

# D'harawal

DREAMING STORIES

## Kai'mia

THE STORY OF THE GYMEA LILY



[www.dharawalstories.com](http://www.dharawalstories.com)

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# Foreword

Throughout the past two hundred years, society has come to regard the Koori Dreaming stories as something akin to the fairy stories they were told as children.

However, for thousands upon thousands of years, the stories in this book were used as a teaching tool to impart to the youngest members of the clans the laws which governed the cultural behaviour of clan members. The successive attempts to destroy the Koori culture and assimilate The People into the Euro-centric population were unsuccessful, and the Dreaming Stories were able to continue in their disguise as charming legends where animals became the heroes and the heroines.

Historians and anthropologists have studied the Koori culture since they first arrived on this continent, and have come to the conclusion that the D'harawal culture is dead. Of, course, this has been done without reference to the descendants of that culture, and without even asking the proper questions. The D'harawal culture is not dead, it is a strong, living, vital culture of the Sydney and South Coast regions that just had to go underground for a while to be able to survive. Now that the right questions have been asked, we have the key to unlock a vast wealth of knowledge of this part of the country in which we live.

It is difficult to explain to a society based on commerce fuelled by the profit motive, that D'harawal culture is not based on the ownership of tangible things like land and dwellings and possessions, but it does have a very strong sense of ownership of information. That information, particularly in story form, was not traded, but could be given, and given freely, but its ownership was respected, those stories were not told or passed on by those to whom they had been given, but the knowledge in them was used by the receiver whilst ever they walked in the Land of the D'harawals, This Land.

It is hoped that our present society is now mature enough to be able to accept the Koori Dreaming stories as they were, as they are, and as they were always destined to be; tools to teach the Children of The People about living with Earth, the Mother, in peace and harmony.



Each story contains several layers of knowledge, the first of which are the secrets. Which can only be passed on or discussed with persons of the same level of knowledge or higher than the story teller. These secrets are never told within a legend, but are remembered separately from the legend itself. These are very important components of any legend, and it is the knowledge of the secrets which determines the level of the person's worthiness to ownership of that story.

The next layer of knowledge within the stories was the law, or laws, to be obeyed. The laws of the stories were told and often repeated after the telling of each story, after which the laws were discussed and their application in life demonstrated in a variety of ways.

The third layer of knowledge contained in each story was the lessons which could be learned from the story and the lessons were taught to all members of the group as well as visitors. These lessons introduced Peoples to the means to live in harmony with each other, and the land and its resources.

In this series of D'harawal Law Legends, there are many lessons to be learned. The D'harawals believed that children learned better and more quickly when they were encouraged to work through a problem, rather than be told the answer. By sharing the stories of our ancestors with you, it is hoped that not only will you recognise and learn the lessons and laws of the Peoples of This Land, but you will also come to understand and respect the culture of The People and our feelings and relationship with the land.

The stories do not in themselves act as an instruction manual - rather they point the way and encourage The People to think, to learn and to live. It is hoped that by sharing our stories, you too may be able to think, to learn and to live in This Land.

With understanding and respect for each other we can learn to more easily share This Land and live together in peace and harmony.

*Frances Bodkin*



## THE STORY OF THE GYMEA LILY

# Kai'mia



This story tells of a long time ago, when the river now known as the Georges River, but then known as **Kai'eemah** joined with the **Goolay'yari**, or Cook's River, and flowed as one through the swamps that once were Botany Bay.

Together they then flowed out through the place called **Kurunulla**, or Cronulla.



At that time, the clan living along the river decided that they would make a trip to the lands of the Wirrimbirra to give thanks to the Creator Spirit for giving them such a good place to live.

