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Item 8 (a) of the provisional agenda *

**Culture, heritage and language recognition: geographical
names as culture, heritage and identity**

**A changing Australian landscape enhancing our diverse
communities through geographical names**

Submitted by Australia **

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A changing Australian landscape enhancing our diverse communities through geographical names



Figure 1: image of street sign showing indigenous place names

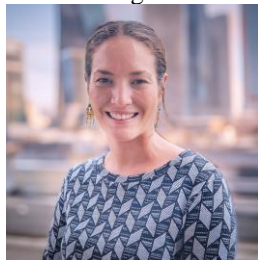
Why is diversity and inclusion important?

Diversity and inclusion in naming is essential to us all being able to live in a safe and equal society.

Naming places, geographic features and localities is an important way to recognise and celebrate the diversity in our communities

Australia has a rich history of incredible and diverse people who have shaped sectors including academia, sport, the arts, politics, medicine and everything in between.

The challenge is ensuring that this diversity is represented in the names we encounter throughout Australia.



Dr. Alanna Kamp is a member of the Geographical Names Board of New South Wales and says it best in a short interview. *“Having diverse place names... give us a sense of belonging and connection to Country...”*

The video has multiple interviews, Dr Alana is on at 2min 21 seconds: <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/919875434/0f971e6308>

Examples of the shift towards diverse naming in Australia

Across Australia we are seeing a shift towards place naming that celebrates and highlights the diversity of our communities. In particular there is a strong commitment to reawakening and preserving Aboriginal language through place naming.

Figure 2: image of Dr. Alanna Kamp

Many Australian jurisdictions are working on updating place name policies to better reflect and support greater diversity in the names we give to places.

Recognizing the multicultural nature of our communities

In New South Wales (NSW) Thirty percent of the population was born overseas, however very few officially assigned names reflected this.

As part of Inner West Council's efforts to recognise the significant social, cultural and economic contributions of migrant communities living in the area, a series of Little Village precincts have been officially named, in consultation with local businesses, cultural ambassadors and communities.

Community feedback has strongly supported the move to reflect the enormous impact that these migrant communities have had on the area.

Figure 3: image of ‘little villages’ named in NSW



In recent years NSW has had the honour of recognising and celebrating the LGBTQI+ community through place names. This is a community that is rarely reflected in the names around us.



Figure 4: image of place names supporting LGBTQI+ communities.

Unity Place in Burwood was assigned to signify a connected and harmonious community. The name represents shared values of community, respect and kindness.

Equality Green in Surry Hills (a locality) commemorates the public gathering of over 30,000 people in support of the Australian (Equality) Marriage Law Proposal, which was passed on this day.

Most recently, Bedford Square was renamed to Pride Square in Newtown as an act of recognition and respect to the local LGBTQI+ community. Pride square was officially opened by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese in February 2023 and was the heart of the Pride Inner West festival.

Proactively striving for more diverse naming

The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Place Names Unit is working collaboratively with the ACT Place Names Advisory Committee to improve the representation of diversity in the people commemorated through the naming of suburbs and public places including roads, parks and bridges.

This includes research for place naming opportunities concentrating on the contribution made by women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people from LGBTQI+ communities, people from diverse backgrounds and people from marginalised groups.

One example is the naming of the Division of Spence which was amended during 2023 to include Catherine Helen Spence (1825–1910), social and political reformer, journalist, feminist, educationist and writer, alongside William Guthrie Spence (1846–1926), trade unionist and politician, after whom the suburb was first named in 1972.

Figure 5: image of the co named division of Spence.



Gender trends in place naming

In Victoria the focus has been changing place name policy to support gender equality and diversity in naming and classification of place name data to obtain baseline data on the gender of place names.

