

# *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**

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## **Orchestrations and Backing Tape/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 tape and/or 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, tickets, programme etc and, 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.

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### 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.

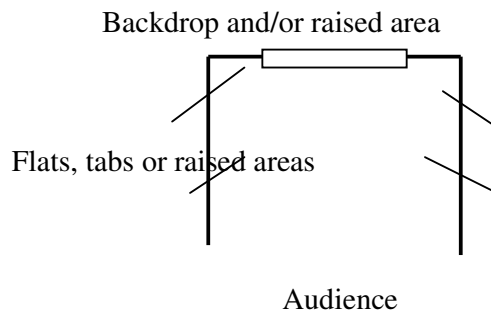
In 1897 Australia was a series of independent colonies with their own border posts, postal and railway systems and no national defence force. Countries such as Italy and the USA engaged in a civil war or wars before establishing federation. Australia avoided civil war but had its fair share of skirmishes,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

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### 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

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### 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 sibilings 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*

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*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.*

## Cobbers 6

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**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.

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**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?

## Cobbers 8

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- 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*

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*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?

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**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, cobber. A cobber is y’mate, Mate.  
**Henry** *[Hopeful]* Right. I think I’ve got it, cobber. *[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?

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**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!

### Cobbers 13

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**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?

## Cobbers 14

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**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.  
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.*

**Harold**

## Cobbers 15

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- 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** Thruuuupppp. *[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.*

## Cobbers 16

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*[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.

## Cobbers 17

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**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.

## Cobbers 19

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**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.

## Cobbers 21

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- 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]*

## Cobbers 22

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- 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 story-teller 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.

## Cobbers 24

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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]*

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**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*

## Cobbers 29

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*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.

## Cobbers 30

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**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.

## Cobbers 31

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**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]*  
*[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** Stewth! 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 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?

## Cobbers 34

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**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.

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**Shopkeeper** *[Person runs across upstage pursued by shopkeeper]*  
**Peel** 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.

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**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]*

**PREVIEW ENDS**

## ***Some More Shows from FOX PLAYS***

### **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.

### **Shakespeare the Musical**

2 acts, 2 hours, 16 songs, 20 principals, chorus of young and/or old performers. History comes **alive** in Elizabethan England – see Shakespeare at school, falling in love, becoming an actor, mixing with royalty, meet his lover, his family, his friends. See the Globe crossing the Thames, catching fire, Guy Fawkes, Queen Elizabeth revolution. Excerpts from nine of Shakespeare's plays and sonnets - *Titus Andronicus, Henry 4, Henry 5, Henry 8, Comedy of Errors, As You Like It, Richard 2, Hamlet, Merry Wives of Windsor*. Be part of the audience at the Globe, the royal court, the streets of London. See spies, executions, religious turmoil, romance, life, love and adventure

## **Rat Race**

Performed around the world. Your set is a giant pile of garbage in which the many rats live and work. Times are very tough. Medical facilities are appalling, food supplies non-existent. Now the humans want to have a clean-up because an election is looming. Enter Snortle Tozer. Rats can be nice. Humans can like rats. We just have to convince them. They try to by making a movie. Fabulous ticker-tape finale. Powerful themes and loads of comedy and drama. Great songs.

## **Jungle**

Your set is a steamy jungle with vines and mist and magnificent characters. Hippo, Zebra, Lion, Monkeys, Ostrich and many more. The animals are worried that some species of humans are on the endangered list. Then there's talk of circus coming to town with performing humans. Should this be allowed. The unemployed monkeys are up to monkey business. Marvellous songs, fantastic costumes and some powerful subjects tossed around with wit and comedy.

## **ROLL 'N ROCK**

When did rock 'n roll begin? Find out in this toe-tapping musical. In 1946, Flip Doodle works in the grocery store in the quiet country town of Dullsville. He also plays the organ in church on Sundays. Flip fancies himself as a songwriter and when Pastor Mustard asks for a new hymn, Flip composes *Roll Up To The Rock*. He tries out the new song on his teenage sisters. They give him heaps. Too slow, boring, no good. After church Flip plays his hymn at a faster speed. Everyone rushes back inside. What is that new music? Flip is confused. He calls it roll 'n rock. The kids love it, the parents hate it. And when the local radio station decide to play the new music, well, the world will never be the same. Staged around the world.

## *Fairy Tales*

Snow White, Cinderella, Hansel and Gretel, Beauty and the Beast, Red Riding Hood and the Wolf, Handsome Prince, Jack of Beanstalk fame and the Witch. What a witch! They're all at the annual fairytale convention. Things are crook. Everyone is unhappy about this and that. There's even a petition for the brothers Grimm. Misery reigns. Then there's a brainwave. Let's swap roles - just for the day, just here at the convention. So they swap. Hey! This will be fun. Gretel is Snow White, Wolf becomes Hansel, Beauty turns into Cinderella and so on. But is the grass always greener on the other side? Will life be better in someone else's shoes? And then there's that huge grumbling ogre upstairs and the wicked Witch is almost everywhere. There's action, danger, hope, joy and love in this funny, beautiful, 100 minute musical. Use adults and/or children in your cast. Terrific songs, stereo backing tape, great band parts. Perfect for Christmas or any time as your panto or family musical. One stunning set, gorgeous costumes. **Fairy Tales** is enchanting, challenging, moving and lots of fun. Peruse script and score today. Includes the hit song "Fall In Love"! Performed in the USA, UK, Australia and New Zealand by adults and youth theatre.

**Rehearsal Material and Performing Rights**

Permission to stage *Cobbers* or any play or musical from **FOX PLAYS** must be obtained in writing before rehearsals commence. Application forms, scripts, scores, tapes and band parts can be obtained from your local agent listed below.

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