



# Aboriginal Naming

A guideline to Aboriginal naming and dual naming of geographic features and places in Western Australia



## Acknowledgement

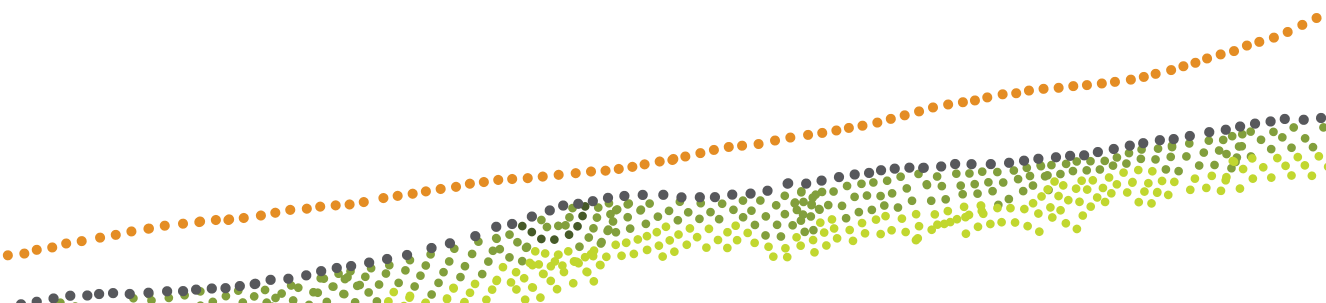
Landgate shows respect by acknowledging the Traditional Owners and ongoing Custodians of Country throughout Western Australia and their continuing connections to land, waters and communities. We pay our respect to Western Australian Aboriginal cultures and Elders past, present and emerging.

## Why are Aboriginal and dual names important?

Geographical features and places in Western Australia were named by Aboriginal peoples long before the arrival of non-Aboriginal people. The names are not arbitrary: they are intrinsically attached to an Aboriginal group's understanding of its history, culture, rights, and responsibilities to the lands.

As part of preserving the history of Western Australia, it is important we, as a community, acknowledge and embrace the history and continued endurance of Western Australian Aboriginal languages and cultures. By acknowledging this continued existence and the survival and adaptation of Western Australian Aboriginal peoples, we recognise the Aboriginal history and ongoing connection to our landscape.

Landgate is committed to the continued recognition of Aboriginal cultural heritage by capturing and recording the original place names and connection to geographical features and places. Assigning Aboriginal names to geographical features and places will help with the wider preservation of Aboriginal heritage and is an important way to progress reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Western Australia. Additionally, these guidelines are intended to support local government and other agencies in the development of their Reconciliation Action Plan.





## What are the naming rules?

The Aboriginal and Dual Naming Guidelines provides a framework for the naming of Western Australian geographical features and places with Aboriginal names.

Although these guidelines are specific to the naming of geographical features and places, Aboriginal names can be and are applied to roads and localities. The Policies and Standards for Geographical Naming in Western Australia (The Policy) outlines information on naming in Western Australia, which includes roads and localities. The Policy is available on the [Landgate website](#).

As per the provisions in the *Land Administration Act 1997*, the Minister for Lands (the Minister) has the authority for officially approving all geographic features and place names in Western Australia. Through delegated authority, Landgate acts on the Minister's behalf to undertake the necessary administrative responsibilities. This includes the development of policies and procedures required for the formal approval of submissions seeking the use of Aboriginal and dual names.


## Who can propose to name or rename geographic features and places using Aboriginal language in Western Australia?

Any individual, group or organisation can propose an Aboriginal name be restored and recognised as an official name. Such proposals must be endorsed by the relevant Traditional Owner group(s) and have local government support.

## What can be named?

Local Aboriginal names are given preference in the naming of any geographical feature or place that does not already have an official place name.

Examples of features and places that can be named include:

- rivers and creeks
  - mountains, hills, peaks and valleys
  - lakes, lagoons, swamps and water holes
  - beaches, bays and islands
  - ridges, points and peninsulas
  - parks and reserves
  - roads and localities (due to addressing purposes dual naming cannot be applied to either of these).
- 



## Dual names

Dual naming is the approach whereby geographical features or places are officially recognised by two distinct names. One name is usually of Aboriginal language origin and the other of non-Aboriginal origin.

