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Change the date: When should Australia Day be held?

AUSTRALIA Day, according to the Australia Day National Network's website is the day "we come together as a nation to celebrate what's great about Australia and being Australian".

Only it's not. On January 26 each year, the nation is undeniably divided.

Many indigenous Australians feel anger and grief over what started on that date more than 200 years ago when their ancestors began to be dispossessed.

Many white Australians feel guilty and uncomfortable with the day and what it stands for some people, and just don't feel like celebrating.

Many others don't feel welcome on the day and are made to feel they aren't truly Australian.

It's a day where a lot of people do celebrate being Australian or whatever the day means to them but it certainly doesn't bring the nation, as a whole, together.

The change the date movement, a campaign to have our national day of celebration shifted from the anniversary of the arrival of the First Fleet and what's come to be known as "Invasion Day", has caught just about all of our attention but the argument usually lacks one thing — an alternative date.

So if we don't want to celebrate on January 26, when should we?

JANUARY 1

One of the strongest arguments is for January 1, the anniversary of the day Australia technically came into being — the Federation of Australia. In 1901, a motley crew of colonies became state of the Commonwealth of Australia.

It has been described by the nation's top indigenous adviser Warren Mundine as "a day everyone can unite behind", and the "proper" day to celebrate Australia's independence.

There's a little-known but compelling argument against the January 1 selection, and that is that it would also, to some extent, exclude indigenous Australians as it also marks the day the Constitution of

Australia came into force, the same constitution which still doesn't acknowledge its nation's first people.

It is, of course, also New Year's Day, which would mean either missing out on an additional public holiday or being too hung-over to celebrate.

ANZAC DAY

We of course already have a day marking the anniversary of the landing of New Zealand and Australian soldiers at Gallipoli in 1915.

On April 25 we commemorate those killed in war and honour returned servicemen and women.

It's also been argued that of all our existing national celebrations, Anzac Day is the one that honours our history best.

So should we just call it our national day and get on with it?

MABO DAY

On June 3, 1992, the High Court ruled in favour of Eddie Mabo's case which overturned "terra nullius" and acknowledged native indigenous land rights.

Mabo's widow, Bonita Mabo, has campaigned for a public holiday to acknowledge the decision and indigenous Australians "who have empowered and inspired each other".

It's also been floated as an alternative Australia Day — the day we all became a little bit more equal.