CHAPTER 17

‘This place already has a name’¹

MELANIE WILKINSON, DR R. MARIKA
AND NANCY M. WILLIAMS

Introduction

The title of this chapter was the response of Yolŋu people to the appearance of road signs with English language names in the Gove Peninsula in the early 1970s. Nhulunbuy is the Yolŋu name for the area that a mining company had chosen for a town site, and the Gove Peninsula, like the entire Yolŋu-speaking area was – and is – saturated with Yolŋu placenames. Yolŋu people objected to the substitution of an English placename for Nhulunbuy and ultimately a dispute arose. Some episodes of the dispute were public and some occurred in a bureaucratic penumbra.

In their classic study of Cheyenne law, Llewellyn and Hoebel (1941: 29), lawyer and anthropologist, asserted that not only law “but the hold and thrust of all other vital aspects of the culture, shine clear in the crucible of conflict”. We believe that placenames are a vital aspect of culture, and we show that the critical naming events we focus on here were marked by conflict. For both Yolŋu and the recently arrived Europeans, the explanation of the origin of names and the process of their application to particular places were ultimately based on explicit claims and publicly sanctioned rules. We describe the dispute that arose during the process of Europeans giving names to places in order to demonstrate the vital role of placenames in both cultures.

The setting

The geographic focus of the dispute about names is north-eastern Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory of Australia. The Aboriginal people involved are linguistically labelled Yolŋu, a coastal people anciently in place, and those recently arrived are predominantly from continental Europe and the British Isles. The parameters of this conflict analysis may be further specified. The location

is a small geographic area on the Gove Peninsula, the central physical feature of which is a hill. The relevant events for the Yolŋu occurred during a very ancient time (*ŋurrunangal/djiwirrtjiwirr/bulanbulan*), and for the Europeans, certain events that occurred during a relatively recent time span – from 1963 to the present. References disputants made during that period to earlier events, in order to legitimate those in the later period, are also examined.

Tenure of the land is traditionally Yolŋu and the Yolŋu names within the area derive from Yolŋu cosmology; however, events relating to tenure change in Australian law occurred in 1968: from being part of the Arnhem Land Aboriginal Reserve, it became subject to leases granted to Nabalco, a mining consortium that included CSR and the Swiss company Alusuisse. The lease that is pertinent to the present discussion is a town lease, a form of special purpose lease. Following that change in tenure (from the point of view of those who executed it, but not including Yolŋu people) names derived from European sources, including some specific to Australian settler culture, were given to the area. As well, some similarly derived placenames that had been applied in the nineteenth century were validated by Australian government instrumentalities.

The acts and events framed by these parameters are described in the following order: Yolŋu accounts of the origin and meaning of the placenames; relevant Northern Territory statutes and regulations governing geographic placenames; a chronology of naming events in the area from 1803 to 2006, with particular focus on events between 1963 and 1984 that pertain to the peninsula and its features and the hill and immediately surrounding area (the town); comments based on linguistic analysis of the names; and finally, tentative remarks concerning what linguistic, historic, and ethnographic analysis may reveal of the origin and formation of proper names (i.e. onomastics – see below) of the diverse peoples involved.

Data sources

The sources of the data are Yolŋu oral histories and published accounts of oral histories, interviews with Nabalco executives and former executives, Nhulunbuy Corporation files, Nhulunbuy Community Library files, Gove Historical Society files and personnel, information in the Northern Territory Place Names Committee's files in the Lands Planning and Environment Department in Darwin, and interviews with the Secretary and former Secretary of the Place Names Committee.² Among the files were newspaper cuttings as well as memoranda and correspondence. Additional data could no doubt be located in Commonwealth Archives and from further extended interviews with

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people who played a role in the naming events that are the subject of this paper. Nevertheless, we believe that the data so far acquired provide a reasonable basis for the inferences we draw.

Figure 17.1: Photo of Wuyal in a bark petition presented to the Commonwealth Parliament in 1968 regarding the naming of Nhulunbuy. The original painting is by Dundiwuy Wanambi (dec). Used with permission from AIATSIS, Canberra.

Figure 17.2: Guide to places associated with Wuyal's movements in the Nhulun area (locations are approximate)

Yolŋu placenames

The description of the origin and meaning of Yolŋu placenames in the area under discussion is based on work in progress by Dr Marika and Melanie Wilkinson. It concerns the hill of Nhulunbuy (Nhulun)³ and the journeys and activities of the Ancestral Beings directly connected to it, in particular those of Wuyal, for it is in these travels, and the events that occurred during them, that the origin of placenames is found.

The country of the Gove Peninsula is affiliated with clans of both Dhuwa and Yirritja moieties speaking Dhaŋu, Dhuwala, Dhuwal, and Dhay'yi language varieties. The examples and accounts here are in Dr Marika's language, Rirratjŋu,

one of the Dharḷu languages.⁴ The focus is on the Dhuwa stories connected with the immediate area of Nhulunbuy itself. We do not consider the adjacent Yirritja lands and, to that extent, the story is partial.

Dr Marika draws on oral accounts by her father and father's brothers as well as published records attributed to her father (Roy Daḍayṇa Marika) and one of her father's brothers (Dhunḡala Marika).⁵

Dr Marika stays close to these accounts, but adds explanations of the significance of names as the accounts unfold. It needs to be noted that the men gave the explanations after 1968 and the establishment of the town and the town centre on the town lease.⁶ For an artistic representation of Wuyal, see Figure 17.1, which is a picture of the bark painting of Wuyal submitted to Parliament in 1968 with the petition on the back (see 'The 1968 Bark Petition' below). Some of the key places Dr Marika mentions are shown on the aerial photo in Figure 17.2.

Wuyal, Birrinydjalki or Gandjalala, the Sugar Bag Hunters, were spirit people who were originally Wāwilak and then Mandhalpuy. Wuyal went from Mandhalpuy country to be Marraṇu and he went to the Marraṇu place Raymaṇgirr (a place to the southwest), and in his travels he also changed his identity to Dātiwuy, Marrakulu, Golumala, and Rirratjiṇu. We, these five clans, sing of his adventures and the travels of Wuyal as he danced and named places of significance in the homelands of these clans. He roamed the area looking for Dhuwa sugarbag (wild honey) called Yarrpany, a special sweet honey for Dhuwa people, following after the bees (dawurr). We dance in movements depicting those of Wuyal as he moved and looked for sugarbag. The places he trod mark his country and the places he stopped are sites of significance.

As Wuyal was marking the track with his footprints he gave names to the land as he passed through. He gave many names. Some of these names are names of people now living (e.g., Gandjalala, Gunditpuy, Birritjimi, Wandjukpuy). Our names come from the places and things to which Wuyal and other Ancestors gave names as they passed through on their journeys.

As Wuyal came up the path to Nhulun he was covered in *raman* (literally feathered down), the fluff of a sort of wattle, stuck all over him with the honey he was eating. He walked and climbed to the top of Nhulun carrying large dilly bags (*dhawar*) and small dilly bags (*buyuminy*). He also carried a stone axe (*dakul* or *djalpat*) and a flint stone spear

(*dhamaṭa*). Its shaft was special, it had a *gundit* (stone flint) in it which made a rattle when it was shaken. He walked using his spear thrower (*mawurrwurr*) like a walking stick. He named the hill Nhulun.⁷

As Wuyal climbed he saw the rocks and the edge of the steep side of Nhulun, he said, “*Dhaṇum nyäkum goyum bandam Mirriki Walarriny Yurrwiḷa Yomunbi Maṭpu Maṭpu-wekarra*.” (“This steep side up here is called Mirriki, Waḷarriny Yurrwiḷa, Yumunbi, Maṭpu, Maṭpu-wekarra.”)

Wuyal climbed up to the top of the hill. There he danced and held up his spear and thrust it back towards Djurruwu (a Telstra Tower stands there now) in the south where he had come from. He said, “*Ṇunham nyäku maṭpum goyum*.” (“Over there also lies my escarpment Maṭpu.”) Maṭpu is thus a term that is used to describe any escarpment that belongs to Wuyal, not just the steep side of Nhulun.

He collected honey on top of the hill and put it in his dilly bag (*buyuminy*). He continued to dance. In turn he looked to the south, to the east, the west and the north and thrust his spear in each direction. He named the following places he saw below:

- *Djaṇarrawuy*: The area at the back of what is now the cemetery up to the area opposite the golf course; it is *Gupa Gäluru* (salt pans at the back of East Woody). *Djaṇarra* is the name of Wuyal’s or Gandjalala’s spear.
- *Ṇarrku’wuy*: An area at what is now the speedway up to the turn-off into town; this area was cleared by the Ancestral Wallaby creating its *Molk* (sacred ground).
- *Wirriyay’wuy*: Nhulunbuy West excluding Gayṇuru, the Town Lagoon. *Wirriyay’* are small birds belonging to the Golumala clan.
- *Wandjukpuy*: Area behind what is now Captain Cook shopping centre, including the blue metal quarry and industrial area.
- *Gunditpuy*: Rocky area opposite *Wandjukpuy* near what is now the quarry. It is where Wuyal dropped the bag with the flints and axe heads (*gundit*).

Wuyal lifted his spear and pointed it north toward Gäluru (East Woody) and thrust his spear forward, as if to throw it. He decided to go there. He walked down the hillside, his chest covered with stringy bark (*gaḍayka*) leaves, leaves of the Dhuwa tree where he could find his *yarrpany*. In his left hand he carried his special spear thrower. You can see this today in the dances the Dhuwa men do, and also in bark paintings. His body covered with stringy bark leaves represents the land which belongs to him. It is covered with those trees.

Wuyal came to Dhamitjinya (the rocky island at Gäluru) and there he mixed the honey he had collected with the fresh water from the middle of the rocky island. He used the grass that grew there (*ḡatṗul*) to strain the honey after it was mixed and then he drank it. He saw some oysters there and gave them names, as well as the trees, the creek, rocks, and sand.

Other special names were given to the local mangroves, currents, waterholes, and things Wuyal left behind. Special names were given for the honey. The liquid honey and water mixture has foam on the surface and is called *Malpitjiṇu*, *Djukurr-wirrakpirrak*, *Yupinṇu*, *Bilinṇu*, *Marriwana*, *Djuwalarri*.

He left his water carrier at the freshwater site Djepulupulu on Dhamitjinya (the rocky island at Gäluru). You can still see the fresh water there today.

From there he looked east and saw the swarm of honey bees at a place called Rombuy (point to the west of Dhamitjinya), near Bekpuy (the next point). He went there following the honey bees and on to Lombuy (Crocodile Creek), where there is a big depression caused by the bees swarming. From there he went to Birritjimi (Wallaby Beach), where he did a special dance.

The last place he stopped was at *Dimbukawuy*, where he left his dilly bag, in the form of an enormous granite rock and associated smaller ones. From there he moved on to country the other side of Melville Bay, to *Yuduyudu* and on over to *Djirrikinyin*, *Barrkira*, *Gurka'wuy*.

Other Dhuwa areas near Nhulunbuy are associated with Wititj, the Ancestral Rainbow Serpent. *Gäyṇuru* (Town Lagoon) is one of those places, a *Gälpu rinḡitj*,⁸ right up to *Wirrawawuy* (Cape Wirarawoi) and on to *Gadalathami* (Town Beach/Surf Club area).

The song and stories of Wuyal emphasise journeys made throughout the Dhuwa places he travelled giving meaning to the land through songs, stories, paintings, rituals, and the laws that we have practiced continuously in order to maintain our connectedness to our land and our individual identities as traditional land owners and caretakers of our land. Sacred art and ritual are connected to Nhulunbuy: in singing the sacred verses we trace and tread the ground that Wuyal sang as he journeyed through a great area, making connections with the flora and fauna, leaving landmarks such as the rocks at *Dimbukawuy*.

We follow in the footsteps of Wuyal and other ancestral creators. We are tracing and treading in their likeness. Our ancestral heritage, through

the stories, paintings and verses provide metaphors that we use to interpret our experiences in the world today. In this way our ancestral realities become today's realities.

Songs and stories, rituals and paintings, can also be narratives; the mind stores all this knowledge, which is interpreted through singing or painting or stories. They are an assertion of ownership. Our knowledge has been handed down from generation to generation. We have practiced these things through all our generations and are still governed today by the ways handed down from the Ancestors.

Individuals are affiliated with particular songs, dances, rituals and language, in the same way as they are to clan and country – through shared substance. The associations produce strong emotions in Yolŋu people. An example that pertains to Nhulun is contained in the report of a Yirrkala school workshop, in which Roy Marika told part of the Wuyal story:

As Roy was talking we could see that he was relating back to time and for a moment the time stood still for us. He was transported back to time, just by singing ... We were all feeling the power surge through our bodies. It was an awesome, magical feeling. It was [as] if our elders, who [had] long since gone, [were] actually there with us, because in Roy's mind they appeared there as if it was only yesterday. (Yirrkala School Literature Production Centre 1989: 9-10)

Statutes and regulations governing placenames in the Northern Territory

In the Northern Territory, as in all states and territories of Australia, formal processes exist by means of which placenames are approved and gazetted.⁹ Procedures of the Place Names Committee for the Northern Territory are currently governed by the *Place Names Act 1980* as amended in 1983 and 2004.¹⁰ In 1945 the *Nomenclature (Public Places) Ordinance* was enacted and it was amended in 1966.

