

John Malcolm Fraser

Prime Minister of Australia 1975–83

Malcolm Fraser (christened 'John Malcolm', but always known by his second name) was born in Melbourne in 1930, and educated at Tudor House (NSW) and Melbourne Grammar before completing a degree in politics, economics and philosophy at Oxford in 1952.

On returning to the family property 'Nareen' near Warrnambool, Victoria, Fraser joined the local branch of the Liberal Party, and at the 1955 federal election won the seat of Wannon to enter parliament as a member of the Menzies Liberal–Country Party government. He entered the ministry under new Prime Minister Harold Holt in 1966 as Minister for the Army (1966–68). He subsequently served as Minister for Education and Science (1968–69 and 1971–72) and Defence (1969–71) in the governments of Prime Ministers John Gorton and William McMahon. Differences with Gorton caused Fraser's resignation from the Defence portfolio early in 1971 and precipitated the events that caused Gorton's replacement as Prime Minister by William McMahon in March 1971.

With the defeat of the McMahon government by the Gough Whitlam-led Labor Party in December 1972, Fraser served as a front bench member of the Billy Snedden-led Opposition, until replacing him as leader in March 1975. When the Opposition parties blocked supply in an attempt to force the increasingly unpopular Whitlam government to an election, the resulting crisis was resolved when Governor-General Sir John Kerr dismissed Whitlam and appointed Malcolm Fraser as caretaker prime minister, pending a double dissolution election. At the December 1975 election Fraser's Liberal–National Party coalition won a landslide victory. Fraser also led the coalition to election wins in 1977 and 1980.

Malcolm Fraser served as Prime Minister between November 1975 and March 1983. During these years the government sought to reinforce Australia's diplomatic and trade relations in East and South-East Asia, and the nation's role as a power within the British Commonwealth. When the coalition lost the 1983 general election to the Bob Hawke-led Labor Party, Fraser resigned as leader of the Liberal Party and as a member of parliament.

After leaving parliament Malcolm Fraser held a number of significant appointments, including Co-Chairman of the Commonwealth Group of Eminent Persons formed to encourage political dialogue and reform in South Africa (1985–86) and with the aid organisation CARE as Chairman, CARE Australia (1987–2002) and President, CARE International (1990–95).

On 20 March 2015 Malcolm Fraser died after a short illness. A state funeral was held for Mr Fraser at Scot's Church in Melbourne, Victoria, on 27 March 2015.

National Archives holdings relating to Malcolm Fraser

The National Archives holds a collection of records created by Malcolm Fraser in his years as a member of parliament, minister and prime minister. Official Commonwealth records about Fraser – including the records of the Fraser Cabinet – are also held. Selected records are listed below. Commonwealth records become available when they enter the [open access period](#).

Selected personal records of Malcolm Fraser

Collection references

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
Speeches and press statements	1965–68	M1373
Speeches and speech notes	1967–73	M1374
Ministerial subject folders	1970–72	M1361
Correspondence with members of Opposition Shadow Ministry	1975	M1360

Selected Commonwealth records relating to Malcolm Fraser

Cabinet records

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
First Fraser ministry – folders of Cabinet submissions (with decisions)	1975	A12908
Second, third, fourth and fifth Fraser ministries – folders of Cabinet submissions (with decisions)	1975–83	A12909
First Fraser ministry – folders of Cabinet decisions	1975	A13050
Second, third, fourth and fifth Fraser ministries – folders of Cabinet decisions	1975–83	A13075
Fraser ministries – Cabinet files	1975–83	A10756

Government agency records

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
The Hon Malcolm Fraser, Minister for the Army – overseas visits	1966–67	A1209, 1968/8824
Statement on Defence by the Hon Malcolm Fraser MP, Minister for Defence – 10 March 1970	1970	A5954, 99/7
Prime Minister Fraser – speeches on foreign policy since December 1975	1975–79	A463, 1977/1660 part 1
Messages of congratulations to Prime Minister, Mr Malcolm Fraser following 1975 election	1975–76	A1209, 1975/3130

Photographs

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
John Malcolm Fraser, Liberal Party – Member of House of Representatives	1956	A1200, L21656
Malcolm Fraser at the launch of the Liberal Party election campaign – Dallas Brooks Hall, Melbourne	1975	A6180, 1/12/75/13
Swearing in of the second Fraser Ministry	1977	A6135, K22/12/77/33
Prince Charles at the Lodge with Prime Minister and Mrs Fraser	1977	A6180, 2/11/77/12

Further information

For more information about holdings relating to the period of the Fraser government see the following fact sheets and guide:

- *Fact sheet 239 - The loans affair, 1974–75*
- *Fact sheet 240 - The dismissal, 1975*
- *Fact sheet 246 - Cabinet records of the Fraser government, 1978–83*

[Research Guide – Malcolm Fraser: Guide to Archives of Australia's Prime Ministers](#)

The University of Melbourne Archives holds the [Malcolm Fraser collection](#).