

## Federation Role Play - The Site of The Federal Capital

Role Plays provide students with an opportunity to gain knowledge about and empathise with people and events in the past and develop their communication, listening, observation and analysis skills.

### Syllabus Links:

Stage 3, Change and Continuity, Social Systems and Structures

Stage 5, Topic 1: Australia to 1914. How and why did Federation occur?

### Outcomes Stage 3

- CCS3.1 - Explains the significance of particular events in the past in developing Australian identities and heritage.
- CCS3.2 - Explains the development of principles of Australian democracy.
- SSS3.8 - Explains the structures, roles and responsibilities and decision making processes of federal governments.

### Outcomes Stage 5

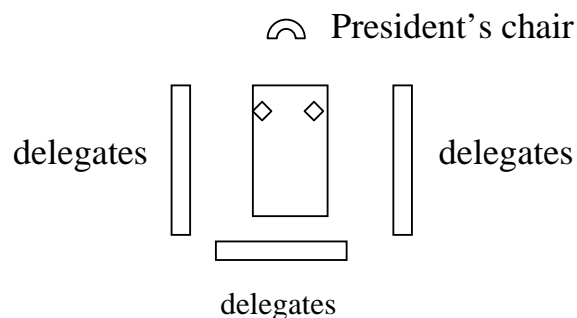
- 5.1 explains social, political and cultural developments and events and evaluates their impact

*Students learn about / Students learn to:*

The reasons for Federation / explain the arguments for and against Federation

## Teaching Sequence

### 1. Setup Room



### 2. Give students background introductory information:

Imagine that you are stepping into a time machine. Now turn the dial to 1897 and hold on tight because it is a long time ago and we may experience some turbulence. You find yourself sitting in the Legislative Assembly of the NSW Parliament but you feel a little different. In the 1890's Australia was a very different place to what it is now. Most of you have beards and all of you are men. The ladies were not allowed to participate and none of you are wearing shorts or sneakers. They weren't invented yet. There were six colonies each with their own independent parliament that made its own laws and was responsible for running the colony. Each colony had its own postal system,

railway system, army and customs laws. Legally each of the colonies was subject to the British Parliament and any changes to the way the colonies were governed had to be passed by British law. Most people lived in cities or towns and the majority lived in the colonies of NSW and Victoria. Not everybody could vote in each colony. Most power and authority was held by white, English speaking men who were keen to keep Australia a “white” nation.

During the 1890’s, there were many conferences and conventions held throughout the colonies to discuss the idea of Federation and to make up a Federal Constitution.

Today we are going to re-enact part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Session of Australasian Federal Convention which was held in the Parliament of NSW in September of 1897. This was a very long convention, lasting more than two weeks so you can imagine how much there was to talk about. Today we’re going to try and re-enact a very small part of the convention. We will also use ideas and conversations that happened during all the other conventions as part of our re-enactment.

As to the Convention you all come from different colonies that have their own parliaments. Some of you are Members of those Parliaments and others are people who live in those Colonies. It is important to remember that Canberra doesn’t exist except for grass and sheep. As representatives of your colony you probably all want the capital of the new Commonwealth to be in your own colony but not everyone can win. You will have to vote on where you want the capital to be at the end of the debate.

**3. Explain the issue to be discussed: That the capital of the new nation should be determined by the first Federal Parliament.** Not all of the delegates will agree with this proposition. They will each give their opinion of where the capital of the new nation should be situated. However once one of the delegates has put forward the motion that: the capital of the new nation should be determined by the first Federal Parliament, delegates have to vote on this motion even if it is not what they spoke about.

#### **4. Explain the Role of President and Procedures for Delegates to speak**

The Australasian Federal Convention held in Sydney in 1897 was chaired by the Right Honourable Charles Cameron Kingston MP, Premier, South Australia.

The Chairperson of the Convention was called the President. Their role was to call upon delegates to the convention to speak and make sure Members followed the rules of debate. The most important rule is that when Members make speeches nobody is to interrupt. If there are interruptions the President says “order” or “the house will come to order” and there must be quiet. Students in role speak on the floor of the House (at the table). Each delegate will be called upon to speak on the issue and then vote for or against the proposition. When a delegate is called upon they should stand and say ‘Mir President’, then the President will ask them to move to the table. At the table the delegate should address their remarks to the President. Speeches are not to be clapped but noises of approval such as “hear, hear” can be made. The President is responsible for keeping the convention in order. The President can “call a delegate to order” or direct that the delegate be ejected from the convention if they are disruptive.

