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First, most and more: facts about the Federal Parliament

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Politics and Public Administration Section

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Abbreviations

AD	Australian Democrats
ALP	Australian Labor Party
ANTI-SOC	Anti-Socialist Party
CP	Country Party
FLP	Federal Labor Party
FT	Free Trade
GRN	Australian Greens
IND	Independent
LP	Liberal Party
NAT	Nationalist Party
NDP	Nuclear Disarmament Party
NPA	National Party of Australia
PHON	Pauline Hanson's One Nation
PROT	Protectionist
UAP	United Australia Party

Introduction

This research paper is designed to answer some of those frequently asked questions about who was the first, youngest, oldest, most often (and so forth) in Australian federal politics. The focus is on records for the Commonwealth Parliament, although a few significant records relate to members of state parliaments. This paper updates and adds to a 2014 Parliamentary Library Research paper entitled [Selected political records of the Commonwealth Parliament](#).¹

The information is arranged under the following broad categories: Governors-General; Prime Ministers; Ministers; Members of Parliament; Women in politics; Indigenous members of the Commonwealth Parliament; Commonwealth Parliament; Legislation; Elections and government; and Referendums and plebiscites. Party/political affiliations are provided for parliamentarians, as well as electoral division and state/territory for members of the House of Representatives (for example, Robert Menzies (LP, Kooyong, Vic.)) and state/territory for senators (for example, Margaret Reid (LP, ACT)).

The records have been compiled from sources that include the parliamentary debates, the *Parliamentary Handbook of the Commonwealth of Australia*, the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* and state parliamentary handbooks. A list of these sources can be found at the end of this publication.

Unless otherwise specified, the information is current as at 9 May 2017.

Governors-General

First Governor-General

The first Governor-General was John Adrian Louis Hope, 7th Earl of Hopetoun, who served from 1 January 1901 to 9 January 1903.

First Australian-born Governor-General

The first Australian born Governor-General was Isaac Isaacs who served from 22 January 1931 to 23 January 1936.

Governor-General serving the longest term

The longest-serving Governor-General was Alexander Gore Arkwright Hore-Ruthven Gowrie who served for nine years and eight days from 23 January 1936 to 30 January 1945.

Governor-General serving the shortest term

William Shepherd Morrison Dunrossil served the shortest term as Governor-General, serving for one year and two days from 2 February 1960 to 3 February 1961.

Prime Ministers

First Prime Minister

The first Prime Minister was Edmund Barton (Protectionist, Hunter, NSW) who served from 1 January 1901 to 4 September 1903.

First Leader of the Opposition

The first Leader of the Opposition was George Reid (FT, East Sydney, NSW), who served from May 1901 to 18 August 1904.

Youngest person to become Prime Minister

The youngest Prime Minister was John Watson (ALP, Bland, NSW) who became Prime Minister aged 37 and served from 27 April 1904 to 17 August 1904.

Oldest person to become Prime Minister

The oldest person to become Prime Minister was John McEwen (CP, Murray, Vic.) who, after Prime Minister Harold Holt's disappearance, became Prime Minister aged 67 years and eight months. He served from

1. M Lumb and R Lundie, [Selected political records of the Commonwealth Parliament](#), Research paper, 2013–14, Parliamentary Library, Canberra, 5 March 2014.

19 December 1967 to 10 January 1968 when Senator John Gorton (LP, Vic.) was elected as Leader by the Liberal Party.

Prime Minister serving the longest term

Robert Menzies (LP, Kooyong, Vic.) was the longest-serving Prime Minister; he was Prime Minister for 16 years, one month and eight days from 19 December 1949 to 26 January 1966. Previously he had also been Prime Minister for two years, four months and four days from 26 April 1939 to 29 August 1941, making his total time in office 18 years, five months and 12 days.

Prime Minister serving the shortest term

Frank Forde (ALP, Capricornia, Qld) served the shortest period as Prime Minister, serving for eight days from 6 July 1945 to 13 July 1945 having been commissioned by the Governor-General upon the death of John Curtin. He then lost the leadership ballot to Ben Chifley.

Oldest serving Prime Minister

The oldest, serving Prime Minister was Robert Menzies (LP, Kooyong, Vic.) who was 71 years and one month of age when he resigned on 17 December 1966, having been in Parliament since 15 September 1934.

Prime Ministers who served separate terms as Prime Minister

Alfred Deakin (Protectionist, Ballarat, Vic.) served three separate terms as Prime Minister: 24 September 1903 to 27 April 1904, 5 July 1905 to 13 November 1908, and 2 June 1909 to 29 April 1910.

Andrew Fisher (ALP, Wide Bay, Qld) served three separate terms: 13 November 1908 to 2 June 1909, 29 April 1910 to 24 June 1913, and 17 September 1914 to 27 October 1915.

Robert Menzies (UAP, LP, Kooyong, Vic.) served two separate terms: 26 April 1939 to 29 August 1941, and 19 December 1949 to 26 January 1966.

Kevin Rudd (ALP, Griffith, Qld) served two separate terms: 3 December 2007 to 24 June 2010, and 27 June 2013 to 18 September 2013.

