

## Biography



### John Andrew Arthur (1875 - 1914)

John Arthur was a lawyer and the federal minister for External Affairs

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John was the son of a gold miner who was brilliant at school. He graduated from Melbourne Uni with a bunch of degrees and awards. He tutored at the uni and then started practicing law in 1901. He became a skilful industrial lawyer and was a leading authority on trade unionism. He was instrumental in bringing about the Harvester judgement that legally acknowledged that Australian workers must be paid a basic living wage.

He went into Federal politics, becoming the ALP member for Bendigo. He was one of the most widely admired and promising politicians the young Commonwealth had seen. He worked hard, held onto his seat for many years and suffered a kidney complaint that he knew would probably stop him from working sometime. He was determined 'to die in harness'.



He was regarded as one of Labor's most brilliant recruits, and there were suggestions, even before his entry into Federal politics, that he would eventually be appointed to the High Court. He was well respected, successful with a very bright future.

His health worsened; he lapsed into a coma and slowly died. There was a grand state funeral and flags flew at half-mast. The Prime Minister, the Governor General and several senators carried his coffin down the steps of parliament to the hearse in front of a large crowd on Bourke street. The cortege of 30 coaches travelled up here to this spot. Mourners included the opposition leader, all government ministers, professors, church leaders, his family, government staff, businesspeople, the legal profession, various leading citizens and even the Chinese Consul-General was there. They laid John to rest with masses of flowers. Minister Arthur was only 39.