



# Croskell Precinct Structure Plan

Cultural Values Interpretation Strategy  
Summary Report

Prepared for: Victorian Planning Authority

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Cover Image: Patch of vegetation at 37 Brocker Street Clyde North as viewed from Donohue Street, looking northwest, 6 September 2022.



## Document control

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Warning: this report may contain images of deceased Indigenous peoples.

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## Acronyms and definitions

The following acronyms and terms are utilised throughout the document. Definitions are provided below for reference.

Acronym/Term	Definition
<b>ACHRIS</b>	Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Register and Information System
<b>ACV</b>	Aboriginal Cultural Value
<b>AHA 2006</b>	Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006
<b>BLCAC</b>	Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation
<b>PSP</b>	Precinct Structure Plan
<b>RAP</b>	Registered Aboriginal Party
<b>VPA</b>	Victorian Planning Authority

## Terminology

Terminology
“Aboriginal” not “aboriginal”
“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples” / “Indigenous peoples” refers to all Australian Indigenous peoples
“Aboriginal peoples” refers to Indigenous peoples from the mainland of Australia
“Boonwurrung” refers to the language Bunurong peoples speak
“Bunurong” refers to Bunurong peoples
“Indigenous” not “indigenous”
“First Nations people/s” refers to the earliest inhabitants of a place or area
“Peoples” (plural) not “people” (singular)
“Place” not “site”
“Traditional Owners” refer to Indigenous peoples from a specific area or region of Australia

## Statement of acknowledgement

We pay our respects and acknowledge our ancestors, our Elders, our Bunurong community and to our community who call Bunurong Country their home. Our land and waters are our home, it is our cultural landscape that we work towards protecting and preserving for our next generation and for all peoples on Bunurong Country to value and appreciate. It is through this landscape that we connect with our ancestors and nurture our spirits.

We also wish to thank the following BLCAC contributors to this report:

- Uncle Shane Clarke (Cultural Protection Manager)
- Terry Atkinson (former Cultural Values Manager)

## Executive summary

This report presents a summary of a project undertaken by the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (BLCAC) to produce a cultural narrative informed by significant Aboriginal Cultural Values (ACVs) that are associated with the Croskell PSP area. These values have been identified and explored through a multivalent research approach that utilises ethnohistorical and anthropological methodologies to address the following key aims:

- Consider what Aboriginal Cultural Values are, how they are currently being theorised and how they apply to Bunurong culture and heritage;
- Identify, explore and record the Bunurong cultural values and their (often layered) meanings;
- Create a resource that can be utilised and built upon by Bunurong peoples themselves; and
- Provide a resource that can be expanded upon and targeted specifically to the planning requirements of future phases of civil works in the study area.

To support our approach to the broad and complex aims that guide this report, BLCAC have developed a method to assist in the defining and production of ACVs across the cultural landscapes of Bunurong Country. This method, which is briefly summarised in Section 2, draws upon Indigenous and Western science, oral histories, archaeology, ethnohistory, biocultural knowledge and much more. Importantly, this work also allows the BLCAC to research and voice some of the values that relate to this important Bunurong place, and to describe some of the ways that these values relate to their broader cultural landscape.

## Project deliverables

This project is designed to deliver to VPA a Cultural Values Interpretation Strategy that relates to the Croskell Precinct Structure Plan (PSP) area. This allows for the BLCAC to record, produce and disseminate classical and contemporary Aboriginal values of a place or cultural landscape as BLCAC see fit.

This project contains four major elements:

1. An ethnohistorical review;
2. Interviews with Bunurong Elders/knowledge holders;
3. Research and the development of a report that contains a cultural narrative of the place; and
4. Meetings between VPA, City of Casey and the BLCAC Cultural Values and Research Unit to discuss and brainstorm the project and related design elements.

The above deliverables address the primary aims of this project for the BLCAC. As such, the Bunurong narrative that has been produced for this project can then be used to further contribute to developments within the Croskell PSP area.

This project identified three broad ACVs themes that are associated with the Croskell PSP area: **Place**, **People** and **Time**. These three broad values themes incorporate various sub-themes that are identified as being relevant to Croskell PSP area, including the values of *places between places, moving through Country and connection and connectivity (between people, time, nature, culture, Country, etc.)*.

This report has been specifically produced as a public-facing summary of this project. A confidential report containing all results and research produced for this project has been provided to the VPA. This report may not be duplicated, distributed or reproduced without prior consent from the BLCAC.



# Recommendations

## Retention and revitalisation of remnant vegetation at 37 Bocker Street

BLCAC strongly recommends that the VPA ensure the retention and revitalisation of the remnant vegetation patch identified at 37 Bocker Street, Clyde North. BLCAC's preferred method of retention is via the establishment of a public reserve encompassing this landscape feature.

BLCAC supports the registration of the area encompassing the vegetation patch at 37 Bocker Street on the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register (VAHR) as an Aboriginal Place. Moreover, BLCAC recommends the creation of a new Aboriginal Place registration that merges two existing places currently located on the periphery of the vegetation patch (VAHR 7921-0880 and VAHR 7921-1841), creating a new place that encompasses the entire sandy rise/dune feature on which the vegetation sits.

