



THE FEDERAL
REDISTRIBUTION
QUEENSLAND

Submission S45

Louise Elizabeth Shellshear

From: [REDACTED]
To: [FedRedistribution - QLD](#)
Subject: Naming Submission
Date: Wednesday, 14 October 2026 5:00:55 PM
Attachments: [electorate submission.docx](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the Australian Federal Government. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

My details:

Name: Louise Elizabeth Shellshear

email: [REDACTED]

Submission about: Names

In particular: A federal electorate, especially a Queensland electorate should be named **Macrossan**.

See attachment for full submission .

Summary:

John Murtagh Macrossan was a Queensland Colonial MLA from 1873 to his death in 1991. He was a pivotal player in the direction of first two Australian Federation Conventions in Melbourne and Sydney in 1890 and 1891. We know of the importance of his vision for the Australian project conventions, because his colleagues (including Deakin, Griffith, and Parkes after whom electorates have already been named) emphatically told us so. Australia's constitution, respected and admired around the world was heavily influenced by Macrossan's vision and architecture, and his insistence on an elected Senate. New research has shed a light on Macrossan's previously mysterious background, explaining the individuality of his extraordinary input. The mystery is why he does not *already* have an electorate named after him...

Submission to name a (Queensland) Federal Electorate MACROSSAN

When I began researching my book “Jack the Hatter” about my great grandfather, John Murtagh Macrossan, I already knew that he was important in Australia’s federation movement, but even I was astounded by just how pivotal he was to the outcome. It was the admiration and obvious respect from the delegates at the convention including Parkes, Griffith and Deakin that was the most persuasive.

Australia has had very few visionaries, people whose input shapes a nation and leaves it a better place. It is an absolute travesty that visionary **John Murtagh Macrossan**, the fiery Queensland MLA whose death in 1891 caused a nationwide outpouring of grief, should today not even have an electorate named after him. People do not weep openly in the streets for just anyone.

Macrossan’s sudden death at the Federal Convention of 1891 meant that the conference itself had to be paused for his Sydney funeral service.¹ The delegates pondered how to deal with Macrossan’s enormous loss, given his pivotal involvement in the whole federation process. Queensland later honoured him with a huge funeral procession, what we would today call a state funeral. A special train had to be provisioned, stopping at all stations from Sydney to Brisbane so that people could pay their respects.^{2,3} Flags flew at half-mast all the way from Cooktown to Brisbane.⁴ Tributes poured in from Europe, UK, and America.⁵ People wept

¹ Australian Town and Country Journal (Sydney, NSW, 1870 - 1919), Saturday 4 April 1891, page 14, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article71251085>, ‘All the members of the convention, save one or two, were present at the ceremonial [funeral].’

² Northern Mining Register (Charters Towers, Qld, 1891-1892), Saturday 4 April 1891, page 6 via Trove <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article81669812>.

³ Queenslander (Brisbane, Qld, 1866-1939), Saturday 4 April 1891, page 625 via Trove <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article20291489>; Death of the Hon. John Murtagh Macrossan M.L.A., Cairns Post (Qld, 1884-1893), Saturday 4 April 1891, page 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article39437092>.

⁴ Cairns Post (Qld, 1884-1893), Saturday 4 April 1891, page 2, via Trove, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article39437092>; Brisbane Courier (Qld, 1864-1933), Friday 3 April 1891, page 5, via Trove, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article3524329>, Queenslander (Brisbane, Qld, 1866-1939), Saturday 4 April 1891, page 625, via Trove, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article20291489>.

⁵ Birmingham Daily Post, Tuesday 31 March 1891, page 8. British Newspaper Archives, <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000033/18910401/042/0008>; Morning Post, London,

openly in the streets. A special law was later passed, granting his widow a pension due to his contribution, something quite unprecedented.⁶ The panegyrics of Parkes, Griffith and Deakin all attested to Macrossan's brilliance and seminal importance to Federation and Australia's constitution.

