

Kaurna Cultural Heritage Survey

July 2007



“The word ‘Aborigine’ comes from the Latin word aborigine, meaning ‘from the beginning’. It should be a proud word, because our peoples have occupied this land since the Dreamtime began, not merely for 150 years.”

(Mattingley, 1988, pg xv)

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Introduction

The City of Port Adelaide Enfield contains one of the highest concentrations of Indigenous residents of any local government in Metropolitan Adelaide. According to the 2001 Census, the Council area is home to over 2100 Indigenous persons representing 2.2% of the total population (over twice the Metropolitan average). Moreover, this concentration of Indigenous people has increased within the City by over 46% since 1991.

In 2006, a Council funded project provided representatives of the local Kaurna descendents the opportunity to paint their own historical picture of the Port Adelaide region based on their memories, cultural stories/histories and their spiritual connections to family and 'country'*. This information booklet summarises the findings of this project and provides an account of Kaurna cultural heritage that brings together the documented knowledge of European historians and the cultural/spiritual/historical knowledge of local Kaurna people.

A particular objective of this booklet is to provide a reasonably comprehensive account of the sites within the City of Port Adelaide Enfield that have special significance to local Kaurna people. In this way, Council officers can readily access and accord due consideration to these sites when assessing applications for future development. The acknowledgement of Kaurna sites of cultural heritage significance is deemed to be especially important in light of the expressed views of both Kaurna and non-Kaurna participants of this project to:

- Assist in enhancing cross-cultural understanding of Kaurna cultural heritage;
- Contribute to the reconciliation of Kaurna cultural and historical knowledge with European based accounts; and
- Enhance knowledge of sites of Kaurna cultural heritage significance in the City of Port Adelaide Enfield in order to i) acknowledge the contribution of Kaurna people to the development of the Council area, and ii) afford some protection to these sites in the context of the anticipated redevelopment of large areas within the City.

While Kaurna sites of cultural significance in the Port Adelaide Enfield Council as documented in the past, were a testament to the presence of Kaurna people in the area, project participants considered that past recordings of Indigenous history had been one-sided and had tended to disregard the spatial and spiritual relationships of significance to Indigenous people.

Accordingly, the desired outcome for the Kaurna participants of this project is that local Indigenous history, culture and language is revived, protected and celebrated in a manner that reconciles the custodians of the past with the community who presently and in the future will call Port Adelaide/Yertabulti and its environs 'home'.

*Country refers to the relationship with the land.

Structure of Report

This report is the culmination of the following research and consultative activities:

- An extensive literature review of documented knowledge of Kaurna cultural heritage and sites of significance. The results of this review were consolidated within an Audits and Directions Report; and
- A comprehensive consultation program involving a series of oral histories, memory workshops and charettes with local Kaurna people and Elders during which (non-documented) sites of cultural heritage significance were identified and mapped.

Bringing together (European-based) documented and (Kaurna-based) non-documented knowledge of significant sites is not without its difficulties as landscape features are interpreted differently by Indigenous people. In addition, there is an absence of an appropriate record that acknowledges the broader spiritual relationship local Kaurna have with 'country'.

In this report, an attempt has been made to better understand the spiritual relationships of the local Kaurna people with the Port Adelaide Enfield landscape as a means of properly identifying and documenting those sites of special cultural heritage significance, so that these sites might then be recognised and valued by both European and non-European residents of and visitors to the City. For this reason, all efforts have been made to include the European and Indigenous names of places. Port Adelaide for example, is known as Yertabulti, 'the land of sleep or death'.

This report begins with a description of the landscape characteristics of the Port Adelaide Enfield Council region. It continues with a detailed account of Kaurna history in the region including an interpretation of pre-European settlement patterns of Kaurna people, in order to provide an appropriate context for a better understanding of the influence of European settlement on the Port Adelaide/Yertabulti region.

This historical account of Kaurna people's connection to 'the Port' discusses aspects of the spiritual relationships that have special meaning and significance to local Kaurna people. The report also documents places of cultural heritage significance that have been compiled from both European and Kaurna sources.

Landscape Characteristics of the Port Adelaide Enfield Area

The Port Adelaide Enfield Council area contains a range of landscape types, in particular the Para Fault block, the Alluvial Plain, the Estuarine Plain and Coastal Dunes as shown in Figure 1. Lefevre Peninsula was known as Mudlangga meaning 'the place of the nose'. It was the land between the Port and the sea at Port Adelaide "created by the ancestors for the hunting of large game."

Each of these landscapes has been occupied historically by local Kaurna people. Veronica Brodie, a Kaurna Elder, recalled her grandmother, Laura Glanville Harris, daughter of her great-grandmother Lartelare (Rebecca Spender) telling her:

"There were mangroves down at Glanville and Port Adelaide before the wharves were built. Those mangroves were a source of food for the Kaurna people who lived there."

Unfortunately, European documentation made little or no mention of the interconnectedness between Indigenous people and their land, their ancestors, their spiritual ancestors, their knowledge and stories, their practices, and their families. In particular, the 'sacredness' of sites was misunderstood because Indigenous mythology and its influence on Kaurna cultural practices was an intangible concept. As a result, there was little recognition of the manner in which Kaurna people learnt, how they saw the land as their 'University' that their people "walked... to gain strength, knowledge and spirituality." (Veronica Brodie, Lewis O'Brien, Elders)

Kaurna History

Kaurna history and knowledge is integral to an appreciation and understanding of the cultural development of the Port Adelaide Enfield Council region and, in particular, 'the Port' area.

