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Howard on Menzies: Building Modern Australia

Former Prime Minister John Howard believes Bob Menzies, Australia's longest-serving PM, shaped modern Australia. In inviting former PM Bob Hawke, author Clive James and others to comment, he reveals much about politics.

Writer/director
SIMON NASHT

Producer
RUTH CROSS

Executive Producers
STUART MENZIES, SIMON NASHT

Airs 7.40pm on Sunday September 18 & 25 on ABC & iview

Made with the cooperation of the Menzies Research Centre

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Series synopses:

Short synopsis:

Former Prime Minister John Howard is adamant that Bob Menzies, Australia's longest-serving PM, had a very positive impact on modern Australia. He invites former PM Bob Hawke, author Clive James and many others to challenge his opinion and in the process reveals an enormous amount about how the game of politics is played.

Medium synopsis:

Robert (Bob) Menzies is Australia's longest-serving Prime Minister (PM). John Howard is one of his biggest admirers and Australia's second-longest serving PM. In this unique two-part series, Howard examines Menzies' career and legacy to prove the point that Menzies deserves more credit for the very positive part he played in shaping modern Australia. His exploration of the times captures: the drama and ruthlessness of politics; the far-reaching impact of international conflicts; and the way migration, bold trading initiatives and an emphasis on education transformed the nation. Beyond just his own recollections and research, Howard invites historians, academics, journalists and former politicians from the left and the right, including Bob Hawke, to challenge him on his beliefs. He also seeks input from his contemporaries in the creative industries, including Clive James, Barry Humphries and Thomas Keneally. Another PM, Paul Keating, once told the Parliament that Menzies put the country "into neutral" during the 1950s but Howard disagrees. He says the economy and the middle classes grew, giving many Australians a taste of the peace and tranquillity of the good life. The series also reveals an enormous amount about the pursuit and use of power and how the game of politics is played – back then and also now.

Detailed synopsis of the series:

John Howard was 24 years of age when he met his political hero, Robert (Bob) Menzies, at a cocktail party at The Lodge in Canberra in 1964. It was their first and last meeting: *"He dominated the room metaphorically, physically and in every other way"*.

At the time Menzies was nearing the end of 16 consecutive years as the Prime Minister (PM) of Australia – a short earlier stint in the role meant he served for 18 years in total. He resigned of his own accord in 1966 and 30 years later Howard was elected Prime Minister, ruling for a period of time second only to Menzies.

"No other Australian Prime Minister met and navigated such a range of challenges as did Menzies," says Howard. His admiration reverberates through the years as current Australian PM Malcolm Turnbull illustrates when he tells Howard: *"You learnt from Menzies and I've learnt from you."*

It is now 50 years since Menzies' stepped down and 10 years since Howard was defeated and Howard sets out to examine Menzies' career and legacy in order to set the record straight about the extent to which he positively shaped modern Australia.

Part social and political history told from the inside, part meditation on the pursuit and use of power, Howard seeks out people from both sides of the political fence to discuss Menzies. In other words, his thesis is not allowed to go unchallenged.

The line-up includes the historians Geoffrey Blainey and Henry Reynolds, economist Bob Gregory, academics Professor Judith Brett and Dr Stephen Mills, PM Malcolm Turnbull and former PM Bob Hawke, journalists Paul Kelly and Greg Sheridan and former politicians Barry Jones and Alexander Downer. Representing the creative industries are Barry Humphries, Clive James and Thomas Keneally.

Former PM Paul Keating once said in the Parliament that Menzies put the country “*in neutral*” during the 1950s. Howard disagrees. To him the Menzies years were the years of nation building, of huge and successful migrant intakes, of expanded trade opportunities.

Today, given how fast Prime Ministers change, it is difficult to imagine how one leader could survive at the top long enough to oversee the transformation of a country.

Told with the insight that only the ultimate insider can bring to the events of the era, *Howard on Menzies* invites us to think again about Australia’s longest-serving Prime Minister and the nation he helped to build.

Howard’s final word is a cry of concern that the middle classes must be preserved. If they are worn down so too will the country’s economic and social values be worn down, including the notion of equal opportunity for all.

Episode one:

Airs 7.40pm on Sunday September 18 on ABC & view

Bob Menzies appeals to the middle classes then forms The Liberal Party to recapture the prime ministership in 1949. Prosperity follows. Home ownership and immigration rises. Only communism threatens.

