

Yoorrook Justice Commission
Submission of Andy Govanstone

Among other things, Country is where our lives happen; where we grow up, where we live, where we interact, where we survive, take sanctuary, where we rest, where we die. For Traditional Owners it is where the Elders have come and gone, where their Elders came and lived before them and their Elders before them for time immemorial, and where the Creator Beings came before All who were to follow.

As a Gubbah, I appreciate and respect that my people are new comers to the land, and my submission is to support the First Peoples and their descendants, the Gunditjmarra.

As a historian and person connected with restoration of Taerak for several decades, and working with Gunditj mob and hearing the stories and seeing the journey of people like Aunty Tina Saunders, Aunty Sandy Onus, Uncle Ken Saunders & his brothers Keith, and Theo and their cousins the Lovett family from Sunday Creek, the late Betty King, Aunty Connie Hart and others who have come and gone, and hearing their life experiences and injustices to them, their parents, and their descendants, I feel I am equipped to join this discussion.

I am particularly mindful of the brave (heroic) stand of the peoples during the colonial invasion, at time of Colonial impact, known locally as the Eumerella Wars and I wonder if the site where the Leaders Tykohee and Tarrerer and their followers were ambushed and murdered after 7 years of life as outlaws with a price on their heads. The site is close to the intersection of Hamilton-Port Fairy Rd and Waterloo Lane. Called "Waterloo" because this is the location where the Aboriginal resistance was broken, although in reality it went underground.

As a resident of Portland I believe that because the 'invasion' started in Portland Bay that a process of ceremony or acknowledgement and recognition of the Colonial wars and dislocation should start here too.

I would like to propose an appropriate location to include in a ceremony or process of Recognition should include the location where the Resistance Heroes are probably still buried, which is the wetland at the western end of Waterloo Road. The event and location is well described by Tom Browne in his book "Early Melbourne Memories" in which he includes several chapters on interactions with Gunditjmarra, and actually coined the term "Eumerella Wars" as a chapter heading in the book to which I refer, which are his memoirs.

I am inspired by the example of the Myall Community in NSW who hold ceremony to acknowledge the Myall Creek Massacre, where descendants of families involved come together in shared sorrow and recognition. I do believe there is a need to hold similar ceremony to help our community bridge the gaping crevasse of ignorance and to help the healing we need. Regarding "Waterloo", the more I look at maps the more Waterloos I see across Victoria. Waterloo Lane, Waterloo Road, Waterloo Plains, Waterloo Bay (AKA Bay of Martyrs near Peterborough), Waterloo township etc etc and they are all euphemisms for Massacre Site and where the local resistance was broken.

END OF SUBMISSION