

Research Report

Naming Policy

1 Purpose

To describe and discuss issues related to naming of roads, open spaces, and council facilities, and to explore opportunities that a new, wider naming policy could create.

2 Context and Situation

Council currently has three policies that contain guidance for naming infrastructure: the Road Naming and Property Numbering Policy 2014, the Reserves Policy 2017, and the Art and Memorials in Public Places Policy 2017.

Elected members and other interested parties have expressed a desire to improve the road naming process, and to promote and support the use of appropriate names in te reo Māori. The review of the Road Naming and Property Numbering Policy 2014 identified that other councils were developing general naming policies. A concurrent review of the Reserves Policy 2017 identified that it contained a section on the naming of reserves and walkways. Further research identified provisions for naming infrastructure in the Art and Memorials in Public Places Policy 2017.

2.1 Council's role in naming infrastructure

Territorial authorities play a significant part in the choice and approval of names, particularly with regard to infrastructure such as roads, parks and reserves, and Council facilities. Under the Local Government Act 1974, part 21, 319(j), councils have power to name and to alter the name of roads. Under the Reserves Act 1977, section 16 (10), territorial authorities have the power to name reserves.

Beyond the practical considerations for naming roads and reserves, under Section 10 of the Local Government Act 2002 the purpose of local government is “to promote the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of communities in the present and for the future.” Ensuring that the names we give to community infrastructure reflect our people and their stories, and promoting the use of te reo Māori, will contribute to cultural wellbeing in the Far North district.

3 Objectives

- To review the existing policy guidance for naming infrastructure.
- To determine whether a new, broader naming policy for infrastructure is the most appropriate way to address issues related to the road naming process.
- To assess whether a broader naming policy for infrastructure could offer the opportunity for significant additional benefits, particularly with regard to promoting the use of te reo Māori and enhancing cultural wellbeing in the Far North District.
- To determine whether a new naming policy could streamline and clarify the Council's policies.

4 Problem and Opportunity Statement

4.1 Scope

The scope is limited to infrastructure that is within Council's power to name, in the Far North district. A naming policy could include guidance for naming several types of infrastructure: roads (both public and private); open spaces (reserves, parks, walkways); and Council facilities (community halls, civic spaces, recreation facilities). The precise scope will need to be developed in consultation with elected members and interested parties.

4.2 Requirements for road naming and property numbering

The Road Naming and Property Numbering Policy 2014 addressed a number of problems that were arising due to inaccurate naming and/or numbering of properties in the Far North district.¹ The ability to accurately identify specific locations is essential for emergency services. It is also crucial for many other services such as utilities, postal deliveries, and couriers.

The requirements for correct and straightforward identification of properties remain essential. Any new or amended policy must ensure that all problems with the accuracy of road naming and numbering are addressed.

4.3 Implementation of the current road naming policy

The problem that has prompted the proposal of a new naming policy has arisen from the implementation of the road naming policy. The Bay of Islands-Whangaroa Community Board have required that all road names are approved in consultation with iwi. However, the current policy does not include procedural guidance for this consultation, and staff are under-resourced to undertake this work. Dissatisfaction with this process has been expressed by iwi representatives and elected members.

Any new or amended policy must ensure that problems with consultation with iwi, and communication between all interested parties, are addressed.

4.4 Naming in Aotearoa New Zealand and the Far North District

A naming policy offers opportunities to enhance cultural wellbeing in our district. Names have special significance. They connect people to the unique identity, stories, culture, and environment of the places to which they belong. Names should reflect the identity, culture, history, and geography of our unique places and communities.

Te Ture mō Te Reo Māori 2016 / The Māori Language Act 2016 recognises te reo Māori as a taonga and an official language of Aotearoa New Zealand. Promoting and revitalising te reo Māori is part of the wider partnership between the Crown and tangata whenua, as expressed in Maihi Karauna.²

The Far North District Council is uniquely positioned to be at the forefront of promoting te reo Māori, as part of the Council's mandate to promote social and cultural wellbeing. Over 50% of our people are Māori. While the number of speakers of te reo Māori averages 4% nationally, in the Far North around 16% of our population speaks te reo Māori.³ Adopting policies that encourage the use of Māori names offers an opportunity to enhance relationships between Council and iwi.

It should be noted that road naming, and names in general, can become a contentious issue. Recent reports in the media underline the reputational risk to the Council if this discussion is not conducted thoughtfully and with sensitivity.⁴

¹ Document number [A1579311](#)

² [Maihi Karauna: The Crown's Strategy for Māori Language Revitalisation 2019-2023](#).

³ [2018 Census](#).

⁴ "[Hamilton politicians shy away from mandatory Māori street names](#)" Stuff, 5 August 2021. It should be noted that mandatory Māori street names was not in fact part of the proposed policy.

5 Review of current policies for naming infrastructure

5.1.1 Road Naming and Property Numbering Policy 2014

FNDC's Road Naming and Property Numbering Policy 2014 aims to ensure correct addressing, so that emergency services and other services can locate a property.

