

William Morris Hughes

Prime Minister of Australia 1915–23

A Labor member of the House of Representatives from 1901, William Morris 'Billy' Hughes served as Attorney-General in the Watson government (1904) and the three Fisher governments (1908–09, 1910–13, 1914–15).

Australia was at war when WM Hughes became Prime Minister, replacing Andrew Fisher, in October 1915. Hughes favoured conscription for overseas service as a means of maintaining Australia's supply of troops to the war zone. This stance led to his expulsion from the Labor Party in late 1916. Commissioned to form a new ministry, he carried on for three months as head of the National Labor Party (with support of the Liberal opposition). His 'splinter' Labor Party combined with the Liberals in 1917 to form the Nationalist Party, which was confirmed in office by the general election held later that year.

A popular wartime leader who was affectionately tagged 'the Little Digger', Hughes visited Australian troops on the western front and, after the war, represented Australia at the Versailles Peace Conference.

The 1922 general election was won by the Nationalist Party, with the support of the recently formed Country Party. When Country Party members refused to accept Hughes as leader, he resigned. In 1923 he was replaced as Prime Minister by Stanley Melbourne Bruce.

Hughes remained in parliament and was a senior member of non-Labor governments until his death in 1952.

Records relating to Hughes held by the National Archives

The National Archives holds many records relating to WM Hughes' long period in parliament, and especially his years as Prime Minister and minister. Hughes' personal records, as well as a selection of records about Hughes and the issues he was involved in, appear below.

In the tables below, titles are linked to the item or series in [RecordSearch](#), the National Archives database. There you can find more information. In many cases you can view entire digitised records. The information will appear in a new browser window.

Personal records of William Morris Hughes

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Papers maintained as Attorney-General and Prime Minister</u>	1914–15	CP359/1
<u>Correspondence of the Prime Minister during his visit to London in 1916</u>	1916	CP359/2
<u>Correspondence regarding the attendance of Prime Minister Hughes at the Imperial War Cabinet and Conference in London, 1918</u>	1917–18	CP359/3
<u>Letter from Clemenceau to WM Hughes</u>	1918	CP222/1
<u>Papers relating to issues raised at the Imperial War Cabinet and Imperial Conference of 1918</u>	1918–21	CP359/4
<u>Copies of cables sent and received by the Rt Hon. WM Hughes during his visit to Europe.</u>	1919	CP290/3
<u>Hughes Ministry – folders of agenda and decisions</u>	1919–22	A2717
<u>Non-current personal files</u>	1920–54	CP268/3
<u>Correspondence with Rt Hon. WM Hughes, MP (Prime Minister)</u>	1921–23	A1492
<u>Correspondence with WM Hughes</u>	1922–37	A1633

Other records relating to William Morris Hughes – in Canberra

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Papers relating to the legal case of Henry R Merton Company Limited versus William Morris Hughes</u>	1887–1922	A11661
<u>Notes of an interview with WM Hughes on Canberra</u>	1925	A458, Z120/1
<u>Changes in the personnel of the Commonwealth government – third ministry of Mr Hughes</u>	1917	A2, 1917/3156
<u>National government – Mr Hughes, Prime Minister – opening of Parliament – Governor-General's Speech</u>	1917	A29, 19
<u>Resignation of Mr Hughes – request by Governor-General to Mr Hughes to continue pending formation of new ministry</u>	1918	CP78/22, 1918/36
<u>Supreme War Council Pacific Islands WM Hughes</u>	1918	CP351/1, bundle 2/7
<u>Cables of the Prime Minister (Hughes)</u>	1920	CP360/9, bundle 1
<u>Rt Hon. WM Hughes – personal matters</u>	1925	A1606, B25/1
<u>William Morris Hughes A Political Biography, Vol. 1, That Fiery Partic 1862–1914 by LF Fitzhardinge (reviews)</u>	1964–65	A5954, 1248/9

Other records relating to William Morris Hughes – in Sydney

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Parliamentary speeches regarding the death of William Morris Hughes (audio tape)</u>	1933–71	C102, 1687160
<u>A political triptych – The life and character of William Morris Hughes Part 1 – Hughes the man (audio tape)</u>	1960	C102, 1931217
<u>A political triptych – The life and character of William Morris Hughes Part 2 – Hughes arch politician (audio tape)</u>	1960	C102, 1931219

<u>A political triptych – The life and character of William Morris Hughes Part 3 – They worked for Bill Hughes (audio tape)</u>	1960	C102, 1126817
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