

Parliament and Government in Queensland



Primary

Information booklet for primary schools



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Parliament House
Brisbane Qld 4000

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QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENT

A Short History

The Queensland Parliament is based on the British system of government called the Westminster system, which evolved over many centuries. The term 'Westminster' refers to the Palace of Westminster (now the Houses of Parliament, London) which was once the residence of the King. The Palace was where members of the Church and nobility, and at a later date commoners, were called to attend 'parleys' (discussions) with the King.

Eventually, these discussions were formalised into a Parliament with two Houses. The term 'parliament' is derived from the old French word 'parlement' (speaking). The two groups of advisers to the King were represented in the Parliament - the House of Lords (also called the Upper House) represented members of the Church and the nobility and the House of Commons (also called the Lower House) represented the commoners. Based on Westminster tradition, Upper Houses usually have a red floor, and Lower Houses have a Green Floor.

Between 27 April and 11 May 1860, the first election was held in the Colony of Queensland to elect Members of Queensland's first Parliament. Twenty-six were Members elected to the Legislative Assembly (the Lower House) and 15 Members were appointed by the Governor to the Legislative Council (the Upper House).

Members of the First Queensland Parliament were summoned by the Governor to meet in Brisbane on the 22 May 1860, in the Old Prisoners' Barracks. This date was significant because it also marked the anniversary of Captain Cook's charting of Moreton Bay.

Robert Herbert was elected as the Member for the electoral district of Leichhardt and from May 1860 until February 1866 served as Queensland's first Premier. Other firsts were:

- First Speaker of the Legislative Assembly - Mr Gilbert Elliott
- First President of the Legislative Council - Sir Charles Nicholson
- First Clerk of the Parliament - Mr Lewis Adolphus Bernays

In 1863, the site for Queensland's first Parliament House was chosen and an architectural competition was held throughout Australia for a design. Charles Tiffin, Queensland's Colonial Architect won the competition with his design and in July 1865, the foundation stone of Parliament House was laid.

On 4 August 1868, Members of the Queensland Parliament met for the official opening of Parliament House. It was regarded by all as the finest building in Queensland.



Houses of Parliament, Westminster, London



Workmen at the front of Parliament House, Brisbane, circa 1870

Structure of the Queensland Parliament

The Queensland Parliament consists of the Sovereign, who is represented by the Governor, and the Legislative Assembly, which has 93 Members representing 93 electorates.

For more information about the structure of the Queensland Parliament go to:

>> [Factsheet 3.3 Queensland Parliament Structure and Functions](#)

>> [Activity: Research Activity](#)



What does a Member of Parliament do?

Your local member performs many different roles. He or she works both in their electorate and also in the parliament.

Members of parliament:

- represent the people of their electorate (known as constituents);
- assist constituents with their problems and their interactions with the government;
- speak out about the issues in their electorate;
- propose new laws and amendments to existing laws and vote on the passage of laws through parliament;
- keep a close watch on what the government does and how it spends taxpayers' money;
- speak in debates in the parliament;
- provide interviews to the media; and
- if they are a member of a political party, take part in party decisions.

Some members also work on parliamentary committees, which examine the government's actions in detail and recommend alternative ways of doing things. Up to 19 of the 93 members may be ministers.

For more information about the role of a member of Parliament see:

>> [Factsheet 3.17 The Role of a Member of Parliament](#)

>> [Activity: Who is my Member](#)

Sovereign: a King or Queen

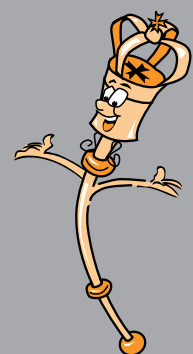
Constitution: a basic set of rules by which a State or country is governed

Royal Assent: When a Bill is passed in Parliament, the Governor will then sign the Bill on behalf of the Sovereign, thus giving Royal Assent to the Bill. The Bill then becomes an Act of Parliament and therefore a law of the land.

Not all Members of Parliament are members of a political party. Those Members who do not belong to a political party are known as **Independent Members**.

MP: Member of Parliament

Constituents: all the people who live in an electorate and are represented by a Member of Parliament in our State Parliament.



WHAT DOES THE QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENT DO?

The Parliament:

- provides the Government of the day,
- represents the people of Queensland,
- makes or amends laws for 'the welfare, peace and good government of the State',
- grants money to the Government to govern, and
- looks at the policies and actions of the Government.

