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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

O/N H-1946857

**PUBLIC INQUIRY OF THE AUGMENTED ELECTORAL COMMISSION
FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: **THE HON. SUSAN KENNY AM KC, Chairperson
(Chairperson of the Australian Electoral Commission)
MR TOM ROGERS
(Electoral Commissioner, Australian Electoral Commission)
MS CAROLINE SPENCER
(Auditor General for Western Australia)
MS DIONE BILICK
(Surveyor General of Western Australia)
MS ANITA RATCLIFFE
(Australian Electoral Officer for Western Australia)**

LOCATION: **PERTH TOWN HALL, 601 HAY STREET, PERTH**

DATE: **10.05 AM, WEDNESDAY, 7 AUGUST 2024**

CHAIR: Good morning, everyone. I think it's time we begin. Welcome to the hearing of the augmented Electoral Commission for Western Australia. I would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today, and pay my respects to their Elders, both past and present.

5

Now, let me introduce myself. I am Susan Kenny, and the chairperson of this augmented Electoral Commission. The other members of the Electoral Commission are Dr David Gruen, the Australian statistician who is unable to participate today, and Mr Tom Rogers on my left, the Australian Electoral Commissioner. The other members who make up the augmented Electoral Commission are Ms Caroline Spencer, the Auditor General for Western Australia, on my right, and to my far right is Ms Anita Ratcliffe, the Australian Electoral Officer for Western Australia, and to my far left is Ms Dione Bilick, the Surveyor General of Western Australia.

10
15 Now, can I commence with just some brief observations which impact on the sort of report we're bound to make. Part IV of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* sets out the requirements to be followed in conducting redistributions. This redistribution is required because Western Australia's entitlement to the House of Representatives has increased from 15 to 16, necessitating one more division. In accordance with section 66 of the Electoral Act, the Redistribution Committee for Western Australia – the Redistribution Committee – has prepared a proposal for the redistribution of Western Australia, which you've all seen, I suspect.

20
25 The proposal, together with the written reasons for the proposal, which is required by section 67 of the Electoral Act, was released by the Redistribution Committee on the 31st of May this year. In accordance with section 68 of the Electoral Act, interested individuals and organisations were invited to make written objections to the proposed redistribution and to provide comments on those objections. A total of 45 objections and 15 comments on objections were received within the required timeframe. This augmented Electoral Commission is required by section 72, sub-section (1), of the Electoral Act to consider all objections lodged in relation to a redistribution – to the redistribution proposal – and all comments on objections.

30
35 The inquiry here today provides the opportunity for members of the public to make submissions about those objections. May I say how grateful and gratifying it is to see all of you here today. The Electoral Act specifies how the redistribution process is conducted and which factors are to be taken into account. Sub-section 73(4) of the Electoral Act states that the primary consideration for the augmented Electoral Commission is that each electoral division meet certain numerical requirements in the form of the redistribution quota and the projected enrolment quota and the acceptable tolerances around these two quotas.

40
45 Subject to an electoral division satisfying those numbers, sub-section 73(4) also requires that we have regard to communities of interest within electoral divisions. This includes economic, social and regional interests, and I think some of you want

to speak about that today. We also need to have regard to means of communication and travel within electoral divisions, physical features and the area of electoral divisions. The boundaries of existing electoral divisions are also considered but I think, for clear reasons, are subordinate to the factors I've just mentioned. We're
5 engaged in redistribution, after all. Of course, boundaries change and, often, there has to be compensating adjustments to boundaries to make sure the electoral divisions are within the numerical tolerances.

10 Now, so you know, the inquiry today will be recorded. Transcripts of proceedings will be made available as part of the augmented Electoral Commission's report and will be on the Australian Electoral Commission website once this report has been tabled in Parliament.

15 Now, I would also like to draw your attention to the fact that we may have some members of the media present today. I would ask them to focus on ensuring it's an opportunity for speakers to have their say and for the proceedings to run smoothly. Should media have a question, I would ask that they speak to Miss Nicole Taylor, who is over there with her hand up, and any discussion take place outside this room.

20 If there is an emergency, emergency exits are located down the stairs and just to the left of the stage. In case of a fire alarm, please wait for instructions from the town hall staff and please do not use the lift unless directed to do so.

25 We would ask people making submissions to come to the table in front, which is here. It's not so much a table as a lectern. Before you begin, would you state your name before you make your presentation. We would like to ensure that all those present are able to make a submission, if they wish. To enable this to happen, we would ask that you keep your remarks to no more than five minutes. A yellow card, which you will see over there, will be shown at the four-minute mark, and a red card
30 at the five-minute mark. Subject to timing, there may be an opportunity to provide further remarks once everyone has had a chance to speak.

35 If you've not registered to speak and decide, during the course of listening to others, that you would like to do so, please talk to the person at the back of the room currently waving their hand. He's right at the back, in the doorway. Thank you.

