



Sir George Turner (1851-1916)

Member for Balaclava (Victoria) 1901-1906

George Turner was born in Melbourne, Victoria, and from the age of 14 worked in the legal profession, being admitted as an attorney in 1881. He was Mayor of St Kilda City 1887-88 and entered the Victorian colonial parliament as a Liberal Protectionist in 1889. In 1894 he became the first Australian-born Premier of Victoria. He won much respect in Victoria for his commonsense, practical approach in the implementation of a moderately liberal reform package. An active supporter of federation, Turner was prominent at the Australasian Federal Convention 1897-98, where he served on the Constitutional and Finance committees, and was instrumental in obtaining public acceptance for federation in Victoria.

In January 1901, Turner was invited to join the first federal cabinet by Edmund Barton. Resigning the Victorian premiership, Turner became the first federal Treasurer and at the March election was returned for the federal seat of Balaclava. Although a supporter of protection, Turner was essentially a non-party man. He held the Treasury portfolio in three ministries and although at times considered overcautious, Turner successfully laid the foundation for the Commonwealth's economic development.

Plagued by ill health, Turner retired from Parliament in 1906 and returned to his legal practice. He was Chairman of Commissioners of the State Savings Bank of Victoria from 1906. Turner was knighted and appointed a Privy Counsellor in 1897 at Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee celebrations in London.

The electorate of Balaclava was named after a local feature (Railway station). Balaclava is a name associated with the Crimean War.