

Everyone's Parliament

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Factsheet

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Queensland Electoral And Parliamentary History: Key Dates And Events

1859 Queen Victoria granted approval and signed Letters Patent on 6 June 1859 to establish the colony of Queensland. On the same day, an Order-in-Council gave Queensland its own constitution. Queensland became a self-governing colony with its own Governor, a nominated Legislative Council and an elected Legislative Assembly. Prior to this, the area encompassing the new colony of Queensland was part of the large colony of New South Wales that had constituted the entire eastern section of Australia.

1860 Queensland's first election was held. The voting franchise (those entitled to vote) was restricted to: adult males (aged 21 years and over) with a three year residence qualification, or six months if owner or lessee of property. Multiple registration and voting was possible through multiple property ownership. Military and police were disqualified. The voting system was first past the post.

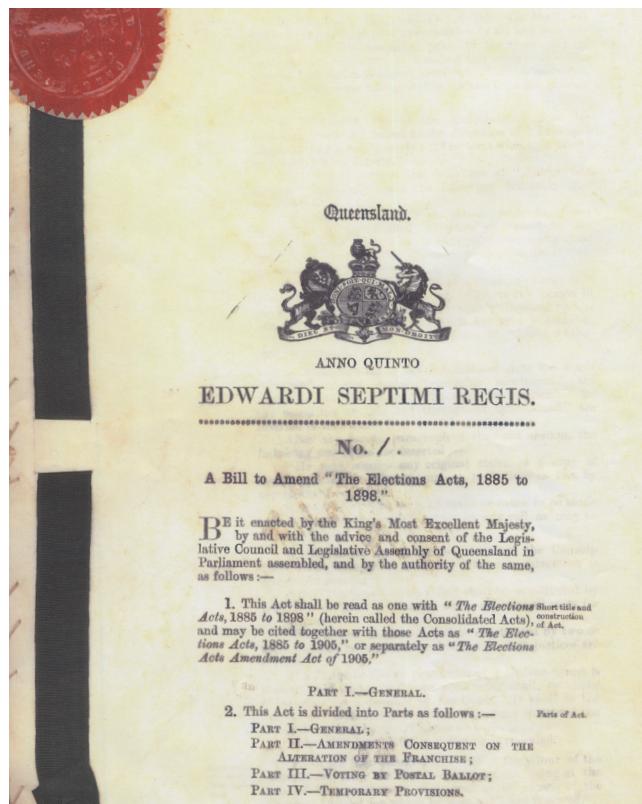
The first parliament was comprised of 26 members from 16 electorates elected to the Legislative Assembly and 23 members nominated by the Governor to the Legislative Council, each for a five-year term. (Subsequent appointments to the Legislative Council were for life.)

From 1860 to 1868 the parliament met in a former military barracks building located in Brisbane's Queen Street that had been converted to house the sittings of the new parliament.

1864 Additional Members Act: the number of members of the Legislative Assembly was increased with an extra six one-member electorates created.

1865 The foundation stone of Parliament House in George St, Brisbane was laid by the Governor Sir George Bowen. With the initial site of the parliament in Queen Street deemed unsuitable as a long-term option to accommodate the parliament, a new purpose-built building was approved and a competition held for its design.

1868 The new Parliament House building was used for parliamentary sittings for the first time on 4 August. The building remained under construction for another 20 years, however, the two parliamentary chambers were able to be used during this period.



With the passage of the Elections Act Amendment Bill on 24 January 1905, women obtained the right to vote in Queensland State elections.



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- 1871** Elections Act: under a property qualification, a maximum of one vote was allowed in any one electorate.
- 1872** Electoral Districts Act: 42 one-member electorates were created for the 1873 election.
- 1875** Cook District Representation Act: one extra member was added to the Cook electorate.
- 1878** Electoral Districts Act: 42 electorates were established but with 55 members.
- 1885** Additional Members Act: 44 electorates existed with 59 members.
- 1886** Members' Expenses Act for Members of Parliament: introduction of an expense allowance (£2/2/- per sitting day to a maximum £200 per year). At this point members were not paid a salary.
- 1887** Electoral Districts Act: 60 electorates with 72 Members.
- 1889** Payment of Members Act: payment of members started at £300 per year.
- 1890** Triennial Parliaments Act: three-year terms for parliaments became effective from the 1893 election.
- 1892** Electoral Districts Act: 61 electorates with 72 Members. Elections Act: introduced "contingent" (optional preferential) voting.
- 1905** Elections Act: legislation granting women's suffrage was passed in January 1905; the property qualification was abolished; Aboriginal people and certain non-European immigrants were still disqualified from voting.
- 1910** Electoral Districts Act: 72 one-member electorates with one vote one value introduced (with a 20 per cent tolerance).
- 1914** Elections Act Amendment Act: compulsory registration and voting was introduced for persons entitled to be enrolled.
- 1915** Elections Act Amendment Act: women were permitted to be elected to the Legislative Assembly for the first time, but not appointed to the Legislative Council.



