



Australian Government
Department of Education



CIVICS AND
CITIZENSHIP
EDUCATION

Discovering Democracy unit:
Upper Primary

People make a nation

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Education
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Australia

People make a nation

Introduction

Before 1901, under British colonisation, Australia was made up of six separate, self-governing British colonies. This unit examines the events leading up to the union of these colonies, the people involved and the reasons for and against Federation. It concludes by examining the nature of the Australian federal system.

Note: Some of the language may be difficult for younger students. If appropriate, check in with groups to clarify their understanding of the text.

By the end of this unit, students will be able to ...

- describe the basic elements of Australia's federal parliamentary system
- outline reasons for and against the move to Federation
- present a point of view about the establishment of the Australian Federation.

Australian Curriculum links

Year 6	
AC9HS6K01	Significant individuals, events and ideas that led to Australia's Federation, the Constitution and democratic system of government
AC9HS6S03	Evaluate information and data in a range of formats to identify and describe patterns and trends, or to infer relationships
AC9HS6S07	Present descriptions and explanations, drawing ideas, findings and viewpoints from sources, and using relevant terms and conventions
AC9HS6K07	The roles and responsibilities of the 3 levels of government in Australia
AC9HS6S02	Locate, collect and organise information and data from primary and secondary sources in a range of formats

Background notes

On 17 September 1900, Queen Victoria signed the proclamation that declared that on and after 1 January 1901, the people of the Australian colonies would be united in a federal commonwealth: the Commonwealth of Australia. The British Parliament had, in July, passed the *Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act*, which would determine the way the people of this new nation would govern themselves.

- The six former colonies would become states of the Commonwealth.
- The new federal parliament would have two Houses: a House of Representatives, elected on a population basis, and a Senate, made up of an equal number of senators from each state. (The territories now elect two Senate representatives each.)
- The head of government would be the prime minister: the leader of the party or parties commanding majority support in the House of Representatives.
- A High Court was established to interpret the new Constitution and to be the highest court of appeal in the land.
- Amendments to the Constitution could only be made as a result of a referendum of the people.

The years leading up to Federation

The 1850s to the 1890s were years when the colonies developed as separate, self-governing colonies. The colonies experimented with parliamentary democracy and with developing the economic and social well-being of their people.

Loyalties to particular colonies grew, but the colonists also shared British traditions, the English language and the immigrant experience. A sense of identity was shaped by colonials proud of their achievements (a colonial team even beat the British at cricket). This sense of identity was fostered by writers and painters. Politicians became more aware of the advantages of common action on defence, immigration and economic growth.

One experience all colonies, except Western Australia, shared was the severe economic depression of the 1890s.

During the 1890s the colonies decided on a process to achieve a federal union: to create a nation. Peacefully and deliberately the Australian people chose to be a nation and chose a form of government.

Different systems of government

Not all countries are divided into states and territories, each with separate parliaments like Australia. Countries such as the United Kingdom and New Zealand only have one parliament, which makes the decisions for the whole country, with councils looking after the day-to-day matters of a local community. Countries with state-level governments as well as national parliaments, such as the United States of America and Malaysia, are called 'federations'. In a federation, responsibilities of government are divided between the central parliament and regional or state parliaments. Australia also has local governments.

More information and additional activities on the Federation of Australia are available on the [Museum of Australian Democracy](#) website.

KEY TERMS

colony, conference, constitution, convention, delegate, election, Federation, government, House of Representatives, nation, parliament, referendum, representative, Senate, state, territory

Note: You can refer to the Discovering Democracy glossary on the Hub if necessary.

Focus question 1: Was Australia always organised into states and territories?

Preparation: Construct a timeline on poster paper that extends from 1788 to 1901. Each 10-year interval should be at least 10 cm apart. Allow space on either side of the timeline for students to add brief information statements.

Activity 1: Our Australian nation (30 min)

- a. Conduct a whole-class discussion to discover what is known about Australia as a federal nation of states and territories with local, state/territory and Commonwealth governments.

Your discussion should include:

- general knowledge of your own state or territory, including the names of and distances to other cities and towns and the capital
- names of and distances to the capitals of other states and territories
- interstate travel and mobility between states and territories, e.g. borders and quarantine gates
- overseas travel and the process of leaving and/or returning to Australia, e.g. passports, customs
- the levels of government including local councils, state/territory parliaments, Commonwealth Parliament (identify Canberra on the map).

- b. Introduce the term 'federation'.

Activity 2: A letter from the past (15 min)

- a. Display **Resource 1**, explaining that this is an adapted copy of a real letter that was published in the *Argus* newspaper in the late 1800s.

Highlight features such as:

- the old-fashioned language
- the use of the word 'colony' instead of 'state'
- the use of the term 'federation'.

Note: This is an opportunity to unpack the purpose and style used in letters to the editor and to explore similar letters published in response to border closures such as those introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia.

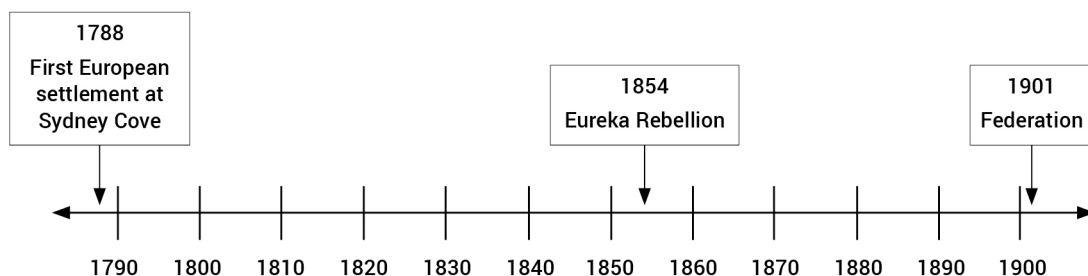
- b. Using the information gathered in Activity 1, ask the students to explain what the letter writer is complaining about. Discuss questions such as:
 - Do you think this is a letter that has been written recently? Why?
 - What actually happened to this man and his wife?
 - Why is he referring to colonies rather than states?
 - Who set the regulations?

- Why might he be blaming Victoria for this problem, rather than South Australia or New South Wales?
- Do you think this sort of thing would happen today when crossing the border between South Australia and Victoria? Why?

Activity 3: Colony to Federation timeline (about 30 min)

The timeline below should be prepared and displayed for use throughout the unit.

- Introduce the timeline. Dates will be added throughout the unit.
- Locate the events already marked on the timeline: arrival of the First Fleet, the Eureka Rebellion and Federation. Add other key dates known to the students as markers.



- Divide the class into six 'colonies' and provide each group with their description from **Resource 2**.

Note: The Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory were not established until after Federation. State borders as they exist today were established in 1861–62.

Using the information provided, each group should:

- find the date their colony was established, and when it formed its own government
- write the name of their colony and the dates on two cards and add these to the timeline
- select one person to report back to the class.

Further activity

Students could use the [timeline](#) on the National Museum of Australia's *Defining Moments* page to locate events in Australia's history. They can add information to the class timeline about other events such as the gold rushes (1851), the end of convict transportation to New South Wales (1840), to Tasmania (1852) and to Western Australia (1868).

Focus question 2: What were the arguments for and against federation?

Activity 1: Introducing the arguments (60 min)

- a. As a class, view and discuss the slideshow *Discovering Democracy: People make a nation*. This presentation provides a brief overview of some of the main arguments for and against federation. The tasks listed at the end of the interactive will be used in the next activity.

Note: ABC Education provides a video overview of the arguments entitled 'Australia's Federation – Behind the News'.

- b. Students working in pairs should discuss the ideas presented on **Resource 3**. They should cut up the sheet and sort them into arguments for and against federation.

Activity 2: A letter to the *Federation Herald* (40–60 min)

Note: If it is possible to find reproductions or samples of papers from around this period, display them as models.