In 1967, the 1945 and 1966 Ordinances were repealed and a new ordinance changed the composition and operation of the Place Names Committee for the Northern Territory. In 1973, the 1967 Ordinance was amended, changing the definition of a public place and the ability of the Committee to recommend the altering the [*sic*] name of a public place.¹¹

Rules of Nomenclature that governed naming in the 1960s have so far not been sighted; however, contemporary correspondence, memoranda and news

reports allow us to infer that they were essentially the same as 'The Rules of Nomenclature 1995' (see note 2).¹² The fact that Nhulunbuy town lease is not technically governed by these rules emerged inconsistently in the records sighted. 'The Rules of Nomenclature 1995' included the following:

- Original (or first published) geographic names (i.e. as distinct from Aboriginal names) should be given preference.
- Names in local usage should normally take precedence (depending on establishing the extent of usage of the name).
- Names which have geographical significance or are names of early explorers, discoverers, settlers, naturalists, surveyors, etc. are generally acceptable.
- Dual names of a physical feature may be used (i.e. one may be an Aboriginal name where no official or recorded name exists).
- Where dual names are contemplated, some research into the local English name and the known Aboriginal name for the feature must determine which name should be dominant or have priority for official use.
- Changing of long established place names is generally not preferred, except where necessary to avoid ambiguity or duplication.
- The use of Aboriginal names is encouraged.
- Known recorded Aboriginal place names should be made clear where possible with a historical background, identifying origins, etc., more particularly in their areas of current occupation and traditional association.
- Places should not be named after living persons (the Northern Territory Rules of Nomenclature 1945 did allow place names of living persons).
- "Names should usually have brevity, be euphonious and [be] easily and readily pronounced" (Item 19 in The Rules of Nomenclature 1995).

Non-Yolŋu names on the Gove Peninsula

At least three non-Indigenous peoples gave names to places in northern Australia before the twentieth century: the Macassans, the English and the Dutch. Macassan traders from Sulawesi called the north coast of Australia 'Marege'¹³ and gave Macassan names to places and features in the area of the Gove Peninsula as well as to other places in or near the Yolŋu area.¹⁴ According to O'Brien, in 1837 George Windsor Earl defined the boundaries and named the Arafura Sea "after the great parent tribe of the Arafuras of New Guinea" (O'Brien 1991: 1). However, O'Brien's research into the origin of the name 'Arafura' led him to conclude that it is derived from the indigenous name for "the people of the

mountains in the Moluccas" (O'Brien 1991: 3). While 'Marege' has not survived as a placename either in common or official use in northern Australia, 'Arafura' has wide currency in both domains.

Other placenames are attributed to Europeans on their voyages of discovery. The earliest widely known record of 'Arnhem' as a name for an area of land in Australia is contained in Matthew Flinders' 1814 record of his voyage around Australia at the turn of the nineteenth century. Here, 'Arnhem' was "the land of Arnhem": Flinders writes that "Zeachen is said to have discovered the land of Arnhem and the northern Van Diemen's Land, in 1618 and he is supposed ... to have been a native of Arnhem in Holland" (Flinders 1966[1814] vol. 1, section 1: x). However, Flinders doubts the veracity of this attribution, *inter alia* noting that "no mention is made of Zeachen in the recital of discoveries which preface the instructions to Tasman" and that in January 1623 Jan Carstens in command of the *Arnhem* was murdered along with eight of his crew in New Guinea, but the *Arnhem* and the *Pera* "prosecuted the voyage, and discovered 'the great island ARNHEM and the SPULT'" (Flinders 1966[1814] vol. 1, section 1: x-xi). Flinders himself appears to have named Cape Arnhem; he says, "the furthest part [of land] then seen was near the eastern extremity of Arnhem's land, and this having no name in the Dutch chart [which he was following], is called CAPE ARNHEM" (Flinders 1966[1814] vol. 2: 220).¹⁵ Dutch archives, however, contain records of seventeenth and eighteenth century navigators giving the name 'Arnhem' (or cognate terms) inconsistently to places in the area.

In 1803 Flinders named a number of features in the area of the Gove Peninsula, including Point Dundas, Drimmie Head, Melville Bay and Mount Saunders.¹⁶ In naming Melville Bay, Flinders wrote:

This bay is unnoticed in the Dutch chart, and I name it MELVILLE BAY, in compliment to the right Hon. Robert Saunders Dundas, viscount Melville, who, as first lord of the Admiralty, has continued that patronage to the voyage which it had experienced under some of his predecessors. It is the best harbour we found in the Gulph of Carpentaria." (Flinders 1966[1814] vol. 2: 224-225)¹⁷

Of the hills that Flinders named, he said that Mount Saunders was a "flat topped hill" and Mount Dundas, the nearer more woody hill, was also flat topped and steep at its north end (Flinders 1966[1814] vol. 2: 220). All these places are within the Gove Peninsula and their names remain in use today. Indeed Mount Saunders is Nhulun.

With the arrival of an increasing number of non-Aboriginal people in the twentieth century came a rapid increase in the application of English or European placenames. The name Gove was first given to the airstrip constructed

during the Second World War in honour of Pilot Officer William Gove. According to Callaghan, a local historian who had consulted Royal Australian Air Force, Department of Aviation and Australian War Museum sources, Gove was a navigator on a Hudson bomber, and was killed on 20 April 1943 when his Hudson collided with another Hudson shortly after take-off at Milingimbi. The air base on the peninsula was fully operational in January 1944, and handed over to the Commonwealth's Northern Territory Administration in 1957 (Callaghan 1988: unpaginated first page of Introduction).

Mineral exploration on the Gove Peninsula, which earlier had been sporadic, increased during the 1950s and by the early 1960s it was apparent that a major bauxite mining operation was anticipated. Contracts were negotiated in 1958 and 1969, but neither came to fruition (K. Eggerking pers. comm. 20 August 2007). Although the lease agreement between the Commonwealth government and the mining company Nabalco was not signed until 1968, the Methodist mission organisation had been aware of the negotiations taking place since at least the late 1950s (Wells 1982: 25). According to Edgar Wells, superintendent of the Yirrkala Mission as of 1962 (Wells 1982: 41-42), meetings of church, government, and mining officials held in early 1963 had ratified an agreement to mine. Wells was concerned at the lack of Yolŋu representatives and the possibility that the mission lease would be included in the area of a proposed mining lease. He says that he received a letter from Wandjuk Marika, a senior Rirratjingu man, with three other clan leaders as added signatories, in which they said "they wished 'all *balanda* [non-Yolŋu people/Europeans] ... to keep out of Melville Bay, Cape Arnhem, Caledon Bay and Bremer Island'". The letter added that "'Notices will be placed at all these places' proclaiming the areas as belonging to the Aboriginal people." (Wells 1982: 19).

The contest over names begins

By 1963, considerable opposition to the mining development and the lack of consultation with Yolŋu had become public (see Berndt 1964). Yolŋu leaders sent two bark petitions to the Commonwealth Parliament in August 1963, one dated 14 August and the second dated 28 August.¹⁸ The petitions, as summarised by the Select Committee that, as a result, reported on the "Grievances of Yirrkala Aborigines, Arnhem Land Reserve", prayed that:

- (1) the House will appoint a committee accompanied by competent interpreters to hear the views of the people of Yirrkala before permitting the excision of any land from the Aboriginal Reserve in Arnhem Land,

and (2) no arrangements be entered into with any company which will destroy the livelihood and independence of the Yirrkala people. (Commonwealth of Australia, House of Representatives 1963: 7)

Thirty-five thumbprints on three sheets of paper were appended to the petition presented on 28 August (K. Eggerking pers. comm. 20 August 2007). According to Wells, the thumb prints were “sent as reinforcement after the signatures on the petition on 14 August were discounted by a member of the House of Representatives” (Wells 1982: 108).

The Parliamentary Select Committee held hearings in September 1963 and reported to Parliament in October. Berndt gives a somewhat optimistic summary of the “major points” of the Committee’s recommendations as:

- a. the recognition that these Aborigines have land rights, even if they are not legal rights in Western European terms ...
- b. that all sacred sites were to ‘be set aside ... for their exclusive use, although the term ‘sacred’ was not defined. (Berndt 1964: 262-263)

While the report did not acknowledge that Yolŋu had land rights that were recognised in Australian law, the effect of the petition, including the fact that a Parliamentary committee had consulted with Yolŋu leaders, further encouraged Yolŋu in their determination to gain official recognition of their ownership of their land. Recognition of the names on the land was intrinsically related.

By 1963, the issue of names on the Gove Peninsula was arising from other sources. In April 1963, the Director of National Mapping wrote to the Surveyor-General of the Northern Territory, following a request that he had received from the National Geographic Society regarding the name Gove. He wrote that the name “‘Gove Peninsula’ is being used nowadays following recent interest in [extensive bauxite deposits] in the area, but does not appear on any official map.” He continued, “Gove as a locality name has obviously been derived from the airstrip established there during the war”. In June 1963, the Surveyor General advised the Director of National Mapping that:

The name “Gove Peninsula” has been approved for that area of Arnhem Land east of a line drawn from the mouth of the Giddy River in Melville Bay to the mouth of Wonga Creek in Port Bradshaw.

The aerodrome is “Gove” and not “Yirrkala” which is the Methodist Overseas Mission, located on the coast northwest of Miles Island ... The Nomenclature Committee wish to preserve the name “Gove” for the aerodrome.¹⁹

At the time, the issue of names was exercising the Yolŋu as well, as is evident in the following exchange. A. R. Miller, Surveyor General, wrote the following letter to H. C. Giese, Northern Territory Director of Welfare, on 4 November 1963:²⁰

SURVEYS AT YIRRKALA

I refer to your letter of the 30th October, 1963 together with copy of a complaint by Rev. E.A. Wells.

I have obtained a report from Mr Senior Surveyor R. T. Smith regarding survey activities at Yirkalla in October.

The surveys effected are part of the National Survey and there was no need for pin-pricking comment by the reverend gentleman. Apart from so called "Sacred Areas," the land is vacant Crown Land, and right of entry is contained in Section 11 of the Licensed Surveyors' Ordinance. As stated by Mr R.T. Smith, the only clearing effected was the minimum required for the operation.

MT. SAUNDERS. A change of name for this feature to "Nulanboi" cannot be considered even though the reverend gentleman considers the existing name offensive to the local clan. Mt. Saunders was named by Matthew Flinders, Commander of H. M. S. Investigator in 1803 and published on Admiralty Chart 2982 dated January 1st, 1814. In addition the following features were named and published:-

Mt. Dundas - Point Dundas

Mt. Bonner - Cape Arnhem and Drimmie Head

It will be appreciated that these names are deep in Australian history and any attempt to change any of them will be strongly resisted.

In December 1963, the Northern Territory Director of Welfare wrote to the Surveyor General regarding the "Re-naming of Mt. Saunders, Gove Peninsula", apparently in response to a letter that Edgar Wells wrote in February 1963 (and in light of the response from the Surveyor General to him in November 1963):²¹

Rev. E. A. Wells has written further (see folios 293 and 294, file 63/2/29) requesting that Mt. Saunders be re-named Nulanboi. It would be appreciated if you would bring this before the Nomenclature Committee for consideration as Mr. Wells considers that in doing this he is presenting the wishes of the Aboriginal people of Yirrkala. Perhaps their wishes might be met by having the word 'Nulanboi' included in

brackets after the name Mt. Saunders. I do not know whether or not this would cut across the principles that the Nomenclature Committee follows in these matters.

In March 1964, the Director of Welfare again wrote to the Surveyor-General:²²

On 5th December last we asked whether it would be possible for the word 'Nulanboi' to be included on maps (after the name Mount Saunders).

Could you tell me, please, whether it has been possible to take this action, in order that the people at Yirrkala might be informed of the outcome of their request that Mount Saunders be renamed Nulanboi.

A month later, in April 1964, the Surveyor-General wrote to the Director, Division of National Mapping:

Representations have been made to the Director of Welfare to rename Mt. Saunders on Gove Peninsula and substitute the native name "NULANBOI".

The Nomenclature Committee is opposed to a change as Mt. Saunders, Mt. Dundas, Mt. Bonner, Cape Arnhem and Drimmie Head were originally named by Matthew Flinders in 1803: reference Admiralty Chart 2982 dated January 1st, 1814.

There is no objection, however, to the name "Nulanboi" appearing under "SAUNDERS" in small type and it will be appreciated if you will keep this in mind when preparing the next map of the area. A copy of this memo is being forwarded to the Director of Military Survey, Canberra.²³

This appears to be the warrant for Mount Saunders remaining the official name for the hill that the Yolŋu know as Nhulun – at least as of 1964.

Plans for the mining development had included the creation of a town in which employees of the company would live (as well as – among other things – an alumina plant and bulk loading facilities). During 1968 some of the preliminary site-clearing work had begun. One of the Select Committee's recommendations was that "the Yirrkala people be consulted on the location of the proposed town" (Commonwealth of Australia, House of Representatives, 1963: 21). We have not yet located records of such consultation, although they certainly may exist. It appears, however, that the name of the town remained in contention.

Disputed names

The town's name: Nhulunbuy, Mount Saunders or Gove?

On 21 January 1966, the District Postal Manager, Port Augusta, wrote to the Director, Department of Lands in Darwin, asking for the appropriate name for the proposed post-office on the Gove Peninsula:²⁴

It is anticipated that an early approach will be made for a post office to serve development of the bauxite deposits by Nabalco Pty Ltd.

If such an application is received and is successful, would you please indicate whether the name 'Gove' would be acceptable.

The Acting Surveyor General, V. T. O'Brien, replied that:²⁵

The site for a town area on the Gove Peninsula has not yet been finalised and will depend to a large extent on the site chosen for the port in the area. Opinions are divided between Melville Bay and Rocky Bay.

The Nomenclature Committee would not be prepared to consider an official name for the Post Office until the official name for the town has been fixed. This may not be resolved for some time.

As most mail is addressed to the camps at Gove, there appears no reason to object to the temporary use of the name Gove, until the town site is declared and named. It is possible that the town site may not bear the name GOVE depending on the final location, and this is the reason we are not in a position to apply the official name as yet.

More than a year and a half later, on 25 October 1967, the Acting Surveyor General again advised the District Postal Manager that:²⁶

A site has not been decided definitely for the new town in the [Gove Peninsula] but it will probably be in the vicinity of Mt. Saunders, and this is one of the names by which the site may be known ...

While Mount Saunders was used in early plans to refer to construction areas, it was Nhulunbuy and Gove that became the focus of the naming dispute. References to Mount Saunders Village and Mount Saunders Construction Camp are made in correspondence between Nabalco and the Place Names Committee in 1970 when describing the area of Nhulunbuy South (see Appendix 2). It is also the name used in the Gove Bauxite Development Feasibility Report (1968). Plans for the township there are all shown as Mount Saunders Township.

