

Vote for another Braund

Branches 1 & 4

Michael Braund

The article by the Research Team in the December 2017 issue of the Journal describes the electioneering efforts of Richard Braund of Norwich for the municipal elections in 1927. Another Braund, a few years earlier, and this time in Australia, went through a similar process. This was George Frederick Braund (branches 1 and 4) when he ran as the selected Liberal¹ and Farmers and Settlers candidate for the Armidale electorate, in the State elections of 1913. This paper will examine the electioneering efforts of George Braund.

The life of George Frederick Braund has been described elsewhere². He excelled at sport, especially fencing and boxing, and represented New South Wales in rugby union in 1888. He coached gymnastics, assisted with the cadet corps at The Armidale School (a leading public school for boys), and was involved in literary and drama groups in Armidale. George was a local magistrate, president of the Armidale Chamber of Commerce, a member of the board of The Armidale School, a director of both the New England Building Society and the Armidale Pastoral and Agricultural Society, and was actively involved in the Farmers and Settlers' Association. He was also a theosophist, believing that his religious beliefs were based on a special insight into divine nature.

Undoubtedly, George played a prominent role in the life of Armidale, but it was as a politician and a soldier that George made his most lasting mark. This article will examine his political career.

During the last years of the nineteenth century, George had been an active member of the Free Trade Party, opposing tariffs. He spent several years promoting his interest in politics.

¹ In Australia, the Liberal party (currently forming federal government as a coalition party with the National party) can loosely be termed centre-right in its emphasis on free markets and small government.

² Braund, M.E., 2007, pages 21-25; Braund, M.E., 2015, pages 24-32.

As early as 1907, he attended a public reception for the State Premier.³ “Mr. G. Braund...spoke in highly complimentary terms of the Carruthers Government, and said that the Premier had ingratiated himself with the people of New South Wales by his able administration of public affairs. Through stress and tumult he had safely brought the country from tribulation and almost despair to progress and prosperity. He had very great pleasure in welcoming him to Armidale”.⁴ He promoted others, too, in their political aspirations. He nominated H.W. Geldard in the East Ward municipal election in Armidale in 1908.⁵ The candidate was unsuccessful.

George took an active interest in events that were in conflict with his nationalistic beliefs. In 1912, a proposal was made for Government House in Sydney to be closed and for the land to be used for recreation. George (wearing his military uniform) protested strongly at a public meeting in Council chambers in Armidale:

The Major believed that the Government, in their action, considered they were doing the best for Sydney by throwing open a large block of beautiful land for the pleasure of the city dwellers, but in the performance of such an act they, were really robbing N.S.W. of a most cherished institution and stripping from those who were to come hereafter an historic landscape and an antique building, with no bitter sentiments attached to it. Not only did Government House represent one of the great links between Australia and the Motherland, but a great link in Australian history. It was the Chief Secretary who had decided that Government House should go, and it was absurd for one man to flaunt his power in such a way. The Major hoped similar protests would come many other centres. What he said he did not say politically, but nationally. No thought of independence should arise in Australia, nor should we presume to stand in the forefront of the nations and unaided defend ourselves. Such action by the Government really

³ Joseph Carruthers

⁴ *Armidale Express* 22 March 1907 page 4.

⁵ *Armidale Express* 24 January 1908 page 4.

meant severing the first single strand of the great cable that binds us to the Empire.⁶

George's language is interesting. He argues strongly that Australia should give no thought to independence and should maintain and strengthen the ties with England (the great cable that binds us to the Empire). The rhetoric would stand him in good stead for his political campaigning that was to follow and his military endeavours that would lead to his death on the battlefield less than three years later.