In January 1941 Australia’s 12th Prime Minister (PM) Robert (Bob) Menzies sets off for the British Empire. World War II was declared 16 months earlier and the conservative PM has committed troops but fears Australia will be defenceless if Japan enters the war. He spends weeks unsuccessfully pleading the case with British PM Winston Churchill that Australia needs to be able to protect itself.

Menzies became PM in 1939, aged 44, after PM Joe Lyons died in office. He scraped in to govern in his own right in 1940 but his arrogance didn’t serve him well and after a bruising battle inside the United Australia Party (UAP) he steps down in August 1941. Within two months the conservatives fall.

To be dumped is a shock after his privileged rise at school, at university and at the bar. Current PM Malcolm Turnbull and former PM John Howard have also been humiliated by rejection by one’s own. Says Howard: “*I never seriously entertained quitting because I was still very committed to public life and I suppose, in the back of my mind, I thought there may be a way back.*”

Menzies fights his way back to power, just as they both did, via a series of Friday night radio broadcasts to those that Menzies calls “the forgotten people”.

“*These are, in the political and economic sense, the middle class,*” Menzies said at the time. “*My home is where my wife and children are. The instinct to be with them is the instinct of civilised man. The instinct to give them a chance in life is a noble instinct, not to make them leaners but lifters.*”



Lyle and Mona, Howard's parents, were typical of those who respond well to these broadcasts. All Menzies needs is a party to represent them so he gathers together various anti-labour groups and establishes The Liberal Party of Australia, one of his biggest lasting legacies. He didn't do it alone but he is the driving force.

"The guiding principles ... were individual liberty and individual freedom, private enterprise, an absence of unnecessary State intervention and, very importantly, a political movement that wasn't controlled or dominated by either organised Labor or concentrations of capitalism," says Howard.

People join in droves but not enough to win the 1946 election. But when the ALP decides to seize control of Australia's banks – and hold onto wartime controls such as petrol rationing – the Liberal Party, in a coalition with the Country Party, wins the 1949 election in a landslide. Howard describes it as *"an extraordinary political resurrection"*.

Protected by tariffs, industry blossoms, unparalleled prosperity boosts home ownership and millions of "new Australians" arrive yet unemployment is almost non-existent.

Menzies fails to ban communism with legislation or a referendum but is able to use the fears around it as political capital for years to come. And he does pull off a diplomatic coup, signing the ANZUS (Australia, New Zealand, United States) Treaty, a mutual defence pact. He also agrees to let Britain test its weapons at Maralinga in South Australia.

The future looks bright when Queen Elizabeth II arrives for a visit in 1954.

Episode 2:

Airs 7.40pm on Sunday September 25 on ABC & view

Petrov and the ALP split help Bob Menzies hold on as PM. The Suez Crisis is a setback, his Japanese trade deal and Vietnam War support bothers some, but he leaves politics on his own terms in 1966.

Australia's second longest-serving Prime Minister (PM), John Howard, wants to set the record straight about the fundamental role played by Bob Menzies in building modern Australia. Not much happened in the 1950s, some say, but Howard says it is the first decade of the 20th century that gave many Australians a share of the good life."

"A little bit of deadly dullness was probably welcome after World War II, you know," author and television commentator Clive James tells Howard.

By the mid-1950s, Menzies has been in power as PM for five years. But then peace is disturbed when Soviet spy Vladimir Petrov suddenly defects. Petrov claims the Australian Labor Party (ALP) is involved in espionage while the ALP claims Menzies orchestrated events to get a boost in the polls. Commentators since have described Menzies' Petrov as Howard's *Tampa*, the freighter with 438 boat people aboard, banned from entering Australian waters during the 2001 election campaign.

When Menzies' narrowly retains the prime ministership in the 1954 election, deep divisions open up within the opposition ALP. Howard describes the resultant split as

“a gift of generational dimensions” and journalist Greg Sheridan as *“unhealthy for Australia”*. Author Thomas Keneally suggests Menzies had a *“dream run”* generally.

Menzies sails through the 1955 election, but not through the Suez Crisis in 1956. And there's blood in the water during the men's polo at the Melbourne Olympic Games when the Russians and the Hungarians clash. Then Menzies does an extraordinary thing.

