

# Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

## History

The role of the Speaker is an ancient and important office of the Westminster parliamentary system. The first person to be called the Speaker of the House of Commons was appointed in 1377. The name Speaker dates from a time when the House of Commons<sup>1</sup> was only allowed to address humble petitions to the Crown through its appointed spokesman, the Speaker. The procedure of the House of Commons revolved around talking until the opinion of the majority was discovered. Once the majority opinion was agreed on, the Speaker was sent to express it to the Crown. At least nine British Speakers are known to have died a violent death because the monarch did not want to hear what the Speaker had to say or agents of disgruntled barons and lords carried out similar persecution. The position of Sergeant-at-Arms was created in order to protect the Speaker from harm.



Speaker's location in the Legislative Assembly Chamber

## Role

The Speaker is the Presiding Officer of the Legislative Assembly and is elected by members of that chamber in a secret ballot (if multiple

<sup>1</sup> The lower house of the British Parliament.

nominations) at the beginning of each parliamentary term. The role of the Speaker is to:

- uphold the traditions, powers, and privileges of the Legislative Assembly;
- regulate debate and ensure that proceedings are carried out in accordance with the Standing Orders and customs of the house;
- call on members who wish to speak or ask a parliamentary question without notice, decide on points of order, and give rulings;
- give guidance to members of the Legislative Assembly in respect of their general behaviour, language and dress;
- exercise, on behalf of the Legislative Assembly, control over the behaviour of public gallery visitors in order to ensure that the proceedings are not interrupted;
- not take part in debates (except on rare occasions). The Speaker does not normally vote, but does have a casting vote in the event that numbers in a division are equal; and
- represent the Legislative Assembly at official functions and exercise overall responsibility for the operations of Parliament House together with the President of the Legislative Council.

Traditionally, Speakers have worn a wig and gown as part of the regalia of office. There has been no resolution concerning the extent to which such regalia should be retained or discarded. Recently, the tendency has been for Speakers to not wear the full regalia. In the absence of the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker performs the duties and exercises the authority of the Speaker.

Between 2001 and 2008 Ms Dianne Guise, MLA, held the position of Deputy Speaker. She was the first woman to hold the position.





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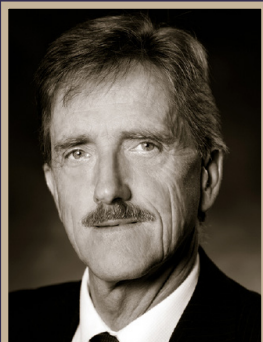
## The most recent Speakers of the Legislative Assembly of Western Australia



George Strickland



Fredrick (Fred) Riebeling



Grant Woodhams



Michael Sutherland



Peter Watson

### Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

Sir James George Lee Steere, KCMG

Charles Harper

Mathieson Harry Jacoby

Timothy Francis Quinlan

Michael Francis Troy

Edward Bertram Johnston

James Gardiner

George Taylor

Thomas Walker

Sydney Stubbs

Alexander Hugh Panton, CMG

William Dartnell Johnston

Joseph Bertram Sleeman

Charles Frederic John North

Aloysius Joseph Rodoreda

James Hegney

John Merrifield Hearman, CMG

Hugh Norman Guthrie

John Mervin Toms

Daniel Norton

(Sir) Ross Hutchinson, DFC

Ian David Thompson

John Joseph Harman

Michael Barnett

James George Clarko

George Joseph Strickland

Fredrick Riebeling

Grant Allen Woodhams

Michael William Sutherland

Peter Bruce Watson

### Period of Office

30 December 1890 - 30 November 1903

2 December 1903 - 27 July 1904

28 July 1904 - 27 October 1905

23 November 1905 - 8 October 1911

1 November 1911 - 13 February 1917

13 February 1917 - 1 March 1917

1 March 1917 - 28 June 1917

19 July 1917 - 23 July 1924

24 July 1924 - 29 July 1930

30 July 1930 - 17 July 1933

18 July 1933 - 24 March 1938

4 August 1938 - 2 August 1939

3 August 1939 - 31 July 1947

31 July 1947 - 5 August 1953

6 August 1953 - 1 August 1956

2 August 1956 - 29 June 1959

30 June 1959 - 23 March 1968

25 July 1968 - 20 February 1971

15 July 1971 - 8 October 1971

16 November 1971 - 30 March 1974

22 May 1974 - 19 February 1977

24 May 1977 - 21 March 1983

22 March 1983 - 8 February 1986

10 June 1986 - 17 June 1993

17 June 1993 - 14 December 1996

6 March 1997 - 10 February 2001

1 May 2001 - 7 September 2008

6 November 2008 - 9 March 2013

11 April 2013 - 11 May 2017

11 May 2017 - still in office

