

THE AUSTRALIAN



NATIONAL FLAG



HERITAGE
SERIES

THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL FLAG

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INTRODUCTION

Name: Australian National Flag
Approved: 1901
First raised: 3 September 1901
Altered: 1903 and 1908
Flag Act: 1953

The current Australian National Flag was the result of a competition in 1901 seeking designs for a new flag. Over 30,000 designs were submitted. The new flag was first flown on the flagpole over the Royal Exhibition Building in Melbourne.



The Australian National Flag is the official flag that Australia is united under. It was first flown on 3 September 1901 after it was approved by King Edward VII. The flag has a blue field (background), with the Union Jack positioned on the canton (upper left quarter or the upper hoist quarter). The bottom left quarter (lower hoist quarter) contains the Commonwealth Star. The right half area (fly) contains the Southern Cross (Crux).

HISTORIC FACTSHEET

THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL FLAG

In 1901, the same year that the *Commonwealth of Australia* came into being (1 January) a competition was run by the Government to find a design for an Australian Flag. The competition followed an unofficial competition for a flag design run by the *Review of Reviews* (see below). A 200 pound prize was put on offer for the winning flag design and entries from the unofficial competition were rolled into the new competition. Over 30,000 design submissions were finally received before five were selected as finalists.

- **Mr Egbert John Nuttall** - Architect, Prahran, Melbourne (1866-1963)
- **Mr Ivor Evans** - student, Haymarket, Melbourne (1888-1960)
- **Mr Leslie J. Hawkins** - student, Leichardt, Sydney (1883-1966)
- **Mrs Annie Dorrington** - artist, Perth (1866-1926)
- **Mr William Stevens** - steamship officer, Auckland, New Zealand (1866-1928)



As a result of the five finalists having almost identical designs, they were all declared joint winners and shared the prize money. The design was never debated in the Parliament.

After receiving approval for the new flag from King Edward VII, Prime Minister Sir Edmund Barton held a ceremony on 3 September 1901 at the newly established Australian Parliament building (Melbourne Royal Exhibition Building). The new Parliament had opened 9 May 1901.

At the ceremony, Hersey Alice Hope, the Countess of Hopetoun, announced the winners. The flag was unfurled by the Countess and first hoisted in Australia on a flagpole over the new Parliament building.



HISTORIC FACTSHEET

THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL FLAG

There have been two alterations to the Australian National Flag since 1901. The first was approved by King Edward VII on 11 February 1903 when changes were made to ensure that all the outer stars of the Crux were standardised to seven points and the inner star (Epsilon Crucis) to five points. Previously each star in the Crux constellation had a different number of points to indicate their differing brightnesses. The second and final alteration was made by proclamation on 23 February 1908 and gazetted on 22 May 1909. In this update the Commonwealth Star had a seventh point added to include Papua (a small territory acquired by Australia in 1906) and any future Australian Territories.

The dimensions of the flag were gazetted in 1934 with a dimensions ratio of 1:2.



A tattered Australian National Flag flying at Marysville after the 2009 Black Saturday Bushfires which destroyed the township. It flew in hope and symbolised national pride.

TIMELINE

Basic Timeline of Events



HISTORIC FACTSHEET

TIMELINE

- 1900** An unofficial competition to find a design for a new Australian Flag was held by the *Review of Reviews*.
- 1 January 1901** The *Commonwealth of Australia* was established by the forming of the six self governing colonies (New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania).
- Early 1901** An official competition was held by the Government of the day to find a design for a national flag. The competition was gazetted on 29 April 1901. All entries from the previous competition were rolled into this competition.
- 29-30 March 1901** On Friday 29 March and Saturday 30 March 1901, the inaugural election of the members of the *Australian Parliament* took place.
- 9 May 1901** The first Australian Parliament was opened at the Royal Exhibition Building in Melbourne.
- 3 September 1901** After receiving approval from King Edward VII for the new flag design, Prime Minister Sir Edmund Barton held a ceremony in Melbourne where the winner of the Australian National Flag competition was announced. The flag was then unveiled and hoisted to the top of the flagpole located over the Melbourne Royal Exhibition Building.
- 11 February 1903** A small variation to the flag design was approved by King Edward VII. These changes were gazetted by the Government nine days later on 20 September 1903.
- 23 February 1908** A second and final variation to the flag design was accepted by proclamation and gazetted 22 May 1909. No further alterations have ever been made to the flag design.
- 1934** The dimensions of the Australian National Flag were officially gazetted by the Australian Government. The flag ratio was 1:2.