Prime Ministers who lost their seats at a federal election

Stanley Bruce (NAT, Flinders, Vic.) lost his seat at the federal election on 12 October 1929.

John Howard (LP, Bennelong, NSW) lost his seat at the federal election on 24 November 2007.

Deputy Prime Ministers who lost their seats at a federal election

Frank Forde (ALP, Capricornia, Qld) was defeated at the federal election on 25 September 1946. He is the only deputy Prime Minister to have lost his seat.

Prime Ministers who died in office

Joseph Lyons (UAP, Wilmot, Tas.) was Prime Minister from 6 January 1932 until his death on 7 April 1939.

John Curtin (ALP, Fremantle, WA) was Prime Minister from 7 October 1941 until his death on 5 July 1945.

Harold Holt (LP, Higgins, Vic.) was Prime Minister from 26 January 1966 to 19 December 1967, the day on which he is presumed to have died while swimming at Portsea, Victoria.

Prime Minister from the Senate

The only senator to become Prime Minister was John Gorton (LP, Vic.). He was appointed Prime Minister while still a senator on 10 January 1968, three weeks after the presumed death of Harold Holt (LP, Higgins, Vic.). Gorton resigned from the Senate on 1 February 1968 in order to contest a by-election for the House of Representatives seat held by Holt. As a result, from 1 to 24 February 1968 (the date of the by-election), the Prime Minister was not a member of the Parliament.

Prime Ministers who have been replaced by their party

William Morris Hughes (NAT, North Sydney, NSW) was replaced by Stanley Bruce (NAT, Flinders, Vic.) on 9 February 1923.²

Robert Menzies (UAP, Kooyong, Vic.) was replaced by Arthur Fadden (CP, Darling Downs, Qld) on 29 August 1941.

John Gorton (LP, Higgins, Vic.) was replaced by William McMahon (LP, Lowe, NSW) on 10 March 1971.

Bob Hawke (ALP, Wills, Vic.) was replaced by Paul Keating (ALP, Blaxland, NSW) on 20 December 1991.

Kevin Rudd (ALP, Griffith, Qld) was replaced by Julia Gillard (ALP, Lalor, Vic.) on 24 June 2010.

Julia Gillard was replaced by Kevin Rudd on 27 June 2013.

Tony Abbott (LP, Warringah, NSW) was replaced by Malcolm Turnbull (LP, Wentworth, NSW) on 14 September 2015.

Ministers

Youngest person to become a minister

Katherine (Kate) Ellis (ALP, Adelaide, SA) was 30 years and two months of age when appointed Minister for Youth on 3 December 2007.

Wyatt Roy (LP, Longman, Qld) was 25 years and 3 months of age when appointed as Assistant Minister for Innovation on 21 September 2015.³

Oldest person to become a minister

Senator Joseph Collings (FLP and later ALP, Qld) was 76 years and four months of age when he first became a minister. He served as Minister for the Interior from 7 October 1941 to 13 July 1945. He subsequently became Vice-President of the Executive Council on 13 July 1945, stepping down on 1 November 1946, at the age of 81 years and five months.

Longest serving minister

John McEwen (CP, Echuca; Indi; Murray, Vic.) served as a minister for a total of 25 years, first from 29 November 1937 to 7 October 1941, and then from 19 December 1949 to 5 February 1971.

The longest unbroken period of service as a minister was that of William McMahon (LP, Lowe, NSW), who served as a minister from 17 July 1951 to 5 December 1972, a total of 21 years and four months.

Minister serving the shortest term

Senator Glenister Sheil (CP and later NPA, Qld) is often described as the minister who served for the shortest period. He was sworn in as a member of the Federal Executive Council on 20 December 1977. His appointment was terminated two days later, before his ministerial appointment (Minister for Veterans' Affairs) was actually gazetted. This was because he had made a statement in support of apartheid in South Africa which was contrary to Government policy.

James Robert Dickson (Qld) was appointed Minister for Defence in the first federal ministry on 1 January 1901, prior to the election of the first Commonwealth Parliament. He died nine days later on 10 January 1901. Dickson was the first federal minister to die in office.

First minister to resign because of a disagreement in Cabinet

Charles Kingston (Protectionist, Adelaide, SA) resigned as Minister for Trade and Customs from the Barton Ministry on 24 July 1903 over a disagreement in Cabinet about whether the proposed Conciliation and Arbitration Bill 1903 should cover seamen on all ships engaged in Australian coastal trade.

2. It could be argued that, although Billy Hughes was replaced by a fellow Nationalist MP, his resignation came at the insistence of the Country Party (G Souter, *Acts of Parliament: a narrative history of the Senate and House of Representatives Commonwealth of Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Vic., 1988, p. 193).

