



Lieut. Ross McDonald



Played with Adelaide University



Football Club: Intervarsity (1911)

Degree: LLB (1913)

Knighthood: 1950

Background

Coinciding with the Centenary of Anzacs our incentive behind the series of biographical publications is the Adelaide University Football and Cricket Club's desire to honour our players who served in the Great War (1914 - 1918). These brave men put on hold their academic, professional and sporting careers for King and Country in the name of peace and freedom. The AUFC/AUCC WW1 Memorial Committee is endeavouring to identify every one of our players who served and prepare life stories on all. This is to ensure their sacrifices and further contributions to society will be recognised by future generations.

On Anzac Day 2015, the Centenary of the Gallipoli landing, a memorial plaque was unveiled on the Adelaide University Oval Pavilion and this was followed by the erection of a picket fence between the pavilion and the scoreboard with each picket bearing a plaque with the name of an AUFC/AUCC player who served.

The following documentation relates to the life of Ross McDonald. It is compilation of information and photographs collected from a variety of historical sources.

AUFC/AUCC WW1 MEMORIAL COMMITTEE

The AIF Project

<https://www.aif.adfa.edu.au/showPerson?pid=196411>



Ross McDonald

Religion	Presbyterian
Occupation	Solicitor
Address	'Tasma', Parliament Place, Melbourne, Victoria
Marital status	Single
Age at embarkation	28
Next of kin	Father, A McDonald, National Bank of Australasia, Melbourne, Victoria
Enlistment date	15 February 1916
Rank on enlistment	2nd Lieutenant
Unit name	Howitzer Brigade 119
AWM Embarkation Roll number	13/136/1
Embarkation details	Unit embarked from Melbourne, Victoria, on board HMAT A60 <i>Aeneas</i> on 3 October 1916
Rank from Nominal Roll	Lieutenant
Unit from Nominal Roll	General List
Fate	Returned to Australia 18 July 1919

Service Record

<https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=1843504>

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Published Biographies

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Biographical Register of Members of the Parliament of Western Australia



[<<- Return to previous screen](#)

Member Name	(Robert) Ross McDonald	
Principal Honours	Knighted June 1950	
Birth	Date 25 January 1888	Place Albany, Western Australia
Gender	Male	
Arrival in WA		
Parents	Son of Angus McDonald, bank manager, and Mary Jane Elder	
Marriage and Family	Unmarried	
Death	Date 25 March 1964	Place St John of God Hospital, Subiaco, Western Australia
	Cemetery Karrakatta Cemetery, Western Australia	Cause of Death

Religion	Presbyterian
Education	Educated Scotch College, Perth and University of Adelaide (by external study)—LLB Admitted to the Bar 10 March 1910, KC 12 May 1936, Hon. LLD (University of Western Australia) 1961
Occupation	Lawyer
Employment History	Enlisted Australian Imperial Force 15 February 1916 in Victoria, 2nd Lieutenant of Artillery To United Kingdom in 1916 then to France and Belgium, served with 39th Battery and 119th Howitzer Battery, 4th Division Artillery; promoted Lieutenant 1 August 1917 Discharged 2 November 1919 From 1919 with legal firm Robinson, Cox and Wheatley (later Robinson and Cox), became partner Member Law Society Part-time lecturer Law School, University of Western Australia, 1928–1931 Original vice-president for Australian and first chairman for Western Australian, International Commission of Jurists Director of numerous companies from 1950 Knighted June 1950
House	MLA
Local Government Service	
Party	Nationalist then Liberal Vice-president Nationalist Party 1936–1943
Date Elected	8 April 1933

Inaugural Speech



McDonald, (Robert) Ross, Inaugural Speech.pdf

Valedictory Speech

Year Retired/Resigned 1950

Electorate West Perth

Parliamentary Service **Electorates**

- MLA West Perth 8 April 1933–25 March 1950

Office

- Leader Nationalist Party (Liberal from 1945) 13 April 1938–14 December 1946
- Attorney General, Minister for Police and Native Affairs 1 April 1947–5 January 1948
- Minister for Housing, Forests and Native Affairs 5 January 1948–7 October 1949

