

AUSTRALIA'S VICE-REGAL LEGACY

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Abstract :

Whether or not Australia becomes a Federal Republic on 1 January 2001 the current and future use of Australia's State and National Vice-Regal Flags should be reviewed.

Throughout the 20th Century five of the six State (formerly Colonial) Governor's flags have evolved from the original British Admiralty's direction of a circled badge in the centre of the British Royal Union Flag into a slight variation of the current respective State Flags. The design of the flag of the Governor-General changed from having a unique flag badge to having a design uniform across the Commonwealth for all Governors-General. The only distinguishing element is the respective country's name. Very uninspiring!

As here in Canada all of Australia's Vice-Regal Flags should be "localized", to better identify and represent the people, states and nation of Australia. As a proposal I have redesigned the various elements of the current State Governors' flags. In the event that Australia does become a Republic then I propose that the current Queen's Personal Flag for Australia be slightly modified for the Australian President's Flag.

If current opinion polls maintain their 60%-75% pro-republic feeling for the Constitutional referendum on the 6th November 1999, Australia would then probably become a **Federal Republic** on the 1st January 2001, the centenary of the establishment of the current constitutional monarchy of the *Commonwealth of Australia*.

Entwined in Australia's constitutional debate, despite public pronouncements by both the Australian Republican Movement and Ausflag that they should be treated as separate debates, is the on-going "Great Australian Flag Debate". For the purposes of this paper I am going to side-step the Australian national flag question and look at the related but until now largely overlooked issue of Australia's State and national Vice-Regal flags. The purpose of this paper is to review the development of these flags since Federation in 1901 and discuss their possible future use, status and revised designs.

Unlike most regional divisions within nations around the world, Australia's internal States are deemed to be "Sovereign" States by the powers vested in their respective Constitutions. This means that each State has in its own right, the Monarch of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland as *Sovereign Head of State*, who is represented by the State Governor. This is exactly the same status as the Monarch's *Sovereign* representative for the *Commonwealth of Australia*, being the Governor General.

Australia's State and Governors' flags had their origins when each of the six States were separate Crown Colonies. For the full story of how these colonial flags came about I urge people to read Ralph Kelly's excellent 13th. (1989) I.C.V. Lecture, *AUSTRALIAN STATE FLAGS 1865-1904: A British Admiralty Legacy* 1. Australia's six colonial Governor's flags strictly followed the 1869 British Admiralty directions of a disc badge encircled by a wreath at the centre of the Union Flag. Upon the birth of the *Commonwealth of Australia* on the first of January 1901 each Governor's unique disc was as follows:

Fig. 1 (Flags of Six Governors - 1901)



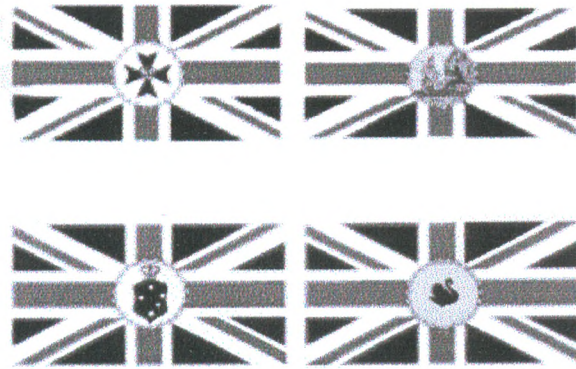


Fig. 1 (continued)

- New South Wales - Combined St. George & Southern Crosses with Lion.
- Tasmania - Red Lion facing the hoist. This flag was used at sea. On land the Governor used the plain Union Flag until June 1961.²
- Queensland - Imperial Crown at the centre of a Royal Blue Maltese Cross.
- South Australia - Britannia with Shield meeting an Aborigine.
- Victoria - Southern Cross Shield topped with an Imperial Crown.
- Western Australia - Black Swan facing the fly on a yellow disc.

