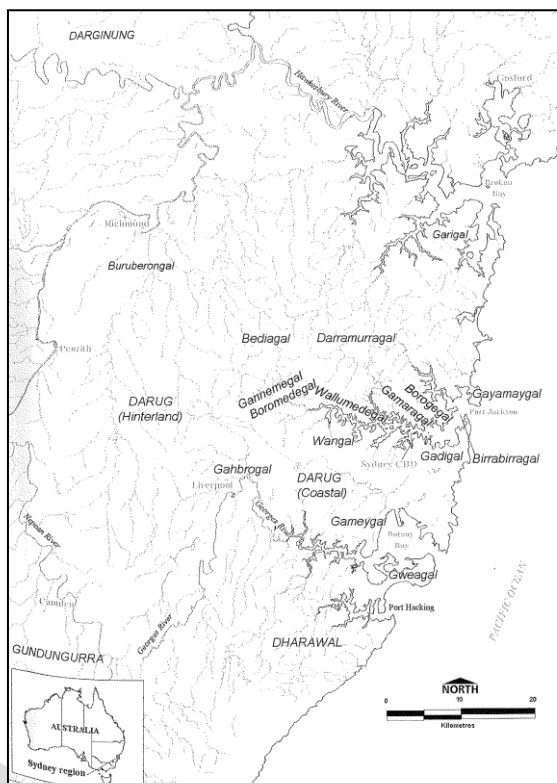


# FILLING A VOID

A REVIEW OF THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT FOR THE USE OF THE WORD 'GURINGAI'



Attenbrow (2010)

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## Preface

In 1788 about 1000 Europeans landed in a country that was foreign to them in fundamental ways. They carried with them perceptions and expectations that belonged to a different landscape and culture and imposed many of these upon the land and people that they met. They saw themselves as a small outpost of culture in a land sparsely populated by savages. These people, the Europeans believed, lacked cultural development as evidenced by a material culture that encompassed almost no built structures, an absence of clothing, and tools and decorative pieces made directly from local products. The land was not apparently tilled or developed in any way and showed no evidence of being owned.

In reality the Indigenous people lived in small clan groups with a complex culture and a highly developed land management system using fire to create diverse vegetation patterns for hunting and foraging.

The Aboriginal people from their side saw a large alien group with strange customs who at first were greeted as temporary visitors and as realisation that these were invaders here to stay and to take control of traditional lands increasingly resisted.

The encounter would prove catastrophic for the Aboriginal people.

## Executive Summary

The First Fleet officers made efforts to record and understand the language of the Aboriginal people they encountered as they began to set up the new colony on the lands they took over. The officers soon realised that there was not one uniform language and that the vocabulary was diverse and complex. Communications proved difficult and there were many potential misconceptions and misunderstandings in the interactions that took place and inevitably these ended up in the written record. These records document a society structured into 'tribal' groups – the officers recorded names for these 'tribes' and the area they were associated with but it is not always clear that the name was the name of the 'tribe'. They recognised a distinction in language or dialect between the Aboriginal people of the coast and those inland and those further north at Broken Bay. There is no record of the word 'Kuringgai' in the early accounts.

Anthropologists of the later nineteenth century using these early records, and the testimony of Aboriginal people still living in the areas, attempted a more definitive description of the language and structure of the Aboriginal society they believed was vanishing. Tribes without appropriate names were allocated names and links between tribes were established based on the customs and linguistic evidence as it was then known. John Fraser published the term 'Kuring-gai' in 1892 for a 'tribe' that he claimed stretched from the Macleay River to south of Sydney, possibly influenced by the name of the Gringai tribe of the Hunter River district and 'Kuri' for men. Kuringgai proved popular to those developing the northern areas of Sydney.

In the twentieth century revisions of the previous anthropological literature were made with new rigour and new tribal and language maps were produced using some of the names that were coined in the nineteenth century, including Kuringgai. 'Eora' a word for 'the men' was also adopted to name the language/tribe of the Sydney region.

By the twenty-first century linguistic research into Aboriginal languages produced a new understanding of the interrelationships of language and dialect in the region. Language boundaries were redefined and the term Kuringgai increasingly discouraged given its origin and previous associations. Other groups and the local community had in the meantime adopted 'Guringai' to define their own Aboriginal connections or identity.

## Introduction

The Aboriginal Heritage Office (AHO) receives many queries on Aboriginal words, placenames, languages, and clan groups both from the Councils which it is employed to provide Aboriginal heritage advice to and the general public. The number of queries is increasing perhaps at least in part because some intending to give Acknowledgement of Country want to know which clan or group they should use. It is believed that it also reflects an increase in interest in the Aboriginal heritage and culture of the district. Such queries are always problematic because the inquirer usually expects a concrete definitive answer.

To date the AHO has relied mainly on the extensive review of Aboriginal Sydney by Dr Val Attenbrow (Attenbrow 2002, 2010) who compiled from archival sources what was recorded of the Aboriginal clans including the various names, spellings and geographical locations. The AHO realised there were issues with some of the names being used and attempted to inform the inquirers of this uncertainty. The AHO has now decided it is time to review the current understanding to provide a more informed response for the future. This report focuses on the origin, validity and use of 'Guringai' but will refer to the broader issue of names of languages and clans in the Sydney area. Much of the published discussion to date has centred on the nature of the 'Sydney language' and its relationships with the neighbouring languages – 'Dharug', 'Dharawal', 'Awabakal'. This published discussion centres on the land between Botany Bay and Port Jackson. In this report we are focused on the area to the north of Port Jackson where the AHO has responsibilities to its eight partnering councils.

## Language Studies in South-Eastern Australia

### First Contact

Governor Arthur Phillip was given written instructions to communicate with the natives and treat them well. With his encouragement a number of the officers and educated men began to take records of words and the language spoken. After initial encounters, however, the local Aboriginal people avoided the new settlement and in order to further communication Phillip took the drastic step of capturing Aboriginal people; Arabanoo in December 1788 and Bennelong and Colbee in November 1789.

It was initially assumed by the British that Aboriginal people across what would become known as Australia spoke the same language. A wordlist compiled by Cook from the Endeavour River in Queensland and short wordlists from Botany Bay were included in documents accompanying the First Fleet to facilitate communication. They proved misleading and unhelpful.

Jeremy Steele (2005) provides a review of wordlists for the early years of the British colony:

Compiler	Words	Role/rank
David Collins (1975 [1798]:507-13 and throughout the text)	[463]	judge-advocate
Henry Fulton (Fulton 1800-01)	[70]	Church of Ireland minister
Daniel Paine (Paine 1795)	[75]	boatbuilder
Philip Gidley King (King 1786-90: MS 397-410)	[371]	lieutenant
Daniel Southwell (Southwell c.1791)	[180]	mate on the Sirius
Watkin Tench (1979 [1789, 1793]: words throughout the text)	[87]	captain
Notebook (c) (Vocabulary of the language of N.S.Wales, in the neighbourhood of Sydney. (Native and English, but not alphabetical) c.1791)	[768]	
Ralph Clark	[5]	Lieutenant
John Hunter	[17]	Captain
Arthur Phillip	[21]	Governor
Thomas Watling	[63]	
Port Jackson Painter	[97]	
John Hunter	[29]	

Adapted from Steele (2005)

Many of the words in the different wordlists are repeated and probably copied between officers so that the total vocabulary captured by the British in the first years of their arrival was small (Powell and Hesline 2010). In most cases the vocabulary centred on physical objects (nouns); of the sky, landscape and parts of the human body; and verbs. Troy (1994) considers the wordlists comprise a diversity of vocabulary offering a “substantial glimpse [of] the culture and environment of the Sydney people”. Any knowledge of grammar or capacity for conversation was equally limited in the beginning and there was much potential for confusion and misunderstanding. It is important to remember this when examining the lists and interpreting what they represent. An account below by Tench shows how easy it was to make assumptions. The next section touches on the records of a number of the people listed in the table above who made the most significant steps in understanding the language to examine further the information they were able to gather and as importantly what information they did not find.

## **William Dawes, Second Lieutenant**

The most important recorder of language among the British at first contact was William Dawes (1762-1836). Through his friendship with Patyegarang, a young Aboriginal woman, and a number of other Aboriginal people Dawes gained the deepest understanding of their language. He compiled the largest wordlist and unusually included many phrases giving a broader perspective of the language. He was part of the April 1791 expedition from Rose Hill (renamed Parramatta) towards the Hawkesbury River which initiated the belief that there were differences in language between the inland and coastal people.

Dawes did not give the language the Aboriginal people in the Sydney area spoke a name. His notebooks, begun probably towards the end of 1790, refer to “the language of N.S.Wales in the neighbourhood of Sydney” (Dawes 1790-1791). Dawes defined the word ‘Eeōra’ as meaning ‘Men, or people’ but did not assign it as the name of the language or provide an example of use which might imply this meaning (Dawes 1790-1791). His early departure from Sydney as a result of refusal to take place in a punitive mission following the death of John McEntire meant that his language work was not completed and a collaborative work with Tench not undertaken (Tench 1793). Unlike other officers of the First Fleet Dawes published no material on the language study he undertook and we are only left with the notebooks that demonstrate how much he had learned.

## **David Collins, Judge Advocate and Secretary to the Governor**

David Collins (1756-1810) was another who strove to record and understand the language of the Sydney Indigenous people but not without an understanding of the difficulties:

In giving an account of an unwritten language many difficulties occur. For things cognizable by the external senses, names may be easily procured; but not so for those which depend on action, or address themselves only to the mind: for instance, a spear was an object both visible and tangible, and a name for it was easily obtained; but the use of it went through a number of variations and inflexions, which it was extremely difficult to ascertain; indeed I never could, with any degree of certainty fix the infinitive mood of any one of their verbs. The following sketch is therefore very limited, though, as far as it does proceed, the reader may be assured of its accuracy. (Collins 1798 Appendix XII—Language)

Collins describes the slow progress of mutual understanding and the development of a pidgin tongue that obscured the Aboriginal language:

By slow degrees we began mutually to be pleased with, and to understand each other. Language, indeed, is out of the question; for at the time of writing this (September 1796) nothing but a barbarous mixture of English with the Port Jackson dialect is spoken by either party; and it must be added, that even in this the natives have the advantage, comprehending, with much greater aptness than we can pretend to, every thing they hear us say. (Collins 1798 Appendices, general remarks)

In his *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales* (1798) Collins discusses the language of the people in the Port Jackson area, makes reference to its distinct form relative to other languages including that of an Aboriginal language recorded by Cook, and comments on the distinct nature of language in close geographical proximity:

Their language is extremely grateful to the ear, being in many instances expressive and sonorous. It certainly has no analogy with any other known language (at least so far as my knowledge of any other language extends), one or two instances excepted, which will be noticed in the specimen. The dialect spoken by the natives at Sydney not only differs entirely from that left us by Captain

Cook of the people with whom he had intercourse to the northward (about Endeavour river) but also from that spoken by those natives who lived at Port Stephens, and to the southward of Botany Bay (about Adventure Bay), as well as on the banks of the Hawkesbury. We often heard, that people from the northward had been met with, who could not be exactly understood by our friends; but this is not so wonderful as that people living at the distance of only fifty or sixty miles should call the sun and moon by different names; such, however, was the fact. In an excursion to the banks of the Hawkesbury, accompanied by two Sydney natives, we first discovered this difference; but our companions conversed with the river natives without any apparent difficulty, each understanding or comprehending the other.

We have often remarked a sensible difference on hearing the same word sounded by two people; and, in fact, they have been observed sometimes to differ from themselves, substituting often the letter b for p, and g for c, and vice versa. In their alphabet they have neither s nor v; and some of their letters would require a new character to ascertain them precisely. (Collins 1798, Appendix XII—Language)

His comments indicate that by the end of the eighteenth century the British perceived a distinction in 'dialect' between the people living in the Port Jackson area from those living at Port Stephens north of Newcastle (and to the south and farther afield) as well as a difference with those people further inland. In the latter case the 'local' Aboriginal people were able to converse quite freely. He also notes the variation in individual use of sounds. This contrasts with the record of that encounter left by Governor Arthur Phillip (Powell and Hesline 2010).

Collins (1798) includes a small list of words he described as differences of dialect:

The following difference of dialect was observed between the natives at the Hawkesbury and at Sydney.

COAST	INLAND	ENGLISH
Ca-ber-ra	Co-co	Head
De-war-ra	Ke-war-ra	Hair
Gnul-lo	Nar-ran	Forehead
Mi	Me	Eye
Go-ray	Ben-ne	Ear
Cad-lian	Gang-a	Neck
Ba-rong	Ben-di	Belly
Moo-nur-ro	Boom-boong	Navel
Boong	Bay-ley	Buttocks
Yen-na-dah	Dil-luck	Moon
Co-ing	Con-do-in	Sun
Go-ra	Go-ri-ba	Hail
Go-gen-ne-gine	Go-con-de	Laughing jack-ass

Again, in Collins' account there is no indication of what the language is called. He too referred to the word Eora as discussed below.

## Arthur Phillip, Governor

Arthur Phillip (1738-1814) was the first governor of the new colony in Sydney. He encouraged the attempts to learn the language of the Aboriginal people they encountered and was a keen observer. His urgency to increase dialogue and language capability of both sides included kidnapping Aboriginal people, firstly Arabanoo and later Bennelong and Colbee. On 11 April 1791 a party including Governor Phillip, Watkin Tench and William Dawes set off from Rose-Hill intending to reach the Hawkesbury River opposite Richmond-Hill and if possible cross it and head into the mountains.

On the journey they met other Aboriginal groups who showed different cultural practices and spoke with different vocabularies:

Though the tribe of Buruberongal, to which these men belonged, live chiefly by hunting, the women are employed in fishing, and our party were told, that they caught large mullet in the river. Neither of these men had lost their front tooth, and the names they gave to several parts of the body were such as the natives about Sydney had never been heard to make use of. Ga-dia (the penis), they called *Cud-da*; Go-rey (the ear), they called *Ben-ne*; in the word *mi* (the eye), they pronounced the letter *I* as an *E*; and in many other instances their pronunciation varied, so that there is good reason to believe several different languages are spoken by the natives of this country, and this accounts for only one or two of those words given in Captain Cook's vocabulary having ever been heard amongst the natives who visited the settlement. (Phillip in Hunter 1793 [2003])

Governor Phillip's observations and that of others of the First Fleet would form the beginning of the European identification of the Sydney language as divided into a coastal and inland form.

