

Before decimal currency – what did Australia use?

Before 1966, Australia had a money system that was based on the imperial (British) pounds, shillings and pence. With 12 pennies in a shilling and 20 shillings in a pound, there was a lot of difficult maths involved in using our money. It was on 14 February 1966 that Australia started to use decimal currency – the dollars and cents that we know today. This was a lot easier than the old money and showed off the unique Australian animals that set this country apart from the rest of the world.

The imperial coins included the half penny, penny, threepence, sixpence, shilling and florin. The obverse side of all the coins featured the reigning Australian monarch. Since 1953, this has been Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II. The reverse side of each coin featured different Australian icons as shown in the table.

Coin	Reverse design	Value in new currency
Half penny 	1939-1964: kangaroo and Commonwealth star	2 half pennies = 1 cent
Penny 	1910-1936: the words "One Penny" and "Commonwealth of Australia" 1937-1964: kangaroo and Commonwealth star	1 cent
Threepence 	1910-1936: Australian Coat of Arms 1937-1964: three stalks of grain	2 cents
Sixpence 	Australian Coat of Arms	5 cents
Shilling 	1910-1936: Australian Coat of Arms 1938-1964: ram's head	10 cents
Florin 	Australian Coat of Arms	20 cents