



Comment on suggestion 39

Ben Ellwood

8 pages

FEDERAL REDISTRIBUTION OF VICTORIA 2017

Comment on submissions to the Redistribution Committee for Victoria

Ben Ellwood

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1. Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the submissions to the 2017 Victorian federal redistribution.

As I stated in my submission (S50), I was born in Victoria and have lived in the state for much of my life. I have a background in political science and Australian history, and my career is in public policy and public administration. I submit this comment in a purely private capacity, and my suggestions should in no way be construed as the views of my employer. I am not a member of any political party.

In my original suggestion, I chose to focus my efforts on division boundaries, and did not consider division names in any great detail. Having reviewed the other suggestions provided to the Committee, I feel in a position to turn my mind from political science to Australian history, and provide some comments on the subject of division names.

In addition, I have had limited time in the past fortnight to examine the division boundaries suggested by others. Rather than make hasty or ill-considered comments on the boundaries suggested by others, I have elected to confine my comments to suggested division names. I hope that my comments are of use to the Committee.

1.1 Overview of submissions

By my count, the committee received:

- 43 submissions regarding division names;
- 8 submissions regarding division boundaries; and
- 16 submissions which dealt with both names and boundaries.

As submissions dealing with division names were so numerous, I have elected to respond largely in aggregate rather than address each in turn. In this section, I will highlight some key themes arising from submissions:

- In recognition of the involvement of Angus McMillan in the mass murder of Aboriginal people, 34 submissions propose to abolish the name **McMillan**. The majority of these submissions proposed that the name be replaced by one selected by representatives of the local Gunaikurnai and Bunurong peoples: **Bunjileene-Purrine**.
- For similar reasons, and to facilitate greater recognition of a significant Aboriginal historical figure, 6 submissions propose to abolish the name **Batman**, generally in favour of **Simon Wonga**.

- 12 submissions propose that a division be named for **General Sir John Monash**, in recognition of outstanding service to his country (principally in the First World War, in civil engineering, and in education and charitable fields). Most of these submissions suggest that the name **Melbourne Ports** be abolished to facilitate such recognition.
- 17 submissions proposed names for the new 38th division, with the majority suggesting commemorating former Prime Minister **The Rt Hon Malcolm Fraser AC, CH, GCL** (8) or restoring the former division name of **Burke** (5). A further five submissions proposed that the name Fraser be used for another (generally rural) division given his strong association with regional Victoria.
- A small number of submissions suggested that the names **Gellibrand** and **Hotham** be abolished in favour of more significant figures, with suggestions including Monash, first female Speaker of the House **Joan Child AO**, first and only female Premier of Victoria **Joan Kirner AC** and Aboriginal activist and community leader **William Cooper**.

1.2 Overview of existing names

Rather than comment solely on a handful of current or proposed names, it seems important to give a brief overview of the existing division names. In doing so, I will touch briefly upon each of the criteria listed in the Guidelines. I will also highlight two additional criteria which I believe should be considered by the committee, specifically whether a name commemorates a prominent Australian woman or a person from a culturally and linguistically diverse background.

- Nine divisions (Ballarat, Corangamite, Corio, Indi, Jagajaga, Kooyong, Mallee, Maribyrnong and Wannon) have **Aboriginal names** or names derived from Aboriginal words, although as noted in S8, only one of these (Jagajaga) is named for an individual or individuals. Several of these are original Federation division names.
- Once divisions with Aboriginal names are accounted for, only five other **original Federation division names** remain (Bendigo, Flinders, Gippsland, Melbourne and Melbourne Ports). Only one of these (Flinders) is named for a prominent person in Australian history. The other four are named for geographical features.
- Seven divisions (Bruce, Deakin, Gorton, Holt, McEwen, Menzies and Scullin) are named for **former Prime Ministers**. All seven men are deceased, and all represented a Victorian division in the House of Representatives. The only former Prime Minister who meets those criteria and does not have a division named for him is Fraser.
- Just four divisions (Aston, Chisholm, Dunkley and Goldstein) – slightly over 10 per cent of the total – are named for **prominent women** in Australian history.
- As far as I am able to determine, only one division (Isaacs) is named for a prominent Australian from a **culturally and linguistically diverse background**.
- One division (Murray) is named purely for a **geographical feature**, and does not meet any of the ‘positive’ criteria.
- The remaining ten divisions are named for **prominent individuals from Australian history**. Seven are figures from the eighteenth and nineteenth century (Batman, Gellibrand, Hotham, Lalor, La Trobe and McMillan) while the remaining three (Calwell, Casey and Higgins) are remembered chiefly for their roles in early- to mid-twentieth century Australia.

