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Submission FOB184

Thomas Johnston

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Johnston, Thomas - Redistribution TAS - Submission on the proposed Tasmanian redistribution (feedback)

Personal details

First name: Thomas
Surname: Johnston
Email: [REDACTED]

Submission on the proposed Tasmanian redistribution details

Category: Names

Details: To whom it may concern,

I wish to record my objection to the proposal of the augmented Electoral Commission to rename the electorate of Franklin in honour of Tongerlongeter.

While other commentators have offered many useful and relevant observations in relation to this proposal, which I expect will have been included in submissions to the Commission, I should simply wish to repeat what I believe to be especially pertinent points offered by Hon Tony Abbott, AC.

Most crucially, he writes: "there are two key problems with renaming the seat of Franklin after Tongerlongeter. First, its against the AECs standard procedure thats to preserve the names of seats that have existed since the time of Federation. Second, and much more important, if Batman has been retired as the name of a federal parliamentary seat, because of his unsavoury personal conduct, isnt it a double standard now to commemorate in this way Tongerlongeter, whose many casualties (understandably enough under the circumstances) included women and children?

"Quite properly, the names of parliamentary seats these days acknowledge significant Aboriginal people who have rendered outstanding service to Australia, such as William Cooper, Vincent Lingiari, Neville Bonner and Truganini herself, as well as Bennelong. But if its really necessary to have an indigenous name from Tasmania, what about relocating the seat of

Truganini from the ACT to there and finding another indigenous person to honour in Canberra?

"As for lionising Tongerlongeter, what about erecting a statue to him, with an explanation of the tragedy that was inevitable in the clash of two then-very-different and mutually misunderstood cultures, perhaps to stand alongside the restored statue of Premier William Crowther, as a reminder of our shared flawed humanity. Better that than posthumously recruiting him into the culture wars that are dividing and demoralising our nation."

In offering this objection, I wish to add my voice to the call for the Commission to seriously consider these and other observations, noting especially the societal dangers inherent in promoting ill-considered historical revisionism, even in such subtle matters as this, in exercising its responsibilities. I do so with all respects due.

Yours faithfully,

Thomas Johnston