40 Now, I would emphasise that this is an opportunity to present new arguments or material. Please don't read out your objection or comment on objection, because all of us have read those materials very carefully and considered them. Without making up our mind, of course. I can assure you all that not only have we read them, but they have been made publicly available on the AEC website.

45 Once this inquiry comes to an end, we will deliberate on what we've received, which includes what you might say today. We'll endeavour to make a public announcement as soon as practicable.

And, now, it is my pleasant duty to call on the first speaker, who is to be Tim Clynych from the Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup. Mr Clynych, if you would go to the lectern, that would be very helpful. And can you state your name for the record before commencing your remarks.

5

MR T. CLYNCH: Tim Clynych, CEO of the Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup. Thank you for the opportunity to present to you today. The Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup has – did – resolve to lodge an objection submission with the Redistribution Committee objecting to the proposal to transfer all the land contained within the Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup from its current position in the Forrest electoral division to O'Connor. Council's position is that, due to community interest, you know, the shire and its community has a stronger relationship with Forrest than it would with the O'Connor electorate.

10
15 And as you said in your opening remarks, we – you know, I don't intend to sit here and go through our written presentation, but there's a few salient points I think I would like to raise. The local government, as everyone is aware, is representative of its community and the community is aware of the proposal and I think there are three or four other submissions from community groups within our shire raising similar
20 views to what the shire has raised. So, I think it's a valid issue for local government to have an interest in. In our submission, we put forward the arguments of – really, of community interest – community interest is more relevant to the Bunbury, the Greater Bunbury, region, which is within the Forrest electorate, than with O'Connor, which is obviously a very vast electorate.

25

Donnybrook-Balingup has been within Forrest since that electoral division was created in 1922, and as I said, our community of interest is really northwards to Bunbury, Australind. All our government services, all our medical services, all our commercial services are really linked within the Forrest electorate. There's very little
30 relationship with O'Connor, other than perhaps, you know, with – with the Bridgetown – with the Bridgetown-Manjimup area, which is at the extremity of the existing O'Connor electorate.

If you look at our land use, our land use is consistent with the South West, with
35 Forrest. It has high levels of rural residential. It has got undulating terrain. It has got river valleys. It has got state forest, and that's not really very characteristic of O'Connor, which is more a broadacre agricultural and mining region. Population growth in Donnybrook has been quite consistent in the last 10 to 20 years, and I guess that's at the heart of this problem, is that O'Connor does not have a great deal
40 of population growth. And so, to maintain the ratios, you continually have to creep into, I guess, the higher-population electorates, and hence Donnybrook-Balingup is proposed to be transferred to O'Connor.

45 But, I guess, from all the – you know, that's a mathematical formula. From a community point of view, it doesn't make a lot of sense to our community. So, I mean, O'Connor does extend from northwards of Warburton in the north to – you know, down to Albany, across to, currently, Bridgetown.

5 Currently, our electors, if they wish to communicate with our – in-person with our local member, it’s not very difficult to get into Bunbury to meet the current member. The Member for O’Connor, which, you know, I think we said in our submission that we – we think he’s a great Member for O’Connor, but his nearest electoral office to us is in Albany. He did have an office for some time in Manjimup, but that’s now closed. So really, the ease of access from our electors to their local member will be greatly diminished under this proposal.

10 There are numerous scenarios that could be – that you, I guess, could consider to ensure that your redistribution quotas are met across all electoral divisions. However, we didn’t go into that in our submission. But if I can be so bold, our colleagues at the Shire of Waroona – so the only other local government that lodged a submission – lodged a submission objecting to being put into the Forrest electorate, because they’re currently in Canning. So, I will leave all the details to you, and how that works, but a simple solution from our selfish point of view would be to keep
15 Donnybrook-Balingup in Forrest, keep Waroona in Canning.

20 The number of electors is almost identical. How you deal with the other implications, I would leave up to you. But, I guess, from a local government point of view, looking at the other local government submission, to me, from the simple – very simple point of view, there’s a potential solution. So on that note, I’ve been given the five minutes. Thank you for the opportunity to present. And it’s a difficult job, I appreciate that. And good luck with it.

25 CHAIR: Thank you very much, indeed. It was very helpful. Now, the next speaker is Allan Henshaw. Mr Henshaw.

30 MR A. HENSHAW: Thank you very much, indeed. Members of the Commission, my name is Allan Henshaw and I’m here to really talk about the naming of the division, which I believe should be named – ‘Beard’. I don’t want to downplay the significance of Vivian Bullwinkel, but she does owe her later life achievements to her survival of the Bangka Island massacre. And this, I think, would likely to be the catalyst for the selection of Vivian Bullwinkel, of the name of the electoral division for WA. However, Vivian was an eastern state’s identity. She was born, brought up,
35 trained and worked in the eastern states until moving to WA aged 62.

