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**11<sup>th</sup> United Nations Conference on the  
Standardization of Geographical Names**

New York, 8 -17 August 2017

Item 5 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 10<sup>th</sup> Conference (for distribution only).**

**National Report of New Zealand**

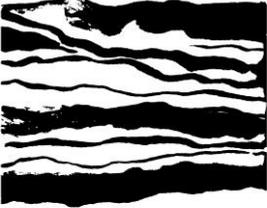
Submitted by Malaysia \*\*

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\*\* Prepared by Wendy Shaw, Secretary, New Zealand Geographic Board Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa

NEW ZEALAND  
GEOGRAPHIC BOARD



NGĀ POU TAUNAHA  
O AOTEAROA



Land Information  
New Zealand  
*Toitū te whenua*

## National Report of New Zealand

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

New York, 8-17 August 2017

Reports by Governments on the situation in their countries and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names since the Tenth Conference



## (a) Summary

This national report of New Zealand is provided according to resolution seven of the 5<sup>th</sup> United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN). It builds on New Zealand's previous national reports submitted for the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> UNCSGN meetings in [2007](#) and [2012](#).

An historical timeline of informal and formal naming influences provides a snapshot to illustrate long term, structured and deliberate application of toponyms in New Zealand and the NZGB's extended jurisdiction.

The statutory role, functions and strategic goals of the [New Zealand Geographic Board Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa \(NZGB\)](#) are summarised, and a flow diagram represents in brief the process followed for regular geographic name proposals.

The core activities listed represent the fundamental work of the NZGB and its Secretariat. Initiatives for the upcoming year will contribute to the NZGB's strategic goals.

Several other challenges are highlighted in this report, with corresponding actions taken to resolve them. Of particular interest are the changes to three offensive geographic names.

## (b) Background information and historical sketch

Refer to New Zealand's [2007](#) and [2012](#) national reports, which cover background and history in more detail.

### Summarised historical timeline of geographical naming in New Zealand

800-950 AD Māori settlement
1642 Abel Tasman (The Netherlands) is the 1 <sup>st</sup> European to discover New Zealand
1769 Captain James Cook (England) is the 1 <sup>st</sup> European to land in New Zealand
1790 sealers and whalers put ashore in New Zealand
1793 Alessandro Malaspina (Spain) explores New Zealand's southwest coast
1814 missionaries arrive in New Zealand to establish Christianity
1824 Admiral Dumont D'Urville (French) explores the northeast coast of New Zealand
1840 The Treaty of Waitangi <sup>1</sup> is signed between Māori and the British Crown
Post 1840 the Royal Geographical Society in London set guidelines for formal geographic naming in New Zealand during the early years of British settlement.
Survey Regulations made under the Land Act 1885 and subsequent Regulations required that during the 'Survey of Native Lands' the surveyor must fix: 'the positions of all remarkable hills, ridges, pa's, eel-weirs, native cultivations, tracks, battlefields, villages, etc., as well as rivers, forests, lakes and coastlines'. The surveyor was also required to ascertain 'the Native names of all boundaries or natural features' within the block surveyed.
Designations of Districts Act 1894 gave the Governor-General of New Zealand authority to alter or assign geographic names in the colony, and specified that any future naming or name alterations would give preference to original Māori names.
In 1924 the Minister of Lands formed the Honorary Geographic Board of New Zealand to advise on place naming in New Zealand. However, it had no legislative authority.
The New Zealand Geographic Board Act 1946 established the NZGB with functions and duties.
A Cabinet Directive of 1956 requested the NZGB to act as a geographic names authority for the Ross Dependency of Antarctica (however the NZGB Act 1946 was not amended).
The New Zealand Geographic Board (Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa) Act 2008 clarified and extended jurisdiction,

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<sup>1</sup> The agreement signed by representatives of the Queen of England and leaders of most Māori tribes when Great Britain first claimed New Zealand as a colony in 1840.

modernised the public consultation process, updated membership of the NZGB and modernised administration.

See *The Encyclopedia of New Zealand* for the [story of place naming](#) in New Zealand.

## (c) Goals and national programmes

### Role

The New Zealand Geographic Board Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa (NZGB) is New Zealand's national geographic naming authority responsible for official geographic names in New Zealand, its offshore islands and continental shelf, and the Ross Dependency of Antarctica.

The NZGB is an independent statutory body of government. The NZGB Secretariat is employed by a government department, Land Information New Zealand (LINZ), and provides the NZGB with administrative support, research assistance and expert advice.

The naming work of the NZGB contributes to a geographic information system that provides economic, cultural and social value to all New Zealanders.

