

Batman bites the dust but Cox plan killed off by electoral commission

By Noel Towell

20 June 2018 — 11:57am

Malcolm Turnbull's task of retaining government at the next federal election got tougher on Wednesday with electoral boundary changes in Victoria positioning Labor to pick up another three seats in Parliament.

The Australian Electoral Commission has created a seat in Labor heartland, which looks set to be snapped-up by leader Bill Shorten, and boundary changes to two marginal Liberal electorates have made them even harder to defend.

The creation of the Division of Fraser in Melbourne's north-west increases the likelihood that Mr Shorten will switch to the new seat, notionally safe ALP territory, from his current neighbouring seat of Maribyrnong, which is tipped to turn marginal in the coming years.



Labor leader Bill Shorten, pictured in question time on Wednesday, is tipped to make the switch to the new seat Fraser.

Photo: Alex Ellinghausen

The federal seat of Batman in Melbourne's inner-north has been renamed Cooper, to honour indigenous rights activist William Cooper and Melbourne Ports will be renamed Macnamara.

But a proposal to rename the seat of Corangamite after swimming teacher May Cox was rejected by the commission.

Corangamite will keep its name but is now more likely to get a new MP with changes to its boundaries making it harder for the Liberals' Sarah Henderson to retain.

Changes to the Liberal-held seat of Dunkley in Melbourne's south-east have also tipped it towards ALP.

On the upside for the Coalition government, the state-wide redistribution bolsters the Liberal lead in the seat of Chisholm in Melbourne's east and puts Melbourne Ports, to be renamed Macnamara, within striking distance.



John Batman was one of the founders of Melbourne.

Photo: Supplied

Some of the most vocal objections to renaming Corangamite came from Ms Henderson, who feared she would be teased if her electorate was renamed Cox.

The name of Batman has become controversial in recent years because of the alleged involvement of John Batman, for whom the seat was named, in massacres of Indigenous Australians in Tasmania.

William Cooper, a secretary of the Australian Aborigines League, campaigned for direct representation in Parliament, enfranchisement, land rights and federal control of Aboriginal affairs.