



Place Names Policy

CI – PN – 01
City Infrastructure – Place Naming

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1 DOCUMENT CONTROL INFORMATION

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Policy Name	Place Names Policy
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Next Review Date: This policy should be reviewed:

- Upon publication of revised or updated Guidelines (which occurs at approximately five-year intervals); and
- Following changes to the Act or other relevant legislation; and
- When requested by Council or considered necessary by relevant staff.

DOCUMENT HISTORY

	Version	Date	Author
Initial Draft		February 2009	Ron Woods
Amended Draft	1.5	15 June 2011	Ron Woods
Amended Draft	1.5	22 May 2013	Lani Smith
Final	1.5	28 August 2013	Lani Smith
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2 POLICY STATEMENT

Intent:

This policy is intended to provide consistent guidance for staff and Councillors when considering requests for and submissions to proposals to name places within the municipality.

It does not cover signage of such places, which is mostly covered adequately by other acts, regulations, Australian Standards and policies. Note, however, that the Guidelines include specific requirements regarding the timing of signage installation in connection with naming.

Objectives:

The purpose of this policy is to set out the criteria to be applied and procedures to be followed by staff and Councillors for the naming of places, to ensure compliance with the Act and Guidelines. It does not detail all of the criteria, principles and procedures in the Guidelines, and must be read in conjunction with them.

Statement:

When proposing to name places, or considering requests for places to be named, the City will:

1. Follow procedures that comply with the Act, Guidelines and this policy; and
2. Ensure proposed names comply with the principles and criteria in the current Guidelines and this policy; and
3. Fairly consider all requests and valid submissions, taking into account all relevant information.

As far as possible, this policy shall also apply to naming proposals undertaken by other naming authorities, including adjoining municipalities and government departments. In particular, the Place Names Officer shall make an appropriate submission to any such proposal that may result in duplication of or confusion with an existing name within the City.

3 OWNER

This policy is owned by the Chief Executive Officer.

All enquiries regarding this policy should initially be directed to the Place Names Officer, who administers the policy.

4 APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all staff and Councillors who deal with requests and proposals to name places.

5 DEFINITIONS

Unless the context requires otherwise, the following terms shall have the meanings shown:

Act: means the *Geographic Place Names Act 1998*;

Note: the Local Government Act 1989 and the Road Management Act 2004 also include provisions for the naming of roads, but both require those provisions to be exercised in accordance with the Geographic Place Names Act 1998.

Directly Affected Property: means a property that will or may undergo a change of address or come under the operation of Section 23 of the *Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2007* (which affects land within 200 metres of a named watercourse) if a naming proposal is implemented;

Essential Service: means Ambulance Victoria, Australia Post, Country Fire Authority, Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority, State Emergency Service, Victoria Police and all similar organizations operating within the municipality;

Guidelines: means the current edition of the *Guidelines for Geographic Names Victoria*, issued by the Registrar under Section 5 of the Act;

Name:

- (*noun*) means the name of a place, which may be official, unofficial, alternative, existing, proposed or historical, as the context requires (see also Section 1.7 of the Guidelines, which lists the status of names in VICNAMES);
- (*verb*) means to assign a new name to or change the existing name or boundary of a place, and named, renamed, naming and renaming have corresponding meanings;

Naming Rights: means use of a sponsor's name as (or as part of) the name of a public facility;

Place: has the meaning given in Section 3 of the Act, which reads:

place means any place or building that is, or is likely to be, of public or historical interest and includes, but is not restricted to—

- (a) township, area, park, garden, reserve of land, suburb and locality;
- (b) topographical feature, including undersea feature;
- (c) street, road, transport station, government school, government hospital and government nursing home.

It also includes significant private facilities such as shopping centres, schools, universities, hospitals, nursing homes, retirement homes and villages, industrial and residential unit developments, and roadways and common-property driveways within such facilities;

Place Names Officer: means the officer appointed by Council to carry out naming processes in accordance with the Act;

Registrar: means the Registrar of Geographic Names (Surveyor General of Victoria) appointed under Section 7 of the Act;

Sponsor: means a business or other organization that contributes (in cash or kind) to a facility such as a sports ground or pavilion, or a sporting, hobby or similar club or group (whether amateur or professional, incorporated or unincorporated), and sponsorship has a corresponding meaning; and

VICNAMES: means the Register of Geographic Names established under Section 9 of the Act, which is the official record of place names within Victoria.

