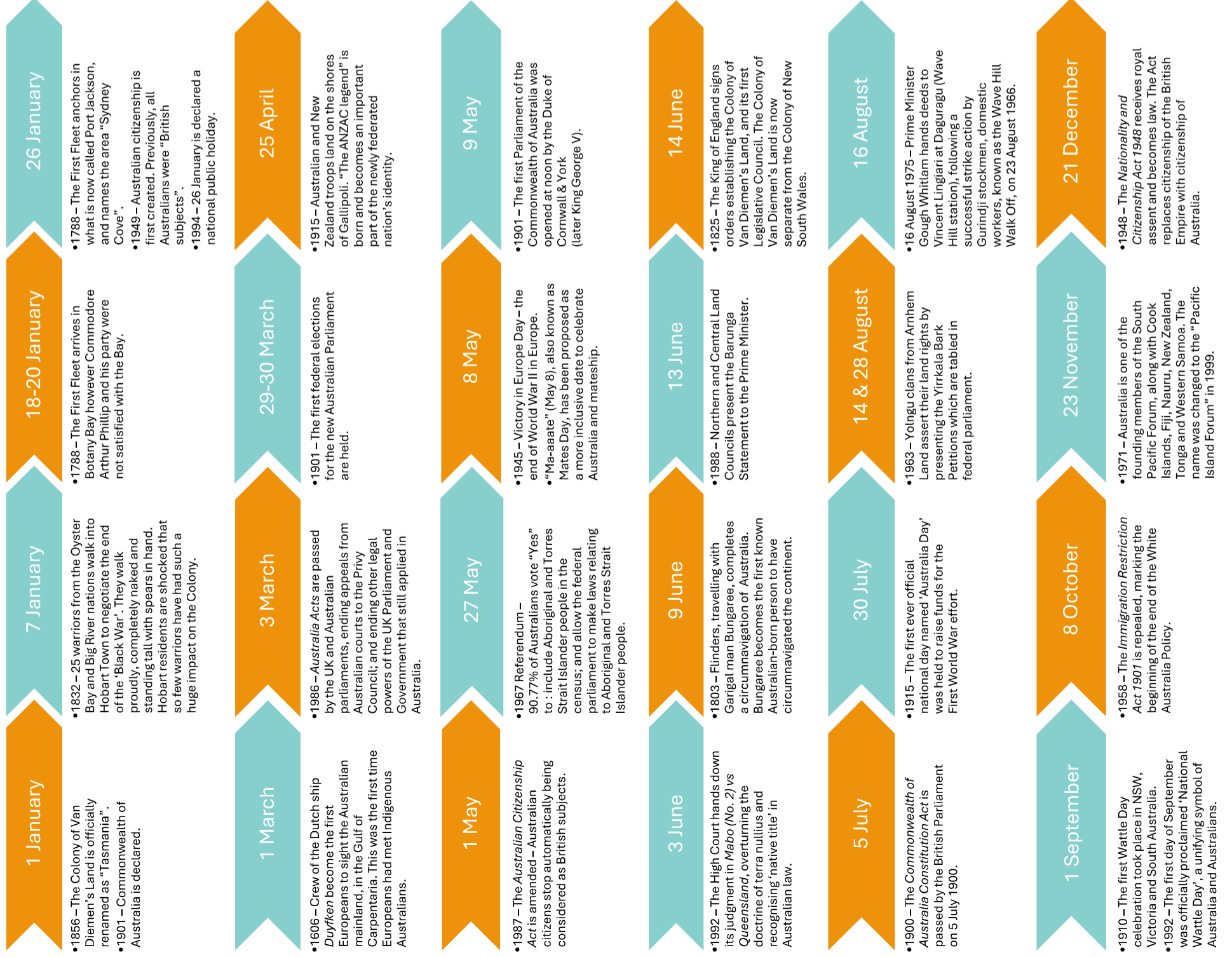
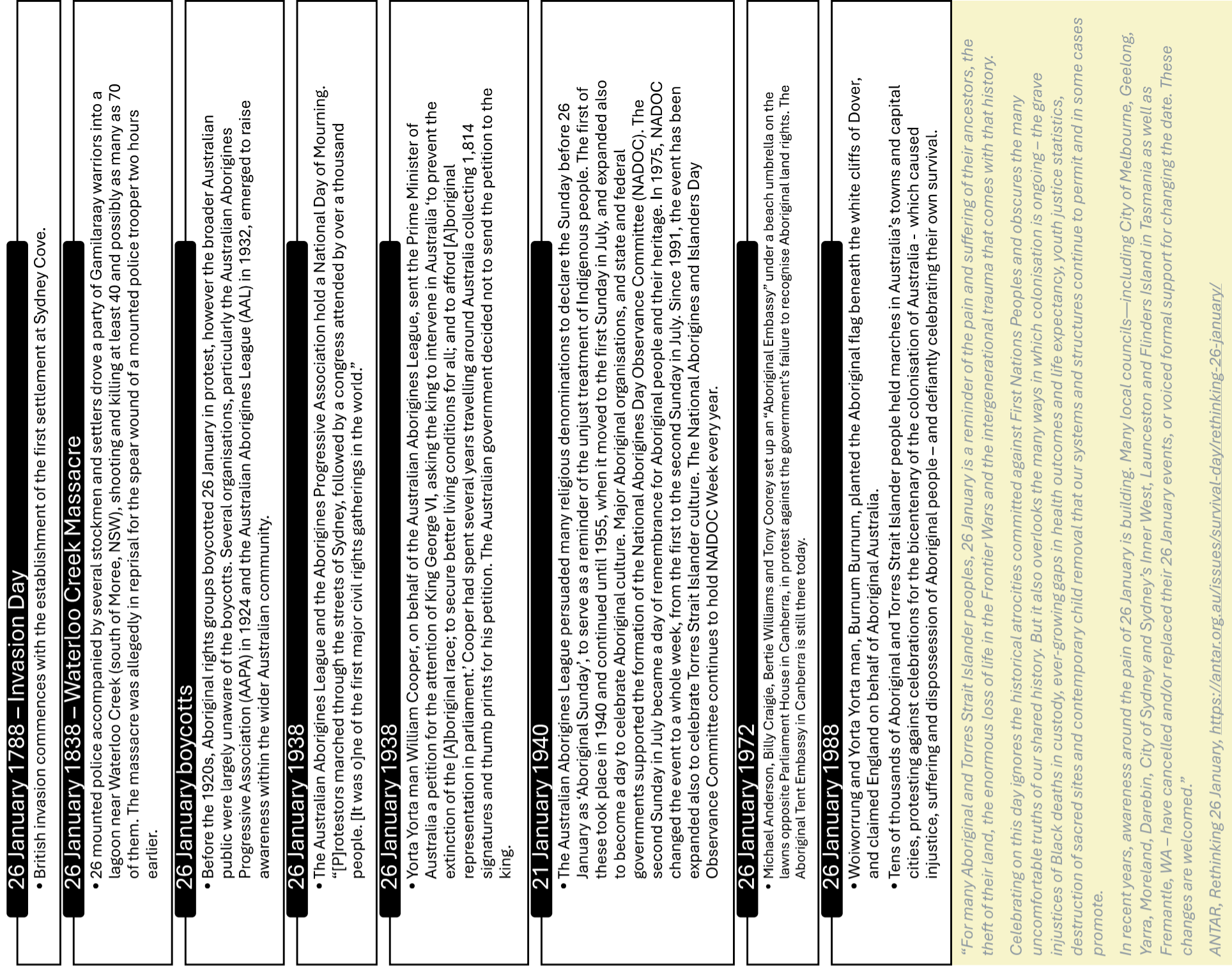


