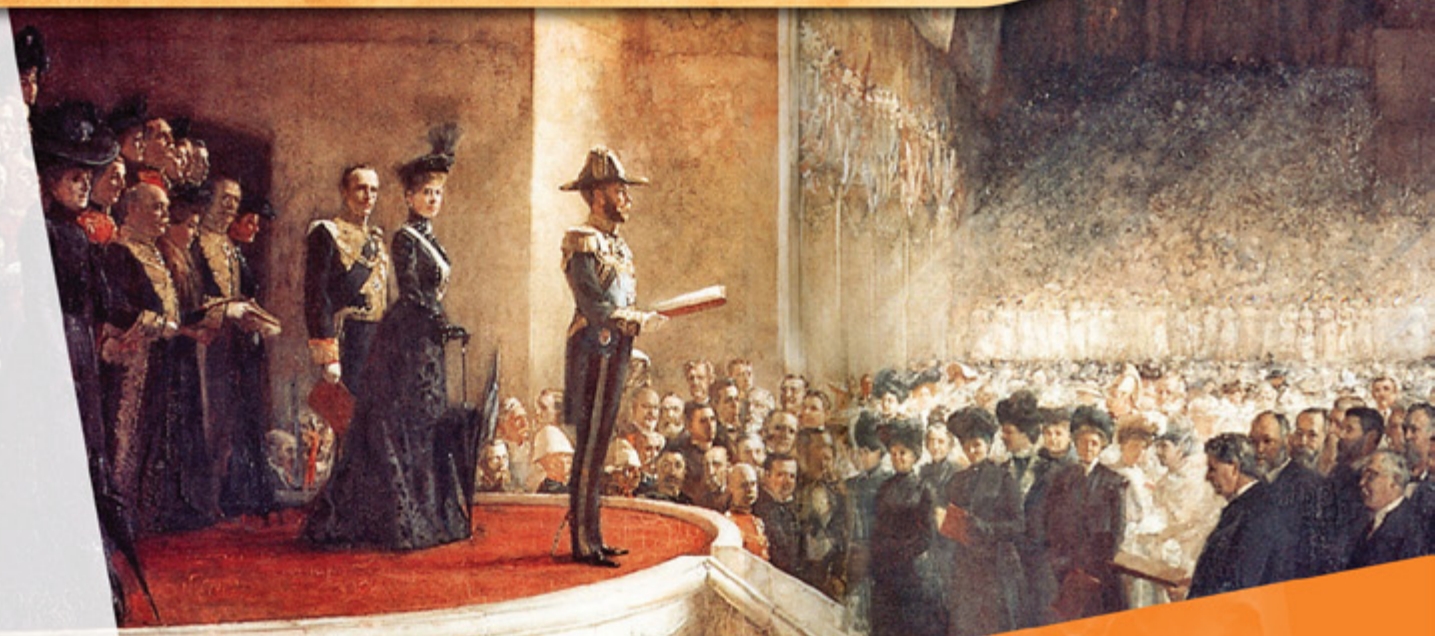


# Stories from Australia's History



## The Story of Federation



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GRAPHIC PAGES!

When a word is printed in **bold**, click on it to find its meaning.

ON THE GRAPHIC PAGES, TEXT WITH THIS COLOURED BACKGROUND COMES FROM A HISTORICAL SOURCE.

# Stories from Australia's history

The story of modern Australia starts on 26 January 1788. On that day, Captain Arthur Phillip arrived at Sydney Cove from England with the **convict** ships of the First Fleet. The new **settlement** brought disaster to Australia's **Indigenous peoples** because the newcomers took their land. This event marks the beginning of Australia as we know it today.

**T**he new **colony** of New South Wales grew quickly. Soon European settlers spread out across Australia and took up land in Tasmania, Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria and Queensland. By 1860, all the settlements except Western Australia were separate colonies, each with its own government and laws. There was no such thing as the **nation** of Australia.

Having separate colonies meant that things like railways and rivers were governed by different rules in different parts of the country. This caused lots of problems. Then, a New South Wales **politician** named Henry Parkes had the idea of joining all the colonies together in a **federation** to form one nation. It took many years, but the struggle towards federation is one of the key stories in Australia's history.

## What does it mean?

Today, Australians proudly belong to one nation with its own flag and power shared between the states and the **Commonwealth** – an arrangement known as a federation.

**federation:** joining together different states under a central government

Henry Parkes  
idea of joining  
the colonies  
together in a  
federation to  
form a nation.  
It took many years  
of struggle to  
achieve  
the key story  
of Australia's  
history.

# The story of Federation

On a warm, windy morning on New Year's Day 1901, a huge parade wound through the streets of Sydney to Centennial Park. Crowds cheered as the country's leaders climbed the steps of a white pavilion and signed the documents declaring Australia to be one nation. Edmund Barton, the new Prime Minister, and Alfred Deakin, his Attorney-General, were sworn in as the leaders of the new **federal** government. They had worked tirelessly and overcome many difficulties to make this happen.

**H**owever, Henry Parkes, known as the 'Father of Federation', was not there. He did not live to see the Commonwealth of Australia that he had fought so hard for. This is the story of the people, the ideas and the events that led to Federation in 1901 and how it changed Australia forever.

On 1 January 1901, thousands of people celebrated in Centennial Park in Sydney as Edmund Barton and Alfred Deakin were sworn in as leaders of the new nation of Australia.



# The big picture

In the 1800s, the **colonies** of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania were like separate countries. They each had their own governments, armies, railways, taxes and immigration laws. There was fierce jealousy between the colonies, especially between New South Wales, the oldest and largest 'mother colony', and gold-rich, proud Victoria.

## The problem of separate colonies

There were many problems caused by the colonies not working together. Each colony charged tariffs, or taxes, on goods coming in, so trading goods within Australia was complicated and expensive. Trains from New South Wales could not run on Victorian or South Australian railway tracks. Armies run separately by each colony were not big enough to defend Australia against invaders. A major issue was that there were no common immigration laws and no agreement on who should come into Australia.

By 1880, Melbourne was a busy, thriving city, but its laws were completely different from the laws in the other colonies. Each colony thought its laws made the most sense and didn't want to change them.

## White Australia

Racist attitudes were common in the 1800s. Thousands of Chinese people came to Victoria during the gold rushes in the 1850s. In Queensland, Pacific Islanders were brought in to work on sugar plantations. These people worked hard and competed with locals for jobs. Times were tough and jobs were scarce, and soon Australians began to resent the foreigners. Soon there were calls to 'keep Australia white' and ban all other races. That could only be done if the colonies joined together and passed one immigration law for the whole country.

## The path to Federation

The path to Federation would be long and difficult. There was a lot of work to be done before the colonies could agree on how the new **nation** would be run.

First, the colonies had to agree that federation was a good idea.

A **Constitution** had to be written.

Every colony had to agree to the Constitution.

Each colony's **parliament** then had to vote on the Constitution.

Once the parliament had agreed to it, the Constitution had to be put to a people's vote. A majority in each state would have to vote 'yes' to it.

### What does it mean?

**Constitution:** a document stating the guidelines and laws by which a nation is governed

## Early moves towards Federation

Since the 1840s there had been calls for Federation, but the colonies could never agree on how it should work. In 1885, a **Federal** Council was set up, with representatives from each colony working together to make decisions. However, the Council had no power and New South Wales refused to join. The premier of that state, Henry Parkes, did not think the Federal Council was the right solution. He believed that the only way forward was to join all the colonies together into one federation. Fellow **politicians** Edmund Barton and Alfred Deakin agreed. Together, these three men took on the fight for federation.

## Eyewitness words

Sir John Forrest, Premier of Western Australia, felt that as all the settlers had come from Britain, there was no reason for them to live under separate laws.

“We have the same people sprung from the same race ... There is nothing to keep us apart. We are all one people, and why should we be divided by ... lines drawn on a map ...?”

# Key people

Three people played key roles in the story of Federation.

