

What is a commemorative coin?

Every Australian coin helps to tell a small piece of our nation's story. The animals you see on our coins were not just chosen randomly. They are unique Australian creatures, showing that we are proud of what makes us special. The person pictured on the two dollar coin is an Aboriginal elder, showing that we acknowledge those who have been living on our land for many generations.

Sometimes you might gaze at a coin and think that it looks a bit different from an everyday coin. It might be a commemorative coin. Commemorative coins celebrate events, anniversaries or people who are such a special part of the nation's story that they are shown on a coin in place of the standard picture.



Current two dollar coin

How is the subject for a commemorative coin decided?

Not every person or event can be commemorated on a coin, so how do we (at the Royal Australian Mint) decide what will be commemorated?

Let's consider some possibilities...

- Can we make a coin to celebrate your grandmother's birthday? No!
People who are commemorated on coins must be recognised as an important part of the entire nation's story, not just your family's story.
People such as Donald Bradman, Captain Cook, Bass and Flinders, and members of the Royal family have been commemorated on Australian coins.
- Can we make a coin to celebrate the 25th anniversary of your local fish and chip shop? No!
Events that are commemorated must impact upon the entire country, not just a local area.
Events such as royal weddings or jubilees, the centenary of women's suffrage (having the right to vote), the International Year of Volunteers, the centenary of Canberra, and the 50th and 60th anniversaries of the end of World War II have been commemorated on Australian coins.
- Can we make a coin to celebrate the Australian Woodchoppers Association? No!
There is nothing wrong with the Australian Woodchoppers Association, but to appear on a commemorative coin, organisations must be important to a much bigger section of our population.
Organisations such as the United Nations, Landcare, Scouts, Guides, and the Australian Institution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATIS) have been commemorated on Australian coins.



Centenary of Scouting 2008

Investigating Australian Coins

- Can we make a coin to celebrate a religion or a political party? No!
Different people have different religions, and different people vote for different parties. It wouldn't be fair to celebrate one over the other.

The Royal Australian Mint also makes collectible coins to buy (known as uncirculated coins), and these have celebrated a whole range of things that are special to Australians.