

Council's role on January 26

Background

At Strathbogie Shire Council's May Council Meeting, Council resolved to undertake community consultation on two different options relating to Council's role on January 26.

Council's aim is to review traditional Australia Day celebrations to be more respectful and to begin to recognise the significance of the day to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

Council has partnered with community groups to deliver celebrations on January 26 for many years. These celebrations usually include a community gathering, barbeques, local performance and often community awards.

However, January 26 is a difficult day for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The anniversary of this day marks the start of the dispossession and marginalisation of First Nations people.

Councils across Australia are reviewing the traditional Australia Day celebrations to be more respectful and to begin to recognise the significance of the day to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. The options for engagement are outlined below.

Option one: In accordance with the inclusivity objectives within the Community Vision and the Memorandum of Understanding with the Taungurung Land and Waters Council, Strathbogie Shire Council no longer formally supports celebrations on January 26 each year as follows:

- Lower the Aboriginal Flag to half-mast on January 26 out of respect for the First Nations People and what the day represents for First Nations people;
- Continue Council's requirement to hold a Citizenship Ceremony on January 26 as required;
- Advocate to the State and Federal Governments where appropriate to change the date of 'Australia Day' to a date that can be celebrated by all;
- National Australia Day Council funding to hold or host Australia Day awards or celebratory activities to be the responsibility of the individual township Australia Day Committees for events in 2023 and beyond;
- Amend Council's event sponsorship and community grant guidelines deeming activities celebrating Australia Day on January 26 (in kind or cash) as ineligible;
- Promotion of celebrations held on January 26 to be coordinated by the individual township Australia Day Committees for events in 2023 and beyond, and;
- Formally support the celebration of community contribution with annual awards in May as part of Volunteer Week, recognising the outstanding community contribution of individuals and groups within Strathbogie Shire commencing in 2023.

Option two: Council continues to celebrate January 26 as per current arrangements

The Engagement Approach

From May 23 to June 20, 2022, Council created an engagement program and extensive communications campaign to ensure Shire residents knew Council was seeking their feedback on two options and were clear on how to provide their feedback.

The aim of the engagement activities was simple. As per the Council resolution, we provided an opportunity for the community to vote for their preferred option, while further feedback could be provided by making a submission to Council. Voting could be done online, or the community was also encouraged to phone our Customer Service Centres to register their vote.

Council has sought the advice of Taungurung Land and Waters Council and the Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Cooperative. Face-to-face meeting requests were made to all Australia Day Committees across the Shire. The engagement activities ensured quantitative and qualitative engagement techniques were used to gather community views.

Depth: Consult

Public participation goal: To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.

Promise to the public: We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.

The goals and tools used are summarised in the table below

Stage	Goal	Tools and methods
One	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To inform the community about Council's consultation about January 26. To seek community input into two options for Council's future involvement on January 26 To ensure the community understands how to share their views. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social media Paid advertising Media release Share Strathbogie online engagement Telephone voting options eNews Website content Face-to-face meetings Letters seeking feedback
Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To inform the community on the outcome of the Council's role on January 26 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social media Paid advertising Media release Share Strathbogie update Engagement report eNews Website content Letters to stakeholders

Ensuring community input
into our decision making

	• Letters to submitters
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Participation and reach

- The project page on Share Strathbogie received 1863 views
- Share Strathbogie achieved 868 contributions
- Share Strathbogie poll received 845 votes from 492 IP addresses
- Engagement time on the website was 1 day, 18 hours and 33 minutes
- 29 submissions were received via email and the Share Strathbogie platform
- Social media reach of 5690
- Social media engagement of 954
- Paid Facebook advertising achieved a reach of 3,832, post engagement of 137 and 124 link clicks.
- Total social media reach of 9522 and engagement of 1091

The table below provides data on the ages of participants who voted on Share Strathbogie.

Platform	Age Group	Number of participants
Share Strathbogie	Under 18 years old	6
	8-24	34
	25-34	124
	35-44	166
	45-54	143
	55-64	154
	65 and over	218
Total		845

The table below provides data on the ages of the paid Facebook advertising reach.

Platform	Age Group	Reach (per cent)
Facebook	Under 18	0
	18-24	1.8
	25-34	6.6
	35-44	11.4
	45-54	18.6
	55-64	26.9
	65 plus	34.7
Total		3832 people

What our Australia Day Committees told us

Australia Day Committees

All six Australia Day Committees located in the Strathbogie Shire were emailed with information regarding the Council report and the options being considered by Council. Committees were asked to meet with Council, and or provide feedback. This initial email contact was followed by phone calls to all. Two of the committees elected to meet with Council, two provided a response. The following provides a summary of these conversations.