## Sir Henry Parkes

**Born:** 1815 in England

**Role:** Premier of New South Wales and first leader of the Federation movement

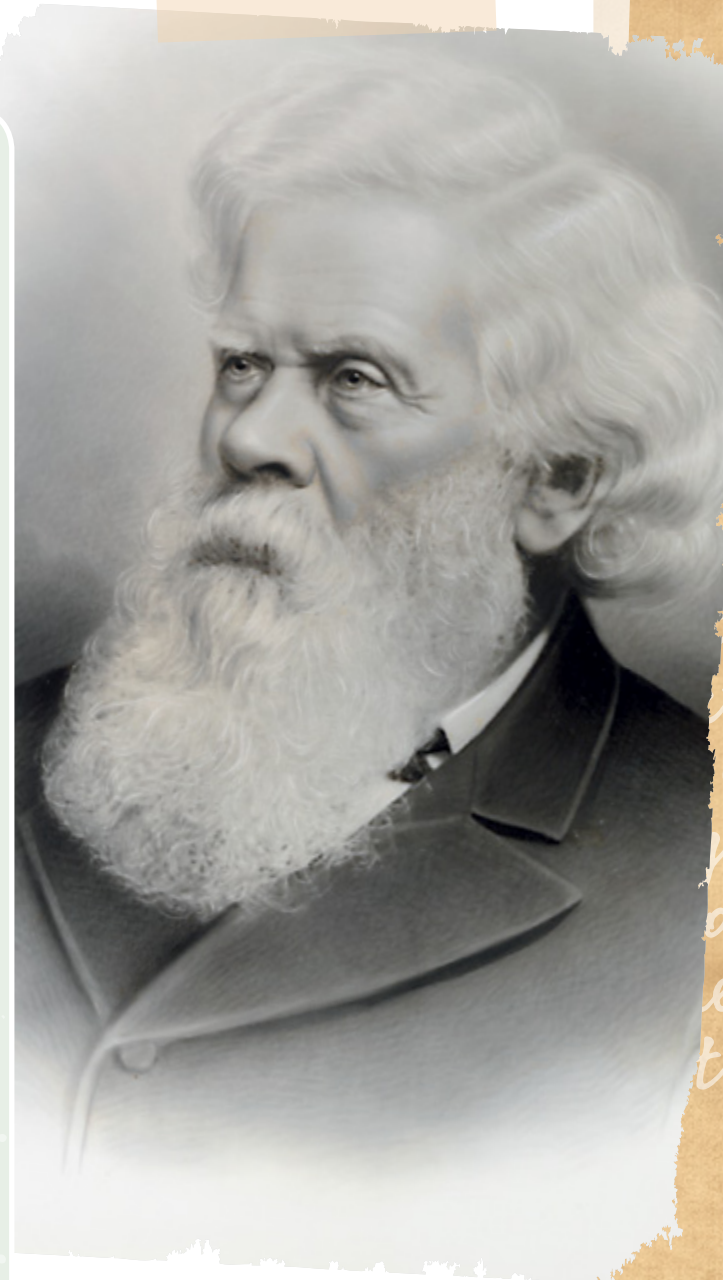
**Age at Federation (1901):** Parkes would have been 86 in 1901, but he died before Federation was achieved.

**Died:** 1896 in New South Wales

**Appearance:** A massive, tall, sturdy man, with long white hair and beard, a rugged, red face and piercing blue eyes

**Character:** Bold, impressive and impatient, Parkes was a strong man with a strong personality. Loud-voiced, with a cutting wit and dramatic manner, he was a brilliant speaker and **politician**. Parkes was vain and jealous of his enemies, but he was widely respected and a natural leader.

**Comments:** Uneducated and poor, Parkes became Australia's leading politician through sheer force of character. From the 1860s onwards, he fought for Federation by giving rousing speeches, organising federation conferences and persuading fellow politicians. His efforts earned him the title the 'Father of Federation'.



## Alfred Deakin

**Born:** 1856 in Melbourne

**Role:** Victorian leader of the Federation movement and co-writer of the Australian Constitution

**Age at Federation:** 44

**Died:** 1919 in Melbourne

**Appearance:** Tall, slim, dark wavy hair, neat beard, dark eyes, well dressed

**Character:** Intelligent, well educated, charming, hardworking, a powerful speaker and clear thinker. Deakin was polite and friendly, but a very private man.

**Comments:** Deakin was a brilliant politician and journalist with strong democratic ideas whose talent and warm personality were vital in achieving Federation.



## Sir Edmund Barton

**Born:** 1849 in Sydney

**Role:** Leader of the Federation movement after Henry Parkes retired and co-writer of the Constitution

**Age at Federation:** 51

**Died:** 1920 in New South Wales

**Appearance:** Tall, portly, grey wavy hair, clean-shaven, sparkling black eyes

**Character:** Friendly and easygoing, Barton enjoyed food and good company. He was intelligent, well read and a clear thinker.

**Comments:** Barton was a people person who could persuade enemies to find common ground. His friendly personality and unwavering support helped bring about Federation.



# A country divided

By the 1880s, people in Australia had been talking for years about joining together into one nation. A Federal Council had been set up in 1836, but it had no power to make laws for the whole country. New South Wales Premier Henry Parkes strongly supported Federation, but the colonies could never agree on what kind of national government they should have.

**Separate colonies created problems on the railways ...**  
**... for cross-border trade ...**  
**... on the rivers ...**  
**... and on farms.**  
**The separate colonies disagreed over defence ...**  
**... and immigration.**  
**Something had to be done ...**

**Farewell from New South Wales Welcome to Victoria**  
**ALL PASSENGERS CHANGE TRAINS!**

**YOU'LL HAVE TO PAY TAX ON THOSE GOODS.**  
**BUT I'M ONLY GOING TO THE NEXT TOWN!**

**FARMERS OVER THE BORDER ARE TAKING ALL MY WATER!**  
**THERE SHOULD BE ONE LAW FOR THE WHOLE RIVER!**

**BUT I GET TWICE AS MUCH FOR THEM IN NEW SOUTH WALES!**

**WE DON'T WANT YOUR TYPE IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA!**  
**BUT THEY LET ME WORK IN QUEENSLAND - WHY NOT HERE?**

**THE FEDERAL COUNCIL CAN SOLVE THE PROBLEMS.**  
**NO! WE NEED ONE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT!**  
**... but the politicians could not agree.**

**June 1889**  
**Parkes had a conversation with the Governor of New South Wales, Lord Carrington.**

**THEN WHY DON'T YOU DO IT? IT WOULD BE A GLORIOUS FINISH TO YOUR LIFE.**  
**HMMM ...**  
**Parkes decided to put all his energy into Federation.**

**FEDERATION SEEMS A HOPELESS CAUSE, MR PARKES.**  
**I COULD FEDERATE THE COLONIES IN TWELVE MONTHS.**

**He wrote to his daughter ...**  
*My dear daughter, [I am] seriously thinking of offering myself as Leader in a great movement to federate ... all the colonies.*

**... and then to his fellow premiers.**  
**Premier of Victoria Duncan Gillies refused ...**  
**... but Parkes travelled around, gathering support.**  
**Queensland Parliament**

*... I suggest we hold a meeting of all the colonies to write a Constitution [a set of rules] for a united Australia ...*  
*Henry Parkes*

**IF HE WANTS FEDERATION, WHY WON'T HE JOIN THE FEDERAL COUNCIL?**  
**ARE YOU WITH ME, GENTLEMEN?**  
**YES!**

**24 October**  
**On his way back from Queensland, Parkes visited Tenterfield in New South Wales.**

**... A GREAT NATIONAL GOVERNMENT FOR ALL AUSTRALIA.**  
**YES!**  
**HEAR, HEAR!**

**I CALL FOR A CONFERENCE OF ALL THE PREMIERS TO START THE PROCESS.**

*Dinner tonight in honour of Premier Henry Parkes*

**The Sydney Morning Herald newspaper reported Parkes' speech. His 'Tenterfield Oration' was a turning point.**

**6 February 1890**

Parke's speech fired up support for Federation, so the premiers attended an Australasian Federation Conference in Melbourne.

CLAP-CLAP

CLAP-CLAP

GENTLEMEN, THE FORMER PREMIER OF VICTORIA, MR JAMES SERVICE.

Service supported border tariffs but the other colonies did not.

