



Defence's Commitment to First Nations Peoples Dual Naming Pilot Project

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIASIS) estimates that 90% of First Nations languages are endangered. By officially recording First Nations place names at Defence bases and establishments, Defence recognises another important layer of history of the place, and helps to preserve First Nations languages and culture. It is a tangible demonstration that we appreciate and acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters where we live, work and train.

Recognition of traditional languages pays respect to our First Nations peoples, acknowledges our military history and helps preserve First Nations culture. Traditional Owners have shared the traditional language place name for the Defence base or establishment, including its meaning and significance for their community, and have provided permission to use this name alongside the current Defence name.

Blamey Barracks – Kapooka I Gabuga (Wiradjuri language)

History of Blamey Barracks, Kapooka

Blamey Barracks, located in Kapooka, New South Wales, is primarily known for its association with the Australian Army's recruit training. It has served as a training facility for the Australian Army since its establishment in 1951.

Blamey Barracks was named after General Sir Thomas Blamey, one of Australia's most distinguished soldiers. Blamey was born in Wagga Wagga where he commenced his military career when he was appointed Second-In-Command of the Cadet Unit at Newtown Public School (now South Wagga Public School), where he was a teacher.



Blamey is the only Australian to have attained the rank of Field Marshal and was Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Military Forces during World War II.

Gabuga

The Wiradjuri name 'Gabuga' is pronounced 'Gah-buh-gah' and means 'eggs'. The traditional name and story of this land tells us that it was a sanctuary for the Bustard birds and that Wiradjuri peoples would come to the area to collect the eggs. The traditional name and meaning was lost over time but the significance of this land remains important to future generations of Wiradjuri peoples.





Defence's commitment to First Nations peoples

The Australian Defence Force has a long and proud military history dating back to the early 1900s. First Nations peoples have long played, and continue to play, a significant role in the defence of Australia and its interests. Defence is committed to contributing to a reconciled Australia, through understanding our past and working towards a shared and prosperous future in partnership with First Nations peoples.

As part of the Defence commitment to First Nations peoples, Defence will deliver dual names as part of a pilot program at Blamey Barracks – Kapooka, RAAF Base Wagga and Puckapunyal Military Area.. Upon completion of the pilot project, Defence will review the level of interest at other bases and determine what further support is required.

The dual name will be complementary to the base name and will be displayed on a new sign. No base entrances or names will be altered or changed for this project.

The artwork – created by Owen Lyons, a Wiradjuri man



In the heart of Wiradjuri country, Gabuga, meaning 'eggs', symbolises food gathering and renewal. Each year, the sacred Bustard bird laid its eggs, and the Wiradjuri peoples carefully collected some for nourishment, leaving enough for the next generation. The Gugaa (Goanna, the Wiradjuri totem) also hunted these eggs, creating a delicate balance of survival and respect.

Over time, new footprints appeared on the land, from all over Australia and beyond, symbolising a diverse convergence of cultures. Despite these changes, Gabuga's significance endures. It remains a place of birth and renewal, where peoples from all walks of life come together and are

metaphorically brought out of their shells, becoming proud members of the Australian Army, connected by the timeless traditions of the Wiradjuri peoples.

The artist, Owen Lyons, has a deep connection with the land of Wiradjuri Country and is passionate about the area. His art reflects his ties to the area and communities within from the regional cities of Griffith to Wagga to the vast landscape that spans the mountains in the east, to the wide plains of the west of beautiful Wiradjuri Country.

