

Australia Day - 26th January

Last Updated Saturday, 30 January 2010

History

The tradition of having Australia Day as a national holiday on 26 January is a recent one. Not until 1935 did all the Australian states and territories use that name to mark that date. Not until 1994 did they begin to celebrate Australia Day consistently as a public holiday on that date.

What drew Australians together in this way? Did Australia Day become a day for all Australians to enjoy?

Refer: <http://www.australiaday.org.au/experience/page76.asp#Beginnings> When did we start celebrating? Australians have celebrated Australia Day since the late 18th century. This day marks the landing of Captain Arthur Phillip at Port Jackson, claiming Australia for the British Empire. Australia Day has changed from a small New South Wales holiday to a major national celebration, embracing all ethnical background, political viewpoints and other differences.

At the beginning … 1788, the Colony of New South Wales in New Holland was formed by Captain Arthur Phillip. The initial name "New Holland", however, didn't last. It was changed to "Australia" in 1817. The first official Australia Day celebration was held the following year (1818).

Celebrating in a sporty manner … In the early nineteenth century, the celebration of 26 January was known as the Foundation day and was often linked to sporting events. A sailing regatta in 1836 was such an example. In 1838, fifty years after Phillip landed, 26 January became the first public holiday in Australia. Celebration during wartime … World War II moved the focus from the festives of Australia Day to the more solemn ANZAC Day. After 1945, when immigrants from Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean were allowed into Australia, and later in 1971 when the White Australian Policy was abolished, unknowingly, the first few steps were taken towards a fully multicultural Australia. 1988 was named as a 'Year of Mourning for Aboriginals', but today it is still recognised as a celebration of survival.

Evolution of celebration … Nationally, Australia Day celebrations are growing bigger each year. There are still formal ceremonies occurring, but now there are more festivities for the majority of the population, so everyone celebrates. From the White Australian Policy to today's multicultural society, from small communal cliques to growing neighborhoods, Australia Day is the center of an ever-changing nation.

Talking points in Australia … Many of the widely discussed political questions raised over the years such as the move towards a Republic, Carbon Trades, Reconciliation, environmental issues, recovery from global recessions, migration, overhaul of education system, public health care.

Let's celebrate! Today Australia Day celebration has become more significant than just a public holiday. Award presentations such as the Australian of the Year Award and the Young Australian of the Year Award, as well as the memorable events such as Citizenship Ceremonies take place on this day. There are also the community celebrations such as the Guides and Scouts Flag Raising ceremonies, and closer to homes, family /friends / neighbourhooood BBQs!!!

Article Summarised by GoKids Junior Editor from Melbourne Charmayne T and GoKids Authour, CM Goh

Information from Australia Day.com.au: <http://www.australiaday.com.au/studentresources/history.aspx>

There are heaps of activities for kids: <http://www.australiaday.org.au/toolkit/page210.asp>

Check out how each state is celebrating: <http://www.australiaday.org.au/experience/>