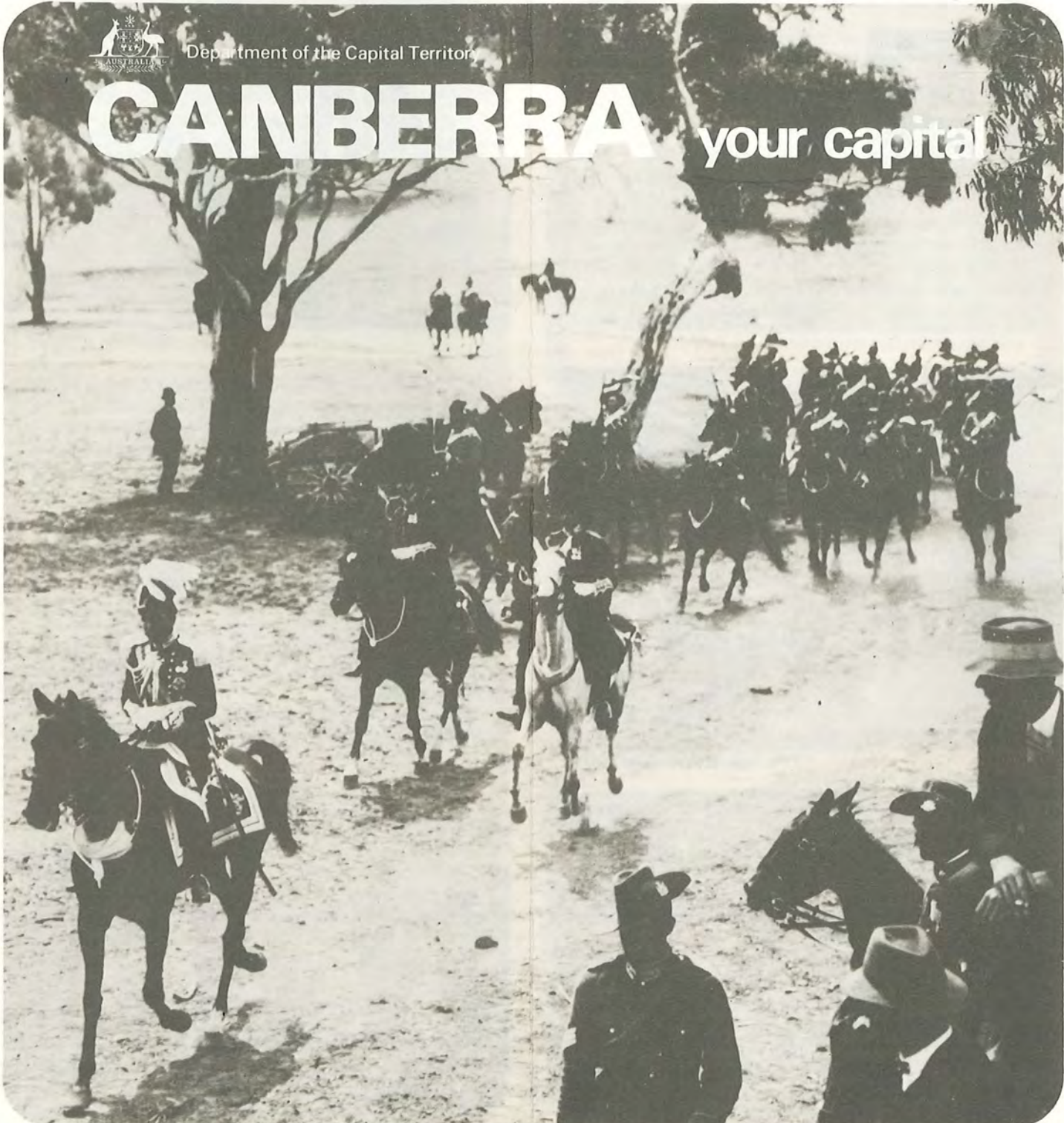




Department of the Capital Territory

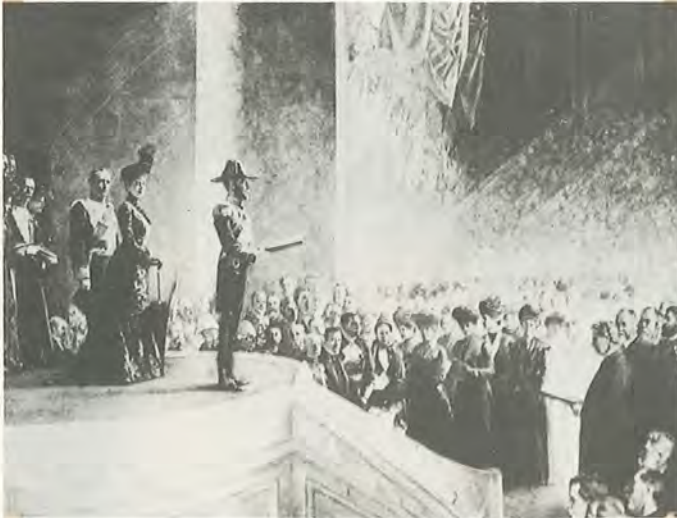
CANBERRA

your capital





ISTORY suggests that in a federation there is a need for the nation's capital to be separately identified and to be dissociated from any city which has served one of the component States. So we have Washington, New Delhi and more recently Brasilia, all established deliberately to serve as the seat of government for the nation as a whole.



