

All Australians share a relationship to the land and the names we give to places convey their significance, sense of history and identity.

The New South Wales (NSW) Government is committed to recognising our Aboriginal cultural heritage by registering original place names given by Aboriginal people so that they sit side by side with existing European names. Since June 2001 the government has supported a dual naming policy for geographical features and cultural sites.

This community-driven system acknowledges the significance of Aboriginal culture and, in doing so, represents a meaningful contribution to the process of reconciliation in NSW.

Policy overview

The dual naming system applies to already named geographical features such as rivers, creeks, waterfalls, beaches, harbours, islands, mountains and caves –specifically those cultural and environmental features of significance to the local Indigenous community.

Relying on community involvement, a dual name can be assigned where there is strong evidence, in the form of written or oral tradition, of a pre-existing Indigenous place name. It should be noted that the dual naming policy applies to geographical and environmental features; it does not apply to suburbs, towns or streets.

Dual naming guidelines

A dual name must be indigenous to the local area within NSW. It can only be assigned where there is definite evidence preferably historic in the form of written or oral tradition that the feature has two names.

Once a dual name proposal is assigned, signposts, maps and directories relating to the area will feature both names.

The location and spelling of a name resides in the hands of the traditional owner or the organisation that represents them. If there are none, the proposal should be referred to linguistic experts.

Order of names

Whichever of the two names of the same feature that is most likely to be used by the local community is to be used first in a sequence. The order of the names will be reviewed by the GNB at regular intervals who will then inform mapping agencies on any changes to the naming sequence. If a visual separator is required, it shall be a solidus preceded and followed by a space '/

Style

Both the indigenous part and the introduced part of the dual name shall be in the same font, font type, font size, font style and colour.

How it works

Under the *Geographical Names Act 1966*, the Geographical Names Board (GNB) has the power to assign names to places, to investigate and determine the form, spelling, meaning, pronunciation, origin, history of any geographical name and to determine the application of each name.

Anyone can submit a dual naming proposal to the GNB.

All submissions should:

- follow the guidelines outlined in this document
- have the support of the local council, the local aboriginal land council and the tribal elders group of the area (if there is one).

Aboriginal community consultation

All dual naming proposals require the support of the local aboriginal land council and, where relevant, tribal elders of the area.

In some (rare) circumstances, a proposal may also need approval from a regional or State Aboriginal Land Council.

If the geographical feature covers more than one aboriginal land council area (e.g. a river), approval is to be sought from each relevant council.

A written proposal should be sent to the local aboriginal land council with details of the geographical or cultural site for which a dual name is being proposed.

Proponents should ask the local aboriginal land council to help establish a meeting to discuss the proposal with local elders and representatives from established Aboriginal families. A copy of the proposal should also be sent to the regional aboriginal land council for comment.

Proponents should specify the exact location, proposed name and spelling of the site within the proposal.

Proponents should allow ample time for reply because the local aboriginal land council may need an unanticipated meeting to consider the proposal. If there is no response from the local or regional aboriginal land council within three months, the GNB can submit the proposal to the NSW Aboriginal Land Council for approval.

Local government consultation

A dual naming proposal also needs to have the written support of the relevant local council. It is strongly advised that proponents should seek comment from appropriate local residents and community groups which can be used as supporting information for council's consideration.

Geographical Names Board procedure

Proponents should submit the dual name proposal, with written confirmation of support from the relevant local aboriginal land council, local council and community bodies, to the Geographical Names Board. The GNB will forward a courtesy copy of the proposal to the NSW Aboriginal Land Council if this has not already occurred.

The GNB will consider the proposal and ensure that it has local approval and meets the dual naming guidelines. The GNB will then advise all parties of its decision.

Submissions approved by the GNB are then advertised in local media outlets for public comment. If there are objections to a submission, the GNB will seek further advice from the relevant local council, tribal elders group and the local aboriginal land council.

If no objections are received after one month has elapsed, the nominated name and the existing name are notified as a dual name in the NSW Government Gazette. Local councils are then free to communicate the dual names on signposts, locality guides and maps.

All geographical names are recorded in the Geographical Names Register which is maintained by the GNB. The register includes location details of more than 80,000 names and includes their origin, history and meaning if available.

Discontinued names are also retained in the register which is an important reference for cartographers, researchers, publishers, government authorities and the public.

For further advice or assistance

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