

Governor Ralph Darling

1772–1858



Governor Ralph Darling was born in Ireland, in 1772, to Christopher Darling, Adjutant General of the 45th Regiment

CAREER

Governor Ralph Darling was a British Military Officer, who was appointed Governor of New South Wales from 1825-1831.

In 1793, at age 14, Darling enlisted as a private in the 45th regiment (his father's regiment) and served in the West Indies for two years. Darling was then promoted to captain in 1796, major in 1800 and later a lieutenant-colonel.

In 1806, Darling became senior assistant adjutant general at the Horse Guards, before going to Spain in 1808 with the 51st Regiment and serving at the battle of Corunna. The subsequent year, Darling served in the Walcheren expedition. He was promoted major-general in 1813 and served as deputy adjutant general in 1814.

Between 1819-1824, General Darling commanded the British troops on Mauritius. He was then appointed Acting Military Governor of Mauritius, and worked to end the enslavement of 70,000 sugar cane workers and the slave trade practices with Madagascar.

In 1824, Darling was appointed governor of New South Wales (replacing Sir Thomas Brisbane). He was given 'Instructions' in the form of letters from Earl Bathurst. These Instructions directed Darling in his role of Governor of the colony.

As Governor, Darling introduced improvements to the machinery of the colonial government (i.e. a supervised civil service) and integral monetary and banking reforms.

Governor Darling was assisted by the newly constituted Executive Council, comprising of the lieutenant-governor, chief justice, colonial secretary and the archdeacon of the Church of England.

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

Governor Darling had full confidence in the military hierarchical structures - it facilitated orders being followed, and aligned with his position as an ultra-conservative, to which the old establishment revolved around.

LATER LIFE AND DEATH

Governor Ralph Darling left Australia in 1831. A parliamentary inquiry was conducted to examine his conduct in New South Wales. Despite scrutiny, Darling was exonerated and knighted by the King, in a display of official favour. He died in Brighton, England on 2 April 1858.

Governor Darling was described as

“his excellency is not as tall and as straight as a poplar tree. He has a courtier like bend.. he is quite erect when walking and fully able to carry that soldier like position, which attention commands.. The countenance betrays tranquility of mind .. a smooth placid firmness, without anything of the stern or overbearing in his composition”
-The Australian 22 December 1825

“a narrow minded man, who was not naturally of a cruel disposition, but who, having been trained in an arbitrary military school, had acquired despotic habits and imbibed a contempt for legal rights and constitutional forms and privileges, which rendered him wholly unfit for the position in which he was placed”
-Samuel Bennett

Darling Harbour and the Darling River, NSW commemorate Governor Darling.