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**EASTERN CAPE PROVINCIAL GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES COMMITTEE (ECPGNC)**

## **RESPONSES TO PUBLIC OBJECTIONS – PUBLIC HEARINGS HELD ON 11 FEBRUARY 2016 IN GRAHAMSTOWN**

To: The Keep Grahamstown Grahamstown (KGG), the Grahamstown Residents' Association, and Members of these Organizations who have submitted written objections to the proposed re-naming of 'Grahamstown' to 'Makhanda'

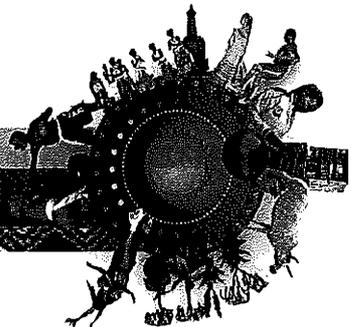
The Eastern Cape Provincial Geographical Names Committee (ECPGNC) has noted that collectively, your objections are mainly based on historical, legislative compliance, socio-economic, business and economic, precedent and miscellaneous considerations. Its responses to the objections are as follows:

### 1. Historical considerations

One of the objectives of standardizing geographical names is to affirm and contextualize history and not to wipe it away. The appeal to history to make a case for keeping names associated with colonialism, such as the name 'Grahamstown' is a blatant defence and affirmation of colonialism and racial discrimination. It flies against the principle of symbolic reparation that was pronounced by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) back in 1994. In line with SAGNC Guidelines, the applicants' proposal is based on "Redress, where a name is changed on the basis of historical considerations".

### 2. Legislative compliance considerations

The ECPGNC derives its mandate to facilitate standardization of geographical names from the South African Geographical Names Council Act (Act No. 118 of 1998), guided by South African Geographical Names Council Guidelines.





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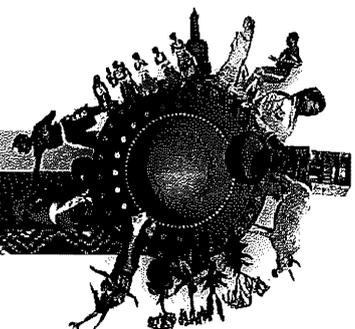
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The process of standardization of a geographical name begins with the receipt of an application form. An application may be lodged by an individual or a group of individuals irrespective of his/her/their employment status. The ECPGNC then ensures that the applicant/s have provided sufficient motivation for the application to be subjected to a consultative process. It also assists such a process by beefing-up the information provided by the applicant/s on both the existing name and the proposed new name. The consultative process begins with the ECPGNC, working with and through its respective District/Metro Sub-Committee, inviting relevant stakeholders to a consultative meeting at which the application/s is/are presented. Such a consultative meeting is also aimed at explaining the consultative process to be followed, resolving any contentious issues that may arise, endorsing the proposed date/s for public hearings and soliciting the co-operation of stakeholders in ensuring that the consultative process becomes fully representative. A critical mandate that each stakeholder's representative is given at the consultative meeting is to facilitate a meeting/s of its constituency and impart, with possible assistance from the District/Metro Geographical Names Committee, all the information gathered from the consultative meeting and use it as a basis for discussion and soliciting the views of members of the constituency on the proposals.

Pertaining to the application for the renaming of 'Grahamstown', two applications were received from Mr X. Mali and Mr M. Nondzube. A stakeholder consultative meeting was convened, in line with the process outlined above, on 16 September 2015. A stakeholder that declined the invitation to attend the meeting was the *Keep Grahamstown Grahamstown (KGG)*, ostensibly because the process had been undertaken three times before. They declined to have anything to do with the consultative process despite an assurance that the previous process they were referring to, which was facilitated primarily by the Makana Local Municipality, was aimed at promoting awareness and testing the views of the public about the possibility of a name change of the town. It was further explained that the present consultative process was as outlined in the first paragraph above.

The date of the public hearings that were to be held on 19 November 2015 was a product of the resolution of the stakeholder consultative meeting. Unfortunately, the hearings had to be postponed following an announcement by a representative of the Makana Municipal Council at the venue of the hearings that community attendance of the hearings would definitely be negatively





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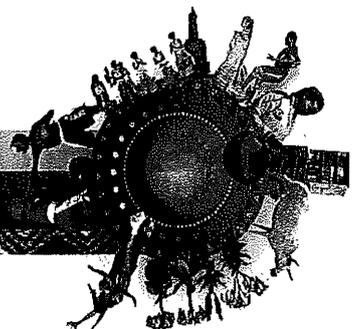
affected due to a spate of xenophobic violence that was engulfing parts of the Grahamstown community on that day. The hearings were re-convened on 11 February 2016. Stakeholders in the Makana Local Municipality were duly notified. The KGG also received the notification but still insisted that they would have nothing to do with the consultative process.

