



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Royal Exhibition Building

Royal Exhibition Building & Carlton Gardens

Traditional Owner and First Peoples'
Cultural Values for the Royal Exhibition
Building and Carlton Gardens

Part 2 of 5 of the World Heritage Management Plan



Prepared for the World Heritage Steering Committee for the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens.

The World Heritage Management Plan (WHMP) for the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens consists of five parts; this Traditional Owner and First Peoples' Cultural Values for the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens is Part 2.

The five parts are as follow:

- Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens Overview Site Management Plan; Part 1 of the WHMP
- Traditional Owner and First Peoples' Cultural Values for the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens; Part 2 of the WHMP
- Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens Heritage Management Plan; Part 3 of the WHMP
- Carlton Gardens Master Plan; Part 4 of the WHMP
- Exhibition Reserve Master Plan; Part 5 of the WHMP

All five parts should be considered together as the complete WHMP. The Overview Site Management Plan provides overarching guidance. Users should refer first to the Overview Site Management Plan to understand the framework for the WHMP and the overarching policies and principles for managing the site. Individual parts respond to different management requirements and proposed outcomes across the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens. For this reason, the parts may be used individually when being practically applied by the responsible management bodies.

Users should refer to the World Heritage Environs Area Strategy Plan in conjunction with the WHMP for strategic guidance for planning and management in the World Heritage Environs Area.

**Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens
Traditional Owner and First Peoples' Cultural
Values for the Royal Exhibition Building and
Carlton Gardens**

Part 2 of the World Heritage Management Plan

May 2023

PUBLIC ACCESS



Acknowledgement of Country

GML acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, the Traditional Owners of the land on which the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens are located, and pays respects to their Elders past and present. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the history and life of this site and wider region. We are committed to truth-telling and to engaging with First Peoples to support the protection of their culture and heritage. We strongly advocate social and cultural justice and support the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

Cultural warning

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this report may contain images or names of First Nations people who have passed away.

Report register

The following report register documents the development and issue of the report entitled Traditional Owner and First People's Cultural Values for the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens, undertaken by GML Heritage Victoria (GML) in accordance with its quality management system.

Job No.	Issue No.	Notes/Description	Issue Date
2644	1	Draft Report	1 December 2020
2644	2	Preliminary Final Report	6 August 2021
2644	3	Final Report	9 November 2021
2644	4	Final Report with Addendum	5 January 2022
2644a	5	Amended Final Report with Addendum (Confidential and Public Access)	11 May 2023
2644a	6	Amended Final Report with Addendum (Confidential and Public Access)	25 May 2023

Quality assurance

The report has been reviewed and approved for issue in accordance with the GML quality assurance policy and procedures.

Indigenous cultural and intellectual property

We acknowledge and respect the inherent rights and interests of the Traditional Owner organisations who contributed their knowledge to this report in Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property. We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the right to be acknowledged and attributed for their contribution to knowledge but also respect their rights to confidentiality. We recognise our ongoing obligations to respect, protect and uphold the continuation of the Traditional Owner organisations' rights in the materials contributed as part of this project.

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Abbreviations and acronyms used in this report

ACHRIS	Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Registry and Information System
ACACH	Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee
BLCAC	Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation
BLSC	Boonwurrung Land and Sea Council
BPA	Board for the Protection of Aborigines/Aboriginal Protectorate Board
CBD	Central Business District
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CHMP	Cultural Heritage Management Plan
CMP	Conservation Management Plan
Cth	Commonwealth
DELWP	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
EVC	Ecological Vegetation Class
EPBC	Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act
HMP	Heritage Management Plan
HO	Heritage Overlay
LDAD	Low Density Artefact Distribution
NAIDOC	National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAP	Registered Aboriginal Party
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VACCA	Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency
VAHC	Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council
VAHR	Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register
VGG	Victorian Government Gazette
VHI	Victorian Heritage Inventory
VHR	Victorian Heritage Register
VPP	Victorian Parliamentary Papers
Vic	Victoria
WAAAF	Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force
WHMP	World Heritage Management Plan
WWCHAC	Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation

1 Introduction

1 Introduction

The Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens (REB and CG) is an historically significant site inscribed on the World Heritage List. The REB and CG is also listed on the National Heritage List and Victorian Heritage Register. Museums Victoria is custodian of the Royal Exhibition Building and grounds on behalf of the State Government of Victoria. The City of Melbourne is custodian and land manager of the Carlton Gardens. Both entities have responsibility for managing and maintaining their respective areas of the site in accordance with the World Heritage Management Plan (WHMP). The 2013 WHMP was prepared for the site in 2012, and in accordance with section 191 of the Victorian *Heritage Act 2017* underwent a review process starting in 2020, which has resulted in the updated WHMP.

The 2013 WHMP consisted of a main report and four appended documents: the Heritage Management Plan, Carlton Gardens Master Plan, REB and Exhibition Reserve Master Plan and World Heritage Environs Area Strategy Plan. Museums Victoria is responsible for updating the Heritage Management Plan (WHMP Part 3), and for the updated WHMP Museums Victoria and the City of Melbourne agreed to work together on this updated for the combined REB and CG site.

In reviewing the 2013 WHMP, including the voice of Traditional Owners and other First Peoples who have associations with the place was prioritised. This Traditional Owner and First Peoples' Cultural Values Report provided a mechanism for that inclusion.

The updated WHMP for the REB and CG comprises five parts:

- Overview Site Management Plan (WHMP Part 1)
- Traditional Owners and First Peoples' Cultural Values Report (WHMP Part 2)
- Heritage Management Plan (WHMP Part 3)
- Carlton Gardens Master Plan (WHMP Part 4)
- Exhibition Reserve Master Plan (WHMP Part 5)

The study area sits within the traditional Country of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people of the East Kulin.

At the commencement of this project there was no Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) for the site of the REB and CG and broader World Heritage Environs Area (the study area), or the City of Yarra (within which a small section of the study area lies east of Nicholson Street [Figure 1]).

As of 1 July 2021, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (WWCHAC) were formally recognised as the RAP for the study area.

As consultation for this project began in December 2020, and site visits concluded in March 2021, three Traditional Owner organisations with a known interest in the study area at that time were consulted, WWCHAC, Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (BLCAC), and Boonwurrung Land and Sea Council (BLSC).

Subsequently, and notwithstanding that WWCHAC are now the RAP for the study area, the values and connections that BLCAC and BLSC have to the REB and CG are retained in this report, as those of Traditional Owners organisations with a broader connection to the area.

It should be noted that the views presented in this report by each Traditional Owner organisation may not reflect the views of the other Traditional Owner organisations, and that WWCHAC is now the

recognised RAP for the area. As the RAP, they have legislated responsibility under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* for the management and protection of cultural heritage within their geographic area and must be consulted in relation to any future decision-making regarding Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens.

In October 2020, GML Heritage Victoria (formerly trading as Context) was commissioned to undertake the Traditional Owners and First People's Cultural Values of the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens Precinct Report. The project is divided into three phases:

- Phase 1: Preparation of a draft background history of the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens.
- Phase 2: Traditional Owner consultation and preparation of a Preliminary Aboriginal Cultural Values Assessment.
- Phase 3: Broader consultation with other First People's organisations and individuals and preparation of a final Aboriginal Cultural Values Assessment.

1.1 Objectives

Within the context of the study area identified by Museums Victoria in the brief for this project (Figure 1.1), the purpose of this report is to:

- identify the potential for recorded Aboriginal heritage places within the study area that have tangible or intangible heritage values
- present a background discussion around understandings of Aboriginal cultural values and their application to heritage places
- provide this report as background material that will form the basis for consultation with the relevant Traditional Owner organisations and other First Peoples organisations and individuals regarding Aboriginal cultural values associated with the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens.

The results of the consultation have been used to develop an understanding of the cultural values of the site for First Peoples. It is intended that this Traditional Owner and First Peoples' Cultural Values Report is part of the updated WHMP and will be used as a reference for not only the WHMP as a whole but the other four parts as well.

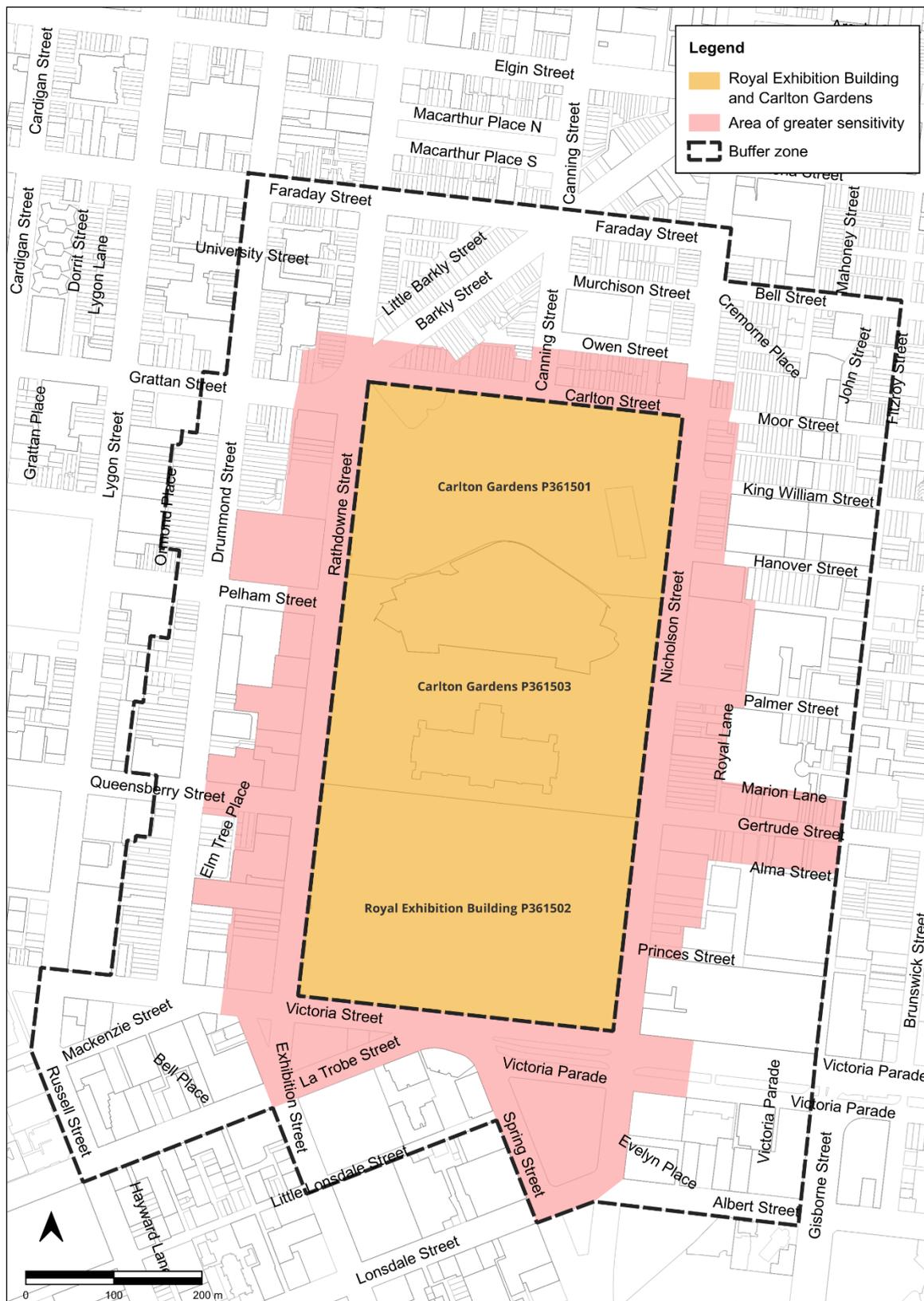


Figure 1.1 The study area. (Source: adopted from Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens Heritage Management Plan *First Peoples Engagement—Consultants Brief*)

1.2 Study area

The study area is situated in Carlton and interfaces to the south with the north-eastern area of the Melbourne CBD, and to the east with Fitzroy. It comprises the World Heritage listed site of the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens. This World Heritage site is a rectangular area of 26 hectares bounded by four city streets—Nicholson Street, Victoria Parade, Rathdowne Street and Carlton Street—along with a buffer zone of 55.26 hectares. The study area is bordered in the north by Faraday Street and Bell Street, in the west by property boundaries in Drummond Street, and in the east by Fitzroy Street. The southern extent follows Victoria Parade to the west, then zigzags along Exhibition, Little Lonsdale and Albert Streets before returning to Victoria Parade at its eastern extent (Figure 1.2).

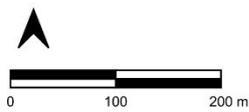
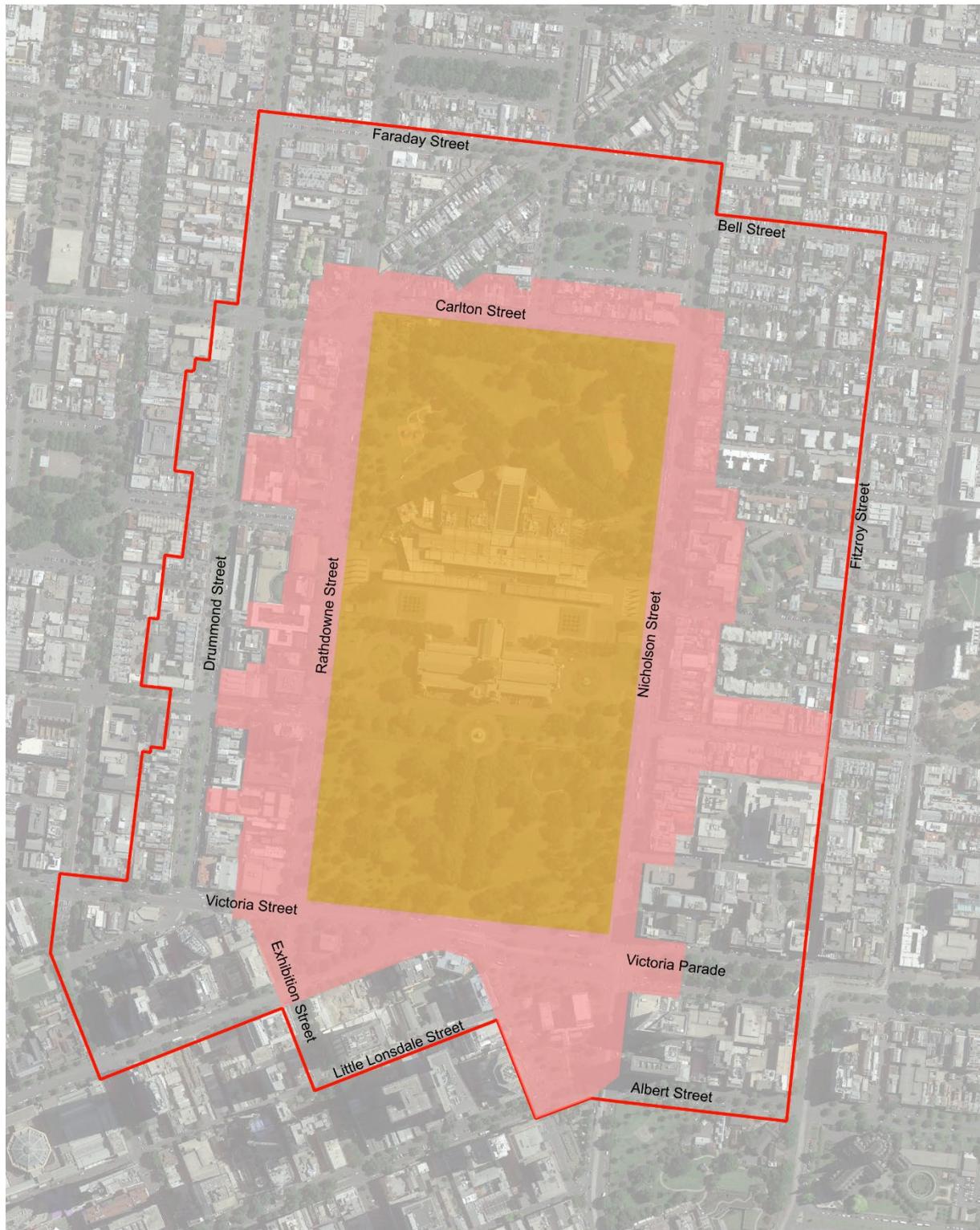
1.3 Methodology

This report is Phase 2 of a three-phase project to recognise the Aboriginal cultural values of the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens.

Phase 1 involved the preparation of the background history of the place through a review of historical, archaeological, geological and cultural information and documentation. Also included was a desktop investigation to identify potential or recorded Aboriginal heritage places within the study area that have tangible or intangible heritage values. Phase 1 concluded with the submission of the Draft Background History of the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens to Museums Victoria and the working group for review and comment. Feedback was incorporated into this background report, which was then provided to Traditional Owners for discussion as part of the consultation in Phase 2.

Phase 2 of this project began with consultation, facilitated by Ian Hamm, with Traditional Owner organisations Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (WWCHAC), Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (BLCAC), and Boonwurrung Land and Sea Council (BLSC). Drawing on information provided by the Traditional Owners as part of the consultation process, a draft Aboriginal Cultural Values Assessment was prepared. This assessment was provided to the Traditional Owner organisations that provided comments. The values and aspirations which were drawn from the cultural values recordings were then incorporated into the background history prepared in Phase 1 to form this Preliminary Traditional Owner and First Peoples Cultural Values Report.

Phase 3, which is currently underway, involves consultation with other First Peoples who were identified by the Working Group and through consultation with the Traditional Owner organisations. These consultations are being facilitated by Karen Milward. Once complete, the results of these consultations will be incorporated into the Traditional Owner and First Peoples Cultural Values for the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens Final Report as an addendum. The Final Report reflects that in light of the RAP decision, WWCHAC are now acknowledged as the Traditional Owners of the project area. Comments from BLCAC and BLSC have been retained as they represent the views of Traditional Owner organisations with a broader connection to the study area.



Legend

- World Heritage site buffer zone/study area
- Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens
- Area of greater sensitivity

Figure 1.2 The study area overlaid on an aerial photo, showing the site of Carlton Gardens and the World Heritage buffer zone. Note that the area of greater sensitivity is subject to revisions and may be modified. (Source: Nearmap November 2023 with GML overlay)

1.4 Language conventions

Some of the historical references and terminology used in reference to First Peoples in this report may be derogatory and cause offence. This is at times used where direct quotes are referenced and should be regarded as historical material only. The use of such language in no way reflects the views of the authors or acceptable contemporary language.

Imperial measurements have been used in the context of historical discussion.

A number of Aboriginal words have been referred to in the text, which are listed below with their meanings. Note that some Aboriginal terminology has various formats owing to inconsistencies in the historical (documentary) records.

Terminology	Meaning
Arweet	Elder (Boon Wurrung)
Dutigalla; Doutta Galla	A name used by John Batman (and other early settlers) in 1835 in reference to the wider Melbourne area. The name was subsequently adopted by surveyor Robert Hoddle as a parish name (c1840)
East Kulin	Refers to the confederacy of three tribal groups who share language and cultural connections. The word Kulin means 'people' in the Woi-wurrung and Boon Wurrung languages
Kulin	Refers to the alliance of five tribal groups in south central Victoria — Wurundjeri, Bunurong, Taungurung, Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung
Birrarung	'River of mists'; Yarra River
Boon Wurrung	The language of the Bunurong (Boonwurrung)
Bunurong (Boonwurrung)	One of the five tribal groups of the Kulin nation. Also referred to as the 'coastal tribe' or the 'Westernport tribe'.
Narm	Port Phillip Bay (Woi-wurrung)
Ngurungaeta	Head man or Elder (Woi-wurrung)
Taungurung	One of the five tribal groups of the Kulin nation, occupying the country north-east of Melbourne and often referred to in historical sources as 'the Goulburn tribe'
Wadawurrung	One of the five tribal groups of the Kulin nation, occupying the country from Werribee to Geelong
Woi-wurrung	The language of the Wurundjeri
Wurundjeri	One of the five tribal groups of the Kulin nation, the Wurundjeri were also referred to by settlers as the 'Yarra tribe' and sometimes as the 'Waverongs'. Their territory is the country that drains into Birrarung (Yarra River) and her tributaries

1.5 Authorship

This report was prepared by Dr Helen Doyle, Dr Janine Major, Leah Tepper, Gloria Gamboz, Juliet Berry and Emma Moore.

1.6 Acknowledgements

We wish to acknowledge the following staff from Museums Victoria and members of the project working for their assistance and guidance on this project.

