

PRIME FACTS 53

THE AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTERS CENTRE

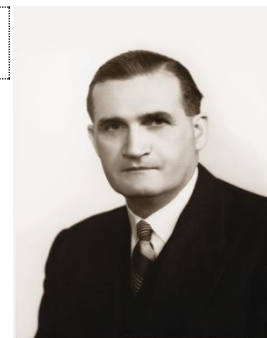
Deputy Prime Ministers of Australia

The official title of Deputy Prime Minister of Australia was created in 1968 and is given to the second-highest ranked member of the government. The Deputy Prime Minister is always a senior member of the Cabinet with a ministerial portfolio of their own.

The Deputy Prime Minister is usually responsible for serving as Acting Prime Minister in the absence of the Prime Minister. However, this is merely convention. The Deputy Prime Minister does not automatically become Prime Minister in the event the position becomes vacant – in such a case, the governing party elects a new leader to become Prime

Minister. On the three occasions when a serving Prime Minister has died, the unofficial Deputy Prime Minister was temporarily commissioned as Prime Minister in their own right, but none of the three – Earle Page (1939), Frank Forde (1945) or Sir John McEwen (1968) was subsequently elected to lead the government.

Originally the position was an unofficial or honorary position. John Gorton was the first to formally establish the position, appointing Sir John McEwen as Deputy Prime Minister on 10 January 1968. While previous governments had had an obvious 'second-in-command', they were not known as Deputy Prime Minister. All Prime Ministers since Gorton have appointed an official deputy who is commissioned in that role by the Governor-General.



Hon. Sir John McEwen
Deputy Prime Minister
1968 – 1971
National Library of Australia

No.	Deputy Prime Minister	Term of office	Party	Prime Minister
1.	Sir John McEwen	10.01.1968 – 5.2.1971	Country Party	Gorton/McMahon
2.	John Douglas Anthony	5.2.1971 – 5.12.1972	Country Party	McMahon
3.	Lance Herbert Barnard	5.12.1972 – 12.6.1974	Australian Labor Party	Whitlam
4.	James Ford Cairns	12.6.1974 – 2.7.1975	Australian Labor Party	Whitlam
5.	Frank Crean	2.7.1975 – 11.11.1975	Australian Labor Party	Whitlam
-	John Douglas Anthony	12.11.1975 – 11.3.1983	National Country Party	Fraser
6.	Lionel Frost Bowen	11.3.1983 – 4.4.1990	Australian Labor Party	Hawke
7.	Paul John Keating	4.4.1990 – 3.6.1991	Australian Labor Party	Hawke
8.	Brian Leslie Howe	3.6.1991 – 20.6.1995	Australian Labor Party	Hawke/Keating
9.	Kim Christian Beazley	20.6.1995 – 11.3.1996	Australian Labor Party	Keating
10.	Timothy Andrew Fischer	11.3.1996 – 20.7.1999	National Party of Australia	Howard
11.	John Duncan Anderson	20.7.1999 – 6.7.2005	National Party of Australia	Howard
12.	Mark Anthony James Vaile	6.7.2005 – 3.12.2007	National Party of Australia	Howard
13.	Julia Eileen Gillard	3.12.2007 – 24.6.2010	Australian Labor Party	Rudd
14.	Wayne Maxwell Swan	24.6.2010 – 27.6.2013	Australian Labor Party	Gillard
15.	Anthony Norman Albanese	27.6.2013 – 18.9.2013	Australian Labor Party	Rudd
16.	Warren Errol Truss	18.9.2013 -	National Party of Australia	Abbott



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Who becomes Deputy Prime Minister?

Under Labor governments, the Deputy Prime Minister has always been the Deputy Leader of the Labor Party. Under Liberal/National governments, the arrangement has always been that the leader of the junior coalition party becomes Deputy Prime Minister – this has always been the leader of The Nationals (previously known as the Country, National Country or National Party).

There is no requirement for a Deputy Prime Minister to be appointed. However, for practical reasons it is normal practice for the government's second-most-senior member to hold the title.

Before 1968

Prior to 1968, a number of prominent people carried out the duties later codified as those of the Deputy Prime Minister. One, William Alexander Watt, was Acting Prime Minister for more than a year, from April 1918 until August 1919, while Prime Minister Billy Hughes attended the Versailles peace conference.

In 1922, the leader of the Country Party, Earle Page, formed a Coalition government with the Nationalists under Prime Minister Stanley Bruce. Though Page's only official title was Treasurer, he was considered as the deputy to Bruce. In 1931, Page again formed a coalition, this time with Joe Lyons' United Australia Party, and became deputy once more. In this capacity, in 1939 he was appointed as Prime Minister for three weeks following Lyons' death.

From 1949 until 1958, former Prime Minister Sir Arthur Fadden, was the *de facto* deputy prime minister to Robert Menzies. Like Page, Fadden was leader of the junior coalition partner, the Country Party, and was Treasurer.

Frank Forde was Deputy Leader of the Labor Party from 1932 until 1946, and was often referred to as 'deputy prime minister', under three different Prime Ministers, while Labor held office, even though he did not officially hold that title. Forde was briefly commissioned as Prime Minister after John Curtin's death in 1945.

After 1968

Though it is normal practice for the Deputy Prime Minister to hold a senior Cabinet position, one, Dr. James Cairns, was removed from Cabinet by Prime Minister Gough Whitlam in July 1975 – however, being Deputy Leader, Cairns could not be removed from the position of Deputy Prime Minister and retained it until he resigned from that post after a short time.

Doug Anthony is the only parliamentarian to serve as Deputy Prime Minister twice, from 1971 to 1972 and again from 1975 to 1983. Only two Deputy Prime Ministers, Paul Keating and Julia Gillard, have subsequently become Prime Minister, though Sir John McEwen served as Prime Minister *before* his appointment as Deputy Prime Minister.

Further Reading

Parliament of Australia – Parliamentary Library – Historical Parliamentary Information

<http://www.aph.gov.au/Library/handbook/historical/index.htm>

Contains lists of Ministers, which includes the Deputy PM