

# Appendix 3

# Message Tree Project

## Community Stakeholder Forum

28 February 2019

*Hobsons Bay Yacht Club  
270 Nelson Place  
Williamstown  
10am -12 noon*

## AGENDA

1. Arrival & Housekeeping
2. Acknowledgement to Country
3. Welcome to the Project – Thanks for coming
4. Introductions
  - a. Name & Organisation (if you represent one)
  - b. What draws you to take part in the Message Tree Project?
5. Background - How the Project Was Created.
6. Project Aims and Outputs
  - a. Four Stakeholder Forums Planned
  - b. Outcomes Report & Handover Ceremony
    - i. Recommended wording for an Interpretive panel.
    - ii. Recommended siting suggestions.
    - iii. Recommendations on additional interpretive approaches in future
    - iv. Recommendations on future 'shared history' projects
7. Research on the Message Tree Story
  - a. Research results so far – Greg Thorpe
    - i. Andrew Curtain's 1889 Essay
    - ii. Williamstown Chronicle (Trove)
    - iii. PROV search results
    - iv. Quarrill & Co Image in Timeball Times 253 (Jan 2013) .
  - b. Important other sources available needing inclusion in our background research?
  - c. Searching for descendants linked to the Message Tree Story
8. General Sharing About the Message Tree Story
  - a. What do we think important about the story so far?
  - b. What might be emerging as important 'themes' so far?
9. Next Meeting
  - a. *Historical Themes Workshop. Thursday 28 March 2019.*

Hobsons Bay Yacht Club Williamstown      28 February 2019: 10am start  
**Minutes** recorded by Philip Hitchcock.

An attendance sheet was circulated. Name, organisation and email address was recorded and given to Snr Sgt Chris.

**Attendees:** Marbee Williams (Yalukit Marnang), Snr Sgt Chris Allen (Victoria Police), Greg Thorpe (Yalukit Marnang), Sgt Glyn Woolley (Victoria Police), Pamela Kadow (Heritage Librarian, City of Hobsons Bay), Tania Blackwell (Arts and Culture, City of Hobsons Bay), Toni Burton (Arts and Culture, City of Hobsons Bay), Rosa McKenna (Spotswood-Kingsville RSL & Get Up Out West), Anthony Hockey (Principal, St. Mary's Catholic PS), Brian Haynes (Williamstown Historian), Janet Long (Williamstown Historical Society), Jenni Mitchell (Get Up Out West), Marise de Quadros (Conversations of the Curious), Sgt Paul Menz (Victoria Police), Sgt Deb Jecks (Victoria Police), Phillip Hitchcock (Friends of Stony Creek and She-oak Enthusiast), Peter Dewar (Volunteer Historical Guide, Joan Kirner House).

Apologies: Cindy Wright (Get Up Out West)

**Welcome to the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Project:** Given by Snr Sgt Chris Allen (Williamstown Police)

**Acknowledgement to Boonwurrung Country.** Greg Thorpe (Yalukit Marnang) gave an acknowledgement focusing on the history of Mingragon a significant Boonwurrung Elder who was born around the time of the arrival of British colonists at Botany Bay in 1788. Mingragon's whole life involved the impacts of colonisation and the death and dispossession of his people from the colonisation process.

Greg also read a message from Boonwurrung woman and Yalukit Marnang Director, Caroline Martin expressing appreciation for everyone who gave up time to take part in this first meeting of Message Tree Project. Caroline also expressed regret that she could not attend due to her commitments as the Creative Director of the Yirramboi First Peoples Festival and also the death of an important Boonwurrung man within the Briggs family, her uncle Johnny.

At Caroline's request, the meeting took a moment to reflect on the death of Uncle Johnny and the many struggles that continue to afflict Boonwurrung people today.

**Welcome to Country:** Caroline's son, Marbee Williams, was in attendance and provided a welcome to country. He also expressed his gratitude that so many had come together to help tell the story of *The Message Tree* and of his ancestors in Hobsons Bay.

Marbee shared a story about the significance of She-oak Trees relating in Boonwurrung men's lore. The story told of a strong bond between she-oak trees and the power (or 'moong') of Boonwurrung men. When the British colonists came to Boonwurrung Country and began to cut down She-oaks to build with it is remembered that it negatively impacted the personal-power and the mental health of Boonwurrung men.

## Introductions and Reasons for Coming:

Each person present gave a brief introduction and their interest in taking part in the project:

- Marbee Williams, is a Yalukit willam clan and Boonwurrung man, representing the Briggs family, his mother (Caroline Martin) and Yalukit Marnang.
- Glynn Woolley from Victoria Police, wants to build community connections.
- Pamela Kadow, Hobsons Bay Heritage Librarian, met Greg and loved the story.
- Tania Blackwell from Council Parks and Culture, has strong interest in aboriginal heritage, here to support the project on behalf of the council.
- Toni Burton, Council Art and Culture, holds the oversight of Council's Heritage projects and has an interested in the interpretation of space. She is fascinated by this story and is taking part to support the project on behalf of the council.
- Rosa McKenna, Get Up Out West (GUOW) and Kingsville/Spotswood RSL, helped to host the grant and is keen to contribute.
- Deb Jecky from Williamstown Police wants to build community relationships, lives in Hobson's Bay and wants her kids to know stories about our First Peoples.
- Paul Metz from the Williamstwon Police interested in indigenous heritage.
- Jenny Mitchell (OA) from Get Up Out West spoke about the origins and history of the group. She is keen and excited to help document the history of The Message Tree.
- Marise de Quadros, from Conversation for the Curious, holds an interest in Indigenous heritage projects.
- Anthony Hopkins is the Principal of St Marys Primary School in Williamstown and is representing the school because past Principal, James Wallace, was a documented supporter of The Message Tree in 1856.
- Brian Haines is an active local historian and has his own research of the story and wants to contribute. Brian also moderates a Williamstown History page on Facebook.
- Janet Long from the Williamstown Historical Society was born near the site of the tree, is representing WHS and wants to learn as much as possible about the story.
- Peter Dewar is a freelance writer, he met Greg at Joan Kirner House, is interested in history, keen to see the story be told.
- Philip Hitchcock is from the Friends of Stony Creek, but here very interested in She-oaks and loves the story had (Roberts) family connections in Williamstown at the time of the tree.
- Greg Thorpe is a Collaborative Shared-History Consultant he Message Tree Project for Yalukit Marnang. His interest in Boonwurrung history of Hobson Bay began after involvement with Get Up Out West. He has family connections to Yarra Street Williamstwon where his family settled in the early 1850s.