3. Assistant Ministers are designated as Parliamentary Secretaries under the *Ministers of State Act 1952*.

Members of Parliament

Number of people who have been members of the Commonwealth Parliament

There have been 1,716 members of the Commonwealth Parliament since Federation. This includes 1,173 who served in the House of Representatives, 593 who served in the Senate, and 50 who sat in both houses.⁴

Senators and members who have been found to be ineligible to serve or invalidly elected

Malcolm McEacham (PROT, Melbourne, Vic.) had his election to the House of Representatives on 16 December 1903 declared void on 10 March 1904. He lost the subsequent by-election on 30 March 1904.

Robert Blackwood (FT, Riverina, NSW) had his election to the House of Representatives on 16 December 1903 declared void on 13 April 1904. He lost the subsequent by-election on 18 May 1904.

Joseph Vardon (ANTI-SOC, SA) had his election to the Senate at the 12 December 1906 election declared void on 31 May 1907. He was elected at the supplementary election on 15 February 1908.

Albert Palmer (PROT, Echuca, Vic.) had his election to the House of Representatives on 12 December 1906 declared void on 10 June 1907. He was elected at the subsequent by-election on 10 July 1907.

James O’Loughlin (ALP, SA) had his selection by the South Australian Parliament to fill a Senate casual vacancy on 11 July 1907 declared void on 20 December 1907. He was subsequently elected at the federal election of 31 May 1913.

Edwin Kerby (NAT, Ballarat, Vic.) had his election to the House of Representatives on 13 December 1919 declared void on 2 June 1920. He lost the subsequent by-election on 10 July 1920.

Robert Wood (NDP, NSW) was disqualified on 12 May 1988 after being elected to the Senate at the 11 July 1987 election.

Phil Cleary (IND, Wills, Vic.) had his election to the House of Representatives on 11 April 1992 declared void on 25 November 1992. He subsequently won the seat at the 13 March 1993 general election.

Jackie Kelly (LP, Lindsay, NSW) had her election to the House of Representatives on 2 March 1996 declared void on 11 September 1996. She was elected to the seat at the subsequent by-election on 19 October 1996.

Heather Hill (PHON, Qld) was disqualified on 23 June 1999 after being elected to the Senate at the 3 October 1998 election. She never sat in Parliament.

Rodney Culleton (PHON, WA) had his election to the Senate on 2 July 2016 declared void on 3 February 2017.⁵

Bob Day (Family First, SA) was found on 5 April 2017 to have been incapable of being elected to the Senate at the 2 July 2016 federal election.⁶

Youngest person elected

Wyatt Roy (LP, Longman, Qld) was elected to the House of Representatives on 21 August 2010 aged 20 years and three months. He is the youngest person elected to any Australian parliament.

Previously, the youngest person elected to the House of Representatives was Edwin Corboy (ALP, Swan, WA). He was elected at a by-election on 26 October 1918 aged 22 years and two months and served until defeated at the next election on 13 December 1919. Corboy was elected when the qualifying age for candidates was 21, which remained the case until 1973 when the age was lowered to 18.

The youngest woman elected to the House of Representatives is Katherine (Kate) Ellis (ALP, Adelaide, SA) who was elected on 9 October 2004 aged 27 years.

4. These numbers include three people who died before taking their seats: John Clasby (UAP, East Sydney, NSW), Charles Howroyd (NAT, Darwin, Tas.) and Lionel Courtney (UAP, NSW). The numbers also include people whose election was declared void or who were disqualified (see entry below) because they sat in Parliament. However, Heather Hill (PHON, Qld) is not included because she was disqualified before taking her seat.

5. On 7 February 2017 the President of the Senate [reported](#) to the Senate that on 11 January 2017 he had issued a statement declaring Senator Culleton’s place in the Senate vacant. This followed a ruling by the Federal Court on 23 December 2016 that he was an undischarged bankrupt. On 3 February 2017 the High Court, sitting as the Court of Disputed Returns, ruled that he was a person who was convicted and subject to be sentenced for an offence punishable by imprisonment for one year or longer at the time of the 2016 federal election, and therefore was incapable of being chosen as a Senator under s 44(ii) of the Constitution.

6. The High Court of Australia found that he had an indirect pecuniary interest in an agreement with the Commonwealth and thus was in breach of section 44(v) of the *Constitution*. He had previously resigned from the Senate on 1 November 2016.

The youngest woman elected to any Australian parliament is Kelly Vincent (Dignity for Disability) who was elected to the South Australian Legislative Council on 20 March 2010 aged 21 years and four months.

Youngest person in the Senate

Senator William (Bill) O'Chee (NPA, Qld) was appointed to the Senate under section 15 of the *Constitution* to fill a casual vacancy on 8 May 1990. He was aged 24 years and 10 months.

The youngest person elected to the Senate was Senator Sarah Hanson-Young (GRN, SA) on 24 November 2007 aged 25 years and 11 months. Hanson-Young's term did not commence until 1 July 2008 when she was 26 years and six months of age.

Senator Natasha Stott Despoja (AD, SA) was appointed to the Senate under section 15 of the *Constitution* on 29 November 1995 aged 26 years and two months, and her term commenced immediately from that date.

Oldest person elected to the House of Representatives

Edward Braddon (FT, Tasmania; Wilmot, Tas.) was elected at the age of 71 years and nine months and served from 29 March 1901 until his death on 2 February 1904.

