

Towards cultural and environmental renewal of the Birrarung

Bulleen-Banyule Flats Cultural Values Study



**Wurundjeri
Woi-wurrung**

Cultural Heritage
Aboriginal Corporation



Environment,
Land, Water
and Planning

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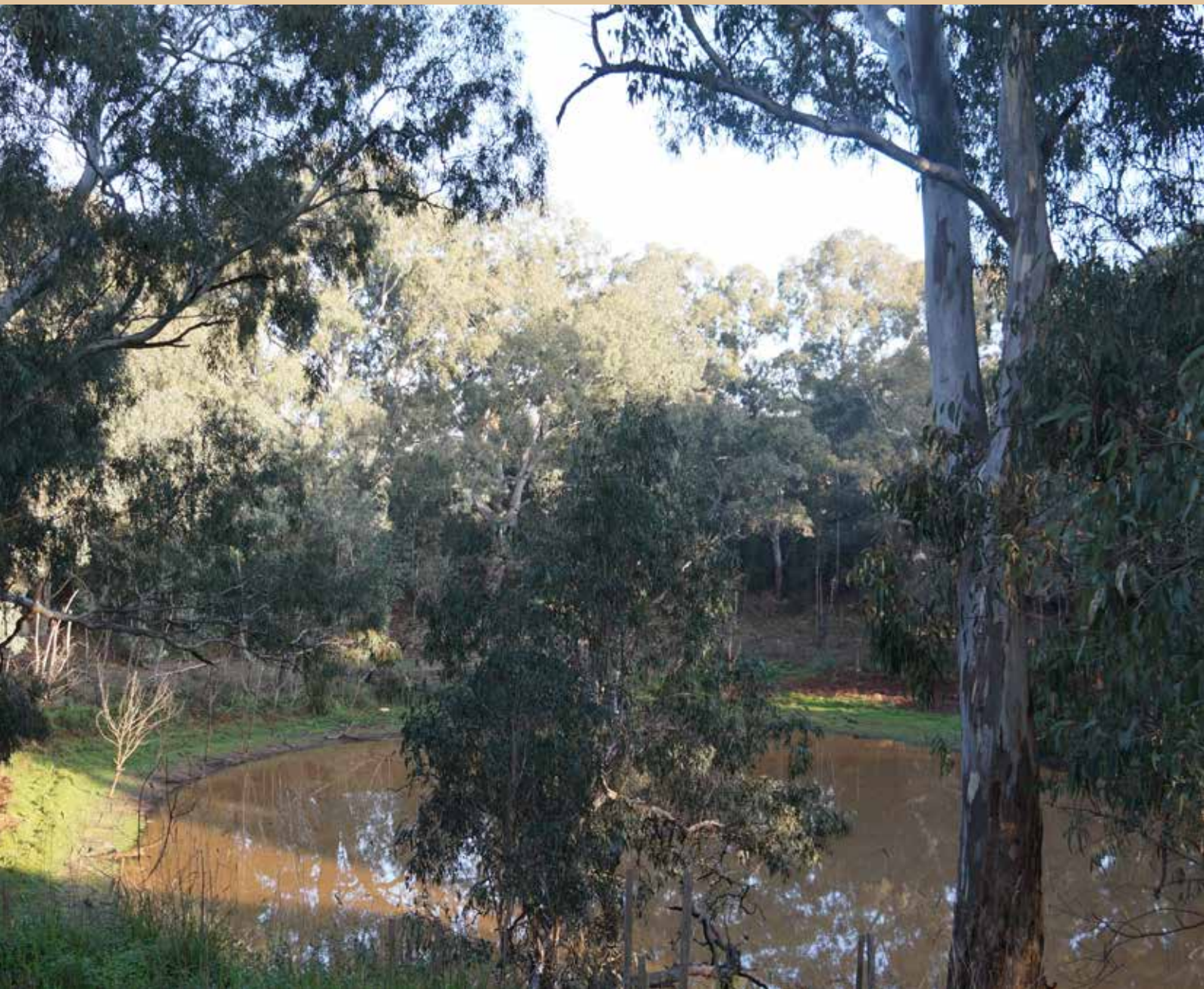
Warning: The following document may contain images of deceased persons.

This summary document presents the results of the Bulleen-Banyule Flats Cultural Values Study, prepared by the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Corporation) for the Department of Environment, Land, Water, and Planning (DELWP).

The Bulleen-Banyule Flats Cultural Values Study (full report) is available by request to the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Corporation and DELWP.

Cover photograph:

Wattle in Bloom, Birrarung, Cultural Values Recording, 15 August 2019



Welcome to Country

*Wominjika Wurundjeri
Galluk yearmen koondée bik*

Foreward

This report summarises a comprehensive project to document Wurundjeri Woiwurrung values in the Bulleen-Banyule reach of the *Birrarung* (Yarra River), in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne, Victoria. The study has been delivered through a partnership between the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation.

Documenting the significance of the Bulleen-Banyule Flats and surrounding land to the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people has revealed that the study area, encompassing the integrated billabong and river system at Heidelberg and Bulleen, is a cultural landscape which has been shaped by Wurundjeri Woiwurrung occupation and land management for generations. The cultural landscape is significant for its role in the social life of Wurundjeri Woiwurrung ancestors, for its links with the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung experience of colonisation and for the spiritual connections the present day Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people have to this place.

Critically, the Bulleen-Banyule Flats Cultural Values Study uncovered a wealth of new materials, artefacts and sites that had previously not been identified, providing a proactive opportunity to register and protect these through statutory processes.

Overall, the study provides a basis to protect and manage this cultural landscape into the future, while demonstrating a robust methodological precedent for future cultural values studies to be funded and delivered across Wurundjeri Woiwurrung Country.



1. Traditional Owner Significance

The Bulleen-Banyule Flats Cultural Values Study documents the cultural values and significance of the Bulleen-Banyule Flats reach of the *Birrarung* (Yarra River) to the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people. In this study, cultural values are understood as the aggregate forms of attachment to Country which contribute to an individual or community's sense of place or as the association that exists between people and place.¹

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

Water is often described as the 'life force' of people and Country within Indigenous Australian cultures. Water is intrinsically linked to ceremony, songs, law and survival.²

Country is a term commonly applied by Indigenous Australians to describe their traditional lands and waters. For Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people, Country is broadly used to describe: their extent of traditional Country; caring for Country by carrying out responsibilities of cultural heritage protection and natural resource management; the creation ancestors and mythological beings which underpin traditional laws and beliefs; and visiting Country which provides a relief from the city and suburbs which now consume much of their traditional homelands.

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

Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people talk of river systems as being one of the vital components of Country. The *Birrarung* supported the riverine and woodland ecological diversity they relied upon for subsistence, resources and material culture.

The Wurundjeri willam are a clan of the Woiwurrung speaking people. The Bulleen section of the *Birrarung* marks the juncture between the traditional estates of two Wurundjeri willam brothers. Their families met with their neighbours on the Bulleen-Banyule Flats and fished for eels, caught bustards and hunted kangaroos. Bunjil and his family, Waa, Bellin-Bellin, Lohan, Karakarook, Brookbool and Boonunboollarook were spiritual beings that created the world for the Wurundjeri willam on the Yarra Flats. This Bulleen section of the *Birrarung* is also associated with key historical moments in the colonial administration and dispossession of Wurundjeri willam from their traditional Country.

¹. Rose, D. B. (1996). *Nourishing Terrains Australian Aboriginal Views of Landscape and Wilderness*. Australian Heritage Commission, Canberra; Australia ICOMOS. (2017). *Practice Note: Intangible Cultural Heritage and Place*. Australia ICOMOS Incorporated.

