FLAG FLYING POLICY

1. POLICY OBJECTIVES

The Flinders Ranges Council (Council) recognises that flagpoles are a community asset and that they are to be used for the benefit of the community and not for commercial or political gain.

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the flying of flags at Council's flagpole sites and ensure that Council complies with flag protocols as set by the Australian Federal Government and/or the South Australian Government and to guide the community and associations on protocols at other official flagpole sites within the Council area e.g. war memorials.

2. SCOPE

This policy establishes guidelines for the flying and display of flags under the care and control of The Flinders Ranges Council and for other official sites within the Council area.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

Council will comply with the guidelines of the flag protocols as set by the Australian Federal and State Governments in instances where it has control over the display or management of flags. This may include the lowering of specific flags to half-mast or the flying of specific flags.

4. PROTOCOLS

4.1 Permanent flag sites

Council recognises the significance of flying certain flags and will permanently fly or display the following flags at designated sites:

- Quorn Town Hall, Seventh Street, Quorn
  The Quorn Town Hall site has a single flagpole which provides for the permanent display of the Australian National Flag only.

- Quorn Council Chambers, Seventh Street, Quorn
  The Council Chambers has a (portable) flag display for two (2) flags which provides for the display of the Australian National Flag (left) and the South Australia State Flag (right). This portable display may be removed from the Chambers and used for special ceremonies such as citizenship etc.

- Quorn War Memorial, Railway Terrace, Quorn
  The Quorn War Memorial has a yardarm flagpole for three (3) flags which provides for the permanent display of the Australian National Flag and other flags as appropriate for remembrance ceremonies such as ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day.

- Hawker War Memorial, Chace View Terrace, Hawker
  The Hawker War Memorial has a yardarm flagpole for three (3) flags which provides for the display of the Australian National Flag and other flags as appropriate for remembrance ceremonies such as ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day. There is also a single flagpole for the permanent display of the Australian National Flag only.

- Quorn and District War Memorial Swimming Pool, Silo Road, Quorn
  The Quorn and District War Memorial Swimming Pool has a flagpole which provides for one (1) flag. This flagpole is used for Australia Day events only and allows for the display of the Australian National Flag. Other flags, such as the South Australia State Flag and Aboriginal Flag will be displayed via other methods when required such as

Citizenship Ceremonies where the portable Council Chambers display may be utilised.

- Cradock War Memorial, Main Road, Cradock
  The Cradock War Memorial has a single flagpole for the permanent display of the Australian Flag.

- Blue Burt Park, Hawker
  Blue Burt Park in Hawker has two (2) flagpoles that are utilised for special ceremonies and occasions such as Australia Day and the Australian Flag and Aboriginal Flag are flown on these poles for these occasions only.

  See Attachment A for default flag flying protocols.

4.2 Flag Flying

- Council will fly the Australian National Flag according to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet Australian Flag protocol as set by the Australian Government (see Attachment B Australian Flags Booklet).
- Variations to the flags being raised on any particular day are advised to the nominated Council representative by the Federal or South Australian Government. If Council receives a formal request for all flags to be flown at half-mast Council's default position will be to comply with such requests in relation to flags on the external flagpole at the Quorn Town Hall.
- The Australian National Flag may be flown at half-mast at the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer or nominated Council representative if a local (or former) resident dies and Council receives a request from the family representative to fly the flag at half-mast in recognition of their passing. The flag will be flown at half-mast from the date of the request up to and including the date of the funeral service. This will apply whether the burial takes place locally or outside the district. The request must come from the family of the deceased, delegate of the family or on advice from the funeral director. A sign noting for whom the flag is half-mast and any relevant funeral details will be placed on the Council noticeboard in the bottom right hand corner and will remain there whilst the flag is flown at half-mast.
- Council may receive requests from non-political and non-commercial community organisations to fly a particular flag. This may be related to a special event such as the flying of the Eureka Flag to celebrate democracy in Australia or the flying of the Rainbow Flag to promote and support diversity. However, Council is unable to accommodate such requests given the external flagpole at the Quorn Town Hall is used exclusively to fly the Australian National Flag. Councils default position is that all such requests will be refused. In the future Council may consider a second or third flagpole at this location.
- All flags that are flown overnight are to have permanent lighting installed as per Federal and State guidelines.

4.3 Special Events and Ceremonies

- For events such as Anzac and Remembrance Day held at war memorials in Quorn, Hawker and Cradock the Australian National Flag will fly in accordance with Attachment 1. Where there is only a single flagpole present (Cradock), the Australian National Flag will be the only flag to fly. Where there is a yardarm present (Quorn and Hawker), the following will apply:
  - ANZAC Day
    - Australian National Flag to fly on left pole.
    - New Zealand National Flag to fly on right pole.
  - Remembrance Day
    - Australian National Flag to fly on middle pole.

- For Australia Day, where it is held at the Quorn Memorial Swimming Pool, the Australian Flag will fly only during the ceremony and where it is held at Blue Burt Park in Hawker, the Australian Flag will fly on the left pole and the Aboriginal Flag on the right pole.
- For citizenship ceremonies, flags will be flown and / or displayed in line with protocols as per advice from the Department of Home Affairs including displaying of the Official Australian Portrait of His Majesty King Charles III and the Australian Coat of Arms.
- For other special occasions such as NAIDOC Week, Reconciliation Day the Aboriginal Flag will be flown where it is possible to do so but must be flown with the Australian Flag and following the above-mentioned protocols. In these instances, Council will advise other parties via email of what flags will be flown and protocols to be followed.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for this policy.

6. REVIEW AND ADOPTION

To be reviewed within 12 months after a General Election, in line with legislation and any legislative changes or by resolution of Council.

Attachments: A Default Flag Flying Protocols
B DPC Australian Flags Booklet

Adopted by Council 18 March 2025
Resolution 057/2025

Review Date	Version Number	Change	Resolution
	1	New Policy	057/2025

Default Flag Flying Protocols

Event/Day	**Number of Poles**	**Flag/s**
Standard, Australia Day, Remembrance Day	One (1)	Australian National
	Two (2)	Australian National South Australian State
	Three (3)	Australian National South Australian State Aboriginal
	Four (4)	Australian National South Australian State Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander
ANZAC Day	One (1)	Australian National
	Two (2)	Australian National New Zealand National
	Three (3)	Australian National New Zealand National
	Four (4)	Australian National New Zealand National

*All flags to be flown in order of preference as per Flags Booklet (Att B)

DRAFT

Australian Government

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Australian Flags

Foreword

***Australian Flags* was first published under the auspices of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet in 1995 to provide information about the Australian National Flag, official Australian flags such as the Australian Aboriginal Flag and the Torres Strait Islander Flag, state and territory flags, and other flags flown in Australia.**

A 2nd edition of *Australian Flags* was published in 1998.

This 3rd edition of *Australian Flags* has a new structure to make the book easier to read and new illustrations to describe flag protocol:

- Part 1 outlines the elements of the Australian National Flag
- Part 2 explains the protocols for the appropriate use and the flying of the Australian National Flag
- Part 3 details other official flags of Australia
- Part 4 outlines the history of the Australian National Flag.

Australian Flags can be used as an educational resource and a source of general information about the history and proper use of the Australian National Flag and other flags of Australia by the Australian community, flag marshals and visitors to Australia.

A hard copy of *Australian Flags* can be obtained free of charge by contacting the electorate office of your local Senator or Member of the House of Representatives.

About the Parliamentary and Government Branch

The Parliamentary and Government Branch is part of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and is responsible for providing advice on flag protocol.

Further information about the Branch's activities is available on our website or by contacting:

Parliamentary and Government Branch
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
PO Box 6500
Canberra ACT 2600
Telephone: (02) 6271 5601
Email: nationalsymbols@pmc.gov.au

Commonwealth Flag Network

The Parliamentary and Government Branch is responsible for the administration of the Commonwealth Flag Network.

This free service notifies flag marshals of flag protocol when flying the Australian National Flag on special occasions such as Anzac Day and Australian National Flag Day or occasions when flags should be flown at half-mast.

Flag marshals and those interested in flying the Australian National Flag are encouraged to register to become members of the Commonwealth Flag Network.

Free issue of Australian flags

The Australian National Flag, the Australian Aboriginal Flag and the Torres Strait Islander Flag can be obtained free of charge by contacting the electorate office of your local Senator or Member of the House of Representatives.

Who can obtain a flag

Flags are available to constituents and eligible organisations, please contact the electorate office of your local Senator or Member of the House of Representatives to request a flag.

Acknowledgements

The Parliamentary and Government Branch would like to express its thanks to the people and organisations that contributed their knowledge and expertise to each edition of *Australian Flags*:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
- Australian Border Force
- Australian Defence Force
- Australian Federal Police
- Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
- Australian Maritime Safety Authority
- Australian Olympic Committee
- Australian War Memorial
- Ballarat Fine Art Gallery
- Christmas Island Shire Council
- Cocos (Keeling) Islands Shire Council
- Mr Harold Thomas
- Mr John Vaughan, Vexillographer
- National Archives of Australia
- National Library of Australia
- National Indigenous Australians Agency
- Norfolk Island Government
- Office of the Administrator of the Indian Ocean Territories
- Offices of State Governors
- Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston
- Rigby Ltd
- Sporting Pix Australia
- State and territory government protocol officers

