



Department of
Sustainability and
Environment

Consulting with Indigenous Groups 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



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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 Indigenous groups to name or rename a feature, locality or road with a name derived from a traditional Indigenous Australian language.

For the purposes of this document, an Indigenous group is defined as one that is officially recognised as having heritage associated with the area in which the feature, locality or road is located.

Officially recognised Indigenous groups that must be consulted include the following Traditional Owner groups:

- Registered Native Title Holder (refer to www.nntt.gov.au)
- Registered Aboriginal Party (refer to www.aboriginalaffairs.vic.gov.au)
- Indigenous Land Use Agreement Holder (refer to www.nntt.gov.au)
- Registered Native Title Claimants (refer to www.nntt.gov.au)
- Registered Aboriginal Party Applicants (refer to www.aboriginalaffairs.vic.gov.au)

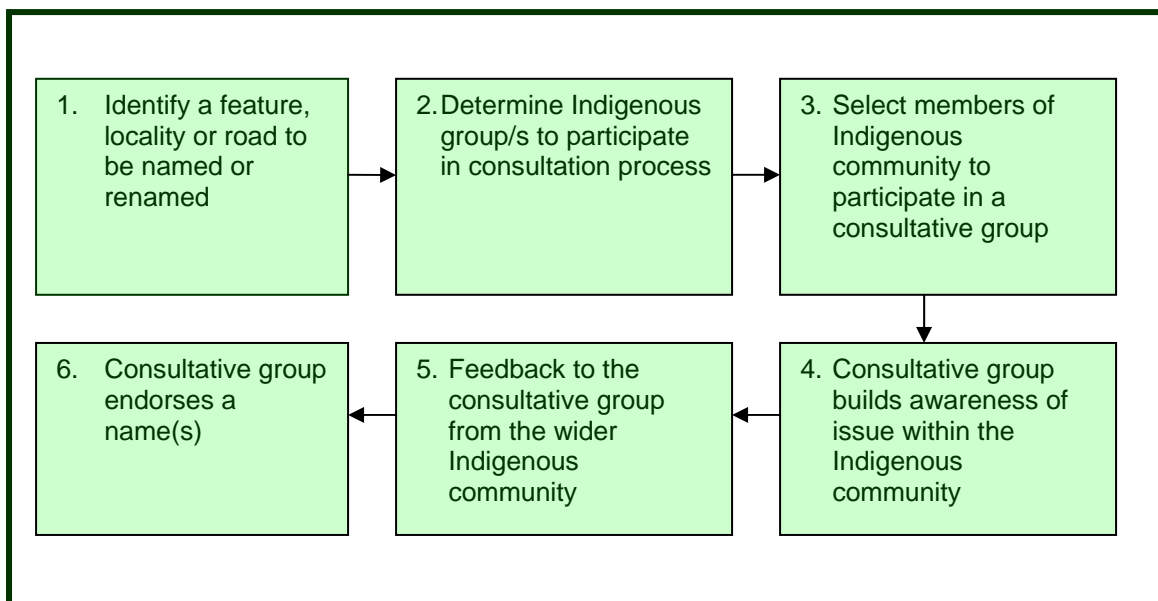
Naming authorities are also encouraged to contact broader Indigenous groups for assistance, including:

- Local Indigenous Network (refer to www.aboriginalaffairs.vic.gov.au)
- Traditional Language Reference Group (refer to www.vaclang.org.au)
- Land Justice Group (www.landjustice.com.au)

The consultation process

The following diagram illustrates the six basic steps of the consultation process when proposing to use an Indigenous word or name to name or rename a feature, locality or road.

Figure 1 – Consultation Process



Preparing a naming proposal

Initially, the naming proposal must be prepared according to the relevant sections of the *Guidelines for Geographic Names 2010*. The proposal preparation will include identifying the feature, locality or road that is to be named or renamed and considering what type of naming process would be suitable.

