



Aboriginal Heritage Office Yarnupings

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Issue 1



Filling a Void:

A review of the historical context for the use of the word 'Guringai'

The AHO's new research paper is now available on our website. It focuses on the origin, validity and use of the somewhat controversial word 'Guringai' but also refers to the broader issue of names of languages and clans in the Sydney area. The research was conducted so that the AHO had a better understanding of the facts relating to the names in northern Sydney in order to provide a more informed response for Councils, residents and other enquirers. We have been encouraged to make it widely available, so here it is and we hope it is of assistance for those trying to navigate the variable histories of northern Sydney!

"It is a very comprehensive and scholarly coverage of the literature tracing the introduction and use of the word 'Guringai' ...I think 'Filling a Void' should be available for all to read – on-line through the AHO website and/or published in a journal..."

Dr Val Attenbrow, author of *Sydney's Aboriginal Past*.

"This Review brings a lot of interesting material on this topic together, making it much easier for the average reader to consult compared with studying volumes of printed material in various places..."

It is our opinion that it would be a very worthwhile contribution, particularly to our local history, if this splendid Review were to be published at an early date".

George and Shelagh Champion OAMs, multiple authors of histories in the region.

[Click on this link to download](#) your own copy of the report.

Inheritance:

By Phil Hunt

"We Do Not Inherit the Earth from Our Ancestors, We Borrow It from Our Children."

This thought provoking quote is considered to be a derivation from a longer speech given by the then Federal Minister for Environment and Conservation Moss Cass in 1974 at a meeting of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Here it is in full:

We rich nations, for that is what we are, have an obligation not only to the poor nations, but to all the grandchildren of the world, rich and poor. We have not inherited this earth from our parents to do with it what we will. We have borrowed it from our children and we must be careful to use it in their interests as well as our own. Anyone who fails to recognise the basic validity of the proposition put in different ways by increasing numbers of writers, from Malthus to The Club of Rome, is either ignorant, a fool, or evil (M.Cass, 1974).

Inheritance and control of personal wealth was a key issue raised in the *Day of Mourning and Protest in 1938* (see Yarnupings, March 2014). Thinking of any inheritance you have ever received, hope to receive or hope to leave, consider the following:

Point 4(e): [all Aborigines should be entitled] To own land and property, and to be allowed to save money in personal banking accounts, and to come under the same laws regarding intestacy and transmission of property as the white population.

In 1938 you could say that Aboriginal people had lost everything, could own nothing and bequeath nothing. Yet we can all celebrate the very real and lasting inheritance received from the actions of Aboriginal people who worked hard to redress these wrongs.

If we think about the accumulation of wealth over generations, it is difficult to see how Indigenous people in Australia had any hope of getting ahead. How can you save if you can't open a bank account and you don't have control of your wages? How can you help the next generation if your meagre assets get seized by the government when you die? How can you encourage aspiration when your former lands are owned by others and they become the wealthier for it while you get poorer?

You may notice that these protestors in 1938 did not demand better protection for the environment. They didn't try to explain the importance of caring for country or express ideas of custodianship, stewardship, intergenerational equity and the like. It is not that these issues weren't important. It was because they were forced into trying to win basic human rights as a priority. If Aboriginal people couldn't persuade wider society that they deserved equal rights, what hope in suggesting 'wild' animals, trees, creeks and hills were of more importance than the sum total of their stripped down parts? In the same vein, if we see Aboriginal heritage as merely a collection of 'artefacts' and 'stories' to leave in the attic for the grandchildren we will fail to grasp Moss Cass' message. The challenge then is how we can moderate our own interests, the few, in favour of those, the many, who will come after us. How do we become as successful as Indigenous peoples whose achievements are measured in the thousands of years?

