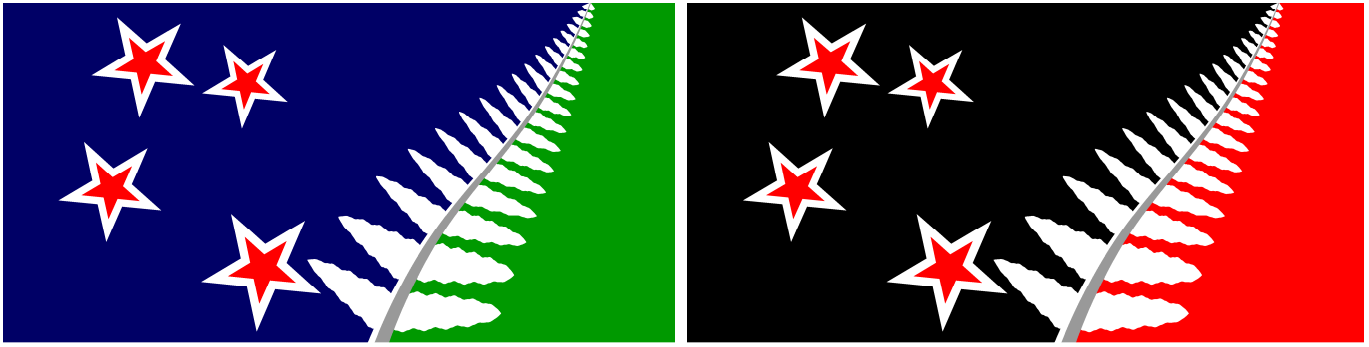


## Star Fern Flag for New Zealand



### Summary

A new National Flag is proposed for all New Zealanders, using the colours of nature to represent the beauty of our country. An additional Celebration Flag (Mana Flag) is also proposed for honouring New Zealanders' cultural, sporting and other achievements involving courage and determination, featuring the black, white and red colours often used in Maori meeting-houses and decorations.

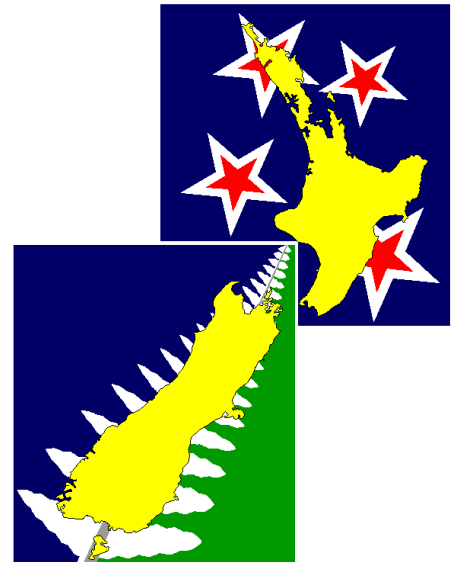
Both flags have the red and white stars of the Southern Cross on the hoist (flag-pole) side, and a Silver Fern on the fly side. The fern is angled to match the north-easterly direction of the South Island, and the Southern Cross angled to match the north-westerly direction of the upper North Island, and with the two symbols coming together in a V shape.

The stars are red for two reasons; red to represent mana, as on Maori flags, and red with white edges and blue background to echo the colouring of the Union Jack. The colours symbolize that our country has both Maori and British heritage, while the four stars (north, south, east and west) acknowledge New Zealanders who have come from all over the world.

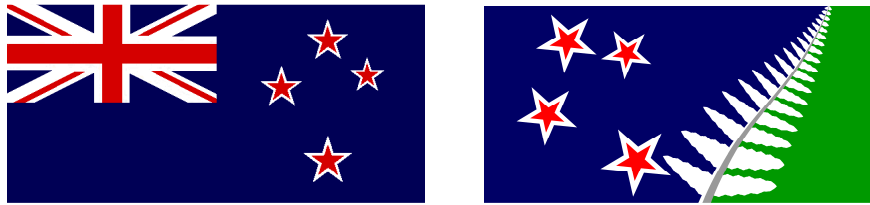
The silver fern is a unique New Zealand icon. It also symbolizes people in their communities, linked together by a ribbon of silver running through the middle, symbolising a road of peace and progress.

It is proposed that the present Flag (New Zealand Blue Ensign) remain an official national flag, especially for ANZAC day and other military commemorations. A similar compromise is used by Canada.

The Star Fern flag is simple and speaks clearly of New Zealand using well-known symbols. However it is designed to be profoundly inspirational, and to symbolise many different aspects of our country. These are detailed in what follows.



## Star Fern Flag – the details



### Not Just a Brand

Some say a flag is just a brand, and serves no purpose but to identify who we are, and what products we sell. I disagree. In what follows I will show how the Star Fern Flag does do the work of a brand - but so much more as well. I believe a flag can unite and inspire by having a rich heritage of meanings that will resonate with New Zealanders. Some aspects of this heritage will be more important to some kiwis and less important to others – but there is a lot here for everyone.