². Weir, J. K. (2012). *Country, Native Title and Ecology*. In J. K. Weir (Ed.) *Country, Native Title and Ecology*. ANU Press, Canberra.

1. TRADITIONAL OWNER SIGNIFICANCE

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

The relationship between the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people and the Bulleen-Banyule flats landscape is one based on socio-cultural, ceremonial, spiritual, ecological, archaeological and historical attachment. Cultural significance is embedded in the contemporary understandings of traditional cultural practices, while archaeological material and ecological biodiversity provide a tangible record of former Wurundjeri Woiwurrung land use and occupation.

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



2. Study Overview

PROJECT DESIGN

The Bulleen-Banyule Flats Cultural Values Study has begun the large task of documenting the tangible and intangible significance of the *Birrarung* (Yarra River) and its lands. The project was led by the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Corporation) and was funded by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP).

The project involved the collection and analysis of data from historical records, archaeological surveys and workshops with Wurundjeri Woiwurrung Elders and community members to shed light on traditional on-Country activities (including traditional fire management, plant harvesting, hunting, aquaculture, resource use and living areas) together with cultural knowledge (language, place names, social practices, traditions and beliefs, ecology and their history of non-Indigenous settlement). This report provides a summary of findings and recommendations. A full report is also available upon request from the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Corporation and DELWP.

Respect and recognition of the right of Indigenous peoples to be both authors and custodians of cultural knowledge has informed the project design. Intellectual Property is owned by the Traditional Owners. DELWP's access and use rights are limited in that they accept that some project activities and findings may not be appropriate to share outside of the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung community.

The process of delivering the study has fostered stronger collaboration between the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Corporation and DELWP. It has also created opportunities for Wurundjeri Woiwurrung Elders and community members to be on Country and reconnect with Country.

OBJECTIVES

The study aimed to realise the following objectives:

- Increased Wurundjeri Woiwurrung engagement in land use planning projects;
- Increased ability for the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Corporation to integrate cultural values, objectives, and traditional and contemporary knowledge in water management projects and practices;
- Increased Wurundjeri Woiwurrung community wellbeing from being able to actively Care for Country; and
- Recognition and respect for Indigenous peoples' rights, cultural and customary interests, allowing for their incorporation into DELWP's integrated planning and management for land, water and the built environment.



2. STUDY OVERVIEW

POLICY CONTEXT

The Bulleen-Banyule Flats Cultural Values Study delivers mutual objectives of the Victorian Government and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Corporation.

In 2017 the Victorian Government legislated for future protection and improvement of the Yarra River by passing the Yarra River Protection (*Willip-gin Birrarung Murrn*) Act 2017 (the Act). The Act recognises the *Birrarung* as one living, integrated natural entity and the Traditional Owners of the *Birrarung* as its custodian. Action 26 of the associated Yarra River Action Plan commits the Victorian Government to work with the Traditional Owners to map tangible and intangible cultural values along the Yarra River.

The Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Corporation established a Water Unit in 2017 to meet the requirements and objectives of the Act. The Water Unit is a dedicated team ensuring active participation in the water industry at all levels; from policy and planning at a decision-making level, to on-ground waterway management and Caring for Country projects. The Water Unit has a Water Policy, *Nhanbu narrun ba ngargunin twarn Birrarung* (Ancient Spirit and Lore of the Yarra), with a key objective of implementing a Wurundjeri Woiwurrung managed and controlled cultural knowledge and mapping program for the cultural and heritage values of the *Birrarung*.

STUDY AREA

The Bulleen-Banyule Flats reach of the *Birrarung* was prioritised for the study of cultural values because of having high biodiversity and recreation values, and many significant previously established Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Places. Several major projects currently impact on the site, including planning for the North East Link, the Yarra Strategic Plan and the Yarra River - Bulleen Precinct Land Use Framework Plan.

The *Birrarung* transects the study area in a north-south direction. It is edged by parkland within an otherwise urbanised landscape. The parklands surrounding the *Birrarung* are important areas with known uses to the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people. These areas also have notable importance given that Indigenous occupation has been traditionally focused around waterways. Within the Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018, all land within 200 metres of a named waterway is defined as an Area of Cultural Heritage Sensitivity.

The billabongs, wetlands and vegetation on either side of the *Birrarung* are part of a landscape that for generations has been carefully managed by the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people. The lagoons and billabongs, once fed by flood events, have now declined from infrequent inundation due to water extractions upstream.

Several confluences occur within the study area, with the waters of the Plenty River, Salt Creek and Banyule Creek flowing into the *Birrarung*. River confluences have always been important meeting places for Woiwurrung people.

Key cultural features of the landscape and the study area boundaries are illustrated in Appendix A.

3. Recommendations

Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people are the custodians of the Bulleen-Banyule Flats cultural landscape. The present-day community holds the traditionally conferred generational responsibilities in caring for this Country. This includes seasonal maintenance of the right ecology, preserving the habitats of totemic and creation ancestors and restoring the ancestral landscape lived in by Wurundjeri willam people.

The following recommendations identify measures to protect and enhance values associated with the Bulleen-Banyule Flats cultural landscape, identified through this study. The Wurundjeri Woiwurrung Aboriginal Corporation require the support of the Victorian Government and other agencies to ensure that cultural values associated with this place are not irretrievably lost.

RECOMMENDATION	POSSIBLE ACTIONS
1. Rehabilitate the ecological values within the billabongs and wetlands to a level of a typical healthy floodplain billabong.	<p>1.1 Foster further collaboration between the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung Corporation and Melbourne Water through the Water for Environment Program.</p> <p>1.2 Prioritise habitat restoration for culturally and ecologically significant plants and animal, including species identified through the Cultural Values Study as totemic beings.</p> <p>1.3 Engage the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung Narrap Unit (land management) for activities on Country, including revegetation, weed control, environmental monitoring and cultural burns.</p>
2. Recognise the Bulleen-Banyule Flats as an Aboriginal cultural landscape for protection and enhancement.	<p>2.1 Register the cultural landscape on the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register as an Aboriginal Cultural Place.</p> <p>2.2 Develop an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Land Management Agreement with public land managers for the future management of the Bulleen-Banyule Flats.</p> <p>2.3 Rename the existing Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Places with Woiwurrung language.</p>
3. Create opportunities for Wurundjeri Woiwurrung to share the cultural values associated with the Bulleen-Banyule Flats.	<p>3.1 Fund the expansion of existing animated audio-visual Story Maps (Gilimbaa Creative Agency) to include other Wurundjeri Woiwurrung creation stories, such as Lohan cooking eels on the Yarra Flats and Waa stealing fire on the Yarra Flats.</p> <p>3.2 Install interpretive signage and name places in Woiwurrung language to educate the broader public about the Bulleen-Banyule Flats being a cultural landscape.</p>
4. Ensure statutory and strategic planning and heritage management processes serve to protect and enhance Wurundjeri Woiwurrung values.	<p>4.1 Ensure that land management and planning projects, including the Yarra River - Bulleen Precinct Land Use Framework Plan, avoid impacts to identified cultural values and avoid disturbance of certain areas of cultural significance.</p> <p>4.2 Utilise established frameworks under the <i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006</i> to manage cultural heritage material on Wurundjeri Woiwurrung Country.</p> <p>4.3 Establish a cultural hub for Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people at the Plenty River confluence or another location as self-determined by Wurundjeri Woiwurrung, not as a built form, but in the style of Garrambi Baan in Eltham.</p> <p>4.4 Make permanent the interim Yarra River planning controls (<i>Amendment GC48</i>), comprising the Significant Landscape Overlay and Design and Development Overlay.</p>

