



Government of Western Australia
Department of the Premier and Cabinet

History of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet

1829 – 2012



On 18 June 1829, Western Australia was proclaimed a British Colony. Laws were made by the Governor and nominated officials, subject to the British Parliament's authority.

The First Parliament

1870

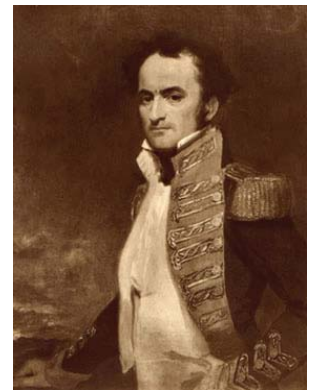
Representative government was achieved in 1870, with the election of 12 members to the Legislative Council of Western Australia.

1890

It was not until October 1890 that the Western Australian *Constitution Act 1889* was proclaimed.

The Constitution set up a Parliament of two Houses – the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly, with full powers to make laws for the State.

The Governor was replaced as the Chief Executive Officer of the Colony by the Premier, John Forrest, and Cabinet became responsible to Parliament.



*Captain James Stirling,
the Colony's first
Governor*



*The first bicameral Parliament of Western Australia. Members
of the first Legislative Assembly, elected 1890.*

Creation of the Premier's Department

1898

A submission made to Premier Forrest by his Secretary and Clerk of the Executive Council, Frederic D North, initiated the creation of the Premier's Department; the forerunner to what is now known as the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

The Department of the Premier and Cabinet was initially established in 1898 as a sub-department of the Treasury. Apart from the Under Secretary, Mr North, the staff had been transferred from the Treasury and the Department of the Colonial Secretary. The four staff members provided secretarial and administrative assistance to the Premier, Executive Council and State Cabinet.

The newly-created Premier's Department was initially located in the Government Building on the corner of Barrack Street and St Georges Terrace, Perth. This site was also known as the Treasury Buildings and, later, Central Government Buildings.



The Forrest Ministry



The establishment of the Department was not without controversy. It was argued that because the position of Premier was a courtesy title bestowed by Parliament and not the Constitution, there was no authority to establish a Premier's Department. There was also some argument against allowing office staff exposure to confidential matters.

In justifying the creation of the Department, Premier Forrest cited the need for staff to handle interviews with those people who came to see him and process the volume of correspondence that required his attention. As greater demands were made upon his time, the Premier's Department was an administrative necessity.

In the period between 1890, when Western Australia was granted responsible self-government, and Federation occurred in 1901, the state affairs requiring the attention of the Premier and his Ministers grew dramatically. The gold discoveries and the associated arrival of people into Western Australia; the Government's capital works program; and the legislative program were just some of the matters that required attention. Premier Forrest was also required to attend the Federation Conventions arranged by the Australian Colonies.

Early Years

1901

In July, the Premier's Department was moved to the Attorney General's department because the Premier, who was also Attorney General, had not included the Treasury in his portfolio.

1902

The Colonial Secretary's Department became part of the Premier's Department and Mr North was appointed Under Secretary of the Colonial Secretary's Department. Consequently, Mr A C Kessell took over as Secretary to the Premier. He remained with the Department until early 1914, when he left to take up the post of Official Secretary at the Western Australian Agent General's Office in London. Mr Kessell was replaced as Secretary to the Premier by Mr L E Shapcott.

1903

In August, the Premier's Department was retitled the Premier's Office.

Between 1903 and 1906, the Office was administered in the portfolio of the Premier of the day and, during this time, was moved to the Department of the Colonial Treasurer and Minister for Education, and then to the Department of the Colonial Treasurer and the Minister for Justice.



Premier's Department circa 1900

1965

Mr Doig remained with the Department until 1965 when he was appointed Commissioner of the State Public Service. He was succeeded as Under Secretary, Premier's Department, by Mr W S Lonnie, who had previously been the Director of the Civil Defence and Emergency Service of Western Australia.

1967

In July, the Premier's Department (as the Premier's Office had been renamed) and the Executive Council moved from the Treasury Buildings to a new location in the May Holman Centre (previously Superannuation Building), at 32 St Georges Terrace, Perth.

1974

When Under Secretary Lonnie retired in May 1974, the vacated position was shared in an acting capacity by Mr F P Knight and Mr R D Davies until July 1975, when Mr Davies was formally appointed as Under Secretary. He remained with the Department until his retirement in 1983.

1983

Following the election, the Premier's Department underwent significant restructuring and was retitled the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

The aims of the restructure were to:

- » reduce delays associated with major government decisions
- » improve the efficiency and standard of government services
- » coordinate and evaluate the implementation of government policy
- » ensure Cabinet is fully informed on the implications and impact of policy proposals;
- » increase consultation in the decision-making process.