- a. Introduce the fictional newspaper the *Federation Herald* by asking students to suggest ways people heard the news in the 19th century.
- b. Use examples of modern newspapers to point out some of the features of newspapers, such as lead articles, headlines, features, editorials, letters to the editor, advertisements and public notices.
- c. Introduce the task. Students will write a letter to the editor of the *Federation Herald* to highlight their point of view of the colonies being united under federation. Display **Resource 1** as a model for students to create their own letters to the editor either for or against federation.

The letters should:

- be brief (one or two paragraphs)
 - open by stating the writer's purpose or position
 - address at least one argument either for or against federation supported by evidence
 - reflect the writer's personal feelings on the topic
 - call for some action to be undertaken.
- d. Encourage students to publish the letters for display.

Note: You could substitute this activity for learners with diverse learning needs with a personal letter rather than a letter to the editor. Ask each student to construct a response to the fourth and fifth bullet points only.

Further activity

Students can prepare replies to the initial letters to counter the arguments.

Assessment

Collect student letters and assess according to the following criteria. The student can:

- present a logical and clear argument for or against federation
- support the argument with evidence
- portray an appropriate perspective.

Focus question 3: How did the people make the nation?

Activity 1: A Federation news flash (15 min)

- Distribute **Resource 4** and discuss what Henry Parkes was saying in his speech. Ask students to consider what effect this might have had on the colonies and on the people listening. (At the time, Parkes was the premier of NSW, the largest colony.)

Consider:

- that the United States had gone to war with Britain so that they could remove British governors and form their own federal government
 - the arguments for and against federation
 - that while there were some misgivings about Parkes, the leaders of all the colonies agreed to conduct a convention to discuss federation.
- Revisit the timeline. Use **Resource 5** to provide markers for the major events leading up to Federation. Add the key dates to the timeline.

Activity 2: What is a convention? (30 min)

- Establish the meaning of 'convention' with the students. Ask them to recall conventions that they may have seen on television or that may have been held locally. Ask them to suggest what occurs at conventions and how they are run.
- Divide the class into groups of four and distribute **Resource 6**. Ask groups to examine the visuals and discuss the following questions:

Note: New Zealand was originally invited to join the Federation but delegates only attended the 1891 Convention.

- What are the common characteristics of the people who attended the conventions?
- Do you think they could represent all the people of the nation? Why?
- Who is not represented?
- What is different about the method of election between 1891 and 1897? Which do you think represents the interests of the people better? Why?

Compare the membership and method of election to these conventions with the 1998 Constitutional Convention held in Canberra to discuss the republic. Do you think the 1998 Convention represents the interests and opinions of the Australian people better than the 1891 and 1897 conventions?

Note: Remind students that a popular belief in the 1890s was that not all citizens were capable of entering politics, including women and First Nations Australians.

- c. Groups should summarise their findings into a 'PMI' ('plus', 'minus' and 'interesting') list before reporting back to the class.

Activity 3: Case study – Corowa (20 min)

- a. Locate the Corowa Conference on the timeline. Distribute **Resource 7** and read through the text with the class. Ask students to underline or highlight the most important items of information in the text. As a class, discuss the key points, sorting the important information from the peripheral material. List those key points on the board.
- b. Discuss the following questions, encouraging students to support their arguments with evidence drawn from the resource and the previous timeline activity.
 - Many people consider the Corowa Conference to be a breakthrough on the road to Federation. What do you think?
 - John Quick received a knighthood for his contribution to Federation. Based on what you know about Corowa, do you think his contribution was significant?
- c. Have students create their own newspaper headlines about the Corowa Conference for display around the timeline.

Activity 4: Classroom convention (90–120 min)

- a. Explain that students will be holding their own convention to discuss some of the issues surrounding federation. The time is 1898, and each student will be given a role in the convention. The task of the convention is to reach agreement on some final elements of the draft Australian Constitution. Roles include actual delegates from the 1898 Convention, fictional delegates from the colonies, and petitioners (a person submitting a formal proposal for consideration). An adult can act as the Speaker to run the proceedings.

Note: Conduct the convention in costume to add to the atmosphere of the role-play.

More than one student can adopt the role of a colonial delegate; difficult roles can be shared.

Each role has a card that explains the person's views on the issues. When participating in the convention, students should respond in role. For example: 'What would a delegate representing Tasmania, the smallest state, think about these issues?'

- b. Revise what is known about Australia as it was in 1898, including the following points:
 - There are six colonies, each with an independent parliament.
 - Each colony's parliament makes its own laws and is responsible for running the colony.
 - Each colony has its own postal system, railway system, army and customs laws.

- Legally, each of the colonies is subject to the British Parliament. To make changes to the way the Australian colonies are governed requires the British Parliament to pass a law.
 - Most people live in cities or towns, and the majority live in the colonies of New South Wales and Victoria.
 - Access to government and voting is limited to white men. (However, women voted in South Australia from 1894.)
 - Most power and influence is held by white, English-speaking people who are keen to keep Australia a 'white' nation.
 - Generally, First Australians' voices are not heard nor their opinions or rights included in decision-making.
- c. Conduct a briefing session. Display **Resource 8** to explain the ideas underlying the Classroom Convention.
 - d. Display **Resource 9**; read through and discuss the issues for consideration at the convention.
 - e. Distribute role cards (cut from **Resources 10–12**) and allow time for students to discuss their roles and clarify their ideas.
 - f. Introduce the convention:

Fellow delegates, welcome to the 1898 Classroom Convention. Each of you has been elected or nominated to attend this convention to represent your colony's view and ensure that the decisions we reach will be acceptable to the people of Australia. We also welcome those who have special petitions or issues that they would like to present to be considered by the convention. At the conclusion of this convention we will have developed a draft constitution for a new federal nation.

- g. Explain the order of business:
 - The Speaker will introduce the issues for discussion. (**Resource 9**)
 - The convention will discuss each question and then vote.
 - The convention will hear and discuss additional issues from petitioners and delegates.
 - The Speaker will review the decisions and close the convention.

Note: Allow time for students to express their own opinions on the issues at the end of the session.

- h. Discuss the outcomes of the main discussion and invite student opinion on the outcomes.

Convention issue 1: Should the Houses have equal powers?

There will be two Houses in the new federal parliament. The People's House (called the House of Representatives) will have a number of representatives from each state to be determined by population. The States' House (called the Senate) will have an equal number of representatives from each state. A law can only be made if it is passed (agreed to) by both Houses of the Parliament. This form of parliament is called a bicameral system, which means there are two Houses.

While both Houses have the power to introduce bills (a proposal for a new law) the House of Representatives is the only House that can create or change bills related to money (bills related to a tax or the spending of money). The Senate is only allowed to pass or refuse to pass a money bill. If it refuses to pass the bill, it can recommend changes, but it cannot make those changes. The amendments must be accepted by both Houses to become law. As a result, the House of Representatives is the main House, and is considered more powerful than the Senate.

Note: The House of Representatives is considered the stronger House because the government is formed by the party or parties that have a majority in this House.

Convention issue 2: Where will the new federal capital be situated?

The first Commonwealth Parliament should select the site.

Note: Later, a meeting of the premiers decided the site should be in New South Wales, but more than 100 miles from Sydney.

The petitions:

- Votes for women. The Constitution did not provide for universal suffrage (votes for all adults). In 1902, a bill was passed to allow women to vote in federal elections in all states.
- Reference to God in the Constitution. The opening statement of the Australian Constitution states that the people of the colonies 'humbly relying on a blessing of Almighty God agree to unite in one indissoluble Federal Commonwealth ...'
- Changes to original states. Chapter 6 of the Constitution refers to the admission and establishment of new states. To date, no new states have been created.
- Import of alcohol. Section 113 of the Constitution states that all alcoholic liquor being imported from another state is subject to the laws of that state. In the case of this petition, if Victorian law had banned alcohol, residents of other states could not bring liquor into Victoria.

