



REFLECT. RESPECT. CELEBRATE.  
**AUSTRALIA DAY 2026 REPORT**

**NADC**

National  
Australia Day  
Council



**Australia Day**

Reflect. Respect. Celebrate.



© National Australia Day Council Limited 2026

© Commonwealth of Australia 2026

This work is copyright. Apart from any use as permitted under the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth), no part may be reproduced by any process without prior written permission from the Commonwealth. Requests and enquiries concerning reproduction and rights should be addressed to the National Australia Day Council Limited.

**National Australia Day Council Limited**

Old Parliament House  
King George Terrace Parkes ACT 2600  
ACN 050 300 626  
ABN 76 050 300 626

**Telephone:** 02 6120 0600  
**Email:** [info@australiaday.org.au](mailto:info@australiaday.org.au)  
**www.australiaday.org.au**  
**www.australianoftheyear.org.au**



**Australian Government**

The National Australia Day Council is proudly supported by the Australian Government.



**CONTENTS**

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO	4
ABOUT THE NADC	8
AUSTRALIA DAY 2026 OVERVIEW	9
AUSTRALIA DAY 2026	11
COMMUNITY EVENTS	18
AMBASSADOR PROGRAM	38
AROUND THE COUNTRY	43
AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR AWARDS	64

## MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

What Australia Day means to each of us depends on who we are, where we come from, and how we came to be Australian. It is about far more than the events of a single day; it is an opportunity to reflect on who we are as a nation and what we aspire to be.

In 2026, communities across the country — from coastal towns and capital cities to regional and remote Australia — came together in many different ways. For some, this means reflecting on who we are as a nation, our past and our future. For others, it looks like community barbecues, citizenship ceremonies, watermelon eating and thong throwing competitions, and celebrations of survival. For many, it was also a quiet day of rest. The fact that Australia Day can be observed in such varied ways speaks to the strength of our democracy, the diversity of our people, and the generosity Australians show each other.

Since 2021, the Australian Government has provided financial support for nearly 4,000 Australia Day events. In 2026, the National Australia Day Council was pleased to support even more organisations to deliver events that encouraged communities to reflect, respect and celebrate. For the first time, the program included a \$2,000 grant to help organisations supplement smaller event costs. This was alongside \$10,000 to \$15,000 grants to support accessible and inclusive Australia Day events.

This year, councils and community groups hosted a record 824 events across the country. Through the Australia Day Community Events Grants program, the National Australia Day Council distributed \$4.65 million in Australian Government funding to support these events and enable communities to mark the day in ways that were meaningful to them.

Flagship events in capital cities also provided important focal points for celebration across each state and territory. To support this national effort, the National Australia Day Council provided nearly \$4.35 million to the Australia Day National Network to deliver events that reflected the character and priorities of their communities. A snapshot of the different festivities is showcased in this report.

On 25 January, the 2026 Australians of the Year were announced: Katherine Bennell-Pegg, Professor Henry Brodaty AO, Nedd Brockmann and Frank Mitchell. Their achievements, service and leadership reflect the very best of Australia. They have each made an outstanding contribution in their field and continue to inspire Australians across the nation.

No matter how it is observed, Australia Day remains a time to reflect, respect and celebrate. It is an opportunity to recognise that we are part of an ancient and multicultural nation, shaped by many histories, experiences and perspectives. At its best, it reminds us of the common bond we share as Australians and of our collective hopes for unity, safety, stability and prosperity.



**Todd Ashurst DSM**  
Interim Chief Executive Officer  
National Australia Day Council





# ABOUT THE NADC



## ABOUT THE NADC

The National Australia Day Council (NADC) works to ensure that celebrations of Australia Day encourage:

- **Participation:** To unite all Australians through celebration and reflection
- **Meaning:** To promote the meaning of Australia Day and being Australian
- **Recognition:** To acknowledge active citizenship and achievement

The NADC promotes our national day to inspire national pride and unity through these core programs:

- The celebration of Australia Day, which encourages all Australians to *Reflect, Respect and Celebrate*
- The Australian of the Year Awards
- Australian citizenship and civic values programs
- The Australia Day Ambassador program

The NADC Corporate Plan outlines its priorities with the purpose of inspiring 'national pride and unity through participation and engagement in its central message: Reflect, Respect, Celebrate – we're all part of the story'.

The priorities include:

- Telling the stories of inspiring Australians
- Empowering Australians to *Reflect, Respect and Celebrate*

## The Australia Day National Network

The Australia Day National Network is an affiliate group of state and territory organisations that helps facilitate the celebration of Australia Day and being Australian, and recognises inspirational Australians through the Australian of the Year Awards.