### Functions

The functions of the NZGB, which are set out in the New Zealand Geographic Board (Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa) Act 2008 include:

- considering proposals for new or altered geographic names,
- approving and adopting recorded geographic names as official geographic names,
- supporting Māori geographic names used in Treaty of Waitangi settlements,
- Antarctic geographic names,
- undersea feature names,
- validating Crown protected area names, and
- maintaining a publicly available Gazetteer of geographic names.

The NZGB's informed, robust and enduring geographic name decisions:

- provide practical and fundamental location identification and navigation,
- recognise heritage and culture,
- are reliable and authoritative, and
- uphold standardised, consistent and accurate geographic names.

### Goals

The NZGB's 10 year strategic plan includes these five goals:

- people have **easy access to trusted and useful information** on geographic names so they can understand the names' history and cultural associations,
- the NZGB has good local, national and international **relationships** to get the right information,
- the NZGB **names features** so people can find where they are,
- the NZGB **encourages people to use official names** in everyday life, and
- the NZGB continually **improves its capability** to make consistent and rigorous decisions.

### The standard process for naming geographic features and places



### Core work

<b>NZGB meetings<sup>2</sup>/administration</b>
Reports, research, recommendations, inductions for new NZGB members, decisions
<b>Undersea Feature Names Committee meetings<sup>3</sup>/administration</b>
Reports, research, recommendations, decisions, liaise with/proposals to SCUFN <sup>4</sup>
<b>Māori Names Committee meetings<sup>5</sup>/administration</b>
Reports, research, recommendations, projects
<b>Antarctic Names Committee meetings<sup>6</sup>/administration</b>
Reports, research, recommendations, liaise with other international naming authorities
<b>Review policies, guidelines, standards, processes, best practice, etc</b>
Ongoing internal review of all policies, guidelines and standards lead by NZGB members
<b>Public Notification/Consultation/Media/Webpages</b>
<b>Treaty of Waitangi names</b>
Advice, recommendations, review documents, implement post settlement obligations
<b>Gazetteer maintenance and publication</b>
Cleanse data and maintain the Gazetteer for public searching and re-use
<b>Compliance requirements for official names</b>
React to compliance issues and proactively inform through information
<b>Annual report to the Minister for Land Information</b>
<b>Responding to enquiries (from the public, iwi<sup>7</sup>, other agencies, Ministers, Official Information Act requests, Parliamentary Questions)</b>
<b>Administration of and liaison with international groups, eg UNGEGN, PCPN<sup>8</sup></b>
The NZGB attends conferences and meetings, reports, presents, follows up on actions, etc.

Refer to the NZGB [Place names](#) webpages for more information about the NZGB's work.

## National programmes and initiatives

<b>Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori (TTWh) (Māori Language Commission)</b>
A new agreement is required to reflect the Māori Language Act 2016, and the advice of accredited orthographic experts to fulfil a function under the NZGB Act 2008.
<b>Generic Māori geographic terms – line drawings</b>
For example:

<sup>2</sup> Regular NZGB meetings usually 2-3 per year

<sup>3</sup> Undersea Feature Names Committee meetings usually once a year

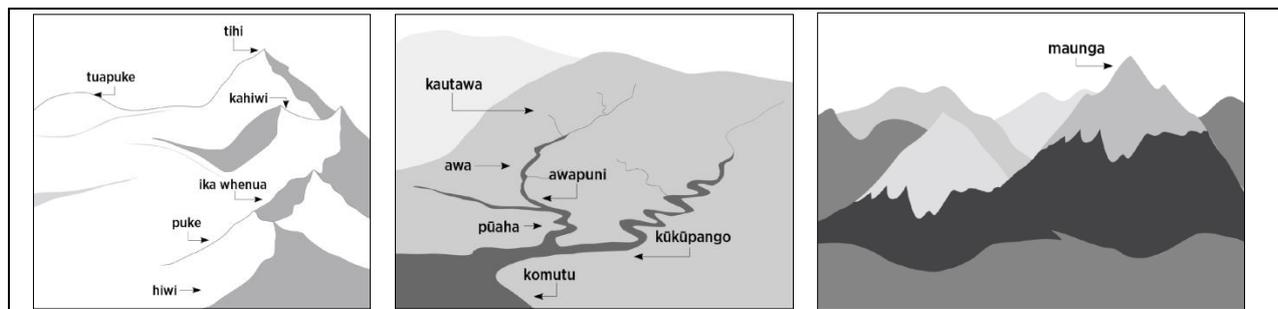
<sup>4</sup> SCUFN – (International) Sub Committee on Undersea Feature Names

