

CHAPTER 3

The recognition of Aboriginal placenames in New South Wales

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Introduction¹

The State of New South Wales (NSW) is located in south-eastern Australia; it covers an area of approximately 801,600 square kilometres and has a population slightly over six million people. NSW was first declared an English possession by Captain James Cook on 22 August 1770. In 1901 the Australian Federation created the Commonwealth of Australia, which in turn constituted NSW as a State within its own right.

Prior to the colonisation, Australia was occupied by 600-700 Indigenous territorial groups speaking about 250 languages and many more dialects. Britain took possession of Australia under the international legal doctrine of 'terra nullius', believing that the land belonged to no other sovereign power. To the Indigenous peoples who occupied Australia, however, the land had great cultural, spiritual and economic significance. As with other colonised countries the Indigenous inhabitants of Australia were subject to massacre, displacement and disease in the years after colonization (NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs n.d.).

In 1966 the NSW Government established the Geographical Names Board of NSW as the statutory body responsible for place naming within the State. The Board was constituted under the *Geographical Names Act 1966*, which enabled it to assign names to places, to investigate and determine the form, spelling, meaning, pronunciation, origin and history of any geographical name; and to determine the application of each name with regard to position or extent (*Geographical Names Act 1966*).

The history of recording Aboriginal placenames in NSW

It is important to acknowledge that there are two systems of placenames in NSW and in fact the whole of Australia. Firstly, there is the system developed by the introduced bureaucracy after colonisation. Further, there are networks of placenames that date back millennia that were used by the respective Aboriginal peoples. Hercus and Simpson (2002: 1) call the first system the “Introduced System” and refer to the second as the “Indigenous Placename Networks”.

Early European explorers of Australia failed to recognise the existence of these Indigenous Placename Networks and subsequently assigned European names to features that commemorated important events, people and places from their own culture.

Some early exceptions did apply, with various Aboriginal word and placename lists being compiled by Second Lieutenant William Dawes in the late 1780s and several maps showing various Aboriginal names published by surveyors such as Grimes and Meehan in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

By the 1850s Aboriginal placenames were starting to be recorded and used as a matter of course. This can be attributed to directions given by the then Surveyor General, Major Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell. It is said that Mitchell gave directions to all surveyors under his control that Aboriginal names should be used and recorded wherever possible. This directive is supported by various letters sent by him to his subordinate surveyors. In a letter sent to Assistant Surveyor Elliot in 1828, he states:

You will be particular in noting the native names of as many places as you can on your map of that part. The natives can furnish you with the names for every flat and almost every hill, and the settlers select their grants by these names. The names of new parishes will also be taken in most cases from the names of the natives... (Mitchell 1828)

A general directive published in the Regulations for the Guidance of Licensed Surveyors 1864 reinforced Mitchell’s correspondence. It stated:

37. Where euphonious aboriginal names can be ascertained, it is desirable that they should be suggested by the Surveyor for new parishes. (The Survey Department of NSW 1864: 4)

Further, the printed forms supplied to all surveyors to furnish their monthly progress report in 1828 carried the following footnote: “Native names of places to be in all cases inserted when they can be ascertained” (Selkirk 1923: 60).

As indicated by Mitchell in his letter to Elliot, settlers were also promulgating the use of Aboriginal names. In 1847 an *Order In Council*² provided squatters the right to convert their illegal occupation of crown land to leasehold. To do this they had to describe their run, which invariably meant Aboriginal placenames had to be used as no other descriptors were available. This action meant that Aboriginal placenames would be recorded on official documents and demonstrated that these names were in common use by the general community at that time.

At the turn of the twentieth century there was a renewed attempt to collect as much information as possible about Aboriginal culture. This interest was fuelled by theories of social Darwinism, which are sometimes referred to as the 'Dying Race Theory'. Various Government policies at that time arose from this notion of "the disappearance of Aborigines as a distinct group" (Wilson n.d.).

Consequently several attempts were made to collect information about Aboriginal placenames. The most ambitious of these was a survey carried out by the Royal Anthropological Society of Australasia (RASA). In the late 1800s the RASA sent surveys out to every police station in NSW. These surveys solicited the help of local police officers to collect information about Aboriginal placenames and their meanings. Figure 3.1 depicts the survey form used for this exercise. This information was eventually collated and published in RASA's journal titled *The Science of Man*.

In the 1990s the Geographical Names Board discovered over 3600 original RASA documents. This collection of documents included all the original responses to the survey, letters and manuscripts, diagrams and press cuttings of the time.

