



**THE NATIONALS**

**APPROACHING A  
CENTENARY OF  
ACHIEVEMENT FOR  
REGIONAL AUSTRALIA**



*Written and compiled by Paul Davey*

## THE NATIONAL PARTY IS...

- The most democratic, non-factionalised and stable political party in Australia, proud of its independent identity and offering equal opportunity to all.
- The second oldest political party in Australia, celebrating its Centenary on 22 January 2020.
- An organisation that -
  - through its State affiliates, has the largest membership across regional Australia of any political party
  - has never been unrepresented in the Commonwealth Parliament, despite predictions since its formation that it would fail
  - by 2018 had returned 180 members and senators to the Commonwealth Parliament, representing regional interests across Australia
  - has accumulated an enviable record of achievements on the statute books by working forcefully in Federal Coalition governments
  - has ensured from the first Federal Coalition agreement that its Parliamentary Leader is the Deputy Prime Minister and acts as Prime Minister when that person is absent
  - while formed to drive better political outcomes for agricultural industries, has long been more than a 'farmers' party', fighting for better services, facilities, and opportunities for people living and working beyond the capital cities.
- The Party's greatest achievement is its independence. Its very existence has forced other parties to pay greater attention to the needs of regional Australia than would otherwise have been the case. Without an independent National Party, Federal policy development would be dominated by city interests and city-based politicians.
- A Country Party brochure, *Mileposts*, charting achievements to 1950, observed:



**You can't afford to be without a Country Party ...  
Thank your stars there is a Country Party**



Change Country Party to National Party and the statement remains true today.

## INTRODUCTION

The National Party of Australia, commonly known as The Nationals, has been an important and influential part of Australian politics, Federal and State, since the early 1900s. The Federal Party will celebrate its Centenary on 22 January 2020.

The Party's primary political concentration has been on improving the services provided to and the lifestyles of the almost eight million people who live and work beyond the nation's capital cities, as well as on increasing international trade opportunities for export industries, particularly the agricultural and resource sectors

The Party's basic philosophy is conservative, in that it supports maximum development of private enterprise and minimum intervention by government. It believes Australians should be able to manage their own affairs in a prospering private sector-led economy, enhanced by

## PARTY ORIGINS

By the early 1900s, farm organisations across Australia were beginning to support political candidates who would promote their policies and objectives in their parliaments. They were concerned that farmers and graziers were overburdened by taxes, tariffs, inadequate transport and other infrastructure, unnecessary duplication of Federal and State administration, and the lack of local services.

To enhance the impact of their cause, and harness the efforts of what were sympathetic individual and largely Independent politicians into a single, unified group, the farm bodies began to form political organisations, each with their own constitutions.

The Country Party in Western Australia was the first, founded by the State's Farmers and Settlers' Association (FSA) on 12 March 1913 and winning ten seats in the Western Australian Parliament at elections the following year.

Country parties followed in Victoria in 1915, Queensland and South Australia in 1918, New South Wales in 1919 (originally named The Progressive Party of New South Wales

appropriate government policies, especially for the disadvantaged and those in genuine need.

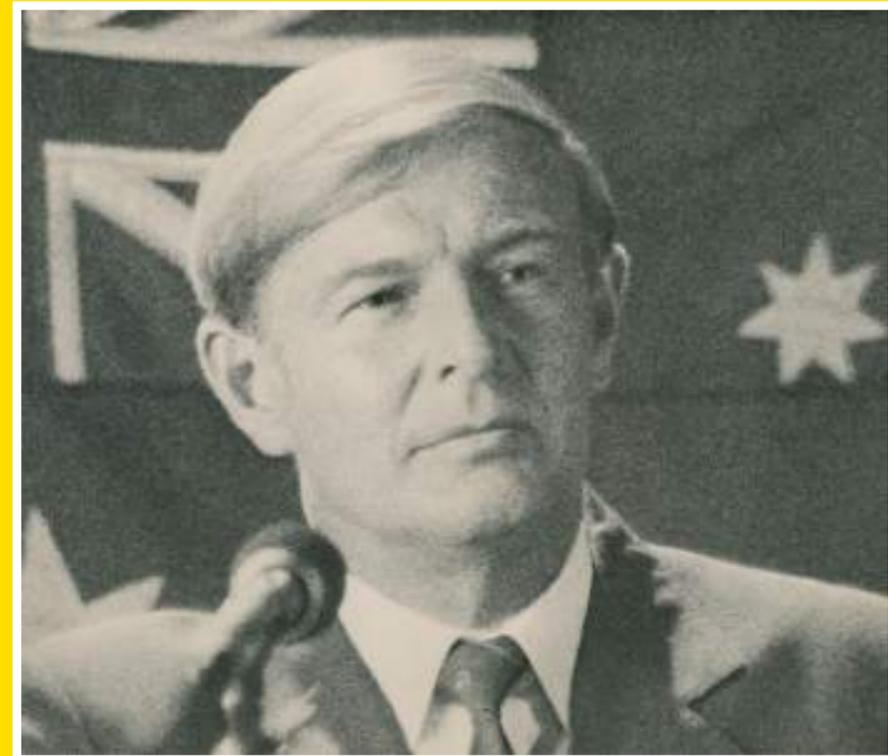
The Nationals believe the prime responsibility of the Commonwealth Government should be to ensure freedom of choice and opportunity for all citizens; to provide an economic framework that rewards individual effort; to preserve the family as the foundation of society; to promote the continued development of services and infrastructure across regional Australia; to guarantee freedom of speech, communication and assembly for all people, providing they act within the law; to promote loyalty to and pride in Australia, its Constitution, National Flag and National Anthem; to maximise international trade; to ensure modern and adequate defence structures that can interact with international partners; and to preserve democratic elections for governments at Federal, State and Local levels.

until becoming the Country Party from August 1925), the Commonwealth Parliament in 1920, and Tasmania in 1922.

The South Australian Party merged with the then Liberal Federation to form the Liberal and Country League from 1932 until re-emerging as the Country Party in 1963. The Tasmanian Party disbanded in 1975, was revived as the National Party in 1994 and again disbanded in 1996. A Country Party was formed in the Northern Territory in 1966 and merged with the Liberal Party to become the Northern Territory Country Liberal Party (CLP) from 1974. The Queensland National and Liberal parties amalgamated into the Liberal National Party of Queensland (LNP) from 2008.

Because of their constitutional autonomy, the State parties are able to tailor their structures and operations to best meet the needs of their respective spheres of interest. In contrast, the Liberal and Labor parties work on a more centralised basis, with their State bodies being Divisions and Branches respectively of their Federal organisations.

# Keep Australia strong.



## National Country Party.



Written and authorised by B. Osmond for National Country Party, Parliament House, Canberra.

