Multiple Aboriginal Place Names in Western Victoria, Australia

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Abstract

In a recent paper on transparency versus opacity in Australian Aboriginal placenames, Michael Walsh (2002: 47) noted that in 'Aboriginal Australia it is relatively common for a given place to have multiple names'. In providing an overview of multiple naming practices Walsh observed that he was unclear on how multiple naming works and what its function is. Other than some case studies (such as Schebeck 2002 on Flinders Ranges, South Australia and Sutton 2002 on Cape York, Queensland) we are yet to gain a comprehensive picture for Aboriginal Australia. This paper adds to this discussion through a consideration of multiple naming in western Victoria using the results of research conducted by Clark and Heydon (2002) into Victorian Aboriginal placenames. The paper also considers the policy implications of multiple indigenous naming for place name administration in the state of Victoria which is yet to accept multiple indigenous naming although it has adopted a dual naming policy that allows for the recognition of a non-indigenous and an indigenous toponym for the one place.

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In a recent paper on transparency versus opacity in Australian Aboriginal placenames, Michael Walsh (2002: 47) noted that in 'Aboriginal Australia it is relatively common for a given place to have multiple names'. In providing an overview of multiple naming practices Walsh (2002: 47) stated the 'simplest case is one place having two names. Such doublets can be intralectal or crosslectal. For intralectal doublets where there are two names for the one place in the same lect, both placenames may be opaque, both transparent, or one opaque and one transparent. … The same applies to crosslectal doublets where two names for the one place come from different lects'. Walsh (2002) observed that he was unclear on how multiple naming works and what its function is. Other than some case studies (such as Schebeck 2002 regarding the Flinders Ranges in South Australia, and Sutton 2002 on Cape York in Queensland) we are yet to gain a comprehensive picture for Aboriginal Australia. This paper adds to this discussion through a consideration of multiple naming in western Victoria (see Figure 1) using the results of research conducted by Clark and Heydon (2002) into Victorian Aboriginal placenames. Some twenty instances of multiple naming have been uncovered in western Victoria. When subjected to scrutiny some of the names that have been attributed as specific names have been shown to be general names, thus reducing the number of 'genuine' instances of multiple naming to fifteen instances. The paper also considers the policy implications of multiple indigenous naming for place name administration in the state of Victoria which is yet to accept multiple indigenous naming although it has adopted a dual naming policy that allows for the recognition of a non-indigenous and an indigenous toponym for the one place.

Multiple toponyms: intralectal doublets

Some nine intralectal doublets have been recorded in the study area: four are of mountains or hills, two are lakes, one is a swamp, one an island, and one a waterfall. Of these nine, four are

officially known by an Indigenous placename: Mt Erip, Lake Buloke, Lake Coorong, and Condah Swamp.

Mount Franklin/Franklinford: the name of an extinct volcano, and contiguous rural locality *Larng-i-barriamul* and *Willam-i-barriamul* both mean 'nest/camp/home (lar(ng)/willam) of the emu (barriamul) (*Dromaius novaehollandiae)*' (Robinson Jnl 19/11/1841 in Clark 2000c, Surveyor General in Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 195, Blake 1991: 106; Hercus 1986: 207; 1999). Larng-i-barriamul is also found in the name of a local water body: Larnebarramul Lagoon. Another name attributed as an endonym is **Lalgambook**, containing boork meaning 'hill'. *Willam* is the Woiwurrung, Boonwurrung, and Daungwurrung word for camp/nest (see Blake 1991) and is found elsewhere in *Willam-i-murring* 'tomahawk-house' (Mount William Quarry near Lancefield) and *Willam-wyn* (camp/hut fire) (Pentland Hills) (see Clark and Heydon 2002). *Lar* is the Djadjawurrung, Djabwurrung, Wembawemaba, Djadjala, and Wathawurrung equivalent (see Hercus 1986) and there are many examples of its usage including *Larngikurrurk* 'home of the magpie' (Cardinal Hill); *Larngidorn* 'nest of the bell-bird' (Doctors Creek); Larngiguragurg 'home of female kangaroos' (Mount Hollowback); *Larngigure* 'home of kangaroo' (Laanecoorie Reservoir); *Larngikalkal* 'dogs camp' and/or 'resting place of cicada'; *Larngiyin* 'camp of the moon' (Mount Misery); and *Larnuk* containing the possessive marker -uk 'his/her/its camp' (Mount Widderin Cave) (see Clark and Heydon 2002). In this instance we have regional variations within the same lect for the same word: nest/camp/home.

