

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
To: [Sinfield, Andrew](#)
Cc: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Subject: RE: Khalsa flags in Canberra - Possible issues with flag booking for Canberra Sikh Association [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Monday, 3 April 2023 3:56:18 PM
Attachments: [image003.png](#)
[image004.jpg](#)
[image005.jpg](#)

OFFICIAL

Hello s 22(1)(a)(ii) Andrew
Thanks to my colleague s 22(1)(a)(ii) for connecting us.
I appreciate s 22(1)(a)(ii) advice that the flags have since been taken down.
s 33(a)(iii), s 47B, s 47E(d)

Allow me to consult further here – we are always available to provide advice or guidance on these sorts of issues, or to connect you with others in DFAT who can.

Kind regards
s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Director
India Implementation and Outreach Section
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
P s 22(1)(a)(ii) | M s 22(1)(a)(ii)
dfat.gov.au | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#) | [LinkedIn](#)

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Sent: Monday, 3 April 2023 3:27 PM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Cc:
Subject: RE: Khalsa flags in Canberra - Possible issues with flag booking for Canberra Sikh Association [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Importance: High

OFFICIAL

Thank you s 22(1)(a)(ii)
s 47B, s 47E(d)

Thank you.
Kind regards,
s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Centre for Australia-India Relations Taskforce
North and South Asia Division
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

P s 22(1)(a)(ii) | M s 22(1)(a)(ii) | E s 22(1)(a)(ii) [@dfat.gov.au](https://twitter.com/dfatgovau)

dfat.gov.au/India75 | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Flickr](#) | [YouTube](#)




From: s 22(1)(a)(ii) <@nca.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 3 April 2023 3:18 PM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii) <@dfat.gov.au>
Subject: FW: Possible issues with flag booking for Canberra Sikh Association [SEC=OFFICIAL]
OFFICIAL
Hi s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Thanks for taking my call.
s 47B(1), s 47E(d)

Best regards
s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Event Co-ordinator | Events and Place Activation

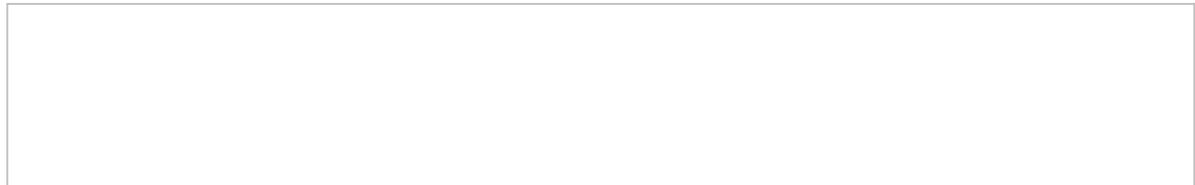
National Capital Authority

 s 22(1)(a)(ii)

National Capital Authority | Treasury Building, King Edward Terrace, PARKES ACT 2600

GPO Box 373, CANBERRA ACT 2601 | ; www.nca.gov.au | Twitter: @NCA_Media

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OFFICIAL

From: Sinfield, Andrew <Andrew.Sinfield@act.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 3 April 2023 1:04 PM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii) <@nca.gov.au>
Subject: Possible issues with flag booking for Canberra Sikh Association
OFFICIAL

Good afternoon s 22(1)(a)(ii)

As discussed we are looking for some advice through Protocol s 47E(d) bout a flag that we have put up on Commonwealth Avenue, King's Avenue and Vernon Circle poles.

The flag has been requested by the Canberra Sikh Association for the Vaisakhi event. They have the flags booked from today until the 28th April. The flag (photo attached) reads 'Khalsa Foundation Day Celebration' and has a symbol for the Sikh faith.

We have received a call from a member of the public advising that the flag could be controversial due to its relation to the Khalistan Movement. This is a separatist movement looking to establish a Sikh sovereign state; this movement also uses the same symbol and colour combination as the provided flags. In particular, the caller advised there had been violence related to the movement in several countries over the last few months. The information we have received from the Canberra Sikh Association does not make mention of any link to this movement, however there is the potential for the perception of a link.

s 33(a)(iii), s 47E(d)

As mentioned, approval for the flags design was not sought this year, as approval was given last year from NCA for the same design (this booking did not end up going ahead). I have not been able to find the email approval for this, but I believe it went through s 22(1)(a)(ii) so likely is part of her personal emails s 22(1)(a)(ii)

If you require any additional information, please give me a call on s 22(1)(a)(ii) .

Thank you,

Andrew

Andrew Sinfield | PN 11288

ACT Property Group

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

Phone: s 22(1)(a)(ii) | Email: andrew.sinfield@act.gov.au

255 Canberra Avenue Fyshwick ACT 2609 | www.act.gov.au

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From: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
To:
Cc:
Subject: FW: Khalsa flags in Canberra - Possible issues with flag booking for Canberra Sikh Association [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Tuesday, 4 April 2023 9:11:40 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.jpg](#)
[image003.jpg](#)

OFFICIAL

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 4 April 2023 9:10 AM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii) @nca.gov.au>
Cc: s 22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>
Subject: RE: Khalsa flags in Canberra - Possible issues with flag booking for Canberra Sikh Association [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hello s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Thanks for speaking with me just now.

My colleagues in DFAT's Protocol Branch are an excellent point of contact for any advice on flag issues. They are copied here.

With kind regards

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Director
India Implementation and Outreach Section
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
P s 22(1)(a)(ii) | **M** s 22(1)(a)(ii)
[dfat.gov.au](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#) | [LinkedIn](#)

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii) @nca.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 3 April 2023 3:42 PM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>; s 22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>
Cc: s 22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>; s 22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>; s 22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>
Subject: RE: Khalsa flags in Canberra - Possible issues with flag booking for Canberra Sikh Association [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi all

ACT government will take down the flags until further notice.

