

Precepts for the design of a New Australian National Flag

Advice for Oz flag designers and for Oz flag referendum committees, circa 2022, from oz.flagalternatives.com page 1 of 7

- For a probable majority of Australians, the two best things about the current national flag are its depiction of the Southern Cross and its visually attractive red-white-and-blue colour-scheme.
- For a probable majority of Australians, the two worst things about the current national flag are its Union Jack and its sometimes problematic resemblance to the flag of New Zealand.
- If any new flag design does not sufficiently reconcile these four pros and cons, preserving all that is loved whilst discarding only that which is loathed, then it will have little chance of ever being embraced.
- Moreover, if any new flag design cannot be effectively adapted into the thirty or more major derivative flags and ensigns of Australia, then it *shouldn't* be embraced. Practicality is every bit as important as aesthetics.

Eleven guidelines: *These guidelines are reasoned opinions, not 'rules'. If you feel that you should ignore any or all of them, you should do so.*

(1) The dimensional ratio should be 1:2 (the length of the flag should be twice its height)

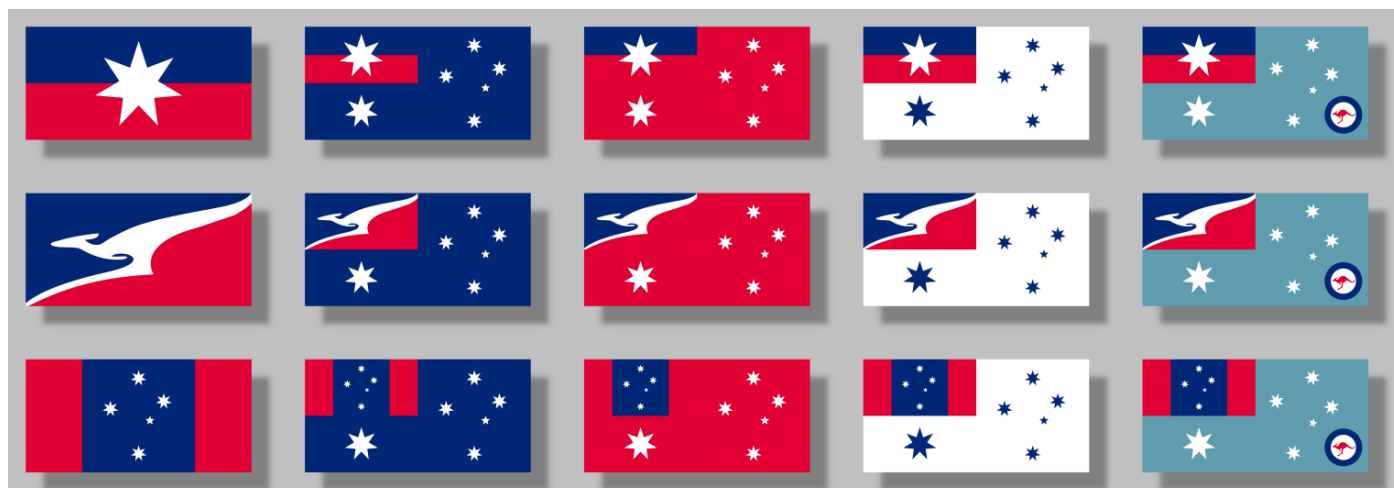
All Australians have lived their entire lives under a national flag with this dimensional ratio. Virtually without exception, all of the rest of the major flags of Australia have this dimensional ratio as well, including all of Australia's civil and Defence Forces ensigns. Any new flag design with another dimensional ratio would not only intuitively look wrong and intuitively wave wrong in the eyes of every Australian, but it would inevitably be difficult to adapt for all of the other flags and ensigns of the nation. There is only one Australian flag that requires a different dimensional ratio than 1:2, and that is Australia's United Nations ensign. The United Nations mandates that the [outdoor flags](#) of all of its Member States have a dimensional ratio that is equal to 2:3, with a length that is 1.5 times the flag's height. However, a flag of any other dimensional ratio can always be easily adapted to suit UN requirements (see the separate PDF entitled "[Australia's UN ensign](#)"). Emasculating the Australian national flag and all of its other thirty or so major derivative flags into the dimensional ratios of United Nations flags would be tantamount to the tail wagging the dog. Last but certainly not least, a 1:2-ratio flag can properly drape over a coffin as a pall, whereas a 2:3-ratio flag cannot. There are no logical nor aesthetic reasons for the Australian national flag to have any other dimensional ratio than 1:2.

