

# Bulletin



## Polish Community Council of Australia & New Zealand

Issue 1: AUTUMN 2005

### From the president

**It is my great pleasure to introduce the inaugural bulletin of the Polish Community Council of Australia and New Zealand ("PCCA&NZ"). There is a need for such a publication. In fact, many believe it is long overdue!**

The Polish community in Australia has grown considerably over the years, so much so, that we were placed among the "top ten" in the Australian Multicultural Book (2001). There are currently 60,000 Polish born people living in Australia. When you take into account second generation Poles (those born of Polish parents), the figure comes close to 160,000. PCCA&NZ comprises about 90% of Polish organisations in Australia.

Poles are playing an important part in many facets of Australian life. At most tertiary institutions in Australia there are Polish academics. Notable examples include: Professor Jerzy Zubrzycki, credited as being the father of the Australian policy of multiculturalism; and, Professor Maciej Hannenberg of Adelaide University, anthropologist and world renowned forensic scientist. There is also a large number of Poles employed in the executive sector, of which Doctor Sev Ozdowski, the Federal Human Rights Commissioner, is a prime example.

In spite of this large "Polish presence" in Australia, our voice has not been heard sufficiently. Our history and our image, often largely distorted, is misrepresented by some seemingly hostile, or ill-informed media outlets.

Throughout one millennium of its recorded history, Poland has made a considerable contribution to human development. Again, to mention but a few examples: famous Poles in the field of science include Nicholas Copernicus and Maria Curie Skłodowska, a double Nobel Prize laureate. Closer to Australia, there was Professor Bronisław Malinowski, one of the most important

- anthropologists of the 20th century and a founder of social anthropology. In the field of exploration, there was Sir Paul Edmund Strzelecki.

- Poland played an important role in shaping the history of Europe. In the 13th century, Poland halted Genghis Khan's march through Europe. In the 17th century, under the leadership of King John III Sobieski, Poland halted the expansion of the Ottoman Empire. In 1920, Poland repelled the advancing Soviet Army, that intended to conquer West Europe. Like Great Britain, at the beginning of WWII, Poland "stood alone".

- Poland was the first country that offered military resistance to Hitler's policy of conquering Europe. Poland fought alongside the Allies and finished the Second World War with the fourth largest army in the Allied camp. In return, Poland was betrayed by the Allies and was given to Stalin as a puppet state at Yalta in 1945.

- This part of contemporary history has never been explored by Hollywood or in other films. Consequently, the general public remains ignorant of this catastrophic historical fact.

- The above demonstrates why Polish migrants in Australia, as, indeed, in other parts of the world, are so sensitive about recognising Poland's true history. Poles found it hurtful and offensive when, for half a century, Poland was referred to in the West as a "Communist Nation", implying that Poland had chosen to be part of the communist regime. In fact, communism had been forced on Poland by the Soviet Union despite massive Polish resistance.

- The main purpose of our first bulletin is to address the issue of the proposed renaming of Mt Kosciuszko to an Aboriginal name. The proposal has been put forth by a small group of influential people. There were no Aborigines among them. In this bulletin you will find information that explains why such an amendment is unnecessary.

- The Polish Community in Australia would support a renaming of Mt Kosciuszko if the Aboriginal people had a prior naming claim. In other cases this may be true, however, in the case of Mt Kosciuszko there is no prior name and, as such, no conflict between the European name and an Aboriginal counterpart. Contrary to many other of the Snowy Mountain tops, Mt Kosciuszko did not provide food for native Australians and its lack of any significant topographical features created no cultural interest. It was only by way of modern science, through Strzelecki's exploration and measurement of this mountain that made Mt Kosciuszko important.

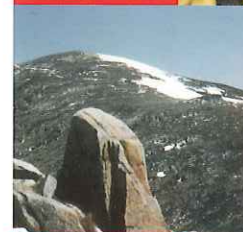
- We must ensure that in the course of pursuing a one-eyed goal, harm is not perpetrated on the Polish Community of Australia. It would be a grave injury to the Poles of Australia, and to the broader multicultural society, if the only significant name of Polish origin in Australia, was removed for no satisfactory reason.

- I hope you will find this, our first, magazine both informative and interesting.