Best regards

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

OFFICIAL

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@dfat.gov.au](mailto:s22(1)(a)(ii)@dfat.gov.au)>

Sent: Monday, 3 April 2023 3:27 PM

s 22(1)(a)(ii) - This section and pages (6 - 7) contain a duplicate email chain (see page 1) and the following pages have been removed

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
To:
Subject: RE: Bookings for Vaisakhi event [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Tuesday, 4 April 2023 11:51:37 AM
Attachments: [image001.jpg](#)

OFFICIAL

Thanks s 22(1)(a)(ii)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii) @nca.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 4 April 2023 11:50 AM
To: Spindler, Alicia <Alicia.Spindler@act.gov.au>; s 22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>
Subject: RE: Bookings for Vaisakhi event [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi Alicia

s 47B(1), s 47E(d)

Best regards
s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Event Co-ordinator | Events and Place Activation

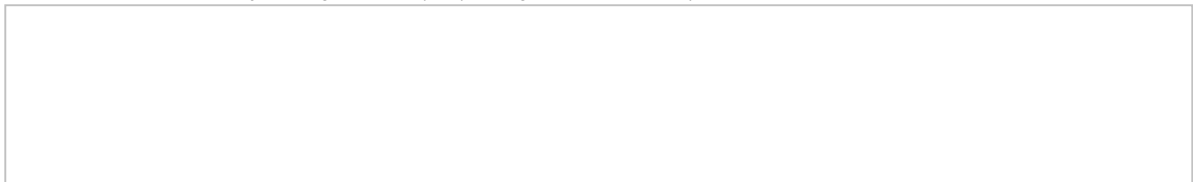
National Capital Authority

📞 s 22(1)(a)(ii)

National Capital Authority | Treasury Building, King Edward Terrace, PARKES ACT 2600

GPO Box 373, CANBERRA ACT 2601 | 🌐 www.nca.gov.au | Twitter: @NCA_Media

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OFFICIAL

From: Spindler, Alicia <Alicia.Spindler@act.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 4 April 2023 10:09 AM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au
Cc: s 22(1)(a)(ii) @nca.gov.au>
Subject: FW: Bookings for Vaisakhi event

Good morning s 22(1)(a)(ii)

s 47B, s 47E(d)

Kind Regards,

Alicia Spindler | Assistant Director – Flags & Banners | ACT PROPERTY GROUP SERVICES | Chief Minister,
Treasury and Economic Development Directorate | 255 CANBERRA AVENUE FYSHWICK | PO BOX 777 FYSHWICK ACT 2609
P: +61 6205 0969 | M: s 22(1)(a)(ii) F: +61 2 6213 0735 | E: alicia.spindler@act.gov.au

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From s 47F(1), s 47G(1)
Sent: Tuesday, 4 April 2023 9:23 AM
To: Sinfield, Andrew <Andrew.Sinfield@act.gov.au>
Cc: s 47F(1), s 47G(1)
Sub

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s 47F(1), s 47E(d), s 47G(1)

On Thu, 30 Mar 2023, 2:11 pm Sinfield, Andrew, <Andrew.Sinfield@act.gov.au> wrote:

OFFICIAL

Good afternoon,

Great! Thank you for letting me know, I was just starting to worry they wouldn't arrive in time. Once they arrive tomorrow we should be all good to install Monday.

Thank you,
Andrew

Andrew Sinfield | Flags and Banners
ACT Property Group
Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate
Phone: **s 22(1)(a)(ii)** | Email: andrew.sinfield@act.gov.au
255 Canberra Avenue Fyshwick ACT 2609 | www.act.gov.au

From: **s 47F(1), s 47G(1)**
Sent: Thursday, 30 March 2023 1:39 PM
To: Sinfield, Andrew <Andrew.Sinfield@act.gov.au>
Cc: **s 47F(1), s 47G(1)**
Subject: Re: Bookings for Vaisakhi event

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Hello Andrew,

Apologies for the delay. Flags will be delivered to you on 31st. Thank you.

Kind regards,
s 47F(1), s 47G(1)

On Wed, 29 Mar 2023 at 14:54, Sinfield, Andrew <Andrew.Sinfield@act.gov.au> wrote:

OFFICIAL

Good afternoon,

We have a flag booking coming up for your Vaisakhi event, with the booking starting on the 3rd April. I wanted to contact you as we have not yet received the flags to be installed and I had not heard anything.

Could you please advise whether you are expecting the flags to be delivered in time for us to install them on Monday? If there are any issues we can assist with, please feel free to contact me

on 6205 0299 or Andrew.sinfield@act.gov.au.

Thank you,
Andrew

Andrew Sinfield | Flags and Banners
ACT Property Group
Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate
Phone: s 22(1)(a)(ii) | Email: andrew.sinfield@act.gov.au
255 Canberra Avenue FYSHWICK ACT 2609 | www.act.gov.au

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From: s 22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au
Sent: 05/04/2023 12:32 PM
To: "Keppell, Cassandra" <Kassandra.Keppell@act.gov.au>
Subject: FW: Bookings for Vaisakhi event [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Attachments: Re: Request to Fly Nishan Sahib (Sikh Cultural Flag) at Commonwealth Avenue Bridge ACT, Kings Avenue Bridge and Russell Overpass

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OFFICIAL

Hi Cassandra

I'm so sorry, I can't get through on the number below.

Feel free to give me a call if you get a moment.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Director
India Implementation and Outreach Section
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
P s 22(1)(a)(ii) | M s 22(1)(a)(ii)
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From: Spindler, Alicia <Alicia.Spindler@act.gov.au>
Sent: Wednesday, 5 April 2023 12:05 PM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii) @nca.gov.au; s 22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au
Cc: Keppell, Cassandra <Kassandra.Keppell@act.gov.au>; Dezman, Adam <Adam.Dezman@act.gov.au>; Sinfield, Andrew <Andrew.Sinfield@act.gov.au>
Subject: RE: Bookings for Vaisakhi event [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hi s 22(1)(a)(ii)

My apologies for the delayed response.

Please see attached copy of the original flag request along with Cassandra (Kass) Keppell's contact details as requested.

Kass Keppell can be contacted on (02) 6205 9876 or via email Kassandra.Keppell@act.gov.au (CC'd into this email).

Kind Regards,

Alicia Spindler | Assistant Director – Flags & Banners | ACT PROPERTY GROUP SERVICES | Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate | 255 CANBERRA AVENUE FYSHWICK | PO BOX 777 FYSHWICK ACT 2609
P: +61 6205 0969 | **s 22(1)(a)(ii)** F: +61 2 6213 0735 | E: alicia.spindler@act.gov.au

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From: **s 22(1)(a)(ii)** <@nca.gov.au>

Sent: Tuesday, 4 April 2023 11:50 AM

s 22(1)(a)(ii) - This section and pages (14 - 15) contain a duplicate email chain (see from page 8) and the following pages have been removed

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii) @act.gov.au
Sent: 06/04/2023 4:36 PM
To: "Tanton, Graham" <Graham.Tanton@act.gov.au>
Subject: FW: Call with Canberra Sikh Association [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Categories: External

OFFICIAL

FYI

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

| Executive Branch Manager

Phone: 02 6205 2250 | Mobile: s 22(1)(a)(ii) | Email: s 22(1)(a)(ii) @act.gov.au

ACT Property Group | Office of Industrial Relations and Workforce Strategy

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate | ACT Government

255 Canberra Avenue, Fyshwick ACT 2609 | GPO Box 777 Fyshwick ACT 2609

www.economicdevelopment.act.gov.au | www.act.gov.au

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii) @act.gov.au
Sent: Thursday, 6 April 2023 1:42 PM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii) @act.gov.au; ACTPGExecutiveSupport <ACTPGExecutiveSupport@act.gov.au>
Subject: FW: Call with Canberra Sikh Association [SEC=OFFICIAL]

FYI

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au
Sent: Thursday, 6 April 2023 1:20 PM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii) @ncā.gov.au; Keppell, Cassandra <Kassandra.Keppell@act.gov.au>
Subject: Call with Canberra Sikh Association [SEC=OFFICIAL]

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OFFICIAL

Hello s 22(1)(a)(ii) cassandra

Thanks for all your assistance this week.

