

Upper Hunter Valley: Aboriginal Owners Research Project

The Office of the Registrar, *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983*, (ALRA) is doing a research project that will form the basis on which the Registrar can register people as Aboriginal owners for cultural areas that lie wholly, or partly, within the Upper Hunter Valley. There are already almost a thousand people in NSW that are registered Aboriginal owners for land with which they have cultural connection.

The registration of Aboriginal owners across NSW is a legislative scheme set out in the ALRA. It is not Native Title and this process doesn't impact on Native Title rights or current cultural heritage agreements.

Our research area (attached) consists of the three Upper Hunter region LGAs. As there is no official definition of the Upper Hunter, this is the most consistent in capturing them all. It is not a cultural area; there may be multiple cultural areas that come into this research area. Cultural area(s) will also extend outside the research area.

We are doing the project in stages and as information is gathered, we will come back to community and discuss what we've found and see how it fits with what people know.

Once the research project is finished the Registrar will be able to take applications from people to register as Aboriginal owners. In order to be registered a person will have to:

- Be descended from an Aboriginal person who was in the cultural area at the beginning of written records;
- Have cultural connection and association with a specific cultural area that lies wholly, or partly, within the Upper Hunter Valley.

As a registered Aboriginal owner you will have legislative standing to speak for your cultural area that you are connected to through family and tradition.

If you have any questions about the project process, please give us a call:

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The Upper Hunter Valley Aboriginal Owners Research Team

We (Kate Waters and Korey Moon) are consultants who are doing the research for the Upper Hunter Valley Aboriginal Owners Project for the Office of the Registrar, ALRA. We have been around visiting communities in the wider area for introductory meetings over the last two months and it's been great to start to meet people.



As the research team what we need do is:

- identify the different cultural areas that people are associated with that are wholly, or partially, located within the Upper Hunter Valley;
- identify the earliest Aboriginal people (apical ancestors) we can locate in the cultural areas and documenting people's family trees;
- research the history of Aboriginal communities and families in the Upper Hunter Valley and surrounding areas.

How we'll be doing this:

- Talking to people about what they understand to be their cultural area;
- Talking to people about their family trees;
- Researching early written records for the region, including genealogical, historical, and ethnographic records.

We will be coming back over the next few months to talk to people as we work on the research. We'll be showing you what we've been collecting from the written records and asking you how it fits with what you know, from family and from your experience.

If you have a cultural connection to any part of the project area, or the surrounding country, and are interested in the project, please give us a call or send us an email. We are happy to answer any questions you may have about the project.

We plan to come back to the Hunter to see people between the **7th and 30th of September**. If you'd like to have a chat then please get in contact and we'll arrange to meet with you.

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