



ll, celebrating the mythological foundation of Japan.

China has its national day on October 1, marking the formation of the Central People's Government on December 2, 1949.

Indonesia celebrates its national day on August 17 to celebrate the nation's foundation.

And so the list goes on.

MY POINT is that January 26 was not the foundation of Australia. It already existed. Nor does the date celebrate our independence. It simply marks the arrival of explorers and invaders from distant lands.

I also recognise that throughout history many people have been the subject of aggression and conquering forces have significantly changed the original community.

But Australia's indigenous communities were not subject to an invading force, rather a new

community with a different level of education and access to weaponry that the First Peoples did not have. Indigenous people were then subjected to dispossession and abuse as the settlers expanded their ownership of the land over time.

I can appreciate our indigenous community objecting to abuse and dispossession being celebrated as our national day. So, as we approach Australia Day, in the spirit of genuinely starting to build trust and give our First Peoples the priority they deserve, I suggest we find another date.

I'd make another point about the way we celebrate Australia Day. We aren't that serious about it. If we were, we'd celebrate Australia Day on the day it falls and not have a holiday if it fell on the weekend as it does this year.

We celebrate Anzac Day on April 25 each year with no day off if it falls on a weekend. So Anzac Day has real meaning.

Australia Day as celebrated now

is, I believe, a joke. We are not serious about it. We don't have enough pride to celebrate the opportunities that Australia offers us.

So, what might be a suitable alternative date? We could combine it with Anzac Day, but the RSL and the military might believe that would downgrade the recognition of those who fought for us — and, as an ex-serviceman, I agree.

January 1 was the date in 1901 on which the Commonwealth of Australia came into being and I believe that is an appropriate date for our national day.

January 1 is, of course, New Year's Day, so why not give it extra meaning by celebrating Australia on the first day of each new year? It makes sense to me; resolutions are made, hopes are high, dreams are daring. Sharper brains than mine might come up with a better date, but we should move quickly to find one. While we continue to support

a date that had such a terrible impact on our First Peoples, we will only delay the rebuilding of trust across the nation.

Australians are decent and giving people who have shown an instinctive generosity on many social issues. Same-sex marriage — who would have thought that such a positive vote would be delivered by city and country folk?

Through the National Disability Insurance Scheme we give those with disabilities and their carers the support they have been denied for years.

Australia is and should be economically conservative and socially generous.

It is time we extended that generosity to our First Peoples and move Australia Day to a date that reflects who we really are.

Think generously.

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a treaty, not a change of date

hands of British justice. But the early settlers and the British authorities failed in one crucial respect. They did not negotiate a treaty with the Aborigines that recognised their claim to the land and provided terms for sharing the land. That was a major factor that contributed to the many years of mistreatment and neglect. Even today many of our First Peoples remain undereducated, underemployed, poorly housed, face enormous social inequality and have high suicide rates. Aboriginal leader Warren Mundine has recently stated in the *Herald Sun* that these issues should be prioritised over any change to Australia Day — which he supports. Let's hope his comments are unrelated to Liberal Party attempts to preselect him for the marginal seat of Gilmore.

It is not a change to Australia Day that is needed. It is a treaty that includes concrete steps to address the economic and social disadvantages of Aboriginal Australians. The Andrews Labor Government has initiated such a process in partnership with Aboriginal people in Victoria. It should now be made a priority at the federal level with the aim of declaring a national treaty, which I think should be ratified on Australia Day 2020, 232 years since the First Fleet arrived.

Surely all Australians can get behind and celebrate an Australia Day that completes what should have been done more than 200 years ago: a treaty for righting past wrongs.

We should reject the attempts by those seeking to gain political advantage by attenuating

victimhood within our Aboriginal communities using a warped interpretation of history.

Those falsehoods play on the belief shared by many Australians that there is still an injustice that should be addressed. But by condemning the Aboriginal community to eternal victimhood, they are engaging in the worst kind of identity politics designed to divide rather than unite. Thankfully, many Aboriginal leaders like Stan Grant and many I have met at the Aboriginal Advancement League reject this kind of victim-based anti-patriotic identity politics.

Those leaders know symbolic acts like changing Australia Day or feigned respect for elders past, present and emerging at meetings will not right past wrongs. A properly negotiated treaty with

accompanying concrete actions will. And such a treaty should be declared on the most symbolic of all days: Australia Day.

I feel privileged to be part of this Australian story along with so many others from around the world who now make up our multicultural mix. And I feel proud of the thousands of years of history of the original peoples of this land as much as of my own European history and background.

We should all recognise that we need a treaty benefiting Aboriginal Australians. It would formalise the Australian story of people from all over the world coming together, being welcomed by an ancient culture and forming a great nation.

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We need a complete rethink on aged care



SARAH RUSSELL

THE Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety began last Friday. Prime Minister Scott

Morrison announced the commission on the eve of last year's ABC *Four Corners* investigation into inadequate care, negligence, abuse and assault in aged care homes.

Before jumping into another expensive royal commission, perhaps Morrison should have reviewed the numerous inquiries, reviews, consultations, think tanks and task forces over the past 10 years. Those inquiries provide evidence of appalling standards of care in some aged care homes.

The most dispiriting aspect of all those inquiries is the number of submissions by residents, relatives and staff that have been ignored.

Submissions to the recent Review of National Aged Care Quality Regulatory Processes indicated strong support for mandatory staff ratios and for a registered nurse to be on duty at all times. But there was no mention of that in the report.

To prevent poor standards in aged care homes, enough trained staff must be employed. The government values the safety of children in childcare and patients in hospitals enough to mandate ratios. So why not in aged care homes?

The terms of reference for the royal commission are primarily about the future of aged care. But if the commission does not look back, it will not be able to move forward without making the same mistakes.

To improve standards, the commissioners must review evidence on indicators such as pressure sores, medication errors, weight loss, falls, infection rates, admissions to hospitals, staffing levels and training. But those figures are not publicly available.

Who decided data on residents' safety and wellbeing in aged care homes must be kept secret? To answer that, we need to go back to when the Aged Care Act 1997 was drafted.

The Act was a turning point for aged care policy in Australia. It encouraged a big increase in private investment. Private equity firms, new foreign investors and superannuation and real estate investment trusts entered the residential aged care market and any of those companies focus on profits rather than standards of care.

The standard of care in aged care homes is a human rights issue. The only way to ensure higher standards is for the government to rewrite the Aged Care Act so it focuses on human rights of older Australians, not the profits of providers.

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