Committees

- Chairman Select Committee on the Rural Relief Fund Act Amendment Bill 1937
- Chairman Select Committee on the Utility of Certain Railway Devices 1942–1943
- Member Joint Select Committee on Alternative Sites for the Erection of Public Buildings 1939–1940
- Member Select Committee on the Land Bill 1933
- Member Select Committee on the Purchasers' Protection Bill 1933
- Member Select Committee on the City of Perth Superannuation Fund Bill 1934
- Member Select Committee on the Electoral Act (1907–1921) 1935
- Member Select Committee on the Commonwealth Powers Bill 1943

Royal Commissions

- Member Royal Commission inquiring into the Kendenup Fruit Co Ltd and De Garis (WA) Development Co Ltd 1923
- Member Hon Royal Commission inquiring into the Administration of the Municipal Council of the City of Perth 1937–1938

Background/Membership

Founder and original president National Trust
Member Board of Trustees Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery 1950–1958
Warden State War Memorial 1952
Chairman Medical School Appeal 1955
Chairman Royal Perth Hospital 1956–1960
President Friends of Royal Perth Hospital
Member Senate University of Western Australia 1950–1961
Chairman and member of council St Catherine's University College
Member council Scotch College
President Victoria League for 20 years and then deputy president
Member Weld Club and Perth Rotary Club, latter from formation, and president in 1930
Captain Hon aide-de-camp to Governor 1925–1931
Member council and vice-chairman Finance Committee Boy Scouts Association

Qualifications Bachelor of Laws (LL B), King's Counsel (KC), Honorary Doctor of Laws (Hon LL D)

References D Black and G Bolton, eds, *Biographical Register of Members of the Parliament of Western Australia: volume two 1930–2010*, Western Australian Parliamentary History Project, Perth, WA, 2011, p. 157.

Further Information G. C. Bolton and Tresna Shorter, 'McDonald, Sir Robert Ross (1888–1964)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mcdonald-sir-robert-ross-10936/text19431>, published first in hardcopy 2000, accessed online 23 December 2015. *West Australian*, 12 April 1933. *Who's Who in Australia*, (1950)

Bibliography

Biography - Sir Robert Ross McDonald

by G. C. Bolton and Tresna Shorter

Sir Robert Ross McDonald (1888-1964), lawyer and politician, was born on 25 January 1888 at Albany, Western Australia, son of Angus McDonald, bank manager, and his wife Mary Jane, née Elder. Ross was educated at Fremantle School, Scotch College, Perth, and the University of Adelaide (LL.B., 1913). After passing Barristers' Board examinations, he was admitted to the Western Australian Bar on 15 March 1910 and in 1912 formed a partnership with L. W. Lohrman. On 15 February 1916 McDonald was commissioned in the Australian Imperial Force. He served with the 4th Division Artillery on the Western Front in 1918 and his appointment terminated on 2 November 1919.

Back in Perth, McDonald joined Robinson, Cox, Jackson & Wheatley and became a partner in 1921. His reputation in commercial law was recognized by his appointment in 1923 to the royal commission inquiring into the Kendenup land schemes of C. J. De Garis. A founding member (1928) of the Law Society of Western Australia, he lectured part time at the university in 1928-31. He took silk on 10 February 1936.

One of Perth's most eligible bachelors, McDonald chose not to marry. He was honorary aide-de-camp (1925-31) to the governor Sir William Campion, a foundation member of Perth Rotary Club (president 1929-30), and president (for twenty years) of the local branch of the Victoria League. Elected to the Legislative Assembly as the Nationalist member for West Perth on 8 April 1933, he became party leader and deputy-leader of the Opposition in April 1938. McDonald was a polite and constructive antagonist to moderate Labor governments. In 1945 he oversaw the incorporation of the Western Australian Nationalists into the Liberal Party. Believing that the new party required rural leadership, he offered to stand down as leader early in 1946 but was persuaded to remain until replaced by (Sir) Ross McLarty in December.

On 1 April 1947 the Liberal-Country Party coalition took office. McLarty appointed McDonald attorney-general, minister for police and minister for native affairs; in January 1948 he exchanged the two former portfolios for housing and forests. As attorney-general, he opposed what many Western Australians saw as the encroachments of the Federal Labor government. In his other ministries he was a force for reform, showing a lively concern for the living standards of timber workers, and infusing fresh vigour into Aboriginal policy with the appointment of the Papua-trained S. G. Middleton as commissioner for native affairs. Resigning from cabinet in October 1949, and from parliament in March 1950, he was knighted in the following June.

