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WESTERN AUSTRALIA

## Objection 34

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## **Submission to Australian Electoral Commission in relation to the naming of new Electoral Division Bullwinkel.**

We are writing in relation to the naming of the proposed new Division of Bullwinkel in Western Australia and to propose an alternative name of Beard for this Division, after Alma May Beard.

Our Aunty, Alma May Beard was a Toodyay local, one of the 21 nurses who survived the sinking of the Vyner Brooke in World War 2 only to be massacred on Radji Beach. She was 29.

Alma was born on 14 Jan 1913 in Toodyay, Western Australia (a town in the proposed new Division). Her father's family had taken up farming in the 1850s at Toodyay on a farm named Pell Mell.

The Beards were one of the earliest families to settle in the area and she was the third generation born on this farm.

She attended the local primary school before boarding at Victoria Square in Perth for High School. She undertook her nursing training at Royal Perth Hospital.

Alma was one of 65 Australian nurses evacuated from Singapore aboard the SS Vyner Brooke in February 1942 which was bombed by the Japanese. The survivors spent up to 65 hours in the water before stepping onto the sand of Radji Beach at Banka Island.

Alma was among the 22 Australian nurses who made it to the beach and remained there to tend to the wounded. The nurses were captured by Japanese soldiers who ordered them back into the water where they were machine gunned in the shallows.

Her mother (our grandmother) later received a letter from Vivian Bullwinkel, (the sole survivor) telling how Alma's "Brave conduct in her hour of crisis has added lustre to the service which she so nobly carried on".

In 1992, the Alma Beard Community Health Centre was opened in her hometown of Toodyay in memory of her service. And in 2022 a memorial sculpture was also erected outside the Medical Centre.

We consider naming this Division after Alma Beard would honour the memory of a local victim of a war crime, particularly a nurse, who were so often overlooked for their dedication and service during war. It would also recognise someone with a strong family and historical connection to this Electoral Division (Toodyay being part of this Division).

This proposal is not intended to diminish any way the significant contribution or courage displayed by Vivian Bullwinkel throughout her life. In fact, we consider it would support and honour Vivian Bullwinkel's strong desire to honour the victims of that massacre.

We also think Vivian would be happy to see her friend honoured in such a way.

We are Alma's nieces and nephews, her direct surviving relatives. Aunty Alma's story has always been an important part of our family history from our childhood and an inspiration to us all.

Marion Beard, Peter Beard, Anthony Beard, Josephine Beard, Michael Beard, Erica Peet, Graham Johnson, Janice Mairata, and Paul Johnson.