

Cobbers

The fair dinkum opening-up of Australia musical

A musical play by Cenarth Fox
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We staged *Cobbers* in 2001. It was an exceptionally good musical for a large cast of kids as everyone was involved. There were lots of speaking parts and singing groups where kids got to front of stage. Great roles for boys and girls. Everyone loved the songs - they were catchy, easy to learn and taught heaps of information without them realising it. These kids are now in year 11, still remember their songs and think very fondly of the play. Parents really loved it and laughed at all the appropriate places. Teachers thought it was a terrific way to teach Aussie history. It was fun to do. **Timboon P-12 School**

The play was a huge success and the kids did a fantastic job. The audience loved the historical approach the play took and most commented that they found out more about Australian history than at school.

Kate Walsh, Sacred Heart School, Corryong

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Orchestrations and Backing CD

Cobbers is scored for piano, guitar, bass, percussion, drum-kit, flutes, clarinets, strings, trumpets and trombones. The band parts are for hire. All musicals from FOX PLAYS have a stereo backing CD with both rehearsal and performance versions.

Production Package

All groups staging a musical or play from FOX PLAYS receive free production notes [*set-design, costumes, lighting, props, etc*], free art-work for your poster with all musicals, a complete set of lyrics for your chorus members. The piano/vocal score has detailed notes for your musical director and most shows have a video and/or colour photographs. Contact your local agent for friendly and helpful advice.

Synopsis

cobber – noun used in Australian English meaning friend, mate or companion. In days past in Suffolk England, *to cob* meant to form a friendship. The word *cobber* first appeared in *The Bulletin* in February 1895.

Three young English siblings [two sisters and their brother] set sail for Australia in 1897. They land in Sydney to live with their aunt. At the time, Australia is in the grip of Federation fever. The three English travellers discover what it's like to live down under at a time when some far-flung colonies of the British Empire are facing a difficult and divisive choice.

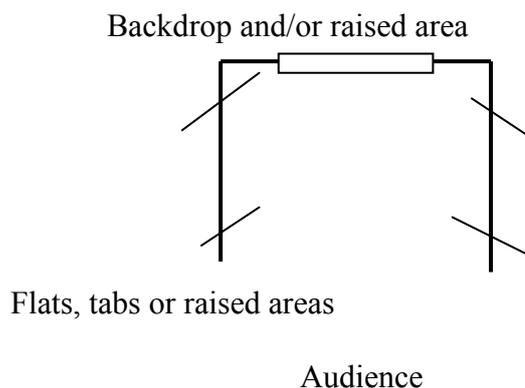
In 1897 Australia was a series of independent colonies with their own border posts, postal and railway systems and no national defence force. Countries such as Italy and the USA engaged in a civil war or wars before establishing federation. Australia avoided civil war but had its fair share of skirmishes, squabbles and struggles along the down under federation way.

Cobbers is at times a serious and then light-hearted look at Australia and Australians just before and after Federation. It was a time to win or lose your cobbers.

Set

There is no set as such as the action takes place in many places both large and small – on a ship, on a quay, in a house, in a street, on a farm, in Australia, in England, etc. A basic empty performing space is required with different levels at the sides and upstage so the space may be dressed from time to time. Costumes and props will dress your production.

Here is a suggested layout of your performing space. More details in the free Production Notes.



The first performance of *Cobbers* was staged by the Timboon P-12 school, Timboon, Australia in 2001 to mark the centenary of the Federation of Australia

Cobbers 3

Characters [Many smaller roles can be doubled]

LOUISA	young woman, English tourist, adventurous, tackles anything
HENRY	young man, English tourist, damn fine fellow, ex-public school
ETHEL	young woman, English tourist, shy, timid, appears gullible, sincere
FLORRIE	middle-aged, middle-class resident of Sydney, protective
ALFRED	[Alf] Florrie's son, young Australian, friendly, a good cobbler
STELLA	firebrand involved in the Womanhood Suffrage League in NSW
ROBERT	[Bob] sheep farmer from outback New South Wales
SPINNER	bloke running a gambling racket
HAROLD	railway ticket clerk
MAYOR	local government official
CLANCY	Sydneysider opposed to Federation
HECKLERS	four spectators at Federation meeting
BLUEY	almost a swaggie, a bushman, folk hero, raconteur, poet
MARY	young uneducated mother from the bush
GRIFFITH	politician supporting Federation
FRED	larrikin with sense of humour
SM	stationmaster at Spencer Street station in Melbourne
NELLIE	young Melburnian/Kalgoorlieite
JANE	young Melburnian/Kalgoorlieite
CONSTABLE/s	Victorian [Australian] policeman and PEEL a London bobby
NED, RUDOLF and DUSTY	gold prospectors in Western Australia
OFFICIALS 3	British civil servants [possibly Ned, Rudolf and Dusty]

There are many parts which can be doubled e.g. Hecklers could be Harold, Spinner, SM, etc

Musical Numbers

1.	Overture	Orchestra
2.	The Daggy Swaggie Rag	Company
3.	The Daggy Swaggie Rag Reprise	Company
4.	A Little Bit Democratic	Stella & Females
5.	A Little Bit Democratic Reprise	Orchestra
6.	Be An Aussie	Alfred, Henry & Company
7.	Travel by Train	Harold & Company
8.	Drongo	Robert & Ethel
9.	Sing of Australia	Company
10.	She'll Be Right, Mate	Fred & Company
11.	First Tuesday in November	Company
12.	First Tuesday in November Interlude	Orchestra
13.	Dear Your Majesty	Ned, Henry & Miners
14.	Drongo Reprise	Robert & Ethel
15.	Cut Those Apron Strings	Queen Victoria & Chaps
16.	Cobbers	Company
17.	Curtain Calls	Company
18.	Playout	Orchestra

No. 1 Overture

[Curtain is down and/or lights black. Overture begins. At place marked, the curtain rises and/or lights come up DC. Only the centre front is lit. Three tourists are standing on a small box with railing on the downstage side. The tourists are on a ship leaving England en route to Australia. They face front, wave to their friends on the quay [in the audience] and throw streamers. Perhaps it is best to have the streamers only make it as far as the orchestra pit or front one or two rows. The less ammunition to give a hostile audience the better! The following speeches occur simultaneously. All the above takes place during the Overture]

- Louisa** *[Calling ad lib, waving, throwing streamers]* Goodbye Take care of Heathcote ... I promise I'll write ... You too ... Give my best to Jeremy ... No, not love, just my best! ... Goodbye *[Continues]*
- Henry** *[Calling ad lib, waving, throwing streamers]* Goodbye Good luck with the rigger final and your exams ... And the same to you, old chap See you in a year or two ... Or three! ... Goodbye *[Continues]*
- Ethel** *[Calling ad lib, waving, throwing streamers]* Goodbye I think I'm glad to be leaving ... Perhaps I'm not really glad ... No I'm not glad ... In fact I want to stay ... Help! ... Goodbye! ... Help! ... Goodbye *[Continues]*
[The tourists continue their calling and waving until the Overture stops. But their cries and waves should gradually diminish to signify the ship is moving away. The music stops. The activity stops. The siblings look at one another]
- Louisa** Well brother and sister dear, we've actually gone and done it. But what have we done?
- Henry** We've set sail from England for Australia, that's what we've done.
- Ethel** I wish we hadn't.
- Louisa** And Australia's on the other side of the world. *[Looking out front]* Way out there. I wonder what it's like?
- Ethel** Horrible.
- Henry** Chin up, girls. We're on an adventure. We're sailing to far-flung Oz and the new twentieth century. It'll be brilliant.
- Ethel** I wish I hadn't come. *[MUSIC BEGINS. Singing is secondary to acting]*
- Louisa** *[Excited, pointing out front]* Look! There's land! That's Australia. *[Calling and waving]* Hello. Australia! *[Continues]*
- Henry** *[Equally excited, calls and waves]* Over here. Hello! Australia *[Continues]*
- Ethel** *[Calling and waving for a different reason]* Help! Save us! Help! *[Continues]*
- Louisa** *[Stops waving]* Listen. I can hear singing.
[OTHERS stop waving and calling]
- Henry** I think they're singing for us.
- Ethel** I want to go home.

No. 2 The Daggy Swaggie Rag

- Company** *Come on and track the outback dusty old road with me
Come on the good old wallaby
Roll up your thin swag, join in a chin wag
Later we'll boil a billy tea
Come to the never-never back-of-beyond with me
Swim in the inland sea – that ain't there*

*Slip on the nosebag, smoko, a rolled fag
Join in the Daggy Swaggie Rag.
Sundown, rundown, stop and cadge some tasty grub
Evenin' grievin', for a far-off, far-flung pub
Life goes, wife knows that we'll always want to roam
It's a good possie just for an Aussie
Life on the road's our home.*

[Singing begins softly but increases gradually in volume. As the volume increases, bring up the lights. We see a variety of Australians on the quay waiting to greet passengers on the ship about to dock. They sing their welcome. They're also miming chatting, greeting their friends, etc. The three English travellers turn and face the singers. Lights dim on the trio. A mini ramp is placed by box DC, the tourists "walk the plank" and touch down on Australian soil. All this takes place during the song. They stand together on the quay looking around at their new home. The end of the song is covered by an increase in waving and greeting. The singers mime greeting travellers we haven't seen before who appear from wherever. Don't upstage the main trio]

Florrie *[Waving calling]* Yoo hoo, over here! Hello. *[Etc]*
[TRIO move towards FLORRIE and ALFRED. Box and ramp could be removed or re-located as main actors move downstage and more lights come up. Actors can move the simple props. Much hubbub upstage as others greet family and friends]

Louisa Auntie Florence? *[They embrace warmly]*

Florrie Oh my darlings. *[Embraces ETHEL]* You're here at last and safe and well.

Alfred *[Shaking hands with HENRY]* G'day mate. I'm your cousin Alfred but everyone calls me Alf.

Henry How do you do. I'm Henry but everyone calls me ... Henry
[More embraces, kisses and handshakes as people introduce themselves]

Florrie I'm so happy. I think I'm going to cry. *[HENRY offers handkerchief]* Oh thank you, Henry. I can see you're a gentleman.

Alf I can see he's a Pom.

Louisa And thank *you*, Auntie, and you too Alf, for all your kind letters and for this wonderful invitation.

Henry Hear, hear. *[Handkerchief returned]*

Louisa Your kindness means so much to us ever since Mother passed away.

Florrie *[Embracing her nieces to pieces]* Oh my dear girls. How terribly sad.

Alfred Yeah. Sorry to hear about your mum, mate

Henry Thank you, Alfred. Alf.

Florrie But enough of times past. We're just so thrilled you're here in sunny Sydney.

Alfred We sure are. So tell us, how was your trip?

Louisa Oh I can honestly say it was the most exciting and breathtaking experience of my life.

Alfred Gee, I must do it m'self one day.

Henry Yes it was like some great, grand adventure.

Florrie I'm so pleased. *[Pause. OTHERS look at ETHEL]*

Ethel It was very long.

Florrie *[Pause]* Oh good. That's the spirit.

Alfred You're gunna love it here in Oz. *[MUSIC BEGINS]* Look, the buggy's over there. You hop aboard and I'll grab your luggage.

Florrie *[Leading trio offstage]* Come on me darlings. Let's get you home.
[ALFRED exits one way, FLORRIE and TRIO another as crowd move forward to reprise song. Crossfade lights. Down upstage, up downstage. Momentarily HENRY is unsure where to go. ETHEL sees him dithering and in panic, calls "Henry". He scampers after his sisters, perhaps through singers]

No. 3 The Daggy Swaggie Reprise

Company *Come on and track the outback dusty old road with me
Come on the good old wallaby
Roll up your thin swag, join in a chin wag
Later we'll boil a billy tea
Come to the never-never back-of-beyond with me
Swim in the inland sea – that ain't there
Slip on the nosebag, smoko, a rolled fag
Join in the Daggy Swaggie Rag.*

[Song ends with singers downstage and darkness upstage. During reprise, two or three chairs are placed behind the singers. Song ends, singers exit in different directions. Bring up lights upstage where FLORRIE leads OTHERS into her sitting-room in suburban Sydney. There is no set as such, no walls or dressers, just a chair or three. The three women sit and the two men stand]

Florrie Now please, make yourselves comfortable. This is now your home.

