



Josiah Thomas (1863-1933)

Member for Barrier (New South Wales) 1901-1917

Senator for New South Wales 1917-1923 and 1925-1929

Born at Camborne, Cornwall, England, Josiah Thomas migrated to Australia in the mid-1880s. Initially a mine manager at Broken Hill, New South Wales, he became involved in union activities, becoming president of the Broken Hill Branch of the Amalgamated Miners Association and a member of the Labour Defence Committee during the 1892 strike. In 1894 he became a Labor Party member of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly, and took particular interest in workers' health and safety.

In 1901 Thomas resigned his Legislative Assembly seat to successfully contest the first federal election, becoming the Labor member for Barrier in the House of Representatives. He was a minister in the first and second Fisher ministries and resigned in 1917 to contest a seat in the Senate. Thomas was a New South Wales Senator 1917-23 and 1925-29.

Thomas was known as a robust speaker in Parliament and respected as a man of principle who continued to uphold the interest of workers. In 1909, whilst Postmaster-General, he marched at the head of a procession in a strike in Broken Hill.

The electorate of Barrier was named after a local geographic feature (Barrier Range).