

MEDIA RELEASE IS IN THREE PARTS

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To download the full report: www.reviewpartners.com.au/australia-day-report

Media release

DON'T CHANGE THE DATE, MATE

Most Australians reject changing Australia Day, Republic and new flag - national poll

The majority of Australians don't want to change the date of Australia Day, see us become a republic or change the national flag, according to a survey conducted following the recent controversies of Australia Day 2017.

The national poll was conducted in the wake of intense publicity surrounding the #changethedate campaign which led to protests on Australia Day demanding that it be held on a different date because of the atrocities suffered by Indigenous people after the landing of the First Fleet on January 26th.

Conducted among 1043 Australians by research firm [Review Partners](#), in association with [Survey Sampling International](#), the study looked in detail at Australians' attitudes towards Australia Day and its link to our British origins.

'Images of protests and burning flags dominated the reporting on Australia Day, so we wanted to understand the truth of Australians attitudes towards the national day,' said report author Paul Costantoura, of Review Partners.

Most people (85%) told us they had heard something in the news or social media about the campaign to change the date, but only 16% said we should change it to another date,'

'However, the majority (59%) said it shouldn't be changed and about a quarter of the population (24%) didn't really care what date Australia Day is held.'

'To make sure people knew the arguments, we told them some people said it represents the day when Australia's original Indigenous peoples were invaded by the British, had their land stolen from them and were slaughtered in their thousands by the early British settlers.'

'After reading this, the number wanting a new date increased to 28%, but 53% still said the date should stay the same and 20% still didn't really care about the date.'

'Asked to rate the importance of changing the date, becoming a republic, or changing the flag, 53% of people didn't want to make any changes, 30% said a republic was most important, 11% gave top priority to changing the date, while only 6% nominated changing the flag.'

Political preference

'Australians varied considerably in their attitudes towards changing the date, with political preference and age being the two major influencing factors', Mr Costantoura said.

'One Nation and Coalition supporters were least likely to support any changes, while Greens voters led the movement for change, followed by ALP voters.'

Only 6% of One Nation voters were in favour of changing the date compared with 44% of Greens voters, while among the major parties, 8% of Coalition and 21% of ALP voters wanted a new date.

Conducted during the first week of February, the survey measured first preference voting intentions and found 32% would vote for the ALP, 28% for the Coalition, 16% for One Nation, 10% for the Greens and 14% for other parties.

When asked to choose simply between *'The ALP, led by Bill Shorten'* or *'The Coalition led by Malcolm Turnbull'*, 55% preferred a Shorten/ALP government and only 45% opted for the Coalition led by Turnbull.

Age

Support for a new date was also strongest among younger people and weakest among older Australians.

One quarter of Australians aged under 35 were in favour a change (24%), which was only half the proportion of over 55s (12%) who supported the idea.

Nevertheless, half of all under 35s (49%) were still opposed to the idea of a new date compared with two-thirds (66%) of those 55 yrs plus.

Achievements not guilt

'We found most Australians wanted to keep the current date because they believed we should be focusing on the positive things we have achieved as a nation since white settlement, rather than making today's Australians feel guilty about how the British inhabited Australia,' Costantoura said.

An overwhelming 92% of people agreed with the statement *'On Australia Day we should remember how far we have come as a diverse nation which now accepts people regardless of their origins.'*

The vast majority (85%) also agreed that *'White people living in Australia today came from many different countries and should not have to feel guilty about how the British inhabited Australia'.*

Knowledge

'One surprising finding from the study is the poor understanding that most Australians have of basic historical facts,' Mr Costantoura said.

'Australia Day is one of the most significant historical anniversaries in our calendar. However, only 43% of people could pick the correct event in history out of a list of six possible alternatives.'

'We had 21% thinking it was the anniversary of the discovery of Australia by Captain Cook and another 17% believing it was the date Australia became a Federation.'

The remainder thought it was: the date of an Indigenous treaty; when we stopped being a colony of Great Britain; or the date of an important WW1 battle.'

'Age was a factor again, with only one-quarter (24%) of those under the age of 35 able to pick the correct answer, but even among older Australians (aged 55 and over), only half (51%) knew that the date commemorated the landing of the First Fleet led by Captain Arthur Phillip.'

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MORE FINDINGS

What it covered

The wide ranging study looked at Australian's attitudes towards Australia Day to answer questions including; How do we feel about Australia Day?; What do we know about it?; What did we do on the day? How many of us had a BBQ?; and what do we think of the advertising campaigns based on our national day?

