

Let's Talk About January 26

Approaching January 26 Respectfully

January 26 is a significant date for many Australians, however it is important to approach this date with respect and understanding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in your workplace, community and wider network. For many First Nations Australians, this day is not a celebration but a reminder of colonisation and the ongoing impacts still experienced by communities across the country.

What Is Significant About January 26?

January 26 marks the anniversary of the First Fleet arriving in Australia and has been observed as a national public holiday since 1994. In 1770, the British Crown tasked Lieutenant James Cook with finding new territory. Eighteen years later, on January 26, 1788, 11 convict ships from Great Britain sailed into Port Jackson, in present day New South Wales. Soon after, Captain Arthur Phillip came ashore and raised the British flag, claiming the land in the name of King George III. This act marked the beginning of British colonisation and the dispossession of the land First Nations Peoples had lived on, cared for, and nurtured for tens of thousands of years.

What Is “Change The Date”?

Australia Day became a nationally recognised public holiday on 26 January in 1994. Before then, each state marked the occasion on different dates throughout the year. However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and community leaders have long advocated that January 26 is a Day of Mourning. It is also important to remember that this day carries complex and varied meanings. While some First Nations Australians advocate for changing the date, others call for the day to be abolished altogether.

What Terminology Is Appropriate?

As January 26 approaches, you may notice different terms used like Invasion Day, Survival Day or Day of Mourning. These terms reflect the diverse perspectives and experiences of First Nations Peoples and acknowledge the impact of British colonisation on their communities, cultures and histories. If you are unsure on what term to use, consider doing some research to see which term reflects your values.

NITV has a great resource to get you started on the terminology and history, which you can read [here](#).