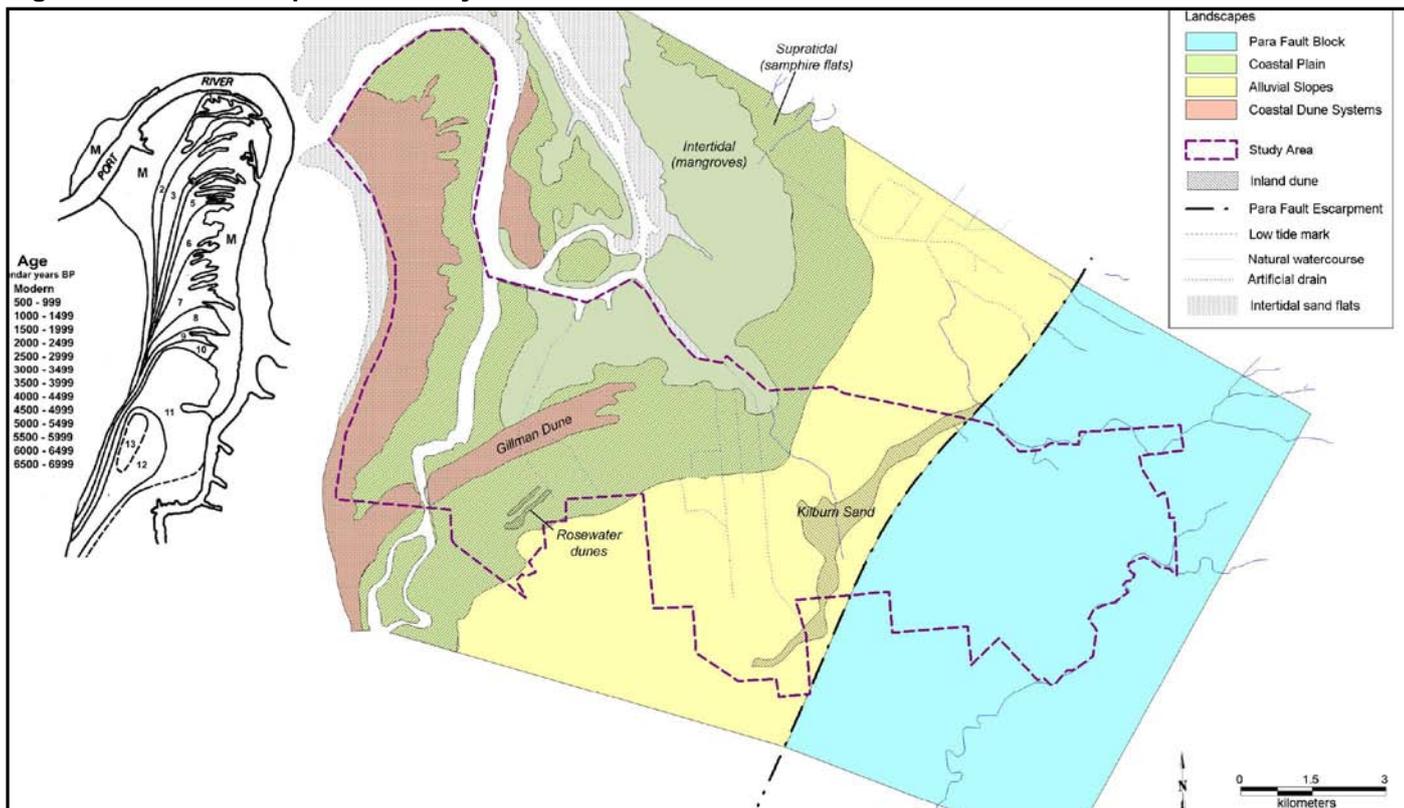
Oral histories and selected historical records of local Kaurna imply a rich history of Kaurna presence prior to European settlement. Indeed, the design of the armorial shield for the new Corporate Town of Port Adelaide in 1856 by Edward Pitts included an Aboriginal man as a 'supporter'.

"Early reports make it clear that Kaurna people were part of life in the Port in the very early days, although, sadly, many of these accounts reflect only the prejudice and insensitivity of the average early 19th Century European."

The Kaurna's strong spiritual attachment to the land is understood through stories of the 'dreaming', which "aren't just fairy tales; they speak about our country, our law and our knowledge." (Lewis O'Brien, Elder)

It is this intangible cultural and spiritual knowledge that has defined and determined places of cultural significance in the environmental, sensory and cultural landscapes of the Kaurna people in the Port Adelaide Enfield Council region. During the course of this study, a complex yet uncomplicated relationship was found between the 'Port' Kaurna people and 'country'. 'Country' spanned from Crystal Brook and Port Wakefield across the Adelaide Plain to the southern tip of Cape Jervis, and relationships were extended to neighbouring Indigenous nations, in particular, the Narungga of Point Pearce Mission on Yorke Peninsula and the Ngarrindjeri at Point McLeay Mission/ Raukkan on the Coorong.

Figure 1 – The Landscape of the Study Area

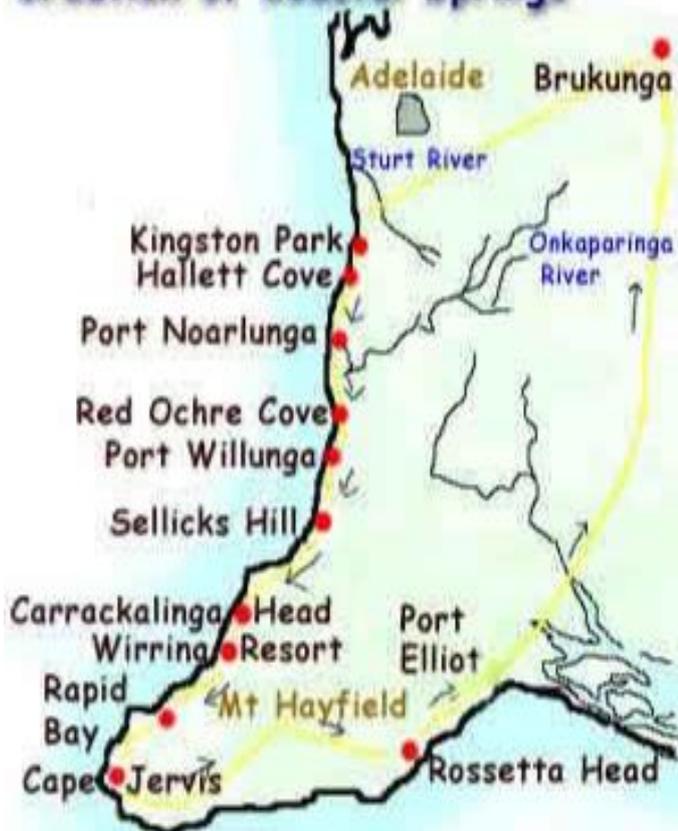


It was recognised that amongst Indigenous people, family relationships, cultural practices and traditions, spiritual rituals and beliefs, and social constructs and teachings, were intimately tied and connected to land, not only to a place of birth and its environs but also to the 'dreaming' places and tracks of ancestral spirits. 'Dreaming' stories and language constituted reality for the local Kaurna people and to this day, these stories are important in recognising Indigenous cultural heritage and reasserting it within the landscape.

The dreamtime story most strongly connected to the coastal area of the Fleurieu Peninsula and Lefevre Peninsula relates to *Tjilbruke*, a Kaurna ancestral being who taught lessons about survival and respect for life and whose tears for his slain nephew created the fresh water springs along the coast from Kingston Park to Cape Jervis as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2 - Tjilbruke Trail

Mythological Journey - Tjilbruke Creation of Coastal Springs



The Cultural, Environmental and Sensory maps shown in Figures 3, 4, 5 and 6 are put forward as an appropriate representation of areas of Kaurna cultural heritage significance that include sacred and significant places, the locations for which Kaurna Elders are custodians and believe should never have been revealed. Sites of significance as recorded by European documentation are also included and listed in Table 1.

Pre European Settlement

At the time of European settlement, the territory of the Kaurna nation in Adelaide/Tandanya and Port Adelaide/

Yertabulti extended from Port Wakefield to Cape Jervis and to the western edge of the Mount Lofty Ranges. The Port Adelaide/Yertabulti region constituted the western extremity of the territory belonging to the *Wirra* Kaurna (northern group within the Kaurna nation). This group is thought to have extended between Angaston, Lyndoch, Port Adelaide/Yertabulti, Yatala/Yertalla and Tea Tree Gully/Kirraungdingga.

However, according to Veronica Brodie, the Port River was the natural boundary separating clan lands and the *Wirra* were located on the eastern bank. The Port River tribe, she claims, resided on the western bank of the river and their territory extended to the sea at Semaphore/Pu:lti and Semaphore South and north from West Lakes/Witongga to the tip of the Lefevre Peninsula/Mudlangga.

"Grandmother told us of many, many camps that were sited from Glanville all the way to Outer Harbor, and that's quite a big stretch."