Australia has honoured the work of these aforementioned dignitaries with electorates, so why not the man on whose shoulders they stood?

New evidence reveals that John Murtagh Macrossan contributed *hugely* to our Australian national identity. Henry Parkes' vision of Australia, as 'a narrow union of states', was way too one-dimensional for my great-grandfather.⁷ What Macrossan envisaged was a full-on merger, not the half-hearted joint venture Parkes had in mind, a sort of glorified Federal Council, dominated by NSW. Griffith also worried that Macrossan was moving too far too fast.⁸ Macrossan refused to be held back by either Parke's obstructionism nor Griffith's timidity. He wanted a constitution that reflected Australia's individuality. And as a result of this man's passion and determination, we have a constitution that is internationally admired and respected.

Tuesday 31 March 1891, page 5, British Newspaper Archives, <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0000174/18480331/019/0005>; *South Wales Daily* 31 March 1891, page 5, British Newspaper Archives, <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000919/18910331/030/0005>; *Dublin Weekly Nation*, Saturday 16 May 1891, page 8, British Newspaper Archives, <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001424/18910516/039/0008>; *United Ireland* (Flag of Ireland) Dublin, Saturday May 16 1891 page 1, , British Newspaper Archives; *The Irish Weekly*, Saturday, Jan 9 1892 page 6, British Newspaper Archives; *The Catholic Standard*, Philadelphia, June 6 1891, page 8 via www.findmypast.com.

⁶ *Grant to Widow and Children of late Hon. J. M. Macrossan*, Parliamentary Debates [Hansard] Legislative Assembly Friday, 16 October, 1891 p.1587, https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/events/han/1891/1891_10_16_A.PDF accessed 14 Jan 2023; "*Grant to Widow and Children of late Hon. J. M. Macrossan*." Parliamentary Debates [Hansard] Legislative Assembly Friday, 23 October, 1891 p 1705 https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/events/han/1891/1891_10_23_A.PDF accessed on-line 14 Jan 2023.

⁷ Bryan, Harrison John, *John Murtagh Macrossan His Life And Career*, University of Queensland Press, 1958, p.52. Via University of Queensland eSpace <https://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:190631>.

⁸ 1890 Australasian Federation Conference Wednesday, February 12, 1890. P. 72. https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/constitution/conventions/1890-1007/upload_binary/1890_1007.pdf;fileType=application%252Fpdf p. 21 of downloaded document.

What Macrossan insisted on was the birth of a whole new *nation*.

Citizens, he said, should see themselves as, ‘First, Australians, and *then* Queenslanders and South Australians and Victorians.’⁹

He was very far-sighted. One of the aims of the Federal Convention, he claimed, was to ‘protect the people of Australia from the future governments of Australia.’¹⁰

We know that Parkes *himself*,¹¹ supposedly the Father of Federation, acknowledges Macrossan’s important contribution.^{12, 13} So why don’t the history books? Why do we only ever hear about Parkes, Griffith and Deakin?

Parkes - ‘I may pass away, the youngest of its advocates may pass away, as the gifted man, Mr. Macrossan passed away in the midst of his work, but the principles of his cause are inherent in the destiny of this country.’¹⁴

History books credit Sir Samuel Griffith with the crafting of the legal frame work of our most important founding document, the Australian Constitution.

⁹ 1890 Australasian Federation Conference - Proceedings No. 7 – 14th February, The Parliamentary Library of Australia. Parliament of Australia:
<https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;adv=yes;db=CONSTITUTION;id=constitution%2Fconventions%2F1890-1007;orderBy=customrank;page=0;query=%221890%20Australasian%20federation%20conference%22%20Dataset%3Aconventions;rec=1;resCount=Default> p22 of downloaded version accessed 26 Sep 2023.

