**This was a letter to the Editor of our local paper the Murray Pioneer. Take it as you wish**

Australia Day History

THIS is a history lesson that neither the government, educators or the media seem to know.

Australia Day is celebrated on 26 January because it is the day Australians received their independence from British rule, when the Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948 was enacted on 26 January 1948.  
It was the first time that ‘Australian citizen’ had been used in any legislation. From that day on all people born in Australia became Australian citizens.

Prior to that day all people living in Australia were ‘British subjects’, regardless of whether they were aboriginal, immigrants or people born in Australia. As British subjects people were required to travel on British passports and fight in British wars.

The day of 26 January 1948 was the day all citizens in Australia became Australians, not British. It was on 26 January under the Nationality and Citizenship Act that we became our own people and made our own decisions.

This is why citizenship ceremonies are held on Australia Day – 26 January.

Australia Day has nothing to do with Captain Cook, who land- ed in Sydney on 28 April 1770, or the first fleet arriving in Botany Bay on 18 January, or ‘invasion’.

Australians of today abhor what was done under British governance to the aboriginal people, as well as many other cultures around the world. So after the horrors of WWII we decided to fix it and become our own people – Australians – and to make our own decisions of how our citizens would be treated, so the Nationality and Citizenship Act was enacted.

Until 26 January 1948 aboriginal people were not protected by law and for the first time since Captain Cook’s landing they were given the full protection of Australian Law.

We are all citizens of Australia and should be celebrating Australia Day and giving thanks for the freedoms, the lifestyles and opportunities that we currently enjoy. We call Australia the ‘Lucky Country’.

The date cannot be changed or ignored because Australia Day is 26 January and it is not for any individual, council or business to not acknowledge the history and celebrate the day.

ANNE STEPIEN  
Kingston-on-Murray