For information, I spoke with s 47F(1) of the Canberra Sikh Association.

We spoke in general terms about revising the consultation process for flying of flags in the Parliamentary triangle.

s 33(a)(iii), s 47B, s 47E(d)

I said we were keen to recognise the great contribution made by the Sikh community in Canberra and hoped we could reach a workable compromise before Vaisaki (14 April). He said he would consult internally with other members of the CSA before Tuesday.
I'll let you know if there's a good outcome.

Hope you have a restful Easter.


s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Director
India Implementation and Outreach Section
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

P s 22(1)(a)(ii) | **M** s 22(1)(a)(ii)

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 Outlook

Re: DFAT advice on Canberra Sikh Association flag design [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

From s 22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au
Date Wed 4/12/2023 8:47 PM
To Tanton, Graham <Graham.Tanton@act.gov.au>; s 22(1)(a)(ii) @nca.gov.au
Cc Shaw, Tania <Tania.Shaw@act.gov.au>; Dezman, Adam <Adam.Dezman@act.gov.au>; Keppell, Cassandra <Cassandra.Keppell@act.gov.au>; Read, Marilynne <Marilynne.Read@act.gov.au>

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

Thanks Graham

DFAT position is that the flag shouldn't be raised in current form. Grateful if we can be consulted if there's a decision to the contrary.

Kind regards

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: "Tanton, Graham" <Graham.Tanton@act.gov.au>
Date: Wednesday, 12 April 2023 at 6:04:28 pm
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au, s 22(1)(a)(ii) @nca.gov.au
Cc: "Shaw, Tania" <Tania.Shaw@act.gov.au>, "Dezman, Adam" <Adam.Dezman@act.gov.au>, "Keppell, Cassandra" <Cassandra.Keppell@act.gov.au>, "Read, Marilynne" <Marilynne.Read@act.gov.au>
Subject: RE: DFAT advice on Canberra Sikh Association flag design [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

Thank you s 22(1)(a)(ii)

As discussed, can I confirm that DFAT's position is the current flag design should not be raised in its current form? I note in the below email, DFAT advised CSA that the current design could be misconstrued and could be "contentious".

s 22(1)(a)(ii) we look forward to working with the NCA on this matter, I will ask the team to set up a meeting tomorrow to discuss further.

Regards

Graham

Graham Tanton | Executive Group Manager ACT Property Group
 Phone: 02 6207 5757 | Mobile: s 22(1)(a)(ii) | Email: graham.tanton@act.gov.au
 Office of Industrial Relations and Workforce Strategy | Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate | ACT Government
 Level 3, Winyu House, 125 Gungahlin Place, Gungahlin ACT 2601 | act.gov.au

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>
Sent: Wednesday, 12 April 2023 5:45 PM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii) @nca.gov.au>
Cc: Tanton, Graham <Graham.Tanton@act.gov.au>
Subject: DFAT advice on Canberra Sikh Association flag design [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

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OFFICIAL: Sensitive

s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Dea

Thank you for consulting the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on a flag design proposed by the Canberra Sikh Association for flying in sites managed by the National Capital Authority and the ACT Government.

DFAT's India Branch consulted with the CSA on 11 April 2023 on the proposed design. During that meeting, DFAT noted that the flag design could be misconstrued. While a matter for the ACT Government, it appears this could contravene ACT Government guidelines on flags and banners given the flag could be seen as 'contentious' especially when '...read at a distance of up to 50 meters from a moving vehicle'. DFAT welcomes the opportunity to provide advice on any alternative designs proposed by the CSA.

The Indian diaspora, including Canberra's Sikh community, are valued and important contributors to Australian society, to our vibrant and resilient multicultural society. We will continue to work with other agencies in Australia to foster greater social cohesion, greater understanding and inclusion of diaspora communities.

DFAT is also available to respond to any requests for consultation on international or diaspora flag designs in future.

Many thanks and kind regards

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

a/g Assistant Secretary
India Branch
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
P s 22(1)(a)(ii) | **M** s 22(1)(a)(ii)
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 Outlook

RE: Sikh Flag [SEC=OFFICIAL]

From Tanton, Graham <Graham.Tanton@act.gov.au>

Date Thu 4/13/2023 6:54 PM

To Hamid Heydarian <Hamid.Heydarian@nca.gov.au>; ^{s 22(1)(a)(ii)} @dfat.gov.au>; ^{s 22(1)(a)(ii)} @nca.gov.au>; Keppell, Cassandra <Kassandra.Keppell@act.gov.au>; Shaw, Tania <Tania.Shaw@act.gov.au>

OFFICIAL

Thank you Hamid, much appreciated.

Based on both DFAT's and NCA position ACTPG will advise the CSA that if they can provide us the revised flags, we will look to fly them tomorrow.

Thanks to both you and ^{s 22(1)(a)} for your assistance in this matter.

Regards

Graham

From: Hamid Heydarian <Hamid.Heydarian@nca.gov.au>

Sent: Thursday, 13 April 2023 6:36 PM

To: Tanton, Graham <Graham.Tanton@act.gov.au>; ^{s 22(1)(a)(ii)} @dfat.gov.au>; ^{s 22(1)(a)(ii)} @nca.gov.au>; Keppell, Cassandra <Kassandra.Keppell@act.gov.au>; Shaw, Tania <Tania.Shaw@act.gov.au>

Subject: Re: Sikh Flag [SEC=OFFICIAL]

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^{s 33(a)(iii), s 47B(1), s 47E(d)}

Cheers, Hamid

Hamid Heydarian
Chief Operating Officer
National Capital Authority

From: Tanton, Graham <Graham.Tanton@act.gov.au>

Sent: Thursday, April 13, 2023 6:18 pm

To: ^{s 22(1)(a)(ii)} @dfat.gov.au>; ^{s 22(1)(a)(ii)} @nca.gov.au>; Keppell, Cassandra <Kassandra.Keppell@act.gov.au>; Shaw, Tania <Tania.Shaw@act.gov.au>; Hamid Heydarian

21 of 53

<Hamid.Heydarian@nca.gov.au>

Subject: RE: Sikh Flag [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Thank you **s 22(1)(a)(ii)**

Hamid, as per our discussion earlier, can you also confirm that based on DFAT's advice, NCA have no objections to the raising of the flags.