BLCAC would like to participate in the management of any future public reserve that encompasses the remnant vegetation patch.

For background information relaying the reasoning for this recommendation, see Appendix 1 of this report.

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation

Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (BLCAC) is a registered Aboriginal corporation that represents the interests of Bunurong Traditional Owners. The BLCAC is the Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) appointed pursuant to the *Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (AHA 2006)*, and the current RAP area covers part of metropolitan Melbourne, Mornington Peninsula, Bass Coast and west Gippsland.

BLCAC is an inclusive organisation that represents Bunurong peoples and their culture and heritage and it provides a unified voice for its members, supporting their cultural goals and aspirations. BLCAC currently employs over 30 full-time, part-time and casual First Nations peoples, who work throughout the BLCAC RAP area in diverse areas including cultural heritage services, and land, water and cultural values related policies and programs.

## 1.2 The Cultural Values and Research Unit

Traditional Owners have deep social, cultural, spiritual and economic connections to land, water and resources through their associations and reciprocal relationship with Country. Traditional Owners across Australia have sustainably cared for, managed and enhanced land, water and resources over thousands of generations. These connections to Country remain important to the health and wellbeing of Traditional Owners.

The legislated obligation for governments and their agencies to formally engage and collaborate with Traditional Owners and RAPs has been incorporated into several planning and management frameworks. BLCAC is actively engaged with particularly those government agencies who are responsible for land, water, and/or natural resources planning and management, and who also have policy obligations to collaborate with Victorian Traditional Owner organisations. BLCAC's Cultural Values and Research Unit (CVR Unit) has a critical role in ensuring that BLCAC is responsibly and effectively engaged and that Bunurong traditional and cultural values are understood and embedded into future projects, processes and policies for the benefit of the broader Bunurong community.

### 1.3 Project setting

This project focuses primarily on an investigation of Bunurong cultural values that relate to the Croskell PSP area (see Figure 1), but it also draws upon relevant information and knowledge regarding values and meaning from the broader cultural landscape, which has been occupied by Bunurong people for millennia. This project therefore operates at various scales, exploring the Aboriginal cultural values of the specific spaces in which this project is set, while simultaneously building an understanding of the values and the very nature of Bunurong Country at large.

To better support our approach to such a broad topic and complex undertaking, this project utilises a novel approach to recording Aboriginal Cultural Values (ACVs), which is briefly outlined in Section 3, and also draws upon some of the ways that the BLCAC define their contemporary values as these relate to Bunurong Country. These values are supplemented and supported by known examples from within the ethnohistorical and archaeological records and synthesised to present a layered understanding of the significance of the area and its surrounds.



