



The Federal Redistribution 2003  
**QUEENSLAND**



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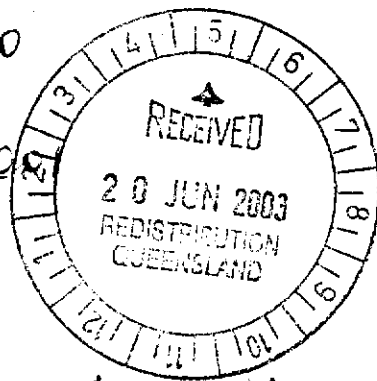
**Public Suggestion Number 28**

**Denis Cleary**

**10 pages**

The Secretary  
Redistribution Committee  
for Queensland  
G.P.O. Box 2590  
Brisbane  
Queensland 4001

57 Ridge Street  
Northgate  
Queensland 4013  
19 June 2003



**SUGGESTION**

**B-28**

Dear Sir,

I wish to submit the name "Macrossan" for a new federal electoral division to be created in Queensland. I propose the name to perpetuate the memory of the Honourable John Murtagh Macrossan (1833-1891), democrat, colonial politician and statesman, who played a decisive role in the achievement of Australia's nationhood through his unwavering support for Sir Henry Parkes, the "Father of Federation", in the struggle for the federation of the Australian colonies.

John Murtagh Macrossan was born in Greeslough, County Donegal, Ireland, the son of Neil Macrossan, farmer and his wife Agnes, née Murtagh. He was educated in private and Catholic schools in Ireland and Glasgow. He arrived in Melbourne in 1853 and worked as a miner in Victoria and probably in New South Wales and New Zealand. By 1865 Macrossan was living on the North Queensland goldfields and by the early 1870's he had emerged as a leading figure among the North Queensland miners. In 1871 he organized the Ravenswood Miners' Protection Association which petitioned the minister for removal of the field warden. Shortly afterwards he was convicted in Townsville of having assaulted the warden, T.R. Hackett, whom he had publicly horsewhipped. In November 1873 Macrossan was elected to the Queensland Legislative

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT SENT 23/6/03

2.

Assembly as an independent member for Kennedy, taking his seat in January 1874. Having lost that seat in 1878, he re-entered Parliament in March, 1879 as member for Townsville.

After some years as an independent, Macrossan threw in his lot with the Conservatives under Thomas M<sup>c</sup>Ilwraith. From 1879 to 1883 he was minister for works and mines and was given this portfolio again in 1888, adding the portfolio of colonial secretary to his responsibilities in 1890. Macrossan was an able and hard-working minister and was responsible for two mining Acts which were well received and brought many reforms. His 1888 Act emphasized employer liability in cases of accident and included such radical measures as inspection by workers' representatives.

Macrossan was an eloquent and passionate debater with a tendency towards being intemperate. In Parliament he was used as the major debating strength of the Conservative Party.

In October 1889 Sir Henry Parkes, then Premier of New South Wales, made his famous speech in Tenterfield urging the federation of the Australian colonies into one nation. Parkes called an Australasian Federation Conference in Melbourne in February 1890, which was attended by delegates from the Australian colonies and New Zealand. The two delegates chosen by the Queensland Parliament were Macrossan and Sir Samuel Griffith.

At the Melbourne Conference Parkes was able to secure unanimous support for a resolution in favour of early federation of the colonies and calling for a Convention to be held early in 1891 to draft a federal constitution. Macrossan was given the main credit by

Parkes himself in his papers for having persuaded the half-hearted, the timid and the doubters to adopt a broader Australian vision by voting for the resolution. Alfred Deakin, the great Victorian federalist, also recorded his admiration for Macrossan's contribution to the cause.

The Morehead Conservative government in Queensland resigned in August 1890, to be succeeded by the liberals under Sir Samuel Griffith. Nevertheless, Macrossan was chosen to accompany Griffith to the Australasian National Convention in Sydney in 1891, as a Queensland delegate. Again he made a notable contribution, this time to the drafting of a constitution which substantially became that which was approved by referendum of the Australian people, to become in 1901 the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia.