HISTORIC FACTSHEET

TIMELINE

- 1953** The Australian Flag was established in the Flags Act 1953.
- 28 August 1996** Governor-General Sir William Deane issued a proclamation that on 3 September of each year Australia would celebrate Australian National Flag Day. It is not a public holiday.
- 2011** Artworkz commenced work on this factsheet.

FLAG PARTS

The Parts of the Australian National Flag



HISTORIC FACTSHEET

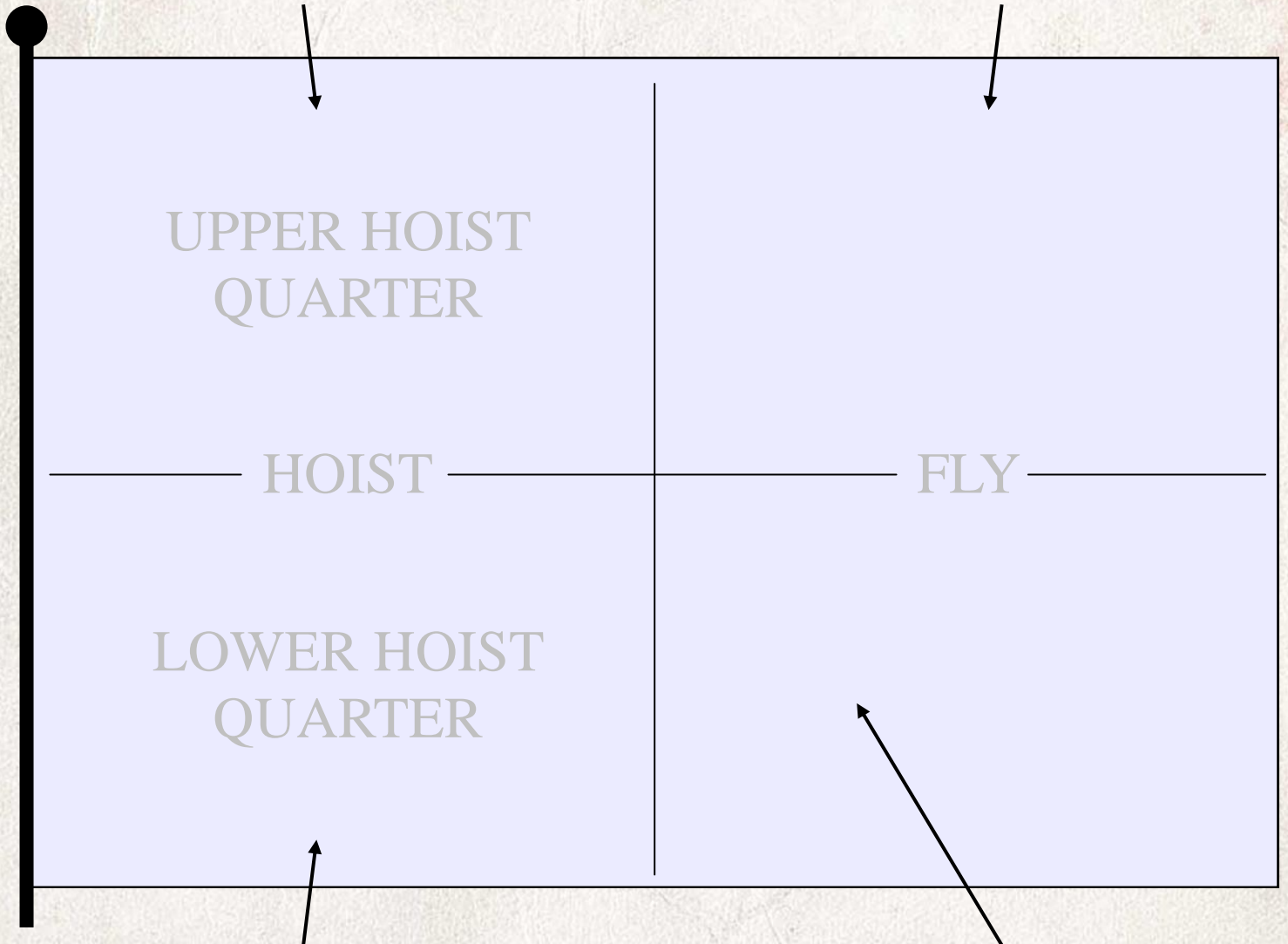
FLAG PARTS

CANTON

Any quarter of a flag. Today it is most often used to describe the upper hoist quarter.

FLY

The half of any flag that is furthest from the flagpole. It may also be used to describe the entire length of a flag.



HOIST