4. Methodology

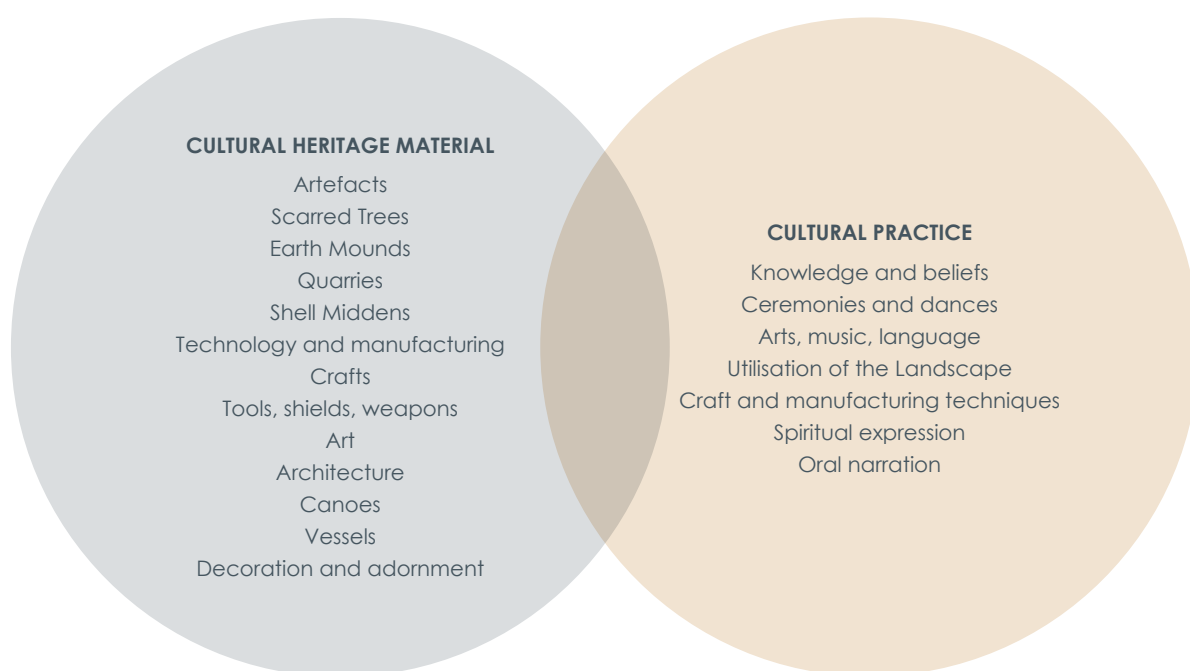
WHAT IS A CULTURAL VALUES STUDY?

A Cultural Values Study is a holistic means to determine a connection between people and place. This Cultural Values Study combines ethnohistorical research and field visits for Woiwurrung knowledge recording (cultural values recording). It also considers the significance of the cultural values identified and produces recommendations to protect and manage those values.

WHAT ARE CULTURAL VALUES?

Cultural values are core elements, ideas and beliefs that a community of people have in common.

Cultural values can relate to cultural heritage material, cultural practices, beliefs, knowledge related to a place and historical narratives.



METHOD CHOICES FOR THIS STUDY

Establishing cultural values within a place or landscape involves knowledge gathering from archival and documentary research in conjunction with cultural values recording activities. The archival and documentary research assists in reconstructing traditional, historical and social connections to place or landscape. The cultural values recording then takes place over a series of workshops and field visits during which Wurundjeri Woiwurrung Elders record their traditional and contemporary knowledge of place and establish the significance of place.

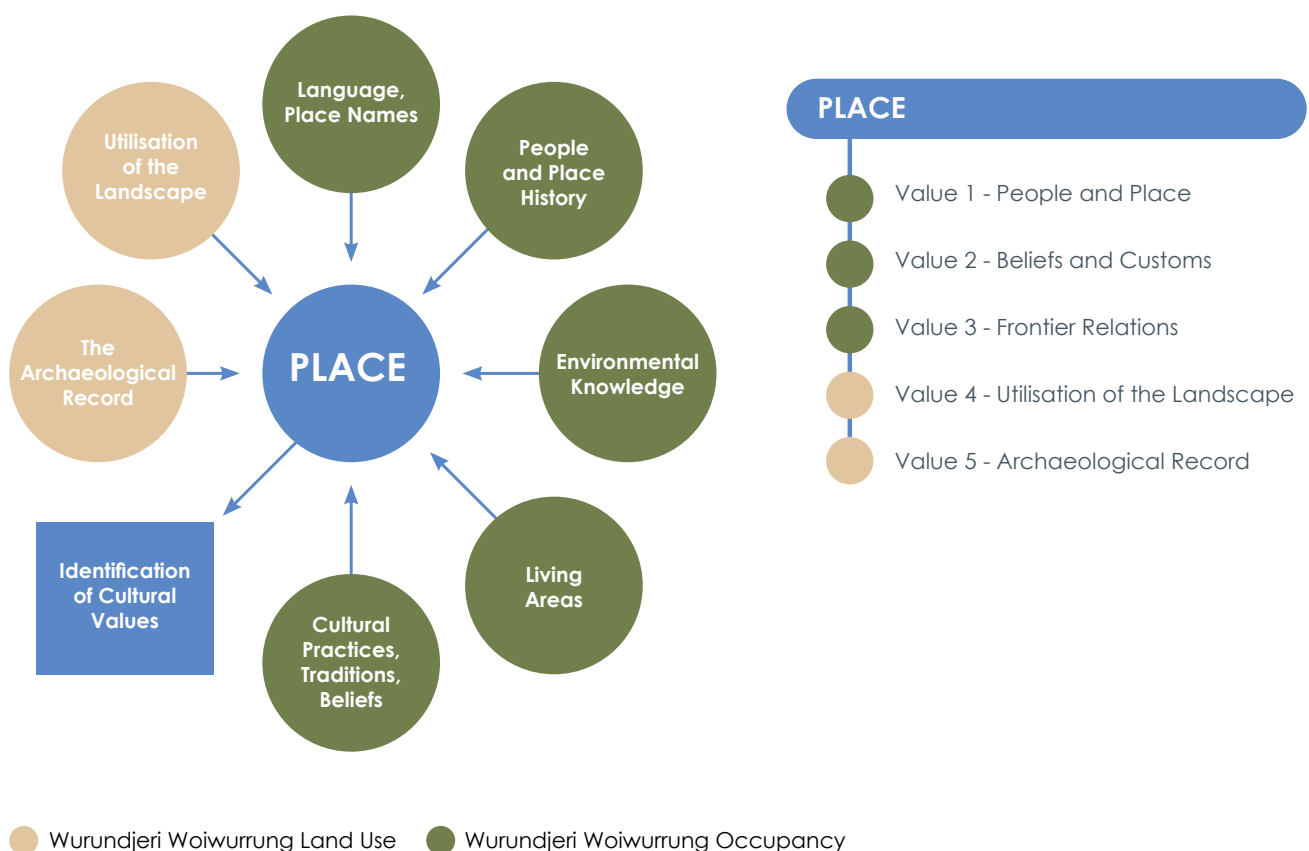
In this study a range of ethnographic field methods were employed. Data was gathered through field based semi-structured interviews, field observation, workshops, discussions and archival and documentary research undertaken in collaboration with the research participants. The research participants were principally the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung Elders. The study also facilitated the involvement of the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung members more broadly.



5. Study Findings

The Bulleen-Banyule Flats Cultural Values Study recorded extensive information about Wurundjeri Woiwurrung culture and history associated with the study area. Data outputs include compiled historical mapping and photography, current field images, a co-constructed paleoenvironmental investigation of Bolin Bolin Billabong with the University of Melbourne and a catalogue of ethnohistorical research material that will help to inform future studies.