## 5. Distribute Role Cards

There are 14 characters:

**The President:** The President is the Presiding Officer of the Legislative Council. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Australasian Federal Convention was held in the Legislative Assembly of the NSW Parliament. However because the 1<sup>st</sup> Session of the Convention was held in the South Australian Parliament, all three sessions of the Convention were chaired by the Premier of South Australia, The Right Hon. Charles Cameron Kingston.

The President's role is to run the proceedings, maintain order, put questions after debate and conduct divisions. They can be compared to a chairperson or umpire.

### **The Delegates:**

The Hon. Edmund Barton, Member of the Legislative Council, NSW

The Right Hon. Sir John Forrest, Premier of Western Australia

The Right Hon. George Reid, Premier of NSW

The Hon. Alfred Deakin, Member of the Legislative Assembly, Victoria

The Hon. Frederick William Holder, Treasurer, Legislative Assembly South Australia

Sir Edward Braddon, Premier of Tasmania

Mr James Walker delegate for NSW

Mr Bernhard Wise delegate for NSW

Mr Henry Bournes Member of the Legislative Assembly, Victoria

The Hon. Alexander Peacock, Member of the Legislative Assembly, Victoria

The Hon. John Gordon Member of the Legislative Council, South Australia

Mr George Leak Member of the Legislative Assembly, Western Australia

The Hon. William Moore, Member of the Legislative Council, Tasmania

Queensland did not send delegates.

## 6. Conduct Role Play

### Role Card 1 President's script

(Words to be spoken are written in BOLD)

**Fellow delegates. Welcome to the 1897 Australasian Federal Convention. Each of you has been elected to represent your colony's view at this convention. I will call upon each delegate to present their views, we will then have time for brief questions and we will then vote on the issue.**

Call upon each delegate to give their viewpoint in the following order:

The Hon. Edmund Barton, Member of the Legislative Council, NSW  
 The Right Hon. Sir John Forrest, Premier of Western Australia  
 The Right Hon. George Reid, Premier of NSW  
 The Hon. Alfred Deakin, Member of the Legislative Assembly, Victoria  
 The Hon. Frederick William Holder, Treasurer, Legislative Assembly South Australia  
 Sir Edward Braddon, Premier of Tasmania  
 Mr James Walker delegate for NSW  
 Mr Bernhard Wise delegate for NSW  
 Mr Henry Bournes Member of the Legislative Assembly, Victoria  
 The Hon. Alexander Peacock, Member of the Legislative Assembly, Victoria  
 The Hon. John Gordon Member of the Legislative Council, South Australia  
 Mr George Leak Member of the Legislative Assembly, Western Australia  
 The Hon. William Moore, Member of the Legislative Council, Tasmania

For each delegate you might say something like:

**I welcome the representative from** (use a name from the above list)  
 \_\_\_\_\_. **Please make your speech at the table.**

Wait for delegate to take their place.

**Would you like to tell the Convention your views on the issue before us today?**

Delegate presents views. Thank the Delegate when they have finished. Repeat for each of the following delegates. At the end of all the presentations by delegates The Hon. William Moore's proposition is put to a vote

**We will now vote on the proposition put by The Hon. William Moore. The proposition is: that the first Federal Parliament determine the seat of Government for the Commonwealth of Australia.**

**If you are in favour of the first Federal Parliament determining the seat of government say ‘Aye’.**

Listen to Responses.

**If you are not in favour of the first Federal Parliament determining the seat of government say ‘No’.**

Listen to Responses. Decide which you think was louder and declare the decision.

**On the question of where the new national capital should be housed, this convention has voted \_\_\_\_\_ (insert decision).**

**We have now come to the end of the convention. I thank all of the representatives from all of the colonies for their attendance today and thank you to the audience members as well. You have all done a great job.**

## **Role Cards for Delegates**

### **The Hon. Edmund Barton, Member of the Legislative Council, NSW**

Thank you Mr President,  
 Sydney is the Mother city of the Australian colonies, it would be an insult to history and to the people of NSW if any other place was chosen for the Federal Parliament to meet in. Furthermore in the interests of national defence, Sydney is perfectly placed to be the capital of our new nation. It has a very good harbour that can be well protected.

