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Submission CS63

Linda

Name an electorate Kellerman

Annette Kellerman – wow!

Australia's first international film star. An extraordinary achievement in itself. But perhaps her most significant contribution was something even more enduring: her invention, promotion and popularisation of lightweight, practical one-piece swimming costumes for women.

Clothing is often dismissed as something ordinary, even trivial. But it is anything but. Clothing is art, culture, identity and big business. It is also fundamental to human wellbeing. In Maslow's hierarchy of needs, clothing is part of meeting our basic physiological needs, alongside air, water, food, shelter and sleep.

And Annette Kellerman changed women's clothing in a way that changed women's lives.

Her promotion of practical swimming costumes helped free women from the restrictive, heavy swimming attire of the Victorian era. Those cumbersome neck-to-knee woollen garments made swimming difficult, uncomfortable and potentially dangerous. Kellerman challenged the conventions of her time and helped make swimming more accessible to women.

This was about much more than fashion. It was about freedom of movement, health, fitness and opportunity. It enabled women to participate more comfortably in swimming and physical exercise, contributing to a broader transformation in women's access to sport and recreation.

It is difficult to overstate the significance of that contribution. More than a century later, the basic concept of a practical one-piece swimming costume remains part of everyday life around the world.

Kellerman was an entrepreneur, innovator, athlete and entertainer. She identified a problem, challenged convention and helped create a solution that had a lasting impact on women internationally.

So why do we so often name electorates after politicians, explorers and place names, while overlooking people whose contributions have fundamentally changed everyday life?

We should be willing to be daring and different.

An electorate name is an opportunity to recognise the people, achievements and values that have helped shape our nation. Recognition should not be limited to those who held political office or explored unfamiliar territory.

It should also recognise the innovators, entrepreneurs and trailblazing women whose contributions have improved the lives of generations.

Annette Kellerman deserves that recognition.

Her legacy is not confined to history books. It is reflected every time a woman puts on a swimming costume and enjoys the freedom to swim, exercise and participate in life.

Be daring. Be different. Recognise an Australian woman whose contribution continues to be felt more than 100 years later.

Name an electorate Kellerman.