



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT AND CITY SERVICES
Ms Suzanne Orr MLA (Chair), Miss Candice Burch MLA (Deputy Chair), Mr James Milligan MLA

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into a Territory Coat of Arms

Submission Number: 053

Date Authorised for Publication: 1 May 2019

18 April 2019

To:
Standing Committee on Environment and Transport and City Services
LACommitteeETCS@parliament.act.gov.au

From:
Jeremy Matthews

Dear Members of the Standing Committee on Environment and Transport and City Services.

Re: Inquiry into Territory Coat of Arms

I write with reference to the questions posed by the Standing Committee, namely:

01. Whether there should be a Coat of Arms for the Australian Capital Territory (in addition to the Canberra City Coat of Arms); and

02. What symbols might be included in the design of an ACT Coat of Arms?

01. The ACT is one of the world's only self-governing jurisdictions that lacks an official coat of arms. As Australia's national capital, it is appropriate that the ACT adopts its own distinct coat of arms. The design should accurately represent the people and place it symbolises and signify the ACT's unique position as the seat of government for the Commonwealth of Australia.

02. The ACT has many meaningful and inclusive symbols that could inform the ACT Coat of Arms. Symbols that evoke a sense of place or the beauty of the ACT's native flora, fauna and landscape. Symbols such as the Royal Bluebell, the floral emblem of the ACT, the Southern Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby the ACT's mammal emblem or Lake Burley Griffin or the Brindabellas which frame Canberra's landscape.

Note. While a black (and white) swan appears on the current ACT flag and the Canberra Coat of Arms, it could be argued that the black swan has a greater association with Western Australia. Particularly as it is their state bird and appears on their current flag, coat of arms and the coat of arms of Perth.

I also respectfully suggest that the ACT colours and traditional sporting colours of violet blue and gold be retained and utilised on both the coat of arms and the new ACT Flag. Violet blue is also the colour of the bluebell flower.

Symbols that represent another country or era, such as crowns, castles, swords and maces adopted from European heraldry should be avoided. They are neither Australian nor reflective of the people and the place they are intended to represent. Specific cultural, ethnic or religious symbolism that gives precedence to one group over others should also be avoided. ACT's symbols should equally represent all its citizens, particularly its flag. They should be inclusive, not exclusive.

Other considerations

Should the current ACT Flag be updated to include the new ACT Coat of Arms?

Flags evolved out of heraldry - the practice of designing coats of arms. While some national and regional flags include their coat of arms, most have a separate flag and coat of arms, and often the two may not look alike at all. For example, the flag of Scotland (St Andrew's Cross) has a white saltire on a blue field, but the royal arms of Scotland have a red lion within a double tressure on a gold field.

The complexity inherent in a coat of arms means they are poorly suited for use on a flag. Traditionally a coat of arms is used on a stationary banner because banners don't flap, are seen from one side, and usually seen close up or printed on paper. While a flag is often seen at a distance, flapping, reversed or partially obscured. Complexity defeats the purpose of a flag because you can't see the detail at a distance or when small. For example, the coat of arms on the current ACT Flag is almost indecipherable when printed on a hand flag or as an on-screen icon. Please refer to the examples below.

The first rule of good flag design is to "keep it simple". The simpler the flag, the more effective it is. Most flags feature one emblem, simple geometric shapes and no more than five colours.

For these reasons, I respectfully suggest that the ACT Coat of Arms not be incorporated into the ACT Flag, and that both designs be treated as two separate initiatives. Both the coat of arms and flag could include the same symbolism and colours, though the designs should be tailored to their intended use and function.

Included in this submission for your consideration, are three alternate designs for a new ACT Flag with accompanying descriptions. The three flags are part of a series of Australian flags I have recently designed, that I am planning to launch on a new website in the coming months.

Best of luck for your initiative to develop a new ACT Coat of Arms. I believe a new coat of arms and the accompanying flag would be a wonderful opportunity to foster unity and align ACT's symbols with its people and its identity.

