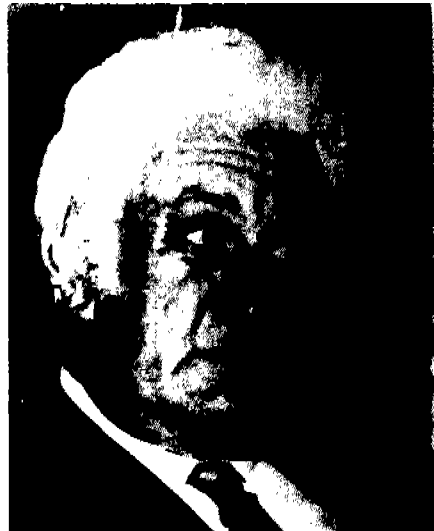


Sir John Robert KERR

AUSTRALIA

Governor General

Addressed as:
Sir John

Sir John Kerr, 61, was sworn in as Governor General of Australia on 11 July 1974. A well-known lawyer and public servant, he had been Chief Justice and Lieutenant Governor of New South Wales since 1972. The post of Governor General, the Queen's representative in Australia, is characteristically apolitical, but Sir John, a onetime Labor Party man who left the party in 1954, astounded the country in November 1975 with a controversial and unprecedented decision to dismiss the man who had appointed him to his post, Labor Prime Minister Gough Whitlam; appoint a caretaker government under Liberal Party Leader Malcolm Fraser; and call for general elections in December.

A boilermaker's son, John Kerr grew up in a working-class section of Sydney. He graduated from the Law School of Sydney University in 1936 and was admitted to the bar in 1938. After military service during World War II, Kerr became principal of the Australian School of Pacific Administration and organizing secretary of the South Pacific Commission. In 1948 he returned to his law practice and a series of distinguished judiciary posts, eventually receiving appointments in 1966 as justice of the Commonwealth Industrial Court and the Australian Capital Territory Supreme Court.

Sir John is a gregarious man who entertains on a prodigious scale and works hard to keep in touch with people and events. He was knighted in 1974 and awarded the insignia of Chancellor of the Order of Australia, one of the country's highest honors, in January 1976. Sir John's first wife, by whom he had a son and two daughters, died in 1974; he remarried in 1975.

27 February 1976

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