



# Comment on objections 30

Kerry Stokes AC

2 pages



**Kerry Stokes AC**

Chairman

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The Australian Electoral Commission  
Att: Redistribution Secretariat  
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PROPOSED NAMING OF THE NEW ACT ELECTORATE OF BEAN

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing to provide my support for the proposed naming of the new ACT electorate of Bean after Australia's First World War Official Historian, Charles Bean. I am aware that a number of objections have been raised regarding the proposal, particularly to do with Bean the man and his character, and purported anti-semitic views and writings in relation to General Sir John Monash.

While it is widely known that Bean had initially been a critic of Monash, his motivation was not anti-semitic, rather it was borne from a strong sense of what constituted noble leadership of Australian servicemen; a view he came to realise that Monash lived up to. It is also well documented that Bean moderated over time his original opinions and judgements of Monash. Indeed, in October 1931, Bean was published in *The Herald* newspaper as describing Monash as Australia's 'greatest military leader' – 'neither a hero nor a mighty strategical genius [but] probably the ablest and most successful British corps commander in France'.

To focus on Bean as a racist and anti-Semite is not only short sighted, it does not acknowledge his character nor the enduring impact he has had on Australian culture. Most importantly, his impact has been through the recognition of our past and serving veterans with the establishment of the Australian War Memorial and the documentation of the First World War Official Histories. Bean ensured we built the finest museum and memorial to the men of the Australian Imperial Forces and nurses and, in doing so, also ensured that Australians understood their sacrifice.

Bean was a unique historian in that he wrote about what he saw first-hand and at the risk of his own life. Every day at the Memorial, you will hear somebody recount the historical story of Bean landing with the Australian troops on Gallipoli on 25 April 1915; staying with them at the front through the entire war; and refusing evacuation when he was wounded. We know that the Memorial was conceived by Bean after witnessing 23,000 Australian casualties in six weeks and having a dying Australian ask him, "Will they remember me in Australia?" His sense of obligation

*Here is their spirit, in the heart of the land they loved; and here we guard the record which they themselves made.* C.E.W. Bean

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to the fallen and his dedication to documenting and publishing the Official History volumes took over 25 years of his life.

As a proud Australian and businessmen, I have had the pleasure of seeing Canberra grow and mature as a destination; a city; and as our national capital, since 1980. I have overseen the establishment of Channel 7 Canberra and the Canberra Times newspaper. It has also been my privilege to be involved with many great national institutions including the Canberra Theatre for eight years; the National Gallery of Australia for nine years; and six years on the National Capital Planning committee. However, my greatest joy has been my involvement with the Australian War Memorial and its Council. It cannot be denied that the Memorial is now considered the soul of our nation, or that it is arguably one of the most important monuments in Australia.

Bean's name lives on because of dedication and commitment to the values he believed in. The Memorial is the continuing tribute to those values. Whatever human foibles Bean may have had, they were insignificant to his contribution.

To quote the Memorial Director, Dr Brendan Nelson, this nation owes Charles Bean a great debt. I could not agree more.

Yours sincerely

Kerry Stokes AC  
Chairman