



Australia's Journey to Federation

It took more than 50 years of debate and discussion before Australian's voted for Federation. Go back in time to the bottom of this page and follow Australia's journey to nationhood.

1901 **September 3 - A new flag**

[Australia's new national flag is flown for the first time. The final design is selected from more than 32,000 entries in an international competition]

1901 **May 9 - Federal Parliament convenes**

[The first Federal Parliament is opened by the Duke of York (later George V) at the Exhibition Building, Melbourne. Federal Parliament is to meet in Melbourne until 1927 when the capital moves to Canberra]

1901 **January 1 - Birth of a nation**

[Lord Hopetoun, Australia's first Governor General, proclaims the Commonwealth of Australia at a ceremony in Centennial Park, Sydney before a crowd of 250,000 people. Sir Edmund Barton is sworn in as Australia's first Prime Minister]

1900 **Britain agrees**

[Australian delegates go to London to negotiate the passage of the Federal Constitution Bill through the British Parliament and witness Queen Victoria signing granting Royal Assent. 3 months later Western Australia votes 'Yes' to join the Federation of Australian States and is added to the Royal Assent documents]

1899 **Second attempt**

[Premiers hold a secret meeting and agree to amend the Federal Constitution Bill to meet the concerns of QLD and NSW. All colonies (except WA) support the Bill and agree to sponsor its enactment in the British Parliament]

1898 **First attempt**

[Delegates meet for a third session in Melbourne and revise the draft constitution once more. Referenda are held. Tasmania, South Australia and Victoria vote 'Yes' but New South Wales fails to attract the minimum number of 'Yes' votes and the Bill is not carried]

1897 **Delegates selected**

[Elections are held in the colonies to select delegates for the national Australasian (Constitutional) Convention. Delegates meet in 1897 in Adelaide and then in Sydney before they agree on a federal constitution that will be put to the people of Australia in referenda]

- 1895** **Premiers come round**
- [At a meeting in Hobart, a majority of Premiers approve a draft Enabling Bill paving the way for delegates from each colony to be elected to attend a national constitutional convention]
- 1893** **Corowa Conference**
- [The first of the 'peoples' conventions'- convened by the Australasian Federation League seeks to break the impasse over Federation by endorsing measures to elect delegates to a new constitutional convention]
- 1891** **National Australasian Convention, Sydney**
- [Delegates agree to adopt the name "Commonwealth of Australia" and a draft constitution is written - but it has no legal status. The move towards Federation is stalled by the lack of a legislative process and the colonies' concerns about their own status and autonomy within a federation]
- 1890** **Australasian Federation Conference, Melbourne**
- [Delegates decide to call a Constitutional Convention to discuss and draft a constitution for a federal system of government]
- 1889** **Parkes makes a stand**
- [New South Wales premier Sir Henry Parkes, calls on the separate colonies to "unite and create a great national government for Australia". Parkes becomes known as the 'father of federation' however he dies before his dream is realised]
- 1883** **Federal Council of Australasia**
- [Australia's largest colony, New South Wales refuses to join and little progress towards Federation is achieved]
- 1871** **Australian Natives Association**
- [The ANA, a popular movement of Australian-born, white men and, later, the Australasian Federation League are founded to promote one united Australia]
- 1863** **First Intercolonial Conference**
- [Australia's six colonies come together to discuss issues of mutual concern ... during the next forty years, 83 intercolonial conferences are held]
- 1846** **First mention**
- [Delegates agree to adopt the name "Commonwealth of Australia" and a draft constitution is written - but it has no legal status. The move towards Federation is stalled by the lack of a legislative process and the colonies' concerns about their own status and autonomy within a federation]