

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Significant Dates 2011

26th January

Survival Day

13th February

National Apology Day

21st March

Harmony Day

24th March

National Close the Gap Day

26th May

National Sorry Day

27th May – 3rd June

National Reconciliation Week

3rd June

MABO Day

1st July

Coming of the Light

3rd July – 10th July

National NAIDOC Week

4th August

National Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander
Children's Day

9th August

International Day of the
World's Indigenous People

26th January - Survival Day

Celebrates the survival of a people and culture expected to die out since British invasion in 1788. Marked by events such as the Survival Day concert first held in Sydney in 1992. Survival Day Perth is celebrated each year at the Supreme Court Gardens.

13 February - National Apology

Anniversary of the formal apology made on 13 February 2008 by the government and the Parliament of Australia to Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people - in particular to the Stolen Generations.

21st March – Harmony Day

Harmony Day celebrates the cohesive and inclusive nature of Australia and promotes a tolerant and culturally diverse society.

24th March - National Close the Gap Day

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are still dying 10 to 17 years younger than other Australians. For that reason, more than 40 national organisations came together in 2006 to form Close the Gap - Australia's largest ever campaign to improve the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Close the Gap day is an opportunity for organisations and community to hold events and raise awareness of the Indigenous health crisis.

26 May - National Sorry Day

National Sorry Day offers the community the opportunity to acknowledge the impact of the policies spanning more than 150 years of forcible removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families. The first National Sorry Day was held on 26 May 1998 following the 1997 HREOC report Bringing Them Home which recommended that a national day of observance be declared.

27 May to 3 June - National Reconciliation Week

National Reconciliation Week was initiated in 1996 to provide a special focus for nationwide activities. The week is a time to reflect on achievements so far and the things which must still be done to achieve reconciliation.

National Reconciliation Week offers people across Australia the opportunity to focus on reconciliation, to hear about the cultures and histories of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and to explore new and better ways of meeting challenges in our communities.

The Week is timed to coincide with two significant dates in Australia's history, which provide strong symbols of our hopes and aims for reconciliation: 27 May and 3 June.

27 May - 1967 Referendum

In 1967 over 90% of Australians voted in a Referendum to remove clauses from the Australian Constitution which discriminated against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. The Referendum also gave the Commonwealth Government the power to make laws on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

3 June - Mabo Day

Mabo Day marks the anniversary of the High Court of Australia's judgement in 1992 in the Mabo case. This is a day of particular significance for Torres Strait Islander Australians.

Eddie 'Koiki' Mabo's name is synonymous with native title rights. His story began in May 1982 when he and fellow Murray (Mer) Islanders David Passi, Sam Passi, James Rice and Celuia Salee instituted a claim in the High Court for native title to the Murray (Mer) Islands in the Torres Strait.

The claim was made against the State of Queensland, which responded by seeking to legislate to extinguish retrospectively any native title on the Islands. This was challenged in the High Court on the grounds that it was inconsistent with the 1975 Racial Discrimination Act. The High Court, in an historical judgement delivered on 3 June 1992, accepted the claim by Eddie Mabo and the other claimants that their people (the Meriam people) had occupied the Islands of Mer for hundreds of years before the arrival of the British. The High Court found that the Meriam people were 'entitled as against the whole world to possession, occupation, use and enjoyment of lands in the Murray Islands.' The decision overturned a legal fiction that Australia was terra nullius (a land belonging to no one) at the time of British colonisation.

1 July - Coming of the Light

This is a particular day of significance for Torres Strait Islander Australians. It marks the day the London Missionary Society first arrived in the Torres Strait. The missionaries landed at Erub Island on 1 July 1871.

Religious and cultural ceremonies are held by Torres Strait Islander Christians across the Torres Strait and on the mainland to commemorate this day.

4-11 July - National NAIDOC Week

NAIDOC Week is observed from the first Sunday in July to the second Sunday in July each year.

NAIDOC celebrations are held around Australia to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The week is celebrated not just in the Indigenous community, but also increasingly in government agencies, schools, local councils and workplaces.

Wherever you live, taking part in NAIDOC Week is a great way to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and to build bridges between all Australians.

NAIDOC originally stood for 'National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee'. This committee was once responsible for organising national activities during NAIDOC Week, and its acronym has become the name of the week itself

4th August – National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day

National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day (NAICD) is an annual event celebrated on 4 August each year, having been established by SNAICC in 1988.

Each year, SNAICC has a theme for Children's Day to highlight a significant issue, concern or hope for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

SNAICC encourages all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations, mainstream child and family welfare services, government agencies, schools, preschools, child care services and any organisations with an interest in children to celebrate National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day.

9th August – International Day of the World's Indigenous People

The United Nations' (UN) International Day of the World's Indigenous People is observed on August 9 each year to promote and protect the rights of the world's Indigenous population. This event also recognises the achievements and contributions that Indigenous people make to improve world issues such as environmental protection.