

FAQs: Council decision on January 26

At Strathbogie Shire Council's May 2023 Meeting Council Resolved to:

- 1. Note the Taungurung Land and Waters Council Statement on January 26.**
- 2. No longer formally supports celebrations on January 26, from 2024 and beyond.**
- 3. Amend Council's Event Sponsorship Guidelines and Community Grant Guidelines deeming activities celebrating Australia Day on 26 January (in kind or cash) as ineligible.**
- 4. Continue to fulfill Council's statutory obligations – event permit under Local Law 2.**
- 5. Empower the Share Strathbogie Community Panel to determine how we best recognise volunteers in our community who make outstanding contributions within existing resources.**
- 6. Note that Australia Day Committees may continue arrangements that they determine and seek funding directly from the National Australia Day Council.**

The following FAQs have been developed for the community to better understand what this resolution means.

Why did Council make this decision?

We recognise January 26 is a day that causes great pain to First Nations people. Council supports inclusion and there is a portion of our community whose experiences of January 26 are a reminder of the dispossession and ongoing effects and impacts of colonisation.

The decision for Council to have no formal role in activities on January 26, follows several steps, we have taken to recognise and strengthen our relationship with First Nations People.

In 2021 we officially signed and adopted a MoU with the Taungurung Land and Waters Council.

Our MoU is underpinned by principles which establish the commitment and relationship between the two parties. These include the following principles:

- The Council desires to address the past and embrace the process of reconciliation and truth telling.
- That Council respect, and hold in strong regard the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage, traditions, customs and believes of the Taungurung people
- That Council supports the recognition of Aboriginal sovereignty in the Australian constitution.

And, in 2022 we adopted a new Community Vision that includes the words: We care deeply for Country and First National People.

Why doesn't Council stick to 'rates, roads and rubbish'?

Council has a responsibility to advocate on behalf of its community, as well as deliver a range of essential services.

Since the Local Government Act 1989 (Vic) was passed 30 years ago, the role of local councils has grown to do more for local communities, including "advocating the interests of the local community to other communities and governments".

As a Council, we have a legislative responsibility to show leadership and advocate for our community. As important as our advocacy work is, we are equally committed to delivering a range of everyday services and programs.

This is a Federal Government issue why is Strathbogie Shire Council getting involved?

We are getting involved because this is a local issue as much as it is a national one. The way we mark January 26 has a significant negative impact on many in our local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

We have a long-standing and collaborative relationship with our local Aboriginal community and have been working closely with the Traditional Owners the land, including an MoU with the Taungurung Land and Waters Council to strengthen our relationships.

Is Council cancelling Australia Day?

No, we are ceasing our official involvement in activities on January 26. This does not exclude Australia Day Committees from continuing to host and deliver township celebrations including award celebrations including award celebrations on January 26 or applying for funding directly to the National Australia Day Council.

Can communities celebrate Australia Day?

Our community is welcome to celebrate on January 26 as they choose. Council encourages people to reflect about what this date means in the history of our nation and its effect on our Aboriginal community.

If eligible, community groups will be able to apply for National Australia Day Council funding and can choose to recognise the day in a manner appropriate to their community.

But Australia Day has always been on January 26 – it's a tradition.

This decision only impacts Council's official involvement in January 26 activities.

Australia Day became a national public holiday celebrated by all states and territories in 1994.

The first Day of Mourning was held on January 26, 1938, being the 150th anniversary of the British invasion. The day was attended by Indigenous Australians and non-Indigenous supporters in protest of the 'callous treatment' of Aboriginal people and continues to be held annually.

Will the Mayor, Councillors and staff still take a public holiday on January 26?

As elected representatives, the Mayor and Councillors work every day for our community, including public holidays. January 26 remains a public holiday, and Council's customer services centres and libraries will be closed. Bin collections will take place as normal.

Will I lose my public holiday on January 26?

Council is not seeking to take away any public holidays. Our goal is to be more respectful and recognise the significance of the day to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

How will Council recognise our volunteers now?

Officers have proposed moving the "Australia Day Awards" to National Volunteer Week, by introducing a shire wide Strathbogie Rocks Annual Community Awards Program/event (an inclusive awards program) recognising the outstanding community contribution of people within our Shire.

However, the Council decision empowers Officers to work with the Share Strathbogie Community Panel to determine the best way to celebrate volunteers, so our community can be assured any changes will be driven by local people.

We will report back when this work is finished.