

# Aboriginal and Dual Naming Policy

A Policy for the  
naming of Tasmanian  
geographic places and  
features

2019



# Preamble

The following preamble provides background and context to the Aboriginal and Dual Naming Policy and is not part of the Policy.

The Tasmanian Government acknowledges the central role Tasmanian Aboriginal communities play in the Aboriginal and dual naming process.

Geographic features and places in the Tasmanian landscape, on both land and sea, were given names by the Aboriginal peoples of Tasmania and used extensively for over 40,000 years prior to the arrival of Europeans.

The names, which formed part of the multiple Aboriginal language groups that existed in Tasmania, signified the complex interlinked relationship between Tasmanian Aboriginal peoples and the land they lived on and cared for. The names were not arbitrary: they were integral to the places to which they were attached. They represented the deep practical and spiritual connection between people and place, and helped to communicate important cultural information between different groups and across generations.

The supplanting of Aboriginal Tasmanian place names by Europeans, beginning with Dutch and French visitors in the 17th and 18th centuries and dramatically accelerated by British occupation from the late 18th century, caused significant pain and cultural damage to the Aboriginal peoples of Tasmania. The past failure to officially acknowledge and use traditional place names, combined with the broader impacts of colonisation and historic efforts to prevent the use of Tasmanian Aboriginal languages, has resulted in a significant loss of cultural knowledge and understanding. While some contemporary Tasmanian place names are based on the names used by Tasmanian Aboriginal people, these names are often based on European interpretation and were co-opted without consent. Some of the names given to places by Europeans are also explicitly offensive to Tasmanian Aboriginal people.

The Government is committed to working with Tasmanian Aboriginal people and the wider community to encourage more Aboriginal place names in Tasmania. Part of this commitment is the establishment and use of the Aboriginal and Dual Naming Policy. This policy was first adopted in 2012, and was revised in 2019, the International Year of Indigenous Languages, to improve the framework for nominating and assessing Aboriginal and dual names for geographic features and places.

The Aboriginal and dual naming of places promotes broader community awareness of Aboriginal history and culture. It is expected that Aboriginal names, which may appear at first to be complex in spelling and/or pronunciation, will, over time, become familiar and easy to use within the Tasmanian community and furthermore, that Tasmanians will value using them.

The adoption of this policy is in line with approaches being taken across other Australian jurisdictions. As recognised by the Permanent Committee on Place Names, a working group of the Australia and New Zealand Intergovernmental Committee on Surveying and Mapping (ICSM), 'the relationship between Aboriginal people and the land is still as prevalent today as it was more than 400 centuries ago – it is fitting

then, to acknowledge Aboriginal footprints in the sands of time.’ The ICSM Guidelines for the Consistent Use of Place Names in Australia have, since 1992, encouraged naming authorities in all Australian states and territories to acknowledge the continuing importance of the original Aboriginal place names, and to adopt more frequent official use of these names, drawn from both languages still spoken and languages no longer spoken.

Scholars believe that between 8 and 16 distinct Tasmanian Aboriginal languages may have been spoken prior to European settlement. In recent decades, a program of language reconstruction has been taking place, and is ongoing. This work is being undertaken by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Corporation and the reconstructed language is known as palawa kani. The Policy now provides for names to be informed by palawa kani and other recorded Tasmanian Aboriginal languages.

The complexity of Tasmanian Aboriginal languages and the limited information available on recorded pronunciations and interpretative European spelling may result in assigned Aboriginal and dual names for geographical features or places being derived from different languages, adopting different spelling systems, pronunciations and syntaxes sitting alongside each other. The policy acknowledges that research into Tasmanian Aboriginal languages and place names is ongoing.

This Policy provides for:

- giving Aboriginal names to geographic features or places that do not already have an official or assigned name (the naming of cities or towns is not covered under the Policy – see 4.9 below);
- replacing an existing official name with an Aboriginal name; and
- giving an additional Aboriginal name to a feature that already has an official name (dual naming).

The Policy is given effect by incorporation into appropriate administrative mechanisms such as the Place Names Advisory Panel’s Tasmanian Place Naming Guidelines.

## Note on the Place Names Advisory Panel

In Tasmania, the official naming of places is primarily the responsibility of the Place Names Advisory Panel. The Panel is regulated under provisions of the Place Names Act 2020 (the Act) and undertakes research and investigation into the origin, priority and usage of place names and assigns official place names in accordance with the Tasmanian Place Naming Guidelines.

