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

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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 Tenth  
Conference (for distribution only).**

**Report from Australia**

Submitted by Australia \*\*

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## **Executive Summary**

This report summarizes the work undertaken by the Permanent Committee on Place Names (PCPN) - formerly the Committee for Geographical Names in Australasia.

This committee is a standing committee of the Intergovernmental Committee of Survey and Mapping and comprised members from each of the State and Territory naming authorities in Australia, the New Zealand Geographical Names Board and other agencies with a place naming responsibility or interest.

The document will summarize the work undertaken by by the PCPN and also the points of focus from each of the relevant austerities with the exception of New Zealand who have submitted a separate report.

## 1. Introduction

The Permanent Committee on Geographical Names was established in 1984 as a coordinating body, initially named as the Committee for Geographical Names in Australasia the name changed in 2015.

Committee membership comprised:

Geoscience Australia	Victoria - Dept of Environment, Land, Water & Planning
Australian Antarctic Division	Tasmania - Dept of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment
Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority	South Australia - Dept for Transport, Energy & Infrastructure
Australian Hydrographic Office	Western Australia - Landgate
Australian Capital Territory - National Capital Authority	Australian National Placenames Survey
Land Information New Zealand	Australian Geospatial Intelligence Organisation
Northern Territory - Dept of Lands	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research
Queensland - Dept of Natural Resources and Mines	Standards Australia
New South Wales Land and Property Information	
Australian Capital Territory - Planning and Land Authority	

## 2. National Coordination Activities

The Permanent Committee on Geographical Names meets twice per year, one face to face meeting and one teleconference. In each of these meetings, there are standard activities that are undertaken at each meeting, including the following:

- Review of the terms of reference
- Review of the PCPN Strategic Objectives
- Review of the Principles for the Consistent Use of Place Names
- Review of the Place Names Reservation List

In addition to the standard matters, the following matters have been considered in the recent past:

### a. Feature Classification

A review of the feature classification has been undertaken, and a new standard developed, moving from the former 4-character code to a three-field classification system in order to:

- Provide a standard for the national gazetteer, being a composite of the jurisdictional data
- Provide a better data analysis / extraction capability for uses of the gazetteer data.

This has been covered in a separate paper submitted by Australia.

### b. Place Names Reservation List

Australia works on a State / Territory based naming authority structure, and in the case of establishing a new suburb or locality for addressing purposes the processes differ due to the legislative framework in each jurisdiction.

As a name is proposed for such use, it has been deemed appropriate to establish a central list of any name earmarked for use as an address locality so that other jurisdictions undertaking similar processes do not duplicate the use of name or use similar sounding names

The method used is as follows:

- Upon confirmation that a particular name is proposed, all other jurisdictions are advised and asked to comment on the proposed name(s) to eliminate duplication or similar sounding names before the process moves too far.

- Proposed names that do not have any conflict are then added to the reservation list to “protect” the name from other use until such time as the proposal has either been completed or lapsed. Once complete, the name becomes official and if the proposal lapses, the name is subsequently removed from the reservation list.

This list is reviewed at each PCPN meeting to ensure currency.

### **c. National Gazetteer**

The content band update process of the national gazetteer is currently under review.

An assessment of the content has revealed some shortcomings in the data provided by some jurisdictions for some feature types. The outcome of this activity has been to encourage the inclusion of data from sources other than the official geographical names gazetteers to ensure that there is a more comprehensive representation of the names associated with all feature classes across the country to better meet client requirements.

There is also an alteration to the input methodology being established. Past practice was for a yearly data dump from the jurisdictions, meaning that as the time progressed, the national gazetteer became more out of date. The new methodology will enable the jurisdictions to input data whenever it is deemed appropriate, dependent on the number of edits in a given period of time. It is expected that this will be in place later this year.

### **d. Indigenous Names Usage**

Continual review and refinement of the guidelines associated with the use of indigenous names and language has proved necessary. Issues still to be resolved include:

- Recognition method for more than one Aboriginal language name for a specific feature.
- Definition or the concept of dual naming, alternative naming, composite naming and co-naming to be considered.
- Increasing trend to use Aboriginal language terms in conjunction with English place names for government facilities.

## **3. Jurisdictional Matters**

Individual survey reports have been received from the following members of PCPN.

