

About Parliament 08

Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

History

The role of the Speaker is an ancient and important office of the Westminster parliamentary system.

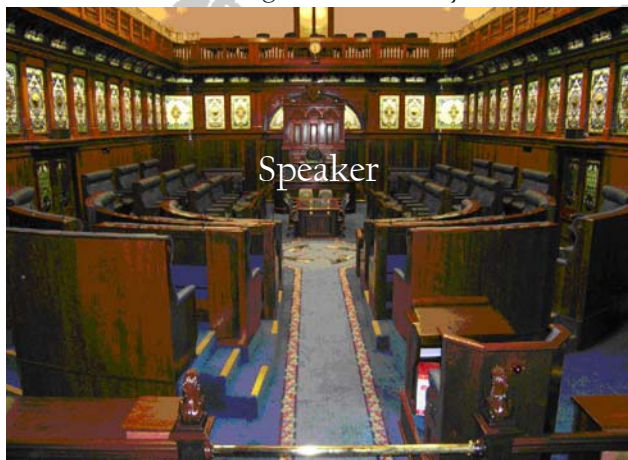
The first person to be called the Speaker of the House of Commons was appointed in 1377.

The name Speaker dates from a time when the House of Commons¹ was only allowed to address humble petitions to the Crown.

The procedure of the House of Commons revolved around talking until the opinion of the majority was discovered. Once the majority opinion was agreed on, the Speaker was sent to express it to the Crown.

At least nine British Speakers are known to have died a violent death because the Monarch did not want to hear what the Speaker had to say. The position of Sergeant-at-Arms was created in order to protect the Speaker from harm.

Location in the Legislative Assembly Chamber



Role

The Speaker is the Presiding Officer of the Legislative Assembly and is elected by members of that chamber in a secret ballot (if necessary) at the beginning of each parliamentary term. The role of the Speaker is to:

- uphold the traditions, powers, and privileges of the Legislative Assembly;
- regulate debate and ensure that the proceedings are carried out in accordance

with the Standing Orders and customs of the House;

- call on members who wish to speak or ask a parliamentary question without notice, decide on points of order, and give rulings when required;
- give guidance to members of the Legislative Assembly in respect of their general behaviour, language and dress;
- exercise, on behalf of the Legislative Assembly, control over the behaviour of visitors to the public gallery, in order to ensure that the proceedings are not interrupted;
- not take part in debates (except on rare occasions). The Speaker does not normally vote, although he or she has a casting vote in the event that the numbers in a division are equal; and
- represent the Legislative Assembly at official functions and exercise overall responsibility for the operations of Parliament House together with the President of the Legislative Council.



Speaker's Chair

Traditionally, Speakers have worn a wig and gown as part of the regalia of office. There has been no resolution concerning the extent to which such regalia should be retained or discarded. Recently, the tendency has been for Speakers to not wear the regalia.

In the absence of the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker performs the duties and exercises the authority of the Speaker. Between 2001 and 2008 Ms Dianne Guise, MLA, held the position of Deputy Speaker. She was the first woman to hold the position.

¹ The Lower House of the British Parliament.

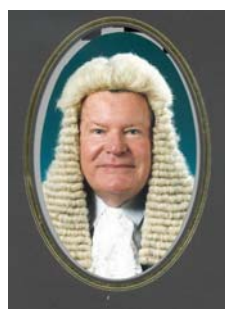
Speakers of the Legislative Assembly

Speaker of the Legislative Assembly	Period of Office
Sir James George Lee Steere, KCMG	30 December 1890 - 30 November 1903
Charles Harper	2 December 1903 - 27 July 1904
Mathieson Harry Jacoby	28 July 1904 - 27 October 1905
Timothy Francis Quinlan	23 November 1905 - 8 October 1911
Michael Francis Troy	1 November 1911 - 13 February 1917
Edward Bertram Johnston	13 February 1917 - 1 March 1917
James Gardiner	1 March 1917 - 28 June 1917
George Taylor	19 July 1917 - 23 July 1924
Thomas Walker	24 July 1924 - 29 July 1930
Sydney Stubbs	30 July 1930 - 17 July 1933
Alexander Hugh Panton, CMG	18 July 1933 - 24 March 1938
William Dartnell Johnston	4 August 1938 - 2 August 1939
Joseph Bertram Sleeman	3 August 1939 - 31 July 1947
Charles Frederic John North	31 July 1947 - 5 August 1953
Aloysius Joseph Rodoreda	6 August 1953 - 1 August 1956
James Hegney	2 August 1956 - 29 June 1959
John Merrifield Hearman, CMG	30 June 1959 - 23 March 1968
Hugh Norman Guthrie	25 July 1968 - 20 February 1971
John Mervin Toms	15 July 1971 - 8 October 1971
Daniel Norton	16 November 1971 - 30 March 1974
Sir Ross Hutchinson, DFC	22 May 1974 - 19 February 1977
Ian David Thompson	24 May 1977 - 21 March 1983
John Joseph Harman	22 March 1983 - 8 February 1986
Michael Barnett	10 June 1986 - 17 June 1993
James George Clarko	17 June 1993 - 14 December 1996
George Joseph Strickland	6 March 1997 - 10 February 2001
Fredrick Riebeling	1 May 2001 - 7 September 2008
Grant Woodhams	6 November 2008 - still in office

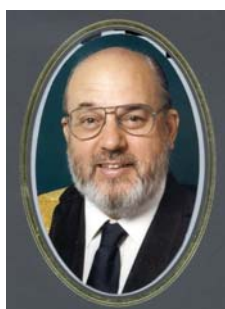
The Last Five Speakers of the Legislative Assembly of Western Australia



Michael Barnett



James George Clarko



George Joseph Strickland



Fredrick Riebeling



Grant Woodhams