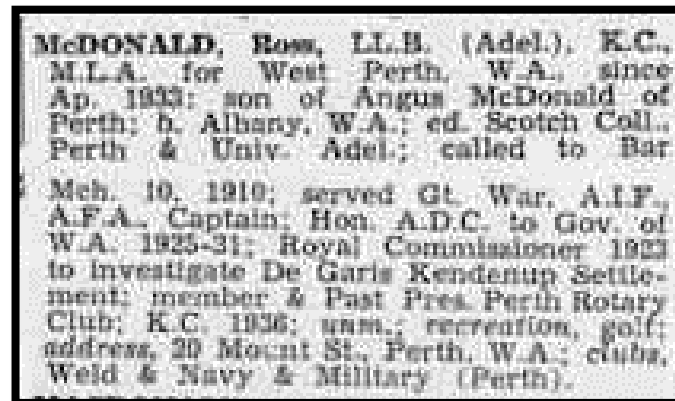
Well liked and respected, but marked by a gentlemanly reticence, McDonald was a trustee (1950-58) of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery of Western Australia, a member (1950-61) of the senate of the University of Western Australia, and chairman (1954-56) of St Catherine's, the first women's college at the university. He was also a director of numerous companies, chairman (1956-60) of the Royal Perth Hospital board and a foundation member of the State branch of the National Trust of Australia. Sir Ross died on 25 March 1964 in Perth and was buried in Karrakatta cemetery with Presbyterian forms. His estate was sworn for probate at £48,773.

Citation details

G. C. Bolton and Tresna Shorter, 'McDonald, Sir Robert Ross (1888–1964)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mcdonald-sir-robert-ross-10936/text19431>, published first in hardcopy 2000, accessed online 29 July 2017.

Additional Biography

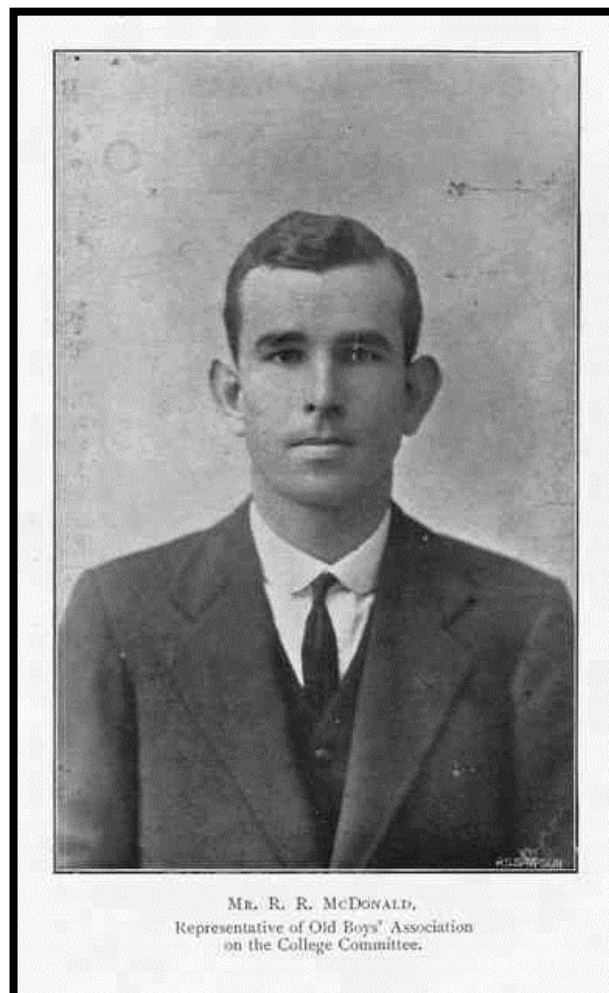
Robert Ross McDonald's life and WWI service are well documented in the biographies above and the Who's Who in Australia (1938) and Scotch College Obituary below.



Schooling

Ross McDonald completed his secondary education at Scotch College, Perth. He passed his Junior Public Examinations in 1902 (6 subjects / 1 Credit/equal 16th in the Special Honour List) and his Senior Public Examination in 1903 (7 subjects / 1 Credit/ 11th in the Special Honour List). Perth secondary school student's examinations were conducted by the University of Adelaide, so Honour Lists included students from both Western Australia and South Australia.

