



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 3: Impacts on the Indigenous population through direct action

Although the number of Aboriginal deaths through introduced disease was greater than the number through targeted violence by Europeans (Barwick 1971, 1998; Broome 2005), it should be recognized that slaying of Indigenous people did occur within the Port Phillip District on numerous occasions. The number of Aboriginal people killed in the ‘frontier’ period—prior to the gold rushes of the 1850s—is a matter of some uncertainty but could easily be 1000 for the District (Broome 2005). There are many documented cases of conflict

in the western district (Clark 1995; Critchett 1990) as well as Gippsland (Gardner 2001).

Kulin people, however, had been subjected to European depredations even before permanent settlement began in the District. From the first decade of the 19th century, European sealers were operating around the coast, from their bases on Bass Strait islands. Sealers were not beyond using violent means, but the interactions of these men with Kulin clans were aimed primarily at capturing Aboriginal women to take back to the islands. Seven Boon wurrung women and a couple of girls were taken in one incident in Port Phillip Bay in 1833 (Barwick 1998; Plomley 1987).

With increasing number of Europeans taking up land across Kulin estates, it became harder and harder for Aboriginal people to gain access to customary sites, in order to fulfill their ritual and spiritual obligations. In the vicinity of Melbourne, police were used to keep Aborigines from entering what had become private land (Barwick 1998). Exclusionist actions such as this struck at the heart of traditional Aboriginal culture.

Time and again from the late 1840s to the 1860s the remnants of Kulin clans sought to create permanent camps within areas that had meaning for them. In each case they were dispersed by government officials or by others fearful of a large congregation of Aborigines (Barwick 1998). William Thomas, the Assistant Protector of Aborigines for the Westernport District, rather than being allowed to protect the interests of his charges, was ordered to break up their camps, if the government deemed they were too close to the town.