

Placenames Australia

Newsletter of the Australian National Placenames Survey

an initiative of the Australian Academy of Humanities, supported by the Geographical Names Board of NSW



Nowhere Else Road

...or am I a toponymist?

Our peripatetic toponymist, Joshua Nash, muses on a road trip and reveals his crisis of confidence

On paper, I am 'a toponymist'. Such labels come laden with certain assumptions, both from within myself and from the scientific community. I am expected to know a lot about a lot (of placenames, at least). As some readers may recall from previous contributions to *Placenames Australia*, the history, linguistics, semantics, and even pragmatics—usage—of Norfolk Island and Kangaroo Island toponyms are meant not only to be in my wheelhouse, but also at my fingertips, producible as and when required. Still, how do placenames actually work? Who names them? Why are they some of the most sturdy parts of language, often the least available and susceptible to change? And why do we know so little about toponymic processes and what these names even are, although we use and think about them so often?

Some of these questions were bouncing around in my mind on a recent road trip with my Serbian-Aussie mate on the west coast of South Australia's Eyre Peninsula. As we jetted along the almost moon-like, midsummer setting from Port Lincoln to Ceduna, taking in the sights and noticing placenames like *Elliston*, *Venus Bay* and *St Peter Island*, and pondering their provenance and possible derivation, we tore past Nowhere Else Road. The eyes-peeled and ever-optimistic toponymist in me requested the driver to stop. I took a quick photo (see right) of that road sign, along with its Stobie pole, that good ol' South Aussie example of functional engineering.

I contemplated the name, its may-be origin and whether it'd be possible to find any records about it. I imagined what an article in *Placenames Australia* about humorously and outlandishly named placenames might look like (here you go), and headed west toward **Streaky Bay** (were there really streaks somewhere there?) **Elliston** we know about: it was named to honour the writer and teacher Ellen Liston. The name of **Venus Bay** was first recorded by Matthew Flinders in 1802, though it's not clear that he actually named it. The name of **St Peter Island** first appeared on a Dutch chart in 1618, in the form *I. St. Pieter*. And **Streaky Bay**? True—Matthew Flinders named it in 1802 because of the streaks in the water, caused by the reflection of light and seaweed.



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From the Editor



You may have noticed that in our introduction to Joshua Nash's article on the front page, we referred to him as 'peripatetic'. After extended appointments in Armidale and Adelaide and cold northern climes, he now says his location is 'some islands'. So an article on the Eyre Peninsula seems like coming home! (There'll be more from Joshua in our next issue, we hope.)

I've just realised there's a very important placenames-related initiative that we've not told you about until now. The **Gazetteer of Historical Australian Places** (GHAP) is a ground-breaking site that opens a treasure chest of information about our places. We are partnering with GHAP to progressively make our data available to everyone. I do recommend that you have a look at this excellent [website](#).

David Blair
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From the grapevine

WA parliament finds us useful

Hansard records a discussion in May about placenames with a 'Chinaman' element, and quotes Jan's September 2019 article on the subject. This [link](#) will get you there, if you'd like to check it out.

First Languages Australia

FLA has just published a position paper on 'Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Place Names'. This is an output of FLA's *Nangun wruk* program 'which aims to better involve language communities in the renaming processes in their regions'. For readers who'd like to download the paper, the webpage is [here](#).

Geometric names that don't work

Readers of the *Sydney Morning Herald* apparently find it easy to get distracted by toponymy. Its popular *Column8* recently hosted a series of contributions on Sydney locations where the apparent geometry can be quite misleading for those who are not in the know. It was noted that **Circular Quay** is semi-circular at the most; **Australia Square** is a cylindrical tower; **Green Square** and **Taylor Square** are triangles; and the railway loop **City Circle** isn't. In Sydney's defence, it was pointed out that New York's **Madison Square Garden** is round. And we bet that other Australian cities are replete with their own examples. Anybody?

Super quiz--do you know the answers?

Our reader Patrick O'Brien has set us a task. Writing from Singapore, Patrick reckons we're the experts to find **the first Australian places** to be named after a person in each of the following categories:

- a First Fleeter who was a military person
- a settler from the First or Second Fleet
- a convict transported to Australia

- a person born to immigrants
- an Indigenous person
- a New Zealander

We set the PA elves to work in the filing cabinet, but they've come back empty-handed. Up to you now, dear readers. Send your answers to the [Editor](#) in time for the next issue, and we'll reply to Patrick.

Puzzle answers - (from page 14)

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Wilsons Promontory | 5. The Coorong | 9. Cabramurra | 13. Cape Keerweer | 17. Lake Gordon |
| 2. Murray River | 6. Lake Garnpung | 10. Kati Thanda / Lake Eyre | 14. Highway 1 | 18. McDonald Islands |
| 3. Steep Point | 7. Great Victoria Desert | 11. Marble Bar | 15. Melville Island | 19. Cape Leeuwin |
| 4. Mount Ossa | 8. Melbourne | 12. Cooma | 16. Munga-Thirri / Simpson Desert | 20. Lake Cootapatamba |

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But **Nowhere Else Road**? Really? I am stumped. Does this easement lead (to) *nowhere*? Are we already in *nowhere*? Can *nowhere* even exist because everywhere is, well, a *where* by dint of its here-there-where-ness, right? When things break down, go back to the drawing board, to first principles, to the so-called **wh**-questions: **who, what, where, when, why, how, by whom, for whom?**

If only the namer of Nowhere Else Road were still alive. Maybe they are? If only I still had the energy, desire, resolve, and need to sniff out those who knew the original account of such places and their connection to land, law, and lore. If only I hadn't needed to get to Ceduna that evening, then I would have had more time to delve into the toponymic intricacies of Nowhere Else Road *in situ*, instead of being abstracted from it in time and space, as I am while formulating these thoughts now.

My fieldwork experiences on Oceanic islands (Nash, 2013, 2018) have revealed to me, and hopefully to the world, the complexity of toponymic practices. Others have nobly attempted to explicate these methods in a scholarly fashion, notably Blair and Tent (2018). And the pages of *Placenames Australia* have done much to make previously esoteric knowledge more relevant, applicable, digestible, and even humorous to a wider readership than is usual with academic research.

I have put forward the expression *toponymic ethnography* as a descriptor for a research field which deals with the way researchers, in consultation with the possessors of toponymic knowledge, can understand and write about people through placenames. The almost mystical nature

...Nowhere Else Road

of the way in which humans bestow names to places highlights the deep need we have to manage the difficulty and incongruity of implanting language, thought, and history in landscapes and environments. *Nowhere Else Road*, then, for whatever reason it was named, reveals how humans give this ostensible impenetrability a good

crack and somehow come out on top at least some of the time.

