



Comment on suggestion 19

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(Hons)

2 pages

From: ALAN JAMES, BA (Hons), Dip Ed, B Ed (Hons)

TO: AUSTRALIAN ELECTORAL COMMISSION

RE: FEDERAL REDISTRIBUTION IN VICTORIA

I'm writing as a member of the English Speaking Union to comment in support of their public submission about the naming of the proposed new federal electorate in Victoria following the 2021 redistribution.

The ESU's suggestion for the name of the new electorate is WATT. This name would honour the outstanding lifetime service to his country of the late William Alexander Watt (1871-1946).

My reasons for supporting this suggestion are as follows:

1. As the Australian-born child of Scottish immigrant James Watt, William Watt is revered in the Scottish community of Victoria, and Australia generally.
2. His contribution to advancing British people through his political career has been recognised by the likes of John Anderson and Geoffrey Serle in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* – see <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/watt-william-alexander-9011>.
3. As a member of the Victorian parliament, Watt “staunchly supported reform of the Legislative Council, the female franchise, further factory legislation and protection of the weak.”
4. In October 1897 Watt was elected to the Legislative Assembly for Melbourne North. At the age of 28 he became the youngest cabinet minister in the British Empire.
5. In 1912, he became Premier of Victoria. In this capacity, he introduced workers compensation legislation, state support for hospitals, electrification of railways and an extensive State-wide irrigation system.
6. As a member of the Australian Natives' Association and as vice-president of the Australasian Federation League of Victoria, Watt was a prominent advocate of Australian Federation which led to the establishment of the Commonwealth of Australia.
7. Watt was elected to the Victorian seat of Balaclava in the House of Representatives in 1914 and held the seat until 1929. He became the Treasurer of Australia in March 1918, was Acting Prime Minister until August 1918 and was the Speaker from 1923 to 1925.
8. Watt was internationally renowned for his leading role as a civil rights campaigner, being made a Privy Counsellor in 1920 and a Commandeur of the Légion d'Honneur of France in 1924.
9. Watt's entire political career was devoted to helping the oppressed, such as through his support for the introduction of workers' compensation legislation.
10. Watt's leadership and support was critical in developing the English-Speaking Union (Victorian Branch), founded after the First World War to advance international peace and understanding between the English-Speaking peoples. He was its President from 1921 to 1925.
11. Watt fulfils all the criteria for naming of Federal Electoral Divisions.

12. The Australian values of fairness, equality and justice demand that the AEC reflect these values in the naming of Federal Electoral Divisions. William Watt's commitment to fairness, equality and justice are unsurpassed.