Activity 5: Making decisions for a nation (15 min)

- a. As a class, discuss the ways decisions are made in different situations in Australia. List suggestions and group these into categories such as family, school, community, the state or territory and the nation. Focus on students' experiences with voting (directly or when their parents have voted), including aspects such as compulsory voting, secret ballot and access to voting (age, citizenship).
- b. Consider the situation in the 1890s.

To make such a big change in the way Australia was governed meant that the people had to be consulted. The best way was to conduct a referendum on the question 'Should Australia become a federation?'. However, since each state was an independent colony, each had to conduct its own campaign and referendum. When voters have to decide on a constitutional question, a referendum is called. A vote on an issue not related to a constitution is called a plebiscite.

Activity 6: Classroom referendums (60–90 min)

- a. There was energetic campaigning before the referendums, as groups tried to convince voters to support their views. Display **Resource 13** and discuss some ideas and techniques that could be used in the ballot.
- b. Prepare for the classroom referendum by preparing 'how to vote' material for display in the classroom, using the sources as models. Students, working in groups or individually, can elect to:
 - prepare a poster
 - create a cartoon
 - create a handbill for voters.

Note: More information on the referendums is available from the [Australian Electoral Commission](#).

Student work should clearly support one viewpoint (either a 'yes' or 'no' vote) and should show evidence of at least one supporting argument.

- c. Conduct the referendum ballot. Set up the classroom with places for secret voting and tally the results using scrutineers to check the results. 'Publish' the results on a display board.

Note: Have students participate as scrutineers of the ballot. This important role relies on attention to detail.

- d. Discuss what actually happened in the referendums. Display **Resource 14** to discuss the vote and the final outcome. Add the dates of the referendums to the timeline. For example: 1898 NSW has insufficient 'yes' votes (fewer than 80,000) to accept the Constitution. (Allow space for multiple entries for the same dates.)

Note: You can access an image of Western Australia's federal referendum tally board.

Activity 7: Federation at last (60 min)

Note: Actual footage of the Federation celebrations and inauguration is available from this [National Film and Sound Archives website](#).

- a. Explain that in July 1900 Queen Victoria gave assent to the *Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act*, which formally declared that the people of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia would be united in a federal commonwealth.
- b. How does a nation celebrate? Ask the class to recall community or national celebrations and list some ideas on the board. What types of celebrations might have occurred in the 1900s?
- c. Prepare for a classroom celebration of Federation. As a class, discuss possible activities. Here are some ideas.
 - Create celebration displays. Prepare posters and charts about the events.
 - Local Federation projects. What was your town or locality doing in 1901? State and territory libraries and local historical societies may also be helpful.
 - Role-play the inauguration ceremony in Sydney (January 1901) or the opening of Parliament in Melbourne (May 1901).
 - Hold a Federation Day for the class.

Activity 8: Reporting on Federation (60 min)

Prepare a news report on Federation. The task can be presented as a written piece for publication in the *Federation Herald* or as a spoken news report. Students should use the outline set out in **Resource 15** to assist in drafting the report.

Assessment

Collect the students' reports and assess using the following criteria. The student can:

- demonstrate the features of a report including logical and sequenced text supported by evidence drawn from the unit
- address all the elements of the task
- provide clear and accurate information with correctly captioned graphics
- outline the basic structure of our federal system: a central parliament with two Houses and a prime minister, with the states retaining their own parliaments.

Further activity

Prepare a 'Federation faces' hall of heroes by completing simple biographies on the following people:

- Edmund Barton
- Samuel Griffith
- Alfred Deakin
- John Quick
- George Reid
- Henry Parkes
- Catherine Spence

Information should include their colony, occupation and contribution to Federation.

Focus question 4: How does the Australian federal system of government work?

Preparation: Collect some objects relating to the three levels of government, e.g. money or a passport (federal), a school photo or car registration certificate (state/territory), a library card (local). Place these in a handbag or briefcase.

Activity 1: Tuning in (30 min)

- a. Ask students to suggest how government affects their daily lives. Assist them by unpacking your briefcase or handbag (see 'Preparation') and asking them to identify whose responsibility each item represents. List them on the board in three columns: 'Federal', 'State/Territory' and 'Local'.
- b. Ask students to suggest other ideas to be added to the lists. Watch the Parliamentary Education Office video '[Three levels of government](#)', which outlines some responsibilities of federal, state/territory and local government.

Note: The Parliamentary Education Office has an interactive [game](#) that tests students' understanding of the three levels of government.

Activity 2: The federal system (60–90 min)

- a. As a class, develop a diagram to illustrate the current structure of federal government. The diagram should show the main parts of the federal system. Consider how the structure is set up and how the people are represented.
- b. Distribute **Resource 16** and discuss the structure detailed in the Australian Constitution.
- c. Form groups of four to six students to construct a diagram on poster paper that illustrates the structure of the Commonwealth Parliament based on the system discussed in the conventions. Students may wish to refer to previous notes or resources.

- d. Provide copies of **Resource 17**, which provides information about the current parliamentary system. Groups should use this information to amend their posters.

Note: An overview of the [Australian Constitution](#) is available on the Parliamentary Education Office website.

- e. Share information by asking each group to display and explain their diagram.
- f. Use a whiteboard to bring all the ideas together and agree on a class model. Develop a list of criteria to identify our Commonwealth Government. For example:
 - It has two Houses of Parliament.
 - The people elect representatives who make decisions for the nation.
 - The House of Representatives is the People's or Lower House. It is made up of representatives drawn from local area electorates and its membership is based on population.
 - The Senate is the States' or Upper House. It is made up by equal numbers of representatives from each state (plus two representatives from each territory).
 - Laws are made when both Houses of Parliament pass a bill and it is signed by the governor-general.
- g. As a class, identify and discuss similarities and differences between group diagrams. Develop a class diagram based on the ideas drawn from the group designs. Modify the diagram until the class is satisfied that the diagram meets all the criteria developed earlier and illustrates the federal system. Check your interpretation with the [fact sheets](#) on our system of government from the Parliamentary Education Office.

Note: Find out about state and territory systems of government by visiting their websites. Most parliaments have education officers who can provide resources for schools.

- h. Extend the diagram by including state and territory government and local government. Remind students that:
 - each state has its own parliament; the territories have legislative assemblies
 - local governments make up the third level of government.
- i. Ask students to locate the names, areas and representatives for their state and federal electorates using the database on the [Australian Parliament](#) website.

Activity 3: People in parliament (20 min)

- a. Allow time for students to research some of the roles of people connected with parliament on [the Parliamentary Education website](#).

Students can add information on the roles of people in parliament to their diagrams.

- b. Prepare a 'Parliamentary People' gallery by designing a poster outlining one person's role in parliament. Choose from prime minister, leader of the opposition, Speaker, ministers, shadow ministers, backbenchers, clerk, serjeant-at-arms, president of the Senate, Usher of the Black Rod.

Activity 4: The future of our system (60 min)

- a. Over the years since Federation, the form and operation of the federal system have been discussed and criticised. Display **Resource 18** and discuss the issues raised in the letters and some possible consequences of the changes.

Note: The letters were created for this activity and are not actual letters.

- b. Allow time for groups to select an issue and conduct some independent research.
- c. In groups, students should construct a futures wheel to predict the consequences of some possible changes. Students can choose to use one of the issues from **Resource 18** or pursue their own topic.

To construct a futures wheel:

- write the proposed change in the centre or hub of the wheel
- branch out changes resulting from this change from the hub
- form the next layer with changes resulting from these changes, and so on.

Note: Numerous examples of futures wheels including downloadable templates are available online.

- d. Ask groups to display their futures wheel and to explain the issues they see as important.

Further activities

The *Federation Herald* special edition: Prepare a front cover for a souvenir edition of the *Federation Herald* to mark an upcoming anniversary of Federation. Divide the class into working groups to draft and publish:

- a headline
- a lead story
- a political cartoon
- an information report of the current form of government
- a report on Federation celebrations
- a pictorial spread illustrating Australia's past and present.

