



Submission FOB176

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Jeff Briscoe submission to AEC objecting to the change of electoral name of Franklin to Tongerlongeter.

Opening comments

Some commentators in the local media have already started comparing the individuals **Sir John Franklin** whom the current electorate is named after and **Tongerlongeter** the individual, the suggested name.

I don't think that is a useful way to approach or justify changing the long standing name of a federal electorate.

So I **will not** be considering the personal merits of **Sir John Franklin** versus **Tongerlongeter**. Sensibly the current name should remain. If the electorate name has already be determined by the AEC to be changed then I believe there are better names that could considered that follow the AEC guide lines. At the end of my submission I will list a few suggestions. I know other individuals and groups who are formally objecting and some have expressed different reasons and some have elaborated more on the crimes of **Tongerlongeter** which I will not repeat in detail in here but support their objections. As I am aware of some of those I will try not to cover the same ground.

The suggested name will be very controversial. I will briefly outline in 3 points the serious concerns I have.

1. Introduction: Challenging history

It is not disputed that there was a major conflict (a war) in Tasmania that occurred between the migrants & families in the country, their workers, the convict underclass, the colonial government (which had control of the military) and the few remaining persons of the aboriginal tribes.

The various tribes had been decimated since settlement by disease, loss of their family units coupled with the loss of their hunting grounds and outrageous brutal treatment by some of the Europeans. Hundreds of people died on both sides. The conflict ended by a process of conciliation, but with an overwhelming loss to the tribes. I will not go into the sad aftermath of their exile to Flinders Island which turned into a great tragedy for the original people of Tasmania.

The armed conflict has always attracted many diligent local scholars such as N.J.B Plomley and recently Dr Nicholas Clements and gained much international attention. There has been an outpouring of detailed studies and books in the last 10 years. In summary both sides of the conflict were fearful of the other. If we can grossly simplify it, both sides wanted to exterminate the other. I will not going into the right and wrongs of the conflict. I have empathy for the suffering experienced by both sides before and after the conflict from what I have read.

Tongerlongeter was the principal resistance aboriginal leader during this conflict period from the 1820's leading up the overwhelming defeat of what remained of the original aboriginal tribes. **Tongerlongeter** has been recently commemorated in the very powerful written book: *Tongerlongeter First Nations Leader & Tasmanian War Hero* by

Henry Reynolds & Nicolas Clements (2021). The book has brought to life a relatively unknown individual for that period of our history.

Portrayed as a great aboriginal resistance fighter, and maybe was the best in Australia. That he is recognised as an important resistance leader is not sufficient a reason for an electorate to be named after him. There are better and less controversial ways to honour him, if that is necessary.

2. War crimes

The book mentioned above has also documented brutal treatment that Tongerlongeter and his small band of warriors inflicted on the other side. And I believe this is one key reason the name of this resistance fighter should not be used as a federal electorate name.

‘Tongerlongeter and his warriors often humiliated and tortured their victims’

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The authors then goes on to describe the manner of horrific tortures which I am reluctant to describe here but I have attached some extract as an attachment.

There are also many examples documented in this book where Tongerlongeter and his men murdered many innocent women and children including brutally a 4 year old child.

These crimes were wrong then and now. It would be further classified today, I am sure, as war crimes. It cannot be justified by saying it was the standard warfare of the time or he was fighting for his people.

The parallels to present day Australia are striking.

- (i) A well-known Australian war hero with a formidable reputation as a soldier who was decorated with VC has been charged with war crimes killing innocent civilians during the war in Afghanistan. The outcome of the criminal court case is yet unknown. A previous civil case had determined his culpability.
- (ii) The federal seat of Batman in Victoria was renamed in 2018 (held the name since 1904) due to the known activities of John Batman and his roving parties. Whilst the original namesake John Batman was one of the important founders of Melbourne, he was involved in killing of Aboriginal people in Tasmania during the same conflict as Tongerlongeter. The electorate was renamed **Cooper** in honour of an indigenous rights campaigner from the early 20th century. In consistency with this decision, and not reflect a two tier justice standard, as Tongerlongeter and his men who killed and tortured men, women and children should not have an electorate named after him.

Accordingly to choose to name for an electorate after a person, whatever his skills as a warrior and leader for his side who committed such outrageous crimes in my view is unconscionable.

3. AEC taking sides

The new name will lead to unnecessary division and polarisation in the community. A debate about the suggested controversial name, if changed will continue.

- (i) Does the AEC want our electoral system to be involved in a continuing political debate?
- (ii) Potential candidates may be reluctant to stand in an electorate seen as named after a person that perpetrated murder and violence against women and children.
- (iii) The renaming could also be conceived as reopening a long resolved historic conflict between historic parties thus favouring one side or the other.
- (iv) The AEC could also be conceived to be taking sides in current political and cultural debates, the most recent being the Voice referendum.
- (v) I suggest it would not progress the aim of reconciliation.
- (vi) Another Victoria electorate **Corangemite** wasn't changed due to an elected member voiced concerns she would 'teased' about the proposed name. Already on social media I have sighted heaps of comments about the proposed name for Franklin has been shown to be capable of ridicule due to its spelling. I will not elaborate as it should be obvious.

