



# **ETHNOGRAPHIC HERITAGE CONSULTATIONS**

## **FINAL REPORT**

**Metropolitan Area Indigenous Groups  
Stirling City Centre Development, City of Stirling**

Prepared for  
Stirling City Centre Alliance

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Carina Hemmers PhD and Teri O'Neill BA

31 May, 5 June and 1 July 2013



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## **Maps**

All maps in this report were provided by Stirling Alliance.

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## **Disclaimer**

Big Island is not responsible for omissions and inconsistencies that may result from information not available at the time this report was prepared.

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## Abbreviations

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AHA	<i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972</i>
Big Island	Big Island Research Pty Ltd
CMNTH	Combined Metropolitan Native Title Holders
DAA	Western Australian Department of Aboriginal Affairs
IAEG	Independent Aboriginal Environment Group
Stirling Alliance	Stirling City Centre Alliance (a Public Private Community Partnership)

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## Introduction

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Big Island Research Pty Ltd (Big Island) was commissioned by the Stirling City Centre Alliance (Stirling Alliance) in May 2013 to provide Indigenous cultural heritage consultancy services to inform the ongoing design of the Stirling City Centre Development Project. This sizable development, minutes from Perth City, will include a mix of retail, office and residential properties. The development will be defined by a corridor of public open space and waterway elements running from the north through the project area, terminating at Herdsman Lake to the south, and a regional transport network that will link the development to Perth City and surrounding areas. An aim of Stirling Alliance is to “make the heart of Stirling a contemporary version of what it once was for the local Nyoongar people: a place of plenty; a place of celebration; a place of trade” (<http://www.stirlingcitycentre.com.au>). The area subject to the ethnographic consultations is a mix of freehold or Crown Land vested in the City of Stirling, and lies within the City of Stirling Local Government Area.

## Project Brief

Initial designs of the development have been completed and the Stirling Alliance now seeks advice from the Nyoongar community on appropriate ways to incorporate and represent Nyoongar cultural heritage within the site. In other words, the purpose of these consultations is to identify and ascertain elements of cultural heritage significance and how Nyoongar people would like to see these meld with the development. The purpose of these heritage consultations therefore differs from the investigation conducted by ACHM in 2010 in relation to the Stirling City Centre Development that entailed a desktop study of past heritage surveys and issues pertaining to the project area (Czerwinski 2010).

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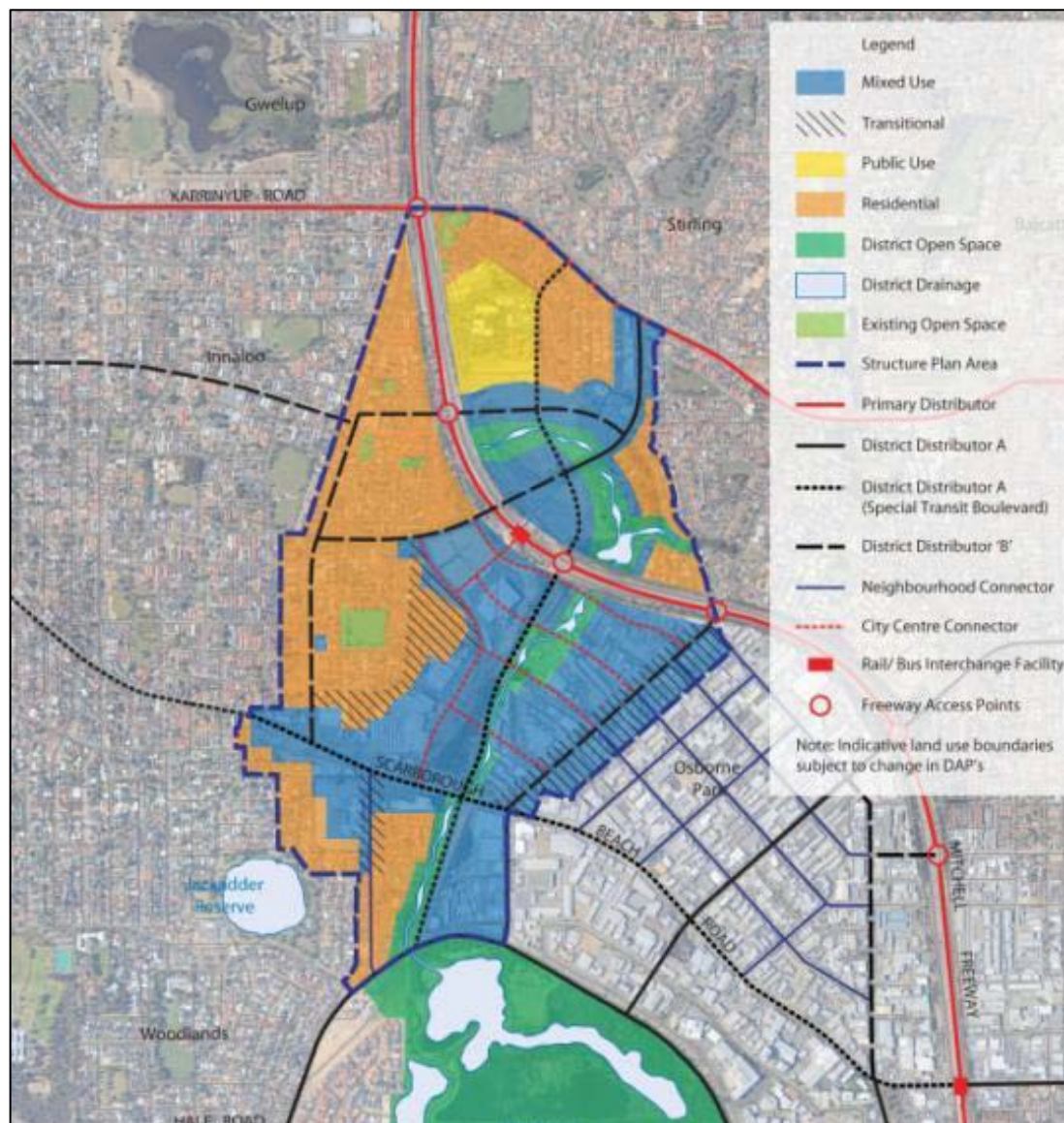
## Synopsis

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### Location, Environment and Disturbance

The project area is located approximately 6.5 kilometres northwest of Perth City and immediately north of Herdsman Lake. It comprises approximately 328 hectares of land.

