

Cabinet records of the Fraser government, 1975–83

The Fraser ministries

The Liberal–Country Party government of Malcolm Fraser began with the swearing-in of the first Fraser ministry on 11 November 1975, following the dismissal of the Whitlam government. It consisted of 15 members who were all members of Cabinet. The role was a caretaker one, pending the outcome of the general election on 13 December 1975. The second ministry, which consisted of 26 ministers, was formed on 22 December 1975 following the Coalition’s election victory. At this time the practice was reintroduced whereby Cabinet comprised only selected members of the ministry.

The Fraser government remained in office for more than seven years, coming to an end with the loss of the general election on 5 March 1983.

The Cabinet records identify five Fraser ministries and five Cabinets. Other sources identify only three Cabinets – the first ministry not being regarded as a Cabinet (the decisions of this period have an ‘M’ suffix indicating they are formally regarded as ministry, rather than Cabinet, decisions); and the period of the fourth and fifth ministries being regarded as one continuing Cabinet (as the 1982 ministerial reshuffle did not alter the composition of the Cabinet).

Fraser government ministries

Ministry	Date range of ministry	Reason for end of ministry
First	11 November – 22 December 1975	Election – 13 December 1975
Second	22 December 1975 – 20 December 1977	Election – 10 December 1977
Third	20 December 1977 – 3 November 1980	Election – 18 October 1980
Fourth	3 November 1980 – 7 May 1982	Reshuffle – 7 May 1982
Fifth	7 May 1982 – 11 March 1983	Election – 5 March 1983

Cabinet in operation

The style of the Fraser government generated a large volume of Cabinet business, a particular feature being the very large number of matters considered without a formal submission. A number of measures were taken to assist the Cabinet Office in dealing with the great quantities of records that resulted. These measures included:

- issuing a Cabinet handbook setting out policy and procedural arrangements
- introducing categories of 'Cabinet papers' and 'Cabinet memoranda' as a way of improving control over matters presented to Cabinet without a formal submission
- using Committees to relieve pressure on the Prime Minister (see the list of committees below).

Records of the Fraser Cabinet

Records become available for access once they enter the open access period.

Cabinet correspondence files

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Cabinet file series</u>	1975–83	A10756
<u>Register of Cabinet files</u>	1975–83	A12999

Submissions

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Submission series – first ministry</u>	1975	A12908
<u>Submission series – second to fifth ministries</u>	1975–83	A12909
<u>Register of submissions</u>	1975	A12910

Papers and Memoranda

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Papers series – Cabinet</u>	1976–79	A12933
<u>Papers series – FAD committee</u>	1976	A12934
<u>Register of papers</u>	1976–82	A12940
<u>Memoranda series</u>	1979-83	A12930
<u>Register of memoranda</u>	1979-83	A12932

Decisions

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Ministry decisions</u>	1975–82	A12931

<u>Register of decisions</u>	1975–83	A12911
<u>Decisions series – first ministry</u>	1975	A13050
<u>Decisions series – second to fifth ministries</u>	1975–83	A13075

Indexes

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Subject index (1975–82)</u>	1975–82	A12936
<u>Nominal index</u>	1975–83	A13156
<u>Nominal index (departments)</u>	1975–81	A12939

Auxiliary series

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Cabinet Office procedural and housekeeping files</u>	1968–83	A7753
<u>Chronological record of meetings</u>	1975–79	A12573
<u>Attendance sheets</u>	1975–83	A12575
<u>Reference index of LC files to decisions</u>	1975–83	A12938
<u>Records of meetings</u>	1976–77	A12935
<u>Debrief sheets</u>	1978-83	A12937

Fraser Cabinet standing committees and ad hoc committees

Cabinet was assisted by a range of standing committees and ad hoc committees. The main standing committees are listed below. Cabinet decisions taken by a subcommittee are identified by the suffix shown.

Ad hoc committees were appointed for a particular purpose as required. Decisions of an Ad hoc committee bear the suffix 'AD HOC'.

Committee name	Date range	Suffix
Coordination	1979–83	CC
Economic	1975–83	EC
Foreign Affairs and Defence	1975–83	FAD
General Administrative	1975–79	GA
General Policy	1979–83	GP
Industry Policy	1979–83	IP
Intelligence and Security	1977–80	IS
Legislation	1975–83	LC
Machinery of Government	1975–79	MOG
Monetary Policy	1977–83	MP
Planning and Coordination	1975–79	PC
Public Information	1977–83	PIC
Social Welfare Policy	1977–83	SWP
Wages Policy	1977–83	WP

Cabinet notebooks

Cabinet notebooks become available 30 years after the end of the year in which they were created. The first Cabinet notebooks for the Fraser government will become available from January 2026. For more information on Cabinet notebooks please see *Fact sheet 128 – Cabinet notebooks*.

Further sources of information

For further information about the period of the Fraser government please see *Fact sheet 242 - John Malcolm Fraser*.