**Dr Janusz Rygielski**  
President of the PCCA&NZ

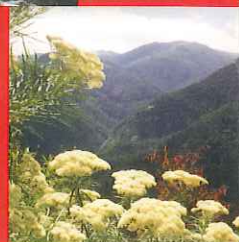
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General Tadeusz Kosciuszko

All Australians are familiar with the exotic (and hard to pronounce!) name of the highest peak in Australia – Mt Kosciuszko. However, only a small number of people know the origin of the name or, more accurately, the man behind the name. Two of the more interesting explanations I have heard are that Kosciuszko is an Aboriginal term or that Kosciuszko was the explorer who first ascended the highest mountain in the Great Dividing Range.

Both, of course, are incorrect!

- Visitors to Kosciuszko National Park will know that Paul Edmund Strzelecki was the explorer who established that this mountain was the highest on the Australian continent and made the first recorded ascent.
- Strzelecki named the mountain after Tadeusz Kosciuszko a great American and Polish patriot and international hero. The inscription on the Summit of Mt Kosciuszko, which records the great Strzelecki's words, expresses an honour to Australia, rather than to Kosciuszko.
- We learn from reading it that Kosciuszko was a Polish patriot – nothing more.

- Thus, the name given to our country's highest peak, to a creek and to one of the largest of Australia's National Parks, is associated with its natural features rather than with the outstanding man who was Kosciuszko. The world-famous hero placed beside Washington and Garibaldi as one of the greatest men of his epoch. Later, we would compare him with Nelson Mandela.

The inscription on the Summit of Mt Kosciuszko, which records the great Strzelecki's words, expresses an honour to Australia, rather than to Kosciuszko.

# Who was Tadeu

## Well then, who was Kosciuszko?

- Tadeusz Kosciuszko was born in 1746 in Eastern Poland. He graduated from Cadet School in Warsaw and, being a distinguished student, he received a special "King's Grant" for further artillery studies at Versailles (France). Kosciuszko was foremost among his peers in a time when soldiers were considered among the intellectuals of society, particularly in mathematics, physics and the applied sciences.
- Kosciuszko studied the art of fortifications under the best teachers, whose names we can still find in schoolbooks today. In France he also learned architecture and painting. He was a specialist with a wide range of qualifications and interests. He was an army surveyor, a civil engineer, a gardener and a painter.
- After six years in Paris, Kosciuszko returned to Poland in a high ranking post within the Polish Army. He was set for a brilliant military career. However, his life took a rather different turn at this stage for Kosciuszko had fallen in love.
- The object of his affection was Ludwika Sosnowska. Unfortunately, for the young pair, Ludwika's father, a magnate, did not approve of the match since Kosciuszko, although a handsome and well-educated officer was, nonetheless, relatively poor. The young couple decided to elope, but did not have enough time to cross the border. Kosciuszko was put under threat of death for Ludwika's kidnapping and had to flee Poland. (As so often happens, history repeats itself. Half a century later, Strzelecki was in a similar situation, when he allegedly tried to elope with Miss Adyna Turno. Perhaps this unfortunate coincidence helped Strzelecki notice his affinity with Kosciuszko). After his unlucky romance, Kosciuszko travelled to America. We do not know how he got there although, knowing his French connections, we may assume that it was organised by Kosciuszko's friends from Paris. France, due to her conflict with England, was very interested in undermining English influences abroad and, hence, supported the independence of the American Colonies. Kosciuszko could not rely on his Polish references and connections but his abilities were acknowledged through his appointment as the Deputy Engineer in Charge of the entire American Army. Kosciuszko then became a Colonel and, finally, a General.
- Tadeusz Kosciuszko was a friend of both George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. He distinguished himself during the American War of Independence by his competence, creativity, bravery and modesty. He gave part of his own rations to a hospital; he saved prisoners of war from starvation.
- Kosciuszko became famous within America because of his unconventional and innovative ideas for military defence strategies, as utilised in Saratoga and Philadelphia. Kosciuszko's foremost achievement was the fortification at West Point. This was an exceptional strategy ideally adapted to the topographical conditions on the steep banks of the Hudson River. It was a strategy which contradicted all that Kosciuszko had learnt about European defence. The English did not dare attack Kosciuszko's stronghold. At Kosciuszko's suggestion, a Military Academy was later founded at West Point. To this day, it continues to educate officer-engineers. In 1828, cadets at the school established a monument in honour of Kosciuszko, the founder of their academy. More than any other gesture, this shows the great esteem and affection for Kosciuszko for at this same time Americans had trouble collecting enough money for Washington's monument!



