

PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

History Notes: Leaders of the Opposition: Parliament of Western Australia
June 2019. Updated February 2023.



Leaders of the Opposition: Parliament of Western Australia



*"I believe in giving a man
cheap land, cheap money
and plenty of it."*

Sir James Mitchell
Inaugural Speech
Hansard

4 July 1906

Sir James Mitchell at his 80th birthday celebrations given by Premier Frank Wise.
Seated left to right : Unknown, Unknown, Sir Hal Colebatch, Philip Collier, Sir James Mitchell, Premier Frank Wise, Mr J.C. Willcock, Unknown.
Collier, Mitchell and Wise were Leaders of the Opposition between 1917 and 1951.
Photograph courtesy of State Library of Western Australia. Call number: BA1613/89

Since 1905, there have been 37 different Leaders of the Opposition in the Parliament of Western Australia. Some MPs have served as Leader of the Opposition two or three times.

Leaders of the Opposition: Parliament of Western Australia

Leaders of the Opposition from 1905

| Premier and time served | No | Leader of the Opposition and time served | Date appointed | Date of retirement from office |
|---|----|--|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| Cornthwaite Rason (Lib) 25 August 1905 – 7 May 1906 | 1 | Henry Darglish (ALP) Served 1 month, 2 days | 25 August 1905 | 27 September 1905 |
| | 2 | William Dartnell Johnson (ALP) Served 23 days | 4 October 1905 | 27 October 1905 |
| Newton Moore (Min) 7 May 1906 – 14 May 1909 | 3 | Thomas Henry Bath (ALP) Served 4 years, 8 months, 12 days | 22 November 1905 | 3 August 1910 |
| Frank Wilson (Lib) 16 September 1910 – 7 October 1911 | 4 | John Scaddan (ALP) Served 1 year, 2 months, 4 days | 3 August 1910 | 7 October 1911 |
| John Scaddan (ALP) 7 October 1911 – 27 July 1916 | 5 | Frank Wilson (Lib) Served 4 years, 8 months, 26 days | 1 November 1911 | 27 July 1916 |
| Frank Wilson (Lib) 27 July 1916 – 28 June 1917 | 4 | John Scaddan (ALP) Served 12 days | 27 July 1916 | 8 August 1916 |
| | 2 | William Dartnell Johnson (ALP) Served 1 month, 12 days | 19 September 1916 | 31 October 1916 |
| | 4 | John Scaddan (ALP) ¹ Served 5 months, 10 days | 31 October 1916 | c.10 April 1917 |
| Henry Lefroy (Lib) 28 June 1917 – 17 April 1919 | 6 | Philip Collier (ALP) Served 6 years, 11 months, 8 days | 9 May 1917 | 17 April 1924 |
| Hal Colbatch (Lib) 17 April 1919 – 17 May 1919 | | | | |
| Sir James Mitchell (Lib) 17 May 1919 – 15 April 1924 | 7 | Sir James Mitchell (Lib) Served 6 years, 7 days | 17 April 1924 | 24 April 1930 |
| Philip Collier (ALP) 16 April 1924 – 23 April 1930 | | | | |
| Sir James Mitchell (Lib) 24 April 1930 – 24 April 1933 | 6 | Philip Collier (ALP) Served 3 years | 24 April 1930 | 24 April 1933 |

Leaders of the Opposition: Parliament of Western Australia

Leaders of the Opposition from 1905

| Premier and time served | No | Leader of the Opposition and time served | Date appointed | Date of retirement from office |
|--|----|--|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Philip Collier (ALP) 24 April 1933 – 19 August 1936 | 8 | Sir Charles George Latham (CP) Served 9 years, 5 months, 13 days | 24 April 1933 | 7 October 1942 |
| John Willcock (ALP) 20 August 1936 – 31 July 1945 | | | | |
| Frank Wise (ALP) 31 July 1945 – 1 April 1947 | 9 | Arthur Frederick Watts (CP) Served 4 years, 5 months, 24 days | 8 October 1942 | 1 April 1947 |
| Sir Duncan (Ross) McLarty (Nat/Lib) 1 April 1947 – 22 February 1953 | 10 | Frank Joseph Scott Wise (ALP) Served 4 years, 2 months, 25 days | 1 April 1947 | 26 June 1951 |
| | 11 | Albert Redvers George Hawke (ALP) Served 1 year, 7 months, 19 days | 3 July 1951 | 22 February 1953 |
| Albert Hawke (ALP) 23 February 1953 – 2 April 1959 | 12 | Sir (Duncan) Ross McLarty (Lib) Served 4 years, 4 months, 6 days | 23 February 1953 | 1 March 1957 |
| | 13 | David Brand (Lib) Served 2 years, 1 month | 1 March 1957 | 1 April 1959 |
| David Brand (Lib) 2 April 1959 – 3 March 1971 | 11 | Albert Redvers George Hawke (ALP) Served 7 years, 8 months, 29 days | 2 April 1959 | 31 December 1966 |
| | 14 | John Trezise Tonkin (ALP) Served 4 years, 2 months, 1 day | 1 January 1967 | 2 March 1971 |
| John Tonkin (ALP) 3 March 1971 – 8 April 1974 | 13 | Sir David Brand (Lib) Served 1 year, 3 months, 2 days | 3 March 1971 | 5 June 1972 |
| | 15 | Sir Charles Walter Michael Court (Lib) Served 1 year, 10 months, 3 days | 5 June 1972 | 8 April 1974 |
| Sir Charles Court (Lib) 9 April 1974 – 25 January 1982 | 14 | John Trezise Tonkin (ALP) Served 2 years, 7 days | 8 April 1974 | 15 April 1976 |
| | 16 | Colin John Jamieson (ALP) Served 1 year, 10 months, 5 days | 16 April 1976 | 21 February 1978 |
| | 17 | Ronald Davies (ALP) Served 3 years, 6 months, 28 days | 21 February 1978 | 18 September 1981 |

