



City of
DAREBIN

the place
to live

**THE
STORY OF
ABORIGINAL
AND TORRES
STRAIT
ISLANDER
DAREBIN**

Acknowledgements

Darebin City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri people as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land we now call Darebin and pays respect to their Elders past, present and future.

We also acknowledge the diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, from across Australia, who have come to live, work and study within our municipality.

Darebin City Council recognises that this is by no means a comprehensive re-telling of the Aboriginal history of the local area, nor is it the only way that even this small part of the story could be told. Council also recognises that contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history within our municipality, and further afield, is constantly evolving. Much of the contemporary history remains with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to whom it belongs.

This resource complements the Darebin Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recognition and Discovery Map available at the following link:

<http://www.darebin.vic.gov.au/en/Darebin-Living/Community-support/Aboriginal-and-Torres-Strait-Islander-Darebin>

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this material contains names of deceased persons.

In order to do justice to the story of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Darebin, people need to look further afield to Aboriginal Victoria and even to Aboriginal Australia, as all are inextricably linked.

Just as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples moved through their traditional lands freely, without boundary fences and walls, so too the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history of Darebin reaches far beyond our current municipal borders.

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Aboriginal Australia

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have lived in harmony with the land for approximately 50 thousand years with their culture considered to be one of the oldest continuous cultures outside of Africa¹.

Aboriginal people believe that the earth, stars, humans and animals were created in a time commonly referred to as the Dreaming/Dreamtime (a non-Indigenous terms created in an attempt to comprehend Aboriginal spirituality)². It was during this time that societal structures, spirituality, rules for social behaviour, and the relationship between life and the land (lore) were determined. While the term Dreaming/Dreamtime is commonly used across mainland Australia, the stories from this time differ between different language groups, communities and individuals.

Similarly to Aboriginal people, Torres Strait Islander people believe in the Tagai, stories which form the cornerstone of spirituality and establish order in the world². A common theme of the Dreaming/Tagai is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are a part of, and hold a deep spiritual connection with the land. They do not 'own' the land as we understand ownership today; rather, they are custodians – a part of the land, and the land a part of them.

An estimated 770,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of about 700 different language groups inhabited the whole of Australia prior to British contact (referred to by many people as invasion)^{3,4}.

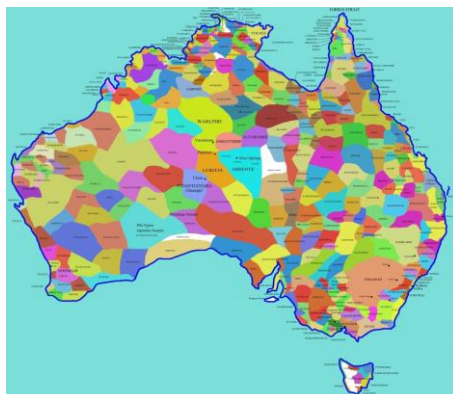


Figure 1: Map of Aboriginal language groups⁵.

These different groups (referred to as clans, language groups or countries – these terms may be used interchangeably throughout this resource), lived

within different geographic boundaries, such as mountain ranges and rivers, (rather than within state and territory boundaries which didn't exist at that time), and maintained different languages, beliefs, practices and traditions^{3,6}. Clans would have extensive knowledge of the resources, and significant sacred sites within their country, as well as the history, and seasonal changes, of the land and the availability of resources.



Figure 2: Australia's modern-day State and Territory boundaries⁷.

Aboriginal lore

As indicated above, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lore (traditional values and societal rules) relating to land, language, ways of living, kinship, relationships and identity was handed down by the Creation Ancestors at a time immemorial⁸. Examples of lore included how to share and manage resources and land, marriage, sacred rituals, as well as the role of men and women⁹. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have upheld their lore for thousands of generations. Traditional consequences for failing to abide by lore may have resulted in: the offender being verbally reprimanded; physical punishments (such as wounding the offender); banishment; or death; and depended on the severity of the offence⁹.

