Kaurna Interpretive Sites

River Torrens Karrawirra Pari

Adelaide100
River—Coast—Hills | Walking Trail

The Kaurna had over millennia developed an intuitive sense of reading the landscape which in turn informed their cultural and ecological approach to managing Country.

Adelaide100® Vision and Project Management

WalkingSA

Adelaide100® Vision and Project Management

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Funded by Preventive Health SA
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Government of South Australia

Government of South Australia

Walking SA recognises the Kaurna people as the traditional owners of the land on which the different sections of the Adelaide100® trail traverses.

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Front cover image: Tarnta Kanya is the Red Kangaroo Dreaming Place of the Kaurna people. 'We, as Kaurna People, must walk on these places to maintain our cultural strength.' Kaurna Statement of Cultural Significance 1998.

Tirkama'dlu warra ingkarnima'dlu
ngadlu nakutha ngadluku taikurringka yarta
Uncle Lewis Yarlupurka O'Brien Kaurna Elder

If we can learn to listen and to hear each other's stories
we will see the importance of sharing this country
Uncle Lewis Yarlupurka O'Brien Kaurna Elder

The Adelaide100® is a loop walking trail of over 100km that takes in the coast,waterways and hills of the capital city of South Australia.

It can be started from any point along the circuit, and spans from the beautiful coastline, through the CBD and suburbs, and into the Adelaide Hills.

This booklet documents some Kaurna cultural heritage sites along the River Torrens Karrawirra Pari section of the Adelaide100® trail.

It is hoped that this information will be culturally inclusive and allow visitors to gain an insight into the rich history and heritage of the Kaurna people who are the traditional owners of the Adelaide Plains.

View Adelaide100® trail sections and download maps.

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Understanding Place

Connection to Country is the raison d'être for understanding and preserving Aboriginal cultural heritage and values.

It provides an alternative way of interpreting the physical and spatial world.

It is essential to recognise that Kaurna knowledge, cultural expression, and systems of meaning are filtered through a different cultural lens from that of European people.

'Sketches 1846' by G.F. Angas (1822-1886) Rex Nan Kivell Collection, NLA

Kaurna Cultural Heritage Significance

The Kaurna, over 40,000 years, developed a complex understanding of Country, which was central to their spiritual and cultural life, and their continued existence.

As part of the process of assessing and determining Kaurna cultural significance, this concept of Country is represented in:

- Places that are associated with a Creator Ancestor or dreaming story linked to a physical or topographical landscape feature.
- Places that have been used by Kaurna precontact and continued after colonisation, which reveal an aspect of Kaurna cultural practice.
- Places that are associated with Kaurna ceremonial rites, burial rites, rites of passage and cultural markers.
- Places associated with specific local environmental resources that the Kaurna used as part of their cultural practices, for making tools, or for domestic needs.
- Places that are associated with plants and animals for foodstuffs and medicinal use.
- Places that have retained their nomenclature and can still be identified.

'Warding off Spears' 1843
by W.A. Cawthorne, SLNSW.

'Resting Ngurro' 1844, by W.A Cawthorne (1825-1897) SLNSW

'A Mangrove Lagoon' c1840s by W.A. Cawthorne (1825-1897), SLNSW.

Key Kaurna Cultural Concepts

Kaurna Miyurna

The Kaurna numbered about 650 at the time of colonisation and were distinguished by their unique language, customs and beliefs. They operated within a social division of local clan groups and were responsible for a designated area of land, which was referred to as *pangkarra*. This custodianship with its cultural obligations was inherited through patrilineal descent. Learning about culture began in childhood and continued into adulthood, being recognised as the basis of an individual's authority. Totemic connections and kinship determined how relationships were to be conducted. Lore was central to Kaurna life and pivotal to Kaurna beliefs, conveyed through stories, ceremonies, and caring for Country.