Toponymy is worthwhile, even at its edges, whims, and vagaries, in that it can expose and divulge what we know and what we can in principle know. The tools we require as scientists will always lag behind what we need to describe, just as language will eternally exist in the wake of the cultural products it attempts to portray. Among this

lovely muddle is the human striving to make sense of all the *nowhere elses* which exist in acculturated and toponymically populated circumstances. Where one could say *good luck, mate!*, let us embrace the language-and-world jumble. If nothing else, we will at least end up at another and different *nowhere else* than where we are now.

Joshua Nash

References

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- Nash, J. (2013). *Insular toponymies: place-naming on Norfolk Island, South Pacific and Dudley Peninsula, Kangaroo Island*. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- . (2018). Inside(r)-outside(r): linguistics, sociology, and the microterritoriality of maritime space on Pitcairn Island. *Journal of Territorial and Maritime Studies*, 5(2), 85-96.

Joshua Nash mentioned several places from his trip along the Eyre Peninsula in South Australia, and he made brief comments and raised intriguing questions relating to each of them. We searched the ANPS Database to see what more we can say about them, and discovered that the names *Elliston*, *Venus Bay*, *St Peter Island*, and *Streaky Bay* did indeed feature there. Turn the page to see what we discovered...

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...Nowhere Else and beyond

Elliston



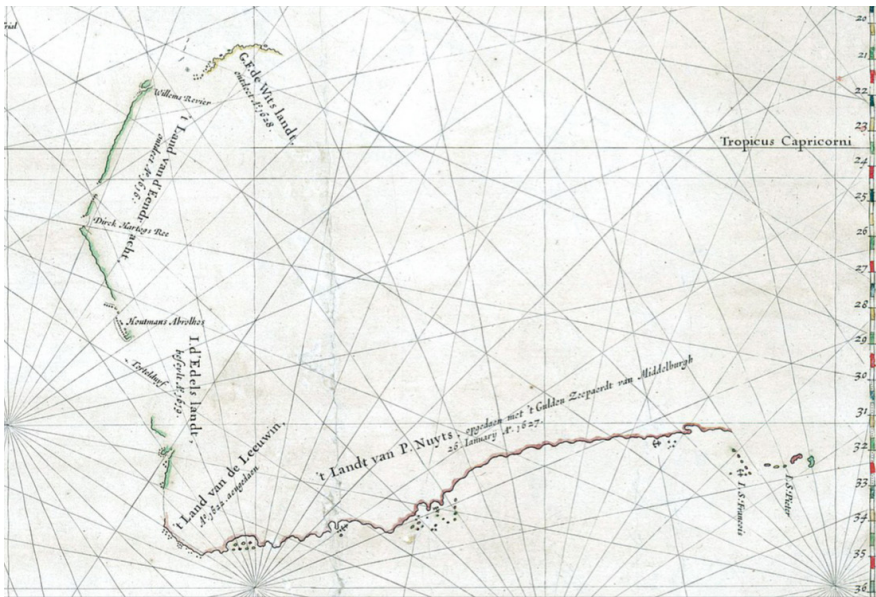
The town of Elliston has a blended name honouring **Ellen Liston** (1838-1885), a noted educator and writer in South Australia. Her family emigrated from England to Adelaide when she was twelve. She was one of the first teacher trainees in the state's education system, but illness later restricted her activities. She worked as a telegraphist and postmistress in various locations around the state, using her spare time to write short fiction and novels.

Portrait of Ellen Liston at Nilkerloo Station, c. 1870. (State Library of South Australia)

Venus Bay

Venus Bay, as with most of the coast of the Eyre Peninsula, was first recorded by Captain Matthew Flinders in 1802 during his attempt to map the coast of southern Australia, although he did not land, did not name it, and had no idea of its extent. South Australian placename records tell us that the name is derived from the 'Venus', the first schooner to enter the bay, as reported in the *Adelaide Times* and *The Register* in December 1849.

St Peter Island



In Flinders' journal (5 February 1802) he names the group of islands along the coast as *Nuyts' Archipelago*, identifying them as those 'laid down by the Dutch navigator' and noting 'the nine Isles of St. Francis and two of St. Peter'.

Jan Tent explains that Peter Nuyts and Francois Thijssen in *'t Gulden Zeepaert* ['the Golden Seahorse'] charted the south coast of Australia in 1627 as far as Fowler's Bay, making the first map of the south coast and the South Australian coast. Jan says that the most likely explanation for the naming is revealed by the personal names of the

two navigators: St Francis was the patron saint of Francois Thijssen, and St Peter of Peter Nuyts. [Readers with good eyesight will be able to spot the two island groups in the bottom right corner of the map, *Chart of the Malay Archipelago and the Dutch discoveries in Australia* by Hessel Gerritsz, 1618-.]

Streaky Bay

Flinders' journal (Friday 5 February 1802) tells the story:

No land was yet visible ahead; and there being much refuse from the shore, as well as seaweed floating about, some hopes of finding a river were entertained. At half-past two, however, low, sandy land was seen from the mast head, nearly all round, the depth had diminished from 19 to 7 fathoms, and the water was much discoloured in streaks at less than a mile from the ship. Smokes Were rising in three different places; but as the wind was unfavourable, and there was no prospect of any opening sufficiently large to admit the Investigator, I gave up the further examination of this place, and called it STREAKY BAY.

Beware the unreliable source

Recently I became interested in looking at the story of a mountain in Queensland's D'Aguilar Range, between present day Brisbane and Ipswich. In 1824 John Oxley named the mountain *Belle View Hill* after he climbed it on 22nd September. He says in his journal 'a more magnificent view it has not often fallen to my lot to behold, the whole country to the south was before me...' ¹ As *Belle View Hill* is no longer registered with the Department of Resources, Queensland, I wondered what had happened to it.

I found three other references to Belle View Hill:

- From the *Queensland Times*, a letter written by George Glover of Ipswich in 1948² in which he objected to a change of name for Oxley's 'Bellevue Mountain'. 'Who then was the person responsible for naming it Goat Mountain, by which it is known these days? A most unfortunate change.'