40 Her achievements and history post-war, I think, belong to Victoria and New South Wales, and not WA. Now, given that the new division includes the Shire of Toodyay, and other nearby shires, it should be noted that amongst the 22 nurses massacred that day was a nurse born, brought up, schooled in Toodyay, trained and worked in Perth virtually all her life, until she volunteered for service. Like Vivian Bullwinkel, she was enlisted in September 1941 and fate brought them together on the SS *Vyner Brooke*, evacuating from Singapore and the Japanese advance. After surviving the sinking of the ship, both were in a party of nurses that set up a casualty station on the
45 beach, displaying a prominent red cross.

And they were there to tend to the wounded while help was summoned. That help turned out to be a party of Japanese soldiers that proceeded to dispatch the walking wounded, then assaulted the nurses in the most grievous fashion, then marched them into the surf and machine-gunned them in the back. Now, Vivian Bullwinkel was the only nurse the survived. Had Alma survived, who knows what she might have achieved. Her life was snuffed out at age 29. So the inescapable link between Vivian Bullwinkel and Alma Beard is the events on Bangka Island in February 1942. And the guidance given by the AEC in regard to naming divisions after persons that are deceased, they – it goes to deceased Australians that have rendered outstanding service to their country.

Now, normally that would be interpreted as long service in a principal role, and probably the recipient of prestigious awards. It also states that Redistribution Committees and augmented Electoral Commissions are in no way bound by the guidelines, and I really don't want to teach you how to suck eggs. But I would submit that laying one's life down for your country by caring for and treating the wounded and ill is outstanding service.

Toodyay forms a significant part of the proposed new division and while there have been a number of submissions requesting the change of name from 'Bullwinkel' to 'Beard', those submissions are only the tip of the iceberg.

There are a lot of people out there that have got a good feeling about this one. Submissions have also been submitted that another of the party of the nurses massacred that day, Sister Minnie Hodgson, who had connections with the York district and that she also lends her name to the division. Whilst the name 'Beard-Hodgson' would be somewhat unwieldy, I would support that suggestion. So whilst West Australians have been accused of being a parochial mob, I would sincerely hope that the AEC take note of and respect the wishes of the people of the proposed division. Thank you. I'm happy to take questions, if there are any.

CHAIR: Normally, we won't questions normally we won't ask questions.

MR A. HENSHAW: Yes.

CHAIR: In fact, you've been very helpful. And we understand precisely what you're saying, I think.

MR A. HENSHAW: Thank you.

CHAIR: So thank you very much, indeed.

MR A. HENSHAW: Thank you.

CHAIR: Now, the next speaker is Peter Stewart.

MR P. STEWART: Peter Stewart from Kalamunda. I'm a private citizen, who had made a submission to the boundary changes. And I want to congratulate the board for following my – most of my recommendation on the boundary, which incorporates the community issue of the City of Kalamunda and the Shire of Mundaring, which
5 we are very much connected as a community. And you added on other things, like the rural areas from our cousins in Toodyay, and Northam, and York, and the other. And also parts of Gosnells and Armadale, which I hadn't thought about. But my main concern about the submission is, again, in relation to the name of 'Bullwinkel'.

10 I think Lieutenant Vivian Bullwinkel is an outstanding Australian, and I don't want to dispute her – the – your decision to name her such, as the name of the new seat. However, I wanted to know why the Electoral Commission, when I look at all the other submissions on the electoral roll, as I made a submission for the name to be after Charles Court. That was a great Western Australian. He was very parochial,
15 supported West Australia, built the Pilbara with the iron ore, did a lot of things in the arts, did a lot of things in – within the State Library and all sorts of areas of government, when he was a minister in the Brand Government, and also as a premier for eight years. I can't understand why we can't recognise some great person like that, who has got a statue after him on St Georges Terrace – why we can't
20 acknowledge somebody like that and why the board came to a view of another person which, you know, wasn't recommended or put forward to the submissions, and why the board goes about it this way. And that's my question and – it's not an objection to the name. It's my question why that was done the way it was. Thank you.

25 CHAIR: Thank you very much, Mr Stewart. The next speaker is from the Liberal Party of Australia (WA Division). Before you commence, can I ask you to state your name, please.

30 MR J. BUXTON: Yes, certainly. It's Jeremy Buxton.

CHAIR: Thank you.

35 MR J. BUXTON: Yes, speaking on behalf of the Liberal Party. And, foremost, we consider this is a very well-balanced distribution, 85 per cent of West Australians stay in the same electorate, so an important job done with minimal disruption. The objection we've put forward we've only put forward because it can be contained within two electorates and has no knock-on effects. But we do need to reiterate that we think the boundary going between – cutting through the locality of Leeming to
40 follow the local government boundary of Cockburn and Melville should be rectified by, instead, following the Roe Highway, which is a far more definitive boundary.