Kaurna Dreaming

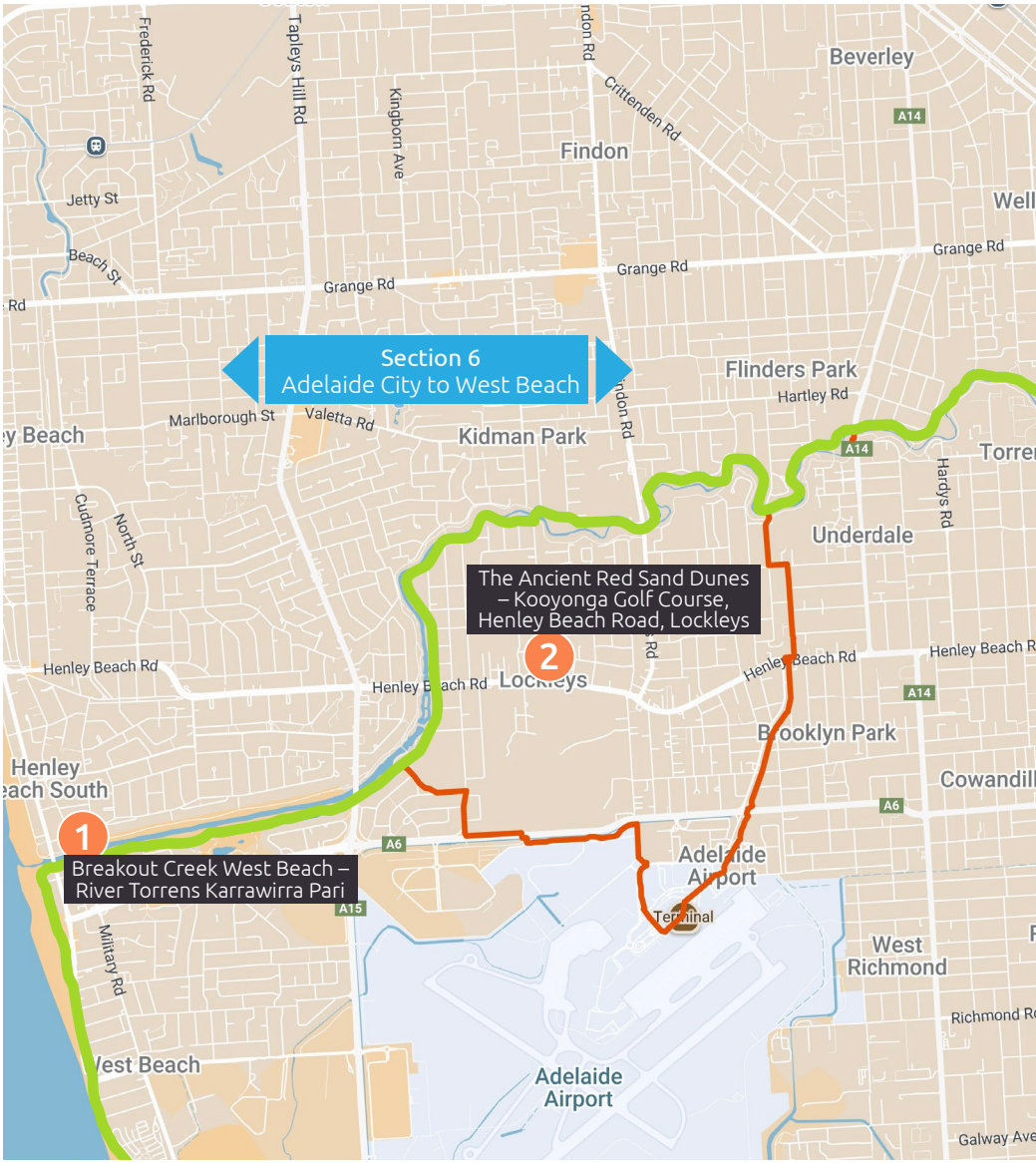
Munaintya is a complex set of beliefs that tells of creation, lore and spiritual relationships. In the beginning, there was only a flat, featureless plain. There were no animals, plants, birds, or any other life. Then the Creator Ancestors began to stir and emerged from deep in the earth and down from the sky to create all things. They took a variety of forms and made epic journeys, shaping the mountains, creating rivers, forests, rock formations, deserts and other natural features before resting at a place important to them. They created all the plants, animals and human beings, and all were to co-exist and live together according to lore. The Creator Ancestors performed ceremonies reflecting the significant events and feats they had taken part in and which linked the terrestrial and sky worlds. This critical knowledge was passed on in the form of songs, dances, stories, images, rituals, secret objects and the marking of sacred sites and walking on Country.

