



Australian Government  
Department of the  
Prime Minister and Cabinet

# AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL Gemstone



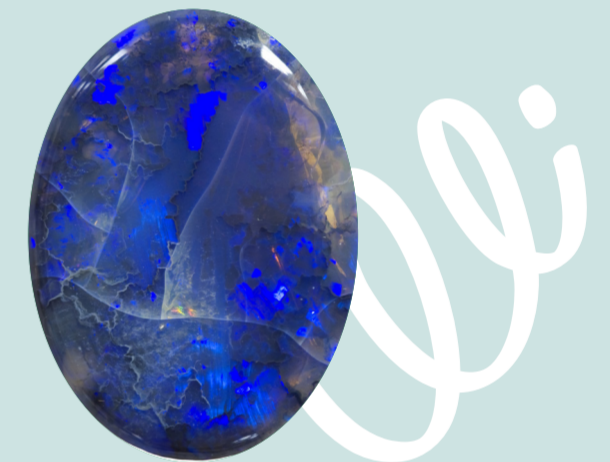
Opal, also known to Indigenous people as the fire of the desert, is a powerful symbol of Australia's arid interior.

Australia's national gemstone is the opal, a stone famous across the world for its brilliant colours. In Indigenous stories, a rainbow created the colours of the opal when it touched the earth.



## BLACK OPAL

Australia is home to the world's highest quality, precious opal. The most famous is black opal from Lightning Ridge in New South Wales. Black opal has a colour play of red, green, blue, violet, magenta or yellow against a dark background.



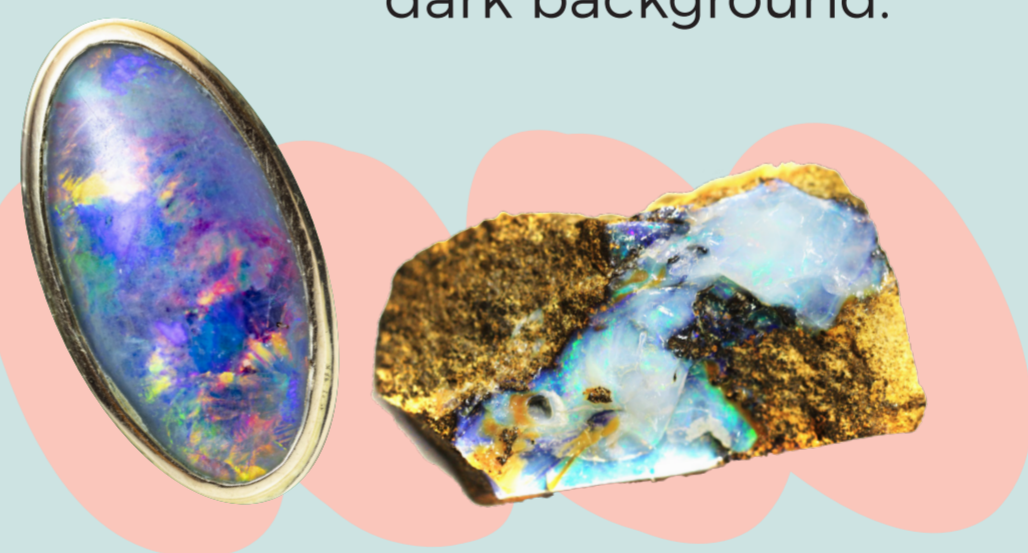
Above: A black opal.

## HISTORY

Australian opals are valued for their stability as well as brilliance. Opals from other countries can be affected by volcanic rock or have high water content, meaning they tend to crack or craze during cutting or polishing, or during hot or dry conditions.

Opal production supports many communities in South Australia, New South Wales and Queensland.

Australia's precious opals include black opal, white opal, crystal opal, fire opal and boulder opal.



Above: Australian stamp circa 1970.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Australia's opal fields are the biggest in the world.



## PROCLAMATION

The opal was proclaimed Australia's national gemstone on 23 July 1993.

To find out more about Australia's national symbols visit [pmc.gov.au/resource-centre](http://pmc.gov.au/resource-centre)