

SECTION 1: What happened to the Traditional Owners of the Mornington Peninsula area and their Land

In this section, we highlight the truth that the land here was taken from the original inhabitants without their consent or compensation, and the subsequent severe impacts. Australia is the only Western colonial or Commonwealth country that has not negotiated a treaty with its First Nations. The making of treaties was common practice during colonisation, so such disregard and disrespect by the Crown towards Australia's original sovereign people is unprecedented as well as unpardonable. Below are excerpts that tell some of the story of what happened to First Nations People during colonisation.

As emphasized by Professor Patrick Dodson, founding Chairperson of the Council of Aboriginal Reconciliation and Federal Parliamentarian: *'There is a discernable lack of appreciation by settler Australia about the grievances and sense of historical injustice that Indigenous people feel. This must be addressed for Australia to be reconciled'*.

ABDUCTION OF BUNURONG / BOON WURRUNG WOMEN 1834

'Port Phillip: Sealer men went on shore in their boats and enticed the natives and after fixing upon the best-looking women and girls did at a preconceived sign seize upon and tie them with cords, and then conveyed them on board the Schooner and proceeded on a Sealing Voyage to King's Island and the Hunter Islands and thence to the Furneaux Islands where [sic] they were left' (Hansen Fels, 2011, p.334).

CRUELTY AND ASSAULT (MILITARY ROUND UP 1840)

'Men, women and children, old and young invalids and others were all huddled away together like a drove of cattle or sheep. Women with young children, if unable to keep up with the rest were struck. Old men, several as well as young, had sabre cuts some on their heads and on other parts of the body' (Hansen Fels, 2011, p.116-7).

DISPOSSESSION ON THE MORNINGTON PENINSULA

Around 1840, Assistant Aboriginal Protector William Thomas noted: 'Soon, year after year, more runs were taken up – Dr Barker and John Barker took up Cape Schanck, Maurice Meyrick took a sheep station between Cape Schanck and Arthur's Seat, Captain Reid dropped on a station down to the point of Mt Martha, Tom Goring a sheep station about four miles from Tuerong in the Melbourne road, and Stratton on the beach between Mount Martha and Mount Eliza. After a time, it was found that the position of 'Terubbabl' was unsuited for a permanent Aboriginal Station. A site was selected on the Dandenong Creek ...' (Hansen Fels, 2011, p.126).

LOSS OF MEANS OF SUBSISTENCE, STARVATION

'...the settlers' sheep and cattle eat the roots and herbs which were formerly devoured by the kangaroos, emus etc and the result is a scarcity of the means of subsistence for the Aborigines' (Hansen Fels, 2011, p.17).

DECIMATION

From 1834 – 1853, Assistant Aboriginal Protector William Thomas recorded a fall of 28 births compared to 135 deaths for the combined groups of the Woi Wurrung and Boon Wurrung (Broome, 2016). The birth rate had dramatically fallen from an estimated 350 to 28 people from both groups with only 11 Boon Wurrung remaining by 1857 (Eidelson, 2014, p.53).

WHITE MAN'S DISEASE

In 1893, 'the distressed and diseased state of the natives, in the opinion of Dr Cussen who was called to attend to them (noted): 'In the whole of his (the doctor's) experience of 18 months (and he has had occasion to attend many) that he never visited them in such a diseased and wretched state of want and disease, and that five or six more are at the verge of death, and that unless something is done to relieve their wants, speedy extinction must soon take place' (Hansen Fels, 2011, p.36).

FRONTIER WARS (1788 – 1920s)

The Frontier Wars were responsible for thousands of Aboriginal deaths around Australia and whilst some argue they did not occur on the Mornington Peninsula, historical signage at Collins Settlement, Sorrento clearly points out '*the first recorded frontier clash in Victoria between Aboriginal people and the British occurred close to this place on 14th February 1802. Men from John Murray's Lady Nelson fired on and killed Boonwurrung men who tried to resist their landing*' (Collins Settlement, Sorrento).

REFERENCES / RESOURCES

- Broome, R. with Barnden, R., Garden, D., Jackson, E., Smart, J. 2016, *Remembering Melbourne 1850 – 1960*, Royal Historical Society of Victoria Inc., Melbourne.
- *Collins Settlement*, historical marker, Pt Nepean Rd, Sorrento, VIC.
- Eidelson, M. 2014, *Yakult Willam: The River People of Port Phillip*, City of Port Phillip Publishing, City of Port Phillip, VIC.
- Hansen Fels, M. 2011, '*I Succeeded Once*' *The Aboriginal Protectorate on the Mornington Peninsula, 1839-1840*, ANU Press, Canberra **Available at Mornington Peninsula Libraries.**

If you have any questions or helpful ideas, please contact **SWAN Supporting First Nations Group** via swanwomen@outlook.com. Your feedback and input is welcomed and encouraged.