

AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL SYMBOLS

<http://www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/our-country/our-national-symbols>

Australia's National Flag



When the Australian colonies federated to form the Commonwealth of Australia on 1 January 1901, there was an urgent demand for a new national flag as an emblem for the new country. An official competition for a design was arranged, which attracted 32,823 entries. Five of these contained almost identical designs and were placed equal first. Apart from later changes in the size of the stars and the number of points, they had produced the present Australian National Flag.

The Australian National Flag consists of three parts set on a blue field. The first part is **the Union Jack**, acknowledging the historical link with Britain. The second part is **the Southern Cross** (a constellation of stars only visible in the Southern Hemisphere), representing Australia's geographical location in the world. Finally, **the Commonwealth Star** represents Australia's federal system of government. Originally, the Commonwealth Star had six points (for the six states), but in 1908 a seventh point was added to represent the Territories of the Commonwealth of Australia.

Australia's National Anthem

Advance Australia Fair was one of many Australian nationalistic songs written in the late-nineteenth century as debates about the creation of the new nation were taking place in the different colonies. It was composed in the late 19th century by Peter Dodds McCormick under the pen-name "Amicus" (which means "friend" in Latin).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s8tswkr25A0>

*Australians all let us rejoice,
For we are young and free;
We've golden soil and wealth for toil;
Our home is girt by sea;
Our land abounds in nature's gifts
Of beauty rich and rare;
In history's page, let every stage
Advance Australia Fair.
In joyful strains then let us sing,
Advance Australia Fair.*

*Beneath our radiant Southern Cross
We'll toil with hearts and hands;
To make this Commonwealth of ours
Renowned of all the lands;
For those who've come across the seas
We've boundless plains to share;
With courage let us all combine
To Advance Australia Fair.
In joyful strains then let us sing,
Advance Australia Fair.*

Although it is thought to have been first performed by Mr Andrew Fairfax at a Highland Society function in Sydney on 30 November 1878, possibly the most significant early performance of Advance Australia Fair was at the inauguration of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901, where it was sung by a choir of 10,000. Advance Australia Fair was not considered the national anthem, however, with this role going to the British anthem God Save the Queen [or King] for most of the twentieth century.

A determined search for a truly Australian national anthem did not begin in earnest until the Melbourne Olympic Games in 1956. The Australian Bureau of Statistics conducted a national opinion poll of 60,000 people in 1974 and in 1977 the Australian Electoral Office ran a poll for a tune for a national song in conjunction with a referendum.

In the 1977 plebiscite, four songs were in contention for the official title:

- *Advance Australia Fair*
- *God save the Queen* [or King] (the British anthem)
- *Waltzing Matilda* (one of Australia's best-known national songs), and
- *Song of Australia* (a popular national song written in 1859)

The results of the plebiscite were conclusive with 43.2 per cent (or 2,940,854 votes) going to Advance Australia Fair. Next most popular was Waltzing Matilda with 28.3 per cent, despite its arguable status as the best-known, best-loved and most iconic national song.

In 1984 the government announced that the tune of Advance Australia Fair together with modifications to two verses of the lyrics would become the Australian National Anthem.

Commonwealth Coat of Arms

The Commonwealth Coat of Arms is the formal symbol of the Commonwealth of Australia and its ownership and authority. King Edward VII made the first official grant of a coat of arms to the Commonwealth of Australia in a Royal Warrant dated 7 May 1908.

The absence of specific references to the states in the shield in the 1908 Arms led to a number of alterations approved on the recommendation of the Commonwealth Government

by King George V. King George V granted the second Commonwealth Coat of Arms in a Royal Warrant dated 19 September 1912.



Symbols of Australia's six states appear together on the shield, which is the central feature of a coat of arms. The border of the shield symbolises federation. The kangaroo and emu are the native animals that hold the shield with pride.

A gold Commonwealth Star sits above the shield. Six of the star's points represent the Australian states. The seventh point represents the territories. A wreath of gold and blue sits under the Commonwealth Star. Gold and blue are the Commonwealth Coat of Arms' livery or identifying colours.

Australia's floral emblem, the golden wattle, frames the shield and supporters. A scroll contains the word 'Australia'.

Australia's national colours

Australia's national colours, green and gold, were popular and well loved by Australians long before they were officially proclaimed by the Governor-General on 19 April 1984.



At international sporting events since before Federation, and of course at many since, the colours have been associated with the achievements of many great Australian sports men and women.

As well as instilling national pride on the field, spectators often also don the official colours and cheer their team waving green and gold boxing kangaroo flags. Back home in Australia, the green triangle and gold kangaroo of the Australian Made logo is the most recognised country of origin symbol on Australian shop shelves.

Prior to proclamation, Australia had no official colours and different combinations vied for the honour: red, white and blue; blue and gold; and green and gold. The colours red, white and blue featured in the first Coat of Arms of the Commonwealth in 1908 and are the colours of the Australian National Flag. Blue and gold have heraldic significance, as the colours of the crest in the 1912 (present) Commonwealth Coat of Arms.

