PORTRAITS OF AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTERS

FROM THE HISTORIC MEMORIALS COLLECTION

AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT HOUSE

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The Historic Memorials Collection is the longest-running art commissioning program in Australia. Founded by former Prime Minister Andrew Fisher in 1911, the collection is guided by the Historic Memorials Committee, a bipartisan committee chaired by the Prime Minister of the day and comprising a number of parliamentary officeholders. The Committee commissions official portraits of the Heads of State, Governors-General, Prime Ministers, Presidents of the Senate and Speakers of the House of Representatives.

From time to time the Committee may also elect to commission portraits of other significant parliamentarians who represent a milestone in the history of the Parliament e.g. Dame Enid Lyons, the first female parliamentarian in the House of Representatives, or Senator Neville Bonner, the first Indigenous parliamentarian. On rare occasions the Committee may also commission paintings of significant events in the history of the Australian Parliament e.g. the opening of Parliament House in 1988.

Early Prime Ministerial portraits were often large in scale and sombre in tone; however over time they have tended to become less formal and capture more of the personality of the sitter. Often they include artefacts of personal significance to the portrait subject.

Not all portraits are generated through a commissioning process and the Committee is able to purchase a portrait if one already exists. For example—the portrait of former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam painted by his friend Clifton Pugh won the Archibald Prize in 1972 and was subsequently purchased by the Committee at the former Prime Minister's request.

All 25 completed portraits of Australian Prime Ministers are displayed, most in a chronological order in Members' Hall, with large scale portraits on display on level 2 of the Main Committee Room Foyer.

1. The Rt Hon Sir Edmund (Toby) Barton GCMG KC

Artist
Norman St Clair Carter
(1875–1963)

Born: 1849 **Died:** 1920

Term of Office: 1 January 1901 to 24 September 1903

Member for Hunter 1901 to 1903, New South Wales

Political Party: Protectionist Party

Edmund Barton was sworn in as leader of the new Commonwealth of Australia on 1 January 1901, after a distinguished career in the New South Wales Parliament. A leader of the Federation movement, he helped draft Australia's Constitution and later became a founding judge of the High Court of Australia.

2. The Hon Alfred Deakin

Born: 1856 **Died:** 1919

Terms of Office: 24 September 1903 to 27 April 1904; 5 July 1905 to 13 November 1908; 2 June 1909 to 29 April 1910

Member for Ballaarat 1901 to 1913, Victoria

Political Party: Protectionist Party

Alfred Deakin held the office of Prime Minister three times in the first decade of Federation. Deakin did much to build on Australia's constitutional foundations, and introduced legislation for the establishment of a site for a new national capital. As Attorney-General he established the High Court.

Artist
Frederick McCubbin
(1855–1917)

3. The Hon John Christian (Chris) Watson

Born: 1867 **Died:** 1941

Term of Office: 27 April 1904 to 17 August 1904

Member for Bland 1901 to 1906, South Sydney 1906 to 1910, New South Wales

Political Party: Australian Labor Party

Chris Watson is considered the world's first national labour government leader. Appointed as Prime Minister at the age of 37, he remains Australia's youngest Prime Minister. His term ended after only four months.

Artist
Sir John Longstaff
(1861–1941)

4. The Rt Hon Sir George Houstoun Reid GCB GCMG

Born: 1845 **Died:** 1918

Term of Office: 18 August 1904 to 5 July 1905

Member for East Sydney 1901 to 1903, 1903 to 1909, New South Wales

Political Party: Free Trade Party

Before entering Parliament in 1901, Reid was Premier of New South Wales from 1894 to 1899. As leader of the Free Trade Party, he was the first federal Leader of the Opposition, holding this role for six of the first seven years of Parliament.

Artist
Sir John Longstaff
(1861–1941)

5. The Rt Hon Andrew Fisher

Born: 1862 **Died:** 1928

Terms of Office: 13 November 1908 to 2 June 1909; 29 April 1910 to 24 June 1913; 17 September 1914 to 27 October 1915

Member for Wide Bay 1901 to 1915, Queensland

Political Party: Australian Labor Party

Along with Deakin, Fisher is one of only two Australian Prime Ministers to have held office on three separate occasions. Fisher was responsible for the establishment of the Commonwealth Bank, the founding of Canberra and the creation of the Royal Australian Navy.

Artist
Emmanuel Phillips Fox (1865–1915)

6. The Rt Hon Sir Joseph Cook GCMG

Born: 1860 **Died:** 1947

Term of Office: 24 June 1913 to 17 September 1914

Member for Parramatta 1901 to 1921, New South Wales

Political Party: Liberal Party

Cook was Australia's sixth Prime Minister. After provoking a double dissolution election, he was defeated by Andrew Fisher.

