



WHY WE CHANGED THE WAY WE MARK JANUARY 26

From 2018 Yarra City Council will change the way we mark Australia's national day in Yarra. We are doing this so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are included and respected on our national day. These peoples have a connection to the land and waterways that goes back over 60,000 years. This connection should be honoured in Australia's national celebrations.

Australia's national day falls on January 26. This date celebrates the day in 1788 that British people first raised a flag in New South Wales to claim Aboriginal lands as their own.

For Aboriginal peoples, January 26 is a day of sadness. It marks the loss of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life, culture and identity. The date January 26 is a reminder of the massacres and violence against Aboriginal peoples. It is a reminder that there is still no legal contract or 'treaty' for the settlement of Aboriginal lands. When we celebrate on January 26, it can be very upsetting for Aboriginal people.

This is not right. After speaking to the Wurundjeri people, other local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and other people in the community, Yarra Council voted to mark January 26 in a more respectful way.

Some of the changes include:

- Holding a small event on January 26 to recognise the loss of culture, language and identity felt by Aboriginal people on that day,
- Supporting the #changethedate campaign to look for a more suitable day for a national celebration,
- Helping the public to understand why we have made these changes,
- Calling our national day January 26 (and not 'Australia Day') until the date is changed, and
- Not holding citizenship ceremonies or award ceremonies on January 26.

Some people are upset by our decision. They think it insults our nation's proud history and identity. But we are not trying to do this. We want to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our national day and work towards a stronger, richer national identity.

Australia's national day should reflect and recognise the huge contribution of Australians of all backgrounds, not just those of British origin.

Australia is a great country with much to celebrate. However you choose to mark the day, we would like you to think about what January 26 means in the history of our nation.