(2) The fly of the national flag should not be red, white, or azure (light) blue

These fly colours are permanently reserved for Australian civil and Defence Forces ensigns, so they should generally not be used for the fly of the national flag, and designs that *do* have a red, white, or light blue fly may deserve rejection. Guideline (3) explains why simply reducing such designs into the cantons of the ensigns may often prove problematic.

(3) The fly of the flag should be *capable* of becoming blue, red, white, or azure blue

In order to be easily adapted into all of the Australian civil and Defence Forces ensigns, the design of the flag should allow for these colour changes to its fly area. Flag designs with flies that cannot become these colours without some drawback would need to be reduced to the canton of the flag or ensign in question. This may not seem like a major problem, but the area of a canton is only one-quarter that of a full flag, so reducing a national flag to canton-size will usually make it considerably more difficult to recognise for any given distance. Designs that have such iconic patterns that they remain highly recognisable at almost any size are rare. Moreover, the reduction of a flag to canton-size may result in visually problematic colour clashes with the field colours of the flag or ensign in question. Also, the current flies and lower cantons of Australia's civil and Defence Forces ensigns include the Southern Cross, the Commonwealth Star, and other established patterns, and they are unlikely to default to solid field colours if the national flag has been designed in such a way that it must be shrunk into their cantons. This means that for certain designs, the resultant ensigns may clumsily show two depictions of either the Southern Cross or the Commonwealth Star, or even both. These are the sorts of conundrums that would pervade most or all of the thirty or more derivative flags of Australia, should the requirements of those flags not be taken fully into account in the design of any new Australian national flag. Consider the problematic designs to the left below, none of which would be able to remain full-size for their ensigns. Note especially that none can be *properly* adapted into red civil ships ensigns, and refer back to guideline (2).



(4) The Southern Cross should be included in its current size, shape, and orientation

In its current size, shape, and orientation, centred horizontally and vertically in the fly of the national flag, the five-star Southern Cross is an iconic symbol of Australia. It has appeared on the flag for well over 100 years, so it may even be Australia's most internationally-recognised symbol, surpassing both the kangaroo silhouette and the Commonwealth Star. It is also an essential design element in seven other major Australian flags: the government ships ensign, the civil ships ensign, the naval ships ensign, the civil aviation ensign, the Army ensign, the Air Force ensign, and the Border Force ensign. In these ensigns as well as in the current national flag, the Southern Cross is a primary and arguably indispensable symbol (see the separate PDF entitled "[The Southern Cross](#)"). For a majority of Australians, moreover, the Southern Cross is the most-loved element of the current flag. There may be some rationale for changing the colours of the Cross or of its field or position, but there is no valid rationale for its omission or for any change to its basic design. The observance of this guideline will automatically prevent all of the problems discussed in guidelines (2) and (3). Allowing the Southern Cross to continue to appear on Australia's national flag and ensigns, as illustrated in the examples below, will allow changes to ensign fly colours as needed, eliminating any requirement to shrink the flag to canton-size. Note that even the narrower fly of the UN ensign can easily accommodate the Southern Cross.



(5) The design should probably have plenty of blue, some (or plenty of) red, and some white

Arguably the world's most popular colour-scheme for national flags is red-white-and-blue, and no doubt a majority of Australians find the red-white-and-blue colouring of their current national flag to be one of its best qualities, perhaps second only to its Southern Cross. Additional colours are by no means forbidden, but no new flag design that is without some red-white-and-blue will be likely to pass muster. The Australian government has specified official Pantone® C (coated) values of red and blue for the current flag, based on what is called the Pantone Matching System (PMS), a proprietary and mostly standardised colour reproduction system that is used in many industries, including flag manufacture. It would therefore make sense to use the official red and blue as a starting point for new flag designs, but the red and blue specified by the government are for use on flag fabrics, not on paper or on computer screens and websites. Sadly there are no official paper or display-screen equivalents for any Pantone colours, so *unofficial* equivalents are necessary. Reasonably good equivalents have been gathered together in the image below. For the official Australian Pantone C values of red and blue, close-equivalent RGB, HSL, and Hex values are listed for graphics software. Additional colours are shown with Pantone C values and with their equivalent Hex values. There are no Pantone values for white or black, so they are 'safe'. Flag designers who reckon they will need more Pantone colours will find hundreds at <http://www.pantone-colours.com/> and at <http://www.pantone.com/color-finder>.

