



Flag Etiquette Guidelines

Dressing Ship

Flag etiquette afloat can be a test of the knowledge, good taste and competency of the skipper. There are a number of “dos” and “don’ts” of flag etiquette.

A good example of bad etiquette is for a corporate or company vessel to fly the company flag from the stern, staff or gaff. Likewise, flying a foreign flag (wearing false colours) from this position is a grave breach of protocol, and in some countries could result in being arrested.

The correct and only flag that should be flown from the stern or the gaff on Australian vessels is the Australian National Flag (blue) or the Australian Red Ensign.

Under the Federal Shipping Registration Act, 1981, the Australian Red Ensign was retained as the national colours of Australia’s merchant ships. Private pleasure craft were given the option of using this Red Ensign or the Australian National Flag. It is recommended that private pleasure craft wear the Red Ensign in home waters but use the National Colours when overseas.

On national holidays and on special occasions it is suggested that private boats can join in the festive spirit and “dress ship”. This is done with the international code of signal flags. On such a day the Red Ensign, or National Flag, should be raised on the stern staff or peak of the gaff staff. Another can be flown at the masthead. There are 40 international code flags which can be flown on a dressing line from stem to stern. The code flag dressing lines should be kept taut with the flags evenly spaced and in the pattern recommended by the Royal Yachting Association.

Although technically not part of the dress ship procedure, other flags such as the owner’s house flag, the Greater Sydney Ensign, the Federation flag etc., may be flown from the yards or equivalent positions. It is important that ensigns, racing or private flags (such as the boxing kangaroo) should NOT be included in the dressing lines which are for code flags only. On the dressing lines triangular flags and pennants should, as far as possible, be spaced between the rectangular flags. Theoretically, all vessels should be dressed alike.

In general the code flag order, reading from the bow, should be:

E, Q, p3, G, p8, Z, p4, W, p6, P pl, I, Code, T, Y, B, X, 1st, H, 3rd, D, F, 2nd, U, A, O, M, R, p2, J p0, N, p9, K, P7, V, p5, L, C, S.

They should be extended from bow to stern over all mastheads. In a single masted vessel the line from the bow to the masthead could finish with the 3rd code flag and the line from the masthead to the stern be carried on from code flag D. In two masted vessels the line between masts starts with Y and finishes with 0.



