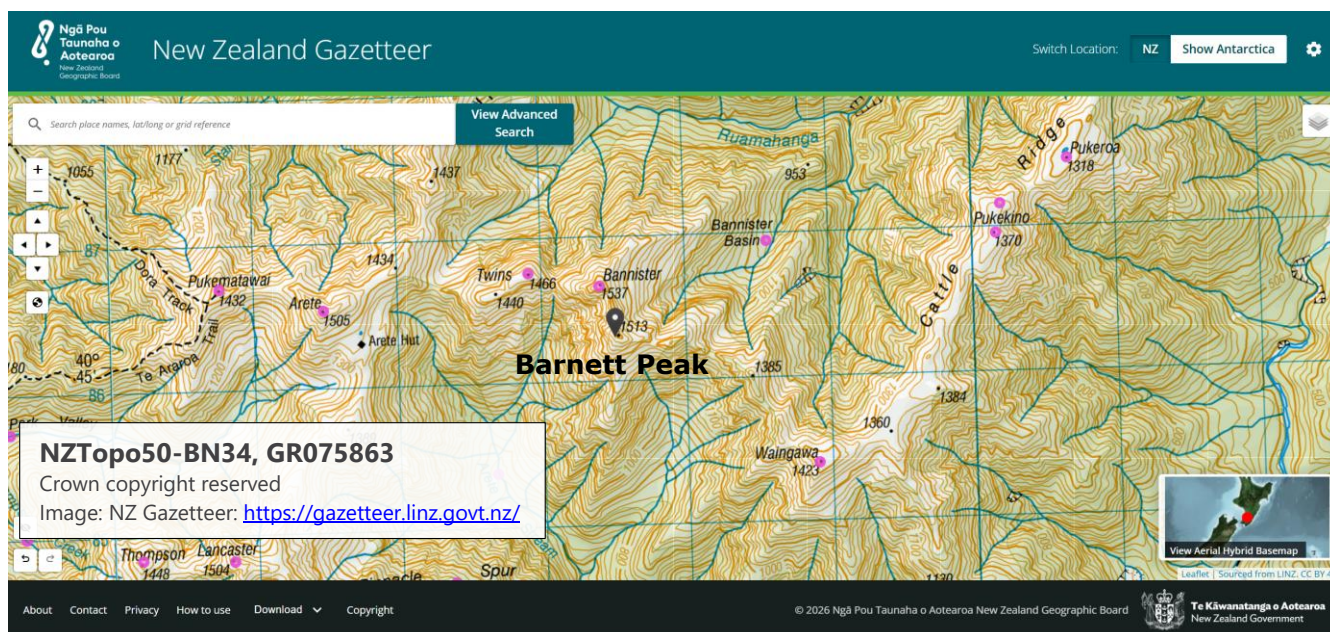


Proposal report considered by the Board on 30 June 2026 with the Board's decision for: Barnett Peak [new name]



Summary

The proposer seeks to assign Barnett Peak as the official geographic name for a prominent 1513m peak in Tararua Forest Park. The unnamed and distinctive peak is located above the bush line, just 400m south-east of Bannister, which is 24m higher. The proposed Barnett Peak is the only unnamed peak out of 15 above 1500m in the Tararua Range.

The proposed Barnett Peak would commemorate the late Shaun Barnett (4/3/1969 to 5/6/2024), who passed away at just 55 after a year-long battle with brain cancer.

The Board observes a period of two years posthumously before considering commemorating an individual with a geographic name. With two years having just passed, the proposer has submitted Barnett Peak to honour the significant and lifetime contribution that Shaun Barnett made to backcountry recreation and preservation, as a 'respected tramp, photographer, and advocate for New Zealand's wilderness, particularly in the Tararua area.'

The proposer further informs that 'naming spot height 1513 after Shaun Barnett pays tribute to his longstanding dedication to the Tararua wilderness, links future generations to his impactful work, while giving identity to this prominent peak. As a central feature in the 15-peak experience and the Bannister crossing network, the naming enriches both local heritage and visitor engagement.'