Where a feature is currently identified by an existing non-Aboriginal name, an Aboriginal name can be put forward to be assigned as a dual name and sit alongside the existing non-Aboriginal name.

The Aboriginal name shall appear first with the non-Aboriginal name occurring second, separated with a solidus (/) preceded and followed by a space. For example, Gujuwanna / Mount Ella. The placement of the non-Aboriginal name occurring first will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

**When displayed on signage both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal part of the dual name shall be in the same font type, size, style and colour.**

Pronunciations of assigned Aboriginal and dual names should be included on signage to encourage the adoption and use of Aboriginal names.

A dual name may be considered as an intermediary step to transition to an Aboriginal name.

Dual naming shall not apply to localities, towns, districts or constructed features such as roads, highways or bridges etc.

## Renaming

Renaming is the approach whereby an existing official name is completely changed. However, if a complete name change is not supported by the extended community (residents, rate payers and businesses surrounding the area directly affected by the proposal), and the adoption of a second name is, local government can apply a dual name.

## Naming proposal requirements

Proposals shall demonstrate a description of the Aboriginal name in the form of written or oral tradition (if culturally appropriate). The description must demonstrate the information has been sourced directly from the local Traditional Owner group(s) or their respective representatives. Information to be included in proposals are as follows:

- the significance and meaning of the proposed name
- preferred spelling
- pronunciation
- a map outlining the area where the proposed name is to be applied.

Applications for the naming of roads, parks and reserves can be made through Landgate's online [Request a Road Name](#) form.

A letter outlining evidence of consent must be provided to Landgate demonstrating the support of the relevant Traditional Owner group(s) and relevant Aboriginal organisations.



## Who should be consulted?

Consultation with the relevant Traditional Owner group(s) is paramount in the process of an Aboriginal naming proposal. Early engagement is encouraged to build good communication through respect and trust. Local government must consult with the relevant Traditional Owner group(s) on all dealings concerning Aboriginal place names. If the geographical feature or place covers the land area of more than one local government or Traditional Owner group (e.g. a river), consultation is to be sought from each relevant group and local government.

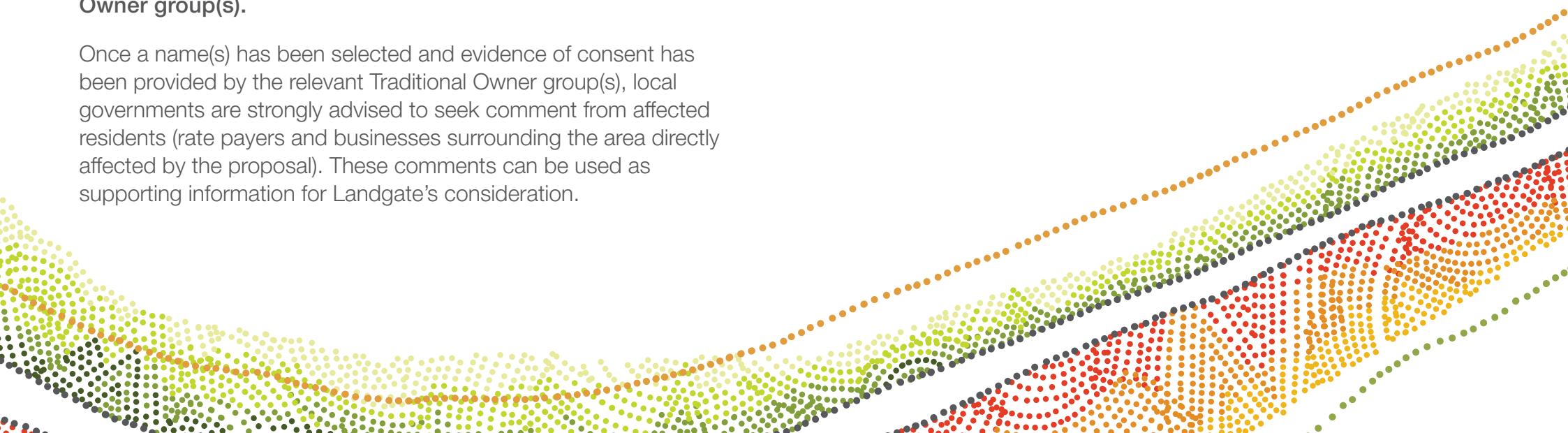
Sufficient time should be provided for Traditional Owner groups to discuss and consider naming proposals as internal consultation processes may be required in accordance with cultural protocols.