"Life, after all, is just a passing phase"...Kevin Gilbert

Turning to the Interns:

Kate Ting:

My name is Kate Ting and I am a new intern at the Aboriginal Heritage Office! I am originally from the USA. I study anthropology at New York University. I hope to finish my Bachelor's degree and become an archaeologist! I am in Sydney studying abroad for the semester. Living, studying and interning in Australia is so exciting. I am learning about Aboriginal culture and history in my anthropology, art, and environmental history courses here. Having the opportunity to apply the knowledge I acquire in class is incredible. This is my second week interning and although it seemed overwhelming at first, everyone is welcoming. I went to my first site today with Phil and we ended up discovering another new site! While I am at the Aboriginal Heritage Office I will be working on inspecting and monitoring Aboriginal sites. I would love to learn more about Indigenous people, Aboriginal site protection and Australian work culture. I can't wait to see what I will do next!

My name is Cecilia Cardani, I am an Italian graduate in Classical Studies. Currently, I am spending eight months in Australia to do some work experience in order to understand better in which field I would like to work in the future. Dave Watts kindly answered my enquiry and he offered me an internship of two months with the Aboriginal Heritage Office in Manly.

I am working mostly with Karen Smith, the AHO Education Officer, helping her with schools presentations, writing official documents, reorganising the cabinets of the Museum and Keeping Place and also joining her at meetings to set up events for the Guringai Festival.

Moreover, I worked with archaeologist Viki Gordon to do surveys for potential Aboriginal heritage sites. I also helped Gareth Birch, the Volunteer Coordinator to take measurements of coastal erosion and to draw up a cross section based on the data recorded.

This internship is very useful for my training because I am testing myself with different tasks and practising what I have learned about preservation of cultural heritage. Moreover, I am learning a lot about the Aboriginal culture which is extremely interesting and represents an exciting term of comparison with the ancient Greek and Latin culture which I have studied, especially on a linguistic level.

Lastly, I am very pleased to work in the friendly and kind environment of the Aboriginal Heritage Office and I admire the great effort they are making and the uniqueness of their work.

Cecilia Cardani:

Art Gallery NSW

By Kate Ting.

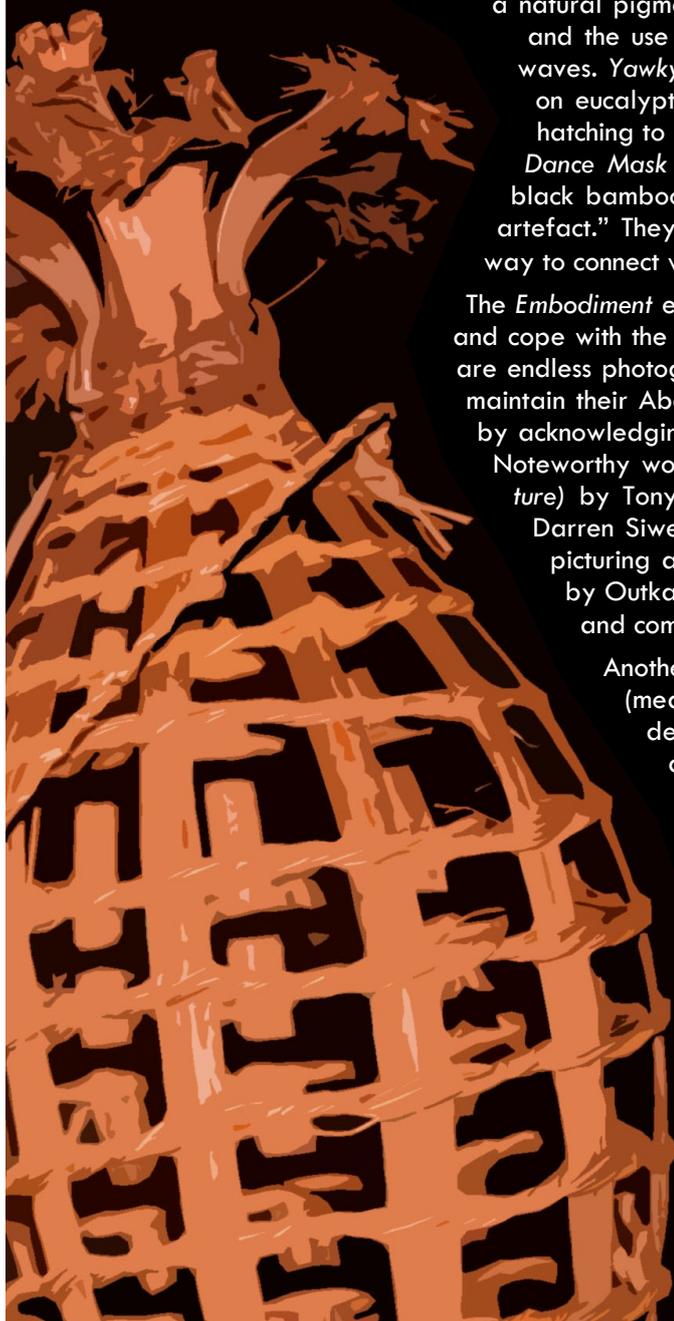
I went to the Art Gallery of NSW for the first time last week. I was very excited to see the iconic works of Warhol, Lichtenstein and Hockney in the *Pop to Popism* exhibit, not to mention my favourite artist, Shahzia Sikander's work in the *Conversations through the Asian Collections* exhibit. But the most breathtaking exhibits were found in the Yiribana Gallery, dedicated to the works of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

