



1982 Cabinet Minutes

Background report

A state election in November 1980 returned a Liberal-National coalition government, with Johannes Bjelke-Petersen as Premier. The leader of the parliamentary Liberal Party, Llew Edwards, was Treasurer. The National Party received 328,000 primary votes, and 35 seats; the Liberal Party, with 316,000 primary votes, won 22 seats. The Labor Opposition managed to hold 25 seats with 487,000 primary votes. Malcolm Fraser was returned as Prime Minister at a federal election held in October 1980. In 1982 the Governor-General was Sir Zelman Cowen, with Sir Ninian Stephen becoming Governor-General on 29 July. The Governor of Queensland was Commodore Sir James Ramsay.

In 1982 the Australian population was recorded at 15.1 million. The Australian Census revealed that for the first time there were more Australian women than Australian men. Queensland's population was 2.3 million, including just over one million in Brisbane. The Gold Coast, the state's second largest city, had almost 150,000 residents. At the 1981 Census, Queensland's Indigenous population (44 700) was 28 per cent of the total Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Australia. Over three million hectares was proclaimed as reserves for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and each reserve community was managed by an elected Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Council.

There were 300,000 primary students and 160,000 secondary students attending 1400 schools. Three universities – University of Queensland, Griffith University and James Cook University of North Queensland – employed 1600 staff and educated 22,000 students. Another 25,000 students were enrolled at colleges of advanced education, which included teacher education colleges, TAFE colleges and the Queensland Institute of Technology.

Primary production was the major economic activity, assisted by government-sponsored irrigation, marketing and research schemes. April 1982 to February 1983 was a period of El Nino related drought, with dust storms and bush fires in southern states. The number of drought-declared areas in Queensland increased during the second half of the year. Mining, particularly of coal and bauxite, increased in importance. Tourism was also a major industry. The Queensland Government encouraged manufacturing and service businesses to relocate from southern states to new industrial estates in Queensland, and also provided other financial assistance to local companies.

Oil from the newly discovered Jackson oil field would be available when the wells were connected with the Moonie-to-Brisbane pipeline. Mary Kathleen (near Mt Isa), the state's only uranium mine, closed in October 1982 when ore supplies ran out. Production at the Gladstone aluminium smelter, using bauxite mined in Weipa, began in February 1982. Coal exportation, particularly to Japan, was the new boom industry, with new mines and ports scheduled for completion within the next few years. A new power station was proposed at Stanwell near Rockhampton. A new rail route over the Great Dividing Range north of Toowoomba was being investigated, as were a coal-train route south of Brisbane and a railway line to Redcliffe. Overseas loans amounting to \$70 million were approved for new infrastructure, mainly power stations and ports.

Work had commenced on the new Wivenhoe Dam, 150 kilometres upstream from Brisbane, designed to mitigate floods and supplement urban water supplies. Construction had also begun on the Boondooma Dam, on the Boyne River, to supply water for a new power station at Tarong, near Kingaroy. The building of a major new irrigation supply dam on the Burdekin River had also been approved.

The state government provided most public health services, supported by Commonwealth funding. Most hospitals were operated by District Boards, except in isolated Indigenous communities, where

the Department of Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement provided medical and health services. Aboriginal health was also provided for by a specialist unit within the Health Department.

The weekly basic wage in December 1982 was \$121 for men and \$101 for women. The minimum weekly male wage, under state and federal awards, was \$170. A loaf of bread cost 77 cents, and a 600ml bottle of milk was 76 cents. Workers were employed, under award conditions, for a maximum of 40 hours per week. In August, for the first time in 70 years in Queensland, 52 unions declared a general strike over the introduction of a 38-hour week, which affected train services, petrol deliveries, mine, port and factory operations.

Mobile phone services had not yet been introduced. Telegrams and telex messages were the quickest method of communicating. Four public broadcasting stations operated on the FM band, while all other radio services used the MW frequency. Brisbane was served by four television stations, but most rural centres had only one station. The internet had not been invented, and computers were still in their infancy.

The major cultural event in Queensland during 1982 was the twelfth Commonwealth Games, held in Brisbane from 30 September to 9 October. Teams from 43 countries attended 142 events in 10 sports: archery, athletics, badminton, boxing, cycling, lawn bowls, shooting, swimming and diving, weightlifting and wrestling. Two demonstration sports – table tennis and Australian Rules football – were also held. Over 6000 volunteers assisted in running the Games, including the billeting of athletes and other team-members.

Stage One of the Queensland Cultural Centre at Southbank, the Queensland Art Gallery, was completed, and work on Stage Two would provide a performing arts complex by 1985. The State Library of Queensland was still located on William Street, and the Queensland Museum was situated on Gregory Terrace.

There were other major events that made significant news during 1982. On the national front, in May, the report into the 'Bottom of the Harbour' tax evasion scheme was tabled, with Queensland businessman Brian Maher named as the biggest tax-avoidance operator in the country. Also in May the High Court upheld the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* in *Koowarta v Bjelke-Petersen*, effectively extending Commonwealth power. In July the Australian Labor Party conference relaxed its uranium mining policy. In August the Costigan Royal Commission handed down its report which investigated tax evasion by the Federated Ship Painters and Dockers' Union and the Crown Solicitors Office. In October Lindy Chamberlain was convicted and started her prison sentence for the murder of Azaria. In December the fight against the Franklin River Dam in the Tasmanian wilderness began and UNESCO agreed to list the Tasmanian Wild Rivers as a World Heritage Site.

On the international front, in 1982 the Falklands War ended with British forces recapturing the South Atlantic islands after the Argentinian invasion; Israel invaded Lebanon, and the resulting massacre in Palestinian refugee camps led to the intervention of an American peacekeeping force; the IRA bombed the Horse Guards Parade in Hyde Park; Princess Grace of Monaco was killed in a car accident; and Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev died a few days before Polish Solidarity leader Lech Walesa was set free from state detention.