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# THE HISTORY AND ORGANISATION OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY



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# **THE HISTORY AND ORGANISATION OF**

## **THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY**

Labor Parties are defined as political parties having trade unions directly affiliated with them.

Labor Parties were formed in five of the Australian Colonies: Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania in 1890. The parties in Victoria and Tasmania did not survive the effects of the maritime strikes and the depression. They had to wait until after Federation and the formation of the Commonwealth Parliament for their re-emergence, along with a party in Western Australia.

The factors leading to the formation of the Labor Party were:

- \* The influence of socialist writers who promised a new society free of poverty and inequality.
- \* The influence of English born trade unionists.
- \* Nineteenth century liberalism which, in the Australian colonies, accepted that workers should be represented in the colonial parliament.
- \* The presence of manhood suffrage.
- \* The introduction of payment of members of Parliament in 1889.
- \* The determination of the Inter Colonial Trade Union Congresses throughout the 1880s to have Labor represented in parliament by a separate Labor Party, not by Liberals or Conservatives.

## LABOR IN GOVERNMENT

The Labor Party was anxious to demonstrate that it could govern. It believed that it had been founded to change the laws and working conditions for urban and rural workers, miners and farmers in Queensland. In 1903 it united in a coalition with a number of Liberals to form a government and it was out of this coalition that an Adult Franchise Act was passed which gave Queensland women the vote.

It was the same willingness to govern which prompted J.C. Watson to form a minority Labor government in the Commonwealth parliament in 1904. Andrew Fisher formed a second minority Labor government in 1908 and in 1910 Fisher won the federal election. He formed the first government in Australia's history to have a majority in both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

By 1910, there was a feeling inside the Labor Party that it should be a nation-wide party, not six separate State parties. Labor was the party which stressed Australian national sentiment in government.

After Federation, the Queensland Labour Party (as it was officially called after 1905) joined with the Labor Parties in the other States to form an Inter-state or Commonwealth Party. The term "Australian Labour Party" was adopted by the Commonwealth Conference in 1908 and there was a tendency to drop the "u" in Labour and call it a "Labor" Party. In November 1918, Queensland became, by resolution of the Queensland Central Executive, the Queensland branch of the Australian Labor Party. The Workers Political Organisations became known as local branches of the Labor Party.

The election of the Labor Government of T.J. Ryan in 1915 produced dramatic changes in the State's social, industrial and economic history. Labor began almost 40 years of government which ended in the 1957 split. (See p14).

Labor was elected to govern Australia in 1914 after the outbreak of World War I. The party split in 1916 over conscription for overseas service and only the Labor Party in Queensland held together in that split.

In 1929, Labor was again elected to government in Australia, but was confronted by the Great Depression. The Commonwealth Labor Governments of John Curtin and Ben Chifley carried Australia through World War II and provided the economic and social reforms on which modern Australia is based. The Whitlam Governments record of reform is readily available through the many books written about that period.

Labor has also placed great emphasis on implementing its ideals through Local Government.

The list of Labor Governments with their Prime Ministers or Premiers is as follows:

### **AUSTRALIA**

1904 (John Watson); 1908-09 (Andrew Fisher); 1910-13 (Andrew Fisher); 1914-16 (Andrew Fisher, Billy Hughes); 1929-31 (James Scullin); 1941-49 (John Curtin, Frank Forde, Ben Chifley); 1972-75 (Gough Whitlam); 1983- (Bob Hawke).

### **NEW SOUTH WALES**

1910-16 (James McGowen, William Holman); 1920-21 (John Storey, James Dooley); 1921-22 (James Dooley); 1925-27 (Jack Lang); 1930-32 (Jack Lang); 1941-65 (William McKell, James McGirr, Joe Cahill, Bob Heffron, Jack Renshaw); 1976- (Neville Wran).

### **VICTORIA**

1913 (George Elmslie); 1924 (George Prendergast); 1927-28 (Edmond Hogan); 1929-32 (Edmond Hogan); 1943 (John Cain Snr.); 1945-47 (John Cain Snr.); 1952-55 (John Cain Snr.); 1982- (John Cain Jr.).

### **QUEENSLAND**

1899 (Anderson Dawson); 1903-07 (Labor-Liberal coalition, William Browne — Deputy-Premier, William Kidston); 1915-29 (T.J. Ryan, Edward Theodore, William Gillies, Bill McCormack); 1932-57 (William Forgan-Smith, Frank Cooper, Ned Hanlon, Vincent Gair).

