

Australia Day 2x2 Relay: A True-Blue Celebration of Conquest and Invasion.

The Australia Day 2x2 Relay was a true-blue celebration with plenty of banter and nothing taken too seriously. The race started bright and early, just before 7:00 am, to beat the forecasted heat. Let's take a closer look at the teams and the personalities that made the event a success:

Kayaking Konvict Phil N was proudly sporting a t-shirt marked with convict symbols in homage to Australia's dark history. I was secretly wondering if teammate Justin P. would be old enough to have vivid memories of convict times, which would explain his attitude to live! I heard he had a PB at last Wednesday TT?

The True Blues Jeff T. and Andrew P. as always perfectly embodied the genuine and authentic Australian.....(no explanation needed), but to their credit for the very first time in 2 years history of this event Andrew had registered in time and under the correct email address. Luckily Jeff had chosen their team name earlier. Happy days!

The Galahs featured by Alanna, Tony, and Esther kept it simple with the name of an Aussie native bird, which Alanna picked to avoid any political debates about Australia Day. Esther's last-minute arrival didn't faze them. Esther has to take public transport on a Sunday morning from Newtown to Lane Cove. Well done Esther for still making it in time! A special thanks also to Alanna for cleaning up the river!

Left and Right Thongs Elke and Anne S. stayed true to a quirky Australian tradition. Contestants take turns throwing a thong as far as they can, and the person who throws it the farthest is the winner. Luckily, no actual thongs were thrown at timekeepers!

Team Treaty: Despite being Jeff C's first relay in a while and Matt Z's first-ever 2x2 start, these two were the absolute gold standard of a relay team with picture perfect changeovers. I hope all the regulars were able to observe how it's done!

The Snags: Ian W, Lachlan W, and Mark Patterson brought a creative sausage-themed number plate to match their team's name. It was Mark's first ever competitive paddle. The Snags were unofficially the day's most pleasant team, arriving on time, complaint-free, and knew what to do. Love you!

The Dragonflies with Matt S. and Duncan sparked some curiosity, but when asked about the link to Australia Day, Matt admitted he wasn't sure himself. There was a bit of unease at the beginning when Duncan stood on the pontoon all by himself. God bless his honesty, Matt confessed that he slept in. To give him more credit, he did call the race organisers on the road, and they really should have picked up the phone!

Bass & Flinders: Pete A. and Don were playing for sheep stations. Pete swapped his ski halfway through the course to test paddle his re-incarnated K1 with cut out foot holes, duct tape everywhere and version 3-foot plate. Good to see this boat back on the water Pete, thank you! Don also showed off his Christmas present, a true-blue stellar ski. It looked like Pete and Don had a secret internal competition going.

The Vege Mightys with John D., Scott, and Eli T. could have been called "The Mighty Vegetables," as their performance was nothing short of superpower. This unfortunately will bring Eli a handicap next time! The Vege Mightys also brought their own cheerleader squad of friends and family! Lovely to meet Oma Tyers!

Team Shark Patrol: David and Pauline provided much-needed shark safety, especially after Matt Z's unplanned swim near the pontoon. Their lifeguard outfits and reassuring presence were much appreciated by paddlers and spectators alike.

Gold and Black Magic with Jeff H. and Lee W. may not have read the race briefing either, but with some guidance from land, they managed to navigate the course. Lee caused a little bit of stir by cutting into other boats three times at the finish line and even jamming his ski under the pontoon but well done otherwise! The most heart-pounding moment of the day came in the final stretch, as Matt and Lee battled it out in a neck-and-neck finish. With just centimetres apart, Lee's sheer determination brought him over the line first. Very impressive finish Lee!

After all the excitement, paddlers, supporters, and organizers gathered for a well-deserved morning tea with classic Aussie treats. A special thanks to Pete for bringing his espresso machine and serving everyone—you're a legend! In true Aussie style, winners didn't receive trophies but instead took home eco-friendly prizes, herbs and tomato plants. A massive thanks to everyone who made the first 2x2 event of 2026 so special.

The History of Australia Day

Australia Day is the official National Day of Australia. It marks the anniversary of the arrival of the First Fleet of British ships at Port Jackson in 1788, and the raising of the British flag by Captain Arthur Phillip at today's Lane Cove River Kayakers shed. However, the history of Australia Day is complex, with roots that are both celebratory and contentious.

Captain Arthur Phillip's fleet consisted of 11 ships carrying convicts, soldiers, and settlers. They marked the establishment of the first British colony in Australia. The earliest recorded celebrations of January 26th as a day of commemoration occurred in 1808 when the colony observed the 20th anniversary of the First Fleet's arrival. However, it wasn't until 1818, the 30th anniversary, that the day began to be officially marked. Governor Lachlan Wrenford held the first official celebration, which included a 30-gun salute and a ball.

Throughout the 19th century, the day became associated with national pride and unity among the Australians of European descent, particularly in New South Wales. It was often referred to as "Anniversary Day" or "Foundation Day." By 1935, all Australian states and territories had adopted January 26 as "Australia Day," a public holiday.

While Australia Day is widely celebrated as a day of national pride, it is also a date of mourning for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. For Indigenous Australians, January 26th marks the beginning of colonization, which led to the dispossession and suffering of their ancestors, as well as the loss of land, culture, and lives. As a result, some Indigenous Australians and their allies refer to January 26 as Invasion Day or Survival Day, highlighting the ongoing struggles for recognition, rights, and reconciliation. Over the years, protests and rallies have been held on Australia Day to draw attention to these issues.

Despite its controversial history, Australia Day has evolved into a day of celebration for many Australians. The day is marked by community events, citizenship ceremonies, 2x2 paddling events, concerts, and fireworks displays. It's a time when people come together to reflect on Australia's history. Traditional elements of Australia Day include backyard barbecues, beach outings, and enjoying classic sausages sizzles, lamingtons, pavlovas,

and meat pies. The day also sees the announcement of the Australian of the Year Awards, which recognize individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the nation. Australia Day is a date that carries different meanings for different people.

My own personal Australian history.

Thirteen years ago, I arrived in Australia with nothing more than a backpack, no money in my pocket, but a heart full of dreams. I had no idea what lay ahead, but I was determined to give it my best. Australia was probably the only country where I could have made it with so much naivety.

Back then, I had very little English language skills and not even a license to practice in my profession that I had a doctorate degree in. So, my journey began as a flyer distributor, a job I did for six months, barely making ends meet. Week by week, I scraped by, barely able to pay for rent and food, leaving behind my friends, family, and the safety net I once knew. As a permanent resident, I wasn't entitled to financial assistance or unemployment benefits—but the opportunity to work and build a life. And that I did!

Life was incredibly hard. Time and time again, my dreams felt like they were slipping away. But it was in that time of struggle that I encountered the incredible generosity of the Aussie culture. There were people who, despite my limited English and lack of experience, saw my determination and gave me a chance. Their kindness and willingness to take a risk on me are things I will never forget. Australia welcomed me with open arms. I experienced firsthand the warmth, acceptance, and inclusiveness that define this country. Strangers became friends; they invited me into their homes and made me feel like I belonged. Even during years of financial and emotional despair, there was always a glimmer of hope—a sense that this place could one day become home. The years that followed were not without immense struggle. There were countless hardships, heartbreaks, and moments of doubt that tested me to my core. But I refused to give up and I prayed, a lot!

I am now Australian citizen, and I am living the dreams that I carried in my heart for all those years. I owe so much to the compassionate, open-hearted Aussies who gave me a chance when I had nothing but hope and a willingness to work hard. Australia gave me the opportunity to build a life, and for that, I will always be grateful.