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Australian Government
Department of Education



**Education
Services
Australia**

A letter to the editor

Sir,

I write to protest against your ridiculous Customs House regulations.

I and my wife were passengers on the express train from Adelaide last Thursday, and on arrival in Melbourne on Friday we were subjected to the embarrassing process of having our boxes opened and searched before a crowd of railway porters and bystanders.

I consider it a disgrace to the colony of Victoria that visitors from neighbouring colonies should be subjected to such treatment. I am a Sydney resident.

What is the use of talking about federation when I cannot travel from South Australia to New South Wales without having my luggage searched? Victorians should be heartily ashamed of themselves.

Yours etc

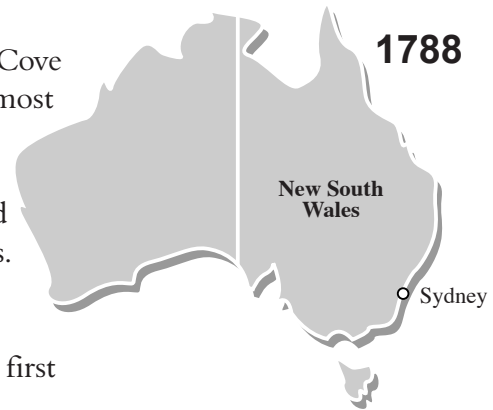
Indignant

Adapted from the *Argus*, 2/2/1887

Six colonies

New South Wales

The first European settlement was established at Sydney Cove in 1788. The new colony of New South Wales covered most of the known continent. Originally set up as a convict settlement, the colony was placed under the rule of a single military governor. The settlement quickly expanded many times over with free settlers outnumbering convicts. The British Government decided that the free settlers should have a say in government and a partly-elected Legislative Council was set up in 1842 to make laws. The first New South Wales Parliament met in 1856.



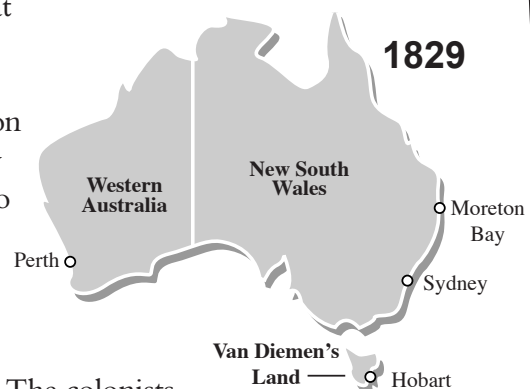
Tasmania (Van Diemen's Land)

In 1804 the first Europeans settled at Hobart. Later in 1804 another settlement was set up at the site of Launceston. For many years the two settlements operated separately under the control of the New South Wales Governor. By 1824 Van Diemen's Land grew important and wealthy in its own right and some of the most well-to-do citizens wrote to the British king requesting that Van Diemen's Land be declared a separate colony. This occurred in 1825. The name, however, was not changed to Tasmania until 1856, the year that the Tasmanian Parliament met for the first time.



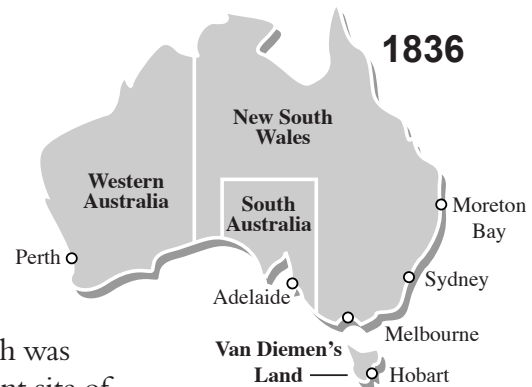
Western Australia

In the 1820s the British Government was worried that the French were planning to establish a colony on the western coast of Australia. To prevent this, the British Government decided that it should establish a colony on the western coastline. In 1829 the Swan River Colony was established. This colony was the first free colony to be founded in Australia. The British Government decided that the settlers would be given land, and many rich settlers came from England to settle the colony. Unfortunately, there were too many landowners and not enough labourers to do the work. The colonists requested that convicts be sent to work the land. Convicts were sent between 1850 and 1868. Western Australia achieved self-government in 1890. Its first parliament met in the same year.



South Australia

South Australia was a free settlement that never received convicts. The British Government declared it a colony in 1836 and a military governor was installed. The land was sold and only rich settlers could afford to buy land. The money earned from the sale of land was then used to pay the fares of the labourers needed to work the land. The first settlers were sent to Kangaroo Island, which was found to be unsuitable, and they moved to the present site of Adelaide. South Australia achieved self-government in 1857.



Victoria

In 1803 a party of soldiers, convicts and free settlers was sent to establish a colony at the mouth of Port Phillip. After a short time it was decided that the land was unsuitable and the settlement was moved to better land in Van Diemen's Land. From 1834 settlers arrived from Van Diemen's Land and north of the Murray River. The settlement was still considered part of New South Wales despite being so far away. Finally in 1851 it became a separate colony and was named Victoria in honour of the Queen. The first Victorian Parliament met in 1856.



Queensland

In 1824 a convict settlement was established at Moreton Bay on the Brisbane River, far away from any other settlements. This penal colony was for the worst offenders and free settlers were kept well away from the area. But by 1842 the convicts had left and the land around the town of Brisbane was becoming a thriving community with the settlers less than happy about being ruled by a government set up in faraway Sydney. After years of lobbying by the settlers, the new colony of Queensland was created, with its own separate parliament, in 1859.

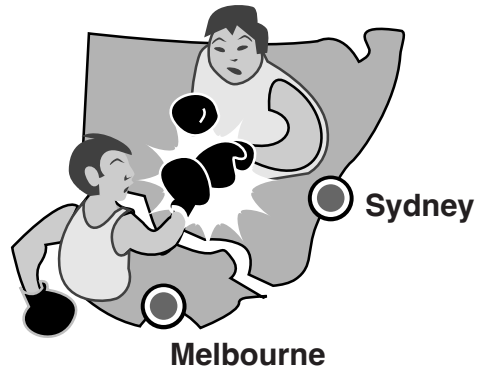


Reasons for and against federation

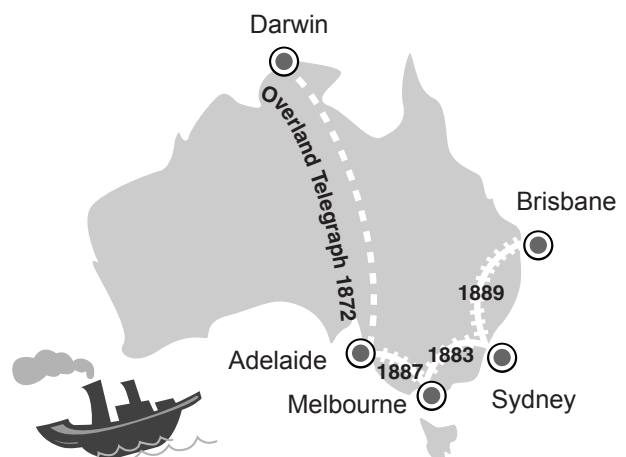
Cut and sort these reasons into 'for' and 'against' federation. Add any other reasons you can find to your list.



All the colonies were worried about the numbers of Chinese migrants coming to Australia.



Victoria and New South Wales were rivals and mistrusted each other's intentions.



Communication and transport between colonies was improving.



Australians were developing a strong national feeling.

