



Objection 18

Campbell Rhodes

2 pages

To whom it may concern,

This is to formally express my objection to some proposed names of new electoral divisions in the Victorian redistribution of 2018. I extend this definition to cover existing divisions that have been altered in the redistribution.

My objections and alternative suggestions are as follows:

Proposed Division of Monash

I do not believe it is appropriate to name any federal entity after a military commander, even one of Monash's status. There are many prominent people from the arts, sciences, politics and activism whose lives are less commemorated than Sir John Monash, especially women and Indigenous Australians.

As an alternative, I propose the name Division of Peacock after Millicent Peacock, the first woman to serve in the Victorian Parliament.

Proposed Division of Batman

This division is named for John Batman, the founder of Melbourne. Batman's treaty with the local people was based on the idea that Aboriginal people were inferior, and is now considered invalid by most legal experts. Batman's 'negotiation' was little more than a swindle; it is in fact considered possible he forged the signatures of the local peoples. Further, as a figure of colonial expansion, Batman is associated with the mass genocide of Indigenous Australians.

As an alternative to Batman, I suggest the name Division of Barak, after Indigenous elder William Barak, a Wurundjeri man who was present at the signing of Batman's treaty.

Proposed Division of Cox

My objection is merely based on the sound of the phrase 'Division of Cox' and 'Member for Cox'. While it is unfortunate that May Cox's name is a homonym for a rude word, in this instance I believe the AEC should rethink the proposal, as evidenced by the mocking already underway on social media.

Proposed Divisions of Gellibrand, Flinders and Wills

I believe it is not appropriate to name institutions for British explorers, who were complicit in the conquest of Australia from its traditional owners. Further, the idea that these men were 'pioneers' and that they 'discovered' Australia is inherently problematic – they didn't discover anything, they simply named it in English and claimed it for their own government.

I take particular objection to the naming of 'Wills' after William Wills. The Burke and Wills expedition was a complete disaster. Both Burke and Wills were supremely incompetent, believing in their own racial superiority, and had little experience at wilderness survival. Only truly incompetent explorers would take a cedar table and Chinese gong on an expedition over extra supplies. With this understanding of the Burke and Wills expedition, it is clear W J Wills is not an appropriate namesake for a federal division.

Proposed Divisions of La Trobe, Hotham

For reasons similar to the above, I believe it is not appropriate to name federal divisions after colonial governors. Charles La Trobe and Charles Hotham were representatives of a conquering power who used their positions to enable the extermination of the traditional inhabitants of their land. Hotham, in particular, is noteworthy for his role in the prosecution of the Eureka rebels. Hotham ordered the release of several notable Americans who were involved at Eureka but deliberately did not include John Joseph, who was black. It has been suggested that Hotham's act was to ensure jurors would convict Joseph due to his race.

Alternative suggestions

In light of the above, I propose the following as alternative names for electoral divisions:

- Division of Wonga, after Wurundjeri elder Simon Wonga
- Division of Harding, after Indigenous activist Eleanor Harding
- Division of Derrimut, after Boonwurrung leader Derrimut
- Division of Mullett, after Gunai/Kurnai elder Albert Mullett
- Division of Dunolly, after Indigenous activist Thomas Dunolly
- Division of Patten, after prominent Indigenous activist and boxer Jack Patten
- Division of Dugdale, after suffrage campaigner Henrietta Dugdale
- Division of Henry, after suffragist and journalist Alice Henry
- Division of Kirner, after Joan Kirner, the first woman to be Premier of Victoria
- Division of Child, after Joan Child, the first woman to be Speaker of the House of Representatives

Kind regards,

Campbell Rhodes