The Legislative Council Chamber is now only used for ceremonial and other formal occasions, such as the Opening of Parliament, Estimates hearings and other Committee hearings.

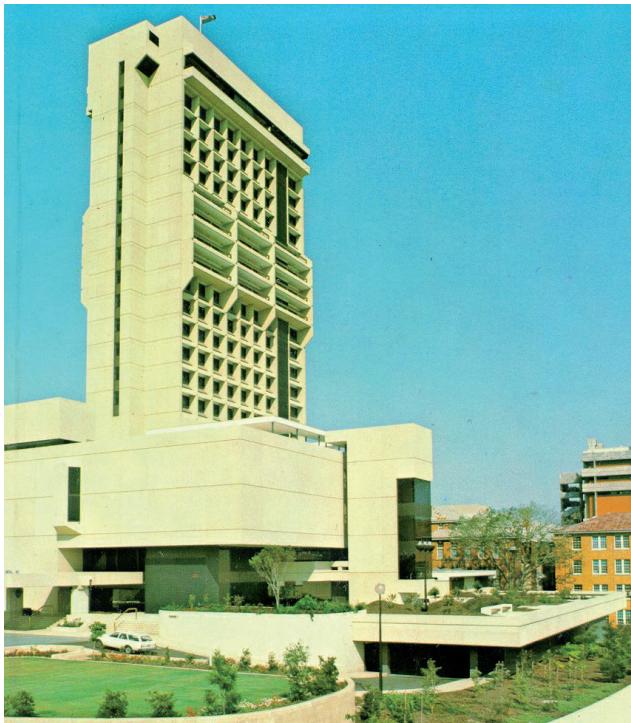
- 1922** Constitution Act Amendment Act: the Legislative Council was abolished, making Queensland the only state in Australia with a unicameral legislature.
- 1929** Queensland's first female member of parliament, Mrs Irene Longman, was elected as the Member for Bulimba, representing the Country and Progressive Party.
- 1931** Electoral Districts Act: the number of electorates was reduced from 72 to 62.
- 1942** Elections Act Amendment Act: first past the post voting was reintroduced.
- 1949** Electoral Districts Act: a zonal electoral system was introduced whereby electorates were allocated into geographic zones, each with different quotas (there were 75 electorates in four zones).
- 1958** Electoral Districts Act: there were 78 electorates established across three zones.
- 1959** Elections Act Amendment Act: British subjects who were natives of Asia or Africa were enfranchised (allowed to vote).
- 1962** Elections Act Amendment Act: compulsory preferential voting was introduced.
- 1965** Elections Act Amendment Act: Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders were able to vote in state elections (though not compulsory).



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- 1971** Elections Act Amendment Act: enrolment and voting became compulsory for Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. Electoral Districts Act: 82 electorates were established in four zones.
- 1973** Elections Act and the Criminal Code Amendment Act: the voting age was reduced from 21 to 18 years.
- 1974** Mr Eric Deeral was elected as the Member for Cook, representing the National Party. Mr Deeral is recognised as being Queensland's first Indigenous member of parliament.
- 1979** The Parliamentary Annexe building was completed providing much needed office space and accommodation for members of parliament.



The Parliamentary Annexe was opened in 1979 creating an additional Chamber, as well as providing office space and accommodation.

- 1980** A major renovation and restoration of Parliament House commenced. This project included the construction of the Porte Cochere which was part of the original design plan for the building but not undertaken due to financial issues. While these works occurred from 1980-1982, the parliament sat in a large conference room in the new Parliamentary Annexe building.