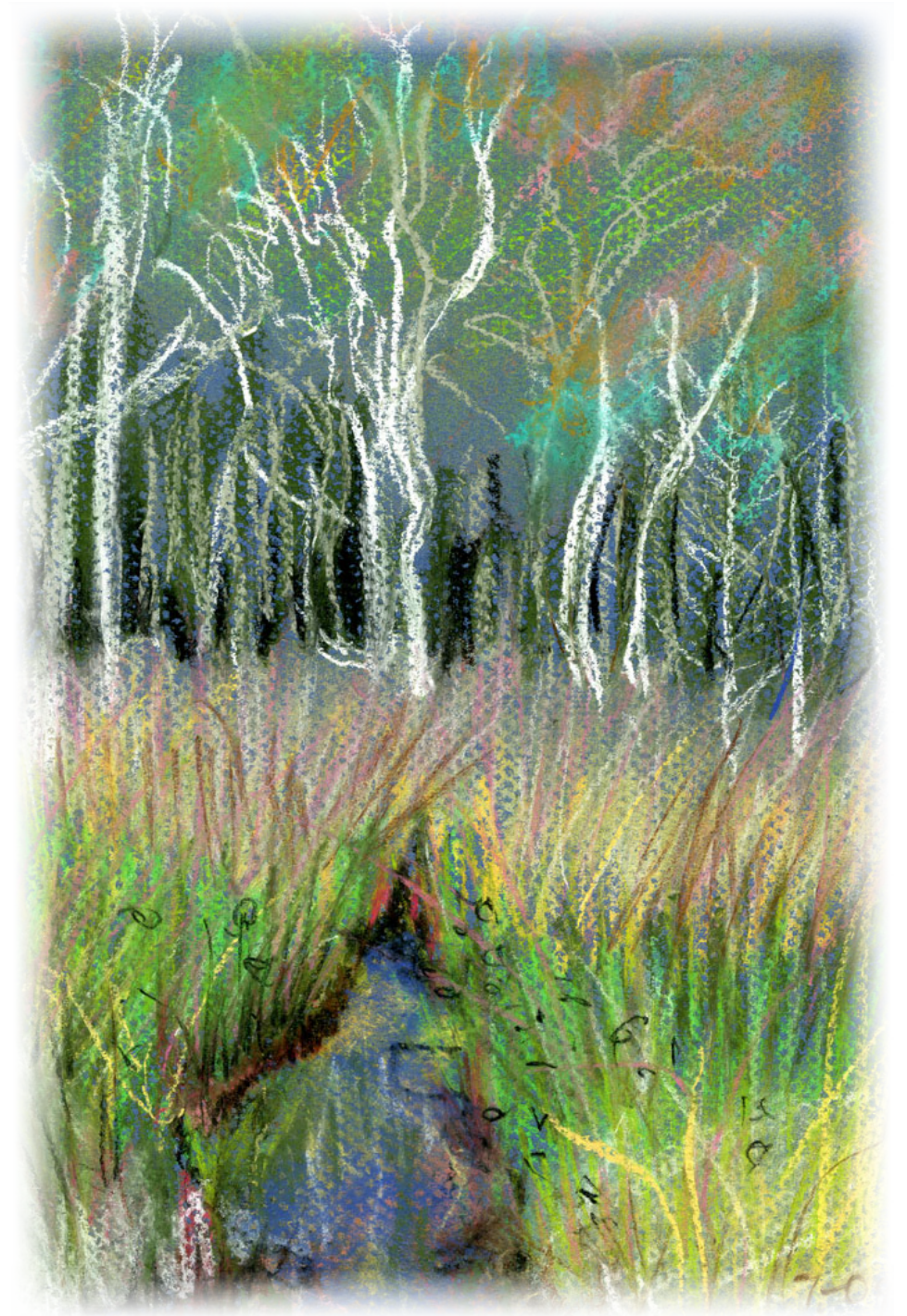
Now the younger members of the clan were not very happy about leaving their homeland to travel for many days along the Kai'eemah into deep gorges and rough land just to give thanks to a Creator Spirit which, they said had done nothing for them.

They wanted to stay behind and fish and hunt in the swamps whilst the knowledgeholders made the journey.

