

## **MENZIES: BY JOHN HOWARD**

### **Media backgrounder**

1. 2014 is the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Robert Menzies becoming Prime Minister for the first time.
2. In a first for a national collecting institution, we have invited former Prime Minister John Howard to curate this exhibition and to share his personal insights, reflections and stories on the intense first term of former Prime Minister, Robert Menzies.
3. John Howard explains how Menzies overcame the setbacks of his first term (1939-1941) and outlines the lessons Menzies learned that would shape Australia's greatest and longest serving Prime Minister.
4. Items on display include significant items from private and national collections including the Prime Minister's desk, personal diaries and films from his 1941 trip to meet with Churchill and Roosevelt. A number of items on display have been loaned by the Menzies family and have not been seen in public before.
5. ***Menzies: By John Howard*** is open until September 2015

### **Exhibition themes**

#### **Menzies as Prime Minister**

How Menzies became Prime Minister, his ambitions, obstacles and first term as Prime Minister 1939-41

#### **Menzies on the world stage**

Menzies' relationships with people like Churchill, Roosevelt and Curtin and the important role relationships and a strong family grounding can play. The unusual candour from a PM captured through his films and diaries.

### **Other quotes from exhibition**

'He had a compelling speaking style. He was the greatest political orator I've heard, and I say that without hesitation. He was fantastic ... As a Prime Minister? Oh yes, Menzies was the greatest.'

John Howard, August 2014

'...he didn't go [to London] as some "cap in hand" colonial. He went there determined to do what had to be done ... to get Churchill and the British to understand how exposed Australia really would be if Japanese attacked.'

John Howard, August 2014


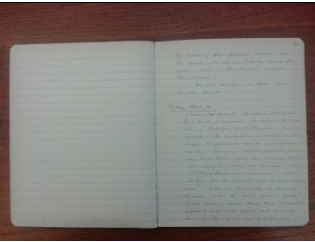

'I don't think there's any one single thing he could have done. He was given a tremendously difficult hand. He arrived as prime minister when his government was running out of steam and the world was sliding towards war. The war comes. It goes disastrously at the start. He goes to Britain and despite all of his valiant efforts he doesn't really turn around the attitude of the British towards the vulnerability of Singapore, partly because they were so hard pressed themselves. They were fighting to survive. I don't think he could've done anything all that differently.'

John Howard, August 2014

### **Key exhibition items**

- PM's desk on display
- Menzies' 1941 diaries from his overseas trip
- Menzies' camera used on his overseas trip



Image	Credit	Caption
 <p>nla.int-nl41450-sc4</p> <p><i>This is an image of Prime Minister Menzies sitting at the desk. The original desk will be on display.</i></p>	<p>The image is courtesy of the National Library of Australia</p> <p>The Prime Minister's desk is part of the Museum of Australian Democracy Collection</p>	<p><b>Prime Minister's desk</b></p> <p>This desk was custom-built for the provisional Parliament House and was used by every successive prime minister from Stanley Melbourne Bruce to Gough Whitlam, including Robert Menzies. It then went into storage, but during the 1999 Constitutional Convention, which was held in Old Parliament House, I came across it and immediately asked that it be put in my office in Canberra. I used it for the rest of my time as prime minister.</p> <p>John Howard</p>
 <p>18 April diary entry</p> <p><i>This image of his original diary shows an entry made on 18 April 1941. Select pages of his original diary will be open and on display.</i></p>	<p>On loan from the National Library Museum of Australia</p>	<p><b>Menzies' 1941 diaries</b></p> <p>Robert Menzies had a remarkably strong sense of history. As well as filming many of his overseas travels, he regularly kept detailed diaries. These three diaries are a complete record of his trip to the Middle East, the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States from January to May 1941. They contain fascinating insights into someone who was passionate in his promotion of Australia's interests, and deeply moved by the way the British people were dealing with the trauma of war.</p> <p>John Howard</p>
<p>Film excerpts shown in exhibition</p>	<p>Courtesy of National Film and Sound Archive</p>	<p><b>Robert Menzies' home movies</b></p> <p>These films were shot by Menzies on his 16-millimetre Kodak camera during his 1941 overseas trip. The subjects are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Australia to England via Tobruk and Benghazi (20 mins)</li> <li>England Part 1 (19 mins)</li> <li>England Part 2 (16 mins)</li> <li>From England to the USA (13 mins)</li> <li>From USA to Australia (14 mins)</li> </ul> <p>Menzies filmed a variety of subjects over the years and would screen the films for colleagues in the Government Party Room at Parliament House.</p>
 <p>AWM 007036</p> <p><i>The movie camera will be on display.</i></p>	<p>Image courtesy of Australian War Memorial</p> <p>Movie camera on loan from the National Museum of Australia</p>	<p><b>Robert Menzies and his camera</b></p> <p>Robert Menzies filming at a coastal command air station in the United Kingdom during his 1941 visit.</p>