Education Kit

Joseph Lyons with Dame Enid Lyons and family at The Lodge, Canberra
Courtesy of the National Library of Australia
Foreword

The Whitlam Institute within the University of Western Sydney is bringing to Sydney for the first time the unique exhibition Mrs Prime Minister – Public Image, Private Lives, a travelling exhibition from the Museum of Australian Democracy, Old Parliament House Canberra. The Whitlam Institute expresses its thanks to those who have so generously supported us in presenting this exhibition, including: our principal supporter the University of Western Sydney Office of the Pro Vice Chancellor Engagement; Lady Fairfax AC OBE; and Dyldam Developments.

We would also like to thank Monica McMahon, the Curator of the UWS Art Collection, for all of her valuable advice and substantial assistance, without which the mounting of the exhibition would not have been possible.

The Whitlam Institute within the University of Western Sydney commemorates the life and work of the Hon Gough Whitlam AC QC and pursues the causes he championed. The Institute bridges the historical legacy of Gough Whitlam's years in public life and the contemporary relevance of the Whitlam Program to public discourse and policy. The Institute is custodian of the Whitlam Prime Ministerial Collection housing selected books and papers donated by Mr Whitlam and providing on-line access to papers held both at the Institute and in the National Archives.

The Office of University Engagement at the University of Western Sydney (UWS) provides a focal point for activities that engage the community in the core business of the University. Engagement at UWS is viewed as partnership, for mutual benefit, between the University and its communities, be they regional, national or global.

If you are interested in bringing a school group along to the exhibition, I would urge you to contact Amy Sambrooke in my office as soon as possible to confirm your booking. Amy can be contacted on 9685 9072 or email a.sambrooke@uws.edu.au

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require any further information about the exhibition.

Kind regards

Eric Sidoti
Director

Resources for this education kit were sourced from the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House website:


Compilation and Editing of this Education Kit by
Monica McMahon, Curator, UWS Art Collection;
Robyn Ryan, UWS Art Collection;
Sandra Stevenson and Amy Sambrooke, Whitlam Institute.
Reflection questions for the exhibition

Mother of the Nation

All Prime Ministerial wives have used their position to increase public awareness, raise funds and support a wide range of important national and social causes.

Many wives have received official recognition for their services to the community. Research one of them and describe the charities and organisations she continued to support when she was no longer Mrs PM.

Did she receive official recognition, such as an OAM for her services?

Political Partner

Every Australian Prime Minister has had a wife who has assisted her husband with his political career.

List the examples given in the exhibition of how these wives assisted their husband’s public and political profile.

Nation’s Hostess

Prime Ministers Wives are expected to participate in official duties, which come with the position.

List some of these official duties displayed in the exhibition.

List some of the functions that the current Mrs PM, Therese Rein has attended in recent months. Do some of these reflect her personal interests?

The Media

The Wife of the PM has to harness the media for her own advantage and to promote her own causes.

Both parties play a delicate balancing act which raises the question: just how far is the Prime Minister’s wife a political figure? Find some examples in the media that support your position.

In recent months, what media coverage has Therese Rein attracted? What did the media focus upon, and has it raised awareness for any particular issue or institution that she may support?
Private Lives

What happens when these women are off duty and behind closed doors?

Do you think, we ever get to know the private women behind the public image? In answering this question, provide examples from biographies or other media.

What did these women do before or after they were a Prime Minister’s wife? Research one of these women and discuss.

Changing the Role

Each woman who has filled the role of Prime Minister’s wife has had a unique personality and agenda.

What do you think the role of a Prime Minister’s wife should be?

Therese Rein, the current Mrs PM is not in this exhibition. Find recent articles about her and describe her personality and agenda in the role of Mrs PM.

Choose two women from this exhibition and compare and contrast the roles they played whilst being Mrs PM.

It’s inevitable that a woman will eventually be Prime Minister of Australia, so what do you think the role of a Prime Minister’s husband would be? Why?

Many wives of former Prime Ministers have had a biography written about them. Read one and describe how she played the role of Mrs PM.
Mrs PM Timeline

1901

JANE BARTON

Lady Jane Barton

Jane (Jeanie) Mason Ross
11 June 1851 – 23 March 1938

Married 28 December 1877
Sir Edmund Barton –
Protectionist Party

Children: 4 sons, 2 daughters

Term as PM wife: 1 January 1901 – 24 September 1903 (2 years, 8 months, 24 days)

‘Strong both in physique and character, indefatigably and loyally devoted to her husband and family.’

