



## The Kulin — 'the local mob'

The Port Phillip region is the ancestral home to the eastern Kulin, a federation or nation of five distinct but strongly related communities covering a vast area of more than 2.5 million hectares of land, today known as south-central Victoria. These traditional communities shared similar wurrungs or languages, trade, marriage, cultural and communal tradition.

### Social moiety, totems

All Kulin had as their defining social moiety (totem) either Bundjil the creator of All, who flew the country as the Wedge-tail Eagle or Waa the Black Raven, the fire keeper and protector. An individual's moiety, inherited from the father, dictated all behaviour and social relationships.

With the guidance of the Elders a network of alliances was created, maintained by regular meetings or ngargee, for trade, initiations, the resolution of differences, and communal politics. These Kulin reunions were normally organised in sync with times of seasonal abundance. Besides considering the diverse community business requiring attention, ngargee were important times for communal celebration, stories, song and dance. They also served to reinforce blood ties, economic agreements and religious kinships between traditional families and clan groups.

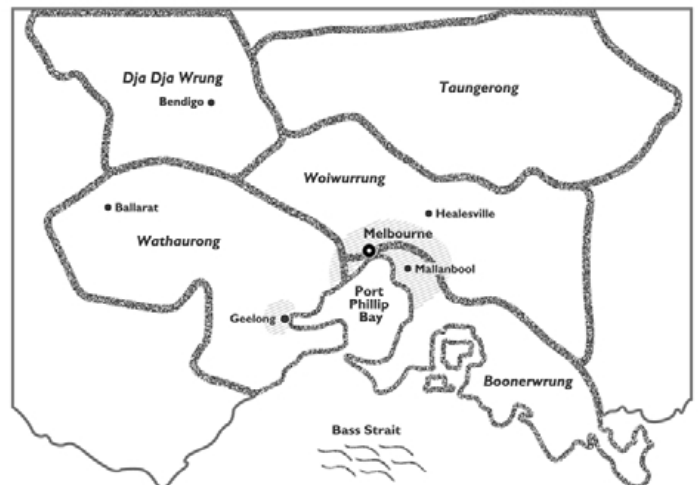
### The Boonerwurring people

Mallanbool Reserve occupies territory of the Boonerwurring people at the time of European contact. Each clan may have consisted of 100 people or more. This was too large a number for normal day to day activities so clans broke up into family based units, dispersing themselves throughout the landscape and reacquainting themselves with the local rhythms of their country.

### Evolving boundaries

Aboriginal people have been connected to this local place for more than 40,000 years. Inevitably, traditional boundaries have evolved and changed during the continuous connection with this land. It is this same land that, in comparatively recent times, we today call Mallanbool, or Murrumbena or even metropolitan Melbourne.

NB: This map only provides an indication of the Kulin language boundaries.



'We are here, we are part of this place'

The region now known as Melbourne is the ancestral lands of the Boonerwurring and Woiwurring (Wurundjeri) people of the Kulin nation.



*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*  
River Red Gum



## *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*

### River Red Gum

#### Biel : Kulin

The River Red Gum is the most familiar of eucalypts, being the most widespread of the species. It is native to every state except Tasmania and thrives in river valleys and other poorly drained or flood prone areas. While it has disappeared from much of its original habitat in inner Melbourne, large trees remain to remind us of its grandeur and what we have lost as development has displaced this beautiful tree.

Strangely for a tree that is so uniquely and identifiably Australian, its name *camaldulensis* derives from Camalduli, a district in Tuscany, Italy.

Naturally the Kulin found many uses for this species. Mature specimens provided habitat and shelter for native animals in the many holes and hollows that characterise its trunk and branches. Famously its bark was cut away leaving large, long-lasting scars. The shape of the removed bark indicates its intended purpose — be it shield, canoe or cradle.

Bark was also used for mia mias or houses. William Thomas (1793–1867), assistant protector of aboriginals in the Port Phillip, Westernport and Gippsland districts of Victoria from 1839–49 reported seeing “in half an hour a village comfortably housed ... A few sheets of bark with a sapling, and two forked sticks make at once a habitation; the sheets of bark six or seven feet long laid obliquely to the angle of about ninety degrees”.

The large burls that develop on Red Gums also had a use, being removed to make tarnuks or containers, for example to hold water while nectar was extracted by soaking. Being very rich in tannins the sap was also valued as a treatment for burns.



*Allocasuarina verticillata*  
Drooping She-Oak

## *Allocasuarina verticillata*

### Drooping She-Oak

#### Wayetuck : Kulin

Spreading from the coast to inland Box, Red Gum and Box Ironbark woodland, the Drooping She-Oak provided timber for making wonguims (boomerangs) and other implements. The wood is very strong and durable. In fact boomerangs 10,000 years old have been found in Wyrie Swamp in South Australia made from the Wayetuck.

The Drooping She-Oak also provided food, the young cones and leaves being eaten. However for the old people, Wayetuck the She-Oak held powerful mung or magic for those few initiated into the keeping and practice of this knowledge.

*Gahnia radula*  
Thatch Saw-Sedge



## *Gahnia radula*

### Thatch Saw-Sedge

Thatch Saw-Sedge and other members of this family provided Koories with food in the form of ground nuts and a strong fibre. Perhaps more importantly, they formed dense masses in areas that were occasionally flooded — providing effective cover for hunting. The sharp edge to their leaves that makes walking through them painful and difficult also provides a good bird habitat.



*Stipa pubinodis*  
Spear Grass

## *Stipa pubinodis*

### Spear Grass

Spear Grass is so named because the mature seeds can penetrate the skin, mouths and eyes of grazing stock. *Stipa pubinodis* grows in moist areas with some shade, producing its flowers from September to January on stems that can be up to 1.5 metres high.