# Janusz Kosciuszko?

Kosciuszko was certainly a man of many talents. In 1793, the American Congress asked him to illuminate Princetown on the occasion of the Fourth of July "because no one could do it better". Kosciuszko was a colourful personality. He was an excellent swordsman, swimmer, oarsman, rider and shooter. At the age of thirty he looked like a young man of twenty, and was, consequently, very popular with the ladies whose portraits he painted. He lost his courage and escaped only once during his stay in America. That was when a few ladies banded together with the intention of examining this man's fabulous talents!

He distinguished himself during the American War of Independence by his competence, creativity, bravery and modesty.

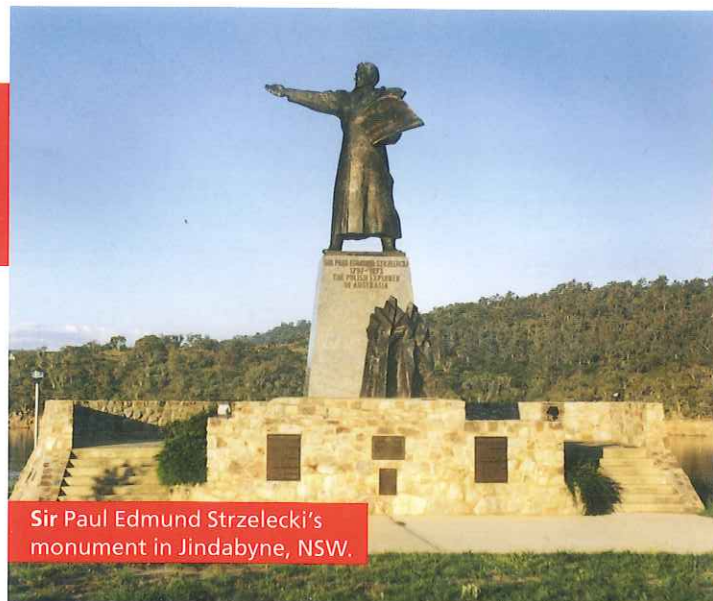
After eight years in the United States, Kosciuszko returned to Poland in 1787. His homeland was in an agony. Since the last great military victory at Vienna in 1683, which had halted the Ottomans' march into Europe, Polish socio-economic systems were in a state of crisis. Neighbouring countries grew stronger and desired a liquidation of Poland. In 1772, Russia, Prussia and Austria carved out and annexed parts of the Polish territory (the "First Partition of Poland"). In the 1780s, Poland belatedly tried to implement innovative reforms.

In 1792, the "Second Partition of Poland" occurred. The Polish monarchy – which up until 1772 had commanded an area twice as large as France – collapsed. The nation rebelled; crowds of people on the streets wanted Kosciuszko to lead the nation. He accepted.

By then, it was too late to defeat the Russian army but Kosciuszko mobilised the whole nation to defend Poland utilising guerrilla-type warfare.

- Kosciuszko invented a new weapon, a scythe with the cutting blade placed upright. This contributed to effective victories for the Poles in the beginning of the insurrection. In a few months, Kosciuszko had organised a war industry. Using his innovative methods, Kosciuszko fortified Warsaw and successfully defended it against the Prussian army. Kosciuszko's talent and qualifications as a surveyor continued to be useful since he could trace fieldwork accurately whilst sitting on his horse.
- Kosciuszko's rebels remained undefeated by much bigger Russian forces, however, Kosciuszko himself was

- eventually wounded by the Russians at Maciejowice. He was taken as a prisoner of war, only released after eight years of solitary confinement.
- Kosciuszko spent his last years in Switzerland. He continued to be a prominent figure. In 1800, using his experience in the American and Polish wars, Kosciuszko invented a military doctrine of national partisan warfare – a century before Mao Tse Dong! Kosciuszko's first book was published in France (and banned). It had a remarkable influence on the later history of Poland. The principles contained in this book are still used for contemporary partisan warfare against invaders.
- Kosciuszko died in 1817, recognised simultaneously as both – Poland's greatest hero and a great American. He was an Honorary Citizen of France. As his life affected many nations, Kosciuszko could be called a "Citizen of The World" since his first biographies were written in Russia and Prussia.



Sir Paul Edmund Strzelecki's monument in Jindabyne, NSW.