[THIS DISAGREEMENT OVER TARIFFS IS] A LION [THAT] STANDS IN THE WAY OF FEDERATION. IT MUST BE KILLED OR IT WILL KILL FEDERATION.

THAT'S TRUE.

Then Parkes spoke.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT TARIFFS. THINK OF WHAT BINDS US TOGETHER -

'THE CRIMSON THREAD OF KINSHIP'

YES! WE ARE ONE PEOPLE!

Sydney Town Hall.

Parkes addressed the delegates.

There were many issues to discuss ...

LET US JOIN TOGETHER: ONE PEOPLE, ONE COUNTRY!

HOORAY!

I HOPE SO.

... WOMEN SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO VOTE IN OUR NEW NATION.

Inspired by Parkes' speech, the leaders agreed to hold a convention to write a Constitution - a set of laws for all of Australia.

*A National Australasian Convention will be held 'to consider and report upon a ... scheme for a Federal Constitution.'*

Agreed

The National Australasian Convention was planned for March to April 1891.

THE CONVENTION WILL BE HERE, IN SYDNEY, AND I WILL RUN IT.

YES, SIR. HOW MANY ARE COMING?

FORTY-FIVE ALTOGETHER.

Delegates

7 members from each colony, plus 3 from New Zealand

It would be the most important meeting between the colonies ever held.

Next morning, the delegates got to work on preparing the Constitution ...

... reading ...

Constitution of the United States of America

Draft Constitution by Charles Kingston (SA)

... discussing issues ...

WHAT ABOUT BORDER TARIFFS?

VICTORIA NEEDS TARIFFS TO PROTECT HER INDUSTRIES.

NO, DEAKIN. WE NEED FREE TRADE ACROSS THE BORDERS.

INDEPENDENCE FROM BRITAIN!

NEVER!

GOD SAVE OUR QUEEN!

For three weeks, they debated laws for the new nation ...

Parliaments in each colony chose their delegates carefully. They included: from Victoria ...

... and from New South Wales.

Alfred Deakin

Edmund Barton

**2 March 1891**

Delegates came from all over Australia.

Parliament House - Sydney

They had just five weeks to write a Constitution.

**26 March**

... but they still had a long way to go.

BARTON, LET'S KEEP WORKING OVER THE EASTER BREAK.

ALRIGHT

GOOD - A WORKING HOLIDAY.

Barton, Charles Kingston and Samuel Griffith sailed up the Hawkesbury River on the *Lucinda*.

Each day, they worked on writing the Constitution.

THIS SECTION NEEDS RE-WRITING.

YES. THE DELEGATES DIDN'T LIKE IT.



27 March 1891 Refuge Bay, Hawkesbury River.

There was also time to relax.



29 March By the end of the Easter holiday ...

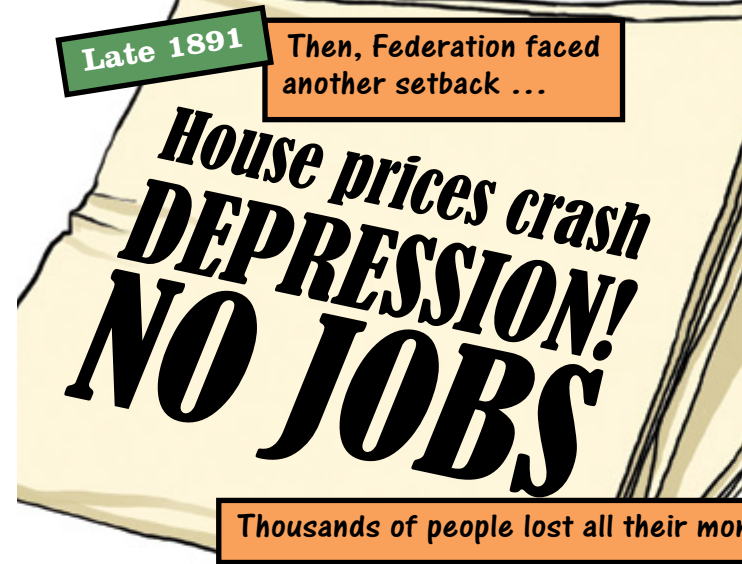
WELL, GENTLEMEN, WE HAVE DONE IT.



Next morning, back at the Convention ...

HERE IS OUR DRAFT CONSTITUTION FOR DISCUSSION.

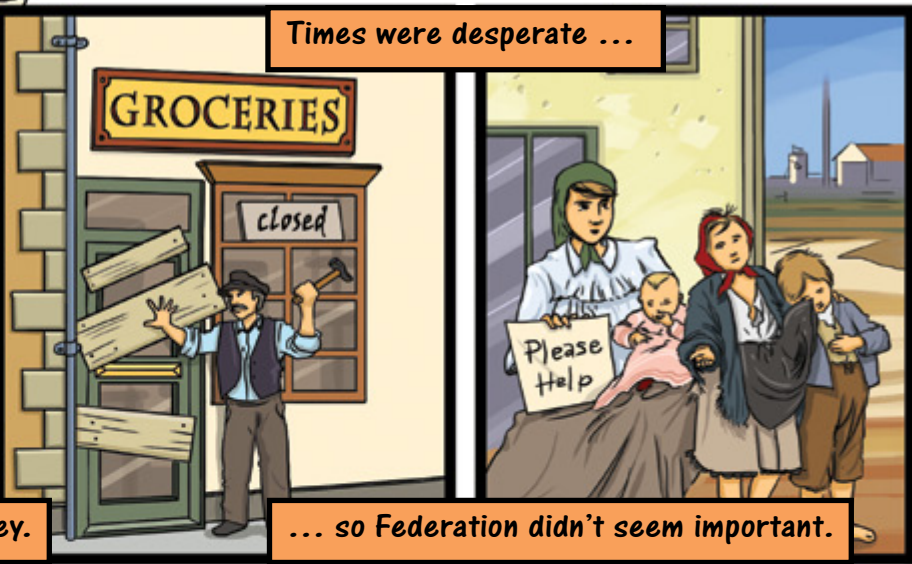
GOOD WORK, GENTLEMEN.



Late 1891 Then, Federation faced another setback ...

# House prices crash DEPRESSION! NO JOBS

Thousands of people lost all their money.



Times were desperate ...

... so Federation didn't seem important.

The delegates argued over every section, but finally ...

- CONSTITUTION**
- Two houses of **Parliament**
    - lower house elected by the people
    - upper house appointed by the Government of each **colony**
  - Queen will be Head-of-State.
    - Governor-General will represent her in Australia.
  - A new court of law - the High Court of Australia - will handle all **appeal** cases, not the Privy Council in Britain
  - Free trade between colonies - no border tariffs.



9 April

WE ARE AGREED ON THE CONSTITUTION?

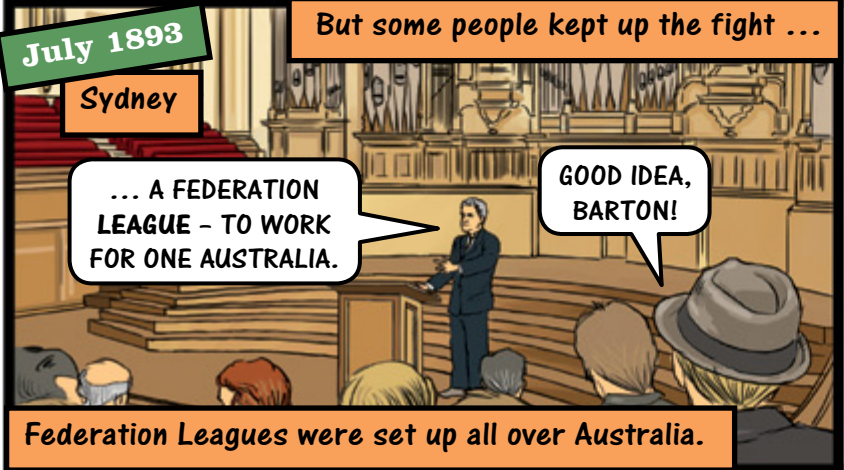
YES

AGREED



AT FEDERATION, WE SHOULD NAME THE NEW NATION THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

The delegates left Sydney full of hope.