In fact, 'Gove' was the name recommended by the Place Names Committee in July 1968. The 'Explanatory Memorandum' issued by the Place Names Committee provided its reasons for recommending the name Gove:

The Place Names Committee has considered at its Third Meeting on 31st July 1968, proposals to name the Townsite on the Gove Peninsula.

Representations of the Aboriginals at Yirrkala have suggested the name NHULAMBUY for the future town and the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs [W. C. Wentworth] has written to the Minister of the Interior about the use of Aboriginal names within Reserves in the N.T.

The Mining Company, Nabalco, prefer GOVE which is already well known throughout the world, and requires a name which is short, simple and concise. They recommend GOVE as it has appeared on all official maps of the area, and is in use by Aboriginals at Yirrkala.

The Welfare Branch has indicated that it favours GOVE which is already in general use and accepted by the Post Office. It is difficult to spell the Aboriginal Place Name (NHULAMBUI) in a non-phonetic way that ensures correct pronunciation by the general public.

The Committee feels that the Aboriginal name can be included effectively in the Townsite itself by a street, park or beach name and accordingly recommends for the approval of the Administrator-in-Council that the name GOVE be adopted for the new mining townsite on the peninsula of the same name.

The name 'Gove' originates from Pilot Officer W. H. J. Gove, who was killed on service at Millingimbi in 1943. ('Explanatory Memorandum', Business Paper No. 1467)

An article in the *Northern Territory News* on 20 August 1968, cited an interview with the Northern Territory Administrator, Roger Dean (who had been Chairman of the Parliamentary Select Committee), and reported his approval of the name. The article was headed "New town has a four letter name" and began "A simple, four-letter word has won out over a complex Aboriginal one in an unofficial contest to provide an official name for the mining township on Gove Peninsula in the Gulf of Carpentaria". It then quoted the "Explanatory Memorandum" in full.

The mining project on the Gove Peninsula was regarded as an immensely important development by the Commonwealth government. It was touted as the largest capital investment in the history of Australia and involved, among other things, as noted above, leases granted by the Commonwealth to the consortium of companies undertaking the project. For that reason, and no doubt others,

anything that was related to the development was newsworthy. Thus the *Northern Territory News* reported on 21 August 1968, the date that the official name Gove was gazetted, "They're not happy with Gove 'name' decision". The subheading of the article was "The new mining township to be built on the Gove Peninsula, 400 miles east of Darwin, was sacred ground of the Aborigines living at Yirrkala Mission". The article continued:

And the Aborigines would continue to call the area Nhulambuy despite Administrative Council's decision to name the township Gove, said Superintendent of the Yirrkala Mission, Rev. W. Fawell yesterday.

The 650 Aborigines, who live at the mission, suggested the name of Nhulambuy but it was rejected by the Council on the grounds that the name was not easy to pronounce.

Yesterday the Superintendent of the Mission, Rev. W. Fawell, told the News that the Aborigines living at Yirrkala were 'not at all happy' with the decision.

Both the president [Roy Dadaynja Marika] and the vice-president [Daymbalipu Mununggurr] have voiced their protests to the Rev. Fawell.

'...it was a poor excuse for the reason given that the town had to be called Gove.

'Many Aborigines find difficulty in pronouncing the word Gove' he said.

'They tend to pronounce it Cove. There are many names in Australia, which are not easy to say,' he added.

Rev. Fawell said, however, that the town will provide an outlet for the agricultural products of the mission.

But he said he still failed to understand why the Administrator should name the town Gove – a name already used for the airstrip and the Peninsula. (*Northern Territory News*, 21 August 1968)

By this time, the dispute about the name was escalating both in terms of the number of individuals and organisations involved and the emotional tenor of the reported exchanges, as the article in the following day's *Northern Territory News* indicated. The heading was "Gove name a decision 'against' aborigines" and the sub-heading was "Yirrkala Aborigines may lose their confidence in Government promises following a decision to name a new mining township Gove". The article quoted from an interview with Rev. Gordon Symons, referred to as Superintendent of the Methodist Overseas Mission based in Darwin

and the Mission organisation operating the Yirrkala Mission, “400 miles east of Darwin and on Gove Peninsula where Nabalco is spending \$280 million to develop bauxite deposits”.

Mr Symons said yesterday the decision to name the town Gove was most unfortunate.

‘The name [Nhulambuy] should have been chosen,’ he said.

‘The Aborigines themselves have never used the name Gove for the town area. They have always called it Nhulambuy.

‘The name should be adopted officially in acknowledgment that it is their country being used for the mining operations.

The decision to call the town Gove will certainly not help increase their confidence that the Government will observe their wishes,’ Mr Symons said. (*Northern Territory News*, 22 August 1968)

An editorial comment in the *Northern Territory News* two days later was sympathetic to the view that the Aboriginal name should be retained:

GOVE township was named that way instead of Nhulambuy [sic] because the Aboriginal name for the area is too hard to pronounce, according to an official statement this week. The statement has already drawn protests. The name is given official strength in a formal notice in this week’s Northern Territory Gazette. The same issue records some presumably easy names for hills in Central Australia. These include Djuburula Peak, Djabangardi Hill, Djakamara Peak, Nabangardi Hill, Djambidjimba Mesa, and Naburula Hills. (*Northern Territory News*, 23 August 1968)

After the Yirrkala Village Council learned that the name Gove had been gazetted, Roy Marika, President of the Council, wrote a letter. The letter was headed “TRANSLATION”, and copies were sent to individuals in the mission organisation, in government, and in the public service.²⁷ This is the letter:

Dear Sir:

Upon hearing that the Aboriginal name Nhulunbuy had been rejected as a name for the Mining Township, the Yirrkala Village Council met to discuss the matter. We are very upset and decided to write to you to let you know what we think hoping that you will be able to help. The following points were made at the meeting:

This is Aboriginal Country and for many years the name Nhulunbuy (and no other) has been used. One of our dream-time ancestors, Wuyal,

gave the name Nhulunbuy to this part of the country. We want the name Nhulunbuy to stand. The old men of Yirrkala as well as the younger people remember the name Nhulunbuy from the time they were little children.

We have been unhappy for some time over the fact that we have not been consulted about a number of things being done and, as a result, some of our sacred sites have been damaged. And now, even though we sent the name Nhulunbuy to the authorities in Darwin, our request has been rejected.

We don't want a street or a park named Nhulunbuy, because streets and parks cover only a small area of ground and the name Nhulunbuy refers to a large area, named originally by Wuyal. We certainly don't want a beach named Nhulunbuy. The beaches all have names already. As he danced, singing, along the beaches, our dream-time ancestor Wuyal named them all a long time ago, before any white man came to this country.

There are other Aborigines belonging to Duwa clans in other parts of Arnhem Land who are also interested in this particular area. They are relying upon the Yirrkala Aboriginal leaders to look after their interests of this area. They would not be at all pleased with us if they were to hear that Wuyal's word had been ignored and the name he gave changed.

The name Gove is not used at all by the Yirrkala Aborigines. Maybe we say it when talking to a white man who doesn't know our language or customs, but that is because he wouldn't understand anything else. At any other time we always refer to that area as Nhulunbuy.

We didn't think this would be too hard for white people to learn and pronounce. As a matter of fact we find English names hard, but nevertheless we try to pronounce them. We hoped that white people would be willing to do the same. As long as we have minds to think with, tongues to speak with, and eyes to see with, surely there can be an effort on both sides to understand each other's language and customs.

The *Northern Territory News* continued to report events relating to the naming dispute. On 27 August 1968 it reported the contents of Roy Marika's letter and provided the names of people to whom it was sent. The heading of the article was "'We don't want Gove' Aborigines tell Canberra":

Yirrkala Aborigines have written to Federal Ministers and Territory Administrator, Mr Roger Dean, protesting against selection of Gove as the name for a new mining town near the mission. Ministers to receive

written protests from the Yirrkala village council will be the Minister for the Interior, Mr Peter Nixon, and the Minister in charge of Aboriginal Affairs, Mr Bill Wentworth. The council has also written to the superintendent of Methodist Overseas Missions, Rev Gordon Symons, telling him of its protests. In their letter to Mr Symons, the council members said they were very upset at the choice of the name Gove.

The name Nhulumbuy, rejected by the Administrator's Council as too hard to pronounce, had always been used for the proposed town area by Aborigines in the area. The council members said Aborigines never used the name Gove except in some conversations with European visitors. "We find European names hard to master, but we are willing to try," the councillors said. "We would hope the Europeans would try with our place names. It needs effort on both sides to gain mutual understanding," they added. (*Northern Territory News*, 27 August 1968)

The next day the *Northern Territory News* suggested that the tide was turning in favour of the Yolŋu. In large font, the *Northern Territory News* reported that the Place Names Committee would reconsider its decision:

The Northern Territory Place Names Committee will be asked to reconsider its recommendation that a new mining township near Yirrkala Mission should be named Gove.

The Administrator, Mr. Roger Dean, said yesterday he would refer the matter back to the committee following protests from Yirrkala Aborigines, who want the town called Nhulumbuy.

This is their "dreamtime" name for the town site, near Mount Saunders on Gove Peninsula.

The Superintendent of Methodist Overseas Missions, Rev Gordon Symons who has spearheaded opposition to the Gove name, has welcomed the reconsideration decision...

Yesterday Mr Dean said Nhulumbuy had never been officially suggested as a name for the township.

However, in view of the protests which followed the announcement that Gove had been chosen, he would ask the Place Names Committee to reconsider its decision...

[Mr Symons] was sure the Yirrkala people would be willing to change the spelling of their name to make it easier for Europeans.

The spelling Nulumboi would be simple, and lead to correct pronunciation, Mr Symons said. (*Northern Territory News*, 28 August 1968)

A series of telegrams between Canberra and Darwin attest to the effect of the Yirrkala Village Council's letter. The following is a telegram (slightly edited for ease of reading) from the Department of Interior in Canberra to the Administrator of the Northern Territory (undated in the Place Names Committee file inspected, but clearly sent during the last week in August):

... Minister, Prime Minister and Minister in Charge of Aboriginal Affairs have received strong representations from Roy Dadaynga Marika as President of Yirrkala Council and also from Reverend Gordon Symons saying that name Nhulunbuy had been given to township area by one of the dreamtime ancestors and no other name has been used by Aboriginals. They are upset at name Gove.

Minister mentioned this to Griffin in Canberra on 29 August and indicated that he clearly thought that name Nhulunbuy (which incidentally is spelt by Symons Nhulambuy) should be given formally to township even if as in case of Groote a different name is used in practice for the mining project.

Have noted report in 'Northern Territory News' of 28 August 1968 that you would refer matter back to place names committee. Would appreciate confirmation and also telex advice of outcome so that representations can be answered...

On 4 September, Administrator Dean sent the following telegram to the Department of Interior in Canberra:²⁸

Reference your 2955 of 2nd September about naming of Gove. I have received representations on this matter from the Reverend Gordon Symons and Roy D. Marika. At my news conference on 3/9/68 I said that I had given the committee the correspondence I had received for its consideration and for any further advice it may wish to give the Administrator's Council. I shall now provide the Committee with a copy of your telegram.

The Committee is arranging to meet before the next meeting of the Administrator's Council which it proposes to hold on the 16th September. The committee will no doubt offer its advice to the A.D.C.O in view of the representations that have been made and the members of the A.D.C.O. will then advise the Administrator. I shall let you know the outcome of this when the meeting is concluded.

The telegram of 2 September would appear to be material to the events that follow and to an explanation of the reversal of the earlier decision regarding the official name. Unfortunately that telegram has not been sighted.

On 19 September, the Secretary of the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department responded to a Memorandum from the Secretary of Interior Department of 17 September requesting urgent advice:²⁹

... concerning whether the administrator in Council has the power to replace the name of 'Gove' recommended by the Place Names Committee, with another name, as the name of a site for a township, under the provisions of the Northern Territory Place Names Ordinance 1967.

2. In my view, the answer to the question is 'No'; but see paragraph 6 below.
3. The Committee is constituted under section 5 of the Ordinance and is given the power to make recommendations 'in relation to the naming of and altering of names of public places' in a report to the 'administration under section 9 of the Ordinance ...'

...

5. In regard to the other question which you have raised in relation to the same matter, my view is that the rejection of the name recommended by the Committee would result in the township not having a name for the purposes of the Ordinance.
6. I have, in the foregoing, treated the Committee's recommendation as having been validly made. I should add, however, that I have some doubt whether a 'township' or 'site for a township' can be regarded as a 'public place' for the purposes of the Ordinance.

A legal loophole seems to be suggested: if 'renaming' from 'Gove' to 'Nhulunbuy' is problematic, then it can be argued that the name 'Gove' was a nullity in the first place; i.e. no name has been *legally* given, therefore no name need be changed.

The 1968 bark petition

The next relevant dated document to which we have had access is an article in the *Northern Territory News* on 9 October 1968. Headed "A new Gove bark petition", it reported that:

The Aborigines of Gove, 400 miles east of Darwin, have had a second bark petition presented to the Commonwealth Parliament.

The first petition, presented about six years ago, resulted in the parliament appointing a special committee to ensure bauxite mining in the area did not interfere with Aboriginal sacred sites.

The committee was lead [sic] by the present Administrator, Mr Roger Dean, then House of Representatives member for Robertson in NSW.

Yesterday's petition asked the Parliament to ensure the new mining township was named Nhulunbuy and not Gove.

This followed a decision by the Administrator's Council last month to name the town Gove – the only name officially suggested.

When Aboriginals protested, and asked for retention of their own name Nhulumbuy, Mr Dean asked the Place Names Committee to reconsider its decision.

The petition yesterday was written on the back of a bark painting showing a warrior armed with a spear and a woomera.

Signed by six Aboriginals, and marked by 11 others, it asked for retention of their dream time name, and suggested the spelling should be changed to Nulunbuy to make it easier to spell and pronounce.³⁰

The petition was presented to Parliament by the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Gough Whitlam. (*Northern Territory News*, 9 October 1968)

We have not located information about events in the Northern Territory that immediately followed presentation of the petition to Parliament. However, the then Chairman of the Place Names Committee, E. F. Dwyer, wrote to the Assistant Director Postal Services Adelaide referring to correspondence of 27 February 1969 (some four months following presentation of the bark petition), advising him thus of the name 'change': "The Minister for the Interior has directed that the town to be established on the Gove Peninsula shall be known officially as 'NHULUNBUY'".

