



Thomas Glassey (1844-1936)

Senator for Queensland 1901-1903

Born at Markethill, County Armagh, Ireland, Thomas Glassey had a harsh childhood, moving to Scotland at the age of 13 where he worked as a coal miner and became a trade union activist. Blacklisted in 1867, Glassey was forced to move to England and finally migrated with his large family to Queensland in 1884. He soon became a union leader in Queensland, and was instrumental in the formation of the Australian Labor Federation in Queensland. First elected to the Queensland Legislative Assembly as a trade union candidate in 1888, he won the seat of Burke in 1894 and became Labor leader in the Queensland Parliament. Glassey had great support from unionists but towards the end of his time in colonial politics fell out with the Labor Party.

In 1901 Glassey stood as a Protectionist and was elected to represent Queensland in the Senate at the first federal election. He is remembered for making a notable speech on White Australia during the first Parliament. He was defeated at the 1903 election and made an unsuccessful attempt to be re-elected to the Senate in 1910.

Glassey also attempted to return to state politics but was unsuccessful. He was an immigration officer in England for Queensland (1911-12) and was a founding member of the Nationalist Party in Queensland in 1917.

The state of Queensland was also represented in the first Senate by:

William Guy Higgs

Andrew Dawson

James George Drake

James Charles Stewart

John Ferguson