

# 1 Tweed's Aboriginal community

## Aboriginal cultural heritage information series



**This fact sheet provides an introduction to the Tweed Aboriginal Community.**

Photo above: Fingal Head Causeway  
Photo by: Christine Slabb of Get Creative

### Our Aboriginal Community

The following Aboriginal statement was developed in consultation with the Aboriginal community:

*Aboriginal sites and places are recognised by traditional custodian descendants as tangible evidence of our ancestor's cultural practice and traditions; as such, they retain a very real and meaningful value through to the present day.*

*Scientific assessment of cultural evidence from some selected sites supports the fact that Aboriginal people were living in the Tweed from at least 10,000 years ago, and a Carbon-14 dated midden and occupation site on Stradbroke Island (in South East Queensland) is recorded as more than 20,000 years old. Our Aboriginal oral tradition tells a story of 'Three Brothers' who came to this land and its people in the 'Dreaming', gave the lore, and formed the nucleus of tribes with whom today's traditional custodian descendants identify. Despite development impacts there are many sites and places of significance to Aboriginal people. Among the most well known is Wollumbin (Mt Warning) which is a place of great spiritual significance and a focus for many stories and beliefs.*



Dreamtime Beach, Fingal Head has significance for Aboriginal people

# 1 Tweed's Aboriginal community continued

A common feature of our Aboriginal identity is language, which is known in the Tweed and further south as Bundjalung; in south east Queensland people prefer Yugambah; and further west, in Kyogle Shire, people use Githabul as both a language and name for group identification. The language dialect for the Tweed is known as Ngandowal, a name referring to the people who say 'Ngando' for the word 'who' or 'somebody'. However, part of the Tweed Coast and south to the Byron area is Minyungbal, where the word 'Minyung' means 'what' or 'something' and can be used as identification for people of this area.

There is general acceptance among our Tweed Aboriginal community of the presence of three main groups in the Tweed River Valley. These were the Goodjinburra people for the Tweed Coastal area, the Tul-gi-gin people for the North Arm, and the Moorang-Moobar people for the Southern and Central Arms around Wollumbin (Mt Warning). However, European settlers used other names and described them as Chubboburri, Gandowal, Duthurinbar, Wirangiroh, Wollumbin, Murwillumbah, Ngarrumbul, Kitabul, and Ngarartbul. These names largely reflected a lack of understanding of our culture, our language and our connection to each other.

Population numbers of these three groups are known to have fallen dramatically, before and after permanent European settlement, mainly through the unchecked spread of European sourced illness and disease. Research suggests that prior to any European contact each of the three groups may have contained from 500 to 700 members, distributed in smaller family groups across what was then their area of 'country'. With a loss of access to food resources, death from illness and disease, and intolerance shown by some European settlers, population numbers plummeted and were only about 10% of original numbers within 60 years of settlement.

The Tweed Valley around Wollumbin (Mt Warning) was rich in natural resources and supported many plants and animals which were collected and hunted for food by Aboriginal people. Traditional people managed the landscape and avoided overexploiting these resources in a way that is poorly understood and little recognised in today's wider community. Although camp locations were moved regularly to allow resource recovery

some natural resources, such as rock outcrops suitable for the manufacture of stone tools, were used extensively for vast periods of time.

High altitude topographical features were often the focus of social and spiritual custom and the location of many of our Aboriginal sites directly reflects the connection and significance value of these places. Wollumbin retains a high cultural and spiritual status beyond the Tweed Valley and this is reinforced by our knowledge of different stories with regional group gatherings for ceremony and cultural expression at certain sites across the Valley. Descendants of traditional custodians maintain that connection and support initiatives to protect and preserve our heritage sites and places.

Source: Tweed Regional Museum



Minjungbal Resource Museum and Study Centre, Tweed Heads