PRYOR



## SUCCESS THROUGH UNITY

The National Party has two great strengths that have helped it achieve many outcomes for the regions it represents, at Federal and State levels, and which have been cornerstones of its longevity: It is non-factionalised and the vast majority of its parliamentary representatives worked and were involved and known in their local communities, many of them having been prominent in local service, community and industry clubs and organisations, before entering Parliament.

The Party's Branch members and parliamentarians have a united ambition – to improve the level of services and infrastructure in their electorates and in regional Australia. There is close co-operation between Federal and State MPs on achieving outcomes across all government jurisdictions.

The current Federal Parliamentary National Party is made up of people who, before entering Parliament, worked in occupations as diverse as journalism, publishing, the law, small business, commercial fishing, agriculture, economics, electrical engineering,

accountancy, medicine, the police force, teaching, banking, finance, and the trades. A similar cross-section of endeavour applies throughout the State Parliamentary Parties.

They are people who know and understand what regional Australians expect from government and they work hard to bring those aspirations to fruition. An underlying priority across all National Parties has been to close the gap in the quality of services, facilities and opportunities enjoyed by those in the cities and those elsewhere.

No other political party in Australia can demonstrate such unity and strength of purpose.

The Party's greatest achievement has been to force other political parties to pay greater attention to the social and economic development of regional Australia than would otherwise have been the case. Without the Country/National Party, policy development would be dominated by city interests and city-based politicians.

## MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE

No other political party in Australia has been as adaptable to changing political, economic and social circumstances as has the National Party.

Economic and demographic changes, which in some areas have seen diminishing regional populations – meaning fewer country electorates – and huge advances in communications' technology, have altered lifestyles, work opportunities and associated political challenges across regional Australia.

Almost from the day of its birth, the Country Party was written off by its detractors as an organisation that was unnecessary and that would die on the vine.

But it didn't. It adapted to change and remains essential to the political framework of regional Australia.

The development of the Party's first Federal organisational structure, The Australian Country Party Association (now Federal Council) in March 1926, on the initiative of one of its founding fathers and Federal Leader, Earle Page, was a deliberate move to separate the Party from farm organisations and widen its electoral appeal.

To the same end, the Party's platform was broadened in June 1927 to include support for such objectives as uniform divorce laws; one authority for the assessment and collection of Federal and State land and income tax; Federal and State co-ordination in the provision of health services, notably the establishment of obstetric nursing and bush nursing centres in country districts; and increased development of country towns and secondary industries - decentralisation.

The Party's policies and achievements over close to 100 years, while still strongly supporting sustainable agricultural and resource production and exports, have benefited broader regional community interests, such as education, health, transport, telecommunications, Aboriginal affairs, the environment, and jobs. The Party has long been more than a 'farmers' party'.

Further recognising the need to remain electorally relevant, the Federal Party changed its name from Australian Country Party to National Country Party of Australia on 2 May 1975 and then to National Party of Australia from 16 October 1982. State parties did likewise.

Hard to shed the image: the Party's name changed from National Country Party to National Party from 16 October 1982, but cartoonist Geoff Pryor was not going to let the cocky image die easily, *The Canberra Times*, p.2, 19 October 1982 (Geoff Pryor, NLA Pic Drawer 9171#Pic/3697/195/nla)

# THE FIRST FEDERAL PARLIAMENTARY COUNTRY PARTY

The Australian Country Party (ACP) was established on 22 January 1920 by a meeting of nine members of the House of Representatives who had been elected on 13 December 1919 and who endorsed the ideals of the Australian Farmers' Federal Organisation (AFFO), which was formed in September 1916 and included delegates from State farm bodies.

The AFFO's core objectives were to prevent duplication of taxation and the overlapping of Federal/State administration; to obviate conflict between Commonwealth and State industrial laws and awards; and to encourage scientific agricultural education and co-operative trading in the interests of primary producers.

The nine members of the new ACP were joined by two more on 24 February 1920, giving a parliamentary strength of eleven on the cross benches. The governing Nationalists under Prime Minister Billy Hughes had 38 members in the House of Representatives and the Labor Party 26.

A Country Party meeting the next day agreed to elect an interim Leader, thereby providing time for the members to assess each other's strengths and weaknesses before electing a longer term Leader. The Tasmanian Member for Wilmot, William McWilliams, was chosen for the role. He was replaced on 5 April 1921 by the Member for Cowper, NSW, Earle Page, who held the position until September 1939.

McWilliams explained the new Party's philosophy to Parliament on 10 March 1920:

I may say at the outset that the Country party is an independent body quite separate from the Nationalists or the Labour party. ... We occupy our own party rooms, we have appointed our own Leader and other officers. We take no part in the deliberations of Ministerialists or of the Opposition. We intend to support measures of which we approve, and hold ourselves absolutely free to criticize or reject any proposals with which we do not agree.

The Party's numbers increased by one from 1 July 1920, when Reginald Wilson, elected as a South Australian FSA candidate on an agreed Senate ticket with the Nationalists at the December 1919 election, took up his seat and joined the Country Party. Being in the Senate, however, he did not attend Party meetings.

A further boost in numbers came in March 1921, when the Member for Robertson, NSW, since 1913, William Fleming, left the Nationalists and joined the Country Party.



Controlling the traffic: when it came to which of the two major parties had precedence, the new Country Party, headed by 'policeman' William McWilliams, would decide (*Bulletin*, 4 March 1920)

Also in March 1921, a conference in Sydney of AFFO delegates and parliamentary representatives adopted the first formal Federal political platform of the Party. Under the slogan Production and a Fair Deal, it promoted, among other initiatives, reform to eliminate overlapping between Federal and State jurisdictions; a Federal convention to remodel the Australian Constitution and facilitate the subdivision of existing States; encouragement of industries essential to national development; the full encouragement of private enterprise in production and all forms of co-operative enterprise; a vigorous immigration policy; extension and cheapening of postal and telephonic communication in country areas; a 'resolute' policy to develop the north of Australia; and a comprehensive system of water conservation and power production.

At the elections on 16 December 1922, the Nationalist representation fell from 38 to 26. Labor was returned with 29 members and there were five Liberals and one Independent. The Country Party, with 14 members, was essential to the continuation of a non-Labor administration. But Page, now Country Party Leader, refused to join a Coalition as long as Hughes was the Nationalist Leader. Ultimately, Hughes stood aside on 2 February 1923 in favour of Stanley Bruce (Flinders, Vic).

# INTO GOVERNMENT

Page and Bruce forged the first Country/Nationalist Coalition Government, holding office until defeated by Labor under Jim Scullin in October 1929.

Page was Treasurer and effectively Deputy Prime Minister, being acknowledged as taking precedence in the Ministry after the Prime Minister and being Acting Prime Minister during Bruce's absences. The position of Deputy Prime Minister was not included in parliamentary records until it was formally established by Prime Minister John Gorton, at the behest of then Country Party Leader, John McEwen, in 1968. However, Country/National Party Leaders have always been, and continue to be, Deputy Prime Minister and Acting Prime Minister in Coalition governments.