Caution has to be exercised when using this historical information. With the exception of Dawes, who provided a key to the orthography of his word lists, most attempts at recording Aboriginal placenames gave a confused insight into the words' orthography and pronunciation. As no Aboriginal language was written, we now have to rely heavily on word lists compiled by authors who, on the whole, had no linguistic training and, in some circumstances, a poor grasp of written English, to reconstruct authentic Aboriginal placenames in areas where traditional knowledge has been lost.

Figure 3.1: RASA survey form

The Anthropological Society of Australasia.

PATRON: HIS EXCELLENCY EARL BRADSLAW, GOVERNOR GENERAL OF N.S. WALES, &c.

PRESIDENT: THE HON. SIR FREDERICK POLLET, K.C.M.G.
CHIEF JUSTICE AND LEGISLATIVE GOVERNOR.

TREASURER: J. HOBBS FRENCH, GENERAL MANAGER,
BANK OF N.S. WALES.

"Argreah," Ashfield, N.S.W.

This Society has been formed amongst other things for collecting all that is obtainable concerning the Aborigines, and your assistance in making a collection of the Native Names of places with their meanings, and the reason why the blacks gave such names to the several localities (see example) will be most valuable. No doubt some of the old residents in your district will be able to assist you.

Yours faithfully,
W. WENTWORTH-BUCKNELL,
Hon. General Secretary.

From information supplied by *R. J. Thompson*

NAME OF PLACE.	MEANING OR REASON WHY IT WAS GIVEN.	NAME OF PLACE.	MEANING OR REASON WHY IT WAS GIVEN.
<i>Mintymulga</i>	<i>Trees struck by lightning</i>		
<i>Bait</i>	<i>White leaved box tree...</i>		
<i>Boon di</i>	<i>Noise made by sea waves breaking on beach.</i>	<i>now called Bondi</i>	
<i>Noojah</i>	<i>Bad smell, caused by the decay of large quantities of seaweed washed ashore.</i>	<i>now Coogee</i>	
<i>Microobrah</i>	<i>The trace of a peatly sandy beach a few miles S of Noojah - the beach was 11 miles after the lake had subsided the present place.</i>	<i>Macoubra</i>	
		<i>Mimambura</i>	<i>Plenty of fish</i>
		<i>Currington</i>	<i>The Medical land (a good one)</i>
		<i>Coolroongath</i>	<i>Home of the side of Jervis Bay entrance to Jervis Bay</i>
<i>Bumabee</i>	<i>Aboriginal name of North Botany Bay</i>	<i>Broona</i>	<i>The Eastern a Jarvis Bay now called Albionvale</i>
		<i>Broodere</i>	<i>The Home of the God lovers</i>
<i>Bwea</i>	<i>do - South Botany Bay</i>	<i>Coroombong</i>	
<i>Kundul</i>	<i>Name of place where Captain Cook landed.</i>	<i>Nandivandian</i>	<i>A crossing place safe harbour</i>
		<i>Wooladoorb</i>	<i>now called Wolladulla</i>
<i>Goonamarra</i>	<i>Name of Beach and sand hills about Port Jackson</i>	<i>now called Currie.</i>	
<i>Bulga</i>	<i>type (Mountain) South of Port Jackson means a Mountain</i>		
<i>Balla</i>	<i>Two Mountains</i>	<i>now Bulli</i>	
<i>Bellambi</i>			
<i>Bapton</i>			
<i>Elowra</i>	<i>Pleasant place</i>	<i>now Illawarra</i>	
<i>Woolyungah</i>	<i>Five Islands</i>	<i>now Wollongong</i>	
<i>Miawmih</i>	<i>Fish may be caught from the beach.</i>	<i>now Miramira</i>	

To add extra confusion, Mitchell wanted to ensure all Aboriginal names collected were euphonious. He issued to all surveyors a circular outlining a set of rules to be used for the collection of these names, as follows:

1. That where g begins a syllable it is never to be followed by h.
2. That the vowel u is always to be used instead of the diphthong oo excepting in the last syllable when the accent is upon it.
3. That no name is to terminate with h.
4. That two r's are to follow the accented syllable only and no other.

