



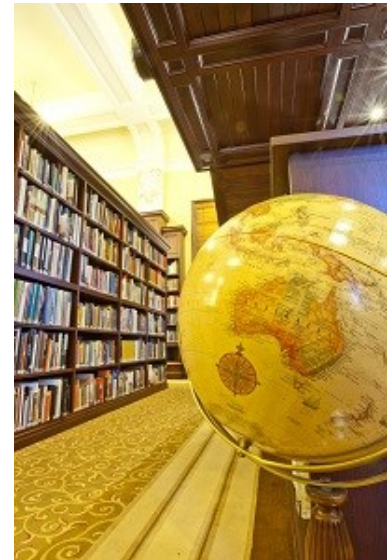
Irish born MPs

Sir John Winthrop Hackett: an advanced liberal

Sir John Winthrop Hackett is the most prominent Irish born WA parliamentarian. He was born in County Wicklow, Ireland in 1847 or 1848, the eldest son of Reverend John Winthrop Hackett, Church of Ireland minister and Jane Sophia Monck. He was educated at Trinity College in Dublin and graduated with a BA in 1871 and an MA in 1874. He was admitted to the Irish Bar in 1874. Hackett migrated to Australia in 1875. He lived in Sydney and later Melbourne where he wrote for the *Age* and *Melbourne Review*. In 1880 he contested the seat of Normanby in Victoria. He moved to Perth in 1882 and managed a sheep station in the Gascoyne. By 1887 he was editor of the *West Australian* newspaper. Hackett was sympathetic to workers' rights and it is thought that his firm was the first to introduce the eight hour day. Premier Forrest recommended Hackett for nomination to the Legislative Council in 1890. The Council became elective in 1894 and Hackett won the seat of the South-West Province which he held until his death. He did not accept a ministry but was a confidante of Premier Forrest. In the 1890s he attended Federal conventions to draft a constitution for the Commonwealth of Australia. In 1905 he married 18 year old Deborah Vernon Brockman in Busselton and they had five children. Hackett was an 'advanced liberal' believing in education, women's suffrage and mental health reform. He was the first Chancellor of the University of Western Australia and its greatest benefactor. In 1916 Hackett died from heart disease and is buried at Karrakatta Cemetery.



Hon John Winthrop Hackett MLC
Photograph from the Parliament of WA



"Aloof and imperious, with a strong sense of duty, he yet could charm with his melodious Irish voice"

Sir John Winthrop Hackett as described by Lyall Hunt in his essay on Hackett in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*



Stephen Noel Dawson at his first communion

Photograph courtesy of Stephen Dawson

Hon Stephen Dawson: number 23

The Hon Stephen Dawson is the 23rd Irish born Western Australian parliamentarian. He is the first WA state politician to be born in Ireland in the twentieth century. Stephen Noel Dawson was born in Dublin in 1975 to Noel Dawson, footballer and Phyllis Dawson. As a teenager he migrated with his family to Australia in 1989. They settled in Nedlands and Dawson went to Hollywood Senior High School. When he was fourteen years old he worked at Hungry Jacks. In 1995 he continued his education at Edith Cowan University graduating with a degree

in education. On his first day of orientation at university he joined the Australian Labor Party. After university Dawson worked as State Manager for Essential Media Communications. On 9 March 2013 he was elected as MLC for the Mining and Pastoral region with his term starting 22 May. In the same year Dawson married Dennis Liddelow but it was annulled when the High Court of Australia invalidated same sex marriages. Dawson is currently the Shadow Minister for Disability Services, Mental Health and Child Protection.

"For us, like many other migrants, Australia has been the lucky country, but it is only lucky for those of us who make it!"
Stephen Dawson, Inaugural Speech, 12 June 2013

23 Irish MPs

There have been 23 Irish born MPs in the Parliament of Western Australia. George Throssell was the first Irish born parliamentarian. Throssell was born on 23 May 1840 in Fermoy, County Cork in Ireland. As a child he emigrated to Australia with his father on board the convict ship, Scindian. In 1861 he began his own business as a produce merchant in Northam. He was the MLA for Northam from 1890 to 1904 and MLC for East Province from 1907 to 1910. For three months in 1901 he was premier and treasurer of the state.



Hon Stephen Dawson MLC
Photograph courtesy of Stephen Dawson

Suspicion

At the beginning of European settlement in Western Australia the Irish were Australia's second largest ethnic group, after the English. Irish people mainly emigrated to Australia in the nineteenth century. After 1900, Irish immigration slowed dramatically. The difficult relationship between Ireland and England affected the Irish experience in Australia. The Irish were treated with suspicion and fear up until the mid-twentieth century. The majority of Irish immigrants were Catholic which only increased the prejudice against them.

Irish born Members of the Parliament of Western Australia

No	Name	Date born	Date elected
1	Throssell, George	23 May 1840	2 December 1890
2	Quinlan, Timothy Francis	18 February 1861	10 December 1890
3	Connor, Francis	1857	20 April 1893
4	Hackett, Sir John Winthrop	4 February 1847/1848	16 July 1894
5	McKernan, Hugh	c1858	16 July 1894
6	Pennefather, Richard William	c16 July 1851	3 May 1897
7	Doherty, Denis Joseph	1861	4 May 1897
8	Conolly, John Richard Arthur	22 July 1870	7 May 1897
9	Moorhead, Frederick William	1863	13 October 1889
10	Diamond, Arthur James	c1844/1845	24 April 1901
11	Stone, Patrick	14 March 1854	24 April 1901
12	Atkins, William	17 January 1836	16 July 1902
13	Lynch, Patrick Joseph	24 May 1867	24 June 1904
14	Ellis, Henry Augustus	24 July 1861	28 June 1904
15	Keenan, Sir Norbert Michael	30 January 1864	27 October 1905
16	Murphy, (Michael) William Alfred	c1858	9 June 1910
17	Harper, Nathaniel White	18 March 1865	16 August 1910
18	Dwyer, Sir Walter	27 August 1875	3 October 1911
19	Robinson, Robert Thomson	18 January 1867	21 October 1914
20	Pilkington, Robert Rivington	8 February 1870	22 July 1917
21	Rainsford, George Henry	25 January 1873	11 February 1928
22	Leahy, David Joseph	19 October 1883	19 December 1948
23	Dawson, Stephen Noel	30 July 1975	9 March 2013

Sources

D Black and G Bolton, eds, *Biographical Register of Members of the Parliament of Western Australia: volume one 1870-1930*, Parliamentary History Project, Perth, WA, 2011.

J Gregory and J Gothard, eds. *Historical encyclopedia of Western Australia*, University of Western Australian Press, Crawley, WA, 2009.

National Centre of Biography, Australian National University (ANU), [Australian Dictionary of Biography website](#), accessed 8 September 2016.

[Parliament of Western Australia website](#) accessed 27 June 2013.