

*Hon John Howard OM AC*

SIR WILLIAM HESELTINE

The recent death of Sir William Heseltine at the age of 96 ended the life of a true son of Western Australia who had served his nation, his Sovereign, and the political party of his choice with great distinction.

The pinnacle of his extensive career was surely his having been private secretary to Queen Elizabeth II from 1986 to 1990.

After being awarded first-class honours in history at the University of Western Australia, he joined the Prime Minister's department in 1951. He was private secretary to Sir Robert Menzies for four years and acting official secretary for a brief period to the then Governor General, Lord De L'Isle.

Bill Heseltine was a strong supporter of the Liberal Party. For two years, he was Assistant Federal Director of the party and retained for the rest of his life a strong interest in its fortunes.

In 1964, he was attached to the Press Office at Buckingham Palace in London. This began his long association with the late Queen. He became her Press Secretary in 1968. He then progressed and ultimately became the Queen's Private Secretary, the only Australian ever to be appointed to this position.

Consistent with his sense of duty and integrity, he maintained an appropriate separation between his political inclinations and the advice he provided in his roles within the Palace.

After serving at Buckingham Palace, he became a company director in 1991. His roles included serving as Chairman of NZI Insurance Australia Ltd.

GPO BOX 36, SYDNEY NSW 2001

TEL: 61 2 9221 2577

HowardJW@aph.gov.au

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He was awarded many British and Australian honours including becoming a Companion of the Order of Australia (AC) in 1988.

Bill Heseltine was a dedicated servant of the causes in which he believed, most importantly the welfare of Australia.

I record my gratitude for his years of dedicated service. And extend my sympathy to his widow Diana Lady Heseltine and the other members of his family.

2 October 2026