



AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL PLACENAMES SURVEY

Report for calendar year 2003

The Australian National Placenames Survey came into being on 1 January, 2000. It is the successor to the pilot National Place-Names Project, which was sponsored by the Australian Academy of the Humanities under a grant from the Special Projects Fund of the Australian Research Council's Learned Academies Program in 1998 and 1999. The ANPS was supported from the same source in 2000 and 2001. Since November 2001 it has come under the aegis of the Asia-Pacific Institute for Toponymy at Macquarie University, which is supported by a grant from the Vice-Chancellor's Millennium Innovations Fund. A separate report on the broader activities of the APIT and a financial statement for the Institute as a whole have also been prepared.

Project objectives

The task of the Survey is to investigate the history, meaning and motivation for use of each name ever current for a geographic feature or inhabited place in Australia, and to make public the results of this research.

Personnel

David Blair, now Senior Research Fellow in the Department of English and Special Adviser to the Vice-Chancellor, has continued his role as (honorary) Director of the ANPS. Research Fellow **Flavia Hodges** has continued to be employed for two days per week January-October, increasing to three days per week from November. Research Associate **Susan Poetsch** continued to be employed for four days per week in January and again from August, and has been joined by a second Research Associate, **Clair Hill**, employed full-time April-September and four days per week from October.

Dr **Jan Tent** of the Department of Linguistics has accepted an invitation to become a member of APIT in connection with his research into early Dutch and Dutch-related placenames in Australia. The Survey's activities are also supported by Honorary Research Associates **Dale Lehner**, Dr **Joyce Miles** and **William Noble**, who have all devoted many hours of voluntary work to promoting the Survey and raising community awareness of our aims and methods.

In addition to the national directorate at Macquarie University, much of the daily work of the ANPS is to be carried out by organisations in each state and territory. In addition to the **Western Australian State Committee** formed in 2001 and the **Victorian State Committee** formed in 2002, there is now also an active **NSW/ACT State Committee**. Its members are Flavia Hodges (Chair); Greg Windsor of the NSW Geographical Names Board (Secretary);

David Blair; Lorraine Bayliss of the ACT Planning and Land Authority; Dr Peter Orlovich, formerly of the University of New South Wales; Prof. Ian Jack of the University of Sydney Department of History; Dr Michael Walsh of the University of Sydney Department of Linguistics; John Hobson of the University of Sydney Koori Centre; and Dr Jaky Troy of the NSW Aboriginal Languages Research and Resource Centre.

The NSW/ACT State Committee has in addition formed an **Aboriginal Names Subcommittee** to coordinate outreach to local communities in recording and researching placenames of Indigenous origin, in part with a view to proposing dual names under the new NSW provisions of 2002. Its members are Flavia Hodges (Convenor); Greg Windsor (Secretary); David Blair, Susan Poetsch and Clair Hill; Lorraine Bayliss; Dr Michael Walsh; Dr Jaky Troy; Dr Val Attenbrow of the Australian Museum; Tristan Tipps of the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs; Kevin Lowe of the NSW Office of the Board of Studies; Melissa Jackson of the State Library of NSW; and Kirsten Thorpe of State Records NSW.

Timescale

The work of the Survey will extend over several decades. For comparison, the English Place-Name Survey began its work in 1925, and is currently striving to complete initial coverage of the country by its centenary; after that many gaps will remain to be filled, as research methods have been refined with the progress of the project. Dr John Atchison, a pioneer of early attempts to establish a national placenames survey in Australia, has recently commented (*Rivista Italiana di Onomastica* VII (2002), 2, p. 484) that 'One is looking probably at a one hundred years, or four generations, process before this country is at the stage of development of England, Sweden or Northern Ireland'.

Achievements

We have continued to publish our quarterly newsletter, *Placenames Australia*, which is distributed free of charge to all interested parties and is our principal vehicle of community outreach. Clair Hill has taken over the role of editor, and is now also responsible for the design and layout previously in the hands of the Public Relations unit. The mailing list of recipients has grown substantially over the past year, and all issues are also archived on the ANPS website.

The ANPS website (www.anps.mq.edu.au) is now live, and will be developed substantially during 2004, with Clair Hill as webmaster.

David Blair (assisted by Flavia Hodges, Clair Hill, Susan Poetsch and Dale Lehner) again offered a special interest seminar on placenames for senior undergraduates at Macquarie University. This year there was an enrolment of seven students, compared to five for the inaugural offering in 2002. Alexandra Orr, who completed the unit in 2002, is now enrolled in an MA in Modern History, with a thesis topic on the local history and placenames of the parish of Prospect, NSW.

In the past year the Survey has particularly strengthened its focus on placenames of Indigenous origin, through links with the national Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages and the newly established NSW Aboriginal Languages Research and

Resource Centre. Members of the Survey were invited to attend the inaugural ALRRC management meeting in June and a meeting of the Advisory Board in September, and made a presentation on the work of the Survey to the FATSIL governing committee in August.

In October, the Survey joined with the NSW Geographical Names Board and ALRRC in arranging a workshop to consult with members of local Indigenous communities about proposed dual names for features around Sydney Harbour, based on the archival research work of Dr Val Attenbrow and the linguistic reconstruction of Dr Jaky Troy and Dr Michael Walsh. This day was very successful and the proposals warmly received; they will now go ahead, with a few spelling modifications suggested at the workshop, for full consultation and likely implementation.

We have also applied to the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs for a Major Grant that will allow us to conduct a series of similar workshops in regional centres throughout the state.

Members of the Survey have also continued outreach activities such as answering email enquiries, encouraging the work of research friends, making presentations to local historical societies and taking part in media interviews.

Future directions

Subject to confirmation of DAA funding (we have heard informally that our application has been successful, but not the exact level of funding) we shall hold a series of workshops for members of Indigenous communities in regional centres throughout NSW in the early part of 2004.

We shall also continue to be involved with the development of the NSW Geographical Names Board's Aboriginal Geographical Naming Strategy concerned with documenting traditional Indigenous placenames. The GNB will make an application under the NSW Department of Education and Training's Elsa Dixon Aboriginal Employment Program for partial support of the staff costs of one Indigenous project manager and two trainees (the latter positions to be rotated between various language groups), and the Department of Lands will also contribute substantially to these costs.

It is hoped that a national web-accessible database will be developed in 2004. A meeting, involving members of the national directorate, Victorian State Committee and NSW/ACT State Committee will be held in Melbourne in February to develop a common data structure. It is hoped that the full database may be implemented by Geoscience Australia under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Committee on Surveying and Mapping, as part of the development of an open GIS compliant national data model.

The Survey will also contribute to the programs in Family History to be offered by the Department of Modern History from 2005, and to the external course offerings being developed by the Education and Training Division of APIT.