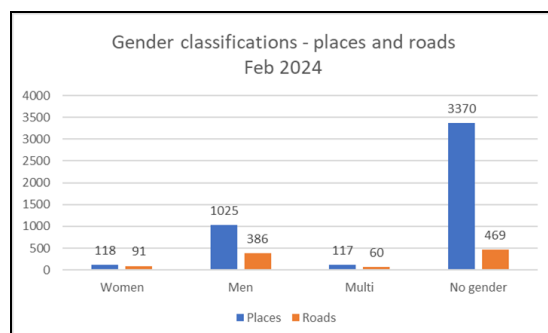


Figure 6: statistics showing classification of names

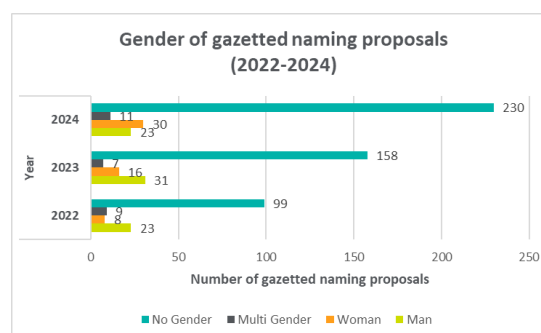


Figure 7: statistics of the number of naming proposals 2022-24

Figure 6 shows the work to date in Victoria at classifying its data. In the Register of Geographic Names – VICNAMES¹ there are some 44,579 officially registered place names and 194,751 officially registered road names. It is clear the bulk of names are not commemorative and therefore do not have a gender. Non commemorative naming would include naming after flora and fauna, non-commemorative locational names and use of Traditional Owner languages. Multi gender refers to commemoration of a family so multiple genders are being commemorated.

Figure 7 highlights the trend in naming over the past 3 years. The bulk of ‘naming’ is not commemorative, approx. 25 per cent of all naming proposal commemorate a person. It is believed to be the first time ever that female commemoration has outpaced male commemoration. Why has this occurred? It is believed to be due to legislative and policy amendments. For example the *Gender Equality Act 2020* was launched, this supported a focus on policies that support gender equality. Geographic Names Victoria (GNV) used this when reviewing its previous *Naming rules for places in Victoria 2016* (naming rules) to ask the question should more be done to support gender equality. This saw the creation of Principle G Gender Equality within the naming rules. Amendments were also made to VICNAMES to support classification and data reporting. When the 2022 naming rules were launched the new principle and the document was promoted to naming authorities.

Additionally the State government launched its Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan – one of the first obligations was for commemorative names to be 70% female for the life of the strategy – until 2027. The work of GNV, community groups and community activists has seen the profile of gender equality in naming being raised and this can be seen in the statistics shown in figure 7.

Improving gender diversity in place naming

Examples of female commemoration include:



Warrior Women Lane² was named in honour of Lisa Bellear – a Minjungbul, Goernpil, Noonuccal and South Sea Islander woman from Minjerribah who was born in Melbourne (Naarm – the Wurundjeri name for Melbourne) and died in 2006 at the age of 45. Lisa was a prolific activist, photographer, broadcaster, poet, feminist, politician, comedian, academic and performer – clearly worthy of commemoration.

Figure 8: image of Lisa Bellear Street art.



Lucas³ (suburb / locality) was named in honour of Eleanor Lucas – a founder of the textile company Lucas and Co. All the streets within Lucas are named after ANZAC veterans in recognition of her company’s involvement in planting 1,000 trees in honour of the men and women who enlisted for service during World War One. The new suburb of Lucas provides a strong link to place and commemorates Eleanor and the work she and her employees undertook.

Figure 9: image of House of Lucas motif.



Lilardia Park⁴ was named in honour of Margaret (Lilardia) Tucker, MBE. Lilardia was an Aboriginal Australian activist and writer who was among the first Aboriginal authors to publish an autobiography, in 1977.

Figure 10: image of Margaret (Lilardia) Tucker MBE



Biddy Giles Park⁵. Bidy was a Gweagal woman who had extensive knowledge of Dharawal land from the south side of the Georges River to Wollongong. Bidy was renowned for her knowledge of the land, storytelling and bush tucker cooking, often acting as a guide with her husband in the local area for travellers on hunting and fishing expeditions.

Figure 11: image of Bidy Giles.

¹ <https://maps.land.vic.gov.au/lassi/VicnamesUI.jsp>

² <https://www.warriorwomanlane.com/>

³ <https://maps.land.vic.gov.au/vicnames?placeld=104109>

⁴ <https://maps.land.vic.gov.au/vicnames?placeld=127110>

⁵ <https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/geographical-names-board/news/biddy-giles-park>



Topsy Secretary Juwaning Park⁶ (joo · anne · ing) Topsy's Larrakia name was Juwaning, the family's European name was Secretary. In addition to the struggle for land rights, Topsy was a strong advocate for Aboriginal family, health and wellbeing. Topsy was part of the movement that lobbied for the establishment of a community controlled Aboriginal health service in Darwin.

Figure 12: image of Topsy Secretary Juwaning

Recognising traditional Aboriginal place names through dual naming

Across Australia jurisdictions are recognising the traditional names given to geographical features by First Nations peoples through dual naming. South Australia was a pioneer in dual naming and is continuing this important work which is a meaningful and tangible step towards reconciliation.

