

**Submission to Yoorrook Justice Commission****From: Ross and Gertraud McDonald****Dated: 22 November 2024****Submission:**

Good Morning, I am interested in getting the full story on the Kangaroo Ground Memorial Park and its surrounds . It is located in the Shire of Nillumbik. I can give you the background. Truth does matter and it is important to avoid the Great Australian silence. The park is a natural 240 metre hill, a special hill, the highest point in Kangaroo Ground, known as Garden Hill for the foundation of a memorial to WW1. It is about 40 Km NE of Melbourne. A lava flow explains the rich volcanic soils of about 3500 acres and the manna gums that occupy the rich black soils today The Kangaroo Ground area was settled by the Scots for farming after 1848 - eager to utilize the rich black volcanic soils surrounding the summit. It was a very spiritual place and the Wurundjeri farmed this area for many hundreds of generations - it was one of the best hunting grounds, an oasis of grasses and alive with marsupials and generous in water. After the 1830's the original inhabitants never returned .Why ? What were the circumstances of their dispossession?.

It is difficult to believe that the Wurundjeri's special hunting ground would be voluntarily given up! The late Mick Woiwod in his book "Kangaroo Ground Dreaming" points to some pastoralists, with their flock of sheep being guarded by unscrupulous shepherds and hut keepers. What is the reality? A portion of the Yering homestead map in the Yarra Valley lists the names of the surrounding hills - which includes one hill north of the Yarra, the Nillumbik Hill. It has the ominous name 'All Gone Dead'. (page 46, KG Dreaming, Mick Woiwod). Nillumbik is translated as " bad land ". Was it the soil quality or something more sinister in Nillumbik country? Efforts have been made to remember the Wurundjeri in a positive way - the rich forb grasses planted on the west side of the Memorial park, the Gawa Resource Trail, on Watson's creek, the Nillumbik Reconciliation Group, the KG cemetery / Wurundjeri camp site plaque at its river sands location and samples of the 'djeri" grub working their scrolls on the manna gum ("Urun" tree) - used as root words for Wurundjeri. But questions still stand over the hill and its dreaming. Understanding the true story will allow us to move on, and build a better future.

**END OF SUBMISSION**