### **Watkin Tench, Captain**

Watkin Tench (1758-1833) was another officer in the First Fleet and friend of William Dawes. He published two books *A Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay* (1789) and *A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson* (1793). His footnote in the text for Thursday 14 April 1791 expresses something of the confusion the British experienced in gaining a grasp of the Aboriginal language:

How easily people, unused to speak the same language, mistake each other, everyone knows. We had lived almost three years at Port Jackson (for more than half of which period natives had resided with us) before we knew that the word 'beeal', signified 'no', and not 'good', in which latter sense we had always used it without suspecting that we were wrong; and even without being corrected by those with whom we talked daily. The cause of our error was this. The epithet 'weeree', signifying 'bad', we knew; and as the use of this word and its opposite afford the most simple form of denoting consent or disapprobation to uninstructed Indians, in order to find out their word for 'good', when Arabanoo was first brought among us, we used jokingly to say that any thing, which he liked was 'weeree', in order to provoke him to tell us that it was good. When we said 'weeree', he answered 'beeal', which we translated and adopted for 'good'; whereas he meant no more than simply to deny our inference, and say 'no'--it is not bad. After this, it cannot be thought extraordinary that the little vocabulary inserted in Mr. Cook's account of this part of the world should appear defective-- even were we not to take in the great probability of the dialects at Endeavour River and Van Diemen's land differing from that spoken at Port Jackson. And it remains to be proved that the animal called here 'patagaram' is not there called 'kangaroo'. (Tench 1793)

The final comment in the above quote refers to the First Fleet's apparent introduction of the Guugu Yimidhir word *ganguru* ('kangaroo') to this part of the continent (Troy 1994). The Aboriginal people encountered at Botany Bay/Port Jackson had no idea what a 'kangaroo' was.

Tench reveals further potential for confusion in the following quote:

They use the ellipsis in speaking very freely; always omitting as many words as they possibly can, consistent with being understood. They inflect both their nouns and verbs regularly; and denote the cases of the former and the tenses of the latter, not like the English by auxiliary words, but like the Latins by change of termination. Their nouns, whether substantive or adjective, seem to admit of no plural. I have heard Mr. Dawes hint his belief of their using a dual number, similar to the Greeks, but I confess that I

never could remark aught to confirm it. The method by which they answer a question that they cannot resolve is similar to what we sometimes use. Let for example the following question be put: 'Waw Colbee yagoono?'--Where is Colbee to-day? 'Waw, baw!'--Where, indeed! would be the reply. They use a direct and positive negative, but express the affirmative by a nod of the head or an inclination of the body. (Tench 1793: Chapter XVII)

Here Tench implies that in speech Aboriginal people would speak in a laconic manner, using the minimum of words required to convey meaning. This would make the understanding of grammatic structure much harder to grasp. Looking from the Aboriginal perspective perhaps they thought it would be easier for the British to understand them if they spoke more simply? Secondly, Tench says that questions were often answered with a paraphrase of the question rather than an answer. Powell and Hesline (2010) suggest that the name Wangal or Won-gal was derived in this manner: it may be a translation by Bennelong of the question 'Where (do you) belong?' *won gal* rather than an answer to it.

Tench like Collins began to appreciate the language:

We were at first inclined to stigmatize this language as harsh and barbarous in its sounds; their combinations of words, in the manner they utter them, frequently convey such an effect. But if not only their proper names of men and places, but many of their phrases, and a majority of their words, be simply and unconnectedly considered, they will be found to abound with vowels, and to produce sounds sometimes mellifluous, and sometimes sonorous. What ear can object to the names of *Còlbee*, (pronounced exactly as Colby is with us) *Bèreewan*, *Bòndel*, *Imèerawanyee*, *Deedòra*, *Wòlarawaree*, or *Bàneelon*, among the men; or to *Wereewèea*, *Gòoreedeeana*, *Milba*, or *Matilba*, among the women. (Tench 1793: Chapter XVII)

In the next quote Tench, like Collins and Phillip, observes differences between the Aboriginal people on the coast and this new group encountered on an expedition:

Neither of the men had suffered the extraction of a front tooth. We were eager to know whether or not, this custom obtained among them. But neither Colbee, nor Boladeree, would put the question for us; and on the contrary, shewed every desire to waive the subject. The uneasiness which they testified, whenever we renewed it, rather served to confirm a suspicion, which we had long entertained, that this is a mark of subjection imposed by the tribe of Cameragal, (who are certainly the most powerful community in the country) on the weaker tribes around them. Whether the women cut off a joint of one of the little fingers, like those on the sea coast, we had no opportunity of observing. — These are petty remarks. But one variety struck us more forcibly. Although our natives and the strangers conversed on a par, and understood each other perfectly, yet they spoke different dialects of the same language; many of the most common and necessary words, used in life, bearing no similitude, and others being slightly different.

English	Name on the sea coast	Name at the Hawkesbury
The Moon	Yèn-ee-da	Con-dò-en
The Ear	Goo-reè	Bèn-na
The Forehead	Nùl-lo	Nar-ràn
The Belly	Bar-an`g	Bin`-dee
The Navel	Mùn-ee-ro	Boom-bon`g
The Buttocks	Boong	Bay-leè
The Neck	Càl-ang	Gan-gà
The Thigh	Tàr-a	Dàr-a
The Hair	Deè-war-a	Keè-war-a

That these diversities arise from want of intercourse with the people on the coast, can hardly be imagined, as the distance inland is but thirty-eight miles; and from Rose Hill not more than twenty, where the dialect of the sea coast is spoken. It deserves notice, that all the different terms seemed to be familiar to both parties, though each in speaking preferred its own.” (Tench 1793: Chapter XIV)

The above extracts imply that in the encounter between the Aboriginals accompanying the British party and those living near the Nepean River there were distinct differences in the way of speaking and yet not enough to cause any difficulty in understanding. It seems strange that such emphasis is placed here on the perceived differences in ‘dialect’ over the distances described. The languages spoken in much of Europe and Britain at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century particularly in rural and lower populated areas were composed of regional dialects that varied over small areas. It was only during the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the modern European languages became standardised over larger areas with the development of industrialised nation states. So regional differences should not have seemed so unusual. We could speculate – perhaps it was that these officers came from more urban privileged backgrounds or the previous expectation that Aboriginal people spoke a single language made the reality of diversity of language/dialect more surprising.

Note also the differences in words and pronunciation expressed in this list by Tench with that of Collins. For a short list referring to records of the same expedition the contrasts reveal how much uncertainty there was in the recording of vocabulary.

Powell and Heseltine 2010 suggest that such differences in vocabulary might reflect that in Aboriginal society a deceased person’s name could not be spoken and given most names utilised everyday words there needed to be a number of words to refer to the same thing. In this situation encounters with different groups using different words might appear to reflect dialect differences but actually represent another cultural practice.

## Clan Names

The officers of the First Fleet were interested in the social structure of the Aboriginal population in addition to language. They made observations on the 'tribal' structure and attempted to identify the names of the various groups. For example Tench discusses the way suffixes added to placenames change the meaning of the word to the men or women who live in the place:

*Parramàtta, Gwèea, Càmeera, Càd-i, and Mèmel*, are names of places. The tribes derive their appellations from the places they inhabit: thus *Cèmeeragal*, means the men who reside in the bay of Cameera; *Cèdigal*, those who reside in the bay of Cadi; and so of the others. The women of the tribe are denoted by adding *eean* to any of the foregoing words: a *Cadigalèean* imports a woman living at Cadi, or of the tribe of Cadigal. These words, as the reader will observe, are accented either on the first syllable or the penultima. In general, however, they are partial to the emphasis being laid as near the beginning of the word as possible. (Tench 1793, Chapter XVII)

## Philip Gidley King, Lieutenant-Governor

Philip Gidley King (1758-1808) made some observation in his journal of the nature of Aboriginal culture and language in the region of Port Jackson including tribal organisation and location:

The females of each tribe are distinguished by the word "*Leon*," added to the name which distinguishes the chief: it is supposed that the word "*Gal*," signifies *tribe*, and the word preceding it is the word of distinction; probably, it is the place where the tribe resides.

The following instances may serve to confirm these suppositions.

MEN	WOMEN
Camera-gal	Cameragal-leon.
Cadi-gal.	Cadigal-leon.
Won-gal.	Wongal-leon.
Gwea-gal.	Gwea-gal-leon.
Boora me di-gal.	Booramedigal-leon.
Norongera-gal.	Norongera-gal-leon.
Wallume-de-gal.	Wallume-degal-leon.
Borogegal-yurrey.	Borogegal-leon.
Gommerigal-tongara.	Gommerigal-leon.

We have every reason to believe, that the natives are divided into tribes, and that the persons belonging to each tribe derive their name from the chief. We have heard much of *Camme-ro-gal*, who lives in the interior part of the country, and is a great warrior. Wolare-warrè must have had some severe conflicts with this chief, as he shewed several scars which proceeded from wounds that he had received from him.

The tribe of Camera inhabit the north side of Port Jackson. The tribe of Cadi inhabit the south side, extending from the south head to Long-Cove; at which place the district of Wanne, and the tribe of Wangal, commences, extending as far as Parra-mata, or Rose-Hill. The tribe of Wallumede inhabit the north shore opposite Warrane, or Sydney-Cove, and are called *Walumetta*. I have already observed, that the space between Rose-Hill and Prospect-Hill is distinguished by eight different names, although the distance is only four miles. (King in Hunter 1793 [2003], Chapter XV)

Like Tench, King sees the suffix –gal attached to a placename as meaning tribe while adding –leon identifies women. His table divides men and women rather than tribe and women suggesting that –

gal could mean the men rather than all the tribe. King identified Camme-ro-gal as a warrior rather than a tribe unlike other recorders.

## Summary

With all these writers in the early colonial period before 1800 there is no evidence to suggest a name for the language spoken on either side of Port Jackson and no mention of 'Guringai' or equivalent in wordlists of the First Fleet period. So where did Guringai come from? We must move forward into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In this period there was a rekindling of interest in Aboriginal culture and language and an attempt to record and better describe them on the basis that they were fast fading and soon to disappear forever. This became a period of anthropological and linguistic research by amateur and professional figures with an intent to classify and order.

Similarly though 'Eora' was identified by a number of officers and included in their wordlists this word lost favour with the British and was replaced with 'Koorie' (Powell and Hesline 2010). See later in this report for a discussion of the return of Eora in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century.

There is scope for more analysis of the tribal names recorded by the First Fleet officers. Powell and Hesline (2010) discuss how some of these names – for example Wongal and Cammeraygal – may reflect misunderstandings or misinterpretations of what the Aboriginal people said or meant. In this report we will only examine the use of Eora as a name for a tribal group and language/dialect.

The next section looks at how certain terms and labels entered into the wider vocabulary in relation to discussing the Indigenous groups of the Sydney area.

## Historical Interlude

To understand the confusion over languages and group boundaries we must remember what was taking place at the time of this interaction between white and Aboriginal. The developing settlement was taking resources and land from the Aboriginal people who previously occupied the space. Epidemic disease, possibly smallpox, struck in 1789 killing a significant portion of the population and fragmenting the culture. It was a devastation that is difficult to fathom although perhaps a comparison with recent tsunamis may give some insight into the effects on a small community. After initially shunning the settlement the remaining Aboriginal people began to live more permanently in and around the area from the 1790s. The Aboriginal population of the area under review to the north of Port Jackson also crashed and in the early 1800s was modified by the introduction of a colony of Aboriginal people including Bungaree from Broken Bay who spoke a different language.

The next section looks at the term 'Guringai' and the evidence for its origin.

## Guringai

As discussed above, the terminology for Aboriginal people of the Sydney area changes in the nineteenth century. In relation to the word Guringai this term is often used today in a general if uncritical way as the identifier of the language group which extends from the north shore of Port Jackson to the Hawkesbury River at Broken Bay (and even beyond). There is a Guringai Festival and the Guringai Aboriginal Tribal Link. Mount Kuring-gai (originally Kuring-gai) railway station was named in 1903 and Ku-ring-gai Council in 1906 both named after the supposed Aboriginal people of the area in an older version of the term. Yet as we have seen the term Guringai was not recorded by those officers of the First Fleet intent on documenting the language of the people they met. Instead as we shall see the first instances of a term that resembles Guringai come from further north half a century later.

## J.F. Mann

John Frederick Mann (1819-1907) was a surveyor and explorer who also recorded some Aboriginal wordlists. According to Wafer and Lissarrague, Mann was the first to use an Aboriginal word that resembles the placename Kuring-gai:

In about 1842, the surveyor J. F. Mann (n.d.:1) had used a similar word to illustrate the use of a suffix of place. 'Gar, Gâi, Gâlie, Galla or alla refer to pleasant camping places, as "Kuringa Gai"' (cf. Smith 2004:23). Mann gives no indication as to the meaning of the first of the two components of this name, nor as to the location of the place it designates. But it is quite possible that this word, however it may be analysed, is associated with the origins of 'Kuring-gai' as a placename. (Wafer and Lissarrague 2010, p. 145)

It is uncertain whether this has any connection to the language name.

## John Fraser

John Fraser (1834-1904) was educated in Scotland at Edinburgh University and founded a high school in Maitland in the 1860s. In his 1883 work 'The Aborigines of New South Wales' Fraser attempts to use Eurasian and African studies to argue the origin of Aboriginal people in Australia from Ethiopian tribes. The work touched a chord at the time as it won an award from the Royal Society of New South Wales which published the article. New research into the origin of Aboriginal people suggests they were the first modern humans 'out of Africa' tens of thousands of years before Fraser's theories would have it.

