



A call to Community leaders Press Release 24 January 2018

Not everyone across our nation celebrates Australia Day. I have no doubt that this year on Australia Day thousands of Aboriginal protestors will once again march, wave placards, burn flags and voice our opinions about Invasion Day.

Our supporters who wish to change the date are simply dismissed as a group of politically correct, angry, banner waving far-left extremists who hold a minority view about the merits of the national holiday. Rather, they should be acknowledged as holding a different philosophical view about the significance of the day.

Across the nation, 26 January is for most people a day of celebration of 230 years of Australian history; not the 60,000 years of Indigenous culture. The last year has been difficult for our people, especially after the rejection by the federal government of the Uluru Statement from the Heart. In a couple of weeks we will gather for the ten-year anniversary of the National Apology.

For our people, the arrival of Captain Cook and then British Settlement of Australia is a day of dispossession, death and disease. We require a new day of significance to include and celebrate our cultural survival, connection to country, family and kinship. Modern Australia is made up of peoples from many different cultural backgrounds. We should have our national day to show respect and celebrate this cultural diversity.

Oddly enough the current Prime Minister and number one ticket holder for an Australian republic wishes to 'save the day' and remains very excited about the anniversary of the First Fleet's arrival in Sydney Harbour in 1788, not far from his harbourside mansion.

Turnbull will soon rise in the House of Representatives to parrot a few words of an Indigenous language and inform us of what a great job his department and agencies are doing for us in his Close the Gap report! Remember, he did promise to work WITH us. The pain and suffering of our people is not so easily bought off with a few trinkets and baubles thrown to us.

In the broader context of this debate I believe that Aboriginal people are still more concerned about real solutions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's housing, education, health, employment and cultural maintenance, including our lands.

We call on all Community leaders across the states and territories to lead a national inclusive discussion and debate on why we need to change and nominate a new day for modern Australia to truly celebrate our diversity.

Note: Mr. John Singer is the Chairperson of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO).

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