## Project Background:

Greg talked about the project back having its beginnings at a meeting of Get Up Out West (the local reconciliation action group for Hobson's Bay) and the groups desire to establish a positive process to find and publicly promote local Boonwurrung histories within Hobsons

Bay. This project began with conversations between Greg and Boonwurrung descendants on behalf of GUOW. The interest of Williamstown Police came to light from a chance meeting between Greg and Jenna from Williamstown Police at a Mabo Day celebration at the Laverton Hub in 2018. Jenna introduced Greg to Snr Sgt Chris Allen and together Chris and Greg developed this current shared-history project and the partnership with Get Up Out West and Yalukit Marnang. Greg thanked Chris for his active leadership and enthusiasm in helping apply for this grant and successfully starting the project.

**Project Objectives:** Greg explained that this meeting was primarily a get to know you meeting and four meetings were planned, every four weeks, until the end of May.

Greg outlined the key outcomes of the project as follows:

- Identify, as close as possible, the former location of the Message Tree
- Propose words for an interpretive panel on or near the site
- Prepare an Outcomes Report for Council: recommendations to council on:
  - Ideas on how else to interpret/tell the Message Tree Story
  - Suggestions for other potential shared history project for Hobsons Bay.
- Expanding the partnerships for shared-history projects.
- Get the story-telling to be respectful and “right” for our times.

#### **Location of the Message Tree:**

There was an informal discussion as to the location of the tree led by Brian Haynes. It was noted that there had been some contention about the location over the years. Greg Thorpe described research he had conducted in 2018 based on descriptions of the tree’s location from accounts published in the Williamstown Chronicle prior to 1950. Greg acknowledged an article by Brian Haines in issue 253 of the Timeball Times or January 2013 (Williamstown Historical Society Newsletter) citing the location of the trees as on the bay side of Nelson Place at the intersection with Thompson Street (in front of the current car park of the yacht club next to the old Customs House building) as concurring with the outcome of his research in 2018. Brian described that the tree stood outside the Water Police building which used to occupy the site which is now the car park for the yacht club.

Both Brian and Greg agreed that reports the The Message Tree had occupied the site of the Wilkinson Fountain in Commonwealth Reserve were incorrect.

Greg acknowledged Brian’s work locating the lithographic image held in the Mitchell Library (Sydney) of Williamstown in 1854, by Snell for Quarrill & Co., which may contain the only visual representation of The Message Tree. Brian spoke about the image and presented some addition analysis of the image to help pin-point which of the trees represented might be The Message Tree.

Brian also tabled Robert Hoddle’s field notes from his 1837 survey which shows six trees that stood in the main part of the town. This may help confirm the location of Message Tree.

Greg mentioned an 'ironic post-script' relating to the location of the tree and the original 75 ft width of the roadway in Nelson Place. The Message Tree was removed in 1857 to allow the 75ft road to be built. Since 1856, however, the road has been narrowed to allow English Elm Trees to be planted on what was the original 75ft roadway. It is therefore possible that, looking back, the The Message Tree, had it not been removed would now stand in the nature strip on Nelson Place where the Elm Trees are now planted.

#### **Research by Yalukit Marnang to Date:**

Greg tabled a document outlining historical sources for the Message Tree. This will be shared via email. There were a number of key sources found:

- Council minute book 1856-1857 at the Public Records Office.
- An 1889 essay by Andrew A. Curtain.
- Accounts of both The Message Tree and the Boonwurrung from the Williamstown Chronicle.

Greg stated that he and Caroline Martin would collaborate on a second document regarding the history of the Boonwurrung in the first 15 years of colonisation at Williamstown. This document would provide some additional context to the life of Boonwurrung people in these early colonial times and would be circulated at a later date.

#### **General discussion:**

- Are there untapped historical sources we need to look at?
- Can we locate some of descendants of key characters with connection to the story: such as Crs Moxham & Langford, James Wallace, Anne Jordon, Andrew Curtain and William Hall Jnr.
- Brian Haines pointed out that for Boonwurrung history it may be useful to look at the Langhorne family Rev George Langhorne, who was Chief Protector of Aborigines after George Augustus Robinson, lived in Williamstown.

#### **Next meeting:**

**Historical Themes Workshop, Thursday 28 March 2019**

**Message Tree Project**  
**Community Stakeholder Forum**

28 March 2019

*Williamstown Police Station  
Nelson Place  
Williamstown  
10am -12 noon*

**AGENDA**

1. Arrival & Housekeeping
2. Acknowledgement to Country
3. Re-Introductions for New Attendees
  - a. Name & Organisation (if you represent one)
  - b. What draws you to take part in the Message Tree Project?
4. Minutes
  - a. Corrections
  - b. Adoption
5. Themes Workshop:
  - a. What are the important themes emerging from the history?
  - b. Key aspects within each theme.
  - c. Do they have a natural order for story-telling/interpretation?
6. Next Meeting

*Interpretive Panel Wording & Future Project Thursday 2 May 2019.*

**Williamstown Police Station.****Nelson Place Williamstown****28 March 2018: 10am - 12 noon**

Minutes recorded by Philip Hitchcock

An attendance sheet was circulated.

Organisation and email address for new attendees was recorded.

