



arts and culture

Department:
Arts and Culture
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



SOUTH AFRICAN GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES COUNCIL

DEPARTMENT
OF
ARTS AND CULTURE

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1. Status of the South African Geographical Names Council

- **Name:** An advisory Council called South African Geographical Names Council
- **Geographical location:** It is housed within the department in Pretoria, Gauteng Province
- **Secretariat:** Is provided by the department within Heritage Branch
- **Sector:** It belongs to the Heritage
- **Legislation:** It is established through the South African Geographical Names Council Act (Act No 118 of 1998)

COUNCIL DETAILS

- **Chairperson** (Mr Jonny Mohlala) and **Deputy Chairperson** (Ms Jane Mufamadi)
- Dr Dr B.A Meiring, Ms S Sekitla, Ms P Dyantyi, Ms A Mawela, Dr E.M. Dikotla, Ms N Tyamzashe, Mr C Van Der Merwe, Mr E McPherson, MS P Habile, MR K Maluleke, Mr S Janda

TERM OF OFFICE (THREE YEARS)

- Term of office: from: **2014/11/01 to 2017/11/01**
- In terms of the act the South African Geographical Names Council meets at least three times a year to consider applications for standardisation of geographical names.



2. Naming Authority in South Africa (Pre 1994)

- 2.1 In accordance with the United Nations Resolution 4 of the First United Nations Conference on Standardisation of Geographical Names, each country has the sovereign prerogative to standardize its geographical names.
- 2.2 Pre-1994, South Africa had established a geographical names authority called the National Place Names Committee.
- 2.3 After 1994, a Working Forum on Geographical Names was established in order to reconstitute the National Place Names Committee as per recommendations of the White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage, international standards and cultural concerns.
- 2.4 The process resulted to the enactment of the South African Geographical Names Council Act of 1998 (Act No.118 of 1998). The South African Geographical Names Council is responsible for naming of all geographical features within the jurisdiction of the Republic of South Africa.



3. Composition of the South African Geographical Names Council (SAGNC)

- 3.1 The South African Geographical Names Council (SAGNC) was established through the South African Geographical Names Council Act No. 118 of 1998. The SAGNC is an advisory body that advises the Minister of Arts and Culture on the transformation and standardisation of the geographical names in South Africa.
- 3.2 The naming of geographical features in South Africa is part of the process of the transformation of the South African Heritage Landscape in order to forge a common national identity and nationhood.
- 3.3 The ushering in of a new society through naming has always received attention at the highest level of governance since the advent of democracy in 1994 and it is also part of symbolic reparation as recommended by Truth and Reconciliation Commission.
- 3.4 The SAGNC is composed of one representative from each province; candidates appointed by the Minister, taking into account their special expertise and the population of the country; representatives of the Post Office, Surveys and Mapping, the Pan South African Language Board and other relevant organizations or government departments as determined by the Minister.



4. Mandate of the SAGNC

Amongst the aims and objectives of the SAGNC are the following:

- 4.1 To facilitate and set guidelines to establish a Provincial Geographical Names Committee (PGNC) in each province.
- 4.2 To receive, investigate and recommend proposed new geographical names and changes to existing names submitted by the PGNCs and other parties for approval by the Minister.
- 4.3 To ensure the standardisation of geographical names.
- 4.4 To ensure the implementation of geographical names in South Africa.
- 4.5 To promote the use of standardised South African geographical names at international level.
- 4.5 To promote awareness of the economic and social benefits of the standardisation of geographical names.



5. How Standardisation is done?

- 5.1 The process of standardisation of geographical name or names change is initiated at local level where the relevant municipality conduct public participation or consultation.
- 5.2 The application is then forwarded to Provincial Geographical Names Committee for processing.
- 5.3 It is then forwarded to the South African Geographical Names Council which will then check for compliance in terms of standardisation guidelines and then forward the application for the Minister's approval.
- 5.4 The Minister can approve or reject the application based on the information submitted for approval or rejection of the name.
- 5.5 All names approved by the Minister are then published in the Government Gazette for official use by the public, researchers, government, atlas publishers, international organizations and other stakeholders.



