

National Trust of Australia (Vic) Classification Report June 2015

Sunbury Rings Cultural Landscape



Background

The preparation of this classification makes particular reference to David Frankel, 'Earth Rings at Sunbury, Victoria', *Archeol Oceania*, 17, 1982, and the *City of Hume: Heritage Study of the Former Shire of Bulla District*, 1998 (David Moloney and Vicki Johnson), and the PSP1075 *Lancefield Road Post-Contact Heritage Assessment*, 2014 (Context).

It should be noted that in the 1998 Moloney and Johnson study a substantially larger cultural landscape, that included Jacksons Creek south as well as north of Sunbury, was identified as being of national heritage significance. This classification only relates to the northern part of this landscape from *Rupertswood* in the south to *Emu Bottom* in the north.

The classification work has also been informed by consultation with the Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri Tribe Land and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council. A stakeholder facilitation day was convened by National Trust in March 2015 at Emu Bottom homestead attended by Wurundjeri elders and staff, together with Friends of Emu Bottom Wetlands, Hume City Council, Melbourne Water and the MPA. The draft classification document was subsequently referred to Wurundjeri for comment. It was confirmed 27 April 2015 that they support the NTAV classification.

The Sunbury Rings Cultural Landscape contains a number of heritage elements that have discrete designations or registrations. The purpose of the classification is to recognise that the significance of the landscape as a broad-acre cultural entity rather than a collection of individually disparate elements.

Existing heritage designations

Earth Rings

- Ring AA H0200, AAV 7822-0092
- Ring G H0201, AAV 7822-0098
- Ring N H0202, AAV 7822-099

Emu Bottom- H053, VHR H274

Rupertswood- H045, VHR H275

Canon Gully- H0366, VHR Inventory H7822-2291

Jacksons Creek Railway Bridge- VHR1692

Environmental Overlays- ESO10

All these sites are protected independently under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act*, *Heritage Act*, and *Planning & Environment Act*. There is no heritage protection for the overall landscape.

1. Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The *Sunbury Rings Cultural Landscape* (SRCL) is a shared cultural landscape associated with, and providing strong evidence of, Aboriginal settlement and land use, and the first settlement of Port Phillip by Europeans in the 1830s. It is a place of living cultural heritage and ongoing significance for the Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri Tribe Land and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council.

The SRCL is a valley formed by Jacksons Creek with a steep eastern escarpment and gentler western escarpment. The range of volcanic hills and sedimentary slopes that run north-south to the west of the SRCL helped develop the large alluvial plains on the west bank of Jacksons Creek.¹ These rich alluvial flats contributed to making Jacksons Creek an important source of food for both Aboriginal people and European settlers. The eastern bank connects to large basalt plains that run to Emu Creek. The steep embankment has been formed by Jacksons Creek cutting deeply into the basalt and is the dominating topographical feature of the area (Plates 1-4).

¹ David Moloney and Vicki Johnson, *Hume: Hume Heritage Study of the Former Shire of Bulla District*, 1998, CL1-2.



Plate 1. Jacksons Creek valley facing south-east from western escarpment



Plate 2. Jacksons Creek valley facing east from western escarpment



Plate 3. Jacksons Creek valley facing north-east from western escarpment



Plate 4. Jackson Creek valley from facing east from Emu Bottom Wetland (photo credit: Bob Padula)

The landscape contains three Aboriginal earthen rings on the western slopes. It is likely that the SRCL was used as an Aboriginal gathering place and these three extremely rare earth rings (*Sunbury Rings*) are evidence of Aboriginal land use. The rings are owned and managed by the Wurundjeri Tribe Land and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council.

The northern boundary of the landscape is bounded by Emu Bottom Homestead, settled by Europeans in the 1830s. The Emu Bottom Wetlands on the valley floor south of Emu Bottom connects to agricultural land owned and managed by the Silesian Order, who own Rupertswood Mansion at the southern end of the landscape.

The natural landscape features provided appeal as a place of recreation and beauty for Melbournians in the nineteenth century. The *Jacksons Creek Railway Bridge*, built during the construction of the railway is a major landscape feature. Jacksons Creek has been used by Europeans since their settlement as a place of gathering including large volunteer militia encampments in the 1860s and the Eucharistic Festivals 1930-1980 at *Rupertswood*, all taking place along Jacksons Creek.

The landscape includes remnant grassy woodland and riparian woodland vegetation communities. The escarpment is dotted with large River Red Gum and Yellow Box trees which are likely to pre-date European settlement and provide a significant contribution to the otherwise treeless landscape. Historically, the vegetation would have been dominated by native grasses and herbaceous species, and these persist to varying degrees where the land has not been tilled. The vegetation and creek provide potential habitat for a suite of threatened species including Swift Parrot and Growling Grass Frog which are both nationally-listed.

How is it significant?

This landscape is of Aboriginal heritage significance, historical, aesthetic and archaeological importance to Victoria.

Why is it significant?

Sunbury Rings Cultural Landscape is historically significant because of its role as a key place of interaction between people and the land over thousands of years. Indigenous land use is preserved in the landscape as is some of the oldest pastoral use of the land by settlers at *Emu Bottom*. The landscape testifies to the changes that have taken place in Victoria since settlement. Read as a whole the landscape presents a clear historical narrative of the history of Aboriginal land use and European settlement of the greater Melbourne region.

