



**THE HON PETER DUTTON MP  
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION**

**AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL FLAG DAY 2023**

On 20 November 1953, Prime Minister Robert Menzies introduced the Flags Bill to Parliament. That piece of legislation formalised the use of the Blue Ensign as the Australian National Flag which had become common practice since it was first flown over the Commonwealth Parliament on 3 September 1901.

Percy Joske, a lawyer who was elected as the Member for Balaclava and became part of Menzies' Liberal government, spoke on the Flags Bill a few weeks after his Prime Minister.

He discussed the symbolism of the Australian flag and explained the pride and devotion Australians felt towards it, saying:

“Our flag will now appear in the pages of the statute-book. Even a weary and austere lawyer may find his eye brightening, and his heart tingling when he sees it there. When we see it wafted in the breeze it will be an inspiration to all of us.”

The sentiments Joske expressed seventy years ago remain true for Australians today.

Our national flag embodies the spirit of Australians. It speaks to our historical achievement. It encapsulates our traditions, institutions and values. And wherever we see the Australian flag – flown outside schools and our institutions, waved by spectators at sporting events, embroidered on the uniforms of our service personnel – it stirs deep within us a sense of gratitude for being a citizen of this great country and a feeling of admiration for our modern nation.

This year will be a consequential year for Australians as we head to the polls to vote in a referendum – many of us for the first time. There will be much which informs the decision of every Australian when they cast their vote. I hope that Australians will have our national flag on their mind when they vote – a flag which says, more than anything else, that we are one country and one people.

Whether we were born Australian, have been Australian for many years, or have just become Australian, we are all Australians. On this National Flag Day, let our flag remind us of the importance of our unity.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Peter Dutton'.

**Hon Peter Dutton MP**  
Leader of the Opposition

3 September 2023