PANTONE 185C	NO PANTONE VALUE	PANTONE 280C	PANTONE 348C	PANTONE 116C
Red: 224 Hue: 245 Green: 0 Sat: 255 Blue: 52 Light: 112 HTML Code: #E00034 RED	Red: 255 Hue: 0 Green: 255 Sat: 0 Blue: 255 Light: 255 HTML Code: #FFFFFF WHITE	Red: 0 Hue: 156 Green: 39 Sat: 255 Blue: 118 Light: 59 HTML Code: #002776 BLUE	Red: 0 Hue: 111 Green: 135 Sat: 255 Blue: 81 Light: 68 HTML Code: #008751 GREEN	Red: 252 Hue: 35 Green: 209 Sat: 249 Blue: 22 Light: 137 HTML Code: #FCD116 GOLD
UNKNOWN PANTONE VALUE DARK GOLD #BC8000	123C Deep yellow #FDC82F	165C Orange #FF6319	NO PANTONE VALUE BLACK #000000	202C Crimson #822433
281C Royal blue #002664	282C Navy blue #002147	286C Heraldic blue #0039A6	300C Intermediate blue #0065BD	350C Dark green #284E36
357C Tartan green #275937	364C Green #427730	409C Grey #8D817B	477C Red brown #5D3526	549C Azure blue #5E9CAE

(6) Indigenous symbols, icons, motifs, and art forms should not be included in the flag design

Australia's Indigenous cultures have always been rich wellsprings of vibrant arts and crafts. Indigenous creations have therefore provided an abundant source of low hanging fruit for would-be Australian flag designers, who in the past have presumptuously incorporated everything from boomerangs and hand prints to dot paintings and Dreamtime motifs into their designs, euphemistically characterising such ripoffs as 'reconciliation'. Consider [the Aboriginal flag](#), which any number of insensitive Aussies have repeatedly championed as a replacement for the Union Jack in a new national flag, rarely with even a passing thought for the wishes of the flag's creator, the Luritja artist Harold Thomas. Mr. Thomas created the flag in "passionate times" as a symbol of Aboriginal land rights. As regards its incorporation into a national flag, he says that it is "not a secondary thing" and that it is "not to be placed as an adjunct to any other thing." For the design of a new national flag, these attitudes should be applied to *all* Indigenous creations and motifs.

(7) Designers should show the full impact of their design on the other major flags of Australia





















Contestants should be required to enter their designs on a [standard form](#), showing not only their national flag design but its probable impact on the other major flags and ensigns of the nation, including civil and Defence Force ensigns, the flags of the states and governors, and the Oz UN ensign. A suggested format for such a form is depicted below.

Design name:	Highlight this area to enter a name for your design	DESIGN NUMBER: 000000 ACCEPTANCE COMMITTEE TRACKING NUMBER: A00000
Designed by:	Enter the names(s) or pseudonym(s) of the designer(s)	This area is only for the use of the Flag Design Acceptance Committee

Highlight this area to upload an image of your national flag design. Highlight the areas further below to upload images of your suggested designs for other flags and ensigns. All images must be uploaded in the Portable Network Graphics (.png) image format, and all images must have a pixel density of 100 pixels per centimetre (ppcm). The image of your national flag design must be dimensioned to 2000 x 1000 pixels. The images of your other flag and ensign designs must be dimensioned to 424 x 212 pixels, except for your United Nations flag design, which must be dimensioned to 318 x 212 pixels.

The current Army ensign is identical to the national flag, but the field of a new version could have a dominant black field. The Navy ships ensign must have a dominant white field. The Air Force ensign must accommodate some form of AF roundel on a dominant azure blue field. The Oz United Nations flag must be a horizontally compressed version of the national flag. The current government ships ensign is identical to the national flag, but a new version could include the Australian Coat of Arms. The civil & merchant ships ensign must have a dominant red field. The civil aviation ensign must have a blue & white cross on a dominant azure blue field. The Border Force ensign must accommodate a Border Force emblem or a label.

The flags of the six Australian states and of their governors must accommodate appropriate emblems on dominant blue fields, except for the flag of the governor of Victoria, which must have a dominant gold field. These flags in particular will serve as models for yet more flags of Australia that have distinctive emblems in their fly areas, including police force ensigns, fire and emergency services ensigns, certain city and regional flags, and many others.