By mid-1913 George had made his political preference well known. By now a Lieutenant-Colonel, George "expressed his great pleasure in once again being associated with such a splendid educationalist as Mr. Lonsdale"⁷ as the Member announced the construction of new classrooms to the Armidale District School.⁸

Armidale celebrated its Jubilee in November 1913⁹. George was elected a member of the Executive Committee charged with arrangements for celebrating the Jubilee. He did not let the occasion pass without a stirring speech:

Lieutenant-Colonel Braund said it was most right and fitting to pay honour to those who had passed away after conferring inestimable benefits upon the community. They had laboured that we might enjoy. (Applause.) The Colonel referred to his pleasurable residence in Armidale for the past 24 years, and how the city had progressed. And Armidale was yet by no means at its zenith. A very big future was before it – (applause) - such as we of to-day could not dream of. The Colonel offered to assist in the celebrations in any way possible. (Applause.)

⁶ *Armidale Express* 19 July 1912 page 10.

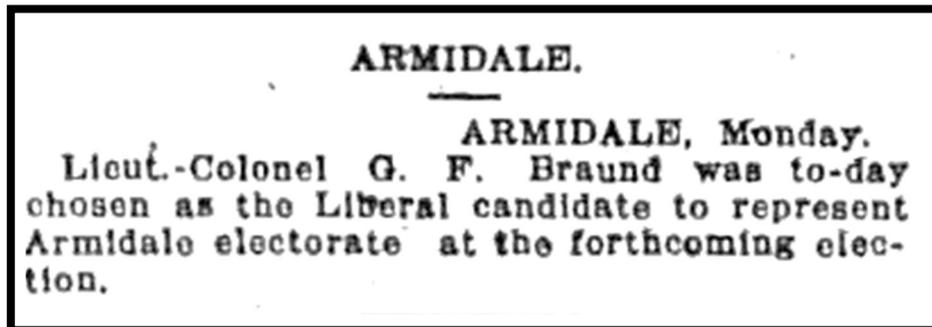
⁷ Edmund Lonsdale was Member for Armidale and it was his death later in 1913, following a car accident, that was to be the catalyst for George's entry into politics. See *Armidale Express* 7 October 1913 page 4.

⁸ *Armidale Express* 1 July 1913 page 4.

⁹ Armidale was proclaimed a municipal area by the Governor of the Colony in 1863. See <http://www.armidaleregional.nsw.gov.au>

George endorsed his support by contributing £2 2s by way of subscription.¹⁰

By 1910, the Free Trade Party amalgamated with the Protectionist Party to become the Fusion Party, though this soon changed its name to the Liberal Party. The new party invited George to contest the Federal seat of New England, but George declined, citing family reasons. In October 1913, though, he was persuaded to contest the Liberal seat of Armidale in the New South Wales Legislative Assembly. It is noteworthy that George used his military title for emphasising his credentials.¹¹



George is the Liberal candidate for Armidale

He won selection easily in both the women's and men's branches with 131 votes from the total votes of 220.¹²

Even though George's return was "regarded as certain" by the *Sydney Morning Herald* (SMH),¹³ he wasted no time in beginning his campaign as the Liberal and Farmers and Settlers candidate for the Armidale State Electorate. His opening schedule was busy, a week spent giving talks in Glen Morrison, St. Leonard's Creek, Round Swamp, Nowendoc, Tia Diggings and Yarrowitch. These meetings were held in halls, a post office and private residences, but George was "everywhere well received". He created a good impression with one correspondent:

A Walcha correspondent, writing to us, (the *Armidale Express*) says :-

"Though Mr. Braund has not had the experience of some of the politicians

¹⁰ *Armidale Express* 22 August 1913 page 2.

¹¹ *Sydney Morning Herald* 21 October 1913 page 7.

¹² *Armidale Chronicle* 22 October 1913 page 3.