Through the war there was a lot of anti-Japanese propaganda,” says economist Bob Gregory. *“There were a lot of stories about prison camps, torture, goodness knows what else ... so what does the Anglophile guy do? He negotiates a trade deal with Japan.”*

The mining industry blossoms and Japan becomes Australia's biggest trading customer. The White Australia Policy persists, however – and Asian students are expected to go home after being educated under the Colombo Plan. As for Indigenous disadvantage: it didn't occur to many people in the 1950s. Menzies easily wins the 1958 election.

Menzies' conservatism obscured his achievements, including in education. Howard says his expansion of universities opened up access and opportunities that helped transform society. Says James: *“The whole intelligentsia of Australia tends to believe that freedom and justice and creativity all began with Gough Whitlam.”*

The economy matters in elections and confidence was waning in the lead up to the 1961 poll. After winning narrowly, Menzies fuelled his political recovery with support for Catholic education, exploiting the bitterly sectarian nature of the ALP.

“(He made a) massive mistake in committing Australia to Vietnam,” Bob Hawke tells Howard, referring to Menzies' 1963 decision. *“I think this is one of the real tragedies of our time. Over 500 fine Australian men dead.”* But Howard says he would have made the same decision if he'd had the same information available at that time.

Menzies decides to leave politics announcing his decision in early 1966. Says Howard:

“Menzies ... created the great middle class that we still have in Australia and that we must hang onto for dear life if we are to preserve the stability and harmony and fairness that we prize as being a distinguishing characteristic of the Australian nation.”

A statement from writer/director Simon Nasht:

“As a documentary director, when a former Prime Minister proposes a series in which he puts forward his views on the importance of a long and important period of Australian political history, of course you are going to step forward and get involved.

I am not aware of a Prime Minister anywhere in the world who has made a statement like this.

Whatever your politics, what John Howard has to say is fantastically interesting. Firstly because a lot happened in Australia and in the world during that time – and politics matters in times of crisis in particular. Secondly because underpinning what Howard and the people he is interviewing are talking about is the sport and science of politics.

This series includes 101 lessons in politics from John Howard, a master politician who loves the game of politics as much as cricket. Here’s just one example into his unique insights: “*The most important thing is to have a very good, candid relationship with the cabinet and the parliamentary party,*” he says. “*You’re not a president, you’re not a dictator, you’re not a monarch. You are the first amongst equals. The others have to respect your primacy but you must respect their equality.*”

And Menzies’ idea to engage the vast middle class was just genius. When he first entered politics one side was connected to the top end of town and the other side to the unions. But Menzies saw the people in between as the glue that held the country together. There’s a line in the film that states that these people didn’t matter too much to politicians – and Howard’s own parents were among them – but that politics mattered a lot to them. Menzies came along and redefined Australian politics as a battle for the hearts and minds in the middle rather than an appeal to the extremes. It remains that today.

My overarching aim was to make the series relevant to today. I did this by interrogating big universal questions about power and politics, leadership and ambition – and by also drawing quite distinct parallels to the modern day.

Menzies had to face the dilemma of whether to send people to war three times: to World War II, Korea and Vietnam. Not many people can tell us what it feels like to make a decision that is likely to result in Australians dying but Howard can because of Iraq and Afghanistan. Menzies was stabbed in the back by his own colleagues, the ultimate slap in the face, just as Malcolm Turnbull and John Howard were. Both Menzies and Howard had to deal with a big unexpected event in the middle of an election campaign. For Menzies it was Petrov; for Howard it was Tampa.

I also had to make the history accessible – economist Bob Gregory was able to talk in a way that conveyed how different Australia was back then, how full of optimism. And I learned a lot: I didn’t know that Menzies built eight universities, that he and John (Black Jack) McEwen commenced trade operations with Japan, that he was hugely supportive of women joining the Liberal Party from the outset.

Menzies proved himself to be a fierce campaigner many times and took us from the speakers’ corner to the television in the lounge. He won eight elections, seven of them consecutive, some landslides, some near misses. Some Prime Ministers only hang around for eight months now.”

The making of the series:

In 2014 HarperCollins published *The Menzies Era: The Years that Shaped Modern Australia*, a 720-page book written by former Prime Minister John Howard.

