



# Comment on objections 2

GetUp! Batman Action Group (GUBAG)

3 pages

**From:** Meredith Kefford  
**To:** FedRedistribution - VIC  
**Subject:** REDISTRIBUTION OF FEDERAL ELECTORAL DIVISIONS IN VICTORIA: ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF OBJECTION RECEIVED AFTER THE LODGEMENT TIME [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]  
**Date:** Monday, 7 May 2018 4:24:31 PM

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Thanks Melanie,

Please treat the letter that was sent by GUBAG on 3 May 2018 as a 'comment on objections' for the Victorian federal redistribution."

Meredith

Meredith Kefford





**ACTION GROUP NETWORK**  
**Batman (GUBAG)**

The Redistribution Secretariat for Victoria,  
Australian Electoral Commission,  
GPO Box 768, Melbourne VIC 3001

AEC VIC SO 07 MAY 2018

2 May 2018

Dear Officer

**Change the Name of the Electorate of Batman**

I'm writing on behalf of the members of our local Getup! group, known as GUBAG (GetUp! Batman Action Group) to express our disappointment at the AEC's Redistribution Committee's failure to take seriously the strong arguments AGAINST retaining the name "Batman" for our electorate, and to urge the committee to reconsider.

GetUp! suggests that local action groups take the name of their federal electorate. However, our group decided from the start that we don't want to be identified with the name Batman. We have been eagerly awaiting the AEC's decision, expecting that the committee would accept the recommendation of the Wurundjeri council and the two local government Councils to change the name to Simon Wonga. Unfortunately, the AEC has disappointed us, with no rational explanation, stating only that "the Redistribution Committee... does not consider that strong enough reasons have been provided...". This is a totally uninformed response to the information that is now available regarding John Batman's actions in the invasion of what was to become Tasmania, and what is now Victoria.

Before coming to Victoria, John Batman played a significant role in the brutal dispossession of indigenous Australians in Tasmania. It seems inconceivable that your committee could have ignored available evidence and made the decision to retain the name of a man described by the artist John Glover, Batman's neighbour in Van Diemen's Land, as "a rogue, thief, cheat and liar, a murderer of blacks and the vilest man I have ever known". It is well known now that in Van Diemen's Land, Batman took part in "roving parties", paid by the colonial authorities to round up aboriginal people and even kill them – men, women and children – if they resisted. In this electorate, we have a significant indigenous population. They have rejected the current name of the electorate. How can we pretend to be moving in the spirit of reconciliation, while naming the electorate after a man who played such a role?

Even more poignant in this electorate is the knowledge that it was in THIS local area, on the banks of the Merri Creek, that Batman "purchased" 240,000 hectares of Wurundjeri ancestral land, imagining that a few mirrors, shirts, and beads was a fair exchange for this enormous stretch of valuable property, which went on to become Melbourne.





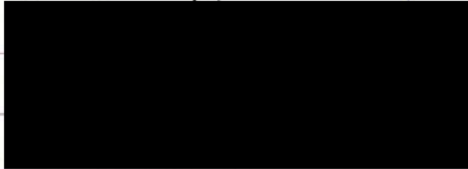
**ACTION GROUP NETWORK**  
**Batman (GUBAG)**

John Batman epitomizes the spirit of exploitative and ruthless colonial invasion. Though he may well have furthered the goals of the British government at the time – on the basis of which modern Australia prospers – his name and his actions cannot be memorialized when we are seeking to reconcile with the First Australians – for their sake and for our own.

We urge the Redistribution Committee to review their decision to retain this offensive electoral name, and in the spirit of reconciliation, to consider renaming it after Simon Wonga, a respected indigenous leader whose name has already been put forward on many occasions.

Our Getup Action Group is free to choose a different name, but our strong preference would be to identify proudly with the name of our electorate.

Yours sincerely,



Meredith Kefford  
Coordinator



On behalf of GetUp! Batman Action Group (GUBAG)