



Media Release

Why Don't Black Perspectives Matter?

January 24, 2018

The CEO of **Culture is Life**, a not-for-profit organisation working to reduce self-harm and suicide among young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, today responded to critics of changing the date of Australia Day, including Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull.

Belinda Duarte said some people had deliberately twisted a simple request for the grief and pain felt by Aboriginal Australians to be respected into a supposed demand to abolish Australia Day.

"This lack of empathy and respect is extremely damaging. It hurts people. And it starts from the top," Ms Duarte said.

In a short video last week Mr Turnbull said he was "disappointed" by those seeking to change the date of Australia Day. He said they are "seeking to take a day that unites Australia and Australians and turn it into one that would divide us".

"That couldn't be more wrong and it's frankly shameful," Ms Duarte said.

"We are not arguing to get rid of a holiday or the celebration of everything modern Australia should be justly proud.

We are just asking for it to be held on a day when we can celebrate too. Aboriginal people have been formally mourning this date since 1938 – 80 years.

The January 26 public holiday was created 24 years ago. Before that the date changed every year to guarantee a long weekend. No one cared. Polling in 2016 showed nearly 60 per cent of Australians didn't know what the holiday commemorated.

This anniversary is a day of grief and pain for Aboriginal communities. What well-adjusted family would continue to hold a party on a day when some of its members are hurting."

Ms Duarte said it's time for change, for the nation to consider the impact of Australia Day on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and their families.



“We are seeking to unify Australians around a national holiday and celebration we can all enjoy. It is people on the other side of this debate, insisting on this date, who exclude the First Australians from Australia Day.

There is no way to interpret these remarks other than that our distress on this day is irrelevant. They are saying it doesn't matter, we don't matter.

That's staggering coming from the Prime Minister of the country.” Ms Duarte said.

Join the campaign at www.cultureislife.org @cultureislife #itstimeforchange #cultureislife

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If you need help or support, you can call Lifeline on 13 11 14 (24 hours-a-day) or contact your local Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation. If you have questions for the Australian Human Rights Commission contact the National Information line on 1300 656 419 or 02 9284 9888.