

Department of Transport and Planning

Correspondence Coversheet for Minister for Planning

Subject	SK24-1315 - Guru Nanak Lake, Berwick Springs - Stitt MP
Decision date	

	Name	Date	Position	Phone no.
Accountable Executive Officer	33(1)	28/06/2024 01:42 PM	33(1)	33(1)
Recommender		28/06/2024 02:49 PM		NA
Notified of recommendation	33(1)			

Background information

- The Hon Ingrid Stitt, MP Minister for Multicultural Affairs wrote to you on 26 May 2024 seeking your approval of the proposed name 'Guru Nanak Lake' for a currently unnamed lake in Berwick Springs.**
 - This request arises from a 2018 election commitment by the then Premier, the Hon Daniel Andrews, MP to name a permanent Victorian landmark in honour of the founder of the Sikh faith, Guru Nanak. Victoria is home to Australia's largest Sikh community, and the commitment aims to recognise the significant cultural, social, and economic contributions of Sikh communities to our state.
 - Geographic Names Victoria (GNV) is aware of this matter and has been working with the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) since 2022 to resolve the matter.
- In April 2023, following targeted community consultation, Multicultural Affairs within the DFFH sought Geographic Names Victoria (GNV) in-principle support of the name 'Guru Nanak Lake' in commemoration of His Holiness Sir Guru Nanak for a lake at Berwick Springs.**
 - At that time GNV rejected the proposed name, assessing that the word 'Guru' as an honorific and in contravention of the Naming Rules for Places in Victoria (the Naming Rules).
 - While GNV rejected the proposal, it also provided advice to DFFH about ways in which the name could be registered, even though it does not comply with the Naming Rules.
- GNV worked with the DFFH, Casey City Council, emergency services and the naming authority, Melbourne Water to reach agreement and determine a process for the assignment of the name 'Guru Nanak Lake'.**
 - Melbourne Water is the owner of the land and maintains the site where the lake is located so is therefore the naming authority in this case. Melbourne Water has agreed to the lake being named.
 - Neither the City of Casey, nor Melbourne Water wanted to undertake consultation with the community about this name.
- GNV provided DFFH with two options for their consideration to enable the name Guru Nanak Lake to be gazetted and registered, noting that Option B was GNV's recommended approach.**
 - Option A - Ministerial direction. This option would see DFFH brief their Minister and request the Minister for Planning to direct the Registrar of Geographic Names to gazette and register the proposed name in the Register of Geographic Names – VICNAMES. Following registration GNV would advise the naming authority (Melbourne Water) to add the name to their systems. This option was not preferred by GNV.

Land Use Victoria		
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- b) Option B - Consultation and engagement. This option would see broader consultation with the community and relevant stakeholder groups. DFFH would have to run the process and deal with any submission and objections and formally lodge a naming proposal with GNV for consideration.
- c) DFFH chose to pursue Option A.
- d) GNV provided advice to DFFH about the content of the letter sent to the Minister for Planning requesting the naming of the lake by Ministerial Direction.

5. The naming proposal is based on the following:

- a) 'Guru' is an extremely important term for the Sikh community. GNV has been advised that removing 'Guru' from the name would be culturally inappropriate and disrespectful.
- b) The use of the title 'Guru' is strictly reserved for the 10 historical Sikh Gurus. While other faiths use this term, only in Sikhism is 'Guru' used as a formal title.
- c) 'Guru' is not like other honorifics as the title cannot be gained through accreditation, like 'Doctor', or through lineage, like 'Aunty', minimising the risk of precedent leading to duplicated names.
- d) The name aligns with the former Premier's election commitment.