6 PROCEDURE AND GUIDANCE NOTES

The City's naming processes shall comply with the procedures, practices, principles and criteria in the Act, Guidelines and this policy. Note that, among other things, the Guidelines include very specific requirements relating to the use of Indigenous and commemorative names.

6.01. Requests for Naming: Any person or organization (including Council staff, a Councillor or Council) may request that a place be named or renamed. **Prior** to beginning any naming process all requests shall be referred to the Place Names Officer, who shall consider the

circumstances surrounding each request and determine whether it has merit. Council Officers intending to carry out any naming project must liaise with the Place Names Officer before initiating a naming project, this is to ensure legislation is adhered to.

In determining the merits of a request, the Place Names Officer shall have regard to:

- Any issues given as the reasons for the request; and
- Whether it is the most practical way of resolving those issues; and
- Whether it complies with the Act, Guidelines and this policy; and
- Whether it will improve public safety; and
- The number of Directly Affected Properties and likely inconvenience it may cause to owners and occupiers of those properties; and
- The suitability or otherwise of any suggested name; and
- The relative urgency of the request; and
- Any other matter that the Place Names Officer considers relevant.

The Guidelines include specific timeframes within which the City must respond to and act on naming requests that are made in the interests of public safety. Accordingly, particular attention must be given to situations where an emergency vehicle has been delayed, or where an essential service or the occupier of a Directly Affected Property has asked for a road to be named or renamed because of a reasonable belief that there is a risk of such a delay occurring.

If a request is deemed to have merit, the Place Names Officer shall initiate a naming proposal in accordance with the Act, Guidelines and this policy. The requester shall be provided with a copy of the proposal when it is advertised for public comment.

If the request is believed to be frivolous or to have no merit, the Place Names Officer shall advise the requester accordingly, stating the reasons for such belief.

6.02. Selection of Names: When considering proposed names, including the names of roads in new subdivisions, the criteria below shall apply in addition to the principles listed in the Guidelines, however these criteria shall not preclude appropriate use of Indigenous names.

- a) Except as provided in paragraphs (b), (c) and (d), preference shall be given to names that have a historical or other relevant connection to the immediate area.
- b) In several areas of the municipality, existing road names have a theme, which shall be applied to the names of new roads in those areas whenever possible. Areas with existing themes include (but are not limited to):
 - the north-western part of Wendouree – flora names;
 - part of Invermay – native flora names; and
 - parts of Invermay and Nerrina – watercourse names.
 - The Lucas locality - ANZAC Commemorative Names. (This theme may also be used throughout the Municipality of Ballarat).
- c) Subject to paragraph (d), the developers of new estates may submit proposed names based on themes that will apply to all road names within that estate.
- d) As far as possible, the names of new roads in the suburb of Lucas shall be drawn from the names of those for whom a tree was planted in the Ballarat Avenue of Honour, with preference given to those who died in the service of the nation.

- e) Irrespective of any existing or proposed theme, names beginning with *St* (Saint) shall not be approved unless there is an identifiable local connection, such as a nearby church or mine (whether operational, abandoned, demolished or closed).
- f) To avoid creating two or more separate intersections where the intersecting roads at each intersection have the same names, new roads that loop around and rejoin an existing road at two or more different points shall have different names at each such point. In addition to signage, a distinctive feature (eg: a bend, intersection or landscaping) shall be created where the names change, to ensure that the point of change is clearly identifiable.

Proposed road names must be checked for duplication and potential confusion with existing road names within a specified radius of the location of the road to be named. Unless the Act or Guidelines specify a larger radius, **a minimum radius of 15 kilometres shall apply to all proposed roads.**

Duplication occurs if the proposed name has the same or similar spelling or sound to an existing road name, irrespective of the road type (eg: Wytes Lane would duplicate White Avenue). Although common in Ballarat, words like *little*, *old*, *north* or *south* must not now be used with a new road name to distinguish it from a similar name.

6.03. Renaming of Roads: The City will support the renaming of roads where the present name:

- Causes confusion, and there is a risk of delay to an emergency vehicle.

Where it is necessary to decide which of two similarly named roads should be renamed, the primary consideration shall be to minimise the number of properties affected by the change, but this shall not prevent other relevant factors from being taken into account.

