



Northern Freight Precinct Structure Plan Cultural Values Assessment

A report by the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage
Aboriginal Corporation for New Communities, Housing,
Building and Land Delivery at Department of Transport and
Planning

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For Public Distribution**

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Executive Summary

The Northern Freight Precinct is on the Traditional Lands of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people. New Communities, Housing, Building and Land Delivery at Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) (formerly Victorian Planning Authority) engaged the Research Unit at Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (WWCHAC) to produce a Cultural Values Assessment (CVA) for the Northern Freight Precinct Structure Plan (PSP). The Northern Freight PSP proposes to develop 1,399 hectares of land for the Beveridge Intermodal Precinct freight terminal and infrastructure for employment and services.

The CVA documents in detail Traditional Owner tangible and intangible values and places of significance associated with the Northern Freight Precinct. The study also aims to increase the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community's association with Northern Freight Precinct and landscape, to inform planning and decision-making guided by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders in relation to the Northern Freight Precinct and its lands, inform caring for Country practices through the integration of cultural values in water management, and to enhance community wellbeing through actively caring for Country.

The CVA tells the Indigenous narrative of the cultural landscape where the Northern Freight Precinct is situated with reference to the broader history and cultural heritage of the area now known as City of Whittlesea and Shire of Mitchell. The CVA details the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Values of the Northern Freight Precinct, inclusive of a review of the recorded cultural heritage values of the Study Area, a summary of the shared Cultural Values and recommendations to incorporate the protection and management of those values into the Northern Freight Precinct Structure Plan.

The method choices for this CVA involved the review and analysis of documentary and archival records relating to the Northern Freight Precinct Project Area, compilation of previously established Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung cultural heritage values (i.e. the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register) and review of traditional associations with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people of the specific location where the Project Area is located, and the cultural landscape. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community engagement was undertaken via online workshops, meetings, on-Country Knowledge Recording field visits, and an online Knowledge Recording, with Elders and community members of the WWCHAC.

Ethnohistorical and ethnographic materials demonstrated Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung occupation, cultural practice and resource use of the Northern Freight Precinct cultural landscape. The area is also significant due to its history as a site of colonial accommodation, resistance, and self-determination by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people at the interface of colonisation. The cultural landscape is also a place of reconnection through activities of the contemporary Woi-wurrung community. These activities range from knowledge sharing and cultural values mapping carried out by the Research Unit and in consultation with the Cultural Heritage Unit to protect and manage Country. Furthermore, the Northern Freight Precinct Project area elicits a spiritual connection as it embodies the living spaces of their Ancestors.

Six recommendations and 22 specific actions for managing cultural values and otherwise embedding Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung perspectives have been identified through consultation with the project participants, the Cultural Heritage Unit, the Narrap Unit, and the Water Program and aligned with the WWCHAC Whole of Country Plan:

- Recommendation 1: Enhanced protection of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung cultural heritage.
- Recommendation 2: Support the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community in holistic caring for Country.
- Recommendation 3: Healthy waterways and water rights across Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country.
- Recommendation 4: Continued engagement of people that live on, work on and visit Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country.
- Recommendation 5: Genuine and meaningful engagement with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People.
- Recommendation 6: Education and Recognition of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People, Ancestors, Country and Culture.

DRAFT

Wurundjeri Community Statement

Cultural significance is reflected in our customs and lore. Country holds the history and cultural practices of our people. It holds our boundaries and laws of respect between clans. Country connects us to the place where our Ancestors stood and lived and cared for Country. And now we do the same.

Cultural significance is understanding the landscape and the environment of our Ancestors. Every element of the environment is interconnected; the plants, the animals, the medicine, the food, and the resources are all reliant on the healthy biodiversity of Country. Our Ancestors observed and learned over time what the biodiversity of a landscape required to sustain us. Every generation were educated to ensure the long-term maintenance of the right forms of land management.

Cultural significance is visualising Country. When we are on Country, we see the land, the water, the animals, the stories. The landscape is the Country of our Ancestors. It is where they walked and we walk now. That is why it needs to be protected, preserved and kept healthy. We need these places to exist to keep their journey going.

Cultural significance is reflection. Our stories are held in memory. Being on Country brings back memories. Caring for Country means that our future children and grandchildren can pass it on to their generation. Our Country is here forever.

- Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders

Warning: this report may contain images of deceased persons

The content derived from the documentary record and reproduced within this report reflects the views of the respective commentators and may not at times accord with the views of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people. The accounts are reproduced here because they represent the corpus of archival and historical research to date pertaining to the Woi-wurrung people who lived within the study area prior to European settlement and during the contact era. This content may also include gender-specific information.

This document presents the results of the Northern Freight Precinct Structure Plan Cultural Values Assessment, prepared by the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation for New Communities, Housing, Building and Land Delivery at Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) (formerly Victorian Planning Authority). Access to information contained within this report must be obtained by written approval from the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and be in accordance with the management of Intellectual Property.

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F E M I N A L

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Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders and community members: Ron Jones, Karen Jones, Aunty Di Kerr, Aunty Alice Kolasa, Bobby Mullins, Allan Wandin, Perry Wandin, Brendan Wandin, Uncle Jason Tweedie.

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation staff: Dr Garrick Hitchcock, Catherine Keneley, Emily Rayside, Natalie Bell, Michael Browne, Lauren Modra, Zara Lasky-Davison, Anna Tuechler, Anna Alcorn.

New Communities, Housing, Building and Land Delivery at Department of Transport and Planning (formerly Victorian Planning Authority): Dr Caroline Spry – Principal Heritage Advisor, Sarah Doring – Strategic Planning Manager, Emily Hillebrand – Director, Metropolitan Melbourne, Dale Bristow – Strategic Planning Manager, Qaisara Mohamad – Strategic Planner

Unearthed Heritage: David Mathews – Director and Principal Heritage Advisor, Anna Light – Heritage Advisor.

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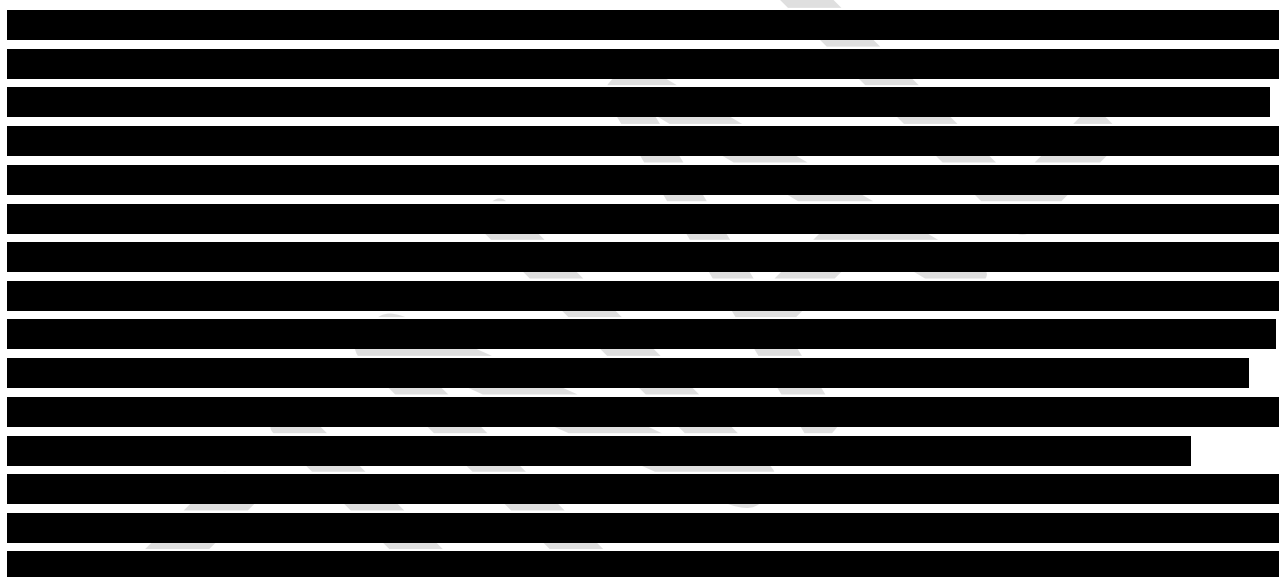


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Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People retain their custodianship over their Cultural Landscape. Indigenous Sovereignty has never been ceded.

This Cultural Values Assessment has been reviewed and endorsed by the following Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders: Aunty Alice Kolasa, Uncle Perry Wandin, Uncle Brendan Wandin and Uncle Jason Tweedie.



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F E M I N A L

Acronyms and Abbreviations

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Place	ACHP
Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Register and Information System	ACHRIS
<i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic)</i>	AHA 2006
Before present	BP
<i>Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006</i>	CATSI Act
Cultural Heritage Management Plan	CHMP
Cultural Heritage Permit	CHP
Cultural Values Assessment	CVA
Cultural Values Study	CVS
Ecological Vegetation Class	EVC
International Council on Monuments and Sites	ICOMOS
Low Density Artefact Distribution	LDAD
Local Government Area	LGA
Precinct Structure Plan	PSP
Public Records Office Victoria	PROV
Registered Aboriginal Party	RAP
State Library Victoria	SLV
Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council	VAHC
Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register	VAHR
Victorian Heritage Database	VHD
Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation	WWCHAC
Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register	VAHR

Orthographic Notes

For consistency throughout this report, the orthography used is that adopted by contemporary Traditional Owner groups represented by their Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) status. Where direct quotations from other sources are provided, the orthography utilised in the original text is retained.

Note that the terms 'Wurundjeri' and 'Woi-wurrung' (and variations) have been used interchangeably since at least the 1880s to refer to those people speaking the Woi-wurrung language in the greater Melbourne area. Except in direct quotations, when referring to the broader language group the language name 'Woi-wurrung' is used, when referring to the contemporary community of people the compound 'Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung' is used.

Variations in orthography can be attributed to different individual and collective pronunciations of the words, dialect variations, and the difficulty and personal prejudices of European observers recording an oral language that was entirely foreign to them.

There is a great deal of archival material that relates to the history of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung RAP area, including Woi-wurrung language terms, some of which is publicly available, but there remains valuable information that is difficult to access and presumably more as yet undiscovered. Some traditional Woi-wurrung names for places and terms were once known and may be recovered again in the future. Where contemporary reimagining and Woi-wurrung renaming for places is used, it will be identified.

Glossary of Key Terms

<i>Birrarung</i>	Woi-wurrung name for the Yarra River. This river is referred to by its traditional name throughout this report.
Bioregion	A landscape-scale approach to classifying the environment using a range of attributes such as climate, geomorphology, geology, soils, and vegetation.
Country	Country is a term used by First Nations Australians to describe their traditional lands and waters. Country is both a common noun and a proper noun. People talk of Country in the same manner that they may refer to an individual. There are varying customs of speaking to Country, singing to Country, visiting Country, and caring for Country.
Cultural Values Study	A comprehensive study delivered by the Wurundjeri Corporation, which details the ethnohistorical, archaeological, traditional land use and present-day Woi-wurrung association with a place, as well as recommendations for the management and protections of that place.
Ecological Vegetation Class	An Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC) is the standard unit for classifying vegetation types within a bioregion.
Geomorphology	Geomorphology is the study of landforms, their origin and evolution, the investigation of relationships between landform development and processes that shape and configure these landforms such as tectonic movement, volcanism, erosion, and deposition cycles.
Kulin	Meaning ‘man’ or ‘person.’ The name by which the aggregation of five language groups and their members occupying southern and central Victoria is known, including Woi-wurrung, Boonwurrung, Wathaurong, Dja Wurrung and Taungurung.
<i>Ngurungaeta</i>	Woi-wurrung term for the traditional headman or leader of a local descent clan.
<i>Tanderrum</i>	The name of the cultural practice whereby gifts were ritually given by a foreign party in exchange for temporary access to another group’s territory or use of resources in their territory.
Traditional	This term is used as many Woi-wurrung people use it: to describe cultural beliefs and practices that have their origins in, and may continue from, the

Currently, the Wurundjeri Corporation is comprised of three family groups, the Nevin, Terrick and Wandin families, who are descendants of Bebejan/Be-be-jern/Jerum-Jerum (born circa late 1700s, died circa 1836), who was a *ngurungaeta* of the Wurundjeri-willam clan, his daughter Annie Borat/Borate (born circa 1836, died 1870-74) and her son Robert Wandoon/Wandin (born around 1824, died 1903). Bebejan was present at John Batman's negotiations in 1835 as was his young son William Barak/Beruk (b.c. 1824, d. 1903), who would later become a great leader of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people into the early twentieth century. The Corporation is structured to ensure that each family group has an even number of Elders who are voting members of the Corporation.

FAMILY

1.2 Whole of Country Plan

In 2025, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (herein referred to as the Wurundjeri Corporation) published its ten year Whole of Country Plan. This plan is a community led document articulating the goals and aspirations of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community. The Whole of Country Plan provides a framework that was developed by Wurundjeri People for Wurundjeri People. It outlines a vision for healthy Country, with specific actions that will be needed to sustain the full expanse of Wurundjeri lands and waterways, now and into the future.

The Whole of Country Plan will provide a consistent and holistic lens through which we show respect for, heal, and care for Country.

The Whole of Country Plan will set out Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung cultural objectives for managing Country. It will articulate Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung's cultural protocols including our self-determined directions to restore health, our aspirations to deepen our spiritual connection with Country, and uphold our responsibility to maintain it for our future generations.

The Plan will outline how we will enhance the value, protection, and rehabilitation of our Country, including all elements of the natural environment, our Culture and our People.

WURUNDJERI CORPORATION WHOLE OF COUNTRY PLAN VISION

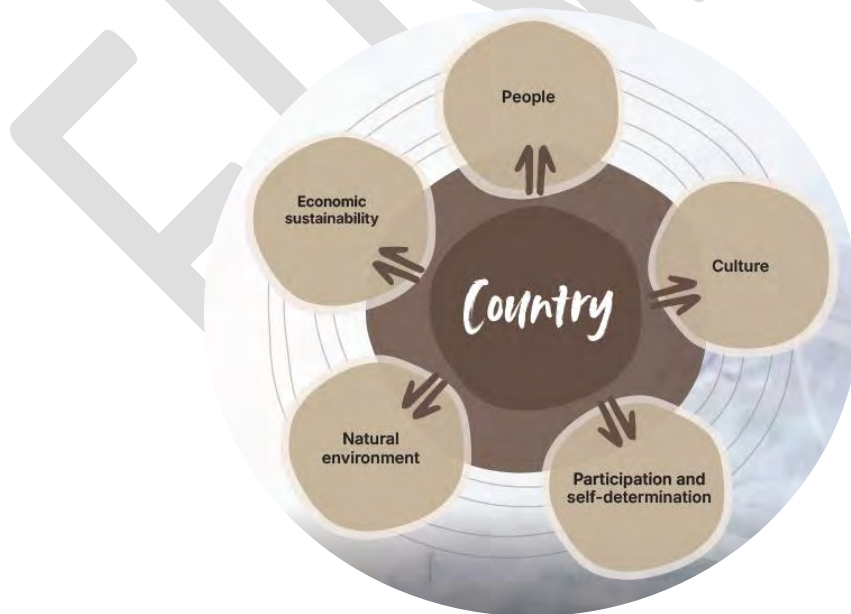


Figure 1: The Whole of Country Plan framework (WWCHAC 2025, p.39)

Frameworks for conceptualising Country, and all that Country encompasses, and the recommendations made within this report are aligned with the Whole of Country Plan, and the goals of the community articulated therein.

1.3 Northern Freight Precinct Structure Plan Cultural Values Assessment

1.3.1 Purpose and Policy Context

In June 2025, New Communities, Housing, Building and Land Delivery at Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) (formerly Victorian Planning Authority (VPA)) engaged the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation's Research Unit to undertake a Cultural Values Assessment for an areas in the City of Whittlesea Local Government Area (LGA) and Shire of Mitchell Local Government Area (LGA) referred to as the Northern Freight Precinct (Map 2). The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Values Assessment (CVA) has been prepared for New Communities, Housing, Building and Land Delivery at Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) (formerly Victorian Planning Authority (VPA)). An Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment has been prepared in parallel to this assessment.

The Study Area encompasses c. 1,399 hectares (ha) of land (Map 2). The Study Area is bounded by North East rail line to the west and adjacent Hume Freeway, Merri Merri (Merri Creek) and Merriang Road to the east, from Beveridge and the Melbourne-Albury-Sydney Railway line to the west, the future Wallan East Part 2 Precinct Structure Plan (PSP) to the north, and the future E6/Outer Metropolitan Ring transport corridor and Donnybrook PSP to the south. The Study Area is located within the City of Whittlesea Local Government Area (LGA) and Shire of Mitchell Local Government Area (LGA) respectively. Northern Freight Precinct will be a largely employment precinct and supporting infrastructure and services to deliver the Beveridge Interstate Freight Terminal (BIFT). DTP has provided the following description of the PSP:

BIFT is one of a number of new intermodal terminals proposed and/or being developed to serve metropolitan Melbourne which will transform the freight and logistics in Victoria. Situated immediately adjacent to both Inland Rail and the Hume Freeway, NFP is ideally located to unlock the potential of Commonwealth's investment in developing Inland Rail and will support broader industrial and commercial development in Melbourne's north.

Objectives

The objectives of the CVA project are defined as the following:

- To document Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung traditional, contemporary and ongoing cultural values associated with the Study Area and the surrounding lands through consultation and collation of information expressed by Wurundjeri Elders regarding this part of their Country.
- To detail Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung tangible and intangible values and places of significance associated with the Study Area including stony rises, Merri Merri (Merri Creek) corridor and the land surrounding it.
- To inform and support planning for the Northern Freight Precinct Structure Plan that incorporates Aboriginal heritage values into design, planning and implementation considerations.
- To assist in planning work and development designs within the Study Area.

The recommendations produced in consultation with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders by WWCHAC will provide direction for the management and protection of the cultural values and areas of

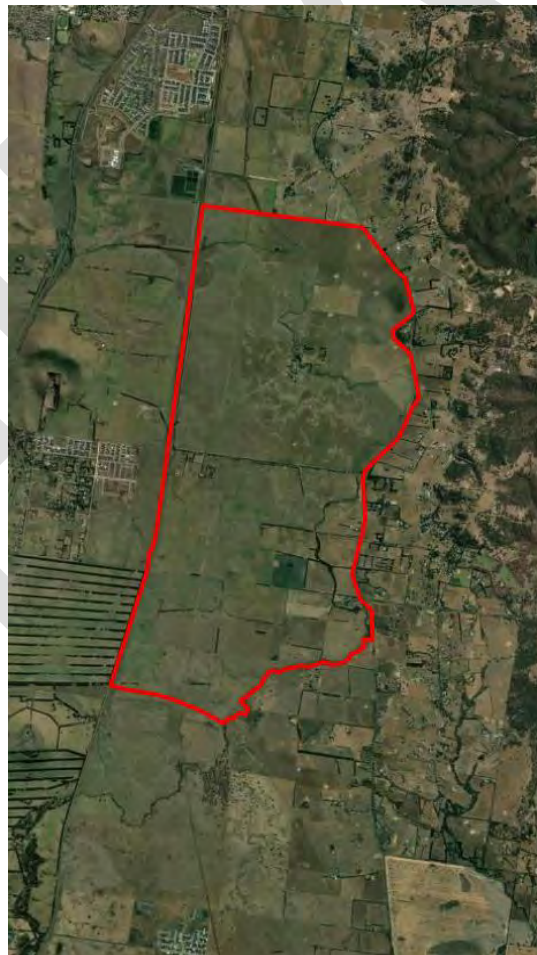
significance to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people alongside proposed activities for the Northern Freight Precinct Study Area. The study may also identify other opportunities for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung integration.

Outcomes

The outcomes of this CVA will meet the objectives of the WWCHAC and include but are not limited to:

- To document Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung traditional, contemporary and ongoing cultural values associated with the Study Area and the surrounding lands through consultation and collation of information expressed by Wurundjeri Elders regarding this part of their Country.
- To detail Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung tangible and intangible values and places of significance associated with the Study Area including stony rises, unnamed waterways, waterscapes, and Merri Merri (Merri Creek) corridor and the land surrounding it.
- To deliver increased community wellbeing from being able to deliver the goals of the WWCHAC Whole of Country Plan.

To support Caring for Country through the integration of cultural values in the design and planning of the Precinct Structure Plan, and land management.



Map 2: Location of the Study Area. Source: WWCHAC

1.4 Project Team

This CVA is delivered by WWCHAC's Research Unit. All Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders, community members and staff of the Corporation who participated in activities for the CVA are listed in (see Section 2.6). The Research Unit and New Communities, Housing, Building and Land Delivery at Department of Transport and Planning (formerly Victorian Planning Authority) project team are listed below.

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Susannah Beardsell – Research Officer

Macey Hodgson – Cultural Values Coordinator

New Communities, Housing, Building and Land Delivery at Department of Transport and Planning (formerly Victorian Planning Authority)

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Qaisara Mohamad – Strategic Planner, New Communities | Spatial Planning

1.5 Report Distribution

This report and its contents remain the property of WWCHAC. The report is intended for use by DTP for the Northern Freight Precinct Structure Plan. This report is a public facing report. Copies of the report will be provided to:

- DTP
- Stakeholders DTP has flagged at the beginning of the project that will need to view a copy

This report is not for distribution outside of the above-named recipients, and it not to be used for a different project other than the one named above. The report will not be provided to any other individual or agency without the prior written consent of the Wurundjeri Corporation.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Purpose of the assessment

The purpose of this study is to investigate and report on the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung cultural values of the landscape within the Northern Freight Precinct Study Area and the lands surrounding it. Documenting the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung cultural values for the Study Area and establishing its

cultural significance will provide the basis for asserting the WWCHAC's aspirations for protection and management of the landscape where the Northern Freight Precinct is located. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung knowledge recording also provides a basis for understanding Wurundjeri Country as a holistic, cultural landscape. The report will also provide the basis for interpretation or other opportunities to reflect Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people's history and association with the Study Area.

The scope of the present assessment was confined to desktop archival, documentary research of ethnographic and ethnohistorical materials, field visits and interviews. The recording of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung knowledge was undertaken by the Research Unit during field visits and interviews with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders. Similarly, the Research Unit recorded any registered Aboriginal Places and identified and established recommendations for the management of the Study Area.

2.2 Method Choices

Within Woi-wurrung Country, Aboriginal Places often contain cultural features of lithic artefacts, scarred trees, earth mounds, quarries, Ancestral remains, stone arrangements, and less often, rock art and shell middens. Heritage places are also those related to cultural practices, beliefs, or traditions. These features are defined as intangible, including, ceremonies, dances, songs, creation stories, spiritual associations, technical skills, traditional craft skills, ecological knowledge, language, traditional laws, and responsibilities. The Australian association of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) describes intangible cultural heritage as cultural practices created by communities or groups of people over time and are practices recognised by those communities or groups as part of their heritage; inclusive of cultural responsibilities, rituals and ceremonies, oral traditions, performance, language, knowledge, and skills.² The *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* AHA 2006 is also reflective of this definition.³ With respect to a more holistic understanding of cultural heritage, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people aspire to preserve not just their archaeological footprint, but also places and landscapes of cultural significance.

A Cultural Values Assessment (CVA) is a holistic means to determine the connection between people and place. The desktop component of the assessment will present the documentary or archival record and an archaeological analysis. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung knowledge recording will constitute a further component undertaken by the Research Unit. This multi-disciplinary approach enables a reconstruction, albeit at times fragmented, of the traditional and contemporary associations to a place or landscape within Woi-wurrung Country. The spatial representation of traditional associations can also be shown as a cultural map.

There is no prescribed format for undertaking or presenting a CVA, and such investigations do not constitute statutory documents pursuant to the AHA 2006. As per the Wurundjeri Corporation Cultural Heritage Management Policies 2019, the assessment also considers the significance of the cultural values and develops recommendations to protect or manage those values against risk of harm from land use or ground disturbing activities. The benchmark for considering cultural significance is contained within section 4 of the AHA 2006; the ICOMOS Australia Practice Note for Intangible Cultural

² Australia ICOMOS, [Practice Note: intangible cultural heritage and place](#), Australia ICOMOS, 2017, accessed 28 November 2025.

³ *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (Vic), S. 5A, [Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 | legislation.vic.gov.au](#).

Heritage and Place; and ICOMOS Australia Practice Note for Understanding and Assessing Cultural Significance.⁴ Section 4 of the AHA 2006 defines Aboriginal cultural heritage significance as including (a) archaeological, anthropological, contemporary, historical, scientific, social, or spiritual significance; and (b) significance in accordance with Aboriginal tradition.

A particular difficulty variously experienced by Indigenous Australians through their engagement in cultural heritage or other land and water related activities is an expectation to demonstrate a continual 'non-broken' relationship to, and knowledge of, Country from the pre-contact period to the present day. This expectation is neither consistent with processes of cultural reproduction over time, nor the nature of colonial dispossession. Country was taken away for so many Indigenous Australians under administrations that oversaw the removal of people onto reserves and missions to make way for pastoral or urban expansion. This often served to break up traditional group structures and languages through which knowledge, language, history and culture had been customarily transmitted. In collaboration with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders and community members, a Cultural Values Assessment can sensitively embed contemporary Wurundjeri knowledge and values within the historical context of traditional and post-contact society, beliefs and customs. The WWCHAC Water Policy, *Nhanbu narrun ba ngaragunin twarn Birrarung Ancient Spirit & Lore of the Yarra* defines cultural practices as the following:

Wurundjeri cultural practises are expressed in activities that connect Wurundjeri people to their family, Country, and identity (practises that are tied to Aboriginal tradition). Yet Aboriginal tradition should not be viewed as static and unchanging from a distant 'authentic' past.

At its essence, Aboriginal tradition is grounded in the handing down of beliefs and practices from one generation to the next and is therefore subject to change over time. Wurundjeri cultural practises include but are not limited to activities such as smoking ceremonies and Welcomes to Country (*Tanderrum*), dance, artwork, music, craft, tool production, and custodianship of Country.⁵

2.3 Research Process

The project activities for this CVA follow an iterative cycle of research, field visits and workshops (See Figure 2). The reporting will consolidate the evidence for the identified cultural values, and in collaboration with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders and community members, a statement of cultural significance and cultural values, and recommendations to reflect the aspirations of the WWCHAC. Table 1 lays out the research components and milestones for the present assessment.

Observation from additional research material and Knowledge Recordings

(Cultural practice, physical expression, knowledge, skills, beliefs).

⁴ Australia ICOMOS, [Practice Note: intangible cultural heritage and place](#); Australia ICOMOS, [Practice Note: understanding and assessing cultural significance](#), Australia ICOMOS, 2013, accessed 28 November 2025.

⁵ WWCHAC, ["Nhanbu narrun ba ngaragunin twarn Birrarung: ancient Spirit and Lore of the Yarra" \[PDF\]](#), p. 8.

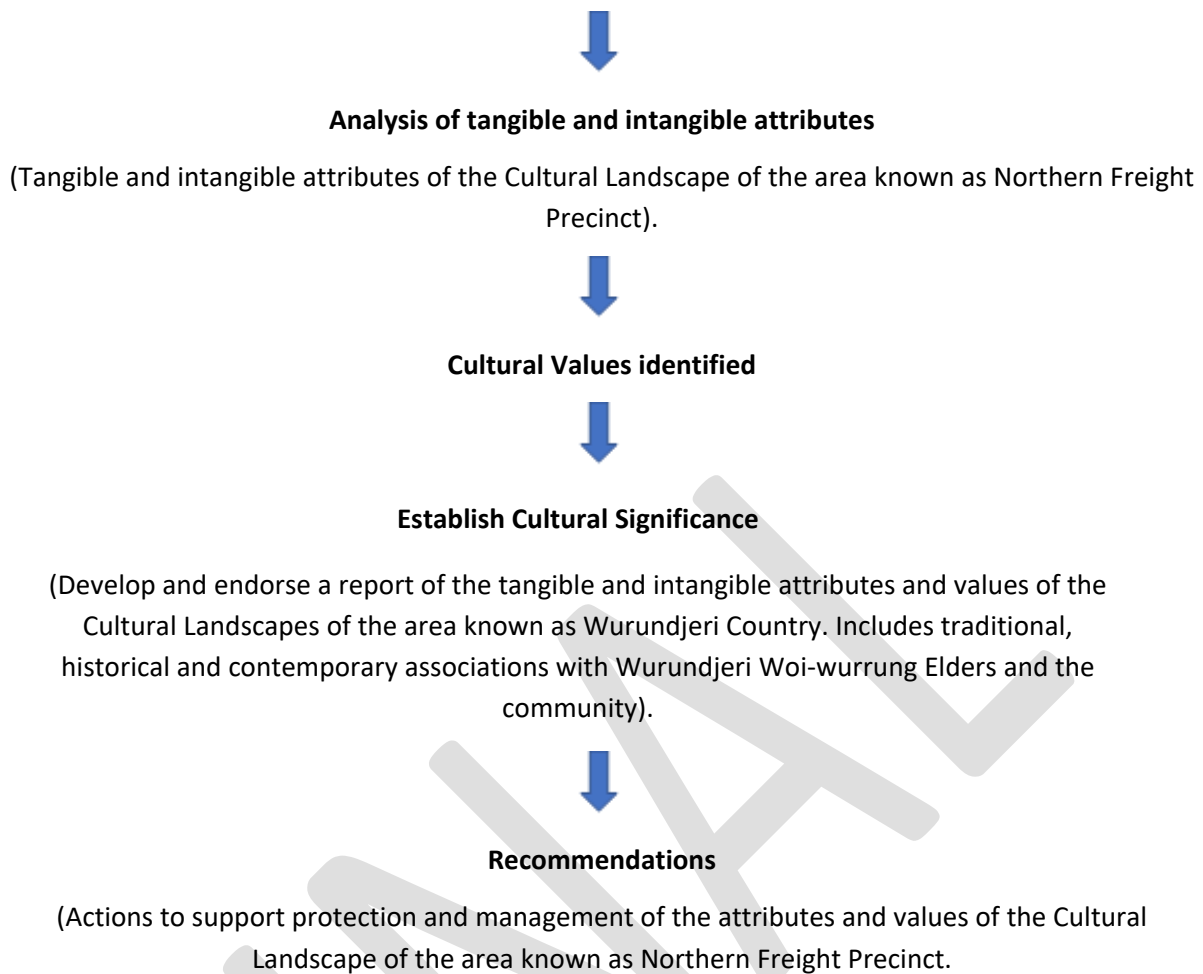


Figure 2: Identification and interpretation of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung cultural value

Table 1: Research components and milestones

Component	Milestone	Includes
1. Desktop Assessment	Ethnohistorical research key areas of focus are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language and place names • Historical narrative of people and place • Living areas & architecture • Cultural practices, beliefs, customs • The archaeological record • Utilisation of the landscape 	Database review of the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register; analysis of published historical, archaeological, anthropological, and other relevant material; compilation of historical mapping; archival access; review of the records of the Port Phillip District Aboriginal Protectorate; review of journals, field notes or other materials drafted by the colonial land surveyors and settlers of 1835-1863.
2. Woi-wurrung Knowledge Recording	Ethnographic data generation and recording	Engagement with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community which may include workshops, field visits and interviews as well as engaging with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung photographic, audio and video collection.
3. Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft report • Final report 	Reporting on the identified cultural values, consultations, outcomes, recommendations, and statement of significance in relation to the study area.

Research activities were guided by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research, as well as the Australian Anthropological Society (AAS) Code of Ethics.⁶ Thematic categories of data comprising cultural values are reproduced in Table 2 (note that categories 1-8 are relevant to the present desktop research component of the broader project). Key categories of data generated during the desktop research and participant engagement components of the project are those reflected by themes of land use and occupancy regimes developed within cultural mapping methods.⁷ Land use refers to traditional land use practices for subsistence and other resources - what is commonly referred to as utilisation of the landscape. Occupancy is evidenced by fixed cultural sites which indicate a longstanding relationship to the land and Traditional Ownership.⁸ For example, in Wurundjeri Country these may be living areas, landscapes or features associated with cultural practices, beliefs, archaeological remains, Ancestral remains, place names and markers of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung historical and contemporary narrative held within a landscape. The interrelated land use and occupancy categories initially provide broad topics of investigation to inform the identification and documentation of cultural values.

1. The archaeological record
2. Historical narrative of people and place
3. Woi-wurrung language and place names
4. Utilisation of the landscape
5. Environmental knowledge and management
6. Living areas and architecture
7. Cultural practices, beliefs, customs
8. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung knowledge

Table 2: Thematic categories of data comprising cultural values

2.4 Desktop Research

Desktop research involves data gathered from the archival and documentary record (ethnohistorical), theses and contemporary knowledge recordings (ethnography) and a review of the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register (archaeological) to reconstruct the traditional context of 'people and place' and the narrative of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people to people relevant to the Study Area. The following archival sources were accessed for this study:

- Historical mapping e.g., survey maps and parish plans, geology maps
- Manuscripts drafted by colonial settlers
- Public Records Office Victoria (PROV)

⁶ Australian Anthropological Society (AAS), "[AAS Code of Ethics](#)", AAS, 2012; Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), "[AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research](#)", AIATSIS, 2020.

⁷ TN Tobias, *Living Proof the Essential Data-Collection Guide for Indigenous Use-and-Occupancy Map Surveys*, Ecotrust Canada, Vancouver, 2009.

⁸ Tobias, *Living Proof the Essential Data-Collection Guide for Indigenous Use-and-Occupancy Map Surveys*, p. 33.

- Records of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate
- Published materials
- State Library Victoria (SLV)
- The Howitt and Fison Archive Project
- Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register (VAHR)
- Victorian Heritage Database (VHD)
- National Library of Australia (NLA)
- Records of the Victoria Archaeology Survey (VAS)

2.5 Knowledge Recording Methodology

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung knowledge recording for this Cultural Values Assessment took place over an on-Country visit at key locations within the Northern Freight Precinct Project Area, one-on-one online interviews, and workshops with participation by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders and community members. On-Country discussions enabled the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders and community members to understand the landscape and for the Cultural Values Advisor to directly explore their connection through conversations regarding traditional and contemporary knowledge, descriptions of land or resource use and reflection on the significance of place etc. Workshops provide a more structured setting for presenting results and research, identifying gaps, developing recommendations and other consultation as required.

One Country visit was undertaken on 12 August 2025 attended by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders and community members, and staff from WWCHAC. WWCHAC staff worked together with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders to develop an approach to the investigation and recording of cultural values of the study area. Prior to the cultural values site visits, a draft desktop assessment detailing the background research undertaken into the study area was provided to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders and community members for review. Informed by this desktop assessment and topographic maps, it was agreed that the cultural values site visits would include a general drive of the study area and geographic region to help frame the landform context and would include targeted site visits to key landform / location features within the study area and geographic region. During the on-Country visits specific locations were selected for visitation by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders based on landscape representation and Wurundjeri associations, and historical research.

Primary information was derived from knowledge recordings with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders and community members of the Research Unit. This included but was not limited to:

- Recorded knowledge of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people referring to:
 - Health of Country (plants and animals, named and unnamed waterways).
 - Utilisation of the landscape (how is Country being managed and previously managed according to Wurundjeri seasons).
 - Land areas or events of cultural and historic significance within the area known as Wurundjeri Country (stony rises, waterways, mountains, hills, wetlands, swamps).

- Traditional knowledge and Woi-wurrung Ancestors
- Other traditional associations pertaining to the study area (language, place names).
- Recorded knowledge of the mapped cultural landscape attributes and cultural values within the area known as Wurundjeri Country.
- History of the area known as Wurundjeri Country.

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders and community members participated in facilitated workshops and on-Country activities to discuss the research, identify cultural values and appropriately consider how those cultural values may be protected and managed in proposed future land uses. The raw data from those sessions has been incorporated into this report.

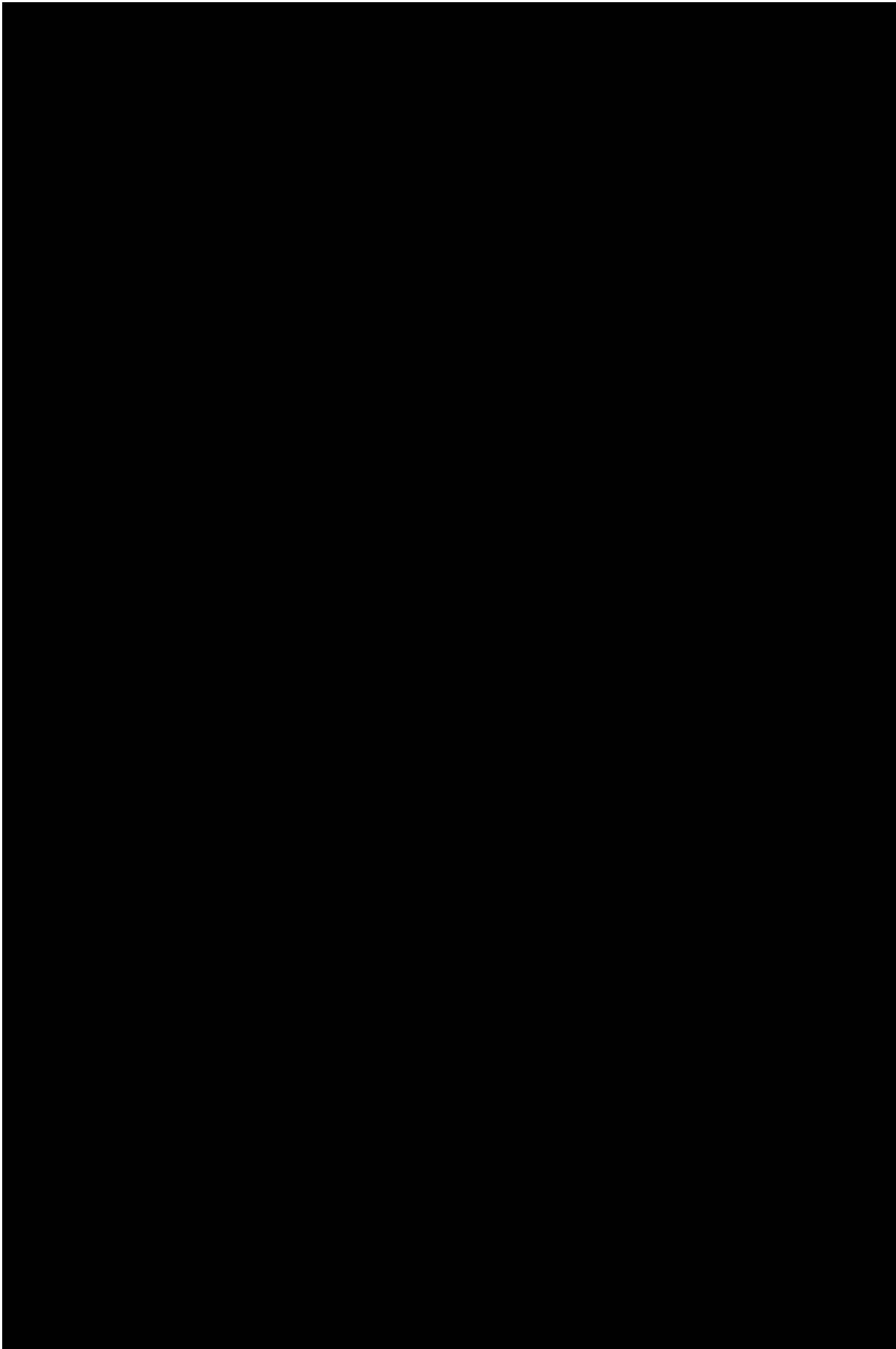
Those who participated in the cultural values recording On-Country visit, interviews, and workshops. Consent was provided by each participant for their knowledge and participation to be included within this report.

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2.7 The Ethnohistorical Method

Ethnohistorical research is employed as a methodology within the discipline of anthropology as a means by which to analyse previously documented ethnographic sources regarding, for instance, information on social and cultural practices recorded by contemporaneous observers at some earlier point in history. The early Aboriginal Australian ethnographic record consists of observations recorded in diaries and journal entries, correspondence, journalistic publications, official records and government reports, created by the earliest explorers, pioneers, settlers, missionaries and government officials to the continent. These records were analysed to uncover information about language and place names, interpersonal relations, patterns of occupation and habitation sites, and narratives connected to Aboriginal spirituality and cosmology, among other themes. While such information is of great value in reconstructing traditional laws, customs and cultural practices, including kinship structures and genealogies, territorial organisation, and spiritual and religious beliefs, it must be treated critically when generating understandings of the lives of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people prior to colonisation. Nevertheless, these reconstructions are central to applied anthropological pursuits in the Australian context with regard to, for instance, cultural heritage management, land rights and Native Title.

2.8 Limitations

As with any research program, the duration of time allocated for its completion was a limiting factor – more time allocated to research invariably means a greater body of source material can be identified, located and analysed, leading to improved robustness and reliability of the final output. There is a great deal of archival material that relates to the history of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung RAP area, its places, resources, communities and industries, much of which is publicly available, but there remains valuable information that is difficult to access and presumably more as yet undiscovered. While none of this undiscovered material may tangibly alter the outcomes of this CVA, it is important to acknowledge the possibility that future discoveries may potentially limit the comprehensiveness and durability of the present work.

Limited records of Wurundjeri history exist that pertain to a holistic perception of Wurundjeri Country and significant land areas within the Northern Freight Precinct Project Area and fewer still that describe traditional cultural practices and traditional economic and land management activities. The mapping of cultural values of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung RAP area is an ongoing activity. This mapping will continue to document and expand knowledge of the importance of places in Wurundjeri life in their past and present contexts and inform awareness of cultural heritage sensitivity with respect to tangible and intangible values.

2.9 Notes on Archival and Published Sources

To ensure intergenerational continuation of customary practices, history and belief systems, Indigenous Australians traditionally transmitted this knowledge primarily through oral traditions, ceremony or other performance and visual or artistic exchanges. Ethnographic data, on the other hand, is often collected after substantial damage has been inflicted upon Aboriginal populations and their ways of life and recorded at least one to two generations removed from pre-contact times.⁹

The documentary record cannot be expected to be the sole, objective, authoritative account of traditional Indigenous practice, having been constructed by contributors who were largely untrained European men –that is, settlers and pastoralists, missionaries, and colonial officials –with their own motivations and predilections. However, some observers were influenced by the emerging field of ethnography and were more systematic in their methods of data collection. In framing the use of early texts in reconstructive activities within applied anthropological enquiries, anthropologist Kingsley Palmer contends:

The reconstruction of an ethnography from early texts is no simple task. One of the reasons for this is that the quality and reliability of the early accounts are immensely variable. The manner in which the data were collected, the selectivity exercised by those who did so, their preoccupations, predilections, and, perhaps most importantly, their prejudices and assumptions, make the data difficult to judge in terms of their overall reliability. Many of the early accounts are impossible to assess with respect to specific issues that might affect their reliability because they include no account of the collector, or of their preoccupations, assumptions and prejudices.¹⁰

From the onset of non-Indigenous settlement of the Port Phillip District in 1835, Woi-wurrung people became the immediate subject of colonial dispossession and missionary activities. In 1839 they were placed under the charge of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate. In 1863 Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people were moved onto the Coranderrk Aboriginal Station, where their usual means of cultural reproduction via language, customary practises and kinship marriage systems were fractured, and at times, actively suppressed by its management. A review of archival and primary source materials can assist in establishing the ethnohistorical context of Woi-wurrung people at the time of non-Indigenous settlement. Whilst containing insightful detail, primary source material must be considered within the context of the time of authorship. Nineteenth century surveyors, colonial settlers, explorers and government personnel recorded the day-to-day life of Indigenous people they encountered with romanticised undertones of ‘natives untouched by civilisation’. Yet their observations were recorded when Indigenous families were present within the early settlements, e.g. the township of Melbourne, the Protectorate areas, or when they were living in their traditional estates now occupied by pastoral runs. These Indigenous people were at the interface of colonisation. Their traditional estates had become places of colonial interference by those with vested land, religious and political interests. Observations and commentary were also made through the lens of social evolution by which commentators viewed Indigenous people as an example of ‘primitive evolutionary stages’.

⁹ S Canning, D Griffin, V Flynn and J Ward, *Voluntary CHMP for the City West Water Detention Tank at Brimbank Park, Keilor East, Victoria*, Australian Cultural Heritage Management (Vic) Pty Ltd, 2008, p. 1.

¹⁰ K Palmer, “Understanding another ethnography: the use of early texts in native title inquiries,” in T Bauman (ed), *Dilemmas in Applied Native Title Anthropology in Australian*, AIATSIS, Canberra, 2010, p. 73.

This theory of social evolution and racial progression was an ethnocentric notion that humankind progressed through identical universal stages from a primitive 'stone age' nomadic hunter gatherer society (i.e. Indigenous people) to a complex and civilised society at the apex of ascension from inferior to superior (i.e. Europeans). Social scientists sought to discover these universal evolutionary traits through comparative analysis of 'tribes and 'civilisations'; and sought to identify what the 'trigger' was for humans to progress from one stage to the next. After the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, the anthropologist Herbert Spencer applied a notion of natural selection to human 'races'. An example is contained within the preamble to the 1877 Report of the Royal Commission of the Aborigines (Victoria) which states that "they follow employments of civilized people with some regularity - fully as much as can be expected of a race just emerging from barbarism".¹¹ This objectionable era of scientific racism is commonly referred to as Social Darwinism and continued well into the twentieth century.

Examples of how social Darwinism held influence can be found in all levels of colonial Victorian society. The preamble to the 1877 Report of the Royal Commission of the Aborigines stated that Aboriginal Victorian peoples "follow employments of civilized people with some regularity - fully as much as can be expected of a race just emerging from barbarism."¹² Chief Protector George Augustus Robinson wrote that Aboriginal people of the Port Phillip District were "fully equal in large majority of the peasantry of civilised communities."¹³ Alfred William Howitt, considered a pioneer Australian anthropologist, wrote of the Kurnai (eastern neighbours of the Woi-wurrung) that "it is not possible to surmise how long a period of time might be requisite for a tribe such as the Kurnai to slowly progress from that point at which their primitive, social history terminates for them... to an analogous position to that in which our Aryan ancestors first become visible to us in the dim and distant past."¹⁴ Howitt also wrote that the 'passage from savagery to barbarism' was not an achievable transition for Indigenous Australians due to his assumption that the continent lacked plants for cultivation.¹⁵

Such terminology and attitudes frequently appear in the Victorian documentary record because it framed the treatment and management of Aboriginal populations within the pervasive colonial logic. Imperial expansion was considered justified by a fundamental view that 'primitive hunter-gathering' people did not own land; and that colonisation offered evolutionary ascension by conversion to Christianity, organisation into nuclear family units and the adoption of sedentary agriculture as their means of existence. There were various means applied to this objective; the most sinister being an Act of the Victorian parliament known as the Victorian Half-Caste Act 1886 (in full: *An Act to amend an Act intituled "An Act to provide for the Protection and Management of the Aboriginal Natives of Victoria"*), which allowed for the removal of children from their families into unpaid domestic servitude or labour in order to assimilate Aboriginal people into white society.

