In this contemporary era of Australian multiculturalism, the park caters for the cultural diversity of the population and is well-suited to promoting social cohesion within a conservation environment by providing facilities for mass gatherings, such as the Australia Day Sky Show, the Anzac\textsuperscript{27} Day memorial service, various summer concerts and plays and religious gatherings, often involving for large crowds. Long recognised as an icon to the people of Perth, the park is used for recreation and social interaction, as are many other parks throughout the world. What makes Kings Park unique is its size and location within the city, its history, commitment to conservation of the local flora and an emphasis on education.

Low (2005, pp. 195-205) explains how the cultural diversity of park visitors ‘can make or break’ an urban park. Although this is true, the primary concern of Kings Park is not so much to provide a site specifically for cultural diversity, but to promote the unique flora of the State in a ‘bush setting’ environment that is socially acceptable to all and to capitalise on the unique location of the park - its close proximity to the city. There is no specific focus on cultural diversity, or specific areas designed to attract any particular ethnic group. Rather, it is a demonstration of some of the vast diversity of the

\textsuperscript{27} Australian and New Zealand Army Corp (ANZAC).
native flora of Western Australia. This exposure to the native flora in a natural bush setting, coupled with magnificent river and city views, successfully caters for in excess of 6 million visits a year from people from many different cultures. While the colonial past of the park is obvious from the many statues and memorials, there is nowadays recognition of the traditional custodians of the land. This is achieved by the use of Aboriginal names for various areas, an Aboriginal art gallery and an organised Aboriginal cultural tour. Such emergent aspects of the park compliment the inculcation of an attitude of appreciation of the botanic diversity of the Western Australian environment with an effort to cultivate an appreciation of cultural diversity, specifically including Indigenous heritage, as well.

**Aboriginal displacement**

At the time of colonisation the land that is now known as Kings Park on Mount Eliza was originally land of the Wadjuk Aboriginal group of the Noongar people. In 1831, John Septimus Roe, the Surveyor General, declared that the area of Mount Eliza, known to the Wadjuk people as Mooro Katta, be kept for Public Purposes with an area at the foot of the ridge, Goonininup, to be set aside for ‘Native Tribes’ (Erickson 2009, pp. 15-17). This meant that the area now known as Kings Park would be set-aside for ‘Public Purposes’ for the convenience and pleasure of the colonisers.

This was a prelude to the future displacement of many Aboriginal people throughout the State and the restrictions that would be placed on them through various policies and legislation. According to the diary of George Moore, Captain James Stirling, the founder of Perth, in his first report on the local Aborigines in March 1827, recorded the prophetic statement, ‘They seemed angry at our invasion of their territory’ (Stannage 1979, pp. 27-28). Moore documented in his journal that many influential settlers showed contempt for the Aboriginal people. In an impassioned plea he observed:

> This people have been taken under the protection of the British nation, and claimed as its subjects – their country has been taken possession of – their existence has been overlooked – their rights have been unregarded – their claims have been unattended to – their lands have been sold by the British Government without

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28 17th June 2014. Kings Park and Botanic Garden has been ranked the best in Australia and the sixth best park in the world, according to the latest rankings from the TripAdvisor traveller’s choice awards, based on the opinions of travellers on the international review site. Kings Park annual survey showed 97-99% visitor satisfaction ratings.

29 Noongar – Spelling as per the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council 2009. It is a generic term for the indigenous people of the southwest of Western Australia.
reference to their existence. Should not some reparation be made? Should not some expense be incurred for their advancement in civilization, and for the gradual amelioration of this condition? And should not some care be taken to secure the purchase in the peaceful and quiet possession of this purchase? By whom should the burden of this be borne? By the few struggling settlers, by whose means the land is secured as an extension of the dominions of their country? Or by the British Nation, which has acquired so vast a territory by such bloodless conquest and upon such easy terms. (South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council, Host & Owen 2009, p. 96)

Although Moore uses the term ‘bloodless conquest’ there are a number of recorded incidents where members of local Aboriginal groups were killed as a consequence of hostile disputes over land occupation and stock losses. Of particular significance in Western Australian history is what is now referred to as the ‘Battle of Pinjarra.’ On the 27th of October 1834 a party including James Stirling, Surveyor General Septimus Roe, the Police Superintendent, five mounted police, and ten soldiers were sent on a punitive expedition to get retribution for the death of Private Nesbit of the 21st Regiment (Nairn 1976, pp. 7-8).