Early historical accounts suggest that the Kaurna occupied the coastal areas in summer (the beaches at North Haven, Semaphore/Pu:lti and West Beach) and retreated to the inland during the winter (Morialta). During autumn the red gum trees (*karra*) stopped dropping their branches, making it possible to move away from the dunes and marshes of the coast to the wooded foothills:

...they wintered in the timbered foothill country, sheltering in the cover of gigantic and often hollow red gum trees along the riverbanks. Often as a basis for shelter they used a fallen tree, and hollowed out beneath it, a practice hazardous when floods and heavy rains destroyed their fires and flooded their sleeping places. (Tindale)

An important component of Indigenous life were corroborees, ceremonies and gatherings held on the Port River banks, at Adelaide Oval, Mutton Cove, and the area known as Glebe Street near the site of 'Taoundi College'. It was forbidden to camp on these sites.

Living in the Port

While early Kaurna cultural practices were recorded, such as the curing of skins (a process known as *babandi*) on the salty clay pans in the Dry Creek and Port Adelaide/Yertabulti area, early European settlers also reported the adaptation and use of European materials for Indigenous cultural purposes. For example, reed spears were modified with nails, iron bars were used for climbing trees, flour was used for body decoration, implements were made with metal chisels and glass, and wurlies were made of wheat bags and timber when traditional materials from the wetland ecology were reduced.

Lartelare (Rebecca Spender), Veronica Brodie's great-grandmother, was remembered as belonging to the "very old original Aboriginals who lived near the Jervois Creek and Swamp" by former Glanville resident Watson John Miller, whose father John Charles Miller arrived in Port Adelaide/Yertabulti soon after 1854.

The original campsite of Lartelare's family was located at the former CSR Factory. However the group was relocated to the Jervois Creek riverbank south of the 1859 Port Bridge

Figure 3 - Indigenous Cultural, Environmental and Sensory Landscapes and European Record of 'Sites of Cultural Significance'

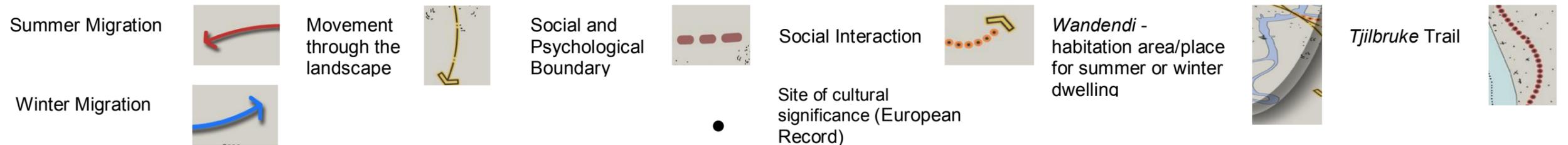
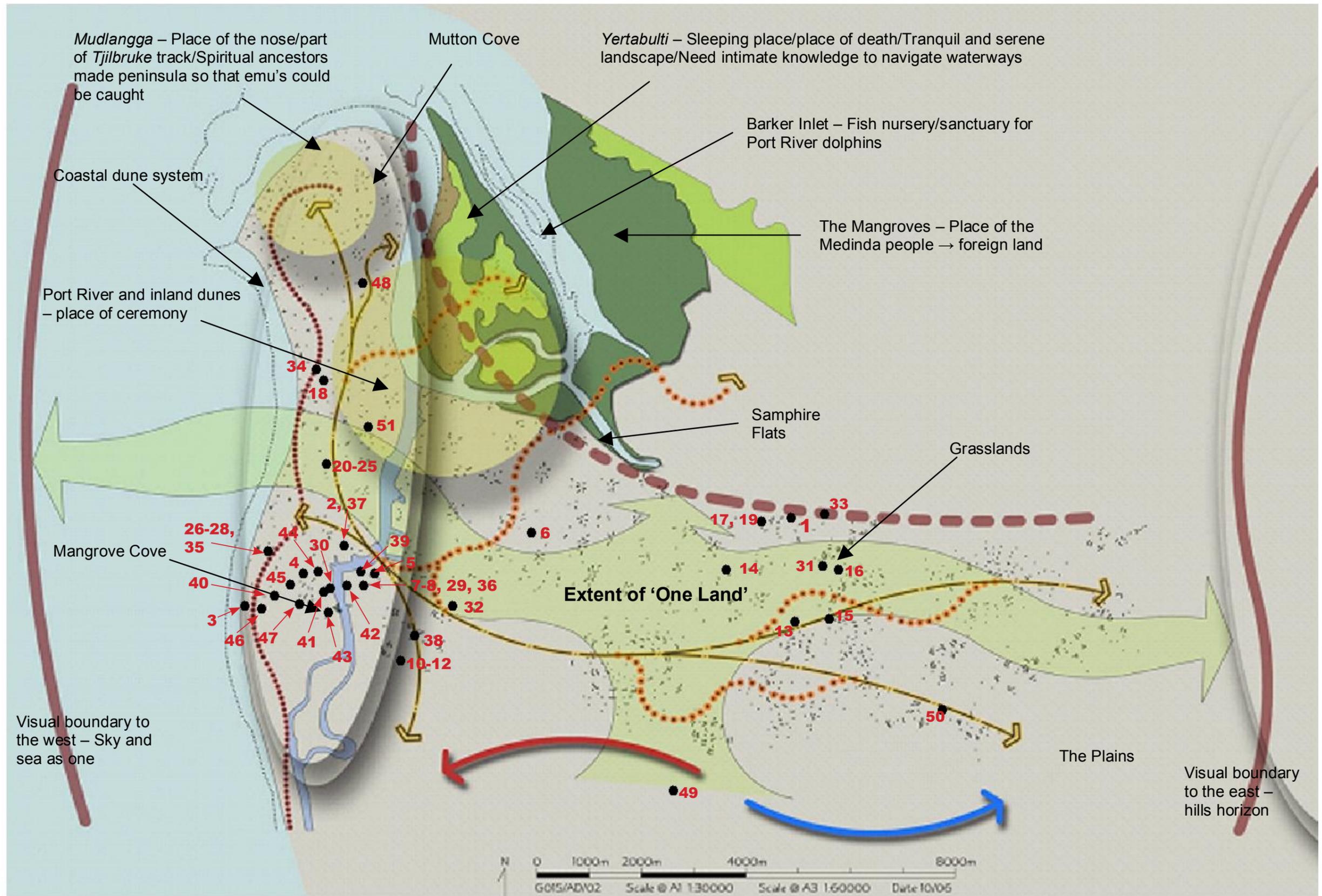