The practical need for clear and unambiguous addressing continues to be relevant. That aspect of this policy is fit for purpose, and should be retained within any future policy. However, the current policy offers no guidance on the social and cultural aspects of naming and placemaking.

When property owners and developers apply for a road name to be approved by Council, the application form used has an appendix offering guidelines for choosing a road name. This guidance refers to the superceded Road Naming Policy 2012, and it is not included in the current 2014 policy. The appendix provides suitable categories from which names should be chosen: history associated with the area, cultural significance, geographic and natural features, a common theme in the location, or noteworthy people. It also states that all Māori names should be submitted to an iwi representative to ensure that they are correct, appropriate, and not offensive.

The Community Boards have delegated authority to approve road names on behalf of Council. At present, the Te Hiku and Kaikohe-Hokianga Community Boards follow the guidance in the application form, and seek feedback from iwi representatives on all Māori road names. Issues have not been reported with this process.

The Bay of Islands-Whangaroa Community Board have required that all road names are approved in consultation with iwi. While this request goes further than the guidelines taken from the superceded 2012 policy, it aligns with the Terms of Reference for Community Boards, namely, that they are expected to "4. Have special regard for the views of Māori." It is also in alignment with the Council's values of manaakitanga and respect for te Tiriti.

However, the implementation of this request has not been delivering satisfactory results. It does not appear to have resulted in any increase in the adoption of names in te reo Māori, or any improvement in communication between interested parties.

Staff report various problems. While many professionals involved in property developments are accustomed to consultation processes, and willing to complete the necessary work, there has sometimes been friction with property owners needing to seek council approval for names for private roads and right-of-ways, which they may view as council infringing on their rights over their property. A further problem arises when the time required to seek approval from LINZ and feedback from iwi representatives causes a delay in the consenting process. Council officers are under-resourced for consultation, and are not currently in a position to facilitate the level of dialogue and communication that may have been envisioned.

The current application form requires applicants to come up with a choice of three names, which are then submitted to LINZ for approval and to iwi representatives for feedback. For some property owners, particularly those who may have little other experience of consultation with iwi, and little knowledge of te reo Māori, the guidance in the form is unlikely to encourage them to consider a name in te reo Māori. There is no assistance offered for how to go about sourcing suggestions for appropriate names, should they wish to, and there is a risk that inappropriate names are submitted.

Correspondence received by FNDC suggests that some iwi representatives are unhappy with the way the road naming consultation process is working. For iwi representatives, the current process involves them receiving a list of three names with brief notes, to comment on. This post hoc approach to consultation does not offer the opportunity for iwi to have meaningful discussion or input. This does not encourage positive dialogue and relationship building.

["John Bryce was a 'fundamentally awful person' but Kiwis name streets after him"](#) Stuff, 15 August 2021.

While the request to consult on all road names aimed to improve communication between Council and tangata whenua, in practice it has not achieved the desired outcome. The implementation of the request does not appear to have been designed with input from Council officers or iwi representatives. Further research, and in particular seeking input from iwi and hapu as to their priorities and capacity, is required to co-design a more meaningful consultation process. Enlisting the advice and support of iwi representatives will be paramount if we are to improve the road naming policy and its implementation.

A policy is the most appropriate mechanism to manage road naming and property numbering. However, further research is required to ensure that the policy is in the appropriate form, and consistent with naming guidelines for other community infrastructure.

5.1.2 Reserves Policy 2017

Council's Reserves Policy 2017 includes a section on the naming of reserves and walkways. It states that names should reflect the history and use of the site, and that the public will be given one month to comment on a proposed name. The policy recommends that a Māori name should be considered if there is a strong Māori connection to a reserve, in consultation with tangata whenua. It also recommends that an appropriate 'European' name should be chosen when there is a strong 'European' cultural connection to a reserve. The policy also allows for dual naming (Māori/'European'). All names for reserves require consultation with tangata whenua, reserve users, neighbours, and other interested parties.

As is the case with road naming, the Council Delegations to Community Boards (January 2013) authorise Community Boards to allocate names for reserves.

Staff do not report problems with the implementation of this policy. However, the description of the cultures of the Far North district as either Māori or 'European' is less than ideal. There is an opportunity to consider how the naming of reserves and the consultation process could be improved.

A policy is the most appropriate mechanism to manage the naming of reserves. However, further research is required to ensure that the policy is in the appropriate form, and consistent with naming guidelines for other community infrastructure.

5.1.3 Art and Memorials in Public Places Policy 2017

The third policy which makes reference to naming is the Art and Memorials in Public Places Policy 2017, which provides guidance when Council receives requests for public buildings, roads, and other facilities to be named after notable local individuals. The policy permits roads, buildings, structures, and open spaces to be named after individuals, as a memorial if the person has died, or with written consent if the individual is still living.

This policy does not include reference to consultation with iwi. Research up to this point has not identified problems arising from this policy.