45 But we appreciate the desirability of following local government boundaries within country divisions and, in fact, is – they are the essential building blocks. But within the metropolitan area, there are occasions where arterial roads are of far greater

importance, and we would suggest this is one such example. If anything, the boundary is archaic. The boundary was almost certainly drawn before the houses in Leeming were built and, as such, you have the local government boundary not merely running along minor roads, but running literally along back fences, as we
5 have demonstrated in our objection.

And, again, putting a bit of Kardinya back into Fremantle, that would have the effect of following major roads. And whereas it's – it will involve not having all of Melville or all of Cockburn within the same federal electorate. We think the
10 confusion that arises when you run boundaries along fence lines and back streets is a mitigating factor and we would note that north of the river, in the boundary between Hasluck and Perth, it is following the Tonkin Highway and not the nearby boundary of the City of Bayswater which, again, runs along fairly minor roads.

15 In – essentially, we are not in favour of any amendments that involve more than adjacent seats. We think this redistribution, you know, has fulfilled a very good purpose. We don't want it changed.

We are particularly strong in the electorate of Bullwinkel. There was a suggestion
20 that Beverley not be part of Bullwinkel, that it is somehow different from York and Northam and Toodyay. We totally reject this argument. The road links from Beverley into the – towards the metropolitan side of Bullwinkel are very strong, and York and Beverley have been together in the same SA2 for a long time – well, perpetually. They have, except in the last three years, been in the same federal
25 electorate. So we commend the boundaries of Bullwinkel that are putting York and Beverley together, as they should be.

The question of the name, of course. It's perhaps an indication of how well the redistribution has been received that most objections are about names and not about
30 boundaries and not about any great radical change. But looking at the guidelines as printed in the – about page 100 – around page 100 of the report, it lists all the other names that were considered of distinguished women. And notably, they are all people of a lifetime of service, and that is what Vivian Bullwinkel is being remembered for. Not for Bangka – surviving Bangka Island, but for all her
35 subsequent achievements. As such, if we can't have Charles Court, she is a most suitable name and we hope that it stands. Thank you.

CHAIR: Mr John Lyon. Thank you.

40 MR J. LYON: Your Honour, and other members, I'm a nephew of Dr Marjorie Lyon. Thanks for the opportunity of addressing the Commission. The Commission has pointed to the need to consider prominent women in choosing a person to honour. Lieutenant Colonel Vivian Bullwinkel is such a person. Another person, and one with stronger WA links, is Dr Marjorie Lyon OBE, a surgeon who was born in
45 Northam and educated there to secondary level. Her further schooling was at MLC Claremont, which has named its middle school after her. She was working for the colonial service in Johor when the Japanese attacked. The citation for her award of the OBE reads as follows:

5 *Miss Lyon, after admirable work during the attack on Singapore, was evacuated, on the 12th of February 1942, by the S.S. Kuala. When this vessel was sunk by Japanese dive bombing, she was directly responsible in rescuing the life of a fellow Lady Medical Officer who had sustained a fractured skull, pulling her for 400 yards through dangerous waters, where bombs were still falling. Upon arrival at POM POM Island, Ms Lyon, although suffering from the effects of shock due to the blast, took over the complete charge of the many wounded on the island. Her tireless efforts saved many lives.*

10 *In arrival in Sumatra, she refused opportunity to escape, preferring to look after the welfare of the wounded. As a result of this, she was interned for three and a half years, during which time Ms Lyon as commandant of various women's camps, displayed remarkable heroism when dealing with the Japanese and efficiency when conducting her medical duties.*

15 The internees of the camp included Australian women. After the hostilities were over, Lady Mountbatten visited the jungle camp where Marjorie was interned and, later, spent an hour with her at the Raffles Hotel in Singapore.

20 In an article in the *Australian Women's Digest*, titled 'Testimony to Courage', Lady Mountbatten wrote:

25 *I saw also an outstanding woman doctor, whose work with the civilian internees' camp in Sumatra will make history and who succeeded in commanding and controlling the Japanese and seeing that they carried out her orders.*

30 After the war, Marjorie continued her work in Malaya until 1951, when she returned home. She set up a specialist practice as a gynaecologist and obstetrician in St Georges Terrace. However, her eyesight had been ruined by malnutrition in the camps, so, in 1952, she joined the Health Department as the school's medical officer. She became known in the wheatbelt, goldfields and the south-west as "the lady doctor." When I was seven, at the Northam Convent, she examined me. She declined promotion, preferring to deal with children and to continue her business to the country until her retirement in 1970. After her death, her family were approached by Dutch survivors of the camp. I got to know of them. Two of them are about 90 and recently attended an annual reunion. I have published Marjorie's diaries and given them copies. They became doctors because of Marjorie's example.

