Name: *Queensland Past and Present: 100 Years of Statistics, 1896–1996*

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QUEENSLAND PAST AND PRESENT

SUMMARY

Queensland became a self-governing colony of the British Empire separate from New South Wales in 1859. The new colony adopted much of the machinery of government from New South Wales. The sheer size of Queensland and the distance from the capital Brisbane to northern, central and western centres led many people to believe that the colony should be further divided into more spatially manageable units. The issue of territorial separation declined to some extent with the push for federation. In the 1899 referendum Brisbane and the southern districts were, in general, opposed to federation on protectionist economic grounds. The rest of the State voted in favour of federation. The vote for federation was carried but Queensland had the lowest majority of any State. In 1901 Queensland became a State of the Commonwealth of Australia.

Numerous changes in electoral and voting legislation have occurred since federation. Plural voting rights for owners of more than one parcel of land were soon abolished. Women were granted the right to vote in 1904. The practice of multi-member electoral districts ended in 1910. Voting became compulsory in 1914. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons were disenfranchised in 1930 and did not regain the vote until 1965. Queensland has had a unicameral legislature, the Legislative Assembly, since 1922 when the Upper House, the Legislative Council, was abolished. In 1949 the Queensland Government recognised the spatial issues in electoral distribution by introducing a system of zonal allowances. Some country electorates had less than half the number of voters as city electorates. A redistribution occurred in 1990.

The electoral history of Queensland is one of stability in terms of the longevity of parties in government. The Labor Party held power from 1915 to 1957, except for 1929–1932. The National Party held power from 1957 to 1983 in coalition with the Liberal Party, and in its own right from 1983 to 1989. Over the one hundred years to the end of 1996 National and Liberal parties governed for about 53 years and the Labor Party for about 47 years.

In 1996 Queensland had a Legislative Assembly of 89 members. At the federal level, the State had 26 members of the House of Representatives and 12 senators. Queensland had 125 local government authorities, comprising 18 cities, 3 towns and 104 shires.

Endnotes


