

BRF 25-184 Decision on changing the township name of Russell to Kororāreka

Ki / To:	Hon Chris Penk Minister for Land Information	Rā / Date:	3 December 2024
Priority Level	Priority: Low	Action required by	No deadline

Purpose

To seek your decision on changing the township name of Russell to Kororāreka (Bay of Islands).

Toitū Te Whenua Land Information New Zealand Whakapā/contacts

Ingoa/Name	Nama waea/ Contact number	Whakapā tuatahi/first contact
Anselm Haanen Board Chairperson	04 4600376 or 027 249 5901	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Wendy Shaw Board Secretary	04 4600581 or 027 4807082	<input type="checkbox"/>

Ngā kōrero a te Minita/Minister's comments

Key messages

1. In September 2021 the New Zealand Geographic Board Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa (the Board) received a proposal on behalf of Kororāreka Marae Komiti to change the recorded (unofficial) name of the township, Russell, to an official original Māori name, Kororāreka.
2. Russell is a small but historically significant township in the Bay of Islands that was first known as Kororāreka until the early 1840s.
3. Te Rūnanga ā Iwi o Ngāpuhi and the Far North District Council support the change, although the council has reservations about the cost to businesses of implementing the change.
4. At its 26 June 2023 hui the Board considered the submissions from the public consultation and the reasons for and against the proposal. It decided to confirm its proposal to alter the township name from Russell to Kororāreka.
5. This is a significant decision which is expected to continue to attract public and media interest from throughout New Zealand.
6. There is no statutory timeframe for you to make your final determination.

Tohutohu/Recommendations

Toitū Te Whenua Land Information New Zealand Recommends that you:

1.	Me whakakoia/Confirm	the Board's decision to accept the proposal to alter the recorded (unofficial) township name, Russell, to the official township name, Kororāreka.	Yes/ No <input checked="" type="radio"/>
2.	Me mātai/Note	that if you agree with the Board's decision, or make a different decision, your determination on the proposal is final, and will be gazetted, publicly notified and added to the <i>New Zealand Gazetteer</i> as the official township name.	Noted <input checked="" type="radio"/>
3.	Me mātai/Note	that if you reject the Board's decision your determination on the proposal is final. The township's recorded (unofficial) name will continue to be Russell.	Noted <input checked="" type="radio"/>
4.	Me whakakoia/Confirm	whether you or the Board will issue a media release on your final decision. LINZ will work with your office on the content of the media release.	Board/ Minister <input checked="" type="radio"/>



Anselm Haanen
Chairperson, New Zealand Geographic Board Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa

Rā/Date: 03/12/24



Hon Chris Penk
**Minister for Land Information
 Te Minita mō Toitū Te Whenua**

Rā/Date:

08 MAY 2025

STATEMENT TO
 INTERESTED
 PARTIES

Te Horopaki/Background

The proposal

1. In September 2021 the Board received an incomplete proposal from Debra Rewiri on behalf of Kororāreka Marae Komiti to change the recorded (unofficial) name of the township, Russell, to an official original Māori name, Kororāreka. After working with the Board's Secretariat, the proposer provided the information required to complete their proposal in June 2022. This included consultation with the Far North District Council, confirming the macron, and confirming the proposal is for the township and not the peninsula. See **Attachment 1** for the proposal. Also see the Location map at the end of this report.
2. Russell is a small but historically significant township in the Bay of Islands that was known only as Kororāreka until the early 1840s. The name Kororāreka tells the story of an unwell chief who, on being given a soup made from the little blue penguin, declared "how sweet is the penguin" (kororā: blue penguin, reka: sweet).
3. The name Russell came from Governor Hobson who renamed Okiato (5km due south of the current Russell) as the first capital of New Zealand in 1840. It was named after Lord Russell, who, as Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, was Hobson's ultimate superior and Great Britain's counterparty to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The capital was moved to Auckland in 1841 and after a fire in 1842 the name Russell was moved north to replace Kororāreka where it has remained. A number of significant historical events have occurred at Russell, or nearby, including at Waitangi. Kororāreka has continued to be commonly used throughout the decades, eg., by mana whenua, businesses, and the local school.

The Board's decision on the proposal

4. See **Attachment 2** for the *Proposal Report* that the Board considered at its 2 December 2022 hui.
5. The Board supported the reasons for outright changing Russell to Kororāreka based on:
 - its functions to investigate and determine the priority of the discovery of a geographic feature, and to collect and encourage the use of original Māori names on official charts and maps, sections 11(1)(c)(d)&(e) of the New Zealand Geographic Board (Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa) Act 2008 refer
 - evidence that Kororāreka is the original Māori name for the township and is already commonly used and widely known
 - dual and alternative names not being preferred for addressable places and discouraged in the ANZ Addressing Standard
 - the risk of potential confusion for emergency responses and maritime safety/navigational aid being low

- Te Rūnanga ā Iwi o Ngāpuhi supporting the proposal
- the Far North District Council supporting the proposed change (with reservations about cost and wide consultation).

