Celebrating one another in harmony



Harmony Day and Week is an annual event when Australians come together to celebrate the nation's vibrant multicultural heritage.

Harmony Day falls on 21 March, and since 2003, WA has incorporated the day into Harmony Week, an extended celebration of multiculturalism that runs 15-21 March.

Harmony Day is about inclusiveness, respect and belonging for all Australians, regardless of cultural or linguistic background, while Harmony Week gives more time for Western Australians to consider the benefits of multiculturalism, including job creation, cultural richness and diversity.

According to 2021 Census data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), over half (55.6 per cent) of Western Australians had one or both parents who were born overseas and 75.2 per cent of respondents indicated a non-Australian ancestry.

Some other interesting ABS stats are:

- Australians identify with over 300 ancestries.
- Since 1945, more than 7.5 million people have migrated to Australia.
- Apart from English, the most common languages spoken in Australia are Mandarin, Arabic, Cantonese, Vietnamese, Italian, Greek, Tagalog/Filipino, Hindi, Spanish and Punjabi.
- More than 70 Indigenous languages are spoken in Australia.

"Our cultural diversity is one of our greatest strengths and is at the heart of who we are. It makes Australia a great place to live," according to the federal government's Harmony Day website.

"An integrated multicultural Australia is an integral part of our national identity. All people who migrate to Australia bring with them some of their own cultural and religious traditions, as well as taking on many new traditions. Collectively, these traditions have enriched our nation."

Harmony Day in Australia also coincides with the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, with 21 March being the date of the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre, in which South African police fired into a crowd demonstration against apartheid.

Orange is the colour of Harmony Day and Week. The colour is a traditional symbol of social communication and meaningful conversations and also relates to the freedom of ideas and encouragement of mutual respect.

People can wear orange on Harmony Day to show their support for cultural diversity and an inclusive Australia.

In over 20 years more than 70,000 Harmony Day events have been held in childcare centres, schools, community groups, churches, businesses and federal, state and local government agencies across Australia.

Australians are encouraged to organise their own local events or celebrations to mark the day in their schools, workplaces and other community groups such as sporting teams.

For a list of events, more information and additional resources on Harmony Day and Harmony Week visit harmony.gov.au and omi.wa.gov.au

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