

Australia Loses Batman And Won't Get 'Cox'



[Josh Butler](#)

ten daily Senior News Reporter

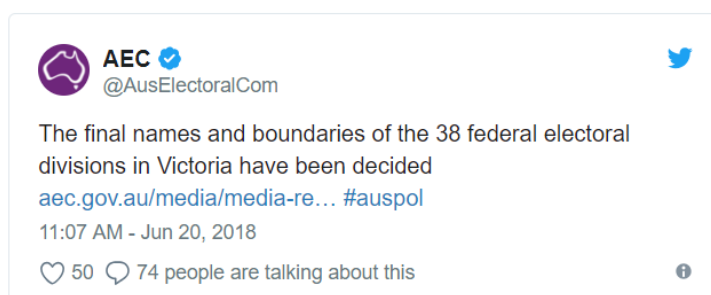
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The Liberal MP was embarrassed, but the AEC rejected those claims.

The division of Batman is no more, after the Australian Electoral Commission decided to shed the superhero-reminiscent name in favour of honouring an indigenous political pioneer.

But the AEC has resisted renaming another electorate 'Cox', after some objections due to potential potty-mouthed "ridicule" for a future Member for Cox.

The AEC has been evaluating boundaries and names of Australian electorates, and on Wednesday, after months of planning and consultation, [released the final results for Victoria](#). Included in the decision was the renaming of three divisions, while affirming the previously-announced plans to redraw the boundaries of 22 electorates and the creation of a new division, named Fraser, in Melbourne's north-western suburbs.



"The augmented Electoral Commission has unanimously agreed to rename the Division of Batman to recognise William Cooper," the AEC said in a statement.

Cooper, born in 1861, was a significant campaigner for the rights of Aboriginal people and workers. One of his most enduring legacies was holding an Aboriginal Day of Mourning on January 26, 1938, to mark 150 years since the arrival of the First Fleet -- the day would later evolve into what is now known as NAIDOC Week.

In a biography posted on the AEC's website:

Mr 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 lodged a personal protest against the treatment of European Jews in Nazi Germany following Kristallnacht.

The seat of Batman -- currently held by Labor's Ged Kearney -- was named for explorer John Batman. Pressure has been applied in recent times to change the name due to his alleged involvement in massacres of Aboriginal people.

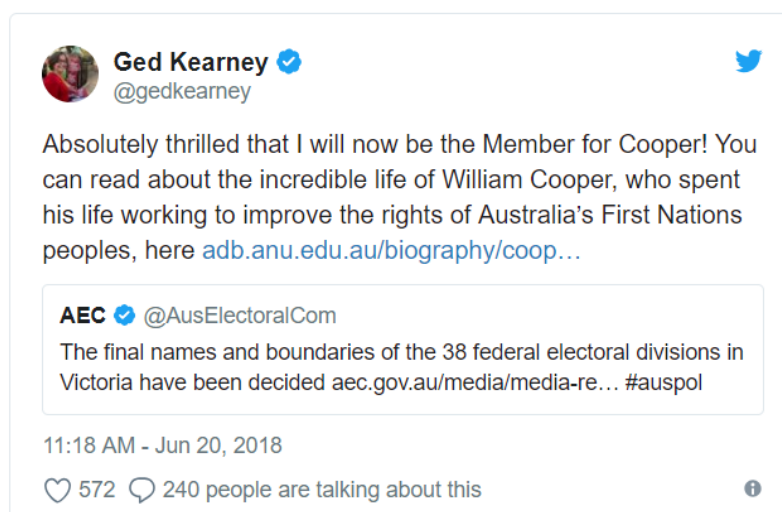
The Redistribution Committee said it had "received suggestions" which "argued that John Batman was not a worthy individual after whom to name an electoral division, based on an evaluation of his legacy and his historical dealings with Aboriginal communities."



Labor member for Batman Ged Kearney (AAP Image/Mick Tsikas)

Labor MP Tim Watts, the Member for Gellibrand, had pushed for his seat to be renamed Cooper. However, the AEC decided neighbouring Batman would instead be renamed.

Kearney said on Twitter she was "thrilled" at the change.



Elsewhere, the division of Corangamite will retain that name. There had been a proposal to rename it after Mary Cox, in recognition of her "lasting legacy in teaching swimming and lifesaving to Victorians", which faced some stiff opposition.

Current Member for Corangamite, Liberal MP Sarah Henderson, had been among those fighting the change, due in no small part to -- ahem -- the "unfortunate double-entendre" potential of Cox.

"I don't really want to put 'delivering for Cox' on my corflutes," she said in a Sky News interview in April.

"There are all sorts of things that happen in Parliament, including when a member might be asked to withdraw... I've already been subjected to quite a bit of ridicule."

The AEC said it had received criticisms that renaming the division 'Cox' including that it "is an unfortunate double-entendre and will open the electoral division and the local member to ridicule".

However, the commission rejected such claims, saying:

It is unreasonable to suggest that worthy individuals who have names that a small section of the community may consider suggestive should not be recognised, and notes that objections which argue this are disrespectful to May Cox, her family and those whose surname is 'Cox'. The augmented Electoral Commission considers Australia a sufficiently mature and open-minded society to recognise the achievements of a worthy individual over any subjective innuendo in name.

Nonetheless, the AEC decided to forego the Cox change and retain Corangamite, due to "the desire of those resident in the proposed electoral division to retain an Aboriginal name for their electoral division".

Fraser has been created as a new division, to reflect the growing population in Melbourne's north-west.