

Paul John KEATING

Prime Minister 20 December 1991 to 11 March 1996

- Keating became the 24th prime minister, replacing Bob Hawke after winning a Labor Caucus ballot.
- Member of the Australian Labor Party. Member of House of Representatives for Blaxland (NSW) 1969-91. Minister for Northern Australia 1975, Treasurer 1983-91.
- His period in office ended on 2 March 1996, when the Labor Party was defeated by the Liberal-National Party coalition at the general election.



Main achievements (1983-1996)

- As Treasurer in the Hawke government, Keating was the architect of the deregulation of the Australian economy.
- The government floated the Australian currency and allowed foreign banks to operate in Australia from 1983.
- Removed direct government controls from interest rates which had helped create a competitive disadvantage for Australian companies.
- Abolished the two-airline policy and achieved a general lowering of tariff levels.
- As prime minister, built strong bilateral links with Australia's Asia-Pacific neighbours, particularly Indonesia.
- Was a driving force in establishing the Asia Pacific Economic forum (APEC) heads of government meeting with its commitment to regional free trade.
- Responded to the High Court decision in the Mabo case 1992 and enacted the Native Title Act 1993 and the Land Fund Act 1994, which was the first national recognition of indigenous occupation and title to land.
- In April 1993 he appointed a Republic Advisory Committee to examine options to make Australia a republic.
- Established the National Training Act 1992, presented the White Paper *Working Nation* in 1994 to combat rising unemployment. Proposed a national superannuation scheme to redress low national savings.



MUSEUM
OF AUSTRALIAN
DEMOCRACY

OLD PARLIAMENT HOUSE

Personal life

- Born in Sydney on 18 January 1944.
- Educated at De La Salle College in Bankstown 1955-58 and Belmore Technical College 1959-61.
- He joined the Labor Party in 1958 at age 15 and became President of the NSW Labor Youth Council 1966.
- Married Anna (Annita) van Iersel, in Oisterwijk, Holland, 17 January 1975.

Life after politics

- He is a visiting professor of public policy at the University of New South Wales 2007.
- Published *Engagement: Australia Faces the Asia-Pacific* (2000) which examines Australian foreign policy directions and achievements during his term in office.
- His commentaries on national issues appear regularly in newspapers.

Character

- *Few prime ministers have provoked such strong public reactions as Paul Keating. Even fewer have presided over such dramatic changes to Australia's economy and society. A self-professed 'big picture' person, a breeder of budgerigars and collector of fine antiques, Keating used his eight years as treasurer and four as prime minister to introduce radical changes that would allow Australia to meet the new economic challenges of the 1980's and 1990's. In doing so, he embraced many of the policies of his conservative opponents and overturned long-held Labor shibboleths.* (Source: David Day, 'Paul Keating' in Michelle Grattan (ed.), *Australian Prime Ministers*, New Holland, Sydney, 2000, p 410).

Did you know?

- He was only 25 when he won the seat of Blaxland, making him one of the youngest federal politicians ever.
- Also one of the youngest federal ministers at 31 when he secured his first portfolio in 1975.
- He managed a rock band The Ramrods, later recalling that he had led them 'from nowhere to obscurity'.
- Like John Howard, he had been in parliament for 22 years when he became prime minister.

Sources

Day, David, 'Paul Keating (20 December 1991-March 1996)' in Michelle Grattan (ed.), *Australian Prime Ministers*, New Holland, Sydney, 2000, pp 409-435

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

Further reading

Blewett, Neal, *A Cabinet Diary: A Personal Record of the First Keating Government*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 1999

Carew, Edna, *Keating: A Biography*, Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, 1988

Edwards, John, *Keating: The Inside Story*, Viking, Melbourne, 1996

Gordon, Michael, *A True Believer: Paul Keating*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1996

Watson, Don, *Recollections of a Bleeding Heart: A Portrait of Paul Keating PM*, Knopf, Sydney, 2002



MUSEUM
OF AUSTRALIAN
DEMOCRACY

OLD PARLIAMENT HOUSE