

Usage and Spelling

Terminology: The collective terms ‘Aboriginal people’ (as a noun, with ‘Aboriginal’ as an adjective), ‘Indigenous’ and ‘First Nations’ are all in use currently. Each term presents problems but I have used ‘Aboriginal people/Aboriginal’ most often as this has generally been preferred by the Aboriginal people I have interviewed. However, I have used the other listed terms at times and I recognise that usage and preferences change over time and context. Most recently, for example, the term ‘First Peoples’ has been chosen in Victoria where the First Peoples’ Assembly of Victoria is negotiating with the state government on a future treaty. Initially used in British Columbia, Canada, in the First Peoples’ Cultural Council, this term has less historical baggage, but has not yet become widely used in Australia.

Spelling: While Aboriginal languages are known to have a number of consonants not familiar to English speakers, there are three consonants that have voiced and unvoiced pronunciations. These pairs – t/d, k/g (hard ‘g’) and p/b – do not have different meanings in any Aboriginal languages, leaving written users to choose to use either the voiced or the unvoiced option. Early English recorders used various conventions for transliterating what they heard, and so early spellings vary widely. For consistency, this book uses the voiced option of each pair: d, g and b. So Dharawal rather than Tharawal; Bidjigal rather than Pitjikal; Gandangara rather than Kantankara; and Dharuk rather than Tharuk.

This text is taken from *Georges River Blues: Swamps, Mangroves and Resident Action, 1945–1980*, by Heather Goodall, published 2022, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.