

## **Governor officially opens the newly Refurbished Legislative Council Chamber**

His Excellency Dr Ken Michael AC, Governor of Western Australia (whilst at the time acting in the capacity of Administrator of the Commonwealth), opened the refurbished Legislative Council Chamber on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> April.

Although the Legislative Council Chamber had long been overdue for a refurbishment, the decision to refurbish was ultimately spurred by the practical need to install additional seats to accommodate an increase in the Legislative Council's membership due to changes to the electoral laws in 2005. Since the 2009 State election the Chamber has had to accommodate 36, rather than 34, Members.

The Chamber is an important part of the State's built heritage, and is visited annually by heads of state, politicians from other parliaments, diplomats and other significant visitors to the State as well as many thousands of members of the public.

After continuous use since 1904, many of the original fittings and later additions to the Chamber were showing significant signs of wear. The desks dated from around 1895 or earlier and the original bench seats were stuffed with horsehair, which had proven uncomfortable for extended sitting periods.

The most obvious changes to the Chamber are the individual leather seats which have replaced the bench seating, and the new carpet design featuring the Legislative Council's crest. Modern features such as wheelchair access and a hearing loop for the hearing impaired have been added. Critical equipment, such as the audio system, Chamber timers and electrical wiring has also been replaced and updated.



Picture: The newly refurbished Legislative Council Chamber.

As part of the ceremony to open the refurbished Chamber, a time capsule was sealed in a wood panel within the Chamber. Each Member contributed an item to be placed in the capsule. Current debates in the community were reflected in some of the items chosen for the capsule, such as genetically modified canola seeds. Others included a Claremont Football Club tie, sands from riverbanks and beaches in the South Metropolitan Region, several inaugural speeches, a cartoon from *The West Australian* on the Legislative Council's punitive powers, a public transport boarding pass, information on the Avon Valley, a dog spike and Western Australian Government Railways original foundry furnace machine badge from the Midland Workshop site and a history of Wanneroo. My contribution was a small wooden portion of the section of the Busselton jetty that was severely damaged by cyclone Alby in 1978.



Picture: The President with the Hon. Alyssa Hayden putting her items into the Time Capsule.