Artist
Norman St Clair Carter (1875–1963)

7. The Rt Hon William Morris (Billy) Hughes CH KC

Born: 1862 **Died:** 1952

Term of Office: 27 October 1915 to 9 February 1923

Member for West Sydney 1901 to 1917, New South Wales; Bendigo 1917 to 1922, Victoria; North Sydney 1922 to 1949 and Bradfield 1949 to1952, New South Wales

Political Party: Australian Labor Party, Nationalist Party

Hughes holds the record for continuous service as a member of the House of Representatives—51 years and 7 months from 1901 to 1952. As Prime Minister during the hardest years of World War I, he earned the nickname 'the Little Digger'.

Artist
George Washington Lambert (1873–1930)

8. The Rt Hon Stanley Melbourne Bruce Viscount Bruce of Melbourne CH MC

Artist
William Beckwith
McInnes (1889–1939)

Born: 1883 **Died:** 1967

Term of Office: 9 February 1923 to
22 October 1929

Member for Flinders 1918 to 1929,
1931 to 1933, Victoria

Political Party: Nationalist Party

During his term, the seat of government was transferred from Melbourne to the newly built capital Canberra. Bruce was the first Prime Minister to occupy the Prime Minister's official residence in Canberra, The Lodge, and to move into the Provisional Parliament House (Old Parliament House).

9. The Rt Hon James Henry Scullin

Artist
William Beckwith
McInnes (1889–1939)

Born: 1876 **Died:** 1953

Term of Office: 22 October 1929 to
6 January 1932

Member for Corangamite 1910 to 1913,
Yarra 1922 to 1949, Victoria

Political Party: Australian Labor Party

In the first week of Scullin's prime ministership the Wall Street Crash of 1929 occurred and his term was spent trying to manage the failing Australian economy. Scullin was responsible for the nomination of Sir Isaac Isaacs as the first Australian-born Governor-General.

10. The Rt Hon Joseph Aloysius Lyons CH

Artist
William Beckwith
McInnes (1889–1939)

Born: 1879 **Died:** 1939

Term of Office: 6 January 1932 to
7 April 1939

Member for Wilmot 1929 to 1939, Tasmania

Political Party: United Australia Party

Joseph Lyons is the only Tasmanian to become Prime Minister and was elected to the Australian Parliament in 1929, having served as Premier of Tasmania. He established the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC), and regulated the growing air travel industry. He was the first Prime Minister to die in office.

11. The Rt Hon Sir Earle Christmas Grafton Page GCMG CH

Artist
William Beckwith
McInnes (1889–1939)

Born: 1880 **Died:** 1961

Term of Office: 7 to 26 April 1939

Member for Cowper 1919 to 1961,
New South Wales

Political Party: Country Party

Earle Page served as Prime Minister for only
20 days in April 1939, after Joseph Lyons'
death. However he was one of the longest
serving parliamentarians, serving for 42 years.
Page was a co-founder and leader of the
Country Party.

12. The Rt Hon Sir Robert Gordon Menzies KT CH QC

Artist
Sir Ivor Henry Hele
(1912–1993)

Born: 1894 **Died:** 1978

Terms of office: 26 April 1939 to
29 August 1941; 19 December 1949 to
26 January 1966

Member for Kooyong 1934 to 1966, Victoria

Political Party: United Australia Party,
Liberal Party

Robert Menzies is Australia's longest
serving Prime Minister. His first term from
1939 to 1941 was as leader of the United
Australia Party. In 1941 he resigned, having
lost the support of his Cabinet. As leader
of the Liberal Party, Menzies won the 1949
election, overseeing a long period of growth in
immigration, social services, hospitals, schools
and universities. He retired from Parliament
in 1966.

13. The Rt Hon Sir Arthur William Fadden GCMG

Artist
Sir William Alexander
Dargie (1912–2003)

Born: 1894 **Died:** 1973

Term of Office: 29 August to
7 October 1941

Member for Darling Downs 1936 to 1949,
McPherson 1949 to 1958, Queensland

Political Party: Country Party

Arthur Fadden replaced Menzies after his
resignation in 1941. He served only 40
days as Prime Minister. During his 22-year
parliamentary career Fadden also served as
Treasurer, overseeing 11 Budgets.

14. The Rt Hon John Joseph Ambrose Curtin

Artist
Anthony Dattilo-Rubbo
(1870–1955)

Born: 1885 **Died:** 1945

Term of Office: 7 October 1941 to
5 July 1945

Member for Fremantle 1928 to 1931 and
1934 to 1945, Western Australia

Political Party: Australian Labor Party

John Curtin is most remembered for his
leadership of the nation during much of
World War II. He died in office on 5 July
1945, only six weeks before the end of
the war.