### **a. Geoscience Australia**

Australia has developed a consistent standard for National Gazetteer contributions. We are now working towards a federated model for access and use of the National Gazetteer. The new Composite Gazetteer of Australia and its Territories will facilitate a frequently updated dynamic gazetteer for Australia, moving from a nominal 2 year update cycle to a cycle that is at the discretion of the supplying jurisdiction. Users will now have an attribute that indicates how up-to-date the data is and when it has been supplied.

### **b. Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority**

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority responsibility is to coordinate the naming of undersea geographic features in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

We have been progressively naming reefs within the GBRMP under a Memorandum of Understanding between the Australian Hydrographic Service, the Department of Natural Resources and Mines and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

The resulting reef names are forwarded to the State for inclusion in their Queensland Place Names database.

#### **c. Australian Hydrographic Office**

An alteration to the contents of the place names gazetteer maintained by the Hydrographic Office. It was decided that all names within State or Territory jurisdictional waters and also coastal features would be removed from this data base to avoid duplication of names when the data is compiled into the national gazetteer.

#### **d. Queensland - Dept of Natural Resources and Mines**

Queensland is focusing on the growing gap between database design and business needs. The databases were designed for very specific and isolated purposes a long time ago yet our policies and products are continuously evolving to reflect the changing social and technological environments.

The current database a bit like a rubber band - there's a certain amount of flexibility and expansion possible, and once that's exhausted we can even join a few together for some extra stretch. That's a reasonable short-term solution, but if you keep it up for too long you end up with a mess of interconnected bands that are difficult maintain and aren't obviously relatable back to policy. The risk then, is ending up in a situation where database design starts to drive policy decisions. Take it a step further and consider that it is 20th century design, and our policies are trying to address 21st century issues. We can try, and we do, but I don't know that it's possible to bridge that gap well.

This is certainly the source, either directly or indirectly, of most of our challenges in Queensland, and I doubt we are alone.

#### **e. New South Wales Land and Property Information**

The Geographical Names Board (GNB) of New South Wales (NSW) has been focussing on providing a strong policy foundation and practical guidelines to support contemporary place name challenges.

One of the main challenges has been around addressing production, aggregation and distribution. Addressing is becoming more of a keystone to many government services and analytics, and naming of roads and address localities is playing a central role. Moreover, addressing is the under-appreciated third component of Identity Management – Name, Address and Date of Birth. Reliable and accurate address information is fundamental to identity management in a digital economy and society. To that end the GNB has published an extensive Addressing User Manual which consolidates different legislations related to an address. As a result, the manual provides a practical framework for an improved addressing system in NSW.

Along the same lines of connecting people and information to place, the GNB is endeavouring to work more closely with the community to preserve the history, culture and identity of its state. To support this role GNB has developed detailed policy and governance documents. These publications provide guidelines on the principles of naming while allowing the GNB to push greater diversity, such as fostering the use of aboriginal and multicultural names.

#### **f. Victoria - Dept of Environment, Land, Water & Planning**

Some of the major successes for the Office of Geographic Names has been the creation and deployment of the ANZAC Commemorative Naming Project. The project commemorates the 100-year anniversary of the Anzac forces landing at Gallipoli. World War One veterans, as well service men and women from all wars and peace-keeping initiatives, and those people who displayed the Anzac spirit on the home front may be recognised. The project has seen some great stories discovered and naming initiatives being undertaken, from recognising existing Anzac related street names and

features, to renaming streets and geographic features with Anzac-themed names. Out of a total of 79 Victorian municipalities, 53 received grants to assist with commemorative naming research.

The Register of Geographic Names - VICNAMES has seen a number of improvements over the years, most notable the migration to a new platform and inclusion of additional data feeds, which provide the user with a better understanding of officially registered and un-official names across the state. The register also allows historical information to be captured for the 200,000 plus road names and corroborating documents, for example pictures, newspaper clippings and excerpts etc can be added for any road or any of the 43,000 officially registered place names.

Another major task of the Office has been the review and update of the Naming rules for places in Victoria - Statutory requirements for naming roads features and localities 2016, which replaces the Guidelines for Geographic Names 2010 Version 2. Version 2 of the Guidelines saw amendments made in line with the AS/NZS4819:2011 Rural and urban addressing standard. The new Naming rules were widely consulted with over 300 comments considered and involvement from Aboriginal groups, emergency services and the Geographic Place Names Advisory Panel. The document has been streamlined and promotes public safety, linking names to place, the use of Aboriginal naming, mandates that the community must be consulted and that a defined process be followed.

