

VOLUME 2
PART 2

MEMOIRS OF THE
QUEENSLAND MUSEUM
CULTURAL HERITAGE SERIES

© The State of Queensland (Queensland Museum), 2002

PO Box 3300, South Brisbane 4101, Qld Australia
Phone 61 7 3840 7555
Fax 61 7 3846 1226
www.qm.qld.gov.au

National Library of Australia card number
ISSN 1440-4788

NOTE

Papers published in this volume and in all previous volumes of the Memoirs of the Queensland Museum may be reproduced for scientific research, individual study or other educational purposes. Properly acknowledged quotations may be made but queries regarding the republication of any papers should be addressed to the Editor in Chief. Copies of the journal can be purchased from the Queensland Museum Shop.

A Guide to Authors is displayed at the Queensland Museum web site
<http://www.qm.qld.gov.au>

A Queensland Government Project
Typeset at the Queensland Museum

QUEENSLAND'S FIRST FEDERAL ELECTION

MANFRED CROSS, AM

Cross, M. 2002: Queensland's first federal election. *Memoirs of the Queensland Museum, Cultural Heritage Series* 2(2): 217-222. Brisbane. ISSN 1440-4788

Queensland's first federal election was conducted under state laws within limits imposed by the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia. The political divide saw Queensland support protection ahead of free trade. White, male voters gave the emerging Australian Labor Party the highest level of support in the nation. □ *First federal election, Federal Parliament, Australian Labor Party, Queensland electoral laws, electoral reform.*

Manfred Cross, AM, 13 Hackett Street, Ashgrove, 4060, Australia; received 25 September 2001.

The Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia required that an election be held within three months of appointment of the first federal ministry. Hence the election for the first Federal Parliament was conducted by the six states at the end of March 1901. In four states it was held on 29 March and in Queensland and South Australia on the following day. The opportunity was also taken to hold a national census on 31 March, providing a useful picture of the nation at the time of Federation. Reflecting on the election process and outcomes provides a useful reminder of how far Australia's political systems have developed in a relatively short space of time.

THE 1901 NATIONAL CENSUS

The national census of 1901 recorded that Queensland had a total population of 503,266, comprising 280,092 males and 223,174 females. Of the male population, 132,897 were white adults who, if qualified, were entitled to enrol and vote. Those not qualified to enrol and vote included all women (at this time women were enfranchised only in South Australia and Western Australia), 6,670 'civilised' Aborigines and an estimated 20,000 not enumerated, and 25,730 excluded by their colour (10,215 Chinese, 2,354 Japanese, 1,899 other Asiatics, 1,311 from India and Ceylon, and 9,951 South Sea Islanders).

In response to the pressure of Separationists, Queensland had been divided into three zones with population recorded as follows: southern 328,390 (65.3 per cent of the state total); central 63,919 (12.7 per cent) and northern 110,957 (22.0 per cent). The population in Brisbane municipalities totalled 134,674, while Charters Towers ranked second with 20,976.

QUEENSLAND ELECTORAL LAWS

The Commonwealth Constitution placed responsibility for conducting the first federal election with the states under their existing electoral laws until the Commonwealth Parliament could pass its own legislation. In Queensland, the relevant law was the *Elections Act* of 1885 as amended. Section 6 of that Act clearly set out the qualifications of electors. It provided as follows:

Every man of the age of 21 years, being a natural-born or naturalised subject of Her Majesty, resident in an electoral district for six months, unless disqualified, is entitled to be entered on the roll for any electoral district if qualified within the district in any of the following ways: freehold estate of the value of £100 sterling, household of the value of £10 p.a., leasehold estate of the value of £10 p.a. held for at least 18 months, or having 18 months to run, holds a licence from the government to depasture on land to the value of £10 p.a.

Provided that no aboriginal native of Australia, India, China or the South Sea Islands shall be entitled to be entered on the roll except in respect of a freehold qualification.

In other words, besides excluding women, there were property and residential qualifications which excluded most indigenous and other non-white men, as well as many itinerant workers. There was no limit to the number of electoral districts in which a property-owner could be enrolled, thus enabling plural voting, a practice which was undemocratic and objected to by labour supporters. However, no elector could claim a plural vote in any one electoral district. Enrolment was voluntary, and for those fortunate enough to be on the electoral rolls, voting was also voluntary.