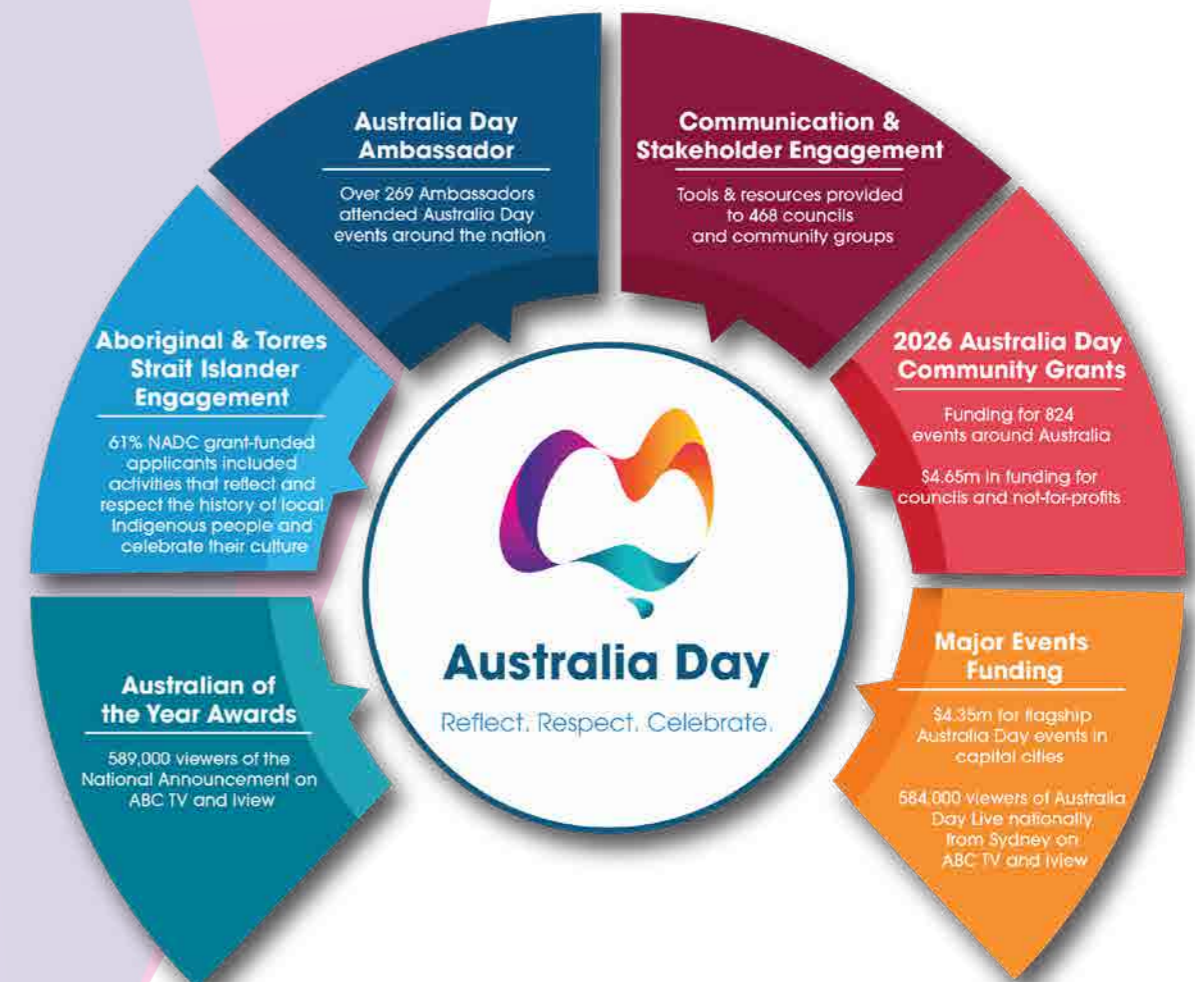
Through the Network, the NADC helps Australia's local government authorities, not-for-profits and community organisations deliver Australia Day events that encourage participation, promote meaning and celebrate citizenship.

## AUSTRALIA DAY 2026 OVERVIEW

The NADC's focus for Australia Day 2026 emphasised respectful and inclusive engagement with the day.

To support this, the NADC delivered:

- A \$4,650,000 Australia Day Community Events Grants program supporting 824 community and council events around the nation, including those with significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elements
- A \$4,350,000 Capital City Funding Program, including the Australia Day Live event in Sydney, broadcast on television and ABC iview
- The National Citizenship and Flag Raising Ceremony from Canberra, broadcast on television and ABC iview
- Requirements for grant-funded events to be accessible and inclusive
- The Australia Day Ambassador program
- The Australian of the Year Awards



# AUSTRALIA DAY 2026



## PRIVATE WELCOME CEREMONY

Australia Day 2026 in Canberra began with a Private Welcome Ceremony on the parklands of Lake Burley Griffin, attended by the Governor-General, Her Excellency the Honourable Ms Sam Mostyn AC and the Prime Minister, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP.

Supported by the NADC and in consultation with the elders and members of the Ngunnawal community, our nation's leaders gathered with the Traditional Custodians of the land to share a moment of reflection and respect.

ABC filmed the moving ceremony from a respectful distance and included the footage in the opener for the National Citizenship and Flag Raising Ceremony broadcast.



## NATIONAL CITIZENSHIP AND FLAG RAISING CEREMONY

The Governor-General and Prime Minister, along with members of the diplomatic corps, attended the National Citizenship and Flag Raising Ceremony on the shore of Lake Burley Griffin.

The annual ceremony, delivered in collaboration with the Department of Home Affairs, NADC and the ABC, welcomes some of our newest citizens.

The ceremony shared the conferees' stories and reflected on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's continuous connection to country.

*Total viewers on ABC TV and ABC iView: 211,084*



# BRINGING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER



## COMMUNITY EVENTS

Local government and community organisations play a vital role in delivering Australia Day events.

In 2026, the NADC helped 468 councils and not-for-profit community organisations deliver more than 824 local community events and activities on Australia Day through \$4.65 million in grants funding provided by the Australian Government.

### Community Grants

Community grants are available for Australia Day celebrations, including but not limited to:

- Australia Day community fairs
- Australia Day multicultural festivals
- Australia Day concerts
- Australia Day picnics
- Smoking Ceremony/Welcome to Country/Acknowledgement
- Australia Day Flag Raising Ceremony
- Australia Day Citizenship Ceremony
- Barbeques in the park/street
- Light/ drone shows
- Australia Day parades
- Beach parties
- Australia Day breakfasts/lunches
- Cultural ceremonies
- Australia Day race/marathon
- Virtual events



BEACH ACTIVITIES



REFLECT. RESPECT. CELEBRATE.



BARBEQUES



CONCERTS





**FLAG RAISING CEREMONIES**



**FIREWORKS**



**ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ACTIVITIES**

**SPORTING COMPETITIONS**



**POOL ACTIVITIES**

# AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY *highlights*



## Celebration of African Australians Inc ACT

The Unity in Diversity: Afro Aboriginal Cultural Fusion was a celebration of traditional and contemporary African and Aboriginal dance, music, and storytelling, with a collaborative Afro-Aboriginal fusion performance a highlight of the day.

Beginning with a Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony, Aboriginal cultural performances were presented alongside African drumming and dance to create a lively and inclusive event that boasted opportunities for cultural exchange and shared celebration.



## Multicultural Association Canberra

Voices and Culture: Australia Day 2026 brought Canberrans together to share food, stories, and conversation over a relaxed community lunch. The event blended cultural performances, First Nations documentaries, and open discussion, to create an informal and welcoming space where attendees could listen, reflect, and connect across cultures.

First Nations perspectives were acknowledged through documentary screenings, while participants shared personal reflections on what the day meant to them. The mix of voices helped create a calm, meaningful atmosphere focused on understanding, inclusion, and mutual respect rather than ceremony.

