

FAQ – Regarding Federal Electoral Division of Batman renaming

Why is Council involved in this? Why doesn't Council stick to rates, roads and rubbish?

Council does have a role to represent and advocate for the needs of people who live in the municipality.

The renaming of the electorate of Batman reflects the spirit and intent of Council's Aboriginal Action Plan and our commitment to reconciliation, building on work between Council and the Aboriginal communities connected to Darebin.

Our work in this area shows respect for Traditional Owners, acknowledges our shared history and recognises the land as vital to Aboriginal communities' cultural, spiritual and physical identity.

Why did Council want to change the name of the electorate of Batman?

John Batman is often thought of as the benign founder of Melbourne, considered to have been sympathetic towards Aboriginal people - notably in light of his attempt to create a Treaty with the local Wurundjeri people to effectively buy their land from them.

There are many places of significance across Melbourne which are named in honour of John Batman.

However, we now know that Batman committed terrible crimes against Aboriginal people.

Batman led roving parties in Tasmania which systematically hunted Aboriginal groups with the intent to execute them. The documented killing of 15 Aboriginal people at Benlomond in 1829 is one such example.

Written testimonies of that time highlight he was a man with "much slaughter to account for" (Governor Arthur, 1829).

Batman can no longer be considered suitability qualified as "having rendered outstanding service" to Australia, which is one of the criteria for electorate names.

How did Council consult with the community?

Council promoted opportunities for the community to have their say in the AEC's redistribution process since this process commenced formally in September 2017.

Opportunities were advertised in Darebin Community News, Mayor's Messages in local papers, on Council's website and social media channels as well as through Council's community networks.

Council has also consulted closely with the Wurundjeri Council as the representative body of the Wurundjeri people, as well as Aboriginal organisations connected to Darebin.

Who makes the decision on the name of the electorate?

The AEC Redistribution Committee is responsible for considering submissions from the public to inform its own decision-making on electoral boundary redistributions and name changes. A separate committee considers objections and makes a final determination of the names and boundaries of redistributed divisions.

The AEC's redistribution process was open to all members of the community to make a submission.

Who was William Cooper?

Mr William Cooper was a mobilising force in the early struggle for rights for Aboriginal people in the first half of the twentieth century. As a calm-speaking political lobbyist, he argued that Aboriginal people should have control over their own affairs.

He held the first 'Aboriginal Day of Mourning' on 26 January 1938 to raise awareness of what this date meant to Aboriginal people. He is known as the 'father of NAIDOC' as NAIDOC has its roots in the original day of remembrance.

He founded an advocacy organisation which would go on to incorporate with the Aborigines Advancement League, which remains proudly in Thornbury today. His face was recently incorporated into a large mural at the League.

He closely followed civil rights around the world; in 1938 Mr Cooper lodged a personal protest against the treatment of European Jews in Nazi Germany at a time when little recognition of these events was happening in Australia.

How do I make a complaint?

The renaming of electoral divisions is the decision of the Australian Electoral Commission. They can be contacted on phone 13 23 26.