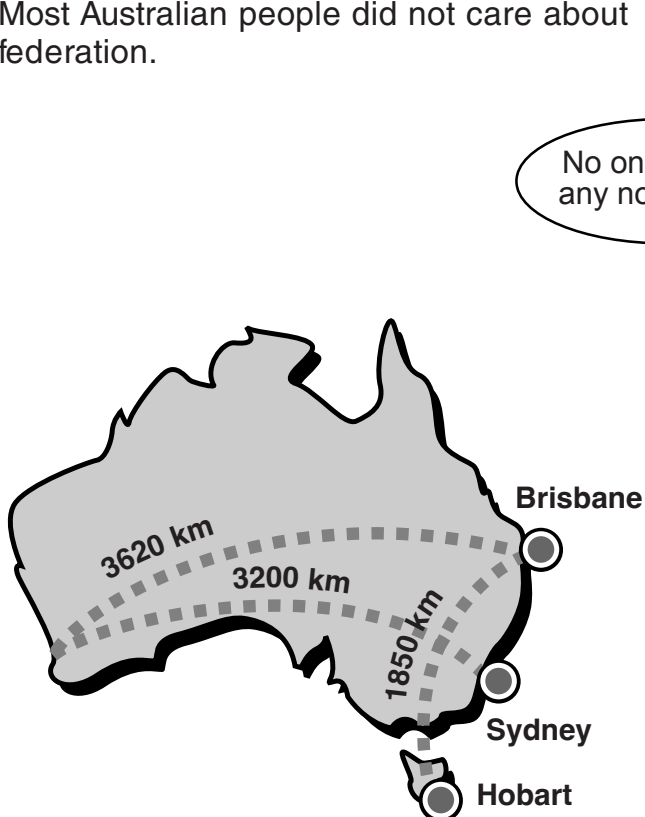


Some colonies worried that free trade between colonies would damage their trade and income.



Australia needed a single army and navy to defend it from invasion.

Most Australian people did not care about federation.



The colonies were very far from each other.



Colonies thought a federation would not look after their interests.

Federation news flash (1)

The Federation Herald

25 October 1889

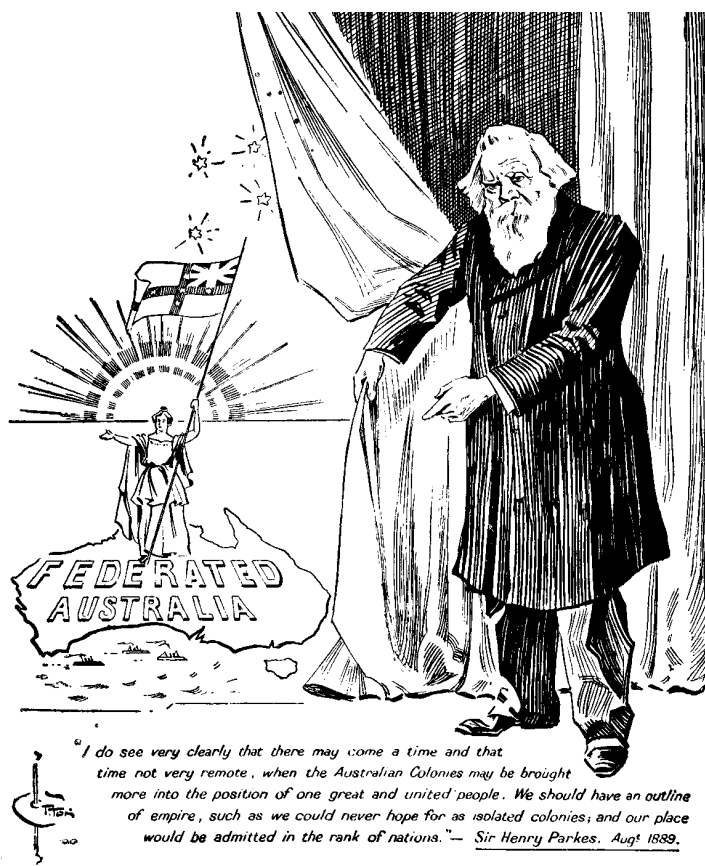
Free

PARKES SAYS IT'S TIME FOR FEDERATION

Yesterday, in the northern New South Wales town of Tenterfield, Sir Henry Parkes, the Premier of the colony of New South Wales, said that the time was now ripe for federation.

Sir Henry declared that people needed to decide whether the time had come for Australia to create an Australian Government for the continent. This statement was greeted by applause from the audience.

He went on to say that Australia now had a population of three and a half million, and that the American people had decided to unite when their population was between three and four million. The numbers were about the same except that the Americans had united after a long war which broke all ties to Britain. Surely Australians could federate in peace, he said, without breaking the ties that held them to Britain, the mother country.



The audience broke into rousing cheers at Sir Henry's statement. Sir Henry has appealed to the premiers of each of the colonies

to send representatives to a conference to discuss federation and to draw up a plan for a federal parliament.

Cartoon of Henry Parkes by Cotton, published in the *Daily Telegraph* 9/7/1900
Courtesy National Library of Australia

1883

Intercolonial conference. The colonies meet to discuss federation. The convention agrees to form a federal council to act on common problems.

1885

The Federal Council of Australia is formed. New South Wales refuses to join it.

1889

Major-General Edwards, a military expert from Britain, visits to review the Australian armies. He says that the colonies' armies are unable to protect Australia and should be united into one.

1889

Henry Parkes makes his speech at Tenterfield in which he calls for the colonies to form a federal government.

1890

The Australasian Federation Conference, Melbourne. Delegates agree to return to their colonies and recommend support for federation.

1891

National Australasian Convention, Sydney. The parliaments of each colony choose and send delegates to represent their interests. The convention draws up a draft outline (a constitution) for a federal government. There is strong opposition to federation from New South Wales, the biggest and richest colony. The other colonies see no point in forming a federation without New South Wales.

1891

Colonies hit by depression. Businesses are failing, banks closing and there is high unemployment and poverty.

1893

Corowa Conference, NSW. Develops a plan for the people in the colonies to elect representatives to attend a new convention and to vote on the constitution they draw up.

1896

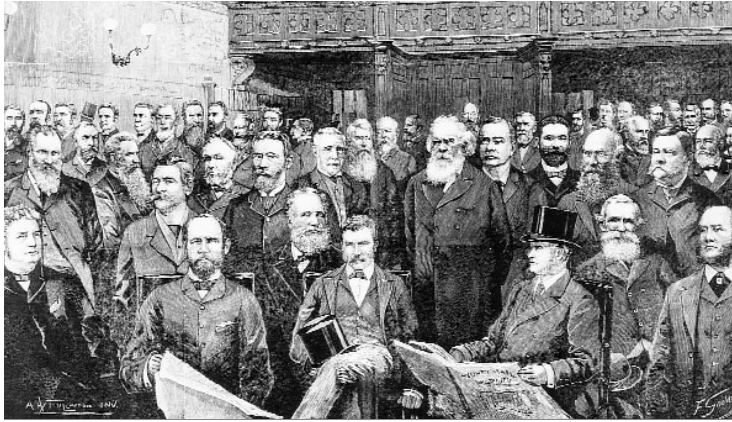
The People's Convention, Bathurst, NSW. Raises interest in the colonies in the upcoming constitutional convention.

1897–98

National Australasian Convention. The biggest of all the conventions; delegates elected by the people in each of their colonies meet three times over a year and a half, first in Adelaide, then Sydney and finally in Melbourne. Western Australian delegates are chosen by parliament. Queensland does not participate at all. Each session runs for more than a month. The convention has to draft a new constitution that will be acceptable to all the colonies. At the close of each session the delegates return to their colonies with the draft constitution to be discussed by their own parliaments. When they meet again, each colony has things they wish to change or to add.

Who attended the conventions?