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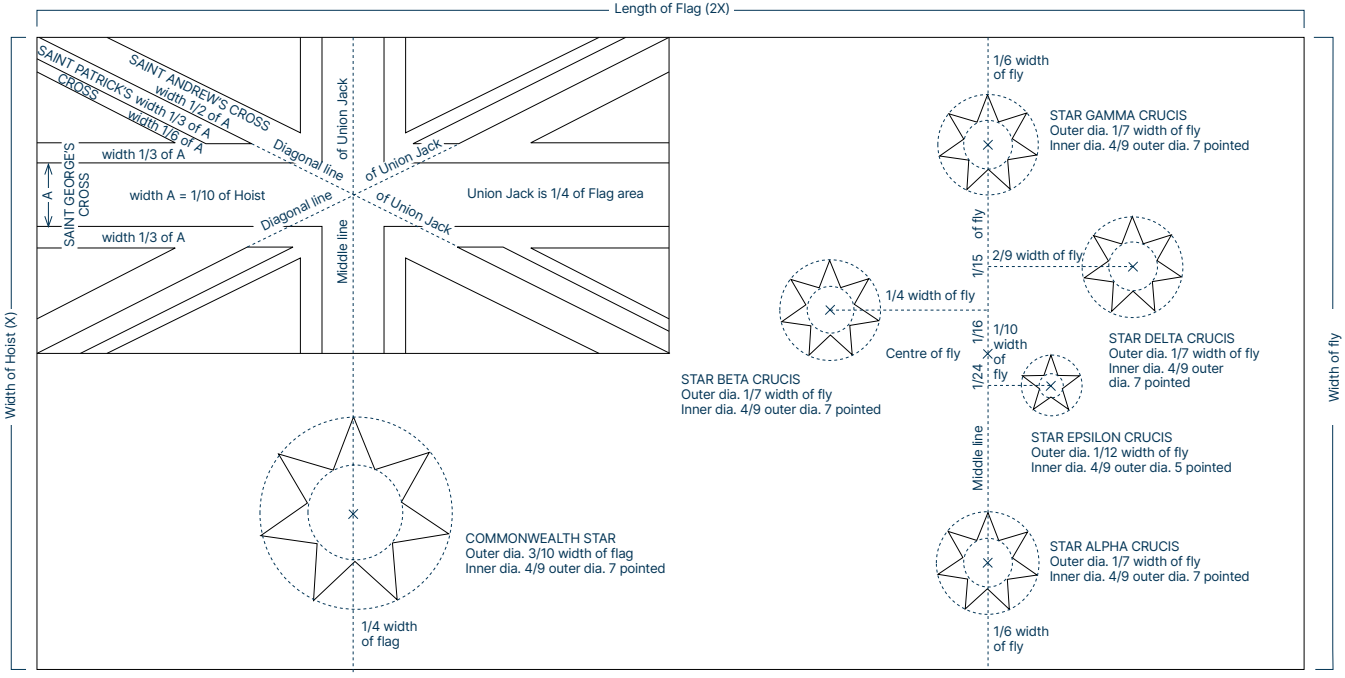
Part 1

The Australian National Flag

The Elements of the Australian National Flag



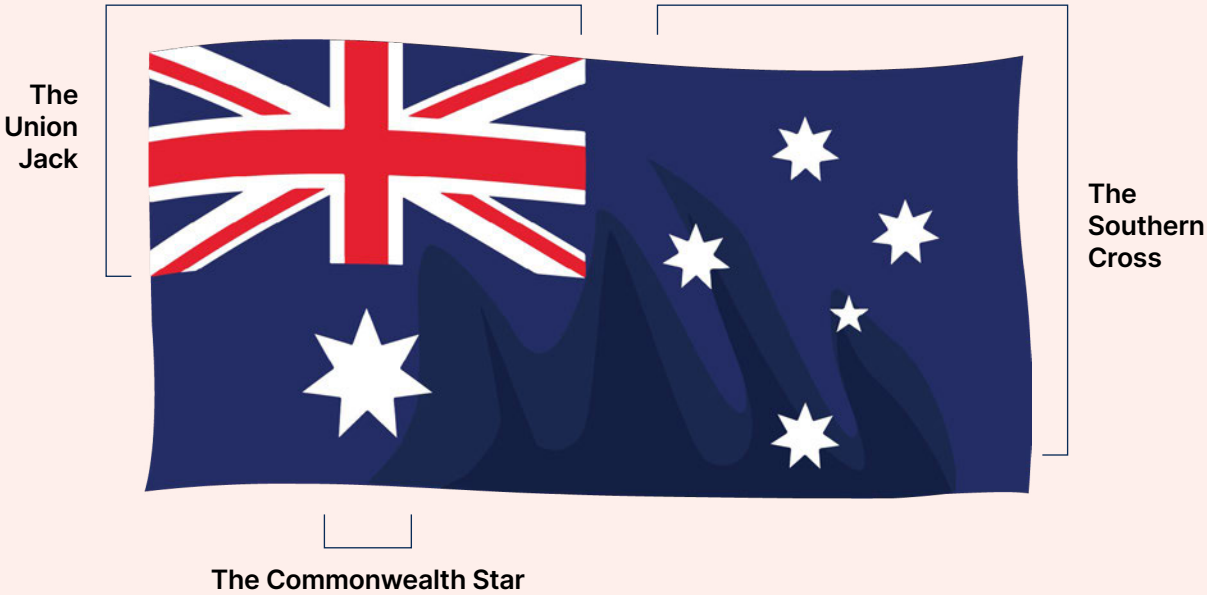
Flag specifications are as outlined in the Flags Act 1953 (Schedule 1).

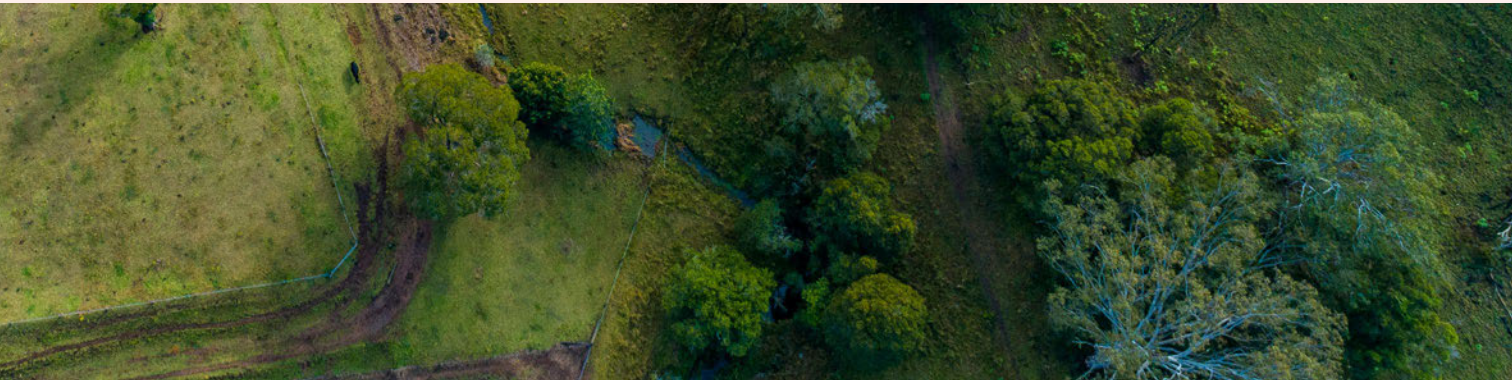
The Australian National Flag consists of three elements:

- the Union Jack
- the Commonwealth Star
- the Southern Cross.

Colour references for the Australian National Flag are:

- Blue: PANTONE® 280
- Red: PANTONE® 185.


The Union Jack
The Southern Cross
The Commonwealth Star



The Union Jack

The Australian National Flag has the Union Jack in the upper left-hand quarter nearest the flagpole (the 'canton') to acknowledge the history of British settlement in Australia. The rest of the background (the 'field') is coloured dark blue. The Union Jack, the commonly used name for the Union Flag, is the flag of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and has its own history.

The first Union Flag, created in 1606, combined the red cross of St George (England) on a white background and the white diagonal cross of St Andrew (Scotland) on a dark blue background. When Ireland became part of the United Kingdom in 1801, the red diagonal cross of St Patrick was added to the Union Jack.

The Commonwealth Star

The Commonwealth Star on the Australian National Flag created in 1901 had six points representing the states (formerly colonies). The seventh point was added in 1908 to represent Commonwealth territories. Another reason for this change was for the star to match the crest of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms, the first version of which was created in 1908. The Commonwealth Star is sometimes referred to as the Federation Star.

The Southern Cross

Four seven-pointed stars arranged in a cross, together with a smaller five-pointed star appear on the right-hand side (the 'fly') of the flag to represent the Southern Cross. The Southern Cross is a constellation that can be easily seen in the night skies of the Southern Hemisphere. It was a common feature of many of the early unofficial Australian flags. The formal name of the Southern Cross is *Crux Australis* and the individual stars are known by the first five letters of the Greek alphabet in order of brightness: (clockwise from the bottom star) *Alpha*, *Beta*, *Gamma*, *Delta* and *Epsilon*.

The original competition-winning design had each star with a different number of points, ranging from nine to five, to reflect their brightness. The number of points was simplified and the official drawing in the *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* on 23 February 1903 showed the four larger stars of the same size with seven points each and one smaller star with five points.

Australian National Flag Day

Australian National Flag Day was proclaimed by the Governor-General on 28 August 1996 and has been observed since 3 September 1996.

Australian National Flag Day acknowledges the first time the flag was officially flown on 3 September 1901.

Australians can celebrate Australian National Flag Day by flying or displaying the Australian National Flag on 3 September each year.

Part 2

The protocols for the appropriate use and the flying of the flag

Flying and use of the Australian National Flag

The Australian National Flag may be flown on every day of the year. It is important to observe correct flag protocol when flying the flag. The following guidelines apply to the Australian National Flag and to flags generally.

Who can fly the Australian National Flag?

Any person may fly the Australian National Flag. However, the flag should be treated with the respect and dignity it deserves as the nation's most important national symbol.

Flag protocol is based on longstanding international and national practice.

Dignity of the flag

The flag should not be allowed to fall or lie on the ground.

The flag should not be used to cover a statue, monument or plaque for an unveiling ceremony; to cover a table or seat; or to mask boxes, barriers or the space between the floor and the ground level on a dais or platform.

The flag should never be flown when in damaged, faded or dilapidated condition. When the material of the flag deteriorates to a point where it is no longer suitable for use, it should be destroyed privately, in a dignified way.

Flying and handling

When flown in Australia or on Australian territory the Australian National Flag takes precedence over all other flags. See the order of precedence when flying the Australian National Flag in company with other flags.

The flag should not be flown in a position inferior to that of any other flag or ensign. The superior position is based on the formation of the flagpoles in the set, not the height of the flag on the flagpole.

The flag should not be smaller than that of any other flag or ensign.

The flag should be raised briskly and lowered with dignity.

The flag should always be flown aloft and free as close as possible to the top of the flag mast, with the rope tightly secured.

Unless all the flags can be raised and lowered simultaneously, the Australian National Flag should be raised first and lowered last when flown with other flags.

When the flag is raised or lowered, or when it is carried in a parade or review, all present should face the flag and remain silent. Those in uniform should salute.

The flag should be raised no earlier than first light and should be lowered no later than dusk.

The flag may only be flown at night when illuminated.

Two flags should not be flown from the same flagpole.

The flag should not be flown upside down, even as a signal of distress.

Disposal of flags

When a flag becomes dilapidated and no longer suitable for use, it should be destroyed privately and in a dignified way. For example, it may be cut into small unrecognisable pieces, placed in an appropriate sealed bag or closed container then disposed of with the normal rubbish collection.

Alternatively you may conduct a flag retirement ceremony for a significant occasion. Further information is available on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's website.

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Displaying the Australian National Flag

Whether the flag is displayed flat against a surface (either horizontally or vertically), on a staff, on a flag rope, or suspended vertically in the middle of a street, the canton should be in the uppermost left quarter as viewed by a person facing the flag.