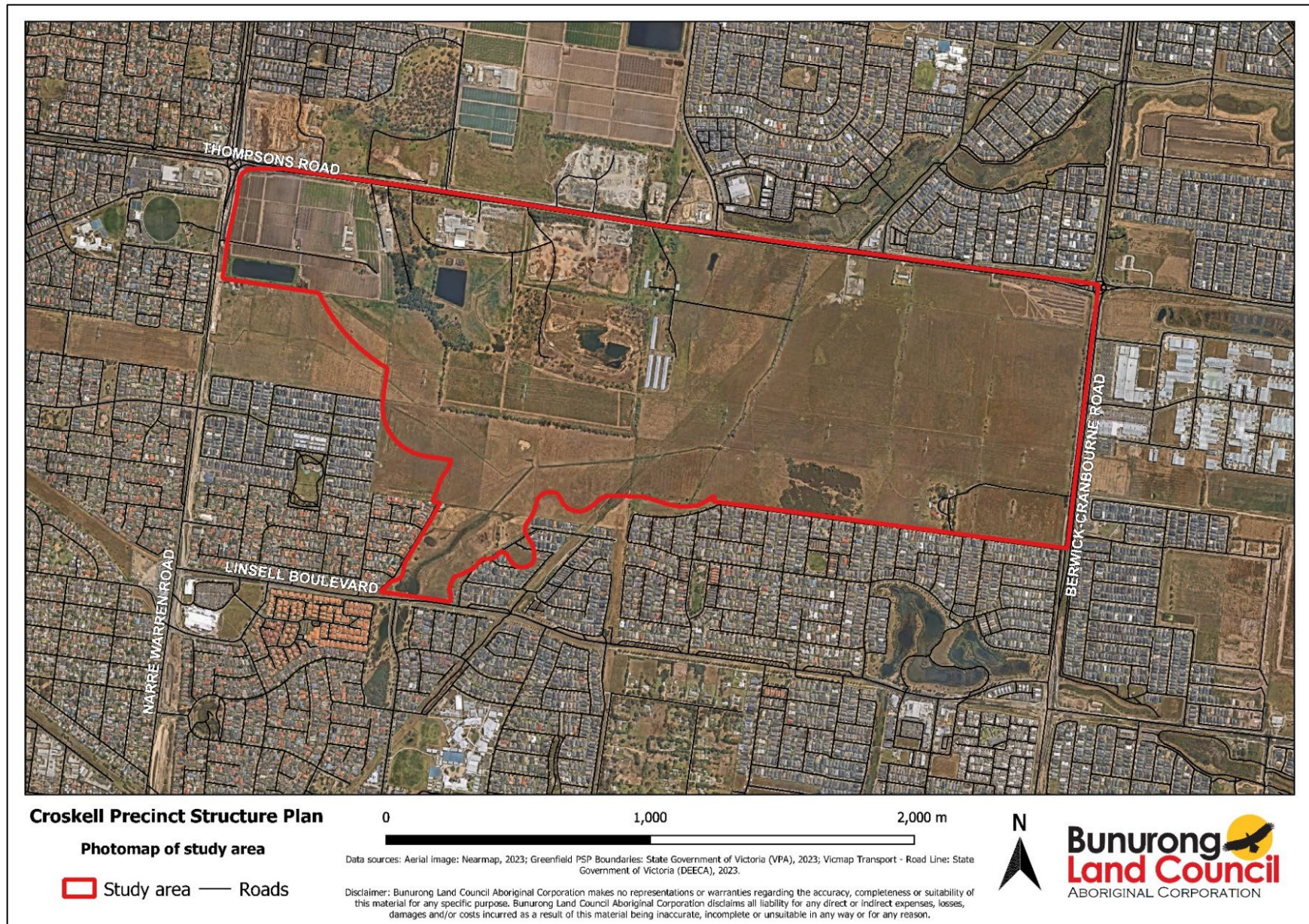


Figure 1: Photomap of study area



## 1.4 Project objectives and limitations

The objectives and limitations of this project are as follows:

- Define and describe what Aboriginal Cultural Values are and consider their (often layered) meanings to Bunurong peoples;
- Explore and record the Bunurong Aboriginal Cultural Values as they relate to the study area;
- Provide a resource that can be built upon and used for future reference by the Bunurong community; and
- Recommend suitable methods by which these values could be interpreted in the study area, such as storytelling, wayfinding, planting, use of materials and design elements, public art, playground, place names and other infrastructure, etc.

Meetings and discussions about this project have been undertaken with Bunurong Elders, community members and knowledge holders. However, this work does not include the views of the entire Bunurong community and as such, it does not represent the whole range of contemporary Bunurong views and values that relate to this study area.

## 2 Aboriginal cultural values frameworks

### 2.1 Aboriginal Cultural Values

The concept of ACVs has its roots in Western thought and it often contrasts with the ways in which both past and contemporary Indigenous peoples define, understand and value their own culture and heritage. When ACVs are framed exclusively through a Western lens, they are often reduced to their tangible dimensions and assessed in terms of their perceived “authenticity” and monetary worth. This intrinsic connection of ACVs with Western ideology is astutely articulated by Australian anthropologist Peter Sutton (2009: 63), who observes that the act of ‘[o]bjectifying and putting values on “culture” is indeed a Western idea’.

The impact of colonialism on Bunurong peoples and culture has been profound and ongoing, resulting in the loss of some “classical” or “traditional” knowledge. One of the main objectives in creating a BLCAC ACVs framework is to assist Bunurong peoples in rediscovering and reclaiming additional and various forms of knowledge that have been preserved and represented within Western processes and mediums such as letters, diaries, journals, artworks, poetry and more since colonisation. However, this framework is also designed to avoid the problematic search for “authentic traditional” Aboriginal values and meanings. Instead, it seeks to represent these values as they are determined and described by contemporary Bunurong knowledge holders and decision makers. Consequently, this framework offers another avenue for self-determination, expression and connection. The ACVs framework does not seek to quantify or measure ACVs but rather strives to promote and communicate ACVs in ways that specifically support the broader recognition of the Bunurong community’s knowledge, culture and aspirations.

To decolonise the production and communication of ACVs, and ensure their sensitivity and relevance to Bunurong peoples, this report adopts an ACVs framework that draws substantial influence from the scholarship of First Nations academics worldwide. It champions a community-led perspective, placing the values, objectives and concerns of the community at the centre. This framework also recognises the validity and value of multiple and diverse ways of knowing, operating with flexibility and openness to accommodate various forms of knowledge, including Indigenous and Western sciences, without hierarchy.

## 2.2 Defining Aboriginal Cultural Values

ACVs frameworks and their associated values themes are often developed and defined by external consultants or organisations before engaging with BLCAC knowledge holders and the wider Bunurong community. In Victoria, models like “Victoria’s Framework of Historical Themes” (Heritage Council of Victoria & Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council, n.d) are frequently used to establish cultural values, usually with the best of intentions. However, a significant consequence of applying this framework (and similar models developed externally and without direct collaboration with the relevant Indigenous community) is that the external consultant ultimately controls the preceding and ongoing conversations. By delineating the framework and themes upfront, the consultant effectively eliminates the opportunity for BLCAC knowledge holders to take ownership and exert meaningful influence over the process and its eventual outcomes. Consequently, the automatic application of these frameworks, and the initiation of projects before community consultation, runs counter to Indigenous rights to self-determination. Moreover, the resulting outcomes may not align with the community’s own objectives or address their concerns. By presenting a framework that defines and elevates what ACVs are for Bunurong peoples, our aim is to decolonise these common approaches to identifying and recording ACVs, supporting Bunurong peoples to meaningfully participate and contribute to projects involving external consultants.

