

# Aboriginal Place Names Forums Outcomes Report

Elevating Aboriginal language and history into the everyday through the formal recognition of Aboriginal place names and languages is a commitment of the Northern Territory Government.

In support of this, the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics and the NT Place Names Committee are collaborating on the development and delivery of the Place Naming Enhancement Project.

A key aim of the project is to deliver strengthened processes around engagement and consultation, particularly in respect of dual and Aboriginal place naming to ensure enhanced recognition of Aboriginal language, and a deeper level of understanding of the history and culture associated with places of significance to Aboriginal people.

If you are interested in starting a place naming project in your community you can find information on the Place Names Committee's website and we can talk to you about the process and requirements to help you develop a project specific Consultation Plan. Contact us at [place.names@nt.gov.au](mailto:place.names@nt.gov.au) or phone 8995 5334.

## Aboriginal Place Names Forums

Forums were convened by the Department to allow a broad range of stakeholders to share ideas about Aboriginal place naming opportunities and challenges in the Northern Territory.

Alice Springs – 27 May 2019

Katherine – 25 November 2019

Darwin – 28 November 2019

The forum in Alice Springs was facilitated by Dr Samantha Wells, Chairperson of the NT Place Names Committee. The Katherine and Darwin forums were facilitated by Guumali, a 100% Aboriginal-owned business that specialises in creating spaces and opportunities that allow Aboriginal people and communities to determine their own future.

The forums were attended by representatives from a broad range of organisations including:

- Aboriginal language centres, ranger groups, development organisations, social and cultural organisations
- Aboriginal land councils
- local governments
- NT and Australian government agencies
- educational organisations
- professional industry groups, and
- boards and committees.

Representatives were from a broad range of backgrounds and brought many different perspectives and included Traditional Owners, chairpersons, chief executive officers, elected local government members, board members, anthropologists, linguists, rangers, developers, project managers, program directors and delivery officers.

## Overview of Discussions

The following is an overview of the main focus of the conversations at the forums. Not all topics or views are included but all feedback received has been captured to inform future considerations and the development and progression of the Place Naming Enhancement Project.

Discussions at the forums centred around four key themes with a number of consistent messages shared by participants:

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

**Traditional names that have existed and been used by Aboriginal people to describe a place since before colonisation, 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

## What local people need to support them to request an Aboriginal place name

**Increase awareness that there is already the opportunity for anyone to request a name.**

**Example:** Harness existing NTG networks and knowledge to share the information.

**Improve information with clear processes setting out roles and responsibilities.**

**Example:** Better website information and downloadable brochures that are easy to understand.

**Provide information in various Aboriginal languages and using different media.**

**Example:** Radio, social media and videos in language explaining importance, opportunities and processes.

**Provide culturally appropriate facilitation and support that recognises there are differences between communities and levels of capacity.**

**Example:** Different communities have different leadership and engagement capacity so support needs will vary, including over time as priorities ebb and flow.

**Develop a collaborative project model led by the NT Government.**

**Example:** Pilot projects with on the ground consultations over time with Traditional Owners, land councils, local government etc.

## What consensus should look like in Aboriginal place naming

**Consensus does not mean everyone has to agree, but it means that most people respect the decision that was made.**

**Example:** Ensure that from the start everyone is educated on the purpose of the consultation and the process, including who will make the decision at the end.

**Majority view is not always a culturally appropriate pathway to consensus decision-making.**

**Example:** In some circumstances and places the views of Traditional Owners, custodians and elders will prevail under traditional decision-making models and there must be flexibility to allow for this.

**A consensus outcome relies on involving the right groups and individuals from the start.**

**Example:** Use land councils and NTG regional networks to identify community authority figures, Traditional Owner groups etc.

**There must be respect for local decision-making authority structures and processes and an understanding that they will differ between communities.**

**Example:** Decision-making processes of a community must be understood before starting any discussions, and the outcomes from local decision-making frameworks must be respected and followed by the Place Names Committee and NT Government Minister.



