



# Suggestion 81

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2 pages

Recommendation of the name – **Billibellary** for the new Victorian electorate



**Billibellary** (c. 1799–1846) was an inspiring indigenous leader, song maker and influential ngurungaeta (or head clansman) of the Wurundjeri-willam clan during the early years of European settlement of Melbourne.

He was an astute and diplomatic leader, described as powerfully built with an influence and reputation that extended well beyond his clan.

When John Batman explored the Yarra river and its tributaries he met Billibellary, one of the eight ngurungaeta he signed a treaty with on 8 June 1835. The meeting took place on the bank of a small stream, likely to be the Merri Creek and treaty documents were signed along with exchanges of goods by both sides.

As Ngurungaeta, or clan headman he was highly respected among the Wurundjeri, and at the time of European settlements, 'he was considered the pre-eminent Kulin clan-head, whose voice carried extra weight.'

In 1845 a school was established on the banks of the Merri Creek to, in European terms, educate and civilise Wurundjeri children. For the first year or two the school enjoyed strong enrolments, largely due to the support and encouragement of Billibellary, who sent his own children along. But there were conflicts over teaching European curriculum and the demands for the teaching of Aboriginal lore and ceremony. The death of Billibellary in 1846 led to a drop in student numbers at the school, with many students drifting away and others becoming disruptive.

Naming an new electorate in Victoria after a key colonial indigenous figure who was instrumental in early political negotiations and developments of the State would be a fitting gesture that commemorates and honours the lasting legacy and place Aboriginal culture deserves in daily life.