Photograph of Ross McDonald published in the Scotch College, Perth, Recorder in 1912.



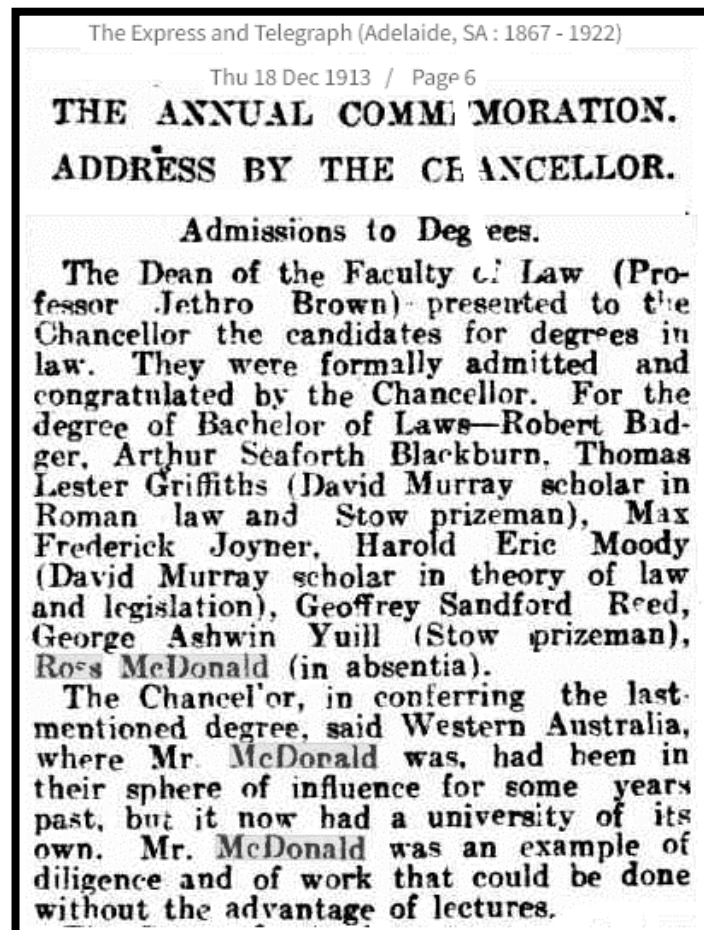
Adelaide University

Following completion of his secondary education, Ross wanted to be a lawyer. In Western Australia, the only way at that time in which lawyers could qualify for admission to practice was by undergoing a period of practical training and service of 5 years in articles with a practising lawyer. In 1910, at 22 years of age, Ross had completed the necessary practical experience with a law firm and was finally admitted to the Western Australian Bar. He further desired to complete study towards a law degree (LLB), however the University of Western Australia (founded in 1911) did not have a Law School until 1927. Like many other legal practitioners from W.A. had done before him, Ross enrolled at the University of Adelaide to complete . While some reports suggest that Ross completed the bulk of his studies remotely from Perth, WA, however he came across to Adelaide on some occasions.

In 1912, Ross was a prominent member of the Young Liberals' Society and was becoming known in W.A. political circles.



Ross completed his Law Degree from 1911 to 1913 and at the Annual Commemoration ceremony for admission to the Law Degree it was noted that he achieved this without the advantage of attending lectures.



University Sport

In 1911 on one of his visits to Adelaide, he represented Adelaide University in the Intervarsity Football Match against Melbourne University in Melbourne.



World War I

Ross enlisted on the 15th of February 1916 in the 119 Howitzer Brigade and was described as 5' 8¾", 115 lbs, with a medium complexion, grey eyes and black hair. In September 1916 he became a 2nd Lieutenant and his unit embarked from Melbourne, Victoria, on board HMAT A60 *Aeneas* on 3 October 1916. Ross was promoted to Lieutenant on the 1st of August 1917. On 18th January 1918 he proceeded to France. He returned to Australia on the 'Orsova' on 18 July 1919.

Career in Newspaper Articles

The University of WA established a Law School in 1927 and Ross McDonald was one of the first lecturers.

