

# Newsletter - August 2001

## President's Message

Congratulations to our ANFA members! Now, after 18 years of hard work, we are celebrating a milestone, the centenary of our chief national symbol our flag of "Stars & Crosses".

Join the big celebration in Sydney on Monday, 3rd September at the Australian National Maritime Museum, Darling Harbour. The Flag Day ceremony will commence at 10.30 am under the Museums giant, fully rigged flagmast.

The principal schools involved, Five Dock Primary, Woolooware High and Pittwater House, will provide choir, band, dancers and honour guard. The Museum will be screening our new video "Our National Flag ... Since 1901" / Guests will include Peter Bland, the young polar adventurer, the Hon. Barrie Unsworth, former Premier and Chairman of the NSW Centenary of Federation and Dr Brendan Nelson, MP, representing the Prime Minister of Australia. Mr Howard and Mrs Hollingworth, wife of the Governor General, will be officiating at the original 1901 site of the first flag raising, at the Royal Exhibition Buildings in Melbourne.

It was at this venue at 2.30 in the afternoon of 3rd September 1901 that the Australian Flag was first raised to the rousing applause of spectators. The large blue flag, measuring 36' x 18' was hoisted to the masthead on the main dome of the buildings, now part of the Museum of Victoria. The first Vice Regal raising of our flag took place at Townsville on 16th September 1901. This event has already been commemorated with Dr Hollingworth, the Governor General, raising the flag on 8th August. Special messages marking the flag's centenary have been received and published on ANFA's website [www.flagaustnat.asn.au](http://www.flagaustnat.asn.au).

Contributors include the Governor General, Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition, Leader of the Democrats, Dick Smith, Alan Jones, the National Trust and Chairman of the National Council for the Centenary of Federation, Professor Geoffrey Blainey.

On 4th July an ANFA, ACT branch was formed by Nigel Morris, an energetic 22 year old. Nigel has had immediate and spectacular success being offered the grounds of Government House, Canberra, for his centenary Flag Day ceremony.

His achievements are inspirational and indicative of the attitude of Australian Youth, appreciating and cherishing the heritage of our flag. H.E. The Governor General will be the Guest of Honour at this Canberra ceremony. For details of the ACT event and other ceremonies to be held at Parramatta, Penrith, Gosford and elsewhere, please contact the ANFA office on 9264 8188.

Many Australians are unaware that 2001 marks the centenary of the Australian National Flag. Have you contacted your local Members of Parliament, Council, RSL, youth groups, schools and community service bodies to encourage celebration of Flag Day and to recommend the video and other resources available from ANFA? ... Now is the time! Another way you can help is by ringing media outlets, especially radio stations and your local newspapers. These outlets have the opportunity of down loading our website information.

Our Office Manager, volunteer Ted Eggins, can be contacted on 9264 8188 for flag posters, stickers, lapel pins, leaflets and a range of other materials and resources. Ted and Gwen run the ANFA office and I and my councillors gratefully acknowledge their dedication, and hard work on which ANFA depends.

Please make a commitment to attend and celebrate the centenary of the Australian National Flag at the National Maritime Museum, Darling Harbour, Monday, 3rd September, Flag Day, 10.30 am to 12.00 noon. It will be the highlight of the 2001 Centenary of Federation. Looking forward to seeing you on this extra special occasion.

John Christian Vaughan  
**President**

## Centenary of Our Flag

As 3rd September 2001 approaches, excitement is building towards the centenary birthday of our very own Australian National Flag. It belongs equally to all Australians and it is their right and privilege to fly it, wave it and display it with pride and dignity while delighting in the memory of historic times past and present and thoughts of future aspirations.

In Sydney the major celebrations will be held at the Australian National Maritime Museum, Darling Harbour, commencing at 10.30 am. This is at the Western end of the PYRMONT BRIDGE (right side, if travelling from the city) almost opposite the monorail station on the left side.

The Museum's large flagmast is near the Museum entrance. Do not confuse this mast with the large flagpole situated part way across the bridge, mounted on a concrete pier in the water. Other details for this event appear in 'The President's Message'. Do not miss out on this special historic occasion

## Who Wrote the Australian Constitution

A theme of the recent republican debate has been the allegation that the Australian constitution is not of domestic origin, but rather is the dated work of our imperial overlords. Prime Minister Paul Keating expressed such sentiments on at least two occasions, saying of the constitution in 1993: "It was framed as a routine piece of nineteenth century British imperial legislation. It shows its age." (Australian, 2 August 1993) In 1994 he declared: "Learning about the Constitution apprises people of the fact that we've got a constitution which was designed by the British Foreign Office to look over the Australian Government's shoulder." (Australian, 16 June 1994)

