



Henry Willis (1860-1950)

Member for Robertson (New South Wales) 1901-1910

Born at Port Adelaide, South Australia, Henry Willis owned a tannery at Hindmarsh, South Australia. In 1888 he moved to Sydney with the intention of studying for the Church of England ministry. Willis entered municipal politics, becoming the first Mayor of Cabramatta and Canley Vale in 1893, and serving on the Camden (1897) and Randwick (1899-1902) councils.

In 1901 Willis, a Freetrader, was elected to the House of Representatives to represent the federal seat of Robertson at the first federal election. He was re-elected at the 1903 and 1906 elections, but was defeated in 1910. He was a member of the Royal Commission on Ocean Shipping Services in 1906.

Willis became a Liberal member of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly in 1911 and in August became Speaker in controversial circumstances. Dubbed a “Judas” and “political leper” by his Liberal colleagues, Willis set about strengthening the power of the Speaker. In an incident in September 1911 he had police eject seven Liberal members from the House. Willis resigned the speakership in 1913 and was soon afterwards defeated at election.

The electorate of Robertson was named after Sir John Robertson (1816–1891), a Premier of New South Wales.