Committee one	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believe there needs to be more time with a more considered and less hurried consultation to come to a decision before hastily pushing forward. • Acknowledged the topic is one of complexity and sensitivity and a more considered approach is needed. • Believe it is not the decision for a small group of community members to make and it needs to be a decision made by the Federal and State Government to achieve much broader and informed community feedback to the review. • All members of our community and beyond need to be given the opportunity to fully consider and respond to the review proposals as, it is, after all a decision for all Australians. • This committee would prefer to take a more conservative approach and watch, wait and see for the State and Federal governments to make a decision on this matter.
Committee two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of committee members attending felt there should be a change to the date to be more inclusive. • Acknowledged there is a section of the community who would like the date retained. • Objective of any change to the 26th January should be to bring the community along with the decision. • General support from the committee in holding a community day- 'Strathbogie Day', in place of Australia Day, for all to celebrate, for various volunteer groups. • Whether it be at the culmination of such a day or in another forum the acknowledgement of exemplary volunteer service to continue. • The community gathering of either a volunteer day or other forum should be local, avoiding the cold months of the year and the more critical fire danger period. • It is recommended that the Community (old Australia Day) committee be represented by all the community groups and they invite funding for an event celebrating the township to continue.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing a new date for Australia Day probably needs to wait until there has been the correct acknowledgement of First Nation Peoples in whatever form that would take.
Committee three	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raised concerns regarding the approach being taken that it will be divisive for the community on what is an important issue. Timelines were also of a concern to enable discussion with members from the committee. The options were raised at a committee meeting and subsequently members from the committee wrote a letter to Council requesting an extension of time and for funds for an independent consultant to facilitate a conversation/ public meeting with the community.
Committee four	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opted to not meet with Council due to the divisive nature of this issue and potential harm that it could cause within community. Concerns were raised about the damage to the group with members of the group all having their own personal beliefs, which were respected and that they did not want to take away from what the group was currently achieving.

What Registered Aboriginal Parties told us

Consistent with Council's engagement plan, Council engaged directly with Taungurung Land and Waters Council and Yorta Yorta Nations Aboriginal Corporation.

No formal written responses were received in regard to either option.

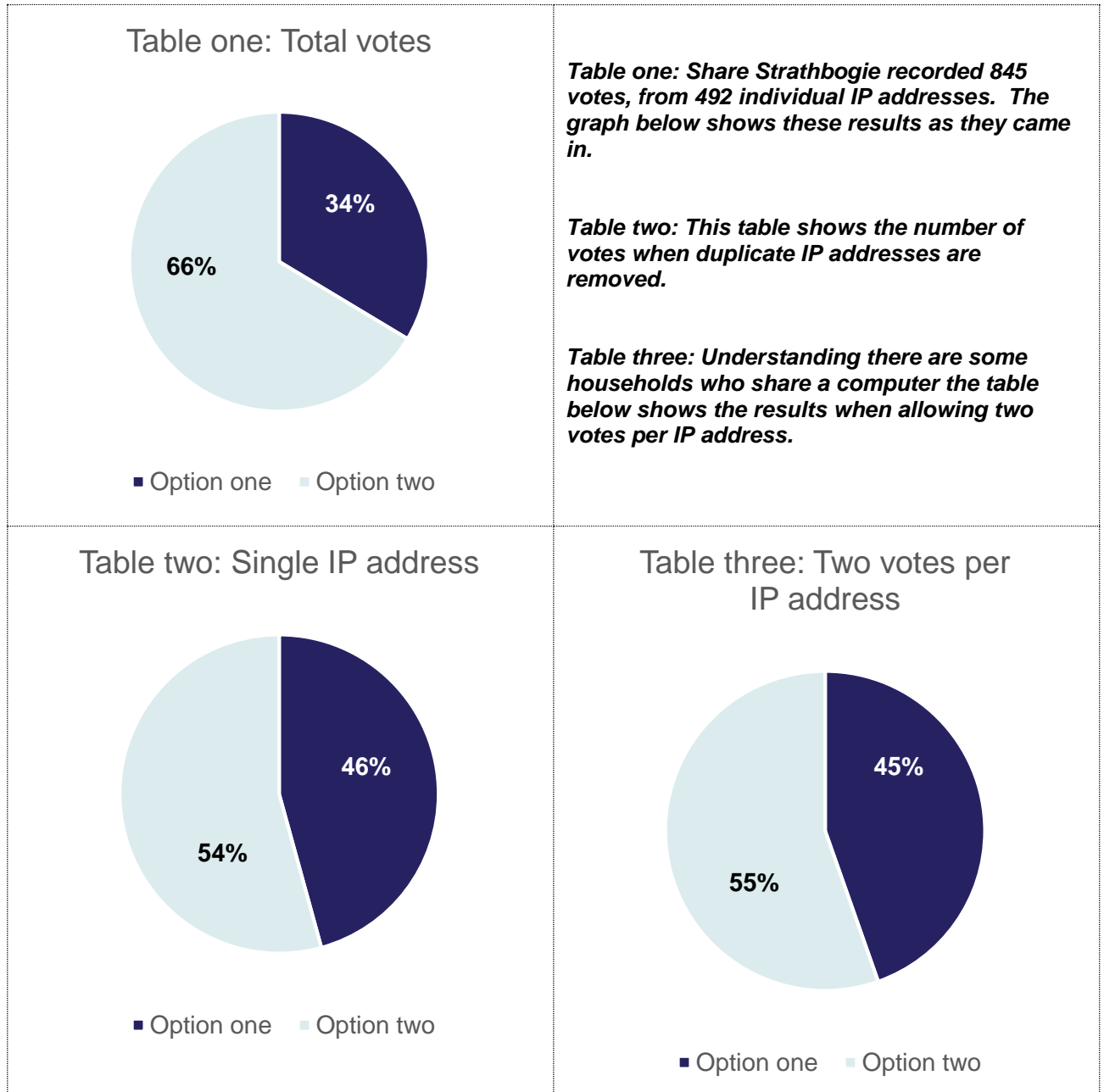
As discussed with Council Officers, TLaWC was supportive of a change to Council involvement, as this was consistent with the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that has been signed between both parties and that it was a decision for Council, and an opportunity to demonstrate leadership regarding this matter.