The study included a process of identifying, understanding and sharing Wurundjeri Woiwurrung values associated with the study area. The values are associated with both traditional and contemporary land use and occupancy and for the purposes of the study are themed.



Cultural heritage material is irreplaceable, as is a cultural landscape. The landscape, but not the cultural association, is at risk of being irretrievably lost when measures are not in place to protect the significant attributes.

During the cultural values recording and workshops the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung peoples' understanding of the history of the Bulleen-Banyule Flats and lived experiences of their ancestors strengthened their connection to this already important stretch of the *Birrarung*. The identification of a cultural landscape and significance of this to the present-day Wurundjeri Woiwurrung community then led to consideration as to how the values should be managed and protected into the future.

Value 1: People and Place

We value our history of people and place because we are responsible for our ancestors traditionally conferred culture and Country.

Several features and places within the Bulleen-Banyule Flats landscape stand out as important historical and socio-cultural sites. Significance stems from associations with important events or with the longer term social and political activity of the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people. Historically significant findings communicate the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people's trajectory as a colonised group of people.

The Yarra Flats meets the undulating hills around Heidelberg, marking the transition from Borrunupton's Country to that of his brother, Bebejern or Jerrum Jerrum. Both brothers were Wurundjeri willam *ngurungaetas*. Bebejern is the common ancestor of the present-day Wurundjeri willam community. His son, William Barak, was an influential Wurundjeri man and advocate for Aboriginal social justice. William Barak spoke of Heidelberg as his father's Country when demonstrating to nineteenth century anthropologists his group's composition, living areas, kinship systems and cultural beliefs.

Records by early colonial settlers of the Port Phillip District, within which the study area is located, evidence the state of Indigenous-settler relations. Some evidence indifference, with non-Indigenous settlers living beside the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung community and allowing them a degree of autonomy to carry out cultural business. Others document conflict, complaint, police intervention and a continual campaign to have Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people forcibly removed from their traditional estates. There are also those who actively sought to utilise Indigenous people as a labour force.

Between 1835 and 1863, marking the period between colonial settlement of the Port Phillip District and the establishment of Coranderrk Reserve, Woiwurrung people remained living at Heidelberg and Bulleen. The Bulleen-Banyule Flats reach of the *Birrarung* was a stopping place for Woiwurrung people travelling between the Yarra Ranges and Melbourne, as well as for Taungurung people visiting their Wurundjeri neighbours. In the early colonial years, these Aboriginal communities continued to harvest traditional resources.

Eels were fished up until the private sale of the lagoons under Special Survey. Special Surveys were enabled through application to the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners of the British Government. A buyer could purchase 5,120 acres at £1 per acre. New resources were also acquired, such as potatoes and iron, and new economic ventures established, such as selling lyrebird tail feathers and marsupial skins or working on farms.

Woiwurrung people faced challenges to maintaining traditional lifestyles and fulfilling cultural obligations whilst adapting to rapid environmental and social change. This became especially difficult following the establishment of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate in 1839. A decision was made in 1840 to amalgamate the Woiwurrung and Bunurong/Boonwurrung people and contain these communities within a reserve. They were asked to select a good country for themselves.³ The good country they chose was Bolin lagoon – one of the most important Wurundjeri willam sites in the study area. This choice was denied, signifying the lack of agency of Indigenous communities experienced under the Protectorate. Non-Indigenous settlement was already occurring at Heidelberg and Bulleen and was preferred over Woiwurrung occupation. The Protectorate also considered Bolin Lagoon too close to Melbourne, from which Indigenous people were actively excluded.

The Woiwurrung and Bunurong/Boonwurrung were camped at Bolin when they decided on an alternative location. Nerre Nerre Warren, the present-day Dandenong Police Paddocks, was chosen. A reserve was subsequently established.

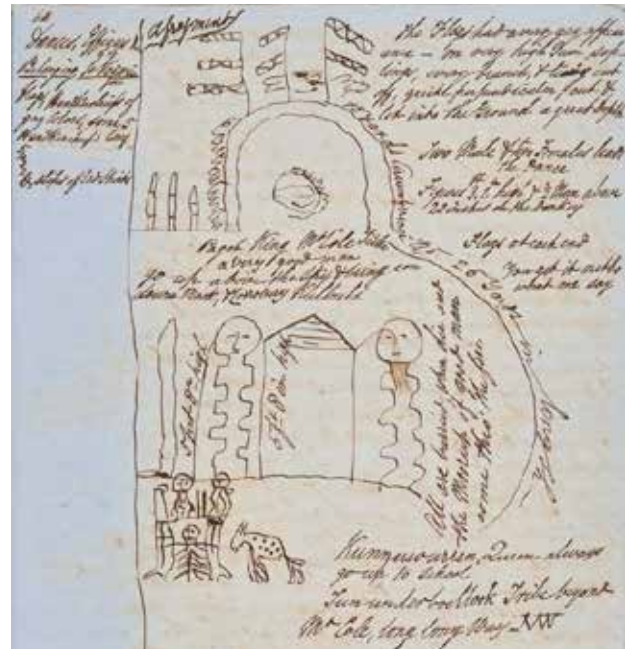
In this historical context, features of the Bulleen-Banyule Flats landscape become important historical sites with unique associations to the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people's trajectory as a colonised group of people. This includes Bolin lagoon as a place of traditional Woiwurrung occupation and as the location of political negotiations with the Protectorate. The landscape takes on social meaning for the present-day community as these locations become understood as markers of Wurundjeri Woiwurrung colonial resistance and efforts for self-determination.

Value 2: Beliefs and Customs

We value our beliefs and customs because this is the love of our Country, our knowledge and skills, our social fabric.

For Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people the landscape provides a physical reminder of the cultural lives of their ancestors. Being on Country reignites and maintains this spiritual connection. This study has linked creation events to the Bulleen-Banyule Flats landscape. Findings explain the formation of the river and periods of recession and drought which are contiguous with geological events known to have occurred during Indigenous occupation of the *Birrarung*.

Wurundjeri Woiwurrung creation ancestors and totemic beings are associated with the *Birrarung*. Many are found within the Bulleen-Banyule Flats. *Bunjil* and his wife *Ganewara* appear in the form of a wedge tailed eagle (*Aquila audax*) and the black swan (*Cygnus atratus*). Among their children are the nankeen kestrel (*Falco cenchroides*), brush tailed phascogale (*Phascogale tapoatafa*), sugar glider (*Petaurus breviceps*), rainbow lorikeet (*Trichoglossus moluccanus*) and swamp harrier (*Circus approximans*), as well as the ancestral beings *Karakarook*, *Brookbool* and *Boonunboollarook*. Others include *Waa* in the form of the Australian raven (*Corvus coronoides*), *Kooborr* the koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) and *Bellin-Bellin* the pied currawong (*Strepera graculina*). These creation ancestors and totemic beings were not there by chance. Their lives were interlinked in a series of events on the *Birrarung* and *Yarra Flats* which paved the path for humans and their cultural lives.



Dances, Effigys &c Belonging to Victoria (Dance Relating to Fire) illustrated by William Thomas c1844-1853 with notes from Simon Wonga held at the Mitchell Library MS 214, Volume 03 Item 01 William Thomas journal, October-November 1841. This illustration was published in Stephens, M (Vol 2. 1844-1853) *The Journal of William Thomas, Assistant Protector of the Aborigines of Port Phillip & Guardian of the Aborigines*, 1839-1867, p. 523

Heidelberg and Bulleen were also ceremonial and dance areas where a *wirrarap* (doctor) could restore one's *murrup* (spirit) and *marmbullu* (kidney fat). Ceremonies could last a day, a night or several nights. They could relate to men and women or be a way to resolve disputes. There is a rare illustration drafted by the Assistant Protector William Thomas which shows a dance related to fire held at the confluence of the Plenty River and *Birrarung*. A song which accompanied the dance spoke of ones *murrup* transitioning from the subterranean through fire to the *karalk* (a pathway of light during sunset) and *tharangalk-bek* (Country in the sky where the spirit beings lived).

