

AUSTRALIA DAY 2019

On the 26th January, all around Australia the sense of comradeship and mateship is infectious. Aussies gather to enjoy activities that we all hold dear, a backyard barbeque, a day at the beach or at the cricket. But the biggest and best party of all, is on Sydney Harbour! The whole day is a series of activities, organised by the Australia Day Council (ADC) through the Premiers Department, beginning just after dawn and continuing till well after dark. In order to ensure the smooth flow of planned activities runs without hiccup, meetings convened by Roads & Maritime Services (RMS) are attended by representatives responsible for everything that should happen, could happen, might happen & you don't want to happen! Meticulous plans are developed so that if the "proverbial should hit the fan", there is a contingency in place. It is only through the hard work of the men & women involved that Australia Day is so successful. So who benefits from all the hard work? The answer is easy, it's everyone in Oz and what we get is a great feeling of pride in our country!



At Barangaroo, Sydney Harbours' Australia Day celebrations begin at 7.30am with a traditional Aboriginal smoking ceremony and a special Indigenous dance to celebrate the world's oldest living culture of which all Australians are so proud.

At 8am Aboriginal dancers and singers perform the WugulOra Morning Ceremony.

WugulOra, meaning 'One Mob', acknowledges our shared history and the traditional custodians of the land. During the performance, Aboriginal and Australian flags are raised on top of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, the largest steel arch bridge in the world.



Between 8am and 10am, there are Stand up Paddleboard (SUP) races for dog owners & their best mate in Watsons Bay, canoe & dragon boat races in Drummoyne and Iron Cove, while about 1,000 swimmers take to the water and splash their way around Rose Bay.



At 10.45am the Great Ferry Race known as the Ferrython starts just east of the Opera House and heads east to round Shark Island before heading back to finish under the Harbour Bridge.

Sydney Sundan
Right in the mids
of all the action!!

In it's infancy, the Ferrython was a real race. The normally staid old commuter ferries that carried the public to work each day would open their throttles in earnest but in 1984, the Karrabee one of these fine old ladies started to take on water and had to withdraw from the event, quickly returning to Circular Quay to disembark passengers. She sunk at the wharf a few minutes after the last passengers & crew were evacuated, so the O. H. & S. brigade moved in and the event has become a bit less of a race. Rumour has it (in true Aussie spirit, turning a blind eye to a bit of innocent bribery & corruption), that the ferry captains meet at a local pub a couple of weeks before the race to decide the winner...



but that does not encroach on the spectacle as the Sydney Harbour Emergency Response fire boat now proceeds the Ferrython to clear the way with its fire hoses at maximum power.

After the conclusion of the Ferrython there is a small pause in proceedings as an exclusion zone around HMAS Canberra, Australia's largest naval ship comes into force for the 21 Gun Salute To Australia (from cannons located in Bradfield Park, at Milsons Point). At midday, our National Anthem sung by a large chorus of children aboard HMAS Canberra, is broadcast and all those aboard spectator boats and on the shoreline, enthusiastically join in.



Singing the National Anthem only just allowed your ears time to stop ringing from the cannon fire before three Hornet F18s came thundering in to execute combat turns so tight that the wind movement across their wings vaporises creating an amazing mist like blanket on either side of their fuselage.



They were ducking and weaving so fast that the next aircraft to fly low overhead, a Qantas A380 appeared almost stationary – almost like a toy plane sitting on top of our main mast.

Then a Ballet of Tug, Yacht and Jet Boats is conducted in Sydney Cove where the participants glided around performing intricate manoeuvres in unison.

The Australia Day Parade that followed is always a real crowd pleaser because entrants decorate their boats in Australian themes as they compete for the Australia Day Councils “Best Dressed Vessel” award. Competition is fierce, and last year the judges announced that the difference between first and second place was thinner than a well-worn Aussie thong - footwear variety, not the popular swimming costume!



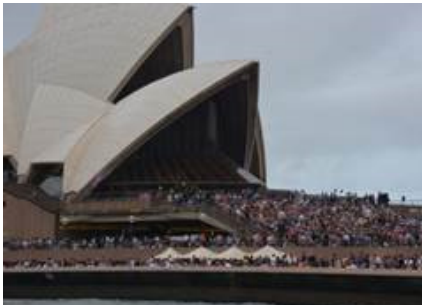
The judges’ decision was based on the following four categories : Creativity, Colour, Use of flags (and / or Australianess), and Originality.

Last years’ Best Dressed Vessel was adorned with flags and outback animals while towing their dinghy dressed as Uluru:

Runner up was our yacht “Sydney Sundancer” which has won this prestigious event nine times since inception! We had decorated in Green & Gold to celebrate all our Aussie sporting heroes who have made us proud ever since we competed as a nation under our own sporting colours.



The Australia Day Parade commenced at 12.45 departing from Kirribilli and headed west along the northern Harbour shoreline before turning south towards Barangaroo then following the southern shoreline in an easterly direction gaining tumultuous recognition from shoreline spectators as we passed crowded vantage points.



At 13.00, the Tall Ships Race set off from Bradleys Head in a westerly direction towards the finishing line under the Harbour Bridge, but these grand old ladies of a bygone era had a few tricks up their sleeve.

In the above photo, Soren Larsen, a Brigantine built in 1949 in Nykøbing Mors, Denmark and boasting, 627 square metres (6,750 sq ft) sail area is engulfed in her own gun smoke having unleashed a “broadside” in the direction of the dark hulled James Craig a barque built in 1874 in Sunderland, England, while the red sailed Coral Trekker built in Norway in 1939 from Baltic Pine, looks on. James Craig after a restoration costing nearly 30 million dollars over nearly 40 years (much by voluntary labour), was in 2003 awarded the World Ships Trust’s International Maritime Heritage Medal for authentic restoration. She joins a select band of restored ships throughout the world, including the Mary Rose (UK 1510), Vasa (Sweden 1627), USS Constitution (USA 1797), Great Britain (UK 1843) and Cutty Sark (UK 1869), which have received this honour. She has rounded Cape Horn 23 times and now graces Sydney Harbour under sail, harnessing the wind for propulsion, just as nature intended.



Later, the yachts that had entertained so well earlier in the day performed their ballet with floodlit sails that changed colour simultaneously in time with the music.



But the event that everyone was waiting for was the Australia Day fireworks. Even though Sydney's famous New Years' Eve fireworks enjoy the reputation of being the world's best, the display on Australia Day could never be called a "fizzer" by comparison. Like every activity conducted to celebrate our nations birthday, it was spectacular.

Whether viewed from the shore or from aboard a boat, the colour & variety of fireworks is simply amazing!

There is no "Doof Doof" or "Jigga Jigga" electro music aboard our boat, we play songs that epitomise the Aussie ethos. "We come from the land down under" and "I still call Australia home" feature heavily in the repertoire. The words of "We are one but we are many...from all the lands we come" are particularly appropriate because I believe we can all live in harmony if we put Australia first, Australia second and Australia third. After that, any differences in attitude, opinion, religious belief or ethnicity can be appreciated as long we all love Australia first and ourselves second.