2. Comments

In the following pages, I will take the opportunity to do four things:

1. comment on some general suggestions put by others in regards to alternative division naming schemes and/or overall naming policy;
2. make some general comments of my own on the subject of naming policy;
3. comment on specific proposals for change to individual names; and
4. make some clarifying comments regarding my own suggestion that the required new division be named Burke.

2.1 Comments on proposals for changes to naming policy/approach

In selecting and changing the names of divisions, the Redistribution Committee of course operates with regard to *Guidelines for naming federal electoral divisions* (the Guidelines). While the Guidelines are not binding on the Committee, they do attempt to codify certain conventions which have emerged over time.

Several submissions suggested changes to the underlying policy principles or approach set out in the Guidelines. Others proposed new or modified criteria or principles which should guide the Committee's decisions, or suggested criteria which should be disregarded. In Table 1, I have set out some suggestions of this nature, and my comments on each.

Table 1

Suggestion (ref. no.)	Comment
Divisions should not be named after people, but after geographic locations (S19)	<p>Disagree – while the use of the names of eminent deceased Australians is a well-established practice, Tim Colebatch argues forcefully for a return to geographical naming of divisions. While the idea is initially attractive for its simplicity, I see three issues.</p> <p>Firstly, state districts in Victoria have long been named on a geographical basis. It is clear to me – both from my work in government and from many years of observing redistribution processes – that many Australians remain unclear as to the difference between the various electoral and administrative boundaries imposed by the three levels of government. The use of geographical names for both state districts and federal divisions would only add to this confusion.</p> <p>Secondly, division boundaries regularly change. While a name like Deakin or Goldstein can be applied to a division in any location, if Ballarat or Murray were to move away from their namesakes it would likely necessitate a change in name. These shifts are even more likely in urban areas where population changes require more radical redrawing of boundaries. For the sake of legibility of our democracy, regular changes to division names should be discouraged.</p> <p>Finally, selecting appropriate geographical names can be a fraught exercise, especially where multiple significant population centres are contained in one district (such as in regional areas). People are more likely to have strong feelings about whether or not they “belong” in a division named Murray or Gippsland than one named Bruce or Menzies. I refer the Committee to the extensive objections made in regard to a relatively minor change to the state district of Bentleigh during the Victorian redivision of 2012-13.¹</p>

¹ Electoral Boundaries Commission (Victoria), 2013, *Report on the 2012-13 redivision of electoral boundaries*, Part III, Paras 167-171. Available at: <http://www.ebc.vic.gov.au/ElectoralBoundaries/PublicResponseProposedBoundaries.html> (accessed on 30 November 2017).