Army 	Navy ships 	Air Force 	Navy cadets 
Government ships 	Civil & merchant ships 	Civil aviation 	Border Force 
Victoria 	Governor of Victoria 	Typical governor flag 	Queensland 
New South Wales 	South Australia 	Western Australia 	Tasmania 
Upper Murray River 	Lower Murray River 	Police, Fire, Rescue, Amb 	United Nations 

Description of design:

Highlight this area to enter a description of your national flag design, discussing how it represents Australia. In addition to the design's symbolic features, list any special virtues or advantages that it may have. How recognisable will your flag be when viewed from a distance or in low wind conditions? Will it be suitable for all purposes, such as when it is published in grayscale, or when it is depicted on a small lapel pin, or when it is draped over a coffin as a pall? How easily can it be adapted into the other flags and ensigns of the nation?

(8) Australian national flag candidates should not be obliged to have simple designs

There are many good flags that have simple designs, but it would be nonsense to maintain that *all* good flags have simple designs, or even that *most* good flags have simple designs, when the world has countless flags with complex designs that are both widely recognised and widely loved by the people whom they represent.



Any flag design that satisfies those two criteria is by any logical definition 'good', regardless of its complexity, number of colours, or difficulty in being drawn by children. The case for simplicity in flag design is rooted in a nineteenth century mentality, when flags could only be made from simple-to-cut and simple-to-sew pieces of fabric. In view of the sophisticated advancements in twenty-first century flag manufacture, simplicity should never be listed as a criterion for a good flag design, let alone as its *major* criterion. By the same token, flag designs do not need to be limited to those that children can draw from memory. Insisting that designs must be 'child-level' is an insipid holdover from the nationalist sentiments of the 19th and early 20th centuries, when children were compelled to take irrational pride in the locational circumstances of their births or of their upbringings. To assert that children cannot recognise their national flag unless they can crayon a reasonable facsimile thereof is as ludicrous as claiming that they cannot recognise their own families until they can produce realistic portraits of them rather than stick figures. There is not even a valid argument for *adults* to be able to draw their national flag, whether from memory or not. For a broader perspective see the PDFs entitled "[The Complexities of Simplicity](#)" and "[Good Flag, Bad Flag is Rubbish](#)".

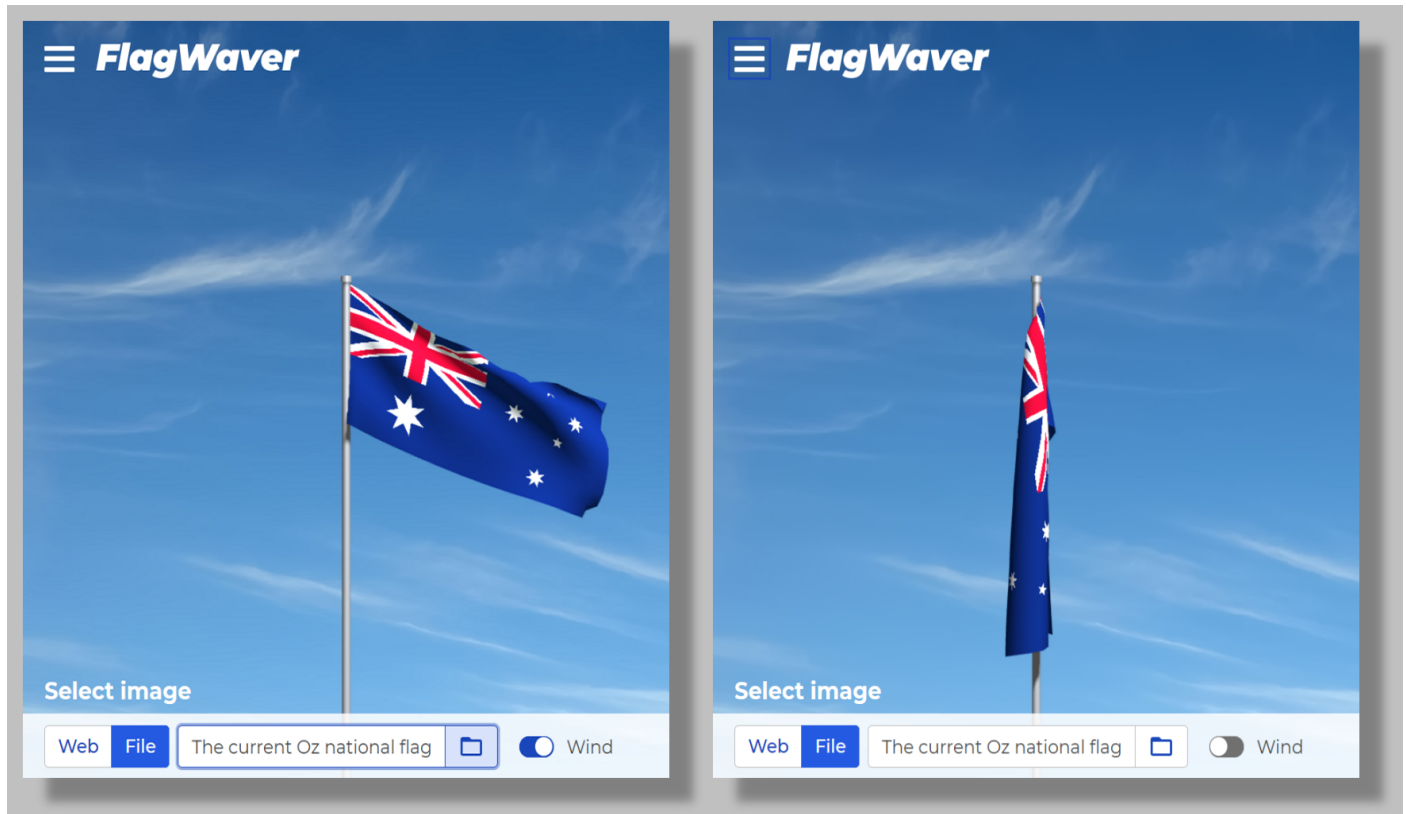
(9) The process of deciding whether Australia will adopt a new national flag should be based upon, yet improve upon, New Zealand's 2015/2016 flag referendum process