¹³ *Sydney Morning Herald* 17 November 1913 page 10.

who have previously visited this portion of the Armidale electorate, yet he has already shown, by his integrity and honesty of purpose, that he is worthy of representing the Liberal cause so ably supported in the past by our late member, Mr. Lonsdale.¹⁴

But not all agreed with this assessment. One newspaper in particular was not enamoured of George or, indeed, the Labor candidate. *The Truth*, published in Sydney, wrote:¹⁵

Storekeeper Braund, of Armidale, is the Lib Advocate selected to wear the mantle of the late Edmund Lonsdale. Braund is the typical "country show committeeman", and unless the Independents get a candidate on the Armidale field the oratory of the campaign in Central New England will be appalling. One can hardly imagine sitting out two hours a'listening to Braund, the Lib, or for a similar period to Eather, the Lab. The latter's platform oratory would be more in keeping with the toast of the "Ladies" at a Sunday School bun struggle than with political platform oratory.¹⁶

George continued his impressive schedule:¹⁷

¹⁴ *Armidale Express* 4 November 1913 page 4.

¹⁵ *The Truth* 26 October 1913 page 3.

¹⁶ According to Wikipedia, the *Sydney Truth*, founded in 1890, claimed to be "The organ of radical democracy and Australian National Independence" and advocated "a republican Commonwealth created by the will of the whole people".. In reality, it was mainly a scandal sheet, exhibited by its eye-catching headlines. The *Sydney Truth*, and its subsidiaries, was replaced by the *Sunday Mirror* in 1958.

¹⁷ *Armidale Express* 4 November 1913 page 5.

GEORGE F. BRAUND,
The Selected Liberal, and Farmers and
Settlers Candidate, for the Armi-
dale State Electorate,
WILL ADDRESS THE ELECTORS
as follows :—

VOOROONGAH, R.O. — TUESDAY,
November 3, 10 a.m.
HERNANI HALL.—TUESDAY, Nov-
ember 4, 2.30.
EBOR HOTEL.—TUESDAY, Novem-
ber 4, 8 p.m.
WONGIWIBINDA.—Mr. T. Porter's,
WEDNESDAY, November 5, 7.30
p.m.
ABERFOYLE HALL.—THURSDAY,
November 6, 2.30 p.m.
WARD'S MISTAKE.—THURSDAY,
November 6, 7.30 p.m.
BACKWATER.—P.O., FRIDAY, Nov-
ember 7, 2.30.
TUBBAMURRA — At Mr. Godfrey
Wall's, FRIDAY, November 7,
7.30 p.m.
BROCKLEY.—At Mr. Ranger's,
SATURDAY, November 8, 3
p.m.
BLACK MOUNTAIN HALL.—SAT-
URDAY, November 8, 7.30 p.m.
ALFRED PURKISS,
Secretary.

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George's busy schedule

He created so much enthusiasm at the meeting at the Anchor Hotel in Wollomombi in early November that a branch of the Liberal League was formed.¹⁸ The same happened after George's appearance at Wongwibinda. His busy tour of these eastern and north-eastern parts of the electorate must have been encouraging for "most marked enthusiasm greeted the Liberal candidate at every centre, without exception".¹⁹ He earned a unanimous vote of confidence following his talk at Ebor.²⁰ The *Glen Innes Guardian* was most impressed:

Advices (*sic*) from Armidale state that Mr. George F. Braund, the selected Liberal candidate, has made a very favourable impression at the centres at

¹⁸ *Armidale Express* 7 November 1913 page 6.

¹⁹ *Armidale Express* 11 November 1913 page 4.

²⁰ *Armidale Express* 11 November 1913 page 2.

which he has spoken. This is not to be wondered at (says the Glen Innes "Guardian") considering the Colonel is one of the brainiest (*sic*) students and keenest business men the Cathedral City possesses.²¹

George wasn't all sweetness and light on the campaign trail. At his Black Mountain meeting he "was frequently applauded, setting forth his party's programme with undoubted ability, and decrying Labour's platform and administration in scathing terms".²²