The *Sunbury Rings* are three of eight such rings in Victoria (two others are also located in the Sunbury area and other examples are less intact) making them extremely rare. The landscape of Jacksons Creek contributed to the use of the land by Aboriginal people. The alluvial flats and basalt plains made it an important source of food as well as providing water. The Rings are best understood as being part of the broader landscape rather than

individual or isolated elements. The view lines and space around them play a part in understanding their context and use.

Some of the assets that made Jacksons Creek so valuable to the Traditional Owners of the area also made it valuable to the European settlers who arrived on the *Enterprize* in 1835. George Evans and William Jackson were the first settlers to find the Sunbury area and Jacksons Creek particularly appealing. Evans' homestead, *Emu Bottom*, built in 1836 is considered to be one of the oldest homestead in Victoria and Jacksons squat later became the site of *Rupertswood*. The movement of the Clarke family into Sunbury in 1850 had a major impact on the landscape and the growth of the region. Clarke's huge pastoral holdings included Jacksons Creek to the north of Sunbury and the Clarke family had significant impact on the use of the valley.

The landscape is aesthetically significant for its landscape character and as a rare example of an 1840s landscape nestled within an increasingly suburban context. The landscape has long been recognised as an exceptional aesthetic setting that drew people from Melbourne and the coast into inland Victoria, and features in 19th Century landscape paintings². The ridgelines and views of the valley are particularly important in maintaining this aesthetic value.

The landscape is of archaeological significance because of the presence of early settlement sites and established archaeological deposits. *Canon Gully* is registered in the Heritage Inventory for its established archaeological value and evidence of the volunteer militia camps of the 1860s but there are also other sites in the landscape that have potential to be archeologically significant to both Aboriginal cultural history and post-contact history.

2. Heritage Council Criteria

Several elements within the landscape are already included on the Victorian Heritage Register. What has not been acknowledged is the importance of the landscape as a whole and the relation that all of these elements have to Jacksons Creek and the geography of the valley.

Criterion A-Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history

The three earth rings that give the landscape its name are some of the most significant Aboriginal cultural sites in Victoria. The landscape is a place of living cultural heritage and ongoing significance for the Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri. The Rings are best understood as being part of the broader landscape of occupation and use rather than individual or isolated and unrelated elements.

Emu Bottom is a significant part of Victoria's cultural heritage, being one of the first homesteads built in the state and amongst the oldest surviving homesteads in Victoria. The

² Gritten, Henry C. 1866. *Jackson's Creek, Sunbury*

early settlement of the Jacksons Creek landscape by Europeans makes it one of the richest areas to understand this period of settlement. The landscape remains relatively intact from this early period and the qualities that attracted George Evans and William Jackson are still evident today.

Rupertswood as a key example of the era of immense wealth that Victoria experienced in the latter nineteenth century. The Clarke family built one of the largest mansions in Victoria with *Rupertswood* and the estate gives testament to an era of wealth and privilege. The Clarke family had a significant impact on the growth of Victoria as one of the biggest landowners in the colony. The Clarke fortune was made off the land, and the resulting landscape is testament to the importance of the land in building Victoria as an agricultural powerhouse. Various generations of Clarkes held court at *Rupertswood* and were prominent social and political figures in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Furthermore *Rupertswood* was the site of the cricket match that gave birth to the *Ashes* cricket trophy, an event vital to the sporting history of Australia.

These two sites are of considerable importance separately but their interplay with their surrounding landscape and relationship with one another satisfies this criteria in terms of the landscape's significance. The landscape shows the use and development of Jacksons Creek for Aboriginal ceremonial use and its subsequent pastoral land use from the earliest days of European settlement.

The landscape contains evidence of the use of the area as a food bowl for both Aboriginal people and European settlers. The occupation and use of the land over generations has left its mark on the landscape. While much of the natural vegetation and food that attracted Aboriginal use of the area disappeared under the hooves of European farm animals the Rings stand as a testament to the use of this landscape as a place of gathering and ritual. The pastoral use of the landscape that developed after settlement, and still continues, links the land to the provision of food and resources to Victoria's population. The landscape provides an important example of the development of land use in Victoria.

Criterion B- Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history

There are very few other landscapes in Victoria that contain such significant elements and are still relatively intact as a landscape. *Emu Bottom* and *Rupertswood* are two of the most significant European settlement sites in Victoria's cultural history and they are connected by a landscape that is intact and holds important environmental and aesthetic significance, as well as the significant *Sunbury Rings*. The indigenous values of the site are not repeated anywhere else in Victoria. While subdivision and development have impacted on some of this land, there is still a clear link between the two sites down the Jacksons Creek waterway and valley. The connection of two such important sites by a readable landscape is very rare. *Canon Gully* also adds a rare insight into the history of Victorian civic and military life and holds an important place in the landscape, with valuable archaeological potential. Intact and

readable earthen rings have not been found anywhere else in Victoria which makes this landscape a unique space in which to see the interaction between post-settlement and indigenous use of the land.

Criterion C- Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's cultural history

An area so rich in cultural history has the potential to yield significant insight into the history of Victoria. The land was used for some of the earliest farming undertaken in Victoria. Surveys into this use, including archaeological surveys, could potentially yield important information about early land use in Victoria and the lifestyle that early settlers led. Furthermore, indigenous land use in the area has been well established by the presence of the Sunbury Rings and there is potential for further evidence of indigenous use to be found in the area, particularly around the myrrnong flats. This potential to yield information has been recognised by *Ecology and Heritage Partners* in their 2014 report.³

Criterion G- Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons

The Wurundjeri, who are the Traditional Owners of the SRCL, have a strong cultural and spiritual association with the landscape and the Rings. The Wurundjeri Land Council now owns and actively manages the land on which the Rings are located. Whilst the connection with the landscape was impacted by European settlement there is a strong and enduring connection between the Traditional Owners and this significant landscape.