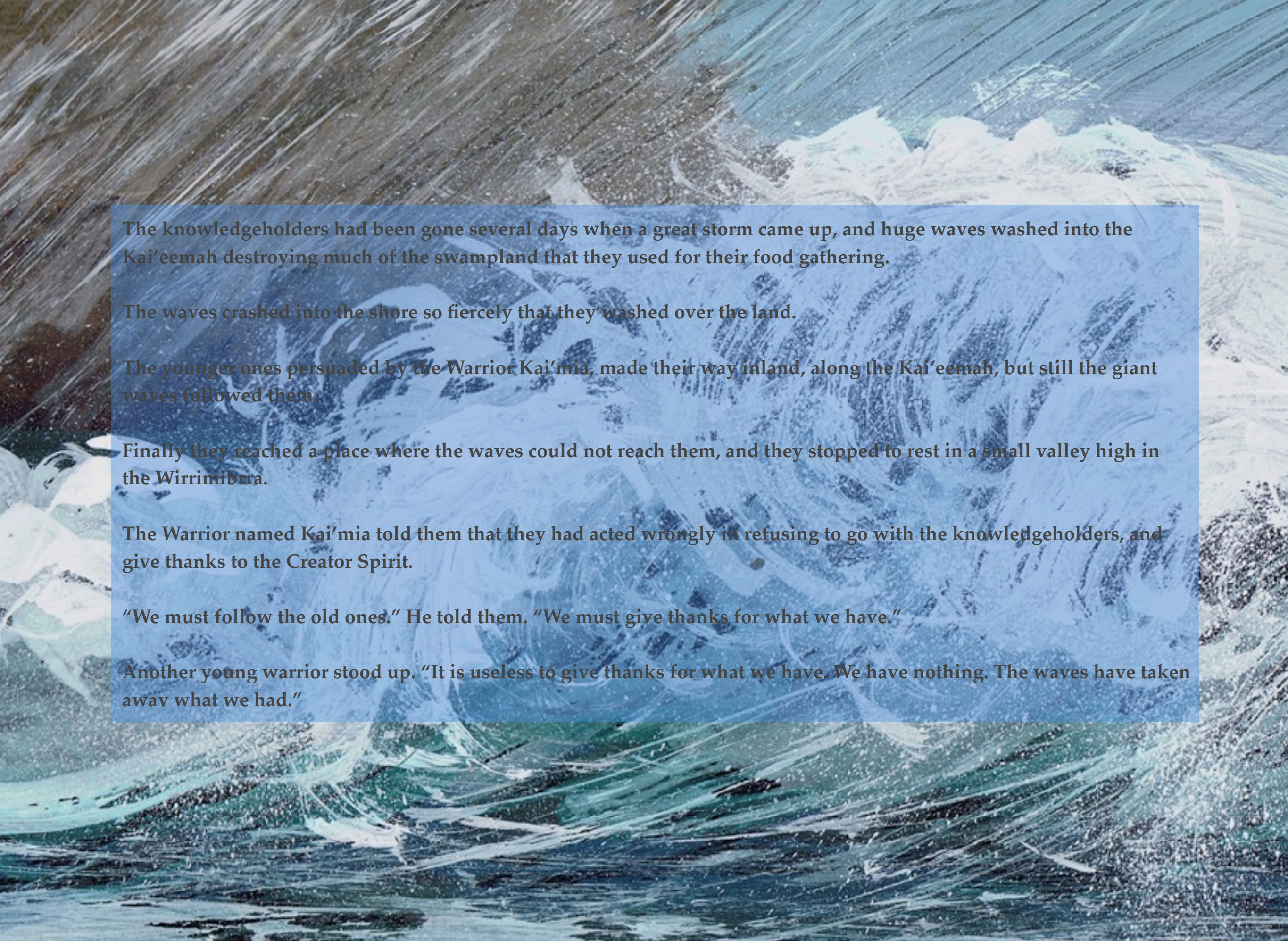
The knowledgeholders tried to explain to the young ones that it was because of the Creator Spirit that they were able to enjoy the things that they did, but the young ones did not listen.

So the knowledgeholders went off alone, with some trepidation, leaving the young ones to either follow or to do as they wished.

However, one, a warrior called Kai'mia, decided to stay with the younger ones, to ensure their safety, and to try to talk them into taking the long trip up the Kai'ee-mah, to fulfill their duties to the Creator Spirit.







The knowledgeholders had been gone several days when a great storm came up, and huge waves washed into the Kai'eemah destroying much of the swampland that they used for their food gathering.

The waves crashed into the shore so fiercely that they washed over the land.

The younger ones persuaded by the Warrior Kai'mia, made their way inland, along the Kai'eemah, but still the giant waves followed them.

Finally they reached a place where the waves could not reach them, and they stopped to rest in a small valley high in the Wirrimibrra.

The Warrior named Kai'mia told them that they had acted wrongly in refusing to go with the knowledgeholders, and give thanks to the Creator Spirit.

"We must follow the old ones." He told them. "We must give thanks for what we have."

Another young warrior stood up. "It is useless to give thanks for what we have. We have nothing. The waves have taken away what we had."



At that moment there was a great flash of lightning and a great clap of thunder, and the younger ones saw a great cave that would give them shelter from the driving rain.

They ran to the cave and huddled there, trying to keep warm.

Kai'mia tried to talk to the younger ones, telling them that it would not be far to the Special Place, that since they had travelled this far, they may as well go the rest of the way. But the young ones were reluctant to go out into the storm, and stayed in the shelter of the cave.

Suddenly there was a great sound of thunder, worse than ever before, and the ground shook violently.

Some of the young ones ran to the front of the cave to be crushed by the falling rock, others ran to the back of the cave only to find themselves trapped in the darkness.

Kai'mia was amongst those who had run to the back of the cave, and as his eyes grew used to the darkness he saw a tiny splinter of light coming from deep within the cave. He made his way to it, and looked up to see the grey, stormy sky.

