



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
Call no: 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 to-day 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. The only other Western Australian state MPs to serve more than 40 years continuously were Philip Collier MLA (42 years, 11 months and 21 days from 1905 to 1948) and Vernon Hamersley MLC (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 and the longest serving member 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 then a Liberal until 1920 when 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. He was Father of the House from 1921 to 1946.

Vernon Hamersley was born 18 March 1871 in Guildford, Western Australia, the son of Samuel Richard Hamersley, 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. On 6 August 1895 he married Clara Hicks, daughter of Joseph and Rosina Snow at St Peters Church, Beverley, WA. 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. 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, Victoria. On 27 June 1900, he married Ellen Heagney Dunaford, daughter of Edward and Catherine Dunaford. Collier 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. He was a firm 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 as an Australian Labor Party parliamentary leader (19 years) and ALP Premier (nine years). He died on 18 October 1948 in 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



Philip Collier addresses a luncheon party of prospectors at Mt Keith

Photograph by LE Shapcott. Photograph courtesy of the State Library of Western Australia. Call number: 001183D

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 in the Parliament of Western Australia. She is also the longest serving member, having served for 24 years, and is now known as the Mother of the House. On 19 March 1994, Roberts won the seat of Glendalough in a by-election, following the resignation of Dr Carmen Lawrence, former premier of Western Australia. The seat of Glendalough was abolished in 1994 and at the next election on 14 December 1996 she won the seat of Midland which she still holds.

From 2001 to 2005 she was Minister of Police and Emergency Services. After Labor's win at the March 2017 election she was appointed Minister for Police and Road Safety.

Michelle Hopkins Roberts was born in Perth on 29 February 1960 to William and Frances Hopkins. Charles Hopkins, the former Lord

Mayor of Perth is her uncle. 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 was councillor for the City of Perth from 1986 to 1993 and Deputy Mayor for the last two years of her service.



Road Safety Minister Michelle Roberts said "people travelling on our regional roads have just as much right to safe road infrastructure as those in the city".

Photographer:
Ross Swanborough
Photograph courtesy
of **Busselton-
Dunsborough Times**,
28 September 2018

List of longest serving women MPs in WA

| Name | Term | Years | Months | Days |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------|---------|------|
| Roberts, Michelle Hopkins MLA | 1994– | 24 | ongoing | |
| Constable, Elizabeth MLA | 1991–2013 | 21 | 7 | 17 |
| Cardell-Oliver, Florence Gillies MLA | 1936–1956 | 20 | 1 | 23 |
| McAleer, Margaret MLC | 1974–1993 | 18 | 11 | 29 |
| Edwards, Judith Mary MLA | 1990–2008 | 18 | 3 | 11 |
| MacTiernan, Alannah Geraldine Cecilia | 1993–1996 1996–2010 2017– | 18 | ongoing | |
| Ravlich, Ljiljana Maria MLC | 1997–2015 | 17 | 9 | 16 |
| Doust, Catherine Esther MLC | 2001– | 17 | ongoing | |
| Ellery, Suzanne Mary | 2001– | 17 | ongoing | |
| Farina, Adele | 2001– | 17 | ongoing | |
| Quirk, Margaret Mary | 2001– | 17 | ongoing | |
| Watson, Giz | 1997-2013 | 16 | | |
| Edwardes, Cheryl | 1989-2005 | 16 | | |
| Elliott, Lyla Daphne | 1971-1986 | 15 | | |



Portrait of Giz Watson, 21st March, 2012

Unknown photographer

Photograph courtesy of the State Library of Western Australia. Call number: BA2970

“Elizabeth Mary (“Giz”) Watson, born 1957, joined the Greens (WA) Party in 1990 and soon became co-convenor. She ran a building and construction company and in 1992 she became one of only three women to be registered as builders in WA. In 1997 Giz was elected to the Legislative Council as MLC for North Metropolitan region. Giz was the first openly lesbian parliamentarian in Australia and played a key role in lesbian and gay law reform in WA in 2002. She has campaigned on many issues including indigenous rights, social justice, and environmentalism and was inducted into the WA Women’s Hall of Fame in 2011.”

