



Department of
Sustainability and
Environment

Consulting with the Wider Community as part of the process of naming and renaming features, localities and roads

Supplementary document to
the Guidelines for
Geographic Names 2010

A Victorian Government initiative



Introduction

Consultation is a key component in the process of naming and renaming geographic features, localities and roads. The following process is recommended when consulting with the immediate and extended community in relation to naming and renaming processes.

For the purposes of this document, there is a distinction between 'immediate community' and 'extended community' for consultation.

'Immediate community' is considered to be:

- people who live or work within the area; and
- owners of properties or businesses in the area.

'Extended community' is considered to be:

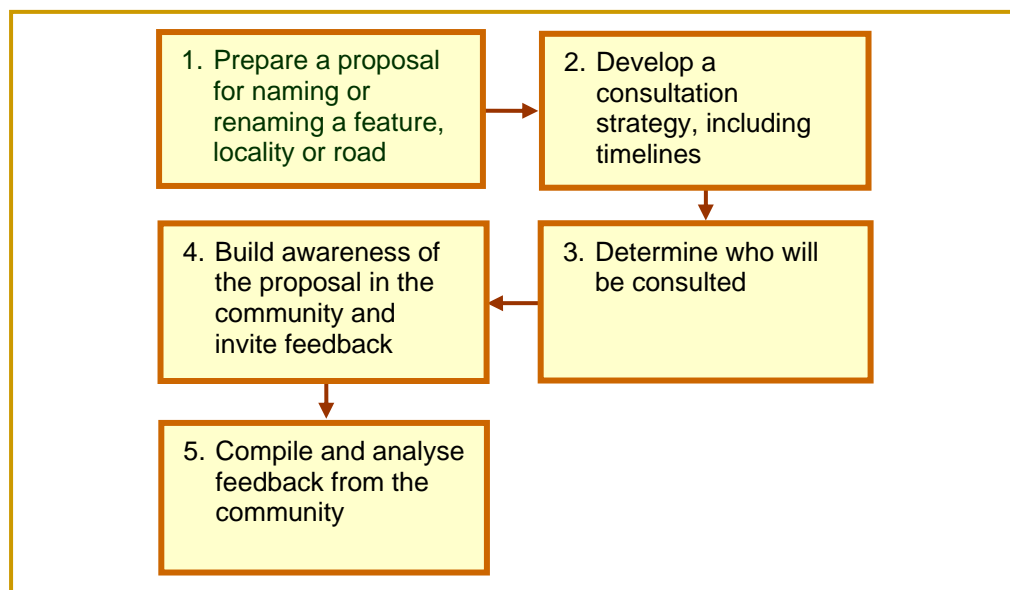
- visitors to the area (shoppers, tourists, recreational or dining visitors etc.);
- organisations that have an interest in the area (Indigenous associations, local historical societies and eminent individual historians, service clubs such as Lions Clubs and Rotary Clubs, Country Women's Associations, farmers groups, Country Fire Authority or State Emergency Service brigades, school parents associations, Probus clubs, senior citizens centres, ethnic associations, etc.); and
- government or non-government organisations that service the area.

'The area' is different depending on the circumstances of the proposal. In general, it is considered to include (but is not be limited to):

- *Features (other than waterways)*: the sites themselves and the localities within which they fall.
- *Waterways*: properties adjoining and within 200 metres of water courses.
- *Localities*: properties within the current and proposed locality's(ies') boundaries and a generous buffer zone of properties adjoining or within 200 metres of the boundaries.
- *Roads*: properties accessed from the road.

The consultation process

The consultation process involves five steps, which are illustrated in the diagram below and described in detail to follow.



Step 1 Prepare a naming proposal

The naming proposal must be prepared according to the relevant sections of the *Guidelines for Geographic Names 2010*.

After the naming proposal has been initiated and checked that it conforms to the principles, naming authorities must consult with Indigenous groups if the proposed name is a traditional Indigenous name or derived from an Indigenous Australian language.

Further details on consultation with the Indigenous community are available in the supplementary document *Consulting with Indigenous Groups in the process of naming and renaming features, localities and roads* available from www.dse.vic.gov.au/namingguidelines. That document also provides information on consultation with the wider community following endorsement of the proposal by the Indigenous community. It can be used to complement the information in this document.