1903

PATTIE DEAKIN

Pattie Deakin

Elizabeth Martha Anne (Pattie) Browne
1 January 1863 – 30 December 1934

Married 3 April 1882
Alfred Deakin –
Protectionist Party

Children: 3 daughters

Terms as PM wife:
24 September 1903 – 27 April 1904
5 July 1905 – 13 November 1908
2 June 1909 – 29 April 1910

(Total: 4 years, 10 months, 11 days)

‘full of life and spirit...modest, capable...and absolutely mistress of herself.’ – Alfred Deakin
1904

ADA WATSON

No image of Ada Watson exists

Ada Jane Lowe
1859 – 19 April 1921
Dressmaker
Married 27 November 1889
John Christian Watson –
Australian Labor Party

Children: None

Term as PM Wife: 27 April 1904 – 17 August 1904 (3 months, 21 days)

'[She was] a fine woman.' – John Christian Watson

1904

FLORENCE REID

Florence (Flora) Ann Brumby (Bromby)
10 November 1869– 1 September 1950
Married 5 November 1891
George Houstoun Reid –
Free Trade Party

Children: 2 sons, 1 daughter

Term as PM wife: 18 August 1904 – 5 July 1905 (10 months, 18 days)

[She was] devoted, true and unselfish...’ – George Reid
1908

MARGARET FISHER

Margaret Fisher
Margaret Jane Irvine
1868 – 15 June 1958
Married 31 December 1901
Andrew Fisher – Australian Labor Party
Children: 1 daughter, 5 sons
Terms as PM wife:
13 November 1908 – 2 June 1909
29 April 1910 – 24 June 1913
17 September 1914 – 27 October 1915
(Total: 4 years, 9 months, 18 Days)
'An intelligent and clear-sighted woman...her tastes remained simple and her chief interest was her family'.

1913

MARY COOK

Mary Cook
Mary Turner
c.1863 – 24 September 1950
Assistant Mistress/School Teacher
Married 8 August 1885
Joseph Cook – Liberal Party of Australia
Children: 6 sons, 3 daughters
Term as PM wife:
24 June 1913 – 17 September 1914 (1 year, 2 months, 25 days)
'What a real servant of the Commonwealth she is.' Newspaper report, 1926
1915

MARY HUGHES

Mary Hughes

Mary Ethel Campbell
6 June 1874 – 2 April 1958
Community Worker - Nurse

Married 26 June 1911

William Morris Hughes –

Australian Labor Party; Nationalist Party from 1917

Children: 1 daughter

Term as PM wife:
27 October 1915 – 9 February 1923 (7 years, 3 months, 14 days)

'Her self-sacrifice, fortitude and zeal won her the golden opinions among our soldiers.' - Newspaper report, 1922

1923

ETHEL BRUCE

Ethel Bruce

Ethel Dunlop Anderson
25 May 1879 – 16 March 1967

Married 12 July 1913

Stanley Melbourne Bruce –
Nationalist Party

Children: None

Term as PM wife:
9 February 1923 – 22 October 1929 (6 years, 8 months, 14 days)

'As stylish and dignified a figure as [her husband] and fulfilled her official tasks with aplomb’
1929

SARAH SCULLIN

Sarah Scullin
Sarah Maria McNamara
1882 – 31 May 1962
Dressmaker
Married 11 November 1907
James Henry Scullin – Australian Labor Party

Children: None

Term as PM wife:
22 October 1929 – 6 January 1932 (2 years, 2 months, 16 days)
‘A lover of good music...she preferred a simple, quiet and relatively austere life.’ - The Herald, 1976

1932

ENID LYONS

Enid Lyons
Enid Muriel Burnell
July 1897 – 2 September 1981
Trainee school teacher, Politician
Married 28 April 1915
Joseph Aloysius Lyons – United Australia Party

Children: Six daughters, six sons.

Term as PM wife: 6 January 1932 – 7 April 1939 (7 years, 3 months, 2 days)
‘...a dead-on-the-beam quickness of mind, warm appreciation of people.....Dame Enid packs a tremendous punch.’ The Australian Women’s Weekly, 1951
1939

ETHEL PAGE

Ethel Page

Ethel Esther Blunt
1875 – 26 May 1958
Nursing sister

Married 18 September 1906
Sir Earle Christmas Grafton Page –
Australian Country Party

Children: 1 daughter, 4 sons

Term as PM wife: 7 April 1939 – 26 April 1939 (20 days)

’In every sphere she entered she proved and held her leadership.’ – Earle Page

1939

PATTIE MENZIES

Pattie Menzies

Pattie Mae Leckie
2 March 1899 – 30 August 1995
Community Worker

Married 27 September 1920
Robert Gordon Menzies –
United Australia Party, Liberal Party – 2nd term

Children: 2 sons, 1 daughter

Term as PM wife:
26 April 1939 – 29 August 1941
19 December 1949 – 26 January 1966
(Total: 18 years, 5 months, 12 days)

’She was naturally, intensely loyal, supportive and devoted to her husband and family.’
1941

ILMA FADDEN

Ilma Fadden

Ilma Nita Thornber
c.1895 – 14 May 1987

Married 27 Dec 1916 (Mackay)
Arthur William Fadden –
Country Party

Children: 2 sons, 2 daughters

Term as PM wife:
29 Aug 1941 – 7 Oct 1941 (1 mth, 9 days)

'A vigorous campaign helper...and an active war worker, but her main interest was
country women and children'. – The Herald

