Geographical Names Board of NSW REPORT 7

Preserving the history, culture and identity of NSW

GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES BOARD
Report

Everyone regularly uses place names to describe where they live, how to get somewhere or where they have been. Features such as mountains, rivers, suburbs and beaches are all known and described by these names. Geographical names connect places to the local community and, in doing so, impact on the community's culture and heritage.

By the 1950s the United Nations' Economic Social Council recognised the importance of place names and introduced directives to authenticate and standardise toponyms. In 1966 the NSW State Government passed the *Geographical Names Act 1966* which provided, amongst other things, for the constitution of the Geographical Names Board (the Board).

The Board is the official body for naming and recording details of places in New South Wales and has the power to assign names to places, to investigate and determine the spelling, meaning, pronunciation, origin and history of any name, and to determine the application of each name with regard to position, extent or other reference.

The Board works closely with councils and the community to ensure place names are widely accepted and reflect local attitudes.

Aims and objectives

The Board's aims and objectives are to continue to:

- preference Aboriginal place names in a manner which seeks to recognise and publicise these names and in so doing promote the use of traditional Aboriginal languages within NSW
- develop and implement initiatives that enforce authoritative addresses thus ensuring a robust system for the delivery of emergency and other essential services to the community

- recognise the contribution to the community by Australians through commemoratively naming geographical features within the state
- redevelop the Board's information systems so as to ensure effective communication and interaction with the community
- accomplish over 400 place name determinations in the reporting year thus minimising issues relating to duplication and confusion in orthography, position and extent with regard to place names
- ensure high standards for the naming of roads, schools and national parks in NSW through a continued commitment to a concurrence role for toponyms that fall outside the Board's jurisdiction
- encourage the standardisation and promotion of geographical names on a state, national and international basis.

Governance

Functions of the Board

As set out in the *Geographical Names Act 1966*, the Board has the following powers and functions.

- Assign names to places.
- Approve that a recorded name of a place shall be its geographical name.
- Alter a recorded name or a geographical name.

- Determine whether the use of a recorded name or a geographical name shall be discontinued.
- Adopt rules of orthography, nomenclature and pronunciation with respect to geographical names.
- Investigate and determine the form, spelling, meaning, pronunciation, origin and history of any geographical name.
- The application of any geographical name with regard to position, extent or otherwise.
- Compile and maintain a vocabulary of Aboriginal words used or suitable for use in geographical names and to record their meaning and tribal origin.
- Compile and maintain a dictionary of geographical names with a record of their form, spelling, meaning, pronunciation, origin and history.
- Publish a gazetteer of geographical names.
- Inquire into and make recommendations on any matters relating to the names of places referred to it by the Minister.
- May compile, maintain and publish a list of road names.

The Board proactively seeks to abide by these statutory provisions through the adoption of nomenclature policies and procedures which are both nationally and internationally recognised.

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Board members

Members are appointed to the Board in accordance with the provisions set out in Section 3 of the *Geographical Names Act 1966*. The Act allows for a total of nine members, four of which are those people who hold the office of, or are a respective nominee of, the Surveyor General of NSW, the Director General of the Department of Planning, the State Librarian and an officer of the Department of Lands nominated by the Director General of that department.

The remaining five positions are nominated by:

- the governing bodies of the Local Government Association of NSW and the Shires Association of NSW (joint nomination)

- the governing body of the Royal Australian Historical Society

- the governing body of the Geographical Society of NSW

- the NSW Aboriginal Land Council

- the Chairperson of the Community Relations Commission.

Members of the Geographical Names Board are 'appointed' by the Governor and hold office for a period not longer than five years. They are also eligible for re-appointment after the completion of their respective term.

Board meetings

The Board met formally on five occasions during the year. Five members form a quorum. The Surveyor General of NSW in his position as Chair has a deliberative vote and casting vote.