¹¹ Royal Commission on the Aborigines, *Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Present condition of the Aborigines of this Colony, and to Advise as to the Best Means of Caring for, and Dealing with them, in the Future. Together with Minutes of Evidence and Appendices*, John Ferres, Government Printer, Melbourne, 1877.

¹² Royal Commission on the Aborigines, *Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Present condition of the Aborigines of this Colony*.

¹³ GA Robinson to C La Trobe, 11 December 1841 in Robinson Forwarding Annual Report for 1841 [1841/2041] Inward Registered Correspondence to the Superintendent of Port Phillip District, Relating to Aboriginal Affairs, VPRS 10/P0000, PROV.

¹⁴ L Fison and AW Howitt, *Kamilaroi and Kurnai: group-marriage and relationship, and marriage by elopement*, George Robertson, Melbourne, 1880.

¹⁵ AW Howitt, [Notes by Howitt on Kulin from Barak, Page 51](#) [hw0391, MS9356/391] Alfred W. Howitt Collection, Howitt and Fison Archive Project.

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Indigenous oral tradition as the primary mode of cultural transmission means that much of traditional customary practice may either be subject to partial or inaccurate recording by non-Indigenous observers, or else remain entirely absent from the documentary record. As historian Fiona Skyring notes:

the historical record is neither an impartial nor complete account of the past.... I also argued in my reports that the context in which the record was created is crucial for understanding what the document means and the information which can be drawn from it. Historical interpretation is not a static methodology, but formed by the cultural, historical and social location of the author.¹⁷

Likewise, anthropologist William Stanner has noted the difficulties in reconstructing, for example, Aboriginal territoriality by recourse to the documentary record alone.¹⁸ The documentary record cannot be expected to be the sole, objective, authoritative account of traditional Indigenous practice, having been constructed by contributors who were largely untrained European men - that is, colonial settlers and pastoralists, missionaries, and colonial officials – with their own motivations and predilections. However, some observers were influenced by the emerging field of ethnography and were more systematic in their methods of data collection.

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The proper approach when utilising ethnographic source data is to critically analyse the historical and political context of the contributors, as well as their expertise and their likely motivations. There is a danger in emphasising certain items of source data – particularly those where Aboriginal voices are absent - and reconstructing the pre-contact socio-cultural landscape based on these ‘textual fragments’ in contradistinction to the more fulsome body of ethnographic data or the ‘textual whole’.²⁰ Elsewhere, anthropologist Timothy Pilbrow has referred to this fragmentary approach as ‘data mining’, and identifies its risk of “underplaying the role that disciplinary conventions and trends of the day played in shaping what was considered observation worthy.”²¹ In summary, the available

¹⁷ F Skyring, “History wars: debates about history in the native title process”, *Studies in Western Australian History*, 2003, 23: 71-82, p. 73.

¹⁸ WEH Stanner, “Aboriginal territorial organization: estate, range, domain and regime”, *Oceania*, 1965, 36(1): 1-26.

²⁰ T Pilbrow, “Embracing our hallmark latencies: on centring anthropologically practice”, in T Bauman (ed), *Dilemmas in Applied Native Title Anthropology in Australian*, AIATSIS, Canberra, 2010, pp. 97-109.

²¹ Pilbrow, “Embracing our hallmark latencies”, p. 99.

documentary record is fragmented and at times contradictory. Nevertheless, any attempt to reconstruct traditional and pre-contact cultural practice must necessarily involve a nuanced investigation of source material along with an evaluation of the motivations and predilections of its contributors.

2.10 Biographical Notes on Early Source Authors

Robinson, George Augustus (1791-1866)

George Augustus Robinson emigrated from England, arriving in Hobart Town in 1824, where he initially established himself as a builder.²² At the time of Robinson's arrival, relations between Aboriginal Tasmanians and colonial settlers were in rapid deterioration. Lieutenant-Governor Sir George Arthur had not given up on conciliation and so employed Robinson with the view to establishing conciliatory intercourse with the original inhabitants. From the outset, Robinson was driven by motives of compassion, which evolved into the sentiment that only he had their welfare at heart.²³ By 1834, Robinson had overseen the removal of almost all of the Tasmanian Aboriginal population from the mainland to the Flinders Island settlement. As a result of his perceived success in Tasmania, Robinson was, in 1837, appointed Chief Protector of Aborigines in the Port Phillip District. He took up this post in 1839 upon the establishment of the Protectorate, which saw him travel extensively across Victoria. He remained in this position until the abolishment of the Protectorate in 1849.

Robinson maintained a series of journals documenting his time with the Protectorate from 1839 to 1852, which has been compiled into six volumes, edited by Ian D. Clark and published in 1998. Along with the journals of Assistant Protector William Thomas, Robinson's writings comprise some of the earliest ethnographic accounts of Aboriginal people in what would later become Victoria.

Thomas, William (1793-1867)

William Thomas was appointed as an Assistant Protector between 1839 and 1849. He was allocated the Western Port district which encompassed the Yarra Basin and resulted in Thomas interacting with both Woi-wurrung and Boonwurrung clans without being able to effectively or consistently distinguish groups.²⁴ Thomas' initial hopes of 'civilising' the Aboriginal inhabitants of the district soon gave way to a focus on the preservation of life and establishing harmony between them and the settlers.²⁵ When the protectorate was abolished in 1849, he was retained as Guardian of Aborigines in the counties of Bourke (the county encompassing Beveridge), Mornington and Evelyn, remaining a chief government advisor on Aboriginal affairs until his death in 1867. He kept a detailed diary, inclusive of amateur ethnographic detail, and prepared numerous official reports for his government overseers. His are among the earliest and most detailed ethnographic accounts relevant to the Wurundjeri population

²² "[Robinson, Geoge Augustus \(1791-1866\)](#)", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, published first in hardcopy 1967, accessed online 28 November 2025.

²³ "[Robinson, Geoge Augustus \(1791-1866\)](#)".

²⁴ L Conor, "'Their Reserves Are Mere Farce': Aboriginal Stations in the Port Phillip Protectorate," *Australian Historical Studies*, 2025, 56(3): 482-501, p. 490.

²⁵ DJ Mulvaney, "[Thomas, William \(1793-1867\)](#)", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, published first in hardcopy 1967, accessed online 9 October 2025.

produced in the early contact period.²⁶

Thomas's journals have been compiled into four volumes, edited by Marguerita Stephens and published in 2014 by the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for languages.

Smyth, Robert Brough (1830-1889)

Robert Brough Smyth was a civil servant and mining engineer who arrived in Melbourne in 1852 from England, where he worked for the office of the Surveyor-General, and from 1860 became the honorary secretary to the Board for the Protection of Aborigines, eventually assuming the role of Chairman.²⁷ In 1878 he published a two-volume book, *The Aborigines of Victoria*, compiled largely from information received from correspondents (settlers and officials, such as guardians of the Aborigines), as well as his own observations and commentary.

Howitt, Alfred William (1830-1908)

Explorer and natural scientist, Alfred William Howitt, came to be recognised as a 'pioneer authority' on Aboriginal culture and social organisation.²⁸ Howitt's status was cemented through his association with contemporary Lorimer Fison and the publication of his books and articles on Aboriginal culture and social organisation, which were well received within the burgeoning anthropological institution. Howitt utilised systematic research methods such as recording his observations as he travelled throughout the colonies and later surveying Aboriginal reserve occupants. Additionally, Howitt liaised with a number of correspondents residing across the south and east of the continent, who supplied him with anecdotal material pertaining to Aboriginal individuals and groups within their respective regions.

Howitt's professional life was largely spent as a mining engineer and magistrate in Victoria. He undertook extensive ethnographic field research with the Gunaikurnai people in Gippsland and engaged with other Aboriginal groups across the state. Wurundjeri *ngurungaeta* William Barak was granted leave from Coranderrk Aboriginal Station to spend one month with the ethnographer, during which time Howitt extracted what information he could on traditional Aboriginal culture from this primary informant.²⁹ Howitt published widely, his most prominent work being his 1904 book *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*.³⁰

²⁶ M Stephens and F Stewart-Muir, *The Years of Terror: Banbu-Deen: Kulin and Colonists at Port Phillip 1835-1851*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2023, p. xi.

²⁷ M Hoare, "[Smyth, Robert Brough \(1830-1889\)](#)", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, published first in hardcopy 1976, accessed online 28 November 2025.

²⁸ WEH Stanner, "[Howitt, Alfred William \(1830-1908\)](#)", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, published first in hardcopy 1972, accessed online 28 November 2025.

²⁹ DL Freedman and A Parmington, "Targeted Cultural Values Inspection of PSP 1074 & 1075 Sunbury", Report prepared for Metropolitan Planning Authority by the Wurundjeri Tribe Land & Compensation Cultural Heritage Council Inc, 2015.

³⁰ The edition referred to throughout this report was published in 2001 by Aboriginal Studies Press.

Parker, Edward Stone (1802-1865)

Methodist preacher and politician, Edward Stone Parker was appointed as Assistant Protector between 1839 and 1848. Parker was appointed the Loddon District including the Macedon District which was “comprehended by a line drawn on the south from a point twenty miles north of Melbourne running by “Murnnieyong” the Mount “Blackwood” of Mitchell, Mount “Cole”, Mount “William”, and the Glenelg and on the west the boundary of the South Australian Province, the east by a line running north from “Tarrewait”, i.e. Mount Macedon, the northern boundary undefined”.³¹ This encompassed north-west and western Woi-wurrung clans, Dja Dja Wurrung people, as well as visiting Wadawurrung and Taungurung clans. Parker initially based himself at Yerrip Hills on Jacksons Creek, near the area known today as Gisborne, and established Terrawait Depot there in 1839 before the establishment of his Loddon Aboriginal Protectorate Station at Franklindford (1841-1848). Parker adopted the word *Terrawait*, being the Woi-wurrung place name for Mount Macedon.³²

Parker was perceptive and sympathetic of the impact of dispossession on Aboriginal people and advocated for their rights to their traditional lands and to utilise the resources it provided, despite the challenges experienced from conflicting interventions with squatters and station hands.³³ When the protectorate ended in late-December 1848, Parker remained at Franklindford, maintaining his connections to the Aboriginal community and pursuing his political and educational interests as a member of the Legislative Council in 1854-1855, a member of the Council of the University of Melbourne in 1853 and an inspector of the Denominational Schools Board in 1857-1862, until his death in 1865. Parker kept detailed writings of his ethnographic accounts which are preserved in the La Trobe Library.³⁴

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³¹ GA Robinson to C La Trobe, 11 December 1841, p. 1-6.
³² Barwick, “Mapping the past”, p. 122; HN Nelson, “[Edward Stone Parker \(1802–1865\)](#)”, in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, published first in hardcopy 1974, accessed online 8 December 2025.
³³ Nelson, “[Edward Stone Parker \(1802–1865\)](#)”.
³⁴ Nelson, “[Edward Stone Parker \(1802–1865\)](#)”.

3.0 The Study Area

This section provides a summary of literature relevant to the Study Area and objectives of the Project. It begins with a description of the physical environment in terms of its geology and geomorphology, as well as the flora and fauna that constitute the Study Area. It then summarises materials relating to the history of the Study Area with reference to primary historical resources, such as colonial diaries and records, as well as secondary historical and anthropological literature to contextualise the project.

The Study Area is part of the Wallan and Beveridge Cultural Landscape. The defining features of the Study Area are stony rise landforms formed from the Mount Fraser lava flow and Merri Merri (Merri Creek) corridor that flows through this landscape.³⁵ The Merri Merri (Merri Creek) catchment is a tributary of the Birrarung (Yarra River), covering 396 square metres from its source near at the foothills of the Great Dividing Range near Heathcote Junction to Wallan, the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) then flows 60 kilometres its junction at Wallan across the Mount Fraser lava flow extent area through Melbourne's northern suburbs and inner suburbs, and to its junction with the Birrarung (Yarra River) at Dights Falls, Abbotsford. The Merri Merri (Merri Creek) and its floodplain travel through the Northern Freight Precinct Study Area and form its northern and eastern boundaries.³⁶

Stony rises and associated rocky knoll landforms formed from the volcanic eruption of Mount Fraser are a dominant feature of this cultural landscape and extend across the extent of the Northern Freight Precinct Study Area and the lands surrounding it. The Aboriginal heritage values and importance of stony rises to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people are explored in Section 3.3 – Stony Rises.

The WWCHAC is the RAP for the entirety of the study area, responsible for a range of statutory functions pursuant to the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (AHA 2006). The entirety of the Study Area, inclusive of the Northern Freight Precinct and adjacent landscapes comprises an important cultural landscape for the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, representing historical and traditional associations and investigation potential. Post-colonial demarcation of land is not reflective of how Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people engaged and continue to engage with their Country.

The study area is located within the Local Government Areas (LGAs) of City of Whittlesea Council and Shire of Mitchell Council. Management of the Study Area is administered by both public and private entities: Department of Transport and Planning, National Intermodal Corporation, Melbourne Water, City of Whittlesea Council, Mitchell Shire Council, and other private landholders.

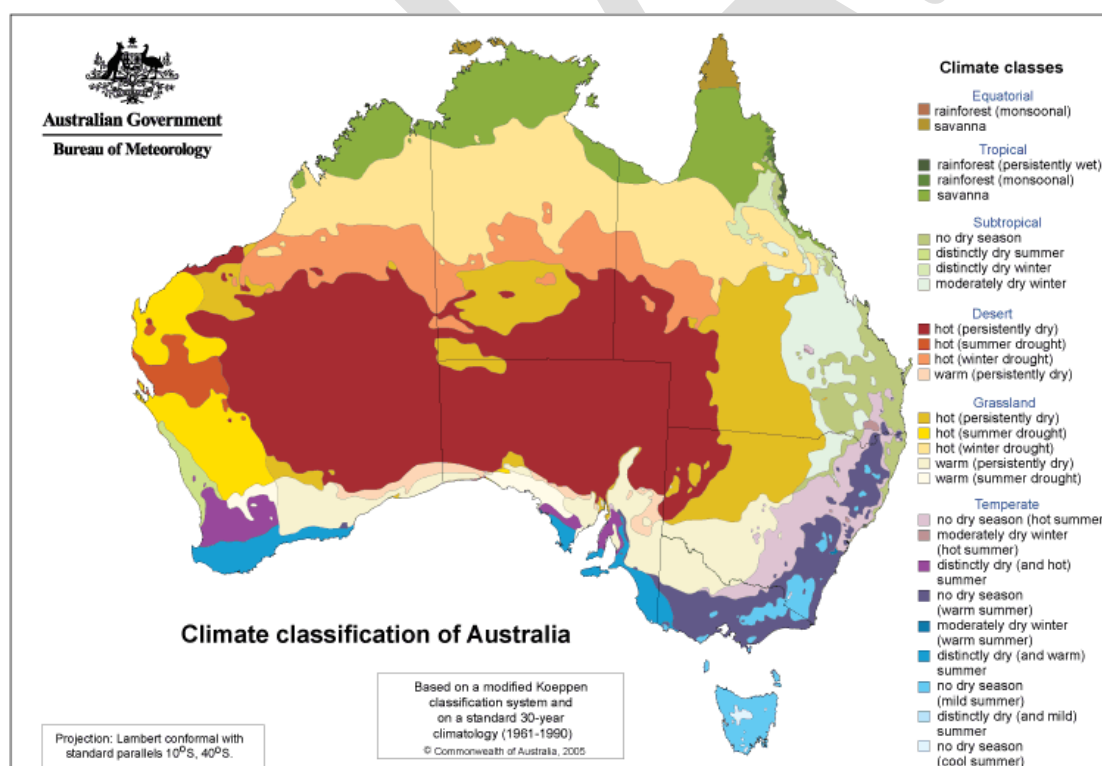
³⁵ C Keneley, J Coomans, C Spry, G Hitchcock, W Morrison, and Z Lasky-Davison, *Wurundjeri Strategic Aboriginal Heritage Assessment*, WWCHAC, 2025, pp. 24-28.

³⁶ Melbourne Water, *Drought Response Plan: Part B A Water Sharing Plan for Licenced Water Users in the: Merri Creek catchment*, 2016, p. 1.

3.1 Climate

Indigenous sovereignty of the Australian continent, from at least 60,000 years before present (BP), coincided with the end of the Pleistocene period (the geological epoch ending 10,000 years ago) and the commencement of the Holocene period, of 10,000 years ago to the present-day Anthropocene.³⁷ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people witnessed the rising sea levels that disconnected Tasmania from the mainland, the melting of the late Pleistocene ice sheets, and the rising of temperature by approximately six to ten degrees. During the late Pleistocene period there was less rainfall and less precipitation which provided suitable climatic conditions for woodland reduction and grassland crops. Following the Pleistocene, climatic conditions warmed, and precipitation increased, allowing the Eucalypt woodlands in south-eastern Australia to flourish.³⁸

While the climate is variable across Victoria and the south-east of Australia, south-central Victoria – including the study area – is characterised by a temperate climate with no dry season and warm summers. As different to evolutionary climate changes from natural events, climate change events occur and are determined by long-term environmental variability changes and land-use changes. The average annual temperature in Wallan is approximately 13.2°C and the average rainfall is 640 mm.³⁹



Map 3: Australian climate zones. Source: Bureau of Meteorology

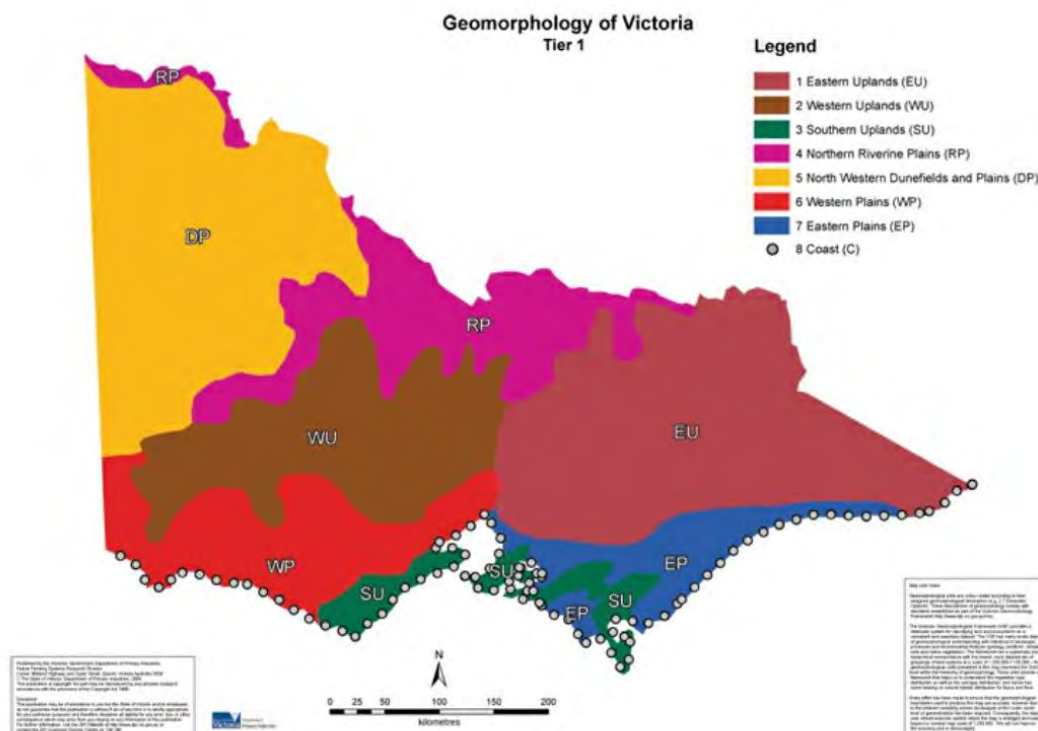
³⁷ 60,000 BP being the date associated with the oldest dated Australian archaeological site, Madjedbebe, where cultural heritage materials are dated to 65,000 +/- 6,000 Before Present.

³⁸ B Hill, M Albrecht and J de Lange, "Bulleen Precinct Plan: Heritage Impact Assessment. Report for the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, prepared by Andrew Long and Associates", 2019, p. 19.

³⁹ Climate Data, [Wallan Climate \(Australia\)](#), Climate Data, n.d., accessed 5 December 2025.

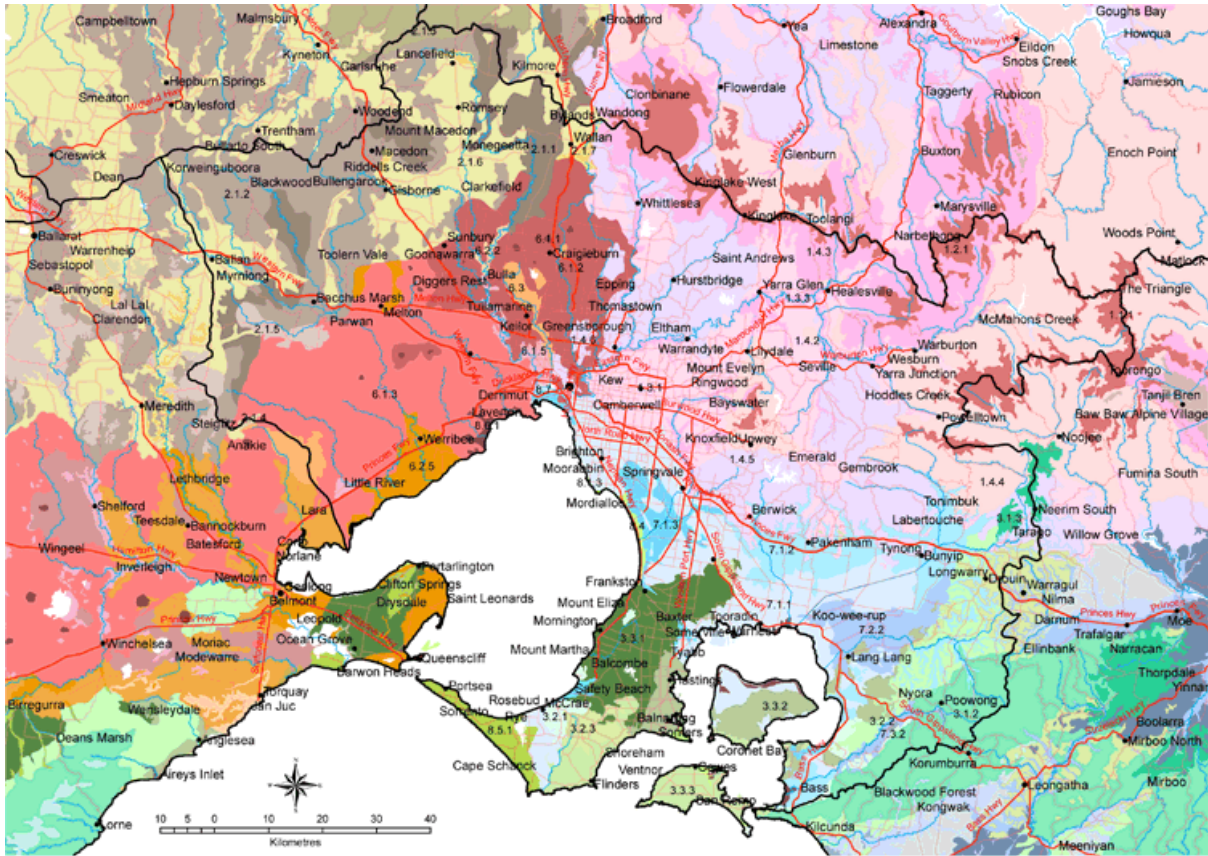
3.2 Geomorphology

The Study Area is situated within the Victorian Western Plain. The Victorian Western Plains geomorphic division, which extends westward from Melbourne to near the South Australian Border. The plains are dominated by a Pliocene-Pleistocene (5-0.001 Ma BP) surface of Newer Volcanic Group basalt sheet flows. Eruption points of lava hills and scoria cones occur sporadically within the landscape.⁴⁰ It is comprised of low-lying undulating plains formed on both volcanic and sedimentary lithologies. The landscapes of this geomorphological unit are formed on some of the youngest rocks of Victoria. Soils on the Western Plains generally reflect the underlying lithology and age of the rocks. The youngest landscapes—the stony rises—have skeletal uniform or gradational soils, whereas the earlier lava flows have deeper soils varying from friable gradational to strongly textured contrast soils. Much of the area is a natural grassland plain, bounded by the Western Uplands to the north, and the coastline and Otway Range – part of the Southern Uplands of Victoria to the south. There are more than twelve volcanic eruption points around Melbourne’s north that shaped the area from the Great Dividing Range and Sunbury/Gisborne area down to the city. Melbourne has been constructed on this large foundation of volcanic rock – one of only a small number of cities in the world to do so. The cooling of the lava flows over the past few million years formed deep layers of basalt stone – the bluestone used to construct many of Melbourne’s landmark buildings in the 19th century.



Map 4: Geomorphology of Victoria. Source: Agriculture Victoria

⁴⁰ K Kapteinis, “Cultural Heritage Management Plan No. 16803 Residential Subdivision: 35 Redstone Hill Road, Sunbury”, Report to Kata Projects Pty Ltd prepared by Ochre Imprints, 2020.



Geomorphological Units

Eastern Uplands (EU)

- 1.1.1 High elevation summit plateaux
- 1.2.1 Moderate elevation plateaux and broad ridges
- 1.3.1 Low elevation low relief landscapes
- 1.3.3 Low elevation terraces, fans and floodplains
- 1.4.1 Prominent summits above 1200m
- 1.4.2 Prominent summits between 500 and 1200m
- 1.4.3 Escarpments and gorges
- 1.4.4 Deeply dissected ridge and valley landscapes
- 1.4.5 Moderately dissected ridge and valley landscapes
- 1.4.6 Outlying ridges and hills

Western Uplands (WU)

- 2.1.1 Dissected uplands: Ridges, escarpments, mountains on non-granitic Palaeozoic rocks
- 2.1.2 Dissected uplands: Hills, valley slopes and plains on non-granitic Palaeozoic rocks
- 2.1.3 Dissected uplands: Ridges, escarpments, mountains on granitic Palaeozoic rocks
- 2.1.4 Dissected uplands: Hills, valley slopes and plains on granitic Palaeozoic rocks
- 2.1.5 Dissected uplands: Plateaux and rises of residual Cainozoic landscapes
- 2.1.6 Dissected uplands: Eruption points and volcanic plains
- 2.1.7 Dissected uplands: Terraces and floodplains

Southern Uplands (SU)

- 3.1.2 Moderate elevation ranges
- 3.2.1 Low elevation plateau and broad ridges
- 3.2.2 Low elevation ranges
- 3.2.3 Low elevation basaltic residuals
- 3.3.1 Very low elevation plateaux
- 3.3.2 Very low elevation hills and low hills
- 3.3.3 Very low elevation basaltic residuals

Western Plains (WP)

- 6.1.1 Eruption points: maars, scoria cones and lava shields, including associated ash and scoria deposits
- 6.1.2 Volcanic derived stony rises
- 6.1.3 Volcanic derived plains with poorly developed drainage and shallow regolith
- 6.1.5 Volcanic derived terraces, floodplains and lakes, swamps and lunettes and their deposits
- 6.2.2 Sedimentary derived dissected plains
- 6.2.4 Sedimentary derived plains and plains with low rises
- 6.2.5 Sedimentary derived terraces and floodplains, and coastal plains
- 6.3 Hills and Low Hills

Eastern Plains (EP)

- 7.1.1 Sunkland coastal plains with ridges and dunefields
- 7.1.2 Sunkland alluvial plains
- 7.1.3 Sunkland former swamps and lagoonal deposits
- 7.2.1 Riverine flood plains and morasses
- 7.2.2 Riverine prior stream plains
- 7.3.1 Higher level plains without dunes
- 7.3.2 Higher level plains with dunes
- 7.3.3 Higher level dissected plains

Coast (C)

- 8.1.3 Active cliffs: Subaerial dominant processes; with shore platform
- 8.4 Coastal Barriers
- 8.5.1 Transgressive dunes: Cliff top; stranded
- 8.6.1 Low coasts: Tidal
- 8.7 Engineered Coast
- water/lake

Victorian Resources Online
www.dpi.vic.gov.au/vro



Map 5: Port Phillip and Westernport geomorphological units. Source: Victorian Resources Online.

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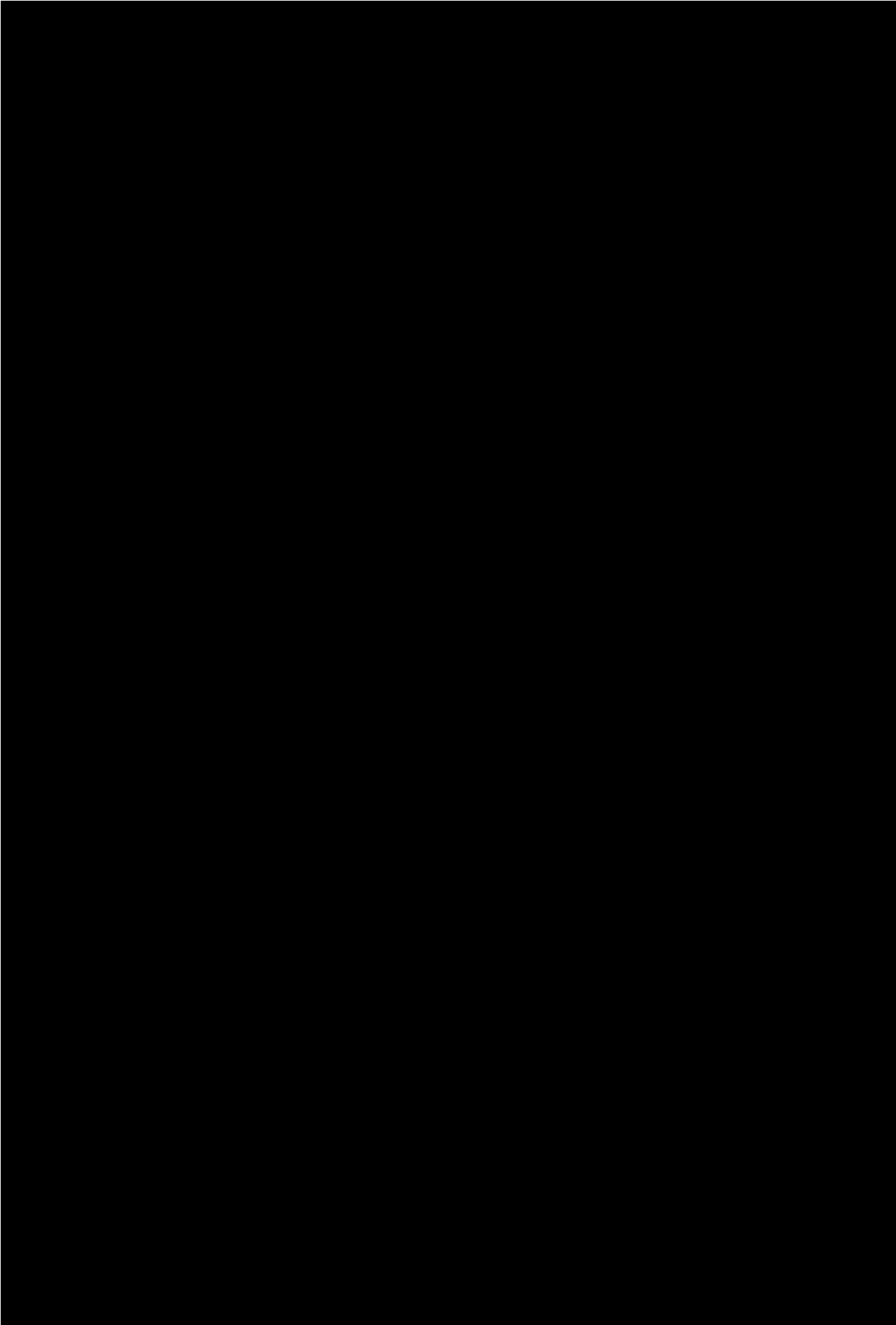
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3.4 Environment

The Victorian Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) describes bioregions as “a landscape-scale approach to classifying the environment using a range of attributes such as climate, geomorphology, geology, soils and vegetation.”⁵⁸ Of the 28 bioregions identified across the state of Victoria, the study area is located within the Victorian Volcanic Plain. This bioregion spans from central Victoria to the west of the state, and is characterised by both flat and undulating basaltic plains with old eruptions points, volcanic cones, old lava flows and stony rises. The geology is of Cainozoic volcanic deposits. On the higher plains, soils vary from red friable earths and acidic texture contrast soils (Ferrosols and Kurosols) which support Plains Grassy Woodland and Plains Grassland ecosystems. The intermediate plains contain calcareous sodic texture contrast soils grading to yellow acidic earths (Chromosols and Sodosols to Dermosols) while the low plains contain grey cracking clays (Vertosols). These areas support stony Knoll Shrubland, Plains Grassy Woodland and Plains Grassy Wetland ecosystems. On volcanic outcroppings, stony rises, Stony Rises Herb-rich Woodland, Basalt Shrubby Woodland and Herb-rich Foothill Forest ecosystems are supported by stony earths (Dermosols and Tenosols).⁵⁹

An Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC) is the standard unit for classifying vegetation types within a bioregion. The EVC provides an insight into the resources that were either available to, or cultivated and harvested, by Woi-wurrung people. Features of the EVCs relevant to the study area (Map 6) (Map 7) show the pre-1750 EVC and current remnant EVC distribution within the study area.

Table 5: 2005 Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs) Distributed within the Study Area⁶⁰

No.	Name	Description	Conservation Status
EVC 17	Riparian Scrub/ Swampy Riparian Woodland Complex	Riparian Scrub – A dense shrubland to 6 m tall growing on waterlogged substrates often with a peaty surface horizon. Emergent eucalypts may be occasionally present. The understorey typically consists of sedges tolerant of seasonal waterlogging. Occurs along creeks and minor stream tributaries of the lowland plains.	Endangered
		Swampy Riparian Woodland – Woodland to 15 m tall generally occupying low energy streams of the foothills and plains. The lower strata are variously locally dominated by a range of large and medium shrub species on the stream levees in combination with large tussock grasses and sedges in the ground layer.	

⁵⁸ Department Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), [Bioregions and EVC benchmarks](#), DEECA, n.d., accessed 25 November 2025.

⁵⁹ DEECA, [Bioregions and EVC benchmarks](#).

EVC 55	Plains Grassy Woodland	An open, eucalypt woodland to 15 m tall. Occupies poorly drained, fertile soils on flat or gently undulating plains at low elevations. The understorey consists of a few sparse shrubs over a species-rich grassy and herbaceous ground layer. This variant occupies areas receiving approximately 500 – 700 mm annual rainfall.	Endangered
EVC 56	Floodplain Riparian Woodland	An open eucalypt woodland to 20 m tall over a medium to tall shrub layer with a ground layer consisting of amphibious and aquatic herbs and sedges. Occurs along the banks and floodplains of the larger meandering rivers and major creeks, often in conjunction with one or more floodplain wetland communities. Elevation and rainfall are relatively low and soils are fertile alluviums subject to periodic flooding and inundation.	Endangered
EVC 125	Plains Grassy Wetland	This EVC is usually treeless, but in some instances can include sparse River Red Gum <i>Eucalyptus camaldulensis</i> or Swamp Gum <i>Eucalyptus ovata</i> . A sparse shrub component may also be present. The characteristic ground cover is dominated by grasses and small sedges and herbs. The vegetation is typically species-rich on the outer verges but is usually species-poor in the wetter central areas.	Endangered
EVC 126	Swampy Riparian Complex	A combination of Riparian Scrub and Swampy Riparian Woodland, see EVC 17.	Endangered
EVC 132	Plains Grassland	Heavier-Soils Plains Grassland - Treeless vegetation mostly less than 1 m tall dominated by largely graminoid and herb life forms. Occupies fertile cracking basalt soils prone to seasonal waterlogging in areas receiving at least 500 mm annual rainfall Low-rainfall Plains Grassland - Treeless vegetation mostly < 1 m tall dominated by largely graminoid and herb life forms. Occupies cracking basalt soils prone to seasonal waterlogging in areas receiving < 500 mm annual rainfall.	Endangered
EVC 175	Grassy Woodland	A variable open eucalypt woodland to 15 m tall or occasionally Sheoak/Acacia woodland to 10 m tall over a diverse ground layer of grasses and herbs. The shrub component is usually sparse. It occurs on sites with moderate fertility on gentle slopes or undulating hills on a range of geologies.	Endangered

3.5 Flora and Fauna

The Northern Freight Precinct and surrounds remain a significant area of living cultural heritage, providing valuable habitat for a diverse range of native animals and plants central to Wurundjeri cosmology. These are species that have remained on Country for thousands of years and survived despite the huge impacts of colonisation and agricultural operations on local ecology.

One example of a culturally significant plant that survives in the project area are the reeds, phragmites. Aunty Alice Kolasa highlighted this plants' ongoing cultural significance to Wurundjeri women who continue to use the reeds to make jewellery for ceremony.⁶⁰ Ethnobotanist Beth Gott notes that phragmites were also one of the many food sources for Woi-wurrung people cultivating volcanic plains.⁶¹

In 1824, Hume and Hovell travelled through the area now known as Beveridge, their account of this journey provides insight into some of the flora and fauna present in the project area pre-contact. Hume and Hovell recalled,

The willow of the colony is frequently met with here, and has a beautiful appearance. At a distance it looks not much unlike the orange or the lemon tree. The indigenous flax plant also is abundant, and the bronze-winged pigeon and the king parrot are both of them common, as also the native dog.⁶²

Eleven years after this account, the colonisation of the Beveridge area began in earnest, transforming Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country. Over the subsequent 170 years, the area was cleared of much of the original vegetation as settlers introduced European farming. The ongoing activities of the pastoral industry in the region, land clearing, wheat production, sheep and cattle grazing on the grasslands and land development, has changed many aspects of the ecosystem and vastly altered Woi-wurrung landscapes and Country. Much of flora and fauna species cultivated by Woi-wurrung Ancestors are gone or greatly reduced and are threatened (Map 6) (Map 7). The extensive use of poisons eradicated local dingo populations, or 'native dogs' that were once abundant; this reduced predator species of birds to a minimum. However, a surprisingly rich diversity of plant and animal species remains in small numbers.⁶³

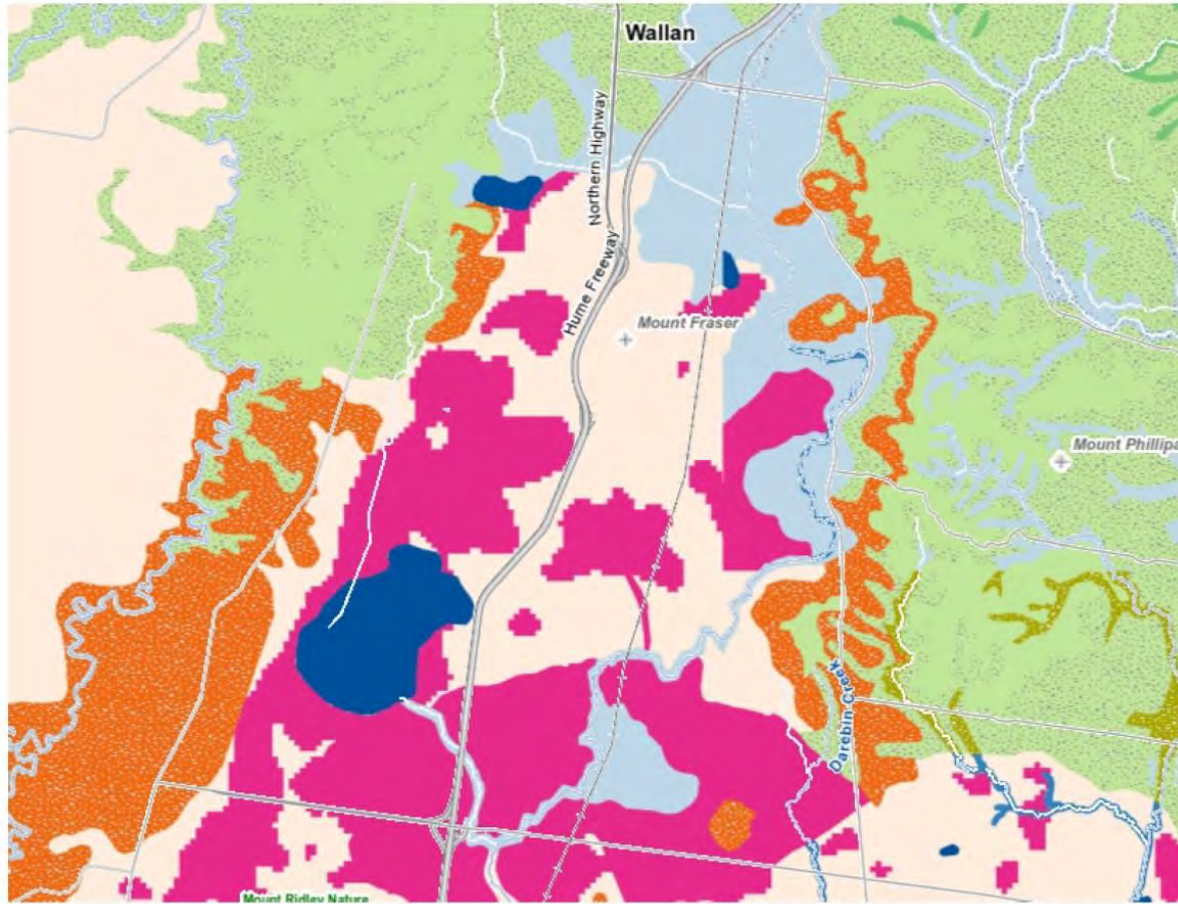
⁶⁰ Aunty Alice Kolasa, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, Knowledge Recording, 22 September 2025.

⁶¹ B Gott, "Koorie Use and Management of the Plains", [conference paper], *Conference on the Grasslands and Grassy Woodlands of Victoria*, Melbourne, 1992, accessed 31 October 2025.

⁶² Hovell and Hume, *Journey of Discovery to Port Phillip*.

⁶³ Environmental Resources Management Australia, *An Ecological Assessment of Beveridge Road, Beveridge Victoria, Beveridge Pastoral Company*, 2008 ; Merri Creek Management Committee, *Swamps and Wetlands of the Upper Merri Cathment*, 2018.

Beveridge Area



Legend

1750 EVCs by Subgroup

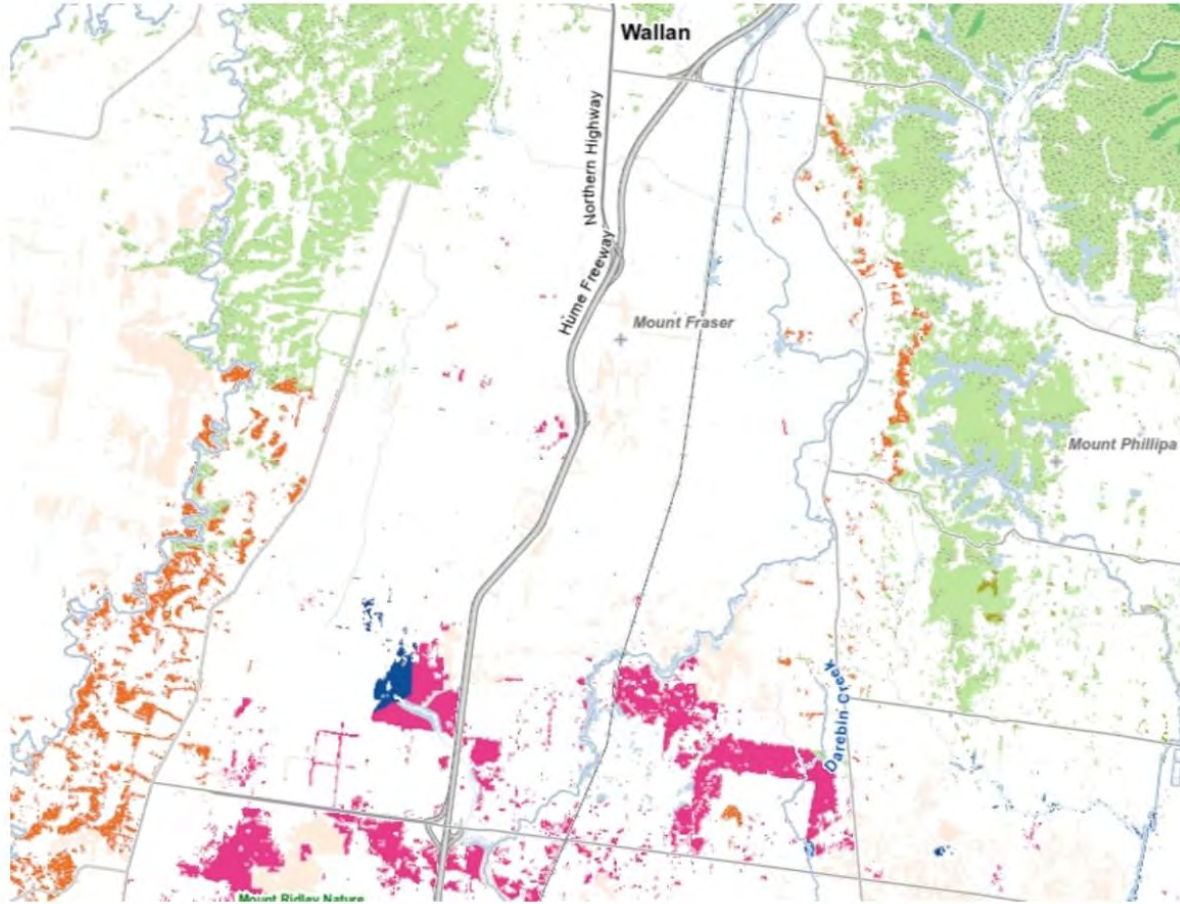
- Dry Forests (exposed/lower altitude)
- Dry Forests (sheltered/higher altitude)
- Damp Forests
- Herb-rich Woodlands (alluvial terraces/creeklines)
- Plains Grasslands and Chenopod Shrublands (clay soil)
- Riparian Scrubs or Swampy Scrub and Woodlands
- Plains Woodlands/Forest (freely-draining)
- Wetlands (fresh water)
- Lower Slopes/Hills Woodlands (grassy)

Disclaimer: This map is a snapshot from Victorian Government data. This material may be of assistance to you but the State of Victoria does not guarantee it is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purpose and therefore disclaims all liability for error, loss or damage which may arise from reliance upon it. All persons accessing this information should make the appropriate enquiries to access the currency of data. © The State of Victoria, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning



Map 6: Ecological Vegetation Classes c.1750. Source: NatureKit, DEECA

Beveridge Area



Legend

2005 EVCs by Subgroup

- Dry Forests (exposed/lower altitude)
- Dry Forests (sheltered/higher altitude)
- Damp Forests
- Herb-rich Woodlands (alluvial terraces/creeklines)
- Plains Grasslands and Chenopod Shrublands (clay soil)
- Riparian Scrubs or Swampy Scrub and Woodlands
- Plains Woodlands/Forest (freely-draining)
- Wetlands (fresh water)
- Lower Slopes/Hills Woodlands (grassy)

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Map 7: Ecological Vegetation Classes 2005. Source: NatureKit, DEECA

4.0 The Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register

4.1 Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Places

An Aboriginal cultural heritage place (ACHP) is a location with historical or significant contemporary associations for Aboriginal people, but which lacks physical or archaeological material. It is therefore a location where Aboriginal associations have been documented. The Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register (VAHR) holds a record of all registered ACHPs across Victoria, along with details describing their location, extent, nature, and significance.