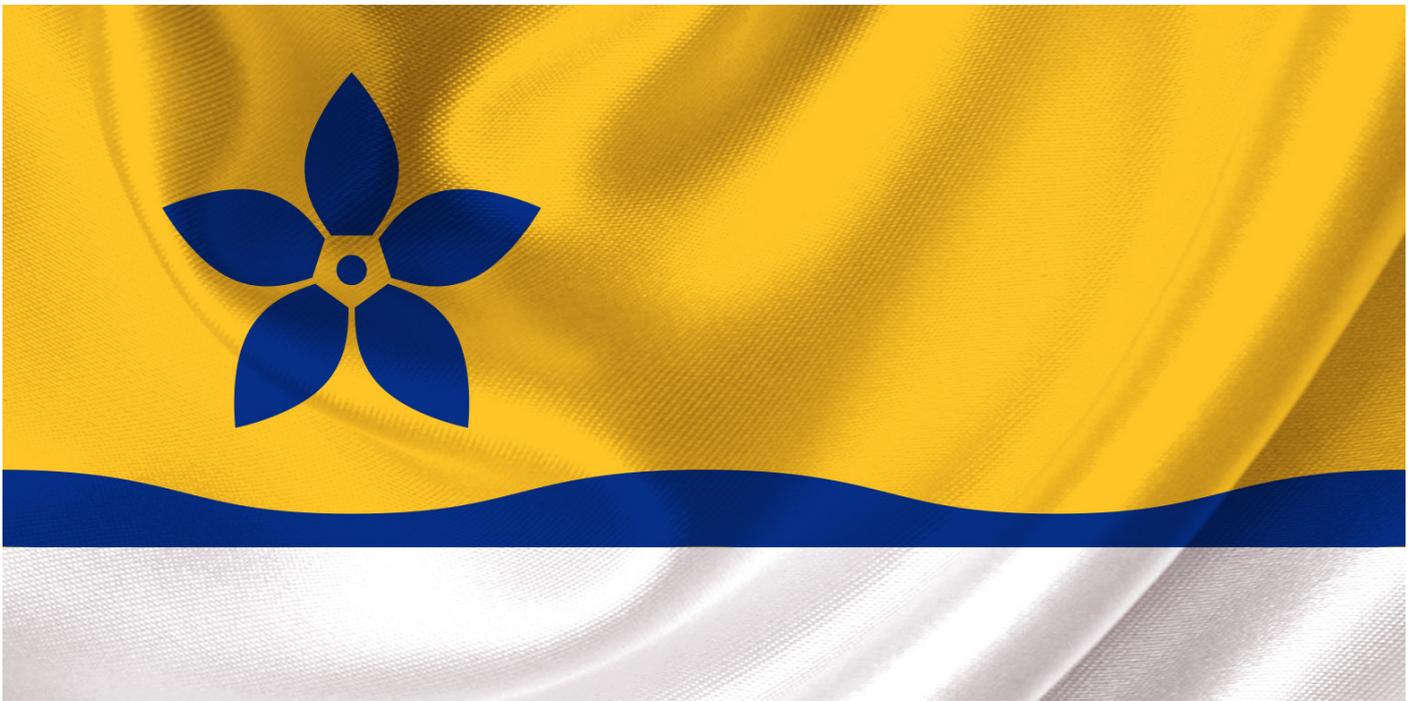
Sincerely,
Jeremy Matthews



Hand flag sold at the Parliament House gift shop, Canberra.



Complicated and intricate designs do not work well on flags, particularly when small or seen from a distance. Simple flags work best.



Proposal: Flag of the Australian Capital Territory
Name: Brindabella Sunrise
Proportion: 1:2
Number of colours: 3

The Brindabella Sunrise Flag features a stylised royal bluebell flower in the hoist on a yellow background with a white and violet blue bottom edge. The bottom panels equal one third the height of the flag.

