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# Christian Porter

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*For the singer, see [The Voice \(U.S. season 4\)](#).*

**Charles Christian Porter** (born 11 July 1970) is an Australian [Liberal Party](#) politician and lawyer serving as [Attorney-General of Australia](#) since 2017, and has served as [Member of Parliament](#) (MP) for [Pearce](#) since 2013. He was appointed [Minister for Industrial Relations](#) and [Leader of the House](#) in 2019.

From [Perth](#), Porter attended [Hale School](#), the [University of Western Australia](#) and later the [London School of Economics](#), and practised law at [Clayton Utz](#) and taught law at the [University of Western Australia](#) before his election to parliament. He is the son of the 1956 Olympic silver medallist, [Charles "Chilla" Porter](#), and the grandson of Queensland Liberal politician, [Charles Porter](#), who was a member of the Queensland Legislative Assembly from 1966 to 1980.<sup>[4][5]</sup>

Before his election to the federal [House of Representatives](#), Porter had served in the [Parliament of Western Australia](#). He first entered the [Legislative Assembly](#) after winning the seat of [Murdoch](#) in a [2008 by-election](#) following the death of the sitting member, [Trevor Sprigg](#), and he was subsequently elected to the new seat of [Bateman](#) at the [2008 general election](#). After the Liberals formed government, Porter was appointed [Attorney-General](#) in

The Honourable  
**Christian Porter**  
MP

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the [Barnett Ministry](#). In December 2010, he was also appointed [Treasurer](#), and held both portfolios until June 2012, when he resigned from the ministry to contest the 2013 federal election.

Prior to assuming his current position, Porter was [Parliamentary Secretary](#) to the Prime Minister in the [Abbott Government](#) from December 2014 to September 2015,<sup>[6][7]</sup> and then [Minister for Social Services](#) in the Turnbull Government from September 2015 to December 2017.

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## Background and early career

Porter's father was Charles "[Chilla](#)" [Porter](#), who during the 1970s and 1980s was director of Western Australia's Liberal Party.<sup>[5]</sup> His grandfather, [Charles Robert Porter](#), was a Queensland Liberal state MP between 1966 and 1980 and served in the ministry of [Joh Bjelke-Petersen](#).<sup>[5]</sup>

Porter was educated at [Hale School](#), then at the [University of Western Australia](#) where he graduated [Bachelor of Economics](#) and [Bachelor of Arts](#) with first-class honours in politics, before completing a [Bachelor of Laws](#) degree. Porter later studied at the [London School of Economics](#) for a Master of Science in political theory, from which he graduated at the top of his class with distinction.<sup>[8]</sup>



Porter in 2015

**Attorney-General of Australia**

**Incumbent**

**Assumed office**

20 December 2017

**Prime Minister** [Malcolm Turnbull](#)  
[Scott Morrison](#)

**Preceded by** [George Brandis](#)

**Leader of the House**

**Incumbent**

**Assumed office**

26 May 2019

**Prime Minister** [Scott Morrison](#)

**Deputy** [Darren Chester](#)

**Preceded by** [Christopher Pyne](#)

**Minister for Industrial Relations**

**Incumbent**

Prior to entering Parliament, Porter worked predominantly as a lawyer, starting as a commercial litigator at [Clayton Utz](#) before moving to public practice. He spent a year as an advisor to the Federal Minister for Justice and then began working for the Office of the [Director of Public Prosecutions](#) as a senior state prosecutor. Before his election in 2008, Porter was working as a lecturer at [Curtin University](#) and the [University of Western Australia](#) as well as retaining, part-time, his position as senior prosecutor at the DPP.<sup>[9]</sup>

## State politics

At the [2008 election](#), Porter contested and won the newly created seat of [Bateman](#) following the abolition of the seat of Murdoch in the 2007 redistribution. He was appointed Attorney-General and Minister for Corrective Services after the election,<sup>[10]</sup> having held the equivalent shadow portfolios prior to the election.<sup>[11]</sup>

On 14 December 2010, Porter was sworn in as Treasurer of Western Australia. He retained the portfolio of Attorney General, while the Corrective Services portfolio was transferred to Terry Redman.