15. The Rt Hon Francis (Frank) Michael Forde

Artist
Joshua Smith
(1905–1995)

Born: 1890 **Died:** 1983

Term of Office: 6 to 13 July 1945

Member for Capricornia 1922 to 1946,
Queensland

Political Party: Australian Labor Party

Forde was Australia's shortest serving
Prime Minister with a term of just eight days
following John Curtin's death. The following
week the Labor Party elected Ben Chifley
as leader. Forde served as a deputy leader
to James Scullin, John Curtin and
Ben Chifley.

16. The Rt Hon Joseph Benedict (Ben) Chifley

Artist
Archibald Douglas
Colquhoun (1894–1983)

Born: 1885 **Died:** 1951

Term of Office: 13 July 1945 to
19 December 1949

Member for Macquarie 1928 to 1931 and
1940 to 1951, New South Wales

Political Party: Australian Labor Party

Ben Chifley became Prime Minister after
the death of John Curtin in 1945.

Chifley started Australia's post-war
reconstruction, with a large-scale
immigration program, and created
the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric
Scheme. He also established the
Australian National University.

17. The Rt Hon Harold Edward Holt CH

Artist
William Edwin Pidgeon
(1909–1981)

Born: 1908 **Died:** 1967

Term of Office: 26 January 1966 to
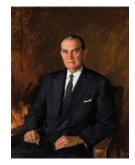19 December 1967

Member for Fawkner 1935 to 1949, Higgins
1949 to 1967, Victoria

Political Party: Liberal Party

Holt became Prime Minister after the
retirement of Robert Menzies in 1966. His
government supported the 1967 referendum
recognising Indigenous Australians, relaxed
immigration laws and increased Australia's
troop commitment to the Vietnam War.
On 17 December 1967, Holt disappeared
while swimming in Victoria and was officially
pronounced dead two days later.

18. The Rt Hon Sir John McEwen GCMG CH

Artist
Sir William Alexander
Dargie (1912–2003)

Born: 1900 **Died:** 1980

Term of Office: 19 December 1967 to
10 January 1968

Member for Echuca 1934 to 1937, Indi 1937
to 1949 and Murray 1949 to 1971, Victoria

Political Party: Country Party

John McEwen was caretaker Prime Minister
after the disappearance of Harold Holt. After
23 days he was replaced when the Liberal
Party elected John Gorton as their new
leader. McEwen continued as Deputy
Prime Minister until his retirement in 1971.

19. The Rt Hon Sir John Grey Gorton GCMG AC

Artist
June Mendoza
(born 1927)

Born: 1911 **Died:** 2002

Term of Office: 10 January 1968 to
10 March 1971

Senator for Victoria 1949 to 1968,
Member for Higgins 1968 to 1975, Victoria

Political Party: Liberal Party

Gorton became Prime Minister in 1968,
winning the Liberal Party leadership ballot
after the disappearance of Harold Holt.

Before becoming Member for Higgins, he
served as a Senator for Victoria for 18 years.
He established the Australian Council for
the Arts and the National Film and Television
Training School. Gorton lost office following
a no-confidence vote in his leadership by
his party.

20. The Rt Hon Sir William (Billy) McMahon GCMG CH

Born: 1908 **Died:** 1988

Term of Office: 10 March 1971 to 5 December 1972

Member for Lowe 1949 to 1982, New South Wales

Political Party: Liberal Party

McMahon became Prime Minister after John Gorton, who resigned after a tied no-confidence vote by his party. He was the first Prime Minister to appoint a Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. He lost the 1972 election but remained in Parliament until his retirement in 1982.

Artist
Sir Ivor Henry Hele
(1912–1993)

21. The Hon Edward Gough Whitlam AC QC

Born: 1916 **Died:** 2014

Term of Office: 5 December 1972 to 11 November 1975

Member for Werriwa 1952 to 1978, New South Wales

Political Party: Australian Labor Party

Under Whitlam Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War ended and free tertiary education and a national health scheme were introduced. He was also the first Australian Prime Minister to visit the People's Republic of China. Whitlam's government was dismissed by the Governor-General Sir John Kerr on 11 November 1975.

Artist
Clifton Ernest Pugh
(1924-1990)

22. The Rt Hon John Malcolm Fraser AC CH

Born: 1930 **Died:** 2015

Term of Office: 11 November 1975 to 11 March 1983

Member for Wannon 1955 to 1983, Victoria

Political Party: Liberal Party

Fraser became Prime Minister in a caretaker capacity after the dismissal of the Whitlam government and won the subsequent election. Fraser's government promoted multiculturalism, introduced family allowances, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, and committed to building a new Parliament House.