- Museums Victoria: Chris Dupe, Ronnie Fookes, Shannon Faulkhead, and Michelle Stevenson
- Heritage Victoria: Amanda Bacon
- City of Melbourne: Kevin Walsh, Angela Hill, Fiona Finlayson and Kate Brocker
- National Trust of Australia (Victoria): Freya Keam
- First Peoples – State Relations (formerly Aboriginal Victoria): Paul Byrne-Moroney
- City of Yarra: Richa Swarup.

Special thanks to Ian Hamm for his assistance in facilitating consultations with Traditional Custodians.

1.7 Recognised heritage values

World Heritage List

World Heritage status is granted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to sites that satisfy that they are of cultural, historical, scientific, technical, architectural or other significance that is of outstanding universal value.

The Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2004 with a minor boundary modification listed in 2010. The site is a rectangular area of 26 hectares bounded by Nicholson Street, Victoria Parade, Rathdowne Street and Carlton Street in Carlton along with a buffer zone of 55.26 hectares.

The Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens was inscribed for its universal values according to criterion (ii): to exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design. Specifically:

The Royal Exhibition Building and the surrounding Carlton Gardens, as the main extant survivors of a Palace of Industry and its setting, together reflect the global influence of the international exhibition movement of the 19th and early 20th centuries. The movement showcased technological innovation and change, which helped promote a rapid increase in industrialisation and international trade through the exchange of knowledge and ideas.

National Heritage List

The National Heritage List is maintained by the Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW). It is a list of natural, historic and Indigenous places determined to be of outstanding heritage value to the nation. Once on the National Heritage List, a place is subject to the provisions of the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). The National Heritage List, which was established in 2003, replaced the Register of the National Estate (closed in 2007).

The Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens was included on the National Heritage List in 2004 (Place ID 105708 and Place File 2/11/033/0235).

Victorian Heritage Register

The *Heritage Act 1995* is administered by Heritage Victoria. The Heritage Act established the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) and is intended to protect places and sites that are primarily associated with non-Indigenous cultural heritage, although some of the places on the VHR may also relate to the activities of Aboriginal people in the post-contact period and may be of cultural significance to Aboriginal people. The *Heritage Act 1995* has been superseded by the *Heritage Act 2017* ('the Heritage Act'). The VHR and VHI are administered by Heritage Victoria.

The VHR provides a listing of places or objects, including buildings, structures, areas or precincts, which have been assessed as being of state cultural heritage significance using the assessment criteria established by the Heritage Council of Victoria. Places on the VHR have statutory protection under the Heritage Act.

The Heritage Act also confers blanket protection on all significant archaeological material that is over 75 years old and associated with the post-contact period, regardless of whether or not it is included on a statutory list.

The Royal Exhibition Building was listed on the Victorian Government Buildings Register in 1982. The Royal Exhibition Building was included as a heritage place on the Victorian Heritage Register in 1998 under the *Heritage Act 1995* (VHR H1501). The Carlton Gardens was added as an extension of the VHR registration in 2002. The VHR citation states that the site has historical, architectural, aesthetic, scientific and social significance, as follows:

The Royal Exhibition Building is historically significant as the only major extant nineteenth century exhibition building in Australia. It is one of the few major nineteenth century exhibition buildings to survive worldwide. Together with the associated landscaped gardens, the building forms one of the major surviving nineteenth century exhibition precincts in the world. The building demonstrates the wealth and confidence of the colony of Victoria in the late 1870s. It has been the stage for highly significant and historic national events, including the Melbourne Exhibition of 1880, the Centennial Exhibition of 1888, the opening of the Federal Parliament in 1901 and as the venue for the Victorian State Parliament from 1901 until 1927. The decorative scheme by John Anderson for the opening of Parliament in 1901 is of historical and aesthetic significance and is among the finest public art works in Victoria.

The Royal Exhibition Building is architecturally significant as one of the finest and largest nineteenth century buildings in Australia. The stylistic choice of Renaissance motifs and the modelling of the dome on that of Brunelleschi's Florence Cathedral is emblematic of the sense of confidence of the young colony of Victoria in 1880. The Royal Exhibition Building is architecturally significant as the largest design carried out by renowned Melbourne architectural firm Reed and Barnes, who were responsible for many of Melbourne's most prestigious public buildings, including the Melbourne Town Hall and the State Library.

The Carlton Gardens, the setting for the Royal Exhibition Building, are aesthetically significant for their nineteenth century 'Gardenesque' style featuring specimen trees, parterre garden beds, in a symmetrical design with the use of axial views and foci. The landscape features outstanding tree avenues, rows and specimen trees on the lawns, a curator's lodge, two lakes with islands, shrubberies and elaborate annual bedding displays along the southern promenade. The nineteenth century path layout is enhanced by magnificent avenues of trees, including the grand avenue of 26 Plane trees which frames the Exhibition Building dome, Elms, Cedar, White Poplar, English Oak and an uncommon avenue of 35 Turkey Oaks. Carlton Gardens is notable for the creative achievement demonstrating skillful

garden design, and a landscape character which features plantings of Pines, Cedar, Araucaria, Cypress, Gums, Figs, Pepper trees, Elms, Planes, Oaks, Poplars, Canary Island Date palms and Washington palms, that display contrasting colours and forms which enhances the Gardens, Royal Exhibition Building and the local urban area. Josef Hochgurtel's Exhibition Fountain of 1880 is the only known work of the artist in Australia and is historically significant as an expression of civic pride in Victoria's emerging international importance. Hochgurtel's fountain is the largest and most elaborate fountain in Australia, incorporating frolicking putti, fish-tailed Atlantes, goannas, platypus and ferns. The fountain and the 'Grand Allee' lined with Plane trees is integral to the setting of the Royal Exhibition Building.

*The Carlton Gardens are of scientific (botanical) significance for their outstanding collection of plants, including conifers, palms, evergreen and deciduous trees, many of which have grown to an outstanding size and form. The elm avenues of *Ulmus procera* and *U. x hollandica* are significant as few examples remain world wide due to Dutch elm disease. The Garden contains a rare specimen of *Acmena ingens* (only five other specimens are known), an uncommon *Harpephyllum caffrum* and the largest recorded in Victoria [Removed Sept 2010], *Taxodium distichum*, and outstanding specimens of *Chamaecyparis funebris* and *Ficus macrophylla*, south west of the Royal Exhibition Building.*

The Royal Exhibition Building and the Carlton Gardens are of social significance for their continuing involvement in the lives of Victorians. The buildings have hosted countless major exhibitions as well as other community uses such as an influenza hospital, wartime military use, migrant reception centre and a venue for several events during the 1956 Olympic Games. The gardens have been enjoyed by visitors for passive recreation, entertainment and social interaction and have been the venue for the successful International Flower and Garden Show.

Victorian Heritage Inventory

The Victorian Heritage Inventory (VHI) is a listing of all known historical archaeological sites and relics in Victoria. The Heritage Act defines 'archaeological sites' as any place that:

- (a) contains an artefact, deposit or feature which is 75 or more years old; and
- (b) provides information of past activity in the State; and
- (c) requires archaeological methods to reveal information about the settlement, development or use of the place; and
- (d) is not associated only with Aboriginal occupation of the place.

Sites on the VHI are accorded protection under the Heritage Act and require a consent, issued by the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria, to be interfered with in any way.

The Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens site is not included on the VHI. However, there are a number of sites listed on the VHI within the Area of Greater Sensitivity and Buffer Zone associated with the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens.

National Trust of Australia (Vic)

The Royal Exhibition Building and Josef Hochgurtel Fountain (B0842) are listed on the non-statutory register of the National Trust of Australia (Vic.). The National Trust recognises the Royal Exhibition Building for its historical and architectural significance, the Carlton Gardens for their scientific (botanical) significance, and both the building and the gardens for their social significance.

Heritage Overlays

The Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens (World Heritage Place) is included in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (HO) of the Melbourne Planning Scheme, as HO69.

The World Heritage Environs Area Precinct associated with the World Heritage Listing area of greater sensitivity is also included in the Schedule as HO361 of the Yarra Planning Scheme.

The South Fitzroy Precinct (Yarra Planning Scheme HO334) abuts the World Heritage Environs Area Precinct. The views and vistas of the REB from HO334 are a significant feature of the precinct, and the nineteenth-century development and character of the South Fitzroy Precinct contributes to the broader setting and context of the REB. There are multiple other individual heritage overlays within this precinct.

Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register

The Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register (VAHR) was established by the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (Vic) and is maintained by First Peoples—State Relations (formerly Aboriginal Victoria). Its purpose is to record places that are of ‘cultural heritage significance to the Aboriginal people of Victoria’. ‘Cultural heritage significance’, as defined by the Act, includes archaeological, anthropological, contemporary, historical, scientific, social or spiritual significance. Aboriginal intangible heritage (referring to the elements of living culture) can also be registered on the VAHR. The Act also provides for Aboriginal intangible heritage agreements, which allows Traditional Owners to identify and negotiate the terms under which registered Aboriginal intangible heritage may be used by others.

Inclusion on the VAHR is not based on a system of significance assessment, as is the case with other heritage registers, and its remit is to include all known places of ‘cultural heritage significance to the Aboriginal people of Victoria’. The Act protects all Aboriginal cultural heritage places and objects whether they are known and recorded on the VAHR or not.

With the exception of the VAHR registrations, Aboriginal values are not considered in any of the above listings. Three Aboriginal places (with four components) within the study area are listed on the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register. These are discussed in Section 3.3.1.

1.8 Previous heritage reports

Within the study area, the site of the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens is a long-established heritage place in Melbourne for which a number of earlier heritage reports have been prepared, including many prepared prior to the World Heritage Listing. A selection of significant previous reports in chronological order include:¹

- Willingham, Allan. ‘The Royal Exhibition Building, Carlton: A Conservation Analysis’. Report prepared for the Exhibition Trustees, November 1983.
- John Patrick Pty Ltd. ‘Carlton Gardens Conservation Analysis’. Report prepared for the City of Melbourne, June 2000.
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¹ Many of these are taken from Lovell Chen 2008, ‘Draft Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens Conservation Management Plan’, prepared for Heritage Victoria’, pp 3-4.

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- Lovell Chen 2008. 'Draft Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens Conservation Management Plan', prepared for Heritage Victoria.
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The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) and *Heritage Act 2017* (Vic) set out specific requirements for the management of World Heritage sites in Australia. In 2008, Lovell Chen prepared the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens Conservation Management Plan, which has been being updated as the Heritage Management Plan (WHMP Part 3).² The Heritage Management Plan notes in its Executive Summary that it incorporates feedback on the earlier Conservation Management Plan and other stakeholder consultation, but that consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples was to be undertaken in 2020 as a separate process.

A comprehensive World Heritage dossier was prepared by Heritage Victoria for the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens between 2004 and 2010 (there is a minor boundary modification in this material).

² Lovell Chen 2020, 'Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens Heritage Management Plan, Final Draft', prepared for the City of Melbourne and Museums Victoria.

2 Aboriginal cultural heritage

Pages 14 - 29 have been redacted because they contain culturally sensitive information.

Detailed information on known Aboriginal cultural heritage places and objects within Victorian can only be obtained through Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Register and Information System (ACHRIS).

The Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register (VAHR) is not a publicly accessible register as it contains culturally sensitive information. Information in the VAHR can only be accessed by people or organisations who need detailed information on cultural heritage places and objects to protect and manage them.

3 Brief history of the area

3 Brief history of the area

3.1 Timeline

Date	Event
40,000 BP	Aboriginal occupation of the Melbourne area
1803	Charles Grimes and his party travel up the Yarra at the future site of Melbourne
1835	Settlers arrive in Melbourne and unlawfully take up land; John Batman's treaty with Aboriginal Elders (Batman refers to the area as Douta Galla)
1836	Governor Richard Bourke declares Melbourne a township
1837	Survey of the Town of Melbourne by Robert Russell
1838	The Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate is established
c.1838–39	Native Police Corps is established in Melbourne; arrival of George Augustus Robinson
1839	Corroboree held at Parliament Hill
1841	Corroboree on the corner of Russell Street and Collins Street
1848	The Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate is abandoned
c.1850s	Use of the Carlton Gardens site as a rubbish site and manure dump
1851	Victoria becomes a colony; gold rushes commence; immigration increases
1852	The site of 65 acres is unofficially reserved for public recreation
1854	Melbourne's first exhibition building is erected in William Street
1854	Edward La Trobe Bateman designs a layout for the Carlton Gardens
1857	Select Committee of Inquiry into the Conditions of the Aborigines
1866–67	Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition is held in the Exhibition Building, William Street
1875	Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition, Melbourne Public Library
1879	Construction of the new Exhibition Building in Carlton Gardens
1880–81	Melbourne International Exhibition held at the Exhibition Building; Aboriginal cultural material is displayed
1884	The 1884 Jubilee Exhibition is held at the Exhibition Building
1885	Melbourne Aquarium is established
1886	<i>Aborigines Protection Act (Vic)</i> , also known as the 'Half Caste Act'. This forces many Victorian Aboriginal people off the missions and reserves.
1888–89	Melbourne Centennial Exhibition is held at the Exhibition Building; Aboriginal cultural material displayed
1890s	Cycling track is installed on the Exhibition Oval (Carlton Gardens)
1901	Australian Federation and the opening of the First Federal Parliament
1901–27	Victorian Parliament sits in the western annex of the Exhibition Building while the Federal Parliament occupies Victorian Parliament House
1902	Australian Federal International Exhibition is held at the Exhibition Building
1902	William Baldwin Spencer, Director of the then National Museum, writes to the Chief Commissioner of Police seeking support from the police to expand the museum's collection of Aboriginal Ancestral Remains and cultural material
1907	Women's Work Exhibition held at the Exhibition Building (includes Aboriginal women's exhibits)
1914–18	First World War
1919–20	The Exhibition Building is used as a hospital during the Spanish Flu pandemic

Date	Event
1924	Closure of Coranderrk Aboriginal Reserve; Aboriginal people resettle in Melbourne and at Lake Tyers, Gippsland
1927	Memorial Service for Anzac Day held at the Exhibition Building
1929	Onset of the Great Depression
1930	Christmas feast held for the poor of Melbourne, hosted and waited on by Sir Sidney Myer
1936	Establishment of the Australian Aborigines League by William Cooper and Margaret Tucker which became the Aborigines Advancement League (Victoria) in 1957
1939	Cummeragunja Walk-off due to poor conditions for Aboriginal people on the reserve; many of those who left Cummeragunja came to Melbourne
1939–45	Second World War; Exhibition Building is occupied by the RAAF and WAAAF
1949–62	Migrant hostel in the Carlton Gardens on what was known as the Exhibition Oval, the location of the plaza and museum today
1946	Tenor Harold Blair performs at the Exhibition Building
1948	Mention of Palais Royale Ballroom, Exhibition Building. The Palais Royale operated from at least 1927 and was later redeveloped and operated as the Royale Ballroom from April 1952 until 1968 when it was closed for renovations (which never eventuated).
1953	Melbourne Aquarium destroyed by fire
1967–71	Construction of the Atherton Gardens Housing Commission flats
1967	Referendum to amend the Australian Constitution to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as part of the population and the Commonwealth
1970	<i>Aboriginal Lands Act (Vic)</i>
1972	<i>Archaeological and Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act 1972 (Vic)</i>
1972	Museum of Victoria becomes the legal repository for Aboriginal Ancestral Remains
1980	Centenary exhibition of the Melbourne International Centenary Exhibition held at the Royal Exhibition Building. The building is also granted its 'Royal' title at this time.
1982	Royal Exhibition Building added to the Government Buildings Register
1983	<i>Museums Act 1983 (Vic)</i>
1984	Legal action taken against the University of Melbourne for possessing Aboriginal Ancestral Remains
1984	Berry collection is transferred from the University of Melbourne to Museum of Victoria
1985	Reburial of Aboriginal Ancestral Remains which had been held at the Museum occurs in the Domain
1988	Bicentenary celebration of the arrival First Fleet; protests in Melbourne against the celebration
1992	The Mabo decision is handed down by the High Court of Australia
1994	<i>Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)</i> comes into force on 1 January 1994
1996	Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett proposes new Melbourne Museum to be built at Carlton Gardens
1998	Royal Exhibition Building added to the VHR
1998	Exhibition Gardens Meeting Place added to the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register as an Aboriginal Historical Place
1998	Museum of Victoria renamed Museum Victoria
2000	Reconciliation Walk, Alexandra Gardens, Melbourne
2000	New Melbourne Museum building completed and officially opened
2001	Centenary of Federation celebrations
2004	The Royal Exhibition Building is inscribed on the World Heritage List and added to the National Heritage List

Date	Event
2006	<i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006</i> (Vic)
2007	Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2007 (Vic)
2008	Apology to the Stolen Generations by the Federal Government.
2010	<i>Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010</i> (Vic); first agreements are made
2016	<i>Aboriginal Heritage Amendment Act 2016</i> (Vic)
2016	Museum Victoria amalgamated with other museums to form Museums Victoria
2018	Aboriginal Heritage Regulations (Vic) revoke and replace the 2007 Regulations (as amended)

3.2 Introduction

The Royal Exhibition Building and the Carlton Gardens occupy Crown land—that is, land that has never been sold by the Crown (as represented by the State of Victoria). From the time of invasion and possession of by the British Empire in 1788, this land has not had any subsequent owners recognised by law. For Aboriginal people, this land remains Aboriginal Country, and settlement by the British colonists can be equated to ‘unsettlement’ of Aboriginal people. The *Uluru Statement from the Heart* declares that ‘this land has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown’.³² It is recognised as belonging to the Country of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung who are the Registered Aboriginal Party.

Since 1880 the Royal Exhibition Building, in its setting of the Carlton Gardens, has stood as a potent symbol of British imperialism and colonial progress, representing the nineteenth-century imperial capitalist mindset of seemingly unlimited expansion and prosperity through the appropriation of land from other sovereign nations and the exploitation of natural resources through sophisticated trade networks, cheap labour and new industrial processes. Established to showcase the success of the Colony of Victoria, this place embodies the dominant nineteenth-century trajectory of ‘discovery’, industrial and economic progress and material prosperity, and the development of middle-class taste, fashion and interests.

With this essential foundational purpose in mind, the Royal Exhibition Building and the Carlton Gardens can also be seen to represent what Aboriginal people have lost and been denied: what has been taken from them. The history and development of the site is closely tied to the injustices perpetrated by governments (including British, the State of Victoria and Australia) against Aboriginal people in Melbourne and across Victoria. As an overt symbol of imperial colonialism, the Royal Exhibition Building did more than most other single buildings in Melbourne’s history to obscure the sovereign rights that Aboriginal people have to their culture and to their Country, and to expropriate Aboriginal cultural material and identity (not only from Victoria and other parts of Australia). The wonders of the known world, covering the fields of science and technology, and art and culture, that were displayed on a lavish scale in exhibition palaces by the imperial powers and their colonial offshoots, as was the case with the Royal Exhibition Building, assumed imperial possession of Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal Ancestral Remains, and objectified Aboriginal people in constructed displays for public viewing. This legacy is part of the building’s history, and the history of the place more generally. It is important that the truth about the way this building functioned, and its implications for Aboriginal people, is acknowledged.

³² Uluru Statement from the Heart, 2018: www.ulurustatement.org.

In a recent discussion piece in the *Age* newspaper, James Lesh and Kali Myer ask, ‘What does it mean for a 21st-century Australian city to have a monument to the British Empire at its centre?’³³ This invites a deeper understanding and acknowledgement of the role of the Royal Exhibition Building in Melbourne’s history and consider how this should be understood in light of reconciliation and efforts to recognise colonial wrongs.

Understanding the purpose of this grand Melbourne building allows a better understanding of the treatment that Aboriginal people were subjected to, and their complete lack of agency in the way in which that their cultural traditions were exhibited. The story of the place from the 1870s to the early 1900s was one that was heavily encumbered with the injustices of cultural appropriation that was central to the wider treatment of Aboriginal people at the time. Likewise, the former museum sites in Melbourne, including buildings within the University of Melbourne and at the State Library of Victoria, have a similar legacy and carry the same burden of cultural theft and cultural appropriation.

The more recent history of the place, since c2000 with the opening of the new the Melbourne Museum—considered Victorian’s principal public museum of the State’s natural history, social history and Aboriginal history—has provided a more inclusive story of the history of Melbourne and Victoria. The Aboriginal story that is now told through Bunjilaka, which has been directed and curated by Aboriginal people telling their own story, represents a significant departure from the colonial model of the *colonisers* objectifying the *colonised* through the medium of the popular exhibition.

Looking beyond the boundaries of the rectangular parcel of Crown land that comprises the Carlton Gardens to the surrounding built-up urban area and north-eastern fringe of the city centre, there is a broader story to be told about Aboriginal Melbourne. The neighbouring residential area of Fitzroy, and to a lesser extent Carlton, has long associations with Aboriginal people as a place where Aboriginal people re-established connections and developed a civil rights platform from the early twentieth century. The Aboriginal community in Fitzroy has contemporary links with the Carlton Gardens that add another dimension to the Aboriginal history of the wider precinct.