Regards

Graham

Graham Tanton | Executive Group Manager ACT Property Group

Phone: 02 6207 5757 | Mobile: **s 22(1)(a)(ii)** | Email: graham.tanton@act.gov.au

Office of Industrial Relations and Workforce Strategy | Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate | ACT Government

Level 3, Winyu House, 125 Gungahlin Place, Gungahlin ACT 2601 | GPO Box 158 Canberra ACT 2601 | act.gov.au

From: **s 22(1)(a)(ii)** [@dfat.gov.au](mailto:dfat@act.gov.au)

Sent: Thursday, 13 April 2023 5:42 PM

To: Tanton, Graham <Graham.Tanton@act.gov.au>; **s 22(1)(a)(ii)** [@nca.gov.au](mailto:nca@act.gov.au);

Keppell, Cassandra <Cassandra.Keppell@act.gov.au>; Shaw, Tania <Tania.Shaw@act.gov.au>;

hamid.heydarian@nca.gov.au

Subject: RE: Sikh Flag [SEC=OFFICIAL]

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OFFICIAL

Dear Mr Tanton and **s 22(1)(a)(ii)**

s 33(a)(iii), s 47B(1), s 47E(d)

The decision to fly these flags on sites managed by the National Capital Authority or the ACT Government remains one for your agencies.

Many thanks and kind regards

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

a/g Assistant Secretary

India Branch

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

P s 22(1)(a)(ii) | **M s 22(1)(a)(ii)**



From: Tanton, Graham <Graham.Tanton@act.gov.au>
Sent: Thursday, 13 April 2023 5:07 PM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au; s 22(1)(a)(ii) @nca.gov.au; Keppell, Cassandra <Kassandra.Keppell@act.gov.au>; Shaw, Tania <Tania.Shaw@act.gov.au>; hamid.heydarion@nca.gov.au
Subject: Sikh Flag
Importance: High

OFFICIAL

Good afternoon ^{s 22(1)(a)(i)} as you are aware s 33(a)(iii), s 47B(1), s 47E(d) CSA
has proposed the flag be amended to remove the text. I believe they have sent you a photo of what the flag would look like. Basically the bottom 250mm will be removed with the edges re hemmed.

Please can I ask that DFAT provide guidance if it is comfortable lifting its objection of the flag being raised bases on the proposed design and once the amendments to the flag have been made.

Happy to discuss

Graham

Graham Tanton | Executive Group Manager ACT Property Group
Phone: 02 6207 5757 | Mobile s 22(1)(a)(ii) | Email: graham.tanton@act.gov.au
Office of Industrial Relations and Workforce Strategy | Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate | ACT Government
Level 3, Winyu House, 125 Gungahlin Place, Gungahlin ACT 2601 | act.gov.au

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From: s 22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au
Sent: Friday, 14 April 2023 10:04 AM
To: Read, Marilynne <Marilynne.Read@act.gov.au>; Polglase, David <David.Polglase@act.gov.au>; Tanton, Graham <Graham.Tanton@act.gov.au>
Subject: RE: Sikh flag DRAFT talking points [SEC=OFFICIAL]

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OFFICIAL

Hello Marilynne

s 47B, s 47E(d)

Kind regards

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

a/g AS
India Branch
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
P s 22(1)(a)(ii) | M s 22(1)(a)(ii)
[dfat.gov.au](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#) | [LinkedIn](#)



From: Read, Marilynne <Marilynne.Read@act.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, 14 April 2023 9:30 AM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au; Polglase, David <David.Polglase@act.gov.au>; Tanton, Graham <Graham.Tanton@act.gov.au>
Subject: Sikh flag DRAFT talking points

OFFICIAL

Hello

Graham has asked me to draft talking points for our Minister's Offices regarding the flags, should they receive any calls. Can you please review them?

- The Canberra Sikh Association is hosting Vaisakhi, which is a significant religious and cultural festival for the Sikh community and is celebrated worldwide.
- The Nishan Sahib is an important symbol of the Sikh religion and is usually installed outside Gurdwaras (temples) during religious and cultural celebrations.
- The Canberra Sikh Association booked the installation of the Nishan Sahib flags at various locations in Canberra to mark Vaisakhi from 3 April to 28 April 2023.
- Following discussions with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the National Capital Authority (NCA), their advice is the flags can be raised.
- The Indian diaspora*, including Canberra's Sikh community, are valued and important contributors to Australian society, to our vibrant and resilient multicultural society. We will continue to work with other agencies to foster greater social cohesion, greater understanding and inclusion of diaspora communities.

For information

- There is a distinction between the Nishan Sahib and Khalistan flags:
 - The Nishan Sahib flag is traditionally a triangle shape with no writing, and represents the Sikh religion and its values.
 - The Khalistan flag is rectangular and represents a political movement seeking a separate Sikh state.
 - The Nishan Sahib flag but the ACT Government prefers rectangular flags for use on our flagpoles.
- The original flags that were provided and raised on 3 April.
- Following concerns raised by members of the community in relation to the design of the flag, and following advice from DFAT and the National Capital Authority, the flags were lowered.
- Subsequent consultation with the Canberra Sikh Association, ACT Property Group, and DFAT, subject to a redesign that would see the removal of any text, DFAT would lift their concerns to the flags being flown.

*dispersed community

Can you please advise if I have mis-represented anything and that you are comfortable for these to be sent to Minister's Offices?

Kind regards
Marilynne

Marilynne Read | Executive Officer
Office of the Executive Group Manager, Graham Tanton
ACT Property Group, Office of Industrial Relations and Workforce Strategy
Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate | ACT Government
Level 3, Winyu House, 125 Gungahlin Place, Gungahlin ACT 2912 | GPO Box 158 Canberra ACT 2601 | act.gov.au
Phone: MS Teams (preferred) or **s 22(1)(a)(ii)** | Email: Marilynne.Read@act.gov.au

I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the ACT. I acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

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From: @dfat.gov.au>
Sent: 14/04/2023 2:58 PM
To: "Polglase, David" <David.Polglase@act.gov.au>; "Tanton, Graham"
<Graham.Tanton@act.gov.au>
Subject: RE: FOR CLEARANCE Query on flags [SEC=OFFICIAL]

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OFFICIAL

s 47B, s 47E(d) - This section and pages (27-29) are exempt and the following pages have been removed

Kind regards,
s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows

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From: s 22(1)(a)(ii) <@dfat.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, 14 April 2023 5:17 PM
To: Hamid Heydarian <Hamid.Heydarian@nca.gov.au>; Polglase, David <David.Polglase@act.gov.au>
Cc: Tanton, Graham <Graham.Tanton@act.gov.au>
Subject: RE: FOR CLEARANCE Query on flags [SEC=OFFICIAL]