Board committees

The Technical and Scientific Sub-Committee

The Technical and Scientific Sub-Committee (the Committee) is tasked with investigating issues pertaining to linguistic consistency for various names relating to traditional Aboriginal languages, the investigation and development of reports relating to nomenclature issues and ongoing training and research programs for the Board. The committee met on one occasion during the year and is made up of academics and experts in the area of history, linguistics and toponymy.
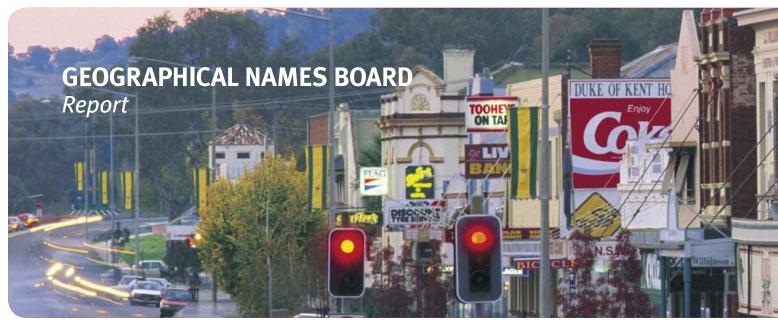
Administration

Section 4 of the *Geographical Names Act 1966* makes provision for a secretary and such officers to administer the affairs of the Board. To carry out this function Lands employs a secretariat which consists of four staff members. The Department of Lands also provides further administrative and technical support to assist the Board in its day-to-day operations.

Report on performance

Determining addresses

Addresses are used everyday for the delivery of emergency services, post and utilities. As such, they need to be logical, unique and readily identified. Along with the allocation of address numbers, the naming of address localities and roads is essential for the provision of addresses in NSW.

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Board members and attendance	
Members of the Board	**Board meetings (5 meetings)**
Mr Warwick Watkins AMP:ISMP (Harv), MNatRes, DipScAgr, HDA (Hons), FAPI, FISA, JP Surveyor General of NSW Ex-officio position.	**4 (Chair)**
Mr Paul Harcombe BSurv (UNSW), MGeom (Melb) Nominee of the Director General of the NSW Department of Lands Position to be reviewed in December 2008.	5
Cheryl Evans Nominee of the State Librarian Reappointed December 2006, position to be reviewed in December 2008.	5
Mr Alan Ventress BA, DipLIB Nominee of the Royal Australian Historical Society Reappointed December 2006, term expires December 2011.	5
Cr Fran Tierney Nominee of the Local Government and Shires Association of NSW Appointed December 2006, term expires December 2011.	3
Dr John Emery BA, MA, PhD, DipEd, DipT&CP Nominee of the Geographical Society of New South Wales Appointed December 2006, term expires December 2011.	4
Ms Wajiha Ahmed BA, LLB, DipLaw Nominee of the Community Relations Commissioner Appointed December 2006, term expires December 2011.	3
Mr Richard Pearson Nominee of the Department of Planning Appointed December 2007, term expires December 2011.	1
Counsellors*	
Dr Peter Orlovich Historical Advisor	5
Dr Jakelin Troy Linguistic Advisor	5
Mr Gerard Herbert Addressing Advisor	5
Mr Terry Pendleton Addressing Advisor Retired December 2007	3

* In accordance with the provision of the Geographical Names Act 1966 the Board may appoint counsellors to advise it on matters within its powers and functions. The Board has appointed four counsellors to advise it on issues such as linguistics, history and addressing.

The Board is committed to ensuring that address localities and roads are named in a manner that maintains the integrity of addresses within NSW. It does this by applying nationally accepted guidelines and standards to both road name and place name proposals.

The Board has formally assigned over 70 address locality names and concurred with 1,498 new road names in the reporting year. Objections were also raised against 153 road names that did not meet the Board's guidelines. The standardisation of these names leads to greater certainty and integrity for many thousand of addresses in New South Wales.

Commemorative naming

The Board is committed to acknowledging everyday Australians who achieved and supported their local community. This year the Board has honoured, among others, war heroes, athletes and politicians.

