

## Independence of Zimbabwe

Following the break-up of the Central African Federation, Britain granted independence to its former parts: Northern Rhodesia, which became Zambia, and Nyasaland, which became Malawi. The third part, Southern Rhodesia, had problems with the lack of guaranteed majority rule.

On 11 November 1965, the Rhodesian Front of Ian Smith issued a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) from the United Kingdom. The British Government considered the UDI unconstitutional and illegal, and imposed sanctions on Rhodesia. On 16 November, Australia announced a series of measures against Rhodesia that mirrored British actions. In 1966 and 1968, the United Nations Security Council imposed mandatory economic sanctions on Rhodesia.

Attempts were made in the later 1960s and early 1970s to reach settlement between the British Government and the Rhodesians. In 1974, an African National Council (ANC) was formed, bringing nationalist parties together. Then in 1976, the major African nationalist groups – the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), led by Joshua Nkomo, and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), under Robert Mugabe – formed the Patriotic Front (PF).

Guerilla attacks by the PF, the crippling effects of economic sanctions, the independence in 1975 of the neighbouring former Portuguese colony of Mozambique, and the pressure applied by South Africa and the United States, forced Smith to begin talks with black leaders on the establishment of majority rule. In April 1979, a general election was held. The two PF parties chose not to participate. Bishop Abel Muzorewa, leader of the United African National Council (UANC), was elected the country's first black prime minister, but was not recognised internationally.

The Australian Government of Malcolm Fraser considered an acceptable solution could be found within the Commonwealth of Nations. The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) held in Lusaka, Zambia, in August 1979, at which Fraser was an active participant, produced the pathway that would lead to a resolution.

On 10 September 1979, the British Government met with representatives of the various Rhodesian groups at Lancaster House in London to begin discussions on a settlement. In December, British Governor Lord Soames arrived in Salisbury to administer Rhodesia.

By 21 December, the Lancaster House Agreement was signed, paving the way for a ceasefire, transitional British rule until the holding of free and democratic elections, and a new constitution implementing majority rule while protecting minority rights. The Australian Government

implemented a number of measures including establishing a Liaison Office in Salisbury, contributing a contingent of 152 to the Commonwealth Ceasefire Monitoring Force, sending an eight-person national observer group and appointing an Australian official to the Commonwealth Observer Group for the elections.

The elections, held in February 1980, were won clearly by Mugabe's ZANU (PF) party. The republic of Zimbabwe was proclaimed at a ceremony in Salisbury (now Harare) on 18 April 1980, at which Robert Mugabe was sworn in as prime minister.

## Selected records about the independence of Zimbabwe

### Department of Foreign Affairs

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Rhodesia – relations with Australia – policy statements on Rhodesia</u>	1960–73	A1838, 190/10/1/5 part 1
<u>Southern Rhodesia – political – elections</u>	1964–80	A1838, 190/2/4 part 1
<u>Southern Rhodesia – political – elections</u>	1980	A1838, 190/2/4 part 2
<u>Southern Rhodesia – political – elections</u>	1980	A1838, 190/2/4 part 3
<u>Rhodesia – political relations with Australia – Australian government action on Security Council resolution (sanctions) [see also parts 18 to 31]</u>	1971–72	A1838, 190/10/2/10 part 17
<u>Rhodesia – Australian relations – activities of Rhodesia – Information service, Melbourne and Sydney</u>	1977–79	A1838, 190/10/1/3 part 8
<u>Zimbabwe – political – chronology of events</u>	1978–79	A1838, 190/2/1/1 part 1
<u>CHOGM – Lusaka, 1979 – possible declaration on racism and racial prejudice</u>	1979	A1838, 899/6/21/3 part 2
<u>Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) – political – general [see also parts 56 to 89]</u>	1979	A1838, 190/2/1 part 55
<u>Southern Rhodesia – Australia relations – general [see also parts 19 to 30]</u>	1979	A1838, 190/10/1 part 18
<u>Commonwealth ceasefire monitoring force – Zimbabwe/Rhodesia</u>	1979	A1838, 681/34 part 1
<u>Commonwealth ceasefire monitoring force – Zimbabwe/Rhodesia</u>	1979	A1838, 681/34 part 2
<u>Commonwealth ceasefire monitoring force – Zimbabwe/Rhodesia</u>	1979	A1838, 681/34 part 3
<u>Commonwealth ceasefire monitoring force – Zimbabwe/Rhodesia</u>	1979	A1838, 681/34 part 5
<u>Commonwealth ceasefire monitoring force – Zimbabwe/Rhodesia</u>	1979	A1838, 681/34 part 6
<u>Commonwealth ceasefire monitoring force – Zimbabwe/Rhodesia</u>	1980–82	A1838, 681/34 part 13
<u>Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) – Lusaka, 1979 – issues [see also parts 2 to 8]</u>	1978–79	A1838, 899/6/21/1 part 1

