

Filibuster: the century-long Australian flag debate

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ABSTRACT: This paper chronicles the changing debate about the Australian flag from pre-federation times. Early criticisms of the outcome of the 1901 flag competition are revealed and alternatives are illustrated. Confusion in the status of the Australian red and blue ensigns is clarified and the true origin of the Flags Act of 1953 revealed. Design proposals from numerous flag competitions and various promotions are comprehensively reviewed to show the development of design trends over the past 30 years. The efforts of flag loyalists are reported, together with Ausflag's campaigns for "Our own flag for the 2000 Olympics."

The illustrations for this paper appear on Plates 50-56.

1 Introduction

The 1st of January 2001 represents, for the mathematically exact, the start of the new Millennium. For the vexillological world, it marks the bicentenary of the Union Jack in its current form. In Sydney, the Millennium Olympic Games will be celebrated in September 2000 (Fig. 1),¹ a prelude to other celebrations to mark the centenary of the inauguration of the Commonwealth of Australia. The year 2001 also marks the centenary of the flag competition which resulted in the national flag of Australia.

The Bicentenary of European settlement in Australia in 1988 saw the beginning of a campaign for the adoption of a new flag design for Australia. That campaign has recently been marked by two opposing events. On 28 July 1997, Ausflag launched a flag design competition restricted to Australian professional designers. Ausflag's brief describes the new competition as "the most important design issue to face our Nation."² 1997 also marked the continued Parliamentary

debate on the *Flags Amendment Bill*, which attempts to preclude the passing of any future legislation to change the Australian national flag without it being first endorsed by a majority of voters.³

This paper seeks not only to chronicle the developments in the "Great Flag Debate," but also to put it into historical context. The attempts to change the flag are not manifestations of the current campaign to alter Australia's constitutional status from an absentee proxy monarchy to a republic. They are a continuation of over one hundred years of striving by a vocal minority to achieve a flag for Australia that reflects the reality of Australia's political, economic and cultural independence. Conservative elements in Australian politics have been successful in prolonging the debate with irrelevant arguments and inaction. The flag debate in Australia is not a "great debate" - it is a filibuster that has already lasted a hundred years.

2 One flag, one people

It is ironic that one of the prominent slogans of the Federation movement was "One People, One Flag, One Destiny" (Fig. 2).⁴ It is ironic because, in a sense there was no flag, other than the British Union Jack. In another sense, there were two flags (Fig. 3).⁵ From Sir Henry Parkes' landmark oration at Tenterfield in 1889, supporters of federation in New South Wales and Queensland used the "Australian Ensign" (Fig. 4).⁶ The Australasian Federation league, founded by Edmund Barton⁷ in 1893, adopted the Australian Ensign as the central prop in its campaign. This flag was described by a correspondent to Barton in the following terms:⁸

it is the bonniest flag you can possibly get. It is historic, and also well known, at any rate on every flagstaff in New South Wales. . . its history goes back to the time before the colonies were separated from New South Wales. . . We do not want any badges which are undistinguishable at a distance. . . we want something distinctively Australian and bold.

The other Australian federation flag (Fig. 5), which was mostly used in the southern colonies and Western Australia (Fig. 6),⁹ was in fact the Victorian mercantile shipping flag, which had been erroneously sanctioned by the British Board of Trade in 1870.¹⁰ In the absence of an official flag, the invitations to the inaugural celebrations were illustrated with the unofficial Australian Ensign. For the actual ceremonies, Lord Hopetoun, the new Governor-General, flew the British Royal Standard from the official pavilion, whilst in Melbourne the Victorian red ensign was predominant (Fig. 7).¹¹ In the streets, any flag would do.

On 29 November 1900, the British Secretary of State for the Colonies wrote to the Governor-General designate enquiring as to:

any observations or suggestions which your Lordship [Hopetoun] may have to offer for a device for a flag for the Commonwealth and also flags for the various States. This matter, however, much depends upon the decision which may be arrived at as regards the grant of Armorial Ensigns. The fact that the Arms or Badge of the separate States have to be incorporated in the Great Seal and also used for the essentially different purpose of a Flag, will have to be borne in mind in preparing those designs.¹²

It is clear that the British authorities expected an Australian flag to comply fully with the standard Admiralty pattern (Fig. 8)¹³ and for it to be similar to the then Canadian flag, which had combined the badges of the Canadian provinces upon confederation.¹⁴

3 Judging the competition

It was not until 13 April 1901 that the Australian Prime Minister turned his mind to the need for a flag.¹⁵ On 29 April 1901, the *Gazette* published invitations for a design competition for a Federal Seal and a Federal Flag. An earlier unofficial competition had been held by the Melbourne *Evening Herald* newspaper, entries being required to include the Union Jack, a Southern Cross (for Australia) and some symbol for federation (six stripes in the winning design by F. Thompson) (Fig. 9).

Another competition by the magazine *Review of Reviews* had commenced earlier,¹⁶ and the organisers transferred the entries and prize money to the Government's competition.¹⁷ On 3 September 1901, the judges announced the winning design, which was displayed with all the entries in the Melbourne Exhibition Hall (Fig. 10).¹⁸ None of the entries are known to have survived. However from photographs of the display and Australian Archives records we can reconstruct some of the entries and design proposals of the period.

