



# Objection 67

Dr Patrick Stokes

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**From:** Patrick Stokes  
**To:** [FedRedistribution - VIC](#)  
**Subject:** Victorian Redistribution Objection - Division of Batman  
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Dear Australian Electoral Commission,

Further to the call for comments and objections to the current proposals for redistribution in Victoria, I write to object to the committee's recommendation to retain the name of the Division of Batman, in which I am an enrolled voter.

Firstly, I welcome the recommendation to rename of the Division of McMillan to the Division of Monash; it is clear that continuing to honour Angus McMillan would be an insult to the Gunai/Kurnai people of Gippsland, in whose murder and dispossession McMillan was an active participant and director.

For the same reasons, however, I was surprised and deeply disappointed to see that the committee proposes to retain the present name of the Division of Batman (which does have some proposed boundary changes recommended) despite a number of submissions urging it be changed. John Batman's murder, enslavement, and dispossession of Aboriginal people in Van Diemen's Land is well-recorded and well-known, and the committee has been thoroughly apprised of these facts via the submissions received.

The names of Australian electorates serve to honour the dead. But they also speak to what in our collective history we take to be commendable and of value. In continuing to use his name for the Division, we are sending the message that the life of John Batman is somehow commendable. Sending such a message is no longer ethically tenable. Whatever 'service' Batman may once have been understood as having rendered to the Australian community – and we should keep in mind that his actions in attempting to claim what is now Melbourne from the Wurundjeri people were wholly self-interested – is manifestly outweighed and defeated by the magnitude of his crimes. In a piece published in the most recent edition of *Meanjin* [1] I argued that even judging Batman by the standards of his own time rather than our own is still not exculpatory; even within his own context he was regarded as a murderer and a thoroughly unscrupulous individual.

As an elector of Batman I am ashamed that my electorate bears the name of a man responsible for these crimes. I would urge the Commission to revisit the Committee's decision not to rename Batman and to choose a name that does not constitute a standing insult to our first nations.

Yours sincerely,

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[1] Stokes, P. 'The Moral Moment' *Meanjin*, Autumn 2018

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