



Suggestion 40

Anne Heath Mennell

3 pages

From: Anne
To: [FedRedistribution - VIC](#)
Subject: Submission to remove the name of McMillan from the Victorian Electorate so named
Date: Thursday, 16 November 2017 5:27:30 PM
Attachments: [McMSubmission.docx](#)

Please find attached my submission arguing for the removal of the name of Angus McMillan from the Gippsland Electorate currently bearing his name.

Our society is steadily becoming more mature in its acceptance of the realities of our founding and I hope that the Commission will acknowledge this development and the arguments in support of renaming the Electorate during the current redistribution process.

Thank you for this opportunity to contribute to the deliberations.

Anne Heath Mennell

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Re: Changing the Name of the McMillan Electorate

November 2017

I am writing in support of the efforts to remove the name of McMillan from the electorate during the current redistribution process. Attempts have been made during previous redistributions, without success. Support for a name-change is growing, as people become more aware of the realities of his life and deeds.

One of the criteria for naming divisions is that they 'should be named after deceased Australians who have rendered outstanding service to their country'. I would argue that Angus McMillan would not qualify under this criterion in the light of evidence discovered over the past few decades. Far from being a 'founding father', he now appears to have been the instigator, or involved in, atrocities, murders and massacres of Aboriginal men, women and children in various parts of Gippsland.

There are no eye-witness accounts of his activities, no confessions, few mentions in the press of the day and only oblique references in contemporary letters, journals etc. It is unlikely that any incontrovertible evidence will emerge at this stage so what evidence we do have will remain circumstantial. It would not be sufficient to sentence him to imprisonment or hanging, which would have been the penalties applied at the time if his actions had been proven. However, we are not seeking a retrospective legal decision, simply an acceptance that the circumstantial evidence is becoming stronger that he does not meet the criteria for using his name for the electorate.

Some would argue that he was merely acting according to the morality of his day and we should not judge him by modern standards. The reality is that McMillan knew what he was doing was both illegal and immoral and that he could face hanging if found out. He ensured that details of his exploits were kept quiet, with the support, if not collusion, of local settlers. There is evidence that not everyone supported his actions but his reputation remained intact and he never faced a legal reckoning. His status as a 'hero', brave explorer and rich landowner remained unsullied.

Under these circumstances it is, perhaps, understandable that his name was attached to the electorate in the past. I would argue that it is now imperative that it be removed as he does not deserve such an honour. His place in the history of colonial Gippsland will remain but his name should be stripped from the electorate where some of the massacres occurred and where descendants of the few Aboriginal people who survived still reside and remember.

I am mindful that at least two earlier attempts have been made to remove McMillan's name, which both failed. The Commission requires 'strong reasons' to consider making a change. In terms of additional evidence, it is unlikely that a stronger case can be made this time. What has changed, in recent times, is a willingness to revisit the history of early settlement and have more mature discussions on these matters. Historians discovered that use of the word 'genocide' to describe

mass killings of Aboriginal people was too confronting and argued that Australia has a culture of 'forgetting and silence' that we are the benefactors of murders, massacres, mis-treatment, atrocities and dispossession of our First People. There appears to be more willingness now to face these unpleasant facts about our founders and we are hearing more of these conversations and seeing ways of making redress. Names can be heavily symbolic and I suggest that removing the name 'McMillan' from the electorate and replacing it with another which is acceptable to the community, especially Aboriginal people, would be a highly symbolic and respectful act.

In conclusion, I have argued above that McMillan does not meet the criterion of 'rendering outstanding service to his country' and does not merit the honour of having an electorate bearing his name. I hope that the members of the Commission will agree.

Anne Heath Mennell

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