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OFFICIAL

Thanks all for your assistance this week and last.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: Hamid Heydarian <Hamid.Heydarian@nca.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, 14 April 2023 5:16 PM
To: Polglase, David <David.Polglase@act.gov.au>; s 22(1)(a)(ii) <@dfat.gov.au>
Cc: Tanton, Graham <Graham.Tanton@act.gov.au>
Subject: Re: FOR CLEARANCE Query on flags [SEC=OFFICIAL]

All
s 47B, s 47E(d)

Thanks

From: Polglase, David <David.Polglase@act.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, April 14, 2023 4:57:05 PM
To: Hamid Heydarian <Hamid.Heydarian@nca.gov.au>; s 22(1)(a)(ii) <@dfat.gov.au>
Cc: Tanton, Graham <Graham.Tanton@act.gov.au>
Subject: RE: FOR CLEARANCE Query on flags [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Thanks Hamid,

Just confirming that we will leave this at our end for now and leave for the Commonwealth to respond.

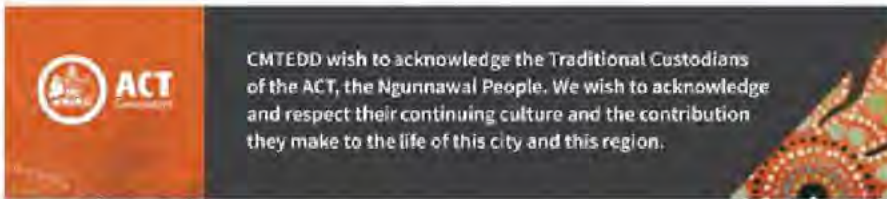
The CM office has just advised the journo of that.

Cheers
David

David Polglase | Acting Executive Branch Manager

Phone: 02 6205 9957 | Mobile: [s 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#) | Email: david.polglase@act.gov.au

Communications & Engagement | Chief Minister Treasury and Economic Development Directorate | ACT Government
220 London Circuit, Canberra City | GPO Box 158 Canberra City ACT 2601 | www.act.gov.au



Artwork: Together, 2019 (detail)
by Selina Walker

From: Hamid Heydarian <Hamid.Heydarian@nca.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, 14 April 2023 4:30 PM
To: Polglase, David <David.Polglase@act.gov.au>; [s 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#) @dfat.gov.au>
Cc: Tanton, Graham <Graham.Tanton@act.gov.au>
Subject: Re: FOR CLEARANCE Query on flags [SEC=OFFICIAL]

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Hi David
Further to my call [s 47E\(d\)](#)

[s 47E\(d\)](#)
Hamid

Cheers,

From: Polglase, David <David.Polglase@act.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, April 14, 2023 4:10:59 PM
To: Hamid Heydarian <Hamid.Heydarian@nca.gov.au>; [s 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#) @dfat.gov.au>
Cc: Tanton, Graham <Graham.Tanton@act.gov.au>
Subject: RE: FOR CLEARANCE Query on flags [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Thanks [s 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#)

No change from us, but noting it is sitting with our Chief Minister office currently.

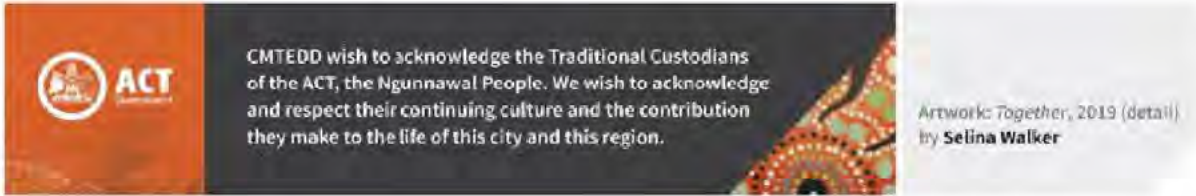
Will come back to you ASAP on that and confirm who is sending on to the journo.

Cheers
David

David Polglase | Acting Executive Branch Manager

Phone: 02 6205 9957 | Mobile: [s 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#) | Email: david.polglase@act.gov.au

Communications & Engagement | Chief Minister Treasury and Economic Development Directorate | ACT Government



From: Hamid Heydarian <Hamid.Heydarian@nca.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, 14 April 2023 3:59 PM
To: [s 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#) <@dfat.gov.au>; Polglase, David <David.Polglase@act.gov.au>
Cc: Tanton, Graham <Graham.Tanton@act.gov.au>
Subject: Re: FOR CLEARANCE Query on flags [SEC=OFFICIAL]

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Thanks Jon.
No changes from NCA.

From: [s 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#) <@dfat.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, April 14, 2023 3:48:21 PM
To: Hamid Heydarian <Hamid.Heydarian@nca.gov.au>; Polglase, David <David.Polglase@act.gov.au>
Cc: Tanton, Graham <graham.tanton@act.gov.au>
Subject: FOR CLEARANCE Query on flags [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Colleagues

[s 47B, s 47E\(d\)](#)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

a/g Assistant Secretary
India Branch
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
ps 22(1)(a)(ii) | M s 22(1)(a)(ii)

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From: s 22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au
Sent: 14/04/2023 6:57 PM
To: "Polglase, David" <David.Polglase@act.gov.au>; "Hamid Heydarian" <Hamid.Heydarian@nca.gov.au>
Cc: "Tanton, Graham" <Graham.Tanton@act.gov.au>; "Media" <media@dfat.gov.au>
Subject: Re: FOR CLEARANCE Query on flags[SEC=OFFICIAL]

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OFFICIAL

Thanks David
s 47B, s 47E(d)

Thanks to ask for patience and assistance.
s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: "Polglase, David" <David.Polglase@act.gov.au>
Date: Friday, 14 April 2023 at 6:47:20 pm
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au, "Hamid Heydarian" <Hamid.Heydarian@nca.gov.au>
Cc: "Tanton, Graham" <Graham.Tanton@act.gov.au>
Subject: RE: FOR CLEARANCE Query on flags[SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi s 22(1)(a)(ii)
s 22(1)(a)(ii)

He's expecting your call.

He'll be able to clarify the below.

