



Hats off to our federal Constitution!

CONVERSATIONS ABOUT OUR AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL CONSTITUTION

with John Christensen

Overview

Setting the scene

English law arrives in Australia + English ideas of government organisation

Early federal ideas did not 'take'

Australian colonies gradually established around Australian coast

From mid-1850s most colonies under 'responsible government'

From 1860s early isolation of colonies begins to break down

Fear of European territorial ambitions in the Pacific.

The French in 1883. The German Protectorate in northern Papua New Guinea, 1884 also raises fears

Colonial Conference in Melbourne, 1890

The 1891 Constitutional Convention

45 delegates, including 3 from NZ, at Convention in Sydney, 1891

Delegates' range of personalities and skills: Deakin, Reid & Forrest

Challenges: 'small' v 'large' colonies and 'free trade' v 'protection'

Plan or model for federation: US + Westminster (England)

Clark and Griffith essentially authors of 1891 draft Constitution

1891 draft foundation for our current federal Constitution

Federation movement falters and rises again

Colonial governments distracted by 1892 droughts, recession, bank failures and changes of government

Grass roots movement begins, Australasian Federation League 1893

Corowa Conference influential

Womens' movement - vote in SA, 1894 - wider political activism

Bathurst 'Peoples Convention', 1896

1897-98 Constitutional Convention

NZ no longer part of federation movement & Qld not represented

Colonies now elect delegates (in WA appointed by both Houses)

New draft produced

Draft approved by referendum in all colonies except WA

Colonies send delegation to London for UK Bill to give draft legal effect

UK Bill passed but commencement delayed pending Proclamation

WA approves draft at referendum

Constitution Act proclaimed to commence on 1 January 1901

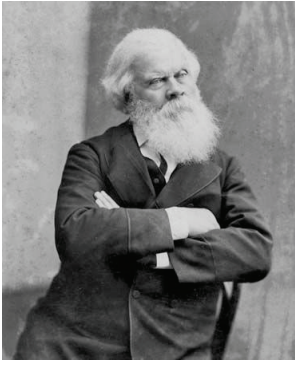
Can we bring our Constitution home?

Australia is independent, but our Constitution still sits in a UK statute

After consultation & expert advice we could pass a referendum to relocate the Constitution to an Australian document

The document would be printed in one piece so that it might be displayed like the Bayeux Tapestry

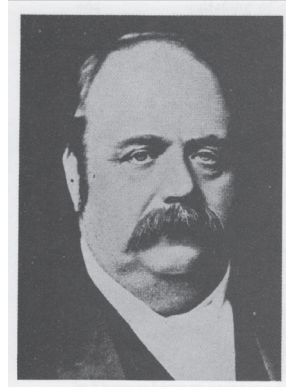
The Commonwealth, States and Territories would appoint citizens of note to come together at a ceremony, and by their signatures, witness the document as our Constitution