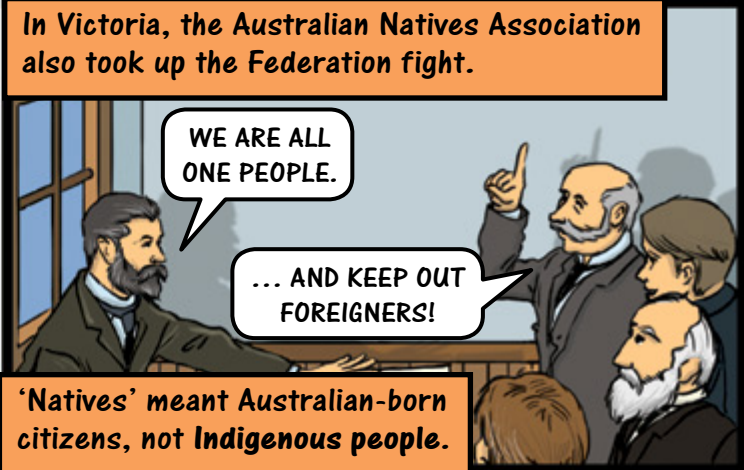
July 1893 Sydney

But some people kept up the fight ...

... A FEDERATION LEAGUE - TO WORK FOR ONE AUSTRALIA.

GOOD IDEA, BARTON!

Federation Leagues were set up all over Australia.

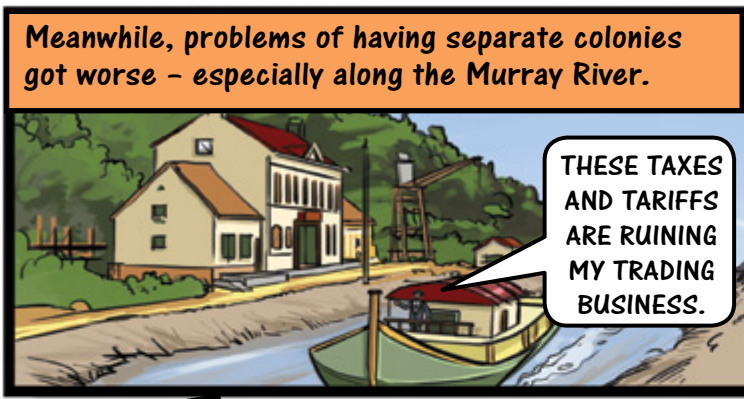


In Victoria, the Australian Natives Association also took up the Federation fight.

WE ARE ALL ONE PEOPLE.

... AND KEEP OUT FOREIGNERS!

'Natives' meant Australian-born citizens, not Indigenous people.



Meanwhile, problems of having separate colonies got worse - especially along the Murray River.

THESE TAXES AND TARIFFS ARE RUINING MY TRADING BUSINESS.

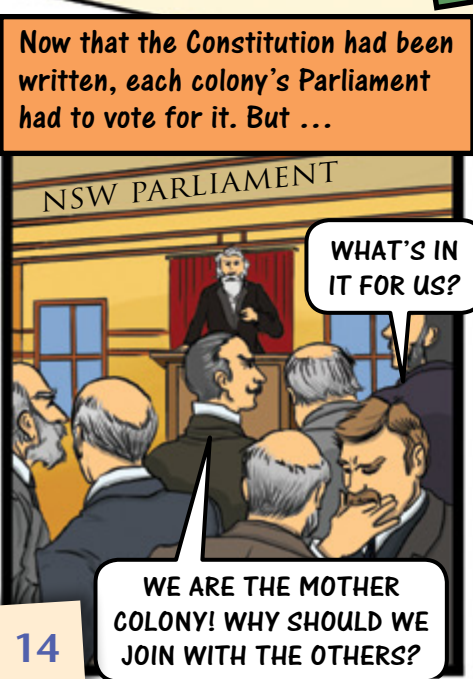


And racist feelings grew ...

WE SHOULD KEEP AUSTRALIA WHITE.

THEY'RE TAKING OUR JOBS!

The problems could not be solved by the separate colonies.



Now that the Constitution had been written, each colony's Parliament had to vote for it. But ...

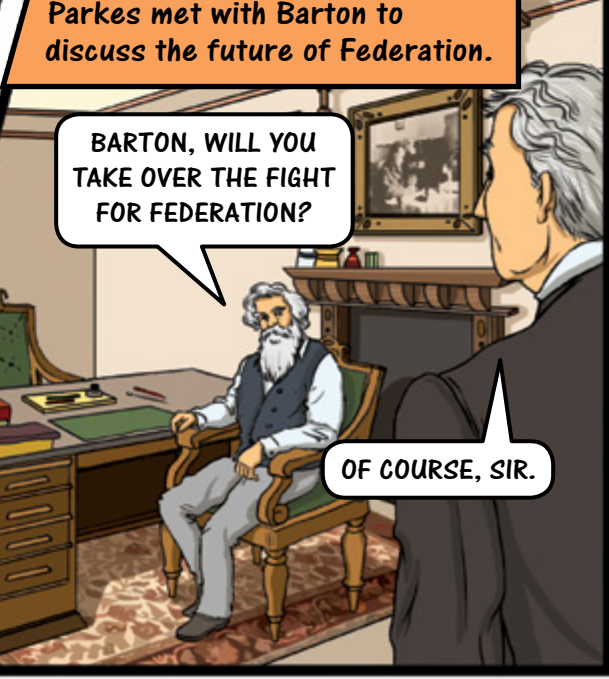
WHAT'S IN IT FOR US?

WE ARE THE MOTHER COLONY! WHY SHOULD WE JOIN WITH THE OTHERS?



Then, Premier Parkes was voted out of office, and the fight in New South Wales stalled.

I'M GETTING TOO OLD FOR THIS.



Parkes met with Barton to discuss the future of Federation.

BARTON, WILL YOU TAKE OVER THE FIGHT FOR FEDERATION?

OF COURSE, SIR.



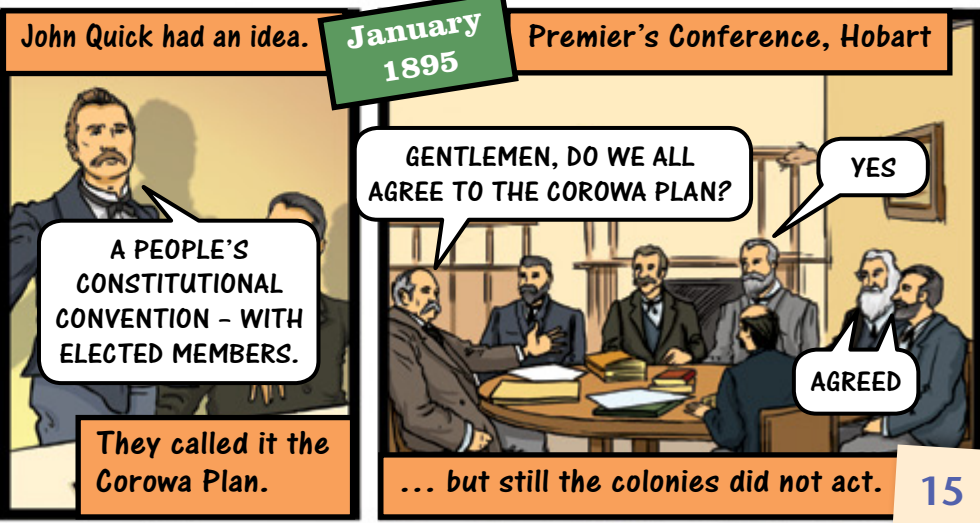
1 August

In New South Wales, the Corowa Federation League held a conference.

THE POLITICIANS DON'T CARE ABOUT FEDERATION.

BUT THE PEOPLE WANT IT!

WHAT CAN WE DO?



John Quick had an idea.

January 1895

Premier's Conference, Hobart

A PEOPLE'S CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION - WITH ELECTED MEMBERS.

They called it the Corowa Plan.

GENTLEMEN, DO WE ALL AGREE TO THE COROWA PLAN?

YES

AGREED

... but still the colonies did not act.