40 I'm aware, of course, of the possible difficulty from the existence in Tasmania of the electorate called 'Lyons', named after the former Prime Minister and Dame Enid Lyons. If this is a difficulty, recourse could be had in calling the new electorate 'Dr Lyon' or 'Marjorie Lyon' or 'Marjorie'. Incidentally, Marjorie's grandfather, John Lamb Lyon, was a well-known stained-glass artist, who established a worldwide business and lived in Victoria and New South Wales. There is an entry on him, as well as one on Marjorie, in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. The name 'Lyon' would also honour him.

I note that the electorate of Durack honours various members of the Durack family. Another possibility would be to call the electorate ‘MacMaster Lyon’. Marjorie’s mother’s maiden name was MacMaster. Her mother’s family of doctors is commemorated by MacMasters Beach. Her mother was a trailblazer for the rights of
5 mental patients, as is apparent from the 1913 libel action in the Supreme Court of WA. Marjorie’s father and two of her brothers practised law in Northam for 60 years. Her father was one of the founders of the Royal Society. Her relatives still live in the electorate.

10 I mention again the very significant fact that, out of 4,000 persons nominated, Marjorie was one of only 200 nominated in 1988 by the Australian Bicentennial Authority as an unsung hero or heroine. I have filed with the Commission a copy of Marjorie’s war diaries. In particular, I draw the Commission’s attention to the views
15 of Rachael Brooks, of Perth, at page 494, Tilly Moelands of Rockingham, at page 498, and Patricia Adams of Queensland, at page 551. I also draw the Commission’s attention to the article on page 36 of *The West Australian* of 26 August 2023. Finally, I refer to what Dr Elsie Crowe, whose life she saved and endured with her three and a half years of deprivation, said of Marjorie:

20 *I’ve never known so utterly honest a person, and integrity and Marjorie are synonymous to me. I’m proud to have been her friend.*

I urge the Commission to name the electorate to commemorate my aunt and possibly
25 her grandfather, and other family members also, for outstanding service to Australia.

CHAIR: The next speaker is Ms Angela Boulter.

MS A. BOULTER: Good morning to the Honourable Susan Kenny, members of the
30 augmented Electoral Commission and fellow Australian citizens. My name is Angela Boulter. I’ve travelled here today from the Forrest electorate. I’m particularly interested in the naming of WA’s newest electoral division, as I am the great-granddaughter of wheatbelt farming pioneers on both my mother and father’s side. I sincerely want to thank the members of the Electoral Commission for their work to date to ensure this is a democratic and inclusive process. I would like to provide you
35 with further support to combine the names ‘Beard-Hodgson’ or ‘Hodgson-Beard’. This is no disrespect to how honourable the intentions are in proposing the name ‘Bullwinkel’ to recognise Lieutenant Colonel Vivian Bullwinkel.

40 To my knowledge, the sentiment of our fellow Australians who live in South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria have not fully been considered, the three states where Vivian Bullwinkel was born, educated and worked. South Australia, the birthplace of Vivian Bullwinkel, is more entitled to have her name honoured. Perhaps New South Wales, where she was educated and trained as a nurse, or even Victoria, where she worked for 16 years.

5 It just does not seem logical that the state Lieutenant Colonel Bullwinkel moved to after she retired from her public service, in the last few years of her life, be given her name. It is inevitable that electoral divisions will change and grow. The naming guidelines state changing of division names should not occur without very strong reasons.

10 South Australia currently has a total of 10 electorates, and only two of these are named after women. This inequality requires future planning, so that half the Australian population is more appropriately represented. With the naming of this new federal electorate, located in the WA wheatbelt, we have this unique opportunity to honour these West Australian army nurses. Twenty-one Australian army nurses did not survive the war crimes that occurred on Bangka Island. Four of these nurses were born in Western Australia.

15 The wheatbelt was home to two, Sister Alma May Beard and Sister Minnie Ivy Hodgson. Sister Hodgson trained and worked as a nurse in WA for 13 years before she set sail from Fremantle to serve her country. By February 1942, less than six months later, at 33, she was dead. Sister Hodgson, along with 20 others, including
20 Sister Beard, were massacred on an Indonesian beach. They had survived a shipwreck. They had surrendered, were prisoners of war and were still performing nursing duties on the beach, caring for the sick and injured. Their bodies were never recovered and returned to their families in Australia. Vivian Bullwinkel bravely survived and lived to tell some of the war crimes.

25 The Me Too movement was formed after Vivian Bullwinkel died. If she was alive, I am certain she would have supported the movement. Vivian Bullwinkel fiercely protected the nurses' honour to prevent further distress to their families. Today, we are a different generation. One that is not willing to brush violence and crimes against women under the carpet. Our new generation demands equal rights and more
30 education around the prevention and protection of women against violence.

