



AUSTRALIA'S FLAG - "DID YOU KNOW?"

- The Australian National Flag is the only flag to fly over an entire continent.
- The Australian Flag was the first national flag chosen in an open public competition.
- The prize for the design competition (£200) was a substantial sum of money in those days – representing nearly a year's wages for an average worker.
- Given that there were 32,823 entries in the design competition, and the 'Australian' population was estimated to be around 3.6 million in 1901; an equivalent response rate from today's population would amount to some 200,000 entries!
- Arranging the 32,823 entries for display at the Royal Exhibition Building in Melbourne took eight weeks, and the judges needed six days to inspect them and choose the winning design.
- Entrants in the flag competition gave their imagination free rein: designs submitted featured "every kind of flora and fauna identifiable with Australia – sometimes all at once" (eg a kangaroo with six tails to symbolise the six states; a galloping emu heading south, and native animals playing cricket with a winged cricket ball !)
- The winning design was unveiled by the wife of our first Governor-General at a ceremony held at the Royal Exhibition Building in Melbourne on September 3, 1901.
- Two out of the five prize-winners in the 1901 flag design competition were teenagers (school boy Ivor Evans and apprentice optician Leslie Hawkins), another was a well-known female artist (Annie Dorrington) and one (William Stevens) was First Officer for the merchant navy. The fifth winner was a Melbourne architect (Egbert Nuttall).
- The Southern Cross (formally known as "*Crux Australis*") is a constellation that can be seen only in the night skies of the Southern Hemisphere. The individual stars are named by the first five letters of the Greek alphabet – *Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, and Epsilon*.
- The Southern Cross has a very significant status in Aboriginal mythology (eg as part of the legend of Mululu of the Kanda tribe).
- The Australian National Flag is raised every morning at the school in Villers-Bretonneux in France, in memory of the thousands of Australian casualties incurred in liberating their village in 1917 (during the First World War).

As our Governor-General (Her Excellency. Ms Quentin Bryce AC) has remarked:
"Since it was first unfurled from the Royal Exhibition Building in 1901, our Australian flag has been an icon of our shared identity, of what it means to belong to our country. It is much loved, worn and flown by Australians here and across the world ... Wherever it is raised, it stirs in us a sense of unity..."