**Attendees:** Snr Sgt Chris Allen (Victoria Police), Greg Thorpe (Yalukit Marnang), Sgt Glyn Woolley (Victoria Police), Michael Neumann (General Manager, Royal Yacht Club of Victoria), Jenni Mitchell (Get Up Out West), Marise de Quadros (Conversation for the Curious), Pamela Kadow (Heritage Librarian, City of Hobsons Bay), Rosa McKenna (Spotswood-Kingsville RSL & Get Up Out West), Toni Burton (Arts and Culture, City of Hobsons Bay), Peter Dewar (Volunteer Historical Guide, Joan Kirner House), Phillip Hitchcock (Friends of Stony Creek and She-oak Enthusiast) Janet Long (Williamstown Historical Society), Uncle Keith Randall (Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer, Victoria Police).

**Acknowledgement to Country** by Greg Thorpe with a special mention of N'Arweet Boollutt (King Benbow)

**Re-Introductions** for New Attendees

Greg outlined the purpose of the meeting to identify historical themes to interpret the Message Tree story.

Minutes of the last meeting were previously circulated by email and minor corrections below were noted; Jenni Mitchell's name is spelt with an "i", Brian Haynes surname has a "y" and Marise's organisation is Conversation *for* the Curious. The previous minutes were accepted.

Themes were written on the whiteboard have been reproduced at the end of these minutes. Some of the aspects discussed are elaborated below.

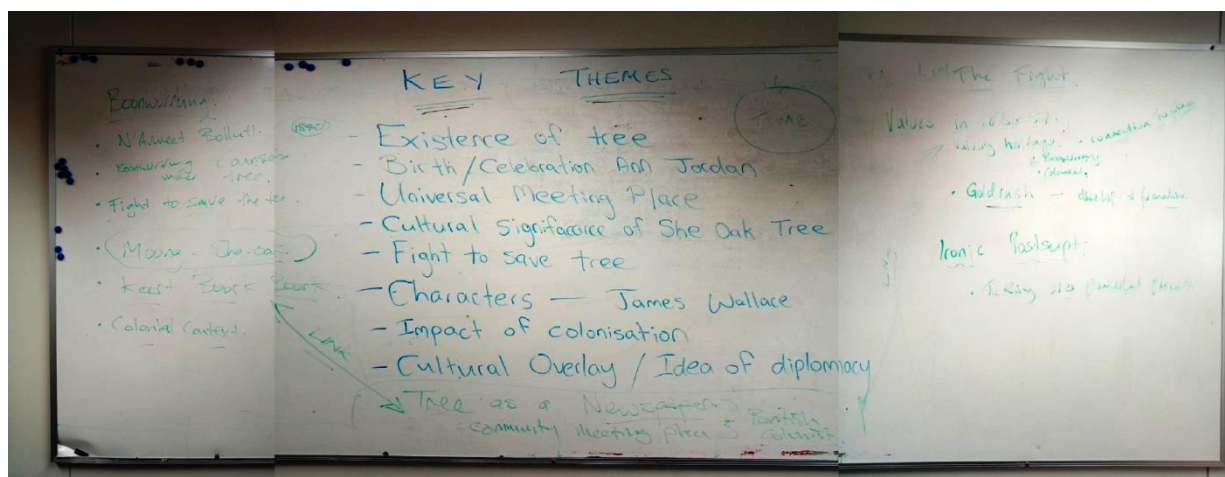
- Boonwurrung ceremony for Anne when she was born is linked to the message tree and can be viewed as a diplomatic act, an attempt to educate the settlers. It was agreed that the Anne Jordan story was a natural candidate for a **new future project** to analyse and re-tell that shared-history.
- Significance of the tree to both new and old residents
- She-oaks have significance
- Local area name Koort Boork boork
- Williamstown area was surveyed and the position of a very wide road was determined by the government. The road alignment required removal of the tree by the newly formed council. Ironically road is narrower now.
- Message tree story provides insight and nuanced stories about the lives of people at the time.
- The area surrounding the tree was significant; nearby shelly beach could have been middens and a clearing where Nelson Place is was a known Boonwurrung camp and there was also fresh water in a well nearby in Thompson St. all supporting the theory of occupation by large numbers of people for ceremony.



- Poem by James Wallace
- Rapid decline of the Boonwurrung people
- Themes from both aboriginal and european groups are similar and “line up”.
- Newspapers were in Melbourne and none in Williamstown so the message tree was used.
- Seat around the tree
- How big was the tree? Discussion
- Woodlands Historical Park building has she-oak shingles indicating the existence of large trees in the past.
- Size of buildings at the time. Most were shacks and rebuilt as larger buildings later on.
- 300 words is the usual number for a single plaque

### WHITEBOARD TRANSCRIPTION

<b>Boonwurrung</b>	<b>KEY THEMES</b>	<b>The Fight</b>
N’Arweet Bollutt	Existence of the Tree	Values in 1856-57
Boonwurrung counsels under the tree	Birth/Celebration Ann Jordan	Valuing heritage – connection to place Boonwurrung Colonial
Fight to save the tree	Universal Meeting Place	
Moong- She Oak	Fight to save the tree	Goldrush- develop and formalise
Koort Boork Boork	Characters - James Wallace	Ironic Postscript
Colonial context	Impact of colonisation	The ring over powerful places
	Cultural overlay/Idea of Diplomacy	
	Tree as a newspaper community meeting place	
	British colonist	



### Direction on Interpretive Themes - Three Panels:

Create draft text for three interpretive panels (max 300 words each) around the following themes:

1. **The long history of She-oaks at Koort Boork Boork (before Williamstown) and the Boonwurrung.** In particular, their connection with *The Message Tree* as a special place.
2. **The Early Colonial Years** where the tree becomes known as *The Message Tree* (Notice Tree) and is shared by the Boonwurrung and the colonists
3. **The fight to save the tree** in 1856 and 1857 and the Boonwurrung connection being remembered by the campaigners.

