



23 JAN, 2022

## Australia Day time to reflect

Sunday Territorian, Darwin

# Australia Day time to reflect



## MALARNDIRRI MCCARTHY



**Call the day what  
you want, we are a  
democracy. Our  
country prides itself  
on our ability to  
agree and disagree  
on matters of  
debate, provided it's  
done respectfully**

Australian of the Year, who through his music inspires a new generation of Australians.

Right now, we need to be inspired.

We are facing our biggest challenge.

If ever there was a time for less division and more compassion and support for one another, it is now.

We can get up early in the morning on Australia Day and remember the atrocities of our past.

We can also appreciate the diversity and achievements of this nation, which so many people call home.

Will you wake up with the sun on January 26th?

**MALARNDIRRI MCCARTHY IS AN NT SENATOR**

THIS week we gear up to January 26th.

Many new Australians will become citizens.

Some Australians will be at barbecues and fun runs while others attend rallies, raising the consciousness of our country's men and women that there is always more than one story about the day.

In 1842, my McCarthy ancestor sailed the seas from Ireland to Australia.

He did not come as a convict like thousands of others before him. He came as a free man.

He chose to make this country his home, for his young family to build their future in an unknown land filled with promise and hope.

My mother's families are the Yanyuwa and Garrawa people of Borrooloola.

I am here because of the stories of both sides of my families, and I both celebrate and commemorate January 26th.

I wake with the sun to reflect on the brutality of early conflicts between black and white Australians and search for the healing ceremony of forgiveness and hope.

At sunrise I ask the healing spirits of our land to ensure we never see such hatred again, against anyone, in our homes, in our communities, in our country and most especially, in our hearts.

I am equally proud to witness and welcome our new Australians at citizenship ceremonies in the Northern Territory.

Call the day what you want, we are a democracy.

Our country prides itself on our ability to agree and disagree on matters of debate, provided it's done respectfully.

This year is especially significant as the Aboriginal Tent Embassy celebrates 50 years since it was set up in Canberra outside Old Parliament House in 1972.

One of the major reasons Billy Craigie,

Michael Anderson, Bertie Williams and Tony Coorey left Redfern to camp outside Old Parliament House was to fight for land rights.

When Gough Whitlam visited the Tent Embassy as Labor opposition leader, he promised to legislate for Aboriginal land rights.

When this culminated with the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976, it was the Yanyuwa who were the first to test it out.

It was in the old police station on Yanyuwa country that my mother's family sat with others and were asked to prove who they were as First Nations people in this country.

Those elders stood in the witness box in the old police station, which had remnants of people being caught in the cells, very recent and horrible memories of the massacres of that area, and there was passion and hope that lives would change.

The 26th of January is also a time to recall the long list of Territory people who have fought hard for positive change.

People like the late Charlie Perkins with the Freedom Rides, the Yolngu people who delivered the Bark Petitions to the federal parliament, and in the 1960s the Wave Hill Walk-off by the Gurindji people.

Our 2021 Senior Australian of the Year Dr Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann, is a wonderful woman and elder with wisdom that so many Australians have been privileged to share in.

Prior to her, there was Sister Anne Gardiner, a stalwart for good in her work with the Tiwi people.

Our Local Heroes of 2019 Kate and Tick Everett who've shared their daughter Dolly's story, so others do not have to suffer as they have.

Then Baker Boy, our 2019 Young