A wheel can always be made better, but it should not be reinvented. The details of the 2015/2016 New Zealand flag referendum process have been presented at <http://www.dpmc.govt.nz/dpmc/publications/nzflag-process>, providing a reasonable starting point for conducting a future Australian flag referendum. Granted, the New Zealand process made several [mistakes](#) along the way, but as long as any Australian flag referendum process is structured to avoid those mistakes, it should do well. Particular attention should be paid to the learning experiences of the New Zealand Flag Consideration Panel, summarised in a PDF at: <https://www.dpmc.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2017-03/nzflag-process-panel-report-may2016.pdf>. However, there should not even *be* a future flag referendum unless a well-structured, full-nation [flag survey](#) has revealed majority public receptiveness to the idea. Only after that prerequisite should the specifics of an Australian flag referendum be hashed out, but some revisions to New Zealand's 2015/2016 process should be obvious. For example, the authority to select the flag design candidates and to winnow them down to one or more final alternatives to the current flag should not be vested in the biases of a small committee but in the full Australian populace, through an online rating process. A committee should only have the authority to eliminate designs that are overtly absurd, offensive, political, religious, or amateurish, as well as those that do not meet clearly established entry criteria. If the design entries number in the thousands, there may be a need to allow a committee to do more extensive filtering, but ideally all of the acceptable designs will be simultaneously presented online, with every Australian elector afforded the opportunity to rate each design for a certain period of time. However, in order to prevent public outcry, the current flag should be included in the online rating process. If the current flag garners the highest rating amongst all of the initial contenders, the matter should be at an end. If not, then from the initial pool of submissions, perhaps fifty designs with the highest ratings should once more be presented to the public, again including the current flag. If at this point the current flag scores the highest rating, again no further action should be taken. If not, then one binding formal vote should be held between the single most popular alternative flag and the current flag. If the current flag receives more than fifty percent of the vote, the referendum should end, with the result to be binding for a minimum duration, also to be determined by a public vote. If the current flag receives less than fifty percent of the vote, the alternative should become the new national flag of Australia. A clean, fair process, with a maximum cost, interpolating from New Zealand's experience, of perhaps a dollar or two per Australian.

(10) Preferable features of a flag design submission website and of a flag design ratings website

Flag manufacturers prefer that designs be in a 'vector' graphics format like '.svg' (Scalable Vector Graphics), but for purposes of a design contest only 'raster' graphics images should be required. Rather than dealing with multiple raster graphics formats of widely varying quality, the contest should be standardised to the lossless image format '.png' (Portable Network Graphics). The design submission website should present a standard, two-page entry form as a ['fillable' PDF form](#). Logged-in contestants would upload their national flag designs directly into the first page of the online fillable form, including their suggested designs for civil and Defence Forces ensigns, the flags of the states and of their governors, and the United Nations ensign, and they would fill out all text fields, saving interim versions of the form as needed. All uploaded PNG images should be required to have a pixel density of 100 pixels per centimetre, as well as uniform pixel dimensions to suit the requirements of the entry form. For example, if the suggested entry form in this Precepts PDF is used as a guide, the upload dimensions for the national flag design might be 2000 x 1000 pixels, whilst the upload dimensions for the civil and Defence Forces ensign designs might be 424 x 212 pixels. These references to graphics formats and to their particulars may seem burdensome, but the reality is that the majority of designs will be submitted by entrants who are conversant with graphics software. They need not be professional graphics designers, but if they cannot work with PNG files they should not be suffered. Again, the first page of the online fillable entry form would include the designer's title for the design, the designer's name or alias, the required