Figure 4 - Environmental Landscape

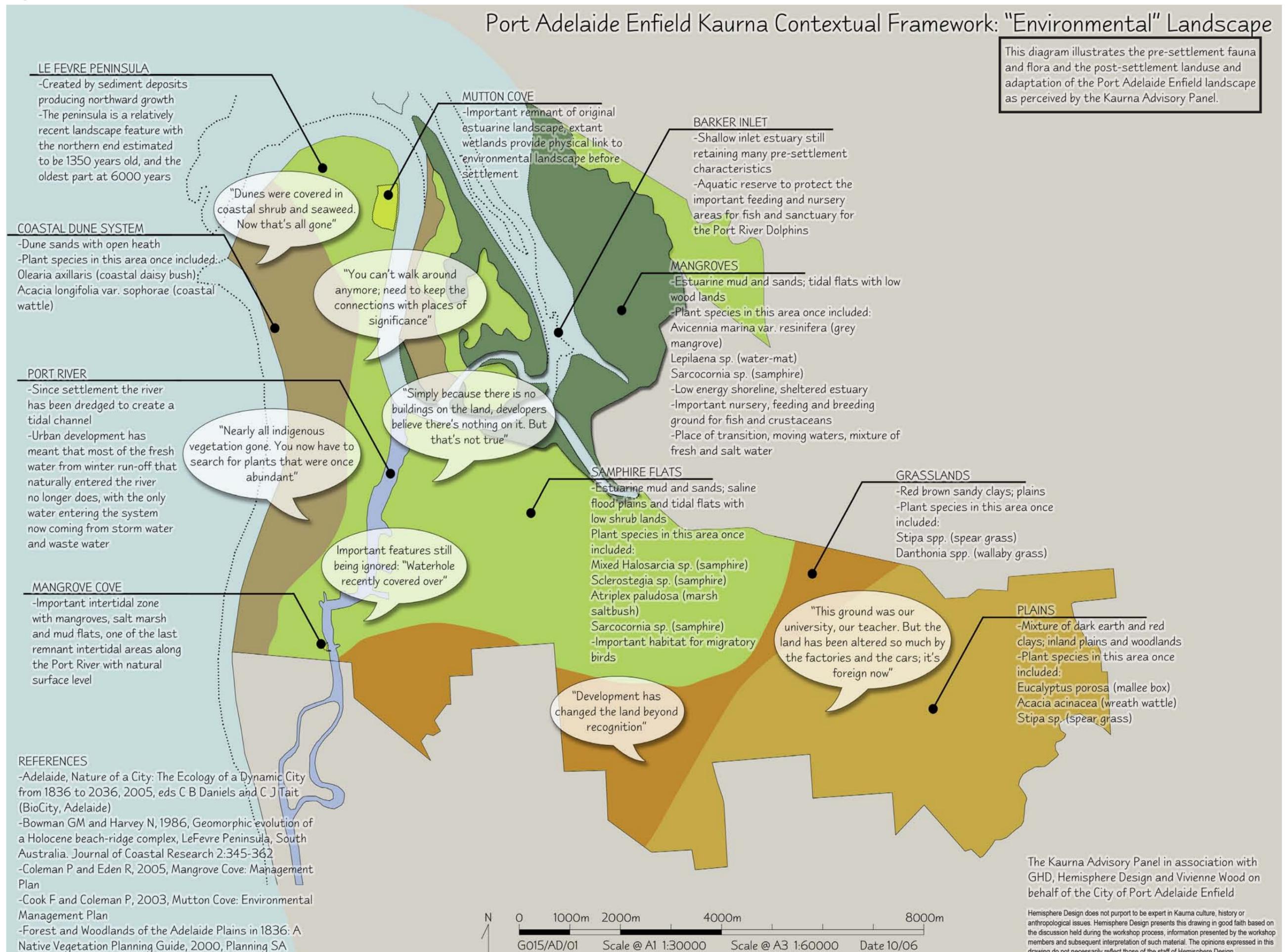
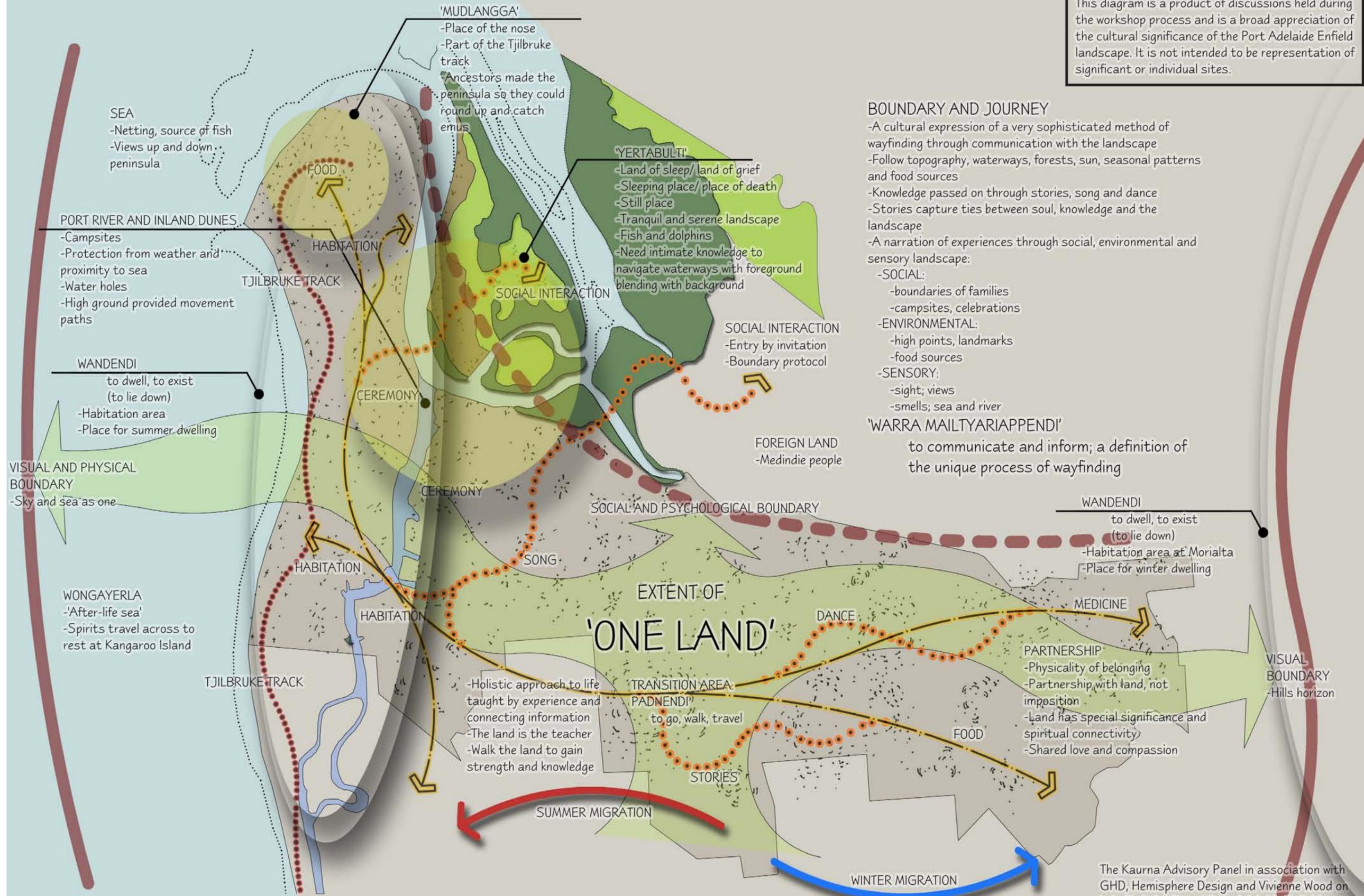


Figure 5 - Cultural Landscape

Port Adelaide Enfield Kurna Contextual Framework: Cultural Landscape

This diagram is a product of discussions held during the workshop process and is a broad appreciation of the cultural significance of the Port Adelaide Enfield landscape. It is not intended to be representation of significant or individual sites.