## 2.3 The BLCAC ACV framework

The BLCAC ACVs framework is a versatile and adaptable tool with numerous potential applications. Its primary focus is on applying a community-led and culturally sensitive approach to assist Bunurong peoples in identifying, defining, researching and recording ACVs. This process facilitates an exploration of the significance of these values and their intricate connections to both tangible and intangible cultural heritage in alignment with Victoria’s *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (AHA 2006)*. The framework also supports Bunurong peoples to conduct important research that, in turn, deepens their understandings of and connections to both past and contemporary cultural landscapes, encompassing places, communities, knowledge, stories, memories and more. By leading this process and placing their values and

objectives at the centre, Bunurong peoples can actively contribute to projects and legislation in ways that are meaningful and beneficial to their community.

Recognising the worth of multiple and diverse perspectives is a fundamental goal of the BLCAC process. It seeks to cultivate a more holistic, nuanced and balanced understanding of ACVs, which, in turn, can result in mutually beneficial outcomes for both Indigenous communities and their external partners. Similarly, when individuals collaborate to bring their ways of knowing together, it paves the way for the growth of respectful relationships and the emergence of exciting opportunities and outcomes. When knowledges and voices are brought together, strong outcomes can be crafted. The unique and powerful forms that these outcomes take cannot exist merely from a single perspective in isolation.

A full explanation of the BLCAC ACVs framework is contained in the confidential Cultural Values Interpretation Strategy document provided to the VPA.

### 2.3.1 The BLCAC ACVs process

Table 1 provides an example how the BLCAC framework may be used by Bunurong peoples to define and contextualise ACVs within the context of a specific project.

Table 1: BLCAC ACVs template (example only)

How values are framed to suit this context	The themes used to analyse values in this context	Examples/description
This is the context of the assessment. This could revolve around a place, a cultural landscape, or an element of Country, such as water.	Caring for Country	What are some of the Bunurong land management practices associated with the context or the broader cultural landscape?
	Learning from the past	How did Bunurong peoples occupy and use this landscape in the past?
	Recognition	Which specific Bunurong clans or people were in this landscape in the past?
	Knowledges	What are some of the concepts and stories linked to this context?

The approach outlined in Table 1 draws upon the following seven questions:

1. What is the overarching context in which these values exist?
2. Which broader values themes are relevant to this context?
3. Which specific values themes can be identified and analysed within this context?
4. How can these values themes be defined and described, and what are specific examples of them?
5. What approaches, sources and knowledge systems can be leveraged to deepen the understanding of these values and effectively facilitate their documentation and communication?
6. What is the significance of these values for Bunurong peoples today?
7. How can these themes and values be connected to meaningful outcomes for the community?

The precise framing of ACVs by Bunurong knowledge holders will ultimately shape the responses to these questions. Additionally, the responses will be tailored to the specific place or places (i.e., the context) at the heart of a project. The answer(s) to each question can be generated through a “workshop” style discussion, during which a project overview is presented, and Bunurong knowledge holders’ responses are recorded. Alternatively, if it is determined to be more appropriate by BLCAC, knowledge holders may choose to contemplate and discuss these questions and their answers in a less structured or formal manner. Moreover, these responses may be effectively generated during a place visit with Bunurong knowledge holders, providing the opportunity for discussions to occur on Country.

To ensure the meaningful and ethical application of the BLCAC ACVs framework, it is vital that the values themes identified through these processes ultimately drive the project; the project itself must not impose its own themes and values. Additionally, Bunurong knowledge holders should be afforded the opportunity to engage in all phases of a project, with consultants respecting their self-determination in establishing their level of participation. Importantly, the involvement of knowledge holders may shift as the project advances through its various stages.

Once cultural values have been identified and articulated by Bunurong knowledge holders, additional methodologies can be effectively employed to reinforce and enhance their responses to these questions (above). These methods might involve investigating, evaluating and integrating knowledge derived from historical, ethnohistorical and archaeological records, oral testimonies and histories, as well as other relevant sources. Additionally, place visits with Bunurong knowledge holders, accompanied by external partners where possible, offer the chance for additional insights to be generated by physically experiencing the relevant part of Country. If deemed appropriate and necessary, additional workshops with knowledge holders might be arranged to discuss any results, recommendations or desired outcomes that have surfaced during these investigative processes.



### 3 Sources of information and knowledge

Like Aboriginal Cultural Values (ACVs) and significance assessments, Indigenous knowledge, including bio-cultural knowledge, is a complex and fluid resource that can only be assembled meaningfully through close collaboration with First Nations communities. In this project, we draw information and knowledge relating to the ACVs of the Croskell PSP area from several significant sources, including the ethnohistorical and archaeological records, and through discussions, meetings and workshops with contemporary Bunurong knowledge holders. Given the vast scale of Indigenous knowledge held by these sources and knowledge holders, three broad values themes are decided upon by Bunurong Elders or knowledge holders to help guide the values research and its outcomes.

