

## Aboriginal placenames of South-East Queensland.

### Introduction

This Information Guide has been developed to support individuals and communities in their research into placenames of South-East Queensland, particularly those from an Aboriginal language background.

Aboriginal placenames generate a lot of discussion and queries regarding meanings, translations, etc. – the landscape of South-East Queensland had traditional names prior to the settlement of Moreton Bay. Some have been maintained in suburbs, placenames or landmarks, many have been lost and replaced by introduced names; while others have been relocated to another locality.

There is also a growing trend of dual-naming to revive traditional names.

Many Aboriginal traditional placenames had a more practical meaning or source. The traditional names may have referred to animals or plants found there; for example, Bulimba, a suburb in Brisbane, is anglicised from the Yuggera / Goenpul language: 'Bulimba' which means 'place of magpie lark (peewee)' [from *Bulum* = 'peewee'; *ba* = 'place of']. -Ba, -bah, -da, -dah as a suffix ending in Aboriginal languages generally refers to 'place of'.

This theme is explored in Rod Milne's publication *Dahs and bahs: Aboriginal placenames of Southern Queensland* and is a great starting point for exploring Aboriginal placenames in Southern Queensland. Another excellent source for the South-East Queensland corner is F J Watson's *Vocabularies of Four Representative Tribes of South-East Queensland* which lists approximately 200 placenames and their Aboriginal meanings and origins as part of the appendixes. Watson identifies that the suffix *-pilly / pilli* refers to 'a gully', hence we have Indooroopilly = 'gully of the leeches'; Yerongpilly = 'sandy or gravelly gully'; 'Mutdapilly = 'sticky/muddy gully'; and Jeebropilly = 'gully of the sugar glider'.

Often landmarks and placenames were some of the first language material documented and they provide important clues to how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are constructed and used across Queensland communities.

In 2019 the International Year of Indigenous Languages, it is a timely reminder to find out more about the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander placenames.

## Aboriginal Placenames of South East Queensland

The following list is a selection of traditional placenames, suburbs and meanings originating from the main Aboriginal groups of the South-East Queensland Region – Butchulla, Jandai, Ngugi, Turrubul, Wakka Wakka, Yugambeh, Yuggera and Yugarabul peoples<sup>1</sup>.

- **Banyo** (Turrubul) – means ‘ridge’.
- **Barambah** (Wakka Wakka) – from *Buranba* which means ‘Westerly wind’.
- **Beerburum** (Kabi Kabi/Undanbi) – from *Bir-barram* which means ‘sound of wings of the King Parrot’.
- **Beerwah** (Kabi Kabi/Turrbal) – means ‘up in the sky’ [from *birra* = sky; *wa*(ndum) = go up/rising up].
- **Boonah** (Yugarabul) – from *buna* which means ‘a bloodwood tree’.
- **Booroodabin** (Yuggera / Turubul) – means ‘place of she-oaks’; the locality is mostly remembered by the Booroodabin Bowls Club. The area was a meeting/gathering place along Breakfast Creek.
- **Bribie Island** – traditionally known by the Kabi Kabi people (Jindoobarrie Clan) as *Yarun*, which means ‘hunting ground’. The contemporary name is derived from a convict basket maker known as ‘Breiby’ or ‘Bribie’ who interacted with the local Aboriginal group.
- **Brisbane** – named by Oxley after Governor Brisbane, however the traditional name for the area was *Mianjin / Meean-jin* (Yuggera / Turrbal) which refers to the ‘spike of land’ which formed Petrie’s Bight.
- **Buaraba** (Yuggera) – name taken from an early pastoral run which means ‘place of dry bushes’.
- **Bulimba** (Yuggera) – several meanings, however believed to mean place of magpie larks / peewees [from *bulum* = ‘magpie lark’; *ba* = ‘place of’]. The area was traditionally known as *Tuguluwah*.
- **Bundamba** (Yuggera) – from *Bundanda* which means ‘axe place’ [*bundan* = axe; *da* = place of]; the name was officially changed from Bundanba to Bundamba in 1931.
- **Caboolture** (Yuggera / Turrubul / Kabi Kabi) – from *kabul* which means ‘carpet snake’ in several South-East Queensland languages; i.e. ‘place of the carpet snake’.
- **Canungra** (Yugambeh) – from *gungungai* which means ‘a long flat or clearing’.
- **Capalaba** (Yuggera) - means place of the scrub possum; derived from '*kappella*' which is a ring-tailed scrub possum and '-ba' which means place of.
- **Coochiemudlo** (Jandai / Nunukul) – from *Coodgee Mudlo / Kutchi mudlo* meaning ‘red rock’.
- **Coochin** (Kabi Kabi / Turrubul) – means ‘red soil’ (locality on Sunshine Coast).
- **Coochin Coochin** (Yugarabul) – means ‘red clay/earth’ (property near Boonah).
- **Coolabunia** (Wakka Wakka) – means ‘sleeping koala’ [from *coala* = koala and *buani* = sleeping].
- **Cooloola** (Kabi Kabi) – from *kululu* which means ‘Cypress Pines’.
- **Coolum** (Kabi Kabi) – from *gulum* meaning ‘without or wanting’ [refers to blunt nature/shape of mountain]; there is a Creation story associated with this placename.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: some names may be derived from clans or dialect groups within these main language nations, e.g. Goenpul, Mununjali, Undanbi, etc.