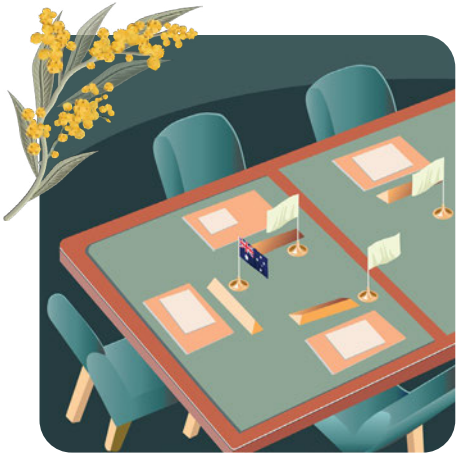
In the case of the Australian National Flag, the Union Jack should be seen in the top left quarter of the flag. 1

Even when the flag is displayed vertically, this rule must be followed, although to the casual observer the flag appears to be back to front. The reason for this is that the canton is the position of honour on the flag.

When the Australian National Flag is displayed alone on a speaker's platform, it should be flat against the wall or on a staff on the right of the speaker as he or she faces the audience. 2

When displayed on a flag rope (a 'halyard'), the flag should be as close as possible to the top, with the flag rope tight.

If the national flag is vertically suspended in an east-west street, the canton should be towards the north. In a north-south street the canton should be towards the east. 3



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Use of the flags on conference tables

Should it be decided to place the flags of nations on a conference table, a single flag representative of each nation present should be placed in front of the leader of that country's delegation. 4

Flying the Australian National Flag alone

When the Australian National Flag is flown alone, on top of, or in front of a building with two flagpoles, it should be flown on the flagpole to the left of a person facing the building. 5

When flown alone, on top of, or in front of a building with more than two flagpoles, the Australian National Flag should be flown in the centre or as near as possible to it. 6

Flying the Australian National Flag with other nations' flags

When the Australian National Flag is flown with the flags of other nations, all the flags should, if possible, be the same size and flown on flagpoles of the same height. According to international practice, no national flag should fly above another in peacetime.

The Australian National Flag must, however, take the position of honour.

When flying with only one other national flag, the Australian National Flag should fly on the left of a person facing the building. 7

When flying the Australian National Flag along with several other national flags, the flags should follow the Australian National Flag in alphabetical order.

The Australian Government's policy in relation to the flying of other nations' flags is to fly only the official flags of nations recognised by Australia.

In a line of several national flags, and where there is an odd number of flags and only one Australian National Flag is available, the Australian National Flag should be flown in the centre. 8

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If there is an even number of flags and only one Australian National Flag is available, the Australian National Flag should be flown on the far left of a person facing the building. 9

10

If there is an even number of flags and two Australian National Flags are available, one should be flown at each end of the line. The flagpoles must be of uniform height. 10

11

When crossed with another national flag, the Australian National Flag should be on the left of a person facing the flags and its staff should cross in front of the staff of the other flag. 11

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In a semi-circle of flags, the Australian National Flag should be in the centre. 12

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In an enclosed circle of flags, the Australian National Flag should be flown on the flagpole immediately opposite the main entrance to the building or arena. 13

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Flying the Australian National Flag with state and other flags

When flying the Australian National Flag with state flags and/or other flags (such as the Australian Aboriginal Flag, the Torres Strait Islander Flag, local government flags, house flags, club pennants, corporate and company flags) in a line of flagpoles, the order of the flags should follow the rules of precedence. The Australian National Flag should always be flown on the far left of a person facing the building. 14 With the exception of a flagpole fitted with a gaff, a house flag or club pennant should never be flown above a national flag.

For example, if the Australian National Flag was being flown with a state flag, the Australian Aboriginal Flag and a local government flag, the Australian National Flag would be flown on the far left (the position of honour), followed by the state flag, the Australian Aboriginal Flag and the local government flag.

If there are two Australian National Flags, one can be flown at each end of a line of flags. 15

If one flagpole is higher than other poles, the Australian National Flag should be flown on that flagpole.

For example, when displaying the Australian National Flag, the Australian Aboriginal Flag and the Torres Strait Islander Flag on a flag stand where the centre flagpole is highest, the Australian National Flag should be placed in the centre.

In a single or double row of flagpoles, arranged at right angles from a structure, such as a building or memorial, the Australian National Flag should be flown on the far left flagpole nearest the kerb. 16 If two Australian National Flags are available the second flag should be flown on the flagpole on the right nearest the kerb.

In a double row of flagpoles, where there is no formal focal point, such as a building or memorial, the Australian National Flag should be flown on the diagonal corners of the arrangement, with all other flags being arranged according to precedence as for a single row. 17

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Flying the Australian National Flag on a yardarm

When the Australian National Flag is being displayed from a flagpole fitted with a yardarm and is flying with another national flag, the Australian National Flag should be flown on the left of the yardarm and the flag of the other nation should be flown on the right of the yardarm, as viewed from the front of the flagpole/gaff combination. 18

If the Australian National Flag is being displayed from a flagpole fitted with a yardarm and is flying with a state flag and a house flag or pennant, the Australian National Flag should be flown from the top of the flagpole, the state flag on the left of the yardarm, and the house flag or pennant on the right of the yardarm, as viewed from the front of the flagpole/gaff combination. 19

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Flying the Australian National Flag on a flagpole with a gaff

If the flagpole is fitted with a gaff, the Australian National Flag should be flown from the peak of the gaff, which is the position of honour, even though the Australian National Flag is then lower than the flag flying from the masthead of the flagpole. This international tradition originates from the days of sailing ships, when it was necessary to keep the flag free of the ship's rigging. 20

The next position of prominence is the masthead of the flagpole, then the left-hand side of the yardarm, then the right-hand side, as viewed from the front of the flagpole/gaff combination.

Flying the Australian National Flag and red ensign on ships

The Australian red ensign is the flag to be flown by Australian-registered merchant ships. Either the Australian National Flag or the Australian red ensign can be flown by government ships, fishing vessels, pleasure craft, small craft and commercial vessels under 24 metres in tonnage length, but not both ensigns at the same time. 21

The rules for flying flags on non-defence ships are set out in sections 29 and 30 of the *Shipping Registration Act 1981* and regulation 22 of the Shipping Registration Regulations. Foreign vessels may, as a courtesy, fly from the foremast either the Australian National Flag or the Australian red ensign when berthed in an Australian port. 22

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Carrying the Australian National Flag in a procession

In a line of flags carried in single file, the Australian National Flag should always lead. Flags are carried so that the right hand of the carrier is above the left hand. 23

In a line of flags carried abreast, it is preferable to have an Australian National Flag carried at each end of the line. 24

If, however, only one Australian National Flag is available, the following applies:

- If there is an odd number of flags, the Australian National Flag should be carried in the centre of the line.
- The flag next highest in order of precedence should be flown to the left of the Australian National Flag (as seen by a viewer facing the flag bearers), the next ranking flag to the right of the Australian National Flag and so on. 25
- If there is an even number of flags, the Australian National Flag should be carried on the right-hand end of the line facing the direction of movement (that is, the left end of the line as viewed by a person facing the flags). 26

Lowering the Australian National Flag in a procession

The Australian National Flag should not be lowered as a form of salute, even when it is appropriate for other flags or ensigns being carried in a procession to be lowered as a form of salute.

Flying the Australian National Flag at half-mast

Flags are flown in the half-mast position as a sign of mourning. 27

To bring the flag to the half-mast position, the flag must first be raised to the top of the mast (the 'peak'), then immediately lowered slowly to the half-mast position. This position is estimated by imagining another flag flying above the half-masted flag – in European mythology, the flag flying above is the flag of death. The flag must be lowered to a position recognisably half-mast so that it does not simply appear to have slipped down from the top of the flagpole. An acceptable position would be when the top of the flag is a third of the distance down from the top of the flagpole.

When lowering the flag from a half-mast position, it should first be raised briefly to the peak, then lowered ceremoniously.

A flag should not be flown at half-mast at night, whether or not the flag is illuminated, unless direction to half-mast the flag for an extended period of time has been issued.

When flying the Australian National Flag with other flags, all flags in the set should be flown at half-mast. The Australian National Flag should be raised first and lowered last.

There are occasions when direction will be given by the Australian Government for all flags to be flown at half-mast.

Some examples of these occasions are:

- On the death of the Sovereign (King or Queen) – the flag should be flown from the time of announcement of the death up to and including the funeral. On the day the accession of the new Sovereign is proclaimed, it is customary to raise the flag to the top of the mast from 11 am until the usual time for closure of business.
- On the death of a member of the royal family – by special command of the Sovereign and/or by direction of the Australian Government.
- On the death of the Governor-General or a former Governor-General.
- On the death of a distinguished Australian citizen, in accordance with protocol.
- On the death of the head of state of another country with which Australia has diplomatic relations – the flag would be flown at half-mast on the day of the funeral or as directed.
- On days of national commemoration such as Anzac Day and Remembrance Day.

Flags in any locality may be flown at half-mast on the death of a local citizen or on the day, or part of the day, of their funeral without direction from the Australian Government.

Draping a coffin

The Australian National Flag may be used to cover the coffin of any deceased Australian citizen at their funeral. The canton should be draped over the 'left shoulder' of the coffin, representing the heart. The flag should be removed before the coffin is lowered into the grave or, at a crematorium, after the service. The deceased's service headdress, sword or baton, awards or medals if any and family flowers may be placed on the flag covering the coffin. Care should be taken during the interment to maintain the dignity of the flag. 28

28

Flying the Australian National Flag on public holidays

All organisations and individuals are encouraged to fly the Australian National Flag on public holidays.

Display at polling places

Where possible, the Australian National Flag should be displayed in or near every polling place on days when votes are being cast in a national election or referendum.

Flying the Australian National Flag on Australian Government buildings

The Australian Government has directed that the Australian National Flag be flown on its buildings during normal working hours on normal working days. This will vary on days of mourning, when the flag is flown at half-mast, and on days of national commemoration.

If more than one flagpole is available at an Australian Government building, other flags, such as house flags, may be flown from the additional flagpole, with the Australian National Flag in the pre-eminent position.

Commercial use of the flag or flag image

The Australian National Flag, or representation of the flag, may be used for commercial or advertising purposes without formal permission, subject to the following guidelines:

- The flag should be used in a dignified manner and reproduced completely and accurately.
- The flag should not be defaced by overprinting with words or illustration.
- The flag should not be covered by other objects in displays.
- All symbolic parts of the flag should be identifiable.