By avoiding thus unnecessary consonants and diphthongs, names to which some have given fourteen letters may be written in nine, as Beraweree for Bherrahwherree, Gulangulah for Ghoolangoolah, Bhroulhee for Brulee, Culapatamba for Coulahpatamboh, and many other words in which there are letters as superfluous as gum trees on the hills. (Mitchell 1829)

Since its inception in 1966 the Board has deliberately encouraged the preservation of Aboriginal placenames. This is demonstrated by the Board's published guideline which states "Names of Aboriginal origin or with an historical background are preferred" (Geographical Names Board of NSW 2001). The Board is also bound by legislation to compile a dictionary of Aboriginal placenames (*Geographical Names Act 1966*, Part 5, Section 1, Subsection g).

In the early 1990s the Board believed it could do more to recognise Aboriginal placenames and appointed a new member to represent the views of the Aboriginal community as a whole. Mr Aden Ridgeway was appointed to the Board at this time as a nominee of the NSW Aboriginal Land Council.

In 1992 the Board embarked on a public debate regarding the implementation of a dual naming policy. It was envisaged that this policy would allow the recognition of the traditional Aboriginal placenames alongside those names recorded in the introduced system. Reports in the press were misleading and implied that introduced names were to be discontinued and replaced by the traditional Aboriginal placenames. Several interviews with Board members failed to change public opinion and finally the then Minister for Land and Water Conservation, George Souris, announced that he was "against dual naming because of the confusion he believed it would cause" (Robinson 1993).

Whilst the Board did not back away from its commitment to give preference to Aboriginal placenames, it took another eight years and a change of Government before the Board was to again investigate the development and implementation of a dual naming policy.

In 2000 the Board was motivated to examine once more a dual-naming policy. This decision was driven by several factors, which included:

- A change in community perception
- A receptive government, and
- The receipt of several naming proposals to reinstate various Aboriginal placenames.

The Board had judged that community perception had changed since its last attempt to introduce a dual naming policy in 1993. The reconciliation walk across Sydney Harbour Bridge demonstrated this change in perception. Over 200,000 people marched across the bridge on 28 March 2000 in a show of solidarity for the cause of reconciliation between white and Aboriginal Australia (Byrne 2000).

A receptive Government also meant that a policy of this nature was more likely to succeed. The Minister responsible for the Geographical Names Board at this time, Kim Yeadon, reported to Parliament that:

Dual naming is a step forward on the path towards reconciliation. It will ensure that Aboriginal place names are recognised as an integral part of our heritage and will positively facilitate the preservation of that heritage. As with all acts of reconciliation, this initiative enriches all of us, indigenous and non-indigenous. This initiative will not only recognise and celebrate the unique link that Aboriginal people have with land and water, it will enhance the cultural heritage of New South Wales for everybody, adding an additional layer of meaning and significance to many of our favourite places. (Yeadon 2001)

In the meantime the Board had received a proposal to recognise the traditional Aboriginal name of a creek on the western outskirts of Sydney. This creek had an introduced name of 'South Creek', which dated back some 200 years. The proposal, however, presented proof of a traditional Aboriginal name, 'Wianamatta', which predated the introduced name.

These combining factors provided the stimulus for the Board to develop its policy; however, careful consideration on the policy development process was required to ensure its successful implementation.

The Board, with Ministerial approval, set up a dual name subcommittee (the subcommittee). The subcommittee had nominees from peak bodies representing Aboriginal communities, State Government, Local Government, emergency services, historians and academia. This subcommittee was charged with developing a policy that was culturally appropriate, cost effective and workable.

The policy and procedures used by the Board to formalise and record Aboriginal placenames

General procedures

The *Geographical Names Act 1966* outlines the procedure required for the Board to formalise geographical names within NSW. The Board is bound by this legislation; thus the formalisation of a placename, be it a singular or a dual name, must comply with this Act.

The Act states that the name must be considered by the Board. If the Board deems the name to be appropriate it then must be advertised in the local press and the NSW Government Gazette (the Gazette). This advertisement invites the general public to submit comments over the proceeding four weeks on the proposed name. If no objections are received after this period the name is officially recognised by way of notice in the Gazette. If an objection is received the proposed name is referred to the Minister responsible for the Board for a final decision. If approved, the name is officially recognised by way of notice in the Gazette.

The Board acknowledged that further safeguards had to be introduced into this process if culturally significant Aboriginal placenames were to be recognised as dual names under the Act. Consequently the Board and its subcommittee developed the dual naming policy and related procedures which provided detail on topics such as; the consultative process with Aboriginal communities, what constitutes a dual name, how the names are to be officially recognised, who determines the orthography of a dual name, and how dual names should be presented. The following information was extracted from the Board's policy and procedural documents on dual naming.