The project area spans the Mitchell Freeway and extends north to Karrinyup Road, east to Telford Crescent, King Edward Road and Selby Street, west to Clematis Street and Odin Road and south to Herdsman Lake/John Sanders Drive (Figure 1 below).



**Figure 1: Stirling City Centre Project Area (map courtesy of Stirling Alliance)**

The City of Stirling envisions the creation of a “sustainable 21<sup>st</sup> century city...a hub for a diverse and prosperous community”, strategically positioned between the Perth CBD and the coast, and connected to the CBD by the Mitchell freeway and rail.



A central element of the development is a “living/urban stream” that will run through the commercial area and retrace the natural water flow of water that dominated the area in the past. As noted above, Stirling Alliance wishes to acknowledge the Aboriginal heritage of the area and highlight this in the context of a modern development. This has been proposed to be achieved through a variety of methods including place naming, a heritage trail, various other interpretive or artistic works and the revival of earlier waterways which will take centre stage in the new city centre. At this stage no timeline has been established for project commencement and construction.

The project area has been the subject of heritage consultations in the past, conducted in 2011 in relation to drilling that was undertaken to investigate the stream that loops through the project area towards Herdsman Lake to the south. Aboriginal monitoring was undertaken at that time during all ground disturbing works. This report was unavailable to Big Island.

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## Heritage Framework

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### Ethnographic Context

The survey area is located within a region that has been, and continues to be, of particular social, spiritual and economic importance to Aboriginal groups living in and around the Perth metropolitan area. Present day Perth was once an area of lakes and swamps that formed a key strategic centre for Nyoongar groups, a gathering place, an ‘administrative’ centre and an important source of food, water and other resources. The area in and around the City of Stirling was a key part of this network of lakes and waterways. This has been addressed in the earlier heritage report for the area commissioned for the project (Czerwinski 2010), and in eleven other heritage reports that have been conducted in the area and adequately summarised in that report.

### Previously Recorded Sites

Five heritage places are listed on the DAA register as being within the project area (Table 1). None of these are Registered Sites. Accordingly, there is no legislative requirement for the City of Stirling to apply for permission under Section 18 of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972 (WA)* (AHA) to impact these places.

Immediately adjacent to, but outside the project area is registered site ID 3585 Herdsman Lake. Site ID 3210 Herdsman Lake North lies approximately 0.5 kilometres east-southeast outside of the project area and is classified as Stored Data.

Site ID	Site Name, Type	Site Status
3207	Jackadder Lake West, Artefact/Scatter	Stored
3208	Scarborough Beach Road, Artefact/Scatter	Stored
3209	Herdsman Lake North, Artefact/Scatter	Stored
4405	Jackadder Lake, Artefact/Scatter	Insufficient Information
21538	Stirling Wetlands, Mythological	Stored

**Table 1: DAA Sites/Other heritage places located within the project area**

Site ID	Site Name, Type	Site Status
3585	Herdsman Lake, Burial	Permanent
3210	Herdsman Lake Northeast, Artefact/Scatter	Stored