McKenzie Falls: **Migunang wirab** - a Jardwadjali placename meaning 'the blackfish cannot get any higher up' (Thornly in Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 63); and **Kurnung** which means 'a hill or impediment of any kind' as well as river (Surveyor General in Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 201; Blake 1991: 112). *Wirap* (blackfish) (*Gadopsis marmoratus)* is also found in *Kuwirap* (Kooweerup) and *Djeriwirap* (Clunie) (see Clark and Heydon 2002). *Kurnung* is found elsewhere in *Kurnung* (Badger Creek) and Koonung Koonung Creek (see Clark and Heydon 2002). *Kurnung* may be an example of Schebeck's (2002: 144) 'general name' classification, where a general term may function as a placename (Hercus 2002); if that is so, then Migunang wirab is its specific name.

Mt Elephant: **Djerrinallum** is a Wathawurrung placename meaning 'nest of sea swallows, terns' (Dawson 1881) (presumably a reference to *Sterna hirundo*) [however, according to Porteous (in Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 214) this name means 'A hill of fire'], and is also the name of a local Wathawurrung clan Djerrinallum gundidj. Willam/yellam is the Woiwurrung, Boonwurrung, Daungwurrung word for camp/nest (see Blake 1991); **Larra** is the Wathawurrung word for 'stony' (Porteous in Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 179; Blake, Clark, & Krishna-Pillay 1998: 141), however one source identifies Larra as the name of a spring at a homestead near Mt Elephant (Surveyor General in Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 193). Larra is also the name for a small township (Lara) near Geelong. Djerrinallum survives in the name of the township Derrinallum that is near Mt Elephant. Given the primacy of Djerrinallum in the name of a local group, Djerrinallum is probably the specific name for this mountain.