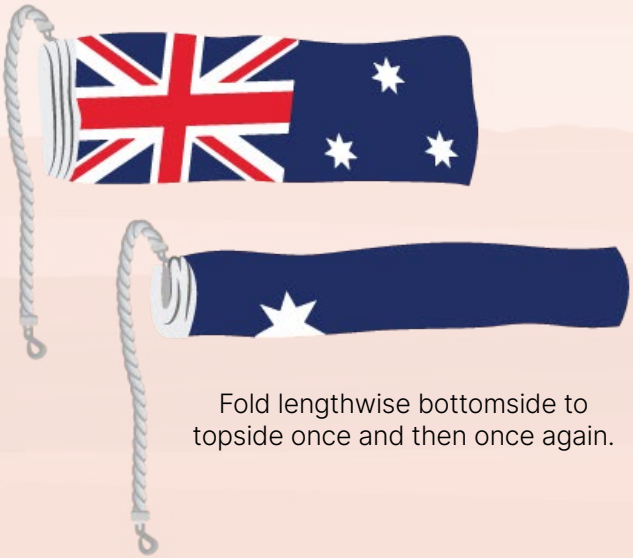
It is not necessary to seek formal permission to use the Australian National Flag for commercial purposes. However, the Parliamentary and Government Branch is available to provide advice on the appropriate use or representation of the Australian National Flag for commercial purposes.

In regard to the importation of items bearing an image of the Australian National Flag, importers must consult the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet for approval of the item before importing the items into Australia.

Flag folding

The following diagrams show how to fold the flag properly:

Start like this.



Fold lengthwise bottomside to topside once and then once again.

Bring the ends together.

Now concertina by folding backwards and forwards towards the hoist edge.

Keep the flag bundled by winding the halyard around and under itself.

Special days for flying flags

The following list shows days of commemoration on which the flying of the Australian National Flag and, where appropriate, other flags, is particularly encouraged. Unless noted otherwise, these days are celebrated nationally.

1 January — Anniversary of the establishment of the Commonwealth of Australia

26 January — Australia Day

13 February — Anniversary of the Apology to Members of the Stolen Generations

March, second Monday — Commonwealth Day

21 March — Harmony Day – Harmony Day began in 1999 and celebrates Australia's success as a diverse society united as one family by a common set of values.

25 April — Anzac Day – Flags are flown at half-mast until noon then at the peak until the usual time for closure of business.

9 May — Anniversary of the inauguration of Canberra as the seat of government (Australian Capital Territory only)

27 May to 3 June — National Reconciliation Week – In recognition of 27 May as the anniversary of the 1967 Referendum which successfully removed from the Constitution clauses that discriminated against Indigenous Australians and 3 June as the anniversary of the High Court decision in the Eddie Mabo land rights case of 1992.

June, second Monday — Celebrated as the Queen's Birthday, except in Queensland and Western Australia, where it is observed later in September or October.

July, nominated week — NAIDOC Week (originally an acronym for National Aboriginal and Islanders' Day Observance Committee, the acronym has since become the name of the week) – NAIDOC Week is held every year to celebrate and promote a greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and culture.

The Australian Aboriginal Flag and the Torres Strait Islander Flag should be flown on additional flagpoles, where available, next to or near the Australian National Flag on Australian Government buildings and establishments.

If there is only one flagpole available, the Australian Aboriginal Flag and the Torres Strait Islander Flag should not replace the Australian National Flag. If there are two flagpoles available, it is at the discretion of the authority concerned to determine which flag should be flown with the Australian National Flag.

3 September — Australian National Flag Day

17 September – Citizenship Day - Citizenship Day was introduced in 2001 and is an opportunity for all Australians to take pride in our citizenship and reflect on the meaning and importance of being Australian.

24 October — United Nations Day – If there are two or more flagpoles of equal height available, the United Nations Flag should be flown together with the Australian National Flag all day. The Australian National Flag should be flown in the pre-eminent position with the United Nations Flag on the second flagpole for the day. The United Nations Flag should be of the same size as the Australian National Flag.

11 November — Remembrance Day – Flags are flown at the peak from 8:00 am, at half-mast from 10:30 am to 11:02 am, and at the peak again from 11:02 am until the usual time for closure of business.

Order of precedence

The Australian National Flag takes precedence in Australia over all other flags when it is flown in company with other flags.

When flown in the community the order of precedence of flags is:

1: The Australian National Flag

2: National flag of other nations

3: State and territory flags

4: Other flags prescribed by the *Flags Act 1953* including:

- the Australian Aboriginal Flag and the Torres Strait Islander Flag in either order and
- the Defence ensigns which should be flown in the following order:
  - the Australian Defence Force ensign
  - the Australian white ensign
  - the Royal Australian Air Force ensign.

5: Ensigns and pennants – local government; Commonwealth, state and territory agencies; non-government organisations.

The order of precedence may be varied in the following circumstances:

- On military occasions or establishments, the Australian National Flag may be followed in the order of precedence by the prescribed Defence ensigns and military pennants ahead of other flags, ensigns and pennants.
- On Commonwealth occasions and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island occasions for their peoples, the Australian Aboriginal Flag or the Torres Strait Islander Flag may follow the Australian National Flag ahead of other flags prescribed under the *Flags Act 1953*, state and territory flags and other ensigns and pennants.

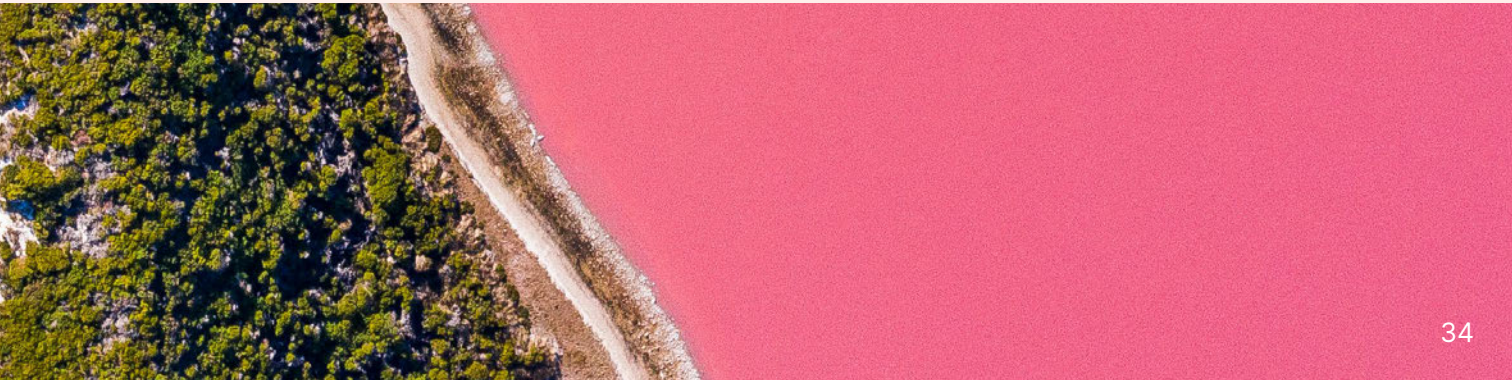
The order of the State flags is New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania (the order in which the State badges appear on the Commonwealth Coat of Arms) with flags of the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory following in alphabetical order.

In the absence of a flag or flags higher in the order, a flag shall follow the flag being flown that is higher in the order.

The order of precedence does not require that a flag listed in the order must be flown in company with other flags in the order.

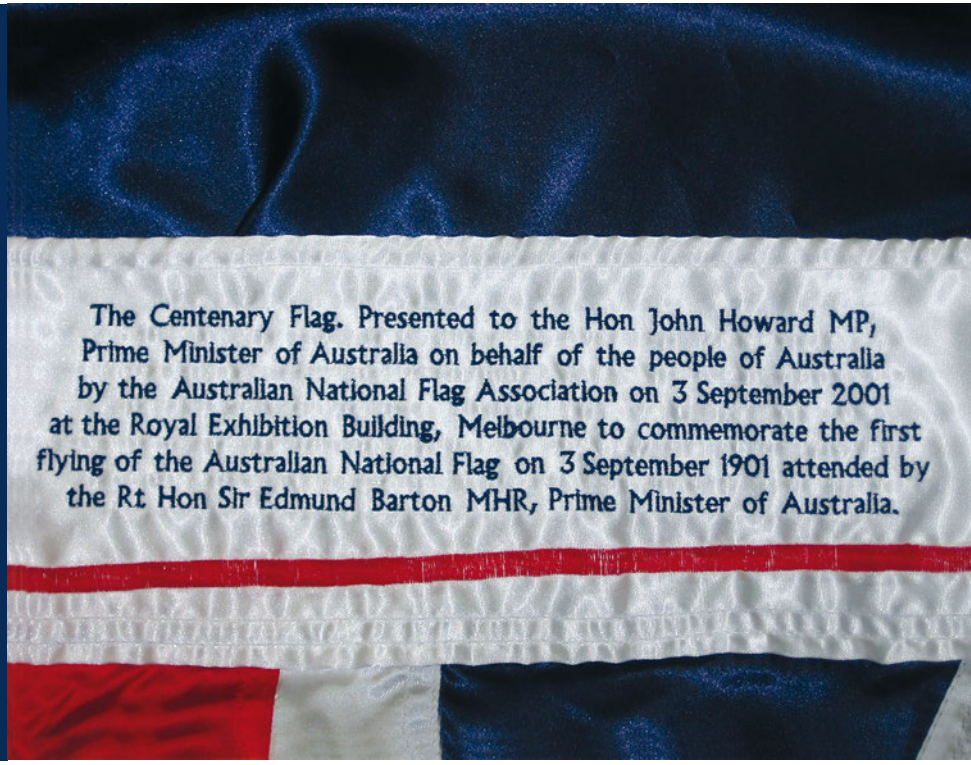
Part 3

Other official flags of Australia



The Centenary Flag

The Centenary Flag was proclaimed a flag of Australia under section 6 of the *Flags Act 1953* on 20 September 2001.



The Australian National Flag Association presented the Centenary Flag to the Hon John Howard MP, the then Prime Minister of Australia, on behalf of the people of Australia, on Australian National Flag Day 2001 at the Royal Exhibition Building in Melbourne. The occasion commemorated the centenary of the first flying of the flag of the Commonwealth of Australia on 3 September 1901. Since then, the Centenary Flag has been flown in each state and territory and was also flown in London at the opening of the Australian War Memorial at Hyde Park on 11 November 2003.

The Centenary Flag is the Australian National Flag with the addition on the headband of an inscription that refers to the first flying of the Australian National Flag on 3 September 1901, and a crimson stripe to represent the thread of kinship that stands at the heart of the federation.

The Centenary Flag is the Commonwealth's flag of State and is flown on ceremonial occasions, such as the opening of Parliament and when visiting Heads of State are present.

A flag for Australia

On 1 January 1901, the six colonies united to form the Commonwealth of Australia. In search of a flag for the new nation, the Commonwealth Government announced a worldwide competition.

