



I am the National Flag of the Commonwealth of Australia. I belong to you and every Australian ... equally ... and freely.

I was conceived before the dawn of the century. Designed by Ivor Evans, I was chosen over and above some 32,000 contenders.

Although I was never an orphan, I was adopted on that sparkling spring day, the 3rd of September, 1901, when I flew above the Exhibition Building in Melbourne. I was hailed and celebrated by people standing on the threshold of nationhood. They took me to their hearts. In that official ceremony, in the presence of our first Prime Minister, I became the chief symbol of a new Nation, embracing the ideals of self determination, national sovereignty and personal freedom, under God.

I have been hoisted aloft over many buildings, from humble homes to the Houses of Parliament. I have listened to every Prime Minister declare his allegiance to me, to our Monarch and to our Constitution. I have witnessed the pledge of each one to protect and defend those freedoms we all cherish, even above life itself.

I am carried with pride in ceremonies and processions. I have draped the caskets of your National heroes, carried to their last resting place, the caskets of Kings and Queens, eminent statesmen, Generals, Admirals, humble Privates and the Unknown Soldier. Wherever free men gather, wherever there is justice, faith, hope, charity and truth, there too am I.

At the tender age of 14 years, I received my Baptism of Fire in World War 1. I flew proudly in those early days as we heard the call to do battle alongside those of our own kin. I was carried up the steep hills of Gallipoli and I was there with the men in the trenches - I watched Simpson bring out the wounded on his doughty little donkey ... I breathed the dust of the deserts and rode in glory with the Light Horse Brigade. I saw our finest sons fall and lie still, in death they had given their last full measure of devotion. The war was over for them forever, but I kept my lonely vigil over their graves and stayed to watch the flowers grow, amid the crosses, row upon row, in Flanders Fields.

Oh, young Australia, I was there with your fathers whom I longed to comfort ... look at me again ... lest you forget.

You know me by my distinctive emblems – the Union Jack is the tie that binds us to your ancestors and rich heritage down through the centuries. The upright red cross on a white field is the cross of St. George, patron saint of England. This cross was there when King John set his Royal Seal to Magna Carta in 1215. And it was there when Simon de Montford brought together the very first Parliament in 1265, making England truly, the 'Mother of Parliaments'.

I proudly wear 2 other crosses - the white diagonal cross on a blue field is the Cross of St. Andrew, patron saint of Scotland. The red, diagonal cross on a white field is the cross of St. Patrick, patron saint of Ireland. These three crosses, which perhaps you scarcely understand, unite our heritage in this wonderful land and forge our future in an inseparable bond. The blazing Southern Cross marks our way ahead, while the 7 pointed Federation Star joins our states and territories in a single, yet united Commonwealth, all this, set in a field of blue, the blue of our southern skies and of the endless ocean washing our golden sandy beaches and coral shores.

We are the heirs to a culture rich and diverse, we are the offspring child of a great Empire. We have a glorious tomorrow ... we are one.

Lest you forget!

I have been to many places, I have seen many things. With our explorers, I crossed the icy wastes of Antarctica, and climbed the heights of Mount Everest. I look down with pride on our mighty sports men and women as they win honours for their country, all over the world. At every official or memorable event in this land, I hold the position of honour.

Following World War 1, we frolicked in our new found liberty ... growth, prosperity, increase and our common wealth. But far to the north in Russia, a new tyranny spewed forth, slaughtering the rich and regal, the lowly and humble, usurping the sovereignty of nations not of its own. We watched from afar, protected by the border of oceans.

Then came 1939, and once again we heard the beat of the warmongers' drums.

Again, my heart went out to our brave soldiers, sailors and airmen. I was there with them, in the Middle East, in New Guinea, Malaya, Borneo and many other

places. I was trodden in the mud, red with the blood, of those brave young Australians, so ruthlessly murdered in P.O.W. Camps.

Lest you forget!

Finally, in '45, peace at last, so we thought. With just a few short years rest, I was again carried into battle, caught up in further hostilities by those promoting war. I watched and praised the endurance and spirit of our volunteers in Korea. I too, felt the sufferings of our brave sons and daughters in the forces in Vietnam ... Lest you forget!

I am well known and remembered in many places.

I am flown every day in the school at Villers Britonneaux in France where grateful children and teachers do not forget their debt to Australian soldiers.

I am many things to many people. To some, I am yesterday, today and tomorrow - an inseparable link in the chain that binds men to God and country. And because I am on the side of God through our great heritage, there are the godless who seek to destroy me and replace those 3 Christian crosses with plants or animals.

But, they dare not. Why ? Because today I am everywhere - in the homes of the humble and the mansions of millionaires, I am in the cities, the suburbs and in country towns. From coast to coast, right across this great nation, I am raised with pride and dignity.

Oh, my people, you have given so much to be Australian and I am proud that we are one, bonded through trial and triumph.

Look at me and remember our heritage and realize our great future. Together we will grow and all the world will know. You must never allow those who seek to reduce diversity into dust, to grind our treasures into a melting pot. And as you consider the future of your own true identity, remember ... I was there in your every hour of loss ... your every moment of glory, so, too, I will be there in all your tomorrows.

Tho proud, loyal and glorious through all my short history, there is one thing for which I need you most of all - I cannot fasten myself to the flagstaff.

**Lest you forget!**

You are my servant O Israel in whom I will be glorified I have heard you .. and I will preserve you and give you as a covenant to the people ... to inhabit the desolate heritages ... Surely, these shall come from afar. Look! those from the north and the west and these from Sinnim, the Great South Land, Terra Australis ....

*Isaiah 49:3, 8, 12.*

*Jerome's Latin Translation*

