

Joseph Cook

Prime Minister of Australia 1913–14

Joseph Cook entered the New South Wales Legislative Assembly as one of the first Labor members in the election of 1891. Feeling constrained by Labor's strict caucus rules, he left the party for George Reid's Free Trade group and the position of Postmaster-General in Reid's government. Like many senior New South Wales politicians of the time, Cook was elected to the first Commonwealth parliament after Federation in 1901. Here he retained his support for Reid. When Reid retired in 1908, Joseph Cook became leader of the Free Trade Party and, in 1909 with Alfred Deakin, formed the first Liberal government. Cook served as Minister for Defence in this government.

In 1913, Cook replaced Deakin as Leader of the Liberal Party opposition and in June of that year became the Prime Minister following the general election. Following a double dissolution instigated by Cook in 1914, the Liberal Party lost the election and Labor regained control of both houses of parliament.

When 'Billy' Hughes left the Labor Party in 1916, a Nationalist coalition government was formed with Cook as Deputy Prime Minister. He served as Minister for the Navy (1917–20) and Treasurer (1920). Cook represented Australia at the Imperial War Conference (1918) and Versailles Peace Conference (1919) and acted as Prime Minister for five months in 1921. He resigned from parliament in November 1921 to become High Commissioner in London.

Joseph Cook returned to Australia in 1927 at the conclusion of his term as High Commissioner. In 1928–29 he headed the Royal Commission into South Australia as affected by Federation. He died in Sydney in 1947.

Records relating to Joseph Cook held by the National Archives

The National Archives holds a collection of the personal records of Joseph Cook. It comprises photographs, publications and other papers accumulated by Joseph and Mary Cook while he was High Commissioner in London. The National Archives also holds records that relate to Joseph Cook in his capacity as a member of parliament, minister, Prime Minister, High Commissioner and royal commissioner.

In the tables below, reference numbers are linked to the item or series in RecordSearch.

Personal records of Joseph Cook

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Photographs, correspondence, published material and invitations accumulated by Dame Mary Cook</u>	1875–1949	M3606
<u>Unidentified photographs and newspaper clippings accumulated by Sir Joseph Cook</u>	1900–47	M3800
<u>Diaries, appointment books and notebooks of Sir Joseph and Dame Mary Cook</u>	1901–40	M3580
<u>Newspaper articles and cartoons relating to Sir Joseph Cook</u>	1901–47	M3612
<u>Documents relating to Sir Joseph Cook's tenure in parliament</u>	1909–22	M3608
<u>Photographs of events involving Sir Joseph and Dame Mary Cook</u>	1909–38	M3614
<u>Correspondence, official papers and newspaper cuttings contained in an indexed book</u>	1909–54	M3635
<u>Assorted letters, telegrams and cards to Sir Joseph Cook</u>	1910–40	M3603
<u>Papers, correspondence and photographs of Sir Joseph and Dame Mary Cook's children</u>	1911–57	M3604
<u>Certificates and booklets detailing honours bestowed on Sir Joseph and Mary Cook</u>	1911–76	M3583
<u>Memorabilia of Sir Joseph and Dame Mary Cook</u>	1912–49	M3633
<u>Records relating to the deaths of Sir Joseph and Dame Mary Cook</u>	1912–50	M3605
<u>Framed photographs of the first Liberal Cabinet and the delegates to the League of Nations</u>	1913–22	M3798
<u>Assorted publications featuring either Joseph Cook, other dignitaries or world events</u>	1914–52	M3795
<u>Invitations, programs, seating plans and menus accumulated by Sir Joseph and Dame Mary Cook</u>	1918–40	M3610
<u>Documents and photographs accumulated by Sir Joseph Cook as Australia's representative to the Imperial War Conference Peace Conference and the League of Nations</u>	1918–76	M3609
<u>Photographs of the unveiling of the memorial to the Second Australian Division at Mont Saint Quentin, France</u>	1919–25	M3632
<u>Documents, invitations, newspaper clippings, photographs and calling cards accumulated by Sir Joseph Cook as High Commissioner</u>	1919–43	M3582
<u>Mounted studio photographs taken of Sir Joseph Cook</u>	1922	M3796
<u>Photographs of christening and launch of the Seagull amphibian flying boat – Southampton</u>	1926	M3613
<u>Reports of the Royal Commission into South Australia as affected by Federation</u>	1928–29	M3634

Other records relating to Joseph Cook – In Canberra

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Personal file – High Commissioner's Office, London</u>	1915–28	CP268/3, Cook J
<u>Privy Council appointments to Cook Rt Hon. Joseph</u>	1918	CP78/22, 1918/222
<u>Signature to peace treaty – commissions to Hughes and Cook</u>	1919	A456, W13/9 Part 1
<u>Framed photographs of Treasurer Rt Hon. Joseph Cook</u>	1920	A8120, 6
<u>Printed biographical material about Sir Joseph Cook</u>	1947–68	M3581

Other records relating to Joseph Cook – In Sydney

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>The Hon. Joseph Cook, MP, Postmaster-General</u>	1894	C4019, 14

Research guide

- [Our First Six: Guide to the Archives of Australia's Prime Ministers](#)