Oldest person appointed or elected to the Senate

Senator Frederick Furner Ward (ALP, SA) was elected at the 1946 election and his term began on 1 July 1947 when he was aged 75 years and one month. The oldest person elected to any Australian parliament was Val Jeffrey (LP) who was elected to the Australian Capital Territory Legislative Assembly on 29 July 2016 aged 81 years and 7 months.⁷

Oldest and longest serving member of the Commonwealth Parliament

William Morris Hughes entered Parliament aged 38 years and six months on 29 March 1901 and died aged 90 years and one month on 28 October 1952 while still a member. He served for 51 years and seven months representing a number of electorates (West Sydney, North Sydney, Bradfield, NSW; Bendigo, Vic.) and various parties (ALP, NAT, UAP, LP).

Member of the Commonwealth Parliament serving the shortest term

Charles Howroyd (NAT, Darwin, Tas.) died on 10 May 1917, five days after being elected on 5 May 1917. He never sat in Parliament.

Oldest serving senator

Senator Joseph Collings (ALP, Qld) was 85 years, one month and 20 days when he retired from the Senate on 30 June 1950 as the oldest person to have served as a senator.

Highest number of crossbenchers in the House of Representatives

Since 1950 the highest number of crossbenchers in the House of Representatives has been eight. This occurred for a short period from 29 April to 7 May 2012.⁸ The crossbench included Adam Bandt (GRN, Melbourne, Vic.); Bob Katter (KAP, Kennedy, Qld); Rob Oakeshott (IND, Lyne, NSW); Tony Windsor (IND, New England, NSW); Andrew Wilkie (IND, Denison, Tas.); Tony Crook (NATS WA, O'Connor, WA); Peter Slipper (IND, Fisher, Qld) and Craig Thomson (IND, Dobell, NSW). Tony Crook moved to sit with the Nationals from 8 May 2012.

Highest number of crossbenchers in the Senate

The highest number of crossbenchers in the Senate since Federation increased to 21 following the departure of Cory Bernardi (IND, SA) from the Liberal Party on 7 February 2017.

First (and only) member expelled from the House of Representatives

Hugh Mahon (ALP, Kalgoorlie, WA) was expelled on 12 November 1920:

7. ACT Legislative Assembly, Members of the eighth Assembly 2012–2016, '[Val Jeffery](#)', n.d.; A Francis, '[Val Jeffery set to become ACT's oldest MLA, to sit in Legislative Assembly for just six days](#)', *ABC News*, 28 July 2016.

8. Crossbenchers include MPs who are members of minor parties not in coalition with the Government or Opposition, Independents, and those from major parties who choose to sit on the crossbenchers, for example, Tony Crook (NATS, WA).

... having by seditious and disloyal utterances ... been guilty of conduct unfitting for him to remain a Member ... and inconsistent with the oath of allegiance which he has taken as a Member.⁹

This followed a speech Mahon gave at a public meeting in Melbourne in which he criticised British policy in Ireland. Mahon's seat was declared vacant; he contested the subsequent by-election but was unsuccessful. The *Parliamentary Privileges Act 1987* (Cth) means that the House of Representatives no longer has the power to expel a member.

First member suspended from the House of Representatives

On 18 August 1910 James Catts (ALP, Cook, NSW) was suspended from the House of Representatives for the remainder of the day's sitting for referring to a statement by Elliott Johnson (LP, Lang, NSW) as 'a dirty, skunky thing to say' and for going over to the other side of the Chamber and saying 'you dirty skunks'.

On 21 February 1994 a new Standing Order (304A, later 94a) came into effect. This allows the Speaker to order the withdrawal of a member from the Chamber for one hour ('sin bin') for disorderly conduct without a question having to be put to the House. Wilson Tuckey (LP, O'Connor, WA) was the first member to be asked to withdraw from the Chamber under this Standing Order on 24 February 1994, just three days after it came into effect.

First senator suspended from the Senate

On 1 November 1912 Senator Arthur Rae (ALP, NSW) was suspended from the Senate for describing a statement attributed to him by Senator Edward Millen (ANTI-SOC, NSW) as 'a deliberate falsehood' and then failing to withdraw it. He was suspended for the remainder of the day's sitting.¹⁰

First member suspended from the Federation Chamber

The first member to be named and suspended from the House of Representatives following disorder in the Main Committee was Wayne Swan (ALP, Lilley, Qld) on 8 February 2001. He persisted in disorderly behaviour by continuing to interject after being called to order and thus defied the Chair.¹¹

The first member ordered from the Federation Chamber for 15 minutes, under a standing order introduced in 2006, was Ed Husic (ALP, Chifley, NSW) on 13 February 2014. He was ejected for continuing to interject after a warning had been given by the Chair.

Member suspended or ordered from the House of Representatives most often

Nick Champion (ALP, Wakefield, SA) has been ejected 82 times for one hour on each occasion.

Senator suspended from the Senate most often

Senator James Keeffe (ALP, Qld) was suspended six times during his term from 1 July 1965 to 4 February 1983.