But it was the green and gold of Australia's landscape, principally of many species of wattle, which won the day. Green and gold is also represented on the Commonwealth Coat of Arms by the wattle which is an ornamental accessory to the shield.

Australia's floral emblem

The golden wattle, *Acacia pycnantha*, Australia's national floral emblem, encapsulates the spirit of the Australian bush. The shrub or small tree grows in the understorey of open forest, woodland and in open scrub in South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory.

Like all emblems and symbols, the golden wattle captures an essence of Australia that brings the colours, smells and textures of the Australian bush alive.

The flower has long been recognised as Australia's premier floral symbol and was officially proclaimed in 1988. In 1912, on the recommendation of the Prime Minister, the Hon. Andrew Fisher MP, wattle was included as the decoration surrounding the Commonwealth Coat of Arms and it has also been used in the design of Australian stamps and many awards in the Australian honours system.



Golden wattle was honoured further with the proclamation in 1992 that 1 September in each year be observed as National Wattle Day. This day provides an opportunity for all Australians to celebrate our floral heritage, particularly through the planting of an Acacia species suitable for the area in which they live.

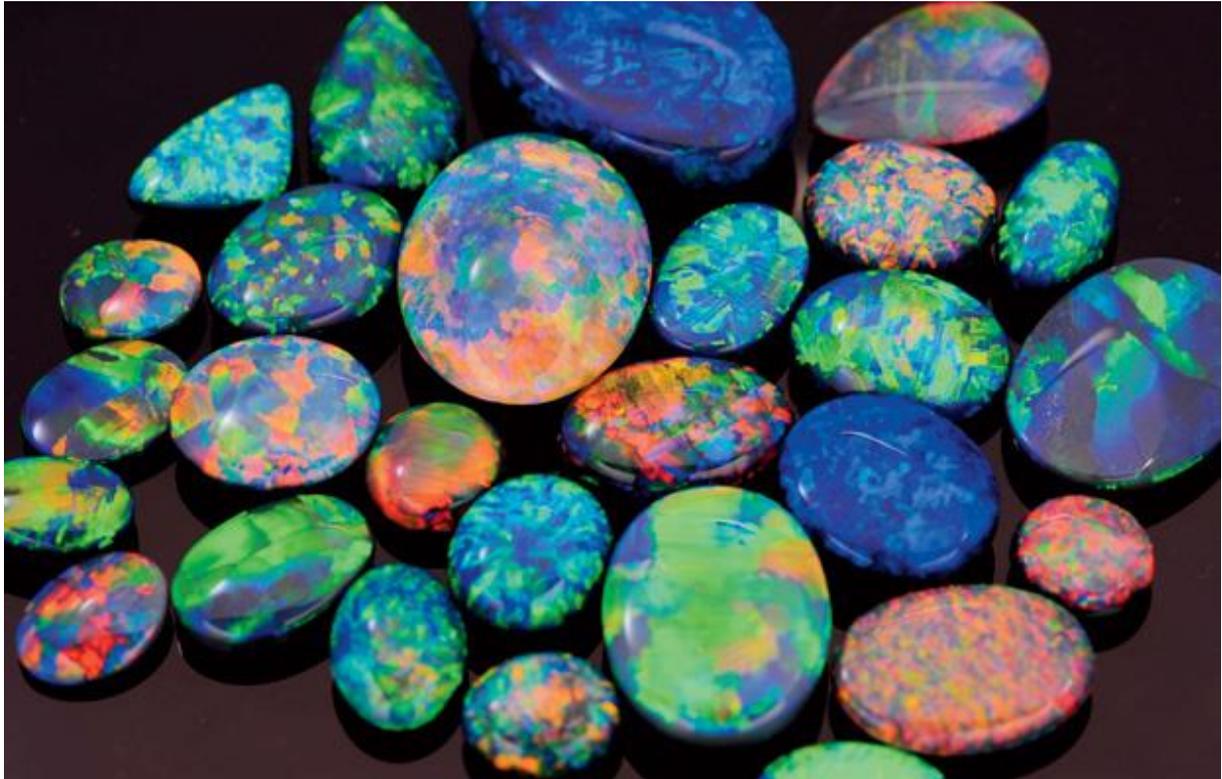
Australia's national gemstone

The opal is a rare and beautiful precious stone.

A very special series of geographical and climatic phenomena need to coincide for the opal to form. The great desert regions of central Australia provide such conditions and Australia produces over 90 per cent of the world's precious opal.

Australia's precious opals include the black opal (produced in Lightning Ridge, New South Wales), white opal (majority of the world's production occurs in Coober Pedy, South

Australia), crystal opal and boulder opal (mined in Central Queensland). The precious stone was proclaimed Australia's national gemstone on 28 July 1993.



In Aboriginal legend, the mesmerising opal was a gift from the sky, from a rainbow that had touched the earth and created the colours of the opal.