



Commemorative Days



Samone Bos

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GLOSSARY WORDS
When a word is printed in **bold**, click on it to find its meaning.

Symbols of Australia

Symbols of Australia represent Australia and its people. They represent our land, governments and stories. Most importantly, symbols reflect our shared experiences as Australians.

What are symbols?

Symbols can take many forms, such as objects, places and events. Some symbols are official, while others are unofficial. Official symbols include government flags, **emblems**, commemorative days and the national anthem. Unofficial symbols include folk songs, foods, landmarks and icons.

Why do we have symbols?

Australian symbols have special meanings. They inspire a sense of pride and belonging in Australians. Symbols identify us as uniquely Australian.

Who chooses Australian symbols?

Some symbols are created by Australia's governments and other authorities. Other symbols are items from our **culture**, natural environment and history that have become important to Australians over time.

The shape of Australia's coastline, as seen on this globe, is one of the most recognisable symbols of the country.



Australian commemorative days

Australian commemorative days are days that are set aside to honour, or show respect for, events that shaped our history or issues that are important to Australians. Some commemorative days are public holidays, which means that schools and many businesses are closed. Others are not public holidays, but are marked with special events organised by governments, schools and other groups.

Why do we have commemorative days?

Commemorative days are important symbols of Australian culture. They provide Australians with an opportunity to think about our shared history, experiences and values. Commemorative days help us to remember our country's achievements, happiest moments and saddest days. They help us to understand who we are as Australians.

Parades are a popular way of commemorating ANZAC Day, which falls on 25 April.



How do commemorative days represent Australia?

Australian commemorative days represent Australia as a young country with an **Indigenous** heritage that includes the oldest continuous living cultures in the world. They represent our country's history, our participation in wars, and other events that have shaped Australia. Commemorative days also represent Australia's present and its future by honouring our **multicultural** society.

Types of commemorative days

Commemorative days may be days of remembrance, celebration or relaxation. Days of remembrance usually honour a sad time in our history. On such days, **memorial** services or other ceremonies may be held. Many commemorative days are days of celebration or relaxation. These are happy occasions that encourage Australians to spend time with family and friends.

On commemorative days, some Australians spend time with family and friends at the beach.



SYMBOL FACT

Australia's first commemorative day was **Foundation Day**, known today as **Australia Day**. Australia Day is a symbol of our national identity.



When a commemorative day results in a long weekend, many Australians spend the weekend camping in the bush.

A LONG WEEKEND

A long weekend occurs when a public holiday falls on a Monday (or sometimes Friday), giving us three days off. The Queen's Birthday and Labour Day are long weekends observed around Australia.

Who chooses Australian commemorative days?

In Australia, commemorative days are chosen by state and territory governments, or groups in the community. Some events are so important in our history that they are honoured with commemorative days. This is so that we can take the time to remember these events. Some of these commemorative days are declared public holidays for all of the community to enjoy or observe.

Observing commemorative days

Australia is a free country. Australians can observe commemorative days in any way that is lawful. On some commemorative days, Australians may choose to attend special events in their community. Other commemorative days that form a long weekend give us the opportunity to take a holiday.

Australia Day

Australia Day is observed on 26 January each year. The date commemorates the arrival of Australia's first British settlers on board the **First Fleet**. On 26 January 1788, Captain Arthur Phillip raised the British flag at Sydney Cove and claimed New South Wales as a British colony.

How is it a symbol of Australia?

Australia Day is a symbol of Australia's national identity. On this day, many Australians display the Australian flag or wear our national colours of green and gold. Across the country, public events and ceremonies are held to celebrate Australia and its people.

On 26 January 1788, Captain Arthur Phillip raised the British flag at Sydney Cove, Port Jackson.

DAY OF MOURNING

On 26 January 1938, the Australian Aborigines League held protests against the celebration of Australia Day, which was called the Day of Mourning. Today, many Australians observe 26 January as Invasion Day or Survival Day. It commemorates a different part of Australia's British heritage, as many **Indigenous Australians** were affected by the arrival of the British.

Early history

In the early 1800s, freed convicts and other British settlers celebrated Foundation Day or First Landing Day on 26 January. In 1818, Governor Lachlan Macquarie declared it a public holiday in the colony of New South Wales. By 1946, all Australian states and territories had agreed to recognise 26 January as Australia Day.

How do we commemorate this day?

Many Australians commemorate Australia Day by attending public breakfasts organised by local councils and community groups. Fireworks displays, barbecues, air shows and public parades are also a part of Australia Day celebrations. Some Australians attend sporting events or concerts.