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### **The Right Hon. Sir John Forrest, Premier, Western Australia**

Mr President,  
 I thank you very much for giving me the honour of speaking directly after my colleague from Sydney. Is anybody at this convention surprised that the Member from NSW wants the capital to be in Sydney? Let's be a little more innovative at this convention so that our descendants look back and remember us with gratitude. I propose that the capital of the new nation be situated in the beautiful, young city of Perth. Then there will be a major city on each side of this wonderful continent and the whole nation will prosper economically.

.....

### **The Right Hon. George Reid, Premier of New South Wales**

Thank you Mr President,  
 I will be content as long as the Federal capital is in NSW. As Premier I will give the Federal Parliament the choice of anywhere in NSW to choose from.

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### **The Hon. Alfred Deakin, Member of the Legislative Assembly, Victoria**

Mr President,  
 The place where the new capital city is situated is a matter of prestige and honour. It should not be handed out to anybody that asks. It should be chosen on the proven merit of the place. It is therefore very obvious that Melbourne is the larger, wealthier and more developed city in this collection of colonies. I suggest strongly that the new Federal Parliament should be in Melbourne.

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**The Hon. Frederick William Holder, Treasurer, Legislative Assembly, South Australia**

Mr President,

We believe that the Federal Capital should be in some place that is not a capital city already. This gives us the opportunity to form a new centre.

.....

**Sir Edward Braddon, Premier of Tasmania**

Thank you Mr President,

Of course Tasmania would like to see the lovely city of Hobart as the Federal Capital. But we understand that the other colonies may not agree with this. Therefore we propose Melbourne, as it is an easy distance from us.

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**Mr James Walker, delegate for NSW**

I will begin by saying that I am not a Member of Parliament and therefore I am truly here to represent the people of NSW. In the view of the people of NSW there is one place only that we will accept as a capital. That place must be Sydney. However if this convention perverts the course of sanity and does not choose Sydney then the people of NSW insist that the new capital must be located within very easy distance of this city! That is all I have to say Mr President.

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**Mr Bernhard Wise, Colony Representative for NSW**

Mr President,

I do not agree that the first Federal Parliament should determine the capital of our nation. This proposition simply postpones the problem. It will waste the valuable time of the new parliament to have to decide where they should govern from. We are gathered here to draft a new constitution. This is one of the decisions we must make

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**Mr Henry Bournes Member of the Legislative Assembly, Victoria**

Thank you Mr President,  
 Unlike the previous speaker I think it is very obvious that the best place for the new capital is Melbourne. However if it is not Melbourne it must not be Sydney and it should be at least 100 miles from Sydney.

.....

**The Hon. Alexander Peacock, Member of the Legislative Assembly, Victoria**

Thank you Mr President,  
 I believe it is a very good idea that the official seat of government be determined by the first Federal Parliament. There are so many cities and towns that have petitioned to have the new Parliament, let's avoid fighting and let the new Parliament decide for itself where it wants to sit.

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**The Hon. John Gordon, Member of the Legislative Council, South Australia**

Mr President,  
 I do not think the colonies should be selfish in this argument. The Federal capital should be central, easy to get to, not exposed to risks of invasion, its climate should be pleasant to live in. I believe that the only fair way to solve this issue is to leave this question to the new Parliament to decide. Let us get back to what we are really here for – creating a Constitution for this new nation. If we don't have a Constitution we won't have a nation and there will be no need for a new capital city!

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**Mr George Leake, Member of the Legislative Assembly, Western Australia**

Mr President,  
 The only way to be fair to everybody is to give every capital city a chance to host the Federal Parliament. The new Federal Parliament should move to a new capital city every six months.

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**The Hon. William Moore, member of the Legislative Council, Tasmania**

Mr President,

It is very obvious that we at this convention cannot agree on where the new Parliament should meet. I would like to take up what was suggested by the representative for South Australia. I believe that this is the only sensible solution to this issue therefore I propose that the first Federal Parliament determines the seat of government.

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