The public hearings were adequately publicised through stakeholder invitations, posters posted at public spaces in Grahamstown and through provincial newspapers – Die Burger, l'solezwe lesiXhosa, Daily Dispatch and the Herald. Three Radio Talk-Shows on Radio Grahamstown were also aired during the month of November 2015.

The ECPGNC also advertised a public notice in the four provincial newspapers inviting comments/objections on the outcomes of the public hearings.

The public hearings that were conducted by the ECPGNC on 11 February 2016, and the outcomes thereof, were the culmination of a consultative process that had started with the stakeholder consultative meeting that was held on 16 November 2016. Many members of the Grahamstown community may not have physically been present at the hearings but their views were heard and communicated through their representatives. Those who argue that the number of people who attended the public hearings was insufficient to render them credible unfortunately miss the point. A question that one may ask them is how many people they deem sufficient to make a credible public hearing. The ECPGNC does not treat the community consultative process as a once-off event. It views and treats public hearings as the culmination of a public consultative process. It is unfortunate that those who raise this argument deliberately deprived themselves of participation in the process in the belief that they would render the process a futile exercise through non-participation and encouragement of others not to participate. What they cannot and refuse to understand is that **there was not a single dissenting view** on the proposed renaming of 'Grahamstown' to 'Makhanda' at the public gathering (i.e. the public hearings) which they wish to be viewed as 'unrepresentative'. One may wonder why the people who now so vehemently object to the proposed renaming of the town never bothered to participate and communicate their opposing views publicly during the consultative process.

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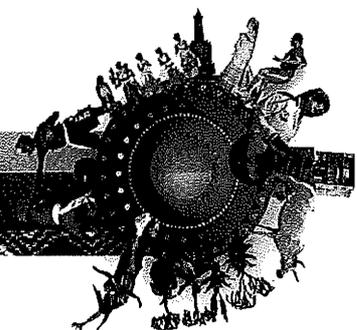
The ECPGNC maintains that it is the sole legitimate body in the Province that is mandated with facilitating standardization of names of geographical features of a provincial nature, based on applications it receives from members of the public. It further maintains that it conducted the community consultative process on four (applications), including the renaming of 'Grahamstown' to 'Makhanda', in adherence to South African Geographical Names Council Guidelines on standardization of geographical names.

3. Socio-economic considerations

The legislative mandate of the ECPGNC which it derives from the South African Geographical Names Council (SAGNC) Act (Act No.118 of 1998) is to facilitate the standardization of names of geographical features in the Province in adherence to SAGNC Guidelines. The role of facilitating the process, which relies on adequate consultation of the affected communities, is key to the mandate of the ECPGNC. The objection to the proposed renaming of 'Grahamstown' based on the allegation that renaming the town is a waste of money which should rather be re-directed towards improving the infrastructure of the town is not tenable. Transformation of the geographic naming landscape in the Province is a government program that has a specific budget allocation. Improving the infrastructure of the town is a legislative mandate of the Makana Local Municipality – not of the ECPGNC. Improving the general livelihood of the people of Grahamstown (i.e. building houses, clinics, schools, etc.) is budgeted for by the Provincial Government through relevant Departments. It is a well-known fact that in government, budgets are allocated towards specific programs and cannot be diverted to other programs.

4. Business and Economic considerations

The objection to the proposed renaming of the town based on arguments such as that 'Grahamstown' is already a brand name, and that re-branding the town will be costly is also not substantive enough to warrant validity. The fact that a name may have developed, over many years of its use, into a brand, does not make it necessarily acceptable to all sections of society.