And minutes of a meeting of the Place Names Committee on 19 March noted that the Committee "has no objection should the Administrator change originally recommended name of GOVE to NHULUNBUY".³¹

The dispute about the official name and the actors involved passed into the ephemera of popular culture. In April 1970, the first issue of *The Projecter* which became a weekly local newspaper in Nhulunbuy included the following item under the heading "A Dark Secret":

Some time ago, when Nabalco and the Department of Interior were looking for a name for the town at Gove, the boys at the Interior came

up with the idea of Nhulunbuy. Eventually their idea was adopted. A few days ago a senior officer of the Northern Territory Administration in Darwin received a phone call from somebody from the Department of Interior who wanted to know if the N.T.A. had ever heard of a place called Nhulunbuy. (*The Projecter*, no. 1, April 1970)

Names within the Nhulunbuy (town) area

The process of naming areas and streets within the new town began with its planning and construction, from 1969 through 1972. The naming, done by the newly arrived non-Yolŋu, did not result in overt conflict with Yolŋu,³² but because it reveals much about the process used by the namers we have included a description of the process and the rationale for the names in Appendix 2. For most of the life of the town only three Yolŋu names can clearly be identified in the official names for places (streets and so on) within the town lease area – the name for the town itself, Nhulunbuy, Wuyal Road and the Rotary Marika Lookout.³³ During 2006 and 2007 two further Yolŋu names appeared. One is Malpi Village, the name for a Rirratjŋu Association housing development, and the other Bunggalwuy (sic) Close in another new housing development.³⁴

Comment

Placenames in their linguistic context

We focus here on a linguistic description of the placenames, both Yolŋu and English, occurring within this paper, including those within Nhulunbuy (see Appendix 2). All Yolŋu examples are given in Dr Marika's own language, Rirratjŋu, but we believe the grammatical claims made about placenames are shared with other Dharŋu, Dhuwal and Dhuwala varieties, if not all Yolŋu varieties. The description here of Yolŋu placenames captures the commonly occurring placename structures, but does not claim to be comprehensive as far as more marginal structures are concerned. The description of English placenames draws on linguistic descriptions by Quirk et al. (1985), Allerton (1987), Huddleston (2002), and Anderson (2003, 2004).

Both Yolŋu and English use nominals³⁵ and nominal construction types for their placenames. While both languages draw on nominals for their placenames, the Yolŋu sample favours single words while the English sample favours two. There is a concomitant greater range in the structural types of names in English. We have not yet found grammatical evidence in Yolŋu languages for establishing a special proper names category separate from other nominals, whereas there is

evidence for this in English. Two key characteristics associated with the distinct grammatical category of proper nouns in English, namely those in relation to the use of determiners and expression of number, are not grammatical features of nominal expressions in Rirratjiju and other Yolŋu languages.

Semantically, Yolŋu placenames are like English placenames and other proper nouns in that their ‘meaning’ is what they name. They share with English the property of being referential, uniquely identifying a place (or person, etc.) rather than denoting a general class which is the property of common nouns.

Overview of the grammar of Yolŋu placenames

In the examples in this paper, and reflecting much more widely occurring patterns, Yolŋu placenames are overwhelmingly single words. These are of two kinds. Some are simple stems, e.g. *Gäluru*, *Dhamitjinya*, *Birritjimi* and *Djurruwu*. Others combine a root with the associative suffix (*-puy*, *-buy*, *-wuy*) e.g. *Nhulunbuy*, *Lombuy*, *Wandjukpuy*. They align grammatically (morphosyntactically) with two general word classes, locational nominals and general nouns. There are some minor grammatical differences between placenames and these general word classes.

Simple stem placenames have the same grammatical properties as general locational nominals. A key characteristic of these stems is that the bare stem, rather than the locative case suffix (*-ŋa*), is used to mark locative case e.g. *Gäluru* ‘at *Gäluru*’.

The associative suffix is a regularly occurring suffix coding a range of relations between nominals. Amongst the broad range of relations by which it codes that something is ‘associated’ with something else, is location. For example, to describe a shrub that grows at the beach, the word for beach would occur with the associative suffix.³⁶ The suffix is also used to derive new nouns e.g. *mulkurwuy* ‘pillow’ [*mulkurr* ‘head’]. Its appearance in placenames is not out of keeping with these two regular functions of the associative suffix.

Placenames incorporating the associative suffix are distinct from both derived nominals with the associative and locational nominals. In derived nominals with the associative, the associative suffix is retained before further suffixes. This does not occur with placenames where further suffixes are attached directly to the base stem (e.g. *Nhulun-*, *Lom-* or *Wandjuk-*). Unlike locational nominals, these stems do require the locative suffix to express locative case, e.g. *Nhulunŋa* ‘at *Nhulun*’.³⁷

Further details of these grammatical features and example constructions are given in Appendix 1.

There is one name that is a combination of words, namely, *Matpu-wekarra*. This is a combination of a proper noun *Matpu* 'name of certain Dhuwa cliff-faces/escarpments linked to Wuyal' and an adjectival noun *wekarra* 'long'. This compound structure does not occur widely in proper names, but there are other examples.

Overview of English placenames grammar

The English placenames in this paper, as in the Yolŋu sample, are all nominals. A limited number of single word placenames occur in our sample, e.g. Gove, Nhulunbuy, Darwin, Canberra, Australia and Sulawesi.

The majority are compounds involving two words. The most common structure involves a generic common noun as a head indicating a kind of location, e.g. mission, airport, road, avenue, street, beach, head, creek, bay, peninsula and island, preceding the noun specifying the name (Yirrkala Mission, Gove Airport, Thunderman Road, Sinclair Street, Town Beach, Drimmie Head, Wonga Creek, Melville Bay and Bremer Island; for details of street names applied within the township of Nhulunbuy see Appendix 2). In a second smaller group of compound names, the generic location term is ordered before the specifying noun, e.g. Cape Arnhem, Port Augusta and Mount Saunders. Three hills are introduced with Mount, a special placename term in English, only found in placenames of hills/mountains (Mount Saunders, Mount Dundas and Mount Bonner). 'Port' is also found following the noun in Gove Port.

There are also longer placenames in which two words are found preceding the generic common noun. These involve proper names made up of two personal names, e.g. Matthew Flinders Way, or a binominal placename, e.g. Melville Bay Road, Mount Saunders Township (a proposed name) and Cape York Peninsula.

A few two-word compounds occur, which involve adjectival modification, e.g. Central Australia, Western Europe and New Guinea. The final group of placenames contains those incorporating the article 'the' (phrasal names in Anderson 2003: 386). These include the Northern Territory, the British Isles, the Arafura Sea and the Giddy River. Gove Peninsula occurs in the paper with and without 'the' but today 'the Gove Peninsula' appears to have broad acceptance. Another structure with 'the' includes postmodification using 'of' as in 'the Gulf of Carpentaria' and 'the Port of Gove'.³⁸ Alignments between the semantic class of the English placenames and their grammatical characteristics are given in Appendix 1.

Placenames and other proper names in Rirratjingu and English

As well as placenames, proper names in English include personal names, geographical locations, both natural features and man-made features, names for certain animals, e.g. pets and racehorses, ships, planes and vehicles, machines, social organisations and institutions, publications, works of art, languages and dialects, and, more marginally, periods of time (see Quirk et al. (1985), Allerton (1987) and Anderson (2003)).

Yolŋu proper names include those for places, people and dogs, social groupings of various kinds as well as special categories of names used in particular contexts. We have seen from Dr Marika the high cultural value attached to certain names because "our names come from the places and things to which Wuyal and other Ancestors gave names as they passed through on their journeys" (see section 'Yolŋu placenames' above).

We have described placenames that refer to pre-existing geographical features, such as the hill Nhulun, and to representations of things featuring in the activities of the Ancestors, e.g. *Dimbukawuy*, the rock form of Wuyal's dilly bag.

Across the Yolŋu region the range of phenomena named in this way includes:

Sites. These may be for particular features of the landscape, e.g. hills, rivers, islands, rocky outcrops, beaches; but, as we have seen, names are not given on the sole ground that they are significant geographical features.

Flora and fauna including specific parts of them, or in particular states.

Particular states of natural phenomena such as clouds, water, fire, wind, rain.

Ancestral beings and spirits and parts of them, beings with particular qualities e.g. expert at hunting, a robber, generous, a boss, deaf.

Implements, artefacts, tools, shelters, fire – the 'man-made' environment.

While personal names share the same significant origins in the ancestral past as placenames, they are grammatically distinct from placenames. This is an outcome of their human reference which, even in common nouns, is grammatically distinguished in Rirratjingu and other Yolŋu languages from non-human referring nominals (see Appendix 1 for details). Sometimes a personal name is derived from a place. Examples in our sample include *Birritjimi* and *Gayŋuru*. While this makes

it possible for a personal name and placename to be identical, the grammatical marking of each will be different in many contexts, e.g. Birritjimiṇa ‘at Birritjimi (the place)’ vs Birritjimiwura ‘with Birritjimi (the person)’.

Within proper names there are some that are less clearly linked to events of the Ancestral Beings. Placenames within this domain have not appeared amongst those presented so far. An example near Yirrkala is the beach known as Ganarri‘mi ‘Shady Beach’. This name is from the *ganarri* ‘Beauty Leaf (*Calphyllum ionophyllum*)’ trees growing there.³⁹ There are also terms for broad geographical domains, e.g. Miwatj, the eastern portion of the broader Yolḷu area, extending from Yirrkala to Bawaka. Within Yirrkala⁴⁰ itself areas are known by words that also common general nouns, e.g. Raki ‘an area of Yirrkala’⁴¹ [*raki* ‘rope, string’], Dhalakarr ‘area in Yirrkala around the boat ramp’ [*dhalakarr* ‘a particular kind of space’], and Raji ‘Beach Camp’ at Yirrkala [*raji* ‘beach’]. As with placenames, there is a range of terms by which people can be called in addition to those personal names linked to the ancestral past.⁴²

Names from a person’s ancestral heritage were also traditionally given to dogs. In recent times these have been extended to cats, cars, boats, houses and new social institutions such as councils. Sometimes this will involve placenames; e.g. ‘Galmak’ is the name of a sacred dwelling place of an Ancestral Being used for a house. ‘Marjarr’ is the name for Yirritja places where Macassans anchored and used as bases for collecting and preparing trepang. It has been used to name a council, thus Marjarr Council.

Proper names, including placenames, that are linked to the ancestral past are used in a range of language contexts. In addition to their use in everyday speech, they are a prominent feature in songs and the calling out that occurs at focal points during ceremonies.

Yolḷu make a broad distinction between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ names.⁴³ Those personal names (*yolḷu yäku* ‘person name’) and placenames (*ḡayi yäku* ‘country/place/camp/home name’) used in everyday speech are viewed as ‘outside’ names.

Songs contain both ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ names. The stories of the Ancestral Beings are closely related to the song cycles, although the language of songs is quite distinct from that of stories and everyday speech. Only some of the words in them are used in everyday speech. As Keen explains,

The language of Yolḷu manikay and bilma songs was related to speech, but consisted of cryptic phrases and clauses, and included lists of proper names and special song-words (including verbs) and archaisms. Unlike myths, songs were not strictly narratives but strings of descriptive expressions, as well as lists of names. But they indirectly implied a narrative through the succession of topics related to a myth. (Keen 1994: 239)

Examples of such lists of names in Dr Marika's account are those for the steep slope/escarpment of Nhulun and those for the liquid honey (see section 'Yolŋu placenames' above). In ritual song the special names for the liquid honey refer to water with foam on it in the rivers that flow past Gäluru and Lomby and toward the small islands Marrawi and Yilipawuy.

The names "called out at key points in ceremonies [that signify] at once a *wangarr* ancestor, a place and a group" (Keen 1994: 71) are a special named category of 'inside' proper names. They are called *bundurr* or *likan* 'elbow' names.

Restrictions apply as to who can possess or talk about particular domains of knowledge in the Yolŋu world and this applies to the meanings or referents of proper names (see Keen 1994: 239; Walsh 2002: 43). Analysis of Yolŋu proper names, particularly those having to do with the ancestral past, has to accommodate this restriction of full knowledge of proper names to those with rights to them.⁴⁴ The important point, however, is that everyone will have some of this knowledge and assume it exists for all such names.

This fundamental connection of proper names to the events of the ancestral past does mean that the number of 'meanings', i.e. referents that can be normally expected of a proper name, is different for English and Yolŋu. English speakers can generally expect a proper name to uniquely identify one of the categories that has a proper name, e.g. a person, a place or an institution. There can be occasional overlap when a personal name is applied to a place, e.g. Darwin. Yolŋu speakers, in contrast, can expect there to be multiple referents to many proper names. All personal names would be expected to have a least one other type of referent in addition to the person named, namely the linked phenomenon from the ancestral past. This may be less marked in the case of placenames, particularly with the simple stem names, but would be the case when a personal name is also a placename. In the more complex stems with the Associative there is room for a different kind of ambiguity. For example, *wirriyay'wuy* can be a placename or a common noun 'associating' something (e.g. their noise or a story about them) with small birds.

Onomastic comparison

Transformations are the stuff of Aboriginal cosmogony; not creation, in the sense of something coming into being *ex nihilo* – from nothing – for something was always there. Tamisari (2002: 92) uses the term 'morphogenesis'. The widely described modes of transformation generally begin with an assumption that the basic features, the lineaments of the universe, were in place and the transforming beings gave them shape and meaning. For Yolŋu an essential aspect of transformation was naming.

The agents of transformation in the Aboriginal world have been variously translated. Dreamtime Heroes, Ancestral Creators. Spirit Beings, Ancestral Beings and Ancestral Spirits are among those that have been used in the Yolŋu context. The word *waŋarr* refers to the spirit beings that existed at a time in the very distant past when the Yolŋu cosmos was given shape and meaning. These spirit beings manifest attributes of human beings and of other species, but they are neither anthropomorphic animals nor zoomorphic human beings. They are spirits, essentially human, and their activities provide a pattern of life for the first true human beings. As they travelled through the land and sea they bestowed names. Yolŋu refer to the travels and the names in order to communicate the kinds of interests they hold in land and waters and with other people. The manner in which Yolŋu control access to the meanings of the names also provides some insight into their role. The act of a spirit being in naming is a religious act of bestowal from which Yolŋu derive a number of interests, including those of ownership. The land and sea and all the features of land and sea as well as all the human beings who have owned or will ever own them derive aspects of their identity from the act of naming and from the names themselves. Few features of the perceived universe are not named.

