



Aboriginal place naming



Introduction

The Geographical Names Board of New South Wales (GNB) is the authority responsible for assigning names to places in NSW, including determining the spelling, pronunciation, origin and history of geographical names. Place names connect people to a place and play a vital role in our social and cultural environment. The GNB is committed to Aboriginal place naming and prefers the use of Aboriginal names for geographical features.

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What is Aboriginal place naming?

Aboriginal place naming is central to language revitalisation as it helps reawaken, preserve and grow Aboriginal languages in NSW and strengthens NSW First Peoples' connections with culture and identity. Aboriginal place naming encompasses both the use of Aboriginal language in naming and the recognition of traditional Aboriginal place names for geographical features. When a feature already has an official non-Aboriginal name, the traditional Aboriginal name can also be recognised officially by assigning it as a dual name. This means the feature has two names, an Aboriginal name and a non-Aboriginal name, each existing in their own right. For example, Mount Panorama / Wahluu.

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Using local Aboriginal language in place naming

Aboriginal language can be used in consultation with the local Aboriginal community for naming any unnamed geographical feature or place within NSW. Names may be derived from the local language to describe the characteristics of the feature or place, tell the story or songline of the feature or place, or may be a translation from the local language of the feature or place itself. For example, Dhungarr Reserve. Dhungarr means pelican in the Guttang language. The reserve is located along the banks of the Manning River and the site was previously a shipyard named Pelican Shipyard.

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Recognising the traditional Aboriginal name of a feature

Many geographical features already have traditional names used by the local Aboriginal community prior to European settlement. These names were given to geographical features and do not apply to post settlement administrative features like suburbs. Traditional names can be officially recognised and recorded for a feature which enables the story and culture of the local Aboriginal community to be shared. For example, Didthul Mountain has high cultural significance to the spiritual values of local Aboriginal communities of the South Coast and Southern Highlands area. The mountain is linked to other prominent landscape features through Dreamtime stories passed down in Aboriginal oral traditions. The story relates to events surrounding the hunting and capture of an eel. The eel is roasted by the people on the beach and while they are sleeping, a pheasant (probably meaning a lyrebird) takes the eel from the fire and carries it to Didthul.

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Proposing an Aboriginal place name

Naming a feature or place using Aboriginal language or a traditional Aboriginal name, requires engagement with the local Aboriginal community in the first instance. This may be the Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) or relevant Elders or Aboriginal community groups within the local area. Consultation with the local Aboriginal community is important to ensure a culturally appropriate name is chosen, the word comes from the local language group, the story and meaning behind the word is captured and the community supports the use of the name for the feature or place.

The name needs to comply with the GNB Place Naming Policy and should also have the endorsement of the local council or the government department that administers the area where the feature is located. For road names, the local council is the road naming authority as per the *Roads Act 1993* and any suggestion to name a road must be directed to council.

Once an appropriate name has been identified and endorsement has been received, it can then be proposed to the GNB.

For more information regarding Aboriginal place naming please visit gnb.nsw.gov.au