Songlines & Tracks

Kaurna men and women, upon completing initiation ceremonies, received a sacred name and a place that they were required to look after. Such sacred places were linked by lore to all the life and spirits within that place. These songlines brought the landscape into existence as the Kaurna imitated the movement of their ancestors and totems as they moved through Country. These traditional pathways linked seasonal changes to water catchments, fauna migration routes and places for gatherings and rituals.

Map of Kaurna Interpretive Sites

Map of the Kaurna Interpretive Sites located along the River Torrens Karrawirra Pari portion of the Adelaide 100® trail.



Section 5
Newton to Adelaide City
Karrauntungga – Hindmarsh Triangle – Adam Street Reserve
Tininyawardli 'The Colonial Store' & The Adelaide Golf Club
Pirltawardli 'Brush Tail Possum House' Native Location – Torrens Weir
Old Adelaide Gaol – 18 Gaol Road
A Kaurna Cultural Landscape – Montefiore Hill
Tarntanya Wama – Adelaide Oval
Tarnta Kanya – Festival Theatre
Government House & King William Street
Tarntanyangga – Victoria Square
Karrakuk – Hackney Ford – SA Company Mill
Botanic Park – Kaurna Camping Place – Karra (Ancient Red Gum)
Kaurna Burial Site – Tennyson Bridge – Walkerville Terrace
Ridleyton
Croydon
Brompton
Ovingham
Fitzroy
Thorngate
Medindie
Gardens
Thebarton
Hilton
Richmond
Marleston
Keswick
Ashford
Kurralta Park
Wayville
Parkside
Goodwood
Port Rd
North Terrace
Hindley St
Currie St
Grenfell St
Rundle St
Bartels Rd
Wakefield Rd
Grote St
Gouger St
Angas St
Carrington St
Halifax St
Gilles St
Sturt St
Gilbert St
South Tce
Victoria Dr
Barton Terrace W
Henley Beach Rd
Glover Ave
Anzac Hwy
Goodwood Rd
King William St
Peacock Rd
Hutt St
Hutt Rd
Unley Rd
Glen Osmond Rd
Harrow Rd
Leader St
Albert St
Map base ©2025 Google

1 Breakout Creek West Beach – River Torrens Karrawirra Pari

'Two Aboriginal Men' c1840s by W.A. Cawthorne (1825-1897), SLNSW.

'A Mangrove Lagoon' c1840s by W.A. Cawthorne (1825-1897), SLNSW.

The Kaurna believed that the Karrawirra Pari (Red Gum River) was a sacred river. It was the embodiment of the Rainbow Serpent, the most powerful of all the Creator Ancestors in the Dreaming. Before colonisation, the Karrawirra Pari meandered its way from the foothills to an area known as Witungga or the reedbeds. Of cultural significance, the Karrawirra Pari did not enter the sea but instead created a rich semi-aquatic environment bound by an ancient coastal dune system and interspersed with lagoons. This tidal estuary extended from the Port River in the north to the Patawalonga Creek in the south. The cultural landscape was part of a Dreaming cycle, and during spring and summer, large ceremonial gatherings took place at traditional camping sites along the coast. The area was rich in resources, featuring abundant fish, shellfish, nesting sea birds, waterfowl, and the black swan (*Cygnus atratus*). The Kaurna people also favoured the ancient dunes as burial sites. However, in the 19th century, European colonisation devastated this pristine ecological system. Colonists introduced flood mitigation and reengineered the Karrawirra Pari. In 1930, a massive drain was constructed, creating an artificial outlet that connected the River Torrens to Gulf St Vincent. As a result, the sacred Karrawirra Pari was changed forever.

