



Minutes of Evidence Curriculum & TRP

Topic 2: *How the movement of people (rapid colonisation, pastoralists etc) impacted on Indigenous communities.*

Key theme(s): Dispossession

Additional theme(s): Ownership; tradition;

Victorian Curriculum link:

Causes of population movements and settlement patterns during this period and the significant changes to the way of life of groups of people ([VCHHK130](#))

Key social, cultural, economic, and political features of one society at the start of the period ([VCHHK133](#))

Intended and unintended causes and effects of contact and extension of settlement of European power(s), including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples ([VCHHK134](#))

If the above hyperlinks do not work in PDF – visit the curriculum via:

<http://tinyurl.com/j85w2pg>

Part 2: Environmental changes

The European settlement of the Port Phillip District brought widespread changes to environments within clan estates, changes that had devastating and lasting impacts on the Indigenous populations. The environmental impacts were felt on the flora and fauna of the area but, given the close connections between nature and humans in the Aboriginal world, the effects were felt as keenly by the Aborigines of the District. The environmental impacts were diverse and had a variety of causes, including:

- the introduction of sheep and cattle in grasslands, which heightened erosion and created more dust. The native animals of Australia do not have hard hooves, so the soils in most areas are more loosely consolidated. The constant trampling of sheep eventually eroded many land surfaces at an unprecedented rate (Bolton 1981);
- the hard hooves of introduced stock also compacted the soils in many areas. This inhibited the growth of native species of plants, particularly grasses, which had evolved to take advantage of the looser Australian soils;
- the introduction of non-native animals (referred to by scientists as 'exotic species') led in a number of cases to the diminishment of native vegetation and sometimes to local extinction of native animal species. Cats and foxes preyed on small native animals; rabbits destroyed pastures by both burrowing and eating out the plant species (Rolls 1969);
- the clearing of forests changed the face of the Port Phillip District. The demand for timber during the 1850s gold rush period—for buildings, for shoring up of mine shafts, as fuel to burn—led to the stripping away of a huge amount of mature vegetation across the District (Powell 1989). This ultimately led to increased erosion of soil, greater run-off of rainwater and degradation of water quality in streams. The clearing of forests also impacted on animal species, for which the forests were home;
- the increasing exclusion of Aborigines from their estates in the years following European settlement meant that they were no longer able to maintain their traditional ways. Their regular fire management of resources ceased and the vegetation in a number of areas began to change. In the absence of periodic burning, areas of grassland became scrubby (Kohen 1995; Laudine 2009).