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## Premier of Western Australia

The Premier of Western Australia is the head of the Executive Government. Following a general election, the Premier, who is the leader of the party or coalition of parties holding a majority in the Legislative Assembly, is by convention commissioned by the Governor to form government.

### History

When Western Australia first commenced Responsible Government in 1890, the word 'Premier' was merely a courtesy title and the position was not recognised constitutionally. In fact, the office was not formally listed as one of the executive positions until the appointment of Ross McLarty in 1947.

Today, Lord John Forrest is officially regarded as being the first Premier of Western Australia to take up the office in 1890. Dr Carmen Lawrence, on 12 February 1990, became the first woman to hold this office in Australia.



John Forrest

### Role

Although the Premier does have ministerial responsibilities, one of the most important tasks is to oversee and coordinate the work of other ministers. In Labor governments, the Premier is the leader of the parliamentary party and is chosen by the Caucus<sup>1</sup>. The Premier allocates portfolios to those members who are elected to the Ministry by the Caucus.

In Liberal and National party coalition or alliance governments, the Premier is usually chosen by the parliamentary members of the dominant party in

the coalition (Liberal Party). The Premier selects the Ministry and allocates the portfolios. An agreement between the Liberal and National Parties indicate how many ministerial posts are held by the respective parties.

The Premier leads the government and takes a major part in parliamentary debates and speaking to the media about government policy.

The roles of the Premier include:

- leading the Government in the State;
- chairing Cabinet meetings;
- providing advice to Her Majesty the Queen on the exercise of powers and functions of the Governor;
- choosing ministers and allocating portfolios (Liberal and Nationals) or allocating portfolios to ministers chosen by Caucus (Labor);
- setting out the principal ministerial responsibilities of ministers and the Acts they will administer (through Executive Council (EXCO));
- authorising a minister to perform the duties and functions of another minister (through EXCO);
- advising the Governor on the opening day of a session and the proroguing of Parliament prior to a General Election;
- ensuring adherence to caretaker government conventions and practices following a general election announcement;
- being the prime communicator between the Governor and Cabinet, the Western Australian Government and Federal, State and Territory Governments, and between the Western Australian Government and overseas governments; and
- as a member of Parliament, representing his/her electorate.

<sup>1</sup> A meeting of all the elected ALP members from both Houses.

## Premiers of Western Australia

Premiers of Western Australia	Party	Period of Office
Rt Hon. Sir John Forrest, PC, GCMG	Forrest	20 December 1890 - 14 February 1901
George Throssell, CMG	Forrest	14 February 1901 - 27 May 1901
George Leake, KC, CMG	Opposition	27 May 1901 - 21 November 1901
Alfred Edward Morgans	Ministerialist	21 November 1901 - 23 December 1901
George Leake, KC, CMG	Opposition <sup>2</sup>	23 December 1901 - 1 July 1902
Sir W.H. James KC, KCMG	Liberal	1 July 1902 - 10 August 1904
Henry Daglish	Labor	10 August 1904 - 25 August 1905
Sir Cornthwaite H. Rason	Liberal	25 August 1905 - 1 May 1906
Sir Newton J. Moore, KCMG	Liberal	7 May 1906 - 16 September 1910
Frank Wilson, CMG	Liberal	16 September 1910 - 7 October 1911
John Scaddan, CMG	Labor	7 October 1911 - 27 July 1916
Frank Wilson, CMG	Liberal	27 July 1916 - 28 June 1917
Sir Henry B. Lefroy, KCMG	Nationalist	28 June 1917 - 17 April 1919
Sir Hal. P. Colebatch, CMG <sup>3</sup>	Nationalist	17 April 1919 - 17 May 1919
Sir James Mitchell, GCMG	Nationalist	17 May 1919 - 16 April 1924
Philip Collier	Labor	17 April 1924 - 23 April 1930
Sir James Mitchell, GCMG	Nationalist	24 April 1930 - 24 April 1933
Philip Collier	Labor	24 April 1933 - 20 August 1936
John Collings Willcock	Labor	20 August 1936 - 31 July 1945
Frank J.S. Wise, AO	Labor	31 July 1945 - 1 April 1947
Ross McLarty, KBE, MM	Liberal	1 April 1947 - 23 February 1953
Albert R.G. Hawke	Labor	23 February 1953 - 2 April 1959
Sir David Brand, KCMG	Liberal	2 April 1959 - 3 March 1971
John Trezise Tonkin, AC	Labor	3 March 1971 - 8 April 1974
Sir Charles W.M. Court, AK, KCMG, OBE	Liberal	8 April 1974 - 25 January 1982
Raymond James O'Connor	Liberal	25 January 1982 - 25 February 1983
Brian Thomas Burke	Labor	25 February 1983 - 25 February 1988
Peter M'Callum Dowding	Labor	25 February 1988 - 12 February 1990
Dr Carmen Mary Lawrence	Labor	12 February 1990 - 16 February 1993
Richard Fairfax Court	Liberal	16 February 1993 - 10 February 2001
Dr Geoffrey Ian Gallop	Labor	10 February 2001 - 25 January 2006
Alan James Carpenter	Labor	25 January 2006 - 23 September 2008
Colin James Barnett	Liberal	23 September 2008 - still in office

### The Last Five Premiers of Western Australia



Carmen Mary Lawrence



Richard Fairfax Court



Geoffrey Ian Gallop



Alan James Carpenter



Colin James Barnett

<sup>2</sup> Premiers were not officially associated with organised parties until 1904.

<sup>3</sup> Hal Colebatch was the only Member of the Legislative Council (MLC) to ever hold the position of Premier of Western Australia.