## Some thoughts on Kosciuszko:

- The Parisian newspaper Le Monitor wrote: *"his gifts to mankind made his name the property of the civilised world."*
- William H Harrison (later a President of America) ended his address to Congress as follows: *"If, one day, by common world agreement, there should be built a temple dedicated to those who gave the greatest benefits to mankind; and if the statue of our great countryman, Washington was placed in the area designed for the most dignified, just beside him should be placed the statue of Kosciuszko."*
- In the 1920s, a popular operetta "Kosciuszko" or "The Old General" played in London.
- Kosciuszko's influence has even been recognised in Casanova's Diaries where he wrote of the "everlasting Kosciuszko".

This, then, is the name, which honours the highest peak of the Australian continent and one of Australia's largest National Parks. This is justly so, because Kosciuszko was a man who always needed a contact with nature. He designed and established parks and gardens everywhere he went, even, incredibly, amongst the rocks and cannons of West Point.

In the eighteenth century Kosciuszko was one of the greatest soldiers. Today, if he were alive, it is certain that he would be counted amongst the greatest conservationists.

Dr Janusz Rygielski

(The above is based on an article first published in the "Summer Guide, Kosciuszko National Park 1983-1984")





# Mt

# KOSCIUSZKO

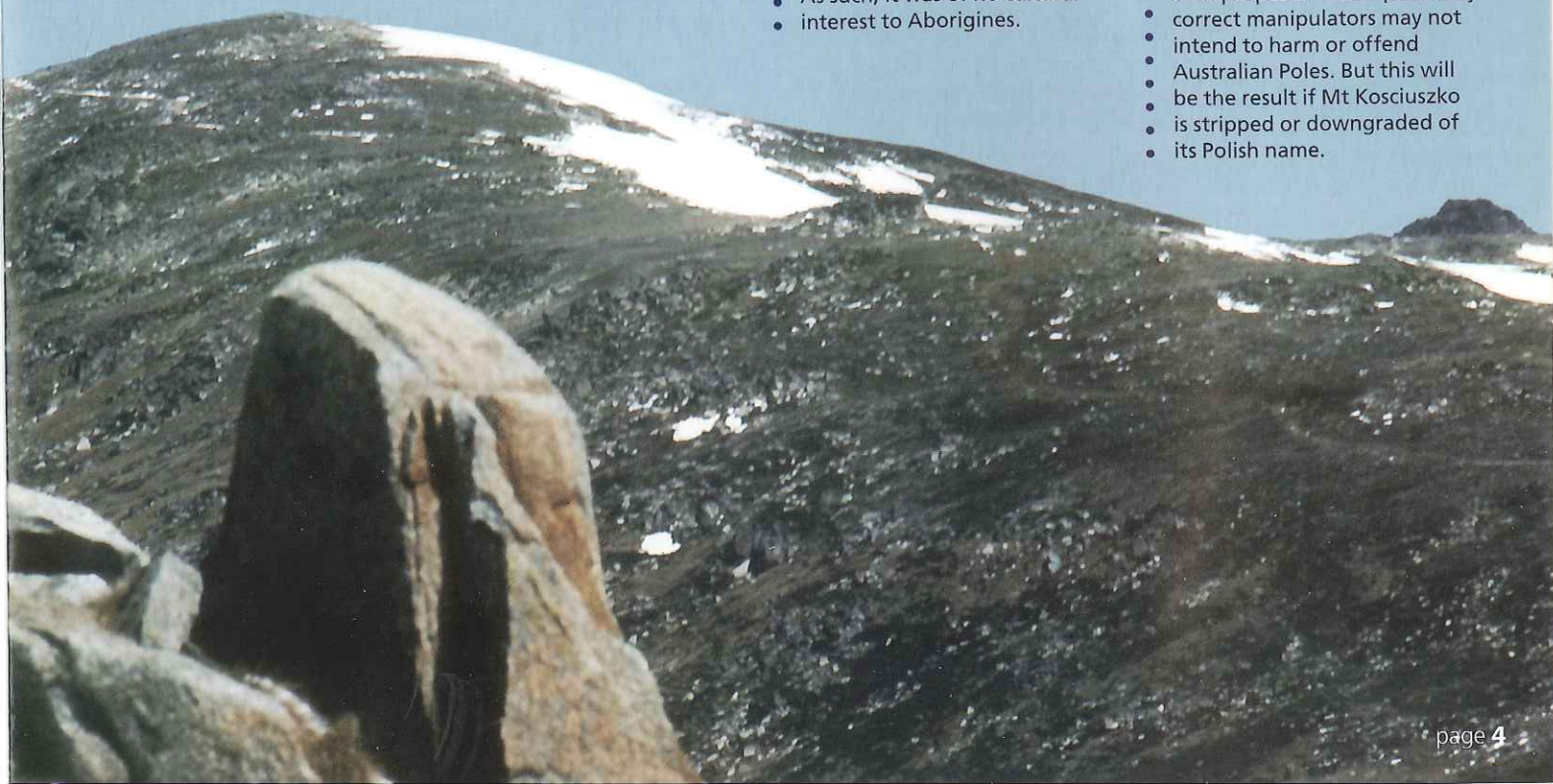
There was no name for Mt Kosciuszko before 1840 when Paul E Strzelecki proposed this one after discovering that this peak was the highest in Australia.