Traditionally, a one-day international cricket match is held at Adelaide Oval, in South Australia, on Australia Day.

SYMBOL FACT

The Australia Day Regatta is the world's oldest boat race. It has been held every year since 1837.



The prime minister's address

Every Australia Day, the prime minister addresses, or speaks to, the country from Canberra, in the Australian Capital Territory. The prime minister speaks about issues and events that are important to Australians. The broadcast of this address on the radio, television and Internet brings Australians together. It is an important part of Australia Day.

THE FIRST AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR

The first person to be named Australian of the Year was Sir Macfarlane Burnet. He received the award in 1960 for his important discoveries in medical science.



Australia Day awards

On Australia Day, some Australians are recognised for their outstanding service to the country. The **governor-general** announces the names of those who have received Australia Day Honours. The prime minister then announces the winners of the Australian of the Year, Young Australian of the Year, Senior Australian of the Year and Australia's Local Hero awards.

At the 1968 Australia Day Awards, boxer Lionel Rose became the first **Indigenous Australian** to be named Australian of the Year.

Citizenship ceremonies

Many people who are not born in Australia choose to become Australian **citizens**. Citizenship ceremonies are held throughout the year, but Australia Day is a popular date for this special event. During the ceremony, the Australian flag is raised and the national anthem, 'Advance Australia Fair', is played. New citizens promise to be loyal to Australia and follow its laws by making a 'Pledge of Commitment'.

Australia Day Dawn

The first Australia Day Dawn was held in 2005 at Uluru, in the Northern Territory. Since then, this early-morning event has been held at other important Australian landmarks in the week before Australia Day. At dawn, former Australians of the Year meet to publicly discuss Australia Day and other topics that are important to the country.

SYMBOL FACT

Since 1949, more than four million people have become Australian citizens.

Indigenous Mutitjulu women performed a welcome dance in front of Uluru at the first Australia Day Dawn, in 2005.



Labour Day

Australian states and territories observe Labour Day at different times of the year. This public holiday celebrates the eight-hour workday first given to Victorian building workers in 1856. At that time, workers rallied for 'Eight Hours Labour, Eight Hours Recreation, Eight Hours Rest'.

How is it a symbol of Australia?

Labour Day is a symbol of the **trade unions** that won the eight-hour workday for many Australian workers. Before the eight-hour workday was introduced, many Australians were forced to work up to 16 hours a day, six days a week. Few or no holidays were allowed. Workers who took sick leave risked losing their jobs.

LABOUR DAY AROUND AUSTRALIA

Labour Day is celebrated at different times of the year around Australia.

WA: first Monday in March

TAS and VIC: second Monday in March

NT and QLD: first Monday in May

ACT, NSW and SA: first Monday in October

In Tasmania, Labour Day is known as Eight Hours Day.

Trade union banners encouraged Australians to fight for better working conditions, as seen in this Labour Day march in Melbourne, Victoria, in 1901.

SYMBOL FACT

In 1879, Victoria became the first state to observe Labour Day as a public holiday.



Today, trade unions around Australia hold marches, such as this one in Brisbane, Queensland, to commemorate Labour Day.

Early history

On 21 April 1856, building workers in Melbourne, Victoria, stopped work to protest against long working hours. They marched to Victoria's Parliament House and encouraged other workers to join them. These building workers were the first Australians to be granted an eight-hour workday. This event was later celebrated as Labour Day.

How do we commemorate this day?

For most Australians, Labour Day is a day to relax and spend time with family and friends. In Queensland, the Labour Day March is held on the streets of Brisbane each year. Victorian trade unions participate in Melbourne's Moomba parade during the Labour Day weekend.

Harmony Day

Harmony Day falls on 21 March each year. It celebrates **multiculturalism** in Australia. On Harmony Day, thousands of events are held across the country to celebrate our multicultural society. Harmony Day promotes respect, fairness and a sense of belonging for all Australians.

How is it a symbol of Australia?

Harmony Day is an important symbol of **tolerance** and acceptance. It encourages Australians to respect the **culture**, language, history and faith of all Australians. Harmony Day represents the many different peoples that live in Australia and enrich our society.

Students at Darley Primary School in Melbourne, Victoria, formed a rainbow of colour to symbolise multiculturalism on Harmony Day.



Early history

Children in Australian primary schools first celebrated Harmony Day in 1999. Students and teachers play an important role in spreading the message of Harmony Day around Australia. Many Australian organisations and community groups are now aware of Harmony Day and promote its celebration.