The Bruce/Page agreement, which maintained the separate identities of the two parties, gave the Country Party five portfolios and the Nationalists six, and became the foundation Coalition agreement upon which ones of today are based.

Page and the Country Party were soon delivering impressive achievements as participants in the Government – introduction of the first radio broadcasting licences (1923), establishment of the Loan Council (1924), restructuring the Commonwealth Bank as a central bank (1924), establishing a rural credits department within the bank (1925), and establishing a Department of Markets (1925), the forerunner of today's Department of Agriculture and Water Resources.



Budgeting times: Earle Page (centre) puts the finishing touches to his 1924 budget, flanked by the Secretary to the Treasury, ASR Collins (left) and Treasury adviser, J Marshall (*Page family*)

These successes impressed the State parties. For instance, in New South Wales, the then Country Party Leader, Ernest Buttenshaw developed the founding State Coalition with the Nationalists under Thomas Bavin. The Government held office from 8 October 1927 to 25 October 1930.

Using a similar formula to that drawn up between Page and Bruce, Buttenshaw secured five portfolios and the Deputy Premiership for the Country Party. The NSW Party Leader has always been the Deputy Premier in subsequent Coalition governments and acted as Premier during absences of the Premier.

In Canberra, the Scullin Government was defeated at the December 1931 election and the Nationalist Party under Joe Lyons, by then named the United Australia Party (UAP), governed in its own right until the elections in September 1934, after which it briefly formed a minority government before establishing a Coalition with the Country Party from 9 November 1934. There was a further period when the UAP governed in its own right from 26 April 1939 to 14 March 1940, when the Coalition was reformed. All non-Labor governments since then have been Coalitions between the Country/National Party and the UAP/Liberal Party.

During periods of Opposition up to June 1974, the non-Labor parties agreed to co-operate, but not be in formal Coalition, except during the first term of the Curtin Labor Government from October 1943 to September 1946, when Arthur Fadden was elected unopposed by a joint UAP/Country Party meeting to be Opposition Leader.

After the Whitlam Labor Government's election in December 1972, Doug Anthony and Liberal Leader, Bill Snedden, agreed to co-operate but not form a Coalition Opposition. However, they did so after the Whitlam Government was re-elected in June 1974, largely because in the non-Coalition period Labor had been able to exploit policy differences between the conservative parties.

The non-Labor parties have formed Coalitions in Opposition ever since. The arrangements were briefly interrupted by the Joh for Canberra campaign in 1987, which split the Party and broke the Coalition for 100 days between 28 April and 6 August.

## THE COUNTRY PARTY PRIME MINISTERS

Three Federal Leaders have been Prime Ministers, each taking on the role in difficult circumstances -

- Earle Page (Cowper, NSW) – 7-26 April 1939, following the death of Prime Minister Joe Lyons
- Arthur Fadden (Darling Downs, Qld) – 29 August-7 October 1941, following the resignation of Prime Minister Robert Menzies
- John McEwen (Murray, Vic) – 19 December 1967-10 January 1968, following the death of Prime Minister Harold Holt.

Because each served for a brief time, they are often

disparagingly referred to as ‘caretaker’ or ‘stop gap’ Prime Ministers. Yet each was sworn in as Prime Minister with full authority and each made decisions and took actions that went far beyond the conventions of a caretaker government. They were very much Prime Ministers in their own right.

They were eminently qualified for their appointments, each having accumulated significant experience as Acting Prime Minister before being called on to formally fill the Government’s top position.

Before being appointed Prime Minister, Page had been Acting Prime Minister for 540 days, Fadden for 137 days, and McEwen for 463 days. There was no-one in any of the governments concerned who was more qualified than these men to be the Prime Minister during the periods in question.



Country Party Prime Ministers: (left to right) Earle Page, Arthur Fadden, John McEwen  
(National Archives of Australia, NAA: A1200, L42124; NAA: A6180, 4/2/77/30; NAA: A1200, L36581)

## THE FEDERAL ORGANISATION

Earle Page was keen to establish a Federal Party organisational structure that could develop a closer relationship with the State parties and help broaden electoral appeal to a wider section of the community than farmers and graziers.

The AFFO convened a conference in Melbourne on 23 and 24 March 1926. It was attended by 60 Country Party delegates from Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia, as well as six women representatives – one from each State.

The result was the adoption of a Federal Party Constitution which established the Australian Country Party Association and a Central Council of 23, made up of the Federal Leader and two other representatives elected by the Federal Parliamentary Country Party; three delegates each from the Country Party organisations of New South Wales and Victoria; two delegates each from the organisations in Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania, and one woman representative appointed by the women’s organisations in each State.

The State parties became affiliated with the Association and the first meeting of its Central Council was held in Sydney on 30 September 1926, at which Page was elected Chairman – a position he held until his death in 1961.

The Association’s first conference, held in Sydney from 1 to 3 June 1927, streamlined the Constitution by changing the name of Central Council to Federal Council, thereby avoiding confusion with State organisations, which were each governed by a Central Council. Federal Council continues to this day and is the governing body of the Federal Party.

A conference in Melbourne in July 1937 amended the Constitution to provide for the establishment of an executive, known today as the Federal Management Committee, to manage the affairs of the Party

between meetings of Federal Council.

In December 1943, it was agreed to drop the word ‘Association’ from the organisation’s name, so it became simply The Australian Country Party, and to recommend that the affiliated State parties adopt the same name (where necessary) with the addition of their State. For instance, the NSW Party had been named The United Country Party of New South Wales since September 1931, to harness electoral support from the New States Movements. All State parties accepted the recommendation, with the NSW Party becoming The Australian Country Party (N.S.W.) from 9 February 1944.

Today, Federal Council usually meets once a year in Canberra. It considers, among other issues, policy motions submitted from affiliated State Party conferences, women’s sections and the Young Nationals, and also elects its office bearers and its Federal Management Committee – the equivalent of the State Party Central Executives - which meets as necessary between meetings of Federal Council to manage the day to day affairs of the organisation.

The Party convenes a Federal Conference once in the life of each Commonwealth Parliament, or once every three years. Conference includes delegates from all the affiliated State Party Federal Electorate Councils throughout Australia and specifically considers Party policy.

The Queensland LNP maintained its affiliated status with the Federal Party after its establishment in 2008. The Northern Territory CLP is an associated organisation. Its delegates to Federal Council and Conference may vote on issues, but not participate in office bearer elections, or motions which seek to amend the Party’s Federal Constitution, or which relate to the administration of the Party.

Only Federal Council has the power to amend the Party Constitution. Constitutional motions require a two-thirds majority vote to be carried.