BOUNDARY AND JOURNEY
 -A cultural expression of a very sophisticated method of wayfinding through communication with the landscape
 -Follow topography, waterways, forests, sun, seasonal patterns and food sources
 -Knowledge passed on through stories, song and dance
 -Stories capture ties between soul, knowledge and the landscape
 -A narration of experiences through social, environmental and sensory landscape:
 -SOCIAL:
 -boundaries of families
 -campsites, celebrations
 -ENVIRONMENTAL:
 -high points, landmarks
 -food sources
 -SENSORY:
 -sight; views
 -smells; sea and river
'WARRA MAILTYARIAPPENDI'
 to communicate and inform; a definition of the unique process of wayfinding

REFERENCE
 -Kurna Dictionary, 1995, Adapted from Teichmann and Schurmann by S Barrett and D Nathan

N
 0 1000m 2000m 4000m 8000m
 G015/AD/02 Scale @ A1 1:30000 Scale @ A3 1:60000 Date 10/06

The Kurna Advisory Panel in association with GHD, Hemisphere Design and Vivienne Wood on behalf of the City of Port Adelaide Enfield

Hemisphere Design does not purport to be expert in Kurna culture, history or anthropological issues. Hemisphere Design presents this drawing in good faith based on the discussion held during the workshop process, information presented by the workshop members and subsequent interpretation of such material. The opinions expressed in this drawing do not necessarily reflect those of the staff of Hemisphere Design.