The book tracks key events in Australian Federal politics from 1949, the year Robert (Bob) Menzies became Prime Minister for the second time, to 1972, when Gough Whitlam regained power for the Australian Labor Party (ALP). Menzies was a major force behind the formation of the Liberal Party of Australia, holds the record for the longest Prime Ministerial reign in history and Howard argues that he laid the foundations for the Australia of today.

"I was 10 years of age in 1949 and 27 when he finished his run as Prime Minister. I remember all the major events of the day from those younger years – the ALP split, Petrov, Vietnam – but looking at them again through the lens of being Prime Minister myself, gave me a very different perspective. Context is everything."

Howard on Menzies executive producer Stuart Menzies had the idea for the series as a result of the book. It was also around that time that the Museum of Australian Democracy held an exhibition to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Menzies' first stint as Prime Minister.

"I mentioned the idea to Museum director Daryl Karp and she suggested that I speak to Nick Cater, executive director of the Menzies Research Centre, the keeper of the Menzies flame," says Menzies. "He said he'd had the same idea and together we went and saw Howard. His first question to me was whether I was related to Bob Menzies. I said 'I share his eyebrows and his surname but I'm no relation'."

Says Howard: "I was conscious of the fact that there had been no dedicated documentary about Menzies' time in power and there had been several on Gough Whitlam. Kerry O'Brien had also sat down and spoke to Paul Keating for four hours and if there was four hours in that ..."

Menzies brought on writer/director Simon Nasht for two reasons.

"His background as a Canberra Press Gallery journalist meant he and Howard would have a language by which they could understand each other. I also felt he was senior enough to let loose on Howard. Actually, I thought he was one of the only people that could pull off making the film Howard would make if he was a filmmaker."

While the series is from John Howard's point of view, Nasht had to make sure he challenged it on the way through. He made the argument to Howard that the work would be much stronger if Labor figures and academics with different views to Howard were included in the line-up of guests.

"It is a credit to him (Howard) that he understood and accepted that, then went on to suggest the historian Henry Reynolds," says Nasht. "I can't think of two men with more diametrically opposed views. Yes, it is a polemic but not one that goes unchallenged."

Other inclusions expected to have markedly different views from Howard about Menzies included author Thomas Keneally, former Australian Labor Party (ALP) Minister and National President Barry Jones, the academic Judith Brett, who had written a critical biography of Menzies, and the ALP's longest-serving Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, the one Howard believes was also the most successful in general.

"I'm very happy with the outcome," says Howard, referring to the finished film. "It would have been a failure if it was in any way a hagiography. Plenty of criticism of Menzies is included and I was very happy to interview Henry Reynolds, Bob Hawke and Tom Keneally. There wouldn't be a liberal vote among that lot.

"One of the things that has made it is having such incredible talent as Clive James, Barry Humphries and Rupert Murdoch. Clive James and Barry Humphries are household names as far as amusing insights into the Australian person goes, and no Australian business figure has had a bigger impact on the world stage than Rupert Murdoch. Also, he had just started a newspaper (*The Australian*) at the end of the Menzies era.

"I very much enjoyed interviewing Clive James at his home in Cambridge. We were born six weeks and two suburbs apart. On the same trip we interviewed Alexander Downer in London and went to the Churchill War Rooms."

Howard undertook nearly all the 30 interviews, which were recorded over 15 months mostly in Australia: "Having been interviewed all my life, it was a fascinating and entirely new experience to be interviewing others. Exciting and enjoyable."

The participants were not easy to wrangle. Says Menzies: "They all had busy schedules and there was a Prime Minister and a former Prime Minister among them. Pulling together this production was incredibly difficult but Ruth (the producer Ruth Cross) did it with unrivalled equilibrium."

Some of the interviews ran for as long as two hours and Nasht and Howard also sat down and talked together in a studio over two days. Says Nasht: "I'd interviewed him on several occasions on the politics of the day, but never over a couple of days and never on his take on politics and history over such a great sweep of time. No limits were set on the subjects covered but there's no reason for him *not* to say what he thinks now anyway."

With all this interview footage and about 300 hours of archival footage considered for inclusion, it is no wonder that the editing took nearly a year.

The filmmakers knew Menzies had a remarkable archive of home movies, including when he was at Chequers with Winston Churchill and at Buckingham Palace with the Queen.

"We were incredibly excited at having access to his archive and are very grateful to the Menzies family for enabling that, especially his daughter Heather Henderson," says Cross. "It's so special because it's literally his point of view and some of it has never been seen."