In the 1883 article Fraser gives thanks to "Mr. J.W. Boydell, Camyrallyn, Gresford (for the Gringai tribe)" (Fraser 1883). He does not provide a detailed description of the location of the 'tribes' he uses as examples, saying:

The tribes with which I am acquainted are chiefly those of the northern half of our territory, the Gringai, the Kamilaroi, and the Ooalaroi, and to these I add a slight knowledge of the Wiradjery and Yüin. (Fraser 1883, pp. 199-200)

From the text and rare examples of descriptions of place it appears that the area of the Gringai tribe is roughly north of Maitland and includes the Dungog area. There is no suggestion that this tribe was part of a greater grouping that stretched towards Sydney. Compare this with the usage of 'Kuringgai' in his 1892 republishing of L. Threlkeld's *An Aboriginal Language as Spoken by the Awabakal the People of Awaba or Lake Macquarie*:

The next great tribe is the Kuringgai on the sea coast. Their 'taurai' (hunting ground or territory) is known to extend north to the Macleay River, and I found that southwards it reached the Hawkesbury. Then, by examining the remains of the language of the natives about Sydney and southwards, and by other tests, I assured myself that the country there-about was occupied by sub-tribes of the Kurringgai. (Fraser 1892b, p. ix)

Here Fraser has identified the Kuringgai as a larger group that encompasses "sub-tribes" that presumably includes the Gringai. There are a number of spellings for Kuringgai in the text which may represent differing typographies: the frontspiece map (see Map 1) has 'Kuriġ-gai', within the text are found 'Kuringgai' and 'Kurringgai'. The following text is curious as while it acknowledges that he created names for tribes he suggests that Kuringgai was not one of them:

Of these tribes, the Kamalarai, Walarai, Ngaiamba, Bakanji, Wiradhari, the Associated Tribes, the Ngarego, the Kuringgai are names already established and in use; and most of them are formed from the local word for 'no,' and thus describe more the speech than the people. The names Murrinjari, Wachigari, Paikalyung, Yakkajari, I have made; for these tribes have no general name for themselves. Wachi-gari and Yakka-jari are legitimate formations from the local words for 'no'; Murrin-jari and Paikal-yung mean the 'men,' which also is the meaning of the native tribe-name Kuringgai—all from their distinctive tribal-words for 'man.' (Fraser 1892b, p. x)

Yet there is no recorded evidence of the use of Kuringgai prior to this publication. By 1893 in his book version of the *The Aborigines of New South Wales* he had modified the spelling with both "The Kurringgai tribe, which occupies our sea-coast for a long distance north and south from Newcastle" and hyphenated versions 'Kuring-gai' and 'Kurring-gai'. So where does this established tribal name come from? Fraser asserts that "Kurringgai and Paikalyung mean the 'men.'" Earlier in the text (p. 2) he states the "kuri or 'black man'" without referring to the particular language to which it belongs.

We know that even the title of the 1892 revision of Threlkeld's work is problematic. Threlkeld had not given the language or the people the name Awabakal or any other name – 'Awabakal' was apparently another construct by Fraser "in the dialect which I have called the Awabakal, from Awaba, the native name for Lake Macquarie" (Fraser 1892, Editor's Preface) and defined as meaning "a plain surface". Rather, Threlkeld had "Nikkin-from *Nik-kin*, Coal, a place of coals. The whole lake twenty-one miles long by eight, abounds with coal" (Threlkeld 1834, Common Places) and later mentioned the "blacks call Lake Macquarie *Nik-kinba*, from *Nikkin*, Coal, and *ba*, place of coal" (Gunson 1974, p. 64, 299). There was no entry under the name 'Awaba'. However, Ford states in Fraser's defence:

Fraser had not made up the term Awaba, presumptively and presumptuously of Aboriginal origin, because the word was known to W.T. Proctor who used it in 1841 on a sketch drawn for Threlkeld himself to do with his 'Ebenezer' colliery, where Proctor printed: 'Awaba or Lake Macquarie'. ... More specifically, before Fraser published it in 1892, the term 'Awaba' was in use by the colonial authorities: it was applied from 1887 to a school located at 'Inglewood' and for a railway platform where the present day Awaba village developed. (Ford 2010, p. 338)

Ford goes on to suggest that the name Awaba relates to an area of Lake Macquarie around present day Awaba Bay and that the term Awabakal should refer to the local clan group in this area and not the broader language group that it is now used for (Ford 2010, pp. 338-339).



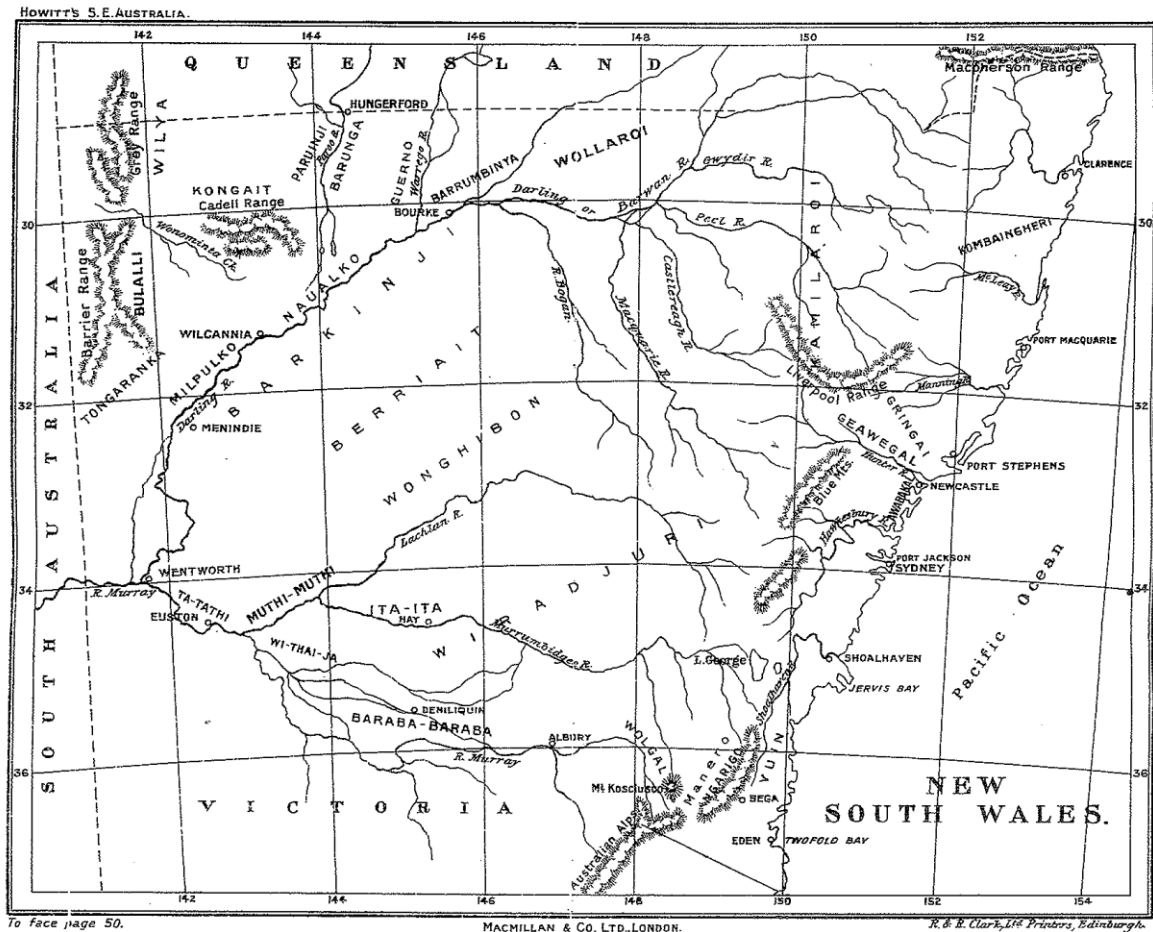
Map 1: Tribal boundaries. Fraser (1892) in his revised edition of Threlkeld's work on the Aboriginal people of Lake Macquarie (who Fraser named the Awabakal) shows area VIII identified as Native tribe 8. Kuri-gai.

## A.W. Howitt

Alfred William Howitt (1830-1908) in his 1904 book *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia* refers to J.W. Boydell, A. Hook, Dr E.M. McKinlay and W. Scott as correspondents on the 'Gringai tribe'. Some of these contacts would have been initiated through his correspondence with John Fraser and he acknowledges a debt to Fraser in the Preface. His description of the location and extent of the Gringai follows:

To the north-east and adjoining the Geawe-gal were two tribes, or perhaps two sections of a large tribe, one on the Paterson River and the other, to which my correspondent refers, being on the Williams and its tributary, the Chichester [Dr E.M. McKinley (sic)]. After careful inquiries I have not succeeded in learning the name of this tribe with used, since it is given for those blacks who lived in that part of the country lying about Dungog [certainty. So far, however, as I am able to form an opinion, the name Gringai may be J.W. Boydell].

Their territory extended up the valley of the Williams and its tributaries to their sources, and southwards for about 8 miles below Dungog. (Howitt 1904, p. 85)



Map 2: Tribal boundaries. Howitt (1904) shows the Gringai tribe to the north and east of the Geawegal tribe which runs along the north bank of the Hunter River. Note there is no Aboriginal tribal name for the region between the Shoalhaven and Newcastle.

Howitt also refers to the 'Kuringal' ceremony: an initiation ceremony which involved tooth evulsion practised among Aboriginal people of the south-east of Australia:

The term *Kuringal*, which means "of the bush," or "belonging to the bush," includes two slightly different forms of the initiation ceremonies, which are called respectively *Bunan* and *Kadja-wallung*. (Howitt 1904, p. 518)

the Murring word *Kuringal*, which may be translated as "of the forest." (Howitt 1904, p. 617)

Howitt writes of *Kuringal* ceremonies he attended on the South Coast and the Aboriginal groups who undertook the ceremony including the Yuin and Kurnai peoples. He does indicate that the ceremony was performed in the district in discussion in this report:

According to the Yuin, the *Kuringal* extended up the coast northwards as far as the Hunter River, and therefore included the now extinct Port Jackson tribe. Collins, in his work, *An Account of the English Colony of New South Wales* gives particulars of the ceremony of initiation, which he saw, at least in great part, in the year 1796, and which was called, by the native tribes which inhabited Port Jackson, *Yoolahng*, from the cleared space in which the ceremonies were held. (Howitt 1904, p. 566-567)

This word, its meaning and usage is not included in the discussion elsewhere of Kuringgai/Guringai (see for example Attenbrow 2010; Wafer and Lissarrague 2008, 2010). Howitt does not use any version of the word Kuringgai for a tribal group or language name in his book.

## **Charles Boydell**

Charles Boydell (1808-1869) was an early Welsh settler in the Gresford district on a property he named Camyr Allyn. He kept a diary in the 1830s which includes some observations of the Aboriginal people and a wordlist of their language (Boydell 1830-1835). His diary does not contain the name Gringai and the wordlist is derived from “Jacky. King of ???” the latter indecipherable word clearly is not ‘Gringai’ but otherwise not identified. His son James W. Boydell (1843-1908) also of Camyr Allyn had correspondence with Fraser and possibly Howitt in the 1880s.

## **William Scott and Gordon Bennett**

William Scott (1844-?) lived in the Port Stephens area from his birth in 1844 until he left for Queensland in 1873. He claims he spent much time in the company of and observing the local Aboriginal people taking notes of his observations. Many years later he was able to publish a description of his observations including a word list of the ‘Port Stephens tribe’ compiled in 1873. In the introductory section he calls the Aboriginal people “the Gringai tribe, a sub-branch of numerous native people that once inhabited the lower portions of the Hunter and Karuah valleys” (Bennett 1929). In the text there is only one other use of Gringai, on page 16, and given the late date of publication it is not obvious whether he referred to them as Gringai in the 1870s when he compiled the word list.

Among the contents of archival material from A.W. Howitt on the Geawegal and Gringai Tribe at the La Trobe Library there is a manuscript entitled “Port Stephens Blacks, Gringai Tribe” and notes associated with it included with correspondence with William Scott that are dated to the early 1880s. This suggests that well prior to the publication of Bennett’s version Howitt received a copy of Scott’s manuscript and that Gringai was associated with it possibly by the 1880s and predating Fraser’s usage.

## **R.H. Mathews**

Australian born Robert Hamilton Mathews (1841-1918) was a surveyor whose early interaction with Aboriginal people led in middle age to a fascination in their culture. Mathews was a prolific author in the later part of his life publishing over 150 works, some in international journals. Mathews, however, had no university education and was considered an outsider and disregarded by the ‘professional’ anthropologists like A.W. Howitt and Baldwin Spencer.

Mathews, in the same manner as Fraser, created terms for Aboriginal tribes or languages where there were no existing terms. For example, the word Darrook now more commonly spelled as Darug/Daruk or Dharug/Dharuk, was mentioned as a dialect in Mathews (1897) and the area where it was spoken described as:

The Dhar’-rook dialect, very closely resembling the Gundungurra, was spoken at Campbelltown, Liverpool, Camden, Penrith, and possibly as far east as Sydney, where it merged into the Thurawal. (Mathews and Everitt 1900, p. 265)

Mathews does not provide a definition of the name and Troy (1993) asserts that no provenance or meaning was ever given nor evidence provided that the name was used by the language speakers

themselves. Powell and Hesline suggest the word might be derived from the markings associated with initiation ceremonies (Powell and Helsine 2010, p. 13).

Mathews (1897) refers to 'Koorinal' defining it as "men who take part in the secret ceremonies" rather than the ceremony itself as Howitt (1904) describes it.

