

Opening of the Royal Australian Mint

The Royal Australian Mint (the Mint) is responsible for producing Australia's circulating coins. It is astonishing to think that every single coin, in the pockets and purses of millions of Australians, was made in a quiet Canberra suburb.

The Mint was officially opened on 22 February 1965 by His Royal Highness, the Duke of Edinburgh in Deakin, Canberra. Prior to this, Australia had three branches of the British Royal Mint: one in Sydney, one in Melbourne and one in Perth. Up until 1965, these branches were responsible for producing Australia's currency.



The Mint today.

Why a new mint?

The mints in Perth and Melbourne were involved in the early production of Australia's new decimal currency. The Perth Mint struck (produced) over 100 million one and two cent pieces in 1965, ready for the changeover in 1966. The Melbourne Mint was responsible for producing most of the early decimal currency test pieces, but it soon became clear that it did not have the capacity to produce the 1,000 million coins that would be needed for the first year of the changeover to decimal currency.

Not just about the changeover

The decision to build a new Royal Australian Mint was not just about the changeover to a new currency.

Australia was developing its identity as a nation, and so, for the first time it was going to have its own Mint. Until this time (the 1950s and 1960s) Australia had been buying most of its currency from the Melbourne Mint. Even though this was located in Australia, it was a branch of the Royal Mint which was owned by the British Government.

The new Royal Australian Mint would be independent of the British Government and the timing was perfect as it would also provide increased capacity to produce Australia's new currency.

For the first few years after the changeover, coins were produced at both the Melbourne Mint and the new Royal Australian Mint to ensure there was enough supply. Many of the staff from the Melbourne Mint moved to Canberra to work at the new facility.

A new, independent Royal Australian Mint was another important event in Australia's development as a nation.