



*Crisis Simulation*

# **The Emu Wars - The Labor Party of Australia**

**Imran Aly Rassiwalla**  
*Chair*



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# The Emu Wars

## *Letter from the Chairs*

Dear Delegates and Sponsors,

We are pleased to welcome you to GSMUN XXVI's Emu Wars Committee! My name is Imran Aly Rassiwalla, and I am extremely excited and passionate about this committee. I've proposed this committee for the past three years, and am inordinately glad that it finally got support under this administration. I could ask for no better swan-song to my high school chairing career. Although The Emu Wars is an inherently jovial topic, I am willing (and have equipped you all) to add as much depth to the committee as you want.

Alas, dear delegates and sponsors, we have come to the obligatory "bio" of the letter. I am a senior at Maggie Walker who has been a part of Model United Nations since freshman year. At Maggie Walker, I am co-captain of our school's debate team, a member of the One Small Step Organizing Team, President of Japanese National Honor Society, and a representative on the School's Advisory Council. Outside of Maggie Walker, I am Vice-President of Youth Club (a local community service organisation), a member of the Fixate Team, and dabble in improv. My favourite subject is history, and (unsurprisingly) I prefer Crisis Committees. In my spare time, I like to play video games, read, and call my friends.

You may have noticed two abnormalities in your research for this committee. First, the two background guides, and second, the absence of topics. There are, indeed, two background guides, one for Labour and one for the United Australia Party. This, while it may seem confusing and counterintuitive, has several benefits. Let's be honest, reading is hard. Reading 16 pages on a topic you only mildly care about with an obtuse dual-column format? Even moreso. By splitting the background guides on party lines, I have reduced the amount of reading for you to write a satisfactory position paper. You are free to peruse the other guide, and it would enrich your experience (you could even use it as an example of an outside source), but it is by no means a requirement. Second is the lack of topics. I have, for many years, harboured the sentiment that topics have no place in Crisis Committees. They are meant for GAs and (maybe) specialised, but crisis is meant to reflect an ongoing situation, not one that is handicapped by confining debate to a specific sector.

In terms of personal guidelines, first I would recommend drawing a smiley face on the back of your position paper (or just a :) somewhere on the page if you submit digitally) in order to unequivocally receive full credit for your paper. Position papers, reflecting Australia, should be written in British English. I personally prefer first person, but any point of view or combination thereof is permitted. The paper should also be 12-point Times New Roman, double-spaced, with one inch margins and citations in Chicago Manual of Style (CMS). Position papers are bound to Maggie Walker's code of conduct, meaning zero tolerance for any plagiarism. This includes generative Artificial Intelligence. It would be a disservice to yourself and your own enjoyment to let a computer algorithm dictate your behaviour for a weekend, and although (admittedly) I likely wouldn't be able to catch an infraction, you would be disappointing yourself and your potential as a delegate. Please send your paper to the chair by email by 5 pm on the day of the conference, or be ready to turn it in at the start of the conference.

Lastly, but certainly not least, please remember to bring money! We will be selling food and merchandise to raise donations for our charity, The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, a global leader in the fight against blood cancer. Work diligently on your research (or don't). If nothing else, make sure to get some rest in these ever increasingly busy times. I look forward to seeing you all in committee!

Your Chair,

Imran Aly Rassiwalla  
gsmunxxvi.emu@gmail.com

**PROPERTY OF THE LABOR PARTY OF AUSTRALIA**

**AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY BACKGROUND MANUAL  
TWELFTH EDITION**

**PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA**

**JUNE 1, 1932**

## **COLLECTIVE BACKGROUND**

When the United Kingdom joined World War I, the British Dominion of Australia was drawn in. Public support for the war was high in Australia, with the government pledging 20,000 troops to the war.<sup>1</sup> However, as the horrors of sluggish trench warfare sullied a supposedly easy victory, more and more Australians opposed the war. In response, the Australian government censored the media, interned Germans, restricted free speech, and suppressed political opposition. Despite this political censorship, by 1916, enlistments had dropped from the high of 35,000 men per a month to a mere 6,000. This was coincided by a wave of strikes that only intensified in 1917.<sup>2</sup> By the time Germany finally surrendered in late 1918, Australia faced over 200,000 casualties in a country numbering only five million, the highest casualty rate of any belligerent in the war.<sup>3</sup> An additional 12,000 Australians would die due to the Spanish Flu pandemic.

