

Newsletter - August 1998

President's Message

To mark the 97th anniversary of our national flag, Mr Des Renford MBE, OHC, will be guest of honour for our FLAG DAY ceremony at Martin Place Amphitheatre on 3 September. Des is an Australian icon who has, despite great odds, achieved extraordinary goals throughout his life, including swimming the English Channel 19 times! He is a brilliant speaker and a deeply patriotic promoter of our Australian flag. Don't miss this opportunity of hearing Des on this special occasion.

The last 12 months have been eventful for the Australian National Flag. The Flags Amendment Bill was passed ensuring a degree of protection for our flag of "stars and crosses". On 17 March last, I was delighted to debate Harold Scruby of Ausflag Limited, live on the Channel 9 Midday Show. It was a very lively debate indeed with enthusiastic support (and much flag waving) from ANFA members in the audience.

Another highlight occurred in May when young adventurer, Peter Bland, trekked to the Magnetic North Pole where he proudly raised the Australian flag that his hero, Sir Douglas Mawson had used to claim Australian Antarctic territory in 1912. His achievement was astounding, especially as he was born with a hole in the heart and underwent major surgery last year. Regarding the flying of the flag, Peter stated that it was "the most significant highlight and one of the greatest moments of my life."

The establishment of the ANFA website on the Internet has proved most successful with many favourable reviews and frequent use by school students. Our video "Making Our Flag" is being updated to make it current through to the Centenary of Federation in 2001. A new edition of our information brochure has recently been printed as well as a new Certificate of Appreciation.

Finally, the next few years will see challenges to our flag and I implore all members to give prominence to The Flag in their daily lives. Fly The Flag on your flagpoles, wear it as a lapel badge, use it as a car sticker, refer friends to our video, website and the resources at our ANFA office. The Flag is our chief national symbol by law, custom and tradition and it must be pre-eminent at the Sydney Olympics and the Centenary of Federation celebrations - let's ensure it is!

John Christian Vaughan
PRESIDENT

ANFA (NSW) Inc - 1997-98 Review

3 September '97 was a beautiful mild sunny day following rain the previous day. The large crowd of ANFA members and general public (Martin Place) enjoyed some excellent musical entertainment and heard a most interesting and telling speech by our Guest Speaker Rear Admiral Andrew Robertson AO DSC RAN (Rtd). With a great service record and knowledge of Naval history, the Admiral quickly set out the record of our Australian flag in war. It simply blew the negative Ausflag Ltd propaganda out of the water.

Meanwhile the Ausflag board, apparently with unlimited funds, were finalising yet another flag design competition, open only to professional designers and artists and sponsored if you please, by companies with overseas multi-national parents. There would be no prize for guessing when these latest designs would be launched!

Australia Day, of course! Though not with much success, Ausflag and the media hounds hungrily feeding off them, now use this special day of celebration and unity to try creating division. Its the same elitist few telling ordinary Australians that they know best what is good for us. Due to their better sense of values - the ordinary Australians obviously did not think much of (once again) those artificial "professional" designs and literally dumped them.

27 January '98 The Sydney Morning Herald now decided to lend Ausflag a hand. First, an Editorial full of Ausflag Propaganda, to which our President John Vaughan replied. When it was obvious that the Herald would not publish the reply we again referred the matter to the Press Council. This resulted in the editor finally agreeing to publish the following on 6 February 1998:

"Your Editorial 'The Debate on a new flag' (January 27) says that the Ausflag organisation has produced compelling evidence that Sir Robert Menzies changed the Australian flag in 1953 from red to blue because the red colour had connotations of communism.

You may find it compelling; in fact, approval of the blue Australian flag, and the Australian Red Ensign as our merchant flag, was officially proclaimed in the Commonwealth Gazette of February 20, 1903.

It is noted with regret that the Herald has become an active promoter of the anti-Australian national flag agenda of Ausflag Ltd.

John Christian Vaughan
PRESIDENT

Herald Flag Poll

Following the launch of the so called best 100 new Ausflag designs the Herald published them on a full page (coloured), added the Aboriginal flag and the Australian National Flag at the tail end and invited the public to a phone-in vote, each design having been given an ident. number.