If we think terms of a brand, then, the Star Fern Flag is really distinctive by itself. There is no other flag like it. But more than this, it links together three of our most popular icons used in branding:

- One icon is the four red and white stars of the Southern Cross, seen on our flag since 1869.
- Another icon is the Silver Fern, associated with New Zealand sport and businesses worldwide. Wherever these two icons have been used in the world they are identified with our country.
- The third icon is the colours of our stunning natural environment – the blue, white and green colours known worldwide from tourism promotions and movies like ‘Lord of the Rings’. Blue, white and green are frequently used in the logos of New Zealand businesses big and small, including Air New Zealand and Fonterra, and also in the logos of local government. Why? Because these colours reinforce our natural, clean green image that is so important to our lifestyle and thinking, and for our tourism, agriculture, forestry and fishing industries. The blue-white-green colours remind one of looking down towards the sea, the sand, and farmland, or looking up at our amazing forests, white mountain peaks, and clear blue sky.

### Finding meaning and inspiration in the flag

This section details many different aspects of the flag, and how they tie in to New Zealand.

#### Aspect 1. Two Islands

- New Zealand is a country of two halves: we have two main islands surrounded by sea.
- The Silver Fern is shown on an angle that matches the South Island
- The green part of the flag is next to the fern, hinting at Pounamu (New Zealand greenstone), part of a Maori name for the South Island: Te Wai Pounamu.
- The Southern Cross is shown on an angle that matches that of northland and the upper North Island
- The fern shape is a little like the ridges of a mountain range (the Southern Alps that make up the backbone of the South Island) while the red-on-white stars are a reminiscent of the volcanic mountains that have shaped much of the North Island’s landscape.

#### Aspect 2. From Everywhere and from Here

- Stars are universal symbols, representing people and ideas that have come from all over the world.
- On the other hand the Silver Fern is unique to New Zealand, representing things and people native to these islands (New Zealand - Aotearoa)
- There is an echo of the Treaty of Waitangi, with the coming of people from all over the world to join with the original inhabitants in one nation.

#### Aspect 3. Peace Fern - Unity with Diversity

- The Silver Fern symbolizes unity with diversity. We are not all the same but all part of a community, and these communities are joined together into one country. I don’t have to do things exactly the same as you do, but I can appreciate you are part of the great variety of people that make New Zealand what it is.

## Star Fern Flag – the details

- Like a fern, a country or a community is a living thing, and if one part suffers then all parts are diminished.
- The silver line on the fern represents speech. This is a twist on the proverb “Speech is silver but silence is golden”. Those who want to keep the gold to themselves often keep silent - but to benefit the whole community together we must have free speech - we must be able to talk with each other.
- Dialogue both ties us together and is the roadway to success, and to peace between the parts of our community.
- The fern, and especially the silver line, has an ‘onward and upward’ shape like a road representing progress.
- The leaves of the fern are segmented (for example the bottom leaves have five bumps on each side). In total there are one hundred segments symbolizing 100% - that no-one is deliberately left out.

### Aspect 4. Stars – The Power of Ideas

- Stars symbolize the power of goals, hopes, and the ethnic and cultural heritage to which we reach out and aspire. They represent looking outward, upward, backwards and forward all at once. We are an outward-looking people, driven to compete with the best in the world.
- The Southern Cross was a favourite early symbol on New Zealand flags. It is unique in the night sky as it always points the way to the South Celestial Pole and so is the easiest way to find the direction South and then all other directions of the compass.
- It is traditionally shown straight-up-and-down, although in fact it can be seen on various angles to the horizon, depending on the time of year and time of night. It can even be used to tell the time, on any night of the year. The angle on the flag is seen in Autumn evenings.
- In a sense the stars honours the brave Pacific and European navigators, who used stars and other signs to find their way to these islands.
- The New Zealand flag traditionally shows only four stars, indicating the four directions of the compass: North, South, East and West. This represents New Zealanders who have come from all over the world - thus including everyone.
- The Southern Cross references the influence of Christianity on New Zealand’s history, institutions, peoples and cultures. Five-pointed stars are also a traditional flag symbol of liberty and reason.
- The red stars echo the use of red to represent mana, as on Maori flags, while the red with white edges and blue background echo the colouring of the Union Jack. The colours symbolize that our country has both Maori and British heritage.

### Aspect 5. Balance

- We are a nation that strives to excel in freedom, prosperity - and in social justice. This balance is represented by the Stars (goals we reach out for) and the Fern (the overwhelming value of living things especially people).
- The two are brought together, meaning we shouldn’t focus on one without the other. We need to balance idealism and down to earth reality. We are ambitious but we will not leaving vast sections of our country behind.
- The V shape means our success as a nation (as in v for victory) depends on this balance of ideals and ‘he tangata’ (the people). It also represents that success requires the unity of both North and South Islands, and of both Maori and non-Maori, in fair treatment for all.