- 1985** Electoral Districts Act: 89 electorates were created across four zones.
- 1988** The Parliamentary Service Act 1988 established the Parliamentary Service Commission and the role of the Clerk as the Chief Executive Officer of the Parliamentary Service.
- 1988** Parliamentary Members' Salaries Act: members' salaries were linked to those of members of the federal House of Representatives.
- 1991** Electoral Districts Act 1991: 89 electorates were established; zones abolished; optional-preferential voting was introduced; and a system of weighting large-sized electorates was introduced.
- 1992** Parliamentary Papers Act: allowed for tabled documents to be copied without incurring any civil or criminal liability.
- 1995** The Parliamentary Committees Act abolished the Parliamentary Service Commission and placed administration of the parliament under the control of the Speaker. It also provided the legislative basis for statutory committees of the Legislative Assembly.
- 1996** Parliamentary Secretaries were appointed to assist particular ministers.
- 1999** A redistribution of electoral districts was finalised in July, the first under the Electoral Act
- 1999** Of the 89 electorates, most boundary changes occurred in the growing urban areas of South-East Queensland.
- 2000** On 19 October it was resolved at a meeting of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (Qld Branch) that Members of the Legislative Assembly should be known as MP rather than MLA.
- 2001** The Constitution of Queensland 2001 brought all of Queensland's constitutional legislation under one modern and readily accessible act. This act dealt with the Executive, Judicial and Legislative branches of Government, enhancing some existing arrangements, and recognising constitutional conventions such as Cabinet.



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The Parliament of Queensland Act 2001 consolidated all laws dealing with the Legislative Assembly, its members and committees. This act covered matters such as: powers, rights and immunities; contempt of parliament; eligibility and disqualification of candidates and members; and members' salaries.

2002 From 3-5 September, the Queensland Parliament sat in Townsville, the first time it had sat outside Brisbane in its history. Over 1,000 people attended the evening question time session, in what is believed to be a record public gallery attendance for a session of an Australian parliament.



In September 2002, the historic first regional sitting of Parliament in Townsville.

2002 On 8 August 2002, as part of a package of e-democracy initiatives, the Queensland Parliament approved changes to rules applying to the process of petitioning of parliament to allow petitions to be sent electronically. The e-petition complemented paper based petitions providing another avenue for the public to raise issues directly with the parliament. e-petitions can be viewed on the Queensland parliament website and ministerial responses to e-petitions are also published.

2004 On 18 June, the Queensland parliament adopted new Standing Rules and Orders as recommended by the Standing Orders Committee. These were the most comprehensive change to the standing orders in the history of the Parliament and took effect from 31 August 2004.

2005 On 11 May 2005, the Queensland parliament celebrated the centenary of eligible Queensland women obtaining the right to vote in Queensland elections.

THE RIGHT TO VOTE, also known as suffrage, was won by many countries over the last century through political struggle and negotiation. In Queensland, the right to vote was only granted to women in 1905, after a long campaign by suffrage groups. Many groups also vigorously campaigned for the amendment or reform through the referendum process.

The Queensland campaign begins
In the late 1800s, various women's suffrage and equal rights groups formed in Queensland to lobby the government, arguing that the lack of government on the best interests of the community and the nation could only be addressed if women had the right to vote. In 1901, the Commonwealth of Australia was formed, which included Queensland. The federal government's preferred option was that men, not women, should have the right to vote. Despite an amendment to the Queensland Constitution in 1900, which gave women the right to vote in local government elections, the right to vote for elections to the Commonwealth parliament, despite Queensland having a female member of parliament, was denied.

Women in New Zealand can vote, only can't vote
In 1893, New Zealand became the first country to give women the right to vote. The Australian colony followed, South Australia in 1902 and Western Australia in 1908. The insertion of the clause in the Queensland Constitution that denied women the right to vote was removed in 1900, but the clause remained in the Queensland Constitution until 1905. In 1905, the Queensland Parliament passed a bill to amend the Queensland Constitution to give women the right to vote. The bill was passed by the Queensland Parliament after much debate and was signed into law by the Governor-General on 11 May 1905.