How do we commemorate this day?

Many organisations, community groups and schools are involved in Harmony Day events. These events celebrate the art, music, dance and food of Australia's different communities. Each year, the Australian Football League (AFL) hosts the Harmony Cup, where Australian Rules football players from our **migrant** communities compete in teams representing their countries of origin.



Players from migrant communities took part in this Harmony Day football match in Sydney, New South Wales.

THE COLOUR OF HARMONY

In 1996, marketing expert Susan Leith-Miller first wore an orange ribbon to promote multiculturalism in Australia. Today, the colour orange is a symbol of Harmony Day.

ANZAC Day

ANZAC Day is commemorated on 25 April each year. It marks the anniversary of the ANZAC landing at Gallipoli, Turkey, in 1915. This was Australia's first major military battle in World War I (1914–1918). Each year, Australians observe ANZAC Day with memorial services, parades and other ceremonies across the country.

How is it a symbol of Australia?

ANZAC Day began as a symbol of respect for the 8709 Australian soldiers who died in battles on the Gallipoli Peninsula in World War I. Since World War II (1939–1945), ANZAC Day has been viewed as a symbol of respect for all returning members of the armed forces and those who have died in battle.

SYMBOL FACT

ANZAC stands for 'Australian and New Zealand Army Corps'. At Gallipoli, soldiers from Australia and New Zealand served in the same army unit, or corps.

ANZAC Day parades include people who have returned from war and family members representing those who have died.

Early history

The first ANZAC Day parades were held in 1916, one year after the Gallipoli landing. In Sydney, wounded soldiers who had returned from Gallipoli participated in the parade by travelling in cars with nurses. Between 1916 and 1918, ANZAC Day also inspired many young men to enlist in the army and serve their country.

How do we commemorate this day?

ANZAC Day is commemorated nationally. Dawn services, ceremonies at local war memorials and parades honour the men and women of our armed forces. Each year, thousands of Australians travel to Gallipoli to attend the dawn service at the ANZAC Commemorative Site.

ANZAC BISCUITS

Anzac biscuits are a popular symbol of ANZAC Day. Australian women first baked these biscuits during World War I to send to Australian men fighting overseas. The hard, sweet biscuits can last for months in a sealed tin.

During World War I, ANZAC Day parades honoured returning soldiers and encouraged more men to enlist in the army.



Dawn services

Australia's first official ANZAC Day dawn service was held at the Sydney Cenotaph in 1928. At war, soldiers were traditionally woken up for battle just before dawn. They would spend the quiet, peaceful pre-dawn time preparing their weapons. Many returning soldiers came to miss that peaceful feeling. The dawn service is a reminder of that special time for soldiers. Dawn services include an assembly, hymns, readings, pipers and gun salutes. A bugler then plays two traditional songs, ending the service.

ANZAC Day ceremonies

ANZAC Day ceremonies are held at war **memorials** across the country. Australia's national ANZAC Day ceremony is held at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, in the Australian Capital Territory. The ceremony includes hymns, prayers, readings, the laying of wreaths and bugle calls. The national anthems of Australia and New Zealand are also played.

THE ODE OF REMEMBRANCE

The Ode of Remembrance is often read at ANZAC Day ceremonies. It is the fourth verse of a poem called *For the Fallen* by Laurence Binyon:

'They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.'

The dawn services held around Australia, such as this one in Canberra, in the Australian Capital Territory, are one of ANZAC Day's most important traditions.



Bugle calls

Bugle calls are an important part of ANZAC Day services. In the military, the reveille, a traditional bugle call, is played in the morning to wake soldiers up. The last post, also a traditional bugle call, is played at the end of the day or as a final farewell at a funeral. These traditions are followed at ANZAC Day services.

The lone charger

The lone charger is a symbol of respect and mourning during ANZAC Day marches and other remembrance parades. A lone, riderless horse is led at the front of the parade, with a pair of boots facing backwards in its stirrups. The boots represent the many soldiers who did not return from war.



The reveille and the last post are bugle calls sounded at ANZAC Day services.

SYMBOL FACT

In Australia, the phrase 'Lest we forget' is displayed on memorials in remembrance of those who died in World War I.

National Sorry Day

National Sorry Day is observed on 26 May each year. It is a day of remembrance marking a sad part of Australian history. Until the 1970s, the Australian government and other authorities forcibly removed many **Indigenous Australian** children from their families. These children are called the **Stolen Generations**.

How is it a symbol of Australia?