First Federal Parliament 1901

The creation of a separate federal capital is particularly important in a democracy which must ensure that minority viewpoints are heard and that no one interest becomes dominant.

Not all the proponents of federation, which ultimately brought about the birth of Canberra, took this long-sighted view. In the latter stages of the movement towards federation, conflict developed between some who wanted Sydney and others who wanted Melbourne to have the honour of becoming the nation's capital. Wiser counsels prevailed and eventually the following provision was included in the Constitution:



Canberra surveyors

'The seat of Government of the Commonwealth shall be determined by the Parliament, and shall be within territory which shall have been granted to, or acquired by, the Commonwealth, and shall be vested in and belong to the Commonwealth, and shall be in the State of New South Wales, and be distant not less than 100 miles from Sydney.'

Queen Victoria's assent to the Australian Constitution Act was given on 9 July 1900 and almost immediately the search for a capital began. Many towns in New South Wales put forward their claims and two Royal Commissions were held before Parliament decided in 1908 that the capital would be located in the Yass-Canberra district. In 1909 the exact site for the new city was fixed.

An area of 2356 square kilometres was transferred from New South Wales to the Commonwealth in

Pegging the site, 1913



January 1911 and shortly afterwards an international competition was launched to find a design for the city.

At a unique ceremony held on 12 March 1913 the city was named Canberra by Lady Denman, wife of the Governor-General. At this ceremony Australia's first Prime Minister, Sir Edmund Barton, returned to the principle of independence, when he said:

'Australia will be mistress in her own house and there will be no room for complaint of provincial influences in the pursuit of national aims'. An equally important point was made by W. M. Hughes: 'This function we are taking part in is a visible and outward sign of Commonwealth spirit'.



Walter Burley Griffin, architect

The site chosen for Canberra had great natural beauty but was virtually uninhabited so the Commonwealth had to start from scratch when it set out to build the new capital to the winning design in the competition. This had been submitted by 37-year-old Walter Burley Griffin, a landscape architect from Chicago and a former associate of the famous American architect Frank Lloyd Wright.

Griffin came to Canberra in 1913 to supervise the construction of the city but little building work had been carried out by 1920 because of the over-riding demands of World War I. The Government then decided



Naming the national capital 1913

to push on quickly with the job of building the capital and such good progress was made that by 9 May 1927 the Parliament was able to sit for the first time in Canberra (it had been temporarily located in Melbourne since 1901).

The rapid development of the city now seemed to be assured but soon the first cold winds of the depression were developing and once again the growth of the national capital almost ceased.

Then came World War II, a testing time for the nation which revealed clearly how greatly handicapped were the nation's leaders because of the still incomplete state of the capital (at this stage few Commonwealth departments had their headquarters in Canberra and as a result Cabinet sometimes met in three places—Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne—in as many weeks).

St John's Church—early landmark



After the war the building of Canberra was resumed, a process greatly accelerated by the establishment of the National Capital Development Commission which was made responsible for the 'planning, development and construction of Canberra as the National Capital of the Commonwealth'. So rapid was the early growth of the city that a population of 150 000 was reached in 1972. The growth rate has now settled and the projected population for the year 2000 is 380 000.

Canberra has other important facets in addition to its role as the seat of government. At the 1913 naming ceremony the Prime Minister, Andrew Fisher, had expressed the hope that the city would become a seat of



Opening Parliament, Canberra 1927

learning as well as politics.

Important centres of learning and research, such as the Australian National University, the Australian Academy of Science, the National Library of Australia and the CSIRO, now established in Canberra, testify to its importance in this part of the nation's life.

Canberra already enshrines and symbolises some of the greatest achievements and highest endeavours of the Australian people. It is a city which belongs to all Australians . . . a small mirror of the nation. Sir Robert Garran, one of the architects of Federation, had this to say of it:

'More and more is the word "Canberra" becoming a

ArchivesACT



Prime Minister Andrew Fisher

symbol of the Commonwealth. And it is undoubtedly an integrating force in a country that has a longer period of disunion behind it than of union, so that its citizens need an occasional reminder that they are more than Queenslanders or Victorians—they are Australians. Canberra is more than a city, it is an idea; and as the city grows, the idea grows with it'.

Cover: Commonwealth ceremony 1913

Sir Edmund Barton

