



# ZWIĄZEK HARCERSTWA POLSKIEGO

POLISH SCOUTING ASSOCIATION Z.H.P. IN AUSTRALIA INC.

ABN 96 655 314 335

*Incorporated in Victoria*

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## OKRĘG AUSTRALIA

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## Heritage Inquiry Productivity Commission Conservation of Historic Heritage Places

### 1.0 Introduction

The Polish Scouting Association ZHP in Australia Inc is a not for profit scouting organization designed to group people from the Polish ethnic background wanting to participate in the scouting movement.

Our aims are to develop in Australian youth of Polish descent the following: values embodying good citizenship, a love of the natural environment, knowledge of the Australian and Polish culture, history and language among others. We are the Australian branch of the worldwide organisation whose headquarters are in London. We also cooperate with the Australian scouting movement and other ethnic scouting movements within Australia, and participate in common activities.

Our activities include country wide trips and camps aiming to familiarise ourselves and the youth under our care with the geography and historic and heritage aspects of Australia, in an endeavour to instil in our charges and members, the love of their native country, the country of their birth, as well as a respect for the country of their forefathers.

In this submission we would like to address two issues of concern.

The first issue relates to the protection of the name of the highest mountain in continental Australia – Mt. Kosciuszko as a place and name of historical significance.

The second issue relates to the provision of adequate information relating to Mt. Kosciuszko at the site of the mountain.

### 2.0 Protection of the name of Mt. Kosciuszko

#### 2.1 Issue

Recently, there have been some proposals to change the name of the highest mountain in Australia – Mt. Kosciuszko or to provide it with a dual name. Currently, this proposal is included as part of the “Kosciuszko National Park Draft Management Plan” created by the New South Wales Parks and Wildlife Service.

There are no real reasons that we are able to ascertain, behind the suggestion for the change. It may be caused by the general lack of knowledge and understanding of the values associated with the name Kosciuszko, its significance, and contribution of Sir Paul Edmund de Strzelecki to the exploration of Australia. The dual name also can not be justified due to the lack of the indigenous or any other prior name for the mountain. Despite the presence of the Aborigines and the stockmen in the region, there was no known name for the mountain and there is no evidence that this particular mountain had any value for the above mentioned groups.

Thus the “new” name would have to be made up. That change would erase the historical aspects of the place, negate the rights of a respected explorer to name the geographical features that he / she discovered and erase the 160 year old history associated with the place. It would also provide a massive blow to the Polish community in Australia and its contribution to the creation of this modern country. It could be considered as a contradiction to the policy of multicultural Australia.

The Polish Scouting Association ZHP in Australia Inc, together with other Polish organizations in Australia, is interested in protection of the name of Mt. Kosciuszko and the history of the location. The exploration of the highest mountains in Australia and the associated naming of the geographical features is part of the history of modern Australia that has been created and developed by people from various ethnic backgrounds.

## **2.2 Who was Kosciuszko**

Tadeusz Kosciuszko (1746 –1817) was a Polish national hero widely known in many countries for his military genius and his ideas of equality and liberty.

He fought in the American Revolutionary War on the side of George Washington. For his service, he was awarded the rank of the Brigadier – General by the United States Congress. He was considered as one of the best engineers in the American service and was put in charge of many important military engineering works such the West Point and Philadelphia. For his contribution he was also granted American citizenship, land and a financial reward, which he used to free some African slaves.

In Poland, Kosciuszko rose to the rank of the Lieutenant General, was awarded the Virtuti Militari medal (the highest military decoration of Poland) and was considered as one of the most brilliant Polish military commanders. He took part in the War in the Defence of the Polish Constitution (the first modern constitution in Europe) against Russia and later led the Kosciuszko Uprising as a Commander in Chief of all Polish forces fighting against the Russian occupation.

He was the first to cross the divide of the social background of the people in his country and treated all people equally regardless of whether they were peasant, town folk or noble. His standard had a phrase written on it “For freedom Ours and Yours”. That behaviour was considered as a dangerous liberalism by many of the time.