### **SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

1905-09 (Labor-Liberal coalition, Tom Price); 1910-12 (John Verran); 1915-17 (Crawford Vaughan); 1924-27 (John Gunn, Lionel Hill); 1930-33 (Lionel Hill, Robert Richards); 1965-68 (Frank Walsh, Don Dunstan); 1970-79 (Don Dunstan, Des Corcoran); 1982- (John Bannon).

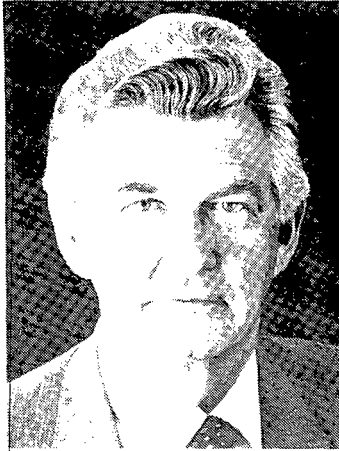
### **WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

1904-05 (Henry Daglish); 1911-16 (John Scaddan); 1924-30 (Phillip Collier); 1933-47 (Phillip Collier, John Willcock, Frank Wise); 1953-59 (Albert Hawke); 1971-74 (John Tonkin); 1983- (Brian Burke).

### **TASMANIA**

1909 (John Earle); 1914-16 (John Earle); 1923-28 (Joe Lyons); 1934-69 (Albert Ogilvie, Edmund Dwyer-Gray, Robert Cosgrove, Edward Brooker, Robert Cosgrove, Eric Reece); 1972-82 (Eric Reece, William Neilson, Doug Lowe, Harry Holgate).

# LABOR'S PARLIAMENTARY LEADERS



## **BOB HAWKE**

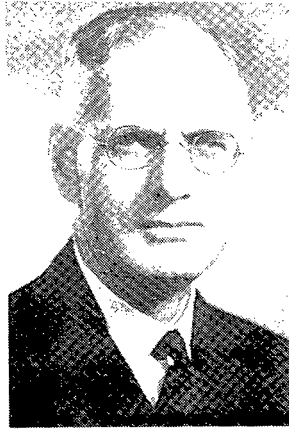
Member for Wills in the House of Representatives since 1980. Elected Leader of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party in 1983. Prime Minister, 1983.



## **KEITH WRIGHT**

Member for Rockhampton South and Rockhampton since 1969. Elected Leader of the Queensland Parliamentary Labor Party in 1982.

# TWO GREAT LABOR LEADERS



## **JOHN CURTIN**

Australia's Prime Minister 1941-1945.

Curtin is regarded as Australia's greatest Prime Minister. The Labor Party's national headquarters in Canberra has been named the 'John Curtin House'.



## **THOMAS JOSEPH RYAN**

Queensland's Premier 1915-1919.

Ryan led the Labor Party to its first electoral victory in 1915, establishing almost 40 years of Labor government. Ryan is regarded as Queensland's most outstanding premier. The Labor Party in Queensland has established the "T.J. Ryan Fund" to build a new party headquarters and to provide ALP offices in provincial centres.

# LABOR LEADERS IN BRISBANE AND PROVINCIAL CITIES

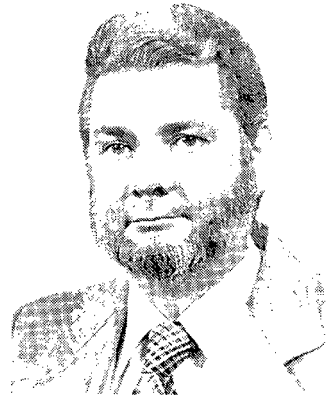


## **ROY HARVEY**

Alderman of the Brisbane City Council 1952-1973,  
1979-  
Member of the Queensland Legislative Assembly  
1972-1974.  
Chairman of the Brisbane City Council Transport  
and Electricity Committee 1961-1973.  
Vice Mayor of Brisbane 1979-1982.  
Lord Mayor of Brisbane 1982-