(It was agreed that the story of the Boonwurrung connection to the message tree should flow through the timeline of the historical narrative and not just be told within the first panel).

---

### Case for a Fourth and Final Interpretive Panel (Post-script):

Project Coordinator Greg Thorpe received a phone call from Rosa McKenna (GUOW) following the meeting to suggest that there could be a fourth interpretive panel to tell the story about the current project and process to recover and celebrate this shared history. Rosa felt it could be another way to bring the Boonwurrung voice in as a 'present day' voice along side others who have collaborated on bringing the story to light.

## Message Tree Project

### Community Stakeholder Forum

2 May 2019

*Friends Room*

**Williamstown Library**

*104 Ferguson Street*

*Williamstown*

*10am -12 noon*

## AGENDA

1. Arrival & Housekeeping
2. Acknowledgement to Country
3. Previous Minutes
  - a. Corrections
  - b. Adoption
4. Three Interpretive Panels – Review Proposed Wording.
5. Ideas for interpretive images for panels – Discuss.
6. Rosa’s Suggestion for a Fourth Panel – Discuss.
7. Idea for a New Message Tree (replanted She-oak) – Discuss.
  
8. Potential Future Shared-History Projects Williamstown – where to from here?
  - a. Story of Baby Anne Jordan & N’Arweet Boollutt?
  - b. Story of the Shelly Beach Camp (Commonwealth Park area) and the Boonwurrung?
  - c. Careful re-internment of Boonwurrung Remains – Williamstown Cemetry.
  - d. First Nations women held on Williamstown Hulks?
  
9. Elsewhere in Hobsons Bay:
  - a. Boonwurrung camp at Jawbone Reserve.
  - b. Boonwurrung camp at Williamstown Racecourse.
  - c. Boonwurrung camp at Queens Street Altona.
  - d. Other stories?
  
10. Finals Steps: Outcomes Report and Handover Ceremony. – Greg Thorpe
  
11. Final Workshop Meeting: **Panel Siting Workshop – On-Site Thursday 30 May 2019.**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Project Meeting,, 2 March 2019**  
**Williamstown Library 10am - 12 noon**

Minutes recorded from notes taken by Philip Hitchcock and Greg Thorpe

An attendance sheet was circulated. Organisation and email address for new attendees was recorded.

**Attendees:** Snr Sgt Chris Allen (Victoria Police), Greg Thorpe (Yalukit Marnang), Ann Goodwin (Chair Archives, Royal Yacht Club of Victoria), Jenni Mitchell (Get Up Out West), Marise de Quadros (Conversation for the Curious), Pamela Kadow (Heritage Librarian, City of Hobsons Bay), Rosa McKenna (Spotswood-Kingsville RSL & Get Up Out West), Peter Dewar (Volunteer Historical Guide, Joan Kirner House), Phillip Hitchcock (Friends of Stony Creek and She-oak Enthusiast), Anthony Hockey (Principal, St. Mary's Catholic PS), Mark Brophy, (Williamstown Community and Education Centre), Janet Long (Williamstown Historical Society).

**Apologies:** Michael Neumann (Royal Yacht Club of Victoria), Brian Haynes (Local Historian), Tania Blackwell (Arts and Culture at Hobsons Bay City Council) , Toni Burton (Arts and Culture at Hobsons Bay City Council), Glyn Woolley (Victoria Police), Cindy Wright (Get Up Out West) and Caroline Martin (Yalukit Marnang).

**Acknowledgement to Country:**

Acknowledgement to Country by Greg Thorpe with a special mention of Caroline Martin's apology (especially due to her leadership as Creative Director of Melbourne's Indigenous Arts Festival Yirramboi which will open tonight).

**Re-Introductions for New Attendees.**

People briefly introduced themselves and there was also general discussion about books and stories that are now bringing shared histories and our part in this ongoing process.

**Previous Minutes:**

The minutes of the previous meeting as circulated by email were accepted.

**Proposed Text for 3 Interpretive Panels:**

Greg explained that the main task of this project and this meeting was to review the proposed wording of the Three Interpretive Panels and arrive a clear recommendation for Council to consider. Guidance from Toni Burton (HBCC) for text of no more than 300 words.

Greg brought the groups attention to the three independent pages of text, each with 300 word or less, covering the three theme areas decided at the previous themes workshop. This text was drafted by Yalukit Marnang with input oversight by Caroline Martin as a Boonwurrung descendant.

It was agreed that the draft text of each panel should be read aloud first, then discussed.

*Points of discussion are recorded below as brief dot points.*

**Panel 1: read aloud**

- Editing – the text can be tightened and focussed even more.
- 300 words is very limiting: It would be good to add to the story onsite with extra information links to audio visual media accessible on the internet from hand-held devices (eg. use web-links via a Quick Response Code published on the panel).
- Estate with a capital E was discussed: The use of capital was understood as a nuance used to respect the Boonwurrung view that their land remains the source of their sovereignty as Traditional Owners.
- How big will the panels be? It was discussed that they may need to be large and the idea of a presentation them in a circle rather than a line was discussed. This design might lend itself to both protect and interpret a New Message Tree if a she-oak was to again be replanted on the site.
- The site being on an intersection is prominent and lends itself as a focal point for future festival celebrations, commemorations and reconciliation gatherings where the street could be temporarily closed for civic gatherings or cultural ceremony (possibly a revival of Boonwurrung dance and song).
- Images: It was agreed images would need to go with the text to help the story. Graphic design will be needed to refine and support this.
- Broad or Narrow Focus? It was commented that the first panel might not talk about the tree enough. The counter view was that to respectfully introduce and contextualise the Boonwurrung relationship to the tree requires a broader understanding of how Boonwurrung related to Koort Boork Boork as a place, She-oaks as a species and also what led to the decline, dispossession and ultimate disappearance of the Boonwurrung from Williamstown (for many years). Greg suggested that this context counters the tradition of “silence” in the Australian historical narrative (ie first peoples did not exist) or “incomplete history” (ie. first peoples were here then ‘they’ just disappeared). The challenge of modern shared histories is to respectfully re-humanise our first peoples and be forthcoming on how ‘they’ viewed this place and what happened to them. This was commonly not done well in most attempts at telling first peoples histories during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- Have we captured the important aspects of themes for this panel? The group agreed the words were a good representation of what needed to be in the text but that some tightening and professional editing would be needed. It was agreed that as a matter of policy and protocol Council should consult with Caroline Martin of Yalukit Marnang on any final wording and design before the panels are produced.

