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History Notes: Timeline of Women MPs in the Parliament of Western Australia  
February 2017. Updated August 2017



# Timeline of Women MPs in the Parliament of Western Australia



*“Pam Beggs (left) drawing the winning ticket in the instant lottery Superdraw supervised by Wendy Silver of the W.A. Lotteries Commission. Northbridge Festival 88, 5 March 1988”*

by Stevenson, Kinder & Scott Corporate Photography

Photograph courtesy of State Library of Western Australia: 324807PD

*“No doubt exists in my mind that the significant absence of women from Australian Legislatures for most of this century may be connected with Australia’s loss of leadership in the sphere of progressive social legislation.”*

Mrs Beggs (Whitford)

Inaugural Speech

Hansard

Tuesday, 22 March 1983

## Timeline of Women MPs in the Parliament of Western Australia

### 1921

- ◇ Edith Cowan (Nationalist) made history when she was elected to the seat of West Perth in the Parliament of Western Australia on 12 March 1921. She was Australia's first woman member of Parliament and the second female member of any parliament in the British Empire.

### 1924

- ◇ Edith Cowan contested the seat of West Perth seat in 1924 without success.

### 1925

- ◇ May Holman (ALP) was elected on 3 April 1925 at a by-election for the Forrest Division. The seat was vacant due to the death of her father, John Holman (ALP) who had held the seat. She was the first female MP to represent the Australian Labor Party in the Parliament of Western Australia.

### 1927

- ◇ Edith Cowan contested the seat of West Perth in 1927 without success.

### 1935

- ◇ May Holman became the first female politician in an Australian parliament to hold a parliamentary seat for 10 years.

### 1936

- ◇ Dame Annie Florence Cardell-Oliver (Nationalist) was elected on 15 February 1936 and served until 7 April 1956.

### 1939

- ◇ May Holman (ALP) died tragically in a car accident on 20 March 1939, two days after being re-elected for a fifth parliamentary term. The accident happened on election eve.
- ◇ At a by-election on 20 May for the seat of Forrest, May Holman's brother, Edward Holman (ALP) won the seat.

### 1949

- ◇ Dame Annie Florence Cardell-Oliver (Nationalist) became Australia's first female cabinet minister when she was appointed the Minister for Health, Supply and Shipping on 7 October 1949.

### 1954

- ◇ Ruby Hutchison (ALP) was the first female member of the Legislative Council when she was elected on 8 May 1954 for the Suburban Province. Her term of service began on 22 May 1954. She remained the only woman MLC throughout her seventeen year term.

### 1956

- ◇ Dame Annie Florence Cardell-Oliver's (Nationalist) parliamentary term ended 7 April 1956 leaving Ruby Hutchison (ALP) as the only woman Member of Parliament until her term ended on 21 May 1971.

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### 1966

- ◇ When Ruby Hutchison MLC married Frederick Lavery MLC on 14 May 1966 she became the first woman in an Australian parliament to serve concurrently with her husband.

### 1971

- ◇ When Lyla Elliott (ALP) was elected to the seat of North-East Metropolitan Province on 20 February 1971, she was the only woman member in the Legislative Council. She began her term of office on 22 May 1971.

### 1974

- ◇ Margaret Craig was the first Liberal woman elected to the Parliament of Western Australia. She won the seat of Wellington on 30 March 1974.
- ◇ Margaret McAleer (Lib) and Grace Vaughan (ALP) were elected on 30 March 1974 to the seats of Upper West Province and South-East Metropolitan Province. McAleer and Vaughan's terms in the Legislative Council began on 22 May 1974.

### 1977

- ◇ Winifred Piesse (NCP) was elected on 19 February 1977 to the Lower Central Province. She served from 22 May 1977 in the Western Australian Legislative Council. She was the first female Member of the Western Australian Parliament to represent the National Country Party (later the National Party of Australia or Nationals WA).

### 1980

- ◇ Grace Vaughan (ALP) lost her seat at the election on the 23 February 1980. She served until 21 May 1980.

