

PENNY WONG

b. November 5, 1968

AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER

*“You can choose not to be interested in politics,
but you can’t choose to be unaffected by it.”*

**She is the first LGBTQ
person to serve as
an Australian foreign
minister.**

Penny Wong is the Australian minister for foreign affairs and leader of the government in the Senate. A respected force in Australian politics, she is the first Asian Australian and first LGBTQ person to hold the office.

Wong was born in Malaysia to an Australian mother and a Malaysian father. When she was 8, her family moved to Australia. She quickly realized that race factored into other people’s perceptions of her. She attended the University of Adelaide, where she studied arts and law. She joined the Australian Labor Party (ALP) as a student and led protests over planned changes to university funding.

After she graduated in 1992, Wong worked for a furniture industry union. She campaigned for better working conditions and wages for its members, especially underpaid immigrant women.

Wong served as an adviser on forest policy to the New South Wales Labor Government and practiced law before she was elected to the Senate in 2001. She was reelected four times: in 2007, 2013, 2016, and 2022.

After the election of ALP Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in 2007, Wong was appointed minister of climate change and water. In this role, she significantly expanded the country’s Renewable Energy Target, driving increased investment in wind and solar power. She represented Australia in international climate negotiations and developed the government’s carbon emissions trading scheme to reduce greenhouse gases.

In 2010 Senator Wong was appointed minister for finance and deregulation. She has delivered three budgets in the wake of the Global Financial Crisis and implemented a policy to promote gender equality at the senior level in public- and private-sector workplaces.

Wong became leader of the government in the Senate in 2013. After the next election, she was appointed leader of the opposition in the Senate, making her the first woman to perform both these roles. Wong made history again in 2022, when she was appointed minister for foreign affairs. She is the first Asian Australian and first LGBTQ person to hold this position.

Soon after she was sworn in, Wong visited New Zealand and other Pacific Island nations to emphasize cooperation on climate, regional Indo-Pacific, and indigenous issues. An Australian household name, Wong is praised as an effective politician. A 2019 poll by The Australia Institute found Wong to be the most trusted federal legislator in the country.

Wong lives in Adelaide, Australia, with her partner and their two daughters.



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