>> [Activity: The Functions of Parliament](#)

Providing the Government of the day

Following a State election, the Governor will call upon the party or coalition of parties with the majority of elected representatives, to form a Government. With 93 seats in our Parliament, a party or coalition of parties needs at least 47 seats to have a majority (the greatest number) in the Legislative Assembly and form a Government.

Members of Parliament who are not members of the party with the majority of seats are known as non-Government Members. They include Opposition Members, Members of minority parties and Independent Members.

For information on the make up of the current Parliament and to view the current seating plan see:

>> [Factsheet 3.4 - Seating Plan](#)

>> [Activity: Who's Who - Where do Members Sit?](#)

>> [Activity: Who's Who - Where do Members Sit? Answer Sheet](#)



Legislative Assembly Chamber

Representing the people of Queensland

The State of Queensland is divided into 93 defined areas called electorates and these 93 electorates each have a name, eg the Electorate of Stafford or the Electorate of Gregory.

Each electorate is represented in the Queensland Parliament by one Member of Parliament, elected in the State elections which are held every three years, eg the Member for Stafford or the Member for Gregory.

Each electorate has a similar number of voters (approximately 35,000). There is naturally some difference in the number of voters in the more sparsely populated electorates of our State, compared with our urban electorates. For example, the electorate of Gregory, although one of the largest in size has approximately 24,500 voters, whilst the electorate of Bulimba in Brisbane has approximately 38,500 voters.

For information about political representation and political parties see:

>> [Factsheet 7.6 - Political Representation](#)

Petitions

Petitioning is one of the traditional forms by which citizens can make direct requests to the Parliament. A petition is a formal request signed by at least one person and placed before the Parliament with the intention of persuading the Parliament to take some particular course of action. For example, a petition may request the alteration of the general law or the re-consideration of some administrative decision. There are two types of petitions:

- e-petitions
- paper petitions

e-petitions: The Parliament introduced on-line petitioning in 2002. The petitions submitted in an electronic format are referred to as e-petitions. An e-petition does not replace a paper petition. Some people may opt to run both an e-petition and a paper petition in order to reach the widest audience.

Paper Petitions: The paper petition is essentially the same paper petition process that has been operating in Queensland for over 140 years. It involves a paper petition being circulated in the community for signatures and then lodged by a Member of Parliament.

>> Activity: [Petitions and petitioners worksheet](#)

Making or amending laws for the welfare, peace and good government of the State

The role of the Government is to introduce new laws and make changes to some of the old laws so that the laws Queenslanders are governed by are sensible, and will protect and help them. For example, in 1992, the Queensland Parliament passed a law which stated that:

Safety helmets for users of bicycles—

A person who—

- a) rides a bicycle, tricycle or power-assisted cycle on a road or bicycle path; or
- b) is a passenger on a bicycle, tricycle or power-assisted cycle (other than a pedicab) being ridden on a road or bicycle path; must wear a helmet.

This law was made to ensure improved safety for all cyclists in Queensland.

When a new law is introduced in the Parliament by the Government, it is called a Bill. The Parliament (the 93 elected Members) then looks very closely at this Bill to see if it will meet the needs of the people of Queensland.

The Opposition and other Members of Parliament may want changes made to parts of this new law, so there is usually much debate between the Government and the Opposition in the Legislative Chamber. When a final vote is taken, if the Bill is passed by a majority vote in the Parliament, then the Governor of Queensland will give assent to the Bill in the name of the Sovereign.

This Royal Assent means that the Bill then becomes an Act of Parliament and as an Act of Parliament it becomes part of the laws of our State.

SIMPLIFIED LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

A proposed new law (Bill) is introduced into the Parliament by a Minister or Member who makes a speech about the Bill and refers it to a parliamentary committee for examination.

A parliamentary committee seeks input from the public and experts and writes a report making recommendations about the Bill.

Members of Parliament debate the Bill in the Legislative Assembly Chamber and vote on whether it should pass.

If the Bill passes, the Governor signs the Bill and the Bill becomes law.

Granting money to the Government to govern

Another function of the Parliament is to examine and approve:

- the amount of money that the Government requires to govern the State of Queensland;
- how the Government intends to spend that money; and
- the ways in which the Government intends to raise money.

The most important example is the annual State Budget in which the Government outlines its financial plan to manage the affairs of the State of Queensland. The Minister who is responsible for the Government Department called the Treasury is called the Treasurer. It is the Treasurer who presents the annual State Budget to Parliament to seek the approval of the Parliament.

