Flags Amendment Bill 1989
(Private Member’s Bill)

Date Introduced: 31 August 1989
House: House of Representatives
Presented by: The Hon. Wallace Fife, M.P.

Digest of Bill

Purpose
To require a referendum for any alteration of the Australian Flag.

Background
Most controversy about the current Australian flag centres on the presence of the Union Jack in the left top corner. Those in favour of the current flag argue that this represents a link with Australia’s history and that, as Australia has grown into a nation with this flag, it should be retained. Emphasis is also placed on the fact that Australian’s have fought and died under this flag and it is argued that in honour of these people the flag should be retained.

The arguments against the current flag also rest on its association with the past. It is argued that the presence of the Union Jack signifies a link with Australia’s colonial past which is not necessary as Australia is now a fully independent nation. In addition, it is argued that the presence of the Union Jack reduces the Australian nature of the flag and leads to problems with identification in some international forums.

Main Provisions
Clause 3 will substitute a new section 5 into the Flags Act 1953 (the Principal Act). Under proposed section 5, the Governor-General will be empowered to declare that the current flag is the Australian flag.

Proposed section 9, which will be inserted into the Principal Act by clause 4, will require a referendum to be held before the flag, as declared under proposed section 5, may be altered.

For further information, if required, contact the Law and Government Group.

6 September 1989

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