Connection to Country

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people maintain a deep connection to their country (land of their language group). This connection, amongst other

things, influences movement through country, land management, movement into other clan's countries, and health.

Contrary to popular belief, Aboriginal people were generally not nomadic. Rather, clans moved through their country, as smaller family groups, to different predetermined campsites, in order to hunt and gather food when it was seasonally in abundance¹⁰.

Both men and women were responsible for food provision with men hunting larger animals, and women and children gathering insects, honey, plant foods and hunting small animals that they may have happened across⁶.

As part of their food gathering practices and movements, many clans would employ sophisticated techniques such as fire farming and aquaculture. Fire farming involved using fire to flush animals out of their burrows, or burn off grassed areas in order to promote growth for following years⁶. Aquaculture, the practice of setting fish and eel traps, was also commonly employed in south-eastern Australia (including what is now Victoria)¹¹.

Family groups and clans would generally remain within their own country. However, individuals or clans would occasionally move through or meet on another clan's country. In these circumstances individuals or groups would wait at the border of the land which they wished to enter until they were met by an Elder who could perform a tanderrum ceremony¹² or grant safe passage through the land.

Tanderrum ceremonies indicated that visitors were welcome on country and were granted temporary use of resources. All of the clans involved would have an understanding of reciprocity, cooperation and respect^{12,13}. Various clans often came together to perform ceremonies and rituals or to attend corroborees.

Individuals travelling through other clans countries did so in order to deliver messages or invitations to ceremonies and the like. In these cases, individuals would carry a message stick which allowed the carrier safe passage, similar to our modern day passports¹⁴. These small, usually wooden, sticks were carved with markings which identified the sender of the message, supported the

verbal message that the carrier would deliver, and may have identified the carrier's place within their clan¹⁵.

Aboriginal Health and healthcare

Connection to country, and subsequently connection to culture, is a major component of health and wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This complex connection takes into account relationships with people, nature, and a deep connection to the past and to the Dreaming¹⁶. Each of these aspects may then be linked to and effect aspects of individual's social, emotional and ultimately physical wellbeing.

The National Aboriginal Health Strategy (NAHS) defines health as:

Not just the physical wellbeing of the individual but the social, emotional and cultural wellbeing of the whole community. This is a whole-of-life view and it also includes the cyclical concept of life-death-life¹⁶.

This definition indicates that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander model of health is a holistic one which takes into account all aspects of one's personal life as well as connections to country, culture, family and community.

As mentioned above, lore also sets out the role of men and women. The Dreaming sets out gender roles and ceremony, much of which is sacred information specific to either men or women. While some of these rituals and initiations occur at the time of puberty, this gendered partition may also be present during healthcare. This would have traditionally been observed in order to maintain secrecy around gendered information (commonly referred to in modern times as Men's or Women's Business).

The NAHS definition of health also speaks about the concept of the life-death-life cycle. During times of loss and bereavement some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people observe a period of cultural practices and protocols commonly termed 'Sorry Business'¹⁷. Some of these protocols may include not speaking the name of the person or refraining from showing images of the deceased person. There is also an expectation that all family members will attend funerals and observe sorry business.

Kinship

The Australian Bureau of Statistics defines family as:

*two or more persons, one of whom is at least 15 years of age, who are related by blood, marriage (registered or de facto), adoption, step or fostering, and who are usually resident in the same household*¹⁸

However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people believe in a more complex kinship system which includes extended family members (Aunts, Uncles, cousins, grandparents etc.). This system, while increasing the number of supports, also defines roles and responsibilities for family (or more widely, community members, as we consider the role of clans or language groups). Roles and responsibilities within the kinship structure may include obligations around social and financial support, the passing of culture and cultural practices from one generation to another and the care, education, and raising of children¹⁹. Rather than being the sole responsibility of biological parents, children may be raised or cared for by a collective group made up of grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and parents.

In previous generations, resources shared amongst family and clan groups would have included food, land and knowledge. While these resources continue to be shared today, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples may now find themselves obliged to share financial resources as well.

