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Elizabeth

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, Elizabeth - Redistribution QLD - Submission

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Submission details

Submission: Names
Details: I do not support Anonymous 7's suggestion that an electorate be named after Arthur Beetson.

Electorate names should recognise people whose contributions to Australia have been practical, transformative and enduring, rather than simply symbolic or historical. In my view, the arguments advanced by Anonymous 7 are more about symbolic recognition than demonstrating a contribution that meets the broader purpose of naming a federal electorate.

While Arthur Beetson may be an important figure in rugby league, the

reach of that sport should also be considered. Rugby league has its strongest following in New South Wales, Queensland and the ACT. Despite the introduction of a Melbourne team, it remains a sport with a relatively concentrated geographical following, rather than one that is central to the lives or national identity of most Australians.

More importantly, the naming guidelines concern contributions to the nation, not simply contributions to a particular sporting code or local sporting community. There is a distinction between recognising sporting excellence and recognising someone whose contribution has helped shape the country as a whole.

I also question the suggestion that Beetson is among the most widely recognised Indigenous Australian sportspeople. I acknowledge that my own awareness is not necessarily representative of the wider community, but I had not heard of him before reading this proposal.

There is also a broader issue of balance in the names we choose for our electorates. Only one federal electorate has been named after a convict, and fewer than ten have been named after artists, poets or authors. By contrast, sporting figures are already well represented in public commemorations and place names. I would argue that the arts, literature and cultural contributions to our national story deserve greater

recognition.

Sport is important to many Australians, but I do not accept that it is necessarily a cornerstone of our national identity, nor that sporting achievement should automatically qualify someone for the naming of a federal electorate.

I therefore urge that this proposal be rejected. Arthur Beetson may well deserve recognition for his achievements and contribution to rugby league, but I do not believe that naming a federal electorate after him is consistent with the purpose and principles of the electorate naming guidelines.