>> Activity: [How Would You Spend the Budget?](#)

Up to 19 Government Members of Parliament (including the Premier) are chosen by their own party or parties to be responsible for one or more Government Departments, which provide a wide range of services to the people of Queensland.

These Government Members are called Ministers and the Chief Minister is the Premier. Together they are referred to as the Cabinet. The Government Department they are each responsible for is known as their portfolio.

Looking at the policies and actions of the Government

Parliament provides ways for the policies and actions of the Government to be closely looked at, so that the people of Queensland are aware of what the Government is doing. Parliament does this through the work of parliamentary committees and through various practices and procedures which are carried out in the Legislative Assembly Chamber, such as Question Time and parliamentary debates.

Parliamentary Committees

There are ten (10) permanent parliamentary committees. Committees have six to eight Members of Parliament working on them. These include members of the Government, members of the Opposition and members of any minor parties and/or any Independents.

Among other matters, committees examine the effect of proposed new laws and government expenditure.

Each committee reports to the whole Parliament about their investigations and their reports are available to the public so that the people of Queensland can be informed about important matters being investigated.



>> Activity: Who's Who - Parliamentary Committee Inquiry - Role Play

Democracy: government by the people. A way of governing a country or a state, in which the people elect representatives to form a government which makes decisions on their behalf.

Coalition: the joining of two or more political parties to form a Government or an Opposition.

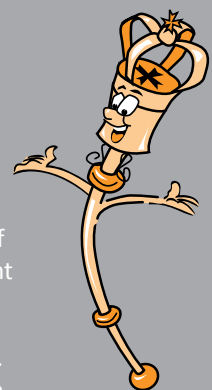
Debate: a formal discussion held by Members of Parliament in the Legislative Chamber about the making of laws or any other topic which may arise.

Royal Assent: When a Bill is passed in Parliament, the Governor will then sign the Bill on behalf of the Sovereign, thus giving Royal Assent to the Bill. The Bill then becomes an Act of Parliament and therefore a law of the land.

Policy: The plan of action that a political party takes to deal with a particular matter. eg. Police use speed guns to measure the speed of motorists and fine those who are breaking the law, to encourage drivers to travel at the correct speed and help prevent road accidents.

Cabinet: all the Ministers in the Government (including the Premier) who make the decisions about what the Government is going to do for Queensland.

Dorothy Dixer: the term comes from the name of a newspaper columnist whose column was based on questions, supposedly from readers, which D.D. would then answer. However, it was believed that D.D. wrote both the questions and the answers.



Question Time

Each sitting day of the Parliament, a very exciting and often very noisy time takes place in the Legislative Assembly Chamber. It is called Question Time and goes for one hour. This is a very good opportunity for the Opposition to question Government Ministers about their work and to question the Premier in particular about the work and decisions made by the Government and to draw public attention to these matters.

For more information on Question time see:

[>> Factsheet 3.8 - Question Time](#)

PEOPLE OF THE QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENT

Elected Officers

Elected officers are Members of the Legislative Assembly who are elected by their fellow Members of Parliament to perform traditional parliamentary roles. They include:

- The Speaker
- The Deputy Speaker
- The Whips

Permanent Officers

The Queensland Parliament has a staff of non-political, permanent officers who are responsible for providing assistance and advice to the Speaker, and to other Members of Parliament. They include:

- The Clerk of the Parliament
- The Deputy Clerk
- The Sergeant-at-Arms
- The Parliamentary Librarian
- The Chief Hansard Reporter
- Parliamentary Attendants



*The Speaker's Chair, Queensland
Legislative Assembly*

For more information about the People of Parliament see:

[>> Factsheet 3.19 - People of Parliament](#)

[>> Activity: People in Parliament Crossword](#)

The Mace

The Mace was originally a close combat weapon used by mounted knights in battle. English Kings also armed their Royal Sergeants with maces, which they used to enforce the wishes of the King upon the people. These maces had the Royal Arms engraved on the handgrip to show that the Sergeants were acting with the authority of the King.

By 1415, the King of England had introduced a Sergeant-at-Arms into the Parliament to assist the Speaker in keeping order in the House. Gradually the design of the Mace changed and became much more decorative, as it became more a symbol of authority rather than being used as a weapon. In the Queensland Parliament, the Mace is the symbol of the Sovereign's authority in the Parliament, through the Speaker. The mace is carried by the Sergeant-at-Arms.