### Aspect 6. Blue and Green - The Colours of Nature

- In addition to representing the combination of land and sea (or sky), the green colour symbolises agriculture and forestry, and Pounamu (greenstone).
- Blue/white/pink/grey/green are also the colours of Paua commonly used for distinctive decorations and jewellery (see, for instance, <http://www.paua.org.nz/gallery1.htm>).

# Star Fern Flag – the details

## Aspect 7. Numbers

Finally the flag has a date hidden in it: 6 / 2 / 1840 - the date of the Treaty of Waitangi.

To find the number 1840, note there are 18 pairs of leaves coming out on each side of the fern stem. The two sides, the green landward side (representing the Maori, tangata whenua) and the blue seaward side (representing the people from across the sea) come together at the tip, the point of future growth.

The stars, on the other hand, have a total of 40 points (four 5-pointed white stars and four 5-pointed red stars  $4 \times 5 + 4 \times 5 = 40$ ). So fern and stars together give 1840

For the day and month, there are 6 specific design features on the flag, each of which consists of a pair (2), and each pair has a meaning discussed above. To recap:

1. The fern has two sides, landward and seaward, which come together - representing Maori and those New Zealanders who came later.
2. The fern has two colours, white and grey – representing communities and peaceful dialogue between them.
3. The stars have two colours, red and white – representing the mana of the Maori and the Union Jack of the British.
4. Overall there are two main symbols, Southern Cross and the Silver Fern – representing aspiring to greatness, balanced with the importance of caring for people and living things
5. The symbols are on two angles, matching the two Islands – We are a nation of two halves
6. There are two background colours, green and blue – the beauty of our environment, land and sea or sky.

That makes  $6(2) 18 40$ .

## Additional Flags

It is not always considered that New Zealand actually has several flags – the usual Blue Ensign, but also a Red Ensign, White Ensign, and other special purpose flags and sports flags. Therefore...

1. The blue-green (“Paua-shell”) version is proposed as National Flag, for representing New Zealanders on the international stage. Blue-white-green is a peaceful, natural colour combination as suits our approach to international affairs and trade. It will send a good message about us, to the world.

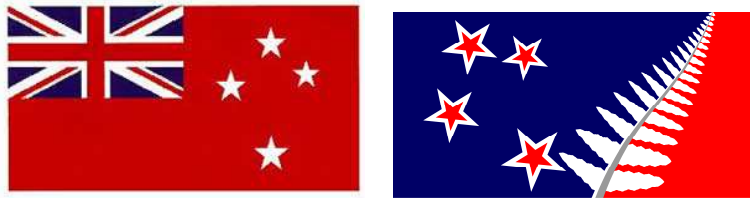
2. The black-red version is proposed as a Celebration Flag (Flag of Honour or Mana Flag) to celebrate individuals' achievements in cultural, sporting or other fields involving courage and determination. As a Flag of Honour it could be used in contexts such as to honour achievement in arts, sciences, military or community service as well as sport. The flag borrows both from common sports flags and Maori flags, but is neither one nor the other. It is hoped that it can be a national flag for *everyone* to use and not just be dismissed as a Maori-only flag. It is expected that Maori will continue to fly flags of their own choosing to rally attention.

Black is the usual colour for national sports teams and it is expected that black flags will also continue to be used at sports events, especially by the NZ Rugby Union who have a trademarked Silver Fern design. The Celebration Flag links in to these, but does not infringe copyright. Many people, first seeing this proposal, are drawn to the black-red flag because it is visually striking, and yet on reflection they do not want to live under a black flag or be represented internationally by all the negative associations of the colour black. In this proposal we get the opportunity to use both colour combinations. In events of celebration either of the flags could be flown or both flown together.



## Star Fern Flag – the details

3. It is traditional in New Zealand and many other countries for private ships to fly a red Civil Ensign, a red version of the national flag. New Zealand's Red Ensign is seen below (on left). It is proposed that a blue-red Star Fern flag could be used as new Civil Flag.<sup>2</sup>



4. Similarly the navy, police, fire, and other services have flags of their own based on the New Zealand Ensign. I believe those services should have input into their own flags but it seems only reasonable to make a suggestion. It is not hard to produce good-looking designs based on the Star Fern proposal.

The New Zealand White Ensign (below left) is used by the New Zealand Navy for on-shore facilities, and on vessels in active service. The British version just has the Union Jack on white field. Adapting that idea would give the modified White Ensign shown below at centre. Alternatively I quite like the idea of reversing the white and red stars and fern (below right). This suggests the symbolism of courage (red) with a white heart of honour, which are values New Zealanders would like to see in their armed forces.