A front-page media article was published in the Euroa Gazette quoting TLaWC.

Ensuring community input into our decision making

Findings

The tables below show the data recorded on the voting



Ensuring community input
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Submissions

Council received 29 submissions of these:

- 12 were in support of option one
- 6 were in support of option two
- 11 provided alternative views or information

No.	Acknowledged
1	<p>To continue celebrating Australia Day on 26th January is not only callous, insensitive and disrespectful, but out-of-step with the majority of Australians.</p> <p>To our First Nation Peoples - this day marks the invasion of their country and many continue to mourn for their losses and death of family members on this date.</p> <p>I feel great shame that this country refuses to acknowledge our history marked by 26th January and continues to ignore the call by so many to change the date.</p> <p>Personally, I have stopped going to any Australia Day celebrations and instead travel to Mooroopna to participate in an indigenous mourning ceremony.</p>
2	<p>January 26th has been used as a date to celebrate since 1994. A Jan 26 Australia Day celebration is younger than the following: Neighbours (1985), the internet (1983), Delta Goodrem (1984), Ariana Grande (1993), Delilah the broilga at Melbourne Zoo (aged 50), the Big Mac (1967) and Mad Max (1979). 28 years is not that long or a significant timeline when compared with 60,000 years of Indigenous culture.</p> <p>As a young person, looking forward I want to create a future that is more inclusive and learns from the lessons of the past. Therefore, I think this motion to change the day of celebrations on Jan 26 is respectful and long overdue.</p> <p>Moving the day of celebrations does not impede on individuals choice to celebrate on that day if they wish, nor does it mean any additional financial burden on the council or to ratepayers. Rather, it provides an opportunity for council and community organisations to celebrate in a respectful way, and for local Indigenous and Torres Strait Islanders to feel welcome in a community that values the significance of learning from traumatic history.</p>
3	<p>Thank you to the councillors for allowing me to present this submission. I am advocating the retention of the Strathbogie Shire's active participation, leadership and support of our official Australia Day activities on January 26th.</p> <p>How we treat January 26th has become contentious within the community. For the majority, it is the day when all Australians can come together to celebrate how fortunate we are to be Australian, regardless of ones origins or place of birth.</p> <p>More recently for some, the day has been politicised and characterised as Invasion Day or Survival Day with calls that Australia Day should be moved to another date.</p>

Moving Australia Day will seemingly solve all of the issues that some see with January 26th.

But first if I may, some history: In 1770— 18 years before the First Fleet's arrival, Lieutenant James Cook claimed Australia for Great Britain. Come 1788, 11 British ships were despatched by Britain to establish up a penal colony. And despite what's commonly thought, the First Fleet actually arrived to (what is now known as Australia) roughly a week before January 26th.

It is recorded that British convicts, marines, officers and their families and even some children of convicts arrived ashore at 'Botany Bay' on the 18th January. On that day in 1788, these convict ships landed at what is now Port Jackson in New South Wales, where Governor Arthur Phillip raised the British flag to signal the beginning of the British colony.

This fleet carried convicts, not invaders as some would prefer to characterise. Since the early days of the British colony, Sydney has marked January 26th under various names, including Anniversary Day: First Landing Day and Foundation Day.

This gradually evolved into 'Australia Day', and other states and territories officially adopted the name in 1935. Since 1979, the federal government has promoted an Australia Day that was less British and more Australian with the objective being the unification of Australia's increasingly diverse population.

Australia Day eventually became a national public holiday in 1994. According to the National Australia Day Council, it's "the day to reflect on what it means to be Australian, to celebrate contemporary Australia and to acknowledge our history".

It is Strathbogie Shire Council's responsibility to manage the shire for the benefit of all residents and rate payers. The councillors are responsible to the people and are not free to pursue individual or personal ideals or agendas.

Withdrawal of council's support, involvement and lead in official Australia Day activities would be an act that crashes head on to its creed of "inclusiveness" and could even be regarded as racist. Without council leading these activities, I ask the question – "Who will? Who will have the authority and funding to create and manage Australia Day activities for the residents of the Shire?"

We have seen no evidence that any local indigenous residents (102 according to the 2016 Census data) are so adversely impacted by Australia Day that the traditions of a federally gazetted day, Australia Day, be simply erased from the diary of services that the Council leads.

What I see is political divisiveness created by a minority group of people who claim to be offended because of the history of some 250 years ago. Because of this claim of offence, it is now pushed upon the rest of the Australian people to accept that because they're offended, we should simply change the date. Being offended is a personal choice. I would like to see us grow up as a country and be more responsible

