



Best photo of the devastating Australian bushfires - BBC News



Covid-19 pandemic, declared by the World Health Organization (WHO). (pharmaceutical-technology.com)



Australia Day: Why it's so controversial - CNN

2020

IN THE NEWS

2020 sees a global pandemic in the form of COVID-19 with measures such as social distancing, regular hand sanitization and the wearing of masks an 'every day'.

In March, there are huge lines of newly unemployed people outside Centrelink offices across the country, whilst Centrelink and myGov websites crash with too many people applying online for unemployment benefits.

The pandemic triggers cases of panic buying across the country, causing major supermarket chains to ration toilet paper.

The genetic sequence of the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 is published in January triggering intense global R&D activity to develop a vaccine. A UK grandmother receives the world's first vaccine (Pfizer) dose on 8 December.

Twelve years after the national apology to Indigenous Australians, the debate over Australia Day continues to heat up as some Australians protest annually, via "Invasion Day" rallies, against a date that marks the start of colonisation.

2019 was the hottest year on record with the bushfire season causing massive damage throughout the country. In terms of the area of land burnt, wildlife deaths, and damage to the environment (some of it permanent damage, such as the burning of remnant rainforest), the 2019-2020 fires are the worst in Australian history.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), which was legislated in 2013, goes into full operation.

Protests are held in numerous cities, part of a series of 'George Floyd' protests around the world, with Aboriginal deaths in custody a focus in the local context.

The ADF releases the final report of the inquiry into alleged war crimes during the War in Afghanistan, highlighting credible evidence of 23 incidents of unlawful killings and a further two instances of the war crime of "cruel treatment". The inquiry also found that Australian soldiers summarily executed non-combatants and prisoners.

Vincent Namatjira wins Archibald Prize for his portrait, *Stand strong for who you are*, a self-portrait with Adam Goodes.

Australian of the Year is James Muecke, an ophthalmologist who is passionate about fighting blindness.

PRIME MINISTER

* *Scott Morrison* *



Australian
POPULATION
25.7 million

In finance news ...

The Australian economy goes into recession for the first time in nearly thirty years, as GDP falls 7 per cent in the June quarter.

In the midst of social distancing measures and ongoing lockdown regulations, online shopping becomes normalised. The BNPL (buy-now-pay-later) space further grows whilst the number of people using credit cards declines.

The government introduces an Early Access to Super scheme, for eligible citizens financially affected by the pandemic.

The extension of the Bring Forward Rule (for eligible retirees) is delayed.

The age limit for receiving spouse contributions to super is lifted from age 69 to 74.

By 2019, the number of superannuation entities decreases to 207 from 1,511 in 2004: a marked consolidation to less than one-seventh (or 14%) of the original number.

In 2020, super assets are just under \$3 trillion.

Reserve Bank of Australia Cash Rate at 0.1%.

Australia's inflation rate at 0.9%.



- IQ Group celebrates 20 years in business.
- IQ group wins 'Best Superannuation Industry Consultancy' (2019).
- HIQ Learning Services, continues to

grow after its launch in 2018, providing contemporary courses and consultancy for both individuals and businesses to further develop their learning culture.

- In 2019, in partnership with the Mother's Day Classic Foundation and Women in Super, IQ launched a series of workshops for volunteers to build on their fundamental project management skills and navigation skills for achieving project success.
- In 2019, IQ Group launched the Pat Barker Foundation, in memory of Pat Baker, who was instrumental in building IQ Group Australia. The goal of the Foundation is to support two charities, The Smith Family and Hopes and Dreams, through fundraising, volunteering and donations.

SPORT

Many sporting events and competitions are cancelled in the midst of the pandemic. Australia defeats India in the 2020 ICC Women's T20 World Cup. Australia's women's soccer team, the Matildas, under the captaincy of Sam Kerr, is ranked amongst the best players in the world, and are a world top 10 team. QLD wins State of Origin. Richmond defeats Geelong in AFL Premiership. Melbourne Storm defeat Penrith Panthers in NRL Grand Final. Horse Twilight Payment wins Melbourne Cup.

TECHNOLOGY

In 2020, there are just over 4 billion users of the internet and over 1.8 billion websites, with Zoom (video conferencing) becoming a major part of people's lives.

The pandemic spurs innovation: Innovative algorithms allow us to identify patterns in the voice associated with ailments; many applications of blockchain technology help to manage pandemic data more reliably; 3D printing plays a role in the manufacturing of ventilators and other medical components; and smartphone tracking apps optimise the tracking of infections.

Developments occur in air traffic management (to accommodate the increasing number of commercially operated, unmanned aerial vehicles). NASA's Unmanned Aircraft System Traffic Management invention enables new package delivery methods, precision agriculture monitoring, disaster response and more.

In May, the human spaceflight by SpaceX is the first in nine years.

The ACCC works to create a mandatory code of conduct requiring Facebook, Google and other tech giants to pay news outlets when they use its content.

In Pop Culture

Numerous films, originally scheduled for theatrical release, are postponed or released on video-on-demand or streaming services.

Jumanji: The Next Level and *1917* films released and *LegoMasters: The Block* and *Married at First Sight* are most watched TV shows.

Blinding Lights (The Weekend); *Dance Monkey (Tones and I)* and *Watermelon Sugar (Harry Styles)* are ARIA top hits.