Artefact scatters are ACHPs that contain lithic artefacts identified at surface or subsurface level in close spatial association. Spatially discrete scatters occur most commonly on elevated terrain and in close proximity to creeks and riverbeds. Artefact scatters are often deposited over time rather than resulting from one particular event.

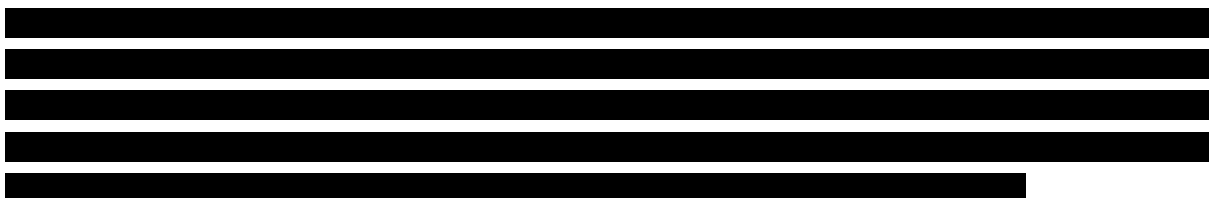
Earth Features comprise rings, mounds, hearths (fireplaces) – and soil deposits containing cultural heritage. Rings are built-up mounds of sediment forming a circle with flat or depressed ground in the centre. Mounds are rounded formations of built-up sediment that contain Aboriginal cultural heritage, and sometimes Aboriginal Ancestral remains. They can vary in shape and size from small to very large. Hearths are the remains of fireplaces, and can contain ashy deposits, charcoal, heat-retainers (e.g., clay balls, stone), and associated artefacts. Soil deposits are in situ subsurface deposits containing Aboriginal cultural heritage that are visible in section (e.g., an eroding creek bank).

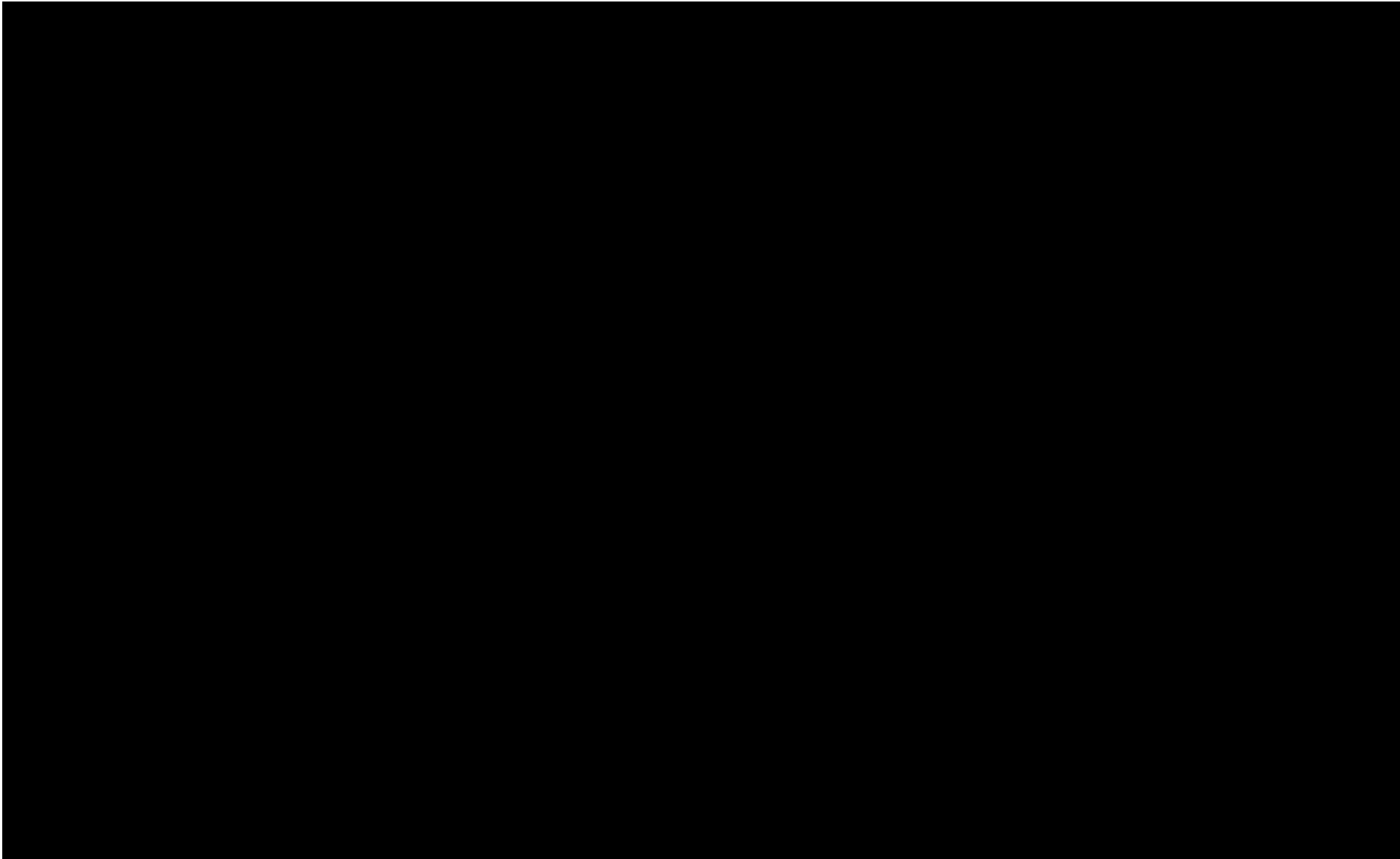
A Low-Density Artefact Distribution (LDAD) is the occurrence of stone artefacts at densities of up to 10 counted artefacts in any area of approximately 10x10 m, or 100 m², including within a single test pit of ≤1 m².

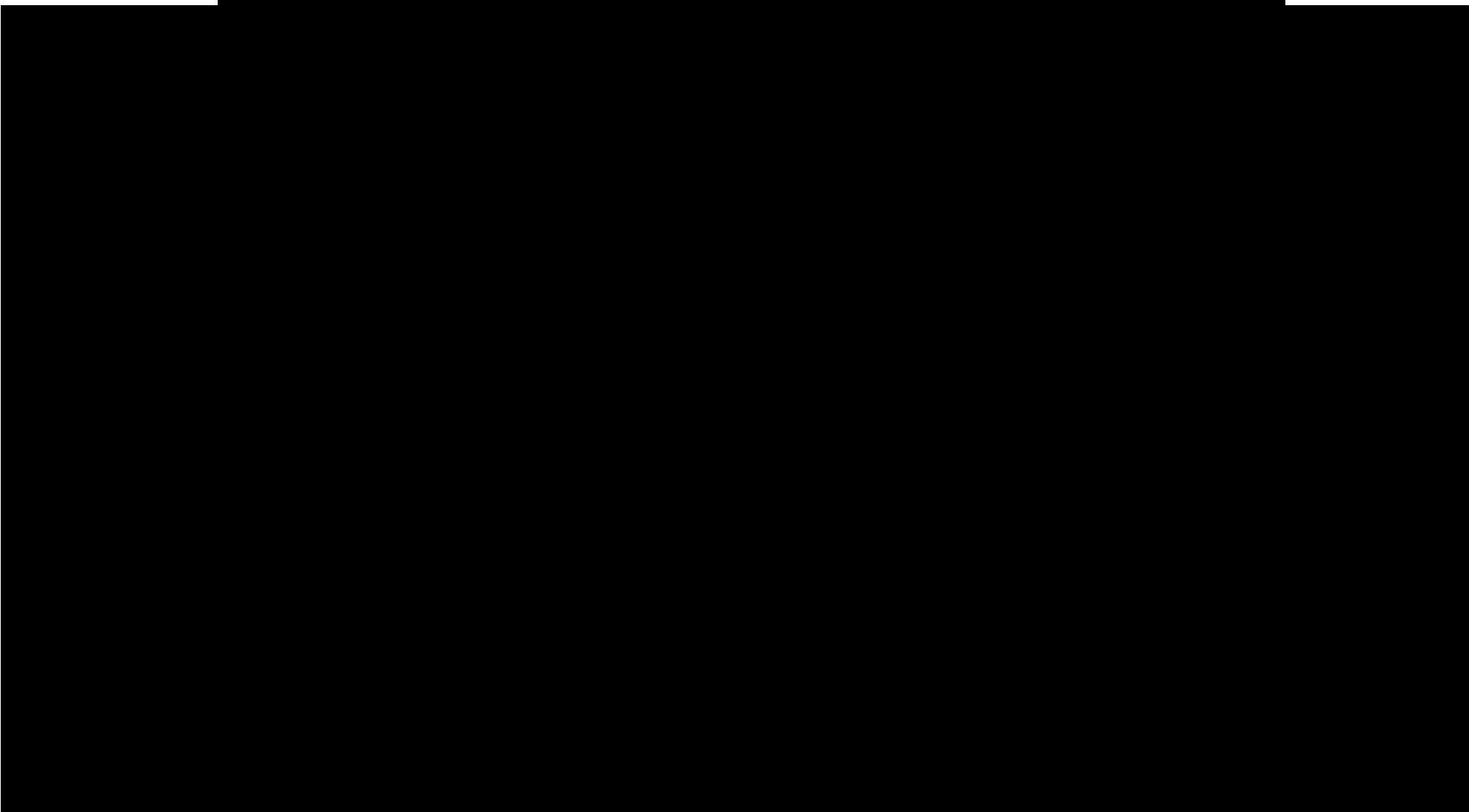
An Object Collection denotes Aboriginal cultural heritage that was collected as part of a CHMP, permit, research project, or that has been donated or collected by a member of the public. It can also include museum collections and unprovenanced finds. Object Collections can form part of private, museum or reburied collections.

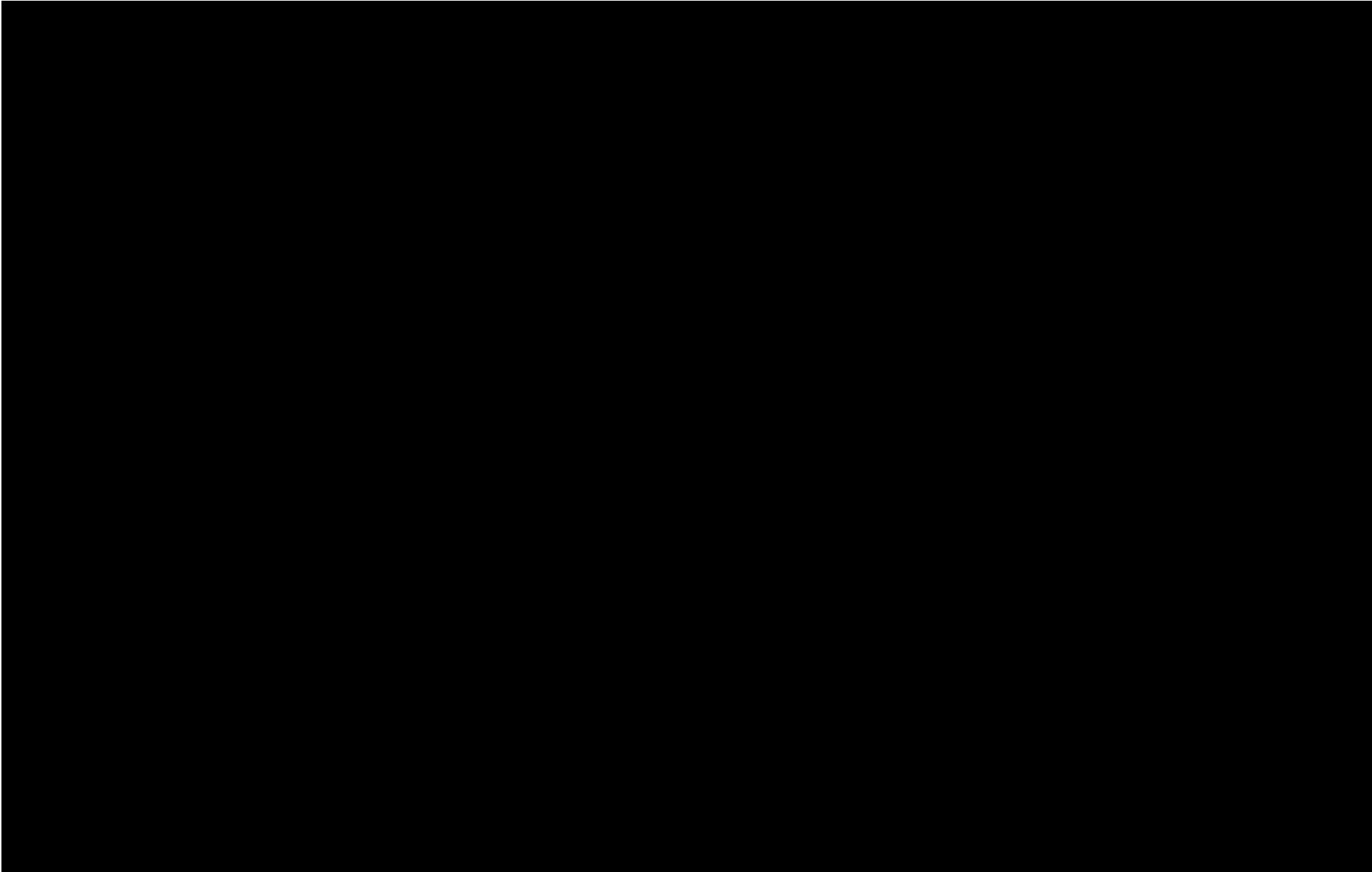
Scarred Trees are trees which have had bark removed by Aboriginal people to create either communicative marks (e.g., dendroglyphs) or to manufacture items that were utilised by Aboriginal people in the past (e.g., canoes, dwellings, shields, and containers).

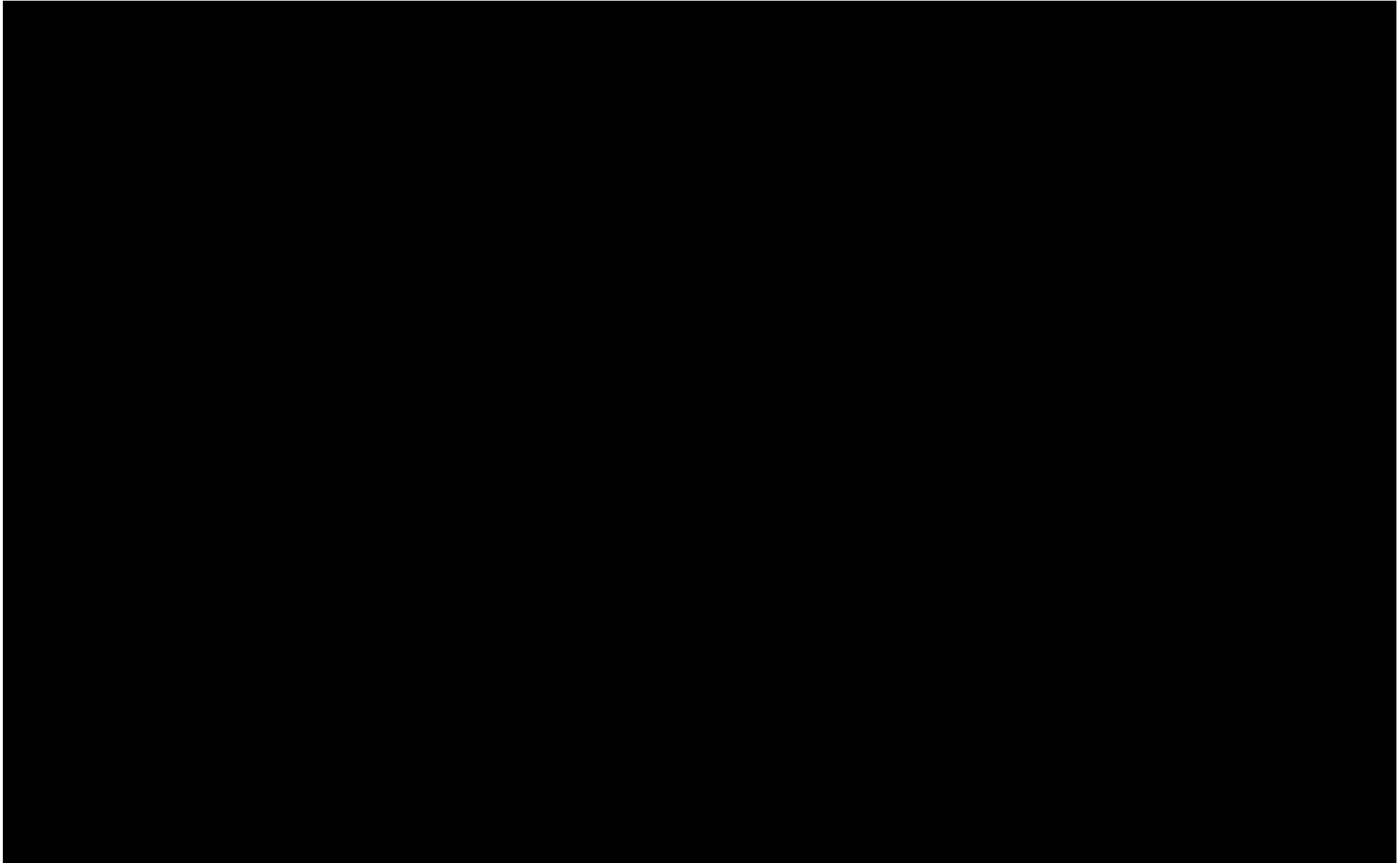
A Quarry is a location where a stone source has been utilised. It can comprise an in-situ outcrop of rock from which stone was procured, or a creek or riverbed where stone pebbles were collected. Quarrying activities can include procurement and/or extraction, transport, and reduction.