Entrants were invited to submit colour sketches for a design for two flags – one for official and naval purposes, the other for merchant ships.

More than 30,000 designs were submitted. From these, the judges chose five designs, which were almost identical, and the £200 prize was divided among the winners. These designs were the beginning of the Australian National Flag as we know it today.

Flags of Australia's Indigenous Peoples

The Australian Aboriginal Flag and Torres Strait Islander Flag were proclaimed flags of Australia under section 5 of the *Flags Act 1953* on 14 July 1995.

Australian Aboriginal Flag

Torres Strait Islander Flag

The Australian Aboriginal Flag

The Australian Aboriginal Flag was first raised on 9 July 1971, National Aborigines' Day, at Victoria Square in Adelaide. It was also used at the Aboriginal Tent Embassy in Canberra in 1972. The flag was designed by Mr Harold Thomas, an Aboriginal artist from the Northern Territory.

On 25 January 2022, the Prime Minister announced the copyright of the Australian Aboriginal Flag was transferred from Mr Harold Thomas to the Commonwealth of Australia.

The flag, designed in proportions approximating one to two, is divided horizontally into equal halves of black (top) and red (bottom), and has a yellow circle in the centre. The black symbolises the Aboriginal people, the red represents the earth and the colour of ochre used in Aboriginal ceremonies, and the circle of yellow represents the sun, the constant renewer of life.

The flag is flown or displayed permanently at Aboriginal centres throughout Australia. It is popularly recognised as the flag of the Aboriginal peoples of Australia.

The flag is protected by copyright and may only be reproduced in accordance with the provisions of the *Copyright Act 1968*. Carroll & Richardson-Flagworld Pty Ltd is the exclusive licensed manufacturer and provider of the Australian Aboriginal Flag on flags and pennants, banners and buntings. As the owner of the copyright in the design of the flag, the Commonwealth allows the design to be freely reproduced by the public on all other mediums.

Colour references for the Australian Aboriginal Flag are:

- Red: PANTONE® 179
- Yellow: PANTONE® 123.

The Torres Strait Islander Flag

The Torres Strait Islander Flag was adopted in May 1992 during the Torres Strait Islands Cultural Festival. Its origin is attributed to the late Mr Bernard Namok of Thursday Island.

The flag has three horizontal panels: the top and bottom panels are green and the middle one blue. These panels are divided by thin black lines. The green represents the land, the blue represents the sea, and the black symbolises the people.

In the centre of the flag is a white Dhari (traditional headdress), which is a symbol for all Torres Strait Islanders. Underneath the Dhari is a white five-pointed star: the five points represent the island groups in Torres Strait and the white represents peace. The star is an important symbol for a seafaring people.

The flag stands for the unity and identity of all Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia.

The flag is protected by copyright and may only be reproduced in accordance with the provisions of the *Copyright Act 1968*, or with the permission of the Torres Strait Island Regional Council.

Colour references for the Torres Strait Islander Flag are:

- Blue: PANTONE® 280
- Green: PANTONE® 342.

Australian ensigns

An ensign is another term for a flag. Originally, an ensign was a flag flown at the stern of a ship to denote nationality. The term ensign is now associated with flags flown by government services on land as well.

The ensigns of the Australian Defence Force

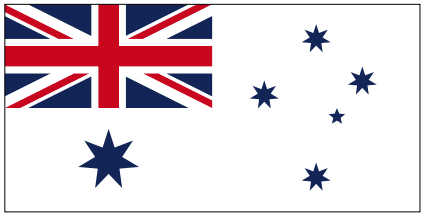
The Australian Army has no separate ensign but has the ceremonial role of protector of the Australian National Flag. The Australian Defence Force ensign represents the Australian Defence Force as a whole. The Royal Australian Navy and the Royal Australian Air Force have their own distinctive ensigns, which have evolved from the flags of their counterpart British services.

Use of Defence ensigns

The Department of Defence issues instructions on the proper use of the defence ensigns.

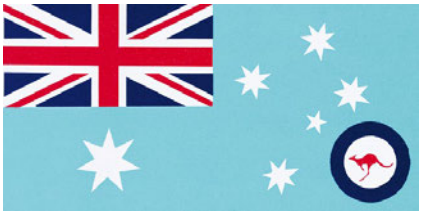
The Australian Defence Force ensign

The Australian Defence Force ensign represents the three services of the Australian Defence Force: the red stripe represents the Australian Army, the dark blue stripe represents the Royal Australian Navy and the light blue stripe represents the Royal Australian Air Force. The defence force emblem in the centre of the flag also represents the three services: the crossed swords represent the army, the anchor represents the navy and the eagle represents the air force. The Commonwealth Star and the boomerang represent Australia.



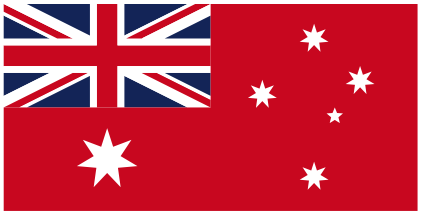
The Royal Australian Navy ensign

The Royal Australian Navy adopted the Australian white ensign in 1967. The white ensign of the British Royal Navy had been used since 1911, when the Royal Australian Navy was formed. The Australian white ensign is usually flown from the stern of a navy vessel, while the Australian National Flag is flown from the bow of the vessel.



The Royal Australian Air Force ensign

The Royal Australian Air Force ensign was approved by King George VI in 1948 and formally adopted in Australia in 1949. Previously, the ensign of the British Royal Air Force had been used. The Australian ensign was distinguished from the British ensign by the addition of the Southern Cross and Commonwealth Star. The light blue background symbolises the sky. A leaping red kangaroo was added to the rounded decorative panel (the 'roundel') in 1982.

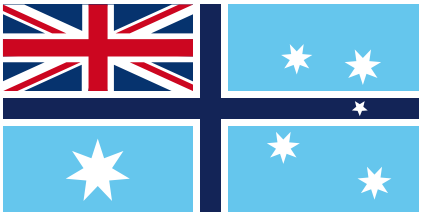


The Australian red ensign

The *Shipping Registration Act 1981* confirms the Australian red ensign as the official flag to be flown by Australian-registered merchant ships. Historically, the Australian red ensign was used on land and at sea and Australians have fought under it during the First and Second World Wars.

Other Australian Government flags

A number of Australian Government flags are flown to represent specific government services, among them the civil air ensign, the Australian Border Force flag and the Australian Federal Police flag.



The Civil Air ensign

Dating from 1935, the civil air ensign represents the Australian Government organisations responsible for civil aviation. This ensign can be seen flying from civil aviation buildings, boats, aircraft and airports. In 1947, the ensign's stars were changed from yellow to white, to make it more easily recognised from a distance. These changes were publicly notified in the *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette (No 39)* of 4 March 1948. The use of the civil air ensign is set out under the *Civil Aviation Act 1988*.

The Australian Border Force flag

Ships and aircraft used by the Australian Border Force display the Australian Border Force flag. The flag is the Australian National Flag with the addition of the words 'Australian Border Force' in prominent white lettering between the Commonwealth Star and the Southern Cross.

The use and design of the Australian Border Force flag is set out under the *Customs Act 1901* and the Customs Regulations 2015.

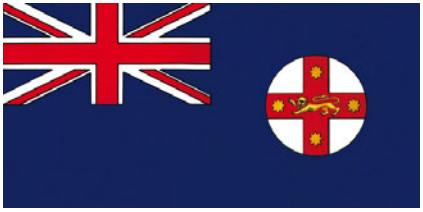
The Australian Federal Police flag

First adopted in 1981, the flag of the Australian Federal Police is flown on buildings of the Australian Federal Police. The flag is predominantly black, with its centre third a white vertical panel on which is placed the badge of the Australian Federal Police, based on the Commonwealth Star, the Crown and the Commonwealth Coat of Arms. The flag has on all four edges a narrow black and white chequer commonly used to represent police services around the world.

State and territory flags

The flags of the Australian states all bear the Union Jack on a dark blue background and each is distinguished by a state badge. These flags were created between 1870 and 1904. The territory flags were introduced more recently.

The flags of the states, or colonies as they were before federation, were first flown on the various colonial governments' ships. By the *Colonial Naval Defence Act 1865*, the colonies were authorised to fly their own flag on their ships – this was the British blue ensign with the badge of the colony in the fly (portion of the flag furthest from the staff). Designs for the badges were sent to the British Admiralty for approval.



New South Wales

The first badge of New South Wales, authorised in 1869, was simply the red cross of St George on a white field. The current badge on the New South Wales flag has been used on the flag since 1876, and was proclaimed in the *New South Wales Gazette* on 18 February 1876. It shows a gold lion of England in the centre of the red cross of St George on a white background.

The cross also bears four eight-pointed stars, one on each arm. The stars represent the Southern Cross, and the gold lion and St George Cross reflect the British heritage of the first European settlers. The St George Cross is also the traditional badge of the British Royal Navy.

Victoria

The Victorian flag was proclaimed by the Governor in 1870. The first reported flying of the flag was on one of the colony's first warships, HMVS *Nelson*.

The badge on that flag comprised the five stars of the Southern Cross.

From 12 November 1877 the badge was changed to include an imperial crown above the Southern Cross. In 1901, with the accession of Edward VII, this crown was replaced with the crown of St Edward, and the flag has not changed since. The Southern Cross stars on Victoria's state flag differ from those on the Australian National Flag. The stars of the Southern Cross on Victoria's flag have differing numbers of points, to show their varying brightness.

Queensland

The badge of Queensland's state flag is made up of the crown of St Edward in the centre of a light blue Maltese Cross. The flag dates back to 1876, when the British Admiralty approved a design submitted by the Governor of Queensland.

Its adoption was notified in the *Queensland Government Gazette* of 20 November 1876. The first design considered for the badge included a depiction of Queen Victoria's head, facing right. The Queensland Government considered, however, that this would be too difficult to reproduce well on a flag and an alternative design was proposed.

South Australia

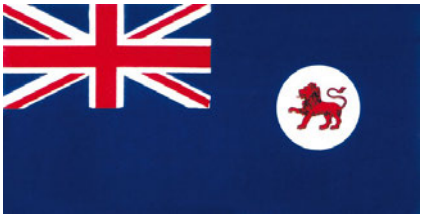
The South Australian state flag was proclaimed on 13 January 1904. Its badge shows an Australian piping shrike (white-backed magpie) on the branch of a gum tree, set against a golden background representing the rising sun.

Originally, the state flag was meant to be flown only from government buildings and vessels, but in 1908 the government of the day encouraged wider use by both government institutions and private citizens.

