

Opinion

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Little wonder that this island continent is a magnet for people from everywhere else

Piers Akerman

We have a full basket of things to celebrate about January 26

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I don't buy my politics or opinions at Woolworths, or Aldi for that matter.

Given that the bulk of the Australia Day products they are now refusing to sell would have been made in China, probably by forced or even slave labour, why would I trust these retailers to sell anything that might add value to the lives of Australians?

Yet the woke who continually bleat their concerns about some ethnic minorities, including all Aboriginal Australians, are prepared to endorse the anti-Australian virtue-signalling propaganda pushed by Woolworths and Aldi.

Woolworths has a lot of form in this area as it, like most of the major law firms, insurance companies, almost all universities and the bulk of the media organisations, are suckers for anything that smacks of feel-good wokeist nonsense, ranging from human-induced climate change to the failed Yes case in the now sunken Albanese referendum.

The issues that most Australians are concerned about are not those

which the big grocers get their knickers knotted over.

Ask anyone searching for products in any aisle and they'll tell you that the cost of living is their biggest worry and that this anxiety is not being addressed by the supermarkets, let alone the federal Government, which is still to deliver on its \$275 electricity price cut, among other election promises.

Australia Day marks a lot more than the end of the long summer holiday for schoolchildren and many workers.

For most Australians, it is a special day on which, in the company of family or friends – and particularly new immigrants – a collective thanks is given for the privilege of living in one of the oldest liberal democracies on earth and for the freedoms that are the legacy of the British settlement.

There's little wonder that this island continent is a magnet for people from everywhere else.

The queues for Islamic, Buddhist or Hindu countries are non-existent. Yet there exists a handful of activists who persist in viewing January 26 as a black day for those who, prior to 1788, were living a Palaeolithic tribal existence.

The fantasy that pre-European Aboriginal life was an idyllic

pastoral relies on a most extraordinary and increasingly elaborate interpretation of history, including by the author Bruce Pascoe, who identifies as Aboriginal although studies of his genealogical record reveal no Aboriginal antecedents.

For his extremely creative work in providing an alternate history to the records of Aboriginal life from the time of first contact, Pascoe has been awarded a position at Melbourne University and numerous contracts for books and programs by the principal woke propagandist, the ABC.

While Aboriginal inhabitants lived Stone Age lives, Pascoe and the revisionists now claim that they were the inventors of parliamentary democracy, as well as aeronautical and navigational arts.

Talking up these fantasies may make some who have self-marginalised themselves from the mainstream feel better about themselves, but they are inaccurate.

Australia Day, according to the woke, should really be called Invasion Day but Salvation Day or Enlightenment Day would be more accurate descriptions of the arrival of Western culture on the continent named Australia by the great navigator and chart maker Matthew



Flinders.

The year 2024, coincidentally, marks the 250th anniversary of Flinders' birth, and will be celebrated by those who sail the seas around Australia and Tasmania, which Flinders and his friend, the British naval surgeon George Bass, first identified as an island.

Aboriginals weren't versed in offshore navigation, as they had no seagoing craft capable of going more than a few hundred metres from a beach, unless it was in very sheltered waters.

This is not to dismiss the skills needed to exist as hunter-gatherers and certainly not to ignore the extensive identification of native toxic plants that was developed during the thousands of years of pre-

settlement existence.

But other claims made for them, including their care for the environment, are palpably false or at best debatable.

Pandering to activists like the ranting Senator Lidia Thorpe and her trade union allies, including Voice advocate Thomas Mayo, by ignoring the benefits of Western civilisation and traducing Australia Day is a slur on the millions who have made homes and lives for their families here, many with Aboriginals, since Captain Arthur Phillip hoisted the Union flag at Farm Cove.

Roll on Australia Day, celebrate this great country, the opportunities it has provided and will continue to offer to those who seek a bright future and not a bleak one.

Do we want Sydney to be homeless hell run by slumlords?

As the Prime Minister seeks ideas to ease the cost of living in his May budget, he must prioritise housing. Housing costs eat up a huge proportion of incomes and they have soared in the past few years.

In the past 12 months alone, average rents have rocketed by \$100 a week – even more in our biggest cities. Less than one per cent of advertised rentals are affordable for a minimum wage earner.

If nothing is done, the number of households experiencing homelessness, overcrowded homes or rental stress will soar from 640,000 in 2021 to 940,000 by 2041.

Australia's warped housing system is creating a new class of working

Wendy Hayhurst



poor. It is crunch time. Choosing to be timid is a huge risk to social stability.

Places like California and London illustrate the consequence of inaction. If you walk through downtown San Francisco today you will see streets lined with tent encampments of people with nowhere affordable to live.

California needs 2.5 million more homes but San Francisco approved less than one new dwelling per day in the first half of 2023.

London's housing crisis has spawned a cottage industry of slum

landlording. People pay a small fortune for a makeshift lean-to or a damp, rat-plagued room with exposed electrical wiring. Meantime, London is set to miss its target of 300,000 new homes a year by the mid-2020s.

So if we don't want London or San Francisco as the new normal, what's the alternative path?

We need more new homes in every part of the market. The National Housing Accord says NSW must build 75,000 units a year, mostly in greater Sydney. Yet, updated forecasts for Sydney predict just 36,000 a year for the next five.

We must be equally focused on the right type of supply, in the right locations. Over the last decade social

housing declined to a forty year low of around four per cent of overall housing stock.

A fair slice of new homes must be targeted at low to moderate income households. As an immediate first step, the \$10bn Housing Australia Future Fund must at least be doubled on the back of commodity-fuelled budget surpluses.

This would boost the housing subsidy revenue stream and add to the 30,000 homes already pledged over the next five years.

Then governments must also use planning powers to require developers to set aside five to ten per cent of new stock to be rented below market rate for low to moderate income earners.

Property developers will factor this obligation into the price they pay for the land, just as they do in many other countries – and even now in the City of Sydney. A well-designed and publicised scheme should not increase project costs.

Australia must also revisit tax breaks for private landlords. These cost \$8.5bn in 2021 and are forecast to soar to \$20bn in the decade.

These arrangements are 25 years old. A steady roll-back will release resources to deliver real change.

Housing problem is a big, complex problem. But ignoring it is simply not an option.

Wendy Hayhurst is CEO of the Community Housing Industry Association