**Think Local.  
Vote National.**

## FEDERAL PARLIAMENTARY PARTY

The Federal Parliamentary National Party is made up of those people who have been preselected by their State organisations and have won election to the Senate or House of Representatives.

The Parliamentary Party operates under its own rules, providing they are not inconsistent with the Party's Federal Constitution. It has the right if necessary to adopt policy positions that are different from those of Federal Council or Conference, providing the Federal Leader explains the reasons to the Federal Management Committee. It also has the right to decide whether or not to enter into, or terminate, a Coalition agreement, after consultation with the Federal Management Committee.

The entire Parliamentary Party (Senators and Members) elects its Federal Leader, Deputy Leader and Parliamentary Whips for the House of Representatives. The Party's Senators alone elect their Senate Leader, Deputy and Whip.

The first woman member of the Federal Parliamentary Party was Agnes Robertson from Western Australia. Originally elected to the Senate for the Liberal Party at the December 1949 election – becoming the fifth woman to enter the Commonwealth Parliament – she switched to the Country Party from 1955 until her retirement in June 1962.

Other Party women elected to the Commonwealth Parliament have been Flo Bjelke-Petersen (Senate,

## PARLIAMENTARY NUMBERS

Some may argue that having fewer than 200 members and senators elected in 100 years is not much of an achievement. This overlooks two important facts: (1) unlike other organisations, the Party generally only contests about one-third of seats in the House of Representatives, and (2) a substantial number of its members and senators have won re-election on consecutive occasions to become long-serving parliamentarians, many for 15 to 20 years and even

Queensland), De-Anne Kelly (Dawson, Queensland), Kay Hull (Riverina, New South Wales), Fiona Nash (Senate, New South Wales), Bridget McKenzie (Senate, Victoria), and Michelle Landry (Capricornia, Qld). Many more women have won preselection from State parties to contest elections.



The fifth woman elected to the Commonwealth Parliament: Agnes Robertson sat with the Country Party from 1955 until retiring in 1962  
*(Australian News and Information Bureau/Auspic)*

longer. This illustrates the people's confidence in their representative's understanding of the issues and needs confronting them, and in his or her determination to take these up on their behalf in Parliament.

The parliamentary strength of the National Party in Canberra in 2018 was 22 members and senators. The highest representation in the Party's history was 31 (23 members and eight senators) after the December 1975 Federal election.

# NATIONALS



## LONGEST SERVING SENATORS AND MEMBERS

Five party senators and members are among the roll of parliamentarians who served more than 30 years in the Commonwealth Parliament:

- Earle Christmas Grafton Page (Cowper, NSW), 42 years
- Walter Jackson Cooper (Senate, Qld), 36 years 7 months
- John McEwen (Echuca, Indi, Murray, Vic) 36 years 5 months
- Ian McCahon Sinclair (New England, NSW) 34 years 9 months
- Ronald Leslie Doyle Boswell (Senate, Qld) 31 years 3 months.



The largest parliamentary representation in the Party's history: twenty-three members and eight senators, making a total of 31, achieved at the December 1975 election: Left to right (back row): Tom McVeigh, John Sullivan, Sandy MacKenzie, Peter Fisher, Bob King, Col Carige, Stephen Lusher, Ray Braithwaite, Glen Sheil, Stan Collard, Frank O'Keefe, Tom Tehan, Doug Scott, Bruce Lloyd, Sam Calder; (middle row) Ron Maunsell, Ian Robinson, Clarrie Millar, David Thomson, Tom Drake-Brockman, Mac Holten, Bern Kilgariff, Bob Katter (snr); Jim Corbett; (seated) Phil Lucock, Jim Webster, Ian Sinclair, Doug Anthony, Peter Nixon, Ralph Hunt, Evan Adermann (Australian Information Service/Auspici)

## FLEXING MUSCLES

The Party has been forthright in representing the interests of its constituencies in Coalition governments.

Earle Page would not accept Joe Lyons' conditions for a Coalition after the September 1934 election, at which the UAP lost several seats, largely because of tariff policy differences.

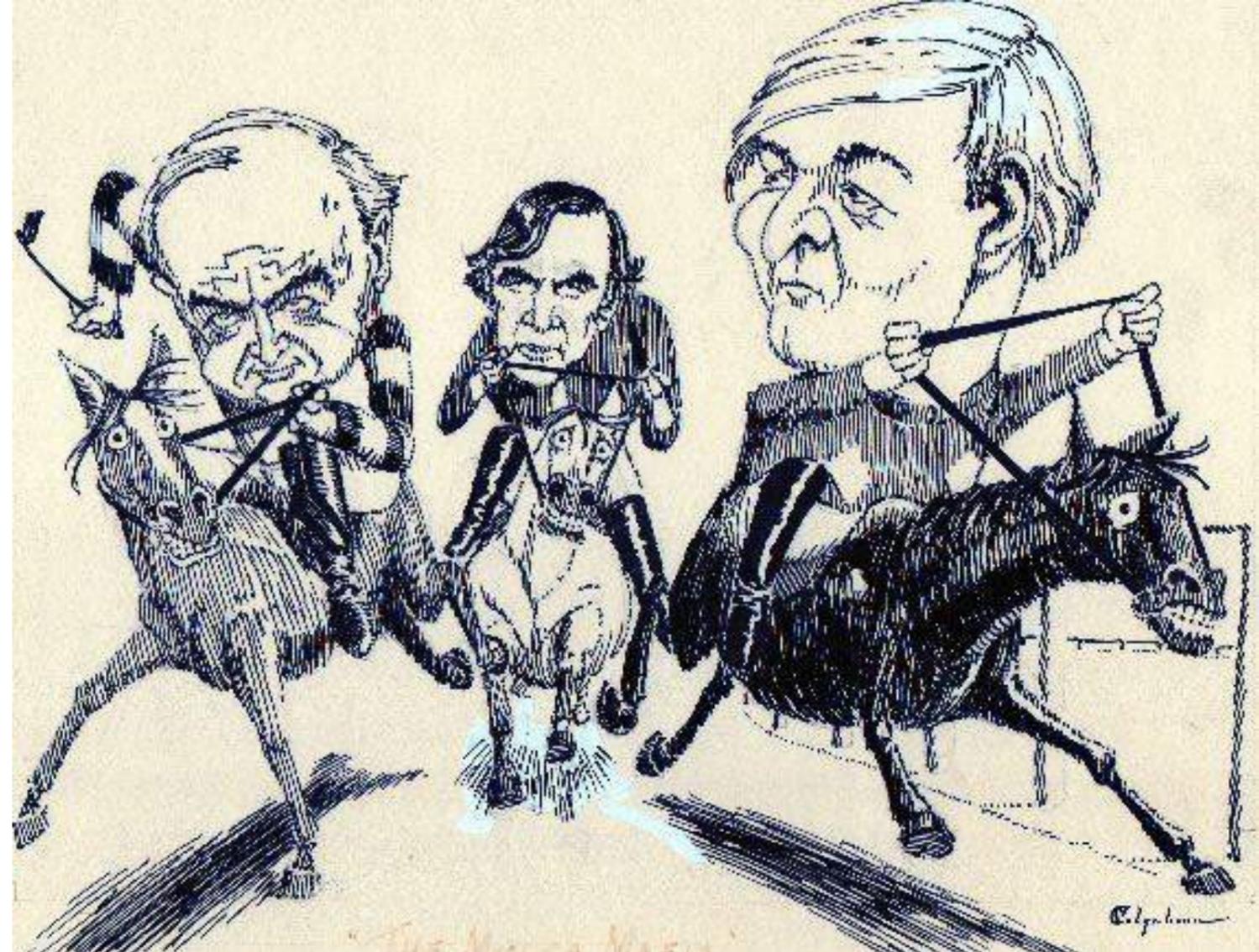
When Lyons, leading a minority government, moved for a special adjournment of the House for the Melbourne Cup, Page cheekily advised that his Party was opposed to the recess and all Labor members indicated they would support him. Lyons withdrew the motion and negotiated a new Coalition Government that held office from 9 November 1934 to 26 April 1939.