On 12 June 2012, he announced he was stepping down from his ministerial portfolios to contest the seat of Pearce at the [2013 Australian federal election](#).<sup>[12]</sup>

## Federal politics

*See also: [Abbott Government](#) and [Turnbull Government](#)*

At the 2013 election, Porter was elected to federal parliament with an 8% margin. He had a rapid rise through the ranks, becoming the parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister in 2014–15, and was a part of the speaker's panel from 2013 to 2015.<sup>[13]</sup>

### Minister for Social Services (2015–2017)

On 20 September 2015, [Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull](#) announced that Porter would replace [Scott Morrison](#) as [Social Services Minister](#) as part of a Cabinet overhaul.<sup>[14]</sup>

#### Assumed office

26 May 2019

**Prime Minister** [Scott Morrison](#)

**Preceded by** [Kelly O'Dwyer](#)

#### Treasurer of Western Australia

#### In office

14 December 2010 – 12 June 2012

**Premier** [Colin Barnett](#)

**Preceded by** [Colin Barnett](#)

**Succeeded by** [Colin Barnett](#)

#### Attorney-General of Western Australia

#### In office

23 September 2008 – 12 June 2012

**Premier** [Colin Barnett](#)

**Preceded by** [Jim McGinty](#)

**Succeeded by** [Michael Mischin](#)

#### Minister for Social Services

#### In office

21 September 2015 – 20 December 2017

**Prime Minister** [Malcolm Turnbull](#)

**Preceded by** [Scott Morrison](#)

**Succeeded by** [Dan Tehan](#)

#### Member of the Australian Parliament for Pearce

#### Incumbent

#### Assumed office

7 September 2013

**Preceded by** [Judi Moylan](#)

#### Member of the Western Australian Legislative Assembly for Bateman

#### In office

In 2016, [Centrelink](#), operating under Porter's senior oversight as Social Services Minister, became involved in a [debt recovery controversy](#). Despite heightened media interest and complaints, after meeting with the Department of Human Services,<sup>[15]</sup> Porter stated that the program was working "incredibly well".<sup>[16]</sup> The program was later subject to a Senate committee inquiry,<sup>[17]</sup> and the program was estimated to be responsible for over 2000 deaths.<sup>[18]</sup>

One of Porter's roles was to manage the [Cashless Welfare Card](#), and increased its use in various communities. He spoke of his pride in the outcomes of the policy.<sup>[19]</sup> The card was linked to increased hardship for many of its users,<sup>[20]</sup> and there is no evidence that it produces a positive outcome.<sup>[21][22][23]</sup>

During his time in this ministry, Porter was instrumental in the formation of the coalition policy of performing drug tests on welfare recipients, which was considered bad policy by experts, since there was no evidence anywhere in the world of a similar project working,<sup>[24]</sup> and the [ABC](#) fact checkers called the policy "wishful thinking" that it would help people get off welfare.<sup>[25]</sup> This section of the legislation was eventually dropped to allow the passage of the remaining elements of the bill, which contained large budget cuts to the welfare system.<sup>[26][27]</sup>

Porter was criticised for skipping the final sittings of the [Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse](#) in order to attend the cricket with [John Howard](#).<sup>[28]</sup>

### Attorney-General (2017–present)

In a December 2017 reshuffle of the Turnbull ministry, Porter became Attorney-General in place of [George Brandis](#). He relinquished the social services portfolio to [Dan Tehan](#).

At the reshuffle, some of the national security powers and responsibilities previously held by the Attorney-General were transferred to the new position of [Minister for Home Affairs](#), which was given to [Peter Dutton](#).<sup>[29]</sup> This was seen as a positive by some, who said that the role of attorney general had become too focused on security and that the role should be realigned to its old role of defending the rule of law. It was also suggested that many areas of the law were in crisis because of the security focus, such as family law and incarceration levels of indigenous Australians.<sup>[30]</sup>

