

## **CITY OF RYDE LAUNCHES FINDING BENNELONG.COM**

In 1813 one of the most significant figures in Australian history, Woollarawarre Bennelong, died and was buried at Kissing Point on land owned by his friend, James Squire. The death of Bennelong marked the end to an extraordinary period of interaction between Aboriginal people and the first colonists.

Over the last three years the City of Ryde's Heritage Advisory Committee has been dedicated to raising local and national awareness of Bennelong and his place in Australian history. In 2010 project funding was successfully obtained and a history of Bennelong project was commissioned and undertaken by Dr Keith Vincent Smith.

Reporting on the life of Bennelong and his role in Aboriginal and colonist relations, had to this time been generally less than favourable, portraying him as a tragic figure who in the end was shunned by the new settlers and ostracised by his own people.

But the study by Dr Keith Vincent Smith shed new light on the life of Bennelong, and his role as intermediary and ambassador between Aboriginal people and members of the First Fleet.

In addition to Dr Smith's research, in January 2013 another important milestone occurred in the Bennelong story. Two hundred years after the death of Woollarawarre Bennelong, environmental scientist Dr Peter Mitchel identified the approximate site of his burial in suburban Putney.

To honour this important figure in Australian history, the City of Ryde have developed an online educational resource [www.findingbennelong.com](http://www.findingbennelong.com) that tells a more comprehensive story of the man, his motivations and the role he played in the world of the new arrivals.

Finding Bennelong is based on the research by Keith Vincent Smith and uses actual transcripts from the time of the First Fleet, as well as the contemporary thoughts and feelings offered by many Aboriginal people. The website introduces the audience to an extraordinary time and complex man, and attempts to answer the question: Who really was Woollarawarre Bennelong?

Finding Bennelong was created jointly by the City of Ryde and Art of Multimedia with the assistance of members of the Project Steering Group and the knowledge of many Aboriginal people.

Media contact: Lee Kirkland City of Ryde Media Officer p9952 8083 m0434 306 444