Concluding remarks

To look back at events and people that lived 200 years ago from the vantage point of 2026 and use that to determine a name of a federal electorate is very courageous and challenging and would be an unwise decision for the AEC. I believe any new name (if changed) should have a clear acceptance and consensus from the community. It does not. There are many suitable names.

Suggestions for alternative names

Reece, after a long serving labor Tasmanian Premier Eric Reece who was responsible for the building of the green energy Hydro system that we still enjoy today.

Goodluck after a popular Clarence City Mayor and member of both the Federal and State parliaments,

Goodwin after the late Vanessa Goodwin, Attorney General in the state parliament.

Harradine after a long serving Senator for Tasmania Brian Harradine.

Yours faithfully

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Attachments

Extracts from *Tongerlongeter First Nations Leader & Tasmanian War Hero* by Henry Reynolds & Nicolas Clements, NewSouth Publishing (2021).

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Bay Big River people had, after all, declared they would kill or expel (children), and that one of the assailants replied in good English: No on her knees to the natives and said. "Spare the lives of my piccaninnies you white bitch we'll kill you alls. This new, indiscriminate attitude was every bit as understandable as it was harsh. Robinson noted:

They have a tradition amongst them that white men have usurped their territory, have driven them into the forests, have killed their game and thus robbed them of their chief subsistence, have ravished their wives and daughters, have murdered and butchered their fellow countrymen; and whilst brooding over these complicated ills... they goad each other on to acts of bloodshed and revenge.

Tongerlongeter and his warriors often humiliated and tortured their victims. This may have been intended to terrorise the invaders' hatred. Either way, the records of coroners' reports read like the scripts into leaving, but it could just as easily have been the product of intense to Robinson the manner of torture they adopted towards their fated of horror films. An Aboriginal woman from Bruny Island described victims, via breaking their arms or legs or cutting their heads, and when they did not kill they disabled or maimed.³⁷ Attacks of this nature commonplace. While there are far too many to enumerate here, it will suffice to illuminate two attacks that were most likely led by Tongerlongeter. The first occurred in September 1828. The Tasmanian were reported:

On Saturday last, [James Stanton,] an assigned servant of Lieut. Hawkins at Little Swan Port, while out in quest of his Master's bullocks, was waylaid by a party of the Black Natives ... and murdered in the most barbarous manner, his brains being literally dashed out ... They then surrounded Lieut. Hawkins' house made

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Resistance: 1828–30

fires around it, using threatening language, and counterfeiting the man's voice whom they had just killed, in hopes of enticing the Lieut. from his house.

This was, according to the Tasmanian, a crime of passion. 'These savages, in tolerable broken English used many opprobrious names towards the white men, and evinced a spirit of determined hostility.'³⁸ The coroner's report left no doubt:

the body of James Stanton was discovered with the head beaten in with waddies: the nails of the fingers were separated from the quills apparently with a knife, the fleshy part of the outside of the hands was cut off, the eyebrows were cut off and the bones of the eyebrows beaten down to the eyes. The whole of the teeth were beaten out of the head and the body otherwise much mangled. During the time they beset Lieut. Hawkins' house they continued calling upon the dead man by name and laughing about it.³⁹

A second case involved John Rayner, a freed convict in the service of George Meredith senior at Oyster Bay. Early in 1830, Rayner was out hunting when his dogs began to growl,

as they always did whenever they saw or scented the blacks, and, on looking round, he perceived some of them near him. He jumped up and ran, but instantly received two spears, one in his breast, which he pulled out readily, and another in his back, which he wrenched at, and broke off short. He still ran as fast as he could, until, coming to a large log, he tripped, and fell over it in such a manner as to conceal him, for he knew nothing more, until, coming to himself at night, he by degrees recalled the circumstances, and with some difficulty made his way home. He remained ill for some time from the wounds.

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Rayner appears to have been sent to the hospital in Hobart to recuperate. Once sufficiently recovered, he began the long walk back to Oyster Bay. He would never make it. Near Grindstone Bay, on 28 March 1830, Rayner was assailed again, this time by 'about 30 black natives'. In his statement to police, he recounted how

he had a fowling piece [i.e. shotgun] which he occasionally presented to intimidate [them] but did not wish to fire for fear of irritating them. They followed him about a mile and a half and occasionally discharged a spear at him. About dusk he received a spear between his shoulders and immediately after another on the back part of his right thigh. They then commenced to run after him and throw volleys [sic] of stones and waddies by one of which he was knocked down senseless he came to himself about midnight when he found himself alone, he suffered much from thirst to alleviate which he pulled off his boot and voided his urine in it and when cold drank it. He also suffered much from cold they having stripped him of his jacket and waistcoat ... About noon on Monday the 29th he crawled with the assistance of a stick in search of water and fell in with a hole in the middle of a marsh about 100 yards [90 metres] from the place where he was attacked of which he drank plentifully[;] he remained there until the 31st when at day break he heard the crowing of some cocks and with the assistance of a stick he proceeded in the direction from whence the sound proceeded ... and shortly after he fell in with one of Mr Gatehouse's men.⁴¹

Horrified, Gatehouse's servants noted that Rayner was in 'unimaginable agony', having been 'cruelly maimed and wounded, with one eye knocked out, and the other quite blind, his frightful sores all festering, and alive with maggots!'⁴² He was immediately shipped to the convict settlement on Maria Island to receive medical attention, but the surgeon there could do nothing, and he died soon after.⁴³

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