The Mace

HOW DO I KNOW WHAT HAPPENS IN PARLIAMENT?

Check Out Hansard!

The Record of Proceedings is referred to as Hansard. Hansard is the official report of the debates and proceedings of Parliament.

What is the origin of Hansard?

It is thought that Hansard takes its name from Luke Hansard, who in the latter half of the 18th century wrote a newspaper column about the House of Commons titled *The Journals of the House*. In 1803, William Cobbett commenced the publication of reports, which were reprints of newspaper reports of the debates of the House of Commons.

Thomas Hansard took over from him. It was not until 1909 that the House of Commons first published its own reports of debates that were, called the *Official Report* and not Hansard. However, in Queensland, because of allegedly unreliable newspaper reports, Hansard was established in 1864, only five years after separation from New South Wales. By 1878, the Queensland Parliament was the first in the world to have a daily official report of the debates without any form of Government censorship.



Printed copies of Hansard

Watch the live broadcast!

Live audio and video broadcasts of parliamentary proceedings are available by clicking on the chamber broadcast icon located in the top right-hand corner of the parliament's home page.

Broadcast on Demand

Broadcast on Demand is available through accessing the electronic Record of Proceedings.

A camera icon will appear in the left-hand margin at various points throughout the electronic document. By clicking on this icon, users will be able to watch a video replay of the proceedings of Parliament from that point onward.

The on-demand broadcast will become available at the times the Record of Proceedings is published on the internet throughout a sitting day, which is 2 pm, 4 pm and within two hours of the House rising.

>> Activity: Live Broadcast

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE CHAMBER?

The Chamber starts at 9.30 am and usually adjourns at 7.30 pm on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and at 6.30 pm on Thursdays.

Prior to the House assembling, all members receive a copy of the Notice Paper, which sets out the day's agenda. The proceedings are governed by rules, known as standing orders and sessional orders, which control what is said and done in the parliament.



Members of the 55th Parliament in the Chamber

Opening

Bells ring to call the members to the chamber. The Speaker is led in by the Sergeant-at-Arms carrying the mace. The Speaker then opens the day's proceedings with a prayer and acknowledges the traditional owners of the land on which the parliament meets.

Asking questions

Question Time runs from 10.15 am to 11.15 am Tuesdays to Thursdays. If Parliament sits on another day of the week, Question Time runs from 10.00 am to 10.30 am. During Question Time, the opposition and other members question the government about its policies and activities. Ministers have three minutes in which to answer a question they have been asked.

Making laws

The major part of the day is focused upon Government Business. Mainly, this involves debating proposed new laws and amendments to existing laws or, at budget time, debate upon how the government plans to raise money or spend it.

Proposed laws introduced into the parliament by individual members who are not ministers are known as Private Members' Bills and are usually debated on Tuesdays.

Debates

Time is set aside each day for debates. Some debates are about Committee Reports, others provide members with an opportunity to raise matters about government policies or issues of general public interest, and some

debates give members the opportunity to raise matters which are of particular concern to them. These are called private members motions.

Adjourning

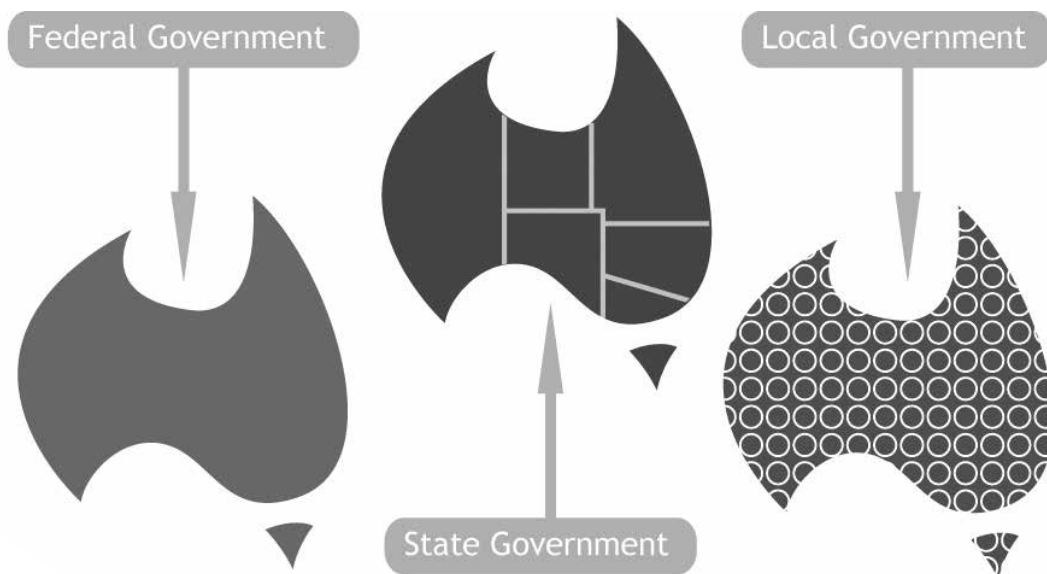
At the end of the day's sitting, 30 minutes is set aside for the Adjournment Debate where members can discuss matters to do with their electorate and constituents.

