

Background report

1984 Cabinet Minutes

Queensland State Archives

International

In 1984, Apple Macintosh micro-computers were released. The first space walk by a female Russian astronaut took place in July. An American female astronaut performed the same feat in October. The first successful solo hot-air balloon crossing of the Atlantic took place in September.

Sectarian warfare between Christian and Muslim militias continued in Lebanon, threatening to overflow into Israel and Syria. In September the United States Embassy in Beirut was destroyed by a car-bomb. Indian soldiers captured parts of Kashmir in April, triggering conflict with neighbouring Pakistan. In June Indian security forces attacked an important Sikh temple in Amritsar. India's Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was subsequently assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards in October. Civil war between Tamil Tigers and Sinhalese forces began in Sri Lanka.

A national coal strike, which would last one year, started in Britain. A police siege of the Libyan Embassy in London began after a police officer was shot dead outside. In October the Provisional Irish Revolutionary Army bombed a Brighton hotel in an attempted assassination of Margaret Thatcher and other members of the British Cabinet. The Soviet Union announced a boycott of the Los Angeles Summer Olympics.

In July David Lange replaced Robert Muldoon as New Zealand's Prime Minister. Conflict between indigenous Kanak people and French settlers in New Caledonia continued. United States President Ronald Reagan said in August, during a radio broadcast sound check, "I've signed legislation that will outlaw Russia forever. We begin bombing in five minutes". Reagan won the November presidential election. Protestors in the Philippines called for the resignation of President Ferdinand Marcos. China and the United Kingdom agreed to return Hong Kong to Chinese control in 1997.

Famine in Ethiopia killed many thousands of people, and caused millions to starve. More than 8,000 people were killed outright when chemicals leaked from a Union Carbide pesticide plant in Bhopal, India. More than 500,000 were injured and the final death toll passed 23,000. Medical researchers discovered the AIDS virus in April.

Australia

Allegations of official corruption in New South Wales continued, leading to a Royal Commission into Premier Wran's involvement. Inflation, unemployment and wage demands in Australia continued to increase. The Commonwealth Government's new universal healthcare scheme, Medicare, began in February. One dollar coins were introduced in May 1984. In December 1983, the Australian dollar had been floated. Australian banks were deregulated in August 1984.

'Advance Australia Fair' was proclaimed as Australia's national anthem in April. Green and gold became the national colours. Western Australia became the last Australian state to abolish capital punishment. The first televised election debate took place, and the Hawke government was re-elected in December. The Williams Royal Commission into Drugs, which ran from 1977 to 1983, submitted a final report.

Queensland

Politically, Premier Bjelke-Petersen continued to assert his authority over the Cabinet and the National Party. The Coalition with the Liberal Party was terminated in August 1983. The National Party vote in the October 1983 election was 38.9 per cent, and the ALP's was 44 per cent.

Bjelke-Petersen oversaw disagreements with the Commonwealth about almost every issue, but especially Aboriginal Affairs, conservation and union matters. The High Court's 1983 Franklin Dam decision was seen as a major threat to states' Rights. The Queensland Government re-established the Government Statistician's Office in 1984 (closed in 1958), believing that the Australian Bureau of Statistics could not offer a comparable level of information, advice and expertise to Queensland departments.

The Queensland Liberal Party, virtually destroyed as a political force in the 1983 election, held only six seats. Two Liberals (Don Lane and Brian Austin) defected to the National Party and became Cabinet Ministers after the election. Opposition questions about alleged corruption related to the construction of a new building at Redcliffe Hospital were disallowed by the Parliamentary Speaker.

The ALP experienced a bitter factional dispute in early 1984, leading State Secretary Peter Beattie to warn members to 'pull their heads in' (CM, 12 March 1984). ALP State President Dr Denis Murphy, regarded as a brilliant parliamentarian and capable leader, died in June.

Bjelke-Petersen and the president of the National Party, Sir Robert Sparkes, led calls for a new conservative party in Australia, starting from Queensland. An all-National Party Cabinet was sworn in after the 1983 election, and the members of Cabinet (at 1 January 1984) were:

- Premier and Treasurer: Johannes Bjelke-Petersen
- Deputy Premier and Minister Assisting the Treasurer: William Gunn
- Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Racing: Russell Hinze
- Minister for Works and Housing: Claude Wharton
- Minister for Mines and Energy: Ivan Gibbs
- Minister for Industry, Small Business and Technology: Michael Ahern
- Minister for Transport: Donald Lane
- Minister for Lands, Forestry and Police: William Glasson
- Minister for Health: Brian Austin
- Minister for Education: Lionel Powell
- Minister for Water Resources and Maritime Services: John Goleby
- Minister for Primary Industries: Neil Turner
- Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs: Vincent Lester
- Minister for Environment, Valuation and Administrative Services: Martin Tenni
- Minister for Justice and Attorney-General: Neville Harper
- Minister for Welfare Services and Ethnic Affairs: Geoffrey Muntz
- Minister for Tourism, National Parks, Sport and The Arts: Peter McKechnie
- Minister for Northern Development and Aboriginal and Island Affairs: Robert Katter.

Cabinet meetings in early 1984 considered a number of Bills that provided for an increase in police powers. Civil libertarians opposed these changes, and the most controversial clauses were withdrawn. Land ownership and community services in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities were also passed. Amendments to the City of Brisbane Act, which meant the Lord Mayor would be elected by popular vote rather than by Councillors, was enacted.

Capital works and major state development projects proceeded throughout the year. Electrification of suburban railway lines continued, as did planning and work for planned electricity generation projects. Construction of the Wivenhoe Dam proceeded. Coal exports increased. In 1983, the

Department of Mines had estimated that Queensland's coal reserves amounted to 5,560 million tonnes of coking coal and 8,250 million tonnes of non-coking coal. The value of coal exports in 1983 was \$1,563.7 million (\$324.5 million higher than in 1981-82), of which \$1,093.2 million, or 69.9 per cent, went to Japan.