events you are organising, honouring their place within the community. Be prepared to understand and respect their feelings if they do not wish to take part, and respectfully listen to what this day represents for them;
- Organise a [‘Welcome to Country’](#) at the beginning of all 26 January events;
- Take into account the multiple responsibilities Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have, both in their work roles and wider community responsibilities, and remunerate them for any consultation or services provided;
- In any acknowledgement of what 26 January means and signifies, include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. In developing council’s history and information of the date, ensure the inclusion of our shared history and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives;
- Include a ‘Welcome to Country’ and acknowledgement of our shared history at all citizenship ceremonies and community events aimed at welcoming New Australians;
- Acknowledge local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the honoured place of First Peoples in event programs and/or fliers;
- Incorporate events which acknowledge injustices and recognise the resilience and survival of First Peoples and their cultures into councils’ 26 January itinerary;

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- One way of commemorating the lives lost as a result of colonisation, and acknowledging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' survival despite these atrocities, is to fly flags at half-mast during mourning ceremonies or when acknowledging past injustices;
- Consider holding a moment of silence and reflection at the start of formal celebrations on 26 January to acknowledge the past injustices and lives lost as a result of colonisation;
- Consider holding celebratory events on an alternative date.

This list is by no means exhaustive but is intended as a foundation for councils ongoing conversations. Any and all approaches to 26 January must be led by Traditional Owners and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and organisations.

Other resources and ideas around 26 January:

- **Attend events celebrating the resilience and survival of First Peoples' cultures and histories** such as the 'Share the Spirit' or 'Belgrave Survival Day' Festivals (see our website www.reconciliationvic.org.au for details);
- **Utilise Maggolee** (www.maggolee.org.au) to find useful resources for and about local government reconciliation efforts and examples of good practice;
- **Learn about our Shared History** - it is easy to connect with the history of your local area and to better understand the connection to traditional lands that continues today. Victoria has made a commitment to truth-telling through the establishment of the Yoo-rook Justice Commission (<https://www.firstpeoplesvic.org/our-work/truth-telling/>), engage with this process by learning about the true history of Australia since colonisation. Seek out resources about topics such as the Frontier Wars (https://www.deadlystory.com/page/culture/history/Frontier_wars), the Stolen Generations (<https://healingfoundation.org.au/>) and learn more about the lived experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples;
- **Engage in respectful conversation** with family, friends, colleagues and neighbours about what 26 January signifies to them and the different perspectives surrounding the day and how it should be commemorated. Open and honest dialogue can lead to a better understanding of different experiences and is a crucial step in reconciliation.