



Australian National Flag Protocol

As one of Australia's most important symbols, the flag should be used with respect and dignity. These protocols will assist you when flying or using the flag, including as part of flag-raising ceremonies.

The Australian Flag and flag flying


On Australia Day, people all over the country will fly the Australian National Flag, as well as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flags.

As the nation's foremost symbol, the Australian National Flag should be used with respect and dignity.

The below protocols are to assist you when flying or using the flag.


- It is best practice to display the Australian, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flag together.
- The correct order for displaying them is: Australian, Aboriginal and then Torres Strait Islander from left to right when looking at the stage. If you are also displaying your State or Territory flag, the order would be Australian, your State or Territory, Aboriginal and then Torres Strait Islander from left to right again.
- The flags should not be flown upside down.
- All flags must be the same size.

More information on flag protocols is available in part two of the booklet Australian flags, which you can get from your Federal Member of Parliament or Senator.





Flying the Flag

- Raise the flag briskly and lower it ceremoniously
 - Do not raise the flag earlier than first light or lower the flag later than dusk
 - When the flag is raised or lowered or is carried in a parade or review, everyone present should be silent and face the flag and people in uniform should salute
 - The flag should always be flown freely and as close as possible to the top of the flagpole with the rope tightly secured
 - The Australian National Flag should be raised first and lowered last, unless all other flags at the ceremony are raised and lowered simultaneously
 - When the Australian National Flag is flown with flags of other nations, all flags should be the same size and flown on flagpoles of the same height
 - The Australian National Flag should fly on the left of a person facing the flags, when it is flown with one other national flag
 - Do not fly two flags from the same flagpole
 - Only fly the flag at night when it is illuminated
 - Do not fly the flag if it is damaged, faded or dilapidated
 - When the material of a flag deteriorates it may either be placed in a permanent place of storage or should be destroyed privately and in a dignified way such as cutting it into small unrecognisable pieces, placing it in an appropriate sealed bag or closed container and then putting it in the normal rubbish collection.
 - Do not fly the flag upside down, even as a signal of distress.
 - Do not allow the flag to fall or lie on the ground or be used as a cover (although it can be used to cover a coffin at a funeral)
 - Information on the protocols for displaying and folding the flag can be found in Part 2 of the booklet Australian flags, which is available from your Federal Member of Parliament or Senator.
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Order of Precedence

When the flag is flown in Australia or Australian territory it takes precedence over all other national flags and should be flown in the position of honour.

After the Australian National Flag, the order of precedence of flags is: national flag of other nations, state and territory flags, other Australian flags prescribed by the Flags Act 1953, ensigns and pennants.

The flag should not be flown in a position inferior to any other flag or ensign and should not be smaller than any other flag or ensign.

Flying the flag at half-mast

Flags are flown at half-mast as a sign of mourning.

The half-mast position will depend on the size of the flag and the length of the flagpole. The flag must be lowered to a position recognisably half-mast to avoid the appearance of a flag which has accidentally fallen away from the top of the flagpole. An acceptable position would be when the top of the flag is a third of the distance down from the top of the flagpole.

There are times when direction will be given by the Australian Government for all flags to be flown at half-mast and you can receive email notifications when this happens by registering for the Commonwealth Flag Network.

Flags in any locality can be flown at half-mast when someone local dies, or on the day of their funeral.

When lowering the flag from a half-mast position it should be briefly raised to the peak and then lowered ceremoniously.


The flag should never be flown at half-mast at night even if it is illuminated.

When flying the Australian National Flag with other flags, all flags in the set should be flown at half-mast.

Using the flag at funerals

The flag can be used to cover the coffin of any Australian at their funeral.





The upper left quarter of the flag should be draped over the 'left shoulder' of the coffin to represent the heart and the flag should be removed before the coffin is lowered into the ground, or after the service at a crematorium.

Flag raising ceremonies

Schools or organisations wishing to hold a flag raising ceremony should follow the protocols outlined under the flying the flag section.


Commonwealth flag network

For up to date advice on how to fly the Australian National Flag on special occasions, register for the Commonwealth Flag Network. To register, please email nationalsymbols@pmc.gov.au.

Optional flag retirement ceremony

In some circumstances it may be fitting to hold a ceremony to mark the retirement of a used Australian National Flag. The order of ceremony below is provided as a guide to how such an event could be run.

- Introduction/Welcome by Master of Ceremonies
- Acknowledgement of Country
- Comments regarding the history and symbolism of the Australian National Flag (flag to be retired brought to be displayed to those in attendance)
- Comments regarding retired flag's history (where flown, how long, memorable events in that time)
- Speech about retirement of flag (Short Silence while flag is retired)
 - The flag can be ceremonially cut into three pieces with solemnity. Two cuts should be done in such a way to ensure that the three symbolic elements of the flag are left intact: The Union Jack, The Federation Star and the Southern Cross.
 - The parts of the flag can be placed in a suitable receptacle and either escorted from the scene or left until those attending the ceremony depart. After the ceremony the flag may either be placed in a permanent



place of storage or should be destroyed privately and in a dignified way such as cutting it into small unrecognisable pieces, placing it in an appropriate sealed bag or closed container and then putting it in the normal rubbish collection.

- Australian National Anthem is played. Information on Anthem protocol and downloadable music files are available on the [PM&C website](#)
- Closing Remarks