

Get involved

We welcome suggestions for new place names and we have produced a naming proposal form to assist you in collecting the necessary information for a proposal.

For a copy of this form, go to our website, contact the address on the back of this brochure, or visit our Bathurst office.

Please note that all proposals need to have the support of your local council.

Preserving our heritage

For nearly 40 years, the Geographical Names Board has maintained the integrity of records relating to place and geographical names in NSW.

We are proud to administer an information system that, in years to come, will continue to form an important part of the historic fabric of our State.

Want more information?

Our staff are pleased to assist with any inquiry about current or historical place names. For further information, contact us using the details on the back of this brochure.

Geographical Names Board

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Geographical Names Board

Preserving the history, culture
and identity of New South Wales

Our role

The Geographical Names Board of New South Wales was established in 1966 as the official body for naming and recording details of places and geographical names in New South Wales (NSW).

Under the *Geographical Names Act 1966*, we have the power to assign names to places; to investigate and determine the form, spelling, meaning, pronunciation, origin and history of any geographical name; and to determine the application of each name with regard to position, extent or other reference.

What is a ‘place’?

Within the Act, a place is described as “any geographical or topographical feature or any district, division, locality, region, city, town, village, settlement, railway station or any other place within the territories and waters of the State of New South Wales but does not include any road, any local government area, county district under the Local Government Act, electoral district or subdivision.”

Keeping a record

We maintain a record of all New South Wales (NSW) geographical names in a Geographical Names Register. Since 1966, we have officially named and collected location data for approximately 80,000 places across the State.

We also record the origin, history, meaning and pronunciation of each name (if this information is available) as well as information relating to discontinued place names.

The Register is an important reference tool for cartographers, researchers, publishers, government authorities and the community.

We update the Register on an ongoing basis, and people are invited to offer information for addition to the Geographical Names Register.

All of our records are carefully maintained and accessible to the public through our website on www.gnb.nsw.gov.au.

Recognising our cultural heritage

The NSW Government is committed to recognising the Indigenous and European cultural heritage of our State. Our community-driven dual naming program enables the attribution of Indigenous place names to physical and environmental features which already have an official name.

The use of Indigenous Australian place names in NSW has been favoured since colonial times. In 1828, the Surveyor General, Thomas Mitchell, established guiding principles which recognised the preference for the adoption of Indigenous place names.

This principle was later acknowledged, following Federation, by the Australasian Surveyors General, and forms part of today’s geographical naming guidelines.

Dual naming

The NSW Government announced in June 2001 a Dual Naming policy for geographical features and cultural sites.

The policy allows Indigenous Australian place names to appear alongside European names in an effort to advance the reconciliation process.

It recognises that Aboriginal place names should be preserved because they are part of Australia’s cultural heritage.

The policy aims to be community-driven and has worked well in areas such as Uluru/Ayers Rock and Kata Tjuta/The Olgas.

The Dual Naming policy applies to features such as mountains, rivers, landscapes and harbour locations. It allows for signposts, maps and directories to feature both names.

The policy does not apply to suburbs, towns or streets.

Determining suburbs and localities

An address locality is a division of the landscape that has defined limits – a suburb in urban areas, or a locality in rural areas. It is the legal name that is used as the last line of a street address with a corresponding postcode.

One of our statutory responsibilities is to determine definitive boundaries and localities throughout NSW.

Given that local residents are one of the most significant users of suburb and locality names, we work closely with local councils when defining boundaries to ensure that names are appropriate for the given area.

Naming roads

Road names are an important navigation and reference tool across a variety of professional and recreational groups. Due to the importance of accurate road naming records, we are involved in the road naming process to ensure that duplication is avoided and approved proposals are accurately recorded.

In NSW, the naming of roads is standardised to ensure that the process is transparent and easy to understand for both regulatory bodies and members of the community.

A consistent approach benefits emergency services, transport and goods delivery and provides opportunities for community consultation when naming roads.

Commemorative naming

Many councils and local communities seek to recognise the work and activities of community volunteers through commemorative naming of a geographical place or feature.

Although the use of names of living persons is not encouraged, we give due consideration to all proposals put forward by councils and community leaders to recognise the work of valued community members.