Louisa Oh Aunt Florrie, it's delightful.

Alfred Listen Henry, soon as you've got your kit stowed away, I can take you down the local and meet the ...

Florrie Alfred! Where are your manners?

Alfred Aw, sorry, Mum.

Florrie Your cousins have just arrived after months at sea. They're tired, they're in a new country. I'm sure they'd like to settle in.

[Apologies. ALF is a bit too keen. Pause]

Ethel What's the local?

Alfred That's our local hotel, Ethel. Surely you have pubs back home in the old country.

Henry Oh we have pubs, thousands of them. But they're not usually frequented by polite young ladies.

Florrie Now your dear father wrote and told me he wants you to see as much as possible. I thought we'd start with a walk in the garden – front and back.

Louisa That sounds lovely, Aunt Florrie but I'm very fond of horses and perhaps one day I could go to the Melbourne Cup.

[FLORRIE and ALF amused]

Florrie The Melbourne Cup!

Alfred Louisa, Melbourne's in another colony.

Louisa Oh. Well we travel from county to county back home in England. Sometimes as much as twenty miles. *[FLORRIE and ALF amused again]*

Florrie I'm afraid places are a little more spread out in Australia.

Alfred Some Aussies travel twenty miles to the corner shop.

[English visitors surprised]

Henry Well I've heard so much about finding gold in Australia. I'd like to try my luck in Kalgoorlie.

Alfred *[Laughing]* Oh dear. Have you had a look at a map, mate?

Florrie Kalgoorlie's almost as far away as England. *[HENRY shocked]*

Ethel I'd like to go England. *[Ignored]*

Alfred Are you sure you realise the size of this place? It can take weeks to travel around Australia. Even months.

Louisa I don't mind. I love to travel.

Henry So do I.

Ethel I prefer the garden.

Florrie Well I'm sure we can talk about it later. But first I should warn you that Sydney is positively buzzing at present.

Henry Do you mean the flies. We've heard they're pretty bad.

Alfred *[Laughing]* They are, mate but Mum's talking about politics.

Florrie Yes Sydney's gone federation mad. Everyone's talking about the colonies uniting and forming one nation.

Alfred Not just here in Sydney, Mum. It's the whole of Australia.

Florrie He's right, it's everywhere. You see Australia is six separate colonies and some politicians and others believe we should unite.

Alfred Hey! We can take them to a federation rally. They'll love that.

Florrie Soon we're going to vote on whether our colony will join the federation.

Louisa Do you support federation, Aunt Florrie? Will you be voting "yes"?

Henry Louisa. That's none of our business.

Louisa Oh I beg your pardon, Aunt. I didn't mean to intrude.

Alfred Not really an issue, mate. Here in New South Wales only the blokes get to vote.

Louisa Really? It's the same in Britain and I think it's absurd.

Henry *[Reprimanding]* Louisa!
[Noises offstage – door opening, people talking]

Stella Yoo hoo, anybody home?

Florrie *[Rises, mild panic]* Oh no. It's Mrs Messenger. Alf, quickly, take Henry outside.

Alfred Aw, Mum, we'll miss all the fun.

Florrie Just go! *[ALFRED leads HENRY outside]* Now girls, please do not say anything, ah, controversial because Mrs. Messenger is a little bit ...

Stella *[Enters maybe with one or more supporters]* Florence, we missed you at the meeting.

Florrie Stella, how are you? Yes I went to the harbour to meet my *[Indicating]* nieces who've just arrived from England.

Stella Dear ladies, welcome to New South Wales where only men are allowed to vote.

Louisa How do you do.

Stella But then coming from patriarchal, class-conscious Britain you'd know all about the lack of female suffrage.

Louisa Yes, we do.

Stella And I'm sure you'll want to join us in fighting this terrible injustice.

Florrie Ah, Stella ...

Louisa Most definitely. I would love to join you.

- Stella** That's the spirit. And what about your sister?
[FLORRIE worried. EVERYONE turns and looks at ETHEL]
- Ethel** I'd like to go for a walk in the garden.
- Florrie** Oh what a splendid idea. Would you care to join us, Stella?
- Stella** Women in New Zealand have the vote. Even our sisters in South Australia. But where else? We hear all this talk about federation. I say let's talk about women being equal.
- Florrie** Stella, please forgive me. Would you like some tea?
[MUSIC BEGINS]
- Stella** What's the point of creating a new nation if half its citizens can't vote? Join our campaign, ladies. Join the *Womanhood Suffrage League*.

No. 4 A Little Bit Democratic

- Stella** *In South Australia women vote, a normal, natural thing
Despite some loony opposition packing quite a sting.*

[Spoken. Mocking pompous male] "To say men can't govern without a lot of fussy, snuffy, gossiping old women is very funny." *[As herself]* Yeah. Hilarious.
[WOMEN amused]

*But we shall battle till the war is won
The right to vote must be for everyone.
Oh you can't be a little bit democratic
It's either everyone or none at all
The law ain't for a few, not what you know or who
The present situation needs an overhaul.
The Greek word "demos" means community
And universal suffrage gives equality
Oh no you can't be a little bit democratic
You either is or ain't, no inbetween.
We're good enough to cook the dinner
We're good enough to fuss and dote
We're good enough to bear the children
We're good enough to vote.
The Greek word "kratos" means sovereign power
And women claim their democratic right this hour
Oh no you can't be a little bit democratic
You've gotta go the whole damn hog.*

[Dialogue during song]

- Stella** Ladies, come on. A few of our local and overseas sisters vote. Why not us? You are in favour?
- Louisa** Of course we are. It's outrageous discrimination.
- Stella** Well said, Louisa. And what about you, Florrie?
- Florrie** Well yes I am in favour, of course I am, but I wondered if we could campaign with ... a little less noise.
- Stella** Less noise? *[Louder]* Less noise!? Ladies please, it's the squeaky wheel that's gets the oil. We must fight. Are you with me?
- Others** *[FLORRIE and ETHEL not as enthusiastic]* Yes!

[Chorus repeated by everyone. LOUISA is quick to catch the mood. FLORRIE is a little worried but gradually she and ETHEL let their inhibitions go if in a somewhat restrained fashion. Song ends. All excited and a little out of breath]

Stella Ladies, I salute you. It's time we told the citizens of Sydney that women deserve and demand the right to vote. Universal suffrage! *[MUSIC BEGINS]*
Women Universal suffrage. *[They exit during the reprise]*

No. 5 A Little Bit Democratic Reprise

[This short instrumental tag enables the women to gather their skirts, placards and leaflets and exit to push their cause. LOUISA helps ETHEL. Lights crossfade and concentrate downstage where ALFRED and HENRY enter walking in a nearby street. ALFRED is in shirtsleeves. The exit of the women and the entrance of the men can and should overlap]

Henry Alf, do you mind if I remove my jacket?
Alfred Mind? Of course I don't mind. This is Australia, mate. It's bloody hot and we don't stand on ceremony. *[HENRY removes his jacket]*
Henry Don't take this the wrong way, Alf, but my first impression is Australia is not quite the same as England.
Alfred *[Amused]* Are you kiddin'? Last year the temperature got to 118 and some folks even died. Would you call that English weather?
Henry Not at all. And I'd be extremely grateful if you'd help me understand some of your local customs.
Alfred My pleasure, Henry. Where would you like to start?
Henry I realise my accent stands out a bit.
Alfred Yeah. About a country mile.
Henry Is that the same as a city mile?
Alfred Much longer.
[HENRY smiles. He thinks he understands]
Henry Perhaps I should learn some Australian sayings. I notice you often call me "mate". Is that normal or is it because we're cousins?
Alfred No mate. Down Under most blokes are called "mate". Even the blokes you don't like are called mate.
Henry Friends and enemies are both called "mate"?
Alfred Too right. You can be very sarcastic and threatening with a, *[Threatens]* "Now listen here, mate!"
Henry I see ... mate.
Alfred It gets rid of any snobby class system. And calling everyone "mate" is handy when you forget their name. Just say, "G'day mate" and you'll be sweet.
Henry *[Struggling]* Good day, mate. You are sweet.
Alfred *[Laughing]* Whoa, whoa, whoa, hold y'horses, cobber. First it's "g'day" not "good day" and never, ever tell a bloke you think he's sweet.
Henry But you said, "you'll be sweet".
Alfred The saying, "You'll be sweet" means everything'll be okay. You can even say, "She'll be sweet". It means the same thing.
Henry Blimey.
Alfred Yeah, blimey's okay but an Aussie would probably say "strewth".
Henry Strewth.

Alfred You've got it. Only don't say that to your Aunt Florrie. It ain't for polite conversation.

Henry And you also said "cobbler".

Alfred No, cobbler. A cobbler is y' mate, Mate.

Henry *[Hopeful]* Right. I think I've got it, cobbler. *[They laugh]*

Alfred Good on ya, mate. So now you can speak Australian, it's time to act like one.

Henry Oh. Ah, what does that mean, exactly?

Alfred Well your typical Aussie bloke works hard, enjoys a drink and has a punt.

Henry Why would he own a boat? Half the country's bone dry.

Alfred I don't mean punt as in boat. I mean punt as in bet, gamble, have a flutter.

Henry Oh, a wager. On the horses.

Alfred Horses, fights, anything. Aussies bet on two flies crawling up a wall.

Henry Blimey. I mean, strewth! *[MUSIC BEGINS]*

Alfred You're getting the picture, mate. Listen.

No. 6 Be An Aussie

Alfred *Every nation has its style, what makes its people tick
And we are no exception, we're sunburnt, tall and thick
Skinned here in far flung Oz you'll see
A mob of friendly folk
And if you'd care to join us, these tips I now bespoke.
You've gotta know our chooks are fowls
And you flatten all y'vowels
If you wanna be an Aussie
You've gotta act a touch laconic, maybe a tad moronic
If you wanna be an Aussie.
You must reject the snob's superiority
Stick it up the bosses and authority
Hey, say g'day, galoot and give the Oz salute [Brush flies]
If you wanna be an Aussie.
We ain't hot blooded like Latinos, [Agreement]
We ain't class conscious like the Poms [More agreement]
We ain't as boastful as damn Yankees ["That's right"]
We ain't misguided like the Coms. ["Silly buggers"]
We ain't as many as the Chinese ["Strewth"]
We ain't religious like the Poles ["God bless 'em"]
We ain't as laidback as the Irish [Laughter]
But parts of all of them are in our souls. [Agreement]*

[Locals join ALFRED in helping HENRY learn what it's like to be an Aussie. The street comes alive with enthusiastic Sydneysiders all singing and dancing. It's a happy song which ends on a high. Song ends and crowd moves about]

Henry Well thanks very much, Alf. I can now say Orstraylia.

Alfred *[Laughing]* Too right, Blue, that's the ticket.
[Man running two-up game calls for players and they gather round]

Spinner Righto lads, let's be havin' y'bets.

[Lots of noise as gamblers make bets and chatter]

Henry I say, what's going on? Is there a fight?

Alfred No mate, just a bit of good old Aussie gambling. The fight comes later.

Henry Can we play? I've never done much gambling.

Alfred Okay but first we'll watch these other mugs do their dough.

Spinner Righto lads, no more bets. Stand back and ... here we go. *[SPINNER tosses two coins in air. CROWD watches them rise and fall and waits. There need be no coins, the business being mimed]* It's tails!
[Crowd explodes with sadness or glee. Old codger is paid]

Henry *[To SPINNER]* Here, I'd like to wager two shillings. *[Crowd gasp]*

Spinner Thanks mate. Now come on lads, place y' bets.
[More bets are placed]

Alfred Two bob, Henry. Are you mad?