Mt Erip: **Yirrip** is the Kulin word for ironbark tree (Blake 1991: 121) (*Eucalyptus sideroxylon*); the meaning of **Nollo** is unknown (Porteous in Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 179). Robinson noted that this hill was 'celebrated among the natives for supplying the choice wood for their spears' (Clark 2000d: 158). Yirrip is also the name of a farming district (Yeerip) near Lake Mokoan; Yerrip Hill on Jacksons Creek in Sunbury, and the Indigenous name for Pleasant Creek – Stawell (see Clark and Heydon 2002).
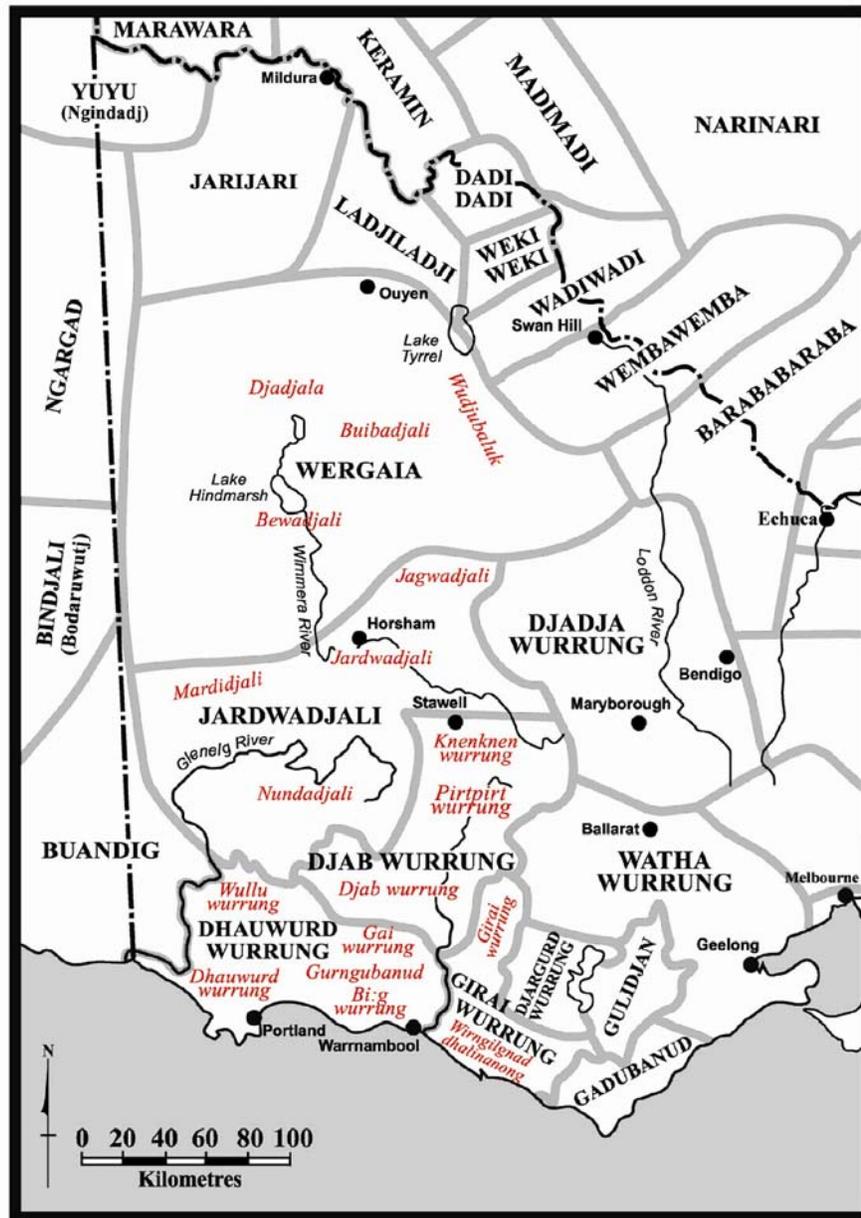
Figure 1 Western Victorian Aboriginal Language and dialects

Lake Buloke: **Banyenong** – Banye is said to mean 'burning of roots and stumps' and 'nong' 'the past' (Chauncy in Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 205); **Buluk** is the general Kulin word meaning 'THE lake' (Hartmann in Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 176; Blake et al. 1998: 118). *Buluk* is found elsewhere in Lake Bolac and *Bulukbuluk* (the name of a swampy area near Mt Macedon (see Clark and Heydon 2002), and may be another example of a 'general name' (Hercus 2002: 68). Hercus's (2002) analysis is that this is probably an instance where a general term has been identified as referring to a specific location, and that its specific name is Banyenong.

Lake Coorong: **Gurrong** is a common Kulin word for 'canoe' (Blake 1991: 112); the meaning of **Yarrak** is unknown, although it is found in the name of the local Jardwadjali clan

Yarrakuluk meaning Yarrak people (Hartmann in Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 176) which would favour the primacy of Yarrak. *Gurrong* survives elsewhere in Coorong Swamp near Rupanyup; Mount Gorong in the Moorabool Shire; and Mount Korong near Wedderburn (see Clark and Heydon 2002).

Stockyard Hill: a volcanic crater with a gap or break in its side likening it to a stock yard (Anderson 1985: 12) was known as **Bapel** meaning 'fat' (Porteous in Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 179), similar to bepul identified by Hercus (1986: 199) as the Djadjala (dialect of Wergaia) word for fat, also kidney-fat; and Bowerwil, presumably a reference to **Barwal**, the Kulin word for 'island' (Robinson in Clark 2000d: 152; Blake 1991: 107). Barwal is found elsewhere in reference to French Island and Swan Island (see Clark and Heydon 2002). A swamp at Tyntynder near Swan Hill is also known as Bapel (see Clark and Heydon 2002).