Sad to relate, Macrossan became ill during the Convention and died on 30 March. His grave is in the Nudgee Catholic Cemetery, Brisbane. The great champion of Federation, Sir Henry Parkes, whom Macrossan so ably supported, was also destined not to see the fulfilment of his dream, dying in 1896 at the age of eighty-one.

John Murtagh Macrossan was also a fervent advocate of the establishment of a separate colony in northern Queensland. While still in opposition in 1876, he secured the appointment of a Financial Separation Commission. In August 1886 he moved that the Queensland Parliament should petition Queen Victoria for the northern portion of Queensland to be erected into a separate and independent colony with representative institutions. Macrossan's motion was defeated by 40 votes to 9, the northern members voting as a bloc for separation. Opposing the motion,

Griffith passionately argued that separation be deferred until North Queensland had reached "a more advanced social status", i.e., until it had a substantial population of European descent. In spite of the defeat, Macrossan again moved in Parliament in 1890 for separation, this time coming as close as 26 votes to 32 to carrying the House.

On 1 October 1874 in Townsville Macrossan married Bridget Queely, an Irishwoman from County Clare. Together they had a daughter and seven sons. Macrossan was noted for his contempt for the legal profession but paradoxically two of his sons, Hugh and Neal, became in their turns Chief Justices of Queensland, as did a grandson, Honourable John Macrossan, who is also a nephew of Hugh and Neal. Hugh Macrossan served one term (1912-1915) as the independent member for Windsor in the Queensland Legislative Assembly.

In submitting the name "Macrossan" for the new federal electoral division, I believe that it would be a most fitting memorial to one of the founders of a united Australian nation, a true statesman. It would be a gesture too to the people of north Queensland if the name "Macrossan" could be given to a division in that part of the state. I realise however that a new division is most likely to be established in the south-eastern part of Queensland. An alternative suggestion is to re-name one of the existing northern divisions. That no doubt would meet with strong opposition, as voters would have already formed attachments to those names, which in some cases have been associated with notable political representatives. Nevertheless, a precedent has been set with the re-naming of the Darling Downs division as "Groom".

If neither of the foregoing suggestions is

considered acceptable, I believe that assigning the name "Macrossan" to a new division in the south-east would still be appropriate, as John Murtagh Macrossan the federalist represented all of Queensland, not only the north, at the Federation Conference in 1890 and the Federation Convention in 1891.

As a matter of interest, I should mention that I was Secretary of the Queensland Place Names Board from 1976 to 1988 and after the abolition of the Board in 1988 was Place Names Officer with the Department of Lands until that position was regionalized out of existence in 1992. I have an abiding interest in history, place names and related matters and take some credit for the naming of the federal division of Blair. My last six years before retiring from the Queensland Public Service were spent with the Land Management Section of the Department of Natural Resources. A good friend was the late Paul Wilson, Manager Place Names and Historical Services of the Department and at one time State Archivist of Queensland for fourteen years.

One day Paul came to my desk in the Land Management Section and told me that the Commonwealth Redistribution Committee had asked the Department of Natural Resources to suggest a name for a new division. He asked me whether I had any ideas. We both agreed that an Aboriginal person, perhaps a woman, would be suitable. Paul suggested Codgeroo Nornuckle (Kath Walker), Aboriginal poetess and fighter for Aboriginal rights. I opposed this on the grounds that the newly elected coalition government in Canberra would be most displeased, to say the least, and that the Department of Natural Resources would never again be asked to submit names for

