Toitū Te Whenua
Land Information
New Zealand

Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa
New Zealand Geographic Board

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Information for Potential Members

Prepared by
Strategy and Policy
Land Information New Zealand
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1. About the New Zealand Geographic Board Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa

Nature and role of the New Zealand Geographic Board

The New Zealand Geographic Board Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa (the Board) is an independent statutory body constituted under the New Zealand Geographic Board (Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa) Act 2008 (the Act).

The two fundamental outcomes of the Board's place naming work are that:

- features and places within New Zealand's jurisdiction are identifiable by name so that people can effectively communicate information about location; and
- place names preserve New Zealand's heritage and culture.

Statutory purpose, functions and duties of the Board

Section 3 of the Act sets out its purpose and includes:

(d) provide effective notification, consultation, and decision-making procedures for naming geographic features; and
(e) provide the means for appropriate recognition to be accorded to cultural and heritage values associated with geographic features; and
(f) enable certain administrative needs of government (including local government) to be met; and
(g) provide for the Board's role of reviewing proposals to assign official geographic names to Crown protected areas; and
(h) ensure the provision of, and public access to, an authoritative record of official geographic names.

The principal functions of the Board in relation to any geographic feature in its area are set out in Section 10(1) of the Act, as follows:

(a) assign an official geographic name:
(b) approve a recorded name as an official geographic name:
(c) alter an official geographic name or recorded name by—
    (i) substituting another name; or
    (ii) correcting the spelling of the name:
(d) discontinue the use of an official geographic name or recorded name:
(e) investigate and determine the position or extent of the geographic feature in respect of which the Board—
    (i) assigns an official geographic name:
    (ii) approves a recorded name:
    (iii) alters the official geographic name.

The Board must also review any proposal to assign a name to, or alter the name of, a Crown protected area (as defined in the Act) and agree whether any proposal meets the naming requirements.

Other functions of the Board are listed under Section 11. These help the Board to carry out its principal functions. They include collecting and encouraging the use of original Māori names, undertaking research, adopting policies, examining spelling, and so on.

The duties of the Board are provided under Section 12, to:

(a) administer the Gazetteer; and
(b) in consultation with the Minister of Conservation, develop rules, standards, or guidelines for naming Crown protected areas; and
(c) make inquiries and recommendations on any matters referred to it by the Minister; and
(d) carry out any other functions or duties given to it or required by or under this Act or other enactment.

Under Section 13, the Board must also establish and maintain a publicly available record known as the *New Zealand Gazetteer of Official Geographic Names.*

In addition to official place naming within New Zealand and its offshore islands, the Board also has naming responsibilities in the Ross Dependency of Antarctica and for undersea features on New Zealand's extended Continental Shelf.

All official documents must use the official geographic name or official alternative name for a geographic feature or Crown protected area, if it is not stated that it uses an unofficial name. To ensure compliance, the Board may apply to the High Court for an injunction to prevent publication of unofficial names in official documents.

Strategic goals of the Board

Strategic purpose: 'To claim, secure and celebrate New Zealand's unique identity through place names.'

Strategic vision: 'We enable meaningful connections between people, place and language by applying these strategic actions: naming places and engagement, education and encouragement.'

Strategic values:

Kaitiakitanga -

- We are dedicated to preserve and protect New Zealand's heritage through place names.
- We fulfil our Treaty obligations.

Mana -

- We acknowledge the mana of places, mana whenua and communities.
- We will be passionate, expert and leaders in place naming.

Manaakitanga -

- We are open, we share, we listen and we engage positively in our relationships.

3. The Operation of the Board

Minister for Land Information

The Board is responsible to the Minister for Land Information (the Minister) and must report annually to the Minister on the performance of its functions and duties, and the exercise of its powers.

The Minister has entered into Accords with four settled Treaty groups. The agreements require the Minister to seek potential Board members from them and for the Board Secretary to inform them of the processes under the Act for making proposals post settlement.

Under relevant legislation and deeds of settlement, the Board is also required to consult with entities that represent the three features, which have legal personhood in New Zealand. These entities and the legal persons they represent are Te Urewera Board (Te Urewera), Te Tōpani Kōkōrangi (Te Kāhui Tupua), and Te Pou Tupua (Te Awa Tupua).

Support and administrative services

The Secretary of the Board is employed by Toitū Te Whenua Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) and is appointed by the Board, to manage and administer the work of the Board and its statutory processes. This also includes handling public enquiries on place names. A Secretariat (including the Secretary) has been established to assist the Board to meet the statutory requirements and its strategic goals.

