

We The People
Program 70
Australia Day 2013



On January 26, 1788, the First Fleet of 11 ships from Great Britain arrived at Port Jackson, which now forms Sydney Harbour. The First Fleet was led by Captain Arthur Philip and he established the penal Colony of New South Wales. By 1808, January 26 was being celebrated as "First Landing Day" or "Foundation Day" with "drinking and merriment" according to the old diaries. By 1818 those convicts who had made good in the new Sydney colony were pretty proud of their success under very difficult circumstances and so Governor Macquarie called a celebration each year with a thirteen gun salute and a dinner. A little later in 1824 William Wentworth started the Australian news paper and free speech had formally arrived. In the same year the annual celebration included a Sydney Regatta which survives today. In 1870 the Brisbane Courier Mail referred to Australia as the "cesspit of England" and denounced any kind of national celebration but by 1888 the day had become known as Anniversary Day. Federation took place in 1901 and in 1905 Empire day records a growing national pride reflecting Sir Henry Parkes prophetic proclamation that "the crimson thread of kinship runs through all of us". From 1946, January 26 was known as "Australia Day" and today the country celebrates and embraces the symbols of the Australian flag with its Union Jack, the Commonwealth Star, the five stars of the Southern Cross and the national anthem "Advance Australia Fair". Other sacred symbols include our national floral emblem the Golden Wattle, our national gemstone the opal and the national colours of green and gold.

Now this Saturday is January 26 Australia Day and most will celebrate it and the tremendous steps this country has taken to become a peaceful homogeneous society of many different people but all equal Australians. It's a day when many will gain their citizenship with pride and swear an oath of allegiance to our nation and its laws and culture. Really, we don't ask much of newcomers do we and all we require is integration and assimilation into our Australian society. The two great national days of unity are ANZAC Day and Australia Day and by any measure both are growing in stature. Australia Day really has transformed into a day of celebration of our Great Southern land and why not, I'm proud of it warts and all. We've made mistakes and still do and we've made great decisions and still do. Our people have fought for peace and given their lives and dedication selflessly and we still do. As a unified nation, we have achieved spectacularly in such a relatively short time.

When it comes to national unification and social harmony I must admit to being offended when I'm called a non indigenous Australian. I resent that phrase as it attempts to limit my national Australian worth and divides society. You may say it's nothing but not to me as time has passed and I believe we Australians are all equal and enjoy equal opportunity. We must not be partitioned off in society as non indigenous because a few want to reduce our national status or sense of worth. On Australia Day there will be the usual chorus from a few who will call the day "Invasion day". That offends me too and yet so many good things have occurred for all of us including those with native back grounds. As a nation we have attempted to help the poor and deprived and as a nation we move when called to duty and we have nothing to be ashamed of anymore historically. I will not participate in the guilt industry on Australia Day and as one person recently wrote about her family members lost to German guns in World War 2, she doesn't hate the Germans of today and why should she. Bravo.

I hope all Australians meet their obligations as a citizen and cast off lethargy and drive our country forward united and focused on the things that build tomorrow and not be frozen in the unchangeable past. As a nation we have many challenges and it's a time to plan for the future and not be possessed by lost events. If you hear someone refer to Australia Day as Invasion day or anything like it tell them in no uncertain terms it's a day of unity and celebration and to put down their spears of hate and join us for the promise and opportunities of tomorrow. Happy Australia day to you and your family.

Until next time this is Kent Bayley.