

The Electoral Boundaries Commission
Level 11, 530 Collins Street
Melbourne, Victoria 3000

July 25, 2021
Peter Gavin, Secretary
6 Gibbons St, Sunbury 3429
Phone 0417 135 373

Email submissions@ebc.vic.gov.au

Dear Commission Members,

Support of proposal to call the new Victorian lower house electorate 'Eureka'

Eureka Australia Descendants and Supporters, Inc supports the Electoral Boundary Commission's proposal to name the new Victorian Lower House electorate in the Ballarat region, 'Eureka'. The name commemorates the district's link with gold mining and, more importantly, its leading role in the struggle for democratic ideals that tragically led to the famous clash at Eureka on 3 December 1854.

This event had great significance in the political development of Victoria. The aspiration for democratic principles that underlay the Charter of the Ballarat Reform League was one of three key issues that motivated dissent on the goldfields. The conflict was more than a dispute about the gold license fee, or indignation at the arbitrary arrest of three suspects in connection with the burning of the Eureka Hotel. A deputation of three representatives of the Ballarat Reform League met with Governor Sir Charles Hotham in Melbourne on 27 November 1854, six days before the conflict, in an attempt to negotiate a peaceful solution. The transcript of their interview, which can be viewed at the Public Records Office, shows that the representatives spent considerable time arguing the case for political rights, as summarised in their Ballarat Reform League Charter which they presented to Hotham, but that the Governor, the Attorney General and the Colonial Secretary would make no concession. When the representatives reported their lack of success to a public meeting on Bakery Hill in Ballarat on 29 November, there was widespread indignation. Under the flag of the Southern Cross, some of the miners responded to a call to burn their licences as a sign of their determination to resist what they saw as tyranny. The diggers swore to "stand truly by each other and to fight to defend their rights and liberties".

The battle that followed on the morning of 3 December must be seen as a battle about political principles. Though the mining population of Eureka were defeated, the subsequent refusal of juries to convict the prisoners from the battle of the crime of High Treason indicated that, even in Melbourne, the public sympathy lay with the miners rather than the Government.

Within a matter of months and following the government authorised Goldfields Commission of Inquiry - which met immediately after Eureka, reported in March 1855, was highly critical of the government and made many recommendations for political and administrative reform (which were subsequently adopted by the government), the Government bowed to the widespread popular feeling engendered by the battle at Eureka, and conceded significant political rights to ordinary citizens. This uniquely important contribution to the development of the Victorian political system is a point of justifiable pride to the community who live today in the area where these momentous events were initiated.

Eureka Australia, Descendants and Supporters Inc, proudly includes many descendants of those who participated in the conflict on the Eureka Goldfield as well as other interested Australians. It strongly supports the proposal to commemorate the sacrifices for political principles including electoral representation and male suffrage reform, through the adoption of the name 'Eureka' for the new Victorian electorate.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eric Howard', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Eric Howard AM

President,
For the Committee of Eureka Australia,
Descendants and Supporters

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