

## The Dismissal, 1975

When he assumed leadership of the Liberal Party in March 1975, Malcolm Fraser pledged that the Opposition would only use its Senate numbers to block supply in the 'most extraordinary and reprehensible circumstances'. Fraser cited the loans affair, 1974–75 as an example of these circumstances in his October announcement that the Opposition would defer voting on the Whitlam government's appropriation bills. For more information on the loans affair please see *Fact sheet 239 – The loans affair, 1974-75*.

Prime Minister Gough Whitlam announced that he would not be forced into calling an early election. The bills were reintroduced and deferred several times. Faced with dwindling funds, the government devised a plan to borrow money from banks so it could continue to pay public servants and creditors when supply ran out.

The Governor-General, Sir John Kerr, met with Fraser and Whitlam several times in an attempt to resolve the Senate deadlock. He also received advice from the Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General on the constitutional position. Controversy still surrounds the role of the Chief Justice of the High Court, Sir Garfield Barwick, who provided advice to the Governor-General before the dismissal.

On 11 November at Government House, Sir John advised Whitlam that he was terminating his commission as prime minister and swore in Malcolm Fraser as caretaker prime minister. On the afternoon of 11 November, the Senate passed the appropriation bills and the two houses were dissolved.

Despite demonstrations across the country, Fraser's Liberal–National Party coalition won the 13 December elections with a devastating swing against the former government. The new Fraser ministry was sworn in on 22 December 1975.

### The records

The National Archives holds many records relating to the dismissal, including departmental and personal records. Some of these files are listed below. Commonwealth records become available once they enter the [open access period](#).

To identify other records, [search the collection](#) using keywords such as ‘double dissolution’, ‘caretaker government’, ‘senate appropriation bills’, or ‘dismissal prime minister’ (with the date ‘1975’).

## Selection of departmental records about the Dismissal

### Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<a href="#">House of Representatives vote of confidence and censure motions against the government</a>	1960–77	A463, 1975/4000
<a href="#">Failure of supply – government employees – reactions to delay of appropriation bills</a>	1975	A463, 1975/4276
<a href="#">Fraser ministry 11 November 1975 – 13 December 1975 – caretaker and administrative arrangements</a>	1974–75	A463, 1975/4375
<a href="#">Addresses to the Governor-General</a>	1975	A463, 1975/4400
<a href="#">Powers of the Senate in relation to supply and constitutional conventions – policy papers</a>	1975	A1209, 1975/1910
<a href="#">The role of the Governor-General in the passage of Supply Bills</a>	1975–76	A1209, 1975/1912
<a href="#">Double dissolution of parliament – 11 November 1975</a>	1975	A1209, 1975/2448
<a href="#">Specific complaints to the Governor-General, regarding the caretaker government – cases</a>	1975	A1209, 1975/2964
<a href="#">Possible rejection of Appropriation Bills by the Senate</a>	1975	A1209, 1978/106 part 1
<a href="#">Possible rejection of Appropriation Bills by the Senate</a>	1975	A1209, 1978/106 part 2
<a href="#">Possible rejection of Appropriation Bills by the Senate</a>	1975	A1209, 1978/106 part 3
<a href="#">Possible rejection of Appropriation Bills by the Senate</a>	1975	A1209, 1978/106 part 4

### Governor-General

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<a href="#">Press clippings and copies of articles relating to the dismissal of the Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, in November 1975</a>	1975–77	A11473

### Attorney-General's Department

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<a href="#">Rejection of Budget – consequences – part 1</a>	1947–75	A432, A1975/6378 [PART 1]
<a href="#">Rejection of Budget – consequences – part 2</a>	1971–75	A432, A1975/6378 [PART 2]
<a href="#">Sir Colin Hannah – revocation of dormant commission</a>	1974–75	A432, A1975/7356
<a href="#">Governor-General and Prime Minister – whether the Governor-General has the power to dismiss a Prime Minister</a>	1975	A432, A1975/7778
<a href="#">Dismissal of Prime Minister by Governor-General</a>	1967–78	A432, A1975/7853 part 1
<a href="#">Dismissal of Prime Minister by Governor-General</a>	1967–75	A432, A1975/7853 part 2

