



Objection 9

James Doyle

2 pages

To the Australian Electoral Commission,

Thank you for all the hard work you have put into developing the proposed redistribution of the ACT's electorates.

I think it is highly desirable, as a small gesture of reconciliation, that the ACT, as the seat of national decision-making, contain electorates with Aboriginal names. I strongly object to the total failure of the AEC to recommend the use of Aboriginal names for ACT divisions.

I think it is highly regrettable that the AEC is displaying a very strong bias towards European colonial and post-colonial history over the Indigenous history and geography of Australia. The bias implicit in rejecting Aboriginal names and retaining and suggesting new white European names for these divisions suggests that the AEC has failed to be inclusive of the opinions and experiences of all Australians.

Furthermore, I would suggest that AEC has not made an adequate effort in searching for a name that considers and respects the local Indigenous history of the ACT. This failure to be inclusive and consultative is highly disappointing given the AEC's solemn responsibility to take into consideration the needs of all Australians.

I recognise, respect, and applaud the contribution that Charles Bean made as a war correspondent and as a key figure in the establishment of the Australian War Memorial. However I respectfully do not consider this a strong enough contribution to the nation to justify rejecting the use of Aboriginal names for the southernmost electorate of the ACT.

Brindabella and Namadgi are the most obvious names for this electorate, and while these are geographic names, which the AEC prefers to avoid, I would point out that the ACT is small enough that there will always be a division that must contain these geographic features, and which consequently will always bear a relationship to that name. Also, there is already a well established precedent, given the naming of ACT Legislative Assembly divisions are based on Aboriginal words and names for geographic features. Further, there are divisions right across Australia that are named for geographic features or regions, including in the case of the vast majority of the electorates with Aboriginal names.

As an alternative to these geographic names I would put forward the suggestion, 'Juninmingo', an Aboriginal woman who led James Ainslie to the Canberra area, where he established a station at Duntroon on behalf of his employer, Robert Campbell. Ainslie then took Juninmingo as his common law wife.

In suggesting this name to the AEC, I would urge the commission to note there are only 19 federal electoral divisions named for women and only 19 with fully or partially Aboriginal names. Additionally, of those 19 electorates with Aboriginal names, only four (Bennelong, Jagajaga, Bonner, and Lingiari) are named for Aboriginal men, and none are named for Aboriginal women. It is also worth pointing out that the vast majority of electorates with Aboriginal names are named for geographical features, which serves to highlight the AEC's inconsistency (and perhaps even hypocrisy) in resisting the use of the names Brindabella and Namadgi.

For the naming of the three ACT electoral divisions I would propose:

A) that the central ACT division currently proposed as the division of 'Canberra' (and the historic location of the station established by John Ainslie) be named Juninmingo. In the case that Juninmingo is not used I would propose that the central electorate be named Ngambri, the Indigenous word from which Canberra was derived, and an Aboriginal people who also claim custodianship of land in the ACT.

B) that the division currently proposed as the division of 'Bean' be named Ngunnawal (to recognize the traditional and acknowledged Indigenous custodians of the ACT, or Ngambri if Juninmingo is used as suggested in A and Ngunnawal is decided against, or Brindabella or Namadgi If Juninmingo is not used as suggested in A, and/or Ngunnawal and Ngambri are decided against.

C) that the name Fenner be retained for the northernmost division of the ACT, in honour and recognition of Frank Fenner's enormous achievement in overseeing the eradication of smallpox, thereby helping to save millions, as well as the control of the rabbit plague through the introduction of the Mymoxma virus, helping to protect and preserve Australian flora and fauna.

In considering this proposal I strongly urge the AEC to be inclusive of the Aboriginal peoples of Australia in their naming of electoral division in the ACT.

Respectfully,

James Doyle

For more information about Juninmingo and Ngambri:

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/specials/curious-canberra/2016-04-04/curious-canberra-what-is-the-aboriginal-history-of-canberra/7286124>

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/specials/curious-canberra/2016-04-04/indigenous-sites-in-canberra/7281812>