In France, the French Legislative Assembly awarded Kosciuszko an honorary citizenship of France in honour of his fight for the freedom of his fatherland and the ideas of equality and liberty. Kosciuszko was also highly regarded by Napoleon Bonaparte who unsuccessfully tried to recruit him for the war against Russia.

Before his death he had freed his Polish serfs from serfdom and left his American estate for the emancipation of the slaves in America and their education.

Tadeusz Kosciuszko died in Switzerland, suffering from poor health and old wounds. After his death his ashes were transferred to a crypt in the Wawel Cathedral in Krakow, the resting place of the Polish national heroes and kings.

Through his deeds, Tadeusz Kosciuszko inspired many other people who greatly contributed to many important causes and became heroes in their own right in Poland and abroad.

As an international hero, he became the namesake of numerous places in the world as well as a patron of many various institutions.

Much more information about Kosciuszko can be obtained from a large range of sources available through the libraries and the Internet.

### **2.3 The value and relevance of the name Kosciuszko to Australia**

The name Kosciuszko stands for the fight for freedom, liberty and equality of people of various ethnic, social and racial backgrounds. In particular the latter is of great importance to modern day Australia.

Today Australia is a free, multicultural nation, where the rights of its citizens are respected and the values of people of various ethnic backgrounds are highly regarded. Equally, many years ago, Kosciuszko fought for the freedom of his homeland and promoted the values of equality amongst the people from various social and racial backgrounds. As part of the Australian multicultural society, the Polish community is proud to contribute the name of one of its greatest national heroes to such an important geographical feature as the highest mountain in Australia.

Currently, the name Kosciuszko is associated with the Polish community in Australia. This is mainly because of Mt. Kosciuszko and the Kosciuszko National Park. There are many Polish ethnic organizations that chose Kosciuszko as their patron. The Polish Scouting Association ZHP in Australia Inc is interested in the education of the Australian society about Tadeusz Kosciuszko and his values. Through the existence of the Association in Australia it has organised a number of camps for its scouts in the vicinity of the Mt. Kosciuszko.

### **2.4 Who was Strzelecki and what was his contribution to Australia**

Sir Paul Edmund de Strzelecki (1797 – 1873) was a Polish nobleman, explorer and geologist.

He gained his popularity through his exploration and voyages of North and South America, Cuba, Tahiti and New Zealand. At the request of George Gipps, Governor of New South Wales he made a geological and mineralogical survey of the Gippsland region of Victoria. He set out on an expedition into the Australian Alps and together with James Macarthur explored the Snowy Mountains. He was the first explorer to officially climb, measure and name the mountain, which is today known as Mt. Kosciuszko. Strzelecki has been obviously inspired by Tadeusz Kosciuszko (described above) and chose to give the grandest name he could think of to the mountain which he considered as the highest in Australia. Strzelecki has also named many other geographical features in the region. The geographical names given by Strzelecki have since then been widely accepted and used for over 160 years.

His exploration is described in his book “Physical description of New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land”, which is widely available in Australia.

He has also explored various regions of Tasmania.

In his book, he made numerous observations about the way of life of Aboriginal People and noted the destructive influence of the settlement of Australia by the Europeans on the Aboriginal people.

He was a member of the Royal Geographic Society and, therefore, an accredited explorer and member of the Royal Society.

He was knighted by the British Queen for his contribution to saving many lives during the Irish potato famine and helping impoverished Irish families to seek new lives in Australia.

Much more information about Sir Paul Edmund de Strzelecki and his exploration is available through various resources available in the libraries and the Internet.