Around 90 people attended, including families, community leaders, and elected representatives. Many stayed for the full program and lunch and left with a shared sense of belonging and a deeper appreciation of each other's stories.



## Australian Multicultural Action Network

Australian Multicultural Action Network hosted an inclusive dinner for newly arrived migrants and refugees, First Nations Elders, youth and long-standing community members to sit together, listen, and build new relationships in an atmosphere of respect and belonging.

Storytelling and panel discussions shared First Nations perspectives, youth achievements and migrant settlement experiences, while music and shared meals encouraged conversation, friendship and intercultural exchange. Native seed packs were given to guests at the close, symbolising growth, renewal and connection to Country.

The event was attended by 182 people, exceeding expectations and reflecting strong community trust and engagement. Many participants described it as their first Australia Day event where they felt genuinely welcomed and included.



# NEW SOUTH WALES *highlights*



## Hawkesbury Council

Aussie spirit was on full display as more than 10,000 people gathered on the banks of the Hawkesbury River to celebrate Australia Day.

The evening was officially opened by Hawkesbury City Mayor Les Sheather, followed by a moving Welcome to Country delivered by local Dharug and Darkinjung woman Shaalee Stubbs. This was followed by a powerful performance from the Wagana Aboriginal Dancers. Laughter and friendly rivalry soon followed as families took part in the Ultimate Cricket Game and the ever-popular thong throwing championship for the Golden Thong Trophy.

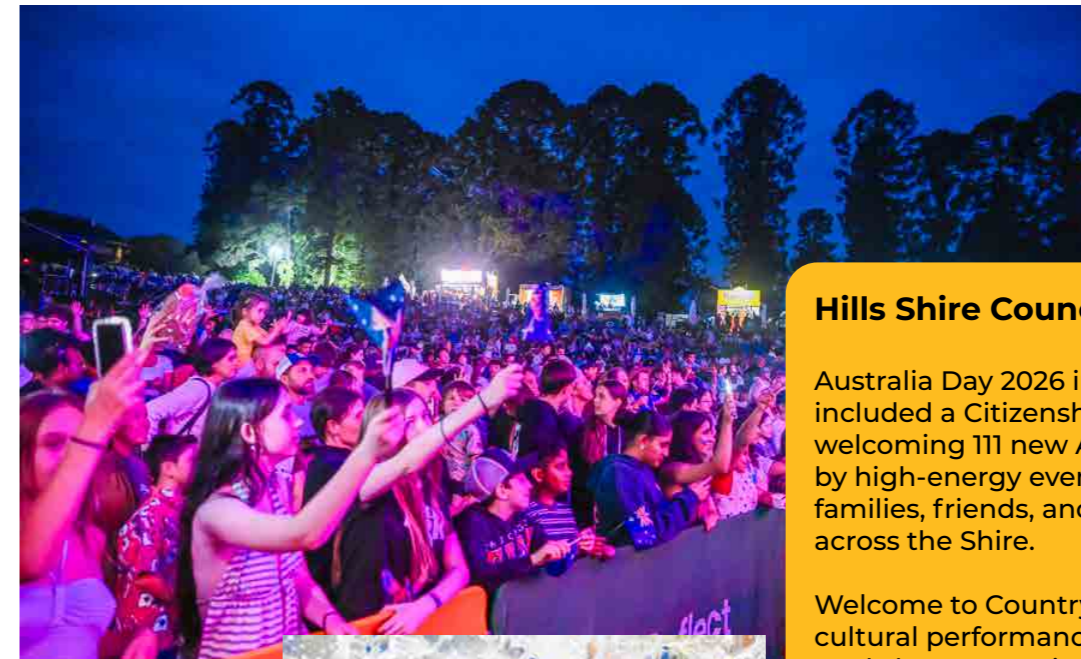
Live music, carnival rides, free face painting, an Emergency Services display and food from the Global Food Court kept all ages entertained, while inclusive features such as a quiet space, Social Story and Communication Board ensured everyone could comfortably take part.



## Marine Rescue Jervis Bay

The Marine Rescue NSW Jervis Bay Unit's, Australia Day Duck Derby turned Huskisson into a lively place with over 1000 people enjoying with its much-loved rubber duck races, markets, food stalls, live entertainment, and children's activities.

First Nations culture was woven through the day with a Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony led by Gadhungal Marring, along with cultural workshops, dance performances, and interactive demonstrations that invited people to learn and participate. These moments sat naturally alongside the fun, reinforcing themes of reflection, inclusion, and shared celebration while supporting the vital volunteer work of Marine Rescue Jervis Bay.



## Hills Shire Council

Australia Day 2026 in The Hills Shire included a Citizenship Ceremony welcoming 111 new Australians, followed by high-energy events that brought families, friends, and neighbours together across the Shire.

Welcome to Country, Smoking Ceremony, cultural performances, and hands-on workshops. Later in the day, Bella Vista Farm transformed into a vibrant festival space filled with live music, community performances, rides, workshops, food trucks and a fireworks finale, while the Waves Pool Party offered a relaxed, splash-filled way for families to celebrate together.

More than 14,000 people took part throughout the day, which culminated in a concert and fireworks display.



# NORTHERN TERRITORY *highlights*



## Litchfield Council

Around 450 community members gathered at the Freds Pass Multipurpose Facility for a welcoming, family-friendly morning featuring a fun run, live entertainment, children's activities, market stalls and a free breakfast prepared by long-standing volunteer groups. Local businesses and producers were supported through stallholder participation, while the event provided an easy-to-access gathering point for residents from across the rural municipality.

The celebration placed strong emphasis on culture, inclusion and community pride. A traditional smoking ceremony, Dreamtime storytelling, Indigenous arts, bush tucker and bush medicine activities respectfully acknowledged the Traditional Owners of the land. The Citizenship Ceremony and community awards highlighted new Australians and local contributors, while Scouts led the flag raising and a local choir performed the national anthem.



## City of Palmerston

The Australia Day Citizenship Ceremony and Awards in Palmerston was a warm and meaningful afternoon that brought together families, community members, local leaders, and service organisations to welcome new citizens and recognise those who had made an outstanding contribution to the community.

New Australians took their citizenship pledge, the Australian Defence Force raised the Australian flag, and First Nations cultural performances, artwork displays and live demonstrations such as weaving and carving reflected Palmerston's diversity and created a sense of belonging for all.