Some entries combined the Australian Ensign with the British authorities' suggestion in a way the Admiralty would not have envisioned (Fig. 11).¹⁹ Others accepted the very strong suggestion from the *Review of Reviews* competition invitation that a flag which omitted the Union Jack and the Southern Cross "might have small chances of success,"²⁰ and added the distinctively Australian symbol, the kangaroo (Fig. 12).²¹ This same unknown entrant also offered a variation of the British red ensign (Fig. 13).²²

The judges rejected a number of designs as "contrary to the heraldry and blazonry of flags."²³ A description of the display states that "the visitor is struck with the amazing variety of patterns, and, at the same time, with the wonderful ignorance of what are the essential points of a national flag. To give but a single example, it is necessary that, if the Union Jack be included as part of the flag, it should be placed on the top left-hand corner."²⁴ This was a problem shared by another design proposal of the period by H.J. Hurman from

Newcastle (Fig. 14)²⁵ and another entrant with the *nom-de-plume* of "Hec Claris Astris" (Fig. 15).²⁶

A marine artist, F. Temple-West, suggested a design which featured a rising sun (a common image of the Federation period) with six rays and stars to represent the six states (Fig. 16).²⁷ Another striking design using six sun rays was submitted by the *nom-de-plume* "Imperialism," which had been the preferred design of the art critic for the *Herald Standard* (Fig. 17).²⁸ Another design proposal of the period (Fig. 18)²⁹ from Alfred Campbell of Sydney was accompanied by a poem that summed up the sentiments of the period:

*One Flag, One Crown,
One Common lot,
One with the Motherland*

Whilst advocates of retention of the current flag place great emphasis on the fact that it was the result of a national competition with five of the designs sufficiently alike the judges divided the prize money, the variety of entries also shows that there were 32,818 other designs which were not acceptable to the judges.

4 Criticism

Contemporary response to the new flag design was mixed. One enterprising individual lodged a claim for copyright of the winning design on 8 October 1901, including a version in white which foreshadowed the Royal Australian Navy Ensign adopted in 1967 (Fig. 19).³⁰ Some correspondents to the *Review of Reviews* disputed the judges' applications of the rules of heraldry, arguing that the principal charge (the representation of the Federation) was not in the principal quarter.³¹ The Government meteorologist of Queensland complained that the depiction of the Southern Cross was inaccurate.³² In London, Rear-Admiral de Horsey even disputed Australia's right to a flag; "The ancient British flag is good enough for the whole Empire..." and a separate flag for Australia "... a political menace to the Empire!"³³ Another correspondent referred to the new flag as "a hash-up of the Victorian Ensign."³⁴

The most strident criticism came from the Sydney *Bulletin*, which described the proposed flag as "vulgar and ill-fitting, a stale rechauffe of the British flag, with no artistic virtue, no national significance."³⁵ However the *Bulletin* acknowledged that "probably seven in ten Australians or British Australians are conscious of no offence in the monstrosity that has been foisted upon them for a symbol."³⁶ The view was illustrated by a cartoon³⁷ (Fig. 20) which described the competition in terms of:

*and a crop of jingo sea judges hanging round chose this
and said 'behold a six pointed star'...*

*and a jingo press said 'a beautiful six pointed star'...
and the Australians got a red flag and painted a white
kangaroo on it and stuck it on a clothes prop...
and then there was a scrap.*

Not quite a boxing kangaroo, but certainly a more distinctive banner was preferred by many (Fig. 21).³⁸ The Australian Natives' Association wrote to Prime Minister Barton formally advising that "the designs of the Federal Flag and Seal of the Commonwealth are not of a national character and they respectfully submit that both should be changed for a design more emblematic of Australia."³⁹

5 Australia gets two flags

The Federal Government was relatively indifferent to the outcome of the competition. Prime Minister Barton waited until 8 February 1902 to arrange for the despatch of two designs to the Secretary of State for the Colonies.⁴⁰ The design marked "A" was the competition winner and a design marked "B" was the Australian Ensign. In effect, whilst Barton is understood to have personally favoured the flag which had been a central feature of the Federation Movement, he was leaving the choice to the British Imperial authorities. The British did not give any explanation as to their reasons for approval of design "A," but it seems reasonable to suggest that it was because it was most closely in conformity with the standard pattern for colonial flags. The gazettal of the design on 20 February 1903 constituted its legal adoption as the flag of the Federal Government. The Australian red ensign was formally adopted as the Merchant Flag by the issue of an Admiralty Warrant on 4 June 1903.⁴¹

Usage of the new flags was initially restricted to Federal Government-owned buildings and vessels and private vessels registered in the Commonwealth. Captain Richard Crouch, a Member of Parliament, representing Corio (Fig. 22) campaigned for wider usage of the Australian flag.⁴² Crouch objected to the Commonwealth Military Forces regulations to continue the practice of flying at military forts, either the Union Jack or, on royal anniversaries, the British Royal Standard.⁴³ The military regarded the new Australian flag (Fig. 23) as an inferior design, and regarded the Union Jack as the "distinctive flag for forts and when flown on barracks indicates the presence of the senior officer."⁴⁴ It became necessary for a resolution to be passed by the House of Representatives on 2 June 1904 that "the Australian flag as officially selected should be flown upon all forts, vessels, saluting places, and public buildings of the Commonwealth upon all occasions when flags are to be used."⁴⁵ The response from the military was to suggest that implementation of the resolution should wait until serious consideration was given to "adopt another (flag) which in our opinion is more appropriate."⁴⁶

It appears that the Australian flag was not fully adopted by the Australian military until 1911,⁴⁷ when King George V decided that the Royal Standard was not to be flown, except where His Majesty was personally present.⁴⁸ The Royal Australian Navy was established in 1910 and it was determined by the Imperial Defence Conference that the ships of the Dominion navies would be granted the use of the White Ensign (Fig. 24), without a distinctive badge, as this "would show that it is desired to offer the new Dominion ships a full share in the heritage of the British Navy."⁴⁹