Henry In for a penny, Alf, in for a pound.

Spinner *[To crowd]* Righto lads, no more bets. Stand back and here we go. *[SPINNER tosses two coins in air. CROWD watches them rise and fall and waits]* It's tails!
[Crowd explodes with sadness or glee]

Codger *[Old codger with hat and long coat. Growls]* That's mine.

Spinner *[Handing over money]* Lucky streak, mate. Y' want another go?

Codger *[Growls]* Tails. *[Crowd murmur]*

Henry What's going on?

Alfred The old codger's on a run. Tails this time and he'll win the lot.

Spinner No more bets. Stand back, here we go. *[SPINNER tosses two coins in air. CROWD watches them rise and fall and waits. SPINNER upset]* It's tails! *[Crowd explode with glee. The bookie has been cleaned out]*

Alfred Strewth. You don't often see that.

Spinner *[Handing over all his money]* Lucky strike, mate. You've cleaned me out. You're the first bloke to do it.

Gambler Not the first bloke. *[Removes hat, Speaks normally]* Just the first woman. *[Crowd reacts]*

Henry Louisa!

Spinner Strewth! You're a shiela! *[Crowd stunned]*

Stella *[Appears and calls]* Women can do anything men can do. We can even beat you at gambling. *[Crowd laugh and tease SPINNER. Some exit laughing and talking. They then re-enter from other positions as they are out walking in Sydney town. STELLA, HENRY and ALFRED converge on LOUISA. STELLA takes LOUISA'S hat and coat]*

Alfred Louisa, you little ripper.

Henry I can't believe you did that.

Stella Brilliant, Louisa. We can play their games and we can play their politics.

Louisa *[Adjusts her clothes]* But what will I do with all this money?

Henry *[Taking money bag]* I'll take care of that.

Stella *[Taking money bag]* No you won't. *[Gives money bag to LOUISA]* Typical man. We do the work, they take the rewards.

Alfred Not such a good move, mate.

Stella Use it for your ticket. When you're ready, drop in and we'll discuss tactics. It's lovely to have you on our side, Louisa. See you later. *[Starts to exit]*

Louisa Stella, wait. I don't know the way.

Stella Well there are two grown men with you. Between them they should be able to work it out. Just. Bye. *[She exits]*

Henry Ticket? What did she mean?

Stella Henry, will you please stop treating me like a servant? Just because you're a man doesn't mean I can't say or do what I like without your permission.

Henry *[Shocked]* Louisa!

Alfred *[Laughing]* Oooo, it looks like she's an Aussie already, mate. Speaks her mind and doesn't mind who to.

Henry I was only trying to help.

Louisa Yes, all right, I'm sorry. And you *can* help me. I'm trying to find the railway station to ask about travelling to Melbourne.

Henry Melbourne! But we've only just arrived. You can't go travelling the countryside as if you owned the place.

Louisa There you go again. I'm simply making inquiries so please stop being so pompous.

Alfred Yeah, Henry, put a sock in it! *[HENRY offended]* Besides, when we get to the station we can ask about your trip to Kalgoorlie.

Louisa Exactly. And I won't tell Aunt Florrie if you don't.

Henry An old public schoolboy never sneaks.

Alfred Yeah and bully for you. Now c'mon, it's over here.
[They walk a little, maybe dodging others and arrive at the station. The crowd move around them. TRIO reaches one side where a railway clerk stands under/beside a sign Tickets]

Louisa What do I say?

Alfred Whatever you'd say to a ticket clerk in England.

Henry But don't call him cobber or mate. *[LOUISA hesitates]*

Alfred Do you want *me* to ask him?

Louisa No thank you. If I can travel alone, I can certainly make my own inquiries.
[ALFRED impressed, HENRY still uptight. LOUISA approaches the clerk who mimes working while the men watch]

Louisa Excuse me.

Harold Where y'goin?

Louisa I'd like to inquire about travelling to Melbourne.

Harold Melbourne! That's in another country.

Louisa I think you mean another colony.

Harold Look, lady, it's much cheaper and quicker to go to Bomaderry.

Louisa Perhaps but I'd like the departure details for Sydney to Melbourne, please.

Harold You can even take the tram to Spit Junction. It's much closer.

Louisa I'm not interested in Bomaderry, Spit Junction or even Woolloomooloo, although I'm sure they're very nice. I wish to inquire about a ...

Harold Train trip to Melbourne. Yeah, I heard you the first time. Y'know it takes ages to get to Melbourne. You've gotta change at the border.

Louisa Look I'm from England ...

Harold *[Mock shock]* No. Y'don't say. I never would have guessed.

Louisa And I'm quite used to changing trains.

Harold Oh, so you've got different gauges too, hey?

Louisa Pardon?

Harold You got different gauges every time you cross the border in England?
Louisa What do you mean ... different gauges?
Harold Look lady, this wonderful country of Australia has a different width of railway in every flamin' colony. Some even have several within their own borders! Even if lines existed around the country, which they don't, trains can't run round Australia because the tracks are a different size.
Henry *[Comes forward]* Well what silly ass thought of that then?
Harold Probably an Englishman, sir. Bloody thick them Poms.
Alfred Yes all right, mate. Just tell the lady the timetable.
Louisa You mean I have to travel on two separate trains to get from Sydney to Melbourne?
Harold Change at the border. Foreign country Victoria. Got their own railways, border posts and customs.
Henry Customs!
Harold You change trains at the border and then go through customs.
Louisa But Victoria and New South Wales are in the same country.
Harold Yeah, well if you'll pardon the pun, one of our quaint customs is customs.
Henry So what about a trip from Sydney to Kalgoorlie?
Harold Would that be by steam train or camel train, sir?
Henry *Camel* train?
Harold Railway ain't been built across the country yet mate.
Henry Are you serious?
Harold Trip to Perth from Sydney's a big one, mate. You'll be changin' trains and battlin' border posts more times than you've swatted flies. This ain't just a big country, mate, this is six separate colonies.
[MUSIC BEGINS]

No. 7 Travel By Train

Harold *To travel by train in Australia is taking a pig in a poke
To travel by train in Australia is really a bit of a joke.
The tracks are all sizes, that's if they exist
With customs at borders a financial twist
To travel by train in Australia is certainly not okey-doke.*
Company *To travel by train in Australia is certainly not okey-doke.*
Harold *The railway tracks in Australia are really a bit of a laugh
There's three foot six and five foot three
And four foot eight and a half
There's standard, broad and narrow gauge
They put the public in a rage
To travel by train in Australia
Means heaps of abuse for the staff.*
Company *To travel by train in Australia
Means heaps of abuse for the staff.*
Harold *They started a line out of Sydney
And headed for Melbourne below
The Vics did the same only northwards
A line-building race was on show*

- They met at the Murray, how nice to attach
But couldn't of course cos the lines didn't match
Oh dear, what a stuff-up, disaster
With losses of mountains of dough.*
- Company** *Oh dear, what a stuff-up, disaster
With losses of mountains of dough.
[Dialogue during song]*
- Harold** In 1850 the Sydney Railway Company agreed to build a five foot three line to the Murray. From their end the Vics agreed to do likewise. But before work started the Sydneysiders changed their minds and chose to build a standard gauge line – four foot eight and a half. Communications between the colonies went like this. Victoria.
- Victorian** You said you'd build a five foot three line.
- Harold** And New South Wales replied.
- N.S.Welshman** Well we've changed our minds.
- Victorian** Oh so now it's our fault.
- N.S.Welshman** My Dad can beat your Dad.
- Victorian** *[Sing song]* Nah nah nah nah nah nah.
- N.S.Welshman** Thruuuuppppp. *[Blows raspberry and gives thumb sign]*
[Both men gesture rudely to one another and then shape up as if to box. HAROLD ignores them and continues to address the audience. The two would-be pugilists are all talk. It's "Go on, I dare", "No, I dare you" stuff with much taunting but no blows. Once the singing starts the fighters resume their watching and singing roles]
- Harold** And so the sensible, intelligent communications continued and Australia cost itself millions of pounds, dollars and common sense. Australia
- Company** You idiot! *[Song resumes]*
- Harold** *To build any railway's expensive
You need careful planning to start
And failure to talk to your neighbour
Is certainly not very smart
With different gauges it's more than just strange
You get to the border and "Everyone change!"
To travel by train in Australia
It's quicker by horse and a cart.*
- Company** *To travel by train in Australia
It's quicker by horse and a cart.*
- [Song ends. TRIO chat downstage. Lights dim upstage. Crowd, HAROLD and sign exit. FLORRIE and ETHEL enter upstage in darkness. They are back in FLORRIE'S living-room. One or two chairs are required]*
- Henry** I say, you chaps are in a mess.
- Louisa** I never realised the colonies were so big and so independent.
- Alfred** 'Spose you're right. It's just the way things developed. And it's one reason why we've got all this talk about federation.
- Louisa** Oh yes. Did you say we could go to a federation rally?
- Alfred** Sure. There's one tonight.

Henry But perhaps your mother will not approve.
Alfred Mum? Nah, she's a softie. C'mon, let's get home for a bit of grub.
[ALFRED starts to exit and the OTHERS follow]

Henry Grub? You eat grubs? *[HENRY and LOUISA exchange worried glances]*
Alfred Tucker, mate. Slip on the old nosebag.
Louisa Oh. High tea.
[The English exit after their cousin looking confused. Lights come up upstage where FLORRIE and ETHEL enter and sit. ETHEL is worried]

Florrie Now don't you worry about a thing, Ethel. I'm sure they're all right and I'm sure they won't be long.
Ethel They never leave me alone.
Florrie But you're not alone, my dear. I'm here. And soon you'll make new friends. I'm expecting my friend Clara and her son, Robert. They'll be dropping in today.
Ethel I want to go home.
Florrie But you *are* home, Ethel. This is your home. Australia's a wonderful country. I know many English people who came for a visit and have never gone back.
Ethel What does "dropping in" mean?
Florrie Oh that means to visit, to stay for a while. In Australia, people just drop in. *[FX door knock]* That'll be them now. *[Rising]* You make yourself comfy. I'll be back in a jiff. *[FLORRIE exits]*
Ethel *[Confused. Thinking aloud]* What's a jiff?
Florrie *[Offstage]* Bob!
Bob *[Offstage]* G'day Flo.
Florrie Where's your mother?
Bob Gone shopping. Said she'd be 'ere later this arvo.
Florrie *[Enters]* The shops. I might have known. *[ROBERT enters]* Now I want you to meet my niece all the way from England. Ethel this is Robert but I'm sure you can call him Bob.
Bob G'day Ethel. Nice to meet you.
Ethel I've just dropped in.
Bob From England? Strewth. *[Apologises]* Ah, sorry, Flo.
Florrie Don't be silly, Bob. Sit down and chat to Ethel while I make some tea. *[Exits]* I won't be long.
Bob *[Sits]* So, you're from the old country.
Ethel She'll be back in a whiff.
Bob Hey?
Ethel Auntie Florence won't be long. She'll be back in a whiff.
Bob A whiff? Oh, righto.
Ethel Have you just dropped in too?
Bob Ah yeah. We come down to the big smoke every few months and we always drop in and say g'day to Flo and Alf.
[Pause. ROBERT fiddles with his hat]
Ethel Are you from Australia?
Bob Too right. Aussie born 'n bred. But I'm no townie. I'm a cocky. We've got a station out the back o' Bourke.
Ethel *[Hasn't got a clue]* You're a cocky from the back of Bourke?