1928



Ross McDonald – Middle Row – Third from Right

Enjoying It

PERTH'S prominent legal adviser, Ross McDonald, who appears in the majority of big common law suits at the West's Supreme Courts is taking a brief spell from perusing legal documents. With a big session in front of him when the courts open in March, Ross has taken advantage of a holiday down at Albany, where he is finding the air exhilarating, but the golf balls just the same as they are in the city. Judge Jack Dwyer is also at the southern port, so Ross will not have to go far to look for another keen golf swiper to while away the hours.



Ross McDonald

May 1936

NEW KING'S COUNSEL.

TWO APPOINTMENTS MADE.

Mr. R. McDonald and Mr. A. Wolf

The appointment of two new King's Counsel was announced yesterday by the Premier (Mr. P. Collier). The distinction has been conferred on Mr. R. R. McDonald, of the legal firm of Robinson, Cox, McDonald and Louch, and Mr. A. A. Wolff, Crown Solicitor, by the Lieutenant-Governor in Executive Council. The number of King's Counsel being limited to the estimated requirements of the State, discrimination is exercised, and it is stated to be the custom in Western



Mr. ROSS McDONALD.

Australia for appointments outside the public service to be recommended by the Chief Justice and for those inside the service to be recommended by the Crown.

Mr. Collier expressed gratification in being associated with the appointments. "Mr. McDonald is one of nature's gentlemen," he said, "and Mr. Wolff as a Crown officer has displayed a quality of intellect which should carry him far in his profession. I feel sure that both appointees will eminently adorn the high office to which they have been called."

Mr. McDonald's Career.

Mr. Robert Ross McDonald was born at Albany and was educated at Scotch College. He studied law at the University of Adelaide, where he obtained the LL.B. degree, and was admitted to the West Australian Bar in 1910. During the war he enlisted as a private and served with the Field Artillery in France and Belgium. On his return to Perth in 1919 he became a partner in the legal firm of Robinson, Cox and Wheatley. In 1923 Mr. McDonald was appointed by the Mitchell Government as a Royal Commissioner to investigate the affairs of the Kensington Fruit Packing Co., Ltd., and the De Oaris (W.A.) Development Co., Ltd., and subsequently was largely instrumental in the rehabilitation of that settlement.

Mr. McDonald was for several years a member of the council of the Law Society, and was one of the first lecturers in the Law School of the University of Western

Australia. He is a member of the Board of Governors of Scotch College, a member and past president of the Perth Rotary Club and was for several years vice-chairman of the finance committee of the Boy Scouts' Association. After the war Mr. McDonald was interested in Citizen Force training and for several years commanded the 8th battery of the Field Artillery with the rank of captain.

In April, 1923, he was selected to represent West Perth in the Legislative Assembly in succession to the late Mr. T. A. L. Davy, K.C. He was re-elected for the same seat in February last and since 1923 has been deputy-leader of the Parliamentary National Party.

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Mr. ROSS McDONALD.

1938



MEMBERS of the Royal Commission inquiring into slum conditions before they set out for an inspection of the slum areas last night. From left to right: Mr. Ross McDonald, K.C., M.L.A. (Leader of the Nationalist Party), Mr. J. T. Tonkin, M.L.A., Cr. H. S. Raphael, M.L.A. (Chairman of the Commission), Miss May Holman, M.L.A., and Mr. Bancroft (secretary).

Ross McDonald (at left)

