



# Comment on objection 33

Michael Burke

3 pages

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
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**Subject:** Comments on objections – South Australian federal redistribution

To: Redistribution Secretariat for South Australia

Australian Electoral Commission

From : Michael Burke, [REDACTED]

## Comments on objections – South Australian federal redistribution

I wish to provide comments to the following objections:

OB1 – “I and many others are horrified at changing the name Wakefield to Spence”

OB312 – "Australian Labor Party strongly objects to the decision not to retain the name Wakefield, and urges the augmented Electoral Commission to restore the name Wakefield to the division that has been named Spence". Further it is stated "The Australian Labor Party proposes instead that the name Spence be given to the division currently known as Sturt. This name originates from 1949 but has no particular connection to the area"

OB320 - Reconsideration to rename Wakefield. Mr Andrew stated that Mr Wakefield “As an author and as a Parliamentarian”.

OB1, OB312, OB320 – All three objections fail to mention that Mr Wakefield never lived in Australia, was later a New Zealand Parliamentarian, wrote a book ““A LETTER FROM SYDNEY, THE PRINCIPAL TOWN OF AUSTRALASIA”, having never visited Australia, whilst serving a Prison sentence in England for the abduction of a 15 year old heiress.

To quote from <http://boundforsouthaustralia.com.au/journey-content/edward-gibbon-wakefield.html>

“It is perhaps ironic that the founding principal of the free settlement of South Australia was devised by a convicted felon while in prison.”

“He also helped to draft the 1834 South Australia Act. However by the time the **South Australian Colonization Commission** was created Wakefield had distanced himself from the venture, disapproving of the low price set for land. “

In addition, I wish to add the following regarding OB312 and the comment to propose renaming "Sturt to Spence" and retain Wakefield.

Although I concur with most of the comments regarding Sturt in OB312, I draw to the Committee's attention the following extract from Hansard in 1948 (especially those Bolded), as proposed by the then Labor Government for the 1949 Redistribution, as their reason for altering the proposed name of a new Division from Bonython to Sturt -

Thursday, 9 December 1948

**Mr McBRIDE** (Wakefield) .- I support the motion, because I believe that the commissioners did a good job in the circumstances. It was unfortunate that the Government decided that the numerical margin previously allowed to exist between country and metropolitan electorates should be abolished. The Electoral Act provides that the ascertained average may be departed from by 20 per cent., under or over. That was designed, not to effect differentiation in the value of votes, but to give representation to large but sparsely populated rural areas. Before the present redistribution, the quota in country electorates in South Australia varied from 53,000 to 58,000, whilst in the city it varied from 60,000 and 80,000. After the redistribution, the average for all parts of the State will be 40,000.

I regret very much that the Government, whilst accepting the recommendations of the commissioners regarding the boundaries, did not accept the commissioners' recommendation regarding names of divisions. For instance, the **Government has decided to alter the name of " Bonython ", as recommended by the commissioners, to " Sturt "**. The name " Bonython " is held in high regard in South Australia-

**Mr Haylen** - There is nothing wrong with " Sturt " either.

**Mr McBRIDE** - I am speaking of " Bonython ", which is the name of a man who served his State well.

**Mr Barnard** - He made money out of the people of South Australia.

**Mr McBRIDE** - He made a success of his business, if that is what the Minister means, but it is disgusting that that should be held against him. He represented an electorate in this Parliament for two terms during the early years of federation. Whilst he made money, he used it for the benefit of the people of South Australia. He made generous gifts to the School of Mines and Industry in South Australia, and also to the University of South Australia, where he is commemorated by the Bonython Hall. He also made a generous gift to the Government which enabled it to complete the State House of Parliament. His record compares more than favorably with that of most of those whose names have been given to electoral divisions in other States. I have no objection to the name " Sturt ", which is that of a man who rendered splendid service to South Australia in the early days; but, after all, he was an Englishman who served in Australia and then returned to his own land. Moreover, his name is commemorated in a number of places in South Australia and in other States. I believe that the Government would have met the wishes of a large number of people in South Australia if it had adopted the recommendation of the commissioners, and retained the name of " Bonython ".

**Mr JOHNSON** (Kalgoorlie) (Minister for the Interior) . - *in reply* - Protests against the proposed redistribution of the electoral divisions of South Australia have been made by the honorable member for Wakefield (**Mr. McBride**) and the honorable member for Boothby (**Mr. Sheehy**).

When both sides challenge the umpire's decision, it suggests that the umpires have been almost fair. With regard to quotas, the commissioners were governed by the provisions of the act. The honorable member for Wakefield has protested at the proposed substitution of the name "Sturt" for the name "Bonython". **Although the Cabinet sub-committee, which considered this matter, had every respect for the great work that Sir Langdon Bonython did for South Australia, they selected the name Sturt because they thought it had a Commonwealth wide significance.** There is nothing to prevent the South Australian Parliament from recognizing the work of Sir Langdon Bonython in whatever form it desires. The redistribution of the electoral divisions of South Australia was left in the hands of three electoral commissioners. Two of them were appointed by an act of Parliament and the third was nominated. The act provides that when the commissioners have made their report it shall be advertised for 30 days to permit of protests, suggestions and recommendations being lodged. The report of the South Australian electoral commissioners was accepted by all parties without protest, and it is now submitted to the Parliament for adoption, with the exception that it is suggested that the name "Sturt" should be substituted for the name "Bonython".

Question resolved in the affirmative.

I support the Committee's decision to rename the Division of Wakefield. It should be noted that the Division of Wakefield has for the majority of its history represented the rural areas of South Australia, north of the new Division and has been in effect merged into the Division of Grey over a number of redistributions. I don't believe the objections have provided any compelling case for the "Federation" name of Wakefield to be retained on the boundaries drawn.

OB240 stated "Within South Australia, the name Wakefield is iconic, however, the name represents a link to the colonial past. While the notion of preserving Federation division names is noble, the reality is that we will continue to need to find divisions to name for prime ministers,

and, combined with the current agenda to redress to gender and racial imbalance, there are just not enough divisions to also keep all existing Federation names. Specifically, I approve of the abolition of Port Adelaide and renaming Wakefield. Naming a division after Catherine Helen Spence is more than satisfactory"

The "new" Division of Spence as now drawn from parts of Port Adelaide and the market garden /urban areas of Wakefield (2004-2018) has in the past (I believe) been represented by multiple Divisions, two that have been abolished – Angas (1903 until abolished in 1934) , Wakefield (1934-1949), Sturt (1949-1955), Bonython (1955 until abolished in 2003) and Wakefield (2003-2018 proposed to be abolished/renamed). There maybe an argument that one of the two abolished Division names could have been reinstated for the Division. With my original submission for names of Divisions I tried to stay to the "Federation" theme. Personally I had a number of other names that I would have liked to proposed, including an indigenous name (but they didn't seem to fall within the guidelines provided for naming and without the new boundaries drawn first I didn't submit them).

However, as an Elector in the proposed "New" Division of Spence that is a merger of parts of two other old Divisions (both names proposed to be abolished – Port Adelaide and Wakefield), I think it is a splendid idea to use a new name as proposed by the Committee.

I did take note of the comments in OB184 from the Electoral Reform Society of SA.

Unless the Committee proposes to change their recommendation based on the comments in OB184, I support the name "Spence" for a Division as drawn on the map and proposed by the Committee.

Kind regards,

Michael Burke

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