35 Combining the names 'Hodgson-Beard' or 'Beard-Hodgson' is more in line with current sentiment, representing a culture of bravery in this new electorate, rather than that of silence, nurturing a generation that learns from history and respects all that is embodied the spirit of these army nurses, that of fellowship, humanity, sisterhood and brotherhood.

40 The wheatbelt of WA plays an immensely important role in our national and global food security. We need the wheatbelt, so that, as a country, we not only survive, but thrive. It is difficult to attract health professionals to rural communities. Naming the new electorate in the wheatbelt after not one, but two, Australian nurses, 'Hodgson-Beard' or 'Beard-Hodgson', is our opportunity to bring communities together, show that we are in the business of respecting community, human and our healthcare workers past, present and future.

In the 2021 census, Yealering, in the wheatbelt, had a population of only 91 people. When one person is killed, it is catastrophic. Sister Hodgson's family farm was in Yealering. The ultimate sacrifice of lives lost in war is most certainly an outstanding service to country. 'Hodgson-Beard' or 'Beard-Hodgson' is so much more than a
5 time. It encompasses the spirit of Australia.

This opportunity shows current and future frontline medical professionals that we care and we will remember them. I'm passionate because my fellow descendants of the girls on the beach are also passionate. My mother was born just two years after
10 Aunt Minnie's life was so brutally stolen. She proudly shares her name, Rosemary Minnie Hodgson, now Stewart. Sister Minnie will always be a part of who we are.

CHAIR: Ms John.

15 MS S. JOHN: Actually, I will be almost summarising what John Lyon and Angela said. I'm Suzanne John and thank you for very much for the opportunity to speak today. I am a member of Australia's oldest women's club, Karrakatta, which sought justice for women in the late 1800s, and I'm also a Paul Harris Fellow of Rotary. Now, it has been mentioned that the Bullwinkel name has already been confirmed
20 and today is just to prove that there was public consultation. So, I hope that's not the case.

I was first delighted that Vivian Bullwinkel was to be honoured in the electoral redistribution, knowing that approximately that the 151 electorates – there are 90 –
25 nine-zero – are named for men and 17 – one-seven – for women and 24 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, and various other Aboriginal names. So, a mere 17 is not too bad, because they're only three per cent of statues in Australia that are of women. There are more animals depicted.

30 There were no women in the parliamentary precinct until last year, when Dames Enid Lyons and Dorothy Tangney's statues were dedicated. John Gorton's dog had featured in the same area for many years. At last, we have Lyons and Tangney, paid by public subscription, and soon Edith Cowan's statue in Perth, also public
35 subsidised. Also, by public subscription is the first and only statue of a woman at the Australian War Museum in Canberra, the amazing heroine, Lieutenant Colonel Matron Vivian Bullwinkel.

40 Every year, I attend the anniversary of the Bangka Island nurses' massacre. The memorial at Point Walter, Western Australia, also public subscription and still not completed for lack of money, honours those young women who died for Australia, but they're not known. Shame. A very brave heroine, Vivian Bullwinkel, was brutalised, shot and survived, including in prisoner of war camps. If it wasn't for her, we may have never known of the fate of the massacred nurses, but she lived.

We have to remember the silent others. Sixty-five nurses fled Singapore on the *Vyner Brooke*. Twelve drowned. Twenty-two were brutalised and then walked into the sea and shot to death. Twenty-one died. One survived. Eight died in the Sumatra prison camp. Year after year, we hear of heroic Bullwinkel, and why shouldn't we?

5

But at Point Walter, the dead are remembered. Matron Bullwinkel only lived in Western Australia in the very latter years of her life. I played bridge with her. A formidable opponent.

10 But what of the wheatbelt born and bred nurses in the electorate who should be honoured, but are forgotten? The young girls who died for their country didn't have the chance to show what they could do in later life. Alma Beard of Toodyay, Minnie Hodgson of Wickpin, are just two of our girls, four West Australians in that terrible situation, who have been ignored. Indeed, all of the nurses who have served in all of
15 the wards of Australia should be remembered.

We do not have just have one Florence Nightingale, as wonderful as Bullwinkel was. We are told she was chosen because of her achievements after the war. If that's the format, then Northam wheatbelt-born Dr Marjorie Lyon is the obvious choice. As the
20 Japanese advanced, Lyon, born and educated in wheatbelt Northam, was instructed to leave her patients. Her ship, the *Kuala*, was also bombed. As you've heard, Dr Lyons swam almost a mile towing a fellow medico. Interred in a prisoner of war camp for three and a half years, she nursed all nationalities against great odds, and we've just heard of these Dutch people who have come to say thank you, and Lady
25 Mountbatten, said of her:

Dr Marjorie Lyon will go down in wartime history.

