

Prime ministers of Australia

Between January 1901, when Edmund Barton was appointed Australia's first Prime Minister, and 1997, there have been 25 prime ministers of Australia who commenced their term in the open period.

The National Archives has prepared a fact sheet on the following prime ministers in this period describing records held about them in the National Archives collection.

Prime ministers of Australia, fact sheets

Period	Prime Minister	Fact sheet
1901–03	Edmund Barton	Fact sheet 210
1903–04, 1905–08, 1909–10	Alfred Deakin	Fact sheet 211
1904	John Christian Watson	Fact sheet 212
1904–05	George Houstoun Reid	Fact sheet 213
1908–09, 1910–13, 1914–15	Andrew Fisher	Fact sheet 214
1913–14	Joseph Cook	Fact sheet 72
1915–23	William Morris Hughes	Fact sheet 73
1923–29	Stanley Melbourne Bruce	Fact sheet 74
1929–32	James Henry Scullin	Fact sheet 75
1932–39	Joseph Aloysius Lyons	Fact sheet 76
1939	Earle Christmas Grafton Page	Fact sheet 77
1939–41, 1949–66	Robert Gordon Menzies	Fact sheet 78
1941	Arthur William Fadden	Fact sheet 79
1941–45	John Joseph Ambrose Curtin	Fact sheet 80
1945	Francis Michael Forde	Fact sheet 81
1945–49	Joseph Benedict Chifley	Fact sheet 82
1966–67	Harold Edward Holt	Fact sheet 83
1967–68	John McEwen	Fact sheet 84
1968–71	John Grey Gorton	Fact sheet 85

1971–72	William McMahon	Fact sheet 215
1972–75	Edward Gough Whitlam	Fact sheet 216
1975–83	John Malcolm Fraser	Fact sheet 242
1983–91	Robert James Lee Hawke	Fact sheet 267

Prime ministers' records

The National Archives holds records relating to all prime ministers. These include:

Commonwealth records relating to the official duties of the prime minister or to the person in an official capacity before or after serving as prime minister. These comprise records created or received by bodies such as Cabinet, or government departments or agencies.

Personal collections relating to their official duties as prime minister or in other official capacities. These are records assembled or created by or for the person.

The National Archives holds personal records of a number of prime ministers, although several significant prime ministerial collections have been deposited with major collecting institutions such as the National Library of Australia, a prime ministerial library or a state or university library.

There are no collections of personal records held for the first five prime ministers (Edmund Barton, Alfred Deakin, John Watson, George Reid and Andrew Fisher) or for the short term Country Party Prime Minister Arthur Fadden (1941). The fact sheets on these men refer principally to records held by the National Archives about them and their period in parliament.

Public access to the records

The *Archives Act 1983* provides a right of access to Commonwealth records once they enter the open access period. While the Act does not apply to personal records deposited with the National Archives by individuals, it does apply to any Commonwealth records which form part of a personal archives collection. Public access to the non-Commonwealth component of a personal collection is determined by the depositor. Reference staff will be able to advise you of the access conditions that apply to the personal records of individual prime ministers. In some cases the records are very old and fragile, and access may be given to a copy rather than the original record.

Sources of information about records of prime ministers

The National Archives has prepared a number of publications that provide information about the life and times of each of Australia's prime ministers and the archives collections that contain information about them.

Website

The [Australia's Prime Ministers](#) website includes copies of significant records relating to each prime minister.

Research guides

The following guides are available to download in pdfs or purchase as print publications.

- [Our First Six: Guide to Archives of Australia's Prime Ministers](#) by Susan Marsden and Roslyn Russell, 2002 (describes records relating to Barton, Deakin, Watson, Reid, Fisher and Cook).
- [Joseph Lyons: Guide to Archives of Australia's Prime Ministers](#) by Susan Marsden, 2002.
- [Stanley Melbourne Bruce: Guide to Archives of Australia's Prime Ministers](#) by John Connor, 2003.
- [Harold Holt: Guide to Archives of Australia's Prime Ministers](#) by Pennie Pemberton, 2003.
- [John Curtin: Guide to Archives of Australia's Prime Ministers](#) by David Black and Leslie Wallace, 2004.
- [Malcolm Fraser: Guide to Archives of Australia's Prime Ministers](#) by Elizabeth Masters and Katie Wood, 2012
- [Gough Whitlam: Guide to Archives of Australia's Prime Ministers](#) by Jenny Hocking, with Clare Land, Natasha Campo and Sarah Tayton, 2016

Other collecting institutions

The [National Film and Sound Archive](#) holds film of every Australian prime minister (except for John Watson), as well as recorded sound of all but five – Edmund Barton, Alfred Deakin, John Watson, George Reid and Andrew Fisher.