6.04. Advertising for Public Comment: The Guidelines require naming proposals to be advertised in all local (but not metropolitan) newspapers circulating in the district. If a naming proposal applies to a road or other feature on the boundary of the City, it must also be advertised in newspapers circulating in the adjoining municipality.

The City shall allow not less than 30 days for the public to make submissions. Proposals will be advertised on commencement of the submission period and approximately two weeks before the end of the period, but should not be advertised over the Christmas-New Year period or on Easter Saturday.

Provided they can be identified and contact details are available, naming proposal information will be sent to:

- The person or organization who requested the naming; and
- Owners and occupiers of Directly Affected Properties and properties immediately adjoining the proposal, and
- Historical, residents' action and similar groups in the vicinity of the proposal, and
- Any other organizations that may have a particular interest in the proposal.

Specific comment will also be sought from local essential services.

Councillors will be advised by way of a Councillor Briefing Paper when naming proposals are advertised, so they can be prepared should members of the public contact them regarding a proposal. Public comment shall be sought before Council considers a proposal, to enable Council to take any submissions into account and thus make an informed decision.

6.05. Validity of Submissions: All submissions will be checked for validity against all of the following criteria:

- Submissions must be in writing (which includes fax and email) – **the Act does not allow verbal submissions to be considered**;
- Submissions must be addressed to the Place Names Officer and be received by the closing time – a late submission can only be accepted if there is just cause for late lodgement and it is not too late to be properly considered with other submissions;
- Submissions cannot be considered before the public comment period closes;
- Submissions must show the name and postal address of the person or organization making the submission, although this information will remain confidential and be de-identified before being considered by Council;
- While submissions may include other relevant information, they must specifically address:
 - Whether the naming or boundary change is required, and
 - Whether the proposed name or boundary is appropriate and;
 - If not how the proposed boundary does not conform to the principles as outlined in the current Guidelines.
- To prevent “vote-stacking” by an individual or small group with a personal agenda:
 - Two or more submissions received from the same organization, person or property will be treated as one submission unless they contain conflicting viewpoints, and
 - As far as is possible, submissions bearing multiple signatures will be checked to ensure that signatures are not duplicated and appear to be legitimate;
- Anonymous, defamatory, offensive or invalid submissions will not be accepted.

6.06. Consideration of Submissions: If valid submissions are received, the Place Names Officer will summarise the relevant* points raised in them. The summary (with explanatory comments where necessary) will be included in an attachment to the report to Council or, if there is no attachment, in the body of the report.

** in this context, “relevant” means having specific relevance to the naming itself. Issues such as traffic management, maintenance or signage (which are often mentioned in submissions) will not be included in the summary unless they are directly relevant to the naming.*

When preparing the summary and comments, all relevant points raised in valid submissions will be given fair and equal consideration, however the following should be noted:

- The reason/s for the proposed naming will be taken into account;
- If conflicting viewpoints must be resolved, submissions from essential services and owners and occupiers of directly affected properties will be given greater weight than those from other sources;
- Unless exceptional circumstances apply, submissions based only on the inconvenience or cost of notifying change of address will be discounted, as these points are always taken into account if proposals affect existing addresses.

While all valid submissions will be considered, only objections relating to concerns about the proposal not conforming to the principles in the Guidelines must be specifically addressed.

If no submissions are received in respect of any naming proposal, it will be assumed that there are no objections to that proposal.

6.07. Council Resolutions: When making a decision on any naming proposal, the Guidelines effectively limit Council to only three options – it can resolve to:

- Adopt the recommendation in the report;
- Defer a decision on the proposal; or
- Abandon the proposal.

Council cannot resolve to adopt a different name to that advertised for public comment. If this is desired, Council must resolve to have a new proposal prepared and advertised in accordance with the Act, Guidelines and this policy.

However, this does not prevent a resolution imposing an additional requirement (eg: that further consultation occurs, or that a proposal to name a related feature be prepared).

The passing of a resolution by Council does not make a name or boundary change official. The City must not publicise a new name or boundary unless and until the Registrar advises that it has been approved and added to VICNAMES.

6.08. Naming Rights: While the Act and Guidelines generally prohibit place names from including names of commercial enterprises or community service organizations, they make specific provision for sponsorship naming of major “drawcard” facilities. Such facilities must have a “base name”, which remains in VICNAMES for the life of the facility. A facility can also be given a sponsorship name, which is recorded in VICNAMES for the term of the sponsorship, following which its status will be changed to “historical”. This ensures that both names are available for emergency management purposes.

