



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT AND CITY SERVICES
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Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into a Territory Coat of Arms

Submission Number: 046

Date Authorised for Publication: 1 May 2019

From: [REDACTED]
To: [LA Committee - ETCS](#)
Subject: Coat of arms submission.
Date: Monday, 8 April 2019 6:35:22 PM

1) I am concerned that the government is spending time and money on considering designs for a territory coat of arms when there are homeless people sleeping on our streets (and winter coming on). Surely the time and money could be better spent providing blankets and meals as a first step, and affordable housing as a second? After the homeless are permanently accommodated, there is the issue of hospital waiting lists, then hospital leaks, graffiti, litter... the list goes on. There are plenty better things to do with MLA's time and taxpayer's money than ponder an extra coat of arms.

Government exists to serve the people. So let's get the high priority needs to the people met as the first priority.

2) We already have a coat of arms. The committee believes this coat of arms was bestowed on Canberra the city, and thus wonders if the ACT needs a separate coat of arms. That would be a reasonable question if there were separate governments for Canberra and the ACT as there are for the city of Melbourne and the state of Victoria. But because the government of Canberra is the same as the ACT government, and there is no municipal boundary separating the city of Canberra from the other settlements in the ACT, there is no need for a separate flag or coat of arms. Canberra and the ACT are one and the same governmentally, and thus should remain so symbolically. To have 2 flags and 2 coats of arms for the same entity would be silly.

3) If the ACT should have a separate coat of arms and flag to Canberra, this would mean additional and unnecessary expense to erect further flagpoles in Canberra so that the flags of Canberra, the ACT, Australia, Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders could fly together. Again, this is a waste of money and time. We have too many flagpoles as it is.

4) If the ACT should have a separate coat of arms and flag to Canberra, then the other settlements outside of Canberra (which would no longer be represented by the "Canberra" flag and coat of arms) would need their own flags and their own representative governments or councils with equivalent functions to LGAs elsewhere in the country. I presume this would mean Oaks Estate, Tharwa, Uriarra and Hall.

4) If the ACT should have a separate coat of arms and flag to Canberra, then Canberra would need its own city council too, separate from the ACT territory government.

5) If any redesign is necessary, it should be to make the flag depict the correct and current coat of arms. Currently, for apparently no reason, the flag does not show the crown which is the crest on the coat of arms. This would be a simple, cheap and easily retrofitted addition to existing flags (just sew on a crown patch to both sides of each flag). There would be no need to replace all existing flags.

6) The current coat of arms and the flag derived from it are perfectly adequate for our current needs. The castle represents the power centre of Australia (and given the increasing fortification of our parliament and militarisation of its guards, is ever more apt); the sword and mace are objects actually carried by the sergeant at arms in parliament. Therefore the suggestions by some other submitters that these are outdated relics of a foreign country cannot be further from the truth. They are in frequent use in the centre of our city, and are used by the very people who make up the *raison d'etre* of the ACT: the national parliament. They are perfectly symbolic of the purpose of the ACT and Canberra: the national capital.

7) A number of submitters have made suggestions that the crown, and indeed the coat of arms as a whole, is a vestige of colonialism and that (for unexplained reasons) this is a bad thing. In other words, that any emblem should be constantly updated to reflect the changing political fashions-of-the-day. This in fact removes the whole purpose of a symbol like a coat of arms which offers a sense of stability to reflect on when caught up in the constant media soundbites we live in today. A coat of arms and derived flag should by definition be conservative in design, reflecting the past as much if not more than the present (which is ever changing) and the future. Calls for presentist political posturing in our territorial symbology show a complete lack of understanding of the purpose of that symbology. A coat of arms and a flag are not things to be changed willynilly, but should be eternal reminders of the ideas of our founding fathers, the bedrock on which we move forward.

7) The alternative design proposed some years ago by Ivo Ostyn has a bluebell flower, but it looks like the charge on the flag of Hong Kong. The flag for the ACT must remain staunchly indicative of freedom and democracy, not a shackled colony of a dictatorship.

8) The field of the current coat of arms could be used very nicely as a flag. Auckland did this with its coat of arms: <https://www.crwflags.com/fotw/images/n/nz-acboa.gif> and most NZ cities do likewise.

9) Again, there are far better things to be spending time and money on than superfluous and redundant coats of arms. We have a perfectly serviceable one that we all can, and should, be proud of. We don't need to need to change it. We don't need another for the territory (as if Canberra and the ACT were somehow different). Let's celebrate the one we have, and start housing the homeless, feeding the hungry, clothing the poor and healing the sick. Those are what the people expect the government to do. So please do them without further shillyshally.

Brendan Whyte



