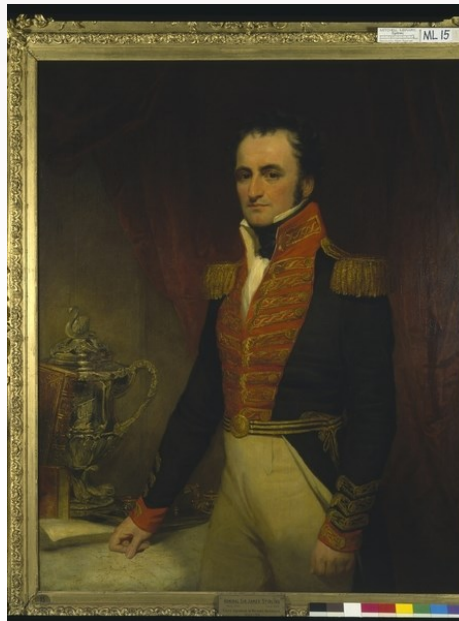


History Notes: Governors of WA  
April 2016

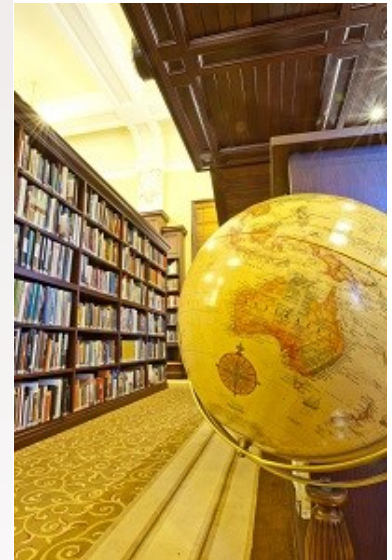
# Governors of WA

## In the navy: Admiral Sir James Stirling

James Stirling was born near Lanark, Scotland in 1791, the eighth child of Andrew and Anne Stirling. Stirling came from a strong naval tradition and aged 12 years he joined the navy. In his 33rd year he married 16 year old, Ellen Mangles, daughter of renowned botanist, at Guildford, England in 1823. They had five sons and six daughters. Following quick promotion in the Royal Navy, Stirling was assigned a mission to assess the potential of the west coast of Australia for a trading post. After his explorations of the Swan River in 1827, Stirling argued strongly to the NSW Governor Darling and his colonial superiors of the superiority of the Swan River area as an ideal location for a new British colony. In 1829 James Stirling was appointed lieutenant-governor of the new settlement. Stirling and his family sailed from England on board the *Parmelia* and on 18 June 1829 he proclaimed the foundation of the Swan River colony. As lieutenant-governor and later governor he administered the colony from June 1829 to January 1839 except during his visits to England. In February 1832, the Executive and the Legislative Council met for the first time. They had the same five members and Governor Stirling lead both making the majority of decisions. The main problem in the colony was a lack of food. Stirling had to buy emergency food supplies from Van Diemen's Land (now Tasmania). On 2 October 1837 Governor Stirling resigned due to his increasingly difficult relationship with prominent settlers and Aboriginal people. Stirling and his family finally departed Fremantle, 6 January 1839 for England. He died at his Guildford home in England, 22 April 1865.



Portrait of Sir James Stirling, ca 1833  
Photograph courtesy of [State Library of NSW](#): ML 15



*"I have however established two other towns, one called Fremantle at the entrance of the river on the south side a port or landing place, and the other on the north bank of the river about ten miles above Fremantle, just at the Islands. The latter is called Perth."*

Extract from James Stirling's letter to his brother, Walter, 7 September 1829



*'Destined for great things'*  
Photograph courtesy of *Weekend West*, 18/10/2014, p.4

## First female governor in Western Australia

Kerry Sanderson AO made history as the first female Governor in Western Australia. She is the 32nd governor, succeeding Malcolm McCusker in October 2014. She was born Kerry Gaye Smith on 21 December 1950 in Subiaco, Western Australia. Her father was an agricultural scientist and was Deputy Director General of Agriculture for many years. Her mother was a deputy principal. Sanderson was educated at Wembley Primary School and Churchlands Senior High School. She

graduated as a Bachelor of Science with a double major in mathematics from the University of Western Australia. Whilst working at the Department of Treasury she attained a Bachelor of Economics. When Kerry Smith was 21 years old she married Lancelot 'Lance' Sanderson, a telecommunications engineer. He was chief engineer for Telstra in Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory. They had two sons. Lance Sanderson died from cancer in 2007.

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*'The greatest danger for most of us is not that we aim too high and we miss it but that we aim too low and we reach it'.*

Kerry Sanderson's favourite quotation, attributed to Michelangelo

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## Honours

Kerry Sanderson AO has received many prestigious awards. In 1996 she was awarded the Telstra Business Woman of the Year. In January 2001 she received a Centenary Medal for service to the maritime industry. She was awarded the Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) on 14 June 2014: 'for service to the development and management of the port and maritime industries in Australia'. The University of Western Australia gave her an Honorary Doctorate of Letters in 2005. She was also awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Murdoch University in 2015.



*'New Governor makes it a family affair'*

Photograph courtesy of *Weekend West* , 18/10/2014, p.1

## Public service

Prior to her governorship, Kerry Sanderson was a public servant and board member. Her first job was at the Department of Treasury rising to director of the economic and financial policy division. In 1991 she became chief executive of Fremantle Ports when it was \$30 million in debt. She restored it to profitability over 17 years. In 2008 Sanderson received a three year posting to London as agent general. After returning to WA she became a board member for companies and charities until her appointment as governor.

