Transcript of poem written by Steven Oliver about Australia Day.

Title of poem is “Hate, He Said”.

Hate, he said was in my heart

Hate, he said drove us apart

Hate, he said to let it go

Hate, he said but he did not know

That what I had inside of me

Was a sadness born of empathy

That because I did not celebrate

It did not mean I was full of hate

I asked him to just try and see

Through my eyes the tragedy

Of dispossession, of pain, of hurt

Of the red of blood that stained this earth

I mourn for all the lives that were lost

I mourn for what this country cost

I mourn for how we came to be

For the end does not justify the means

It’s in the past he said, move on

Why mourn for something so long gone?

I looked at him and I came to say,

Do you think we should forget about ANZAC day?

It’s not the same was his retort

I said wait a minute, give it some thought

People died while fighting for their land

Protecting it from a foreign hand

Make no mistake there was a war

That had been fought on these very shores

A war that didn’t always discriminate

Where the elderly or infants could meet the same fate

As those who fought to protect them so

And that’s why we should never let go

Never forget what price was paid

For us to live as we do today

He looked at me quite seriously

Said he celebrates because we’re free

He celebrates our democracy

And everything great in this country

I said, that’s fine, I get that, that’s clear

Just please don’t forget how we got here

Just take a moment to think it through

What price was paid for me and you

To live in this country as we do

Don’t take for granted the sacrifice

Both of land and of life

We need to remember all who died

Not let their memories be swept aside

You got an apology, he said

It talked about loss and mentioned the dead

What more do you want? He asked of me,

And so I replied in the hope he would see

We have a day for Australia, the Queen

For New Years and Christmas and all those between

Like Labour and Easter, the ANZAC Parade

And just what the hell is Boxing Day?

There’s even a day that we have for the Shows

But nothing that speaks of my people’s woes

A national day to acknowledge the cause

To acknowledge all that has happened before

And I don’t mean NAIDOC I mean something more

Where the whole nation stops, like it does for a horse!

A day, is that too much to ask?

To remind us, don’t ignore the past

He processed my words and looked at the ground

We both sat in silence, then there was a sound

A sound that seemed like heaven to me

A sound of two words that said, I agree!

We talked some more as the day came to end

And despite our differences I’d made a new friend

He understood as the day came to night

That I needed some things in this country made right

And because I did not celebrate

It did not mean I was full of hate.