

Henry Parkes' Re-enactment and Official Opening Wallangarra Railway Station Tuesday 23 October 2001

The Hon Paul de Jersey AC
Chief Justice of Queensland,
and representing
His Excellency the Governor of Queensland

Premier
Ministers
Mayors
Your Grace
Local member
Other distinguished guests
Ladies and gentlemen

I at once add my expression of congratulations and gratitude to all who have contributed to this splendid occasion. It has been a fascinating day, brilliant in every respect: one which will rightly become itself a vivid entry in the nation's historical record; ... and as an illustration of regional pride and achievement – nothing short of spectacular!

We speak, ladies and gentlemen, of today's protagonist, Sir Henry Parkes as being the “father of Federation”. The then New South Wales Premier's Oration at Tenterfield on 24 October 1889 has been termed his “grand pronunciamento”, a “clarion call” which “set in motion” the popular movement for Federation.

While, on the other hand, the *Argus* newspaper of the day described the language of the Oration as “delightfully glowing but provokingly vague”¹, the Oration did plainly herald events which led to the pivotal Australasian Federation Conference in Melbourne in February 1890, and the Sydney Convention in March and April the following year.

It was the Sydney Convention which produced the draft of the Constitution ultimately adopted. That was the draft so heavily influenced by the work of the signal Queenslander Sir Samuel Griffith, and his party, on the Queensland Government Steam Yacht *Lucinda* at Refuge Bay over the Easter break: the illustrious Griffith – third Chief Justice of Queensland, twice Premier, first Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia.

We Australians have gathered here in part to commemorate the Queensland link with Sir Henry Parkes’ “clarion call” made to the nation at Tenterfield, and in acknowledging that, I am confident I won’t be condemned as unduly parochial!

It is in that regard significant that immediately before going to Tenterfield to meet with and address his former constituents, Parkes had been to Brisbane. In Brisbane he was buoyed by the positive reaction of leading Queenslanders to his Federation proposal. That Queensland reaction contrasted markedly with the dismissive negativity earlier displayed by the Premier of Victoria.

It seems, Mr Premier, that our “smart State”, was preceded by a “smart colony”, which anticipated a “smart nation” – although it must be conceded Queenslanders were later somewhat grudging in their embrace of Federation.

But it was, no doubt, animated by that Queensland encouragement, that Sir Henry Parkes went on to deliver his spirited rendition at Tenterfield.

¹ AGL Shaw: *Centennial Reflections on Sir Henry Parkes’ Tenterfield Oration*, Canberra Historical Journal, 25 March 1990

We have in recent times experienced other “clarion calls” – particularly, calls for global unity in the defence of humanity. It is at this historical point interesting therefore to note that Parkes’ own call at Tenterfield was hinged specifically on the need for a co-ordinated Australian military initiative, what he called “a great Australian army”.

Eleven decades have elapsed since the presence of the “father of Federation” here in 1889. The station, and the railway, have over that span, witnessed the passing through of many nationally significant personages. That is not surprising: the Wallangarra Railway Station was in many instances the first port through which distinguished visitors were welcomed into the State of Queensland, and the port from which they were farewelled – and as this refurbishment confirms, what a congenial port!

The Duke and Duchess of Cornwall, and the Governor General, Lord Hopetoun, were here in 1901. Prime Minister Billy Hughes passed through in 1917. Three years later, the town saw the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VIII. Then in 1927, after opening Parliament House in Canberra, the Duke and Duchess of York passed through Wallangarra en route to Toowoomba. The Duke of Gloucester changed trains here in 1934.

Thanks to the Centenary of Federation, we can all now appreciate, at this border location, in wonderfully restored condition, our historic, break-of-gauge Wallangarra Railway Station, such an important part of Australian and Queensland heritage, and still a fully operational station.

**Henry Parkes’ Re-enactment and Official Opening
Wallangarra Railway Station
Tuesday 23 October 2001**

The Hon Paul de Jersey AC
Chief Justice of Queensland,
and representing
His Excellency the Governor of Queensland

I warmly commend this initiative of executive government, effected through the Centenary of Federation Committee, with the support of the State Departments of Development, and Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, together with the Stanthorpe Shire Council, Queensland Rail and the Commonwealth Government.

Both as Chief Justice, and representing His Excellency the Governor, I repeat my expression of sincere thanks to all who have helped re-create, today, with arresting finesse, events of such memorable proportions.

**Henry Parkes' Re-enactment and Official Opening
Wallangarra Railway Station
Tuesday 23 October 2001**

The Hon Paul de Jersey AC
Chief Justice of Queensland,
and representing
His Excellency the Governor of Queensland
