

Diversity and Inclusion Case Studies

Indigenous Place Naming

Australia – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander place naming

Across Australia, place names for areas such as a city, town, suburb, street, river or creek, mountain or outcrop are a starting point for sharing Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and cultures. Indigenous Australians have a strong connection to the land and sea, making it vital that we recognise and include this connection and Indigenous naming practices in how we name places in Australia.

The current place naming convention in Australia is to put the most commonly used place name first and any subsequent names after. In practice, this creates some examples where an Indigenous place name comes first and others where a European place name comes first. Indigenous place naming is also relatively complex in Australia, due to the capacity for multiple indigenous names for a single cartographic feature, and the potential for some place names to vary based on things like the season, dryness and other environmental and temporal conditions. In addition, Indigenous Australian's have historically had approximately 290-363 indigenous languages, with approximately 150 in use today.

ANZLIC jurisdictions including NSW, Victoria, WA and NT have run a range of workshops on Indigenous place naming. In 2019, the Northern Territory Department of Infrastructure Planning and Logistics (in collaboration with the ICSM's Place Names Committee) commenced the Place Names Enhancement Project (PNEP).

The aim of the PNEP is to address inconsistencies in the current conventions around dual place naming by "elevating Aboriginal identity, language and history into the everyday" through complimentary place naming. On 27 May 2019, the PNEP team held a southern region Aboriginal Place Naming Forum in Alice Springs, and is considering a northern region forum for later in 2019.

Outputs from PNEP have included new online systems to lodge, process and track naming requests; collaboration to scope dual and Indigenous place naming opportunities and address any discriminatory/derogatory place names; and the creation of a modernised place name database including better location features and pronunciation enhancements.

The Victorian Government has created a series of short documentaries highlighting the importance of Indigenous languages, the first of which is [available online](#). They are also reviewing offensive and derogatory place names across Victoria and have partnered with organisations to sponsor initiatives such as the [River of Language at Melbourne Museum](#) and Indigenous Mapping Workshops in Perth in April 2019.

Additionally, the Queensland Government has worked with a local indigenous company to develop virtual reality (VR) tools to visualise land use in Brisbane pre-European settlement. This work uses spatial information, botanical content and digital built environment data to provide an integrated VR experience. The team also developed a welcome to country video ([available online](#)) to showcase this work.

Initiatives across jurisdictions to promote indigenous place naming help achieve the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographic Names (UNGEGN) resolution '*promotion of indigenous and minority geographical names as a means of cultural retention/revitalisation*'. Cultural heritage is also an important element of the [UN's Sustainable Development Goals](#).

New Zealand – Maori place naming

New Zealand has a long history of dual place naming, with the importance of Māori place names (traditional and contemporary) recognised in legislation (see the [New Zealand Geographic Board \(Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa\) Act 2008](#)) and by standards, guidelines, policies, practices, processes and products of the New Zealand Geographic Board Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa - meaning ‘the memorial markers of the landscape’.

Restoration and correction of original Māori place names meets statutory, cultural and heritage goals, and Treaty partnership, protection and participation government goals. Making them official means they are required in all official documents (maps, signs, charts, websites, etc.). Recording and collecting place names offers discovery and for Māori they signal identity, status, belonging, acknowledgement and restitution.

[NZGB’s naming policies, principles and guidelines](#) explicitly cover NZGB’s commitment to Māori place naming, and Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) also has [guidance for consulting with Māori](#) when making a place name proposal.

Women in spatial initiatives across Australia and New Zealand

Several ANZLIC jurisdictions are actively promoting women’s participation in the spatial industry. Initiatives include networks across the public and private sectors, such as:

- Through the **Surveying and Spatial Sciences Institute (SSSI)**, most jurisdictions hold regular [Women in Spatial](#) forums to help engage women in surveying and spatial sciences. Prominent female professionals present at these forums, encouraging women to meet and interact to develop personal and professional networks.
- **NSW Surveying Taskforce – Women in Surveying Day** – An event on 6 March 2019 (held in conjunction with International Women’s Week), which saw 55 female senior high school students from across NSW get hands on experience in surveying by undertaking three different survey tasks focused on measuring building heights, surveying in the Olympics and navigation.
- **Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) Women in Leadership Network** – An employee-led network, created to promote the interests of LINZ women and to support and encourage women to achieve their career goals.
- **New Zealand’s [Women in Spatial Group](#)**, which is organised under the umbrella of [Survey and Spatial New Zealand](#).