

Australia before Federation - 1

Before Federation, Australia was a group of six sparsely populated, self-governing colonies belonging to a country on the other side of the world. Distances between the major settlements were vast and the colonies were developing like separate countries with no common goal.

In New South Wales, they want free trade between colonies. It's crazy having to pay import taxes on goods every time you want to cross a border. We'd all be better off with free trade because it would keep prices down and we wouldn't have to pay import taxes.

In Victoria, they want people to buy locally produced goods to keep the farmers and manufacturers in business.

They protect their economy by adding taxes to goods that are imported from other colonies or countries. This makes them more expensive, so people will buy Victorian goods instead.

What would happen if the Germans or French tried to invade one of the colonies? They've got bigger armies and navies than any of us. We wouldn't stand a chance against them!

Even if all the colonies agreed to help the one being invaded, who would organise the operation? The invaders would sneak in easily while our lot were arguing about who should be in charge!

Not only that but it would take forever to mobilise all units because Australia is such an enormous continent.

Have you ever crossed the border into another colony by train? What a nuisance! When the railways were being built, the different colonies didn't talk to each other about what size track to use. So now, when you get to a border, you have to change trains, even if it's the middle of the night, because the tracks are different sizes.

The train would have to be unloaded at the border anyway for all passengers and freight to be checked by customs officials.

There are far too many foreigners coming into Australia. Many thousands of Chinese have come over since the gold rushes. If we're not careful, there will soon be more of them than there are of us! This is a British colony and we must keep it that way!

But they need foreigners in Queensland! They wouldn't be able to harvest the sugar cane crops if it wasn't for the Pacific Islanders.

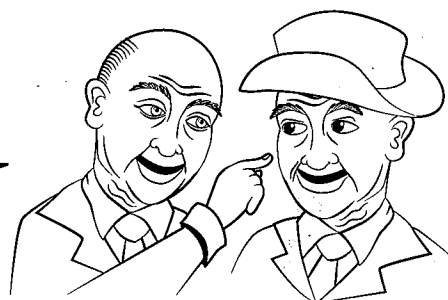
They put up with poor working conditions and don't ask for as much money as white men would.

We shouldn't be employing them when there are plenty of white men looking for work!

Yeah, me too, cobber. I'm a true blue Australian native.

I was born in Australia, mate.

I know all about the 'homeland' from my folks but this is my home ... this beautiful red land with acres of blue sky.



This place is in my blood. I can't explain it but when I see those paintings by Roberts and McCubbin or read the latest Banjo poem, I think, 'Yeah, that's Australia, mate!'

Key figures and events that led to Australia's Federation, including British and American influences on Australia's system of law and government (ACHHK113) © AC