

10 November 2023

MoAD reflects on legacy of Old Parliament House 48 years on from ‘the Dismissal’

It is one of the most iconic images in Australian political history.

The day is 11 November 1975 and the 21st Prime Minister of Australia, the late Edward Gough Whitlam AC QC, is speaking on the steps of Parliament House (now Old Parliament House) moments after the official dismissal of his government.

Today, on the 48th anniversary of the dismissal of the Whitlam Government, the Museum of Australian Democracy (MoAD) at Old Parliament House remembers the time the heritage listed building was the backdrop to a momentous time in Australian politics.

While most photographs from that day focus on the crush of reporters, cameramen and excited onlookers around Whitlam, more than 4,000 Australians gathered in front of Parliament House, voicing their support with chants of “We want Gough”.

MoAD Senior Curator Amy Lay explains Old Parliament House has always been a symbol of Australia’s enduring democracy and has been a backdrop for so many important moments in our modern political history.

“Visitors to the Old Parliament House today can experience the layers of Australian history on display for themselves. They can they stand where Gough Whitlam stood to make his famous speech. They can also visit the Museum of Australian Democracy to experience the Senate chamber, the Prime Minister’s Office and immerse themselves in a range of thought-provoking exhibitions”.

“Old Parliament House was always designed to be a temporary building to house Australia’s federal parliament from 1927 until 1988, when staff and politicians shifted ‘up the hill’ to (new) Parliament House.”

“Despite the tumultuous events of 1975, Gough Whitlam maintained a strong interest in the building where he served his entire parliamentary career”, she said.

“In 1992, Whitlam and fellow former prime minister Sir John Grey Gorton GCMG AC CH officially reopened the restored Old Parliament House to the public, paving the way for its current role as the home of Australia’s democratic stories and our political and social history”.

Find out more about the events of November 1975 at [Dismissed! Whitlam, Fraser, Kerr and the story of 1975](#)

--- ENDS ---

For enquiries, high-res images, videos or interviews please contact the media officer on (02) 6270 8120 or email media@moadoph.gov.au



