

Place Names Policy

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Version History

Version	Date	Comments
1.00	03/09/2013	Establish a framework for decision making and interpretation in administering the Place Names Act 1994
1.01	16/01/2019	Reformatting to DNRME template.
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Approval

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1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish a framework for decision making and consistent interpretation in relation to administration of the *Place Names Act 1994*, as well as offering guidance on general matters of place naming as they relate to the department. It must be recognised that place naming policy and legislation has evolved over a number of years and statements in this policy are not generally intended to be applied retrospectively. The extent to which these policies are applied to existing place names is a matter that should be addressed on a case by case basis.

2 Terms

Unless otherwise specified, the following definitions apply to terms used within this document.

Act means the Queensland *Place Names Act 1994*.

Affected property means a property which would be assigned a different location address as the result of a locality name or boundary change.

Affected person means an occupant or owner of an affected property.

Alternate name means the name recorded in the gazetteer as an alternative name for a place.

Approved name means the name recorded in the Gazetteer as the current name of the place.

CGNA means the Committee for Geographical Names of Australasia.

Chief executive means the Director General of the department. (Chief executive may also mean the chief executive's delegate where delegation powers exist).

Confluence means the junction between two watercourse features or a watercourse and a large water body.

Department means the government entity, as defined under the *Public Service Act 2008*, carrying out the function of administering the Act.

Dual name means a place name consisting of two names of differing origin separated by a solidus.

Eponymous means named after a person or group of persons.

Gazetteer has the same meaning as in the Act.

Historical name means a name previously known as the name of the place. It is recorded in the PNDP but not in the Gazetteer.

Locality (which states or implies a bounded locality) means an area with defined boundaries; providing the official locality name for addressing purposes.

Location address is an address given to a physical feature or location. On some forms and databases it may be referred to as a property address, residential address, or business address.

May indicates an option.

Minister means the Minister for the department administering the Act. (Minister may also mean the Minister's delegate where delegation powers exist).

PNDB means the Place Names Database maintained by the department and which contains the Gazetteer.

Postal address is an address used for mail delivery. On some forms and databases it may be referred to as a service address or delivery address.

Proposal means the Ministers proposal in accordance with section 8 of the Act.

Regulation means the *Place Names Regulation 2005*.

Shall indicates a statement is mandatory.

Should indicates a recommendation or highly desirable outcome.

Stakeholder means any organisation identified as having an interest in the action.

Submission means written comments about the proposal submitted in response to section 9 of the Act.

Suburb, in the application of this policy, has the same meaning as 'locality'.

Suggestion means documentation provided to the department or the Minister suggesting certain action in accordance with the Act.

Unapproved name means a current name that is not an approved name. It is recorded in the PNDB but not in the Gazetteer.

3 Defining a place

The Act defines a place as 'an area or geographical feature (whether natural or artificial)' however the following types of places are excluded under the Act, named by other naming authorities, or for other reasons will not be named under naming procedures described in the Act.

- Roads, busways, bridges, cattle grids, culverts, ferries, fords, railway crossings, car parks, tunnels, or viaducts.
- Cuttings (as part of a road).
- Canals and open drains, except where they connect parts of a predominantly natural watercourse.
- Buildings or similar structures (this includes establishments like schools and hospitals).
- Dam walls or similar structures.
- Local government areas, or divisions/wards of local government areas.
- Electoral districts.
- Marine Parks, Forest Reserves, any type of National Park, Conservation Parks, Resources Reserves, Nature Refuges, Coordinated Conservation Areas, Wilderness Areas, World Heritage Management Areas, or International Agreement Areas.

- Maritime, navigation, coastal, hydrographic or oceanographic features external to Queensland waters.
- Undersea features located within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.
- Tourist regions, business districts, pastoral districts, agricultural regions, irrigation regions or similar.
- Unbounded localities.
- Airports, airfields, landing strips, runways, heliports, helipads or similar.
- Sports fields/grounds, courts, racing tracks, raceways or similar.
- Timber reserves, State forests, municipal parks/reserves or similar.
- Industrial estates, residential estates, business parks or similar.
- Statues, monuments or commemorative plaques.
- Survey marks, trigonometric stations, telecommunication towers, water towers or similar.
- Homesteads or rural properties.
- Mines, mine fields, oil fields or similar.
- Boat ramps, jetties, marinas, ports, pontoons or similar (but not harbours).
- Bathing reserves.

4 Recording and publishing data

4.1 The Gazetteer of Place Names

The Gazetteer of Place Names (the Gazetteer) is a record of approved names recognised under the Place Names Act 1994.

