



Submission FOB206

Trent

Submission to the Australian Electoral Commission against the renaming of Franklin

Re: Proposed renaming of the Division of Franklin to Tongerlongeter

I write to object to the proposal to rename the federal Division of Franklin to Tongerlongeter as part of the 2026 Tasmanian redistribution.

The threshold for renaming has not been met

The AEC's own guidelines for naming federal electorates state that names should not be changed or transferred to new areas without very strong reasons. This is a deliberately high bar, and for good reason: electorate names are historical markers, not blank slates to be redrawn at will. Franklin has carried its name continuously for well over a century. Continuity of this kind is itself a public good because it anchors civic identity and orients generations of voters to a stable point of reference. A boundary redistribution, however significant, is not by itself a "very strong reason" to discard that continuity. The scale of the boundary change is a separate question from whether the name should follow it, and the Commission has previously held the line on retaining established names even where boundaries shifted substantially (as with Hunter and Corangamite in other redistributions).

The case against Franklin is thin

Sir John Franklin served as Lieutenant-Governor of Van Diemen's Land and was a distinguished naval officer and Arctic explorer. The rationale for removing his name rests largely on the fact that he spent a comparatively small portion of his life in Australia, but this has been true for the entire 120-plus years the electorate has borne his name, and was known and accepted when the name was chosen and every time it has been reviewed since. Nothing new has emerged about Franklin's record to justify revisiting a settled question; the "problem" being solved is not a defect in Franklin's service but a preference for someone else.

Being of English heritage is not a disqualifying factor for electorate naming

Relatedly, part of the implicit case against Franklin appears to rest on his being an English-born, male colonial administrator rather than someone who meets modern cultural preferences, noting that the three alternative names considered compromised of two aboriginals and one female suffragette. Franklin's race and gender are not a legitimate basis for renaming. Many of Australia's most enduring place names and electorate names honour British-born figures who served the colony and the nation, including in Tasmania itself. Ancestry or birthplace should not be treated as a disqualifying feature for retaining a long-standing name.

Tongerlongeter's record is deeply contested

Finally, the proposed replacement name honours a war leader whose forces, during the Black War, killed colonial settlers including women and children. Historical accounts, including the biography by Reynolds and Clements cited in support of the renaming itself, and contemporary newspaper reports document raids attributed to Tongerlongeter's group in which women, girls and a boy were killed. Whatever one's view of the broader conflict and its causes, an electorate name is meant to confer straightforward honour. A name whose associated history includes the deliberate killing of women and children is not a comfortable or uncontroversial choice, and its adoption should not be treated as self-evidently appropriate.

For these reasons, I ask the Commission to retain the name Franklin.