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Reasons behind Mark McGowan's resignation as WA Premier

Mark McGowan has stood down as WA Premier after a turbulent number of years which included car chases and threats against his family.

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Outgoing WA premier Mark McGowan has revealed the personal toll of governing the state during the COVID-19 pandemic. "The Covid experience ... basically three years of standing here or wherever it might be, having to deal with all that and the pressure that was associated with that," he said during a press conference on Monday. "That drained me a lot. But just being the premier drains you."

WA Premier Mark McGowan says leading the state through the Covid-19 pandemic was "all-consuming" and had "taken it out of him", as he made the shock announcement he was quitting.

"I just don't have the energy or drive that is required to continue in the role as premier," he told reporters on Monday.

"This job is like no other. After seven elections across nearly three decades, now is the right time to step away from the job that I have loved."



Mr McGowan has served in Parliament for 26 years as the Minister Rockingham. Picture: NCA NewsWire /Philip Gostelow

Mr McGowan led Labor to two overwhelming election victories in 2017 and 2021. But he is pulling the pin before the next poll due in early 2025.

"This week will be my final week. It is not a decision I have taken lightly, I've been considering it for quite a while."

Throughout his tenure as state leader, Mr McGowan faced considerable obstacles including threats against himself and his family, and pressure over his tough handling of Covid.

DEATH THREATS

In November 2021 Mr McGowan and his family considered moving out of their home in Rockingham after threats were allegedly made against them.

Police charged two men over phone calls made to the WA Premier, which allegedly included threats to behead his wife and children.

"In terms of my own family, obviously it's not pleasant. It's not very nice and I just urge the people doing it to stop," he told reporters at the time.

A 20-year-old from Canning Vale and an 18-year-old from Harrisdale allegedly called the premier personally and issued the threats via voicemail, according to police.

The threats were enough to make the McGowan family "consider" moving away.

COVID-19 BACKLASH

It was far from the only "un-Australian" acts that were carried out as politicians across the country rolled out Covid-19 vaccinations.



A number of threats has been issued against Mr McGowan over his Covid-19 policies. Picture: NCA NewsWire / Sharon Smith

Mr McGowan came under intense criticism for mandating vaccinations and locking down WA's borders.

His Rockingham electorate office was forced to close at around the same time after his staff were threatened.

Despite the tensions, the WA government continued to pursue a 90 per cent vaccination rate.

"It's not going to change our approach. We're going to continue to work to get West Australians vaccinated," he said.

"We're going to continue with the rules we've put in place because that is what is needed."

said.

He has also been approached and verbally abused by protesters on a number of occasions.

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He was also accosted by Covid-19 protesters opposed to mandatory vaccinations, with a mob also seen swarming his car.



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The altercation was captured on video, with the premier seen walking to his car before he was descended upon by a group shouting and holding signs.



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Though he has plenty of followers, the premier has also experienced his fair share of hecklers. Picture: NCA NewsWire / Philip Gostelow

A woman attempted to get in the way of the premier and his security, demanding he "give us our jobs back".

As Mr McGowan got into his car, the group called him a "f***ing coward" while banging on the vehicle's windows.

"Aren't you down here to convince us?" one woman yelled at the Premier.

"We will rise up," another yelled as he sped off.

LAWSUITS

Billionaire Clive Palmer took Mr McGowan and the state of WA to court multiple times throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

Both men came out as the losers of their bitter defamation trial after they sued each other in the NSW Federal Court, with \$5000 in damages awarded to Mr Palmer and \$20,000 to the Premier.



Mr Palmer pursued the WA government and Mr McGowan personally with legal fights throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Picture: NCA NewsWire / Dan Peled

"Both men went too far in their political jousting and both men litigated, but only one was willing to draw back and avoid the long and costly hearing," Justice Michael Lee said at the conclusion of the trial.

Mr Palmer claimed that Mr McGowan defamed him in multiple comments including that he was a "threat" to WA.

The premier countersued over Mr Palmer's claims he "lied" to the public about Covid-19, among several other comments.

The defamation trial was sparked after the mining magnate lost his High Court battle with WA over its hard border.

Mr Palmer sought \$30bn from the state after claiming that legislation introduced by WA Labor was unconstitutional.

The bill amended a 2002 state agreement with Mr Palmer's Minerology company and was designed to block him from suing over a decision by the previous Liberal government to not assess one of his mining projects.

"Time and time again, Clive Palmer has attempted to bring our state down – first, by challenging the hard border that kept Western Australians safe through a pandemic, and then by launching an outrageous legal claim for damages," he said in a social media post.

Mr Palmer on Monday tweeted: "Goodbye, Mark McGowan, Goodbye."

CAR ACCIDENTS

To add to the complications in Mr McGowan's time as premier, he was also involved in a car accident.

The premier managed to emerge unscathed from the incident, with the woman hitting him while on the way to her first day at a new job.

Despite hearing a big bang, Mr McGowan said there was very little damage to the car.

"I'm fine. It wasn't that bad," he told Seven West Media.

"We were just coming around a corner and another car sort of hit us, it felt worse than it was.

"It was all very dramatic, I think, for her, but she was great. She was good-humoured, a bit shaken up, a bit shocked but we had a good chat."



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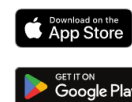
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