Speaker who has ejected or presided over the suspension of the most members of the House of Representatives

During Bronwyn Bishop's (LP, Mackellar, NSW) term as Speaker (12 November 2013 to 10 August 2015) there were 402 occasions when members were suspended, or ordered to withdraw from the Chamber for one hour. She herself ordered out 400 members.

President who has presided over the most suspensions of senators

Alister McMullin (LP, NSW), President from 8 September 1953 to 30 June 1971, and Sir Condor Laucke (LP, SA), President from 17 February 1976 to 30 June 1981, both suspended senators on six occasions.

Members of Parliament who have crossed the floor most frequently

Senator Reginald (Reg) Wright (LP, Tas.) crossed the floor 150 times from 22 February 1950 to 30 June 1978. Senator Ian Wood (LP, Qld) crossed the floor 130 times over the same period.¹²

9. For this and other information about MPs' suspensions see: R Lundie, *'That's it, you're out': disorderly conduct in the House of Representatives from 1901 to 2016*, Research paper, 2016–17, Parliamentary Library, Canberra, 22 December 2016.

10. Senate, *Navigation Bill, In Committee, Debates*, 1 November 1912, pp. 4997–9.

11. The Main Committee, renamed the Federation Chamber in February 2012, was established in 1994 to deal with non-controversial legislation.

12. Detailed information about MPs crossing the floor is only available from 1950 onwards.

First (and only) member to have their seat declared vacant through being absent without leave

Senator John Ferguson (FT, Qld) had his seat become vacant on 6 October 1903 for being absent without leave for two months from 6 August 1903.¹³

First member to be sung into Parliament

Linda Burney (ALP, Barton, NSW), the first Indigenous woman elected to the House of Representatives, was sung into the House of Representatives on 31 August 2016 by Wiradjuri woman, Lynette Riley. She sang in the Wiradjuri language from the public gallery as part of Ms Burney's [first speech](#).¹⁴

First senators and members to make the affirmation of allegiance

Before taking their seats in Parliament all MPs are required by the *Constitution* to swear allegiance to the Crown. They may do this by taking an oath or making an affirmation. The first senators to make an affirmation were Josiah Symon (FT, SA) and James Walker (FT, NSW) in 1901. The first member to do so was Edward Archer (ANTI-SOC, Capricornia, Qld) on 20 February 1907.¹⁵

State or territory party leaders who have sat in Parliament together

Senators Katie Gallagher (ALP, ACT) and Zed Seselja (LP, ACT) are the first members of Parliament to have opposed each other in the same state/territory legislature and the same house of the Federal Parliament. John Downer and Thomas Playford had previously opposed each other in the South Australian Parliament, however, both entered the first Federal Parliament in 1901 as senators for the Protectionist Party.

Senators and members who have died in office

54 senators and 79 members have died in office. Senator Sir Frederick Sargood (FT, Vic.) was the first, dying while on holiday in New Zealand on 2 January 1903.

Women in politics

First woman political candidate

In 1897 Catherine Helen Spence ran for the National Australasian Convention. She came 22nd out of 33 candidates and was not elected.

Women first eligible to vote for the Commonwealth Parliament

Women in South Australia and Western Australia had been granted the right to vote before Federation and so were eligible to vote in the first Commonwealth election on 29–30 March 1901. All women (excluding Indigenous women) 21 years of age or older became eligible to vote through the *Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902* (Cth) which came into effect on 12 June 1902. Thus the first election at which all women could vote for the Commonwealth Parliament was the election of 16 December 1903.

First woman candidate for the House of Representatives

Selina Anderson (PROT) contested the 16 December 1903 election as a candidate for Dalley, NSW. She was also a candidate later under her maiden name of Siggins for the Country Party in the seat of Calare at the federal election on 16 December 1922. She was unsuccessful on both occasions.

First women candidates for the Senate

At the 16 December 1903 election senate seats were contested by Vida Goldstein (for Victoria), and Nellie Martel and Mary Ann Moore Bentley (for New South Wales). None were successful.

First women elected to Parliament

Enid Lyons (UAP and later LP, Darwin, Tas.) was elected to the House of Representatives on 21 August 1943 and retired on 19 March 1951.

13. The vacancy occurred under section 20 of the *Constitution*: 'The place of a senator shall become vacant if for two consecutive months of any session of the Parliament he, without the permission of the Senate, fails to attend the Senate'.

14. L Burney, [Governor-General's speech: address in reply](#), House of Representatives, *Debates*, 31 August 2016, p. 163.

15. D McKeown, [Oaths and affirmations made by the executive and members of federal parliament since 1901](#), Research paper, 2013–14, Parliamentary Library, Canberra, updated 24 October 2013, p. 9.

Senator Dorothy Tangney (ALP, WA) was elected to the Senate on 21 August 1943 and served to 19 March 1951. Tangney was re-elected and then served from 28 April 1951 to 30 June 1968.

The first woman elected to any Australian parliament was Edith Cowan (NAT, West Perth, WA) who was elected to the WA Legislative Assembly on 12 March 1921 and served until 22 March 1924.

