

# PRIME MINISTER

The Prime Minister is the leader of the Australian Government and the leader of the nation. By convention, the Prime Minister is a member of the House of Representatives who leads the parliamentary party, or coalition of parties, with the support of the majority of members in the House.

## Choosing the Prime Minister

The Prime Minister is chosen by a vote of the members of the government. The Prime Minister can keep their job as long as they are a member of parliament and retain the support of the government.

Australia has no maximum period of service for a Prime Minister, unlike countries such as the United States, where the President can only serve for two four-year terms.

## Role

The Prime Minister is the most powerful person in Parliament. They have many tasks, including:

- chairing meetings in which the government discusses policies and examines bills (proposed laws)
- selecting members of the government to be ministers
- leading Cabinet (Prime Minister and ministers) in deciding government policy
- acting as the chief government spokesperson
- representing the Australian Government overseas
- advising the Governor-General about important issues such as the appointment of ambassadors and heads of government departments
- advising the Governor-General about constitutional matters
- deciding when to call a federal election and leading the government in the election.

## House of Representatives

When in the House of Representatives, the Prime Minister sits at the central table in front of the government and directly opposite the Leader of the Opposition. As the head of the Australian Government, they take the lead in presenting major speeches to Parliament about government policy and answering many questions directed to the government during Question Time (see *Question Time*).

## The Australian Constitution

Although the Prime Minister is often seen as the most important person in the Parliament, the role is not mentioned in the Australian Constitution. The Prime Minister works according to practices and customs that developed over hundreds of years in the British Parliament and were then adopted by the Australian Parliament.

## The Prime Minister's residences

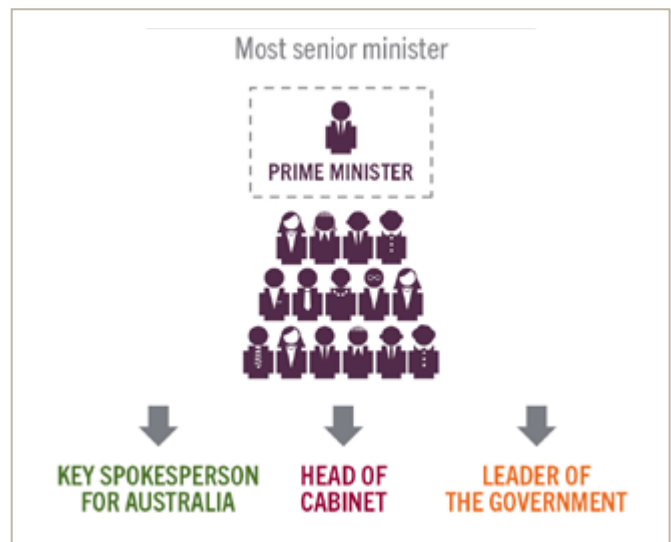
There are two official residences that can be used by the Prime Minister and their family:

- The Lodge, in Canberra
- Kirribilli House, in Sydney.

## History

The Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP is the current Prime Minister.

Australia has had 29 prime ministers.



The role of the Prime Minister



The Prime Minister, the Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP

NAME	PARTY	TERM
Sir Edmund Barton	PROT	01.01.1901 – 24.09.1903
Alfred Deakin	PROT	24.09.1903 – 27.04.1904
John (Chris) Watson	ALP	27.04.1904 – 17.08.1904
Sir George Reid	FT*	18.08.1904 – 05.07.1905
Alfred Deakin	PROT*	05.07.1905 – 13.11.1908
Andrew Fisher	ALP	13.11.1908 – 02.06.1909
Alfred Deakin	PROT	02.06.1909 – 29.04.1910
Andrew Fisher	ALP	29.04.1910 – 24.06.1913
Sir Joseph Cook	LIB	24.06.1913 – 17.09.1914
Andrew Fisher	ALP	17.09.1914 – 27.10.1915
William (Billy) Hughes	ALP NL NAT	27.10.1915 – 14.11.1916 14.11.1916 – 17.02.1917 17.02.1917 – 09.02.1923
Stanley Bruce	NAT*	09.02.1923 – 22.10.1929
James Scullin	ALP	22.10.1929 – 06.01.1932
Joseph Lyons	UAP UAP*	06.01.1932 – 09.11.1934 09.11.1934 – 07.04.1939
Earle Page	CP*	07.04.1939 – 26.04.1939
Sir Robert Menzies	UAP UAP*	26.04.1939 – 14.03.1940 14.03.1940 – 29.08.1941
Sir Arthur Fadden	CP*	29.08.1941 – 07.10.1941
John Curtin	ALP	07.10.1941 – 05.07.1945
Francis (Frank) Forde	ALP	06.07.1945 – 13.07.1945
Joseph (Ben) Chifley	ALP	13.07.1945 – 19.12.1949
Sir Robert Menzies	LP*	19.12.1949 – 26.01.1966
Harold Holt	LP*	26.01.1966 – 19.12.1967
John McEwen	CP*	19.12.1967 – 10.01.1968
John Gorton	LP*	10.01.1968 – 10.03.1971
Sir William (Billy) McMahon	LP*	10.03.1971 – 05.12.1972

NAME	PARTY	TERM
Edward (Gough) Whitlam	ALP	05.12.1972 – 11.11.1975
John (Malcolm) Fraser	LP*	11.11.1975 – 11.03.1983
Robert (Bob) Hawke	ALP	11.03.1983 – 20.12.1991
Paul Keating	ALP	20.12.1991 – 11.03.1996
John Howard	LP*	11.03.1996 – 3.12.2007
Kevin Rudd	ALP	03.12.2007 – 24.06.2010
Julia Gillard	ALP	24.06.2010 – 27.06.2013
Kevin Rudd	ALP	27.06.2013 – 18.09.2013
Tony Abbott	LP*	18.09.2013 – 15.09.2015
Malcolm Turnbull	LP*	15.09.2015 – Present

\*Coalition government

Note: The Liberal Party (LIB) is a different party to the Liberal Party of Australia (LP).

### Party Abbreviations

- ALP:** Australian Labor Party
- CP:** Country Party
- FT:** Free Trade
- LP:** Liberal Party of Australia
- LIB:** The Liberal Party
- UAP:** United Australia Party
- NAT:** Nationalist Party
- PROT:** Protectionist
- NL:** National Labor

**Source:** Australian Electoral Commission website  
[www.aec.gov.au/Elections/Australian\\_Electoral\\_History/pm.htm](http://www.aec.gov.au/Elections/Australian_Electoral_History/pm.htm)

### LINKS

#### PEO website

Fact Sheet: *Government*  
[www.peo.gov.au/learning/fact-sheets/government.html](http://www.peo.gov.au/learning/fact-sheets/government.html)

#### APH website

House of Representatives Infosheet: *The Australian system of government*  
[www.tinyurl.com/Infosheet20](http://www.tinyurl.com/Infosheet20)

#### Other websites

Prime Minister of Australia  
[www.pm.gov.au/](http://www.pm.gov.au/)