



# Comment on suggestion 27

## Reconciliation Victoria

4 pages

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**Subject:** [VIC REDISTRIBUTION SUGGESTIONS] Aileen Traynor \*WWW\* [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]  
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Victorian Redistribution comment on suggestions uploaded from the AEC website.

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Additional information: Attached is a submission from Reconciliation Victoria to The Australian Electoral Commission Redistribution Committee in support of the renaming of the Federal Electorate of McMillan.

ref: Suggestion 64

Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation and Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation

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## A submission from Reconciliation Victoria to The Australian Electoral Commission Redistribution Committee

In support of the renaming of the Federal Electorate of McMillan

### Suggestion 64:

Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation and  
Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation

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#### 1. Introduction

This submission supports the formal suggestion to change the name of the Federal Electorate of McMillan and we support the replacement name - *Bunjilene-Purrine* - chosen by the Aboriginal Communities who carry the legacy of the atrocities committed by Angus McMillan and those whose land the electorate occupies, the Gunaikurnai and the Bunurong People.

Reconciliation Victoria believes that the timing for the Australian Electoral Commission's 2017 redistribution process provides an outstanding opportunity to promote a better understanding of our true history as well as a community discussion about the importance of expanding Aboriginal cultural heritage as a means towards reconciliation.

To achieve reconciliation in Victoria, Reconciliation Victoria champions the recognition of Aboriginal Victorians as the first peoples of the region and the special place they have in our community. We believe that respect for culture, land and heritage is something all Victorians must develop further.

We believe that governments and government institutions at all levels have a vital role to play in promoting and celebrating local histories, and in the process of truth-telling.

Victoria has a rich and diverse Aboriginal history going back thousands of years, and which continues today. It is important that Aboriginal people see the long history of their connection to the land and particular places is reflected appropriately in place naming.

Many Aboriginal people have played a significant role in the development of local areas post-settlement. Recognition of the active involvement of Aboriginal people in the

community is a positive step and supports a culture of respect in the broader community.

We believe it is paramount that governments work with Traditional Owners to provide appropriate naming and interpretation for the general community to recognise the connection of Aboriginal people to places prior to European settlement.

## **2. Community appetite for change**

There has been a groundswell of concern to change the current name of the electorate. Numerous articles have appeared in the national and local press about the unworthiness of honouring a man such as Angus McMillan, and the cruelty of perpetuating this memory for the Aboriginal descendants of those impacted by his actions.

The Scottish press has published many articles about Cal Flynn's book *Thicker than Water*, tracing her shocked discovery of the flawed life of her great great uncle.

Korumburra Secondary College have set the tone by changing the name of their McMillan House to Howitt House, following a student-led campaign. Howitt is respected by many Gunnaikurnai people as he recorded much of the language and thus contributed to its survival.

## **3. The legacy of Angus McMillan**

As has been documented by a number of historians (including Peter Gardner and Professor Lyndall Ryan), Angus McMillan was responsible for a number of massacres of Aboriginal people in the 1840s, numbering some hundreds of men, women and children, and he contributed significantly to the near annihilation within a single decade of the Gunnaikurnai people (or Kurnai as they were largely called by Europeans in the past).

Professor Ryan from the University of New South Wales has recently published a work (2017 a, b and Appendix 2) that is progressively mapping those massacres on the east coast of Australia that she states are uncontested in the veracity of their claims. She has recorded five massacres in Gippsland, four of which are attributed to McMillan, and account for between 111 and 201 deaths.

Given the legacy of Angus McMillan and the clear injustices meted out to Aboriginal people, there is a very strong case to argue that McMillan's name should no longer be honoured publically in contemporary Australian culture.

#### 4. Conclusion

Changing the name of the Division of McMillan would be an important contribution and logical next step on a journey towards reconciliation. It would recognise the distinct place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia's history and its future as a cohesive, inclusive and respectful society.

Significantly, a name change would advance the journey of healing by clarifying history to truly reflect the past and enable all people, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, to stand together with shared understanding and hope.

We urge the Australian Electoral Commission to support this name change for the benefit of all the community and future generations.

End

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