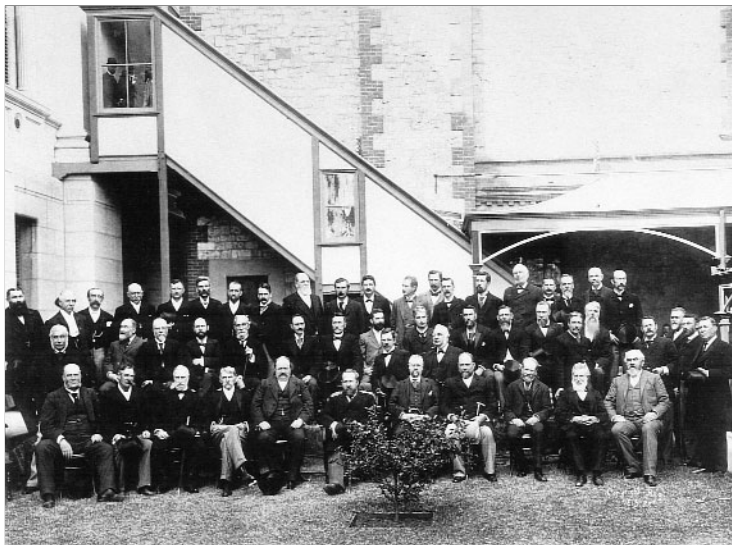
Courtesy National Library of Australia



- There were 45 delegates chosen by the parliaments of each colony.
- Delegates were all politicians.
- The delegates were all men (women were not allowed to stand for election).
- All colonies were represented.
- New Zealand also sent representatives.

Members of the 1891 Australasian Federation Convention.

Courtesy Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales



- There were 50 delegates elected by the people of the colonies.
- Ten representatives were chosen by the Western Australian Parliament.
- Queensland did not send any delegates.
- The delegates were all men (although one South Australian woman, Catherine Spence, stood for election).
- The delegates were from a range of backgrounds.

Second session of the second National Australasian Convention, Sydney 1897.

Courtesy Auspic



- There were 152 delegates.
- Half the delegates were elected by Australian voters.
- Half were appointed by the Government.
- All states and territories were represented.
- The delegates were both men and women.
- The delegates came from a range of backgrounds.

Delegates at the 1998 Constitutional Convention, Canberra.

Federation news flash (2)

The Federation Herald

2 August 1893

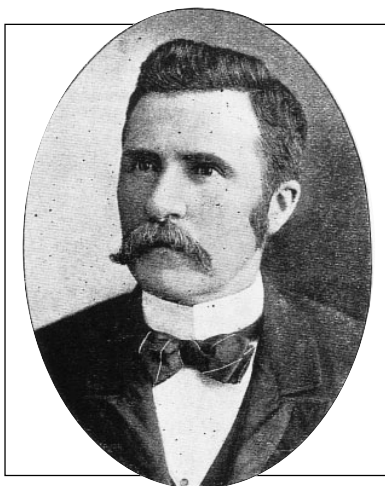
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COROWA PLAN: AUSTRALIA FOR AUSTRALIANS

Corowa, New South Wales. Yesterday, a great step forward was made when the Corowa Conference ended with a plan for leading the Australian colonies to Federation.

After two long days and nights of discussion, Doctor John Quick, a member of the Bendigo branch of the Australian Natives Association, came forward with a new scheme for the union of the colonies.

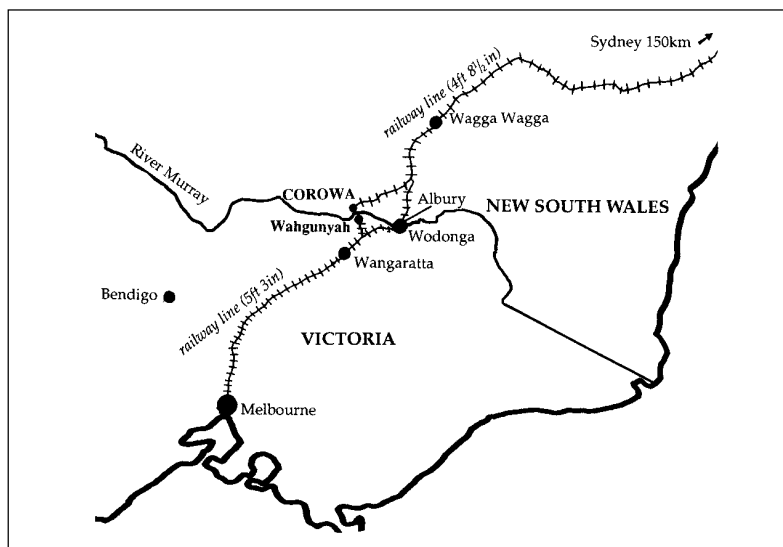
He proposed that the people in each colony should elect and send representatives to a convention to draft a federal constitution. Then the constitution should be put to the people for approval by vote. The scheme was supported by enthusiastic cheers.



Dr John Quick.

Doctor Quick said that the plan had to be clear and simple so that it would be understood and supported by all citizens: the bricklayer, the carpenter, the mason, the merchant and the miner.

One delegate commented: 'At last, after days of talk we finally have a practical plan for federation.'

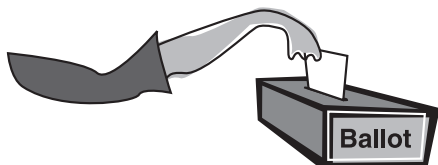


Location of Corowa, NSW.

Photo of Sir John Quick courtesy Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales
Map reproduced with permission of the Parliamentary Education Officer, Canberra

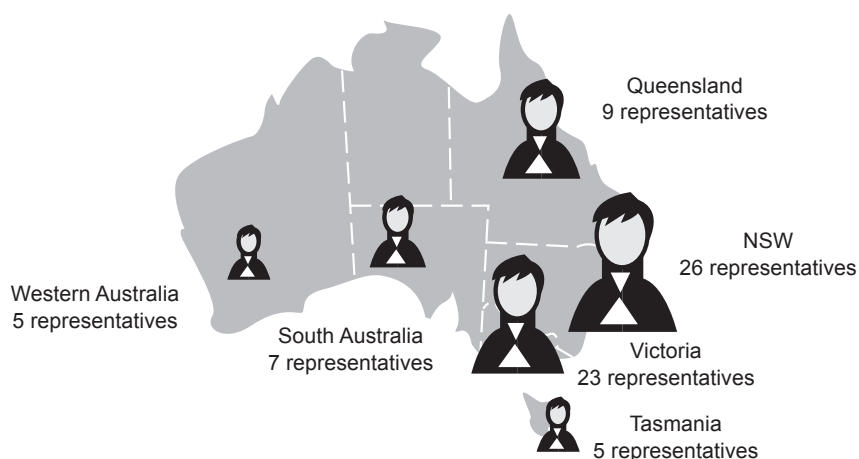
Convention briefing

What structure should the new federal parliament take?



People vote for politicians to represent their interests in federal parliament.

If there is one House,
each state sends representatives according to its population.



But ... how can the 'little' states get their voices heard?



A **People's House** represents the interests of the local area.



A **States' House** represents the interests of the state; each state has an equal number of representatives.

Are they equal?



People's House



States' House

Option 1: The interests of the people are stronger.



People's House



States' House

Option 2: The interests of the states are stronger.



People's House



States' House

Option 3: The Houses are equal. But what if they don't agree?

Classroom Convention issues

Issue 1: Should both Houses of Parliament have equal powers?

You each come from colonies that have their own parliaments. You agree that the federal parliament should be made up of a People's House and a States' House. What structure will this new parliament take, and how will it protect your interests?

You have to decide if:

- a the People's House should be the stronger.
- b the States' House should be the stronger.
- c the Houses should have equal powers.

Issue 2: Where will the new federal parliament be situated?

Australia is a very big place and most of the population lives in the mainland eastern colonies. You are concerned that the capital must be situated in a place that is convenient, but also well placed to serve the interests of your colony.

You have to decide if:

- a a federal capital should be a major city: either Sydney or Melbourne.
- b a federal capital should be built on a new site.
- c a new capital is not needed; meetings should be held in each of the capital cities in turn.

Classroom Convention role cards

Politicians

Delegate: Mr Edmund Barton, Member of the Legislative Council, New South Wales

Issue 1: The People's House should be stronger.

Issue 2: The federal capital should be decided by the Commonwealth Parliament.