**Table 2: DAA Sites/Other heritage places located in the vicinity but outside the project area**

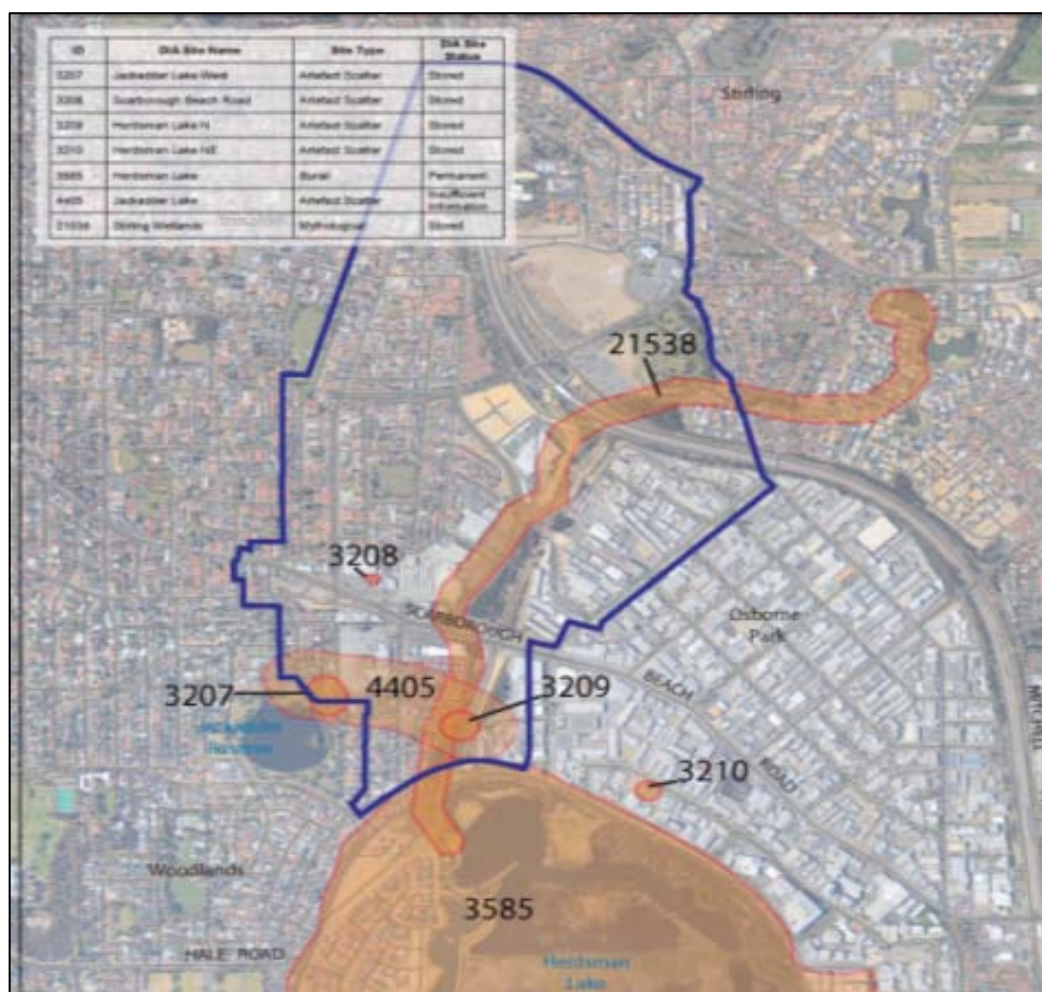


Figure 2: DAA sites/Other hertiage places in relation to the project area  
(map courtesy of Stirling Alliance)

## Survey Participants

The following people participated in the consultations on 31 May, 5 June and 1 July 2013.

Big Island Research	
Guy Wright	Director, Anthropologist
Amanda Harris	Anthropologist
Teri O'Neill	Project Manager

Stirling Alliance and Syrinx	
Hannelie Evans	Senior Planning Officer, Stirling Alliance
Jennifer Catto	Administration Officer, Stirling Alliance
Kerry O'Flaherty	Senior Designer, Syrinx



*Friday 31 May, 2013, 10.00am*

### **The Combined Metropolitan Native Title Holders (CMNTH)**

These families have had a longstanding and strong connection to the Perth metropolitan region and have often been at the forefront of agitation for appropriate recognition of Aboriginal heritage issues. They formed the core of the group that was granted native title in the judgment of Justice Wilcox in 2006 – since appealed. They have been recognised by the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (SWALSC) as having the capacity to “speak for” heritage and related issues in the Perth metropolitan area - although the relationships between many of them and the SWALSC has been strained for many years. The individuals attending for CMNTH were:

Combined Metropolitan Native Title Holders		
Albert Corunna	Marie Baker	Jarrold Garlett
Irene Jones	Bella Bropho	Kelvin Garlett
Gwen Corunna	Alison Wilkes	Naomi Bropho
Vanessa Corunna	Natasha Bropho	Olive Wilkes
Jordan Warrell	Greg Garlett	Richard Wilkes
Victor Warrell	Shannon Garlett	Linley Wilkes

*Friday 31 May 2013, 2.00pm*

### **The Bona fide Bloodline Traditional Owners of the Swan Valley**

This group is headed by the Reverend Cedric Jacobs. Rev. Jacobs’ family asserts that it is the true direct genealogical descendent of the original Nyoongar owners of the Swan River area. The SWALSC have recognised the Jacobs family genealogical connection to the Perth metropolitan region and have provided a letter to Rev. Jacobs to that effect. The DAA recognise that the Jacobs family have a significant right to speak for southern portions of the Perth metropolitan area. The individuals attending for the Jacobs family were:

The Jacob’s Family	
Cedric Jacobs	Karen Jacobs
Jade Dolman	Ezra Jacobs-Smith

*Wednesday 5 June 2013, 10.00am*

### **The Ballaruks People**

This group includes Mr Christopher Robert (Corrie) Bodney. Mr Bodney has been a prominent figure in Aboriginal heritage matters in the Perth metropolitan area for more than 30 years and is generally recognised as having significant knowledge of heritage issues. The individuals attending for this group were:

<b>The Ballaruks People</b>	
Corrie Bodney	Violet Bodney
Tanya Bodney	Stephen Anderson

### **The Independent Aboriginal Environment Group (IAEG)**

This group consists mainly of the Hume family group, headed by Mr Patrick Sullivan (Sully) Hume. The Hume's are eligible to be members of the CMNTH group, but choose not to participate in the process with the other members. Mr Hume is well recognised as a senior Elder with significant knowledge of the Perth metropolitan region. Similarly, his family members have had long-term interests in protecting Aboriginal heritage values in the related area. The individuals attending for the IAEG group were:

<b>The Independent Aboriginal Environment Group</b>	
Rebecca Hume	Gladys Yarran
Patrick Hume	Jocelyn Indich

### **The Bibulmun Group**

The late Mr Ken Colbung headed this group. Mr Colbung did not claim to hold native title rights in the Perth metropolitan region. However, like Mr Bodney for the Ballaruks People, he had a long association with heritage issues in Perth and was widely respected for his knowledge. He was often Chairman of the Aboriginal Cultural Material Committee (ACMC) during the 1970s-90s. The individuals attending for this group were:

<b>The Bibulmun Group</b>	
Esandra Colbung	Melanie King
Lalita Colbung	Gillian King

*Monday 1 July 2013, 10.00am and 1.00pm*

An Aboriginal heritage survey was run concurrently with the ethnographic consultations on 1 July, and will be reported on by AHMS separately. However, this survey provided Big Island a further opportunity to engage with Nyoongar people, particularly South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (SWALSC) nominees, and record their aspirations of how Aboriginal cultural heritage may be incorporated into Stirling Alliance's development.