It is beyond the scope of this paper fully to discuss the wide variance in usage of the blue and red versions of the Australian flag. In both World Wars, Australian troops paraded before the Australian blue ensign, but for all the subsequent wrapping of patriotism in the flag (Fig. 25),⁵⁰ the civilian population was prohibited from using the national flag. In September 1915 a group of men from the town of Gilgandra in the central west of New South Wales commenced a journey to the Army recruiting office in Sydney, encouraging as they went further volunteers from the towns passed through. This remains famous as "the Coo-ee March" and it was led by men carrying the Australian red ensign (Fig. 26).⁵¹ To some the red ensign was an acceptable form of patriotic pride, but for others a red flag had other connotations (Fig. 27).⁵²

Whilst images of the blue ensign in magazines of the day are claimed to show its usage by the general public, the official position was set out in a circular to the State Premiers in 1924 that "on shore, the Union Flag can be flown by any subject of the Empire... and... the flying of the Commonwealth Blue Ensign is reserved for Commonwealth Government use, but there is no reservation in the case of the Commonwealth Red Ensign."⁵³

In World War II, the Royal Australian Air Force recruited women with images of the blue ensign, but on Victory Day, the hand wavers were red, or better still "Old Glory." Red was again an acceptable political colour, with the flag of the allied Soviet Union even being flown on Commonwealth buildings during the war on Russia's national day and on the anniversary of the foundation of the Red Army.⁵⁴ The cinema newsreels used the red ensign as did posters for sporting events. Whilst the *Women's Weekly* could be relied upon to display the correctly coloured flag for events of truly national significance, such as Prime Minister Ben Chifley opening work on the Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Scheme, even the Commonwealth Government would fall back to using the Union Jack as the prime symbol of nationality.⁵⁵

6 First hint of change

Whilst a Cabinet submission in June 1939⁵⁶ recommended that the public should be permitted to use the Commonwealth Blue Ensign, it was not until 15 March 1941 that Prime Minister Robert Menzies released a press statement that "there should be no unnecessary restriction placed on the flying of the Blue

Ensign on shore.”⁵⁷ Whilst some like to claim that the *Flags Act* of 1953 was introduced by Prime Minister Menzies to stop the use of the again politically sensitive red flag, it actually had its origins in the establishment by the Labor Prime Minister Ben Chifley of an inter-departmental *Committee on Flags and Their Usage in Australia* on 5 October 1949.⁵⁸ An undated and unsourced background paper in the Prime Minister’s file on the matter included a remarkable hint that, following the imminent elections, the Labour Government was contemplating a new Australian flag design that would eliminate the Union Jack from the Australian flag. The paper stated: “that the Commonwealth possesses no flags symbolic of its emergence from the colonial chrysalis into a world where it moves freely among the sovereign nations... It is an anachronism to retain the Union Jack in a truly Australian flag.”⁵⁹ Noting that the allegiance of a loyal Australian was to King George VI, not the Government of the United Kingdom, the paper suggested a more symbolic flag would be one that combined the “red and gold of royalty with the blue and gold of Australia or ... included the Southern Cross on such a flag with or without some Royal emblem.”⁶⁰ But the Labor party lost government in the elections of December 1949 and no new flag proposal has subsequently emerged from government, though in 1956 the Menzies Government did consider altering the Australian Coat of Arms to a new design which better reflected Menzies’ desire to encourage more Australian loyalty to the Crown (**Fig. 28**).⁶¹

7 The designs begin

Leaving aside the 1901 design proposals for the Australian flag, the long parade of new flag proposals commenced in 1956. Jack Murray’s Republican Socialist League proposed removal of the Union Jack, substituting the Commonwealth Star (**Fig. 29**).⁶² However, it was only after Canada adopted a new flag in 1965 that the general public started to contemplate the possibility of Australia emulating its fellow Dominion. In 1968, the *Australasian Post* suggested a possible design which rearranged the remaining elements (**Fig. 30**).⁶³ This design has had enduring public acceptance, as exemplified by its use by the Australian cricket team on their Test Match tour of England in 1997.

From 1966, opposition to the war in South Vietnam and conscription which supplied it with Australia’s youth, acted as a catalyst for widespread social change and an awakening of Australia’s search for cultural independence from both British and American domination (**Fig. 31**).⁶⁴ The Eureka Flag (**Fig. 32**)⁶⁵ was revived by the union movement, the socialist left, the racist right, student radicals and anti-war protesters. With its authentic Australian heritage it continues to be advocated as a replacement national flag, but like the Confederate flag it has been used too much as a banner of protest for it to be acceptable to the mainstream.

The mood for change after 23 years of conservative rule led, in December

1972 to the whirlwind that was the Whitlam Labor Government. *The Bulletin*, a modern revival of the old title, urged the new government to adopt one of the best 10 designs chosen in the Australian National Anthem and Flag Quest, which had been launched on 1 August 1971. The winning design, submitted by a professional graphic artist, Richard Bates, was evocative of the existing flag but dramatically innovative in its design (**Fig. 33**).⁶⁶ Other designs were more conventional, one evoking the Eureka flag in green and gold (**Fig. 34**),⁶⁷ and another featuring the kangaroo (**Fig. 35**)⁶⁸ as the quintessential Australian icon.

The controversial dismissal of Gough Whitlam led to a return to Liberal Party rule in 1975. The opportunity for a change of flag had been lost. Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser commenced a programme of official promotion of the Australian National Flag to entrench a design which, up till then, most Australians had been only dimly aware of. A flag that had travelled to the Moon and safely returned could not be changed.⁶⁹

8 A flag for the bicentenary

In 1980 plans were unveiled for the building of a new Parliament House to be completed by 1988 to coincide with the Bicentenary of European Settlement. Sunken into Capital Hill, Canberra, the central design feature was an 81-metre tall flag mast. The need for a more appropriate national flag was re-awakened. Unexpectedly, the Bicentenary itself promoted the concept of a new flag. The logo adopted for the celebrations was a stylised map of Australia, which was initially in the unofficial national colours of blue and gold (**Fig. 36**).⁷⁰ When the logo and flag were changed to green and gold following the proclamation of official national colours in 1984,⁷¹ the Bicentennial flag was widely used as an unofficial alternative national flag.