If a naming authority considers using an Indigenous name(s) for the proposal it must consult with the relevant Indigenous groups to determine an appropriate name and receive consent for the use of that name.

Determining Indigenous group(s) for consultation

It is the responsibility of the naming authority to determine which Indigenous group(s) should be contacted for consultation. A list of groups that should be contacted appears under the **Introduction section** on page 1 of this document.

Naming authorities should refer to the available Traditional Owner information for the area in which the feature, locality or road is located and determine which Traditional Owner group(s) should be consulted.

When the naming authority identifies more than one group that must be consulted it should establish a consultative group with which to liaise and determine an appropriate name(s) for the proposal.

Selecting a consultative group

Because the area or feature to be named or renamed could embrace more than one Indigenous group – for example a mountain range that includes more than one nation or clan – a special consultative group may need to be formed from members of two or more Indigenous groups.

To establish the consultative group, the naming authority should contact all relevant Traditional Owner and/or broader Indigenous groups by phone or letter, and outline the following information:

- background to the naming proposal;
- location of the feature, locality or road to be named or renamed;
- details of which Indigenous groups have been identified as having heritage associated with the area;
- information on the desirability of forming a consultative group, formed by members of relevant Indigenous groups;
- details on how Indigenous groups can nominate a member for the consultative group and what their responsibilities will be;
- a proposed timeline for the naming program, and a 'reply-by' date; and
- a contact officer within the council and contact details for the Office of Geographic Names.

The Indigenous groups will decide who should be appointed to the consultative group, and guidance on appointments should be provided by the naming authority. In order to recognise the need for the naming authority to gain confirmation of the representative status of a nominee, if it is convenient, letters or emails supporting the membership should be provided from the representative group Chief Executive Officer or board chairperson.

Members of a Traditional Owner or broader Indigenous group selected to be members of the consultative group must have consent from their community to make decisions on naming or renaming geographic features, localities or roads. Each member of the consultative group should have equal voting rights and be appointed to assist the naming authority with identifying an appropriate name(s) for the naming proposal.

There is no intention to impose criteria demanding gender equity on the membership of the consultative group; however, it is important when communicating with the broader Indigenous community that care is taken to ensure that both women and men are involved during all stages of the decision-making process.

Building awareness within the Indigenous community

For the consultative group to legitimately represent the wider Indigenous community, it is important that members represent their Traditional Owner and/or broader Indigenous group and take responsibility for building awareness within their community of the proposed naming or renaming. Community awareness could be built in the following ways:

Media

Build awareness through Indigenous radio stations and Indigenous programs in the mainstream media. Radio stations can include (but are not limited to) 3KND 1503 AM.

Indigenous newspapers and newsletters that reach the affected community might include the *Koorie Mail* and *Indigenous Times*. Whatever media method is used, it is important that information is included on how the broader community might provide feedback to appointed members of the consultative group.

Notices

Notices can be placed in public places, for example at the following locations:

- the site to be named or renamed;
- Aboriginal Co-operatives or organisations;
- Native title group offices;
- KODE Schools;
- local council offices;
- libraries;
- TAFEs and universities;
- community centres and learning exchanges; and
- shops with community notice boards such as bookshops, supermarkets and organic food stores.

Meetings

Members of the consultative group should hold meetings with the communities they represent (or raise the naming proposal during normal meetings of the communities), and ensure that both women and men are invited and encouraged to provide input or feedback into the process.

Feedback from the Indigenous community

The broader Indigenous community may provide feedback to the consultative group using the following methods:

1. Meet with appointed members of the consultative group. It is the responsibility of the consultative group members to bring feedback to the consultative group.
2. Provide an opportunity for people to express their opinion by letter, phone call, email or possibly through an Internet site, especially if public media such as radio or newspaper is used.

The consultative group may wish to hold a public meeting to allow the broader community to attend and express their views but this is not mandatory.

Endorsement of name(s)

The consultative group should establish a process for identifying an appropriate name(s) for the proposal and determine a method for achieving group consensus on a final name(s) to be endorsed and provided to the naming authority.