### **South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council**

Independently of the consultations with the above groups, the SWALSC typically nominates four people who are thought eligible to assert native title primarily because of their genealogical connection to the Perth area. A larger list of potential participants for this heritage survey was determined at a Native Title Working Party meeting and supplied to AHMS who organised the survey. A number of these people were contacted by AHMS and were available to attend on short notice. Note that there is some overlap in those people nominated to attend the heritage survey and those who were present at the previous ethnographic consultation sessions. Those who attended the survey were:

Morning Session	
Rebecca Hume	Patrick Hume
Gladys Yarran	Noel Morich
Russell Gidgup	Ronald Gidgup Snr
May Maguire	Glenys Yarran

Afternoon Session	
Albert Corunna	Vanessa Corunna

Greg Garlett was also invited to this meeting but did not arrive.

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## **Ethnographic Survey**

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### **Survey Method**

Anthropologists Dr Guy Wright and Dr Amanda Harris, and Project Manager Teri O'Neill of Big Island met with relevant Nyoongar groups at the Herdsman Lake Wildlife

Centre on 31 May and 5 June 2013. While not in the project area *per se*, participants felt familiar with the area and appreciated the venue and the presentation provided by the Stirling Alliance.

Dr Amanda Harris and Dr Carina Hemmers of Big Island met with nominees from the SWALSC and staff from AHMS at the project area on 1 July 2013 to undertake the heritage survey.

Personnel from the Stirling Alliance and Syrinx were also present during these sessions.

At each session Dr Wright or Dr Harris provided an overview of the project and introduced representatives from Stirling Alliance and Syrinx. Ms Hannelie Evans, Senior Planning Officer with the Stirling Alliance, provided groups with a PowerPoint presentation that outlined the proposed development, the history of the area and previous research and heritage surveys relevant to the development. Groups were provided with printed copies of the presentation, including maps, schematic diagrams and Aboriginal heritage information. Ms Evans explained to the groups that Stirling Alliance wished to represent Nyoongar history and culture in the new development through interpretive material and a heritage trail. Thus, these meetings were an opportunity to begin the “place making process” by considering the stories, experiences and past events that people felt were important and were comfortable sharing.

It was explained to meeting participants that the Stirling Alliance also planned to undertake an archaeological and heritage assessment of the Structure Plan Area to re-record and verify the location of previously recorded sites and identify any previously unrecorded Aboriginal sites (this was completed as the heritage survey on 1 July 2013).

When Nyoongar participants were satisfied with the discussions held with representatives of the Stirling Alliance and Syrinx, the latter moved to a separate room so a private discussion could continue between the anthropologists and Nyoongar participants. The position and views of each group were discussed further and clarified before Stirling Alliance and Syrinx representatives were invited back. Any further questions were then answered and the views of each group on the development were summarised.

## Results

Substantial cultural, historic and environmental knowledge of the project area and surrounding region, as well as a strong sense of connection to place was demonstrated by the Nyoongar participants. Several families spoke about living in the area as children, working on the roads, collecting peat, and gathering in the old Nookanburra Hotel along Scarborough Beach Road. It was apparent that the project area was and continues to be a culturally important place to Nyoongar people. As has been discussed elsewhere (e.g. McDonald 2005, O'Connor et al. 1989), the area was part of a key wetland and resource area that has since been devastated by development. Nearby Herdsman Lake was also said to be a site of a massacre of Aboriginal people by European settlers in the 1800's.

The key heritage concerns and stories of the groups relating to the project area are summarised below. These represent issues that Nyoongar consultants wish to have addressed as part of the Stirling City Centre development.

### *A massacre*

Mr Albert Corunna spoke of a massacre by the 63<sup>rd</sup> regiment that occurred at Herdsman Lake. He described how people hid in the reeds and how one man climbed into the trees and yelled at the soldiers to “go away, we have women and children here!”. Mr Victor Warrell suggested a plaque should be installed in a visible place acknowledging the massacre. Nyoongar consultants said this one was just one of a number of “massacres” that occurred before and after the Pinjarra Massacre.

Investigations into this event have found that the violence seems to have actually occurred at nearby Lake Monger, on May 3, 1830 (see Appendix One for the *Western Mail* article (dated 9 January 1914) on the event). However, further research is recommended.

### *A key resource area for past Nyoongar groups*

Mr Richard Wilkes described the area around Herdsman Lake and north into the project area as akin to a “supermarket”: a source of water and other resources, including water fowl, turtles and crustaceans. Ms Bella Bropho spoke of how her ancestors fished and camped in the area. Both accounts underlined the importance of the area as a key



meeting place for Nyoongar people around Perth. The group described the impact of development that had already occurred in the area as “wilful damage”. They shared a strong sense of loss over what they saw as the desecration of the country.

#### *Nyoongar patterns of land use and movement*

Nyoongar consultants requested that any interpretive works convey the way that Nyoongar people moved through the land in a manner that bears no relation to boundaries and divisions that are imposed on the country by Europeans. As stated by Ms Rebecca Hume, “We want people to look at the country without whitefella boundaries”. It was felt that recognition be given to ‘all the different Aboriginal groups that moved through this place’.

#### *Nyoongar place names*

The groups asked that Nyoongar names are used throughout the development in acknowledgment of the strong Nyoongar heritage in the area. The Nyoongar name of Herdsman Lake was discussed – Nookunburra - meaning “sweet water”. Recognition of this original name would be appreciated.