A number of individuals have created designs which they have, with varying degrees of success, promoted as their ideal new flag. In addition to media publicity, such flags have appeared on car stickers and promotional material whilst full-sized flags have been sold to the public to fly or wave at sporting fixtures. One of the earliest designs was by Athol Kelly whose “All Australian Flag” (**Fig. 37**)⁷² features in green and gold both the kangaroo and the Southern Cross and, somewhat disconcertingly, the Commonwealth Star as if it were one of the pointer stars - Alpha Centauri. The Australian country music artist John Williamson promoted his “Fair Dinkum Flag” (**Fig. 38**)⁷³ from 1983 until 1991 when he began promoting another design.⁷⁴ Adding the Sun to the Southern Cross is a recurring theme, which reflects the importance of both as Australian symbols, though it results in an astronomical anomaly. In 1984 Tony Burton designed his Southern Cross flag (**Fig. 39**)⁷⁵ which has inspired many subsequent variants, with the lower stripes evocative of both a British heritage and the red earth of Central Australia.

Flag design competitions have become a relatively frequent media phenomenon. The Sydney newspaper *The Daily Telegraph* conducted a competition in 1982, to which the author submitted his own concept - an evolutionary flag which featured a boomerang, the angles of which match the east and west coasts of the Australian map (Fig. 40). The design was published as a weekly finalist, but it did not win in the final judging.

It is, in retrospect, remarkable that a yacht race could have so captured the nation's sporting and patriotic pride. On 26 September 1983 the 12-metre yacht *Australia II* won the America's Cup, and it seemed the whole nation watched on television as the yacht returned to port with its victory banner unfurled - the boxing kangaroo (Fig. 41).⁷⁶ Spontaneously, thousands of Australians began to fly the boxing kangaroo and there was a real possibility that if this larikan flag had had a less pugilistic design it could have become popularly chosen as the de-facto national flag.

9 Loyal opposition

Less than two weeks after the *Americas Cup* victory The Australian National Flag Association (ANFA) was launched. The main aim of ANFA is stated to be the promotion of the importance and significance of the flag as the chief national symbol, though the unstated aim is to provide loyal opposition against the proponents of change. An early car sticker states the aim plainly as "Keep This Our Flag Forever." ANFA initiated an annual commemoration of the 1901 unveiling of the flag design (Fig. 42), and on 3 September 1996 "Flag Day" received official recognition by the new Liberal-National Party Government.

There were a number of patriotic logos about in the 1980s. In 1981 the Australian Manufacturing Council started a product endorsement advertising promotion featuring the Australian Flag - the "Advance Australia" campaign (Fig. 43). However, the campaign was relaunched in 1986 as the "Australian Made" campaign, and the flag was quietly dropped as an ineffective branding for Australian origin, being replaced by a stylised kangaroo designed by Ken Cato (Fig. 44). The search for a national business identity has led to a variety of other identity logos, ranging from the koala to other attempts to make the flag work commercially.

One of the early promoters of a new flag was Alan Wright, who organised an "Aussie Push for 88," progressively testing public acceptance of his designs from his first flag in February 1983 (Fig. 45)⁷⁷ to his preferred design (Fig. 46).

10 Ausflag

The most enduring and prominent group advocating a change of flag has been Ausflag (Fig. 47). Established in 1981 by Harold Scruby, it became incorpo-

rated as a non-profit company in 1983 under the name "Ausflag 88 Limited." When the Bicentenary came and went without a new flag, the "88" was dropped. Ausflag currently states its objective as "the adoption of a truly Australian flag, a flag which clearly and unequivocally proclaims our identity to other nations, a flag which is internationally recognisable and not confusing to other nations, and a flag which unites the Australian nation in all its diversity."⁷⁸ In 1985, Ausflag 88 organised a flag competition with an \$88,000 prize pool, with the *Bulletin* being the main promotional medium. Whilst some regarded the matter light heartedly, the competition captured substantial public interest.

The winner of the Ausflag competition was Wayne Stokes (Fig. 48),⁷⁹ whose original entry, which included an additional yellow stripe, was modified by Ausflag upon vexillological advice. Public response was mixed, but mostly muted. In retrospect, Ausflag wasted the opportunity provided to it by the initial level of corporate sponsorship. After the prize money was awarded in March 1986, there was no further funding available to promote the winning design. Thinking that the design was not sufficiently different to capture the public's imagination, Ausflag persuaded the design firm of Lunn-Dyer and Associates to create new proposals which were publicised in 1987 (Figs 49 and 50).⁸⁰ Featuring the kangaroo and the supposedly popular green and gold, these "logo" flags also failed to inspire.

Other designers to promote their flags have included Hundertwasser whose "Down Under" flag (Fig. 51), features Uluru (Ayers Rock), positioned to show "Australia holding the Earth from down under."⁸¹ Since 1989 Geoff Coulin has promoted his flag which features the Southern Cross and the wattle (Fig. 52),⁸² the colours of which have inspired another wattle flag designed by Tony Burton (Fig. 53).⁸³ A design seminar was held at the 13th International Congress of Vexillology in Melbourne in 1989.⁸⁴ Two of the more notable vexillologists offering their suggestions were Dr Whitney Smith (Fig. 54) and the President of ANFA, John Vaughan (Fig. 55).