Whether the role that names play for Yolŋu is singular we are not sure. But all anthropologists who have worked with Yolŋu have recorded aspects of the significance of names and naming – among others, Warner (1958: 18, 380–381, for example), Thomson (1949: 47) referring to the *djirrikay* as the caller of ‘big names’, the Berndts, the Morphys, Keen, and Tamisari. A chapter in Williams’ (1986) study of Yolŋu land tenure is titled “And then there was the word”.

Tamisari speaks of morphogenesis, “the processes of transformation, and especially imprinting, metamorphosis and externalisation[, as] intrinsically connected with names and the action of naming”, and of how the Ancestral Beings’

shaping of the ground involves the act of naming and, conversely, how names thus embody ancestral morphogenetic processes ... like designs, songs and dances, names are manifestations, and as such they are visible marks or, as Yolngu would say, the footprints of the ‘Ancestral Beings’.
(Tamisari 2002: 92–93)

In contrast with the naming processes of Yolŋu, those put in place by settler Australians in the Northern Territory are premised on the assumption that the naming of places is an act of current (principally) non-Aboriginal people, even though some of the names have historical warrant. Yolŋu personal names may be derived from placenames (via certain relatives) and places may not be named from persons,⁴⁵ while in 1995 the Northern Territory Rules of Nomenclature stipulated that places may be given personal names (of certain categories of people and currently no longer living).

For Yolŋu, places may have multiple names; the more important the place is, the more names it has. In contrast, the 1995 Rules of Nomenclature stipulated that places should have only one name (with the exception of possible dual names of features).

The Rules of Nomenclature further stated that "[t]he use of alternate/alternative names should be discontinued and resolved by recommending one form or the other in the renaming process under existing rules". Although in the Yolŋu domain, names that were bestowed do not change, in everyday usage an alternative name may be used following the death of a person with the placename.

Yolŋu have formal religious institutions to maintain names of places and knowledge about them as well as processes to change the ones that may be publicly used. This knowledge is central to members of society. On the other hand, in the Northern Territory secular institutions manage the process of determining and recording placenames. The names, but not the context of their naming, is everyday knowledge.

Placenames are officially sanctioned by both groups. For Yolŋu, sanctions are based on religious law. Spirit beings and contemporary social practice associated with them sanction placenames. For settler Australians in the Northern Territory, the formal processes for approving placenames involve the administrative agency of The Department of Planning and Infrastructure, the Place Names Committee and the *Place Names Act* enacted by the Northern Territory Parliament. This does not strictly apply to names given within private lease held areas such as Nhulunbuy. In those areas the right to give names rests with the lease-holder (see Appendix 2).

Placenames link Yolŋu to their origins and ongoing cultural practice through ritual. They are located in domains of high cultural value and are fundamental to individual identity. The domain of placenames in non-Aboriginal society is secular, even mundane, although as the dispute in the case of Gove vs Nhulunbuy reveals, no less politically and personally charged. This is most clear in the issues surrounding what came to be referred to as the 're-naming' of Gove and the fact that although names could be officially changed (through a process that involves a name being rescinded by Parliament), the process was minimally described in the Rules of Nomenclature, that is, in comparison with the rules for approving names.

Concluding comment

The dispute focussed on the naming of Nhulunbuy demonstrates that in the 1960s and 1970s placenames were a vital aspect of both Yolŋu and white Australian societies, despite the fact that one was sanctioned by religious institutions and the other by secular institutions. They were, however, societies not equal in political power. The dispute revealed that the actions each took to defend their ability to control the processes involved both mechanisms and rationales that were consistent with their institutions. Yolŋu employed tactics that they believed had been successful in previous conflicts with the dominant society, that is, they invoked the authority of the sacred endowment of names and made a visual representation in the form of a bark painting of Wuyal as their warrant to preserve the original name, Nhulunbuy. White Australians employed tactics available in legislation and related regulations to impose a different name. Both administrative and legal tactics came into play. Initially white Australians relied on the procedures of official place-naming in the Northern Territory jurisdiction that were publicly supported by officers in several branches of the Northern Territory Administration. Subsequently when Yolŋu succeeded in escalating the dispute to involve officers of Commonwealth departments and Commonwealth politicians, both legal devices (the advice that the town lease was not a public place and was therefore not necessarily subject to legislation and regulations governing placenames, since these only pertained to public places)⁴⁶ and ultimately political response to what was beginning to appear to be wide public support for the Yolŋu position were in play. Politicians directed administrative officers by various means (partly documented in archives) to reverse the earlier decision to effect a change in name (among other things, asserting that Gove was the original name and any other name would reflect a change from the original name), publicly responding in a manner which would suggest a benefit to Aborigines and thus would be popularly supported. Finally, it was made to appear that the decision to retain (or change, from the publicly proclaimed official administrative perspective) the name Nhulunbuy was a unilateral decision of a Cabinet Minister, perhaps involving the Prime Minister.

This dispute, like all disputes, had no absolute and final determination. In various contexts, Yolŋu still act to maintain the integrity and consistent use of the name Nhulunbuy, despite the fact, for example, that in 2006 the East Arnhem Tourist Association's website (<http://ealta.org/nhulunbuy.html>) contains a heading "Nhulunbuy or Gove" and the following text: "Nhulunbuy is the name of the town and Gove is the name of the Peninsula that the town is located on. You will hear the two names used interchangeably but they mean the same place".

Appendix 1: Details and examples of grammatical characteristics of Yolŋu placenames

Yolŋu placenames that are simple stems

Placenames consisting of simple stems appear to have morphosyntactic properties that are identical with a closed class of locational nominals which include *djinawa* 'inside, under' and *galki* 'near'. This class is distinct from other nominal classes in never occurring with the locative case suffix *-ŋa* (*-ŋur*, *-ŋura*).⁴⁷ The bare stem is used for locative case. This class also occurs with a more limited range of case suffixes than other nominals, namely those with a locational sense: ablative *-ŋuru* (*-ŋur*, *-ŋuru*), allative *-li* (*-lil*, *-lili*) or rarely *-yu* (*-y*, *-yu*)⁴⁸ and perlativ *-murru* (*-kurr*/*-gurr*/*-wurr*, *-kurru*/*-gurru*/*-wurru*) as well as the associative *-puy*/*-buy*/*-wuy* in adnominal⁴⁹ contexts. The following examples show some of these characteristics for the placename Gäluru and the locational nominal *djinawa* 'inside, under'. Example (1) shows the use of the bare stem as the name in a verbless clause. Examples (2) and (3) show the use of the bare stem in locative case, and (4) and (5) provide examples with the allative. Examples (6) and (7) show the contrasting use of the locative case suffix with the general noun *raŋi* 'beach'.

(1)	<i>Dhaŋum</i>
this/here-PROM ⁵⁰
The name of this place is Gäluru.
This is the place with the name Gäluru.	<i>yäku</i>
name	<i>ŋayi</i>
place/camp	<i>Gäluru.</i>
Gäluru
(2)	<i>Dhaŋum</i>
this/here(S/O/LOC-PROM)
We are (sitting) here at Gäluru.	<i>ŋali</i>
we
two(S/O)	<i>nyena</i>
sit:PRES	<i>yaka</i>
IMP
Gäluru(LOC'at')
(3)	<i>Dhaŋum</i>
this/here(S/O/LOC-PROM)
We are (sitting) here inside.	<i>ŋali</i>
we
two(S/O)	<i>nyena</i>
sit:PRES	<i>yaka</i>
IMP
<i>djinawa</i> '.
inside(LOC'at')
(4)	<i>ŋali</i>
we two(S/O)
Let us go to Gäluru.	<i>ŋarruŋa</i>
go:PRES	<i>Gäluruḷi.</i>
Gäluru-ALL'to'	

- (5) *ŋali* *ŋarruŋa* *djinawa'li*.
 we two(S/O) go:PRES inside-ALL'to'
 Let us go inside.
- (6) *Dhaŋum* *ŋali* *nyena* *yaka* *raŋiŋa*.
 this/here(S/O/LOC- we two(S/O) sit:PRES IMP beach-
 PROM) LOC
 We are (sitting) here at the beach.
- (7) *ŋali* *ŋarruŋa* *raŋili*.
 we two(S/O) go:PRES beach-ALL'to'
 Let us go to the beach.

Yolŋu placenames incorporating the associative suffix

Placenames including the associative suffix align with the general noun class. They are distinct from the simple stem placenames on two counts. First they occur with the locative suffix in locative case rather than the bare stem. Secondly they involve a suffix that is a regularly occurring adnominal suffix, the associative (ASS). The following examples show these characteristics for the placename Lombuy. Examples (8), (11) and (12) show the use of these placename in a verbless clause identifying the place, (9) gives an example in locative case, and (10) an example with the allative.

- (8) *Dhaŋum* *yäku* *ŋayi* *Lombuy*.
 this/here-PROM name place/camp Lombuy[Lom-ASS]
 The name of this place is Lombuy.
- (9) *Dhaŋum* *ŋali* *nyena* *yaka* *Lomŋa*.
 this/here(S/O/LOC)- we two(S/O) sit:PRES IMP Lom-LOC('at')
 PROM
 We are (sitting) here at Lombuy.
- (10) *ŋali* *ŋarruŋa* *Lomli*.
 we two(S/O) go:PRES Lom-ALL'to'
 Let us go to Lombuy.

With some of these associative marked placenames, speakers will allow variation in the citation form of the name between the root and the root plus the associative suffix. Thus:

- (11) *Dhaŋum* *yäku* *ŋayi* *Nhulunbuy.*
 this/here-PROM name place/camp Nhulunbuy
 The name of this place is Nhulunbuy.

Or:

- (12) *Dhaŋum* *yäku* *ŋayi* *Nhulun.*
 this/here-PROM name place/camp Nhulun
 The name of this place is Nhulun.

This variation in the presence or not of the associative is unique to a subset of stems within this category of placenames.

With general nouns, the ASS suffix functions as both an adnominal case marker and to derive nominals.

In its regular adnominal function, the associative case is used to express wide a range of relations or 'associations' between two nominals including time, function/purpose, location, cause and 'what a story is about'. It is its use to code locational associations that is implicated in its use in placenames. The example given in note 36 is repeated here:

- (13) *Dhaŋu* *dharpa* *raŋiwuy,* *yaka* *ɖiltjiwuy.*
 this tree/shrub beach-ASS NEG bush/back-ASS
 This shrub is [found/grows at] the beach, not the bush.

An example of a derived general noun is *mulḵurwuy* 'pillow' derived from *mulḵurr* 'head'. However, the locative form 'on/near the pillow' is *mulḵurwuyŋa* [*mulḵurr-wuy-ŋa* 'head-ASS-LOC']. This contrasts with the locative form of placenames which do not retain ASS suffix; e.g. *Lomŋa* in example (9). A form such as **Lombuyŋa* is not possible. So while the associative case suffix appears to be fossilised in many placename stems, they are not grammatically identical to general nouns derived using the associative case suffix.

The appearance of the associative in placenames is thus not out of keeping with the use of the associative with nominals of the general noun class, first to code the relationship of location, and secondly to derive new nouns. However as we have seen they are distinct from derived noun stems in that they do not retain the ASS case marker. They are also distinct from regular adnominal expressions using the associative in not occurring with a head nominal, although they could all be said to assume *ŋayi* 'camp, place, home' and are given this as their hypernym *ŋayi yäku* 'placename'.

Morpho-syntax of Rirratjinu personal names in comparison with placenames

The morphosyntax of personal names is distinct from that of placenames. The distinction between human and non-human referring nouns is fundamental to morphological marking in Rirratjinu and other Yolngu languages. Personal names are treated as regular human-referring nominals. This can be illustrated using the suffixes described for locational nominals and placenames in examples (2-7) and (9-10) above. These suffixes are in fact a subset of those occurring with non-human referring nouns. Human-referring nouns⁵¹ have different forms of the locational suffixes, e.g. human locative *-gura*, *-kura*, *-wura* and allative *-gul*, *-kul*, *-wul* (compare non-human locative *-ŋa* and allative *-li*). When a name is used for both a place and a person, e.g. Birritjimi, the morphology often clarifies which is meant. Thus *Birritjimiwul* ‘to Birritjimi (the person)’ but *Birritjimili* ‘to Birritjimi (the place)’. There are some contexts where it could be ambiguous, e.g. *Dhanju Birritjimi*. ‘Here is Birritjimi (the place or the person)’.

Alignments between semantic and morphosyntactic characteristics of English placenames

There are some broad alignments between the semantic class of proper names and morphosyntactic characteristics of the proper name. Thus names that generally occur with *the* are:

- names of rivers (the Giddy River – but contrast creeks as in Wonga Creek)
- seas and oceans (cf. the Arafura Sea, the Gulf of Carpentaria)

Names that generally occur without *the* are:

- countries and states (Central Australia, Sulawesi – but contrast the Northern Territory)
- cities and towns (Yirrkala, Darwin)
- mountains (Mount Saunders)
- location names combining a proper noun and common noun describing a place (Cape Arnhem, Thunderman Road)

Two morphological constraints on the morphosyntactic possibilities for proper names are:

- plural forms of names always occur with *the* (cf. the British Isles).
- names with modification involving *of* always occur with *the* (e.g. the Gulf of Carpentaria) with *of* linking a common noun and a proper noun.

In most grammatical analyses for English, proper name are categorised as a type of noun, thus the terms proper nouns and common nouns. Anderson (2003, 2004) has recently argued for the categorisation of proper names as a subclass of nominals which he calls determinatives. He claims, on the basis of certain functional/semantic characteristics, that proper names align more closely with pronouns and determiners, also considered determinatives, than with common nouns. This perspective has not been adopted in the very general description of English placenames we present.

