

Protocol for Flying the Australian National Flag



Guidelines for flying the flag are laid out in the [1953 Flags Act](#) and in a pamphlet entitled "The Australian National Flag", which is published by the Australian Government on an infrequent basis. The guidelines say that the Australian National Flag are allowed to be flown on every day of the year, and that it "should be treated with respect and dignity it deserves as the nation's most important national symbol".

The National Flag must always be flown in a position superior to that of any other flag or ensign when flown in Australia or on Australian territory, and it should always be flown aloft and free. The flag must be flown in all government buildings and displayed in polling stations when there is a national election or referendum. Private pleasure craft can fly either the Red Ensign or the Australian National Flag. The British Blue Ensign can be flown on an Australian owned ship instead of the Australian Flag if the owner has a warrant valid under British law.

The [Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet](#) also advises that the flag should only be flown during daylight hours, unless it is illuminated. Two flags should not be flown from the same flagpole. The flag should not be displayed upside down under any circumstances, not even to express a situation of distress. The flag is not to be placed or dropped on the ground, nor should it be used to cover an object in the lead-up to an unveiling ceremony, or to hide other material. Flags that have decayed or faded should not be displayed.

According to a government publication, old or decayed flags should be disposed of in private "in a dignified way"; a method given as an example is to cut the flag into small pieces before being placed in the waste.

When the flag is flown at [half-mast](#), it should be recognisably at half-mast, for example, a third of the way down from the top of the pole. The Australian Flag should never be flown half mast at night. Flags are flown at half-mast on government buildings:

- On the death of the [Sovereign](#) – from the time of announcement of the death up to and including the funeral. On the day the accession of the new Sovereign is proclaimed, it is customary to raise the flag to the top of the mast from 11 am.
- On the death of a member of a [royal family](#).
- On the death of the Governor-General or a former Governor-General.
- On the death of a distinguished Australian citizen. Flags in any locality may be flown at half-mast on the death of a notable local citizen or on the day, or part of the day, of their funeral.
- On the death of the head of state of another country with which Australia has diplomatic relations—the flag would be flown on the day of the funeral.
- On [ANZAC Day](#) the flag is flown at half-mast until noon.
- On [Remembrance Day](#) flags are flown at peak from 8am until 10.30 am, at half-mast from 10.30 am to 11.03 am, then at peak for the remainder of the day.

The Department provides a subscription-based email service called the Commonwealth Flag Network, which gives information on national occasions to fly the flag at half-mast as well as national days of commemoration and celebration of the flag.

The Australian National Flag may be used for commercial or advertising purposes without formal permission as long as the flag is used in a dignified manner and reproduced completely and accurately; it should not be defaced by overprinting with words or illustrations, it should not be covered by other objects in displays, and all symbolic parts of the flag should be identifiable. It also must sit first (typically, left) where more than one flag is used.