The Secretariat will provide induction material for new Board members and may arrange for a meeting to be held between new Board members, the Chairperson and the Secretary prior to the first Board meeting attended by the new member.

Other teams within LINZ provide operational, communications, policy, project management, IT, and other support as required.

Board determinations

The Act sets out a detailed process for the naming of geographic features. The following is a general description of the process within New Zealand and its offshore islands, but not including Crown protected area names, Antarctica, undersea feature names beyond 12 nautical miles, alterations to district or region names, and Treaty of Waitangi settlement names.

The Board either receives a proposal to assign a new name, or for a name change, or to discontinue a name, or may create a proposal itself (though this is rare). If supported by the Board, the proposal is then notified publicly, and the public must be given at least one month to make submissions on the proposal, for or against. As soon as is reasonably possible after the closing date for submissions, the Board must consider any submissions made and decide whether to uphold or reject any objections to the proposal.

If the Board receives no objections to a proposal, or receives only supporting submissions, or receives objections and agrees with the objections, then the Board must make a determination on the proposal. Any determination made in these circumstances is final.

If the Board does not uphold any objection(s) and therefore does not make a determination on a proposal, it must report with recommendations to the Minister setting out a summary of the submission(s) and the Board's decision on the proposal along with the reasons for that decision. The Minister may determine the proposal by

confirming, modifying, or rejecting the decision of the Board. The Minister's determination on the proposal is final.

Information, including flowcharts, guidance notes, proposal forms, etc., on this process and other processes for the various types of naming, are available online linked from: https://www.linz.govt.nz/regulatory/place-names/propose-place-name.

Delegations

For efficiencies and effectiveness, certain decision-making is delegated to the Chairperson or Secretary, such as Committee recommendations from the Undersea Feature Names Committee (UFNC) and Antarctic Names Committee (ANC), review and concurrence of Crown protected area names, collected names, and so forth.

Mana whenua consultation

In June 2005, Cabinet agreed that the primary responsibility for iwi consultation on geographic names under the Board's jurisdiction be with the Board. This requires additional contributions from the Board members representing Māori, and also additional requirements of the Secretariat.

Protocol with Te Tari Whakatau

The Board has a relationship protocol with the Te Tari Whakatau – Office of Treaty Settlements and Takutai Moana. It seeks to ensure a consistent and standardised approach by both parties when dealing with place names included in settlement redress.

Projects

From time-to-time projects are undertaken, requiring additional input by some or all Board members, for example, generic geographic features, maps, or reference books.

4. Information for Potential Members of the Board

Board membership

The Board consists of eight members appointed by the Minister for Land Information. Two additional members, the Surveyor-General and the LINZ official responsible for setting hydrographic information standards, are ex-officio members of the Board. The Surveyor-General is the Chairperson of the Board.

Under Schedule 1 clause 1(2) of the Act, the Minister for Land Information must appoint:

(a) on the recommendation of the Minister for Māori Development, 2 persons as representatives of Māori who—
  (i) have a knowledge of tikanga Māori and te reo Māori; and
  (ii) are able to provide advice in relation to the naming of geographic features and Crown protected areas for which tikanga Māori or te reo Māori is relevant; and
(b) 1 person nominated by Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu; and
(c) 1 person nominated by the New Zealand Geographical Society Inc; and
(d) 1 person nominated by the Federated Mountain Clubs of NZ Inc; and
(e) 1 person nominated by Local Government New Zealand; and
(f) 2 other persons.

In addition to the 10 Board members, advice is provided from a number of regular

observers from:

- Te Tari Whakatau
- Te Puni Kōkiri
- Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori
- Department of Conservation.

The Board has established three committees whose membership requires at least two Board members and several other expert members:

- Undersea Feature Names Committee (UFNC)
- Antarctic Names Committee (ANC)
- Komiti Taunahatanga Māori.

For information on the desired attributes of Board members, please see the **Attributes of Members of Ngā Taunga o Aotearoa New Zealand Geographic Board 2026** document.

Term and reappointment

Appointments to the Board will be for a term of up to three years. Members may be re-appointed to the Board. Even though a member's term of appointment may have expired, the member continues in office until their successor is appointed (or they resign). It is desirable that members are reappointed to the Board for at least two terms to gain experience in applying the Board's guiding principles and protocols and to maintain the Board's consistency and expertise.

