Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 2017 Significant Dates Poster and Information

For an electronic copy of the poster, please contact Sally Berger at NEPCP on 9450 2616 or email sally.berger@bchs.org.au
26 January - Survival Day
Background: January 26, 1788 was the date on which Captain Arthur Phillip took formal possession of the colony of New South Wales and raised the British flag for the first time in Sydney Cove. In the early 1880s the day was known as 'First Landing’, ‘Anniversary Day’ or ‘Foundation Day’. In 1946 the Commonwealth and state governments agreed to unify the celebrations on January 26 and call it ‘Australia Day’. The day became a public holiday in 1818 (its 30th anniversary) and since 1994 has been celebrated by all states and territories.

However, to many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people there is little to celebrate and the day is a commemoration of a deep loss - loss of their sovereign rights to their land, loss of family, loss of the right to practise their culture. The day is therefore also known as ‘Invasion Day’, ‘Day of Mourning’, ‘Survival Day’ or, since 2006, ‘Aboriginal Sovereignty Day’.

The name Survival Day emphasises that Aboriginal culture is still strong, and that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's identities are positive and alive despite all that has happened since colonisation. Survival Day has become one of the biggest Indigenous cultural events that is staged throughout Australia. In all major cities alternative concerts are held where mainly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people gather. There are various Survival Day events around the State and around Australia.

13 February - National Apology Day
This event marks the anniversary of the Apology to Australia’s Indigenous peoples in the House of Representatives on 13 February 2008 by former Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, apologising for past laws, policies and practices that have impacted on Australia’s First Nations Peoples, particularly members of the Stolen Generations. The motion was supported by the Opposition and passed through both houses of Parliament; Brendan Nelson (former Leader of the Opposition) gave a formal response. Many members of the Stolen Generations were present in the Chamber to hear the Apology and thousands more filled the Great Hall of Parliament House and flowed out onto the lawns to watch it on big screens. The Apology was broadcast across Australia.

View information on the National Sorry Day Committee Inc.

16 March 2017 - National Close the Gap Day
In 2006, more than 40 national organisations came together to form Close the Gap - Australia's largest ever campaign to improve the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Every year people are encouraged to hold their own event on National Close the Gap Day to raise awareness about the life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Since 2006, the Close the Gap campaign has achieved an enormous amount with community support. In 2013, there were over 900 National Close the Gap Day events around Australia.

View information: Oxfam
21 March - Harmony Day
Harmony Day is a day of cultural respect for everyone who calls Australia home – from the traditional owners of this land to those who have come from many countries around the world. By participating in Harmony Day activities, people can learn and understand how all Australians from diverse backgrounds equally belong to this nation and enrich it. [View information: Harmony Day]

26 May - National Sorry Day
National Sorry Day is a significant day for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and particularly for Stolen Generations survivors. The idea of holding a ‘Sorry Day’ was first mentioned as one of the 54 recommendations of the Bringing them home report, which was tabled in Parliament on 26 May 1997. This report was the result of a two year National Inquiry into the forcible removal of Indigenous children from their families, communities and cultural identity. On 26 May 1998 the first ‘Sorry Day’ was held in Sydney, it is now commemorated across Australia, with many thousands of people participating in memorials and commemorative events, in honour of the Stolen Generations. [View information: National Sorry Day Committee]

27 May - 3 June - National Reconciliation Week
National Reconciliation Week is an ideal time for everyone to join the reconciliation conversation and reflect on shared histories, contributions and achievements. It is held annually from 27 May to 3 June and is a time to celebrate and build on the respectful relationships shared by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians. Preceded by National Sorry Day on 26 May, National Reconciliation Week is framed by two key events in Australia’s history, which provide strong symbols for reconciliation:

- 27 May 1967 – the referendum that saw more than 90 per cent of Australians vote to give the Australian Government power to make laws for Indigenous people and recognise them in the census.
- 3 June 1992 – the Australian High Court delivered the Mabo decision, which recognised that Indigenous people have a special relationship with the land. This paved the way for land rights known as native title. Mabo Day is held 3 June to celebrate the life of Eddie Koiki Mabo.

[View information: National Reconciliation Week]
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.
View information: Mabo Day

2-9 July 2017 - National NAIDOC Week
NAIDOC is a celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and an opportunity to recognise the contributions of Indigenous Australians in various fields. Its origins can be traced to the emergence of Aboriginal groups in the 1920s which sought to increase awareness in the wider community of the status and treatment of Indigenous Australians. NAIDOC stands for National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee. Activities take place across the nation during NAIDOC Week in the first full week of July. All Australians are encouraged to participate.
The National NAIDOC Committee is pleased to announce the 2017 National NAIDOC theme - Our Languages Matter. The 2017 theme aims to emphasise and celebrate the unique and essential role that Indigenous languages play in both cultural identity, linking people to their land and water, and in the transmission of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, spirituality and rites, through story and song.
View information: NAIDOC

4 August – National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s Day
National Aboriginal and Islander Children’s Day (NAICD) is a celebration of Indigenous children and is held on 4 August each year. NAICD was first observed by the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) in 1988. Each year SNAICC produces and sends out resources to help celebrations for NAICD.
View information: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s Day
9 August – International Day of the World’s Indigenous People
The International Day of the World’s Indigenous People (9 August) was first proclaimed by the General Assembly in December 1994, to be celebrated every year during the first International Decade of the World’s Indigenous People (1995 – 2004). In 2004, the Assembly proclaimed a Second International Decade, from 2005 – 2014, with the theme of A decade for action and dignity.

View information: United Nations

Note: This is only a brief listing of some of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Significant Dates in 2017. There are other dates, which also may be of importance, such as the Coming of the Light and other significant local events that have not been specified in this listing.

How to Use This Resource
North East Primary Care Partnership encourages all member agencies to distribute this list of Dates to the relevant people within your organisation who are responsible for the planning and/or promotion of key and significant dates within your agency. This listing could also be placed on your agency website/intranet or added to a Calendar of events. The list of Significant Dates may also be printed and displayed in areas, where either staff or consumers can have access to this information. The information about the Significant Dates can be distributed/posted alongside the Significant Dates listing.

Electronic Copy of Significant Dates
If you have any questions or feedback about this information, please contact sally Berger on 9450 2616 (Monday/Wednesday/Thursday) or sally.berger@bchs.org.au

Thanks
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