So many other special dates we could celebrate “Australia Day” ...



What does 26 January mean for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?



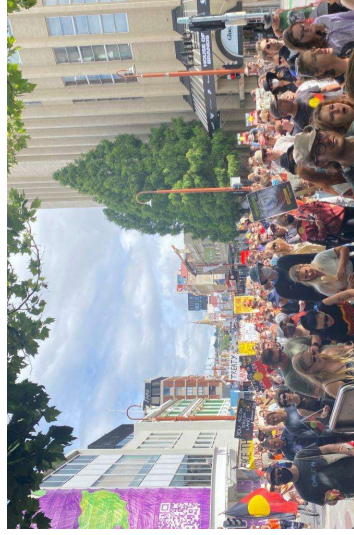
What does 26 January mean for the Tasmanian Aboriginal community?

Nala Mansell, “Why January 26 should not be a day of celebration”, SBS News

“Ever since the beginning of time and right up until the 25th January 1788, Aboriginal people across Australia enjoyed rich, happy, and healthy lives. We had our own land, languages, education and political systems, customs, traditions, and laws. We had exclusive rights over the whole country, its Islands, and its seas. We were strong, proud, and sovereign people with full control over our own lives and destinies.

Then suddenly, on that date, the tall ships arrived on our shores, and the British Invasion of Aboriginal lands began. They were armed to the teeth with a mission to wipe out the entire Aboriginal race and claim our lands as their own. From that day forward, the lives that Aborigines had known for thousands of years were destroyed, forever.

For many of us, January 26th will always be a day of mourning, hurt and sorrow but also a day to honour the many Aboriginal warriors who fought and died while having to defend their lands and lives.



Invasion Day Rally, nipaluna / Hobart, 26 January 2023.
Credit: TAC tacinc.com.au/campaign/invasion-day/

Source: www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/opinion-why-january-26-should-not-be-a-day-of-celebration/mitq7xoIn

“First Nations people divided over whether to participate in Australian of the Year Awards”, ABC News

“As annual awards ceremonies get underway in each state and territory to decide who will contend for the national title of 2025 Australian of the Year, some First Nations Australians are grappling with whether to participate...