Location on map

2 The Ancient Red Sand Dunes – Kooyonga Golf Course, Henley Beach Road, Lockleys

Album of Sketches, by W.A. Cawthorne (1825-1897), SLNSW.

The Kooyonga Golf Course at Lockleys contains rare remnant native vegetation from precolonial settlement. It is a significant Kaurna site concerning the once ancient red dunes of the Adelaide Plains. This area was once a forest of Native Pines (*Callitris preissii*), Peppermint Gums (Eucalyptus odorata), Black Tea Tree (*Melaleuca lanceolata*), and She-oaks (*Allocasuarina verticillata*). The Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo lived in the drooping she-oaks and was one of the totems of the Kaurna. The red dunes extended in an unbroken line from Queenstown to the Sturt River. There are many stories concerning the discovery of Aboriginal remains due to farming, sand mining and building activity, such as the development of the golf course in the 1920s. This development destroyed the remaining ancient dunes and replaced precious native vegetation with fairway greens. The ancient red dunes were highly valued by the Kaurna and were regarded as important for burial mounds, as they connected the terrestrial world to the sky world, where the soul moved from life to death to rebirth.

Location on map

3 Karrauntungga – Hindmarsh Triangle – Adam Street Reserve

'Two natives hunting' c1840s by W.A. Cawthorne (1825-1897), SLNSW.
The river red gum earns its common name from the colour of its wood. After rain or when cut, milled, and finished the wood has a deep rich, red hue.

Triangular Section 353 was the first private town laid out in the Province of South Australia. It was owned by Sir John Hindmarsh (1785-1860), the first Governor of South Australia. On 28 December 1836, Governor Hindmarsh had proudly proclaimed '*that Aborigines were equally entitled to the privileges of British Subjects*'. After a tumultuous fifteen months, the Governor was controversially recalled to England. Far from being protected, the Kaurna were dispossessed of their Country and subject to the imposition of British Law. By 1839 the Township of Hindmarsh was cleared of its ancient forests as it contained extensive deposits of gravel, sand, clay and limestone. This resulted in it becoming one of the earliest industrial areas of Adelaide with quarrying, brickmaking, sand carting and tanneries. Deep pits and pug holes destroyed the native landscape and the tanneries polluted the waters of the River Torrens. In stark contrast, a feature of precolonial Karrauntungga was the forest of river red gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*). These trees soared to heights of 45 metres and some were a 1000 years old. Kaurna warriors used the karra (red gum) to make a spear called a wirnta. This consisted of a single length of hardened wood with a point that was either barbed or featured serrated quartz tips. The sap from the karra was also used to heal cuts and wounds while the leaves had antiseptic qualities. The Kaurna carved shields, digging sticks and made funeral biers from the branches of the karra linking it to rituals of life and death and why Karrauntungga was an important burial place for the Kaurna.

Location on map

4 Old Adelaide Gaol – 18 Gaol Road

Note the gargoyle carved on either side of the stone entrance. They are reputed to depict Aboriginal faces.

In 1840, Governor George Gawler (1795-1869) called for tenders for the construction of a public gaol on the west parklands in the newly established city of Adelaide. Designed by colonial architect George Strickland Kingston (1805-1880), it was to replace the temporary stockade known as 'The Stone Jug' located in the grounds of Government House on North Terrace. The gaol was to be situated further west on the southern bank of the River Torrens/Karrawirra Pari. This was part of an ancient Kaurna campsite and track that ran along the river to the coast. The Adelaide Gaol was officially opened in 1841 and the ominous two-storey stone structure with its hanging tower cast a dark shadow across the landscape. Twenty-three Aboriginal men were executed in South Australia up until 1862. At least six Kaurna men were executed and buried in unmarked graves between the stone walls of the gaol. In the 20th century the gaol would gain notoriety for 'Aboriginal Deaths in Custody' – the last being Kingsley Richard Dixon. He was a 19 year old Kaurna man who died in tragic circumstances on the 9 July 1987. Six months later on 4 February 1988 the Adelaide Gaol was closed after 147 years of operation. For the Kaurna, the Adelaide Gaol would become a lasting symbol of colonial repression and institutionalisation.

