

**A History of the Aboriginal People of the Central Coast of
New South Wales to 1874**

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Statement of Originality

I hereby certify that the work embodied in the thesis is my own work, conducted under normal supervision. The thesis contains no material which has been accepted, or is being examined, for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University's Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968 and any approved embargo.

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Abbreviations

AIAS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (now AIATSIS)
AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
ANU	Australian National University, Canberra
ATCJ	<i>Australian Town and Country Journal</i>
BP	Before the Present
BWHS	Brisbane Water Historical Society
CCC	Central Coast Council
CCFHS	Central Coast Family History Society Inc.
Col. Sec.	Colonial Secretary
GDLHSG	Gosford District Local History Study Group
HRA	<i>Historical Records of Australia</i> (Series I)
HRNSW	<i>Historical Records of New South Wales</i>
HRV	<i>Historical Records of Victoria</i>
JNHDHS	<i>Journal of the Newcastle and Hunter District Historical Society</i>
JPRSNSW	<i>Journal & Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales</i>
JRAHS	<i>Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society</i>
LGA	Local Government Area
LGM	Last Glacial Maximum
NMH	<i>Newcastle Morning Herald</i>
NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Service (New South Wales)
NRS	New South Wales Records Series
NSW	New South Wales
NSWBDM	New South Wales Registry of Births, Deaths & Marriages
OED	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
PHC	Percy Haslam Collection, University of Newcastle
SANSW	State Archives of New South Wales
SLNSW	State Library of New South Wales
SMH	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>
UNSW	University of New South Wales
VDL	Van Diemen's Land (later Tasmania)
VPLA	<i>Votes and Proceedings, Legislative Assembly of New South Wales</i>

Abstract

In contrast to the large amount of research published on the Aboriginal history of early Sydney, the Aboriginal history of the Central Coast just to the north has received little scholarly attention. Possible perceptions that the region is and was of little importance, or that relevant documentation is lacking, are not supported by the evidence. Examination of a wide variety of recent botanical, geological and archaeological findings reveals that the Central Coast held a significant place in the Aboriginal world, possibly eclipsing that of Sydney, and that it provided an environment with abundant resources in which Aboriginal people flourished. Further, analysis of the large number of newspaper reports, government documents and settler reminiscences from the colonial period which make reference to the traditional Aboriginal owners of the region, now known as the Central Coast Darkinjung, allows a well-informed account of their recent history. These various sources show that the initially numerous Darkinjung people were almost certainly decimated by the waves of disease which followed the arrival of the British in 1788, and that the spirit of those who survived was then all but broken by the capture, trial and incarceration of key leaders in a unique, allegedly humanitarian experiment overseen by Governor Sir Richard Bourke in the 1830s. Although a few of those imprisoned eventually returned home, disease, exposure and despair led to the supposed extinction of the Aboriginal people of the Central Coast in 1874. However, several women had survived and produced children so that the Central Coast Darkinjung continue to the present day. This thesis fills a gap in the story of the colonisation of Australia, acknowledges the role of the Central Coast as pivotal in Aboriginal economy and spirituality, and

creates a much-needed narrative framework for further, more specific research on the region's Aboriginal history.