The New South Wales Government approved the proposal in recognition of the international status of General Tadeusz Kosciuszko – one of the greatest heroes of the American War of Independence and the leader of Poland during its own Independence War. Since then the name "Kosciuszko" has become an integral part of Australian heritage. It has been immortalised in Australian literature and other forms of art. For all Australians of Polish origin, Mt Kosciuszko is our nation's most important cultural feature, incomparable with any other piece of Australian heritage.

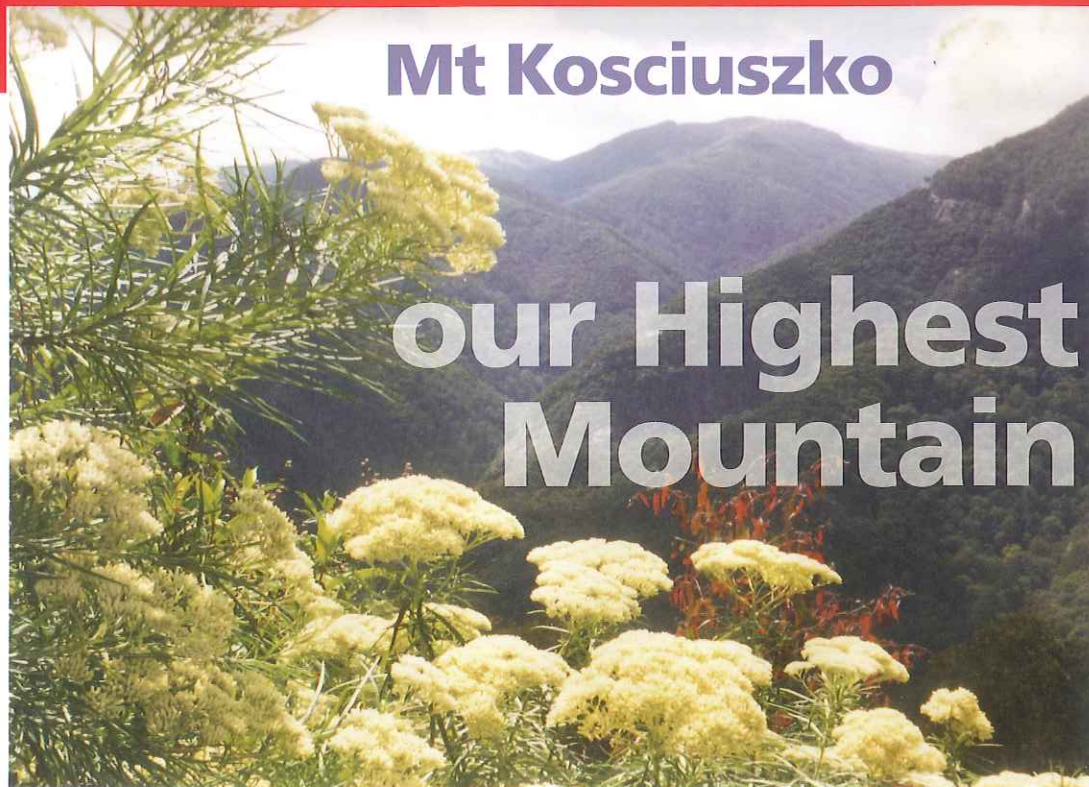
- Recently, the Kosciuszko National Park Administration has undertaken a project to give more weight to Aboriginal aspects of the Park. One of the proposals under consideration is to rename the Park (including the mountain itself), or to allocate two names to it. The entire Australian Polish community, as well as Poles abroad, find this proposal offensive and discriminatory.
- The idea to rename Mt Kosciuszko contradicts Australian multiculturalism.
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- Australian historians and anthropologists have researched the prehistory of the Snowy Mountains. They have identified the purpose of the Aboriginal presence in the high country and the sites of camps. The sole reason for visiting the alpine tops by Aborigines was to feast on the Bogong moth. Indigenous tribal groups built their camps close to those peaks with mountain crevices where the moth lived. Contrary to many other alpine tops, Mt Kosciuszko has only one crevice far from the summit and, consequently, the top was of no interest to Aborigines. Mt Kosciuszko does not possess any outstanding physical features and it is not immediately obvious that it is the highest peak in the range. As such, it was of no cultural interest to Aborigines.