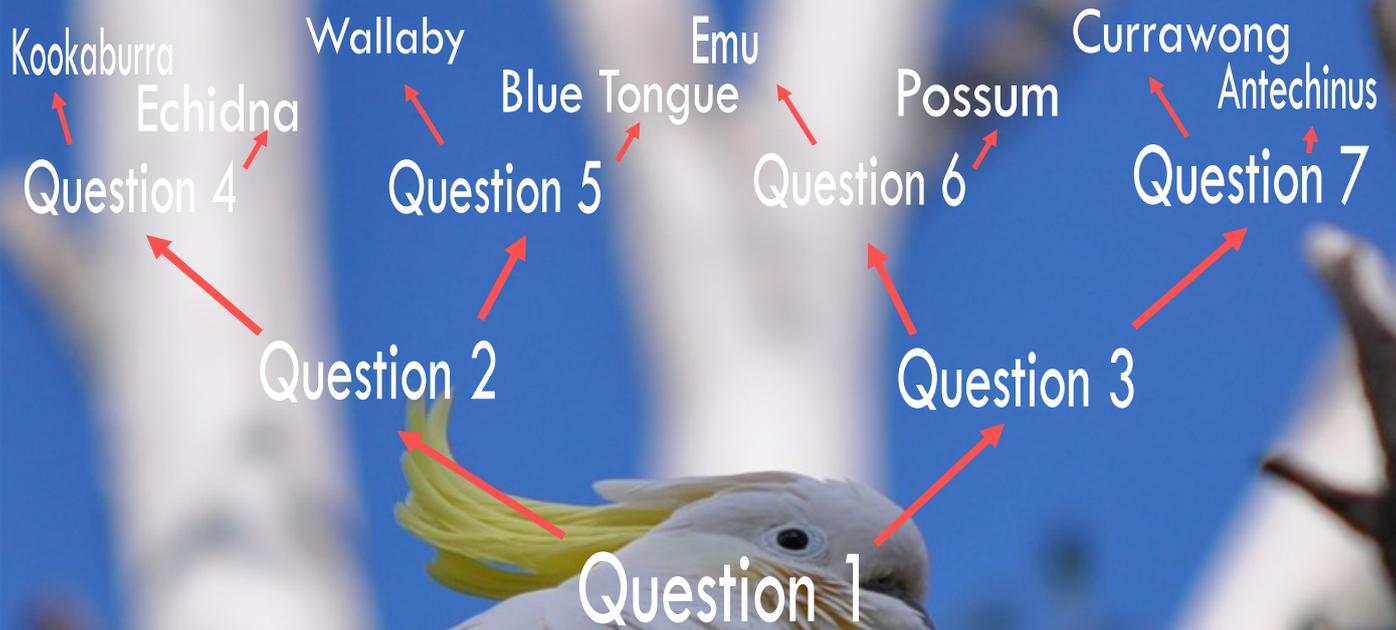
There are currently two exhibits on display. There are the *Our Spirits Lie in the Water* and *Embodiment* exhibitions. The first focuses on the Indigenous peoples' deep connection to water, and how it shapes the way they live their lives and inspires their artwork. Different mediums and methods of creating art are present, such as bark paintings, cultural weavings, sculpture, and abstract paintings. There are paintings of water sprites, rivers, streams, and aquatic animals. It shows us how one simple idea of something we typically take for granted can foster so many styles. Some notable pieces of this collection are *Winga (Tidal Movement, Waves)* by Cornelia Tipuamantumirri, *Yawkyawk* by Jimmy Njiminjuma, and *Beizam (shark) Dance Mask* by Ken Thaiday. *Winga* is a natural pigments painting on canvas. Both the composition of the piece and the use of contrasting colours help to depict the movement of the waves. *Yawkyawk* is a depiction of a water spirit using natural pigments on eucalyptus bark. The artist uses a technique called *rarrk* or cross-hatching to represent the land of Milmingkan. Lastly, the *Beizam (shark) Dance Mask* is a sculpture made of feathers, plywood, string, glass, black bamboo, plastic and paint. The artist calls his work a "mobilised artefact." They are used for ceremonial performances and are a great way to connect with his Islander heritage.