**Panel 2: read aloud**

- It was asked if the word “invaded” was technically correct. Greg made the point that there is enough evidence from a number of modern histories (such as *1835* by Boyce) to support the idea of an “invasion” if not in a military sense then as an act of ‘intention to dispossess’ the first peoples. From the Boonwurrung perspective the British ‘invaded’ and broke their laws and ignored their sovereignty in doing so. From an interpretive viewpoint the fact the word is question is a positive as it helps us all have this conversation and see all sides of this history. That process is part of what good shared history should achieve.
- The group is again keen that the words be edited and possibly rearranged for best impact . The text should again be submitted to council for these minor edits and reviewed by the Boonwurrung.
- The group is happy with these draft words to present to Council.

**Panel 3: read aloud**

- Greg pointed out a unique aspect of the history with potentially national significance being the evidence that the public campaigners seeking to save the tree in 1856 were arguing a heritage value in the old tree which ‘included’ its value as a place for first peoples. This is confirmed by the ‘research letter’ by an anonymous proponent of the tree’s removal found in the Williamstown Chronicle that year. Greg recently discussed this history with Professor Victoria Hasking and Professor John Maynard (Newcastle University) who thought the story unique within that period of Australia’s history.
- Broad discussion about early history of Victoria and the tree story’s place in it followed.
- Group was happy with the draft wording but again felt that they need some final editing and final oversight from Yalukit Marnang.

**Images**

- Do we need an image of a tree?
- Greg suggested that an image of a mature tree with an 8ft tall trunk could be created by an artist working from a photo of an old tree similar to the image of a She-oak in the Historical Sources Document.
- It was suggested it might be good to have an artist create an impression of the tree during this period where Boonwurrung are shown (possibly seated) conducting counsel, with colonists reciting poetry etc. and posting messages on the tree.
- Could Boonwurrung language be used in the panels? It was agreed that this would be good but probably English words would also need to be shown also increasing the number of words. It was acknowledged that the loss extent of the Boonwurrung loss from colonisation is a huge story to tell which makes it a difficult task in few words. Bringing more Boonwurrung ‘voice’ via internet interactive aspects to the site might help tell culture and language to come through.

### **Group Recommendations on Draft Text for Three Panels:**

- The three panel drafts presented are a good telling of the key themes in the story and are told respectfully and with sensitivity to the Boonwurrung perspective.
- The text would need additional professional edits to tighten the wording prior to arriving at final text for the panels. The text may also need to be chunked to sit around images.
- In keeping with this project's commitment to a respectful shared-history approach, any final changes to the wording of the panels should be run past Yalukit Marnang for Caroline Martin, to provide comment from a Boonwurrung perspective, prior to production of the panels.

### **Possible Panel 4:**

- Rosa Mckenna (GUOW/RSL) suggested the idea of a forth panel which tells the story of the message tree project, the revival of this shared-history and giving present-day Boonwurrung voice a place to be heard on the cultural importance of this history and it's revival to Boonwurrung today.
- It was thought this panel could have web-interactive media with audio-visual of Boonwurrung representatives speaking directly on the subject (again possibly using QR Code Technology).
- The group felt it would be a good way of moving the history into the present day while reminding the public that Boonwurrung are not 'gone' from Williamstown but have returned and are working to re-claim, strengthen and share their culture and history again.

### **Recommendation for a 4<sup>th</sup> Panel:**

- Text for a 4<sup>th</sup> Interpretive Panel, in line with the above, should be developed by Council with Yalukit Marnang and provided for in the on-site design.

### **Graphic design**

It was discussed that there would to a graphic designer working with the edited text to produce high quality interpretive panels.

### Replanting a New Message Tree

- The group was positive about the idea of planting a replacement Drooping She-oak (*Allocasuarina verticillata*) or New Message Tree at the Foot of Thompson Street. It is an idea that a number of members had independently and spontaneously raised with Greg as Project Coordinator at the outset of the project.
- It was recognised that a New Message Tree would be small for many years and would need a physical protect in the first 10-20 years.
- It was felt that the line of English Elms would need to be interrupted for this to happen and that it could be sensitively achieved with the two juvenile Elms closest to the Old Customs House being removed from the avenue. As deciduous trees, it was thought that the Elms could be transplanted successfully elsewhere (in winter) once they drop their leaves. This would open space for a Message Tree Node to feature in its own space at the end of the avenue of Elms at the 'foot' of Thompson Street in front of the Royal Yacht Club of Victoria.

#### Recommendation for a 'New Message Tree':

- A New Message Tree be replanted at the 'foot' of Thompson Street on the north side of the intersection in front of the Royal Yacht Club of Victoria in the approximate location of the original Message Tree.
- This tree would become the centre-point of an interpretive node for sharing the story of The Message Tree and its association to both the British colonists and the Boonwurrung.
- An appropriately young Drooping She-oak should be planted and an effective protective barrier be erected to allow the tree protection from urban movements while young and small.
- The two juvenile Elm Trees at the western end of the line of elms be removed and transplanted to make space for a Message Tree node.

