

The Daily Historian

Henry Parkes, the 'Father of Federation'

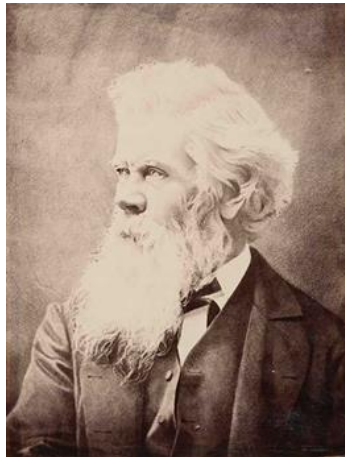
One of Australia's most significant political figures, Sir Henry Parkes, is a worthy recipient of the title the 'Father of Federation' writes S.Lyons

After 117 years, the Commonwealth Government has started to carefully review the Australian Constitution to ensure that it meets the needs of the population of the 21st Century. In doing so, we remember the important contributions of significant people, such as Henry Parkes, who was determined to unite Australia as one colony.

In 1889, Sir Henry Parkes delivered a stunning and inspiring speech called the Tenterfield Oration, which caught the attention of many individuals. This Oration is remembered as one of the most influential speeches in Australian history. He called for a national government, with representatives from each colony. He also had a vision of a united Australia, which he shared with everyone.

Sir Henry Parkes was born on the 27th of May 1815, in Canley, (England). When he was

21, he married his first wife Clarinda Varney. Parkes had a business as an ivory and bone turner but failed within the year. He then applied as a bounty immigrant and arrived in NSW in 1839. He married twice more, and had 17 children in total.



Sir Henry Bamford Parkes, one of Australia's most significant political figures

Parkes started his political career in NSW, where in 1854, he was elected to the New South Wales Legislative Council, then moved to the Legislative Assembly in 1856. He became a minister for the government of James Martin in 1866. Later, in 1872, Henry Parkes was

elected Premier of NSW for the first time. In 1877, he was awarded a knighthood by Queen Victoria for his efforts.

After passionately pursuing his dream of a federated Australia, Parkes' work resulted in an inter-colonial conference in Melbourne, in 1890. In 1891, the Australasian Federation convention had another inter-colonial conference, this time in Sydney. During this conference, the first Federal convention developed the first draft constitution. This allowed negotiations between the colonies of WA, SA, NT, QLD, VIC, ACT, NSW and Tas.

Four years before Australia became a federated nation, Sir Henry Parkes sadly passed away on the 27th of April 1896, at 80 years of age. Sir Henry Bamford Parkes's determination, passion and never-give-up attitude makes him a worthy recipient of the title the 'Father of Federation'.