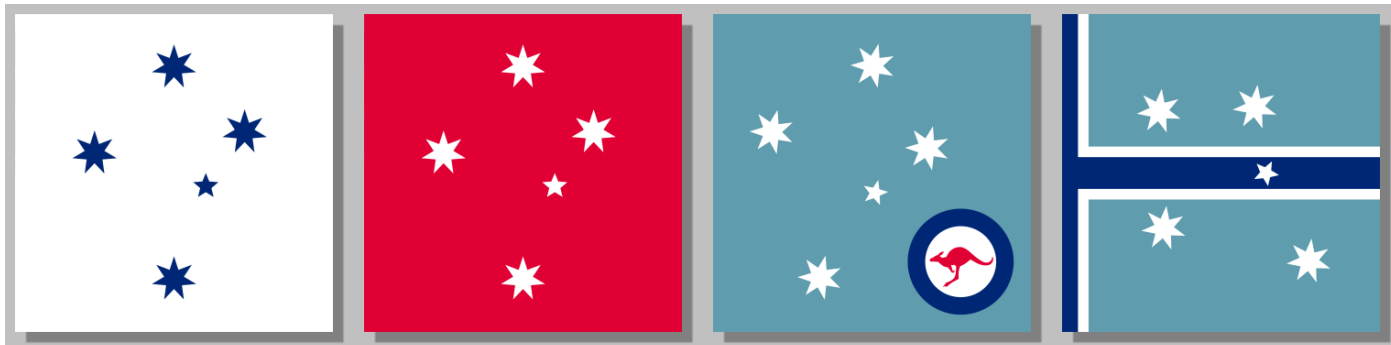
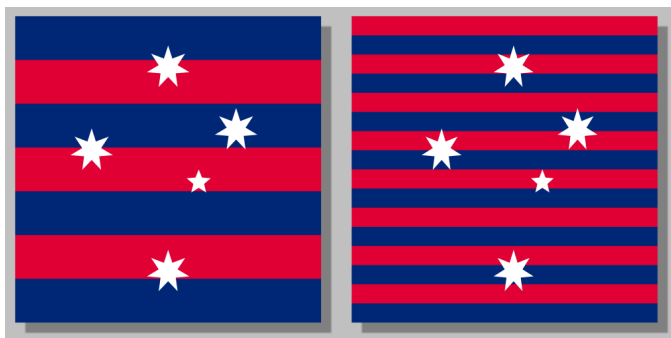


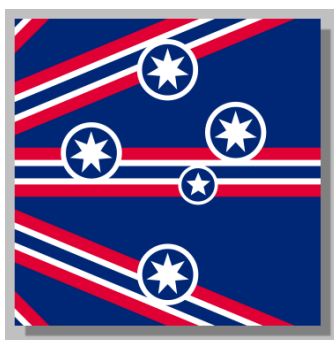
Australia has depicted the Southern Cross on the fly of its national flag for more than 115 years, as five high-contrast white stars on a dark blue field. The same fly of white stars on a blue field is also currently used for Australia's Army ensign, for its government ships ensign, and for its Border Force ensign. The design has also been easily adapted to other official Australian flags and ensigns. For naval ships ensigns, blue stars appear on a white field. For civil ships ensigns, white stars appear on a red field. For Air force and for civil aviation ensigns, white stars appear on an azure blue field. No matter the colour of its stars or its field, the basic design of Australia's Southern Cross fly is iconic. As a result it may well be the most internationally-recognised symbol of Australia, even surpassing kangaroo silhouettes and the Commonwealth Star.



It would therefore be the height of folly for a new Australian national flag design to do away with the Southern Cross. Nor would the Cross be likely to retain its current recognisability and symbolic strength if it is resized or reoriented for a new flag, and such changes would also negatively impact the practicality of any new design for adaptation, as noted above, to Australia's civil, government, and Defence Forces ensigns. There are several logical implications. A new national flag cannot have a white, red, or azure blue fly, because those fly colours must be reserved for civil and Defence Forces ensigns. A new flag could have a black fly, but that option might best be reserved for a new Army ensign. Any light blue fly would be too difficult to distinguish from azure blue. A gold fly would conflict with the current colour of the Victoria Governor's flag. A green fly would probably simply be unpopular. It follows that there is a strong argument to retain the dark blue fly of the current national flag, along with the Southern Cross in its current format.



The one permissible alternative would be a fly with stripes in two colours, most likely blue-and-red such as in the examples shown to the left, where seven stripes could be used to represent the six official states and the territories of Australia, or where sixteen stripes could be used to represent Australia's full realm of states and territories. Such a fly would be utterly distinctive from the flies of all other national flags, for which multiple stripes have in the main always been red-and-white or blue-and-white.



Such stripes would also vastly improve recognition of the flag in windless conditions, when the stars of the Southern Cross can tend to become lost in the folds. For some designs the stripes might only appear in the fly or in the hoist, whilst for others they might extend the full length of the flag.

There could also be cases where other design elements besides the Southern Cross appear in the fly of the national flag or in the flies of one or more of its derived ensigns. In such cases the stars of the Cross might be given circular backgrounds or 'halos', such as depicted to the left, to better offset the stars and to make them effectively larger and more easily recognised.



Incidentally, the flag of Australia's Returned and Services League treats the Southern Cross fly in a unique way, as gold stars on a dark blue field, and there is nothing to prevent flag designers from using this attractive colour-scheme for the fly of a new Australian national flag. On a blue field, gold stars have a contrast that is almost as good as that of white stars, and gold stars atop blue-and-red stripes will also prove to be a workable and appealing combination.