



## Sir John Forrest (1847-1918)

**Member for Swan (Western Australia) 1901-1918**

**B**orn at Preston Point, Western Australia, John Forrest was a noted explorer. Forrest qualified as a surveyor in 1865 and in 1869 undertook the first of many successful explorative expeditions in Western Australia. Forrest was given a seat in the Western Australian Legislative Council in 1883 as a consequence of his appointment as Commissioner of Crown Lands. On the implementation of a new Constitution for Western Australia in 1890, he was elected to the Legislative Assembly as the member for Bunbury and became leader of the government. He was unchallenged as Premier for ten years.

Forrest was a consistent supporter of federation and attended the federal conventions of 1891 and 1897-98, where he was vigilant in ensuring that the interests of Western Australia should not suffer in a federal agreement.

Forrest was invited to join the Barton Ministry in January 1901 and at the first federal election in March 1901 was returned unopposed to represent the federal seat of Swan in the House of Representatives. He served as Postmaster-General, Minister for Defence and Minister for Home Affairs and was Treasurer in five ministries. Strongly critical of the Labor Party, Forrest rallied the anti-socialist element in Parliament to achieve the Fusion Government of 1909, and laid the foundations for the formation of the Liberal Party. Forrest resigned from the ministry owing to ill health in 1918 and set sail aboard a troopship to the United Kingdom for medical treatment. He died while the ship was anchored off the coast of Sierra Leone.

In 1891 Forrest became the first Australian to be appointed Knight Commander of the St Michael and St George (KCMG) and in 1918 the first Australian to be granted a peerage. His last few months were spent as First Baron Forrest of Bunbury.

The electorate of Swan was named after a local geographic feature (Swan River, which was discovered and named by the Dutch explorer, Willem de Vlamingh in 1697, after the famous black swans of the area).