3.3 Aboriginal Country

The Carlton Gardens was built on high ground on the north side of Birrarung (Yarra River), with its southern edge about 1200 metres from the river itself. The central Melbourne area was a long-established meeting place of the five tribes of the Kulin confederacy. During these meetings they would have conducted ceremonies, traded goods, arranged marriages and resolved disputes. Such gatherings mostly took place in the warmer months when food resources were plentiful. Like other areas of high ground in the vicinity of the lower Yarra, on both the north and south banks, the study area would have been an important meeting place. Being high ground, the area would have had strategic advantages and offered intermittent views towards the river and Narrm (Port Phillip Bay) beyond. Plains, spurs, valleys and hills converged to form a continuous landscape delineated by the river, its winding tributaries, and the shifting coastline of Narrm. The rivers, creeks and swamps provided fertile environments for plants and animals. Likened to a ‘temperate Kakadu’, the Melbourne area provided an abundance of plant and animal resources for Aboriginal people to enjoy prior to the arrival of British settlers.³⁴ William Thomas, Assistant Aboriginal Protector, noted in 1841 that the

³³ James Lesh and Kali Myers 2020, ‘This symbol of the past must also reflect our present and future’, *Age*, 12 November 2020.

³⁴ Tim Flannery (ed) 2002, *The Birth of Melbourne*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, p 8.

'splendid swamps by the Yarra' were favoured fishing spots for local Aboriginal people and regular meeting places for local clans.³⁵

3.4 The impact of settlement

The first permanent British settlers, led by John Batman (representing the Port Phillip Association) and John Pascoe Fawkner, arrived in present-day Melbourne in mid-1835 and took up land. Subsequent to August 1836, when Richard Bourke, the Governor of NSW, declared the settlement official, all of the area of Port Phillip was outside the 'limits of settlement' and was deemed illegal. John Batman purported to have made a treaty with the Aboriginal 'Chiefs' in June 1835, which entitled the Port Phillip Association to 600,000 acres of land, but the British Home Office declared the treaty invalid. Batman referred to the new settlement as Dutigalla (or Doutigalla), which he understood to be the local Aboriginal name for the place.³⁶

The site for the new township was selected on the north bank of Birrarung (the Yarra River), at the point in the river where the salty, tidal flow met with fresh water from upstream. This point in the river was marked by a rocky ford referred to as The Falls and provided an ideal place to settle because it allowed access to the open sea and also provided a reliable source of fresh drinking water.

A plan for the new township was drawn up in 1837 by assistant surveyor Robert Russell and completed by Robert Hoddle. The site of Carlton Gardens lay just outside the new township. It was not included in the land made available for sale and retained for public purposes. It would have been used, like much of the land on the fringes of the settlement, as an unofficial grazing area. At a distance from the river itself, it occupied the higher ground of Melbourne at the eastern end. The eventual alienation of this site as a public reserve, and later as formal gardens, can be explained by its physical location in relation to its distance from Birrarung (the Yarra River) and hence exclusion from Hoddle's town grid, which was within a 1.0 mile × 1.5 mile rectangle.³⁷

The population of the new township grew steadily, as did the number of livestock, which quickly reached the tens of thousands. Sheep and cattle were fattened on the rich herbage, trampling traditional Aboriginal food sources such as murrnong. Livestock was corralled initially by shepherds rather than fences. Aboriginal people were systematically dispossessed of the country they had occupied for tens of thousands of years; they were denied the right to occupy their own land and to practise their culture, as well as suffering from the loss of resources, introduced diseases and exposure to alcohol. They were victims of racially motivated violence and untold injustices. From the late 1830s and through the 1840s, the Aboriginal people of Melbourne were mostly camped on the south bank of Birrarung (Yarra River), where an Anglican Mission and a school was established in 1837. A second Aboriginal mission was subsequently established near the junction of Birrarung (Yarra River) and the Merri Creek, which also operated a school. Aboriginal people continued to move around the settlement and to travel significant distances out of Melbourne and back again. Assistant Protector William Thomas spent considerable time locating Aboriginal people and bringing them back to a designated camp, where he believed they would be safer. Thomas recorded over many years, from 1839 until 1862, the details of Aboriginal movements around Melbourne and further afield.³⁸

³⁵ Gary Presland 2009, *The Place for a Village: How nature shaped the city of Melbourne*, Museum Victoria, Melbourne, p 206.

³⁶ Bain Attwood with Helen Doyle 2009, *Possession: Batman's Treaty and the Matter of History*, Miegunyah Press, Carlton, p 54.

³⁷ This grid forms the Melbourne central business district and is bounded by Flinders Street, Spring Street, La Trobe Street and Spencer Street.

³⁸ Stephens (ed) 2014, *The Journal of William Thomas*, volume 1–3, VACL, Fitzroy.

Superintendent CJ La Trobe issued a proclamation in 1840, prohibiting Aboriginal people from entering the town proper.³⁹ To some extent this was to protect them from being exploited and being given alcohol, but this restriction on movement was another injustice imposed by the authorities.



Figure 3.1 (Top) Detail of a sketch of early Melbourne, dated 1843, showing Aboriginal people carrying spears. Although titled 'Collingwood', Presland suggests that this is more likely to depict the high ground of Fitzroy; this remains unclear. (Source: Presland 2009, *The Place for a Village*, p 174) (Bottom) Artistic impression of the view of Melbourne from the high ground of Eastern Hill (near Fitzroy), looking out across the settlement of Melbourne to Port Phillip Bay. (Source: Bernard Barrett 1970, *The Inner Suburbs*)

³⁹ Stephens 2014, vol 1, p 154.

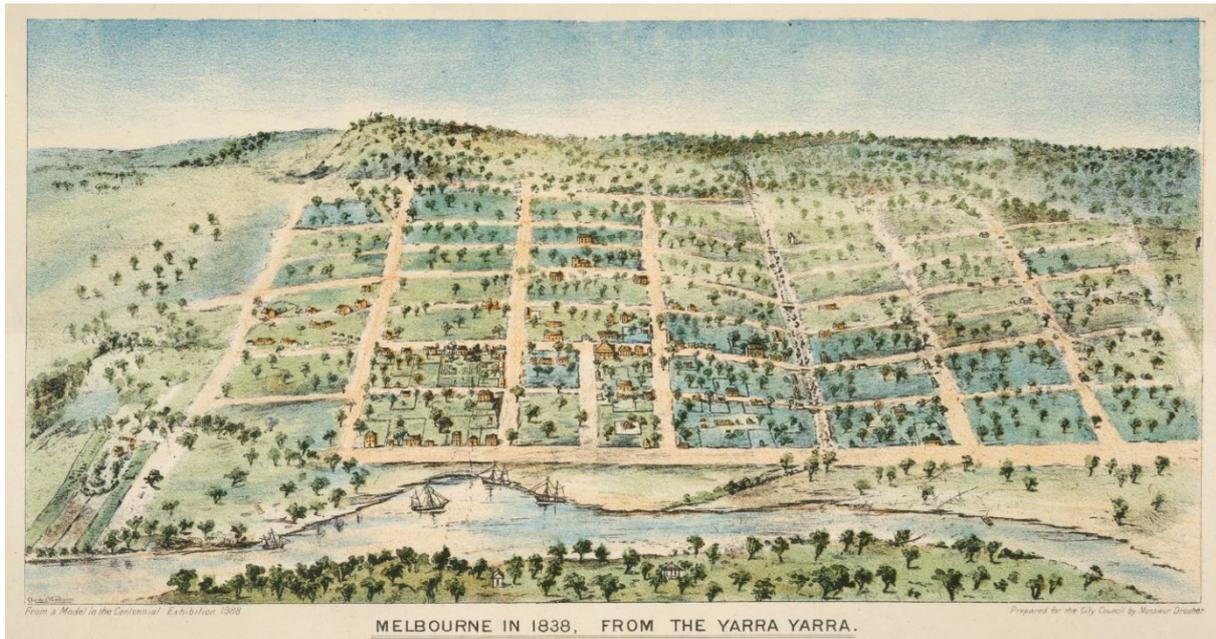


Figure 3.2 'Melbourne in 1838: From the Yarra Yarra', artistic rendition created by Clarence Woodhouse, 1888. The future site of the Carlton Gardens, shown to be timbered, is in the right far distance. (Source: State Library Victoria, BIB ID 1657219)

3.5 Modification of the landscape

William Thomas noted in 1840, only five years after the establishment of Melbourne, that 'the spot where Melbourne now stands ... was the regular rendezvous for the tribes known as Waworongs, Boonurongs, Barrabools, Nilunguons, Gouldburns [sic] twice a year or so'.⁴⁰ Large meetings of several hundred people were held on the site of Parliament House. In the period post-1835, corroborees were recorded by settlers as having been held in several places, including at the corner of Collins Street and Russell Street (Parliament Hill) and at the corner of Lonsdale Street and Elizabeth Street.

When the first settlers arrived in the mid-1830s, the site of the Carlton Gardens and the wider area would have been well timbered. On the 1837 plan of Melbourne completed by Hoddle based on Russell's original survey, the site is marked with trees.⁴¹ Boonwurrung woman Louisa Briggs recalled that when she came to Melbourne in c1837 the 'exhibition ground was all forest'.⁴² Another colonial chronicler James Bonwick noted that in 1840 there were accounts of 'parties losing themselves in the bush, going from town across the present Carlton Gardens'.⁴³ The tree species in this area were likely to have included River Red Gum, Drooping Sheoak, Black Wattle and Silver Wattle. This tree cover would have been gradually diminished through the 1840s as settlers removed timber for public and private use. In the 1840s, Melbourne's streets were dotted with large tree stumps, indicating that there had been some sizeable trees through the area.⁴⁴

The area stretching from Eastern Hill and around the Carlton Gardens, at the eastern end of the settlement, was relatively high ground and there was some run-off from this area, which fed down to the river. Williams (or Townend) Creek, a tributary of the Yarra that flowed along the route of present-

⁴⁰ Cited in Gary Presland 1994, *Aboriginal Melbourne*, p 35, taken from Bunj Consultants 2002, p 6.

⁴¹ Robert Russell 1837, Plan of the Township of Melbourne (SLV).

⁴² Carolyn Briggs 2014, *The Journey Cycles of the Boonwurrung*, 2nd edition, Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages, Melbourne, p 33.

⁴³ James Bonwick 1857, *Early Days of Melbourne*, Jas J Blundell & Co, Melbourne, p 25.

⁴⁴ Andrew Brown-May 1995, *Melbourne Street Life*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Kew, p 31.

day Elizabeth Street, had its headwaters in Carlton. A small intermittent stream ran from the Carlton Gardens in a westerly direction (down the route of Little Lonsdale or Lonsdale Street) to Williams Creek. Figure 3.4 shows the proximity of Williams Creek and the intermittent stream to the study area.

It is likely that the site of Carlton Gardens still had some tree cover in 1852, when the site was first set aside for public purposes. Yet the natural beauty of the site was also compromised through its use as a rubbish dump in the 1850s.⁴⁵ While the large trees that had stood within the central town layout were felled through the 1840s, the area outside the town grid was more likely to have its original vegetation preserved, notwithstanding the removal of trees, often illegally, for private use. The survival of large trees on the site suggests a habitat for birds and other animals would have been preserved at that time.

The site was reserved in 1852 and fenced in c1854. By 1854, there was also a ‘watch house’ on the site on the Nicholson Street side; this was most likely a permanent police presence.⁴⁶

Although La Trobe Bateman’s 1856 design for Carlton Gardens was executed, the only surviving design elements are the curvilinear paths located to the south of the gardens and the locations of the entrances.⁴⁷ It is possible that some of original vegetation remained at the site in the 1870s, judging by a statement in the *Excursionist’s Handbook*. The author, Henry Thomas, noted that ‘unhappily the skill like that of Mr. Hodgkinson has not been lavished here. Nature has been permitted to have, too much, her own way.’⁴⁸ However, this might also refer to the plan not being maintained and simply nature getting unwieldy, rather than original trees being extant.

From 1836 until 1852 the site was unalienated, which meant it was an area that was available for Aboriginal people to use. Being outside the town centre, it was not ‘off limits’ to Aboriginal people, although there was no guarantee that authorities would not ask Aboriginal people to move on.

Developing the Carlton Gardens involved the erasure of the original landscape through the modifications that were made. The watercourse that flowed from this point, and along the route that would become Lonsdale Street, was drained. Whereas in other public parks and gardens there were efforts to preserve large and notable trees, for example in the Botanic Gardens, the Fitzroy Gardens and elsewhere, there does not appear to have been such a policy in place here and virtually all, if not in fact all, the original vegetation was removed. There is no record of scarred trees being preserved at the Carlton Gardens as they were in other public parks, which is not to say however that there were none.

Despite some efforts to ‘improve’ the site, its lack of beauty drew criticism. Clement Hodgkinson had recommended that a ‘large sheet of water’ be constructed at the Carlton Gardens in 1873.⁴⁹ An artificial lake was formed at the high point of the grounds as part of a new landscape scheme designed in 1879 by Nicholas Bickford to complement the new Exhibition Building. Earthworks were

⁴⁵ Frank Thring, early film footage of Melbourne, 1931, viewed on YouTube.

⁴⁶ Thomas Ham 1854, Plan of the City of Melbourne, Cyril Mason, Melbourne.

⁴⁷ Anne Neale 2005, ‘The Garden Designs of Edward La Trobe Bateman (1816–97)’, *Garden History*, vol 33 (2), p 228.

⁴⁸ Henry Thomas 1873, *Melbourne Handbook of Recreations: And handbook for 1873*, H Thomas, Melbourne, p 208.

⁴⁹ Clement Hodgkinson 1873, ‘Parks and Gardens’, *VPP*, no 50, 1873, John Ferres, Government Printer, Melbourne, p 2.

carried out in 1879–80 to provide a more suitable area for a floral display at the front (southern) approach.⁵⁰

In many ways the Carlton Gardens represented not only the destruction of the Aboriginal landscape but the cultural erasure of the Aboriginal history of the place. Through the development of a formal garden in 1854, and then a new more grandiose landscape design in c1880, the development of a new landscape scheme and the construction of the Exhibition Building itself, the site became a place of overt imperial iconography.

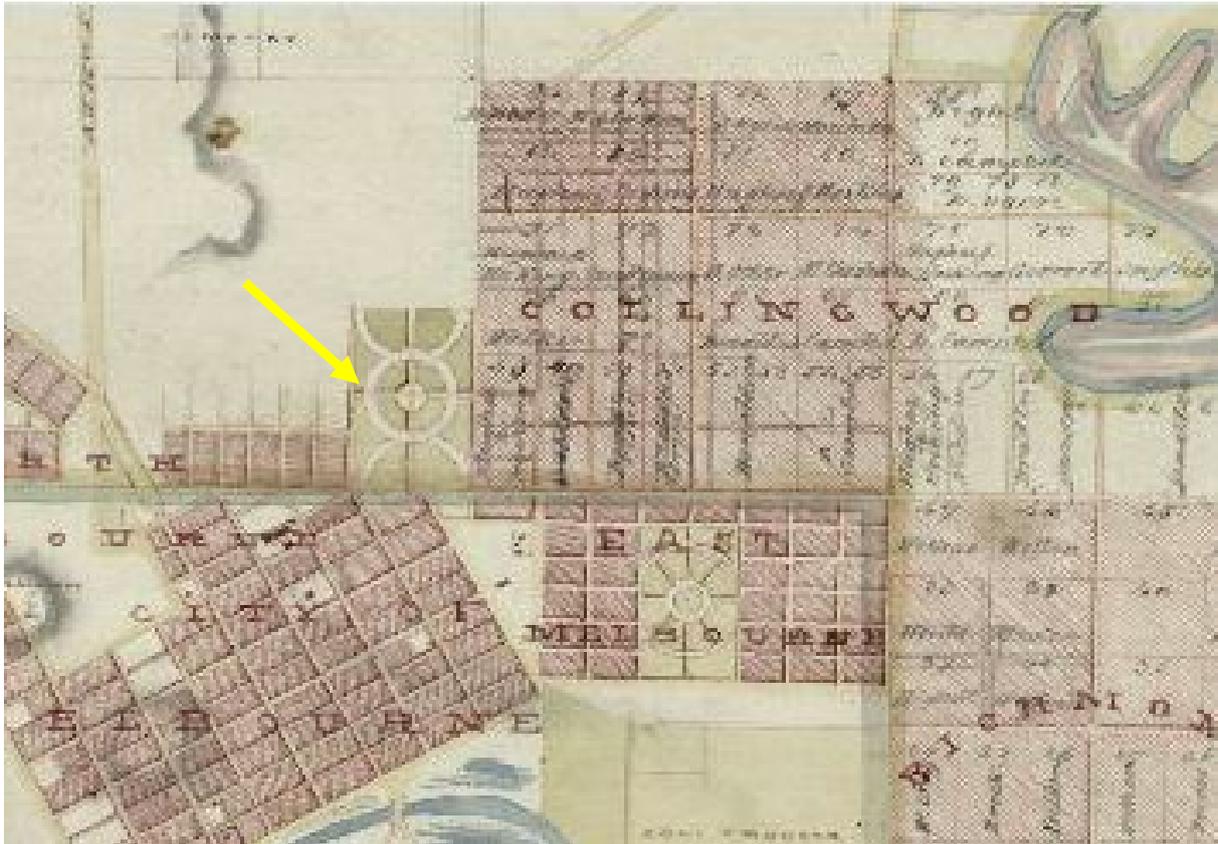
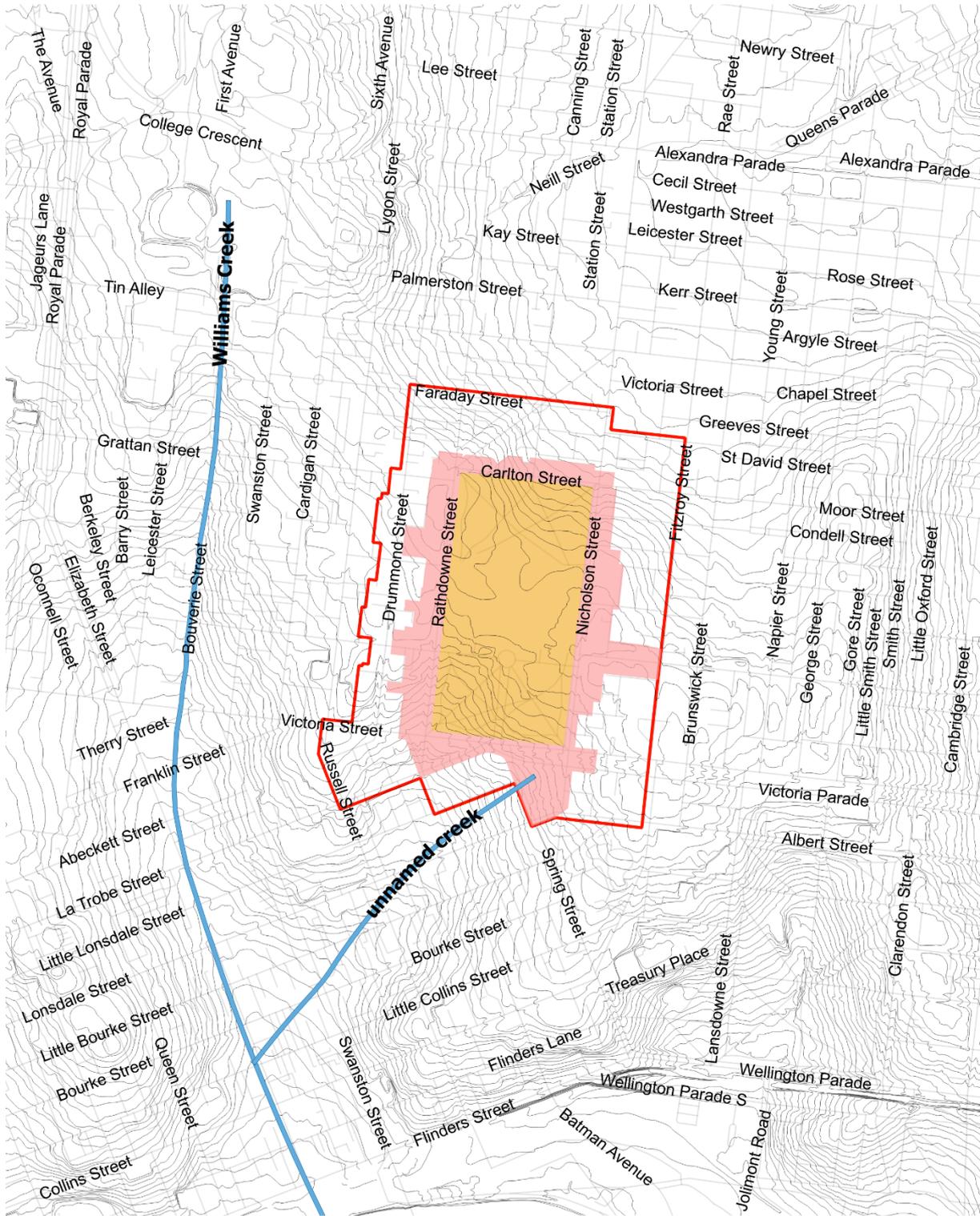


Figure 3.3 Detail from 'Plan of the Parish of Jika Jika', undated [c1854], showing the Carlton Gardens (arrowed) with little development to the north and west. (Source: State Library Victoria with GML overlay)

⁵⁰ Dunstan 1996, pp 94–95.



