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OPERATING GUIDELINES

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Geographic Names Board Operating Guidelines¹

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1 BACKGROUND

Geographical names are an essential reference system for transportation and communication and are perhaps the most commonly and widely used form of spatial information. Clear, unambiguous names for populated places, roads and physical features are essential for correct reference in resource development and planning and standard forms of names are important elements of reliable maps and charts. The orderly process of designating names for landscape and seascape phenomena permits the government through the Geographic Names Board to exercise its prerogative in managing and protecting this aspect of Samoan culture and heritage.

Foremost is the demand for accurate information in the protection of life and property by emergency service organisations. At a more general level, current data on location and extent is required by a wide range of administrative and planning agencies, such as statistics for population and census planning and development programs. At another level again, there is a growing expectation of access to the historical and heritage data which is inherent in the record of place names.

There is presently no system of street addressing in Samoa. A street address, or property number, is used for many facets of day to day life, whether in a social environment or in the day to day running of business. It is proposed here that the Geographic Names Board has a primary role in the development, and progressive implementation, of a strategy for street addressing for Samoa.

2 INTRODUCTION

These guidelines are part of a suite of policy and legislative proposals which impact on the production, management and application of spatial information (formerly known as national mapping) in Samoa. The adoption of these guidelines is dependent on the adoption of these proposals - the principle ones being:

1. **Spatial Information Act.** This Act sets out the structural framework for the management and use of spatial information in Samoa. A key component of the structure is the establishment of the *Spatial Information Agency* as an operational division of MNREM. Part 4 of this Act establishes the Geographic Names Board and defines the powers and function of this Board
2. **Spatial Information Agency.** This agency will, as part of its role as custodian of Samoa's national maps and its core national spatial datasets, be responsible for maintaining the geographic place names registers and databases. It will also deliver technical and other support to the Geographic Names Board and through this support exercise much of the routine place and road naming functions by delegation.

3 PRINCIPLES

3.1 Geographic Names Board

Responsibility for the naming of all places² in Samoa ultimately resides with the Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Meteorology. Under the proposed *Spatial Information Act* for Samoa a Geographic Names Board (Board) is established as a statutory advisory board within the Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Meteorology (MNREM). The primary role of the Board is to provide advice and assistance to the Minister and to develop rules and guidelines for designating place names throughout Samoa for approval by the Minister.

It is proposed that the Board will be fully supported by a secretariat provided by *the Spatial Information Agency*³; a Division of the MNREM. The secretariat serves the needs of the real estate, government and mapping industries for place names and will develop and maintain a computer database that holds essential information on all named roads and places in the nation. In practice many of the routine functions of the Board will be delegated to the secretariat.

The Board represents many different points of view, from local communities to professional institutions and government agencies within Samoa. It provides an inexpensive mechanism to make democratic naming decisions for the Government.

In the draft Spatial Information Act the Board is proposed to consist of 6 members:

- (1) The Minister who shall be chairperson;
- (2) The CEO who shall be deputy chairperson;
- (3) Four other members to be appointed by Cabinet from time to time on the recommendation of the Minister

3.2 General naming principles

3.2.1 Community consultation

The naming of places is essentially a local community issue. The overarching principle then is that, when allocating a new name or changing an existing one, the Board will ensure the local community is extensively consulted to determine their view before any recommendations are made.

3.2.2 Sources of names

Suitable Names - Preferred sources of names include names from the Samoan language currently or formerly identified with the general area, pioneers of the nation or area, citizens who have made a significant community contribution and thematic names of (say) a nautical or sporting nature. Gender diversity is encouraged. All name proposals must clearly identify the origin of the name and provide relevant references to allow for the verification of the name.

² "Place" is defined in the legislation as meaning any town, village, settlement, district, division, locality, feature, object, road or reserve over the land and maritime jurisdiction of Samoa

³ A draft Act establishing the Spatial Information Agency is in Technical Assistance Report No. 14 (June 2005 – revised August 2005)

Unsuitable Names – The following names are to be avoided - given/first names, corrupted, unduly cumbersome or difficult to pronounce names, obscene, derogatory, racist or discriminating names, company or commercialised names - unless there is a historical context. Duplication of names within the same or adjoining localities is also to be avoided.

Names of Living Persons - The names of living persons are not normally suitable for place names, and if proposed will be subject to a more rigorous selection process. The proposal must be accompanied by comprehensive biographical details including details of community involvement, and also an indication of strong community support for the proposed name.

3.2.3 General principles

Other general principles which should be applied when developing guidelines include:

- New names and changes of names should have strong local community support.
- Names in public use shall have primary consideration.
- Name duplication and dual naming should be avoided, especially those in close proximity.
- Names of living individuals should be used only in exceptional circumstances.
- Generic terms must be appropriate to the features described.
- New names proposed must be accompanied by exact information as to location, feature identification, origin, or if alteration is proposed, by a rationale.

4 GUIDELINES

4.1 Roads

4.1.1 Introduction

The naming of public roads, streets and all other thoroughfares should conform to the general policy regarding selection of names.

