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Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names

Berlin, 27 August-5 September 2002

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 Seventh Conference

Report on Australia

Submitted by Australia**

Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide information on the role and function of the Committee for Geographical Names in Australasia (CGNA). The name of the Committee may puzzle some delegates, but it is representative of the very cooperative approach taken by Australia and New Zealand to all issues relating to land information. CGNA has a coordinating role in geographical names matters concerning both Australia and New Zealand, but it is the names authorities in the Australian states and territories and New Zealand who make naming decisions. These authorities usually have legislative authority for their decisions, and the Committee's work on guidelines and issues is an effective way of supporting that authority.

This report focuses on the strategic plan developed by CGNA, as this is the most effective way of identifying national goals and programmes, and outlining current issues. The major issues facing CGNA are:

- **Community education.** CGNA has begun to deal with this issue by preparing a promotional video on Australian geographical names. The video uses a high-profile Aboriginal actor as its presenter, and focuses strongly on Aboriginal names. It was released only this year and has been well received by the community. It is on display in the country exhibition.

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- **Dual naming.** Australia's indigenous names are a significant part of the country's heritage, and the promotion of these names is regarded as important to reconciliation for all Australians. Many indigenous names have been replaced by European names, and CGNA is developing guidelines as an effective means of recognizing these displaced names.
- **Geographical names as Internet domain names.** For many years geographical names have been excluded from use in Australia in the .com domain. CGNA is now working towards ensuring that the names of towns and communities are preserved for use by those communities. This topic is the subject of a short paper submitted by Australia under another agenda item.

A number of other issues referred to in the report are discussed at the annual CGNA meeting. The meeting is rotated between major Australian and New Zealand cities. Next year the meeting will be held in Townsville, Queensland in late March/early April.