For the next 75 years the basic flag layout remained the same, however during this time span four of the six States made a total of six changes or modifications to their flag discs. These were



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

Fig. 2 "Imperial" Crown and **Fig. 3** ("Tudor" Crowns) -1901 - "Imperial" Crown replaced with the "Tudor" Crown in both the Queensland (date unknown) and Victorian (27 August) flags.³



Fig. 4

Fig. 4 (Piping Shrike bird Flag Disc - S.A.) 1904 - Piping Shrike became the new South Australian symbol and flag badge (13 January).

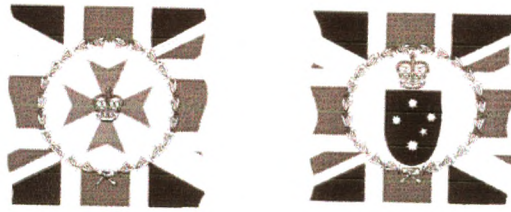


Fig. 5 ("St. Edward's" Crowns) 1953-57)

The "St. Edward's" Crown became the new Crown on both the Queensland and Victorian flags during this period. ⁴



Fig. 6

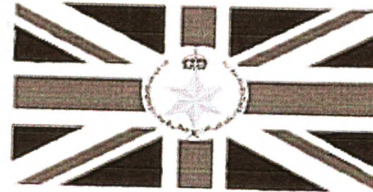


Fig. 7

Fig. 6 (Black Swan - left-facing Flag Disc - W.A.1953 - Western Australian Black Swan reversed to face the hoist. **Fig. 7** (Governors-General Flag - Six-Pointed Star)

During this time-span a vice-regal flag for Australia as a whole was also introduced, modified, changed and modified, being the Governor-General's flag. Altogether there have been four flags for the Governors-General of Australia.

Fig. 7 (Governors-General Flag - Six-Pointed Star)

The first flag consisted of the original six-pointed golden-yellow Federation or Commonwealth Star, surmounted by the Tudor Crown, both inside a Laurel Wreath, all of which is encircled in a golden yellow ring, centred on the Union Flag. Unfortunately Government House in Canberra has no record of this first version Governor-General's flag, which I sourced from the British Admiralty *Drawings of the flags in use at the present time by various nations*, August 1889, containing a tissue-thin paper amendment slip.⁵ This flag did exist even if only as an official Admiralty/Colonial Offices file drawing. The Governor-General's flag was mentioned in correspondence dated 29 December 1902 from the Secretary of State for Colonies to the Governor-General of Australia.⁶ Formal adoption occurred 20 February 1903 coinciding with Royal approval of the then Australian Blue (National) and Red (Merchant) Ensigns.⁷



Fig. 8 (1909-36)

Fig. 8 (Governors-General Flag - Seven-pointed Star)

I believe that the vice-regal flag was modified in May 1909 with the inclusion of a 7th point in the Federation/Commonwealth Star, still centred on the Union Flag. Once again this coincided with the

same change in Australia's Blue and Red Ensigns.⁸ Government House in Canberra has archival information about this and the flags of subsequent Governors-General.



Fig. 9 1936-53



1953 - Present

Fig. 9 (Governors-General Personal Flag)

In September 1928 King George V requested that the Governors-General of His Dominions have a distinctive flag in order to achieve "uniformity of custom".⁹ Following discussions throughout 1930 with Dominion officials, the Colonial Office and finally the Prime Ministers of the Dominions, a new Governor-General's flag consisting of a royal blue field, a Crowned Lion on top of the Tudor Crown, all above a scroll showing the name of the Dominion, was approved and gradually introduced. Australia's new Governors-General flag was adopted 23 June 1936.¹⁰



Fig. 10

Fig. 10 ("Tudor" and "St. Edward's" Crowns)

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II made it known 28 August 1952 that the St Edward's Crown was to replace the Tudor Crown in all future designs embodying all representations of the Crown.¹¹ As with the rest of the British Commonwealth all Vice-Regal flags were accordingly altered to include the new St. Edward's Crown over the next four to five years. These were in Australia's case, the Governor's flags of Queensland and Victoria, and the Governors-General flags of Australia. Unfortunately I have not been able to ascertain the exact dates of these alterations.¹² In the late 1950's Queen Elizabeth II decided that it would be appropriate for her to have a "Personal Flag" for separate British Commonwealth Nations.