National Sorry Day is an important symbol of **reconciliation** for all Australians. It acknowledges and creates awareness of the mistakes made by the Australian government and other authorities. National Sorry Day aims to build a bridge between Indigenous Australians and non-Indigenous Australians, and to create a positive future.



THE APOLOGY

On 13 February 2008, former prime minister Kevin Rudd made a formal apology to Indigenous Australians. In parliament, he said sorry for the laws and policies of past governments that had 'inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians'.

During National Sorry Day activities, non-Indigenous Australians are encouraged to listen to the stories of Indigenous Australian elders.



Sorry Day acknowledges the harm done to the Stolen Generations and their families. Here, descendants of the Stolen Generations hold up photos of their affected family members.

Early history

Before the first National Sorry Day, hundreds of thousands of non-Indigenous Australians signed and wrote personal messages in Sorry Books. These books were presented to Indigenous Australian representatives on the first National Sorry Day on 26 May 1998.

How do we commemorate this day?

Today, National Sorry Day is commemorated with marches and community events that celebrate the **cultures** of Indigenous Australians. Many schools and councils 'plant' a Stolen Generations Track Home to commemorate National Sorry Day. The tracks of plastic feet represent the Indigenous Australian children who were taken from their families. Every National Sorry Day, all Australians are encouraged to write down their commitment to reconciliation in Pledge Books.

SYMBOL FACT

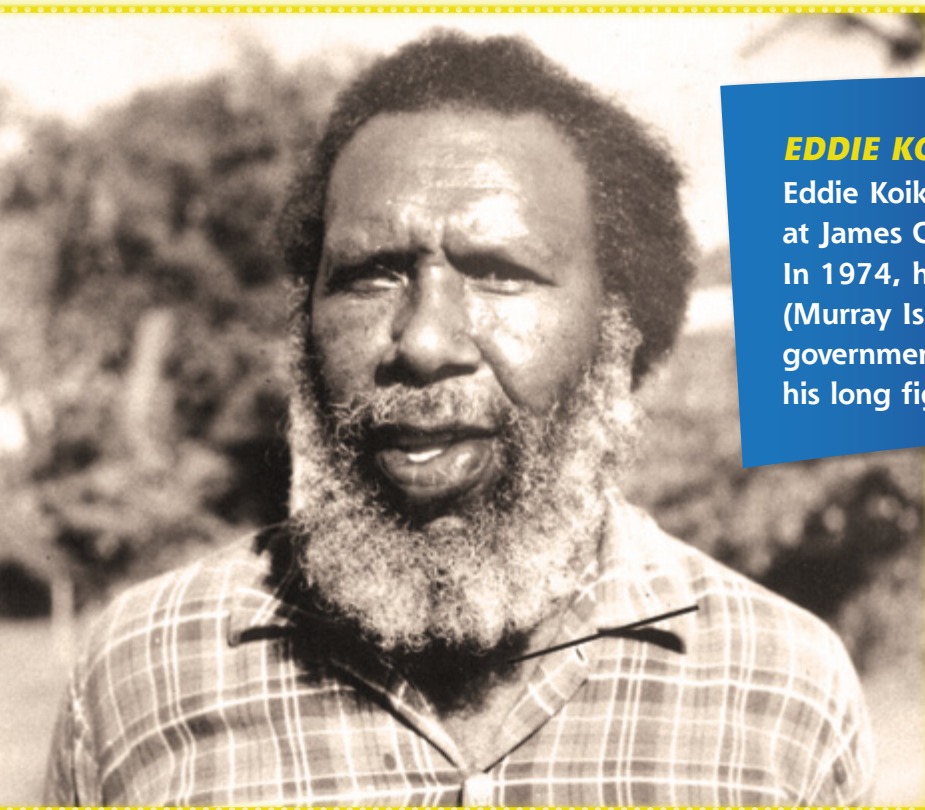
On 28 May 2000, around 250 000 Australians walked across the Sydney Harbour Bridge, in New South Wales, during the People's Walk for Reconciliation.

Mabo Day

On 3 June 1992, Eddie Koiki Mabo and the Meriam people of the Torres Strait Islands won **native title** rights to their land. Mabo Day marks the anniversary of the first time **Indigenous Australians** were granted **land rights** in a court of law.

How is it a symbol of Australia?

Mabo Day is a symbol of native title and **Indigenous** land rights. The Mabo decision, made by the High Court of Australia, overruled the idea that Australian land had belonged to no one before European settlement. This decision was an important event in the history of Indigenous Australia because, for the first time, it was legally recognised that Indigenous Australians had rights to the land called Australia.