#### *Nyoongar cultural heritage trail*

The groups were pleased to hear of possible plans for a heritage trail through the development. They saw this as an opportunity to ensure continuity between Nyoongar interpretive works across Perth from Herdsman Lake and Lake Monger to Kings Park, the proposed memorial to Midgegooroo, Elizabeth Quay and further up the Swan River. Mr Richard Wilkes commented on the work done by the City of Swan in developing a heritage trail and suggested it presented a good model.

Reference was made to statues that had been installed in Maylands commemorating Nyoongar heritage. Several participants requested the commission of artworks of a similar standard in the new Stirling City Centre development.

Ms Gladys Yarran asked that Nyoongar people be described in interpretive works as “hunters and gatherers” and “first nation people”, rather than “Aboriginal”.

It was important to participants that Stirling Alliance develop a pamphlet on Nyoongar cultural heritage. Reference was made to the pamphlet developed by Perth Airport which has been well received. Ms Rebecca Hume suggested that it include a picture of a Nyoongar hand holding a quartz artefact.

Mr Victor Warrell commented on the lack of representation in the Stirling Alliance 'screen savers' that appeared throughout the consultations during discussion sessions. Concerns were raised relating to there being no Aboriginal people in the displays despite their claims of "community" and "diversity". It was requested that such public documents be reviewed and future presentations include Aboriginal people and culture.

#### *Yellagonga's country*

Mr Corrie Bodney reminded all that this would have been part of Yellagonga's country and this should be acknowledged in interpretive works in the development. Yellagonga was a renowned leader of the Mooro people, or "King of Perth" as suggested by Mr Noel Morrich.

It was also suggested that reference could also be made to one of Yellagonga's grandsons, Tommy Dower, who was a well respected Aboriginal tracker, leader of the Perth Aboriginal community and advocate for Aboriginal rights (Bolton & Gregory 1999; <http://www.valuingheritage.com.au/SwanRiverColony>).

#### *A history of being "pushed out" from the area*

All groups consulted spoke about their ongoing experience of being progressively displaced from Perth, including the project area, once a foremost location within Nyoongar society. Mr Richard Wilkes said, "We could afford to live there then but not now. Development pushes us out. We've become poor . . . We need to be part of the development and develop with it . . . regain some status and have the chance to compete in the workforce. We've never ceded the land, as far as we're concerned we still own it."

The experience of being "pushed out" due to Aboriginality resonated with people's experiences in the Perth CBD that has emerged during other significant consultations for the developments in the region.

Ms Vanessa Corunna spoke of the loss of Aboriginal organisations and resources as homes in the area were “taken over by non-Indigenous people”. It was suggested that a counter to this experience could be found in the adoption of Welcome to Country ceremonies by Nyoongar people by the City of Stirling. The positive experience of this practice by Nyoongar consultants in the Town of Bassendean was relayed.

*Meaningful Nyoongar involvement and responsibility in the project*

Groups requested that a Steering Group or Committee be established to formalise ongoing Nyoongar involvement in the development. The Jacobs family specifically asked to be included in any technical and environmental design decisions.

Mr Victor Warrell and Mr Greg Garlett spoke of their shared frustration at being brought into the design process after a substantial number of decisions have already been made. They argued that the overall conceptual design is culturally relevant and aspirations for the area held by Nyoongar people in regards to this are overlooked.

Mr Warrell questioned the “core values” in the presentation and argued that these did not reflect values common to Nyoongar people. Nyoongar people premise these views on an understanding that the country remains theirs, that it was never ceded and that they are forced to live within a socio-cultural world that is overly determined by people of European decent. Thus, inclusion of Aboriginal people in the consultation process at even this relatively early stage underscores their sense of disempowerment and social marginalisation.

Nyoongar consultants also asked for employment opportunities. They requested opportunities in the construction of the development but more so within the City of Stirling itself. Ms Rebecca Hume spoke on behalf of many families in arguing they demonstrate some “goodwill” and ensure Nyoongar representation on relevant committees, and within its staff.

### *The Nookanburra Hotel and a sense of place*

Ms Hume and others retold stories of the Nookanburra Hotel, named after the Aboriginal term for Herdsman Lake. The hotel still stands at 401 Scarborough Beach Road (now known as the Botanica Bar & Bistro) and used to be a prominent meeting place for Nyoongar people. The hotel was well known for a fibreglass statue of an Aboriginal man, “Nookanburra Ned”, that stood on its roof during the 1960s. A 1965 article that appeared in the Canberra Times reflects the ethos of the times (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Nookanburra Hotel statue 1965

Ms Hume also spoke of collecting nearby peat that was stored, smoke emerging, in the stables located beside the hotel when she was sixteen. Around the hotel “all the rest was bush, and water would run underneath,” she said. Several families recalled the old road layout before the construction of Scarborough Beach Road and many days spent labouring on them by hand, shovel and horse.

#### *A mourning place*

Consultants posed the question of a dedicated meeting place for Nyoongar people as part of the new City of Stirling development. In particular, they would like such a place to use for mourning members of their community that have passed away. Many participants questioned why they have to rent halls for mourning purposes and believe that they should have their own dedicated mourning place.

