



Comment on suggestion 6

Cr Geoff Ellis

2 pages

In respect of the electoral division currently referenced as vic18 for the purpose of this redistribution I would like to comment upon suggestions received.

Anne Jones, Convenor of the West Gippsland Reconciliation Group, in suggestion number seven of the 2002 redistribution, submitted that the group was “embarking on a process to determine if there was a desire in the Aboriginal community to have the name of the McMillan electorate changed. We believe it is essential to consult with the Aboriginal people of Gippsland to seek their point of view and their wishes on this issue.” Ms Jones noted that elements of that group had, at that point, been meeting for over ten years to advance reconciliation in Gippsland.

The response to the invitation for suggestions for the 2017 redistribution strongly implies that the broader community supports a change of the name. Two Aboriginal representative groups combined to present a name for consideration as a replacement. As these submissions build on the foundations noted by Ms Jones this response can be said to be the result of over two decades of consultation and investigation.

67 suggestions were submitted to the first round of the 2017 redistribution. Well over a third of those requested removal of the name imposed on the electorate in 1949. My comments relate to, and strongly support, those suggestions including, but not limited to, #1, #5, #11, #12, #13, #15, #16, #18, #21, #22, #24, #30, #32, #33, #34, #40, #42, #44, #48, #51, #54, #55, #56, #57, #59, #60, #61 and #64.

The number and vehemence of submissions requesting removal of the McMillan name reflect an increasing desire for change informed by revelation of the truly horrific nature of the settlement of Gippsland in the 1840s. This information was not available in 1949 and has been increasingly available over the past three decades.

To summarise, the actions of McMillan were reprehensible and unworthy of honouring through the naming of an electorate. Removal is surely warranted, morally, by the sheer weight of the evidence and, communally, through the sheer weight of the suggestions received.

This is not an attempt to rip McMillan from the history books – we can’t escape the past – it is an acknowledgement of that history and a step toward reconciliation.

The suggestion of Bunjileene – Purrine is commendable and the name should be included in the AEC consultation process. Adoption of this name would be a long overdue act of practical reconciliation. It follows precedents set with Eden Monaro and Bennelong.

I also strongly commend the adoption of Fraser as a name for a seat in the west of the state and believe there is great merit in application of the name to a seat in the area that the deceased Prime Minister represented. His efforts to welcome and accommodate refugees surely warrant commemoration in this manner.

As a resident of [REDACTED] I also strongly support the calls to include the state seat of Bass District within a single federal electorate. The current boundaries are physically ill-defined and cause great inconvenience to voters, particularly during pre-polling when the reasoning behind the inclusion of Phillip Island in Flinders and Wonthaggi in McMillan seems inscrutable and causes great confusion.

In closing, I return to the un-ignorable need to despatch the name of McMillan. Retention of that name continues the lie of terra nullius and disrespects the victims of his Highland Brigade. I hope that the redistribution process is not terminated due to an untimely dissolution of Parliament.

If a mini-distribution is required to facilitate an early election I strongly request, even beg, that the expunging of that name be included in the outcome of such a mini-distribution.

There is an overwhelming call for change based on strong reasons that have been well articulated, well documented and well supported in these suggestions. It's time.

Cr Geoff Ellis

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