At the Paris Peace Conference, Australia demanded both increased independence from the British Crown and that Germany pay for the total cost of the war. The nation achieved both, but only to an extent. Germany would pay Australia five million pounds in reparations, and Australia, while still a dominion, would be considered a full-fledged member of the new League of Nations.<sup>4</sup> Early on, the Australian government worried that this new League would recognise the equality of all races, compromising the government's ability to suppress aboriginal rights, but luckily for the segregated government, they were able to successfully argue against the proposal.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, Australia gained the German portion of New Guinea and parts of Nauru, a small island in the Pacific Ocean—Northeast of Australia. As a whole, the conference was a success for Australia, but the Australian people would never forget that their new dominions, wealth, and independence were paid for in blood.

In the words of Prime Minister Stanley Bruce, 1920s Australia was defined by “men, money and markets.” With the uncertainties of new technologies, the Bolsheviks of the Soviet Union looming close, and the memory of *The War to End All Wars* still fresh, Australia experienced a turbulent but economically fruitful time.<sup>6</sup> Strikes, movies, steam, communists, agrarians, prohibitionists, and corruption all defined this new era.

The Australian government also instituted a plan for veterans to settle on Australia's vast interior, a prize for their service.<sup>7</sup> Oftentimes, this ‘empty’ land was occupied by aboriginals, the indigenous peoples of Australia who were systematically oppressed by the British during colonisation and afterward. This land grant initiative would prove mostly unsuccessful, especially for aboriginal veterans.<sup>8</sup> Only three Aboriginal veterans would be granted land, out of over one thousand.<sup>9</sup>

As Australia entered the latter half of the 1920s, its economy was already showing signs of turmoil. Australia's policy of borrowing heavily to complete infrastructure projects and its dependence on exports, led to an economic recession by 1927.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the Australian pound was tied to the British pound sterling, which returned to the gold standard in 1925. When a currency, like the British pound, is on the gold standard, its value is directly connected to gold, often creating deflationary pressures that drastically increase the value of the currency.<sup>11</sup> This sudden change in the value of the Australian pound severely damaged the export economy. Therefore, when the New York Stock Exchange crashed in 1929, Australia was wholly unprepared for its economic future.<sup>12</sup>

Both Labor and the United Australia Party collectively shared memories of World War I and the turbulent Twenties. However, from the Great Depression onwards, our

stories would diverge, before crashing into each other today—June 1, 1932.

Welcome honourable Labor MP, to the Emu Wars: Australian Labor Party Background Guide. As a member of the Australian parliament, it is crucial that you understand the recent history of your party. Currently, it has been three years since the Depression started, and our party has been voted out of the majority. Allow me to explain.

### **AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY BACKGROUND**

Following the economic unrest in Australia, the Nationalist Party, a more pro-war and conservative breakaway of our party, was voted out of office. After twelve years in the opposition, the Labor Party is finally back in power.<sup>13</sup> Our victory was such a landslide that the Nationalist Prime Minister even lost his seat. Unfortunately, we came to power just a couple of days before the Wall Street Crash of 1929. Our party leaders immediately set out to remediate this crisis, ripping Australia off the gold standard and listening to the advice of Sir Otto Niemeyer, a representative of the Bank of England, in order to draft the Melbourne Plan.<sup>14</sup> By raising taxes and cutting pensions, the government would be given more capital to remediate the crisis. It was the traditional approach taken by nations throughout history and stood in contrast to the radical proposals of men like John Maynard Keynes, who suggested that it was possible to spend your way out of a recession.<sup>15</sup>

Unfortunately, some men like Treasurer Ted Theodore bought into Keynes' vision and suggested inflationary spending measures similar to those suggested by Keynes. Some small parts of his philosophy would still make it into the finally adopted plan.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, New South Wales Labor Premier Jack Lang proposed the "Lang Plan." This populist plan involved reducing interest on government bonds (loans from the government to citizens) to 3%, and for the

government to stop paying its loans altogether.<sup>17</sup> The final plan was signed by all Premiers and the Prime Minister, and, therefore, was dubbed the Premier's Plan. It involved a 20% cut on all spending (including a reduction in wages and pensions), a 22.5% reduction in interest rates that the government paid on internal loans, and tax increases.<sup>18</sup> However, this would not satiate Theodore and Lang. In his own province, Lang would go on to implement the ideologically pure version of his plan, leading to New South Wales defaulting on his debt payments and Lang's removal from office.<sup>19</sup> Although Lang may now be gone, his supporters remain vital to the Labor coalition, and have christened themselves as "Lang Labor." In contrast, Theodore's ideas faced more backlash in Labor, and the Prime Minister soon assumed control of the role of the Treasurer.<sup>20</sup>