## Governor's constitutional role

The governor represents Her Majesty the Queen as Head of State in Western Australia with executive power that is subject to the advice of the cabinet. The governor's powers and duties are written in the Letters patent, under which the governor is appointed and the Constitution Act 1889. The governor is expected to act apolitically. The specifics of the governor's role are to:

- preside over Executive Council
- appoint ministers, judges, magistrates and Justices of the Peace
- fix the time and place for each session of the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council
- prorogue and dissolve the Legislative Assembly
- prorogue the Legislative Council. The governor does not have power to dissolve the Legislative Council.
- accept the resignation of members of the Legislative Council
- appoint the President of the Legislative Council
- issue writs for general elections
- take the oath or affirmation of allegiance from MPs.



**Letters patent re  
Constitution 25  
August 1890 (UK)**

The Letters patent have important provisions on the governor's role which were not included in the Constitution of Western Australia.

## Governor's community and ceremonial role

The governor also has a community and ceremonial role to:

- open the Parliament of Western Australia
- promote Western Australia
- welcome and provide hospitality to heads of state, ambassadors and other official visitors
- present honours and awards under the Australian honours system
- present awards and medals to scouts and guides; Girls and Boys Brigades; Churchill Fellowships and Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee Trust Awards
- participate in public events
- Travel Western Australia to meet people in the country and the city, and keep informed of state developments.

## By appointment

Prior to the granting of responsible government to Western Australia in 1890, the governor was the representative and the agent of the British government. Responsible government meant the governor did not act on the advice of the British Colonial Office but the advice of the premier or ministers from an elected parliament. Since the Australia Acts 1986 the governor is appointed by the premier and can only be dismissed by the British sovereign on the advice of the premier.

## 32 governors

Since the proclamation of the Swan River Colony in 1829, there have been 32 governors. All of them have been men except for the current governor, Kerry Sanderson AO.

Traditionally governors had a British military background. More recently the governors have had careers in university education, the judiciary, state public service and the Australia military. The majority of the first governors were born overseas, mostly in the United Kingdom. Sir James Mitchell was the first Australian-born governor appointed to the role in 1948.



## Governors of Western Australia

No	Name		Date appointed	Date retired/died
1	Stirling, James <sup>1</sup>	Lieutenant Governor	30 December 1828	5 February 1832
		Governor	6 February 1832	11 August 1832
		Governor	19 August 1834	2 January 1839
2	Hutt, John		3 January 1839	26 January 1846
3	Clarke, Andrew KH		27 January 1846	11 February 1847
4	Fitzgerald, Charles		12 August 1848	22 July 1855
5	Kennedy, Arthur Edward		23 July 1855	19 February 1862
6	Hampton, John Stephen		28 February 1862	1 November 1868
7	Pine, Benjamin Chilley Campbell <sup>2</sup>		20 July 1868	NA
8	Weld, Frederick Aloysius		30 September 1869	3 January 1875
9	Robinson, William Cleaver Francis		11 January 1875	6 September 1877
			10 April 1880	13 February 1883
			20 October 1890	17 March 1895
10	Ord, Harry St George		30 January 1878	9 April 1880
11	Broome, Frederick Napier		2 June 1883	20 December 1889
12	Smith, Gerard		23 December 1895	29 June 1900
13	Lawley, Arthur		1 May 1901	13 August 1902
14	Bedford, Frederick George Denham		24 March 1903	22 April 1909
15	Strickland, Gerald		31 May 1909	3 March 1913
16	Barron, Harry		17 March 1913	26 February 1917
17	Ellison–Macartney, William Grey		9 April 1917	8 April 1920
18	Newdegate, Francis Alexander Newdigate		9 April 1920	16 June 1924
19	Campion, William Robert		28 October 1924	8 June 1931 <sup>3</sup>
20	Mitchell, James	Lieutenant Governor	1933	1948
		Governor	5 October 1948	30 June 1951
21	Gairdner, Charles Henry		6 November 1951	26 June 1963
22	Kendrew, Douglas Anthony		25 October 1963	28 August 1973
23	Edwards, Hughie Idwal		7 January 1974	2 April 1975
24	Kyle, Wallace		24 November 1975	16 May 1980
25	Trowbridge, Richard		25 November 1980	24 November 1983
26	Reid, Gordon Stanley		2 July 1984	30 September 1989
27	Burt, Francis Theodore Page		19 March 1990	31 October 1993
28	Jeffery, Michael Philip		1 November 1993	5 May 2000
29	Sanderson, John Murray		18 August 2000	31 October 2005
30	Michael, Kenneth Comminos		18 January 2006	2 May 2011
31	McCusker, Malcolm James		1 July 2011	30 June 2014
32	Sanderson, Kerry Gaye		30 June 2014	present

## Footnotes

1. When James Stirling was in England, from August 1832 to August 1834, successive administrators were responsible for the governing the colony.
2. By Letters patent issued on 20 July 1868, Sir Benjamin Chilley Campbell Pine was appointed Governor of Western Australia but he did not take up the appointment. On 14 April 1869, Frederick Aloysius Weld was appointed 'in the room of Sir Benjamin Pine'.
3. The post of governor was not filled between 1931 and 1948. Sir John Northmore was administrator until 29 June 1932 and lieutenant-governor until 10 July 1933. He was succeeded by Sir James Mitchell as lieutenant-governor until 4 October 1948. Sir James Mitchell was appointed governor on 5 October 1948.

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