



Objection 73

Peter Willcocks

2 pages

Email Submission to Australian Electoral Commission – Peter Willcocks

From: Peter Willcocks

Sent: Tuesday, 19 April 2018 9:28 AM

To: 'fedredistribution-vic@aec.gov.au' <fedredistribution-vic@aec.gov.au>

Subject: Proposed renaming of Melbourne Ports

18 April 2018

Australian Electoral Commission.

Re: Renaming of Melbourne Ports to Macnamara.

Dear Commissioners,

My submission is in favour of the renaming of Melbourne Ports to Macnamara.

I applaud the commission for making the recommendation for change. The electorate of Melbourne Ports' prime industry is no longer that of shipping.

The renaming of Melbourne Ports to Macnamara is an inspired opportunity to raise awareness of the work of Dame Jean Macnamara. She was not only a medical practitioner, a scientist, a polio specialist but most importantly an advocate for social change. She created awareness of social inclusion and educational opportunities for those deemed at the time less academically capable.

I am one of the tens of thousands of Australians who had paralytic polio. I am indeed in her debt, not so much for her work as a doctor but more from her way of doing things that recognised polio survivors as people who can live a full life. Prior to her inclusiveness, women who had polio were discouraged from marriage and having children, boys were discouraged from 'men's' work and study. As disabled we were directed to nonchallenging sedentary tasks.

I am fortunate to have discovered some of the work of Jean Macnamara as part of study some years ago into the social and economic impact of infectious disease in Victoria.

The young Jean Macnamara graduated with a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery from Melbourne University in 1922. The network had begun, she graduated with other notables of 20th century Dame Kate Campbell (Paediatrician), Lucy Bryce (Haematologist and medical scientist), Jean Littlejohn (Ear, nose and throat surgeon) and Sir Macfarlane Burnet (Nobel prize 1960 for medical research).

One of the significant differences in the career of Dr Macnamara was her personal commitment to people who had polio which began in 1925 as medical officer responsible to the Poliomyelitis Committee of Victoria. In 1925 it was accepted that there was no cure for polio, treatments varied many of which resulting in lasting legacies of pain, crippling and isolation; children that had polio were treated as victims and in the main deemed of little potential for employment to be hidden from society.

By 1938 Dr Macnamara was widely published, had developed research partnerships not

only in Australian but also in America and England. She had inspired our top scientists, politicians, fund raisers, fellow practitioners, trainee physios and the very people care was direct at, those that had polio to find a cure to find a vaccine. Though 'a cure' still alludes us, it was due in some part to some of her earlier research into the virus that led to that great day in 1956 when our first Jonas Salk polio vaccinations began in Victoria.

In 1937-8 there were 2276 notifications in Victoria of poliomyelitis. Of the many articles on and by Dame Jean Macnamara, the following 1938 article in the Gippsland Times shows the extent of depth of her reporting, of the esteem in which she was held and her worthiness of the renaming of Melbourne Ports to Macnamara.

"Victorians on their mettle -

This is the first epidemic (1938) in Victoria in which we have the facilities to give each child anything like ideal treatment. In the past – 1931 for example we had to choose between giving a few a splendid chance and neglecting the remainder or trying to ensure that everyone was cared for as well as we could. We then chose the last-mentioned alternative..."¹

Your sincerely,

Peter Willcocks



¹ Gippsland Times (Vic.: 1861-1954), Monday 24 January 1938, page 6