Aboriginal education

From the time of the Dreaming/Tagai, and continuing today, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have existed within an oral culture. This means that teaching and culture were not written in books but were passed down to the next generation through dance, song, stories, play and rituals.

Storytelling

Children are taught the lore of their language group through stories told by their Elders. The sharing of these stories is as much about entertainment as the passing on of culture and lore¹⁹. Some stories were, and remain, sacred and are only shared with certain people. These include stories only shared with men or women who have carried out certain initiation rites¹⁹.

Hands on learning

Skills such as gathering and hunting traditional foods may be taught through hands on learning (kinaesthetic learning), and play based learning (use of toys, games and play)¹⁹. Skills required for hunting, such as spear and boomerang throwing, may employ the use of models of traditional tools and weapons¹⁹. Traditionally children would have learned how and what food to gather while gathering food with their mothers, aunts and grandmothers. During this time, children would have also learnt how to live in harmony with the environment and about seasonal changes^a.

^{aa} For more information on the seven seasons of the Kulin people please go to:
<https://museums victoria.com.au/forest/climate/kulin.html>

Aboriginal Victoria

Of the 700+ language groups that inhabited Australia, 38 different language groups are represented within Victoria. Five of these groups with similar languages are commonly referred to as the Kulin Nations²⁰. These language groups are the Boonwurrung, Woiwurrung (known as the Wurundjeri people), Taungurung, Wathawurrung and Dja Dja wurrung.

Wurundjeri country covers most of the area now known as greater Melbourne and includes the City of Darebin.

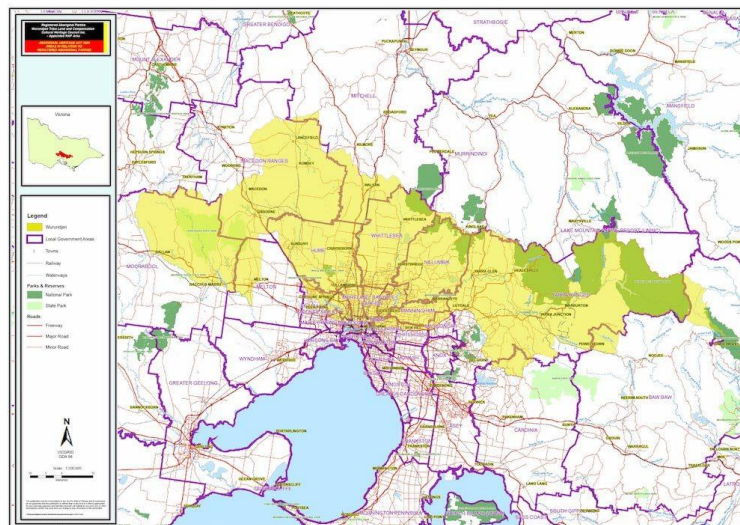


Figure 3: Wurundjeri 'boundaries'²¹.

Wurundjeri Dreaming stories tell us that

Bunjil [the eaglehawk] made the mountains and rivers, man and all the animals, and passed on to men the knowledge of how to make weapons and how to behave amongst one another¹².

Within the Woi wurrung language group^b there are multiple clans, one of which is the Wurundjeri Balluk clan¹². This clan can be further subdivided into four distinct family groups, each headed by a Ngurungaeta (Woi wurrung word, pronounced *na-run-getta*), or headman. The family group most likely to have

^b More information on leaders of the Wurundjeri people can be found at:
<https://www.wurundjeri.com.au/our-story/ancestors-past/>

lived on the land now known as the City of Darebin is the Wurundjeri Willam clan, whose Ngurungaeta was Billebilly¹². This land may have also been used by the Bebejan family group, as they were based around the Heidelberg area¹².