Western Australia

The state badge of Western Australia depicts a black swan on a circle of yellow. The black swan has been used as a symbol in Western Australia since the 1830s: the colony was commonly called the Swan River Colony in the early days of settlement. The black swan badge was proposed for adoption in 1870 and its use on the flag was confirmed in 1875.

Originally facing away from the flagpole, the swan was reversed in 1953.



Tasmania

On 25 September 1876, the Governor of Tasmania decreed that the distinguishing flag for vessels employed by the Government of Tasmania would be the blue ensign with a red lion superimposed on a white shield. This ratified a proclamation made by Queen Victoria on 7 August 1869.

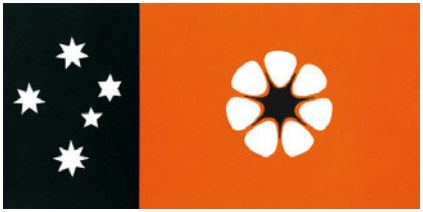
The flag was subsequently adopted for general state government use, but it was not until 3 December 1975 that the design was gazetted.

The Australian Capital Territory

The Australian Capital Territory flag was adopted by the territory's Legislative Assembly on 25 March 1993, after a public selection process.

Blue and gold are the regional colours. The blue and white swans symbolise Aboriginal and European Australians. The castle alludes to Australia's capital city, Canberra, and the royal crown (the crown of St Edward) represents the role of the Sovereign in government. The sword of justice, the parliamentary mace and the rose of York are depicted on the shield.

From 1927 until this new design became the official flag of the Australian Capital Territory, the city of Canberra's flag had been used as a de facto flag. This flag features the full coat of arms of Canberra, including the swans as supporters.



The Northern Territory

The Northern Territory flag was adopted on 1 July 1978, when self-government was proclaimed.

Mr Robert Ingpen, a prominent Australian artist, was commissioned to design the flag. He based his design on a number of designs entered in a competition organised by the Northern Territory Government in 1978.

A black panel on the left of the flag bears the Southern Cross. On the right-hand ochre-coloured panel is a stylised Sturt's desert rose in white with a black star in the centre. The seven petals of the desert rose and the seven points of the star symbolise the six Australian states and the Northern Territory.

The Southern Cross stars, in white, have the same number of points as on the Victorian state flag. Black, white and ochre are the official colours of the Northern Territory and the Sturt's desert rose is its floral emblem.

Norfolk Island

Christmas Island

Cocos (Keeling) Islands

The external territories

Australia has seven external territories: Norfolk Island, Heard Island and McDonald Islands, Christmas Island, the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, the Australian Antarctic Territory, the Coral Sea Islands, and Ashmore and Cartier Islands.

Norfolk Island is the only external territory with its own official flag. Adopted on 11 January 1980, this flag has three vertical panels: the outer two are deep green, while the central panel is white and bears a deep green Norfolk Island pine.

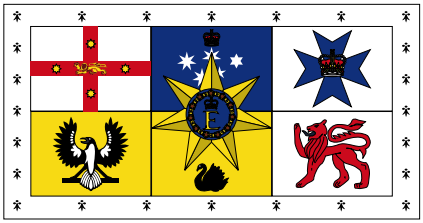
Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands have flags that are used in the community but have not been formally adopted.

The Australian National Flag is flown at all Australian bases in the Australian Antarctic Territory. It is also flown with the flags of other Antarctic Treaty nations at the South Pole.

Jervis Bay

Jervis Bay, the only Australian internal territory without self-government, does not have its own flag.

Royal and Vice-Regal flags



Her Majesty The Queen's personal flag for Australia

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II has a special flag that is flown to acknowledge her role as Queen of Australia.

Her Majesty gave her approval for the flag's design on 20 September 1962 and it was first used during the 1963 royal visit. It is flown only when she is visiting Australia.

The flag consists of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms with a large gold seven-pointed Commonwealth Star in the centre. Within the Commonwealth Star, Her Majesty's initial 'E' in gold, above which rests a stylised crown (the crown of St Edward), is enclosed by a garland (a 'chaplet') of gold roses. These elements are set on a blue roundel.

Her Majesty's personal flag for Australia is used in the same way as the Royal Standard in the United Kingdom. When it is flown on or outside a building, no other flag should be flown with it. The flag signifies the presence of The Queen.

On 7 July 2000, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the passage of the *Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900* by the British Parliament, Her Majesty The Queen attended a church service at Westminster Abbey in London. Her Majesty The Queen's personal flag for Australia flew at the Abbey, the first time it has flown in the United Kingdom.

The Governor-General's flag

The Governor-General's flag pre 1936

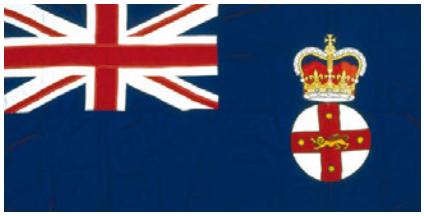
The Governor-General's flag

The Queen's representative in the Commonwealth of Australia, the Governor-General of Australia, also has a personal flag. In 1930 King George V had approved the use of a new personal flag by governors-general of the dominions, to reflect their changed status from representatives of the British authorities to personal representatives of the Sovereign. The Australian version of the new flag was adopted on 16 July 1936 and first used in that year, by Lord Gowrie.

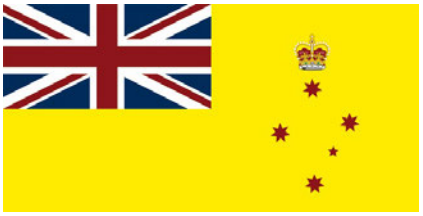
The flag shows the Royal Crest, which consists of the crown of St Edward beneath a crowned lion. Beneath the crest is a golden scroll inscribed with the words 'Commonwealth of Australia'. The background is dark blue. The proportions are one to two.

The Governor-General's flag is flown continuously when the Governor-General is in residence. It is also flown on the vehicle in which the Governor-General is travelling.

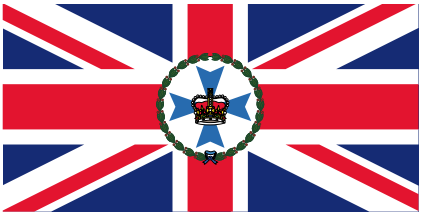
Governors-general, between 1909 and 1936, used as their personal flag a Union Jack with a badge at its centre showing a seven pointed gold star, surmounted by an Imperial Crown and surrounded by a laurel wreath.



New South Wales



Victoria



Queensland

South Australia

Western Australia

Tasmania

State Governors' flags

The Governor of each Australian state has a personal flag or standard, generally the state flag with the addition of a crown above the badge, as illustrated here.

The Administrator of the Northern Territory flies the Australian National Flag.

The United Nations flag

The United Nations flag is not an Australian flag, but it is flown in Australia and elsewhere according to special rules set out in the United Nations Flag Code.

In accordance with a proclamation made by the Governor-General on 19 August 1948, 24 October each year is observed throughout Australia and its territories as United Nations Day, being the anniversary of the coming into force of the Charter of the United Nations. The United Nations flag is flown on this day where possible. If only one flagpole is available, the Australian National Flag should be the flag flown on that day.

The United Nations emblem originated in 1945, when a button design was sought for the San Francisco conference at which the United Nations Charter was drafted and approved. The Presentation Branch of the United States Office of Strategic Services prepared the design and, on 7 December 1946, the General Assembly accepted a modified design as the official seal and emblem of the United Nations. On 20 October 1947, the General Assembly approved the design of the United Nations flag, using the emblem on a light blue background.

Part 4

History of the Australian National Flag

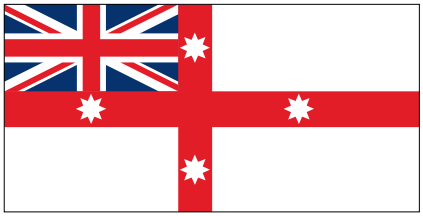
Evolution of a national flag

Before federation, Australia's colonies flew the flags of the United Kingdom: the Union Jack (more formally called the Union Flag) and its other flags.

The Union Jack was first raised in Australia on 29 April 1770 by Captain Cook at Stingray Harbour (later renamed Botany Bay). Cook raised it again at Possession Island, off Cape York, when he claimed the east coast of Australia in the name of King George III. Governor Phillip hoisted this flag again on 26 January 1788 at Sydney Cove, marking the first European settlement of Australia.

Growing Australian nationalism in the 1890s inspired the use of many unofficial flags. A common feature was the Southern Cross, a constellation unique to southern skies. Among the better known flags in Australia's early colonial history are the national colonial flag (1823), the Anti-Transportation League flag (1851), the Murray River flag (1853), the Eureka flag (1854) and the Australian federation flag (1880s-1890s).

From 1870, each Australian colony adopted as its flag a British blue ensign incorporating a different badge to distinguish it from the other colonies.



The national colonial flag

Captain John Bingle and Captain John Nicholson are credited with the first recorded attempt to design a 'national' flag for Australia. Their flag featured four stars of the Southern Cross on a red cross, against a white background, with the Union Jack in the canton.

In his diary, Captain Bingle claimed that this design, created in 1823 or 1824, was accepted as the national colonial flag of Australia by the Government of Sir Thomas Brisbane.

The Anti-Transportation League flag

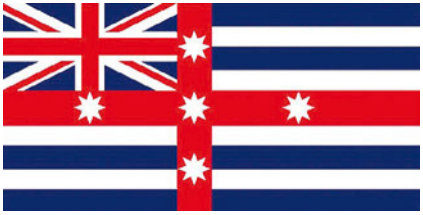
The Australasian Anti-Transportation League was formed to organise protests against the transportation of convicts from Britain to Australia and New Zealand. Its flag was flown at the League's first meeting in Melbourne on 28 February 1851.

This flag is preserved at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in Launceston. Made of silk, it measures about 274 centimetres by 366 centimetres. It has a deep blue background with the Union Jack in the canton and five stars arranged in the pattern of the Southern Cross.

The Union Jack is hand-sewn in rose-red, white and blue and the stars are gold. The five stars represent Tasmania, Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia and New Zealand. A white silk border runs across the top and bottom and the right-hand side.

A gold inscription around the edges reads, 'Australasian League, Tasmania, Instituted 1851'.

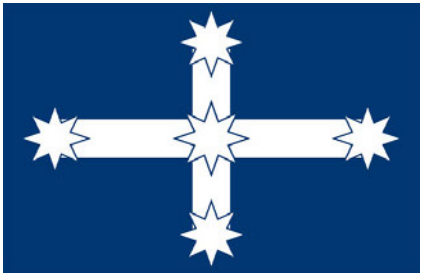
In 1853, when transportation ended, the League dissolved and its flag did not fly again.