Though taking the Australian pound off the gold standard seemed like a good emergency measure, it led to a 30% reduction in the value of the Australian pound, making imports far more expensive.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, the backlash of Lang's dismissal meant that we couldn't afford to lose any more of our coalition. So, begrudgingly, Ted Theodore would return to his post as treasurer, and Labor would be more open to Keynesian economics.<sup>22</sup> Though I noted our earlier disdain for Keynes' philosophy, it has shown some measure of success in the Roosevelt administration of the United States.<sup>23</sup> While the predominant view in our party is still that Keynesian economics would have detrimental long-term effects, we refuse to take it entirely off the table.

This decision, along with the populist elements of the Premier's Plan, frustrate one of our most ideologically conservative members, Joseph Lyons, who threatens to leave the Labor Party to form the United Australia Party. His new party supports only balancing the budget and cutting spending.<sup>24</sup> Due to the Depression, his party may gain power in the most recent 1932 elections, by a

strong margin. By combining both houses, their coalition would control eighty-one seats to our measly thirty.<sup>25</sup>

However, despite their power, all hope is not lost. The United Australia Party, as the ones in power, now have to deal with the responsibility of ending the Depression, or being blamed for its continuance. Furthermore, the United Australia Party has to deal with a new threat that has recently ravaged our farmland.<sup>26</sup> Scientists call them *Dromaius Novaehollandiae*, others call them Emus, but as for me, I call them the Birds from Purgatory.

### **TOPIC: THE BIRDS FROM PURGATORY**

Veterans of the First World War were given land in the interior to settle and farm on. These plots were generally in Western Australia, and weren't actually fertile.<sup>27</sup> After the start of the Depression, with imports declining, soldiers turned into farmers to grow wheat. The government promised to subsidise the crop, but never fulfilled that oath due to external.<sup>28</sup> As the United Australia Party comes to power, farmers are continuously suffering. The price of wheat has fallen dramatically, adding to their distress. Farmers are now threatening to refuse to deliver the wheat, risking all Australian citizens. Additionally, some 20,000 Emus have begun to ravage the farmland in Western Australia.<sup>29</sup> When Emus eat wheat crops, they also knock over the fences, making it easier for smaller fauna to come to eat the remaining crop. Farmers now risk the dissemination of their crops and the destruction of their property.<sup>30</sup> The Emu is also a nasty bird, standing up to seventy-three inches tall and travelling at up to thirty miles per hour.<sup>31</sup>

The threat of independence also looms over the state of Western Australia. By this point, our great country has only existed for a mere thirty years, and regionalism still threatens to fracture us apart. The threat of independence from Western Australia is nothing new, but some, especially the United

Australia Party, worry that this may be the straw that breaks the camel's back.<sup>32</sup>

Politicians in the Party, like Sir George Pearce, have even suggested using weapons of war to dispatch of the Emu threat.<sup>33</sup> However, this may just be the lucky break our party has been looking for since the Great Depression fell into our lap a few days after assuming power. If the United Australia Party embarrasses itself in Western Australia, it would assuredly bolster our own power. It is just a matter of figuring out how best to capitalise on these Birds from Purgatory.

Today is June 1, 1932. We stand at the crux of the unknown. The United Australia Party hopes to rework the very fabric of our economy, transitioning from an Agrarian to an Industrial state. Emus continue to ravage the crops in Western Australia day after day. War draws closer and closer. In the rest of the world, Joseph Stalin commands the Soviet Union is attempting to expand outward, threatening our Pacific domains. Germany turns to extremism, and once again we are threatened by the prospect of being drawn into a European conflict due to our status as a dominion.<sup>34</sup> The Great Depression engulfs the entire world. And, in the midst of it all, we stand here. Good luck, members of parliament. Whether young or old, new or experienced, regardless, the future is now in your hands.