¹⁰ Harrison Bryan, *The Political Career of John Murtagh Macrossan*, B.A, M.A Thesis, School of History, Philosophy, Religion, and Classics, The University of Queensland, 1954, University of Queensland Library p150 footnote from an interview: ‘MR THURLING, the Brisbane cab - driver ... remembers only one sentence that Macrossan ever spoke in his hearing. Once, in his cab, Macrossan explained to a friend the difficulties attending the Federation Convention in its deliberations. ‘We were trying,’ said Macrossan, ‘to protect the people of Australia from the future Governments of Australia.’

¹¹ *Brisbane Courier* (Qld, 1864-1933), Wednesday 31 May 1899, p. 5 via Trove <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article3694711>.

¹² Sir Henry Parkes, *Fifty Years in The Making of Australian History with Portraits*, Longmans, Green, And Co., London And New York: 16 East 16th Street, 1892 pp. 605-609 <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-3578896/view?partId=nla.obj-4100078>.

¹³ *1890 Australasian Federation Conference Debates*. (1890). 81.
https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/constitution/conventions/1890-1007/upload_binary/1890_1007.pdf;fileType=application%252Fpdf

¹⁴ *Sir Henry Parkes before his Constituents*, Sydney Morning Herald (NSW : 1842 - 1954), Friday 17 April 1891, page 5, vis Trove, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article28270294>.

Yet Griffith *himself* acknowledged that Macrossan's forensic knowledge of the American constitution¹⁵ (on which ours is largely modelled) hugely influenced this legal scaffolding. We now know Macrossan was still struggling with the wording of Clause 123 of our draft constitution on his death bed. We know that Andrew Inglis Clark, another very important contributor, himself also not originally acknowledged, held Macrossan's work in very high esteem.¹⁶ We know that the version of the constitution that was drafted about the time of Macrossan's death in 1891, absolutely bursting with his influence, remained remarkably unaltered in the ten years that followed before Federation.¹⁷

So why doesn't he get any credit at all for our current Constitution?

Fortunately, he has not been forgotten at all in North Queensland. Macrossan's role in the Separation movement is still warmly remembered up there. Many northerners wanted a separate state, with its own capital, independent of the rest of the Brisbane-centric south. Just two years ago, in 2023, North Queenslanders celebrated the 150th birthday of Ravenswood with a huge parade including an oversize effigy of Macrossan on the 150th anniversary of his election.¹⁸ In 1948, nearly sixty years after his death, one pro-separation article claimed - "For his devotion to North Queensland's interests, his scrupulous honesty and his courageous fight against a mental and political giant like Sir Samuel Griffith, the name of Macrossan will be honoured by North Queenslanders for all time."¹⁹

¹⁵ Roger B. Joyce *Samuel Walker Griffith*, University of Queensland Press St Lucia, 1984 p. 186 https://espace.library.uq.edu.au/data/UQ_195366/DU272_G73J68_1984.pdf.

¹⁶ *Brisbane Courier* (Qld, 1864-1933), Tuesday 8 August 1899, p. 8 via Trove <https://trove.nla.gov.au/search/advanced/category/newspapers> <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article3699144>.

¹⁷ Sir R. C. Baker, K.G.M.G. *Federation*, Scrymgeour and Sons, Printers, King William Street, Adelaide 1897, *It's Financial Aspect* p. 13, <https://thesis.library.adelaide.edu.au/dspace/bitstream/2440/15094/1/Baker.pdf> p. 7 of downloaded version.

¹⁸ *150th Anniversary of Election of John Murtagh Macrossan*, Dr Glenn A. Davies, Stuff I've written blog, <https://glennadavies.net/2023/11/25/150th-anniversary-of-election-of-john-murtagh-macrossan/>; <https://www.facebook.com/7NEWTownsville/videos/ravenswoods-150th-anniversary/310533696430537/>.

¹⁹ *Townsville Daily Bulletin* (Qld, 1907 - 1909 ; 1912 - 1966), Tuesday 14 December 1948, page 5, via Trove <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article63453384>.

