

Governors-General of Australia



Left: The Earl of Hopetoun,
Australia's first Governor-General
1901-1903
National Library of Australia



Right: Quentin Bryce
Australia's 25th Governor-General
2008-
Office of the Governor-General

No. Governor-General

Term of office

1.	John Adrian Louis Hope, 7th Earl of Hopetoun	1.1.1901 – 9.1.1903
2.	Hallam Tennyson, 2 nd Baron Tennyson	9.1.1903 – 21.1.1904
3.	Henry Northcote, 1 st Baron Northcote	21.1.1904 – 9.9.1908
4.	William Ward, 2 nd Earl of Dudley	9.9.1908 – 31.7.1911
5.	Thomas Denman, 3 rd Baron Denman	31.7.1911 – 18.5.1914
6.	Sir Ronald Munro-Ferguson	18.5.1914 – 6.10.1920
7.	Henry Forster, 1 st Baron Forster	6.10.1920 – 8.10.1925
8.	John Baird, 1 st Baron Stonehaven	8.10.1925 – 21.1.1931
9.	Sir Isaac Alfred Isaacs	21.1.1931 – 23.1.1936
10.	Brig. Gen. Alexander Hore-Ruthven, 1 st Baron Gowrie	23.1.1936 – 30.1.1945
11.	H.R.H. Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester	30.1.1945 – 11.3.1947
12.	Sir William John McKell	11.3.1947 – 8.5.1953
13.	Field Marshal Sir William Joseph Slim	8.5.1953 – 2.2.1960
14.	William Morrison, 1 st Viscount Dunrossil	2.2.1960 – 3.2.1961
15.	William Sidney, 1 st Viscount De L'Isle	3.8.1961 – 7.5.1965
16.	Richard Gardiner Casey, Baron Casey	7.5.1965 – 30.4.1969
17.	Sir Paul Meernaa Caedwalla Hasluck	30.4.1969 – 11.7.1974
18.	Sir John Kerr	11.7.1974 – 8.12.1977
19.	Sir Zelman Cowen	8.12.1977 – 29.7.1982
20.	Sir Ninian Stephen	29.7.1982 – 16.2.1989
21.	William George Hayden	16.2.1989 – 16.2.1996
22.	Sir William Deane	16.2.1996 – 29.6.2001
23.	Right Rev. Dr. Peter Hollingworth	29.6.2001 – 29.5.2003
24.	Maj. Gen. Michael Jeffery	29.5.2003 – 5.9.2008
25.	Quentin Bryce AC	5.9.2008 -



Australia is a constitutional monarchy. The Queen of Australia is Her Majesty Elizabeth II, who is also Sovereign of the United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand and 12 other countries. The nations which share this monarchy are known as Commonwealth Realms.

Because the Queen lives in the United Kingdom, she is represented in Australia by the Governor-General, who is in effect Australia's Head of State. Some authorities argue that the Governor-General is Australia's Head of State in every respect: others disagree. The role of the Governor-General is set out in chapter two of the Constitution, which establishes the Executive Government of Australia. Under the principles of responsible government, the Governor-General is obliged to accept the advice of his or her ministers, except in unusual circumstances. The Governor-General must assent to bills passed by the Australian Parliament before they can become law. The Governor-General also presides over meetings of the Federal Executive Council. The Governor-General opens and dissolves Parliament, commissions the Ministry, and is Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Defence Force. On one occasion, in 1975, the Governor-General dismissed the Prime Minister of the day on account of his inability to obtain Supply and appointed a caretaker Prime Minister in his stead.

The Governor-General is appointed by the Queen on the advice of the Australian government. This was not always the case. During the first thirty years of Federation the British government recommended whom the Sovereign should appoint. In 1930, Australian Prime Minister James Scullin asserted his right to advise King George V on the appointment of a new Governor-General. After initial resistance the King agreed to appoint Scullin's choice, the Australian-born Sir Isaac Isaacs, a distinguished jurist and Federationist, who had also been a member of the first Commonwealth Parliament.

Governors-General are not appointed for fixed terms. A typical appointment is for five years, but there have also been shorter and longer terms.

When the Governor-General is absent from Australia, his or her duties are performed by the Administrator of the Commonwealth. All State Governors hold a dormant commission to act as Administrator. Usually, the longest-serving Governor will become the Administrator should this be necessary. An Administrator also takes over if a Governor-General dies or resigns.

Prior to Isaacs, every Governor-General was British, and all but one were peers. It remained common to appoint British aristocrats as Governor-General until the early 1960s. One, the Duke of Gloucester, was a member of the Royal Family. Only Australians have held the position since 1965.

The Governor-General lives at Government House in the Canberra suburb of Yarralumla. Government House sits on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin and has been used by every Governor-General since 1927. The Governor-General also has a second official residence at Admiralty House on the northern foreshore of Sydney Harbour.

In 1999 a proposal for Australia to become a republic, replacing the Governor-General with a President elected by a two thirds majority of the Federal Parliament, was defeated at a national referendum. The No vote was supported by 55% of Australian voters and carried all states. The issue retains some currency in Australian political debate, but does not appear to have substantial public support as a matter of high priority.

Further Reading

- Australian Republican Movement website: <http://www.republic.org.au/>
- Australians for a Constitutional Monarchy website: <http://www.norepublic.com.au/>
- Carroll, Brian, *Australia's Governors-General: from Hopetoun to Jeffery*. (Kenthurst: Rosenberg Publishing, 2004)
- Constitution Education Fund Australia website: <http://www.cefa.org.au/>
- Cunneen, Christopher, *Kings' Men: Australia's Governors-General from Hopetoun to Isaacs*, (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1983)
- Governor-General of Australia's website: <http://www.gg.gov.au>
- Parliamentary Library, *Frequently Asked Questions about the Office of Governor-General*: <http://www.aph.gov.au/library/pubs/rn/2003-04/04rn10.htm>
- Smith, David, *Head of state: the Governor-General, the Monarchy, the Republic and the Dismissal*. (Paddington: Macleay Press, 2005)
- Twomey, Anne. *The Chameleon Crown: The Queen and Her Australian Governors* (Sydney: Federation Press, 2006)