

John Grey Gorton

Prime Minister of Australia 1968–71

John Gorton was born in Wellington, New Zealand in 1911 and lived most of his childhood in Sydney. He finished his schooling as a boarder at Geelong Grammar before completing an MA at Oxford. Then he returned to work on his father's orchard near Kerang in rural Victoria. He joined the RAAF on the outbreak of World War II, serving in the United Kingdom, Singapore, Darwin and Milne Bay (Papua New Guinea). He was discharged with the rank of Flight Lieutenant in 1944 after being severely wounded during air operations.

John Gorton was elected to the Senate in 1949 as a senator for the state of Victoria. He entered the Menzies ministry in 1958 as Minister for the Navy, a position he held until 1963. He was subsequently Minister for Works (1963–67), Minister for the Interior (1963–64) and Minister for Education and Science (1966–68) in the governments of Menzies and Holt. After Harold Holt disappeared in late 1967, Gorton became leader of the Liberal Party. He was sworn in as Prime Minister in January 1968. On becoming party leader he transferred to the House of Representatives, winning a by-election for Holt's former seat of Higgins.

John Gorton was Prime Minister of Australia from 1968 to 1971, when he was replaced as party leader by William McMahon.

Gorton resigned from the Liberal Party on 23 May 1975, sitting as an independent in the House of Representatives until the end of the parliamentary term. He contested the 1975 elections as an independent senator for the ACT, but failed to win a seat.

John Gorton was appointed a member of the Privy Council and in 1971 a Companion of Honour. He was knighted in 1977, and appointed a Companion of the Order of Australia in 1988.

John Gorton died in May 2002.

Records relating to John Gorton held by the National Archives

The National Archives holds many records relating to John Gorton's years in parliament, including his period as Prime Minister and the many years he spent as a minister. They include his personal

records, and many records about John Gorton and the issues he was involved in during his years in government.

In the tables below, reference numbers direct you to the item or series in [RecordSearch](#), the 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 John Gorton

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
Correspondence files maintained by Gorton while Minister for Education and Science	1955–68	AA1969/212
Subject files of Mr Gorton as Prime Minister and Minister for Defence	1963–71	M3787

Other records relating to John Gorton

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
World War II RAAF service record – John Grey Gorton – RAAF number 400793	1939–48	A9300, Gorton J G
Pilot Officer John Grey Gorton – RAAF Number 400793 – casualty file	1942–43	A705, 163/34/154
The Prime Minister – The Hon. JG Gorton	1966–69	AA1978/508, 22
Defence Review Ordered by Prime Minister Gorton – The Age 19/6/1968. Statement by Minister for Defence 30/6/1968	1968	A5954, 99/4
The Gorton Ministry – February 1968 (Press Cuttings)	1968	A5954, 1918/19
[Personal record of the Honourable Sir Reginald Swartz] Speeches and press statements by Prime Minister Gorton	1968–70	M2454, box 2 folder 8
Election campaign October 1969. Policy speeches by Mr Gorton and Mr Whitlam	1969	A5954, 1477/12
Australia's long term defence strategy – Prime Minister Gorton's statement in Parliament regarding stationing of Forces in Malaysia – Singapore beyond 1971	1969	A5954, 1201/26