



Suggestion 27

Eureka Australia

2 pages



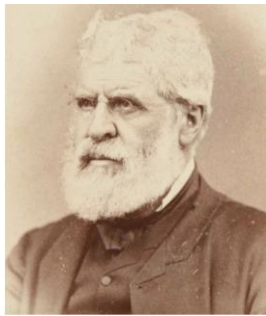
The Director,
Australian Electoral Commission,
Canberra, ACT

October 8, 2020

Re: SUGGESTION FOR NAMING OF NEW FEDERAL ELECTORATE IN VICTORIA

Eureka Australia: Descendants and Supporters Inc is a bi-partisan community group that aims to promote awareness of the significance of the battle at the Eureka goldfield in Ballarat in 1854 for the development of Victorian, and indeed Australian democracy. We have presented the Eureka Democracy Award since 2007 at an annual dinner to a person or organisation who has contributed to making Australian society more democratic and less unequal. We suggest that an appropriate name for the proposed new federal electorate in Victoria is 'Chapman'.

Henry Chapman (1803-1881) was a Victorian barrister who, we believe, deserves greater recognition today. The principle reasons are:



1. He was a pivotal figure in the introduction and successful passage of the secret ballot legislation in Victoria in 1855, despite the determined opposition of the Government. Victoria was the first Australian colony to have secret voting.
2. Chapman personally drafted the provisions of the electoral act that related to the introduction of the secret ballot after it had been passed by the original Victorian Legislative Council, and after the legal officers of the Government of the day refused to draught the provisions of the statute.
3. Chapman was responsible for the invention of the accoutrements of elections that are familiar to us today, here and in many other countries. They are: the voting paper prepared by the Government with the names of the candidates printed upon it, the private stall for marking of the ballot paper and the sealed box to hold the completed ballot papers.
4. Chapman acted pro-bono as counsel for John Joseph, the Afro-American man who was the first of the prisoners from Eureka to be tried and acquitted on a charge of high treason. Joseph's acquittal undermined the entire prosecution case, and the ensuing trials of eleven others on the same charge all ended in acquittals.

THE 'KEY TO POLITICAL PROGRESS'

Since the 1830s, the British Chartist movement had campaigned (without success) for the introduction of voting by secret ballot, in order to eliminate corrupt voting practices. In December 1855, the goldfields community of Forest Hill (Castlemaine) petitioned the Victorian Legislative Council for the introduction of the secret ballot. There were many points of dissatisfaction with the recently proclaimed new Victorian Constitution of 1855, but Henry Chapman, as a member of the Legislative Council, urged his fellow members who were in favour of reform to prioritise the issue of the secret ballot, for he regarded it as 'the key to political progress'.¹ This proved to be sound advice because, following the introduction of voting by secret ballot, a number of other aspects of the Constitution such as a restrictive property franchise, very long terms of office for Upper House members, unequal electorate sizes, and other undemocratic features were progressively reformed.

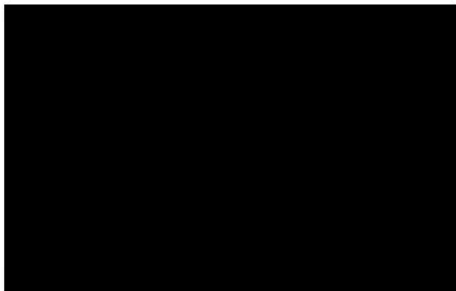
¹ Geraldine Moore, *George Higinbotham and Eureka: The Struggle For Democracy In Colonial Victoria*. P. 149.

The Canberra suburb of Chapman is not named after Henry Chapman. It is named after Sir Austin Chapman, (1864 to 1896) who held portfolios in the Deakin and Bruce Governments.

In commenting on Chapman's significance, Judith Brett (Emeritus Professor of Politics at Latrobe University) writes:

*The official printed ballot paper and the compartments for voting became known as the Australian ballot, and attracted the interest of reformers in Britain and the United States... It was adopted in New Zealand in 1879 and the United Kingdom in 1872... The Australian ballot then spread throughout Europe, the Canadian provinces and the American states, though each polity made its own minor variations.*²

Because of Chapman's significance to Victoria, Australia and the world, we believe that it is time to commemorate his achievement by naming the proposed new electorate after him.



Eureka Australia,

References:

1. 'Chapman, Henry Samuel (1803-1881)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 3, 1969. <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/chapman-henry-samuel-3193>
2. Judith Brett, *From Secret Ballot to Democracy Sausage: How Australia Got Compulsory Voting*. Text Publishing Company, Melbourne, 2019. P.19-25.
3. Geraldine Moore, *George Higinbotham and Eureka: The Struggle For Democracy In Colonial Victoria*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 2018. pp 148-9.
4. "H.S. Chapman and the 'Victorian Ballot'", *Historical Studies, Australia and New Zealand*, Vol. 12 No. 48, April 1967. pp 506-521.

Eureka Australia Descendants and Supporters Inc.

² Judith Brett, *From Secret Ballot to Democracy Sausage: How Australia Got Compulsory Voting* p.24.