

Beyond Money

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Australian coins

Did you know that up to two million coins are produced each day at the Royal Australian Mint? Did you also know that Australia's first coloured coin was produced in 2012 to commemorate Remembrance Day?

The Australian 1c, 2c, 5c, 10c, 20c and 50c coins that we use today were first introduced on 14 February 1966 as part of the decimal currency system. They replaced the British half penny, penny, threepence, sixpence, shilling and florin which had been used as Australian currency since 1825.

The \$1 coin was introduced in 1984 (to replace the \$1 note) and the \$2 coin was introduced in 1988 (to replace the \$2 note). The 1c and 2c coins were taken out of circulation in 1982 because they became too expensive to produce.

Australian coins have many interesting features. All coins have an obverse (heads) and reverse (tails) design. The obverse side of Australian decimal coins feature the year the coin was minted and an image of the reigning monarch, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. The reverse side of the original decimal coins featured unique native fauna (except the \$2 coin which features an image of an Indigenous man, the Southern Cross and some native flora), but more recently have sometimes featured commemorative designs of a famous person or event.



Where and how are the coins produced?

The Royal Australian Mint can make up to two million coins per day and each coin stays in circulation for about 30 years. That's a long time!

The process of coin-making is a long but interesting one. All Australian circulating coins are produced in Canberra at the Royal Australian Mint. The Royal Australian Mint opened in 1965 and since then has produced more than 15 billion circulating coins!

The process of creating a finished coin begins with a detailed design concept which must be approved by the appropriate Minister before it can be produced.

The coin designs are created using a combination of computer software and hands-on sculpting processes. Clay models are made from which plaster casts are created. A 3D digital scanner scans the model and computer software adds any words or dates to the design. The model is then cut directly into steel using a computer-controlled engraving machine. This can take up to 24 hours.

A coin press then presses the reverse (tails) design and the obverse (heads) design onto blank coins at the same time. The coin presses can strike up to 650 blanks per minute.

The coins are approved by quality control staff then bulk packed into plastic bags ready for shipping to banks across the country. Did you know that much work is involved in designing and producing a coin?

Note – The main reference for this fact sheet is The Royal Australian Mint website: ramint.gov.au