Legend

- World Heritage site buffer zone/study area
- Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens
- Area of greater sensitivity
- Contour (1m)
- Former waterway

Figure 3.4 Location of the former waterways that defined the landscape in 1837, shown in proximity to the study area. (Source: GML)

3.6 Containment of the landscape, 1854–1925

From the time the site was reserved for public recreation in 1852, there continued to be Aboriginal people living in Melbourne. The city also attracted Aboriginal people from outside Melbourne. Areas of Crown land in the central city that were reserved as public parks and gardens provided places where Aboriginal people could go.

From the mid-1850s the site was developed as the formally laid out Carlton Gardens according to a plan by landscape designer Edward La Trobe Bateman, a cousin of Governor Charles La Trobe.⁵¹ Once the site was laid out, it would have become less accessible and less inviting to Aboriginal people. Although the site remained Crown land it had been enclosed with a fence by c1854, probably with locked gates. Implementing the plan of La Trobe Bateman would have required the removal of a large proportion of the indigenous vegetation. By the standards of prevailing good taste, the gardens at this time would have been a salubrious place. They were ornamented with a fountain (in the centre of the site) and laid out with a network of pedestrian paths and a collection of exotic trees.

In the late 1870s, Melbourne's civic leaders were planning an ambitious international exhibition. The young city was considered 'a jewel in the crown' of the British Empire. It had developed dramatically over the previous twenty years as a result of the Victorian gold rushes and had also benefited from significant pastoral wealth. Melbourne society was prosperous and cultured, with fine institutions, a well-laid-out city, and governed by a democratically elected Victorian Parliament.

The construction of the Exhibition Building in 1879, incorporating an ambitious blend of architectural styles, imposed a foreign aesthetic on the landscape. Architects Joseph Reed and Frederick Barnes were influenced by Rundbogenstil style and modelled the dome on Brunelleschi's Duomo in Florence. Evoking the Renaissance, the building represented a monument to the Enlightenment, as well as a celebration of the prosperity brought by imperial colonialism and industrial capitalism. Occupying a central position in Carlton Gardens, it stood as a cathedral to colonial progress, to wealth and prosperity, and to achievement in the arts and sciences. Underlying the success of Melbourne and Victoria in the nineteenth century, however, was the exploitation of land and resources of the Kulin.

In 1880 sections of shrubbery within the gardens were fenced off for the 1880 Exhibition, in part to help control spectators and paid admissions. Internal fencing was introduced much more extensively for the 1888 Exhibition, as well as the development of a brick curator's lodge, which coincided with the re-establishment of the North Garden after the close of the Exhibition that year. John Guilfoyle, brother of William Guilfoyle, occupied the lodge from 1891 after being appointed curator.⁵²

There were other sites in the broader precinct that have associations with Aboriginal people. Opposite the Carlton Gardens in La Trobe Street, and still within the study area, is the building of the Royal Society of Victoria, which was established as an institution for scientific learning in 1854. Modelled on the Royal Society in London, the Royal Society of Victoria promoted and published works on the scientific and anthropological study of Aboriginal people. It is likely that the institution held cultural material of Aboriginal people at different times at its premises in La Trobe Street. The Royal Society of Victoria also organised the ill-fated Burke and Wills expedition of 1860.

⁵¹ Georgina Whitehead 2007, *Civilising the City: A history of Melbourne's public gardens*, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne, pp 130–39.

⁵² Lovell Chen 2008, 'Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens Conservation Management Plan', p 62.



Figure 3.5 Sketch by Nicholas Chevalier depicting Aboriginal men at the former Exhibition Building in William Street presenting Governor Bowen with an address to Queen Victoria on the occasion of the Queen's Birthday in 1863. The figure leading the group of Aboriginal men appears to be Simon Wonga and the man next to him wearing a black jacket and white waistcoat appears to be William Thomas. (Source: *Leader*, 30 May 1863)



Figure 3.6 Detail from an early view of Carlton Gardens, c1865. (Source: State Library Victoria, Accession number H2491)

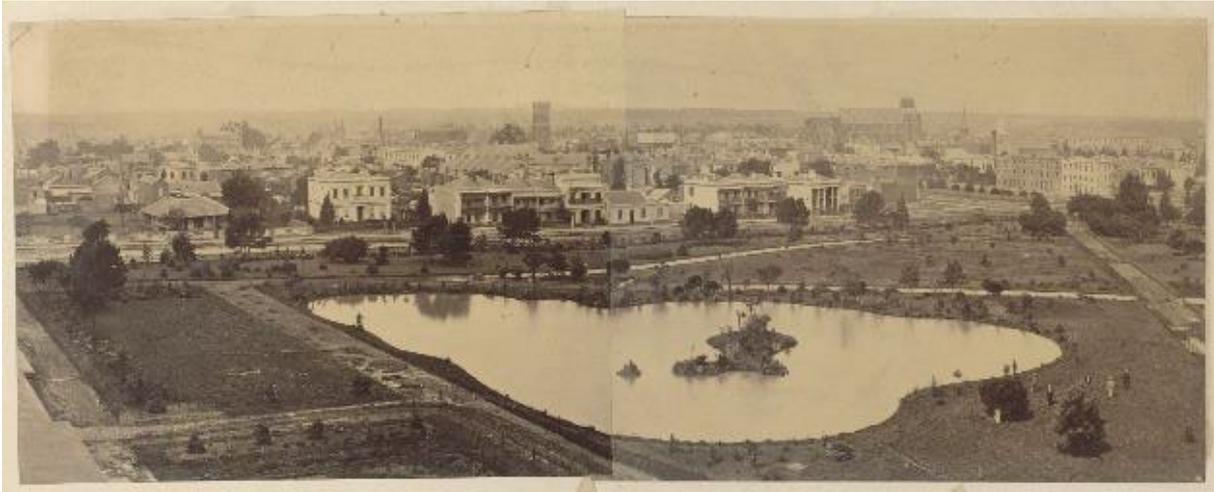


Figure 3.7 Charles Nettleton, Carlton Gardens, looking southeast towards Victoria Parade, 1880. (Source: State Library Victoria, Accession number H14127)



Figure 3.8 Detail from photograph of the Carlton Gardens taken by Charles Nettleton from the Exhibition Building dome in 1883, looking south. This site is fenced, and a lake has been constructed. (Source: State Library Victoria, Accession number H848)

3.7 The public display of Aboriginal culture

3.7.1 Melbourne's early museums and exhibitions

The Exhibition Building was one in a series of exhibition spaces in Melbourne used for the display of Aboriginal cultural material. This included highly sensitive material, such as secret or sacred objects and Aboriginal Ancestral Remains, which was often taken without permission and displayed without due acknowledgement as to its provenance. Other sites that pre-dated the Royal Exhibition Building as an exhibition space included the Exhibition Building in William Street (1854), the Melbourne University Museum (c1850s), and the Melbourne Public Library (1866 Intercolonial Exhibition and 1875; also its ongoing role as Melbourne's main museum up to 2000). At the 1866 Intercolonial

Exhibition a book of Aboriginal languages was published and displayed for the occasion to assist with the interpretation of the cultural objects displayed.⁵³

Melbourne's exhibition halls and buildings were also places of political agitation, from the presentation of a letter to the Governor of Victoria for Queen Victoria in 1863, which took place at the Melbourne Exhibition Building in William Street, to the more recent lobbying for the return of Aboriginal Ancestral Remains that has occurred from the 1980s onwards.

There is a long history of Aboriginal culture being acquired, collected, and displayed in Melbourne—from the various colonial exhibitions held in Melbourne from 1854 to Max Kreitmeyer's wax displays in his Bourke Street studio through the 1870s and 1880s. The first public museum in Melbourne was located at the University in Parkville from the c1860s. This was the main repository of Aboriginal cultural material and Aboriginal Ancestral Remains that were collected for scientific, anthropological and cultural purposes. Even after the creation of the Museum at the Public Library building, Aboriginal Ancestral Remains continued to be deposited at the University Museum—for example in 1929 when human remains, presumed to be Aboriginal Ancestral Remains, were uncovered during building works at the Shrine of Remembrance.⁵⁴

The Melbourne Museum holds a large number of important Aboriginal objects in its collection, including carved timber weapons, tools and implements, woven baskets and jewellery, both from Victoria and elsewhere in Australia. The collection includes a bark canoe made from Mountain Ash and used on Birrarung (Yarra River), which was collected in the 1850s by John Buchan, a resident of Studley Park, Kew, from Aboriginal people who were camping near his home.⁵⁵ Other important items are represented by the extensive AW Howitt Collection, which includes rare wax recordings of Aboriginal language being spoken in Victoria in the late nineteenth century.⁵⁶

The cultural material held by the Melbourne Museum represents a legacy of destroying Aboriginal culture and of non-Aboriginal people taking something that was not theirs to take. The collection, although held at different repositories over time, including the University of Melbourne and the Melbourne Public Library, also represents a legacy of voyeurism regarding Aboriginal culture.

3.7.2 Representing Aboriginal culture at the colonial exhibitions

The Melbourne International Exhibition of 1880–81 comprised many 'courts' from all corners of the world and included displays of Aboriginal cultural material (including tools, weapons etc), comprising material belonging to Aboriginal people from Victoria and other colonies. The South Australian Court at the 1880–81 Exhibition included a diorama depicting Aboriginal life (see Figure 3.10). This was designed by the English journalist Richard Twopeny, who was living in Adelaide at the time.⁵⁷ The current interior decorative scheme of the building includes a series of small 'representative' plaster heads, including a plaster-cast head of an Aboriginal figure, retained from decoration for the 1880 Melbourne International Exhibition.

The Jubilee Exhibition was held at the Exhibition Building in 1884 to celebrate the jubilee of the first permanent settlement in Victoria. This was a smaller and more commercial venture than the other

⁵³ Anonymous, *Vocabulary of Dialects Spoken by Australian Natives*, Masterman, Melbourne, 1867.

⁵⁴ *Argus*, 13 November 1929, p 10; *Herald*, 14 November 1929, p 1.

⁵⁵ Deborah Tout-Smith (ed) 2009, *Melbourne: A city of stories*, Museum Victoria, Melbourne, p 22.

⁵⁶ Melbourne Museum: <https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/articles/14428>.

⁵⁷ State Library South Australia, <https://collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/resource/B+72445/58>.

exhibitions of the 1880s. It included a display of terracotta statues of Aboriginal figures made by Graham Ferry. The figures were arranged in a campsite in a fern gully.⁵⁸

The 1888 Melbourne Centennial Exhibition was a celebration of the output of the nations of the world and the words 'Victoria Welcomes All Nations' were written in a mural under the dome. On this occasion there were also exhibits of Aboriginal cultural material as well as a display of Aboriginal figures made in wax by Max Kreitmeyer.⁵⁹ The NSW Court included a scene depicting the arrival of Captain Cook at Botany Bay and this included wax figures of two Aboriginal people on the shore.⁶⁰ The Ancestral remains of the Tasmanian Nuenonne woman Truganini were first placed on public display at the Melbourne International Exhibition in 1888; they were subsequently displayed at the Tasmanian Museum in Hobart for around 70 years. This was done in spite of her dying wish that her remains not be interfered with after death, and that she be laid to rest in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel.⁶¹

Few Aboriginal people attended the exhibitions of the 1880s as visitors, although some did. This included a group of 40 people from the Maloga Mission near Echuca, who visited the Melbourne International Exhibition in January 1881. They arrived by train and camped at Brighton Beach. A group from Maloga Mission also visited in 1888, again camping at Brighton Beach and attending the event over several days.⁶² During the 1880s and until the early twentieth century, Aboriginal people were more likely to be represented as part of displays of material within the Exhibition Building, such as cultural items and in dioramas, rather than to be visitors to the site. An image from a French journal in 1881 depicts Aboriginal people at the entrance to the Exhibition Building asking for money from those attending the Melbourne International Exhibition.⁶³

⁵⁸ Dunstan 1996, p 164.

⁵⁹ Centennial International Exhibition, Melbourne 1888, *The Official Catalogue of Exhibits, etc., Centennial International Exhibition, Melbourne, 1888–9*, Mason, Firth and McCutcheon, Melbourne; Dunstan 1996, p 155.

⁶⁰ *Sydney Mail*, 11 August 1888, p 285.

⁶¹ Cassandra Pybus 2020, *Truganini: Journey through the Apocalypse*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest (NSW), pp 265–66.

⁶² Dunstan 1996, p 125; *Oakleigh Leader*, 22 December 1888, p 6.

⁶³ Lynette Russell 2003. 'An Unpicturesque Vagrant': Aboriginal Victorians at the Melbourne International Exhibition 1880', *La Trobe Journal*, no 93–94, September 2014, pp 77–81.

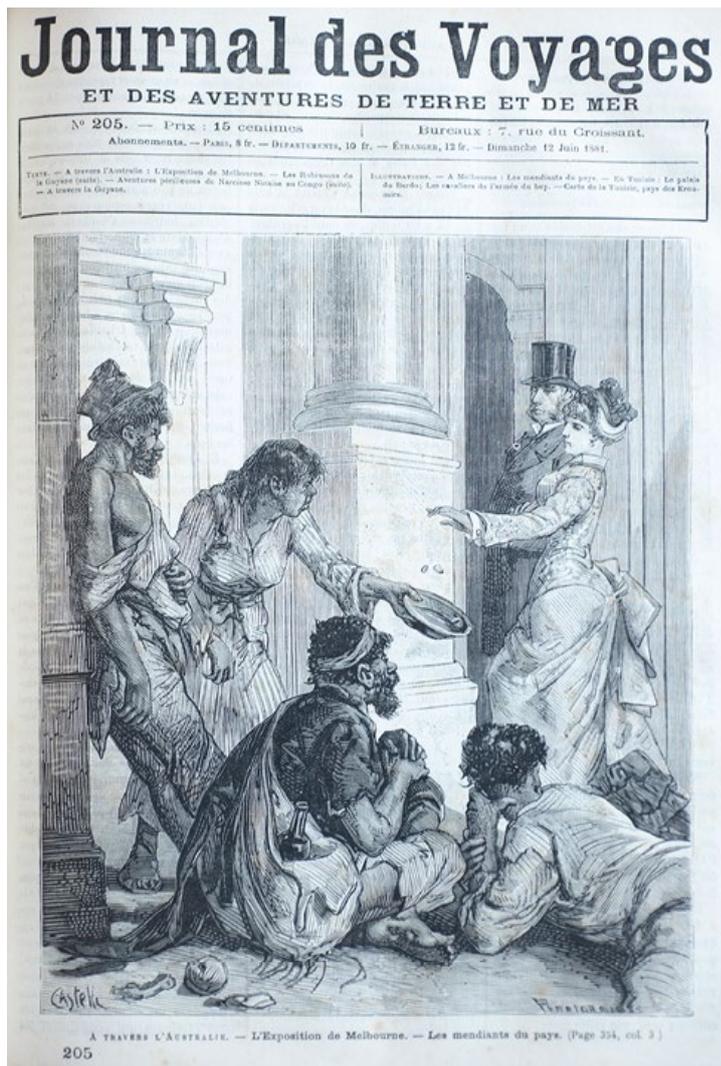


Figure 3.9 Image of Aboriginal people at the entrance to the Melbourne International Exhibition in 1881, taken from the French publication, *Journal des Voyages*, June 1881. (Source: reproduced in Leigh Boucher and Lynette Russell (eds) 2015, *Settler Colonial Governance in Nineteenth-century Victoria*, ANU Press, Canberra, p 41)

The display of living Aboriginal people themselves was considered again in 1888 but it was thought that there was not a suitable place available for this in the Carlton Gardens. Instead, an Aboriginal family from Coranderrk was set up in a mia mia at the Zoological Gardens in Royal Park upon the request of its director, Albert Le Souef. Le Souef had relocated some mia mias from Coranderrk to the Zoo in 1882 to create an 'Aboriginal encampment', and he considered that the Melbourne International Exhibition was an opportune time for the mia mias to be 'inhabited', in order to satisfy the interests of visitors to Melbourne.⁶⁴ During the Centennial International Exhibition in 1888, visitors to Melbourne who wished to see an Aboriginal camp were also encouraged to go to Brighton Beach to observe the camp of visitors from the Maloga Mission.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Lucy Salt 2014, 'Looking Again: Tom Nicholson, Tony Birch and Royal Park, Melbourne', *Meanjin*, vol 73, no 4.

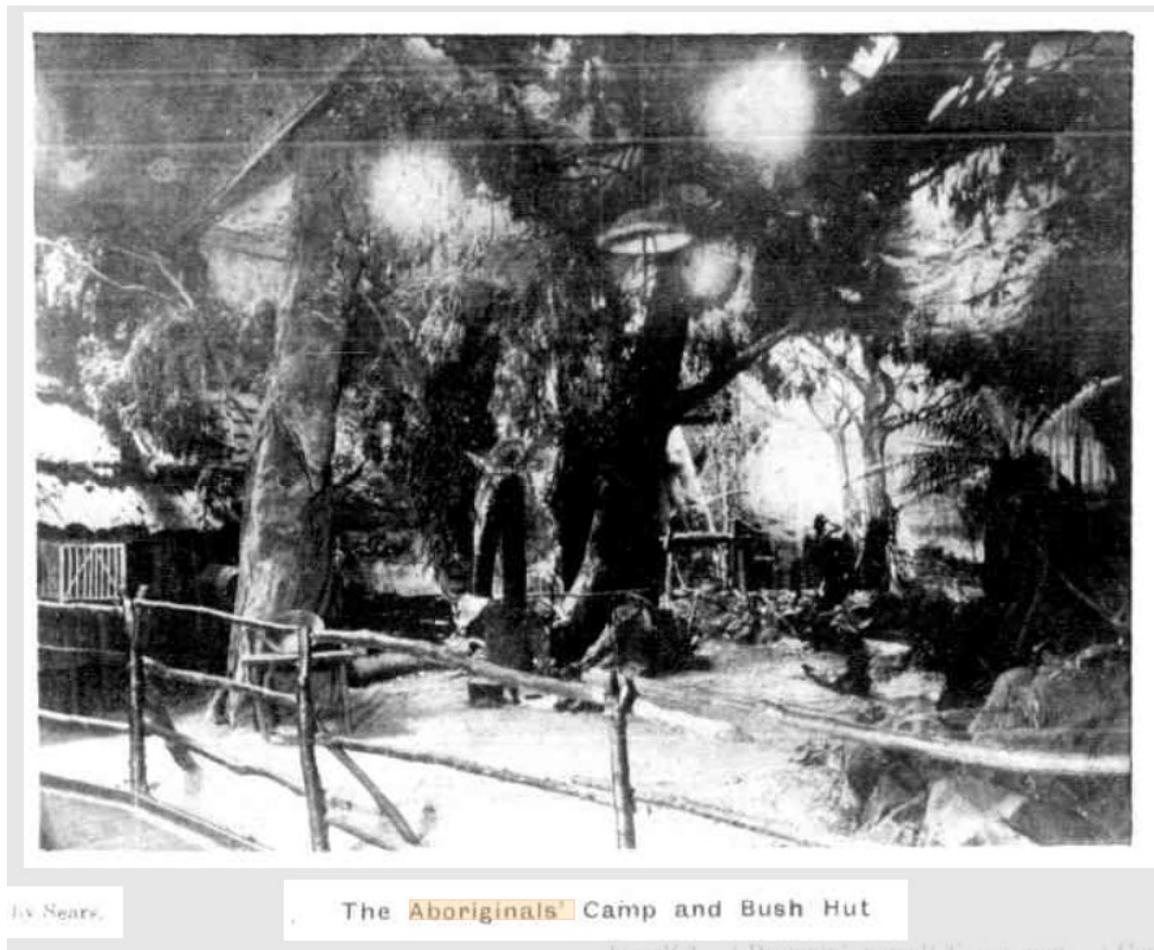
⁶⁵ *Oakleigh Leader*, 22 December 1888, p 6.