### 1983

- ◇ Pamela Beggs (ALP), Pamela Buchanan (ALP), Yvonne Henderson (ALP) and Jacqueline Watkins (ALP) were elected at the state election on 19 February 1983.
- ◇ Margaret Craig (Lib) was defeated for the new seat of Mitchell at the 1983 election. Her original seat of Wellington was abolished in a redistribution.
- ◇ Kay Hallahan (ALP) was elected to the South-East Metropolitan Province on 19 February 1983 and commenced her term on 22 May 1983 in the Legislative Council .
- ◇ Winifred Piesse (NCP) failed by 400 votes to be re-elected at the 1983 election.

### 1986

- ◇ Labor MPs Kay Hallahan and Pam Beggs share the honour of being the first ALP women selected for cabinet postings. On 26 February 1986 Hallahan was appointed the Minister for Community Services; The Family; Youth; The Aged and Minister assisting the Minister for Women's Interests and Pam Beggs was appointed Minister for Tourism; Racing and Gaming.
- ◇ Carmen Lawrence (ALP) and Judyth Watson (ALP) were elected on 8 February 1986 to the seats of Subiaco and Canning respectively.
- ◇ Beryl Jones (ALP) was elected to the Lower West Province at the 1986 election for a term commencing 22 May 1986 in the Legislative Council.
- ◇ Lyla Elliott (ALP) did not renominate for her seat in 1986.

## Timeline of Women MPs in the Parliament of Western Australia

### 1987

- ◇ Beryl Jones (ALP) was the first woman to chair a Select Committee in either house of parliament. She chaired the Legislative Council's Select Committee into Charitable Collections from 28 April 1987.
- ◇ On 16 March 1987, Kay Hallahan (ALP) became the first female to hold the position of Deputy Leader of a party in the Legislative Council.

### 1988

- ◇ On 15 November 1988, Judyth Watson (ALP) became the first female to chair a Select Committee in the Legislative Assembly. She was appointed chair of the Select Committee on the Reproductive Technology Working Party's Report.

### 1989

- ◇ Carmen Lawrence (ALP) was elected as the Member for Glendalough on 4 February 1989. Her original seat of Subiaco was abolished in a redistribution.
- ◇ Dr Hilda Turnbull (Nat) was elected to the Legislative Assembly seat of Collie on 4 February 1989. She was the first woman to represent the National Party in the Legislative Assembly.
- ◇ Cheryl Edwardes (Lib) was elected for the seat of Kingsley on 4 February 1989 to the Legislative Assembly.
- ◇ Cheryl Davenport (ALP) and Muriel Patterson (Lib) were elected on 4 February 1989 to the South Metropolitan Region and the South West Region. They began their parliamentary terms in the Legislative Council on 22 May 1989.

### 1990

- ◇ Carmen Lawrence became Australia's first female premier on 12 February 1990.
- ◇ Judy Edwards (ALP) won the by-election for the seat of Maylands on 26 May 1990 which was made vacant when Premier Peter Dowding resigned.

### 1991

- ◇ Elizabeth Constable (Ind) was the first woman elected as an Independent (ie without any party endorsement) to the Parliament of Western Australia. She won a by-election on 20 July 1991 for the seat of Floreat which was vacant due to the death of sitting member, Andrew Mensaros (Lib).

### 1992

- ◇ Pamela Buchanan (ALP) resigned in March 1992 due to ill health.