Payment

The payments, which members of the Board will receive, are set out below. They are in accordance with the framework determined by the Government for paying members of statutory and other bodies (Cabinet Circular CO (19) 1 refers).

- Members - $436 per day

Time commitment

The Board usually meets in Wellington for one day, three times each year. An additional one-day fee (at least) is reimbursed for preparation for meetings and travel. Board members also spend additional time on matters such as Treaty settlement names, general Board/iwi consultation, Antarctic naming issues, or other urgent matters as they arise.

Committees appointed by the Board and established to advise the Board on specified matters, such as naming of undersea features or geographical features in Antarctica, will include membership from at least two Board members. Each of the three Board Committees meets at least once a year.

Online meetings are sometimes held for special meetings of the Board.

Broad focus

The Board strives to accommodate the interests of all New Zealanders, and government requirements with an understanding of New Zealand history and geography, when assigning new or altering existing place names or adopting recorded names as official. It has a responsibility to hold and maintain archival information on existing place names.

Decisions must be balanced against the standards, policies, rules, guidelines, and

procedures that define the parameters within which the Board must operate. The effect of place naming is felt not only by individuals/local community/local iwi/visitors and tourists but often has a wider impact on central and local government organisations (e.g. signage, addressing, publications, emergency services).

The Board collectively has a strong desire to give practical effect to all of its functions, in particular to restore original Māori place names. In addition, place names are being sought by claimants as part of their Treaty of Waitangi claim settlements. Indigenous place naming is acknowledged by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Naming (UNGEGN), to recognise their significance. Such acknowledgement is perceived as a form of education about New Zealand's history and ensures that such information is not lost to future generations.

Media

Place naming affects many different groups of people within a community, as well having implications for central and local government organisations. The strong attachment that people often have with place names can mean that proposals to change them sometimes become highly contentious issues that receive media attention. Therefore, Board members are occasionally requested to represent and explain the Board's view in the media. All Board media releases are published in English and Māori.

Other considerations

Conflicts of interest

To maintain the confidence of the Government and the public, boards and other bodies must conduct their affairs impartially and be seen to be doing so. An interest arises where a person has a financial, familial or other personal interest in a matter that could give rise to bias, or the appearance of bias, in the work of an agency.

A conflict of interest will not necessarily bar an appointment. New Zealand's comparatively small population, and the limited number of people who possess particular combinations of skills and experience, mean it is always possible that the question of interests will arise. This will tend to put a focus on identifying and managing interests, rather than disqualifying all those who have interests.

Candidates for Crown entity boards are required to identify whether they (or a partner, child or other close family member or friend) have or are likely to have any financial, personal or professional interests that might create a conflict if they were to be appointed.

The key points in respect of conflicts of interest are:

1. *Perception*: If it can be perceived there is a conflict then there will be a conflict regardless of whether the conflict is real or actual.
2. *Financial Interests*: Are always a conflict of interest and must be declared. A decision will then be made on whether the conflict is of a nature that it can be managed.
3. *Recording*: Any conflicts financial or other must be declared to the Chairperson of the Board as soon as possible in advance of Board discussion on the issue which gives rise to the conflict. The conflict should be recorded in the Boards minutes.
4. *Managed*: The Board must agree on the process for managing the declared conflict of interest.

As part of the appointment process, the Minister should be confident that every actual or potential conflict of interest that can reasonably be identified has been identified, and

where a conflict of interest has been identified, an acceptable mechanism or system has been proposed or established to deal with the conflict appropriately. Applicants will be asked to disclose any conflicts of interest and propose mechanisms to deal with them as part of the application process.

Additionally, interests held by a member's family as well as the member personally may change over time. The issues with which a board or body deals with will also change. Throughout a member's term of office, actual and perceived conflicts of interest must be borne in mind as interest, conflicts, and context change. All boards are expected to have a register where interests are recorded. All board members need to review their interests regularly and add or remove them from the register as soon as the circumstances require it.

Further guidance on the management of interests and conflicts can be found on the Office of the Auditor-General web site at www.oag.govt.nz/2007/conflicts-public-entities/.

Probity

People who seek to be appointed to the Board will also be asked to consider whether there is anything in their personal background, which could embarrass the Government or the Board, if it became public in the future. They will be asked to either:

- provide an assurance that there are no such elements in their background; or
- if there are, to provide details for consideration in the appointment process.