

In the hoist, 16 vertical black and red columns represent the official regions of New Zealand proper (for the civil ships ensign, their colour order is reversed). A silver fern frond overlays the columns in the canton, angled upward to afford maximum visibility when the flag hangs slack. In the lower canton the columns morph into 22 Escheresque blocks. These can be taken to represent New Zealand's official regions plus six other major areas of the full Realm of New Zealand: the Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau, the Ross Dependency, the Chatham Islands, and the Kermadec Islands. In the fly, the Southern Cross completes the design.