#### 3.1 Indigenous bio-cultural knowledge

Indigenous bio-cultural knowledge is often treated as a static and unchanging resource that can be easily located and applied to resource development and planning projects (e.g., Cruikshank, 1998b; Goodall, 2008b), often with minimal (meaningful) collaboration with Traditional Owner communities. However, as Cameron Muir and colleagues (2010: 259) contend, Indigenous bio-cultural knowledge (like *all* knowledge) is ‘dynamic, adaptive and contextual. Because of compartmentalisation and the assumption of timelessness, the importance of social relationships in ecological relationships has been overlooked’. This assumed timelessness and, by extension, the underlying emphasis on knowledge that is considered “authentic” or “traditional” (i.e., as it may have been at the time of, or prior to, Western colonisation), actively undermines the knowledge, opinions and values interpretation of cultural landscapes by contemporary Indigenous peoples. These assumptions also continue the problematic Western colonial practice of essentialism, which renders contemporary Indigenous peoples as “inauthentic” and dislocated from their “traditional” knowledges, cultural landscapes, lifeways and even their ancestors (McNiven and Russell, 2005; Russell, 2001).

Over the last several decades, increased social activism and growing calls for decolonisation have led to the development and adoption of various tools to support the meaningful

inclusion of Indigenous peoples and their bio-cultural (and other) knowledge into projects. Importantly, this work has built upon the rejection of problematic concepts of “authenticity” and “tradition,” as well as the critical interrogation of the myriad ways in which (Western) history and knowledge-making disciplines, such as archaeology, history, philosophy and Western science, have been centred, elevated and naturalised within settler-colonial countries as the standard against which all other ways of knowing must be measured (and ultimately fall short). In response to this problem, Muir and colleagues (2010: 260) suggest that:

instead of understanding society’s current function as a Western system that is starting to ‘bring in’ some Indigenous knowledge, we imagine it from the other side: that the non-Indigenous society and system has been accommodated into the more situated and longer established Indigenous system.

The BLCAC supports this approach and believes that it will indeed support more meaningful, respectful and productive dialogues between external consultants and contemporary Indigenous peoples about their knowledge, cultural landscapes and values, as these have been defined, adapted and understood by Indigenous peoples through time.

Projects that aim to explore Indigenous bio-cultural knowledge and values have been largely concerned with asking, “what was the environment like before the arrival of Europeans?” In responding to this question, these projects usually present a list that categorises the names that past and contemporary Indigenous peoples have provided for individual plant species, sometimes in conjunction with a description of their layered uses and meanings. However, as Goodall and Cadzow (2009) observe, if Aboriginal knowledge is presented in such limiting ways, which ultimately seek to align with the conventional methodological frameworks that (generally) Western scientists and environmental managers employ, these lists are likely to miss their significant intangible dimensions, including related stories, meanings, values and/or the important morals that frequently relate to this knowledge within Indigenous ways of knowing. Consequently, although this report will collate Aboriginal bio-cultural knowledge from various sources and will list and map how these resources manifest within the landscape, this significant knowledge will be framed according to the cultural values of the Bunurong people.

## 3.2 Community engagement and ethnohistorical Research

Contemporary Aboriginal communities, including the Bunurong, have maintained and passed down aspects of their rich cultural knowledge and oral traditions for millennia. Collaborating with Bunurong Elders and knowledge holders provides BLCAC the opportunity to share their understanding of Bunurong culture and it is hoped that the sharing of this knowledge will facilitate the rejuvenation and transmission of cultural knowledge and practices, support the preservation of Bunurong Country for future generations and allow for healing.

The information presented in the following section of this report will also draw upon various ethnohistorical and archaeological sources. Ethnohistorical accounts provide a direct means of engaging with a range of historical and anthropological sources that describe early cross-cultural entanglements, as well as various people, places and events. However, it is crucial to emphasise that these sources are a product of their time and often contain material that is clearly Eurocentric in nature. Undoubtedly, the people (generally male Europeans) who compiled these ethnohistorical documents would also not have fully comprehended the knowledge that was shared with them by Bunurong peoples, or they may have thought that certain details were not important enough to be included into their accounts. Although these are significant limitations of this source material, the ethnohistorical record often contains valuable insights into Indigenous cultures that have otherwise been disrupted or lost through the destructive forces of colonialism and the passage of time.

During discussions regarding the development of ACVs for this Project, members of the Bunurong community put considerable thought into the ideas that underpin and drive this project. These ideas have been narrowed to three broad values themes that are expanded and explored in the remainder of the document: (1) Place, (2) People and (3) Time (Table 2). Bunurong values related to water and flora have also been identified as particularly significant to the study area.

Table 2: ACVs of the Croskell PSP area.