Figure 6 - Sensory Landscape

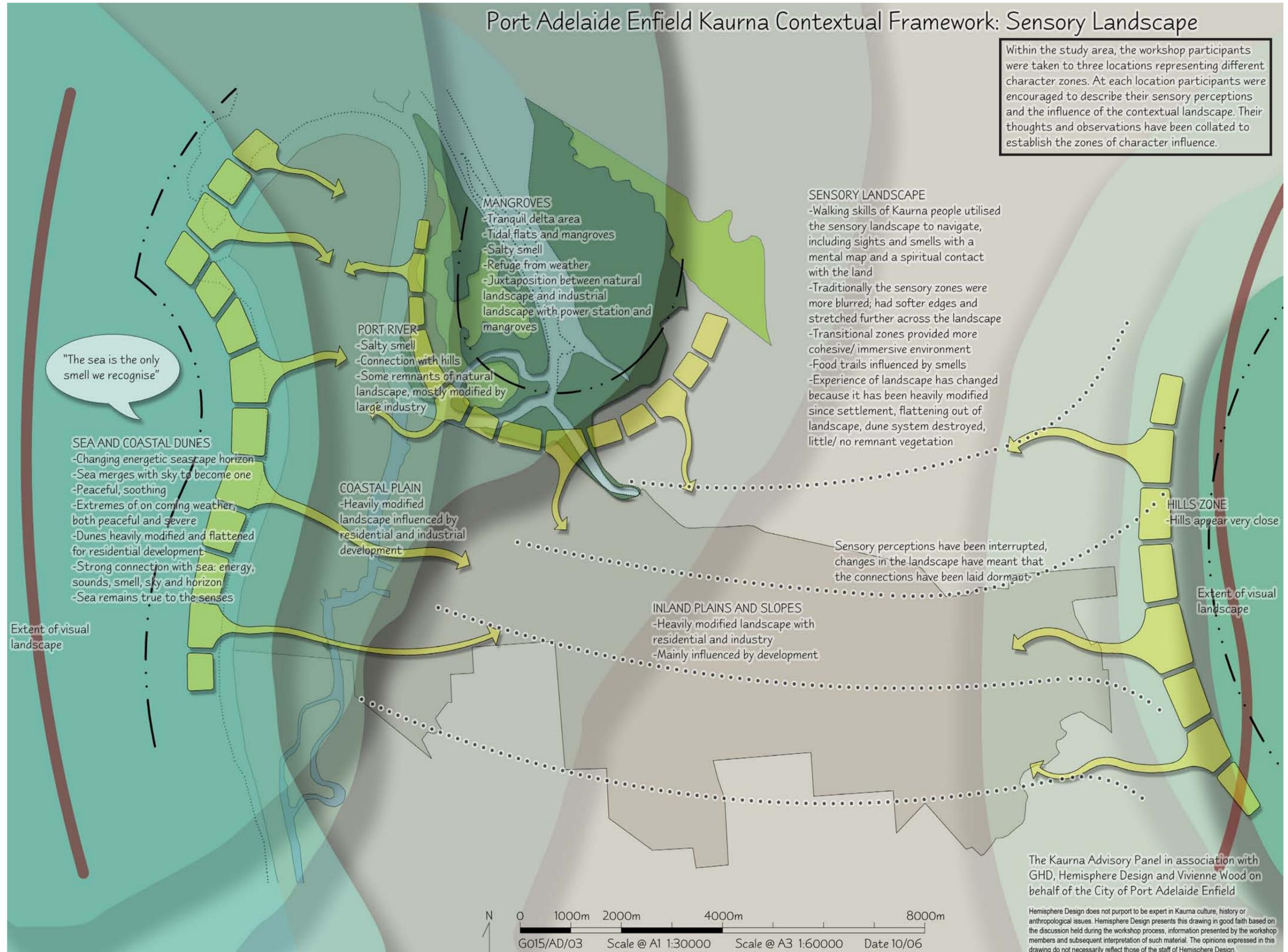


Table 1 - European Record of Sites of Significance

ID/Name	Class/Type	Locality	Description
1	Archaeological Burial	Section 1000 Hd Pt Adelaide	Multiple burials and various occupational remains retrieved from possible mound site.
2	Archaeological Burial	Birkenhead	Skull and jaw.
3	Historic/ Oral Campsite	'The Pines' about 40 yards north of Fort Glanville.	
4	Archaeological Burial	Glanville	Various skeletal remains possibly from two sites.
5	Historic/Archival Campsite	Near Port Adelaide Post Office	Camp on high ground.
6	Archaeological Burial	Wilkins Road, Gillman	Multiple burials and occupation remains retrieved from sand quarry.
7	Archaeological Isolated Find	Port Adelaide	Cyclon
8	Archaeological Burial	Port Adelaide	Skull and jaw
9	Archaeological Burial	Port Adelaide	Skull and skeleton.
10	Archaeological Burial	Queenstown	Part skeleton.
11	Archaeological Burial	Queenstown	Skull and jaw.
12	Archaeological Burial	Queenstown	Unspecified bones.
13	Archaeological Campsite	Kilburn, Kennet's Sand Quarry (former)	Several stone artefacts.
14	Archaeological Burial ¹	Wingfield Sewerage Treatment Plant	Skull fragment
15	Archaeological Burial	Gepps Cross School, Blair Athol	Part skeleton found in schoolyard.
16	Archaeological Burial	Gepps Cross	Part skeleton.
17	Archaeological Burial	Dry Creek	Part skeleton.
18	Historic/Oral Water source	Roy Marten Reserve	Examples of freshwater wells. Many others were found throughout the dunes.
19	ArchaeologicalBurial	Dry Creek	Part skeleton.
20	ArchaeologicalBurial	Largs Bay	Human teeth.
21	ArchaeologicalBurial	Largs Bay	Skull fragment and jaw.
22	ArchaeologicalBurial	Largs Bay	Skull and other fragments.
23	ArchaeologicalBurial	Largs Bay	Skull and jaw.
24	ArchaeologicalBurial	Largs Bay	Femur and ulna.
25	ArchaeologicalBurial	Largs Bay	Skull and jaw.
26	ArchaeologicalBurial	Semaphore	Skull
27	ArchaeologicalBurial	Semaphore	Skull and part skeleton.
28	ArchaeologicalBurial	Semaphore (sandhills)	Jaw fragment.
29	ArchaeologicalBurial	Port Adelaide	Skull and jaw
30	Historic/OralCampsite	Glanville	Historic camp dating from c. 1851.
31	ArchaeologicalBurial	Gepps Cross (Coles warehouse)	Burial uncovered in trenching.
32	ArchaeologicalBurial	Rosewater	Skull and part skeletons (women and child) uncovered from dune.
33	ArchaeologicalBurial	Cavan Hotel, Cavan	Skeletal remains uncovered during trenching.
34	Archaeological Burial	Tapurro (Taperoo Sandhills)	Part skull found in sandhills.
35	Historic/OralCampsite	Pu:lti, Semaphore dunes	Wurlies covering high ground in lea of dunes and waterfront.
36	Historic/ArchivalHistoric event	yerta bulti (Old Port Adelaide)	Location of first contact between Kaurna (Parnataty - King Rodney) and whites.
37	Historic/OralBurial	Birkenhead, north of Fletchers slip	Burial ground noted by early European settler (Purvis).
38	Historic/OralCeremonial ground	Glebe Street, Alberton	Corroboree ground.
39	Historic/OralCampsite	Port River foreshore	Various camping sites along foreshore.
40	Historic/OralCampsite	Near Le Fevre High School	Historic camp occupied by Parnataty among others until c. 1912.
41	Historic/OralCeremonial ground	Between Hart and Marion Streets, Ethelton	Ceremonial ground 1850s to 1880s.
42	Historic/ArchivalCampsite	South of Jervois bridge, behind Clubhouse Hotel.	Historic camp.
43	Historic/OralCampsite		
44	Historic/OralCampsite	Behind the Cumberland Hotel, Causeway Road Glanville.	Historic camp until c. 1870s
45	Historic/OralCampsite		Historic camp until 1912.
46	Historic/OralCampsite		Historic camp, burial ground and freshwater well.
47	Historic/OralCeremonial ground	Buck's Flat	
48	Historic/OralCampsite	South of Veitch Road	Historic camp c. 1940s to 1950s.
49	Historic/ArchivalReserve	Croydon Park	Country section allocated as Aboriginal reserve.
50	Historic/ArchivalReserve	Hampstead Gardens	Country section allocated as Aboriginal reserve.
51	Historic/OralBurial	Southeast corner of Largs Bay Primary School.	3 individuals relocated nearby.

¹ The name Palti was first put forward by Sheridah Melvin as a re-spelling of Pu:lti which was recorded by Black (1920: 84). However, Black, unlike many other English observers, uses the vowel symbols as in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). So the 'u' here is pronounced like 'u' in 'put', whereas the vowel in palti is pronounced like 'u' in 'but'. Although Melvin explains her Palti re-spelling by referring to a discussion with Rob Amery (Kaurna language specialist), Amery believes that his input into this discussion was mis-interpreted and mis-quoted.

and later to the 1878 Jervois Bridge, the relocation likely to have occurred as land was taken over for the development of the Government Dock Yard, the Firewood Wharf, and colonial buildings of the 1860's.

In the early 1900's, it was reported that the local Kurna established numerous camps at what was known as Bucks Flat (Semaphore/Pu:lti) between 1907 and 1912 when they became involved in paid employment.

Key Elements of Kurna Cultural Heritage

Partnership with the land

Kurna descendants continue to reiterate their attachment to 'country', in particular to the Lefevre Peninsula/Mudlangga, and the endurance of its mythological and spiritual aspects. This view of land is seen as one of partnership between people and 'country', which is difficult if not impossible to sever.

It was believed that the physical attributes of the Port Adelaide/Yertabulti region such as waterholes, the river, the coast, inland watercourses, wetlands, mangrove forests and sand dunes, were created by spiritual ancestors to sustain the Kurna groups, thus to destroy or change those features was to work against the ancestral beings, an action considered to be sacrilege.

The organisation of family groups was well thought out to ensure land management of the region in regards to the use of land, food and water resources. The different family groups within the Kurna nation and their neighbours met regularly on neutral ground at Victoria Square/Tarndanyangga, Moseley Square (Glenelg/Pattawilya) and Mount Barker to conference about the issues confronting them.

The Woodville area was covered in forest, providing a vantage point for groups moving east during the winter journey. It took several days to reach the River Torrens/Karrawirraparri campsite where many of the Aborigines rested, surviving on a diet of fish and making their homes in the trees before heading to higher ground.

The Taperoo/Tapurro area was well known for its water supplies with the last remnant waterhole located at the Police Academy at Largs Bay. The wetlands at West Lakes/Witongga acted as a natural filter for the River Torrens/Karrawirraparri outwash and along with the samphire flats, provided a rich source of food and reeds for basket weaving.

When the Port Adelaide/Yertabulti Kurna headed south to the Fleurieu Peninsula to visit relatives, they followed the *Tjilbruke* trail, their most significant spiritual and educational journey. The *Tjilbruke* trail followed natural land features connected to 'dreamtime' stories and led the Kurna as far away as the Coorong region.

Significant sites were not confined by the administrative boundaries of the present Port Adelaide Enfield Council. The territory was bounded by the sea to the west and the foothills to the east and included spiritually significant places that could be sighted from the plains such as Mount

Bonython and Mount Lofty. These peaks were the ears of *Nganno*, the giant who laid down to die after being wounded in battle to form what is known as the Mount Lofty Ranges. The two peaks are called *Yurrebilla* and were a reminder to the Port Adelaide/Yertabulti Kurna that life was precious and decisions were to be made wisely with respect to the teachings of spiritual ancestors.

If you were Kurna *"belonging to the Port Adelaide region, you knew that you would only get as far as Port Wakefield Road and then you felt like you've gone over into foreign land."* (Lewis O'Brien, Elder)

Kinship

The kinship system is *"a feature of Aboriginal social organisation and family relationships... It is a complex system that determines how people relate to each other and their roles, responsibilities and obligations in relation to one another, ceremonial business and land."*

Further strengthening the ties between the various Indigenous groups were 'skin' and 'moiety' systems, determining family relationships and other parts of social organisation, most importantly to whom an Indigenous person could be married.

Veronica Brodie tells us that *"there was kinship, bloodlines. My great-grandmother was born on the peninsula (Lefevre) and she went to live in the Coorong because there were ties through kinship. She made connections with Narungga, Pine Point, Point Pearce and the Riverland. The mark of my great-grandmother made it possible for all of us to have relations all over. I grew up Ngarrindjeri but my genealogy includes the Spenders, Adams, Wilkins, Camerons and my bloodline includes Kurna."*

For these reasons family relationships between the Port Adelaide/Yertabulti Kurna and their neighbours extended far beyond the Port Adelaide Enfield Council region and were not limited to birthplace or territory. As a result, the 'sense of place' for the Port Adelaide Aborigines, was not restricted to the Port River and its surrounds.

Transposition of Knowledge

The land was seen as a teaching tool to educate its people about spiritual ancestors, land management, social structures and family values. The *Tjilbruke* dreaming, for instance, a story relating to the Adelaide coastline, is 6,000 years old and is an extremely sacred story according to Kurna people.