As for Police, Fire Service, Customs, DOC or other government departments, letters or symbols could go on the right-hand side of extended ensigns, as at above left or on a blue, red or green field as shown below.



<sup>2</sup> The blue-red combination is attractive, and there could be some demand for this choice as national flag. However there are two points against it:

First there is nothing distinctive about the colours. Red-white-blue is by far the most popular colour combination on world flags, appearing alone on 35 national flags and with other colours on 26 more, including nearly half the flags of North and South America, one-quarter of European flags, and the more than half of all Pacific flags. A recent poll put red-white-and-blue as the most popular colour choice among Australians considering a new flag. These facts don't mean we cannot use it as the colours of a national flag, but there is nothing about red-white-and-blue that says anything special about New Zealand. One the other hand there are scarcely any flags using blue, white and green so the flag will always be recognisable even from a distance or if there is no wind on the flagpole.

Secondly the blue-white-red would undermine the other versions, meaning there would be little point using a blue-green version representing natural colours or black-red version celebrating human achievement. So those opportunities would be lost, and we lose some symbolism that appeals to people. Red-white-and-blue certainly can't help underscore our natural clean-green image. And of course we will be back to the drawing board as to whether we want a maritime ensign and what it should look like. By using the blue-green (Paua shell) version as national flag we keep all options open.

## Things you probably didn't know about the New Zealand Flag

This section deals with some history, pointing out why the Southern Cross is such an appropriate symbol for New Zealand, and why it would be a great shame to lose it.

### What's so special about the Southern Cross?

*“It was the time of the beginning of the New Zealand Marine, which then consisted of a single ship. In quite an informal way [Lieutenant] Markham was asked if he could suggest a distinctive flag. ‘You have already the right’, he replied, ‘to fly the Blue Ensign, why not add to it the stars of the Southern Cross?’ The suggestion was received with delight.”* So reads the biography of Sir Albert Markham, later to become famous as an Arctic explorer. But Markham, interesting though he may be, is not our focus. Rather we consider the question: Why the response of “delight”? What did this symbol, this Southern Cross, mean to New Zealanders of 1868? What can it mean for us today?

A simple answer often quoted is that the Southern Cross represents the Southern Hemisphere. But there are other southern stars, so there is more to it. Let's look back in history. To the ancient Greeks there was no “Southern Cross” but merely some stars in the constellation Centaurus. However due to a wobble in the earth's axis those stars ceased to be visible from Europe after the time of Christ, and largely passed out of European minds. Then in 1321 the Italian poet Dante wrote of an imaginary journey where he passed through the Inferno of the Earth's centre, and came out (supposedly on Easter Sunday 1300) on the coast of an island on the far side of the Earth. The first thing he saw was four bright stars near the South Pole, which were named for the four natural virtues Justice, Prudence, Temperance and Fortitude. Dante may have heard something of the Southern Cross from travellers such as Marco Polo, but whatever the facts it was Dante's poetry that had a lasting influence on European imagination. Nearly two centuries later, on Easter Wednesday in the year 1500, the Portuguese explorer Pedro Alvares Cabral discovered a southern coast. He called it the “Land of the True Cross” after the constellation of four unfamiliar stars high overhead in the early evening. The land, we now know as Brazil. The constellation, we know as Crux, the Cross. Generations of Europeans sailing south would see this constellation rising from the ocean ahead, with the long axis of the cross always pointing South. They took comfort from the thought that Christ was watching over them, so far from home. A world away, Polynesian sailors did not imagine the stars as a cross but they were well-known nonetheless. Visible as far north as Hawaii, they were part of a system of navigation used by the ancestors of Maori and Pacific Islanders to travel vast distances across the ocean.