The oldest creation story known to us is *Bunjil's* creation story. *Bunjil* laid the love of the land, our knowledge and skills. He observes our day to day life. These are our intangible values, our creation stories, our oral histories, our dances. Our beliefs give us our social structure in our daily lives and with the land.

To us it is reality, not just a dreamtime story.

Value 3: Frontier Relations

Our history of frontier relations tells of our struggle.

Frontier conflict refers to conflict between Indigenous Australians and non-Indigenous colonisers which erupted from the initial encounters in 1788 and spanned a period of 140 years to the 1930s. Frontier conflict varied widely in duration and intensity but was a recurring feature of the history of non-Indigenous settlement.⁴ Non-Indigenous colonisation also brought epidemics of infectious diseases which spread quickly through south-eastern Australia. Adult survivors of the initial smallpox outbreaks from Sydney and Port Jackson were observed among the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people at Heidelberg and Bulleen c1839-1840.

The initial colonial settlers at Heidelberg and Bulleen were silent on the matter of Indigenous occupation; however one named John Hunter Kerr gained unique access to the hunting practises, living areas and ceremonies of his Wurundjeri neighbours. He was also aware that his presence came with limitations as they purposefully withheld some cultural knowledge. Kerr's interactions with his Wurundjeri neighbours was not a cross-cultural or mutual exchange. Kerr wrote about the people and their customs through the ethnocentric notion of racial progression which prevailed during his era. He also immediately attempted to dissuade the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate from allowing Woiwurrung people to camp at Bolin lagoon on the day they arrived with the Protectorate on Tuesday 25 August 1840. He seemingly did this by following the appropriate bureaucratic processes and directing his complaints to the Assistant Protector.

It was the agitation of brothers Lemuel, John, Armyne, and Sandford Bolden which exemplified frontier tension at Heidelberg and Bulleen. In 1840 Armyne reported that there were 200-300 people camped on his farm who were armed and threatening to burn Armyne's huts. They were likely to have been camping at locations within the study area, within the vicinity of Annulus Billabong and Banksia Street Wetland.

Mounted police responded to the situation by ambushing and wounding individuals, forcing their retreat. This marked the beginning of a long period of struggle between the Bolden's and Wurundjeri people.

Despite it being generally accepted elsewhere, the Bolden brothers disputed the Wurundjeri people's right to access their traditional Country or to fish in the lagoons. Other settlers made incidental complaints to the Protectorate regarding vegetable and fruit theft from farms and fear of Wurundjeri campfires. During this time, Heidelberg and Bulleen were under the surveillance of the Protectorate. The response of the Assistant Protector was to take the Wurundjeri people away from escalating tensions. Relocation was disruptive for the Wurundjeri people.

Bolin has a very sad history. The history of how our land was taken is distressing. When settlers came, they claimed the land and took over. They did not want us here. Our people were pushed out to the outskirts and excluded, then rounded up and put onto mission stations. How these people were treated, it makes us upset. But that is our history. It was a struggle.



Plan showing the surveyed lands to the northward of Melbourne and allotments contiguous to it by surveyor Robert Hoddle, State Library of Victoria, MAPS 821.1 A 1837 Hoddle

⁴. AIATSIS (2015) First Encounters and Frontier Conflict. The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies: <https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/articles/first-encounters-and-frontier-conflict>

Value 4: Utilisation of the Landscape

We value our traditional utilisation of the landscape because Caring for Country is Bunjil's Law.

The Bulleen-Banyule Flats landscape is representative of traditional Wurundjeri Woiwurrung Country prior to extensive clearing and other modifications by pastoralists, farmers and urban development. Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people carried out sustainable and systematic land management to ensure the seasonal maintenance and distribution of plant and animal species required for diet, resources, clothing, body adornment, tools, manufacture, weaponry and craft. This carefully managed biodiversity is described as 'healthy Country'.

Within the documentary record, the plains of Woiwurrung Country are frequently described as 'thinly wooded grasslands' and 'recently burnt countryside' during the warmer months. Indigenous fire management regenerated large tracts of important grasslands. In other areas of rich fertile soils, the earth was manually turned to grow *murnong* (yam daisy - *Microseris lanceolata*) and other tuber or root-based vegetables. Aquatic and amphibious species of sedges, rushes, reeds and water ribbons were collected from the floodplains. The tree canopies of eucalypts, casuarina, and acacia species provided the bark, resins and wood required for canoes, *willams* (huts), *tarnuks* (vessels), axe handles, digging sticks and other non-utilitarian uses.

Utilisation of the landscape is also apparent in association between people and place. Rivers could mark a boundary between clans and Kulin groups. The Wurundjeri willam *ngurungaeta* Billibellary mapped for Thomas the divide between Woiwurrung and Taungurung Country, this being the *Birrarung* and Goulbourn River. Rivers were utilised as thoroughfares. A travelling route along the *Birrarung* from Heidelberg to Healesville connected Bolin lagoon to the Plenty River where dances and ceremonies were carried out, and quite likely also to the Yarra Ranges where lyrebird hunting took place.



The Country surrounding the Birrarung would have been burnt to bring in the native grasses and other plants that require the fires to grow. When we burned depended on the area and weather. Usually the Country was burnt in late autumn and early winter to avoid high temperatures and hot winds. When it's done at this time of the year, there is moisture in the ground and plants which produces a low intensive fire that trickles and controls itself. Burns were needed once a year to every two years. The Bulleen-Banyule Flats would need an annual fire regime to return the grasslands and then probably require burns every second to third year. Fire through here will help remove the leaf litter and rejuvenate the native grasses that need that fire to regenerate. The seed bank is usually still present, the fire brings it back and kills off the exotic weeds. It will take time but it will come back.

Caring for Country, it's Bunjil's law. Bunjil's law is not to harm land and waterways. Cultural values are the food fibre and medicine that is still there and what would be expected to have been there if it wasn't for colonisation. If you go back to our true cultural values, our culture was to protect the land and everything that lives within the landscape. We made sure that areas were periodically burnt to promote regrowth and thereby supply food for us and the animals. Cultural values are about protecting the landscape, from the trees to make sure there is enough shelter for the birds, to the grasses to restore the biodiversity, and everything else that then stems from that.

MATERIAL TYPE		
Animal (skin, bone, sinew)	Plant (fibre, bark, timber)	Inorganic (stone, ochre)
Sinew twine Cord Possum skin cloaks Piercing tools Marngrook ball Bodily decoration Bone needles Shell scraping tools Emu talon spear barb Kangaroo skin bags Kangaroo skin baby carriers	Cord & String Baskets Tarnuks Boomerangs Waddies Spears Shields Musical instruments Kannan - digging stick Miam, willam - huts Fire sticks Mats Fishing nets Clubs Bodily decoration	Pigments Scrapers and Blades Engraving tools Axes Grinding stones Cutting tools Fish traps Piercing Tools

Value 5: The Archaeological Record

We value our archaeological record because this is the physical evidence of our occupation, living areas and material culture.

Aboriginal cultural heritage material, such as scarred trees and artefact scatters registered throughout the study area, evidence the traditional occupation of Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people. Registered Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Places within the Bulleen-Banyule Flats are the tangible links which help to demonstrate why this is a significant cultural landscape for the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people.