The *Embodiment* exhibit calls upon a current perspective to re-enact, explain and cope with the experiences of the past. Although it is just one room, there are endless photographs, sculptures and films to view. All of the works try to maintain their Aboriginal identity with modern day influences in the present by acknowledging the hardships of the past as being part of their people. Noteworthy works in this gallery are *Hey Ya (Shake it like a Polaroid Picture)* by Tony Albert as well as *Northie Kwin* and *Jingli Kwin*, both by Darren Siwes. In *Hey Ya*, Albert shows a series of enlarged Polaroids picturing a young man dancing with the lyrics from the song *Hey Ya* by Outkast on the bottom. The young man is "reconnecting to country and community by following the movements of his ancestors."

Another series of photographs, *Northie Kwin* and *Jingli Kwin*, (meaning "Northy Queen" and "Naughty Queen" respectively) depicts an Aboriginal woman in one and an Aboriginal man and women in the other. Their faces' have been painted white and they have been dressed as members of the royal. It is almost laughable and satirical how the models look, but it is also a grave reminder of the colonization of Australia, the removal of Aboriginals from their lands, and the genocide of their people. Siwes, the artist, says he wants to, "distort truth from untruths and to stir the comfortable in with the uncomfortable." All in all, these were some very thought provoking pieces.

Our Spirits Lie in the Water is going on from now until November 15, 2015. Don't miss your chance to see these amazing pieces!





See Where Your Knowledge Takes You:

Question 1: What's the name for the traditional language group of Northern Sydney?

- a) Cultural knowledge of this kind is unclear due to the devastating impact of European settlement (take a left).
- b) The Guringai or Ku-ring-gai (take a right).

Question 2: Ku-ring-gai Council has less engraving sites because...?

- a) Aboriginal woodland clans did not undertake engraving as often as coastal clans (take a left).
- b) The shale geology common in the area is not ideal for engraving (take a right).

Question 3: Returning boomerangs were used to...?

- a) Throw directly at bird prey and would return to be thrown again if one missed the target (take a left).
- b) Thrown above bird prey to scare them into hanging nets (take a right).

Question 4: The successful 1967 referendum...

- a) Included Aboriginal people in the census and gave the Commonwealth Government the power to make laws that pertained specifically to Aboriginal people (take a left).
- b) Gave Aboriginal people the right to vote and granted them Australian citizenship (take a right).