#### *Environment*

The Jacobs family in particular expressed concerns about the impact of the development on the environment. However, the extensive disturbance to the project area that has already occurred was noted. Mr Ezra Jacobs-Smith wished to see priority given to the “flow of water over the flow of traffic” and any natural interconnectivity between water bodies retained or restored. While plans to enhance waterways in the development were welcomed, the family said they would prefer to see the creek running through the project area and into Herdsman Lake, sometimes known as Jackadder Creek, widened and surrounded by parkland. They suggested that the road planned for beside the creek could be relocated further east to run through Osborne Park. Mr Jacobs-Smith also stated that no further pollution should enter the creek and inquired about plans for contamination testing before and after construction. Maintaining the purity of the water, both above and below ground were important to the Jacobs family. Ms Evans from the Stirling Alliance explained that the quality of the water in the stream is continuously monitored and as part of the Stirling City Centre development measures would be introduced on-site to improve the water quality. However, this is still in the early stages of development and no details were available at the time.

It has since been communicated to Nyoongar consultants that the water flowing down the creek does not enter Herdsman Lake but is directed into the sea through a system of



storm water drains that was established in the 1920s, known as the Nookkenburra Drainage system. In addition, no changes to this drainage system are planned for the development. The existing stream is fed by a combination of surface water drainage and ground water. As could be seen at the site, there are a number of storm water drain outlets opening into the stream. These form part of the network of pipes known as the Nookkenburra Drainage system. Ms Evans provided (via Big Island) interested consultants with details on this system.

Mr Jacobs-Smith asked about the Stirling Alliance's plans for environmental remediation, including revegetation of drains. He suggested that proper planting of native flora along Jackadder Creek could render the creek a natural filtration system. Rev. Cedric Jacobs said he would like to see a return to native flora in areas throughout the development, reflective of the past environment.

Ms Karen Jacobs raised concerns about the removal of peat from the areas north of the freeway and the risk of subterranean gases being released during ground disturbing works. Ms Jacobs said she would like to see the wetlands that once existed there re-established and expressed sadness that Ikea now sits on part of that former wetland system.

The Jacobs family suggested some restoration of a river/creek that they believe to run under Scarborough Beach be undertaken.

Mr Ron Gidgup and Mr Patrick Hume spoke of the destruction of habitat that previously supported native fauna. They said they would like to see the development incorporate planting of native species along green corridors and spaces.

All of the Nyoongar groups consulted recommended that the restoration of the natural environment is not just environmental, but an important reflection of a Nyoongar traditional way of life and cultural heritage.

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## General Conclusions

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A range of fairly clear cut modalities for the recognition of Nyoongar cultural heritage emerged through the consultations. Several of these – a pamphlet, heritage trail, Nyoongar place names, art work and statue – received immediate support from Stirling Alliance representatives. Other suggestions will require further consideration and discussion. Palpable among all groups was an overriding sense of loss – of ownership, habitat, culture, status, agency and belonging – and these consultations have been a valuable step in redressing this shared experience.

Groups appreciated the exchange offered by the Stirling Alliance, albeit they felt this was at a later stage in the design of the development than they would have preferred, and look forward to further positive and productive consultations. They asked that all heritage interpretive works draw on detailed research, including face to face interviews with knowledgeable Elders, to ensure that works are accurate, and capture the particular spirit of this country and its people. Moreover, they remain hopeful that the absence of any recognition of Nyoongar people in the general vicinity of the City of Stirling will soon be relegated to the past.

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## Recommendations

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Big Island Research Pty Ltd recommends:

1. The Stirling City Centre Alliance engage further with the Nyoongar community for the purpose of progressing the representation of Nyoongar heritage in the proposed Stirling City Centre development.

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## References

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Bolton, G. and Gregory, J. Claremont: a history, UWA Press, Nedlands 1999, pp.i-xi, 1-244

Czerwinski, 2010. Preliminary Investigation of Aboriginal Heritage – City of Stirling Structure Plan, Prepared by ACHM for the Stirling Alliance, February 2010

O'Connor, R., Quartermaine, G. and Bodney, C. 1989 Report on an Investigation on to Aboriginal Significance of Wetlands and Rivers in the Perth-Bunbury Region. Report prepared for the Western Australian Water Resources Council

McDonald, E. 2005 Study of Groundwater - Related Aboriginal Cultural Values on the Gnangara Mound, Western Australia. Report prepared for Estill Associates

The following article can be found at,

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/44879885?searchTerm=troops%20first%20fight%20with%20natives&searchLimits=>, (viewed 23 July 2013).

Western Mail (Perth, WA : 1885 - 1954), Friday 9 January 1914, page 38

## A BATTLE NEAR PERTH. TROOPS FIRST FIGHT WITH NATIVES. AN INCIDENT OF EARLY WESTERN AUSTRALIAN HISTORY.

(By B.C.)

The initial circumstances of the early settlers in Western Australia, potentially rich though they might be, were of such a nature as to bring upon them all the tribulations and trials generally associated with pioneering efforts. Landing at Fremantle under dangerous conditions in the middle of a more than ordinarily inclement winter in the year 1829, without adequate shelter, and with only the rudest material at hand to construct the same, their position was indeed unenviable. However, all the disabilities were borne with that spirit and fortitude which has made the British race the pioneers of exploration through centuries of time.

During September of the year mentioned, the civil establishment was removed from Fremantle to the site of Perth, and the latter city had its genesis in this early encampment of the settlers.

One of the gravest difficulties of pioneering, the adverse and militant attitude of the existent aboriginal population, had been however, absent from their many trials, for the greatest amity and goodwill had up to the present prevailed. But the policy of indiscriminate charity and kindness which had characterised the actions of the administration in their dealings with the natives was to have, owing to shortage of commodities, a very undesirable result.

