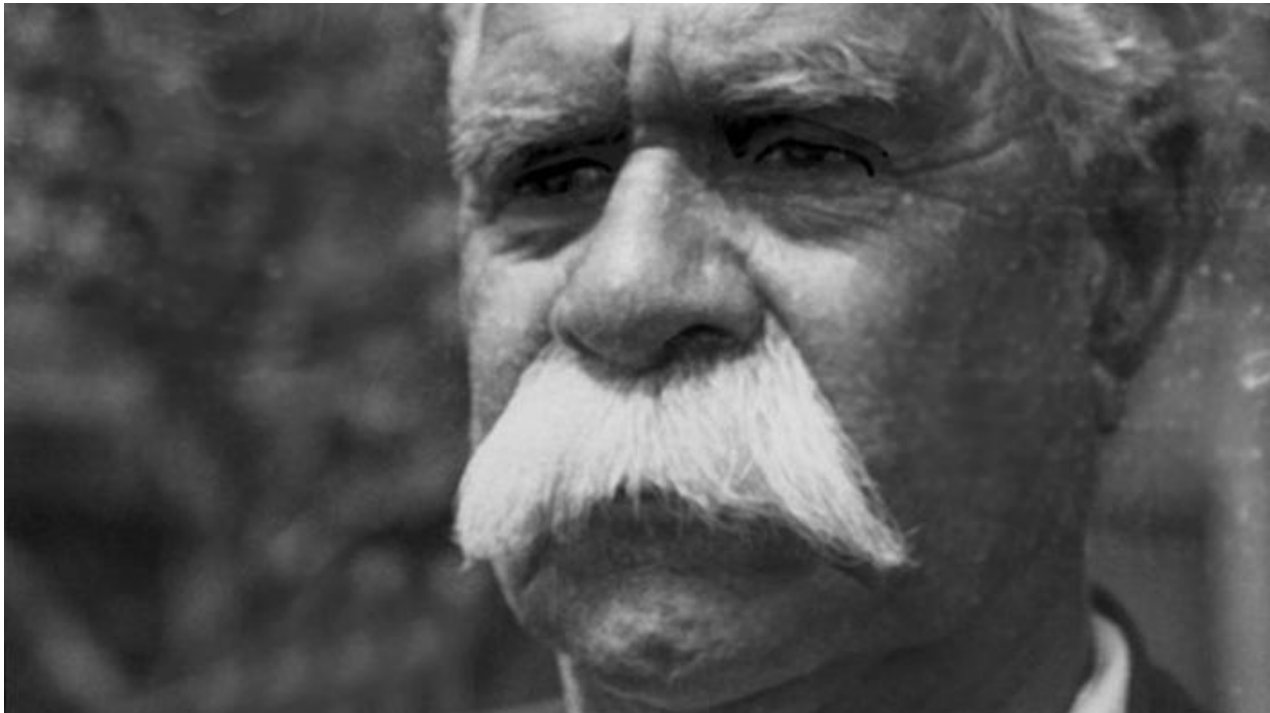


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## Federal seat of Batman to be renamed after Indigenous rights leader William Cooper



Yorta Yorta Man, William Cooper (1860 - 1941), a political activist and community leader. (Koorie Heritage Trust)

**The Australian Electoral Commission has 'unanimously agreed' to rename the federal seat of Batman in honour of Indigenous rights campaigner William Cooper.**

By [Nakari Thorpe](#)

The Victorian federal seat of Batman in Melbourne's inner-north will be renamed Cooper in honour of Indigenous rights campaigner, William Cooper.

Electoral Commissioner and presiding member, Tom Rogers, said the decision had been carefully considered.

"The augmented Electoral Commission has unanimously agreed to rename the Division of Batman to recognise William Cooper, and to modify the boundaries of 22 of the electoral divisions initially proposed," he said.

"All written objections and comments, as well as the information presented at the inquiries in Winchelsea and Melbourne, have been carefully considered in deciding the final boundaries."

The dumping of the name "Batman" follows a campaign by the local Darebin Council and the Greens who argued that its original namesake, John Batman was involved in the massacre of Aboriginal people in Tasmania before he helped found Melbourne in 1835.

Leonie Drummond is the great-granddaughter of William Cooper. She was 'very excited' to hear the news.

"I'm just really proud," she told NITV News.

"It's a really great thing to see the contrast how [the seat] was named initially and how it has changed is a remarkable turnaround. To recognise the work of Aboriginal people, the work they've done and the work of Uncle William - it's really rewarding to see a change in the community," she said.

"It's lovely for everybody, for Aboriginal people and for all Australians - who should be really proud."

Kimberley Moulton's great grandmother, Ada, was the sister of William Cooper. She said it was a really proud moment.

"Not only for the family, but for Aboriginal Victoria and Yorta Yorta people as well," she told NITV News.

As a curator, Ms Moulton has been able work with his family and community to honour Mr Cooper in an exhibition.

"Even though he was guest on Kulin land he led political protests and a humanitarian fight from Melbourne," she said. "He is a person that brought hope to our people and he wanted to rectify the injustices of the past. He was not only a proud Aboriginal person, but he was a leader in Australia, and all around the word."

"It's amazing because John Batman is the opposite of what Uncle William stood for – so that's a big statement."

William Cooper was a spokesman for Aboriginal people who, as secretary of the Australian Aborigines League presented a petition and led deputations to authorities, calling for direct representation in parliament, enfranchisement, land rights and federal control of Aboriginal affairs.

In 1938 Mr Cooper, a Yorta Yorta man, led a march to Melbourne's German Consulate to make a stand against the persecution of the Jewish people by the Nazi government.



Just recently, he was commemorated with the unveiling of a bronze statue in his hometown of Shepparton, with hundreds turning out to acknowledge his leadership and honour his legacy.

Mr Rogers said the Commission had adopted the majority of the names proposed by the Redistribution Committee for Victoria, to the boundaries of 22 of Victoria's 38 federal seats and the creation of a new electorate in Melbourne's north-west suburbs.

When the redistribution is fully determined on 13 July, 11 of the state's 38 electoral divisions, almost 30 per cent, will be named for an Aboriginal person or word, and the number of Victoria's electoral divisions named after women will increase by one to five.

The proposal to rename the seat of Corangamite after Australian swimmer May Cox was rejected. Liberal MP Sarah Henderson, who currently holds the seat, was vocal about objecting to rename the seat to Cox - fearing she would be teased.