

Best of Warren



Woo Hoo!

Warren Brown is on assignment

Australians know we are worth celebrating

Daniel Wild



Every year in January Australians are subjected to the usual hand-wringing about our national day.

The activist class and inner-city elites hold that Australia, our culture, and history, is not worth remembering, much less celebrating. To them, January 26 is a day of mourning, invasion, dispossession, and violence.

But this year is a little different. The vibe and energy around Australia Day have shifted. Mainstream Australians – the silent majority – have had a gutful of being put upon by the out-of-touch activists, and are now clearly making their voices heard.

It started last year, when Woolworths announced it would not be stocking Australia Day-themed merchandise on its shelves. The stated reason was that the day “means different things to different people”.

The backlash was immediate and fierce, with calls for a boycott of the supermarket giant ultimately leading to the premature departure of then-chief executive Brad Banducci.

A similar scenario played out in the weeks leading up to Christmas, when the foreign-owned Australian Venue Co., which runs more than 200 pubs across Australia, said their venues

would not be celebrating or even recognising Australia Day. Again, confronted with strong pushback, Australian Venue Co. backed down within 24 hours.

Big corporates, sporting codes, and civic institutions now need to think twice before they seek to cancel our national day.

New polling commissioned by the Institute of Public Affairs shows a dramatic surge in support for celebrating Australia Day on January 26, with some 69 per cent Australians backing our national day, up from 63 per cent last year, and just 14 per cent opposed.

Critically, this surge in support is being driven by young Australians aged 18-24.

In the survey undertaken 12 months ago, just 42 per cent of those in this age bracket said they supported celebrating Australia Day on January 26.

This year, that number skyrocketed to 69 per cent.

That a majority of young Australians are confident to support our national day, despite years of indoctrination at school, university, and in the media, shows how strong and deep the vein of patriotism is among the next generation.

The reason for these strong results is that Australians understand that if we do not fight for our values, our culture, and our way of life, we will lose them.

We celebrate Australia Day on the January 26 because that is the day that modern Australia commenced. The First Fleet arrived not just with prisoners from Great Britain, but also

with a rich intellectual and moral cargo of the ideals developed in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, and forged through the Enlightenment. These include parliamentary democracy, liberty, fairness, tolerance, and individual rights.

None of this is to minimise, much less deny, the real hardship and violence which many Indigenous Australians experienced at the hands of some colonists.

Rather, it is to say that now, more than at any time since World War II, we must as a nation unite around our shared values, which speak to all Australians regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, or gender.

And we must remember that the true history of Australia is how a small group of disparate, inward-looking penal colonies set up by Britain on the other side of the world overcame hardship and division to become

among the most tolerant and fair-minded of nations.

We are the people who went further than any other in establishing the rule of law and equality before the law.

Just four months after the very first Australia Day in 1788, two lowly convicts won the right to sue their ship's captain, a legal entitlement not available to any other individual in a comparable position anywhere else in the world at that time.

We are the people who as far back as 1836 made critical advances in religious tolerance, when NSW governor, Sir Richard Bourke, established the Church Act which provided funding for Catholic and Protestant churches on an equal basis at a time when sectarian conflict was rife.

We are the people who invented the secret ballot in 1853, which meant that everyday Australians could vote without being intimidated by wealthy landowners or union officials.

We are the people who, by a margin of 90-10, said “Yes” to removing divisive references to race in the Australia's Constitution in 1967, in a watershed moment for racial equality.

And we are the people who, in 2023, voted to keep it that way, with 60 per cent of Australians opposing the reinsertion of racial separatism into our Constitution.

These are the reasons why we celebrate Australia Day on January 26. Long may that continue.

Daniel Wild is deputy executive director of the Institute of Public Affairs

Mass quit wrong way to fix system

Lisa Robins



The mental health of Australians has been the cornerstone of my career. From my frontline work as a psychologist in major NSW hospitals to my current role as CEO of the Australian Patients Association, my focus has always been unwavering: putting patients first.

It is from this perspective that I find the looming mass resignation of 201 out of 260 public hospital staff specialist psychiatrists in NSW deeply troubling.

This drastic action, a response to unmet demands for improved employment conditions as part of industrial action, threatens to leave society's most vulnerable without access to critical care. Such a co-ordinated withdrawal risks overwhelming an already fragile system, with devastating consequences for patients and their families.

This is not a viable outcome. While a gradual loss of staff is damaging but manageable, a sudden exodus of this scale would be catastrophic. The stakes are simply too high for this course of action.

Psychiatrists are advocating for a 25 per cent pay increase to address critical workforce shortages in NSW, where one-third of public psychiatrist positions remain unfilled.

Beyond the issue of remuneration, psychiatrists are also spotlighting the severe strain on the NSW public mental health system.

Overcrowded emergency departments, psychiatric wards operating perpetually at capacity, and impatient units often characterised by violence and overwhelming stress all point to a system in crisis. The personal toll on psychiatrists working in such conditions is immense.

Let me be unequivocal: public hospital psychiatric services save lives. These professionals are driven by a deep sense of purpose and social justice, tirelessly supporting those in crisis. They deserve fair pay, improved conditions, and our utmost respect. However, mass resignation is not the solution. I urge my colleagues to reconsider this drastic step.

For the sake of your patients, your colleagues, and the future of mental health care in NSW, I urge you to stay the course and fight for change from within.

The stakes are too high, and your voice has never been more needed.

Lisa Robins is CEO, Australian Patients Association