



# Suggestion 77

Stephen Melzer

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14-October-2020

To: Tom Rogers  
Australian Electoral Commissioner, and  
Chair of the Redistribution Committee

Dear Mr Rogers and members of the Redistribution Committee,

**Re: A name for a new Federal Electorate in Victoria – Melzer**

Jean Melzer was a pioneer for women in Federal politics, and an electorate in her name will stand as a beacon for women interested in serving their communities through active engagement in the political process but unsure of the impact that service may have on their families.

In the early 1970s, while a single mother, Jean Melzer was appointed the first female State Secretary of the Victorian branch of the ALP, and was not only responsible for rebuilding the Party structure, but also ran the Victorian end of the iconic *It's Time* campaign that saw the Whitlam government swept into office.

Following from that, from 1974 to 1980 she served as the first female Senator to represent the ALP in Victoria while still running a household on her own – including extended periods away from home while the Senate was in session and when Parliamentary committees were active.

In 1978 she was the first woman elected as the Secretary of the Labor Caucus, a no-doubt challenging position given the volatility of politics in the late '70s.

After her term in the Senate ended, she continued to actively contribute to the community as an advocate for communities of disabled Australians, and even in retirement led the invigoration of the University of the Third Age (U3A) network in Victoria and nationally.

Jean was pleased and humbled by the recognition received for her commitment and sacrifice, including the award of an OAM during her lifetime, but her lasting legacy would be enshrined in the Australian political system should an electorate be created with her name.

Thank you for your consideration I recommend the submission to you and the Committee.

Best regards,

Steve Melzer  
- proud son