

CREATING A NEW FEDERATION

What would Australia look like if we designed it now?

Give your students a chance to write a new Constitution for a new federation.



- 1 Organise the class into groups using the *Group organisation information* as a guide. Each group will represent a different colony.
- 2 Ask each group to decide between proposed projects (listed below). Which one will be best for the people in their colony? The federal government will only be able to afford to undertake one of these, and each group must vote as a block.
 - A A high-speed rail line between Melbourne and Sydney; or
 - B A hydro-electric dam in Tasmania; or
 - C Desalination plants for Adelaide, Brisbane, and Perth.
- 3 Vote, tally the votes and announce which project will go ahead.
- 4 Discuss with the class what happened in the activity.
 - If project B or C was chosen, were all the representatives voting to benefit their colony?
 - If project A was chosen, who benefits from it, and why was it chosen? Then discuss how the students felt about the vote.
 - Was everyone's voice heard?
 - Was it fair?
- 5 Tell the students how the authors of the Australian Constitution solved this challenge—between basing representation on population and ensuring that the rights of the smaller states would be protected—by having a bi-cameral parliament with a House of Representatives and a Senate. Law-making power was also divided between the states and the federal Parliament, and they included a High Court to resolve disagreements. Ask your students to share their opinions of our current parliamentary organisation.
 - What are the pros and cons?
 - What could be improved?
- 6 Organise the class into pairs or small groups. Ask students to use the Constitutional options scaffold (page 20) to design a constitution for a new federation.
- 7 Invite students to share the key points of their new constitution with the class.
- 8 If you have time, organise the students into their original groups from step 1. Ask them to discuss the merits of each new constitution and to vote on their preferred one. Then discuss why each group chose a particular constitution and how they believe it will benefit the people of the new nation.

Group organisation

Colony	Percentage	If there are 30 students in your class
New South Wales	35% of the class	10
Victoria	30% of the class	9
Queensland	15% of the class	5
South Australia	10% of the class	3
Western Australia	5% of the class (or at least one student)	2
Tasmania	5% of the class (or at least one student)	1

If your class is too small, you can either ensure a majority of students are representing New South Wales and Victoria, or you may choose to put students into 6 roughly equal groups, but give each group a vote value according to the above numbers. For example, New South Wales would have 35 votes and Tasmania would have 5.

The above percentages are based on the population of each colony in 1901. You may wish to explain that these figures, from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, did not include Indigenous Australians or non-white immigrants, as they were not counted in the census at that time.

Curriculum links

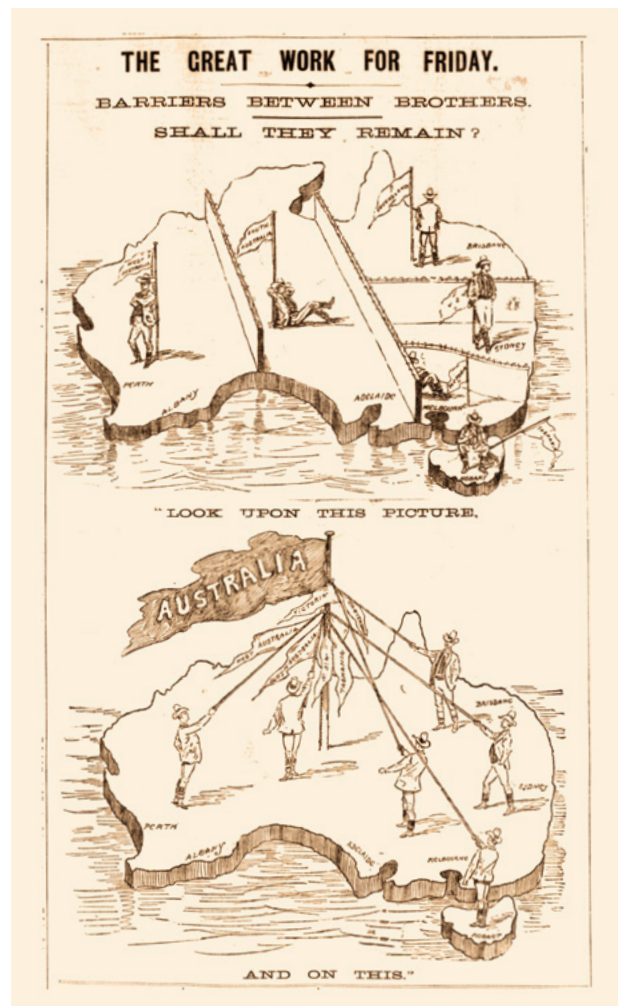
Year 6 (ACHASSI127)

Year 7 (ACHCK048) (ACHCS057)

Year 8 (ACHCS071)

Year 9 (ACHCS085) (ACHCS086)

Year 10 (ACHCS099)



A cartoon published in *The Argus* newspaper in 1898 urged colonists to federate.

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Constitutional options

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Create your own
Levels of government	Three levels – federal, state, and local	Two levels – federal and local	Two levels – federal and state	
Head of State	Hereditary monarchy	Appointed by the parliament	Elected by the people	
Executive government	Appointed by the Prime Minister from among elected representatives in their party	Appointed by the Head of State, may or may not be elected representatives	Made up of the Head of State, the Prime Minister and elected representatives from across the parliament	
Parliamentary structure	Bi-cameral – 2 chambers	Single chamber	Two chambers plus an advisory body appointed by the parliament or the head of state	
Parliamentary powers	Power to make laws on a limited number of topics, with remaining issues left to the other levels of government	Power to make laws on any topic, but also to delegate power to the other levels of government	Power to allow or disallow laws made by the other levels of government	
Election frequency	Elections to be held on a regular schedule	Elections to be held when decided by the head of state	Elections to be held when decided by the parliament or government	
Representation	Based on population, with each representative responsible for a similar number of voters	Proportional, with each representative sharing an electorate with a number of other representatives	Based on state or local government areas, with each electorate having the same number of representatives regardless of population	
Courts	Judges and justices appointed by the government or the parliament	Judges and justices appointed by the head of state	Judges and justices elected by the people	
Changing the constitution	Referendum of the people	Decision of the parliament	Decision of the head of state	