First woman to become Governor-General

Quentin Bryce became Australia's first woman Governor-General on 5 September 2008.

First woman to become Prime Minister

Julia Gillard (ALP, Lalor, Vic.) became the first woman Prime Minister on 24 June 2010. She became the first elected woman Prime Minister following the federal election on 21 August 2010.

First woman member of the ministry/Cabinet

The first woman Cabinet member was Enid Lyons (LP, Darwin, Tas.), Vice-President of the Executive Council from 19 December 1949 to 7 March 1951.

The first woman minister responsible for a government department was Senator Annabelle Rankin (LP, Qld), Minister for Housing from 26 January 1966 to 22 March 1971.

The first woman minister to administer a government department and be a member of the Cabinet was Senator Margaret Guilfoyle (LP, Vic.), who was appointed to Cabinet on 8 July 1976 during her term as Minister for Social Security from 22 December 1975 to 3 November 1980.

Highest percentage of women ministers and/or cabinet ministers

The June 2013 Rudd ministry had the highest proportion of women, with 11 women ministers out of a total ministry of 30 (36.7 per cent of the ministry). The June 2013 Rudd ministry also had the highest proportion of women Cabinet members, with six women Cabinet ministers out of 20 (30 per cent of the Cabinet).

First woman Speaker of the House of Representatives

Joan Child (ALP, Henty, Vic.) served as Speaker of the House of Representatives from 11 February 1986 to 5 June 1987, and from 14 September 1987 to 28 August 1989.

First woman President of the Senate

Senator Margaret Reid (LP, ACT) served as President of the Senate from 20 August 1996 to 18 August 2002.

First woman to lead a federal parliamentary party

Senator Janine Haines (AD, SA) was Leader of the Australian Democrats from 18 August 1986 to 24 March 1990.

Indigenous members of the Commonwealth Parliament

First Indigenous members of the Commonwealth Parliament

Senator Neville Bonner (LP and later IND, Qld), a descendant of the Yuggera and Ugarapal peoples, was the first Indigenous senator.¹⁶ He was appointed on 11 June 1971 under section 15 of the *Constitution* and was returned at the next election on 2 December 1972. He served until 4 February 1983.

Kenneth (Ken) Wyatt (LP, Hasluck, WA), a Nyungar man, is the first Indigenous member of the House of Representatives. He was elected on 21 August 2010.¹⁷

First Indigenous woman senator

Nova Peris (ALP, NT) was elected to the Senate at the 2013 half-Senate election and served until her retirement on 9 May 2016. She is a descendant of the Gija, Yawaru and Iwatja peoples.¹⁸

First Indigenous woman member of the House of Representatives

Linda Burney (ALP, Barton, NSW), a Wiradjuri woman, was elected to the House of Representatives on 2 July 2016.¹⁹

16. T Rowse, 'Bonner, Neville Thomas (1922–1999)', *The Biographical dictionary of the Australian Senate*, online edition, The Senate, Canberra.

17. K Wyatt, 'Governor-General's speech: address in reply', House of Representatives, *Debates*, 29 September 2010, p. 211.

18. N Peris, 'First speech', Senate, *Debates*, 13 November 2013, p. 253.

First Indigenous minister

Ken Wyatt (LP, Hasluck, WA) was the first Indigenous minister, appointed as Assistant Minister for Health from 30 September 2015 to 18 February 2016; then Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care to 24 January 2017. On 24 January 2017 he became the Minister for Aged Care and the Minister for Sport.

Commonwealth Parliament

First Commonwealth Parliament opened

The first Commonwealth Parliament was opened in Melbourne on 9 May 1901. Parliament later moved to the provisional Parliament House in Canberra on 9 May 1927 and then to the present Parliament House on 9 May 1988.

Number of times the Queen has opened Parliament

Queen Elizabeth II has opened Parliament on three occasions: 15 February 1954, 28 February 1974, and 8 March 1977.

Welcome to Country ceremony first conducted prior to the opening of Parliament

The Welcome to Country ceremony was first conducted prior to the opening of the 42nd Parliament in the Members' Hall of Parliament House on 12 February 2008.

First President of the Senate

Senator Richard Baker (FT, SA) served as the first President of the Senate from 9 May 1901 to 31 December 1906.

First Speaker of the House of Representatives

Frederick Holder (FT, and later PROT and ANTI-SOC, South Australia and Wakefield, SA) served as the first Speaker of the House of Representatives from 9 May 1901 until his death in the Chamber on 23 July 1909. He is also the only Speaker to have died in office.

Presidents who have resigned midterm or died in office

Senator Douglas McClelland (ALP, NSW) is the only President of the Senate to resign mid-term. He was President from 21 April 1983 to 23 January 1987. The only President to have died in office was Senator James Cunningham (ALP, WA) who was President of the Senate from 1 July 1941 to 4 July 1943.

Speakers who have resigned or died in office

Nine Speakers have resigned (Walter Nairn, Jim Cope, Dr Harry Jenkins, Joan Child, Leo McLeay, Bob Halverson, Harry Jenkins, Peter Slipper and Bronwyn Bishop) and two have died in office (Frederick Holder and Archie Cameron).

