

MEDIA RELEASE



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40TH ANNIVERSARY OF ABORIGINAL TENT EMBASSY: TIME FOR CHANGE

On the 40th anniversary of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy, ANTaR urges consideration of a more inclusive national holiday.

“As we finally seek to address our Constitutional silence regarding the prior occupation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, we should also reflect on the symbolism of our national day,” said ANTaR National Director, Jacqueline Phillips.

“January 26 is regarded by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Invasion or Survival Day, in recognition of their experience of dispossession and colonisation.”

On January 26, a British naval officer, Arthur Phillip, raised the Union Jack over Sydney without the consent of the First Peoples. This began the British occupation of the land we now know as Australia.

“Until we choose a more appropriate national holiday, our aspiration for a modern, reconciled nation will be difficult to realise.”

ANTaR has sent a message of support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples gathering for the Corroboree for Sovereignty at the Aboriginal Tent Embassy in Canberra from today.

“It is no coincidence that the Aboriginal Tent Embassy was established 40 years ago today, as a protest against the failure of governments to recognise the continuing sovereignty of Australia’s First Peoples.”

“Forty years on, the Tent Embassy remains a powerful symbol of the Aboriginal struggle for equality, rights, recognition and sovereignty.”

“It is a reminder of how far we have come, but also how far we have to go to secure a truly equal place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in this country.”

“As Australians reflect on this national holiday, it is worth remembering that we lag behind our peers in failing to recognise Australia’s First Peoples and their struggle for civil rights in our holiday calendar.”

“Across the Tasman, New Zealand celebrates the historic signing of the Treaty of Waitangi between the Māori and British colonisers on its national holiday. In the United States, civil rights leader Martin Luther King is honoured by a national holiday every year.”

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