1939

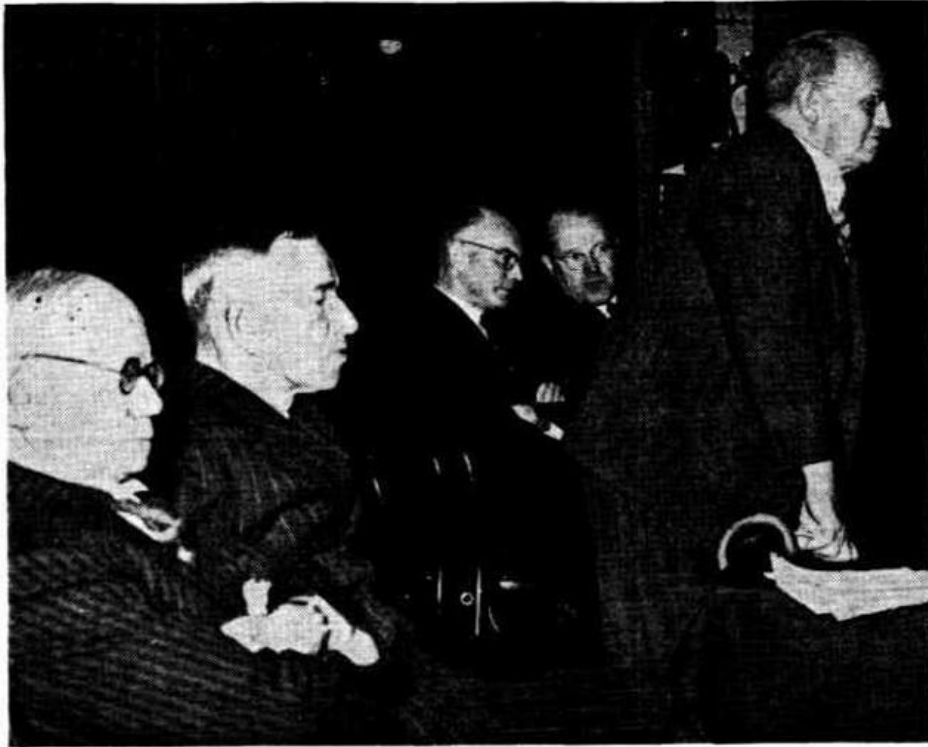


1940



1946

CITIZENS' EDUCATION RALLY.



Citizens of Perth held an education rally at the Perth Town Hall on Monday night. The speaker is Mr. Frank Wallace, chairman of the executive of the Progressive Education League. Seated behind him are (left to right) Messrs. E. Needham, M.L.A., and Ross McDonald, M.L.A., and Professors G. A. Currie and R. G. Cameron.

Ross McDonald (second from left)

1947

MEETING THE FORCE.



The newly-appointed Minister for Police (Mr. Ross McDonald), who is also Attorney-General in the State Cabinet, reviewing metropolitan members of the police force on Thursday. He was accompanied by the Commissioner (Mr. J. Doyle) and Mr. W. H. Kitson, who formerly had charge of the department as a member of the Wise Government.

—Mr Ross McDonald

PERSONALITIES

The Minister for Housing, Forests and Native Affairs (Mr. Ross McDonald) was 60 years of age last Sunday. He was born at Albany on January 25, 1888, and was educated at Scotch College. Studying law at the University of Adelaide he obtained the LL.B. degree, and was admitted to the West Australian Bar in 1910. He was appointed King's Counsel in 1936.

Enlisting as a private with the A.I.F. in World War I, he served in France and Belgium as an artillery lieutenant. After the war he was for 10 years a member of the A.M.F., during which he commanded the Fifth Battery Field Artillery.



Mr. Ross McDonald.

In 1933 Mr. McDonald entered the Legislative Assembly as member for West Perth and has retained the seat since. From 1937 to 1946 he was Parliamentary leader of the National Party (which subsequently became the Liberal Party). When the McLarty-Watts Government came into office on April 1, 1947, he became Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Native Affairs. Early this month when portfolios were re-allocated he relinquished those of Attorney-General and Police accepting in their stead Housing and Forests.