6. Names within and outside the jurisdiction of the SAGNC

- 6.1 Naming of all geographical features fall within the mandate of the SAGNC, this include but not limited to all human settlements, mountains, rivers, dams etc.
- 6.2 Naming of all juristic names e.g. name of a country, names of provinces and names of the local authorities falls outside the jurisdiction of the South African Geographical Names Council.
- 6.3 This also includes all names of features under the control of local authorities e.g. streets, municipal buildings, squares, parks and cemeteries or any other features within the jurisdiction of the municipality.
- 6.4 The privately owned buildings and farms also fall outside the mandate of the South African Geographical Names Council.
- 6.5 Policies and guidelines on standardisation of geographical names also apply to features outside its jurisdiction.



7. Approved names since the establishment of the SAGNC to present

LANGUAGES	PROVINCES									TOTAL NUMBER OF NAMES PER LANGUAGE
	NW	GP	KZN	EC	MP	WC	NC	LP	FS	
AFRIKAANS	15	5	2	0	4	4	0	3	0	33
ENGLISH	8	26	5	2	16	8	0	13	1	79
ISINDEBELE	1	0	0	0	24	0	0	0	0	25
ISIZULU	0	5	319	0	29	0	0	0	1	354
SESOTHO	0	2	0	4	5	0	0	0	23	34
SESOTHO SA LEOA	3	2	0	1	36	1	0	163	1	207
SETSWANA	111	4	1	0	7	0	3	7	3	136
SISWATI	0	0	0	0	88	0	0	0	0	88
TSHIVENDA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	90	0	90
XITSONGA	0	0	0	0	20	0	0	23	0	43
ISIXHOSA	0	0	0	235	1	3	1	0	0	240
OTHERS OR UNKNOWN NAMES	10	4	13	2	9	1	2	21	2	64
TOTAL NUMBER OF NAMES	148	48	340	244	239	17	6	320	31	1393



8. Analyses of approved names as per province

1. KwaZulu Natal (340)
2. Limpopo (320)
3. Eastern Cape (244)
4. Mpumalanga (239)
5. North West (148)
6. Gauteng (48)
7. Free State (31)
8. Western Cape (17)
9. Northern Cape (6)



9. Narrative on approved names

- 9.1 The SAGNC has amongst other things advised the Minister on correction of spelling and correction of orthography of corrupted names. Most of these names are in KwaZulu Natal Province and Eastern Cape Province.
- 9.2 Amongst the name changes that were approved and finalized by the Minister of Arts and Culture are major towns in Limpopo and Mpumalanga Provinces e.g. Pietersburg to *Polokwane*, *Neillstroom* to *Modimolle*, *Piet Retief* to *Emkhondo*, *Nelspruit* to *Mbombela*, *Luydenburg* to *Mashishini* etc.
- 9.3 The project of renaming of three Presidential Guesthouses (*Kings House* to *Dr John Langalibalele Dube* in KwaZulu Natal Province, Durban; *Presidential Guesthouse* to *Sefako Makgatho* in Gauteng Province, Pretoria; *Diplomatic Guesthouse* to *Johnny Makhathini* in Gauteng Province: Pretoria);
- 9.4 Renaming of some of the airports like *Johannesburg International Airport* to *O R Tambo Airport*, *La Mercy Airport* to *King Shaka International Airport*, *Bloemfontein International Airport* to *Bram Fischer International Airport* in Free State Province: Bloemfontein; etc.



10. Capacity Building and advocacy

- 10.1 The SAGNC has facilitated the establishment of nine provincial committees in all nine provinces.
- 10.2 There were then capacity challenges which resulted in slow pace in standardization of geographical names.
- 10.3 The Department and the SAGNC took it upon itself to drive capacity building and an awareness campaigns in all nine provinces in order to build capacity for provinces to be able to enforce policies of the SAGNC at provincial level and local level.
- 10.4 Capacity building focused on public participation which revolves around Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (PAJA) and the process to be followed when applying for standardization of geographical names which is regulated through the Handbook on geographical names.



11. CHALLENGES

- 11.1 Amongst the risks and threats the Department and the SAGNC are facing in this process is resistance to change which escalate to court cases challenging Minister's decision.
- 11.2 On 8 May 2014 the Pretoria High Court rule in favor of the Minister on *Nelspruit to Mbombela* name change and there is another outstanding matter on Louis *Trichardt to Makhado* name change.
- 11.3 Pretoria name change has been in the main stream in the media for the past ten years and was referred back to City of Tshwane Metro for public participation.
- 11.4 Definition or clarity on public participation and consultation in relation to standardisation of geographical names.
- 11.5 Legislative shortcomings which render some provinces and municipalities ineffective.



THANK YOU

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