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### **Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names**

New York, 31 July – 9 August 2012

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

**Reports by Governments on the situation in their  
countries and on the progress made in the  
standardization of geographical names since the Ninth Conference  
(for distribution only).**

National Report of New Zealand

Submitted by New Zealand \*\*

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# National Report of New Zealand

## Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names

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Reports by Governments on the situation in their countries and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names since the Ninth Conference (for distribution only).



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## Summary

This National Report of New Zealand is provided according to resolution 7 of the fifth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, under standardised headings, and covering progress made since the ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names of 2007.

Since November 2008, New Zealand's national naming authority, the [New Zealand Geographic Board Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa \(NZGB\)](#), has undergone significant changes to manage its extended naming jurisdiction and increased functions, duties and processes acquired through the introduction of the NZGB Act 2008 (NZGB Act) which replaced the original 1946 act. The NZGB's two fundamental outcomes (location identification and preservation of heritage and culture) are reinforced by the new act and remain core to the NZGB's operational activities and to its robust and enduring decision making.

The general work and history of the NZGB is provided, along with statistics on processing. In addition, a recent New Zealand name proposal that attracted significant public attention is included to explain the rationale for the decisions taken, and the community, cultural and political aspects that emerged. Another area of significant interest is the process for restoring Treaty of Waitangi indigenous name proposals through settlements outside of the NZGB Act. These settlements are implemented as a Government priority, with separate legislation and enable significant cultural benefit and acknowledgement. The report also provides information on an initiative to work towards making a national set of suburb and locality names (and their extents) official, in cooperation with territorial authorities, with a view to enabling integrated, standardised and consistent addressing that will provide cohesion, certainty and eliminate ambiguity for emergency services, postal services, and government administration.

## Background

### *Early Geographical Naming in New Zealand*

English and Māori are the two official spoken and written languages of New Zealand. English is most widely used, though the use of Te Reo Māori<sup>2</sup> is increasing.

Geographical naming in New Zealand began with the arrival of the indigenous Māori people from Polynesia around 800 – 950 AD. Theirs was not a written language and the names they gave to places were passed down through oral tradition.

In 1642, the Dutch explorer Abel Tasman briefly sailed along the West Coast of New Zealand. Later, Captain James Cook circumnavigated the country in 1769 and was the first European known to have set foot in the country, claiming it for the British Crown, and opening the way for colonial settlement, with the first arrivals being mostly sealers in the 1790s, followed by missionaries in the early 1800s. By 1839, the total non-Māori population was about 2,000. Both Tasman and Cook recorded geographic names in New Zealand on their charts, including some original Māori geographic names that were set down in writing for the first time by Cook.

In 1840 the British government entered into a treaty, known as the Treaty of Waitangi, with Māori chiefs of New Zealand. In 1901 New Zealand became a self governing Dominion and is a member of the Commonwealth.

### *Formalising Geographical Naming in New Zealand*

Legislative provisions for geographic naming in New Zealand were initially under the auspices of the Royal Geographic Society of London, until the Designations of Districts Act of 1894 gave the Governor-General of New Zealand authority to alter or assign geographic names in the colony.

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<sup>2</sup> Te Reo Māori means the Māori language.

One of the early reasons for an authority on geographic names was to avoid confusion in the naming of post offices, railway stations, etc. In 1924, the Minister of Lands approved the formation of a Board to adjudicate on questions generally concerning place and feature names in New Zealand.

The first Board, known as the Honorary Geographic Board of New Zealand, lacked the necessary power to implement its decisions and acted in an advisory capacity until 1946 when the New Zealand Geographic Board was established under the New Zealand Geographic Board Act 1946.

The New Zealand Geographic Board Act 1946 set up the Board as a statutory body governed by the Act. Its chief function was to make provision for the naming of places in New Zealand which extended to:

- New Zealand;
- Offshore islands: the Kermadec, Antipodes, Chatham, Auckland, Campbell, Snares and Bounty Islands;
- New Zealand territorial waters within the 12 nautical mile limit; and
- the Ross Dependency of Antarctica (this responsibility was added later by Cabinet direction of 1956).

