

1832 Minutes of the Legislative Council now available on the internet

The early minutes from the Legislative Council have been made available on the internet. The minutes cover the period from the establishment of the Legislative Council in 1832 to 1870. Prior to their transcription, access to the early minutes of the Colony was limited to a few academics, due to the fragile state of the documents. The handwritten Minutes of the early years provide a rare and irreplaceable record of the period following the arrival of the first European settlers.

The handwritten minutes were painstakingly transcribed over nine months by a team of Hansard reporters from the West Australian Parliament. Hansard reporters worked with enlarged copies of the original pages and magnifying devices to overcome the problems of illegible handwriting and damaged paper.

“Making these documents freely available will contribute to a better understanding of the State’s colonial history. It will be used by historians and researchers wanting to investigate the period before gold was discovered in the State. The State had a very modest population prior to the 1890s and it is not a well documented period” explained the President of the Legislative Council, the Hon Barry House MLC

The Minutes provide details of the early steps taken to establish the colony. The earliest minutes detail the fragile finances of the Colony, which was dependent on funds from England. A surprising proportion of the very early minutes deal with arguments about liquor licensing. The minutes also provide insight into the attitude of the colonial government to the indigenous people of Western Australia and the experiences of the early settlers.

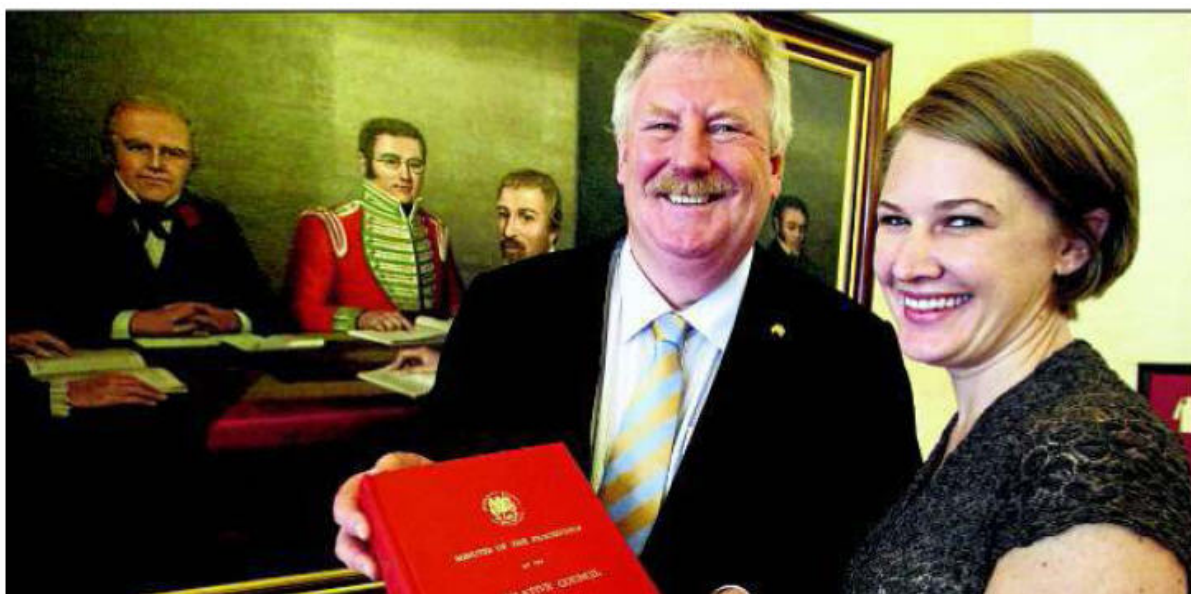
“It is important to have access to source documents rather than relying on an inherited version of events. As a former teacher, I am very keen to encourage a better understanding of the State’s history and institutions, and making the Legislative Council’s early records available will hopefully achieve that” said the President.

Reporting Services Manager, Ms Belinda Corey said the checking process involved reading for context, rather than text, to ensure the right words had been identified and transcribed.

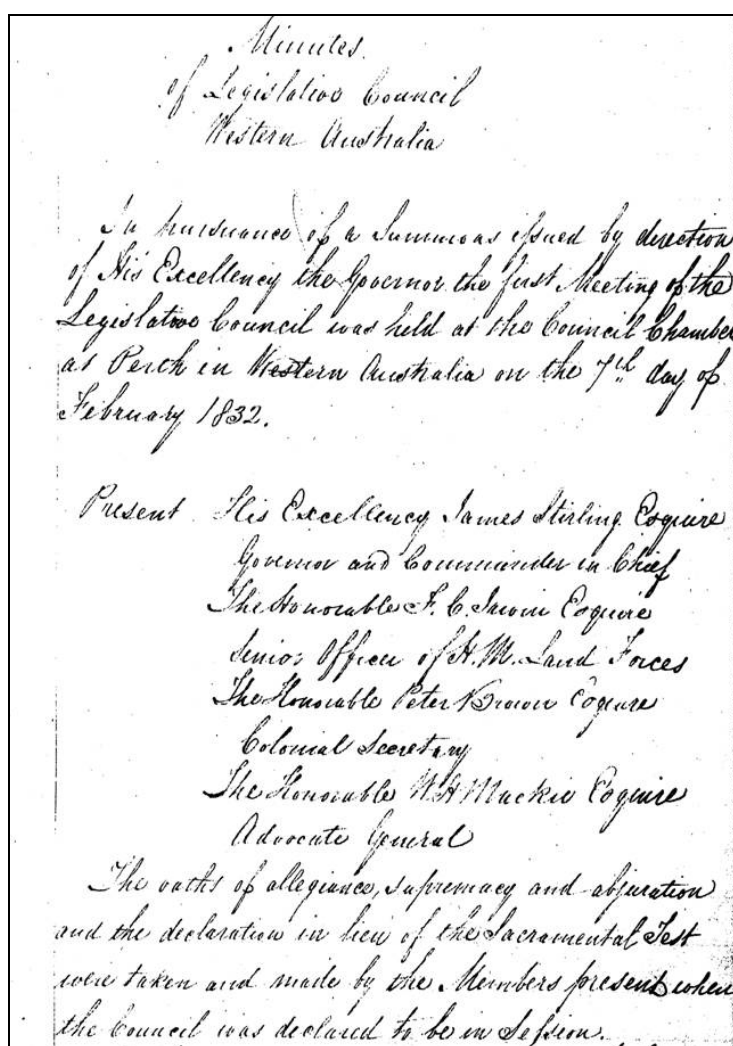
“The original Minutes of the 1832 - 1870 period were handwritten by the Clerk of the day. Thirteen Clerks served during the thirty-eight years and each brought his own style of transcribing the Minutes. There are variances in clarity, handwriting, spelling, adherence to procedure and layout of proceedings providing constant challenges in attempting to provide for historians an accurate, legible, comprehensive and consistent copy of the Minutes of the earliest days of the State’s Parliament,” described Ms Corey.

The original Legislative Council Minutes are currently housed in the State Archives of Western Australia.

The Minutes are available on the Parliament House website under, *Legislative Council - Chamber Documents - LC Minutes 1832 - 1870*.



Picture: The President with Belinda Corey, Parliament's Reporting Services Manager, with a volume of the early minutes. In the background is a painting of the first meeting of the Legislative Council in 1832.



Picture: Scanned Minutes of the Legislative Council from 1832.