## **Walter John Enright**

W.J. Enright (1874-1949) was a solicitor and amateur scientist in the Maitland district who at university studied geology and modern languages. He like R.H. Mathews had connections with the Aboriginal people from youth and was inspired by Mathews to undertake anthropological research. Enright's comments regarding the specificity of Aboriginal vocabulary with respect to flora and fauna and the confusion this could raise in white Australians are worth citing here:

[Aboriginal people] distinguished the different species of animal and vegetable life, and in some, if not all, cases had one name for the female of the species. On one occasion I heard a resident of the Newcastle district who took a keen interest in the aborigines say that the language of the Lake Macquarie natives differed from that of the natives of Wyong district, and gave as a reason that there was a different word for opossum in each district. As he could not say which species of opossum either name applied to, his argument failed completely. Similarly, in our east coast district we have three species of ironbark. The unlettered native has a name for each, but ask persons who are not interested in the timber trade, botanists or nature students, and most of them only know a tree of any one of the species as an "ironbark." There might be three different aboriginal names collected in three different localities for the "ironbark," but as the inquirer did not recognize the difference in species, he would conclude that there were dialectic or linguistic differences. (Enright 1932, pp. 321-322)

## **Summary**

By the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the term Kurringgai in various spellings had become adopted by the growing population of the North Shore of Sydney, thanks to Fraser, to the extent it was used to name national parks (1894), council areas (1906) and railway stations (1903). Yet the term had no roots in the records of the past and would be assessed critically by another generation of researchers. There is little to note in terms of language research in the decades following Howitt's 1904 publication.

## Later 20<sup>th</sup> Century

After a period of nearly half a century where the use of the word Guringai is mostly associated with placenames, the later part of the twentieth century saw some important developments by influential figures that helped entrench it in the wider consciousness.

### Fred McCarthy

Frederick McCarthy (1905-1997) was Curator of Anthropology at the Australian Museum and later Principal of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. He recorded many rock engravings in the Sydney district and undertook excavations. As one who published material for the general public through his position in the museum his interpretations of Aboriginal culture became part of mainstream opinion in a way that other academics' opinions did not.

In correspondence with George Champion McCarthy made the following response regarding the Aboriginal people of the Sydney area:

There was only one tribe occupying the whole of the area from the north shore of Botany Bay to the south shore of Broken Bay, and as far west as Parramatta. In early literature the whole of the south and central coast was said to be occupied by the Kuringgai, and in 1940 Tindale gave the name Kameraigal to the Sydney tribe. This is the name of one of the hordes or local groups only, no name having ever been recorded for the whole tribe. I named it the Eora, the name given by this tribe to black men as compared with white men, and have used this name in my list of Aboriginal place names and euphonious words. (F. McCarthy pers. comm. to George Champion, 26 April 1961 in Champion 2003)

McCarthy believed that the people inhabiting the north shore of Port Jackson and the Sydney Peninsula were a single group and he named them Eora after a word for men in the records of the First Fleet. This name would then be adopted by Tindale in his major work (Tindale 1974).

### Norman Tindale<sup>1</sup>

Norman Tindale (1900-1993) who began research in Australia as an entomologist produced one of the most influential assessments of Aboriginal language and clan groupings for the whole of Australia. The 1974 map of Tribal Boundaries transformed Australian perspectives. Tindale reviewed the work of Fraser and made some scathing commentary:

For the tribes of New South Wales, a low level of understanding was attained in a publication by John Fraser. He listed only fourteen names of what purported to be tribes. Examination of his map shows that his 'tribes' bore little relationship to those now recognized and were closer to the so-called nations that some nineteenth-century-writers pretended to find. Five, possibly six or more of his names were artefacts, admittedly having been coined by himself to supply what he considered to be a lack. While they might possibly serve to denote some of the language divisions in place of those devised by modern scholarship, they are not aboriginal concepts and are not indicative of the tribal units accepted in this study. Depending in part, as he says, on

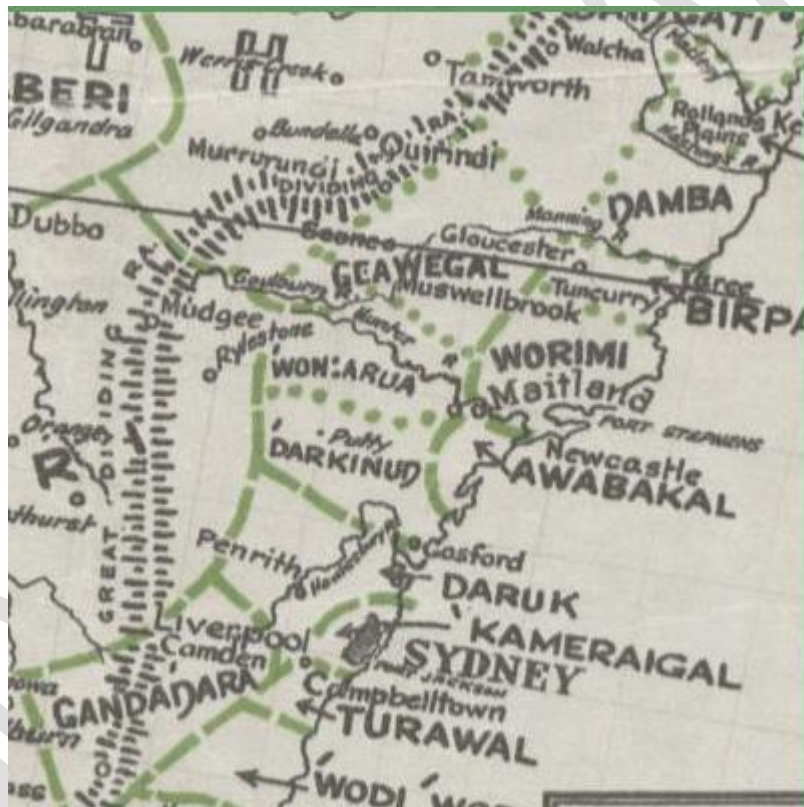
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<sup>1</sup> Tindale (1974) defined clans, hordes and tribes in the following way: clans are groups of persons in both patrilineal and matrilineal societies who claim descent from a common ancestor and ownership of a definite area of country. Members of contiguously placed clans exchange women for wives and meet together with some regularity. Each clan group *minus* persons departing from it in marriage *plus* ones imported as spouses constitutes a horde. A series of hordes that are contiguously placed and have certain common practices are regarded as a tribe.

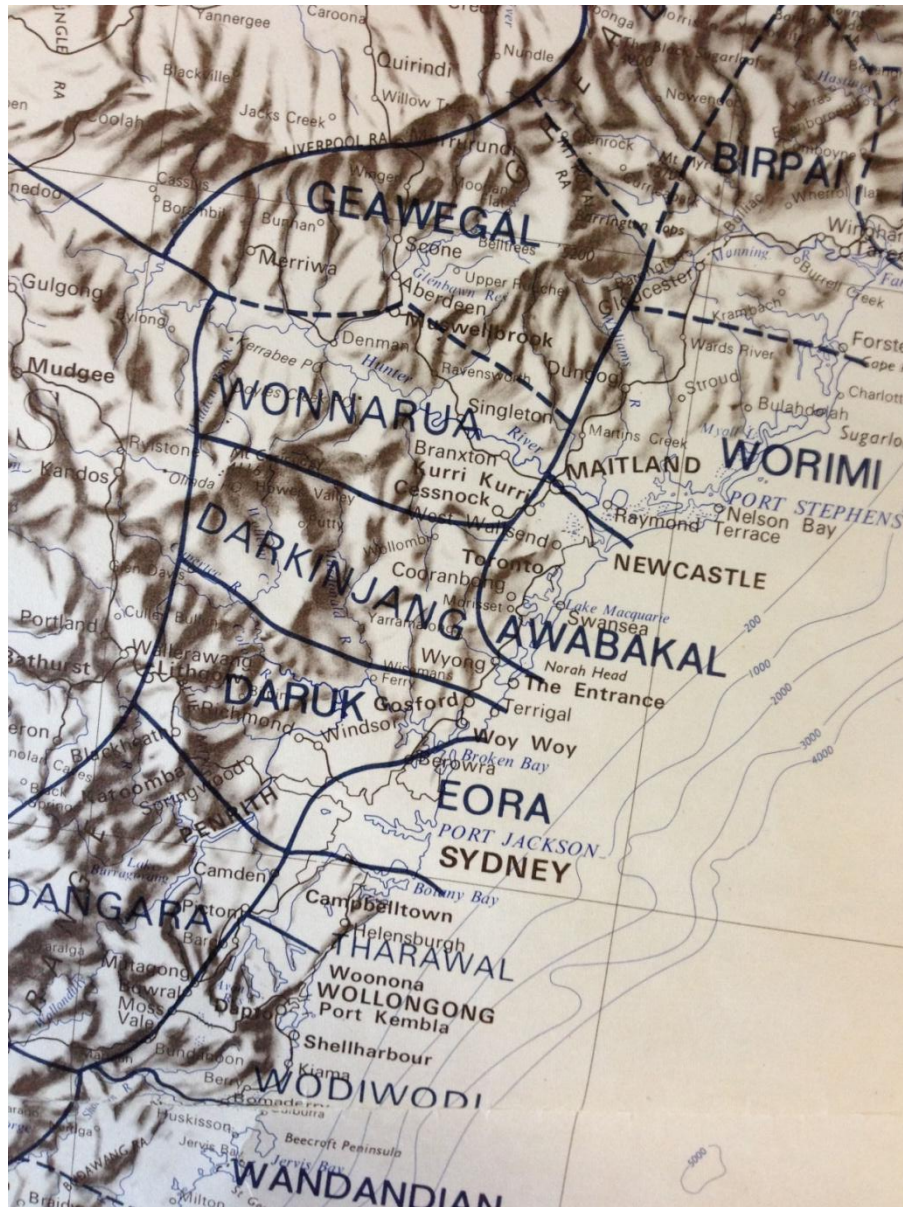
“ten years thought” rather than data from aboriginal sources, his work is most unsatisfactory and unquestionably the most inaccurate and garbled account ever published about the aborigines. This regional term appears not to have been listed by any other writer on tribes.

The balance of Daingatti to the south, plus twelve other tribal territories extending as far as the northern half of Gandangara country were lumped as the “Kuring-gai.” (Tindale 1974: 127-128)

Tindale removed the term Kurringgai entirely, returning to a lower order subdivision so that for example the centre of Fraser’s original Kurringgai geographic range became Awabakal for the Aboriginal tribe in the Port Stephens area (Tindale 1974). His research and interpretation of the Sydney area shows change when we compare his 1940 and 1974 versions (see Maps 3 and 4). Initially Tindale divided the area from Port Jackson north to the Hawkesbury between the Kameraigal in the south around Port Jackson and Daruk in the north-west and extending over Broken Bay (Tindale 1940). Later he used Eora, relegating Kameraigal to a ‘hordal’ or clan level and expanding its range to the Hawkesbury. Much of Tindale’s work was necessarily broad scale and lacked the precision of later linguistic studies.



Map 3: Tribal boundaries. Tindale (1940) map showing Kameraigal and Daruk as the tribal names for the area north of Port Jackson to Broken Bay.



Map 4: Tribal boundaries. Tindale (1974) replaced Kameraigal with Eora and has expanded the range further north to Broken Bay displacing Daruk. Turawal is now Tharawal, Darkinung now Darkinjang.

Tindale utilised the work of R.H. Mathews extensively in his compilation of the Aboriginal tribal boundaries. In turn his maps influenced later researchers such as Kohen (see below).

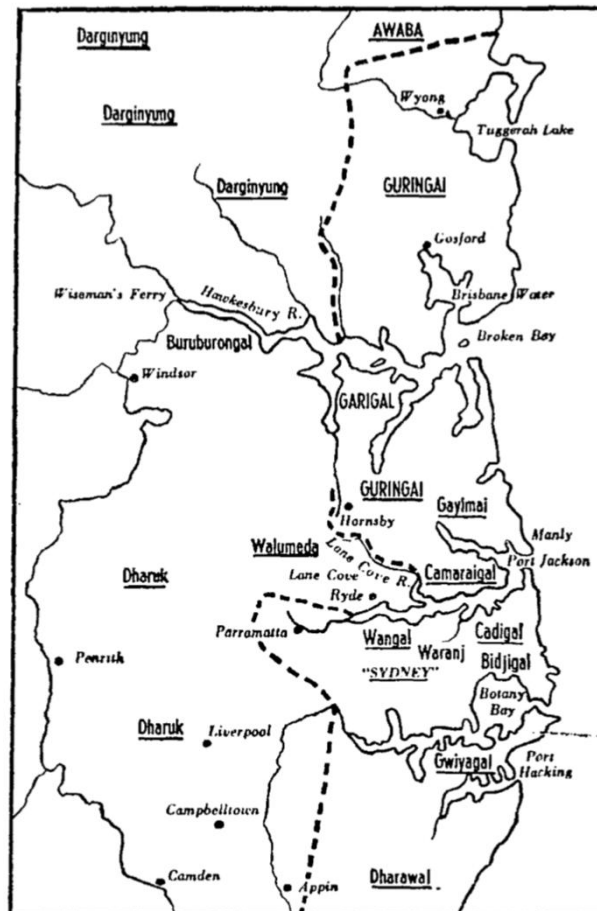
## Arthur Capell

Arthur Capell (1902-1986) was a linguist who worked as a high school teacher and parish priest. In the 1960s Arthur Capell made a reanalysis of the languages of the south central NSW coastline (Capell 1970). Part of this involved research in the Mitchell Library looking at early manuscripts.

His findings which relate to this work were:

- (1) Dharruk nowhere reached the coast except in a dialectical form on the Sydney Peninsula.

- (2) A language which it is convenient to call Kuringgai (Guringai) was spoken on the north side of Port Jackson, and extended at least to Tuggerah Lakes, merging then into Awaba.
- (5) The language of Sydney, as embraced between the south shore of Port Jackson and the north shore of Botany Bay, and as far inland as Rosehill (Parramatta district) represents the only area in which a Dharruk dialect reached the sea. It was not spoken normally on the north shore of Port Jackson, except to the west of Lane Cove River. (Capell 1970, pp. 21-22)



Map 5: Language boundaries. Capell (1970) utilised Fraser's term Kuringgai to refer to a language that stretched from Tuggerah Lake to Port Jackson.