More recently, a milestone for geographic naming in New Zealand was reached with the passing of the [NZGB Act 2008](#), after more than five years of review. While the former New Zealand Geographic Board Act 1946 was an enlightened piece of legislation for its time, an update was needed to improve its jurisdictional, consultative and administrative provisions.

The main features of the new Act include:

- clarifying the jurisdiction of the NZGB;
- revising procedures for public participation in the place naming process;
- considering the composition and membership of the NZGB;
- ensuring the provisions of the Act align more clearly with the Treaty of Waitangi;
- modernising the Act's administrative and procedural provisions;
- strengthening the NZGB's roles, enabling it to create new names, change or discontinue current ones, and approve recorded names; and
- providing for a publicly available Gazetteer of official geographic names.

For more information refer to '[Place Naming Legislation in New Zealand](#)' by Don Grant and Wendy Shaw, FIG 2010.

## Goals and National Programmes

*New Zealand Geographic Board Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa (NZGB)*

The NZGB is a statutory body of government administered by [Land Information New Zealand \(LINZ\)](#) – a government department with other responsibilities including topographic mapping, hydrographic charting, survey and title processing, addressing for electoral purposes, regulating purchases by overseas investors of sensitive New Zealand assets, Crown land management including pastoral leases of high country, Office of the Valuer-General.

The NZGB assigns, approves, alters, discontinues, reviews and validates the use of names for geographic features (eg geographic names), undersea features and Crown protected areas in New Zealand, its offshore islands and its continental shelf, and the Ross Dependency of Antarctica.

The NZGB provides a sound framework and processes for official geographic naming. It seeks to ensure that robust and enduring decisions are made, and information is available on place and feature names to support national and local uses. These include infrastructural planning, emergency response, recreation, cultural heritage, communication and tourism. The NZGB continues in its efforts to maintain best-practice geographic naming, including balancing practical and administrative requirements with cultural and heritage considerations.

### *Aims/Goals*

Geographic names are widely used by the community, businesses, travellers, local authorities and central government, and are particularly important for emergency services and maritime safety. In its official place naming role, the NZGB aims to ensure:

- features and places within New Zealand's jurisdiction are identifiable by name so that people can effectively communicate information about location, and
- geographic names preserve New Zealand's heritage and culture.

### *Membership*

The NZGB has 10 members to ensure adequate representation on the NZGB of community and government interests. It is chaired by the Surveyor-General, an ex-officio position from within LINZ. Nominated members are appointed by the Minister for Land Information from the New Zealand Geographical Society, Federated Mountain Clubs, Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, and Local Government New Zealand. The Minister of Māori Affairs and the Minister for Land Information each put forth two members. The remaining member from LINZ is appointed ex-officio, and carries the responsibility for setting national hydrographic information standards. Two standing observers contribute from two Government Departments – Ministry for Māori Development and Māori Language Commission.

The NZGB Secretariat team is employed by LINZ, and manages, administers and supports the statutory processes of the NZGB. It operates under a separate output class. They comprise four staff: the Secretary, two NZGB Advisors, and one Treaty Names Advisor.

### *Purpose, Functions and Duties*

Sections 3, 10, 11 and 12 of the [NZGB Act 2008](#) set out the NZGB's purpose; principal functions; certain other functions the NZGB may undertake in order to carry out its principal functions; and the duties of the NZGB.

The purpose:

- Provide for continuation, membership and administration of the NZGB.
- Establish jurisdiction.
- Set out powers.
- Provide for effective notification, consultation and decision-making procedures.
- Provide the means for appropriate recognition to be accorded to cultural and heritage values associated with geographic features.
- Enable certain administrative needs of government (including local government) to be met.
- Provide for the NZGB's role of reviewing proposals to assign official geographic names to Crown protected areas.
- Ensure the provision of, and public access to, an authoritative record of official geographic names.