More than 22,000 voting calls were registered during the 48 hours of the poll, the biggest response ever to a Herald phone poll. But the result published on 31 January 1998 was bad news for Ausflag and SMH. They put up 101 designs against the one "tried and true" real flag, which won by more than a country mile: ie. 8,253 votes against the next best with only 1,581, the other 100 designs also failing to impress.

Of the many resultant letters to the Editor (for which the Herald must receive credit for publication) space will only permit one short example here;

"First they give us 100 'living treasures', now they give us 100 Australian flags. Who are these comedians who are pulling my leg? Please pull the other leg, it yodels!"

W. Allen Smith, West Pennant Hills.

Web Site Statistics

The Herald published large illustrated contributions in their prime "OPINIONS PAGE" from a Sydney University lecturer and a "Sydney barrister" respectively. Our response to the first was not published but we let it pass, due to little other attention. The second however, was offensive and factually flawed. While our approach to the Assistant Editor was at first negative, our contact with the Australian Press Council secured publication in full, along with other supporting responses.

Our Australian National Flag. web site is receiving periodical updates and our web designers recently advised it is being accessed at the average rate of 300 visitors per week. We still receive some telephone requests for information however, including one bright and courteous young student from Georges Hall who later wrote back:

Dear Mr Eggins,

You recently sent me some information that came in very handy for my flag debate. Thank you for rushing it over so promptly. I have won that debate and the judges were very pleased with the amount of information I had to support my case. They were most impressed on the way I was able to hammer the opposition arguments as I was well prepared.

Thank you for your invaluable assistance.

Laura (Aged 10)

Posted by Ted Eggins

Flag Ammendment Bill 1996 Press Release

The Australian Flag will forever be protected after the passage of the Flag Amendment Bill 1996, the Manager of Government Business in the Senate, Senator Ian Campbell, said today. Senator Campbell said the Australian flag should now be seen as the "people's flag" as the Bill prevented any change to the flag without a referendum.

"This is a great day for our nation and will ensure that vocal minority groups are not able to sabotage our national heritage," he said.

"Those Australians who have fought under the flag and our sportspeople currently in training for Sydney 2000 can now rest assured that it will not be changed against the wishes of the Australian people."

Senator Campbell said during debate in the Senate that he was proud to have had the responsibility to carry this important Bill through the Senate on behalf of the Howard Coalition Government. "The passage of the Bill protecting our flag is the fulfilment of a key commitment made by the Coalition and fought for by the Coalition over the past decade," Senator Campbell said.

Members and supporters will realise however that the "Flags Act Amendment Bill 1996" does not mean the our cherished, historic flag is safe for all time and circumstance. It does mean that it can only be changed as the national flag, as a result of a majority vote by all eligible Australian electors. As the cost of funding any such separate election is estimated in the vicinity of forty to fifty million dollars, a Federal Government of any particular persuasion would need firstly to have such money available and secondly, extremely compelling reasons and confidence in the need for change. (Editor)

More Propaganda Destroyed

A.N.F.A. opponents claim we didn't have an Australian Flag until The Menzies Flag Act of 1953! Of course we all know that is uneducated rubbish. In our 1997 Newsletter we published extracts from ARMY MILITARY ORDERS dating from early this century concerning military use of the Australian Flag. In his speech on 3 September last year and in previous written detail, Rear Admiral Andrew Robertson provided similar rock solid evidence of RAN use of the flag since the formation of our Australian Navy in 1911.

Now, our A.N.F.A. member, Captain W.F.Cook RAN(Rtd) of the Naval Historical Society of Australia INC. has sent in a copy of page 41 of the book "The Royal Australian Navy - An Illustrated History" by George Odgers.

Quoting: "On 5 October 1911, the existence of the new Australian Navy was formally advised when the Naval Board issued an historic order promulgating the designation 'Royal Australian Navy' for the permanent naval forces of the Commonwealth and for the ships of the Navy to be designated 'His Majesty's Australian Ships'.

The order also directed that all ships and vessels of the R.A.N. were to fly at the stern the White Ensign as a symbol of the authority of the Crown and at the jack staff, the flag of Australia."