However, many people have also been recognised who have tirelessly worked behind the scenes to improve either the environmental or social conditions in

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their communities. For example, in March 2008 the Board named a walkway after Rose Hobbes who worked for better conditions and facilities for women in the Moree district. Likewise, the Board commemorated Ray Morcom who laboured to preserve and regenerate bushland and riverine areas in and around Bathurst.

Preserving our culture and history

Place names connect history and culture to the land in which we live. The names given by Aboriginal people to country can be thousands of years old and may have deep spiritual significance to individual clans and nation groups.

The Board acknowledges this and proactively seeks to reinstate Aboriginal place names wherever it can. To facilitate this, the Board has introduced a dual naming policy which recognises traditional Aboriginal place names alongside existing introduced names.

On 5 October 2007, the Board dual named Pigeon House, which is a mountain in the Shoalhaven named by Captain James Cook on 21 April

1770. This mountain has high cultural significance in the spiritual values of local Aboriginal communities and is linked to other prominent landscape features through dreamtime stories passed down in Aboriginal oral traditions. The traditional Aboriginal name for this peak is Didthul, which is now recognised as an official place name in its own right.

The Board also formalised the name for a new suburb on the eastern foreshore of Darling Harbour as Barangaroo. This name honours a prominent Aboriginal woman who was married to Bennelong and was known to be a powerful figure in the Sydney area in the early days of colonisation.

The Board deals with significant historical issues on a regular basis. This is demonstrated when, after a great deal of community consultation, the Board approved the suburb of Harbord to revert back to its original name of Freshwater - reversing a name change that took place in 1923. The Board noted that the local council, the local chamber of commerce and the majority of residents supported this action.

Statutory reporting

Consultants

In September 2007 the Board procured the services of Ajilon, Australia Group, to facilitate the development of its current strategic plan. Ajilon carried out a workshop with the Board, researched all necessary issues and drafted the final strategic plan. This consultancy was valued at $5,000.

Consumer response

The Board's secretariat is administered by Lands. As such, all policies, systems and guidelines relating to complaints and customer satisfaction are dealt with as per the department's directions.

Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statement

The Board is committed to the principles of multiculturalism and ensures the recognition of other traditions and customs by preferencing place names that acknowledge ethnicity in our society. The *Geographical Names Act 1966* also provides for the appointment of a

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Indicators			
Designation	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Address locality names and boundaries	280	188	73
Road names	1,099	908	1,651
Dual names	1	1	1
Other place names	124	259	127

member to the Board by the Community Relations Commissioner to ensure linguistic and cultural considerations are taken in to account in the Board's determinations.

Through it strategic plan, the Board has resolved to develop strategies that better understand multicultural expectations in NSW and publish its decisions in languages required by its customer base.

Legislation

There were no changes made to the *Geographical Names Act 1966* in the reporting year.

Publications

The following publications are available through the Board's website, www.gnb.nsw.gov.au or at the Board's office.

- Geographical Names Board – Preserving the history, culture and identity of NSW.
- Determining suburbs and localities in NSW.

- Dual Naming – Supporting cultural recognition.
- Commemorative naming.
- Guidelines for the determination of place names.
- Place name application form.
- Glossary of status values in the Geographical Names Register.
- Glossary of designation values in the Geographical Names Register.
- Geographical Names Board – The NSW road and address locality naming process.
- Road naming in NSW.
- Guidelines for the naming of roads.
- The naming and addressing of private roads and roads in community subdivisions.
- Rural addressing for NSW.

For information on payment performance, risk management and insurance, and all other administrative procedures, policies and processes for this report please refer to the appendices.

Future focus

In September 2007, the Board drafted its strategic plan which sets its direction for the next three years. The Board's vision is to be recognised by communities as the authoritative body for location based naming in NSW. To realise this vision the Board identified four key areas, these being:

- data quality
- community awareness and strategic partnerships
- policy and legislation
- technology.

As such, the Board has prioritised strategies that will:

- improve data quality to meet the needs of the community, partners and customers
- ensure that appropriate communications are in place to raise the awareness of the Board and its functions
- establish an appropriate framework to support the Board to achieve its outcomes
- maximise the use of technology as an enabler to support strategic directions of the Board.