Question 5: What is a Welcome to Country is?

- a) A ceremony carried out to welcome back Aboriginal clan members returning to country after walkabout (take a left).
- b) Carried out at significant events by a Traditional Owner or representative to welcome visitors and acknowledge country, spirits and elders (take a right).

Question 6: Why are stone artefacts more common in desert areas than the Northern Beaches?

- a) Stone types ideal for tool making such as silcrete and fine grain mudstone are rare in the Northern Beaches with the dominant geology of Hawkesbury Sandstone being of poor quality for tool making (take a left).
- b) Relatively frequent rainfall in the Sydney area causes rapid weathering of the worked edges of artefacts making them impossible to identify (take a right).

Question 7: The skeleton of 'Narrabeen Man' was a significant find because...

- a) He was unusually tall for this region and artefacts found along with skeletal evidence of injury suggests that he met an untimely end (take a left).
- b) Due to the fact that sea levels were higher during the time he was alive, Aboriginal clans were not thought have inhabited the area now known as Narrabeen (take a right).

Answers on Page 6.

How'd Ya Go:

Final Answer	Points out of 3	Question	Answer
Kookuburra	2	1	Left
Echidna	1	2	Right
Wallaby	2	3	Right
Blue Tongue	3	4	Left
Emu	1	5	Right
Possum	0	6	Left
Currawong	2	7	Left
Antechinus	1		

Stuck In the Riddle With You:

Three guests are charged \$30 for their hotel room, each paying \$10. The desk clerk realises that the proper amount should have been \$25 and sends the bellboy up to refund the guests' \$5. On the way the bellboy decides that it would be easier to pocket \$2 for himself and refund the guest \$1 each. After paying \$10 and receiving \$1 back, the guests have now paid \$9 each. $3 \times \$9 = \27 . The bellboy has pocketed the \$2 bringing the total to \$29.

Where's the missing \$1???

Book Review:

Melinda Hinkson's book *'Aboriginal Sydney'—A Guide to Important Places of the Past and Present* provides a distinctive perspective on Sydney through places that reveal its ancient past and honour the continuing, living Indigenous culture of its present. Many people do not realise the existence or extent of Aboriginal cultural heritage within the city. The book aims to help everyone discover this in a '45 Significant Sites' format with practical information (maps, photos and directions, site facilities etc) and helpful, easy to read details of each sites' history and cultural significance, key events and the people associated with it (including a two page summary of the work done by AHO - editor).

This is a work that displays an alternative history of Sydney. The sites are ordered by geographical region, often with a suggested order of visitation. Read through, it provides an overview of Sydney's Aboriginal history before and since colonisation. Of course, many of the sites provide great harbour and other views and bushwalks or wonderful exhibitions and cultural displays. Others are less visually stimulating but still of great historical interest. These include sites in Redfern, Parramatta and Blacktown— the last 2 recently remembered as part of various (doomed) 'civilising experiments' with Aboriginals, often children, conducted by earlier 'white' governments.

Many of the sites are well-known and readily accessible however, for me, a significant number were unknown, and of interest both to read about and to plan to visit. Aboriginal custodians want to share this heritage with the wider community in the hope that more people will come to appreciate its value.

As we saw from the *'First Contact'* series aired recently on SBS, there is still a great deal of ignorance, misunderstanding and ongoing prejudice concerning Aboriginal people. A read of this simple guidebook and a visit to even just a few of the sites would help us all to increase our knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal culture and heritage and to appreciate and enjoy everything it has to offer. Of course, it will also increase your enthusiasm for the 'task at hand'.

Written by Chris McClure (Volunteer Site Monitor).

Riddle Answer:

Has the wool been pulled over your eyes? The key is to realise that the \$27 paid by the guests include the \$2 'tip' deducted by the bell boy. Breaking down the equation will shed some light...

$$\$25 \text{ (room charge)} + \$2 \text{ (bell boy 'tip')} + \$3 \text{ (refund)} = \$30$$