The half of the flag that is nearest to the flagpole. It may also be used to describe the vertical height of a flag.

FIELD

A term used to describe the entire background of a flag. The Australian Flag has a blue field.

HISTORIC FACTSHEET

FLAG PARTS

THE UNION JACK

The Union Jack serves to remind us of our strong connection with the United Kingdom (motherland) and its colonies worldwide.

THE SOUTHERN CROSS

The star constellation Southern Cross was used to symbolise the great Southern Land, as this constellation is only visible in the Southern sky.



SEVEN POINTED FEDERATION STAR

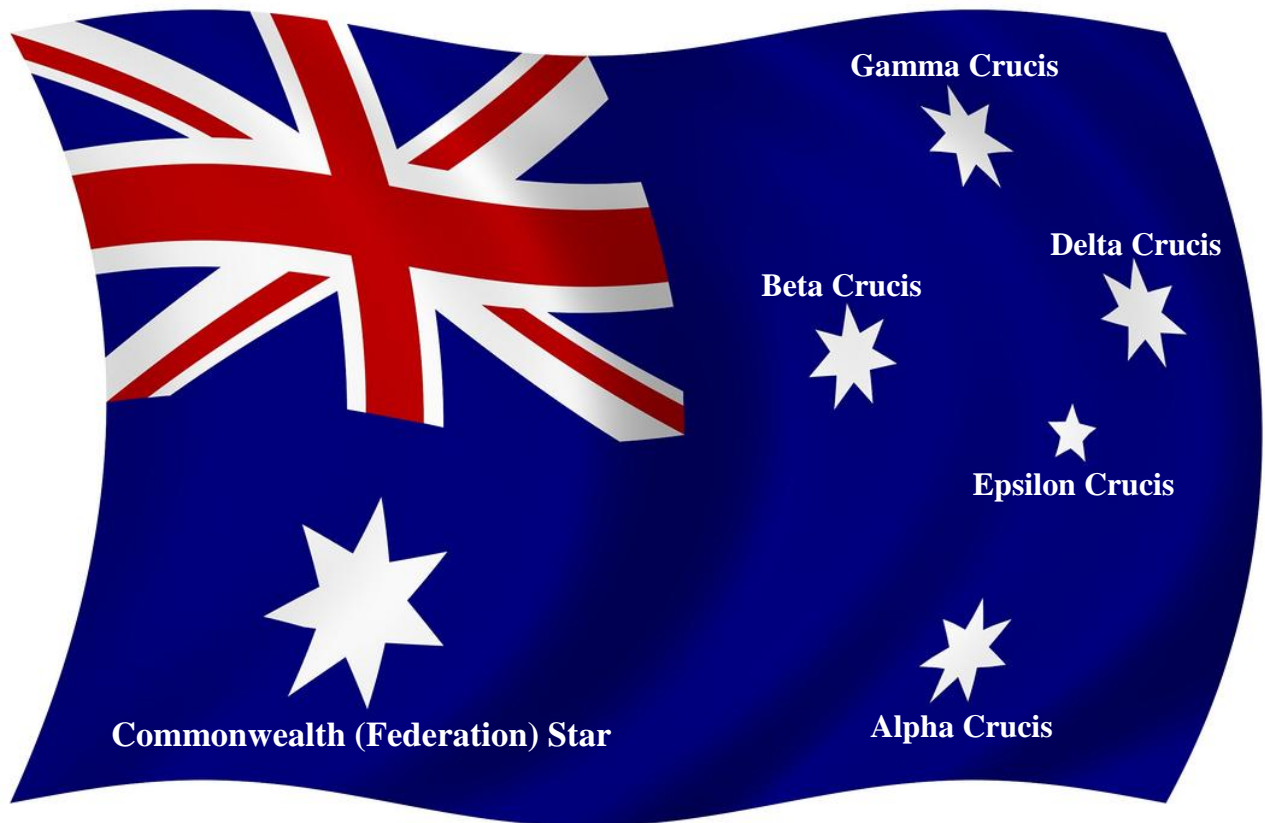
The seven pointed star represents the seven colonies of Australia. This was originally a six pointed star, as then it did not include the territories.