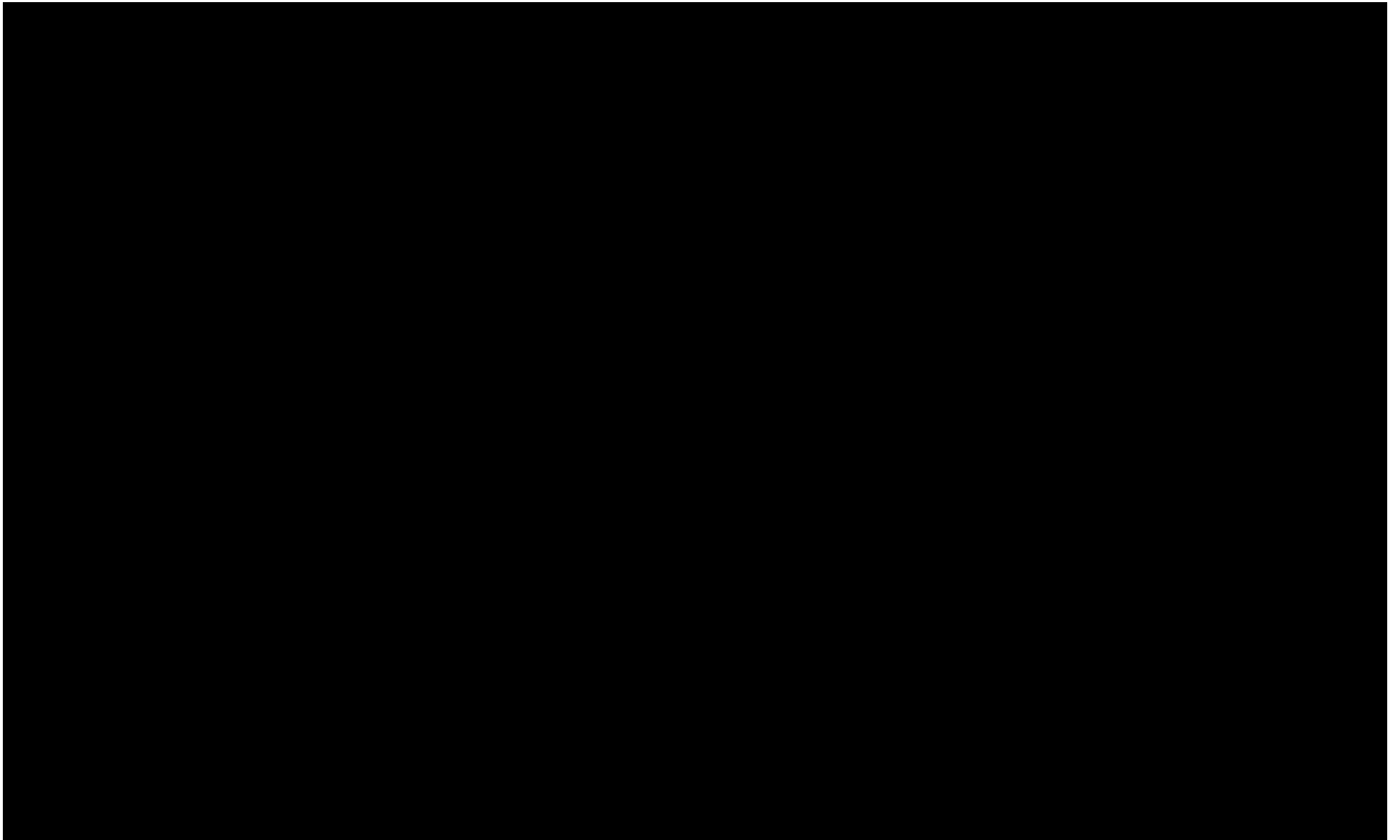


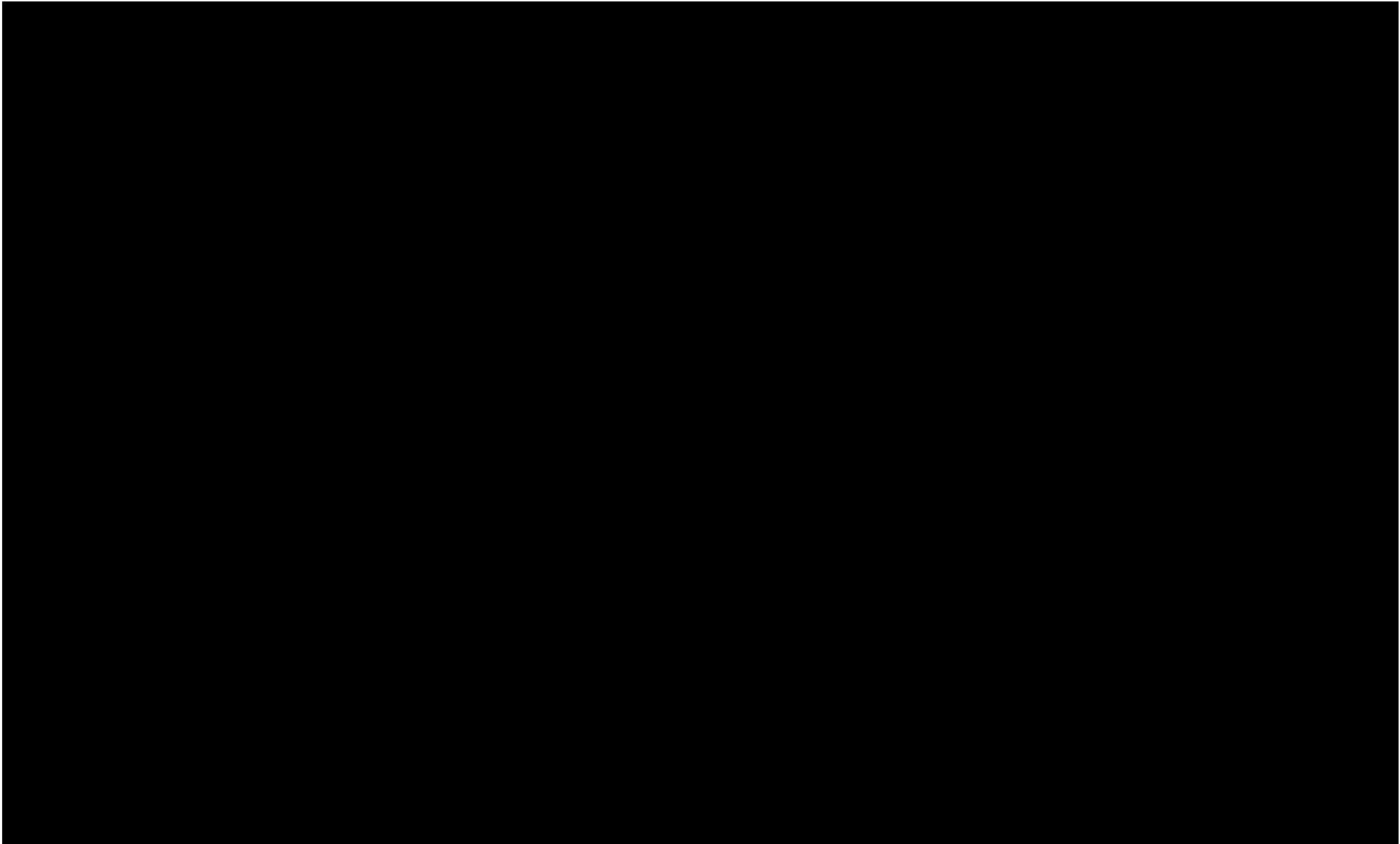


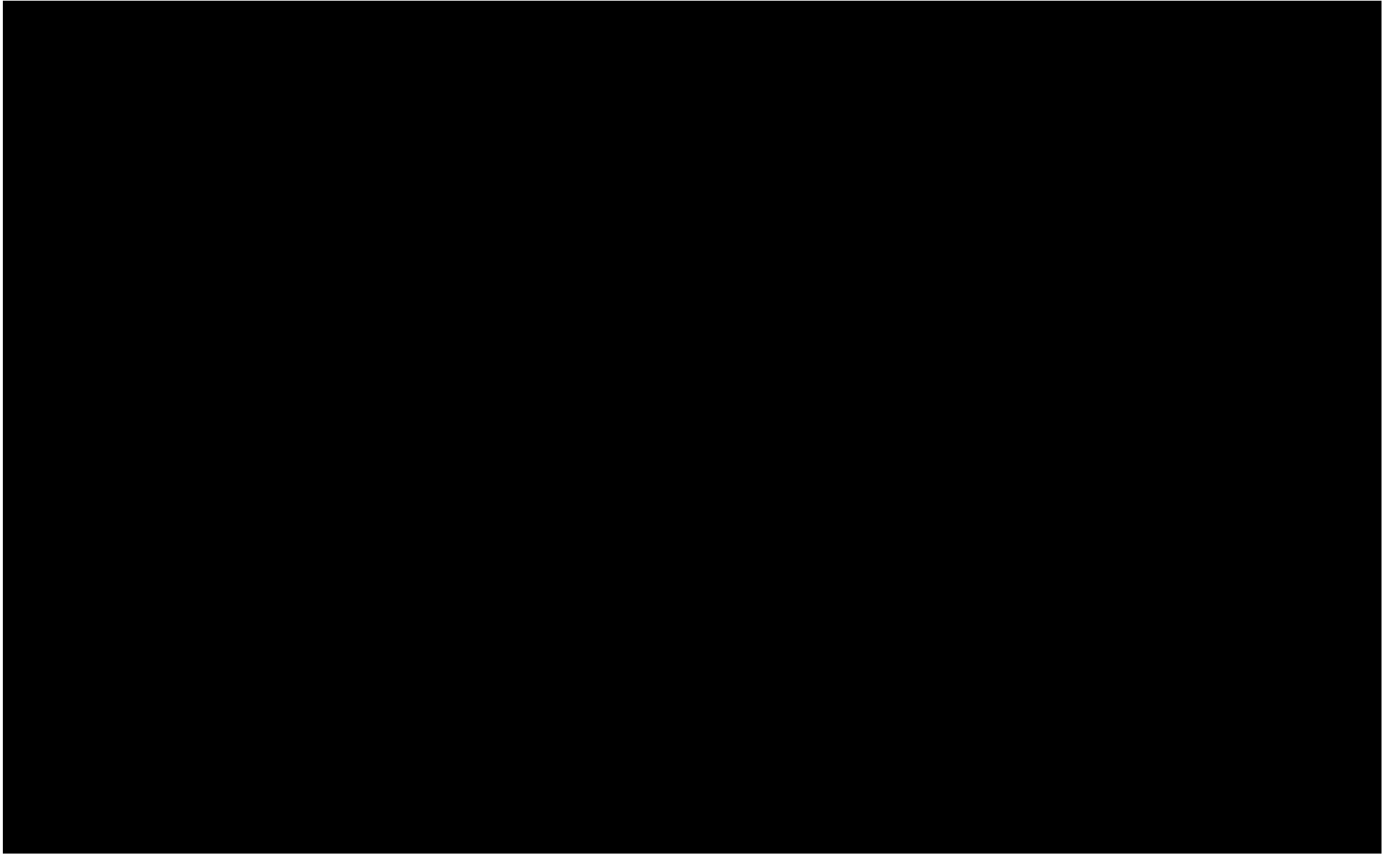


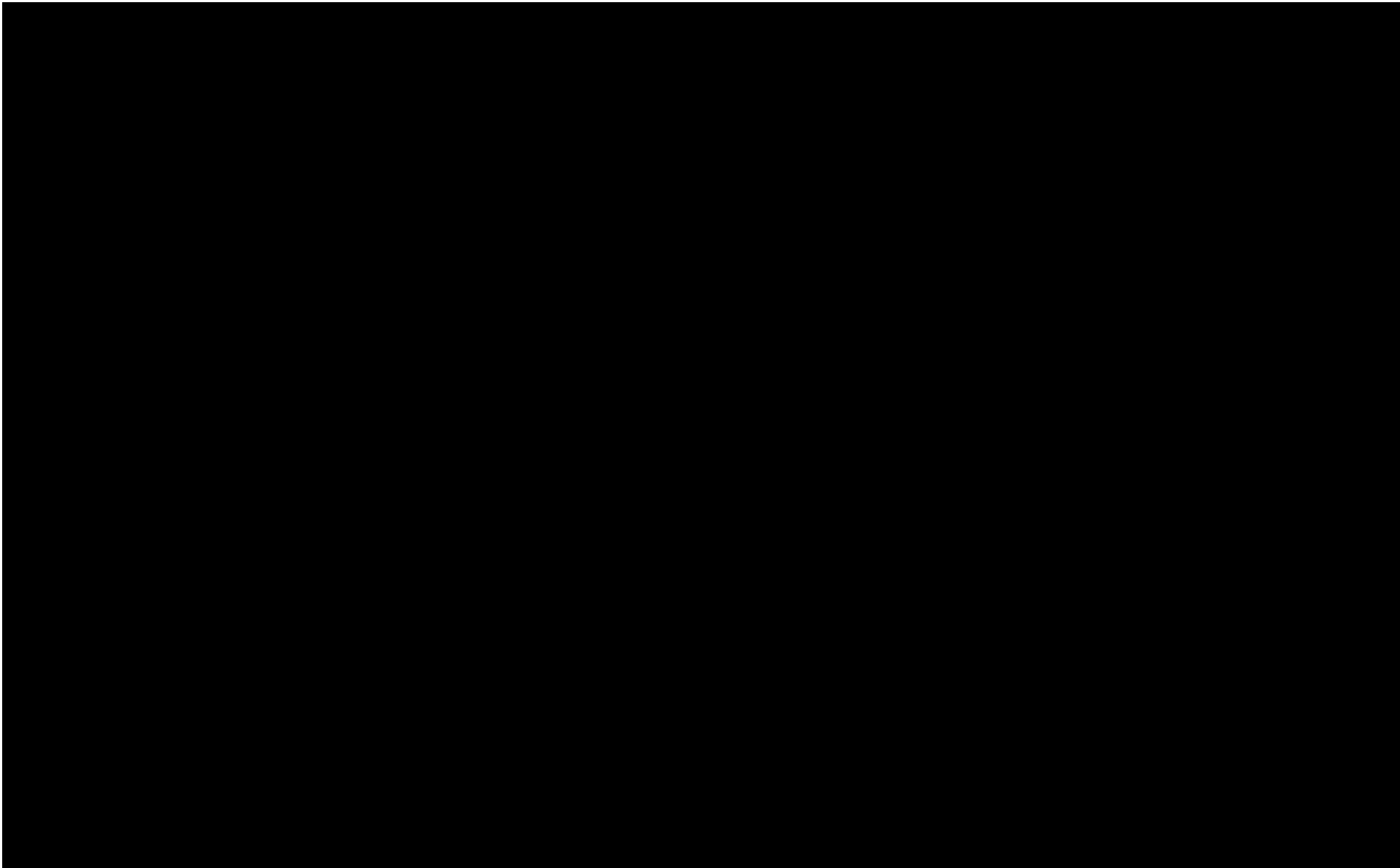


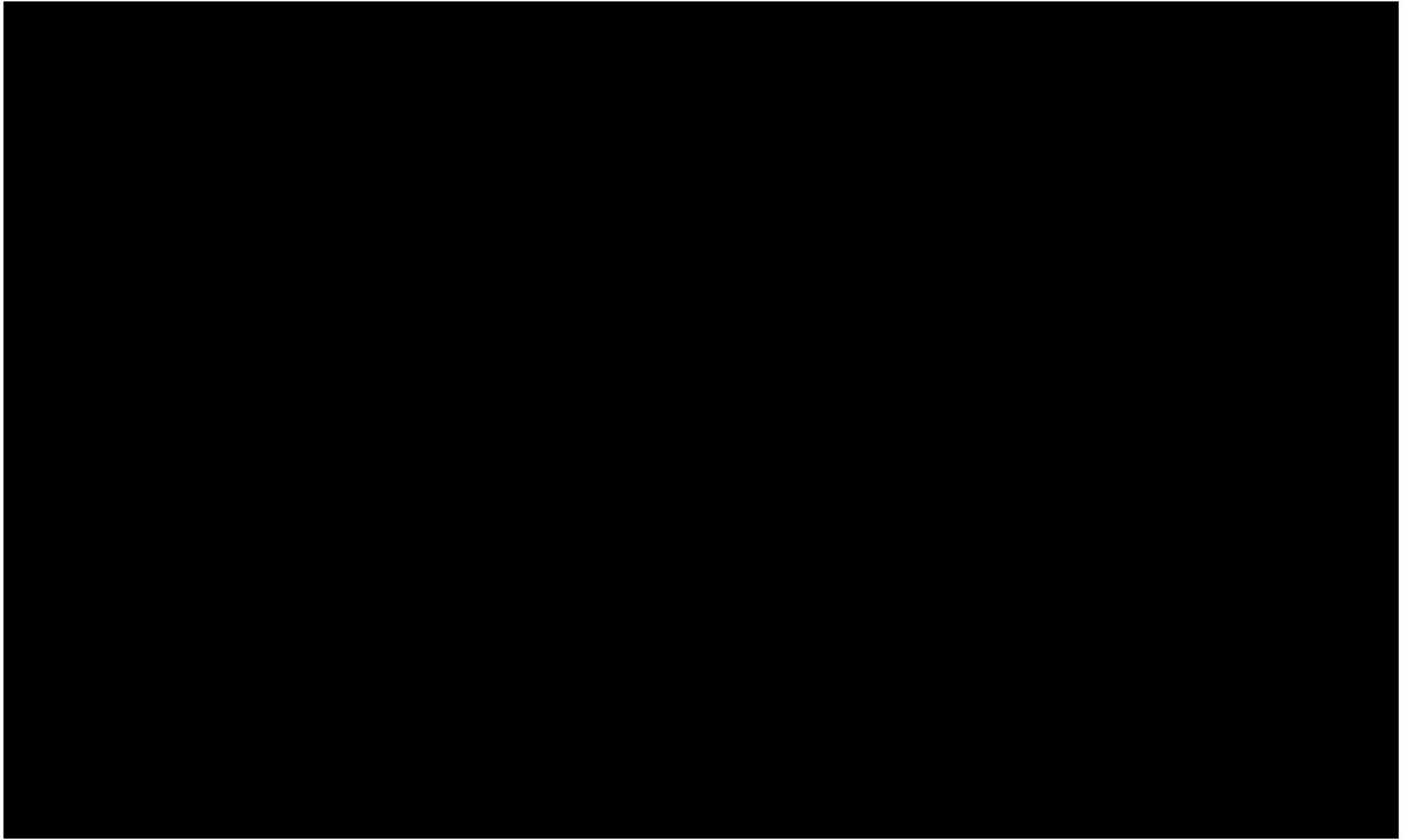


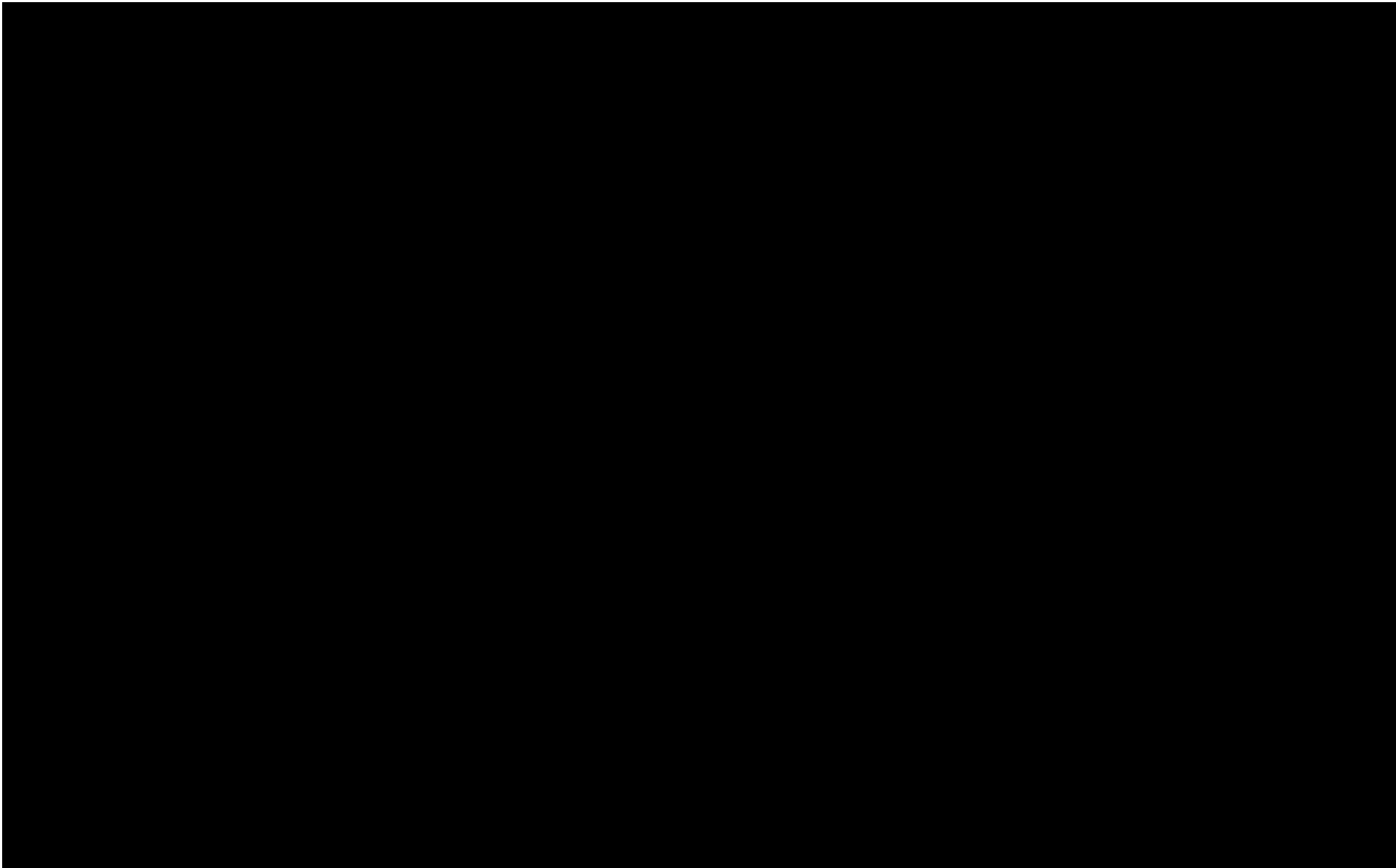


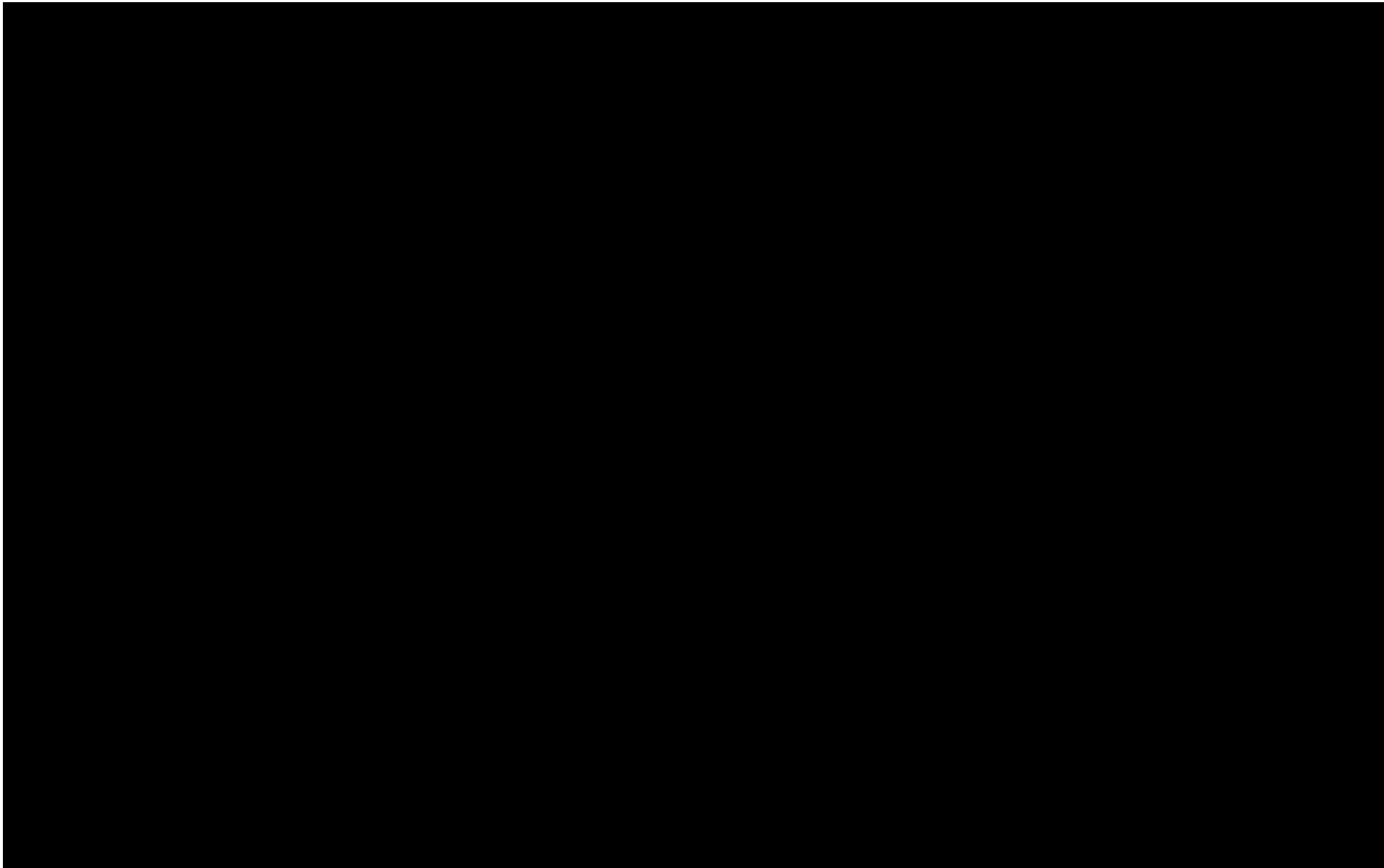


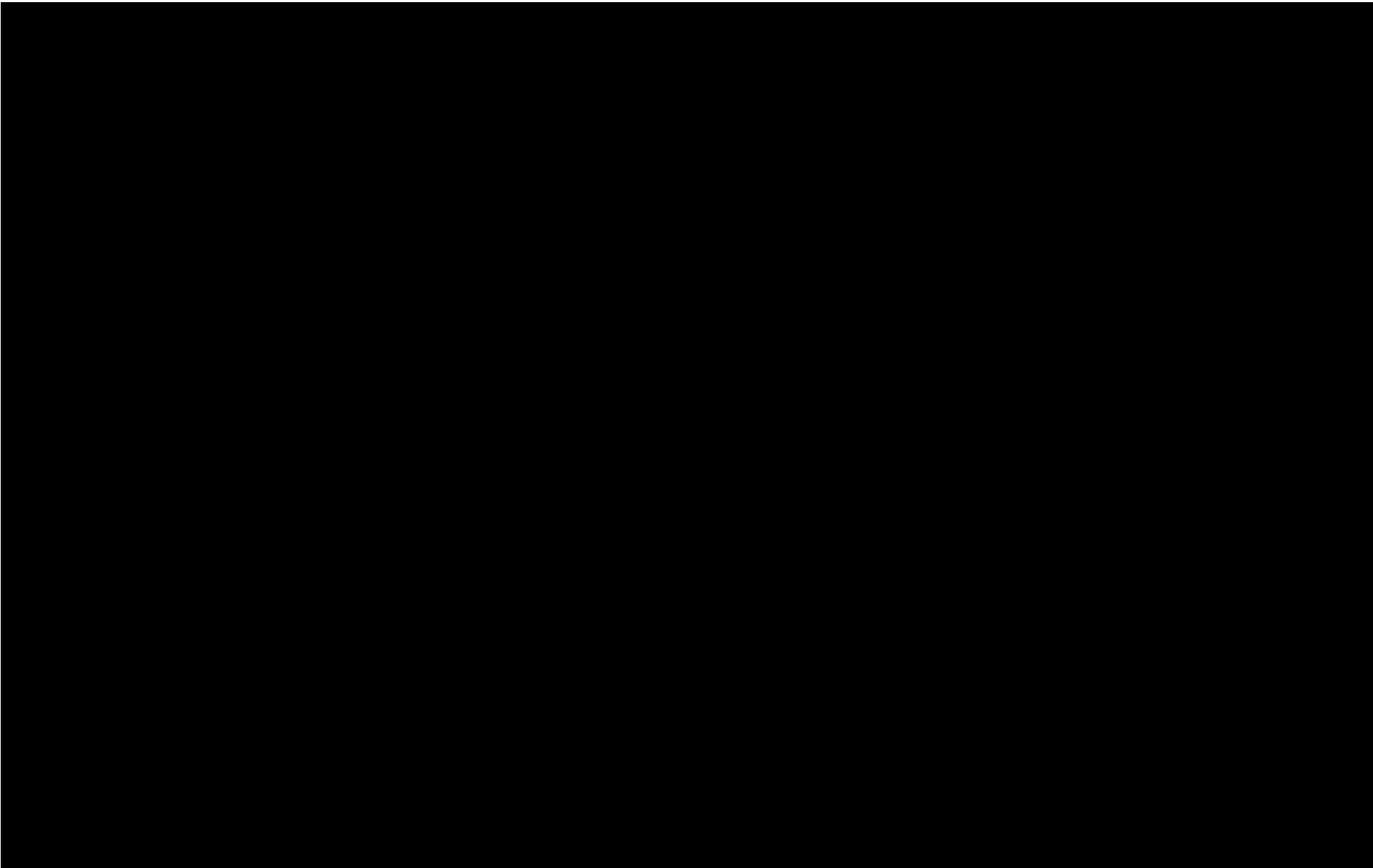


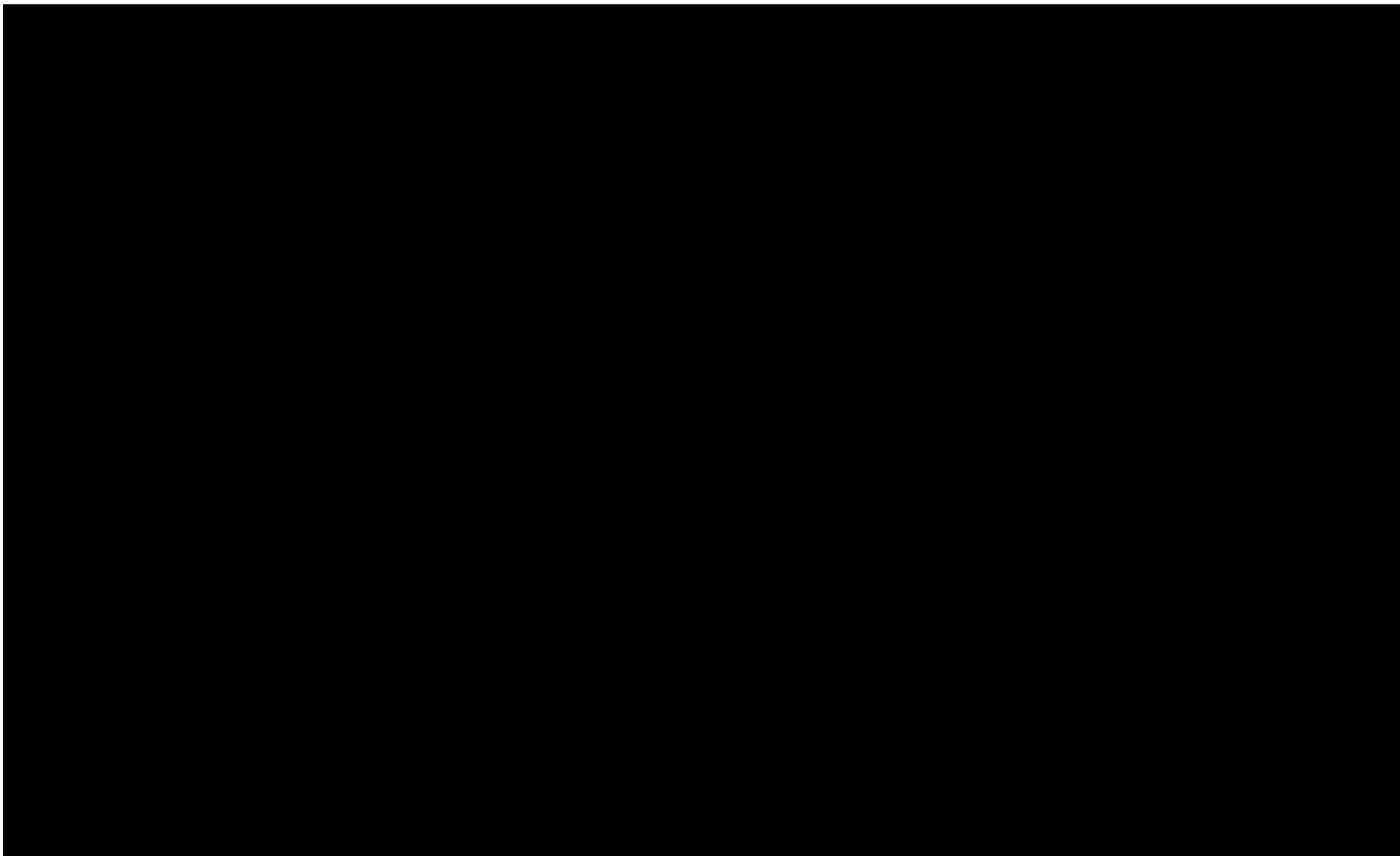


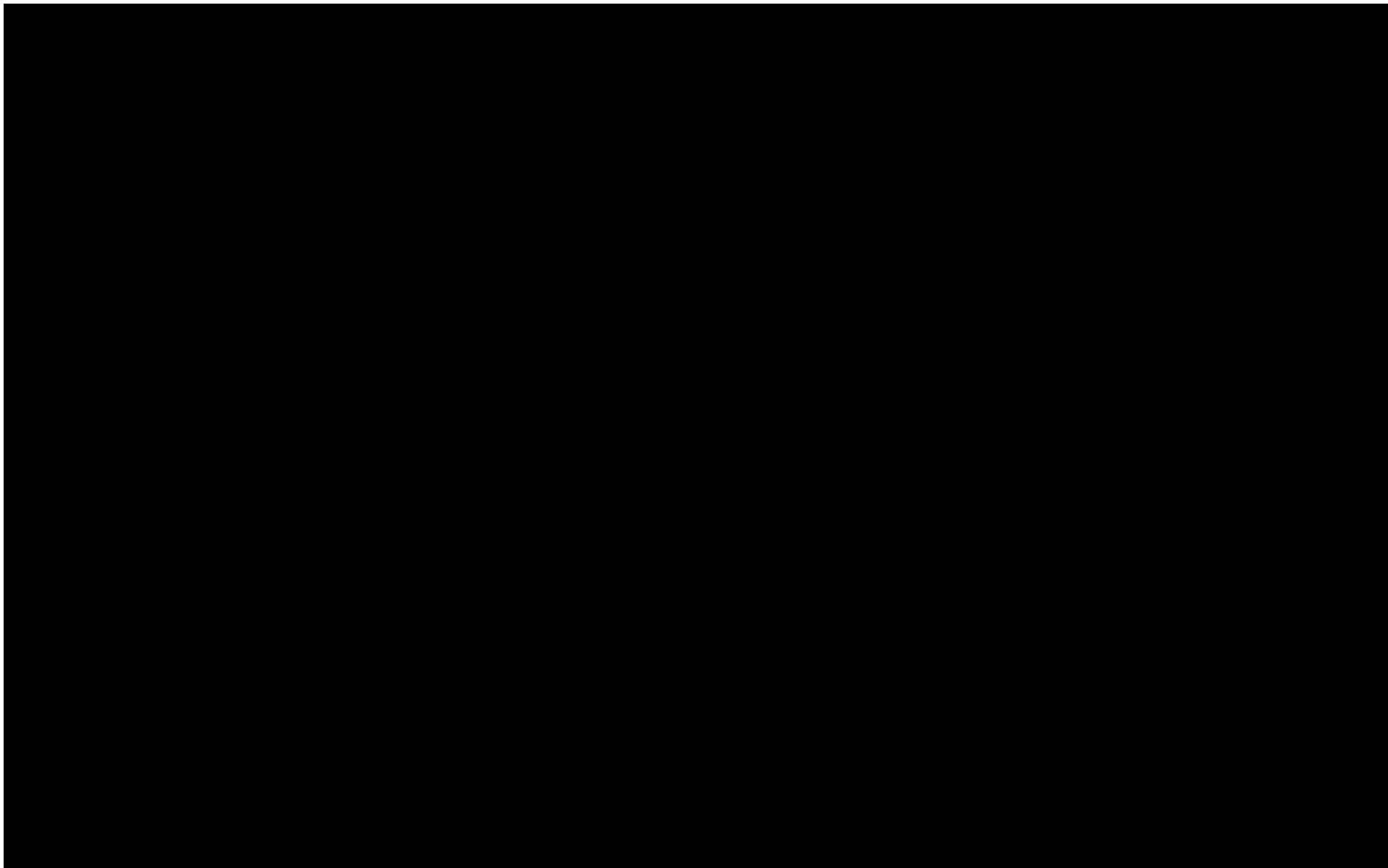


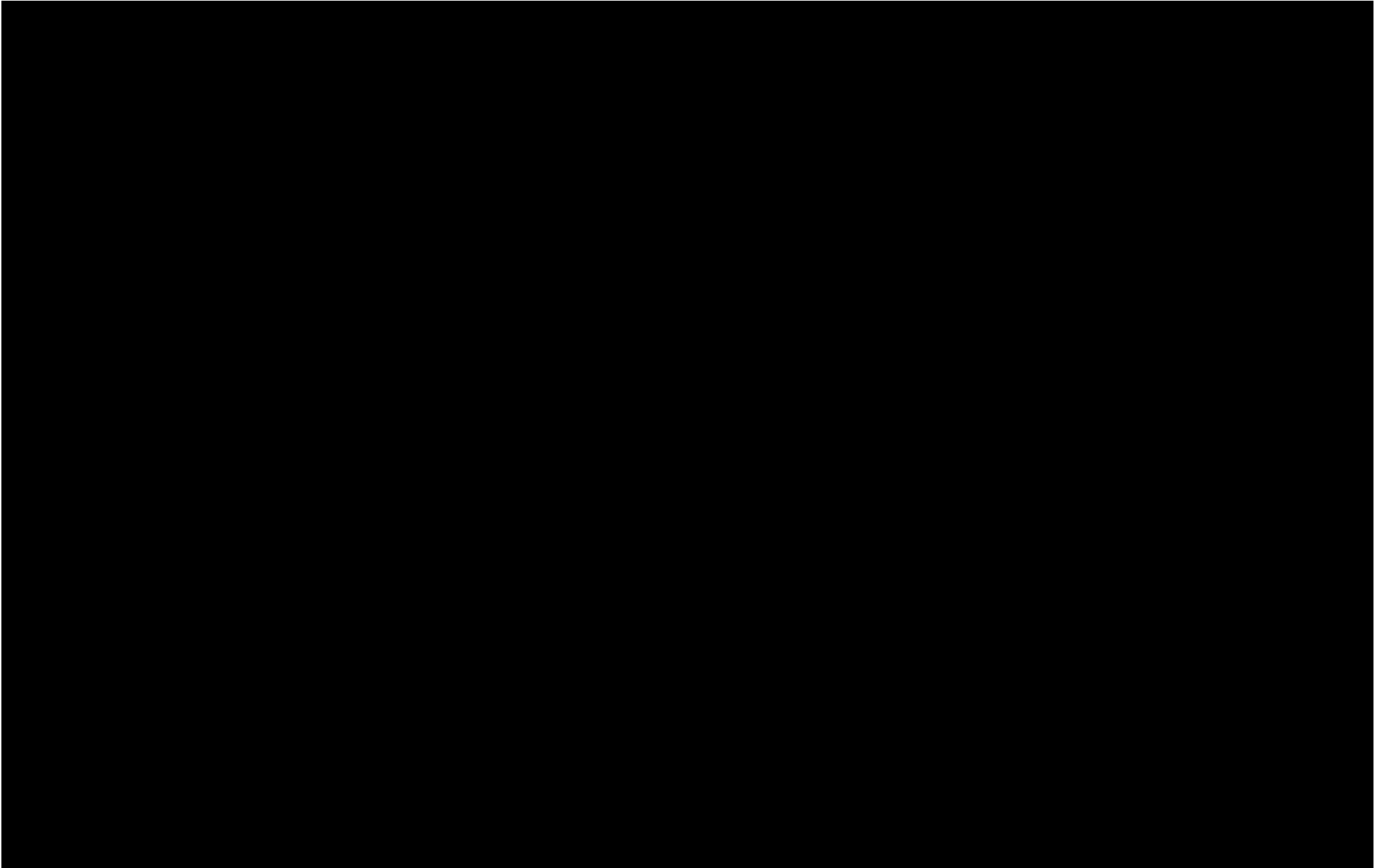


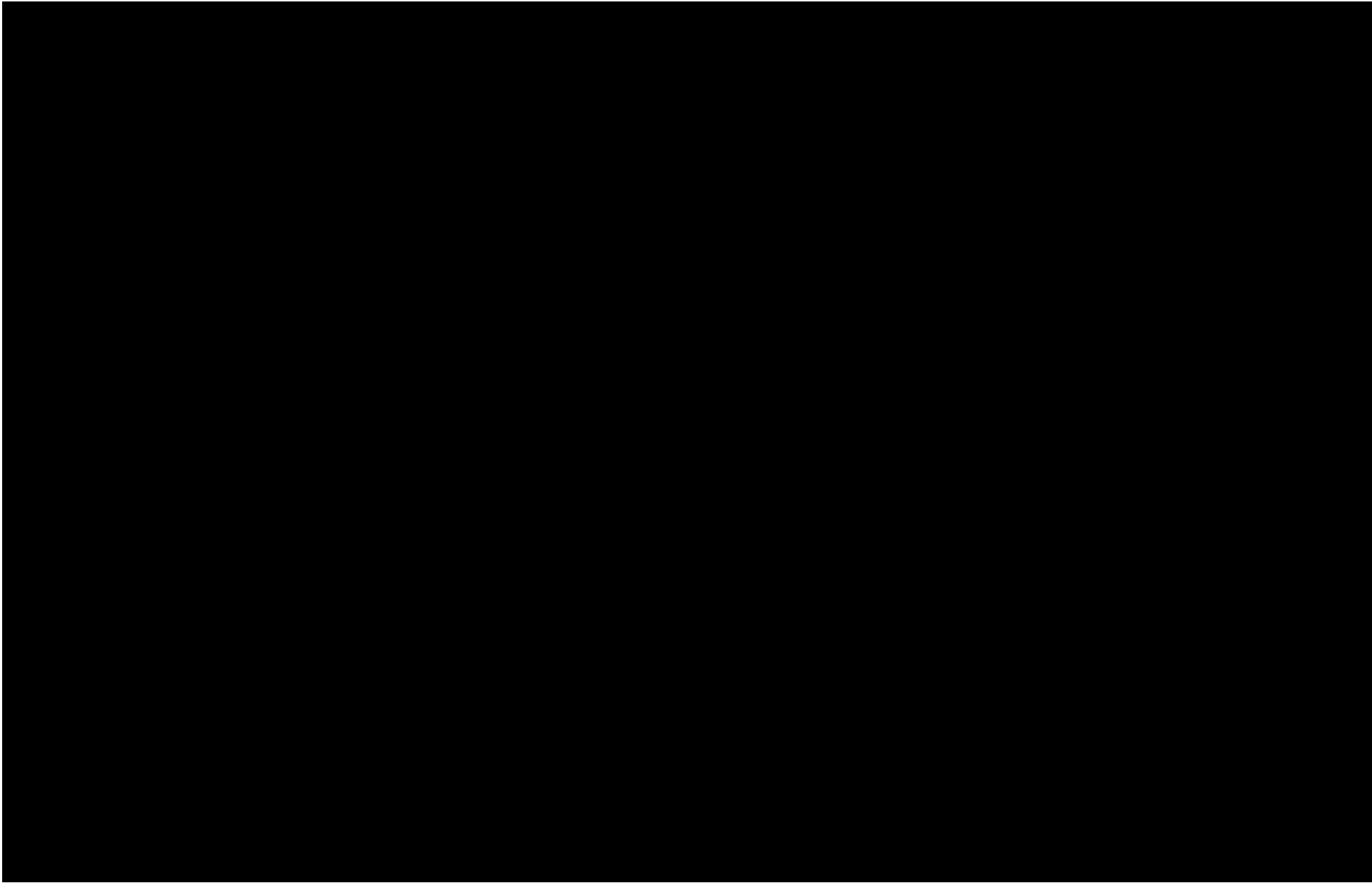


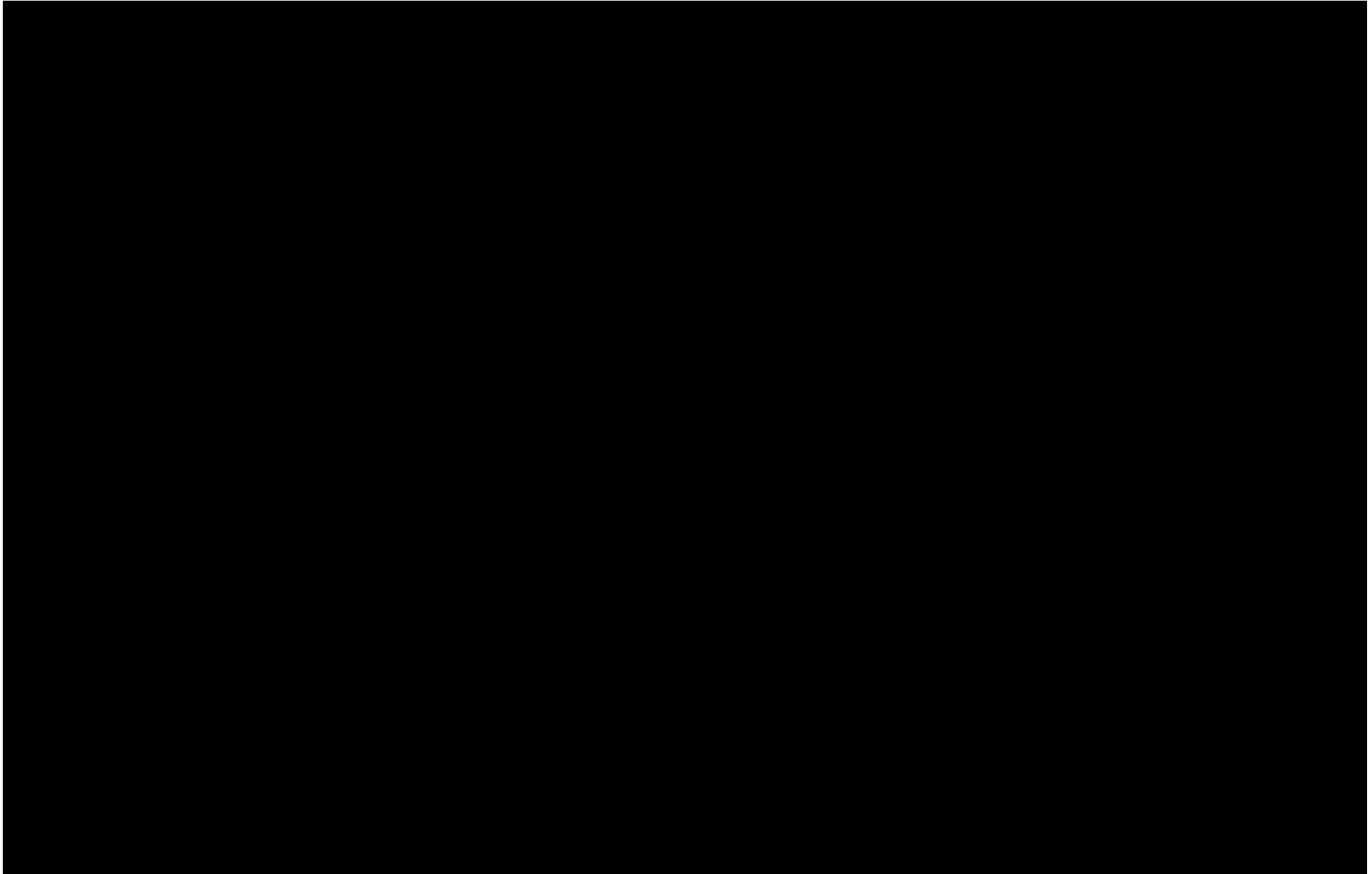


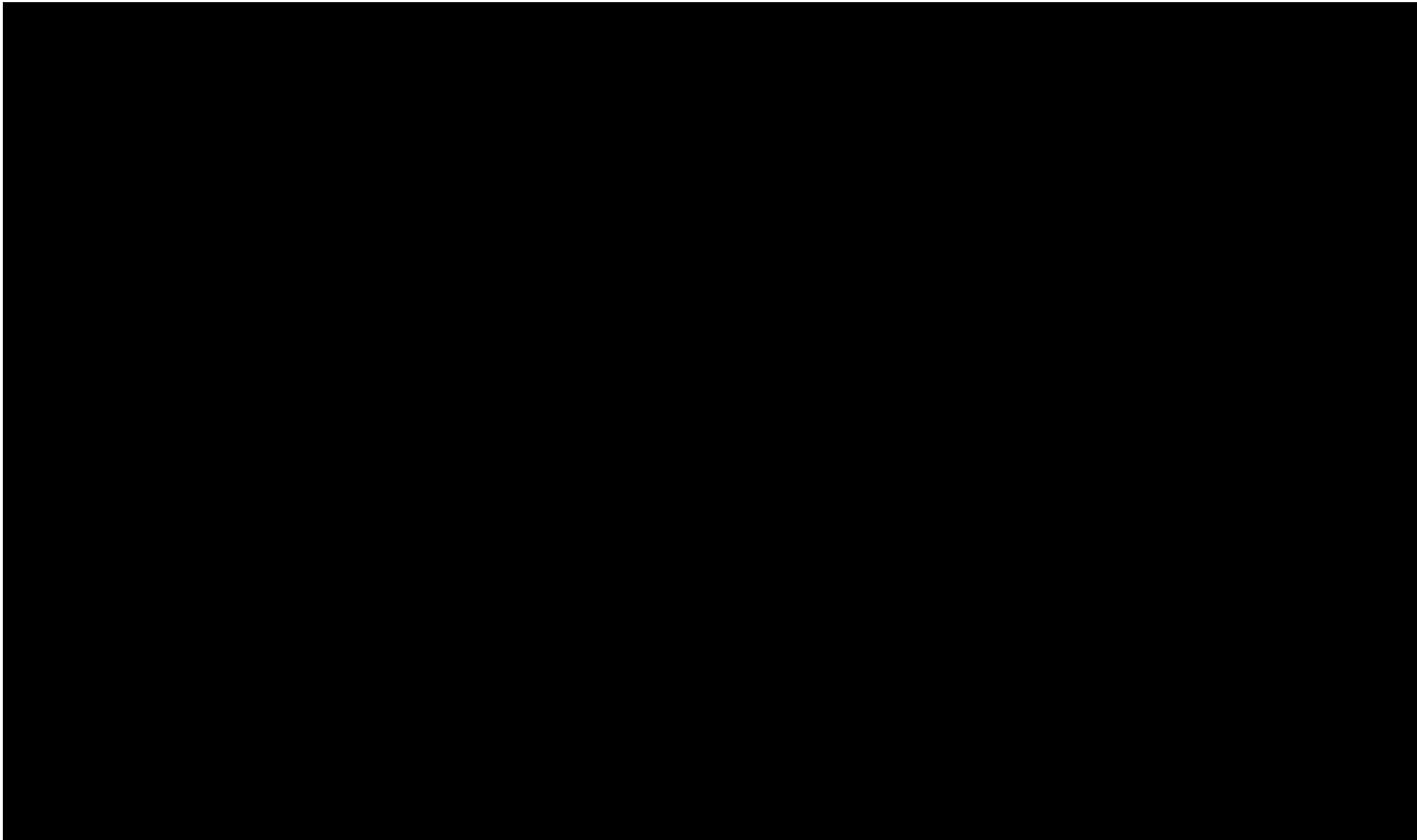


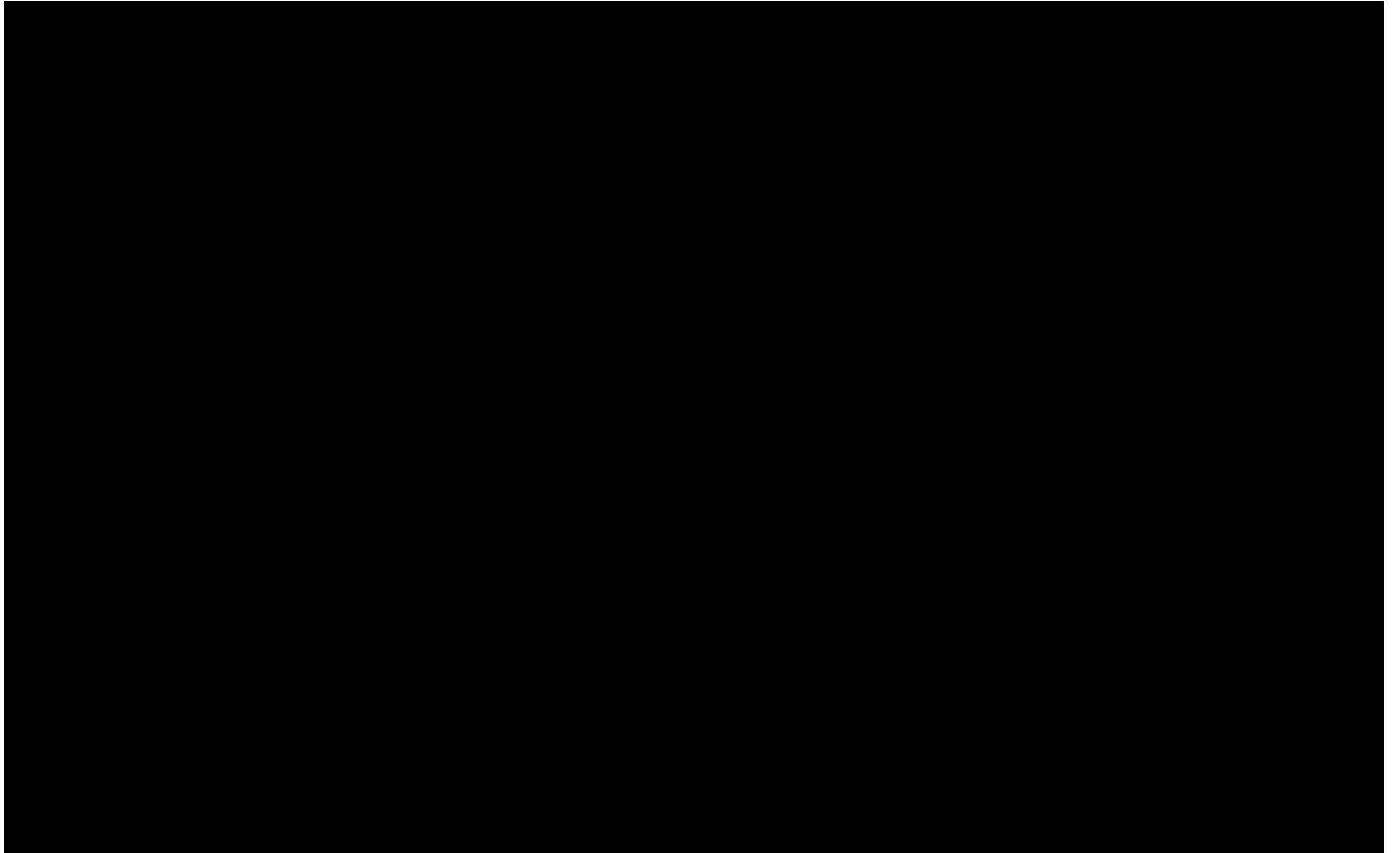


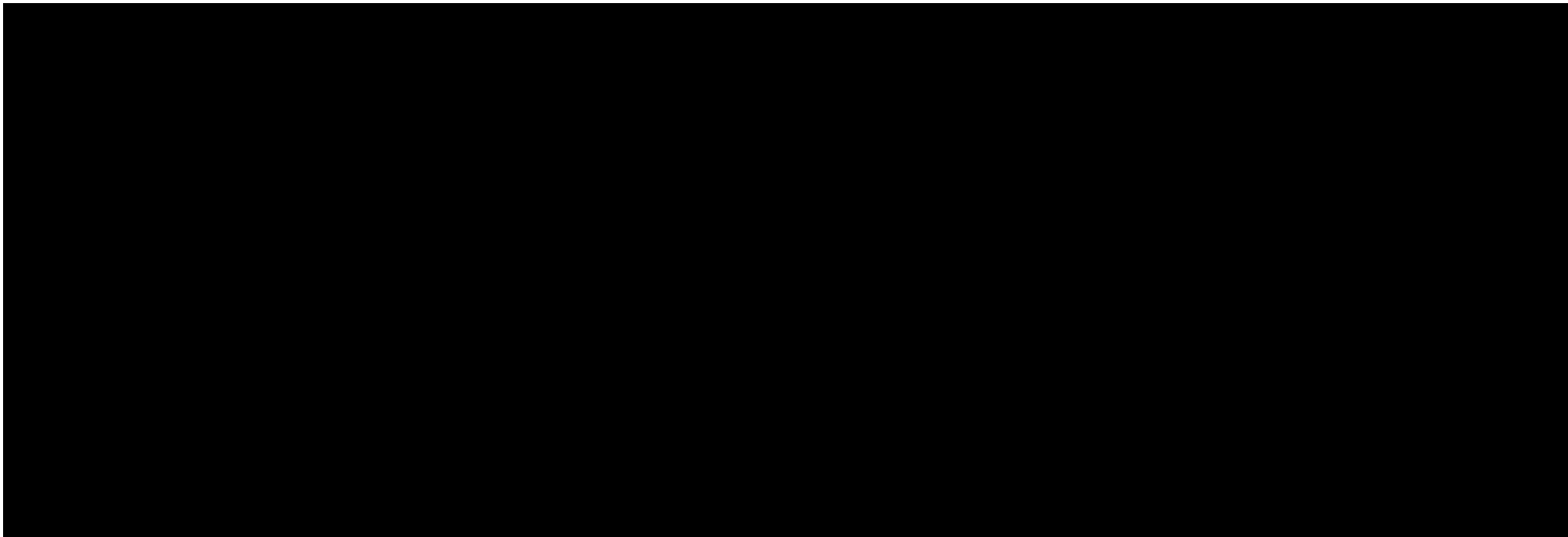












5.0 The Victorian Heritage Register

The Victorian Heritage Register, housed within the Victorian Heritage Database (VHD), lists the state's most significant heritage places, objects, and historic shipwrecks, protected under the *Heritage Act 2017* (Vic). Additionally, the database houses information on some areas of local heritage significance as historical overlays associated with Local Planning Schemes, as well as non-statutory listings held by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) and the Victorian War Heritage Inventory.

A search of the Victorian Heritage Database was conducted in October 2025 revealing 14 heritage places located within the Study Area. The highest concentration of heritage places occurs in the west and south of the Study Area, comprising primarily historical residences and other buildings as well as dry-stone walls.

There are eight Victorian Heritage Inventory places, one Victorian Heritage Register place, one Victorian War Heritage Inventory place and four National Trust listings in Beveridge. The Victorian Heritage Inventory is a listing of all known historical (non-Indigenous) archaeological sites within Victorian, which are protected under the Victorian Heritage Act 1995. The Victorian Heritage Register lists and provides legal protection for heritage places and objects that are significant to the history and development of Victoria. National Trust listings and Victorian War Heritage Inventory are non-statutory listings without legal protection. Using the information provided by the Victorian Heritage Register, Table 5 summarises the Beveridge sites listed on the Victorian Heritage Database.

Table 7: Sites in Beveridge listed on the Victorian Heritage Database

Place ID	Name	Location	Description
149	John Kelly's Former House	44 Kelly Street Beveridge, Mitchell Shire	This c. 1860 vernacular timber house is listed on the Victorian Heritage Register because it belonged to the father of the infamous Ned Kelly. Ned Kelly would have spent his early childhood years living in this cottage constructed by his father, John Kelly.
8835	Donnybrook Quarry IV - Dry Stone Wall	200 Donovans Lane Beveridge, Mitchell Shire	This dry-stone wall is listed as a Heritage Inventory Site. Dry-stone walls were typically constructed in the 1870s and 1880s to facilitate European pastoralism on the Victoria's basalt plains
8836	Donnybrook Quarry V - Dry Stone Wall	200 Donovans Lane Beveridge, Mitchell Shire	This dry-stone wall is listed as a Heritage Inventory Site.
8837	Donnybrook Quarry VI - Dry Stone Wall	200 Donovans Lane Beveridge, Mitchell Shire	This dry-stone wall is listed as a Heritage Inventory Site.
8838	Donnybrook Quarry VII - Dry Stone Wall	200 Donovans Lane Beveridge, Mitchell Shire	This dry-stone wall is listed as a Heritage Inventory Site.
10121	John Kelly's House and Outbuildings	44 Kelly Street Beveridge, Mitchell Shire	These buildings are listed as a Heritage Inventory Site, likely for their association with Ned Kelly.
13600	Beveridge Gangers House Ruins and Brick Scatter	75 Stewart Street Beveridge, Mitchell Shire	Much of this site's history has not been fully researched by the Victorian Heritage Register. However, it is believed to be the remains of a pre-1900 building, which was purchased by James Stewart in 1900. It is currently listed as a Heritage Inventory Site.
14320	Former Beveridge Station Complex	Beveridge Station Lane Beveridge, Mitchell Shire	This station complex was a part of the Melbourne-Sydney rail; the station opened in 1872. It is listed as a Heritage Inventory Site.
23046	Mandalay 1	Mandalay Circuit Beveridge, Mitchell Shire	This site is a Heritage Inventory Site, with unknown significance, but comprises of artefact scatters and bluestone alignments.
68956	John Kelly's House	44 Kelly Street, Beveridge - Property No B2166	John Kelly's house is also listed as a part of the National Trust.
68971	Former inn (later Post Office)	1/9 Old Hume Highway, Beveridge - Property No B0723	This site was the former Beveridge Inn, now the post office and pub; it is a National Trust listing.
68975	Braemore	Merriang Road, Beveridge -	This site is a National Trust listing; it is a bluestone house built in c. 1859 for settler John Sherwin.

68993	Former Catholic Church	Property No B0402 Cnr Spring & Lithgow Streets, Beveridge - Property No B3008	This c. 1860s bluestone church building is a National Trust listing.
154643	Beveridge War Memorial	Beveridge, Mitchell Shire	This War memorial is listed as a Victorian War Heritage Inventory.

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6.0 Woi-wurrung Context

Across Wurundjeri Country there is a rich tapestry of cultural heritage and intangible heritage values (cultural values). As part of previous cultural values works recorded on Wurundjeri Country, these different aspects have been expressed in some of the following ways:

Country and Water

Aboriginal occupation of Victoria extends back to at tens of thousands of years. The earliest date of occupation found at the archaeological site ██████████ in Keysborough, dates back approximately 35,000 years. Approximately 60 kilometres to the north-west of Keysborough is the Northern Freight Precinct, situated within a landscape in which Woi-wurrung Ancestors lived for many thousands of years and shaped the landscape through land management and cultural practices.

Second to Antarctica, Australia is the driest continent on Earth.⁶⁴ Approximately 18% of the continent is desert with a low average rainfall concentric to its arid core.⁶⁵ These climatic conditions have no doubt influenced the role of water as the 'life force' of people and Country broadly within Indigenous Australian cultures, linked to ceremony, songs, law and survival. Country is a term commonly applied by Indigenous Australians to describe their traditional lands and waters. Country is a common noun and also a proper noun, by which people talk of Country in the same manner that they may refer to an individual. There are varying customs of speaking to Country, singing to Country, visiting Country, and caring for Country.⁶⁶ For Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, connection to Country is expressed within the notion that caring for Country is a generationally transmitted law from the Ancestors, spoken of as Bunjil's law. For the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community today, caring for Country is carrying out their responsibilities of cultural heritage protection and natural resource management, respecting the Creation Ancestors and totemic or supernatural beings which underpin traditional laws and beliefs, and preserving the natural environment which provides a relief from the city and suburbs now consuming much of their traditional homelands.

Water is integral to the formation of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country, and there are many Creation stories for different waterways, including the *Birrarung* (Yarra River). As stated by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders of the WWCHAC Water Program subcommittee:

The waterways are the lifeblood of the land. The veins of Country. We must care for our mother and her veins.

The waterways provide not just for humans, but all living things; all around us, above us and below us. Being respectful of all spiritual and living things connected to waterways is our cultural responsibility. Waterways sustain all animals and plants – all life. Waterways are important for our totemic systems, as they may depend on living and thriving waterways. Ensuring waterways are healthy and thriving contributes to our strong continued connection to Country.

⁶⁴ Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), [Outback Australia - the rangelands](#), DCCEEW, updated 3 October 2021, accessed 2 December 2025.

⁶⁵ Geoscience Australia, [Areas of Australian and territory deserts](#), Geoscience Australia, updated 25 November 2022, accessed 2 December 2025.

⁶⁶ DB Rose, *Nourishing Terrains: Australian Aboriginal Views of Landscape and Wilderness*, Australian Heritage Commission, Canberra, 1996, p.7.

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People are the only cultural authority to speak for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country, therefore, it is paramount that Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People are providing direction on how Country should be cared for and managed. Understanding our lores/laws and our traditional cultural protocols, process, governance and decision-making needs to be respected, supported and resourced to allow proper informed participation. Speaking to the right people who make decisions is an important space for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People to be in to ensure cultural values for waterways are imbedded and informing policy and planning. Being involved at a high level and at the beginning of processes, lays the foundation for working towards and achieving cultural outcomes for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People, Country and our waterways.

Providing the Elders the space and opportunity to teach and pass knowledge onto the next generation is extremely important. Our voices, stories, history and connections need to be acknowledged and shared. We need to ensure there is the space for the next generation to continue to Care for Country.

Working together is integral to the environmental, spiritual, sustainable and cultural outcomes for Country. A healthy Country contributes to the health and wellbeing of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People.⁶⁷

Traditionally, water flowing through Wurundjeri Country was essential to sustaining living areas and ecological niches reliant upon it for diet and resources. For foraging peoples,⁶⁸ water sources are also central to economic activity, for instance in the development of technology such as fish traps and weirs in the collection and utilisation of aquatic plants and animals, and the utilisation of riverine plant species in the manufacture of nets, baskets, tools and implements.⁶⁹ Indeed, well-watered areas can support dense populations uncharacteristic of the continent's drier interior. Travel routes following unnamed and named watercourses connected communities and families. For example, the Maribyrnong River connected northwestern Woi-wurrung clans with their southeastern neighbours, and the Werribee River connected Woi-wurrung clans with neighbouring Wadawurrung groups. Culturally, water defines territories, sustains sacred practice, and embodies local Ancestral spirits. In terms of the cultural centrality of water for Indigenous Australians, anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose writes:

Right across Australia water is part of the sacred geography of people's homelands. Water knowledge is integral to the broader domain of ecological knowledge, and water is invariably linked to life. 'Living water' is the term frequently used to describe permanent waters. It conveys the sense of water having its own life, and also of offering life to others. Human understandings of water elaborate both aspects: water in its own presence or absence, and water in its connectivities across land forms, between earth and sky, and among living things.⁷⁰



⁶⁷ WWCHAC Water Unit Elders, internal communications, 2024.

⁶⁸ Referring to human groups as 'foragers' as opposed to the more common 'hunter-gatherers' offers a counter-narrative to orthodox discourse, in which economic activities are highly gendered and assigned value hierarchically. Using more neutral terminology emphasises the value of all subsistence activity regardless of whether it is typically defined by social, gendered, or temporal distinctions. It is also worth noting the recent and ongoing debate within the fields of anthropology and archaeology regarding the proper categorisation of subsistence activities of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples - whether groups were indeed foragers (or 'hunter-gatherers') as historically thought, or agriculturalists. Although beyond the scope of this report, it is clear that there exist a range of subsistence activities that do not neatly fit within any of the prevailing categories.

⁶⁹ V Strang, *Gardening the World: agency, identity and the ownership of water*, Berghan Books, 2009.

⁷⁰ DB Rose, "Fresh Water Rights and Biophilia: Indigenous Australian Perspectives", *Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia: Dialogue*, 2004, 22(3):35-44, p. 39.

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Waterways throughout Woi-wurrung territory, and the Birrarung (Yarra River) and Merri Merri (Merri Creek) in particular, were essential for sustaining living areas and the ecology upon which Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people relied for subsistence. In this sense, waterways were seen as life-giving. Its floodplains and the higher ground surrounding offered resource-rich occupation sites, and the water itself formed a travel route for Woi-wurrung people to access seasonal hunting grounds and ceremony sites and to visit neighbours and engage in trade and exchange.

With the advent of colonisation however, the lands and waters of the Port Phillip district were rapidly and completely expropriated by the colonial government and the original inhabitants removed to missions and reserves (discussed further below). These enclosures prohibited Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people from managing their territories as they had done in the pre-contact period and excluded them from participating in the political institutions by which land, water and natural resources were managed. Despite enduring connections to land and water Country and customary responsibility for its care, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people have been victims of ongoing water colonialism.⁷⁵

Social and Territorial Organisation

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⁷⁴ Transcription sourced from Howitt, [Notes by Howitt on Kulin from Barak, Page 72.](#)

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This section provides an overview of the ethnohistorical record in relation to Woi-wurrung people and the Study Area, and summary of information collected and interpreted by various researchers who have reconstructed patterns of territorial and social organisation prior to European invasion. While the direct relevance of this to a discussion of contemporary Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung values is sometimes limited, it nevertheless provides useful context for understanding patterns of land use in the Study Area.

Prior to European invasion, the project area was part of an area associated with Woi-wurrung speaking people who held tracts of land in estate groupings (often referred to as 'clans'). Woi-wurrung Country was divided into a number of such estates which were seen as relatively unchanging areas, generally around a constellation of important sites, for which rights and responsibilities were inherited through a principle of patrilineal descent. Membership of a clan was a permanent and unchanging matter of descent, which regardless of where one lived, remained a central component of a Woi-wurrung speaking person's identity. Social organisation for Woi-wurrung people was based on the moiety division (moiety meaning two halves) which, among other things, determined who was socially acceptable to marry. Underpinning social organisation and kinship structures among the Kulin cultural bloc was a division into two moieties; represented by Bunjil the wedge-tailed eagle (*Aquila audax*) and Waang or Waa the Australian raven or crow (*Corvus coronoides*). Moiety affiliation could transcend localised allegiance when Kulin people met for cultural or recreational activity. For instance, when playing the ball game of marngrook, Bunjil and Waa formed the competing teams.⁷⁷ Moiety affiliation also governed protocols for Bunjil and Waa people when they lived together, by which each moiety had their own utensils and food. Breaking this law would result in sickness which only a *wirrarap* (doctor/healer) could remedy.

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⁷⁶ AW Howitt, *The Native Tribes of south-east Australia*, originally published in 1904, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2001, p. 311.

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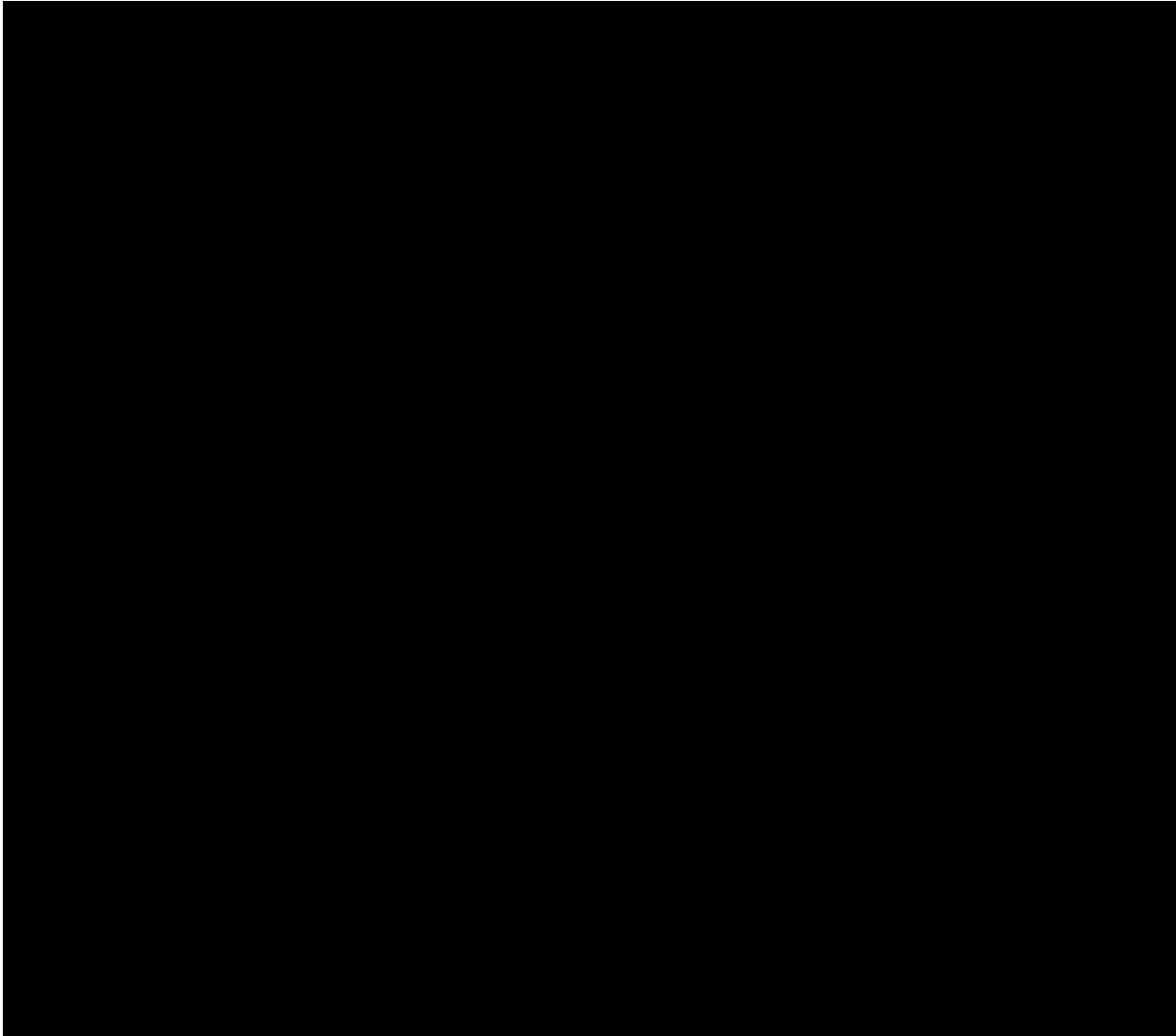
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⁹⁵ Local groups listed in WWCHAC, [The rule book of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation \(ICN: 8714\)](#), WWCHAC, 2021, p. 4.



