

## Opinion: Keep the flag and get a new one, too

To date much of the flag debate has centred on whether or not to change the current New Zealand flag, with different people putting forward ideas for what a new flag might look like.

However, New Zealand can have a new flag without discarding its existing flag. Countries can, and often do, simply add an additional flag.

Canada is often used as an example of a country that changed its flag to support arguments that a new, changed flag will enhance our international identity and serve as a symbol of national pride.

Such claims ignore the fact that Canada did not replace its old flag with the Maple Leaf flag we all know today. Both the Royal Union Flag (the Union Jack) and the Canadian Red Ensign (an unofficial Canadian flag used since 1870, including during WW2) continue to be used in an official capacity. Canada instead added the Maple Leaf flag as an additional national flag and gave the Maple Leaf flag precedence in day-to-day use.

While no laws set out the rules for the use of the Canadian flag, protocols provide guidance on how to display the Maple Leaf flag, both alone and with other flags. These deal with the order of precedence in which flags are placed, where the flag can be used, how it can be used, and what people should do to honour the flag.

The Maple Leaf flag can be displayed on any Government buildings, at airports, on military bases and diplomatic buildings, as well as by Canadians themselves at any time of the day. The Maple Leaf flag has to have its own flag pole and not be inferior to other flags (except for the Queen's personal standard or those of the Canadian Royal family, the Governor General, or Lieutenant Governors).

The Royal Union Flag is used alongside the Maple Leaf flag on Commonwealth Day, Victoria Day (Queen's Birthday), and the anniversary of the Statute of Westminster. It is also used with the Maple Leaf flag on days and at ceremonies marking Canadian war-time involvement with other Commonwealth forces.

The Canadian Red Ensign is also used at some military commemorations and both the Red Ensign and the Royal Union Flag are flown by veterans' groups and others who continue to mark the importance of Canada's British heritage and Commonwealth connections.

The same could be done in New Zealand. We could keep the current New Zealand Ensign flag and add an additional national flag, such as the silver fern on a black background, for day-to-day use. This would give New Zealand a distinctive flag and national symbol, while retaining the current flag and the history, traditions and service it represents.

Unlike Canada, the identity and use of the flag in New Zealand is prescribed in legislation, in the Flags, Emblems, and Names Protection Act 1981. Part 1 of that Act deals with the New

Zealand flag and ensigns and will need to be amended if there is any change in flag. Adding an additional flag or changing the current flag would therefore require passing legislation through Parliament, with the attendant Parliamentary select committee process.

Section 10 of the Act sets out that the Minister of Arts, Culture and Heritage can prescribe the rules relating to the flying of the New Zealand flag. Setting out protocols similar to those used in Canada would be a straightforward exercise.

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