Location on map

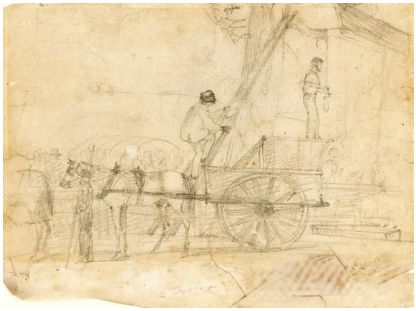
5 Pirltawardli 'Brush Tail Possum House' Native Location – Torrens Weir

'The School Room of the Aborigines at the Native Location', c1843 by W.A. Cawthorne (1825-1897), SLNSW.

In October 1838, two Lutheran missionaries named Christian Teichelmann and Clamor Schürmann of the Dresden Mission Society arrived in Adelaide. They immediately set about learning the local Kaurna language by living with the Kaurna at their camp at Pirltawardli referred to as the 'Native Location'. The Dresden Missionaries immersed themselves in Kaurna customs, language and cultural beliefs as part of the colonial authorities' plan to civilise the Kaurna people. The Dresden Missionaries established a school and housing at Pirltawardli which was a 14 acre site on the northern bank of the River Torrens. It stretched in an arc near the Torrens Weir and extended across the parklands. The missionaries taught a large number of Kaurna children and adults to read and write in their language and translated parts of the Bible into Kaurna. In 1840, Teichelmann and Schürmann published 'Outlines of a Grammar: Vocabulary and Phraseology of the Aboriginal Language of South Australia' which contained over 2,000 words of the Kaurna language and 200 translated sentences. This early documentation of the Kaurna language in the 19th century by Teichelmann and Schürmann laid the foundation for not only the revival of the Kaurna language in the 1990s but the reintroduction of Kaurna culture as part of public life in Adelaide.

Location on map

6 Tininyawardli 'The Colonial Store' & The Adelaide Golf Club



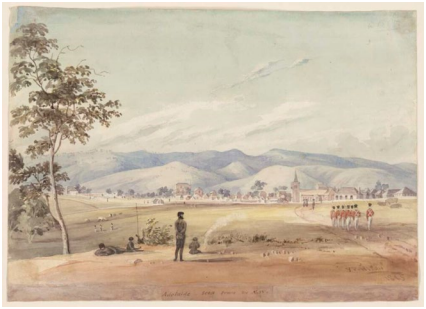
'Sketched From the Ground' c1839 by J.M. Skipper (1815-1883) SLSA B7797

The Colonial Store was situated on the slope of Montefiore Hill below Strangways Terrace in North Adelaide. It was one of the earliest buildings erected by the South Australian colonial authorities on Pirltawardli. The Colonial Store Manager, William Williams (1803-1858), had acquired some knowledge of the Kaurna language and acted as an intermediary between the Kaurna, troopers and settlers. In May 1839, two young Aboriginal men were executed in front of the Colonial Store for the murders of two British colonists. In separate incidents shepherds had been attacked and killed, one on the River Torrens near Paradise and the other near the Para River. The killings coincided with the first occupation of the surveyed country sections around Adelaide. They may have been provoked by settler incursions into Kaurna territory, exploitation of Aboriginal women, and declining food resources. As relations between parties deteriorated two Aboriginal men, who could not speak English, were arrested, tried and found guilty under British Law and executed:

"Yesterday morning being the time appointed for the execution of Warritya and Wangutya, who were condemned in the Supreme Court for the murder of William Duffell, and the latter for the murder of James Thompson, a scaffold was erected in front of the iron stores on the Park Lands in North Adelaide… the unfortunate men were led, or rather dragged to the scaffold and placed by the executioner on the fatal drop. Their countenances betrayed every symptom of terror."
South Australian Register, 1 June 1839.