Longest-serving President

Alistair Maxwell McMullin (LP, NSW) served as President of the Senate for over 17 years from 8 September 1953 to 30 June 1971.

Longest-serving Speaker

John McLeay (LP, Boothby, SA) served as Speaker of the House of Representatives for over 10 years from 29 August 1956 to 31 October 1966.²⁰

Longest speech in Parliament

Senator Albert Gardiner (ALP, NSW) spoke for 12 hours and 40 minutes on the Commonwealth Electoral Bill 1918 from 10.03 pm on 13 November to 10.43 am on 14 November 1918. The transcript of the speech took up 79 pages of Hansard (parliamentary debates).

Highest number of sitting days in a year

The House of Representatives sat for 122 days in 1904, the highest number of sitting days in a calendar year.

19. L Burney, [Governor-General's speech: address in reply](#), House of Representatives, *Debates*, 31 August 2016, p. 163.

20 His service covered four periods: 29.8.1956–14.10.1958; 17.2.1959–2.11.1961; 20.2.1962–1.11.1963; 25.2.1964–31.10.1966.

Lowest number of sitting days in a year

The House of Representatives sat for 29 days in 1937, the lowest number of sitting days in a calendar year.

First and only joint sitting of the House of Representatives and the Senate following a double dissolution election

The House of Representatives and the Senate held a joint sitting over 6–7 August 1974 to deal with six Bills which had been ‘trigger’ Bills for the double dissolution election on 18 May 1974. Although there have been seven double dissolution elections (1914, 1951, 1974, 1975, 1983, 1987 and 2016) this is the only time a joint sitting has been held. A joint sitting is different from a joint meeting of both Houses.

First electronic petition tabled in the Senate

The first electronic petition was presented to the Senate by Senator Natasha Stott Despoja (AD, SA) on 26 June 1997. The petition related to native title and called upon senators ‘to ensure that regional agreements with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are pursued in good faith, so as to determine their rights to their land in a spirit of reconciliation.’²¹

First electronic petition tabled in the House of Representatives

The first electronic petition presented to the House of Representatives was tabled on 7 November 2016 when seven such petitions were tabled.²²

Petition with the highest number of signatures

Since 1988, when the number of signatures was first recorded, the petition with the greatest number of signatures was a petition concerning funding support for community pharmacies. It was presented to the House of Representatives on 26 February 2014 with 1,210,471 signatures.²³

First broadcast of the proceedings of Parliament

Radio broadcasts of proceedings of the House of Representatives began on 10 July 1946 and of the Senate on 17 July 1946.²⁴ Senate proceedings have been regularly televised from August 1990 and House of Representatives proceedings from February 1991.

Longest sitting in the House of Representatives

The House of Representatives sat continuously for 57 hours 30 minutes from 2.30 pm on Thursday 16 November 1905 until midnight on Saturday 18 November 1905. The sitting actually lasted until 12.05 pm on Monday 20 November but was suspended over the Sunday.

The longest sitting was from 11.00 am on Friday 18 January 1918 until 6.22 pm on Friday 25 January 1918 (175 hours and 22 minutes); however, during this period the sitting was suspended from 3.09 am on 19 January until 3.00 pm on 25 January.²⁵

Longest sitting in the Senate

The Senate sat for 66 hours and 18 minutes over the period from Thursday 16 December to Tuesday 21 December 1993.²⁶

Shortest sitting in the House of Representatives

The shortest sitting period in the House of Representatives was for one minute on 14 March 1928 when the House was adjourned so that Members could attend a function to honour the aviator, Bert Hinkler.²⁷

21. Senate, [Petition: native title](#), *Debates*, 26 June 1997, p. 5259.

22. House of Representatives, Petitions Committee, [report](#), *Debates*, 7 November 2016, p. 2853.

23. House of Representatives, Chamber Research Office, Infosheet 11: [Petitions](#), November 2016. This publication contains a photo of the petition.

24. I Ward, ‘Parliament on “the wireless” in Australia’, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 60(2), 2014, pp. 157–176.; ‘Senate goes on the air’, *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, 19 July 1946, p. 4.

25. BC Wright, ed, *House of Representatives practice*, 6th edn, Department of the House of Representatives, Canberra, 2012, p. 240.

26. The periods were: 16 December 1993 (9 am to midnight); 17 December 1993 (9 am–1 pm, 2 pm–6 pm, 7 pm–after midnight); 18 December 1993 (9 am–1 pm, 2 pm–6.30 pm, 8 pm–after midnight); 20 December 1993 (10 am–1 pm, 2 pm–6.30 pm, 8 pm–12.49 am on 21 December); 21 December 1993 (9 am–1 pm, 2 pm–6.30 pm, 8 pm–2.21 am on 22 December). Australia, Senate, *Journals*, 53, 1993–1995, 16–21 December 1993, pp. 1073, 1091, 1104, 1112.