# Viewpoints

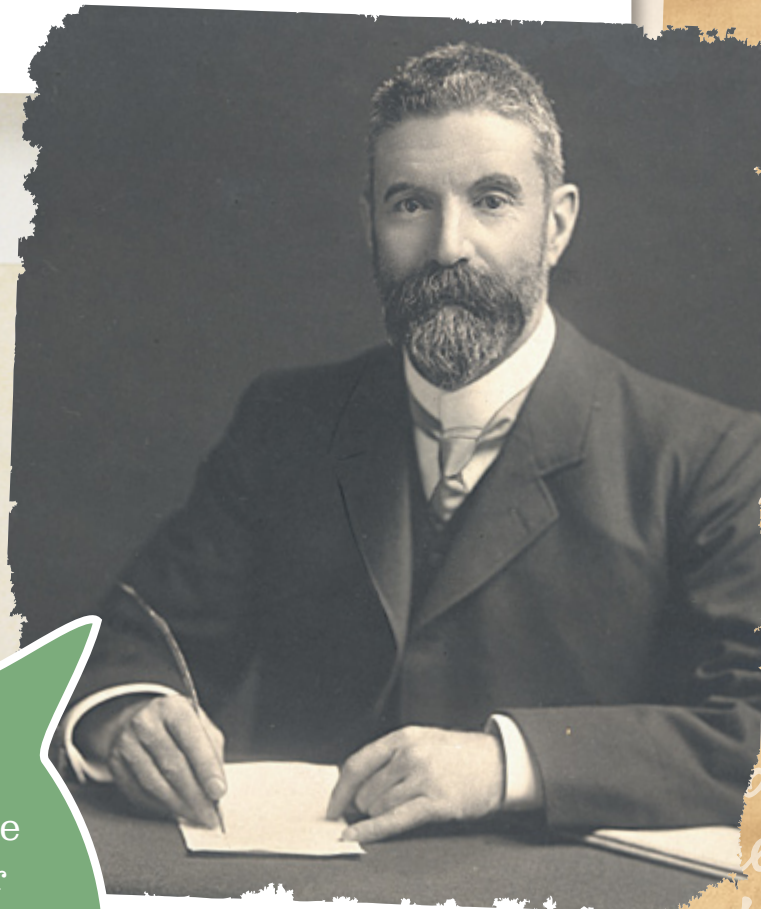
In the 1890s, fear of other races and cultures was widespread in Australia. Many people and **politicians** supported Federation because a united Australia could pass laws to stop non-British people coming into the country. Some people, however, spoke out against the idea of a 'white Australia'. These two points of view are shown in the following words spoken at the time.

## Alfred Deakin, politician

Alfred Deakin was in many ways a fair, democratic man, but he believed that workers from Asia and the Pacific Islands had to be kept out of Australia. He gave his reasons in a speech in the **Federal Parliament**:

“It is not the bad qualities, but the good qualities of these alien (foreign) races that make them so dangerous to us. It is their inexhaustible (endless) energy, their power of applying themselves to new tasks, their endurance (toughness) and low standard of living that make them such competitors [for jobs].”

Alfred Deakin, 1901



Alfred Deakin believed that Australian jobs would be taken by hardworking immigrants.

## Bruce Smith, politician

Bruce Smith was a Federal politician who did not support the idea of a white Australia. He believed it was based on **racism** rather than the fear of losing jobs, as people claimed. He explained his views:

“The foundation (basis) ... is **racial prejudice**. The whole thing is a bogey (something causing fear), a scarecrow. I ... say that a large part of the scare is founded upon a desire to make political capital (advantage) by appealing to some of the worst instincts of the ... people.”

Bruce Smith, around 1901

This cartoon, published in 1888, tried to appeal to Australians who felt that non-British people such as the Chinese were pests, and promised that Federation would stop them coming to Australia.





# One people, one Australia

As problems of defence, immigration and cross-border trade increased, support for Federation grew among the people. In 1896, Henry Parkes died, but the fight went on. A new Australian national spirit sprang up, spurred on by *The Bulletin* newspaper, the Federation Leagues and the Australian Natives Association. They called for a strong, united Australia.

**April 1896**  
Henry Parkes had been the Father of Federation ... but others continued the fight.



**Bathurst Federation League**

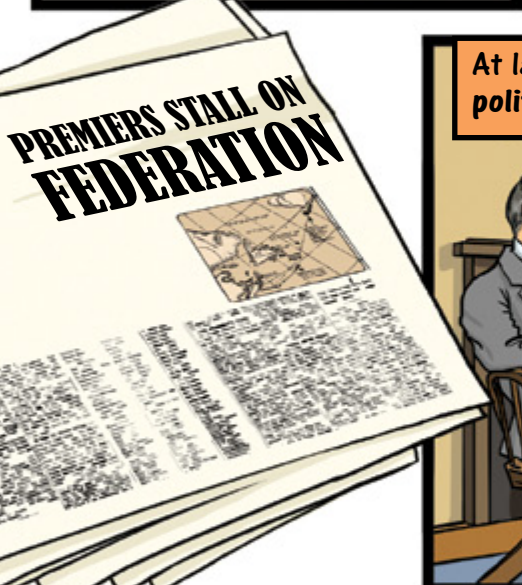


THE PREMIERS HAVE DONE NOTHING.  
WE MUST PROD THEM INTO ACTION.  
They arranged a People's Federal Convention.

**17 November**



SENATORS IN THE FEDERAL PARLIAMENT SHOULD BE ELECTED BY THE PEOPLE.  
HEAR, HEAR!  
YES!  
Two hundred people debated the 1891 Constitution and demanded a new Federation Convention with elected delegates.



At last, the politicians acted.



HMM ... I'D BETTER DO WHAT I PROMISED.

**4 March 1897**



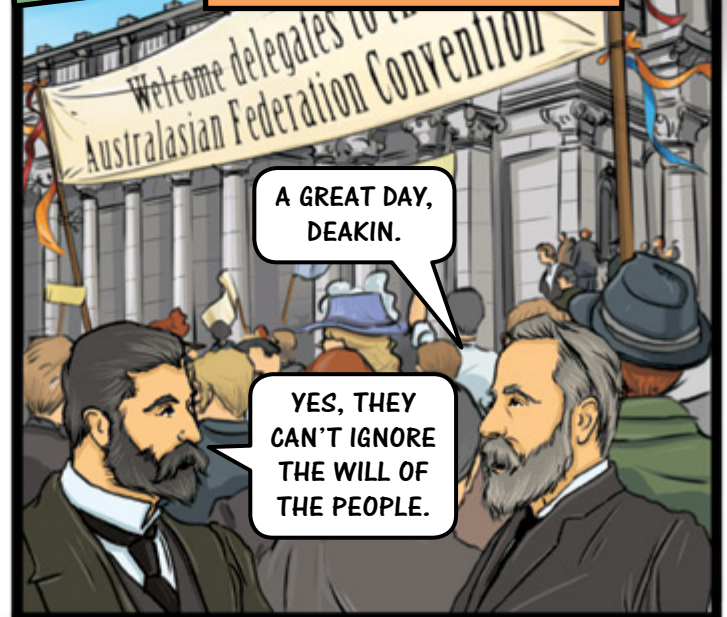
In New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria, people voted for 10 delegates from their colony.

In Western Australia, Parliament chose the delegates, but in Queensland ...



THE PEOPLE SHOULD VOTE!  
NO - WE SHOULD CHOOSE THE DELEGATES!  
... so they sent no one.

**22 March** Parliament House, Adelaide

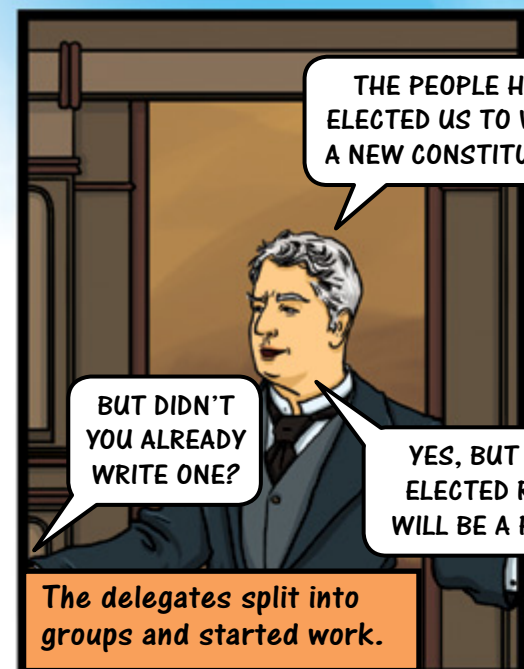


A GREAT DAY, DEAKIN.  
YES, THEY CAN'T IGNORE THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE.