The naming of private roads, laneways and rights of way is outside the scope of the Board's responsibility, and is a function of the local village. Laneways will normally only be named if a name is required for addressing purposes. All such names should however be notified to the secretary of the Board for inclusion in any street directories and to assist the emergency services.

4.1.2 Naming roads

New Roads - Survey plans require approved road names before the survey can be approved for registration. The developer or their agent (surveyor) should consult with the secretariat of the Board as early as possible in the preparation of a scheme or development plan. The secretariat should maintain a list of preferred names. Alternatively the developer may be allowed discretion, particularly with larger developments, for the selection of names which conform to the above guidelines. In either case road names must be approved by the Board before approval of a survey plan.

Existing Roads – Unnamed roads should be treated in a like manner to new roads. Proposals for renaming roads should follow the above guideline and be submitted through the secretariat of the Board. Proposals should be accompanied by a map showing the extent of the name and full details on the name, including the reason for the selection.

4.1.3 Renaming roads

The renaming of roads is discouraged unless there are good reasons for a change of name. Typical reasons are redesign of a road, changed traffic flow, misspelling of a name and duplication problems. Renaming is particularly necessary when a road is converted to a cul-de-sac, resulting in two or more separated sections of road, as this can provide difficulties for emergency services. Renaming may also be helpful in solving house numbering problems, when a system of street addressing is introduced in Samoa.

Where a change to the name of a road is proposed the name selected should conform to the above guidelines. In addition, for regional roads the change of name should have broad community support, and for local roads, majority support from affected residents. However, the requirements of emergency services for clear unambiguous naming will also be a consideration. Proposals normally require the support of the local community, but the Minister is the final authority in all such matters.

4.2 Administrative boundaries

4.2.1 Introduction

The term “Administrative Boundary” is used to mean the boundary defining the extent of any town, district, land division, village or locality in Samoa⁴. The term does not include electoral boundaries which are subject to the Electoral Act.

The naming of administrative areas should conform to the general policy regarding selection of names. Submissions are always made to the Minister by individuals or groups who normally will seek community support for a proposal. Accurate mapping details are essential for all such proposals.

4.2.2 Establishing administrative boundaries

Boundaries should be established in accordance with the following:-

- Natural boundaries i.e. rivers, shorelines, creeks.
- Centreline of major highways, divided carriageways, other roads.
- Village boundaries.

⁴ From Spatial Information Act – Draft revised August 2005

Boundaries currently along the back of lots facing a road are to be maintained where residents and village administration currently accept such boundaries and do not desire a change.

4.2.3 Changing administrative boundaries

Proposals to change any administrative boundary must be directed to the Minister in the first instance. The Minister may direct the Geographic Names Board to undertake an investigation into the proposed change and return a recommendation to the Minister as appropriate.

4.2.4 Naming administrative areas

In accord with the general naming principle, areas may not be named in honour of someone still living. Names for new administrative areas or changes of names should have a Samoan emphasis and be selected from the following categories:-

- a) Name associated with the area:
 - Samoan - feature or descriptive.
 - Locational or descriptive name.
 - Pioneer settler of the area.
 - Early property name.

- b) Name associated with the development of the nation:
 - Statesman or former politician.
 - Other, for example – a ship, an event, etc.

- c) Other choice of name:-
 - Any special flora or fauna associated with the area.

4.2.5 Renaming administrative areas

Renaming proposals submitted to the Geographic Names Board, which conform to the preceding guidelines, are likely to succeed only if there are sound reasons for a change. The proposal must have some of the following typical requirements:-

- The proposal is supported by a broad-based community survey indicating very strong community support for the name change.
- The proposal has village government support.
- The proposal is to rename all or part of a locality before urban development occurs.
- The proposal is based on a locality being divided by a newly constructed major road or communication feature.
- The current name can be easily confused with another name and has emergency services problems.

- The proposed name has some long-standing association with the village or general locality.
- The proposal is based on a change to village or other boundaries.

Renaming proposals submitted to the Geographic Names Board, while conforming to the preceding guidelines, are unlikely to succeed if:-

- The proposal seeks to adopt an inappropriate developer's name coined to promote a development.
- The proposed name has no relationship to the area or is a made up name.
- The proposed name is duplicated or similar in spelling or sound to an existing Samoan town, village or locality name.
- The proposal does not have strong local community support.

4.3 Parks & reserves

4.3.1 Introduction

The following general guidelines apply when naming parks or reserves:

- Priority will be given to the naming of parks and reserves after an adjacent street or feature to maximise the identification of that park or reserve with an area.
- Names that commemorate, or may be construed to commemorate living persons, will not be considered for parks or reserves.
- Proposals to name parks or reserves should include evidence of strong community support for the name. This support can be ascertained by some of the following:-
 - Advertising proposals to name parks and reserves in local papers, inviting comments.
 - Erection of signs on the park or reserve, advising of the proposed name.
 - Advising residents in the area surrounding the park or reserve of the proposed name in writing.
 - Advising local progress associations of proposed names and requesting their comments.