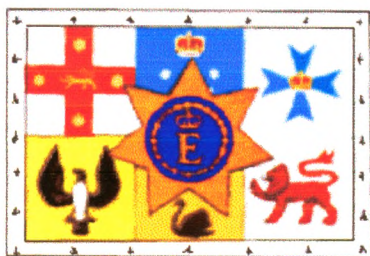


Fig. 11



Fig. 12

Fig. 11 (Queen's Personal Flag, for Australia)

Australia's "personalized" regal flag has a white field with the badges of the six States. In the centre overlapping each badge is a golden-yellow seven-pointed Commonwealth/Federation Star, charged with the Queen's own Device of a royal blue disc charged with her initial letter "E", together with St.

Edward's Crown, both in golden-yellow, and all within a ring of roses, also in golden-yellow. The new Queen's Flag for Australia was publicly announced by the then Australian Prime Minister, Robert G. Menzies, in Canberra 13 January 1963.¹³ Personally, I believe that these Queen's flags were partially created to make the citizens of British Commonwealth nations feel that the Monarch is their own Monarch and to continue its relevance during the then period of de-colonization and greater independence from the "mother country".

Fig. 12 (75th. Anniversary of Nationhood - Australian Post)

The first day of January 1976 marked 75 years of the Commonwealth of Australia. This date coincided with a national awakening and debate about how independent Australia is, what kind of nation Australia should be in the future. The awakening following the Federal constitutional crisis of late 1975. This involved the rival powers of the Governor-General and those of the elected government of the day, especially when it came to a government's dismissal by the Governor-General. During this period questions relating to the States and their Governors were also raised. As a child about to enter my teenage years and already interested in politics, nationhood, flags and symbolism in general, I found this all very enthralling. The dismissal of the Federal Government by the Governor-General, 11 November 1975, tarnished, in the eyes of many Australian, the vice-regal offices. Wary of the possible spill-over effect this might have on the six State vice-regal positions, each Governor voluntarily, I believe, started to "Australianize" and reduce some of the pomp and ceremony traditionally associated with this very British position.



South Australia 18 September 1975



Tasmania February 1977



New South Wales 15 January 1981



Victoria 18 April 1984



Western Australia 12 April 1988

Fig. 13

Fig. 13 (New Governors' Flags of Australia)
Commencing in late 1975, five of Australia's six Governors' flags were replaced with new designs. As with the previous common design, all the new Governors' flag designs consisted of their

respective State flags with the addition of the St. Edward's Crown above the State flag disc. Except for Victoria, all the colours stayed unchanged. As Victoria's State badge already contains a crown the Governor at the time of change, Rear Admiral Sir Brian Muffay, decided that the flag would be a variation of the current State flag. The variations were a golden-yellow field and red Southern Cross stars, representing Victoria's golden past and future. Red for the stars is used only to distinguish them from the field.¹⁴

The new Governors' flags were approved or adopted on the dates indicated on the previous page (Fig. 12).



Fig. 14

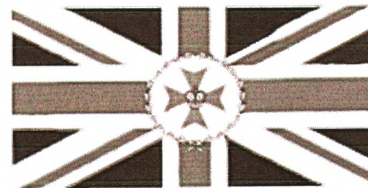


Fig. 15

Fig. 14 (Victoria's Personal Governor's Flag)

The only state not to change its Governor's Flag is Queensland, which historically has been a more conservative state of Australia, and content with *status quo*.

Fig. 15 (Queensland's Personal Governor's Flag)

Now for the future. Regardless of the result of the Constitutional Referendum of 6 November 1999, Australia will continue to comprise the current six States and probably in the near future seven States (the new one being the Northern Territory) each with the ceremonial position of Governor. Therefore the use of a personal flag to represent the position and office of State Governor should continue as representative of the particular State and its constitutional status; this being in tune with Australian society today.

