



**Mick Gentleman MLA**

Manager of Government Business  
Minister for Planning and Land Management  
Minister for Police and Emergency Services  
Minister for Corrections  
Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety

Member for Brindabella

21/448

Mr Tom Duncan  
Clerk, ACT Legislative Assembly  
[tom.duncan@parliament.act.gov.au](mailto:tom.duncan@parliament.act.gov.au)

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter of 2 June 2021 providing Petition No. 6-21, lodged by Ms Suzanne Orr MLA, concerning the representation of women, especially women of diverse backgrounds and First Nation leaders, recognised in place naming and public statues in the ACT.

The petition calls on the ACT Government to look to promote equality and diversity in the people we recognise through public commemoration; increase the prominence of women in place naming conventions across the Territory; and identify opportunities to increase the representation of women, especially of diverse backgrounds and First Nations leaders in our public statues.

The ACT Place Names Advisory Committee (the committee) provides advice to me about the naming of divisions (suburbs), public places and the commemoration of eminent Australians. The committee shares my commitment for place names which recognise our diverse and inclusive community, both locally and nationally. This aligns with a range of commitments in the ACT with respect to LGBTIQ+ inclusion and visibility.

The Commonwealth holds responsibility for the naming of public places on National land in the ACT and for the commissioning and installation of statues of national significance.

Minister for the Arts, Tara Cheyne MLA, has provided advice to me about the representation of women in the ACT Government's Public Art Collection and about measures to address the gender imbalance of women as artists and subjects in the collection.

The *Public Place Names Act 1989* was amended in 2002 to require consideration of the number of women and men after whom divisions or public places have been named in the last 10 years, and

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whether the names of women are well represented. I have strengthened the requirement for greater diversity by approving new guidelines under the Act which provide for 'the desirability for the totality of public place names in the ACT to be reflective of diverse cultural situations and cognisant of community sensitivities'.

I am pleased that over the past 10 years, three divisions have been named recognising notable women, that is, Lady Gertrude Denman GBE, Dame Jean Macnamara DBE and Judith Wright. In addition, the names of six public parks have been determined to recognise the contribution of women such as Judy Harris OAM, for Aboriginal health services; poet Rosemary Dobson AO, a longstanding supporter of poetry and literature in the ACT; and architect, Gene Willsford.

In relation to division names, I am advised that the Australian and New Zealand Rural and Urban Addressing Standard ASNZ4819-2011 provides that locality names (including divisions) shall not be duplicated in Australia. The names of some prominent female leaders in Australian history, including Edith Cowan and Henrietta Grenville, cannot be easily considered for the ACT as the locality names Cowan and Grenville already exist in other states.

I can confirm that the gender representation in new road names in the ACT has steadily improved over the past 10 years to approximately 40% women and 60% men. I acknowledge that it can be difficult to identify women for posthumous commemoration under some established nomenclature themes, such as 'Defence Personnel' in Campbell. In recent years, the committee has made sure that new division themes provide for wider opportunities to recognise women and diversity.

In Denman Prospect, the theme 'activism and reform' has enabled place names commemorating activists including Léontine Cooper, Muriel Matters, Nellie Martel and Nessie Skuta and a pioneer for women's rights in the law, Joan Rosanove QC. In total the road names commemorate the names of 41 women compared to 22 men. Since 2016, leading female architects and town planners have been commemorated in Taylor, named for Florence Taylor MBE, including Margaret Feilman, Heather Sutherland and Helen Proudfoot.

During the current committee term, I am expecting new place names will be determined in Jacka (valour and community service); Kenny, named for Sister Elizabeth Kenny, (nurses and health administrators); Macnamara (science and technology) and Whitlam (arts and culture) to posthumously recognise a range of women for their significant contribution to the community.

I encourage the petitioners to nominate women for commemoration by completing the electronic 'Proposal for Commemoration' form available from the ACT Place Names website or by contacting the Co-chair of the ACT Place Names Advisory Committee at email [placenames@act.gov.au](mailto:placenames@act.gov.au).

Regarding public statues in the ACT, the ACT Government owns and manages 117 public artworks. The Commonwealth Government, private individuals and companies also own public artworks located in public spaces across the Territory. As noted by the petitioners, statues in the ACT including those in the ACT Public Art Collection do not fully reflect the diversity of our community. Women are poorly represented, not only as artists but also as subjects in the collection.

Historically, male artists have dominated the practice of sculpture in Australia. This is reflected in the make-up of the ACT Government's collection. Of the 117 artworks in the collection managed by artsACT, 83 artworks are by male artists, 24 works by female artists and 11 by male and female artists working together.

The ACT Government is looking to increase diversity in the ACT Government's public art collection. The Minister for the Arts has advised me that a first step towards addressing this gender imbalance in the collection is to amend the ACT Public Art Guidelines. The Guidelines are currently being amended to highlight how to apply diversity, equality and inclusion principles to the artwork commissioning process. Although the Guidelines are not mandatory, for artworks to be accepted into the collection for long term care and management by the ACT Government it will need to be demonstrated that these principles have been applied to the commissioning process.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely



Mick Gentleman MLA

*31/3/2021*