Leaders of the Opposition: Parliament of Western Australia

Leaders of the Opposition from 1905

| Premier and time served | No | Leader of the Opposition and time served | Date appointed | Date of retirement from office |
|--|----|--|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| Raymond O'Connor (Lib) 25 January 1982 – 25 February 1983 | 18 | Brian Thomas Burke (ALP) Served 1 year, 5 months, 1 day | 18 September 1981 | 19 February 1983 |
| Brian Burke (ALP) 25 February 1983 – 25 February 1988 | 19 | Raymond James O'Connor (Lib) Served 11 months, 27 days | 19 February 1983 | 15 February 1984 |
| | 20 | William Ralph Boucher Hassell (Lib) Served 2 years, 9 months, 10 days | 15 February 1984 | 25 November 1986 |
| Peter Dowding (ALP) 25 February 1988 – 12 February 1990 | 21 | Barry John MacKinnon (Lib) Served 6 years, 5 months, 17 days | 25 November 1986 | 12 May 1992 |
| Carmen Lawrence (ALP) 12 February 1990 – 16 February 1993 | | | | |
| Carmen Lawrence (ALP) 12 February 1990 – 16 February 1993 | 22 | Richard Fairfax Court (Lib) Served 9 months, 4 days | 12 May 1992 | 6 February 1993 |
| Richard Court (Lib) 16 February 1993 – 16 February 2001 | 23 | Carmen Mary Lawrence (ALP) Served 11 months, 22 days | 16 February 1993 | 7 February 1994 |
| | 24 | Ian Frederick Taylor (ALP) Served 10 months, 5 days | 7 February 1994 | 12 October 1994 |
| | 25 | James (Jim) Andrew McGinty (ALP) Served 2 years, 3 days | 12 October 1994 | 15 October 1996 |
| | 26 | Geoffrey (Geoff) Ian Gallop (ALP) Served 4 years, 4 months, 1 day | 15 October 1996 | 16 February 2001 |
| Geoff Gallop (ALP) 16 February 2001 – 25 January 2006 | 22 | Richard Fairfax Court (Lib) Served 10 days Resigned as MLA 27 April 2001 | 16 February 2001 | 26 February 2001 |
| | 27 | Colin James Barnett (Lib) Served 4 years, 11 months | 26 February 2001 | 9 March 2005 |

Leaders of the Opposition: Parliament of Western Australia

Leaders of the Opposition from 1905

| Premier and time served | No | Leader of the Opposition and time served | Date appointed | Date of retirement from office |
|---|----|--|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| Alan Carpenter (ALP) 26 January 2006 – 23 September 2008 | 28 | Matthew (Matt) John Birney (Lib) Served 1 years, 15 days | 9 March 2005 | 24 March 2006 |
| | 29 | Paul Domenic Omodei (Lib) Served 1 year, 9 months, 24 days | 24 March 2006 | 17 January 2008 |
| | 30 | Troy Raymond Buswell (Lib) Served 6 months, 18 days | 17 January 2008 | 4 August 2008 |
| | 27 | Colin James Barnett (Lib) Served 1 month, 19 days | 4 August 2008 | 23 September 2008 |
| Colin Barnett (Lib) 23 September 2008 – 17 March 2017 | 31 | Eric Stephen Ripper (ALP) Served 3 years, 3 months, 28 days | 26 September 2008 | 23 January 2012 |
| | 32 | Mark McGowan (ALP) Served 5 years, 1 month, 22 days | 23 January 2012 | 17 March 2017 |
| Mark McGowan (ALP) 17 March 2017 – | 33 | Dr Michael (Mike) Nahan (Lib) Served 2 years, 2 months, 27 days | 17 March 2017 | 13 June 2019 |
| | 34 | Liza Mary Harvey (Lib) Served 1 year, 5 month, 11 days | 13 June 2019 | 24 November 2020 |
| | 35 | Zak Richard Francis Kirkup (Lib) Served 3 months and 17 days | 24 November 2020 | 13 March 2021 |
| | 36 | Mia Jane Davies (Nat) Served 1 year, 9 months, 16 days | 14 April 2021 | 30 January 2023 |
| | 37 | Ronald Shane Love (Nat) | 30 January 2023 | |

Notes

1. Scaddan resigned his seat of Brownhill-Ivanhoe on 8 August 1916 to contest a ministerial by-election for Canning. After being defeated for Canning, he was re-elected for Brownhill-Ivanhoe on 7 October 1916 and as Leader of the Opposition on 31 October 1916. In April 1917, Scaddan left the Labor Party and subsequently the position of Leader of the Opposition was declared vacant.

Abbreviations

| | |
|-----|--|
| ALP | Australian Labor Party |
| CP | Country Party |
| Lib | Liberal Party |
| Min | Ministerialist |
| Nat | National Party of Australia (Nationals WA) |

Sources

D Black, (ed), *The Western Australian Parliamentary Handbook: Twenty-Fourth Edition*, Parliament of Western Australia, Perth, WA, 2018.

Parliament of Western Australia website. [Current Members](#). Accessed online 10 December 2018.

Parliamentary debates, Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly, Government Printer, Perth WA, 1890-2017.

Sir James Mitchell at his 80th birthday celebrations given by Premier Frank Wise, [photograph], State Library of Western Australia, BA1613/89, 1945.