

## Figure 4 Thoughts on the flag

ABC programme - [COMPASS: RAISING THE FLAG](#)  
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### Summary:

What is it about a flag that arouses such powerful emotions? Until quite recently Australians wore their patriotism lightly... it was one of our identifying characteristics. Yet suddenly the Australian flag is everywhere, and many are wrapping themselves in the Blue Ensign. Some have been using our flag to state to others that 'I am more Australian than you'. This is a critical examination of Australia's relationship with its sometimes-controversial flag. A flag can give meaning to people's lives and a sense of belonging. But how inclusive is this particular symbol of our nationality?

### Michael McKernan-Historian

Those men who landed on the shores of Gallipoli on the 25 April 1915, they weren't landing with an Australian colour patch on their uniform. They weren't landing being sort of driven up the slopes of the Gallipoli peninsula led by an Australian flag. They didn't have those sorts of symbols, they weren't there. What was the most identifiable Australian symbol of the First World War? Without a shadow of a doubt it was the slouch hat.

### ABC Narrator

At the time of Gallipoli we did have our own flag. But it was more common to fly the Union Jack. The quest for a uniquely Australian national Flag had begun quite early in colonial Australia. The first attempt dates back to 1823 but was just one of a variety of unofficial flags. The most famous is the Eureka Flag flown on the Ballarat goldfields in Victoria in 1854, a symbol of the diggers' revolt against authority. Back home, the Union Jack was issued to public schools and from 1901 right up until the 1950's saluting that flag was an established ritual. For 50 years the Union Jack took prominence. To fly the Australian flag alone was regarded as disloyal, and at one stage was even used as a symbol of defiance. In the St Patrick's Day procession in 1920 the Irish Catholics of Melbourne thumbed their nose at authority by carrying the Australian flag.

### Dick Smith- Businessman & philanthropist

I won the lottery of life, I was born in Australia in the 40's. And at school I would salute the flag. In those days we were sort of more patriotic or there was a little bit, not so much the political correctness you hear about these days. And there was no problem in standing up to the Aussie flag and getting kids to say the school sort of motto and all that type of thing. I love that. I remember flying to the North Pole. It took me three years to get there. But to actually take my little Australian flag and sit it there in the ice, because it's just floating ice and then dance around it. To me it was a symbol of Australia. I think that if you end up with a situation where people almost are going to march or die under the flag for any reason, that type of thing I think is very bad. You only have to see in Nazi Germany in the 1930's, and that's the type of thing we don't want. I would never take that flag too seriously. I think it's important that we have it. I admire it, I look up to it but I don't take it too seriously.