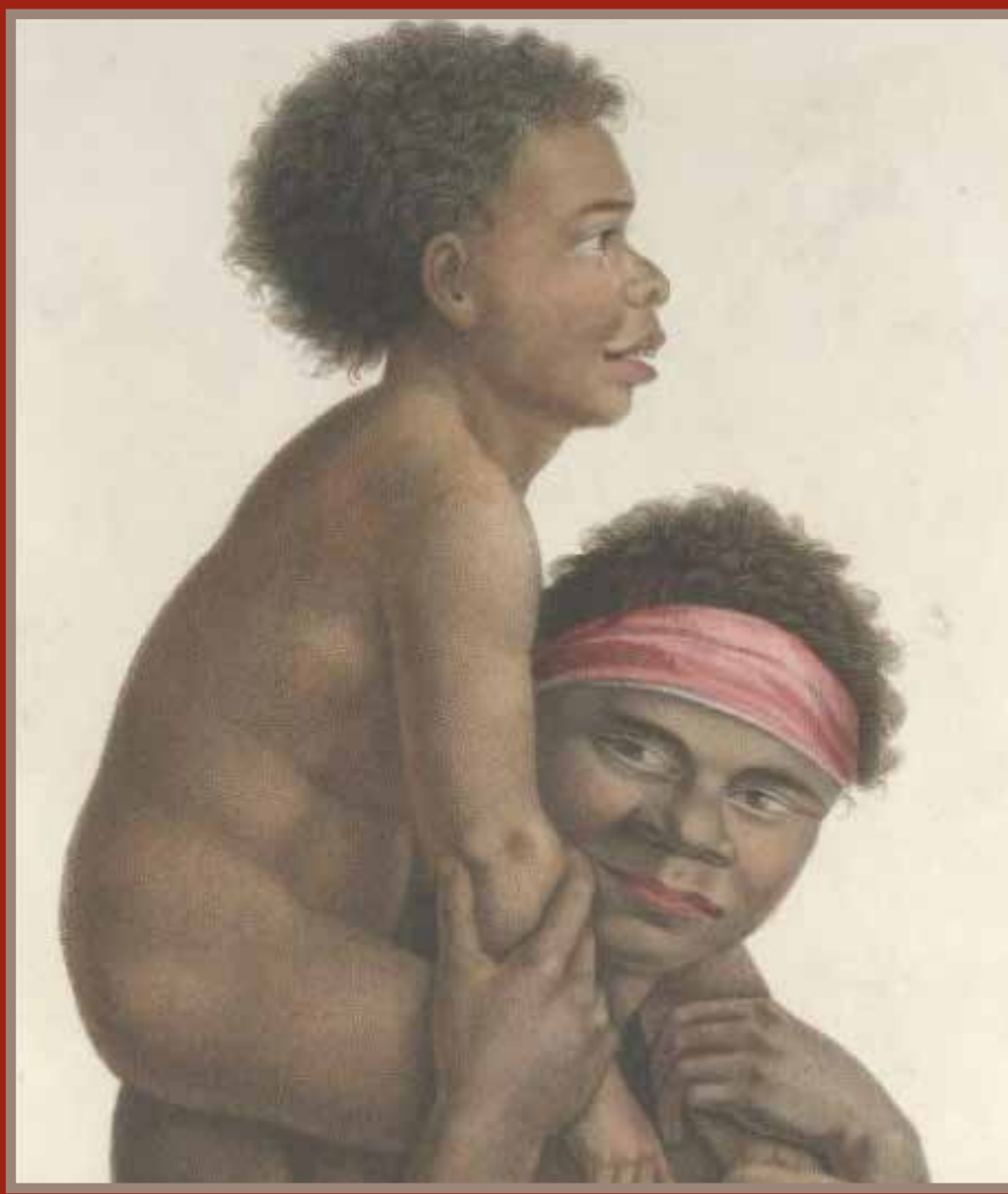


# FERTILE FLOODPLAIN COUNTRY



◀ *Women, like this Burrubiranggalian, played a critical role in the social fabric of First Nations communities. They provided a large proportion of the food, medicines and material resources for their groups, whilst teaching children early skills, knowledge and the essentials of life.*

Jeune Femme de la Tribu des Bou-rou-be-ron-gal avec son enfant sur les épaules. Nouvelle Hollande. Nlle. Galles du Sud. [Young woman of the Burrubiranggal (Burrubiranggal) tribe, with her child on her shoulders. New South Wales] PETIT, Nicolas-Martin, after: engraved by Barthelemy ROGER under direction of Jacques MILBERT. Editeur: l'imprimerie de Langlois, Paris, 1824

Oral traditions and written historical records tell us that within this **Ngurra** were rich hunting grounds. Although the ravages of time and European land use have removed most of the physical evidence, we know that the **Burrubiranggal** tended and cared for these hunting grounds with great ceremony and dedication, to ensure they continued to provide a healthy, productive ecosystem that nourished all the beings that depended on it.