The Gazetteer is kept within the Place Names Database (PNDB) and consists of any records in the PNDB attributed as both “approved” and “current”.

The Gazetteer is updated as soon as possible after the Minister makes a decision and as new supporting information about names becomes available.

The requirement for the Gazetteer to be available for inspection during business hours is met by providing ready access to the gazetteer data via electronic media.

4.2 Place Names Database (PNDB)

The PNDB supports the management of Queensland place names. It contains:

- the gazetteer of place names (approved and current records).
- names of some points of interest (unapproved and current records).
- historical names (non-current records).
- alternate names (either gazetted as alternate names or as unofficial names and spellings).

The PNDB records the following attributes:

- the unique reference number for each record.
- the place name.
- any alternate names for the place.
- links to previous records for that place (e.g. where there have been name or boundary changes).
- a code representative of the type of place (note: the same code may be used for more than one type of place however those places should be similar).
- the location of the place as a coordinate of latitude and longitude; a point (positioned at the confluence for linear places such as creeks).
- the status of the place name as approved or unapproved.

- the status of the place name as current or not current.
- the date and page number of the gazette notice about the naming of the place.
- the Queensland Place Names (QPN) plan number.
- supporting information such as any comments, history or origin information about the place name.

Direct access to the PNDB is by authorised staff only.

A copy of the PNDB data may be available for searching by the public via electronic media.

The department will maintain a glossary of terms including feature types, feature definitions and codes used in the PNDB.

4.3 Queensland Place Names (QPN) Plan

The QPN plan is the official departmental plan showing the location and where possible, the extent of the place to which the name applies.

5 Powers of the Minister

Under section 7 of the Act:

- Giving a name to a place includes defining the boundary of the place.
- Changing the approved name of a place includes changing the defined boundary of a place.
- Boundaries of places may be considered defined when they are:
 - described in a gazette notice, and/or
 - shown on a plan referenced in the gazette notice.

The Minister's powers in the Act are delegated under section 392(1) of the *Land Act 1994*.

6 Powers of the Chief Executive

The Chief Executive omits a name from the gazetteer by changing its status in the place names database to "not current".

The chief executive may record names of excluded places in the gazetteer if the department has an agreement with the relevant naming authority to name according to acceptable principles and supply regular updates of those names.

The Chief Executive's powers in the Act are delegated under section 20 of the Act, in accordance with the *Place Names (Chief Executive) Delegation (No1) 2021*.

7 Naming process

The Minister shall develop a proposal before making a decision.

The Minister shall publish proposal notices and invite submissions on proposals, unless publication of a proposal notice is not required due to reasons under section 10 of the Act.

All decisions shall be published.

The department supports administration of the Act by investigating naming issues on behalf of the Minister and presenting recommendations for developing proposals and making decisions.

The department recognises the value of local knowledge and community input, and provides avenues for individuals and organisations to make suggestions to the department about place naming.

7.1 Suggestions

The department will consider naming suggestions and may recommend that the Minister develop a proposal relating to a suggestion.

The Minister may decide to make a proposal that is similar or identical to a suggestion; however a proposal is a distinctly separate regulatory process and is not an expected outcome for all suggestions.

The department will provide contact details and guidelines to assist any individual or organisation wishing to make a suggestion about a place name.

The action of making a suggestion does not confer rights on the person making the suggestion and departmental decisions made in relation to suggestions are not subject to any form of review or appeal under the Act.

Making a suggestion does not exclude an individual or organisation from making a submission on any proposal.

Suggestions and information about individuals or organisations making suggestions will be handled in accordance with the department's obligations under the *Information Privacy Act 2009*.

A suggestion may be about:

- Giving an approved name to a place.
- Changing the approved name of a place.
- Discontinuing the use of the approved name of a place.
- Changing the boundary relating to an approved place name.

The department will not consider suggestions that are:

- Made verbally; suggestions shall be in writing.
- Made anonymously.
- Missing required information.
- In honour of living persons.
- Racially offensive or derogatory to a group or class of persons. Consideration may be given where such a name is already in use and widely recognised.

- About a large-scale amendment of existing place names such as names that no longer meet general community standards of appropriateness e.g. all creeks named 'Blackfellows Creek' or all the islands within the 'Torres Strait'.
- About alternative or dual naming of bounded localities/suburbs.
- About unbounded localities, districts, tourist, administrative or economic regions with defined or undefined boundaries.
- About any of the types of places identified in the section, Defining a place.
- The same or substantially similar to a suggestion that has been considered or a proposal that has been developed within the previous five (5) years.