He told the others who were crying out, or sobbing to be quiet, and to come and help him climb up to the crack in the roof of the cave.



Several of the young warriors stood below the crack and by climbing on to their shoulders he found that he could reach a small overhang, and pull himself up into the crevice. With great difficulty he began making his way up towards the light when once again the earth shook and rocks came tumbling down upon him.

One sharp rock broke his arm, and another ripped a great wound in his body.

Slowly he dragged himself up into the light, and despite his injuries searched for the trees out of which he could make rope to help his friends climb out, but to no avail. In despair he fell to the ground above the hole, but as he lay bleeding and in great pain on the rock, the earth shook once again, closing up the crack through which he had escaped.

Dimly, he could hear the cries of help from his friends below, but alone he could do nothing to help them.

Hoping to reach the knowledgeholders Kai'mia made his painful way along the Kai'ee-mah towards the Special Place, but he was very badly hurt, and fell, many times, until he was too weak to travel any more.

He cried out for help, hoping that someone would hear him, but the only answer he received was from the thunder. "Oh Great Spirit!" He cried, "help my brothers and sisters."

Then, the Warrior Kai'mia died.





Now near by, sheltering from the storm under a great log were some warriors from the Wirrimbirra.

They heard his cry, and came to find his body lying on some white sands.

“There must be others.” The warriors of the Wirrimbirra said. “We will follow his tracks.”

But they had travelled only a small distance when they found that his tracks had been washed away in the rain.

“Look at this!” Said one, pointing to a small plant with blood red tips on its leaves. “And there is another.”

Wherever the blood of Kai'mia had fallen, a small plant had grown from the sand, and on top of the cave where Kai'mia had first fallen, there was a giant plant like the smaller ones they had followed.





And on top of this giant plant was a great flower that looked like a clot of blood held aloft by a great spear.

The Wirrimbirra warriors knew then that this was where the young ones were trapped. But try as they might, they were unable to move the great rock and free the young ones trapped below.

They were still trying to find a way into the cave beneath when the knowledgeholders, returning from their journey passed by.

When they saw the body of Kai'mia, they realised that it was their young ones trapped beneath the great rock.

For many days they worked hard trying to dig a way into the cave, but the voices of the young ones grew weaker and fewer until there was silence.

Sadly, the knowledgeholders returned to their homeland to find that what they once known was no longer.

Instead of the swamps, there was a great bay, and where the Kai'ee-mah had met the sea there was high mountains of sand.





The two rivers now no longer joined together, but ran into the sea separately.

Now, there are stories of how the young ones are still living in the great caves below the ground, seeking a way out, and how the spirit of Kai'mia still searches for them.

Now, it is said, that wherever you see the flower of Kai'mia, you know that the spirit of Kai'mia was there, still searching for his brothers and sisters.

And some say that the descendants of the Young Ones are still trapped in the caves below, and sometimes you can hear their cries of help in the silence before a storm.

And when the knowledgeholders returned to the place where the two rivers once ran into the ocean they performed a ceremony and buried certain objects.

And whilst ever those objects remain there, the storms will not take away the Kurunulla.





And when you look out across the great waters of the Kai'eemah, you will remember what happens when you show disrespect to the Creator Spirit and allow the Spirit of This Land to weaken.

But the Creator Spirit recognised the bravery of Kai'mia, and decreed that the giant plant which grew wherever his spirit had paused to listen for the voices of his brothers and sisters would be forever in memory of his bravery.

That is why, the nectar of the flowers quenches the thirst of those who are lost. And the stem of the flower provides food for those who hunger.

And from the leaves rope can be made that is strong enough to hold the weight of persons who may be trapped amongst fallen rocks.





# Kai'mia

GyMEA Lily: *Doryanthes excelsa*

Family: Doryanthaceae

Distribution: Open forest in eastern New South Wales.

Common Names: GyMEA lily, Giant Lily

Derivation of Name: *Doryanthes*...From Greek dory a spear and anthos, a flower, referring to the spear-like flowering stems; *excelsa*...From Latin excelsus, elevated, high, referring to the tall flower spikes.

Conservation Status: Not considered to be at risk in the wild.

Distribution: Coastal

Niche: On well-drained sandy soils over Hawkesbury Sandstone

General Description: *Doryanthes* is an Australian genus comprising two species (the other being *D. palmeri* of northern New South Wales and south-east Queensland).