The attitude of the settlers towards the aboriginal population, prompted as it was by kindness, from which the fear of otherwise hostile action on the part of the natives was not altogether absent, had turned the aborigines into a horde of lazy "cadgers." The kindness of the whites was no doubt greatly appreciated by the original inhabitants, but when it became impossible to continue the gifts, the persistent beggar became an equally persistent thief. Cut off from what they considered to be, by reason of general practice, their undoubted rights, the natives began to show a turbulent disposition in place of their quiet inoffensive manners, and to take by force what was now denied to them. Eventually the situation culminated in a strongly hostile demonstration by the aborigines, which needed a strong display of force to quell.

Early on the morning of May 3, 1830, the natives visited the cantonment of the military in Perth. The body, which was accompanied by a large number of women and children, formed only one portion of the visitors, as another and still larger body was found to be following the bank of the Swan River towards Mt. Eliza. Both parties were strongly armed in the native fashion, and the whole displayed a truculent disposition never before exhibited. The party that visited the military camp appeared to

tion never before exhibited. The party that visited the military camp appeared to be absolutely bent upon plunder and mischief, and showed a determination to destroy any property and goods they were prevented from carrying away. The other portion also were guilty of many small acts of plunder, and the alarm of the settlers at these many overt acts on the part of a hitherto inoffensive aboriginal population can be imagined. Until now their depredations had been of the "sneak thief" order, and occasioned more annoyance than harm, and this present attitude had been unheard of before. Then again it was ascertained that the leaders of what was now uncommonly like a raid were wild aborigines and unknown to any of the white population, and the alarm was thereby increased. In their previous visits to the military camp, where a kindly welcome had always been extended, they had displayed a very inoffensive and harmless demeanour, any thefts they committed being of a very petty nature, but several attempts were now made to spear and carry off the live stock, and only a determined display of force prevented them from executing their design.

With absolute effrontery they forced themselves into the huts of the men, and in several cases could not be persuaded to retire, which led to their forcible ejection by the angry soldiers, and a generally hostile and irritated feeling was the outcome of their visit. The action of the soldiery in forcibly ejecting them from the camp nearly precipitated an action at this stage, but the natives were eventually persuaded to retire without an open breach being made.

During the morning the feeling of alarm increased, and the military force was placed in a state of readiness should further and more serious action be rendered necessary. The Lieutenant-Governor, Captain James Stirling, was absent on an exploring expedition at Port Leschenault, and the responsibility of dealing with the serious position devolved on Major Irwin, the officer commanding the troops. About 11 a.m. the body of natives, which had now joined forces, visited the workshop of Mr. Trigg, and caused a considerable amount of annoyance not unmingled with alarm. The attitude of the leaders at last became so threatening that Mr. Trigg produced his gun, and it was only by plain intimation that unless they withdrew action would follow that they were induced to retire. Continuing their journey towards Mt. Eliza, the now augmented body of aborigines, still displaying their truculent attitude, no doubt helped by the visible alarm they were plainly causing visited the boatshed of Mr. Edwards, where they again outlined their determination to provoke a conflict. Any attempt to proceed with the usual routine of work was impossible, everything movable was seized upon, all small tools being immediately used for hair ornaments, pieces of wrought iron being taken, and a boat then on the stocks roughly overturned and greatly damaged. When Edwards attempted to remonstrate with the leaders he was threatened with the pointed



leaders he was threatened with the poised spears, and the situation became very difficult and dangerous. Eventually better counsels prevailed, and the now thoroughly aroused natives were induced to retire, having wrought considerable damage by their actions and caused considerable loss by what they had stolen.

After the retirement from the workshop of Mr. Edwards, a period of peace prevailed, and it was thought that the danger was now over, but a more serious state was to eventuate. About 3 p.m. on the same day information was received at the Cantonment that the natives were again in evidence, and were amusing themselves by spearing the poultry at the homestead of Mr. Sutherland, an officer of the civil establishment. On receipt of the information the officer at headquarters, Ensign Dale, turned out a part of the Guard fully armed and immediately proceeded to the scene of action. Meanwhile the natives had moved on to the homestead of a settler named Minchin, and growing bolder attempted to purloin several household implements, until induced by a small party of armed settlers to desist, when they very slowly and sullenly retired, with loud demonstrations of ill-will. Reaching a house occupied by a settler named Paton, whose family fortunately was not at

home, they made a preconcerted attack on the homestead. Whilst one portion feigned an attack on the front another broke open the back premises and ransacked the building, taking, however, only a few blankets which they dropped in their subsequent flight. The party which had forced them to retire from Minchin's now came up with them at Paton's and attempted to again force them to retreat, but greatly to their astonishment they met with strong and well-planned opposition. On advancing to the attack they were received with a shower of well-directed spears, and several shots were fired in retaliation, one native being seen to fall, but undeterred, the natives counter-attacked, causing the precipitate retirement of the party, which consisted of only four men, followed by a shower of spears. Evidently this small shot was of small avail, and up to this time ball had not been used, for the enemy pursued the settlers, who were forced to take refuge in Minchin's house. The attack of the natives had been carried out with the greatest confidence, and they leisurely retired to Paton's house, collecting their spears as they returned. Knowing that the military were on their way to assist a body of settlers of about twenty strong, that had been hastily gathered, determined to force the natives to evacuate their position at Paton's house. On perceiving this body, the natives, contrary to all previous views of their courage, advanced in a strong body to the attack, and for a few minutes a fairly brisk encounter took place, spears and shots being freely exchanged. The settlers escaped without casualties, but several of the natives were wounded. Eventually the blacks were dislodged from their position, when they hurriedly made for a