**Landgate will advance for consideration proposals nominated by a local government or local community member where the proposal has been endorsed by the relevant Traditional Owner group(s).**

Once a name(s) has been selected and evidence of consent has been provided by the relevant Traditional Owner group(s), local governments are strongly advised to seek comment from affected residents (rate payers and businesses surrounding the area directly affected by the proposal). These comments can be used as supporting information for Landgate's consideration.

## How can you help?

If you know of an Aboriginal place name that is not officially named or is incorrect, or a non-Aboriginal place name that may cause offence to Aboriginal people, please contact the relevant local government.





## Aboriginal and dual naming FAQs

### **Q: Why do we need Aboriginal and dual naming guidelines?**

The Aboriginal and Dual Naming Guidelines will assist in providing consistent advice on how we approach naming areas of significance to Aboriginal Traditional Owner groups.

### **Q: Will applying an additional Aboriginal name to a geographic feature or place that already has an official name (dual naming) change the status of the non-Aboriginal name?**

The process of dual naming is intended to recognise and respect Aboriginal cultural heritage and provide the opportunity for an Aboriginal name to be assigned to a place as an official name. Therefore, both names (dual names) will have the same status, facilitating recognition of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal connections to a place or feature.

In cases where there is overwhelming support to change the name, or where the existing name of a feature is demonstrably offensive to Aboriginal people, Landgate will consider replacing an existing official name with an Aboriginal name.

### **Q: Will dual naming and changes to official place names create confusion?**

The use of Aboriginal and dual naming assists in promoting broader community awareness of Aboriginal history and culture. It is expected Aboriginal names, which may first appear to be complex in spelling and/or pronunciation, will over time become familiar and easy to use within the community and furthermore, Western Australians will value using them.

### **Q: Will people have to use the dual names?**

Where there are dual names assigned to a feature, either or both names may be used as the official name. Using dual names will provide the community with the opportunity to become familiar with the feature's significance in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal history. People may choose to use either or both names.

### **Q: Will dual names create confusion for emergency services?**

Once Aboriginal and dual names are formally approved, they will be provided to emergency services and made readily available.

### **Q: How will I know which Traditional Owner group(s) to consult?**

Landgate may be able to assist with an initial list of contacts of Aboriginal Elders, advisory or reference groups. However, Landgate acknowledges the list may not encompass all Traditional Owners. The applicant is responsible for ensuring consultation has been undertaken with the relevant groups for the area.