The consultative process with Aboriginal communities

All dual naming proposals require the support of the Local Aboriginal Land Council and, where relevant, tribal elders of the area. In some (rare) circumstances, a proposal may also need approval from a Regional or State Aboriginal Land Council.³ If the geographical feature covers more than one Aboriginal Land Council area (e.g. a river), approval is to be sought from each relevant Council.

A written proposal should be sent to the Local Aboriginal Land Council with details of the geographical or cultural site for which a dual name is being proposed. Proponents should specify the exact location, proposed name and spelling of the site within the proposal. Proponents should ask the Local Aboriginal Land Council to help establish a meeting to discuss the proposal with

local elders and representatives from established Aboriginal families. A copy of the proposal should also be sent to the Regional Aboriginal Land Council for comment.

Proponents should allow ample time for reply because the Local Aboriginal Land Council may need an unanticipated meeting to consider the proposal. If there is no response from the Local or Regional Aboriginal Land Council within three months, the Board can submit the proposal to the NSW Aboriginal Land Council for approval.

Once approved, public comment is sought through press advertisements as outlined in the *Geographical Names Act 1966*. The Board will also advertise the proposal in the *Koori Mail* (an Aboriginal newspaper covering NSW).

What constitutes a dual name?

Since June 2001 the NSW State Government has supported a dual naming policy for geographical features and cultural sites. This community-driven system acknowledges the significance of Aboriginal culture and, in doing so, represents a meaningful contribution to the process of reconciliation in NSW.

A dual name may be used for the naming of physical or environmental features of significance to the local Aboriginal community when an official name already exists.

A dual name must be indigenous to the local area within New South Wales. It can only be assigned where there is definite evidence, preferably of a historical nature, in the form of written or oral tradition that the feature has two names.

Address features, such as suburbs or localities, cannot have a dual name. If a location were to be dual named it would be designated as either a rural or urban place.

How the names are to be officially recognised

Both the introduced name and the Indigenous name shall be gazetted and recorded as a name within its own right. Each name shall be linked to the other in the NSW Geographical Names Register and given a status of 'Dual Assigned'.

Who determines the orthography of a dual name?

The orthography and/or spelling of a name should reside in the hands of the traditional owners, or the organisation that represents them. If there are none,

the submission should be referred to identified experts in the area of Linguistics and/or Orthography. All names should be represented by characters in the Roman alphabet and/or Arabic numbers (e.g. A, B, C/1, 2, 3).

Wherever possible traditional owners should be encouraged to seek the advice from experts in the area of linguistics and/or orthography on the spelling and pronunciation of a name before concurring with a proposal.

How dual names should be presented

For presentation purposes the introduced name shall be in standard font and the Indigenous name shall be in italic font except where only an Indigenous name is used, in which case it shall be in standard font. When shown together the two names will be separated with a forward slash (/). The Board does not preference the order in which the names are to be displayed when shown together.

Technical issues

After the development of the Dual Naming Policy the Board recognised that it required further advice to make informed decisions regarding dual name proposals and future strategies relating to Indigenous placenames.

On 3 April 2003 the Board established its Technical and Scientific Sub Committee (TSSC) to inform it on such issues. The Board turned to the Australian National Placename Survey (ANPS) to help in this endeavour.

The ANPS is based at the Macquarie University Sydney and is seen as one of the leading academic organisations in the field of toponymy in Australasia. ANPS is tasked with the collection of all Australian toponyms in a manner that recognises established principles for the research and documentation of history, geography, linguistics, cultural knowledge, surveying and mapping (Australian National Placename Survey n.d.).

ANPS established its New South Wales/Australian Capital Territory committee to take on, among other things, this advisory role to the Board. This committee consists of experts in linguistics, archiving, anthropology, Indigenous issues and toponymy. This group, along with the NSW government funded Aboriginal Language Research and Resource Centre (ALRRC⁴) has been instrumental in resolving issues surrounding the spelling and pronunciation of proposed dual names and consulting with local Aboriginal communities.

Education and training

After the implementation of the dual naming policy it became apparent that promotion was required if community based proposals were to be developed and submitted to the Board. The Board again turned to the ANPS and the ALRRC for assistance.