Ceremony and Cultural Performance

During the colonial contact era, non-Indigenous observers witnessed and documented spiritual and cultural practices of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, including dances, ceremonies and initiation rituals. These practices often invoked the movements and actions of Ancestral beings and were performed as means of passing down information between generations, appeasing Ancestors and spirits in the landscape, and to ensure the regeneration of the landscape. Many cultural beliefs manifested in dances and ceremonies which involved the performance of dancers, singers and musicians. Intricate costumes made from animal skins and leafy boughs were donned, props were made from paintings on sheets of bark, while faces and bodies were painted with ochre.⁹⁶

Corroborees were performed as celebrations and were most often practiced at night-time by Woi-wurrung people. They consisted of singing, dancing, and the use of musical instruments such as clap sticks and the beating of possum skin rugs. Intricate costumes made of animal skins and leafy boughs were donned and faces and bodies painted with clay.⁹⁷ William Barak, ngurungaeta of the Wurundjeri

⁹⁶ Howitt, *The Native Tribes of south-east Australia*, p. 367; JH Kerr, *Glimpses of life in Victoria: by a resident*, Edmonston & Douglas, 1872; W Thomas, *The Journal of William Thomas, Assistant Protector of the Aborigines of Port Phillip & Guardian of the Aborigines of Victoria 1839-1867*, vol. 3, M Stephens (ed), Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Language, 2014.

⁹⁷ Howitt, *The Native Tribes of south-east Australia*.

and one of Howitt's most valuable informants, illustrates in several his artistic works, ceremonies, and dances.



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In her published history of Croydon, Muriel McGivern discusses the Bilcock family having borne witness to corroborees, in particular one performed at Birt's Hill located approximately 7 kilometres south of the study area in Croydon:

A few hundred yards nearer Croydon North [from Birt's Hill] can be seen the depression crossing Maroondah Highway where corroborees were once enacted by aborigines of the Wurunjerri Tribe (as witnessed by the Bilcocks), the natives' favourite camping spot not far away.⁹⁸

In her subsequent book, McGivern reiterates that corroborees were performed in the area:

The Bilcock family last century witnessed corroborees near their store at Birt's Hill, one mile north of Croydon town; descendants have stated that the aborigines camped near an old sawpit and were often joined by clans from the Yarra six miles away. The stamping and clapping of hands went on for hours. Corroborees and rites were also enacted in the late 1850s on present White Gums estate, Mooroolbark.⁹⁹

Ceremony also included cultural practices. Woi-wurrung people were taught cultural practices from traditional knowledge transferred to them from their Elders and Ancestors. Traditional knowledge of cultural practice is passed down through successive generations. Transmitted Dreamtime stories, rituals and events tell of the purpose and meaning of life. As Rhodes et al. state:

Aboriginal people ensured that the maintenance of social structures and the passing on of the values through each generation. This was accomplished through deep spiritual relationship with environment which included a wide range of rights and obligations to guide their daily actions.¹⁰⁰

Creation Ancestors and Spiritual Life

Indigenous Australian spiritual beliefs are based on multiple spirits, or Creation Ancestors, who existed alongside other totemic or supernatural beings during the Creation period prior to human occupation. This formed the basis of the cosmological and spiritual framework which informed most aspects of traditional society. During the Creation period, these Ancestors and other beings shaped the Country, formed human and non-human animals and imparted laws and customs before then taking the shape of land entities and forever after living alongside the human earth-realm, Underworld and Skyworld. The paths that Creation Ancestors left on the earth became referred to as songlines which connect and map mythological sites featured within Indigenous traditions surrounding significant events.¹⁰¹ In an Australian context, totems are symbolic devices ascribed with certain rules between individuals, groups and other existents.¹⁰² Totemic relationships can be between people and plant or animal species, or between people and landform features or areas of Country.

Woi-wurrung Country is imbued with the activities of supernatural beings and Woi-wurrung Ancestors. Principal among these is Bunjil, the creation spirit, who is the creator of the earth, trees,

⁹⁸ M McGivern, *A History of Croydon*, City of Croydon, 1967, p. 81.

⁹⁹ M McGivern, *Aboriginal of the Dandenong Mountain*, Melbourne Printers Pty Ltd, 1972, p. 22.

¹⁰⁰ D Rhodes, T Debney and M Grist, "Maribyrrnong Aboriginal Heritage Study: Report for City of Maribyrrnong," Biosis, 1999, p. 32.

¹⁰¹ F Cahir, I Clark and P Clarke, *Aboriginal biocultural knowledge in south-eastern Australia*, CSIRO Publishing, 2018, pp. 1-3.

¹⁰² WEH Stanner, *White Man got no Dreaming: Essays 1938-1973*, ANU Press, 1979.

and people.¹⁰³ It was Bunjil who instituted the moiety system and therefore the structure for Kulin social organisation. Smyth conveys a narrative of the creation of humankind told to him by a member of the Woi-wurrung:

Bund-jel was the first man. He made everything, and the second man (Kar-neen) he made also, as well as two wives for Kar-neen. But Bund-jel made no wife for himself, and after the lapse of time he came to want Kar-neen's wives. Kar-neen watched his wives very jealously, and was careful that Bund-jel should not get near them. Bund-jel, however, was clever enough to steal both of the wives in the night, and he took them away. Kar-neen, taking some spears with him, pursued Bundjel, but he could not find him, nor could he find his wives. But in a short time Bund-jel came back, bringing with him the two women. He asked Kar-neen to fight on the following day; and he proposed that if Karneen conquered he should have the women, and if Bund-jel conquered that they should be his. To this Kar-neen agreed. But Kar-neen had in his mind a different plan. And this was his plan: to make Ingargiull or corroboree. Kar-neen spoke to Waung (the Crow), and asked him to make a corroboree. And many crows came, and they made a great light in the air, and they sang —

Mene-Nar-in-gee,

Targo Barra Targo,

Burra mene long-go,

Wah!¹⁰⁴

Ellender and Christiansen provide another Creation narrative, as understood by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people:

Having formed features of the earth, Bunjil decided to bring humanity into existence. He gathered up a quantity of clay from a riverbed, divided it in two, and placed it on large sheets of bark that had been cut from a Gum tree. Bunjil then worked the clay, shaping it into the image of two men. He took stringy bark from the trees and used it for hair. Bunjil was pleased with his work and danced around the figures he had made. He blew air into the mouths, noses and navels of these new creatures and filled them with life. Then Bunjil's brother Pallian, who had been given control over all rivers, creeks and billabongs, began to thump the water with his hands. The water became thicker and thicker and eventually took on the shape and appearance of two women. Each man was presented with a hunting spear while the women were given a strong digging stick, to unearth yams and edible roots.¹⁰⁵

Howitt relayed the Woi-wurrung narrative of the creation of the Pleiades. Similar stories relating to the formation of this constellation abound in Aboriginal cosmological narratives across the continent. Howitt recorded that the Pleiades are a group of women, the Karat-goruk, who were digging up ant eggs with their digging sticks at the ends of which were hot coals. The crow, Waang, stole these coals, which were swept up into the sky when, at the command of Bunjil, Bellin-Bellin the musk-crow, released a whirlwind from his bag. They remained in the sky, with the embers on the

¹⁰³ Howitt, *The Native Tribes of south-east Australia*; I Ellender and P Christiansen, *People of the Merri Merri: The Wurundjeri in colonial days*, Tony Faithful (ed), Merri Creek Management Committee, 2001.

¹⁰⁴ Smyth, *The Aborigines of Victoria*, pp. 425-426.

¹⁰⁵ Ellender and Christiansen, *People of the Merri Merri*, p. 33.

yam-sticks, forming the Pleiades.¹⁰⁶ Howitt cites Thomas, who recoded that the Pleiades were Karakarook, Bunjil's daughter. When Bunjil created two men, his son Binbeal "caused two women to come out of the water as wives for them, and Karakarook gave each of them a kunnan (woman's stick)."¹⁰⁷

Narratives relating to cosmological beliefs were also retold to Howitt; the Kulin believing in a sky Country called Tharangalk-bek idealised as Gum Tree Country, where there were trees. It is here that, Howitt was told, Bunjil ascended with his family in a whirlwind.¹⁰⁸ It is important to note the reverence held toward gum trees in this narrative corresponds with the earthly value applied to this important natural resource. After all, the Wurundjeri-willam are named after a species of eucalypt – 'wurun' meaning the Manna Gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*), which is common along Birrarung, and 'djeri', the grub which is found in or near the tree.

The Woi-wurrung believed that every person possesses a *murrup* or spirit, which becomes a ghost after death and may temporarily enter the Tharangalk-bek during sleep, where it can associate with the *murrup* of others who have passed. Indeed, William Barak reported to Howitt that when asleep, his *murrup* travelled up Badger Creek, a tributary of the Birrarung (and where Coranderrk Aboriginal Station was established adjacent) and saw a quartz reef full of gold. He searched in vain for this spot while awake, but his *murrup* was never able to take him to the spot.¹⁰⁹ However, it was the Ngamat, where the sun went upon setting in the west, where the *murrup* went directly after death, or else it either lingered somewhere familiar or revisit the earth from the sky. "The Murrup ascended to the sky by the Karalk, that is, the bright rays of the setting sun, which is the path to the Tharangalk-bek, and the Karalk was said by some to be made by the Murrups when in Ngamat."¹¹⁰

In addition to narratives of Ancestral spirits and their creation of the landscape, cosmological narratives might also serve to convey a moral message and be retold to transmit tenets of customary law guiding social behaviour.¹¹¹

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people continue to refer to the supernatural powers held by Bunjil and other spiritual beings, and the physical manifestation of their activities on the features of the earth. Of particular relevance to the Birrarung (Yarra River) is a narrative telling the creation of humans:

Pal-hj-yarij who is described sometimes as a brother of Potd-jel, and sometimes as a son, has the control of the waters, great and small. He is supreme over rivers, creeks, and lagoons ; and the sea obeys him likewise. All creatures that live in the deeps or shallows he can control. There is nothing in the deep waters of the rivers that can perplex him ; and his chief pleasure is to paddle in the shallow waters, and to dive to great depths in the deep waters. One day he was playing in a deep, deep water-hole. He thumped and threshed the waters with his hands, in the same manner as the women beat the skins when men dance the corroboree. The water became thick ; it became very thick; it became as mud ; and Pal-hj-yan could no longer see through it as before. But something he saw at length. And dividing the thick waters with a bough, so as to get a glimpse of things underneath, he beheld what appeared to be hands, such as Pund-jel had given to the men he had created. Fal-Jy-yan took a strong twig, bent it into the form of a hook, and again divided the waters, and there appeared two heads (such as Pund-

¹⁰⁶ Howitt, *The Native Tribes of south-east Australia*, 430.

¹⁰⁷ Howitt, *The Native Tribes of south-east Australia*, 430.

¹⁰⁸ Howitt, *The Native Tribes of south-east Australia*, 433.

¹⁰⁹ Howitt, *The Native Tribes of south-east Australia*, 436

¹¹⁰ Howitt, *The Native Tribes of south-east Australia*, 438.

¹¹¹ Smyth, *The Aborigines of Victoria*, pp. 447-449.

jel had given to the men), then bodies (similar to those made by Pc^ntd-jel), and finally two creatures like Mon-mon-deek (young women). Pal-ly-yan named one Kunner-warra, and the other Ku-ur-rook, and he brought them to Pund-jel, his brother, to show them to him. Pund-jel gave to each man whom he had created a woman. Pund-jel put into the hands of the men spears. To each man he gave a spear ; and Pal-ly-yan gave to each woman and put into her hands a Kan-nan (digging-stick). Pal-ly-yan spake to the men and women, and told them to live together. He ordered that the men should use their spears for killing the kangaroo, and he told the women to use the Kan-nan to dig roots. Pund-jel and Pal-ly-yan remained with the blacks for three days. They showed the men how they should spear the kangaroo and the emu, and they told the women where they could find roots. On the third day, Pund-jel, Pal-ly-yan, and the four blacks sat down. A whirlwind (Pit-ker-riny or Wee-oong-koork) came, on the third day, when they had all sat down. On the third day, when they had all sat down, there came a storm (Koor-reen), a great storm (Borrn-geen-borrn-geen), and the whirlwind and the storm and the great storm carried Pund-jel and Pal-ly-yan upwards — far away—and the blacks saw Pund-jel and Pal-ly-yan no more."¹¹²

Resource use and subsistence economy

There is a substantial body of work relating to resource use within Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country. Local historian Muriel McGivern described the activities of Woi-wurrung people of the Croydon area and the plethora of plant and animal resources utilised for subsistence purposes on a seasonal basis:

By order of the Commissioner, aboriginals were allowed free passage through runs, and access to water always. They were an everyday sight to the Turners in their wanderings for food for the tribe – climbing trees after possums and kur-bo-roo (koala) in well-timbered parts: digging for wombats; catching the Bang (bandicoot) in its nest: stalking the wallaby in the ranges and across the flats of Croydon with sharpened spear and throwing stick: taking ducks and wild-fowl in streams with the help of nets held by a native in an overhanging tree while another black frightened the birds which rose from the water and were entangled in the net: digging for Barrm (yam) a tuber that cockatoos fed on almost exclusively in summer as stated by William Turner: gathering native raspberries, wild cherries, and the heart of the treefern in the mountains, and procuring countless other items of food in season.¹¹³

McGivern also makes note of the temporal and spatial properties of subsistence activities, resource use and elements of material culture:

The [the aboriginal people] hunted (also) across Croydon to the luxuriant fern ravines in the mountains, for they ate the hearts of tree-ferns. The tribe moved frequently, always keeping within its own tribal area along the Yarra basin. Eels were speared in creeks with an implement made from the peduncle of the garass-tree while the spikes were collected for food; yams were rooted for in boggy stretches, and most plants made use of. The Yarra natives shifted camp according to the direction the winds blew; they were adept in stripping sheets of bark from the huge trees that once grew in the Yarra valley, performing the task with lightning rapidity with their stone axes.¹¹⁴

Woi-wurrung people moved about the extent of their traditional estates and occupied specific tracts when propitious to do so based on the seasonal availability of resources and climatic conditions. They

¹¹² Smyth, *The Aborigines of Victoria*, p. 422.

¹¹³ McGivern, *A History of Croydon*, p. 12.

¹¹⁴ McGivern, *A History of Croydon*, p. 59.

spent the cold winter months on high ground away from areas subject to frequent flooding and in summer moved towards the flat ground closer to the river where resources were plentiful.¹¹⁵

Flora

“Despite a popular view of hunting as the major food source, foods of vegetable origin were important in the diet and were always the fallback foods, gathered mainly by women and children.”¹¹⁶ Some commentators suggest that reliance on plant foods contributed up to fifty percent of the diet of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people.¹¹⁷ Of some specialist food products gathered by women, Bunce recorded the collection of *Korong* (liquid amber gum) from the black wattle tree (found throughout the Upper Yarra Valley sub-region), which was dissolved in water to form a glutinous liquid to which sugar or manna was added as a sweet drink. He also described the collection of tuberous roots.¹¹⁸

Due to its year-round availability and need for limited processing prior to consumption, the staple food item of the Woi-wurrung people, and indeed Aboriginal people across Victoria, was the ‘Yam Daisy’ or *murnong* (*Microseris* spp.)¹¹⁹ (See Figure 3).

Murnong were abundant in dry sclerophyll woodlands and grasslands, and so would have been utilised either within or in close proximity to the Study area and the surrounding landscape.¹²⁰ While animal protein would have contributed a large proportion of the diet of the Woi-wurrung people, particularly when animal resources were limited, plant foods - and roots in particular - provided an important replacement. Botanist Beth Gott describes this important food resource:

This plant is one of the very few native members of the tribe Cichoreae (Liguliflorae) of the family Asteraceae (Compositae). It has a swollen root which varies in form from spheroidal to tapering, and from the top of which arises a rosette of upright leaves, which grow up during the autumn and winter. New roots grow down from the base of the rosette and begin to swell, while the old root tuber gradually shrivels and becomes bitter. In spring, when the flower is produced, the new tubers are white and swollen, not starchy, but with a copious milky latex.¹²¹

Located within the densely forested hillsides would have been a fern once identified as common bracken *Pteridium esculentum*, now recognised as a separate species native to Australia, New Zealand, and the South Pacific:

Pteridium was probably more important as a food resource in the higher rainfall forested areas, although it still needs relatively open conditions within such areas. After burning or clearing, *Pteridium* will regenerate from its rhizomes very rapidly, and will dominate the area for a period of years, until

¹¹⁵ B Carroll, *The Upper Yarra: An Illustrated History*, The Shire of Upper Yarra, 1988, p. 2.

¹¹⁶ B Gott, “Indigenous use of plants in south-eastern Australia”, *Telopea*, 2008, 12: 215 – 226.

¹¹⁷ Canning et al., *Voluntary CHMP for the City West Water Detention Tank at Brimbank Park*.

¹¹⁸ D Bunce, *Australasiatic reminiscences of twenty-three years' wanderings in Tasmania and the Australias: including travels with Dr. Leichhardt in north or tropical Australia*, JT Hendy, 1857, p. 71.

¹¹⁹ Canning et al., *Voluntary CHMP for the City West Water Detention Tank at Brimbank Park*; D Frankel and J Major, *Kulin and Kurnai: Victorian Aboriginal Life and Customs*, Messmate Press, 2014; D Frankel and J Major, *Victorian Aboriginal Life and customs: Through early european eyes*, La Trobe University, 2017; A tuberous plant found across southern and central Victoria; staple plant food item of the Woi-wurrung people, and indeed Indigenous people across Victoria.

¹²⁰ Gott, “Indigenous use of plants in south-eastern Australia”.

¹²¹ B Gott, “Ecology of Root Use by the Aborigines of Southern Australia,” *Archaeology in Oceania*, 1982 17(1): 59-67, pp. 63-64.

shaded out by new shrub and tree growth. Burning thus increased its availability, and cyclic burning could ensure a constant supply.¹²²

In addition to *murnong* and bracken, roots and seeds were staple food items throughout south-eastern Australia, some of which were ground to produce flour.¹²³ Local fruits and aquatic tubers as well as tree gum and honey from native bees were also consumed.¹²⁴

Floral resources were not only utilised for human consumption, but also for medicine and the manufacture of fibres, string, adhesives, and implements.¹²⁵ Additionally, a variety of timber resources were collected for fuel and the manufacture of tools and other implements such as firesticks (for use in fire-making and fire-based land management) and musical instruments.¹²⁶ River Red Gum, prolific throughout the region, would have been utilised for the manufacture of tools and other implements.



Figure 3: Murnong or Yam Daisy (*Microseris lanceolata*). Source: Frankel and Major 2017, p.129.

Fauna

Early and contemporary ethnographic accounts abound with evidence of Aboriginal people of the Melbourne region trapping, hunting, fishing and otherwise utilising a wide variety of faunal products, employing an extensive knowledge of variations in seasonal availability and ecology.¹²⁷ A wide variety of faunal resources were utilised for food, medicine, ceremonial purposes and the manufacture of clothing and other items, such as kangaroo, emu, possum, bandicoot, koala, echidna, wombat, reptiles, birds, fish and eels.¹²⁸ In addition to more substantial animal foods, ant pupae as well as a variety of grubs were consumed as important sources of protein.

¹²² Gott, "Ecology of Root Use by the Aborigines of Southern Australia," 64-65.

¹²³ (Gott 2008) Gott, "Indigenous use of plants in south-eastern Australia".

¹²⁴ Bunce, *Australasiatic reminiscences*; Frankel and Major, *Kulin and Kurnai*; Gott, "Indigenous use of plants in south-eastern Australia".

¹²⁵ Frankel and Major, *Kulin and Kurnai*; Gott, "Indigenous use of plants in south-eastern Australia".

¹²⁶ Bunce, *Australasiatic reminiscences*.

¹²⁷ Canning et al. *Voluntary CHMP for the City West Water Detention Tank at Brimbank Park*.

¹²⁸ Bunce, *Australasiatic reminiscences*; Thomas, *The Journal of William Thomas*, vol. 1-3.

Trade and exchange

Barter was undertaken at tribal meetings among the Kulin. One such event, held at the Merri Creek in Melbourne in 1840, saw attendees come from as far as the Buffalo River. At such meetings, William Barak told Howitt that, “people made presents to others from distance parts ‘to make friends.’”¹²⁹ Trade and exchange thus served important economic and social purposes and enhanced social ties among the Kulin and their neighbours.

Stone and other inorganic materials was locally utilised for use in the manufacture of implements such as tomahawks and cutting tools, as well as for trade with other neighbouring groups. For instance, stone obtained from quarries located within Woi-wurrung territory, such as the greenstone obtained from Wil-im-ee Moor-ing (Mount William),¹³⁰ has been found to have been used locally as well as in locations over 300 kilometres distant.¹³¹ Canning and others note that complex networks of trade and exchange operated in the region between the Kulin and recipient groups, at the time of European contact.¹³² As such, they note that when economic products are absent from one estate but present in other neighbouring estates, it may indicate enmity or even hostility between groups, as evidenced by the absence of trade and exchange practices.

In addition to practices of trade and exchange of raw materials and manufactured products, Aboriginal people from elsewhere might offer gifts to thengurungaeta to access raw materials and resources on another’s country. Such was the case with the stone found at the Wil-im-ee Moor-ing quarry.¹³³ Trade and exchange of other raw materials such as silcrete, quartz and ochre would also have occurred.

Adaptation to the introduced European economy culminated in the manufacture of souvenirs and mementos such as baskets, rugs, boomerangs, spears, fire-lighters and paintings for the tourist market, or possibly in some cases as gifts for local colonial settlers [REDACTED].¹³⁴ Economic production is recorded during the operation of the station, and would have utilised local resources such as timber, fibre and ochre for paint.

Material Culture

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people manufactured a great deal of different items for specific uses and purposes from a wide variety of available materials. Baskets and bags were extremely important for transporting items, such as instruments or ceremonial clothing items that needed to be transported to gathering places, or babies. Game could be caught with fish traps or nets, hunted with boomerangs and spears, or thrown with the aid of the woomera, a spear-throwing device used to nock a spear and extend the throwing arc of the arm, enabling far more power, distance and precision when throwing a spear. These are all carved from wood. Bone needles were used to sew animal skins such as possum

¹²⁹ Howitt, *The Native Tribes of south-east Australia*, p. 718.

¹³⁰ A highly significant place, Wil-im-ee Moor-ing was handed back to the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people by then federal Indigenous Affairs Minister Jenny Macklin in 2012.

¹³¹ Canning et al., *Voluntary CHMP for the City West Water Detention Tank at Brimbank Park*; Frankel and Major, *Kulin and Kurnai*; Howitt, *The Native Tribes of south-east Australia*.

¹³² Canning et al., *Voluntary CHMP for the City West Water Detention Tank at Brimbank Park*.

¹³³ Howitt, *The Native Tribes of south-east Australia*.

¹³⁴ R Broome, *Aboriginal Victorians: a history since 1800*, La Trobe University Press, 2005.

for cloaks and marngrook balls. Digging sticks were used to turn the soil and harvest tubers like murnong (Yam Daisy).

Belts made of possum skin, lyrebird feathers, reed necklaces, bone piercings and ochre body paints were all forms of bodily adornment.¹³⁵ These as well as the elaborate patterns on the inside of possum skin cloaks were aesthetic and artistic expression, used for dance, ceremony and celebration. The greenstone axes quarried from Wil-im-ee Moor-ring (Mount William) were renowned amongst all Kulin groups and traded far beyond Victoria, and likely more ornamental than utilitarian. As historian Gary Presland notes:

Most of the Mount William hatchets that have been found show very little wear, which suggests they were prized more as social objects than as practical ones. They seem to have been passed on as valued exchange items which were treasured for themselves and not used.¹³⁶

The Greenstone trade has been reconstructed from the ethnohistorical and archaeological records, with axe heads quarried from Wil-im-ee Moor-ring (Mount William) located hundreds of kilometres away from their source.¹³⁷ Famed Wurundjeri ngurungaeta Billibellary shared custodianship and management of the greenstone quarry with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Ancestors.¹³⁸ In the 1840s, the quarry was managed by Ningulabul, his two sons, Ningulabul (junior) and Ner-rim-bin-uk, and Murrum Murrumbean of the Gunung-willam-balluk clan, Bunerim of the Marin-balluk clan, and by Billibellary and Bebejan of the Wurundjeri-balluk and the Wurundjeri-willam clans.¹³⁹

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Ancestors travelled across their Country, usually in groups comprising one or two families plus visitors, between 15 and 20 people, and sometimes came together at large gatherings, such as those recorded by William Thomas in East Melbourne of multiple hundreds of people.¹⁴⁰ As people moved, they made camps and shelters out of available materials, such as sheets of bark.¹⁴¹ During stationary periods these camps rapidly converted the living environment into a village. The architecture of these 'semisedentary' structures in south-eastern Australia is described as employing rigid bark sheets supported by forked sloping poles and struts to generate a planar form such as triangular prisms and lean-to walls. These structures could contain substantial interconnecting spaces to a height at which the residents could stand upright.¹⁴²

William Thomas described that as many as 150 dwellings, called willams in the Woi-wurrung language, were built within a living area, with the willam of the ngurungaeta (leader) and those of his kin built in the first instance. The living areas were divided into hamlets approximately eighteen metres apart with up to six willams spaced five metres apart. In each hamlet an assigned married man was responsible for keeping order and settling any disputes. Thomas wrote "I have seen one of the most beautiful, romantic, and stillest parts of the wilderness become a busy and clamorous town, and the

¹³⁵ Smyth, *The Aborigines of Victoria*, p. 273.

¹³⁶ G Presland, *First People: The Eastern Kulin Nation of Melbourne, Port Phillip and Central Victoria*, Museums Victoria Publishing, 2010, p. 144.

¹³⁷ I McBryde, "Kulin Greenstone Quarries: the social context of production and distribution for the Mt William site," *World Archaeology* 1984, 16(2): 267-285, p. 269.

¹³⁸ Barwick, "Mapping the Past," p. 121.

¹³⁹ Barwick, "Mapping the Past," p. 121.

¹⁴⁰ Presland, *First People*, p. 20.

¹⁴¹ DL Freedman, C Spry and K Jones, *Jacksons Creek Regional Parklands Woiwurrung Cultural Values Study*, draft report prepared by WWCHAC for the Waterways of the West, 2021, p. 117.

¹⁴² Freedman et al., *Jacksons Creek Regional Parklands Woiwurrung Cultural Values Study*, p. 117.

beautiful forest marred for materials for their habitation, and as much bustle as though the spot had been located for generations” .¹⁴³

Visible manifestations of Aboriginal culture unsurprisingly abound in the early literature, and pertain largely to tools, technology, implements and architecture, as well as clothing, bodily adornments, and body modifications.

Tools, technology, implements and architecture

The women were busy with their tomahawks in stripping large flakes, or sheets of bark, from the stringy-bark trees, and setting forks and saplings whereon to place the bark for the erection of willams, or dwellings, as a shelter.¹⁴⁴

Many observers have recorded the construction of and residence in bark huts known variously as *miamias*, *miams*, and *willams*¹⁴⁵, as well as the manufacture and use of a large number of other tools, technologies and implements. Regarding traditional architecture Thomas wrote:

In warm weather, while on the tramp, they seldom make a miam - they use merely a few boughs to keep off the wind; in wet weather a few sheets of bark make a comfortable house. In one half-hour I have seen a neat village begun and finished. The harmony that exists among them when none of another tribe is in the party is surprising. I have been out with them for months without a single altercation. Wherever one is born, that is considered his or her country.¹⁴⁶

Early settler and owner of Dalry Station, Hubert De Castella noted the seasonal variation in construction of temporary huts in order to obtain the most appropriate protection from the elements: in summer, “a few gum-tree branches piled up and leaning against some sticks stuck in the ground protect them from the sun and the hot wind”;¹⁴⁷ while in winter “they remove from the trees large strips of bark six or eight feet high and as wide as the trunk is round”¹⁴⁸ in order to construct a shelter that is turned against the direction of the rain, protecting its inhabitants inside. Individuals possessed their own fire and crouched on the ground in their possum skin cloak, which had a dual purpose – to be used as clothing and bedding.

Stone tools, such as tomahawks and axes were fashioned from water-worn pebbles, or samples split from larger pieces of stone. Of great value among the Kulin and neighbouring peoples was the highly prized greenstone quarried from Wil-im-ee Moor-ring, located in the north-western portion of Woiwurrung territory.

¹⁴³ Freedman et al., *Jacksons Creek Regional Parklands Woiwurrung Cultural Values Study*, p. 117.

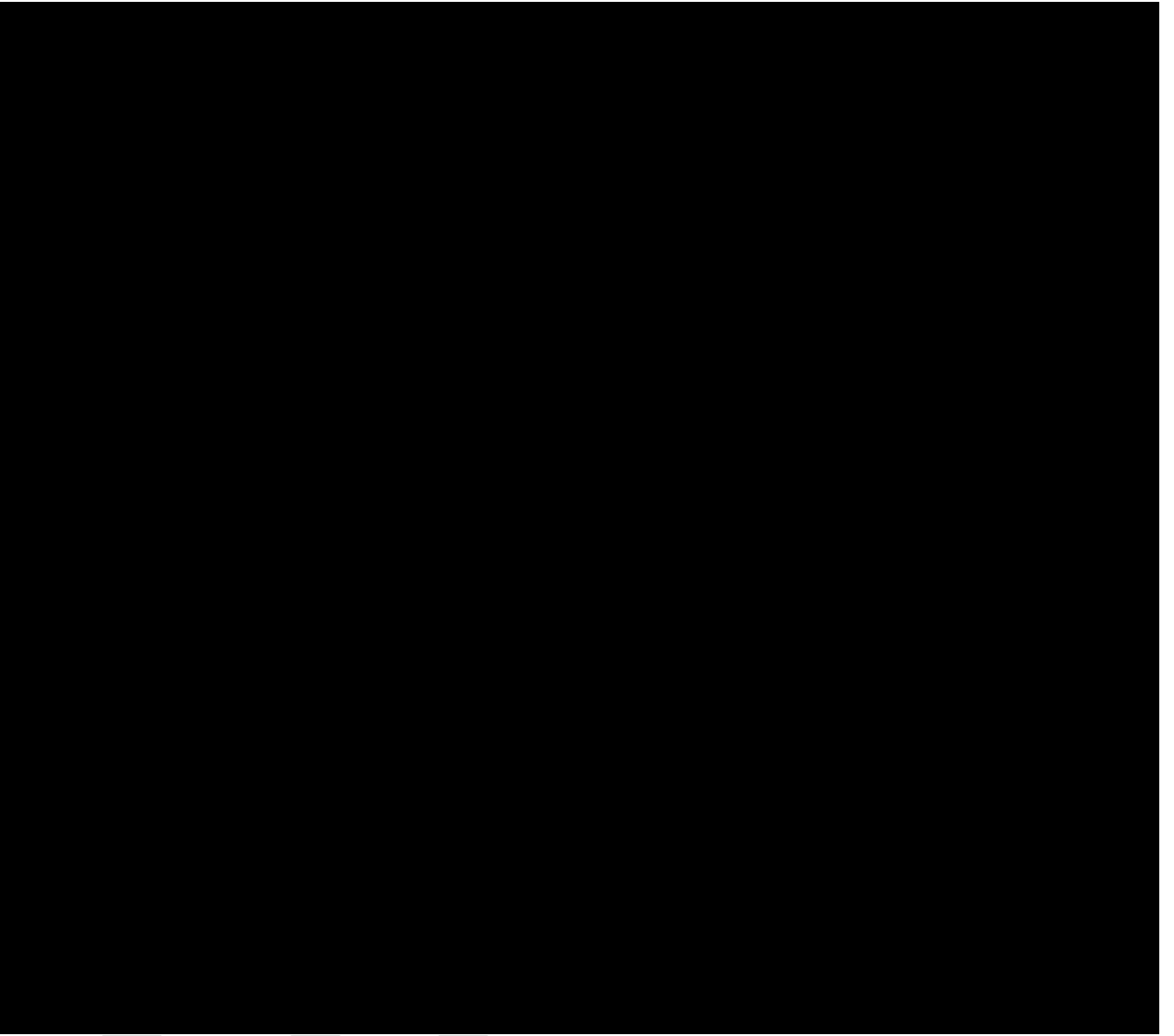
¹⁴⁴ Bunce, *Australasiatic reminiscences*, p. 73.

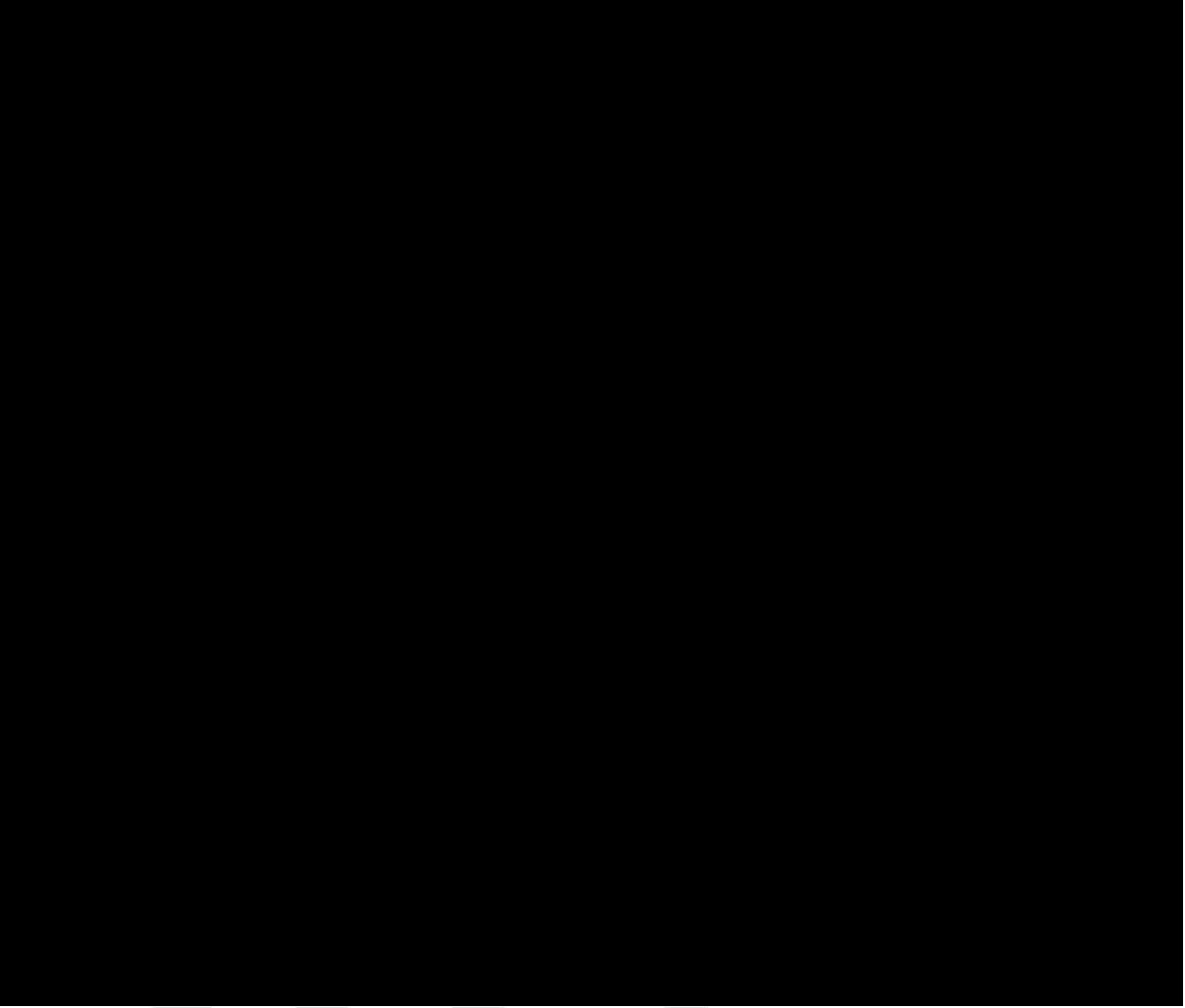
¹⁴⁵ Bunce, *Australasiatic reminiscences*; Frankel and Major, *Kulin and Kurnai*; Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*.

¹⁴⁶ TF Bride (ed), *Letters from Victorian Pioneers: being a series of papers on the early occupation of the colony, the Aborigines, etc., Addressed by Victorian Pioneers to his Excellency Charles Joseph La Trobe, Esq., Lieutenant-Governor of the Colony of Victoria*, Robt. S. Brain, Government Printer, 1898, p. 66.

¹⁴⁷ H de Castella, *Australia Squatters* (CB Thornton-Smith trans), Melbourne University Press, 1987, p. 73.

¹⁴⁸ de Castella, *Australia Squatters*, p. 73.





The preferred everyday implements used by Woi-wurrung people were the spear thrower for men, and *kannan* (digging stick) for women. The spear thrower was used in hunting and perhaps settling of disputes when spears were used to inflict punishment on a perpetrator. The *kannan* was used for digging up *murnong* and other roots and tubers. Such was their importance, that Woi-wurrung people were ceremonially buried with their spear thrower or digging stick – as gender dictated – placed in the earth at the head of the grave (see section on mortuary rituals, above).

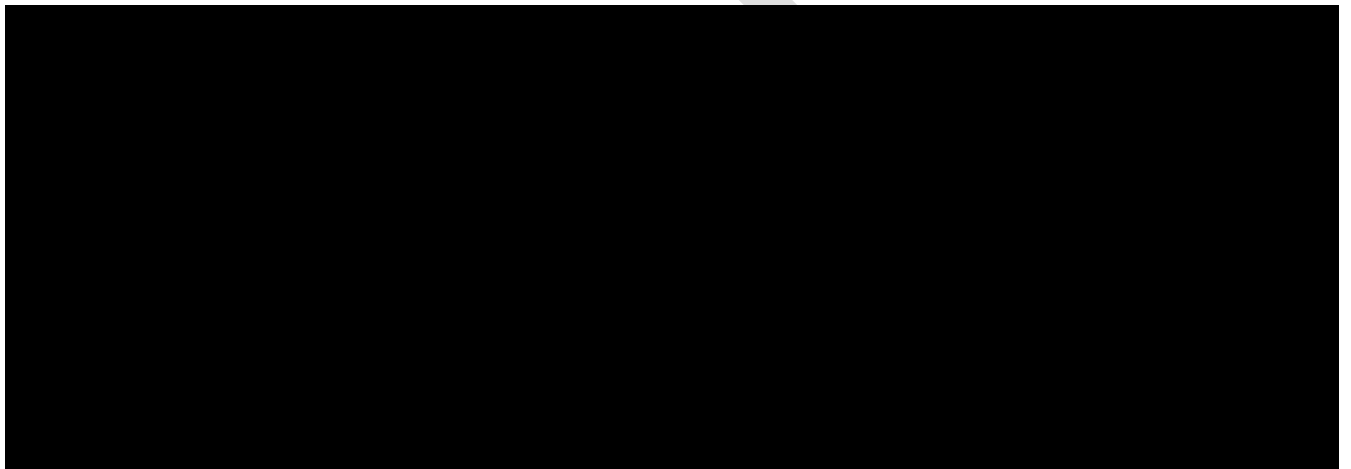
Smyth recorded from an informant near Yering Station, gendered recreational activities as training in the art of proper use of men's implements:

On another occasion the same gentleman saw an old man accompanied by a number of boys—some of tender years and others nearly full grown—who appeared to be receiving instruction in the several arts by which a savage gains a living in the forest. The old man, whether merely to afford the boys amusement or to teach them the proper method of throwing the spear, engaged in the following pastime. A piece of bark was cut from a tree and formed into a disc somewhat larger than a dinner-plate, and this was put into the hands of one of the elder boys. Having selected an open space of tolerably smooth sward, the game commenced. The boys were placed in a row, and each was provided with a light spear; the elder boy, who held the disc, stood at some distance in front of the row, and at a given signal he hurled the bark disc—not as a cricketer usually throws a ball, but downwards from the shoulder, and with a peculiar jerk—so as to give the disc a ricochet-like movement as it bounded rather than rolled along the grass. Each little boy in turn threw his spear. Few hit the disc, but those that struck

it or came very near it were complimented by the old man and by their fellows. The attitude of the boys, their eagerness, the attention of the old man, the triumph exhibited in his countenance when better play than usual was made, and the modest demeanour of the most successful spearman, formed a picture which was very pleasing. Other exercises followed this performance, and their aged instructor seemed to delight in the work which he had taken in hand. Obedience, steadiness, fair-play, and self-command were inculcated by the practices which were witnessed.¹⁴⁹

Made from hollowed-out burls of gum trees or the bark covering the burls, *tarnuks* were carrying vessels, usually used for transporting fresh water, but also the collection of other articles and food stuffs.¹⁵⁰ Due to their weight, they were not always carried from camp to camp, but may have been left behind and used upon return or made afresh at the next camp.

Recorded by Robert Brough Smyth, John Green had, during his time as Manager of Coranderrk Aboriginal Mission, obtained a specimen of the fishing nets used by the Station's residents, made from the fibre of the stringybark tree. He records the name of the net as *Karrt-keerrt*.¹⁵¹



Smyth also described the manufacture of fire using firesticks (Figure 8) (Figure 9) called *Weenth-kalk-kalk*, made from the wood of what he renders as *Jtledycarua Cunninghamii* (presumably *Hedicaria Cunninghami*, common name Native Mulberry) and *Prostanthera lasianthos* (common name Victorian Christmas Bush). Howitt names the preferred wood *Djel-wruk* (*Hedicaria Cunninghami*), which grew "plentifully in the gullies of the Dandenong Mountains and the Yarra River."¹⁵² For the Woi-wurrung, the process of fire-making was known as *Werrgarrk* and involved a piece of dry wood called *Bah-anoo* measuring approximately ten inches in length held in place but the toes of the seated practitioner. A second piece of dry wood like dowelling, known as *Boo-ho-bo*, measuring approximately two feet in length and half an inch in diameter, was placed in a depression in the horizontal piece. The dowelling was twirled between the palms of the hands until it the wood dust (*Kan-an-doorr*) started to smoke (*Manr-noo-en*). Dry eucalyptus leaves were the added to the smoulder and eventually ignited, creating flames (*Kool-kool-boo-noo-cn*).¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ Smyth, *The Aborigines of Victoria*, p. 50.

¹⁵⁰ Smyth, *The Aborigines of Victoria*, p. 346.

¹⁵¹ Smyth, *The Aborigines of Victoria*, p. 390.

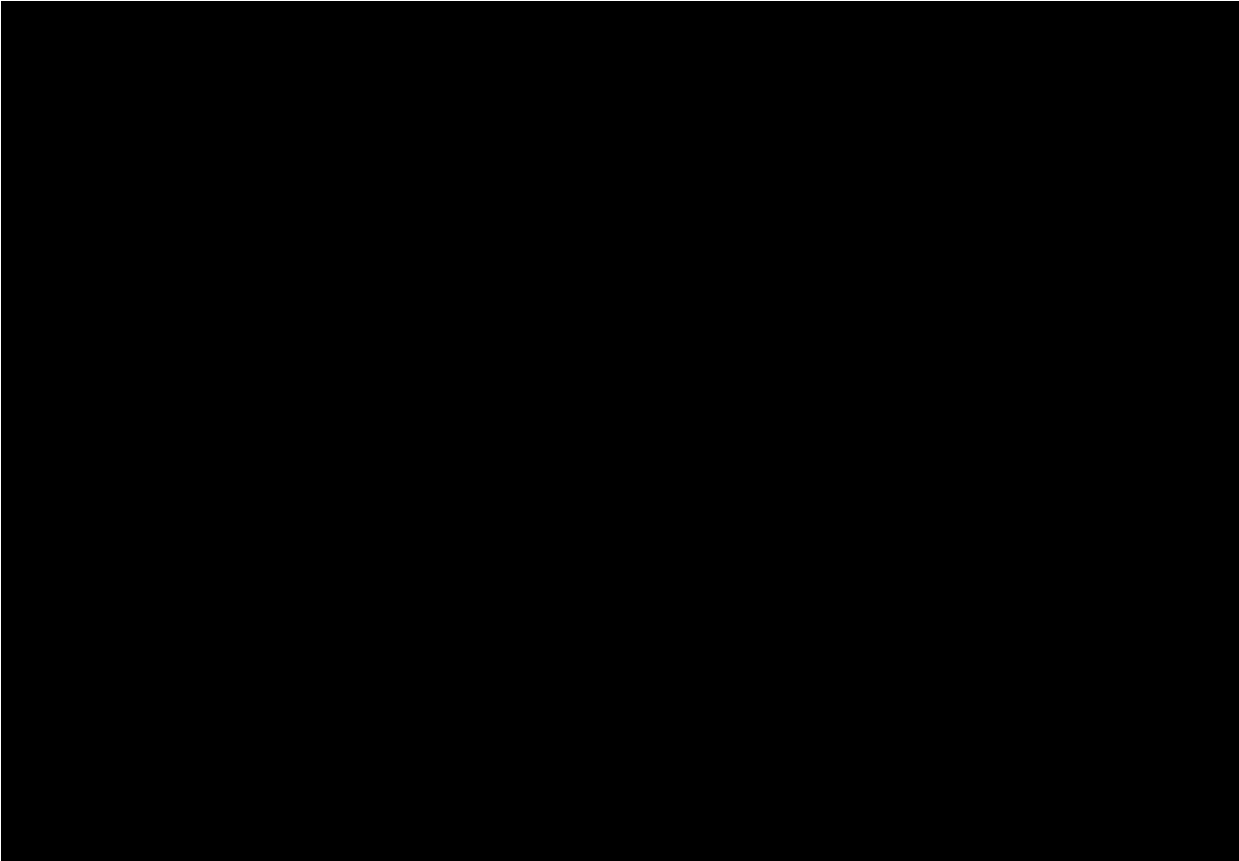
¹⁵² Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, p. 771.

¹⁵³ Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, p. 771; E Shaw, *Early Days among the Aborigines: the story of Yelta and Coranderrk Missions*, W & J Barr, published c. 1949, p. 33; Smyth, *The Aborigines of Victoria*, pp. 393-394.

