



*The NAIDOC theme for 2015 is 'We all Stand on Sacred Ground.' It highlights the connections Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have to country. Across the world, the names we give a place can represent history, culture and identity.*

*To celebrate the NAIDOC theme, we're exploring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander place names that have been part of Australia for thousands of years, and asking 'what's in a name?'*

### Did you know?

- The name 'Canberra' came from a local Aboriginal name for the area. It was first recorded as 'Kamberra' or 'Kambery', and then named Canberra in 1913 when it became the capital.<sup>1</sup>
- Tasmania has dual named a number of natural features like *kanamaluka* / River Tamar and *truwana* / Cape Barren Island.<sup>2</sup>
- Since 1992 naming authorities have been encouraged by governments to use Aboriginal place names to acknowledge their importance.
- Bennelong Point, the site of Sydney Opera House was known as 'Dubbagullee' by local Aboriginal people.<sup>3</sup>
- In the 1970s the Yolngu people responded to the arrival of English road signs by stating "This place already has a name".<sup>4</sup>

### What's in a name?

You might have heard of the co-naming of Mt Panorama / Wahluu and kunanyi / Mount Wellington with their traditional Aboriginal names. Using traditional place names acknowledges and shows respect for the Traditional Owners of Country and their relationship to an area. It celebrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, languages and histories and can help to build respectful relationships between government, visitors and local communities. What do you think? What's in a name?

[Find out more here.](#)



<sup>1</sup> <http://www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/canberra-australias-capital-city>

<sup>2</sup> <http://tacinc.com.au/dual-names-2013/>

<sup>3</sup> Anita Heiss and Melodie-Jane Gibson, *Aboriginal People and Plan*, Barani, Sydney's Aboriginal History. Available: <http://www.sydneybarani.com.au/sites/aboriginal-people-and-place/>

<sup>4</sup> Melanie Wilkinson, Dr R. Marika and Nancy M. Williams. 'This place already has a name'. In *Aboriginal Placenames – naming and re-naming the Australian landscape*. Available: [http://press.anu.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/whole\\_book10.pdf](http://press.anu.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/whole_book10.pdf)

## Starting a trend...

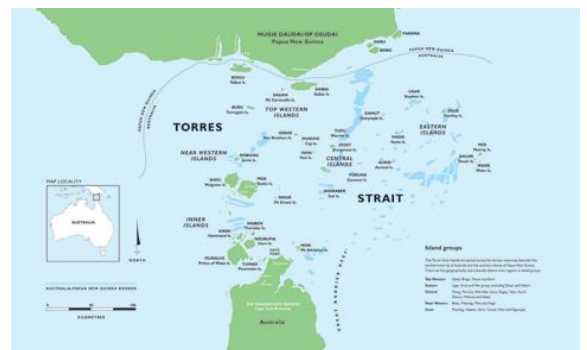
One of the best known traditional names in Australia is Uluru. In 1993, the iconic landmark became the first in the Northern Territory to be dual named. Officially it became 'Ayers Rock / Uluru' and is written that way on signs, maps and other materials. This change led to a wave of dual naming across Australia.

Uluru is the name given to the landmark by the Anangu people who have been caretakers of the site for 30,000 years. Despite, Uluru being named 'Ayers Rock' by explorer William Gosse, the Anangu people have continued to refer to it as Uluru. The surrounding Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park was handed back to the Anangu in 1985 and this year we celebrate 30 years since the handback. It took until 1993 for the official dual naming of Uluru. From 1993 until 2002 Uluru was officially known as 'Ayers Rock / Uluru' before it was changed to 'Uluru / Ayers Rock' to recognise the significance of the Anangu name.

The change in the official name of Uluru led to broader acceptance of the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language place names and cultures. It has led to interest in cultural activities at or around Uluru, and fostered greater understanding of Anangu culture and history. [You can find more information on the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park here.](#)

## Some statistics...

- Many of the **274** Torres Strait Islands are known by their traditional and European names. This includes Coconut Island (Poruma), Darnley Island (Erub), Mabuiaig (Jervis Island).<sup>5</sup>
- There are **100s** of dual named places in New Zealand. The dual naming process began in the 1920s and continues to this day. The Māori name is usually used first, for example, Aoraki / Mount Cook.<sup>6</sup>



## Take action...

- Learn some of the stories and traditional names of the sacred ground you live on.
- Find out the meaning of dual named places in your area and their significance.
- Contact your local council to see what their policy is on dual names.
- Find out if there are any dual naming movements happening in your area.
- Campaign for the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander names of significant landmarks in your community to be recognised.
- Participate in the annual [NAIDOC week](#) activities around the country.

*Reconciliation Australia would like to thank the Intergovernmental Committee on Surveying and Mapping for their assistance in developing this factsheet.*

Photo credits:

Banner: Wayne Quilliam

Torres Strait map: [National Museum of Australia](#)

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.abc.net.au/ra/pacific/places/country/torres\\_strait\\_islands.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/ra/pacific/places/country/torres_strait_islands.htm)

<sup>6</sup> Frameworks of the New Zealand Geographic Board Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa Version 7 April 2015