

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL FLAG DAY 2021
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
BALL ROOM, 11.30 am FRIDAY 3 SEPTEMBER 2021

[VICE-REGAL SALUTE IS PLAYED]

I am delighted to be with you today to mark the 120th anniversary of our Australian National Flag Day.

I begin by paying my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land— the palawa people, to pay respect to those who have passed before us and to acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community, who are the custodians of this land.

I acknowledge Senator the Honourable Eric Abetz, Senator Jonno Duniam, Deputy Lord Mayor of the City of Hobart, Helen Burnet; the Chair of the Australian National Flag Association – Tasmania, Mr Reg Watson; the Chairman of the Royal Over-Seas League –Tasmania Branch, Mr Stephen Jones; and the representatives of the Caledonian Society, the Royal Commonwealth Society, both Northern and Southern Tasmania, and the Welsh Society of Southern Tasmania.

Flags have a long history and originated as rallying points and as a means of identification in warfare. In later times, they became symbols of the nations they represented. They are now also extensively used for signalling, for decoding and for display.¹

In respect of the history of our national flag, on 3 September 1901, Prime Minister Edmund Barton announced the five joint winners of the competition to design a flag for Australia. The key elements of their designs were used to create the new flag. The flag was flown for the first time over the dome of the magnificent Exhibition Building in Melbourne, which was the seat of the federal government.¹

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/flag-heraldry> accessed 26 August 21

In 1903, King Edward VII approved two designs for the flag of Australia: the Commonwealth blue ensign, and the Commonwealth red ensign, for the merchant Navy.

On both ensigns, the stars of the Southern Cross were simplified to four seven-pointed stars and one five-pointed star. In 1908, a seventh point was added to the Commonwealth star to represent the Australian territories.

However, people were confused about the use of two Australian flags.

In 1953, Parliament passed the Flags Act. The flag (blue ensign) was proclaimed as the “Australian National Flag.” The Australian red ensign was the flag for merchant ships registered in Australia.

The *Flags Act 1953* was amended in 1998 to ensure that the Australian National Flag can be changed only with the agreement of the Australian people.

There are other official Australian flags. The Australian Aboriginal Flag and the Torres Strait Islander Flag are official flags. The ensigns of the Australian Defence Force are also official.²

In 1996, the Governor-General Sir William Deane proclaimed the 3rd of September as Australian National Flag Day. This celebrates the first time the Australian National Flag was flown on 3 September 1901.

In respect of our flag design, the Union Jack in the upper left corner recalls the history of British settlement. The Union Jack consists of three heraldic crosses, the cross of St George, patron saint of England; the cross saltire of St Andrew, patron saint of Scotland; and the cross saltire of St Patrick, patron saint of Ireland.

Below the Union Jack on our National Flag is the white Commonwealth, or Federation, star. It has seven points representing the unity of the six states and the territories of the Commonwealth of

² [tps://pmc.gov.au/government/australian-national-flag](https://pmc.gov.au/government/australian-national-flag)

Australia. This star is also featured on our Commonwealth Coat of Arms.

The Southern Cross constellation is also shown on the flag in white. Its five stars can only be seen from the southern hemisphere and is a reminder of our Australian geography.³

The three crosses, St George, St Andrew and St Patrick, serve to represent the principles on which our nation is based – parliamentary democracy, rule of law and freedom of speech.⁴

The Australian National Flag identifies a free and democratic people united in spirit and purpose. Our flag belongs equally to all Australians whatever their origins.⁵

In our community, respect for our flag is a mark of respect for our nation and for our shared history.

In conclusion, I am very pleased to be a part of our 120th anniversary celebrations of our Australian National Flag and to share these celebrations with members of the loyal societies represented here.

I would now like to invite you all to join me and my husband for luncheon in the Drawing Room.

Thank you.

³ <https://www.anfa-national.org.au/history-of-our-flag/anf-design/accessed> 25 August 21.

⁴ <https://www.anfa-national.org.au/flying-the-flag/meaning-symbolism/>

⁵ Ibid..