In a letter to Lieutenant-Governor Charles Joseph La Trobe, Thomas retold the story of how the Woi-wurrung came to possess fire and the importance of never being without it:

How Man first came in possession of Fire- They say that "long time after Punjil made man and woman, blacks had no fire, were very cold, and eat all flesh raw"; that some lubras went out to get food. They were with their *kannan* digging up *murrar* (piss-ant's eggs), when several snakes of all kinds came up out of the earth where they were digging; that they were terribly frightened; kept beating the snakes but could not kill them. To their relief came down Karakarook with a large *kannan*, and two young men named Tourt and Tarrer; that Karakarook and the lubras fought the snakes for a long time, when the end of Karakarook's stick broke off; from the piece broken off arose smoke. A bird - (by their account of the same kind as a crow, only of a great size - as large as an eagle) - flew down and ran off with the fire. Tourt and Tarrer immediately flew up in pursuit of the crow, while Karakarook remained with the lubras. The crow flew to a mountain named Nun-nur-woon, where it was overtaken by the two flying young men. Tarrer returned with the fire safe, having pulled off bark from ne tree and another to keep it from being exhausted. "Tourt no more come back"; he was burnt to death on a mountain named Munnio, where he had kindled a small fire lest what small quantity he had should be lost, and Punjil, for Tourt's good deed, turned him into a large star, that always looks like fire. Karakarook showed the lubras her stick, and, having examined the qualities of it, bade them never to be without fire. Tarrer afterwards directed them to where the stick might be found, and showed them how to make fire; disappeared, and was no more seen.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ Bride, *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, pp. 87-88.



Shaw noted that in winter, heavy rains caused extensive flooding to the Yarra Flats. At such times canoeing became a recreational activity.¹⁵⁵ River-going canoes called *Koor-ron* were made from the bark of Eucalyptus trees, with the preferred species being *Eucalyptus rostrata* (Swamp Messmate or River Red Gum).¹⁵⁶ The bark was cut off in one large piece, the natural curve given shape to the craft. Mud was then used to plaster the vessel, making it waterproof.¹⁵⁷ Smyth noted that sometimes they were sewn at one end or else heated over a fire to create the desired shape. De Castella noted a more rudimentary form of construction which required the removal of bark from a trunk selected especially because of its natural curvature. The bark was removed by hatchet and carried to the water's edge. There, it was placed in the water with strips of bark laid across the inside of the shell to keep the edges apart. If the bark was not curved enough, clay might be used to mould into a rim to prevent water from seeping in.¹⁵⁸

Canoes were not manufactured until there was an occasion for this immediate use and were usually constructed at the site of departure once a tree of suitable size to transport its contents was identified.¹⁵⁹ Canoes may have reached 18 feet in length¹⁶⁰ and were handled with great dexterity.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁵ Shaw, *Early Days among the Aborigines*.

¹⁵⁶ Smyth, *The Aborigines of Victoria*.

¹⁵⁷ Shaw, *Early Days among the Aborigines*.

¹⁵⁸ de Castella, *Australia Squatters*.

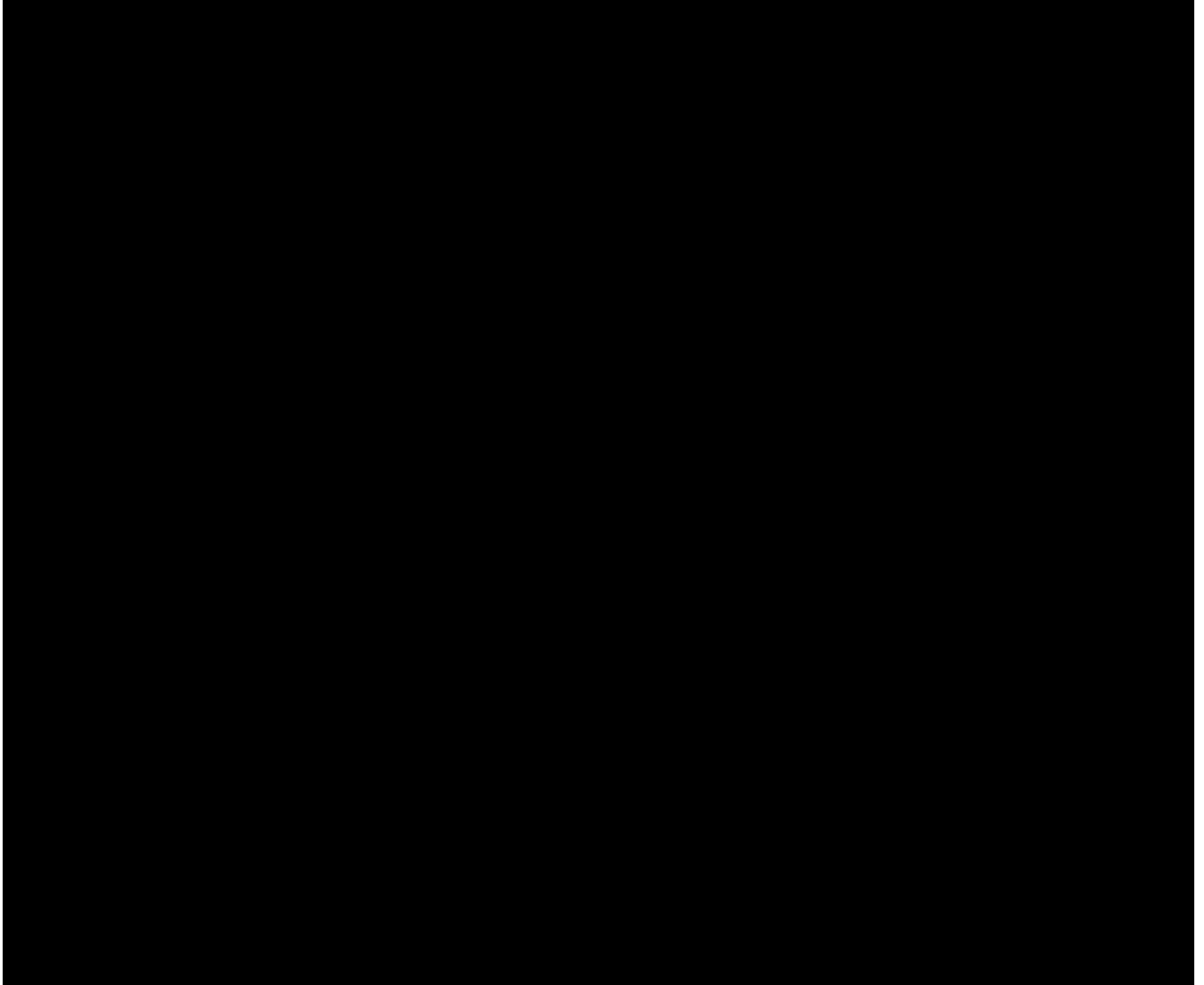
¹⁵⁹ Smyth, *The Aborigines of Victoria*.

¹⁶⁰ Smyth, *The Aborigines of Victoria*.

¹⁶¹ de Castella, *Australia Squatters*.

Unique to the Kulin people was the practice of a recreational ball game known as *Marngrook*,¹⁶² which utilised a ball made of possum skin. The objective of the game being to prevent the opposing side from gaining possession of the ball.¹⁶³ Teams were divided based on moiety affiliation.

To represent the manufacture and use of some of the large variety of different tools and implements, those mentioned in the literature are listed in Table 6 organised by material type.



¹⁶² Howitt records the game as *Mangurt*: Howitt, *The Native Tribes of south-east Australia*.

¹⁶³ Frankel and Major, *Kulin and Kurnai*.

Table 8: Tools and technology, implements and architecture; organised by material type

Material Type		
Animal (skin, bone, sinew)	Plant (fibre, bark, timber)	Inorganic (stone, ochre)
Twine/sinew	Cord	Pigments
Cord	Baskets	Scrapers
Cloaks	Bowls	Engraving tools
Piercing tools	Boomerangs	Axes
<i>Marngrook</i> ball	Waddies	Tomahawks
	Spears	Cutting tools
	Shields	Fish traps
	Musical instruments	
	Women's digging sticks <i>kannan</i>	
	Huts <i>miam, willam</i>	

Clothing, adornments, and body modifications

Possum skin cloaks were the most valued item of clothing, being skilfully made for an individual during childhood and added to over the course of a lifetime. It was worn daily and afforded much-needed warmth in the cool southern winters, as well as serving as a baby-carrier and sleeping rug.¹⁶⁴ For Woiwurrung men transitioning from child to initiated young man, the child's possum skin cloak was replaced by a possum skin *branjep*, a skirt worn around the waist, and a *berbert* of ringtail possum strands round his biceps which he wore during this liminal phase.¹⁶⁵

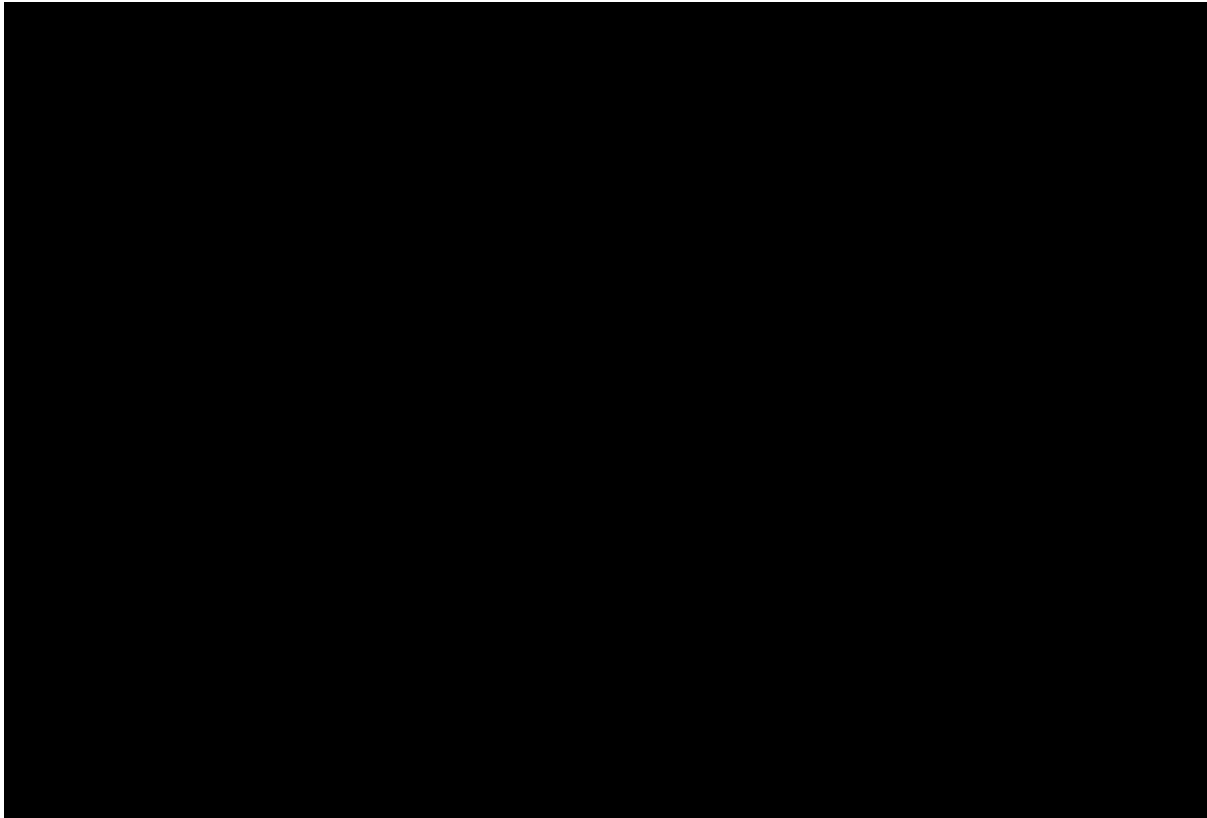
Daniel Bunce provides a detailed description of the processing of possum skins for cloaks, utilising other materials for needles, thread, and etching utensils:

Many opossums had been caught during our excursion, and the skins were now pegged out on sheets of bark, and stretched to their fullest tension with wooden pegs of the *Pomaderris apetala*, or dogwood. The points of the pegs had been previously scraped with a piece of broken bottle, and hardened in the fire so as to enable them to act as a substitute for European tacks and nails; and a quantity of them was the never-failing accompaniment of a "Baggerooks," or black woman's basket, or "Beenack." After the opossum skins are sufficiently stretched and dried, they are very curiously marked, the work of the men; animals, kangaroos, emus, as well as the human figure, are frequently represented by a piece of broken glass bottle, or, when not to be obtained, the bowl of a metal spoon, with one side filed sharp, for the purpose of scratching the skin when in the soft state. Prior to the introduction among them of needles and thread, they used the finer tendons and sinews of the kangaroo and opossum for thread, and the sharp-pointed bone of a fish or kangaroo for a needle, in sewing their rugs. In those days they needed not the aid of foreign ornament, but were amply adorned with strings, and a necklace called "Coornburt," composed of a number of short pieces of reed, strung together, and hanging pendant from the neck.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ DL Freedman, "RU003: Overview of the Birrarung Wurundjeri Stories Possum Skin Cloak", prepared for DELWP, 2021.

¹⁶⁵ Freedman, "RU003"; Howitt, *The Native Tribes of south-east Australia*.

¹⁶⁶ Bunce, *Australasiatic reminiscences*, pp. 75-76.



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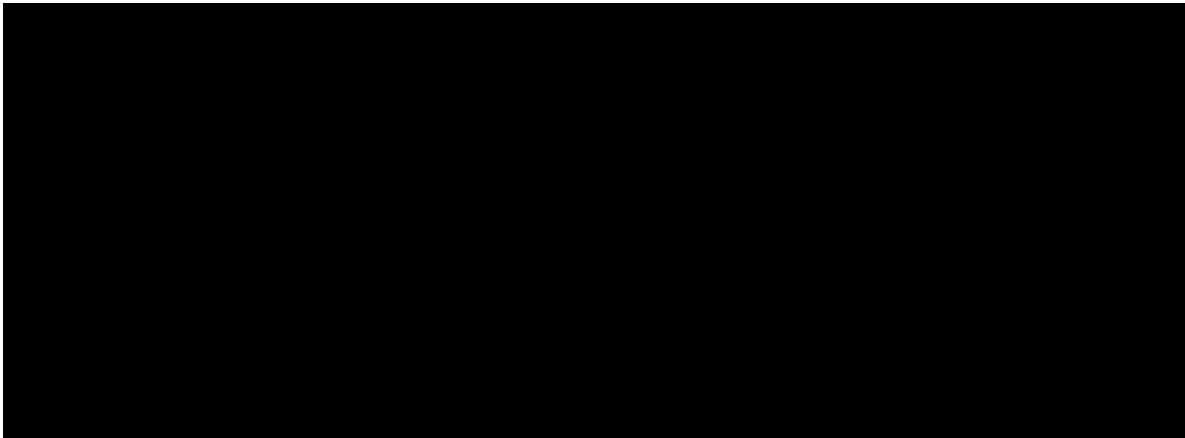
[Redacted text block]

Other items of bodily adornment worn by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people include: the wearing of head bands and neck cords;¹⁶⁸ the wearing by men of a short ‘apron’ of possum skins with the fur still on around their waists and possum skin cloaks (Figure 13); the wearing by women of short skirts of emu feathers; the wearing of bags for carrying belongings;¹⁶⁹ and the daubing of the body with ochre, clay and animal fat.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Thomas, *The Journal of William Thomas*, vol. 2.

¹⁶⁹ Frankel and Major, *Kulin and Kurnai*.

¹⁷⁰ Frankel and Major, *Kulin and Kurnai*; Thomas, *The Journal of William Thomas*, vol. 2.



It was typically the role of women to weave baskets and bags from plant fibre for the purpose of carrying food and other articles.¹⁷¹ One such woven basket is housed within the National Trust's Gulf Station collection, currently on loan to the Yarra Ranges Regional Museum. While its provenance is unknown, it is likely that it was crafted by a resident of Coranderrk and either purchased by or gifted to a member of the Gulf Station estate.



¹⁷¹ Smyth, *The Aborigines of Victoria*.





FINAL

7.0 Contact Period

For the purposes of this study, the contact era of non-Indigenous colonial invasion within the Port Phillip District refers to the period between 1835 to 1863. 47 years after the First Fleet arrived in Botany Bay, and after several false starts, the colonial invasion of Victoria began in earnest. The pastoral expansion was among the most rapid in the world. This influx of colonialists with pastoral interests encroached into Woi-wurrung Country. In 1835, John Batman, on behalf of the Port Phillip Association, performatively “purchased” land across what he called Port Phillip Bay through the signing of what is commonly known as the Batman ‘treaty’. While this document was not recognised by Kulin leaders or the British government as a ‘treaty’, it was the first formal act of Indigenous land dispossession in Victoria and immediately diminished Aboriginal people’s access to their Country and resources. The year 1863 marks the movement of Woi-wurrung people onto the Coranderrk Aboriginal Mission.



Figure 15: John Wesley Brutt, Batman’s ‘Treaty’ with the aborigines at Merri Creek, 6 June 1835, ca. 1888.
Source: State Library Victoria.

This section is not designed to preference a history of European and other immigrants to Australia colonial invasion of the study area but serves to contextualise the interactions between Woi-wurrung people and the initial colonial settlers and administrators by investigating the archival records that may contain information of Woi-wurrung people’s lifeways in and around the Northern Freight Precinct area. What follows in this section is an attempt to consolidate the archival and published sources which relate to Woi-wurrung people and settlement of the study area.

European Exploration

The first European to launch a sustained incursion into the Port Phillip region was Acting Surveyor-General of New South Wales, Charles Grimes, and his party in 1803. An account of this journey survives in the journal of James Flemming, a member of the exploration party. His journal documents the European first expedition to travel up the ‘Great River’.¹⁷⁴ Commencing from Port Phillip Bay, the party

¹⁷⁴ J Shillinglaw, *A Journal of the Exploration of Charles Grimes, 1802-1803*, City of Footscray Historical Society, 1988.

travelled north for two or three miles until they reached a place where two branches joined. They opted to take the western branch then referred to as the Saltwater River (now known as the Maribyrnong River). Here they noted “the land became high, where we landed and went on a hill. The soil a reddish loam from ten to fifteen inches deep. Saw a large lagoon at a distance. Went over a hill to a large swamp [Moonee Ponds]. Soil black, eighteen inches, with blue clay at bottom. No trees for miles”.¹⁷⁵ They returned to their boat and sailed along the Maribyrnong describing the banks as “stony soil, stiff blue clay, and not trees only some straggling oaks by the side of the river. We went up the hill till we came to the rocks [Solomon’s Ford in Avondale Heights]”... Unable to get the boat over the ford, they were able to cross on foot “at a place the natives had made for catching fish”.¹⁷⁶ From here they walked two miles inland, observing levelled hills, stony soils, few trees and the mountains in the distance clothed with timber. The following day the party travelled back downstream to the junction and proceeded up the eastern branch that they called the Freshwater River (now known as the Birrarung (Yarra River)).¹⁷⁷ An 1888 account written by Alexander Sutherland, recounts that the party observed “pleasant meadow lands lay on either side, but the river was fringed with gum, and wattle, and honeysuckle, whose branches, strewn with grass, and leaves, and *debris*, told a tale of heavy winter floods.”¹⁷⁸ The party continued upstream to Studley Park and were stopped just short of the river’s confluence with the Merri creek, prohibited from travelling further by “a bar of stone ran across the current, forming a fall of several feet in height” at Dights Falls.¹⁷⁹ The party concluded that “the Freshwater River they had explored at the head of Port Phillip was the most suitable place for a settlement, though none of them was enthusiastic about the quality of the soil”.¹⁸⁰ After investigating the Birrarung, on Friday 11 February, Grimes, Flemming and their crew returned west, crossing the Kororoit and Skeleton Creeks. From the vantage point at the pinnacle of a stony hill the Werribee Plains were described as a level plain in circumference of 10 miles (16 km) with a ground surface of “one-third grass, one-do. stone, and one-do. earth, mostly newly burnt”.¹⁸¹

As the party explored, they encountered Aboriginal people. Flemming wrote in his journal that that they ‘fell in with’ a group of fourteen men, women and children near Frankston who followed them after some men on expedition gave them biscuits, hats and a handkerchief. The party also encountered seven Aboriginal people at a swamp near West Melbourne; near the Birrarung at the hill which would become known as Batman’s Hill; and came upon a group on Gardiners Creek.¹⁸² On Friday 18 February, near Point Cook on Woi-wurrung Country, Flemming described a meeting with a group of Aboriginal people:

As we went out of the boat eleven natives met us; they were very civil. I gave one of them a biscuit; he looked at it; I took it again, eat of it, when he did the same; whatever we said they said it after us. There was one who appeared to be their chief. They handed us their spears to look at; one of them was barbed and one with two prongs. They followed us as we went on, and Mr. Grimes seemed much frightened

¹⁷⁵ J Flemming, “A Journal of the Explorations of Charles Grimes, Acting Surveyor-General of New South Wales. Kept by James Flemming”, *The Voyage of His Majesty’s Colonial Schooner “Cumberland” from Sydney to King Island and Port Phillip in 1802-1803*.

¹⁷⁶ Flemming, “A Journal of the Explorations of Charles Grimes”.

¹⁷⁷ Flemming, “A Journal of the Explorations of Charles Grimes”.

¹⁷⁸ A Sutherland, *Victoria and its Metropolis: Past and Present*, McCarron, Bird & Co., originally published in 1888, republished in 1977, p. 51.

¹⁷⁹ Sutherland, *Victoria and its Metropolis*, p. 51.

¹⁸⁰ Sutherland, *Victoria and its Metropolis*, p. 53.

¹⁸¹ Flemming, “A Journal of the Explorations of Charles Grimes”, p. 15.

¹⁸² Flemming, “A Journal of the Explorations of Charles Grimes”, pp. 14-15.

and hailed the boat to follow us; when the boat came up we went on board. I made signs for them to come into the boat, but they would not, venture. Two of them appeared to be marked with the smallpox. After dinner we went on shore with an additional guard; they all met us again. Gave them some fish, a tomahawk, and an old hat; they put our hands to their breast and looked into my haversack. The boat loitered behind us, and the sailors said that they took the lead-line and a hoe out of the boat, and some fish; the line again but not the hoe. The land is a light sand from the point of the hill, and in some places swampy; the timber something larger, consisting of gum, oak, Banksia, and mimosa, some small pine, one half of it dead by the country being lately burnt... Saturday 19th – Weighed anchor at daylight; came opposite to the place we left last night. Dropped anchor... Came opposite to an island [Swan Island]... Soon after our arrival on shore two of the natives we had seen on the preceding day came to us. They looked much at my buttons; I cut two off and gave each of them one, and some biscuit. They went with us upwards of a mile and returned.¹⁸³

While the accounts from the Grimes expedition do not provide direct insight into the study area, these accounts capture colonial settler impressions of Woi-wurrung Ancestors and Country.

The next significant incursion occurred during 1824 and 1825, when the explorers Hamilton Hume and William Hovell travelled from Sydney to Geelong, mapping a route through the Great Dividing Range. On 14 December 1824, they reached the hill now called Mount Fraser, which they named Mount Bland, and then travelled on to Bald Hill on the Merri Creek. In their record of their journey, they wrote, ‘Wherever the land in these plains rises a little above the general level, it is stoney, and in these spots it was thinly scattered over with the honey-suckle of the colony.... Nothing could surpass the beauty of this view.’¹⁸⁴ Their account does not mention any interactions with Aboriginal people in the area. But the following day, they noted that, ‘[h]ere there had evidently been some natives not long before them.’¹⁸⁵

The Port Phillip Association

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Batman, with the aid of Indigenous people from Sydney who were members of his expedition, negotiated with eight ngurungaetas who he believed to have collectively possessed the Port Phillip District.¹⁸⁸ Batman identified three ‘principal chiefs’, whom Batman writes in his diary as agreeing to exchange 600,000 acres in payment of an

¹⁸³ Flemming, “A Journal of the Explorations of Charles Grimes”, p.16.

¹⁸⁴ Hovell and Hume, *Journey of Discovery to Port Phillip*.

¹⁸⁵ Hovell and Hume, *Journey of Discovery to Port Phillip*.

[REDACTED]

annual rent, blankets, knives, looking glasses, tomahawks, beads, scissors and flour. They signed a 'deed of title' and the eight chiefs each delivered to Batman soil representing their Country, which Batman interpreted as giving him full possession of their land. These events are described by Batman in his journal:

when we fell in with the tracks of the Natives, and shortly after came up with a family, One Chief his Wife & 3 Children, I gave Him a Pair of Blankets Hand Kerchiefs, Beads, and Three Knives, He then went on with us and crossed a fresh water Creek. The Land on Each side excellent - He took us on, saying He would take us to His Tribe and mentioned the Names of Chief's - we walked about 8 miles, when to our great surprise we heard several voices calling after us on looking back we saw 8 men all armed with spears &c &c &c - when we stopped they threw aside their weapons and came very friendly up to us, after shaking hands and my giving them Tomahawks, Knives &c - they took us with them about a mile back where we found Huts, Women and Children, after some time and full explanation, I found Eight Chiefs amongst them who possessed the whole of Country near Port Phillip - three Brothers, all of the same name are the Principal Chiefs, and two of them men of six feet high and very good looking the other not so tall but stouter, the other 5 Chiefs were fine men – and after a full explanation of what my object was, I purchased two large tracks of Land from them about 600,000 Acres more or and delivered over to them, Blankets Knives, looking Glasses, Tomahawks, Beads Scissors, flour &c &c as payment for the Land and also agreed to give them a tribute or Rent Yearly, the Parchment the Eight Chiefs signed afternoon, delivering to me some of the soil Each of them, as giving me full possession of the tracks of Land, this took place along side of a beautiful stream of water, and from whence my Land commences - and when a tree is marked 4 way's to know the corner Boundry [sic] - the Country about here exceeds any thing I ever saw both for Grass and richness of Soil - The timber light and consist of She Oak and small Gum, with a few - Wattle My Natives gave the Chiefs and there Tribe a Grand Croberrow [sic] to Night. They seemed quite delighted with it - Each of the Principal chiefs has two Wives and several children each in all the tribe consists of 45 men women & children. (Batman, 1835, pp. 58-62)

1835 Sunday 7th June detained this morning some time drawing up triplicates of the Deeds of the Land I purchased and delivering over to them more property on the Banks of the Stream which I have named Batman's Creek - after my good self. Just before leaving the two principal Chiefs came and brought their two Cloaks, or Royal Mantles and laid at my feet, wishing to accept the same, on my consenting to take them, they placed them round my Neck and over my shoulders, and seemed quite pleased to see me walk about with them on - I asked them to accompany me to the Vessel, they very properly pointed to the number of Young Children, and then at their feet, meaning that they could not walk, but said they would come down in a few day's - I had no trouble to find out their sacred marks . One of my Natives / Bungitt / went to a tree out of sight of the Women, and made the Sydney Natives mark, after this was done I took, with two or three of my Natives, the Principal Chief, and shewed the mark, on the tree this He New immediately and pointed to the out of the teeth, this mark is always made when the ceremony of Knocking out the tooth in the front however after this I desired [sic] through my Natives, for Him to make his mark, which after looking about for some time, and hesitating some few minutes, He took the Tomahawk, and cut out in the Bark of the Tree his mark – which is attached to the Deed, and is the signature of their Country, and Tribe - about 10 A.M. I took my departure from those interesting people I think the Principal Chief stands 6-4 Inches high and his Brother 6 ft 2 In and as fine looking men as Ever I saw. (Batman, 1835, pp. 62-65)

Surveyor John Helder Wedge travelled with the Port Phillip Association during this 1835 expedition. He recorded the claimed acreage as “the limits of the tract of land obtained by J. Batman... in the deed of conveyance”.¹⁸⁹ The tract of land was neatly divided up between the Port Phillip Association into

¹⁸⁹ JH Wedge, Field Book 1835-1836 [manuscript MS10768 & MS9302] State Library of Victoria.

seventeen areas of their claim. The map below is an 1879 reproduction of Wedge’s map, originally published in 1836, which shows the extent of land claimed by the Port Phillip Association. It also shows the project area as a part of the land initially claimed by association member Mr Mercer.

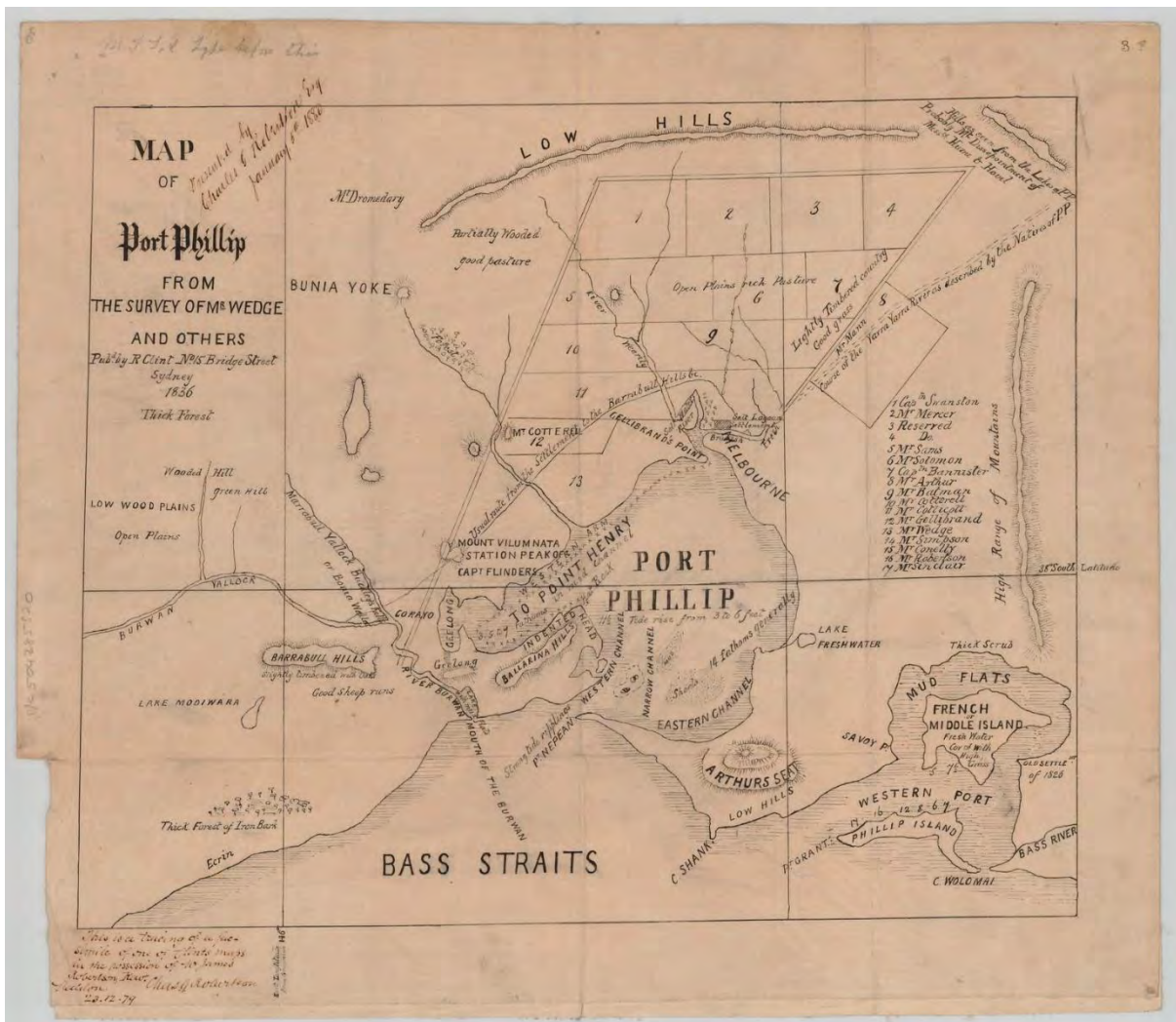


Figure 16: Map of Port Phillip from the Survey of Mr Wedge and Others. Image courtesy of the State Library Victoria

Interpretations of Batman’s ‘treaty’ vary. In 1840, Surveyor Robert Hoddle described Batman’s arrangement as “some kind of treaty” which had been mediated by the escapee convict William Buckley who had adopted the customs of the Wadawurrung people by living in their community for over thirty years.¹⁹⁰ In the late twentieth century, anthropologist Barwick contended that Batman misinterpreted the symbolic handover of soil, which typically occurred during a *tanderrum* ceremony that gave visitors temporary access to the Country and its resources, as acquiescence to his purchase.¹⁹¹ Barak, son of one of the ‘principal chiefs’ Jerum-Jerum (Bebejern) and possibly one of the

¹⁹⁰ R Hoddle, *A chapter on Port Phillip being an account of the settlement from its formation with a map*, G Scurfield and JM Scurfield (eds), Garravambi Press, 1840 p. 3.

¹⁹¹ Barwick, “Mapping the Past”: Tanderrum was a cultural practice whereby gifts were ritually given by a foreign party in exchange for temporary access to another group’s territory or use of resources in their territory.

young children referred to above, would talk of this meeting with Batman once he was an adult residing at Coranderrk. Multiple writers recorded Barak's reminiscences; one example is in an Aboriginal Dictionary, compiled by two women in the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, Mrs. G.H. Hunt and Alice Davies. They wrote,

Barak's father was chief of the Yarra Tribe... who once occupied Melbourne and district. He was a boy when the first white men came. When his father saw them he said "here are strange men, let us kill them". But a man named Buckley, an escaped convict who lived with the tribe said "no, do not kill them, be friends, for they have spears that throw fire, and will kill you... give them food" and they did. Then after a time Batman coveted the land and brought a [...] and a few presents. Batman guided the chief's hand to make a mark. There was only one chief, Barak's father. Two other men's hands were guided too, and then the presents put down. Barak has told me that his father did not know that his land and the land of his tribe was being taken away for a few shillings' worth of barter. The tribes [...] was from near Brighton to the Salt Water River, then to the Dividing Range. Barak told me that part of his tribe camped where Government House now stands, another part in the present [...] Gardens. Others in Studley Park.¹⁹²

Ultimately, the Port Phillip Association's deed of conveyance was declared void by the Governor of New South Wales, Richard Bourke who brought into effect 'the Proclamation of Governor Bourke' being a declaration that the British Crown owned the continent of Australia. This initial application of the concept of terra nullius contended that the land belonged to no one prior the British Crown taking possession of it. The ruling declared that the Port Phillip District was owned by the Crown and thus could not be transferred between individuals, or individuals and its Aboriginal population. Despite this, the Port Phillip Association did not cease their colonising endeavours.

The Port Phillip Association planned for their vision of management and 'civilisation' of the Aboriginal people within the limits of settlement. This vision amounted to the Aboriginal population becoming servants of the colonial settlers.¹⁹³ Their memorandum stated two objectives. The first was to 'keep up a friendly feeling to insure on their part a feeling of confidence'. The second was to make Aboriginal people as much use to the Association as possible. Rations were to be scaled out in proportion to 'those who will make themselves useful and a less scale for those who will not'. Polygamous family structures were to be fragmented into Christian family units who were then to be employed on each station on as an unpaid labour force with a small piece of land to cultivate for themselves. This plan was to be overseen by William Buckley.¹⁹⁴

During March 1837 the Governor of New South Wales, Richard Bourke, visited the Port Phillip settlement on a tour of the region, oversee the plans of Melbourne and sale of first building lots. He visited the reserved area for the mission situated on the left bank of the Yarre' Yarre' (Birrarung, Yarra River) and encouraged attendance by distributing blankets to a group of 120 Aboriginal people with the assistance of William Buckley and a further four brass plates as honorary distinctions for good conduct on the recommendation of Captain Lonsdale.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² GH Hunt and A Davies, *Aboriginal Dictionary: Compile by Mrs. G.H. Hunt of Burwood NSW and Mrs George Davies of Healesville Victoria assisted by Barak, before 1932* [UMA-ITE-2001008501048] Records of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Victoria, University of Melbourne Archives.

¹⁹³ C Swanston, J Gillchard, J Edge, W Sams, A Colville and M Connolly, *Memorandum for Mr. Batman, 1835* [MS10258/7] Port Phillip Association Records, 1835-1836, State Library of Victoria.

¹⁹⁴ Swanston et al., *Memorandum for Mr. Batman*.

¹⁹⁵ R Bourke, *Journal, 1837* [MS 5176; MS 6941; MS 7759] State Library of Victoria, pp. 7-9.

Attempts to assemble Woi-wurrung and Boonwurrung people were made on this government mission southeast of the Melbourne settlement, an area of 895 acres reserved by Richard Bourke in 1837, under the management of Episcopal missionary George Langhorne. The acreage covered the present-day areas of South Yarra and Toorak, from Punt Road in the west; the Birrarung to the north; High Street to the south; and Williams Road to the east. It was to be a place of “residence and agriculture designed to showcase the benefits of a settled European lifestyle, such things as religion, education, production and exchange”.¹⁹⁶ William Barak recalled Langhorne when narrating his memories to Alice Davies years later as a resident of Coranderrk,

A Mr Langhorne started a school for blacks in Bourke St and King St, and he and a Mr Belche (late of Geelong) used to go to the camps and preach. Barak’s father was very angry at the way he had been duped [in Batman’s deed of title], and made trouble.¹⁹⁷

Prior to the establishment of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate, Langhorne’s Aboriginal mission had operated from 1837 on the south side of the Birrarung. Langhorne opened a school at the mission, yet he was unable to hold the student’s presence; on one occasion the children were removed by their parents during January to carry out their annual grassland burning.¹⁹⁸ Sporadic attendance combined with increasing land value on the Birrarung so near the Melbourne settlement resulted in the mission’s closure in August 1839. Langhorne’s assessment for the future of the Aboriginal people within the Port Phillip District was that marrying into the lower classes of new Australians was the only option for inserting Aboriginal people into the supplanted English social strata; “the intermixture by marriage of the Aborigines among the lower order of our countrymen as the only likely means of raising the former from their present degraded and benighted state.”¹⁹⁹ Richard Sadleir, an Anglican leader and politician from New South Wales, provided commentary on the usefulness of Langhorne’s mission. He found no evidence of adults adopting the Christian teaching, yet they were dependent on the rations provided.²⁰⁰

Government Survey

Survey was essential in enabling colonists to occupy land across Port Phillip. After the initial work of surveyor Robert Russell in 1836, Robert Hoddle and a team of assistant surveyors surveyed areas of the Port Phillip District from 1837 to the 1850s. Hoddle’s reminiscences provide an insight into their “mindset” when mapping and allotting the district for occupation. He did not trust the Aboriginal population, so always carried a musket and observed that shepherds do the same. If any arrived at his tent after dark, he shot ‘leaden pills’ (bullets) in their direction. He regretted not carrying a double-barrelled musket.²⁰¹ He doubted that the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate and police will be of any use to the colonial settlers who will continue perpetrating frontier violence in response to sheep theft:

As their hunting grounds are taken possession of, their subsistence driven away to make room for our flocks and herds, and their lands sold, it is but fair they should receive compensation and protection; and it can scarcely be wondered at, that, urged by the calls of hunger, they attack the flocks of the solitary settler, who are, in self-defence, compelled to take steps which will eventually exterminate a race of beings that might be made useful to stockmen and shepherds... They are remarkably clever in

¹⁹⁶ I Clark and L Kostanski, *Stonnington’s Indigenous History*, City of Stonnington, 2006, p. 8.

¹⁹⁷ Hunt and Davies, *Aboriginal Dictionary*, p. 25.

¹⁹⁸ Cahir et al., *Aboriginal biocultural knowledge in south-eastern Australia*, p. 101.

¹⁹⁹ Clark and Kostanski, *Stonnington’s Indigenous History*, p. 44.

²⁰⁰ R Sadler, *The Aborigines of Australia*, T Richards, Government Printer, 1883.

²⁰¹ BH Colville, *Robert Hoddle: Pioneer Surveyor 1794-1881*, Research Publications Pty Ltd, 2004, p. 191.

tracking the footsteps of animals, are expert riders, and make the most careful and attentive shepherds; and although they occasionally join their tribes to be present at their annual ceremonies, they invariably return to their employment.²⁰²

When Hoddle surveyed the Port Phillip District, he was instructed to assign each Parish a name originating from Indigenous words for the place. Hoddle later reported the difficulty of following this instruction to the Chief Protector George Robinson.²⁰³ To fulfil his instructions, Hoddle asked George Langhorne for a list of Woi-wurrung words; Langhorne obliged and included in his list the names of some of his former students.²⁰⁴ The name Kalkallo was used for the parish south of the project area, and was the name of a Wurundjeri-willam boy who attended Langhorne's school; the name of the project area's parish, Merriang is not as readily traceable.²⁰⁵ Hoddle surveyed the project area in 1840, he described the land between Mt Fraser and Bald Hill as mostly 'open level country destitute of water,' and closer to Mt Fraser noted that there was a 'well of good water' and 'fine soil' (see Map 11).

²⁰² Hoddle, *A chapter on Port Phillip*, pp. 17-18.

²⁰³ F Cahir, "Why Did Squatters in Colonial Victoria use Indigenous Placenames for Their Sheep Stations?" in I Clark, L Hercus, and L Kostanski (eds), *Indigenous and Minority Placenames Australian and International Perspectives*, Australia National University Press, 2014.

²⁰⁴ 'Suburban Native Names: origins of "Pahran" & c,' *The Argus*, 28 April 1906.

²⁰⁵ Kalkallo is mentioned in a recount from Langhorne in W Thomas, *Aboriginal words and phrases, 1838* [MLMSS 214/vol. 21/Item 1] William Thomas papers, 1834-1868, 1902, State Library of New South Wales, Mitchell Library.



Map 11: Hoddle 1840 Kalkallo/Merriang. Source: Public Records Office Victoria VPRS 8168/P0002, Sydney Y6; Kalkallo/Merriang; Hoddle.

Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate

Another essential colonial mechanism in the early years of settlement was the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate. The rapidity with which Indigenous people in British colonies were dispossessed from their Country and subjected to unlawful behaviour resulted in the proceedings of a British House of Commons Select Committee of Enquiry on Aborigines (British Colonies) 1835-1837. On 31 January 1838 the Governor of New South Wales, Sir George Gipps, received notification that the British Government wished to adopt a 'plan for the better protection and civilisation of the Native Tribes' within the colony.²⁰⁶ Upon the recommendation of the Enquiry, local land tax funded the Office of Chief Protector of Aborigines who was stationed at Port Phillip and aided by four Assistant Protectors. The position of Chief Protector was assigned to George Augustus Robinson, Commandant of the

²⁰⁶ [Historical Records of Australia: Series 1 Governors' despatches to and from England Volume XIX July 1837 - January 1839](#), The Library Committee of the Commonwealth Parliament, 1923, accessed 9 October 2025, p. 252.

Wybalenna Aboriginal settlement on Flinders Island, Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania).²⁰⁷

During February 1839, George Augustus Robinson left Flinders Island for the Port Phillip District to take up this new position. During that same month, the British Government appointed Charles Joseph La Trobe to the newly created position of Superintendent of the Port Phillip District, who reported directly to the Governor of the Colony of NSW; and Robinson to the Superintendent. Robinson and his Assistant Protectors' instructions were to monitor Aboriginal people's movements, 'conciliate their respect and confidence', 'watch over [their] rights and interests', induce them to adopt a more settled lifestyle and engage in agriculture, provide education to their children, learn their language, distribute rations and supplies, and instruct Aboriginal people in 'the Elements of Christianity' for their 'moral and religious improvement'.²⁰⁸ Robinson's four Assistant Protectors were James Dredge, William Thomas, Charles Wightman Sievwright and Edward Stone Parker. Each was assigned a regional district over which they also held the powers of a magistrate; The area now called Beveridge fell within the district of Assistant Protector William Thomas.

In the short term, the presence of a regional protectorate system was meant to safeguard Indigenous people from frontier violence. In the long term, the objective was to introduce a settled mode of existence reflecting that of the colonial settler society. The system could also be perceived inversely, by which it enabled protection for European settlers against Indigenous interference.

As described above in section 2.9, William Thomas was appointed as an Assistant Protector between 1839 and 1849. His initial hopes of 'civilising' the Aboriginal inhabitants of the district soon gave way to a resignation towards preservation of life and establishing harmony between them and the colonial settlers. Thomas' initial hopes of 'civilising' the Aboriginal inhabitants of the district soon gave way to a focus on the preservation of life and establishing harmony between them and the settlers.²⁰⁹ Thomas left a detailed account of his travels in his journals, including several mentions of travelling through Mercer's Vale. For example, Thomas recounted a journey from the Goulburn Aboriginal Station to Melbourne in March 1847; he wrote,

Monday 13 December 1847. At day break leave [Goulburn Station] taking a piece of Damper in my hand, about 10 Miles on my way fall in with 9 Adult Males encamp'd by the river, & about 18 Miles the large Ent we fell in with at Kilmore I stop some time with them, let the horse feed & inform them of the Death at the Goulburn Station, by several times during the day giving short feeds to the horse travel 60 Miles. Stop at Beveridge's Mercers Vale.

Tuesday 14 December 1847. Very early leave Mercers Vale, arrive at Merri Creek by 11 o'clock, get a clean [WORD MISSING] take a fresh horse, & report myself at His Honors & Chief Protrs.²¹⁰

On one occasion, Thomas mentions Mercer's Vale as a place where Woi-wurrung men went to meet Taungurung and Dja Dja Wurrung people.²¹¹ Thomas also procured a map from Wurundjeri-willam *ngurungaeta* Billibellary, depicting his Country. The map includes Sydney Road and the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) as key landmarks (see Map 16 below). These accounts demonstrate that, as Elder Perry

²⁰⁷ [Historical Record of Australia](#), pp. 253-255.