- From Sydney May, (Hon. Secretary of the Queensland Place Names Committee during the 1930s and a well-regarded source of placename information in later years), the following entries appeared in the journal *Local Government*: **1. Goat Mountain, November 1958** – 'On the left bank of the Brisbane River, near Mount Crosby. Oxley marked it on his survey as Bellevue Hill and Allan Cunningham a few years later, in 1829, as Mount Arucaria. It has now been changed to Goat Mountain...' **2. Goat Mountain, December 1958** – 'a range near the Brisbane River not far from Mount Crosby...The name Goat Mountain was given by W.H. Traill.'³

- From the *Queensland Geographical Journal*, 'A map of John Oxley's Survey of the Brisbane River 1823-4 to illustrate the Right Hon. Sir Hugh M. Nelson's Anniversary address to the Royal Geographic Society of Australasia Q. 27 July 1900'. Sir Hugh Nelson was President of the Society and a former Premier. I regarded the map [see right] prepared for him as a reliable source. In the top left hand corner a mountain is endorsed 'BELLE VIEW HILL now GOAT MT'.⁴

At this point I thought it was clear that Oxley's *Belle View Hill* was now *Goat Mountain*, regardless of Sydney May's mention of Cunningham's *Mount Arucaria*. However, *Goat Mountain* is not in the records of the Department of Resources, and neither is *Mount Arucaria*.

With further research I came to the conclusion that Goat Mountain had been renamed *Mermaid Mountain*. On a 1928 cadastral 40ch map Mermaid Mountain appears in the same position.⁵ This proved to be correct.

However, what of Belle View Hill? Despite the endorsement on Sir Hugh Muir Nelson's map it never was *Goat Mountain*. Whoever had prepared the map had made an error. George Glover was also misinformed. I happened to look at an entry from Sydney May in a later edition of *Local Government*, February 1962, under the heading 'Mount Crosby'. Here he totally contradicts his earlier information about Goat Mountain, making no reference to his previous entries: '...he [Oxley] says they could see a wooded peak which they called Belle View Mountain, North280. This wooded peak is now Mount Crosby and an old resident told me that the foreman of the gang which laid the [water] mains from Mt Crosby to Brisbane was named Crosby—and having had the honour of laying the first pipe the name Mt Crosby was given to the spot.'⁶ A look at the map supplied on the Department of Resources *place-names-search* website clearly shows Mount Crosby with Mermaid Mountain to the north. They are two different mountains. As for the foreman, that *may* be the origin of the name but the Department of Resources has two other suggestions. 1. The first farmers in the area came from Crosbie-on-Eden. 2. A gold prospector, George Crosby, worked in the area in the early days. On a 1906 map (charted in 1901), Goat Mountain is shown in the same position as Mermaid Mountain, whilst the name Mermaid



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...beware the unreliable source

Mountain appears on a 1928 map. Thus the name was changed sometime between 1901 and 1928.⁷ As for Mount Arucaria, I think it is a third mountain—perhaps Pine Mountain, which the Department of Resources says (quoting J. G. Steele) was originally named *Pine Ridge* by Oxley.⁸ Arucaria is a species of pine, and of course Cunningham was a botanist.

Thus, after being led astray by more than one unreliable source of placename information, it seems that the following is correct:

- Rather than the one mountain I set out to investigate, there are three mountains involved.
- The name *Belle View Hill* was lost, and it was re-named *Mount Crosby* for one of several suggested reasons listed above.
- Goat Mountain was probably named originally by W. H. Traill, a former editor of the *Bulletin* and politician who returned to Queensland during the 1890s. It was later renamed *Mermaid Mountain* to honour the ship that brought Oxley to Queensland. It is now a popular hiking spot famed for magnificent views.
- *Mount Arucaria*, which appears on Cunningham's map⁹ is possibly today's *Pine Mountain*.

This experience reinforces my appreciation of our policy at the Australian National Placenames Survey. We add

into our database all of the references that we unearth, even if we know they are incorrect. Many references to each placename can then be considered together, and a sensible decision as to its likely origin can be arrived at. Ideally this system will help prevent the frustrations I have recently endured as I was led astray by unreliable sources.

Endnotes

¹ John Oxley, *Journal*, 1824, re exploration of Moreton Bay.

² *Queensland Times*, 14 February, p. 3.

³ *Local Government* November 1958, p. 30; December 1958, p. 29: Sydney May, 'Queensland Place Names'.

⁴ *Queensland Geographical Journal*, New Series No. 1 Vol XV. *Map of John Oxley's Survey of the Brisbane River 1823-4* to illustrate the Right Hon. Sir Hugh M. Nelson's Anniversary address to the Royal Geographic Society of Australasia Q. 27 July 1900.

⁵ Moreton 40 chain Map, Sheet 3 West 1928.

⁶ *Local Government*, February 1962, p. 36.

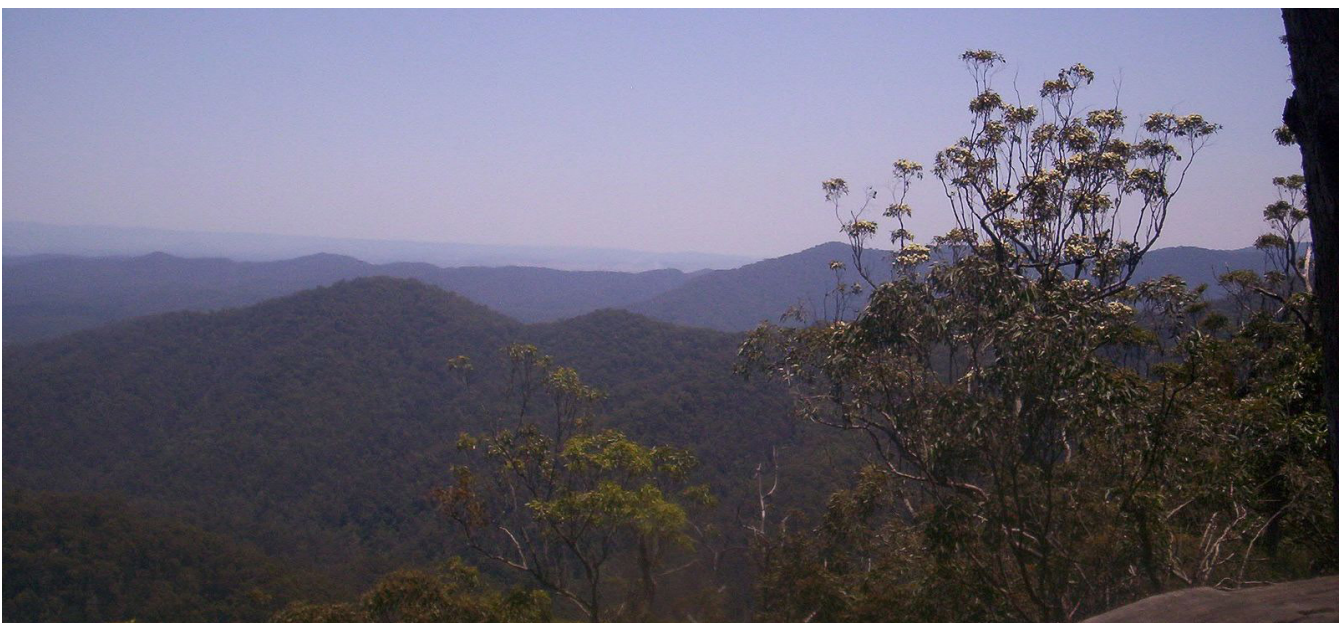
⁷ Cad-map-2 mile – 1906, Charted in 1901; and Moreton 40 Chain Map, Sheet 3 West 1928