Condah Swamp: **Tyarrk** refers to the common reed *Phragmites australis* (Dawson 1881; Krishna-Pillay 1996: 196; Blake 2003: 139); **Konda** is the Dhauwurdwurrung word for 'water' (Dawson 1881; Mathew Papers 1907; Krishna-Pillay 1996: 214). There are many instances of Tyarrk elsewhere in Victoria, including Langanong-djark the endonym for Ashens (Wilson in Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 177); Tjarrk the endonym for Framlingham (Lane in Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 187); Kelly Swamp (Robinson in Clark 2000d: 100); a swamp on Koort Koort Nong pastoral run (Scott in Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 185); a swamp near Larra homestead (Dawson 1881: lxxxii); Olinda Creek (Robinson Jnl 30/8/1840 in Clark 2000a); a creek near Mt Campbell (Robinson Jnl 27/5/1840 in Clark 2000a); and finally the Melbourne suburb of Toorak.

Griffiths Island: **Mallin** (Robinson Jnl 28/4/1841 in Clark 2000b) meaning 'island' and confirmed in the name of the local Dhauwurdwurrung group Mallingundidj (Blake 2003: 109); and **Meerring** (Robinson Jnl 27/8/1841 in Clark 2000b) meaning 'eye, hole in the ground' (Krishna-Pillay 1996). Mallin is found elsewhere in Kurnnamaleen, 'little islands' on the west side of Lady Bay near the mouth of the Merri River (see Dawson 1881: lxxx), and Kurtbaulen 'islands of stone', a descriptive name for the Stony Rises (see Scott in Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 182). Meerring is found elsewhere in Martung-mirring 'big eye', the name of a marsh in the vicinity of Lake Purrumbete (Scott in Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 182); and Yatt mirng 'white eye', the name for a sink hole at Mount Rouse (Dawson 1881: lxxxiv) and a crater in Tower Hill Island (Dawson 1881: lxxxiv). Mallin, the general word for island, may be another example of a 'general name'; Meerring is probably a reference to some specific landscape feature on the island, rather than the island itself.

Crosslectal Doublets

In terms of crosslectal doublets five have been identified in the study area: four are mountains, and one is a locality that is now a township. The mountains are clearly observable from the vantage point of the adjoining lect and this may explain the existence of multiple naming. The locality Hexham is on the margin of the lects concerned. Of these five, only Mt Langi Ghiran has an official Indigenous name.

Hexham: **Bulla-bulla**, the local Djabwurrung name meaning 'good' (Lane in Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 187), and **Petereet**, the Dhauwurdwurrung name for the masked lapwing (formerly called spurwinged plover) (*Vanellus miles*) (Goodall in Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 187; Dawson 1881; Krishna-Pillay 1996: 179; Blake 2003: 135).

Mt Emu: known to local Wathawurrung people as **Tarecurrumbeet** (Robinson Jnl 5/8/1841 in Clark 2000b), and to the Marr people as **Narrowhane** (Goodall in Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 187).

Mt Langi Ghiran: **Larngidjerin** the local Djabwurrung name meaning 'home of the black cockatoo' (Robinson Jnl 10/7/1841 in Clark 2000b); and the neighbouring Wathawurrung name **Corrong-ah-jeering** also meaning 'house/camp of cockatoo' (Tyers 1840 in Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 216; Blake 1991: 112; Blake et al 1998). Charles Tyers recorded the Wathawurrung name as

referring to Mt Cole, which adjoins Mt Langi Ghiran, however its similarity with Langi Ghiran suggests he has misunderstood his source. According to Dawson (1881) the local Djabwurrung word for black cockatoo was 'wiran', a reference to the Banksian cockatoo (or red tailed black cockatoo; *Calyptorhynchus magnificus*). Chauncy (1862–66 in Smyth 1878), notes that 'gherin' is a reference to the yellow-tailed black cockatoo (funereal cockatoo; *Calyptorhynchus funereus*); however in support of Dawson (1881), Blake (*et al* 1998: 101) note that *djerrin* is 'black cockatoo with red'.