Alternative date

Among those favouring a change to the date of Australia Day, there was no real agreement on an alternative date.

About one in eight Australians (13%) thought it should be January 1 to celebrate Australia becoming Federation in 1901. Fewer than one in ten (8%) opted for January 28th because it was a date other than January 26th which marks the end of the Christmas holiday season. A further 7% picked the option May 8, because it sounds like the word 'maate'.

Celebration

Governments have made a concerted effort for decades to encourage people to treat Australia Day as a celebration rather than just a day off, so the study looked at what the day now means to Australians.

The majority of Australians (72%) considered the day to be important, with 32% rating it as very important. Only 8% said it was not at all important.

Despite this, 60% admitted that they didn't do anything special to recognise our national day and just viewed it as a day off (with 8% having to work on the day).

Activities

'Whether they celebrated or not, we wanted to understand in more detail how Australians spent the day,' Mr Costantoura said.

'Interacting with the immediate family was the most common way to spend the day, with 43% spending it just with their partner or friend as a couple or including their kids.

'We also found 39% of people joined their extended family and/or friends in some activity on the day.

'On the other hand, one in five Australians (19%) spent the day alone.

BBQ

'The classic Australian BBQ was a feature of the day for one-third of people (33%), so we asked them what they threw on the barbie.

'The lamb industry had spent millions of dollars on a highly publicised campaign to get lamb on the BBQ and the results tended to confirm its effectiveness.'

'Lamb was thrown onto 47% of Australian BBQ's on the day, just beaten by beef on 51%, but ahead of chicken on 42%.'

'Sausages were the Australia Day staple, ending up on 76% of hot plates, while the immortal prawn was tossed onto 22% of BBQ's beating fish on only 10%.'

Lamb advertising

The lamb ad also became a lightning rod for the #changethedate campaign, generating a social media storm of criticism against its representation of Indigenous Australians welcoming settlers from other countries to Australia.

However, it appears this resentment was not widespread since the ad generated an overwhelming positive response.

After watching the lamb ad during the online survey, 84% of people were positive, including 35% who said they 'loved' it and 49% who 'liked' it. That left only 4% of people who 'hated' it and another 12% who 'didn't like' it.

Asked for their opinions about the ad, 90% of people agreed that *'it makes a good point about how we are all immigrants'* and 87% thought *'it gets a message across with real Australian humour'*.

Just under half agreed it made them *'think about buying lamb'* (45%) with only one quarter (26%) feeling *'it fails to treat Indigenous people with respect'*.

Government advertising

The National Australia Day Council (NADC) also ran their own advertising to inspire people to 'Celebrate Australia your way'.

While 43% of people thought they remembered seeing the lamb ad, slightly fewer (37%) recalled the NADC advertising, which featured five prominent Australians talking about how they planned to celebrate Australia Day.

Most people knew at least one ambassador (79%), with 21% unable to recognise any of them.

The two most recognised faces were Poh Ling Yeow (Poh of Master Chef fame) and country singer Lee Kernaghan, who were known by 54% of people.

Australian of the Year and domestic violence campaigner Rosie Batty was recognised by 37% and Ben Roberts Smith, decorated army veteran (and Chair of the NADC) was familiar to 29%.

The fifth representative, refugee from the Congo and former Tasmanian ALP candidate Alphonse Mulumba was known by 4% nationally.

Overall, just on half the population felt the five were good or very good representatives of Australia today (51%), a further quarter felt they were 'OK' (25%) and only 6% thought they weren't very good.

The remaining 18% admitted they didn't really know them so couldn't say.

About Review Partners

Review Partners is an Australian research and communications agency which conducts polling and research to understand how Australians think and feel about major issues, companies and brands. Based in Sydney it works with major Australian companies and government agencies to support the strategic development of marketing, advertising and policy communication.

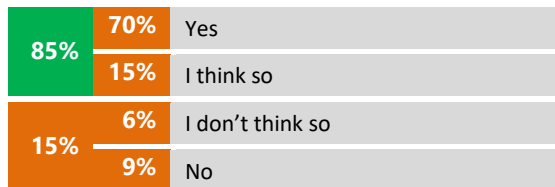
About Survey Sampling International

SSI is the premier global provider of data solutions and technology for consumer and business-to-business survey research. SSI reaches participants in 90+ sample countries via Internet, telephone, mobile/wireless and mixed-access offerings. SSI staff operates from 40 offices and remote staff in 20 countries, offering sample, data collection, CATI, questionnaire design consultation, programming and hosting, online custom reporting and data processing. SSI's 4,000+ employees serve more than 3,000 clients worldwide.