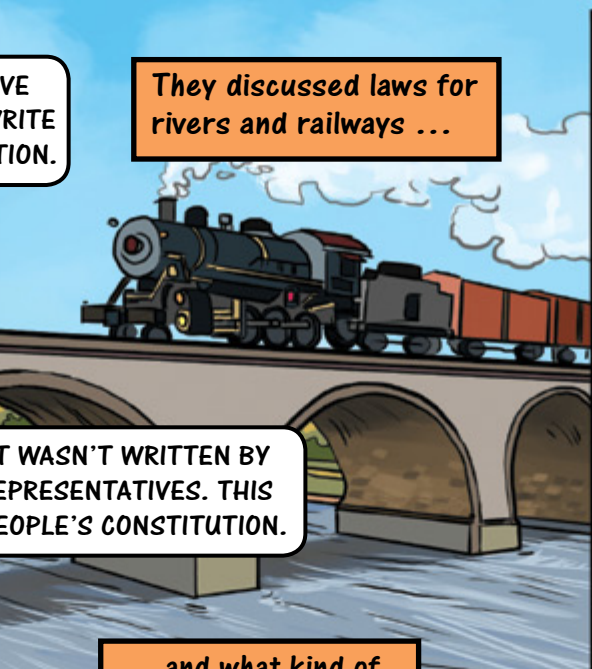
Edmund Barton led the Convention.



GENTLEMEN, THIS IS A GREAT STEP TOWARDS FEDERATION.



THE PEOPLE HAVE ELECTED US TO WRITE A NEW CONSTITUTION.  
BUT DIDN'T YOU ALREADY WRITE ONE?  
YES, BUT IT WASN'T WRITTEN BY ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES. THIS WILL BE A PEOPLE'S CONSTITUTION.  
The delegates split into groups and started work.

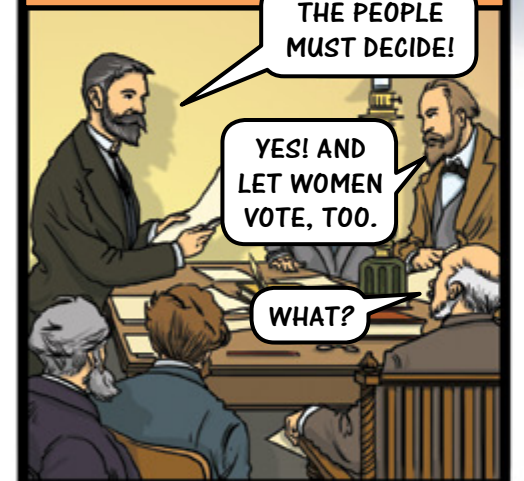


They discussed laws for rivers and railways ...  
... and what kind of government Australia should have.

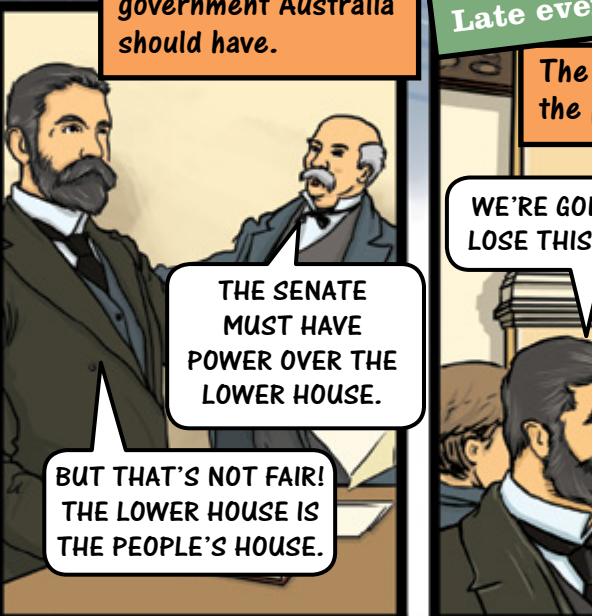


... for courts of law ...  
WE NEED A NEW COURT FOR THE WHOLE COUNTRY.  
YES - A HIGH COURT OF AUSTRALIA.

... and discussed who should vote for the new Australian parliament ...



THE PEOPLE MUST DECIDE!  
YES! AND LET WOMEN VOTE, TOO.  
WHAT?  
THE SENATE MUST HAVE POWER OVER THE LOWER HOUSE.  
BUT THAT'S NOT FAIR! THE LOWER HOUSE IS THE PEOPLE'S HOUSE.



Late evening.  
The Convention decided to vote on the powers of the Senate.



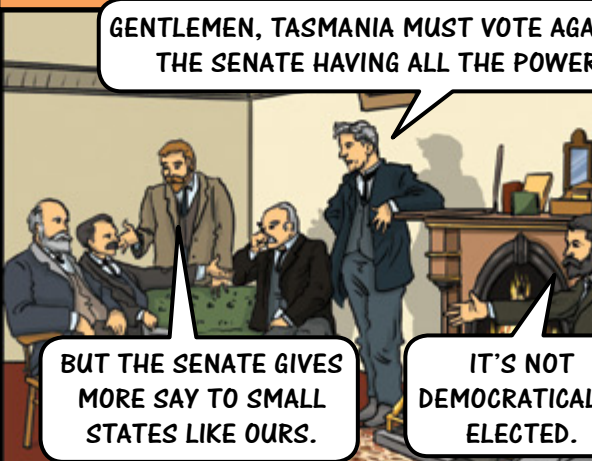
WE'RE GOING TO LOSE THIS VOTE.  
YES, DEAKIN, UNLESS WE CAN GET THE TASMANIANS TO CHANGE THEIR MINDS.

Barton thought of a way to delay the vote ...



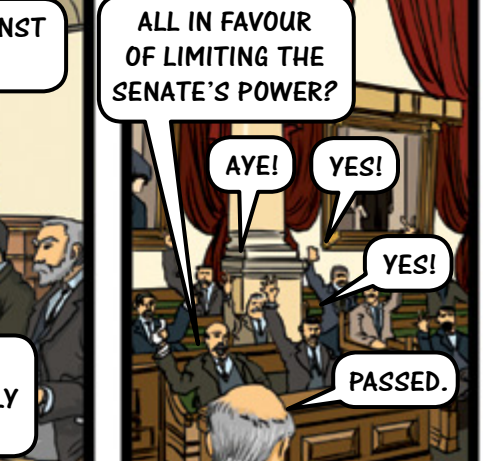
I WOULD LIKE TO SPEAK ON THIS ISSUE ... (COUGH-COUGH) ... BUT I HAVE A COLD ...  
The delegates agreed to put off the vote until the next morning.

All night, Deakin and Barton argued with the Tasmanians ...



GENTLEMEN, TASMANIA MUST VOTE AGAINST THE SENATE HAVING ALL THE POWER.  
BUT THE SENATE GIVES MORE SAY TO SMALL STATES LIKE OURS.  
IT'S NOT DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED.  
... until they agreed to change their vote.

Next morning ...



ALL IN FAVOUR OF LIMITING THE SENATE'S POWER?  
AYE! YES! YES!  
PASSED.  
Barton's tactic had worked.

**23 April 1897**  
Adelaide

After four weeks' work, the Australasian Federation Convention broke up ...

THANK YOU, GENTLEMEN. WE HAVE A NEW DRAFT CONSTITUTION.

... to give each colony time to discuss the new Constitution.

WE MEET AGAIN IN SEPTEMBER.

YES, IN SYDNEY.

**1898**

Across Australia, Federation was gaining more support because of concerns about defence ...

