

# Curtin University

JOHN CURTIN PRIME MINISTERIAL LIBRARY

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# INFORMATION UPDATE

GOUGH WHITLAM ISSUE 2014

## JCPML Foundation Patron Hon. Edward Gough Whitlam, AC, QC (1916 – 2014)

The John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library (JCPML) expresses its condolences to the Whitlam family on the passing of a remarkable man. The JCPML acknowledges the support and significant contribution Gough Whitlam made to the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library as our Foundation Patron.

Mr Whitlam was Australia's 21st Prime Minister, leading the nation from December 1972 to November 1975. He joined the Australian Labor Party (ALP) in 1945 and held the seat of Werriwa in the House of Representatives from 1952, through 11 federal elections over the next 25 years.

Mr Whitlam was one of Parliament's most articulate members. From 1967 to 1972 he was the elected Leader of the ALP and modernized the party's views on urban development, housing, education, foreign affairs and health.

He was also the first prime minister to visit the People's Republic of China and drew on international agreements to develop programs for human rights, the environment and conservation and fostered Australian participation in international organisations.

Image: John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library

Mr Whitlam had a long standing personal involvement with cultural heritage institutions and his first visit to the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library (JCPML) was in 1997. In 1998 he was invited to be the Foundation Patron of the JCPML and deliver the inaugural JCPML Anniversary Lecture.

Mr Whitlam generously donated copyright to his John Curtin Memorial Lectures and the inaugural lecture to enable open access to this material by researchers.

Both Mr and Mrs Whitlam attended a number of annual JCPML Anniversary Lectures, openings of JCPML exhibitions and the JCPML play *The Shadow of the Eagle* during Mr Whitlam's term as Patron. Their commitment to the development of the Library and its programs was invaluable.

In announcing his retirement as active Patron of the JCPML in 2008, Mr Whitlam said "As long as I was sufficiently mobile I greatly enjoyed being the patron of a foundation honouring the Australian Prime Minister who took the initial steps to ensure that World War Two would be succeeded by more effective structures than those which succeeded World War One."

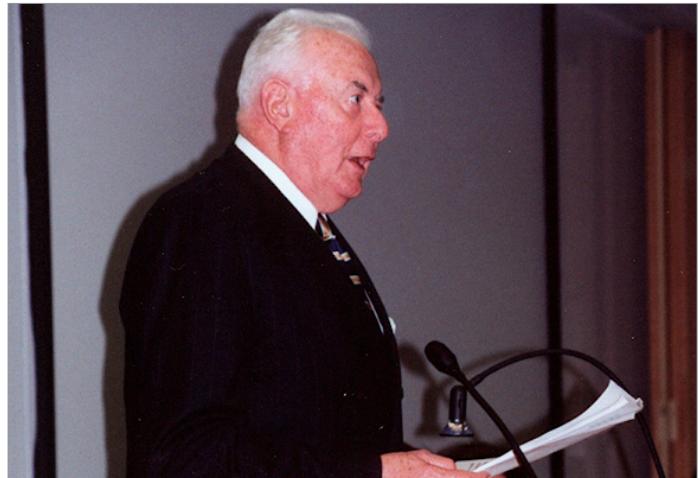
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# JCPML EVENTS

## RIGHT

The Hon Gough Whitlam delivered the JCPML's inaugural Anniversary Lecture to mark the 53rd anniversary of John Curtin's death. The speech was titled *John Curtin: Party, Parliament and People*.



The Hon Gough Whitlam delivering the JCPML Anniversary Lecture.



Paul Keating with JCPML Foundation Patron Gough Whitlam at the 2002 JCPML Anniversary Lecture presented by Mr Keating.



Paul Kelly with Gough Whitlam at the 2004 JCPML Anniversary Lecture.

## LEFT

*An Australian Vision: Foreign Policy Challenges in the 21st Century* was the 2004 Anniversary Lecture presented by journalist Paul Kelly.

## BELOW LEFT

Professor Larissa Behrendt presented the 2007 lecture *Shaping a nation: visionary leadership in a time of fear and uncertainty*.

## BELOW RIGHT

The 8th Anniversary Lecture was presented by the Hon John Faulkner *John Curtin: a Labor Life*.



Image by Klaus Schmechtig

Professor Larissa Behrendt with Gough Whitlam at the 2007 JCPML Anniversary Lecture.



Prof Hacket, Imogen Garner, Hon John Faulkner, David Black, Margaret Whitlam & Hon Gough Whitlam.