## **MIKE REYNOLDS**

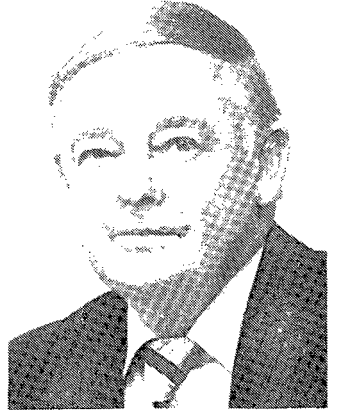
Alderman of the Townsville City Council 1973-  
Committee Chairman of the Townsville City Council  
Works and Planning Committee 1976-  
Deputy Mayor of Townsville 1976-1980.  
Mayor of Townsville 1980-





**DES FREEMAN**

Alderman of the Ipswich City Council 1973-  
Chairman of the Ipswich City Council Finance  
Committee 1976-1979.  
Mayor of Ipswich 1979-

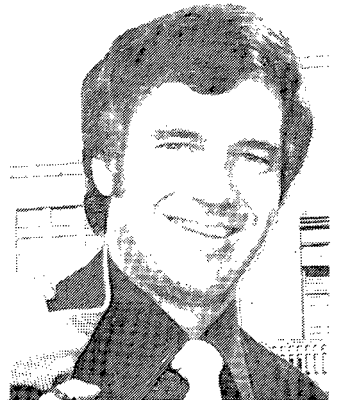


**"JOCK" ANDERSON**

Alderman of the Maryborough City Council 1964-  
Mayor of Maryborough 1970-

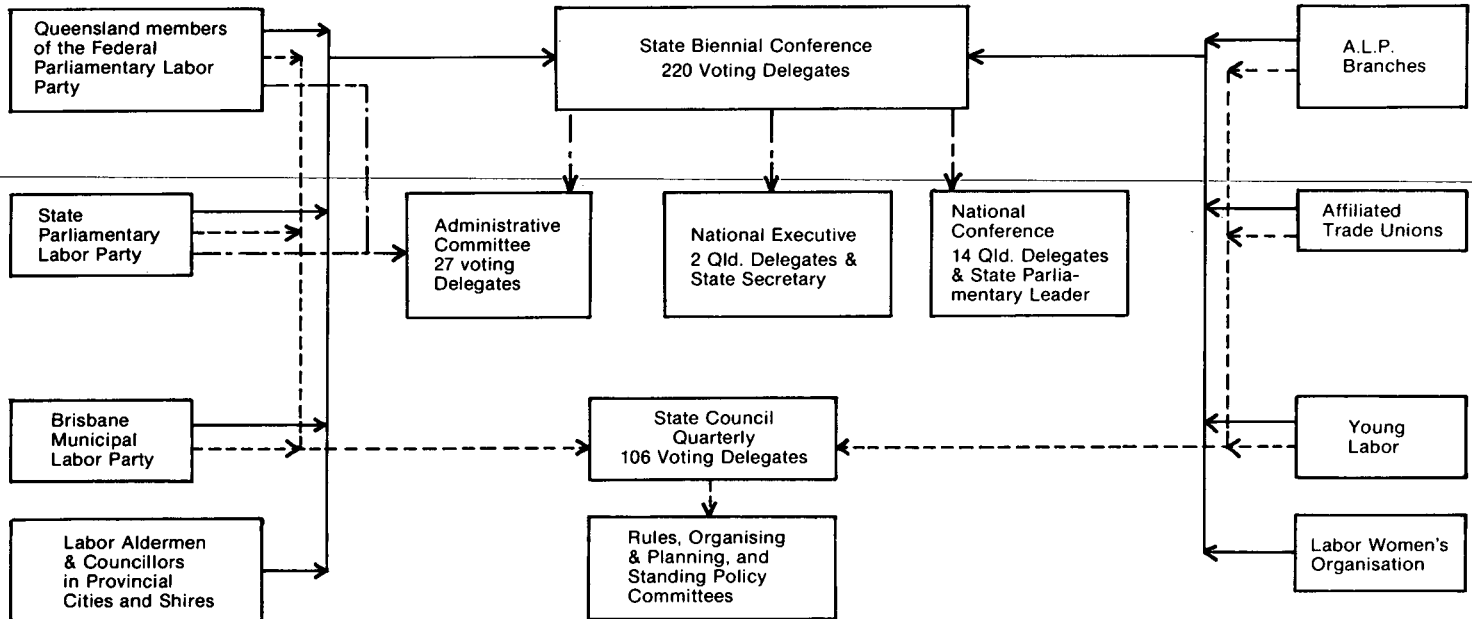
**JIM WEBBER**

Alderman of the Rockhampton City Council  
1970-1973, 1979-1982.  
Mayor of Rockhampton 1982-



# AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY — QUEENSLAND

## ORGANISATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE



(Members of the Administrative Committee are ex-officio members of the State Council, but not all Administrative Committee members have voting rights on the State Council. The General Returning Officer is a delegate to the State Conference and the State Council but does not have voting rights. The Treasurer is a member of the Administrative Committee without voting rights).

