



# Comment on objections 24

Dr Janet Salisbury

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Re: Naming of new Canberra electorate after Charles Bean

**Comment from Janet Salisbury,**

I agree with the submissions you have received which object to the naming the new electorate 'Bean'. However, I think it is a distraction to focus on the antisemitism of Charles Bean as the reason for the objection. It doesn't matter how 'great' or otherwise Charles Bean was, he is not the right person for this electorate to be named after because:

1. **War commemoration has already been overdone in Australia and it is time to create other narratives.** The massive government spending over the past 20 years on war commemoration has already seen a huge over representation of military history in our national narrative. Charles Bean is already honoured in his association with the AWM. Everywhere we turn, there is more money and PR being put into war commemorations – including huge expenditure in AWM upgrades, a new war museum in France, and so on. I have great respect for those who have lost their lives in war but the current hype around war commemoration prevents Australians from coming to terms with other narratives from our history including the Frontier Wars, and from creating a new vision for a peaceful and sustainable future.
2. **Charles Bean is a privileged white, western (Anglo) male.** And as a woman, I am sick of this one sector of our society being constantly and repeatedly recognised to the exclusion of other groups (First Nations people, women, other nationalities). The symbolism embedded in the names we give suburbs, electorates etc sends a very powerful message about who we are, and who holds the power and privilege in society. By repeating the message that white, western men are the ones who we most admire, we further reinforce an already deeply entrenched masculine bias in society. Indeed, it is likely that those who proposed him in the first place, and the committee who have made the selection are all influenced by this bias. We will never have 50% representation for women in parliament, on boards and in every other walk of life, if we do not change the relentless privileging of male achievements every time an opportunity like this comes up. The same applies to Indigenous people and other groups who are currently excluded from the national narrative.
3. **Bean is a national figure and this is a local electorate.** Canberra electorates should be named after someone/ something meaningful for the Canberra community. This is how identity and pride in who we are is forged. Recognition for Charles Bean should reside (as it already does) in our national institutions and not on the streets of Canberra.

**Dr Janet Salisbury**