	<p>in that regard, responsible for our own feelings, responsible to also act forgivingly toward the rest of non-Indigenous Australia, considering we weren't actually responsible for what happened to Aboriginal people in 1788.</p> <p>Council indeed needs to be bold. Be Australian. Be proud of our country and our history. Mark Australia Day in the manner to which the Australia Day Council designed – a day when all Australians can come together to celebrate how fortunate we are to be Australian, regardless of ones origins or place of birth.</p> <p>Australia Day is also the day we recognise new citizens through Citizenship Ceremonies, and we also recognise local volunteers. The day also brings economic activity to the towns and region as visitors from Melbourne and surrounds enjoy their visits to the Shire.</p> <p>Only through their involvement and leadership with Australia Day, can the Strathbogie Shire lead community discussion and shape how it looks in the future. Walking away from it and pretending it is not a nationally gazetted day is not an option. To simply decree behind closed doors that the day will have no official support, or to insist that the day has a different focus, signalled by flags at half-mast and mourning, pays no regard to what we can be nor respects the diversity of the Shire.</p> <p>I commend that the Shire consider its role in representing all residents rather than chasing personal ideals and accordingly retains its role in leading Australia Day events in the Shire in 2023 and beyond.</p>
4	<p>I would like to clarify the dates that are being attributed to Australia Day.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Captain Cook landed in Sydney on 28 April, 1770. 2. The First Fleet arrived in Botany Bay on 18 January, 1778. 3. The Nationality and Citizenship, Act 1948 was finally enacted on 26 January, 1949. <p>On this day the previous 'British subjects' (i.e. all residents of Australia) became Australians in their own right - this included both Australians and Aborigines. This will also explain why Citizenship events are held on this day!</p> <p>I would like this shared with all councillors so that everyone has the correct facts before any type of decision is made in relation to our current Australia Day event.</p>
5	<p>Thanks for the opportunity to comment on the Shire's consultation process regarding future Australia Day commemorations. I am all up for Option 1 (my response already submitted).</p> <p>My only other comments are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I very much support the idea of moving the "Citizens of The Year" awards to Volunteers week and, 2. if we are going to lobby Federal Government for an alternative Australia Day, aim for 3 June - to commemorate the 3 June 1992 High Court Mabo Decision, a decision which extinguished the silly notion of "Terra Nullius" and also recognised both Indigenous and European claims to the continent.
6	<p>I feel the change of the date will be the best for everyone.</p>

7

As you are probably aware there is a lot of discontent in our community about our council's proposed actions relating to Australia Day 2023 and beyond. Two options have been put forward for the community to vote on but many people would like to see a third option which is a combination of Option One and Option Two. I suggest the following:

- Strongly advocate to the State and Federal Governments to change the date of Australia Day to a date that can be celebrated by all. (We recognise that it will be very difficult to move forward with the issues relating to Australia Day until a new date is selected).
- In order to start the healing process with our local Taungurung people, the Shire will send them a written invitation to the Australia Day ceremony in 2023 and beyond. This invitation will include a statement that whilst we recognise that this is a very difficult day for some members of the Taungurung people and indigenous people in other communities, we would still like them to attend the Australia Day ceremony to celebrate all of the wonderful aspects of modern Australia and the development of our country as a democratic and inclusive nation.
- At the Shire's Australia Day ceremony the aboriginal flag will be lowered to half mast out of respect
- At the Shire's Australia Day ceremony the Shire will ensure that the flag of the local Taungurung people is raised
- Council continues to celebrate 26th January as per current arrangements.

Please note that many of the residents in our community also feel uncomfortable with celebrating Australia Day on 26th January yet we still attend especially to support our new citizens during the Citizenship Ceremony. We also wish to make other new members of our community welcome and for them to feel accepted as residents of our Shire. This should be promoted.

Many of the residents in the Shire fail to see what benefits can be gained by the councillors refusing to be involved in Australia Day in 2023. It will not close the divide that exists between the indigenous community and our modern multicultural community. The only action that will close the divide is to change the date and the proposal by our councillors to not organise or attend the Australia Day celebrations will not achieve this outcome. It is also important to note that the unacceptable treatment of our indigenous people occurred more than 230 years ago. While we are deeply ashamed about what happened during this time, it does not reflect the thinking of our current Australian citizens. We want to embrace and include our indigenous people into our community.

One other suggestion that has been made is to include any local indigenous people who are accomplished singers, poets or dancers to perform at our Australia Day celebrations. If we don't have these people in our local community, we need to look further afield as they certainly do exist. As well as a BBQ, we would like to be given the opportunity to share the food of the indigenous people with them. We would like to cook with them and eat with them.

	<p>We want an inclusive Australia Day ceremony which includes the councillors who were voted to represent their constituents - and their constituents do not support the councillors not been involved in Australia Day. That is not the way to solve the problems associated with Australia Day.</p> <p>Points 1-6 can be slightly re-worded and presented as a third option for the residents of the Shire to vote on as so many people do not support Option One or Option Two. Kristy Hourigan - can you please present and discuss this with the other councillors as soon as possible. We need another option.</p>
8	<p>I would like to vote for option 1 as I would like to be inclusive of the whole community which as we currently celebrate is not. I'm proud to be Australian and a member of this community and would like to have a more appropriate day we can celebrate all together as one on a day that isn't as hurtful to some people in our community.</p>
9	<p>Leave Australia day as it is our council need to stay inside its scope of practice for example rate roads and rubbish a better use of council time would be looking into how they could lower rates and help support rate payers</p>
10	<p>I wish for Australia Day celebrations to stay on Jan 26, however I do support the respect to native Australians during the celebration whether it be flag half mast or recognition of some sort.</p> <p>But we can't change the past or wipe it away. We can acknowledge what's happened in the past and what's happening now and the plans for the future. In summary don't change the date.</p>
11	Option three
12	Option three
13	I really applaud the council for their steps in supporting our First Nations people.
14	Option three
15	<p>I feel that Option 1 is a good first step and would like to see strong representation from the Taungurung elders of this area in any/all discussions as to the future of Australia Day celebrations.</p>
16	Option three
17	<p>To celebrate Australia Day on Jan 26. has always seemed to me to be inappropriate. I can understand that it has been termed Invasion Day, as it started the displacement of aboriginals by Europeans. It also marks the anniversary of the foundation of a British penal colony.</p> <p>It does not mark the anniversary of the creation of Australia as a nation. The public holiday should be shifted to another date. My personal choice would be to have Australia Day celebrated on April 25, as it is widely held that Australia's involvement in the Gallipoli campaign began a maturation process in the Australian psyche - we were no longer a colony, but independence was still growing.</p> <p>I would also like to see ANZAC day commemorated on Nov.11(Remembrance Day), which would be more inclusive of all veterans, even those of different nations. All soldiers share the same courage and sacrifice - and Australia is multicultural. There would be no increase in the number of public holidays.</p>