While Menzies spent a lot of time behind his own camera, he didn't spend a lot of time in front of cameras. Some of his election speeches no longer exist and there is no original recording of his forgotten people speech, only a transcript. In part, because of the lack of footage of Menzies in Australia, the researchers trawled the world.

"None of us anticipated just how much archive footage we were going to use, the sheer volume of it and what a relentless task it would be finding it, finding out who owned it and getting it delivered," says Cross. "It's complex. It's like detective work. But images speak volumes and we needed to break up the talk. And we had fun with

some of it: the 1950s advertisements, for example, the political campaigns that use film language in a way that is so totally different to now, the way women are portrayed ...”

As producer, Cross had to hold everything together and keep the wheels turning from development right through to completion. It required financial and people management skills, creative input, and many other talents.

“*Howard on Menzies* was harder to make than I expected and it took longer,” says Nasht. He worked with several editors but Mark Middis deserves the most accolades for the ultimate shape of the finished series.

“There was an immense amount of story to tell in two hours,” says Nasht. “John Howard’s book runs 720 pages and the script of the film is 50 pages. There were big areas of Australian history that we simply couldn’t go into: including conscription and the building of Canberra.

“Unfortunately we were too late to interview two people: Malcolm Fraser, who was a Minister in the Menzies Government before becoming Prime Minister, and (cricket commentator) Richie Benaud. (They died within a month of each other in early 2015.)

“The glaring omission is Paul Keating, although we have included archive footage of him talking about the 1950s in Parliament. He says ‘*that was the golden age when Australia stagnated, when they put the country into neutral*’.

“Neither party (Keating nor Howard) seemed keen, I guess because it would not have been a discussion, more two immovable points of view. Some Prime Ministers on opposite sides of the fence get along and others don’t.”

Nasht says Howard was “unfailingly co-operative and helpful” during the making of *Howard on Menzies*. Menzies says Howard’s encyclopaedic knowledge of the period was both extraordinary and very useful to the filmmakers.

And despite having written the book, Howard learned a thing or two about Menzies: “The most interesting thing I learned (from making the documentary) was that wonderful and quite revealing story about his driver Alf Stafford (being Indigenous). No-one had drawn my attention to that and it was a wonderful vignette.”

What would Howard say to someone if he wanted to encourage them to watch *Howard on Menzies*? “It will tell you about the building of modern Australia. It will give you insights into years you’ve not experienced but years that left their mark on the life you experience now.”

List of participants and selected quotes from the series:

Unless otherwise noted, each person appears alongside John Howard.

Geoffrey Blainey – Historian.

Cate Blanchett – Actor (*file footage*).

Kevin Bradley – Senior Curator, National Library of Australia.

Professor Judith Brett – Emeritus Professor, Politics, La Trobe University.

“He (Menzies) was scornful of people ... Somebody would say to him ‘Well, Bob, you know, your problem is you don’t suffer fools gladly,’ and he (would say) ‘What do you think I’m doing now?’”

Carl Bridge – Historian.

Sir John Carrick – Former Education Minister.

Felix Comito – A Holden worker, just like his father, who spent 30 years at the factory.

Alexander Downer – Former Liberal Party Minister.

“The thing about Menzies is that he carried the country through a huge transition. Through changes that were gradually, cautiously made to the economy to allow a flourishing, if you like, of middle class Australia. Things that people take for granted, like the growth of home ownership in Australia.”

Peter Edwards – Historian.

Tony Eggleton – Menzies’ former Press Secretary.

Margaret Fitzherbert – Victorian Liberal politician and author, *Liberal Women*.

Michelle Flynn – Granddaughter of Menzies’ chauffeur Alf Stafford.

Professor Bob Gregory – Economist.

(On the 1950s) “There were so many jobs around and it was so optimistic in those days, the unemployment rate was ... one per cent. You know, they were leaving a job on Friday, walking into a new job on Monday. It was quite amazing.”

Trish Groves – Goulburn resident.

Bob Hawke – Former Prime Minister of Australia.

(On the Petrov Affair) “I think Menzies overplayed the politics of it. There was a tendency for politicians to use what was a real threat but overplay it for political purposes.”

Anne Henderson – Historian. (*Not interviewed by John Howard*)

“You can’t imagine that it was a very good time to be in London (in 1941) trying to convince the bull-headed Churchill that his idea of how to fight the war needed a slight deviation.”