Required information

Suggestions about bounded locality/suburb names or boundaries:

- Shall include the name and address of the individual/organisation making the suggestion.
- Shall include details of the nature of the suggestion including whether it is about changing a name or changing a boundary.
- Shall include a reason for the suggestion which explains why the current situation should be changed.
- Shall include a map, diagram or text describing the location and extent of the suggested change.
- If about a new name, shall include information about the history/origin of the name, including references, sufficient for DNRME to consider the suitability of the name.
- Shall include a letter of support from the relevant local government which includes acknowledgment that it may need to reallocate location addresses and notify affected persons.
- Shall include documentation showing widespread support from affected persons, including acknowledgement that they may need to change all their location and postal address details.

Suggestions about geographic feature names:

- Shall include the name and address of the individual/organisation making the suggestion.
- Shall include details of the nature of the suggestion including whether it is about giving a name, changing a name, or discontinuing a name.
- Shall include a reason for the suggestion which explains why the current situation should be changed.
- Shall include a map, diagram, or text describing the location of the feature.
- If about a new name, shall include information about the history/origin of the name, including references, sufficient for DNRME to consider the suitability of the name.
- Shall include a letter of support from the relevant local government.

In addition to information required above, suggestions about names that honour a deceased person or family:

- Shall include a brief biography of the person or family containing:
 - Full names, including parents and children if known.
 - Dates of any relevant births, deaths or marriages.
 - Information about their life, including the general nature of their occupation and education.
 - Details of any civil and community contributions made by the person such as membership of community organisations, terms of office and achievements (mere ownership of land is rarely a sufficient reason to name a place after a person).
 - Details of any honours or decorations received by the person.
- Should include consent from family or descendants.

- Should include any other information of historical interest in support of the suggestion.

Suggestions that do not contain the required information may be returned with a request for further information.

There is no set timeframe within which the department will assess suggestions and the department may develop a schedule of dates for considering suggestions.

7.2 Research

Research may be undertaken in response to suggestions or to issues identified within the department, to determine whether or not to develop proposal recommendations for the Minister. The act of undertaking this research, including making enquiries, will not necessarily result in development of a proposal.

When considering suggestions or internally identified issues, the department will consider:

- The place naming issues in section 6 of the Act and any relevant statements in this policy.
- The value of the action to the community and other stakeholders, including the demonstrated need for an action, and the public good that is likely to be derived from the action.
- The likely impact of the action on the community and other stakeholders.
- If the suggestion is about a locality/suburb, whether there are any anomalies with road and address data in the area, as these should be dealt with in the first instance.

To assist with its research the department may make enquiries of certain individuals and organisations. The department may request responses be directed to a certain staff member, via certain methods, by a set date.

Comments and information about individuals or organisations making comment in response to enquiries:

- will be handled in accordance with the department's obligations under the *Information Privacy Act 2009*.
- may be considered by the Minister when developing a proposal and making any subsequent decisions.

7.3 Proposals

7.3.1 Publishing proposals

The Minister shall publish a proposal notice before making a decision, unless the Minister decides that publication is not justified.

Justifications for not publishing proposal notices are:

- The action is of a minor technical nature, or
- The action is unlikely to generate significant community interest, or
- The action otherwise meets the requirements for dispensing with publications in section 10 of the Act.

Proposal notices that are to be published:

- Shall be published in the Queensland Government Gazette.
- Shall be published in at least one newspaper circulating generally in the area of the place to which the proposal relates.
- May be published via electronic media.
- Shall describe the place to which the proposal relates. This may be done by a brief description in the text of the notice or reference to a plan.
- Shall invite written submissions about the proposal, including an address where submissions are to be sent and a date by which submissions are to be received by the department (the closing date).
- May include advice that submissions may be published.

7.3.2 Notification about proposals

Where a proposal is for the alteration of a locality boundary or changing the name of a locality, the department may work with the relevant local authority to attempt to notify affected persons.

The Executive Director will determine the most appropriate method to notify affected persons.

Notifications will:

- provide direction to a published proposal notice, and/or
- invite written submissions about the proposal, including an address where submissions are to be sent, a date by which submissions are to be received by the department (closing date), and may include advice that submissions may be published.

Notification about the proposal will be given prior to or as soon as possible after publication of the proposal, but no later than one month prior to the date by which submissions are to be made.

Notification about proposals may also be given to identified stakeholders.

7.3.3 Submissions about proposals

Submissions shall be in writing.

The address where submissions are to be sent may be a postal, web, email, or location address.