Mt Sturgeon: **Wurgarri** meaning 'black' is the local Djabwurrung name for this feature (Robinson Jnl 26/6/1841 in Clark 2000b; Hercus 1986: 254), and the local Djabwurrung clan was named Wurgarri gundidj; the Giraiwurrung knew the feature as **Tolelokewearr** (Robinson Jnl 5/5/1841 in Clark 2000b). **Malubgar** is a second Djabwurrung name recorded in the literature, meaning 'that mountain there' and is probably not a placename (Robinson Papers in Clark 2000d: 135). Malubgar is also recorded as a second name for Mura Mura (Mt Zero). Malubgar is probably an example of what Hercus (2002: 7) has classified as 'silly names', placenames based on probable misunderstandings between the recorder and the Aboriginal speaker

Mt William: **Duwul** the local Djabwurrung language name meaning 'The Mountain' (Robinson Jnl 3/8/1841 in Clark 2000b), probably understandable given that this mountain is one of the highest peaks in the Grampian/Gariwerd ranges; and the local Djabwurrung clan was known as Duwul baluk; **Worranneyan**, is recorded as the Giraiwurrung name for this mountain (Robinson Jnl 13/7/1841 in Clark 2000b).

Intralectal triplets

In the study area it has been possible to identify five toponymic triplets – four intralectal and one crosslectal, relating to mountain ranges (2); a lake (1); a mountain (1), and a coastal locality that is now a township (1). In the case of the solitary crosslectal triplet – Gariwerd/Grampian Ranges – these mountain ranges are readily observable from the distant lects. Of these five, only Lake Condah and Grampians (Gariwerd) National Park have official Indigenous names.

Victoria Range: three names have been recorded for the Victoria Range: **Billiwin**, containing 'bili' 'stomach' (Surveyor General in Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 202), after which the local clan Billiwin balug was named (Clark & Harradine 1990: 51), **Bareng** meaning 'river' (Surveyor's Returns, 1869–70; Surveyor General in Smyth 1878 Vol.2: 199), and **Larneyannun**, containing 'lar(ng)i' 'the nest/camp of …'(Robinson Papers in Clark 2000d: 150). To see other instances of placenames containing 'lar(ng)i', see discussion of Mount Franklin (above). Bareng is seen elsewhere in Barengi-djul, 'river-waterbags' the name of a bend in the Wimmera River south of Jeparit; and Bareng, the name of the Wannon River. Bareng is likely to be a misunderstanding between the surveyor and his source.

Lake Condah: there are three names recorded for this lake – **Konda** meaning 'water' (Mathew Papers 1907; Krishna-Pillay 1996: 214; Blake 2003: 169); **Karrap** meaning 'lake' (Lane in Smyth 1878 Vol.2: 187); and **Tyarrk**, a reference to the common reed (*Phragmites australis*) (Dawson 1881: lxxxii; Krishna-Pillay 1996: 196). See discussion of Condah Swamp (above) for other instances of Konda and Tyarrk. Karrap and Konda are likely to be 'general names'. **Gundidj** meaning 'belonging to' (Stahle 1880 in Howitt Papers) is a fourth name recorded for this topographical feature however this is unlikely to be a placename as Clark (1990) has argued that Stahle has misunderstood his Aboriginal sources – this is probably another example of a 'silly name'.

Port Fairy: *Puyupkil*, a reference to pig face (*Carpobrotus spp.*), and the name of the local Dhauwurdwurrung clan Puyupkil gundidj (Robinson in Clark 2000b; Krishna-Pillay 1996: 193); *Tarngunnet* (Robinson in Clark 2000d) a placename similar to that recorded for Lady Julia Percy Island (Tirngoona, see above) which was translated as 'where the sun go away longa night'; and

Nyamat meaning 'sea, ocean, sea water, wave' (Robinson Jnl 28/4/1841 in Clark 2000b; Lane in Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 187; Krishna-Pillay 1996: 198; Blake 2003:198). Nyamat is probably a 'general name'.

