



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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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: 051**

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## THE HERALDRY & GENEALOGY SOCIETY OF CANBERRA INC

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The Committee Secretary  
Standing Committee on Environment  
and Transport and City Services,  
Legislative Assembly for the ACT  
GPO Box 1020  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

### INQUIRY INTO A TERRITORY COAT OF ARMS

Please find attached a submission from the Heraldry and Genealogy Society of Canberra, to the Standing Committee on Environment and Transport and City Services relating to the inquiry into a Territory Coat of Arms.

We fully support the principle that the Australian Capital Territory should have a Coat of Arms that is distinct from the existing City of Canberra Coat of Arms.

There is considerable expertise and experience in heraldic matters within our Society. Members of the Heraldry special interest group, particularly those involved in developing this submission, would be happy to offer further assistance to the Standing Committee as this visionary initiative progresses.

Please direct any correspondence to [REDACTED] or the Heraldry & Genealogy Society of Canberra Inc at [REDACTED]. The Society contact is Mr Christopher Lindesay and he is also available on telephone [REDACTED].

Yours faithfully

Nick Reddan  
President

16 April 2019

# Submission to the Standing Committee on Environment and Transport and City Services of the Australian Capital Territory

From the Heraldry and Genealogy Society of Canberra Inc

Re: Inquiry into a Territory Coat of Arms

## Preamble

The Heraldry and Genealogy Society of Canberra Inc (HAGSOC) is submitting this document in response to the call for submissions by the Standing Committee on Environment and Transport and City Services of the Australian Capital Territory in relation to its inquiry into a Territory Coat of Arms.

HAGSOC was established in 1964 and has more than 700 current members from the ACT and surrounding districts, some of whom have been granted Arms. One of the specialist interest groups (SIGs) within HAGSOC focuses on Heraldry. The active membership of the Heraldry SIG collectively represents more than 250 years of experience and expertise in heraldic matters, and includes members of the Australian Heraldry Society Inc, the Heraldry Society of Scotland, The Heraldry Society UK and the International Association of Amateur Heralds.

The aims of HAGSOC in tendering this submission are to

- a. address directly the two questions raised in the call for submissions, and
- b. offer observations on points directly related to an application for a Coat of Arms for the ACT and within the scope of expertise of HAGSOC members with experience in Heraldry.

In summary, HAGSOC

1. **fully supports** the initiative to apply for a Coat of Arms for the Australian Capital Territory (in addition to and distinct from the Canberra City Coat of Arms),
2. **offers** an annotated list of symbols that would be meaningful and heraldically appropriate to include in an ACT Coat of Arms,
3. **encourages** the Standing Committee to seek a formal Grant of Arms for the ACT from the College of Arms, London, and
4. **suggests** that an application for a Coat of Arms for the ACT presents a rare and ideal opportunity to design a new ACT flag that accords with the ACT Coat of Arms.

## Section 1

### 1.1 Question 1

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

HAGSOC fully supports the principle that the Australian Capital Territory should have a Coat of Arms that is distinct from the City of Canberra Coat of Arms. The primary reasons for this support are outlined below.

The Coat of Arms currently associated with Canberra was originally granted in 1928 by the College of Arms, London to the Federal Capital Commissioners (FCC) and their descendants. The closest current equivalent to the FCC is probably the National Capital Authority. The government of the Australian Capital Territory is a distinct entity that has existed since the ACT became self-governing in 1989. The fact that the 1928 Grant of Arms applies to the City of Canberra and not to the Australian Capital Territory in its entirety is evident in the *City of Canberra Arms Act 1932* (<https://www.legislation.act.gov.au/a/1932-3>), and has been confirmed in an email from Garter King of Arms writing for the College of Arms (see **Appendix 1**).

The ACT has a distinctive identity that has at its heart the significant role that this area has played in people coming together to meet and interact over at least the last 21,000 years. To Indigenous people this area was Kambera (variously spelled), the meeting place. Since 1911 the area has been recognised as the setting for the city housing the seat of national government.

Known as the Federal Capital Territory until 1938, when it became the Australian Capital Territory, the Territory was established to provide a site for the national capital and to ensure that key resources were available to support the city. The borders of the ACT were largely geographically determined on the basis of water catchment boundaries, principally to ensure that the capital would have a reliable water supply. Other resources including timber, stone and food could also be sourced within the Territory, and rural settlements and farms are located in the non-urban areas that are not protected within Namadgi National Park.