Suggestion (ref. no.)	Comment
<p>Division names should <u>not</u> be rejected because they (wholly or partially) replicate LGA names (S17)</p>	<p>Agree – as Jeff Waddell points out (in support of adopting the name Monash) such duplication is already commonplace in Victoria (e.g. Ballarat, Bendigo, Gippsland, Maribyrnong and Melbourne).</p> <p>I would add that some examples are not even in the same areas of Victoria (e.g. Casey, Corangamite, and La Trobe) but do not appear to cause significant confusion. At the very least, I note that there were no submissions suggesting that this was the case.</p> <p>Unlike state districts (see above), local government areas are sufficiently different in scope and function to be easily differentiated from federal divisions.</p>
<p>Divisions should be named after living persons (S47)</p>	<p>Disagree – Catherine Cowley’s thoroughly-researched submission makes a good case for expediting the recognition of more women and Aboriginal people through division names. I support this endeavour.</p> <p>However, I do not agree that the Committee should depart from established practice and name a division after a living person – not even for former Prime Ministers Julia Gillard and Bob Hawke. Commemoration of this kind is most appropriate where a person has died and their legacy may be assessed in full. Ms Gillard, who is only 56 at the time of writing, may yet pay a significant role in Australian public life in the decades ahead.</p> <p>There are many deceased Australians who have rendered outstanding service to their country, including numerous women and Aboriginal people, and the shortfall in these groups can easily be addressed without naming divisions after living persons.</p>
<p>Various abolished division names should be reinstated (S7, S36, S67)</p>	<p>Disagree in general, agree in some cases – the names of abolished divisions should not be reinstated merely because they were used in the past, and each should stand or fall on its own merits.</p> <p>In the context of the current shortage of divisions named for prominent women, Aboriginal people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, a return to using the names of colonial era dignitaries and squatters (e.g. Bourke, Fawkner, Henty and Higginbotham) should be discouraged.</p> <p>However, some abolished division names could be considered for reinstatement if they provide opportunities to introduce more Aboriginal names (e.g. Corinella, Wimmera, Yarra) or to recognise those whose contribution to Australia was something other than holding a public office (e.g. Streeton).</p>

2.2 General comments on naming policy

At the conclusion of the redistribution process, the Committee will need to recommend names for 38 divisions. In doing so, it will no doubt give strong consideration to the criteria listed in the Guidelines, and in particular to the principle that “names of divisions should not be changed or transferred to new areas without very strong reasons.” I anticipate that most divisions will retain their current names.

Nevertheless, and with a view to gradually improving the list of division names currently in use in Victoria, I will make some general comments on how I believe the Committee should approach the task of naming divisions. I have summarised this approach in Table 2.

Note that I will go in to greater detail on some individual proposals in relation to the names in columns 4 and 5 in the next section.

Table 2

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5
High priority to retain	Retain unless significantly impacted by boundary changes	Retain	High priority to change	Opportunity to improve through change
Aston Bruce Chisholm Deakin Dunkley Goldstein Gorton Holt Isaacs Jagajaga McEwen Menzies Scullin	Ballarat Bendigo Corio Flinders ² Gippsland Indi Kooyong Mallee Maribyrnong Melbourne Murray	Calwell Casey Higgins Lalor La Trobe	Batman McMillan	Corangamite Gellibrand Hotham Melbourne Ports Wannon Wills (see below)
13 names	11 names	5 names	2 names	6 names

I submit that it would be highly undesirable to abolish any division name which commemorates an Aboriginal person, a former Prime Minister, a woman, or a person from a culturally and linguistically diverse background without strong reasons. Therefore, I suggest that every attempt be made to retain the names in column 1 of Table 2.

I further submit that it would be preferable to retain Aboriginal place names, original Federation names, or solely geographical names while these remain relevant to the proposed division boundaries. However, if they lose this relevance then strong consideration should be given to replacing them. Therefore, I suggest that the names in column 2 be retained only if movement of division boundaries does not render them confusing or irrelevant.

Having dealt with the straightforward names, I turn to those in columns 3, 4 and 5 of Table 2. Making judgements as to the historical significance of particular individuals is an inherently challenging task. With the benefit of hindsight, those who were much celebrated in their time may be seen as less than admirable, while those who struggled with public perception (or even went unnoticed) may sometime be redeemed.

From column 3, I consider that **Higgins**, **Lalor** and **La Trobe** are unquestionably figures of historical significance, and the use of these names should continue. **Calwell** and **Casey**, while less celebrated and not without their critics³, certainly rendered significant service to

² The Division of Flinders is not named for the Mornington Peninsula locality of the same name, and need not always contain that area. However, I consider that any division of this name ought to incorporate in a substantial manner the coastal areas of Victoria which were first mapped by Flinders.