The Murray River flag

Another unofficial flag, the Murray River flag, was flown on some of the paddle-steamers that were part of the Murray River trade in the 1850s. Featuring the Southern Cross and stripes, this flag's design was influenced by earlier flags such as the national colonial flag and the New South Wales merchant flag of the 1830s.

Today there are two versions of the Murray River flag which are flown from vessels travelling on the Murray River: the Upper Murray flag and the Lower Murray flag. The Upper Murray flag is the original flag design and is flown above Wentworth in New South Wales. The Lower Murray flag is a newer design based on the original flag and is flown below Wentworth and into South Australia.

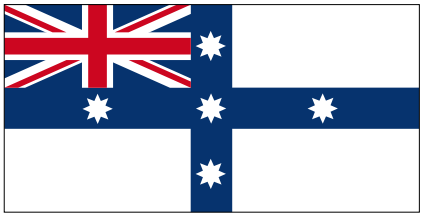


The Eureka flag

The Eureka flag is important because of its early use of the Southern Cross but not of the Union Jack. Some would claim the Eureka flag as the first 'Australian' flag of a distinctive design and differing from flags that had previously been used. The flag was plain blue with five white stars, one at the centre and one at each tip of a white cross.

The Eureka flag was that used by gold miners at the Eureka Stockade at Ballarat in Victoria from November 1854. At a meeting at Bakery Hill on 29 November that year, the miners raised the Eureka flag and swore an oath to fight to defend their rights. They were protesting against the expense of a Miner's Licence Fee and other perceived political and economic injustices.

Although the miners lost the battle at the Eureka Stockade, they succeeded in having many oppressive laws repealed. This event played a part in the development of democracy in Australia. The original flag is kept at the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery.



The Australian federation flag

In the 1880s and 1890s, the Australian federation flag was a popular symbol of the movement for federation of the six colonies. The flag featured the stars of the Southern Cross in white placed on a blue cross against a white background. In the canton was the Union Jack.

The design was based on the New South Wales ensign of the 1830s, which was a popular local banner until the 1890s, when it was adopted as the Australian federation flag. Also known as the Australian ensign, it was still seen as late as the 1920s. Prime Minister the Right Hon Edmund Barton submitted it to the British authorities in 1902 as an alternative to the design chosen for the Australian National Flag through the 1901 competition.

A flag competition

In 1900, with federation looming, the search for a national flag began. A Melbourne journal, *the Review of Reviews for Australasia*, launched a competition in November 1900, offering a first prize of £50. The journal suggested that entries in the flag competition incorporate both the Union Jack and the Southern Cross.

Upon federation in 1901, the Commonwealth Government also announced it would run a flag competition, and the *Review of Reviews* agreed to combine its entries with those submitted to the government competition. The prize money (£75 from the *Review of Reviews* and £75 from the Government) was boosted to £200 by a donation from the Havelock Tobacco Company.

The conditions of the government competition were set out in the *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette of 29 April 1901*. The notice also stated that the successful design would be submitted to the imperial authorities for approval.

Commonwealth of Australia Gazette.

PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY.

No. 27.] MONDAY, 29 APRIL. [1901.

Commonwealth of Australia,
Prime Minister's Office,
8th April, 1901.

DESIGN FOR A FEDERAL FLAG.

THE Government of the Commonwealth of Australia invite competitive designs for a Federal Flag, such designs to be submitted by post or otherwise not later than the 31st May, 1901.

The designs will be judged by a Board to be appointed by the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia, of £75 will be paid to the designer of that selected as the best.

Each competitor will be required to forward two coloured sketches—one for the constant service, and one for naval or official use—not less than 5 inches by 3 inches in size.

All designs must be addressed on the cover "Federal Flag Competition," and must be addressed to "The Secretary to the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia, Melbourne," not later than the 31st May, 1901.

Each design must bear a motto or term de plume, and must be accompanied by a sealed envelope containing the name and address of the designer. The envelope must be marked with the motto or term de plume and contains the name and address of the designer.

The successful design will be submitted to the Imperial authorities.

The award of the Board, however, will be final, and the prize will be given in accordance with their decision, even if the design be not accepted by the Imperial authorities.

EDMUND BARTON.

Commonwealth of Australia,
Prime Minister's Office,
8th April, 1901.

DESIGN FOR A FEDERAL SEAL.

THE Government of the Commonwealth of Australia invite competitive designs for a Great Seal for the Commonwealth, which will be judged by a Board to be appointed by the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia, of £75 will be paid to the designer of that selected as most suitable.

Each competitor will be required to forward sketches showing obverse and reverse, of a size not less than 3 inches in diameter.

All designs must be addressed on the cover "Federal Seal Competition," and must be addressed to "The Secretary to the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia, Melbourne," not later than the 31st May, 1901.

Each design must bear a motto or term de plume, and must be accompanied by a sealed envelope containing the name and address of the designer. The envelope must be marked with the motto or term de plume and contains the name and address of the designer.

The successful design will be submitted to the Imperial authorities.

The award of the Board, however, will be final, and the prize will be given in accordance with their decision, even if the design be not accepted by the Imperial authorities.

EDMUND BARTON.

VICTORIA:
Printed and Published for the Government of the Commonwealth of Australia by Robt. S. Brain, Government Printer, Melbourne.

Reproduced courtesy of The National Archives of Australia

More than 30,000 entries

In all, 32,823 entries were received from all over the world and from people of all ages and backgrounds, even an unnamed state Governor. The size of the entries also varied, from two postage-stamp-sized ones (which were disqualified for being too small) to a pair of entries using about 60 square metres of bunting.

The majority of the designs contained the Union Jack and Southern Cross but native animals were also popular. Among the more quirky designs were a kangaroo leaping through the constellation of the Southern Cross, a scene depicting native animals playing cricket with a winged cricket ball, a six-tailed kangaroo representing the six Australian states, and a kangaroo aiming a gun at the Southern Cross.

Judging the designs

All the designs were displayed at the Exhibition Building in Melbourne, where the first Commonwealth Parliament had opened. The judges spent six days viewing the entries, looking for a design that incorporated the Union Jack, the Southern Cross, and a representation of the six states joined in federation.

The judging criteria included historical relevance, compliance with the conventions of heraldry, originality, utility, and the cost of manufacture. The judges also sought a design that would be acceptable to the British Admiralty.

Five winners found

The judges settled on five almost identical designs. The prize money of £200 was divided among the winners: Annie Dorrington from Perth, who became a quite well-known artist; Ivor Evans from Melbourne, a 14-year- old schoolboy whose father owned a flag-making business; Leslie Hawkins, a teenager from Leichhardt in New South Wales; Egbert Nuttall, from Prahran in Victoria; and William Stevens, First Officer in the Union Steamship Company of New Zealand.

The competition winning design

The national flag flies

The Australian flag flew for the first time on 3 September 1901, the day on which Prime Minister the Right Hon Edmund Barton announced the competition winners. It was a large flag, 5.5 metres by 11 metres, and was flown over the dome of the Exhibition Building, where all the designs were on display. The Australian National Flag as we know it today is based on this design. The canton featured the Union Jack, underneath it was a six-pointed star representing the six states, while the five stars of the Southern Cross occupied the fly. The background was dark blue.

At first, this flag was known as the Commonwealth blue ensign; later it became the Australian National Flag. The Commonwealth red ensign, or merchant flag, was identical except that its background was red instead of blue.

Australian National Flag Day

To commemorate the day on which the Australian National Flag was first flown, 3 September of each year is officially recognised as Australian National Flag Day.

Photograph Courtesy of the National Australia Day Council

Changes to the national flag

The design of the Southern Cross was simplified when the blue and red ensigns were gazetted in February 1903. The four main stars, which originally had different number of points to reflect their varying brilliance, all became seven pointed stars. The smallest star remained a five-pointed star.

In 1908, the six-pointed star representing the six states was replaced by a seven pointed star, the additional point representing the territories. At that time, Papua was the only territory of the Commonwealth, but the symbolism was intended to include any territories created in the future. The change was gazetted in December 1908.

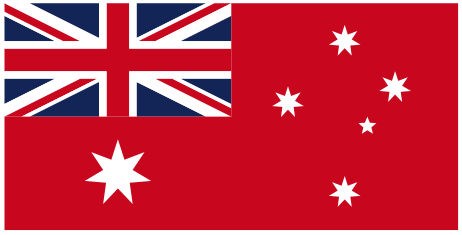
Blue or red ensign?

For the next several decades there was confusion surrounding the use of the two Australian flags. At first, the blue ensign was intended for official and naval purposes only and the red ensign was to be used by the merchant fleet. However, the general public also began using the red ensign on land. The flag placed in the time capsule left by Antarctic explorer Sir Hubert Wilkins in 1939 was the red ensign.

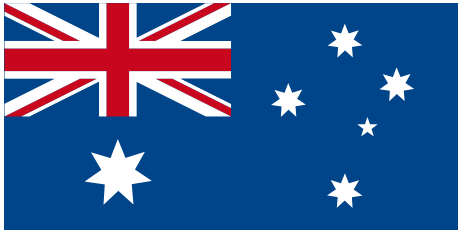
The Union Jack also continued to be used widely in the community. For example, in 1931 it was draped over the coffin of one of Australia's most famous soldiers, General Sir John Monash.

On 15 March 1941, Prime Minister the Right Hon Robert Menzies issued a press statement recommending the flying of the blue ensign as a national emblem on public buildings and schools and by private citizens, provided it was used with respect. The red ensign was to continue to be used by Australian merchant ships. On 24 February 1947, Prime Minister the Right Hon Ben Chifley expressed his support for this wider use of the blue ensign.

The *Flags Act 1953* ended the confusion about which ensign to use.



The Australian red ensign



The Australian blue ensign

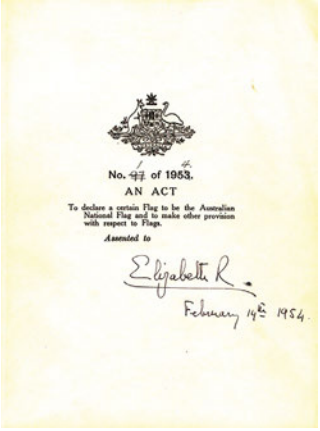
The *Flags Act 1953*

In 1951 King George VI had endorsed the Australian Government's recommendation to use the Commonwealth blue ensign as the Australian National Flag. The *Flags Act 1953*, passed by the Australian Parliament in December, proclaimed the Australian blue ensign as the national flag and the Australian red ensign as the flag for merchant ships registered in Australia. The Act was signed into law by Queen Elizabeth II on 14 February 1954, after she opened the Australian Parliament.

The *Shipping Registration Act 1981* which came into operation on 26 January 1982 confirmed the Australian red ensign as the official flag to be flown by Australian-registered merchant ships.