Figure 3.10 'Bush scene' diorama in the South Australian Court, Melbourne International Exhibition, 1880–81. (Source: Museums Victoria, ref. MM107848)

From 1885 the north-eastern annex of the Exhibition Building was used for the Melbourne Aquarium. The displays of Aboriginal life that had been constructed for the 1888 exhibition were retained and relocated to the Aquarium; see image published in 1905 (Figure 3.11). The 'Ethnographic Court' included Aboriginal weapons and implements and other ethnographic items.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ *Punch* (Melbourne), 28 December 1905, p 13; Dunstan 1996, pp 225–27.



by Sears.

The **Aboriginals'** Camp and Bush Hut

Figure 3.11 Aboriginal display at the Exhibition Building. (Source: *Melbourne Punch*, 28 December 1905, p 13)



Figure 3.12 Canoe attributed to Wurundjeri, collected from an Aboriginal camp on the Yarra River at Kew in the 1850s. Melbourne Museum Collection. (Source: Museums Victoria, ref X45168)



Figure 3.13 Sister basket, Coranderrk, made by Jemima Wandin Murphy, c1910s, Melbourne Museum Collection. (Source: Museums Victoria ref. X72537)

3.7.3 Aboriginal Ancestral Remains at the Melbourne Museum

In 2000 the Melbourne Museum was relocated to its present site at the Carlton Gardens, accommodated within a new museum building. Also relocated to the new site was a substantial collection of Aboriginal Ancestral Remains. These, along with secret and sacred objects and other Aboriginal cultural material, had been systematically collected and transferred to the museum since their oftentimes earlier looting by colonists from the mid-nineteenth century. The systematic collection of Aboriginal Ancestral Remains began in earnest in the early 1900s, following a request from Walter Baldwin Spencer, Director of the then National Museum, to the Chief Commissioner of Police, Thomas O’Callaghan, for police assistance in expanding the museum’s collections with Aboriginal Ancestral Remains and objects.⁶⁷

The museum not only brought this collection with it to the Carlton site but also brought with it the colonial legacy of collecting and studying human remains of Indigenous populations. This practice was underpinned by the general acceptance in the nineteenth and early twentieth century of western theories of race and the normalisation of stealing and exploiting human remains from Indigenous populations worldwide.⁶⁸ Most notably among the Aboriginal Ancestral Remains donated to the museum were the Berry collection (transferred from the University of Melbourne in 2002)⁶⁹ and the Murray Black Collection from the 1950s.

Richard Berry was the Professor of Anatomy at the University of Melbourne from 1906 to 1909. He was interested in studying the similarities between Tasmanian and mainland Australian Aboriginal people. His research focused largely on craniometry (the study of brain size and shape to determine evolutionary ‘progress’ or intelligence) and he was a well-known advocate for eugenics—a pseudo-science used to justify notions of white supremacy, assimilation policies, and the institutionalisation and sterilisation of undesirable elements of society.⁷⁰ Following a recent successful campaign Berry’s name was removed from his namesake building at the University of Melbourne owing to the offence it caused to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people;⁷¹ to have his name associated with a collection of Aboriginal Ancestral Remains is arguably more offensive.

George Murray Black was a civil engineer and amateur collector who was commissioned by the University of Melbourne Medical School and the Australian Institute of Anatomy Canberra to provide them with Aboriginal Ancestral Remains. He ‘worked’ predominantly in northern Victoria, the Riverina, and eastern South Australia, where he desecrated hundreds of Aboriginal burial sites to furnish these institutions with Aboriginal Ancestral Remains and associated objects. The University of Melbourne collection was transferred to the Museum of Victoria, as it was then known, in 1984.

Collectively, Berry and Black were responsible for the removal of over 1200 Aboriginal Ancestral Remains from their places of respectful burial into the custody of the Museum of Victoria. At the time,

⁶⁷ Rob McWilliams 2016, ‘Resting Places: A history of Australian Indigenous Ancestral Remains at Museum Victoria’, p 2: <https://museums victoria.com.au/collections-research/repatriation-of-ancestral-remains/>.

⁶⁸ Jordi A Rivera Prince 2015, ‘Can the repatriation of the Murray Black Collection be considered an apology? Colonial institutional culpability in the Indigenous Australian fight for decolonization’, *In Situ*, Penn Libraries, University of Pennsylvania, vol. 5, issue 1, Article 5, p 1, <https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1018&context=insitu> accessed 20 November 2020.

⁶⁹ McWilliams 2016, p 5.

⁷⁰ Gary Foley 2012, ‘Eugenics, Melbourne University and Me’, *Tracker Magazine*, May 2012, <http://www.kooriweb.org/foley/essays/tracker/tracker10.html>; M Cawte 2008, ‘Craniometry and Eugenics in Australia: RJA Berry and the quest for social efficiency’, *Australian Historical Studies*, vol 22, no 86, p 35.

⁷¹ Foley 2012.

the Murray Black Collection was ‘the largest of Aboriginal skeletal remains in the world’.⁷² Over the years, further Aboriginal Ancestral Remains were transferred to the museum by Victoria Police, farmers and amateur collectors, and as a result of archaeological excavations.⁷³ These remains were stored, studied and displayed, before a change of museum policy in 1983 that saw a move toward repatriation.⁷⁴

While the museum had been actively seeking donations of Aboriginal Ancestral Remains and had effectively made themselves the repository for these from the early 1900s, it was not until 1972 that they were afforded this legislative responsibility. The *Archaeological and Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act 1972* stated that the museum would be the ‘official place of lodgement of relics’ and that the Director would be entrusted with their care.

The move toward a policy of repatriation came incrementally. First, the adoption of the Council of Australian Museum Directors’ policy on human skeletal remains allowed for the return of any human skeletal remains of recent origin.⁷⁵ Second, with the introduction of the *Museums Act 1983*, the museum, with the Museums Board’s approval, was able to return Aboriginal Ancestral Remains to their communities.⁷⁶

The first Aboriginal Ancestral Remains to leave the museum were unprovenanced, and thus could not be returned to Country. They were, however, reburied owing to the determination and advocacy of Jim Berg, a Gunditjmara man, and an inspector under the *Archaeological and Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act 1972*. With the assistance of Ron Merkel QC, Berg was instrumental in bringing legal action against the University of Melbourne for storing the Berry collection rather than lodging it with the museum in accordance with the *Museums Act 1983*. Shortly after this victory he turned his attention to the respectful reburial of 38 unprovenanced Aboriginal Ancestral Remains held at the museum. After negotiations and meetings with the City of Melbourne, the Museum of Victoria, Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee (ACACH), the Victoria Archaeological Survey, Victoria Police and the Aboriginal community, the 38 Aboriginal Ancestral Remains were wrapped in bark and carried from the museum by members of the Aboriginal community along Swanston Street, accompanied by the Koorie Flag, a police escort, and around 200 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal supporters, to the chosen burial site in the Kings Domain.⁷⁷

From 1985 until the transfer of the responsibility for all Aboriginal Ancestral Remains in Victoria to the VAHC, the Melbourne Museum continued to work with communities to provenance and repatriate Aboriginal Ancestral Remains. Today, the Melbourne Museum remains a place of safe-keeping of Aboriginal Ancestral Remains that have been transferred into the legal custody of the VAHC. The VAHC now works with the museum and Aboriginal communities to provenance and repatriate their Ancestors. Traditional Owners from all over Australia travel to the Melbourne Museum to collect and organise Aboriginal Ancestral Remains for repatriation back to their Country. The museum, therefore, remains a place where Ancestors await the time when they can be returned to Country. It could be perceived that the Royal Exhibition Building, Carlton Gardens and the Melbourne Museum are places of mourning, which is further heightened by the requirement of Traditional Owners to obtain

⁷² Shannon Faulkhead and Jim Berg 2010, *Power and the Passion: Our Ancestor’s Return Home*, Koorie Heritage Trust Incorporated, Melbourne, p 21.

⁷³ McWilliams 2016 provides an overview of how Aboriginal Ancestral Remains came to be lodged with Museums Victoria.

⁷⁴ McWilliams 2016, p 11.

⁷⁵ Stanton et al 1990, p 52.

⁷⁶ Section 24(3) of the *Museums Act 1983*.

⁷⁷ Faulkhead and Berg 2010, pp 8–23. (The description ‘Koorie flag’ is the term used by Jim Berg.)

permission from the Melbourne Museum to gain access to their Ancestors and cultural heritage that are held there. At the time of writing, Jim Berg continues his work in repatriating Victorian Aboriginal Ancestral Remains.

3.8 Aboriginal people and the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens

3.8.1 Public exhibitions and trade fairs

In addition to the large-scale colonial exhibitions, the Royal Exhibition Building has hosted an extensive range of other public exhibitions, trade fairs and other similar events, as well as public and private functions through the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. These include, for example, the Women's Work Exhibition (1907), the Motor Show (first held in 1912), the State Schools Jubilee Exhibition (1922). From 1923 the Exhibition Building was the temporary home of the Australian War Memorial until its collection was relocated to Canberra.⁷⁸ Other events held at the Exhibition Building included the Toy Fair, the Home Show, the biennial Arts Show and the Affordable Art Show. The Carlton Gardens has been the venue for the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show since 1995.

In some cases, exhibitions have included Aboriginal cultural material. It is likely, for example, that the State Schools Exhibition held in 1922 displayed material of Aboriginal students from state schools with Aboriginal enrolments, including the Badgers Creek, Heywood, Lake Tyers, Ebenezer and Framlingham state schools. Another example was the Women's Work Exhibition of 1907, which included 'a comprehensive collection' of work done by Aboriginal women of the Northern Territory, which was gathered by Mrs Herbert, the wife of the Government Resident for the exhibition in Melbourne.⁷⁹

With some exceptions, most of the large-scale public events held at the Royal Exhibition Building have not generally accommodated Aboriginal people or culture. There has been indirect referencing of Aboriginal culture through different products on display and through mainstream advertising, in which Aboriginal cultural motifs have often been appropriated. A more authentic inclusion of Aboriginal culture was at the Homes Exhibition in 1954, where Bill Onus demonstrated boomerang throwing from a balcony inside the Exhibition Building.⁸⁰ Onus operated a business called Aboriginal Enterprises, which produced Aboriginal artwork and manufactured furniture using Aboriginal designs.

There have also been many works of art displayed at arts shows at the Royal Exhibition Building that carry a political message about the injustices suffered by Australian Indigenous people and the assertions of Aboriginal political rights.

⁷⁸ Elizabeth Willis 2004, *The Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne: A Guide*, Museum Victoria, Melbourne, p 38.

⁷⁹ *Register* (Adelaide), 12 August 1907, p 7.

⁸⁰ *Herald*, 26 August 1954, p 2.



Figure 3.14 Bill Onus performs at the Homes Exhibition at the Exhibition Building in 1954. (Source: *Herald*, 19 August 1954, p 13)

3.8.2 The seat of the Victorian Parliament, 1901–1927

The first Federal Parliament was opened to great fanfare at the Melbourne Exhibition Building in 1901. Aboriginal people were largely absent from the celebrations. Ann Bon, a long-time advocate for the rights of Aboriginal people in Victoria and a friend of the Aboriginal community at Coranderrk, had requested that Wurundjeri Elder William Barak be invited to attend the opening ceremony. An invitation was duly sent but the manager of Coranderrk, Joseph Shaw, advised that it would not be suitable for Barak to attend on account of his age (he was in his 80s).⁸¹

After the lavish formal opening, Federal Parliament took over Parliament House in Spring Street, Melbourne where it sat from 1901 until 1927 when the new Federal Parliament House in Canberra was completed. As a result, the Victorian State Parliament was relocated to the Exhibition Building during this period. From 1901 until 1927, a number of key pieces of legislation and policy decisions were heard in Victoria that impacted on Aboriginal people. This included, for example, the Soldier Settlement legislation after World War I, and the decision to close Coranderrk Aboriginal Reserve in the 1920s.

⁸¹ Kristin Otto 2009, *Capital: Melbourne when it was the capital city of Australia, 1901–1927*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, p 5.

3.8.3 Public events, concerts and sporting events

Musical events have been a mainstay of the Royal Exhibition Building, with concerts and other performances. This included performances by Aboriginal musicians and singers. Between the wars, for example, the tour of the Wallaga Lake Gum Leaf Band included a residency at the Palais Royal at the Exhibition Buildings in Carlton Gardens.⁸² In 1946, the popular Aboriginal tenor Harold Blair was billed to perform at the rear of the Exhibition Building for the Council for the Enjoyment of Music and the Arts.⁸³

Social events, including regular balls in the ballroom, were held for many years, but these more than likely would have excluded Aboriginal people. The ballroom, which was an original component of the complex, was demolished in 1979.

Sporting events were also held at the Exhibition Building and in the Carlton Gardens. When cycling became popular in the early 1890s, the Exhibition Oval, within the grounds of Carlton Gardens, was the site of a cycling track.⁸⁴ The wealthy racing identity and entrepreneur John Wren hired the building for a boxing and wrestling competition in 1906.⁸⁵ Given the significant number of Aboriginal men who participated in boxing competitions, it is likely that some of the men competing in boxing competition were Aboriginal, but more research is required to clarify this.⁸⁶

A large-scale Christmas feast provided by Sir Sidney Myer for the poor people of Melbourne during the depths of the Great Depression in 1930 is one event that could well have involved Aboriginal people. Many Aboriginal people were living in Melbourne at that time, and most of them would have been considered poor.

3.8.4 Other uses of the place

The Aquarium continued to operate as a popular attraction until 1953, when it was destroyed by fire.⁸⁷ In the 1940s the building was also used by the Country Roads Board and the Victorian Police.⁸⁸ In addition, the western annex was used by various government agencies from 1927 until 1960.

The Exhibition Building was used as a makeshift public hospital and morgue in 1919 during the Spanish Flu epidemic of 1919–20.

During the Second World War the Royal Australian Air Force was stationed at the site, and at one time 4000 men of the 17th Brigade of the Sixth Division, 2nd Australian Imperial Force, were housed there overnight before marching through Melbourne the following day.

The Exhibition Building also used as one of the venues for the 1956 Olympic Games, hosting basketball, pentathlon, weightlifting and wrestling events.

⁸² Kevin Bradley 1995, 'Leaf Music in Australia', *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, no. 2, pp. 2-14, p. 5 cited in Context 2019, 'Hoddle Grid Heritage Review', prepared for the City of Melbourne, vol 3, p 29.

⁸³ *Herald*, 11 September 1946, p 13.

⁸⁴ Lovell Chen 2013, p 48.

⁸⁵ Otto 2009, p 65.

⁸⁶ See for example, Richard Broome 1996, 'Theatres of Power: Tent boxing circa 1910–1970', *Aboriginal History*, vol 20, pp 1–23.

⁸⁷ *Argus*, 29 January 1953, p 1.

⁸⁸ *Herald*, 16 August 1944, p 3.

3.8.5 Migrant housing

In the period immediately after World War II, newly arrived British migrants were accommodated at the Exhibition Oval for a few days, where temporary housing was erected. It is possible that this housing was also available for general public housing needs, as at Camp Pell for example, but this would need further investigation.

3.8.6 Carlton Gardens: a place to meet, a place to rest

As public parkland and Crown land, the Carlton Gardens has provided a place of recreation for the general public since the 1850s. The proximity of the gardens to Fitzroy, where there has been a large Aboriginal community since the 1920s and 1930s, meant that it became a popular meeting place for Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people continue to use the gardens as a place to sit, and to meet and talk

3.9 Bunjilaka

Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre is a permanent exhibition within Melbourne Museum. Bunjilaka first opened to the public in 2000 as a space dedicated to representing the experience of First Peoples in Victoria. Since that time, Bunjilaka has had millions of people visit to engage with Indigenous culture. The space was named after Bunjil, the creator, with Bunjilaka meaning 'the place of Bunjil'.⁸⁹

In 2010 community forums were held across the state to engage with community about what a redevelopment of Bunjilaka might look. These forums took place in Geelong, Warragul, Ballarat, Bendigo, Mildura, Horsham, Swan Hill, Shepparton, Echuca, Wodonga and Melbourne, and were attended by over 185 people who directly contributed how representations of Indigenous issues, stories and exhibit content should be displayed.⁹⁰

Bunjilaka opened the First Peoples exhibit in 2013. This major permanent exhibit in Melbourne Museum engages the public with Aboriginal culture and is entirely co-created with Aboriginal people. The Birrarung Gallery, the art space at Bunjilaka, hosts three exhibitions a year for contemporary Aboriginal artists. The Birrarung Gallery looks over the Milarri Garden, which comprises plants significant to the First Peoples of Victoria. Bunjilaka also contains the Kalaya performance space. This use of space at Bunjilaka allows for a reflection of survival against all odds as well as a celebration of Koorie culture today.

Bunjilaka is overseen by the Yulendj group. Yulendj is the Kulin word for 'knowledge and intelligence' and the group consists of sixteen respected members of the community and Elders from across the state. Their knowledge and experience has helped shaped Bunjilaka into a place of history and pride for Aboriginal culture.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre 2021 <https://museums victoria.com.au/bunjilaka/>

⁹⁰ Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre 2021.

⁹¹ Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre 2021.



Figure 3.15 Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre. (Source: Museums Victoria)

3.10 Aboriginal Fitzroy

Accounts of European settlers in the 1840s recorded that Aboriginal people camped and held ceremonies in the area surrounding and including the study area, including at Newtown Hill (Fitzroy), Ryrie's Hill (Clifton Hill) (as per Aboriginal Historical Reference 2.1-81 in Figure 2.4), Parliament Hill and Yarra Park.⁹² Aboriginal people have had a long association with the Fitzroy area since before colonisation, and this continued into the settlement period. Early settler William Kyle recalled, for example, that the high ground of Newton Hill (now Fitzroy) was an Aboriginal camping place in 1841.⁹³ This strong association with Fitzroy continues to the present day. While this connection may have changed in many aspects since pre-colonial settlement of the area, Aboriginal people continue to live and work, and maintain strong community ties in the area

To the early colonists, Fitzroy was originally known as Newtown. It is recognised as 'Melbourne's first suburb'. Situated on high ground to the east of surveyed township of Melbourne, Fitzroy began as a genteel area, and many of its streets on the higher ground are graced with nineteenth-century villas and townhouses. Fitzroy also emerged as an area where cheap housing was provided for the working-class. Factories were established in the lower ground of Collingwood that was close to the river. The increased industrialisation of Melbourne in the 1870s and 1880s saw the construction of cheap housing for workers. When tariffs were introduced by the Victorian Government in the 1920s this encouraged the growth of the manufacturing industry, which was largely based in inner Melbourne.

⁹² Gary Presland 1985, *The Land of the Kulin: Discovering the lost landscape and the first people of Port Phillip*, McPhee Gribble, Ringwood, pp 30, 32.

⁹³ Charles Daley 1925, 'Reminiscences from 1841 of William Kyle, a pioneer', *Victorian Historical Magazine*, volume 10, p 164.

It is widely accepted that Aboriginal people have had strong connections with the Fitzroy area since before colonisation. Aboriginal connections with Fitzroy continue into the present day, having changed in many aspects, but still comprising living and working in the area, and creating strong community ties.

The impact of settler colonialism in Melbourne from the mid-1830s led to a dramatic decline in the local Aboriginal population and adverse effects on Aboriginal health and wellbeing due to a number of factors, including dispossession, removal from Country, disruption to cultural practices, violence, removal of children, and susceptibility to introduced diseases. The Board for the Protection of Aborigines (BPA) strongly encouraged community members to move to different Aboriginal missions and reserves around Victoria.⁹⁴ For the Wurundjeri these included the short-lived Acheron Aboriginal Reserve, and the Coranderrk Aboriginal Reserve, near Healesville.

In the late nineteenth century, as a result of the 1886 *Aborigines Protection Act* (also known as the 'Half Caste Act'), many Aboriginal people were forced off Aboriginal missions because the Act legislated that people of mixed descent were no longer eligible to remain on the Aboriginal missions and reserves.⁹⁵ During the early twentieth century, Aboriginal people began returning to the Fitzroy area as a result of the closure of Aboriginal missions and reserves, particularly from Coranderrk and Framlingham in Victoria and Cummeragunja in NSW. Well-known community members such as Thomas James, Grace Brux, Margaret Tucker, Martha Nevin and William Cooper were active in Fitzroy after coming to Melbourne from Aboriginal missions and reserves around this time.⁹⁶ The Depression of the early 1930s also forced many Aboriginal people from regional areas to the city to look for work. This trend continued as work opportunities in the defence industries increased during World War II.⁹⁷

Aboriginal people coming to Melbourne tended to move to the inner suburbs, largely due to their central accessibility, affordable housing and employment opportunities, along with the support networks that were available to new arrivals. Most Aboriginal community members who lived in Fitzroy during the early and mid twentieth century lived in the block bounded by Victoria Parade, Johnston Street, Brunswick Street and Hoddle Street, with a concentration around Gertrude Street (Historical Reference I.D. 104-1 in Figure 2.4).⁹⁸ Fitzroy became the hub for the Aboriginal community from around the 1920s.⁹⁹ The site of what is now the Atherton Gardens Estate was central to this neighbourhood.