Artist
Sir Ivor Henry Hele
(1912–1993)

23. The Hon Robert (Bob) James Lee Hawke AC

Artist
William (Bill) Leak
(born 1956)

Born: 1929

Term of Office: 11 March 1983 to
20 December 1991

Member for Wills 1980 to 1992, Victoria

Political Party: Australian Labor Party

Hawke won the 1983 election, and then
became Australia's longest-serving Labor
Prime Minister. His term focussed on
globalisation, micro-economic reform and
industrial relations which led to the floating of
the Australian dollar and a reduction in tariffs.
In 1991 Hawke was defeated in a leadership
ballot by his Treasurer, Paul Keating.

24. The Hon Paul John Keating

Artist
Robert Lyall Hannaford
(born 1944)

Born: 1944

Term of Office: 20 December 1991 to
11 March 1996

Member for Blaxland 1969 to 1996,
New South Wales

Political Party: Australian Labor Party

After eight years as Treasurer in the
Hawke government, Keating became
Prime Minister in a leadership ballot.
Keating continued economic reforms,
introduced Indigenous land rights
legislation and reformed vocational
education and training.

25. The Hon John Winston Howard AC

Artist
Jiawei Shen
(born 1948)

Born: 1939

Term of Office: 11 March 1996 to
3 December 2007
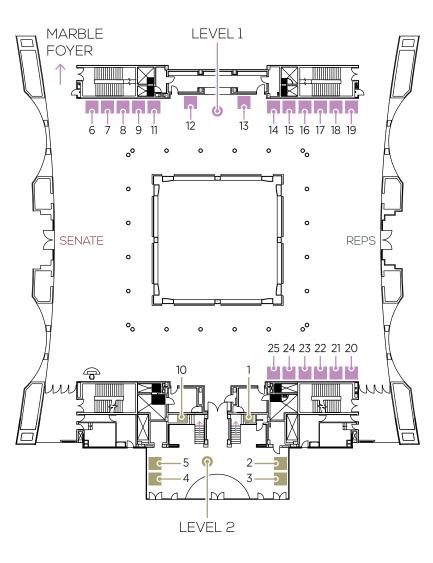
Member for Bennelong 1974 to 2007,
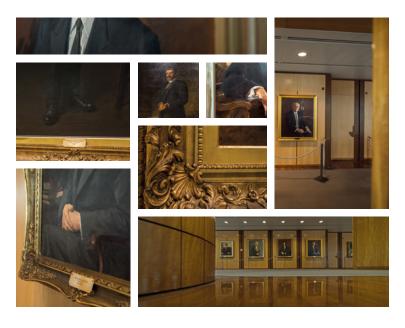New South Wales

Political Party: Liberal Party

Howard is Australia's second longest serving
Prime Minister. His government introduced
major taxation reform and the Goods and
Services Tax (GST). Howard implemented
strict gun control legislation after the
Port Arthur massacre. His government was
defeated in 2007 and Howard lost his seat—
the first Prime Minister to do so since Bruce
in 1929.

MAP OF PORTRAITS

MARBLE
FOYER

LEVEL 1

6 7 8 9 11   12   13   14 15 16 17 18 19

SENATE   REPS

25 24 23 22 21 20

10   1

5   2
4   3

LEVEL 2

FAQ

Where are the portraits of the most recent Prime Ministers?

Portrait commissions are generally completed within three to five years of a Prime Minister leaving office. The length of time to complete a portrait varies considerably between commissions and depends on the availability of the artist and the sitter as well as the artist's working style.

Who selects the artist?

The subject selects their preferred artist. The National Portrait Gallery of Australia then provides the Parliament with advice on the suitability of the chosen artist to undertake the commission. All artists must be Australian although they do not need to reside in Australia.

When is a portrait commissioned?

Portraits of Prime Ministers are generally commissioned after they leave office.

Can a Prime Minister choose to be represented by a photograph instead of a painting?

At its very first meeting in 1911 the Historic Memorials Committee engaged in robust debate about whether or not a photograph might be commissioned instead of a painting. The Committee's resolution was to commission photographs of all parliamentarians and only commission paintings of its highest officeholders, something that it has continued to do for more than 100 years.

What happens if a Prime Minister doesn't like their portrait?

Prior to undertaking a portrait commission, each artist is commissioned to produce a 'study' which is a half-size version of the finished work. This study must then be approved by the subject and the advisor from the National Portrait Gallery of Australia before the commission can proceed. If the subject rejects the study then further changes may be negotiated between the subject and the artist or a new artist can be selected to undertake the commission.

Why are the portraits different sizes?

New portrait commissions for Prime Ministerial portraits specify a size limit to ensure that they can be hung within Members' Hall. Prior to 1988 and the opening of Parliament House, Prime Ministerial portraits were hung in Old Parliament House and many of the early large portraits reflect the grand architecture of King's Hall.

The prevailing economic conditions can also impact on portrait commissions, e.g. Prime Minister Joseph Cook opted for a more modest-sized portrait as the commission was undertaken in the midst of World War I in an atmosphere of financial hardship.