Shaun was a member of Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa New Zealand Geographic Board until April 2024, just before his passing. He was the Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand nominee to the Board, first appointed by the Minister for Land Information on [25 June 2020](#), then reappointed on [24 February 2022](#).

Shaun Barnett's family advised the proposer that they support the proposal.

A representative of Rangitāne o Wairarapa supported the proposal, having met Shaun, and expressing 'I can think of no other person more worthy to have their name memorialised this way'.

The Secretariat emailed six mana whenua groups on 8 May 2026 for comment on whether an original Māori name exists for this feature. As at 10 June 2026, no responses were received, however, if the Board accepts the proposal, mana whenua can still provide their views through the public consultation phase.

The President of the Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand Inc. confirmed support for the proposal, stating 'Shaun Barnett made a great and lifelong contribution to outdoor recreation in New Zealand. Through his writing, photography, and advocacy within the tramping community, he championed backcountry access, conservation, and the cultural heritage of our mountain landscapes, inspiring and informing generations of outdoor enthusiasts. He had particularly strong connections to the Tararua Range. Among his many contributions, Shaun served as an FMC Executive member and later as editor of FMC's *Backcountry* magazine for 10 years. Naming this peak after Shaun would provide a fitting and enduring recognition of his service to the outdoor community and to the celebration of our backcountry.'

Masterton District Council advised the proposer that it 'is neutral on the proposal and support your process to consult with Rangitane and Ngāti Kahungunu. We would encourage you to be clear on the position of both iwi before proceeding. Clearly you have had good feedback from Rangitane already.'

Board's decision

At its 30 June 2026 hui the Board made this decision on the proposal:

Accept the proposal to **assign Barnett Peak** to an unnamed peak at 1513m, just south of Bannister (peak) in Tararua Forest Park, based on:

- recognising and commemorating a notable New Zealander who made a significant contribution to the area (and throughout New Zealand's back country), specifically for backcountry recreation, wilderness advocacy and preservation, and as a renowned author and photographer of the back country. The proposal therefore meets the Board's Standard for personal naming criterion 1.1(c): 'a notable leader, of good character, and/or contributed to, or had a strong association with the feature, place or area.'
- the location of the feature in Tararua Forest Park being appropriate given Shaun Barnett's lifelong connection with the area, noting that he also lived most of his adult life in Wellington,
- support from Rangitāne o Wairarapa, *Wilderness* magazine, Shaun Barnett's family and the Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand Inc.,
- the need to give a geographic name to the only unnamed high and distinctive peak that is part of the 15-peaks over 1500m, regularly traversed by experienced recreationalists, and therefore potentially assisting with back country navigation, and emergency response,
- 'Peak' being the appropriate generic term,

and

Notify as a proposal to assign for two months.

Secretariat assessment

The proposal

The proposer seeks to assign Barnett Peak as the official geographic name of a prominent 1513m peak in Tararua Forest Park.

The proposed name would honour and commemorate the late Shaun Barnett, recognising his lifelong commitment to, and love of, the back country.

The proposer has provided comprehensive information as part of the proposal, covering all minimum requirements, including detailed biographical information as well as several photographs clearly showing the peak. The proposer's documentation also includes clear evidence of support for the proposal.

The proposer summarises Shaun's early influences, education and volunteer work for the Department of Conservation, leading to his career as a freelance photographer and writer, based in Wellington. The list of his publications are:

- *Classic Tramping in New Zealand* (1999, co-authored with Rob Brown) which won a Montana Book Award
- Edited *Wilderness* magazine from 1999 to 2003, becoming its Roving Editor after that
- Edited Federated Mountain Clubs *Backcountry* magazine from 2008 to 2018, noting that he also edited and contributed chapters to the publication *Freedom of the Hills*, designed to lobby for the creation of a network of high country conservation parks which now exist as a testament to that work
- *Shelter from the Storm* (2013, co-authored with Rob Brown and Geoff Spearpoint); widely regarded as a key turning point in the work to preserve New Zealand's backcountry hut network. It won the 2013 Booksellers' Choice Award
- *Tramping: A New Zealand History* (2014, co-authored with Chris Mclean); considered to be the definitive work on the subject
- National guide books: *Tramping in New Zealand* (later editions as 'Tramping in Aotearoa') and *Day Walks in New Zealand* were first published in 2007 and revised and reprinted continuously until 2024
- Author or co-author of *North Island Weekend Tramps*, *Natural New Zealand*, *A Bunk For The Night* and *Leading The Way: 100 Years of the Tararua Tramping Club*
- His last book, *A Wild Life*, was published posthumously.

The proposer concludes:

'Shaun was regarded as one of the most widely-travelled trampers in the country. He had visited over 800 backcountry huts, a figure that probably only a handful would have exceeded. He had an extensive network of tramping friends and had a remarkable knack for connecting those people – usually on tramping trips – and thus helping build capacity for advocacy for New Zealand's remote spots. He also willingly mentored many people in writing, photography and advocacy.'

'For someone whose interest and influence covered the length and breadth of the country, there is no one obvious place where he should be commemorated. However, the Tararua Range was very much 'home territory' for nearly half his

life, and there were few corners of the range that he had not visited. The range is considered the birthplace of organised tramping in New Zealand, so it is fitting that someone whose contribution to tramping was so immense be honoured there.'

Names shown
on plans and
maps

No maps or plans name the peak at 1513m.

The 15 peaks in Tararua Range above 1500m are all named in the region except for the peak at 1513m:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Logan 1500m | 2. Bannister 1537m |
| 3. Arete 1505m | 4. Lancaster 1504m |
| 5. Brockett 1538m | 6. Girdlestone 1546m |
| 7. Pukeamoamo / Mitre 1571m | 8. Peggys Peak 1545m |
| 9. North King 1535m | 10. Middle King 1521m |
| 11. South King 1531m | 12. McGregor 1540m |
| 13. Angle Knob 1510m | 14. Mount Hector 1529m |
-

Location of the
feature, generic
term,
[geographic
feature type](#)

The alpine region is highly valued by skilled trampers and mountain runners completing the 15-peak traverse. Therefore, the peak at 1513m warrants being named for improved navigation and emergency response.

The unnamed and distinctive peak is located above the bush line, just 400m south-east of Bannister, which is 24m higher.

'Peak' is an appropriate generic term, however many of the existing geographic names in this alpine region do not include a generic term, as per the list above. Therefore, Barnett alone may be appropriate to assign officially.

[New Zealand
Gazetteer](#),
associated
names, and
duplication

The peak at 1513m is not named in the *NZ Gazetteer*.

There are two other Barnett names in the *NZ Gazetteer*:

- Barnett Glacier in Antarctica, named for Donald Barnett, and
- Walter Barnett Scenic Reserve, north-west of Tokoroa.

Neither of these two existing names are likely to be confused with Barnett Peak as they are far too distant geographically and they each have unique generic terms. Both are named for different individuals.

Research,
history and
references

There are many tributes to Shaun Barnett. These are just a few which provide evidence of the high esteem in which he was held:

- Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand Inc.: Shaun Barnett Man of words, pictures and compassion, by Peter Laurenson, pp7-21, *Backcountry Bulletin* #237, August 2024¹
- Tribute by the NZ Geographic Board, pp22-23, *Backcountry Bulletin* #237, August 2024
- Tribute by Dr Robin Kearns, Board member, p23, *Backcountry Bulletin* #237, August 2024
- Tribute by Paulette Tamati-Elliffe, Board member:

¹ Linked from <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ymw0wV57OJNvFyWZRIPY5IFWFDNxXIRZ>

Māturuturu ana kā roimata, ka takiauē te kākau ki te roko i tēnei o kā mateka, auē taukuri e! Kai te hoa, e Shaun; kua mau rā koe ki te kupeka a Taramainuku, kua iri rā ki Te Hao o Rua. Hai te wā ka rewa a Matariki, ka whetūrahia koe. Moe mai, okioki mai rā.