The massacre lasted nearly an hour before the lust for blood was appeased, and Stirling gave the order for the bugler to sound cease-fire. At least 30 natives [sic] many of them women and children, lay dead. Another 20 or 30 were wounded; many of whom died later, yet Stirling demanded still further punishment and prisoners were sought. The only prisoners available were the surviving women and children. Eight gins [women] were arrested still clinging to their dead husbands, and their children were arrested too. (Nairn 1976, p. 8)

**Mount Eliza (Mooro Katta), Aboriginal sacred site**

The original site of Kings Park on Mount Eliza (Mooro Katta) and the adjacent area of what is now the old Swan Brewery (Gooninup), was used in 1833 as a native depot and ration station with the aim of containing and segregating the Aboriginal people in the early days of colonial settlement. Although this use was discontinued in 1840, Aboriginal people continued to be contained by the State in various ways. In 1905 the containment was formalised by the passing of the Native Administration Act (WA) (Lewi 2005, p. 45).³⁰ This act was designed to ban local Noongar from the metropolitan area and was in use until 1954. One Noongar elder recounted:

You wasn’t allowed to camp around there at Kings Park by the river on your home grounds. Police would shift you even if you sat on their seats…they only wanted bridiahs (upper white class people) there…the old people used to talk about Kings Park, all along the river. But you wasn’t allowed to stop there. (Ansara 1989, p. 68)

³⁰ The ‘Native Administration Act’ was formerly the ‘Aborigines Act 1905 (WA)’
These attempts at racial segregation were characteristic of the displacement and consequent alienation of Aboriginals in the Perth area which continued throughout the twentieth century (Lewi 2005, p. 46).

The original old Swan Brewery site on the Swan River at the base of the escarpment of Kings Park was a place of special cultural significance to the local Noongar Aboriginal people. In the 1980s, and 1990s, the site was the centre of a bitterly fought heritage battle, involving long legal and historical disputes, public demonstrations and protests over its redevelopment. The claims for and against heritage significance were divided three-ways: firstly, Aboriginal protesters proposed the demolition of the buildings claiming the site had spiritual significance; secondly, the buildings were claimed, by the non-Aboriginal group, to have a significant European heritage, and thus should be conserved; and thirdly, real estate development companies called for a major redevelopment of the buildings and their use (Lewi 2005, p. 44).

The case is important in a number of ways in that it illustrates the conflicts that may arise when a ‘settler-colonial’ account recording the history of a place is challenged by Aboriginal beliefs. It was a prime example of ‘multiple dissonance’ (Tunbridge & Ashcroft 1996, p. 185 as cited by Lewi 2005 p. 44). The conflict began as early as 1833 only four years after the colony was founded. As mediation to compensate for the killing of Yagan, an Aboriginal resistance leader, the land just below Mount Eliza (Kings Park) was formally reserved and gazetted to the ‘service of the Native Tribes’ (Ansara 1989, p. 1). In Noongar cosmology, the site is associated with a mythical being called ‘Waugal.’31 The being had emerged from Mount Eliza and crawled its way to the sea, in turn creating the Swan River. Soon recognised by Europeans as valuable land with a fresh water spring, the local Aboriginal people were forced out of the area. In 1838 the Government sold the land for a steam mill and in 1879 a brewery was built. Legal documents make the point that it ‘was inconceivable that the traditional owners would have given their consent freely to the alienation of a site of such spiritual significance…(or to)… the construction of industrial buildings thereon…’ (Ansara 1989, p. 2).32

Noongar protests over the re-development of the Swan Brewery proposal continued for several years and often featured in the Western Australian press. For example a