On the day of the first federal election, 100,184 of Queensland's white adult males were enrolled, of whom 61,081 cast formal votes for the House of Representatives. The election, therefore, was



FIG. 1 The federal electorates. (*The Worker*, 26 January 1901)

decided by only twenty-six per cent of the state's white adult population.

The Queensland Parliament enacted the *Parliament of the Commonwealth Elections Act* of 1900 to enable the election to be conducted under Queensland legislation and to distribute the sixty-one colonial electorates among nine federal divisions (Fig. 1). For example, the Brisbane federal division included the colonial electoral districts of Brisbane North, Enoggera, Fortitude Valley, Toombul and Toowong. The legislation named the nine federal divisions, eight of which names survive today. The enrolment of electors ranged between 8,728 in Maranoa to 12,980 in Brisbane.

CONDUCT OF THE POLL

The holding of the 1901 federal election within one day presented an enormous practical challenge, given that Queensland's colonial elections had been held over three polling days to reach the scattered

population (Fig. 2). Queensland's Principal Electoral Registrar, John Alexander Boyce, was appointed returning officer for the state with the assistance of Edwin Adolphus Blackboro, a clerk in the Home Secretary's Department. A returning officer was appointed for each of the nine federal divisions and staff had to be recruited for each of the 800 polling places throughout the state. Rolls and electoral information were distributed by boat, train, coach, horse and, sometimes, camel. Following the close of nominations, ballot papers were printed and distributed in the same way. Two ballot papers were distributed, blue for the House of Representatives and yellow for the Senate, with candidates' names placed on the papers in alphabetical order. The hours of polling on 30 March were from 8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. The voting system was optional preference for the House of Representatives and first past the post for the Senate. Plural voting for the House of Representatives was not allowed.

There were unforeseen difficulties in conducting the poll. Though Queensland at the time was experiencing the worst drought in recorded history, there were heavy rains in western and northern parts of the state during March, isolating some of the polling places by floods. The most remote of these was Bedourie in the far south-west of the Maranoa electorate. Acting-Sergeant Walsh of the Gatton Police, a former resident of the west (Fig. 3), was despatched to the outpost to bring in the last returns before 4 May, the date fixed for return of the writ. Walsh left Brisbane by train on 5 April, and reached Charleville on the following day. There he took a Cobb & Co. coach for Windorah on 7 April, but on arriving at the Cliffs he discarded the coach as a means of transit. He finally reached Bedourie with a relay of six horses, riding 862 kilometres and swimming the flood waters of the Channel Country to send the returns by telegraph from Windorah.



FIG. 2. Receiving and collating returns at Brisbane's Central Telegraph Office on election evening. (*The Queenslander*, 6 April 1901)

ISSUES

The federal election involved issues quite different from state issues. Throughout the nation the major issue of the campaign was the federal tariff, with the major parties advocating protection or free trade. Other important issues were the push for a 'White Australia', the extension of the franchise to all adults, the withdrawal of South Sea Island labour and the future of Queensland's sugar industry. Edmund Barton, appointed prime minister on 1 January 1901, led the Protection cause with a platform spelled out at Maitland, New South Wales, on 17 January. George Reid, a former premier of New South Wales, led the Free Trade cause. Both leaders and some of their prominent supporters visited Queensland during the campaign. 'How to vote' advertisements were placed in the newspapers, with the *Brisbane Courier* supporting protection. (Queensland on the whole was protectionist and by 1899-1900 customs and excise provided £1,610,113 out of a total revenue of £4,585,207.) The *Telegraph*, on the other hand, advocated Free Trade, while the *Worker*

carried the Labor banner. Provincial and local newspapers focussed on local issues.

The Australian Labor Party had no national leader and depended on its local organisations. The Commonwealth Labor platform had four planks: first, electoral reform, providing one adult-one vote; second, the total exclusion of coloured and other 'undesirable' people; and third, the introduction of old age pensions. The final plank was that the Commonwealth Constitution should be amended to provide for initiative and referendum for the alteration of the Constitution and that the referendum process be substituted for double dissolution as a means of settling deadlocks between the two houses of parliament.