The Country Party fought tenaciously to successfully protect the competitiveness of commodity exports affected by Australian dollar revaluations in November 1967 and December 1971.

During the Fraser/Anthony Coalition Government from 1975 to 1983, the troika of Doug Anthony, Ian Sinclair and Peter Nixon was often seen as having undue influence on Cabinet decisions.

In December 1983, Doug Anthony encouraged his National Party senators to cross the floor and support a Hawke Labor Government proposal to increase the size of the Commonwealth Parliament from 125 to 148 members and 64 to 76 senators. The Liberals under Andrew Peacock opposed the enlargement, but Anthony justified his position on the grounds that there had been no significant increase in the number of members or senators since 1949, yet over the intervening years the number of eligible voters had almost doubled.

During the sale of the second and third tranches of Telstra between 1999 and 2005, the Nationals secured more than \$4.6 billion for programs to improve and secure regional telecommunications services, despite Treasurer Peter Costello's wish that all sale revenues be directed at reducing Commonwealth debt.



'The Mulga Mafia': emphasising the influence in Cabinet of (left to right) Peter Nixon, Ian Sinclair and Doug Anthony, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 September 1981 (Chris Henning <henning.christopher@gmail.com>)



Flexing muscles: the National Party exerting influence during the Telstra sale negotiations (Cartoon by Peter Nicholson from *The Australian newspaper*, 21 March 2000, <www.peternicholsoncartoons.com.au>)

## FEDERAL SECRETARIAT

The Party has a Federal Secretariat in Canberra, John McEwen House, named after the former Leader and the man who drove its establishment and opening by the Prime Minister, John Gorton, on 4 November 1968.

The Secretariat provides an additional policy, research and facility for the Federal Parliamentary Party, and co-ordinates and organises meetings of Federal Council

## WOMEN'S FEDERAL COUNCIL

At each annual meeting of their governing bodies, the affiliated State parties elect women delegates to represent their State on the Women's Federal Council (WFC), which held its first formal meeting on 24 November 1960. This does not mean women were ignored in Party affairs before that time; far from it. The inaugural Federal Party Constitution of 1926 provided for a woman delegate from each State to be on the Australian Country Party Association, and the State parties involved women on their Central Councils

## TRAIL BLAZERS AT ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL

At organisational level, the Federal and State parties have been trail blazers with the election or appointment of women to senior positions.

In June 1973, Doug Anthony appointed Stella Swinney, a foundation member of and former major in the Australian Women's Army Services and recently retired principal of Duval College at the University of New England, NSW, as a special advisor on women's issues, attached to the Federal Secretariat. It was the first such appointment by a political organisation.

Shirley McKerrow was the first woman to head a State political organisation as President of the Victorian National Party from 1976 to 1980. She then became the first woman to be Federal President of a political party, holding the position in the National Party's organisation from 1981 to 1987.

Helen Dickie became the NSW Party's and the State's first woman to lead a political party organisation in 1997 and went on to be elected the second female Federal President from 1999 to 2005.

and its committees, Federal Conference, Federal Management Committee, Women's Federal Council, and the Young Nationals. During Federal election and referendum campaigns, the Secretariat co-ordinates the national campaign and provides central campaign support to State Secretariats and candidates throughout Australia.

from an early time. Today, the Federal and State Party organisational bodies are strongly represented by women, including at executive level.

The WFC considers resolutions from State women's organisations or delegates and undertakes research to help in the development of Federal Party policy on a wide range of issues affecting women and families, notably in regional Australia, including on health services, education, drug and alcohol abuse, transport, domestic violence, and communications. The WFC President is a delegate to the Federal Management Committee and Federal Council and Conference.

Christine Ferguson followed Helen Dickie's footsteps, being NSW State Chairman from 2007 to 2012 and Federal President from 2012 to 2015. Emma Watts currently holds the important position of Chairman of Federal Council's Policy Standing Committee.

Helen Tiller became the first woman director of a State political organisation when she ran the South Australian National Country Party for five years from 1978. Jenny Gardiner, appointed General Secretary (State Director) of the NSW Party in 1984, was the first woman executive of a political party in that State. She went on to serve in the NSW Legislative Council from 1991 to 2015.

Cecile Ferguson became the first woman Federal Director of a political organisation when she took over the National Party's Federal Secretariat from 1992 to 1997. Another female Federal Director was Gaye White in 2000. While not formally appointed Federal Director, Jenny Bailey ran the Federal Secretariat from 1977 to 1979.

Suffice to say, there are many more women and young people who have given, and continue to give, outstanding service to the parties across Australia at Branch and Electorate Council level.

## YOUNG NATIONALS

The Young Australian Country Party Federal Council was formed in 1967, with the former Queensland Premier, Mike Ahern, elected its first President, from 1967-1969.

Known today as the Young National Party of Australia, it is governed by a Federal Council made up of delegates elected by the young Party organisations of affiliated States and associated organisations. The Young Nationals Federal Council meets annually immediately prior to the Annual Meeting of Federal Council. It may convene meetings at other times, as

## THE NIXON REPORT

In the wake of the 1987 Joh for Canberra campaign, Federal Council established a committee under the chairmanship of the former Minister for Primary Industry, Peter Nixon (Gippsland, Vic), to comprehensively review the Party's structures and Constitution – the first such inquiry in the Party's history.