On Australia Day 1991, Ausflag launched its third promotion, reverting to the Southern Cross (Fig. 56),⁸⁵ it having formed the view that only a minimalist change flag could be achieved. However, it decided to have an each-way bet and also offered the public its suggested design in green and gold (Fig. 57). Whilst these designs again failed to inspire the public, the most successful part of this campaign was its pamphlet "Our Own Flag" which set out a strong argument for a flag change, even though it perpetuated a number of misconceptions about the history of the Australian flag. The pamphlet was widely quoted, including in Parliament, where on 28 April 1992, Prime Minister Keating declared that he regarded the existing flag "as an ambiguous representation of our nation and I believe it ought to be changed."⁸⁶

11 Competition season

And so the competitions started again. The Adelaide *Advertiser* selected a design based on the "Australian Made" logo (Fig. 58) as its competition winner.⁸⁷ The television programme *A Current Affair* launched a flag competition on Australia Day 1993. Three winning designs were selected by a panel of eminent Australians, with the intent being to hold a telephone poll to select the winning design. However, the anticipated media coverage was lost when an election was called, so the prize money was shared equally between David Couzen (Fig. 59), Christine Lowe and Geoff Cross (Fig. 60) and Tony Burton (Fig. 61).⁸⁸ The author was involved in the judging process and was responsible for selecting the short-list of 50 designs which were considered by the judges. My personal favourites were Figs 62–64⁸⁹ for their innovations in design, whilst Figs 65⁹⁰ and 66⁹¹ show the results of two professional designers. The flag in Fig. 67⁹² shows the results of compromise between multiple themes.

Each of the flag competitions has generated a level of hate mail. The most extra-ordinary letter was from someone who mailed in a flag (Fig. 68) and stated sincerely that it was the "most beautiful flag in the world" and should not be changed. It mirrors other distortions of the flag when it is used for dubious commercial purposes from airlines to selling books.

Ausflag geared-up again and held another flag competition, with the winners being announced on 17 December 1993. A panel of eminent Australians selected the winning design by graphic designer Mark Tucker (Fig. 69),⁹³ it having been considered more vexillographically practical compared to the more artistic version of the same theme submitted by Roderick Simpson (Fig. 70).⁹⁴ The judges completely rejected all considerations of kangaroos and green and gold. In selecting the Uluru theme in red, white and blue, they had been swayed by one of the judges, the fashion designer Jenny Kee, whose own flag design featured these elements. In a co-incidence, the third prize was shared by two designs both submitted by Tony Burton, a modification of the Aboriginal flag (Fig. 71)⁹⁵ and the same design that had been a finalist in the previous television competition (Fig. 61). Two green and gold flags were selected as token finalists for the public display (Figs 72 and 73).⁹⁶ My personal favourite design was by Marianne Evers (Fig. 74),⁹⁷ for I personally believe that a truly inspiring and unambiguously Australian flag should feature the kangaroo, preferably in an innovative stylisation.

12 The state of play

The flag debate got caught up in what was regarded by Prime Minister Keating as the more important issue of converting Australia to a republic. Whilst an Australian Republican Movement fund raising dinner could auction off a designer republican flag,⁹⁸ the political strategists formed the view that the

back-lash against a change of flag would delay the republic. The flag could wait. However, Australians For A Constitutional Monarchy regarded defence of the flag as integral and would not allow the two issues to be unbundled.

Ausflag presses on, periodically issuing press releases and posters which maintain the issue in the media's eyes. It has an Internet site that has recorded over a million hits. Ausflag has targeted the 2000 Olympics as the new deadline for a solution to Australia's identity crisis. Each year it launches another publicity event - displaying on some of the main approach streets to Sydney a variety of flags. Flags which have been competition winners, are colourful and provocative of press coverage (Fig. 75),⁹⁹ are designed by famous commercial designers (Figs 76 and 77)¹⁰⁰ or are merely the latest in the parade of possible designs (Fig. 78).¹⁰¹

What the past 30 years have shown is that there is a continuing dissatisfaction with the capacity of the Australian flag adequately to reflect Australia's nationality as it exists in the modern world. The Union Jack is Australia's past. Britain has left Australia to join the European Union and Australia is on the other side of the world (Fig. 79).¹⁰² There has been no shortage of designs for an effective alternative and indeed there are literally thousands of credible designs that have been developed for the various competitions. What has been lacking is the political will. The current Prime Minister, John Howard, is highly unlikely to tolerate, let alone promote a flag change. Australia must await the new millennium and a future Prime Minister who, like Canada's Lester Pearson, will demonstrate the leadership necessary for Australia to adopt a flag that looks to its future, not to its past. As with the Republic, there is amongst a majority of Australians a sense of it being inevitable, the only uncertainties are how, when and to what.

Notes and references

1. The logo for the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games was unveiled on 14 September 1996, replacing the previous bid logo. Featuring the "Millennium Athlete," the design was created by FHA Image Design, a team led by Creative Director Trevor Flett. The design is copyright to the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games.
2. Ausflag Limited, *The Australian Flag Professional Design Competition and Exhibition Designers' Brief*, July 1997, cover.
3. *Flags Amendment Bill*, 1996, introduced into the House of Representatives 26 June 1996.
4. Illustration in Australian Archives, ACT (Series AI 715: Item 60).
5. Silk embroidered panel with unofficial Australian coat of arms circa 1880. Author's photograph of original in the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney.