Note that Capell like many later researchers does not give a name to the Sydney language though he considers it a dialect or "even a sub-dialect" of Dharruk. Capell redrew the boundaries of Aboriginal languages in the area under review and utilised Fraser's term Kuringgai (Guringai) for a language 'Karee' that was revealed in the manuscripts he had found in the Mitchell Library. This usage was deemed convenient rather than reflecting some actual recorded term. To justify his findings he refers to several manuscripts, one by Threlkeld which had the name 'Karee':

Beyond the word *Karee* Threlkeld's manuscript does not localize the speakers of the language. The evidence which suggests that this language could perhaps more conveniently be called Kuringgai (Guringai) rests on another manuscript, also preserved in the Mitchell Library. This is a much later work, done by J. F. Mann, and probably not

earlier than 1870. I saw this originally in a copy made by Mr. F. D. McCarthy, and he at that time marked Mann's list, "mostly Awaba". However, when Threlkeld's manuscript came to light it seemed desirable to reconsider Mann's work. This vocabulary was then found to agree with Threlkeld's "Karee". Mann explained in a heading that he had got it from "Long Dick", who was a son of Boongarie (*bu'ngari*?). (Capell 1970, p. 23)

Capell separated the Kuringgai from the Awaba to the north and centred them over the Broken Bay area (see Map 5). He then provides an explanation for the southern boundary of the Kuringgai:

Of Long Dick there is no record in history: ... except for the fact of being Boongarie's son. If, however, he was this, and Boongarie belonged to the Pittwater tribe, then this second language preserved by Threlkeld is the language of the Pittwater people, and included the well-known Cammeraygal on the extreme south, along the northern shores of Port Jackson, and stretched as far north at least as Broken Bay. This is the basis for the statement above that the "Sydney" language did not cross Port Jackson. Moreover, the difference between the two is at language level; not at dialect level (Capell 1970, p. 24)

Capell noted that (according to his interpretation of the distribution of Kuringgai) the significant natural barrier of Broken Bay did not form a boundary while Port Jackson did. The boundary west of Kuringgai was more problematic as there seemed to be no obvious boundary and his explanation is tentative at best:

Something needs to be said about the languages here discussed to each other. The boundaries of Kuringgai are now fairly clear except in the west. If Dharruk did not meet the coast between Manly and Broken Bay, where was its eastern boundary? There is no natural boundary – and it is curious that although Port Jackson does seem to form a natural boundary on the south of the Kuringgai area, Broken Bay, a more difficult crossing, did not bound it on the north. It is clear that Dharruk in some form was spoken in what is now Ryde, and the author's suggestion at present is that the boundary ran along Lane Cove River and in some way thence north to about Wiseman's Ferry. The Hawkesbury River would be the northern boundary of Dharruk;

Later researchers would be critical of the geographic boundaries and interpretations and linkages that Capell made of the vocabularies from the manuscripts he utilised (Wafer and Lissarrague 2010).

## **Helen Brayshaw**

Helen Brayshaw is a consultant archaeologist. She did a PhD on the Aboriginal people of the Hunter River district. Her map (see Map 6) shows the position of the various tribes in the Hunter catchment, including the Gringai near the junction of the Paterson and Allyn Rivers. She does not extend the map to include her interpretation of the location of the Kuringgai but refers to it in the text:

The coastal areas of the Hunter Region were occupied by the Awabakal centred on Lake Macquarie and its mountainous hinterland; to their north were Gaddang speaking tribes, who included the Worimi centred on Port Stephens, possibly the Gringai of the Dungog area, and the Birpai, who were north of the Worimi. To the south of the Awabakal were the Kuringgai (or Guringgai), living both north and south of Broken Bay. Inland of the Kuringgai and bordering both the Awabagal and the Wonaruah were the Darkinung tribes, whose territory extended from the Hawkesbury River northwards towards the southern drainage of the Hunter River. (Brayshaw 1986, p. 40)

Brayshaw's description of the location of the Kuringgai suggests she was using the interpretation of Capell. It also shows the complete separation of the Gringai tribe from the higher order group the Kuringgai.



Fig 3: Major tribal groups in the Hunter Region

Map 6: Tribal boundaries. Brayshaw (1986) showing location of the Gringai on the Patterson, Allyn and Williams Rivers north of the Awabakal which lie between Newcastle and Lake Macquarie.

## James Kohen

James Kohen works in the Indigenous Bioresources Research Group at Macquarie University. He did a PhD on prehistoric settlement in the Cumberland Plain and has worked for many years on the environmental impact of Aboriginal people. He undertook research in the primary documents of the First Fleet and settlers to identify the language and customs of the Dharug people particularly.

In the Sydney region, three major Aboriginal languages were spoken. The south side of Botany Bay, extending down the coast as far as Nowra and Jervis Bay and west to George's River, was the province of the Dharawal language. A second closely related language, Dharug, was spoken over a large area of the Cumberland Plain from Appin to the Hawkesbury River and west into the Blue Mountains. A dialect of Dharug was spoken on the coast between Botany Bay and Port Jackson and from Parramatta to the Lane Cove River on the north side of Port Jackson. Between the Lane Cove River and the coast, from the north shore of Port Jackson across Broken Bay as far as Tuggerah Lake, the language was Kuring-gai. These three language groups, Dharawal, Dharug and Kuring-gai, were termed 'tribes' by Europeans. Much of the vocabulary was common to all three languages, so all the Aborigines of the region could understand each other with little difficulty. (Kohen and Lampert 1987, p. 345)

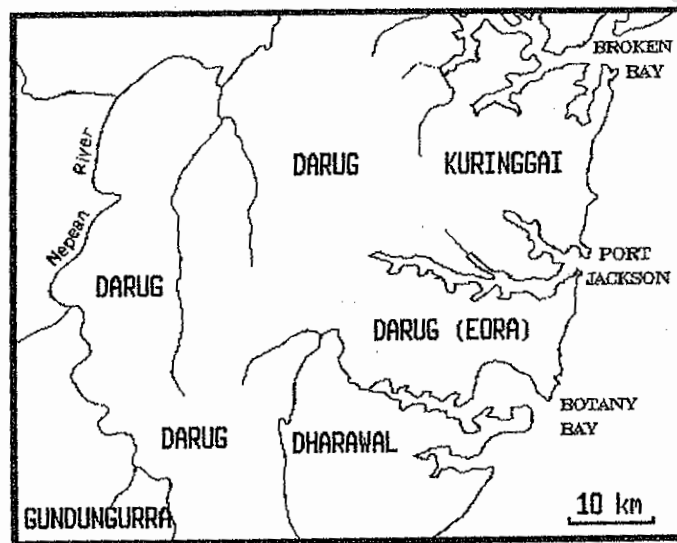
This description is very similar to that of Capell (1970) and the map in Kohen (1993) shows a similar language distribution but with less definition of the boundaries between the groups. In this later book Kohen expands on this description to include dialects:

There were several dialects of each language spoken. The two dialects of the Darug language were the Eora dialect along the coast and the inland dialect, which was spoken by the Woods tribes, the *bediagal-tugugal-tugara*.

A distinct dialect of Dharawal was spoken by the Gweagal clan on the south side of Botany Bay near Kurnell, while the Wodi Wodi dialect was spoken further south near Wollongong.

The Kuringgai language probably consisted of several dialects, one of which was spoken at Broken Bay. This was recorded as Kari (the language of the Carigal clan). (Kohen 1993, p. 22)

This description of the Kuringgai accords closely with Capell's interpretation and again there is a strong language boundary between the Darug (Eora) and Kuringgai along the axis of Port Jackson (see Map 7). Yet the First Fleet records do not reveal such a distinction between the people on either side of Port Jackson and it seems unlikely given the amount of movement back and forth that there would be a language barrier here.



Map 7: Language boundaries. Kohen (1993) subdivided the Sydney district among three languages Darug, Kuringgai and Dharawal with Eora as a dialect of Darug.

## David Horton

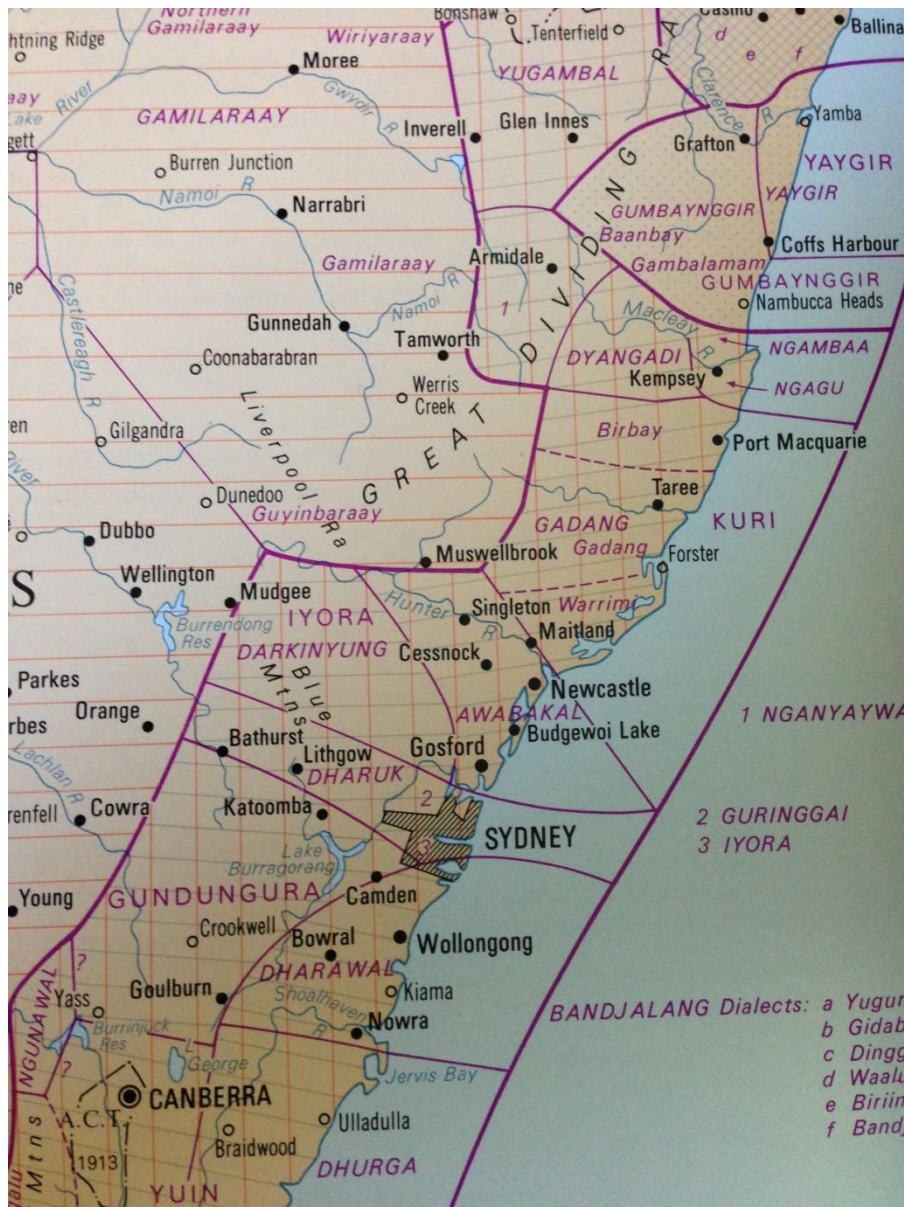
David Horton was the general editor of *The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia* (1994) which was a widely accessed source for Australians. The entry under Kuring-gai begins: "People of the Southeast region between Tuggerah Lakes and Port Jackson, neighbours of the Awabakal, Eora, Dharug and Darkinung peoples" (Horton 1994, I p. 566). As part of this research maps were compiled showing tribal/language groups for different regions which were then amalgamated into a single separately published map (see portion of online version in Map 8) which also widely distributed in Australia and is still in press and sold to international visitors (Horton 1996). This map clearly shows Kuring-gai as a coastal group centred on Broken Bay and is very similar to the map of Capell (1970).



Map 8: Tribal/Language Map – “larger groupings of people which may include smaller groups such as clans, dialects or individual languages in a group”. Horton (1996) adopts Eora as with Tindale (1974) but this grouping lies south of Port Jackson and he has Kuring-gai centred roughly on Broken Bay so that Dharug and Darkinyung do not reach the coast. This leaves Awabakal, Kuring-gai, Eora and Tharawal north to south along the coast.

## Michael Walsh

Michael Walsh, a linguist with a strong interest in languages in the north of Australia compiled language maps for Australia as part of a larger atlas covering the western Pacific (Walsh 1981). His map of south-eastern Australia shows quite a departure from those earlier maps we have met in this report. The names of most of the languages are familiar but the boundaries of ‘Dharuk’, for example, are quite different from others, going further inland forming a narrow swath from the coast at Sydney and crossing the Blue Mountains to as far west as the Macquarie River. On the west Dharuk lies between Gundungarra and Darkinyung (with an unusual inclusion of ‘Iyora’ above Darkinyung) and on the east at the coast, Dharawal and Awabakal. Guringgai is placed in the north-west of Sydney up towards the corner of the Nepean-Hawkesbury centred somewhere near Dural and Iyora at the western end of the Sydney Peninsula. Altogether it is a contrast to previous and later interpretations of the Dharug language and it is unknown what sources were used to derive this particular language distribution.



Map 9: Language boundaries. Walsh (1981)

## Summary

From the sources of the late twentieth century we see a number of different versions of language and tribal boundaries. In this period the work of the late nineteenth century anthropologists are scrutinised. McCarthy brings back and redefines the term Eora to refer to the tribe and language group of the Sydney district. Tindale dismantles much of Fraser's Kuringgai tribal structure and provides a tribal model that is used by many later researchers. Capell takes a new look at evidence for languages spoken in the area between Port Jackson and Lake Macquarie, readopts the discarded term Kuringgai and his interpretation is followed by another group of researchers and the local community up to the present day. It would not be inaccurate to say that in the process of clarification the understanding of what Aboriginal people actually said was less well understood.