## Variety the Children's Charity NT

The Hot 100 Australia Day Ute Run brought together the Northern Territory community in a vibrant celebration of an iconic symbol of Australian life. Around 1,000 participants gathered at Hidden Valley Raceway before up to 600 decorated utes and vehicles paraded through Darwin and Palmerston, delighting an estimated 10,000–15,000 spectators along the route. Families and friends from diverse cultural backgrounds came together to enjoy the spectacle, showcasing pride, creativity and community spirit while raising funds to support NT children in need through Variety.



# QUEENSLAND *highlights*



## Bundaberg Regional Council

Around 3,500 people enjoyed a full day of live music, classic Aussie games, roving entertainment, and activities for all ages this Australia Day in Bundaberg.

With food stalls, art stations, bubble play and light-hearted competitions like prawn peeling and mullet throwing, the day felt distinctly Bundaberg and proudly Australian.

Reflection and respect was marked from the outset, with a traditional dance, didgeridoo performance, and blessing by the local Taribelang Aboriginal Cultural Group setting a meaningful tone. Balanced with fun, connection, and community pride, the town came together to celebrate Australia Day in a way that was inclusive, welcoming, and full of local character.



## Barrio Fiesta Brisbane Inc

SALAMAT PO! Australia (Thank You, Australia) was a heartfelt Australia Day celebration led by Barrio Fiesta Brisbane Inc, bringing together the Filipino community and the wider public in Coorparoo to express gratitude, connection and belonging. The day began with a Thanksgiving Eucharistic Mass (Pasalamat), offering a reflective and unifying moment to acknowledge migrant journeys and give thanks to Australia as a place of new beginnings and opportunity.

Following the service, the celebration continued with Salu-Salo—a shared feast of food, music and cultural exchange. An Indigenous smoking ceremony and Welcome to Country set a respectful tone, while cultural performances showcased the richness of Filipino heritage alongside Australia's diverse communities. A standout feature was the Indigenous-inspired barbecue luncheon, which introduced native ingredients and First Nations food traditions, creating opportunities for learning, conversation and shared appreciation.

## Somerset Regional Council

Somerset residents marked Australia Day by welcoming new citizens at a Citizenship Ceremony and recognising outstanding community spirit through the Australia Day Awards. Performances by the Esk Community Choir set the tone, followed by an inspiring address from Australia Day Ambassador and Paralympian Hani Watson, whose story of resilience resonated with the audience.

The celebration shifted into relaxed family fun with a free morning tea, live music from Rheanna Leschke, and children's activities including face painting and wildlife encounters with Geckoes Wildlife where the wombat "Bumpy" proved a clear favourite. Free ice creams and shared conversation rounded out a warm, easy-going celebration.



# SOUTH AUSTRALIA *highlights*

## Blinman Men's Shed Inc

The new Blinman Community Garden hosted the small Flinders Ranges community's Australia Day events. Despite extreme heat approaching 50°C, the event went ahead safely thanks to shaded infrastructure, extra cooling measures and careful planning. Around 20 residents attended throughout the day, showing the strength of connection in this small Flinders Ranges township.

The day began with a Welcome to Country by Rhianna Coulthard of the Adnyamathanha people followed by shared meals with a cooked breakfast featuring produce from the community garden, and a relocated lunch hosted in a community member's home when rising temperatures made outdoor gathering unsafe.

Simple games, a raffle and portrait photography added to the sense of togetherness. The photography sessions proved so meaningful they evolved into an ongoing community project, capturing the faces and stories of Blinman locals. Overall, the celebration highlighted adaptability, care for neighbours and the importance of honouring culture and connection, even in challenging conditions.



## District Council of Robe

Robe's Australia Day celebrations brought the community together for a relaxed and welcoming morning on the lawns of the Robe Institute. Locals and visitors gathered to enjoy a free community breakfast prepared by the Robe Lions Club before coming together for the Citizenship Ceremony and Australia Day Awards celebrating individuals and groups who had made outstanding contributions to the community. The address by Australia Day Ambassador Peter Cahalan was a highlight of the morning, alongside a heartfelt tribute honouring the late Bill Quinlan-Watson OAM who made significant contribution to the Robe community.



## Australian Young Christian Workers Movement

The First Nations and Multicultural Youth Music and Culture Festival brought together over 100 young people and community members in Adelaide for an evening of cultural sharing, creativity and connection. The event showcased local First Nations and multicultural youth through live music, dance, storytelling and interactive workshops, alongside free food, drinks and family-friendly activities, creating a welcoming and inclusive festival atmosphere.

A key highlight was a Q&A panel with Indigenous leaders, providing a meaningful space for dialogue, learning and reflection. Youth played a central role in planning, organising and delivering the event, as well as performing and facilitating activities.



# TASMANIA highlights

## Weymouth Progress Association

The Weymouth Sandcastle Competition turned Pipers River Beach into a hive of creativity and laughter as families gathered along the sand, with buckets and spades to compete for sandcastle glory.

Around 150 people attended, including local families and visitors from neighbouring towns. With more than 35 teams competing and over 100 children involved, the beach buzzed with energy and pride, making the event a memorable and genuinely Australian way to mark the day.



## Derwent Valley Council

New Norfolk's riverside Esplanade was brought to life with a relaxed, family-friendly celebration that blended recognition, fun, and togetherness. The morning began with the Australia Day Awards Ceremony, where local volunteers and community members were acknowledged for their dedication and contributions. The atmosphere shifted into a lively community fun day, with families spreading out across the Esplanade to enjoy live entertainment, face painting, games, free food and drinks, and complimentary entry to the local pool.

The strong turnout created a warm, inclusive atmosphere and reflected the Derwent Valley's strong community spirit, leaving many families and volunteers proud of their local connections and already looking forward to next year's celebration.



## Bruny Bowls and Community Club

Around 1,000 locals, visitors, and holidaymakers came together at the Bruny Bowls and Community Club to enjoy a day of live music, circus and acrobatic performances, family activities, and local food vans. The atmosphere was vibrant and welcoming, with volunteers, performers, and businesses all contributing to a celebration that felt unmistakably community-led.