Location on map

7 A Kaurna Cultural Landscape – Montefiore Hill



'Adelaide from the North' c1845, by F.R. Nixon (1817-1860) NLA NK232

Montefiore Hill as depicted by Colonel Light on his original 1837 'Plan of Adelaide' was part of the North Adelaide plateau which offered distant views across north, south, east and west of Adelaide. The Adelaide Plains were criss-crossed with the Dreaming tracks of ancestral spirits, but only fragments of this rich cultural understanding remain. Before colonisation, this elevated site commanded a spectacular view of the Mt Lofty Ranges and the Kaurna ancestral being, Nganu. This giant from the east was slain in a battle and where he fell his spine created the mountains and the great plain to the west. His two ears became Mount Lofty and Mount Bonython. The Kaurna perceived specific qualities in Country as part of interpreting cultural lore and understanding obligations. This lore was influenced by a complex relationship with the sky world which was reached from certain landforms. From these sites young men might be spirited by 'clever men' as part of their initiation ceremonies and attainment of knowledge. But this view of the world could not survive the onslaught of colonisation. The British Empire's legacy of slavery and Aboriginal dispossession would collide head on in the establishment of South Australia. Indeed, Montefiore Hill was named after South Australian Colonizing Commissioner Jacob Montefiore (1801–1895). He was the eldest son of Isaac Montefiore, a prominent British merchant and sugar planter of Barbados and a slave-owner. The Montefiores, like many other slave-owning families became investors in South Australia.

Location on map

8 Tarntanya Wama – Adelaide Oval

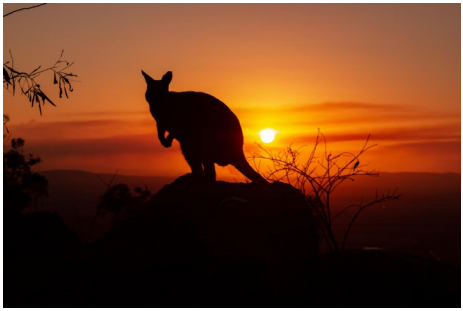
'Kuri Dance' c1844 by G.F. Angas (1822-1883), South Australia Illustrated, London, 1847.

The word for Adelaide is Tarntanya, and the word for plain is wama, which is now used for Adelaide Oval. Before colonisation, this was a Kaurna ceremonial site below Montefiore Hill and adjacent to the River Torrens/ Karrawirra Pari. It was of particular significance to the Kaurna as a significant camping ground and gathering place. It was not subject to flooding as it was higher than the river. The Kaurna celebrated life and lore through ceremony, songs, dances and games. Parntu was played with a possum skin ball, very much like football. Young men would stand in a line with one of the men kicking the parntu high into the air while the rest of the men would try to catch it and kick it back again into the air, the object being to keep it in the air as long as possible. Tarntanya Wama was also part of an important Dreaming track and ancient trade route that was thousands of years old. The Kaurna orientated themselves to Country by the Southern Cross constellation, and as such, the ancient track ran on a north-to-south axis and crossed the river via the 'old Ford' on the Karrawirra Pari. An early settler to Adelaide in 1837 was witness to a dramatic performance of the Kuri dance at Tarntanya wama against the backdrop of a full moon:

"We sat down on the grass beside them, while the men, decked with emu feathers and kangaroo bones, and their bodies ornamented with alternate stripes of chalk and red ochre, executed a sort of dance. They threw themselves into attitudes which we thought impossible at the same time uttering fearful yells and screams."
The Diaries and Letters of Mary Thomas, Adelaide, 1837.

Location on map

9 Tarnta Kanya – Festival Theatre



Tarnta Kanya is the Red Kangaroo Dreaming Place of the Kaurna people. 'We, as Kaurna People, must walk on these places to maintain our cultural strength.' Kaurna Statement of Cultural Significance 1998.

