


# **26 JANUARY** BACKGROUND INFORMATION

We, the Greater Shepparton City Council,  
acknowledge the Yorta Yorta People of the  
land which comprises Greater Shepparton.  
We pay respect to tribal Elders, past, present  
and emerging and we celebrate their  
continuing culture and acknowledge the  
memory of their ancestors.







# Background to January 26

January 26 holds diverse and complex meanings for Australians. While it remains a public holiday and a date upon which awards and citizenships are conferred, it is not a day of celebration for all, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

The date itself is the anniversary of the 1788 landing of the First Fleet at Sydney Cove and raising of the Union Flag by Arthur Phillip following days of exploration of Port Jackson in New South Wales.

There has been recorded public activity marking this date going back to the early 19th century, although the way it has been marked has changed over time.

In 1935 all Australian states and territories adopted use of the term “Australia Day” to mark January 26.

Since 1994 it has been gazetted as a national public holiday for Australia. Australia Day is generally used to confer awards and citizenships at Council-run community events focused on celebrating Australian national identity.

In 1938, on the 150th anniversary of the First Fleet landing, Aboriginal leaders met in Sydney and declared January 26 to be a Day of Mourning. For many Aboriginal people, January 26 signifies invasion and subsequently violence, dispossession and oppression, the separation of families and the forced loss of language and culture.

The governing body for Australia Day, the National Australia Day Council, is increasingly encouraging communities to represent Australia’s diversity at community and family events on January 26. Through their Australia Day Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Acknowledgement Project they are encouraging meaningful, reflective, and respectful Australia Day events.

A national Change the Date campaign exists – some Councils have signed up to this scheme (to date Greater Shepparton City Council has not).



Survival Day Dawn Ceremony,  
credit: Nicola Ceccato Shepparton News



## Council's current role in January 26 events

Greater Shepparton City Council's current role is to conduct citizenship ceremonies, hand out Australia Day Awards, and provide financial grants and in kind support to help communities mark the day.

In 2023, support was provided to local Australia Day committees and local Aboriginal community groups.

These events are funded through the Greater Shepparton Australia Day Grants Program managed and administered by Council.

In 2023 Australia Day events were held in Shepparton, Mooroopna, Tatura, Dookie, Arcadia, Murchison and Toolamba. Council works with all groups to ensure they have Australia Day Ambassadors to speak at their events and organise Councilor's to attend each town event.

In 2022, for the first time Council also supported the Greater Shepparton dawn mourning service held on 26 January at Kaieltheban Park, Mooroopna. This support continued in 2023.

## October 2022 Council resolution

Following a period of engagement with a community stakeholder group, Council decided in October 2022 to advocate to the Australian Government to change the date of Australia's national day from 26 January, and to remove the Australian Citizenship Ceremonies Code requirement for the local government councils to conduct citizenship ceremonies on 26 January.

This decision followed a period of engagement with a community stakeholder group comprising Australia Day committees, and a number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community organisations.

They also resolved to:

- lower the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags to half-mast on 26 January at all council-owned facilities to acknowledge this date as a day of mourning for Aboriginal people.
- continue Council support for Australia Day committees in 2023 and the community-led 'Survival Day Dawn Ceremony'.
- review of the Australia Day grant guidelines to encourage and support grant recipients to reflect on Australia's full history at events held on January 26
- continue community engagement to inform a Council decision about:
  - Australia Day in 2024 and beyond
  - The development of a program proposal for a day of community celebration for 2024, that is not held on 26 January, that is inclusive, reflects the full history of Australia, and is culturally respectful.

Following engagement with the Greater Shepparton community, in mid-2023 Council will make a decision about 26 January for 2024 and beyond.





Survival Day Dawn Ceremony,  
credit: Nicola Ceccato Shepparton News

## Greater Shepparton Australian Citizenship Ceremonies

Choosing to become an Australian citizen is an important commitment to being part of Australia's future.

Council places high importance on citizenship and hosts ceremonies approximately every three months throughout the year, including on January 26. Around 200 people each year receive Australian citizenship certificates at these events.

Previously, the cancellation of citizenship ceremonies on 26 January by some Council's saw them stripped of the right to hold citizenship ceremonies by the Australian Government.

Some Councils have shifted citizenship ceremonies to other dates and some have used them as an opportunity to inform Australia's newest citizens about the country's history.

In late 2022 the Australian Government removed the requirement for local councils to hold citizenship ceremonies on 26 January each year.

## Memorandum of Understanding – Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation and Greater Shepparton City Council

The Greater Shepparton City Council exists within Yorta Yorta Country. The Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation (YYNAC) is the local Registered Aboriginal Party.

An agreement has been reached that guides how the two organisations work together

(Memorandum of Understanding). For example, Council works with YYNAC to provide Welcome to Country and other cultural protocols and services.

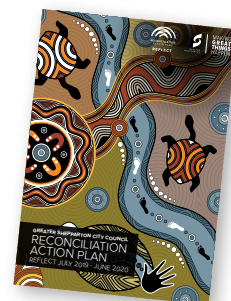
## Greater Shepparton City Council – Reconciliation Action Plan

Greater Shepparton has one of the largest populations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples in Victoria outside of metropolitan areas.

The local community has strong connection to culture, and Greater Shepparton has many places that have significant Aboriginal cultural significance.

To indicate Council's commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People and communities, Council released its first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) in 2019. The RAP has been the basis for the continuing acknowledgement and celebration of the strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and cultures in Greater Shepparton.

Council is currently in the process of developing the next RAP, "Innovate".



## Links and further resources

**National Australia Day Council**

[australiaday.org.au/about/nadc](http://australiaday.org.au/about/nadc)

**Reconciliation Australia**

[reconciliation.org.au/the-annual-australia-day-debate-kicks-off-early](http://reconciliation.org.au/the-annual-australia-day-debate-kicks-off-early)







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