



Samantha Graham-Maré, MP

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4 May 2026

Department of Sports, Arts and Culture
Private Bag X 897
PRETORIA
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ATTENTION: MINISTER GAYTON MCKENZIE

Dear Minister McKenzie,

RE: OBJECTIONS TO NAME CHANGES IN THE EASTERN CAPE PROVINCE

I am writing to you on behalf of the individuals who submitted over 38000 objections to the name changes your Department gazetted on 6 February 2026 for Graaff-Reinet, Aberdeen, Adendorp, Barkly East and East London.

As was indicated to your office, the Gazette, in itself, was legally flawed in that it did not provide for the submission of objections to the name changes contained therein. The SA Geographical Names Council Act allows for a 30 day objection period wherein persons aggrieved by the proposed name changes may make submissions thereon to you. The Act further states that you are required to respond to each grievance in writing, after due consideration, providing your decision and the reasons therefore.

While the Act does not provide any timeframes within which this must be done, it is moot in law that any administrative action under the state must be done within a reasonable time. In addition, the Promotion of Action to Justice Act (PAJA) provides that when any person requests information on a decision taken by the state, that the person responsible must respond within 90 days. Failing which, it is deemed that the decision taken is without reason and can be overturned.

It is now 2 months since the objections were submitted to your office. Other than an acknowledgement of receipt, there has been no further correspondence. This means that you have failed to respond within a reasonable time and are now in contravention of PAJA's stipulated timeframes.

In the meantime, the residents of 4 towns and 1 Metro are living in limbo between the name they love and the name your Department has bestowed on them. It is inconceivable that government can continue to be so ignorant of its own prescripts on public participation that it proceeds with administrative action in direct conflict with the wishes of the people it purports to represent.

I am requesting that you review your decision to change these names on the basis of the extremely strong opposition to the fundamentally flawed process that was followed in reaching the decision. And that you declare the process to have been finalised so that it cannot just be renewed on a whim. In addition, this decision must be communicated to all those who objected. I imagine it will be an easier letter to write than the converse.

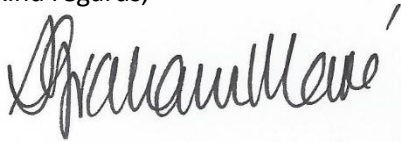
I further request that you provide timelines for this process to unfold which can be communicated to the affected communities. The name change issue has created unnecessary conflict in communities that would welcome finalisation and the chance to rebuild and move forward.

While many might view these name change processes as fundamental to righting the wrongs of the past, we believe that the random nature, poor public participation, ignorance of the desires of the community and the heavy-handed, "take it or leave it" approach in the Eastern Cape has done the exact opposite of nation-building. It has divided communities and created conflict where none existed.

We would welcome the opportunity to move past this episode and focus our efforts and energy on building our country, creating jobs and growing our economy.

I look forward to your positive response.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Samantha Graham-Maré', written in a cursive style.

SAMANTHA GRAHAM-MARÉ, MP
CONSTITUENCY HEAD: DR BEYERS NAUDE