For the Kaurna, The Dreaming or Munaintya translates as a complex set of beliefs that tell of creation, lore, and spiritual relationships and refers to a time when the world was created and came into existence. In the beginning, there was only a flat, featureless plain. Then, the Creator Ancestors began to stir and emerged from deep in the earth and down from the sky to create all things. They took a variety of forms and made epic journeys, shaping the mountains, creating rivers, forests, deserts and other natural features before resting at a place important to them. Tarnta, the Creator Ancestor, flew through the sky and passed through the underworld, avoiding unfavourable places until he arrived at a most beautiful site known as Tarntanya. This place was located on the south bank of the Karrawirra Pari, where there was an ancient stone ridge that ran from east to west like the river. At a magnificent rocky outcrop, Tarnta created tattooing and other secret sacred rituals and handed down the lore to the Kaurna. He then turned himself into a Giant Red Kangaroo and ascended to the sky world. The rock became Tarnta Kanya or Red Kangaroo Rock.

Location on map

10 Government House & King William Street

'Vice Regal Residence' Second Government House, North Terrace and King William Street, Adelaide, Lithograph c1870s

The story of the Kaurna Nation is a remarkable story of survival given the extraordinary impact of British colonisation on Kaurna Country from 1836. Reconstructing precolonial landscapes is essential in understanding what shaped Kaurna cultural beliefs and practices. It is also a common theme in colonisation that institutions representing the judicial, military, economic and cultural power of the colonisers were often located on sacred sites. Within weeks of arriving in December 1836 and announcing the existence of the Province of South Australia, Governor Sir John Hindmarsh (1785-1860) erected a Vice Regal residence known as 'Government Hut' across what is now King William Street. Following Hindmarsh's recall and the subsequent appointment of Governor George Gawler (1869-1795), the new governor embarked on a massive building campaign in October 1838. This led to the establishment of the first stone quarry on the southern bank of the River Torrens/Karrawirra Pari below North Terrace at what is now Festival Theatre. This massive swath of sandstone was part of the North Terrace escarpment that ran from the Railway Station to the Botanic Gardens. Stone from this ridge was used to construct a new Government House, the Adelaide Gaol, Trinity Church and later Old Parliament House - all cornerstones of British culture. This single act led to the wholesale destruction of one of the Kaurna's most important sacred sites - Tarnta Kanya, the magnificent Red Kangaroo Rock.

Location on map

11 Tarntanyangga – Victoria Square

'Kuree' c1840 by W.A. Cawthorne(1825-1897), FL20196044, SLNSW
"Of the many corroborees played in the vicinity of Adelaide, when the annual meeting of the different tribes takes place, none, in point of dramatic effect and uniqueness, equals the Kuri, as it is not to be seen every day."

The Tarntanya clan (Red Kangaroo Dreaming) of the Kaurna people gathered at this significant location, Tarntanyangga. This place's central position and its unique configuration along north-south and east-west axes on a plateau are integral to Kaurna Dreaming. For thousands of years, cultural knowledge and understanding were shared here through songs, dances, stories, rituals, and the marking of sacred sites. Kaurna songlines were deeply ingrained in the memory of this place, with lore being passed down as a sacred trust from one generation to another. Tarntanyangga is of special significance and power for the Kaurna, as long before colonisation in the 19th century, it was where the Kaurna conducted conferences on important matters. The Kaurna were respected for their intimate knowledge and their understanding of the movement of stars and heavenly bodies, and the cycles of life and death. It was not by chance that Colonel William Light (1786-1839), South Australia's first Surveyor-General, selected this site for the City of Adelaide. An astute observer of other cultures, Light noted the movement of the Kaurna people across Country and so laid out Adelaide on either side of the River Torrens/Karrawirra Pari, north and south. Light carefully located the centre of colonial power for the new city-state south of the Karrawirra Pari in Victoria Square. Light's original design for this place was two rectangular forms intersected only by an east-west road replicating the Karrawirra Pari.

