



Submission FOB114

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Submission on the Proposed Renaming of the Division of Franklin

To the Australian Electoral Commission,

I wish to provide a submission regarding the proposed renaming of the federal electorate of Franklin.

I am comfortable with the name being changed, particularly given that the boundaries of the division have shifted significantly. However, I do not support the proposed name “Tongerlongeter,” and I believe it does not align with the foundational principles of Australia’s democratic system.

This view is **not** a judgement on Tongerlongeter as a historical figure, nor on colonisation, nor on the attitudes of the era. History is complex, often painful, and, as the saying goes, “history is not there for you to like.” Colonisation brought profound harm to Aboriginal peoples, and it also laid the institutional foundations of the democratic nation we participate in today. Both truths coexist.

A core aspect of democracy is the ability to rise above conflict and violence and instead resolve differences through debate, representation, and peaceful civic process. Modern examples of democratic maturation include the suffragette movement in the United Kingdom, which shifted from civil disobedience to legislative advocacy, ultimately contributing to women’s enfranchisement (Purvis, *Emmeline Pankhurst: A Biography*, 2002), and the political evolution of groups in Northern Ireland, where democratic gains were achieved only after violent conflict gave way to negotiation and parliamentary participation (Cochrane, *Northern Ireland: The Reluctant Peace*, 2013).

Tongerlongeter was, by historical accounts, a formidable warrior and a leader of resistance during the Black War. The AEC’s own background paper notes that “he emerged as a leader of the federation of Oyster Bay clans and played a prominent role in Aboriginal resistance to colonial expansion” (AEC, *Background Paper on Proposed Division Names*, 2024–25). This is an important part of Tasmanian history. However, leadership expressed through armed resistance, while understandable in its context, does not reflect the qualities of democratic leadership we should be elevating in the naming of electorates.

In this era, we should be celebrating individuals who helped bring communities together, strengthened democratic institutions, or contributed to civic unity. Naming an electorate after a figure whose historical role was defined by conflict against the very structures that later evolved into our democratic system feels inconsistent with the purpose of electorate naming, which is to honour contributions that support democratic continuity, representation, and cohesion.

I also note that more than sixty alternative naming suggestions were submitted. Many of these proposals presented strong cases grounded in civic leadership, community-

building, or contributions that align more closely with democratic principles. Several examples demonstrate clear merit, strong alignment with democratic values, and deep relevance to Tasmania's history:

Mathinna (Metineh)

Mathinna's life is intertwined with Tasmania's early colonial history and directly connected to Sir John and Lady Franklin (Clements, *The Black War*, 2014). Her story reflects the human consequences of early colonial policy and highlights the democratic value of protecting vulnerable individuals and ensuring all people have agency and dignity. Naming a division after Mathinna would honour Tasmania's past while symbolising a commitment to inclusion, fairness, and compassion, values central to modern democratic society.

Jessie Spink Rooke (1845–1906)

Jessie Rooke was a leading Tasmanian suffragist, temperance reformer, and social advocate who played a pivotal role in securing women's voting rights in Tasmania (Petrow, "Women's Suffrage in Tasmania," *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, 2001). Her legacy is a direct contribution to Australia's democratic development: peaceful reform, expanded civic participation, and non-partisan advancement of equality. Naming a division after Rooke would honour Tasmania's role in the national suffrage movement and celebrate democratic leadership expressed through advocacy rather than conflict.

Ida "Aunty Ida" Amelia West AM (1919–2003)

Aunty Ida West was a Tasmanian-born poet, community leader, and advocate for Aboriginal rights. She was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for her service to the Aboriginal community (Australian Honours Database, PM&C). Her work focused on peaceful advocacy, cultural preservation, and improving the lives of Aboriginal Tasmanians through dialogue and representation. Her legacy aligns strongly with democratic values: strengthening representation for marginalised communities, building bridges between cultures, and advancing civic participation. Naming a division after her would honour Tasmania's Aboriginal heritage while celebrating leadership expressed through peaceful engagement.

Truganini (1812–1876) (Preferred)

Truganini is one of the most significant figures in Tasmanian and Australian history. Born in Van Diemen's Land, she lived through the upheaval of colonisation and became a spokesperson and community leader during one of the most turbulent periods in

Tasmania's past (Ryan, *Truganini: A Life*, 2023). Unlike leaders defined primarily by conflict, Truganini's legacy is characterised by resilience, negotiation, cultural survival, and the preservation of community identity.

Her story encourages reflection, reconciliation, and understanding, values deeply aligned with democratic principles. She is a Tasmanian figure of national importance whose legacy is non-partisan and profoundly meaningful. Naming a division after Truganini would honour Tasmania's Aboriginal history while celebrating a leader whose life embodies endurance, cultural identity, and the democratic principle of seeking peaceful coexistence.

These alternatives demonstrate that there are many worthy candidates whose legacies better reflect the values that underpin Australia's democratic system.

For these reasons, while I support renaming the electorate due to boundary changes, I do not support the proposed name "Tongerlongeter." I encourage the AEC to consider one of the many alternative suggestions that more appropriately honour democratic leadership and civic unity.