

Starter Reading – Misuse of the Emblem

In times of peace, medical personnel of the Australian Defence Force retain their right to use the emblem on the medical sites, equipment and so on. **Otherwise, use of the emblem is strictly controlled.**

Australian Red Cross may use the emblem for its own operations and publicity but, even then, the emblem must be small in proportion and used under strict conditions – so that no one could possibly think it was being used in the sense of protection. For example, red cross could never put an emblem on a roof top. That could only occur during an armed conflict in which Australian Red Cross was, for example, establishing a **safety zone for civilians sheltering under the cross.**

It is important to understand that the red cross **does not ‘belong to’ or is not ‘owned by’ Australian Red Cross.** It is **not a trademark or a logo**, but an international symbol of protection, set apart by international humanitarian law. The Geneva Conventions are the international treaties, or rules, of war, agreed to by all 196 nations, and also accepted into national law – in Australia’s case, the ***Geneva Conventions Act 1957 (Cth)***.

In Australia it is a breach of the law to use the red cross emblem, **without the written permission of the Minister of Defence.** It is also the Minister of Defence who potentially could prosecute those who misuse it.

Australian Red Cross works to educate all Australians that the real meaning of the red cross emblem is **‘Don’t shoot’**. It should not be confused as simply standing for ‘health’ or ‘helping’. The correct symbol for First Aid sites and services in Australia is a **white cross on a dark green background.**