NOMINATIONS AND ENROLMENTS

When nominations for the election closed, there were fifteen candidates for the six available seats in the Senate (one candidate had withdrawn) and twenty-three candidates for the nine seats in the House of Representatives. Of these total thirty-eight candidates, twenty-one



FIG. 3. Acting-Sergeant Walsh, who brought in the last returns from far south-west Queensland. (*Evening Observer*, 11 May 1901)

were sitting or former members of the Queensland Parliament.

THE QUEENSLAND RESULT

The comparatively stable system of well-defined party loyalty, which prevails today, did not develop until eight years after the election, so it is difficult to calculate an accurate party vote (Table 1).

TABLE 1. The Queensland election result.

Senate		House of Representatives	
Labor	3	Labor	4
Protection	2	Protection	3
Free Trade	1	Independent	2

While Protection carried the nation, with New South Wales remaining the bastion of Free Trade, the outstanding feature of the result in Queensland was the rise of the Labor Party. The state had the highest percentage of Labor votes in Australia: 39.7 per cent in the House of Representatives and 31.6 per cent in the Senate. For the Upper House, the Central Political Executive of the Australian Labor Federation endorsed three candidates and resisted pressure to endorse a ticket of six, thereby concentrating the Labor vote (Fig. 4). In contrast, seven candidates supported Protection and three Free Trade. The surprising result was three Labor Senators out of six, one from each of the southern, central and northern regions.

Undoubtedly Thomas Glassey (Protection) and John Hoolan benefited from their previous Labor affiliations.

Of the other candidates, James George Drake, a member of the Queensland Legislative Council and a keen advocate of Federation, had the advantage of being top of Prime Minister Barton's ticket as the appointed Postmaster-General. John Ferguson, also of the Legislative Council, was the only Free Trade candidate elected to the Senate. He had strong support from Rockhampton where he was a leading building contractor and leader of the fight for Central Queensland Separation. Able candidates, such as Thynne, Bartholomew, Hamilton and Cowley, all Protectionist and all on the *Brisbane Courier* ticket, were unsuccessful due to the dispersed conservative vote (Table 2).

In the nine federal divisions the vote reflected the characteristics of the electorates. No Protectionist candidate was endorsed for Brisbane where Thomas Macdonald-Paterson and Charles Hardie Buzacott fought for the conservative vote. Macdonald-Paterson was successful. There were no surprises in the Darling Downs where William Henry Groom, member of the Queensland Legislative Assembly for thirty-eight years, contested the division. A former convict, he was the oldest person elected to the House of Representatives and died in August 1901. An

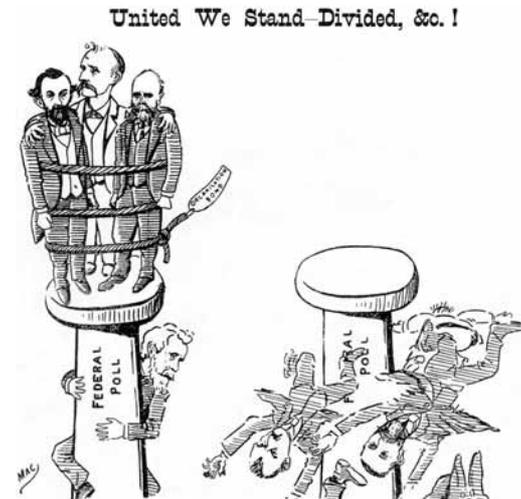


FIG. 4. A humorous comparison between the disciplined campaign run by the Labor candidates (Higgs, Dawson, Stewart and former colleague, Glassey) and the confusion of their opponents. (*Evening Observer*, 6 April 1901)

