This Information Guide has been developed to support individuals and communities in their research into the Aboriginal languages of Toowoomba and the Darling Downs. It complements a community language workshop held at Toowoomba in November 2010.

The main Aboriginal language groups in the Toowoomba region are Barunggam, Jarowair, Giabal and Kienjan tribes. Giabal and Jarowair are recognised as the two main groups of the Toowoomba area: Giabal extends south/south-west from the City and takes in Cecil Plains, Pittsworth and Allora while Jarowair extends north/north-west and takes in Oakey. From the west, Barrungam meets Jarowair near Dalby while Bigambul and Kambuwal borders Giabal near Millmerran and Pratten; Kienjan and Githabul extend from the southern regions while Jagera and Garumgar are the neighbouring languages on the eastern boundaries.

This traditional landscape changed dramatically with the settlement of Drayton in the 1840’s and the pastoral expansion west. Those Aboriginals that survived the frontier conflict of this time were pushed to the fringe of society in camps and later moved to missions such as Deebing Creek, Durundur and later Barambah. There is evidence that local Aboriginals were working on the properties to the west of Toowoomba in this contact period. Ceremonies such as the Bonye Bonye festival remained active until the late 1800’s – groups from South-East and South-West Queensland as well as Northern New South Wales gathered at Gummingurru, near Gowrie (west of Toowoomba) prior to attending the festival. Gummingurru site is being restored and remains an important ceremonial place for not only the traditional groups but neighbouring groups.

Toowoomba today has an active Aboriginal population comprising descendants of local groups as well as a majority drawn from the Darling Downs and South West Queensland – Bidjara (Charleville), Gunggari (Mitchell), Mandandanji (Roma/Surat) and Guwamu, Kullili, Kunya (Cunnamulla) are significant groups along with Gamilaroi people drawn from communities including Moree, Boggabilla/Toomelah, and Goondiwindi. Many of these people have moved to Toowoomba for economic reasons as rural towns decline; however they still maintain familial and cultural links back to country.

Sources

There are additional references for Toowoomba, Darling Downs and South West Queensland located at The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), Canberra – this material includes sound recordings, as well as vocabulary and word lists. AIATSIS has an on-line catalogue: http://mura.aiatsis.gov.au/

AIATSIS Language Select Bibliographies

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) in Canberra has produced PDF versions of Select Bibliographies for a range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. The Select Bibliographies provide a list of materials held by AIATSIS relating to specific languages, including those from the Darling Downs and South West Queensland, e.g. Bigambul, Githabul, Kooma and Gungarri. The Toowoomba area languages have been grouped under Barunggam.

A full list of these can be found at the following weblink: https://aiatsis.gov.au/research-guides-and-resources/language-and-people-bibliographies
Language Resources – Toowoomba & Darling Downs

The following list of print resources and materials are useful starting points for language activities in schools, communities or public libraries – these items are held at the State Library of Queensland, while additional reference materials may be found in local/regional public libraries. Out-of-print materials may not be readily available and held in collecting institutions such as the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (Canberra).

**Linguistic Materials in SLQ Collections:**


General Language Materials in SLQ Collections:


Curr, E. M. (1887) The Australian Race: its origins, languages, customs, place of landing in Australia and the routes by which it spread itself over that continent. RBF 572.994 cur


Jackson, G. K. (1940) 'Darling Downs Aborigines' in Toowoomba Tourist Bureau Darling Downs Centenary Souvenir 1840-1940. Q 994.33 DAR


Further Details

For further information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages at the State Library of Queensland, please contact:

kuril dhagun, State Library of Queensland

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PO Box 3488, South Brisbane Qld. 4101.
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