**LEGEND:**

- > Election by or to the State Conference.
- - - - -> Election by or to the State Council.
- · - · -> Election to the Administrative Committee, National Conference and National Executive.

## ADMINISTRATION

In Queensland the supreme policy and rule making body was the Labor-in-Politics Convention. This met each three years and consisted of delegates from affiliated trade unions and from branches in all the State electorates. The Queensland Central Executive administered the Labor Party.

At the Commonwealth level an Interstate Conference was held every three years and after 1951 every two years. It consisted of an equal number of delegates (six) from each State. It was the supreme body in the Labor Party throughout Australia. In 1915 a Federal Executive was formed which administered the Labor Party nationally.

The organisation and administration of the Labor Party both at the National and State levels have undergone significant changes in the past decade.

Women had not been given the level of representation in the Party organisation that their numbers warranted. Following an enquiry established by the National Executive in 1978, and chaired jointly by Bill Hayden and Bob Hawke, a programme of affirmative action was begun to ensure that women were fully represented on all committees and executives of the Labor Party.

### Queensland Organisation

Associated with the National Executive intervention in Queensland, significant changes were made to the organisation and administration of the Party.

- a. **State Conference.** Delegates represent affiliated unions, branches in State electorates, Labor parliamentarians, Young Labor and Labor Womens' Organisation. State Conference meets biennially.
- b. **State Council.** Delegates represent affiliated unions, branches in Federal electorates, Labor parliamentarians, Young Labor. At least one delegate from each Federal division must be a woman. State Council meets quarterly.
- c. **Administrative Committee.** Twenty-seven delegates, elected largely by State Conference; State and Federal parliamentarians are represented; at least six delegates must be women. The Administrative Committee meets at least monthly.

## National Organisation

In 1981 the National Conference made significant changes to the composition of the National Conference. No changes were made to the National Executive.

- a. **National Conference.** Ninety-nine delegates including the four Federal parliamentary leaders and representatives of the States and Territories in proportion to their number of Federal electorates. At least a quarter of the delegates must be women. All the State parliamentary leaders are delegates.
  
- b. **National Executive.** Two delegates from each State, one from each Territory and the four Federal parliamentary leaders. State Secretaries who are not elected delegates, attend as non-voting delegates.

The National Executive and National Conference have powers which override those of the State branches. National policy and rules are binding on all party members.

## TRADE UNIONS

Trade unions are associations of employees who have joined together to use their combined strength to obtain better working conditions, to protect individual employees and to give themselves a stronger voice in questions of national, state or local importance.

There are almost three million trade unionists in Australia. Two-thirds of these belong to unions directly affiliated with the Labor Party.

These trade unions contribute to the formation of the Labor Party's policies and their members, along with branch members and Labor politicians, are involved in the administration of the Party.

## LABOUR DAY

Labour Day is celebrated in Queensland on the first Monday in May. The name "Labour Day" is the successor to "Eight Hour Day" and "May Day". On 1st March, 1865 the first Eight Hour Day march in Queensland was held.

The Eight Hour Day march was held intermittently on 1st March until 1891. On 1st May, 1891, the first "May Day" procession in Queensland was held at Barcaldine at the height of the big pastoral strike.

Brisbane held its first May Day march on 1st May, 1893. In 1901, the day of the march was changed to the first Monday in May when it became a public holiday.

The name "Labour Day" replaced "Eight Hour Day" in 1912.

Queensland remains the only State to continue to celebrate May Day as a public holiday.

## PARTY OF ACHIEVEMENT

In government Labor has based its legislation on the concepts of equality and justice.

Its main achievements fall into six broad categories;

- \* Health, Welfare and Education
- \* Industrial Reforms
- \* The Economy and Economic Development
- \* Primary Industry and support for people in rural and provincial areas
- \* Electoral and Parliamentary Reform.
- \* Encouragement of small businesses.