Bob Yeah. Got the sheep run by the Black Stump. Out past Woop Woop.
Ethel Woop Woop?
Bob Yeah. Back o' Bourke.
Ethel Oh. Does Bourke have a front?
Bob Hey?
Ethel We have a station in our town in England.
Bob Really? Big station is it?
Ethel Oh very big. Six trains a day, six days a week.
Bob Oh, right.
[Pause. ETHEL makes brave decision to confess]
Ethel I've got a brother and a sister.
Bob Really? Me too. And about twenee thousand sheep.
Ethel My brother and sister are both much smarter than I am.
Bob Same here.
Ethel *[Pleased]* Really?
Bob Oh yeah. In fact most of the sheep are smarter than me.
Ethel *[Confessing]* I don't *mean* to be ... inconsequential.
Bob Do you mean thick?
Ethel *[Nodding]* I try not to be but it's just the way I am.
Bob Well if you decide to stay in Australia, Ethel, you'll be right at home.
Ethel *[Almost excited]* Truly? Do you mean it?
Bob Of course. In Australia dills and drongoes are very respectable citizens.
Ethel Oh. Is it difficult to become a drongo?
Bob Nooo. Easy as pie. Anyone can do it. Australia's full of drongoes. Some our finest politicians are champion drongoes.
Ethel So if I'm a drongo, I won't be out of place? *[MUSIC BEGINS]*
Bob Out of place! Strewth, Ethel! You'll be a local legend.
Ethel *[Pleased]* I think I'm going to like living in Australia.

No. 8 Drongo

Bob *Oh it's delightful to be a drongo, it's delirious to be a dag
Though you'd think that being thick
Would somehow make you sick
But au contraire no savoir-faire will somehow do the trick.
And it's de-wonderful to be da dunder-ful [fool]
It's delicious and gives a thrill
So be ye dumbcluck or dope, Australians live in hope
T'be a drongo, t'be a dill.
A sandwich short of a picnic is reality and not a joke
And kangaroos in your top paddock
Would describe the average Aussie bloke.
If you mumble and stumble with your two left feet
If you chunder down under you slob
Well then you're likely a yokel and certainly local
Come in mate, you're part of the mob.*

Bob *[Dialogue]* Come on Ethel. Every Dumb Dora can dance.

[Happily she takes his hand and they dance before singing the reprise. Snappy duet sees ETHEL become happy as she and ROBERT celebrate their ability to love and laugh at who they are. They finish in happy pose, perhaps she on his bended knee, and are surprised as FLORRIE returns]

Florrie *[Enters]* Oh! *[Couple break their pose]*
Bob Oh g'day Flo. Mum not here yet?
Florrie No but Alf, Louisa and Henry are coming up the path.
Ethel Oh that's super. I've got some wonderful news for them.
Florrie *[Suspicious]* I see. Is everything all right, Bob? *[OTHERS enter]*
Bob Extra good, Flo. I've just been telling Ethel about the farm.
Louisa We're back. I think we've walked all over Sydney.
Alf G'day Bob. *[They shake hands]* Good to see you, mate.
Bob You too, mate. How ya goin?
Alfred Bit of all right, mate.
Florrie Now Louisa and Henry, this is a friend of the family from the country. This is Robert.
Louisa Hello. I'm Louisa.
Bob G'day.
Alf And this is Ethel and Louisa's brother, Henry.
Henry *[Trying to be an Aussie]* Good day cobber.
Bob G'day, mate. Nice to meet ya.
Florrie Well c'mon, sit down. *[The women sit]* I was going to serve tea but perhaps we'll wait for your mother, Bob. Now, what have you three been up to?
Louisa Well after Stella took me almost to the station, I then got lost.
Florrie Lost! Were you out on your own?
Alfred It's all right, Mum. Me and Henry looked after her.
Florrie Oh Alf, your grammar is terrible. It's not me and Henry. It's Henry and me. You always put the visitor before the pronoun.
Alfred Right. Gotcha. *[HENRY and LOUISA look at one another. Pause]*
Ethel Bob's got a station. *[OTHERS impressed]*
Bob Yeah, got a sheep property. About twenee thousand head.
Henry Twenty thousand. Strewth! *[OTHERS look at him. Embarrassed]* Sorry.
Ethel It's in a town called Woop Woop.
Alfred *[Laughs]* Woop Woop! Fair go, Ethel. What silly drongo told you that?
Florrie *[Covering up]* Ah, Louisa, you were saying about the station.
Louisa Oh yes. You won't believe how many different railway gauges there are in Australia. The colonies have all built their own and not cared about the others.
Henry Louisa, please, we're guests in Australia, remember?
Alfred No, she speaks the truth. This big country's got a few isolated, insulated colonies. And they sooner we federate the better.
Bob Yeah, I heard about this federation business. Back home the local rag's full of it.
Alfred I didn't know you could read, Bob!
Bob I can't, mate but I need the paper for the dunny.
[They laugh but others puzzled. FLORRIE unhappy]
Florrie That's enough you too. Kindly remember there are ladies present.

Ethel Is the dunny near Woop Woop? *[ALFRED and ROBERT laugh]*
Florrie Ethel, if you have any more questions about Australia, perhaps you could ask me. *[Awkward pause]*
Louisa Tell me, Bob, do you think Australia should federate?
Bob Well to tell you the truth, I don't really know much about it. But since I'm 'ere in the big smoke, I thought I might go to a meeting.
Henry We're going to a federation rally. You could come with us ... cobber.
Bob Oh, righto. Thanks mate.
[Crowd noises offstage]
Florrie *[Rising]* Good idea. We can all go. Now!
Alfred But Mum, it doesn't start till seven o'clock.
Florrie *[Hustling her nieces]* We'll need to be early to get a good seat. Come and get your hats, girls.
Bob But Flo, me Mum's not here. I can't get by without me Mum.
Florrie Oh stop being a drongo. I'll leave a note. Now come on, get cracking!

[Mumbling, the characters exit to the meeting and as they do the lights change to signify a new venue. It's a town hall at night. The audience spills in from different directions and fills the hall. Their chatter mixes with the principals' mumbling. Lots of chatter. The company form lines on an angle facing one downstage corner. They could bring on simple benches thus providing their own seats. A speakers' box is placed downstage in one corner facing front. The audience on stage face this corner although the various speakers will be facing the real audience. The hubbub continues and builds as the spectators arrive. A sign Federation Rally could appear upstage. Some banners or placards with "NO" or "YES" etc are seen if your space permits. MAYOR enters and climbs on to box/platform. He raises hands and the hubbub stops]

Mayor Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. Let us sing of Australia. *[MUSIC BEGINS. Company rise and sing. The main characters need not appear in this scene. They are not the stars. It is the various speakers who should be featured. But you could have your main characters in the audience and, if so, they enter and sit]*

No. 9 Sing of Australia

Company *Sing of the outback, the city, the bush
Sing of the mountain and sea
Sing of the people from near and afar
Sing of their liberty.
Sing of tradition, of mateship and love
Sing of the greeting cooee
Sing of this wonderful, bonzer, brown land
Sing of our home, Australia.*

[Song ends. Audience sit. Hubbub. Hecklers are scattered around the hall]

Mayor Ladies and gentlemen. Federation is without doubt the most important issue ever to be raised in the history of Australian politics.
Heckler 1 Get on with it. I told my missus I was goin' to church.
[Laughter]
Mayor Tonight we will hear from several speakers. As you know, the citizens of this colony will be asked to vote on a very ...

- Stella** That's a lie! *[Hubbub]* The only citizens who can vote are of the male sex! *[Bigger hubbub. Usher moves to STELLA and mimes request]* This public meeting is a disgrace. It's a sham!
- Mayor** *[Trying to keep control]* Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.
- Heckler 2** Throw her out! Send her back to the kitchen! *[Laughter. More hubbub]*
- Stella** It's not one vote one man, it's one vote one *person!*
- Women** *[Some women]* Hear, hear. *[USHER persuades STELLA to sit]*
- Mayor** *[Appealing for calm]* Ladies and gentlemen, please. *[Noise settles]* It is only fair we give each speaker a chance to be heard and without further delay I invite Mr. Clancy to address us. Mr. Clancy. *[Polite applause. MAYOR retreats and CLANCY moves to address gathering]*
- Heckler 3** Keep it short, mate. The last tram's at nine! *[Laughter]*
- Clancy** Your Worship, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. I ask a very important question. Does anyone here tonight know the population of New South Wales? Well?
- Heckler 4** Counting you, there's one too many. *[Laughter]*
- Clancy** New South Wales has more people than the whole of Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania combined. Far more. We are the founding colony of Australia and the most powerful. But under federation, we could become the weakest. *[Hubbub]* If you don't believe me read the proposed constitution, the one upon which you are about to vote.
- Stella** You are, you're a man.
- Clancy** It gives those colonies with hardly any inhabitants exactly the same number of votes as this proud and well-populated colony. In fact if the smaller colonies combine, they can defeat the two largest colonies in the new parliament. I ask you, is that fair? Is that right?
- Crowd** *[Some NO advocates]* No! ... That's wrong! ... Of course not! ... *etc*
- Clancy** 700,000 people get 24 senators while 2.5 million have 12.
- Crowd** *[The NO advocates]* Outrageous ... Shame ... It's not fair ... *etc.*
- Clancy** In many matters, for example trade and public works, the smaller colonies can defeat the two biggest colonies. The tiny colonies can outvote us on the money bills!
- Crowd** *[Some NO advocates]* Shame ... That's outrageous. ... Don't let it happen... *etc*
- Clancy** Even if we join with those conservative windbags south of the Murray, the Cabbage Colony, we'll still be outvoted. The small colonies can tell us what to do! It's disproportionate power. It's madness. We'll pay for their mistakes.
- Crowd** *[NO advocates]* Shame! ... Vote No! ... It's wrong! ... *etc*
- Clancy** It's all right for them. The farmers of tiny Tasmania can sell their goods in our vast market while in return offer us almost nothing. They have no markets. South Australian wine growers see Sydney as a vast reservoir of drinkers.
- Heckler 1** I'll drink to that! *[Laughter]*

- Clancy** But none of you'll be laughing when the cost of living takes off like the new Bondi tram. *[Hubbub]* Believe me, federation has some nasty financial surprises. Today a New South Wales postage stamp is tuppence. With the proposed national postage service it'll cost fourpence. *[Hubbub]* Or more! And the ninepenny telegram will cost a shilling! Why should we pay for the costs incurred by others?
- Crowd** *[NO advocates]* We shouldn't pay! ... Vote No! ... etc
- Clancy** Now to you working men.
- Stella** Women work too you know. Or don't we count? *[Hubbub]*
- Clancy** Some unionists think a federal award means a better deal. And so it might. But what happens when a dispute goes to court? What do we know about this new High Court? The judges are responsible to no-one and have their job for life! And you can bet they'll all be conservatives. *[Hubbub. Agreement]* They're no friend of the working man. They've never had to earn their living on the docks, in factories or on farms. And so I appeal to workers, to trade unionists, think before you vote. Gentlemen, it's better the devil you know.
- Heckler 2** Don't look now, mate but I think your horns are showing! *[Laughter]*
- Clancy** And to farmers, to our sheep and cattle breeders I ask this question. Will your stock be safe under federation? Do you want Queensland's tick-infested cattle to destroy your herds?
- Crowd** *[NO advocates]* No!
- Clancy** The diseases and poor bloodlines in other colonies will freely cross our borders and infect your animals. What protection will you have?
- Crowd** *[NO advocates]* No protection!
- Clancy** Beware of the many unanswered questions in this new constitution and make no mistake, our farmers and workers have much to lose. Australia deserves the best. New South Wales deserves the best. Do not settle for anything else. We are supposed to be debating federation, not fetteration! My friends, the old sayings are often the best. Federate in haste, repent at leisure. On polling day, vote No!
- [Polite applause with the NO advocates being enthusiastic. CLANCY retires – he could exit if your performing space is not large or else resume seat behind rostrum – and MAYOR steps up and the crowd is silent]*
- Heckler 3** Is that it? Can we go home now? *[Hubbub. Laughter]*
- Mayor** My fellow Australians, whatever your point of view about federation, I know in your heart, like me, you are proud to be Australian.
- Crowd** Hear, hear.
- Mayor** This debate concerns not only politicians but also the people. So let us celebrate the Australian way of life. Please welcome our distinguished storyteller and poet – Mr. Bluey Jones.
- [Strong applause as BLUEY enters. He's a popular figure and waves his greeting. The room goes very quiet]*
- Heckler 4** What's he know about federation? *[CROWD angry]*
- Crowd** Shhhh ... Be quiet Give him a go. ... etc
- [HECKLER silenced and again you could hear a pin drop. Perhaps light BLUEY and dim lighting on audience. He recites with sincere feeling]*
- Bluey** *Is there a finer landscape than the bush with ghostly gum?
Is there a bluer ocean in which we all have swum?*

