

# GRAPEVINE CUTTINGS (August 2007)

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## A Constitutional Proposal & Early Bendigo Vineyards

### Did you know that –

In 1912 John Boyd Steel, Founder and President of the Young Australia Party, drafted a proposed “New Constitution for Australia” to be known as the “Commonwealth Constitution Act, Australia No.1”

One of the main features of this new constitution was to divide Australia into 22 Provinces and 7 Territories. The Provinces were to be local governing areas thus eliminating the States as the middle tier of government. The Territories, made up from sparsely populated areas would, presumably, be directly administered by the Commonwealth. Victoria was to be divided into 3 Provinces, the central area that included Bendigo, was to be named Myora.

The Senate would be composed of 2 Senators from each Province and the House of Representatives would have 4 Members from each Province. Senators and Members would serve 5-year terms, which implies fixed government terms.

Now, have a guess where the proposed Commonwealth Capital was to be located. Where else could you locate a centralised government? Alice Springs of course.

Since Federation there have been other attempts at proposing alternative constitutional ideas, but these were probably mere academic exercises. Removing one tier of government would not be in the interests of state politicians. Great Britain, with a population nearly 3 times that of Australia, seems to manage with a two tier system of government. With modern communications, the ‘tyranny of distance’ is not now a valid reason for a three-tier system.

### Did you also know that –

The first vineyards were planted in the Bendigo district in the mid 1850s only a few years after the discovery of gold. By 1864 there were nearly forty vigneron producing a wide variety of table and wine grapes mainly along Bullock Creek, Sheepwash Creek, Emu Creek, Axe Creek and the Campaspe River.

One of the most prominent wine merchants at the time was Frederick Klemm who had a *wine manufactory* in Mundy Street. The wine merchants processed the fruit from the vineyards, often blending the wines to make a more standard and marketable product.

A selection of local wines was exhibited at the 1873 Vienna Exhibition. The judges were surprised by the quality and purported to have remarked that “no colonial wine could be that good”. To commemorate the centenary of the arrival of the First Fleet, an International Exhibition was held in the purposely-built exhibition building in Carlton. Over the years 1888 and 1889 this huge exhibition covered a wide range of interests promoting commerce and industry, arts and science, progress and education as well as entertainment and tourism.

Vignerons from the Bendigo district that exhibited wines at this Exhibition were A.Bruhn of Emu Creek, F.Grosse of Strathfieldsaye, H.Meyer of Mandurang and F.K.Shaw of Goornong. Records indicate that none of them won any medals.

The discovery of the vine disease, phylloxera, in the district in 1893 resulted in the destruction of the vineyards and the demise of this promising industry. It wasn't until seventy years later, in the 1960s, that a resurgence began. You can see today how successful this industry has become.

Source: The Bendigo Historical Society archives.