Music played throughout the day, children joined in face painting and Rookie Rollers, and families watched performances and caught up with friends. The event reflected the spirit of Reflect, Respect and Celebrate, offering a positive and inclusive way for people of all ages to enjoy the national day in a beautiful coastal setting.



# VICTORIA *highlights*

## Angelsea Surf Life Saving Club Inc

The Great Aussie BBQ at Angelsea Surf Life Saving Club combined live music, classic beachside fun and a strong sense of local pride to celebrate Australia Day.

Families gathered for face painting, music and the much-anticipated Duck Derby, where crowds moved from the clubhouse down to the shoreline to cheer on the floating race. Children and youth played an active role, with Starfish Nippers and youth members helping marshal the ducks and supporting event logistics, adding energy and inclusivity to the day.

The day concluded with a relaxed community barbeque prepared by volunteers, reinforcing the club's strong culture of togetherness.



## West Wimmera Shire Council

Across West Wimmera Shire, Australia Day was celebrated through five locally hosted events in Harrow, Goroke, Dergholm, Kaniva and Edenhope, delivered in partnership with community groups and supported by Council.

Each town marked the day in its own way, with flag-raising ceremonies, Australia Day Ambassador addresses, live local music and shared meals including breakfasts and barbeques. Attendance across the Shire reflected strong local engagement, with residents gathering in halls, swimming pools, parks and community reserves to reflect on what it means to be Australian and to enjoy time together.



## Dromana Australia Day Committee

The Dromana Australia Day Event brought together around 7,000 locals and visitors for a vibrant, free celebration at the Dromana Recreation Reserve. Beginning with a community breakfast and live entertainment, the morning featured children's rides, face painting, performances, displays and food stalls.

More than 30 local schools, sporting clubs and community groups participated, supported by over 250 volunteers across 50+ stalls and activities. Free and accessible to all, the event delivered strong social, cultural and economic benefits, reinforcing community pride and belonging while living out the theme Reflect. Respect. Celebrate

# WESTERN AUSTRALIA *highlights*

## City of Cockburn

The Australia Day Coogee Beach Festival welcomed around 6,000 people to the Coogee Beach Reserve for a vibrant, family-friendly celebration by the coast. Running throughout the morning, the festival offered a wide mix of free activities including water slides, splash zones, beach games, weaving workshops, novelty competitions such as the watermelon eating contest, and demonstrations from local emergency services. The relaxed seaside setting provided a welcoming space for families, young people and visitors to come together, enjoy shared experiences and celebrate Australia Day in a fun and accessible way.



## Town of Port Hedland

The Australia Day Fireworks Spectacular 2026 brought more than 2,000 residents and visitors together for a free and family-friendly evening event. The night featured live performances by local and visiting artists, children's activities such as laser tag, face painting, craft stations and games, alongside a range of food vendors. The highlight of the night was Port Hedland's largest fireworks display, a vibrant 12-minute show that provided a shared moment of excitement and celebration for the community.



## Rotary Club of Esperance

The Australia Day in the Park celebration in Esperance brought together around 4,000 community members and visitors for a free, family-friendly day at Ralph Bower Adventureland Park. Hosted by the Rotary Club of Esperance for the 30th consecutive year, the event featured a wide range of activities including children's rides and games, an animal petting farm, live music by local artists, static community displays, and more than 40 market and food stalls showcasing local businesses.

A central highlight of the event was the citizenship ceremony and an inspiring address by Australia Day Ambassador Naveed Ahmed. The event strengthened community pride, supported local businesses and service groups, and reinforced Rotary's long-standing commitment to bringing the Esperance community together to Reflect, Respect and Celebrate Australia Day.

## AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

Every year, hundreds of proud Australia Day Ambassadors visit towns and cities to inspire and unite communities.

Ambassadors were supported with key communications material to ensure the program was delivered consistently around the country. Event checklists were made available to participating Ambassadors and councils.

In 2026, 269 Ambassadors attended events around the country.

*"From the moment I arrived, I felt welcomed into a community that is proud of its people, its stories, and its place. Spending time in Wentworth and the surrounding region allowed me to see the very best of Australia — the people, the effort, the quiet leadership and generosity that often goes unseen."*

*Australia Day, at its best, is about what unites us — not what divides us. Through this experience, I saw firsthand how focusing on contribution, kindness and belonging creates moments of shared purpose and genuine connection."*

Ange Clarke  
Ambassador for Wentworth Shire Council  
NSW

Paralympian Hani Watson,  
Somerset Regional Council



## CELEBRATING COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

On Australia Day, award ceremonies across the country shine a light on people whose generosity, tenacity and leadership make a real difference.

From local individual efforts to group achievements, these accolades recognise everyday Australians whose actions strengthen the social and cultural fabric of our communities.



# AROUND THE COUNTRY



## CAPITAL CITY EVENTS

The Capital City Funding Program was offered to organisers of major landmark events in state and territory capitals. Overall, \$4,350,000 was provided to capital cities for flagship Australia Day events.



## ADELAIDE

Close to 3,000 people gathered at Elder Park / Tarntanya Wama for Mourning in the Morning, a respectful and inclusive First Nations-led ceremony shaped by South Australian Aboriginal leaders. Guided by the theme Our Continuing Journey, the morning held space for mourning and truth-telling, while affirming the living strength, resilience and continuity of First Nations cultures across these lands.

The ceremony opened with a Welcome to Kurna Country by Major Uncle Moogy Sumner AM, followed by a traditional dance by Tal-kin-jeri. Eminent barrister Anthony McAvoy SC delivered a powerful address reflecting on South Australia's history and the role of truth-telling in shaping a more just future, and an informal yarning conversation, led by Marcellus Enalanga, brought together Leeroy Bilney and Deb Moyle to explore practical pathways for respectful collaboration with First Nations communities.

Original music by Rob Edwards shared his family's Stolen Generations story, followed by contemporary dance by WAYIN: THI — a Kurna word meaning move and flow. Uncle Eddie Peters closed the performance program with an acoustic set weaving his Torres Strait Islander heritage and stories of island life, reinforcing the diversity and richness of First Nations cultures across land and sea.

This year, Adelaide experienced its hottest Australia Day ever with temperatures reaching 45 degrees, which unfortunately forced the cancellation of Aus Lights on the River, the Aus Lights parade and fireworks display.