His next tour, of Tilbuster, Sugar Loaf, Rockvale, Saumarez Ponds, Thalgarrah, Kelly's Plains and Castle Doyle, brought more enthusiasm for his cause and excellent receptions.²³ His energy was noted in the *Armidale Chronicle*: "Day and night he is hammering Liberal politics into the outposts of the electorate, and reports from independent sources prove that he is making very satisfactory headway".²⁴ An appearance in the School of Arts Hall in Armidale on 18 November 1913 to a crowd of 300 was very well received. In a speech lasting some 90 minutes, George "justly condemned the Labor government, and then outlined the policy of the Liberal Party". He "made a wonderful impression".²⁵ One wonders at the impartiality of the newspaper using the word "justly". Another speech, this time at Armidale Town Hall in the same week, demonstrates George's oratory skills and his passion for *Empire and duty*. He obviously was popular:

A remarkable ovation greeted Mr. Braund on rising to speak, ending with three resounding cheers and one feeble attempt at a hoot. Mr. Braund prefaced his speech by saying he would accept that tribute, not for himself but for the cause he represented. He stood that night in a very unexpected position. Five weeks ago he had no idea of a political campaign but he had never shirked the call to public duty -(Applause.) and when the tragic death of their old member caused the Liberal standard to devolve on him he grasped it and strode into the fight. (Applause.) He was conscious of his

²¹ *Armidale Express* 11 November 1913 page 6.

²² *Armidale Express* 11 November 1913 page 8.

²³ *Armidale Express* 14 November 1913 page 4.

²⁴ *Armidale Chronicle* 15 November 1913 page 7.

²⁵ *Armidale Express* 21 November 1913 page 4.

own limits, but filled with the belief that the Liberal cause was best suited to his country he would use every endeavour to carry that flag to victory.
(Applause.)

George then explained how the Liberals were more competent in every facet of government than Labor – the Independents he dismissed altogether – and stressed to the captive audience that it was their choice: to be (Liberal) or not to be (Labor). His speech attracted much applause and even some laughter. Clearly, the audience delighted in George’s words, though he may well have been preaching to the converted for, after George resumed his seat, “three hearty cheers rang out for the Liberal cause, and three feeble responses for the opposition”.²⁶ Further meetings in Boorolong (30 km north-west of Armidale) and Wyndella (17 km south of Boorolong) followed on 26 November.²⁷

An address at the Armidale Town Hall on 27 November, made in conjunction with a speech by the Hon. J. Garland, MLC, did no harm at all to George’s prospects in the up-coming election. His detailed pronouncement of the virtues of the Liberal party were rewarded by prolonged applause.²⁸ But George didn’t have everything his own way. In a letter to the Editor, a Mr. J. Bowman of the Australian Workers’ Union challenged some of the statements made by George in his speech of 27 November. In addition, Mr. Bowman questioned George’s fitness to represent Armidale:²⁹

²⁶ *Armidale Express* 21 November 1913 page 10.

²⁷ *Armidale Chronicle* 26 November 1913 page 5.

²⁸ *Armidale Express* 2 December 1913 page 2.

²⁹ *Armidale Express* 2 December 1913 page 4.