The functions:

- Assign, approve, alter or discontinue official or recorded names.
- Investigate and determine the position and extent of features with official names.
- Adopt policies, rules and standards for official names.
- Examine cases of doubtful spelling.
- Investigate and determine the priorities of discovery of a feature.
- Collect original Māori names and encourage their use on official charts and maps
- Seek advice from Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori (Māori Language Commission) on the correct orthography of Māori names.
- Undertake research into proposals to name or alter the name of geographic features, and undertake other functions necessary to give effect to the 2008 Act or any other enactment.

The duties:

- Administer the New Zealand Gazetteer of Official Geographic Names.
- Develop rules, standards, or guidelines for naming Crown protected areas in consultation with the Minister of Conservation.

- Make enquiries and recommendations on matters referred to the NZGB by the Minister for Land Information.

### *Meetings*

In the past, the NZGB has usually met twice a year to consider geographic name proposals. Because of the Government's priority to settle Treaty of Waitangi claims by 2014, a third meeting may be scheduled to process Treaty name proposals. Other meetings may be required for urgent geographic naming matters (such as Antarctic names) and may be held via teleconference.

The NZGB has established three separate committees to deal with Antarctic, Undersea and Māori names. These committees convene once a year, with members including at least two NZGB members, and relevant experts.

### *Consultation with Māori*

- See '[Protocol for Māori Place Names](#)' for standard proposals for geographic names.
- The NZGB has agreed to engage directly with Treaty claimants during the early stages of negotiation of their settlement, to provide information about the NZGB, its role, its functions and the processes.
- The NZGB has also agreed to consult directly with Māori when processing undersea feature names.

### *Consultation with the Public*

The NZGB Act 2008 has streamlined the public consultation requirements, allowing flexibility in the length of time to consult and in the advertising in newspapers or other news publication including electronic media.

### *Consultation with Territorial Authorities*

The NZGB is also committed to achieving consistent suburb and locality naming practices (including defining their extents). Proposals affecting local communities, particularly for populated places, will generally be advised to Local Councils for their views. Suburbs and localities are integral components of addresses, being essential for the efficient provision of emergency services, and important for identifying and describing local communities. A small number of territorial authorities have recently reviewed their suburb and locality names and extents. Under the NZGB Act 2008, provision has now been made for a member nominated by Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ), to cover off their specific naming considerations. LGNZ will collaborating later in 2012 with the NZGB to develop a guideline or code of practice for suburb and locality names. Late last year, LINZ contributed to an ANZ Addressing Standard ([AS/NZS 4819:2011](#)) for Council's to follow (covering road numbering, road naming and locality naming). A small number of territorial authorities have recently reviewed their suburb and locality names and extents, in order to formalise them as official names.

### *Standards and Guidelines*

The NZGB's consideration of proposals to assign, approve, alter or discontinue official or recorded names, is carried out in accordance with specified criteria. The current standards and guidelines are published on LINZ's website to provide clarity regarding how proposals will be evaluated, which consist of the following:

- [Interim Standard for Undersea Feature Names](#)
- [Standard for Crown Protected Area Names](#)
- [Frameworks of the NZGB](#)
- [Guidelines for Dialogue by the New Zealand Geographic Board Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa with Tangata Whenua](#)
- [Protocol for Māori Place Names](#)
- [Minimum Requirements for Proposals](#)

### *Treaty of Waitangi*

The NZGB continues to contribute significantly towards meeting the Government's priority of negotiating historic Treaty of Waitangi settlements by 2014. The NZGB has a significant role in providing advice on Treaty of Waitangi names including the cultural redress

component of settlements. The NZGB is committed to processing Treaty names as a priority above standard geographic name proposals.