The ANPS's parent organisation, the Asia Pacific Institute for Toponymy (APIT) and the ALRRC successfully gained funding to host a series of workshops throughout NSW. These workshops are designed to train members of local Aboriginal communities in the processes of recording Aboriginal placenames and researching their linguistic and cultural background. The workshops allow participants to have a clear understanding of how to prepare submissions to the Board in cases where they may wish to name a feature previously without an official name, to change an existing official name or to establish a dual name.

The project has the full support of the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs who funded the workshops through its Major Grants Program 2003–2004.

Among other outcomes, the workshops were directly responsible for the formalisation of 20 dual names within the Sydney Harbour area and the ongoing submission of other proposals.

Issues to be considered in recording and publishing Aboriginal placenames

It is important to acknowledge that once Aboriginal placenames are gazetted by the Board they become part of the introduced system. As this is the case there are several issues that have to be considered when formalising these names. These include:

- what Aboriginal placenames should be recognised,
- how should the names be pronounced and spelt,
- what consequence does formalisation or gazettal have on ownership and what happens with culturally sensitive information?

The question of what Aboriginal placenames should be recognised is extremely complex. Judgements on ownership and cultural restriction have to be made when considering this issue.

Rob Amery and the Kurna Language and Language Ecology Class suggest that:

Indigenous languages are regarded in a fundamentally different way to large world languages like English. They are regarded as 'owned' entities in the same way that songs, ceremonies and land are owned. (Janke 1998: 20)

Once an Aboriginal placename becomes legally gazetted by way of the provisions outlined in the *Geographical Names Act* 1966 the name then becomes like any other in the introduced system and would be seen to be in the public domain.

If what Rob Amery and the Kurna Language and Language Ecology Class state is correct, that being the Aboriginal placename (as an extension of language) is owned, then each Aboriginal Community should be conscious that if one of its placenames is proposed as a geographical name then the rights it may see it has over that name may be diminished. As this is the case, Aboriginal communities should only concur with a proposal if they are happy for the names to be used without restriction in the broader community.

This is particularly important if the Aboriginal placename has *secret/sacred*⁵ limitations placed on it. Concurrence should not be given to Aboriginal placename proposals if such limitations exist on a particular name and the Aboriginal community does not want these limitations violated.

It is not envisaged that all Aboriginal placenames should be recognised in the introduced placename system. Only names that the Aboriginal community deem not to have secret/sacred limitations and names that can be used in the public domain without any ownership restrictions should be considered.

Once it is established what Aboriginal placenames can be recognised in the Introduced System, decisions have to be made on the placename's spelling and pronunciation. For instance, should the placename take a form which is only easily read and pronounced by trained linguists, or should it be spelt in a way that everyday Australians can grasp and pronounce in a way which sounds akin to what was originally spoken, but without the technical idiosyncrasies which were apparent in the original word?

The TSSC discussed this issue at length and noted NSW Hansard which stated:

This initiative will not only recognise and celebrate the unique link that Aboriginal people have with land and water, it will enhance the cultural heritage of New South Wales for everybody. (Yeadon 2001)

Therefore the TSSC recommended that proposed dual names should be spelt and pronounced in a manner that everyday Australians can grasp and pronounce. It also recommended that if this approach is taken all historical reference information and the reference orthography used to reconstruct the placenames should be recorded against each name. This requirement was seen as being necessary so future generations could establish how the name's orthography was established.

The Board now recognised that the Dual Naming policy is not envisaged to be used as a tool to collect and preserve all Aboriginal placenames. It noted that some names would not be collected due to ownership and secret/sacred limitations and further, the names that were collected may vary slightly in pronunciation from what was originally spoken. Investigations commenced on the development of a system which allowed the collection of Aboriginal placenames in a manner that was sympathetic to these issues.

Planned future initiatives to recognise placenames in the Aboriginal Naming Network

The Board commenced research on establishing a methodology that could effectively recognise the Indigenous Naming System of NSW. A partnering arrangement between the Board and ANPS is proposed to create a dictionary of Aboriginal names for NSW. This dictionary would recognise all names that would be made available to it by the Aboriginal community and look at all cultural issues regarding the use of these names.

The objectives of the project would be:

1. Collect and preserve a minimum of 200 Aboriginal names per year
2. Recognise and respect any cultural restrictions on these names
3. Preserve Aboriginal languages through a holistic approach to linguistic adaptations in tribal areas.

It is proposed that the Department of Lands would supply office space and desktop computers, along with some guidance and toponymic references from the Board's Secretariat, whilst ANPS would supply its database for the collection of information, students studying various related courses through Macquarie University to help resource the project and initial training for project team members (based on standard training as given to ANPS volunteer researchers).