Appendix 2: The naming of places within Nhulunbuy

Names appearing within the township of Nhulunbuy up to 1984

The special purpose lease for the town of Nhulunbuy was granted to the Gove Joint Venturers by the Commonwealth on 30 May 1969 and construction of the town was completed in 1972. However, construction of infrastructure for the mining development had commenced in 1968. According to Alan Black,⁵² a former senior employee of Nabalco, the creation of the town began with a study involving Nabalco, represented by Black, the Northern Territory Administration, represented by Noel Lynagh, and an officer of the Commonwealth Department of the Interior. Black said that the objective of the study was the development of a town that would become a regional centre for Arnhem Land.

Agius McNally Holmwood, a firm of planners, had been employed by Nabalco in 1966, and they initiated and controlled the planning and construction standards between 1966 and 1972 (Agius n.d.). The architects and engineers were called the 'Town Group' as distinct from the town's administrators, according to Black, who was the first Town Administrator. With the establishment of the Nhulunbuy [Town] Corporation, Black became its Chairman, a position he held from 1969 to 1972.

Black attributes the selection of names for streets and areas within the town to the members of the Board of the Nhulunbuy Corporation. He said that the procedure they followed was to seek the approval of Nabalco, the Commonwealth and the Yirrkala Village Council. He said he believed that Roy Marika, chairman of the Village Council, had approved their approach of using names of local significance. However, Janie Mason, the editor of the local weekly newspaper (then called *The Nhulunbuy Newsweek*), in a series of articles in 1973 on the significance of street names, makes no mention of Mr Marika's role in their selection. The names were

Aboriginal placenames

selected as a series defined by the type of street or road, i.e. whether a major road, an encircling road, a cul-de-sac, etc. It was the Board’s intention that all names should represent some local or locally significant entity.

Figure 17.3: Nhulunbuy Town Map
(East Arnhem Land Tourist Association Inc.)

In his capacity of Town Administrator, Alan Black wrote to the Secretary of the Northern Territory Place Names Committee on 9 November 1970 advising the Committee of the names that had been chosen. He wrote:⁵³

Attached is a list of names of streets and public places which will be used in the town of Nhulunbuy and forwarded for your information.

The list covers the area of the town now under construction and as the necessity arises, further lists will be forwarded for the information of the committee.

Although Nhulunbuy will have a large international Community, it was considered appropriate to keep the names distinctly Australian in character and the names were chosen with this in mind.

The attached list, in which names are organised into various categories, is as follows:

Town Park
Arafura Park
Town Oval
Nabalco Oval
Town Beach
Town Beach
Main Road – Prospect to Dundas Point
The Melville Freeway
Way (1) – Primary Distributor from Melville Freeway
Matthew Flinders
Crescents (4) – Australian Gemstones
Garnet
Ribbonstone
Carnelian
Jasper
Terrace (1) – Opposite Swimming Pool and adjacent to beach
Mirimina (an aboriginal myth)
Lanes & Walks (3)
Ilpilya (an aboriginal myth)
Nadubi (an aboriginal myth)
Mawalan (a deceased chief of a Yirrkala tribe)
Avenues (12) – Native Flora
Tamarind
Corallita
Lacebark

Aboriginal placenames

Mimosa
Quandong
Casuarina
Sandalwood
Eugenia
Hakea
Gungunnu (sic)
Bottlebrush
Cassia
Closes (15) – Native Flora
Geebung
Myall
Dryandra
Bunya
Duranta
Mallee
Nandina
Grevillea
Wilga
Pandanus
Karo
Solandra
Lillipilli
Tuckaroo
Melaluka (sic)

NAMES OF STREETS AND PLACES – NHULUNBUY

Roads (5) – Local Names
Singing Rocks
Thunderman
Weyal (sic)
Arnhem
Banyan
Streets (9) – Crew of “Investigator”
Westall
Allan (sic)

Thistle

Bell

Franklin

Wolsey

Sinclair

Douglas

Bauer

Circuits (4) – Ships of Navigators associated with Arnhem Land

Providence

Pandora

Chesterfield

Beagle

Black wrote to the Chairman of the Place Names Committee four months later advising him that the naming within the town lease had been completed. It is clear that some communication between Black and the Place Names Committee had occurred in the interim. Thus, on 2 March 1971 he wrote:⁵⁴

The naming of areas and streets within Special Purpose Lease 214 [the town lease] has now been completed as far as possible together with areas for Nabalco installations and a list of the names is attached for the information of the Committee.

The name "Melville Freeway" was first used when the road was a dirt track and we were very keen to retain a name which grew up with the Project.

However, we appreciate your thoughts in respect of the use of "Freeway" and the road will be named "Melville Bay Road."

The streets chosen for Nhulunbuy South have prominent associations with Alusuisse and were chosen for a specific purpose. Consequently, we would not wish to change these at a later date.

When the designs are completed for Nhulunbuy North and Nhulunbuy East, the streets will be named in a pattern similar to the other areas and we would welcome any suggestions the Committee may have for a suitable pattern which could be used.

The attached list of names and their origins is as follows:

NAMES OF AREAS

Nhulunbuy South	the area presently known as Mt. Saunders Village and Mt. Saunders construction camp
Nhulunbuy North	the proposed extension known as area No. 2
Nhulunbuy East	the proposed extension known as area No. 3
Wallaby Beach	the housing area now known as Wallaby Beach
Prospect	the area surrounding the airport and including the old prospecting camp
Port of Gove (or Gove Port)	the marine terminal (the Gove Port is now internationally known and recognized)
Melville	the bauxite treatment plant area

NAMES OF STREETS

Melville Bay Road	main road from Prospect to Melville Bay
Iluka Terrace	the street at Wallaby Beach
Chippis Road	
Fusina Close	
Feldegg Avenue	
Satral Avenue	
Enalu Road	
Aisa Street	
Isal Street	
Sava Street	
Boxal Street	
Atlanta Street	

The Chairman of the Place Names Committee replied to the Town Administrator on 19 May 1971 (the letter is undated, but subsequent correspondence refers to a letter of this date in a way that supports the inference):⁵⁵

Thank you for your letter 50/3 of March 12 1971 and the attached list of street and area names.

The Committee endorses the area names suggested, but with the exception of the Melville Bay Road, can make no comment upon the other names as no supporting details were provided. It would be appreciated if these details could be supplied.

The Committee has adopted as one of its nomenclature guides that the names of living persons will not be used. This has not always been the situation in the past.

In considering street names in new areas the Committee endeavours to preserve the names of the early pioneers, explorers and navigators both of the surrounding areas in the case of most towns and the whole Territory in the case of Darwin, and it was suggested that your Company could follow this precedent.

It was further suggested that you might consider using the names of service personnel, who died on active service while based at Gove. Other suggestions were the use of euphonious aboriginal names of local flora, fauna and tribal legends, some of which you have already used.

On 28 May the Town Administrator replied to the Chairman of the Place Names Committee and supplied him with the rationale for the selection of names.⁵⁶

Further to your letter dated 19th May, 1971, we advise that the names of streets – with the exception of Melville Bay Road and Iluka Terrace – attached to your letter dated 2nd March are abbreviated names of some subsidiaries and affiliated companies of Alusuisse. These names have been used in Nhulunbuy South.

Thank you for you suggested patterns for further names for other areas, and a list will be forwarded to you at a later date for Nhulunbuy north and Nhulunbuy east.

We agree with the precedents which have been established for naming streets and Nabalco has followed the guide lines which have been given to us. We are sure you will agree there is no question that Alusuisse is a pioneer in this area.

Iluka Terrace is the only residential street at Wallaby S/Beach and as this is the aboriginal word commonly used for "near the sea" it was considered an appropriate name for the street.⁵⁷

No further correspondence concerning the naming of streets and areas in Nhulunbuy has been sighted in the files of the Place Names Committee in Darwin. A pamphlet published in 1984 by the Nhulunbuy Corporation, *Information Booklet/Nhulunbuy*, contains a partial list of "street and place names and the reason for their choice" (1984: 6-12), which is almost identical to the series published by Janie Mason in *The Nhulunbuy Newsweek* between July and

August 1973. This list suggests that it may have been derived in part from the same sources as the list available on the then Northern Territory Lands Planning and Environment website.⁵⁸ They are as follows:

Aisa Street: named after a metal extrusion plant in Brazil

Boxal Street: named after the aluminum can factories of Alusuisse (in Switzerland, France, Germany, and the Netherlands)

Chippis Road: named after a Swiss village where there is an aluminum smelter; the offices of Swiss Aluminium are registered in Chippis and Zurich

Enalu Road: named after the acronym for Alusuisse Engineering Limited, a subsidiary of Swiss Aluminium Ltd

Feldegg Road: named after street in Zurich where the head office of Swiss Aluminium Ltd is located

Fusina Close: named after the location of one of the Alusuisse Italian smelters and power stations

Husnes Avenue: named for an aluminium smelter in Norway

Isal Street: named after an aluminium smelter in Iceland

Satral Street: named after an Alusuisse production plant in Belgium

Sava Street: named after an Alusuisse subsidiary in Italy

There is one point of variation between the 1984 list and that in the original names proposed to the Place Names Committee in 1971 and described in the 1973 *Nhulunbuy Newsweek* articles. The original list contained Atlanta Street but not Husnes Avenue. Atlanta Street is described as “a projected alumina/aluminium complex in Northern Germany” (*Nhulunbuy Newsweek*, 1973 vol. 1, no. 48). The sign for Atlanta Street was manufactured (Phil Herdman pers. com.), but by 1984 Husnes Avenue had come into being. Perhaps it was decided to select the name of something already in existence.

Comment on non-Yolŋu names for the town area

The lists that the Nhulunbuy Town Administrator supplied to the Place Names Committee were chosen on the basis of cross-cutting criteria. The former Administrator said that they were derived from the nature of the area (and in some cases the purpose of the area) and/or the characteristics of the street or road (e.g. crescent, lane, close) to which categories of ‘objective entities’ were

applied. Thus the crescents were to be named for Australian gemstones, the avenues and closes for native flora, lanes and walks for Aboriginal entities, roads for 'local names', streets for members of the *Investigator's* crew, and circuits for the ships of navigators associated with Arnhem Land.

The 'local names' which were to be applied to roads are anomalous – or at least puzzling. 'Thunderman' is presumably the English translation of *Djambuwal*, an important figure in Dhuwa moiety mythology (and is the attribution given in the 1973 series), 'Arnhem' had long been applied to an area much larger than 'local', and 'Banyan' is presumably the name of a tree with wide distribution that includes south-east Asia. While all the materials providing information about the source of the name Banyan simply include it within the category flora, there is a possible basis for its inclusion as a 'local name' in connection with some events at the time. A banyan tree was involved in controversy in the early days of construction when one associated with Wuyal was bulldozed and another with significance at the plant site only just preserved. (Ted Egan was District Welfare Officer in the region between 1967 and 1969 and was directly involved in these events, which he reports on in his autobiography (Egan 1997: 243–244)). In a Nhulunbuy Corporation note on file about names in the Nhulunbuy area (D.7.5), R. S. Marika refers to the destruction of the tree as he explains the significance of Wuyal:

Then he [Wuyal] went towards Wallaby Beach. There he danced his last dance, and he turned into a Banyan tree which was at Wallaby Beach. The people of Yirrkala were very upset to see the tree knock down. That tree reminds us about Wuyal.

'Singing Rocks' is inscrutable, although it has been suggested that it may have been a monolingual English-speaker's interpretation of the Aboriginal English phrase 'we sing these rocks'. The then extant Lands Planning and Environment list attributed the name to a 'feature of local significance', an attribution that conveys minimal information.

The lists available so far and the maps that have been published diverge in some ways that are trivial (e.g. obvious misspellings such as 'Melaluka' for 'Melaleuca', 'Asia' for 'Aisa' and 'Gungunnu' for 'Gungurru', Westal for Westall and Franklyn for Franklin),⁵⁹ and in some ways that are significant for a project in comparison. Thus with respect to the names of ships, *Beagle* is on the 1970 list as one of the "ships of the navigators associated with Arnhem Land". In the 1984 list, its importance is said to lie in the fame of its onetime passenger, Charles Darwin, although its master, Lt Stokes, is credited with charting the north Australian coast west of Cobourg Peninsula. The Department of Planning and Infrastructure register list refers to the *Beagle's* significance as "the novel and unprecedented one of passing through old London Bridge – the first rigged

man-o-war that had floated upon the Thames – in order to salute the coronation of King George the 4th”. The *Beagle* was also said to be important for having surveyed Clarence Strait, the Adelaide and Victoria Rivers, and Darwin and Bynoe Harbours. None of these feats has particular significance for Arnhem Land, and certainly none for the Gove Peninsula.

Of the other ships and/or their navigators on the Administrator’s 1970 list, only the *Providence* is tangentially relevant to the local area: Matthew Flinders (according to the Lands Planning and Environment List) was a young officer on board the ship commanded by William Bligh. *Pera* is not on the 1970 list, but was given as the name of a circuit added to the area that continues to be referred to as ‘Contractors’ (for the earlier ‘Contractors’ Village’). *Pera* has the best claim for association with the local area, since it was apparently one of the first of two ships recorded to have sailed into the Gulf of Carpentaria (Flinders 1966[1814] vol. 2: x-xi).

The names in Nhulunbuy South that were connected with Nabalco and which the Town Administrator argued should be permanently retained on the basis of the claim that Nabalco was a pioneer in the area, are diverse – and explained almost identically in all sources from the original correspondence to the Place Names Committee in 1971 onwards including the 1984 Nhulunbuy Corporation Publication and the Department of Planning and Infrastructure website. In order to make any inferences based on the selection of these names and their use in a circumscribed area of Nhulunbuy, further data on the circumstances in which they were put forward are needed. The only additional placename that currently exists in Nhulunbuy South is ‘Recreation Close’, which runs along part of an oval and is said to have been so designated when it led to a community hall, later used as a Boy Scouts hall. With some minor variations, there is clear concurrence in the list of names to be found on the current Department of Planning and Infrastructure (formerly Land Planning and Environment) website register,⁶⁰ the 1984 Nhulunbuy Corporation Booklet, and the earlier 1973 *Nhulunbuy Newsweek* material (1[43]:18, 13 July 1973), all of which reflect the names originally proposed. The 1973 *Nhulunbuy Newsweek* introduction to a series on Place Names in Nhulunbuy explained to the new residents of Nhulunbuy that the original selection of names was processed through the Place Names Committee “by Nabalco”. The introduction further explained that:

The Place Names Committee, Lands and Survey Branch of the Department of the Northern Territory, lays down broad outlines for the naming of all streets, places, etc. in the Northern Territory. The Committee recommends and makes suggestions. Names of living persons may not be used. Final approval of the names is obtained from the Committee before the place names are published.