<u>Proposal for bank finance to pay public servants and suppliers</u>	1975	A432, A1975/7866 part 1
<u>Proposal for bank finance to pay public servants and suppliers</u>	1974–79	A432, A1975/7866 part 2
<u>Double dissolution 1975</u>	1975–76	A432, GCD1975/7906
<u>Supply pending Appropriation Act 1975–76</u>	1975	A432, PC1975/7958

## Treasury

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Caretaker government – guidance and background</u>	1974–75	A571, 1975/6607
<u>Deferral of supply 1975 – scheme to facilitate access to finance for employees of and suppliers to the Australian Government – part 1</u>	1974–75	A571, 1975/9083 part 1
<u>Deferral of supply 1975 – scheme to facilitate access to finance for employees of and suppliers to the Australian Government – part 2</u>	1974–75	A571, 1975/9083 part 2
<u>Deferral of supply 1975 – scheme to facilitate access to finance for employees of and suppliers to the Australian Government – part 3</u>	1974–75	A571, 1975/9083 part 3
<u>Deferral of supply 1975 – scheme to facilitate access to finance for employees of and suppliers to the Australian Government – part 4</u>	1974–75	A571, 1975/9083 part 4
<u>Deferral of supply 1975 – scheme to facilitate access to finance for employees of and suppliers to the Australian Government – part 5</u>	1974–75	A571, 1975/9083 part 5
<u>Deferral of supply 1975 – scheme to facilitate access to finance for employees of and suppliers to the Australian Government – part 6</u>	1974–75	A571, 1975/9083 part 6
<u>Deferral of supply 1975 – scheme to facilitate access to finance for employees of and suppliers to the Australian Government – part 7</u>	1974–75	A571, 1975/9083 part 7
<u>Deferral of supply 1975 – scheme to facilitate access to finance for employees of and suppliers to the Australian Government – part 8</u>	1974–76	A571, 1975/9083 part 8

## Selection of records of personal records about the dismissal

### Sir John Kerr

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Letters and telegrams of criticism addressed to the Governor-General, Sir John Kerr</u>	1975–77	A10926
<u>Notes on Mr Whitlam's letter to the Queen of 26 December 1975</u>	1975	M4523, 1 part 4

## Sir Clarence Harders (Secretary, Attorney General's Dept.)

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>The dismissal – advice – compelling the states to act regarding issuing of writs for a half Senate election</u>	1975	M4081, 2/2
<u>The dismissal – advice – opinion of Solicitor-General and Attorney-General regarding exercise of Governor-General's powers in constitutional crisis</u>	1975	M4081, 2/6
<u>The dismissal – double dissolution of parliament – tabling of documents</u>	1975–77	M4081, 2/11 part 1
<u>The dismissal – double dissolution of parliament – tabling of documents</u>	1975–79	M4081, 2/11 part 2
<u>The dismissal – Governor-General – position where the Senate rejects supply</u>	1975	M4081, 2/16
<u>The dismissal – Governor-General – discussions with Secretary of Attorney-General's Department (CW Harders)</u>	1975	M4081, 2/17
<u>The dismissal – reference material – Governor-General (appointment, instructions, role and advice)</u>	1972–75	M4081, 2/20

## Edward Gough Whitlam

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Letter by Mr Whitlam to Martin Charteris (private secretary to Queen Elizabeth II) of 26 December 1975</u>	1975	M1734, 1

## Photographs

You can use our PhotoSearch database to locate photographs relating to the dismissal. Use the search term 'double dissolution' to identify images of interest.

## Further information

For more information about holdings relating to the period of the Whitlam government see:

- *Fact sheet 239 - The loans affair, 1974–75*
- *Fact sheet 240 - The dismissal, 1975*
- [Gough Whitlam: Guide to Archives of Australia's Prime Ministers](#)
- [The Whitlam Years](#) – commentaries on the Cabinet documents of the 1972–75 Whitlam governments.

A collection of personal records of EG Whitlam is held by the [Whitlam Institute](#) at the University of Western Sydney.