WE NEED TO UNITE TO DEFEND OUR COUNTRY.

YES - AN AUSTRALIAN ARMY AND NAVY.

... immigration ...

QUITE RIGHT.

AFTER FEDERATION, THE BRITISH WILL HAVE NO SAY.

WHITE AUSTRALIA PLAN RACIST, SAY BRITISH

Keep Australia White

**2 September**  
Parliament House, Sydney.

The Federation Convention met again.

THE COLONIES HAVE ASKED FOR ALMOST 300 CHANGES!

REALLY? BUT WE HAVE ONLY THREE WEEKS HERE!

Three weeks later ...

WE'VE RUN OUT OF TIME.

WE HAVEN'T FINISHED!

They agreed to meet again in the summer in Melbourne.

**20 January 1898**  
Melbourne

The Federation Convention met for the third time.

PHEW, IT'S HOT!

FEDERATION WILL GIVE WOMEN THE VOTE.

HMM ...

... and women's rights.

Alfred Deakin travelled through the colonies ...

ONE PEOPLE! ONE AUSTRALIA!

WE'LL LOSE OUR PLACE AS THE MOTHER COLONY IF WE FEDERATE.

March 1898

But in New South Wales, Premier George Reid had doubts.

The delegates set to work, discussing every change until they agreed.

The **Federal** Government will control:  
- old-age pensions  
- union disputes  
- trade

New High Court of Australia  
- no court appeals to the British Privy Council  
Senate - will be elected

**17 March**

Finally, after nearly two months ...

ARE WE ALL AGREED, GENTLEMEN?

AGREED!

The Australasian Federation Convention had done its work.

Now, the people in each colony had to vote 'yes' or 'no' to Federation and the new Constitution.

Draft Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia

New South Wales Parliament

HA-HA-HA

GENTLEMEN, THERE ARE SERIOUS PROBLEMS WITH THIS CONSTITUTION!

BUT YOU HELPED TO WRITE IT!

WELL ... YES ... ER ... NO ...

They called him 'Yes-No Reid'.

**3-4 June**

In New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia, the people voted on Federation.

People's **Referendum**

Are you in favour of the Proposed Federal Constitution...?

Yes

No

Three colonies voted 'yes', but ...

... not in New South Wales.

REFERENDUM FAILS IN NSW

Federation could not go ahead without the largest colony.

**Late June 1898** Premier Reid wrote to the other premiers ...

**29 January 1899** Melbourne

The Premiers' Conference began.

The premiers discussed changes to the Constitution.

**Late June 1898** I suggest a Premiers' meeting to make changes to the Constitution that my colony will accept.

**Late June 1898** The premiers agreed - including those of Queensland and Western Australia.

**29 January 1899** SORRY - NO PRESS ALLOWED.

**29 January 1899** IT'S A SECRET MEETING.

**29 January 1899** THE NATIONAL CAPITAL MUST BE IN SYDNEY.

**29 January 1899** NO - MELBOURNE!

**29 January 1899** HOW ABOUT IN BETWEEN?

**29 January 1899** They agreed on a new capital city at least 160 kilometres away from Sydney.

**5 April 1900** But there was one last point ...

**5 April 1900** THE HIGH COURT MUST BE THE FINAL COURT OF APPEAL!

**5 April 1900** NO! YOU MUST ALLOW APPEALS TO THE BRITISH PRIVY COUNCIL.

**5 April 1900** They argued for weeks, until ...

**5 April 1900** Section 74 HIGH COURT OF AUSTRALIA No appeal

**June** (WE MIGHT AS WELL) PACK UP AND GO HOME.

**June** I HAVE AN IDEA!

**June** Barton worked out a middle way ...

**June** Section 74 The High Court of Australia may decide which court cases can appeal to the British Privy Council.

**June** Everyone agreed at last.

**2 February** The premiers' 'secret' conference wound up.

**2 February** WITH THESE CHANGES, MY COLONY WILL VOTE YES NEXT TIME.

**2 February** I SHOULD HOPE SO.

**June - July** The colonies voted again on the changed Constitution.

**June - July** READ ALL ABOUT IT!

**June - July** Then Queensland voted 'yes' in September.

**June - July** Referendum People of NSW vote YES

**June - July** In Western Australia, the parliament couldn't decide whether to hold a referendum, but ...

**June - July** FEDERATION CAN GO AHEAD WITHOUT THEM.

**June - July** YES.

**July** The British Parliament passed the Constitution Bill - and Federation was achieved.

**July** HOORAY!!

**July** 1 January 1901 Centennial Park, Sydney

**July** The Commonwealth of Australia came into being. Edmund Barton was its first Prime Minister.

**July** Back in Western Australia ...

**July** YES - THE MINERS IN KALGOORLIE WILL RIOT IF WE DON'T.

**July** WE'D BETTER LET THE PEOPLE VOTE ON FEDERATION.

**July** On 31 July 1900, the people there voted for Federation, too.

**December** London, England

**December** A majority of Australians had voted for Federation ...

**December** MR CHAMBERLAIN, WHAT SHALL WE DO ABOUT THE AUSTRALIANS?

**December** WE NEED TO MEET THEM FACE TO FACE.

**December** ... but the British Parliament still had to approve the Constitution.

**January 1900** Barton, Deakin, Kingston and James Dickson sailed for England.

**January 1900** WE WILL NEED TO EXPLAIN THE CONSTITUTION TO THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT.

**January 1900** YES, SO THEY'LL VOTE FOR IT.

**March** Joseph Chamberlain's office, London

**March** GENTLEMEN, WE MUST MAKE SOME CHANGES TO THIS CONSTITUTION.

**March** BUT THE AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE HAVE VOTED FOR IT, SIR!

**March** They argued back and forth and slowly the British gave in.

**1 January 1901** Centennial Park, Sydney

**1 January 1901** The Commonwealth of Australia came into being. Edmund Barton was its first Prime Minister.

**1 January 1901** The Australian people celebrated.

# What happened next?

At Federation, Edmund Barton was appointed caretaker Prime Minister until **Federal elections** were held on 29 and 30 March 1901. Barton won his seat and became Australia's first elected Prime Minister. Alfred Deakin became the Attorney-General. Women in South Australia and Western Australia were allowed to vote in the Federal election of 1901. Women in other states had to wait until 1902 for the same right. **Indigenous** Australians were given the vote in 1962.

## Opening of Federal Parliament

The opening of the first Federal **Parliament** was held in the Exhibition Buildings in Melbourne on 9 May 1901. The Duke and Duchess of York came from England to represent the Queen, and were greeted by 12000 invited guests. The Federal Parliament continued to meet in Melbourne until Parliament House in Canberra was built in 1927.

Artist Tom Roberts painted this picture, *Opening of the First Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia*, in 1903. The massive painting includes 250 individual portraits.



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## The White Australia policy

The White Australia policy became official when the *Immigration Restriction Act* was passed in 1901. The law forced some immigrants to pass a dictation test before they were allowed to enter the country. The test could be in any language – this was up to the immigration officer – and English was rarely chosen. Naturally, few people passed. This test was used to keep non-British people out. The policy was eased after World War II when many European refugees and workers were accepted into Australia. It was finally ended in the 1970s and is widely thought to have been an unfair policy.

## A new capital city

As agreed in the Australian Constitution, a new capital city was planned between Melbourne and Sydney. A site was found around 300 kilometres south-west of Sydney, and in 1910, the Australian Capital Territory was established. The city of Canberra was designed by American architect Walter Burley-Griffin. The first Parliament House was officially occupied by the Federal Parliament on 9 May 1927. 'Old Parliament House' was used until 1988, when the current Parliament House was built.

Today, Australia is a thriving, **multicultural** country, where people from many different backgrounds are Australian citizens.

## Eyewitness words

“To say it (Federation) was fated to be (certain to happen) is to say nothing ... any one of a thousand minor incidents (events) might have deferred (delayed) it for years ... To those who watched its inner workings, followed its fortunes ... [the fact that Federation actually happened] must always appear to have been ... a series of miracles.”

Alfred Deakin, 1900



# The effects of Federation

Federation was one of the most important events in Australia's history and had wide-ranging effects.