## Timeline of Women MPs in the Parliament of Western Australia

### 1993

- ◇ Carmen Lawrence was the first Leader of the Opposition following the Australian Labor Party's defeat at the state election in February 1993.
- ◇ When Cheryl Edwardes (Lib) was appointed Attorney General on 8 March 1993 she became the first female Attorney-General in Australia.
- ◇ Diane (Dee) Margetts was the first woman to be elected to both the Australian Senate (for the Greens on 1 July 1993) and the Legislative Council of Western Australia (on 10 February 2001 for a term commencing 22 May 2001).
- ◇ Kay Hallahan (ALP) resigned as MLC for the East Metropolitan Region in January 1993 and successfully contested the Legislative Assembly seat of Armadale at the 6 February 1993 election. She was the first female Member of the Parliament of Western Australian to serve in the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council.
- ◇ Valma Ferguson (ALP) served out the remainder of Kay Hallahan's parliamentary term for the East Metropolitan Region in the Legislative Council until 21 May 1993 but was unsuccessful in gaining a further term in 1993.
- ◇ Diana Warnock (ALP) and June van de Klashorst (Lib) were elected to the Legislative Assembly for the seats of Perth and Swan Hills at the 6 February 1993 election.
- ◇ Alannah MacTiernan (ALP) and Barbara Scott (Lib) were elected as MLCs for the East Metropolitan Region and the South Metropolitan Region on 6 February 1993 and began their terms on 22 May 1993.
- ◇ Pamela Beggs (ALP) and Jacqueline Watkins (ALP) were defeated at the February election.
- ◇ Diane Airey (Lib) served out the remainder of Philip Pental's (Lib) term until May 1993, after he resigned just prior to the 1993 election. She did not contest a seat in the 1993 election or at subsequent elections.
- ◇ Margaret McAleer (Lib) retired on 21 May 1993 and Beryl Jones' (ALP) parliamentary term ended.

### 1994

- ◇ Carmen Lawrence resigned from state parliament in February 1994 and won the federal seat of Fremantle at the election on 12 March 1994. She was the first Western Australian woman to serve in a state and federal parliament.
- ◇ On 7 February 1994, Kay Hallahan (ALP) became the first female to hold the position of Deputy Leader of the State Parliamentary Opposition.
- ◇ Michelle Roberts (ALP) won the seat of Glendalough at a by-election on 19 March 1994 as Carmen Lawrence (ALP) had vacated the seat to enter federal politics.
- ◇ Rhonda Parker (Lib) won a by-election for the seat of Helena on 26 September 1994.

### 1995

- ◇ Valma Ferguson (ALP) re-entered the Parliament of Western Australia on 4 April 1995 to again fill a casual vacancy, due to the resignation of ALP State President, Tom Butler.

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### 1996

- ◇ Megan Anwyl (ALP) won a by-election for the seat of Kalgoorlie on 16 March 1996 as Ian Taylor (ALP) had vacated the seat. She was re-elected at the state general election on 14 December 1996.
- ◇ Alannah MacTiernan (ALP) resigned as the MLC for the East Metropolitan Region on 21 November 1996 and was elected as the MLA for Armadale at the election on 14 December 1996.
- ◇ Katie Hodson-Thomas (Lib), Monica Holmes (Lib) and Sheila McHale (ALP) were elected at the 14 December 1996 election for seats in the Legislative Assembly.
- ◇ Helen Hodgson (Dem), Ljiljanna Ravlich (ALP), Christine Sharp (GWA), and Giz Watson (GWA) were elected at the 14 December 1996 election and began their Legislative Council parliamentary terms on 22 May 1997.
- ◇ Helen Hodgson was the first woman to be elected representing the Australian Democrats. She was elected to the Legislative Council representing the North Metropolitan Region for a term commencing 22 May 1997. She was the first female parliamentary leader of the WA Democrats.
- ◇ Ljiljanna Ravlich (ALP) was the first woman Member of the Parliament of Western Australia born in a non-English speaking country. She was born in Split, Croatia.
- ◇ Giz Watson (GWA) and Christine Sharp (GWA) were Western Australia's first female Members of Parliament to represent the Greens. Christine Sharp represented the South West Region and Giz Watson represented the North Metropolitan region.
- ◇ Giz Watson was the first openly lesbian parliamentarian in Australia.
- ◇ Judyth Watson (ALP) unsuccessfully contested the seat of Southern River at the 14 December 1996 election. She previously held the seat of Kenwick which was abolished in a redistribution.
- ◇ Yvonne Henderson (ALP) did not contest her seat of Thornlie at the 14 December 1996 election.
- ◇ Kay Hallahan (ALP) retired at the 1996 election.