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century

From the late 20<sup>th</sup> century the original wordlists and manuscripts of earlier researchers were re-examined by linguists with a greater understanding of Aboriginal languages through the work done with Aboriginal languages still in use across Australia. The notebooks of William Dawes were identified in 1972 and this important source came under increasing investigation. This research enabled the existing records to be placed in the context of what we now know about Aboriginal languages. The later 19<sup>th</sup> century anthropological work was also more critically reviewed and a tendency developed to move away from using terminology that was invented by anthropologists for geographic names where there was no evidence for a pre-existing Aboriginal name/word. In some cases names were already well entrenched in the literature and adopted by the Aboriginal communities.

In the Sydney area Jakelin Troy (1994) decided to define the language of the area of Sydney as the 'Sydney language' as none of the current names used had an origin in the records of the later 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## Val Attenbrow

Val Attenbrow is an archaeologist who has worked with the Australian Museum after completing degrees in the archaeology of the Sydney area with major projects studying the Mangrove Creek and Port Jackson catchments. Her book *Sydney's Aboriginal Past* (2002, 2010) remains a significant and well-researched resource of knowledge of Aboriginal people and their culture for the Sydney area. Her review of the local clans and clan names and languages and language names drew together much material assessing the primary and secondary sources. Attenbrow's considered opinion was that the boundaries are roughly as follows:

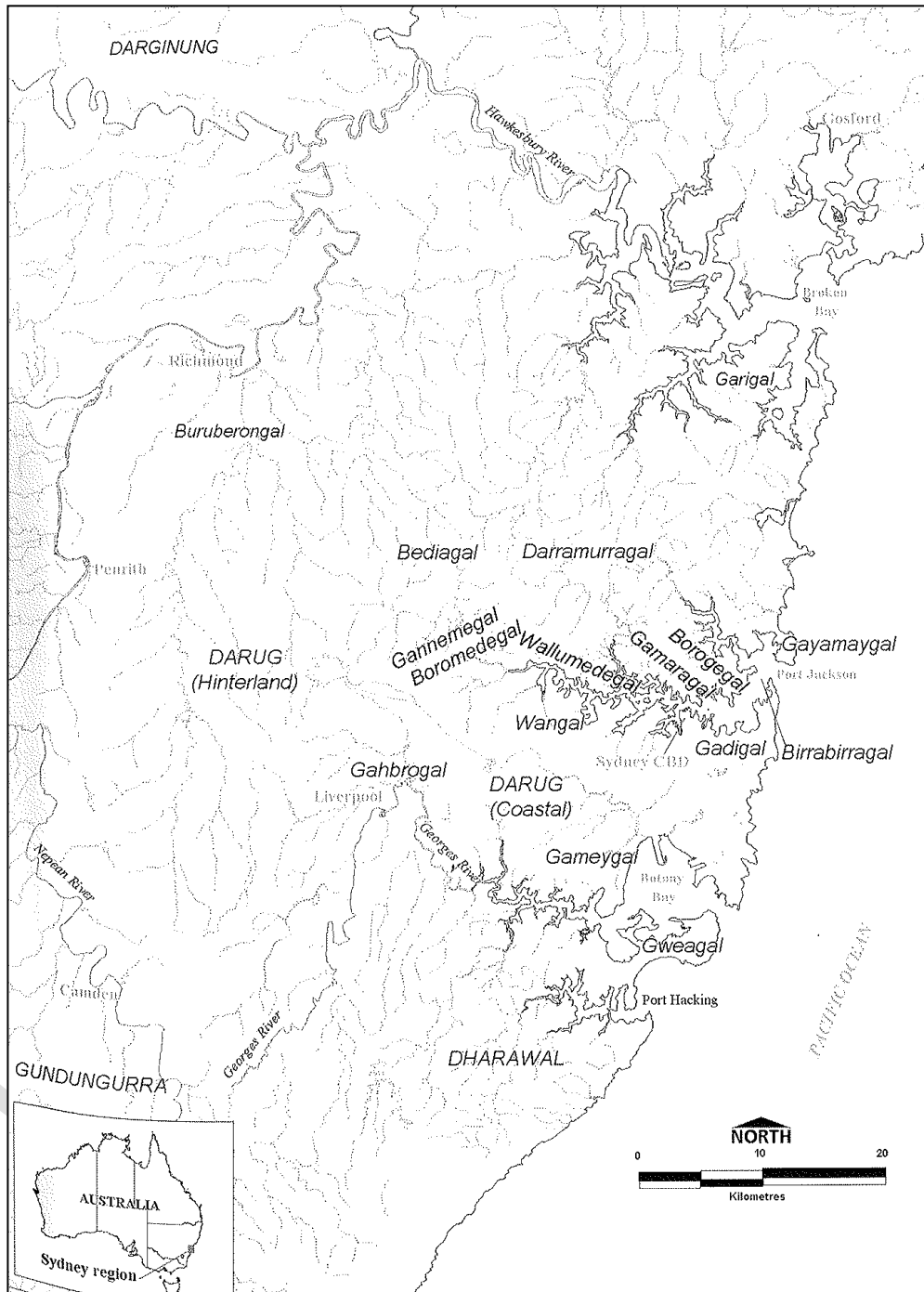
- Darug, coastal dialect/s – the Sydney Peninsula (north of Botany Bay, south of Port Jackson, west to Parramatta), as well as the country to the north of Port Jackson, possibly as far as Broken Bay;
- Darug, hinterland dialect – on the Cumberland Plain from Appin in the south to the Hawkesbury River in the north; west of the Georges River, Parramatta, the Lane Cover River and Berowra Creek;
- Dharawal – from south side of Botany Bay, extending south as far as the Shoalhaven River; from the coast to the Georges River and Appin, and possibly as far west as Camden,
- Gundungurra – southern rim of the Cumberland Plain west of the Georges River, as well as the southern Blue Mountains. (Attenbrow 2010, p. 34)

So Attenbrow did not use Guringai as a name for the language spoken north of Port Jackson but rather extended the coastal dialect of Darug across from the Sydney Peninsula and possibly as far north as Broken Bay. Attenbrow also commented on the naming of languages and the modern use of these names by Aboriginal communities:

Naming languages and the groups who spoke them became important in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when word lists and language distributions began to be discussed and published in the anthropological literature. The use of these language group names by present-day Aboriginal communities as a way of maintaining local identity and affiliations with land over areas that incorporated more than one clan estate has become common in recent time, especially for addressing issues such as land claims and funding. This is particularly the case in areas such as the Sydney region where the original land-based entities such as clans who had responsibilities for estates in pre-colonial times have not survived, though their descendants still live in many parts of the region. It is a valid use

of the language names, but it also has to be remembered that, because of the history of events that has taken place in the Sydney region, the present composition of groups using the language names and the boundaries within which they operate are, in some places, quite different to those of the past. (Attenbrow 2010, p. 35)

In short Attenbrow is saying that current Aboriginal-community use of names that in some cases were created by the 19<sup>th</sup> century anthropologists is a valid affirmation of cultural identity.



Map 10: Language, clan and other named groups map. Attenbrow (2010) made extensive review of primary records to identify the various descriptions of Aboriginal clans and languages. Note the extensive gaps to the north of Port Jackson and no mention of Guringai/Kuringgai.

George and Shelagh Champion wrote an assessment of their research into the relevance of the Kuring-gai Tribe to the Manly, Warringah and Pittwater Peninsula (Champion 2003) with many of their findings in agreement with those of this report. In addition they identified that:

It appears that it wasn't until 1894 that the name "Kuring-gai" was first used officially on our peninsula. The N.S.W. Minister for Lands, Henry Copeland was looking for a suitable name for our new national park, when he found the name "Kuring-gai" on Fraser's map. Copeland thought the name had a genuine Aboriginal ring about it, and added the word "Chase" rather than "Park". (Champion 2003)

## **Keith Vincent Smith and Jeremy Steele**

Jeremy Steele a retired university administrator did a PhD on 'The Aboriginal Language of Sydney' (Steele 2005) reviewing previous work. He was supervised by James Kohen and provided with support from Keith Vincent Smith who was working on the Eora clans for a PhD degree. Steele followed Smith's lead in identifying the Sydney language as 'Biyal-Biyal' (see section on Eora below for Steele's explanation in not using Eora) derived from the word for 'no' repeated – the use of 'no' as a name and it being doubled seen elsewhere in Aboriginal clan names (e.g. Tindale 1974, p. 41). Other researchers do not follow this (e.g. see Wafer and Lissarrague 2008, p. 141; Powell and Hesline 2010, p. 13).

Steele commented on the way that First Fleet officers were quick to note differences between coastal and inland Aboriginal people but made no such observations on either side of Port Jackson:

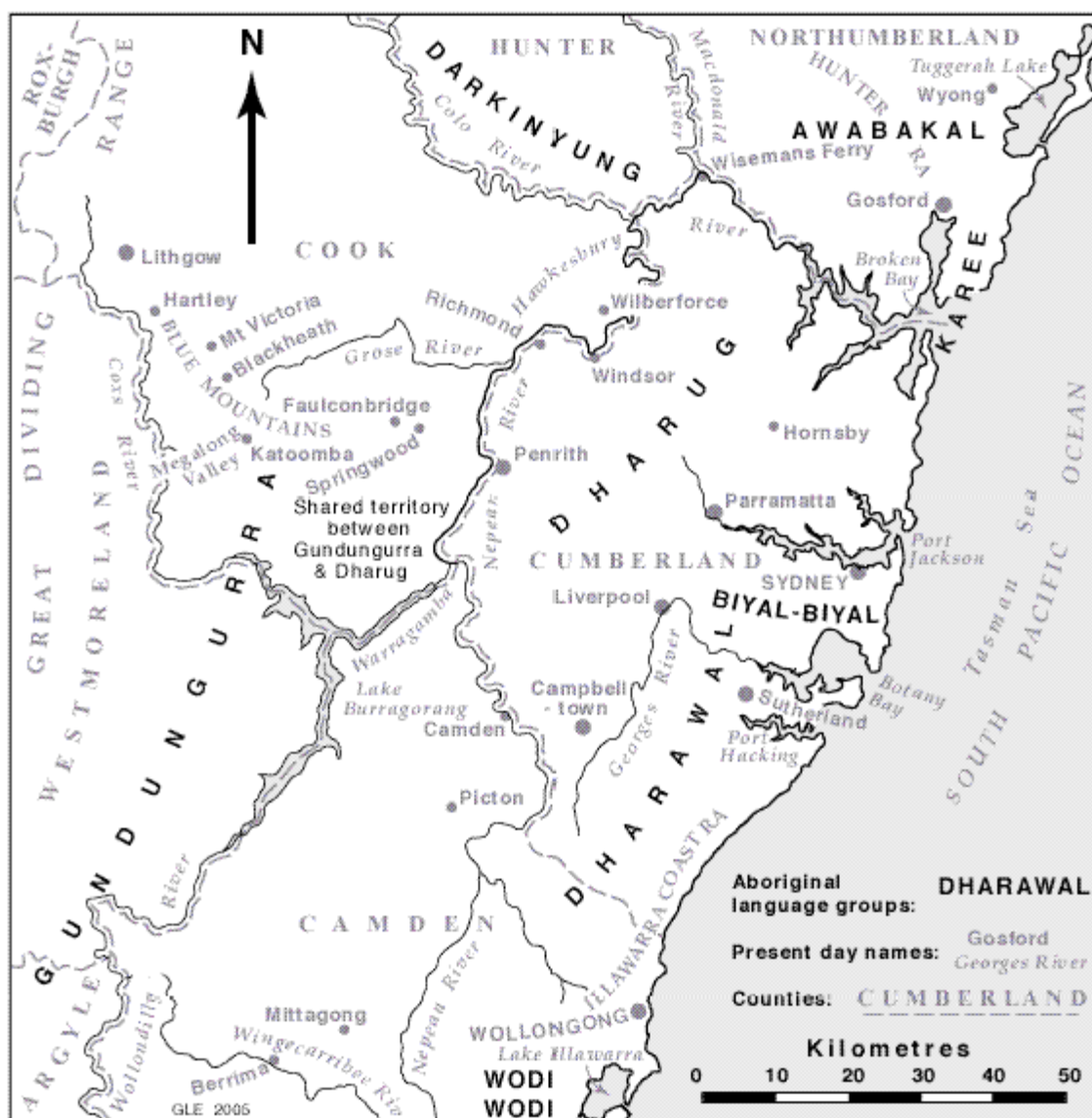
Dawes made no reference to a language difference on the northern and southern shores of the harbour, yet he and Tench both drew attention to minor dialectal variations between the 'coasters' (the Sydney people on the coast), and the 'wood tribes' inland (Steele 2005, p. 18)

After discussion Steele makes the following conclusion as to the extent of the Sydney (his Biyal-Biyal) language:

Where the boundary between Biyal-Biyal and the language to the north lay, or where they merged into one another, it is not possible to determine. The well-inhabited harbour was unlikely to have constituted such a line of separation; the less populated hilly bushland between Port Jackson and Broken Bay is more probably where the languages might have diverged. (Steele 2005, p. 19)

It is worth keeping this passage in mind when you examine his map of language boundaries (see Map 11) as the area to the north of Port Jackson is blank.

Smith made similar conclusions: "Biyal-Biyal was the dominant Indigenous language spoken in the coastal area of Port Jackson in 1788, from Georges River to Broken Bay and from South Head to at least as far west as Parramatta" (Smith 2004: 21).



Map 11: Language boundaries. Steele (2005) map. Awabakal to the north of Broken Bay, Karee centred on Broken Bay, Darug forming the hinterland of the land north of Port Jackson, Biyal-Biyal the area between Port Jackson and Botany Bay and Dharawal to the south along the coast.