Mātanga kōrero/Consultation

6. The Board agreed to proceed with the proposal and publicly notified it, inviting submissions between 18 January 2023 and 18 April 2023.
7. The proposal received 1,821 submissions, with 955 supporting and 866 objecting.
8. This table, which has the location of submitters based on volunteered information, indicates the level of local community engagement:

	Russell	Rest of NZ	International	Unknown	Total
Supporting	113	818	8	16	955
Objecting	83	717	2	64	866
Total	196	1535	10	80	1,821

9. The number of submissions for or against does not in itself influence the Board's decision. Rather, its consideration is based on the reasons provided on both sides and how they stack up against good place naming practices. It is not a vote or numbers game.
10. At its hui on 22 June 2023 the Board considered the submissions received on the proposal.
11. The reasons provided in the supporting submissions included that the proposal would:
 - restore the original Māori place name which is a meaningful, well-known and well-used name that has been in long term use and has history well before colonisation
 - remove a colonial/culturally inappropriate name that commemorates a person who had no ancestral tie, spiritual connection or significant affiliation to the township or New Zealand
 - honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnership obligations that Māori maintain their language, culture and identity, and demonstrate that Māori culture is valued
 - restore the mana of the whenua and town
 - represent a move to become a more inclusive bicultural society
 - be an opportunity for everyone including international visitors to engage with Māori culture and solidify our national identity to tourists and internationally
 - distinguish it from the many other places in the world named Russell, noting that no other places are named Kororāreka.
12. The reasons provided in the objecting submissions included that:

- Russell is an iconic well-known name that has been in long term use and is easy to recognise, remember, pronounce, and spell
 - Russell is an established and recognised brand in the tourism industry and has a strong national and international identity
 - the change would be costly, create confusion and anxiety, have a significant negative impact on tourism, and hinder clear communication about location
 - it would be a commercial disaster and destroy decades of marketing and branding
 - people don't understand or want to use the Māori language or place names
 - Kororāreka is too long, hard to remember, difficult to pronounce and spell, inappropriate, and cumbersome in comparison.
13. The *Submissions Report* that the Board considered at its 22 June 2023 hui includes a summary of the categories of the objections and responses to them – see **Attachment 3**.

Ngā tatunga o te poari/The Board's decision

14. At its 22 June 2023 hui the Board did not uphold any of the objecting submissions and did not consider them to outweigh its original reasons for accepting the proposal. The Board noted that the local community is already transitioning to Kororāreka with the name being in common use and widely known, and that a number of the objecting submitters supported Kororāreka as part of dual or alternative names. The Board considered an option for official alternative names, where either could be used, but did not support it in this case. The Board agreed that the reasons in the supporting submissions confirmed its initial decision.
15. Because the Board did not uphold the objections, the Minister for Land Information must make the final determination as required by section 20(1) of the New Zealand Geographic Board Act 2008.

Ministerial consideration

16. While the former Minister for Land Information did consider the Board's report, he did not make a final determination.
17. This briefing follows BRF 24-179, which was provided to you in December 2023.

Hiraunga ahumoni/Financial implications

18. The costs associated with transitioning can be minimised by the Board adopting a soft approach to compliance on official documents. For example, road signage can be updated during regular maintenance and replacement cycles. There is no legal requirement for branded products and businesses (other than those intended for travellers or tourists) to use the official name, so they can choose if they want to use it, and when.

Hunga pāpāho/Media

19. The Board released a bilingual media advisory in English and te reo Māori on 18 and 19 January 2023 respectively, which was also posted on the LINZ website. Facebook posts followed on 18 January 2023 and 6 April 2023. A considerable number of media articles were published during the public consultation period.
20. In more recent media articles the proposer has criticised the Board for the length of time it has taken to process their proposal.
21. There has been significant media interest in this proposal. If you confirm the Board's decision to change the township's name from Russell to Kororāreka you have the option to issue a media release on your final decision or the Board can do this instead, clearly stating the reasons for, and the impact of, the change.

Ngā Tāwhaitanga/Next Steps

22. Once you make your final determination on this proposal, it will be notified as required by the New Zealand Geographic Board Act 2008.

Tāpiritanga/Attachments (Electronically Available via Objective Connect)

Document number	Name of attachment
1.	Proposal from Kororāreka Marae Komiti received 6 September 2021
2.	<i>Proposal Report</i> that the Board considered at its 2 December 2022 hui
3.	<i>Submissions Report</i> summarising the submissions that the Board considered at its 22 June '23 hui

Te tūwāhi mapere/Location map