⁸ www.qld.gov.au/environment/land/title/place-names/queensland-place-names-search

⁹ *A Geographical Sketch of a part of New South Wales lying East of the Dividing Range in the parallels of 26', 27' and 28' S Lat. and West and North-west from the Penal Settlement at MORETON BAY. Explored in the Winter of 1829 by A.C. (-Alan-Cunninghams-map-of-the-Moreton Region-Queensland-cicra-1829-Photographer.jpg)*

Dale Lehner

With thanks to Deann O'Donoghue of the Kenmore & District Historical Society for sharing her vast knowledge of the local area.



The D'Aguilar Range, Westridge Outlook (photo: Wikimedia)

‘Upper’ and ‘Lower’ toponyms

Many placenames are multiword constructions rather than single words, and in *Placenames Australia* we report from time to time on what we’ve found about the internal structure of these toponyms. In our March and June issues of 2021 I looked at placenames that have pre- and post-modifying adjectives such as *Old X*, *New X* and *X New* (I didn’t find any with the post-modifying *X Old*). And in June and December 2018 I looked into toponyms with pre- and post-modifying cardinal compass points (CCP toponyms) (such as *North X* and *X West*).¹ This time I want to look at two other adjectives that are sometimes used in toponyms, ‘Upper’ and ‘Lower’.

The number of instances is rather fewer than in the other two types we’ve looked at—in Australia there are only 374 placenames with ‘Upper’ and 258 with ‘Lower’.² Quite often an ‘Upper’ or ‘Lower’ toponym has an accompanying antonymic twin and even a non-modified version, e.g. Victoria’s *Plenty*, *Upper Plenty*, and *Lower Plenty*. The ‘Upper’ and ‘Lower’ usually signify the relative elevation of the feature, or its position on a stream (up-stream vs down-stream).

Most of these placenames were non-natural features, mainly settlements and constructed features: this was true for both ‘Upper’ (77.8%) and ‘Lower’ (68.6%). The remaining placenames attached to natural features are mainly for streams and waterfalls. Interestingly, this matches the similar trend we found with CCP toponyms. And if we look at the position of the adjective in the toponym, we again find a similar pattern to the CCP toponyms, with pre-modifying adjectives outnumbering those in a post-modifying position (Table 1).

Adjective position	Named features
Upper_	328 (87.8%)
_Upper	46 (12.3%)
Lower_	237 (91.9%)
_Lower	21 (8.1%)

Table 1

Table 2 paints an interesting picture in that it shows that only non-natural features have the adjective in the post-modifying position. Many of these are schools, just as the examples in the CCP set were.

Adjective position	Non-natural features	Natural features
Upper_	251 (86.3%)	83 (100%)
_Upper	40 (13.7%)	0
Lower_	157 (88.7%)	81 (100%)
_Lower	20 (11.3%)	0

Table 2

Sometimes, with toponyms of this type, the referent may be ambiguous. For example: *Tarwin Lower Jetty* (Figure 1). Is it (*Tarwin Lower*) *Jetty* or *Tarwin* (*Lower Jetty*)?



Figure 1

As Figure 2 makes clear, it is actually the former.



Figure 2

Jan Tent

Endnotes

¹ Also see my article on naming capes, lakes, mounts and points in *Placenames Australia*, September 2016.

² Building, bridge and road names were not included in the dataset.

‘Indigenous’ or ‘Introduced’?...

I often hear people refer to placenames such as *Wagga Wagga*, *Murrumbidgee*, *Wangaratta*, *Wallaroo*, *Mandurah* and *Barangaroo* as ‘Aboriginal’ or ‘Indigenous’ placenames. Strictly speaking this is incorrect, because they all form part of the ‘Introduced’ toponymic system. Let me explain.

ANPS distinguishes between two parallel placenaming systems or networks that cover the Australian landscape: the ‘Introduced’ and the ‘Indigenous’. Figure 1 schematically illustrates the underpinning and arrangement of such parallel toponymic systems. The Introduced system embraces the set of placenames introduced before and after European occupation; they form part of standard Australian English, are listed in the national gazetteer and the various state and territory gazetteers, and appear on our maps and roadside signs. In contrast, the ‘Indigenous’ (or autochthonous) systems encompass the numerous networks that existed before European occupation of the continent.¹ Prior to this event, every place of significance to Australia’s Indigenous peoples had been named.

However, in some places they endure and have yet to be fully documented, even though in many such regions elements of them convey sacred (secret) knowledge, and are therefore required to remain undisclosed.

Some toponyms recorded in the Introduced system were derived from the Indigenous network, and usually in a corrupted form, whilst others in the Introduced system derive from non-toponymic Indigenous words, such as *Kangaroo Valley*, *Mount Bogong*, *Gang Gang Creek*, *Gympie* and *Woomera*.

