

Robert Gordon Menzies

Prime Minister of Australia 1939–41 and 1949–66

After a brief career in Victorian state politics as Attorney-General and Minister for Railways (1928–34), Robert Gordon Menzies entered federal parliament as member for Kooyong. He became Attorney-General in the Lyons government immediately, and deputy leader of the United Australia Party (UAP) in 1935.

He resigned from all government and party posts in March 1939 as a protest against the government's decision to drop its national insurance scheme. When Prime Minister Joseph Lyons died in office in April 1939, Menzies was elected leader of the UAP and became Prime Minister. He led the UAP government (April 1939 – March 1940) and the UAP–Country Party coalition government (March 1940 – August 1941).

Following party dissension in 1941, Menzies resigned as Prime Minister to be replaced by Arthur Fadden. Labor was in power two months later, with the support of two independent members. Instrumental in forming the Liberal Party of Australia from the remnants of the UAP in 1944, Menzies became Prime Minister for the second time on 19 December 1949, when his Liberal Party, in coalition with the Country Party, beat Labor. Menzies remained Prime Minister for a record 16 years. He won a further six general elections before retiring in 1966.

His government's measures included an extensive immigration scheme, expansion of the CSIRO, establishment of medical and hospital benefits, as well as forging defence links with the United States of America after signing the ANZUS pact in 1951 and SEATO in 1955.

Appointed a Knight of the Thistle in 1963, Menzies resigned from the prime ministership in 1966 and retired from parliament one month later. He died in 1978.

Records relating to Robert Menzies held by the National Archives

The National Archives holds many records relating to Robert Menzies' parliamentary career. They include personal records, as well as records about him and the issues he was involved in.

In the tables below, reference numbers 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.

Robert Menzies' records held in Canberra

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Miscellaneous papers of Robert Gordon Menzies</u>	1933–46	CP450/9
<u>Personal papers of Menzies as Attorney-General</u>	1934–39	CP450/7
<u>Cables to and from RG Menzies and Party during visit to London</u>	1941	CP290/9
<u>Folders of papers maintained by Menzies as Prime Minister</u>	1949–66	M2576
<u>Prime Minister's Office file on Royal Commission on Espionage</u>	1954–55	A6227
<u>Binder of transcripts of press conferences, interviews and broadcasts given by Prime Minister Menzies</u>	1960–63	A4959

Other selected records relating to Robert Menzies – in Canberra

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Prime Minister notes of speeches by Mr Menzies</u>	1939–41	A461, AA4/1/12
<u>RG Menzies honours</u>	1939–50	A463, 1969/7404
<u>Portrait of the Rt Hon. RG Menzies by Charles Wheeler</u>	1939–56	A463, 1965/2336
<u>Negative master sheets (Daily War and Menzies) inwards cables</u>	1940–41	AA1979/333
<u>Sir Robert Menzies – Commissions signed appointing Sir Robert Menzies to various positions in the Australian Government</u>	1941–52	A6382
<u>Statements by Rt Hon. RG Menzies, Leader of the Opposition</u>	1946–49	A5954, 2214/1
<u>Federal elections – December 1949. Speeches and statements by the Rt Hon. RG Menzies, Leader of the Liberal Party.</u>	1949	A5954, 2315/13
<u>Menzies anti-inflation plans curtailment of Immigration</u>	1951	A462, 414/5
<u>Correspondence from RG Menzies to the Petrovs granting them political asylum</u>	1954	A6201, 16
<u>Correspondence between Australian PMs (Menzies/Holt) and heads of other governments: nuclear power</u>	1954	A6706, 50
<u>Menzies/Spry correspondence re 'The Petrov case'</u>	1956–58	A6122, 1418
<u>Correspondence between Australian PMs (Menzies/Holt) and Heads of other governments: Indonesia</u>	1957–66	A6706, 34
<u>Photographic negatives, single number series with 'RGM' prefix</u>	1959	A1775
<u>ELDO/Blue Streak [correspondence between Prime Ministers Menzies/Macmillan re cancellation of missile project at Woomera]</u>	1959–62	A6706, 24
<u>Attorney General's department – summary of achievements during term of Menzies government 1949–1961</u>	1960–72	A432, 1961/2522
<u>Atomic tests – Menzies statement – 13 September</u>	1961	A6456, R087/096
<u>Book (Original). Book 3 – 'The Notable War record of the Menzies Government 1939–1941'</u>	1965	A5954, 765/2
<u>Book (Original) Chapter 30 – 'An Appraisal of Prime Minister Menzies in 1941'</u>	1965	A5954, 766/25
<u>Death of Sir Robert Menzies – condolence messages, arrangements for Memorial Service, United Kingdom</u>	1978	A9257

Other selected records relating to Robert Menzies – in Sydney

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Menzies, Sir Robert (audio tape)</u>	1966	C102, 1499371