The NZGB has provided advice and recommendations to another Government department, the Office of Treaty Settlements (OTS) since the late 1990s on geographic names being sought in settlement redress, with Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu settlement paving the way for subsequent claims. Many geographic names have been restored or changed through the cultural redress component of a number of separate settlements and have been well received by the claimants as a positive outcome for their grievances. Many claims currently under negotiation include geographic names. The Government has clearly indicated a priority to settle all Treaty claims by 2014, and to help achieve this, OTS is negotiating several claim groupings on a regional basis.

The NZGB considered how it could best meet the Government's objective. The outcome was the establishment of a policy on Treaty names, together with a practical approach to processing Treaty names in a realistically achievable timeframe, in line with the NZGB's naming criteria. The NZGB's role in Treaty settlement geographic naming is advisory only, with final decisions made by the Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations. The Treaty settlement legislation then provides for official Treaty names to be gazetted by the NZGB. In order to communicate the NZGB's role clearly, meetings with claimants and OTS are encouraged early in the negotiations.

The volume of Treaty work has increased significantly over the past few years. Therefore, an additional staff member was appointed to the NZGB's Secretariat in January 2011, to assist the NZGB in providing timely and accurate responses to documentation on Agreements, Deeds, Cabinet Papers, and Bills. The extra resource has also enabled the NZGB the ability to commit to an extra Treaty names meeting each year (if needed), in addition to the two regular NZGB meetings. The NZGB has agreed to process a maximum of 160 Treaty names per year; 30 at each of the two regular NZGB meetings and 100 at the additional Treaty names meeting.

#### *International Liaison*

The NZGB continues to cooperate with a range of international naming organisations on Antarctic, regional and global geographic naming.

The Committee for Geographical Names of Australasia (CGNA) is a working group under the Intergovernmental Committee for Surveying and Mapping (ICSM), which is itself a standing committee of the Australia New Zealand Land Information Council (ANZLIC). Membership on CGNA continues to be very beneficial in terms of networking and applying best practice principles on common challenges in the field of toponymy. The Secretary's involvement with CGNA during the reporting period included:

- attending the annual two-day meetings and presenting a jurisdictional report from New Zealand.
- participating in an annual teleconference.

The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) upholds consistency, standardisation and accuracy in geographic naming practices worldwide. Contribution and participation by the Secretary has been on-going.

The NZGB continues to work closely with its United States and Australian counterparts on Antarctic naming. Liaison also extends to the overarching Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR), who maintains a Composite Gazetteer of Antarctica.

For undersea feature naming, liaison with the international Sub-Committee on Undersea Feature Naming (SCUFN), which meets annually to consider such names, is provided by a New Zealand representative to SCUFN, who is also a member of the NZGB's Undersea Feature Names Committee. The NZGB's Undersea Feature Names Committee has begun a process of reviewing a significant number of existing undersea feature names, which will be submitted to the SCUFN yearly. The next meeting of SCUFN will be held in Wellington, New Zealand, October 2012.



### *Gazetteer*

One of the NZGB's goals is to implement a Gazetteer database system in 2012. This database will link geographic names with spatial data through [LINZ's Data Service](#), and it will be available to the New Zealand public and other agencies. The NZGB is required to establish and maintain a publicly available record known as the New Zealand Gazetteer of Official Geographic Names. The Gazetteer must list all official geographic names, and the relevant Gazette or statutory reference for each official name, including the type of feature or area and its positional reference. The Gazetteer may also include historical background information about the name and information about the spatial extent of the feature. As an interim measure, six separate spreadsheets were created to meet the requirements of the 2008 Act as at 1 November 2008: New Zealand, Offshore Islands, Railway, Antarctic, Crown protected areas, and Undersea. These are available on LINZ's website, and are updated as geographic name changes occur – refer to <http://www.linz.govt.nz/placenames/find-names/nz-gazetteer-official-names/index.aspx>.

