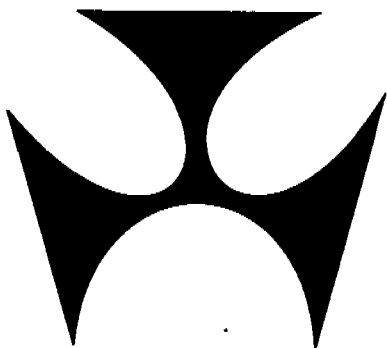


# Something quite abstract

*Love it or hate it, it seems that just about everyone has an opinion about the Bank's logo. Here Currency takes a closer look at the emblem and tries to find out once and for all exactly what it means.*



The brainchild of Australian designer, Gordon Andrews, the Bank's logo was commissioned by Dr Coombs, when he was Governor of the Bank.

But the initial brief proved difficult to fulfil. Writing in his 1993 autobiography, *a designers life*, Andrews notes, 'After two weeks of painful struggle which took me nowhere, in desperation I made an appointment to discuss the matter with the Governor. Over his office table, I confessed that I was in a hole and needed help. The ideas that I had sketched were placed on the table while he studied them carefully. After a time he looked up and said, "Gordon, how about doing something quite abstract." It's not uncommon to be intimidated by a job and this one had me stumped until Dr Coombs' casual comment released my creativity. I went away light in heart and produced the design in no time.'

Almost from the day it was unveiled people wanted to liken the logo to something else - just about everything was tried, but the most common comparison was with the symbol of three balls that traditionally hang above pawnbroker shops. Gordon Andrews attempted to set the record straight in 1960 when he made it quite clear that, 'The Reserve Bank's design...does not imitate or symbolise anything. It is quite distinctive, with its own personality. It is simply a design which echoes something from heraldry, from coinage, and is

therefore suitable for a bank.' But the myth that the logo really means *something* continued to prevail.

Gordon Andrews went on to note that his asymmetrical (the right 'arm' is slightly higher than the left), clover-like graphic was 'a device in modern dynamic form...intended to be aesthetically pleasing and readily recognisable. The simplicity of the design...was contrived to preserve a contemporary style.'

Fans might say that these words still ring true. Certainly, the logo's longevity was an issue that Gordon Andrews was concerned about right from the beginning. 'I feel that the emblem will last because it is a sound and stable design,' he said in 1960. 'But only time will tell. If, five years from now, people agree that it is a successful emblem, recognisable everywhere as the Reserve Bank's, then I will be content.'

Thirty-five years on, Gordon Andrews must be a very happy man. While his original design has evolved a little over the last three decades (the letters RBA that were initially featured between the arms of the symbol are not commonly used today), the basic graphic has remained unchanged.

In addition to designing the Bank's logo, Gordon Andrews designed the paper \$1, \$2, \$10 and \$20 notes issued in 1966, and later the paper \$5 and \$50 notes. He also produced new graphics and signage for the Bank's (then) new note printing facility at Craigieburn. ✕

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