

# The story of us

[Parts of the World](#), [Australia](#)



In Australia pre-federation, times were rough. Working conditions, living conditions, and pay for work were all terrible and lacked satisfaction.

Although this might seem like nothing would make this better, you would be surprised by how much this changed. This presentation will explain to you how although many conditions in Australia were terrible and offered no satisfaction for the average working class person, this all changed as the Federation came and benefited Australia for good.

In the 50 years leading up to the federation for Australia's manual labourers, work was tough. Their working experiences were typified by uncomfortable and dangerous conditions, low pay and long hours. They worked in areas which required physical labour such as the building and construction trade, or the mechanical and maintenance industry. The factories were quite often poorly ventilated, without basic amenities, overcrowded and often reached over 40 degrees Celsius in summer, while being cold and damp in winter. At the turn of the century, factories were hard places to work. It was not uncommon for injuries to come directly from bad machinery and almost no safety equipment, which is compulsory at working sites now. Another factor that came into play was the native Australians in the workplace. One of the reasons for the federation of Australia was that all Australians were keen to utilise the legal power of the government to keep a 'white Australia.' This belief was the result of a lot of derogatory and racist views of whites and fears of non-whites taking their jobs, making the wages lower and changing up the working conditions. On the 5th of June, 1901 the Immigration Restriction Bill (Immigration Restriction Act 1901 (Cth)) [from [skwirk.com](http://skwirk.com)] was introduced. The British government did not want Australia to restrict

immigration based on race or colour out of fear that it would offend their multiracial allies overseas. On the 23rd of December, the governor gave the act his assent and the Immigration Restriction Act 1901 (Cth) [retrieved from [skwirk. com](#)] was made the law.

This was a time when Aussies worked long hours and also had terrible working conditions and received poor pay in return. In 1907, the court changed the future of wages for Aussie workers when it was faced with the case of *Ex parte HV McKay (1907)* [retrieved from [skwirk. com](#)]. It has famously become known as the ‘Harvester judgement.’ The case came about after McKay applied for an exemption from the Excise Tariff (Agricultural Machinery) Act 1906 (Cth) [[skwirk. com](#)], which could be waived if the employer was found to be paying ‘fair and reasonable’ wages. The Agricultural Implement Makers Society claimed, however, that McKay’s workers were being underpaid at 36 shillings (\$3. 60) per week. Court President Justice Higgins calculated that 42 shillings (\$4. 20) per week was the basic wage an unskilled worker (who supported his wife and three children) could live on. Upon its establishment, the Commonwealth government introduced revolutionary social legislation, which improved the lives of many Australians. In 1904, the Commonwealth government established the Conciliation and Arbitration Court to resolve disputes and issues between workers and employers. [[skwirk. com](#)]

Before the federation, the wellbeing of the elderly and disabled was the responsibility of the colonies but it usually fell to charities or family members. As the aged population began to increase and the 1890s

depression hit, people started to realise that the government had to take over the welfare of the elderly population. In 1900, NSW passed the Old-Aged Pensions Act 1900 (NSW) which provided payment of £26 (\$52) per year to eligible residents over 65 years old. After Federation was reached in 1901, the Commonwealth passed the Invalid and Old Aged Pensions Act 1908 (Cth)[skwirk. com]. It initially paid an aged pension of £26 to those over 65 years, who had lived in the Commonwealth for more than 25 years, were of good character and passed means and assets tests. The disability pension came into effect in 1910 and paid those over 16 years who were totally and permanently incapacitated to work, the same amount as the aged pension. Like the aged pension, recipients were also subject to means and assets testing, and residency requirements (but only of five years). Both pensions could not be claimed by non-residents, the Indigenous peoples of Australia, Asians and Indigenous peoples from the Pacific Islands, New Zealand and Africa.

In conclusion, we can all see that overall, although white Australians have discriminated non - whites, almost begged for a new law to make them obsolete and have them deported from the country, and then passed an action making this happen, we can see that overall, Australia as a country completely benefited from the Federation in 1901. This is shown to us by the acts passed, the fine features of the acts passed, and the impact that they made on even today's society. I also can see this as I have researched the impacts of these acts have had on today's events, such as events with asylum seekers, an events with aboriginal abuse in the past. We can take lots of knowledge from these stated points, such as how recent events have

impacted us as a society and how although lots of sacrifices were made when the acts were passed before the federation, these ultimately benefited Australia as a country and a residential area.