Who is nominated Father or Mother of the House?

Following the British House of Commons tradition, the Father or Mother 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 or Mother of the House.

First Father of the House

In the Parliament of Western Australia, Lancel Victor De Hamel was nominated the first Father of the House. He was the Father of the House in the Legislative Assembly from 9 December 1890 to 3 July 1894. The first Father of the House in the Legislative Council was Sir George Shenton. His term as father lasted from 24 December 1890 to 21 May 1906.



Sir George Shenton, ca. 1900

Image courtesy of the [State Library of Western Australia](#)

Call number: 1905B/10

Shenton was the first Father of the House in the Legislative Council.

Queensland Parliament. She has been referred to as Mother of the House in parliamentary debates but Queensland Parliament does not officially use the term.

First Mother of the House

For the first time in the Parliament of Western Australia there is a Mother of the House in the Legislative Assembly. The Hon Michelle Roberts is the longest serving parliamentarian, following the resignation of the Hon Colin Barnett in 2018. On 5 February 2018 Roberts received the title Mother of the House. It appears that she is the first designated Mother of the House in a lower house of any Australian parliament.

From 1968 to her retirement in 1971, Senator Dame Annabelle Rankin was jointly Father, or Mother, of the Australian Senate with her colleagues Justin O'Byrne and Bert Hendrickson. In the ACT Legislative Assembly Vicki Dunne is the longest serving MP but the parliament has not given her the title Mother of the House. Fiona Simpson was elected as the Member for Maroochydore, Queensland on 19 September 1992. Following the retirement of the Hon Lawrence Springborg in November 2017, Simpson became the longest serving MP in the

Origin of Father of the House

According to the Oxford English Dictionary the 'father of the house' is the longest serving (or sometimes the oldest) member of a society or institution". The expression was originally used to refer to the father of the city eg in 1668 N Hardy in the *Royal Commonwealths Man* referred to the "eldest Alderman upon the bench that had served in the Office of a Lord Mayor, to whom is given that honourable title of the Father of the City". The expression was used in the House of Commons in 1893 as recorded in the **Daily Telegraph** on 8 July: "The Right Hon. C. P. Villiers, M.P., 'Father of the House of Commons', was robbed of his watch on Thursday".

Fathers and Mothers of the House, Legislative Assembly

| Name | Term as Mother/Father |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| De Hamel, Lancel Victor* | 9 December 1890—3 July 1894 |
| Harper, Charles** (first elected December 1890) | 3 July 1894—27 October 1905 |
| Piesse, Frederick Henry (first elected December 1890) | 27 October 1905—26 October 1909 |
| Quinlan, Timothy Francis (first elected April 1897, previously member December 1890–June 1894) | 26 October 1909—3 October 1911 |
| Taylor, George (first elected April 1901) | 3 October 1911—12 April 1930 |
| Troy, Michael Francis (first elected June 1904) | 12 April 1930—18 March 1939 |
| Collier, Philip (first elected October 1905) | 18 March 1939—18 October 1948 |
| Marshall, William Mortimer (first elected March 1921) | 18 October 1948—19 August 1952 |
| North, Charles Frederic John (first elected March 1924) | 19 August 1952—7 April 1956 |
| Sleeman, Joseph Bertram (first elected March 1924) | 7 April 1956—21 March 1959 |
| McLarty, Sir (Duncan) Ross (first elected April 1930) | 21 March 1959—17 May 1962 |
| Hawke, Albert Redvers George (first elected April 1933) | 17 May 1962—23 March 1968 |
| Tonkin, John Trezise (first elected April 1933) | 23 March 1968—19 February 1977 |
| Jamieson, Colin John (first elected February 1953) | 19 February 1977—8 February 1986 |
| Grayden, William Leonard (first elected April 1956, previously member March 1947–October 1949) | 8 February 1986—6 February 1993 |
| Blaikie, Barry Roy (first elected February 1971) | 6 February 1993—14 December 1996 |
| Cowan, Hendy John (first elected March 1974) | 14 December 1996—16 October 2001 |
| Bradshaw, John Leslie (first elected 19 February 1983) | 16 October 2001—26 February 2005 |
| Trenorden, Maxwell Wayne (first elected 8 Feb 1986) | 26 February 2005—6 September 2008 |
| Ripper, Eric Stephen (first elected 19 March 1988) | 6 September 2008—9 March 2013 |
| Barnett, Colin James (first elected 11 August 1990) | 9 March 2013—5 February 2018 |
| Roberts, Michelle Hopkins*** (first elected 19 March 1994) | 5 February 2018— |