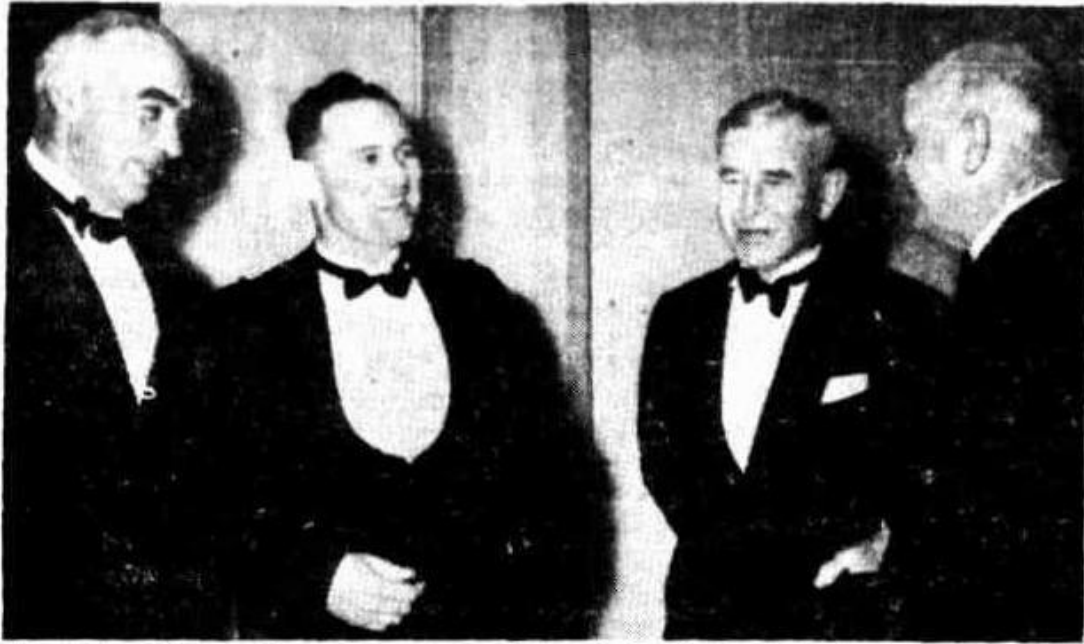
Last June he toured the North West as far as Wyndham by air, making general inquiries on behalf of the Government. In August he attended a building materials conference in Canberra, and also assisted the Premier (Mr. McLarty) at the Premiers' Conference and the Loan Council.

As Attorney-General he carried out a heavy task during the last session of Parliament when 104 Bills (a record number) were introduced.

He is a member, and an ex-president, of the Perth Rotary Club.

1949

DINNER FOR FORMER MINISTER

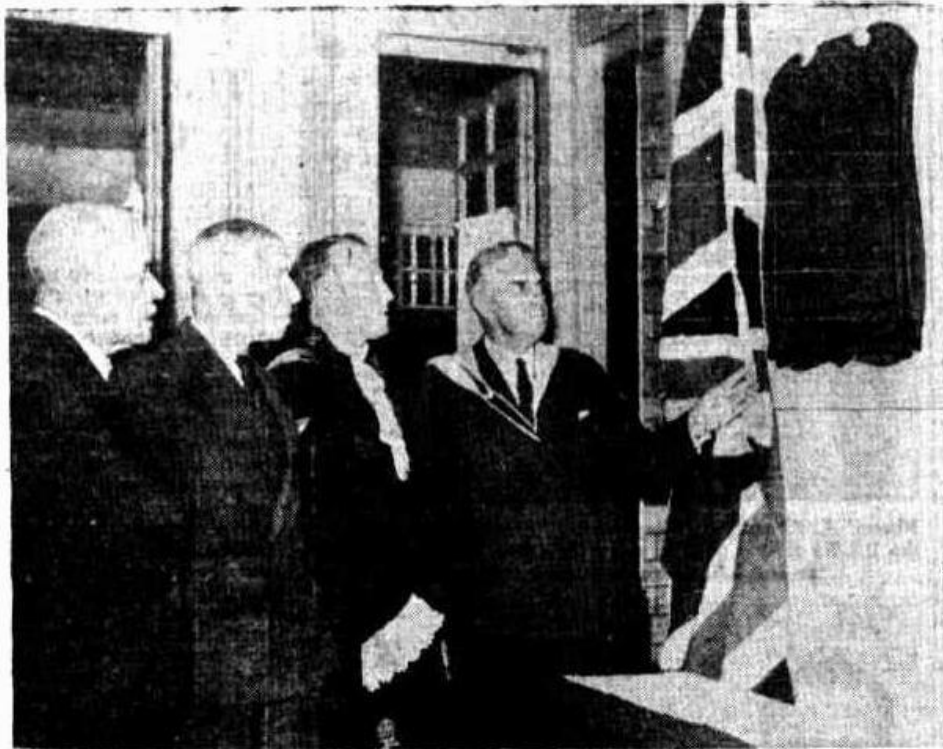


The State Cabinet held a dinner at the Esplanade Hotel last night in honour of Mr. Ross McDonald, who resigned from the Cabinet recently. Chatting before the dinner are the Deputy-Premier (Mr. Watts), the Honorary Minister for Housing, Forests and Local Government (Mr. Brand), Mr. McDonald and the Premier (Mr. McLarty).