Aboriginal Darebin

The area now known as the City of Darebin has traditionally been a significant area for Wurundjeri people. Traditionally, summer months may have been spent on the banks of the Yarra River and the Merri and Darebin creeks⁶. The proximity to both creeks may have been important as they were reliable water sources despite the lack of rainfall during summer months²². These water sources may have also been important sources of food as they were well inhabited by platypus, water rats and fish²². Silcrete outcrops at the site now popularly known as Mount Cooper (now part of the Bundoora Park area) may have been utilised as a source of materials for making stone tools¹². The name Bundoora is also significant. It is thought that the suburb of Bundoora is shortened from Keelbundoora, which was the name of a young boy who was present at the signing of the Batman Treaty²³.

British contact

In 1770, Lieutenant James Cook circumnavigated New Zealand and the eastern coast of Australia. It was during this trip that Cook declared Australia as terra nullius or 'no one's land'²⁴. Eighteen years later, on 26 January 1788, Captain Arthur Phillips landed in Sydney Cove in order to establish a British penal colony.

These new comers were completely different from anyone the Gadigal people of the area had encountered. It has been suggested that because the British settlers' skin was so much lighter than that of the Gadigal people, and subsequent Aboriginal groups, they were assumed to be ghosts. In any case, the British settlers were not welcomed to the land with a tanderrum ceremony.

Victorian Aboriginal clan members from the Gunai/Kurnai area of Gippsland and the Bunurong area of Western Port may have seen these and other European ships off the coast during this era. However, the first official attempt to develop a colony in Victoria occurred in 1803¹³. Prior to these attempts, settlement along the Southern Coast was deemed illegal by the New South Wales Government¹³. Despite multiple settlement attempts by both British and French explorers (each of which was abandoned), people of the Wurundjeri clan may not have had direct contact with Europeans until the 1830s¹³.

When exploration did move to the south, into the area now known as Victoria, some 40 years after the first fleet's landing, explorers noted signs of smallpox within the Kulin nations (particularly within the Wathawurrung clan)^{13,25}. This is despite people of the Kulin Nations not having had any direct contact with British people. Smallpox, which Aboriginal people had no immunity to or treatment for, is said to have halved the Aboriginal population in south-eastern Australia in 1790 and again in 1830¹³.

In 1835, on behalf of Tasmanian pastoralists, John Batman entered Port Phillip Bay and surveyed the lands around the Yarra River¹³. A week after his arrival, he presented a treaty of sorts to the Ngurungaeta of the Kulin Nations. In Batman's view, his treaty proposed the purchase of 600,000 acres of land

around Melbourne and Geelong²⁰ in return for an initial ‘payment’ (and smaller annual endowment) of:

*20 pairs of blankets, 100 knives, 30 tomahawks, 200 handkerchiefs, 30 mirrors, 50 scissors, 100 pounds of flour, 6 shirts*¹².

It is unclear what the Ngurungaeta’s views of this transaction would have been. Batman had conscripted the services of Aboriginal people from New South Wales who acted as ‘translators’ despite differences in language groups. Historians have also questioned whether in fact the Ngurungaeta of the Kulin Nations did in fact sign the Batman treaty^c. In any case, there was a profound cultural misunderstanding as they would not have had the same understanding of ‘purchase’ as Europeans did. As discussed in earlier sections, Aboriginal people would have had an understanding of reciprocity, cooperation, respect and short-term use of resources¹³.

^c Some historians believe that markings made on the Batman treaty were a replication of marks already present in John Batman’s diary. Marks that were made by clans of the Sydney area.

European Settlement of Port Phillip (Melbourne)

Despite Batman's attempts to purchase the land of Melbourne, Sir Richard Bourke, Governor of New South Wales, deemed that any treaty or bargain for land where there wasn't an official presence was 'void, and of no effect against the rights of the Government'^{25,26}. However, it soon became clear to the New South Wales Government that the increasing number of European squatters present in Victoria demanded a government presence²⁶.

From 1835 onwards, change occurred rapidly for the Wurundjeri Willam people. In 1837, Robert Hoddle surveyed the land now known as Northcote as part of the street planning system. In 1839, the Government sold most of the land now known as the City of Darebin (Northcote, Fairfield, Alphington, Reservoir, Preston & Bundoora)²⁷. By 1840, all of the land within Darebin had been sold to European graziers or land prospectors⁶.