31 Waugal – akin to the great Rainbow Serpent featured in Aboriginal dreamtime mythology. (Lewi H, 2005, p. 45)
32 Drawn from the report ‘Aboriginal usage of Kings Park’, 1987 W.A. Museum’s Aboriginal sites Department by anthropologist Liz Bloor.
feature article in *The West Australian* newspaper on the 6th July 1989 read ‘Never have we seen people, Aboriginal, white, of all social strata and of widely different political beliefs, as united as they are in their opposition to the plan to spend millions on refurbishing the old Swan Brewery.’ The site was considered to be sufficiently protected because of its status as parklands and did not require further endorsement by the Western Australian Aboriginal Heritage Act. The authority did, however, suggest a suitably worded plaque in the vicinity of a fresh water spring on the site to notify the public of ‘Aboriginal occupation and usage of this area’ (South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council, Host & Owen 2009, p. 231). This recommendation was considered to be totally inadequate. As a result of continuing Noongar protest, the Federal Government intervened in support of the Aboriginal claims taking control of the site and ruled that it was on crown land and therefore protected by the Federal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Act (1984) (Lewi 2005, p. 53).

However, in 1992 all heritage listings and proposals for demolition were defeated in the courts and the site was leased for development by the Multiplex Company (Lewi 2005, p. 54). Protests continued but by 1999 expressions of interest were sought for luxury apartments and retail outlets and restaurants; by 2001 the redevelopment was completed (Department of the Environment and Heritage 2004, p. 13). Lewi records that ‘Any previous intention of an Aboriginal cultural centre, art gallery or theatre, along with other requests by the Aboriginal community for an alcohol-free site were not enacted’ (Lewi 2005, p. 55). The Swan Brewery episode is an ‘example of the erasure of difficult and messy local significance and memory, in the face of an easier solution of market-driven renewal that aimed to create a far more typical international model of exclusive urban lifestyle’ (Lewi 2005, p. 56). It can be seen as an example of imposition of colonial power over indigenous culture and history.

**Reconciliation Action Plan**

In more recent times the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority (BGPA), a government instrumentality, has been committed to recognising Aboriginal cultural heritage and continuing connection to Kings Park. The BGPA has sought to develop a relationship with Aboriginal people, and in particular the Noongar people, in order to conserve and enhance the cultural heritage of lands under the governance of the authority. Their purpose is to develop awareness and respect for Aboriginal culture within the Perth community and among visitors to Kings Park (Botanic Gardens & Parks Authority
In 2009 the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority commenced a Reconciliation Action Plan that includes:

- Delivery of cultural awareness training of Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority staff by a local Noongar consultant.
- Naming of six new facilities (including car parks, roads and pavilions) in Kings Park and Botanic Garden with Noongar names.
- The establishment of a new Aboriginal Heritage Trail through the Western Australian Botanic Garden, ‘Boodja Gnaring’, including over 30 interpretive signs and a publication of a brochure to support and promote the trail.
- Development of a curriculum-based schools education program with a focus on the six seasons and Noongar connections with Kings Park and Botanic Garden with delivery involving local Noongar people.
- Development and implementation of an Aboriginal Recruitment and Retention strategy.

(Version 2013 - 2018, Botanic Gardens & Parks Authority 2013f, p. 4)

In the past consultation has been with an Indigenous Reference Group, Elders and representatives of local Noongar families. In the future, consultations will occur through the South West Land and Sea Council and the Wadjuk Working Party representing the registered native title claimant group over the Perth metropolitan area. Building a working relationship with the Aboriginal community is valuable to the authority, as it facilitates a collaborative approach to cultural and land use matters. As Western Australia’s top tourist destination, Kings Park and Botanic Garden reaches a large audience through these activities (Botanic Gardens & Parks Authority 2013f, p. 6).