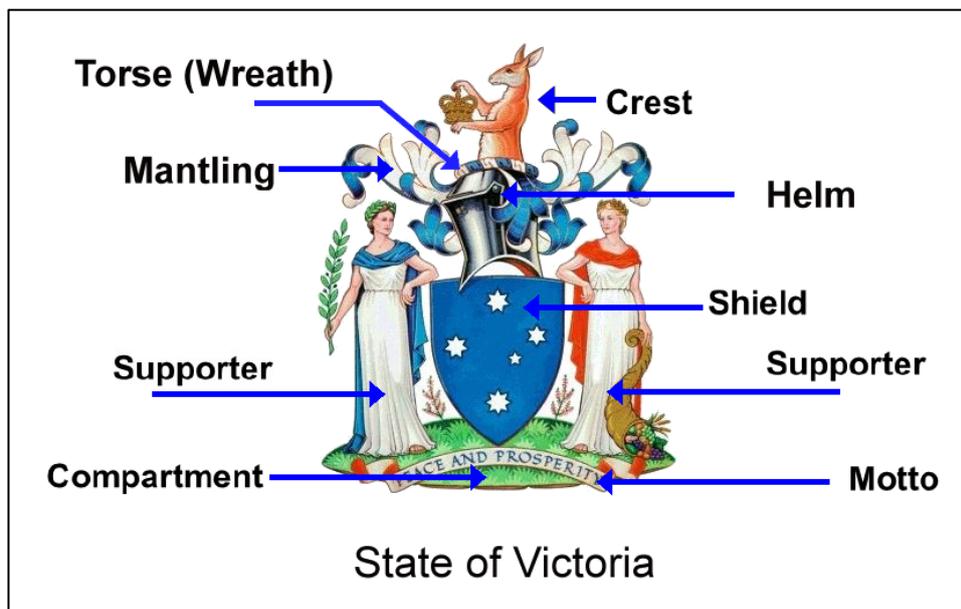
As the defined region and jurisdiction within which the national capital and the Australian Parliament are located it is entirely appropriate and necessary that the Australian Capital Territory should have use of symbols that equate with its status and role within the Commonwealth of Australia. A unique Coat of Arms for the Territory, formally granted by the College of Arms, is such a symbol. The fact that all other States and internal Territories of Australia (apart from Jervis Bay) and their capital cities have received distinct Grants of Arms from the College of Arms strengthens the case.

## 1.2 Question 2

What symbols might be included in the design of an ACT Coat of Arms. When suggesting images and symbols, the Committee invites people to describe how they are significant to or representative of the people, history or landscape of the ACT.

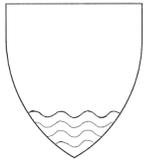
HAGSOC suggests that the symbols listed in Table 1 (below) be considered for inclusion in the design of an ACT Coat of Arms. In each case the significance of and/or reason for suggesting the symbol is noted. Heraldically appropriate usage of each symbol is also suggested.

The main components of a Coat of Arms, as referred to in Table 1, are illustrated in Figure 1 for reference.



**Figure 1.** Principal components of a Coat of Arms (the Arms of Victoria, Australia are shown here for illustrative purposes only).

**Table 1.** Symbols suggested for inclusion in an ACT Coat of Arms, their significance and heraldically appropriate representation.

Suggested Symbol	Indicative Image	Heraldic Role & Representation
<p><b>The colours blue, yellow and white</b> symbolise/reference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• traditional colours of the ACT, e.g. in sport; also included in the Australian Coat of Arms</li> <li>• blue = freedom, justice, prosperity, peace; also sky, water, mountains</li> <li>• yellow = sunshine, justice</li> <li>• white = peace, purity, snow</li> </ul>		<p>The key colours may appear <i>inter alia</i> as the Field (background colour) on the shield, in the Charges on the shield, and in any circlet or mantling associated with the Crest</p>
<p><b>Brindabella Range</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High-elevation area of the ACT; 60% of the ACT is hilly or mountainous</li> <li>• Iconic part of the natural setting for the ACT, the city of Canberra and other communities within the ACT</li> <li>• Long history of Indigenous use and custodianship</li> <li>• Associated with water resources, biodiversity and quality of life</li> <li>• Namadgi National Park – scenery, recreation, conservation</li> </ul>	 <p>Part of Canberra, looking west to the Brindabellas</p>	<p><b>Charge (Division)</b> Mountains can be symbolised on a shield by a jagged line (<i>fess indented</i>) or pair of lines (<i>fess dancetty</i>)</p> 
<p><b>Molonglo &amp; Murrumbidgee rivers</b> symbolising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the importance of water to people in the ACT, historically and in contemporary times, from diverse perspectives</li> <li>• the network of travel corridors for Indigenous people who gathered in the ACT region over millennia</li> <li>• the key location of the ACT within the Murray-Darling Basin</li> </ul>	 <p>Murrumbidgee River from Shepherds Lookout</p>	<p><b>Charge</b> Water is symbolised on a shield by wavy lines (<i>barry wavy</i>)</p> 
<p><b>Seven-pointed Commonwealth Star,</b> referencing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the position and importance of the ACT within the Commonwealth of Australia</li> <li>• the stars of the Southern Cross in the current ACT flag</li> <li>• clear night skies; links with astronomy (Mt Stromlo); Canberra Deep Space Communication Centre at Tidbinbilla</li> </ul>		<p><b>Charge</b> Included on a shield as depicted here (<i>mullet of seven points</i>)</p>