## South East Queensland Placenames (continued)

- **Coomera** (Yugambeh) – refers to a species of wattle tree; the bark was used to stun fish.
- **Coonowrin** (Kabi Kabi) – from *coonoong-warrang* which means ‘crooked neck’.
- **Coorparoo** (Yuggera) – from *koolpurrum* which refers to mosquitoes – this was also the name given to Norman Creek; however, a second plausible meaning is ‘gentle dove’ [refers to the sound made by the dove].
- **Cooroy** (Kabi Kabi) – from *kurui* which means ‘grey forest possum’.
- **Corinda** – Department of Natural Resources indicates the name is derived from a homestead in Aramac, Central-Western Queensland. The suburb and railway station were originally named in the 1880’s; however, the word had been in use since 1850’s in Central Queensland and Southern States.
- **Deebing Creek** (Yuggera / Yugarabul) – from *dibing* which means ‘mosquito / midge fly’.
- **Doboy** (Yuggera) – from *dubee* which means ‘mud crab’.
- **Doomben** (Yuggera) – from *dumben* which means ‘a tree fern’.
- **Dugandan** (Yugarabul) – from *dugai / tugai* which means ‘place on rising ground or mountain spur’.
- **Dundathu** (Butchulla) – from *dhan-dauwa-dhu* which means ‘place of dead trees’ [refers to a site on the Mary River where Pettigrew & Sims established a sawmill in the 1850’s].
- **Elimbah** (Kabi Kabi / Undanbi) – means ‘place of grey snakes’ [*yilam* = ‘grey snake’; *ba* = ‘place of’].
- **Enoggera** (Turrubul) – from ‘*Euogerra*’ a contraction of ‘*youara-ngarea*’ which means ‘song and dance’ [refers to a ceremonial site at Enoggera used for dances].
- **Fisherman Island** – traditionally known by the Jandai people as ‘*andaccah*’, which means ‘mullet’.
- **Fraser Island** – traditionally known by the Butchulla people as *k’gari*.
- **Gatton** – named after the town in Surrey (UK), but traditionally known by the Yuggera people as *boona of buna* meaning ‘bloodwood tree’.
- **Gayndah** (Wakka Wakka) – from *kunda* which means ‘a mountain range’.
- **Gin Gin** (Wakka Wakka) – from *Kwin Kwin* which means ‘red soil / red soil country’.
- **Goomeri** (Wakka Wakka) – from *gumerri* which means ‘wooden shield’.
- **Goodna** (Yuggera) – means ‘dung’ – was in use from 1840’s.
- **Gowrie** (Wakka Wakka) – from *kowari* which means ‘place of scrub’ [from *kowa* = ‘scrub’].
- **Grandchester** – originally named “Bigge’s Camp”, it became Grandchester in 1865; however, it was traditionally known by the Yuggera people as *Goojabila* which means ‘honey’.
- **Grantham** – named after an early pastoral run, but traditionally known by the Yuggera people as *Goanumby* which means ‘green bark’ – so called because the inner bark of ironbark trees was collected from this area for humpies.
- **Gympie** (Kabi Kabi) – from *Gimpi* which means ‘stinging tree’.
- **Helidon** – named after an early pastoral run, but traditionally known to the Yuggera people as *Yabarba* (means ‘kurrajong’).