In a survey I conducted (Tent, 2017) I looked at the number of toponyms in Australia that had an Indigenous element (either a specific, a generic or both). I found that 28.2% of the approximately 375,000 named places in the 2012 gazetteer of Australia had such an Indigenous element. We cannot claim that settlements in Australia with a so-called ‘Aboriginal’ or ‘Indigenous’ name are derived directly from the Indigenous networks, because settlements were not part of traditional Aboriginal culture. Nevertheless, a form of the name may once have belonged to a nearby topographic feature. In addition to

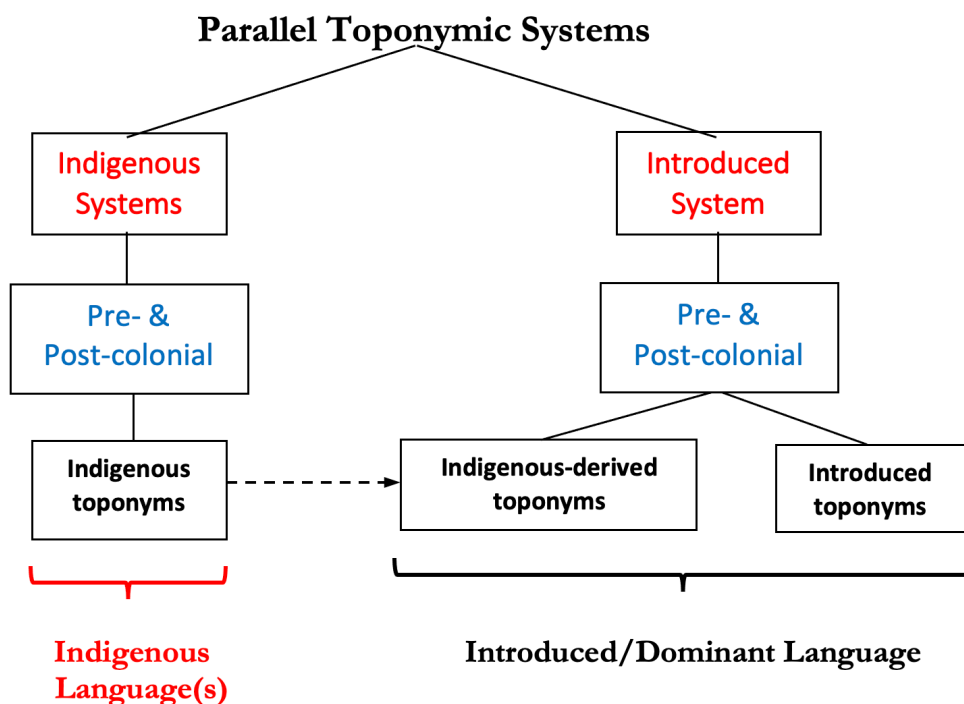


Figure 1 The hierarchical relationship arrangement of Parallel Toponymic Systems

Under this schema, toponyms may be classified as ‘Indigenous’, ‘Indigenous-derived’ or ‘Introduced’. Unfortunately, in most parts of the country the Indigenous placename networks have been obliterated.

this, most often the Indigenous name or word which now adorns our toponym is rendered in a corrupted form, due to a lack of correspondence between the English sound system and that of the originating Aboriginal languages,

...Part 1

a misunderstanding in the European recording the word, or both. We must therefore refer to such names as ‘Indigenous-derived’ or ‘Indigenous-based’ toponyms. Finally, as is so very often the case, Indigenous-derived names have been ‘transported’ across the country and applied in regions that have no cultural or linguistic connection with the place whence the name originally came. A fitting example is that of Sydney’s *Parramatta* which was transported to a location on the Yorke Peninsula (SA), but spelled *Paramatta*, and to Tasmania where it designated a former proclaimed town which was never developed, and spelled both *Paramatta* and *Parramatta*. Another example is the Tasmanian mining town *Waratah*, 77km south of Burnie (< *warrada*, Dharug language, Sydney).

Since our toponymic tour has arrived in Tasmania, let us linger in this state because it affords some excellent examples of genuine Indigenous and Indigenous-derived (pseudo-Indigenous?) placenames.

The Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre’s website has an [interactive map](#) that shows Aboriginal names of over 180 places (Figure 2). They are in Palawa Kani, a unique language created under the initiative of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC). It is a composite construction, based on the limited surviving spoken and written remnants of Tasmania’s original languages. Currently Palawa Kani functions primarily as a cultural artefact which enables Tasmania’s Indigenous community to distinguish itself within Australian society in general (Berk, 2017, pp. 3, 8). One unusual feature of the writing system is the absence of capital letters in its orthography. The names on the TAC map were retrieved and reconstructed by the Palawa Kani Language Program.

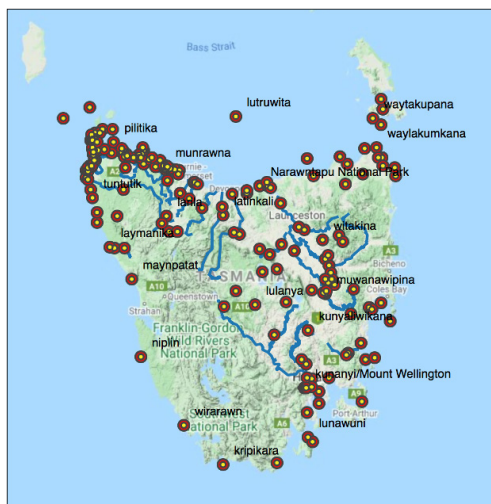


Figure 2
TAC
Aboriginal
placenames
map

When you zoom into the centre of the web version of the map in the region of Great Lake or *yingina* (see Figure 3), you will notice five toponyms that, unlike the others, have not been highlighted in black with the accompanying red and yellow target symbol, and they are also spelled with an initial capital. I have highlighted each with a red rectangle; they are: *Breona*, *Poatina*, *Liawenee*, *Miena*, and *Waddamana*. Land Tasmania’s [Placenames Tasmania website](#) provides origins to some of these names:



Figure 3 Section of Figure 2, Great Lake district,
Central Tasmania

Breona (Suburb/Locality): Aboriginal word meaning ‘fish’ (Ling Roth attributes this word to an unpublished work by ‘Roberts’). Previously known as *Tiagarra* (Ling Roth notes this as a southern tribes word for ‘keep’).²

Poatina (Suburb/Locality): Tasmanian Aboriginal word meaning ‘cavern’ or ‘cave’. The name was given to the village and the underground power station associated with the Great Lake North Hydro-Electric Power Development. It was practice of the Hydro-Electric Commissioner at the time to make use of ‘aboriginal names, which had not been used elsewhere, and that the meaning should bear some relation to the development. The meaning “CAVERN” appeared to be appropriate in view of the fact that the actual power station would be underground.’ [Dennison (2003 [1994]) also gives this meaning.]

Liawenee (Suburb/Locality): Aboriginal - meaning ‘fresh water’. [The Wikipedia entry for *Liawenee* claims ‘the name was derived from a Tasmanian Aboriginal word meaning “frigid”’. Dennison (2003 [1994]) gives the meaning as ‘fresh water’.]

Miena (Suburb/Locality): Aboriginal word for ‘lagoon’ or ‘lake’ (Milligan).³ [The Wikipedia entry for Miena claims ‘the name translates to “lagoon-like”’. This meaning is also ascribed by Dennison (2003 [1994])]

Waddamana (Suburb/Locality): From a Tasmanian Aboriginal

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word the meaning of which is generally accepted as ‘running water’ or ‘large river’.