Today, the Australian National Flag is a symbol of the entire nation. Australians also recognise other important flags that represent areas or groups within the nation, such as the state and territory flags, the Australian Aboriginal Flag, the Torres Strait Islander Flag, and the ensigns of the Australian Defence Force.

Protection for the Australian National Flag



No. 47 of 1953.

AN ACT

To declare a certain Flag to be the Australian National Flag and to make other provision with respect to Flags.

Assented to

Elizabeth R.

February 14th 1954.

On 24 March 1998, the Flags Amendment Bill became law. It amended the *Flags Act 1953* to ensure that the Australian National Flag can only be changed with the agreement of the Australian people.

In the event that a poll is required, the existing design of the Australian National Flag must be one of the designs in any selection put to the people.

Photo Courtesy of the National Archives of Australia: A1559, 1954/1

Timeline

29 April 1770	Queen Anne Union Flag raised by Captain Cook at Stingray Harbour, later renamed Botany Bay
22 August 1770	Queen Anne Union Flag raised by Captain Cook at Possession Island off Cape York, claiming the entire east coast of Australia in the Name of King George III
26 January 1788	Governor Phillip raises the Queen Anne Union Flag at Sydney Cove
4 June 1801	Union Jack (in current form) flown in Australia as national flag for the first time
28 February 1851	Australasian Anti-Transportation League flag unfurled
29 November 1854	Eureka Flag raised
August 1869	Badge of New South Wales flag authorised, using simply the red cross of St George on a white field (later addition of gold lion of England and four eight-pointed stars of the Southern Cross)
3 January 1870	Western Australian flag adopted (later change to direction of swan)
4 February 1870	Victorian flag adopted, using simply the Southern Cross as a badge (later addition of imperial crown, which itself was replaced by the crown of St Edward)
18 February 1876	New South Wales flag proclaimed
25 September 1876	Tasmanian flag adopted for use on Tasmanian government vessels (later detail of lion changed)
20 November 1876	Queensland flag gazetted (later change to crown)
1 January 1901	Federation – Australian colonies join to form the Commonwealth of Australia
3 September 1901	Winning design of public flag competition announced by Prime Minister the Right Hon Edmund Barton – first time Australian National Flag is flown
20 February 1903	Announced in Commonwealth of Australia Gazette No 8 that King Edward VII has approved a design for the flag of Australia (Commonwealth blue ensign) and one for the flag of the merchant navy (Commonwealth red ensign) with Southern Cross stars simplified to four seven-pointed stars and one five-pointed star
13 January 1904	South Australian flag proclaimed
23 February 1908	Australian flag modified to current form, with seven-pointed Federation Star (*Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* No 29 of 22 May 1909)

1908	Australian Army Military Order, No 58/08, directs all military establishments to fly the 'Australian Ensign' in place of the Union Jack
1911	Following the granting of the Royal title to Australia's naval forces, Naval Order 78/1911 directs all vessels of the Royal Australian Navy to fly the flag of the 'Australian Commonwealth' at the jack staff and the White Ensign of the Royal Navy at the stern as the symbol of the authority of the Crown
23 March 1934	Dimensions of national flag specified (*Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* No 18)
6 June 1935	Civil air ensign adopted (*Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* No 30)
16 July 1936	Australian Governor-General's flag adopted (*Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* No 56)
15 March 1941	Prime Minister the Right Hon Robert Menzies issues a press statement encouraging the Australian public to fly the Commonwealth blue ensign on land. Australian merchant ships are to continue to fly the Commonwealth red ensign.
24 February 1947	Prime Minister the Right Hon Ben Chifley issues a statement in support of Prime Minister the Right Hon Robert Menzies' earlier statement, encouraging more general use of the Commonwealth blue ensign.
20 October 1947	United Nations Flag adopted
4 March 1948	Civil air ensign modified – stars altered from yellow to white (*Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* No 39)
1949	Royal Australian Air Force adopts Royal Australian Air Force ensign, approved by King George VI in 1948. In 1982, ensign is modified with the addition of a kangaroo to the roundel.
4 December 1950	Australian Cabinet decides to adopt the Commonwealth blue ensign as the Australian National Flag
1951	King George VI approves the Government's recommendation that the Commonwealth blue ensign be adopted as the Australian flag
3 December 1953	Flags bill passed by the Australian Parliament
14 April 1954	*Flags Act 1953* takes effect and declares the Commonwealth blue ensign as the Australian National Flag
20 September 1962	Her Majesty The Queen's personal flag for Australia approved
1 March 1967	Australian white ensign adopted as flag of the Royal Australian Navy (*Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* No 18)
9 July 1971	Australian Aboriginal Flag first raised

3 December 1975	Tasmanian flag gazetted
1 July 1978	Northern Territory flag adopted
11 January 1980	Norfolk Island flag adopted
25 March 1981	*Shipping Registration Act 1981* confirms the use of the Australian red ensign as the flag for use by Australian-registered merchant ships. (Act operative from 26 January 1982)
6 May 1982	Royal Australian Air Force ensign amended by the addition of a kangaroo in flight to the roundel (*Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* S89)
29 May 1992	Torres Strait Islander Flag adopted during Torres Strait Islands Cultural Festival
25 March 1993	Australian Capital Territory flag adopted
21 March 1995	*Anzac Day Act 1995* comes into effect. The Act declares 25 April as a national day of commemoration to recognise and commemorate the contribution of all those who have served Australia (including those who died) in time of war and in war-like conflicts
14 July 1995	Australian Aboriginal Flag and Torres Strait Islander Flag proclaimed as flags of Australia under section 5 of the *Flags Act 1953* (*Commonwealth of Australia Gazettes* S259 and S258)
3 September 1996	Australian National Flag Day proclaimed (*Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* S321)
20 October 1997	Remembrance Day on 11 November proclaimed as a national day of commemoration, with one minute's silence to be observed (*Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* S437)
24 March 1998	Flags Amendment Bill amends the *Flags Act 1953* to ensure that the Australian National Flag can only be changed if the electorate approves
14 April 2000	Australian Defence Force ensign proclaimed as a flag of Australia under section 5 of the *Flags Act 1953* (*Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* S190)
7 July 2000	Her Majesty The Queen's personal flag for Australian flies in the United Kingdom for the first time at a church service at Westminster Abbey, London, attended by Her Majesty The Queen, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the passage of the *Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900* by the British Parliament
20 September 2001	Centenary Flag proclaimed as a flag of Australia under section 6 of the *Flags Act 1953* (*Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* S283)
25 January 2022	Correcting an administrative oversight to the 1995 proclamation, the Torres Strait Islander Flag and Australian Aboriginal Flag were proclaimed again by the Governor-General to ensure the flags remained as official flags of Australia.
25 January 2022	Copyright of the Australian Aboriginal Flag was acquired by the Commonwealth of Australia to enable its image to be freely used.

Glossary

Bunting – Strong, coarse cloth used to make flags. Can also refer to a string of small festive flags

Canton – The top left quarter of a flag, also known as the first quarter or upper hoist. It is the position of honour on a flag

Ensign – A flag flown (or 'worn') on a ship, signifying nationality

Field – The background of a flag

Flag mast – A free-standing pole used for flying of flags. Often also used to describe a flagpole equipped with a yardarm and gaff

Fly – That portion of a flag furthest from the staff

Gaff – A spar set diagonally on the after side of a mast or flagpole

Half-mast – The flying of the flag below the top of a flagpole to indicate mourning

Halyard – The rope used to raise or lower a flag

Heraldry – The practice of designing signs involving symbols and devices on shields and flags as a means of identification, according to specific design protocols. Probably dates back to the 12th century, when warriors and jousters began wearing helmets that covered their faces, thereby obscuring their identity

Hoist – The half of a flag closest to the staff. Also to raise a flag

House flag – Generally, a flag flown by a trading or pleasure craft, identifying the company or person to which it belongs, but which may also be flown on buildings and vehicles

Jack – Originally, a national flag that was flown from the bow of a ship from the jack staff. Through custom, the Union Flag of the United Kingdom came to be known as the Union Jack

Masthead – The upper tip (the truck) of a flag mast fitted with a yardarm and/or a gaff

Peak – The tip of a gaff or flagpole

Roundel – A round decorative or identifying symbol, such as that used by the Royal Australian Air Force on its aircraft

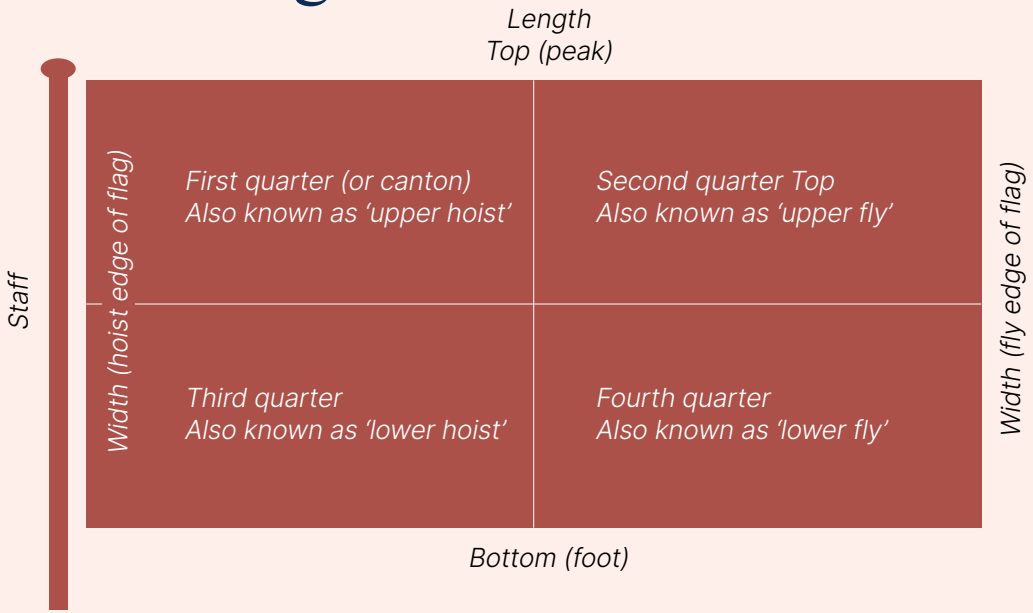
Shield – A shield-shaped badge used in heraldry and often applied in the field of a flag

Staff – A short pole on which a flag is flown, for example, an ensign staff

Standard – Originally the banner of an important noble or member of a royal house. Now generally used to describe the banner of a head of state, for example the Royal Standard is the personal flag of The Queen in the United Kingdom

Yardarm – Sometimes called a cross arm. Either end of a yard

Parts of the Flag



PM
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