How values are framed to suit this context	The themes used to analyse values in this context	Examples/description
The Croskell PSP area	Place	What do we know about Bunurong cultural practices within this natural and cultural landscape? How have Bunurong peoples interacted with this landscape?
	People	Who are the people who have had a connection to this place and cultural landscape in the past, both Bunurong and non-Bunurong?
	Time	How does time intersect with the natural and cultural landscape? What are some of the past, present and future values of this place for Bunurong peoples?

These values themes also cover the key ideas and design themes that were explored and discussed during a place visit to the Croskell PSP area, which was conducted by BLCAC representatives alongside VPA and City of Casey representatives on 6 September 2022. A summary of this visit can be found in Appendix 1. These ideas and themes will therefore be integrated into the research and discussion of the three broader themes that are listed in Table 2. Additionally, the following sub-themes and ideas were developed during the place visit and were subsequently incorporated into the exploration of the three broader themes:

- Places between places;
- Moving through Country; and
- Connection and connectivity (between people, time, nature, culture, Country, etc.).

## 4 Aboriginal Cultural Values of the Croskell PSP area

The Aboriginal Cultural Values of the Croskell PSP Area have been guided by consultation with Bunurong community members. These values are broad, and they each contain several sub-themes and topics. This section provides brief definitions of these broad values themes. Short summaries of some of the ways in which these themes were explored during this project have also been included in this summary report. A more detailed exploration of these themes in relation to the Croskell PSP area is contained in the confidential Cultural Values Interpretation Strategy document provided to the VPA.

### 4.1 Place

The landscape of the Croskell PSP area—both natural and cultural—is dynamic and has undergone many significant changes over millennia. The myriad natural and cultural processes that have and continue to inform the current configuration of the Croskell PSP area also shape the many complex and layered place meanings that the Croskell PSP area holds for Bunurong peoples and the broader community. Many of these place-making processes, as well as destructive processes such as climate change, erosion, urbanisation, private ownership, and land clearing and conversion, continue today.

#### 4.1.1 Pre-1750 EVCs and the associated use of local plant resources

Although Bunurong Country has been dramatically degraded and transformed as a result of Western colonisation and settlement, an indication of the ecological communities that likely existed within the study area prior to the 1750s, as well as their broad patterning, can be explored through the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) NatureKit tool (<https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/biodiversity/naturekit>). As part of the exploration of the theme of place, pre-1750s Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs) located within or near to the study area were identified. General information about some of the native and local plant life that could be accessed within these EVCs was then collated along with any known uses of these plants by Bunurong peoples.

### 4.1.2 Places between places: Mayune and Garem Gam

In relation to the Croskell PSP area, it is important to acknowledge the roles of waterways and the margins of swamps and marshlands as the original highways—places of connection and moving (see Appendix 1).

Two places historically frequented by Bunurong peoples are known to be in the general vicinity of the study area. These two places are the Mayune and Garem Gam pastoral stations. A brief history of these places, and some of the journeys that are known to have occurred between these stations was collated as part of the exploration of this theme.

## 4.2 People

The current RAP area appointed to the BLCAC differs significantly from the traditional area that the Bunurong occupied and belonged to before Western colonisation. The Bunurong peoples' pre-colonial Country extends from the Werribee River in the north-west to Wilson's Promontory in the south-east. This Country includes the catchments of Lowyeeung (Carrum Swamp), Western Port and the Tarwin River. It also includes the Mornington Peninsula. William Thomas (in Victoria. Parliament. Legislative Council. Select Committee on the Aborigines, 1859: 66) outlines part of the extent of Bunurong Country in the following excerpt:

The geographical limits of the two Melbourne tribes [Bunurong and Wurundjeri] are from the source of the Yarra eastward, S.E by the river Tarwin; dividing range between the Yarra and the Goulburn river, north; south by the sea coast; the river Exe [Werribee River] to the west. Aboriginal boundaries are judiciously defined, by rivers, creeks and mountains; which by what I have learnt, is universal. For example, the Yarra tribe claim all the country south and north of the river to dividing range; on this ground, that all the waters flow into the Yarra. The Western Port or coast tribe claim all the country from ranges, creeks, &c. [etc], that fall into the sea, to the Tarwin.

Like these spatial boundaries, the cultural boundaries of Bunurong Country are also important to consider. In part, these cultural boundaries relate to the different clan groups that make



up the Bunurong people, and the names of each of these clans relates to the places that these clans inhabit across the cultural landscape. It is crucial to note that boundaries, as they are understood in Western thinking, is not necessarily how Indigenous peoples in the past or the present think of boundaries. While boundaries may anchor to physical places or features, such as rivers and creeks, they are not in themselves natural, and they do not exist in nature of their own accord. Rather, boundaries are by their very nature *human-made* constructions that may have their basis in various natural and cultural variables. They may serve various purposes and be governed by various cultural rules, customs and traditions. The boundaries of physical landscapes may therefore be similar or different to the boundaries of spiritual landscapes or economic landscapes, or to the boundaries that relate to inter-tribal marriage, reciprocal land use and the practice of lore. Consequently, these cultural landscapes and their boundaries were and are constantly in flux or in the process of being produced. When we look at any line on a map within this cultural context, we must therefore remember that it is not a solid boundary in the way that Westerners may conceive of them. Instead, these boundaries are both flexible and permeable.