27. Wright, *House of Representatives practice*, op. cit.

Shortest sitting in the Senate

The shortest sitting period in the Senate was for two minutes on 24 October 2002 when the Senate was adjourned so that Senators could attend a memorial service for the victims of the terrorist attacks in Bali.²⁸

Legislation

First private member's Bill assented to

The Life Assurance Companies Bill 1904 was introduced by Littleton Groom (PROT, Darling Downs, Qld) and assented to on 23 November 1905 (Act no. 12 of 1905).

First private senator's Bill assented to

The Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Bill 1908 was introduced by Senator Edward Needham (ALP, WA) and assented to on 13 December 1909 (Act no. 28 of 1909).

Largest and smallest number of bills assented to in one year

A total of 264 Bills were assented to by the Parliament in 1992, the largest number in one year. The smallest number of Bills assented to was 12 in 1907.

Bill with the highest number of sponsors

The Racial Discrimination Amendment Bill 2016 was sponsored by 20 senators on its introduction to the Senate on 31 August 2016.

Longest debate on a Bill in Parliament

The longest debate on a single Bill in the Senate was on the Native Title Amendment Bill 1997—debate on the Bill lasted for 56 hours 8 minutes. Such records are not kept for the House of Representatives.

Elections and government

Largest Commonwealth electorate by area

Durack in Western Australia covers an area of 1,629,858 sq. kms.²⁹

Smallest Commonwealth electorate by area

Grayndler in New South Wales covers an area of 32 sq. kms.³⁰

Largest Commonwealth electorate by population

Canberra in the Australian Capital Territory had 144,391 people enrolled as at 31 December 2016.³¹

Smallest Commonwealth electorate by population

Lingiari in the Northern Territory had 65,752 people enrolled as at 31 December 2016.³²

Smallest vote margin to win a seat

John Lynch (ALP) defeated Alfred Conroy (LP) by just seven votes (13,162 to 13,155) to win the seat of Werriwa (NSW) at the federal election on 5 September 1914. There have been two contests where the margin was less but in both cases the result was challenged and their election declared void. Edwin Kerby defeated David McGrath by one vote for the seat of Ballaarat, Victoria at the federal election on 13 December 1919, but his election was declared void on 2 June 1920. Robert Blackwood defeated John Chanter by five votes for the seat of Riverina, NSW at the federal election on 16 December 1903, but his election was declared void on 13 April 1904.

First Commonwealth election at which all Indigenous people could vote

The right to vote had been extended to all Indigenous people in 1962, but the House of Representatives election on 30 November 1963 was the first opportunity for the exercise of that right.

28. Senate, [Notices, Debates](#), 24 October 2002, p. 5816.

29. Australian Electoral Commission (AEC), ['Current federal electoral divisions'](#), AEC website, 6 February 2017.

30. Ibid.

31. AEC, ['Elector count by division, age group and gender \(31 December 2016\)'](#), AEC website, 13 January 2017.

32. Ibid.

Government with the largest majority

The Fraser LP/NCP Coalition Government had a majority of 55 after the 1975 federal election, having won 91 seats to the ALP's 36 in the House of Representatives.

Governments with the smallest majorities after a federal election

The Cook Liberal Party Government had a one seat majority (38–37) after the 1913 federal election.

The Menzies UAP/CP Coalition retained government after the September 1940 federal election with 36 seats. Labor also won 36 seats (ALP 32 and Non-Communist Labor 4), but two independents supported the Government.³³

The Menzies LP/CP Coalition retained government after the December 1961 federal election. Although it had won the same number of seats (62) as the ALP, the ALP numbers included two territory members (for the ACT and NT) who did not have full voting rights and therefore could not affect the outcome of divisions. After providing the Speaker the LP/CP Coalition had a majority of one.

The 2010 federal election produced the first hung parliament since 1940. Although the Coalition gained 72 seats, the Gillard Labor Government retained power with 72 seats and the support of three independent MPs and one Australian Greens MP.³⁴

Party which has been in government the greatest amount of time overall

Non-Labor parties have been in power for 67 per cent of the time since Federation (nearly 78 years) compared to the ALP's 33 per cent (just over 38 years).

Longest continuous period in government

The Liberal/Country Party Coalition was in government for 22 years, 11 months and 16 days from 19 December 1949 to 5 December 1972.

Shortest period in government

The ALP was in government for three months and 22 days from 27 April 1904 to 17 August 1904.

Referendums and plebiscites

At the referendums to vote on 44 proposed amendments to the *Constitution* since Federation, eight have been passed. There have been three plebiscites: two on military conscription during World War I which failed to pass, and one to choose a national song in 1977.

33. Menzies resigned as Prime Minister and was replaced by Arthur Fadden (CP, Darling Downs, Qld) on 29 August 1941.

34. The Coalition's 72 seats did not include Tony Crook (NATS WA, O'Connor, WA) who chose to sit on the crossbench. Those supporting Labor were Rob Oakeshott (IND, Lyne, NSW), Tony Windsor (IND, New England, NSW), Andrew Wilkie (IND, Denison, Tas.) and Adam Bandt (AG, Melbourne, Vic.)

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