6 September 2008 – 9 March 2013

**Preceded by** *District created*

**Succeeded by** [Matt Taylor](#)

#### Personal details

**Born** Charles Christian Porter  
11 July 1970 (age 50)<sup>[1]</sup>  
[Perth](#), Western Australia,  
Australia

**Nationality** Australian

**Political party** [Liberal Party](#)

**Spouse(s)** Lucy Gunn (divorced)  
Jennifer Porter<sup>[2]</sup> (separated)

**Children** 2

**Father** [Chilla Porter](#)

**Relatives** [Charles Robert Porter](#)  
(grandfather)

**Alma mater** [Hale School](#)  
[University of Western  
Australia](#) (BEc, BA (Hons),  
LLB)<sup>[3]</sup>  
[London School of Economics](#)  
(MSc)<sup>[3]</sup>

**Profession** Politician, lawyer

**Website** [christianporter.com.au](http://christianporter.com.au) 

At the commencement of his role as attorney general, Porter called on religious institutions to implement the recommendations of the [Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse](#).<sup>[31]</sup>

Following the raids on the journalists of the ABC and [NewsCorp](#), Porter would not rule out prosecuting journalists for publishing public interest stories, although he said he would be "seriously disinclined" to go ahead with a prosecution.<sup>[32]</sup> In the case of NewsCorp journalist [Annika Smethurst](#), Porter asked the court not to destroy the evidence collected from the raid on her house, so that it could be used in a future court case. Porter and the Federal Police said the restrictive privacy when it comes to security matters, "may justify very large incursions on the freedom" of individuals.<sup>[33]</sup>

In November 2019, Porter as Attorney-General extended the religious freedom bill from faith-based schools and organisations to religious hospitals and aged-care providers. The bill states that the aforementioned institutions would be able to employ staff according to their beliefs with legal protection.<sup>[34]</sup>

Other actions he has taken in his role have been calling on social media platforms to be seen as publishers,<sup>[35]</sup> attempts to block environmental groups from calling on boycotts of companies connected to the coal industry,<sup>[36]</sup> repealing the [medevac](#) laws, to restrict union activity<sup>[36]</sup> and attempted to have [GetUp!](#) registered as an arm of the Labor party.<sup>[37]</sup>

During the [COVID-19 pandemic](#) Porter worked with [Sally McManus](#) of the [ACTU](#) to develop amendments to the Fair Work Act. Mr Porter hailed the negotiations as a success, with McManus stating that; "We had been concerned that several employer groups had been advocating for a widespread removal of workers' rights akin to WorkChoices".<sup>[38]</sup>

In December 2020, Porter introduced a bill to merge the [Family Court of Australia](#) with the [Federal Circuit Court of Australia](#), citing administrative efficiencies.<sup>[39]</sup>

## Personal life

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Porter was listed as a contender for [Cleo](#) magazine's eligible bachelor of the year in 1999.<sup>[31][40]</sup>

He has described himself as "not particularly religious".<sup>[41]</sup>

In the mid 2000s, Porter married Lucy Gunn, but they divorced. In 2008, Porter married Jennifer Negus, a former colleague,<sup>[42]</sup> and granddaughter of former [independent senator Syd Negus](#).<sup>[43]</sup> He took paternity leave after his wife gave birth to their first child the day after being sworn in as the social services minister.<sup>[44]</sup> They later had a second child, but announced their separation in January 2020.<sup>[45][42]</sup>

In November 2020, it was alleged on the ABC program [Four Corners](#) that, although married, Porter had kissed and cuddled a colleague's political staffer in a public setting.<sup>[46]</sup> Porter denied the allegation. He claimed that the staffer in question had also denied to Four Corners that the event occurred, but that the denial was not mentioned in the report.<sup>[47]</sup> He again denied the allegation on the Perth radio channel 6PR.<sup>[48]</sup>

In the program, former Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull claimed that Porter's alleged behaviour had caused concern in the party room, although that was disputed by Porter.<sup>[46]</sup> Not long after he said he had raised the alleged incident with Porter, Turnbull promoted Porter to the position of Attorney General. Porter attributed the criticisms made by Turnbull to a falling-out between the two men during the [2018 Liberal Party of Australia leadership spills](#), which ended Turnbull's prime ministership.<sup>[49]</sup>

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