Archaeological material is predominantly located on the river terraces, ridgelines, escarpments and slopes in the study area; these being the higher grounds overlooking the river. Resources and food were harvested from the floodplain and surrounding landscape, then taken to the living areas on higher ground for food processing and manufacturing.

Prior archaeological investigations indicate that former pastoral and urban land uses have not removed Aboriginal cultural heritage material although at times the original context may have been disturbed. Despite no dated cultural heritage material, archaeologists have predicted sites of early occupation surviving the area due to the Pleistocene and Quaternary age of river terraces which hold archaeological material. This means cultural heritage material could be as old as 30,000 years Before Present to as recent as 5,000 years Before Present.

Protecting landscapes containing Aboriginal cultural heritage material from further disturbance is a priority for the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people. The study has uncovered a wealth of new materials, artefacts and sites that had previously not been identified, providing a proactive opportunity to register and protect these through statutory processes. The current mechanism for management and protection is the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*.

This study has also shown that management and protection can be afforded through linking heritage with planning processes in the Yarra River – Bulleen Precinct Land Use Framework Plan



6. Cultural Renewal

Our living cultural practises bring our community together.

The ability for Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people to live at Bulleen and Heidelberg was irretrievably diminished by colonial settlement and administration of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate. Both intentionally sought to remove Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people from their traditional estates. At the cessation of the Protectorate, Aboriginal reserves were established by the Central Board Appointed to Watch Over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria. The movement of Indigenous Victorians onto these reserves had disastrous implications by fragmenting kinship systems and prohibiting language and cultural practices.

This has not diminished the significance of the Bulleen-Banyule Flats cultural landscape to the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people. The landscape takes on new meaning as values are identified that contribute to Wurundjeri Woiwurrung peoples understanding of their history and traditional presence within this place.

Keeping culture alive unites the present-day Wurundjeri Woiwurrung community. The renewal of traditional customary practises within a modern context and the practise of educating one generation to the next sustains the cultural identity of the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung community. For example, Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Corporation's Narrap Team carry out on-ground works to manage and restore Country. They utilise contemporary land management practices in conjunction with Indigenous fire management and traditional ecological knowledge.

Wurundjeri Cultural Heritage Officers are actively involved in the identification, management and protection of cultural heritage places. Walking Country for cultural values studies creates opportunities for sharing knowledge, reconnecting with a place, and relating to the journey of their ancestors within a landscape. On-Country ceremonies carried out by Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people, such as *tanderrum* (Welcome to Country), also enable the preservation of culture on Country.



5. CULTURAL RENEWAL

There are also continuous traditions, being the respect for creation ancestors and totemic beings, as well as the physical manifestation of their activities within the natural features of Wurundjeri Woiwurrung Country.

Participating in this study has created opportunities for the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung community to reconnect with Country through the cultural values recording. The Wurundjeri Woiwurrung community desire further opportunities to be on Country and reconnect with Country. Recommendations of this study identify for government and other agencies to contribute to projects and programs towards this end.

We never left Country. To us, the cultural values are our Aboriginal values.

Cultural values are the responsibility of each person to care for Country. This includes the responsibility of non-Indigenous people to learn about what Country needs and advocate in the community for healthy Country. We can achieve this together through cross-cultural respect. Viewing the Yarra as a living entity will influence the community to think strategically about how it can be protected into the future. This has always been our cultural attitude to land management.



7. The Cultural Landscape

For our community the natural world is also a cultural space. We have a special interest in preserving not just our cultural objects, but also landscapes of cultural importance.

The documentation of cultural values contributed to greater recognition of the Bulleen-Banyule Flats as an integrated cultural landscape. This study has observed the lives of Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people within the study area through both cultural values recording and ethnohistorical research activities. This has demonstrated how the landscape of the Bulleen-Banyule Flats has been shaped, both physically and conceptually, by Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people. Thus, it may be viewed as not only a natural landscape, but also a cultural landscape. Significance of the cultural landscape is rooted in the investment of meaning by the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people.

Findings of this study attest to the sense of place and association that the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people held, and continue to hold, within this stretch of the *Birrarung*. This sense of place is held within the artefactual remains; the ceremonies and dances witnessed in Heidelberg and Bulleen; the creation stories and dwelling places of creation ancestors and other spiritual beings associated with the Yarra Flats and Heidelberg; the Heidelberg to Healesville travelling route; the numerous resources that were harvested and sourced from Country; and the post-colonial historical narrative.

The Wurundjeri Woiwurrung participants in the Bulleen-Banyule Flats Cultural Values Study formed the view that the Bulleen-Banyule Flats is a cultural landscape where each value is interrelated and thus all contribute equally in qualifying the cultural significance of the area.

The key conclusion of the Bulleen-Banyule Flats Cultural Values study has been to recognise the significance of the study area as an integrated cultural landscape. Protecting and enhancing this cultural landscape is of special importance to Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people.



8. Project Evaluation

EVALUATION PROCESS

The Bulleen-Banyule Flats Cultural Values Study was a pilot project. Independent external evaluation was undertaken to assess the success of the project in meeting its defined outcomes. The evaluation was based on a range of data, including the evaluation consultant attending project meetings, interviewing officers and participants and conducting a peer review of the project method and outputs. Data was gathered across the lifetime of the project. The evaluation was provided by Chris Johnston, Heritage Specialist, Calendia PL.

Some of the evaluation findings are shared here in the hope that they might inform similar partnerships and cultural values projects being undertaken across a range of agencies.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

The methodology employed was rigorous and replicable. The supporting elements – the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Corporation and DELWP governance arrangements, the internal support for the project officer, and the respect and commitment shown by the participating DELWP staff – contributed to this successful outcome and were regarded as key elements of the method. A recommendation is that the worthwhile process of collaboratively developing the project brief – including the objectives and outcomes – be continued for all future partnership projects.

The study facilitated broader participation from Wurundjeri Woiwurrung community members than would usually input into a cultural values study. In addition to Elders, participation was expanded to include the Youth Engagement Committee, the Narrap Team (land management), Cultural Heritage Officers, and other Wurundjeri Woiwurrung organisational staff. The initiative of the Elders in broadening the engagement opportunities has been commended. The right resourcing and funding was key to broadening opportunities to participate, share knowledge and reconnect with Country.

While there was value noted in having a Project Control Board (PCB) co-chaired by DELWP and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Corporation to lead the project, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung PCB members preferred the informality associated with on Country meetings as these offered a more relaxed setting and a chance to talk one-on-one. This helped build mutual trust.

The importance of being on Country was a key emerging theme. Of all the activities undertaken that enabled participation, the on-Country visits were the most important. Elders emphasised the importance of just being there, talking with and listening to others, and sharing the experience together. This creates a sense of belonging – to community, to ancestors and Country. DELWP officers also highly valued the opportunities to be on Country with the Elders. Learnings for future projects include meeting more frequently on-Country and for DELWP, where appropriate, to extend broader invitations for a range of staff visit Wurundjeri Woiwurrung with Wurundjeri Woiwurrung Elders.

At officer level the evaluation found relationships between DELWP and the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Corporation to be strong and collaborative. The project manager felt well supported by DELWP staff. At the senior level, Wurundjeri Woiwurrung Elders aspire to build a collaborative organisational relationship with DELWP's senior level staff.

There remains a need for DELWP to determine how information from this cultural values study, and future projects, can and will be used by DELWP. This includes implementing the outcomes.

Opportunities were identified for DELWP to improve understanding and respect for Traditional Owner perspectives, knowledge and cultural values by creating opportunities to celebrate these values using case studies, news stories, articles or through events. The evaluation noted that finding effective ways to incorporate Traditional Owner values into government policies, plans and strategies is still a work in progress; key decision-makers need to be aware and informed, and the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Corporation needs to remain 'at the table' to help guide this work.