1941

ELSIE CURTIN

Elsie Curtin

Elsie Needham
4 Oct 1890 – 24 June 1975
Community Worker

Married 21 April 1917 Perth (27)
John Curtin –
Australian Labor Party

Children: 1 son, 1 daughter

Term as PM wife:
7 Oct 1941 – 5 Jul 1945 (3 yrs, 8 mths, 29 days)

'She was a very evenly balanced person, always calm, jovial [and] ready for a laugh'. -
Elsie Curtin (daughter)
1945

VERA FORDE

Vera Forde

**Veronica (Vera) O’Reilly**
1894 – 1967 (73)

**Married** 5 Feb 1925

Francis Michael Forde –
Australian Labor Party

**Children:** 3 daughters, 1 son

**Term as PM wife:**

6 July 1945 – 13 July 1945 (8 days)

'She was very politically active and committed to helping those around her.' – Clare Attridge – daughter of Vera Forde.

1945

ELIZABETH CHIFLEY

Elizabeth Chifley

**Elizabeth Gibson McKenzie**
1886 – 9 Sept 1962

**Married** 6 June 1914

Joseph Benedict Chifley –
Australian Labor Party

**No children**

**Term as PM wife:**

13 Jul 1945 – 19 Dec 1949 (4 yrs, 5 mths, 7 days)

'Never the Prime Minister’s Lady, but simply the kind, unassuming woman who lives at 10 Busby Street, Bathurst'. - Newspaper report
1966

**ZARA HOLT**

Zara Holt

**Zara Kate Fell (nee Dickens) – later Bate**

10 March 1909 – 14 June 1989
Businesswoman & Community Worker

**Married** 8 October 1946
Harold Edward Holt – Liberal Party of Australia

**Children:** 3 sons

**Term as PM wife:**

26 January 1966 – 19 December 1967 (1 year, 10 months, 23 days)

*A happy, witty, warm and affectionate lady.* – Andrew Peacock

1968

**BETTINA GORTON**

Bettina Gorton

**Bettina Brown**

1915 – 2 October 1983

**Married** 15 February 1935
John Grey Gorton – Liberal Party of Australia

**Children:** 1 daughter, 2 sons

**Term as PM wife:**

10 January 1968 – 10 March 1971 (3 years, 2 months)

*She was intelligent, friendly, gracious and highly respected.* – Kangaroo Lake resident.
1971

SONIA McMAHON

Sonia McMahon

Sonia Hopkins
1 August 1932 -
Occupational Therapist

Married 11 Dec 1965
William McMahon – Liberal Party of Australia

Children: 2 daughters, 1 son

Term as PM wife:
10 March 1971 – 5 December 1972 (1 year, 8 months, 25 days)
‘Elegance and glamour were her political assets’. – The Herald 1970

1972

MARGARET WHITLAM

Margaret Whitlam

Margaret Elaine Dovey
19 November 1919
Social Worker & Writer

Married 22 April 1942
Edward Gough Whitlam – Australian Labor Party

Children: 3 sons, 1 daughter

Term as PM wife:
5 December 1972 – 11 November 1975 (2 years, 11 months, 7 days)
1975

TAMIE FRASER

Tamie Fraser

Tamara Margaret Beggs

28 February 1936 -

Married 9 December 1956

John Malcolm Fraser – Liberal Party of Australia

Children: 2 sons, 2 daughters.

Term as PM wife:

11 November 1975 – 11 March 1983 (7 years, 4 months)

'She is relaxed, poised, friendly and committed.'

1983

HAZEL HAWKE

Hazel Hawke

Hazel Masterson

20 July 1929 -

Married 3 March 1956 (divorced 1995)

Robert James Lee Hawke – Australian Labor Party

Children: 2 daughters, 2 sons

Term as PM wife:

11 March 1983 – 20 December 1991 (8 years, 9 months, 10 days)

'She has a loud, unaffected laugh and a broad Australian accent...she is a survivor.' – The Australian, 1987
### 1991

**ANNITA KEATING**

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<tr>
<th>Annita Keating</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Annita Johanna Maria van Iersel</strong> (Holland)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 October 1948 –</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Married</strong> 17 January 1975 (separated 1998)</td>
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<td>Paul John Keating –</td>
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<td>Australian Labor Party</td>
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<td><strong>Children:</strong> 1 son, 3 daughters</td>
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**Term as PM wife:**

20 December 1991 – 11 March 1996 (4 years, 2 months, 20 days)

’...a really strong individual who’s got her own mind and does things her way.’ – Nancy Pilcher, 1996.

### 1996

**JANETTE HOWARD**

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<th>Janette Howard</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Janette Parker</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>11 August 1944 -</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Married</strong> 4 April 1971</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Winston Howard – Liberal Party of Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Children:</strong> 1 daughter, 2 sons</td>
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**Term as PM wife:** 11 March 1996 – 2 December 2007

’She [has] a vivacious personality and is highly intelligent.’ – John Howard.
Bibliography

For additional information on Prime Ministers’ wives, the following books may be helpful.


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