



HARMONY DAY

Facts for Students

Harmony Day is celebrated on 21 March every year. It is organised by the Australian Government and is a day to celebrate our culturally diverse society.

Diversity in Australia

Although Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have lived in Australia for thousands and thousands of years, most of Australia's population is made up of people whose families only arrived in the country within the last 200 years.

This means that everyone has different and varied backgrounds: Italian, Greek, English, Vietnamese, Irish, Korean, Canadian etc.

All the different cultures that come together in Australia bring many things with them: different foods, ways of dressing, languages, customs and beliefs.



Harmony Day is about celebrating these differences and learning about new cultures.

Immigration and Australia

When people leave their home country to live in another country it is called immigration. Immigration began in Australia in 1788, with the arrival of the First Fleet. The First Fleet was made up of 11 ships carrying English convicts and officers.

Australia was originally used as a place to send criminals from the overflowing jails in England, free settlers (people who were not convicts) soon began moving here too. The first European immigrants who came to Australia were mainly from England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales.



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People from overseas have brought many new skills and ideas with them and have worked to help make Australia the fantastic country it is today.

For example:

- Afghans (people from Afghanistan) with camels began arriving during the mid-to-late 1800s to explore the outback and transport goods into the desert.
- People from many countries have opened cafés and restaurants.
- Japanese, Malay and Filipino immigrants worked as pearl divers.
- Many immigrants worked to build roads and railways.



Living together in harmony

To live peacefully and happily in Australia, we have to make sure that everyone feels equal. It does not matter how different we are, we should always treat others with fairness and respect.

Some people might look or dress differently from you. Try to learn more about other people's cultures and customs. Remember, differences are not a bad thing. They make us unique and special.



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Australia by numbers

Many people in Australia speak different languages. The top five languages spoken in Australia are:

1. English
2. Mandarin
3. Arabic
4. Cantonese
5. Vietnamese



Approximately 30 percent of Australians were born overseas. The top five countries where people have travelled from are:

1. England
2. New Zealand
3. China
4. India
5. Philippines



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Harmony Day fast facts

- Did you know that since 1945 over seven million people have migrated to Australia?
- Harmony Day takes place on the United Nation's International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.
- Did you know that Harmony Day began in 1999 and since then more than 25,000 Harmony Day events have been held across the country?
- Australians identify with over 270 ancestral backgrounds.
- Often, before an event, function or meeting takes place, Australians will acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land they are on. This is called an 'Acknowledgement of Country' and it pays respect to Aboriginal culture and heritage.
- Events celebrating Harmony Day can be held by schools, sporting clubs or community groups.