After the initial processes have been completed, the procedures of the guidelines stipulate that a round of wider community consultation is required. The information below should be used as a guide.

Step 2 Develop a consultation strategy

A strategy for consulting with the wider community should detail who will be consulted (refer to Step 3), how they will be consulted (refer to Step 4) and how feedback will be compiled and analysed (refer to Step 5). Information on each of these topics is provided below.

In addition to this information the strategy documentation should outline a timeline for the consultation process, allocate staff and resources to different tasks and define the background purpose and intended goals to be achieved through consultation. Preparing this information in advance means that it can be referred to in different information campaigns throughout the consultation process.

Step 3 Determine who should be consulted

Consultation should be held with the communities that will be affected by the proposed naming/renaming or boundary adjustment of any feature, locality or road. The following guide should be used to identify which members of the community to consult.

Proposal	Who to consult*	Type of consultation (refer to notes for further details)
New feature	Immediate and extended community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Notices• Surveys• Public meetings (if it is a large-scale feature or potentially contentious issue)
New locality	Immediate and extended community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Letters to affected residents, ratepayers or businesses; and to residents, ratepayers and businesses in properties adjacent to the proposed new boundaries• Notices• Surveys• Public meetings (if it is a large-scale proposal or potentially contentious issue)

* This is a guide only and naming authorities should exercise discretion when making a decision about whom to consult. If a proposed naming, renaming or boundary change is considered to be small-scale and only affects a handful of residents, ratepayers and businesses, consultation should focus on these people. If the feature, locality or road is known to a lot of people and is, or will be, used extensively by the wider community, the consultation should extend to all possible stakeholders.

Proposal	Who to consult*	Type of consultation (refer to notes for further details)
New road	Immediate and extended community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notices • Surveys • Public meetings (if it is a large-scale proposal or potentially contentious issue)
Renamed feature	Immediate and extended community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notices • Surveys • Public meetings (if it is a large-scale proposal or potentially contentious issue)
Renamed locality	Immediate community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letters to affected residents, ratepayers or businesses • Notices • Surveys • Public meetings (if it is a large-scale proposal or potentially contentious issue)
Renamed road	Immediate community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letters to affected residents, ratepayers or businesses • Notices • Surveys • Public meetings (if it is a large-scale proposal or potentially contentious issue)
Boundary change of a feature	Immediate and extended community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notices • Surveys • Public meetings (if it is a large-scale proposal or potentially contentious issue)
Boundary change of a locality	Immediate community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letters to affected residents, ratepayers or businesses; and residents, ratepayers and businesses in properties adjacent to the proposed new boundaries • Notices (if it is a large-scale proposal or potentially contentious issue) • Surveys • Public meetings (if it is a large-scale proposal or potentially contentious issue)
Boundary change of a road	Immediate community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letters to affected residents, ratepayers or businesses • Notices (if it is a large-scale proposal or potentially contentious issue) • Surveys • Public meetings (if it is a large-scale proposal or potentially contentious issue)

Step 4 Build awareness of the proposal and invite feedback

The following methods can be used to build awareness of the proposal and invite feedback. Each method has its own strengths and prior to selecting one or more of the methods, naming authorities should give consideration to the proposal's aims and the required outcomes of community consultation.

Notices

This includes newspaper (including local and Indigenous newspapers), radio and television. If an advertisement is to be placed and the naming authority is seeking to reduce costs, it is possible to place an advertisement or notice listing the basic details and referring readers to a website, phone number or council office for further details.

Advertisements in local newspapers alone are generally insufficient to draw people's attention to a proposal. In addition to advertisements, notices can be placed in public places, for example:

- at the site to be named or renamed;
- local council offices;
- libraries;
- TAFEs and universities;
- community centres and learning exchanges;
- shops with community noticeboards such as bookshops, supermarkets, organic food stores; and
- tourist information centres.

These notices should include the following:

- the proposed (new) name/boundary and why it has been nominated;
- where the feature, locality or road is located; and
- information on how to provide feedback – i.e. public meeting (give date, time and venue), phone number, mailing address, email details and the website's URL.