Under the Act, the Panel consists of seven members, including three members of the community, with the Surveyor-General as Chairperson. The role of the Panel is, among other things, to:

- consider whether any unnamed place (road, locality, geographical feature etc.) warrants the assignment of a name, and the extent of the place’;

- advertise any proposed new or altered name for a period to enable public comment;
- determine the appropriateness of any proposed name, based on the application of the Tasmanian Place Naming Guidelines, and subsequently make a recommendation to the Minister for Primary Industries and Water who then must confirm or reject the recommendation; and
- in the case of an Aboriginal naming proposal, to refer the proposal to the Aboriginal and Dual Naming Reference Group for further consultation and to provide a recommendation.

## **Policy**

### **1. Purpose**

To provide advice and direction to the Tasmanian community, Government Agencies, Local Government Authorities and the Place Names Advisory Panel about the application of Aboriginal names for naming Tasmanian geographic features and places.

### **2. Principles**

The Tasmanian Government acknowledges that places in Tasmania were named by Aborigines long before the arrival of Europeans. The Tasmanian Government acknowledges prior Aboriginal ownership and is committed to preserving Aboriginal heritage and language by ensuring that Aboriginal place names can be restored to Tasmanian geographic features and places. This will be achieved by applying the following principles:

- 2.1 That preference is given to local Aboriginal place names for any geographic feature or place that does not already have an existing official place name, provided the proposed Aboriginal name can be authenticated to the satisfaction of the Place Names Advisory Panel.
- 2.2 Where an existing official place name does not have community support, the name may be replaced by an Aboriginal name provided it can be authenticated to the satisfaction of the Place Names Advisory Panel.
- 2.3 That the Aboriginal dual naming of geographic features and places that already have official names occurs when a complete name change is not possible or acceptable. Both will be official place names, and both names will be used together with the Aboriginal name occurring first, separated by a solidus to be preceded, and followed by spaces, for example kunanyi / Mount Wellington.
- 2.4 That the renaming of geographic features or places where the existing place name may be offensive to the Tasmanian Aboriginal communities will be a priority for consideration by the Panel.
- 2.5 Where previously assigned official place names are derived from Aboriginal names, or are Aboriginal names but have demonstrably incorrect spelling or form, names may be amended to ensure they are generally accepted by Aboriginal communities.

- 2.6 Where alternative names have been used for extended periods by Aboriginal people to identify geographic features or places as part of community and cultural tradition, consideration will be given to renaming those features. Sometimes, these names may not be from Aboriginal languages, for example Big Dog Island in place of Great Dog Island; Hummocky Island in place of Chappell Island.
- 2.7 That the Place Names Advisory Panel will establish and maintain an Aboriginal and Dual Naming Reference Group of people with expertise in Tasmanian Aboriginal history, languages or place naming. The Panel may seek advice or comment from the Reference Group on:
- proposals where more than one Aboriginal name is proposed for a geographic place or feature;
  - proposals where multiple names are given for parts of the one place or feature;
  - proposals where there is substantial community division about a proposed Aboriginal name, or when one Aboriginal name cannot be clearly prioritised from a number of known names; and
  - any other issue the Panel determines.
- 2.8 If there is substantial community division about a proposed Aboriginal name, or when one Aboriginal name cannot be clearly prioritised from a number of known names, the Place Names Advisory Panel may exercise discretion not to adopt an Aboriginal or dual name. Notwithstanding this, where more than one name for a geographical feature or place can be authenticated to the satisfaction of the Place Names Advisory Panel, the Panel may elect to record multiple names in its database, and select one name to be assigned for official publications. This reflects the practice of the distinct original Aboriginal groups who named features within different contexts from their neighbouring groups. Recording multiple names may assist in providing education about the complexity of Aboriginal languages.
- 2.9 It is not intended that Aboriginal place names previously made official under the Aboriginal and Dual Naming policy (since 2012) will be rescinded or substantially amended.

### **3. Register of Aboriginal Community Organisations**

- 3.1 The Place Names Advisory Panel will maintain, and make publicly available, a register of Aboriginal community organisations and groups to be consulted as part of an Aboriginal place-naming proposal. Interested Aboriginal organisations and groups can self-nominate for inclusion on the register, indicating the nature and scope of their interest (such as in relation to specific areas or places).