### Future directions for the group

- It was proposed that after the project the group continue to meet every 2 months, under the name of "Shared History Alliance" for Hobsons Bay. It was agreed that the email list could be used to invite attendance at the initial meeting and the Greg would put out the call. A meeting place was discussed and Pam Kadow from Williamstown Library said a room could be provided at the library.
- Mark (from the Williamstown Community and Education Centre) said that the centre could potentially partner with a grant and help the group access grant listings.



**Future projects were discussed:**

- Story of Baby Anne Jordan & N'Arweet Boollutt
- Story of the Shelly Beach Camp (Commonwealth Park area) and the Boonwurrung
- First Nations men held in Williamstown Prison Hulks?
- Careful re-internment of Boonwurrung Remains – Williamstown Cemetry.
- Schools especially primary schools (where the curriculum is more flexible) need information, local stories to tell and curriculum guides.
- Occupation sites could form a trail; Jawbone, Willi racecourse, Queen St Altona
- It was widely agreed that the next project to focus on would be the story of Baby Anne Jordan.

**Outcomes report**

- Outcomes report and handover ceremony with Caroline Martin during NADIOC week in June and handover early July
- Greg will meet with Council before the next meeting to talk about how future projects might be supported by Council including funding.

**Next meeting Thursday 30 May 2019**

**Message Tree Project**  
**Community Stakeholder Forum**

30 May 2019

*Board Room*  
**Royal Yacht Club of Victoria**  
*120 Nelson Place*  
*Williamstown*  
**10am -12 noon**

**AGENDA**

1. Arrival & Housekeeping
2. Acknowledgement to Country
3. Previous Minutes
  - a. Corrections
  - b. Adoption
4. Site Visit:
  - a. Interpretive Node:
    - i. As a place for gathering and ceremony?
    - ii. Size of the area?
    - iii. Curving the road edge?
    - iv. Locating the New Message Tree?
    - v. Interpretive Panel Placement?
  - b. Our Recommendation:
    - i. Overall concept/vision
    - ii. Foreseeable issues and potential solutions.
5. Finals Steps
  - a. Outcomes Report;
    - i. Content
    - ii. Drafting Process
  - b. Handover Ceremony;
    - i. Date
    - ii. Location
    - iii. Invitations
6. Shared History Alliance
  - a. First Meeting
  - b. Current Potential New Project Funding
7. Thanks to All Message Tree Project Participants

**Royal Yacht Club of Victoria 30 May 2019 10am - 12 noon****Minutes recorded by Philip Hitchcock**

An attendance sheet was circulated.

**Attendees:** Snr Sgt Chris Allen (Victoria Police), Greg Thorpe (Yalukit Marnang), Michael Neumann (General Manager, Royal Yacht Club of Victoria), Ann Goodwin (Chair Archives, Royal Yacht Club of Victoria), Toni Burton (Arts and Culture, City of Hobsons Bay), Cindy Wright (Get Up Out West) Jenni Mitchell (Get Up Out West), Marise de Quadros (Conversation for the Curious), Pamela Kadow (Heritage Librarian, City of Hobsons Bay), Rosa McKenna (Spotswood-Kingsville RSL & Get Up Out West), Peter Dewar (Volunteer Historical Guide, Joan Kirner House), Philip Hitchcock (Friends of Stony Creek and She-oak Enthusiast), Anthony Hockey (Principal, St. Mary's Catholic PS), Mayor Cr Jonathon Marsden.

**Welcome to the Royal Yacht Club of Victoria** by the General Manager Michael Neumann. Greg thanks Michael and Board of RYCV for their community spirit regarding the Message Tree Project including through sponsorship of the project through the pro-bono contribution to the room for this meeting at no charge to the project.

**Acknowledgement to Country** was given by Greg Thorpe with a special mention of NAIDOC week, the themes for this year Voice, Treaty, Truth. Greg shared some personal stolen generation stories from his family and called on us all to reflect on the Boonwurrung families impacted by the same stories of stolen children and horrifically impacted by colonisation in many other ways.

- Previous minutes were accepted.
- Kevin Mullins Senior Designer – Open Space and City Design, City of Hobsons Bay contacted the group by email with his apologies for not attending the meetings as he had been away. He said it sounded like an interesting project and he would like to be involved. Greg had made contact with him directly prior to this meeting.

**On-Site Workshopping:**

Greg told the group that (although it was a cold day) it would be ideal to go outside to get a feel for the space where the site of old message tree was thought to have stood. There was some discussion about the points to be decided:

- Curving the road?
- Replanting the two small elm trees elsewhere
- Placement of the replanted She-oak tree
- Interpretive panels and barrier
- Form and species of the tree ( Drooping she-oak , *Allocasuarina verticillata*, some had 8ft trunks in local histories) Canopy of mature tree would at least 10m more probably 15m. The group went outside to the site of the message tree, there was acknowledgement of the significance of a group meeting here in this place again.

The group then went on site and discussed a range of ideas and concepts before unanimously agreeing on the following answers to key site design questions during the site visit:

- **Locating the New Message Tree? Location Agreed.** It was agreed that the 'exact' location of the original tree could not be determined with pin-point accuracy but that it was known to have stood at the 'foot' of Thompson Street and in front of the Water Police (now the RYCV). From this criterion the area adjacent to the intersection currently occupied by young elm trees was considered both credible and close enough to accurately honour the story. It also offered practical advantages being a prominent location at the end of the shopping precinct in the street.
- **Interpretive Node?: Yes.** This site should be constructed as a special node specifically for the telling of the Message Tree Story and its links to the Boonwurrung.
- **Replant a new Message Tree? Yes a Drooping She-oak** (*Allocasuarina verticulata*) should be replanted and referred to as The New Message Tree in recognition of this new chapter in the Message Tree story. In considering replanting at the site or close to the small elm tree next to the large mature Elm directly opposite the end of Thompson Street is where the group felt the New Message Tree should be planted (i.e the immature Elm second in the line of Elms moving east from Syme Street toward Ann St).
- **Should the node be designed as a place for gathering, festivals and public ceremony?** Yes. Electrical services for audio or visual broadcasting toward gatherings in the intersection should be included is possible.
- **Size of the (Message Tree Node) area and curving the road edge?** The New Message Tree should be planted as the centre-point of a 10m diameter circle (or similarly arranged space). As an interpretive device and to honour the 1856 resident request to bend the street around the original Message Tree, the interpretive node should be designed to extend the gutter line of Nelson Place into the roadway to the limits of the existing tourist bus waiting bay (i.e the car park space).
- **Interpretive Panel Placement/Style?** A design that allows the Message Tree story to be told in 4 panels of text (per previous meeting outcomes) in a circle surrounding the tree and possibly being incorporated into the design of a protective barrier/fence around the New Message Tree.