TABLE 2. Queensland Election results for the 1901 Commonwealth Parliament.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES				SENATE				
BRISBANE				Higgs, William Guy	MLA	South	29,452	LAB
Macdonald-Paterson, Thomas		PROT	3,351	Dawson, Anderson	MLA	North	29,350	LAB
Guilfoyle, D.H.		LAB	2,273	Drake, James George	MLC	South	26,552	PROT
Buzacott, Charles Hardie	MLC		1,538	Stewart, James Charles	MLA	Central	23,736	LAB
			7,162	Ferguson, John	MLC	Central	23,276	FT
CAPRICORNIA				Glassey, Thomas	MLA	South	22,670	PROT
Paterson, Alexander		IND	3,632	Thynne, Andrew Joseph	MLC	South	22,001	PROT
Nelson, Wallace		LAB	3,493	Bartholomew, John	MLA	South	20,624	PROT
			7,125	Hamilton, John	MLA	North	18,680	PROT
DARLING DOWNS				Cowley, Alfred Sandlings	MLA	North	18,265	
Groom, William Henry	MLA	PROT	4,685	Plant, Edmund Harris		North	17,028	
Ransome, Horace Charles			1,283	Murray-Prior, Thomas	MLA	South	13,236	PROT
			5,968	Hoolan, John	former MLA	North	7,382	IND LAB
HERBERT				Seymour, David Thompson		South	4,969	
Bamford, Frederick William		LAB	3,353	Ahearne, Joseph		North	4,516	FT
Brown, W.V.			3,140	Buzacott, Charles Hardie (withdrawn)	MLC	Central	2,918	
			6,493				284,655	
KENNEDY				LABOR VOTE	82,538	28.99%		
McDonald, Charles	MLA	LAB	3,936	INDEPENDENT LABOR (Hoolan)	7,382	2.59%		
Barnett, M.			2,325	FORMER LABOR (Glassey)	22,670	7.95%		
			6,261					
MARANOVA								
Page, James		LAB	2,998					
Bunning, G.E.			2,629					
			5,627					
MORETON								
Wilkinson, James	former MLA	IND	2,569					
Darvall, Anthony W.		PROT	2,099					
Maughan, W.J.R.	former MLA	PROT	1,296					
Kretshmer, Edward		IND	301					
Kellett, W.		PROT	149					
Neilson, R.D.		IND	114					
			6,528					
OXLEY								
Edwards, Richard		PROT	3,753					
Turley, Henry	MLA	LAB	3,299					
			7,052					
WIDE BAY								
Fisher, Andrew	MLA	LAB	4,910					
Annear, John Thomas		PROT	3,955					
			8,865					

Abbreviations: PROT = Protectionist; LAB = Labor; IND = Independent; FT = Free Trade.

interesting contest was in Moreton where no Labor candidate was endorsed but two former Labor members of the Legislative Assembly, who had resigned from the party, were among the six contestants. James Wilkinson standing as an Independent was successful. He was admitted to the Labor party in 1904 (Table 2).

THE QUEENSLAND ELECTION OF 1899

It is interesting to compare the result of the 1901 Commonwealth election with the

Queensland Parliament election of 1899. There were seventy-two members in the Legislative Assembly representing fifty single member electorates and eleven double member electorates. The the results were as follows:

Ministerialist vote (49.12 per cent) 43 members;
 Labor (34.02 per cent) 21 members;
 Opposition (13.48 per cent) 8 members; and
 Independents (3.38 per cent) no members.

The appointed Legislative Council had no member representative of Labor until 1904.

REFERENCES

- Biographical Handbook and Record of Elections for the Parliament of the Commonwealth* (Melbourne: Government Printing Office, third edition, 1921).
- Census of Queensland, 1901, *Queensland Parliamentary Papers*, 2 (1902).
- Chesterman, J. & Galligan, B., *Citizens Without Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge, University Press 1997).
- Hughes, C.A. & Graham, B.W., *Australian Government and Politics 1890-1964* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1968).
- Irving, Helen (ed.), *The Centenary Companion to Australian Federation* (Oakleigh: University of Cambridge Press, 1999).
- Oldfield, Audrey, *Woman Suffrage in Australia, A Gift or a Struggle* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
- Quick, John & Garran, Robert, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth* (first published 1901; reissued Sydney: Legal Books, 1976).
- The Elections Act 1885-98* (Qld), 62 Vic., No. 14.
- The Parliament of the Commonwealth Elections Act 1900*, 64 Vic., No. 25.
- The following Queensland newspapers were searched from January to May 1901: *Brisbane Courier*; *Telegraph*; *Evening Observer*; *The Worker*; *The Queenslander*; *The Bulletin*; *Queensland Times* and *The New Eagle*.