new divisions. I then briefly thought of Jerome (after Paddy Jerome, the famous Queensland Aboriginal boxer). He however had had no connection with politics. Paul then mentioned Captain Reg Saunders, the first Aborigine to hold commissioned rank in the Australian Army. I replied that I thought that Saunders would be a good choice but that he was a Victorian and not a Queensland. We then considered former Senator Neville Bonner (a most worthy candidate) but as he was then still living, passed him over. A principle of place naming is to avoid naming geographical features after living persons, although this obviously does not concern redistribution committees, as Rankin was named after Dame Annabelle Rankin while she was still alive. Finally, I had a brain wave. I remembered that not only had the late Harold Blair been a singer of world renown, but that he was a Queensland, an early spokesman for justice for his people and that he came from Cherbourg, which is only a short distance outside the boundary of the division that came to be named after him. I was slightly concerned that some people might assume that the division had been named after Sir James (Jimmy) Blair, Attorney-General and Secretary for Mines for Queensland (1903-1908) and a most colourful state parliamentarian from Ipswich.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to submit a name for the new division. Enclosed please find a copy of Harrison Bryan's entry for John Murrays Macrossan in the Australian Dictionary of Biography, on which my submission is largely based.

yours faithfully,

Dennis Cleary

# AUSTRALIAN DICTIONARY OF BIOGRAPHY

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VOLUME 5 : 1851-1890

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MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY PRESS



VOLUME 5 1851-1890

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GENERAL EDITOR  
DOUGLAS PIKE

jointly with Robert who, however, died in 1859 at Stuttgart, Germany. The property remained in their joint names until their brother George (1826-1883) bought out the interest. When Banyenong West was subdivided in 1861 William took over part of the run. George and his brother John arrived in August 1840 as cabin passengers in the *Culdee*. They were in partnership at Lillirice station on Mount Emu Creek near Portland from 1845 until John sold his interest and returned to Scotland in 1853. In 1844 George had been an active member of the committee formed at the separation meeting in Melbourne. Like Robert, George had been appointed a territorial magistrate by Lieutenant-Governor La Trobe in 1852. George held Watchem station in 1864-70 and for some time was a member of the firm of Cuninghame & Macredie.

T. F. Bride (ed), *Letters from Victorian pioneers* (Melb, 1898); R. V. Billis and A. S. Kenyon, *Pastoral pioneers of Port Phillip* (Melb, 1932); P. L. Brown (ed), *Clyde Company papers, 4-5* (Lond, 1959-63); National Mutual Life Assn of A'sia, *A century of life* (Melb, 1969); *A'sian Insurance and Banking Record*, 15 Nov. 1886, 18 May 1891; *Argus*, 4 Apr 1891; Cuninghame papers, 1-3 (ML).

MARJORIE J. TIPPING

MACROSSAN, JOHN MURTAGH (1833-1891), politician, was born at Creeslough, Donegal, Ireland, son of Neil Macrossan, farmer, and his wife Agnes, née Murtagh. He was educated in private and Catholic schools in Ireland and Glasgow. He arrived at Melbourne in 1853 and was a miner in Victoria and probably in New South Wales and New Zealand before 1865 when he was certainly located on the North Queensland goldfields. By the early 1870s he had emerged as a leading figure among the North Queensland miners. In 1871 he organized the Ravenswood Miners' Protection Association which petitioned the minister for removal of the field warden. In that year Macrossan was convicted in the Townsville court of having assaulted the warden, T. R. Hackett, whom he had publicly horsewhipped. In November 1873 Macrossan was returned to the Queensland Legislative Assembly for one of the newly-constituted seats for the Kennedy electorate. After some years as an independent, he threw in his lot with Thomas McIlwraith [q.v.]. In the 1878 elections, which brought the Conservatives to office, Macrossan swung the northern electorates solidly behind McIlwraith, but was himself defeated by making a last-minute decision to contest a doubtful seat. However, he was given the portfolio of works and mines on 21 January

1879 and in March was elected for Townsville; he retained this seat until 1891.

Macrossan resigned from the ministry in March 1883 but returned to office in June 1888 under McIlwraith. In January 1890 he added the portfolio of colonial secretary to that of mines. As a minister Macrossan was able and hard-working. His first actions in 1879 had been to introduce economy and order into the railways, though the Opposition asserted that his wholesale dismissals from the Ipswich railway workshops could be shown to have a sectarian bias. He was responsible for two mining Acts which were well received and clearly represented many reforms. In particular the 1888 Act emphasized employer liability in cases of accident and included such radical measures as inspection by workers' representatives.