The process should include a final meeting of the consultative group, which will examine the feedback from (a) appointed members of the group that report feedback from their own communities, (b) other Indigenous people who have written, phoned, etc..

If there is consensus at this point then the consultative group can endorse the name(s) and provide written or verbal advice of its decision to the naming authority.

If consensus is not reached on the name, the consultative group must contact the naming authority and/or the Office of Geographic Names to discuss whether or not further support is required to reach a decision.

Once a final decision has been made, the naming authority and consultative group should work collaboratively to promote the naming proposal to the wider community. Information on how this may be achieved is outlined in the following section.

Building awareness of the proposal within the wider community

Once a name(s) has been selected and approved by the relevant Indigenous groups, and endorsed by the consultative group, it can be important to also involve the wider community in the decision-making process. This should be the responsibility of both the naming authority and the consultative group. This consultative process should be undertaken in accordance with Principle 1(M) of the *Guidelines for Geographic Names 2010*.

The local community should be made aware of the proposed name being considered and provided with the opportunity to give feedback. Any publicity should seek to build awareness and understanding of Indigenous cultural heritage so that the proposed name can be seen in that context.

The following methods can be used to raise awareness of the feature's, locality's or road's proposed name.

Public media

This includes newspapers (including local and Indigenous newspapers), radio and television.

Advertisements are not sufficient to draw people's attention to an event. There needs to be promotion to the wider community outlining the broad issue of why an Indigenous name is being proposed and seeks expressions of interest from people who may wish to be involved in the process. Other forms of media can include radio and internet.

Notices

Notices can be placed in public places, for example at the following locations:

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

Letters

Letters can be sent to community organisations such as Indigenous associations, service clubs such as Lions Clubs and Rotary Clubs, Country Women's Associations, farmers groups, school parents associations.

This does not mean that clubs or organisations are legitimate representatives in the process. It is simply a means of bringing about awareness of the issue.

If the location or feature to be named or renamed is outside the town's limits, letters can also be sent to businesses that operate in that area (for example tour group operators).

Awareness building, whether it is through the public media or notices, should provide information on how the reader or listener may become involved in the consultation process.

Ideally this means advertising a public meeting that people can attend to get an overview of the issue, an outline of the process, and information about how they can become involved.

Feedback from the wider community

The wider community can provide feedback in a number of ways. This should be coordinated by the naming authority.

It has already been suggested that a public meeting should be held and that the awareness building may lead to such an event. However, this may be seen as being a bit excessive. It depends on how important the location or feature is to the community and how controversial any naming or renaming might be.

If a public meeting is held then it should be jointly organised and chaired by the naming authority and the consultative group. Any comments made at the meeting should be noted by a nominated recorder and passed to the consultative group for consideration.

If the naming or renaming is not considered to be a controversial issue after deliberation and discussion with the consultative group, then opportunities for feedback should include letters, phone calls, an Internet site and email.

An appropriate timeline for feedback should be established. When the feedback period ends, an analysis sheet should be prepared summarising the responses according to category of response and where the response came from: an organisation, individual or business. This sheet, together with the letters, phone log, emails, etc. should be passed onto the consultative group.

Reimbursement of costs

The naming authority is expected to cover reasonable costs associated with the consultative group and public awareness campaign.

Limited financial assistance may be provided by the naming authority to facilitate the consultation process; however, reimbursement will not be available for consultative group meetings held when the naming or renaming is one of a number of agenda items.

If meetings are held by the consultative group to specifically discuss the naming issue, members' travel costs may be reimbursed by the naming authority.

If a public meeting to gather feedback from the broader community is held, the person acting as co-chair may also have travel costs reimbursed.

It is not anticipated that a consultative group will need to establish a new Internet site. If one already exists, however, consideration will be given on a case-by-case basis to cover the cost of adjusting that site to record feedback on the issue. It is not considered necessary to create a new email address and account for the consultation process.