<u>Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) – Lusaka, 1979 – issues</u>	1979	A1838, 899/6/21/1 part 10
<u>Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) – Lusaka, 1979 – issues</u>	1979	A1838, 899/6/21/1 part 11
<u>Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) – Lusaka, 1979 – issues</u>	1979–81	A1838, 899/6/21/1 part 12

## Cabinet Office

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Rhodesia sanctions</u>	1970	A5869, 288
<u>Southern Rhodesia – legislation to impose sanctions</u>	1973–74	A5915, 783
<u>Legislation to impose sanctions against Rhodesia</u>	1974	A5931, CL867
<u>Rhodesia Information Centre, Sydney</u>	1977	A12909, 1152
<u>Rhodesia – recent developments</u>	1978–80	A10756, LC2172 part 1
<u>Southern Africa and CHOGM</u>	1979	A12909, 3135
<u>Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) – Lusaka, 1–8 August 1979 – Australian initiatives</u>	1979	A12909, 3304
<u>Rhodesia – Australian contingent for Commonwealth ceasefire monitoring force</u>	1979	A12909, 3651
<u>Rhodesia – considerations for Australia</u>	1979	A12909, 3653

## Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) by Southern Rhodesia – legal implications</u>	1965–66	A1209, 1965/6724
<u>Rhodesia – post-UDI negotiations and mediation</u>	1965–66	A1209, 1965/6752 part 1
<u>Rhodesia – post-UDI negotiations and mediation</u>	1966	A1209, 1965/6752 part 2
<u>Rhodesia – post-UDI negotiations and mediation</u>	1965	A1209, 1965/6752 part 3
<u>Visit of UK Prime Minister, Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher – June and July 1979 – briefing</u>	1979	A1209, 1979/834 part 1
<u>Visit of UK Prime Minister, Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher – June and July 1979 – briefing</u>	1979	A1209, 1979/834 part 2
<u>Prime minister's visit to Zimbabwe – April 1980</u>	1980–81	A1209, 1980/521 part 1
<u>Prime minister's visit to Zimbabwe – April 1980 – itinerary and air travel</u>	1980	A1209, 1980/539 part 1
<u>Prime minister's visit to Zimbabwe – April 1980 – security and general administrative arrangements</u>	1980	A1209, 1980/541 part 1

## Office of National Assessments

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Rhodesian settlement – the paradox of transition</u>	1979	A13952, 2
<u>Rhodesia – elections and their implications</u>	1979	A13952, 3

<u>Rhodesia – developments at Lancaster House talks</u>	1979	A13952, 5
<u>Rhodesia – threat to Australian monitoring force</u>	1980	A13952, 10
<u>Rhodesia – election results</u>	1980	A13952, 11

### **Rt Hon John Malcolm Fraser (CP 51)**

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Precedents file (standard replies to correspondence received, includes statement on Rhodesia)</u>	1961–79	M1281, 19
<u>Rhodesia (includes papers relating to Zimbabwe)</u>	1977–80	M1268, 69
<u>Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) – Lusaka, 1979</u>	1979	M1356, 11

### **Geoffrey Yeend (CP 982)**

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Handwritten notes of conversation between Malcolm Fraser and Margaret Thatcher</u>	1979	M4805, 28

### **Allan Griffith (CP 981)**

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Africa – Rhodesia</u>	1967–80	M4609, 7
<u>Africa – Rhodesia</u>	1978–80	M4609, 6
<u>Africa – Rhodesia/Zimbabwe – report on April 1979 general election</u>	1979	M4609, 9
<u>Africa – Zimbabwe/Rhodesia – cables and other documents</u>	1979	M4609, 10

## **Identifying further records**

Use [RecordSearch](#) to identify further records held in the National Archives collection. Searches using the keywords 'rhodesia' and 'zimbabwe' will find relevant records.