

Aboriginal Culture

Aboriginal culture is the oldest surviving culture in the world.

We honour the Ancestors who lived and worked in this land for thousands of years and value the ways in which Aboriginal culture enriches the lives of all Australians to this day.

In Aboriginal culture, people do not own or possess land – they belong to the land and are responsible for its care.

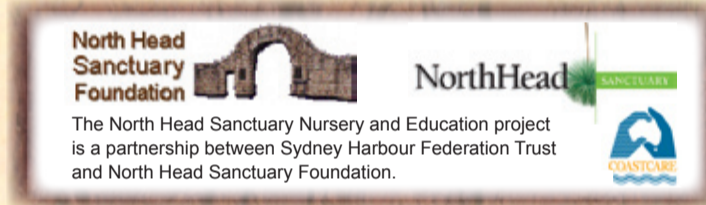
Protecting and caring for the environment is inherent in Aboriginal culture. People harvested only what was needed so as to conserve the plants and animals on which they depended for sustenance.

The future of human life on our planet would be more secure if all people learned to limit their use of resources to what they really needed.

Car-rang-gel (North Head), for thousands of years, has been a sacred place where kuradgi men and women gathered for ceremonies. People travelled from far and near to this very special location where there are permanent water flows and valuable resources for use and for trade.



NOTE: The Aboriginal knowledge provided within this brochure has been generously given by the D'harawal people, a southern group, one of several Aboriginal groups of the greater Sydney area. The information is provided for this brochure only. It cannot be reproduced, copied or adapted into other materials without the prior informed consent of Aunty Fran Bodkin, D'harawal knowledgeholder.



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Aboriginal Use of Plants



Lambertia formosa



Banksia ericifolia



Lomandra longifolia

Aboriginal science and technology devised uses for most Australian plants.

Some plants such as the Xanthorrhoea have a variety of uses.



Xanthorrhoea media

Sleep
Epacris longiflora
leaves and stems were placed on a low fire and the vapour inhaled to ensure a good night's sleep.

Pain or fever
The young leaves of *Eucalyptus capitellata*, Bai'ayil, were boiled until the water turned green. It was then allowed to cool, and carefully strained before being used as a wash for joint, chest or muscle pain, and to relieve fever.

Diarrhoea
The red bark exudate of *Angophora costata* was dissolved in warm water, and when cooled, the liquid was taken to relieve severe diarrhoea.

Coughs and colds
The branches and leaves of *Melaleuca quinquenervia* or *Boronia ledifolia* were placed on a low fire and the vapour inhaled to relieve coughing or nasal congestion. The young leaves were chewed to relieve the discomfort of head colds.

Toys
children's toys were carved from *Banksia marginata* wood.

Dolls and toy animals
Lambertia formosa, Mountain Devil or Kuridja (D'harawal name) seed pods were used as toys for children. Feathers were tied to the stem underneath the pod, and they became little birds. Or grass string arms, body and legs were woven then the seed pods attached to the top to make a doll like a possum or kangaroo.

Funny Trick
The *Grevillea buxifolia* or Grey Spider Flower was often used by children to frighten other children or unaware parents. They would place a flower near to a sleeping victim then wake them up with a cry of "look out for the big spider". This was usually only done when the children could escape quickly.

Skin lesions
The hardened gum of *Eucalyptus capitellata* was soaked in warm water, then, when soft, applied to skin lesions where it would form a film over the day. This was done several times a day.

Sores
The fresh gum of *Eucalyptus camfieldii* was collected, mixed with warm water and applied to sores, cuts and scabies. The dry, hardened gum of *Eucalyptus camfieldii* or *Eucalyptus capitellata* was ground to a powder, then placed directly onto sores and wounds.

Wounds
Melaleuca bark - the fine inner bark was used as emergency bandages, with the powder in between layers acting as an antiseptic.

Insect Bites
Pteridium esculentum sap from the stem is useful for taking the sting out of insect bites.

