



Objection 326

Boroondara Reconciliation Network

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On behalf of the Boroondara Reconciliation Network, I wish to object to the retention of the electorate name of Batman in the new Victorian seat redistribution. John Batman may have been the first European settler in the Melbourne area but his treatment of the Indigenous people as an invader of their lands makes him a most inappropriate person for an electoral name to celebrate.

Before his arrival in the Port Phillip District, Batman was a settler in Van Diemen's Land who led roving parties to fight Aborigines and participated in the infamous Black Line campaign attempting to drive Aborigines off the island. In Port Phillip, he resorted to forging details of an alleged treaty and land sale with local "tribal chiefs" in an attempt to justify a massive land grab.

William Buckley, who had lived with the local Port Phillip for thirty-two years before walking into Batman's camp saw Batman's "treaty" for what it was,

"I knew that if any transactions had taken place, it must have been because the natives knew nothing of the value of the country, except as hunting grounds, supplying them with the means of present existence. I therefore looked upon the land dealing spoken of, as another hoax of the white man, to possess the inheritance of the uncivilised natives of the forest, whose tread on the vast Australian continent will very soon be no more heard."

It can reasonably argued that Batman's behaviour laid the ground for the near genocide of Port Phillip's original inhabitants. His name does not deserve to be honoured in an electoral name. It is similar to the controversy over the continuation of the name Asperger's to refer to an autism syndrome when new research has revealed that the pioneering Austrian paediatrician whose name came to describe patients with Asperger's syndrome was in fact a Nazi collaborator who sent children to their deaths.

At a time when the Victorian Government is preparing the groundwork for a Treaty the Australian Electoral Commission could take this redistribution as an opportunity to celebrate our First Australians by renaming the new seat with a suitable Woiwurrung name.