

History Notes: Longest Serving WA MPs
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Longest Serving WA MPs

Honest John: longest serving WA parliamentarian

The longest serving member of the Western Australian Parliament is the Hon John Tonkin AC who served continuously in the Legislative Assembly for over 43 years from 1933 to 1977. John Trezise Tonkin was born on 2 February 1902 in Boulder, Western Australia to John Trezise Tonkin, engine driver and his wife, Julia. He was educated at Boulder City Central School and was dux of the school in 1916. He also attended the Eastern Goldfields High School in 1917 and Claremont Teachers' College. His working career began as an office boy at Kalgoorlie Electric Power Company. He taught at various country schools in WA and finally at the metropolitan North Perth Primary School until the start of his parliamentary career. In

his early 20s, Tonkin joined the Australian Labor Party and remained a member for 70 years. In 1927 and 1930 he contested the WA seats of Sussex and Murray-Wellington before winning North-East Fremantle in 1933. In 1950 the seat was abolished and he then won the seat of Melville. In 1944 he was appointed Minister for Education and Social Services. By 1955 he was the Deputy Premier and from 1971 to 1974 he was Premier of Western Australia. The Tonkin government established Australia's first parliamentary ombudsman and an environmental watchdog and passed the state's inaugural Aboriginal heritage legislation. Tonkin was defeated in the 1973 election and retired two years later. He died in Perth aged 93 years. A state funeral service was held at Wesley Church in Perth.



Premier John Tonkin

Photograph: courtesy of State Library of WA
BA1119/P269



"To my mind there can be no better investment than money spent in training the intellects and improving the minds of the boys and girls of today who will be the men and women of tomorrow".

Hon John Tonkin's
Inaugural Speech,
Hansard

18 July 1933

List of longest serving MLAs in Western Australia

Name	Term	Years	Months	Days
Tonkin, John Trezise	1933–1977	43	10	11
Collier, Philip	1905–1948	42	11	21
Johnson, William Dartnell	1901–1905, 1906–1917, 1924–1948	39	6	26
Grayden, William Leonard	1947–1949, 1956–1993	39	5	11
Wilson, Arthur Alan	1908–1947	39	5	6
Hegney, James	1930–1947, 1950–1968	35	10	29
Stubbs, Sydney	1911–1947, (MLC 1908–1911)	35	5	12
Sleeman, Joseph Bertram	1924–1959	35	–	–
Hawke, Albert Redvers George	1933–1968 (MHA, SA, 1921–1924)	34	11	15
Troy, Michael Francis	1904–1939	34	8	22
Jamieson, Colin John	1953–1986	32	11	25
McLarty, Sir (Duncan) Ross	1930–1962	32	1	5
North, Charles Frederic John	1924–1956	32	–	16
Mann, James Isaac	1930–1962	31	11	19
Marshall, William Mortimer	1921–1952	31	5	7

Longest serving MPs in WA

The longest serving member of either House of the Parliament of Western Australia is the Hon John Trezise Tonkin who served continuously for 43 years, 10 months and 11 days in the Legislative Assembly from 1933 to 1977. Apart from John Tonkin, the only other Western Australian state MPs to serve more than 40 years continuously were Philip Collier MLA (for 42 years, 11 months and 21 days from 1905 to 1948) and Vernon Hamersley MLC (for 42 years, two months and 19 days from 1904 to 1946 in the Legislative Council). The Hon Michelle Roberts, the current Member for Midland, is the longest serving woman in the Parliament of Western Australia.

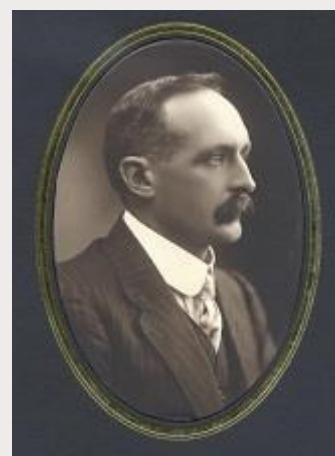
List of longest serving MLCs in Western Australia

Name	Term	Years	Months	Days
Hamersley, Vernon	1904–1946	42	2	19
Drew, John Michael	1900–1918, 1924–1947	41	2	13
Kirwan, Sir John Waters	1908–1946	38	–	–
Moore, Norman Frederick	1977–2013	36	–	–
Baxter, Charles Farquharson	1914–1950	35	9	12
Miles, George James Gallop Warden	1916–1950	33	8	3
Wittenoom, Sir Edward Horne	1894, 1895–1898, 1902–1906, 1910–1934	32	1	27
Griffiths, Clive Edward	1965–1997	32	–	–
Heenan, Eric Michael	1936–1968	32	–	–
Seddon, Sir Harold	1922–1954	32	–	–
Baxter, Norman Eric	1950–1958, 1960–1983	31	–	15
Fraser, Gilbert	1928–1958	30	5	10
MacKinnon, Graham Charles	1956–1986	30	–	–

Vernon Hamersley: longest serving MLC

The Hon Vernon Hamersley is the longest serving member of the Legislative Council (42 years, two months and 19 days). On 24 April 1901 he contested Toodyay as an Independent. Hamersley was a Liberal until 1920 then he joined the Country Party. He was elected the MLC for East Province on 5 August 1904 in a by-election. In May 1916 he ran again for election but the result was declared void. However he was returned at a by-election and held the seat until 24 October 1946. Hamersley was Father of the House from April 1921 to October 1946. He was born 18 March 1871 in Guildford, Western Australia, the son of Samuel Richard, pastoralist and farmer, and Matilda Brown. He was

educated at Guildford Grammar School, WA, Magdalen College School, Oxford and Downton Agricultural College, Salisbury in England. He married Clara Hicks on 6 August 1895 at St Peters Church, Beverley, WA. She was the daughter of Joseph and Rosina Snow. They had one son and two daughters. Hamersley farmed with his father in York until 1895. He inherited 'Hasely', Toodyay from his grandfather which he developed as a farm and stud. He was also part-owner of Mt Barnett cattle station, Kimberley, WA. He spent a short time on the goldfields. Vernon Hamersley died 24 October 1946 in West Perth and was buried at Culham Cemetery, Toodyay, WA.