>> Activity: Mock Bill - Role Play Bill

>> Activity: Mock Bill - Role Play Script

THE THREE LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

There are three levels of government in Australia: federal government, state government and local government. The federal and state government are both established under the Australian Constitution. Every person forms part of the local community. Every local community is part of a state or territory and every state or territory is part of Australia. Representatives elected by their local community make decisions about the area they are elected to represent. Rules are made by our parliaments to keep order and allow for fairness in our community. These are called laws. It is the job of the Government to carry out the laws made by the Parliament.



A diagram showing the three levels of government in Australia: federal government, state government and local government.

>> Activity: Three Levels of Government Work Sheet

>> Activity: Three Levels of Government Answer Sheet

HOW DOES THE STATE GOVERNMENT WORK?

Queensland's system of government is a constitutional monarchy. The Sovereign represented by the Governor is the highest authority in the State. However, the Sovereign has to follow the rules set out in the State's Constitution.

Following a State election, the Governor calls on the leader of the party, or coalition of parties, with the greatest number of elected representatives in our Legislative Assembly to form a government. The leader of the Government is the Premier.

Ministers are then chosen to assist the Premier in the governing of the State. These Ministers led by the Premier make up what is called the Cabinet. There are up to 18 Ministers in the Cabinet. Each Minister is responsible for one or more Government Departments which are responsible for delivering services to the people of Queensland.

The Premier

The Leader of the Government is the Premier. The Premier is the most dominant political person in the State. The Premier's position involves a huge amount of work and responsibility. Much of the business of the Government is dealt with by Cabinet which comprises the Premier as Chief Minister and up to 18 other Ministers. The decisions which are made by Cabinet affect the lives of all Queenslanders.

For more information about the Role of the Premier see:

>> [Factsheet 4.3 The Premier of Queensland](#)

The Role of a Minister

The term 'Minister' is Latin for 'servant' or 'helper'. 'Ministers' were originally royal servants who were chosen to give advice to the English Sovereigns on certain matters. They met with the Sovereign in his royal apartment or 'cabinet' and became known as the Cabinet Council or simply Cabinet.

Following a State election, Members of Parliament from the Government side are chosen to be Ministers and as a group are called the Cabinet. Each Minister is responsible for one or more Government Departments, which provide services to the people of Queensland.

For example, the Minister for Health is responsible for the Department of Health which provides health services to meet the needs of all Queenslanders. These services may include nursing homes for the aged, dental health, alcohol and drug services, public hospitals and health education, to mention but a few.

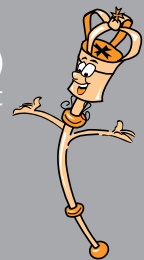
For more information on the role of a Minister see:

>> [Factsheet 4.1 The Principles of Cabinet](#)

>> [Activity: The Premier, Opposition Leader and Ministers](#)

Cabinet: all the Ministers in the Government (including the Premier) who make the decisions about what the Government is going to do for Queensland.

Portfolio: the Government Department for which a Minister is responsible



THE OPPOSITION

The Role of the Opposition

The Opposition is the second largest political party or coalition of parties in the Legislative Assembly.

The role of the Opposition is to carefully monitor what the Government is doing, criticise Government policies which they do not agree with and offer alternative policies to the people of Queensland.

The aim of the Opposition is to present themselves as a type of Government that the people would prefer to the Government that they do have. Therefore, when the people vote in the next State election, the Opposition would hope to win the most seats so that they could become the Government.

The Leader of the Opposition

The Leader of the Opposition is elected by the Members of Parliament who are in Opposition. As Leader, he or she plays a major role when leading the debate against the Government in the House concerning Government policies and actions.