"Destroying the Tjilbruke story is like knocking down the pyramids... it would be inconceivable, absolutely sacrilegious." (Lewis O'Brien, Elder)

To learn, to internalise and own knowledge, to discover, analyse and develop the skill of observation, took time but was imperative for the survival of the Indigenous people, their culture, language, rituals and spiritual connection.

Knowledge could not be gained by staying still. The land had to be 'walked' to learn. Walking the land from summer to winter camps, experiencing the physical elements of the environment along the way, walking the *Tjilbruke* trail,

navigating by the stars, listening to stories and songs, and tapping into the memory of the Elders and the earth, taught social order and the skills necessary to survive without destroying the ecology of the territory supporting the Port Adelaide/Yertabulti Kurna.

Protocols governing behaviour were passed on constantly in everyday activity and more formally during cultural ceremonies, rituals and meetings through the use of language and experience. For this reason, the revival and reclamation of Kurna language, particularly in educational establishments in and around the Port Adelaide region, is seen as integral to the healing of past hurts experienced by Indigenous people and helps reclaim culture and connection to 'country', family, spiritual ancestors and the 'Dreamtime'.

Significance of Birthplace

"To our people, land is the life force to be revered, maintained with sacred rituals and held in trust from one generation to the next."

The Port Adelaide/Yertabulti Kurna participants involved in this project know they are descendents of the original Kurna who lived on Lefevre Peninsula/Mudlangga, which had been provided for them by their spiritual ancestors. The Indigenous culture of the area was supported and determined by the river, estuary, wetlands and coastal system environments.

Veronica Brodie, born in 1941 at Point McLeay Mission/Raukkan, identifies a site in Glanville, near the Jervois Bridge, as the birthplace of her grandmother (Laura Spender) and great-grandmother (Lartelare) whilst her mother (Rebecca Harris) was born at the Glenelg/Pattawilya camp after the family was moved on.

Glanville is *".. like home to me and I can feel the pulses and the blood beats when I pass there. And I know that my old people were there one time. And I think.. through no fault of our own, but through some good luck from grandmother, that we were born into this area and that was her legacy to us. To leave that for us."*

Laura Glanville Spender was born in Port Adelaide at Glanville in 1876 at the old CSR site, demolished and now part of the Newport Quays Development. Lartelare was also born in a wurley on the Glanville site in 1851, she was a tribal sister to Ivaritji, a full-blooded Kurna woman born in Port Adelaide/Yertabulti in 1845.

Lewis O'Brien was born in 1930 at Point Pearce Mission, Yorke Peninsula. Josie Agius was born in 1934 in Wallaroo to parents who both originated from Point Pearce Mission. Both Lewis and Josie returned to the Port Adelaide/Yertabulti area at a young age because of their family connections to local Kurna through their great great-grandmother Kudnarto, a full-blooded Kurna woman originally from Crystal Brook. Familial ties to the Kurna people of 'the Port' extended beyond physical, social and administrative boundaries of the Port Adelaide Enfield region and for that reason, many descendents have moved back into the area.

Spiritual Connection

The spiritual connection to land was enriched by a number of 'dreaming' stories belonging to the Port Adelaide/Yertabulti Kurna people including:

- 'Tjilbruke' dreaming
- 'The Seven Sisters' dreaming
- 'The Red Kangaroo' dreaming
- 'Tidley the Frog' dreaming
- 'Dreamtime'
- Teaching of totem origins

Tjilbruke became the most widely known ancestral story due to Norman Tindale's work with Milerum (Clarence Long), a Ngarrindjeri man. The content of other 'dreaming' stories was lost as a result of the disruption to Indigenous culture on the Adelaide Plains.

The Elders today believe their ancestors connected with the spiritual realm through rituals, secret women's and men's business, walking the land and staying in balance with the physical environment.

The Kurna people from *"the very old tribe.."* believed that everything physical in their world contained an essence or spirit originating in the 'Dreamtime' and that each person descended from one of these spirits possessing some of its life force. The spirit they descended from was their totem.

"Totemism is a view of nature and life, of the universe and humans, which colours and influences the Aboriginal peoples social groupings and mythologies, inspires their rituals and links them to the past."

In the Port area, totems were often aligned with bird and sea life found in the river, the wetlands and along the coastline, such as pelicans, swans and other sea-faring animals. The Port River groups' totem was *Kudlyo*, the black swan. The Kurna groups today strongly encourage the revival of Indigenous culture and spiritual connection to ancestral spirits by identifying with a totem. For that reason, the protection of the Port River and its environs is of primary concern to the Kurna descendents that have returned to the area.

Particular Places of Kurna Cultural Significance

While Kurna people had occupied and modified locations throughout their territories, there is ample evidence (archaeological, archival and oral) to suggest that specific areas operated as key residential centres. The significance of the Reedbeds area (West Lakes/Witongga) for instance, had long been recognised and indeed was referred to as *"the principal centre of occupation for the local tribe"* based on the volume of artefactual material found in the area.

Sand dunes provided elevated areas overlooking the swamps throughout the River Torrens/Karrawirrapari outwash plain, a prime habitat for the many resources used by the Kurna. Gepps Cross and the 'inner range of sandhills' stretching between Dry Creek and Glenelg/Pattawilya (including West Lakes/Witongga) were

recorded as two of the “best collecting grounds” for stone artefacts.

More recent studies further highlighted the importance of the Port River estuary and environs in Kaurna life with large numbers of sites found along the coastal margins, principally throughout the lower outwash plains of Dry Creek, the Little Para and Gawler Rivers. The area was a rich food source along with the coastal wetlands.

Areas of particular note within the Port Adelaide Enfield Council region include:

- Gillman Dune: Now almost entirely levelled or developed, offered elevated locations extending well into the low lying, flood prone environments surrounding the southern edge of the estuary. The strategic importance of this feature is illustrated in the number of sites found along its length including camps that were maintained well into historic times in and around Port Adelaide/Yertabulti.
- Gepps Cross – Dry Creek area: The discovery of several skulls aligning the Kilburn dunes near Gepps Cross was reported in *The Adelaide Observer* 1/8/1868 with the article noting that the area was a well known ‘fighting ground’ and skeletons and implements had been found throughout the area on previous occasions.
- Rosewater – Queenstown area: A number of sites (burials and a ceremonial ground) have been recorded in the area aligning along the Rosewater dunes. A shallow waterhole located in the area had been used by Aboriginals “who were very numerous in the district” together with the local settlers and teamsters carting ore from Burra to Port Adelaide/Yertabulti. The locality of the waterhole was later called ‘Rosewater’ for its high quality water.

Sites of Aboriginal heritage have been defined in European documentation as one of eight types: burials, campsites, mounds, scarred trees, ceremonial grounds, isolated finds, water sources and events.

Evidence or records of sites is limited. Studies tend to be focused on the Port River estuary and few studies have been undertaken within the broader Port Adelaide Enfield Council area. Discovery of Aboriginal heritage sites tend to result from trenching, excavation or land disturbance as a consequence of development. Burial sites also tend to dominate the finds while other cultural material, such as stone artefacts or fauna material, may be overlooked.

The presence of burial grounds in the area is verified in an oral history from Veronica Brodie:

“There’s a burial ground just around the corner from my house at Largs Bay, on the southeast corner of Largs Bay Primary School, halfway between the school fence and the street... The big reserve opposite the naval base at Gawler Reach, just past the Birkenhead Bridge, is the site of the biggest Kaurna burial ground in the area. They put a reserve over the top of it – Birkenhead Reserve...”