During the 1930s, the Aboriginal community of Melbourne consisted of 10-12 families living in Fitzroy and one or two families living in Richmond, North Melbourne and Footscray. After World War II, many more Aboriginal families came to live to Melbourne.¹⁰⁰ Before the building of the Atherton Gardens Estate and 100 Napier Street, there were Aboriginal people living in Young Street, Little George Street, Kent Street and Gertrude Street (Historical Reference I.Ds 2.1-86, 2.1-87 and 2.1-88 in Figure 2.4) to the east of the study area.¹⁰¹ With the demolition of many of these houses in Fitzroy, many

⁹⁴ The Board for the Protection of Aborigines was a board instituted by the Victorian Government that regulated the lives of Aboriginal people. Part of its responsibility was to administer the *Aborigines Protection Act 1886* (also known as the 'Half Caste Act').

⁹⁵ City of Yarra and Yarra Aboriginal Advisory Group 2002, p 16; Broome 2005, p 288.

⁹⁶ City of Yarra 2009, p 1.

⁹⁷ Broome 2005, p 286.

⁹⁸ Broome 2005, p 288.

⁹⁹ According to the VAHR, Aboriginal people first used the Carlton Gardens as the principal community meeting place in the period from the 1920s to the 1940s.

¹⁰⁰ Bunj Consultants 2002, 'Snapshots of Aboriginal Fitzroy', p 16.

¹⁰¹ Context 2014, p 15.

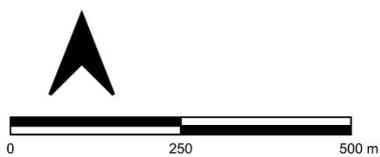
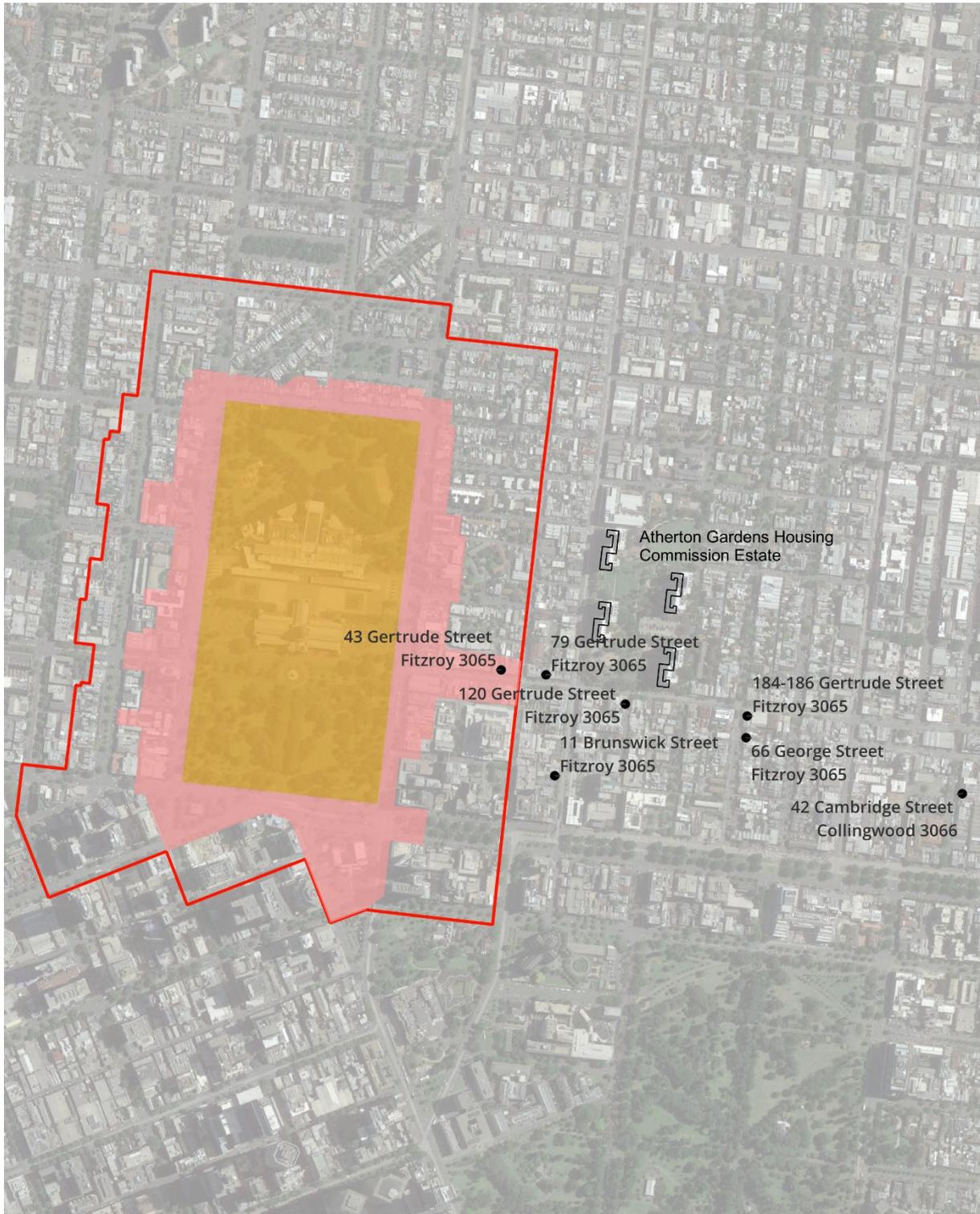
Aboriginal residents left the area and resettled further north in Preston and Reservoir, while some became residents at the new Atherton Gardens Estate.¹⁰²

By the late 1940s, around 300 Aboriginal people were living in Fitzroy. In the mid twentieth century, Aboriginal people continued to move between Melbourne and regional areas to meet their work and family obligations, often using Fitzroy as a stopover.¹⁰³

By the 1950s, many places of Aboriginal social significance had emerged in Fitzroy, which today form an important part of the Aboriginal community's collective memory and continue to be part of, or to influence, contemporary community activities (Figure 3.16). These included the Builders Arms Hotel and the Royal Hotel for socialising and music (Historical Reference I.Ds 2.2-11 and 2.2-12 in Figure 2.4), the Exhibition Youth Club (within the study area) and Fitzroy Football Club for boxing and football training (Historical Reference I.Ds 4.3-16 and 2.3-19 in Figure 2.4), friends' houses for playing cards and socialising (many homes were located where the Atherton Gardens Estate now stands), the Church of England Hall (within the study area) for dances, concerts and choirs, and the Gore Street Church of Christ (within the study area) for religious services and meetings (Historical Reference I.Ds 6.3-7 and 6.3-9 in Figure 2.4). This significance of places in Fitzroy to Aboriginal people is also reflected in the places of historical reference that are listed on the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register (see Table 2.2).

¹⁰² Context 2014, p 15.

¹⁰³ Broome 2005, pp 289–95.



Legend

- World Heritage site buffer zone/study area
- Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens
- Area of greater sensitivity

Figure 3.16 Map of Aboriginal organisations within and close to the study area.

3.10.1 Key places

In the 1960s Fitzroy became the springboard for Aboriginal social and political movements, with the creation of many important Aboriginal organisations geared towards community self-determination.¹⁰⁴ These organisations include the following, of which the Koori Club is within the boundary of study area:

Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (1973), 11 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy (Historical Reference I.D 13.1-16 in Figure 2.4; Figure 3.16).

The Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service was officially established in 1973 after members of the community took legal academics to a local pub at closing time where they witnessed Fitzroy police indiscriminately arresting Aboriginal people, regardless of whether they had been drinking or not. Prior to the formation of the Service, legal representation had been conducted by a team of volunteers, some of whom were members of the National Council of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women and the Aborigines Advancement League. These volunteers visited incarcerated Aboriginal people, organised bail and represented them at court hearings for many years before the Legal Service was established. Some of these volunteers included Stewart Murray, Les Booth, Alick Jackomos, Merle Jackomos, Hyllus Maris, Margaret (Briggs) Wirrapunda, Dan Atkinson, Jim Berg, Julia Jones and Geraldine Briggs; as well as Ron Merkel QC, Gareth Evans QC, Ron Castan AM QC, Peter Hanks QC, and Dr Elizabeth Eggleston.¹⁰⁵

Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (1973) (George Wright Hostel), 66 George Street, Fitzroy (Historical Reference I.D 13.1-12 in Figure 2.4; Figure 3.16).

Established in 1973 at 229 Gertrude Street, the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service was the first Aboriginal community-controlled health and dental service in Victoria. It was established to provide quality healthcare to Aboriginal Victorians with an emphasis on Aboriginal control of Aboriginal affairs. Through the leadership of community members such as Julia Jones, Margaret Tucker, Edna Brown, Bruce McGuinness and Alma Thorpe, the Health Service also initiated a range of projects and organisations dedicated to improved community health. The Fitzroy Stars Aboriginal Community Youth Club Gymnasium Incorporated, Nindeebiya Art & Craft Workshop, the George Wright Hostel, Koori Kollij, Koori Information Centre and the Aboriginal Funeral Fund all started as Health Service initiatives. The Health Service moved premises to 136 Gertrude Street and remained there from 1979–1993. Today, the Health Service remains one of the largest and most important Aboriginal community organisations to have emerged from Fitzroy.¹⁰⁶

Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (1976), 11 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy (Figure 3.16).

The Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) was established in 1976 to take steps towards healing the effects of racist Government practices and policies on Aboriginal children, families and communities. The large scale removal of Aboriginal children, for example, from their families and communities on the basis of colour and cultural identity—

¹⁰⁴ Roberts Evaluation Pty Ltd 2011, 'Social Impact Assessment: Background Report Fitzroy'. Prepared for Department of Human Services. Roberts Evaluation, Melbourne, p 34.

¹⁰⁵ City of Yarra and Wurundjeri Tribe 2015.

¹⁰⁶ City of Yarra and Wurundjeri Tribe 2015.

*now referred to as the Stolen Generations—was a Government sanctioned practice implemented in many areas, Australia-wide, until the 1970s.*¹⁰⁷

The Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency was founded by Mollie Dyer, who was the daughter of Yorta Yorta Elder Margaret Tucker.¹⁰⁸ Mollie Dyer was a lifelong activist and champion for the care of Aboriginal children. She successfully lobbied changes to the social welfare system in Victoria and became focused on Aboriginal adoption and preventing loss of cultural identity. She secured direct federal funding for the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) which directly resulted in a 40 per cent reduction in the number of Aboriginal children in care within a three-year period. Mollie Dyer was a respected and trusted voice for the Aboriginal community.

Aboriginal Housing Board (1981), 79 Gertrude Street, Fitzroy (Figure 3.16).

*The Aboriginal Housing Board of Victoria was established by the Aboriginal community in 1981 after two years of negotiations and lobbying of the State Government. Originally it operated from 108 Smith Street Collingwood, the rented premises of the Victorian Aboriginal Co-operative Limited. From 1981, the Board assumed responsibility for management of the Victorian Aboriginal Rental Housing Program, which was administered and owned by the State Housing Authority. Previously, Aboriginal families were subject to a State Housing service that failed to meet the specific cultural needs of the Aboriginal community, leading to high rates of evictions and homelessness in Aboriginal communities throughout Victoria. As an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation, the Board fought to provide safe, secure and affordable housing that also met, most importantly, the cultural needs of Aboriginal tenants and communities.*¹⁰⁹

The Koori Club (1969), 43 Gertrude Street, Fitzroy (Figure 3.16)

*The Koori Club was a social and political meeting place during the 1960s for young Aboriginal people. Established by Lin Onus – who later became an internationally renowned artist – the Club asserted an ‘Aboriginal Only’ policy as influenced by the ‘Black Power’ movement of the time. These young and fiercely proud Aboriginal activists challenged the more conservative approach of earlier generations. Koori Club member and renowned speaker and leader, Bruce McGuinness, was instrumental in spreading word of the Club and stimulating community debate through the Club’s newspaper, *The Koorier*. This publication had a significant impact on other young Aboriginal people in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and beyond. According to historian Richard Broome, the Koori Club “...had a short life, but symbolised the Aboriginal rejection of assimilation, and the beginning of an Aboriginal cultural renaissance that is still unfolding.”¹¹⁰*

Koori Information Centre (1982), 120 Gertrude Street, Fitzroy (Historical Reference I.D 13.1-15 in Figure 2.4; Figure 3.16).

The Koori Information Centre was established in the early 1980s to meet arising groundswell of community interest in Indigenous issues. A lot of this interest was generated by huge demonstrations during the 1982 Brisbane Commonwealth Games where hundreds of Indigenous people were arrested under unjust Queensland Government laws. The Koori Information Centre began as a program of the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, but later

¹⁰⁷ City of Yarra and Wurundjeri Tribe 2015.

¹⁰⁸ Mollie Dyer 2003, *Room for One More*, Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, East Melbourne.

¹⁰⁹ City of Yarra and Wurundjeri Tribe 2015.

¹¹⁰ City of Yarra and Wurundjeri Tribe 2015.

developed into an independent organisation led by Robbie Thorpe, an activist well known for his creation of the famous ‘Pay the Rent’ campaign. It was also in this building that Aboriginal artist Lin Onus produced a popular series of comic books and t-shirts with his distinctive artistic designs. Singer-songwriter Archie Roach recorded some of his first songs here. Over the years, the Koori Information Centre developed into an effective coordination centre for Aboriginal political activity including the publication and distribution of a community newspaper, The Koorier, that attracted unwarranted covert surveillance by ASIO (Australian Security Intelligence Organisation).¹¹¹

Fitzroy Stars Aboriginal Community Youth Club Gymnasium Incorporated (1982), 184–186 Gertrude Street, Fitzroy (Figure 3.16).

Fitzroy Stars Aboriginal Community Youth Club Gymnasium Incorporated was an Aboriginal controlled and managed organisation supported by the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service. It was established as a preventive health program to combat the increasing drug and alcohol problems within the metropolitan Aboriginal community. Respected community member Jock Austin was employed as the Health Service’s Sport & Recreation Officer and was instrumental in the Gym’s establishment. The Gym first opened its doors to the Koori community in 1982 at 173 Gertrude Street. The following year, the Gym moved to 99 George Street where it shared the space with Nindeebiya Workshop. Some of the people responsible for the Gymnasium’s establishment (now located at 184–186 Gertrude Street) include Jock Austin, Alma Thorpe, Bruce McGuinness, Dr Bill Roberts, John ‘Longfulla’ Austin, Johnny Mac, Bindi Jack, Ronnie ‘Fox’ Foster, ‘Punchy’ Rose and ‘Magpie’.¹¹²

Koori Kollij (1982), 42 Cambridge Street, Collingwood (Figure 3.16).

Established in 1982, Koori Kollij was an Aboriginal health worker training program that forged new and enduring standards of Aboriginal healthcare in Australia. Born from the philosophy of Aboriginal control of Aboriginal affairs, the ‘kollij’ was created to ensure that Aboriginal people were an integral part of healthcare within their communities. A venture of the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, the first intake attracted thirty Aboriginal students. With enrolments from across the country, graduates returning to their communities were able to share newly learned skills and implement important changes to health service delivery. While focusing primarily on health worker training, course offerings soon expanded to include politics of health, media, art and music. Koori Kollij was a place where many students first learned of their country’s history and how to create positive changes for their people. Many graduates continued on to fulfil senior leadership roles in their communities.¹¹³

Many of the public parks and reserves around Fitzroy and Carlton probably also served as meeting places, in particular the corner of Gertrude Street and Nicholson Street. There are two mature Moreton Bay Figs (including one of extremely large girth) on the Nicholson Street side of Carlton Gardens, where members of the Aboriginal community gathered in the years before and during World War II (Historical Reference I.D 2.2-17 in Figure 2.4; Figure 3.17). Families would gather in these public places on Saturdays and Sundays from the late 1930s to the early 1950s.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ City of Yarra and Wurundjeri Tribe 2015.

¹¹² City of Yarra and Wurundjeri Tribe 2015.

¹¹³ City of Yarra and Wurundjeri Tribe 2015.

¹¹⁴ Bunj Consultants 2002, ‘Snapshots of Aboriginal Fitzroy’, p 31.



Figure 3.17 (Left) This Moreton Bay Fig (*Ficus macrophylla*) in the Carlton Gardens is important as an Aboriginal meeting place. (Right) A Sugar Gum (*Eucalyptus cladocalyx*) within the study area, on the western side of the Museum Victoria complex. (Source: David Meagher, reproduced with permission)

136 Gertrude Street, Fitzroy, has played a central role in the Aboriginal community of Fitzroy. From 2009 until 2021, the site was home to Charcoal Lane, which served as a social enterprise kitchen and restaurant. This renowned restaurant used native flavours to create a hospitality training program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth. This program had more than 300 participants and sought to combine cultural experiences that connected food to country. In 2021 the decision was made to close Charcoal Lane and return 136 Gertrude Street to the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service. Established in 1973, the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service moved to 136 Gertrude Street in 1979. Re-establishing this service in its iconic Gertrude Street home will create a new health hub that will continue to serve the community.¹¹⁵

The Atherton Gardens Housing Commission estate is another place, which, although located outside the study area, was an important place of gathering for Aboriginal people from the 1960s.¹¹⁶ Throughout the 1980s, public spaces such as Carlton Gardens, Atherton Gardens Estate and the lanes around Fitzroy became well known meeting places for many homeless Aboriginal people. The

¹¹⁵ Mission Australia 2021, 'Mission Australia announces closure of Fitzroy social enterprise restaurant Charcoal Lane', <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/news-blog/media-and-updates/mission-australia-announces-closure-of-fitzroy-social-enterprise-restaurant-charcoal-lane>, accessed 29 September 2021.

¹¹⁶ Context 2014, p 2.

open area of the Atherton Gardens Estate (facing Gertrude Street) soon became a favoured place in Melbourne for Aboriginal people rather than Carlton Gardens, because it was less visible to police and offered a more secluded naturalistic environment.¹¹⁷

3.10.2 Key people

Jack Patten (1905–1957) lived at Salt Pan Creek, Sydney, when he was first exposed to Aboriginal politics and activism. He was responsible for organising political groups up and down the coast from Sydney. In 1937 Patten was introduced to Percy Stephensen, editor of the *Publicist*, a monthly political publication owned by William Miles. Through this publication Patten wrote letters to the Premier of NSW. Patten became president of the Aborigines' Progressive Association and hitch-hiked around New South Wales collecting affidavits from Aboriginal communities as evidence for the Legislative Assembly making selections of the Aborigines Protection Board. In 1938 he co-authored the pamphlet 'Aborigines Claim Civilian Rights!', which promoted a Day of Mourning on 26 January. Patten's activism emphasised the education of Aboriginal children and advocated for full citizenship and equality for Aboriginal Australians. Patten enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force in December 1940 and served in the Middle East. He died in Melbourne in 1957.¹¹⁸

Pastor Sir Doug Nicholls (1906–1988) was a Yorta Yorta man, a champion sprinter and footballer, a political activist, a religious minister, and Governor of South Australia. He began playing football for the Northcote Victorian Football Association in 1927 before moving to play with Fitzroy in 1932 in the Victorian Football League. Nicholls was respected a leader of the Aboriginal community and the Fitzroy police requested his return to the area to mediate racial tensions surrounding overcrowded housing in Fitzroy. Nicholls established welfare services from a house in Gertrude Street, Fitzroy, and was appointed minister of the Church of Christ Aborigines Mission in Gore Street. He went on to be a founding member of the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League in 1957. In 1958 he helped to establish the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement and served as a national field officer until becoming Victorian secretary in 1962. He never forgot his roots in sport and was an enthusiastic patron of the National Aboriginal Sports Foundation. He was knighted in 1972 and became Governor of South Australia in 1976.¹¹⁹

William (Bill) Onus (1906–1968), a Yorta Yorta/Wiradjiri man, was introduced to political activism in 1929 after becoming involved with trade unions in Sydney. It was during this time that his skills as a public speaker became apparent. Bill joined the Aborigines Progressive Association in 1939 and quickly rose to the role of secretary. He reformed the Australian Aborigines' League with Doug Nicholls and his brother Eric Onus. Determined, ambitious and charismatic, he developed new and innovative approaches in pursuing the cause of justice for his people. Bill Onus worked tirelessly to advocate for Aboriginal issues into the mainstream media and regularly commented on public affairs. He drew on his talents as an artist, a performer and an entrepreneur, and impressed audiences with his skill with the boomerang. The Australian Aborigines' League became the Aborigines Advancement League in 1957. Bill became the first Victorian director of the 1967 Referendum movement and tirelessly advocated for Aboriginal issues. He established a business, Aboriginal Enterprises, which manufactured Aboriginal cultural items, including boomerangs, which he sold from a shop in Belgrave.