In 2022 the City of Mount Gambier, in collaboration with Traditional Owners and cultural leaders assigned dual names from the language of the Boandik peoples to six significant geographical features:



Figure 13: images of dual names in South Australia.

Pronunciation (sound files) and the meaning of the names is provided below:

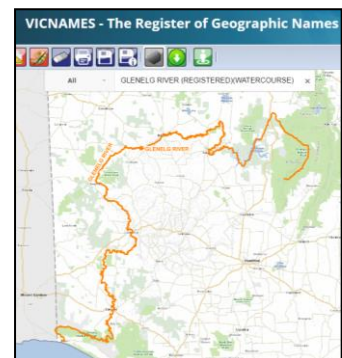
- Umpherston Sinkhole / [\(bah-loombbool\)](#) – buttercup flower
- Cave garden / [\(th-oo-gi\)](#) – bull frogs
- Leg of Mutton Lake / [\(yah-ton-loo\)](#)
- Blue Lake / [\(waa-wore\)](#) – crow country
- Browne Lake / [\(kroh-weh-rat-wah-ri\)](#) - emus, their tracks
- Valley Lake / [\(ket-lah mah-l-pi\)](#) – sacred talking tree

Bunganditj Language Coordinator at Burraandies Aboriginal Corporation, Tara Bonney said that “By having dual names introduced to the community in an obvious way such as signage, it reminds both indigenous and non-indigenous people that this is Aboriginal land, and we have a language that has been spoken here for thousands of years.”

Using Aboriginal language in underwater naming

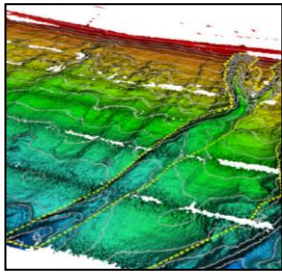
In 2023 the Australian Hydrographic Office (AHO) had a new name accepted by the Sub-Committee on Undersea Feature Names (SCUFN). The Traditional Owners Gunditj Mirring gave permission to name an underwater canyon, Bocara, Bocara Canyon was proposed to the AHO by Patrick De Deckker of the Australian National University back in 2021/2022.

Figure 14: shows the extent of the current Glenelg River⁷



⁶ <https://www.ntlis.nt.gov.au/placenames/view.jsp?id=25034>

⁷ <https://maps.land.vic.gov.au/lassi/VicnamesUI.jsp?placeId=3050>



The undersea canyon is just outside of Australian Territorial Sea, in the Australian Exclusive Economic Zone, approximately 20-60NM off the coast, and in waters from 530m deep to over 4000m deep. Bathymetry was collected to confirm the extent of the feature, and the name was approved by the Hydrographer of Australia. The name was proposed as the feature is considered the ancient extended course of what is now the Glenelg River.

Figure 15: shows the one slide of bathometric data highlighting the channel and its depth.

Recognising Aboriginal place names through renaming

In 2021, the Northern Territory renamed Darwin's popular 'Vesteys Beach'⁸. The new name – 'Bundilla Beach'⁹ – recognises the continuing connection to the land and the seas of Darwin's Larrakia Traditional Owners. Renaming the beach was the culmination of more than two years' engagement between the Northern Territory Place Names Committee and members of Darwin's Larrakia community as well as the City of Darwin local government council.

The new name – Bundilla – derives from the Larrakia language and signifies a 'girl' or 'young woman'. Bundilla Beach is a significant place for Larrakia women, particularly young women.

In contrast, the former name, 'Vesteys Beach', arose from informal reference to the short-lived meatworks, built by Britain's Vestey Brothers in the early twentieth century on the nearby Bullocky Point. Vesteys is a particularly masculine name bearing strong associations with the British Empire. Initially proposed as a dual name – 'Bundilla / Vesteys Beach' – parties unanimously advocated instead to rename the beach in preference to the potentially patriarchal pairing of the Vestey name with a Larrakia word of significance to women and young women. The new name – Bundilla Beach – is widely embraced by the Darwin community. Figure 16: image of local's with the new sign for Bundilla Beach.