Health and Healing

Fun for Children

Skin care

Food



Fruits

The edible fruit of *Elaeocarpus reticulatus*, *Astroloma humifusum* and many other plants formed part of the diet.



Leaves

The leaf bases of *Xanthorrhoea* were eaten raw or cooked and are almost like cabbage. The inner leaves were not eaten as this would kill the whole plant.



Roots

The bark from the young root up to 4cm thick of *Eucalyptus capitellata*, was roasted to a crisp, pounded and eaten.



Seeds

The seeds of *Actinotus helianthi*, *Talara'tingi*, were ground to a paste to eat raw or cooked.

Grubs

Grubs inhabiting the trunk and branches of *Banksia aemula* were eaten raw or cooked.



Tools and Implements



Implements

Tools and implements were carved out of wood from trees such as *Elaeocarpus reticulatus*, *Angophora costata* and *Eucalyptus capitellata*.



Cooking

Melaleuca quinquenervia bark was used to wrap food for cooking.

Canoes

The bark of either *Corymbia gummifera* or *Eucalyptus* trees was cut, shaped, lashed together and waterproofed to make bark canoes from which many Aboriginal people were seen fishing in Sydney Harbour.



Ornaments

The wood from *Banksia marginata* was used to carve ornaments.

Blankets

Melaleuca quinquenervia bark was used to wrap babies for warmth when carrying them.



Fire

Making Fire

The soft wood of the *Xanthorrhoea* provided the base for a fire-drill when making fire. Hard wood sticks were spun quickly against the drill.



Tinder

The inner bark of *Eucalyptus capitellata* or Brown Stringybark was used as tinder for lighting fires especially in wet weather when other wood was wet.

Torches

The grey dry infertile cones of *Banksia marginata* or *Banksia ericifolia* were soaked in emu oil, set alight and used as torches.



Weapons and Hunting

Spear shafts

The stems of *Eucalyptus camfieldii*, *Bai'ayli*, were used for the making of spear shafts.



Resin

Resin from *Xanthorrhoeas* was widely used e.g. to glue barbs on spears.



Traps

Eel traps were made from *Lomandra longifolia* leaves.

Nets

The bark fibres of *Eucalyptus capitellata* were spun into string for weaving of hunting and fishing nets.



The inner bark of any of the native figs can be used to make string for fishing lines or nets that do not rot in salt water.

Caring for babies



Nappies

The soft inner bark of *Melaleuca quinquenervia* was used for babies' nappies. A strip was cut according to the size of the baby, some soft fluffy seeds of *Typha* (water reed) or *Clematis* were placed on the paperbark, the baby was put on top of that with the bark folded up between its legs and string tied around its waist. When the nappy was soiled, it was discarded, and the seeds grew, complete with fertiliser.

Pillows

The twigs and leaves of *Boronia serrulata* were used as pillows for invalids and babies.



Dew drink

Dew from this plant was collected before sunrise and given to young babies.

Drink



Nectar drinks

Banksias, *Melaleucas*, *Lambertia formosa* and other nectar bearing flowers were soaked in water to make sweet drink. It was then given to young children or old people as an enervating drink.



Dew drinks

Dew was collected before sunrise from *Actinotus helianthi*, *Talara'tingi*, and given to people to drink after emotional trauma.



Early morning dew from *Boronia ledifolia* was used to treat sore throats.



The dew of *Banksia ericifolia* was collected before sunrise and given to unsettled children.

Leaf drink

The young leaves of *Melaleuca quinquenervia* were held underwater and crushed and the liquid was taken to relieve headache and colds.



Containers and mats

Dilly bags

The leaves of *Lomandra longifolia* were split, dried and made into string for creating dilly bags.



The stringy bark fibres of *Eucalyptus capitellata* were spun into yarn for weaving dilly bags.

Coolamons

Wood that had grown into a suitable shape was made into a coolamon that could be used to carry a variety of objects.



Mats

The leaves of *Lomandra longifolia* were woven into mats and baskets.



Woven objects

The leaves of *Dianella* were used for weaving baskets and platters.

