

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.