Another burial ground was observed and recorded by Will

J Purvis, a colonist who lived in the Birkenhead area from the late 1840’s:

Portion of Lefevre’s Peninsula was used as a burial place. Its position was north of Fletchers Slip, now known as part of Sandwell, and near ‘the village’. This is now a portion of Birkenhead. This part of the district was then a succession of light sand dunes, and after a heavy southerly blow the light sand moved away in clouds towards Snowden’s Beach. These dunes extended to and through the village, as can be seen to this day by the different heights of the buildings, some of which rest on high piles. After a southern blow skulls and human bones were often exposed on the surface. (Sunday Mail 21/11/1936)

The locations of European recorded sites, as shown in Figure 3, are indicative only and in many instances relate to much larger areas used by the Kaurna groups before European settlement.

Extent of One Land

Participants of this Council project suggested that the European record of ‘significant Indigenous sites’ is a limited view of the Indigenous landscape.

Indigenous people were connected to ‘country’ through cultural, environmental and sensory experiences. These experiences were driven by connections with and belief in the spirit world and spiritual ancestors.

“According to Aboriginal belief, all life as it is today is part of one vast unchanging network of relationships, which can be traced to the Great Ancestors of the ‘Dreamtime’.”

Indigenous people did not measure time by past, present and future, they did not define territory with built forms, they did not believe in separation from ‘country’ and family, but believed that every living thing was created by spiritual ancestors and connected over time and space.

The Kaurna group of the Port Adelaide Enfield Council region viewed their world in this manner. Their life was sustained by the physical landscape and natural ecosystems found there. Their cultural practices and rituals, familial interrelationships and ‘dreaming’ stories, were grounded in the Port Adelaide/Yertabulti area, but at the same time reached out and connected to Indigenous groups south, north, east and west of the Adelaide Plains.

Post European Settlement

At the time the first official white settlers arrived at Port Adelaide/Yertabulti, there was a Kaurna camp on high ground near the future site of the Port Adelaide Post Office. An early *Advertiser* article reports that ‘King Rodney’ or *Parnatartja* (Ivaritji’s father), was the first Aboriginal person to be encountered by the Europeans when they arrived at Port Adelaide/Yertabulti.

Along with King Rodney, ‘King John’ (*Mullawirraburka*) and ‘Captain Jack’ (*Kadlitpinna*) were the leading men or ‘chiefs’ of the Adelaide tribe, the three men featuring prominently in early dealings between the new colonists and the Aboriginal people in the Port Adelaide/Yertabulti area.

The Kurna called the Europeans *pindemeyu*, meaning 'men from the grave'. They believed the newcomers were their own departed kin, restored to life. According to reports:

"When they [the Aborigines] first saw the whites they took them to be the souls of their own forefathers, who... had come back to see once more their native country."

Port Adelaide/Yertabulti was a popular camping place for the Kurna following European settlement as it afforded a respite from Adelaide. Ivaritji, known as 'Princess' Amelia Savage, the last surviving full-blooded Kurna woman who died in 1929, said in an interview with *The Advertiser*, "the tribe to which she belonged numbered thousands."

Decline of Kurna People in the Port Adelaide Enfield Area

Mortality rates amongst Indigenous people following European settlement of the Adelaide Plain rose dramatically:

"There is considerable evidence to suggest that the Kurna suffered a dramatic population decline both immediately before and immediately after white settlement. Sturt (1833), Angas(1947), Stirling (1911) and other writers confirm the occurrence of a smallpox epidemic which travelled down the Murrumbidgee and Murray River systems in the late 1820s and which Stirling traced to contaminated materials arriving on a ship in the colony of Sydney."

Missionaries who lived with the Kurna in Adelaide recorded a Kurna word for the disease, *nguya*, meaning pustule. The Kurna reported the disease came from the east reducing their numbers considerably with their only defence being a song, the *nguya palti*. Other causes of mortality amongst the Kurna included dysentery and venereal infections. Between 1843 and 1845, there were twice as many deaths as births amongst the Adelaide tribe. The diseases were particularly fatal to children and a number of early colonists highlighted the absence of children amongst the Kurna shortly after settlement.

Besides the loss of access to and availability of food and water, upon which the local Kurna survived, it is believed the discontinuation of people camping in the Buck's Flat and other areas of Port Adelaide/Yertabulti was due not only to the reclamation and selling off of land but also to the introduction of new legislation, the *Aborigines Act 1911*, which enabled the Chief Protector of Aborigines to declare any town or municipality prohibited areas for Aboriginal people.

The police were instructed by the Chief Protector of Aborigines to remove Aboriginal fringe-dwellers from Adelaide in January 1912 under authority of this Act.

Ration stations were established all over South Australia with the "small remnant of the Adelaide tribe" strongly encouraged to leave for the Willunga ration depot in 1858. Veronica Brodie's great-grandmother, Lartelare, resisted this move choosing to wander with her family between fringe camps at Glenelg/Pattawilya and Murray Bridge until her eventual settlement at Point McLeay Mission/Raukkan

where she died in 1916. Laura, Veronica's grandmother, also moved between fringe camps on the Adelaide plains resulting in the birth of her daughter Rebecca Spender, Veronica's mother, at the Glenelg/Pattawilya camp in 1896.

It is recorded that the final removal of Kurna people from the Port Adelaide/Yertabulti area was directly related to the 1911 Act:

".. suddenly they were gone. Hunted out. Hunted out after 1912. They didn't appear after that.."

Commercial development pursued by European settlers in the Port resulted in increased subdivisions and development of land. According to reports of the time, Aboriginal fringe-dwellers from Adelaide/Tandanya, Glenelg/Pattawilya and Port Adelaide/Yertabulti were arrested and sent to Milang and then onto Point McLeay Mission/Raukkan under police escort. They were warned that leaving the mission without permission of the superintendent would result in imprisonment for six months. This, it is claimed, signified the end of fringe-camps in Adelaide/Tandanya.

Continued restrictive and repressive legislation confined most Aboriginal people to missions and reserves and almost destroyed the connection 'the Port' Kurna had with the Lefevre Peninsula/Mudlangga.

Conclusion

The Kurna Elders and descendants who participated in the 2006 Council project returned to Port Adelaide/Yertabulti because their spiritual relationships to 'country' and social interrelationships with extended family are an integral part of who they are.

They are hopeful for the future of Indigenous people in the Port Adelaide Enfield Council region. They envisage a future where Indigenous history and remnants of culture, language and 'Dreaming' stories are protected, revived and celebrated.

While it is acknowledged that Port Adelaide is now a major focus for the land development industry, as supported by Government and private investment, it is hoped that the histories of the past, including Indigenous history, are reconciled with the aspirations of the present and the future so that all communities and people who call 'the Port' home, feel 'at home'.

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Special Tribute

It is with great admiration that the project team acknowledges the enormous contribution of Aunty Veronica Brodie. A direct descendent of Lartelare, Kurna woman from "*the old Kurna people*", Aunty Veronica dedicated her life to raising the awareness of Indigenous history and the association of her people with the Port Adelaide/Yertabulti area.

The project team is very grateful for the invaluable input Aunty Veronica provided and attributes the success of this project in large part to her willingness along with the willingness of the other Kurna Elders and participants to share their knowledge. It is with great sadness and respect that we acknowledge her passing.