## **2.5 Reasons to protect the name – Mt. Kosciuszko**

The Polish Scouting Association ZHP in Australia Inc would like to provide the following reasons for the protection of the name - Mt. Kosciuszko:

- Mt. Kosciuszko, being the highest mountain in Australia, is of national significance and it is on the Register of the National Estate. Therefore, any major changes affecting the mountain should be considered at a national level, despite the jurisdiction of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service for the provision of the day to day management of the mountain. Mt. Kosciuszko is among the most important geographical names in Australia such as Sydney Harbour, The Twelve Apostles (please note the lack of the proposal to change the name despite the natural processes affecting the place) and Fraser Island.
- Respect of the right of a known accredited explorer to name geographical features he / she discovers, given that the names are widely accepted by the community and the authorities. Please, note that there are many European names given to various geographical features throughout Australia. Some examples include: Point Danger, Mt. Warning and Glass House Mountains in Queensland and New South Wales named by Captain Cook during his exploration of Australian coast line. The validity of geographical names is further supported by their prolonged common use over a very long period of time (over 160 years).
- Respect for the contribution of the Polish community into the exploration and development of multicultural Australia. The Polish community in Australia is classified among the “top ten” in the Australian Multicultural Book (2001).
- The lack of an Aboriginal or any other valid name for the mountain. There is no evidence that the mountain was of significance to Aboriginal people or early stockmen due to the lack of interesting topographical features. It is also known that the mountain has no known food sources that could be used by native Australians or any animals hoarded by early stockmen. The mountain itself does not stand out as being the highest in the range. There are other mountains in the range with much more interesting topography and with the identified food sources that could have been used by the Aborigines. Yet there are no known Aboriginal names for them to indicate their interest in naming those mountains. Without any interesting features and no food sources Mt. Kosciuszko could hardly stimulate an interest of the native Australians. Also, no explorer noted a different name for the mountain despite collecting the original names of geographical features given by the native inhabitants. The mountain known as Mt. Kosciuszko and its name became significant through its exploration and measurements made by Sir Paul Edmund de Strzelecki.

## **3.0 Provision of information relating to Mt. Kosciuszko and its exploration**

### **3.1 Issue**

For many decades the top of the Mt. Kosciuszko has been marked by the bronze plaque of historical value (mounted in 1940) providing information about Mt. Kosciuszko and its exploration.

In the late 90's, the copy of the original plaque, damaged by vandals and the elements, has been replaced by a plastic plaque with a different inscription less accurate but still containing the portion of the original description. Some of the information that is missing relates to the description of what Strzelecki's achievements were and the names of the members of Strzelecki's party including the Aboriginal guides. The original and the copy of the original plaque have been initially stored by the New South Wales National Park and Wildlife Service. Recently they were retrieved by an employee of the Polish Embassy in Canberra and stored in the Embassy.

### **3.2 Recommendation**

The Polish Scouting Association ZHP in Australia Inc would like to see a return of a copy of the original information plaque to the top of the mountain. It could be the plaque currently stored in the Embassy, or another plaque containing an accurate description relating to the information about the mountain, the significance of the name Kosciuszko and the exploration of the mountain by Sir Paul Edmund de Strzelecki. This is to promote the spread of knowledge about the mountain and its historical and heritage value to the general Australian and Polish community.

We also recommend the inclusion of a monument / marker with the description of the mountain on the top of the mountain. This is with the provision that the monument / marker is not obstructive and is made from the local material such as granite.

## **4.0 Conclusion**

The Polish Scouting Association ZHP in Australia Inc is interested in the two issues listed below in the scope of the Conservation of the Historic Heritage Places.

**Issue 1:** Protection of the name of Mt. Kosciuszko given by the explorer Sir Paul Edmund de Strzelecki.

The Association would like to see the name Kosciuszko preserved due to its historical and heritage reasons and the rights of the explorer Sir Paul Edmund de Strzelecki respected to acknowledge the contribution of the Polish Australian community to the creation of this modern multicultural nation.

**Issue 2:** Return of the original historic plaque to the top of Mt. Kosciuszko.

The Association would like to see a return of a copy or the original plaque to the top of the Mountain with the original description or description more accurate than the current available. This is to promote the education of the community into the history of Australia, of which the discovery of the highest mountain in Australia was a part, the education of the meaning of the name "Kosciuszko" and the contribution of the explorer Sir Paul Edmund de Strzelecki.

With Regards,

Rafal Drozdz pwd.

On behalf of

The Polish Scouting Association ZHP in Australia Inc.