Criterion H- Special association with the life or works of a person, or groups of persons, of importance in Victoria's history

The landscape has a strong association with several prominent Victorians including George Evans and members of the Clarke family. Evans arrived in Port Phillip on the *Enterprize* in 1835 as part of the first group of settlers in Melbourne. Evans quickly explored land to the north of the port and settled in what is now Emu Bottom and was granted a squatters license over a significant parcel of land. Evans was one of the first settlers in Melbourne and Victoria and built one of the earliest European structures in Victoria. Evans' role in the early history of post-settlement Victoria and his association with the Emu Bottom area makes the landscape significant in the course of Victoria's history.

The Clarke family have played an important role in the development of agriculture in Sunbury and the civic life of Victoria. William Clarke ('Big' Clarke) was born in Tasmania in 1831 and emigrated to the fledgling colony of Victoria in 1850 and took ownership of 31, 317 acres of land in Sunbury and its surrounds with the purchase of a Special Survey. He chose the site of William Jacksons earlier settlement as the centre of his estate and in 1876 built the mansion *Rupertswood* for his son Rupert. 'Big Clarke' was the first Australian-born

³ Ecology and Heritage Partners, *Opportunities and Constraints Analysis (Cultural Heritage)*, Jacksons Creek Road Crossings for the North Link, 2014.

baronet and was an influential figure in the growth of Victoria as a colony. The SRCL has strong connections with Clarke and his family through their use of the land as the lynchpin in a pastoral empire, the establishment of *Rupertswood* mansion and the role of Sir Rupert and Lady Clarke in the use of Jacksons Creek as an important social and recreational space for visitors from Melbourne.

Additionally, after the Clarke family sold the estate it was purchased in 1922 by Hugh McKay. At the age of 18, McKay developed the Sunshine stripper harvester, a machine which revolutionized farming. Described as a "self-made man with a strong and independent character", McKay was lauded for his vision, energy and business success. His influence was also felt in industrial, economic and political areas, social welfare, local development, and overseas trade.

McKay's Sunshine Harvester Works was the largest industrial enterprise in Australia in the 1920s. It had a major impact on the social and economic development of Australia, and was a significant contributor to the mechanisation of agriculture around the world. (Source Museum Victoria website: <http://museumvictoria.com.au/sunshine/mckay.asp>)

The transfer of Rupertswood to McKay meant that the estate has been owned by two of the most significant figures in Victorian agricultural history.

3. Landscape Character and Ecology

The SRCL is characterised by the Jacksons Creek, its steep eastern escarpment, and the more undulating western escarpment. The range of volcanic hills and sedimentary slopes that run north-south to the west of the SRCL helped develop the large alluvial plains on the west bank of Jacksons Creek.⁴ These rich alluvial flats contributed to making Jacksons Creek an important source of food for both Aboriginal peoples and European settlers. The eastern bank connects to large basalt plains that run to Emu Creek. This embankment sees little flow from tributaries, which mostly run to Emu Creek from this plain. The steep embankment has been formed by Jacksons Creek cutting deeply into the basalt and is a key typographical feature of the area. This embankment has contributed to the long held aesthetic appeal of Jackson Creek and the SRCL.

The SRCL is home to ecological values listed as threatened at State level. The landscape is part of the Victorian volcanic plain which covers much of the south-west of Victoria.⁵ The grassland communities of the basalt plains are some of the most biodiverse vegetation communities in Victoria, but since European settlement over 98% of these grasslands have been lost, first due to agricultural expansion and now due to urbanisation. The vegetation communities present within the SRCL include modified patches of Escarpment Shrubland,

⁴ David Moloney and Vicki Johnson, *Hume: Hume Heritage Study of the Former Shire of Bulla District*, 1998, CL1-2.

⁵ Ecology and Heritage Partners, *Opportunities and Constraints Analysis (Cultural Heritage), Jacksons Creek Road Crossings Preliminary Ecological Assessment*, 2014, 7.

Riparian Woodland, Stream Bank Shrubland and Grassy Woodland well as habitat for the nationally-listed Growling Grass Frog (*Litoria raniformis*) and potential habitat for the nationally-listed Swift Parrot (*Lathamus discolor*). The Jacksons Creek valley is an important habitat corridor within the northern metropolitan region, due to the seasonal connectivity of the Jacksons Creek waterway and the permanent water of the larger billabongs on the Creek. The significance of this fauna corridor would have been best understood by the Traditional Owners of the region, and appreciated by the first European settlers to subsist in the area.

4. Comparisons

There are many significant latter nineteenth century homesteads on the Victorian Heritage Register that bear comparison with *Rupertswood* in particular. Like *Rupertswood*, most of these mansions and homesteads are registered for the building itself and, in some cases, the surrounding gardens and farmland. Very few are acknowledged in playing a role in the broader cultural landscape of the area. There are a few homesteads that have significant Aboriginal sites connected to them such as Mount Rothwell at the base of the You Yangs and Purumbete, near Camperdown.