The closing date for submissions shall be a normal working day and be no less than two months from the date of publication of the proposal notice in the *Queensland Government Gazette*.

Neither the department nor the Minister will directly respond to submissions unless further information or discussion is required.

Submissions and information about individuals or organisations making submissions will be handled in accordance with the department's obligations under the *Information Privacy Act 2009*.

7.4 Decisions

7.4.1 Making decisions

The department will prepare decision recommendations for the Minister.

In preparing a recommendation and making a decision about a proposal, the department and the Minister will consider:

- The place naming issues in section 6 of the Act and the naming principles in the sections of this policy, Naming principles – general, Naming principles – localities and suburbs, and Naming principles - features.
- The value of the action to the community and other stakeholders, including the demonstrated need for an action, and the public good that is likely to be derived from the action.
- The impact of the action on the community and other stakeholders.
- Any submissions made about the proposal.
- Any other relevant information, including comments made by stakeholders in response to enquiries made during the department's initial research.

Decisions about a place name should specify the extent to which the name applies.

Unless specified, decisions are effective from the date the Minister makes the decision.

7.4.2 Publishing decisions

Decision notices:

- Shall be published in the Queensland Government Gazette.
- Shall be published in at least one newspaper circulating generally in the area of the place to which the proposal relates.
- May be published via electronic media.
- Shall either describe the place to which the decision relates (by a brief description in the text of the notice or reference to a plan), or give reference to the relevant proposal notice.

7.4.3 Notification about decisions

Any individuals/organisations who made a submission or who were notified about the proposal should also be notified about the decision.

Where a decision is for the alteration of a locality boundary or changing the name of a locality, the department may work with the relevant local government to attempt to notify affected persons.

The Executive Director will determine the most appropriate method of notification. Notification may be given prior to publication of the decision.

Organisations which may be impacted by place naming decisions are also notified of the decision.

- A register of contact details for such organisations is maintained by the department for the purpose of distributing decision notifications.
- Organisations have been identified during the course of administering place names activities. Any organisation wishing to receive decision notifications can do so by sending a request to the department.

8 Compliance

The department will take reasonable steps to notify persons suspected of not complying with requirements under the Act and offer advice for rectifying the situation.

9 Naming principles – general

In general, place names:

- Should be easily pronounced and spelt and be easily understood when written or spoken; however in the case of indigenous languages it is accepted that a traditional name which might appear at first to be complex will, over time, become familiar and easy to use within the community.
- Names from Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander languages should be transcribed as accurately as possible to suggest a pronunciation as close to the Indigenous form as a speaker of Australian English can reasonably attain.
- Should be simple, concise, easily recognisable, and contain no more than 50 characters.
- Shall not be a name that could be construed as advertising or promoting commercial or industrial enterprises.
- Shall have the same spelling as any associated name from which it is derived (e.g. MacRaes Flat, not McRaes Flat, where named after Mrs MacRae).
- Shall not begin with the definite article 'The' unless there are strong historical reasons for doing so.
- May contain qualifying terms such as 'Upper' or 'New', or cardinal indicators; however more distinctive names are preferred.
- If derived from an indigenous source should be local to the area and be endorsed by the local indigenous community.
- Shall not contain Arabic or Roman numerals. Where numbers are used they shall be written in full. For example "Seventeen Seventy".
- Shall not be abbreviated or contain an abbreviation, initial, or acronym (e.g. 'Mount', not 'Mt'). An exception is 'St' for 'Saint' as this is an honorific rather than a generic term.
- Shall not include the possessive apostrophe (e.g. Bethels Green, not Bethel's Green). Apostrophes forming part of an eponymous name may be included in a name (e.g. O'Connor).
- Shall not be a word or acronym protected by State or Commonwealth legislation, without the appropriate Ministerial approval (refer <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2004C00025>).
- Should not be offensive, racist, derogatory or demeaning.

- Shall only contain personal names applied posthumously. Where a personal name is to be used, the person commemorated should have contributed significantly to the area where the feature is located. Ownership of land should not in itself be grounds for applying a personal name to a feature.

10 Naming principles – localities and suburbs

In this section, unless otherwise specified, the term locality means either a bounded locality or a suburb.

Principles in this section shall be considered in addition to the general principles listed in the section, Naming principles – general.

Localities enable unique identification of location addresses and their names and boundaries are to be clear and unambiguous.

Localities provide a single layer of contiguous boundaries across Queensland. To avoid ambiguity and possible confusion for the delivery of emergency and location based services no other levels of administrative boundaries will be named under the Act.