EDDIE KOIKI MABO

Eddie Koiki Mabo worked as a gardener at James Cook University in Queensland. In 1974, he learned that Mer Island (Murray Island) belonged to the Australian government, not to his people. This sparked his long fight for native title.

Eddie Koiki Mabo's battle became an important symbol in the fight for Indigenous land rights.



Some Australian cities, such as Townsville, Queensland, celebrate Mabo Day with a march through the streets of the city.

SYMBOL FACT

Sadly, Eddie Koiki Mabo died five months before the successful ruling of the High Court of Australia in 1992.

Early history

The Mabo case brought native title to the attention of all Australians. In 1996, the Indigenous Australian Wik peoples of Cape York, Queensland, were granted land rights in another famous case. The High Court of Australia ruled that **traditional owners** and pastoral leaseholders, or farmers, could share the rights to land.

How do we commemorate this day?

On Mabo Day, community groups commemorate the important decisions that were made in the High Court of Australia in 1992. Some schools and universities mark the occasion with performances by Indigenous Australians. Mabo Day is a special holiday in the Torres Strait Islands.

Queen's Birthday

The Queen's Birthday is a day that honours Queen Elizabeth II, who was born on 21 April 1926. In most parts of Australia, the Queen's Birthday is observed on the second Monday in June. Western Australia observes the holiday in late September or early October.

How is it a symbol of Australia?

The Queen's Birthday public holiday is a symbol of respect for Australia's **monarch**, Queen Elizabeth II. Although this public holiday is not celebrated on the Queen's actual birthday, it is still an important way for Australians to honour the Queen and our country's British heritage.

VOLUNTEERS DAY

South Australia also observes Volunteers Day on the Queen's Birthday each year. On this day, exceptional volunteers are rewarded for their service to the community with the Premier's Business Award in Volunteering, the Joy Noble Medal and the Andamooka Award.

Queen Elizabeth II, seen here with former prime minister John Howard, represents Australia's British heritage.



Early history

The first royal birthday observed in Australia was that of King George III on 4 June 1788. Captain Arthur Phillip, the governor of the **colony** of New South Wales, commanded that ships in Sydney Cove fire royal salutes to mark the occasion. Though the monarchs and their birthdays have changed, the June date has become traditional in most states and territories.

How do we commemorate this day?

An important part of the Queen's Birthday celebrations is the release of the Queen's Birthday Honours list, which recognises the achievements and contributions of Australians. Since 2001, the Collingwood Magpies and the Melbourne Demons have played an AFL match at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG), in Victoria, on the Queen's Birthday.

Many Victorians commemorate the Queen's Birthday by going to the AFL match between the Magpies and the Demons.

SYMBOL FACT

Since 1980, Australia Post has released a stamp each year to commemorate the Queen's Birthday or other important royal anniversaries.



Wattle Day

Wattle Day was first celebrated officially on 1 September 1992. It is not a public holiday but a special day that honours all Australian wattle plants, especially Australia's floral emblem, the golden wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*). There are more than 700 different types of wattle growing in Australia's different natural environments.

How is it a symbol of Australia?

The golden wattle is a floral emblem that symbolises Australia's unique plants.

Golden wattle designs are a part of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms and the Order of Australia medal.

The golden wattle is often used on days of mourning as a symbol of remembrance and national identity.

The green and gold of the golden wattle are Australia's national colours.

WHICH DAY?

For many years, Wattle Day was celebrated on different days around Australia. It was not until 1992 that all Australians observed Wattle Day on 1 September. This was due to the efforts of wattle fan Maria Hitchcock, who asked the government to adopt this official day.

SYMBOL FACT

Australian wattle seeds have tough skins that split in the heat of a bushfire. This means that wattles are able to grow even after bushfires destroy the parent plant. In this way, wattles represent the Australian fighting spirit.

Students at Yates Avenue Public School in Parramatta, New South Wales, were given wattle plants by the city council in honour of Wattle Day.



Early history

Between 1909 and 1910, groups of Australians in New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria formed the Wattle Day League. They promoted the idea of commemorating the wattle on a special day. For many years, Australians celebrated the first day of spring by wearing sprigs of wattle.

How do we commemorate this day?

For thousands of years, wattle seeds have been a traditional bush food for **Indigenous Australians**. Wattle seeds are now a popular ingredient in cakes, biscuits and jams, often served on Wattle Day. Many Australians also commemorate Wattle Day by planting wattle trees and shrubs.