[The Wikipedia entry for Waddamana claims ‘The Tasmanian Aboriginal name waddamana means “noisy water”’. A similar meaning is ascribed by Dennison (2003 [1994]) ‘an aboriginal word for “noisy water” or “big river”’.]

So, why aren’t these five toponyms highlighted on the TAC’S map? The answer is very simple: they aren’t Indigenous placenames, but Introduced placenames based on Indigenous words, often non-toponymic words. Notice how *Placenames Tasmania* says ‘Aboriginal word meaning “xyz”’ for each of these names, rather than ‘Aboriginal placename meaning “xyz”’. They are not, and never were, toponyms. Rather, they were superimposed upon the landscape by the Tasmanian Hydro-Electric Commission in the early 1900s when the hydro-electric plants and dams were built around Great Lake.

I mentioned the Sydney harbour-side name *Barangaroo* (named in honour of Bennelong’s wife) in my opening paragraph, declaring it an Introduced name, because the East Darling Harbour area certainly was never known by that name by the Cadigal people—locations never bore the names of people. This name was introduced to the area as a symmetrical counter-balance to *Bennelong Point*. Tasmania also has a number of eponymous Aboriginal toponyms, the most well-known of which are linked to Truganini, whose name has been given to several locations and streets. Her father’s name, Mangana, was bestowed upon a former goldmining township 10km north of Fingal (nowhere near his home of Bruny Island where he was chief of the clan). However, a bluff, a mountain and conservation park on Bruny Island bear his name. And Truganini’s sister, Moorina, has a hamlet on the Ringarooma River, 44km east of Scottsdale, which is named after her, as well as a bay and a conservation area on Bruny Island.

...‘Indigenous’ or ‘Introduced’?

None of these toponyms can however be considered as ‘Indigenous’ or ‘Aboriginal’ toponyms, but ‘Introduced’ ones, and are thus ‘Indigenous-derived’.

The moral of the story is: we should exercise caution when declaring a toponym as ‘Indigenous’ or ‘Aboriginal’.

Jan Tent

Endnotes

¹ I use the plural with ‘Indigenous systems’ because there was, and is, no uniform Indigenous toponymic system among the First Nations peoples of Australia. Each language group has its own system of place-naming. This is likely to also be the case in other regions of the world with autochthonous populations who speak a variety of languages.

² Henry Ling Roth (1855–1925) English-born anthropologist.

³ Joseph Milligan, surgeon-superintendent at Wybalenna between 1844 and 1847. It is located on the west coast of Flinders Island. This is the site to which Tasmania’s Indigenous people were moved from the mainland. Wybalenna was established as the so-called ‘Aboriginal Settlement’ in 1834 for the purpose of being ‘civilised and Christianised’. It was named *Wybalenna* because it meant ‘black man’s houses’ in the language of the Ben Lomond people, the largest Aboriginal nation at the site.

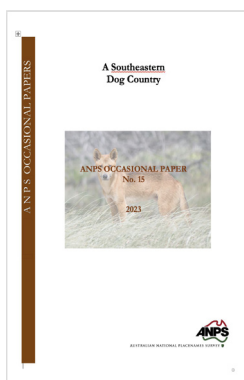
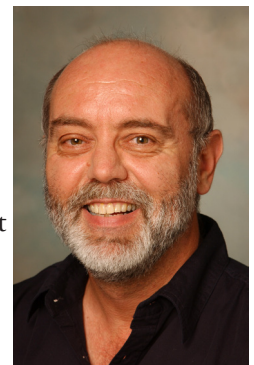
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Dr Jan Tent is the Director of the Australian National Placenames Survey. He is a frequent contributor to these pages on the theory and terminology of toponymy. He has a special interest in Dutch-based placenames in Australia and its surrounds. The second part of this article will appear in our next issue.



Now published - ANPS Occasional Paper 15

A Southeastern Dog Country, by Jim Wafer and Tracey Howie

In the wedge of country that stretches from the mid-Hunter to Barrenjoey Head, the recorded Indigenous toponyms indicate a clear linguistic and cultural coherence. About 10% of those placenames may incorporate the word for ‘dog’—such a high proportion strongly suggests that this is Dog Country.

Download it from the [ANPS Publications page](#).

Hidden continents

Our Dutch toponymic legacy extends below the surface of the sea

An article in *The Conversation* some time ago¹ explained how Australia is surrounded by underwater continents. The largest is *Zealandia* (the world's 8th continent) which extends underwater from New Zealand (Fig. 1). Two smaller 'lost continents', called microcontinents, in 2011 were discovered submerged off the West Australian coast—*Gulden Draak Knoll* and *Batavia Knoll* (Fig. 2). They are lost continental fragments more than 1000km west of Perth.²

Zealandia, naturally enough, takes its name from New Zealand, the highest point of that submerged continent. The *Gulden Draak Knoll* takes its name from the VOC ship the *Vergulde Draeck* 'Gilt Dragon', which was wrecked south of Ledge Point on 28 April 1656. It was bound for Batavia (Jakarta) loaded with trade goods and eight chests of silver to the value of 78,600 guilders.

The *Batavia Knoll*, of course, takes its name from the ill-fated VOC ship the *Batavia*, which foundered on 4 June 1629 on Morning Reef off the Houtman Abrolhos, during her maiden voyage to Batavia. The ensuing horror of that event is well-known in the annals of Australia's European history.

I have found ten more undersea features in the *Composite Gazetteer of Australia* that have a Dutch or Dutch-linked name. A search of the 1494 undersea features listed in the Gazetteer reveals some interesting naming patterns. Those patterns, as well as the three underwater continents, are an incentive to look into these 'hidden' toponyms in more detail in a future issue of *Placenames Australia*.