	<p>I'm sure the RSL might have some problems with this, but it should be seen as a calendar change, not a change of the significance of the day.</p>
18	<p>After sleeping on my decision I realised that I actually am more in support of option 1.</p> <p>I will not be celebrating Australia Day on the 26th January as I do not feel comfortable celebrating on a day which has so much hurt and distress to so many of our first nations people. I feel that if we were to go with option 3 then changing the date is much less likely to happen and I strongly believe we should change the date.</p>
19	<p>Whilst I acknowledge individual views, I do not believe this is an issue for Council to be consumed by. This issue divides our community and should be a matter for Federal Government. Yes, I understand you want to be leaders by taking a stand, but our municipality needs the fundamentals to service our existing rate base and provide infrastructure to support growth for the financial sustainability of the shire.</p> <p>Our largest populated town in the Shire, Euroa, is struggling with business growth and in the coming 6 months it will struggle more with an ever increasing delay and cost of obtaining goods.</p> <p>Please start focussing on the strategic long term matters for which Local Government are needed for.</p> <p>Our communities have struggled enough the past 2 years and will continue to do so for some time now. Please show positive work by showing our community work is happening on the ground, in our streets and get the basics right before we embark on matters which will divide us.</p>
20	<p>I would strongly back the retention of celebrating Australia Day on 26th January each year and would hope the Council would continue to sponsor this day of celebration.</p> <p>I have lived permanently in Euroa for 16 years and have attended almost every Australia Day celebration in Euroa since then. Until this year it has always been well attended, but this year was very disappointing as there was very little publicity by the Shire of the event and the Shire staff who were there didn't seem to have any idea how the event should be run.</p> <p>As a past member of the Euroa Third Age Club committee I had helped many times in preparing the site and helping staff. At the end of the event the RSL was thanked for the use of the site with no mention of the Third Age Club whose decking the band were performing on.</p> <p>I felt at the time that the shire wasn't interested and this has been confirmed by the push to change the date.</p> <p>Yes I can accept the fact that some people feel that 26th January was invasion day - but if people feel so strongly about that why celebrate the Queens Birthday weekend.</p> <p>I would be happy to celebrate a day for celebration for the indigenous community on another date during the year. Euroa has always been well known for its connection to historical events in the north-east and I think this would be a retrograde step.</p>

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21	<p>I am aware that there has been significant discussion between individuals and within community groups on this matter. Regardless of the viewpoint taken there is common consensus that the community requires more time to consider this delicate and emotional matter.</p> <p>Rather than providing two options, with relatively little lead time, Council have an opportunity to take a leading role in facilitating community forums promoting conciliatory discussions.</p> <p>These forums could be coordinated using an independent facilitator. I hope that our councillors use the opportunity to read into this with a little more detail and sense there is more to this than simply providing our residents with two options.</p>
22	<p>I stand before you as just one of many in our community who seek to end our council's support of Australia Day celebrations on the 26th of January. Given the leadership in reconciliation our Shire has shown, being the first Shire to implement a Memorandum of Understanding to recognise and govern relationships with the Taungurung people on whose land we are fortunate to call home, I was very disappointed to see the range of Australia Day activities and awards ceremonies throughout our Shire on 26th January 2022.</p> <p>On the date that marks the claiming of this land as Britain's and saw the start of violence, invasion, taking of land, lives and systemic racism against the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who already lived here.</p> <p>While policies have changed over time, this systemic and cultural racism still exists today. Demonstrated in just one way by the continued celebration of Australia Day on the very date that causes pain for so many of our people.</p> <p>As Australian's we have much to celebrate about our wonderful nation and the devoted people who volunteer and work tirelessly to continue to make Australia, and the Strathbogie Shire, a better place. I would love for an "Australia Day" or other day for national celebration that is encompassing of Australians all (in the words of our national anthem).</p> <p>There has been much discussion of this important issue in our community of late. Some people believe this is not a Shire matter. I believe that just as our Shire has shown leadership with the MoU and with the recognition of climate change at a local level, by taking public action on an issue such as the celebration of Australia Day, our Shire can take an active role throughout the community and in signalling the importance of this issue to higher levels of government.</p> <p>Potentially leading to meaningful changes around the actual date. Some members of our community feel that a majority of Australians want to celebrate this date. That change mustn't happen to suit a "minority" of people.</p> <p>Ten years ago I heard calls to "change the date" and I didn't recognise it as an issue. While I haven't researched current statistics, I'm happy to describe the process of un-</p>