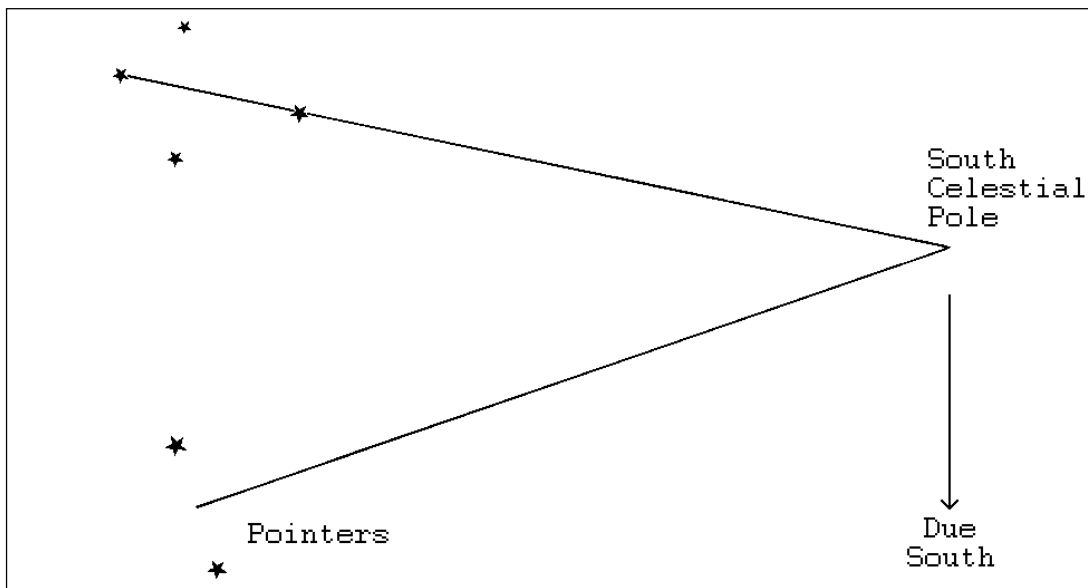
The Southern Cross is visible only briefly from the northern tropics, rising and setting in a few hours. Further south the stars rise higher and higher until, from the Tropic of Capricorn down, the stars never set. New Zealand is one of only four nations in the world that can see the Southern Cross from everywhere in the country, all year round. (Yes, I'm excluding the Tokelauan territories we administer but that are not part of New Zealand proper.) The other three nations are Uruguay, Lesotho and Swaziland, which don't feature the Southern Cross on their flags. The upshot is that New Zealand has a unique reason to feel attachment to the Southern Cross and to claim it as a national icon. By contrast, our near neighbour Australia uses the Southern Cross on its flag, but the northern third of the continent cannot even see the stars at certain times of the year - since they are below the horizon. I wonder if the residents of Darwin feel, at times, a sense of irony when they sing Australia's national anthem “*Beneath our radiant Southern Cross...*”.

The Southern Cross is the quintessential symbol of South-ness. Not only in name: it can be used to find the direction South, and thereby all other directions of the compass. It can also be used to tell the time. These facts may not be important in 2008, unless you are lost, but they still make a nice trick for 'showing off' or simply feeling connected with nature.

The angle the Southern Cross makes to the horizon depends on the time of night and month of the year. It can be sideways, even upside down. Imagine the Southern Cross is like the hour-hand of a clock, with the three 'top' stars at the tip of the hour-hand and the bottom star further down the hand, nearer the

## Things you probably didn't know about the New Zealand Flag

clock centre. Suppose you point your hand at the top star and then move it along past the bottom star and out the other side. Stop at a distance a bit further than a man's handspan as seen at arms length. Then you will be pointing at the centre of the clock, a piece of blank sky called the South Celestial Pole. If you drop your hand to the horizon you will be pointing due South. Another way of finding south is by using a right angle line through the Pointers as shown below.



All Southern Hemisphere stars rotate around this South Celestial Pole (clockwise, of course!) So you can use the celestial hour-hand to tell the approximate time on any night of the year, using simple mental arithmetic.<sup>3</sup>

Early New Zealanders were aware of these connections, and so the Southern Cross was special to them. It quickly became an icon. 'The Southern Cross' was the name of our first hotel (Wellington, 1841) and of an early Auckland newspaper (1943) – a forerunner to the New Zealand Herald. Australia chose to represent the Southern Cross by five stars including a faint one in the middle. New Zealand chose to represent it by just the four bright stars corresponding to the four compass directions. Those who like symbolism can think of this as representing people from all over the world. The Southern Cross gives New Zealanders an icon that is practical, historic, and uniquely relevant to us – and to my mind it would be a great shame to lose it.

### Why are the stars red?

In 1865 the British Admiralty gave the instruction. Vessels in the service of a colonial government must “wear the Blue Ensign with the seal or badge of the colony in the fly”<sup>4</sup>. The Blue Ensign is a flag with the Union Jack in the top left quarter and blue on the other three quarters. But the New Zealand Governor, Sir George Grey, had a decision to make. What should be the distinctive badge of New Zealand-ness on the flag?

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<sup>3</sup> Look at the ‘hour’ that the celestial hour-hand (top star) is showing: straight up-and-down is 12 o’clock, horizontal (East) is 9 o’clock, and so on. Now double this number to make the time on a 24-hour clock, for example 9 o’clock stars become 18:00 hours. Then find the number and fraction of months *after* 29 March: double that and subtract from the ‘hours’. For example on 1 May subtract 2 hours, while for Waitangi Day (6 February) you would *add* 3.5 hours. If it’s daylight saving, add one more hour. And finally add an extra half hour. This last adjustment is because we don’t actually live on the international dateline, but since 1945 New Zealand clocks have been permanently on 30 minutes daylight saving as if we *did* live there, 12 hours ahead of London. So “9 o’clock stars” on Waitangi Day will occur at 23:00 hours i.e. 11 pm at night.