*Doryanthes excelsa* is a clumping, tussock-like species consisting of long, lance-shaped leaves about 150 cm long by about 10 cm wide. The leaves are bright green in colour. The flowering stem emerges from the centre of the tussock during winter and may reach 3 to 5 metres in height when the flowers open in spring. The flowers occur in clusters at the top of the stem and, individually are about 100 mm long. The flowers are usually red but a rare white-flowered form is known. The flowers are bird-attracting.

GyMEA lily is a hardy and attractive plant that has received a lot of attention in public landscaping projects in recent years. Although native to the Sydney region, it has proven adaptable to a range of climates. The plant prefers well drained, moist soils in full sun or partial shade. The foliage is frost tolerant but the flowers may be damaged by heavy frost. Plants tend to be fairly slow growing but respond to applications of slow-release fertilisers. The development of flowering stems can take anything from 5 to 20 years from seed.

Uses: Food source.

Indicator of appearance of whales. This plant has mythological value.

Associations with other organisms: Seeds eaten by *Wallabia tricolor*; Nectar eaten by Rainbow Lorikeet, Rosella, Noisy Miner



# Goolay'yari

## Australian Pelican

Pelicans mainly eat fish, but they are opportunistic feeders and eat a variety of aquatic animals including crustaceans, tadpoles and turtles. They readily accept 'handouts' from humans, and a number of unusual items have been recorded in their diet. During periods of starvation, pelicans have been reported capturing and eating seagulls and ducklings. The gulls are held under water and drowned before being eaten head first. Pelicans will also rob other birds of their prey.

The bill and pouch of pelicans play an important role in feeding. The bill is sensitive and this helps locate fish in murky water. It also has a hook at the end of the upper mandible, probably for gripping slippery food items. When food is caught, the pelican manipulates it in its bill until the prey typically has its head pointing down the pelican's throat. Then with a jerk of the head the pelican swallows the prey. The bill is delicately built. The lower jaw consists of two thin and weakly articulated bones from which the pouch hangs. When fully extended, the bill can hold up to 13 litres. The pouch does not function as a place to hold food for any length of time. Instead it serves as a short-term collecting organ. Pelicans plunge their bills into the water, using their pouches as nets. Once something is caught, a pelican draws its pouch to its breast. This empties the water and allows the bird to manoeuvre the prey into a swallowing position. The pouch can also serve as a net to catch food thrown by humans, and there are sightings of pelicans drinking by opening their bill to collect rain-water.

The Australian Pelican may feed alone, but more often feeds as a cooperative group. Sometimes these groups are quite large. One group numbered over 1,900 birds. A flock of pelicans works together, driving fish into a concentrated mass using their bills and sometimes by beating their wings. The fish are herded into shallow water or surrounded in ever decreasing circles.

### **Mating and reproduction**

Breeding depends on environmental conditions, particularly rainfall. Pelicans are colonial breeders with up to 40 000 individuals grouping on islands or secluded shores. Breeding begins with courtship. The female leads potential mates (two to eight or more) around the colony. As the males follow her in these walks, they threaten each other while swinging their open bills from side to side trying to attract the female's attention. The males may also pick up small objects, like sticks or dry fish, which they toss in the air and catch again, repeating the sequence several times.

Both sexes perform 'pouch-rippling' in which they clap their bills shut several times a second and the pouch ripples like a flag in a strong breeze. As the courtship parade progresses, the males drop out one by one. Finally, after pursuits on land, water or in the air, only a single male is left. The female leads him to a potential nest site.



The nest consists of a scrape in the ground prepared by the female. She digs the scrape with her bill and feet, and lines it with any scraps of vegetation or feathers within reach of the nest. Within three days egg-laying begins and eggs are laid two to three days apart. Both parents share incubation and the eggs are incubated on their feet.

The first-hatched chick is substantially larger than its siblings. It receives most of the food and may even attack and kill its nest mates. A newly hatched pelican has a large bill, bulging eyes, and skin that looks like small-grained bubble plastic. The skin around the face is mottled with varying degrees of black and the colour of the eyes varies from white to dark brown. This individual variation helps the parents to recognise their chick from hundreds of others.

The chicks leave their nests to form creches of up to 100 birds. They remain in creches for about two months, by the end of which they have learnt to fly and are fairly independent. Wild birds may live between ten and possibly 25 years or more.

Breeding season: At any time of year

Clutch size: 1 to 3

Incubation: 35 days

Time in nest: 28 days

- See more at: <http://australianmuseum.net.au/australian-pelican#sthash.VMW4PkDr.dpuf>

## **Kai'eemah**

Georges River, south of Sydney, NSW

## **Kurunulla**

Cronulla, south of Sydney, NSW