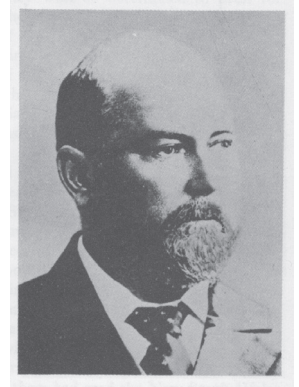
Henry Parkes, NSW



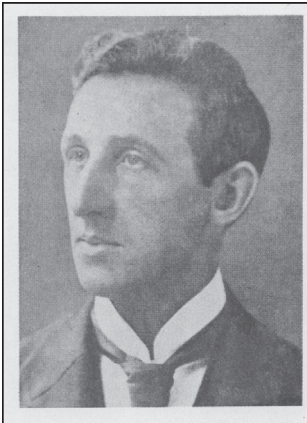
Alfred Deakin, Vic



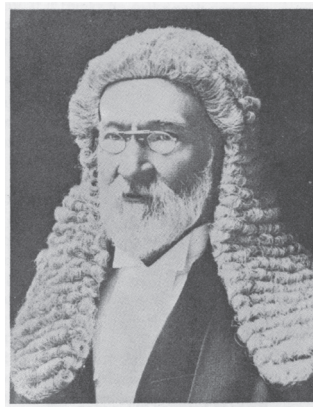
George Houstoun Reid, NSW



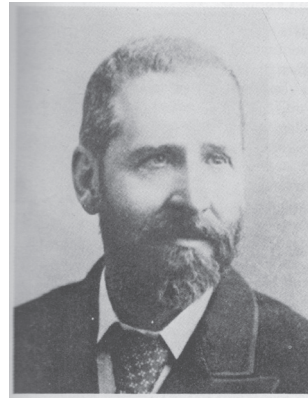
John Forrest, WA



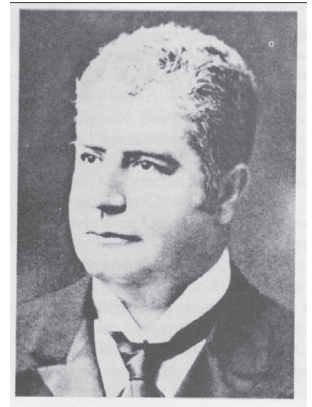
Robert Randolph Garran
Secretary Drafting
Committee, 1897-98



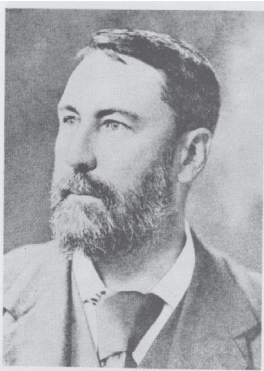
Samuel Walker Griffith,
Qld



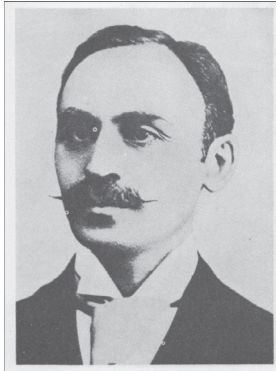
Andrew Inglis Clark,
Tas



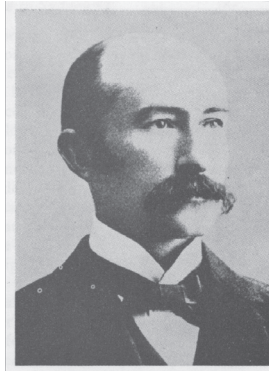
Edmund Barton,
NSW



Richard Edward O'Connor,
NSW



Isaac Alfred Isaacs,
Vic



Henry Bournes Higgins,
Vic

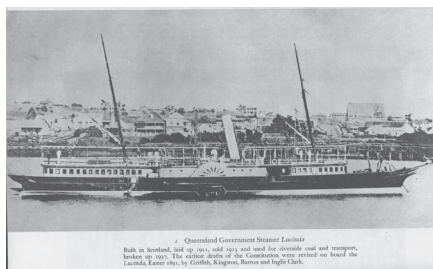


Charles Cameron Kingston,
SA



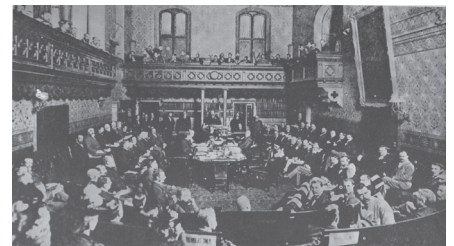
1 Federal Conference, Melbourne, 1890
Seated, L. to R.: W. McMillen (NSW); J. Hall (NZ); J. M. Macrossan (Q);
D. Gillies (Vic); J. A. Cockburn (SA); L. Lee-Stevens (WA).
Standing, L. to R.: A. E. Clark (Tas); W. R. Russell (NSW); S. W. Griffith (Q);
H. Parkes (NSW); T. Playford (SA); A. Deakin (Vic); R. S. Bird (Tas);
G. Jackson (Secretary)

Melbourne Conference 1890



2 Queensland Government Steamer 'Lucinda'
Built in Scotland, but up 1891 and used for several coal and passenger
travels up 1901. The entire draft of the Constitution were invited on board the
'Lucinda', 2,000 tons, by Griffith, Kingston, Barton and Inglis Clark

'Lucinda'



3 The Convention in Sydney, 1897
The meeting-place is the Legislative Assembly Chamber. Kingston is in the presiden-
tial chair. Before him, at the head of the Table, is Barton. On Barton's left is Webb,
writing as Assistant Clerk; on his right, Blackburne and (nearer the camera) Jerome

Sydney Convention 1897