

**26 JANUARY**  
COMMUNITY  
STAKEHOLDER GROUP  
CONVERSATION  
MEETINGS:  
**WHAT WE HEARD**



# Conversation 1

- January 26 evokes a range of feelings for different people – it is a day of community recognition for some people and for many (most?) Aboriginal people, it is a day of mourning and conflict.
- Separate to the question of the date itself, there are different views about the name 'Australia Day'.
- The younger generation are interested in change and want to have a strong voice in this change.
- Uncertainty exists nationwide about what the contemporary purpose and meaning of Australia Day is.
- We need to work towards what is best for our community of Greater Shepparton that allows all to come together, acknowledge and celebrate.
- If done well, a day of community pride can have meaning for all about what is good about this country.
- Is there an option to have two days – for example, a day of celebration, and a day of mourning/remembrance?
- Desire to remember the old people before colonisation, the richness of the people, land, water and culture.
- There is some interest in the Aboriginal community about welcoming the new citizens to Country as part of citizenship ceremonies, and giving an understanding of Aboriginal culture, history and heritage.
- Need to establish the important parts of current January 26 activities that should stay in Greater Shepparton.





Survival Day Dawn Ceremony,  
credit: Nicola Ceccato Shepparton News



## Conversation 2

- There is limited attachment to the specific January 26 date as a national day from any of the groups represented.
- There is more contention over the term 'Australia Day' with some community members attached to the name and others objecting to what 'Australia' represents to them.
- The Australia Day awards are considered very important as are citizenship ceremonies but it the underlying meanings of these that are important rather than the fact they are held on January 26, and there was little specific attachment to having these on the day.
- Some in the group felt we shouldn't be constrained by what is happening nationally – there is an opportunity for Greater Shepparton communities to have a day/events that are uniquely significant, meaningful and celebratory to us.
- 'Don't rush this' – broaden the consultation to include more community stakeholders.
- Several Aboriginal participants expressed concern that they may be seen as the drivers of change 'troublemakers'.
- One younger Aboriginal participant mentioned she wants 'peace' in her life as a a person with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal family members and that the way forward should be uniting and not divisive.
- Change is important but 'the way you do change is crucial'.
- People indicated they felt safe to participate in discussions and express a variety of views.



Survival Day Dawn Ceremony, credit: Nicola Ceccato Shepparton News



Attachment 10.2.1

## Conversation 3

- General summary of discussions from conversations 1 and 2 reflecting what has been heard to date:
  - Don't rush the process to fit in to a particular timeline/frame.
  - Commence with incremental changes.
  - Have more conversations on a one on one basis with individual groups to allow for all voices that want to be heard to be heard.
- Learnings from other Councils that have sought to make changes to January 26 have been sought.
- Suggestions made:
  - Greater Shepparton City Council to advocate to the Australian Government to remove the requirement to conduct a Citizenship Ceremony on Australia Day.
  - Greater Shepparton City Council to advocate to the Australian Government to change the date of Australia Day.
- One participant spoke about the opportunity for community leaders as key to any change in this space and the beauty that exists through opportunity and change:
  - "I see something much more beautiful (to acknowledge a day) - that comes from our leaders".
  - "How do we live the best we can on this land and have kinship with everyone that from here and come here?"
  - "We (Aboriginal people) believe in the beauty of the opportunities that exist for recognition of our hurt".
- Some of the group felt a new date needs to be determined/set before considering a change to Australia Day.
- Recognition that Aboriginal people may not be in a position to identify a different date as yet, but generally want to see Australia Day gone as the first step.

