

Federation: How Australia Became a Nation — Knowledge Organiser

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Key facts

- Before 1901, Australia was six separate British colonies, each with its own laws and even border taxes.
- On 1 January 1901, the colonies joined together — federated — to form the Commonwealth of Australia.
- They became states, with a new national parliament to make shared laws.
- Edmund Barton became Australia's first Prime Minister.

Key vocabulary

- Federation — joining separate states under one national government.
- Colony — a settlement controlled by another country.
- Constitution — the set of rules for how a country is governed.
- Parliament — the group that makes a country's laws.

Why federate?

The colonies wanted to trade freely without border taxes, defend themselves together, and build shared railways and laws. Federation made them stronger as one nation — though First Nations peoples were left out of the new constitution and not counted as citizens for decades.