Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Language Resources
South-East Qld Placenames

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 generates 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 placenames or landmarks, others have been lost and replaced by introduced names; there also seems to be a growing trend of dual-naming to revive traditional names.

The following list is a selection of traditional placenames and meanings originating from the main Aboriginal groups of the South-East Queensland Region – Butchulla, Jandai, Ngugi, Nunukul, Turrubul, Wakka Wakka, Yugambeh, Yugar and Yugarabal peoples¹.

- **Banyo** (Turrubul) – means ‘ridge’.
- **Barambah** (Wakka Wakka) – from ‘Buranba’ which means ‘Westerly wind’.
- **Beerburrum** (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** (Yugarabal) – from ‘Buna’ which means ‘a bloodwood tree’.
- **Bribie Island** – traditionally known by the Kabi Kabi people (Jindoobarrie Clan) as ‘Yarun’, which means ‘hunting ground’.
- **Brisbane** – named by Oxley after Governor Brisbane, however the traditional name for the area was ‘Mianjin / Meean-jin’ (Yugara / Turrbal) which refers to the spike of land which formed Petrie’s Bight.
- **Buaraba** (Yugara) – name taken from an early pastoral run which means ‘place of dry bushes’.
- **Bulimba** (Yugara) – several meanings, however believed to mean place of magpie larks/Peeees [from ‘bulum’ = magpie lark; *ba* = place of].
- **Bundamba** (Yugara) – from ‘Bundanda’ which means ‘axe place’ [bundan = axe; *da* = place of].
- **Caboolture** (Yugara / Turrbul / 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** (Yugara) - means place of the scrub possum; derived from ‘kappella’ which is a ring-tailed scrub possum and ‘-ba’ which means place of.
- **Coochiemudlo** (Nunukul) – from ‘Coodgee Mudlo / Kutchi mudlo’ means ‘red rock’.

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

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South East Queensland Placenames (continued)

- **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 ‘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 Dreaming story associated with this placename.
- **Coomera** (Yugambeh) – refers to a species of wattle tree; the bark was used to stun fish.
- **Coonowrin** (Kabi Kabi) – from ‘coonooong-warrang’ which means ‘crooked neck’.
- **Deeving Creek** (Yugara / Yugarabul) – from ‘dibing’ which means ‘mosquito / midge fly’.
- **Doboy** (Yugara) – from ‘dubee’ which means ‘mud crab’.
- **Dooben** (Yugara) – from ‘dumberi’ 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 Yugara people as ‘Boona’ (means a 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 ‘gumerrl’ which means ‘wooden shield’.
- **Goodna** (Yugara) – means ‘dung’.
- **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 Yugara people as ‘Goojabila’ which means ‘honey’.

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South East Queensland Placenames (continued)

- **Grantham** – named after an early pastoral run, but traditionally known by the Yugara 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 by the Yugara people as ‘*Yabarba*’ (means ‘kurrajong’).

- **Helidon Spa** – traditionally known by the Yugara people as ‘*Woonarrijimmi*’ (means ‘where the clouds fell down’ – there is a local Aboriginal Dreaming story that describes how the springs were formed).

- **Indooroopilly** (Yugara) – means ‘gully of leeches’ [from ‘*nyindur*’ meaning leeches; *pilli* = gully].

- **Ipswich** – named after Ipswich in the UK, however the traditional Yugara name for the area was ‘*Doolmoor*’; while the Yugarabul people called it ‘*Dulmah*’.

- **Jeebropilly** (Yugara / Yugarabul) – means ‘gully of sugar glider’ [from ‘*jeebro*’ meaning sugar glider; *pilli* = gully].

- **Jumpinpin** (Yugambeh) – 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** (Yugara / 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 this appears to be incorrect.

- **Laidley** – named by Cunningham after James Laidley (Deputy Commissary, Sydney), but traditionally known by the Yugara people as ‘*Milgero*’ (meaning not recorded/unknown).

- **Laidley Creek** – as previous, but traditionally known by the Yugara people as ‘*Gooranjee-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 Dreaming story associated with this placename.

- **Maroon** (Yugarabul) – from ‘*murrun*’ which means ‘sand goanna’; there is a Dreaming story associated with the name/area.

- **Milbong** (Yugarabul) – named after ‘One Eye Waterhole’ – *Milbong* means ‘one eye dead or gone’.

- **Moggill** (Yugara / 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 ‘*Mulubaa*’ which means ‘place of black snakes’ [*mulu* = black snake; *ba* = place of].

- **Moorooka** (Yugara) - believed to be derived from ‘*mooroonga*’ which means ironbark.
South East Queensland Placenames (continued)

- **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 ‘Niambooyoo’.

- **Mount Mitchell** (Cunningham’s Gap) – traditionally known by the Yugarabul people as Coonyin-nirra.

- **Mundoolun** (Yugambeh) – from ‘Mundheralgun’ which means ‘death adder’.

- **Murrarie** (Yugara) – 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 Yugara people as ‘Tamamareen’ (means ‘where the fishing nets were burnt in a grass fire’).

- **Mutdapilly** (Yugara / 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** (Turrubul) – from ‘Binkinba’ which means ‘place of land tortoise’ [from Binkin = tortoise; ba = place of].

- **Purga** (Yugara / Yugarabul) – from ‘pur-pur’ which means ‘meeting place’.

- **South Stradbroke Island** – traditionally known by the Nunukul / Jandai groups as ‘Currige’ 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** (Yugara) – name taken from early pastoral run which means ‘place of the wild lime’ [turum = wild lime; pa = place of].

- **Tewantin** (Kabi Kabi) – from ‘dauwadhan’ meaning ‘dead tree or logs’ [refers to when the area was first used for sawmilling].
South East Queensland Placenames (continued)

- **Tibrogargan** (Kabi Kabi / Undanbi) – refers to the mountain and the Dreaming 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** (Yugara) – means ‘place of stunning fish plant’ [from tangul = plant used for stunning fish and pa = place of].

- **Toowong** (Yugara) – from ‘tuwung’ which means ‘koel / cuckoo’.

- **Undulla** (Yugaraboul) – corruption of the word ‘nandulla’ which means silver leafed wattled.

- **Urangan** (Butchulla) – from ‘yuangari’ 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** (Yugara / Yugaraboul) – 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** (Yugambeh) – 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** (Yugara) – means a ‘whirlpool’; a second reference suggests it means ‘cool or shady’.

- **Woolloongabba** (Yugara) – from ‘woolloon-capemm’ which means ‘whirling water’ – refers to series of waterholes originally located there; a second reference refers to a ‘fighting place’.

- **Wulkuraka** (Yugara / Yugaraboul) – from ‘woolcooracca’ which means ‘flowering gum tree’; a second reference refers to ‘plenty of kookaburras’.

- **Wynnum** (Yugara) – from ‘winnam’ which means ‘breadfruit or Pandanus tree’.

- **Yeronga** (Yugara) – from ‘yarungnga / yarung’ which means ‘gravelly place’; a second reference refers to ‘yurong’ which means rain.

- **Yeerongpilly** (Yugara) – means ‘sandy or gravelly gully’ [from ‘yarungnga / yarung’ = sand/gravel and ‘pilli’ = gully].

**Note:** This list is merely a selection of placenames 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.

Further information on Aboriginal placenames can be obtained from a range of sources including: Traditional Owner Groups, Indigenous Language Centres, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations, Historical Centres and Museums, Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management as well as community members.

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Sources in State Library of Queensland Collections:

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Further Details

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