6. Otherwise known as the "Federation Flag," there were many variations in the details of its design, which had been first proposed and used as a flag for New South Wales in 1832. See Tony Burton, "Australia's Forgotten Flag" in *Cruz Australis* Vol 8/4 No. 36, pp. 160-182.
7. Edmund Barton was a leading New South Wales pro-Federation politician and he subsequently became the first Australian Prime Minister.
8. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 May 1898, reproduced in R. Evans, C. Moore, K. Saunders and B. Jamison (editors), *1901: Our Future's Past*, Macmillan, 1997, p. 255.
9. Illustration from author's collection - original source unknown.
10. Kelly, R., "Australian State Flags (1 865-1904) A British Legacy" in *Report of the 13th International Congress of Vexillology*, Flag Society of Australia, 1993, p. 26 and footnote 20, also reproduced in *Cruz Australis* Vol 8/4 No. 36, p. 187 and p. 204.
11. Postcard dated 30 December 1900, reproduce in David Cook, *Picture Postcards in Australia 1898-1920*, Pioneer Design Studio, Lilydale, Vic, 1985, facing p. 144.
12. Despatch to Governor-General dated 29 November 1900, in *Papers re Commonwealth flag laid on table of Senate*, Australian Archives, ACT (A1: 1904/4897).
13. Fig. 13 is my interpretation of how the then badges of the States could be combined in the Canadian style. Note the impractical form of South Australia's 1876 badge.
14. A British Admiralty Warrant of 1892 authorised for use on board vessels registered in the Dominion a British red ensign with a shield for Canada. Initially this was a quartering of the badges of the foundation Provinces (Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, though a number of variants exist with all of the provincial badges combined) until 1921 when a new Grant of Arms for Canada was made.
15. Minute by the Prime Minister dated 13 April 1901, in *Papers re Commonwealth flag laid on table of Senate*, Australian Archives, ACT (A1: 1904/4897). This minute authorised the Competition for (1) a seal and (2) a flag.
16. The competition was launched in the October 20, 1900 issue of *The Review of Reviews*, p. 442.
17. See the April 20, 1901 issue of *The Review of Reviews*, p. 378.
18. Photograph from September 20, 1901 issue of *The Review of Reviews*, p. 243.
19. Reconstruction of design from unknown entrant, using details of a photograph in Frank Cayley, *Flag of Stars*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1966 at p. 103.
20. October 20, 1900 issue of *The Review of Reviews*, page 442.

21. Reconstruction of design from unknown entrant, using a photograph from September 20, 1901 issue of *The Review of Reviews*, p. 245.
22. *Ibid.*
23. Report to Prime Minister Barton by Board of Judges dated 2 September 1901, in *Papers re Commonwealth flag laid on table of Senate*, Australian Archives, ACT (A1: 1904/4897).
24. August 20, 1901 issue of *The Review of Reviews*, page 127.
25. Reconstruction of design from description in *Town and Country Journal*, Sydney, 4 June 1898, reproduced in R Evans, C Moore, K Saunders and B Jamison (editors) *1901: Our Future's Past*, Macmillan, 1997, p. 255-6.
26. Redrawn from illustration in La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria, reproduced in *Australia's Yesterdays*, Readers' Digest, third edition, 1986, p. 20.
27. Redrawn from illustration in Australian Archives, ACT (A6: 1901/133).
28. Reconstruction of design, using details of a photograph in Frank Cayley, *Flag of Stars*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1966 at p. 103. Also illustrated in Carol A Foley, *The Australian Flag: Colonial Relic or Contemporary Icon?*, Federation Press, Leichhardt, NSW, 1996, p. 51.
29. Redrawn from illustration in Australian Archives, ACT (A6: 1901/133).
30. Form of entry in the register of copyright in paintings, drawings and photographs in Queensland of proprietorship by William Henry Lumley. Redrawn from illustration in Australian Archives, ACT (A1715: 102).
31. Letter to the editor from *Crix du Sud*, October 20, 1901 issue of *The Review of Reviews*, p. 345.
32. Letter to the editor from Clement Wragge, October 20, 1901 issue of *The Review of Reviews*, p. 345.
33. December 20, 1901 issue of *The Review of Reviews*, p. 532.
34. Cayley, F., *Flag of Stars*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1966, p. 111.
35. *Bulletin*, Sydney, 28 September 1901, reproduced in R. Evans, C. Moore, K. Saunders and B. Jamison (editors) *1901: Our Future's Past*, Macmillan, 1997, p. 257
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Bulletin*, 21 September 1901 reproduced in R. Evans, et al (*Ibid.*) at p. 258. The cartoon also appears in *Cruz Australis*, Vol 8/2 No. 34, p. 79.
38. Reconstruction of design, using details of cartoon in *Bulletin* (*Ibid.*).

39. Letter from General Secretary, Australian Natives Association, NSW to Prime Minister Barton dated 25 February 1902. Australian Archives, ACT (A8/1/02: 135/13).
40. Minute for His Excellency the Governor-General from Edmund Barton, dated 8 February 1902. Australian Archives, ACT (A6: 1901/134).
41. Commonwealth *Gazette* of 15 August 1903. Australian Archives, (A1: 1904/4897).
42. Letter from Richard Crouch to Prime Minister Barton dated 16 April 1903. Australian Archives, ACT (A461: A336/1/1 Part 1). Also see Commonwealth *Hansard* of 28 June 1904.
43. Commonwealth *Gazette* of 25 April 1903. Australian Archives, ACT (A461: A336/1/1 Part 1).
44. Letter from Department of Defence to Prime Minister dated 13 June 1904: Australian Archives, ACT (A461: A336/1/1 Part 1).
45. Commonwealth *Hansard* of 2 June 1904.
46. Letter from Department of Defence to Richard Crouch dated 14 June 1904. Australian Archives, ACT (A461: A336/1/1 Part 1).
47. Military Order 135 of 1911 stated "It is directed that in future the Australian flag is to be used as the saluting flag at all reviews and ceremonial parades." Australian Archives, ACT (A6661/1: 32). It appears that the use of the Australian flag was sanctioned to be flown on military forts in 1907, alongside the Union Jack. See Commonwealth *Hansard* of 30 October 1908.
48. Despatch No. 204 from Secretary of State for the Colonies to Governor-General dated 11 May 1911. Australian Archives, ACT (A6661/1:34).
49. Quote is from Confidential Despatch from Secretary of State for the Colonies dated August 1910. Approval was contained in Clause 3 of Agreement of 1911 between the Admiralty and representatives of Canada and Australia. Australian Archives, ACT (A461: A336/1/1 Part 1).
50. Postcard, reproduce in David Cook, *Picture Postcards in Australia 1898-1920*, Pioneer Design Studio, Lilydale, Vic, 1985, front cover.
51. Meredith, J., *The Coo-ee March*, Kangaroo Press, 1986, p 64.
52. Anarchy flag, carried by Chummy Flemming on many May Day marches from 1890's, reproduced in *Programme for May Day Exhibition*, The Queen's Hall, State Library of Victoria, 1988. Author's collection.
53. Circular to Premiers of all States from Earle Page, Acting Prime Minister dated 31 January 1924. Australian Archives, ACT (A546: 1/61).
54. Letter from Department of External Affairs to the Legation of the USSR dated 27 April 1944. Australian Archives, ACT (A989/1: 43/80/1/6/3).