*Lancel De Hamel had been a member of the old Legislative Council since 1889.

**Charles Harper had been a member of the old Legislative Council since 1884.

*** Michelle Roberts is the first Mother of the House.

Fathers of the House, Legislative Council

| Name | Term as Father |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Shenton, Sir George* | 24 December 1890—21 May 1906 |
| Hackett, Sir (John) Winthrop (first nominated December 1890, resigned December 1891, re-nominated 8 December 1891) | 22 May 1906—19 February 1916 |
| McLarty, Edward (term commenced July 1894) | 19 February 1916—21 May 1916 |
| Clarke, Ephraim Mayo (term commenced August 1901) | 22 May 1916—15 April 1921 |
| Hamersley, Vernon (term commenced August 1904) | 15 April 1921—24 October 1946 |
| Cornell, James (term commenced May 1912) | 24 October 1946 —25 November 1946 |
| Baxter, Charles Farquharson (term commenced May 1914) | 25 November 1946—2 March 1950 |
| Seddon, Harold (term commenced May 1922) | 2 March 1950—21 May 1954 |
| Fraser, Gilbert (term commenced May 1928) | 22 May 1954—1 November 1958 |
| Heenan, Eric Michael (term commenced May 1936) | 1 November 1958—21 May 1968 |
| Hislop, James Gordon (term commenced November 1941) | 22 May 1968—21 May 1971 |
| Logan, Leslie Arthur (term commenced April 1947) | 22 May 1971 —21 May 1974 |
| Griffith, Sir Arthur Frederick (term commenced June 1953) | 22 May 1974 —21 May 1977 |
| MacKinnon, Graham Charles (term commenced May 1956) | 22 May 1977 —21 May 1986 |
| Griffiths, Clive Edward (term commenced May 1965) | 22 May 1986 —21 May 1997 |
| Moore, Norman Frederick (term commenced May 1977) | 22 May 1997 —21 May 2013 |
| House, Barry John (term commenced October 1987) | 22 May 2013 —21 May 2017 |
| O'Brien, Simon McDonnell (term commenced 22 May 1997) | 21 May 2017 |

*Sir George Shenton had sat continuously in the old Legislative Council since 1875.
There have been no Mothers of the House in the Legislative Council

Sources

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Portrait of Giz Watson, 21st March, 2012, State Library of Western Australia, BA2970

LE Shapcott, *Philip Collier addresses a luncheon party of prospectors at Mt Keith* [photograph] , 1915? State Library of Western Australia, 001183D.

Sir George Shenton, [photograph], 1900, State Library of Western Australia, 1905B/10

Stevenson, Kinder & Scott Corporate Photography, *Premier John Tonkin* [photograph] , 1971, State Library of Western Australia, BA1119/P269.

Ross Swanborough, "Road Safety Minister Michelle Roberts said "people travelling on our regional roads have just as much right to safe road infrastructure as those in the city", [photograph], *Busselton-Dunsborough Times*, 28 September 2018, 12:18pm. Accessed online November 2018: <https://thewest.com.au/news/busselton-dunsborough-times/funds-for-highway-roadwork-ng-b88973863z>