Fig. 16 (Some Lieutenant- Governors' Flags of Canada)

To consider the possible future development of these Governors and Governors-General flags, we in Australia should look now no further than here in Canada, where the Lieutenant-Governors and Governors-General were "Canadianized", over a six-year period commencing in 1981, following the

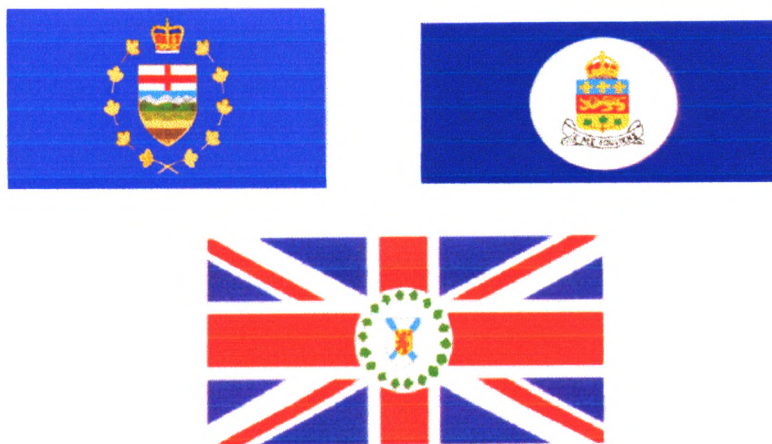


Fig.16 The Flag of the Lieutenant-Governor - Alberta, Quebec, and Nova Scotia. (The flags of the other seven Provinces follow the Alberta design. Ed.)

British Admiralty design patterns since 1869. As with the Canadian flag debate preceding the 1965 adoption of Canada's national flag, I believe that Australia can and should learn from the Canadian national and provincial experiences. Therefore, I will now finish by showing you my own proposals for the seven Governors' flags and President's (Head of State's) flag.

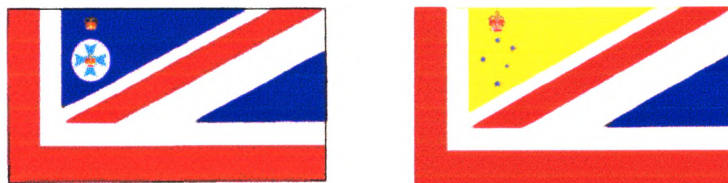


Fig. 17

Fig. 17 (Proposed Governors Flags - Queensland and Victoria)

The Governors' flags would be a combination of the upper fly quarter of the Union Flag and the various State badges.

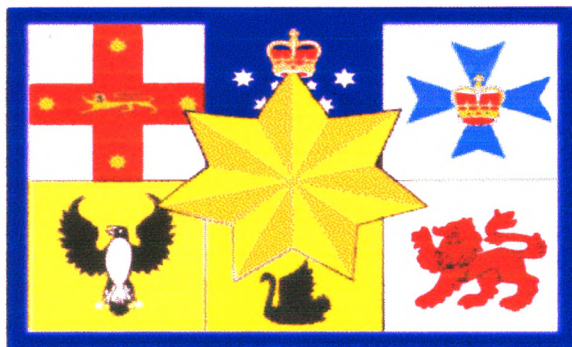


Fig. 18

Fig. 18 (Proposed President's Flag)

The President's Head of State's flag would be the modified Queen's Flag for Australia. Should Australia continue to be a Constitutional Monarchy, I believe that the Governor-General's flag should still be "Australianized".

Notes and Sources :

(1) See *Crux Australis* Vol. 8, No.4-36, Oct.- Nov. 1992, pp. 183-206 and *Report of the 13th. International Congress of Vexillology* (August 1993).

(2) See *Crux Australis* Vol. 2, No. 6-12, Oct. 1986, pp. 28-30, and Correspondence dated 15 March 1996 from Government House, Hobart, Tasmania to the Author.

