Edward Gough WHITLAM, AC, QC
Prime Minister from 5 December 1972 to 11 November 1975

- Gough Whitlam became the 21st prime minister when the Australian Labor Party won the 1972 federal election. He replaced the Liberal Party’s William McMahon.
- Whitlam’s government dismissed by Governor-General Sir John Kerr because he had been unable to secure passage of Supply bills through the Senate. Malcolm Fraser appointed as caretaker prime minister, replacing Whitlam as a result of the double dissolution election 1975.

Main achievements (1972-1975)
- Implemented wide-ranging reforms of the Labor Party’s organisation and modernised its policy platform. Implemented reforms in every field of public policy, including education and regional development. Record number of Bills introduced and enacted.
**Personal life**


- Served as navigator in Royal Australian Air Force, stationed in Northern Territory for much of the Second World War. Completed Law degree at University of Sydney. Admitted to state and federal courts as barrister 1947, and appointed Queens Counsel 1962.

- Married Margaret Dovey on 22 April 1942. Began campaigning for Curtin Labor government in support of expanding Commonwealth’s powers for post-war reconstruction. Built house in Cronulla with War Service loan. Active in local community groups. Moved to Cabramatta following changes in his electorate boundaries.

**Life after politics**


**Character**

- Variously described as articulate, quick-witted, a prodigious reader with a remarkable memory, a renowned public speaker and political commentator, a rational optimist. An ‘erudite, pedantic manner...given to forceful, impetuous action’. (Source: *Acts of Parliament*, MUP, 1988, p 465)

**Did you know?**

- Whitlam was the first Labor prime minister since 1949.

- He was the first prime minister to visit the People’s Republic of China.

- Whitlam’s government introduced and enacted a record number of Bills. The Senate rejected 93 Bills, more than the total number (68) rejected since Federation.

**Sources**

National Archives of Australia: http://primeministers.naa.gov.au


Further reading