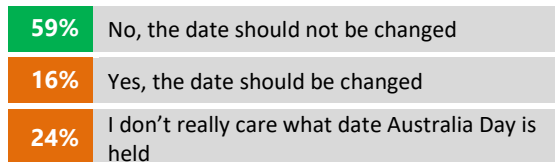
THE KEY STATISTICS

WHAT SHOULD WE CHANGE?

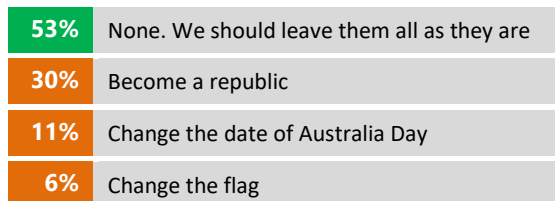
Have you heard anything in the news or social media about some people wanting to change the date of Australia Day from January 26th to another date?



Do you think we should change the date on which Australia Day is held?

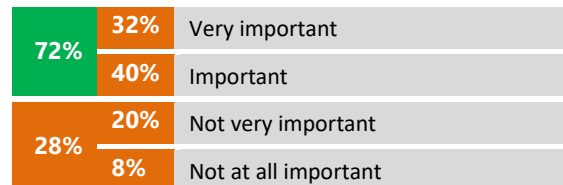


Which do you think is the most important change we should make?



HOW IMPORTANT IS AUSTRALIA DAY?

It's great to have a holiday, but apart from that, how important is Australia Day to you as Australia's National Day?



OUR HISTORY?

On which anniversary do you think Australia Day is held?



THE ARGUMENT IN FAVOUR OF CHANGING THE DATE

Australia Day is the anniversary of the landing of the first fleet from England and establishing Australia as a British colony 1788. Some people have suggested we should not celebrate this day because it represents the day when Australia's original Indigenous peoples were invaded by the British, had their land stolen from them and were slaughtered in their thousands by the early British settlers. Considering this argument, do you think we should change the date on which Australia Day is held?



AGE, GENDER, POLITICAL PREFERENCE

	No, the date should not be changed	I don't really care what date Australia Day is held	Yes, the date should be changed
TOTAL	59%	24%	16%
Gender			
Male	61%	24%	15%
Female	57%	25%	18%
Age			
18-34 yrs	49%	27%	24%
35-54 yrs	61%	25%	14%
55 yrs +	66%	21%	12%
First preference			
The Australian Labor Party	53%	26%	21%
Liberal National Coalition	69%	22%	8%
The Australian Greens	25%	31%	44%
One Nation	80%	14%	6%
Other parties	54%	30%	16%
Preferred Government			
The Australian Labor Party, led by Bill Shorten	52%	25%	23%
The Liberal / National Coalition, led by Malcolm Turnbull	68%	23%	9%

ATTITUDES TOWARDS AUSTRALIA DAY

Here are six other statements that people have made about Australian history. Do you agree or disagree with each of them?

	AGREE	Strongly agree	Agree	DISAGREE	Disagree	Strongly disagree
On Australia Day we should remember how far we have come as a diverse nation which now accepts people regardless of their origins	92%	50%	42%	8%	6%	2%
We shouldn't forget history, but we should be focusing on what is good about Australia, not the mistakes made by people in the past	87%	47%	40%	13%	10%	3%
We should remember that the British brought thousands of pioneers to Australia who laid the foundation for what we are today	86%	31%	55%	14%	12%	2%
White people living in Australia today came from many different countries and should not have to feel guilty about how the British inhabited Australia	85%	40%	45%	15%	12%	2%
The convicts have just as much right as Indigenous Australians to feel dispossessed because they were forced to leave their homes and families when they were sent to Australia	72%	22%	50%	28%	22%	6%
The British were just invaders who stole the country and slaughtered thousands of Indigenous people	47%	13%	35%	53%	36%	17%

WHAT DID YOU DO ON THE DAY?

Did you do anything special to recognise or celebrate Australia Day?

60%	No (Day off/work)
40%	Yes

Did you organise (or go to) a BBQ on Australia Day

33%	Yes
67%	No

What did you (or someone else) cook on the BBQ?

76%	Sausages
51%	Beef
47%	Lamb
42%	Chicken
25%	Vegetables
22%	Prawns
10%	Fish
5%	Something else/

How do you feel about the lamb ad?