<sup>5</sup> Māori Names Committee meetings usually once a year

<sup>6</sup> Antarctic Names Committee meetings usually once a year

<sup>7</sup> Iwi – tribal group usually descended from a common ancestor and associated with a distinct territory

<sup>8</sup> PCPN – Permanent Committee on Place Naming (Australia and New Zealand)



### Generic geographic terms – orthographic review of Māori generics

For example:

puke, hiwi	hill	An elevation of terrain above the level of the surrounding land
kōmata	hills	end of a range
tuapuke	hillock	A rounded hill of no great elevation or small rise in the land

### **Promotion plan**

Updating webpages, brochures, teachers' pack, regular radio slots, directly engaging with local Councils, etc.

### Gazetteer recorded names – ongoing capture

#### Gazetteer river extents

Integrate river extents with the LINZ Topographic dataset to eliminate duplication. Making the extent information interoperable between the Gazetteer and Topographic databases is an end goal, ie if name or extent is changed, it gets flagged to LINZ Topographic team.

### Enhancements to the online Gazetteer

#### **Scanning NZGB archive records**

Archive books for use and re-use, including future public access.

#### **Submissions and proposals – updates needed and online options**

#### **Policies and strategic review**

Rationalisation, consolidation of standards/guidelines/strategies.

#### **New editions of the Oral History Atlas and Survey Pegs**

Requested by the Māori Names Committee to include new stories, translation into Māori, orthographic review, new maps, re-publishing, and promoting.

#### **Suburbs and Localities**

Develop a process and programme for the NZGB to work with LINZ to maintain an authoritative Localities dataset.

#### **WW1 names project**

Ongoing research, reporting and decisions for the WW1 commemorations.

#### **Cook names project**

250 years national celebration starting in 2019 – requires research, reporting, decisions, posting on the NZGB's website.

#### **Waikato Wars names project**

Formal commemorations late 2017 – requires research, reporting, decisions, posting on the NZGB's website.

Completion of these initiatives is subject to available capacity and funding beyond core NZGB work.

## **(d) Problems, solutions and achievements**

## Notable names

On 10 October 2013 the Minister for Land Information confirmed the NZGB's recommendation to assign alternative names for New Zealand's two main islands. This decision was gazetted on 17 October 2013: either 'North Island' or 'Te Ika-a-Māui' and either 'South Island' or 'Te Waipounamu'. There had been a significant public response during the submission phase earlier in 2013 (2,608 submissions were received from 1,329 submitters). Interest waned once the decisions became public. This is perhaps due to people becoming more aware that they can choose which names to use, and understanding that the assignment of these and other alternative names will have no direct material impact on them.

The NZGB processed three proposals to change offensive 'Nigger' geographic names in the South Island or Te Waipounamu in 2015/16. The new names are 'Kānuka Hills', 'Tawhai Hill' and 'Pūkio Stream', which are Māori words for local alpine flora. The proposals attracted considerable media and public attention along with several hundred submissions. The Minister for Land Information made the final decisions on the three proposals in December 2016.

## Addressing

A suburb or locality name is a fundamental element of address along with road name and property number. Unique and usable suburb or locality names form a key part to locating people and property, contributing to efficient government administration and linking data for a wide range of public and private purposes. The NZGB has an important statutory role in the naming of suburbs and localities, which form part of a unique address. Ultimately the NZGB would like to have the names and extents of all suburbs and localities in New Zealand officially assigned as a nationally consistent set, and used as common descriptors of address and location. This would assist emergency services, NZ Post, government administration, etc, by providing certainty and minimising ambiguity. It would also meet the fundamental need to identify and describe local communities, preserve heritage and culture, and help the NZGB to maintain consistent and standardised naming in New Zealand. LINZ is developing a business case to manage and maintain an authoritative Localities dataset expressly for addressing. LINZ will formally engage with the NZGB to ensure that the statutory requirements of the NZGB Act 2008 are accounted for within any discussions, strategies, designs and processes of LINZ's future role. The NZGB recently posted a [new webpage](#) to outline its role in suburb and locality naming.

## Advice on geographic names in Treaty of Waitangi settlements

The NZGB makes recommendations on geographic name proposals as part of the Treaty of Waitangi settlement process. For Māori, restoration of mana<sup>9</sup> and identity are intrinsically linked to geography and the story of place. The NZGB's expertise supports this process of cultural redress. The NZGB Secretariat reviews Treaty of Waitangi claims settlement documents and provides advice on Treaty geographic name proposals on behalf of the NZGB.