It's about community wellbeing, it's about self-determination, and by being actively engaged in these activities ... it's empowering, especially when you're actually able to get out there and care for Country.

The Elders also expressed a strong desire to build the relationship by sharing knowledge.

All we're trying to do is tell our story, and get people learning about it, and how they need to look after Country.

The evaluation notes that the final report is a key part of the knowledge legacy. It is something that the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people have – as an organisation and as a community – that can be shared and can find a place on family bookshelves to be drawn upon into the future. Encouraging interest by younger Wurundjeri Woiwurrung men and women – is about 'putting that seed of curiosity in their mind' – and to build on what has been done in this pilot through future projects. One of the strengths of the historical narrative approach is that Elders now have access to that story and, through telling and retelling, it can become part of the bigger Wurundjeri Woiwurrung story.

PROCESS BASED RECOMMENDATIONS

Future directions emerged for the Victorian Government from this evaluation process.

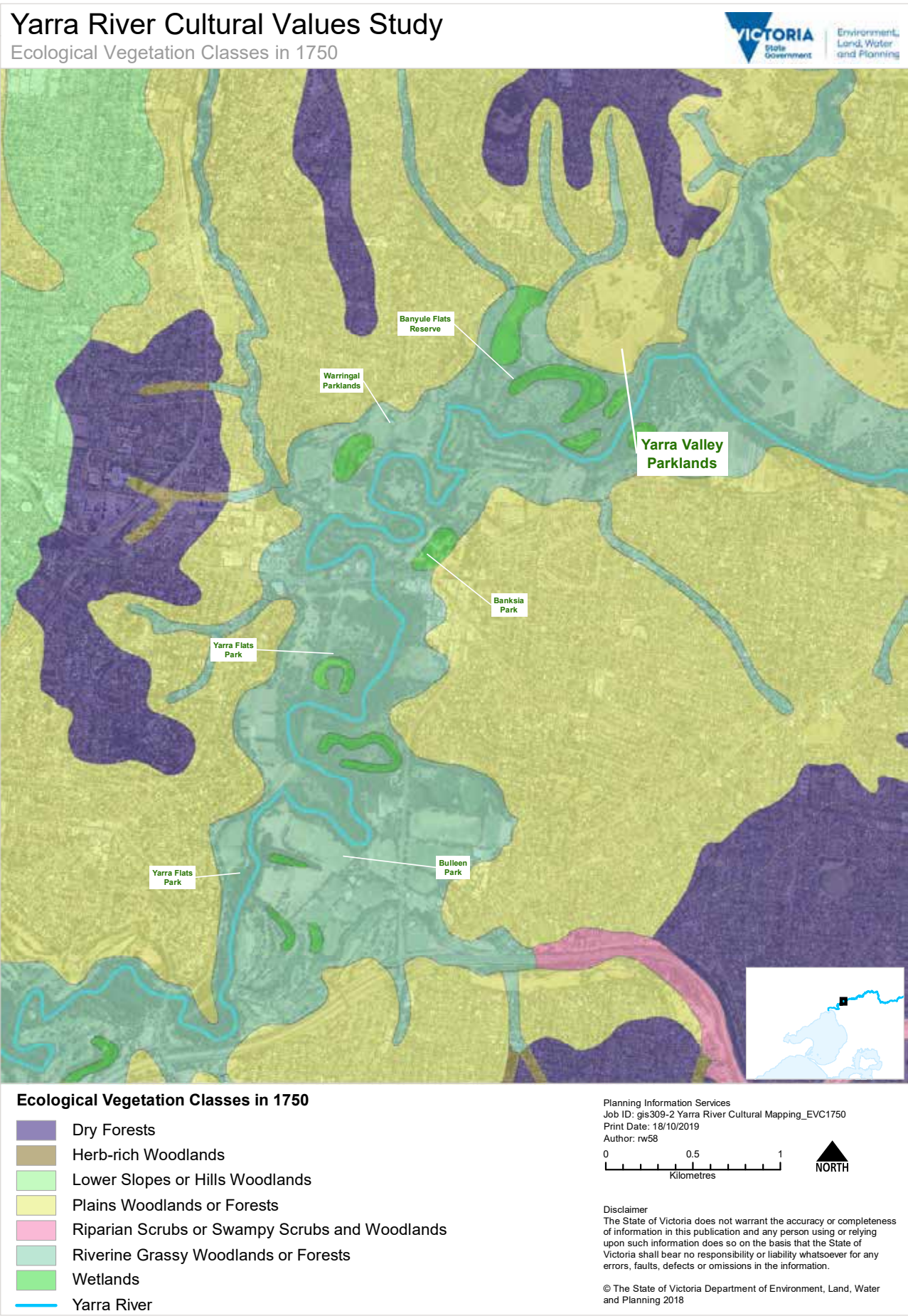
The following recommendations are adopted by DELWP and the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation in addition to the place-based recommendations at Section 2 of this report:

1. Fund future cultural values studies for the *Birrarung*, not on a single project basis, but as an ongoing funding commitment. This will enable the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Corporation to sustain the expertise and capacity to undertake future cultural values studies.
2. Provide funding and support to Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Corporation to develop and manage a GIS, place-based data management system.
3. Prioritise relationship building at DELWP Director-level through to Minister-level with Elders. This needs to be seen as a peer-to-peer relationship and should be in addition to maintaining strong officer level relationships.



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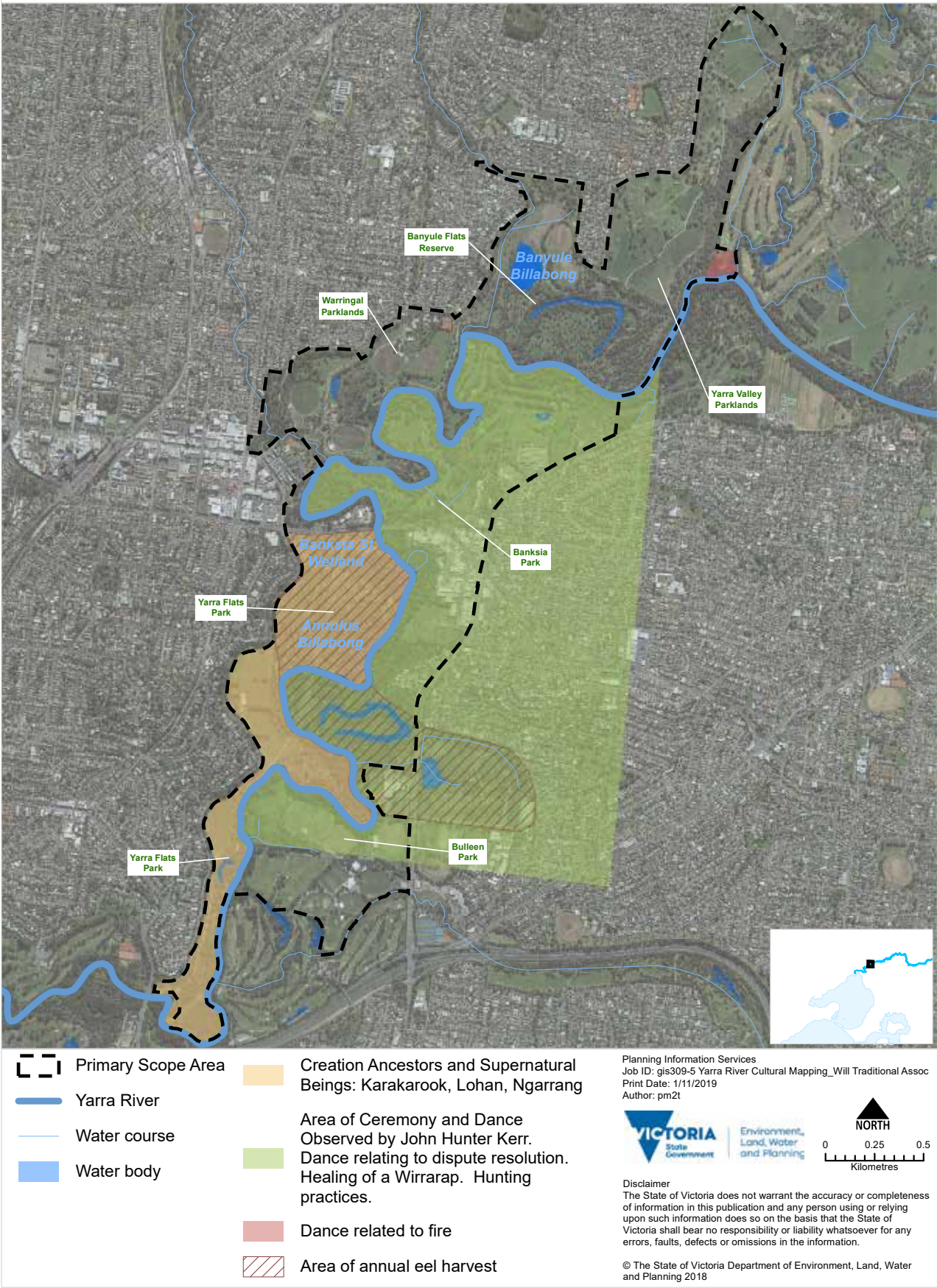