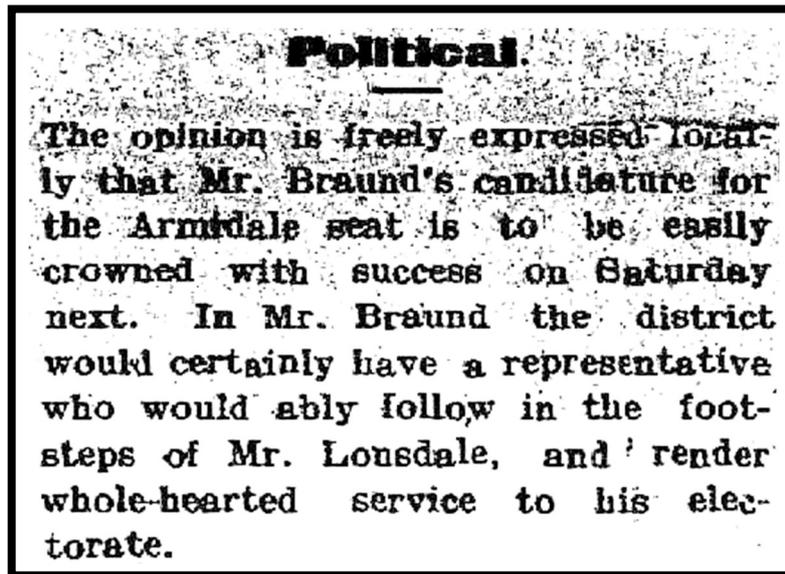
Doubts about George's competence

George, of course, responded, by way of a letter to the Editor, in which he refuted Mr. Bowman's claims, giving evidence to support his claims. He ended his letter by stating that his own standing and political claims he prefers to leave in the hands of the electors.³⁰ Another letter to the Editor, on the day before the election, urged the people of Armidale to vote for George: "Mr. George Braund, in his first political contest, one of Armidale's own leading young citizens (he was 47), grasping the opportunity in both hands, a character which allow no half measures in his representation of the electorate to suffice".³¹ The writer was George Lambert Lonsdale (1869-1947) of Melbourne, an ex-Armidalian and son of Edmund Lonsdale (see page 2 above, and footnote 7). The *Armidale Express*, too, seemed to be supportive of George when it wrote:³²

³⁰ *Armidale Express* 5 December 1913 page 6.

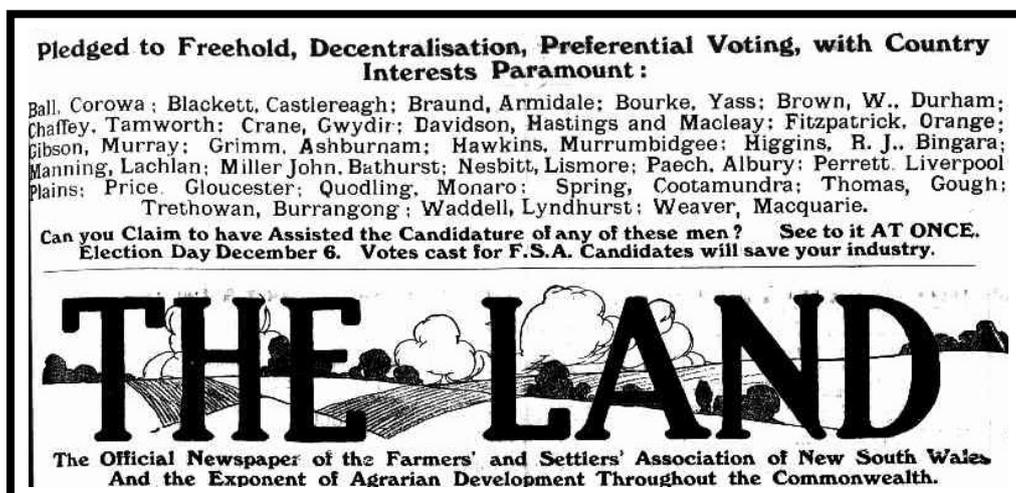
³¹ *Armidale Express* 5 December 1913 page 4.

³² *Armidale Express* 2 December 1913 page 4.



