

President of the Legislative Council

History

The office of the President can be traced back to the Lord Chancellor of the House of Lords in the British Parliament. The office of the Lord Chancellor dates back to at least 1066. In order to gain the cooperation and confidence of members from both sides of the house, the President (also known as the Presiding Officer) must exercise the office with political impartiality. Some Presidents have chosen not to attend meetings of their party, despite remaining an elected member of that party.



Crest of the Legislative Council

Role

Chosen by the members of the Legislative Council at the beginning of each four-year parliamentary term, the President of the Legislative Council has a host of duties, some of which are constitutional and some of which have evolved from the Parliament's Westminster origins and Western Australia's history.

The roles of the President include:

- upholding the traditions, powers and privileges of the Legislative Council with a major function being to regulate debate and to ensure that the proceedings are carried out in accordance with the Standing Orders and customs of the house;
- calling on MLCs who wish to speak and deciding on points of order and giving rulings when required;
- casting the deciding vote if a division (or vote) of the Legislative Council results in equal numbers;

- giving guidance to MLCs in respect of their general behaviour, language and dress;
- exercising on behalf of the Legislative Council the control of the behaviour of visitors to the public gallery in order to ensure that the proceedings are not interrupted;
- representing the Legislative Council at official functions and exercising overall responsibility for the operations of Parliament House together with the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly; and
- explaining and promoting the role and operation of the house to the public.



President's Chair centre of the podium

In the earlier phases of the history of the Legislative Council, when knighthoods were awarded to leading public figures, no less than 10 of the first 12 Presidents were bestowed knighthoods. In the last decade the position of President has been occupied by men who have been qualified with law, political science or educational qualifications.

In the absence of the President, the Chair of Committees performs the duties and exercises the authority of the President.

The Chair of Committees in the Legislative Council is elected by fellow members and takes the centre chair at the Clerk's Table whenever the house moves into the Committee of the Whole to consider a bill in detail.



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*The most recent Presidents of the
Legislative Council of Western Australia*



Samuel (George)
Ernest Cash



John Alexander
Cowdell



Nicholas David
Griffiths



Barry John
House



Kate Esther
Doust

President of the Legislative Council *Period of Office*

Sir Thomas Cockburn-Campbell (Baronet)	29 December 1890 - 27 September 1892
Sir George Shenton, Kt	11 October 1892 - 21 May 1906
Sir Henry Briggs, Kt	21 June 1906 - 8 June 1919
Sir Walter Kingsmill	31 July 1919 - 21 May 1922
Sir Edward Wittenoom, KCMG	27 July 1922 - 9 August 1926
Sir John Waters Kirwan, Kt	10 August 1926 - 21 May 1946
James Cornell	25 July 1946 - 25 November 1946
Sir Harold Seddon, Kt	26 November 1946 - 21 May 1954
Anthony Lloyd Loton	14 June 1954 - 6 August 1958
Sir Charles Latham, Kt	7 August 1958 - 21 May 1960
Sir Leslie Charles Diver	28 July 1960 - 21 May 1974
Sir Arthur Frederick Griffith	22 May 1974 - 21 May 1977
Clive Edward Griffiths	24 May 1977 - 21 May 1997
Samuel (George) Ernest Cash	27 May 1997 - 21 May 2001
John Alexander Cowdell	22 May 2001 - 21 May 2005
Nicholas David Griffiths	24 May 2005 - 21 May 2009
Barry John House	22 May 2009 - 22 May 2017
Kate Esther Doust	22 May 2017 - still in office

