

FACTSHEET

Women in the Assembly

While many parliaments have histories of being dominated by (or made up only of) men, women have played a large role in the Assembly since it was created.

A history of firsts

Many of the firsts for women's representation in the ACT Legislative Assembly were also firsts for any state or territory parliament (and, in many places, of any parliament in Australia at all!)

- **Rosemary Follett** (1989) was the first female head of government of the ACT and in Australia.
- **Kate Carnell** (1993) was the first female opposition leader of the ACT and in Australia.
- **Roberta McRae** (1993) was the first female speaker of the ACT and in any Australian state or territory (Joan Child had become federal speaker in 1986).
- Also in 1993, the Assembly became the first parliament in Australia with all women in its three top jobs: Follett as head of government, Carnell as opposition leader, and McRae as Speaker.
- In 2016, the Assembly became the first parliament in Australia with a majority of female members (13 out of 25, or 52%).

Women in the top jobs

As of December 2024, eight women have served in the three top jobs of the Assembly: the Speaker, Chief Minister, and Opposition Leader:

Speakers

Three women have served as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly: **Roberta McRae** (1992-95), **Vicki Dunne** (2012-16), and **Joy Burch** (2016-24). Ms Burch also holds the record as the longest serving speaker.

Chief Ministers

Three women have served as Chief Minister: **Rosemary Follett** (1989, 1991-95), **Kate Carnell** (2001-06), and **Katy Gallagher** (2011-14).

Opposition Leaders

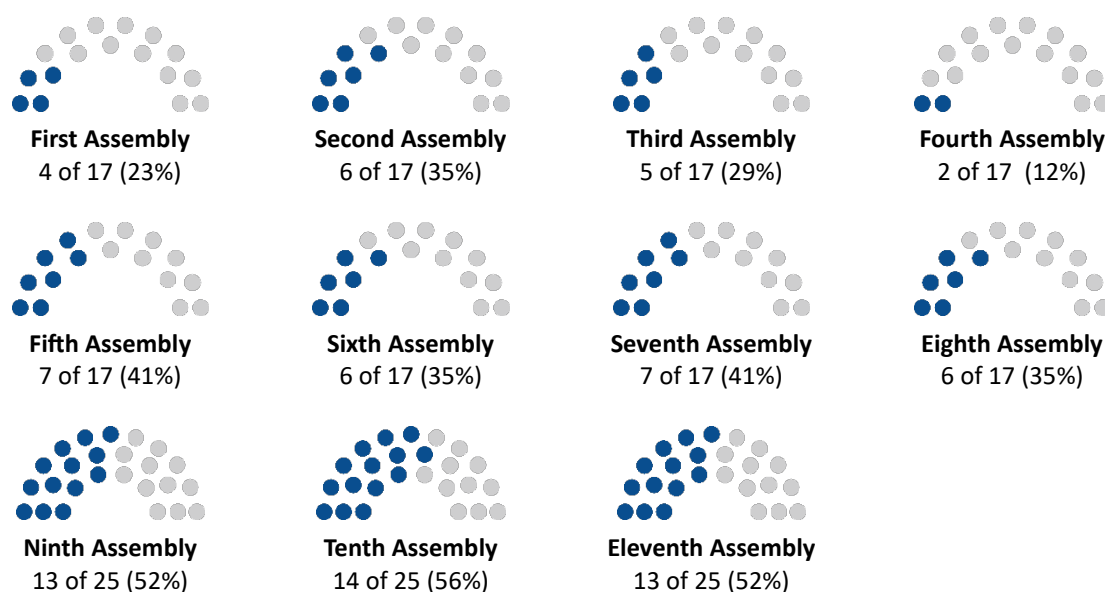
Four women have served as Opposition Leader: **Rosemary Follett** (1989-91, 1995-96), **Kate Carnell** (1993-95), **Elizabeth Lee** (2020-24), and **Leanne Castley** (since 2024).

By the numbers

Since self-government in 1989, there has never been an Assembly elected that did not include at least two women as members.

Women as a percentage of members wavered over the first eight assemblies, averaging at 31% with the highest share 41% (Seventh Assembly) and the lowest 12% (Third Assembly). In every assembly since expanding to 25 members in 2016, women have made up a majority of members: 52% in the Ninth and Eleventh Assemblies and 56% in the Tenth.

Women elected to each Assembly



Women appointed as ministers