Gerard Henderson – Author, Executive Director of the Sydney Institute.

(To John Howard) “The intelligentsia doesn’t much like Liberal Party leaders. They didn’t like Robert Menzies and may I say they didn’t like you.”

“Menzies in his early days was very smart and he knew he was very smart and he let everyone know he was very smart and that wasn’t smart.”

Barry Humphries – Comedian and satirist.

“The more I tried to describe the stultifying aspects of suburban life in Australia the more I felt a sneaking respect for it.”

“I grew up in a Melbourne which pretended it was in the home counties of England. The first kangaroo I ever saw was in the London Zoo. I never saw an Aborigine or an Indigenous Australian ... The tin of biscuits had a thatched cottage, the music was always English ... I knew there was something I didn’t much like about it, but I wasn’t sure what ...”

Clive James – Author and television personality.

Barry Jones – Former Australian Labor Party (ALP) Minister and National President.

“People have a loyalty to a party, and it is not necessarily just the ideas, it’s a bit like their loyalty to a football club. ‘Look they may have done some crummy things in the past, but they represent my world view, and right or wrong I’m going to continue to

vote for them’.”

Paul Keating – Former Prime Minister of Australia (*file footage only*).

Paul Kelly – Journalist.

“Menzies achievement in forming the Liberal Party is absolutely fundamental because ... he gave those opposed to Labor, those opposed of a liberal and conservative disposition, an enduring political vehicle to support ... The scale of that achievement is simply enormous.”

David Kemp – Former Liberal Party Minister.

Thomas Keneally – Author

(On the 1950s) It is true that people looking back at that time used the word Menzian as a synonym for antiquated, out of touch.”

Michael Kirby – Former High Court Justice.

David Livingston – Jeparit resident.

Professor David Lowe – Historian.

Dr Stephen Mills – Lecturer, graduate School of Management, University of Sydney.
(Not interviewed by John Howard)

“He invoked the middle class aspiration for homes. The physical structures of houses but also the people in it, the families, basically the mums looking after the kids, but also the values that the homes represented – frugality, patriotism, independence, autonomy.”

Rupert Murdoch – Media proprietor.

Henry Reynolds – Historian.

Greg Sheridan – Journalist.

David Stafford – Son of Menzies’ chauffeur Alf Stafford

Diana Stafford – Daughter of Menzies’ chauffeur Alf Stafford

Malcolm Turnbull – Prime Minister of Australia

(About Menzies 1941 fall from grace) “Because he (Menzies) lost the prime ministership at a time when he was the leader of a nation at war, he was rubbing shoulders with the people that were reshaping the history of the world and suddenly he became relatively a political nobody. Menzies had to pull himself out of a very dark place.”

Key sources of information:

- ***The Menzies Era: The Years that Shaped Modern Australia*** by John Howard, 720 pages HarperCollins, 2014
- **Menzies Research Centre** www.menziesrc.org.
- **National Archives of Australia** www.naa.gov.au
- **Parliament of Australia** www.aph.gov.au
- **Wikipedia** www.wikipedia.org
- Countless newspaper, magazine and journal articles and interviews.
- The 30 interviews conducted for the series.

Timeline of events referred to in the series:

1894

Robert (Bob) Gordon Menzies is born on December 20 to James and Kate Menzies in Jeparit, Victoria. His father subsequently became a Victorian MP.

1916

Menzies graduates from the University of Melbourne with first class honours in law .

1918

Menzies is admitted to the Victorian Bar. Two years later he is sole counsel for successful party in the landmark constitutional litigation: the Engineers' Case.

1928

Menzies is elected into the Victorian Parliament. In 1934 he wins a Federal seat.

1939

APRIL – Joe Lyons becomes the first Prime Minister (PM) to die in office. Menzies is subsequently voted leader of the United Australia Party (UAP) and becomes Australia's 12th PM.

JULY – John Howard is born on July 26 to Lyall and Mona Howard in Earlwood, NSW.

SEPTEMBER – Britain and France declare war on Germany after its troops invade Poland. Australia follows in support of Britain.

1940

The UAP-Country Party Coalition scrapes home in a Federal election, then has to rely on support from two independents to stay in office.