flag images, and the designer's description of the design, all of which would fit on a single A4 sheet, as exemplified by the PDFs that are linked to [from this web page](#). The second page of the online fillable entry form, which would only be privy to the submission committee, would contain the designer's full contact details, assurance of copyright surrender, acknowledgement of the designer's understanding of the official flag design guidelines and of the official terms and conditions for flag design submissions, and any other needed details or tracking information. Only fully completed forms would be capable of being submitted to the committee, which would notify entrants of acceptance or rejection of their design forms. Once the submission period ends, all accepted flag designs would be simultaneously posted online for public rating. They could be presented in grids of [numbered thumbnail images](#), which when selected could lead to downloadable PDFs of the first pages of the entry forms. Additional provisions could let the public observe the designs either waving in the wind or hanging limply, as at the website <https://krikenoid.github.io/flagwaver/>.



Consider the flag design above, for example. If it were a new design for the Australian national flag, a design that you had never seen before, what might you learn from the simulation above? When the flag waves in the wind, you might observe its attractive colours and its three easily identifiable symbols, one for the UK and two for Australia. With the wind switched off, you might observe that the draped flag shows only a bit of the UK symbol, although it is still identifiable. The Australian symbols, however, have become almost completely obscured within the folds of the flag. The draped flag could be a British blue ensign, or it could be the New Zealand flag with its own obscured stars. You might also observe that more than three-quarters of the total area of the flag is blue, such that the flag becomes almost totally blue when it is limp, seemingly the flag of no nation at all. You might wonder why the designer did not put a symbol of Australia in the canton as well as in the fly and in the lower canton, or even a symbol spanning the entire hoist, so that the draped flag might be as likely as the waving flag to identify the nation that it represents. If flag designs were available that performed better in both a wind and a lack thereof, would you champion the flag above?

The insights that the public could gain from being able to observe a given flag design in this way are so valuable that the flag design rating website should have this feature *built in*, so that visitors can simply select a link to immediately see how a given flag design will actually appear when it is waving in the wind or when it is draped in windless conditions, revealing virtues and flaws that would otherwise be difficult or even impossible to anticipate. The complete coding for the 'online flag waver' shown above is freely available at <https://github.com/krikenoid/flagwaver>, so any competent website designer should be able to easily [embed a flag waving feature](#) for every displayed flag design.

(11) Designers and committees should be sceptical of every so-called 'rule' of good flag design

Care has been taken in this PDF to characterise the advice that it offers as guidelines rather than rules, because the word 'rule' implies a certain inviolability. Lest you think this point trivial, consider that the official flag design guidelines for the 2015/2016 New Zealand flag referendums flatly stated, "Flag designs that include...complex objects will not be considered." This illustrates that what is typically listed as the first rule of good flag design, namely simplicity, can be taken far too literally and to detrimental effect, as in the case of NZ's referendums, notwithstanding that 'simplicity' and 'complexity' are completely subjective terms, and thus are open to widely disparate interpretation.

The obstinate insistence that simplicity is an unbreakable rule of good flag design can even be institutionalised, as has been the case for [Ausflag](#), which for decades has been Australia's main lobbying group for flag change. During its long existence, Ausflag has myopically solicited and promoted only the simplest of alternative Australian flag designs. Guideline (8) has already explained why a good flag does not need to be simple, but many other typical flag design rules are begging to be broken. One such rule posits that a flag design should be limited to only two or three colours. For example, some will claim that flags of two or three highly-contrasting colours are always 'bolder', but it is equally valid to dismiss such flags as being 'starker'. Given that subjective adjectives can always be chosen to have either positive or negative connotations, they can never serve as objective arguments, one way or the other. What is objectively true is that some of the world's greatest flags contain a dozen colours or more, so it would be mindless to insist that Australia's flag have a maximum of three. Additional arguments for limited colours tend to be either specious or simply false. One such assertion is that more than four colours are hard to distinguish, which is absurd. Another premise is that flag fabrics come in only a limited number of colours, but a simple Internet search will reveal that such fabrics are available in a full spectrum of over 70 shades, which means that there is no reason to limit even a sewn-together flag to three colours, much less a printed flag, for which hundreds of colours of ink are available. You may also hear a last-ditch argument about limited colours reproducing better in greyscale, as though this should be a critical concern in an age when virtually every remaining newspaper and magazine on earth is published in full colour. Even if this were not the case, choosing colours that maintain a high contrast in both colour and greyscale can be virtually impossible, as is easily demonstrated by reproducing the the colour palette from guideline (5) in greyscale:

PANTONE 185C	NO PANTONE VALUE	PANTONE 280C	PANTONE 348C	PANTONE 116C
Red: 224 Hue: 245 RED Green: 0 Sat: 255 Blue: 52 Light: 112 H1ML Code: #E00034	Red: 255 Hue: 0 WHITE Green: 255 Sat: 0 Blue: 255 Light: 255 H1ML Code: #FFFFFF	Red: 0 Hue: 156 BLUE Green: 39 Sat: 255 Blue: 118 Light: 59 H1ML Code: #002776	Red: 0 Hue: 111 GREEN Green: 135 Sat: 255 Blue: 81 Light: 68 H1ML Code: #008751	Red: 252 Hue: 35 GOLD Green: 209 Sat: 249 Blue: 22 Light: 137 H1ML Code: #FCD116
UNKNOWN PANTONE VALUE DARK GOLD #BC8000	123C Deep yellow #FDC82F	165C Orange #FF6319	NO PANTONE VALUE BLACK #000000	202C Crimson #822433
281C Royal blue #002664	282C Navy blue #002147	286C Heraldic blue #0039A6	300C Intermediate blue #0065BD	350C Dark green #284E36
357C Tartan green #275937	364C Green #427730	409C Grey #8D817B	477C Red brown #5D3526	549C Azure blue #5E9CAE

Highly-contrasting colours such as red-and-green, orange-and-azure blue, gold-and-grey, and other combinations do become harder to distinguish in greyscale, but that is perfectly alright, because none of the shades are *exactly* the same, and the human eye can still distinguish between them. This tends to mean that no matter how many colours a flag design has, [its greyscale representation will not become unrecognisable](#). Lastly, it may be true that a limited number of colours can make the manufacture of a flag slightly easier, quicker, and less expensive, but these should not be primary design concerns. Modern flag production methods are simply not greatly affected by flag designs with many colours, whether in difficulty of manufacture, speed of production, or pricing, so [let's make 'em fab, not drab](#).

A remaining assortment of typical flag design rules also do not stand up well to scrutiny. Like simplicity and limited colours, they are really only suitable as suggestions, and they should never be thought of as criteria for rejection. It is true that flags tend to wear out from their fly edges, but anyone who says that the patterns of a flag design should never extend to the fly edge must be oblivious to the UK's Union Jack and to any number of other famous flags. If a flag fabric has been subjected to heat, cold, wind, rain, and the sun's radiation long enough to deteriorate at its fly, then the rest of it is not far behind. Although it may be theoretically easier to hem a fly edge that has a solid colour with no patterns, it will probably be better in most cases to heed the biblical admonition of not mending old garments with new cloth, and to instead simply replace flags when they have worn out. Usually, of course, that is exactly what is done, at least by anyone with actual respect for the flag that they are flying. Should a flag design not include curves because those can be harder to sew? Oh, do me a favour. Should lettering, seals, and coats of arms be forbidden? Rubbish, because there are any number of well-known and well-loved flags that have all of these things. Go tell Mexico that the fabulous COA on their flag violates a heap of rules, but you'd better be ready to run for your life, gringo.



Additional resources for Australian flag designers and for Australian flag referendum committees:

(You may find it convenient to visit the Web pages that are located [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).) Those who are unfamiliar with flag nomenclature may want to review the PDF entitled "[Flag Terminology](#)". Australian symbolism is explored in the PDF entitled "[Symbols](#)". Several other 'resource' PDFs have been gathered together [here](#). Sadly, the most prominent flag design PDF of the last two decades has been an insipid pamphlet entitled "[Good Flag, Bad Flag](#)", which the author of these guidelines considers to be [rubbish](#), due to its dogmatic emphasis on flag design simplicity and to its unwarranted insults of many current and historical flags. Far better is

[“The Commission's Report on the Guiding Principles on Flag Design”](#). Unlike *Good Flag, Bad Flag*, it sets forth useful flag design generalities without stooping to the pretence of criticising existing flags. Flag designers and flag referendum committees should also consider the advice of the well-known design guru Roman Mars, who is enthusiastic about all forms of good design, including good flag design. A website in support of his insightful statement, “Loving your flag is the only rule that really matters”, can be found at <http://ideas.ted.com/7-fantastic-flags-that-break-every-design-rule/>.

