

# Queensland state emblems



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## The state flag

The state flag dates from the time when Queensland was a self-governing British colony with its own navy.



In 1865, the Governor of Queensland was told by the Admiralty in London that the colony's vessels of war should fly the Blue Ensign imposed with the colony's badge on the stern, and a blue pennant at the masthead. Other vessels in the colony's service were to fly the same flag but not the pennant.

At the time, Queensland did not have such a badge, however the design of a proposed badge was eventually submitted to London.

In 1875, the Governor received drawings of the badges of several colonies from London, which the Admiralty proposed to insert in the Admiralty Flag Book. He was asked to certify that the badge shown for the colony of Queensland was correct. The badge was composed of a representation of Queen Victoria's head facing

right, on a blue background and encircled by a white band with the word Queensland at the top.

The Queensland Government thought it would be too difficult to reproduce the head of the Queen on a flag adequately so an alternative design, of a Royal Crown superimposed on a Maltese Cross, was submitted to London.

In 1876, the Governor was advised that the Admiralty had "approved of the device enclosed in your despatch... as the future badge of the colony for insertion in... the Blue Ensign for use by government vessels".

The Queensland Government encourages the flying of the state flag. Requests from schools and youth groups for free flags should be made through Members of Parliament.

## The state badge

The badge of the State of Queensland evolved from the need for a seal or badge to be included in the design of the state flag.



The original design for the badge was produced in 1875 and featured the head of Queen Victoria, facing right on a dark blue background, surrounded by a white circle with the word Queensland in the upper portion.

The then Queensland Government agreed it would be difficult to reproduce the image of Queen Victoria on a flag and consequently submitted four alternative designs for consideration by the Governor of Queensland.

The Governor wrote to the Secretary of State in London on 23 March 1876 recommending that the proposed design, a Royal Crown superimposed on a Maltese Cross, be the “future badge of the Colony”.

The design was approved by the Lords and Commissioners of the Admiralty in July 1876. The badge is officially described as “On a Roundel Argent, a Maltese Cross Azure surmounted with a Royal Crown”.

## The Coat of Arms

The Queensland Coat of Arms, the oldest state arms in Australia, was granted to the Colony of Queensland by Queen Victoria in 1893.



They were the first Arms assigned to a British colony since Charles II granted Jamaica its Arms in 1661. The Coat of Arms is a heraldic device, symbolising the Queen's constitutional authority in the state.

In line with economic trends in the nineteenth century, primary industries take pride of place on the Arms. Rural activities are represented by a sheaf of wheat, the heads of a bull and a ram, and by two stalks of sugar cane.

The importance of mining is indicated by a column of gold rising from a heap of quartz. The state motto, *Audax at Fidelis*, means "bold but faithful".

The Coat of Arms was given a more modern rendering when the supporters, the red deer and the brolga, were assigned in 1977, the Queen's Silver Jubilee year. The brolga is one of Queensland's most distinctive native birds. The red deer was introduced from the royal herds near London.

The Coat of Arms remains in use within the Queensland Government, however is not available for commercial use.

## The state colour

On Thursday 13 November 2003 the Governor in Council officially proclaimed maroon as Queensland's state colour.



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Maroon has traditionally been used by major sporting and community groups to promote their strong connection and pride in being representatives of Queensland.

## The aquatic emblem

On Tuesday 8 March 2005, the Barrier Reef anemone fish was officially proclaimed as the state's aquatic emblem after the public nominated this species as their preferred representative for Queensland.



© Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

For a state with such a close connection with the coastline and the water, it is only fitting that an emblem symbolises this connection.

The idea to identify an aquatic emblem originated from the Australian Underwater Federation. A panel of experts, chaired by the Queensland Museum, recommended a shortlist of aquatic species.

The public were invited to have their say on the shortlist during an eight week public consultation process.

The Barrier Reef anemone fish (*Amphiprion akindynos*) is well known for its habit of living with large, tropical sea anemones. The species name *akindynos* comes from the Greek word meaning safe or without danger. This refers to the condition the fish enjoys while tucked among the tentacles of its host.

This species grows to 12 centimetres in length. The Barrier Reef anemone fish is brown and orange with two black-edged white bars. The first bar crosses the head. The second bar crosses the body at the middle of the dorsal fin. The tail is white.

## The faunal emblem

The koala was officially proclaimed the faunal emblem of Queensland in 1971 after a newspaper poll showed strong public support for this endearing marsupial as the state's animal ambassador.



© Getty Images

The poll was instigated by the Queensland Government after a proposal was raised at a national meeting of state tourism ministers for all states to adopt a faunal emblem.

The koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) is commonly found throughout eastern areas of Queensland south of Townsville, although it has been found as far north as Cooktown and as far west as Cunnamulla.

The species is reputed to be shy, however colonies of koalas often thrive near built-up areas if there are sufficiently large tracts of bushland.

The koala is a marsupial—an animal that carries its young in a pouch. The newborn young, less than two centimetres long, crawls through its mother's fur to her pouch where it is harboured and suckled for about six months.