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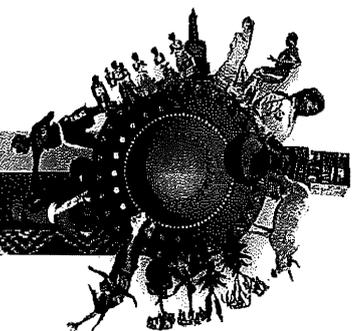
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Branding is a deliberate and subjective act. In the case of 'Grahamstown' it has been used to associate the name of Colonel Graham with excellence in education and in the arts and thus sway the public from questioning the origins of the name. It is the view of the ECPGNC that the town, not the name in itself, is indeed associated with excellence in the aforementioned areas. The town will therefore not need to be re-branded once it is renamed. The new name, which adheres to the principle of symbolic reparation established by the TRC, will take over as the brand name. This argument, therefore, cannot be used to defend the use of a name that is associated with brutal colonial subjugation and racial discrimination. Any positive transformation comes at a cost. Standardization of geographical names is a process that is not confined to South Africa. It is a process that has taken place, and is taking place, in countries all over the world, particularly in those that have previously been colonised. When colonialists replaced original names of indigenous geographical features, the issue of cost was never an issue. Many name changes have occurred in the country without resulting in economic or business slumps. Where businesses have been affected, they have had play their part in bearing the costs of transformation. It is a fact that in the long run, the affected businesses, and indeed the country at large, benefited from the name changes. We mention a few prominent examples in this regard: 'Jan Smuts International Airport' to 'OR Tambo International Airport'; 'Rand Afrikaans University' to 'Johannesburg University'; 'University of Port Elizabeth' to 'Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University'; 'Barklays Bank' to 'First National Bank'; and 'United Bank' to 'ABSA'.

5. Precedent considerations

In objecting to the proposed renaming of 'Grahamstown' the *Keep Grahamstown Grahamstown* organization base their argument on precedent, alleging that this case is similar to *The Chairperson's Association v Minister of Arts & Culture & Others* (Case No.25/2006) in which the Judgment of the Supreme Court of Appeal, as delivered on 3 March 2007, stated:

"[46] The guideline is that before a proposal for a name change, even one of a transformatory nature, is considered, adequate consultation with local communities and other stakeholders must take place."





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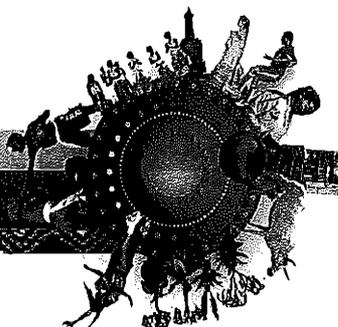
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Assuming that the case quoted above is similar to the one in question, the ECPGNC maintains that it did the best it could to conduct adequate consultation through a consultative meeting with stakeholders in the Makana Local Municipality and through a public hearing session that was preceded with meetings of respective stakeholder constituencies within the community of Grahamstown. Details of the consultative process followed have already been given under Legislative compliance considerations (Item No. 2) above.

6. Miscellaneous considerations

It is unfortunate that objections in this category reflect the views of people who are so emotionally attached to the name and steeped in their one-sided view of the matter that they refused to be part of the consultative process that was conducted by the ECPGNC. There is obviously something very odd in the view that a name that is synonymous with brutal colonial atrocities unites all sections of the community and should therefore be retained. There is something that smacks of racism and community divisiveness in the view that 'Grahamstown is a special place for English Speaking South Africans'. There would be nothing new and strange in the sharing its name with that of the local municipality. In terms of SAGNC Guidelines, there is nothing wrong with that. The town 'Mbizana' in the O.R. Tambo District has long shared its name with the 'Mbizana Local Municipality'. The suggestion that a compromise is presently in place pertaining to the local municipality having the name 'Makana' and the name 'Grahamstown' being retained misses the point completely. A hundred percent of members of the community who attended the public hearings shared the view that 'Grahamstown' be renamed to 'Makhanda' on the basis of the historical brutal atrocities bestowed by Colonel Graham over the indigenous communities in the name of British colonialism. The compromise that is being suggested by objectors to the name change is therefore not tenable. The issue of name changes will undoubtedly be very divisive as long as there are individuals and groups in society who harbour a sense of entitlement over decisions on whether to change or retain certain geographical names, in disregard of views expressed through ECPGNC public consultative processes.





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If the KGG, the GRA or any of their members who lodged their individual objections in writing, are dissatisfied with the response of the ECPGNC, they are free to appeal to the South African Geographical Names Council (SAGNC). They will have thirty (30) days from the day on which they received the ECPGNC response within which they may lodge their written appeals.

Please note that if lodged by an organization, the appeal should be accompanied by the following:

- Minutes of the meeting at which the decision to object to the proposed name change was taken, or the relevant extract thereof, signed by the chairperson of the organization or an official authorized to do so, with a covering letter confirming the validity of the minutes attached and the content therein.
- The objection should be on the organization's letterhead.
- The objection should contain names and addresses of the top three officials of the organization and their contact details.
- An attendance register of the meeting that took the decision to object must be attached. The register must have the organization's official stamp or be on a letterhead.

Appeals may be submitted to the Chairperson of the SAGNC through the SAGNC Secretariat Unit using the following e-mail address: [ThulileM@dac.gov.za](mailto:ThulileM@dac.gov.za).

Ms P. Nazo  
Chairperson: ECPGNC

20/11/2017

Date