84%	35%	I love it
	49%	I like it
16%	12%	I don't like it
	4%	I hate it

Link to the ad:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LX_i-zeaWs

Sample size: 1043
 Survey period: 6 Feb 2017 to 9 Feb 2017

POLITICAL PREFERENCES

If an election were held today, which political party would get your first preference vote?

32%	Australian Labor Party
28%	Liberal National Coalition
16%	One Nation
10%	The Australian Greens
14%	Other parties

Recognising that you may or may not support either of the two major political parties, it is likely that one of them will form a Government. So which of the two major political parties would you most want to see form a Government?

55%	The Australian Labor Party, led by Bill Shorten
45%	The Liberal/National Coalition, led by Malcolm Turnbull

COMMENT

LET'S TALK ABOUT BURNING THE FLAG

The image of a protester burning a flag on Australia Day 2017 raised a lot of questions about the significance of the day and how Australians really feel about the idea of changing the date.

It also raised questions about what can be achieved by burning the flag.

What did the protester want to achieve by burning an Australian flag? Sure he was angry. Sure he was making a point about the historical treatment of Indigenous people. Sure he wanted a new date for Australia Day.

Did he want to draw attention to the need for better health and education outcomes for Indigenous people in the future? Did he advance those issues or potentially set them back?

To find answers, in the weeks after Australia Day [Review Partners](#) asked 1043 Australians what they thought (with the support of [Survey Sampling International](#)).

In a previous analysis in B&T magazine, I looked at what [Australia Day advertising](#) told us about ourselves. Our latest survey results gave us a deeper insight into the mood of the nation following the wave of protests that swept our capital cities.

The survey revealed that yes, most Australians (84%) had heard about the campaign to change the date. Presumably a lot of them had seen the flag burning images.

Despite this, only 16% of people thought we should change the date of Australia Day, 59% said no and 24% said they didn't really care what date Australia Day is held.

This is important because it suggests the publicity around changing the date had little effect on changing the attitudes of the broader population.

A lot of the arguments for changing the date seemed to focus on making white Australians feel guilty for what other white Australians did in the past – a point that seems unlikely to galvanise people into action.

On the issue of guilt and responsibility, our survey found that the overwhelming majority agreed *'White people living in Australia today came from many different countries and should not have to feel guilty about how the British inhabited Australia'* (85%).

The same proportion agreed *'We shouldn't forget history, but we should be focusing on what is good about Australia, not the mistakes made by people in the past'* (87%).

Most people know that guilt is a bad method of persuasion – whether you are selling products or dealing with a relationship.

So is trashing the competitor brand by setting fire to it – particularly when it alienates the people whose minds you are trying to change.

During the Vietnam war, protesters around the world burnt American flags to send a message to President Johnson to end the war to benefit the Vietnamese people. It worked.

Who were the protests in Australia (and the flag burning) intended to benefit?

What concerns me is that the broader issues of the relationship between Indigenous people and the rest of the population got lost in the anger over the date of Australia Day – as if a new date was an end in itself.

The anger directed at Australia Day also overlooks the fact that many Indigenous people use Australia Day to celebrate Indigenous culture.

In fact on January 26th every year since 2001, Sydney has hosted 'the largest one day celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in Australia' - the Yabun Festival since 2001. www.yabun.org.au

Like the ice bucket challenge, I fear that #changethedate took hold on social (and mainstream) media without its supporters really understanding the issues or having a purpose – apart from venting their anger at previous (dead) generations.

I also fear another reason it became viral is because we are heading into a vacuum of national identity.

We used to stand for acceptance of diversity, but the failure of moderate government and the rise of the far right in politics has seen that fade as a national trait.

There is also the risk that, when Australia Day doesn't really stand for a clear national identity, then people – particularly younger generations - will naturally wonder why we bother with it – beyond a holiday and a BBQ.

In one way the protests were an attempt to vest some significance in the day by suggesting it represents what is wrong with Australia.

The fact that Australians of all colours are now marching in the street to support an Indigenous cause should be a positive signal for recognition and reconciliation.

However, the answer to better outcomes for Indigenous people does not lie in anger or guilt.

It lies in finding the positive things that we can share with each other and represent a new level of mutual respect – so we can proudly share our Australian national identity together – which I still think was the central message in the [MLA lamb ad](#).

It is also the message that drew the strongest support in our survey, with 92% of people agreeing that *'On Australia Day we should remember how far we have come as a diverse nation which now accepts people regardless of their origins'* (92%).

Changing the date might be symbolic step towards this, but not the way it is currently being argued.