*Is there a braver people from here to kingdom come?
There is y'know, it's here – Australia.
Is there a fiercer bushfire that burns with deadly might?
Is there a wilder climate that changes day to night?
Is there a screeching louder than the cockatoos in flight?
There is y'know, it's here – Australia.
Is there an older island with legends real and rare?
Is there a richer continent with wealth for all to share?
Is there a better country with freedom in the air?
There is y'know, it's here – Australia.
Is there a people stronger who'll battle flood and drought?
Is there a neighbour kinder who'll always help you out?
Is there a mate more willing whose love you'll never doubt?
There is y'know, you're part of it – Australia!*

[Pause. Silence. BLUEY takes simple bow then suddenly audience erupts with emotion. He has touched their hearts. They applaud, whistle, some wave hats. Crossfade lights, up on audience. BLUEY waves then exits. MAYOR steps up to rostrum still applauding. Applause fades but buzz remains]

- Mayor** Ladies and gentlemen, please. *[Hubbub stops]* Thank you. We are indeed fortunate to live in this fine city in this prosperous colony.
- Heckler 1** Hey, fair go! This ain't no election rally. *[Laughter]*
- Mayor** I thank you sir *[madam]* and take your point. Tonight we are here to discuss the question of federation and our next speaker will put the case for the Yes vote.
- Mary** *[Calling from audience on stage at rear of hall]* I would like to speak.
[Instant hubbub. Who's this? People turn upstage to look]
- Mayor** Thank you ladies and gentlemen.
- Mary** Why won't you listen to an ordinary person? *[More hubbub]*
- Heckler 2** Yeah. Let her speak.
- Stella** You'd let her speak if she were a he! *[Big hubbub]*
- Mayor** This is a public meeting and there must be order.
- Crowd** *[Calling]* Let her speak What are you afraid of? ... Give her a go ... *etc.*
[MAYOR approached by official and they quickly confer]
- Mayor** *[Trying to establish calm]* All right, perhaps we can make an exception. *[Crowd settle but still buzz]* If you would come forward, madam.
- Stella** Women can speak and women can vote.
[MARY moves through hall to rostrum. She is pushing a pram and carrying a well-wrapped baby. People move and help. Hubbub continues. MARY reaches front, parks pram and climbs rostrum holding baby. MAYOR offers to help]
- Mary** No thank you, I can manage. *[She faces audience and a hush descends]* I am a simple country woman, a wife and mother. I was born in the bush and have lived there all my life. I've made this trip to the city to ask you people to think about what you're doing. We are poor. My husband works as a timber-cutter. There's talk if federation comes in, it will destroy our jobs.

We live in a simple hut with no running water, no shops and the nearest school is thirty miles away. We freeze in winter and faint in summer. *[Murmur from CROWD]* It's very hard just to give your children a basic meal. They get little education.

People say federation will mean cheaper timber, that better timber will flood in from other colonies. The government can't help us. In Sydney there are hundreds of men lining up for help every day. How can the government help poor people way out in the bush? They won't provide my children with food or pay for their clothes or shoes. Without a job, my husband cannot care for his wife and family. Is it fair that children should be forced to go hungry? Please, I beg you.

Think about us poor people when you come to vote. Think about the poor.

[Sound of baby crying. She pats her baby then moves back to her pram and exits pushing the pram and holding the baby. Hubbub breaks out. People talk about Mary's bravery and her point of view. MAYOR steps forward]

Mayor

Please, ladies and gentlemen. Please. *[Hubbub stops]* Thank you. Our next speaker, Mr. Griffith is a strong supporter of federation and I ask for your complete attention. Mr. Griffith.

[GRIFFITH steps up to the rostrum to moderate applause but with the YES voters being more enthusiastic]

Heckler 3

We all know why you're here, mate. You're a politician. *[Laughter]*

Griffith

And we all know why you're free to speak your mind, sir, because this country is a democracy.

Crowd

Hear hear.

Griffith

We are part of the great British Empire. Our forefathers arrived some one hundred years ago and look at us now. Some mock us, some call us the convict colony but they cannot mock our proud and wondrous achievements. We have explored and farmed the land, we have built successful manufacturing industries.

Crowd

Hear hear.

Griffith

But I warn you, ladies and gentlemen, the giant strides this colony, this nation has made could soon be swept away.

Heckler 4

You can't sweep away strides, you flamin' idiot! *[Laughter]*

Griffith

Mock, sir, at your own peril. As I speak the German navy is ever present in the waters to our north. *[Hubbub]* The Japanese have a real interest in our Pacific neighbours and the Russians are reported already in Tasmania. *[Hubbub]* Should any foreign power choose to attack, how shall we defend ourselves?

Heckler 1

We can start by putting you in the front line. *[Laughter]*

Griffith

The Mother country can defend us, of course, but by the time the British navy arrives we may already be slaves to our enemies.

Heckler 2

We will be if we have to rely on our railways. *[Hubbub]*

Griffith

Australia needs a national defence force. A navy of New South Wales cannot defend her own colony let alone the other colonies. We have thousands of miles of unprotected coastline. We are isolated and alone. If we federate we can create a new Australian navy. We can stand and fight for ourselves.

- Crowd** Hear hear.
- Griffith** And what of the hordes of foreigners to the north who could enter this country and take our jobs? Already in Queensland foreigners work for far less than the Australian worker. Some have called them slaves. We need uniform laws to prevent this happening in other colonies. I say we keep Australia for Australians!
- Crowd** Hear, hear.
- Heckler 3** For yourself more likely!
- Griffith** And what is the use of fighting and taxing one another? At many colonial borders we stop and search our citizens and make them pay a second time for their clothes and cattle. We need one country not six. And look at our ridiculous railways. We need a uniform gauge throughout the land. We all pay more for the crippling cost of transport and God help us if we have to send soldiers across colonies. By the time our troops change trains, the enemy will have won.
- We need national legislation to promote and protect our manufacturers, traders and farmers. Federation will defend our shores, remove the non-Australian cheap labour and give us a new and secure financial future. Federation is essential. We have a great deal to gain from Federation and much more to lose if we reject it. Beware the No case. No could well mean never. *[Hubbub]* For the sake of this great country I ask you, I urge you, I implore you, vote Yes!
- [Strong applause with the YES advocates being enthusiastic. GRIFFITH waves and laps up the applause but eventually retires – he could exit if your performing space is not large or else resume seat behind rostrum – and MAYOR steps up. The crowd is buzzing]*
- Mayor** Ladies and gentlemen. *[Noise settles]* Thank you for your attendance tonight and I trust you've heard all the points at issue in this most important debate.
- Fred** *[From the hall]* No we ain't. *[Hubbub, people turn]* You haven't told us the most important thing of all. *[More hubbub]*
- Mayor** I'll thank you, sir, to keep your heckling till next time.
- Fred** *[Moving forward]* I ain't no heckler. I represent thousands of voters in this here colony – throughout Australia!
- Heckler 4** *[To MAYOR]* That's more than you can claim, mate. *[People agree]*
- Fred** Only take a mo. Be over in a jiff.
- Heckler 1** We want to hear what he's got to say.
- Crowd** Yes, let him speak ... Give him a go ... Put him on ... *etc.*
- Mayor** All right. But keep it short. *[FRED ascends rostrum. Crowd hush]* And this gentleman will be our final speaker. *[To FRED]* Mister?
- Fred** Just call me Fred.
- Mayor** *[Announcing]* Mister, er, Fred. *[Crowd amused. MAYOR retires]*
- Fred** G'day. Won't keep ya long. So far this whole Federation malarkey has told us why we should vote Yes or No but what it ain't told us is why we should vote Neither. *[Hubbub]*
- Heckler 2** What's that when he's at home? *[Laughter]*

Fred I represent the party loved by Australians throughout this massive continent. I represent arguably the most widely accepted and best understood movement in this wide, sunburnt land. I represent ... the Apathy Party. *[Big buzz]*

Heckler 3 Yeah, but who cares? *[Much laughter]*

Fred We may have to have politicians but we don't have to like 'em.

Crowd Hear, hear.

Fred And we sure as hell don't have to vote for 'em.

Crowd Hear, hear.

Fred Remember folks, it's everyone's right to make the greatest political statement of all time. "I don't like any of youse politicians and I ain't gunna vote for no-one." *[Applause]* This country has battled climate, distance and government incompetence and through all these hardships the one thing that's kept us strong has been the good old Aussie attitude – she'll be right, mate. *[MUSIC BEGINS]*

Crowd *[As one]* She'll be right, mate.
[The move with gusto and Gustav to celebrate their Australianess]

No. 10 She'll Be Right, Mate

Females *Every nation, every people have a style, an attitude*

Males *It defines them, it refines them be they dull, polite or rude*

Females *It's the climate, it's location, it's their history, their food*

Males *And down under in Australia there's behaviour we exude.*

Company *She'll be right, mate, she'll be right*
She'll be sweet, pal, life is bright
She'll be apples, sore eyes see that sight
She'll be right, mate, she'll be right.

Males *When there's danger, when there's trouble*
When the road ahead is long

Females *When you're pestered, when you're tested*
When it's obvious you're wrong

Males *For the problem a solution*
There's a way to make yourself strong

Females *Take the possie of an Aussie and respond as in this song.*

[The hall comes alive and the entire crowd joins the song. They know it well. It's self-deprecating, a gentle mocking of an important Australian trait. They're happy to sing about themselves. Song ends and most of the public depart in good humour. A few could sing the chorus unaccompanied as they leave. Lots of chatter. ALFRED, HENRY and ETHEL come forward and FLORRIE joins them. The ones who remain are upstage]

Florrie There you are. I thought I'd lost you. Well, I hope you weren't too put off by all that barracking and nonsense.

Stella *[Appears with placard]* Votes for women. Give us the vote.

Florrie Oh my goodness, it's Stella. *[Feeble greeting]* Stella. Hello.

Stella *[Coming over]* Florrie, just the one. Where's Louisa?

Ethel She's gone.
Stella Gone? But I need her now.
Florrie She's probably met some new friends. We're just waiting for her.
Stella I need help with these leaflets. I'll go and find her. *[Exiting. Calling]* One person one vote. Votes for women.
Florrie Thank heavens she's gone. Now for pity's sake, where is Louisa?
Ethel I told you, Auntie. Louisa's gone.
Florrie What do you mean? Gone where?
Alfred She'll turn up. You know what they say. She'll be right, mate.
Henry Oh it's no use, Alf. Your mother will find out sooner or later.
Florrie Find out what?
Ethel She's gone out but she'll be back in a jiff.
Florrie Alf, will you please tell me? Where is Louisa?
Alfred I'm sorry, Mum, but right now she's on the train to Melbourne.
Florrie Melbourne! *[FLORRIE starts to collapse and is helped]*
[Lights change to signify new setting. Quartet exit helping FLORRIE as STATIONMASTER enters from other side and calls]
SM Spencer Street station. End of the line. Spencer Street station.
[Dry smoke could spill onto stage to signify a steam train. If possible add FX of loco arriving. The crowd – from the Federation rally – are now passengers and friends meeting at Melbourne's railway station. Friends greet one another. LOUISA emerges through the crowd carrying a small case and looking lost. SM walks past her]
Louisa Excuse me. *[SM ignores her]* Sir?
SM *[Turns]* Yes madam?
Louisa I need some assistance please. I've just arrived from Sydney and require accommodation.
SM You, the world and its old lady.
Louisa *[Doesn't understand]* I beg your pardon.
SM *[Calling]* Next train for Flemington departs from platform three. *[Back to LOUISA]* Don't you know what day it is?
Louisa Yes, it's Tuesday.
SM What, any Tuesday?
Louisa I'm sorry. I have no idea what you're talking about.
SM Look lady, today's the first Tuesday in November. And in the colony of Victoria that means the greatest social event of the year.
Louisa That's as may be but I've come to see the running of the Melbourne Cup.
SM That's what I'm talking about. It's Melbourne Cup Day! The whole colony stops for the horse race. One of these days it'll be the whole world. *[Directs people as porter with trolley crosses stage]* Mind y'backs. Thank you. *[SM wanders off and LOUISA is lost]* Next train for Flemington departs from platform three.
Nellie *[Approaches LOUISA]* Excuse me. We couldn't help overhearing. You're not from around here are you?
Louisa *[Relieved]* Oh, thank goodness. No, I'm from Sydney.