In the same year, the title of the Permanent Head was upgraded to Director General and Mr B J Beggs, the Conservator of Forests at the time, was appointed to the position in March of that year. When he retired in June 1985 he was succeeded by Mr D G Blight, who had previously held senior positions in the Public Service Board.

1984

The Department moved to Governor Stirling Tower, located at 197 St Georges Terrace, Perth.



Governor Stirling Tower

1987

The Department was again restructured and became known as the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet. The restructuring created two sub-departments - the Department of the Premier, with Gordon Pearce as Chief Executive, and the Department of the Cabinet, with Kevin Edwards as Chief Executive.

The reorganisation enhanced the Department's ability to respond quickly to the requirements of the Premier and Western Australian Government. Divisional responsibilities became more clearly streamlined, and objectives and strategies were redefined in separate corporate plans of the Department.

The Ministry of the Premier and State Administration was created to support the Premier in carrying out his responsibilities as Head of Government and to ensure that matters of state administration, delegated by the Premier, were managed efficiently.

The Ministry of the Cabinet and Public Sector Management was also created in this process, to carry out new policy initiatives in the public sector.

1989

Two years later, a Government policy initiative resulted in further restructuring.

1990

The amalgamation of the Ministry of the Premier and State Administration with the Ministry of the Cabinet and Public Sector Management occurred. It became known as the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet, once more.

The aim was to increase efficiency by streamlining operations and eliminating duplication of effort, while placing greater emphasis on social policy and the impact of government programs on Western Australian families.

Mr Blight was reappointed Director General for a second five-year term, on 2 May 1990.

1995

Mr Blight was appointed to the position of Public Sector Standards Commissioner and the position of Director General was then occupied in an acting capacity by the former Chief Executive of the Public Sector Management Office, Mr John Pritchard. He subsequently became Director General in June 1996.



Perth foreshore 1990s

1997

Mr Pritchard retired as Director General and was replaced by Mr Mal Wauchope, who was previously Chief Executive of the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet's Office of State Administration. He had also held senior positions with the Treasury Department.

In addition to being Director General, Mr Wauchope was Clerk of the Executive Council, and the State Representative on the Council for the Order of Australia.

Following Mr Wauchope's appointment as the head of the Ministry, a high-level functional review was undertaken to determine its key focus and core business. Particular regard was given to determining which of the Ministry's functions:

- » should continue to be performed by the Ministry
- » could be performed by other agencies, and/or
- » did not need to be undertaken by government, at all.

The major outcomes from the review were:

- » the number of direct reports to the Premier were reduced from seven to two
- » the Government Property Office was transferred to the Treasury Department
- » an internal working party was established to determine the structure and composition of a newly formed Public Sector Management Division
- » external consultants were appointed to review the service performance of the Corporate and Business Services Division
- » a position of Deputy Director General was created
- » Assistant Director General positions were created to assist the Director General and Deputy Director General, and to manage the activities of key functions within the Department.

2001

With the new Government came a number of internal changes to the Department.

One of the first actions of the newly elected Government was to establish the Machinery of Government Taskforce, to review the structure of the public sector and recommend a package of reform proposals. The Ministry provided the Taskforce with both executive and administrative support and continued to provide a major advisory and coordinating role during the implementation phase.

The review reduced the number of Government departments from 46 to 21.

During 2001 and 2002, a number of new services were created within, or added to, the Department including the:

- » Physical Activity Taskforce (Be Active WA)
- » Office of Multicultural Interests (now with the Department of Local Government)
- » Office of Science and Innovation (now with the Department of Commerce)
- » Office of Road Safety (now with Main Roads WA)
- » Office of E-Government (now defunct)
- » creation of the Middle East Trade Office in Dubai.

During this period, the Premier launched the first 'Harmony Day', organised by the Office for Multicultural Interests. The Office of Science and Innovation also took part in a successful bid for a major research grant for the International Square Kilometre Array (SKA) radio telescope.

The Department coordinated the preparation of a number of important sustainability strategies, including the *State Water Strategy* and *Focus on the Future: The Western Australian State Sustainability Strategy: Consultation Draft*. Extensive public consultation was undertaken in the development of both strategies.

The Functional Review Taskforce, established to undertake the *Review of the Effective Delivery of Government Priorities*, reported its findings in December 2002. The recommendations endorsed by Cabinet included a number of Whole-of-Government measures to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the public sector.

The Department of the Premier and Cabinet played an important role in this process, with the Director General sitting as Chair of the Strategic Management Council. Implementation of a number of the reforms commenced during the year, with the Department playing a key role in their coordination and implementation.



The logo for the 175th Anniversary of the establishment of the Swan River Colony

175th Anniversary

2004

2004 marked the 175th Anniversary of the establishment of the Swan River Colony (later called the State of Western Australia). The Department and the Constitutional Centre of Western Australia organised a number of events throughout the year to commemorate this stage in Western Australia's history.