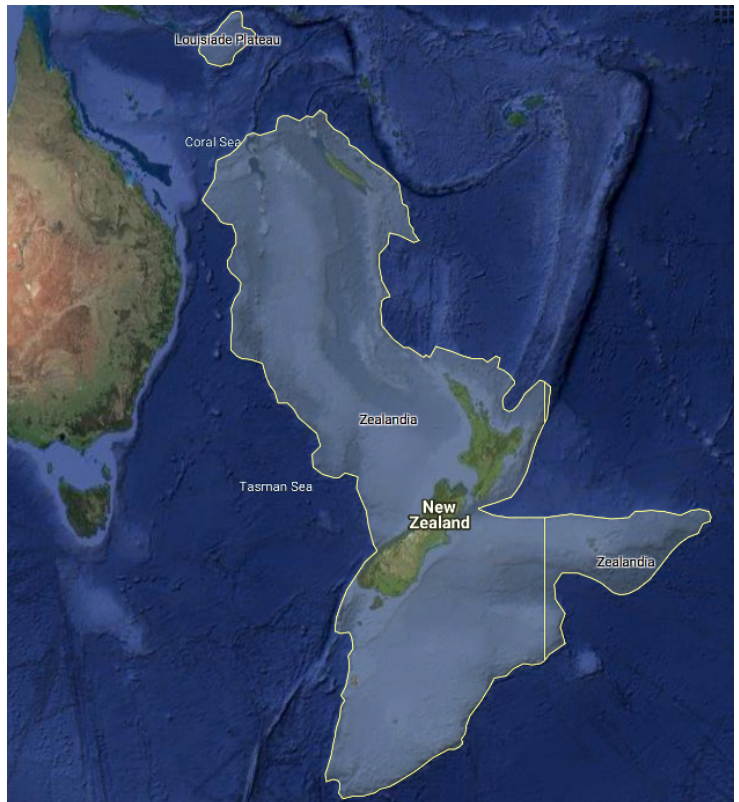


Figure 1 The continent of Zealandia

Jan Tent

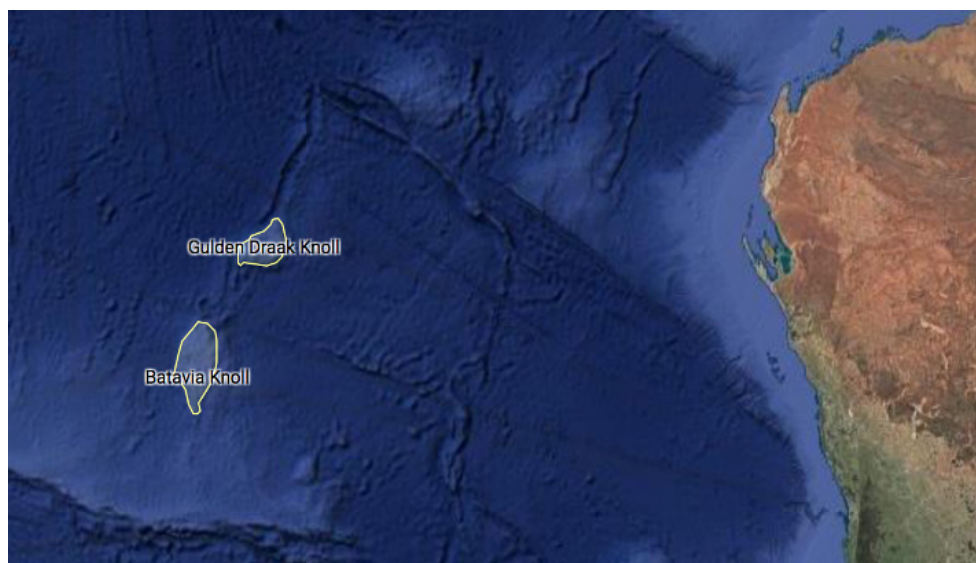


Figure 2 The micro-continents of *Gulden Draak* and *Batavia*

Endnotes

¹ 'What are lost continents, and why are we discovering so many?' by Maria Seton (Univ. Sydney), Joanne Whittaker (Univ. Tasmanian) and Simon Williams (Univ. Sydney).

² The micro-continent denoted as *Louiside Plateau* (top of the map in Figure 1) takes its name from the Louisiade Archipelago, so named by Louis Antoine de Bougainville in 1768 after King Louis XV. However, the first European to sight these islands was Luis Váez de Torres in 1606. Quite a fitting toponym given three Louis were involved in its discovery and naming.

Vanuabalavu: the long and winding land...

It is a pleasure to return to these columns after a brief hiatus. Followers of this series of articles will know that we have already attempted to explain the names of the larger islands of Fiji—two very large and five middling—and are now ambling through the third rank: those under 100 square kilometres, all but one of which have fewer than ten villages. Rabe (off south-east Vanualevu, officially misspelt Rabi, 67km²) has come under the microscope, as have Muala (officially misspelt Moala, 65km²) and Lakeba (60km²), both in Lau.

Next in line, at 57 km², is **Vanuabalavu**, the northernmost island in Lau, a long thin island shaped rather like the letter Z, with the lower stroke being formed by the adjoining islands of Namālata and Susui. It is the only island of the third rank with more than ten villages—12 to be precise. Of these, two are the result of mid-nineteenth century immigration: Naqara, a settlement of descendants of Solomon Islanders from the labour trade, and Sawana, founded by the Tongan prince Ma'afu and his associates, and the only village in Fiji where Tongan is spoken. Vanuabalavu can accommodate more villages than other islands of its size because of its lengthy coastline, due to its narrowness.

In contrast to Rabe and Lakeba, we need not dwell long on etymology. The name is a simple noun phrase comprising *vanua* 'land' and *balavu* 'long'; so it means 'long land', the same construction as the name of Fiji's second largest island *Vanualevu*, 'big land'. In contrast to the two biggest islands in Fiji, Vitilevu and Vanualevu, it has always been commonly (though not exclusively) written as one word—so at 11 letters you might think it the longest name of an inhabited island, but it is just pipped by *Matacawalevu* in the Yasawa group.

Both elements occur in many other placenames in Fiji: *Vanuavatu* 'land of rocks', an island in Lau; *Ucunivanua* 'headland', a village on the easternmost point of Vitilevu;

Nukubalavu 'long sand', a village near Savusavu on Vanualevu. Cognates of the word *vanua* 'land' occur in placenames in many other Pacific islands, e.g. *Hanuabada*, a village near Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea, and the islands *Vanualava* in northern Vanuatu, *Fonualei* in Tonga, and *Fanuatapu* in Samoa.

Geologically, Vanuabalavu is composite, comprising original limestone in the far north and far south, and the remains of a volcanic caldera rim elsewhere. Nearby islands such as Munia and Cikobia are situated on the

south and east parts of the same rim, and the whole form a group that is named 'The Exploring Isles' on maps. The name was bestowed on the group in 1840 by Lieutenant-Commodant Ringgold in order to commemorate the

United States Exploring Expedition he was serving on. Like many English names given in earlier days, this name is seldom if ever heard today in Fiji.