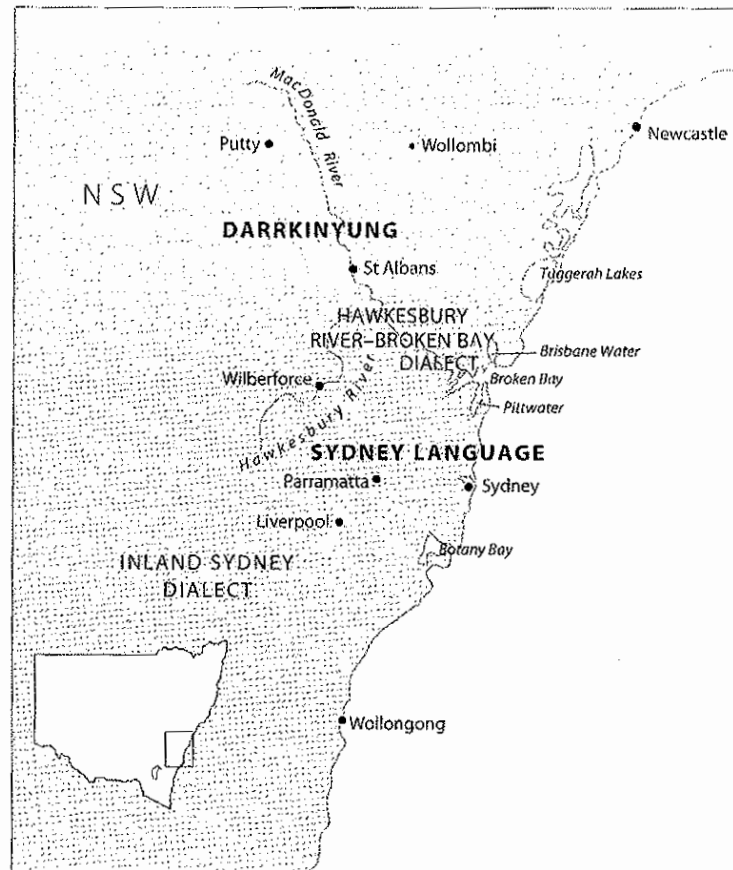
## Jim Wafer and Amanda Lissarrague

In 2008 Jim Wafer an anthropologist at the University of Newcastle with special interest in anthropological linguistics and Amanda Lissarrague a linguist who has worked with the Many Rivers Aboriginal Language Centre published a work on the Aboriginal languages of NSW and the ACT (Wafer and Lissarrague 2008). In it they define two languages for the Sydney-Hawkesbury region, the Sydney language and the Hawkesbury-MacDonald River (HMR) language. Both of these languages were divided into coastal and inland dialects (see Map 12). While they did not give an overall Aboriginal name for the Sydney language they did use the words Eora/ Iyura for the coastal dialect and Dharug for the inland dialect with the explanation:

Nonetheless, the names “Eora” and “Dharug” have now entrenched themselves in the onomastic landscape: in popular usage, in the naming practices of indigenous people of the region, and also in the professional literature, such as the work of Tindale (1974:

193 and map) and Horton (1994 and map (1996)). For this reason we have retained “Eora” as an alternative name for the coastal dialect of the Sydney language, and “Dharug” as an alternative name for the inland dialect. (Wafer and Lissarrague 2008, p. 141)

The Hawkesbury River-Broken Bay (HRBB) dialect of the Hawkesbury-MacDonald River language lies in the middle of what Capell defined as the area of the Kuringgai language (compare Maps 5 and 12).



Map 12: Language boundaries. Wafer and Lissarrague (2008) subdivide the languages in the area into the Sydney language with inland and coastal dialects sometimes called Dharug and Eora/Iyora and Hawkesbury-MacDonald River language with two varieties Darrkinyung and Hawkesbury River-Broken Bay dialect. The Sydney language stretches as far north as Broken Bay.

Wafer and Lissarrague examined ‘The Kuringgai Puzzle’ in a later article (Wafer and Lissarrague 2010). In this work they separate Gringai from Kuringgai and also identify Kuringgai as originally derived from Fraser:

First, we need to make a distinction between two phonologically similar but distinct dialect names. Guringay (‘Gringai’), which ... is a dialect of the Lower North Coast language, is distinguished from ‘Kuringgai’ by the absence of a velar stop after the velar nasal (that is, there is no *g* after the *ng*). The origins of ‘Kuringgai’, as with the name ‘Awabakal’, are ... probably attributable to John Fraser. Fraser mentions it in his 1892 compilation of the works of Threlkeld and ... makes extravagant claims for its geographic range. (Wafer and Lissarrague 2010, p. 151)

Wafer and Lissarrague examine Capell (1970) and consider his evidence of geographic range of linguistic groups “to be supported by only the barest minimum of evidence”. They also reject his separation of the Kuringgai and Awabakal into distinct languages instead identifying them as dialects of the same language. In Wafer and Lissarrague Their summary:

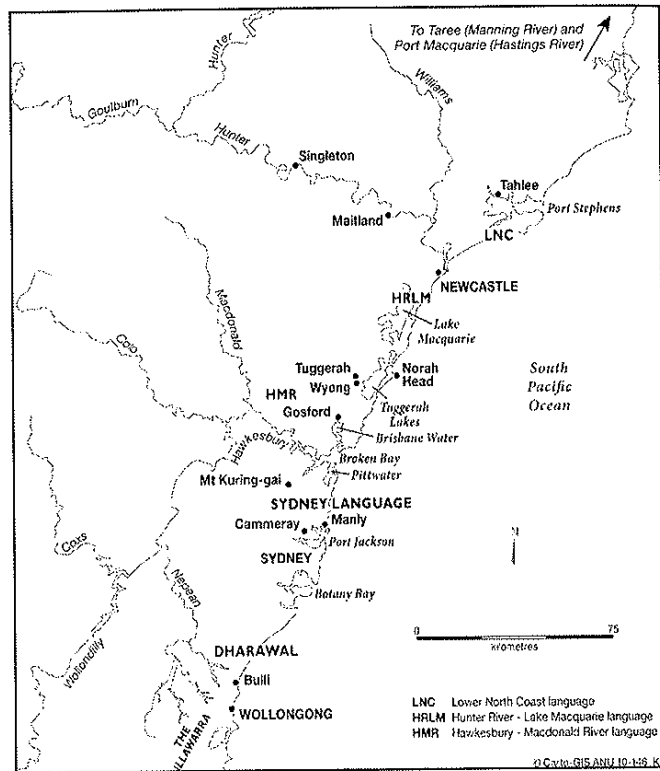
Capell gives no other justification for calling this dialect ‘Kuringgai’ than the fact that it was ‘convenient’. We suggest that this nomenclature has several major weaknesses. The name appears to have been invented by John Fraser, using morphemes from the Sydney language. There is no evidence that it was ever used by the speakers of the language variety to which the name was applied by Capell, or by their neighbours. And its original use, as the name of a super-language of the central NSW coastal belt, makes it ambiguous. To avoid ongoing confusion about the referents of this term, we suggest dropping it as a name for the southern dialect of HRLM.

There are two obvious names that would probably have a degree of authenticity: Kari and Karikal (spelt here in the orthography Lissarrague has developed for language revival in HRLM). We have decided to adopt the latter as a more appropriate name for the southern dialect of HRLM than ‘Kuringgai’ (cf. Smith 2004:93). . (Wafer and Lissarrague 2010, p. 152)

Wafer and Lissarrague’s concluding remarks regarding Capell’s ‘Kuringgai’ are (see Map 13):

We propose the following (hypothetical) picture of the dialectology of the region attributed by Capell to ‘Kuringgai’. The language of Brisbane Water, extending north through Tuggerah Lakes, was the southern dialect of HRLM (Karikal), and the language of the north shore of Broken Bay, to the west of Brisbane Water, was the coastal dialect of the Hawkesbury-MacDonald River language. The language of the south shore of Broken Bay was the Sydney language. Broken Bay appears to have been an area where the three languages converged, and was thus probably a linguistic transitional zone. (Wafer and Lissarrague 2010, p. 154)

In the end like Tindale (1974) before them Wafer and Lissarrague break up Fraser monolithic super-group of ‘Kuringgai’ into a number of languages and dialects.



Map 13: Language boundaries. Wafer and Lissarrague (2010) subdivide the languages in the area into the Sydney language with inland and coastal dialects sometimes called Dharug and Eora/Iyora and Hawkesbury-MacDonald River language with two varieties Darrkinung and Hawkesbury River-Broken Bay dialect. The Sydney language stretches as far north as Broken Bay.

## Local community

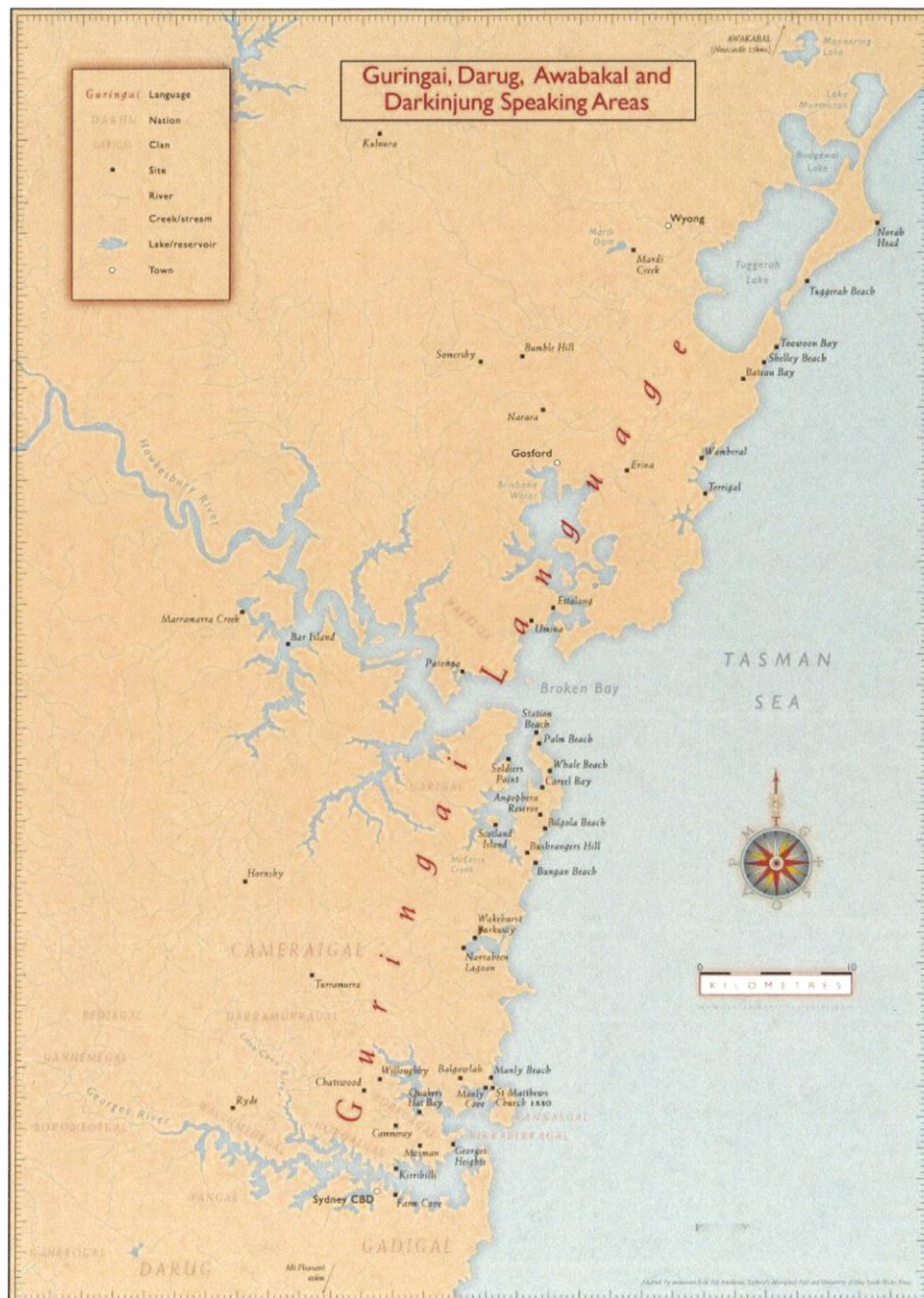
A group of people from near Broken Bay and Central Coast who have formed an organisation called the Guringai Aboriginal Tribal Link have a website that identifies 'Wanagine/Guringai land' as that stretching from Lane Cove to Lake Macquarie. They expand this description for traditional lands of Guringai speaking people to include:

All of Port Jackson catchment, including the tributaries of Middle Harbour and Lane Cove River, the Broken Bay catchment, including tributaries of Brisbane Water, Cowan Creek and Pitt Water, the water shed along Peats Ridge, following along the range to Kulnura, as well as the Lakes of the Central Coast to lower Lake Macquarie.

Under the heading Sophy Bungaree, however, the website provides a different area for the Guringai which comprises the Hawkesbury River Basin ending in the south at the ridge line of Duffy's Forest where they abut the neighbouring Eora of the Sydney Basin.

They cite Fraser's 1892 work as the origin of the name Kuringgai and also refer to a number of primary records such as Government blanket distributions, Court records, and so on to show evidence of the existence of Guringai speaking people in the area when Europeans first arrived. Their assessment is that the Guringai speaking people lived along the coast in the area described above and were sea people and that there remain families descended from these original inhabitants. The Guringai Aboriginal Tribal Link Corporation was established in 2003.

The History of Aboriginal Sydney project funded in part by the Australian Research Council and the Department of History, University of Sydney and with local community input has produced a timeline of events and map for the northern beaches region which is available on their website (History of Aboriginal Sydney 2010-13). On their website there is a map showing the geographic spread of the Guringai language which ranges from the north shore of Port Jackson to Tuggerah Lake (History of Aboriginal Sydney n.d.). This map is an adaptation from a map by Val Attenbrow with the major difference that the defined 'Guringai Language' with 'Guringai' is not found in Attenbrow's version.



Map 14: Language boundaries. The History of Aboriginal Sydney map shows Guringai Language extending along the coast from the north shore of Port Jackson across Broken Bay and Brisbane Water to Tuggerah Lake. (History of Aboriginal Sydney n.d.)