These spreadsheets are acknowledged as not providing an efficient mechanism for the NZGB, LINZ, other government agencies, and other geospatial users, to determine what the official name of a feature or place actually is. LINZ is therefore currently working toward publishing a fully integrated Gazetteer database system on the LINZ website by mid-2012. This Gazetteer database is needed to:

- securely record geographic name information
- provide geographic name information as required by the Act (including annual reports to the Minister)
- be efficiently used by government agencies (including LINZ Customer Services) and private organisations to enable them to comply with the Act
- enable people to effectively discover official and historic geographic name information thereby allowing them to comply with the law
- enable people to efficiently obtain geographic name information thereby reducing the number of enquiries to the NZGB's Secretariat.

The design of the new Gazetteer database system is underway. The LINZ Data Service will host the new Gazetteer, which will be fully downloadable and also available for machine to machine linkage through WFS-G, aligning with OGC data interoperability standards.

### *Annual Report to the Minister for Land Information*

The NZGB Act 2008 requires the NZGB to [report](#) annually to the Minister on the performance of its functions, duties and the exercise of its powers.

## **Problems, Solutions and Achievements**

### *Resourcing*

Reduced funding due to the need to find savings for the Government during the downturn in the global economy has put constraints on what the NZGB can achieve. The focus has been to concentrate on core activities and Government priorities, in particular the processing of Treaty names. The workload of the Secretariat has increased significantly because of the new NZGB Act 2008 and Treaty work.

### *Media*

Interest continues in geographical names, and any controversial name proposals are quickly picked up by the media. Where heightened public interest is identified, the NZGB will be proactive and informative, as required – this may include press releases, targeting journalists with information, radio and television interviews.

### *Proposal Example – Whanganui and Wanganui*

The NZGB received in early 2009 a proposal from local Māori, Te Rūnanga o Tupoho, to correct the spelling of a city in the North Island from Wanganui to Whanganui. The NZGB considered the numerous aspects before agreeing to support the proposal based on:

- its statutory function to examine the spelling of place names;
- its statutory function to collect original Māori place names;

- its statutory function to encourage the use of original Māori place names;
- its statutory function to seek advice from Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori (the Māori Language Commission) on Māori place name orthography; and
- the fact that local Māori and many iwi from the region strongly support the change; that many other people support the change (though they are a minority); and many other organisations now use 'Whanganui' in their business names.

This was not an easy decision because the NZGB will not generally support alterations to the names of populated places without the support of the local council.

In considering the proposal for a second time after receipt of 850 submissions through the public consultation stage, the NZGB took account of:

- historical evidence;
- the submission by the Wanganui District Council seeking to uphold democracy, common usage, the community's choice, and pronunciation;
- several options from the Human Rights Commission, including alternative names;
- a newer 2009 community referendum of 19,000 voters, 77% of whom preferred Wanganui;
- the long history of the naming debate dating back to the early 1800s;
- the claim before the Waitangi Tribunal;
- standardised orthography and dialectical pronunciation;
- compliance under the NZGB Act 2008;
- costs and impacts, and a transition period; and
- policies and precedents (Hataitai, Epuni, Petone, Kaiapoi, Timaru, Whanganui River).

The Board confirmed its decision to alter the spelling, based principally on the grounds of correct spelling and orthographic representation of Te Reo Māori (this also upholding the principle of univocity). While this was the Board's decision, in its [report](#) to the Minister for Land Information, several decision options were presented to the Minister as follows:

- Status quo – reject proposal outright or reject and review in 5-10 years time
- Reject proposal and make Wanganui official
- Accept proposal and make Whanganui official immediately or allow for several years of transition to reduce compliance costs
- Apply dual names: Wangnau / Whanganui or Whanganui
- Apply alternative names: Whanganui or Wanganui
- Allow/apply other alternatives: Petre or Lawsland or he River City or Wanganui or Whanganui, etc.

The Minister for Land Information made his final determination after meeting with the Mayor and a local Māori representative; he decided that alternative names should be applied, ie Whanganui or Wanganui. The Minister released a press statement about his decision on [18 December 2009](#).

