

People, places

With 2025 all but in the rear view mirror, we take a look at the West Australians who dominated headlines, were influential and had us talking

JESSICA PAGE



Roger Cook

An emphatic election victory in March silenced previous claims that Roger Cook was an unelected Premier, and cemented his position.

Mr Cook wasted no time reshaping Cabinet and the State's bureaucracy, in a bid to close Labor's McGowan chapter and set a new agenda.

Responsibility for health was split between five ministers, while the passage of new State development laws on the last sitting day of the parliamentary calendar sets the stage for the Premier to fast-track energy and AUKUS projects.

Taxpayer-funded plans for a Perth rugby league team and a Burswood street circuit (now called Perth Park) sparked claims Labor was distracting voters with "bread and circuses", but Mr Cook joked that he deserved the title of "bogan whisperer" more than his Treasurer Rita Saffioti.

He assured Labor's State conference he'll still be leader in 2029.

Ellie Whiteaker, Daniel Pastorelli, Daniel Smith, Mark Reed: Labor's power behind the scenes

Two of WA Labor's most senior figures behind the scenes are now MPs themselves.

Ellie Whiteaker was the brains behind Labor's winning election strategy and is now a senator. Daniel Pastorelli was chief-of-staff for both Mark McGowan and Roger Cook, as

Premier.

He's on the fast track to Cabinet and fast becoming the Government's "fixer", having been given the tough task of managing public consultations over the Perth Park and put in charge of an overhaul of public holidays as Cabinet secretary.

Former McGowan strategist Mark Reed took over at party HQ, while former BHP and Alan Carpenter adviser Daniel Smith quickly shuffled the decks inside the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Olly Pickett

Brother Olly Pickett was named Western Australian of the Year and Senior Australian of the Year, for his work leading one of the State's largest volunteer-led charities.

The retired metalwork teacher turned a Rotary Club's request for a wheelchair into an organisation that now gifts thousands of them to children around the world each year.

In a world first, the wheelchairs — backed by the World Health Organisation — are fully adjustable, meaning they can "grow" with the child into adulthood.

The 84-year-old was nominated for the award by former students at St Patrick's College in Geraldton.

"I have seen the smiles on the faces of so many kids and it has all been worth it," he said.

Arthur Leggett

The death of World War II prisoner of war Arthur Leggett reminded us all of a



Rick Ardon and Susannah Carr.
Picture: Daniel Wilkins

generation's service and sacrifice that shaped our State

He was 106, and was laid to rest with a State funeral at St George's Cathedral in May.

Governor Chris Dawson described Mr Leggett as a torchbearer for Australian values.

He believed in the power of education to prevent war.

Chris Dawson

Sworn-in as the 34th governor of WA in the wake of his stint police commissioner and COVID-19 vaccine commander Chris Dawson was a unifying voice in 2025.

His public apology over th

