

Post-election speech (results not known): Joseph Cook, Opposition Leader (Commonwealth Liberal)

June 2, 1913

“One can’t speak definitely as yet. The figures are so incomplete but it looks as though a change had come over the scene. I am more pleased than I can say at the figures for my own State.

I am afraid there has been a hopeless feeling abroad for some time past, and people had come to think that the late condition of affairs was irrevocable. All that is changed by the figures so far available. To put it plainly, our old State has swung right over; or, shall I say, swung back to its old political moorings. The change is due to many causes which can be better tabulated later.

One may mention at once the better organisation of our party. Too much praise cannot be given to Mr Archdale Parkhill for his skilful and competent handling of the whole elections. In this connection, too, we must speak of the splendid work of our women and their organisations. They have worked most usefully and capably all through to the finish on Saturday night. I mention these as typical of the rest. It seems invidious to single out anyone where all have done so well.

All these victories are tinged with regard for the loss of the brave men who have fallen in battle. We have lost some very fine men, and our public life will be the poorer for their defeat. Sir John Quick and Messrs Gordon, Fairbairn and Hedges seem to have gone down – all of them good men who have rendered conspicuously able service in to their country.

I must mention in this connection also the excellent work put in by those who have fought the hard, hopeless seats. We have been successful, they have failed. But none the less their work has been well done; and they are just as much entitled to praise as those who have won out. In some cases more so, because from the first it was known in their particular cases that the fight was pretty hopeless. Our best thanks are due to those who fought so pluckily and failed.

Last, but not least by any means, I wish to express my obligations to our State con[word unclear] in all the States who have given us great assistance. In connection with my own State I specially mention Mr Wade, the leader of the State Liberals. He has worked as hard for us as he would have done for himself, and we greatly appreciate it. After all, though, the referendum battle was as much theirs as ours.

The fight has done much to weld the Liberal forces of State and Commonwealth, and to bring into greater relief the fact that we are two wings of the one great Liberal army. For details, we must wait until the figures are more nearly complete. The position to say the least is very interesting.

Source: Compiled from Sydney Morning Herald, 3/6/1913 and original documents.