## HOW LABOR GOVERNS

State and Federal Labor governments placed importance on fair wages with reasonable and safe working conditions. They sought to provide high real wages and a "social wage" by establishing health, welfare and other services at a cheaper cost per head through the taxation system.

Workers compensation, safety legislation, regulation of working conditions, sick and long service leave and a shorter working week to give workers the benefits of improved technology all came from State and Commonwealth Labor governments.

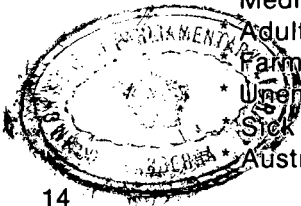
Unregulated private enterprise made worse the two great depressions in Australia's history. Labor governments believe they have a responsibility to wage and salary earners, farmers, small businessmen and those on pensions and fixed incomes to regulate the Australian economy to provide for economic growth and an equitable sharing of the profits from industry.

The best governments that farmers and people in rural towns and provincial cities have had, have been Labor governments. Marketing schemes, guaranteed prices for primary products, co-operatives and assistance for transport, education, welfare and local government in rural areas have come from Labor governments.

Fair treatment and land rights for Aboriginal people have become more important for the Labor Party in the past two decades.

### **SOME ACHIEVEMENTS OF LABOR GOVERNMENTS**

- \* The Commonwealth Bank
- \* Widows' pensions
- \* Snowy River Scheme
- \* Workers' Compensation
- \* Queensland's free hospitals
- \* School dental clinics
- \* TAA
- \* Supporting Mothers' Benefits
- \* Australian National University
- \* SGIO
- \* 8-hour day
- \* Aboriginal Land Funds
- \* Medibank
- \* Adult franchise in local government
- \* Farmers co-operatives and marketing boards
- \* Unemployment and sickness benefits
- \* Sick leave, long service leave
- \* Australian Heritage Commission



## READING

The books listed below are available in most public libraries.

### Trade Unions

D.W. Rawson  
R.M. Martin  
Ian Turner  
Jim Hagan  
Frank Nolan  
Archie Dawson  
Frank Waters  
D.J. Murphy

**Unions and Unionism in Australia**  
**Trade Unions in Australia**  
**The Union is Strength**  
**The History of the ACTU**  
**You Pass This Way Only Once.**  
**Points and Politics**  
**Postal Unions and Politics**  
**The Big Strikes, Queensland 1889-1965**

### Labor Party History

R.A. Gollan  
Ian Turner  
N.B. Nairn  
D.J. Murphy

**Radical and Working Class Politics**  
**Industrial Labour and Politics**  
**Civilizing Capitalism**  
**Labor in Politics. The State Labor Parties in Australia 1880-1920**  
**Labor in Power. The Labor Party and Governments in Queensland 1915-1957**

D.J. Murphy,  
R.B. Joyce and  
Colin A. Hughes }  
W.J. Harris  
Brian McKinlay

**The Bitter Fight**  
**A Short History of the Australian Labor Party**

### Labor Party Leaders

Norman Makin  
L.F. Fitzhardinge  
H.V. Evatt  
D.J. Murphy  
John Robertson  
H. Radi &  
P. Spearritt }  
Lloyd Ross  
L.F. Crisp  
Kylie Tennant  
Laurie Oakes  
Graham Freudenberg  
James Walker  
D.J. Murphy  
D.J. Murphy &  
R.B. Joyce }

**Federal Labour Leaders**  
**William Morris Hughes**  
**Australian Labor Leader, William Holman**  
**T.J. Ryan, A Political Biography**  
**J.H. Scullin, A Political Biography**

**Jack Lang**  
**John Curtin**  
**Ben Chifley**  
**Evatt, Politics and Justice**  
**Gough Whitlam**  
**A Certain Grandeur, Gough Whitlam**  
**The Leader, Gough Whitlam**  
**Bill Hayden, A Political Biography**  
**Queensland Political Portraits 1859-1952**  
(biographies of Kidston, Ryan, Theodore, McCormack, Forgan-Smith, Hanlon.)  
**John Cain and Victorian Labor, 1917-1957**  
**Robert J. Hawke**

Kate White  
Blanche D'Alpuget

Copies of the Australian Labor Party policies and its Constitution and Rules may be obtained from:

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Published April 1983  
Reprinted June 1983





Authorised by Peter Beattie, Ross Street, Newstead  
and printed by Gem Printing, Samford Road, Alderley.