

# The Timeline of Events Towards Federation

## **March 1897 – March 1898**

All three sessions of the National Australasian Convention are held as they work towards creating a draft of the new Federal Constitution.

## **January/February 1899**

The Premiers of all six colonies meet to discuss changes to the proposed Constitution. They also decide on where the federal capital will be.

## **April – September 1899**

All referendums are held and won, except for Western Australia.

## **November 1899**

The Constitution Bill is passed in Queensland.

## **December 1899 – March 1900**

Australian delegates are invited to London to negotiate the enactment in Britain of the Constitution Bill. The first delegates meeting is held in London.

## **July 1900**

The Western Australian referendum is won.  
The Commonwealth Constitution Act is passed by the British Parliament.  
Queen Victoria gives royal assent to the Act.

## **September 1900**

Lord Hopetoun is appointed first Governor-General of Australia.

## **January 1901**

The Commonwealth of Australia is proclaimed in Centennial Park, Sydney.  
Edmund Barton is sworn in as Australia's first Prime Minister.  
Queen Victoria dies and is succeeded by Edward VII.

## **March 1901**

The new Commonwealth Government takes control of a wide range of functions formerly exercised by the colonies, including military forces, postal and customs departments and immigration.  
The Commonwealth's constitutional powers also include:

- Legislating for trade with other countries
- Taxation
- Customs and border defence
- Banking – currency and coins
- Weights and measures
- Communication services
- Railways
- Census and statistics
- Fisheries
- Federal territories
- Federal public service – including police, education, and health

## **March 1901**

The first Federal election is held. Adult men can vote in all states, but Aborigines and women can vote in only some states. A census shows the population of Australia is 3,773,801. Aborigines were not counted.

## **May 1901**

The first Federal Parliament is opened by the Duke of York (later to become George V) at the Exhibition Building Melbourne. The Parliament finally moves to Canberra in 1927

## **September 1901**

Australia's new national flag is flown for the first time.  
32,823 entries were in the competition for its design.