Mr Ross McDonald – Second from Right

1950

OLD SCOTCH COLLEGIANS REMEMBERED



A tablet commemorating old Scotch Collegians who died during service in World War II was unveiled at the school yesterday. Left to right Mr. G. G. Campbell (senior member of the staff), Mr. Ross McDonald (an old Scotch Collegian), who performed the unveiling ceremony; the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in W.A. (the Right Rev. Neil MacLeod) and the principal of the school (Mr. G. Maxwell Keys).

Mr Ross McDonald – second from left

1950

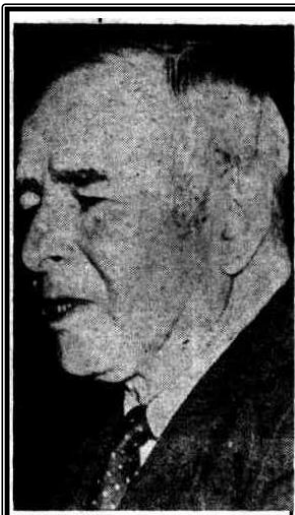
'Congratulations,' Says A Boy To A New Knight



♦ TO THOSE CONTAINED in a sheaf of telegrams he has just delivered 14-year-old telegram boy Ron Tyler adds his congratulations as he brings newly-honoured knight Sir Ross McDonald to the door of his Mount-st. home today. The door bell and the telephone kept Sir Ross busy from early morning. "This will take a bit of getting used to," he said.

Sir Ross McDonald

1952



Sir Ross McDonald (right) and Mr. Murray Little, the former Director of Education, will be the two members of the Royal Commission to inquire into the administration of the Kindergarten Union of Western Australia and pre-school training.

Their appointment and the terms of reference are expected to be announced after the next meeting of the Executive Council.

The intention of the Government to appoint the Royal Commission was announced last week.

The Minister for Education (Mr. Watts) then said that the Government desired to obtain a thoroughly informed report on pre-school education and the operations of the Kindergarten Union.

The desire of the Government primarily was to see some extension of pre-school education within the reasonable future, within the ability of the State.

Sir Ross McDonald

Death

Sir Ross died on 25 March 1964 in Perth and was buried in Karrakatta cemetery. The following Obituary appeared Scotch College (Perth) Recorder (1964):

SIR ROSS McDONALD

Western Australia joined with Scotch College to mourn the passing of one of the School's most illustrious Old Boys on March 25: Sir Ross McDonald was a man of exceptional qualities.

Born in Albany on January 25, 1888, Sir Ross came to Scotch before the turn of the century, two years after the School's foundation and at a time when the College assembled in the Shearer Memorial Hall in Beaufort Street, Perth. He distinguished himself early in his College career, winning prizes for English Literature and Latin.

He left Scotch at the end of 1904 to study Law at the University of Adelaide. He was a foundation member of the Old Scotch Collegians' Association, and those few Old Boys who have survived him still remember him as an outstanding speaker at the first annual Old Boy's Dinner of 1908.

He was admitted to the W.A. Bar in 1910 and later became one of the first lecturers at the Law School of the University of W.A. At the outbreak of World War I, he enlisted as a private in the Field Artillery and rose to the rank of Lieutenant, serving in France and Belgium. Even after the war, when he returned to Perth and became a partner in a Perth legal firm, he maintained his interest in military affairs and, as a member of the A.M.F., commanded the Eighth Field Artillery.

From 1925 to 1931, he was honorary A.D.C. to the Governor, Sir James Mitchell. He was appointed King's Counsel in 1936 and the following year he became Parliamentary Leader of the National Party (later, the Liberal Party), a position which he held until 1946. As Native Welfare Minister in 1948, he was largely responsible for the

27

initiation of the movement for improved conditions for aborigines. His work as a Housing Minister concerned with the problems of post-war reconstruction was also outstanding, and during his term as Attorney-General he was responsible for the introduction of a far-reaching Bill concerning the distribution of Legislative Assembly seats.

He served on the College Council and became an honorary life member. He was also a past-president of the Perth Rotary Club. In 1950, a knighthood was conferred on him in recognition of his services to W.A.

Upon his death, 'The West Australian' said: "Sir Ross McDonald brought to public life a cultivated mind, a detachment allied to high principles and a natural courtesy that gave him a special and influential place in the State's affairs."

His enormous energy, his sympathy and his dedication to the ideal of service will remain as an example to his fellow Scotch Collegians.

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