Delegate: Sir John Forrest, Premier of Western Australia

Issue 1: The Houses should be equal. The States' House should be able to protect states' rights by acting as a check on all decisions.

Issue 2: A new federal capital should be created. The capital should be in the coolest place in Australia, a place members could visit even in the hottest times.

Delegate: Mr George Reid, Premier of New South Wales

Issue 1: The States' House should be weaker; it should have limited powers to decide how money should be spent.

Issue 2: The federal capital should be in New South Wales.

Delegate: Mr Alfred Deakin, representative of Victoria

Issue 1: The People's House should be stronger, to protect the interests of the states with the greatest population and wealth.

Issue 2: The federal capital should be in a major state but not in Sydney.

Delegate: Mr Charles Kingston, Premier of South Australia

Issue 1: The States' House should be weaker because the people should rule.

Issue 2: A new site should be selected but not in Sydney or Melbourne.

Delegate: Sir Edward Braddon, Premier of Tasmania

Issue 1: A strong States' House is needed to protect the small states, particularly in money matters.

Issue 2: Hobart is the best place, because by going to such a pleasant place, federal ministers would not sacrifice their health or comfort.

Classroom Convention role cards

Colony representatives

Delegate: New South Wales

- Issue 1: The People's House should be stronger to protect the interests of the biggest colony. The states who pay the most in taxes should have a greater say in how they are spent.
- Issue 2: Absolutely must be in Sydney, the first and most important city.

Delegate: Victoria

- Issue 1: The People's House must be the main House to protect the interests of the bigger states.
- Issue 2: Should be in Melbourne, one of the biggest and most beautiful cities.

Delegate: South Australia

- Issue 1: The two Houses should be equal. The smaller states need their interests protected by the States' House.
- Issue 2: A new site to be developed but not in Sydney or Melbourne.

Delegate: Western Australia

- Issue 1: The Houses should be equal to protect the interests of the smaller states.
- Issue 2: We are so far from the others, it would be nice to have parliament meet in Western Australia sometimes.

Delegate: Tasmania

- Issue 1: The States' House should be the stronger to protect the small states.
- Issue 2: A new site, preferably in the eastern states.

Delegate: Queensland (Unofficial delegate)

- Issue 1: Equal powers for the Houses.
- Issue 2: A new site, preferably in the eastern states.
(Queensland did not send delegates to the 1898 conference.)

Delegate: Victoria

- Issue 1: The People's House should be stronger to protect the interests of the more populated colonies. It is not democratic for the States' House to have equal numbers since the states differ so much in population.
- Issue 2: It should be situated in an eastern state but not in Sydney or Melbourne. It should be in Ballarat, the home of Australian democracy.

Delegate: New South Wales

- Issue 1: The two Houses should not be equal. The People's House should be the stronger – after all, this is a representative parliamentary democracy.
- Issue 2: It should not be built in any of the existing capital cities. Bathurst is a thriving rural centre in central New South Wales. It should be the new federal capital.

Classroom Convention role cards

Petitioners

Petitioner: Votes for women

You have attended the Constitutional Convention to present your petition on:
Votes for women.

You come from South Australia. Women have the vote in South Australia. You are concerned that if you cannot have votes for women secured in the new draft constitution, women might not get the vote.

Petitioner: Votes for women

You have attended the Constitutional Convention to present your petition on:
Votes for women.

You come from Tasmania where women do not get the vote. Men have always made the decisions in your colony; why should things change now?

Petitioner: A blessing in the Constitution

You have attended the Constitutional Convention to present your petition on:
Including a blessing from God in the words of the Constitution.

You are from New South Wales and are concerned that the writers of the Constitution will not include a blessing in the Constitution. Most Australians at this time are Christians and it is important that the Constitution reflect their beliefs.

Petitioner: Forming a new state

You have attended the Constitutional Convention to present your petition on:
Forming an additional state.

You come from northern Queensland. You are concerned that when Queensland becomes a state the interests of your area will be ignored. North Queensland is a large area, with significant agricultural wealth. You believe that your area should form a seventh state.

Petitioner: Import laws

You have attended the Constitutional Convention to present your petition on:
The import of liquor across state borders.

You come from Victoria. You believe that alcohol is a dangerous drug and should be banned in your state, and you are working with your Temperance League to convince the Parliament of Victoria to change the law. You think that even if Victoria bans the sale of alcohol, free trade between colonies would still allow alcohol to be imported from other colonies. You want to exclude liquor from the free trade agreement.

You want to prevent this possibility by excluding liquor from the free trade agreement.

Referendum sources

FEDERATION REFERENDUM

— G —

MARK YOUR VOTING THUS:

YES - - - - - ☒

NO - - - - - ☐

— G —

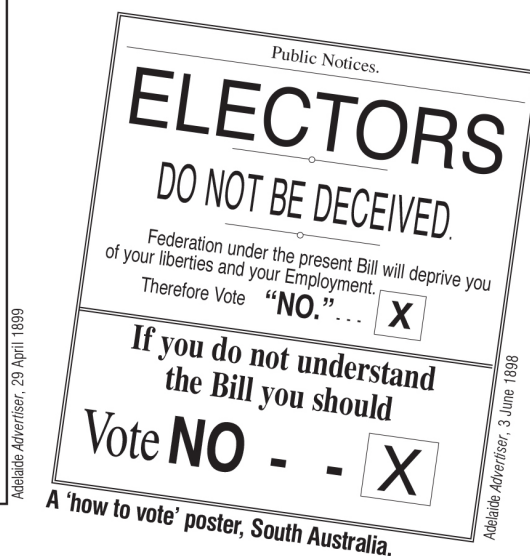
We cannot all by voice and pen do great things for Australia. Yet every man and woman whose names are on the Roll can exercise a Vote as powerful as the highest in the land.

VOTE FOR FEDERATION

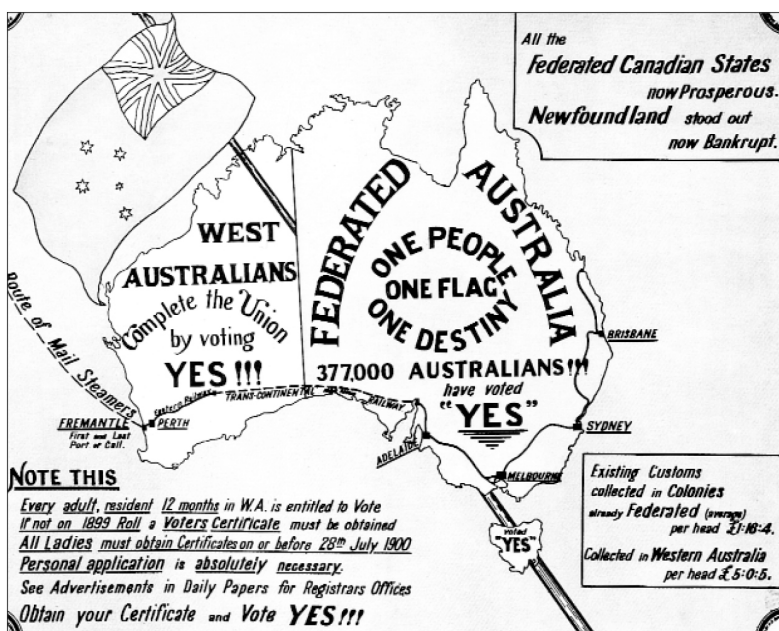
and in days to come we will be proud to tell that we did our part in creating THE FREEST AND FAIREST NATIONAL CONSTITUTION ever submitted for the APPROVAL OF ANY PEOPLE.

Authorised by Alfred Odgers, Gilbert-place, Adelaide.

A 'how to vote' form, South Australia.



A 'how to vote' poster, South Australia.



A referendum postcard, Western Australia.



A referendum poster, Tasmania.

**THE WAY TO VOTE
TO-DAY.**

Are you in favour of the Proposed
Federal Constitution Bill?

~~YES~~
NO

W.E. Smith, Bridge St., Sydney

A referendum pamphlet in
New South Wales.