Alternatively, if there is no proposed name, notices should include the following:

- guidelines for nominating a name or names;
- details of how the community can have input into endorsing or selecting a name (e.g. through a vote); and
- information about how to provide feedback – i.e. at a public meeting (give date, time and venue), phone number, mailing address, email details and/or the website's URL.

Letters

Letters to members of the immediate or extended community should be clear and precise. As a minimum they must refer to the principles and procedures of the relevant sections of the *Guidelines for Geographic Names 2010* and include the following information:

- the location and extent of the feature, locality or road proposed to be named or renamed (with a map and written description);
- the reason for choosing the proposed name;
- the closing date for public feedback, which must be 30 days from the date of the letter and/or public advertisement (whichever is later); and
- an indication that, if the name or boundary change affects addresses, Australia Post may continue to record and recognise the old address for a period of six to 12 months to ensure a smooth transition from the old address to the new; however, it should also be stated that Australia Post might not guarantee the delivery of incorrectly addressed mail and customers should also be advised to use their official address.

Sections 2, 3 and 4 of the *Guidelines for Geographic Names 2010* outline further specific information that must also be included in letters to members of the immediate community.

NOTE: If property addresses are potentially affected by the proposal, the letter must include a survey seeking a response from the residents, rate payers and/or businesses in question. Refer to information below for further details about what should be included in the survey.

Surveys (for use only with the immediate community)

Surveys should be used to gain an indication of community support or rejection of a naming/renaming or boundary change proposal. They must be used with the immediate community if they will be affected by an address change arising from the successful outcome of a proposal.

Surveys must refer to the *Guidelines for Geographic Names 2010* and include the following details:

- a statement outlining the background of the proposal;
- information that the non-return of surveys will be treated as tacit consent for the proposal;
- inclusion of two questions:
 - Do you approve the proposal to name/rename/adjust the boundaries of _____?
 - Do you support the proposed name _____ or boundary location (as shown on map)?
- space for respondents to include their name, address and contact details.

If a naming authority is seeking to gain support from the extended community for a proposal, it should avoid using surveys and do it by publishing notices inviting written submissions. The naming authority could also consider establishing an online campaign site and facility for registering support, objections or comments (refer to the 'Internet' section below for further details).

Internet

Internet sites can be valuable for collating all relevant information in one area for the benefit of immediate and wider communities. A website can be developed within the naming authority's existing website or as an additional site with its own domain name.

Websites are very useful for allowing members of the extended community to lodge expressions of support or objection to a naming/renaming or boundary change proposal. They are also a very practical facility for accommodating a naming competition.

When a website is used as a platform upon which to hold a naming competition, clear information must be provided about the requirement for names to conform to the principles of the *Guidelines for Geographic Names 2010*.

As a minimum, websites promoting a naming/renaming or boundary change proposal or competition should include the following information:

- background to the proposal;
- maps indicating the location and extent of the feature, locality or road;
- the closing date for submissions;
- information about how expressions of support or objection can be lodged;
- details on how naming proposals can be lodged, if relevant;
- reference and links to the online *Guidelines for Geographic Names 2010*.

Public meetings

If it is considered necessary, a public meeting could be held. The need for this depends on how important the feature, locality or road is to the community and how controversial the naming/renaming/boundary changing may be.

If a public meeting is held then it should be organised and chaired by the naming authority. Consideration must be given to the location and timing of any public meetings so that those in full-time work can attend.

The venue should be one that is acceptable to all sections of the community (e.g. not a pub) and held at an appropriate time in the evening (e.g. 7.30 pm).

If one or more public meetings are held, a reasonable amount of time between the last meeting date and the closing date for feedback submissions should be provided. This will give people time to think about the issue; talk it over with their families, colleagues and friends; and give feedback to the naming authority by letter, email or through the website.

Comments made at the meeting should be noted by a nominated recorder and passed onto the naming authority for analysis and consideration.

If the awareness campaign results in some sections of the community being opposed to the proposed name, a group may form to present a case against the name. If this occurs, care must be taken to take notice of concerns and determine to what extent the group is representative of the wider community.

