



Guy Barnett MP

LIBERAL MEMBER FOR LYONS



Joseph & Dame Enid Lyons

The Tasmanian electorate of Lyons was named after Joseph Aloysius Lyons (1879-1939); the first and only Tasmanian to be elected Prime Minister and the only Australian to hold the office of both Prime Minister of Australia and Premier of a State. He was married to Dame Enid Lyons (1897-1981).

As tenth Prime Minister, Joseph 'Honest Joe' Lyons was Prime Minister of Australia from 1932 to 1939 during the difficult and crucial years of Australia's climb out of the Great Depression up until the Second World War.

Joe Lyons has become best known for two momentous decisions in his life – he left the Labor Party for the United Australia Party (the forerunner to the Liberal Party) in the middle of his political career, and, at 35, he fell in love with a 17 year old girl, Enid Bumell. Joseph and Enid Lyons married in 1915 and had twelve children!

Dame Enid was the first woman elected to the House of Representatives in 1943 and the first woman to reach Cabinet rank as Vice-President of the Executive Council in 1949 under the leadership of Prime Minister and Liberal Party founder, Sir Robert Gordon Menzies.

Joe Lyons was born in Stanley and went to school at the St Joseph's convent school until his father lost the family's savings on the Melbourne Cup and suffered a breakdown. At the age of nine and a half, Lyons went to work. Looking back at this time in a speech to the Parliament, Lyons recounted:

"I learned then what it is to suffer, what it is like to be poor and out of work. And I swore to myself as I grew up, that if I ever had the chance to see that the children of the future should not have to go through what I did, I would use it to the full."

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Tasmanian
Liberals

In time, Lyons became a school teacher and also an active member of the Labor party. He was elected to State Parliament in 1909 and in 1914 became Minister for Education, Treasurer and Minister of Railways in the Earle government. He was Premier from 1923 to 1928 and in 1929 left state parliament to successfully contest the federal seat of Wilmot.

After leaving the Labor Party in defiance of its economic policy (which sought to defer redemption of Commonwealth bonds) Lyons formed the United Australia Party and became Prime Minister in 1932 – a position he held until his death in 1939.

Lyons is remembered as a leader who pursued consensus politics and one who discouraged party-driven divisions in Australia society. He was a pacifist and throughout his public career expressed opposition to military conscription.

“The best parliamentarian I’ve ever known.”

– Sir Robert Menzies on Joseph Lyons.