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| Frequently Asked Questions |
| Naming Rules for Places in Victoria Review 2020 |

## Q. What are naming rules?

## A. Naming rules are statutory requirements for naming roads, features and localities. They outline how naming, renaming or changing the boundaries of features, localities and roads in Victoria occurs.

## Naming authorities like councils must use these rules, which are based on national standards. They help ensure that places are named in a standardised way, to avoid confusion, errors and discrimination. This is vital for assisting emergency services and ensuring public safety. Under the current *Geographic Place Names Act 1998*, the naming rules are reviewed at least once every five years.

## Q. Why do we have naming rules?

## A. Appropriate naming is essential when identifying locations in emergencies and when delivering goods and services across Victoria. In addition, naming can preserve our cultural identify and connects communities to the places they live.  The naming rules are based on national standards and policies. They provide consistent standards and naming procedures across the state. They were developed through consultation with councils, government departments, emergency agencies and public service providers.

## Q. What can be named or renamed using the rules?

## A. Any public or private road, feature or place within Victoria can be named, renamed or have its boundary changed; using the principles, requirements and procedures in the naming rules.

## Q. Who can propose a new name, a name change, or a boundary change?

## A. Anyone (individuals, community groups, organisations, government departments or authorities) can propose a new name, a change to an existing name or a boundary change with the relevant authority.

## Q. What is a naming authority?

## A. Naming authorities are organisations responsible for naming and renaming areas and changing boundaries. They include councils, government departments and authorities, and some private organisations.

## Q. Who can develop a naming, renaming or boundary change proposal?

## A. A naming authority is often responsible for or administering the named location or feature. This includes providing the Registrar of Geographic Names with any naming proposals. The naming authority for a place is usually the local council.

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The Geographic Place Names Advisory Committee can develop or review a naming proposal if a road, feature, or place is determined to have greater than local significance.

## Q.  Who can appeal the naming proposal?

## A. Anyone (individuals, community groups, organisations, government departments or authorities) can appeal names proposed for places and streets.

## Q. Who has authority to endorse and enter a name in VICNAMES?

## A. The Registrar of Geographic Names. The Minister responsible under the *Geographic Place Names Act 1998* may direct the Registrar to enter a name.

## Q. What is the Naming Rules for Places in Victoria Review 2020?

## A. The *Geographic Place Names Act 1998*requires the naming rules to be reviewed at least once every five years. This ensures any issues with using the rules are addressed and allows changes and improvements to be made to the rules. The review process includes feedback from stakeholders and reflects community interest in the rules for naming places.

## Q. Why are the naming rules being reviewed?

## A. The naming rules are required to be reviewed at least once every five years by law, as part of the *Geographic Place Names Act 1998*.

## Q. Why is it important to review the naming rules?

## A. Naming rules contribute to public safety. Community facilities and infrastructure are officially named and registered with Geographic Names Victoria so that emergency services can accurately find them.

## It is also important that Geographic Names Victoria is aware of places that are already named, but not registered. These names are considered unofficial place names but are just as important to have officially registered.

## Q. What does the review hope to achieve?

## A. The naming rules review will:

* Meet legislative requirements of the *Geographic Place Names Act 1998*.
* Obtain public and stakeholder feedback about the naming rules.
* Obtain feedback about achieving gender equality in names given to new places.
* Obtain feedback on incorporating Aboriginal names into new locations, places and streets.
* Obtain stakeholder/user feedback about the practical application of the rules, the ease of the naming process, and any suggested improvements.

## Q. What is Geographic Names Victoria?

## A. Geographic Names Victoria, led by the Registrar of Geographic Names, administers the naming or renaming or roads, features and localities in Victoria, and maintains the VICNAMES Register of Geographic Names. <https://maps.land.vic.gov.au/lassi/VicnamesUI.jsp>

## Q. What is the role of Geographic Names Victoria in the naming review?

## A. Geographic Names Victoria is responsible for administration of the review. Its role is to:

* aid the naming rules review Committee in approving the key areas for review
* draft the review process and scoping documents
* identify for the Committee the key stakeholder groups
* advise the Committee on the adequacy of the current principles and suggest additions, deletions or amendments
* inform the Committee about issues directly or indirectly experienced with policies or procedures provided in the naming rules, and where appropriate, propose possible solutions
* disseminate information between the Committee and stakeholder groups
* provide administrative assistance to the Committee in creating the drafts and final naming rules section on guiding principles
* liaise with Land Use Victoria and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning’s Digital and Communications Division on drafts and final naming rules documents, the Communications Plan, including details of the stakeholder engagement program, webpage design and the naming rules launch
* liaise with Land Use Victoria’s Office of the Chief Executive to develop Ministerial Briefs and correspondence for the Victorian Government Statutory and Governance Unit.

