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**RADA NACZELNA
POLONII AUSTRALIJSKIEJ I NOWOZELANDZKIEJ**

Polish Community Council of Australia and New Zealand Inc.

Mr Scott Austin
Heritage Inquiry Productivity
Commission
Locked Bag 2, Collins Street East
MELBOURNE VIC 8003

Brisbane, 16 January 2006

Dear Mr Austin

Thank you for sending me your Draft Report on Conservation of Australia's Historic Heritage Places. I also appreciate the time you spent discussing with me various aspects of conservation.

As you realize, the Polish Community Council of Australia and New Zealand approached your Commission because the heritage issue we raised (protection of the name of the highest mountain in Australia, Mt. Kosciuszko named by Polish explorer Sir Paul Strzelecki in 1840) does not have its appropriate place in the Australian conservation system.

We perfectly understand the need for conservation of nature as well as historical places. However, during our discussion, I brought to your attention the famous tree in Coopers Creek with Burke and Wills' carving on it which is classified as a heritage place rather than a nature conservation object. This example perfectly shows that the concept of conservation does not have to be rigid and should be open to the new ideas. The other conclusion is that the heritage value of a place should be protected in some way even if it does not conform to the current classification system.

To illustrate my point I would like to cite a few examples where this particularly applies to topographical names. Quite often, as a result of political changes, many historical names were changed carelessly to honour a particular dictator. For example, after the World War II the name of the highest mountain in Czechoslovakia was changed from "Gerlach" to "Stalin", in Bulgaria from "Musala" to "Stalin" as well, in the Sar Planina mountain range in Yugoslavia, the name of highest mountain was changed from "Turkish" to "Tito". After the Russian Revolution the highest peak in The Soviet Union became Lenin's Peak and a historical town - Carycyn (from "Tsar") was changed to "Stalingrad" but after the collapse of the Soviet Union it became "Volgograd". However, in the meantime there was the famous Stalingrad Battle which strongly influenced the result of World War II. Now, historians and teachers have a problem to explain where this battle took place.

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In 1977 the Polish Government decided to change names of about 100 names of townships. The new names did not correspond with topographical names of this beautiful mountain region. The change deprived the region of its character. The new names did not work with books and articles written about this part of Poland. As the whole operation was executed without a proper consultation, the public revolted and forced the Communist Government to restore the historical names. These are just a few examples of how important traditional names are and why they need to be protected. Any politically motivated change of names in the part of Europe, we know, always resulted in public objections and restoration of the original names, sometimes many years later.

This rule also applies to the colonial imposition of names to objects which already had their traditional names. "Ayers Rock" returned to "Uluru", "Mt Egmont" to "Taranaki", "Mount McKinley" to "Denali" etc.

Generally, by common sense historical names should be protected, however, in practice this position does not always prevail. Therefore there is a need for a specific legal protection of exceptional names which, meeting the first requirement - being the original names, are strongly associated with the Australian history and culture and therefore constitute elements of the Australian heritage.

There are more places and names such as "Mt Kosciuszko" that should be legally protected. In Queensland there is an area named Glasshouse Mountains which includes volcanic spires, most of them having original Aboriginal names. And while it seems appropriate to use a name of "Coonoowin" rather than "Crookneck" it would be completely wrong to change the name of "Glasshouse Mountains" given by Captain Cook, as there was no prior Aboriginal name for the collection of these mountains. A quite opposite situation exists in the highest area of Australian Alps where the collection of the highest mountains has its original indigenous name (Munyang) while all the tops have historical European names.

We suggest that in the process of reconciliation all original Aboriginal names, that have been named in the past and are documented be restored, unless they completely don't match the current environment. Places with no names could be given Aboriginal names referring to topographical features or legends. However significant European names older than, lets say, 150 years (in New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania) or 120 years (in other states and territories) should be treated as precious Australian heritage buildings which are not always as old -

I feel that "political correctness" can lead to such questions as "Whether Governor Brisbane was the right person to be given his name of a capital city?" Similar questions were asked in other parts of the world and, as I mentioned before, resulted in political disasters. Let's treat the whole Australian history and heritage with due respect by preserving everything that documents our country's rich historical and multicultural past and will continue to be documented it in the future.

Yours sincerely

Janusz Rygielski