

PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

History Notes: Leaders of the Opposition: Parliament of Western Australia  
June 2019. Updated May 2021



# 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 36 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	6	John Scaddan (ALP) Served 12 days	27 July 1916	8 August 1916
	7	William Dartnell Johnson (ALP) Served 1 month, 12 days	19 September 1916	31 October 1916
	8	John Scaddan (ALP) <sup>1</sup> Served 5 months, 10 days	31 October 1916	c.10 April 1917
Henry Lefroy (Lib) 28 June 1917 – 17 April 1919	9	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				
Philip Collier (ALP) 16 April 1924 – 23 April 1930	10	Sir James Mitchell (Lib) Served 6 years, 7 days	17 April 1924	24 April 1930
Sir James Mitchell (Lib) 24 April 1930 – 24 April 1933	11	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	12	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	13	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	14	Frank Joseph Scott Wise (ALP) Served 4 years, 2 months, 25 days	1 April 1947	26 June 1951
	15	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	16	Sir (Duncan) Ross McLarty (Lib) Served 4 years, 4 months, 6 days	23 February 1953	1 March 1957
	17	David Brand (Lib) Served 2 years, 1 month	1 March 1957	1 April 1959
David Brand (Lib) 2 April 1959 – 3 March 1971	18	Albert Redvers George Hawke (ALP) Served 7 years, 8 months, 29 days	2 April 1959	31 December 1966
	19	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	20	Sir David Brand (Lib) Served 1 year, 3 months, 2 days	3 March 1971	5 June 1972
	21	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	22	John Trezise Tonkin (ALP) Served 2 years, 7 days	8 April 1974	15 April 1976
	23	Colin John Jamieson (ALP) Served 1 year, 10 months, 5 days	16 April 1976	21 February 1978
	24	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	25	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	26	Raymond James O'Connor (Lib) Served 11 months, 27 days	19 February 1983	15 February 1984
	27	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	28	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	29	Richard Fairfax Court (Lib) Served 9 months, 4 days	12 May 1992	6 February 1993
Richard Court (Lib) 16 February 1993 – 16 February 2001	30	Carmen Mary Lawrence (ALP) Served 11 months, 22 days	16 February 1993	7 February 1994
	31	Ian Frederick Taylor (ALP) Served 10 months, 5 days	7 February 1994	12 October 1994
	32	James (Jim) Andrew McGinty (ALP) Served 2 years, 3 days	12 October 1994	15 October 1996
	33	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	34	Richard Fairfax Court (Lib) Served 10 days Resigned as MLA 27 April 2001	16 February 2001	26 February 2001
	35	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	36	Matthew (Matt) John Birney (Lib) Served 1 years, 15 days	9 March 2005	24 March 2006
	37	Paul Domenic Omodei (Lib) Served 1 year, 9 months, 24 days	24 March 2006	17 January 2008
	38	Troy Raymond Buswell (Lib) Served 6 months, 18 days	17 January 2008	4 August 2008
	39	Colin James Barnett (Lib) Served 1 month, 19 days	4 August 2008	23 September 2008
Colin Barnett (Lib) 23 September 2008 – 17 March 2017	40	Eric Stephen Ripper (ALP) Served 3 years, 3 months, 28 days	26 September 2008	23 January 2012
	41	Mark McGowan (ALP) Served 5 years, 1 month, 22 days	23 January 2012	17 March 2017
Mark McGowan (ALP) 17 March 2017 –	42	Dr Michael (Mike) Nahan (Lib) Served 2 years, 2 months, 27 days	17 March 2017	13 June 2019
	43	Liza Mary Harvey (Lib) Served 1 year, 5 month, 11 days	13 June 2019	24 November 2020
	44	Zak Richard Francis Kirkup (Lib) Served 3 months and 17 days	24 November 2020	13 March 2021
	45	Mia Jane Davies (Nat)	14 April 2021	

## 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.