Remembrance Day

Remembrance Day is observed on 11 November each year. This date commemorates the end of World War I in 1918, when Australia and the Allies defeated the Central Powers. For many years, 11 November was called Armistice Day. 'Armistice' is another word for 'peace agreement' or 'ceasefire'.

How is it a symbol of Australia?

Remembrance Day is a symbol of the sacrifices made by Australians who have fought and continue to fight in wars. It honours the many Australians who have died or suffered in the service of their country. On 11 November each year, Australians show respect for victims of war by attending Remembrance Day **memorial** services, wearing a red poppy or observing one minute of silence at 11 a.m.

THE FLANDERS POPPY

The Flanders poppy is a symbol of Remembrance Day. It is worn to honour those who died at war. During World War I, these red poppies grew on the battlefields of Europe, where many soldiers had died.



This wall at the Australian War Memorial is inscribed with the names of Australians who have died in battle. Red poppies have been stuck in cracks, symbolising the bloodshed of war.



SYMBOL FACT

Almost 100 000 Australians have died serving our country in wars since 1901.

For more than 90 years, the one minute of silence observed on Remembrance Day has been an important symbol of respect for victims of war.

Early history

On 11 November 1919, King George V instructed all British **colonies** and territories to observe two minutes of silence at 11 a.m. This was the time when fighting stopped on the battlefields of World War I in 1918. The Allies, including Australia, began holding remembrance services at this time.

How do we commemorate this day?

Australian cities and towns host Remembrance Day memorial services each year. A national ceremony is held at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, in the Australian Capital Territory. The 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month is now a symbol of remembrance for all victims of war. In 1997, Sir William Deane, the then **governor-general**, encouraged all Australians to observe one minute of silence at this time.

Try this!

Symbols help us to remember things about our history. They also tell us what our **culture** values. Symbols of Australia exist all around us and are a part of our daily lives.

Do you know?

These questions will help you to think about some of the commemorative days in this book. You can find the answers by turning to the page indicated.

- ★ Why is Australia Day also known as Invasion Day or Survival Day? (PAGE 8)
- ★ What colour represents Harmony Day? (PAGE 15)
- ★ Why are ANZAC Day dawn services held at dawn? (PAGE 18)
- ★ What is the significance of Mabo Day? (PAGE 22)
- ★ Which important honours are awarded on the Queen's Birthday? (PAGE 25)

Think about it

Look around you at home, at school and in your local community.

- ★ What symbols can you see?
- ★ How do these symbols represent Australia and its people?
- ★ What other symbols do Australians use to show who they are?

Find out more

- ★ <http://www.awm.gov.au/education>

The 'Kids HQ' page at the Australian War Memorial website includes soldier profiles and quizzes.

- ★ <http://www.harmony.gov.au/>

This Australian government website gives suggestions to students and teachers on ways to celebrate Australia's **multiculturalism**.

- ★ <http://www.nsdcc.org.au>

The website of the National Sorry Day Committee gives teachers and students information about National Sorry Day and how to get involved.

- ★ <http://www.australiaday.org.au>

The website of the Australia Day National Network provides a toolkit with suggested activities related to celebrating Australia Day.

- ★ <http://wattleday.com/>

The official Wattle Day website provides information on Wattle Day, including its history in Australia.

Glossary

Allies

countries united against the Central Powers in World War I (1914–1918)

Central Powers

countries united against the Allies in World War I

citizens

official members of a country, either by birth or by choice

colony

a place ruled or governed by another country

culture

the ways of living that a group of people have developed over time

emblems

objects, or pictures of objects, that are used as symbols

First Fleet

the group of eleven ships that sailed from England on 13 May 1787 to establish a colony in New South Wales

governor-general

a representative of the British king or queen in Australia

Indigenous

naturally existing in an area or region rather than coming from somewhere else

Indigenous Australians

the first peoples of Australia, comprising Aboriginal Australians and Torres Strait Islanders

land rights

rights of Indigenous Australians to take possession of their traditional lands

memorial

something designed to honour the memory of someone who has died or an important event

migrant

a person who has come from another country to live permanently

monarch

a king or queen

multicultural

many cultures living together

native title

the right of Indigenous Australians to land or water that is traditionally theirs

reconciliation

the act of making two or more sides with different views come together in agreement

tolerance

being able to accept differences between ourselves and others

trade unions

organisations of workers in the same or similar trades who have come together for a common goal

traditional owners

Indigenous Australians who, according to their customs and beliefs, are responsible for the lands of their peoples



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