ROYAL BLUE BACKGROUND

The royal blue background represents Royalty and our motherland England. The free end of a flag is referred to as the "Fly".

HISTORIC FACTSHEET

STARS



**After an alteration to the flag in 1903 and another in 1908,
all stars on the Australian Flag now have seven points
except *Epsilon Crucis*, which has five points**

Commonwealth (Federation) Star
Gamma Crucis
Beta Crucis
Delta Crucis
Epsilon Crucis
Alpha Crucis

Seven pointed star
Seven pointed star
Seven pointed star
Seven pointed star
Five pointed star
Seven pointed star

Click star name for more



USING THE FLAG

Using the Australian National Flag



HISTORIC FACTSHEET

USING THE FLAG

Rules that apply to the use of the Australian National Flag

- The National Flag should only be used in a way befitting the national status of the emblem
- The National Flag may be displayed between 8 am and sunset
- The National Flag may be displayed at night on special occasions, when illuminated sufficiently
- All citizens are free to fly the Australian National Flag, as long as they comply with the rules pertaining to its use
- The National Flag should always be flown aloft and free
- When flown with other sovereign national flags, all flags should be flown on separate staffs, and all should be flown equally and free
- The National Flag should always be flown near a polling booth, when the polling booth is being used for voting for Commonwealth purposes
- The National Flag should only be flown at half mast for purposes of mourning. These instances are usually under the direction for the Prime Minister, though acceptable occasions would include the death of a sovereign, the death of a member of the Royal Family, the death of a foreign sovereign, or on the death of a distinguished Australian citizen
- The National Flag should only be placed in the half mast position after being fully raised and then slowly lowered to half mast

Continued...



HISTORIC FACTSHEET

USING THE FLAG

- The National Flag should only be removed from the half mast position after being hauled to the top and then slowly lowered
- The flag may not be used for advertising purposes
- The flag should form a distinctive feature of an unveiling ceremony for statues and monuments, etc. The flag should not be used to cover such items, or be allowed to touch the ground at any time
- The flag should only be disposed of in a dignified manner, by being burnt privately and without attention being drawn to it
- Flying of the flag upside down is a universal signal of distress and may only be used for such instances

FOLDING THE FLAG

Folding of the Australian National Flag



HISTORIC FACTSHEET

FOLDING THE FLAG

**The Australian National Flag should be folded
in accordance with the below steps**

1. Lay the flag out lengthways
2. Fold the bottom edge to the top edge
3. Repeat the above step (2)
4. Fold the two ends together
5. Concertina the flag by folding it backwards and forwards, towards the end with the hoist
6. Secure the flag with the Halyard (rope), by winding it around the flag

THE ROYAL CONNECTION

King Edward VII



HISTORIC FACTSHEET

THE ROYAL CONNECTION



KING EDWARD VII

King of the United Kingdom and the British Dominions and Emperor of India. He was the first British monarch of the House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha.

Born: 9 November 1841
Reign: 22 January 1901 - to his death.
Died: 6 May 1910
Parents: Queen Victoria and Albert (Prince Consort)
Spouse: Princess Alexandra of Denmark (1844-1925)

King Edward approved a slight alteration to the first Australian National Flag on 11 February 1903. The new version of the flag had seven points on the Commonwealth Star (Federation Star) to symbolise the Australian Territories.

Edward married Princess Alexandra of Denmark, whom the township of Alexandra in Central Victoria is named after.





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