## Within Australia

Federation provided a strong, central government which had the power and the money to do many things that separate **colonies** could not do on their own. Old age pensions were paid for the first time. Interstate roads, shipping and railways now worked under one set of **Federal** laws, and border taxes were banned. Postage and other communications were unified across Australia. Disagreements between workers and bosses were now dealt with in an Australian industrial court, and decisions made by the court applied throughout the country.

## A new national spirit

After Federation, a national spirit grew strongly. People began to believe there were things that all Australians had in common, such as mateship, **equality** and a fair go for all. Australian Army soldiers showed that spirit when they fought at Gallipoli in 1915, and the Anzac legend was born. Non-European migrants were kept out of the country under the White Australia policy, but after it was abolished, Australia grew into a strong and **multicultural nation**.

## What ever happened to ...

### Alfred Deakin?

Alfred Deakin became a leading member of the Australian government and served three terms as Prime Minister, between 1903 and 1910. He remained a strong, wise leader until he retired from politics in 1913.

Deakin died after a long illness on 7 October 1919 and was given a state funeral.

Alfred Deakin was responsible for establishing the country's most important bodies, such as the High Court and the Australian Navy, and is remembered as a great prime minister.



## Timeline

This timeline shows the main events relating to the struggle for Federation.



27 April 1896  
Henry Parkes dies.

July 1893  
Edmund Barton forms a Federation League in Sydney. Across Australia, other Leagues follow.

6 February 1890  
The Australasian Federation Conference is held in Melbourne.

1881 Henry Parkes suggests a Federal Council made up of representatives from each colony.

17-21 November 1896  
The People's Federal Convention is held in Bathurst.

4 March 1897  
Elections are held for delegates to the Federation Convention.

June-September 1899  
All the colonies but Western Australia vote 'yes' to the changed Constitution.

1 January 1901  
The Commonwealth of Australia is officially inaugurated in Sydney.

29 January-2 February 1899  
A 'secret conference' is held in Melbourne. The premiers make changes to the Constitution to satisfy New South Wales.

July 1900  
The British Parliament passes the Constitution Bill.

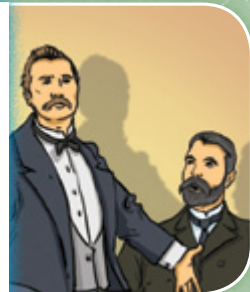
22 March-23 April 1897  
The first session of the Federation Convention is held in Adelaide to write a new Australian Constitution.

20 January-17 March 1898  
The third session of the Federation Convention is held in Melbourne.

March-June 1900  
Barton, Deakin and others debate the Constitution Bill with Joseph Chamberlain in London, England.

31 July 1900  
Western Australia votes for the Constitution and joins Federation.

31 July-1 August 1893  
The Corowa Conference is held. The Corowa Plan calls for a new Federation Convention with elected members.



2 March-9 April 1891  
The National Australasian Convention is held to write an Australian Constitution.

24 October 1889  
In the Tenterfield Oration, Parkes proposes a Federation Conference.

1886 The Federal Council meets in Hobart.



2-24 September 1897  
The second session of the Federation Convention is held in Sydney.

3-4 June 1898  
Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia vote for Federation and the Constitution. Only New South Wales votes 'no'.

9 May 1901  
The first Federal Parliament opens in Melbourne.



# What do you think?

Many people were in favour of Federation in the 1890s because they wanted to keep Australia 'white'. Today, Australia is a successful **multicultural** country where people of all backgrounds live together. However, multiculturalism raises questions about what it means to be an Australian. Try the following activities to test your own ideas about this important subject.

## Who is right?

Australians disagree about whether immigrants should keep their own traditions and customs, or adopt Australian ones. Read the following opinions and have a discussion about who you think is right.

### Multiculturalists

People from other countries and cultures have important customs and values. These things are part of who they are. Coming to Australia should not mean that they leave their culture behind. Welcoming different cultures, customs and traditions enriches all Australians.

### Traditionalists

Immigrants who choose to come to Australia should adopt the customs of their new home. Part of moving to a new country is accepting its traditions and values, rather than clinging to your own. Immigrants need to become like other Australians to fit in.



## What would you do?

The following scenes actually occurred during the struggle for Federation. Read each scene, then choose what you would do.

### Scene 1

You are Edmund Barton. In 1891 you are invited to be a minister in the New South Wales government of Premier George Dibbs. However, Dibbs is opposed to Federation and the Constitution. Would you ...

- A** refuse, saying you could not work with someone who is against Federation
- B** accept, but only on the condition that Premier Dibbs promises to allow you to push for Federation in the New South Wales **Parliament**
- C** accept without conditions?

### Scene 2

You are Henry Parkes. The Corowa Plan of 1893 suggests asking the people to elect representatives to a **convention** where a new **Federal** Constitution will be written. Would you ...

- A** speak out against the Corowa Plan
- B** quietly support the Plan but do nothing to help it along
- C** support the Corowa Plan as a path towards Federation and speak in its favour around the country?

### Scene 3

You are William Lyne, Premier of New South Wales in 1901. You have fought against Federation all the way, but the Governor-General nominates you to be the first Prime Minister of Australia. Would you ...

- A** refuse on principle, because you have always opposed Federation
- B** agree only if no one else will take the job
- C** accept the nomination?

Once you have chosen what you would do in each scene, find out what actually happened on page 31.

# Find out more

## Websites

<http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/explore/federation/constitution-website/stories/call-to-action/pods/national-identity/index.html>

This website designed for students includes profiles and photographs of key people, audio recreations of famous speeches and images of original documents associated with Federation.

<http://moadoph.gov.au/learning/resources/getting-it-together-from-colonies-to-federation/>

This extensive site from the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old **Parliament** House, Canberra, offers free downloads of educational packages on all aspects of Federation. *Getting it together: from colonies to Federation*, designed for Years 5–8 students, includes original documents, class activities and a teachers' guide.

## Book

Alfred Deakin, *The Federal Story: the inner history of the Federal cause 1880–1900*, edited by J. A. La Nauze

This is Alfred Deakin's own account of the events leading up to Federation. It includes behind-the-scenes glimpses and personal portraits of the leaders.

## Places to visit

**Parliament House, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory**

The School Visits Program offers tours of Parliament House. The Parliamentary Education Office runs many educational programs including face-to-face role plays for students and teachers to learn about the workings of **Federal** Parliament.

**Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne, Victoria**

This is the site of the opening of Federal Parliament in 1901, and is now a World Heritage Site.

Parliament House,  
Canberra, ACT



# Glossary

- appeal** a review of a case in a higher court
- colony** an area of land that is controlled by a distant country
- Commonwealth** a group of states with common interests
- convention** a meeting to discuss important matters
- convict** someone serving a sentence in jail for committing a crime
- delegates** people chosen to do something on behalf of others
- elections** selection of someone, by voting, to represent the people
- equality** where everyone has the same rights
- federal** to do with the nation as a whole
- Indigenous peoples** the original peoples of Australia
- league** a group of people with a common goal
- multicultural** having many different cultures
- nation** a country unified under one government
- parliament** a group of people elected to make laws
- politician** person who serves in parliament
- racial prejudice** unreasonable negative attitudes to people of different races or cultures
- racism** unfair treatment based on race
- referendum** a poll of the whole voting population
- settlement** a place where people live

## What actually happened in the 'What would you do?' scenes described on page 29:

Scene 1: B. Edmund Barton accepted Dibbs' offer of a ministry in the New South Wales Government, but only if Dibbs would allow him to argue for Federation in parliament. Many Federation supporters were appalled that Barton agreed to work with Dibbs, a strongly anti-Federation man. Henry Parkes was furious with Barton and never forgave him.

Scene 2: A. Parkes spoke out against the Corowa Plan for a people's **convention**, saying that it was 'quite preposterous (absurd) to talk of a mob of people making a constitution ...'

Scene 3: C. Lyne happily accepted the nomination, but there was a public outcry. Edmund Barton and Alfred Deakin refused to work with him if he became Prime Minister. Lyne was persuaded to give up the nomination, and Barton was appointed Prime Minister at Federation in 1901.



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