



## William Henry Groom (1833?-1901)

**Member for Darling Downs (Queensland) March to August 1901**

William Groom was born in England. He was transported to Australia for seven years in 1849 after being convicted of stealing. He was conditionally pardoned in October 1849 and worked in the Bathurst and Turon areas in New South Wales. He became assistant manager of a local business and correspondent of the *Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal*. In 1854 he was sentenced to road labour for three years after being convicted of gold stealing. On his release he migrated to Queensland where he set up as a storekeeper and auctioneer at Drayton.

Groom's business enterprises prospered and he became the sole proprietor of the *Toowoomba Chronicle* which became the most powerful newspaper in the Darling Downs area. He was the first Mayor of Toowoomba in 1861, an office he later held five times. In 1862 Groom was elected to the Queensland Legislative Assembly seat for Drayton and Toowoomba, which he held almost continuously until 1901.

In March 1901 he successfully stood as a Protectionist for the seat of Darling Downs in the House of Representatives at the first federal election. Already in his late sixties at the time of election, and with many years of parliamentary experience behind him, Groom was invited to speak first in the Address-in-Reply to the Governor-General on the first day of sitting. He died in August that year, the first member of the federal Parliament to die in office. His son Littleton Ernest Groom succeeded him as member for the House of Representatives for Darling Downs.

The electorate of Darling Downs was named after its locality. The Darling Downs district was named after Sir Ralph Darling, a Governor of New South Wales.