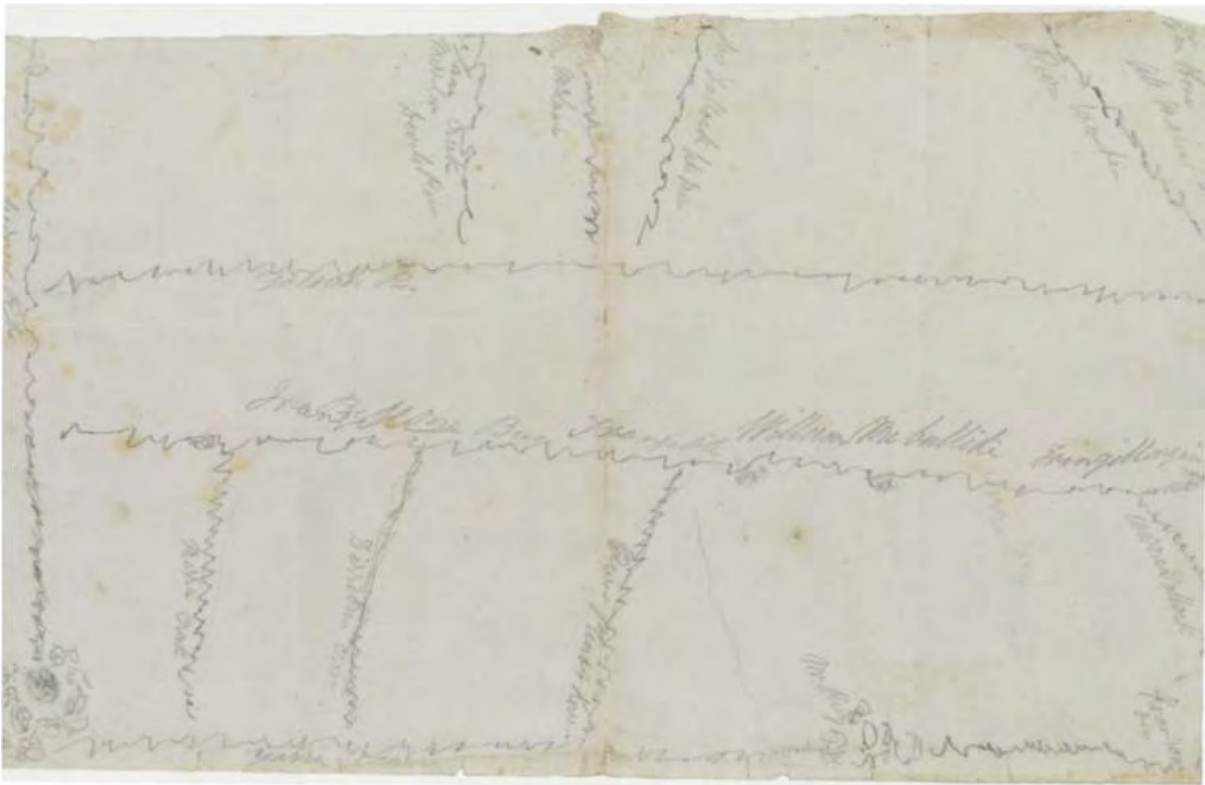
²⁰⁸ [Historical Record of Australia](#), pp. 254-255.

²⁰⁹ DJ Mulvaney, "[Thomas, William \(1793-1867\)](#)", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, published first in hardcopy 1967, accessed online 9 October 2025.

²¹⁰ Thomas, *The Journal of William Thomas*, vol. 2, p. 281.

²¹¹ Thomas, *The Journal of William Thomas*, vol. 2, p. 235.

Wandin noted, there was a pre-colonisation Woi-wurrung travel route west of the project area, roughly corresponding with the Hume Highway.²¹²



Map 12: Billibellary's Map. Source: Robert Borough Smyth Papers, State Library Victoria.

Merri Merri (Merri Creek) and the Merri Creek School

The Merri Merri (Merri Creek) is the main waterway in the Study Area, and a major waterway within Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country. During the contact period the Merri was a site of significant exchanges between Wurundjeri people and settlers, such as Batman's 'treaty' as discussed above. Because creeks, such as the Merri, were used as pathways across Country, European colonial settlers frequently came into contact with Woi-wurrung clan groups as they travelled along these waterways.²¹³ In 1842, the headquarters of the Native Police Corps was moved from Narre Narre Warren to the banks of the Merri Creek, when the corps were under the leadership of Captain Henry Dana.²¹⁴ The Native Police Corps in Melbourne was originally established in 1837 and operated intermittently over the following years. When Native Police Protectorate Station was relocated to the Merri Creek, within a government reserve at Yarra Bend, the station at Narre Narre Warren was abandoned. Known as 'the government paddock', the Merri Creek Protectorate Station was delimited by Merri Creek to the west, Heidelberg Road to the north, and the Birrarung (Yarra River) to the east and south.²¹⁵ In the years that followed the establishment of Merri Creek Station, William Thomas formulated a relationship with Billibellary, the Woiwurrung ngurungaeta, which resulted in an

²¹² Perry Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, On-Country knowledge recording, 12 August 2025.

²¹³ I Clark and T Heydon, *A Bend in the Yarra: A History of the Merri Creek Protectorate Station and Merri Creek Aboriginal School 1841-1851*, Aboriginal Studies Press, 2004, p. 33.

²¹⁴ Ellender and Christiansen, *People of the Merri Merri*, p. 90.

²¹⁵ Clark and Heydon, *A Bend in the Yarra*, p. 33-36.

increased level of cooperation from Aboriginal people in the area. In addition, the proximity of the Station, in the vicinity of the Merri Creek and Yarra River confluence (an area of significant cultural importance to Wurundjeri today) contributed to the success of the Protectorate. A function of the Protectorate Station was to dissuade Aboriginal nomadic traditions and promote the adoption of Christianity and more European-like sedentary practices. Life on the Merri Creek Protectorate Station, like many other government reserves of the time, was characterised by an agenda of integration and assimilation, where interactions with Aboriginal people were designed subjugate and erode the cultural tradition of the local indigenous people to one of a growing dependence on Europeans and their economies. Historians Ian Clark and Toby Heydon argued that, 'Thomas saw his role as a captain of the economy of colonisation – where food, blankets and medicines were exchanged for attention to scripture, adherence to the rule of law and manifestation of a Protestant work ethic'.²¹⁶

In 1845, the Melbourne Baptist congregation established a school for Aboriginal children at the confluence of the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) and the Birrarung (Yarra River). Attendance at the school was largely dependent on support of Billibellary. Providing both food and boarding facilities, the purpose of the school was to provide a European education and instil Christian values to local Aboriginal population. The Merri Creek Aboriginal School had limited success in achieving its objectives as a result of the on-going tension between the teachings provided through the school's curriculum and responsibilities of clan members to adopt more traditional lore as instilled by their leaders. Notably, the name Borat appears in school records. Borat, also known as Annie Borate, was a close relative of William Barak and is an Ancestor of many contemporary Wurundjeri people.²¹⁷

Wurundjeri-willam *ngurungaeta* Billibellary passed away at the Merri Creek Protectorate Station in August 1846. After his passing, the school, camp and station were all abandoned.²¹⁸

Coranderrk Aboriginal Mission

The Aboriginal Protectorate of Port Phillip ceased operating in 1849. Over the subsequent years, a group of Taungurung leaders, aided by Billibellary's son and successor as Wurundjeri-willam *ngurungaeta*, Simon Wonga, agitated for a reserve of their own. An initial reserve was gazetted in Acheron, on Taungurung Country. In 1860, Acheron residents were moved to the Mohican Station, which was later closed in 1863, when Coranderrk Aboriginal Mission began operating. Coranderrk was established on former seasonal camping grounds of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, roughly 50 km south-east of Beveridge. It was to be located on the banks of what was called 'Kunderruk' creek²¹⁹ or Coranderrk Creek (later renamed Badger Creek), named after the Christmas Bush that proliferated along its banks.²²⁰ Manager John Green and the Mohican residents travelled by foot over the Black Spur, to the reserve south of Healesville.

From its inception, Green and the Coranderrk residents comprising Woi-wurrung people and members of other groups across the state, including children and the infirm who could be cared for at the station, set about constructing slab and bark huts, perimeter fences and gardens. Crops were planted

²¹⁶ Clark and Heydon, *A Bend in the Yarra*, p. 37.

²¹⁷ Ellender and Christiansen, *People of the Merri Merri*, p. 96.

²¹⁸ Stephens, *Years of Terror*, p. 372.

²¹⁹ Thomas, *The Journal of William Thomas*, vol. 2, p. 279.

²²⁰ Thomas, *The Journal of William Thomas*, vol. 3; de Castella, *Australia Squatters*.

immediately, and cattle grazed the fields; Green's aim being that the station become entirely self-sufficient free from government dependence. By 1864, the Aboriginal population of the station was 64 men, women, and children. Certainly because of the brutal impacts of the colonial period, and despite the less than favourable climatic conditions, the station soon became a welcome home to its residents.

At this time, pastoral pressure on the land in the region – and particularly those parcels deemed less productive - was not so great as it would later become.²²¹ Initially 2,300 acres were set aside as reserve land, with another 2,550 acres of additional land reserved in 1866. A total area of 4,850 acres was gazetted as a permanent reserve for the use of Aboriginal people in 1884. However, from 1893 portions of land began to be excised from the station, first for settlement by the *Crown Lands Reserves Act*, and then later for the Soldier Settlement Commission in 1948 (though not for returned Aboriginal soldiers), after the station officially closed in 1924.

Coranderrk became at once a permanent home and a site of active resistance against the colonial government, from which the Kulin launched political action to obtain the freedom to determine their own affairs. In an 1886 petition drafted by the Aboriginal residents at Coranderrk, they sought freedom from the Board's 'protection':

Could we have our freedom to go away shearing and harvesting, and come home when we wish, and also to go for the good of our health when we need it; and we aboriginals all wish and hope to have freedom, not to be bound down by the protection of the board.²²²

Coranderrk remains a prominent place for the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community, as a place of traditional occupation alongside the Birrarung and within their traditional territory, and later as the reserve upon which their forebears were resident and active in their resistance against the incursion of the colonial government on their affairs. Although the violent dispossession of the Woi-wurrung people and eventual establishment of Coranderrk Aboriginal Mission caused their usual means of cultural reproduction via language, customary practices, kinship and marriage systems to become fractured, and was at times actively suppressed by the government and station management, it was also a place of community and at least for a time, self-sufficiency. The station allowed their forebears to remain on their traditional Country and maintain important connections to the landscape in which the spirits of their Ancestors was imbued. The Coranderrk cemetery was eventually handed back to the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community in 1991.

Colonial Settlement

From the initial settlement of the Port Phillip Association and John Pascoe Fawkner in 1835, squatters and their families arrived quickly in the Port Phillip District. By 1836, James Malcolm began squatting at Mercer's Vale, present day Beveridge.²²³ By June 1840, the crown had sold the northern portion of the project area to two settlers, by the names of Nicholas Arrowsmith and William Lithgow; the southern portion was divided up and sold to five different men in March 1853.²²⁴ Within six years of

²²¹ D Barwick, *Rebellion at Coranderrk*, ANU Press and Aboriginal History, 2024.

²²² Petition as cited in Barwick, *Rebellion at Coranderrk*, p. 269.

²²³ T Ham, "Ham's Squatting Map of Victoria: Carefully Corrected to This Date from the Colonial Government Surveys, Crown Lands Commissioners & Explorers Maps, Private Surveys, &c.", compiled, engraved and published by Thomas Ham, 1851; T Ham, *Key to Ham's Map of the Squatting District of Victoria*, T. Ham, 1851, p. 8.

²²⁴ Merriang Parish Plan, 2003 [VPRS 16171/P0001/6] PROV.

the advent of colonisation the estates of most of the local groups had been appropriated and occupied and their owners dispossessed. By 1839, Assistant Protector William Thomas was already reporting that the Woi-wurrung and Bunurong peoples inhabiting the vicinity of Melbourne were having trouble obtaining food resources and were suffering from the effects of introduced diseases.²²⁵ Their subsistence required large tracts of land, which was increasingly being taken over by pastoralists and the growing settlement. Thomas estimated that the population of these two groups totalled approximately 350 in 1836, and documented only 207 in 1839, and a pitiful 33 by 1863.

By 1861, Europeans had claimed all the state of Victoria except for the mountains and Mallee country deemed uninhabitable. Archaeologists David Frankel and Janine Major write,

The rate of European settlement and the speed with which the colony developed is remarkable. Within a few years Europeans had moved into most areas of the state, transforming the landscape and setting in place patterns of settlement, attitudes and practices which still affect us today. The impact on Indigenous communities immediate, and in some cases, even preceded the arrival of settlers, especially where introduced infectious diseases decimated communities.²²⁶

Colonial expansion is typically understood to have progressed along Major Mitchell's route between Sydney and the new southern colony. However, historians Robert Spreadborough and Hugh Anderson argue that this 'generalisation ignores intrusions from the southern coast', positing instead that 'pastoral expansion may best be seen as the result of a growth of connections between the three main nuclei already mentioned; in the south around Port Phillip Bay, at Portland in the south-west, and in the northeast.'²²⁷ Spreadborough and Anderson categorise settler incursions into three tiers of colonial penetration. The first tier being the large and well-organised official parties that typically traversed a wide area in response to a particular commission, Hume and Hovell's 1824 expedition to Port Phillip fits into this category. The second tier were organised by collectives of pastoral companies who pooled their resources to finance preliminary expeditions of small groups of neighbouring squatters for the purpose of exploring the country most often with the view of stocking it in the future. The third and final tier was the 'loners' who drove livestock in search of new grass and carried out expeditions of their own runs.²²⁸

Despite Governor Bourke's sanction in September 1836, the following years (1838-1840) represent the major period of expansion.²²⁹ After the depression and up to 1849, rapid expansion pushed settlement from the settled areas in the north, east and south, infilling the state to about 1855.²³⁰ It is this period of colonial expansion that coincided with the establishment of pastoral runs within the vicinity of the study area. The study area was located entirely within what was known as the Settled Districts, an area located within a 25 mile radius from the Melbourne settlement and subject to different lease conditions (see Map 13 below).

²²⁵ Barwick, *Rebellion at Coranderrk*.

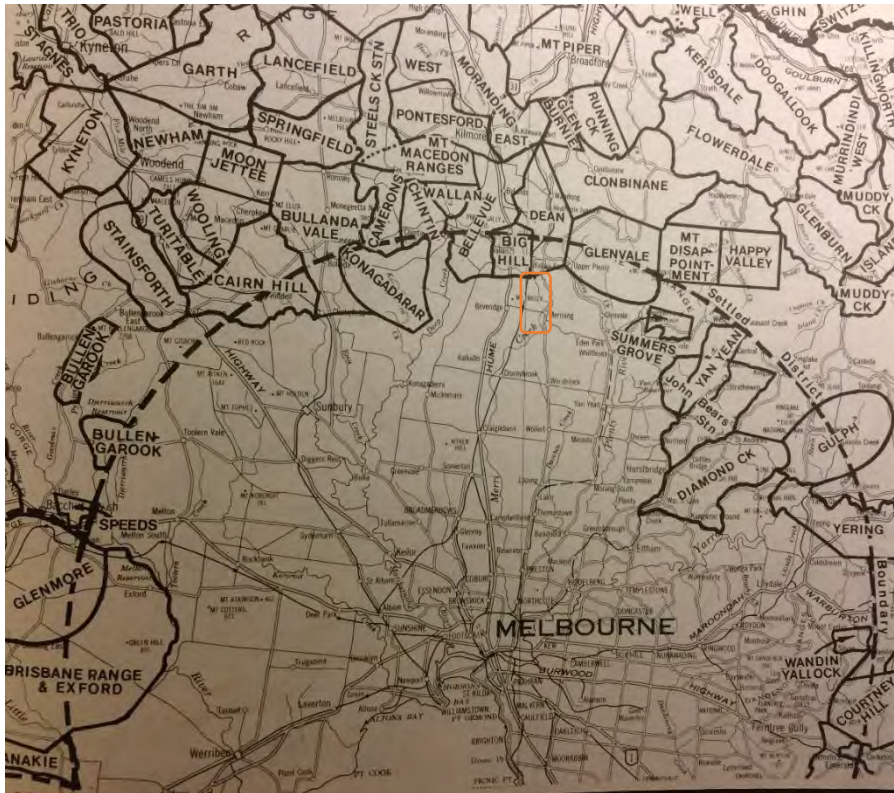
²²⁶ Frankel and Major, *Kulin and Kurnai Victorian Aboriginal Life and Customs*, p. 17.

²²⁷ R Spreadborough and H Anderson, *Victorian Squatters*, Red Rooster Press, 1983, p. x.

²²⁸ Spreadborough and Anderson, *Victorian Squatters*, p. xix.

²²⁹ Spreadborough and Anderson, *Victorian Squatters*, p. xii.

²³⁰ Spreadborough and Anderson, *Victorian Squatters*, p. xv.



Map 13: Map showing Beveridge as part of the Settled District of Melbourne. Source: Spreadborough and Anderson 1983

Early European observations recorded about the quality of the land within and in the vicinity of the study area as generally quite desirable for pastoral endeavours. As early as 1824, Hume and Hovell noted that '[t]he soil in all this tract of country was excellent.'²³¹ Later in 1872, after decades of European agriculture use, the land was still notably prized for its quality. When the North-Eastern Railway opened, as a reporter described the land from a train travelling north; he wrote that the 'richness of the black soil in valleys' was surprising and admirable. He also paid particular attention to Herne's swamp, describing it as a 'large marsh, which in winter is almost under water, but in summer is clothed in rich verdure'.²³²

The quality of the land for agriculture and grazing attracted significant European farmers to the area, including men like William J.T. Clarke, Australia's first millionaire who gained his wealth through grazing sheep and in Hugh Anderson's words 'was widely feared for his ruthless land hunger.'²³³ Another early landowner in the area was John Hunter Patterson, who purchased land in the area in 1840. In 1842, Patterson published a pamphlet critiquing the Aboriginal Protectorate system. He wrote,

Although much has been done by the government and enterprise of individuals to advance the interests of this colony, it is a matter of general complaint, that no efficient means have been adopted to restrain the predatory habits of the aborigines. At the same time it is universally admitted, that unless these are

²³¹ Hovell and Hume, *Journey of Discovery to Port Phillip*.

²³² 'Opening of the North-Eastern Railway', *The Age*, 12 April 1872, accessed 11 July 2025.

²³³ H Anderson, "William John Clarke (1805–1874)" in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, published first in hardcopy 1966, accessed online 14 November 2025; Bride, *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, p. 277.

restrained, and the colonists furnished with a reasonable guarantee, for the security of their persons and property, the resources of the country can neither be fully nor speedily developed.²³⁴

He acknowledged Aboriginal people as the ‘natural possessors’ of the land and that European invasion was ‘depriving’ them of ‘their customary supplies of food’ and even made gestures to justice, calling for them to be ‘fed, and fed gratuitously, let the cost and sacrifice be what they may’. Ultimately, Patterson argued to reform and expand the Protectorate system. His critique focused on reducing Aboriginal people’s, including Woi-wurrung people, access to Country and ensuring that colonist faced less resistance from local Aboriginal groups. In this pamphlet, Patterson does not directly reflect on his personal interactions with Woi-wurrung people but was likely informed by his experiences owning stations and witnessing, in his words, ‘their irregular excursions’ that, in his opinion, threatened ‘the security of [colonists’] persons and property’.²³⁵

8.0 Woi-wurrung Cultural Significance

Landscapes are tangible and symbolic, natural, and artificial. They are the product of human occupation and interpretation of physical and metaphysical surroundings. The cultural values embedded within a landscape or place emerge from a community’s usage of the area, their memory or knowledge and its associated historical narrative. Cultural values might more aptly be described as the aggregate forms of attachment to Country which underpins an individual’s or community’s sense of place; or the association that exists between people and place.²³⁶

Australia ICOMOS (International Council on Monument and Sites) recognises that “the Indigenous cultural heritage significance of places can only be determined by the Indigenous communities themselves”.²³⁷ The *Burra Charter* defines cultural significance broadly, encompassing “aesthetic, historical, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations”²³⁸ Establishing the significance of this cultural landscape must reflect the viewpoint of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people in conjunction with consideration of this and other established heritage frameworks. The *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (AHA 2006) defines cultural significance as including archaeological, anthropological, contemporary, historical, scientific, social, or spiritual significance; and significance in accordance with Aboriginal tradition.²³⁹ Elders of the WWCHAC also developed a characterisation of significance from their own cultural viewpoint:

Cultural significance is reflected in our customs and lore. Country holds the history and cultural practices of our people. It holds our boundaries and laws of respect between clans. Country connects us to the place where our Ancestors stood and lived and cared for Country. And now we do the same.

Cultural significance is understanding the landscape and the environment of our Ancestors. Every element of the environment is interconnected; the plants, the animals, the medicine, the food, and the resources are all reliant on the healthy biodiversity of Country. Our Ancestors observed and learned

²³⁴ JH Patterson. “[Proposed Plan for the better treatment of the Aborigines of Australia Feliz](#)”, *The Geelong Advertiser*, 27 June 1842, accessed 24 September 2025.

²³⁵ Patterson. “Proposed Plan for the better treatment of the Aborigines of Australia Feliz”.

²³⁶ Australia ICOMOS. [Practice Note: intangible cultural heritage and place](#); Rose, *Nourishing Terrains*.

²³⁷ Australia ICOMOS, *Australia ICOMOS Statement on Indigenous Cultural Heritage*, Australia ICOMOS, 2001.

²³⁸ Australia ICOMOS. [Practice Note: understanding and assessing cultural significance](#), p. 2.

²³⁹ *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (Vic).

over time what the biodiversity of a landscape required to sustain us. Every generation were educated to ensure the long-term maintenance of the right forms of land management.

Cultural significance is visualising Country. The billabongs are dried up now but we can see their original formation. When we are on Country, we see the land, the water, the animals, the stories. The landscape is the Country of our Ancestors. It is where they walked and we walk now. That is why it needs to be protected, preserved and kept healthy. We need these places to exist to keep their journey going.

Cultural significance is reflection. Our stories are held in memory. Being on Country brings back memories. Caring for Country means that our future children and grandchildren can pass it on to their generation. Our Country is here forever.²⁴⁰

The AHA 2006 definition of cultural significance distinguishes between contemporary significance and significance in accordance with Aboriginal tradition; yet this is an uncomfortable distinction. Traditions are not static or unchanging from an 'authentic' past but change over time through processes of cultural reproduction as Indigenous communities renew their connection and interpretation of places, customs, or landscapes, that were historically denied to their forebears.

The ability for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people to carry out their cultural lifeways were diminished by non-Indigenous settlement and administration of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate, both of which actively depopulated Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, dispossessed them of their traditional estates, and prohibited movement between their living areas. At the cessation of the Protectorate and Guardian system, Aboriginal reserves were established by the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria. The movement of Aboriginal Victorians onto these reserves had disastrous implications in fragmenting traditional social structures as the Board sought to suppress cultural practices, traditional kinship structures and language.

For the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community, both contemporary significance and accordance with their traditions is sustained through the renewal of traditional customary practices within a modern context and ensuring the generational transmission of knowledge. For example:

- The Wurundjeri Corporation's Narrap Unit and Water Program, co-managed by a Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung emerging leader, carry out on-ground works to protect, manage and restore Country, through utilising modern land management practices in conjunction with cultural burning and their traditional ecological knowledge.
- Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Officers participate in archaeological assessments and identify cultural heritage material, reconnecting the Officers with the material artefacts of their Ancestors, whilst they participate in the management and protection of ACHPs.
- Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders and community members walk on-Country for knowledge recording, sharing stories and relating to the journey of their Ancestors within a landscape.
- Ceremony and dance revival; women of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community have renewed coming of age ceremonies, related law, traditional dances, and language.
- On-Country ceremonies carried out by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, such as Tanderrum and Smoking Ceremonies.

²⁴⁰ DL Freedman and G Smith, *Burrung Dalga Bik Ngarrgu Yiaga: Bulleen Banyule Flats Cultural Values Study*, DELWP, 2020.

- Transmission of cultural knowledge is undertaken through educational programs delivered by knowledgeable Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders and emerging leaders.

These examples of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung traditions reflect the reproductive nature of cultural practices over time and that even places which may have been involuntarily unutilised because of successive government policies have now become imbued with contemporary meaning as cultural values are identified within a landscape.

8.1 Attributes

For Aboriginal people, there are various kinds of cultural heritage associated with the landscapes that have been lived in and with by their Ancestors for many thousands of years. These include the *tangible* cultural heritage normally recorded during archaeological investigations, such as the artefact scatters, scarred trees and earth features previously discovered within the study area. These places are physical reminders of the cultural lives and occupation area of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Ancestors. A special connection therefore exists between those places and contemporary Wurundjeri people. This special connection underpins the high significance of these places.

There is also *intangible* heritage that the Wurundjeri people associate with landscapes including that of the study area and the surrounding region. The Merri Merri (Merri Creek) that across the cultural landscape of the Northern Freight Precinct provided a resource base including food, organic and inorganic materials for subsistence and other use by Woi-wurrung speaking people. The natural values, such as remnant vegetation, physiographic features and the vantage points afforded within the Northern Freight Precinct Study Area are all integral to the cultural landscape. These landscape characteristics are therefore significant in accordance with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung tradition. Other values such as those associated with the performance of ceremony and customary practice imbue the landscape with metaphysical significance transcending its extant physical and natural features.

For the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, expressions of cultural value reflect the features and significance of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage. In establishing cultural values pertaining to the Northern Freight Precinct Study Area, several thematic categories of data have been determined: utilisation of the landscape, people and place, beliefs and customs, individuals associated with the cultural landscape of the Northern Freight Precinct, frontier relations, the archaeological record and cultural renewal. Best practice heritage management demands the avoidance of harm to both tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Where harm cannot be avoided, proper management of any disturbance to cultural heritage is integral to the maintenance of these significant places and integrated cultural landscapes.

The cultural significance of the Northern Freight Precinct Study Area is defined in accordance with the attributes established by Australia ICOMOS (and are similarly reflected in the AHA 2006): aesthetic, historical, scientific, social, or spiritual values. Expression of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung values as characterised by these attributes follows.

8.1.1 Archaeological

Interpretation of the archaeological record is difficult in such a highly disturbed and heavily degraded peri-urban landscape. Previous disturbances through pastoralism and later residential development are likely to have altered the context and integrity of cultural heritage material, as well as original deposition. Nonetheless, analysis of the previously registered Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Places (ACHPs) located within the study area demonstrates that Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung occupation and resource use was considerable and likely sustained at least seasonally over time. These places include artefact scatters containing stone tools, earth features, middens and scarred trees which indicate occupation as Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Ancestors travelled along the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) utilising the rich supply of plant and animal resources and preferred on this waterway, its floodplain and the land surrounding it.²⁴¹ This is especially evident at present-day Northern Freight Precinct Study Area. Landforms of cultural heritage sensitivity within the Northern Freight Precinct Study Area which hold further potential for the presence of archaeological material include waterways, named and unnamed, wetlands, confluences, stony rises, escarpments overlooking the Merri Merri (Merri Creek), alluvial terraces and areas of remnant native vegetation, such as Common River Reeds (*Phragmites australis*).²⁴²

8.1.2 Historical

A place or landscape holds historic significance when it has been the site of an important event, influenced, or has been influenced by, an historic event, phase, movement or activity, person, or group of people.²⁴³ The Northern Freight Precinct Project Area holds historic significance for the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community as a site of Aboriginal-coloniser relations at the interface of colonisation. While Wurundjeri-willam people enjoyed a certain level of autonomy in relation to their occupation of their territory, they were also subject to life alongside the initial interlopers and as a result experienced conflict and violence as squatters pushed outwards from the nucleus of colonial invasion and sought to expropriate traditional estates along the way.

As explored in this CVA, acknowledgement of the locations of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Ancestors movements and occupation of their Traditional Lands across the Northern Freight Precinct Project Area – either at stony rises in proximity to landforms important to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, such as Mount Fraser, Bald Hill, Hearn's Swamp, Camoola Swamp, unnamed waterways, rocky escarpments of the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) or elsewhere upstream – as locations in connection with travel routes and cultural practices – imbues the landscape with cultural significance.

Despite dispossession, displacement, and the eventual expropriation of their traditional land and water estates, in the early colonial period, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Ancestors attempted to maintain their traditional lifestyles on and about the stations and Merri Creek Aboriginal School that emerged along the Merri Merri (Merri Creek). Reflections from Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders Brendan Wandin and Aunty Alice Kolasa of their Ancestors are as follows:

²⁴¹ Perry Wandin and Brendan Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders, Knowledge Recording 18 November 2025.

²⁴² Perry Wandin and Brendan Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders, Knowledge Recording 18 November 2025; Aunty Alice Kolasa, Uncle Jason Tweedie, Perry Wandin, Knowledge Recording 22 September 2025.

²⁴³ Australia ICOMOS. [Practice Note: understanding and assessing cultural significance](#), p. 2.

“Going about their everyday along the rivers, depending on what they were allowed to do. Colonisation was a big awakening – they tried to live their lives normally, whole life would have been up-ended. Whole life turned upside down. Going from happy with life, then told to can’t go here, told can’t go, told can’t practice culture that involves everyday life – making artefacts to go hunting, food, their whole life would have been changed”.²⁴⁴ – Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder Brendan Wandin

“Living with adaptability living their lost life world to a new world – British colonial settlement. ‘like waking up one morning and you’re in another world. And you have to think to yourself how are you going to survive? It was all about survival, food, how are we going to eat, how are we even going to go forward?’”.²⁴⁵ – Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder Aunty Alice Kolasa

Pastor John Green’s property stands out as an important place in terms of good relations with the Wurundjeri-willam, when he ministered to the community on Sundays. These relationships, forged on Country at the frontier were to persist through Green’s days managing the Coranderrk Aboriginal Mission and right up until his death in 1908. Within this context, the cultural landscape of the Northern Freight Precinct Study Area can also be understood as a site of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung peoples’ accommodation of and resistance to colonial pressure and efforts towards self-determination.

8.1.3 Social

The Northern Freight Precinct Study Area is a place of contemporary social significance as a site of cultural renewal. Cultural renewal may be self-determined and enacted by the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community for their own purposes. At other times, it may be facilitated by the activities of external agencies. Cultural renewal is manifest in the performance of cultural practice and transmission of cultural knowledge, even when place-based practice may have paused for a time. Visitation and the rejuvenation of cultural place-based narratives facilitated by the current project likewise constitutes an important transmission of knowledge and cultural practice.²⁴⁶ Wurundjeri Elders Uncle Perry Wandin and Brendan Wandin stated that the Northern Freight Precinct Study Area would hold social value if the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community are given the opportunities to hold cultural practices on Country in the Northern Freight Precinct area.²⁴⁷ Wurundjeri Elder Aunty Alice Kolasa agreed and expressed that, “it is important to visit Country as much as we can ... to see the health of Country and to see the land managers are doing their job”.²⁴⁸

8.1.4 Spiritual

The spiritual significance of a place is oftentimes associated with its natural or environmental features and may manifest as traditional knowledge and belief, art, cultural practice, or even as an emotional

²⁴⁴ Brendan Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online Knowledge Recording, 26 November 2025.

²⁴⁵ Aunty Alice Kolasa, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online Knowledge Recording, 26 November 2025.

²⁴⁶ Uncle Perry Wandin and Brendan Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders, Knowledge Recording 18 November 2025.

²⁴⁷ Uncle Perry Wandin and Brendan Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders, Knowledge Recording 18 November 2025.

²⁴⁸ Aunty Alice Kolasa, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online Knowledge Recording, 26 November 2025.

response.²⁴⁹ For the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community, spiritual meaning is found in Country animated by Ancestral spirits and which sustains a conceptual link to their Ancestors and their ongoing care of Country; “it must be protected and preserved as the Ancestors protected and preserved it.”²⁵⁰ Waterways are of particular cultural and spiritual importance.

The cultural landscape of the Northern Freight Precinct elicited an emotional response from the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders who reported a feeling of amazement and attuned with their surroundings and connection to their Ancestors on Country. Wurundjeri Elder Uncle Perry Wandin reflected that “when we were walking further and going from spot to spot... it looked different, you didn't realise you're that high up above the ground... it's just unbelievable when you get out there and have a good look, you could see exactly how it would have been”.²⁵¹ Aunty Alice reflected the higher points were vantage points.²⁵² Reflections from Wurundjeri Elders seeing where their Ancestors walked on Country, where they walk now, came from their deep connection with this cultural landscape, including the stony rises, Mount Fraser, Bald Hill, Hearn's Swamp, Camoola Swamp and Merri Merri (Merri Creek), and its spirit. Perceived as a living entity Merri Merri (Merri Creek), and all waterways, named and unnamed, are the lifeblood of Country and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community. The health and continued protection of the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) and all waterways is their responsibility with the understanding that keeping the Country healthy keeps the people healthy.²⁵³

“Water was put there to survive with and so was food. “Ancestors would have sustained what they had for future generations. They all looked after Country and realised from their fathers and ngurungaetas this is what you do. Water was a survival kit”.²⁵⁴ – Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder Aunty Alice Kolasa

Within Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultures broadly, places which are associated with Ancestors and spiritual attachment may be considered as sacred. A sacred site will come with a set of restrictions, a group or an individual who are the custodians of that site, and they will hold a set of management responsibilities.²⁵⁵ For Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, this spiritual attachment extends to the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) and the cultural landscape surrounding it across the Northern Freight Precinct Project Area, being an ancestral homeland which Ancestors fought hard to protect from colonial invasion interference. There is often an expression by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders and community members that one's own wellbeing is linked to the wellbeing of Country and its biodiversity. Endangering the environmental features of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country is therefore considered unacceptable. In this context, it is the present-day descendants of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people who are the custodians of the Northern Freight Precinct cultural landscape, who hold the traditionally transmitted generational responsibilities to care for this place to ensure seasonal maintenance of the right ecology, habitats for their totemic and creation Ancestors, and its restoration of the landscape traditionally lived in by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people.

²⁴⁹ Australia ICOMOS, [Practice Note: The Burra Charter and Indigenous Cultural Heritage](#), Australia ICOMOS, 2013, accessed 5 December 2025.

²⁵⁰ (Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung representative, Interview 2022)

²⁵¹ Uncle Perry Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, Knowledge Recording 22 September 2025.

²⁵² Aunty Alice Kolasa, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online Knowledge Recording, 2 December 2025.

²⁵³ Brendan Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online Knowledge Recording, 26 November 2025.

²⁵⁴ Aunty Alice Kolasa, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online Knowledge Recording, 2 December 2025.

²⁵⁵ Rose, *Nourishing Terrains*.

8.1.5 Aesthetic

The aesthetics of a cultural landscape can either symbolically or literally represent former Ancestral Country prior to extensive clearing and other modifications by pastoralists, farmers and more recent city or urban development. Landscapes without these forms of disturbance are increasingly rare in Woi-wurrung Country. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people do not perceive the land, vegetation, and wildlife as isolated elements. Rather, they view the aesthetic features of a landscape holistically through the lens of ecological biodiversity required for healthy Country. Extensive land clearing places high value on remnant plant and tree species. The landscape, but not the cultural association, is at risk of being irretrievably lost when measures are not in place to protect the environmental and topographic features through correct land management. This is understood as Caring for Country, or for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, Bunjil's law.

Woi-wurrung people sustainably managed the land and its resources to ensure seasonal harvests of plant and animal species required for diet, resources, clothing and body adornment, tools, manufacture, weaponry, and craft. The Manna Gum trees (*Eucalyptus viminalis*) and Swamp Gum trees (*Eucalyptus ovata*) atop a stony rise and throughout the Northern Freight Precinct (South) Project Area provided shelter from the elements. River Red Gum trees (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) populating the banks of the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) are used for tools and weapons, while dried reeds from the Common River Reed (*Phragmites australis*) continue to be used for making necklaces.²⁵⁶

Central to land management practices dictated by seasonal transitions within the cultural landscape of the Northern Freight Precinct Project Area, Beveridge, and Port Phillip District broadly. The reliance on healthy Country for the seasonal regeneration of food, fibre, medicine, and resources meant that the traditional landscape was shaped by intentional design through the land management techniques of Woi-wurrung people, comparable to a designed landscape in the present-day (e.g., public park, garden, or an agricultural farm).

The flowing water, floodplains, and wetlands of the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) were essential elements of healthy Country. The archaeological record and cultural heritage sensitivity mapping confirms that the Merri Merri (Merri Creek), and waterways in general, constituted central living areas within the Wurundjeri-willam estate. Woi-wurrung Ancestors harvested aquatic food plants and resources such as freshwater sea life, installed fish and eel traps in the river and extracted potable water from the waterways. Aquatic sedges, rushes, reeds, and water ribbons were harvested from the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) and its floodplains. The soils surrounding the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) would have been manually turned to grow tuber or root-based vegetables. The tree canopies of eucalypts, and acacia species provided the bark, resins and wood required for canoes, *willams* (huts), *tarnuks* (water vessels), axe handles, *kannans* (digging sticks) and for other non-utilitarian uses.²⁵⁷

Additionally, the eruption points, such as Mount Fraser and Bald Hill, were utilised by Woi-wurrung people in the pre- and early contact period as vantage points from which to survey the landscape for

²⁵⁶ Aunty Alice Kolasa, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, Knowledge Recording 22 September 2025; Uncle Perry Wandin and Brendan Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders, On-Country Knowledge Recording 12 August 2025.

²⁵⁷ Brendan Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online Knowledge Recording, 26 November 2025.

smoke signals and other signs of activity. This may have been a method for long-distance communication between local descent groups and in the defence of Country from interlopers.²⁵⁸

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²⁵⁸ Brendan Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online Knowledge Recording, 26 November 2025.

9.0 Knowledge Recordings

Knowledge recordings were taken on-Country across the Northern Freight Precinct Project Area with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders Perry Wandin and Brendan Wandin in August 2025. Two Knowledge Recording sessions were also held with Aunty Alice Kolasa, Uncle Jason Tweedie, Uncle Perry Wandin and Brendan Wandin online in September 2025 and October 2025, these sessions were informed by photos and records taken on the previous on-Country day.

9.1 Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Values

The following cultural values were identified by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders in the knowledge recording sessions held in 2025.

Through the project meetings, on-Country visits to the project area and online workshops, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders have identified the following Cultural Values for the purpose of this CVA. While there may be other Cultural Values associated with the Project Area, these are those identified as most important, with connection to the Project Area. These Cultural Values are:

Caring for Country:

The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community have a deep and abiding connection to their Country. Despite the effects of colonisation, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people maintain their responsibility to manage and care for their Country. This responsibility was never relinquished.

Cultural practices and ceremony:

In the face of colonisation and its detrimental impacts on their culture, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people prioritise cultural continuation by revitalising and reclaiming aspects of their traditional practices, language and customs.

Importance of Merri Merri (Merri Creek)

Merri Merri (Merri Creek) holds cultural importance for the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community for traditional associations with their Ancestors, Woi-wurrung language place name, archaeological cultural heritage materials and proximity to significant waterways, named and unnamed, and cultural landscapes, including Hearn's Swamp, Mount Fraser and Bald Hill.

Importance of stony rises:

Stony rises, as a landform are known to have cultural heritage values and cultural values and hold for importance for the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community. The stony rises that are still visible today in the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung RAP area have and are mostly associated with the Mount Fraser lava flow which erupted around 800,000 years ago, have different shapes and sizes, and support unique species of plants and animals.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁹S Fraser, M Soto-Berelov, L Holden, R Hewson J Webb and S Jones, "Mapping stony rise landforms a novel remote sensing, geophysical, and machine learning approach", *Geomorphology* 2024 450:109070, p. 3; M Heath, D Phillip and EL Matchan, "An evidence-based approach to accurate interpretation of 40Ar/39Ar ages from basaltic rocks", *Earth and Planetary Science Letters* 2018, 498:65-76; M Heath, D Phillips, and EL Matchan, "Basalt lava flows of the intraplate Newer

Post Contact Associations:

The movements of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Ancestors within the landscape observed by the colonialists of the Port Phillip District were a result of their dispossession of what were their inherited estates now being overrun by pastoral interests and frontier conflict. This rendered Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Ancestors to procure what resources they could, when they could, to survive in a rapidly changing social and ecological environment. Understandings of First Nations peoples utilising Country must be understood within the context of this time.²⁶⁰

Waterways (including wetlands, swamps, streams, water expanses)

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people have a deep understanding of the local ecosystems and the importance of maintaining the health of waterways for the benefit of all living beings.

Ancestors and Traditional Knowledge

For Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people cultural significance and connection to Country including stories, beliefs, cultural practices, ecological knowledge, and language are traditional knowledge held by their Ancestors of Country who passed their knowledge on from generation to generation.

Celebration and Recognition of Elders, Ancestors and Language

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people aim to educate both their own community members and the wider public about their culture, history and connection to Country.

Cultural Value : Caring for Country

For the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community, both cultural significance and accordance with their traditions is sustained through the renewal of customary practices on-Country and ensuring the generational conferral of this knowledge. Caring for Country practices take as a reference point cultural traditions passed on from one generation.²⁶¹ Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people are the traditional custodians of the cultural landscape of the Northern Freight Precinct Project Area and hold the responsibility of caring for this place to ensure seasonal maintenance of the right ecology, habitats for totemic and Creation Ancestors and restoration of the landscape traditionally managed by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people in connection with the WWCHAC Whole of Country Plan.

River Red Gum trees along the Merri Merri (Merri Creek), towering high on a stony rise and Swamp Gum trees are in the Northern Freight Precinct (South) Project Area. In an on-Country visit held on 12 August 2025 Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder Brendan Wandin expressed a feeling of amazement at their appearance and health of the trees. Brendan reflected that the fencing of the Swamp Gum tree

Volcanic Province in south-east Australia (Melbourne region): ⁴⁰Ar/³⁹Ar geochronology reveals ~8 Ma of episodic activity", *Journal of Volcanology and Geothermal Research* 2020 389:106730; Kenely et al., *Wurundjeri Strategic Aboriginal Heritage Assessment*.

²⁶⁰ Freedman et al., *Jacksons Creek Regional Parklands Woiwurrung Cultural Values Study*, p. 146.

²⁶¹ Zagor, KM and Hansen K, WWCHAC (2023) *marram baba Merri Creek Regional Parklands, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Values Position Statement*, Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA).

provided protection against grazing activities and livestock. Protection of these vegetation species is important due to the future development of the Northern Freight Precinct.²⁶²

Stony rises and the land surrounding them in the Northern Freight Precinct (South and North) Project Area provided environments for plant species to thrive, including a Manna Gum tree, and habitats for animal species, such as and Eastern Grey Kangaroos. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder Perry Wandin reflected that Kangaroos are a totemic animal important to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder Perry Wandin expressed his concern that Eastern Grey Kangaroo populations are dwindling.²⁶³ Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder Aunty Alice Kolasa reflected that the consideration of protection areas is important for the conservation of the Eastern Grey Kangaroo population that live on the cultural landscape of the Northern Freight Precinct.²⁶⁴

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders expressed plant species that live in the riverbed and along the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) play an important role in the management of water and healthy waterways.²⁶⁵ Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder Perry Wandin reflected that the volume of water in the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) that flows through the Northern Freight Precinct (South) Project Area was healthy and supported vegetation and biodiversity, such as frog species, in the land surrounding the creek bed.²⁶⁶ Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder Brendan Wandin explained that water plants such as River Reeds (*Phragmites australis*) and the Manna Gums featured along the embankment of the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) filter the water and support the health of the waterway.²⁶⁷



Plate 1: Merri Merri (Merri Creek) and vegetation. Photo credit: Catherine Keneley, WWCHAC 2025

The health of the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) catchment and its tributaries is of importance to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community. In an on-Country visit held on 12 August 2025 Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders Uncle Perry Wandin and Brendan Wandin reflected that the water was not healthy, appearing murky and foaming. The Elders expressed their concern that the outflow of the Wallan

²⁶² Brendan Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, On-Country Knowledge Recording, 12 August 2025.

²⁶³ Uncle Perry Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online cultural values workshop, 22 September 2025.

²⁶⁴ Aunty Alice Kolasa, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online cultural values workshop, 22 September 2025.

²⁶⁵ Uncle Perry Wandin and Brendan Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders, On-Country Knowledge Recording, 12 August 2025.

²⁶⁶ Uncle Perry Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, On-Country Knowledge Recording, 12 August 2025.

²⁶⁷ Brendan Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, On-Country Knowledge Recording, 12 August 2025.

Treatment Plant could have impacted the health of the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) flowing through the Northern Freight Precinct (North) Project Area.



Plate 2: Merri Merri (Merri Creek), Northern Freight Precinct (north) Study Area. Photo credit: Catherine Keneley, WWCHAC 2025

The revegetation of water plants back into the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) is necessary to help feed the water species, filter water and support biodiversity and the health of the waterway. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder Brendan Wandin expressed that the inclusion of a conservation zone and protection of established and remnant trees, including dead trees, along the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) was also important.²⁶⁸ Brendan recommended that testing should be undertaken to see what species of animals are still living in the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) such as platypus, eel, yabbie and fish populations.²⁶⁹ The revegetation of native plant species such as Common River Reeds (*Phragmites australis*) along the creek bed of the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) and more proactive harvesting of this vital plant is important to the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders and their aspirations for sharing their culture, including ceremonial practices, and Caring for Country with their non-Indigenous allies.²⁷⁰

Cultural Value : Cultural practices and ceremony

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people carry a deep cultural and spiritual connection to their Country, including the landscape on which the Northern Freight Precinct Project Area is located. Undertaking cultural ceremonies on-Country is an important part of cultural continuation.²⁷¹ Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders reflected that the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) was important to them as a cultural

²⁶⁸ Brendan Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online Knowledge Recording, 22 October 2025.

²⁶⁹ Brendan Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online Knowledge Recording, 22 October 2025.

²⁷⁰ Uncle Perry Wandin, Aunty Alice Kolasa, Uncle Jason Tweedie, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders, online cultural values workshop, 22 September 2025.

²⁷¹ Zagor and Hansen, *marram baba Merri Creek Regional Parklands*.

landscape and reminder of their Ancestors' connection to Country. Ceremonial grounds located along the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) catchment, were used for everything, cultural practices including²⁷²:

- Gatherings,
- Camping,
- Celebrations such as births,
- Weaving,
- Initiations,
- Making tools,
- Sorting River Reeds and making necklaces,
- Monitoring the running of eels migrating in March,
- Preparing food including eels.



Plate 3: Merri Merri (Merri Creek). Photo credit: Catherine Keneley, WWCHAC, 2025

Cultural Value : Importance of the Merri Merri (Merri Creek)

Merri Merri (Merri Creek) is of extreme cultural importance to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people.²⁷³ The Merri Merri (Merri Creek) catchment and its waters that flow through the Northern Freight Precinct Study Area hold tangible cultural heritage values and cultural values that show the presence

²⁷² Uncle Perry Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, Knowledge Recording, 21 November 2025 ; Brendan Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online Knowledge Recording, 26 November 2025.

²⁷³ Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders, Inception Meeting, 23 June 2025.

of Ancestors and support Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people’s spiritual connection to Country. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder Uncle Perry Wandin reflected that:²⁷⁴

“The banks of the Merri are common sites for artefacts, showing that the Ancestors traveled along the waterway. Ancestors traveling through Country along the *Merri Merri* (Merri Creek), using Mount Fraser and Bald Hill as landmarks.”

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder Aunty Alice Kolasa reflected the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) is a “very important creek”. Aunty Alice reflected that the confluence of the Merri Creek and the Birrarung (Yarra River), as the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) is a tributary of the Birrarung it is an important waterway.²⁷⁵ The flows of the waterway sustained her Ancestors; the creek supported Ancestors’ lives and their connection to Country.²⁷⁶

"She flowed everywhere where she was needed. That Creek was important to the Ancestors." – Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder Aunty Alice Kolasa, 2025



Plate 4: Merri Merri (Merri Creek) and creek bed. Photo credit: Catherine Keneley, WWCHAC, 2025

²⁷⁴ Perry Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, On-Country Knowledge Recording, 12 August 2025.

²⁷⁵ Aunty Alice Kolasa, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online cultural values workshop, 22 September 2025.