The Leader of the Opposition chairs Shadow Cabinet which is made up of people from the Opposition, who are the spokespersons for the Opposition in the areas covered by Government Ministers, e.g., Minister for Health (Government and Shadow Minister for Health (Opposition)).

For more information about the role of the Opposition and the Leader of the Opposition see:

[>> Factsheet 3.14 Role of the Opposition](#)

For more information on the three levels of Government see:

[>> Factsheet 1.1 The Three Levels of Government](#)

FIRSTS IN THE QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENT

First Governor of Queensland

Sir George Ferguson Bowen GCMG

Sir George Ferguson Bowen was the first Governor of the new Colony of Queensland. He was born in County Donegal, Ireland in 1821, and was educated at the Charterhouse and Trinity College, Oxford. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts with First Class Honours in Classics in 1844.

In 1847 he was appointed President of the University of Corfu and became the Chief Secretary of the Government of the Ionian Islands. It was in the Ionian Islands that George Bowen met his wife, the Countess Diamantina Roma.

In 1859, he was appointed the first Governor of Queensland. Bowen was accompanied to Queensland by Robert Herbert, who later became the first Premier of Queensland. Prior to the first colonial elections to elect a parliament, Governor Bowen appointed three men to form an interim government. They included Ratcliffe Pring as Attorney-General, Robert Mackenzie as Colonial Treasurer and his trusted friend Robert Herbert as Colonial Secretary. On 4 January 1868, Governor Bowen's term of office as Governor of Queensland ended and he left to take up the role of Governor of New Zealand where he faced new challenges bringing the Maori War to an end.



Sir George Ferguson Bowen GCMG

In March 1873, Bowen returned to Australia, this time to become the Governor of Victoria. From 1879 until 1883, he served as Governor of Mauritius and completed his colonial service as Governor of Hong Kong in 1887 before retiring.

First Premier of Queensland

Robert George Wyndham Herbert GCB

Born on 12 June 1831 in Brighton, England, Robert Herbert attended Eton and then entered Balliol College, Oxford. Graduating in law in 1856, Herbert was called to the Bar in 1858.

In June 1859, when Sir George Ferguson Bowen was appointed Governor of the new colony of Queensland, he was authorised to select a private secretary who could also become Colonial Secretary of Queensland, a man who would be independent of local influences.¹ Bowen chose Herbert and on proclamation of the colony on 10 December 1859, Robert George Herbert was commissioned as Colonial Secretary. In the 1860 elections for Members of the first Legislative Assembly in the parliament of Queensland, Herbert was invited to contest three seats and was returned unopposed in the electorate of Leichhardt.

From 22 May 1860 until February 1866, Herbert was the elected leader of the Queensland Government. Lacking any parliamentary experience, Herbert relied on his legal training to deliver clear and effective debate. He was also assisted by the lack of any formal



Robert George Wyndham Herbert GCB

opposition in those early days.

Education and land legislation were the areas of major concern to the fledgling government. The biggest education issue of the time was the decision to stop State funding to religious schools. Land legislation related to settling the land and promoting agriculture.

In February 1866, Herbert turned the premiership over to Arthur Macalister and sat as a Private Member for many months before returning to England, where he served as Permanent Under-Secretary in the Colonial Office. He was, according to many, the perfect public servant, imperturbable and efficient, with an outwardly gracious manner.²

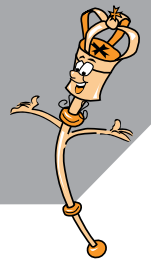
Herbert was made Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath (KCB) in 1882 and Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath (GCB) in 1892. Unmarried, he died on 6 May 1905 at Ickleton, England.

¹ The Duke of Newcastle, in B. A. Knox, 'Herbert, Sir Robert George Wyndham (1831 - 1905)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 4, Melbourne University Press, 1972, pp 382-385.

² B. A. Knox, 'Herbert, Sir Robert George Wyndham (1831 - 1905)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 4, Melbourne University Press, 1972, pp 382-385.