30 When Dr Lyon was released and returned to her home state, Western Australia, she was eventually in charge of the school medical service throughout WA, including the very wheatbelt schools which the new electorate encompasses. The bureaucrats, or whomever chooses these names, did a democratic job in a woman, especially someone as well-known as the Matron Bullwinkel, but they chose her because she is well-known. Perfect. Let South Australia, her birth state, honour their own. Australia
35 should learn about and remember those young wheatbelt girls who died for their country, and Dr Marjorie Lyon, who had an identical life of service to Matron Bullwinkel during the war and in prison, but Lyon came back to her own home state, WA, and continued to serve here.

40 Do not use the fact that prior Prime Minister Joseph Lyons and Enid Lyons already have an electorate in their honour. It's in Tasmania. This is Western Australia. The women I have mentioned deserve recognition in their own state. It's time they were honoured. We're West Australians. Thank you.

45 CHAIR: Thank you very much indeed. The next speaker is Rosemary Stewart.

MS R.M. STEWART: Okay. My name is Rosemary Minnie Stewart.

CHAIR: Okay. Can I ask you - - -

5 MS R.M. STEWART: Good morning.

CHAIR: - - - Ms Stewart, it would help – yes.

10 MS R.M. STEWART: Okay. Okay. My name is Rosemary Minnie Stewart. Good morning to the Honourable Susan Kenny, members of the augmented Electoral Commission and fellow members of the public. I am very pleased to have the opportunity to speak to you today and give my suggestions and comments into the naming of the new federal electorate of WA. As we all know, ‘Bullwinkel’ has been proposed as a new name. Lieutenant Colonel Vivian Bullwinkel was a very
15 courageous and resilient nurse who has rightfully been recognised by the only woman to have a statue erected in her honour at the Australian War Memorial.

20 However, there were 21 other nurses who never returned home and who endured the same horrific war crimes as Vivian. These 21 nurses never went on to have the opportunities of a full life like that of Vivian. Two of these nurses, namely Minnie Hodgson and Alma Beard, came from the wheatbelt region east of Perth. These two nurses represent the others, who were raped, murdered and – by the enemy of the time, the Japanese, on Bangka Island, now part of Indonesia, on 16 February 1942.

25 One of the nurses, my aunt, Sister Minnie Ivy Hodgson, worked for over 10 years in various hospitals in the wheatbelt of Western Australia, including Northam. She was matron of Kondinin Hospital before she volunteered for nursing service in Singapore. She was inspired by her three brothers, William Hodgson, James Hodgson and Richard Hodgson, who had left the farm in the wheatbelt and joined the
30 Australian Defence Forces overseas during World War Two.

Minnie’s family, the Hodgsons, took up virgin land in the wheatbelt in 1908. Farming virgin land was a hard slog, but the loss of their daughter, Minnie, in wartime was even more distressing. Through their pioneering spirit, they managed to
35 hang on and descendants of her five siblings still live in the wheatbelt today. Likewise, I believe Alma Beard’s family were pioneers also in the region. It would mean a lot to these families and the region if these nurses finally got the recognition they deserve. I strongly recommend to the augmented Electoral Commission the name ‘Hodgson-Beard’ or ‘Beard-Hodgson’ be adopted for the name of the new
40 federal electorate of WA. Thank you everyone for your time.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, indeed. The next speaker is Josephine Beard.

45 MS J. BEARD: Thank you. My name is Josephine Beard and I am the niece of Alma Beard, who’s been the subject of quite a bit of discussion already this morning.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak here today. I would like to add just a few words to my previous submission in relation to the naming of the proposed new subdivision of 'Bullwinkel'. Even a very cursory glance through the names of the federal electoral divisions has told me what I'm sure you already know. The names reflect mostly men, some with very tenuous links to Australia and/or dubious achievements, with the value of hindsight.

Bearing that in mind, I wanted to acknowledge the work of the Redistribution Committee in considering the very large number of people who were originally nominated for the naming of this electorate and their subsequent desire to widen the field of nominations, and I quote:

While acknowledging the merit of the image of the individuals presented and their contribution to Australian society, the Redistribution Committee noted there would be benefits in considering a wider range of potential names, including those of prominent women.

I also note that the Committee's guidelines for naming electorates are, in the main, electoral divisions should be named after deceased Australians who have rendered outstanding service to their country. My family have always held Vivian Bullwinkel in high regard. She took great pains to ensure that my grandmother had the opportunity to know as much as she could about my aunty and their time together in the nursing service, and how highly she regarded my aunty. I'm sure she did this for other parents as well. Of significance is that Vivian also worked to ensure that the nurses, especially those who were the victims of the war crimes, were given due recognition.

She travelled to London shortly after the end of the war and visited the Nurses' War Memorial Chapel in Westminster Abbey, ensuring she obtained photos of my aunty's name in the roll of honour. I'm sure she did this for all others as well. I'm not sure, but I'm sure she did. She also attended the opening of the Alma Beard Community Health Centre in Toodyay in 1992. This, to me, reflects her commitment and dedication to ensuring that those nurses were never forgotten.