55. See photograph of Prime Minister Chifley opening the Snowy River project, 1949, National Library of Australia, reproduced in Stephen Alomes, *A Nation at Last?*, Angus & Robertson, 1988, p. 133.
56. Cabinet Papers dated 22 June 1939. Australian Archives, ACT (A461: A336/1/1 Part 3).
57. Press Release based on Memorandum from Secretary, Prime Minister's Department to Secretary, Department of External Affairs dated 28 February 1941. Australian Archives, ACT (A981/1: Def 220).
58. Letter from Prime Minister Chifley to Minister for Defence dated 5 October 1949. Australian Archives, ACT (A518/1: EC112/1 Part 2).
59. *Necessity of an Australian National Flag*, undated and unsigned background briefing paper circa 1949. Part of a file of materials in Prime Minister's file on Cabinet Submissions for Flag Act. Australian Archives, ACT (A462: 828/1/1 Part 1).
60. *Ibid.*
61. Drawing in Australian Archives, ACT (A463: 1956/219 Part 1).
62. Edwards, J., "The Southern Cross: Variations on a Theme," *Cruz Australis*, Vol 2 No 6/12, p. 46.
63. Smout, A.H., *Our Flag ... and how to fly it*, Murray, Sydney, 1970, pp. 12 and 18.
64. Badge circa 1972. The koala is "Blinky Bill" an Australian children story character.
65. It should be noted that the flag now accepted as the authentic Eureka flag was not known until 1963 when Len Fox wrote a booklet entitled *The Strange Story of the Eureka Flag* and it did not get general acceptance until after Frank Cayley's confirmation in *Flag of Stars* in 1966.
66. *The Bulletin*, 13 January 1973, Cover and pp. 20-21.
67. Entry by I Walsh, *Ibid.*
68. Entry by J O'Leary, *Ibid.*
69. A 6x4 inch flag was carried to the Moon on Apollo 11, which, together with a fragment of moon rock was "presented to the people of the Commonwealth of Australia by Richard Nixon, President of the United States of America." Hilary Golder, *Documenting a Nation*, Australian Archives, Canberra, 1994, p. 44
70. Bartlett, R., "Australian Bicentennial Flag," *Cruz Australis*, Vol 3/3 No 15, pp. 3-10.
71. Commonwealth of Australia *Gazette*, No S 142, 19 April 1984.

72. Edwards, J., "Proposed National Flags, Part 3," *Cruz Australis*, Vol 1/3 No 3, pp. 52-56.
73. Edwards, J., "Proposed National Flags, Part 2," *Cruz Australis*, Vol 1/2 No 2, pp. 48-52.
74. Burton, T., "A Flag of Our Own," *Cruz Australis*, Vol 7/4 No 32, pp. 162-3.
75. Burton, T. and Kelly, R., "Designs on an Australian Flag - A Melbourne Workshop," *Cruz Australis*, Vol 8/1 No 33, p 20.
76. Edwards, J., "The Boxing Kangaroo: Apotheosis of a Myth," *The Flag Bulletin*, Volume XXIV/4 No 112, pp. 111-144.
77. Edwards, J., "Proposed National Flags, Part 6," *Cruz Australis*, Vol 1/6 No 6, pp. 56-76.
78. "Ausflag: Who We Are" on Ausflag's World Wide Web site at www.ausflag.com.au/ausflag/who.html
79. Edwards, J., "The Ausflag Competition," *Cruz Australis*, Vol 2/4 No 10, pp. 6-8.
80. Burton, T., "The Design of the Australian Flag: A Gestalt Approach," in *Report of the 13th International Congress of Vexillology*, Flag Society of Australia, 1993, pp. 106-123.
81. *Ibid.*
82. Coulin, G., "The Stars and the Wattle," *Cruz Australis*, Vol 6/3 No 27, pp. 150-151.
83. Burton, T., "Australia - The Wattle Flag," *Cruz Australis*, Vol 6/1 No 25, p. 10.
84. Burton, T. and Kelly, R., "Designs on an Australian Flag - A Melbourne Workshop," *Cruz Australis*, Vol 8/1 No 33, p 19-37.
85. Burton, T., "Ausflag Mark 3," *Cruz Australis*, Vol 7/1 No 29, pp. 17-20.
86. House of Representatives *Hansard*, 28 April 1992, p. 1835.
87. *The Advertiser*, Adelaide, 30 April 1992
88. The *A Current Affair* competition has been comprehensively covered by three articles: Tony Burton, "Flag design by media: The Aussie Flag Debate continues," *Cruz Australis*, Vol 9/1 No 37, pp. 5-13; Tony Burton, "Fifty of the finest: Channel 9 Network flagquest," *Cruz Australis*, Vol 9/2 No 38, pp. 51-90 and Ralph Kelly, "A Current Affair," *Cruz Australis*, Vol 9/3 No 39, pp. 145-159.
89. *Ibid.* Fig. 62 is a design by Joseph Ting, Fig. 63 is a design by Jacob Chahrozian and Fig. 64 is a design by Anthony Frost.
90. *Ibid.* Fig. 65 is a design by Jon Hawley

