

Place Name SUMMARY (PNS) 4.3.1/05

‘TUNI’

(McLaren Vale)

(last edited: 31/3/2013)

Abstract

Tuni is not Kurna; it is a Ngarrindjeri word meaning ‘sand or ground’.

It was chosen on 10th January 1946 by the SA government’s Nomenclature Committee as the name of a railway stopping place on the western outskirts of McLaren Vale, on the former Willunga line.

<i>Coordinates</i>	Approx. -35.213082° Latitude, 138.531661° Longitude. (estimated from
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Language Information

<i>Meaning</i>	‘sand, ground’
<i>Etymology</i>	
<i>Notes</i>	
<i>Language Family</i>	Yaraldic: ‘Ngarrindjeri’.
<i>KWP Former Spelling</i>	
<i>KWP New Spelling 2010</i>	
<i>Phonemic Spelling</i>	
<i>Pronunciation</i>	“Tu-ni”.
<i>Pronunciation tips</i>	Stress the first syllable; ‘u’ as in ‘put.

Main source evidence

<i>Date</i>	1843
<i>Original source text</i>	“Tūne, sand.”
<i>Reference</i>	Meyer 1843, <i>Vocabulary of the... Aborigines of the Southern and Eastern portions of... SA</i> : 101.
<i>Informants credited</i>	
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	

Date	1879
Original source text	“Ground – Tuni... Sand – Tuni.”
Reference	G Taplin 1879, ‘Vocabulary of the Narrinyeri Language’, in <i>The Folklore, Manners, Customs and Languages of the South Australian Aborigines</i> : 131, 136.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	

Date	Jan 1946
Original source text	“Rw St DL 5890/40: The following names are suggested for stopping places on the Willunga line:... TUNI m⁹ ‘sand’. ”
Reference	Minutes of 10/1/1946, in Nomenclature Committee Minutes Book, GNU: 106.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	

Date	March 1946
Original source text	“SAR 6968/45. Stopping places on the Willunga line:... No.9, TUNI meaning ‘sand’ ”. [<i>signed for committee by “AD Smith and RO Segerlind 5/3/46”</i>].
Reference	Nomenclature Committee Minutes as sent to Director of Lands, in Docket DL 5890/40, State Records.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	

Discussion: ‘TUNI’ RAILWAY STATION:

Aboriginal words have been all the rage for naming purposes since the 1890s. On the 4th of February 1946 PF Cherry, Secretary of the Office of the Railways Commissioner, sent a letter to the SA Surveyor-General:

We have a number of un-named level crossing stops on the Willunga line which are at present identified by numbers... 2, 4, 6, 9 and 11.... It is deemed desirable that names should be substituted for numbers and the Railways Commissioner would be glad if the Nomenclature Committee would suggest a suitable name for each of the above stopping places. It is suggested that short aboriginal place names be selected containing few syllables.¹

The Committee responded with a typewritten Minute to the Director of Lands dated 5th March:

¹ SAR 6968/45, in docket DL 5890/40, State Records of SA.

Consideration has been given to the requests of the Railways Commissioner, and the Committee submits the following native names for use in connection therewith:–

... SAR 6968/45. Stopping places on the Willunga line:–

No.2, PATPA meaning 'south wind'.

No.4, YETTO meaning 'good'.

No.6, KORRA meaning 'grass'.

No.9, TUNI meaning 'sand'.

No.11, PIKKARA meaning 'south'.²

Spellings in this note are identical to those hand-written in the Committee's Minutes Book.³

The committee, a little more familiar than the Commissioner with Aboriginal language sources, had wisely not complied with his request to use existing place-names. At that time they were using plenty of Aboriginal words but rarely making any distinction between different languages or lands. For sources they used most of the readily-available Aboriginal wordlists from all over Australia.

They did not say where they obtained the word 'Tuni' and its meaning, but their source was probably the 'Narrinyeri' wordlist collected by Taplin and published in his *Folklore* (1879); this was much more easy to find than Meyer's rare book.

The old line was closed in 1969.⁴ It is now followed by the Coast To Vines Rail Trail, where this and other stations are now commemorated by onsite plaques.

In the Kurna language of the McLaren Vale area, 'sand' is *worra*.

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End of Summary

² Enclosure in Docket DL 5890/40, State Records. The information in the typescript is identical with that which appears in the Committee's Minutes Book, with the same internal date but for some reason still under the head of 'Meeting 10.1.46'.

³ Nomenclature Committee Minutes Book: 106.

⁴ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Willunga_railway_line,_Adelaide (16/3/09).