There are several landscapes and reserves included on the Victorian Heritage Register that acknowledge significant historic places and natural environments. Although none hold the same elements and features as the Sunbury Rings Cultural Landscape, there are some important comparisons. For reserves and public open space to be included on the register as of state significance it has to be associated with a (or several) significant events, people or plantings. For example Castlemaine Diggings National Park is included as an outstanding example of relatively intact 1850s goldfields. The Eureka Historic Precinct is included because of its association with the Eureka Rebellion, an event of national significance. The *Sunbury Rings* is different from these landscapes but it fulfils the criteria for state level significance because of its association with the early settlement of Victoria through *Emu Bottom* and the development of Victoria as a colony through *Rupertswood*, evidence of continued land use through extensive remnant plantings, ruins and quarries and important Aboriginal sites.

There are many landscapes in Victoria that have been registered with the National Trust for their scenic and environmental values. Other valleys that can be compared with the Sunbury Rings Cultural Landscape include Wandiligong Valley and Buckland Valley in the Alpine Shire, Cotswold Valley in the Yarra Ranges Shire and the Mitta Mitta Valley in Towong Shire. Wandiligong Valley was one of the first landscapes registered and Buckland Valley is significant for the anti-Chinese riot that occurred there in 1857, which shows that landscapes are not only registered for their aesthetics values but also their historical associations. The aesthetic value of the 'valley' has been well established through these registrations and the Jacksons Creek valley is a particularly good example of this landscape

feature. The steep escarpment to the east of Jacksons Creek is the dominant landscape feature and provides an important view line for visitors and residents of the area.

Many landscapes in Victoria are protected under local planning schemes by the mechanism of the Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO). Evidence of pastoral land use has been protected by various SLO's including Corangamite SLO4, Southern Grampians SLO2 and Indigo Shire SLO2. These SLO's show that landscapes that contain evidence of pastoral use, such as the *SRCL*, have been recognised as significant and in need of planning protection, although none of the above contain the same level of cultural and historical significance as Jacksons Creek. Greater Geelong SLO14 protects the landscape from Clifton Springs to Port Arlington, including important views, pastoral land use and the Spray Farm Estate. Spray Farm is an architecturally and historically significant pastoral estate and mansion and is listed on the Victorian Heritage Register (H0898).

5. History

The *Sunbury Rings Cultural Landscape* includes several significant cultural sites and areas of environmental importance that are best understood as an entire landscape. Parts of this landscape are protected under current planning overlays but the landscape as a whole is not protected despite the important cultural and environmental values present, including Aboriginal cultural heritage, post-contact heritage, geology, biodiversity and important view lines.

The three earth rings that give the landscape its name are some of the most significant Aboriginal cultural sites in Victoria. The rings are situated in the landscape on land that was part of the *Rupertswood Estate* and subsequently the Salesian College. The site was handed over to the Traditional Owners several years ago and the Wurundjeri Land Council now manages the site. The three rings are situated on the upper slopes of the hills above Jacksons Creek. An archaeological survey was carried out in 1979 by David Frankel (Latrobe University) who identified the sites as Aboriginal but was unable to deliver a conclusion as to their use due to the lack of information about such sites in the Victorian region.⁶ While similar (bora) rings in NSW are known to have been used for rituals, especially in relation to initiation ceremonies, there is no available evidence in Victoria to prove this use. These rings (along with their counterparts in Western Sunbury) are five of very few similar sites in Victoria, making them highly significant. A similar site was reported in Colac in the 1960's but has since been lost. Frankel's conclusion from the available evidence was that it was likely that the rings served a similar purpose to the bora rings in NSW and were an important Aboriginal cultural site. The significance of this site has been recognised by the handover of the land and the inclusion of the site on the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register. The two other earth rings within the Sunbury area have already been impacted on or are under threat of development. These rings are best understood within the context of

⁶ David Frankel, "Earth Rings at Sunbury, Victoria," *Archeol Oceania*, 17, 1982, 83-89.

the landscape, including their spatial relationship to each other as well as the views from them. Their position on the top of the hill means they have a southerly view down the valley to *Rupertswood* and Jacksons Creek.