European settlement and the concept of land ownership and boundaries led to Aboriginal dispossession of land. Wurundjeri people were no longer able to move through their traditional lands freely. Access to traditional hunting and gathering grounds were now closed off and natural resources were lost due to animal grazing and land clearing for housing and roadways¹².

Despite attempts to maintain traditional ways of life, the loss of traditional lands and food supplies, meant that Wurundjeri people sought out food and other resources such as blankets within the growing city centre of Melbourne¹³. At first, European settlers and Aboriginal people lived in close proximity due to their mutual curiosity¹³. However, European customs such as the use of alcohol and differences in European law and Aboriginal lore gave rise to increasing racial tensions¹³. These tensions, coupled with the European desire to 'civilise' and 'protect' Aboriginal people, gave rise to new laws and gave the Aboriginal Protectorate Board (established in 1860) statutory powers¹³.

Aboriginal people and the law

Prior to 1901, each of the six colonies of Australia (New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia & Tasmania) were responsible for creating laws for its people. In 1869, the Victorian government became the first colony to pass laws relating to Aboriginal people.

The *Aboriginal Protection Act 1869 (Vic)* allowed the Aboriginal Protectorate Board^d to regulate Aboriginal people's employment, marriage, social life, aspects of daily life, and where they lived²⁸. This law also meant that the Governor could order the removal of any child from their family to a reformatory or industrial school, a practice that continued until approximately 1970^{e29}.

Removal of children was undertaken under the guise of protection. It was hoped that children could be given a Christian education which would allow them to assimilate into the non-Indigenous population. The impacts of this practice have been devastating not only to those children who were removed, but also to the family and community from which they were removed. Some of the major impacts (to individuals) of removal include the loss of family connection, culture and language; experiencing physical, emotional & sexual abuse; long term mental health issues (including grief and loss of identity); and denial of parental or caregiver attachment³⁰. There was also a major mental health impact (including grief, guilt and a mistrust of authorities) which affected, and continues to affect, the families and subsequent generations of people who were removed as part of the Stolen Generations³¹.

^d Also commonly referred to as the Aborigines Protection Board or simply as the Board.

^e The practice of removing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families occurred throughout Australia and resulted in around 20 – 25 thousand children being removed³⁰. Children taken from their families and country in this manner are now commonly referred to as the Stolen Generations.

The Aboriginal Protection Act 1869 (Vic) also saw many Aboriginal people moved to Aboriginal missions, reserves and stations. Many people were not given a choice of which Mission or Station that they were sent to live at, particularly those who were forcibly removed. This resulted in families being separated across different missions. In some instances, Aboriginal people were moved farther from their traditional lands than was logistically necessary (e.g. Yorta Yorta people [covering an area which included Echuca and Shepparton] were sent to the Coranderrk mission [Healesville]). It could be assumed that this practice was established to further isolate people from their traditional lands, language groups and family. It was also during this time that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were forbidden to speak their native languages. It is thought that these regulations were implemented as settlers' and Mission managers were fearful of what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people communicated about in their own languages and to further accelerate their assimilation into the non-Indigenous population.

Mission Reserve or station?

Mission: Created by churches or religious individuals, in order to 'train' Aboriginal people in Christian ideals and prepare them for work³².

Reserves: Parcels of land put aside for Aboriginal use. Reserves were not managed by the government or their officials³².

Stations: Reserves managed by the Aborigines Protection Board. These sites provided housing, rations, and controlled who could and couldn't live there. As such many people were forcibly moved on and off of stations³².

At various points between 1839 and 1968, and for varying lengths of time, 15 different Aboriginal Missions or Stations were operated throughout Victoria³³

In 1886, the *Aborigines' Protection Act 1886 (Vic)* came into effect³⁴.

