

Traditional Owners Engagement Summary

Prepared for the Myrtle and Macleay Parks Master Plan

January 2024

Figure 1: The bark of a River Red Gum Tree at Myrtle and Macleay Park

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

The City of Boroondara acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and original custodians of this land, and we pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

Introduction

The City of Boroondara is developing a Master Plan for land commonly known today as Myrtle and Macleay Parks (MMP), in Balwyn North. This report is a summary of the engagement that has occurred to date with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (WWCHAC), to inform the respectful and considered development of the Master Plan. It should be read in conjunction with the Myrtle and Macleay Master Plan Background Report (2023).

The City of Boroondara seeks to build awareness and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and peoples to contribute towards the reconciliation process and acknowledge and celebrate the resilience, strengths and contribution Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples make to the community.

In alignment with Theme 1 of the Boroondara Reconciliation Strategy 2022-2026 theme: *Understand, Acknowledge and Respect*, the objectives of consultation with Traditional Owners were to:

- improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness within Council and in the community
- acknowledge the Traditional Owners, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, within Council and across the municipality
- develop a better understanding by Council of the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities in Boroondara
- acknowledge and celebrate local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stories, histories, cultures and peoples.

Approach:

The Master Plan is developed in two phases, and the information presented in this report is reflective of consultation which occurred in the first phase, for the development of the Draft Master Plan.

Consultation consisted of two meetings between City of Boroondara and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders from the WWCHAC's cultural consultation team, where project briefings and advice and feedback were shared in a collaborative setting.

Engagement will continue during phase 2 of the Master Plan development, which will help to shape the final Myrtle and Macleay Parks Master Plan.

Phase 1 Completed

Background review and site analysis

23 May 2023 - Initial project briefing to WWCHAC

Stakeholder needs analysis

28 August 2023 - Project update and confirmation of advice

Phase 2 Further ongoing consultation and review to commence for Phase 2 including:

Draft Master Plan

Community Consultation

Final Master Plan Report

Figure 2: Project Staging

Key Findings & Recommendations

The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (WWCHAC) has provided their advice and aspirations for the future development of the Myrtle and Macleay Parks (MMP), which is to increase acknowledgement and awareness of the Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people.

Key feedback from the WWCHAC is provided below, in no particular order, with detail about how it can be considered by City of Boroondara within the scope of the Myrtle and Macleay Master Plan.

Pre-colonial site history

Aboriginal cultural knowledges and histories are passed down through oral tradition including song, story, language, dance and art. Due to the nature of this cultural knowledge transfer and the impacts of colonisation, there is limited documentation of Aboriginal or pre-settlement history of this site, other than it being on the Traditional Lands of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people.

The existing historical account in the Myrtle and Macleay Master Plan Background Report provides a perspective of the site based on published records available, written from a non-Aboriginal perspectives. It is acknowledged that this account is limited, as it does not include a Traditional Owners knowledge of land.

Collaboration with the Traditional Owners

Due to the limitations of historical records, further research and advice from the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation should be sought during the development of the Master Plan where possible, and/or specifically for implementation of relevant initiatives.

The City of Boroondara is committed to listening, learning and considering the voices of the Traditional Owners and developing a Master Plan with initiatives that respond to the feedback from WWCHAC: to increase awareness of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people and culture.

WWCHAC perspectives and advice will be considered in the design development, review, and implementation stages of culturally sensitive initiatives.

Opportunities for awareness:

The WWCHAC has suggested the following approaches to raise awareness about the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung, which are outlined below:

Signage and artworks

WWCHAC suggested interpretative signage be placed within the Parks and an Acknowledgement installed at main entrances. These visual elements can serve as educational tools.

Using Woi-wurrung words throughout the parks should be considered on signage. This, as well as other information, can provide visitors with insight into the history of the park and the connection of the land to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people.

Signage highlighting the importance of caring for Country (caring for the land) can convey a message of environmental stewardship and educate the community about Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung cultural values for land management.

Opportunities for awareness continues over the next page.

Circular gathering areas

Circular gathering areas and a smoking pit were proposed as spaces where people can come together. These areas can serve as focal points for storytelling, cultural events, and fostering a sense of community.

Should an open smoking pit not be possible due to safety or maintenance concerns, the design of the nominated area should consider surfaces that can accommodate smoking ceremonies or interpretive elements, and be done in collaboration with the Traditional Owners.

Native planting

Opportunities for the incorporation of native planting should be considered for all planted areas throughout the Parks including easily accessible areas where there are opportunities to convey traditional knowledge about the specific flora and increase biodiversity.

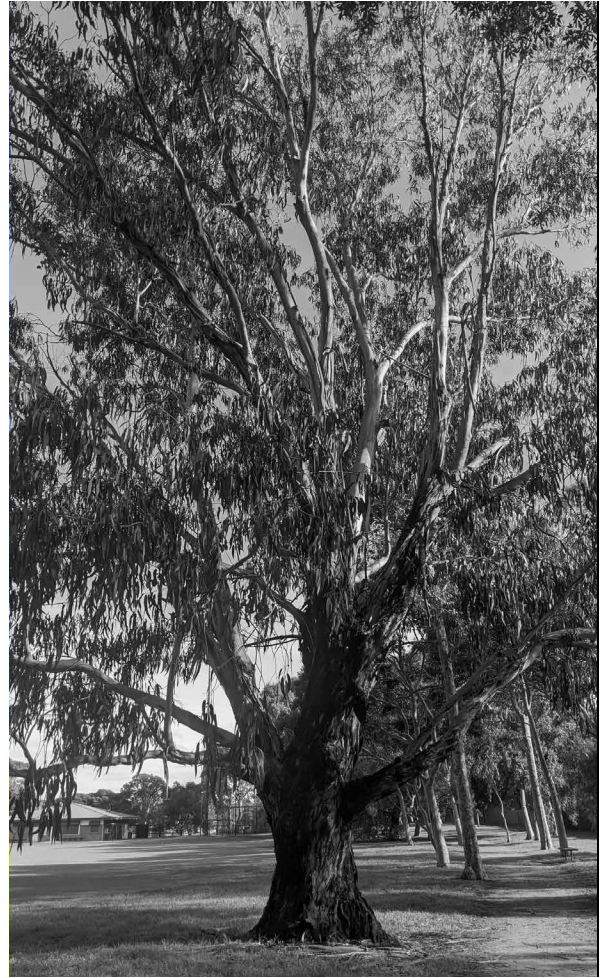


Figure 3: Tree-lined path in Macleay Park

Summary

Engagement with WWCHAC during the development of the Master Plan for Myrtle and Macleay Parks (MMP) in Balwyn North has been a valuable and informative process, and is in line with the Council's commitment to reconciliation in Boroondara.

Council is committed to ensuring that any historical or cultural interpretations in Myrtle and Macleay Parks are developed on the basis of research and analysis. Therefore, a further review of the draft Myrtle and Macleay Master Plan by WWCHAC is recommended prior to adoption to ensure that the initiatives and actions align with the values and aspirations of the Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people.

The recommendations in this report propose tangible actions to achieve increased awareness in the community of the Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people.

Consultation with the WWCHAC is considered not just a starting point to inform the master plan development, but an ongoing process through its adoption and implementation. A continued collaborative approach with the WWCHAC is recommended during the implementation stages of relevant initiatives at Myrtle and Macleay Parks over the next 10 years.

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