However, while most council areas are required to gazette placenames with the Northern Territory Government through the *Place Names Act*, this was not a requirement for privately leased land, which was the situation for Nhulunbuy under the Act that was in place at that time. The right to give names rested with the leaseholder and their obligation to the Government in regard to placenames was simply to provide them for general information purposes. We have ample evidence that this took place with respect to the names put in place during the 1970s.

Table 17.1 summarises the names actually occurring in the various categories proposed and the relationship between those that were proposed and those that were actually used. The table also includes several street names put in place since those originally proposed; they are discussed below in the section 'More recent names'.

Table 17.1: Categories of placenames proposed and used in Nhulunbuy

1970/1971 Categories	Number proposed	Number in 2007	Comments
Native flora			
found locally (and elsewhere)	10	15	Most additions in this category made by 1984: Acacia, Banksia, Lobelia, Magnolia, Jasmine, Raintree, Fern tree Closes; Wattle Close added since 1984
found in Australia	11	11	
not native to Australia	7	10	
Total	28	36	
Australian gemstones	4	2	
Terraces, lanes and walks ('Aboriginal Myths' and one local indigenous name)	4	1	Only one name, Nadubi, is currently extant; Ilpilya and Mirimina were no longer in use by 1999; Mawalan was never used.
'Local names' (includes one Yolŋu word, Wuyal, three English terms attributed to local Aboriginal themes (Thunderman, Singing Rocks), possibly Banyan, and Arnhem)	5	7	Bunggalwuy (sic) CI (off Leach Rd) (2007) (Since corrected to Bunggulwuy) Malpi Village (new housing development) (2006) Names approved but still to appear in 2007: Ngarrku Village (new housing development) and BingaBinga for the street in Malpi village
Crew of Investigator Franklin is spelled Franklyn and Westall as Westal on current signs. In the 1984 list they appear as Franklyn (sic) and Westall.	9	5	5 of the original number proposed were never used (Allan, Thistle, Bell, Douglas and Bauer); one not proposed, Whitewood, was added by 1973
Ships of navigators associated with Arnhem Land	4	6	2 added by 1973: Pera and Klyn Circuits
Alusuisse connection	10	10	1 of the proposed names was never used (Atlanta) and 1 added (Husnes) by 1984

1970/1971 Categories	Number proposed	Number in 2007	Comments
Others not included in specific categories in the 1970/1971 correspondence:			
Named from what the road gives access to (Melville Bay Rd)	1	2	1 added (Recreation Close, beside an oval in Nhulunbuy South)
Historical figure of discovery (Matthew Flinders Way)	1	1	
Categories of later names not found in the 1973 or 1984 material but found on current street signs and current maps. Much of our information on the sources of these names is from Phil Herdman (pers. comm.).			
Historical figures in Northern Australia. These names appear in the Place Names Register of the Dept of Planning and Infrastructure but without any information as to their origins.		5	All are in the area known as the Industrial Estate: John Flynn ⁶¹ Drive, Durack Close, Miller Close, Traeger Close, Buchanon (sic) Road. In place since the late 1980s.
Local identities Dartnall and Ovcacic do not yet appear in the Place Names Register		5(or 6)	Dartnall Place (near the Bakery); Ovcacic Street (in the Industrial Estate): (Both on maps from 2001) Dargaville Rd (in Ngarrku Village): Walling Cl (In Ngarrku Village); Leach Rd (off Wuyal Rd) (2007)
?Fish /Local Fauna		1	Barramundi Close (2007)

Comments on Aboriginal names in the 1970 list

Aboriginal names in the original 1970 list were to be used for 'lanes and walks' and a 'terrace'. One, 'Mawalan', originally proposed for the walk parallel to and between the swimming pool and the town beach, was for the 'deceased chief of a Yirrkala tribe'. Mawalan was head of the Rirratjiŋu clan at the time of his death in 1967, and the then Town Administrator⁶² thought the name was not used because Yolŋu prohibited its use so soon after his death, as mentioned above. With respect to 'Ilpilya' and 'Nadubi', when interviewed in October 1999, Black thought that they might have been supplied by somebody at the Yirrkala Mission, or that they might have been taken from a book by Anne Wells, the wife of Edgar Wells, Superintendent of the Yirrkala Mission during 1962-1963.⁶³ Search for these or similar names in her 1971 book produced the following: Bilipinya (A. Wells 1971: 17ff.) is the name that the Djaŋ'kawu gave to their first camping place when they arrived on the mainland from Burralku. Climbing up from the beach at Bilipinya, "they heard the call of the black cockatoo Nadthili" (Wells 1971: 18). Could 'Ilpilya' be a rendering of 'Bilipinya'? And could 'Nadthili' be a rendering of 'Ŋatili'? Both are problematic, but transcriptions of other Yolŋu names in the book make them nevertheless possible sources. Questioning Yolŋu for possible local links for these two names, as well as for Mirimina (proposed name for the Terrace), has revealed nothing relevant. However a Google search

produced a possible source for Nadubi. That search led to a 2004 art exhibition depicting a work from Kurnbalanja (OenPELLI) of 'Nadubi, an evil spirit woman who has stingray barbs protruding from her joints'.⁶⁴ This information pertains to the western boundary of Arnhem Land, country of Kunwinjku people who have not traditionally had close affiliations with Yolŋu.

Nadubi Walk still stands as a sign for a walkway between Chesterfield Circuit and Wuyal Road. The most recent map on which this name has been found however, is in a Nhulunbuy Corporation Information booklet dated July 1984. The map in the December booklet produced in the same year does not show any named walkways, yet this is the publication providing information about all the street names. The walkway alongside the swimming pool to have been given the name Mawalan is shown as Mirimina Walk in the July 1984 booklet. Running alongside the other side of the swimming pool up to Franklyn (sic) Street was Mirimina Terrace. Ilpilya Walk is shown as the walkway between Chesterfield Circuit and Dryandra Close. By 1999 both Mirimina Walk and Mirimina Terrace had disappeared. Mirimina Terrace was incorporated into the swimming pool grounds, and Mirimina Walk fenced in. We have one map which we can date between 1984 and 1999 that shows Ilpilya Walk,⁶⁵ but do not have further details as to when the name, and any possible signage, fell into disuse.

Other names are included here as 'Aboriginal' although they were not indicated as such in the 1970 list. They are Thunderman (Djambuwal), Wuyal, Singing Rocks and possibly Banyan (see section above: 'Comment on non-Yolŋu names for the Town Area').

In the information provided for the flora names from the 1973 *Nhulunbuy Newsweek* articles and in subsequent documents, a small number are described as Aboriginal in origin, i.e. Geebung (Close) and Bunya (Close). They are not from local languages, and the attribution of Iluka to a New South Wales source suggests a view that there is a single Aboriginal language.

In general, the evidence of naming by recent European arrivals indicates minimal interest in the expression of local Indigenous culture. By 2005 only three Yolŋu words occurred amongst the placenames in the town lease area, the name of Nhulunbuy itself, Wuyal Road and Rotary Marika Lookout (honouring Roy Marika, a Yolŋu leader prominent in the land rights movement in the 1960s).⁶⁶

More recent names

Several street names have been put in place since those discussed above. Most of them are listed in the last two rows of Table 17.1. It is presumed these date from 1984 onwards.

The descriptions of the placenames in the 1973 *Nhulunbuy Newsweek* articles reveal an attempt to relate the choices to the local context. Despite being described as ‘native flora’ in the original proposal, about one fourth of the flora names selected are not native to Australia, and the rest are divided between those that occur locally and those that occur in other parts of Australia. It appears that the people living in Nhulunbuy in the early 1970s tried to relate the names to their immediate environment. Thus the explanations that accompany the names include comments about related species in Australia, locally, or about the possibilities of growing them in Nhulunbuy gardens. This desire for the ‘localising of names’ by the new inhabitants is reflected in the majority of the most recently named streets: Ovcacic St, Dartnall Pl, Dargaville Rd, Walling Cl and Leach Rd. These streets are named for people who could be described as ‘local identities’ in the recent life of the town. The first two have been on maps since 2001 and the latter three were chosen in 2006 and appeared on signs in the first quarter of 2007.

Names added up until 1984 retain the categories established in 1970-1971. Names added since then have introduced new categories. Examples of local identities have just been given. Included in the ‘local identities’ are a number of names for people who were still living at the time the names were chosen. This is outside the Place Names Committee’s Rules of Nomenclature and Guidelines and advice received by the Corporation from the Place Names Committees during the 1970s. Another new category is that of historical figures of Northern Australia used for streets in the Industrial Estate.⁶⁷ The only additional placename in Nhulunbuy South, where streets were originally named with Alusuisse connections, is ‘Recreation Close’. This runs along part of an oval and is said to have been so designated when it led to a community hall, later used as a Boy Scouts hall. This, like Melville Bay Rd is named for what it gives access to.

Of the five new street names selected in 2006,⁶⁸ one is a Yolŋu name, albeit misspelled – Bunggalwuy (for Bunggulwuy) Close. In the *Arafura Times* the name is attributed to traditional owners of the area “with Bunggal (sic) meaning ‘dancing ceremony’ and Wuy meaning a ‘place’” (*Arafura Times*, 1 November 2006: 8). The last of the new names is Barramundi Close, introducing yet another new category. With only one example, we cannot be certain about a category but fish or local fauna are possibilities. With the establishment of Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation in 1992, a Yolŋu organisation responsible for managing recreation areas which are

outside the town lease, signs have appeared that include the original Yolŋu name together with later non-Yolŋu names: thus 'East Woody (Gäluru)', 'Town Beach (Gaḏalathami)', and 'Wirrawuy' (for 'Cape Wirawawoi' on topographic and other maps of the area). Moves to develop a tourist industry have also played a role in naming, and there is a growing tendency for Yolŋu names to appear on recent maps produced by the North East Arnhem Land Tourist Association (see Figure 17.3). These maps are widely used locally.

The use of Yolŋu names is not a general feature of contemporary signage within the town lease; for example, until 2005, Mount Saunders remained signed only as 'Mount Saunders' in contrast to recent maps that provide both names, i.e. 'Nhulun' and 'Mount Saunders'. In 2005, Dhimurru Land Management Corporation worked with Nhulunbuy Corporation to have signs made and posted indicating the location of the mountain and its lookout tower, signs that give the name 'Nhulun' primacy. In 2006 a new housing venture, undertaken by a Yolŋu organisation, has been given the name 'Malpi Village'. Committee Members of the Rirratjirŋu Association have also approved the use of the name BingaBinga for the street in Malpi Village as well as Ngarrku Village for another housing development.⁶⁹

In the names for local businesses, sporting associations and the like 'Gove', 'Nhulunbuy', 'Arnhem' and 'Arafura' feature prominently.⁷⁰ Only a handful of business names and sporting teams incorporate Yolŋu names. One large local business, Gove Industrial Supplies, should be noted for going against the trend in changing its name to include a Yolŋu placename, becoming 'Gorrkbuy Industrial Supplies'.

The actions of Indigenous organisations within Nhulunbuy and local moves to develop a tourist industry appear to have produced a greater recognition of Yolŋu placenames in recent years. It will be interesting to see whether the choice of Bunggalwuy (sic) Close marks a serious change in naming strategies by the Nhulunbuy Corporation.

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— 20 July 73, vol.1, no 44: 12-13.

— 3 August 73, vol.1, no 45: 15-16.

— 10 August 73, vol.1, no 46: 10-11.

— 17 August 73, vol.1, no 47: 12-13.

— 24 August 73, vol.1, no 48: 11-12.

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Endnotes

1. This paper is developed from a paper with the same title originally drafted for the conference *Place-names of Indigenous Origins* at The Australian National University in 1999. The conference was sponsored by AUSTRALEX (The Australian Association for Lexicography), the pilot National Place Names Project and the Australian Language Research Centre.
2. To Stuart Duncan, Secretary of the Place Names Committee, our sincere appreciation for encouraging us to write the paper, for generous assistance in locating files in the Place Names Committee archives at the Northern Territory Department of Planning and Infrastructure, providing us with useful documentation, and for commenting on earlier drafts of the paper. Nancy Williams thanks Alan Black, first Town Administrator of Nhulunbuy, and Ted Egan, historian and previous Administrator of the Northern Territory, for enthusiastically and generously responding to questions during telephone interviews. Vernon O'Brien, earlier chairman of the Place Names Committee, provided us with otherwise unavailable documents and made himself available for interview. Dr R. Marika acknowledged the teaching and support from many of her family including her late father Roy *Dadayŋa* Marika, Mawalan, *Lāŋani*, Dhuwarrwarr, her mother *Djerrkŋu*, her recently deceased younger brother as well as *Witiyana*, *Mayatili* and the team at Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation. Many people who have lived in Nhulunbuy shared documents as well as their memories about the naming of Nhulunbuy. Thank you all. We would like to acknowledge the contributions of Jane Dermer from Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation, Phil Herdman and Howard Smith of the (East) Arnhem Land Historical Society and Chrys McDuffie of the Nhulunbuy Corporation in particular.
3. Nhulun and Nhulunbuy have been accepted spellings since 1969; however, up to and during the time of the dispute described in this paper a number of variants were in circulation and the spelling itself became an issue. The spelling of Nhulunbuy follows the orthography used for regional Yolŋu languages. The 'Nh' represents a lamino-dental nasal, often pronounced with an alveolar nasal 'n' by English speakers. The 'u's represent vowels close to that in English 'hood'. A common mis-pronunciation uses the vowel as in English 'but'. The last syllable is closer to English 'boy' than 'bye'.
4. Dhuwa clans owning the land and sea in the Nhulunbuy and surrounding areas and their languages are *Rirratjijŋu* (Dhaŋu), *Golumala* (Dhaŋu), *Marrakulu* (Dhuwal), *Dātiwuy* (Dhuwal), *Gālpu* (Dhaŋu) and *Djambarrpuyyu* (Dhuwal). Adjacent to these territories are *Yirritja* lands owned by *Gumatj* (Dhuwala), *Lamami* (Dhaŋu) and *Dhalwarju* (Dhay'yi) clans.
5. One record is contained in a Yirrkala School Literature Production Centre publication resulting from a workshop during which children were taken to the places where Dr Marika's father, Roy Marika, a renowned *Rirratjijŋu* leader, told them the story of *Wuyal*, the Sugar Bag Hunter. The other is a tape recording made by *Muwarra Ganambarr*, a *Dātiwuy* leader.
6. Some of the descriptors are given in terms of use areas created by non-Yolŋu lessees and non-Yolŋu functions. Compare these also with the naming pattern proposed in 1971 for Nhulunbuy: South, North, and East (see Appendix 2).