Hon Vernon Hamersley: Photograph from the Parliament of Western Australia

Philip Collier: second longest serving MP



Hon Philip Collier
Photograph: Parliament of WA

The Hon Philip Collier is the second longest serving state MP in WA. He was born on 21 April 1873 at Woodstock, near Melbourne in Victoria. He married Ellen Heagney Dunaford, daughter of Edward and Catherine Dunaford on 27 June 1900. He was a miner at Steiglitz near Ballarat, Victoria and NSW. He was also a construction foreman at the Greater Melbourne Sewage Co in Northcote. In 1904 he moved to WA and mined at the Perseverance Goldmining Company in Kalgoorlie until 1905. He was a strong union member holding various positions including vice president of the

Goldfields Trades and Labour Council. On 27 October 1905 he was elected MLA for Boulder in WA and retained the seat until 18 October 1948. He held a number of portfolios including Mines, Railways, Water Supplies and Forests. He was the Leader of Opposition as well as Premier and Treasurer twice in the 1920s and 1930s. From 1939 to 1948 he was Father of the House in the Parliament of WA. He served the longest terms ever as an Australian Labor Party parliamentary leader (19 years) and ALP Premier (nine years). He died on 18 October 1948, Mt Lawley, WA.

“I submit that the prosperity of any nation depends on the distribution of its wealth, not on the total production whatever”, Hon Philip Collier’s Inaugural Speech, 12 July 1906

Fathers of the House

Name	Term as Father	Name	Term as Father
De Hamel, Lancel Victor	1890–1894	Hawke, Albert Redvers George	1962–1968
Harper, Charles	1894–1905	Tonkin, John Trezise	1968–1977
Piesse, Frederick Henry	1905–1909	Jamieson, Colin John	1977–1986
Quinlan, Timothy Francis	1909–1911	Grayden, William Leonard	1986–1993
Taylor, George	1911–1930	Blaikie, Barry Roy	1993–1996
Troy, Michael Francis	1930–1939	Cowan, Hendy John	1996–2001
Collier, Philip	1939–1948	Bradshaw, John Leslie	2001–2005
Marshall, William Mortimer	1948–1952	Trenorden, Maxwell Wayne	2005–2008
North, Charles Frederic John	1952–1956	Ripper, Eric Stephen	2008–2013
Sleeman, Joseph Bertram	1956–1959	Barnett, Colin James	2013–present
McLarty, Sir (Duncan) Ross	1959–1962		

Following the British House of Commons tradition, the Father of the House is the member who at the time has the longest period of continuous service in a parliamentary chamber. If the longest serving members began their parliamentary terms on the same day, the member who was sworn in first is nominated Father of the House.

List of longest serving women MPs in WA

Name	Term	Years	Months	Days
Roberts, Michelle Hopkins MLA	1994–	23		
Constable, Elizabeth MLA	1991–2013	21	7	17
Cardell-Oliver, Florence Gillies MLA	1936–1956	20	1	23
McAlear, Margaret MLC	1974–1993	18	11	29
Edwards, Judith Mary MLA	1990–2008	18	3	11
Ravlich, Ljiljana Maria MLC	1997–2015	17	9	16
Quirk, Margaret Mary MLA	2001–	16		
Doust, Catherine (Kate) Esther MLC	2001–	16		
Ellery, Suzanne (Sue) Mary MLC	2001–	16		
Farina, Adele MLC	2001–	16		

Michelle Roberts: longest serving woman parliamentarian



Hon Michelle Roberts
Photograph from the
Parliament of Western
Australia

The Hon Michelle Roberts is the longest serving woman parliamentarian in the Parliament of Western Australia. She was born in Perth on 29 February 1960 to William and Frances Hopkins. She was educated at Sacred Heart in Point Peron; Highgate and North Inglewood primary schools and Mercedes College in the city of Perth. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Western Australia and then completed a Diploma in Education.

Roberts joined the Australian Labor party in 1978 and was the first woman President of the state Australian Labor Party from 2000 to 2007.

After university she was a teacher at John Curtin Senior High School from 1983 to 1987. In 1983 she married Gregory Roberts at Mercedes Chapel in Perth. They

have three daughters. From 1987 Roberts worked as a policy and research officer with various government departments.

Michelle Roberts has a strong commitment to civic leadership. She was councillor for the City of Perth from 1986 to 1993 and Deputy Mayor for the last two years of her service.

On 19 March 1994, Roberts won the seat of Glendalough in a by-election. The seat was abolished in 1994 and at the next election on 14 December 1996 she won the seat of Midland which she still holds. After the Labor Party won the March 2017 election, she was appointed Minister for Police and Road Safety. She had been working as Shadow Minister for Police since 2012. From 2001 to 2005 she was Minister of Police and Emergency Services .

Sources

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