Normally a gentle creature the koala spends almost all its life in the tops of eucalypt trees, usually dozing during the day, and actively foraging for choice leaves at night. It rarely drinks water since it normally gains sufficient moisture from dew and its diet of oily eucalypt leaves.



## The bird emblem

The brolga, featured on the Queensland Coat of Arms since 1977, was officially proclaimed the bird emblem of Queensland in January 1986.



© Getty Images

Of the 14 species that comprise a worldwide family of cranes, brolgas (*Grus rubicunda*) are the only species native to Australia. They can be found all along the Queensland coast from Rockhampton to the Gulf of Carpentaria. Brolgas are otherwise known as the Native Companions.

Adult birds are predominantly grey and are characterised by a long thin neck, a bare head and a conspicuous patch of red skin behind the eye. They stand more than a metre tall on long, slender legs and their outstretched wings can measure up to two metres across.

Brolgas are famous for their intricate dancing displays at mating time. A pair of adult birds will bow to each other with exaggerated dignity, then bob and pirouette and prance back and forth. Sometimes they will jump into the air in unison. Their huge wings are spread throughout the dance, adding extraordinary grace and smoothness to the movements.



## The floral emblem

The Cooktown orchid was proclaimed Queensland's floral emblem in 1959 during celebrations to mark the state's centenary.



© Getty Images

This distinctive native flower had long been popularly regarded as Queensland's unofficial floral emblem and this was confirmed in a government-sponsored newspaper public opinion poll taken in the centenary year.

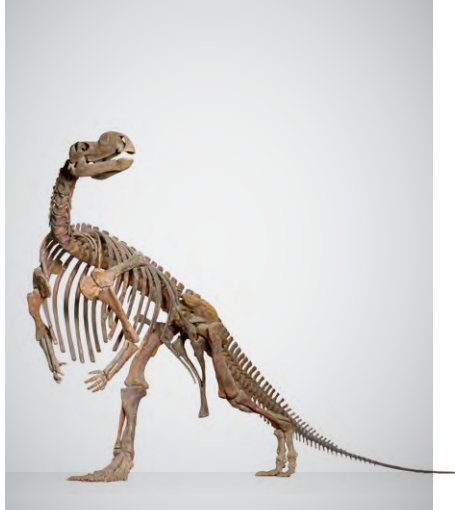
Queensland Parliament endorsed the popular choice in the *Emblems of Queensland Act 2005*. The Cooktown orchid (*Dendrobium bigibbum*) is native to Queensland's northern tropics. It grows on trees and rocks in well-watered areas of Cape York Peninsula.

Each plant flowers for up to six weeks in autumn and winter. Individual flowers reach about four centimetres across. They are usually all-purple in colour although plants with white or white-spotted flowers have been found.

The Cooktown orchid is relatively easy to cultivate as a garden specimen in frost-free areas of coastal Queensland. It needs a well-drained sunny position, protected from winter winds. A bed of loose charcoal or bark is a suitable growing medium. It can also be cultivated on the trunks or branches of trees.

## The state fossil

The *Muttaborrasaurus langdoni* dinosaur was officially recognised as Queensland's fossil emblem in December 2023.



Reconstruction of *Muttaborrasaurus langdoni*  
© Queensland Museum, Peter Waddington

From April to July 2022, coinciding with the dinosaur tourism season, Queenslanders participated in an online selection process, casting their votes to nominate their preferred fossil emblem from a shortlist of 12 candidates. Among these choices, *Muttaborrasaurus langdoni* emerged as the clear favourite of Queenslanders.

The Muttaborra dinosaur roamed the Earth during the Cretaceous period, roughly 100 million years ago. The dinosaur was about seven to eight metres long, which is the length of two average cars, and ate plants including seed ferns, ferns and conifers.

The fossil remains of the Muttaborra dinosaur were discovered in Muttaborra, located in Central Queensland, where the Traditional Owners are the Iningai people and Bidjara people. Doug Langdon, a local grazier, discovered the fossil bones while mustering cattle in 1963.

## The state gem

The state gem for Queensland is the sapphire. This was formalised in August 1985.



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The sapphire gemstone, a variety of the mineral corundum, was discovered in central Queensland in the early 1870s. As found in nature, typical corundum is very dark coloured. With tinges of blue, green or brown it is very nearly opaque. However, the transparent gem varieties show a wide range of colours.

The name sapphire was traditionally used for clear, blue corundum stones. Nowadays, except for the

pink varieties that are called ruby, it is common to refer to stones of all colours as sapphires.

The pink to red colour of ruby stems from its chromium content, whereas the sapphire's blue results from its titanium content. Yellow and green sapphires contain variable amounts of ferrous and ferric iron. The hardness of the sapphire is second only to that of the diamond.

For advice on the Queensland emblems telephone **(07) 3003 9253** or visit **[www.qld.gov.au](http://www.qld.gov.au)**

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**Queensland  
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