For personal names, the person being honoured by the naming should have either had a direct long-term association with the area, or have made a significant contribution to the area of the proposed park or reserve, or the nation.

4.3.2 Naming parks and reserves

Proposals for the naming of parks and reserves should be forwarded to the secretariat of the Geographic Names Board and should include:-

- Proof of community support, including evidence of consultation.
- A map showing the location of the park or reserve.
- The reason for the choice of name.

- For personal names: biographical details, including dates of birth and death (if relevant), length and years of service or association

4.3.3 Re-naming parks and reserves

Names chosen for parks and reserves are expected to be permanent, and renaming is discouraged. If renaming is proposed because of some exceptional circumstance, evidence of substantial community support for a change of name must be provided.

4.4 Physical features

4.4.1 Introduction

Naming proposals for physical features may be received from the general public, companies, village government and statutory authorities. Proposals should conform to the guiding principles outlined above for general naming.

4.4.2 Procedure

Proposals are to be submitted to the secretariat of the Geographic Names Board. The feature/s to be named should be carefully investigated to check if there is an existing Samoan name and each proposal should include:-

- reason for proposal;
- location by latitude and longitude, either geographic coordinates or Samoan Map Grid coordinates;
- identification on a map indicating precise extent;
- photographs or sketches; and
- origin and meaning of name proposed.

4.5 Mapping Production

4.5.1 Introduction

When a person, organisation or authority proposes to compile a map for general publication, the relevant section of the Spatial Information Agency of MNREM is able to supply an up-to-date listing of all approved names relevant to the area under examination. Listings can be supplied in analogue or digital form and can be varied to suit specific requirements.

4.5.2 Procedure

Where mapping includes fieldwork all available sources of information should be investigated. Unapproved names obtained from land owners, residents, village government or signposts should be submitted to the Geographic Names Board for consideration.

Submissions of names obtained by 'local investigation' should include:-

- the current use or otherwise of recorded names and variants of these;

- local names and variants in use, for those features which have no recorded names; and
- proof of general enquiry concerning the evidence of any name in use in the area.

The investigation should include aspects of derivation and origin, time in use, and in particular, form of spelling. The reliability of the information gained and weight of opinion should be tested by reference to as many informants as possible. In addition, care must be taken to determine the exact positions for the application of the names, all of which should be recorded for submission to the Geographic Names Board.

4.6 Street addressing

4.6.1 Introduction

Street address is used for many facets of day to day life, whether in a social environment or in the day to day running of business. We require accurate street addressing for the delivery of goods, letters and bills and for the location of properties by friends, service utilities and emergency services.

At present there is no system of street addressing or property numbering in Samoa. The World Bank Postal and Telecommunications Sector Reform Project is presently being undertaken, however this does not propose to consider the introduction of a system of street addressing. SamoaTel⁵, who are responsible for the postal component of the project, believe that the general uncertainty and instability surrounding the definition of administrative boundaries renders the introduction of street addressing premature. This is entirely reasonable under the circumstances. Nevertheless there is strong support from SamoaTel and others for the introduction of a street address /property numbering system in Samoa – especially in Apia.

4.6.2 Responsibility for Street Addressing

The proposed Spatial Information Agency, has responsibility for the core spatial databases of Samoa. It also provides the secretariat of the Geographic Names Board and presents itself as the logical custodian⁶ of the national street address system. Thus, under normal circumstances the Geographic Names Board should charge the Spatial Information Agency with the establishment of guidelines covering:

- (i) The process of assigning numbers to existing properties and dwellings; and
- (ii) The procedure, based on development and subdivisions for assigning numbers to new properties.

However, there are clearly policy issues affecting such an action at the present time.

⁵ Interview General Manager Postal, Ioane Tagata

⁶ A "Custodian agency" is defined in the Spatial Information Act as an agency of the Government of Samoa assigned responsibility and accountability for certain spatial information.

4.6.3 Strategy for street addressing

In the first instance the anecdotal evidence, strong as it may appear, must be converted into an overall policy to adopt a system of street addressing in Samoa. Under the prevailing circumstances, any system of street addressing will require to be introduced progressively within a more stable framework of clearly defined and recognized administrative boundaries. It is therefore considered that a strategic direction is required before guidelines for street addressing can be reasonably developed and adopted.

Thus, the Geographic Names Board (once constituted) should be directed, as a priority, to undertake a strategic study of street addressing for Samoa. The study should examine as a minimum:

- (i) The present situation;
- (ii) The demand for street addressing;
- (iii) The benefits of street addressing
- (iv) The cost of street addressing
- (v) Pre-requisites for an effective system of street addressing;
- (vi) A policy for street addressing, and if positive, conclude with
- (vii) An implementation strategy;

5 CONCLUSION

This paper is designed to serve as a guide to the naming of places and cultural detail in Samoa, allowing for the orderly recording and authorisation of names. It is hoped it will be a valuable source of information and guidance to government, businesses and individuals who are involved in this process.