	<p>learning and re-learning I personally have gone through to lead to my change of opinion.</p> <p>Like so many of my generation, my schooling taught very little about our Aboriginal history and basically outlined that the process of occupation was largely peaceful with very little resistance from the “nomadic” Aboriginal people.</p> <p>In my mind that term nomadic meant “happy to move onto another place”. The very basic history on the subject I was taught left a picture of an uncultured, simplistic, singular group of people who benefited through British occupation leading to modern ways.</p> <p>Through my work as an early childhood teacher, teaching at two early learning services within Euroa throughout this time, over the past few years I have undertaken a gradual process of un-learning the untruths I was taught and absorbed through our culture, and relearning about the deep and rich cultures of First Nation’s peoples. I am by no means anything close to an expert, I am still very much learning.</p> <p>Those of us who work in early childhood education are fortunate; we are required through the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework, to provide inclusive programs. In the area of equity and diversity, early childhood professionals are required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote cultural awareness in all children, including greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing and being • nurture children’s evolving capacity to learn from birth, regardless of circumstance or ability • support all children to develop a sense of place, identity and a connection to the land and the natural world • engage in sustained shared conversations with children to explore equity and diversity, to promote each child’s sense of identity • ensure that the interests, abilities and culture of every child and their family are understood and valued • ensure that all children have equitable access to resources and opportunities to demonstrate their learning • maximise opportunities for all children to do well and learn from others, including opportunities to experience diversity and difference in ways that nurture positive attitudes, and care and respect for others • identify and implement the type and level of support or intervention that is required to demonstrate and improve children’s learning and development • recognise multilingualism as an asset and support children to maintain their first language, learn English as an additional language, and learn languages other than English • are committed to equity and avoid practices that directly or indirectly contribute to gender inequality, prejudice and discrimination. Page 12, Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) Department of Education and Training, 2016
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	<p>Trough embedding Aboriginal perspectives age-appropriately throughout my play-based curriculum and helping our youngest generation develop inclusive beliefs, hopefully some of our team's work is filtering through to help families and the wider community want to learn more about the truth of our history and current reconciliation issues.</p> <p>While Strathbogie Shire, and the other Local Government Areas that have already withdrawn financial support of Australia Day celebrations on January 26th can't "change the date", we can take steps to signal our support of First Nations Peoples by not celebrating on this day.</p> <p>Moving Shire-business such as recognition ceremonies to alternate dates is an excellent idea to inclusively recognise important community service. Removal of Shire's financial support for Australia Day celebrations still allows community and local-business groups to apply directly to the Australia Day Council for financial support of these celebrations if their group members feel it is appropriate.</p> <p>I applaud the Strathbogie Shire for giving full consideration to this issue and raising difficult but vitally important discussions throughout our community. I hope that our community, and our Councillors, are ready to "be brave, make change" in the words of the 2022 reconciliation week theme.</p>
23	<p>I am writing to you on behalf of the community of Nagambie, our business members and our committee in relation to the Australia Day celebrations review.</p> <p>Go Nagambie has received feedback from numerous community members and held lengthy internal discussions regarding this matter, we feel it crucial that this feedback be shared and responded to by the Shire. A summary of this feedback and discussion is following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go Nagambie is in unison with several other community groups throughout our shire that more time is required for community consultation on this important matter • There are concerns that the Share Strathbogie platform is not effectively allowing a broader cross section of the community to have their say • It is believed a broader community wide consultation meeting/s is required to more effectively inform the community of the potential changes • There is a strong feeling throughout the community that council are now focusing on decisions that are the domain of federal government and this is coming at a cost to the fundamental operational local government activities that are in desperate need of focus and attention • There is also a concern re the lack of transparency regarding the content of the public feedback generated from the Share Strathbogie community consultation process on several previous resolutions that the council has voted on. <p>Go Nagambie requests an extension to the feedback time period until September 1st and for the Shire to undertake further discussions with community groups and</p>

	business chambers such as Go Nagambie to work collaboratively with the Shire to ensure wider community consultation and input to this important matter.
24	<p>I present this submission to the Strathbogie Shire Council in reference to the Australia Day Celebrations Review.</p> <p>My name is [REDACTED], and I write this submission as a person who was born and raised at Violet Town and now operate a family business [REDACTED].</p> <p>In my past, I have worked closely with a number of Aboriginal people in the private and public sectors, in rural and in remote areas of Australia (and in Canada).</p> <p>Some of these wonderful people of indigenous heritage have been very influential on my professional and personal life. I am whole heartedly and unreservedly calling on the Strathbogie Shire Council to continue to celebrate Australia Day in the way it has in the past, but indeed to further celebrate and acknowledge the building of arguably the greatest nation in the world. A nation made of all types and colours of people. A nation with a great history of migration and settlement ... of partnership and innovation ... of ingenuity and perseverance.</p> <p>Australians of all nationalities have worked to develop this nation and fought in wars around the world throughout history. There is no doubt in my mind, despite some shortcomings, Australia is the best nation in the world.</p> <p>And part of that success, is due to its indigenous history and the rich culture that aboriginal ancestors have provided to us.</p> <p>But many of my dealings with indigenous people in Australia and overseas, has clearly demonstrated to me that such peoples want respect and real action for them to be able to move forward and to be able to integrate and contribute to a modern world. It is not healthy for any individual, regardless of heritage or ethnicity, to be bogged down by what they don't have or what wrongs might have been done against them or their ancestors. It is important, as my late father would say, "to make the best of what you have got and to move on".</p> <p>And this is ever so important for my fellow Australians who regard themselves as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. We should be celebrating the great nation we have developed and to be thankful that it was indeed the British that settled Australia, and not the Indonesian, Japanese, Chinese, French or Spanish.</p> <p>I would like to point out the irony of the mixed messaging put out by the Strathbogie Council. In this case, you are suggesting with Option 1 to acknowledge our Indigenous Peoples by down playing Australia Day, but then actively promoting participation in the Commonwealth Games Rowing Competition on the Nagambie Lakes. With the Commonwealth Games Rowing Competition you are supporting something where so many nations were 'invaded' by the British and colonized and a sport dominated by white Caucasians and often by the social and cultural elite of the community. How ironic. Where is the consistent application of logic?</p>