We heard you say:	We suggest we:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't rush this' – broaden the consultation to include more community stakeholders, including including CALD communities.</li> <li>• The Australia Day awards are considered very important as are citizenship ceremonies. However, it is the meanings of these that are important rather than the fact they are held on January 26.</li> <li>• Need to establish the important parts of current January 26 activities that should stay in Greater Shepparton.</li> </ul>	<p>Continue with the citizenship ceremony, Australia Day Awards and grants in 2023 on January 26 2023 and that further conversations need to occur in 2023 towards potential further change in 2024.</p> <p>Continue conversations in 2023 with key/ interested individual group to develop and explore a local approach to Australia Day and prepare an Options Paper for consideration by Council.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is limited attachment to the specific January 26 date as a national day from any of the groups represented, and for some it is a day of great sadness.</li> <li>• Change is important but 'the way you do change is crucial'.</li> <li>• The younger generation are interested in change and want to have a strong voice in this change.</li> <li>• Some of the group felt a new date needs to be determined/ set before considering a change to Australia Day.</li> <li>• Recognition that Aboriginal people may not be in a position to identify a different date as yet, but want to see Australia Day gone as the first step.</li> </ul>	<p>Advocate to the Australian Government to change the date (e.g. write letter to Prime Minister) and / or join Amnesty International's 'Change the Date' campaign, or both.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is some interest in the Aboriginal community about welcoming the new citizens to Country as part of citizenship ceremonies, and giving an understanding of Aboriginal culture, history and heritage.</li> <li>• January 26 evokes a range of feelings for different people – it is a day of community recognition for some people and for many (most?) Aboriginal people, it is a day of mourning and conflict.</li> <li>• Desire to remember the old people before colonisation, the richness of the people, land, water and culture.</li> </ul>	<p>Adapt the relevant grant guidelines to encourage Australia Day Council applicants to reflect on the full history of Australia on January 26, potentially with the involvement of the local Aboriginal community.</p> <p>Encourage a shift away from some more overtly 'nationalistic' gestures at events (for example, flags on seats).</p> <p>Explore how citizenship ceremonies are conducted in Greater Shepparton more broadly.</p> <p>Advocate to the Australia Government to remove the requirement on Councils to conduct a Citizenship Ceremony on Australia Day.</p>

**We heard you say:**

- Some in the group felt we shouldn't be constrained by what is happening nationally – there is an opportunity for Greater Shepparton communities to have a day/events that are uniquely significant, meaningful and celebratory to us.
- January 26 evokes a range of feelings for different people – it is a day of community recognition for some people and for many (most?) Aboriginal people, it is a day of mourning and conflict.

**We suggest we:**

Provide funding (as per 2022) to the 'Survival Day Dawn Ceremony' and extend in kind support if desired by the event organisers. Recognise this event publically.

- If done well, a day of community pride can have meaning for all about what is good about this country.
- We need to work towards what is best for our community of Greater Shepparton that allows all to come together, acknowledge and celebrate.
- Some in the group felt we shouldn't be constrained by what is happening nationally – there is an opportunity for Greater Shepparton communities to have a day/events that are uniquely significant, meaningful and celebratory to us.
- The younger generation are interested in change and want to have a strong voice in this change.
- Is there an option to have two days – for example, a day of celebration, and a day of mourning / remembrance?
- Uncertainty exists nationwide about what the contemporary purpose and meaning of Australia Day is.
- Need to establish the important parts of current January 26 activities that should stay in Greater Shepparton.
- There is more contention over the term 'Australia Day' with some community members attached to the name and others objecting to what 'Australia' represents to them.
- Several Aboriginal participants expressed concern that they may be seen as the drivers of change 'troublemakers'.
- Separate to the question of the date itself, there are different views about the name 'Australia Day'.
- People indicated they felt safe to participate in discussions and express a variety of views.
- One participant spoke about the opportunity for community leaders as key to any change in this space and the beauty that exists through opportunity and change:
- "I see something much more beautiful (to acknowledge a day) - that comes from our leaders".
- "How do we live the best we can on this land and have kinship with everyone that from here and come here?"
- "We (Aboriginal people) believe in the beauty of the opportunities that exist for recognition of our hurt".

Proceed to October OCM with key recommendations as above and a public statement flagging Council is committed to making change but that we are eager to walk together with community so that the steps we take reflect local community aspirations.



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