

PRIME FACTS

AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTERS CENTRE

123

Mark William LATHAM

Leader of the Opposition 12 December 2003 to 18 January 2005

- Mark Latham became the 28th Leader of the Opposition in 2003 after Simon Crean resigned as Leader of the Australian Labor Party (ALP).
- Member of the Australian Labor Party 1979-2005.
- Member of the House of Representatives for Werriwa (NSW), 1994-2005.
- Resigned as Leader of the Opposition in 2005 and was succeeded by Kim Beazley.



As Opposition Leader

- Committed to withdrawing Australian troops from Iraq by Christmas 2004.
- Pressed for reforms to Parliamentary superannuation entitlements which were adopted by the Howard government.
- Recruited high-profile former Midnight Oil singer Peter Garrett as the Labor candidate for the south Sydney seat of Kingsford Smith.
- At the general election of 9 October 2004, the Labor Party under Latham suffered a small swing (1.7 per cent) and lost five seats in the House of Representatives, winning 37.6 per cent of the primary vote, 47.3 per cent of the two-party vote and 60 seats out of 150.

Political life

- Worked as a research assistant to former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam.
- Elected to Liverpool City Council in 1987, and served as Mayor of Liverpool 1991-94.
- Assistant Shadow Treasurer and Shadow Minister for Competition Policy and Local Government 1996-97, Shadow Minister for Education and Youth Affairs 1997-98, Assistant Shadow Treasurer and Shadow Minister for Urban Development and Housing 2001-02, Shadow Minister for Economic Ownership 2001-03, Shadow Minister for Community Security 2002-03, Shadow Treasurer and Manager of Opposition Business 2003.



MUSEUM
OF AUSTRALIAN
DEMOCRACY

OLD PARLIAMENT HOUSE

Personal life

- Born 28 February 1961, Ashcroft, New South Wales.
- Educated at Hurlstone Agricultural High School and the University of Sydney.
- Married Gabrielle Gwyther in 1991 Divorced in 1997.
- Married Janine Lacey in 2000. Two children.

Life after politics

- In late 2005 published *The Latham Diaries*, describing his life in politics. The diaries became well known for their depictions of some of Latham's contemporaries in an unflattering light.
- Has been employed irregularly as a commentator and journalist on political affairs. Most notably, in 2010 was a guest reporter for a segment on the Channel Nine program *60 Minutes* in which he controversially advocated an informal vote.

Character

Journalists liked Latham because he had none of the mealy-mouthed equivocation they so regularly encountered in other MPs. In a town where many are as anodyne on the record as they are savage when speaking anonymously, Latham was never afraid to speak directly, to pick fights, or to 'dump a bucket' on public figures of whom he disapproved. Not that this was the only attraction: Latham was also well-read and articulate, and a good source of conversation and ideas about modern political and social theory. He was unusual among Labor MPs in that he had an insurrectionist cynicism about the trade unions' role in the party.

Crabb, A 2005, *Losing it: the inside story of the Labor Party in opposition*, Pan Macmillan Australia.

Did you know?

- At the age of 42, Latham was the second-youngest person to lead the Labor Party (after Chris Watson, who was 38).

Sources

Crabb, A 2005, *Losing it: the inside story of the Labor Party in opposition*, Pan Macmillan Australia.

Duffy, M 2004, *Latham and Abbott: the lives and rivalry of the two finest politicians of their generation*, Random House Australia, Milsons Point (NSW).

Lagan, B 2005, *Loner: inside a Labor tragedy*, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest (NSW).

Latham, M 2005, *The Latham diaries*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Victoria.

McGregor, C 2004, *Australian son: inside Mark Latham*, Pluto Press, North Melbourne Victoria.

Further reading

Latham, M 1998, *Civilising global capital: new thinking for Australian Labor*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards (NSW).

Latham, M 2002, *Wedge politics and the culture war in Australia*, Menzies Centre for Australian Studies, King's College, University of London, London.

Latham, M 2003, *From the suburbs: building a nation from our neighbourhoods*, Pluto Press, Annandale (NSW).



MUSEUM
OF AUSTRALIAN
DEMOCRACY

OLD PARLIAMENT HOUSE