



PLACE NAMES COMMITTEE

for the Northern Territory

Aboriginal Place Names and Dual Naming

The recognition of Aboriginal language, culture and history through place naming is a priority for the Place Names Committee (the Committee).

Place names are an integral part of Aboriginal culture and identity. Aboriginal place names come from more than 100 different languages and dialects across the Northern Territory but are specific to place. While many continue to be known and used today, others were replaced by non-Aboriginal place names following English settlement.

The use of Aboriginal place names and languages:

- recognises the deep histories of specific places for Aboriginal peoples;
- enables broader understanding of Aboriginal culture and the significance of places; and
- provides a pathway for truth telling, healing and reconciliation.

When is a place name considered to be an Aboriginal place name?

Names that have existed and been used by Aboriginal people to describe geographical features of the landscape since before English settlement, such as names for places with cultural significance and names for places in songlines. *Example: Uluru.*

Names given to a place to commemorate the contributions or achievements of an Aboriginal person. *Example: Namatjira Drive.*

Names that are derived from Aboriginal language words. *Example: Garramilla Boulevard.*

Names that are used by and/or agreed by Aboriginal people to describe a particular area. *Example: Judbarra / Gregory National Park.*

Aboriginal names for geographic or topographic features

The Committee acknowledges that there are pre-existing Aboriginal place names for geographic and topographic features across the Northern Territory. The Committee encourages the registration of local Aboriginal names for such features when there is no officially registered name for the feature. If there is a registered name in place, the Committee recommends the consideration of dual naming.

Furthermore, the Committee appreciates of the work that Aboriginal people are doing to share Aboriginal place names through registration under the *Place Names Act 1967*.

The Committee recognises:

- more than one Aboriginal place name may exist for any particular feature, both within a specific language group and from two or more language groups; and
- some Aboriginal place names may be subject to restrictions that must be respected.



PLACE NAMES COMMITTEE

for the Northern Territory

In the Northern Territory, a dual name generally has two distinct parts separated by a solidus (/); one is an Aboriginal name and the other is a non-Aboriginal name, such as a name given and recorded by an explorer since English settlement.

To avoid potential confusion for emergency services and other service providers, dual naming is not applied to any place name that forms a part of an address, such as roads, suburbs, localities or towns.

Aboriginal names for new places

It is the Committee's preference that requests to name new roads, suburbs, parks, infrastructure and buildings first consider an Aboriginal name and requestors engage and collaborate with relevant local Aboriginal organisations to identify if there is an appropriate Aboriginal name that can be used.

However, it may be appropriate and practical to apply non-Aboriginal place names in existing areas (i.e. infill land developments or existing / staged subdivisions) particularly where thematic naming has already been used.

Engagement and collaboration are essential

It is expected that all people making place naming requests seek the views of and/or involve stakeholders in the place naming process to meet requirements under the *Place Names Act 1967*.

In line with the right to self-determination and in recognition of local decision making authorities, all requests for Aboriginal place names require engagement with and support from the Traditional Owners for the area.

Officially registered place names are meant to be enduring. Once a place name has been officially registered, the Committee is reluctant to change it. This is why it is essential that appropriate engagement is undertaken for all naming request.

Language

While names should be transcribed as accurately as possible, spelling may be adjusted to avoid duplication and to support pronunciation as close to the Aboriginal form as a speaker of Australian English may reasonably attain. It is expected that, over time, names that at first appear difficult to say will become familiar and easier to use.

In identifying appropriate Aboriginal place names:

- Names from one area are not to be applied to other areas.
- Words should be of the local language used in the area.
- The meaning of the words should be appropriate for the place.

English generic terms will be used to specify the type of feature involved, unless cultural reasons do not support or allow this.



PLACE NAMES COMMITTEE

for the Northern Territory

National guidelines

For all recommendations for place names, including Aboriginal names, consideration is given to the Australia and New Zealand Place Names Working Group's *Principles for the Consistent Use of Place Names*, which includes the *Principles for the Use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Place Names*.

How to make a request

Careful consideration should be given when making a naming request to ensure there are no cultural limitations or restrictions that might apply in the future that would affect the use of a proposed name if selected for a place.

All place name requests must be lodged through the Place Names Online portal and include evidence of engagement with interested persons as required under the *Place Names Act 1967*. Aboriginal place names should include evidence of engagement with relevant Traditional Owners for the area.

If you are considering making a place names request, contact the Place Names unit for advice on what is required and how to proceed.

Use of Aboriginal place names

Once an Aboriginal word is registered under the *Place Names Act 1967*, it becomes the official name for that place and will be included in the Northern Territory Place Names Register. The Register is a public database that shares the place name, place type, mapping location, as well as history and origin information about the place name. The place name is then available for mapping and location information services and other people to use. It receives greater exposure through mediums such as signage and maps and becomes part of everyday language.

The Committee does not have a role in the use of place names for other purposes, for example a business using their location as part of their name. However, the Committee encourages cultural sensitivity if a place name derived from an Aboriginal language is used for other purposes.

Further Information

Contact the Place Names unit:

- by calling 8995 5334;
- by emailing place.names@nt.gov.au; or
- by appointment, in person at Level 1, Energy House, 18 – 20 Cavanagh Street, Darwin City.

Approved: 30 September 2021