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Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names

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Item 9 of the provisional agenda*

**Geographical names as culture, heritage and identity
(including indigenous, minority and regional language names)**

Australian indigenous names projects

Summary**

Given the potential for Australia to develop a rich multicultural environment through interaction with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage and culture, it is very important to ensure that progress is evident in relation to the recognition and use of place names from the languages of indigenous peoples.

The report provides a brief summary of the progress made in relation to the recording and use of indigenous names in Australia since the ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. Included in the summary are the national initiatives and information relating to legislative changes, policy creation or alteration and specific recording projects undertaken by the seven state and territory jurisdictions with responsibility for place naming.

Within Australian naming policies it is stressed that the recognition and use of names from indigenous languages will:

- Emphasize the existence of the languages, even those that are considered extinct
- Support the use of indigenous languages in the general community
- Retain aspects of indigenous heritage
- Provide windows into indigenous heritage for the rest of the Australian community.

* E/CONF.101/1.

** The full report was prepared by Bill Watt, Chair of the Committee for Geographical Names of Australasia, with contributions from all states and territories, and is available in the language of submission only from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/ungegnConf10.html>.



It is recognized that by far the greater majority of indigenous place names are not recorded in official government gazetteers, nor available for general use. However, given the available resources it is pleasing to see that progress is still being made to ensure that indigenous place names are becoming progressively better represented in the general geographic nomenclature of Australia.
