

### Robert James Lee HAWKE, AC

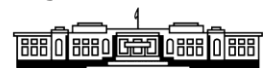
Prime Minister 11 March 1983 to 20 December 1991



- Bob Hawke became the 23rd prime minister when the Labor Party defeated the Coalition Government of Liberal Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser at the 1983 federal election.
- Member of the Australian Labor Party from 1947.
- Member of House of Representatives for Wills (Victoria) 1980-92.
- Ceased to be prime minister after losing a challenge from Paul Keating for leadership of the Labor Party in December 1991. Keating then became prime minister.

#### Main achievements (1983-1991)

- Convened Economic Summit 1983 which produced a 'Wages Accord' with the trade unions. The Accord improved economic growth without inflation and cut real wages.
- Intervened to stop the Tasmanian government proceeding with construction of a dam in the Gordon-below-Franklin area. The World Heritage Properties Conservation Act 1983 gave the Commonwealth control over State heritage sites.
- Modernised the national economy, and integrated it into the global economy, through a program of deregulation. Moved for privatisation of the domestic airline and the Commonwealth Bank. Floated the Australian dollar and admitted foreign banks to compete with national ones. Phased out or reduced tariff protection for local industries.
- Diversified Australia's export base and built closer ties with Asian countries. Established the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum 1989.
- Comprehensive tax reform. Reduced top marginal rate, introduced capital gains tax.
- Improved social security benefits to the children of low-income families. Established the Medicare health scheme 1984.
- Outlawed sex discrimination in the workforce via the Sex Discrimination Act 1984.
- Reformed Australia's education and training system. Established national training and qualification standards, and curriculum standards for schools. Created new universities from former Colleges of Advanced Education.
- Established the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) 1989 as the peak national policy and administrative agency for Indigenous Australians.
- Used personal diplomacy to develop closer ties between Australia and the United States, Russia, China, Japan and South-east Asia.
- Supported international pressure on South Africa to overturn its apartheid regime. Committed Australia to the multinational military force that defended Kuwait's sovereignty against the Iraqi invasion 1990-91.



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## Personal life

- Born 9 December 1929, Bordertown, South Australia.
- Educated at Perth Modern School and the University of Western Australia. Graduated Bachelor of Laws and Bachelor of Arts (Economics). Rhodes Scholar 1953. Oxford University Bachelor of Letters 1953-55 for thesis on wage fixation in the Australian arbitration system. Research scholar at the Australian National University 1956. Research Officer and Advocate for Australian Council of Trade Unions 1958. ACTU President 1970-80.
- Married Hazel Masterson, 3 March 1956, Perth, Western Australia. Divorced 1995. Married Blanche d'Alpuget 1995.

## Life after politics

- Resigned from Parliament in February 1992.
- Received honorary doctorates from four overseas universities and three Australian ones.
- Engaged in diverse business interests.
- Worked in television journalism for the Nine Network.
- Adjunct Professor in the Research Schools of Pacific Studies and Social Sciences at the Australian National University 1992-95 and Honorary Visiting Professor in Industrial Relations at the University of Sydney 1992-97. Member of Advisory Council of Institute for International Studies at Stanford University 1992-97.
- Granted Freedom of the City of London 1999.
- Honorary positions with groups such as the Boao Forum for Asia, Trade Union Education Foundation, Deliberative Issues Australia, and Indigenous Engineering Aid.
- The Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Centre, at the University of South Australia, was established in 1997.

## Character

- *Gregarious by nature, he had no pretensions to 'cultcha', and he genuinely shared his trade union colleagues' enthusiasm for football, horses and beer... Confident, authoritative and charismatic... Hawke as prime minister was corporatist and bureaucratic by instinct and presidential in style... he was a supreme optimist, with an unquenchable faith in his ability to negotiate a way through intractable problems... He was also a complete pragmatist, with only a few passions and less ideology.* (Source: Neal Blewett in Michelle Grattan's *Australian Prime Ministers*, pp 383, 388-9, 397)

## Did you know?

- Bob Hawke maintained Labor tradition and was a teetotaler during his term as prime minister.
- Was the longest serving Labor prime minister.

## Sources

Blewett, Neal, 'Robert James Lee Hawke' in Grattan, Michelle (ed.), *Australian Prime Ministers*, New Holland Publishers, Sydney, 2000, pp 380-406

National Archives of Australia: <http://primeministers.naa.gov.au>

Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Centre: [www.unisa.edu.au/hawkecentre](http://www.unisa.edu.au/hawkecentre)

National Museum of Australia: [www.nma.gov.au](http://www.nma.gov.au)

## Further reading

Hawke, Robert, *The Hawke Memoirs*, Heinemann Australia, Port Melbourne, 1994



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