



Charles McDonald (1860-1925)

Member for Kennedy (Queensland) 1901-1925

Charles McDonald was born in North Melbourne, Victoria. He was apprenticed initially as a printer and then transferred to watchmaking. In 1888 he moved to Charters Towers in Queensland where he became involved with the labour movement. President of the Australian Labor Federation in Queensland 1890-92, he organised support for strikers during the shearers' strike in 1891, and was known as "Fighting Charlie". In 1893 he was elected to the Queensland Legislative Assembly for the seat of Flinders.

Despite his initial opposition to federation "as a middle-class device for diverting the needs of Labour", he successfully stood for the federal seat of Kennedy in the House of Representatives at the first federal election in 1901. McDonald held the seat continuously from 1901 until his death in 1925. He was Chairman of Committees 1906-10 and was the first Labor Speaker of the House of Representatives 1910-1913, an office he held again 1914-17. A noted republican, McDonald did not wear the traditional Speaker's wig and gown and had the ceremonial mace removed from the table of the House of Representatives.

The electorate of Kennedy was named after Edmund Kennedy (1818-1848), explorer.