	<p>If the Strathbogie Shire Council were fully committed to helping our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, they might do so by offering practical initiatives ... such as targeted employment opportunities ... which could be a great win for the individual participants and the Shire Council.</p> <p>Perhaps if the Council were to pursue down playing the celebration of Australia Day, it should do so in an uncompromising manner. This could include a call for the proposal to no longer have the day as an official public holiday and to drain the Nagambie Lakes due to the symbolic damage the damming did to the indigenous Dream Time River Serpent of the Goulburn River.</p> <p>I have been a recipient of an Australia Day Award and I know of many people in the local community who have as well. I think it is imperative to continue to acknowledge and celebrate the great community and nation we have and those who contributed to it, of all nationalities and skin colour.</p> <p>Without reservation, I ask the Strathbogie Shire Council to at least continue to celebrate and acknowledge Australia Day as it has in the past and consider opportunities to further celebrate and acknowledge the unique and valuable attributes of Australia and being Australian.</p>
25	<p>Mr Davis ,an Aboriginal Elder wrote . "I think it divides the country even more by adding another day. We do have days we can celebrate like NAIDOC Day and NAICOD Week. Australia Day is for everyone to come together "he said. By coming together Mr. Davis said it is a chance for Australia as a nation to reflect on, learn from and understand things that happened in the past so we don't go down the same path again. Wise words him and other Elders who say leave it as it is. Does [REDACTED] actually have the hide to think [REDACTED] knows better than the Elders and they should follow [REDACTED] opinion? I think [REDACTED] is actually helping to continue racism rather than end it. [REDACTED] was elected by the ratepayers and is paid by the ratepayers to help provide services to the community, stick to the job.</p>
26	<p>I have a unique position within the Shire, [REDACTED], and growing up in this region with a rich family history, all this provides me with many opportunities to discuss local topics, Council items and much more with a wide range of the people in the community.</p> <p>The discussion around Council's Australia Day motion has obviously been one that is creating divide and many mixed and varied opinions. I have heard many ideas of how this should be handled moving forward.</p> <p>The conversation is one that should be treated with the utmost delicacy. I have had the privilege of traveling to some remote parts of Australia, sitting and learning about the Aboriginal culture from locals. But when I spoke to these Indigenous people the topic around Australia Day never came up, we were too busy learning about their culture and hearing legends and stories.</p>

	<p>Therefore, I do not have a broad knowledge regarding their thoughts on the matter. Nor have I or many other people had further education on the history surrounding January 26th or many other dates relevant in this discussion.</p> <p>What I do know is a vast majority of people in the community I have spoken to do not appreciate being pushed into and told how they should be celebrating their Australia Day.</p> <p>People in this community are proud to be Australian and proud of where they come from and their history. To most people the day is about recognising outstanding community members who make our towns a better place to live, work and be.</p> <p>It's about celebrating the amazing country we all get to call home and how lucky we are to be here. In saying this we would all agree that the Indigenous culture can be and should be more connected and celebrated and aligned with any future 'Australia day' celebrations that take place in our community.</p> <p>Why can we not include our first nations people in these celebrations, as they should be rightly included. There is NAIDOC week, sorry day, and reconciliation week but having a joint time to recognise the past and celebrate the future is one I would be proud to be a part of and is necessary for us moving forward collectively in this discussion.</p> <p>Before any decision is formerly made, I believe Council needs to do a lot more with the wider community on education of exactly where January 26th date comes from, what other possible dates would be an appropriate time to celebrate our community and culture and further conversations with our local Taungurung committee, amongst other Aboriginal views have taken place.</p> <p>Our Aboriginal population is only 1.2% [Censis 2016 data], we understand this is a very sensitive subject no matter what your views, and should be treated as this therefore not rushed through council.</p> <p>Without more appropriate consultation, debate and education with the wider community it is my opinion and my family's opinion that Australia Day should remain Australia Day and celebrated on January 26th. More needs to be done around this discussion to move forward in unity.</p>
27	<p>Your request to the Avenel Australia Day Committee for feedback on Strathbogie Shire Council's review of Australia Day celebrations was discussed [REDACTED] monthly meeting on June 8, with 22 members in attendance.</p> <p>[REDACTED] outlined the Shire's two options contained in your email of May 23, which were also circulated to our full membership before the meeting.</p> <p>The strong opinion of the meeting was that there needs to be more supported, considered and less hurried consultation and deliberations on this important and complex discussion.</p>