### 1997

- ◇ Dr Christine (Chrissy) Sharp (GWA) was the first woman to chair a Standing Committee in the Parliament of Western Australia when she was selected to chair the Legislative Council's Standing Committee on Ecologically Sustainable Development on 26 June 1997.
- ◇ Valma Ferguson's (ALP) parliamentary term ended on 21 May 1997.

## Timeline of Women MPs in the Parliament of Western Australia

### 2001

- ◇ Carol Martin (ALP) became the first Indigenous woman member of an Australian parliament when she was elected to the Parliament of Western Australia on 10 February 2001.
- ◇ Jaye Radisich (ALP) was the youngest ever woman member of the Parliament of Western Australia. Radisich was only 24 years old when she was elected as the Member for Swan Hills in the Legislative Assembly on the 10 February 2001.
- ◇ Dianne Guise (ALP), Margaret Quirk (ALP) and Dr Janet Woollard (Ind) were also elected to the Legislative Assembly on 10 February 2001.
- ◇ Diana Warnock (ALP) did not contest the election in 2001.
- ◇ Hilda Turnbull (Nat), June van de Klashorst (Lib), Rhonda Parker (Lib), Megan Anwyl (ALP) and Monica Holmes (Lib) were unsuccessful in retaining their seats at the February 2001 election.
- ◇ Helen Hodgson (Dem) was defeated and Cheryl Davenport (ALP) and Muriel Patterson (Lib) did not re-contest their seats at the 2001 election.
- ◇ Kate Doust (ALP), Sue Ellery (ALP), Adele Farina (ALP), Robyn McSweeney (ALP), Dee Margetts (GWA) and Louise Pratt (ALP) were elected to the Legislative Council on 10 February 2001 for parliamentary terms beginning on 22 May 2001.
- ◇ Louise Pratt (ALP) was the youngest female elected to the Legislative Council when she won the seat for the East Metropolitan Region, aged 29 years.
- ◇ Sue Walker (Lib) was elected MLA for Nedlands at a by-election on 9 June 2001 due to the resignation of the incumbent, Richard Court.

### 2004

- ◇ Wendy Duncan (Nat) was the first woman to be elected President of the National Party of Western Australia in 2004.

### 2005

- ◇ Lynn MacLaren (GWA) was elected for the South Metropolitan Region on 15 February 2005 to fill a casual vacancy until 22 May 2005 caused by the resignation of Jim Scott (GWA), who unsuccessfully contested the seat of Fremantle in the Legislative Assembly.
- ◇ Cheryl Edwardes (Lib) retired on 26 February 2005.
- ◇ Judith Hughes (ALP) was elected to the seat of Kingsley on 26 February 2005.
- ◇ Christine Sharp (GWA) did not contest a seat in the 2005 election.
- ◇ Dee Margetts (GWA) and Lynn MacLaren (GWA) were defeated at the 2005 election.
- ◇ Shelley Archer (ALP), Sheila Mills (ALP), Helen Morton (Lib), Margaret Rowe (Lib), Sally Talbot (ALP) and Donna Taylor (later Faragher) (Lib) were elected to the Legislative Council on 26 February 2005 for terms commencing 22 May 2005.

### 2007

- ◇ Louise Pratt (ALP) resigned from state parliament on 29 October 2007 and was elected to the Senate for Western Australia at the 24 November 2007 federal election (term began 1 July 2008).

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### 2008

- ◇ Dr Elizabeth Constable was the first female Independent Member to become a Cabinet Minister. She was appointed Minister for Education, Tourism and Women's Interests on 23 September 2008.
- ◇ Carolyn Burton (ALP) and Shelley Eaton (ALP) were elected to the Legislative Council on 17 September 2008 to fill vacancies due to the resignation of Graham Giffard (ALP) and Vincent (Vince) Catania (ALP).
- ◇ Donna Faragher (Lib) became the youngest female minister when she was appointed Minister for the Environment and Youth on 23 September 2008. She was 33 years old.
- ◇ Sue Ellery became the first woman to be Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council when she was appointed on 16 September 2008.