The Queensland campaign continues
Women in Queensland continued to lobby for the right to vote, and women could be elected to the Queensland Legislative Assembly. In 1908, the Queensland Parliament passed a bill to amend the Queensland Constitution to give women the right to vote. The bill was passed by the Queensland Parliament after much debate and was signed into law by the Governor-General on 11 May 1908.

Female parliamentarians in Queensland
The first female member of the Queensland Legislative Assembly was elected in 1925. In 1971, the Queensland Parliament passed a bill to amend the Queensland Constitution to give women the right to stand for election to the Queensland Legislative Assembly. The bill was passed by the Queensland Parliament after much debate and was signed into law by the Governor-General on 11 May 1971.

Independence suffrage
Queensland's independence from Great Britain in 1901 brought with it the right to self-government. In 1902, the Queensland Parliament passed a bill to amend the Queensland Constitution to give women the right to vote. The bill was passed by the Queensland Parliament after much debate and was signed into law by the Governor-General on 11 May 1902.

Her note, her voice
Women in Queensland have joined *Her voice* and their ability to contribute positively to Queensland's future.

First panel of the Women's Suffrage display, created to celebrate the centenary of women obtaining the right to vote.

2005 From 4-6 October, the Queensland parliament sat in Rockhampton, only the second time in its history that it sat outside Brisbane.

2007 Hon Anna Bligh MP was appointed Queensland Premier on 13 September 2007. She was the state's first female premier.

2008 The Queensland parliament held its third regional parliamentary sitting in Cairns between 28-30 October 2008.

2010 The Queensland parliament celebrated its 150th anniversary in May 2010.

2011 The Queensland parliament held its fourth regional parliamentary sitting in Mackay between 24-26 May 2011.

2011 The Queensland parliament introduced a new portfolio-based committee system and amended its legislative process to include committee examination of bills.



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2011 The Committee of the Legislative Assembly was established, consisting of seven members (including the Speaker) to oversee and manage specified matters of the House.

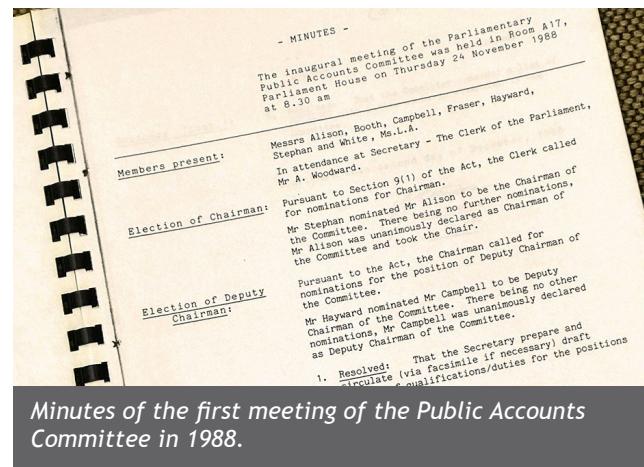
2016 The Electoral (Improving Representation) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2016 increased the number of electoral districts for the state from 89 to 93. The Act also reintroduced full preferential voting for state elections. The increase in members from 89 to 93 came into effect during the state election for the 56th Parliament on 25 November 2017.

2016 A referendum was conducted on 19 March 2016 to ask electors whether they approved of a bill to legislate for fixed four-year elections for the Legislative Assembly. The referendum was approved by 52.96 per cent of electors. The Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill 2015 received Royal Assent on 5 May 2016.

Fixed four-year terms will commence from the start of the 57th Parliament with the polling day being held on the last Saturday in October in the relevant year.

2016 The committee system was recognised in the Constitution of Queensland 2001 and portfolio committees were provided with the power to initiate inquiries within their area of responsibility.

2019 Thursday 4 April 2019 marked the first release of 30 year committee documents. The first documents to be publically released were the minutes of meetings of the Public Accounts Committee during 1988. Parliamentary rules state records are to be held in custody of the Clerk for a period of 30 years. From this time onward, the Queensland Parliament proactively releases committee minutes that have attained the age of 30 years, subject to approval by the Speaker.



2019 The Human Rights Bill was assented to on 7 March 2019. The Act requires statements of compatibility with human rights to be tabled for all Bills introduced into the Legislative Assembly, amongst other matters. The Act also provides portfolio committees with responsibility for examining a Bill to consider whether the Bill is compatible with human rights.