



Submission to Toit Te Whenua Land Information
New Zealand, New Zealand Geographic Board on
the proposal to rename Franz Josef township and
Franz Josef Glacier

1. Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to share our feedback on the proposal to rename Franz Josef/Waiau and Franz Josef Kā Roimata o Hine Hukatere.

Westland District Council (WDC) is a statutory entity based on the West Coast of the South Island of New Zealand.

Our vision statement is: *We work with the people of Westland to grow and protect our communities, our economy and our unique natural environment.*

The Westland District is approximately 450 km in length and one of the most sparsely populated parts of New Zealand, with an area of 1,186,272 hectares and a population of 8,640 people (2018 Census, Stats NZ). Approximately 33% of the population (2,960) lives in Hokitika. The remaining 66% live in small villages and rural areas such as Ross, Franz Josef and Haast. The district has a focus on the outdoors and outdoor recreation (87% of the land area is DOC land), which is a tourism drawcard, alongside dairy farming, mining and other enterprises.

2. Executive Summary

We do not support the proposed name change from 'Franz Josef' to 'Franz Joseph' for either the village or the glacier. We do not have a stance on the proposed change to the Te Reo name for the glacier.

This proposal will have a wide-reaching financial and brand-recognition impact on businesses and organisation in the Westland district and the wider West Coast. It will impose unnecessary costs in an economic environment where communities are already under financial pressure.

3. Effect of name change

Council

Council operates various internal systems that include the names of the townships within the district, such as GIS maps and the rating database. Changing the name of the Franz Josef / Waiau village would involve Council putting resources into making changes to its systems to reflect the name change. This would take staff time away from their regular activities and potentially create an additional cost that would have to be recovered through rates.

Another area of Council operations that would be impacted by the proposed name change is Council documentation, both internal and external. Council would have to ensure that the amended name flows through to all of our planning and strategy documentation, relevant policies and procedures. Any licences or external documents issued to customers based in the Franz Josef area would have to be amended or updated. We acknowledge that in some cases this could be done as documents are reviewed and updated on a business-as-usual basis.

Destination Westland Ltd

Council has a Council Controlled Organisation – Destination Westland Limited (DWL). This company owns and operates the Franz Josef Heliport and manages Licences to Occupy on behalf of Council. DWL would be impacted in a similar way to Council, with the need to update policies and procedures and reissue documents with the updated name. There would also be a financial impact with the need to purchase new advertising and signage materials with the amended name.

Franz Josef tourism operators

Franz Josef village is primarily a tourist town, with the main attraction being the Franz Josef Glacier. This is a well-known domestic and international brand and the economy of the town relies on brand recognition with international as well as local tourists. Tourism is an important contributor to the Westland District's economy with recognisable places and attractions.¹

Imposing an unnecessary name change on the township and glacier landmark will adversely affect tourism operators in the township. They will be required to undertake re-branding of their businesses to match the updated name. At a time when tourism is still in the recovery phase following the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost of living continues to increase, this is very unfair to impose on small business owners.

Other organisations

There are many other organisations throughout Westland and the West Coast, such as Development West Coast, who will also be impacted by this proposal. These organisations will also have to update any marketing, brand materials, and systems that relate to Franz Josef and the Glacier Country.

Recommendation: We recommend that the name Franz Josef / Waiau and Franz Josef Glacier is retained. We do not take a stance on the Te Reo name.

4. Argument for the name change

While we acknowledge that there is a valid argument for changing the spelling to Franz Joseph, we do not believe that it is necessary at this time, due to the reasons stated above.

Ngā mihi nui.



Simon Bastion, Chief Executive

¹ During 2022 domestic and international tourism contributed \$97m to the Westland economy, which made up 14% of Westland's GDP. The total number of guest nights was 671,300 for international and domestic tourists to July 2023, based on a 12 month rolling sum. *Source: Dot Loves Data Westland District Environmental Scan September 2023.*