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Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Ministers

Leader of the Opposition

The leader of the largest political party or coalition of parties not in Government in the Legislative Assembly is known as the Leader of the Opposition.

History

The term 'Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition' originated in the British Parliament in 1826. This term is rarely used in Australia.

The Western Australian Parliament did not officially recognise the position of Leader of the Opposition until 1905.

Since 1911 the Leader of the Opposition in Western Australia has been paid a salary equivalent to a minister and has been given special entitlements above those received by a backbench member.

Role

The Leader of the Opposition appoints and coordinates the Shadow Ministry's scrutiny and questioning of government policies and administration.

The Opposition is considered to be the alternative Government and the Leader has an important role in creating alternate policies for the State.

The Leader of the Opposition is also often viewed as being the next possible Premier of Western Australia.

An Opposition Leader:

- coordinates the scrutiny of government policy and administration;
- formulates alternative policies that are responsible and practical to provide the electorate with an alternative Government; and
- can force an election - provided a successful vote of no confidence against the Government can be carried in the Legislative Assembly.

Opposition Leaders rely heavily on the procedures of each House to enhance their role. These procedures include Questions without Notice and Questions on Notice to ministers, budget debates, legislative debates, making speeches on motions (including Matters of Public Interest), and grievance and adjournment debates.

Apart from the range of parliamentary procedures, the Leader of the Opposition and shadow ministers also promote their own policies to the public through the media.

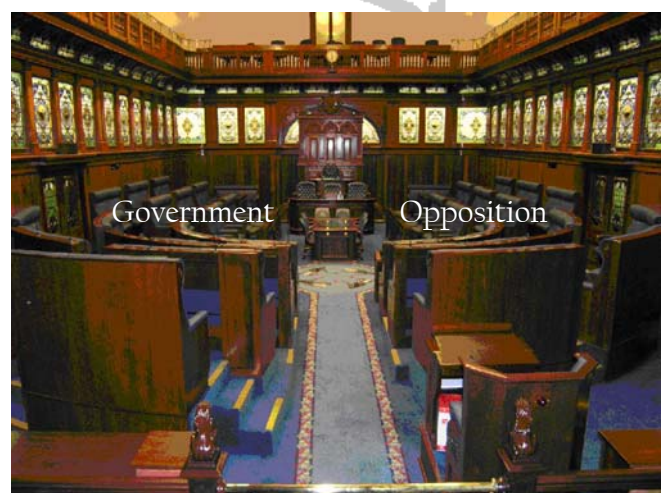
The Leader of the Opposition in Western Australia has always been a member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA).

When the Assembly is in session the Opposition Leader sits to the Speaker's left, directly opposite the Premier.

The Speaker usually affords the Leader of the Opposition the right to ask the first Question without Notice. On other parliamentary procedures the Speaker usually recognises the call of the Leader of the Opposition.

The Leader of the Opposition fulfils a vital function in our parliamentary system of government and, in collaboration with the other opposition members, contributes to the preservation of our democracy.

Location in the Legislative Assembly Chamber



Leaders of the Opposition since 1971

David Brand (Lib)	3 March 1971 - 5 June 1972
Charles Court (Lib)	5 June 1972 - 8 April 1974
John Tonkin (ALP)	8 April 1974 - 15 April 1976
Colin Jamieson (ALP)	16 April 1976 - 21 February 1978
Ron Davies (ALP)	21 February 1978 - 18 September 1981
Brian Burke (ALP)	18 September 1981 - 19 February 1983
Ray O'Connor (Lib)	19 February 1983 - 15 February 1984
Bill Hassell (Lib)	15 February 1984 - 25 November 1986
Barry MacKinnon (Lib)	25 November 1986 - 12 May 1992
Richard Court (Lib)	12 May 1992 - 7 February 1993
Carmen Laurence (ALP)	16 February 1993 - 7 February 1994
Ian Taylor (ALP)	7 February 1994 - 12 October 1994
James McGinty (ALP)	12 October 1994 - 15 October 1996
Geoffrey Gallop (ALP)	15 October 1996 - 16 February 2001
Richard Court (Lib)	16 February 2001 - 26 February 2001
Colin Barnett (Lib)	26 February 2001 - 9 March 2005
Matthew Birney (Lib)	9 March 2005 - 24 March 2006
Paul Omodei (Lib)	24 March 2006 - 17 January 2008
Troy Buswell (Lib)	17 January 2008 - 6 August 2008
Colin Barnett (Lib)	6 August 2008 - 23 September 2008
Eric Ripper (ALP)	23 September 2008 - still in office

Shadow Ministry

The Leader of the Opposition is assisted in fulfilling such a role by the Shadow Ministry of which he or she is a member.

The Shadow Ministry is composed of the most prominent members of the Opposition in the Parliament who are usually given shadow portfolios to match those of the Government.

Members of the Shadow Ministry occupy the Opposition front benches in both the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council. The Shadow Ministry is often labeled as the 'alternative government'.

A shadow minister's role is to scrutinise, appraise and criticise a particular government minister, questioning the minister about relevant policy direction and administration, and sometimes integrity issues.

Shadow Ministry members are the Opposition's main spokespeople in Parliament and to the electorate through the media. Unlike ministers, shadow ministers can also serve on parliamentary committees.

In the Western Australian Parliament shadow ministers date back to 1974, but they do not have an official status.

Apart from its Leaders, Deputy Leaders and Party Whips, shadow ministers do not receive a salary allowance for their roles, although many are appointed to parliamentary committees for which there is remuneration.

In recent times the Shadow Ministry has been numerically greater than the Government Ministry.

Opposition members may be given 'shadow spokesperson' positions including portfolio areas not listed in the Government Ministry. These extra portfolios may be indicative of the Opposition's future policy directions.