True, the present constitution is encased in an imperial statute, but it was essentially the work of local draftsmen, presented to the queen for enactment by the parliament at Westminster only after having first been ratified by the people of each colony at a plebiscite. The imperial parliament had the power to alter the constitution substantially during its passage through the two houses. Nevertheless, the only alteration actually made of any import concerned appeals to the privy council, which have since been abolished. Indeed John Quick and Robert Garran attribute Federation and the constitution under which it was achieved to the efforts of the local communities rather than any colonial masters:

Never before have a group of self governing, practically independent communities, without external pressure or foreign complications of any kind, deliberately chosen of their own free will to put aside their provincial jealousies and come together as one people from a simple intellectual and sentimental conviction of the folly of disunion and the advantages of nationhood. The States of America, or Switzerland, or Germany, were drawn together under the shadow of war. Even the Canadian provinces were forced to unite by the neighbourhood of a great foreign power. But the Australian Commonwealth, the fifth great Federation of the world, came into voluntary being through a deep conviction of national unity. We may well be proud of the statesmen who constructed a Constitution which whatever may be its faults and its shortcomings has proven acceptable to a large majority of the people of five great communities scattered over a continent; and proud of a people who, without the compulsion of war or the fear of conquest, have succeeded in agreeing upon the terms of a binding and indissoluble Social Compact.

It cannot be disputed that it was the Australian people and their statesmen that brought about federation.

Politically reality and legal theory are merging. There is a growing acceptance of the theory that the constitution is a legally binding document because it emanates from the will of the people.

The constitution owes its origin, and continuing life, to the people. Only the people can change it. And when they reject a proposed change, they indicate their continued acceptance of the system. They have demonstrated since federation considerable wisdom in their decisions about change.

(Reproduced from his excellent book THE CANE TOAD REPUBLIC [1999] with kind permission from Professor David E Flint AM LL.M. and the publisher, Wakefield Press, Box 2266 Kent Town, South Australia 5071).

## ANFA (NSW) Inc - 2000 - 01 Review

Our September 3, 2000 event, Australian National Flag Day (Sunday and also Fathers' Day) held at the historic Holy Trinity Church (The Garrison Church) Millers Point on a beautiful sunny day, was most enjoyable and appropriate. We were again, indebted to Rev. Brian Seers for arranging a lovely service (including a brilliant soloist), use of the church flagpole, grounds and the ornate entertainment facilities. This occasion was also used for the exciting launch of our new educational video "Our National Flag since 1901". It received an excellent reception.

Meanwhile the final count down was on for the 2000 OLYMPIC GAMES SYDNEY. It has to be agreed they were a huge success in terms of 'SHOW CASE AUSTRALIA' with perfect weather, all sporting facilities, transport, crowd control apparently spot on and our athletes performing in the main, brilliantly. But what a test for the popularity of our great National Flag far ahead of any normal expectations. Simply a sea of flags from day one to the end not only there, but across the city and suburbs and I am sure, the Australian Nation. No credit to SOCOG it is believed they only sold the poor old boxing kangaroo. Full credit to the Australian people who own it they took it to proudly wave and/or fly at their homes and business premises. We applaud and warmly congratulate them all.

1st January 2001 Centenary of Federation Day and the beginning of a new century and millennium. Billed as a day of great celebration I thought it fell a bit short of the mark. Certainly there was a parade but I found it less than impressive. The speeches during the day (to me) seemed unbalanced with too much emphasis on today's cultures and demographics of which we are all aware and a minimum of educational information or reference to the solid platforms and visions of the early and mid federation years which generated the favourable transition conditions to achieve our current national status.

26th January 2001 another great day for celebration except for "The Australian" providing Ausflag and Harold Scruby a large portion of its "Opinion" page for the annual whinge and the lecture to Australians. Of course it was all a big yawn and I doubt if many read it. Both President John and this writer sent appropriate responses to "the Editor" who, as usual, lacked the courage to

publish them. My view of the day was that the big crowds were out to celebrate and enjoy this special day many with their own national flag to display.

A visit to the Hyde Park Citizenship ceremony conducted by the Sydney City Council was of great interest. Our two roving A.N.F.A. (sisters) Freda and Greta were also in attendance with flags and camera.

Conducting the event was one Lord Mayor Frank Sartor, a former constant critic of our Aussie flag. While entertaining his new Australian Citizen guests he was happily waving his very own Australian flag. What a conversion! Well done and congratulations, Frank.