The logo for the 175th Anniversary incorporated the state emblem, the black swan; with colour elements depicting the brown of the land, the green of the environment and the blue of the water.

Other highlights of 2004 included:

- » The opening of the Migrant Wall in Fremantle Fishing Boat Harbour. Fremantle Harbour played a key role in the rich multicultural society that we are today, as the primary gateway for thousands of migrants entering Western Australia. The Wall features the names of individual migrants and families who have come to Western Australia through the port.
- » The construction of the Bali Memorial in Kings Park. The Memorial was built in Kings Park to commemorate those Western Australians who died, or were injured in the Bali bombing incident of 12 October 2002, and to acknowledge those who provided support following the incident. Following extensive consultation with families, key stakeholders and the public, a final design for the Memorial was chosen.
- » The reconstruction of the State War Memorial in Kings Park. The reconstruction was carried out as part of the 175th anniversary and involved careful restoration of the monument and the water-damaged undercroft.
- » The creation of the Small Grants Scheme for War Memorials and Honour Rolls. The Small Grants Scheme was implemented to assist with the refurbishment and restoration of 38 dilapidated War Memorials and Honour Rolls across Western Australia.

2005

The diversity of the Department's operations were demonstrated by several achievements during the period including:

- » provision of advice and support to the Premier on security and emergency management-related issues relevant to Western Australia, including the State response to the Boxing Day Tsunami
- » arranging hospitality, ceremonial and special events, such as the State Reception for His Royal Highness Prince Charles, The Prince of Wales, in 2005
- » the opening of the Office of Shared Services during July 2005. The Office of Shared Services was the result of the earlier Functional Review Taskforce and Implementation Team projects.

2005 also saw the Office of Development Approvals Coordination established within the Department of the Premier and the Cabinet, as a Government initiative to improve approval processes for industrial and resource development projects.

A New Premier Sworn In

2006

2006 began with significant change as Premier Gallop unexpectedly announced his retirement in January.

The Hon Alan Carpenter MLA was sworn in as the new Premier and several Ministerial portfolio changes also followed. The transition period also saw Cabinet endorse a decision to transfer several Departmental functions out of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet to other agencies, by mid-2006.

The Office of Science and Innovation was moved to the Department of Industry and Resources.

The Office of Native Title was moved to the Department of Treasury and Finance.

The Office of Multicultural Interests was moved to the Department for Communities.

The Office of Crime Prevention was transferred largely to the Western Australian Police Service in July, with remaining elements moving to the Department of Community Development.

The Physical Activity Taskforce was moved to the Department of Sport and Recreation.

The Office of Water Strategy went to the Department of Water.

Elements of the Policy Division were moved to various other government departments.

2006 also saw the establishment of the Office of the Special Advisor on Indigenous Affairs, with the appointment of the former Western Australian Governor, Lieutenant General John Sanderson AC, to the office.

2006 was a year of significant change for the Department, which saw a reduction in staff numbers by 112 full-time equivalent staff and a reduction in budget by \$137 million.



Perth City, 2006

2007

2007 saw responsibility for the Office of Shared Services transferred to the Department of Treasury and Finance.

This was also the year that the Western Australian Government office in Canberra was established, to represent more closely the interests of the State to its Federal counterpart.

In the wake of Corruption and Crime Commission hearings, the Department established the Government's Register of Lobbyists.

A New Government

2008

September 2008 saw a new Government sworn in, following the general election, under the leadership of the Hon Colin Barnett MLA.

One of the first actions of the Premier was to establish the Public Sector Commission (PSC).

The Commission, headed by the Public Sector Commissioner, operates independently from Government. The purpose of PSC is to enhance the integrity, professionalism and independence of Western Australia's Public Sector. After 11 years as Director General of the Department, Mr Wauchope was appointed to the position of Public Sector Commissioner.

The PSC was created from a merger of the Public Sector Management Division and the Office of the Public Sector Standards Commissioner. This meant the Department lost part of its resources and, under the new Director General, Mr Peter Conran AM, developed a new focus on policy and providing support services to the Premier and Cabinet.

Mr Conran, together with a few senior officers of the Department, were also appointed as Clerks to the Executive Council.

2009

Further streamlining of the Department's functions occurred from 1 January 2009 with the transfer of the Office of Developmental Approvals Coordination to the Department of State Development, and the transfer of the Office of Road Safety to Main Roads Western Australia.



*Current Director General,
Mr Peter Conran AM*

The Move To Dumas House

2012

In 2011, Premier Barnett announced that the heritage-listed Hale House would be refurbished as part of a move to take advantage of State Government-owned property near Parliament House. The building would become home to a purpose-built Office of the Premier, State Cabinet meeting room, and the Cabinet Secretariat.

It was also announced that the Department of the Premier and Cabinet would relocate from Governor Stirling Tower to Dumas House, in West Perth. For the majority of the Department, this occurred in the final half of 2012