#### **g. Tasmania - Dept of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment**

- *Structure*
  - There have been a number of changes of staff and roles in the past five years.
  - As nomenclature is linked to the jurisdictional foundation spatial datasets, place naming workflow is managed by a number of staff within the same section, specifically in the spatial attribution of the nomenclature persistent ID, and resolution of any naming discrepancies that become evident through automated mapping processes.
  - The seamless integration of place naming practices into the spatial data management section has proved to generate efficiencies and provide a sense of ownership and understanding across a wider group of staff.
- *Legislation*
  - A process to gain approval to construct a new Place Names Act to repeal the nomenclature section of the *Survey Coordination Act 1944* commenced in 2015 with an issues paper developed and distributed to a range of stakeholders and interested parties seeking comment and feedback.
  - The responses indicated unanimous support for new legislation and the need to streamline the place naming process given today's contemporary practices and capability. An outline of the required provisions and the Department's preferred position for new legislation has been developed after consideration of stakeholder feedback and other jurisdictional legislation.
  - Although it was originally intended to introduce the new Bill into Parliament in 2016 the Government Legislation Scheduling Committee deferred the Bill to mid 2017. The Chairman prepared a Cabinet Briefing Document for noting progress on the proposed Bill which was noted by Cabinet on 12 June 2017, and approval was received to release the consultation report and Departmental preferred position paper back to stakeholders for information. Draft jurisdictional place naming guidelines have been developed in anticipation of the new legislation, and provide a consistent approach to place naming to those of the PCPN and other jurisdictions. These new guidelines will be released to stakeholders for comment together with draft new legislation.
  - Tasmanian placenames are now delivered freely as spatial point files, together with a number of attributes under Land Tasmania's Open Data provisions.
- *Spatial Data and Products*

- Significant work has been undertaken in reviewing the feature classifications of the jurisdictional place names managed within *Placenames Tasmania*. With the more expansive classification that now exists, the most appropriate feature classification has been applied whilst still preserving the original intent of the feature type when first named.
- The jurisdictional objective is to record a definitive spatial extent of every officially named feature. To achieve this, the persistent ID of a placename is recorded as an attribute against the point, line or polygon feature within the jurisdictional transport, administrative, topographic or hydrographic datasets. This also ensures the correct name is supplied for these features when delivered. For remaining features such as bays, mountains, hills, valleys, points etc. a “Feature Extent” dataset holds polygons representing the approximate extent of these names.
- Land Tasmania completed the Feature Catalogue matching process to the Placenames Tasmania data, enabling it to be uploaded to the Composite Gazetteer of Australia. The data was supplied to Geoscience Australia in June 2017.
- *Working with Other Groups and Organisations*
  - Extensive liaison has been undertaken with Local Government Councils to educate and assist in the guidelines and processes for the effective electronic lodgement of new street name proposals.
  - There have been a further 7 Aboriginal names assigned as dual names on the 19 January 2016 bringing the total of names assigned under the Aboriginal and Dual Naming Policy to 13. There is currently a proposal for 11 Aboriginal place names that have been submitted to the Nomenclature Board for consideration at their next meeting in early July.
- *Culture and Heritage*
  - As *Placenames Tasmania* has the provision to hold and make available to the public information on the source or background on the naming of features, work is continuing both to promote this website to the public, and ongoing work in adding further background information as it becomes available.
  - During the migration of data, much information was added which was previously stored on “card” records.
  - The Tasmanian Government will shortly commence the process of reviewing the *Aboriginal and Dual Naming Policy*. This policy provides a framework for the naming of Tasmanian geographic features with the overlying principle that preference is given to Aboriginal place names for any geographic feature or place that does not already have an existing official name.
  - This policy also provides for the dual naming of features that already have an official name to enable an Aboriginal name and an introduced name to be used together as the official name.
  - As part of the Tasmanian Government’s new policy to advance relations with the Aboriginal community, this policy will be reviewed to ensure that it is supportive of the greater Aboriginal community and consistent with the Government’s policy.

#### **h. South Australia - Dept for Transport, Energy & Infrastructure**

Due to departmental reorganisation, the major part of the geographical names effort has been the routine aspects of name assignment and alteration. However, there have been some notable achievements, including:

- Completion of the assignment of locality and suburb boundaries covering the whole of the State to serve as the basis for standardized addresses.

- Continued efforts in the use of traditional Aboriginal names, both as stand-alone features and in a dual naming format, including the dual naming of the largest salt lake in South Austral – Lake Eyre / Kati Thanda.