- In multicultural Australia, the name of the highest peak in Australia is the only significant name of Polish origin. Unlike most other names in Australia, it is not linked with the colonial past. Mt Kosciuszko does not bear the name of an administrator or politician. Mt Kosciuszko bears the name of a true international hero, a world-famous freedom fighter at the time when his name was given to the highest Australian peak. Kosciuszko was a man who, two centuries ago, gave his entire American estate to black slaves. When Mt Kosciuszko's name was questioned in the 19th century, Australian scientists defended it. Today, ironically, some manipulators want to use indigenous Australians for their own purposes. These politically-correct manipulators may not intend to harm or offend Australian Poles. But this will be the result if Mt Kosciuszko is stripped or downgraded of its Polish name.







## Mt Kosciuszko

# our Highest Mountain

The suggestion emanating from Tumbarumba Shire to again change the name of Mount Kosciuszko is an unhappy one. It may be a thought by some as being an act of 'reconciliation' to the original inhabitants of our continent, but there is no merit in it.

- A name was given to our highest mountain on the occasion when that fact was realized. To change that name to some meaningless sound, albeit Aboriginal, would achieve nothing. Historic names – the names of our heritage – should not be changed. In the case of Mount Kosciuszko, which recently has been given a Polish spelling by the New South Wales Government, there are many reasons, additional to that obvious one, why abandoning Strzelecki's naming should not be permitted.
- It does not lessen the value of Aboriginal culture to point out the fact that the concept of there being a highest point of land in a continent was foreign to Aborigines. It could not have been otherwise, for this is a relatively modern concept and dependent upon the growth of European culture and the knowledge gained by European exploration.
- The highest mountain of a continent is a grand concept, and Strzelecki considered that

Strzelecki was a man deserving of praise.  
A scientist, world traveller, explorer,  
and a gentleman whose efforts profited  
every place he visited.

- Sir Paul Edmund de Strzelecki detected, climbed, and named our highest mountain, as most Australians know. Strzelecki and James McArthur ascended this mountain massif together. Strzelecki considered it to be the highest part of Australia, a fact unknown at the time. He climbed to its highest point and gave a name in keeping with this concept.
- such a mountain should have a grand name. No greater name – in his estimation – was there than that of Tadeusz Kosciuszko – the name known in the British Isles, America, and Australia in its English version Thaddeus Kosciuszko.
- Kosciuszko was a freedom fighter of great renown, and not revered just for his efforts in trying to free Poland. He was

- honoured by the great and the ordinary, by peasants and poets alike – in the latter category Byron and Leigh Hunt come to mind.

- When General Kosciuszko 'fell' and was taken prisoner at Maciejowice, the Scottish poet Thomas Campbell commemorated the event in these stirring words:

*In vain, alas! In vain,  
ye gallant few!*

*Flank rank to rank your  
volleyed thunder flew*

*Oh, bloodiest picture  
in the book of Time,*

*Sarmatia fell, unwept,  
without a crime;*

*Found not a generous friend,  
a pitying foe,*

*Strength in her arms, nor  
mercy in her woe!*

*Dropped from her nerveless  
grasp the shattered spear,*

*Closed her bright eye, and  
curbed her high career –*

*HOPE, for a season, bade  
the world farewell,*

*And Freedom shrieked –  
as KOSCIUSKO fell!*

- Later, in America, it was from Colonel-Engineer Kosciuszko's fortifications that Washington in the American Revolution crossed the Delaware and saved the Revolution. Kosciuszko is important for many reasons, not least the one being that 'he stood all his life for individual freedom as well as national, for the right of man to his soul'.

