

## Harold Edward Holt

### **Prime Minister of Australia 1966–67**

A solicitor by profession, Harold Holt entered Parliament as a member of the United Australia Party following a by-election for the seat of Fawkner (Victoria) in 1935. Holt was a backbench member of the Lyons government. He first entered the ministry in 1939 as Minister Assisting the Minister for Supply and Development in the first government of Robert Menzies.

With the outbreak of war, Holt resigned from the ministry in order to enlist in the Second AIF. He was recalled to the government following the death of three senior ministers (Fairbairn, Gullett and Street) in an aircraft accident in August 1940, and appointed Minister for Labour and National Service. He held this portfolio until the collapse of the government in October 1941.

Holt served as a minister throughout the 16 years of the Menzies government (1949–66), holding the positions of Minister for Immigration (1949–56), Minister for Labour and National Service (1949–58) and Treasurer (1958–66). On Menzies' retirement in January 1966, Holt became leader of the Liberal Party and Prime Minister.

During his time in office, Holt strongly supported United States' involvement in Vietnam. One of his first acts as Prime Minister was to increase the size of the Australian forces in Vietnam by one third.

An active sportsman, Harold Holt disappeared while swimming in heavy seas off Portsea in Victoria on 17 December 1967. His body was never recovered.

### **Records relating to Harold Holt held by the National Archives**

The National Archives holds many records relating to Harold Holt's years in parliament, including his period as Prime Minister and the many years he spent as a minister. The personal records of Harold Holt held by the National Archives are listed below. All records are held by the National Archives in Canberra.

The National Archives also holds many records about Harold Holt and the issues he was involved in during his years in government. Information about Holt will also occur in the records of a range of Commonwealth departments, especially those of the Departments of Immigration, Labour and National Service and the Treasury.

## Personal records of Harold Holt

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Briefcase, wallets and related personal papers of Harold Holt</u>	1924–97	M4298
<u>Press cuttings booklet of Harold Holt</u>	1926–67	A1728
<u>Correspondence files maintained by Holt as Prime Minister</u>	1929–67	M2684
<u>Ministerial correspondence collected by Harold Holt</u>	1935–40	B3230
<u>General correspondence files relating to Harold Holt as Assistant Minister for Supply and Development</u>	1939–40	B3229
<u>Papers relating to youth unemployment maintained by HE Holt as Assistant Minister for Supply and Development</u>	1939–40	MP392/4
<u>Personal papers of Harold Holt</u>	1941–67	M4299
<u>Correspondence files of HE Holt as Treasurer and Prime Minister</u>	1943–67	M2606
<u>Personal papers of Harold Edward Holt</u>	1943–68	M4295
<u>Folders of speeches and articles</u>	1946–65	M2607
<u>Folders of minutes of the meetings and related documents of the Organising Committee for the XVIth Olympiad and sub-Committees</u>	1950–57	M946
<u>Correspondence files of HE Holt as Treasurer</u>	1950–66	M2568
<u>Travel diaries and letters of Harold Holt</u>	1952–65	M2608
<u>Pen sketches of Harold Holt and William McMahon by Paul Hasluck</u>	1959	A2668
<u>Press cuttings relating to the Seven Nation Summit conference, Manila, Philippines, 24–25 October 1966</u>	1966	A1664
<u>Set of two facsimile manuscripts by Jose Rizal presented by the President of the Philippines and Mrs Ferdinand E Marcos</u>	1966	A1666
<u>Press cuttings regarding the Commonwealth prime ministers' conference</u>	1966	A1729
<u>Press cuttings relating to Holt's succession as Prime Minister</u>	1966	A1730
<u>Folders of papers maintained by Holt while Prime Minister</u>	1966–67	M2684
<u>Appointment diaries maintained by Private Secretary</u>	1967	A2587
<u>Correspondence files of the Prime Minister relating to foreign affairs</u>	1966–67	A7854
<u>Press reports on the visit of Holt to the Republic of China, 4–6 April</u>	1967	A1665
<u>Appointment diary maintained by Assistant Private Secretary</u>	1967	A2588
<u>Papers contained in the briefcase of Holt at the time of his death</u>	1967	M1945
<u>Condolence letters and books sent on the death of the Rt Hon. HE Holt</u>	1967–68	M2655
<u>Speeches and related papers of HE Holt</u>	1967	M4249

## More information

- *Fact sheet 144 - Harold Holt's disappearance*
- The Life and Death of Harold Holt
- Harold Holt: Guide to the Archives of Australia's Prime Ministers