All around Australia, roads, towns, houses, rivers, mountains, parks, parishes and suburbs have names that originated in the languages of Indigenous Australia, although many of these names bear little relationship to the features or places they describe. In Australia, as elsewhere, this use of Indigenous terms in projects of mapping and naming has been understood as central to the possessive and dispossessive imperatives of the colonial project; the history of Indigenous naming is a history of settler attempts at legitimacy and possession.

And yet, the turn of the twenty-first century has witnessed the development of new programmes of Indigenous naming across Australia. The Indigenous names of significant geographic features have been restored, names offensive to Indigenous peoples have been removed, and the use of dual naming has become more common. Newly-built urban spaces have also been given Indigenous names, ostensibly in a drive to more formally recognise Indigenous peoples and their histories within official commemorative practices. Taking the naming of Barangaroo as its focus, this paper will consider the kind of commemorative urban landscapes produced by these programmes of Indigenous naming.

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