7. The place is referred to as both Nhulun and Nhulunbuy. The longer form includes the associative suffix, which has the forms *-buy*, *-puy* and *-wuy* and refers to Nhulun and the area associated with it (see section 'Overview of the grammar of Yolŋu placenames' and Appendix 1).
8. *Ringitj* is a small piece of country belonging to a clan within another group's territory. *Ringitj* are important in linking clans of the same moiety together – in this way they are similar to embassies.
9. The procedure for officially recognising placenames varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. The Secretary of the Northern Territory Place Names Committee emphasised in 1999 that the 'Rules of Nomenclature' which the Committee had used throughout its existence were never more than "guidelines"; that is, they never had statutory force (Stuart Duncan, pers. comm.).
10. <http://notes.nt.gov.au/dcm/legislat/legislat.nsf/linkreference/PLACE%20NAMES%20ACT?opendocument>
11. The current *Place Names Act* (with amendments) is available on line. Amendments include *Northern Territory Rules of Nomenclature, 2001*, which differ from the 1995 rules of nomenclature that we infer were in force in the 1960s and 1970s.
12. The 1995 Rules of Nomenclature were obtained from the Northern Territory Department of Land Planning and Environment website in 1999. For current Rules of Nomenclature, see: <http://nt.gov.au/placenames/policy/nomenclature.shtml>.
13. Macknight (1976: 33) says: "The area of the Northern Territory visited by the Macassans was known to them as Marege". The origin of this name is obscure, though it is recorded in many sources. Matthes, in his Macassarese dictionary, says that it really applies to the Aborigines and this usage is recorded by direct observers. 'Marege' was clearly distinguished from the Kimberley coast, which was known as 'Kayu Jawa'. Dr Marika recalls Wandjuk Marika telling her the name the Macassans used was Butha-marri. It also appears in a translation of a text from Wandjuk by his daughter Rärriwuy (Cooke 1995: 17).
14. Macknight (1976: 90) refers to names of Macassan origin in Grays Bay and on Groote Eylandt.
15. Powell (2000: 246), says: "'Arnhem Land' is first referred to in instructions given to Pool in 1636". Gerrit Pool was sent out in command of two ships by Anthony van Dieman, Governor of Batavia 1636-1645. Sheehan (2006: 4-6) finds subsequent scholarship contradictory, but notes that Van Colster in the *Arnhem* may have discovered Arnhem Land in 1623.
16. He also named Dhambaliya, east of Nhulunbuy, 'Melville Isles', but that name was later changed in favour of the Tiwi Island which had been given the same name, because the latter was larger. Dhambaliya was then given the name 'Bremer Island' after an earlier failed settlement on Melville Island by Captain Bremer, who later became Sir John. Recognition at the time of the confusion as to the island on which the settlement had actually been located did not result in any change, and Dhambaliya remained Bremer Island. [This account is based on materials in National Archives Item 172059.]
17. After Earl defined and named the Arafura Sea, Melville Bay was of course no longer within the Gulf of Carpentaria.
18. According to Schwarz, who had access to Parliamentary archives, and sighted the "thumb print petition", "The number of petitions actually created in 1963 is confusing. Reverend Wells ... speaks of 'Five major copies [that] were to be completed' [Wells 1982:81]. It appears, however, that only two were painted and the remaining petitions are typed copies held in the Parliamentary archives. In most literary accounts, however, only the image of the second painted panel stamped 28 August, 1963, is reproduced and it is commonly referred to as 'The Petition' or 'The first petition', thereby confusing the status of the first panel, stamped 14 August, 1963, as a petition in its own right ... It seems that the existence of the first panel, the so-called Dhuwa panel, has become obscured, and I have found only two published images of it [one is in Wells 1981:36] ... Perhaps for this reason the second panel has come to be known as 'The Bark Petition'. It should be noted as well that Wandjuk [Marika 1995:105] refers to the 1968 Petition as the 'second bark petition' thus suggesting that the two 1963 panels are indeed one work. On the other hand, Parliament refers to the three panels (two from 1963 and one from 1968) as 'three bark petitions.'" (Schwarz 1999: 96). Eggerking (pers. comm. 20 August 2007), who has recently sighted all copies of the petition and

relevant archives, states that Anne Wells typed five petitions at one time and all were signed at that time. Parliament did not regard the three pages of thumbprints as part of the petition because none of the sheets of thumbprints contained the prayer required by the standing orders for each page of a petition. All copies are held in the Parliament archives.

19. Correspondence from A. R. Miller, Surveyor-General, Lands and Survey Branch, to Director of National Mapping, 25 June 1963 S101B pt. 3, Northern Territory Place Names Committee files.
20. Melville Bay and Gove Surveys F649 S385 PT 1, Northern Territory Archives.
21. Northern Territory Place Names Committee file.
22. 63/2729 61/2000, Northern Territory Place Names Committee file.
23. 61/2000 14 April 1964, Northern Territory Place Names Committee file.
24. Correspondence in Northern Territory Place Names Committee files.
25. S101B(3) Northern Territory Place Names Committee file.
26. Correspondence in Northern Territory Place Names Committee files.
27. Northern Territory Place Names Committee files. The translator is not named.
28. To Swift Dept Terr AA85016/0849K/4.9.68 555/D2140, Northern Territory Place Name Committee file.
29. 67/6088 71/7063F 68/3328, Northern Territory Place Names Committee Files.
30. In fact, the Yolŋu text does not include this orthographic alternative, although the translation (certified as correct) does.
31. The name 'Gove Harbour' was gazetted in 1987 (Northern Territory Gazette G38 dated 23 September 1987).
32. One proposed name was opposed, according to Black, the town's first administrator, because it was the name of a then recently deceased clan leader (Mawalan), and consequently was not used.
33. The local Rotary Club constructed and named the lookout on Nhulun. The name was put in place prior to Mr Marika's death. It is named for Dr Marika's father, Roy Daḍayja Marika.
34. Correctly Bunggulwuy (Bungulwuy in the Yolŋu orthography). By the time this went to press a new sign now stands with the correct spelling.
35. Nominal is a term for word classes typically associated with noun phrases and may include in its membership other classes such as pronouns, adjectives, demonstratives, common nouns and proper nouns.
36. *dhaŋu* *dharpa* *raŋiwuy*, *yaka* *ḍiltjiwuy*
 tree/shrub beach-associative not bush-associative
 This shrub is [found/grows at] the beach, not the bush.
37. While there are none in our sample, there are placenames incorporating the locative suffix. These behave like those with the associative suffix in that further case suffixes are attached directly to the root. In these placenames the citation and locative case forms are identical.
38. 'The Port of Gove' was only ever proposed as a name (see Appendix 2).
39. In *Gaṇarri'mi* -mi is the proprietive ('having') suffix.
40. Strictly speaking, 'Yirrkala' does not apply to the whole of the Yirrkala community. It has been extended in its application to the township. The same is true of 'Nhulunbuy'. Similarly the term 'Miwatj' has been given a broader application in its use in names for new institutions, e.g. 'Miwatj Health'.
41. The term *raki* was used because of a special string associated with the Mangalili clan who live in that area.
42. These include kin terms, avoidance address terms, subsection terms and 'nicknames'.
43. Yolŋu terms for the 'inside' names include *djinawa* 'inside' and *dharrpal* 'sacred/secret', *maḍayin* 'sacred', *dhuyu* 'sacred/secret/forbidden', while those for 'outside' names include *warraṇul* 'outside', *garwar* 'top, surface' and *yānaŋu* 'not forbidden, profane'.

44. Writers have approached this restriction in various ways. Tamisari (2002) does not provide the actual name in her descriptions. Keen adopts English names as "pseudonyms, based on the Yolŋu practice of naming people after ancestral beings and their analogues; most are names of species associated with the appropriate patrimoiety" (Keen 1994: vii-viii). Two Yolŋu teachers, Gurruwiwi (1988) and Gondarra (1988), writing on Yolŋu names of children at their school, provide the names – but only general meanings, e.g. *ŋayi* 'place', *wata* 'wind', *wäyin* 'land animal', *bäru* 'crocodile', *gortha* 'fire', *ŋarali* 'cigarette'. They do not give the moiety or specific group or events with which the names are associated. This is similar to the 'common noun glosses' of personal names included in the Yolŋu Matha Dictionary in Zorc (1986), although many entries there are given no gloss at all.
45. This may be a widely shared feature. Hunn reports that the Sahaptin-speakers of the Columbia Plateau "reject *biographical* place-names, that is, those named for historical individuals, an aversion shared by the Dena'ina". Moreover, he adds, "This is in stark contrast to the English immigrant's decided preference for such names. Nearly half of our English sample of Washington State place-names are biographical." (Hunn 1996: 22).
46. We note that in 1973 (closely following the outcome of the dispute), the Place Names Ordinance was amended, changing the definition of a public place and the ability of the [Placenames] Committee to recommend altering the name of a public place (<http://notes.nt.gov.au/dcm/legislat/legislat.nsf/linkreference/PLACE%20NAMES%20ACT?opendocument>).
47. The Dhaŋu form is given first, followed by Dhuwal and Dhuwala forms.
48. The ergative-instrumental-temporal suffix is occasionally used to mark the allative case on placenames. The only attested forms are after vowels with the *-y* or *-yu* variant of the suffix (also *-dhu* and *-thu*). For Djambarrpuyŋu see Wilkinson (1991: 585). Yirrkalayu has been noted by Schebeck (pers. comm.).
49. In Dhaŋu, Dhuwal and Dhuwala languages the suffixes which code relationships between nominals, i.e. 'adnominal suffixes', and those that code relations between verbs and nominals, i.e. 'relational suffixes', are largely distinct. The most productive adnominal suffixes are the proprietive *-mi* (*-mirr*, *-mirri*) and the associative.
50. Glosses used in Appendix 1: PROM: Prominence, S: 'subject' in intransitive clauses, nominative case. O 'object' in transitive clauses, accusative case, LOC: Locative, PRES: Present, IMP: Imperfective, ALL: Allative, ASS: Associative, NEG: Negative
51. Human referring nouns also formally distinguish the subject of a transitive verb (with the ergative suffix *-dhu/-thu/-yu*) from the subject of an intransitive verb (the bare stem) and the object of a transitive verb (with the accusative suffix *-nha*). Non-human referring nouns use the bare stem for both subject of intransitive verbs and objects of transitive verbs but mark the subject of a transitive verb (with the ergative suffix *-dhu/-thu/-yu*).
52. Telephone interview on 14 October 1999.
53. 68/3944, Northern Territory Place Names Committee file.
54. 70/756, Northern Territory Place Names Committee files.
55. L5.70/756 68/3944, Northern Territory Place Names Committee files.
56. 70/756 L5/70/756, Northern Territory Place Names Committee files.
57. So far no Yolŋu word (or phrase) that means 'near the sea' has been found which is remotely like *Iluka*. It is presumably possible that some Aboriginal language speaker other than Yolŋu – perhaps a Nabalco employee – was consulted and provided this name. *Iluka* is listed in Tyrrel (1933) as "Near the sea. N.S.W." and in Kennedy and Kennedy (1989) as "NSW Aboriginal name meaning 'near the sea'".
58. The current relevant website is <http://www.nt.gov.au/placenames/register/index.shtml>
59. Several of these misspellings are retained in current street signs.
60. <http://www.nt.gov.au/placenames/register/index.shtml/>
61. Coincidentally John (Gerard) Flynn was also the name of the third Town Administrator 1974-1975.
62. Alan Black, pers. comm. 15 October 1999.

63. *This Their Dreaming*, published in 1971, is an account of Yolŋu elders painting the Yirrkala Church Panels in 1963. People at Yirrkala and Nhulunbuy in 1970 could have had access to a pre-publication copy. Wells 1961 did not provide any possible sources, although they may exist in other books Anne Wells published before 1970.
64. Crossing Country Exhibition 2004, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/sub/crossingcountry/2_EXHIBITION/exh_highlights8.html
65. The name there actually looks to be 'Ipliya' but as the typing of 'Dryandra' and 'Ilpilya' overlap it is hard to make out. 'Ipliya' is in fact the version in both the 1984 booklet of December as well as in the 1973 series of the *Gove Gazette*, but 'Ilpilya' is shown on the map in the July 1984 booklet.
66. The local Rotary Club named the lookout on Nhulun the 'Rotary Marika Lookout', which is indicated on some maps as the 'Roy Marika Lookout'. The name was put in place prior to Mr Marika's death. It is now also signposted as 'Roy (Malpi) Marika Lookout'.
67. We would like to acknowledge Phil Herdman of the (East) Arnhem Land Historical Society for information relating to the origins of these names.
68. The signs for these streets appeared as this was going to press in the first half of 2007. Bunggalwuy has since been corrected to Bunggulwuy.
69. Both these names refer to the wallabies making or resting in their domain, their sacred molk. The names are ŋarrku and Biŋgabiŋga in the Yolŋu orthography.
70. In the 2006/2007 Northern Territory phone directory for addresses in Nhulunubuy there are 29 beginning with Gove, 18 with Nhulunbuy 10 with Arnhem or Arnhemland and four with Arafura.