It may be that the group represents particular business interests that may not align with broader community values. The only time a group may be seen as representative of the whole community is when the community elects representatives to act on its behalf, specifically on the subject of a naming or renaming proposal.

Existing groups that have been formed for other purposes (e.g. charity and support or special interest groups), and generally represent a small proportion of the community, cannot be seen to have a mandate to speak on behalf of the wider community. However, if groups have discussed the issue at a general meeting with a vote taken to tender a submission, this may be submitted to the consultation group for consideration.

If there is opposition a new proposal may be put forward. In this instance, the naming authority will need to recommence the naming proposal process.

Step 5 Analyse feedback from the community

Naming authorities should refer to the information contained in Principle 1(N) in the Guidelines for Geographic Names 2010 for additional information.

To assist in analysing the feedback, a spreadsheet should be developed to collate and organise the information. The spreadsheet should include:

- the source of the feedback (whether it is an individual or a community organisation, protest group, business or government department or authority);
- positive or negative responses to questions posed on the surveys; and
- if a respondent provided alternative suggestions.

If there was no specific name proposed by the naming authority, the consultation process may have generated a detailed list of possible names. Naming authorities should collate this information and check that the names conform to the principles of the guidelines. The names that conform should be shortlisted and then formed into a proposal as per the procedures outlined in the guidelines. This will require further community consultation to determine support for the final name for the proposal.

Confirming consent or objection from written submissions (immediate and extended communities)

If a naming authority is determining community support for a proposal, the statistics related to letters of support and objection are important to consider. The number of letters received should be categorised by their expressions of support or objection, and this information should then be represented as a percentage of the total amount of submissions received.

This information should then be further analysed. In particular, the statements of objection should be categorised as to whether they have raised issues regarding the proposal not conforming to the principles and/or procedures of the guidelines, or are related to other topics.

Statements of objection that do not refer directly to ways in which the proposal does not conform to the guidelines must be discarded and cannot be included in the data analysis of community support.

For example:

Total submissions received	50
Submissions in favour	25 (50%)
Submissions against	25 (50%)
Total valid submissions received	40
Submissions in favour	25 (62.5%)
Submissions against	15 (37.5%)

Objections must be addressed when they raise an issue of the proposal not complying with the principles and procedures outlined in the guidelines. If it can be shown that the proposal does not conform to the requirements of the guidelines the naming authority must alter or abandon the proposal.

If the proposal is then altered to ensure compliance with the guidelines, the naming authority must re-consult with the community to ascertain support or opposition to the revised proposal.

When community support for a proposal is minimal, but the proposal has been put forward based on public safety and/or emergency response concerns, the naming authority should attempt to refine and/or change the proposal so that it meets community expectations. If the naming authority believes that community support will not be forthcoming and non-approval of the proposal will maintain the risk to public safety, it should seek advice from the Office of Geographic Names, who can refer the matter to a Geographic Place Names Advisory Committee (refer to Section 1.5(f) of the *Guidelines for Geographic Names 2010* for further details).

Confirming consent or objections from survey material (immediate community only)

When a survey is sent to the immediate community, consent is considered to be achieved when the number of respondents expressing consent, added to the number of non-respondents (indicating tacit consent) is greater than 50 per cent of the total surveyed population.

For example:

Population in immediate community	100
Respondents who objected	30
Respondents who expressed consent	30
Non-responses (tacit consent)	40
Total community that consents	70%

*This proposal **can** be considered to have community consent*

Population in immediate community	100
Respondents who objected	55
Respondents who expressed consent	40
Non-responses (tacit consent)	5
Total community that consents	45%

*This proposal **cannot** be considered to have community consent*

When community support for a proposal is minimal, but the proposal has been put forward based on public safety and/or emergency response concerns, the naming authority should attempt to refine and/or change the proposal so that it meets community expectations.

If the naming authority believes that community support will not be forthcoming and non-approval of the proposal will maintain the risk to public safety, it should seek advice from the Office of Geographic Names, who can refer the matter to a Geographic Place Names Advisory Committee (refer to Section 1.5(f) of the *Guidelines for Geographic Names 2010* for further details).