As a politician Macrossan was used, both in and out of office, as the major debating strength of the Conservative Party: good examples are the no confidence motion of 1876, the Ipswich dismissals of 1879, and especially in 1880 the steel rails scandal, the mail contract and the Douglas [q.v.] libel. They all show a lack of restraint which came out most strongly on other occasions affecting him personally: for example, the debate on Griffith's education bill in 1875; the judgment of Sir Charles Lilley [q.v.] in the case of *McSharry v. O'Rourke* in 1886; and perhaps the bitterness surrounding the election of W. H. Groom [q.v.] as Speaker in 1883. Ironically enough, this fierce lack of restraint probably caused him to be passed over twice when the leadership fell vacant. In 1886 when McIlwraith first retired he was succeeded as leader of the Opposition, not by Macrossan his obvious lieutenant but by Albert Norton [q.v.]. Again, in November 1888 when McIlwraith resigned as premier, the party chose B. D. Morehead [q.v.].

In February 1890 Macrossan and Sir Samuel Griffith attended the conference on Federation called by Sir Henry Parkes [q.v.] in Melbourne. Although the government resigned in August Macrossan was chosen to accompany Griffith to the Australasian National Convention at Sydney in 1891. Macrossan had been suffering from heart disease for some years but he had an attack of bronchitis and died during the convention on 30 March. He was buried in Nudgee, Queensland. He was survived by his wife Bridget, née Queely, whom he had married at St Joseph's Church, Townsville, on 1 October 1874, and by a daughter and five of their seven sons. Hugh Denis (1881-1940) and Neal (1889-1955) became chief justices of Queensland, and Vincent was one of Brisbane's leading solicitors. Not the least

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igned from the ministry in returned to office in June 1891. In January 1890 he was appointed as secretary of colonial secretary. As a minister Macrossan was working. His first actions were to introduce economy and reform railways, though the fact that his wholesale disestablishment of railway workshops was to have a sectarian bias. He was responsible for two mining Acts received and clearly reprints. In particular the 1888 employer liability in cases included such radical legislation by workers' repre-

Macrossan was used, both as the major debating conservative Party: good no confidence motion of dismissals of 1879, and the steel rails scandal, the Douglas [q.v.] libel. lack of restraint which only on other occasions normally: for example, the education bill in 1875; or Charles Lilley [q.v.] in *Wright v. O'Rourke* in 1886; bitterness surrounding the Groom [q.v.] as Speaker enough, this fierce lack probably caused him to be when the leadership fell when McIlwraith first succeeded as leader of the Macrossan his obvious Albert Norton [q.v.] in 1888 when McIlwraith died, the party chose B. D.

1890 Macrossan and Sir James Macrossan attended the conference on the subject of Chinese immigration by Sir Henry Parkes [q.v.] though the government had chosen Macrossan was chosen fifth to the Australasian Conference on at Sydney in 1891. Macrossan was suffering from heart disease but he had an attack during the convention and was buried in Nudgee, Queensland, where he was survived by his wife, whom he had married in Brisbane, Townsville, on 1 July 1871, by a daughter and five sons. His son Hugh Denis (1881-1940) became chief justice of Queensland and Vincent was one of the best solicitors. Not the least

of the paradoxes associated with Macrossan is that he founded a Queensland legal tradition despite his oft-expressed contempt for those who lived on the law.

Some mystery surrounds the source of Macrossan's income, but he must have had some substance to remain an unpaid member of parliament for twelve years. He certainly controlled the *Northern Advocate* and *Miners' Journal* for some time and was rumoured to have other newspaper interests in the north. He also appears to have invested in lead mining and was involved in railway construction contracts in New South Wales and perhaps in Queensland.