### **4. Naming Proposal Requirements**

- 4.1 A naming proposal can be made by any individual, group or organisation.
- 4.2 The proposal must be made to the Place Names Advisory Panel and be accompanied by:
- a description of the historical origins of the proposed Aboriginal name. The description must demonstrate adequate research and authenticity, including sources;

- evidence that local Aboriginal communities have been consulted;
  - evidence demonstrating the support of local Aboriginal communities;
  - if the naming proposal is to replace an existing official name, a description of the level of support, or lack of support, for the existing name;
  - evidence that the local Council has been consulted; and
  - evidence that affected landowners and relevant statutory entities have been consulted.
- 4.3 The Place Names Advisory Panel may reject the naming proposal if the requirements of clause 4.2 have not been met to the satisfaction of the Panel.
- 4.4 The Place Names Advisory Panel, or the Reference Group if so requested by the Panel, may conduct additional enquiries and research as it sees fit in order to supplement a naming proposal.
- 4.5 The Place Names Advisory Panel may, at its discretion, engage directly with Aboriginal communities, relevant landowners, local government and statutory entities to ensure appropriate consultation for a proposal has occurred.
- 4.6 Any naming proposal relating to a place, geographic feature or unbounded locality on 'Aboriginal Land' as described under the Aboriginal Lands Act 1995 must, in addition to the requirements of clause 4.2, include evidence of the owner's consent.
- 4.7 The Policy may be applied to applications to name Tasmanian geographic features and places in accordance with the Place Names Act 2020.
- 4.8 The Policy will not apply to Tasmanian features and place names assigned through legislation other than the Place Names Act 2020 (e.g. Commonwealth Agencies).
- 4.9 The Policy does not apply to the naming or renaming of cities or towns which are governed in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1993.
- 4.10 The Policy is consistent with current legislation for place naming under the Place Names Act 2020.
- 4.11 The Policy is also consistent with national standards as outlined in the International Committee on Survey and Mapping (ICSM) Guidelines for the Consistent Use of Place Names.

## **5. Process for Implementation and Administration of the Policy**

- 5.1 The Aboriginal and Dual Naming Policy will be incorporated into the Tasmanian Place Naming Guidelines and published on the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE) and Department of Communities Tasmania websites.



- 5.2 The Place Names Advisory Panel, working with the Department of Communities Tasmania, will make available templates and associated information to assist those preparing submissions for Aboriginal or dual names.
- 5.3 The Place Names Advisory Panel will establish and publish an annual calendar for the consideration of Aboriginal and dual name proposals.
- 5.4 DPIPWE will inform naming and signing authorities about the Policy and encourage timely replacement/upgrading of signage and related products.
  - 5.5 The Panel will publish the names in accordance with the Place Names Act 2020 and the Tasmanian Place Naming Guidelines.
- 5.6 The Place Names Advisory Panel procedures will provide for submissions to proposed names to be made, prior to them being dealt with by the Panel. The Panel will advertise on its website, *Placenames Tasmania*, all proposals for a period of at least one month. The Panel will consider all submissions and make a recommendation to the Minister for Primary Industries and Water. The Minister may confirm or refuse the Panel's recommendation.
- 5.7 The process for lodging submissions is outlined in the Tasmanian Place Naming Guidelines. In general, submissions must relate to the substance of the intended assignment of names, and not be lodged in opposition to the principle of Aboriginal and Dual Naming.
- 5.8 Where possible, the Tasmanian Government will utilise additional communication mediums to promote the Aboriginal and dual naming process to the wider community.
- 5.9 Both parts of a dual name are to be shown on all official signage, directories, maps and all official documents and publications without any distinction between the two, other than the sequence. The Aboriginal name will appear first, separated by a solidus to be preceded, and followed by spaces.
- 5.10 Official signage, maps and other information products will be updated incrementally as maintenance budgets for signage allow, or as new editions of maps and visitor information publications are released.



**Department of Communities Tasmania**

Office of Aboriginal Affairs

**Phone:** (03) 6232 7130

**Email:** [aaa@communities.tas.gov.au](mailto:aaa@communities.tas.gov.au)

**[www.communities.tas.gov.au](http://www.communities.tas.gov.au)**

File No: DOC/2019/2993