### **POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS**

#### **Economics**

Currently, it is the position of the United Australia Party to follow the Premier's Plan exactly: reducing spending, raising taxes, and increasing the interest rate on bonds.<sup>35</sup> For most members of the Australian Labor party, this is a good foundation. However, we diverge in the belief that this alone is not enough. The two policies that most Labor MP's uphold as necessary to supplement the Premier's Plan are defaulting on debts and inflationary spending.

First, we must default on debts. Australia does not have the capital to repay

debts currently without causing mass anguish amongst our people. While it may hurt our credit in the long run and make food more expensive after the Depression, people are currently dying of starvation and wasting away in poverty. The Labor Party, unlike the United Australia Party, supports a measure that will greatly relieve the people in the short term. Not only is this best for the people, it is best for the Party. Incorporating such measures by pausing our debt payments (both domestically and abroad) would allow us to fully reincorporate the breakaway Lang Labor into our coalition, and the relief would give us more political capital that could bring us back to power in the upcoming elections. Additionally, it is important to show that, even if the United Australia Party eventually supports this proposal, it is a Labor proposal first and foremost.

The second measure of borrowing excessively in order to spend our way out of the depression may seem incompatible with both the Premier's Plan and the Lang Plan. Some Labor party members indeed espouse this sentiment, believing that Keynesian economics and Keynesian economics alone can save us from the Depression. Other more moderate members of the Labor party believe in ditching the Lang Plan and creating a compromise between Keynesian principles and the Premier's Plan. This new proposal would involve borrowing heavily, but still cutting some services in order to provide the services most essential to economic recovery and revitalization. Finally, some Labor party members are hopeful that Keynesian economics can be incorporated into both the Lang Plan and Premier's Plan, pausing debt repayment while still borrowing. While this plan may be the least 'grounded' in the traditional sense, if it works it would be the quickest way to pull Australia out of the Great Depression.

At the end of the day, while our party members are divided on how to incorporate the Lang Plan and Keynesian economics into the Premier's Plan, we all seem to agree with

Keynes' quote that "difficulty lies not so much in developing new ideas as in escaping from old ones."<sup>36</sup> No matter what path Australia takes in the future, it is clear that the traditional Premier's Plan is not enough to help us escape from this very non-traditional economic Depression.

As for the situation with the Emus, our most popular proposal is to provide economic subsidies to farmers. This is something that still splits the Labor Party, with some believing that we don't have the economic capital to provide subsidies. Furthermore, if the fairly conservative Western Australia did secede from the union, it would arguably be better for our party. With fewer United Australia Party seats, we would be one step closer to the majority, and the capital saved by not providing the subsidies could be crucial in the economic recovery plan we implement when we finally return to power.<sup>37</sup>

However, those who do support subsidies argue that the government would heavily suffer from the loss of Western Australia in terms of capital produced. Though it is not the best farmland, as we switch to a more industrial economy the fertility of land is becoming less and less relevant. Furthermore, urbanisation coincides with liberalisation, making the province invaluable for our party in the long run.<sup>38</sup> In the short term, those who support this proposal also argue that by providing subsidies and promoting it as a Labor initiative, we may be able to win Western Australia, a feat considered by many to be impossible.

Finally, there are those most cynical and conniving members in our party who suggest that the best course of action would be to subtly nudge the United Australia Party to use weapons of war on the Emus, actively "going to war with birds." In an already economically tumultuous period, doing so would surely make the United Australia Party unpopular with the people. However, we can go even further.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What policies can the Labor Party implement from the sideline in order to ensure that we win the next election?
2. How can we win back Lang Labor, and incorporate them into our coalition as they currently stand on the sideline?
3. What is the best way for Australia to escape from the Great Depression? What economic policies should supplement the Premier's Plan?
4. What should we do with the threat of secession and Emu's from the West? Should we seek to gain the favour of Western Australia, or stoke the flames of war?

## FURTHER RESEARCH

1. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iIRz52AQIMk&ab\\_channel=ExtraHist](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iIRz52AQIMk&ab_channel=ExtraHist)

1. [ory](#): Video describing the economic tensions behind the Emu Wars
2. Experience of Nationhood: A classic history textbook describing Australia's history in the 20th century
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4. <https://web.archive.org/web/20190721205219/http://primeministers.naa.gov.au/primeministers/scullin/in-office.aspx>: A source detailing Australia's Prime Ministers and the split occurring between parties
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## Endnotes

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16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
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19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
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