Paul Costantoura, Review Partners



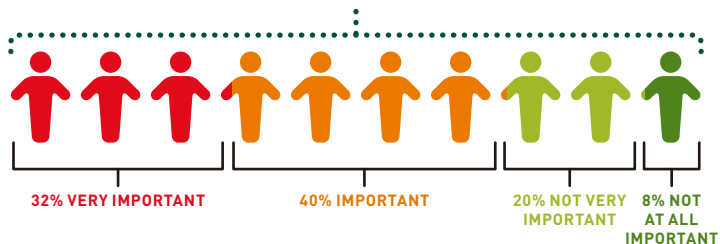
AUSTRALIA DAY 2017

The majority of Australians do not want to change the date of Australia Day, become a republic or change the flag, according to a survey conducted following Australia Day 2017.

IMPORTANCE OF AUSTRALIA DAY

How important is Australia Day?

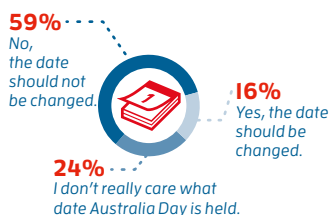
It's great to have a holiday, but apart from that, how important is Australia Day to you as Australia's National Day?



CHANGES TO AUSTRALIA DAY

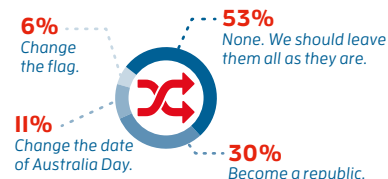
Should we change the date?

Do you think we should change the date on which Australia Day is held?



What is the most important change we should make?

Some people have suggested that we should cut ties with the UK in three main ways. Which do you think is the most important change that we should make?



AUSTRALIA DAY ACTIVITIES

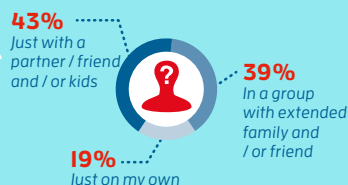
Did you celebrate?

Did you do anything special to recognise or celebrate Australia Day?



Who were you with?

Who did you spend it with?



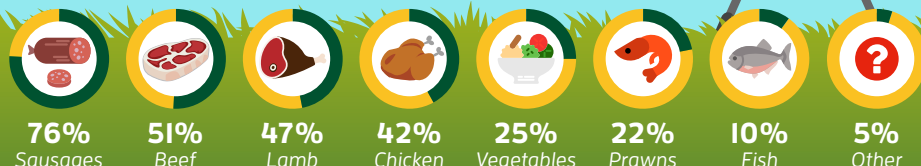
Did you have a BBQ?

Did you organise (or go to) a BBQ on Australia Day?



Whats on the BBQ?

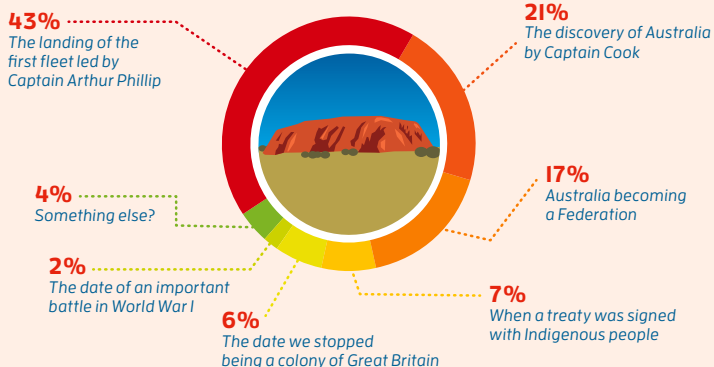
What did you (or someone else) cook on the BBQ?



HISTORY OF AUSTRALIA DAY

Australia Day is the anniversary of what?

On which anniversary do you think Australia Day is held?



LAMB ADVERTISING

How do you feel about the ad?

How do you feel about this ad?



YouTube www.youtube.com/watch?v=LX__i-zeaWs

About the Study

This research study was undertaken by research company Review Partners in association with online panel company Survey Sampling International shortly after Australia Day 2017 following intense publicity about the #changethedate campaign and protests demanding the date of Australia Day be changed because the atrocities suffered by Indigenous people at the hands of early settlers.

The survey was conducted in the first week of February 2016 among a sample of the 1043 people selected using a commercial online panel provided by Survey Sampling International. The sample was stratified to match the most recent ABS demographics of the Australian population according to gender, age and location.