Jane You don't sound like a Sydneysider.
Louisa Well actually I'm from England. I've just arrived in Australia but I love horses and have read so much about the Melbourne Cup.
Nellie Well we can't have a visitor think badly of Victoria. We're going to the Cup and you're welcome to tag along if you like.
Louisa If I like? Oh that's so kind. My name's Louisa. *[They shake hands]*
Jane Hello. I'm Jane and this is my friend Nellie.
Nellie Nice to meet you.
Louisa You're not Nellie Melba are you? *[WOMEN laugh]*
Nellie 'Fraid not. Now have you got a fancy hat and parasol?
Louisa No, I left them at home. Do I need them?
Jane Louisa, the Melbourne Cup is the most elegant of social gatherings. It might have a few horses trotting up and down but the real reason for holding the event is to allow the ladies of fashion to trot up and down.
Nellie Don't worry. We'll find you something. You're about our size. Come on. We can't be late for the Cup.
[NELLIE and JANE start to exit and LOUISA tags along]
Jane You're off to Flemington, Louisa and the famous Melbourne Cup.
[MUSIC BEGINS. Lighting change to indicate a new setting. Beautifully dressed people enter and sing. It's a toffy event but a few scallywags can enter and exit to give it a non-snobbish flavour. The three WOMEN exit, add fancy hats, gloves and parasols and re-enter the song when ready]

No. 11 First Tuesday in November

Company *Marvellous Melbourne, Port Phillip Bay
Glorious gardens, sunny Spring day
Horses for courses, come giddy-up
Fashion and passion, our Melbourne Cup.
It's the race that stops a nation
In the nation that stops to race
It's the social event where each gal and gent
Circumvent with style and grace
It's the meeting where rich and riff raff
Rub shoulders, engage close up
It's the carnivale down under
Flemington and the Melbourne Cup.
Now they're off and they're heading for the post
Never fear still a mile or two to go
On this day let us pray ours can stay
Every horse carries hopes of lots of dough
Now in the straight, second time, hear the crowd
As the beer helps them cheer what a show
There are whips, there are hooves
And a group who so approves
They have won, oh what fun, hats to throw, hooray!*
[As one the successful punters throw hats in air, catch them easily as the song continues with its elegant feel]

*It's the first Tuesday in November
Flemington and the Melbourne Cup
It's a date easy to remember
So much champagne you may sup
There are thoroughbreds worth a million quid
And a sea of hats that will not be hid
On the first Tuesday in November
Flemington and the Melbourne Cup.*

[Voices over last few bars. "Come on, Dobbin" "Run you silly old bugger" "Someone call the knacker" etc. Song ends and everyone suddenly freezes in theatrical pose. They are watching the final moments of the Cup. Some with mouth open, others praying, cheering etc. But all frozen during the first part of the race call. There was no radio in those days and thus no broadcast but poetic licence is taken and a racecaller {a journalist} appears on raised level with large megaphone]

- Caller** And as they enter the famous final Flemington furlong in the 1897 Melbourne Cup, it's still anyone's race.
[Faces in the crowd show emotion. Nothing else moves. JANE, NELLIE and LOUISA are right there]
- Caller** My lords, ladies and gentlemen, the jockey is J. Gough, and the winner of the Melbourne Cup, *The Grafter*.
[Crowd comes alive. Huge cheer from the crowd. Winners are grinners and the rest can please themselves. Constant hubbub]
- Louisa** *[Excited]* I've won, I've won. That was my horse.
- Nellie** Oh Louisa. Your first Melbourne Cup. That's beginner's luck.
- Jane** *[Pointing offstage]* Look, here comes the winner now.
[Crowd bunch up and look to one side. They jostle for the best position. Slight pause. Excitement builds. Silence almost before the cheer for the winner]
- Stella** *[Enters with placard and cries]* Votes for women!
[Instant hubbub. People are shocked. STELLA and maybe a couple of her supporters invade the lawn at Flemington. Political protests in this area are unheard of and as this protest involves women, the shock value is high]
- Gent 1** How dare you, madam.
- Stella** All this talk of Federation means nothing. Half the population can't vote.
- Lady 1** Madam, you are a disgrace.
- Gent 2** Someone call the police.
- Stella** Women *demand* the vote. Votes for women!
- Lady 2** Madam, you should be shot.
[Whack. Gives STELLA a safe but fierce-looking whack with parasol. Screams and scuffle develops with people moving in on STELLA. Her placard is removed and she is surrounded. Hubbub]
- Nellie** Did you see that? What a performance.
- Jane** She's very brave though. I could never do anything like that.
- Constable** *[Leading STELLA past LOUISA]* Come along, madam. Make way please.
- Louisa** Stella?
[Everyone stops. Everyone is stunned]
- Stella** Louisa. What are you doing here?
- Louisa** I came for the Melbourne Cup.

Stella But I thought you were on our side. *[Pause]* Louisa? *[Another pause]*
Louisa I am. *[Raises her voice and grabs placard from Constable]* Votes for women.
[Hubbub, shock from patrons. CONSTABLE moves to LOUISA]
Constable Right, Miss, you and all.
[NELLIE and JANE watch in disbelief as LOUISA and STELLA are escorted from Flemington. STELLA and LOUISA keep calling "Votes for women" as they exit. Suddenly NELLIE and JANE look at one another and then decide to join the cause. They scamper after LOUISA etc calling as they go]
Nellie *[Exiting]* Votes for women.
Jane *[Catching up]* Wait for us. Votes for women! *[MUSIC BEGINS]*

No. 12 First Tuesday in November Interlude

[Hubbub as racegoers mingle, talk as one then turn and exit during the Interlude. Dim lighting as the four suffragettes stagger down. They've been on the run, look a little "less tidy" and are out of breath. STELLA and LOUISA have small cases and could even sit on these]

Stella Thank you for your support, ladies. It's nice to have some Victorians on side.
Nellie I've never done anything like that before in my entire life.
Jane Me neither. My parents will disown me.
Louisa Well we're very grateful and proud of you. Aren't we Stella?
Stella All this talk of a democratic federation and only the women in South Australia get to vote.
Nellie I'm going straight home to tell my father about this disgraceful situation.
Jane But Nellie, your father is such an ogre.
Nellie I don't care. What right have men got to keep us from voting? Come on Jane, let's start campaigning. *[Exits]*
Jane Nice to have met you Stella. And you too, Louisa. Up the revolution. Bye. *[Exits]*
Louisa Bye. Good luck.
Stella Do you think the press will report my protest at Flemington.
Louisa I'm sure they will. You certainly made an impact. I think the Premier was about to make a speech.
Stella Ha! I bet it wasn't about votes for women.
Louisa Stella, I'm sorry, but I have to get back to Spencer Street station and catch a train to Sydney. My family will be worried.
Stella Your aunt maybe but not your siblings.
Louisa *[Worried]* What do you mean? What's happened?
Stella It's all right. They're fine. But last I heard your sister has found herself a fancy man.
Louisa Ethel! A fancy man?
Stella And your brother was on his way to the goldfields in Kalgoorlie.
Louisa But that's in Western Australia.
Stella He's a man, Louisa, with all the benefits the law allows. *[Collecting belongings]*
Now come on, time to help our sisters in Sydney. *[Exits]*
Louisa *[Collects her belongings and follows]* Is Kalgoorlie like Melbourne?
Stella No, dear. Kalgoorlie's like Kalgoorlie. *[They exit]*

Cobbers 4

[Pause. HENRY enters with case. He's new and lost in Kalgoorlie. Two women enter walking in the street. He approaches them]

- Henry** Good afternoon, ladies. *[The women stop]*
- Nellie** *[A somewhat different Nellie]* Good afternoon to you, too.
- Henry** I wondered if you could help. I think I'm lost.
- Jane** *[A different Jane]* We know the feeling. We've been lost for years.
- Henry** I've just arrived from England. This is Kalgoorlie isn't it?
- Nellie** Strewth! A gold miner from England.
- Henry** Well actually I'm from England via Sydney.
- Jane** Sydney, England, Timbucktoo. We've got 'em all here, mate. Gold is like a magnet. Draws 'em in from all over the world.
- Nellie** Drew us 'ere too.
- Henry** Well that's why I'm here. To try my luck at finding gold. Where do you think I should start?
- Nellie** You could try them fellas over there.
[She indicates. HENRY looks. Rough voices are heard offstage]
- Jane** And when you find y'fortune, you come and find us. We'll help you celebrate.
[They exit laughing]
- Nellie** Really celebrate. *[More laughter]*
- Henry** *[Uncertain]* Much obliged I'm sure.
[Group of angry miners enter talking at once. HENRY moves aside, observes]
- Ned** Look, it ain't my fault. Why are havin' a go at me?
- Rudolf** You is our foreman. *[OTHERS agree]* You is the man to make them change the rules. *[More agreement]*
- Ned** Now shut up the lot of youse and listen. *[They settle]* The bosses told me today they are gunna send a letter to London in England with a petition to make the goldfields a separate state. *[Big hubbub]*
- Dusty** You mean that paper we signed last month?
- Ned** You, me and nearly thirty thousand others. It's not just the miners. Everyone's fed up. The government in Perth don't give a damn about us and the sooner we have our own colony the better. Agreed?
- Men** Agreed!
- Ned** Even the people of Albany have joined our cause. Premier Forrest is a typical bloody politician. He's only in it for what he can get out of it.
- Miner 1** String 'im up. *[Agreement]*
- Rudolf** I tell you if this premier comes out of the forest to Kalgoorlie, I will tell him he is a crook! *[Some amused by this]* To his bloody face. *[Agreement. "You tell 'im, Rudolf" etc]*
- Ned** All we need is for Queen Victoria to give us the go ahead and we'll be our own boss. *[Support]*
- Dusty** What's this new law about a maximum depth of ten feet?
[Miners go crazy. They hadn't heard and are furious]
- Ned** *[Calling for peace]* All right, settle down. It's only a rumour but apparently the government's planning a freeze on how far we can dig for gold. *[Miners angry]* They reckon it'll be ten feet. *[Miners furious]*
- Rudolf** Where I come from, this means war.
- Miner 2** Yeah, let's have a war. *[Miners agree]*

Ned *[Calling for calm]* Settle down. C'mon, knock it off. *[They settle]* Now ... *[Sees HENRY]* Who's the bloke over there. *[MINERS turn and look]*

Henry *[Moving towards them]* Ah, g'day cobbers. I'm new in Kalgoorlie.

Ned We're all new, mate. And we're all on the same side. Are you from the government?

Henry No, no, heavens no. I'm from Sydney.

Rudolf You don't sound like a man from Syd-er-ney.

Henry Well I'm new to Sydney. I've just arrived from England.

Miners England!

Miner 1 Do you know Queen Victoria?

Henry Well yes, she's my Queen, yours too, British Empire and all that - but I don't know her personally. *[MINERS excited]*

Miner 2 Do you know where she lives.

Henry Of course. Everyone in England knows where their Queen resides. *[Hubbub]*

Rudolf He can take our letter. *[MINERS agree]*

Dusty Are you here to find gold?