## BRISBANE

South Bank Parklands came alive as Riverside Green hosted an afternoon of delicious food, live entertainment, and family-friendly fun.

Hosted by Alistair McLeod, the vibrant main stage program spotlighted some of Queensland's most loved culinary personalities alongside an exciting line up of live music and performances.

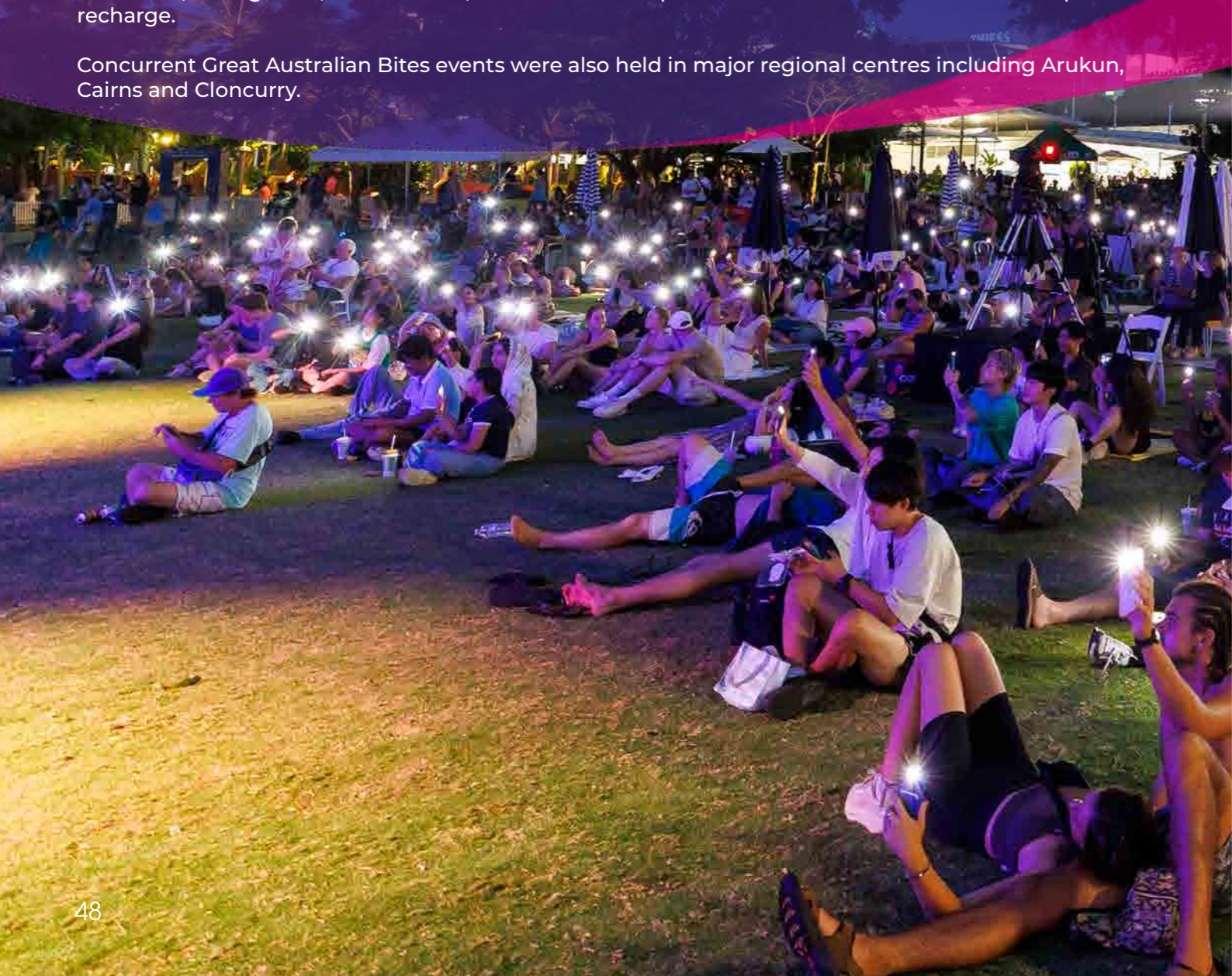
Food lovers were treated to a series of live cooking demonstrations on the main stage, featuring some of Australia's most respected chefs. Around 5,700 attendees watched as they shared their skills, stories, and signature flavours in engaging demonstrations throughout the afternoon. Appearances included Dominique Rizzo, Simone Prest, Justine Schofield, and Matt Golinski.

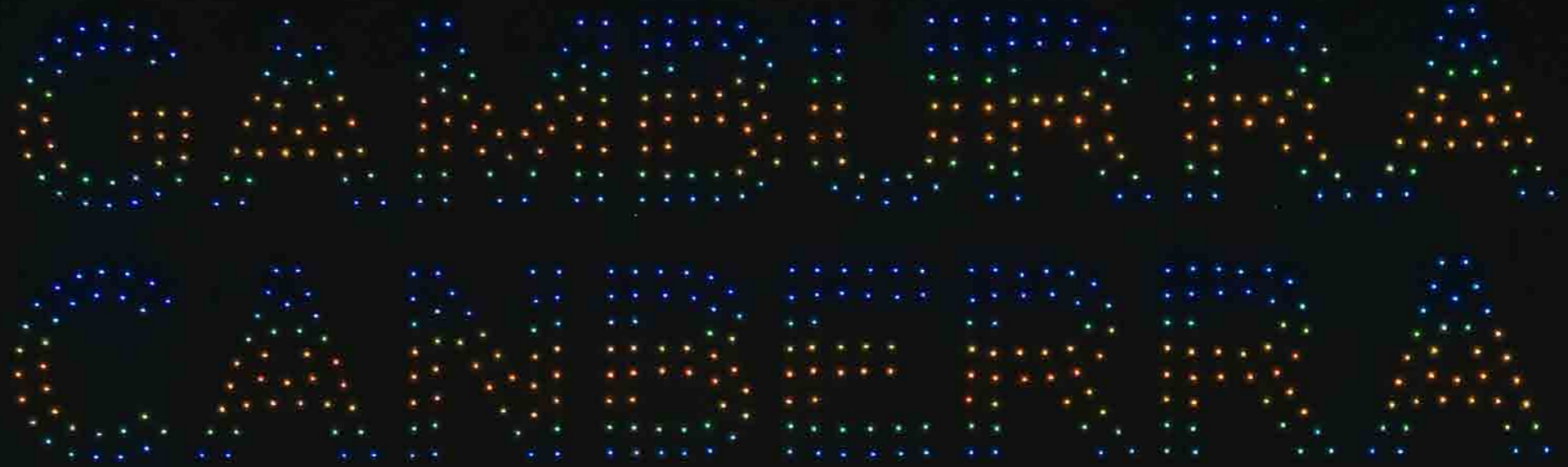
The celebration of food continued across the site, with local food vendors and restaurant pop ups showcasing the best of Queensland produce.