KCB: Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath

GCB: Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath



>> Factsheet 7.2 First Premier of Queensland

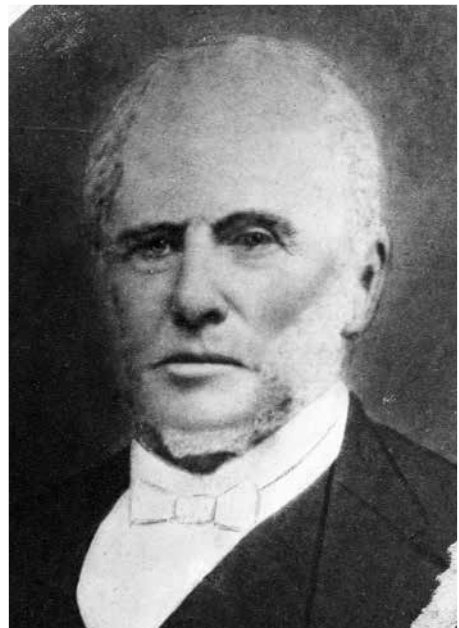
First Speaker of The Legislative Assembly

Sir Gilbert Elliott GCMG

The first speaker of the Legislative Assembly was Gilbert Elliott. He was born in 1796 in Stobs, Roxburghshire in Scotland. At the age of 18, Elliott joined the artillery section of the British Army and served in France.

In 1830, Elliott married Isabella Lucy Elliot. They migrated to the colony of New South Wales in 1838. He became a justice of the peace in 1839. On the recommendation of the Earl of Auckland, a near relation, he was appointed police magistrate at Parramatta by Governor Sir George Gipps in June 1842. As visiting justice at the female factory he uncovered gross fraud and embezzlement. Counter-charges by the superintendent led to an inquiry which found Elliott 'an excellent Public Officer, and a man of unimpeachable integrity'.¹

From 1854 to 1857 Elliott was the Commissioner for the City of Sydney. Deciding to move north, the Eliotts purchased Yenda Station in the Wide Bay area. At the first elections held in the Colony of Queensland in 1860, Gilbert Elliott was elected to the Legislative Assembly of the Queensland Parliament as the Member for Wide Bay.



Sir Gilbert Elliott GCMG

He became the first Speaker of the Queensland Parliament and served in that role from 22 May 1860 until 13 July 1870. He then became a Member of the Legislative Council in November 1870 and died on 30 June 1871.

¹ A. A. Morrison, 'Elliott, Gilbert (1796 - 1871)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 4, Melbourne University Press, 1972, pp 135.

First Female Member of the Queensland Parliament

Irene Maud Longman

Sixty-nine years after its first sitting, the Queensland Parliament welcomed its first female member. Irene Maud Longman was elected as the Country and Progressive National Party member for the seat of Bulimba in 1929. She was the first woman to stand for election and to be elected to the Queensland Parliament. As former Clerk of the Parliament, C.A. Bernays recalls, The House seemed palpably nervous when she first took her Oath.¹

The Member for Bulimba was honoured with being chosen by the Moore Government to move the Address-in-Reply debate at the opening of the 25th parliament and thunderous applause in the House greeted her when she rose to speak.

She opened her speech by saying: Mr Speaker, to have been chosen for such a duty, I esteem a great honour - an honour to the electorate which I represent and an honour to the women of Queensland, who will appreciate it as a recognition of their entry into [the] parliamentary life of this State.²

Irene Longman, nee Bayley, was born at The Huon, Tasmania and attended high school in Sydney. She later became a teacher and taught both in Sydney and at Rockhampton Girls' Grammar. In 1904, she married Heber Albert Longman, a scientist, who later became the Director of the Queensland Museum.

Irene Longman worked diligently in public welfare work and was the Honorary President of the Queensland Association for the Welfare of the Mentally Deficient. She was also the President of the Queensland National Council for Women and was actively involved in many women's organisations.

Although serving only one term before she was defeated in 1932, Irene Longman was by all accounts a very capable politician and will always be recognised for the part she played in forging the path for women's entry into the Queensland Parliament.

¹ C.A. Bernays, *Queensland - Our Seventh Political Decade - 1920-30*, Angus & Robertson Ltd, Sydney, 1931, p.338

² *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 1929, VOL CLIII, p.10.



Irene Maud Longman

>> Factsheet 7.4 First Woman Elected to the Queensland Parliament

First Indigenous Member in the Queensland Parliament

Eric Deeral

Eric Deeral is acknowledged as the first Indigenous person to be elected to an Australian state parliament. Mr Deeral was the Member for Cook in the Queensland Parliament from 1974 to 1977.

Born at Hope Vale Lutheran Mission in 1932, Eric Deeral was evacuated to Woorabinda during World War II, where he was educated at the Woorabinda Central School. He left school at the age of 13 and held various jobs as a labourer, bush worker and stockman.