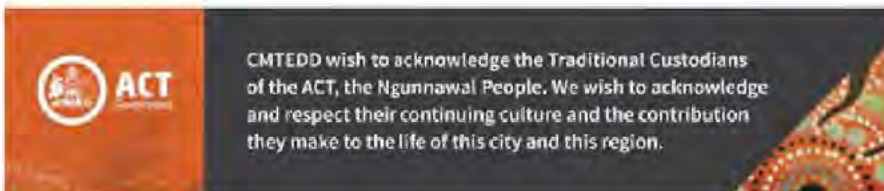
Cheers
David

David Polglase | Acting Executive Branch Manager

Phone: 02 6205 9957 | Mobile: s 22(1)(a)(ii) | Email: david.polglase@act.gov.au

Communications & Engagement | Chief Minister Treasury and Economic Development Directorate | ACT Government

220 London Circuit, Canberra City | GPO Box 158 Canberra City ACT 2601 | www.act.gov.au



Artwork: *Together*, 2019 (detail)
by Selina Walker

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au
Sent: Friday, 14 April 2023 6:35 PM
To: Polglase, David <David.Polglase@act.gov.au>; Hamid Heydarian <Hamid.Heydarian@nca.gov.au>
Cc: Tanton, Graham <Graham.Tanton@act.gov.au>
Subject: Re: FOR CLEARANCE Query on flags[SEC=OFFICIAL]

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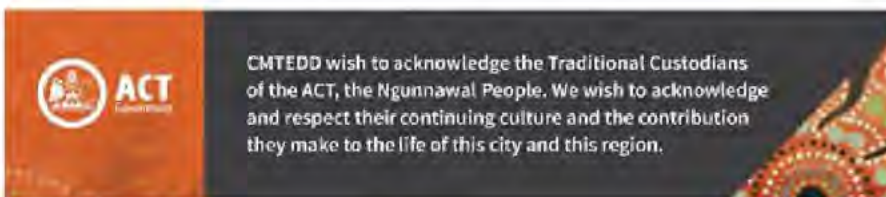
Thanks David
Please can I get s 22(1)(a)(ii) contact details?
s 47B, s 47E(d)
s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: "Polglase, David" <David.Polglase@act.gov.au>
Date: Friday, 14 April 2023 at 5:49:33 pm
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au, "Hamid Heydarian" <Hamid.Heydarian@nca.gov.au>
Cc: "Tanton, Graham" <Graham.Tanton@act.gov.au>
Subject: RE: FOR CLEARANCE Query on flags [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Thanks s 22(1)(a)(ii)
s 47B, s 47E(d)

David Polglase | Acting Executive Branch Manager
Phone: 02 6205 9957 | Mobile s 22(1)(a)(ii) | Email: david.polglase@act.gov.au
Communications & Engagement | Chief Minister Treasury and Economic Development Directorate | ACT Government
220 London Circuit, Canberra City | GPO Box 158 Canberra City ACT 2601 | www.act.gov.au



Artwork: Together, 2019 (detail)
by Selina Walker

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au
Sent: Friday, 14 April 2023 5:39 PM
To: Hamid Heydarian <Hamid.Heydarian@nca.gov.au>; Polglase, David <David.Polglase@act.gov.au>
Cc: Tanton, Graham <Graham.Tanton@act.gov.au>
Subject: RE: FOR CLEARANCE Query on flags [SEC=OFFICIAL]

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OFFICIAL

Thanks Hamid and David
s 47B, s 47E(d)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

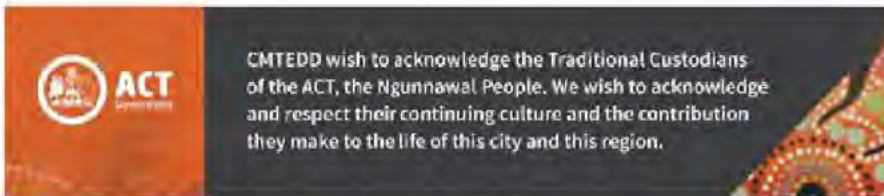
From: Hamid Heydarian <Hamid.Heydarian@nca.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, 14 April 2023 5:11 PM
To: Polglase, David <David.Polglase@act.gov.au>; s 22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>
Cc: Tanton, Graham <Graham.Tanton@act.gov.au>
Subject: Re: FOR CLEARANCE Query on flags [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Hi David. s 47B, s 47E(d)

From: Polglase, David <David.Polglase@act.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, April 14, 2023 4:57:05 PM s 22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>
To: Hamid Heydarian <Hamid.Heydarian@nca.gov.au>;
Cc: Tanton, Graham <Graham.Tanton@act.gov.au>
Subject: RE: FOR CLEARANCE Query on flags [SEC=OFFICIAL]
OFFICIAL

Thanks Hamid,
s 47B, s 47E(d)

Cheers
David

David Polglase | Acting Executive Branch Manager
Phone: 02 6205 9957 | Mobile: s 22(1)(a)(ii) Email: david.polglase@act.gov.au
Communications & Engagement | Chief Minister Treasury and Economic Development Directorate | ACT Government
220 London Circuit, Canberra City | GPO Box 158 Canberra City ACT 2601 | www.act.gov.au



Artwork: Together, 2019 (detail)
by Selina Walker

From: Hamid Heydarian <Hamid.Heydarian@nca.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, 14 April 2023 4:30 PM
To: Polglase, David <David.Polglase@act.gov.au>; s 22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>
Cc: Tanton, Graham <Graham.Tanton@act.gov.au>
Subject: Re: FOR CLEARANCE Query on flags [SEC=OFFICIAL]

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Hi David
Further to my call s 47B, s 47E(d)
s 47B, s 47E(d)

s 47B, s 47E(d)

Cheers,

Hamid

From: Polglase, David <David.Polglase@act.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, April 14, 2023 4:10:59 PM
To: Hamid Heydarian <Hamid.Heydarian@nca.gov.au>; s 22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au>

Cc: Tanton, Graham <Graham.Tanton@act.gov.au>
Subject: RE: FOR CLEARANCE Query on flags [SEC=OFFICIAL]

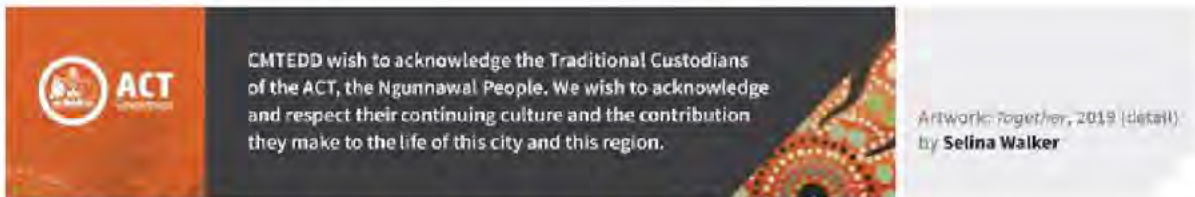
OFFICIAL

Thanks s 22(1)(a)(ii)
s 47B, s 47E(d)

Will come back to you ASAP on that and confirm who is sending on to the journo.