Support from the Armidale Express

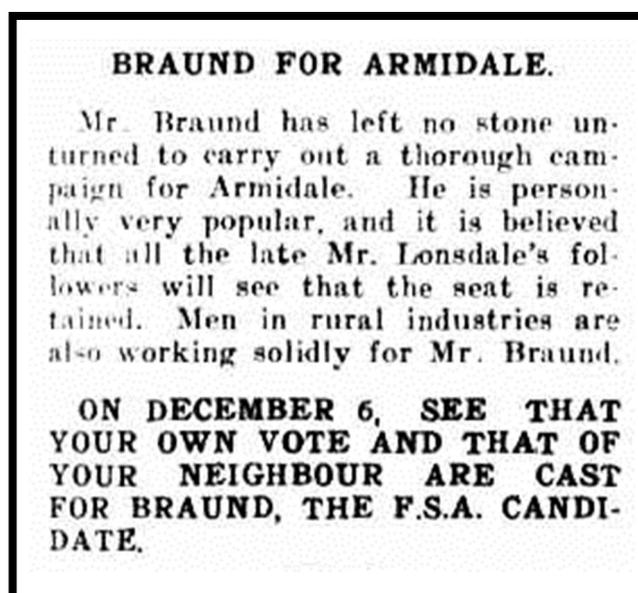
In addition to personal appearances throughout the electorate, George publicised himself widely. His alignment with the Farmers' and Settlers' Association (FSA) meant that he had a strong connection with the farming fraternity. *The Land*, the "Official Newspaper of the Farmers' and Settlers' Association of New South Wales. And the Exponent of Agrarian Development Throughout the Commonwealth", advertised strongly in support of George throughout November 1913. On 7 November, the newspaper asked its readers: "Can you Claim to have Assisted the Candidature of any of the men? See to it AT ONCE. Election Day December 6. Votes cast for F.S.A. Candidates will save your industry".³³



Support from The Land newspaper

³³ *The Land (Sydney)* 7 November 1913 page 1.

The Land also showed its readers how to vote for George by placing a cross in the square against his name and, by so doing, voting for freehold tenure.³⁴ An open letter from the head office of *The Land* to the producers of New South Wales urged its readers to vote for George: "Remebering that unity is strength may I plead with you to see that every available vote is cast in the ineterest of ... Braund for Armidale.... These men are pledged to the platform of the Farmers' and Settlers' Association. You begged for a chance; your opportunity is at hand: see that you take it".³⁵ A last appeal came from the FSA a week before the election:³⁶



More FSA support

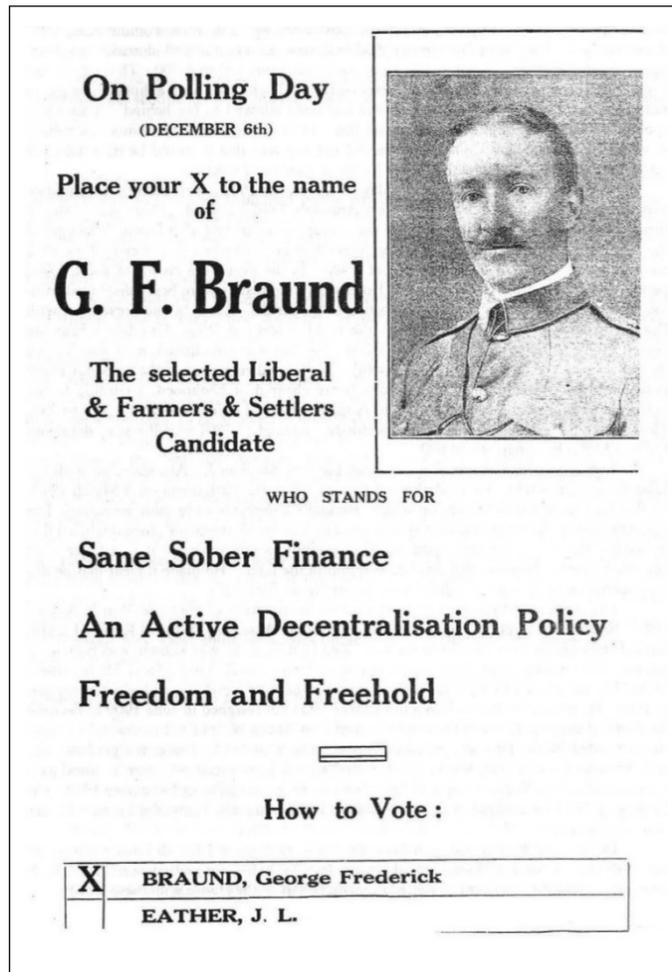
After strenuous campaigning, often travelling by motor-bike, George was ready for the election on 6 December 1913. A final 'how-to-vote' advertisement shows him in army uniform as the selected Liberal and Farmers & Settlers candidate, standing for '*sane, sober finance, an active decentralisation policy and freedom and freehold*'. (See Farrell³⁷ for a brief account of George's election campaign).