Traineeships would be offered to Aboriginal people to help support the project. These traineeships would be cycled to reflect the area of activity (e.g. if work is being done in Wiradjuri country, preference would be given to a trainee

representing this group). ANPS may also look at the possibility of recognising this training by a certificate issued by the Macquarie University, which could lead on to further tertiary studies.

It is further proposed that a position to manage the project would be offered to an Aboriginal person to ensure that cultural sensitivities are considered.

The project could start by collecting information already available through web dictionaries and local experts. Once exhausted, a proactive search could take place within Aboriginal communities.

It is envisaged that the project will:

- Recognise and respect cultural sensitivities in the collection of this information
- Empower the Aboriginal community in the area of Aboriginal naming
- Give a consistent approach to the preservation of Aboriginal languages
- Raise the profile of the government in both the areas of Aboriginal Affairs and History preservation
- Ensure consistent orthographies for Aboriginal placenames within their respective countries
- Develop one repository of the Aboriginal Naming Network in NSW
- Meet the legislative requirement outlined by the *Geographical Names Act 1966*
- Allow the Board to process more, well researched, culturally appropriate dual naming and Aboriginal naming proposals, and
- Complement ANPS initiatives and utilise its database.

It is proposed that a submission could be created by both the Board and ANPS to seek funding from key Aboriginal representative groups and State and Federal government for the resourcing of the project. The partnering arrangement could also seek support from all parties who were involved in the Dual Naming Sub-Committee as well as the Minister for Lands. Corporate partnering could also be negotiated through organisations such as the Macquarie Dictionary to help co-fund the project.

Conclusion

Since colonisation many attempts have been made to recognise Aboriginal placenames. Motives for these attempts range from the need to describe land for procurement, to the collection of information as a cultural oddity, to legitimate recognition of the original placenames as a mark of respect for Aboriginal people.

Whatever the motive, the collection of these names has been problematic. The interpretation of language and subsequent transcription into the Roman alphabet has led to the corruption of many of these placenames. Furthermore, the publication and recognition of sacred/secret names has driven a further wedge between the white and Aboriginal cultures.

Through the help of organisations such as the ANPS and the ALRRC the Board has recognised that Aboriginal placenames can only be collected when effective consultation is carried out with the local Aboriginal community, education and empowerment is offered to those communities and cultural and intellectual property rights are respected.

Building on this knowledge NSW has implemented a dual naming policy which, within the last four years, has recognised over 20 important Aboriginal placenames. The Board, ANPS and the ALRRC have also conducted Aboriginal placename workshops in most regions within NSW. These workshops are designed to educate and empower the local Aboriginal community so further names can be recognised and preserved.

The Board determined that not all Aboriginal placenames could be recognised as part of the Introduced Naming System if cultural and intellectual property rights are to be respected. As this is the case future strategies are being investigated so the Aboriginal Naming Networks can be preserved for posterity.

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Endnotes

1. This paper was originally presented at a conference on minority/indigenous placenames organised by the Frisian Academy and the Dutch and German Speaking Division of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), at Ljouwert/Leeuwarden, Frisia, The Netherlands, 15-16 April 2005.
2. An Order signed by the Queen in Council. The *Sale of Waste Lands Act* 1846 empowered the Queen in Council to make rules and regulations for the occupation of Crown lands.
3. The New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC) was established under the *Land Rights Act 1983* (NSW). It is a self-funding statutory authority responsible for protecting and promoting the rights and interests of the Indigenous people of NSW. The State's Land Council network operates as a three tiered system consisting of the peak body, NSWALC, its Branch offices, 13 Regional Aboriginal Land Councils (RALCs) and 120 Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs). Every four years Land Council members vote for a Councillor to represent their region. Those 13 men and women make up the democratically elected arm of the NSWALC, providing guidance for the organisation and assisting it in meeting its objectives under the *Land Rights Act*.

Aboriginal placenames

4. The NSW Aboriginal Languages Research and Resource Centre (ALRRC) has been established by the NSW Government within the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs to play a key role in the preservation and revitalisation of Indigenous languages in NSW. It exists to foster and facilitate the recording, retention and understanding of those languages and to help Indigenous communities regain and strengthen access to their languages as a pathway to revitalising their culture.
5. Secret/sacred refers to information that, under customary laws, is made available only to the initiated; or information that can only be seen by men or women or particular people within the culture (Janke 1998: 317).