### **Q: Is funding available for Aboriginal and dual naming?**

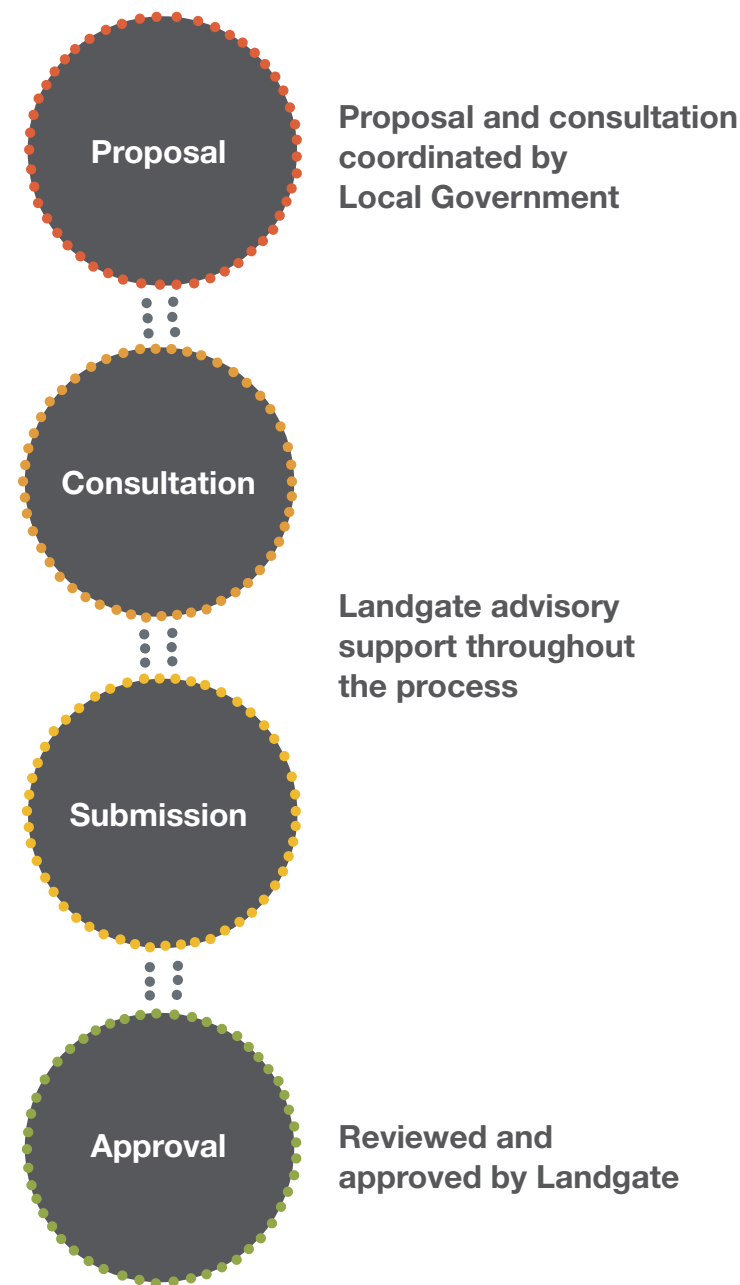
Landgate is unable to provide advice or support regarding any costs incurred, compensation or possible payments for consultation services received. The applicant is responsible for all or any costs incurred in the preparation of their request or implementation of a successful name change.

### **Q: Are these guidelines final or is feedback still welcome?**

The Aboriginal and Dual Naming Guidelines is a living document – feedback is welcome. Updates and amendments will be included when applicable.

## Landgate's Aboriginal and dual naming process

- Any Aboriginal place name proposal developed by local government or members of the general public must first be endorsed by the relevant Traditional Owner group(s) and can be submitted directly to Landgate for initial advice and guidance.
- A description of the Aboriginal name's origins in the form of written or oral tradition (demonstrating verified research, authenticity and sources) must be included in the proposal.
- Advisory support is available by Landgate at any time throughout the proposal's development. Questions can be directly forwarded to Landgate's Location Data Maintenance Team at [geographicnames@landgate.wa.gov.au](mailto:geographicnames@landgate.wa.gov.au) or PH: 92737200.
- Naming proposals must show evidence demonstrating the support of the relevant Traditional Owner group(s) on all dealings concerning Aboriginal place names.
- Landgate will advance for consideration proposals nominated by a local government or local community member where the proposal has been endorsed by the relevant Traditional Owner group(s).
- Proposals submitted to local governments are compiled and reviewed against Landgate's Policy and Standards for Geographical Naming in Western Australia.
- If submissions meet the requirements the local government submits it to Landgate for approval.
- Proposals submitted by community members directly to Landgate will be assessed, then forwarded to local government for comment and formal submission.
- Through delegated authority Landgate acts on behalf of the Minister for Lands to undertake the administrative responsibilities required for the formal approval of submissions of geographic features and place naming.
- Landgate may request further information on naming submissions prior to approval.





1 Midland Square, Midland WA 6056  
PO Box 2222, Midland WA 6936

Telephone: +61 (0)8 9273 7373

Email: [customerservice@landgate.wa.gov.au](mailto:customerservice@landgate.wa.gov.au)

[landgate.wa.gov.au](http://landgate.wa.gov.au)

**Version 02:2023**

The graphics reflect the theme of dual-naming. This is symbolised by dual paths running alongside and together – one path representing Landgate and the other representing Aboriginal culture.

Design and layout by Nani Creative  
[nani.com.au](http://nani.com.au)