The Nixon Report was handed down on 6 May 1988 – a document spanning 86 pages and containing 68 recommendations and conclusions. It also recommended a substantial re-write of the Federal Constitution and consequential amendments to

## THE NATIONALS BRAND

In a further move to increase uniformity in Party presentation across Australia, a Federal Conference in Canberra on 11 October 2003 endorsed the use of The Nationals as the Party's uniform shortened name and logo for all promotional material and Federal election campaigns. It also recommended that the State parties do likewise, which they did.

well as a Young Nationals Federal Conference once in the life of each Commonwealth Parliament or once every three years.

The Young Nationals Federal President is a member of the Federal Management Committee and a delegate to Federal Council and Federal Conference. Each State National Party, either through its Young Nationals organisation, or through its Central Council, nominates further delegates to Federal Council and Federal Conference, so the younger Party members are represented at all levels of the organisation.

State Party constitutions, as well as changes to Party structures to ensure better co-ordination and co-operation between the State and Federal parties.

The report was adopted by Federal Council in July 1988, as was the revised Constitution, with minor amendments. The State parties progressively implemented necessary amendments to their constitutions, leading to greatly improved levels of co-operation, information sharing and strategic planning. The report was a landmark in the Party's history.



**THE NATIONALS**

*for Regional Australia*

## MERGERS

By the mid-2000s, the Queensland National and Liberal parties were coming to the view that their future electoral prospects would best be served by amalgamating into one party. They became the Liberal National Party of Queensland (LNP) from 26 July 2008. The Party remained affiliated with the National Party and became a Division of the Liberal Party. This was not the first time the non-Labor parties in Queensland had worked as one. The Nationalist and Country parties merged to become the Country and Progressive National Party for 12 years from 1925.

Under the current arrangements, Queensland House of Representatives electorates and Senate positions are designated as being National Party or Liberal Party, and the members and senators sit accordingly in the Party Rooms in the Commonwealth Parliament.

Some might consider this complex – but little in politics is simple! And the arrangements have worked for ten years. The Federal National Party Leader from December 2007 to October 2016, Warren Truss, held the Queensland seat of Wide Bay and was technically a member of the LNP from July 2008. But his commitment to the National Party never diminished and was never questioned. The same has applied to LNP ministers, members and senators sitting with the Nationals.

A similar situation applies with Nigel Scullion, a Northern Territory CLP senator who sits with the National Party in Canberra. He was the Party's Senate Leader from 2007 to 2008, its Deputy Parliamentary Leader from 2007 to 2013 and its Senate Leader again from 2013 to the present time, as well as on occasions acting as Federal Leader.

National Party organisations elsewhere have resisted approaches or suggestions to amalgamate with the Liberals, preferring to maintain their independent identity.



## LANDMARK ACHIEVEMENTS IN GOVERNMENT

The Country/National Party has been responsible for many historic landmarks in the development of Australia, too numerous to quantify in this document. A sample of Federal achievements in Government includes:

- The nation's first radio broadcasting licences (1923)
- tax averaging for primary producers (1924)
- Department of Markets, forerunner of contemporary Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (1925)
- Rural Credits Department within the Commonwealth Bank (1925) and the Commonwealth Savings Bank (1927)
- Council for Scientific and Industrial Research – today's CSIRO (1926)
- first Federal Aid Roads Agreement (1926)
- Australian Agricultural Council (1935)
- Australian Trade Commissioner Service – now Austrade (1934)
- National Health and Medical Research Council (1936)
- abolition of petrol rationing (1950)
- free milk for children under 13 in schools (1950)
- free medical treatment for pensioners (1951)
- first medical benefits scheme (1953)
- introduction of television (1956)
- Australia-Japan Agreement on Commerce (1957)
- Reserve Bank of Australia and Commonwealth Banking Corporation (1958)
- live sheep export trade (1960)
- Ord River Irrigation Scheme (1963-1972)
- State Aid to Independent schools (1964)
- Australian Wool Commission and flexible wool reserve price scheme (1970)
- standard gauge Indian Pacific railway, Sydney to Perth (1970)
- National Agricultural Outlook Conference, now known as the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences Outlook Conference (1971)
- abolition of Commonwealth estate and gift duties (1977)
- \$200 million National Water Resources program over five years (1977), extended for further four years as the Bicentennial Water Resources Program (1983)
- Australian National Animal Health Laboratory, Geelong, Victoria (1978)
- Closer Economic Relations with New Zealand (1982)
- \$356 million in Federal fodder and interest rate subsidies for drought hit farmers, over and above existing joint Federal/State drought programs (1982/83)
- National Rural Finance Summit and subsequent \$525 million Agriculture – Advancing Australia package (1997)
- increased child care places from 306,000 to nearly 562,000 between 1996/97 and 2004/05
- \$4.69 billion from the Telstra sales to improve country and regional telecommunications' services (1999-2005)
- Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (2000)
- \$1.78 billion for dairy deregulation adjustment (2000)
- Stronger Families and Communities Strategy, including \$8.8 million for National Agenda for Early Childhood (2003)
- National Water Initiative, supported by \$2 billion Australian Government Water Fund (2003)
- a \$1.1 billion Connect Australia package (2005)
- implementation of Free Trade Agreements with Thailand and the USA (2005)
- \$2 billion for a perpetual Communications Fund for regional telecommunications (2005)
- Drought assistance funding of \$1.25 billion over five years to 2005/06
- the \$15 billion Auslink national land transport program (2005) and \$22 billion Auslink 2 program (2007).
- \$50 billion Infrastructure Development program – largest in Australia's history – delivering 22 major works (2014) and 47 in 2015 (\$6.7b Bruce Highway/\$5.6b Pacific Highway/\$565m Black Spots)
- White Paper on Agricultural Competitiveness – a \$4 billion investment in farmers (2015)
- additional \$2.6 billion for Roads to Recovery and Black Spots programs (2015)
- \$5 billion Northern Australia Infrastructure Fund (2016)

# PARTY LEADERS

Federal Parliamentary Leaders	
<b>McWilliams, William James (Tas)</b>	24 Feb 1920 - 5 Apr 1921
<b>Page, Earle Christmas Grafton (NSW)</b>	5 Apr 1921 - 13 Sept 1939
<i>Prime Minister</i>	7 Apr 1939 - 26 Apr 1939
<b>Cameron, Archie Galbraith (SA) (LCL)</b>	13 Sept 1939 - 16 Oct 1940
<b>Fadden, Arthur William (Qld)</b>	16 Oct 1940-12 Mar 1941
<i>Acting*</i>	12 Mar 1941 - 26 Mar 1958
<i>Prime Minister</i>	29 Aug 1941 - 7 Oct 1941
<i>Opposition Leader</i>	7 Oct 1941 - 16 Sept 1943
<b>McEwen, John (Vic)</b>	26 Mar 1958-1 Feb 1971
<i>Prime Minister</i>	19 Dec 1967-10 Jan 1968
<b>Anthony, John Douglas (NSW)</b>	2 Feb 1971 - 17 Jan 1984
<b>Sinclair, Ian McCahon (NSW)</b>	17 Jan 1984 - 9 May 1989
<b>Blunt, Charles William (NSW)</b>	9 May 1989 - 6 Apr 1990
<b>Fischer, Timothy Andrew (NSW)</b>	10 Apr 1990 - 1 July 1999
<b>Anderson, John Duncan (NSW)</b>	1 July 1999 - 23 Jun 2005
<b>Vaile, Mark Anthony James (NSW)</b>	23 Jun 2005 - 3 Dec 2007
<b>Truss, Warren Errol (Qld) (LNP from July 2008)</b>	7 Dec 2007 - 11 Feb 2016
<b>Joyce, Barnaby Thomas Gerard (NSW)</b>	11 Feb 2016 - 26 Feb 2018**
<b>McCormack, Michael (NSW)</b>	26 Feb 2018 - current