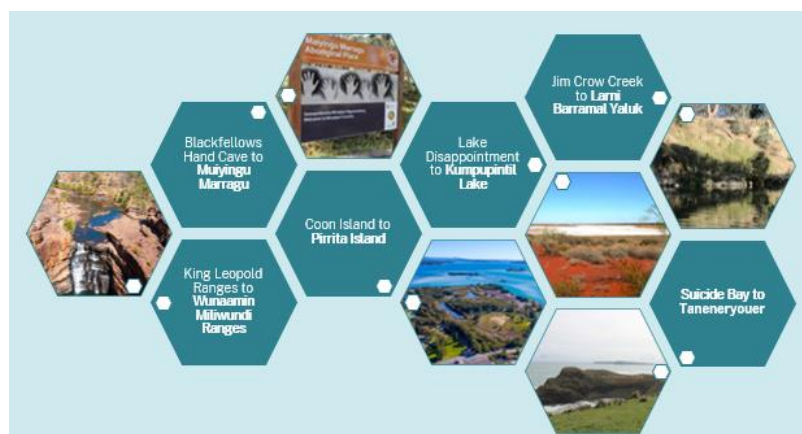
In 2023 the Queensland government renamed the popular Fraser Island to K'gari. The name Fraser Island was a tribute to Eliza Fraser, a woman who was shipwrecked on the island in 1836. On 7 June 2023 Fraser Island changed its name to K'gari. K'gari is the Butchulla Peoples' traditional name for the island. The name K'gari comes from the creation story of the island, which has been passed down orally for generations between the traditional owners of the surrounding land and waters

Figure 17: sign of K'gari on the island.

Renaming offensive place names

We know there are many names by today's standards are considered to be inappropriate examples are discussed below. Figure 18: images of offensively named places and their new indigenous names.

Muiyingu Marragu in Central West NSW was originally submitted as a dual name to Blackfellows Hand Cave. However, consultation with the local Aboriginal community highlighted the offensive nature of the existing name and as a result, the feature was renamed to Muiyingu Marragu, which means 'hands' in Wiradjuri language.



King Leopold Ranges in the Kimberly region of WA was officially renamed as Wunaamin Miliwundi Ranges. The Ranges were originally named by Alexander Forrest in 1879 in honour of Belgian King Leopold II, due to his "interest in exploration", despite having no ties to Australia and never visiting the region. The new name, recognises both the Bunuba and Ngarinyin name for the ranges and honours their rich history and connection to Country.

⁸ <https://www.ntlis.nt.gov.au/land/info/app/placenames/19323>

⁹ <https://www.ntlis.nt.gov.au/land/info/app/placenames/25001>

Coon Island in Lake Macquarie, NSW was renamed as Pirrita Island. Pirrita is a local Awabakal word for oysters from the mangrove tree. It signifies the oysters growing on the mangrove bushes in this part of the lake.

Lake Disappointment in Western Australia was renamed as Kumpupintil Lake following a request from The Western Desert Lands Aboriginal Corporation. With the support of Landgate (the State's naming office), the reinstatement of the Martu name was formalised in November 2020. The name Kumpupintil foretells the Martu creation story of the lake, where warriors fought giants in a great battle creating the lake which has been used as a food source and ceremonial ground for generations.

Jim Crow Creek in Victoria was renamed to Larni Baramal Yaluk which means home or habitat of the Emu Creek. The name reconnects the landscape with Dja Dja Wurrung culture and language. The term Jim Crow refers to the segregation of black people and is thought to have come from American colonists brought over in the Gold rush era.

Finally, in Tasmania, Suicide Bay has been renamed as "Tarn nena oower" which means 'trauma'. Similar to Blackfellows Hand Cave, this was originally proposed as a dual name. Suicide Bay is located at the site of the 1828 Cape Grim massacre in Tasmania's far north-west, where 30 Aboriginal men were shot and thrown off the cliffs after trying to protect women from sexual assault by white settlers.

Conclusion

Our place names should reflect the diversity of peoples, languages, and experiences that have shaped our communities. Through deliberate action and collective commitment, we can harness the power of geographic place names to foster understanding, respect, and belonging across cultures, ultimately shaping a world where diversity and inclusion thrive.

Many of you will have heard of the saying 'You can't be what you can't see' but we challenge this. You can be, what you can't see, but having visible representation makes it safer, more doable and accepted. Visible representation of diversity in our place names is important and makes a difference.

The ICSM Place Names Working Group are in the process of reviewing its Australian Place Name Principles to ensure they continue to support diverse and inclusive naming across Australia.

The Group of Experts is invited to consider the content of the paper and the work undertaken to support our diverse communities. Australia welcomes the opportunity to discuss the work.