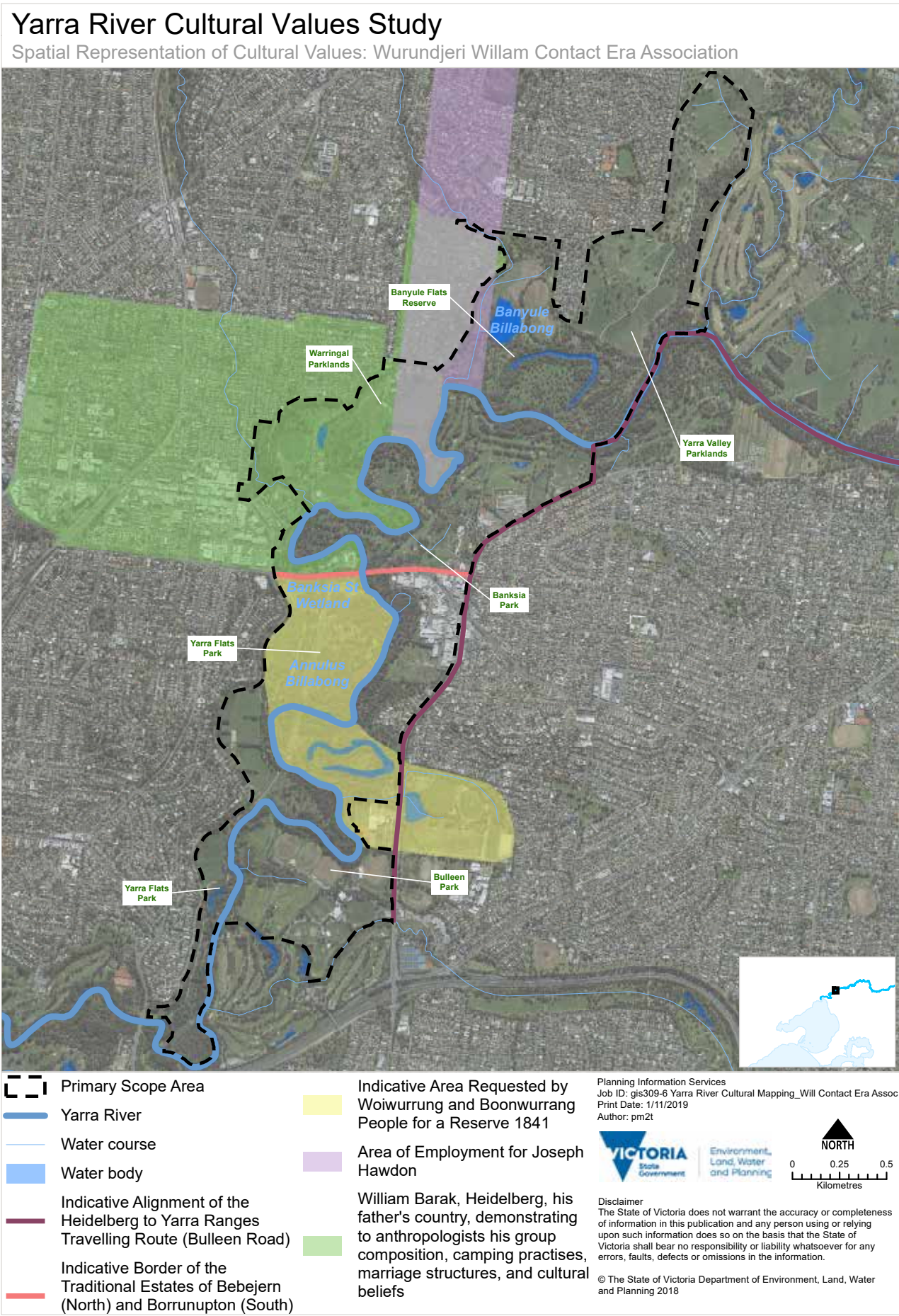
Map 2 Bulleen-Banyule Flats Cultural Values Study Area



Yarra River Cultural Values Study

Spatial Representation of Cultural Values: Wurundjeri Willam Traditional Association





English terms

Cultural values	Core elements, ideas and beliefs that a community of people have in common.
Cultural significance	A concept used in Australian heritage practice and legislation to encompass all of the cultural values and meanings that might be recognised in a place. Cultural significance is the sum of the qualities or values that a place has, including the five values— aesthetic, historic, scientific, social and spiritual—that are listed in Article 1.2 of the Burra Charter. ⁵
Cultural mapping	The spatial representation of land use and occupancy associated with an individual, group and place.
Ethnohistory	The study of cultural practices, behaviours and other ethnological data gathering from the historical and documentary record.
Pleistocene	Geological time period ranging from 2.580 million to 11,650 years Before Present.

Woiwurrung

Birrarung	Yarra River
Bunjil	Wedge Tailed Eagle, creation ancestor
Burrung Dalga Bik	Misty Wetlands
Karalk	Pathway of light during sunset
Murnong	Yam Daisy (<i>Microseris lanceolata</i>) a staple food for Woiwurrung people
Murrup	A person's lifeforce that transitions from the physical being to tharangalk-bek
Ngurungaeta	Headman
Tarnuks	Vessel
Tanderrum	Welcome to Country
Tharangalk-bek	Country in the sky where the spirit beings lived
Willam	Hut
Wirrarap	Doctor/medicine person
Woiwurrung	Language group
Wurundjeri willam	Clan of the Woiwurrung language group

⁵. Australia ICOMOS (2013) Practice Note: Understanding and Assessing Cultural Significance. Version 1, November 2013

Photo and Image Credits

All photographs were taken by Delta Lucille Freedman for the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Corporation over the duration of the Bulleen-Banyule Flats Study, other than the photograph of field participants on page 19, University of Melbourne paeleo-environmental core extraction at Bolin Bolin Billabong, photo taken by Jack Banister, University of Melbourne, 20 November 2019.

Ngoon Godjn – Thank You

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