Deputy Federal Parliamentary Leaders	
<b>Jowett, Edmund (Vic)</b>	24 Feb 1920 - 5 Apr 1921
<b>Gregory, Henry (WA)</b>	5 Apr 1921 - 2 Dec 1921***
<b>Fleming, William Montgomerie (NSW)</b>	27 Jun 1922 - 16 Dec 1922****
<b>Gibson, William Gerrand (Vic)</b>	16 Jan 1923 - 12 Oct 1929
<b>Paterson, Thomas (Vic)</b>	19 Nov 1929 - 30 Nov 1937*****
<b>Thorby, Harold Victor Campbell (NSW)</b>	30 Nov 1937 - 21 Sept 1940
<b>Fadden, Arthur William (Qld)</b>	16 Oct 1940 - 12 Mar 1941
<i>Vacant</i>	12 Mar 1941 - 22 Sept 1943*****
<b>McEwen, John (Vic)</b>	22 Sept 1943 - 26 Mar 1958
<b>Davidson, Charles William (Qld)</b>	26 Mar 1958 - 1 Nov 1963
<b>Adermann, Charles Frederick (Qld)</b>	25 Feb 1964 - 8 Dec 1966
<b>Anthony, John Douglas (NSW)</b>	9 Dec 1966 - 2 Feb 1971
<b>Sinclair, Ian McCahon (NSW)</b>	2 Feb 1971 - 17 Jan 1984*****
<b>Hunt, Ralph James Dunnnett (NSW)</b>	17 Feb 1984 - 23 July 1987
<b>Lloyd, Bruce (Vic)</b>	23 July 1987 - 23 Mar 1993
<b>Anderson, John Duncan (NSW)</b>	23 Mar 1993 - 1 July 1999
<b>Vaile, Mark Anthony James (NSW)</b>	1 July 1999 - 23 June 2005
<b>Truss, Warren Errol (Qld)</b>	23 June 2005 - 3 Dec 2007
<b>Scullion, Nigel Gregory (Sen, NT) (CLP)</b>	3 Dec 2007 - 13 Sept 2013#
<b>Joyce, Barnaby Thomas Gerard (NSW)</b>	13 Sept 2013 - 11 Feb 2016
<b>Nash, Fiona Joy (Sen, NSW)</b>	11 Feb 2016 - 27 Oct 2017##
<b>McKenzie, Bridget (Sen, Vic)</b>	7 Dec 2017 - current

## Notes:

The party did not elect a formal Senate leader prior to 1935. In the period 1938 to 1949, the party's Senate numbers gradually diminished from four to one, making it hardly necessary to elect a leader. Interestingly, despite being the only Country Party senator from July 1947 to December 1949, Walter Cooper was deputy leader of the Opposition in the Senate from 19 March to 31 May 1947 and Senate Leader of the Opposition from 1 July 1947 to 19 December 1949. Country Party numbers increased to five at the December 1949 elections, from which time leadership positions were regularly filled.

\* Page and McEwen tied in the ballot for the leadership. To break the deadlock, the Party Room agreed to proceed with the election of its Deputy Leader – for which Fadden had overwhelming support – and then appoint the Deputy as Acting Leader. With the deepening war crisis and Prime Minister Menzies overseas, the Party Room confirmed Fadden as Leader on 12 March 1941. It also agreed to leave the Deputy's position vacant.

\*\*Joyce was advised by the New Zealand High Commission in Canberra on 10 August 2017 that he may be a New Zealand citizen by descent in light of his father's New Zealand heritage, potentially bringing into question his right to serve in the Australian Parliament, as per Section 44 of the Australian Constitution. Joyce requested that the matter be referred for adjudication to the High Court of Australia and immediately took the necessary action to renounce any right to New Zealand citizenship that he might have. On 27 October 2017 the High Court ruled him ineligible to be a parliamentarian. A by-election for his seat of New England, NSW, was announced for 36 days later, on 2 December 2017. While Joyce remained the Party's Federal Leader pending his return at the by-election, Scullion became Interim Parliamentary Leader. The Liberal Party's Deputy Leader and Foreign Minister, Julie Bishop, became Acting Prime Minister during three absences overseas by the Prime Minister during the by-election period, while the position of Deputy Prime Minister remained vacant. Joyce resumed his portfolio and Deputy Prime Minister responsibilities from 6 December 2017 after winning the New England by-election in a landslide.

\*\*\* Gregory resigned as Deputy Leader over a disagreement on Coalition strategy. As the Parliament rose for the summer recess on 10 December (and was subsequently prorogued twice) and did not resume until 28 June 1922, the Deputy Leader's position was not filled until the pre-session Country Party meeting on 27 June 1922, when Fleming was elected. His tenure was short-lived as he lost his NSW seat of Robertson at the election on 16 December 1922. Gibson was elected to replace him at the pre-session Party meeting on 16 January 1923.

\*\*\*\* The eldest of Page's three sons, Earle junior, was killed by lightning while moving cattle on the family property, Heifer Station, Grafton, in January 1933. As a result Page was absent from Parliament for nine months until 4 October 1933. The Party Room appointed Paterson Acting Leader in the meantime.

\*\*\*\*\* With the confirmation of Fadden as Leader, the Party Room agreed that "with the party reuniting and in light of international events, there was no need for a Deputy to be appointed".

\*\*\*\*\* Anthony as Trade Minister embarked on a series of international visits in 1976, including to the Soviet Union. He returned unwell to Australia in July. Unable to shake his illness, ultimately identified as hepatitis, he was granted leave from the Parliament from 20 October and did not return until 1 February 1977. During that period, the Party Room appointed Ian Sinclair Acting Leader and Peter Nixon Acting Deputy.

#Scullion was a member of the Northern Territory Country Liberal Party and sat with the National Party in the Commonwealth Parliament. He was the first Senator to hold the party's Deputy Leader position, all others, as with Leaders, having come from the House of Representatives.