1941

JANUARY – Menzies goes abroad leaving Country Party leader Arthur Fadden acting PM. On his return, having lost the support of his colleagues, Menzies resigns as PM. The independents support the Australian Labor Party (ALP) to form a minority government.

NOVEMBER – Menzies begins a series of weekly commercial radio broadcasts across the Eastern States. This continues until 1944 and a selection is published in book form.

1943

The ALP easily wins the 1943 election under PM John Curtin.

1944

Menzies and others hold a conference of non-labour political parties in Canberra at which it is decided to form the Liberal Party of Australia. A second conference in Albury follows. The party is officially launched in 1945 in Sydney, with Menzies as leader but in 1946 the ALP again wins Government, this time under Ben Chifley.

1949

The Liberal Party, with Menzies at the helm, convincingly wins its first election, in coalition with the Country Party. Menzies becomes PM for the second time and goes on to win seven successive elections (also 1951, 1954, 1955, 1958, 1961 and 1963), starting a 16-year reign, unbeaten in Australian politics before or since.

1950

JANUARY – The idea of a network of developing and donor countries is raised at a conference in Colombo, in the then Ceylon, the aim being to strengthen the economic and social development of countries in the Asia-Pacific.

JUNE – The Communist Party Dissolution Bill is passed by Parliament, enacted in October, but subsequently challenged in the High Court and held to be unconstitutional.

JULY – The government announces it will send troops to fight in Korea.

1951

After winning an election, Menzies holds a referendum aimed at outlawing communism. He narrowly loses – but capitalises on the fear of communism for years to come.

1952

The ANZUS Treaty between Australia, New Zealand and the United States comes into force. It aims to maintain peace in the Pacific.

1954

FEBRUARY – Queen Elizabeth II arrives in Sydney, the first and last Australian visit by a British reigning monarch.

APRIL – Vladimir Petrov and his wife Evdokia, successfully appeal for political asylum. The drama helps Menzies win the May election – but only just.

1955

Divided by communism, the ALP begins to split asunder, eventually resulting in the formation of the Democratic Labor Party. It helps the Coalition win the election.

1956

MAY – British nuclear tests take place at Maralinga in South Australia.

SEPTEMBER – Menzies leads an international committee that aims to achieve international management of the Suez Crisis but the mission fails.

NOVEMBER – The Melbourne Olympic Games open.

DECEMBER – Menzies invites Sir Keith Murray to inquire into the future of universities.

1957

The Australia-Japan Commerce Agreement is signed.

1958

The Menzies Government is comfortably returned to office, is nearly defeated in 1961 but successfully fights back in the 1963 election.

1965

Menzies announces that Australian troops will be sent to Vietnam to support US forces.

1966

Menzies, aged in his 70s, holds a press conference to announce his retirement as PM.

1974

Howard is elected to the Federal Parliament. He wins a spot in Cabinet in 1977.

1985

Howard is elected leader of the Liberal Party, replacing Andrew Peacock as Leader of the Opposition. After failing to lead his party to victory in the 1987 election, he is replaced by Alexander Downer – but re-elected head of the party in 1995.

1996

The Liberal Party, with Howard at the helm, defeats Paul Keating's Labor Government and Howard is sworn in as Australia's 26th PM. He goes on to win four successive elections (also 1998, 2001, 2004), becoming Australia's second longest-serving PM.

2015

Malcolm Turnbull successfully challenges Tony Abbott for the role of Liberal Party Leader and becomes Australia's 29th PM, subsequently winning in his own right in the 2016 election. Turnbull lost their tussle for the role of Leader of the Opposition in 2007.

The key creative team:

Writer/director – Simon Nasht

A former political reporter and foreign correspondent, Simon Nasht has established himself as one of Australia's most experienced and accomplished documentary filmmakers. He has run successful production companies in London and New York, and in 2011 formed a partnership with entrepreneur Dick Smith to produce thought-provoking films about subjects that matter for Australia and the world. Recent Smith&Nasht projects include *Mission Rubberman*, *Fungi – The Fifth Kingdom*, *Howard on Menzies*, *Frackman*, *Defendant 5*, *Inside the Inferno*, *Life on Us*, *The Vasectomist* and *Recognition: Yes or No?* With the industry undergoing fundamental change, Smith&Nasht has recently created a digital rights and distribution company, Screen Impact, which will harness the power of documentaries to engage audiences and achieve positive social change. It will work with other filmmakers to build partnerships, create campaigns and make content available using innovative technology.