- Lech Paszkowski, in his book *Sir Paul Edmund de Strzelecki* quotes Dr Joseph Wytral, an American scholar, observing that 'Kosciuszko regarded slavery as the darkest blot on the escutcheon of a free America. The toleration of bondage violated his concept of America as the land of the free and equal. Sixty-three years before the Civil War [that is in 1798] Kosciuszko initiated procedures to abolish slavery in the United States'.



## Mt Kosciuszko – our Highest Mountain (continued from page 5)

Strzelecki, himself, stated in his report concerning the naming of Mount Kosciuszko: *that, although in a foreign country, on foreign ground, but amongst a free people, who appreciate freedom and its votaries, I could not refrain from giving it the name of Mt Kosciuszko.*

He explained it in similar terms, in his letter (in French) to Adyna Turno in Poland, that he gave the name – to remind and hand down on this new continent the name dear and sacred to all Poles; to all people friends of liberty and honour; today this culminating point of New South Wales is called Mt Kosciuszko and it is unnecessary to tell you that upon publication of the maps of Gipps-land everybody has commended that name.

Even if Tadeusz Kosciuszko were not so important and praiseworthy, the fact that the name for the discovered mountain was bestowed by Sir Paul Edmund de Strzelecki in itself deserves that the naming not be interfered with. For Strzelecki was a man deserving of praise. A scientist, world traveller, explorer, and a gentleman whose efforts profited every place he visited. He spent a number of years in Australia, covering much ground and contributing greatly. A man of great energy and capacity for thought and action, honoured by all who made contact with

- him – and not just because he happened to be a nobleman, but because of those actions. He was a man of whom we can be justly proud. Lech Paszkowski's book, mentioned previously, tells us (without bias) all about him.
- There are scores of books to tell us about Tadeusz Kosciuszko.

- Our highest mountain is tied to these two important figures of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and it is tied to Freedom. It is not tied to any Aboriginal connection. As one of many peaks between the headwaters of the Murrumbidgee and the Murray it no doubt provided a source of food to its summer visitors.
- Probably all the names associated with these peaks refer to that source of food – the Bogong moth. Here are some of those words that appear or have appeared on our maps – one sound obviously was hard to differentiate between a 'J', a 'T' and a 'D':

- Jagungal* or *Jar-gan-gil* or *Tar-gan-gil* or
- Tackinal* (Table Top Mtn) or *Teangal* or *Targil* (both also associated with *Jagungal*)
- Dargal*
- Youngal*
- Corungal* or *Orungal*
- Coruncal* or *Corunal* (both also associated with *Jagungal*)

- Certainly there is no Aboriginal name associated with our highest peak, despite that Spencer of Waste Point may have claimed that our Mt Townsend could have been associated with the Targangil sound. Back in the second half of the eighteenth century Spencer used to claim this peak was Mt Kosciuszko when it suited him.

- Mount Townsend is our second-highest mountain, and thoughts should not be turned to changing its name either. Surveyor Thomas Scott Townsend was a most important man in our Snowy Mountains heritage.

- It must be said again that historic names should not be tampered with; they are an entity in themselves. It is bad enough changing the given spelling, but to abandon a heritage name in order to replace it by a made-up one because of a whim or for some political or social agenda is culpable.

**Alan E J Andrews, FRAHS**  
(Author of *Kosciuszko: the Mountain in History*, Tabletop Press, ACT)

## About Polish Community Council of Australia and New Zealand

The Polish Community Council of Australia and New Zealand Inc. is non-profit, non politically aligned community-based voluntary umbrella body for Polish community organisations in Australia and New Zealand. The Council was established as an Australian organisation in 1950 to represent the Australian Polish community within Australia and abroad and to coordinate the activities of Polish community organisations in Australia. Several Polish community organisations in New Zealand joined the Council in 2002.

Membership of the Council is open to all Polish and Polish-Australian organisations from all States and Territories and from New Zealand. Currently, the Council comprises 26 member organisations (which in turn, have a number of member sub-organisations) with over 10,000 volunteers involved in a range of community programs and activities.

The Council's objectives are set out in its constitution. Its activities and operational framework support the principles of Australian multicultural policy based on the notion of upholding the values and principles of democracy, freedom, justice and respect for human rights. The Council's headquarters are currently located in Brisbane, Queensland, having been so determined by the Congress of Delegates in 1999.

## Contact details

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