

Guidelines for flying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags

Introduction

Cultural safety is one of the most critical elements in people accessing our services and identifying as being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags are a significant means of demonstrating our recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and encouraging access to health services. Flags can be used to promote a sense of community partnership and demonstrate commitment towards closing the gap.

This document provides guidance and protocols for flying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags at Queensland Health facilities. The guidelines should be used with discretion and in accordance with the Australian and Queensland Government protocols. Flying of the Australian National and Queensland flags is also described in the context of flying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags.

History and significance of flags

Aboriginal flag



The Aboriginal flag is an official flag of Australia and was recognised under Federal legislation in July 1995. Designed by Aboriginal Elder Harold Thomas in 1971, this flag symbolises Aboriginal identity. Mr Thomas was recognised as the designer of the Aboriginal flag by the Federal Court and has been granted backdated copyright of the design to 1971.

The top half of the flag is black to represent the Aboriginal people. The red in the lower half represents the red earth (the relationship to the land) and the red ochre used in Aboriginal ceremonies. The circle of yellow represents the sun (giver of life) and yellow ochre.

Torres Strait Islander flag



The Torres Strait Islander flag is an official flag of Australia and was recognised under Federal legislation in July 1995.

The flag designed by Torres Strait Islander Mr Bernard Namok, is emblazoned with a white Dhari (headdress) which is a prominent symbol of Torres Strait Islander peoples. The white five pointed star beneath it symbolises peace, the five major island groups and the navigational importance of stars to the seafaring people of the Torres Strait. The five island groups include:

- Northern Division (Boigu, Dauan, Saibai)
- Eastern Islander (Darnley, Murray, Stephen)
- Western Division (St. Pauls, Kubin, Badu, Mabuiag)
- Central Division (Yorke, Coconut, Warraber, Yam)
- Southern Division (Thursday Island and Inner Islander, NPA and Mainland Australia) .

The green stripes represent the land, the black stripes represent the people, and the blue represents the sea.

Australian National flag



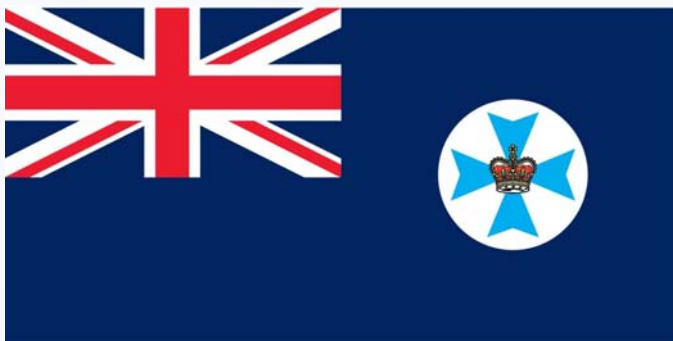
The Australian National flag is Australia's foremost national symbol. The first 'Federal' flag was chosen from a competition in 1901.

When the winning flag design was chosen, five people submitted almost identical designs. These people were declared joint winners and shared the prize money. Australia's first Prime Minister, Edmund Barton, announced the winning design in Melbourne on 3 September 1901.

The Australian flag has three elements on a blue background: the Union Jack, the Commonwealth Star and the Southern Cross. The Union Jack in the upper left corner (or canton) acknowledges the history of British settlement.

Below the Union Jack is a white Commonwealth or Federation star. It has seven points representing the unity of the six states and the territories of the Commonwealth of Australia. The star is also featured on the Arms. The Southern Cross is shown on the fly of the flag in white. This constellation of five stars can be seen only from the southern hemisphere and is a reminder of Australia's geography.

Queensland State flag



The Queensland State flag dates from the time when Queensland was a self-governing British colony with its own navy and was officially approved in 1876. The State flag comprises the State badge inserted in the Blue Ensign. The Royal Crown superimposed on a Maltese-style cross was approved as the Queensland badge in July 1876. The shape of the cross resembles the insignia of Australia's highest military award for valour - the Victoria Cross. The badge represents the Royal Crown on the Maltese Cross.

Flag flying protocols

The following need to be considered when flying any flag in or outside a Queensland Health facility:

- Most importantly, flags should be flown and displayed in a dignified manner and should not be used as a curtain to unveil a monument or plaque, or used as table or seat cover or allowed to fall to or lie upon the ground.
- The Australian flag should be flown in the position of honour.
- The Australian flag must be hoisted first and lowered last. When flying the Australian flag with State flags and/or

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags, in a line of flagpoles, the order of the flags should follow the rules of precedence (see below).