##Nash was ruled ineligible to be a Senator by the High Court of Australia on 27/10/2017, due to her father's British heritage.

Senate Leaders	
<b>Hardy, Charles</b>	Oct 1935 - 30 June 1938
<b>Cooper, Walter Jackson</b>	Dec 1949 - Dec 1960
<b>Wade, Harrie Walter</b>	Mar 1961 - 18 Nov 1964
<b>McKellar, Gerald Colin</b>	Nov 1964 - 13 Apr 1970
<b>Drake-Brockman, Thomas Charles</b>	Dec 1969 - 13 Dec 1975
<b>Webster, James Joseph</b>	Feb 1976 - 28 Jan 1980
<b>Scott, Douglas Barr</b>	Feb 1980 - 30 June 1985
<b>Collard, Stanley James</b>	July 1985 - 5 June 1987
<b>Stone, John Owen</b>	July 1987 - 1 Mar 1990
<b>Boswell, Ronald Leslie Doyle</b>	10 Apr 1990 - 3 Dec 2007
<b>Scullion, Nigel Gregory</b>	3 Dec 2007 - 19 Sept 2008
<b>Joyce, Barnaby Thomas Gerrard</b>	17 Sept 2008 - 8 Aug 2013
<b>Scullion, Nigel Gregory</b>	13 Sept 2013 - current

Federal Presidents	
<b>Page, Earle (NSW)</b>	1926 to 1961
<b>Moss, William (Vic)</b>	1962 to 1968
<b>Hunt, Ralph (NSW)</b>	1968 to 1969
<b>Roberts, Sidney (Qld)</b>	1969 to 1974
<b>Solomons, Adrian (NSW)</b>	1974 to 1978
<b>Drake-Brockman, Tom (WA)</b>	1978 to 1981
<b>McKerrow, Shirley (Vic)</b>	1981 to 1987
<b>McDonald, Stuart (Vic)</b>	1987 to 1990
<b>Paterson, John (WA)</b>	1990 to 1996
<b>McDonald, Don (Qld)</b>	1996 to 1999
<b>Dickie, Helen</b>	1999 to 2005
<b>Russell, David (Qld)</b>	2005 to 2006
<b>Tanner, John (Vic)</b>	2006 to 2012
<b>Ferguson, Christine (NSW)</b>	2012 to 2015
<b>Anthony, Larry (Qld)</b>	2015 - current

# KEY DATES IN PARTY DEVELOPMENT

22 January 1920	The Australian Country Party is formed in the Commonwealth Parliament.
24 March 1926	A conference convened by the Australian Farmers' Federal Organisation, including Country Party representatives and parliamentarians, adopts the first Federal Constitution, establishing The Australian Country Party Association – today's Federal Council
2 May 1975	A Federal Convention in Canberra agrees to change the Party name to National Country Party of Australia
16 October 1982	Federal Conference in Canberra votes to change the Party name to National Party of Australia
28-31 July 1988	A special Federal Council in Canberra accepts the report of an internal Party review, chaired by former minister, Peter Nixon, and its substantially re-written Federal Constitution, bringing greater unity and co-operation between the Federal and State National parties
11 October 2003	Federal Conference in Canberra endorses use of The Nationals as the Party's uniform shortened name and logo for all Federal and State elections.
14 October 2006	Federal Conference in Canberra agrees the Federal Party's constitutional name should be changed to The Nationals. Federal Council endorses the change.
1 June 2013	Federal Council in Canberra agrees that, while retaining The Nationals as the Federal Party's abbreviated name and for use on promotional and election campaign material, the constitutional name should revert back to National Party of Australia.

## PAGE RESEARCH CENTRE

The Page Research Centre was established in 2002. Acting independently from the National Party, the Centre researches and explores contemporary issues, especially those affecting rural and regional Australia. Its findings are published and made available to Commonwealth and State Governments.

In 2007 the Centre embarked on a new line of work – to preserve the history of the National Party at Federal

## RESEARCH, PROGRAMS AND PUBLICATIONS

Further information on various aspects of the National Party of Australia, its history and personalities, can be found in the following selection of programs and publications:

ABC Television, *A Country Road – The Nationals*, 2014  
ABC Television, *Dynasties*, episode 6, The Anthonys, 14 December 2004  
Anthony, D&M (eds), *Letters Home – Diaries and letters of Sapper Hubert Anthony*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2009  
Aitkin, DA, *The Country Party in New South Wales – A study of Organisation and Survival*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1972  
Botterill, LC, and Cockfield, G, (eds), *The National Party of Australia: Prospects for the great survivors*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2009  
Costar, B, and Woodward, D, (eds), *Country to National*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1985  
Croke, K, *Foundations for a New Era – The Road to Amalgamation*, LNP, Brisbane, 2013  
Davey, P, *Joh for PM – the inside story of an extraordinary political drama*, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney, 2015  
Davey, P, *Ninety Not Out – The Nationals 1920-2010*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2010  
Davey, P, *Politics in the Blood – The Anthonys of Richmond*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2008  
Davey, P, *The Country Party Prime Ministers – their trials and tribulations*, Dobson's Printing, Sydney, 2011  
Davey, P, *The Nationals – The Progressive, Country and National Party in New South Wales 1919 to 2006*, The Federation Press, Sydney, 2006

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information on The Nationals is available from your local Federal or State Nationals Parliamentarian, the Federal Secretariat, or the Secretariat in your State or the Northern Territory, contacts for which are as follows:

and State levels. This resulted in the establishment of the Page Research Centre Library at the Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, NSW. The Library continues to accumulate a large range of documents, diaries, memos, newspaper articles, personal papers, photographs, and audio and visual tapes, CDs and DVDs. Access to these is available to researchers interested in the Party's history.

The Centre also supports the publication of books on National Party history. More information on the Centre is available at <[www.page.org.au](http://www.page.org.au)>.

Ellis, UR, *A History of the Australian Country Party*, Melbourne University Press, 1963  
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Jackson, RV, (ed), *John McEwen – His Story*, 1983, republished by The Page Research Centre, 2014  
Layman, L, and Duncan, W, (eds), *Blood Nose Politics – A centenary history of the Western Australian National Party 1913-2013*, The National Party of Australia (WA) Inc., Perth, 2013  
Lunn H, Joh – *The Life and Political Adventures of Johannes Bjelke-Petersen*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1978  
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Rees P, *The Boy from Boree Creek – The Tim Fischer Story*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2001.

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Tasmania - 02 9299 5811  
Western Australia - 08 9322 7856  
Victoria - 03 9600 1424



# Vote



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- WE WILL GET THE ECONOMY MOVING SO YOU WILL WANT TO WORK HARDER AGAIN
- UNDER NATIONAL POLICIES YOU WILL BE PROUD TO FLY THE FLAG



# NATIONALS

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**THE NATIONALS**  
*for Regional Australia*

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