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Joyce attacks 'gutted' critics of national day Date

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Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce has lashed out at people who want to change the date of Australia Day, labelling them "miserable gutted" and arguing the idea was "political correctness gone mad".

Mr Joyce's intervention came after his one-time cabinet colleague, the former industry, resources and science minister Ian Macfarlane, revealed his newfound belief that the national day should move "to remove a potential roadblock to reconciliation and a greater Australia".

Describing himself as a "conservative, Anglo-Celtic Australian," Mr Macfarlane has said the day was inherently divisive because it commemorated what many Indigenous Australians regard as an invasion. He likened it to the idea of a Scottish person celebrating the Vikings raping and pillaging or England's assault on Scotland.

January 26 marks the arrival of the first 11 convict ships from Great Britain. It has been celebrated as Australia Day since 1994 but is not embraced by many Australians who call it "Invasion Day".

Mr Joyce told Sydney radio station 2GB he gets "sick of these people who every time, every time there's something on, they just want to make you feel guilty".

"They don't like Christmas, they don't like Australia Day, they're just miserable gutted people and I wish they would crawl under a rock and hide for a little bit," the Nationals leader said, calling on people to stop "weeping and gnashing your teeth about me about the terrible evils we have done".

"This is Australia Day and if you don't like it, I don't know mate, go to work, do something else."

Mr Macfarlane said his views had changed since leaving Parliament, noticing ongoing division - including ABC radio station Triple J's shortlived decision to move the annual Hottest 100 countdown and Fremantle City Council's cancellation of its events.

The comparison with the experience of his Scottish ancestors "was the moment I decided that as a conservative, Anglo-Celtic Australian, I want to play a part in the push to changing the date of Australia Day.

"I believe it is an important way to prevent a potential schism in Australia's society and to remove a potential roadblock to reconciliation and a greater Australia."

He said Australians could not be united around the national day because, to some, it represents "terrible wrongdoings".

"It's about healing a wound, drawing a line, getting on with the really important issues facing our Indigenous communities," Mr Macfarlane wrote in *The Australian*.

"That said, I acknowledge, as do many Indigenous leaders, that this symbolic date change won't stem the real disadvantage still suffered by many Indigenous Australians. As a country we should look to the things that are working to close the gap for our indigenous brothers and sisters."

He suggested March 1, to mark the date when the Commonwealth government took over many functions of the former colonies in 1901.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and Opposition Leader Bill Shorten have not expressed any desire to move the date.