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**Southern Brush-Tailed Rock Wallaby**

*(Petrogale penicillata)*

- ACT mammal emblem
- Culturally important to Indigenous people – illustrated in rock art in the Territory and region
- Locally extinct in the wild, present at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve through conservation programs

**Supporters**

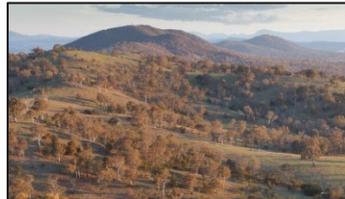
Positioned on either side of the shield  
*Proper: depicted realistically*

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**Topographical landmark sites**

include Capital Hill, Black Mountain, Mt Ainslie, Mt Majura, Mt Taylor, Mt Painter, Red Hill, Aranda/O'Connor Ridge, the Pinnacle – representing

- important Indigenous sites
- the axes of the Burley Griffin plan for Australia's capital
- national cultural landmarks including Parliament House



Mt Majura (L) and Mt Ainslie

**Compartment**

The base on which the shield and supporters stand. Often shown in a Coat of Arms as a mound/hill. See below for further suggested details.

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**Royal Bluebell (*Wahlenbergia gloriosa*)**

- ACT floral emblem
- Native to the ACT; in the wild mainly in sub-alpine woodland areas
- References the higher-elevation parts of the Territory

**Compartment**

A green mound strewn with clusters of flowers: Royal Bluebell and Button Wrinklewort  
*Proper: depicted realistically*

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**Button Wrinklewort (*Rutidosia leptorhynchoides*)**

- Endemic to southern tablelands temperate grasslands; endangered
- ongoing conservation work symbolises care for the future
- References lower-elevation parts of the Territory

**Compartment**

See above for Royal Bluebell  
*Proper: depicted realistically*

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**Gang-Gang Cockatoo (*Callocephalon fimbriatum*)**

- ACT faunal emblem

**Crest**

Perched on a branch of Yellow Box – see below  
*Proper: depicted realistically*

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**Yellow Box (*Eucalyptus melliodora*) foliage, flowers, fruit** – represents

- endangered Yellow Box-Red Gum Grassy Woodlands that covered ~14% of the ACT pre-1750, and remain significant for biodiversity
- significant ecosystem for Indigenous people

**Crest**

A sprig/branch with foliage, flowers and fruit (on which the Gang-Gang perches)  
*Proper: depicted realistically*

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### **1.3 A Motto for the ACT Coat of Arms**

An appropriate Motto that represents one or more core values associated with the person or organisation is frequently included in a Grant of Arms. The Motto generally appears below the shield, partly overlapping the compartment; or below the shield if the Coat of Arms is depicted without the compartment.

HAGSOC suggests that the Motto should reflect the significant role that the ACT has played for at least the last 21,000 years as an important place for people to come together and to interact. The Territory, and the national capital and parliament located therein, continue to fulfil that vitally important function. Fundamentally we are suggesting that the Motto should reflect the centrality of people and their coming together – physically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually – to our collective understanding of and engagement with this place.

HAGSOC is also of the view that a Motto in Language would acknowledge the rich Indigenous heritage of the ACT (mottos associated with Coats of Arms were traditionally expressed in Latin; this tradition continues in the present, although some mottos are now written in English or another language appropriate to the particular Grant). With this in mind we suggest that the following be considered as a starting point for discussion of a Motto for inclusion in the ACT Coat of Arms:

“Ngunawal” – which we understand to mean “We, the People”

Consultation with Indigenous communities and leaders with current and past ties to this Country will be essential in pursuing such a proposal, and we see it as desirable that alternative ideas that accord with the spirit and intention of this suggestion may arise from such consultation.