Producer – Ruth Cross

Ruth Cross is a producer and head of production and development for Sydney-based production company Smith&Nasht. She has managed the slate since the company was founded in 2011. Her producing credits include *The Vasectomist* for SBS, CBC, VPRO, DR and its ground-breaking outreach campaign, World Vasectomy Day. The project was a collaboration with two-time Oscar nominee and Emmy Award-winning director Jonathan Stack. More recently she produced *Defendant 5* for ABC and Al Jazeera and *Recognition: Yes or No?* also for the ABC. Alongside production, Ruth has been a film programmer for the Adelaide Film Festival and the First Factual Films Festival (F4), held as part of the Australian International Documentary Conference (AIDC). She managed the industry marketplace at AIDC and was seconded to the Sheffield Doc/Fest team to produce the UK MeetMarket. She is currently programming consultant and board member of the Antenna Documentary Film Festival. Ruth holds an MA in Documentary Production from the University of Salford in the UK. She subsequently founded a UK-based independent production company, an early recipient of the Channel 4 BRITDOC fund.

Executive producer – Stuart Menzies

Stuart Menzies has extensive experience in content creation, executive producing, commissioning, programming and financing and is currently chief executive officer of December Media. Previously he was the Head of Content and Creative Development at the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and, before that, Controller of ABC2, the network's younger skewing digital channel which, under his stewardship, saw significant audience growth. Stuart has a clear understanding of audience, and combines creativity and strategic thinking to deliver bold, provocative and popular programs and digital content. His understanding of the media landscape, as both a producer and buyer, give him deep knowledge of national and international program financing and distribution models.

Editor – Mark Middis

Mark Middis cut his editing teeth on Four Corners with Gold Walkley award winning films including *Sinking the Rainbow Warrior*. In the 35 years since he has edited a broad range of high end documentaries such as *Wild Dog Dingo*, *Bombora The History of Surfing*, *Renzo Piano: Piece by Piece* (Sydney Film Festival) and *Mother of Rock* (Melbourne Film Festival). Mark's passion for the creative process behind crafting powerful emotive stories means he is in high demand with filmmakers and broadcasters alike.

Cinematographer - Peter Coleman ACS

After graduating in Communications from Macquarie University, Peter worked for several years as a professional camera assistant. He then attended the Australian Film, Television and Radio School in 1992, completing a Specialist Extension in Cinematography. Peter has gone on to photograph a wide variety of drama, documentary, television and IMAX films, working in more than 40 countries. During this time he has won numerous awards including an Australian Film Institution nomination and two Golden Tripods from the Australian Cinematographer's Society.

Others in the creative team

Editors	Mark Middis, Karin Steininger ASE, Nikki Stevens
Cinematographer	Peter Coleman ACS
Additional Camera	Micah Walker, Pieter De Vries, Frank Flick, Brad Dillon, Oliver Nasht
Narrator	Linda Cropper
Voice of Robert Menzies	James Carleton
Sound Recordists	Leo Sullivan, Paul Smith, Josh Talbot
Researcher	Anna Cater
Additional Research	Lilly Powell
Archive Researcher	Con Anemogiannis
Production Coordinators	Sharon Murray, Juliette Weiss
Assistant Editors	Jared Zammit, Dan Grinberg, Rebecca Clare, Laura Wedlake
Colourist	Jamie Hediger
Sound Mixer	Cliff Jones
Online Editor	Martin Webb
Post Production Facilities	twodogs.tv
Original Music	Al Harding
Music Production	Michael Letho
Art Director	Rose Draper
Graphic Designers	Priyadarshi Sharma, Aditya Satria, Warren Bones
Stills Photographers	Mark Rogers, Christian Trinder
Production Accountant	Daniel Prypchan CPA
Historian	John Nethercote

Archive Footage courtesy of

ABC Archive

Alfred George Stafford MBE collection, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)

Australian War Memorial

The Menzies Foundation

National Archives of Australia

National Film & Sound Archive of Australia

National Film & Sound Archive of Australia's Film Australia Collection

National Library of Australia

State Library of New South Wales

State Records NSW

State Library Victoria

Additional Finance from Mind The Gap Film Finance (Michael Agar & Caroline Farmer)

ABC Commissioning Editor

Anita Brown

ABC Head of Factual

Steve Bibb