

DESPATCH BOX

The despatch box is a wooden box decorated with silver and enamel edges with a hinged lid and a lock. Its original purpose was for parliamentarians to carry their documents to the chamber. Ministers and shadow ministers now use them to rest their speeches and documents on when they address the house - that is when they are said to be speaking 'from the despatch box.'

There are two despatch boxes in the House of Representatives. They sit on the centre table next to where the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition sit. They are replicas of two boxes which sat in the House of Commons before they were destroyed by a bomb explosion in 1941 during the Second World War. The despatch box replicas were given to the Australian Parliament in 1927 by King George V on the opening of Parliament House in Canberra.

The boxes now symbolise the link between the British House of Commons and the Australian House of Representatives.



The despatch box is elaborately decorated with silver



The Prime Minister speaking from the despatch box

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