91. *Ibid.* Fig. 66 is a design by Joe Bollen, who designed a similar flag which was the winning design in a competition for a flag to commemorate the sesquicentenary of the City of Sydney, see Tony Burton, "A flag for Sydney's Sesqui," *Cruz Australis*, Vol 8/1 No 33, pp. 9-13.
92. *Ibid.* Fig. 67 is a design by Ian Giles.
93. Author's collection and Tony Burton, "Flag year 94," *Cruz Australis*, Vol 10/1 No 41, pp. 3-31.
94. *Ibid.*
95. *Ibid.*
96. *Ibid.* Fig. 72 is a design by Ross McLeod and Rod Nathan and Fig. 73 is a design by Stephen Harrington.
97. *Ibid.*
98. A flag designed by Tom Storrier, at the third annual dinner of the Australian Republican Movement, 4 November 1993.
99. This is a design by Harold Scruby. See "Ausflag's latest flag concepts" on Ausflag's World Wide Web site at www.ausflag.com.au/ausflag/concepts.html
100. These are designs by Ken Done. See "Ken Done's Flag Gallery" on Ausflag's World Wide Web site at www.ausflag.com.au/ausflag/done.html
101. This is a design claimed by Harold Scruby. See "Ausflag's latest flag concepts" on Ausflag's World Wide Web site at www.ausflag.com.au/ausflag/concepts.html
102. Cartoon by Tandberg, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 October 1996. Original in collection of author.

Ralph Kelly

Ralph Kelly is an Australian from Sydney. Vexillology is a hobby interest that Ralph has had an active role in for 30 years, including undertaking extensive archival research. Ralph's profession is investment banking, being an Executive Director at NatWest Markets Australia. Ralph is President of the Flag Society of Australia and he is a Director of Ausflag, where he provides a vexillological perspective on that entity's promotional and political lobbying for a new Australian national flag. He has been involved in two flag design competitions and he chairs Ausflag's Professional Design Competition Committee. Acknowledged within Australia as a flag expert, he has appeared on Australian television news to comment on the flag debate.

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Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8

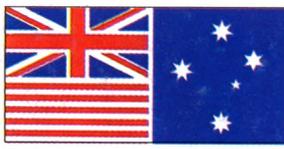


Figure 9



Figure 10

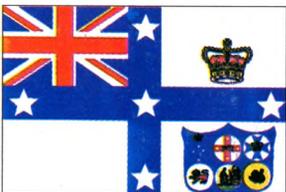


Figure 11



Figure 12

Plate 52



Figure 25

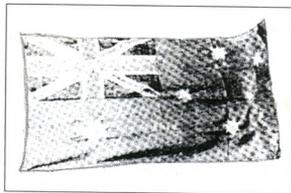


Figure 26



Figure 27



Figure 28



Figure 29



Figure 30



Figure 31



Figure 32



Figure 33

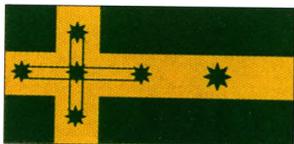


Figure 34



Figure 35



Figure 36

Plate 53



Figure 37



Figure 38



Figure 39



Figure 40



Figure 41



Figure 42



Figure 43



Figure 44



Figure 45



Figure 46



Figure 47



Figure 48



Figure 49



Figure 50



Figure 51



Figure 52



Figure 53



Figure 54



Figure 55



Figure 56



Figure 57



Figure 58



Figure 59



Figure 60

Plate 55



Figure 61

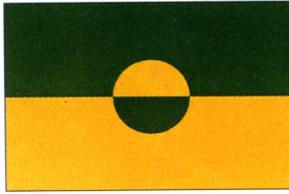


Figure 62



Figure 63

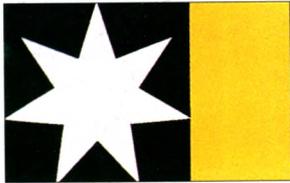


Figure 64



Figure 65



Figure 66



Figure 67

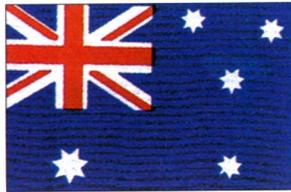


Figure 68

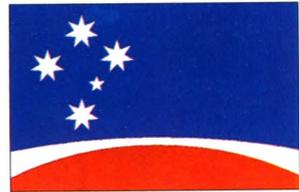


Figure 69



Figure 70

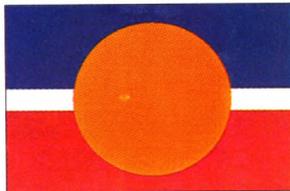


Figure 71



Figure 72



Figure 73

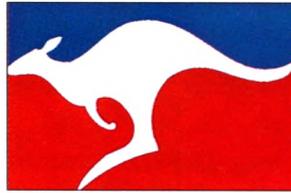


Figure 74



Figure 75



Figure 76

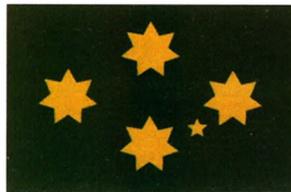


Figure 77



Figure 78



Figure 79