³⁴ *The Land (Sydney)* 21 November 1913 page 15.

³⁵ *The Land (Sydney)* 21 November 1913 page 6.

³⁶ *The Land (Sydney)* 28 November 1913 page 3.

³⁷ Farrell, J.J., 2002, pages 113-130.



George's how-to- vote card³⁸

As was expected, George won - by over 700 votes (3939 to 3112, informal 185). The *Armidale Express* was quick to spread the news, proclaiming at a "splendid victory ... meritorious in the extreme... and in the victory (n)o higher tribute to Mr. Braund's worth and popularity could possibly have been paid".³⁹ The result was declared officially by J. B. Fitzgerald, Returning Officer, on 17 December.⁴⁰ George left for Sydney soon after the election, in time for the first session of the new Parliament on 23 December.⁴¹ In spite of the

³⁸ Jubilee Souvenir of the Municipality of Armidale 1863-1913.

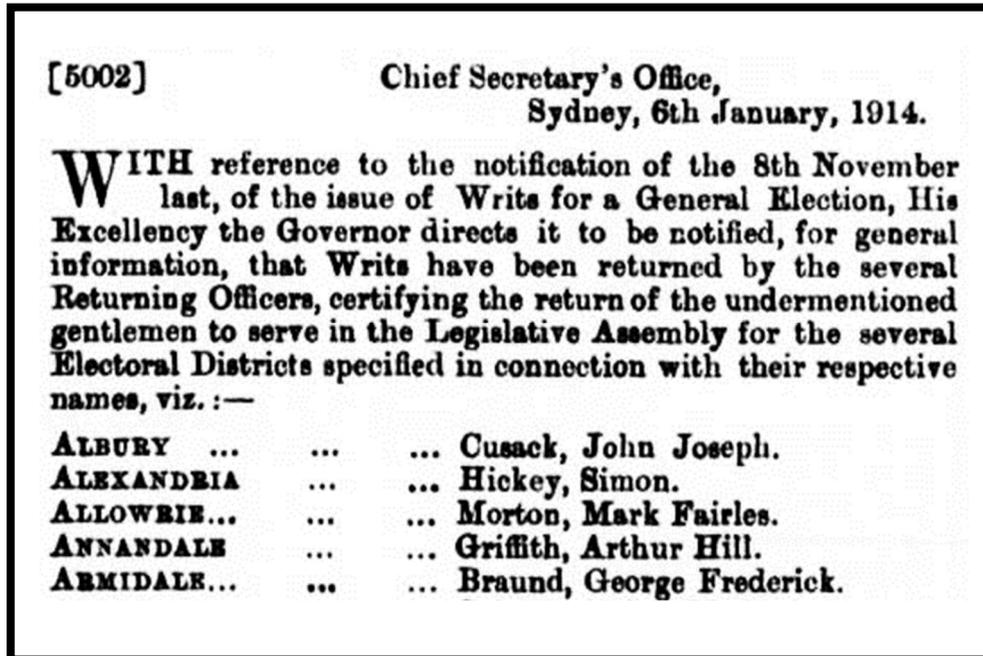
³⁹ *Armidale Express* 9 December 1913 page 4.

⁴⁰ *Armidale Express* 19 December 1913 page 4.

⁴¹ *Armidale Express* 19 December 1913 page 5.

Liberal win in Armidale, the Labor party won State power and George joined the ranks of the Opposition.

A proclamation from the Chief Secretary's Office in January 1914 confirmed George's appointment to serve in the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales.⁴²



George is proclaimed to serve in the Legislative Assembly

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⁴² *Government Gazette of the State of New South Wales* 6 January 1914 page 37.

The Armidale Express and New England General Advertiser (NSW: 1856-1861; 1863-1889; 1891-1954).

The Sydney Morning Herald.

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