### South East Queensland Placenames (continued)

- **Helidon Spa** – traditionally known by the Yuggera people as *Woonarrajimmi* (means ‘where the clouds fell down’ – there is a local Aboriginal Creation story that describes how the springs were formed).
- **Indooroopilly** (Yuggera) – means ‘gully of leeches’ [from *nyindur* meaning ‘leeches’; *pilli* = ‘gully’]. Traditionally, the area was known as *Mirbapa*.
- **Ipswich** – named after Ipswich in the UK, however the traditional Yuggera name for the area was *Doolmoor*, while the Yugarabul people called it *Dulmah*.
- **Jeebropilly** (Yuggera / Yugarabul) – means ‘gully of sugar glider’ [from *jeebro* meaning sugar glider; *pilli* = ‘gully’].
- **Jumpinpin** (Yugambah) – means ‘pandanus root’; according to Steele (1984) the roots were beaten until fibrous and then used as chewing ropes for eating honey.
- **Kalbar** (Yugarabul) – from *galbar* which means ‘dead/whitened trees’.
- **Kurilpa** (Yuggera / Turrubul) – means ‘place of fawn-footed melomys’ [*kuril* = fawn-footed melomys; *pa* = place of]. Note: previously thought to mean/refer to a water rat species, e.g. white-tailed water rat; however, ongoing research indicates this to be incorrect.
- **Laidley** – named by Cunningham after James Laidley (Deputy Commissary, Sydney), but traditionally known by the Yuggera people as *Milgero* (meaning not recorded/unknown).
- **Laidley Creek** – as previous, but traditionally known by the Yuggera people as *Goonanjee-gerrara* (means ‘going down creek’); this refers to the Gatton and Helidon groups crossing the creek as they are ‘going down’ towards Moreton Bay.
- **Lake Clarendon** – named after early run, traditional name for the area is unknown.
- **Ma Ma Creek** – claimed to be a corruption of *Mia Mia* (bark huts) but this word originates from Western Australia; it may have been a borrowed name used by early settlers. The traditional name for the area is unknown.
- **Maroochydore** (Kabi Kabi) – means ‘place of the black swan’ [from *murukutchi* = ‘black swan / red-bill’; *dha* = ‘place of’]; there is a Creation story associated with this placename.
- **Maroon** (Yugarabul) – from *murrun* which means ‘sand goanna’; there is a Creation story associated with the name/area.
- **Milbong** (Yugarabul) – named after ‘One Eye Waterhole’ – *Milbong* means ‘one eye dead or gone’; also refers to a local Aboriginal man who had one eye.
- **Moggill** (Yuggera / Turrubul) – from *mugil / magil* which means ‘water lizard’.
- **Moogerah** (Yugarabul) – means ‘thunder’; this refers to the storms which develop along the ranges surrounding Cunningham’s Gap.
- **Mooloolaba** (Kabi Kabi) – from *Muluaba* which means ‘place of black snakes’ [*mulu* = ‘black snake’; *ba* = ‘place of’].
- **Moorooka** (Yuggera) – believed to be derived from *mooroonga* which means ‘ironbark’.
- **Mooroolbin** (Yuggera / Turubul) – refers to the Hamilton Reach of the Brisbane River where a large sandbank was known as ‘long nose’; *mooroo* = ‘nose’.
- **Moreton Bay** – traditionally known by the Ngugi people and neighbouring groups as ‘*Quandamooka*’; this term is also used to refer to people of Moreton Bay.
- **Moreton Island** – traditionally known by the Ngugi people as *Moorgumpin*, which means ‘place of sand hills’.
- **Mount Cordeaux** (Cunningham’s Gap) – traditionally known by the Yugarabul people as *Niamboyoo*.