The City may also allow a sponsor’s name to be used in conjunction with an official name for promotional purposes, provided that the official name is clearly identified (eg: *City Oval* may be promoted as *Mars City Oval*, provided it is clear that *City Oval* is the official name). The use of a sponsor’s name in this way must be approved by Council and will be subject to specific conditions regarding the nature, size and placement of signage.

6.09. Unofficial Names: The City will actively discourage the display, promotion and use of unofficial names, particularly where they could be mistaken for an official name. Such names are not included on maps and databases used by essential services and 000 operators, and pose a very great risk of confusion and life-threatening delays to emergency vehicles.

6.10. Naming Competitions: Subject to prior consultation with the Office of Geographic Names, a name may be chosen by holding a naming competition. As a general guide, the competition must:

- Be widely publicised and open to anyone to enter, and
- Make specific reference to the Guidelines, and
- Allow a reasonable time for submission of entries.

The entry form and/or publicity relating to the competition should include some guidance as to suitable and unsuitable names. In some cases, it may be necessary to undertake a normal naming proposal process in addition to and following the naming competition – if so, both the entry form and publicity should include this information.

Before the winning entry is chosen, a shortlist of preferred names must be submitted to the Place Names Officer, who will check that each one complies with the principles and criteria in the Guidelines and this policy. **Names that do not comply must be excluded from further consideration.**

Note that the winning name cannot become an official name unless and until it is formally approved by both Council and the Registrar and added to VICNAMES. Accordingly, the timing and wording of any public announcement of the winning name must take this into account.

6.11. Change of Address: Where adoption of a new name changes the address of a Directly Affected Property, the City will notify the owners and occupiers (if any) of that property of the new address. This is in addition to any other notification required by the Act and Guidelines, but may be done in conjunction with or separately to such notification.

Unless exceptional circumstances apply, **Council will not reimburse residents or businesses for any costs of notifying change of address** (including printing new stationery), or buying or affixing new house/property numbers or for any other costs arising from adoption of a naming proposal or renumbering of properties.

6.12. Naming of Roads in New Estates: The developer (or his/her representative) of a new estate that creates a new road **and/or common property driveway** shall submit proposed road names to the Place Names Officer for approval. The Place Names Officer shall not approve a proposed name that conflicts with the principles and criteria in the Guidelines and this policy. Approved names should then be shown on the plan of subdivision lodged with the City, following which the normal subdivision approval process will ensure that the names are added to VICNAMES.

6.13. Street Signage: Signage for road names must comply with current AS/NZS Standards. In new subdivisions it is the responsibility of the developer to supply and install street signage that is compliant with the standards and adheres to the current Guidelines for Geographic Names. Signage is a mandatory requirement for all roads and must be installed in a timely manner. This is particularly important in new estates where signage must be installed before any infrastructure work takes place. This is to ensure ease of location should emergency services be required and is applicable to **private and public roads alike**.

7 COMPLIANCE RESPONSIBILITIES

Managers/Supervisors shall be responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy.

The Place Names Officer shall be responsible for:

- Ensuring that all naming proposals undertaken by the City comply with the policy; and
- Explaining the policy to other staff (including senior officers) and Councillors; and
- Monitoring and reviewing the policy:
 - Upon publication of revised or updated Guidelines (which occurs at approximately five-year intervals); and
 - Following changes to the Act or other relevant legislation; and
 - When requested by Council or considered necessary by relevant staff.

Other staff shall ensure that any individuals or organizations asking about or contemplating the naming of a place are referred to the Place Names Officer to ensure that they are given correct advice regarding this policy. Non adherence to this policy may result in a breach of the Geographic Place Names Act 1998.

8 CHARTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS COMPLIANCE

It is considered that this policy does not impact on any human rights identified in the *Charter of Human Rights Act 2007*.

9 REFERENCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Acts	GEOGRAPHIC PLACE NAMES ACT 1998 *
Regulations	N/A
Codes of Practice	GUIDELINES FOR GEOGRAPHIC NAMES VICTORIA *
Guidance notes	N/A
Australian Standards	AS/NZS 4819:2011 RURAL AND URBAN ADDRESSING
Related Policies	N/A

* The Act and current Guidelines can be accessed at <http://services.land.vic.gov.au/vicnames/>