Finally ANZAC DAY this year another beautiful fine weather day appeared bigger and better with more public and particularly younger generations lining the streets. The historic march was further enhanced by more flags carried and a sea of flags waved by the public. Some of these were supplied, courtesy of AUSTRALIA POST, handed out by their motor cyclists prior to the march a greatly appreciated gesture.

This report cannot be concluded before acknowledging, with most sincere thanks to those members who responded to our donation appeal 2000. Your generous support has enabled the Association to meet administration costs and to discharge final accounts for production of the new educational video. We hope this 2001 appeal will enable additional production of video copies for wider distribution to schools.

Special mention is also made with deep appreciation to Mrs Toni Field who generously applied her special qualifications, in conjunction with officers of the NSW Department of Education and Training, to produce the Teachers Notes which accompany each video.

We are also indebted to a small group of always cheerful volunteers without whose valuable assistance there would be no newsletter posted or other such projects completed.

## **Federal Flag and Seal**

At the Exhibition Building yesterday afternoon the Countess of Hopetoun formally opened the Commonwealth Flag and Seal Exhibition and announced the names of the successful competitors.

The event was timed for 2.30 p.m. and at that hour a large number of people had assembled about the entrances, attracted by the absolutely unique occasion. Among those present were a goodly sprinkling of legislators, both Federal and State, and a number of clergymen of various denominations. Lady Hopetoun, who was accompanied by Captain Wallington, private secretary to His Excellency, the Governor General, arrived just as the halfhour struck, and was received at the Nicholson Street entrance by the Prime Minister, Mr Barton, Sir J. Forrest and Mr. Drake, the Postmaster General. The Committee responsible for the arrangements was represented by Mr J.S. Blackham.

As Lady Hopetoun entered, a huge 'Blue Ensign' with the prize design of the Southern Cross and a six pointed star thereon was run up to the top of the flagstaff on the dome and breaking, streamed out on the heavy south westerly breeze, a brave and inspiring picture.

On entering the rooms reserved for the thousands of designs which go to make up the exhibition, the beholders were almost dazzled by the polychromatic spectacle which greeted their eyes. Every conceivable and inconceivable combination of colours glared from the walls which were bespread from top to bottom with the artistic, inartistic and, in many instances, weird designs sent in, and for a few minutes the effect was truly overpowering. After making a brief inspection of the principal designs which had been awarded prizes or honourable mention, Lady Hopetoun seated herself at the prize table.

The Prime Minister rose and said the Countess of Hopetoun had kindly consented to open the Exhibition, but before doing so wished him to explain how the competition had come about and how it had resulted. With regard to the flags, he read the following letter from the judges Melbourne

## **Design Competition Letter**

Sir,

Attracted by the loyalty and sentiment of the Australian people as represented by the 30,000 designs for a national flag, the great majority of which contained "The Union Jack" and Southern Cross, it was felt that the only additional emblem was one representing the federation of the six States. This was supplied by various forms such as coloured bars, shields, devices, stars, figures, letters, animals, etc., introduced in various forms, colours and positions on the various designs.

Having carefully examined every exhibit with due regard to history, heraldry, blazonry, distinctiveness, utility and cost of making it up in bunting, it was apparent that a Commonwealth Flag, to be representative, should contain

- The Union Jack on a blue or red ground.
- A six pointed star, representing the six federated States of Australia, immediately underneath the Union Jack and pointing directly to the centre of the St. George's Cross, of a size to occupy the major portion of one quarter of the Flag.
- The Southern Cross in the fly, as indicative of the sentiment of the Australian nation.

Many designs, somewhat similar, were rejected as not being in accord with heraldry borders around the union Jack, contrary to the heraldry and blazonry of flags crosses, coloured stars, stars too small to be seen at a distance, and otherwise faulty in design.

In conclusion we may state that our task was not an easy one, but our desire was to give the people of our new born nation a symbol that would be endearing and lasting in its effect, and with that end in view we hope that we have been successful.

On behalf of the judges,

J.W. Evans

J.A. Mitchel

## **Message for National Flag Day 2001**

"Australia's flag symbolises the Commonwealth, the States and the Territories. It is the flag of the people as well as the nation. The flag was designed by Australians, acclaimed by the people in 1901, and approved by the first national parliaments. It is one of the world's older national flags. It salutes the stars of the Southern Cross which shone above this continent when the first Aboriginal people arrived. It acknowledges the British influence on Australia's way of life its language, parliaments, laws, literature, fine arts and sports. It honours those who fought for their nation in two world wars and in other conflicts. It remains the first choice of the majority of Australians, despite a long campaign to replace it with other flags.

The flag was first unveiled on this day, 100 years ago. It is a day to be celebrated."