<sup>4</sup> Italicised quotes are from *An Encyclopedia of New Zealand* (1966, edited by A.H. McLintock)

## Things you probably didn't know about the New Zealand Flag

In January 1867 Grey announced the badge would be the letters “NZ in red, ... surrounded by a margin of white”. This was temporary. On 23 October 1869 a new Governor, Sir George Bowen, followed Markham's advice and proclaimed “a permanent device ... the distinctive badge of the colony ... shall be the Southern Cross, as represented in the Blue Ensign by four five-pointed red stars in the fly, with white borders to correspond to the colouring of the Jack.” Why red?

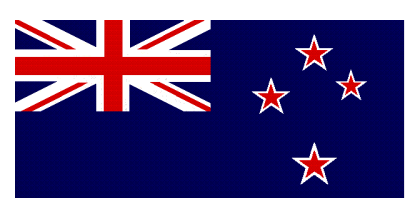
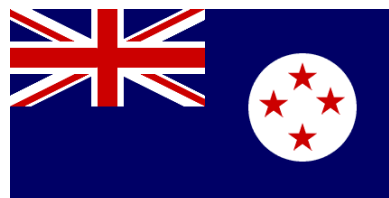
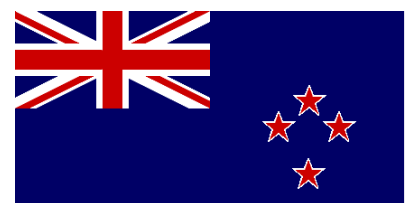
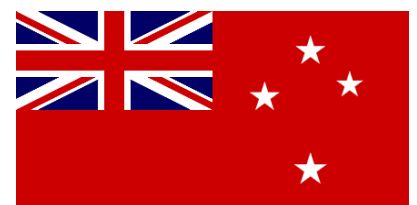
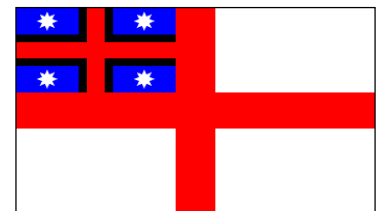
The first surprise is that the colour red for the NZ badge precedes the use of the Southern Cross. So we don't have red just to avoid confusion with Australia's flag, as some may suppose. Australia didn't even fly the Southern Cross until 1901, 32 years after New Zealand did. The colonies Victoria and New South Wales did have a Southern Cross on their flags, but again that was after New Zealand's flag. So the red stars were not flag envy. Governor Grey could easily have proclaimed white letters NZ, and Governor Bowen white stars. They would have been much easier to sew than two-tone stars, and would have had high visibility. So where did the red come from?

Let's look a bit further back in history. In 1830 a New Zealand built ship *Sir George Murray* was seized by Sydney Customs for not flying a flag and not being registered by a government. So in 1833 James Busby, the British Resident in the Bay of Islands, wrote to New South Wales Governor Burke suggesting “the Maori chiefs should select a flag to be recognised by British authorities as the national flag of the New Zealand tribes”.

Burke sent back a suggested flag which had the Union Jack in the top left corner, and blue and white stripes elsewhere to represent New Zealand. Busby, and the Rev. Henry Williams who advised him, rejected the design outright. They thought Maori might feel insulted by the design, especially as the part for New Zealand had “no red ... a colour to which the New Zealanders are particularly partial, and which they are accustomed to consider as indicative of rank.” Later (in 1834) a flag was chosen (top right) that had a lot of red, and was recognised as the flag of the Confederacy of Independent Tribes.

Much later, hapu friendly to the British were often given a red flag: “Some of these ... incorporated the British *Red Ensign with special devices*.” (see Takutimu flag, for example) “But those presented by the Government usually consisted of the *New Zealand Red Ensign ... with the name of the hapu, or of a notable ancestor, worked or printed on the fly. Maori preferred this flag because red was a colour denoting rank and mana*.” Governor Grey was familiar with Maori customs. So this appears to be one reason for our red stars – as a symbol of mana.

Red stars or letters do not show up well on a dark blue flag - unless there is some white in between. Therefore the Governors ordered that the letters and stars to be edged in white. In flag terms this is called fimbriation. By happy coincidence it meant the New Zealand stars had the red centre, white edges and blue background that made them echo the Union Jack. Some British colonists may have seen this as showing loyalty to the Empire, or representing a hope for a south seas Better Britain. At any rate



## Things you probably didn't know about the New Zealand Flag

the choice seems to have been an inspired one, as it meant our stars had meaning to both British and Maori cultures, reflecting both signatories of the Treaty of Waitangi.