Our tears cascade and our heart weeps at this great loss. To our dear friend Shaun; you have been caught by the net of Taramainuku, suspended at Te Hao o Rua, to become a guiding star in our night sky at the rising of Matariki. May you rest in peace.

- *The Post*: Passion for New Zealand's great outdoors knew no bounds – obituary: <https://www.thepost.co.nz/nz-news/350305260/passion-new-zealands-great-outdoors-knew-no-bounds-obituary>
- *Wilderness* magazine: Shaun Barnett, a man of the backcountry and eminent trumper: https://www.wildernessmag.co.nz/shaun-barnett-a-man-of-the-backcountry-and-eminent-tramper/?srsltid=AfmBOoofKcoi6K5caZ4l5SRjBz-iMiYZxhmG3VSlo_-dk3y9Db5NODTp
- Shaun Barnett Memorial Scholarship through *Wilderness* magazine: https://www.wildernessmag.co.nz/apply-for-the-shaun-barnett-memorial-scholarship/?srsltid=AfmBOopKPCi_4PZ1LXu0Pxtb1uL0BIFeQkmpOUnzlqEiLdnrD2V7EUhz

Consultation
with iwi

The proposer received support from Rangitāne o Wairarapa.

Other mana whenua groups with interests in the region have yet to comment on whether an original Māori name exists for this peak.

Consultation
with others

The proposer received support from *Wilderness* magazine, Shaun Barnett's family and the Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand Inc. The proposer has not consulted with individual local tramping and mountaineering clubs that will likely have an interest in the proposal.

Masterton District Council advised the proposer that it is neutral on the proposal. The feature is within Tararua Forest Park (a conservation park), so the Department of Conservation (DOC) may have an interest in new names assigned within the park (for maps, information boards, etc). If the Board accepts the proposal DOC will be advised prior to public notification.

Relevant section
from the [NZGB
Act 2008](#)

A purpose of the Board under s.3 is to: 'provide the means for appropriate recognition to be accorded to cultural and heritage values associated with geographic features'.

[Standard for
New Zealand
place names](#)
criteria

1.1 Acceptable names

- Names that reflect New Zealand's exploration, events, tradition and history, and its diverse and inclusive society and culture.
- The surname or traditional ancestral Māori name of a person who has been deceased for at least two years, was a notable leader, of good character, and/or contributed to, or had a strong association with the feature, place or area.

1.3 Undesirable names and other considerations

- (e) Long-term existing names or names that are in common local use may take precedence over new names if they conform to this standard.

The proposer advises that the feature is occasionally referred to as South Bannister. Some references to South Bannister, or just descriptively 'south Bannister summit' are noted, but it's unknown how widely they are used or if there are other local use names. The Board may consider the reasons for the proposed name outweigh consideration of South Bannister which appears to be a name of convenience when describing all peaks above 1500m.

- (i) There should be a compelling or overriding need, such as identification for emergency services, to name features in designated wilderness areas and pristine/remote conservation areas with wilderness characteristics.

1.4 Generic terms

- (a) A generic term should accurately describe the type of feature being named.

- (e) Natural features should usually have a generic term included in their name.

From the Board's generic terms policy² 'Common exceptions include names for some hills eg Stargazer, Mairehau, Sugar Loaf, and names which themselves indicate the nature of the feature eg The Gap, Lovers Leap.' A more recent Board decision was for Lancaster in the Tararua Range, which does not have a generic term.

Media

There may be media attention because the proposed name is part of a well-known traverse of the 15 peaks over 1500m in this popular alpine region of Tararua Forest Park.

Supporting information

1. Proposal for Barnett Peak – 9 March 2026 (includes supporting correspondence, photographs and biographical information)
2. Consultation with mana whenua – 8 May 2026

² https://www.linz.govt.nz/sites/default/files/corp/nzgb_generic-terms-policy_20191018.pdf