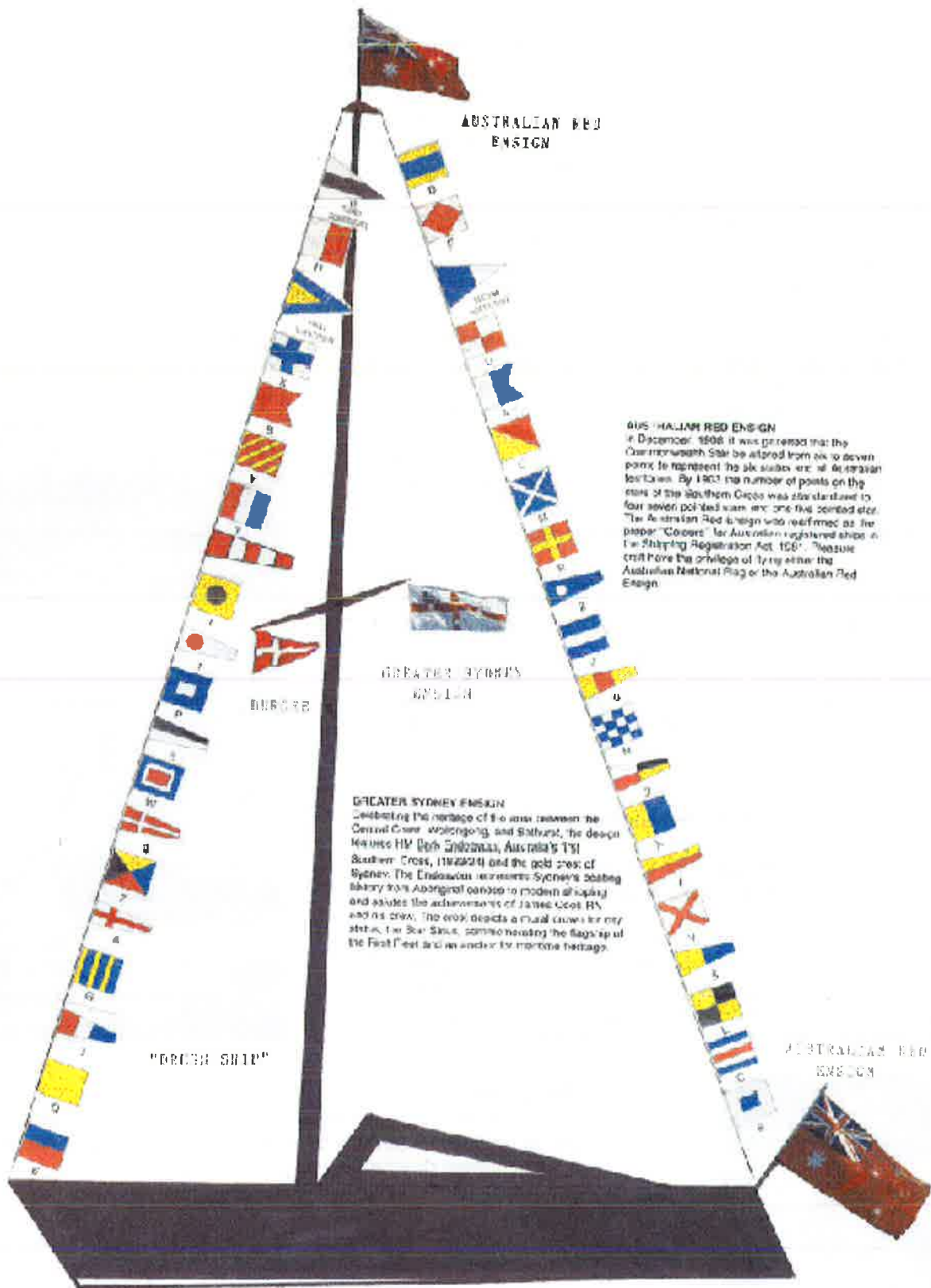
Making Colours

Ensigns and other appropriate flags should be hoisted (Colours made), at 0800 hrs each day or as soon as the crew go aboard, and lowered at sunset or when leaving the yacht.

Salutes

Ensigns should be dipped to all Warships and to Flag Officers as a mark of courtesy. When dipped in salute it should be lowered slowly one third of the way down the returned after it has been acknowledged.

When the ensign is worn on a small staff at the stern and the above method is not viable, the practice has been to remove the staff from its socket then slowly lower it to the horizontal. After acknowledgment it is returned to its original position.



AUSTRALIAN RED ENSIGN

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 In December, 1808, it was proposed that the Queensland Star be added from six to seven points to represent the six states and all Australian territories. By 1863 the number of points on the stars of the Southern Cross was standardized to four seven-pointed stars and one five-pointed star. The Australian Red Ensign was reaffirmed as the proper "Colours" for Australian registered ships in the Shipping Registration Act, 1867. The use of the Red Ensign was the privilege of flying either the Australian National Flag or the Australian Red Ensign.

GREATER SYDNEY ENSIGN

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 Celebrating the heritage of the area between the Central Coast, Wollongong, and Sutherland, the design features the Dark Opal, Australia's TSI Southern Cross, (1828-29) and the gold cross of Sydney. The Ensign also commemorates Sydney's boating history from Aboriginal canoes to modern alighting and recalls the achievements of James Cook RN and his crew. The cross depicts a small cross for my star, the Star of St. Paul, commemorating the flagship of the First Fleet and an anchor for maritime heritage.

BURGER

"DRUM SHIP"

AUSTRALIAN RED ENSIGN