

## Edmund Barton

### **Prime Minister of Australia 1901–03**

Edmund Barton was born Sydney in 1849. After graduating from Sydney University Barton practiced as a solicitor and barrister during the 1870s.

His political career began with his election to the New South Wales Legislative Assembly seat of University of Sydney in 1879. This began a career that saw him represent a further three seats in the Legislative Assembly – Wellington (1880–82), East Sydney (1882–87 and 1891–94), and Hastings-Macleay (1898–1900) – over the next 20 years. He also served twice in the Legislative Council (1887–91 and 1897–98). A member of the Protectionist grouping, Barton served as Speaker of the Assembly (1883–87) and Attorney-General (1889 and 1891–93). He led the Protectionists in opposition in 1898–99.

Barton was a strong advocate for federation. He attended the National Australasian Convention in 1891. At the first session of the Australasian Federal Convention in 1897 he was elected convention leader and chairman of the constitutional committee. In March 1900 Barton led an Australian delegation to London to assist the passage of the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Bill through the British parliament.

Commissioned to form the first Commonwealth government by the Governor-General, Lord Hopetoun, Barton was sworn in as Prime Minister and Minister for External Affairs on 1 January 1901. His ministry included former colonial premiers William Lyne (New South Wales), George Turner (Victoria), James Dickson (Queensland), Charles Kingston (South Australia), John Forrest (Western Australia) and Philip Fysh (Tasmania). Alfred Deakin of Victoria was also a minister. The general elections held in March confirmed Barton's government, but its majority in the parliament relied on support of the Labor Party. The new government's busy program included legislation to restrict immigration, and to establish the Commonwealth Public Service, the defence force, and the High Court of Australia.

Barton served only a single term as Prime Minister, resigning in 1903 to take up an appointment as a Justice of the High Court. He remained on the High Court until his death in 1920.

## National Archives holdings relating to Edmund Barton

The National Archives holds a range of records relating to Edmund Barton both as a federation figure, his term as the nation's first Prime Minister, and his years as a judge of the High Court. A selection is included in the table below.

### Records held in Canberra

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Record copy of draft of a Bill to constitute the Commonwealth of Australia, 1891, as considered by Committee No. 1 of the Australasian Federal Convention (Barton's copy)</u>	1897	R212, 1
<u>Telegram from Secretary of State for the Colonies requesting reasons for choice of WJ Lyne instead of Edmund Barton</u>	1900	A6661, 1055
<u>Letter from King O'Malley to Edmund Barton regarding Protectionist and Free Trade rivalry</u>	1901	A6, 1901/561
<u>Folders of copies of Cabinet papers (Items from 1901–03 relate to Barton's government)</u>	1901–3	A6006
<u>Framed photograph of the first Commonwealth ministry, Melbourne, 1901</u>	1901	A8120, 1
<u>Barton ministry – ministerial oaths</u>	1901–3	A5447, 1
<u>Barton ministry – correspondence and historical notes</u>	1901–3	A5447, 2
<u>Report of interview between a deputation from the Chamber of Commerce, Sydney and the Prime Minister, Mr Barton</u>	1902	A8, 1902/214/2
<u>Anniversary of the birth of the Commonwealth – Governor-General's telegram and Barton's reply</u>	1903	A1, 1903/129
<u>Barton, Sir Edmund – appointment to Privy Council Board and condolences</u>	1915–20	A2, 1920/547
<u>Commonwealth Jubilee celebrations – laying of wreath on grave of Sir Edmund Barton</u>	1951	A461, EP317/1/6

\*series available on microfilm in all research centres, with the exception of the Melbourne research centre.

### Records held in Sydney

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>ABC publicity photos of Sir Edmund Barton – former Prime Minister</u>	1901	SP1011/1, 1027
<u>ABC radio presentation by J Reynolds – Fathers of Federation – Edmund Barton</u>	1951	SP369/1, F/23/6

### Records held in Canberra – High Court Judge

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Judges of the High Court – appointment of Sir Edmund Barton</u>	1903–20	A432, 1950/484
<u>Legal notebooks of Justice Sir Edmund Barton: Judges notebooks</u>	1901–19	A10612
<u>Chambers notebooks</u>	1916–19	A10611

<u>Associate's notebook</u>	1917–19	A10609
<u>Original jurisdiction notebooks</u>	1918–28	A10603
<u>Commissions empowering Sir Samuel Griffith and Sir Edmund Barton to administer the oath and affirmation of allegiance to members of the Senate and House of Representatives</u>	1910	A2, 1910/2510