We are aware that the Australian National University recently engaged in a consultative process with representatives from the Little Gudenby River Tribal Council, Buru Ngunawal Aboriginal Corporation, King Brown Tribal Group, and the Ngarigu Currawong Clan that resulted in the gift of the name “Kambri” to the University to denote the new central precinct focused around University Avenue and its intersection with Sullivans Creek.

## Section 2: Additional Considerations

### 2.1 The Coat of Arms Design Process

HAGSOC is pleased to note that the Committee has familiarised itself with the conventions surrounding the design of coats of arms, by contacting the College of Arms in London. HAGSOC has a number of members with expertise and experience in heraldry (some of whom are armigers) who are in a position to provide ongoing advice on heraldic principles and guidelines for heraldically appropriate design as the process advances. HAGSOC suggests that the design process should include consultation with one or more of these people at key stages in the process.

### 2.2 An ACT Coat of Arms and the ACT Flag

HAGSOC recommends that as part of the process of seeking a Grant of Arms for the Australian Capital Territory the ACT Government gives consideration to changing the ACT flag, so that the flag and the Coat of Arms both appropriately represent the Australian Capital Territory as distinct from the City of Canberra. We note that the current ACT flag features the shield and supporters from the City of Canberra coat of arms; and that the City of Canberra does not have an officially promulgated flag.

It is common practice in jurisdictions in many parts of the world to have an official flag that is designed according to the following general principles of vexillology:

**Simplicity** – a flag should be instantly recognizable and memorable, which requires that it should be sufficiently simple that a child can draw it from memory; the number of colours should be limited, ideally to two or three; and lettering of any kind should never be included on a flag.

**Relevance** – images, colours and/or patterns on a flag should be meaningful in terms of what the flag symbolises.

**Distinctiveness and Connection** – a flag should distinctively identify the entity it symbolises and should not duplicate other flags; however, one or more similar elements between flag designs can be used to show connections between entities.

Clear visual links between a flag and the associated coat of arms ensure consistent visual messaging and identification. Vexillological best practice in designing a flag associated with a coat of arms conforms with the following principles:

- a. A flag can display the image of the shield in a rectangular form (see the first example in Figure 2 below, or the City of Canberra flag design illustrated in Figure A2.1); or
- b. the design could include appropriate symbols from the Coat of Arms (see examples 2 and 3 below).
- c. The flag should not include a partial achievement of the Coat of Arms (i.e. the shield from the arms together with only some of the other elements such as the crest, supporters, compartment, motto). Note that the current ACT flag breaks this rule, as well as other vexillological principles.

Examples are given in Figure 2 (below).

HAGSOC suggests that an appropriate design for an ACT flag to accompany an ACT Coat of Arms incorporating the symbols suggested in this document could be based on the principles outlined above and on the ideas set out in **Appendix 2**.

		<p>The shield from a coat of arms displayed as a flag</p> <p><i>The Province of British Columbia, Canada</i></p>
		<p>The Charge from the arms is modified on the flag, which uses the principal colours of the arms (red, white)</p> <p><i>The Republic of Singapore</i></p>
		<p>Charges from the arms are included in the flag, which uses the colours from the arms (yellow, blue, red, white)</p> <p><i>The Territory of Nunavut, Canada</i></p>
		<p>The colours of the flag are those in the arms (black, white, ochre); Sturt's Desert Rose appears in both arms and flag</p> <p><i>The Northern Territory, Australia</i></p>

**Figure 2.** Coats of arms (left) and flags (centre) exemplifying heraldically and vexillologically appropriate flag design options.

### 2.3 Seeking a Grant of Arms for the ACT

A Coat of Arms has formal standing only if it has been awarded by the body empowered to grant arms to entities within the relevant jurisdiction. For the proposed ACT Coat of Arms to have the international standing and recognition befitting the Territory, including its historical, current and future roles within the Commonwealth of Australia, the ACT Coat of Arms must be formally awarded and registered by the heraldic authority accredited to do so. At this time (since Australia does not have its own Heraldic Authority) that authority is the College of Arms, London (the College is the official heraldic authority for England, Wales, Northern Ireland and much of the Commonwealth including Australia and New Zealand); see <https://www.college-of-arms.gov.uk/>

The City of Canberra Coat of Arms was granted by the College of Arms in 1928.