## Q. Who will be providing feedback on the naming rules?

## A. In addition to the general public, organisations are invited to provide feedback on the naming rules include Government users such as the Department of Transport; including Roads, Transport for Victoria, Public Transport Victoria and transport authorities like the Level Crossing Removal Authority; the Department of Health and Human Services; emergency services; Australian Marine Search and Rescue; local government organisations; utility providers; surveying professionals and industry peak bodies; universities and training providers; national bodies; Traditional Owners; property and insurance industry representatives and community interest groups.

Feedback will also be sought from internal stakeholders including Land Use Victoria; Land Use Victoria’s chief sponsors (Land Registration Services, Surveyor-General Victoria, Land Information and Spatial Services (Vicmap); the Valuer General Victoria); groups and business units that use or rely on spatial data and land information from the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning; and all other Victorian Government departments using or relying on spatial data and land information.

## Q. When can people provide feedback on the naming rules?

## A. Twelve weeks of public consultation is being conducted on the naming rules. Consultation is expected to open on Monday 21 December 2020 and close on Friday 19 March 2021 via the Engage Victoria website.

## Q. What happens once the consultation is complete?

## A. There are two rounds of consultation. Once the first round is complete, comments and suggested changes will be reviewed by the naming rules review Committee and Geographic Names Victoria. These comments will see changes made to the current naming rules.

A first draft of the naming rules will be created and is expected to be released for consultation in June 2021, for a period of four weeks. Comments will be reviewed before amendments to the rules are made.

Once the Committee and the Registrar of Geographic Names have finalised their review and approved the final document, Ministerial endorsement and Governor-In-Council approval will be sought.

Publication and promotion of the new naming rules document is expected to begin by December 2021.

## Q. When will the review be completed?

## A. The current review will begin in 2020 and is expected to be completed by December 2021.

## Q. When will the next naming review take place?

## A. The *Geographic Place Names Act 1998* states that the ‘Guidelines’ in force under the act must be reviewed once every five years. With the current review expected to be completed in 2021, the next review is scheduled for 2025, and is expected to be complete in 2026.

## Q. Can you name places after living people?

## A. Naming often commemorates an event, person or place. In considering commemorative naming, the names of people who are still alive must be avoided, because community attitudes and opinions can change over time. In addition, when naming a place after a person, that person should be, or should have been, held in strong regard by the community.

In exceptional circumstances, a naming authority can apply to the Registrar of Geographic Names for an exemption, to name a place after a living person.

## Q. Is gender equality considered in place names?

## A. Geographic Names Victoria currently has no statistics on the use of women’s names in naming Victorian places and streets. Initial research indicates an uneven balance between places and streets that are named after women, compared to those named after men. Following the release of the *Gender Equality Act 2020*, Geographic Names Victoria is looking to address this.

## Q. Will existing streets and places be renamed for better gender equality?

## A. No. Recommendations from the naming review will inform the naming of new streets and places. While achieving gender equality in naming for places and roads that have already been named is not part of the review, it can recommend that new places and streets are named with a more equitable balance between male and female names.

## Q. Why are Aboriginal names part of the review?

## A. To ensure the preservation of Aboriginal place names and languages across Victoria. In Victoria we have a rich history, with 38 different Aboriginal language groups, representing culture and connection to Country. The uniqueness of language is based on location. Each language is deeply rooted to the land and offers an ideal opportunity to connect a name to a place.

Naming authorities, such as local councils, must engage with Traditional Owners when assigning Aboriginal names to roads, features and localities, it is important that a process has been defined.

## Q. What is the process for naming a road or place with an Aboriginal language name?

## A. Using Aboriginal languages in naming roads, features and localities is encouraged, subject to agreement from the relevant Traditional Owner group(s).

Naming authorities must consult with the relevant Traditional Owner group(s) before consulting with the public about a proposed name. When more than one relevant Traditional Owner group is involved, naming authorities must consult all parties.