Points discussed on site are listed below. Potential design challenges are marked in red:

- **Intersection of Nelson Place and Thompson Street** provides a great opportunity for public activity and ceremony to be carried out through a controlled closure of the intersection. The potential also that Boonwurrung could again use such a space for ceremony around a New Message Tree is a reconciliation opportunity worth designing for.
- **New Message Tree is the natural centre point** of the space as it is the centre point of the story itself. It would also lend itself a potentially unifying anchor for an historic precinct that contains other important shared Boonwurrung histories close to the end of Thompson Street such as the Anne Jordan story, Woolpack Inn and the Shelly Beach Willum/Village (Along Nelson Place west of Thompson Street).
- **Space around the New Message Tree:** 15 metres diameter is the maximum expected spread of a very old Drooping She-oak but 10 metre is considered adequate. This space would need to be levelled and there is a level drop between the current footpath and the

road that will need treatment. The opportunity to use pavement artwork, or multi-media (including web-interactive) methods on the site to assist or expand the interpretive value of the node

- **Tourist bus wait parking to be relocated?** It was considered that there should be alternative places to provide bus wait parking elsewhere along Nelson Place to the East and that freeing this space is very important to the effectiveness of the node which will add to the tourist value of the gem pier precinct.
- **Disability access, ramps?** This was discussed in relation to the slope and different levels between the road the footpath. It was considered the node should be brought to be level with the road and a design solution to allow disability access incorporated.
- **Accessing the Yacht Club site behind the node:** There is a small gate to the RYCV behind where the node would be which is currently not being used which needs to be considered in the final site design. There is also an unused vehicle gate adjacent to the old customs house building that needs to be considered and the RYCV consulted.
- **Identifiable Underground Services:** Some major underground services appear to cross from the road to the RYCV close to the site with drainage or sewer close by in the road.
- **Safety of people within the Message Tree Node from road traffic:** Bollards were discussed to create separation for pedestrians.
- **In 100 years?** The group was aware that the long term needs of the site may change leading to different design needs in the long term. It was also clear to the group that replanting the New Message Tree and providing a place for retelling this history was itself an historic step that marks a 'new chapter' in the story.
- **Honouring the Place Itself:** For First Peoples, including the Boowurrung, the spiritual significance of special place often lives in the land itself leading to a downward-focussed (Earth-focussed) reflection whereas most monotheistic religions (colonial religions) look to a separate power seen to be above or beyond Earth (unearthly). The recognition of the Message Tree location as a special place is therefore naturally of potentially spiritual importance to the Boonwurrung.

Very cold, raining and windy day so the group adjourned back to the Yacht club to finalise the concept planning process as a white-board workshopping exercise.

#### **In-door Whiteboard Workshopping:**

Greg drew a diagram on the whiteboard (see last page) representing what had already been agreed and this was added to. The following opportunities and issues (in red) were discussed:

- **Can the bus stop be relocated (important)?**
- **Services stormwater pipes and etc.**
- **Can the site be raised to be level with the road?**
- Deviating the gutter to be curved would be an important symbolic gesture
- Concept plan (could be our whiteboard drawing)
- **Fence around the tree to protect it** incorporating text panels and art.
- Interpreting the site
- Tube stock or mature tree. The point was made that tubestock trees have been shown to outgrow more advanced trees. It was accepted that either way a replanted tree would not be of significant size for the first 20 years and would require good physical protection.

- Name of the tree. It was acknowledged that this should be the “new” message tree. Greg also mentioned that Caroline Martin (Yalukit Marnang) had shown some interest in finding an appropriate location west of the Maribyrnong to receive a name in honour N’Arweet Boollutt (King Benbow) and Greg and Caroline had wondered if this node deserves to be considered further in this. Greg talked about the importance of N’Arweet (clan leader) and the differential treatment throughout our colonial history afforded to N’Arweet Derrimut compared to N’Arweet Boollutt.
- This public node has a strong potential to be a focal point for national reconciliation for the City of Hobsons Bay.
- **Ground around the tree should be a hard level surface** as soft landscaping is likely to create maintenance issues and limit the use of the node as a gathering space for groups (eg. tour groups).
- Can we ask the council to take our recommendations as a concept plan and collaboratively work with Yalukit Marnang and this group to **further this to a plan for construction** using Council’s technical design expertise? **Yes Agreed.**
- QR codes could be used as one possible web-interactive technology to link a person at the node to online content thus expanding on the limits of the interpretive panels at the site. The Hobsons Bay library (Williamstown) was considered the most likely appropriate place to host and maintain web-based content while the potential to use A/V of Boonwurrung descendants (eg. use of this technology could importantly open additional space for contemporary Boonwurrung ‘voice’ to be heard as oral history given directly in person).
- The concept of seating around the tree was discussed. It was suggested that a curved seat to the roadside of the circular node could be used as an alternative to bollards to help protect pedestrians on and in the node from road traffic. The importance of maintaining visual connection for potential speakers standing in the node but presenting outwards (southward) to toward the intersection at a festival needed to be maintained. For this it was considered a backless or low back seat on the roadside of the node would achieve that design outcome.
- **Not too much structure.** Apart from the seat, the tree, the fence/interpretive panels, artworks and QR code points, the site needs to remain an open space to gather in.
- Tree needs to be the focus of attention.
- The idea of including more First Peoples in the design and construction phase of this node was put forward and broadly supported. It was suggested this should be discussed with Yalukit Marnang further too.
- **Maintaining the momentum of the project:** It was accepted Council will need to continue to develop the detailed construction plans from our concept plan for a special node which will take time. As an interim measure it was suggested that the three interpretive panels could be finalised (per recommendation at previous meeting) and placed on site along with information about plans in progress to construct a special node with a New Message Tree to be developed later.