Henry Well yes. That and to see Australia.

Ned Listen mate, we need someone to help us. Someone to ask Her Majesty to make the goldfields a separate colony. The government in Perth treat us really badly. *[Agreement]*

Henry Well why don't you just send her a letter? I'm only a humble British subject.

Rudolf Yes but what if the government interrupts our letter.

Miner 1 He means intercepts.

Ned We will pay you well, won't we lads?

Miners Aye ... Yes ... *etc*

Henry But you don't know me. I could be a fraud, a crook, a bushranger. *[Laughter]*

Rudolf You ain't no bushranger, mate. And poor Ned's dead.

Ned We don't have a choice. We have to try everything. Unless we get a better deal there's a real chance we could see another Eureka.

Henry Was that the trouble in the Victorian goldfields?

Rudolf Big trouble. The police treat us very badly. *[Agreement]*

Ned You take our letter to your Queen. You tell her the pain and the suffering we are having here in Kalgoorlie.

Dusty An Aussie bloke always sticks by his mates. Are you an Aussie?

Henry I'd like to be.

Dusty But are you a mate, mate?
[Pause. MINERS stare at HENRY. He looks from side to side]

Henry Yes. I'm a mate. *[Much backslapping and thanks from MINERS]*

Ned Wait a minute. Hold it. *[They stop]* Who's gunna write the letter? *[MINERS shake heads, mutter apologies]* Come on, there must be someone who can scribble.

Rudolf Not me. I can't even talk the English. *[MUSIC BEGINS]*

Henry Well I can write. *[MINERS relieved]*

Rudolf *[Handing paper and pencil]* Here, mate. You write what we tell you.

No. 13 Dear Your Majesty

Ned *Dear Your Majesty*

Miners *Dear Your Majesty*
Dusty *Please listen to your subjects here in Oz*
Miners *Here in Oz*
Rudolf *We'd like a brand new colony*
Miners *Or join another colony*
Ned *Your help is much required here now because*
Miners *It is, because. Ahhh.*
Trio *The government don't like us, ignore us and spike us*
They cause us pain and grief, put on the mozz.
Miners *Put on the mozz.*
So please your Majesty
On our knees your Majesty
Kalgoorlie a new colony in Oz.
Colony in Oz.
We're British to our bootstraps [Most of us]
We're loyal to the English throne
We're still a part of Blighty
But we'd like a place to call our own.

[During song HENRY writes as the men dictate/sing. Miners are sincere and desperate. They want relief from their problems. A moving if comical event. Song ends and HENRY addresses the hopeful miners]

Henry Gentlemen, I'm honoured to represent you and I promise I'll take this letter to England and speak on your behalf. *[MINERS happy]* Now, which way should I go?

Rudolf *[Pointing one way]* Eng-er-land is that way. I saw it on a map.

Dusty Don't listen to him. He can't read. *[Pointing in opposite direction]* England's that way. *[Dispute begins]*

Ned *[Pointing in another direction]* No it's not. It's that way.
[MINERS argue and point]

Henry Gentlemen, please. *[They settle]* I'll travel by several trains including camel and finally by ship to deliver your important letter.
[MINERS happy]

Ned Tell Queen Victoria we're all Australians but still loyal to Britain and the Crown. *[To OTHERS]* Is that right men?

Miners Yes ... Aye ... That's right.

Rudolf Even I am the Aussie now. *[Laughter]*

Henry Well thanks for the trust. I'll guard your letter with my life and hope to return one day and find you in better times. *[Starts to exit]*

Dusty You pull this off, mate and you'll be a fair dinkum Aussie.
[Agreement]

Ned Yeah. See ya mate. And good luck. *[MINERS add their farewells]*

Henry Goodbye ... cobbers. *[He departs as miners wave and call "Good luck" etc]*

[POSTMAN enters behind the MINERS who are waving and calling. They stop waving and drift away. They exit. NED, DUSTY and RUDOLF remain]

Postman Hey, got a letter here for a Henry Somebody. It's got a stamp from New South Wales.

Dusty They're foreigners.

Ned Give us a look. *[Inspects envelope]*

Rudolf Our friend from Eng-er-land was called Henry.

Ned Yeah. This is for him. *[To Postie]* We'll give it to him.

Postman Righto. See that you do. *[Turns and exits]*

Dusty How can you give it to him? He's on his way back to England.

Ned *[Opening letter]* If it's real important, we'll chase after him. If it ain't, well, it can wait. *[Takes out letter]*

Rudolf I think we are in the strife, mate. None of us can read.

Dusty I can. *[Takes the letter]* A little. *[Reads]*

Ned Now he tells us. *[Pause]* Well?

Dusty It's from his sister, Ethel. She's gone bush with a fellah.

Rudolf Good luck to her. I wish a women *[sic]* would go to the bush with me.

Dusty Some sheep property out the back of Bourke.

Ned Well give it here. *[Takes letter]* I'll get the post office to drop her a line. *[They start to exit]* Come on. This won't get us any gold.

Rudolf Maybe sheep make more money than gold. What do you reckon?

Dusty I reckon I need a drink.
[They exit. Change lighting to night. FX Sounds of cicadas. We're now in outback New South Wales. ROBERT and ETHEL enter. They're walking in the garden by the homestead. A few insects need the odd swipe or whack. The sounds of the bush at night occur throughout]

Bob Over here, Ethel, you'll see it real clear.
[They move downstage and stop]

Ethel Do I need a looking glass?

Bob Nah, it's fine. Specially with no clouds like tonight. *[Pointing into the night sky]*
There it is. The great southern cross.

Ethel *[Looking at the stars]* Oh yes. Are they the stars of Australia?

Bob Well I don't think they've got our name on them but they are in our part of the sky.

Ethel I think they're beautiful.

Bob *[Looking at her]* Yeah. Beautiful.

Ethel *[Sees him looking at her. Turns away. He follows]* So exactly how many sheep have you got, Bob?

Bob Dunno exactly. But twenee thousand's a good guess.

Ethel Your family must have lived here a very long time.

Bob Oooh yeah. At least seventy years.

Ethel *[Laughing]* Seventy!

Bob Yeah. Long time ain't it?

Ethel Seventy years is a drop in the ocean. My family has lived in England for hundreds, maybe thousands of years.

Bob Thousands!

Ethel You Australians are only babies. You've got no history at all.

Bob I guess you're right. Mind you the aborigines have lived here a fair while. They were the first Australians.

Ethel I haven't seen any. Where are they today?
Bob Not sure. I don't think there's many left.
Ethel Did your grandparents buy this farm from the aborigines?
Bob Not exactly. Say, why do you want to know all this? That's ancient history.
Ethel Well, if I'm going to spend more time in your country, in this part of your country, I'd like to know all about it.
Bob *[Pause]* You're not really a drongo, are you?
Ethel No more than you. *[They smile]*
Bob We don't talk much about the aborigines. Some of the things that happened were pretty bad.
Ethel Every country's history has parts which are horrible.
Bob Do English people talk about their history?
Ethel Depends who you're talking to. Mother said every family has a skeleton and the only thing worse than the skeleton was denying it ever existed.
Bob Sounds like Australia. We've got a few skeletons. I heard the aborigines of Tasmania all disappeared. There's none left.
Ethel Mother said it's not what's written in history books we should think about, it's what's not written.
Bob Hmm. Hadn't thought of that. Anyway my grandparents were squatters.
Ethel What's a squatter?
Bob People who went bush, put up a tent and claimed the land. Australia had lots of squatters.
Ethel Did they pay the previous owners?
Bob Hardly. There weren't anybody here to pay.
Ethel You said the aborigines were here.
Bob *[Nods]* They were. *[Pause]* I think taking the land was one of the things your Mum spoke about.
Ethel Not in the history books?
Bob And not talked about.
Ethel I think you mean spoken about.
Bob Yeah, spoken. Tell me Ethel, are you spoken about?
Ethel Spoken *for*, Bob, spoken *for*.
Bob Well if you ain't, spoken for I mean, maybe I could speak for you.
Ethel Goodness, Robert, whatever could you mean? *[MUSIC BEGINS]*
Bob I reckon you know, Ethel. Even a drongo'd know that.

No. 14 Drongo Reprise

Duet *It's delightful to be a drongo, it's delirious to be a dag
Though you'd think that being thick
Would somehow make you sick
But au contraire no savoir-faire will somehow do the trick.
And it's de-wonderful to be da dunder-ful [fool]
It's delicious and gives a thrill
So be ye dumbcluck or dope, Australians live in hope
T'be a drongo, t'be a dill.*
[Duet ends and couple are about to kiss when London bobby, PEEL, enters and speaks forcing courting couple to move back in surprise]

Peel 'ello, 'ello, 'ello. And what 'ave we got 'ere then?
Bob Strewth! Who are you? Where did you spring from?
Peel Constable Peel me lad, not that's it any of your business. 'Evening Miss.
Ethel Good evening, officer. Have you seen the southern cross?
Peel No Miss but I've seen me sergeant when 'e's cross and believe me that ain't a pretty sight.
Ethel Could you tell me the time, please?
Peel Now then, Miss. Big Ben's for poor people.
Bob Big Ben!?
Peel *[Pointing]* Up there, lad. The clock tower at Westminster.
Bob *[Stunned]* Westminster?
Peel Colonial are we sir? Never been to London before?
Bob *[Stunned further]* London?
Ethel *[Taking his hand]* Come along, Bob. I think it's time to milk the sheep.
Bob *[Being dragged off]* Hey! Hang on! What d'ya mean?
Peel *[Musing]* Ah, what it's like to be in love in dear old London.
[Person runs across upstage pursued by shopkeeper]
Shopkeeper Stop thief! Hey you! Stop! *[They exit. Londoners wander in]*
Peel Oi! Come 'ere! *[Exits blowing whistle]*
[Hubbub as people wander in the London street. Lights come up to indicate daytime. People in warm clothes. HENRY and ALFRED enter. ALFRED is looking around]
Alfred Henry, this is bloody marvellous, mate.
Henry Shhhh. Not so loud.
Alfred *[Softer]* Sorry. Forgot. No bloodies in London.
Henry mate.
Henry There are some officials now. Just pretend we're important chaps on government business.
Alfred Strewth. How I do that?
Henry Remove your hat and thereafter close your mouth.
Alfred Righto. *[Removes hat]* Gotcha. *[Mimes "zipping" his mouth]*

[Two or more government officials are chatting on one side of the stage. HENRY leads ALFRED close in to observe. The officials speak with exaggerated upper class accents]
Official 1 Rah, rah, rah, rah, rah.
Official 2 Haw, haw, haw, haw, haw, haw, haw.
Alfred *[Whispers]* What language is that?
Henry Shhh.
Official 1 Hair, hair, hair, hair, hair, hair, hair.
Official 2 Haw, haw, haw, haw, haw, haw, haw.
Alfred *[Whispers]* What are they saying?
Henry *[Not loud]* Haw, haw, hair, hair, rah, rah, rah.
Alfred *[Looks at a serious HENRY]* Strewth! You've got drongoes too..
Official 3 *[Australian official enters and speaks to OFFICIALS]* Gentlemen, I bring you greetings from the colonies of Australia.
Alfred He's an Aussie.
Henry Shhhh.

- Official 3** The premiers of the Australian colonies would like her Majesty the Queen and the British Houses of Parliament to agree to the antipodean dominion becoming a nation.
- Official 1** Rah, rah, rah.
- Official 2** Hair, hair, hair.
- Official 3** *[Miffed]* Now see here, gentlemen. We've been a jumbled collection of colonies for a hundred years. Even Earl Grey suggested unity many years ago.
- Official 1** Haw, haw, haw, haw.
- Official 2** Hair, hair, hair, hair.
- Official 3** *[Apologetic]* Oh righto. Sorry. I didn't realise. Ah there's just the business of the appeal to the Privy Council and our new name. We're keen on the Commonwealth of Australia. I understand Her Majesty likes the Dominion of Australia.
- Official 1** Rah, rah, rah, rah.
- Official 2** Haw, haw, haw, haw.
- Official 3** *[Protests]* Aw, fair crack of the whip, fellas. We wanna be independent. We'll still be part of the British Empire but we're not dependent on Britain any more. We've grown up. Come on, fellas, how about a fair go?
[MUSIC BEGINS. Immediately a flurry of activity. The OFFICIALS bow]
- Alfred** What's happening? What's going on?
- Henry** *[Pushing ALFRED to one side]* Hurry. It's the Queen.
- Alfred** Queen Victoria! Strewth!