Commonly referred to as the 'Half-caste Act', this law gave way for Aboriginal people who were of mixed descent and under 34 years old to be removed from the Reserve system. This Act resulted in further dislocation and separation of families. People removed from Missions and Reserves were only supported with provisions for up to seven years³⁴.

On January 1 1901, Australia became an independent nation and the Australian Constitution came into effect. The Constitution:

*establishes the composition of the Australian Parliament, and describes how Parliament works, what powers it has, how federal and state Parliaments share power, and the roles of the Executive Government and the High Court*³⁵.

The Constitution included two clauses regarding Aboriginal people. The first, section 51 [xxvi], allowed states to retain their power to make laws regarding Aboriginal people. While the other, section 127, stated that Aboriginal (and Torres Strait Islander people) would not be counted in 'reckoning the numbers of people'^{f36}. This decision was made as it was thought that states that were home to large Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations would be given an unfair advantage in terms of federal Government funding and support.

Laws specifically designed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continued to be enacted until 1957 with Acts removing (*Aborigines Act 1910 [Vic]*) and reinstating (*Aborigines Act 1915 [Vic]*) the distinction between Aboriginal people and Aboriginal people of mixed descent^{34,38}.

Despite managing every aspect of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's lives, missions sooner or later fell into mismanagement or became impracticable. Pressure from neighbouring farmers demanding more land for

^f Despite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people not being counted as part of the Australian census, the Aborigines Protection Board did keep records although these were inconsistent. Inconsistencies included only counting people who were under the control of the Aborigines Protection Board, only counting people who were "permanently settled", sporadically including people of mixed descent in the count and not conducting the count throughout the whole of Victoria. These inconsistencies were rectified as part of the 1967 Referendum³⁷.

their livestock resulted in the Government selling off parcels of Reserve and Mission land³⁹. This move, coupled with the removal of people of mixed descent, and thereby a large part of the labour force, made Missions and Reserves impracticable, consequently resulting in closure. At the same time conditions at Missions and Reserves, such as Cummeragunja, were of major concern for residents. Conditions such as overcrowding and a lack of sanitation and rations resulted in deaths of some of the people who lived there⁴⁰.

Despite the Government's position of controlling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lives, many settlers supported the rights and entitlements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. One such activist was Anne Bon. Anne acted on behalf of Aboriginal people and became good friends with Wurundjeri Ngurungaeta William Barak^g during his travels⁴¹. With the death of William Barak's son, Anne began petitioning the Government to conduct an inquiry into the management of Coranderrk mission. Until the time of her death in 1936, Anne Bon continued to advocate, and assisted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in self-advocating, for their civil and human rights⁴².

^g For more information on William Barak: <https://cv.vic.gov.au/stories/aboriginal-culture/william-barak/william-barak-king-of-the-yarra/>

The interwar years - Aboriginal Activism

Throughout the 1920s, the population in what is now known as the City of Darebin flourished^{6,26}. Reasons for this growth included the introduction of faster transport options between the municipality and Melbourne (electric trams and trains became operational in the area, as well as increased wages and affordability of cars and petrol)²⁶. The housing boom post-World War I also helped bolster the population as War Service Homes for returned servicemen were established¹². At the same time, the State Savings Bank began approving loans for people wishing to purchase their own home²⁶.

The 1920s and '30s in particular saw Aboriginal people reclaim their right to live in Melbourne and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations were formed across the Eastern seaboard⁴³. It has been proposed that the movement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people towards major cities may have been partially due to the mismanagement and closure of country missions, and the implementation of the *Aborigines Act 1915 (Vic)*, which removed Aboriginal people of mixed descent from missions and stations^{6,34,43}. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may have equally been drawn to Melbourne in the pursuit of the work and social opportunities that the city afforded⁴³.