An Australian flag survey summary can be found at http://www.ausflag.com.au/preferred_colours_and_symbols.asp. A historical perspective can be found at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_flag_debate.

Free raster graphics software can be downloaded from <https://www.gimp.org/> and <https://www.getpaint.net/>, and free vector graphics software can be downloaded from <https://inkscape.org/en/>.

Experimenting with the online [Scratch's Flag Designer](#) can be fun. It is very basic, but it may nevertheless yield some insights into standard flag divisions and patterns, and it allows you to save your work in a vector graphics format.

At http://www.wpmap.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/All_Flags_of_the_World_5024x3757.jpg, there is a very good chart of national flags.

An article about Harold Thomas can be found at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harold_Thomas_\(activist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harold_Thomas_(activist)).

Every would-be flag designer in the world should ponder all of the charts that are shown on the website [Flag Stories](#).

If you download this 'Precepts' PDF and view it with [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#), you can use the 'selection tool' (arrow icon) to highlight any of the images that it contains. You can then right click the images for copying and pasting into graphics programs for possible further use. For example, the Pantone colour chart may prove especially handy for designers with graphics programs that feature a 'colour picker' tool, generally depicted as an eyedropper icon. The suggested flag design contest entry form could also prove useful. Whether you are viewing this PDF with Acrobat Reader or on the Internet, all of its Web links can be opened with a click. On the Internet, a right-click will allow the links to be opened either in new tabs or in new windows.

Parting thoughts:

Harold Thomas was once quoted as saying, “The problem with the Australian flag is that although it looks good, it does not feel good.” Possibly no one has ever expressed the quandary more succinctly.

The flag of the United Kingdom is an amalgam of the flags of England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. If Scotland and/or Northern Ireland leave the UK due to Brexit, the Union Jack will become anachronistic, a flag without a future.

Australians and New Zealanders fought and died in two world wars, largely on behalf of the UK, yet afterwards they were left holding the wrong end of the economic stick, when in 1973 the UK secured the EU membership that it had sought since the early 1960s, drastically reducing its imports from Down Under. By then, in concerted protest, most of the other 53 Commonwealth nations had already freed their flags of the symbolic shackle of the Union Jack, so that nowadays only two major nations and former colonies obstinately retain the Jack in the cantons of their national flags.



“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.” (from the booklet “*Australian Flags*” – Part 2: protocols for appropriate use of the flag, Australian government). The Union Jack may soon cease to exist, so one wonders how much longer, in life and even in death, that its echo of colonialism will be allowed to continue to dominate Australians.



Lastly it is interesting, to say the least, that the official flag of the Returned and Services League of Australia does not include a Union Jack. One might say that the RSL has thus set a good example for all Australians to follow when they consider designs for a new Australian national flag.

Shown to the right, a bonus: Colour swatches from one of the [Pantone websites](#) mentioned in this PDF. These are graphics software close-equivalents for several of Australia's various official colours. You may prefer them to some of the equivalents presented earlier in this PDF.

Official blue of the current national flag	Official red of the current national flag	Official Australian green	Official Australian gold	Official red-ochres (2) and yellow of Harold Thomas's Aboriginal Flag (wrong to use the flag, but not the colours)		Official ochre of the Northern Territory flag	
PANTONE® 280 C	PANTONE® 185 C	PANTONE® 348 C	PANTONE® 116 C	PANTONE® 1795 C	PANTONE® 179 C	PANTONE® 123 C	PANTONE® 159 C
POSSIBLY: RGB 1-33-105 HEX #012169	POSSIBLY: RGB 228-0-43 HEX #E4002B	POSSIBLY: RGB 0-132-61 HEX #00843D	POSSIBLY: RGB 255-205-0 HEX #FFCD00	POSSIBLY: RGB 210-38-48 HEX #D22630	POSSIBLY: RGB 224-60-49 HEX #E03C31	POSSIBLY: RGB 255-199-44 HEX #FFC72C	POSSIBLY: RGB 203-96-21 HEX #CB6015