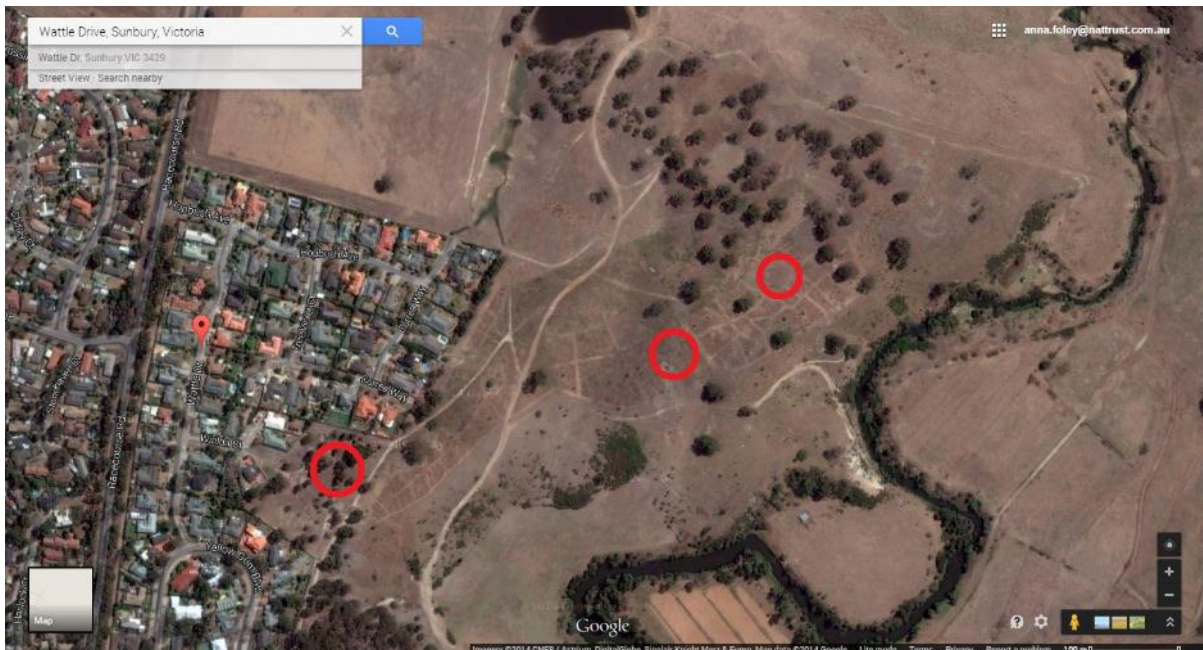


Plate 5. Aerial map showing approximate location of the three *Sunbury Rings*.

There is significant evidence of Aboriginal land use throughout the landscape. Before European settlement it is likely that the landscape was an important site for food and water. Ceremonial sites, like the rings, are normally located in areas that were able to host large groups of people. The *SRCL* was likely to have been an important area for the cultivation and collection of myrrnong, a staple of Aboriginal diet prior to European occupation. The presence of an area rich in myrrnong coupled with the existence of the rings point to a landscape that was most likely used as an important place for gatherings.⁷ The richness of the land around Jacksons Creek was well recognised by Aboriginal people and was cultivated purposefully to provide an ongoing source of food and water, particularly large game like kangaroos and emus. The large, open grasslands that provided food to the local people became prime land for the Europeans who saw these areas as perfect for pastoral use, particularly sheep runs.

Emu Bottom (H274) is considered one of, if not the oldest, surviving homesteads in Victoria with the original structure being built in 1836 by George Evans (1785-1876).⁸ Evans was one of the first settlers of Melbourne and was the first European to settle in the Sunbury area. He saw the land around Jacksons Creek as prime grazing land and proceeded to fundamentally change the landscape to suit his needs. The homestead Evans built has survived because it was built of brick, one of the only substantial buildings built by the early settlers. One of Evans' shipmates also settled around Jacksons Creek, William Jackson who

⁷ David Moloney and Vicki Johnson, *Hume Heritage Study*, CL1-5.

⁸ Victorian Heritage Database, http://vhd.heritage.vic.gov.au/vhd/heritagevic#detail_places:65951

gave his name to the waterway. The presence of these two men in the landscape means the *SRCL* is one of the most important areas in the first settlement of Port Phillip.⁹ This early settlement had a disastrous impact on the local Aboriginal population. The introduction of hoofed animals by Evans and Jackson and subsequent settlers destroyed the rich stocks of *myrrnong* in the area and with it removed the main source of food for the Aboriginal people of the land.¹⁰ Additionally to this there were early reports of clashes between Aboriginals and the settlers that resulted in Aboriginal people being pushed off their land.

The bounding site at the southern end of the landscape is *Rupertswood* (H275), a mansion completed in 1876 and one of the largest in Victoria. *Rupertswood* was built by Sir William Clarke (1831-1897) an important pastoralist and landowner and the first Australian born baronet. Clarke named the mansion after his son Rupert (1865-1925). The mansion is considered significant architecturally and provides an important landmark in the Sunbury area.¹¹ The spires of the mansion can be seen from the *SRCL* and serve as an important visual reminder of the history of the site. *Rupertswood* is a “unique representation of an extraordinary and, nowadays inconceivably, affluent way of life” and is well known as the birthplace of the *Ashes* cricket trophy.¹² As discussed above the Clarke family played a very significant role in the history of Victoria, particularly in regards to agriculture and pastoral land use.

Emu Bottom and *Rupertswood* are not just significant independently but form important markers in the landscape that demonstrate the narrative of post contact European settlement in the Sunbury area. These two properties are currently controlled by heritage overlays H053 (*Emu Bottom*) and H045 (*Rupertswood*).

The landscape also includes another heritage protected site, Canon Gully.¹³ Canon Gully is a remnant path on the eastern escarpment about two kilometres north of *Rupertswood*. This path was created in 1866 for visitors to Sunbury to watch the Easter gathering of the Volunteer Militia Encampments. The Victorian Volunteer Militia was established in 1854 in response to the outbreak of the Crimean War. The Volunteer Militia soon grew and became an important part of early Victorian community life with corps being set up throughout Victoria. Each year an Easter Encampment was held for these militia where the different groups would congregate to take part in a mock battle. This Encampment took place in Sunbury at the Clarke Estate five times between 1864 and 1877. Canon Gully was created as a spot at which the visitors and observers could sit and watch the mock battle from a safe distance with the Jacksons Creek valley acting as a natural amphitheatre. The first encampment at the property (yet to be named *Rupertswood* as this predates the mansion) attracted around 2 400 volunteers to participate in the battle and more than 10 000

⁹ Moloney and Johnson, *Hume Heritage Study*, CL1-4.

¹⁰ Moloney and Johnson, *Hume Heritage Study*, CL1-6.