The dispossession of local Aboriginal people in Kings Park and other parks of the same era must be viewed in the context of the period, circa 1829. Although concern for the natural environment has a long history (Lowenthal 2005), during early nineteenth century the concerns for colonial expansion and the rise of capitalism took precedence over concerns for the conservation of the natural environment. Therefore, setting aside the area of Kings Park was purely for the recreational use of colonial settlers. Serious consideration for conservation of the natural environment in the context of the area of Kings Park was not an issue at the time of the development of the park. Although the environmental movement had its roots in the nineteenth and early twentieth century writings of Thoreau, Muir and Pinchot it did not reach maturity until the 1960s and 1970s with the publication of *Silent Spring* (Carson 1962) and *The Limits to Growth* (Medows et al. 1972), a report for the Club of Rome. Also in 1972 the United Nations brought together governments from the developed world and newly decolonised states for its first conference on the environment (Brockington & West 2012, pp. 1-3).
During the early period of the park Jarrah trees (*Eucalyptus marginata*) were logged for commercial purposes and used in many of the early colonial buildings, a rifle range for the use of the military was also a feature (Erickson 2009, p. 28), and Veldt Grass (*Ehrharta erecta*) was sown as fodder for settlers’ livestock. The development of the park ‘as a place to be set aside for recreation and amusement’ (Erickson 2009, p. 31) of the settlers did, however, have serious consequences for the local indigenous people, as does the impact of many national parks around the world today, created in the name of conservation. It was an exclusion of local people who have traditionally relied on the environment in question for their livelihoods (Igoe 2002, p. 594). Their right to live on customary land was denied.

At the time of colonisation the culturally preconceived ideas of the settlers who came to the Swan River included the popular notion of racialism. A clear example of this was the prevailing attitude towards the Catholic Irish or ‘bogmen’ who were regarded as lower order human beings, but even lower on the scale of human ranking were the Australian Aborigines (Reynolds 1974, pp. 45-53; Stannage 1979, p. 27).

The number of Noongar people living in the region at the time of colonisation is uncertain; their roving habits in search of subsistence made any attempt at an accurate census impractical (Collard 2007, p. 8). Nevertheless, according to Francis Armstrong the Native Interpreter from 1829 to 1848, there were about 1600 ‘Natives’ [sic] of all ages in the areas of the Swan and Canning rivers, and approximately ‘350 between the coast and the mountains’ (cited by Collard 2007, pp. 10-11). Their presence in the region was of little significance to the colonisers, and there was no attempt to negotiate a treaty with the Noongar people to occupy their country. As Morgan (2015, p. 15) says ‘After all, Western Australia was a settler colony, implicitly founded on the supplanting of indigenous peoples on the land and waterways.’

However, nowadays, in acknowledgement of the survival and spiritual lives of the traditional custodians of the area, the Noongar people, a section of the main walkway through the botanic garden has been named the Boodja Gnarning walk. A placard welcoming visitors to Noongar country is at the beginning of the walk stating, ‘Wanju Wanju Noongar Boodja’, which when translated means ‘Welcome to Noongar country’. The placard continues; ‘Welcome and experience Australia’s oldest living culture first-hand and discover traditional foods, tools, medicine and shelter of the Noongar people

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33 Erickson is referring to the Colonial Office Dispatch of 1831, Acc 36 vol 19 folio 65.
34 The west coast and the Darling Range east of Perth.
from the south-west of Western Australia.’ Further placed at a strategic point along the walkway, there is a placard that identifies the spiritual beliefs of the Noongar about the area. On a hill at the meeting of the Swan and Canning rivers the placard explains how the Noongar people viewed the landscape.

For the Noongars, the landscape was created by ‘deities’ who brought order to the land and provided food, shelter and the laws for the people. The meeting of the Swan and Canning Rivers that forms this vast expanse of water in front of you symbolises the strength of unity in Noongar people.

Imagine the Noongar people gathered on this hill, Kaarta Garup, overlooking the water…watching…curious…as boats of the early European settlers arrived…

(Botanic Gardens & Parks Authority 2016)

Other placards show the practical use of some of various plants situated along the walk. Crushed leaves from the ‘Wonnil’ or Peppermint tree (Agonis flexuosa) are described as being as used as an antiseptic and the saplings used as spear shafts and digging sticks. The Boronia (Boronia megastigma), which has a distinctive scent, was used during ceremonies, celebrations and special occasions. ‘Mungitch’, Banksia’s (Banksia sp.) when burning, the cone made a perfect travelling candle when the Noongar moved from camp to camp, and the nectar rich flowers when mixed with water made a pleasant drink. The distinctive Balga (Xanthorea sp.) is described as a plant that supplied many resources to the Noongar people. The flowering stems provided edible nectar and structural support for shelters. Dry stems were used for fire sticks. Resin exuding from the trunk when mixed with charcoal and kangaroo dung made a strong adhesive for binding tool components together. Thatch for shelters and bedding was harvested from the fronds, the base of which was edible. At the viewing point near the Old Swan Brewery another placard displays the story of the Aboriginal dreamtime serpent Waugal:

Dreaming serpent, the Waugal - In the Aboriginal Dreamtime, the Waugal meandered through the landscape, creating rivers, waterways and lakes on its journey from the hills to the ocean. This rainbow serpent is an ancestral ‘deity’ of the Noongar community. The Darling Escarpment, on the distant horizon, is said to represent the body of Waugal. The Waugal was seen by certain tribal elders who spoke to the Dreamtime Being. Local Noongars today follow the path of rivers, teaching the young the Dreaming story of how the Waugal created the Swan River (Botanic Gardens & Parks Authority 2016).
Foresight of early planners

The early period of settlement did, however, demonstrate the foresight (in the context of providing for the British settlers) of the civic planners of the period. A plaque near the statue of John Forrest (1847-1918), the first president of Kings Park, states that his vision for the park was to enable children 1000 years hence to see the country as it was when Captain James Stirling first landed.

Although there is no evidence that Forrest was aware, at the time, of any necessity to seriously consider environmental conservation to the extent that we do now in the twenty-first century, there was an awareness of the need of an area for social and recreational purposes for the citizens of the new colonial settlement. Under the influence of the ‘homeland’, the site of the park was initially designed to reflect images of mother England, to the extent that it was considered appropriate to introduce deer into the area. This did not eventuate and kangaroos were introduced instead, only to disappear after a short time (Erickson 2009, p. 11), no doubt killed by local dogs or hunted and eaten by the settlers.35

James Stirling and John Septimus Roe had the initial foresight to put aside the area of land for public use (Erickson 2009, pp. 43-44) until such time as funding became available for development. At the instigation of Governor Weld and Malcolm Fraser the area was formally recognised in the Government Gazette 1872 as a ‘Reserve for Public Park and Recreation.’36

As the development of the park progressed through the early years of colonial settlement, it was evident that attachment by the settler society to the roots of their British homeland was very strong, an experience similar to that of early seventeenth-century colonial America (Wulf 2012). Figure 5, presenting the view from Mount Eliza in 1905, shows strong allegiance to a traditional English garden, with formal beds of daisies and other unidentified flowers taking a prominent place (Seddon 1987).

35 Kangaroo meat is still sold for human consumption in Australian supermarkets and butchers shops.
36 Public park and recreation ground, Reserve 11A, amended Reserves Act 1994 to Reserve 1720, 400.6 hectares.
Figure 5 - View of Perth 1905, Anglicisation of the environment.

State library of Western Australia – 5155B obtained 2013.

The view from Mt Eliza, 1905 shows two dark figures, right foreground, with their backs to the camera; looking northeast towards the city across Perth Water. The difference in mood is that the foreground is an English garden with daisies and other flowers in formal beds; and the figures are schoolboys in knickerbockers and jackets with midshipmen's collars; the Anglicisation of the environment is thus complete. (Seddon 1987, p. 4 Figure 5)

Symbols of the empire were placed throughout the park and are still evident today. Strategically placed overlooking Fraser Avenue and what was once a colonial outpost is a statue of Queen Victoria (Figures 3,6,7), ‘endorsing Perth’s place and right to take its place in the pantheon of Imperial cities’ (Summers 2007, p. 202). Prominently displayed in the main visitor precinct other memorials are to the Tenth Light Horse Brigade, The ANZAC Bluff memorial and a statue of Lord John Forrest, the man credited with the formal creation of the park. Forrest was a man of significant influence in the State of Western Australia; he became Surveyor General in 1883, he was also a politician and the first president of the Kings Park governing body. His intention for Kings Park was to retain a mix of native vegetation and exotic plants according to the principles of a ‘Natural Garden’ (Erickson 2009, pp. 57-58).
Figure 6 - Queen Victoria statue 2015.

Photo courtesy Greg Acciaioli 2015