Vanuabalavu was a major port and trading centre in the mid-nineteenth century, even boasting a botanical garden, and the capital of a short-lived western-style government comprising Vanualevu and Lau, named *Tōvata*. It had a Prime Minister and Parliament, passed and enforced laws and collected taxes, being based on the government of the Kingdom of Tonga, which was in turn based on that of Hawai'i.

Most of the villages are on or near the east coast facing the lagoon formed by the former crater. Of the three on the west coast, two have the name *Daku*, meaning 'back (of the island)', and can be distinguished as *Dakuilomaloma* and *Dakuiyaro*, also known as *Daliconi*. (*Lomaloma* and *Yaro* are the names of the two districts on the island, Lomaloma in the south and Yaro—now more often known as *Mualevu*—in the north.)

We have referred previously to the list of islands known to the Tongans compiled in 1777 by William Anderson, the surgeon on Cook's third voyage to the Pacific. Most



Beach on Vanuabalavu

Jacjay77 / wikimedia

...Placenames of Fiji 21

of these are identifiable, thanks to Anderson's skilful recording, and 15 are islands in Fiji. Given its relative size and importance, and proximity to Tonga, one might expect to see Vanuabalavu on the list, but it is missing. The nearest we come to it is Kinakina, probably referring to Qilaqila, a small uninhabited (and uninhabitable) limestone island just off the northern extremity of Vanuabalavu. So why only this island and not the much larger Vanuabalavu? While simple forgetfulness cannot be discounted, there is evidence elsewhere in the list that Tongans were most familiar not with larger well-populated islands, but with uninhabited or scarcely inhabited islands at the eastern extremities of Fiji, presumably because they either skirted them or stopped there briefly, or perhaps simply used them as landmarks, on their way to destinations beyond Fiji, such as Rotuma, Kiribati or Pohnpei.

The first recording of the name *Vanuabalavu* was by Captain Brumley, a New England trader, who included it in his list of Fiji islands, compiled around 1807, under the name *Bollowhu*. Shortly after, in 1810, the English missionary John Davies, who had been shipwrecked off the coast of Macuata, compiled a list of islands that included *Fanuaparau*. The next recorder was the French explorer Dumont d'Urville, who in 1827 recorded the name as *Banouan-Balabou*—almost entirely correct taking French spelling conventions into account—and

its population at an estimated 2,000. Then in 1840, the American Commodore Charles Wilkes, in charge of the United States Exploring Expedition, gave the name as *Vanua-valavo* and estimated the population at only 500. Given that the population was around 1,000 according to the census of 1881, the correct figure was probably between these two estimates.

Relative accuracy in placename recording arrived in 1850 with the publication of the missionary linguist David Hazlewood's *Fijian Dictionary*, which contained a supplement of names of islands in Fiji. This included the name *Vanua Balavu*, along with its etymology 'long land'.

One final remark regarding placenaming in Fiji: while there is a Vanuabalavu 'long land', there is no Vanualeka 'short land'; and while the two largest islands are Vitilevu 'big island in the east' and Vanualevu 'big land', there are no islands named Vitilailai 'small island in the east' or Vanualailai 'small land'. Maybe there is a universal tendency to name places after their positive characteristics, rather than the negative, something we might term 'toponymic hyperbole' or 'toponymic spin'—a topic I don't believe has been covered yet by *Placenames Australia*.

Next time: the firewalking island of **Beqa!**

Paul Geraghty

'Reedy' placenames from Wiradjuri?

The indefatigable **Peter McInnes** is continuing his excavation of the reed beds of eastern Australia. Peter's article in our previous issue (March 2023) suggested that we may have many placenames with an origin in Aboriginal words for 'reeds', but which have not previously been identified as such. He mentioned *Tarlo*, *Tyreel* and *Tyrl Tyrl* as possibilities.

Since we published his article Peter has located a publication which might confirm his hypothesis. In the Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Authority's *Wiradjuri plant use in the Murrumbidgee Catchment* (2008), page 91 is headed with the Wiradjuri words *Balandalabadin*, *Dyirill*, *Dhirill* and *Gubudha*, and gives the following account of the reed *Phragmites australis*.

'[...the reed] is found in wetlands and along the edge of creeks and rivers. A tall grass it can reach over 3 metres high. It has a cane-like stem with leaves up to 60 centimetres long, giving the plant many purposes.

Aboriginal people use the strong stems as light spears by joining them together to spear Guya in the nearby wetlands and rivers. The stems are also used to make fire.

The roots... can also be dug up and roasted like many other tubers. One of the most important uses of [the reed] was the use of the long, wide leaves for weaving.

The leaves fibrous nature make them ideal for making baskets, backpacks and other useful carrying implements.'

Peter notes the Wiradjuri words *Dyirill* and *Dhirill* used for this common reed, and suggests that the similarity with the placenames *Tarlo*, *Tyreel* and *Tyrl Tyrl* is not a coincidence.

Placenames Puzzle Number 87

Anagram toponyms

Australia's most... The clues are anagrams of the answers. Example: Australia's highest peak. KIOSK UN CUT ZOOMS > Mount Kosciuszko.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Continental Australia's most southerly point.
OILY PORN SNOWSTORM | 11. Australia's hottest town. RABBLE RAM |
| 2. Australia's longest river. RARER IVY RUM | 12. Australia's chilliest town. AMOCO |
| 3. Continental Australia's most westerly location.
POTENT PIES | 13. Australia's oldest extant European toponym. AWE
CREPE REEK |
| 4. Australia's second-highest peak. ATOMS ON US | 14. Australia's longest road. IHAY WHIG |
| 5. Australia's longest strand. GOO NO RETCH | 15. Australia's largest island (excluding Tasmania).
SMELLED VILLAIN |
| 6. The largest natural freshwater body in NSW.
ANKLE PUNK RAG | 16. Australia's largest national park. MEANDERING
SHRIMP TOURISTS |
| 7. Australia's largest barren region. ERGO
REACTIVATED STIR | 17. Australia's largest (in capacity) artificial reservoir.
DONG ELK OAR |
| 8. Australia's largest city by population. LUMBER
ONE | 18. Australia's most distant external territory. COLD
DIN LANDMASS |
| 9. Australia's highest populated place. ARM RAB
CRUA | 19. Continental Australia's most south-westerly
point. CLUE WANE PIE |
| 10. Australia's lowest natural point. AKIN HEATEDLY
KARATE | 20. Australia's highest lake. AKA CAPABLE TOMATO |

[Compiled by **Jan Tent**
Answers on page 2]

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Supporting photographs or other illustrations are greatly appreciated.

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