In respect of Alma, she had a very strong family connection, not just with Toodyay but also the surrounding district. Her family on both sides, the Beards, the Brennans, the Syreds, arrived with the first of the European settlers and took up farming in the area. Naming an electorate after the first European settlers is not without precedent.

Alternative names, because there has been, I understand, quite a bit of alternatives, could be 'Bullwinkel-Beard' to incorporate both the Bullwinkel name and the Beard name. I also note the submission for 'Beard-Hodgson' which also, to me, has

significant merit as well. I'm sure you did not expect the type of controversy that's arisen, although I think maybe you did, when selecting the name 'Bullwinkel', who was a woman, a nurse, and a prisoner of war. I stated previously in my submission that my siblings and my cousins all grew up knowing the story of our aunty's
5 murder. We also growing up knowing the part Vivian Bullwinkel played in bringing that massacre to light, and in honouring all of those nurses. So whatever you decide, in our minds, Vivian Bullwinkel's name will always be synonymous with Alma Beard and all those who died on Bangka Beach.

10 CHAIR: Thank you very much indeed.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: I think there is one further speaker.

CHAIR: Mr Don Stewart.

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MR D. STEWART: My name is Don Stewart. I'm the husband of Rosemary. They have – the three that accompany me today – have said pretty well everything I was going to say, but I would like to say that these 21 nurses, for decades, were pretty well ignored by the population of Australia. I think when Vivian Bullwinkel was at
20 the inquiry in Tokyo in 1947, she was sworn to secrecy about what actually happened on Bangka Island. And I think she kept to that, and I don't know how the details eventually came out. I don't know that it was from Vivian Bullwinkel, but possibly an American who survived and teamed up with Ms Bullwinkel at the time. And, of course, she wasn't – he wasn't under the auspices of Australia. So, I think
25 this – this is a great opportunity to remember those 21 nurses who weren't able to perform anything great in their lives. They had been wonderful nurses. My – Minnie Hodgson was a career nurse who answered the call of duty, and I think that a 'Hodgson-Beard' name for the electorate would be very appropriate. Thank you.

30 CHAIR: Thank you very much, Mr Stewart. We have one other speaker, Mr Anthony Beard.

MR A. BEARD: Good morning. Anthony Beard, and I, too, am a signatory to a written submission and I want to speak on the naming of the electorate.

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The other parts of it, the boundaries, the redistribution, they're for the topographers and the political parties to fight over, but the one thing I'm interested in is people. And this time next year, the member for this new electorate will be ensconced in Canberra, possibly preparing their maiden speech. And as many parliamentarians do,
40 they reflect on the name of the electorate that they're representing. And I wonder, when they reflect – when this member reflects, they'll reflect on a family whose history goes back to 1855, and upon retiring from their farm, whose residence in Stirling Terrace in Toodyay still exists as a St John Ambulance depot, I wonder if they'll reflect upon the fourth generation of that group, Alma Beard, and on what she
45 achieved. We know, as we've heard so many times today, the history of what

happened, but she, as nurses are – and so many other professionals in the health field – people people, and that’s what she was. She is remembered both in Toodyay with the Alma Beard Medical Centre. She’s remembered with the new statute recently unveiled there and also at the War Memorial in Toodyay.

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She’s also on the front panel of the WA War Memorial in Kings Park, and she’s remembered with a tree of honour in the prisoner of war circle. Reflecting back on the events on Bangka Island, we go back to the last few weeks, days and hours of Alma Beard’s life, and she was there, as were the others, and still caring at the last moment for the wounded, ill and dying, to the extent that her great friend, Vivian Bullwinkel, wrote to her parents and told them how nobly she’d carried out her duties. She’s also remembered, of course, at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. She’s remembered at the Kranji War Memorial in Singapore and, as you heard earlier from my sister, in Westminster Abbey.

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She was a fine Australian person, and this is about people, and we think that in honour of her name and her deeds, not deflecting any way from the deeds of the 20 other nurses and, particularly, of Vivian Bullwinkel, who was well celebrated, but for the other stories you’ve heard so far, we think that Vivian Bullwinkel would be delighted to have this electorate named after her dear friend Alma Beard.

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CHAIR: Thank you very much indeed, Mr Beard. Now, I’m not sure whether there is anyone else who is due to speak or who is here to speak. What we’ll do, I think, is take a break for half an hour. If someone else comes forward, then we’ll be here, and for the moment, you’re free to leave, but thank you all so much for what you’ve told us. In many cases, it’s been very moving, and we’re very grateful for you coming here today. Thank you.

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30 **MATTER ADJOURNED at 11.02 am ACCORDINGLY**