Ensuring community input into our decision making

	<p>We are also concerned that the Share Strathbogie platform is not the most appropriate mechanism to achieve broad, informed and productive community feedback to the review.</p> <p>All members of our community need the opportunity to fully consider and respond to the review proposals, and we are unable to facilitate that within the proposed timelines. Our meeting therefore agreed the following steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to hold a further, specific meeting of Avenel Active members to scope development of a broader discussion document for consultation with Avenel residents • to hold a community-wide consultation meeting (or meetings, as required) to inform a more considered formal submission to the Shire Council, including any alternative options proposed by our community. <p>We also consider the proposed community-wide consultation would be more effective if professionally facilitated. This may be beneficial to the process for all townships.</p> <p>██████████ respectfully seeks Shire Council’s endorsement of this approach and provision of funding to Action Groups to enable appointment of a facilitator to support consultation. We anticipate this process could be completed by 1 September 2022.</p>
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<p>29</p>	<p>There are hundreds of reasons why the 26th January is not an Australia Day which we can all, or should, celebrate.</p> <p>Specifically 26th January was the day in 1838 when army Major Nunn and a troop of some dozens rode down and massacred hundreds of Aboriginal people at a place called Waterloo Creek. Nunn’s massacre was the precursor to the better known Myall Creek massacre where white station workers in company with a local squatter killed dozens of people, partially incinerating their bodies.</p> <p>The 26th January was also the day on which the 1927 Royal Commission into the Killing and Burning of Aboriginal people in the East Kimberley was established. The allegations in that matter included the execution and incineration of a score of Aboriginal women and men, avenging the death of a WW1 soldier settler.</p>

	<p>More particularly for us here in Victoria there are contemporary reasons for rejecting the 26th January as a day in which we can all participate and celebrate our country's culture.</p> <p>Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006 (Victoria) In Victoria we passed a Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities in 2006. This Charter binds local government.</p> <p>All public authorities including local government departments and agencies are required to act consistently with the Charter. Specifically local government must act in ways that are compatible with human rights and take relevant human rights into account when making decisions.</p> <p>Human Rights Principles The principles on which the Charter is founded are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • human rights are essential in a democratic and inclusive society that respects the rule of law, human dignity, equality and freedom; • human rights belong to all people without discrimination, and the diversity of the people of Victoria enhances our community; • human rights come with responsibilities and must be exercised in a way that respects the human rights of others; <p>And, with particular reference to First Nations people -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • human rights have a special importance for the Aboriginal people of Victoria, as descendants of Australia's first people, with their diverse spiritual, social, cultural and economic relationship with their traditional lands and waters. <p>Two particular sections in the Charter militate against celebrating this most unsuitable date.</p> <p>Section 18 'Taking part in public life' - requires local government to ensure people can 'participate' in public life. Section 18 protects the right to take part in public life, in local politics and public administration, and to participate in a public debate or dialogue.</p> <p>Section 18 - Taking part in public life</p> <p>(1) Every person in Victoria has the right, and is to have the opportunity, without discrimination, to participate in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives.</p> <p>(2) Every eligible person has the right, and is to have the opportunity, without discrimination—</p> <p>(a) to vote and be elected at periodic State and municipal elections that guarantee the free expression of the will of the electors; and</p> <p>(b) to have access, on general terms of equality, to the Victorian public service and public office.</p> <p>Aboriginal people are telling us that they cannot, they do not want to, it is disrespectful and distasteful to ask them to 'celebrate' on the 26th January. Local governments which insist on retaining the date are defying their obligations under the Charter.</p> <p>Section 19 requires public authorities to adopt measures that protect and promote cultural diversity and inclusion.</p>
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	<p>Section 19 requires local government to ensure that people can celebrate their identity and culture. The 26th January as a day of ‘celebration’ ensures the diametrically opposite outcome.</p> <p>Section 19 Cultural rights</p> <p>(1) All persons with a particular cultural, religious, racial or linguistic background must not be denied the right, in community with other persons of that background, to enjoy his or her culture, to declare and practise his or her religion and to use his or her language.</p> <p>(2) Aboriginal persons hold distinct cultural rights and must not be denied the right, with other members of their community—</p> <p>(a) to enjoy their identity and culture; and</p> <p>(b) to maintain and use their language; and</p> <p>(c) to maintain their kinship ties; and</p> <p>(d) to maintain their distinctive spiritual, material and economic relationship with the land and waters and other resources with which they have a connection under traditional laws and customs.</p> <p>Culture, language and religious beliefs are central to our identity and promote full and active participation in community. Aboriginal people may find it difficult to exercise their right to enjoyment of culture and traditions. Under the Charter, people have a right to enjoy identity and culture, and maintain kinship ties. practise religion and use language. This right also protects access to cultural institutions, ancestral lands, natural resources and traditional knowledge.</p> <p>Conclusion:</p> <p>The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities imposes obligations on bodies including local government.</p> <p>It is arguable that a failure to take this Charter seriously would result in a breach of the obligations imposed.</p> <p>Damage resulting from a breach would be reputational, social and potentially, economic.</p> <p>The Ombudsman is increasingly reporting on breaches. That is a trend that will only continue as our state accepts its treaty and truth telling obligations. Our Shire is being offered a leadership opportunity.</p>
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