¹¹ Victorian Heritage Database, http://vhd.heritage.vic.gov.au/vhd/heritagevic#detail_places;65926

¹² Australian Heritage Places Registry, <http://www.heritage.gov.au/cgi-bin/ahpi/record.pl?RNE5555>

¹³ Canon Gully is protected by a heritage overlay under Hume City Council (H0366) and is on the Victorian Heritage Register Inventory (H7822-2291).

spectators.¹⁴ The Sunbury Encampment became a favourite spot of many of the volunteers and visitors with the *Argus* reporting that it was “a far prettier and more advantageous spot than the ground selected for any of the previous annual encampments.”¹⁵ The landscape has remained relatively unchanged since this period and has avoided major subdivision and development. Many of the natural assets that attracted visitors to Jacksons Creek in the 1860’s are still present today.

The extension of the railway line to Sunbury in 1859 meant that it became one of the first places in inland Victoria accessible to those living in Melbourne. This accessibility made Sunbury, and Jacksons Creek in particular, a popular place for day trips and picnics. The Clarkes particularly encouraged this and opened their estate to Melbourne’s elite. This was aided by a railway station at *Rupertswood* itself. The Melbourne-Mount Alexander railway is one of the most significant pieces of engineering in Victoria. It was the first government railway and became known as “The Main Line” of the Victorian railway system. The railway was the greatest public work in Australia at that point in time and was a feat of great engineering.¹⁶ The *Jacksons Creek Railway Bridge* was the result of the railway and has become an important landscape feature of the SRCL. This railway bridge is listed on the Victorian Heritage Register (H1692) and is a reminder about the importance of the railways in the growth of Victoria.

A large portion of this landscape is covered by Schedule 10 to the Environmental Significance Overlay of Hume City Council (ESO10). This schedule classifies the area as a rural conservation area and recognises the significance of the biodiversity in the area. There is significant remnant native vegetation in the area including grasslands, eucalypts and the Jackson Creek waterway. The overlay demonstrates that the area is considered environmentally significant but it does not include recognition of the cultural values associated with the area or the importance of the landscape as a whole.

This landscape is not just a collection of several independently significant sites. The sites and environment work together to form an entire landscape that has significant historical, aesthetic and scientific values. The view lines of the landscape are important in preserving an understanding of the topography and use of land in Sunbury. Aesthetically the area has long been considered a beautiful area with the *Age* in 1886 describing it as “a lovely spot one of the most picturesque in to be seen in Australia.”¹⁷ While the landscape has changed around the valley since 1866, the qualities that led to such a description are still in place today. The history of the area as a place for recreation and enjoying natural beauty has become even more important as modern developments encroach upon the open space.

¹⁴ Moloney and Johnson, *Hume Heritage Study*, CL1-8-9.

¹⁵ The *Argus*, 28/3/1864

¹⁶ Moloney and Johnson, *Hume Heritage Study*, CL1-8.

¹⁷ The *Age* 26/3/1886

6. Condition/Intactness

The landscape is relatively intact though it has been impacted upon by subdivision and modern housing development. Up to the 1970s the landscape remained virtually as it was when Clarke took over the area from Evans. There were a few roads built, including Racecourse Road, but there were still very few dwellings north of Sunbury along this waterway. This changed gradually as more land was developed. In the last two decades development in Sunbury has grown substantially and the SRCL has not been spared development. Several developments now enter the landscape from Racecourse Road, and the houses at Yellow Gum Boulevard have a significant impact on the Rings themselves. Nevertheless the landscape is still remarkably intact taking into account the large-scale development of the area. The sight lines between the rings and the valley are maintained and the views to the escarpment have not been greatly infringed upon. The spires of *Rupertswood* are visible from much of the landscape. *Emu Bottom* has been isolated from the landscape by subdivision but still has an important relationship to Jacksons Creek.

There have been significant efforts over many years to rehabilitate the landscape in terms of natural resources. The *Friends of Emu Bottom Wetlands* community group has been vital in establishing the wetlands in the north of the landscape as an important space for native vegetation.

The Wurundjeri Land Council is managing part of the landscape and are attempting to control introduced species and reintroduce native flora and support native fauna habitat. Much of the landscape has been used by Salesian College as an agricultural school which has continued the European tradition of using the land for pastoral uses. The landscape is still very much a living place with communities who are continuing and establishing different traditions. Overall the landscape is very intact considering its proximity to a major satellite city of Melbourne and the various land uses that have existed over many centuries.

7. Threat

The SRCL is increasingly under threat from development and infrastructure. There is currently a development proposal to subdivide land along the western side of Racecourse Road adjacent to the existing general residential subdivision. This proposal comes to the edge of Wurundjeri-owned title and the site of the rings, but is currently being finessed by Villawood to ensure some buffer of public open space between the Wurundjeri-owned title and the proposed general residential subdivision. Additionally the Metropolitan Planning Authority is currently creating a Precinct Structure Plan (PSP) for the area as Sunbury is marked as a key urban growth area. Jacksons Creek is a major geographical feature that impacts upon this PSP. There is currently only one crossing of Jacksons Creek south of Salesian College and there is pressure for a new bridge to be built from just north of the *Sunbury Rings* on the western escarpment to the eastern escarpment in *Canon Gully*. Any bridge would have a severe impact on the cultural landscape values of the landscape. It is

essential that the cultural heritage values of the entire *SRCL* are recognised to make sure that any future development or infrastructure in the area is appropriate.