## Aboriginal Heritage Office

The Aboriginal Heritage Office (established in 2000) is a partnership of local councils. It initially adopted the commonly used interpretations of Capell and Kohen where Guringai extended to the north and was bounded by the Darug to the west. For the south side of the harbour the AHO used clan names instead of Eora. From around 2003 onwards the AHO has emphasised clan names over tribal names in an effort to remain more faithful to the known facts. An example of this is Willoughby Council's 2008 Aboriginal history project, supervised by the AHO, where the tribal names were avoided as much as possible (Currie 2008).

In 2010 the AHO put out a statement in response to a number of calls by non-Aboriginal people in regards to the use of the term Guringai. The AHO quoted Val Attenbrow about the fact that the current use of names are, in some places, "quite different to those of the past", and went on to express the following:

The AHO has discussed this issue with Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, the recognised custodians for this area, as well as members of the local Aboriginal community. It is generally agreed that the term Guringai may not be the original name for the area, tribe or language. However, given the lack of any credible alternative, it is considered to be an appropriate and convenient term to represent the area as distinct from other parts of Sydney.

It is a sad fact that much of the traditional knowledge of this area was wiped out in the smallpox epidemic of 1789 and subsequent impacts of the invasion. This is part of the story of this area.

It is interesting to note that it was the English who brought smallpox and other diseases, who took the land, and who made such a poor job of recording the language. It was the new colonists, and later 'Australians', who banned Indigenous languages and created policies of assimilation designed to remove the cultural heritage of Aboriginal survivors. It has been academics and amateur historians who have tried to reconstruct the past, generally for their own ends rather than for the betterment of Aboriginal people, then argued and theorised and changed their interpretation of the past without much thought of the impact that this would have on Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people have just got on with the job of trying to survive and trying to maintain their culture. The word Guringai has become incorporated into the region's history and landscape, whether right or wrong.

Does using the term Guringai add to the injustice? No!! The injustice is non-Aboriginal people making assumptions of what Aboriginal people want or need without bothering to ask.

Aboriginal Heritage Office, July 2010 ['Does Using Guringai add to the injustice', quoted in Elimatta, Spring 2010, p. 3, Aboriginal Support Group Manly Warringah Pittwater]  
[Note, this was based on a letter from the AHO responding to a request from the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs]

The AHO's current review is as a result of continued debate over the suitability of the term Guringai and aims to gain a thorough understanding of the facts and options for establishing the most appropriate terminology for the future.

## Eora

Among Collins' 'Consanguinity' wordlist is "Eo-ra" defined as "The name common for the natives". Compare this with Dawes entry for "Eeōra" "Men, or people". Eora is now a familiar term associated in some way with the people and/or language of the area between Port Jackson and Botany Bay. This is probably in large part due to the widespread influence of and reference to the works and maps of Tindale (1974) and Horton (1994, 1996) as seen in the copies below. However, this usage is not without disquiet: Troy (1994) used 'the Sydney language' rather than attaching a name that was not used by Aboriginal people.

Tindale (1974) explained his use of the term in replacement for Kamaraigal:

The name Eora is accepted for the tribal group around Port Jackson, instead of the hordal term Kamaraigal used in my 1940 work. David Collins (1798-1802) supplied a meaning of "black men" and wrote the term with a capital letter. John Hunter (1793:408) was the first to mention the word, giving it a meaning of "men, or people." On a later page of his vocabulary, he gave "yo-ra" with meaning of "a number of people." The suffix -gal attached to certain locality names in the Sydney area was accepted by Hunter and later by Collins as indicating areas of residence of "tribes." In the nomenclature of this work, they are names of hordes. While discussing the differences between Port Jackson people collectively and those of the Hawkesbury River who spoke a different dialect, Hunter, by inference recognized the groupings of the larger groupings called tribes in this study. (Tindale 1940: 127)

Attenbrow (2010) provides an extensive review of the "Eora dilemma" showing its presence in the original wordlist records from the First Fleet, the absence of its use by most writers of the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the first use by the Australian Museum in 1943, and its adoption by Tindale and McCarthy to encompass collective 'tribal' groupings of clans.

Some authors have moved away from Eora by using another term 'Biyal-Biyal'. For example, as Jeremy Steele explains in his thesis:

Speakers of Biyal-Biyal have been called 'Eora', or 'Iyura'. Neither term has been adopted here because:

- Dawes wrote "eeora" three times and "eora" once, and the term occurred once as "eo-ra" and again once as "e-o-rah" in the companion Anon notebook— each time to indicate 'men or people' (tribal men, not white men), rather than the name for their language;
- in the Sydney language, after respelling to linguistic conventions, no words start with a vowel, any original initial vowels being replaced by the semivowels y or w, or the often 'unheard' ng (thus "eeora" is here respelt yura);
- the variant forms of 'Eora' noted, together with respelling by some writers as 'iyura' and 'iyora', are a confusion considered better avoided. ...

There is another word for 'man', mala, for which the female equivalent is dyin. As there is no female equivalent for yura, and as many of the recorders provided female forms for the clan groups (Gadigal, male member of the Gadi clan; Gadi-galyan, female; Gamaragal, Gamara-galyan, etc.), the word might denote not a clan but a status, perhaps 'initiated man'. It might also correspond to a human-male contrast in English, or *homo-vir* in Latin. To the north, the similar word guri is also used for 'man' in

Awabakal, Darkinyung, Gadang and Biripi; to the south, the less similar word yuwin is used, in Dharawal and Dyirringany. None of the wordlist compilers stated that the word was the name of a tribal group. (Steele 2005, p. 5)

Others criticise Bial-Bial claiming it derives from a source that is too late in time and inappropriate in context (Powell and Helsine 2010).

## **Summary**

It can be seen that the early 21st century commentaries have helped to confirm the lack of authenticity of the word Guringai at a tribal or language group level and clarified the source of the word Eora, although it is clear that there is still widespread inconsistency in the way information is used and that this contributes to confusion and ongoing debate. The next section looks at the clan level.

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## Clan names

Clan is the term given to a collective of families claiming descent from a common ancestor and ownership of a definite area of country. In terms of the names of clans in the Sydney region much remains subject to dispute in the 21<sup>st</sup> century assessments of the status and reality of clan names. Attenbrow provides the clearest review of names and their associated spellings and reorded or presumed location.

Clan names chart (Attenbrow 2009)

Clan name	Historical spelling/s	Name or description of country
Bediagal	Bediagal, Bidjigals, Bid-ee-gàl, Bejigal, Be-dia-gal	Probably to the north-west of Parramatta, between Parramatta and Hawkesbury River, possibly around present day Castle Hill.
Birrabirragal	Birra birragal-leon	Possibly associated with Birra Birra, a rocky reef in the lower harbour now known as Sow and Pigs.
Borogegal	Borogegal, Borogegal-yurrey	Possibly associated with Borogegy, now know as Bradleys Head.
Boromedegal	Boorammedegal, Boromedegal, Boora me di-gal, Booramedigal-leon	Assumed to be associated with Parramatta area, on similarity of pronunciation, Parràmatta (Tench 1793), Par-ra-mata (King in Hunter 1793).
Buruberongal	Burubirangal, Bu-ru-be-ron-gal, Buruberongal, Boo-roo-bir-rong-gal, Boo-roo-ber-on-gal, Boorooberongal	To the north-west of Parramatta, about two hours walking distance from the Hawkesbury River (Phillip in Hunter 1793).
Darramurragal	Darra murra gal, Tarra-merragal	Said to be 'in the district of Wanne', but on similarity of name associated with the suburb Turramurra, at the headwaters of the Lane Cove River.
Gadigal	Cadigal, Cadigàl, Cadi-gal, Cadi-gal	Cadi was on the south side of Port Jackson, extending from South Head to Long Cove (Darling Harbour) (King in Hunter 1793). Cadi, the bay of Cadi, is probably 'Kutti' which is the Aboriginal place name for Watsons Bay.
Gahbrogal	Cah-bro-gal	The Cahbrogal lived inland and ate estuarine teredo worms called cah-bro (Collins 1798). In 1845 Mahroot said the 'Liverpool blacks' were called 'Cobrakalls'(In: Select Committee on the Condition of the Aborigines Report 1845). Associated with the suburb Cabramatta.
Gamaragal	Càmmeragal, Cam-mer-ray-gal, Cameeragal, Camera-gal, Kamarigal	Cam-mer-ray (Collins 1798), Cammerra (Phillip 1790), Camerra (King in Hunter 1793) was on the north shore or north side of Port Jackson.
Gameygal	Kamey-gal	Around Kamay, the name for Botany Bay, possibly to the north-west of Gwea (Anon ca 1790-1792).

Gannemegal	Cannemegal	Wau-maille [War-mul] which the Cannemegal was said to inhabit was one of eight place names in the district of Rose Hill which was 10 minutes walk westward from Rose Hill (Anon ca 1790 1792).
Garigal	Caregal, possibly Corrugal	Caregal initially given as name of 'a man, or a tribe, who resided to the northward'. Later, 'Nanbarre said Caregal was the man's name, and he lived at, or near Broken Bay' (Phillip in Hunter 1793).
Gayamaygal	'the tribe of Kay-yee-my'	Kay-yee-my, the place where the Governor was wounded - Manly Cove (Phillip in Hunter 1793); Kay-ye-my, Manly Bay (Anon ca 1790-1792).
Gweagal	Gweagal, Gwea-gal	Gwea. Gweea was on the southern shore of Botany Bay (Tench 1793).
Wallumedegal	Wallumedegal, Walumetta, Wallumede-gal	Wallumede. Wallumede was on the north shore, opposite Warrane (Sydney Cove) (King in Hunter 1793).
Wangal	Wangal, Wanngal, Won-gal	Wann (Phillip 1790). Wanne (King in Hunter 1793) extended along the south side of the harbour from Long Cove (Darling Harbour) to Rose Hill, which the local inhabitants called Parramatta.

Note, there is no historic use of the term 'Gai-mariagal', which has only appeared relatively recently.

Powell and Hesline (2010) provide a reassessment of many of the names most familiar in the Sydney area showing possible alternative explanations for their origin. This report will not go into any detail on these names excepting that of Eora (above) which now is associated with the language or coastal dialect of the Sydney language.

## Current use

An example of where the use of these names is heading is found in the draft map of Aboriginal languages put forward by the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs (Aboriginal Languages Research and Resource Centre 2013). Eora is given to the coastal language north of Sydney to Broken Bay and Dharug the inland language. The location is generalised without boundaries defined.

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) manages an Indigenous Language database which also treats Eora as a confirmed language along with Awabakal, Darkinyung, Dharawal, Dharug, Gundungurra while Ku-ring-gai/Guringai, Hawkesbury River-Broken Bay language is listed as potential data with the evidence incomplete (AIATSIS n.d.).

## Aboriginal languages of NSW



Map 14: Language boundaries. NSW Government Department of Aboriginal Affairs website draft map of Aboriginal languages (2013). Dharug and Eora form the languages of the Sydney district with Darkinyung apparently cutting towards the coast north of the Hawkesbury River and south-west of Awabakal. (Aboriginal Languages Research and Resource Centre 2013)

## Conclusions

In terms of northern Sydney, it seems clear from the available evidence that the early Europeans did not record a discrete and widely understood name for the language or tribe of the area nor for other parts of the region. The first use of the word 'Guringai' is over a hundred years after the arrival of the First Fleet. Kuringgai was a term created by Fraser in 1892 to define a super-tribe that he claimed stretched from the Macleay River to south of Sydney. This 'Kuringgai' actually encompassed a number of subordinate groups – smaller, more appropriate divisions of the Aboriginal clan structure and language, including the Gringai (Guringay) tribe in the Hunter River area. Fraser's initial definition was rejected by later researchers such as Tindale (1974). Tindale divided the area up into groups which were named with words coined by 19<sup>th</sup> century anthropologists (e.g. Daruk) or modified from their original meaning (e.g. Eora). Capell adopted the term Kuringgai 80 years after Fraser to identify an Aboriginal group which he defined as extending from as far north as Brisbane Waters to the north shore of Port Jackson. More recent research suggests that this language group was more localised to the Broken Bay district and should more appropriately be defined as Karikal or Garigal. The Aboriginal people on the north shore of Sydney towards Broken Bay were most likely speakers of the Sydney language. There is a move away from using words like Eora, Dharug, Guringai among some of those involved but still a sense by others that these words now represent a part of Aboriginal culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It seems clear that with each new piece of research the issue remains confusing with layer upon layer of interpretation based on the same lack of original information. This is exacerbated where writers make up names for their own problem-solving convenience. In the absence of factual evidence, it seems the temptation to fill the void with something else becomes very strong and this does not appear to be done in consultation with Aboriginal people who then inherit the problem.



Cartoon by Nicholson from *The Australian*, 27 September 2003: <[www.nicholsoncartoons.com.au](http://www.nicholsoncartoons.com.au)>

## Next Steps

It is unfortunate that the term Guringai has become widely known in northern Sydney and it is understandable that people wish to use it as it is convenient to have a single word to cover the language, tribe/nation, identity and culture of a region. However, it is based on a nineteenth century fiction and the AHO would argue that the use of the term Guringai or any of its various spellings such as Kuringgai is not warranted given its origin and previous use. It is not authentic to the area, it was coined by a non-Aboriginal person and it gives a misleading impression of the connectivity of some original clan boundaries. It is part of the story of this place that there is no certainty over tribal names, language groups or dreaming stories. To project the opposite is to continue this fiction. There is still need for further research and investigation, both historical and archaeological, to look for new or missed information. However, part of the history of Australia is that Aboriginal people died in the first conflicts between the new and the old, survivors were discouraged or forced to stop speaking their language, practising ceremony and passing on culture to their children, and traditional knowledge was hugely affected. In the absence of a convenient single term for the whole of northern Sydney, the AHO would recommend the use of clan names for local areas, with the understanding that these too have their limitations and problems, and the acceptance of the truth of the lack of certainty as a feature of how Aboriginal history and heritage is portrayed here.

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