²⁷⁶ Aunty Alice Kolasa, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online knowledge recording, 28 November 2025.

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder Brendan Wandin explained that the high elevation of the rocky escarpment of the Merri Merri (Merri Creek), in the Northern Freight Precinct (North) Study Area, are vantage points:²⁷⁷

“The rise on the left outcrops along the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) aren’t obvious, you have to stand on the top of the rise to see how high you are.”

During an On-Country day held in August 2025, Brendan identified archaeological cultural heritage on the rocky escarpments and reflected that these places were important to his Ancestors.²⁷⁸ Aunty Alice reflected that “finding artefacts makes you think about the Ancestors”.²⁷⁹

Plant species including River Red Gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) and Common River Reeds (*Phragmites australis*) are part of the ecological system of the Merri Merri (Merri Creek). Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder Brendan Wandin explained that the Common River Reeds have an important role in supporting the health of the creek and the ecosystems which rely on it.²⁸⁰

“[The reeds] help with sediment... [they would] act like a strain or a filter.” The reeds also support “what’s living in the water itself: eels and fish would love that.”

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder Aunty Alice Kolasa reflected that the Common River Reeds hold significance for their traditional associations and their importance to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people today in contemporary cultural practices.²⁸¹ Aunty Alice explained that:²⁸²

“You know the djirri djirri, they wear that necklaces around their necks - that's the phragmites... they boil them, they cut them, and they string them.”

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders reflected that the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) needs to be healthy to support Country and all living things. All waterways, including the Merri Merri (Merri Creek), are important to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people; the health of waterway is essential for healthy Country. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder Brendan Wandin reflected the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) needs to be healthy as “everything pretty much still going back to the waterways”.²⁸³ Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders were concerned about areas of the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) where the landscape had appeared to be neglected.²⁸⁴ Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder Uncle Perry Wandin reflected that the water quality “changes with the landscape”, and noted areas where the water was murky and surrounded by introduced plants, and that areas, within the Northern Freight Precinct (South) Study Area where revegetation works had reintroduced River Red Gum trees and Common River Reeds that the water was healthier.²⁸⁵ Uncle Perry Wandin reflected from the on-Country Day held in August 2025 the volume of water flowing and the sounds of frogs croaking was a positive sign of health water.²⁸⁶

²⁷⁷ Brendan Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, On-Country Knowledge Recording, 12 August 2025.

²⁷⁸ Brendan Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, On-Country Knowledge Recording, 12 August 2025.

²⁷⁹ Aunty Alice Kolasa, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online cultural values workshop, 22 September 2025.

²⁸⁰ Brendan Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, On-Country Knowledge Recording, 12 August 2025.

²⁸¹ Aunty Alice Kolasa, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online cultural values workshop, 22 September 2025.

²⁸² Aunty Alice Kolasa, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online cultural values workshop, 22 September 2025.

²⁸³ Brendan Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, On-Country Knowledge Recording, 12 August 2025.

²⁸⁴ Aunty Alice Kolasa, Uncle Perry Wandin, Uncle Jason Tweedie, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders, online cultural values workshop, 22 September 2025.

²⁸⁵ Uncle Perry Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online cultural values workshop, 22 September 2025.

²⁸⁶ Uncle Perry Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, On-Country Knowledge Recording, 12 August 2025.



Plate 5: Merri Merri (Merri Creek). Photo credit: Catherine Keneley, WWCHAC, 2025

Cultural Value : Importance of Stony Rises

“To be part of that when you’re doing cultural heritage work out there ... when you’re up there you start finding you’re digging in the crevices on the stony rise, then you see the different layers of soil. As soon as you start scraping artefacts, artefacts! You just knew they were there. You just sat there and looked around what a view”²⁸⁷ – Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder Uncle Perry Wandin

Stony rises, as a landform are known to have cultural heritage values and cultural values and hold for importance for the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community. The stony rises that are still visible today in the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung RAP area have and are mostly associated with the Mount Fraser lava flow which erupted around 800,000 years ago, have different shapes and sizes, and support unique species of plants and animals.²⁸⁸ Uncle Perry explained that the stony rises that form the landscape, including the Northern Freight Precinct Study Area are a continuation of Mount Fraser adjacent to the Study Area.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁷ Uncle Perry Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online Knowledge Recording, 21 November 2025.

²⁸⁸ Fraser et al., “Mapping stony rise landforms a novel remote sensing, geophysical, and machine learning approach”; Heath et al., “An evidence-based approach to accurate interpretation of $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ ages from basaltic rocks”; Heath et al., “Basalt lava flows of the intraplate Newer Volcanic Province in south-east Australia (Melbourne region)”; Kenely et al., *Wurundjeri Strategic Aboriginal Heritage Assessment*.

²⁸⁹ Uncle Perry Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online cultural values workshop, 22 September 2025.



Plate 6: Stony rise and Mount Fraser. Photo credit: Catherine Keneley, WWCHAC, 2025

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders Brendan Wandin and Uncle Perry Wandin visited stony rise landforms within the Northern Freight Precinct during the on-Country Day held in August 2025. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders Brendan Wandin and Uncle Perry Wandin visited the large stony rise in Northern Freight Precinct (South) Study Area surrounded by rocky knolls and a gum tree, with view lines to Bald Hill and Mount Fraser. Uncle Perry explained that the texture of the landscape filled with stony rises on plains would hold a lot of water. He noted the stony rises as places of elevation in the landscape, providing good vantage points.²⁹⁰ The Elders also visited two large stony rises in Northern Freight Precinct (North) Study Area overlooking Hearn's (Hernes) Swamp and Camoola Swamp respectively. The Elders admired the stony rises and were amazed at the height of the stony rises on the landscape and the vantage points they provided to view other cultural landscapes across Country. Uncle Perry reflected that,²⁹¹

"When we were walking further and going from spot to spot... it looked different, you didn't realise you're that high up above the ground... it's just unbelievable when you get out there and have a good look, you could see exactly how it would have been."

²⁹⁰ Uncle Perry Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online cultural values workshop, 22 September 2025.

²⁹¹ Uncle Perry Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, On-Country Knowledge Recording, 12 August 2025.



Plate 7: Stony rise and Gum tree. Photo credit: Emily Rayside, WWCHAC, 2025.

Uncle Perry and Brendan explained that stony rises were also utilised by Ancestors as a camping place, for ceremonies, making tools, and lighting fires as a wayfinder for other Ancestors.²⁹² Uncle Perry explained that camping on the stony rises allowed Ancestors to be very visible in the landscape, and even more so when fires were lit on the stony rises:²⁹³

"Up on the Stony rises, if anyone was going to be late, they'd light a fire so they could spot that fire and head in that direction because they use the stars as well, but the spot fire just made it easier."

Uncle Perry and Brendan explained that stars were also utilised by Ancestors for wayfinding when they travelled across Country.²⁹⁴ Brendan explained that "Indigenous peoples, all around the world, used stars to navigate".²⁹⁵

For Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder Aunty Alice Kolasa, sitting on stony rises helps her to visualise Country.²⁹⁶

²⁹² Brendan Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online Knowledge Recording, 26 November 2025; Uncle Perry Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online cultural values workshop, 22 September 2025.

²⁹³ Uncle Perry Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online cultural values workshop, 22 September 2025.

²⁹⁴ Brendan Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online Knowledge Recording, 26 November 2025; Uncle Perry Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online cultural values workshop, 22 September 2025.

²⁹⁵ Brendan Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online Knowledge Recording, 26 November 2025.

²⁹⁶ Aunty Alice Kolasa, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online Knowledge Recording, 28 November 2025.

"I love sitting on the Stony rises. When I when I'm on Country, I just love sitting on them and I just look around and I try to visualise what they did."

Aunty Alice explained that her spiritual connection to stony rises and Country connects her to her Ancestors. Aunty Alice reflected that her Ancestors would have utilised the stony rises as a vantage point and for viewing other groups travelling across Country:²⁹⁷

"The Ancestors would have used stony rises to watch their neighbours as well just by being on a vantage point. It's like a lookout tower and you can see everyone below you, and you can see who's over there and who's over there and who's got their campfires going. [And] watching for enemy coming up on the higher land. Before their enemy they would have been watching their neighbours."

Stony rises are repositories of archaeological cultural heritage, as well as landforms that hold cultural values and are important Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people. During the On-Country Day held in August 2025 Uncle Perry and Brendan investigated for artefacts on the top of and in the crevices of the stony rise near Hearnnes (Hernes) Swamp.



Plate 8: Stony rise on escarpment adjacent to Hearnnes (Hernes) Swamp. Photo credit: Catherine Keneley, WWCHAC, 2025

Uncle Perry reflected in a workshop held in September 2025 that artefact collections are common on stony rises, indicating that despite the exposure to wind, the Ancestors used them as stopping points.²⁹⁸ Uncle Jason Tweedie noted that stony rises were used for knapping places. Ancestors knapped tools on the stony rises, and he explained that,²⁹⁹

²⁹⁷ Aunty Alice Kolasa, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online Knowledge Recording, 28 November 2025.

²⁹⁸ Uncle Perry Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online cultural values workshop, 22 September 2025.

²⁹⁹ Uncle Jason Tweedie, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online Knowledge Recording, 28 November 2025.

“There are a lot of artefacts that are found on the tops, all in between the rocks, and on the sides of them, not so much down the bottom. So they must have been sitting there, waiting, making their tools while they were waiting for birds to come in and kangaroos and things like that.”

For Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders stony rises, including potential stony rises, are considered as places of cultural heritage sensitivity and should be protected. The protection and conservation of the stony rises on the escarpment above Hearnes (Hernes) Swamp is essential.³⁰⁰



Plate 9: Stony rise overlooking Hearnes (Hernes) Swamp and view to Mount Fraser. Photo credit: Catherine Keneley, WWCHAC, 2025

Cultural Value : Post Contact Associations

The movements of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Ancestors within the landscape observed by the colonialists of the Port Phillip District were a result of their dispossession of what were their inherited estates now being overrun by pastoral interests and frontier conflict. This rendered Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Ancestors to procure what resources they could, when they could, to survive in a rapidly changing social and ecological environment. Understandings of First Nations peoples utilising Country must be understood within the context of this time.³⁰¹

Waterways acted as natural trade and travel routes, as well as communication channels between the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people and other Traditional Owners. They facilitated the exchange of goods, cultural practices and knowledge, strengthening social ties between communities.³⁰²

Waterways are considered sacred in Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung culture. They are seen as the lifeblood of the land, connecting the past, present and future generations. The rivers, creeks, and water bodies

³⁰⁰ Brendan Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online Knowledge Recording, 26 November 2025.

³⁰¹ Freedman et al., *Jacksons Creek Regional Parklands Woiwurrung Cultural Values Study*, p. 146.

³⁰² Zagor and Hansen, *marram baba Merri Creek Regional Parklands*.

are central to Dreaming stories, which are important narratives that explain the creation of Country, its features and the relationships between the people and the environment.³⁰³

Merri Merri (Merri Creek) its bends, embankments and waterscapes located along the extent of the Study Area provided places of ceremony including for camping and making tools. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders Uncle Perry Wandin and Brendan Wandin reflected that the cultural heritage records within the landscape of the Merri Merri (Merri Creek), in particular the rocky escarpments along the creek, show the presence of their Ancestors on Country here.³⁰⁴

Wurundjeri Elder Uncle Perry Wandin reflected that the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) was a travel route for Ancestors prior to colonisation and it continued to be utilised in the contact period. Uncle Perry explained that his Ancestor Billibellary led a non-Indigenous man by the name of Poulter and his grandfather along the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) catchment to Hanging Rock for ceremonial practices. Uncle Perry reflected that they would have walked along the creek flowing across the landscape near Mount Fraser.³⁰⁵

Cultural Value : Other waterways including wetlands, unnamed waterways, water expanses

Water is one of many significant elements for the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people. It is the source of Creation stories, resources traditionally used by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people and carries with it long traditions of cultural practices and history.³⁰⁶ Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people continue to care for Country and connect with traditional and contemporary cultural practices.

Waterways are considered sacred in Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung culture. They are seen as the lifeblood of the land, connecting the past, present and future generations. The rivers, creeks, and water bodies are central to Dreaming stories, which are important narratives that explain the creation of Country, its features and the relationships between the people and the environment.³⁰⁷

Waterways including the Merri Merri (Merri Creek), unnamed waterways, wetlands and water expanses are important to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders.³⁰⁸ Unnamed waterways flowing from named waterways such as the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) support the role of wetlands and water expanses on the landscape and are important to the health of Country.³⁰⁹ Wetlands such as Hearn's (Hernes) Swamp, Camoola Swamp, Merri Bend Swamp and Merriang Park Swamp in the Study Area would have been utilised for their resources and as places of occupation. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder Uncle Perry Wandin explained his Ancestors would have camped close to wetlands for their water supply.³¹⁰

³⁰³ Zagor and Hansen, *marram baba Merri Creek Regional Parklands*.

³⁰⁴ Uncle Perry Wandin and Brendan Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders, On-Country Knowledge Recording, 22 September 2025.

³⁰⁵ Uncle Perry Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, On-Country Knowledge Recording, 12 August 2025.

³⁰⁶ Zagor, KM and Hansen K, WWCHAC, *marram baba Merri Creek Regional Parklands, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Values Position Statement*, Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), 2023.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Aunty Alice Kolasa, Uncle Perry Wandin, Uncle Jason Tweedie, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders, online cultural values workshop, 22 September 2025.

³⁰⁹ Aunty Alice Kolasa, Uncle Perry Wandin, Uncle Jason Tweedie, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders, online cultural values workshop, 22 September 2025 ; Keneley et al., WWCHAC, *Wurundjeri Strategic Aboriginal Heritage Assessment (SAHA)*, WWCHAC, 2025.

³¹⁰ Uncle Perry Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online cultural values workshop, 22 September 2025.

"You would had your pools and water so they would have... sat up the top of the rise with a big fire going or just on the other side to keep away from that wind, you would have had your own water supply down on the bottom as well."

The escarpment looking over Hearn's Swamp is a high point to view over the wetland landscape. During an On-Country Day held in August 2025, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders Uncle Perry Wandin and Brendan Wandin explained standing on the escarpment provided a vantage point over the extent of the wetland. The reflected that on how the impacts of European agricultural activities, grazing and draining of the wetland had changed the landscape, but they expressed they were happy to see water in the wetland. Brendan expressed that he would prefer to Hearn's Swamp be left alone and it should be considered as an area of protection. Brendan also reflected that the possibility of future revegetation works, involving the removal of weeds and planting native grasses, would support the wetland landscape.³¹¹



Plate 10: Hearn's (Hernes) Swamp. Photo credit: Catherine Keneley, WWCHAC, 2025

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders reflected that the vegetation on the landscape such as Sedges and River Reeds indicated the presence of wetlands and would support biodiversity. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder Uncle Perry Wandin reflected that the vegetation and elevation of the landscape identified the presence of wetlands. Uncle Perry reflected from the On-Country Day held in August 2025 that dry conditions and draining activities at Merriang Park Swamp meant that there was no

³¹¹ Brendan Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online Knowledge Recording, 26 November 2025.

surface water present, but noted that rainfall would rejuvenate the wetland landscape. Uncle Perry explained the effects of rainfall events would make it difficult to access the area.³¹²



Plate 11: Merriang Park Swamp. Photo credit: Catherine Keneley, WWCHAC, 2025

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders expressed their concern over the impacts that would be caused from future development on Camoola Swamp. They reflected it is important to record and document all the values of the landscape of Camoola Swamp.³¹³

Cultural Value : Ancestors, Traditional Knowledge and Material Culture

For Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people cultural significance and connection to Country including stories, beliefs, cultural practices, ecological knowledge, and language are traditional knowledge held by their Ancestors of Country who passed their knowledge on from generation to generation. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people sustainably managed the land and its resources to ensure seasonal harvests of plant and animal species required for diet, resources, clothing and body adornment, tools, manufacture, weaponry and craft.³¹⁴

Cultural heritage materials recorded in the landscape provide better understandings of the presence of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Ancestors on Country and their utilisation of the resources Country provided them to survive and as they moved across the landscape. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder Brendan Wandin explained that finding artefacts along the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) were physical

³¹² Uncle Perry Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online cultural values workshop, 22 September 2025.

³¹³ Aunty Alice Kolasa, Uncle Perry Wandin, Uncle Jason Tweedie, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders, online cultural values workshop, 22 September 2025.

³¹⁴ Zagor and Hansen, *marram baba Merri Creek Regional Parklands*.

reminders of the presence of his Ancestors on Country and indicated how the landscape was utilised by his Ancestors as a place of camping and a travel route:³¹⁵

“[Artefacts] tell you that the Ancestors were there and were there all the time coming through or camping there.”

Cultural Value : Celebration and Recognition of Elders, Ancestors and Language

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people aim to educate both their own community members and the wider public about their culture, history and connection to Country. This includes promoting awareness of Indigenous perspectives and histories in schools and the broader community. Performing cultural ceremonies (such as Welcome to Country ceremonies) is also a way of knowledge sharing with the wider public on Country. The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people seek recognition of their ongoing connection to the land and acknowledgment of their historical and cultural significance as Traditional Owners. This includes recognising the importance of cultural landscapes and landforms, such as stony rises, unnamed waterways and the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people. Part of this recognition involves engaging in a process of Truth-telling about Australia’s colonial past. Truth-telling also includes acknowledging the ways in which the structures of colonialism continue to impact First Nations People today.³¹⁶

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders reflected on the importance of the recognition of Traditional Owners in the Northern Freight Precinct Study Area and acknowledgement of Ancestors, [REDACTED].³¹⁷ For Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders Ancestors are the Traditional Custodians of the land of the Merri Merri (Merri Creek), and the land surrounding it across the Study Area. Ancestors including Billibellary, Bebejan, William Barak and Simon Wonga are intrinsically connected to this cultural landscape including the Merri Merri (Merri Creek). Recognition of their Ancestors, the history of their Ancestors on this land and Truth-telling today is important to Wurundjeri Elders. Education of the history of the land and the Study Area is essential for Truth-telling.³¹⁸

Acknowledgement of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Ancestors and Woi-wurrung language are guided by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders and informed by Protectorate records and ethnographic materials. Further research of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Ancestors is currently being conducted by WWCHAC’s Research Unit.

10.0 Cultural Values Map

This section depicts a table of cultural values themes and map showing Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Values (Table 9). This map depicts the locations and extents of landforms of Aboriginal cultural values and cultural heritage values, such as Merri Merri (Merri Creek), potential stony rises and Mount Fraser lava flow, and waterways named and unnamed, including pre-European wetlands, water

³¹⁵ Brendan Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, online Knowledge Recording, 22 October 2025.

³¹⁶ Zagor and Hansen, *marram baba Merri Creek Regional Parklands*.

³¹⁷ Aunty Alice Kolasa, Uncle Perry Wandin, Uncle Jason Tweeide, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders, online cultural values workshop, 22 September 2025.

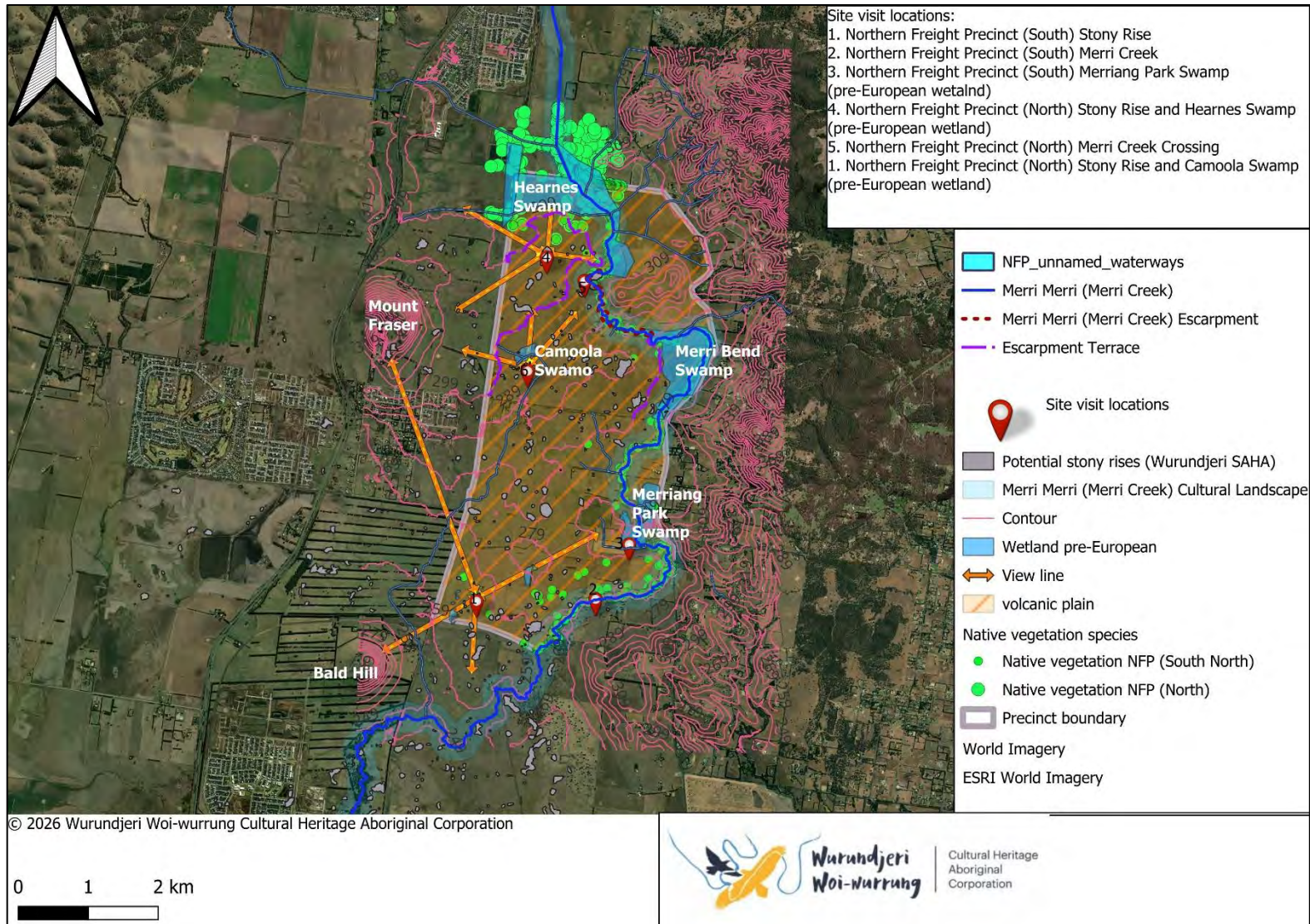
³¹⁸ Aunty Alice Kolasa, Uncle Perry Wandin, Uncle Jason Tweeide, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders, online cultural values workshop, 22 September 2025.

expanses, creeks). The map also depicts the locations of important cultural landscapes including Merri Merri (Merri Creek) cultural landscape, Wallan and Beveridge cultural landscape, and Marram Baba Upper Merri Creek Regional Parklands and Galgi ngarrk (Craigieburn Grasslands). The locations of Aboriginal cultural values and cultural heritage values depicted on this map are determined by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders who have identified these places as culturally sensitive and must require protection. Note that this map is based on information made available from WWCHAC of the Northern Freight PSP CVA process including an Inception Meeting, one on-Country visit, online Knowledge Recording interview and workshop, and post-visit meetings. This information has also been drawn from the findings of the Wurundjeri Strategic Aboriginal Heritage Assessment (SAHA).

An ACHIA has been prepared in parallel with this CVA. **Cultural Values and Archaeological evidence are both needed to develop a holistic understanding of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung cultural heritage.** The Aboriginal cultural values map (Map 14) is informed by Traditional Owner knowledge of the study area.

Table 9: Cultural Values themes and landforms

Merri Merri (Merri Creek)	Mount Fraser lava flow and Volcanic Plain	Other waterways named and unnamed (including pre-European wetlands, water expanses, creeks)
Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung traditional associations	Mount Fraser lava flow area and Volcanic Plain – including stony rises, rocky knolls, elevated rocky escarpments	Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung traditional associations
Travel routes	Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung traditional associations	Travel routes
Archaeological cultural heritage	Travel routes	Archaeological cultural heritage
Water sources – including named waterways, pre-European wetlands, floodplain and water expanses to support the health of Country	Archaeological cultural heritage	Water sources – including named and unnamed waterways, pre-European wetlands, floodplain, possible springs and water expanses to support the health of Country
Plant species	Water sources – including named and unnamed waterways, pre-European wetlands, floodplain, possible springs and water expanses to support the health of Country	Plant species
Food bowls – including for animal species and fishing and eeling, yabbies as well as shellfish	Water sources – including named and unnamed waterways, pre-European wetlands, floodplain, possible springs and water expanses to support the health of Country	Food bowls – including for animal species
Viewpoints – rocky outcrops as important observation points and elevation points	Plant species	Aesthetic values
Woi-wurrung language place name	Animal species	Post-contact values
Post-contact values	Viewpoints – including elevated rocky escarpments / stony rises	
Aesthetic values	Post-contact values	
	Aesthetic values	



Map 14: Northern Freight Precinct Aboriginal Cultural Values

11.0 Recommendations

The following recommendations were identified by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders during the on Country day and subsequent workshop knowledge recording sessions held in September and October, 2025. Six recommendations and 22 specific actions for managing cultural values and otherwise embedding Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung perspectives have been identified through consultation with the project participants, the Cultural Heritage Unit, the Narrap Unit, and the Water Program. These recommendations draw on the identified as well as other Cultural Values work conducted by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders, particularly in relation to stony rises and waterways. Each recommendation and associated actions are linked explicitly to the most relevant cultural values identified in Section 9.0.

Recommendation 1: Enhanced protection of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung cultural heritage

“Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung cultural heritage is better protected through increased understanding, legislative changes, and the development and implementation of stronger strategies and goals” – Whole of Country Plan 2025-2035 Goal

Tangible Aboriginal cultural heritage refers to physical remnant traces of Aboriginal occupation, such as artefacts and scarred trees. Sites that contain tangible Aboriginal cultural heritage material are highly important for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People because they provide a physical link to Country and to the lives of their Ancestors. While there are several Aboriginal Places registered within and surrounding the project area, it should be acknowledged that they only tell part of a story. In the places where there are not registered Aboriginal Places, this does not rule out the existence of Aboriginal tangible cultural heritage material but often correspond to areas which have not been subject to archaeological investigation.

This recommendation is modelled on goal four within the Whole of Country Plan 2025-2035. The strength of this goal lies in the ownership of traditional knowledge and continuing to regain and strengthen this responsibility, collaboration with government and external stakeholders and advocacy to government to maximise benefits for Country.

Action 1: Protect tangible cultural heritage.

- a. Planning authorities, responsible authorities, developers and land managers should engage with the WWCHAC Cultural Heritage Unit regarding the protection of tangible cultural heritage in accordance with the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* and its regulations.
- b. The development of the Northern Freight PSP design should avoid harm to the archaeological and cultural values associated with stony rises and the escarpment of the Merri Merri (Merri Creek), and associated Camoola Swamp, Hearn's Swamp,

Merriang Park Swamp and Merri Bend Swamp.

Action 2: Identify and protect stony rises.

- c. A survey of the Northern Freight PSP project area should be completed for ground truthing with WWCHAC Elders or Cultural Heritage Officers to inspect stony rises.
- d. Where stony rises are present and CHMPs are not mandatory, voluntary CHMPs or Cultural Heritage Permits should be prepared to manage the risk of harming Aboriginal cultural heritage, which is an offence under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*.
- e. A survey of the Northern Freight PSP project area must be completed for ground truthing with WWCHAC Elders or Cultural Heritage Officers to inspect potential stony rises. Landforms and areas of cultural values identified in this CVA must be mapped in future assessments of the study area, such as an ACHIA.
- f. Planners and land managers should engage with the WWCHAC's Cultural Heritage Unit regarding any proposal to establish public open space where stony rises are present.
- g. Planners should consider the cultural landscape (stony rises, waterscapes including waterways, named and unnamed, wetlands, Merri Merri (Merri Creek) corridor and floodplain) and how it should be incorporated into planning, design and implementation of the precinct.

Action 3: Investigate the escarpments and basalt level of the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) in the project area. Further investigations should occur in order to identify:

- h. Where archaeological cultural heritage material is present on or under the ground surface.
- i. Improve understandings of the geomorphological characteristics the embankment of the Merri Merri (Merri Creek).

Action 4: Protect intangible cultural heritage.

Planning authorities, responsible authorities and land managers are to apply the following guiding principles to protect Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung cultural values holistically:

- j. Cultural values are to be considered in relation to their tangible (physical) and intangible (non-physical) attributes, including artefacts, cultural features, flora, fauna, waterways and waterbodies, landforms, stories, associations, practices, beliefs, traditions and cultural landscapes – not just in relation to the areas of cultural heritage sensitivity and registered Aboriginal places that appear on ACHRIS. ACHRIS only includes areas of cultural heritage sensitivity that are recognised in the *Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018* (Vic.), and Aboriginal places that have been identified and registered primarily through archaeological investigations for CHMPs. ACHRIS therefore presents an incomplete and biased record of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung cultural values.
- k. Areas of important cultural heritage landscapes identified from the Wurundjeri Strategic

Aboriginal Heritage Assessment (SAHA) depicted through the First Peoples – State Relations’ mapping platform for strategic planning are to be treated as areas of cultural heritage sensitivity.

- l. Development activities are to be designed to avoid harm to important cultural heritage landscapes identified from the Wurundjeri Strategic Aboriginal Heritage Assessment (SAHA) depicted through the First Peoples – State Relations’ mapping platform for strategic planning.
- m. Planners should continue engagement with WWCHAC Research Unit to undertake further Cultural Values work on Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country. Elders have recommended the engagement of the Research Unit at WWCHAC to undertake further research of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung narrative of the cultural landscape where Northern Freight Precinct is located necessitating the investigation and recording of the true history of the land and their Ancestors including the Ngurungaeta (headman) of the area.

Recommendation 2: Support the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community in holistic caring for Country

“Investment in Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People to enhance outcomes across Country: Sustainable investment in Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People to enhance the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation’s capacity and capability and ensure best outcomes across Country” – Whole of Country Plan 2025-2035 Goal

“Enhanced biodiversity across Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country: Biodiversity is enhanced across all of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country. The natural landscape is recognised as a broader living entity” – Whole of Country Plan 2025-2035 Goal

“Enhanced protection of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country from encroaching development: Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country is better protected from development through increased understanding of the value of preserving Country, as well as enhanced legislation.” – Whole of Country Plan 2025-2035 Goal

For the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community, both cultural significance and accordance with their traditions is sustained through the renewal of customary practices on-Country and ensuring the generational conferral of this knowledge. The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People are the custodians of the Northern Freight Precinct Project Area and hold the responsibility of caring for this place to ensure seasonal maintenance of the right ecology, habitats for totemic and creation ancestors and restoration of the landscape traditionally managed by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People.

The Narrap Unit and Rangers at WWCHAC are best placed to provide a holistic approach to managing Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country and should be given first preference in engagement opportunities for all areas of Natural Resource Management (NRM) on Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country. As the Traditional Owners of this land, they have a particular cultural perspective on the NRM of this Country. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung rights and interests are enshrined in their cultural rights and responsibilities that have been passed down by their Ancestors over a millennia. This cultural responsibility is managed and commercially practiced by the Narrap Unit who apply traditional ecological knowledge

in conjunction with scientific and technical skill to carry out land management works and cultural burning regimes for the protection, management, and restoration of Country. Through the knowledge recordings Elders have recommended the protection of the cultural landscape and its landforms important to Wurundjeri, such as stony rises and waterways, named and unnamed.

This recommendation is modelled on goal four, six, and thirteen within the Whole of Country Plan 2025-2035. The strength of these goals lies in the ownership of traditional knowledge and continuing to regain and strengthen this responsibility, placing Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People living, working and practicing Culture on Country to preserve and enhance Country health, strengthening relationships within the community including intergenerational ones, collaboration with government and external stakeholders and advocacy to government to maximise benefits for Country. The threats for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people to achieving these goals are related to

- The different ownership including Crown land and privately owned create challenges in access and consistent land and water management,
- The current and future impacts of climate change, restrictive government policy and boundary issues, the ongoing politicisation of First Nations' issues resulting in uncertainty with change of government and the general public's lack of understanding of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country leads to lack of connection and the continued disrespect of Country, overdevelopment of Country for residential, commercial and transport purposes leading to destruction of Country, funding for the corporation not guaranteed, leading to ongoing uncertainty and inability to confidently forward plan, and increasing demand for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation services and the need to expand capacity and skills development. The below actions are based on this goal and are a result of the cultural values recorded during the project related to the **Caring for Country and Water, Protection, preservation, and land management - Biodiversity across Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country, and Advocacy** themes.

Action 5: Plant appropriate native species. Extensive planting of appropriate native species including foods, fibre, and medicine throughout the area where possible. This will encourage the re-establishment of a native natural environment and promote cultural renewal. This should include plant species endemic to the environment recommended by Elders and from engagement with the Narrap Unit. Invasive species should be removed from the project area.

Action 6: Rehabilitate mismanaged areas. Mismanaged areas of the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) affected by the impacts of pollution / water treatment need to be cleaned up and returned to healthy status, this can include utilising traditional ecological management.

Action 7: Engagement with the Narrap Unit and Water Program. Protection and enhancement of the study area is important to improve the health of Country. The Narrap Unit should be supported to achieve the WWCHAC's aspiration for the sustainable management of waterways across Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country. Ecological rehabilitation may include Wurundjeri-led waterways assessments to monitor the health of waterscapes, such as waterways, named and

unnamed, and wetlands including Merri Merri (Merri Creek), Camoola Swamp, Hearn's Swamp, Merri Bend Swamp and Merriang Park Swamp. Engagement may also involve the development of strategies for the protection of known and potential threatened species, such as Growling Grass Frog and Eastern Grey Kangaroo, and recommendations for habitat conservation such as corridors, Common River Reed areas and high-raised walking platforms.

Action 8: Minimise potential impacts to the aesthetic and natural attributes where possible within the Northern Freight Precinct Project Area by collaborating with WWCHAC on the design and planning of infrastructure.

Recommendation 3: Healthy waterways and water rights across Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country

“Improved waterway health across Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country. Water is understood as a complex living entity” – Whole of Country Plan 2025-2035 Goal

Waterways hold immense cultural, spiritual, social, and economic significance to the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People. They are not just physical features of the landscape but represent a living connection to their Ancestors, the land and their way of life. The preservation and protection of these waterways are crucial for the continuation of their cultural heritage and their connection to Country.

An integral part of maintaining a strong cultural identity is the transmission of cultural practices and associated information to the younger generations. This is most effectively done on-Country, as it provides younger people with a direct, rather than abstract, experience of cultural practice and teaching. Water is central to these cultural experiences as it generates the plants and wildlife that form the teaching tools and the landscape backdrop that forms the teaching ‘classroom’ for the younger generation.

For Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People, health and wellbeing is directly linked to the health of their Country. Healthy waterways create healthy Country and reassure Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People that Country is being cared for. Having access to waterways for recreation, resources and teaching culture keeps the community healthy and strong and contributes to their overall wellbeing.

This recommendation is modelled on goal seven within the Whole of Country Plan 2025-2035. The strength of this goal lies in the return of water to waterways, enhancing water rights and improving cultural flows, collaboration with government and external stakeholders and advocacy to government to maximise benefits for Country. The threats for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people to achieving this goal are related to systemic challenges. These challenges include restrictive government policy and boundary issues, the ongoing politicisation of First Nations’ issues resulting in uncertainty with changes in government. Additionally, the general public’s lack of understanding of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country leads to lack of connection and overdevelopment of Country for residential, commercial and transport purposes. Which in turn, propels the destruction of Country through Land use practices that both intentionally and unintentionally cause destruction to Country, like restricting water flows and the pollution of all elements of the natural environment. The below actions are based on this goal and are a result of the cultural values recorded during the project related to the **Caring for Country and**

Water, and **Advocacy** themes.

Action 9: Protect and enhance Merri Merri (Merri Creek), tributaries and waterscapes.

The protection and enhancement of the Merri Merri (Merri Creek) corridor, including the embankment within the Northern Freight Precinct Project Area is required. The creek line should be rehabilitated where possible, incorporating tributaries and waterscapes (including wetland swamps, floodplains, ground water etc) to support the retardation and treatment of surface water flows, and where water flows end, with the removal of weeds and invasive species, and the identification and preservation of any native plants. Engagement with the Water Program at WWCHAC is essential to this action.

Action 10: Review advocacy opportunities to engage with waterway and land managers.

Incorporate the findings of the CVA to inform decision-making regarding the Northern Freight Precinct South drainage program. To improve the ecological health, environmental flows, Cultural flows, and the persistence of natural cycles of flooding, infiltration, and evaporation of Merri Merri (Merri Creek) and the connected cultural landscape of the Northern Freight Precinct, including associated waterways, named and unnamed, wetlands and groundwater expanses. Engagement with the Water Program at WWCHAC is essential to this action.

Recommendation 4: Continued engagement of people that live on, work on, and visit Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country

*“Non-Wurundjeri people living on, working on and visiting Country continue to enhance their understanding of Country, resulting in a deeper respect and connection with Country”
– Whole of Country Plan 2025-2035 Goal*

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People are and have been the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and waters within the Northern Freight Precinct Project Area for tens of thousands of years and beyond. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Culture is still alive and still strong; it has survived a violent colonial past and continues to thrive today. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People aim to educate both their own community members and the wider public about their culture, history, and connection to Country. This includes promoting awareness of Indigenous perspectives and histories in schools and the broader community. Performing cultural ceremonies (such as Welcome to Country ceremonies) is also a way of knowledge sharing with the wider public on-Country.

The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People seek recognition of their ongoing connection to the land and acknowledgment of their historical and cultural significance as Traditional Owners, with the hopes that this will foster a continued interest and engagement by the broader community and local, state and federal governments.

This recommendation is modelled on goal two within the Whole of Country Plan 2025-2035. The strength of this goal lies in the ownership of traditional knowledge and continuing to regain and strengthen this responsibility, collaboration with government and external stakeholders and a

continued interest and engagement by the broader community and local, state, and federal governments by growing community and government engagement. The threats for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people to achieving this goal are related to the increasing demand for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation services and the need to expand capacity and skills development, the ongoing politicisation of First Nations' issues resulting in uncertainty with change of government and the continued systemic and community racism and misinformation. The below actions are based on this goal and are a result of the cultural values recorded during the project related to the **Celebration of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People and Culture, Education and Walking Together** theme.

Action 11: Co-develop interpretation of Aboriginal heritage values with WWCHAC.

Planners should adopt a holistic approach when considering the design, development and production of heritage interpretation products and engage with the wider story of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung history, Ancestors and their traditional knowledge, Truth-telling, Country and cultural landscapes connected to the Northern Freight Precinct Project Area. Cultural landscapes include waterscapes, such as Merri Merri (Merri Creek), Hearn's Swamp, Camoola Swamp, Merri Bend Swamp, Merriang Park Swamp, unnamed waterways, stony rises and other important cultural heritage landscapes such as Mount Fraser and Bald Hill.

Recommendation 5: Genuine and meaningful engagement with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People have a real voice in the decisions that impacts Country. "A whole of community approach that is Wurundjeri-led. The Wurundjeri Corporation is engaged at project inception and through the planning delivery and finalisation of all significant projects occurring on Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country, especially at a state and local government level"

– Whole of Country Plan 2025-2035 Goal

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People aspire to exercise self-determination over their affairs, ensuring that decisions regarding their land, culture and community are made by their own people. The recognition and involvement of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community in the management and protection of their Country and Water must be embedded into the Northern Freight PSP. Stakeholders cannot rely on written reports alone, they must always engage with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community and involve them in decision making, to ensure that their voices are heard and respected. Wurundjeri knowledge is vast and complex and should be sought by stakeholders who operate on Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country. Responsibility for Caring for Country is largely perceived to be placed under the remit of Traditional Owners. There is a need for all stakeholders to understand and act on their responsibilities for caring for Country, and the associated impacts on cultural heritage and community wellbeing. Aunty Alice Kolasa echoed this sentiment and stated that stakeholders and Wurundjeri

Corporation should be working together “everyone should be Caring for Country, we all live and work here on Country”.

This recommendation is modelled on goal one within the Whole of Country Plan 2025-2035. The strength of this goal lies in the ownership of traditional knowledge and continuing to regain and strengthen this responsibility, collaboration with government and external stakeholders and a continued interest and engagement by the broader community and local, state, and federal governments by growing community and government engagement. The threats for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people to achieving this goal are related to the following:

- Systemic challenges such as restrictive government policy and boundary issues,
- Increasing demand for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation services and the need to expand capacity and skills development,
- Overdevelopment of Country for residential, commercial and transport purposes leading to destruction of Country and,
- The ongoing politicisation of First Nations’ issues resulting in uncertainty with change of government.

The below actions are based on this goal and are a result of the cultural values recorded during the project related to the **Involvement in decision making and self-determination** theme.

Action 12: Facilitate engagement with WWCHAC to facilitate and support equal partnerships, engagement with planning, design, and protection of areas of cultural heritage sensitivity. Planning authorities and responsible authorities should lead by example by creating strong and meaningful partnerships and working relationships with WWCHAC.

Action 13: Facilitate engagement with the Narrap Unit to support the capacity and diversity of the Narrap Unit service delivery. The Narrap Unit should be offered first preference in codesigning and leading water, natural resource management activities, remediation works. This includes the application of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) as informed by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community as the Traditional Owners.

Action 14: Continue engagement with WWCHAC’s Research Unit to undertake further Cultural Values work on Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country. Elders have recommended that planning authorities and responsible authorities should strive to engage in Cultural Values works for any projects that they are leading on Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country at the project inception stages. The outcomes of cultural values works should planning, design and implementation of the precinct.

Action 15: Provide project updates to WWCHAC. Planning authorities, responsible authorities and land managers should provide updates regarding the project and the outcomes and evaluation of recommendations provided in this report to WWCHAC Elders and community

members. Updates should be delivered through engagement with the Policy and Partnerships Unit at WWCHAC. Evaluation and implementation of recommendations through engagement with Policy and Partnerships Unit.

Action 16: Participate in Cultural Awareness Training for the project team.

Recommendation 6: Education and Recognition of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People, Ancestors, Country and Culture

“Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People and Culture are reflected on Country, in both the natural and built environments” – Whole of Country Plan 2025-2035

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People are and have been the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and waters within Northern Freight Precinct Project Area for tens of thousands of years and beyond. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Culture is still alive and still strong; it has survived a violent colonial past and continues to thrive today. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People aim to educate both their own community members and the wider public about their culture, history, and connection to Country. This includes promoting awareness of Indigenous perspectives and histories in schools and the broader community. Performing cultural ceremonies (such as Welcome to Country ceremonies) is also a way of knowledge sharing with the wider public on-Country. The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People seek recognition of their ongoing connection to the land and acknowledgment of their historical and cultural significance as Traditional Owners. Part of this involves engaging in a process of Truth-telling about Australia and Victoria’s violent colonial past, acknowledging the violence and injustices enacted by colonisers, but also the resistance, activism and strength of Aboriginal People who were impacted by a violent colonial system that deliberately attempted to erase Aboriginal Culture and Peoples. Truth-telling also includes acknowledging the ways in which the structures of colonialism continue to impact First Nations People today.

The Yoorrook Justice Commission, which was established in May 2021, was tasked with creating an official public record based on First Peoples’ experience of systemic injustice since the start of colonisation. The final report, *Yoorrook: Truth be Told*, is a culmination of four years of engagement with thousands of First Peoples across Victoria, containing a compilation of oral testimonies, family histories, books, poetry, story, and song. The report was conducted with ‘...the hope that by finally coming to terms with the past, all Victorians may develop a shared understanding of our history and a common aspiration, or a future built on truth, justice and pride in the First Peoples of Victoria’³¹⁹. Aunty Alice Kolasa strongly urges the project team to engage with this report to gain an understand of the importance and relevance of Truth-telling.

This recommendation is modelled on goal ten within the Whole of Country Plan 2025-2035. The strength of this goal lies in the advocacy and collaboration with government and external stakeholders, and a continued interest and engagement by the broader community and local, state, and federal governments by growing community and government engagement. This goal can be achieved through opportunities for Truth-telling as guided by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people and

³¹⁹ Yoorrook Justice Commission, “[Yoorrook; truth be told](#)”, Yoorrook Justice Commission, 2025, p. 14.

the Victorian Statewide Treaty Bill. The threats for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people to achieving this goal are the continued systemic and community racism and misinformation, the ongoing politicisation of First Nations' issues resulting in uncertainty with change of government and the general public's lack of understanding of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country leads to lack of connection, continued disrespect of Country. The below actions are based on this goal and are a result of the cultural values recorded during the project related to the **Celebration of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People and Culture, Education and Walking Together** theme.

Action 17: Acknowledgement of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People and their Ancestors as the Traditional Owners and custodians of Country must be clear within the precinct. Education of the traditional knowledge of Ancestors and the cultural landscapes connected to the Northern Freight Precinct Project Area is of importance to Wurundjeri Elders.

Action 18: Use Woi-wurrung language where possible with consultation with the WWCHAC's Policy & Partnerships Unit and Education Unit. Woi-wurrung language should be used on signage (with English translation where necessary) and for naming natural features, waterways, surrounding areas, flora and fauna, and significant sites within the Northern Freight Precinct Project Area.

Action 19: Use Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung art and design where opportunities exist for direct interpretation and design, it is recommended that the project team should use Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung artwork and cultural design elements be reflected in future buildings, works and infrastructure design in the Northern Freight Precinct Project Area. WWCHAC should direct these usages. Where possible incorporate Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung artwork and cultural design elements into the design phase of the project, co-developed with WWCHAC and engaging with WWCHAC approved artists.

Action 20: Co-develop any interpretation with WWCHAC and take a holistic approach when considering interpretation products, such as signage and education resources, and engage with the wider story of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung history, Ancestors and their traditional knowledge, Country, Truth-telling and cultural landscapes connected to the Northern Freight Precinct Project Area. Cultural landscapes include waterscapes, such as Merri Merri (Merri Creek), Hearn's Swamp, Camoola Swamp, Merri Bend Swamp, Merriang Park Swamp, unnamed waterways, stony rises and other important cultural heritage landscapes such as Mount Fraser and Bald Hill.

Action 21: Celebration and recognition of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Ancestors as inspiration for design principles for the Northern Freight Precinct Project Area.

Action 22: Promote and Respect Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People’s right to practise Culture on Country. Planning authorities and responsible authorities are encouraged to engage with WWCHAC and to facilitate opportunities for cultural practises during the timelines of the project and beyond, this includes cultural practises including Welcome to Country and smoking ceremonies, education, and walking on Country to read Country. It is very important to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People that visitors are welcomed on to our land in this way. It is a cultural tradition that has been practised on Wurundjeri Country for tens of thousands of years and beyond.

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