



# Comment on suggestion 6

Brian Cox

2 pages



The Chairman  
Redistribution Committee for the Australian Capital Territory  
Marcus Clarke Street  
Canberra City ACT

Dear Sir or Madam

### **Comments on suggestions for naming ACT Electoral Divisions**

Having looked at all sixteen suggestions reproduced on the ACT Redistribution Website, I noted that many of them scarcely, if at all, comply with the published guidelines for naming divisions.

I do not propose to comment herein in detail on each suggestion, but briefly to raise the question whether a particular proposed name is compliant with the guidelines for naming divisions.

The key guidelines relevant to the above stated approach are:

1. "that in the main divisions be named after deceased Australians who have rendered outstanding service to their country." and
2. "locality or place names should generally be avoided, but in certain areas the use of geographical features may be appropriate e.g. *Perth*."

A couple of the suggestions (nos 1 and 6) propose *Griffin* in honour of Walter and Marion Griffin the renowned designers of Canberra as Australia's national capital city. Do the Griffins literally qualify under criterion 1. above? For example did they ever become Australians and hence could they be 'deceased Australians'? Was their outstanding achievement in designing Canberra "service to their country"? Your committee may think these points a bit on the picky side but it is a real question and I would point out that the Griffins' contribution has already been prominently recognised in the naming of the beautiful Lake Burley Griffin at the very centre of the city they designed. They are truly well recognised already.

Some other suggestions (nos 9 and 11) proposed the name *Namadgi* be resurrected. Here I agree with the comment in suggestion no1 referred to above that the name *Namadgi* should not be resurrected because a second abandonment, should that ever occur, would be most unfortunate. Also *Namadgi* has a geographical connotation possibly contrary to criterion 2 above. I note, too, that *Namadgi* is opposed in Suggestion 15 for reasons with which I also agree. I note, too, that in his suggestion ( i.e. no. 9) Mr. Walsh is unsure about the merit of choosing "*Namadgi*".

*Brindabella* and *Molonglo* are suggested (suggestions 3 and 8 ) – again the geographical constraint would seem to arise. Moreover, the name *Brindabella* is compromised as it is used for elections for the A.C.T. Legislative Assembly. As for *Molonglo*, another possible difficulty arises because until recently it was also the name of another A.C.T. Legislative Assembly electorate. This could become a possible point of public confusion. In addition to that a major new regional development has begun in the ACT – namely the new geographical area known as Molonglo Valley. This is becoming a new town area akin to Woden and Belconnen, and this would seem to constrain the use of the name *Molonglo* to the division which includes that area. This point gets to the reason, as I understand it, which underlies Guideline 1 above – i.e. boundary changes occasioned by relative population changes over time could result ( and, as I recall. have resulted) in the geographical area over which the seat was named in the first place no longer existing within the newly evolved boundaries. Also,

it is not clear to me that the suggestion (no8) in which this name is proposed covers the newly evolving region of Molonglo Valley.

*Thwaites* is suggested in S.10 in honour of Michael and his wife Honor. Undoubtedly both were distinguished people in their differing ways, but have they rendered outstanding service to their country of a dimension which seems to be required in naming a Federal electorate?

Suggestion 15 proposes the name *Shakespeare* after Mr Arthur Thomas Shakespeare, co- founder with his father of the Canberra Times newspaper. While he was undoubtedly a prominent Canberra figure over many years, and did much for this city, can his work be regarded as of “outstanding service to this country”?

Several suggestions propose the retention of *Canberra* and *Fenner* as divisional names. I agree with the retention of *Canberra* as it seems not to be excluded by the geographical guidelines. But while I recognise Professor Fenner’s distinguished service in the world of science, I do question whether he qualifies under the concept of “outstanding service to the nation” as well as does Dr Lewis Nott, for the reasons I have already given in my suggestion – no 13- that one division be named *Nott*.

Suggestion 2. envisages that ACT divisional boundaries encroach into surrounding NSW areas. No doubt the ACT Redistribution Committee would seek solid legal advice as to whether such boundaries would be permitted under Part III of the Constitution or the Commonwealth Electoral Act. Also I would wonder what would be the reaction of the NSW and ACT Governments and of the Members of Parliament who currently occupy the seats affected by the proposed change. A change of this kind also could have ripple effects on other boundaries in NSW. Extending ACT divisional boundaries into NSW is surely out of the question.

In conclusion I reiterate my choice of the name *Nott* for one of the ACT divisions in recognition of the man whose strong advocacy in the first place led to representation of the ACT in the House of Representatives and the fact that Dr Nott was himself the first Member for the ACT in the House.

Yours faithfully

Brian Cox

Former Australian Electoral Commissioner.