Aboriginal and Dual Naming Policy

As part of preserving the history of Tasmania, it is important that we, as a community, acknowledge the history and continued existence of Tasmanian Aboriginal language and culture. In formally acknowledging the continued existence, connection to the land and the survival and adaptation of Tasmanian Aboriginal people we recognise the Aboriginal history and connection to our landscape, as well as the European history and connection. Recognising Aboriginal names for Tasmanian geographical features and places will help in the wider preservation of Aboriginal heritage.

The Aboriginal and Dual Naming Policy provides a consistent guide to how we approach naming of areas that have significance to our Aboriginal history and Tasmanian Aboriginal people of today. A copy of the Policy is available at www.aboriginalaffairs.tas.gov.au

Q: Why do we need an Aboriginal and Dual Naming Policy?

Assigning Aboriginal and Dual names is an important way to progress reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Tasmania. The Tasmanian Government is committed to supporting the Aboriginal and Dual Naming Policy as an effective contribution to the broader community’s understanding of Aboriginal history and culture in Tasmania.
Q: Why did the Tasmanian Government decide to review the original Aboriginal and Dual Naming Policy?

The original Aboriginal and Dual Naming Policy was formally endorsed in November 2012. During 2015, the Premier consulted with Tasmanians to identify opportunities, hear issues of concern, build genuine engagement and trust, and develop a shared vision for the future of Tasmania. During these consultations the Premier heard from a number of Tasmanian Aboriginal people who felt they were unfairly excluded from contributing to and proposing Aboriginal names under the Policy.

Q: What was specifically considered during the review?

The following areas were considered as part the review:

- parties who can submit Aboriginal and dual name proposals;
- requirements for authenticating Aboriginal and dual names;
- the role of local Aboriginal groups in dual naming;
- *palawa kani* and the use of other Tasmanian Aboriginal languages under the Policy;
- the requirements for consultation under the Policy; and
- replacing existing place names (specifically offensive names) with Aboriginal names.

Q: How were Tasmanians given an opportunity to contribute to the review?

Tasmanian Aboriginal people, Aboriginal community organisations and groups, local councils, other interested parties and members of the public were invited and encouraged to provide submissions in response to a Review of the Aboriginal and Dual Naming Policy Issues Paper in November 2017, and draft amendments to the Policy in October 2018.

In addition, three Aboriginal organisations met directly with Tasmanian Government representatives to discuss the review.

Q: Why is the Tasmanian Aboriginal Corporation no longer the exclusive proponent of Aboriginal and dual names?

There was a general and consistent view expressed during the consultations that a revised Aboriginal and Dual Naming Policy should be expanded to allow Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organisations, local councils, or individuals to propose an Aboriginal or dual name directly to the Nomenclature Board.

This does not diminish the TAC’s ability to continue to provide Aboriginal and dual naming proposals to the Board, as it has done in the past.

Q: Will the review lead to more Aboriginal and dual names in Tasmania?

It is anticipated that the revised Policy will make it easier for Tasmanians to propose Aboriginal and dual names, which may in turn result in an increased number of place name proposals and assignment of Aboriginal and dual names in Tasmania.
Q: What does the Aboriginal and Dual Naming Policy provide for?

The Policy provides for:

- giving Aboriginal names to geographic features or places that do not already have an official or assigned name;
- 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).

Q: Why change perfectly good names?

This is not primarily about changing names. It is intended to provide the opportunity for an additional Aboriginal name to be assigned to a place as an official name. This will mean that both names (dual names) will have the same status and that there is recognition of both Aboriginal and European connections to a place.

Only in cases where the existing name of a feature is demonstrably offensive to Tasmanian Aboriginal people will the Nomenclature Board consider replacing an existing official name with an Aboriginal name.

Q: If Aboriginal people consider places named in honour of European settlers to be offensive, will they be renamed under the Policy?

No, it is unlikely such place names would be considered appropriate for renaming under the Policy.

While the Policy details ‘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 Board’, it is intended that this provision will only apply to renaming places or features with names that are racially or historically offensive to Aboriginal communities.