The entertainment rolled all day with a lively music and performance program featuring Tribal Experiences, Jake Newell and Alisha Todd Duo, Birdman Randy and The Ivory Street Preachers, and Franky Smart. Families also enjoyed appearances from Ranger Stacey and Ranger Ben, who brought extra excitement for younger audiences.

For kids and kids at heart, there was plenty to enjoy with free activities including face painting, arts and crafts, lawn games, a silent disco, and a dedicated quiet zone for those who need a calm space to recharge.

Concurrent Great Australian Bites events were also held in major regional centres including Arukun, Cairns and Cloncurry.





## CANBERRA

Over three nights, 80,000 Canberrans and visitors to the nation's capital enjoyed the return of the FLIGHT: Drone SkyShow + Night Markets on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin.

The show delivered a truly immersive experience with more than 600 drones transforming the sky into images reflecting Australia.

The multi-sensory spectacle was enjoyed from various viewing points around Lake Burley Griffin and was complemented by two event hubs at Commonwealth Place and Kings Park that hosted live entertainment and food under the summer skies.



## DARWIN

The Australia Day Council Northern Territory (ADCNT) delivered a vibrant, inclusive program of events that showcased the diversity of Territorians and honoured its First Nations people.

Across the day more than 10,800 people participated in Australia Day celebrations.

The annual Oz Run from Darwin Convention Centre to the Darwin Waterfront Precinct welcomed 3,800 participants of all ages and abilities. Upon crossing the finish line, participants received a commemorative medal and enjoyed a free sausage sizzle generously prepared by the Nightcliff Darwin Lions Club.

The fun run culminated in a culturally significant Smoking Ceremony, which marked the transition into the official Australia Day festivities. The traditional custodians of the Darwin region, the Larrakia people, conducted the ceremony, which was well-attended by 2,000 people, and highlighted the profound contribution of First Nations communities to Australia's past, present and future.

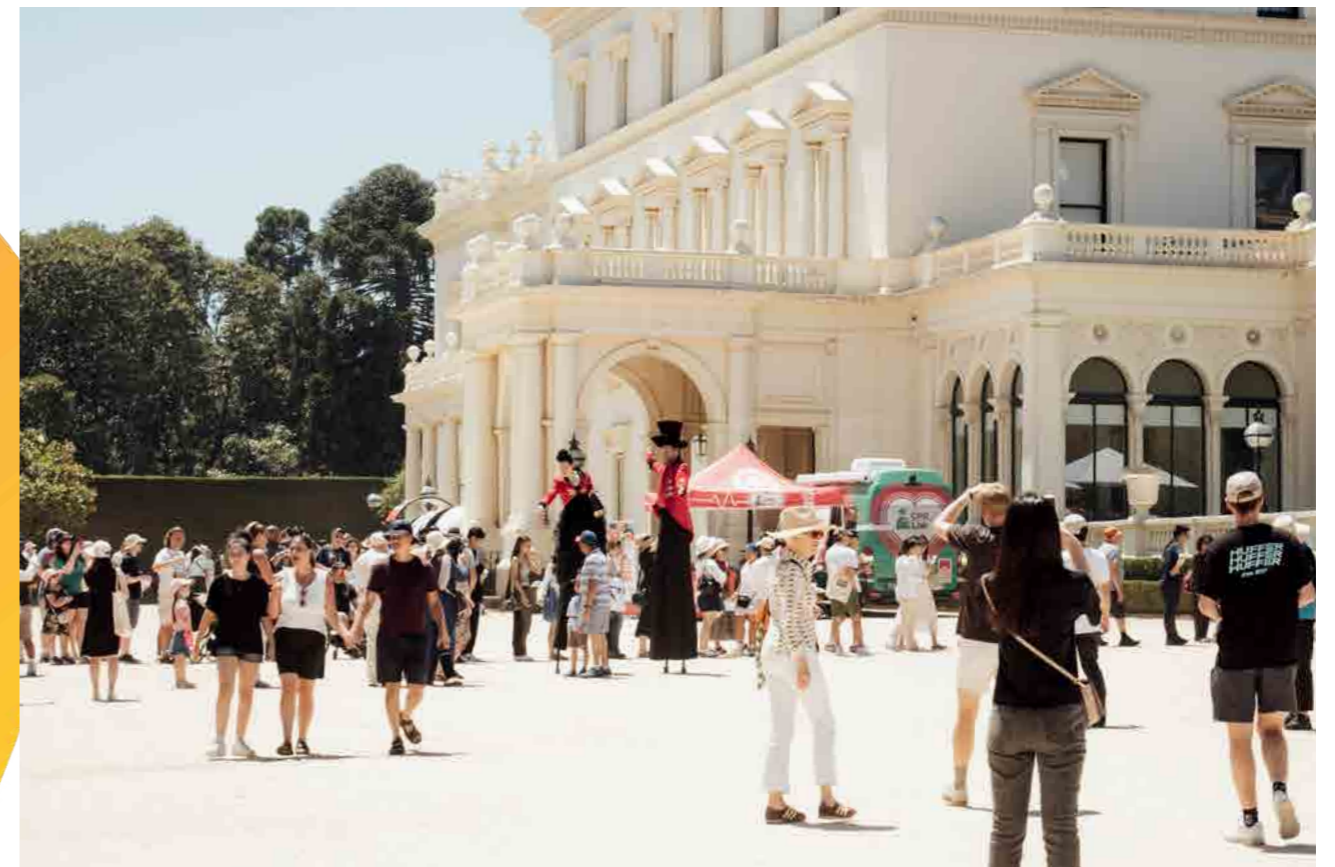
The Festival of Us, the Northern Territory's flagship Australia Day event, drew 5,000 people to the Territory Netball Stadium for a family-friendly showcase of the unique and diverse Australian spirit. Festival highlights included the children's television show Bluey stage show where over 100 families had the chance to meet and greet fan favourites Bluey and Bingo, Australia Day on the Station highlighted the spirit of the Territory's remote and rural communities, a Kick Back Parlour where kids could relax with games focused on the Northern Territory, and the ever-popular Free Community Dinner which gathered around 1,200 community members for a multicultural feast that showcased the diversity of the Territory's cuisine.



