



26 January Position Statement

Reconciliation Victoria acknowledges that for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples 26 January marks the start of the ongoing colonisation that brought with it dispossession, massacres and attempted genocide.

The effects of colonisation are still with us today. Despite strong resistance, ongoing resilience and surviving cultural practices, many First Nations peoples still experience unacceptably low life opportunities and outcomes in health, education, employment and justice.

In 1938 the Aboriginal Advancement League established 26 January as a Day of Mourning and protest against the treatment of First Peoples since colonisation. It has been a day of protest ever since. By comparison, 'Australia Day' has only existed as a national holiday since 1994.

There is widespread support across Victoria for changing the date of Australia Day. The Truth-telling work that the Yoorrook Justice Commission has done (and that Nyerna Yoorrook Telkuna will continue) means that many Victorians have begun to learn the true history of the state for the first time.

Truth-telling is of critical importance in building understanding of First Peoples' attitude to 26 January and the reasons why it's essential that it cease to be a day of celebration.

Reconciliation Victoria urges all Victorians to learn about our shared history, recognise and honour the achievements of First Peoples, and support our national celebration being held on a different day – not on a day of mourning for so many.

Until that occurs, it's imperative that we're mindful of the significance of 26 January to First Peoples. Cultural safety and awareness must be a priority for everyone. Ensure discussions around the date are handled sensitively and avoid [cultural loading](#) of First Peoples.