Q: Will these name changes just create confusion?

This does not mean that there will necessarily be changes to existing official names. We are not talking about re-writing of Tasmania’s place names. While it may take some time for the community to become accustomed to the use of the dual names these will only be applied to geographic features. The vast majority of features will be dual named, not re-named.

Q: Will it create confusion for Emergency Services?

While either name may be used where dual names are applied, these would be for geographic features. Addresses will not be affected. The policy is focused on places that have significance to Tasmanian Aboriginal people and does not relate to the naming of towns, suburbs, roads, highways or bridges.

Q: Will everyone have a say in the assignment of Tasmania’s place names?

Yes. Aboriginal and dual naming proposals submitted to the Nomenclature Board must demonstrate that there is community support for the proposal and must show consultation with local Tasmanian Aboriginal people.
Q: How can I ensure I provide all the correct information to the Nomenclature Board to support my Aboriginal and dual naming proposal?

The Tasmanian Government has developed an information pack to support proponents in preparing and submitting their Aboriginal and dual naming proposals, to ensure all relevant information is provided to the Board.

This information pack is available at www.aboriginalaffairs.tas.gov.au.

Q: How will I know which Aboriginal people to consult?

The Nomenclature Board 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).

Q: What happens where there are multiple and differing recorded spellings and pronunciations for proposed names?

Where more than one name for a geographical feature or place can be authenticated to the satisfaction of the Nomenclature Board, the Board may elect to record multiple names in its database, and select one name to be assigned for official publications.

Q: What happens if Aboriginal groups cannot agree on a proposed Aboriginal or dual name?

If there is substantial division about a proposed Aboriginal name, or when a single Aboriginal name cannot be clearly prioritised from a number of known names, the Nomenclature Board, as a last resort, may exercise its discretion not to adopt an Aboriginal or dual name.

Q: Will people have to use the dual names?

Where there are dual names assigned to a feature, either or both names may be used as the official name. Using dual names will provide people with an opportunity to become familiar with the feature’s significance in Aboriginal and European history. People may choose to use either or both names.

Q: How can I learn to pronounce Aboriginal and dual names?

Recordings of assigned Aboriginal and dual names are currently available on the Tasmanian Aboriginal Corporation’s website.

The Tasmanian Government is also considering the inclusion of audio recordings of assigned Aboriginal and dual names on its online LISTmap resource - a whole-of-government platform that can help you find and use information about land and property in Tasmania.
Q: By changing existing names, aren’t you denying Tasmania’s European history?

Any Aboriginal names will be added to the existing names so that there will be dual names for the feature. This will not change the existing name. This will ensure recognition of both Aboriginal and European history.

Q: What is the legislation that governs Aboriginal and dual naming?

Place naming in Tasmania is governed under the provisions of the Survey Co-ordination Act 1944, which provides for the composition of the Nomenclature Board and its functions. The Tasmanian Place Naming Guidelines (the Guidelines) apply to all place names assigned under the provisions of the Survey Co-ordination Act 1944. The Aboriginal and Dual Naming Policy is given effect through incorporation into appropriate administrative mechanisms, including the Guidelines.

Q: What approach is taken by other states?

All states and territories have Aboriginal and dual naming policies and are all considering issues related to this at the present time.

Experience in other states has shown that the use of Aboriginal names for features provides a valuable insight into Aboriginal history. Aboriginal history in Tasmania is as rich as it is in any other state. It is important that this is recognised and preserved.

Q: How are dual names displayed on maps and signs?

Where a dual name has been assigned, the Aboriginal name is added to the existing name. Both parts of a dual name are shown on official signs, maps and other publications, although in daily use one or the other may still be preferred.

Q: How much money is going to be spent on changing signs and maps?

Changes to signs and maps are not expected to incur significant additional costs. Changes to maps and tourism products would occur when they are normally due for updating and re-publication. There are likely to be some costs associated with changed signage, but in most cases this would be factored into normal maintenance and operational programs.