A policy is an appropriate mechanism to manage the naming of roads, buildings, structures, and open spaces after individuals. However, further research is required to ensure that the policy is in the appropriate form, and consistent with naming guidelines for other community infrastructure.

5.1.4 Naming of other Council facilities in the Far North District

We do not have a policy for the naming of our public buildings. However, the process of naming new council facilities has worked well. Council officers report that names for Te Ahu in Kaitaia and Te Hononga in Kawakawa grew out of an organic, people-centred process, and reflect the kaupapa of their communities. There is an opportunity to draw on learnings from these successful initiatives to improve the way other infrastructure is named.

A policy could be an appropriate mechanism to manage the naming of other Council facilities. However, further research is required to ensure that such a policy is in the appropriate form, and consistent with naming guidelines for other community infrastructure.

5.1.5 *Lack of consistency across the current policies*

Of the three policies which include guidance for naming infrastructure, road naming is the one which has proven to be problematic in its implementation. However, there is also a broader issue, in that the policies do not present a consistent, strategic approach to this aspect of place-making. There is an opportunity to streamline and clarify Council's approach to naming infrastructure in a broader naming policy, in the context of promoting social and cultural wellbeing and supporting the taonga of te reo Māori.

6 Discussion

The policy guidance for naming community infrastructure, found in three separate policies, was reviewed together, to ensure a consistent, best practice approach.

6.1 *Is a policy still the most appropriate way to manage naming in the Far North district?*

The review has identified that a policy is still the most appropriate way to manage road naming and property numbering, the naming of reserves, and requests to name community infrastructure after notable individuals.

The review has also identified that a policy could be an appropriate way to manage the naming of other Council facilities, in order to have a consistent approach.

6.2 *Are the policies in the most appropriate form?*

The Road Naming and Property Numbering Policy 2014 contains guidance on clear and unambiguous addressing, which is still fit for purpose, and this aspect of the policy should be retained. The policy does not include guidance on the social and cultural aspects of road naming. This aspect of the policy requires amendment or incorporation into a new, more general policy.

The guidance on naming in the Reserves Policy 2017 should be amended to describe the cultures of the Far North District more appropriately. The naming provisions in the policy require amendment or incorporation into a new, more general policy.

The Art and Memorials in Public Places Policy 2017 provides guidance when Council receives requests for public buildings, roads, and other facilities to be named after notable local individuals. The policy does not include reference to consultation with iwi. This aspect of the policy requires amendment or incorporation into a new, more general policy.

There is no Council policy for the naming of our public buildings. However, a policy could be an appropriate mechanism, in order to be consistent with naming guidelines for other community infrastructure.

6.3 *Is a new, general naming policy the most appropriate mechanism?*

Research undertaken to date indicates that a new, general naming policy is the most appropriate way to address the current problems related to the road naming process. While the current road naming policy covers the requirements for clear and unambiguous addressing, it offers no guidance on the social and cultural aspects of naming and placemaking.

With regard to road naming, the development of a strategic, cohesive naming policy offers the opportunity to:-

- ensure that the views of interested parties are taken into account;

- invite iwi representatives to have input into designing the level of communication and consultation that they would consider appropriate for road names;
- promote the use of te reo Māori in road names; and,
- improve guidance and support for developers and property owners to seek input from iwi and hapu for suggested road names, should they wish to.

The social and cultural aspects of naming and placemaking represent issues that are wider than road naming alone. Significant problems have not been reported with the implementation of the other policies that offer guidance on naming. However, there is an opportunity to improve the guidance in these policies, to mitigate the risk of future problems.

6.4 Could a broader naming policy for infrastructure offer the opportunity for additional benefits?

A new naming policy would offer several benefits, as it would:-

- ensure that names reflect the unique culture and identity of the Far North district;
- encourage and enable the use of te reo Māori names where appropriate;
- take into account the social and cultural aspects of placemaking;
- align with the Far North District Council's values of manaakitanga and respect for te Tiriti; and,
- enhance the social and cultural wellbeing of the Far North District.

6.5 Could a new naming policy streamline and clarify the Council's policies?

Best practice is to provide consistency in naming across a variety of community infrastructure, and a more general naming policy would do this. Some local councils already have comprehensive naming policies in place (e.g. Wellington City Council, Waipa District Council, Tauranga City Council), and some are developing such policies (e.g. Hastings District Council).

7 Conclusion

At present, Council has three policies that make reference to naming: the Road Naming and Property Numbering Policy 2014, the Reserves Policy 2017, and the Art and Memorials in Public Places Policy 2017. These policies are not cohesive. In particular, dissatisfaction has been expressed with the current road naming policy.

This research report has identified that the development of a new naming policy is an appropriate way to address issues identified with the Road Naming and Property Numbering Policy 2014, and to promote social and cultural wellbeing in the district through encouraging the use of names in te reo Māori. Further research, consultation with interested parties, and workshops with elected members are required to determine the most appropriate form and precise scope of this naming policy.