

Kim Christian BEAZLEY AC

Leader of the Opposition 11 March 1996 to 10 November 2001;
28 January 2005 to 4 December 2006



- Kim Beazley became the 26th Leader of the Opposition after the Australian Labor Party was defeated in the federal election by the Liberals led by John Howard. In 2001 he stepped down and was succeeded by Simon Crean. In 2005 he returned to the leadership after the resignation of Mark Latham. He was succeeded by Kevin Rudd in 2006 following a successful leadership challenge.
- Member of the Australian Labor Party since 1980.
- Member of the House of Representatives for Swan (WA) 1980-93, Brand (WA) 1993-2007. Special Minister of State 1983-84, Minister for Aviation 1983-84, Minister for Defence 1984-90, Leader of the House 1988-96, Minister for Transport and Communications 1990-91, Minister for Finance 1991, 1993-96, Minister for Employment, Education and Training 1991-93, Deputy Prime Minister 1995-96, Shadow Minister for Defence 2004.

As Opposition Leader

- Opposed the introduction of the goods and services tax (GST) by the Howard Government.
- In the federal election of 1998, under Kim Beazley's leadership, the Labor Party won the majority of the popular vote, with 51.15 per cent of the national two-party preferred vote and achieving a national swing of 4.78 per cent. Despite this, the election was won by John Howard's coalition government, who won a majority of seats in the House of Representatives.
- Led the Labor Party to a net loss of four seats and a negative swing of 2.26 per cent at the federal election of 2001.
- Strongly opposed the Howard Government's WorkChoices legislation in 2005.

Political life

- Responsible, as Defence Minister 1984-90 for the establishment of the Royal Australian Navy's submarine program.
- Established the 'Job Compact' programme 1993. Under the scheme 233,000 Australians who had been unemployed for over 18 months were guaranteed either a job or training for a job.
- As Minister for Communications in 1990 laid the groundwork for the eventual privatisation of Telecom (now Telstra) and the opening of the telecommunications industry to market forces.
- Oversaw, as Finance Minister, much of the privatisation of the Commonwealth Bank.



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Personal life

- Born 14 December 1948 in Perth, Western Australia.
- Educated at Claremont Primary 1954-60 and Hollywood High School 1961-65. Graduated from University of Western Australia with a master's degree in arts. Rhodes Scholar 1973. Oxford University Master of Philosophy 1973-76. Tutored in politics at Murdoch University, WA 1976-80.
- Married Mary Paltridge, 24 June 1974 at St Aloysius church, Oxford. Divorced 1988.
- Married Susie Annus, 27 January 1990. Three daughters.

Life after politics

- Professorial fellow of political science and international relations at University of Western Australia.
- Chancellor of the Australian National University 2008-09.
- Ambassador to the United States of America since 2010.
- Appointed Companion of the Order of Australia, 2009.

Character

His outstanding characteristic is his judgement. He has a lightning quick appreciation of people and situations, and I have rarely found either to be at fault. Like any of us he has ambition, but I always found he had it under control, if you know what I mean. He knows what he wants and will fight hard to get it, but he is essentially a principled and straight man. As you can see I am proud to call him a friend.

Tony Blair in FitzSimons, P., *Beazley*, Sydney: HarperCollins, 1998

Did you know?

- He was diagnosed with polio in 1954.
- His father, Kim Edward Beazley, was the federal member for Fremantle (WA) 1945-77 and Minister for Education from 1972-75. Kim Beazley Snr was widely regarded as one of the Parliament's best orators.
- Beazley's childhood dream was to play cricket for Australia.
- In 1969, he became guild president at the University of Western Australia.
- The only person to serve as Labor leader on two separate occasions.

Sources

FitzSimons, Peter, *Beazley*, HarperCollins Publishers, Sydney, 1998.

National Archives of Australia: primeministers.naa.gov.au

Australian Labor Party: www.alp.org.au/people/beazley_kim

Further reading

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