(3) See Ralph Kelly's 13th I.C.V. Lecture *AUSTRALIAN STATE FLAGS 1865 1904: A British Admiralty Legacy*, Notes 55 & 56.

(4) It should be noted that in Victoria's case the new St Edward's Crown and Arms of Queen Elizabeth II were first used at the head of Victoria's Government Gazettes, 26 March 1957, No.141

(5) Extracts of the Admiralty's *DRAWINGS of the FLAGS in USE at the PRESENT TIME by VARIOUS NATIONS* - August 1889, photocopied during a visit by the Author to the Ministry of Defence Whitehall Library; London, England 19 or 20 June 1991.

(6) See *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* No. 8, Friday, 20th. February 1903, p. 1.

(7) See Note (6).

(8) See *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* No. 29, 22nd. May 1909 - Page 1 124. This gazette does not make specific mention of the Governors General's flag. The Author has a letter dated 30 July 1996 from the Deputy Official Secretary of the Governor-General, Government House, Canberra, confirming the flag adoption in 1909.

(9) Letter dated 30 July 1996 to the Author from the Deputy Official Secretary of the Governor-General, Government House, Canberra, A.C.T.

(10) See *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* No. 56, Thursday, 16 July 1936, p 1.

(11) Letter dated 10 May 1999 to the author from Mr Peter Gwynne-Jones Garter - Principal King of Arms, College of Arms - London, U.K.

(12) See note (4.)

- (13) Press Release (P.M. 2/1963) - Canberra, 13 January 1963.
 (14) See *Crux Australis* Vol. 1, No. 1 - 2 June 1984, 'Flags in the News' by John Edwards, pp. 19-24.

Acknowledgment of Figure Sources:

Figures 1,3,4 Central Disc designs and encircling wreath originally sourced from 13th ICV lecture Australian State Flags 1865-1904: A British Admiralty Legacy (Ralph Kelly 1989).
 Figures 5, 6, 8, 9b, 11, 13, 14 and 15 Original artwork prepared by Hart and Boyd Design (1992) and On the Ball Design (1995) for the National Australia Bank Ltd. and supplied and reproduced with NAB permission.
 Figures 7, 9a, 16, 18 and 19 Original artwork prepared by Don Porter Design for Vexventures (1999)
 Figure 16 *Symbols of nationhood*, Ottawa, 1991.

Ralph Bartlett - Some of his Activities

Published Vexillological Works:

- 1999 'Australia's Vice Regal Legacy' - 18th ICV lecture
- 1997 'Charting Vexillology's Brightness' - 17th ICV lecture
- 1996 *Flags of Paradise Chart* (Author / Publisher).
- 1994 *Flags of Aspirant Peoples Chart* (Co-Author/Publisher).
- 1990 *Flags of Non-Independent Peoples* (Co-Consultant).
- 1989 *Vexillology - A 25th Anniversary History and a Bibliography of Flag Literature* (Co-Author).
- 1988 - 97 *Flags of the Nations Chart*, Consulting Ed.& Researcher for National Australia Bank. (Three eds. 1988, 1990, 1992).
- 1987 '25 Years of World Vexillology', 12th ICV lecture.
- 1985 'Province of Bumbunga', 11th ICV lecture.
- 1980's - 90's *Crux Australis*, Journal of the Flag Society of Australia (Numerous Articles).

International Congresses of Vexillology

- 1985 (Madrid), 1987 (San Francisco), 1989 (Melbourne), 1991 (Barcelona), 1993 (Zurich), 1995 (Warsaw), 1997 (Cape Town), 1999 (Victoria B.C).



Ralph Bartlett with a group of fellow vexillologists at his first Congress, Madrid, 1985
 left to right, Ralph, Emil Dreyer, Sebastian Herreros Agüi, Adolfo Durán Rodríguez, Günter Mattern, Arnold Rabbow



Ralph Bartlett with the Editor, Melbourne, 13th ICV