### Concluding a Successful Project:

- It was noted that this project appears to have successfully engaged all the key stakeholders in The Message Tree Story but also provided a unique approach to reviving or telling a shared history story.
- Our process is unique for placing Boonwurrung descendants (via Yalukit Marnang) in the project facilitation role and conducting the project as a community collaboration for find the respectful story-telling approach.

- We have successfully engaged a wide range of local Williamstown story tellers, story keepers as well as those with a close geographic the Message Tree or to with historical links to key characters in the story (eg. St.Marys Primary School and James Wallace).
- The relationships formed in this project now stand to potentially work a similar process on other shared histories in Williamstown.
- These outcomes have amounted to an interesting new approach and if implemented by Council stand as an important step toward reconciliation and a greater sense of community well-being (especially for our First Peoples).
- Everyone who has contributed to this project in such good will has been part of this first success using this approach.

### **Outcomes Report:**

Greg presented an outline of the draft table of contents for the Outcomes Report that will now be prepared by Yalukit Marnang along with Get Up Out West and Williamstown Police (as grant application partners). Edits or additions were offered but none forthcoming from the group who supported Greg's outline. Greg invited any other group member who was keen to get involved in this process to contact him. A draft of the report would be emailed to group members prior to the handover ceremony.

### **Special Thanks:**

- Greg took the opportunity to thank everyone for their active participation in the project commenting on the significant volunteer commitment made by all who have taken part at meetings.
- He offered special thanks to Get Up Out West and specifically Snr Sgt Chris Allen and Victoria Police (Williamstown) for championing this project from the very start and being instrumental in pulling together the grant application and the core partnerships.
- Council's active participation as the funding body but also the role of officers from Arts and Culture on the project group were acknowledged with special thanks to Hobsons Bay City Council Mayor, Jonathan Marsden for his interest in the project and his attendance that this fourth meeting.
- Thanks were also extended to those community organisations who sponsored the project with in-kind contributions such as meeting rooms at no charge including The Royal Yacht of Victoria, Hobsons Bay Yacht Club, Williamstown Police and Williamstown Library.

### **Handover Ceremony and Potential Spin-off Projects:**

This will take place on Thursday 11 July 2019 from 10am and will form part of Hobsons Bay's National NAIDOC week celebration. A location is yet to be determined but emails will go out.

In reflecting on the NAIDOC theme for this year Greg Thorpe drew a connection with our project and the theme of Voice, Treaty and Truth, submitting that in our project the central role of Yalukit Marnang has helped us discover and celebrate Boonwurrung Voice, while our deeper understanding

of the plight of the Boonwurrung in the period 1835-1860 has brought greater truth to our local historical narrative. Both of these steps go some way in the direction of acknowledging Boonwurrung people as our local sovereign people. This notion of unextinguished sovereignty is now at the heart of renewed calls for Victoria to complete a Treaty with its First Peoples.

We may need to create another “moment” to tell this stories to schools and other key story-tellers who have not been able to attend all meetings here but who will have an on-going story-teller role in Williamstown. The potential for a schools curriculum guide was briefly discussed.

Anthony Hockey (Principal, St. Mary’s Catholic PS) presented the idea developed at the school for a Song about the Message Tree story that could be performed by his school choir, which was widely approved. Anthony is in contact with Yalukit Marnang via Greg and the project is in the process of being built.

### **Shared History Alliance**

The group re-confirmed the agreement to use the group’s email list to call the first Shared History Alliance meeting for Williamstown, probably in the 8 weeks following the Handover Ceremony. The group again reconfirmed an eagerness to move on to our second project focussing on the Boonwurrung and the British baby girl, Anne Jordan at the Woolpack in during August 1840. Greg reported that Council’s Arts and Culture Group are seeking internal funds to contribute to this project.

### **Final Special Mentions:**

Greg acknowledged Jenna Galvin from Williamston Police as a key instigator of this project with Snr Sgt Chris Allen who extended a further acknowledgement to Greg Thorpe for his facilitation of the project and for mediating the involvement of Caroline Martin and Yalukit Marnang which has been central to the success of the project.

Greg also thanked Phil Hitchcock for doing the minute-taking and being our resident ‘She-oak Enthusiast’ on the project. Phil responded by saying that since he planted a drooping she-oak in his backyard and he has never been the same...(in a good way).



• CURVE gutter line? Yes. (to the limit of a park)  
 Formal concept plan? → Yes.  
 • Gathering place? Yes. • Seating (looking toward)  
 • locate NMT existing young elm? Yes  
 • Panels (space for 4) around tree and with a protective fence structure?  
 • Activity mode - hardwired surface - probably (size & certainly flat) (10m)

THOMPSON  
 NELSON  
 PLACE  
 BUS Parking  
 Informal Panels 'swatches' on site? (Already found coordinates & context)  
 C & T Formal resolution from Council? for concept plan to continue

The diagram shows a central circular area with a tree in the middle, labeled 'Diameter 10.5m'. Above the circle is a curved structure labeled 'BUS PARKING' and 'SEAT'. To the left is 'NELSON' and to the right is 'PLACE'. Below the circle is a dashed line and a small structure labeled 'CUSTOMER HOUSE'.

Larger Vision: — Abandonment employment  
 Growing shared history — School in design & construction.  
 — truth telling.  
 as an ongoing process  
 Seating?

White Board from Workshopping Process.