## MELBOURNE

Thousands of Victorians gathered across Melbourne to celebrate Australia Day 2026 at free public events at Government House Victoria and Federation Square. Government House welcomed around 15,000 visitors to explore the historic State Apartments, enjoy live performances and roving entertainment, and relax in the gardens with picnics or food from on-site vendors. The open day offered a rare chance to experience one of Victoria's most significant heritage sites in a festive and welcoming atmosphere.

At Federation Square, more than 11,200 people attended a full-day community celebration featuring free food, live music and interactive activities. Families enjoyed Bluey Live Interactive Experience performances, face painting, roving characters and creative workshops, while crowds gathered for free sausages and to watch the Australian Open on the big screen. Live music performances, including Zindzi and the Zillionaires and an evening DJ set by Winston Surfshirt, rounded out a vibrant day of community celebration in the heart of the city.





## PERTH

Auspire – Australia Day Council WA collaborated with the City of Perth to celebrate Australia’s rich cultural tapestry. Audiences were treated to a diverse program of multicultural activations and performances throughout the day that highlighted both respect for First Nations cultures and the vibrancy of Western Australia’s multicultural communities.

Auspire began the day with a Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony at Victoria Gardens, East Perth. Delivered by Corroboree for Life, around 200 people gathered to experience the cultural tradition, before coming together for a community barbeque breakfast hosted by the Rotary Club of Heirisson.

Cultural celebrations continued into the afternoon at Langley Park within the City of Perth’s Multicultural Zone. Auspire was proud to return the Reflect Respect Celebrate Film Dome to Australia Day, screening *Koora Koora: A Long Long Time Ago*, which featured Aboriginal storytelling and illustrations, alongside Our Australian Values.

Surrounding the Film Dome, crowds enjoyed a dynamic program of live performances including a Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony, Brazilian Samba, the Māori Haka and African drumming.

For the first time, Auspire also hosted Western Australia’s first public Australia Day Launch and the 2026 WA Australian of the Year finalists’ send-off at the Elizabeth Quay Floating Stage. The event brought the community together to meet the state’s national finalists ahead of their trip to Canberra, and was supported by live entertainment in a welcoming summer atmosphere.



## SYDNEY

Australia Day in Sydney 2026 was the largest in the country. It began with a poignant and moving reflection on the Sydney Opera House sails ahead of free events across the city to mark the significance of our national day.

Garry Purchase's artwork, *Dancing in the Moonlight*, was projected on the Sydney Opera House sails for Dawn Reflection, depicting the sacred BurriBurri, the humpback whale, breaching beneath a night sky. The WugulOra Morning Ceremony at Barangaroo featured performances from First Nations storytellers and represents reflection, understanding and reconciliation as the nation proudly gathered.

This year, the Australia Day Citizenship Ceremony was held on the iconic Sydney Opera House forecourt, with more than 360 people sworn in as our country's newest citizens. From midday, Sydney Harbour came alive with a series of free-to-view showstopping events across the water including a midday Salute including a 21 Gun Salute, the Royal Australian Navy's HMAS Canberra and a fast-jet fly past.

The Ferrython saw four of Sydney's beloved Emerald Class ferries race bow-to-bow while the Tall Ships Race, 190th Australia Day Regatta and Harbour Parade rounded out the harbour events.

The return of the popular Mega Kidz Zone at the Overseas Passenger Terminal offered giant games, inflatables and arcade action for families, alongside a Surf Life Saving NSW Fun in the Sun activation that offered a chance to meet the volunteers of one of Australia's most beloved organisations and brush up on water safety.



## AUSTRALIA DAY LIVE

Against the iconic backdrop of the Sydney Opera House, Australia Day Live brought the nation's celebrations to a spectacular close, broadcast live across ABC TV and ABC iView.

The concert featured an all-star lineup of Australian music including including Cody Simpson, Kate Ceberano, William Barton and Jude York, alongside supergroup The Fabulous Caprettos, composed of Wendy Matthews, Rai Thistlethwayte, Dave Gleeson and Joe Camilleri and included moving and timely tributes and acknowledgment of the Australian Jewish community following the Bondi terror attack.

Video stories throughout the show captured the unique diversity, lifestyle, humour and values that make our country so special before the night sky was lit up with fireworks, and a drone show above Sydney Harbour.

The concert culminated in an incredible finale featuring fireworks display and a spectacular aerial show over Circular Quay, delivering a memorable celebration for those at the event and the millions tuning in on ABC TV.

*"Our national day is an opportunity for us to reflect on the national character, and this year that reflection is as important as ever. When our character is tested, what shines through should give us all cause for hope, optimism and pride."*

### John Foreman AM

Creative Director, Australia Day Sydney  
Chair, National Australia Day Council (until April 2026)

Total viewers on ABC TV and ABC iView: 584,033  
(512,000 in 2025)



# AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR





## AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR AWARDS

Since 1960, the Australian of the Year Awards have honoured outstanding Australians and become a defining highlight of Australia Day celebrations.

Announced on the 25 January by the Prime Minister and broadcast live on ABC TV and iView, the Australian of the Year Awards have long celebrated those who inspire, service their communities and demonstrate excellence – Australians we can all aspire to be.

The 2026 recipients are:

- Australian of the Year: Katherine Bennell-Pegg, astronaut from South Australia
- Senior Australian of the Year: Professor Henry Brodaty AO, dementia treatment pioneer from New South Wales
- Young Australian of the Year: Nedd Brockmann, ultramarathon runner for homelessness from New South Wales
- Australia's Local Hero: Frank Mitchell, Indigenous construction leader from Western Australia

Total viewers on ABC TV and ABC iView: 589,036 (523,000 in 2025)

**NADC** | National  
Australia Day  
Council