position, when they hurriedly made for a swamp about 2½ miles north-west of the Camp, probably what is now known as Mounger's Lake. The small party of soldiers had now reinforced the settlers, and Ensign Dale decided to at once pursue them in the hope of capturing the leaders. The daring and hostile conduct of the natives now made punishment an absolute necessity, if the infant settlement was to be freed from alarms in the immediate future, and the depredations, which were assuming serious proportions, checked effectually the leaders of the present revolt must be captured. Major Irwin, who was hastening on with the main body of the military force, gave orders to continue the pursuit with vigour, but only to fire if self-defence rendered such a course absolutely necessary. Irwin decided that the opportunity should be taken to give the aborigines a lasting lesson, and to make them sensible of the superiority of the whites by showing to them how seriously they could retaliate. The advance guard of the pursuit under Ensign Dale was overtaken by the reinforcements on the banks of the swamp, about two miles to the north-west, when it was ascertained that Dale had received two spear thrusts from a native leader whom he had followed into the swamp and attempted to capture alive. The native had also slightly wounded the Sergeant-Major of the Guard, who had gone to the officer's assistance, and though badly injured from the effects of a gunshot wound in the face, succeeded in escaping. Both sides were now thoroughly exasperated. The settlers, smarting under the strength of the hitherto undreamt of opposition, and amazed at the spirit of the blacks, were inclined to give them a severe and, if needs be, a bloody lesson. On the other hand, the blacks, being assured of the strength of their position in the fastnesses of the swamps, awaited sullen and revengeful the projected attack.

Recognising the seriousness of the position and the nature of his own personal responsibility, Major Irwin decided to carry out his previous resolution and only fire if attacked. The blacks must be given a severe lesson, but in their present exasperated state they could only be overcome by a sullen and severe struggle. The position they had secured in the swamp made any hand to hand attack extremely dangerous, and though in measure "treed" and brought to bay, their well-known craftiness might enable them to escape in the fast approaching darkness. To allow them to escape would only lead to further trouble in the near future, and cause the settlement to be kept in a state of constant alarm. Then again their known facility to rapidly convey information over considerable distances might lead to molestation of the settlers further inland before adequate warning could be conveyed or assistance sent. Irwin, therefore, determined that the best course to pursue was to instil into their minds the power of the white to retaliate, but at the same time to endeavour to pacify and conciliate them, so that reprisals anticipated would not take



that reprisals anticipated would not take place.

The combined forces of the settlers and the military, for every man who possessed arms had turned out, were divided into two parties. One party was placed under the command of Mr. Dale, whose wounds were not so severe as to incapacitate him from further action, and Major Irwin retained command of the other portion. Dale's command made a detour and moved to the northward of the lagoon, so as to place the blacks between two fires. On assuming position, Dale's party were promptly attacked by the natives, who now recognised their precarious position, as it was possible for the attack to advance and practically "rake" the lagoon with fire. The attack of the natives on the portion of the force commanded by Dale was not altogether unsuccessful, for they succeeded in severely wounding the senior non-commissioned officer. The party retaliated and opened fire on the natives concealed in the scrub, which formed no protection from bullets. Groans were heard proceeding from the swamp, and it was soon made manifest that several natives had been severely wounded. On the outbreak of fire Major Irwin hastened to the spot, being greatly concerned that his hopes for conciliation were now at an end, and it would be necessary to attack the concealed enemy with his full strength. This action he was extremely reluctant to take, as it was certain that the natives had been accompanied by a number of women and children, who, though, no doubt, concerned in the pilfering, could not be held responsible for the acts of violence during the day.

The natives now evinced a desire to parley, on which Irwin advanced unattended to the edge of the swamp, and endeavoured to get them to surrender, or at least deliver up their leaders. To these requests the natives declined to accede, and the officer withdrew. Darkness had now fallen, and patrols were told off to completely surround the lagoons and prevent, if possible, any movement during the night. For a considerable time voices were heard in the lagoon, but in a while silence reigned. Yet the patrols had not reported any movement on the part of the blacks. At daybreak next morning the commander of the troops endeavoured to get into communication with the blacks and, if possible, re-establish friendly feelings, when it was found that the lagoon was practically deserted by the enemy.

The military cordon had reported no movement during the hours of darkness, but the thick scrub made the matter of reconnaissance very difficult. In a little while, however, the

patrols to the eastward reported that the enemy were in the act of crossing the river at what is now the Causeway, having eluded the vigilance of the reconnoitring parties travelling, no doubt, along the chain of swamps which then extended to what is now East Perth. Chagrined that the blacks had escaped, but still considering that by their stealthy retreat they had shown that a salutary lesson had been given, Major Ir-

win withdrew the troops and returned to the cantonment. A patrol at East Perth surprised a party of three natives and brought them as prisoners into camp, when they were questioned on the result of the action of the previous day. The Commandant was assured that several natives had fallen in the attack by Dale's party on the swamp, and to set his own doubts at rest, the prisoners, under strong guard were taken to the scene of the encounter, but nothing was found to prove their statement. The groans of the wounded, however, had been heard during the night, so it was inferred that those who fell had been carried off by the enemy during their stealthy retreat.

During the day a party of natives visited the cantonment and made overtures of amity and friendship, which were accepted. However, it was deemed expedient for a few days to keep a strong guard under arms to rapidly deal with any contingency which might arise.

The result of the action was certainly inconclusive, but the blacks gathered from the attack of the previous day that the whites could not be molested with impunity. No reprisals took place, and the settlement soon returned to its wonted attitude of peaceful industry.

However, the desire of Major Irwin to prevent retaliation was not entirely successful, though no further trouble was encountered for some time in the immediate vicinity of Perth and Fremantle. Unfortunately, to this encounter, on the other hand, could be traced the beginnings of those long years of trouble with the natives, where isolated settlers were murdered under distressing circumstances. These acts of aggression, however, were in nearly all cases prompted by a spirit of retaliation for injuries, either fancied or real.