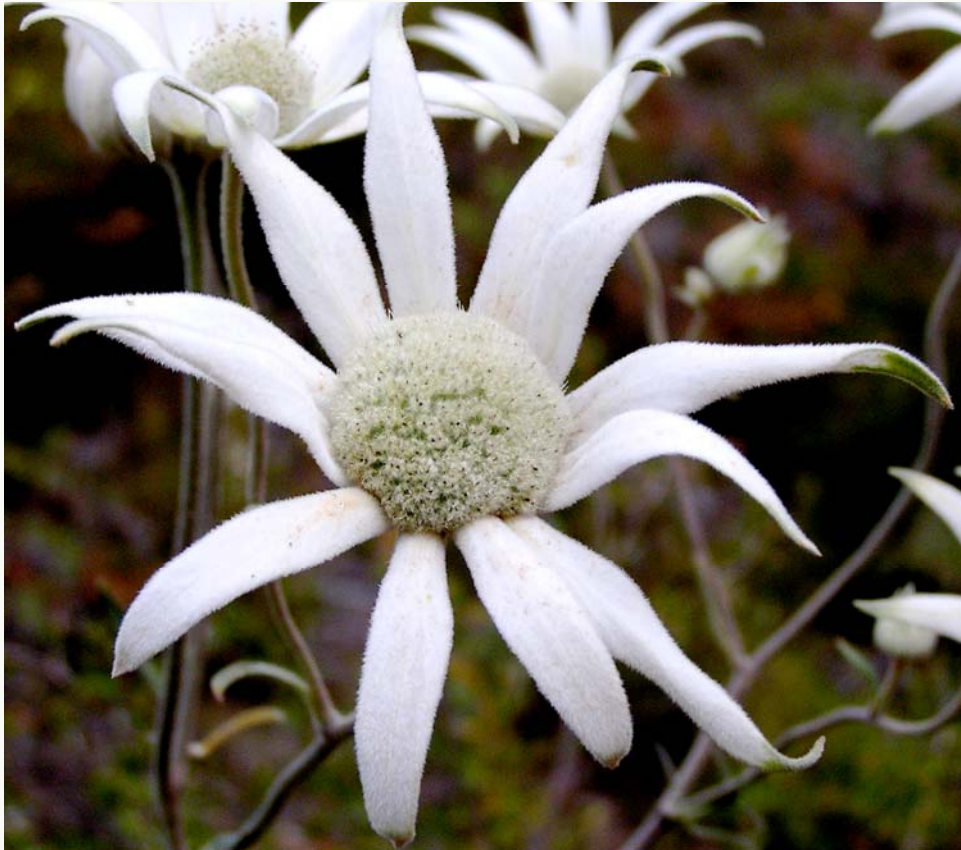


The story of our logo

The flannel flower has been the emblem of The Benevolent Society since the 1920s and is represented in a graphic form in our logo.



A Sydney coastal native plant, the flannel flower is a symbol of resilience in times of adversity. Despite its fragile, daisy-like appearance, it can survive and flourish in the harshest environment. It is symbolic of our work and our approach in supporting vulnerable people and communities to draw on their personal strengths in the face of life's challenges.

The significance of the flannel flower is beautifully represented in the Aboriginal Dreaming story below. We are grateful to the Bodkin/Andrews clan of the [Dharawal](#) (or Tharawal) people for allowing us to share their story here.

Important note: the story shown below is the intellectual property of the Bodkin/Andrews clan of the Dharawal people and must not be copied or reproduced without approval.

The flannel flower story

'Once, long ago, in a time of great cold, the ground was white with ice all year round, and grey clouds covered the skies. Children were born to The People, and learned to walk without having seen the sun or the moon and the stars.

During this time the flowers died, and the only colour to be seen in the bushland was the green of the trees and grass, and the brown of the earth. Mothers and aunts told their children of the wonderful colours of the flowers, but the children did not understand. They had never seen the beauty of the waratah, or the warm golden wattles. The mothers and aunts were very worried. Without the flowers the plants did not bear fruit for the children to eat, and the mothers and aunts knew that it was unhealthy for the children to eat only the roots of the plants and the flesh of the animals. But they were also very concerned that the Earth was sick, that she could not make the flowers grow because some evil spirits had taken possession of her.

They called a great meeting of all the mothers of the clans to discuss what could be done to free the Earth of this evil spirit, and to bring back the flowers. They all met at the women's place in the Yandel'ora (the place of peace between people), and talked about what they could do. One by one they bemoaned the fact that even the Miwa Gawaian (the white waratah) had failed to produce a flower, and that they could not ask the Spirit Woman to help them.

But one woman, barely old enough to have been through initiation requested to be allowed to speak. Some of the older women huffed with impatience, but the eldest of them, a wise old woman called Naali, put her hand up to silence the other women. 'We do not have any thoughts of what to do.' She said. 'Why can we not listen to what the younger ones have to say. Speak little Tianna, let us hear what you have to say.'

Tianna, whose name means bright star, seated herself within the circle. 'It has been said that the Spirit Woman told us to tell the Miwa Gawaian when we are troubled.' She began timidly. 'And always we have gone to the flower and told it our problems. We have never gone to the flower unless there was great need.' The other women nodded, for they knew what Tianna was saying was true.

'Whenever we have had a great need, we have gone to the flower and it has been there for us.' She was very nervous, and her hands shook as she touched the feathers on her headband. 'This time, when we went there was no flower. Perhaps our need is not great enough. Or, perhaps the Spirit Woman is angry with us, we have not cared for the Miwa Gawaian as we should have done.' The women looked at each other, guiltily. They had not cared for the Miwa Gawaian as the Spirit Woman had requested. They had not tended it and kept its stems free of other plants.

As each clan blamed the other for neglecting their duty, Tianna got to her feet and left the meeting, making her way from the hill, across the icy ground to the valley where the Miwa Gawaian grew. She saw the stems of the flower, with the rich, green leaves, she saw the honey bees buzzing around, looking for the flower, and she saw the ants climbing the stems, looking in vain for the precious nectar of the flower.

Tianna realised that it wasn't just The People who were dependent on the flowers, but it was the animals and the insects and the birds, too who needed the flowers and the fruit. She looked around the small valley, and saw that there were no young plants growing beneath the mature ones.

The day began to fade, and Tianna shivered, and began to gather some wood to build a fire before the night fell. As the fire burned, Tianna noticed that the ice melted on the ground around the flames. She drew her feathered cloak around her, and went to sleep. Whilst she slept she dreamed that the Spirit Woman came down and lighted a great fire which warmed the Earth, and melted the ice that covered the ground. When she awoke during the night to place some more wood on the fire, she saw the moon shining above her.

The next morning the clouds still covered the sun, but they did not seem to be as heavy. The next day, the sun could be seen mistily making her way across the skies, and the day after patches of blue sky appeared. Then, as Tianna tended the Miwa Gawaian, she saw a tiny plant poking its leaves through the soil. Tianna touched the tiny plant, its leaves were soft, and covered with fine fur, and were the colour of the frost. With great joy the young woman danced around the plant and the Miwa Gawaian. She ran all the way back to her clan, and told her grandmother about the tiny plant.

The grandmother gathered all the women and together they went to the valley to see for themselves. But, when they reached the valley, there were hundreds of the plants growing, and some of them bore white flowers, flowers the colour of the ice on the ground, flowers with petals that were soft and covered with fine fur, to keep them warm. Flowers that were shaped like a bright star. That is why the Flannel Flower is always the first flower to bloom after the ice has melted.

To find out more about the history of the Aboriginal people and places of Sydney, visit the [Barani website](#).