### 2009

- ◇ Adele Carles (GWA) made history when she became the first Greens member of a lower house seat in Australia. She won a by-election for the seat of Fremantle on 16 May 2009 following the retirement of the sitting member, Jim McGinty (ALP).

### 2010

- ◇ Linda Savage (ALP) was elected to the Legislative Council 23 March 2010 after the sudden death of the sitting member, John (Jock) Kilday Ferguson (ALP) on 13 February 2010.
- ◇ Adele Carles (Ind GRN) resigned from the GreensWA on 8 May 2010 and became an Independent Green.

### 2014

- ◇ Elizabeth (Libby) Mettam (Lib) won a by-election for the seat of Vasse on 18 October 2014 following the incumbent, Troy Buswell's (Lib) resignation due to ill health.

### 2015

- ◇ Ljiljana Ravlich (ALP) retired from state parliament on 10 March 2015.

### 2016

- ◇ Laine McDonald (ALP) was elected to the North Metropolitan Region on 11 October 2016 to fill a casual vacancy (to 22 May 2017) caused by the retirement of Ken Travers (ALP).



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### 2017

- ◇ Robyn Clarke (ALP), Emily Hamilton (ALP), Cassandra (Cassie) Rowe (ALP), Jessica Shaw (ALP), Jessica Stojkovski (ALP) and Sabine Winton (ALP) were elected to the Legislative Assembly on 11 March 2017.
- ◇ Cassie Rowe MLA and Samantha Rowe MLC became the first sisters to sit in any house of parliament in Australia, following Cassie's 2017 election. Samantha Rowe was elected to the East Metropolitan region on 5 April 2012 for term commencing 22 May 2013 and was re-elected in 2017.
- ◇ Amber-Jade Sanderson (ALP) was also elected to the Legislative Assembly on 11 March 2017. She was previously an MLC for the East Metropolitan Region from 22 May 2013 to 5 February 2017.
- ◇ Diane Evers (GWA) and Robyn Clarke (ALP) were elected to the Legislative Council on 11 March 2017 for a term commencing on 22 May 2017.
- ◇ Alannah MacTiernan (ALP) was elected to the Legislative Council for the East Metropolitan Region on 11 March 2017 for a term commencing on the 22 May 2017. She was MLC for the East Metropolitan Region from 22 May 1993 to 21 November 1996. Alannah was then MLA for Armadale (Legislative Assembly) from 14 December 1996 until 20 July 2010.
- ◇ Alison Xamon (GWA) was also elected to the Legislative Council for the East Metropolitan Region on 11 March 2017 for a term commencing on the 22 May 2017. She was previously MLC for the East Metropolitan Region from 22 May 2009 to 21 May 2013.
- ◇ Elise Irwin (Lib) was elected to the Legislative Council for the North Metropolitan Region on 4 April 2017 to fill a vacancy due to the resignation of Hon Peter Katsambanis (Lib) on 6 February 2017. She retired on 21 May 2017.
- ◇ Catherine (Kate) Doust MLC became the first woman to be President of the Legislative Council in Western Australia when she was elected on 22 May 2017.
- ◇ Sue Ellery MLC became the first woman to be Leader of the Legislative Council in Western Australia when she was appointed on 17 March 2017.

## Notes

Since 1921, 93 women have been elected to the Parliament of Western Australia.

Names in **bold** represent a sitting member of parliament

## Abbreviations

ALP	Australian Labor Party
Dem	Democrats
GWA	Greens (WA)
Ind	Independent
Ind GRN	Independent Green
Lib	Liberal
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
MLC	Member of the Legislative Council
Nat	National Party of Australia
NCP	National Country Party

## Sources

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Black, David (ed), *The Western Australian Parliamentary Handbook*, 23rd edition, Perth, WA, Parliament of Western Australia, 2014.

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Stevenson, Kinder & Scott Corporate Photography, *Pam Beggs (left) drawing the winning ticket in the instant lottery Superdraw supervised by Wendy Silver of the W.A. Lotteries Commission. Northbridge Festival 88, 5 March 1988* [photograph], State Library of Western Australia, 324807PD.