After Grey's and Bowen's flags, the flag was changed in line with British Empire standards to show the red stars on a white disk. Finally in 1902 the flag reverted to just having white edges on the red stars, but with the stars in astronomically correct position, and with sizes of stars corresponding to the relative brightness.

What can we take from this? Firstly it was clear to early New Zealanders that the distinctively New Zealand part of the flag was the Southern Cross, and secondly the stars have always been deliberately red and white on a blue background. Was the choice of colour deliberate bicultural symbolism, or just luck? I believe it was a clever choice that both honours the mana of the original inhabitants, the Maori, and acts as a deliberate echo of the Union Jack brought into a South Pacific context. Incidentally it makes the stars on our flag unique among the national flags of the world, and makes them a New Zealand icon. For these reasons I believe that if New Zealand ever chooses to change its flag the design must include the red-and-white-on-blue stars of the Southern Cross.

### Is there any necessity for the flag to change?

Originally, this proposal began with the designer taking the view that there was no necessity to change our New Zealand flag, but that it was worthwhile anyway to consider what the flag *might* be changed to – in case the public appetite for change increased. A difficulty in the debate is that many New Zealanders feel less than enthusiastic about the current flag, and yet there is strong disagreement about what we do want. I think this is connected with the fact many New Zealanders - especially Pakeha (New Zealand European) – have little sense of a unique national culture or identity beyond Sport. Perhaps a flag debate – held with respect – can give us a focus through which to consider and celebrate who we are as a nation.

A recent (2007) TV3 poll showed that public opinion is 52% against even holding a referendum on changing the flag (versus 43% in favour of a referendum). This may be partly because proposed designs have failed to seize public imagination. Some designs are too complicated, but most have tended to say even less about us than the current flag does. In such a context many people sensibly argue 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it'. Nevertheless it is clear that many New Zealanders feel do not feel adequately represented by our current flag.

### The Union Jack on the NZ Flag: What does it still mean to us?

Many of those who wish to retain the Union Jack on the New Zealand Flag are people who have been born in the UK, or have family connections there, and sentimentally wish to retain a symbol of 'home'. Others who support retention include ex-Servicemen and Servicewomen who wish to honour past comrades and military connections. Others cling to tradition, seeing a change to the flag as part of a slippery slope away from the Monarchy and away from much of what was good in the past that they want to preserve for the future.

By contrast many who push to change the flag are Pakeha / New Zealand European whose British ancestors came to these shores up to eight generations ago. They may have sentimental links to Britain, and they value a shared history and language. However, they know that despite their ethnic links and a shared Monarch the UK does not recognise them except as foreigners with less status than, say, Poles, Italians and Bulgarians. As Britain changes to become more and more different to us, they question why our flag should be so dominated by the flag of the United Kingdom. "Shouldn't our flag represent *us*".

Other New Zealanders – Maori, Pacific Islanders, Asian, African, and so forth, do not see any representation of themselves on the flag. They may see the flag as totally British-focussed and not neutral. Exclusive representation of one ethnic group on a flag may be regarded as a slight against other ethnic groups.

## Why Change ?

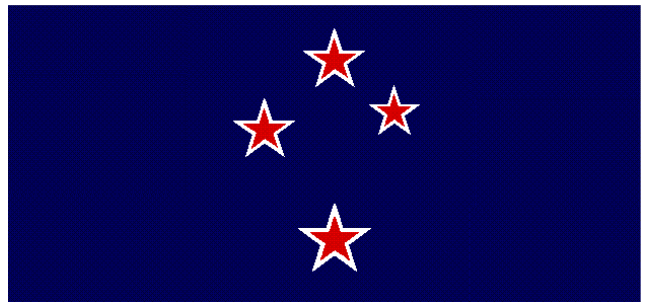
It is worth considering that at the time of proclamation of the New Zealand Flag in 1902, New Zealanders considered themselves just as British as anyone living in London or Glasgow, and ethnically they overwhelmingly were of British descent. Even our nominal independence day (Dominion Day 26 September 1907) received half-hearted acclamation, and later governments resisted moves to greater independence. This is not the case now.

Also in 1902 the Union Jack was not just the flag of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It was the flag of the whole British Empire – a vast assembly of countries, some effectively independent but most being colonies with governors appointed from London. The empire included all of Ireland, the dominions Canada and Australia, the colonies New Zealand, Newfoundland, South Africa, India, Jamaica, British Honduras, British Guyana, and many other lands. These days the Union Flag just doesn't have the same meaning, and it flies over a vastly reduced smattering of islands. The British Empire, as envisaged by those who proclaimed our current flag, has effectively ceased to exist.

In short, we have changed, and the meaning of the Jack has changed, so why do we continue show the Union Jack on our flag when most other members of the Commonwealth have a flag that represents themselves alone?

