



Comment on objections 2

Professor Peter Stanley

1 page

Observations on the naming of the new ACT electorate

I am shocked at the number who represent Charles Bean as 'anti-Semitic' (even 'stridently' in one case). As an historian I think these submissions (of which there is evidence of collusion or an orchestrated campaign) should not be accorded weight in the decision. Having defended Bean against charges that anti-Semitism should be counted against his many other substantial achievements, however, I have to say that I am more persuaded by the argument that the new electorate should be named in honour of a woman and an Indigenous woman at that. By all means do not name the new electorate after Charles Bean, but decide against according that honour without unfairly blackening his name. As I have written publicly, Bean shared the anti-Semitism common to Anglo-Australia a century ago. His action in opposing Monash's appointment as commander of the Australian Corps are well known and documented – mostly because he himself preserved the evidence of his opinion. Unlike most Australians of that time, Bean changed his mind, on this and other questions (such as the White Australia policy – if all those who agreed with that policy at the time were to be removed from having electorates named after them, then not a single electorate named after a politician from before 1970 would remain). Still, if the electorate is not to be named after another white, Anglo-Australian male, then let it be named after a woman of colour.

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