The *Opportunities and Constraints Analysis (Cultural Heritage), Jacksons Creek Road Crossings for the North Link Report* (Ecology and Heritage Partners, October 2014) notes that any bridge crossing over Jacksons Creek should avoid any proximity to the Rings as they “are considered to be amongst the most highly significant heritage places to the Wurundjeri.”¹⁸ A GTA Consultants report for the MPA identifies two possible bridge crossings of Jacksons Creek,¹⁹ both of which would have significant impacts on the cultural heritage value of the landscape. Ecology and Heritage Partners recommended that whichever option becomes preferred a Cultural Heritage Management Plan should be prepared due to the likelihood of significant Aboriginal Heritage existing in the area.²⁰

8. Extent of classification

In the preparation of this nomination particular reference has been made to the *City of Hume: Heritage Study of the Former Shire of Bulla District*, 1998 (David Moloney and Vicki Johnson) and the PSP1075 Lancefield Road Post-Contact Heritage Assessment, 2014 (Context). It should be noted that in the 1998 Moloney and Johnson study a larger cultural landscape that included Jacksons Creek south of Sunbury, was identified as being of national heritage significance.

This classification only relates to the northern part of this landscape from *Rupertswood* in the South to *Emu Bottom* in the north. The landscape is bounded by Racecourse Road to the west and the Jacksons Creek escarpment to the east.

¹⁸ Ecology and Heritage Partners, *Opportunities and Constraints Analysis (Cultural Heritage), Jacksons Creek Road Crossings for the North Link*, 2014, 5.

¹⁹ GTA Consultants, *Jacksons Creek Road Crossing, PSP 1075- Lancefield Road, option Assessment and Development*, 2014.

²⁰ Ecology and Heritage Partners, *Opportunities and Constraints Analysis (Cultural Heritage)*, 10.

Appendix A. Supporting figures.