Referendum results

1898 referendums

All colonies except Queensland and Western Australia went to the polls to vote ‘yes’ or ‘no’.

Results of the 1898 Referendums (3–4 June 1898)

New South Wales	No *
Victoria	Yes
South Australia	Yes
Tasmania	Yes

* Before the referendum, the New South Wales Parliament had decided to set a limit for the ‘yes’ votes before they would accept the Constitution. So even though there were more ‘yes’ than ‘no’ votes polled in New South Wales, they did not reach a sufficient level.

What happened next?

While three out of four colonies accepted the constitution, the biggest colony, New South Wales, did not. Once again, it was considered not worth continuing with federation unless New South Wales could be persuaded to join.

The Secret Premiers’ Conference

In January 1899, the premiers of the colonies met to make changes that would make the constitution more agreeable to New South Wales, which had not voted ‘yes’, and to Queensland, which had not participated. Seven changes were made, including an agreement that the new federal capital would be created in New South Wales in a place no closer to Sydney than 100 miles.

The colonies vote ‘Yes’

1899 referendums

29 April	South Australia
20 June	New South Wales
27 July	Tasmania
27 July	Victoria
2 September	Queensland

1900 referendum

On 31 July Western Australia held a referendum and voted ‘yes’ just in time to be included in the new federation.

Federation report outline

Headline:

Introduction

What is federation? _____

Who is involved? _____

When will it occur? _____

Background events

Why is Australia federating?

How did it happen? (Describe at least two events.)

What is the result? (Describe how a federal government will work.)

Expert opinion

Provide a statement by one of the federation experts.

Picture and caption

Add an illustration to provide more information about federation; include a suitable caption.

The Australian Constitution

The Australian Constitution sets out the rules for the system of government in Australia.

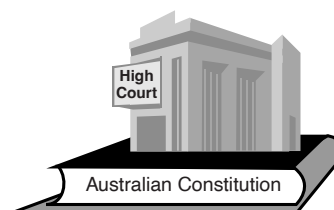
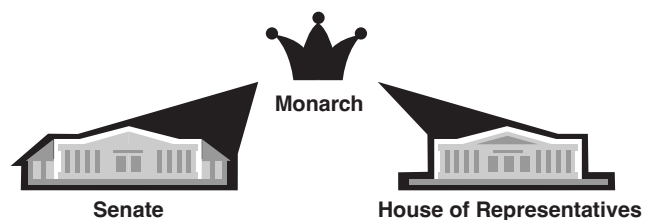
It divides powers and responsibilities between the Commonwealth Government and the state governments.

It does three important jobs:

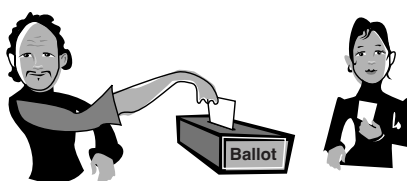
- It creates the Commonwealth of Australia, which made the colonies into six states of the Federation. The Australian Constitution allows the states' own constitutions and parliaments to continue.
- It sets up the Commonwealth Parliament, consisting of the monarch – represented by the governor-general – the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Commonwealth Parliament makes laws for everyone in Australia. The Constitution sets out the Parliament's main powers and functions, usually described in the Constitution as 'Federal' and 'Commonwealth'. All other powers remain with the states.
- It sets up the High Court as the highest court in the land. The High Court interprets the Constitution, and judges whether laws made are in line with the Constitution if a law is challenged. The High Court is also the final court of appeal for cases heard in other courts.



Today, the territories also have their own constitutions and parliaments.



The Constitution is the supreme law for the Commonwealth of Australia. Ordinary laws can be changed if the proposed changes are passed by both Houses of Parliament. A proposed change to the Constitution must also be passed by the people of Australia in a referendum after being passed by the Parliament. If a majority of the people in a majority of the states do not support the proposed change, the Constitution will not be changed.



The federal system

The following clues will help you complete your government diagram.

- a Underline the most important items of information that tell you about how the federal government works. They will form the structure of your diagram.
- b Circle the additional information that will provide important details. These details will be the extra information you add to make your diagram interesting.

Clues

- 1 The people of Australia elect politicians to represent them in parliament.
- 2 The Commonwealth Parliament has two Houses: the House of Representatives (the People's or Lower House) and the Senate (the States' or Upper House).
- 3 Voters elect 12 representatives from each state and two from each territory for the Senate. Voters in electorates elect one representative each to represent them in the House of Representatives. States with bigger populations have more representatives in this House.

New South Wales	47
Victoria	38
Queensland	30
Western Australia	16
South Australia	10
Tasmania	5
Australian Capital Territory	3
Northern Territory	2
Total	151*

* The number of electorates are decided according to the population. From time to time the Australian Electoral Commission redistributes (changes) the electorates, so the number of representatives from a state or territory can change.

Did you know?

The number of representatives in the States' House is roughly half the number in the People's House.

- 4 The political party (or group of parties) with the most members (representatives) elected to the House of Representatives forms the Government.
- 5 The political party (or group of parties) that has the second highest number in the House of Representatives forms the Opposition. The Opposition puts forward different ideas about how to run the nation, and questions and checks the laws being proposed.
- 6 The Government is made up of the prime minister (the leader of the party or parties in government) and ministers who are chosen from both Houses and who are responsible for important parts of the system, such as the Treasury (the money), employment and immigration. Members of the government party who are not ministers are called backbenchers.

- 7 The prime minister and the senior ministers (the ones with the most important jobs) make up the Cabinet, which is the most powerful part of the Government. The Cabinet plans how the nation will be governed.
- 8 The main job of the Commonwealth Parliament is to make laws to govern the nation. Proposals for new laws are called 'bills' and most can be introduced by members (representatives) in both Houses. No matter where the bill begins, it must be discussed in both Houses, and can be changed (or amended) by both Houses. Any changes must be agreed to by both Houses. Only bills to do with money are not allowed to be changed by the Senate. Once a bill is passed (approved) by both Houses, it is signed by the governor-general (the King's representative) and it becomes law.
- 9 Elections for the House of Representatives are held at least every three years. Senators are elected for six-year terms. Half-Senate elections are held every three years, meaning half the senators must stand for election every three years. Senators representing the territories are elected at every general election.

The future: letters to the editor

Are there too many governments?

Australia has too many governments and too many politicians. Our system of government means that three levels of government share the responsibility for running a nation of less than around 26 million people. It's time to simplify the system. If we abolished state-level government, we would have a smaller, more efficient system of government. The central government would look after national issues and the regional governments would look after local needs. Just think, we could save money by having fewer governments to run, and the different state systems, such as education and even road laws, could become the same all over the nation.

The Territory should be a state

All this talk of changing the Constitution and reforming our system of government leads me to ask, what about the Northern Territory? The Northern Territory has outgrown its territory status and deserves to take its place in the federal system with all the rights and representation of a state. It needs to have an equal voice in Parliament to give us the fair share in national decision-making we deserve. We may only have a small population but the Territory is big in many ways. We have a thriving tourist industry, rich natural resources and contribute more than our share to the nation.

Let us control more of our taxes

Before Federation each colony had its own taxation system to raise funds to support the colony. Each of them had different taxes and rules and spent the money they raised in their colony.

Today, most taxes, including income tax and the goods and services tax (GST), are collected through the Australian Government Taxation Office. Each year the Australian Government issues a budget that determines how much money is spent on national services such as the armed forces and to fund projects such as highways, and how much is passed to states and territories to fund their services and projects including schools and hospitals.

Some argue that the distribution of funds to states and territories is not as fair as it might be, particularly when it comes to taxes like the GST. They say their state or territory contributes more than they receive and that this is not fair. Other states and territories argue that the money needed to provide the same services as other governments is more than they contribute.

What's fair? Maybe the old system worked better. I think we should let each state and territory control taxation and decide how much they are willing to share with the federal government and other governments.