¹¹⁷ Context 2014, p 16.

¹¹⁸ Horner, Jack 1988, 'Patten, John Thomas (Jack) (1905–1957)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/patten-john-thomas-jack-7980>.

¹¹⁹ Richard Broome 2012, 'Nicholls, Sir Douglas Ralph (1906–1988)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/nicholls-sir-douglas-ralph-doug-14920>.

Bill Onus also served as the first Aboriginal justice of the Peace. His leadership inspired a new generation of Aboriginal activism.¹²⁰

Uncle Jim Berg is a Gunditjmara Elder who was a founding member and CEO of the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service. He was appointed an Inspector under the *Archaeological and Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act 1972* when he recognised the need for an organisation to be the custodian of Koorie culture. Berg also played a critical role in the legal battle against the University of Melbourne and Museum of Victoria which saw Ancestral Remains returned to Country. Berg has been a Justice of the Peace for over fifty years and served as a council member on the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council for twelve years. He was the founder of the Koorie Heritage Trust in Melbourne.¹²¹

William Cooper (1861–1941) was a Yorta Yorta Elder and Aboriginal activist who was advocated for Aboriginal representation in Parliament. He became involved in political activism when he joined the Australian Workers Union and was the representative of Aboriginal workers in both western New South Wales and central Victoria. Cooper became involved with the growing Aboriginal community in Melbourne in the 1930s, where a strong activism base had emerged in Fitzroy. Cooper lobbied for King George V to allocate a Member of Federal Parliament who would directly represent Aboriginal people, but he was unsuccessful. Cooper helped found the Australian Aborigines' League in 1936 and in 1938 proclaimed an 'Aboriginal Day of Mourning' for 26 January, which coincided with the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the First Fleet. Cooper ran campaigns to raise awareness for what the date of 26 January meant for Aboriginal Australians, and to protest against discrimination. The modern celebration of NAIDOC Week has its roots in this campaign.¹²² Cooper also protested the persecution of Jewish people by Germany during World War II by walking from his home in Footscray to the German Consulate in South Melbourne. This protest was one of the first in the world to oppose the actions of the Nazi regime.

Lionel Rose (1948–2011) was a boxer, musician, and activist. Born in Warragul in 1948, he grew up in Jindivick, at an impoverished Aboriginal settlement known as Jackson's Track. In 1963, aged only 15, he won the National Australian Flyweight Title and was only narrowly beaten in the Olympic trials to represent Australia in Tokyo in 1964. After this time, he became even more committed to making a career as a professional boxer. After winning the Australian Bantamweight Title in both 1966 and 1967, Rose was the reigning Australian champion at the time of the 1967 Commonwealth Referendum. As a result, he became a symbol of the advances of the rights of Aboriginal people at this time. In 1968 Rose entered Australian sporting history when he defeated Masahiko 'Fighting' Harada of Japan in 15 rounds to become the Champion of the World at 19 years of age. When he returned to Australia following this victory, 250,000 people lined the streets of Melbourne to welcome him home. This cemented his hero status in the eyes of the Australian public, and in 1968 he became the first Aboriginal to be named 'Australian of the Year'. Following his boxing career, Lionel Rose released two albums and achieved a number one hit with *I Thank You* in 1969. Despite his success and celebrity, Rose continued to give back to the Aboriginal community. He was involved in several grassroots community projects, concerned with issues such as Indigenous health care and

¹²⁰ Aboriginal Victoria, 'William 'Bill' Onus', <https://www.aboriginalvictoria.vic.gov.au/william-bill-onus>.

¹²¹ Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council, 'Interviewee biographies—Returning Our Ancestors', <https://www.aboriginalheritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/interviewee-biographies-returning-our-ancestors#uncle-jim-berg>, accessed 2 August 2021.

¹²² Aboriginal Victoria, 'William Cooper', <https://www.aboriginalvictoria.vic.gov.au/william-cooper>, accessed 2 August 2021.

reconciliation. From the time of its foundation, Lionel Rose was a patron of the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service in Fitzroy.¹²³

Archie Roach (1956–present) is a Gunditjmara and Bundjalung man who is an acclaimed musician, singer, songwriter, storyteller and activist. Born in Mooroopna in 1955, Archie spent his young years living with his family at Framlingham Aboriginal Mission, near Warrnambool. Archie Roach was forcibly removed from his family at the age of 2. Upon learning as a teenager about the circumstances of his forced removal from his family, he suffered significantly around issues of identity. He turned to alcohol and became homeless. While homeless, he met Ruby Hunter, a Ngarrindjeri woman, in Adelaide. Archie Roach credits Hunter as being his saviour during this difficult period of his life. Australian musicians Paul Kelly and Steve Connolly first noticed Archie Roach when his song *Took the Children Away* was performed on community radio in Melbourne. In 1990 Archie Roach released his debut album, *Charcoal Lane*, produced by Kelly and Connolly. *Charcoal Lane* is set near Gertrude Street in Fitzroy, the centre of Melbourne’s Aboriginal community. *Took the Children Away* was released on the album and won a Human Rights Achievement Award, the first time the award had been won by a songwriter. Archie Roach is held in high regard around the world. He has shared the stage with some of the world’s most influential musicians, including Paul Simon, Bob Dylan and Patti Smith, who have helped to spread the message of Australia’s First People across the globe. Although his influence is international, Archie Roach remains committed to local issues. He established the Archie Roach Foundation, which is dedicated to creating opportunities for Aboriginal youth. Archie Roach became Victoria’s State Recipient of Australian of the Year in 2020.¹²⁴

Ruby Hunter (1955–2010) was a talented singer–songwriter who advocated for the rights of Aboriginal women and children through activism and music. Ruby was a Ngarrindjeri woman who was born near the Murray River in the Coorong region of South Australia. When she was 8 years old, Ruby and her four siblings were removed from their family. Ruby grew up in a series of foster homes and institutions, becoming homeless on the streets of Adelaide at the age of 16. While homeless, Ruby met Archie Roach, who was also a victim of the Stolen Generations, and they formed a strong bond. Upon moving from Adelaide to Melbourne, Ruby worked at the Margaret Tucker Hostel which provided accommodation and support for Aboriginal women and girls. Through the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency in Thornbury, she and Archie cared for 14 children in a family group home. Ruby and Archie also used their own home as a refuge for disadvantaged and homeless young people. Ruby also worked at the Winja Ulupna Women’s Recovery Centre in St Kilda. Ruby Hunter’s music career began with her writing songs in secret. Archie discovered her song *Down City Streets* and recorded it on his debut album *Charcoal Lane* in 1990. Her music reflected her experiences of being a homeless young person and as one of the Stolen Generations. *Down City Streets* was so critically acclaimed that Ruby was offered a record contract which was the first time in Australia’s history that an Aboriginal woman was signed to a major record label. The release of her debut album in 1994 kick-started her highly successful music career. Even with her success, Ruby never stopped giving back to community.¹²⁵

¹²³ Aboriginal Victoria, ‘Lionel Rose (MBE)’, <https://www.aboriginalvictoria.vic.gov.au/lionel-rose-mbe>, accessed 29 September 2021.

¹²⁴ Aboriginal Victoria, ‘Archie Roach’, <https://www.aboriginalvictoria.vic.gov.au/archie-roach>, accessed 27 September 2021.

¹²⁵ Aboriginal Victoria, ‘Ruby Hunter’, < <https://www.aboriginalvictoria.vic.gov.au/ruby-hunter> > accessed 27 September 2021.

4 Aboriginal cultural values

4 Aboriginal cultural values

The purpose of this report is to enable the incorporation of Traditional Owner and First Peoples cultural values in the World Heritage Management Plan (WHMP) for the study area which is currently due for review. This report is Part 2 of the WHMP, and informs the WHMP and all its parts (see Section 1) to ensure that Traditional Owner and First Peoples' values of the place are recognised and managed appropriately in the continuing use, development and management of this world heritage site.

The study area is defined as the World Heritage Site of the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens, including the World Heritage Environs Area (see Figure 1.1). While such a circumscribed area may hold contemporary values for Aboriginal people, the cultural values assessment included consideration of the broader context with which Aboriginal people had connections to in the past.

4.1 Consultation with Traditional Owner organisations

4.1.1 Registered Aboriginal Party Appointment

Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) have statutory authority under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* for the protection and management of cultural heritage within their geographic regions. Historically, the study area and much of the Melbourne area has been contested by three Traditional Owner organisations with a known interest in the study area. These groups are:

- Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (WWCHAC)
- Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (BLCAC)
- Boonwurrung Land and Sea Council (BLSC)

The Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council (VAHC) put forth a proposal for an updated RAP boundary for the Melbourne area which was made public in June 2021. This proposal was formalised on 1 July 2021 following acceptance by BLSC and consent by WWCHAC resulting in the VAHC extending the RAP boundary of WWCHAC to include the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens World Heritage Environs Area. As of this date, WWCHAC became formally recognised by the State of Victoria as the sole Traditional Owners for the study area.

As consultation for this project began in December 2020, and site visits concluded in March 2021, all three Traditional Owner organisations with a known interest in the study area were consulted for this project. Subsequently, and notwithstanding that WWCHAC are now the RAP for the study area, the values and connections that BLCAC and BLSC have to the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens are also included in this report. For future consultation and decision-making regarding Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens, WWCHAC must be consulted in line with its status as the RAP for the study area, including its legislative responsibilities under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*.

4.2 Outline of consultation

Consultation with Traditional Owners and other First Peoples regarding their cultural values associated with the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens was planned in two parts: firstly, with WWCHAC (now recognised as the RAP for the study area) and with the two other Traditional Owner groups who have a broader connection to the place (BLSC and BLCAC), and secondly, with other First Peoples with a known connection to the study area and broader context. A report on this second round of discussions is provided as an addendum to this report.

The main objective of the consultation process was the identification of tangible and intangible Aboriginal cultural values in the study area.

Consultation requirements under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* were not specifically addressed because these are specifically directed towards development activities, and the current values assessment project is not related to any proposed development activities. The requirements for consultation and other statutory requirements for future development activities remain, should such future activity be planned.

Consultation with the Traditional Owner organisations involved the following process:

- an initial meeting that provided a background to the report and some background history and other information about the place and its wider context
- provision of the background historical material and archaeological material to each Traditional Owner organisation
- an onsite meeting and workshop session, a recap of the background history and other material, and walk around on site with Elders and other representatives of the three Traditional Owner organisations
- provision of the draft report to each Traditional Owner organisation
- review and comment on the draft report from each Traditional Owner organisations
- endorsement of the Preliminary Traditional Owners and First Peoples Cultural Values Report.

Consultation was broken up into two phases. The first phase involved initial consultation about the Aboriginal cultural values of the study area with the three Traditional Owner organisations. These initial consultations took place between December 2020 and March 2021 and were via online video-conferencing due to Victorian State Government COVID-19 restrictions.

Following the initial consultation, a site visit was undertaken involving a sit-down session at the Melbourne Museum, a visit to locations within the Carlton Gardens that were previously determined by participants, and a walkthrough of the Royal Exhibition Building. Other locations within the study area were spontaneously visited on the day. The onsite consultation sessions were facilitated by Ian Hamm, with the assistance of GML's Melbourne staff.

The dates of the initial meetings and site visits with the three Traditional Owner organisations are shown in **Table 4.1**.

Table 4.1 Consultation meeting with the Traditional Owner organisations.

Organisation	Initial meeting date	Site visit date
Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (RAP for this study area)	15 December 2020	9 March 2021
Boonwurrung Land and Sea Council	3 February 2021	22 February 2021
Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation	2 February 2021	22 March 2021

A record of these onsite meetings was sent to each Traditional Owner organisation for approval.

A copy of the draft Aboriginal cultural values report was provided to each organisation for their approval before it was finalised for incorporation into this document.

It should be noted that the views presented in this report by each Traditional Owner organisation may not reflect the views of the other Traditional Owner organisations, and that WWCHAC are now the formally recognised RAP for the study area.

4.3 Initial workshops and site visits

At the initial meetings with the three Traditional Owner organisations, an overview was provided about the WHMP review process and how the Cultural Values report will inform the Heritage Management Plan (WHMP Part 3) and master planning at the site. A timeline summary of the history of the study area was also provided, with an emphasis on the Aboriginal history of the Royal Exhibition Building, the Carlton Gardens and the surrounding area that encompasses the World Heritage Environs Area. Historical maps and plans of the area, along with the historical timeline, were tabled at these meetings.

In addition, there was a preliminary discussion about what broadly constituted Aboriginal cultural values. As examples of what Aboriginal cultural values might include, the following list was presented:

- cultural associations, links, stories, knowledge, memories concerning Aboriginal people
- tangible (e.g. places, buildings) or intangible (e.g. stories, memories, traditions)
- land and water, plants, birds, animals and fish
- language and traditions
- cultural practices and traditions
- values that could be applied across time and space.

During onsite consultation, Elders from each of the three Traditional Owner organisations discussed aspects of the study area's history that were important to Aboriginal people from traditional, historical and contemporary perspectives, drawing on the background historical and archaeological material presented as well as their own knowledge of the study area. These included conversations about the following:

- the original landscape, topography and vegetation of the study area
- how Aboriginal people lived on Country
- key Aboriginal people in the area's history
- the display of Aboriginal cultural material at the various exhibitions
- the significance of the use of the Exhibition Building as Victoria's Parliament House from 1901 until 1927
- the important story of the Aboriginal people who came to Fitzroy to look for work after they came off the missions and reserves in the 1920s and 1930s
- prominent Aboriginal people involved in political activism in the area
- ongoing cultural life and associations.

Discussions with Traditional Owner organisations also looked at some of the considerations that could be taken into account in future planning, in terms of how future works within the study area might best incorporate Aboriginal cultural values, including:

- Vegetation and landscape design
- provision of an outdoor meeting place/performance space
- smartphone applications
- audio-visual installations
- education
- incorporation of Aboriginal language
- opportunities for public art
- Aboriginal-inspired design elements

and other general opportunities for promoting Aboriginal culture.

While much discussion with the Traditional Owners focussed on the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens, reference was also made to the broader study area (i.e. within the broader buffer zone) and outside the study area, such as Gertrude Street and the broader Fitzroy area, which are associated with notable Aboriginal people and events.

The locations in Carlton Gardens that were visited for the onsite meeting included:

- Two Moreton Bay Figs (*Ficus macrophylla*) close to the Nicholson Street boundary
- the ornamental lake in the south-eastern corner of the study area
- the Exhibition Fountain
- a large eucalypt on the western boundary (Sugar Gum, *Eucalyptus cladocalyx*).

A written record was made of the meetings with each of the three Traditional Owner organisations.

4.4 Traditional Owner and First Peoples' cultural values

4.4.1 Overview

Understanding the Aboriginal cultural values of a place carries with it an understanding of the heritage values that are missing from the established or recorded understanding of that place. In Victoria the lack of due acknowledgement of Aboriginal heritage values, tangible and intangible, in the assessment of built heritage rests with the long-established system of Aboriginal heritage being concerned with material cultural heritage, i.e. archaeology; this was first regulated through the *Archaeological and Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act 1972* which was superseded the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*. It is further inhibited by the process of built heritage being predominantly assessed under the *Heritage Act 2017* (and its predecessor of 1995) which states that it does not apply to a place or object for which cultural heritage significance rests solely on the grounds of its association with Aboriginal tradition.

The recognition of Aboriginal heritage values more broadly, however, is enshrined in key supporting heritage guidelines, notably *The Burra Charter* (2013) and *The Burra Charter and Indigenous Cultural Heritage Management Practice Note* (2013), and the understanding and recognition of Aboriginal cultural values is now beginning to be adopted in mainstream heritage practice in Victoria. This shift is part of a period of renaissance of Aboriginal culture in Victoria that has seen a stronger footing for Indigenous rights, with practical steps being taken to redress the past. It comes at a time that has been described as a 'twin revolution' in terms of 'the dramatic discovery of Australia's deep history and

the reassertion of Aboriginal cultural identity in the second half of the twentieth century'.¹²⁶ In the context of this understandings, and in light of calls for truth-telling and self-determination, it is important for First Peoples cultural values to be heard, considered and integrated into future planning. This concurs with the call for a 'Declaration of Recognition' in the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*, which would articulate 'Australia's shared history, heritage and aspirations'.¹²⁷

The identification of Traditional Owner and First Peoples' cultural values in this report has been informed by the knowledge held by the Traditional Owner organisations consulted with for this project and considered in the context of the background historical material.

The consultation carried out with Traditional Owner organisations has raised new historical information about place and people, which has been drawn upon in further shaping the thematic history provided in Section 2.

The consultation notes from all meetings and consultation, which remain confidential, are recorded in a separate volume.

4.4.2 Objectives

The potential broad goals of identifying the Traditional Owners' cultural values for the study area include:

- recognising the important and continuing Aboriginal history and heritage within the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens study area
- acknowledging the Aboriginal cultural perspective of the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens
- informing the future planning and development of the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens study area; this can be achieved through urban design, place-making, naming, interpretation, public art, education, etc.
- identifying further investigations or other work that could be undertaken to better understand Traditional Owners' cultural values for this World Heritage site and the surrounding area
- enriching the wider historical understanding of the study area for all.

4.4.3 Understanding Traditional Owner and First Peoples' cultural values

Traditional Owner and First Peoples cultural values are broad-ranging and embedded in the present in terms of what is important now but can relate to values that are traditional or historical as well as contemporary. They may be informed or supported by documentary sources, oral history, or tangible and intangible heritage, but essentially they are communicated by Aboriginal people who have a connection to the place. They are not necessarily time or place specific and can apply to a large area or landscape or to a specific place or area.

Cultural values can be attributed to all forms of cultural heritage created by Aboriginal people, whether tangible or intangible.

¹²⁶ Billy Griffiths 2018, *Deep Time Dreaming*, Black Inc, Carlton, p 5.

¹²⁷ Uluru Statement from the Heart 2018.

- Tangible heritage can include (but is not limited to) buildings, other built structures, artefacts, made objects, other objects, trees and vegetation, land and water, rocks and rock forms, birds, animals and fish, landscapes, and bodies of water.
- Intangible heritage refers to any cultural associations with a place that has no physical record—for example, stories and memories, songs and music, cultural knowledge, language, cultural practices and cultural traditions and beliefs, and other cultural associations.

Many of the Aboriginal cultural values associated with the study area are intangible as they relate to stories and traditions or to places and landscapes that no longer survive sufficiently intact. They also, importantly, relate to the contemporary and ongoing period and recognise that Aboriginal culture can be a fluid and developing concept. Aboriginal cultural values for a place can also be drawn from archaeological records and historical records that may have also been recorded through consultation with First Peoples'. A large amount of knowledge about cultural values associated with places rests with the inherited memories of the Traditional Owner organisations. This knowledge is the intellectual property of the respective Aboriginal person or group.

Aboriginal cultural values can be attributed to recognised Aboriginal heritage places as well as to other otherwise unrecorded places and areas. Where a place is determined to be of Aboriginal cultural heritage significance, however, it follows that the place will also, by implication, have Aboriginal cultural value. Some places that are considered to have Aboriginal cultural values, such as the Moreton Bay Fig meeting place in Carlton Gardens, are listed on the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register, but most are not. There is currently no rigorous method of recognising heritage places in Victoria that have Aboriginal cultural values.

Aboriginal cultural values can co-exist with other recognised heritage values and significance, such as archaeological, historical and social significance. This is a typical situation in a built-up urban area in inner Melbourne, particularly where the place includes public land. Places that are found to have both Aboriginal heritage significance and general historic heritage significance (identified through a means other than the VAHR) may be said to have 'shared heritage', where shared heritage relates to a place being valued by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. It does not necessarily follow, however, that a particular value about a place is shared by both parties. Nor does *shared* value or *cultural* value necessarily equate with positive experience. Places within the study area of the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens could be determined to have shared heritage values to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

4.4.4 Identifying Traditional Owner and First Peoples' cultural values for the study area

Drawing on the discussions with the three Traditional Owner organisations, as well as documentary research carried out for the Background History Report, the identified cultural values for the study area can be summarised in the following broad categories shown in **Table 4.2**.