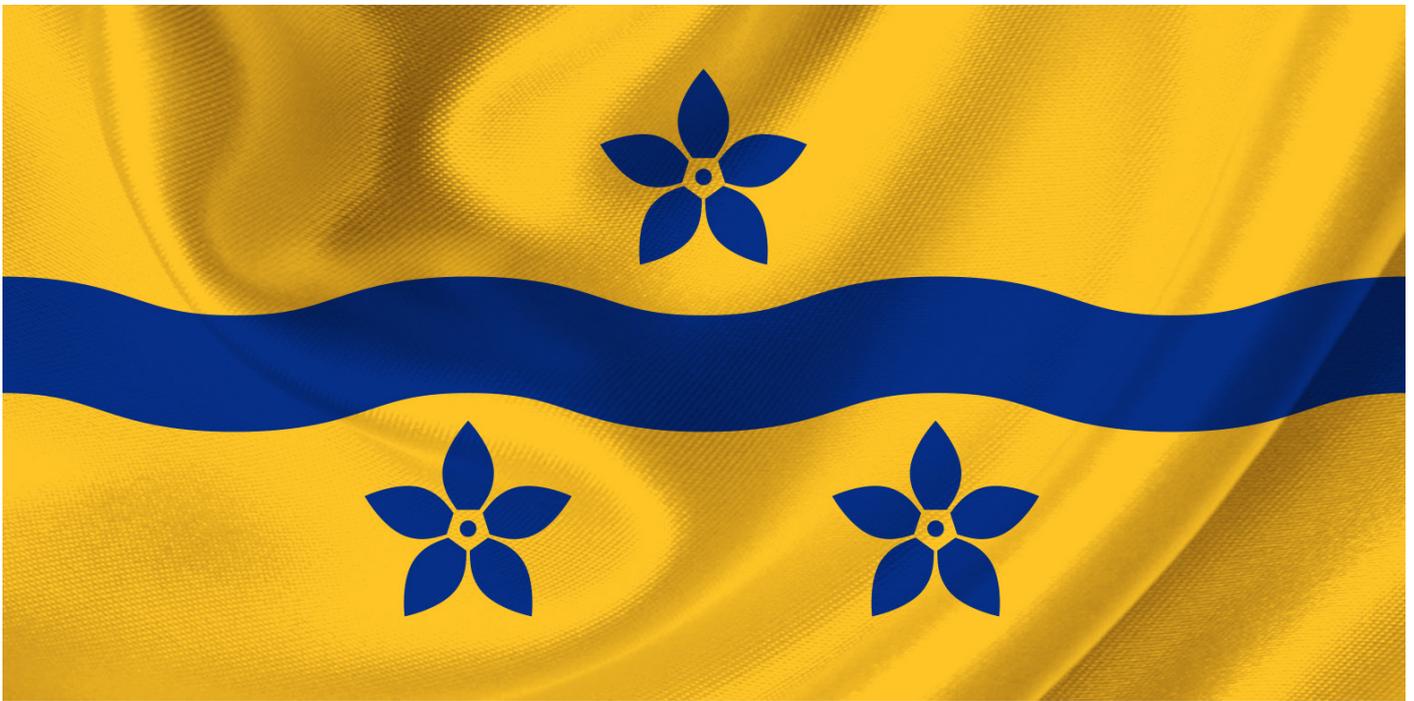
The Royal Bluebell (*Wahlenbergia gloriosa*) is the floral emblem of the Australian Capital Territory. The traditional owners of the ACT area the Ngambri-Ngunnawal peoples used the petals of the bluebell as food, and they are reported to make a delightful addition to a mixed salad. A floral emblem also reflects that Canberra is classified as a garden city. The bluebell design has been simplified to make it easier to distinguish when small or seen from a distance.

The white horizontal panel represents Lake Burley Griffin and the three rivers that connect to it. Lake Burley Griffin is located in the approximate geographic centre of Canberra.

The wave partition represents the rolling Brindabellas that frame Canberra's landscape. The name Brindabella is derived from an Aboriginal word meaning 'two kangaroo rats'. However, another account states that 'Brindy brindy' was a local term meaning water running over rocks and Bella, meaning 'beautiful' in Italian, was presumably added by the Europeans. As the Australian Capital Territory is the national seat of government, the three peaks could also symbolise the three branches of government being: executive, legislature and judiciary. The yellow background represents the golden sky of a sunrise over the ACT landscape.

Colours

Violet blue and gold – are the official colours and traditional sporting colours of the ACT. Violet blue is also the colour of the royal bluebell flower.



Proposal: Flag of the Australian Capital Territory
Name: The Bluebell Flag
Proportion: 1:2
Number of colours: 2