Eric continued to educate himself and in 1957 became the Chairman of the Hope Vale Mission Community Council and then a liaison officer with the Queensland Aboriginal Affairs Department. In 1973, he was appointed as a consultant to the Queensland Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

In the 1974 election, 10 years after his elders and those of the surrounding Cape York and Torres Strait communities had met at Palm Island and selected him to stand as a candidate for parliament, he defeated six other candidates to win the state electorate of Cook, representing the National Party.

In parliament, Mr Deeral raised issues facing Aboriginal Australians, but made it clear he represented all members of his electorate. He sought improved roads for the far north to allow tourism and other industries to develop. He also ensured improvements were made to schools, together with better access to medical treatment. He pointed out that he considered himself an Australian from Queensland and that his ancestors had lived in the Cook region for more than 20,000 years.

After losing his seat in the 1977 election, Mr Deeral continued to work closely with the community. He held many community positions including that of the first chairperson of the Aboriginal Coordination Council. The Council was established in 1985 to advise the government on the wellbeing of Aboriginal people living in communities.

In later years, Mr Deeral was involved in Aboriginal justice issues as an Elder of the Gamay clan of the Guugu Yimithirr nation. Mr Deeral's dedication to parliamentary and community service provided inspiration for other Indigenous people to follow in his footsteps.



Eric Deeral

In honour of Mr Deeral's life time of service, the Queensland Parliament's annual Indigenous Youth Parliament (which commenced in 2009) was renamed the Eric Deeral Indigenous Youth Parliament by the then Speaker of the Parliament, Ms Fiona Simpson MP. The inaugural Eric Deeral Indigenous Youth Parliament was held at Parliament House on 28 June 2012 and Mr Deeral was a special guest at this event. The Eric Deeral Indigenous Youth Parliament provides young Indigenous leaders a forum to speak on matters of importance and debate a Youth Bill on education issues.

Eric Deeral passed away on 5 September 2012 in Hope Vale, Queensland at the age of 80. His service was further recognised with a plaque dedicated in Mr Deeral's honour at Parliament House on 1 November 2012.

>> [Factsheet 7.5 Biography of First Indigenous State Member](#)

First Female Premier

Hon Anna Bligh

In 2007, 147 years after the first parliament and 78 years after the first female member was elected, Anna Maria Bligh was sworn in as Premier of Queensland. After her government's re-election in March 2009, Anna Bligh became the first woman ever elected as a state premier in Australia.

Ms Bligh was born in Warwick, Queensland, on 14 July 1960. She grew up on the Gold Coast, attending Catholic primary schools and Miami State High School, before completing the last six months of her schooling at Nowra State High School. Ms Bligh graduated with an Arts Degree from the University of Queensland in 1980.

Prior to her election as the Member for South Brisbane on 15 July 1995, Ms Bligh worked for many community organisations. She also worked in the Queensland Public Service in employment, training and industrial relations policy. Following the election of the Beattie Labor government in June 1998, her first ministerial responsibility was as Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care, as well as Disability Services. She later became Queensland's first female Minister for Education and during this time was the minister responsible for the arts, as well as Leader of Government and Parliamentary Business.



Hon Anna Bligh

Anna Bligh served as Queensland Premier until March 2012 when her government was defeated in a general election.

First Female Speaker of the Queensland Parliament

Fiona Simpson MP

In May 2012, the Hon. Fiona Simpson MP was elected as Speaker of the Queensland Parliament, becoming its first female Speaker since its creation in 1860.

Formerly an award-winning journalist, Ms Simpson was elected to the Queensland Parliament in 1992, representing the seat of Maroochydore. At that time, she was the youngest woman elected to the Queensland Parliament.

With extensive experience in shadow ministerial portfolios and Parliamentary committees, Ms Simpson was Deputy Leader of the Nationals and Deputy Opposition Leader from 2006 to 2008 before helping facilitate the state merger of the Liberal and National Parties. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Japanese language, Journalism and Government and a Masters in Organizational Leadership, with further study through the Australian Institute of Company Directors and the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard.

Recognising her interest in women's leadership, in 2014 she was selected as one of Queensland YWCA's 125 leading women. In her former role as the Speaker, Ms Simpson subscribed to the motto of service above self and demonstrated an enthusiasm for connecting with students, community groups, Indigenous and regional Queenslanders, as well as business and the academic sectors.

Fiona Simpson served as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly until 23 March 2015. Her term as Speaker ended following the change of government after the general election held on 31 January 2015.



Fiona Simpson MP