³ Calwell for his view that Australia should maintain a European-only immigration policy, and Casey for his controversial decision to appoint of John McEwen as Prime Minister (instead of William McMahon) following the death of Harold Holt.

Australia in their fields. On balance (and in the absence of public suggestions to the contrary) I suggest that the use of these names should continue for the time being.

2.3 Comments on specific proposals for change

High priority for change – Batman and McMillan

I wish to strongly endorse the many submissions which propose to abolish the names **Batman** and **McMillan**. I wish to endorse the joint submission of the Wurundjeri Land & Compensation Cultural Heritage Council Aboriginal Corporation, Darebin and Yarra Councils (S8 and S49) and the joint submission of the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation and Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (S64).

I will not repeat here the arguments made in these and many other detailed submissions, but simply state that the commemoration of two men who were involved in the mass murder of Aboriginal people is so deeply inappropriate and offensive that it should not be allowed to stand.

I further wish to endorse the suggested replacement names of **Simon Wonga** and **Bunjileene–Purrine**. In the event that either name is not considered appropriate for any reason, I encourage the Committee to nevertheless abolish the names Batman and McMillan in recognition of the ongoing trauma they cause to Aboriginal Victorians. Any number of potential names of those “who have rendered outstanding service to their country” – and in particular the names of significant Aboriginal people – would be an improvement on the status quo.

Opportunity to improve through change

A number of current division names (set out in column 5 of Table 2), while relatively inoffensive in and of themselves, present opportunities to improve the overall mix of division names in use in Victoria, including by adopting the names of prominent women or people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Specific details of these proposals, including references to other submissions, are set out in Table 3.

Table 3

Division name	Comments
Corangamite	<p>The current division which bears this name no longer contains either Lake Corangamite, or the Shire of Corangamite (though it does border both).</p> <p>If the division shifts further east in the redistribution, it would be most appropriate to rename the division rather than retaining an irrelevant (if historic) name.</p> <p>In the event that Wannon is not renamed Fraser as I suggested, I support the proposal by Dean Ashley (S67) to apply the name Fraser to this division. I would also support the choice of an appropriate Aboriginal name of relevance to the new geographic area.</p>

Division name	Comments
Gellibrand	<p>The name of this division commemorates Joseph Gellibrand (1786-1836), a lawyer and explorer who is remembered chiefly for helping to draft the so-called 'Batman Treaty' between early land speculators and local indigenous elders, which saw 600,000 acres of land exchanged for some blankets, tools, mirrors and clothing. Gellibrand is a contested, and relatively minor, historical figure who certainly cannot be said to have "rendered outstanding service" to Australia. He is remembered in a number of geographical names and in my view does not truly deserve a federal division.</p> <p>I support the proposal by the Australian Labor Party Victorian Branch (S65) to rename the division after Aboriginal activist and community leader William Cooper. I note that Paul Rodgers (S45) and Catherine Cowie (S47) also propose renaming Gellibrand on similar grounds, though propose alternative replacements.</p>
Hotham	<p>The name of this division commemorates early (Lieutenant-)Governor of Victoria Sir Charles Hotham, who held that role for less than 18 months in 1854 and 1855. While Hotham made some noteworthy contributions in his short tenure, including to the colony's finances, his role in exacerbating tensions on the Victorian goldfields and his early resignation do not suggest someone who "rendered outstanding service" to Australia, especially compared to his predecessor Charles La Trobe (also honoured with a division name). Like Gellibrand, Hotham is remembered in a number of geographical names and does not truly deserve a federal division.</p> <p>I note that David Walsh (S23) and Catherine Cowie (S47) also propose renaming Hotham on similar grounds, though propose alternative replacements.</p> <p>Given the relative lack of distinction of the name Hotham, I propose that the division be renamed for (first female Speaker of the House) Joan Child AO – a name supported by Paul Rodgers (S45) for a different division. Ms Child represented the former division of Henty in Melbourne's south-eastern suburbs, which shares territory with the current division of Hotham.</p>
Melbourne Ports	<p>While the name Melbourne Ports has been in use since Federation, I do not believe that it should therefore remain in use indefinitely. As observed by the Committee for Monash (S9) and The Hon Ted Baillieu (S29), the name is an anachronism. Much of the Port of Melbourne, and all of the Port of Williamstown (which together gave the division its original name) lie outside the division, and have done for some years. As noted by Martin Gordon (S7), the similarity with the adjacent division name of Melbourne is potentially confusing.</p> <p>I therefore support the suggestions of multiple submitters – in particular that of the Committee for Monash (S9) and James Bowen (S26) – to rename Melbourne Ports in recognition of General Sir John Monash. Monash clearly "rendered outstanding service" to Australia in both war and peace. His recognition here would also add to the currently very small number of divisions named after people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.</p>
Wannon	<p>I reiterate my suggestion (S50) that the division of Wannon be renamed "Fraser" in recognition of former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, who held the seat from 1955 to 1983, and had a strong connection to the Western District.</p> <p>For the reasons I outlined in my original submission, I consider that Fraser's name should not be attached to a new urban division.</p> <p>While Wannon is an original Federation division name, and an Aboriginal word, it is the name of a river which is significant in only one part of the division.</p> <p>I note the similar suggestions from Dr Mark Mulcair (S25) and Dr Michael Hedger (S36), and the similar reasoning (albeit in alternate locations) from Jeff Waddell (S17) and Dean Ashley (S67).</p>