[QUEEN VICTORIA enters. She could be alone or with attendants. All bow again including the duo from Down Under. COMPANY means all civil servants, any attendants and visitors from Oz]

No. 15 Cut Those Apron Strings

- Queen** *Since eighteen thirty-seven, I have been your Queen
I married Albert, had nine kids but now am seldom seen
I may be hid but am not meek, I tell PMs my views
And say to brash colonials, "We are not amused"
So what now chaps? You think that you know best?
You'd like to know if you can leave the nest?
The everywhere British Empire, the sun on which doesn't set
A curate's egg reputation with many a largish debt
Has now a few far-flung members all seeking to slip the net
It's ticketty-boo, ta-ta to you, just grab what you can get.
Snip, snip*
- Company** *Cut those apron strings.* **Queen** *Snip, snip*
- Company** *Cut those apron strings* *Snip, snip*
Cut those apron strings, cut those apron strings.
- Queen** *Whoa. Snip, snip
The Commonwealth of Australia is who they would like to be
Dominion of Australia, appeals much more to me
But titles are not the issue, it's really their liberty
So Commonwealth of dear Oz it is and great good luck to thee.*

[Song ends and QUEEN exits with everyone bowing. MAYOR of Sydney enters and calls a la ringmaster. Sydneysiders enter. Londoners could become Aussies minus coats. It's summer. We're back in Oz. It's party time. STELLA will have her usual placard but others will have "One People – One Nation" etc. A photographer with camera on tripod could appear at some time. A flash goes off as snaps taken]

- Mayor** Roll up, roll up. See the results of the great Federation poll. By the town hall. Roll up, roll up.
[Scoreboard either real or on a slide appears upstage. It's important the audience can see the figures. It may even be several placards with the result of each colony thereon. STELLA and LOUISA appear with placard/s]
- Stella** *[Calling]* What use is your immoral poll? Half the population were forbidden from voting. More than half!
- Louisa** Women deserve the vote. Women *demand* the vote.
- Henry** Louisa.
- Louisa** *[Sees her brother. Runs to him]* Henry! And Alf! *[TRIO embrace. Much happiness]*
Welcome home.
- Alfred** I see you've still getting stuck into local politics.
- Louisa** Oh yes. And isn't it wonderful. Australia is about to become a nation.
- Henry** Not if the people voted No it isn't.
- Mayor** *[Announcing]* And here are the results from South Australia.
[Crowd excited]
- Stella** *[Calling]* A colony where women can vote.
- Mayor** Those in favour of federation 65, 900. *[Hubbub]* Those against 17,053.
[Scores appear. Big cheer. Hubbub]
- Louisa** See? What did I tell you?
- Alfred** Strewth. If that's repeated around the country, Australia will unite.
- Mayor** And in the Northern Territory. In favour of Federation, 162.
- Heckler 1** A hundred and sixty-two? Was that humans or kangaroos? *[Laughter]*
- Mayor** And against Federation, eight. *[Score appears. Big cheer]*
- Louisa** This is wonderful. Soon we'll be one nation where everyone can vote.
- Alfred** What's this "we" business? You're a Pom.
- Louisa** It's a great country, Alf. Do you think there's room for a Pommy or two like us?
- Henry** Speak for yourself.
- Louisa** Come on brother. You love the life down under just like your sisters. And speaking of your other sister, she loves it most of all.
- Henry** Ethel? What's happened?
- Mayor** *[Announcing]* And now, via the wonders of the modern telegraph, we have the result from Tasmania. *[Crowd falls silent]* Those in favour of Federation 13, 437. Those against 791.
[Score appears. Huge cheer. Most of the crowd are delighted]
- Henry** What's the news about Ethel?
- Alfred** Here she is now. *[ETHEL and FLORRIE enter]*
- Ethel** *[Delighted to see her brother and cousin]* Henry! And Alf! *[Embracing]*
- Alfred** *[To ETHEL]* Hello cousin. Just dropped in for a jiff I see. *[Laughter]* G'day Mum.

- Florrie** Don't you "G'day Mum" me. Where's the postcard you promised? [*Teasing then embracing*]
- Henry** It looks like we're just in time to see Australia become a new nation.
- Alfred** Louisa and Henry reckon they'd like to become Aussies. What about you Ethel? Still heading home to dear old Blighty.
- Ethel** I'm heading for the station. The *sheep* station. [*OTHERS stunned*] And you're all invited to the wedding.
- Others** Wedding!?! [*ROBERT enters*]
- Ethel** I'm going to be a fair dinkum Aussie bride.
- Bob** G'day everyone. Sorry I'm late. [*Much congratulating*]
- Henry** Bob, cobber. Welcome to the family.
- Florrie** I think I'm going to cry.
- Alfred** Strewth Bob, bloody ripper, mate.
[*More congratulating and embracing*]
- Mayor** And now the result of the vote in the colony of Victoria. [*Crowd boo*] Yes all right. They might be protectionists but let's see how they voted. In Victoria the NO vote was 9,805. The YES vote 152,653.
[*Score appears. Cheering*]
- Henry** Hey, this is looking good for Australia. We Poms might just have to change our team.
- Ethel** [*Teasing*] I've already switched sides.
- Louisa** Well just make sure you support women getting the vote.
- Florrie** My country is changing. My niece is getting married. My son has come home. It's all too much.
- Alfred** It's all bloody marvellous. Three colonies have voted Yes.
- Mayor** And now the all-important vote in New South Wales. Those in favour of Federation 107,420. Those against 82,741. [*Another huge cheer*] And with the gift of foresight, I can confidently predict the result in sunny Queensland to be NO votes 30,687. YES votes 38,488. [*Scores appear. Cheers*] Finally, the colony of Western Australia, who like their neighbours across the border allowed women to vote, their referendum scores were NO votes 19,691. YES votes 44,800. [*Scores appear. Cheers*] Ladies and gentlemen, we soon face a new century and ... a new Australia!
[*Huge cheer. Much backslapping and celebrating*]
- Bob** Now look here, you Poms. Ethel's decided to become an Aussie. What about you Louisa and you, Henry?
- Louisa** I've decided to become a suffragette. An *Aussie* suffragette.
[*Much happiness. MUSIC BEGINS*]
- Henry** Well what can I say. My sisters have impeccable taste. G'day, cobbers!
[*Much happiness. Principals join in as full company sings*]

No. 16 Cobbers

- Company** *Here we are, starting something brand new
Will it be successful and right?
Have we bitten off more than we can chew
Is our future rosy and bright?
Here we are hoping union will work*

*“Federate sounds great” so they say
And our chances brighten, burdens quickly lighten
With a chum we’ll soon find our way.
Friends, mates, cobbers and pals
Living together as one
Friends, mates, cobbers and pals
Make life worth living and fun
Stick by your partner, talk to your foe
Heed lesson and lingo homespun
Friends, mates, cobbers and pals
Living together as one.*

[CURTAIN or BLACKOUT. Pause followed by Curtain Calls. Company members enter first followed by principals]

No. 17 Curtain Calls

Company

*Oh you can’t be a little bit democratic
It’s either everyone or none at all
The law ain’t for a few, not what you know or who
The present situation needs an overhaul.
The Greek word “demos” means community
And universal suffrage gives equality
Oh no you can’t be a little bit democratic
You either is or ain’t, no inbetween.
It’s delightful to be a drongo, it’s delirious to be a dag
Though you’d think that being thick
Would somehow make you sick
But au contraire no savoir-faire will somehow do the trick.
And it’s de-wonderful to be da dunder-ful [fool]
It’s delicious and gives a thrill
So be ye dumbcluck or dope, Australians live in hope
T’be a drongo, t’be a dill.
Every nation, every people has a style, an attitude
It defines them, it refines them be they dull, polite or rude
It’s the climate, it’s location, it’s their history, their food
And down under in Australia there’s behaviour we exude.
She’ll be right, mate, she’ll be right
She’ll be sweet, pal, life is bright
She’ll be apples, sore eyes see that sight
She’ll be right, mate, she’ll be right.*

[CURTAIN or BLACKOUT]

No. 18 Playout

Dinkum Poppies

dinkum – true, honest, genuine or excellent example of its kind
tall poppy – someone with outstanding status

Dinkum Poppies is a musical salute to heaps of people who had something to do with Australia. Statesmen, shearers, squatters, soldiers, social-workers, singers, sporting stars, sheilas, strikers, suffragettes, swindlers and swaggies. Struth! One set, 2 acts, 95 mins, 20+ roles, heaps of chorus work. Starring Joseph Banks, Caroline Chisholm, Elizabeth Macarthur, Major Mitchell, Peter Lalor, Lola Montez, Kate Kelly, Robert Menzies, Don Bradman and many, many more.

The setting is a modern sideshow in a fairground. Business is bad. When someone suggests they “spin a yarn”, something special occurs. In stroll the stars. Fair dinkum. Great success since 1988. Loads of toe-tapping, meaningful songs.

The Originals

Big cast, toe-tapping musical set in and around sensational Sydney in the early 1800s. Loads of conflict and comedy. The women at the *Parramatta Female Factory* are not the same ladies of polite Sydney society who sip tea and sing *Lift Your Little Finger*. The convicts and soldiers fight amongst themselves and the perils of the uncharted bush. The Governor upsets wealthy businessmen and life is hard. The show-stopping *Sydney Town* is a full company song bursting with energy and life. Great singing/dancing routines.

The people and events are fictitious but the settings, characters and battles are very real. *The Originals* is a rollicking musical, 2 acts, 110 minutes, big chorus numbers, 20 roles, four simple scenes. It's won high praise in Australia and New Zealand since 1974. The early days in Sydney were rough, dangerous and exciting, matched only by the fascinating people who lived there. Lively, moving songs including the four-part anthem *Australia*. Highly recommended for adult companies and talented teenagers.

Don Bradman Lives Next Door

2 acts, 90 minutes, a two-hander set in cricket heaven today. 2 songs, 1 set.

A comedy in cricket heaven today. The world's greatest batsman and the world's greatest showman are next-door neighbours. Don Bradman and William Gilbert Grace set the world of cricket alight. Enter Fred Ashley-Cooper, the cricket world's prolific writer. Fred wants to write a warts 'n all book about Doctor Grace and his suspect activities. Grace tells all. Bradman plays his piano.

Today we have gambling, sledging, chucking, cheating, controversial umpiring, strange pitches, media beat-ups, apartheid, one-day cricket, loud music at games, sponsors, crazy spectators, players' wage demands, fiery bowlers, scuffles and fantastic finishes. **YES BUT ALL THAT TOOK PLACE IN THE 19th CENTURY!**

W.G. is a bullying snob who unabashedly claims single-handedly to have taken cricket from a social pastime to an international obsession and credits himself with the birth of the Ashes – that little gem alone is reason enough to see the play. Melbourne Observer

*The script is a nice combination of C.J.Dennis, Steel Rudd and even Barry McKenzie. The Footy Almanac
A fantastic play, well performed and directed! A must see! Lynne Stevens-Chappel*

A very clever play and the actors were superb. Strathmore Theatre

Brilliant play, brilliant production, brilliant playwright. I would happily go again. Marie Ryan 96.5FM

What a great play and what an enjoyable afternoon. Cameron Close

*A madcap round of 'warts and all' interviews, quizzes and dance routines, a thoroughly enjoyable show all round.
Victorian Drama League*

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