## How consultation should happen for Aboriginal place names

### **There are opportunities to leverage existing consultation and engagement structures.**

**Example:** Some communities have multi-agency partnerships with clear local decision-making models that can be used to consult and get decisions about Aboriginal place names in those areas.

### **Consultation must be place-based, multi-layered and respect differences between communities and naming projects.**

**Example:** Who to involve in a consultation will depend on the type of name, e.g. language word or commemoration of an individual, where the place is located, who has responsibility or owns the place, and any traditional decision-making models.

### **Consultation processes must be clear from the start and easy to follow.**

**Example:** A consultation plan should be developed at the start and clearly set out what needs to be done, by who, and what must be provided back to confirm it happened.

### **Consultation must not be rushed.**

**Example:** Traditional decision-making models can require many different conversations before a decision can be made. This can take time as there are other demands on people's time, cultural protocols, and sometimes people are very spread out or away from the community.

### **Consultation should be inclusive and information needs to be provided in different ways to ensure everyone can be involved.**

**Example:** Language translation and interpreter services should be used when needed to make sure everyone understands the process and has the opportunity to be a part of the conversation.

### **There is already a lot of information and knowledge out there about Aboriginal place names and this should be leveraged before a consultation starts.**

**Example:** Research before a project, can identify a lot of information about what a place could be named, which can make conversations easier and quicker.



## Other strong messages

Place naming can be a real catalyst for reconciliation. Bringing everyone on the journey and sharing its benefits is important for all Territorians and Australians.

The NT's Aboriginal culture and knowledge systems are extremely important and a distinguishing feature of the Northern Territory. There is significant value in Aboriginal place names, including economic benefits. Work to realise these benefits should be resourced.

Linguists and anthropologists, together with Aboriginal knowledge custodians have already done a lot of work and recorded a lot of information. Building on existing work in this space can offer real grassroots opportunities to strengthen Aboriginal place naming.

Place naming can cause a lot of hurt and pain and there is work to do to address some naming decisions of the past.

## What now?

The information and feedback gathered through the Forums will be used to inform the development of a Draft Northern Territory Place Names Engagement and Consultation Framework. The Draft Framework will be put out for consultation in 2020 to key stakeholders and the community and you will be asked for further feedback when it is available.

Work has also started to improve information on the Place Names Committee's website to make it easier to understand the existing process for requesting Aboriginal place names.

The Place Names Committee is exploring a number of potential pilot Aboriginal and dual naming projects across the Northern Territory, including some in Darwin and Alice Springs and in more remote locations. Key stakeholders and the broader community will be engaged about these opportunities during 2020.

If you have any other ideas that you would like to share to help enhance place naming processes in the Northern Territory please email [place.names@nt.gov.au](mailto:place.names@nt.gov.au), phone 8995 5334 or visit [www.placenames.nt.gov.au](http://www.placenames.nt.gov.au)



# NT Place Naming Process for Registered Names

## Expression of Interest



- Any person or organisation can request a place name.
- Contact the department to advise interest in registering a place name.
- The department will provide advice on what is needed and help develop a consultation plan. Requirements will depend on the type of place name.
- The department will check that the name meets NT place names guidelines and national standards.

## Consultation



- The person or organisation who wants to request the name is responsible for undertaking consultation.
- All 'interested parties' identified in the consultation plan must be consulted.

## Submission to the NT Place Names Committee



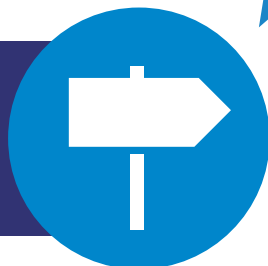
- A place name submission including supporting consultation documentation is made online.
- The Place Names Committee considers the submission at its next meeting.
- If the proposed place name meets the criteria it is then recommended to the Minister for approval.

## Place Name Approval



- The Minister is responsible for approving official registered place names.
- If approved the place name is included in the NT Place Names Register.

## Place Name Acknowledgement



- Once the name is registered in the NT Place Names Register, mapping companies and other people are able to use the name.
- Signage is the responsibility of the local council or equivalent for that area.
- Place names for geographic features are entered into a National Register.

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