As an Aboriginal population was established in Melbourne's working-class suburbs of Fitzroy and Northcote, so too an Aboriginal community life was developed¹². These communities comprised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from across Australia and gave way for the first pan-Aboriginal political movement – The Australian Aborigines League^{42,43}. Founded by William Cooper^h, and other influential Aboriginal people, in 1932, the League pushed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be given full citizenship rights⁴⁴. The Australian Aborigines League was also successful in fundraising, welfare work and educating the wider population to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's concerns⁴⁵.

^h For more information on other prominent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders go to: www.vic.gov.au/aboriginalvictoria/community-engagement/leadership-programs/aboriginal-honour-roll.html

In 1938, members of the Australian Aborigines League and other prominent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from Melbourne, including Lady Gladys and Sir Douglas Nichollsⁱ, attended the first national gathering of Aboriginal activists in Sydney^{43,46}. The 26th of January 1938 marked the 150th anniversary of English occupation in Australia and was dubbed the Day of Mourning. This event is noted as a turning point in Aboriginal people's fight for equality, both in citizenship status and within the community⁴⁷. Furthermore, the Day of Mourning marked the beginning of the modern Aboriginal political movement^{46,47}.

ⁱ One source for more information on Sir Douglas Nicholls is:
<http://heritage.darebinlibraries.vic.gov.au/article/375>

Self Determination

During the war years, the Australian Aborigines League was less active while many 'white' organisations and groups were concerned about the welfare and betterment of the 'Aboriginal situation'. Post-war, there was a shift to a more combined approach (Aboriginal and non-Indigenous people campaigning together)¹³ as people appeared to be more concerned with human rights issues following the World War II Holocaust.

One such organisation that began with this combined approach was the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League (VAAL; also known as The League)⁴³. The VAAL, established in 1957, took up the work of the Australian Aborigines League after Sir Douglas Nicholls travelled to, and noted the condition of people living on, the Warburton Ranges Mission⁴³. Aboriginal people who lived on the mission were removed from the mission due to the inception of the Woomera Range Complex, established by the British and Australian defence forces as a long-range weapons testing facility⁴⁸.

By 1969, partly due to the influence of the American Black Power movement, the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League became the first Aboriginal-run organisation to assume community control of Aboriginal affairs^{43,49}. This move clearly marked a move towards self-determination^j for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. As a welfare and activist body, the League is acknowledged as the 'mother' of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations⁵⁰ many of which have remained in close proximity to the League's home in Northcote.

^j The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights defines self-determination as the right to freely determine peoples' political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development⁵¹.

Re-establishing Aboriginal Darebin

Since the 1920s, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population within Darebin has been well established with a steady north/south flow between the municipalities of Yarra and Darebin and more recently further north (reflecting shifts in housing access, employment/education opportunities, service location and family, kin and community connections). Reasons for choosing the Darebin area vary and may have included the proximity of the City of Darebin to the CBD and the suburb of Fitzroy (a hub for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people)⁴³, lower living costs, and family connections.

Northcote, in particular, during the first part of the 20th century, was close to noxious industries which may have kept housing costs low⁶. It has also been suggested that the Aboriginal Protection Board designated these areas for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander settlement. Although Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people now had freedom from living on Missions and Stations they may have still been told where to live under the Aboriginal Protection Board's control.

A family history or connection within the City of Darebin may have also brought more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to live in the area. As has been previously mentioned the kinship structure holds great importance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. People may feel comfortable or safe in and around Darebin as this is where they have grown up or they may have kinship connections within the municipality.

The City of Darebin has also become home to many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations. These organisations may be another reason that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have chosen to live and/or work within the City of Darebin.

Many people, from diverse Aboriginal countries and the Torres Strait Islands work, live and study in Darebin. Each person with their own story, culture, and history. It is important that we acknowledge the traditional owners of the land that the City of Darebin covers, the Wurundjeri people, and the diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from other clans who call the City of Darebin home. Irrespective of the reasons why Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander people have come to live, work and study in Darebin, our community is much richer for their presence and contributions.

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Cover Artwork by Natasha Ellis-Corrigan, proud Jinabara/Bundjalung woman.
Aboriginal artist from Jinabara Designs.

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