### Should we just drop the Union Jack?

In theory one could simply remove the Union Jack to please those who want change. But if we do so without even a nod in the direction of the old flag then we upset those for whom it is precious. We would simply swap one unhappy section of society for another. This would be yet another win-lose solution when we could be trying for a win-win solution.



As a case in point The New Zealand Herald (28/9/2007) reported remarks by Prime Minister Helen Clark as a suggestion to 'New Zealandize' the flag by removing the Union Jack and leaving simply the four red-white stars on a blue background. To be fair, she was merely replying to a reporter's question arising from her Dominion Day speech, and it is possible the reporters read more into her comments than she intended. But at any rate the remark generated a great deal of argument, some of it vitriolic, with 113 pages of reader feedback to the Herald and international attention. Interestingly, almost all the discussion was about the absence of the Jack and almost nothing was said about the stars that were kept. There seems to be a great lack of understanding about what the stars might represent for us, a lack that this document seeks to redress.

### A Silver Fern on a Black Flag?

As an alternative symbol, some people have proposed a simple white fern on a black background such as the 'Stylised Silver Fern' used on the [www.nzflag.com](http://www.nzflag.com) website, or something more realistic. Many New Zealanders like this suggestion because of the association with sport - especially with Rugby Union which has its own trademarked black flag for the All Blacks. However many other New Zealanders strongly dislike the idea of a black flag either because the associations of the colour black or because they resent the idea of being identified solely by a sports symbol, or both.



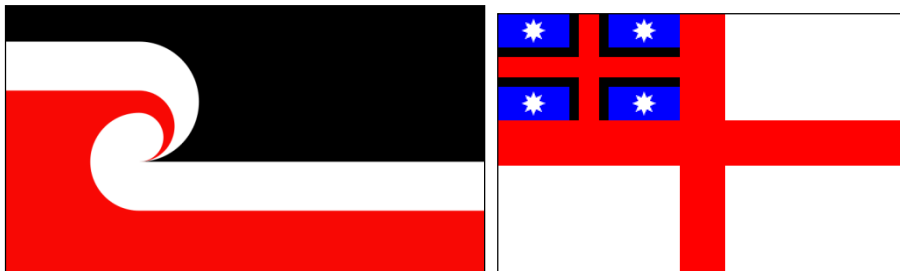
To many people, black suggests death and danger, piracy, anarchy (e.g. <http://flag.blackened.net>), mystery and intrigue, dark deeds and underhand dealings. In a sports context these qualities may be regarded as a good thing, as evidenced by the way sports teams often adopt aggressive nicknames such as tigers, lions, pumas, panthers, bears, dragons, bulldogs, sharks, barbarians and buccaneers. The combination of black flag and white symbol is particularly evocative of piracy. In a limited international

## Why Change ?

context such as Rugby Union, anyone interested in the sport knows that the All Black team symbol is a Silver Fern. But there have been instances where foreigners who don't know or care about Rugby have mistaken the symbol for a white feather, which is would be a very odd symbol indeed, for a flag. Outside of a sporting context a black flag does not really give us the chance to say something positive about this country. In Lord of the Rings imagery it is more like Mordor than the beauty of the Shire or Lothlorien. In short, the black flag has many enthusiastic supporters and many adamant opposers. Its adoption would be require a divisive win-lose battle.

### A Maori Flag?

Some propose using a Maori design, e.g. the Tino Rangatiratanga design (left), or the flag of the Independent Tribes of New Zealand (right), or some other based on Koru patterns as this would be uniquely New Zealand. However other citizens feel alienated and ignored by such a design, especially if it is the only symbol. They argue that if we want to make our flag more representative we cannot do it by making it even more racially specific than the current one is perceived to be.



Others have proposed designs based solely on Environmental themes or Unity themes, but these are not unique, nor of overwhelming importance to everyone.

### Resolution?

The Star Fern Flag is an attempt to resolve the debate by having a design that is simple, beautiful, and very evocative of New Zealand. It links in with existing icons, and can be adapted to serve as a Celebration flag, Civil Ensign or for other purposes. Above all it is designed to bring people together by being so rich in symbolism that no-one is excluded - people can identify with different aspects of the flag. I hope it can be a source of unity and inspiration to all New Zealanders.

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### Who is behind this design?

The Star Fern Flag was designed by Dr Barry McDonald, a university senior lecturer from Auckland. Barry is a fourth generation New Zealander whose forebears first arrived in Otago in 1863. His ancestry is Scottish and English with a dash of Irish.

The Star Fern Flag was developed as a hobby using the New Zealand-made computer program 'R'.



The Star Fern Flag (in any colours) is NZ registered design 409505 and the map version (Star Fern Overlay) is NZ registered design 409507. The fern design (Peace Fern) is NZ registered design 409506. Not to be reproduced for commercial purposes without written permission.

Website [www.starfern.co.nz](http://www.starfern.co.nz)