

FIRST NATIONS PERSPECTIVES

Landcare Australia is proud to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the Country on which we live and work. We value and respect their deep and continued spiritual and cultural connections to the land, waters and seas, and pay our respects to their Ancestors, and Elders past, present and future.

Water is Sacred

For First Nations peoples, water is sacred, it is the lifeblood of Country which binds all aspects together in the landscape, holding high physical, cultural, and spiritual significance. Water is the nurturing and nourishing life force, sustaining the wellbeing of Country and the beings both tangible and invisible within it, that both depend on water and in return ensure it remains healthy. First Nations peoples understand that plants, animals, landforms and spiritual beings hold a reciprocal

and beneficial relationship to water. It is also widely known that water can hold a destructive element that impacts and changes Country, though the appreciation of this, and knowledge on how to respond, is profoundly embodied in the peoples' continuing connection to Country.

Throughout Australia, strict protocols and practices around the use and management of water, are of the utmost importance to First Nations peoples. Rivers, streams, billabongs, waterholes, chains of ponds, and lagoons are highly



regarded and respected as an important source of sustaining life. Within many areas across the continent, there are water places revered as significant and special, promoting spiritual and physical healing, often interwoven with ceremonial practices.

In the more arid and semi-arid regions of Australia where water flows and bodies are scarcer, water was extremely precious and protected. Extra measures were taken to ensure the health of water, such as small water soaks covered to prevent evaporation, being polluted, or overused. More broadly, different waterways had

separate uses ranging from the everyday to the sacred. Sometimes this is related to gender or age restrictions, or in certain water places, laws around the spiritual and physical safety of strangers, in contrast to the people belonging to that Country.

To understand and appreciate more about how important water is for First Nations peoples, Country and in truth the broader community, contact local Traditional Owners, First Nations organisations or water management bodies committed to Caring for Country partnerships.

**For other useful resources please visit this Landcare Australia web page:
www.landcareaustralia.org.au/culturallandmanagement/**

Source: Appropriate words & terminology for First Nations topics - Creative Spirits <https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/media/appropriate-terminology-for-aboriginal-topics>

Source: Demonstrating inclusive and respectful language – Reconciliation Australia Plan <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/inclusive-and-respectful-language.pdf>

Source: Narragunnawali - A Guide to Using Respectful and Inclusive Language and Terminology

The content for First Nations Perspectives was developed for Landcare Australia. The purpose of this information is to provide a useful introductory resource for educators using Junior Landcare resources, for landcare groups and other environmental community groups, and for individuals. This is dynamic content and we understand that some information may change from time to time. Please contact us if you would like to provide additional information that we can include in this important resource.