Location on map

12 Botanic Park – Kaurna Camping Place – Karra (Ancient Red Gum)

'Adelaide, a tribe of natives on the banks of the River Torrens 1850' by Alexander Schramm (1814-1864) 143355 NLA

This area of the parklands was a camping ground for the Kaurna as it was situated alongside the Karrawirra Pari amid an ancient forest of River Red Gums. The Karra trees were used by the Kaurna for shelters, for implement-making and as cultural markers. Close by, remains one of two ancient River Red Gums in the park that predate colonisation in 1836. The survival of these trees can be attributed to the first Director of the Adelaide Botanic Gardens, George William Francis (1800-1865), who decided to retain specimens of the original native vegetation. The southern bank of the Karrawirra Pari was favoured by the Kaurna as a ceremonial and burial ground and was used until the late 1850s. This was because the area still existed in its natural state with an abundance of food and plant resources to sustain traditional Kaurna practices, and it was also part of an ancient Dreaming track along the river. In 1849, the accomplished German artist, Alexander Schramm (1814-1864), arrived in South Australia from Berlin. He devoted his creativity to recording aspects of Kaurna cultural life, which were fast disappearing under the onslaught of colonialism. His poignant '*Adelaide, a tribe of natives on the banks of the River Torrens 1850*' is an intimate portrayal of the Kaurna camping in this area amongst their beloved red gums and reflecting the tragedy of their plight. The Kaurna, by this time, were seen as a nuisance to the gentrification of the City of Adelaide.

Location on map

13 Karrakuk – Hackney Ford – SA Company Mill

'Adelaide, a tribe of natives on the banks of the River Torrens, Hackney Bridge 1850' by Alexander Schramm (1814-1864)

Karraku (ochre) was extracted and used by the Kaurna for millennia. Ochre was a sign of all that was sacred, of all that connected the Kaurna to Country and was handed down by the Ancestors. It was an important part of traditional lore and was necessary for ceremony. It was mixed with water, blood, the fat of emu, possum, goanna and sometimes orchid oil to form a fixative so that the pigment could be painted on rock, weapons, ceremonial objects and skin. Hackney, on the Karrawirra Pari, was a significant source of red and white ochre and was close to the Kaurna camp in Botanic Park. The old Ford at Hackney was part of this Aboriginal landscape. Crossings over rivers were significant for Aboriginal people. They were cultural markers for tracks and were near camps and burial places. This was the case at Hackney, where an ochre pit was located. The availability of natural resources was also an important consideration in the establishment of the Province of South Australia in 1836. A major investor in the colony was the South Australia Company, headed by G.F. Angas (1789-1879). The Company was granted Section 256, Hackney, Hundred of Adelaide, in 1838, where they established the SA Company Farm in 1839, and the SA Company Mill above the old Hackney ford in 1842 and 'ochre pit'. The ready supply of water, timber and clay was used in brickmaking and in building the mill, which was powered by a Watts steam engine. Within a few years, the landscape was unrecognisable and the Dreaming track of the Kaurna was destroyed.

Location on map

14 Kaurna Burial Site – Tennyson Bridge – Walkerville Terrace

'Native Inquest', c1840s by W.A. Cawthorne (1825-1897), FL 15891697 SLNSW

At the corner of Stephens Terrace and Tenth Avenue, St Peters, near the Tennyson Bridge was an important Kaurna burial ground. It was one of the oldest Kaurna burial grounds in Adelaide. The Kaurna were bound by lore to bury their dead on Country. They believed that after death, the soul would leave and then later reunite with the person's body. If remains were disturbed or removed, the soul could not find its way back to the body, causing much angst in the sky world. The place of a burial was critically important for the Kaurna because a person had to be buried on Country:

"The Adelaide tribe also had a burying ground on the south side of the banks of the Torrens, near Walkerville. Walter Mitchell remembers that some 50 years ago, the blacks used to bury their dead on this spot, which he believes was the property of the South Australian Company. The bodies were put in shallow graves, and various ceremonies were performed by the tribe. These ceremonies were of a most sacred nature, and no white man was allowed to witness them. The blacks subsequently visited the graves and lit fires, which were kept burning for weeks. A large number of blacks were buried at this place."
The Advertiser, 6 July 1902, Adelaide

In the late 1920s, with the development of a petrol service station and subdivision for housing, this ancient burial site was destroyed, and the skeletal remains of some of the 'old people' were removed to the South Australian Museum for investigation.

Location on map

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ngadlu nakutha ngadluku taikurringka yarta
Uncle Lewis Yarlupurka O'Brien Kaurna Elder

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