Cheers
David

David Polglase | Acting Executive Branch Manager
Phone: 02 6205 9957 | Mobile s 22(1)(a)(ii) Email: david.polglase@act.gov.au
Communications & Engagement | Chief Minister Treasury and Economic Development Directorate | ACT Government
220 London Circuit, Canberra City | GPO Box 158 Canberra City ACT 2601 | www.act.gov.au



From: Hamid Heydarian <Hamid.Heydarian@nca.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, 14 April 2023 3:59 PM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au; Polglase, David <David.Polglase@act.gov.au>
Cc: Tanton, Graham <Graham.Tanton@act.gov.au>
Subject: Re: FOR CLEARANCE Query on flags [SEC=OFFICIAL]

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Thanks s 22(1)(a)(ii)
No changes from NCA.

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii) @dfat.gov.au
Sent: Friday, April 14, 2023 3:48:21 PM
To: Hamid Heydarian <Hamid.Heydarian@nca.gov.au>; Polglase, David <David.Polglase@act.gov.au>
Cc: Tanton, Graham <graham.tanton@act.gov.au>
Subject: FOR CLEARANCE Query on flags [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Colleagues
s 47B, s 47E(d)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

a/g Assistant Secretary
India Branch
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Ps 22(1)(a)(ii) | Ms 22(1)(a)(ii)
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Controversy around Sikh flags in Canberra highlights tensions between India and Khalistan separatists

By foreign affairs reporter [Stephen Dziedzic](#)

Religious Leaders

Fri 21 Apr 2023 at 4:31 am



The Sikh flags are once again flying outside Parliament House, following protests from the Sikh community. (ABC: Luke Stephenson)

The Australian Capital Territory government became embroiled in a dispute with Canberra's Sikh community earlier this month after it abruptly took down dozens of flags bearing a symbol of the faith, fearing they might be interpreted as a statement of public support for an Indian separatist movement.

The Canberra Sikh Association wrote to the ACT government last week, seeking an "urgent meeting" to explain why dozens of flags depicting the Khanda —

Key points:

an emblem of Sikhism — were pulled down earlier this month, less than 24 hours after being put up along major thoroughfares on the approach to Parliament House.

The issue was eventually resolved on Friday last week after the ACT government sat down with Sikh community representatives. And the flags — with a slight modification — are now flying once again from the flagpoles.

However, the dispute left some in the Sikh community deeply unhappy, demonstrating the political sensitivities and community divisions surrounding the campaign from some Sikhs to establish a separate state in India.

The saga began on April 3, when 82 flags bearing the Khanda — a symbol of the Sikh faith and identity — were put up along Kings Avenue and Commonwealth Avenue in Canberra to mark the festival of Vaisakhi.

However, the Khanda is also used as a symbol by those campaigning to establish an independent nation for Sikhs, called Khalistan, in the Punjab region in India's north-west.

India's government regards the Khalistan movement as a direct threat to its sovereignty, and last month [launched a major manhunt to capture separatist preacher Amritpal Singh, who broke into an Indian police station with armed supporters in February to free one of his associates.](#)

The Khalistan movement has also been trying to build support in Sikh diaspora communities in the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada and Australia.

- The flags were removed after a complaint related to India's Khalistan separatist movement
- Flags of the Khalistan movement incorporate the same Sikh holy symbol featured on the Canberra flags
- However, the dispute was quickly resolved with a new design, and the flags have been replaced

An ACT government spokesperson told the ABC that "a concern was raised by a member of the public to the ACT Property Group about the flag's design" and the "flags were lowered on the same day" after it consulted with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

The ACT government did not identify who made the complaint, but the ABC understands it related to the Khalistan issue.

However, the decision to unilaterally take down the flags then drew protests from the Sikh community, which said it was blindsided by the move.



The flag originally included the words Khalsa Foundation Day. (ABC: Luke Stephenson)

Last week, the Canberra Sikh Association wrote to the ACT government, expressing its "utter surprise and dismay" at the decision, just days before the issue was resolved.

"A removal of the flags depicting the Khanda is highly disrespectful, disheartening and full of sadness to all Sikhs," the organisation wrote.

"Instead of a joyful celebration of Vaisakhi Day, 14 April 2023 will be full of sadness and despair to all Sikhs in Canberra and Australia.

"The ACT government has not provided its reasons for removing the flags in writing and the Sikh community in Australia and internationally is seeking answers as to why the flags have been removed."

The flags — which were put back up on April 14 — retain the Khanda symbol, but no longer include the words "Khalsa Foundation Day Celebration", which were included on the original flags.

An ACT government spokesperson said "following discussions with the Canberra Sikh Association, the association submitted a revised design" and that "DFAT advised the National Capital Authority and the ACT Property Group it did not object to the revised flag's design".

It is not clear why the ACT government insisted those words be removed, given Khalsa Foundation Day marks the day the Sikh religious community was established, on Vaisakhi, and seems to indicate that the flags were being raised to celebrate a festival rather than a political movement.

However, the Indian government has previously accused Khalistan supporters of deliberately trying to co-opt Sikh imagery, such as the Khanda, to blur the line between the religion and the separatist push.

On Thursday, the Canberra Sikh Association sent a message to its community members and supporters celebrating that the flags had been put back up.

"Following constructive dialogues with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department of Home Affairs, and the ACT Property Group (ACT

Government), we are pleased to announce that the Nishan Sahib (Khanda) flags have been reinstalled on all 82 poles," the email reads.

"The flag's design was altered by removing the event details. This outcome serves as a testament to the values of diversity, tolerance, inclusion, and social cohesion that the Sikh community cherishes."

"We extend our heartfelt appreciation to everyone who contributed to the positive outcome of the flags' reinstallation, including government representatives and the wider community. Your steadfast support has been instrumental in ensuring the rights of the Sikh community are respected and protected."

The association also said the "intent and meaning" behind the flags removed were misconstrued by some members of the public" and that this was "primarily due to the text size and distance from the ground, which led to a complaint being lodged".

Support for Khalistan mixed

While some Sikhs, both in India and abroad, have been campaigning hard for Khalistan, other Sikhs are deeply opposed to the movement.



Tensions between members of the Sikh and Hindu communities had risen following an unofficial secession referendum in Melbourne. (ABC News)

India's Modi government has also been pressing Western countries with large Sikh diasporas to try to stop Khalistan supporters from holding political rallies and informal referenda, saying the activity is subversive and threatens to undermine India's territorial integrity.

Earlier this year, [skirmishes broke out between Khalistan advocates and Indian government supporters in Melbourne's Federation Square](#) at a "referendum" called to gauge Sikh community support for the separatist push.

Vandals also targeted Hindu temples in Melbourne with anti-India and pro-Khalistan graffiti in January this year, stoking community tensions.

When India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met Foreign Minister Penny Wong in February he said he "emphasised the need for vigilance against radical activities targeting the Indian community".