Neighbourhoods, unbounded localities or regions are not permitted to be used in addressing, and are not considered approved locality names for addressing purposes.

10.1 Locality names

- Should be short, clear and unambiguous; preferably a single word.
- Shall not be duplicated within the country, inclusive of names reserved under CGNA Reserved Names Policy.
- Should not be similar in spelling or sound (e.g. Wytmont, Whitmont) to any other locality name within the country.
- Shall not be a dual name and shall not have an alternative name.
- Should be the same as the associated town name from which it is derived e.g. the suburb Bargara is derived from the town Bargara.
- Shall only use characters from the standard alphabet. Diacritical marks, special characters, hyphens and full stops shall not be used. Where the name from which the locality name is being derived includes a hyphen, it may be replaced with a space.
- Should avoid the inclusion of qualifying terminology, a cardinal indicator, or a similar prefix or suffix (e.g. Upper, New, East, West). Where such use is unavoidable, the term should only be used as a suffix (E.g. Capalaba West, not West Capalaba).

10.2 Locality boundaries

- Will be clearly and unambiguously described on a plan, preferably aligned with cadastral boundaries. Where cadastral alignment is not possible, natural or artificial boundary identifiers should be described in general or on each section of the boundary.
- Shall be contiguous (i.e. no gaps or overlaps).

- Shall not create an island polygon within another locality e.g. all localities should share a boundary with at least two other localities or at least one other locality and a state or coastal boundary. Some exceptions may need to apply in areas with complex local government boundaries.
- Should follow definite and distinguishable community or physical barriers. These should be immediately apparent and easily identifiable in the field (e.g. breaks in residential development or zoning, open space areas, ridges, creeks, flood plains, major road centrelines, railways, canals or pipelines.)
- Should be positioned to include areas of similar character and similar functional relationships in the same locality wherever possible.
- Should not extend beyond local government, state or territory boundaries. Where this is unavoidable (e.g. for historical reasons or across large areas of ocean), it will be treated as two separate localities.
- Should not segment cadastral land parcels or adjacent properties in common ownership although some exceptions may apply to large areas such as forest, lakes or national parks.
- Should not segment roads into different localities except where it is unavoidable for very long roads. This does not include dividing a road along the centreline where that road has been identified as a distinguishable barrier suitable for a boundary.

10.3 Making changes

Locality names and boundaries are intended to be enduring, and should only be changed where there are sound reasons. Long term benefits to the community shall outweigh any private or corporate interests, short term effects, and the impact on the community in making a change.

Where there are anomalies with road or address data in the area these should be dealt with in the first instance, and consideration given to how this may impact the perceived need for a locality change.

Locality boundaries should be amended where a subdivision or resurvey of a land parcel creates a situation contrary to the boundary principles in the section, Locality boundaries.

Boundaries in areas that are subject to urban development should be reviewed regularly and altered where appropriate, preferably in conjunction with any subdivision, amalgamation, or rezoning of properties that occurs in the early stages of a development.

Developers and local governments are encouraged to consider locality names and boundaries during the early planning stages of a new development, particularly where residential areas expand into rural and semi-rural areas creating new communities, or where a development will alter property access.

11 Naming principles – features

Principles in this section shall be considered in addition to the general principles listed in the section, Naming principles – localities and suburbs.

11.1 Feature Names

- Should include a generic term (e.g. 'river' or 'bay') to indicate the feature type.
- Should not be similar in spelling or sound to any similar feature type in the surrounding area.
- May be a dual name or have an alternate name, but never both.

11.2 Feature extents

Feature extents shown on plans or described in decisions are indicative of the extent to which a name applies and are not intended as legal boundaries.

The place names database does not store feature extents; for each feature it records a single coordinate value only.

The coordinate value recorded for a feature represents an approximate centroid of the feature; an exception is watercourse and gully features where the coordinate value represents the confluence.

11.3 Making changes

Feature names are intended to be enduring, and should only be changed where there are sound reasons. Long term benefits to the community shall outweigh any private or corporate interests, short term effects, and the impact on the community in making a change.

12 Reference documents

Place Names Act 1994 (Qld)

Place Names Regulation 2005 (Qld)

Defence (Prohibited Words and Letters) Regulations 1957 (Commonwealth) Place Names (Chief Executive) Delegation (No.1) 2012

AS/NZS 4819:2011 Rural and Urban Addressing

CGNA Guidelines for the Consistent Use of Place Names 2012

Memorandum of Understanding in relation to the naming of undersea geographic features in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

13 Keywords

SIG/2019/851; place names; committee for geographical names of australasia; gazetteer; locality; place names database