Palawa elder Rodney Dillon, who has twice accepted a nomination for the awards, said the position was not uncommon and ‘there are a lot of Aboriginals around Australia who feel like that as well’.

‘The people that have got that feeling. It’s important because we all feel it on the 26th ... or the day before, the 25th — the last day of freedom,’ Mr Dillon said.

Mr Dillon was nominated for 2024 Tasmanian Senior of the Year and 2011 Tasmanian Australian of the Year.



While being recognised was an “honour” for palawa lawyer Maggie Blanden, she still felt she had to turn down an Australia Day award.
Image credit: ABC News: Ebony ten Broeke

Source: www.abc.net.au/news/2024-11-25/indigenous-perspectives-australian-of-the-year-awards/104357050



Aboriginal protest in Hobart against the Bicentennial Celebrations, 26 January 1788
© Australian Overseas Information Service

The celebrations of this date each year are degrading, hurtful and downright racist. Those of us who feel an obligation to our ancestors can’t join in the celebrations and those who feel a sense of shame that a nation would proudly gloat about the victory of one race over another while turning a blind eye to the misery it has caused, can’t celebrate, yet politicians claim that Australia day is a day of unity.

The excuse that we are ‘all Australian’ and that ‘what happened to Aborigines is in the past so we should all move on’ is bulls**t - could you imagine the reaction if we said the same thing every Anzac or Remembrance Day?

Most people who spend Australia day at the beach or having a BBQ with their mates aren’t celebrating the significance of the date. They’re celebrating all the things that being Australian means to them; none of which should relate to the atrocities committed against our people which began on January 26th.”

What can I do about 26 January?

Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Listen to what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to say

Amplify the voices of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people on social media

Attend your nearest Invasion Day rally – search online for ‘Invasion Day’, ‘Survival Day’, or ‘Day of Mourning’ events

Buy a t-shirt, hat, or badge from an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander business

Be an active bystander. If you hear someone saying something uninformed or racist – Support, Record, and Report.

See Australian Human Rights Commission Racism. It Stops With Me – Guide to Bystander Intervention https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-11/ahrc_sf_2021_6_bystander_intervention_a4_r3.pdf

Learn about the Traditional Owners and contemporary Aboriginal community in your area.

Learn about what happened in your area during invasion.

Learn about the ongoing impacts of colonisation.

Ask your workplace if you can work on 26 January and take a different day off

Write a letter to your local paper, or call your local radio station, to share what you have learned and why you are choosing not to celebrate on 26 January

Wear a t-shirt, hat or badge to spark conversations with family and friends

If you hear people making uninformed comments, take responsibility for sharing what you have learned about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives.

Inform yourself

Inform others

“We want allies. Allies are important but what is your job as an ally? If you know me a little bit, we’ve got a bit of a relationship and maybe you meet me on a particular day, I don’t know, near the end of January and we go for a bit of a walk down the street. At the end of the [26 January protest] march, [we head off to your uncle’s barbecue]. And then [your] old Uncle Frank says something messed up.

It’s not my job to say, ‘Hey Uncle Frank, that’s based in a stereotype and not really nice’ – because that’s when we have to share something that comes from our heart and our guts and it makes us feel rubbish.

A true ally – actually I prefer the term *accomplice*, because accomplices are willing to get into trouble. I don’t know your Uncle Frank and if I call him a racist person he might want a bit of a Barney about it – but you’ve got a relationship with Uncle Frank because you love him because he’s a family. You’re the one who should have a chat with him because you’ve got a relationship. It shouldn’t be up to me.

A true accomplice – someone who understands us – can look at me and go, ‘You’re not up to it today’. No, because that march was pretty intense. ‘All right I’ll take it on, I’m the one going to have the yarn.’”

– Duncan Robinson, Speech delivered 26 July 2023, “Voice to Truth: a voice for generations”, University of Tasmania Island of Ideas lecture series <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UvQYBAhZGK8>

Other resources:

- Reconciliation WA conversation guide - <https://www.recwa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Walking-alongside-Aboriginal-and-Torres-Strait-Islander-Peoples-on-January-26.pdf>
- Amnesty International, 10 ways to be a genuine ally to First Nations communities <https://www.amnesty.org.au/10-ways-to-be-an-ally-to-first-nations-communities/>

Some local councils publish information about why they choose not to hold citizenship ceremonies on 26 January, eg:

- Brighton Council <https://www.brighton.tas.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Message-from-the-Mayor-Celebration-of-Australia-Day-25-January-2023.pdf>
- City of Launceston <https://www.launceston.tas.gov.au/News-Media/Council-to-move-events-from-January-26>
- Kingborough Council - <https://www.kingborough.tas.gov.au/2023/02/citizenship-ceremonies-kingborough/>

Look for local events held by Aboriginal organisations in your area –

- Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre usually holds protest marches and rallies in Hobart, Launceston and Devonport.
- All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and allies are usually welcome to join in both the march and the rallies.