There was a time when Macrossan was a household name, one Sydney paper describing him as ‘the most popular man in Queensland ... certainly the most popular politician in the north’²⁰. The media loved him, faithfully reporting the highs and lows of his political life. His seventeen-year political career put Queensland on the map! His role in the Henry Blake affair alone caused an international incident, upsetting the British Establishment.²¹ Search Trove, the Australian newspaper archive, and you will see he gets more than 25,000 hits during his political career.

Speaking of maps, buy an *actual* map and you’ll see that Macrossan’s influence still lingers in Queensland’s topography. There is a mountain range, a river, a rural locality near Townsville, a New Guinea island, a plant, a luxury Brisbane apartment block, a railway station, a school, a bridge, not to mention about fifteen streets or thoroughfares named after him.

Macrossan was the person credited for first suggesting the use of Italian immigrants instead of [kidnapped] Kanakas for workers in the sugar cane industry.²² Macrossan’s Mining Safety and factory and shopkeeper legislative agenda presaged the Labour Party and the later Australian Labor Party. We know that his previous biographer, Harrison Bryan saw him as a change-agent, whose far-seeing industrial legislation and miner’s rights activism helped to transition a squattocracy into a party at least pretending to care about its workers.^{23, 24}

²⁰ *Brisbane Courier* (Qld, 1864 - 1933), Friday 15 June 1888, page 3, (quoting *Sydney Evening News*), <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article3477849>.

²¹ *Pall Mall Gazette*, November 13, 1888, page 5, British Newspaper Archives, <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0000098/18881113/005/0005>

²² Parliamentary Debates [Hansard] Legislative Assembly THURSDAY, 26 September 1889 p1834 ‘*The Sugar Industry*’ https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/events/han/1889/1889_09_26_A.PDF accessed on-line 16 Mar 2024

²³ Harrison Bryan, *The Political Career of John Murtagh Macrossan*, B.A, M.A Thesis, School of History, Philosophy, Religion, and Classics, The University of Queensland, 1954, University of Queensland Library, p III.

²⁴ Harrison Bryan, *John Murtagh Macrossan His Life and Career*, University of Queensland Press, 1958 p. 18-19; and: ‘we see the first glimmer of a coming change—the first hint that in addition to a squattocracy there was a baby democracy claiming a share in the government of the country. John Macrossan came to that Parliament,

Macrossan's enormous popularity as a Catholic at a time when anti-Catholicism was rife meant that Irish Catholics felt they finally had an advocate, that somebody had their back. They could now apply for jobs previously denied to them.²⁵ He was regarded as the highest-ranking lay Catholic in Queensland,²⁶ a position that came with many responsibilities, almost akin to an extra portfolio. It put him in an adversarial position with Archbishop Dunne whose attitude was that Catholics should really be trying to assimilate, not draw attention to their disadvantage.²⁷ Macrossan's legacy with the Catholic Church lingers today.

Macrossan must be one of the most fascinating Australians you've never heard of...

Why has he not so far been honoured with an electorate?

and what better democrat than he?', Bernays, Charles Arrowsmith, *Queensland politics during 60 years (1859-1919)* (Brisb., Govt. Pr., 1919, p193.

²⁵ A letter to Macrossan from Denis Fouley, personal assistant to Bishop Quinn, on 26 July 1881, highlighted this pressure. 'Give us fair play, that is all we want. Whenever a billet is vacant, let a Catholic have as good a chance of it as any other man'. From family papers of John B. Macrossan (deceased).

²⁶ *Illustrated Sydney News* (NSW, 1881-1894), Thursday 19 September 1889, page 30, via Trove, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article63622056>, 'Mr. Macrossan, the recognised leader of political Roman Catholicism in Queensland'; *Freeman's Journal* (Sydney, NSW, 1850-1932), Saturday 4 April 1891, p. 16 via Trove <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article115566798>, '[Macrossan] was the recognized leader of the Catholic body in Queensland'.

²⁷ Neil J. Byrne, *Robert Dunne (1830-1917)*, *Archbishop of Brisbane*, Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1991, 71, 73, 80, 108, 116, 135, 202 <https://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:193097>.