Information relating to the proposal was posted on the LINZ website, so as to provide clarity and transparency around the whole process and the decisions made. Of particular interest are the [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

The only proviso to implementing the two alternative names has been that a minor technical correction to the current NZGB Act 2008 has been required, in order to allow for alternative names to be used on official documents. We are currently awaiting a decision from the government on a proposal for legislation to amend the relevant sections of the Act. An indication of when the legislation will be changed cannot be provided until that decision is made. While the Whanganui and Wanganui alternative naming will not be official until the legislation has passed and the names have been gazetted, as neither name is currently an official name there is no legal reason why either name or both names cannot be used now.

#### *Proposal Example – Hillary Ridge*

In January 2008, Sir Edmund Hillary passed away and New Zealanders began discussing how best to remember his lifelong achievements. Sir Edmund was one New Zealand's most loved national figures and naming a significant geographic feature was one of many

suggestions made to honour and commemorate him. Twelve 'Hillary' name proposals in total were received from the public during a two year period set aside by the NZGB as a respectable timeframe to observe, which also allowed people time to submit their proposals. The NZGB decided that the most appropriate proposal was to alter South Ridge to Hillary Ridge, on Aoraki / Mount Cook – New Zealand's highest mountain, This decision was based on:

- The feature being a significant geographical feature befitting a great New Zealander, who made significant contributions in New Zealand and abroad;
- Sir Edmund's personal association with this feature having been one of the party to make the first ascent of South Ridge in February 1948, along with Harry Ayres, Mick Sullivan, and Ruth Adams;
- The feature being easily identifiable to the public of New Zealand, and clearly visible from the Aoraki / Mount Cook village and the surrounding area;
- Sir Edmund's family indicating support for the name; and
- Support from local Māori, Ngāi Tahu, which was conditional on another feature being named for Sir Edmund's guide on that first ascent, Harry Ayres. Ayres Ridge has subsequently been officially assigned to an alpine feature close to Hillary Ridge, which was also a first ascent for Harry Ayres.

The final decision on Hillary Ridge was confirmed by the Minister for Land Information in July 2011, after considering a [report](#) from the NZGB, which included submissions for and against the name.

#### *Statistics*

<b>DECISIONS</b>	<b>2008/2009</b>	<b>2009/2010</b>	<b>2010/2011</b>	<b>2011/2012</b>
Final/official by the NZGB	20	24	59	27
Final/official by the Minister	3	3	21	12
Declined	17	5	28	13
Discontinued			1	1
Proposals notified for public consultation	34	25	85	7
Corrigendum [correction of errors]	4	1	12	2
Treaty of Waitangi settlement	14	178	117	138
Antarctic	39	5	3	9
Deferrals	40	15	37	40
Under investigation	2	11	30	
Withdrawn	1			
Noted	2	4	7	
Recorded approved	1	1	1	1
Crown Protected Area		3	2	23
s.35 Validation – CPA		899	215	
s.35 Validation – Antarctic	1193			1660
Undersea Features			85	95
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1370</b>	<b>1174</b>	<b>703</b>	<b>2028</b>

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The NZGB continues its efforts to uphold standardised, consistent and accurate naming practices within New Zealand, in order to identify locations, avoid confusion and ambiguity, and to provide for the preservation of heritage and culture. Internationally, geographic names are acknowledged as being more than just names on a map, they are a crucial location dataset of any geospatial system.

As a statutory body of government, the NZGB provides a sound framework and processes for official geographic naming. This is essential for robust and durable decisions, and information that supports national and local use for infrastructural planning, emergency response, recreation, cultural heritage, communication, tourism, etc. The NZGB seeks to

balance the practical aspects of geographic naming with the cultural and heritage values associated with naming geographic features, which help give us our identity as New Zealanders.

For more information about geographical naming in New Zealand, contact:

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