- Flags should not be flown at night unless properly lit.
- More than one flag should not be flown from one halyard (flag pole).
- The flags should be of identical size (standard flag size is 6ft x 3ft).
- The flagpoles should be of identical height (a standard flagpole is around 6m) – exceptions apply.
- If there is only one flagpole available it is preferred that the Queensland flag remain.
- A tattered or dilapidated flag should not be flown and should be destroyed in private.
- Flags are flown at half-mast position as a sign of mourning. Half-masting should be undertaken by first taking the flag to the top of the mast and lowering to the half-mast position, which is when the top of the flag is approximately one-third of the distance down from the top of the mast. The flag should be raised to the top of the mast again before lowering it for the day.
- Further information can be obtained from the Australian Government and Queensland Government resources described below.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flag protocols

These protocols have been developed as advice for Queensland Health facilities when flying the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander flag/s:

- It is highly recommended that Queensland Health Service Districts undergo community consultation prior to the raising of the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander flags.
- It is critical that the flags are flown upright. The Aboriginal flag always has the black half upward to the sky and the red half downwards. The Torres Strait Islander flag is upright when the Dhari appears like downward horse shoe.
- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags are of equal status and the selection of which of these flags to fly will depend on local circumstances and relevance.
- During NAIDOC Week and Reconciliation Week each year, the Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander flags take precedence over the Queensland State flag where only two flagpoles are available. They should not replace the Australian flag which will continue to be flown in the first flagpole in the position of precedence. Where there are three flagpoles, the Australian flag would be flown, followed by the Queensland, followed by the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander flags.

Australian National flag protocols

The Australian flag should always be flown on the far left of a person facing the building, in a position of honour. The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet protocol booklet, "Australian flags – Part 2: The protocols for appropriate use and the flying of the flag." Part 2 excerpt can be accessed at: http://www.itsanhonour.gov.au/symbols/docs/australian_flags_excerpt.pdf

Queensland Government flag protocols

Queensland's Department of the Premier and Cabinet have specific protocols when flying flags on State Government buildings.

[Flying the flag. The State of Queensland flag](http://www.premiers.qld.gov.au/right-to-info/published-info/assets/flying-the-flag-the-state-of-queensland-flag.pdf) is available at: <http://www.premiers.qld.gov.au/right-to-info/published-info/assets/flying-the-flag-the-state-of-queensland-flag.pdf>

If you require endorsement for flying flags contact the Department of the Premier and Cabinet for further information.

Precedence for flying flags on flagpoles outside Queensland Health facilities

Precedence can be achieved by order (left to right) and/or by height. The following illustrations show the application for Queensland Health facilities, observing the protocols described by both the Australian and Queensland Governments.

Precedence for flying flags (left to right)

One flagpole: Queensland flag (Queensland Government policy)



Two flagpoles: Australian flag and Queensland flag



Two flagpoles: Preferred display during NAIDOC and Reconciliation Week

Option 1



Option 2



The Queensland flag is replaced by the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander flag during Reconciliation and NAIDOC Week.

Three flagpoles: Australian, Queensland and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander flags

- The Aboriginal flag can be interchanged with the Torres Strait Islander flag dependent on locality and community preference. A hospital flag can also be included as an optional flag when there are three or more flagpoles.
- This option allows for the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander flag to be flown daily.

Option 1



Option 2



Four flagpoles: Australian, Queensland, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags

- The Aboriginal flag can be interchanged with the Torres Strait Islander flag dependent on locality and community preference.
- This option allows for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags to be flown daily.
- A hospital flag can also be included as an optional flag when there are three or more flagpoles.

Option 1



Option 2



Five flags: Australian, Queensland, Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and hospital flags



In this arrangement, the Australian flag is still being flown in a position of honour and precedence; then follows from left to right: Queensland State Flag, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander flags and the hospital flag. This layout would allow for all flags to be flown daily.

Precedence for flying flags vertically

The honour point of a flag is its top left corner.

The protocol for flying flags vertically is that this honour point remains in the top left corner, although it may appear to be back to front. This means that the flag is rotated 90 degrees and flipped over.

Option 1



Option 2



Flying flags indoors

The options provided above will apply if all four flags are to be displayed vertically.

The Queensland Department of the Premier and Cabinet guidelines do not provide specific protocols for displaying the State of Queensland flag inside Queensland Government buildings.

It is therefore acceptable to fly the Australian National flag together with the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander flags dependent on location and community preference.

Option 1



Option 2



Flying flags on a stand

Flags may be displayed on a stand. The Australian flag has precedence as the tallest flag in the centre.

This arrangement places the Aboriginal flag on the left as next in order of precedence. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags are interchangeable depending on location.

