

Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Ministry

The leader of the largest political party or coalition of parties not in government in the Legislative Assembly is known as the Leader of the Opposition.

History

The term 'Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition' originated in the British Parliament in 1826. This term is rarely used in Australia. The Western Australian Parliament did not officially recognise the position of Leader of the Opposition until 1905. Since 1911 the Leader of the Opposition in Western Australia has been paid a salary equivalent to a minister and has been given special entitlements above those received by a backbench member.

Role

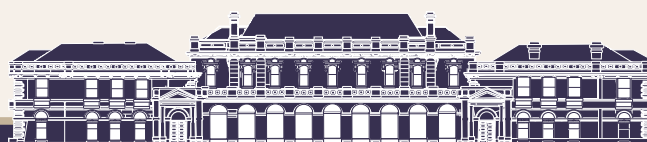
The Leader of the Opposition appoints and coordinates the shadow ministry's scrutiny and questioning of government policies and administration. The opposition is considered to be the alternative government and the leader has an important role in creating alternate policies for the state. The Leader of the Opposition is also often viewed as being the next possible Premier of Western Australia. An Opposition Leader:

- coordinates the scrutiny of government policy and administration;
- formulates alternative policies that are responsible and practical to provide the electorate with an alternative government; and
- can force an election - provided a successful vote of no confidence against the government can be carried in the Legislative Assembly.



Government and opposition separation in the Legislative Assembly chamber

Opposition Leaders rely heavily on the procedures of each house to enhance their role. These procedures include Questions without Notice and Questions on Notice to ministers, budget debates, legislative debates, making speeches on motions (including Matters of Public Interest), and grievance and adjournment debates. Apart from the range of parliamentary procedures, the Leader of the Opposition and shadow ministers also promote their own policies to the public through the media. The Leader of the Opposition in Western Australia has always been a member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA). When the Assembly is in session, the Opposition Leader sits to the Speaker's left, directly opposite the Premier. The Speaker usually affords the Leader of the Opposition the right to ask the first Question without Notice. On other parliamentary procedures the Speaker usually recognises the call of the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition fulfils a vital function in our parliamentary system of government and, in collaboration with the other opposition members, contributes to the preservation of our democracy.



Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Ministry

Leaders of the Opposition since 1971

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| David Brand (Lib) | 3 March 1971 - 5 June 1972 |
| Charles Court (Lib) | 5 June 1972 - 8 April 1974 |
| John Tonkin (ALP) | 8 April 1974 - 15 April 1976 |
| Colin Jamieson (ALP) | 16 April 1976 - 21 Feb 1978 |
| Ron Davies (ALP) | 21 Feb 1978 - 18 Sept 1981 |
| Brian Burke (ALP) | 18 Sept 1981 - 19 Feb 1983 |
| Ray O'Connor (Lib) | 19 Feb 1983 - 15 Feb 1984 |
| Bill Hassell (Lib) | 15 Feb 1984 - 25 Nov 1986 |
| Barry MacKinnon (Lib) | 25 Nov 1986 - 12 May 1992 |
| Richard Court (Lib) | 12 May 1992 - 7 Feb 1993 |
| Carmen Lawrence (ALP) | 16 Feb 1993 - 7 Feb 1994 |
| Ian Taylor (ALP) | 7 Feb 1994 - 12 Oct 1994 |
| James McGinty (ALP) | 12 Oct 1994 - 15 Oct 1996 |
| Geoffrey Gallop (ALP) | 15 Oct 1996 - 16 Feb 2001 |
| Richard Court (Lib) | 16 Feb 2001 - 26 Feb 2001 |
| Colin Barnett (Lib) | 26 Feb 2001 - 9 Mar 2005 |
| Matthew Birney (Lib) | 9 Mar 2005 - 24 Mar 2006 |
| Paul Omodei (Lib) | 24 Mar 2006 - 17 Jan 2008 |
| Troy Buswell (Lib) | 17 Jan 2008 - 6 Aug 2008 |
| Colin Barnett (Lib) | 6 Aug 2008 - 23 Sept 2008 |
| Eric Ripper (ALP) | 23 Sept 2008 - 23 Jan 2012 |
| Mark McGowan (ALP) | 23 Jan 2012 - 17 Mar 2017 |
| Colin Barnett (Lib) | 17 Mar 2017 - 21 Mar 2017 |
| Mike Nahan (Lib) | 21 Mar 2017 - 13 Jun 2019 |
| Liza Harvey (Lib) | 13 Jun 2019 - 24 Nov 2020 |
| Zak Kirkup (Lib) | 24 Nov 2021 - 13 Mar 2021 |
| Mia Davies (Nat) | 19 Apr 2021 - still in office |

Shadow Ministry

The Leader of the Opposition is assisted in fulfilling such a role by the shadow ministry of which he or she is a member. The shadow ministry is composed of the most prominent members of the opposition in the Parliament who are usually given shadow portfolios to match those of the government. Members of the shadow ministry occupy the opposition front benches in both the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council. The shadow ministry is often labeled as the 'alternative government'.

A shadow minister's role is to scrutinise, appraise and criticise a particular government minister, questioning the minister about relevant policy direction and administration, and sometimes integrity issues. Shadow ministry members are the opposition's main spokespeople in Parliament and to the electorate through the media. Unlike ministers, shadow ministers can also serve on parliamentary committees.

In the Western Australian Parliament shadow ministers date back to 1974, but they do not have an official status. Apart from its Leaders, Deputy Leaders and Party Whips, shadow ministers do not receive a salary allowance for their roles, although many are appointed to parliamentary committees for which there is remuneration.

In recent times the shadow ministry has been numerically greater than the Government ministry. Opposition members may be given 'shadow spokesperson' positions including portfolio areas not listed in the government ministry. These extra portfolios may be indicative of the opposition's future policy directions.