Submission prepared on behalf of the President, Council and members of the Heraldry and Genealogy Society of Canberra by

Dr Joseph V Johnson CSC AAM RFD ED FRGS FSA Scot

Mr Geoffrey J Kingman-Sugars JP (FIAAH)

Prof Janette A Lindesay FRMetS

Mr Christopher J Lindesay JP FSA Scot

## APPENDIX 1

**From:** Garter Principal King of Arms [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Thursday, 4 July 2013 01:24

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** RE: Congratulations

Dear Mr Kingman-Sugars,

Thank you for your email. The ACT Government does not have the right to use the Arms granted to the Federal Capital Commission in 1928. There is no further correspondence on the file more recent than a letter from my predecessor dated 20th October 1999.

Physical possession of the Letters Patent in the Archives of the ACT Government does not give them any rights over the Armorial Bearings being granted.

Yours sincerely,

Thomas Woodcock

Garter King of Arms

College of Arms  
[REDACTED]

## APPENDIX 2

### The ACT Flag: Design suggestions in relation to an ACT Coat of Arms

With the principles outlined in this submission in mind, HAGSOC recommends that the ACT Government consider a flag design that mirrors the proposed arms for the ACT. Just as the flag of the City of Canberra reflects the arms of the City of Canberra (see Figure A2.1 below); or just as the flag of the City of Queanbeyan reflects the City of Queanbeyan arms, the ACT flag could mirror the arms of the ACT.



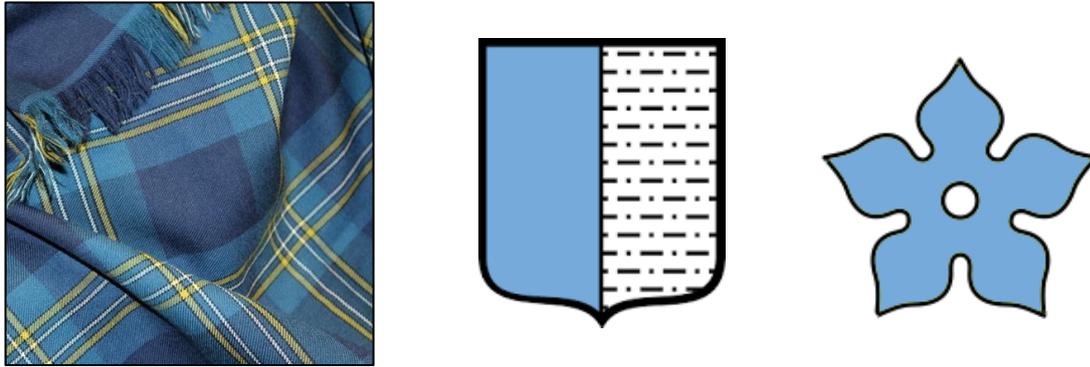
**Figure A2.1.** The Coat of Arms of the City of Canberra illustrated by heraldic artist Ian Mackay FHGSC, showing the full heraldic achievement together with its associated flag.

Alternatively a design could be considered in which the background colours and layout of the current flag (blue and yellow/gold) are retained, and the linear intersection between the two colours is replaced with a zig-zag line representing the Brindabellas. This would retain the traditional colours of the ACT and reference the history of the flag currently associated with the Territory, while also creating a unique ACT flag.

From the list of symbols put forward in this submission for the ACT Coat of Arms we suggest that one appropriate for the flag could be the ACT floral emblem, the Royal Bluebell. On the flag this could be represented in a visually effective and heraldically and vexillologically correct way using a *cinquefoil* with pointed petals in the heraldic colour *bleu celeste* (sky blue), outlined in black, against the yellow portion of the flag. Such a design would directly reference an ACT Coat of Arms that includes some or all of the suggested symbols (colours blue, white, yellow/gold; the Brindabellas; the Royal Bluebell).

The design would also relate closely to the Canberra Tartan, which became Canberra's tartan in 1997. In the Canberra Tartan the dark blue and yellow represent the current ACT flag; the white

stripes reflect the Southern Cross stars on the flag; and the medium blue (which is closely similar to *bleu celeste*) represents the Royal Bluebell (Figure A2.2).



**Figure A2.2.** The Canberra tartan (left); the heraldic colour *bleu celeste* or sky blue (centre); and a cinquefoil with pointed petals in *bleu celeste* (right).