Macrossan was physically small and slight, pale-complexioned and almost delicate in appearance. His deep-set eyes and heavy beard, jet black in his earlier years, attracted attention and hinted at a depth of feeling and a strength of expression to which his contemporaries all attest. Solitary by nature, he was known to miners as 'Jack the Hatter', and he seems not to have made friends easily. This difficulty must have been enhanced by his intense vigour in party politics, the bitterness and passion of the speeches in and outside the House, the strength of his insistence on his Catholic religion and a clear determination not to conciliate or to suffer fools gladly.

Macrossan's early loyalty to the Conservative Party must have shocked his original electors, the northern miners, but the suggestion that he had betrayed his constituents as a price for future office seems ill-based. Whatever his changes of attitude, a consistency can be distinguished in his actions on issues he thought vital, but his vacillation on such matters as payment of members of parliament cannot be freed completely from the suggestion of opportunism. On some subjects, however, he stood firm, irrespective of party policy or personal advantage. Committed to the interests of working miners, he legislated for their safety and was much more consistent in opposing Chinese coolie immigration to the gold-fields than he was on Kanakas or Indians in agriculture. A fervent advocate for North Queensland, he complained that its interests were ill-served by 'Queen Street Ministries'. While still in opposition in 1876, he secured the appointment of a Financial Separation Commission. In 1886 he came out openly for complete separation for the North and in the assembly made one of Australia's great statements for local self-government. Though supported only by the balance of his 'Northern Nine', he tried again in 1890 and came as close as 26 votes to 32 to carrying the House. On religious questions he was always consistent and arguably affected his personal prospects thereby. Contem-

poraries regarded him as the lay leader of Catholicism in Queensland. Rumour persists that he had been intended for the priesthood.

Finally, Macrossan emerged as one of the earliest and ablest of the apostles of Federation. Contemporaries have recorded his fervent, infectious enthusiasm and clear grasp of principles. In the convention debates he stands out for his knowledge and admiration of American precedent. Wise and Deakin recorded that he was a quiet speaker but stress the detail and incisiveness of his argument. To Queensland journalists he was ever the fiery demagogue, and to his long-time enemy Thadeus O'Kane [q.v.] his oratory was 'raw and bloody bones'. Undoubtedly a Statesman Macrossan lay behind the Politician Macrossan.

H. Bryan, *John Murtagh Macrossan: his life and career* (Brisb. 1958); V&P (LA Qld), 1891, 1, 271, 296, 312; H. Bryan, 'John Murtagh Macrossan and the genesis of the White Australia policy', *JRHSQ*, 5 (1953-57); *Australasian*, 15 May 1886; *Brisbane Courier*, 31 Mar 1891; *Daily Mail* (Brisb), 28 Sept, 5 Oct 1907; H. Bryan, *The political career of John Murtagh Macrossan* (M.A. thesis, Univ Qld, 1954).

HARRISON BRYAN

MAIR, WILLIAM (1806-1904), soldier and civil servant, was born on 31 August 1806 at Glasgow, Scotland, son of Hugh Mair of the 42nd 'Black Watch' Regiment and his wife, née Woodburn. Educated at Inverness, Glasgow and Londonderry, he was commissioned in November 1830 in the 99th Regiment which he joined in Ireland next June. He served in Mauritius from 1831 to 1836, when he was promoted lieutenant, and in Ireland in 1837-41.

Mair was ordered to escort 200 convicts to Van Diemen's Land and sailed in October from Dublin in the *Richard Webb*. He arrived at Hobart Town in March 1842 and soon sailed for Sydney. The rest of the regiment arrived later by detachments. Mair was paymaster to the regiment and for some time quartermaster. In February 1843 he became adjutant of the mounted police. With light duties in Sydney he went to such outlying stations as Maitland, Penrith, Bathurst, Berrima, Goulburn and Yass. On 7 December 1843 he went to Melbourne and visited stations in the Port Phillip District. With La Trobe's permission he rode as far as Port Fairy and returned overland to Sydney through Albury and Goulburn in January 1844.

In October 1846 La Trobe sought more mounted police to control riots between Orange and Catholic factions in Melbourne and asked Mair to take command of the Port