



Queensland Parliament: Celebrating 150 years in 2010

In 2009, Queensland celebrated Q150. This marked the 150th anniversary of Queensland's creation following its separation from the colony of New South Wales in 1859. However, the first Queensland Parliament did not sit until 1860, almost a full year after the new colony was created.

Background

On 6 June 1859, Queen Victoria approved the creation of a new colony to be called Queensland. On 10 December the same year, Sir George Ferguson Bowen arrived in Brisbane as the new colony's Governor and officially proclaimed the Colony of Queensland. He appointed Sir Robert George Wyndham Herbert as the Colonial Secretary - a position similar to today's Premier, except that he was appointed, not elected. Herbert's interim government presided over Queensland until April 1860 when Governor Bowen issued the writs for the first election.

The First Election

Queensland covers a large area and in the 19th Century, the lack of communication technologies and slow modes of transport meant that it took weeks to travel from one end of the colony to the other. For this reason, voting for the first Queensland election took place from 27 April to 11 May 1860.

At the 1860 election, 26 Members were elected to the Legislative Assembly from 16 electorates (some electorates had two representatives) and

there were 11 appointees to the Upper House. All of these 37 Members were men as only land-holding males were eligible to be candidates and vote. Herbert was elected unopposed to the seat of Leichhardt and became Queensland's first Premier after having served as the Colonial Secretary from December 1859.

The first Queensland Parliament met on 22 May 1860 before being officially opened on 29 May 1860. The Parliament first sat at the Old Convict Barracks building which was located in Brisbane's Queen Street, roughly opposite the current Myer Centre.



Then and Now: Stamp produced to commemorate 100 years of self government in Queensland and Parliament House today.



What has changed?

While the Queensland Parliament maintains the Westminster style of government, much has changed over the past 150 years:

- the parliament has changed location, moving to its present location on the corner of Alice and George Streets in 1868;
- it is now a unicameral parliament with the Legislative Council (the Upper House) being abolished in 1922;
- there are now 93 Members in the Legislative Assembly (the Lower House) representing 93 electorates; and
- a significant number of Members are women, with female suffrage achieved in 1905, and both the positions of Governor and Premier have been filled by women.

Many of these developments would have been unimaginable for Herbert and his first government.

For more information about the Queensland Parliament's 150th anniversary celebrations visit:
www.parliament.qld.gov.au/P150

Historical timeline of Queensland's Parliament

6 June 1859	Order-in-Council provided for the separation of Queensland as a separate colony to New South Wales
10 December 1859	Sir George Bowen arrives as Queensland's first Governor and appoints Sir Robert Herbert as Colonial Secretary
27 April - 11 May 1860	Queensland's first elections are held
22 May 1860	Parliament first sits at Old Convict Barracks, Queens Street, Brisbane
1868	Parliament moves to its present location to the corner of George and Alice Streets, adjacent to the City Botanic Gardens
1922	Queensland becomes a unicameral parliament after the Upper House abolishes itself
1979	The Parliamentary Annexe building is added to Parliament House
2002	Regional sittings of the Queensland Parliament first occur in Townsville
2010	Queensland Parliament celebrates 150 years since its establishment in 1860

For more information on Queensland Parliament history see Factsheet 3.1 on the Queensland Parliament's website.