

The Canberra Times

NATIONAL ACT CANBERRA LIFE

What's wrong with Canberra's coat of arms

Dr David Headon considers how well Canberra's coat of arms works in this day and age, writes John Thistleton.

By **John Thistleton**

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Dr David Headon's verdict on Canberra's coat of arms:

1. The triple-towered castle: Castles might work well for olde-worlde coats of arms, created centuries ago, but not for Canberra in the 21st century. An irrelevant symbol now.





Canberra's coat of arms.

2. The sword of justice: Could be included but seems awkward, at best, for this century (scales of justice in a modern democracy?).
3. Parliamentary mace: Still relevant in formal terms, but a question mark over its cultural relevance.
4. Imperial crown: An embarrassment in the 21st century.
5. Rose of York: Included as a courtesy, in 1927, for "Bertie", the Duke of York, but absurd today.
6. Portcullis (castle gate): Same as the triple-towered castle, but is also a mediaeval prison gate. Irrelevant.
7. Gum tree: Sadly, the (barely visible) tree behind the portcullis prison gate is meant to be a gum tree. It bears zero resemblance. Drawn by someone who has never seen a gum tree in their lives.
8. Supporters: The black and white swans, with no reference points from the 1920s, hold up well - precisely because the black swan is recognised locally.
9. Motto: Could readily be dropped, unless the community thinks otherwise. Present motto privileging the Queen/King over the "people" - if we accept that it's the "people", not the "mob". Inappropriate for our present-day democracy.



John Thistleton



John Thistleton is a reporter for The Canberra Times.