Here at the Riverfarm itself, while the physical evidence of the **Burrubiranggal's** society, culture and land use has been removed, it is important to remember that this happened because of forced dispossession and dispersal by Europeans. However, the **Burrubiranggal** fiercely resisted this dispossession, never surrendered or ceded sovereignty and retain a deep, abiding and unbroken connection to this place, stretching back at least 50,000 years.

To look out across at the **Dharrabang** and the surrounding areas today, it's important to reflect on and re-imagine what this part of **Ngurra** meant to the **Burrubiranggal**, an area of towering, sheltered canopies, of luxurious jungle, laced with vines, intermingled with wetlands containing plentiful foods such as fish, eels, shellfish, crayfish and all types of water birds, to nourish and sustain the families that lived here.

Despite being forever changed, **Ngurra** throughout this area, especially the river and other aspects that remain, still holds great significance for the **Burrubiranggal** descendants, and the Dharug Nation more broadly.

**Ngurra**, all that it represents, and the cultural heritage values embodied therein, are central to the identity and ongoing relationship held by Dharug people to a profound connection, history and story, as old as time.



**Ngurra (Country)** for the **Burrubiranggal**, likely followed the river to the west, extended across the river further south-west to the escarpment of the mountains, southwards to the ironbark forests of Castlereagh and possibly east across into the Cumberland woodland perhaps as far as South Creek.

The neighbouring woodland areas, with huge old growth trees, surrounded by open grasslands were great habitat for Kangaroos (Burru). Burru were an important feature and food source of this **Ngurra**. The **Burrubiranggal's** name is derived from the Burru.

This part of **Burrubiranggal Ngurra**, before being cleared and modified by Europeans, was a lush and abundant gallery rainforest, extending from the river, merging into vast floodplain wetlands, and ascending to woodland on the higher terrace, where the main town of Richmond now stands.

This rainforest contained numerous food and medicine plants and trees. Lagoons and wetland 'swamps' provided rich food resources which nourished the community, when the people were living in this area as part of their seasonal and

ceremonial movement through Country. There were also more open places, where native yam beds grew, were harvested and replanted, tended to and cherished by the **Burrubiranggalian** (the women of the clan) as a staple food source, over time beyond counting. They were supplemented by other seasonal food plants growing on the fertile riverbank and flood plain.

Wrapping around this floodplain rainforest, was the mighty river, the **Dharrabang\***, the Dharug name for any larger freshwater river system, connected to the term for the leg, **dharra**.

(\*This name has been recorded with a various spelling, though mishearing's of the true term. It is also a common practice in First Nations Languages to name features in Country after parts of the body, with the idea of a leg as the term for river, frequently found in languages in this region).



◀ **TOP:** *The abundant grassy woodlands were lovingly cared for, seasonally managed by the cultural use of fire, providing ideal conditions for a wide range of animals, including most notably, Burru – the Eastern Grey Kangaroo.*

Lycett, Joseph & Lycett, Joseph. (1817). [Aborigines hunting kangaroos] Retrieved April 21, 2022, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-138499976>

◀ **MIDDLE:** *The river and the surrounding Ngurra provided rich resources for First Nations communities, supporting a strong economy, a physically healthy community and a vibrant and sophisticated social, cultural and spiritual lifestyle.*

Lycett, Joseph. (1817). Aboriginal Australians night fishing by fire torches, New South Wales, ca. 1817 Retrieved April 21, 2022, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-138499378>

◀ **LEFT:** *Looking eastward from Kurrajong across to the Hawkesbury district, sadly this rare image in the early 1850's is the closest depiction bearing some similarity to the gallery rainforest, cleared from Ngurra over successive decades from 1801.*

From the Currajong [i.e. Kurrajong] above Douglass' farm (picture) / [Conrad Martens] <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-134449126/view>



Local Land Services

QR CODE

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For more on the history about the River Farm visit the WSU website