Division name	Comments
Wills	<p>I submit that if a division named for Robert O'Hara Burke is not to be reinstated, then continuing the use of the name Wills (Burke's fellow explorer) is something of an anachronism.</p> <p>It is possible that previous redistribution committees have informally earmarked this name for eventual replacement with that of former Prime Minister Bob Hawke, who held the division from 1980 to 1992, and is 87 years old at the time of writing.</p> <p>If this is the case, and Wills is likely to be abolished as a name in a future redistribution, then there seems little reason to reinstate the name Burke (as I proposed in S50). The Committee may wish to consider the merits of creating a single division with the name "Burke & Wills", as a compromise between retaining the names and making space for those of arguably more eminent Australians.</p>

2.4 Comments on naming the new division

In my original submission, I proposed that the new division I drafted in the western suburbs of Melbourne take the name **Maribyrnong**, and that the current division of Maribyrnong adopt the (relatively recently abolished) name **Burke**.

The exact placement of the two names is more or less a matter of semantics: the new division would contain approximately one third of the electors of the former Maribyrnong, and both proposed divisions could make a claim to inherit the name. I note that the Guidelines state that:

When two or more divisions are partially combined, as far as possible the name of the new division should be that of the old division which had the greatest number of electors within the new boundaries.

While I consider it fitting that the current division of **Wills**, named for Burke's fellow explorer, would lie adjacent to my proposed Burke, I would have no strong objection to allocating the name Burke to either my proposed new division or to a differently constructed new division in the northern or western suburbs of Melbourne, and retaining the name Maribyrnong in situ.

I note that a number of submissions, including those of Dr Mark Mulcair (S25), Dr Michael Hedger (S36), Colin McLaren (S52) and Charles Richardson (S66) also propose reinstating the name Burke for the new division (albeit in varying locations).

In line with my comments and observations elsewhere in this document, however, I would entirely support the Committee should it decide to pass over the name Burke in favour of one from an underrepresented group – such as a woman, an Aboriginal person, or a person from a culturally and linguistically diverse background who has contributed in an outstanding manner to the country.

Robert O'Hara Burke and William John Wills were important figures in early European exploration of Australia, and held a special place in the hearts and minds of early Melbournians. The names of explorers, artists, musicians and scientists add a degree of human interest amongst an otherwise relatively dry list of former Vice-Regal officers and Prime Ministers. Nevertheless, it may be hard to justify the retention of these two names amongst a relatively small pantheon of division names as time goes on.