## South East Queensland Placenames (continued)

- **Mount Mitchell** (Cunningham's Gap) – traditionally known by the Yugarabul people as *Coonyin-nirra*.
- **Mundoolun** (Yugambeh) – from *Mundheralgun* which means 'death adder'.
- **Murrarie** (Yuggera) – from *mudherri* which means 'sticky / messy earth'.
- **Murphy's Creek** – named after Peter Murphy (servant / travelling companion of Patrick Leslie), but traditionally known to the Yuggera people as *Tamamareen* meaning 'where the fishing nets were burnt in a grass fire'.
- **Mutdapilly** (Yuggera / Yugarabul) – means 'sticky gully', referring to the black soil in the area – area was also known as Ten Mile Swamp [*mutda* meaning 'sticky/muddy ground'; *pilli* = 'gully'].
- **Nambour** (Kabi Kabi) – from *Nambur* which means 'red-flowered tea tree'.
- **Ninderry** (Kabi Kabi) – means 'place of leeches' [from *nyindur* meaning 'leeches'].
- **Nindooinba** (Yugambeh) – from *Ninduinba* which means 'place of remains of a fire'.
- **North Stradbroke Island** – traditionally known by the Nunukul / Jandai groups as *Minjerribah*, which means 'Island in the sun'.
- **Pimpama** (Yugambeh) – from *pimpimba* which means 'place of soldier birds (noisy miners)' [*pimpim* = soldier bird; *ba* = 'place of'].
- **Pinkenba** (Yuggera / Turrubul) – from *Binkinba* which means 'place of land tortoise' [from *Binkin* = 'tortoise'; *ba* = 'place of']. Traditionally this was the name for the New Farm area.
- **Purga** (Yuggera / Yugarabul) – from *pur-pur* which means 'meeting place'.
- **South Stradbroke Island** – traditionally known by the Nunukul / Jandai groups as *Currigee* which is derived from *curragee* meaning currajong trees; a second reference suggests the mouth a river, possibly referring to the place where the Coomera River entered the Bay.
- **Tabralga** (Yugambeh) – from *Dhaberigaba* which means 'place of clubs / nullas'.
- **Tallebudgera** (Yugambeh) – means 'rotten or decayed logs'; [from *Talle* = 'trees/logs'; *Budhera* = 'rotten or decayed'] – refers to the practice of the local people placing timber (preferably oaks) in the water to attract teredo (type of mollusc) which was a source of food.
- **Tallegalla** – despite sounding Aboriginal, the word is derived from Latin and refers to several species of 'scrub turkey' which are prolific in the district; the locality is also known as Two Tree Hill.
- **Tarampa** (Yuggera) – name taken from early pastoral run which means 'place of the wild lime' [*turum* = 'wild lime'; *pa* = 'place of'].
- **Tarragindi** – despite sounding Aboriginal, the suburb is named after an Australian South Sea Islander, Tarragindi Tassaroni.
- **Tewantin** (Kabi Kabi) – from *dauwadhan* meaning 'dead tree or logs' [refers to when the area was first used for sawmilling].
- **Tibrogargan** (Kabi Kabi / Undanbi) – refers to the mountain and the Creation Story associated with the Glasshouse Mountains; derives from *jeebora* which means sugar glider and *gaggalin* which means 'biting'; name is also used for several features in the area, e.g. Tibrogargan Creek.
- **Tingalpa** (Yuggera) – means 'place of stunning fish plant' [from *tangul* = plant used for stunning fish and *pa* = place of].