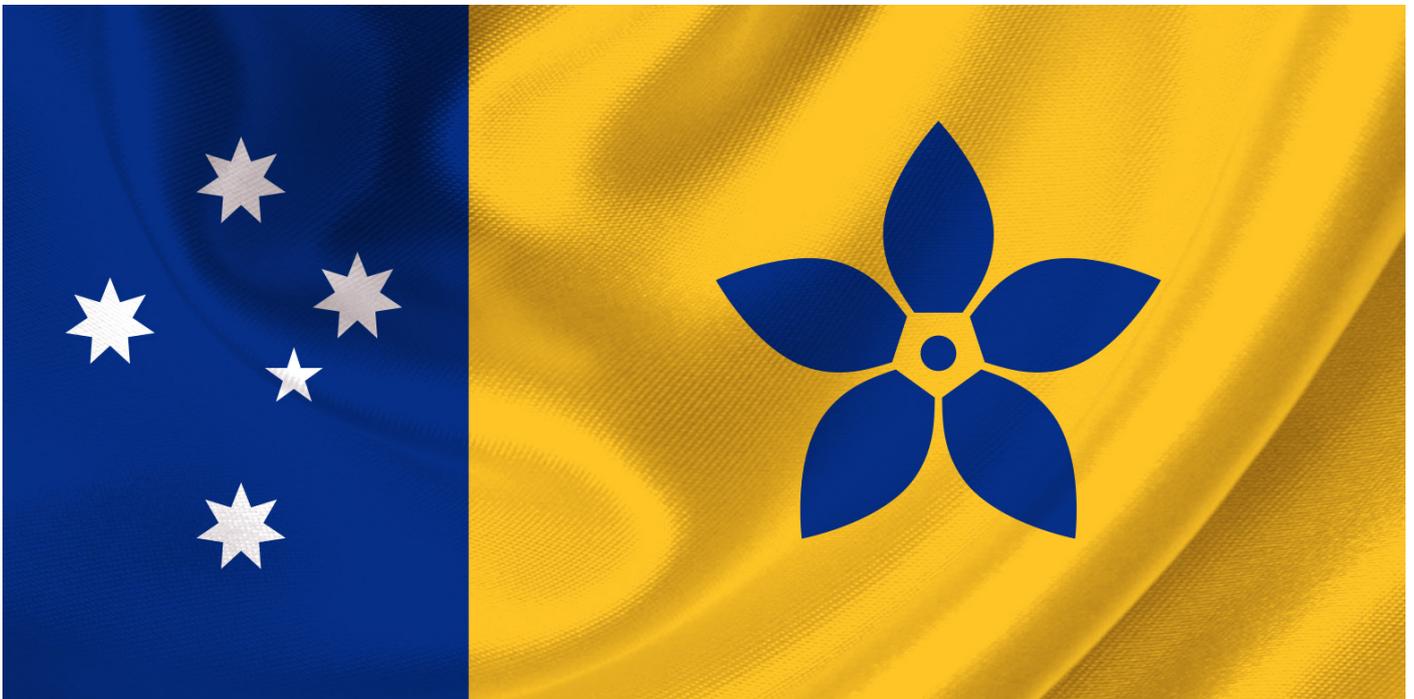
The Bluebell Flag features three royal bluebell flowers on a yellow background, with a wavy line running through the middle.

The royal bluebell is the floral emblem of the Australian Capital Territory. The traditional owners of the ACT area the Ngambri-Ngunnawal people used the petals of the bluebell as food, and they are reported to make a delightful addition to a mixed salad. The three bluebells represent the three apices of the Parliamentary Triangle being: Parliament House, the seat of the government of Australia, the Defence Headquarters at Russell and City Hill. The three bluebells also symbolise the three branches of government being: executive, legislature and judiciary. A floral emblem also reflects that Canberra is classified as a garden city. The bluebell design has been simplified to make it easier to distinguish when small or seen from a distance.

The wave partition represents Lake Burley Griffin and the three rivers that connect to it, or the rolling Brindabellas that frame Canberra's landscape. Lake Burley Griffin is located in the approximate geographic centre of Canberra. The name Brindabella is derived from an Aboriginal word meaning 'two kangaroo rats'. However, another account states that 'Brindy brindy' was a local term meaning water running over rocks and Bella, meaning 'beautiful' in Italian, was presumably added by the Europeans. The yellow background represents the ACT landscape from the plains and river valleys to the ranges and mountain regions.

Colours

Violet blue and gold – are the official colours and traditional sporting colours of the ACT. Violet blue is also the colour of the royal bluebell flower.



Proposal: Flag of the Australian Capital Territory
Name: The Bluebell Pale
Proportion: 1:2
Number of colours: 3

The Bluebell Pale Flag is based on the Australian pale format, as used by the current flags of the Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory. These flags consist of two panels, with the left panel in the hoist being equal to one third the length of each flag. The left panel always contains a white Southern Cross emblem, while the right panel in the fly contains the main emblem of the state or territory it symbolises.

Alternatively the Southern Cross could be replaced by the Commonwealth Star, symbolising the ACT's position as the seat of government for the Commonwealth of Australia.

Please refer to pages 3 and 4 for the meaning of the bluebell and colours.