#### 4.2.1 Moving through Country: prominent Bunurong people in the Croskell PSP area

There are several accounts of prominent Bunurong peoples moving through the Croskell PSP area. In consideration of the sub-theme of *Moving through Country*, a section providing a short biography of two prominent Bunurong men was prepared, with a particular emphasis placed on their interactions with the Country surrounding the Croskell PSP area.

#### 4.2.2 Track and Roads

Waterways and the margins of swamps and marshlands are places of connection and moving for Bunurong peoples. In a historical context, these places of movement were paths between camping and meeting places. Unfortunately, many of these paths were destroyed by early squatters, who made use of these paths to run stock. A brief examination of known historical routes was conducted as part of this project.

### 4.3 Time

Time is a complex human concept and value, and various peoples and cultures across the world conceive of time in different ways. According to the conventional Western framework, time operates along a standardised and unilinear continuum—from the past, which lies behind us, to the present where we currently reside, and then forward into the future, which still lies ahead. Within this model, the past is generally considered to be static, finished and incapable of being truly engaged with in the present or future. At its most concerning level, this view of the past may lead to perceptions and representations of the past—including peoples, events, traces, technologies, knowledges and actions—as being fundamentally disconnected from and irrelevant to peoples and the world today.

However, scholars from around the world are leading philosophical and decolonising challenges to these restrictive and Eurocentric ways of understanding time, and are pointing to the many ways in which the past, present and future are enmeshed, eternal and inseparable from each other (e.g., see Atalay, 2006; Gallois, 2007; Smith, 2012). According to certain Indigenous ways of knowing, time is not confined to a simple horizontal line; rather, the past and the future intercept with and exist within the present. They also actively inform the present and the present also informs the ways in which they are understood. Thus, time is dynamic rather than static, and its various strands continuously cross over and intersect, and are formed and reformed by each other.

This concept of non-linear time, and of an active past and future within the present, is particularly evident in The Dreaming and in the important connections that First Nations peoples have with their ancestors, descendants and with Country (Cladis, 2009; Heil & Macdonald, 2008). Theologian Brian Edgar (2003: 129, quoting Stanner, 1998) suggests that for many First Nations peoples in Australia, '[t]he past underlies and is within the present, "events do not happen now, as a result of a chain of events extending back to a long past period – a "Dreamtime" – a beginning. They exist and they happen because that Dreamtime is also here and now. It is The Dreaming, the condition or ground of existence." It is sacred-past-in-the-present'. An important point here is that culture, values, Country, and The Dreaming are actively created within and through all time—they are dynamic and continuous

but also sometimes changing, and they are not confined to the past (Gallois, 2007). Thus, for many First Nations peoples (and, we could argue, for *all* people), time is an interwoven and deeply personal, cultural and experiential phenomenon, and the separation of time, as is common in Western thinking, is an illogical, destructive and disconnecting practice (Bain, 2005; Gallois, 2007).

#### 4.3.1 Impacts of human action and harm on Country

Alongside the influence of various and ongoing natural processes upon the character, constitution and integrity of the Country in which the Croskell PSP area is situated, there are many direct and indirect impacts related to human action. To provide further insights into changes on Country over time, a comparison of pre-1750s EVCs with 2005 EVCs for the study area was undertaken. An examination of historical maps of the study area was also conducted. A particularly important result of this examination was the recognition that while land clearing and drainage infrastructure have severely harmed Country within the Croskell PSP area, there is also evidence that some parts of Country within the PSP area have survived these harmful acts. For example, historical aerial imagery of the Croskell PSP area indicates that a patch of native vegetation situated along the southern boundary of the PSP near present day Donohue Street, Clyde North, has managed to survive successive land clearing events. This patch of vegetation has been identified by members of the Bunurong community as being particularly significant (see Appendix 1).

## 5 Interpretation strategy

### 5.1 General principles

This interpretation strategy is intended to provide guidance and inspiration for interpretative works that might be undertaken within the study area.

The following general principles are proposed for interpretive works within the study area:

- Interpretative works should reflect one or more of the themes (Place, People, Time) or sub-themes (Places between places, Moving through Country, Connection and connectivity) identified in the Cultural Values Interpretation Strategy;
- The intent of these interpretive works is to convey the cultural values of a place. As such, any interpretive works proposed for the study area should directly relate to the character, purpose, or function of the place;
- Proposals for interpretive works should prioritise locations, materials, forms and content (text and/or images) that best convey the chosen theme/sub-theme;
- Interpretive works can be straightforward, instructive, and text-based, or they can be abstract and minimalist in approach. Incorporation of sensory elements in the designs of interpretive works is encouraged;
- The incorporation of Boonwurrung words for the naming of places and developments within the study area is strongly encouraged. Consultation with BLCAC is required regarding any potential use of Boonwurrung words;
- BLCAC strongly encourages the engagement of Bunurong artists to produce interpretive works and/or public artwork within the study area. A list of Bunurong artists can be provided by BLCAC upon request; and
- BLCAC strongly recommends that developers who intend to incorporate interpretive works into their developments engage with BLCAC as early as possible to ensure that any proposals are culturally appropriate.