## South East Queensland Placenames (continued)

- **Toowong** (Yuggera) – from *tuwung* which means ‘koel / cuckoo’. Traditionally the area was known as *Baneraba*.
- **Undulla** (Yugarabul) – corruption of the word *nandulla* which means ‘silver leafed wattle’.
- **Urangan** (Butchulla) – from *yuangan* which means ‘dugong’; a second reference suggests it may be derived from *yerengen* which refers to ‘a small shellfish’.
- **Wamuran** (Kabi Kabi) – from *Wamuran* who was a local leader/warrior; *Menvil Wamuran* also known as King Jacky Delaney [King of Stoney Creek].
- **Warill** (Yuggera / Yugarabul) – means ‘creek’ or ‘river’; used in several placenames, e.g. Warrill View, Warrill Creek.
- **Willawong** – language origin is unknown, possibly an introduced word from Southern States; means the junction of two creeks which may be a reference to Oxley and Blunder Creeks.
- **Wongawallan** (Yugambah) – refers to *wonga* meaning ‘pigeon’ and *wallan* meaning ‘water’; a second reference suggests it is derived from *wangum-wulam* which means a cut / scarred cheek.
- **Woombye** (Kabi Kabi) – from *wambai* which means ‘black myrtle tree’; the timber was used for axe handles.
- **Woogaroo** (Yuggera) – means a ‘whirlpool’; a second reference suggests it means ‘cool or shady’.
- **Woolloongabba** (Yuggera) – from *woolloon-capemm* which means ‘whirling water’ – refers to series of waterholes originally located there; a second reference refers to a ‘fighting place’.
- **Woollowin** (Yuggera) – from *Kuluwin* which refers to a species of pigeon.
- **Wulkuraka** (Yuggera / Yugarabul) – from *woolcooracca* which means ‘flowering gum tree’; a second reference refers to ‘plenty of kookaburras’.
- **Wynnum** (Yuggera) – from *winnam* which means ‘breadfruit or Pandanus tree’.
- **Yeronga** (Yuggera) – from *yarungnga / yarung* which means ‘gravelly place’; a second reference refers to *yurong* which means rain.
- **Yeerongpilly** (Yuggera) – means ‘sandy or gravelly gully’ [from *yarungnga / yarung* = ‘sand / gravel’ and *pilli* = ‘gully’].

**Note:** This list is merely a selection of placenames and suburbs from South-East Queensland and provides an insight into the traditional names for country used by Aboriginal groups. Many words were ‘shared’ across neighbouring groups and may have a shared meaning in several languages.

## Sources in State Library of Queensland Collections:

This is only a selection from the State Library Collections – for a comprehensive listing of print and electronic materials relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, use the One Search facility: [One Search -Catalogue](#)

Brisbane History Group (1990) *Brisbane: local, oral and placename history*. Brisbane History Group: Brisbane. **G 994.31 1990**

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Watson, F. J. (1944) *Vocabularies of Four Representative Tribes of South Eastern Queensland*. REFJ 499.15 wat

State Library Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Blog: "[Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Placenames](#)"

Additional information was sourced from the Queensland Government Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy online [Place Names Search](#) and the Australian Government Geoscience Australia [Place Name Search](#).

## IYIL2019 Exhibitions

As part of the State Library's commitment to the International Year of Indigenous Languages, there will be two upcoming language exhibitions that explore the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages of Queensland.

# JARJUM STORIES

*Jarjum stories*: A kuril dhagun showcase focusing on children's books and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. **Opens 19 October 2019.**

# SPOKEN

*Spoken: celebrating Queensland languages*: A major exhibition exploring the survival and revival of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages throughout Queensland. Join in the many talks and events to celebrate the rich and diverse languages spoken today. **Opens 21 November 2019.**

## State Library of Queensland

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

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### **State Library Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Webpages:**

[www.slq.qld.gov.au/resources/atsi/languages](http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/resources/atsi/languages)

### **State Library Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Blog:**

<http://blogs.slq.qld.gov.au/ilq/>

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