# EDWARD GOUGH WHITLAM (1916-2014)

By Emeritus Professor David Black

In the 1974 federal election campaign one of my most enduring memories was the sight of the then 58 year old prime minister Gough Whitlam moving about the WAIT campus followed by literally hordes of young people and attracting the kind and degree of attention usually limited to pop music stars and the like. The fact that the adulation for Whitlam was first and foremost centred on his government's decision to abolish tertiary education fees should not detract from the mass appeal of other huge issues at the time concerning the abolition of military conscription, the development of Medicare, moves towards equal pay for women, the emphases on environmentalism and the status of indigenous Australians, and the acceptance of the existence of Communist China. Whitlam was the symbol of the hopes and aspirations of large numbers of Australians and especially younger Australians. The fact that Whitlam had been arbitrarily dismissed as prime minister by the Governor-General and subsequently repudiated by the electorate on two occasions should not detract from the status and standing of this man who in so many respects led Australia into the modern world.

Born Edward Gough Whitlam on 11 July 1916 in Kew, Melbourne, the future prime minister was always known as Gough for family reasons. His father, a future Commonwealth Crown Solicitor, moved the family to Sydney in 1918. Subsequently Gough became the only Australian prime minister to spend his formative years in Canberra.

Gough attended the University of Sydney but did not complete his law

studies until after World War Two. During the war he served for several years in the Royal Australian Air Force as a navigator and bomb aimer.

His increasing involvement with the ALP led to his endorsement and election to the House of Representatives in November 1952 as member for Werriwa in Sydney's western suburbs. He represented Werriwa until his resignation. Gough Whitlam resigned on 31 July 1978 following Sir John Kerr's unilateral and unprecedented intervention and two substantial electoral defeats.

In July 1998, two years after the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library was founded, Gough Whitlam agreed to become the first JCPML Patron and to deliver the inaugural John Curtin Anniversary Lecture. The lecture observed the 53rd anniversary of Curtin's death, only weeks short of the Japanese surrender in August 1945. Titled *John Curtin: Party, Parliament, People*, the lecture emphasised Curtin's conviction that the party system—a strong two-party system—was the "indispensable basis for a parliamentary democracy." In rejecting proposals for a national government in 1941, Curtin suggested "If there is one thing worse than a government of two parties it would be a government of three parties." In Whitlam's view historians and political commentators alike could well take note that "Our most narrowly divided House of Representatives provided our strongest government throughout our most dangerous time" and it ran its three year term. At the same time his central area of concern was the need for modernisation of the Australian Constitution and the fact that:

*The great defining principles of parliamentary democracy have prevailed with or without provision in the Constitution...and they have prevailed because of the strength of the most important of all the institutions not mentioned [except since 1977 with reference to Senate casual vacancies] in the Constitution, the great political parties.*

Whitlam resigned as the active JCPML Patron in 2008, to be succeeded by Paul Keating, but accepted the title of Inaugural JCPML Patron.

As Inaugural Patron of the JCPML Whitlam was generous with his time and encouragement. He travelled significant distances to be present at functions, even when the personal toll of such travel was significant. It is therefore revealing that Whitlam concluded his inaugural lecture with a quotation from Curtin's last major speech to Parliament in February 1945:

*If we are to concert with other people of goodwill in order to have a better world, there must be some pooling of sovereignty...There must be some realisation that countries cannot always have their own way...There is a price that the world must pay for peace...less nationalism, less selfishness, less race ambition.*

Established in 2001, the Whitlam Institute is a significant institution in its own right, but there is a special place for Gough Whitlam in the annals of Curtin University and the JCPML.

## Whitlam Institute

The Whitlam Institute within the University of Western Sydney is a public policy institute that commemorates, and is inspired by the life and work of one of Australia's most respected Prime Ministers, The Hon. Gough Whitlam AC QC. It pursues the causes he championed and is guided by the principles upon which his parliamentary career and years of service to the people of Australia were founded.

For more information see <http://www.whitlam.org>



## Whitlam Walk

On 5 July 2002 the contribution of the JCPML's Foundation Patron, Hon. Gough Whitlam, to the JCPML and Curtin University of Technology was recognised by the naming of a significant walkway in his honour. 'Whitlam Walk' is the pedestrian pathway leading from the northern end of the campus through the colonnades to the John Curtin Centre.

Image by Adrian Lambert

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