## 5.2 Methods for interpretation

While BLCAC does not wish to stifle creativity or innovation by dictating the forms that interpretive works must take, the following approaches have been determined to be suitable for the study area.

### 5.2.1 Interpretive panels

An interpretive panel is a straightforward way of providing information on a theme, and the use of interpretive panels within the study area is encouraged. However, panels should always be positioned in locations that directly relate to the content included on the panel. One location within the study area that could be interpreted in this way is the remnant vegetation patch at 37 Brocker Street, Clyde North.

### 5.2.2 Thematic trails

The large size of the study area, combined with the presence of a waterway that cuts through it, indicates that the development of one or more themed trails could be an appropriate means of providing longform interpretive content to visitors and residents of the study area. This could be developed in conjunction with interpretive panels.

## 6 Recommendations

### Retention and revitalisation of remnant vegetation at 37 Bocker Street

BLCAC strongly recommends that the VPA ensure the retention and revitalisation of the remnant vegetation patch identified at 37 Bocker Street, Clyde North. BLCAC's preferred method of retention is via the establishment of a public reserve encompassing this landscape feature.

BLCAC supports the registration of the area encompassing the vegetation patch at 37 Bocker Street on the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register (VAHR) as an Aboriginal Place. Moreover, BLCAC recommends the creation of a new Aboriginal Place registration that merges two existing places currently located on the periphery of the vegetation patch (VAHR 7921-0880 and VAHR 7921-1841), creating a new place that encompasses the entire sandy rise/dune feature on which the vegetation sits.

BLCAC would like to participate in the management of any future public reserve that encompasses the remnant vegetation patch.

For background information concerning the reasons for this recommendation, see Appendix 1 of this report.



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# Appendix 1: Croskell PSP place visit report

## Background

In August 2022, BLCAC requested access to two properties within the Croskell PSP area for the purposes of a place visit. These two properties were:

- 1580A Thompsons Road Cranbourne East 3977; and
- 37 Bocker Street Clyde North 3978.

These properties were identified as locations of particular interest during the initial research phase for the Croskell PSP Cultural Values Interpretation Strategy. This interest was determined via the identification of specific landforms and/or flora (i.e., elevated locations in the landscape, patches of native vegetation, etc.) on these properties that could potentially assist with interpretations of the Croskell PSP area.

## Summary

Representatives from BLCAC visited 37 Bocker Street Clyde North 3978 on 6 September 2022 as part of a larger place visit of the Croskell Precinct Structure Plan (PSP) area. This property was identified as a location of particular interest during the initial research phase for the Croskell PSP Cultural Values Interpretation Strategy. The aims of this place visit were as follows:

- Determine on-ground conditions in identified locations of interest within the study area,
- Provide participating Bunurong Elders and knowledge holders with a firsthand experience of these locations to aid their interpretations of the study area, and
- Provide participating Bunurong Elders and knowledge holders with an opportunity to discuss elements of the PSP with representatives from VPA and City of Casey.

Representatives from VPA and City of Casey also participated in this visit.

37 Brocker Street Clyde North was identified as a location of particular interest to the BLCAC due to the identification of what appeared to be a significant patch of remnant native vegetation in aerial imagery of the property. Unfortunately, this property was unable to be accessed by participants due to a locked gate at the entrance to the property. However, the edge of the patch of vegetation was able to be surveyed from the road reserves of Loddon Place (Figure A1) and Donohue Street (Figure A2).

During the surveying of the vegetation patch from the road reserve, BLCAC participants enquired about proposed plans for this vegetation. VPA Participants detailed several potential options for this area, with the imposition of a levy on developers who apply to clear the land (as per the Melbourne Strategic Assessment program) being the most likely outcome (Figure A3). During this conversation, BLCAC representatives talked about the history of Bunurong dispossession brought on by colonial authorities giving the land away to those who cleared it and emphasised the harm that has been inflicted on Country because of those practices. BLCAC representatives queried whether it would be possible to have this patch of remnant vegetation retained in the PSP as either a park or a reserve and indicated that retaining this patch of vegetation would be a desired outcome of the PSP for BLCAC. Following this discussion, further surveying of plants within the patch occurred, with BLCAC representatives discussing various plant uses with VPA representatives (Figure A4). The visit to the Croskell PSP area concluded following this discussion.



Figure A1: Area of remnant native vegetation at 37 Bocker Street Clyde North as viewed from Loddon Place, looking west, 6 September 2022



Figure A2: Conditions of remnant native vegetation at 37 Bocker Street as viewed from Donohue Street, looking west, 6 September 2022





Figure A3: BLCAC and VPA participants discussing the remnant native vegetation at 37 Brocker Street at Donohue Street, looking west, 6 September 2022



Figure A4: BLCAC representatives discussing Bunurong plant use with Richard Overall (VPA) at Donohue Street, looking northeast, 6 September 2022





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