6. GNV notes the following points on compliance with the naming rules principles in the DFFH proposal.

- a) *Principle A* – Emergency Services have confirmed that the use of the word Guru in the name and use of feature type Lake does not pose a risk for emergency services.
- b) *Principle C* – the name is linked to the site, as the local area is home to one of the highest Sikh populations and the lake reflects Sikh environmental values.
- c) *Principle D* – Names must not be duplicated within a five-kilometre radius within metropolitan Melbourne and the same suburb. It is noted that Guru Boulevard is approximately six kilometres away in the suburb of Lynbrook. The road provides access to a Sikh temple and residential properties. Therefore, the name Guru Nanak Lake is not considered a duplicate under the naming rules.
- d) *Principle I* – the proposed name commemorates a significant person, who is held in strong regard by the Sikh community.
- e) *Principle K* – the name reflects Victoria's diverse multicultural society.
- f) GNV also notes that while the name Guru Nanak Lake commemorates a significant person and acknowledges our diverse multicultural society, it is not consistent with the current efforts supporting gender equality and Traditional Owner languages.

7. Section 11(5) of the *Geographic Place Names Act 1998* (the Act) provides the Minister with the power to direct the Registrar.

- a) Section 11(5) states '*The Registrar must comply with any directions given by the Minister from time to time concerning the registration of names in the Register...*'.
- b) This clause of the Act provides you with the discretion to name a place however you choose, even if the name is inconsistent with the Naming Rules.
- c) GNV will clarify the use of honorifics in the Naming Rules when they are next updated.

8. As Minister for Planning, you have the option to support or reject the naming proposal.

- a) Should you support the name, you can direct the Registrar to gazette and register the name in VICNAMES. If that is the case the Registrar, through GNV will:
 - work with the naming authority (Melbourne Water) to ensure they are aware of the gazettal and registration and to request update of their systems.

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- notify DFFH of the naming so they can work with Melbourne Water to ensure that has appropriate signage is in place at the lake and notify the Sikh and broader community of the naming.
 - b) Should you reject the proposal, further work will need to be undertaken to achieve the naming proposal. This would include community consultation.
 - Under the naming rules local government naming authorities must undertake community consultation to gather the breath of community views. State Government Departments and Agencies can choose to undertake community consultation, or not.
 - DFFH are comfortable with their decision not to engage further with the broader community, focusing instead on the Sikh community and selected stakeholder groups.
9. GNV advises that it will register the name, should you wish to exercise your discretion and direct the Registrar to name the lake.
10. If you direct the Registrar to name this geographic feature it may be noted as a precedent by other groups to promote similar naming proposals.
- a) This does present a risk, as other groups may want geographic features or roads named.
11. Two letters of response to Minister Stitt have been prepared for your signature advising of your preferred outcome.
- a) The first letter is fully supportive of the proposal.
- b) The second letter supports the proposal, subject to wider community consultation in line with the naming rules.
- c) GNV can provide advice to DFFH about appropriate community consultation. This may include newspaper advertisements, mail drops and or a community survey managed by DFFH.

Recommendations

That you please:

- a) **Note** the information in this coversheet.

☒ Noted

☐ Please Discuss

- b) **Approve** and **sign** the preferred letter to Minister Stitt either accepting or rejecting the naming proposal.

☒ Approved

☐ Not Approved

☐ Please Discuss

 Hon Sonya Kilkenny MP Minister for Planning Date: 24/9/2024	Comments: Pls amend letter per discussions with MO.
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The Hon Sonya Kilkenny MP

Minister for Planning
Minister for the Suburbs

1 Spring Street
Melbourne, Victoria 3000 Australia

Ref: CMIN-1-24-3341

Ingrid Stitt MP
Minister for Multicultural Affairs
PO Box 4057
MELBOURNE VIC 3001
ingrid.stitt@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Ingrid

Thank you for your letter dated 26 May 2024 regarding formal registration of the name, 'Guru Nanak Lake', for a currently unnamed lake at Berwick Springs.

I sought advice from Geographic Names Victoria about your naming proposal. Following Geographic Names Victoria's advice I have decided to allow the name 'Guru Nanak Lake' and have requested the Registrar of Geographic Names to register the name. Geographic Names Victoria will contact your office to discuss a gazettal and registration date.

I trust this information is of use. However, should you or your staff, have any further questions or additional information about this matter please contact 33(1) via email at 33(1) @transport.vic.gov.au or call him on 33(1)

Thank you again for raising this matter.

Yours sincerely

The Hon Sonya Kilkenny MP
Minister for Planning
Minister for the Suburbs

Date: 24/09/2024