The Australian government has repeatedly stressed the referenda have no legal effect, and has vowed to take a zero-tolerance approach to any violence or vandalism.

Ian Hall from the Griffith Asia Institute told the ABC that, in recent months, "anything that suggests support for Khalistani separatism" had drawn "swift and stern responses from New Delhi".

"We are at a delicate point in the bilateral relationship, where Australia is very much a partner of choice for India and we are spoilt for opportunities for closer economic and security cooperation," Dr Hall said.

"But we know, from the experience of others, especially Canada – which has a big and politically active Sikh population and a poor relationship with India – that the Khalistan issue can do serious damage if managed poorly."

Posted Fri 21 Apr 2023 at 4:31am, updated Fri 21 Apr 2023 at 8:00am

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
To: [Hamid Heydarian](#)
Cc: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Subject: RE: Senate Estimates - Flags [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Wednesday, 10 May 2023 3:00:59 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

OFFICIAL

Thanks Hamid. Very helpful.

We will make these updates and will share with you a subsequent version.

I think we will need to work out how to provide more visibility to ACT Government for information. We'll propose something.

Thanks

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: Hamid Heydarian
Sent: Wednesday, 10 May 2023 2:52 PM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Cc:
Subject: FW: Senate Estimates - Flags [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Thanks for the opportunity to comment. A couple of suggestions to provide a bit more context.

(highlighted). s 47B(1), s 47E(d)

Happy to discuss

Hamid

s 47B, s 47E(d), s 47C(1)

s 47B, s 47E(d), s 47C(1)

s 47B, s 47E(d), s 47C(1)

s 22(1)(a)(iii)

Director
India Implementation and Outreach Section
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

P s 22(1)(a)(ii) | **M s 22(1)(a)(ii)**

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2.9 Removal of Sikh Flags

Handling Note: FAS SXD *Cowan* to lead.

Key Messages

- DFAT was consulted by the ACT Government and the National Capital Authority in April 2023 on a flag design proposed by the Canberra Sikh Association.
- Australia respects the right of individuals to engage in peaceful protest and supports the peaceful expression of views.
- The Australian Government will continue to work across the community to foster social cohesion and inclusion of diaspora communities.

Why were Sikh flags removed from flying on flagpoles in Canberra?

- A concern was raised by a member of the public to the ACT Property Group about the flag's design
 - after discussions with the ACT Property Group, the National Capital Authority (NCA) and DFAT, the Canberra Sikh Association provided a revised flag design, including the Khanda (symbol of the Sikh faith), which was flown in Canberra.
- Pleased the situation was resolved and the Canberra Sikh Association were able to mark Vaisakhi (vah-sah-key)
 - Canberra's Sikh community makes excellent contributions to this city's multicultural society.

s 33(a)(iii), s 47E(d)

What consultation processes are in place to ensure flags flown in the National Triangle are not contentious?

- The NCA and ACT Property Group are developing guidelines for consultation, including with DFAT, on the design of flags flown in areas administered by the NCA.
- Further questions on this process should be directed to the NCA and the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts.

Background

The Canberra Sikh Association (CSA) booked the installation of a flag incorporating the Sikh Khanda (religious symbol) at various locations in Canberra to mark Vaisakhi (a harvest festival) over 3 – 28 April 2023. The original flags provided by CSA were raised on 3 April 2023. A concern was raised by a member of the public to the ACT Property Group about the flag’s design. Following consultation with the National Capital Authority (NCA), the ACT Property Group lowered the flags later in the day on 3 April. The NCA consulted DFAT, which provided advice on sensitivities enlivened by the flags. DFAT suggested further consultation on the flag design. Following consultation among the CSA, NCA, ACT Property Group and DFAT, the CSA submitted a revised design. The revised flag design was raised on 14 April. The NCA owns the flag poles in the National Triangle but the ACT Government is responsible for management of the installation of flags.

Supporting information

Date	Event
September 2023	DFAT agrees to join proceedings with ACT Government agencies for FOI review with ACT Ombudsman.
July 2023	DFAT responds to ACT Government request for third party consultation on FOI regarding the removal of Sikh flags in Canberra.
14 April 2023	Revised flag design raised / Vaisakhi.

s 33(a)(iii), s 47B, s 47E(d), s 47G(1)

12 April 2023	DFAT email to ACT Property Services and NCA suggesting the flags should not be reinstated in current design, pending further consultation.
11 April 2023 (PM)	DFAT meeting with CSA ^{s 33(a)(iii), s 47E(d)} about flag design (at DFAT).

s 33(a)(iii), s 47B, s 47E(d), s 47G(1)

4 April 2023 11:50	NCA email to ACT Property Group and DFAT advising of additional stakeholder engagement on flag design.
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4 April 2023 10:09	ACT Property Group email to NCA on reason for removal of flags. s 33(a)(iii), s 47B, s 47E(d), s 47G(1)
3 April 2023 (PM)	Flags removed by ACT Property Group. s 33(a)(iii), s 47B, s 47E(d)
3 April 2023 15:56	DFAT email to NCA and ACT Property Group with request for further consultation on flag design.
3 April 2023 15:42	NCA Event Coordinator email to inform that the NCA has directed the ACT Property Group to remove flags while consultation and clarification on design is undertaken.
3 April 2023 15:18	NCA Event Coordinator email to DFAT to query sensitivity of a flag design based on a concern raised by a member of the public.
3 April 2023 13:04	ACT Property Group email to NCA advising of a call from a member of the public that the flag design may be controversial due to its resemblance to 'Khalistan' flag. s 47B, s 47E(d)
3 April 2023 (AM)	Flags raised by ACT Property Group.
22 September 2022	CSA application to ACT Property Group to fly flags for Vaisakhi in 2023 (Commonwealth Avenue, Kings Avenue and Vernon Circle from 3/4/2023 – 28/4/2023).
9 July 2022	Original request from Canberra Sikh Association (CSA) to ACT Property Group for flags to be flown during Vaisakhi in 2022. CSA unable to provide flags in time.

Questions on Notice

- No QoNs asked.

Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests

- In July 2023, a member of the public sought access under FOI to documentation relating to the removal of Sikh flags in Canberra. The request is under review with the ACT Ombudsman and DFAT is joining proceedings with ACT Government agencies.

Recent Ministerial Comments

- No recent comments

Relevant Media Reporting

- On 21 April 2023, ABC reported on flags depicting the Khanda (religious symbol) being removed by the ACT Government [[Controversy around Sikh flags in Canberra highlights tensions between India and Khalistan separatists - ABC News](#)].

Prepared by:

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Mob: s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Date: 27 September 2023

Cleared by Branch Head:

s 22(1)(a)(ii), a/g AS IBB

Mob: s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Date: 3 October 2023