## Approving and adopting recorded geographic names as official geographic names

An important role of the NZGB is to convert recorded geographic names into official geographic names. This is because the government wants certainty about the name for a place or feature, and by making it official, consistency can be applied across official published material, avoiding confusion and giving recognition to one name for a place or feature. Over 33,000 recorded geographic names are not official. The NZGB has made considerable progress using a fast-track process available under section 24 of the NZGB Act 2008, which applies where there is no other name known for a feature or place and the existing recorded geographic name is unlikely to attract public objection.

## Naming undersea features

By actively naming undersea features over New Zealand's continental shelf, the NZGB contributes to managing those areas for science, exploration, protection, maritime safety purposes, as well as New Zealand's sense of place. Since 2010 the NZGB's Undersea Feature Names Committee has successfully reviewed and processed over 500 of the 857 existing recorded undersea feature names within the NZGB's jurisdiction. The NZGB also works closely with SCUFN, to ensure that New Zealand's undersea feature names beyond its 12 nautical mile territorial limit that have been in long term use are accepted for use on international graphic and digital products.

## Process improvement

The NZGB has been working to improve its systems and processes, with a view to increased visibility of its role and decisions, and to make official geographic names more accessible to the public. Of note is the effort to improve and

<sup>9</sup> Mana, means authority or status

record the NZGB Secretariat's processes in Promapp™ for better understanding by all staff, and for a consistent and comprehensive approach to supporting the work of the NZGB.

## Online Gazetteer

The NZGB has identified enhancements to the [Gazetteer](#), which will improve user experience and make more of our official geographic names data available for re-use. The new online Gazetteer will go live in the latter half of 2017.

## Strategic Plan

In 2015 the NZGB developed a 10 year Strategic Plan to create a framework that gives the NZGB opportunities to become more proactive in certain areas such as education, compliance, commemorations, capability, consultation, being relevant and raising awareness of what it does.

## Relationships

The NZGB is working towards building stronger relationships with other government agencies. It has regular, constructive and productive liaison with the Office of Treaty Settlements to ensure the NZGB's contribution to the government's commitment to progressing Treaty of Waitangi settlements continues in a timely manner. Relationships have been strengthened with the Office of Treaty Settlements and Te Puni Kōkiri (the Ministry of Māori Development) with signed Agreements.

For Māori, the NZGB continues to devote special attention to ensure that it meets statutory functions to collect, encourage the use of, and correctly spell original Māori geographic names.

## (e) Conclusions and recommendations

This report outlines how the NZGB fulfils its primary roles and responsibilities under its guiding legislation. It also covers other areas of focus that have helped the NZGB to develop and work more successfully in processing geographic names. The importance of the NZGB's work continues to be recognised, particularly how geographic names touch the lives of so many New Zealanders.

The NZGB has a responsibility to safeguard the geographic naming traditions, and culture and heritage brought to New Zealand by its various communities. Knowing the stories behind geographic names adds to our sense of identity and belonging – helping us better connect with our identity: who we are, where we're from, and the importance of those who came before us. For this reason, the NZGB's contribution to geographic names in the cultural redress of Treaty of Waitangi settlements continues to be an important priority. This includes the on-going commitment to post settlement relationships.

From a technical perspective, geographic names form one of the fundamental data themes for location identification and are becoming more extensively used in electronic mapping tools and databases – including many web-based applications of government, businesses and communities – and people expect the data to be correct.

The NZGB closely assesses geographic name proposals against its naming criteria, statutory responsibilities and strategic priorities to ensure it makes the best geographic naming decisions that are enduring, robust, standardised, consistent and accurate.

A focus on key business improvement initiatives in the past couple of years has helped the NZGB align its five strategic goals to make information accessible, build relationships, name places and features, monitor compliance and build internal capability. The NZGB and its Secretariat have a direction that contributes to LINZ<sup>10</sup>'s 'Power of Where' vision and New Zealand government priorities, while maintaining independent and impartial decision making.

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

Wendy Shaw  
Secretary for the New Zealand Geographic Board Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa  
c/- Land Information New Zealand  
Radio New Zealand House  
155 The Terrace  
PO Box 5501

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<sup>10</sup> LINZ – Land Information New Zealand is the government agency that administers the NZGB

Wellington 6145  
New Zealand

Phone +64 4 460 0581

Email [wshaw@linz.govt.nz](mailto:wshaw@linz.govt.nz)

**Reference:**

[NZGB Annual Report 2015/16](#)