Table 4.2 Summary of broad Aboriginal cultural values identified for the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens study area.

Aboriginal cultural values	Description
Connections and reconnections to Country	Wholistic approach to Country, nurturing Country, including the land, water, plants, birds and other animals. Also includes reconnecting to Country after 'unsettlement'.

Aboriginal cultural values	Description
Traditional cultural knowledge	Promoting, preserving and reigniting traditional knowledge, including Aboriginal languages; traditional practices such as the manufacture of cultural objects, and education.
Contemporary cultural knowledge	Dichotomy of crowds viewing Aboriginal people in exhibits and dioramas but ignoring them outside that space. Exhibitions also have helped teach Aboriginal people about Aboriginal life and culture when this was not taught in the education system.
Respect for Ancestors	Remembering the stories of Ancestors.
Taking political action	The Carlton Gardens as a hub for political activism and social change since the 1930s.
A meeting place	Continual meeting place for Aboriginal people since World War I.
Stories of survival and need for healing	Stories of Aboriginal people finding their community and keeping community strong; for example, after leaving the missions and making new lives in Melbourne or reconnecting after being taken from their families.
Cultural resilience	Expressing Aboriginal cultural and spiritual life that has been passed down. Resilience of culture.
Celebrating community	Celebration of all the community, inclusively, including recent immigrant groups.
Improving education about and understanding of Aboriginal culture	Bringing Aboriginal people to the forefront and ensuring children are connected and are given voices.

4.5 Aspirations arising from cultural values recording

There is significant potential for the acknowledgement, expression and celebration of Aboriginal cultural values within the study area, particularly within the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens.

The acknowledgement and recognition of Traditional Owner and First Peoples' cultural values can be built into the structure or design of a new element at the site from the outset or it can be integrated into the existing design as a new element. Cultural values could be expressed through public art and other devices that could be incorporated into existing areas. They could also be expressed through landscape design—through revegetation, for example by planting locally appropriate plants, such as reeds and waterlilies in and around the ornamental lake, or traditional plants used for food or medicine; through planting of species appropriate to the pre-European landscape (including River Red Gums, sheoaks and wattles); and through the use of 'Kulin design' elements and colours in hard landscaping (for example, geometric shapes, cross-hatching, diamonds).

On a broader community level, Aboriginal cultural values could be celebrated in many ways as the area develops as a progressive and culturally diverse residential area; for example, through improving education and truth-telling about Aboriginal history, introducing Aboriginal naming and language, promoting Aboriginal traditional practices, creating a community meeting place and/or performance space, and encouraging greater opportunities for Aboriginal artists and performers.

4.5.1 A meeting place

Traditional Owner consultation has highlighted and reinforced the study area, particularly the Moreton Bay Fig trees, as an important meeting place for Aboriginal people. The group of three trees are located at the eastern edge of the Carlton Gardens, directly adjacent to the intersection of Gertrude

Street and Nicholson Street. The trees sit at one of the highest points of the gardens and provide cool, shady areas underneath their canopies. Some of the comments about this place were:

In the early to mid 1970s the Fig Tree in the Gardens had lots of Elders gathering there from around Victoria. It was an important tree that I saw at 16 years old, saw passing on of morals, how to find other people. Around the same time lots of people were gathering in parks nearby too. We were not allowed to meet in the parks and were unsettled to lower ground. — Bunurong Elder.

The trees have been used as a meeting place by Aboriginal people since at least the 1930s, and people still use them as a meeting place today. Families gathered in these public places around Fitzroy and Carlton on Saturdays and Sundays from the late 1930s to the early 1950s. Elders from across Victoria and Australia would gather at the Moreton Bay Figs to pass on cultural knowledge and traditions to young people in the early to mid-1970s.

It is important to acknowledge that the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens area has Aboriginal connections as an important meeting place. Several capital cities in Australia have a recognised meeting place for Aboriginal community members. Examples of these meeting places are Musgrave Park in Brisbane and Redfern Park in Sydney, which have dedicated areas to hold events and ceremonies.



Figure 4.1 Musgrave Park, Brisbane, during the Commonwealth Games in 1982. (Source: Amelia Dunn 2018)

4.5.2 Acknowledgement of Aboriginal activism

The Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens is bordered by the suburb of Fitzroy to the east, part of which, up to Fitzroy Street, is within the boundary of the study area. The area of the Carlton Gardens and the broader Fitzroy area are known to have strong connections with Aboriginal people both pre and post the 1830s, as well as being a place of recreation for the general public since the 1850s.

During the period that the Victorian Parliament sat at the Exhibition Building, from 1901 to 1927, State legislation was passed that directly affected Victorian Aboriginal people. One such decision was the closure of the Coranderrk Aboriginal Reserve (and some of the missions), which caused further displacement and unsettlement of people and ultimately brought many Aboriginal people to the Fitzroy area.

During the early twentieth century, Aboriginal people began returning to the Fitzroy area after the closure of Aboriginal missions and reserves, and with the onset of the Depression. Fitzroy became a hub for the Aboriginal community from the 1920s, with grassroots organisations appearing in the area in the 1950s.

Many significant Aboriginal leaders and activists addressed gatherings in the Carlton Gardens around this time under the Moreton Bay Figs, including Pastor Doug Nicholls, Jack Patten, Bill Onus, William Cooper, Ebenezer Lovett, Martha Nevin and Margaret Tucker.

In the 1960s and 1970s, a strong Aboriginal social and political movement developed in the Fitzroy area. Gertrude Street, Fitzroy, was home to the first Aboriginal legal centre, dental service, childcare service and youth support services, all significant Aboriginal organisations geared towards self-determination. The Black Panther movement in America provided inspiration for political self-education and community programs that found voice through activism initiated in Fitzroy.

Some of the comments from Traditional Owners were as follows:

Lot of action, marching, protest. The 'good times' – people fighting for justice. Good fight and struggles. Climbing over fences, getting arrested. Today we're finally getting voice. — Bunurong Elder.

Everyone needs to be acknowledged, lots of people travelled through. Acknowledge the descendants of all those involved in activism in this area. — Bunurong Elder

Throughout the 1980s, as displacement, discrimination, disadvantage and gentrification continued in Fitzroy, so did the strengthening of Aboriginal community resilience and support networks. Public places, including the Carlton Gardens, were key meeting places for many homeless Aboriginal people, as well as for local residents and those arriving or passing through Melbourne. Young people were taught traditional practices and lore beneath the Moreton Bay Figs when dispossession and displacement made it difficult for traditional ways of passing on knowledge to be maintained. The Moreton Bay Fig gathering place helped to strengthen identity and connections among Aboriginal people in the wake of intense cultural upheaval.

The continued and intergenerational use of Carlton Gardens (particularly the Moreton Bay Figs as a meeting place) holds significant values for Aboriginal people in Victoria.

4.5.3 Revegetation with indigenous plants

The Carlton Gardens are a formal, highly landscaped, European-style environment with a distinct lack of indigenous vegetation. Aboriginal Elders noted that although there is the occasional Australian native tree, there is a lack of indigenous plants, especially around the fountains and lakes. The lack of indigenous plantings within the Carlton Gardens creates a feeling that the environment has been hidden, which in turn creates a disconnection or disruption in the feeling of belonging.

The importance of Australian native plants cannot be underestimated—Australian flora provided (and still provides) Aboriginal people with food, medicine, narcotics, stimulants, adornment, ceremonial

objects, clothing, shelter, tools, fuel, and materials for artwork. Indigenous plants also feature in Aboriginal lore.¹²⁸ Symbolically, plants feature in Aboriginal cultural traditions and spiritual beliefs.

The Traditional Owners expressed the opinion that introducing Australian native plants to the study area, such as waterlilies, water reeds and sheoaks, would help visitors better understand the living culture and traditional knowledge of Aboriginal people. In restoring the past environment, the Carlton Gardens could be utilised to show the holistic relationship that Aboriginal people have with the environment. This could be achieved through the planting and interpretation of the multiple uses and meanings of Australian native plants.

The Milarri Garden in the Melbourne Museum was well received by Traditional Owners during consultation, mainly for its use of Australian native plantings and naturalistic shaped waterways that create an artificial 'natural' environment.



Figure 4.2 'Sheoak mit Gommtree und Stumpfartigenpflanzen ... bei Melbourne' [Sheoak with gumtree and tree stumps ... near Melbourne], by Eugène von Guérard, October 1854. (Source: State Library Victoria, Accession number H3810)

4.5.4 Opportunities for cultural practices

During onsite consultation, Traditional Owners expressed the view that there is an opportunity to demonstrate tree scarring on a stand of eucalypt trees adjacent to the 'Colonial Square' on the western side of the Carlton Gardens. It was suggested that each tree could be scarred in a different way to show the stages of bark removal, not only as a way of expressing cultural practices but as an educational tool. It was noted by all participants that there is no visibility or acknowledgement of Aboriginal people, culture, or Country within the Carlton Gardens, and the scarring of trees has the ability to provide a visible reference point and an acknowledgment of Aboriginal culture.

Some of the comments from Traditional Owners were as follows:

¹²⁸ Phillip Clarke 2007, *Aboriginal People and their Plants*, Rosenberg Publishing, Kenthurst (NSW).

There would have been so many scarred trees in the gardens. We are close to the Yarra so they would have made canoes, shields. All the vegetation has been removed. — Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder

Reeds from swampy wetlands can be used to make baskets and other objects, a very labour-intensive process; made by Aboriginal women. Baskets can be made within a few days but is hard work, I have seen their fingers bleeding from this work. — Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder

It would be great to see more native plants and trees. Maybe a native area in the gardens. People need to know the history and that will help people visualise what was here. — Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder

The contemporary scarring of trees has been the subject of various academic papers, which detail how the continuation of cultural practices ensures that traditional practices are not lost and provides a source of connection and cultural resonance for Aboriginal people. Griffin et al. noted that contemporary cultural heritage values and spaces can be formed through an active social process of identity, cultural beliefs and connection to Country.¹²⁹ The process of tree-scarring using traditional tools can also help increase awareness of cultural heritage both for users of the gardens as well as Traditional Owner communities. A contemporary scarred tree at Plenty Gorge, north of Melbourne, (Figure 4.4) and resulting *koorong* (canoe) was found to have immense value in ‘filling the gaps’ of cultural discontinuity¹³⁰

Additionally, female Elders noted the lack of reed species within the ornamental lake in the Carlton Gardens. Basket-weaving is a traditional practice of Aboriginal women, with each basket created for a particular use. Weaving is a complex process that is connected to the local environment through the selection and use of materials, and through manufacture and purpose. Baskets represent significant knowledge that has been passed down through families and communities and links Aboriginal people to culture and Country. Access to the gardens to collect suitable reeds for weaving would help to re-establish of Aboriginal people’s connections with this place.

Practices such as the cultural scarring of trees and the gathering reeds represent a tangible link between the landscape of the area prior to 1835 and the present-day site of the Carlton Gardens. They also represent a continuation of cultural practices that demonstrate the sustainable management of the land and its resources, which is an area of growing concern globally. The ability and opportunity to express cultural identity also has direct links to wellbeing. Conversations with Elders highlighted the observation that exposing children to the celebration of Aboriginal culture can contribute to them being happy and well-balanced.

¹²⁹ Darren Griffin, Delta Lucille Freedman, Bill Nicholson Jnr, Fiona McConachie and Alexander Parmington, 2013. pages 59–65.

¹³⁰ Griffin et al.



Figure 4.3 Coiled basket being woven from Spiny-headed Mat-rush at Lake Tyers on the east coast of Victoria. (Source: Australian National Botanic Gardens Centre for Australia National Biodiversity Research, 2012: <https://www.anbg.gov.au/aborig.s.e.aust/lomandra-longifolia.html>)



Figure 4.4 Contemporary scar on a River Red Gum. (Source: Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, 2021)

4.5.5 Welcoming spaces

During consultation it was noted that members of the Aboriginal community often felt excluded from Melbourne’s public spaces, such as Flinders Street Station, and from public life in general, such as work environments and housing, and instead met in public parks—most notably, the Carlton Gardens and the park at the Atherton Gardens Estate in Fitzroy. These spaces fostered a sense of belonging and inclusivity when other spaces didn’t.

Traditional Owners notes that there is a real lack of visibility of Aboriginal people or Aboriginal culture in the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens. Bringing back the presence of Aboriginal people and their history to this space would assist in making the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens a more welcoming place. A number of ideas were discussed in relation to creating a sense of belonging at the site, including the introduction of improved interpretation and welcome signs in Aboriginal language. It was suggested that a new area in the plaza near the entrance of the Museum could be used for a gathering place. Visible developments such as revegetation projects and the use of existing trees for cultural practices would also assist in making this a more welcoming space.

Some of the comments were as follows:

Language is good. They should have 'Wominjeka' written all over the museum windows to welcome everyone. — Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder

Everyone would have had to come to this area. — Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder

Bunjilaka, and, as noted above, the Milarri Garden trail in the Melbourne Museum, were noted during consultation as being welcoming and inclusive spaces. Within these spaces, Traditional Owners felt that their voices were represented, and that the exhibitions were immersive and engaging for children to learn about culture.

4.5.6 Truth-telling and history

Traditional Owners feel strongly that the truth about colonial history, including Aboriginal dispossession and injustices need to come to light and needs to be taught. Traditional Owners would like their history told at the site of the Royal Exhibition Building, including the story of Aboriginal people's struggle and their resilience to keep their culture alive.

It was important for Traditional Owners that the pre-colonial landscape is known and understood, and that the truth about the colonial experience for Aboriginal people in Melbourne is brought to light.

Some of the Traditional Owners' comments on this subject are as follows:

It's very important that school students understand the full site of the history. All non-Indigenous people need to know the truth about this history. We live with it every day. — Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder

There are no teachings about Aboriginal life and culture. Exhibitions help to teach. — Bunurong Elder

When we talk about values, places, waterways and lifestyles, Aboriginal cultural needs to be highlighted as well as Aboriginal history. — Bunurong Elder

Aboriginal people were able to invent, be tough, be resilient and thrive. It is a positive story of where Aboriginal people have been, and where they are going. — Bunurong Elder

4.6 Conclusions

The Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens study area holds tangible and intangible heritage values for the Aboriginal community. The study area holds importance to individual community members, with particularly strong social and political associations tied to the Moreton Bay Figs. To retain these values and associations, consideration and further consultation should occur when future development and change, including the introduction of new design components is to occur within the study area.

Areas of importance in the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens study area noted during consultation are the:

- Moreton Bay Figs
- ornamental lake
- large eucalypt (Sugar Gum, *Eucalyptus cladocalyx*)
- Royal Exhibition Building
- Bunjilaka and Milarri Garden in the Melbourne Museum
- indications of the pre-settlement landscape (landform, water, views)
- meeting / gathering place in the plaza between the Melbourne Museum and Royal Exhibition Building.

The tangible areas of importance are shown in Figure 4.5.

Additionally, considerations for future design and development were drawn out in consultation, some of which are associated with the areas of importance. These considerations and recommendations are as follows:

- replanting of Australian plants that are local to Melbourne
- creation of a gathering place / performance space
- protection of Moreton Bay Figs and improved interpretation of this site
- providing improved access for Elders to the collection of Aboriginal objects held at the Melbourne Museum, such as baskets and other made objects, to support teaching and transmission of cultural knowledge
- interpretation throughout the Carlton Gardens and Royal Exhibition Building of the Aboriginal history and contemporary associations with the study area and broader Fitzroy area
- providing space for traditional practices such as tree scarring
- acknowledgement of Country and First Peoples
- incorporation of Aboriginal language in signage and place-naming

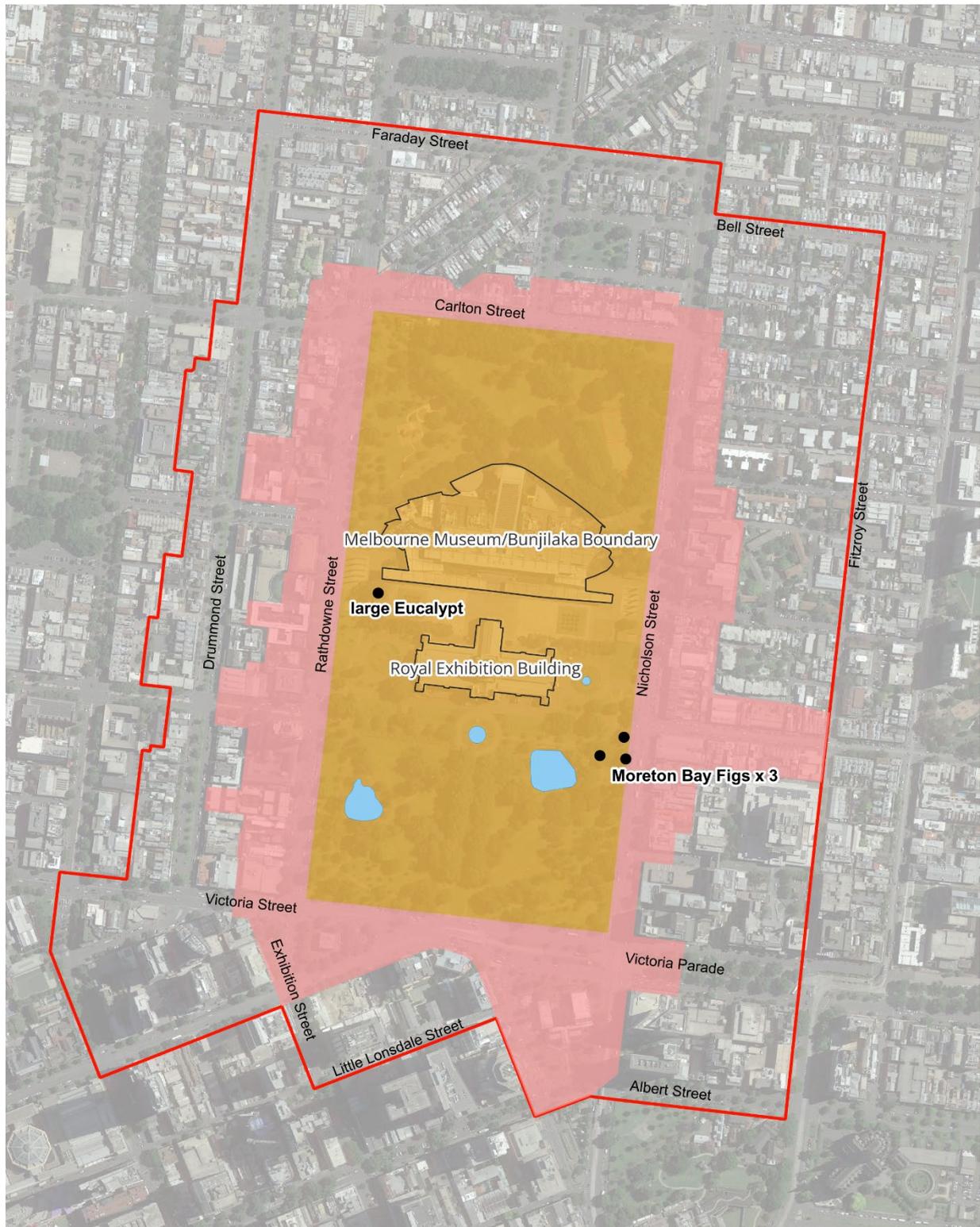


Figure 4.5 Areas of tangible cultural values identified during consultation. (Source: Nearmap with GML overlay)

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Addendum — First Peoples Consultation

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Introduction

Phase 3 of the Royal Exhibition Buildings and Carlton Gardens Traditional Owner and First Peoples Cultural Values assessment project involved consultation with First Peoples who were identified by the Project Working Group as well as through consultation with the three Traditional Owner organisations consulted for this project — Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (the Registered Aboriginal Party for the site as of 1 July 2021), Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation and Boonwurrung Land and Sea Council. Consultation was facilitated by Karen Milward of Karen Milward Consulting. Karen, a Yorta Yorta woman based in Melbourne, is a well-respected facilitator of Aboriginal community consultations and cultural awareness competency training.

The Royal Exhibition Buildings and Carlton Gardens Traditional Owner and First Peoples Cultural Values Report was developed as one of five parts of the updated World Heritage Management Plan for this world heritage listed site. Due to the timeframes associated with the preparation of this report, the timing of consultations with First Peoples was such that the consultation reports were unable to be incorporated into the Traditional Owner and First People's Cultural Values assessment report. They are therefore to be provided as addenda to that report.

This document forms Addendum 1 and details consultation with Aunty Bev Murray, currently the Manager of Link-Up Victoria based at the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency in Northcote. This addendum should be read in conjunction with Section 4 of the Traditional Owner and First Peoples Cultural Values report.

This Addendum has been redacted because it contains culturally sensitive information.