



# Federation

## Teacher Notes

### Overview

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The “*Federation*” program is designed specifically for Year 6 students. Its aim is to enhance students’ understanding of how Australia moved from having six separate colonies to become a nation.

In an interactive format students complete a series of activities that include:

- Discussing what Australia was like before 1901
- Constructing a timeline of the path to Federation
- Identifying some of the founding fathers of Federation
- Examining some of the federation concerns of the colonies
- Analysing the referendum results

### Objectives

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Students will:

- Discover what life was like in Australia before 1901
- Explain what Federation means
- Find out who were our founding fathers
- Compare and contrast some of the colony’s concerns about Federation
- Interpret the results of the 1899 and 1900 referendums

### Western Australian Curriculum links

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Curriculum Code	Knowledge & Understandings
Year 6 Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS)	
<u>ACHASSK134</u>	<u>Australia as a Nation</u> Key figures (e.g. Henry Parkes, Edmund Barton, George Reid, John Quick), ideas and events (e.g. the Tenterfield Oration, the Corowa Conference, the referendums) that led to Australia's Federation and Constitution, including British and American influences on Australia's system of law and government (e.g. Magna Carta, federalism, constitutional monarchy, the Westminster system, the Houses of Parliament)

Curriculum links are taken from:

<https://k10outline.scsa.wa.edu.au/home/p-10-curriculum/curriculum-browser/humanities-and-social-sciences>

## Background information for teachers

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### What is Federation? (in brief)

Federation is the bringing together of colonies to form a nation with a federal (national) government. In Australia's case, this was the colonies of New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australian.

The colonies (which would then be known as states) would retain the Parliaments and legal systems that were already well established and continue to govern themselves on some things. Certain matters of national significance would be taken over by the national government.

For Federation to occur, an Australian Constitution had to be written and agreed to by the colonies, and then the British Parliament would need to approve it. This happened on July 9, 1900. On January 1, 1901, the first day of the twentieth century, the Commonwealth of Australia was proclaimed. Federation had taken place and the new nation was born. The states retained their systems of government and the Commonwealth Government (also known as the Australian or Federal Government) came into being.

### Reasons for Federation

Most colonial inhabitants shared a common language, culture and background. National identity was promoted in the publications of the day, and through the writings of authors such as Henry Lawson. People began to identify themselves as Australian.

In the mid-1800s, Australian life was becoming established. Population centres were developing and settlement had begun to move further away from just the coastal areas. Gold had been discovered, and there was an influx of people hoping to find their fortunes on the goldfields. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the push to limit immigration was generally agreed to across all the colonies.

On the broader international front; there was growing concern about nations such as Russia, Germany and France showing interest in the Pacific region. This led to a feeling that a united Australian defence force was needed.

At the same time there was the need for a more unified approach to trade between the colonies. The uniformity was something that only a national government could provide.

In 1889, Henry Parkes (Premier of NSW) made his famous speech at Tenterfield and in February 1890 an inter-colonial meeting was held in Melbourne. A national Australian convention was arranged for Sydney in 1891. This meeting was very productive. A draft Constitution was produced that provided for a federal government as well as state governments, free trade between the colonies, federally imposed custom duties, a national defence force, a supreme court and a bicameral federal Parliament.

In 1895, it was agreed that voters in each colony should elect delegates to attend a further convention. During 1897 meetings were held in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney. Queensland did not send delegates. A Constitution similar to one proposed in 1891 was agreed to.

During 1898-1899, Australians voted for the Constitution Bill. It is interesting to remember that at this time voting rights were limited and only women in South Australia and Western Australia were able to have their say. Despite the huge consequence of this vote, many eligible voters did not vote. By the end of 1899, the path was clear for Australia to begin the new Century as a new nation.

***"For the first time in the world's history, there will be a nation for a continent and a continent for a nation".***

*Edmund Barton Australia's first Prime Minister*

In January 1900, a delegation representing each of the five colonies that had accepted the Constitution went to England to make sure that the United Kingdom Parliament passed the Constitution without making changes to it. The Act was finally passed on 9 July 1900.

Meanwhile, in Western Australia a debate was under way on the question of whether WA should join the Federation as an Original State. The Western Australian referendum was held on 31 July 1900 and was passed with a large majority. This made it possible for Western Australia to be included in the proclamation made by the Queen on 17 September, bringing the Commonwealth of Australia into effect on 1 January 1901.

### Timeline to Federation

<b>1871</b>	Formation of the Australian Native's Association (ANA) in Melbourne
<b>1890</b>	Australian Native's Association Inter Colonial Conference held in Melbourne with the primary goal of Federation
<b>1891</b>	Premier of NSW, Sir Henry Parkes, organises Australian Federation Conference. The conference resolves in favour of Federation and drafts a Constitution
<b>1893</b>	ANA Annual Conference at Kyneton (Vic). As a result, Federation Leagues are formed throughout Victoria.  Delegation goes to Sydney to get the assistance of Federation advocate Edmund Barton in the establishment of the Australian Federation League.  Australian Federation League holds first conference at Corowa (NSW) and adopts Dr John Quick's proposal for each colony to pass an Enabling Bill for Federation.
<b>1895</b>	Premiers meet in Hobart to draft the successful Enabling Bill incorporating the scheme proposed by Dr John Quick
<b>1896</b>	People's Federal Convention held at Bathurst (NSW)
<b>1897</b>	Federal Constitutional Convention commences in Adelaide, then in Sydney. The final session was held in Melbourne in 1898.
<b>1898</b>	ANA Annual Conference at Bendigo supports the Constitutional Bill unanimously  Alfred Deakin delivers a speech later credited with clinching the Victorian campaign for Federation  Public meetings held to explain the draft Constitution and the advantages of Federation  Referendums on Federation held on June 3/4 Yes – Victoria Yes – South Australia Yes – Tasmania No – New South Wales
<b>1899</b>	Majority <b>Yes</b> vote at referendums on Federation in NSW, SA, Vic, Tas, QLD
<b>1900</b>	Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia becomes law July 9 Royal Assent and approval by the British Parliament follows  WA referendum held in July – Yes vote

## Useful websites

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**National Library of Australia** - 'Federation Gateway'

<http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/131193/20111216-1107/www.nla.gov.au/guides/federation/index.html>

(note that the website is no longer maintained it is archived as is, available for use)

**State Library Western Australia** - 'Western Australia and Federation'

<http://www.slwa.wa.gov.au/federation/fed/index.htm>

**State Library Victoria** - 'Federation of Australia'

<http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/41734/20040809-0000/www.statelibrary.vic.gov.au/slv/refresources/federation/index-2.html>

**Parliamentary Education Office**

<http://www.peo.gov.au/>