Mt Pierrepoint: **Allowween** (Robinson Jnl 1/7/1841 in Clark 2000b), **Culmurri** (Robinson in Clark 2000d: 129), and **Parreeyt**, a Marr word meaning 'water' (Robinson Jnl 13/11/1843 in Clark 2000c; Dawson 1881; Krishna-Pillay 1996: 214; Blake 2003: 169). Parreeyt is seen elsewhere, for example, 'Mumpareeyt' 'bottom of the water' (Spring Creek, near Mt Rouse); and 'Lapeeyt parreeyt' 'salt water' (a locality on the Hopkins River) (see Clark and Heydon 2002).

Crosslectal triplet

The Grampians: the endonym, *Gariwerd*, the Jardwadjali/Djabwurrung name meaning 'The Mountain Range' (Robinson Jnl 11/6/1841 in Clark 2000b; Clark and Harradine 1990: 44); and the two exonyms: *Murraibuggum*, containing marree meaning 'stone', their Dhauwurdwurrung name (Tyers 1842 in Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 66; Krishna-Pillay 1996: 206; Blake 2003: 192); and *Tolotmutgo*, their Wathawurrung name (Tyers diary 26/2/1840). In addition to these three names, there are two other local attributions found in the literature: **Duwul**, a Kulin word meaning 'The mountain' that also refers specifically to Mt William (Dawson 1881: lxxxii) (see above); and **Kawa**, a Kulin generic word meaning 'abrupt mountains' and probably not a placename (Wilson in Smyth 1878 Vol. 2: 178; Blake *et al* 1998: 123).

Victorian government policy and multiple naming

In terms of the policy framework in Victoria and its amenity towards multiple naming, government guidelines on dual naming are as follows:

> Naming authorities may assign dual or multiple names to places, in those instances where it is appropriate to give official recognition to names drawn from two or more cultural backgrounds. The most common combination would be a name drawn from a relevant Indigenous Australian language and an Australian English name. There should not be any restriction on the language source for names used in selecting dual names, provided Principle 3 [non transferral of names from other places] is observed and provided Australian English is used. For example, Grampians (Gariwerd) National Park (Victoria 2004: 25).

> Where a feature has an existing European name that has been in common use for a long period of time, dual naming of that feature should be considered as an appropriate mechanism to recognise both cultures. Address features such as suburbs, towns and rural districts cannot have a dual name. The approach adopted in assigning dual names, and determining which name shall take precedence, needs to be based on the information available at the time. Where the European name has little or no associated information, but had been recorded on maps for a considerable time, and the origin and meaning of the Indigenous name are well documented, the Indigenous name should take precedence over the European name (appearing as the primary name on official maps). In cases where the Indigenous name has little or no detail of origin or meaning, the European name should remain as the primary name (Victoria 2004: 43).

Although these guidelines do not preclude cross-lectal Aboriginal naming in that it is possible to argue that cross-lectal names are 'names drawn from two or more cultural backgrounds', they are clear that the most common combination is likely to be one of an Australian English and an Indigenous Australian language name. Dual naming, where it does exist in Victoria is almost predominantly of the Indigenous-non-Indigenous combination. Examples include Grampians (Gariwerd) National Park; Mount William (Mount Duwil); Fyans Creek (Barri Yaloog Creek); Mount Sturgeon (Mount Wurgarri); and Mount Abrupt (Mount Murdadjoog). There is no provision in the guidelines for intra-lectal multiple naming. Multiple naming is not permitted for address features such as towns and rural districts; in the study area, this would mean that the

multiple naming of Hexham and Port Fairy would not be allowed. The adoption of dual naming in Victoria in the early 1990s in response to a submission to reinstate up to 100 Indigenous placenames in and around the Grampians National Park (see Clark and Harradine 1990) was the result of protracted and controversial public discussion. The desire to restore multiple Indigenous naming in Victoria – whether intra-lectal or cross-lectal – has yet to be tested.

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