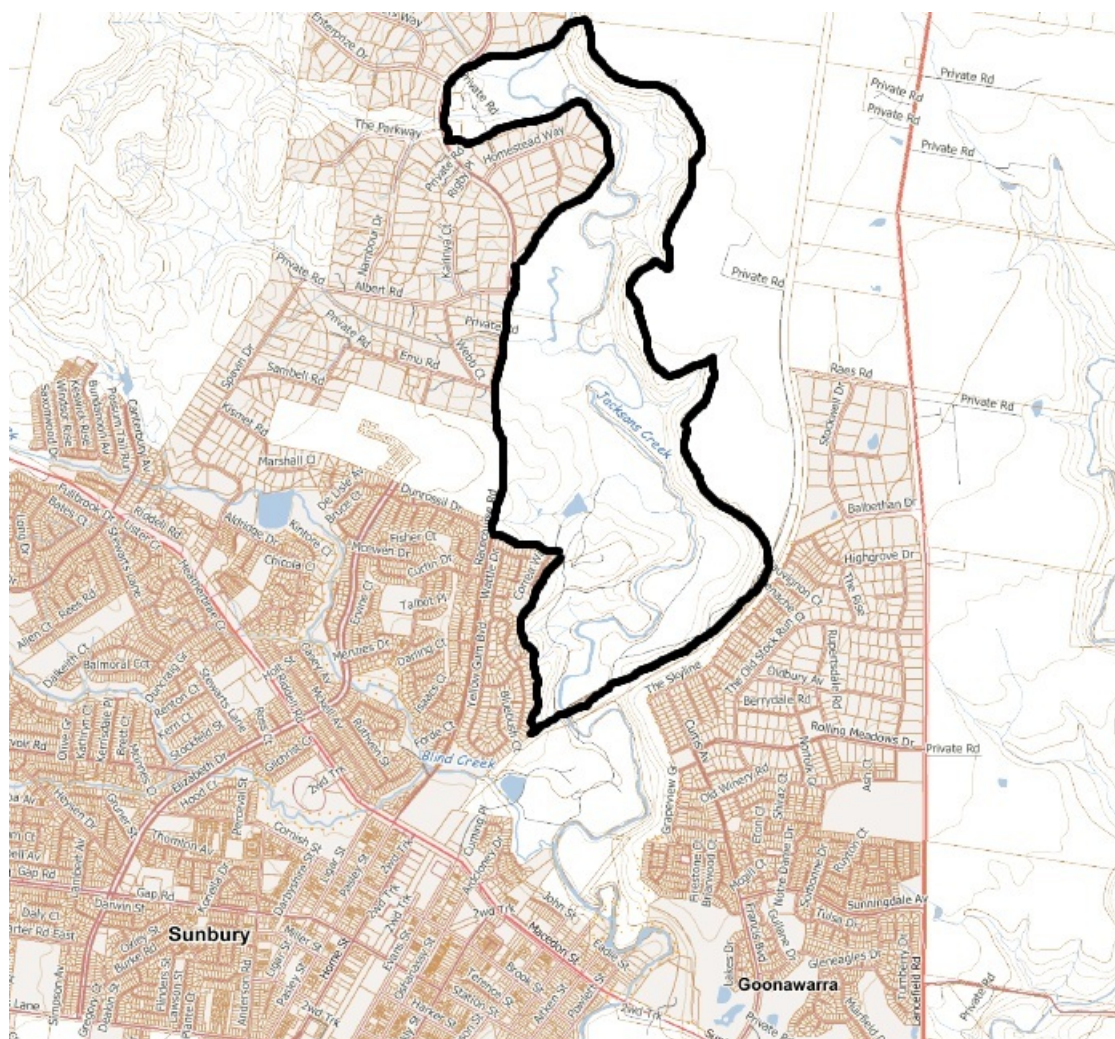


Plate A.1. Extent of proposed classification

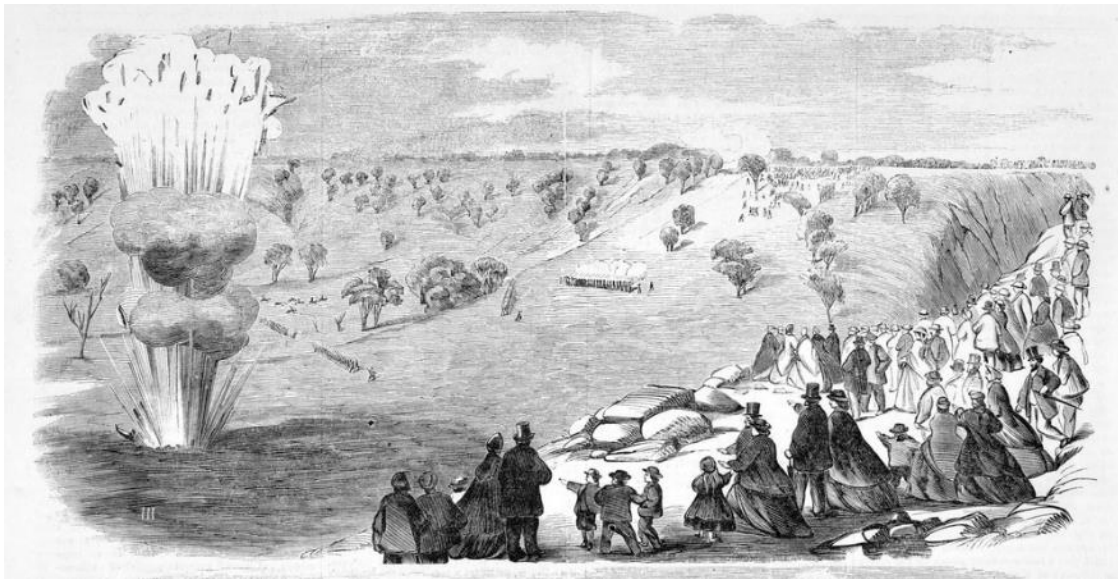


Plate A.2. The Volunteer Encampment 25 April 1866. SLV Image IAN24/04/66/8

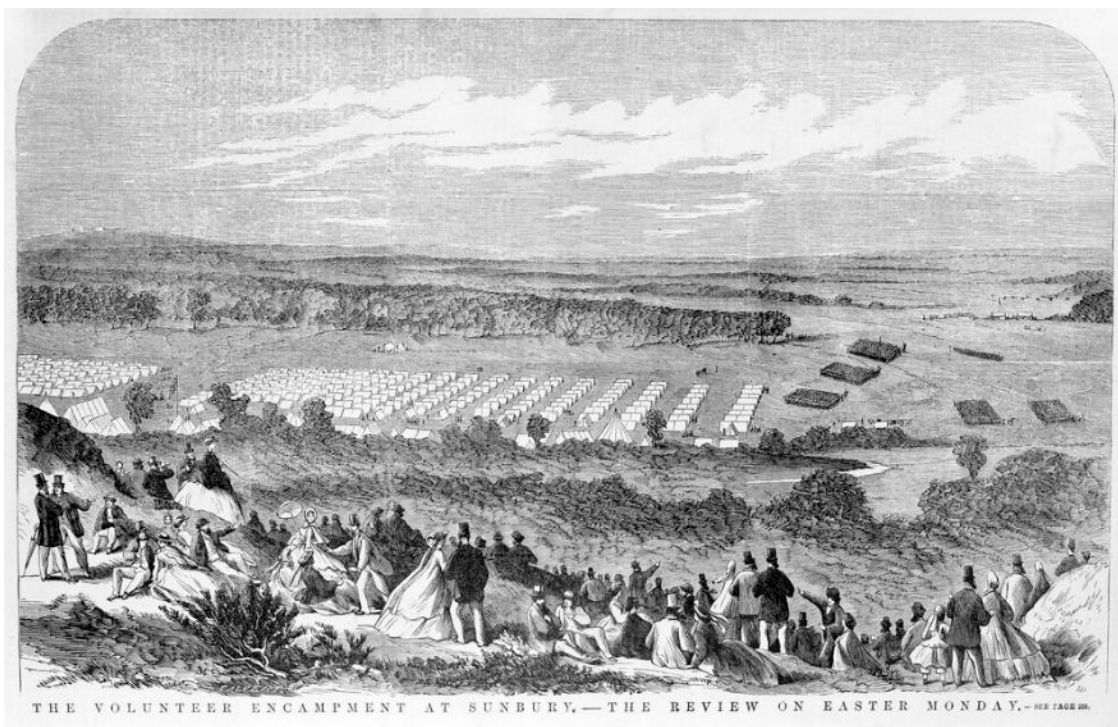


Plate A.3. The Volunteer Encampment 25 April 1866. SLV Image IMP25/04/66/257



Plate A.4a. Charles Nettleton, 1866 Volunteer encampment.SLV
<http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/67289>



Plate A.4b. Charles Nettleton, 1866 volunteer encampment. SLV
<http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/67389>



Plate A.6. March 2015. Looking from ring (fenced) south to Rupertswood.

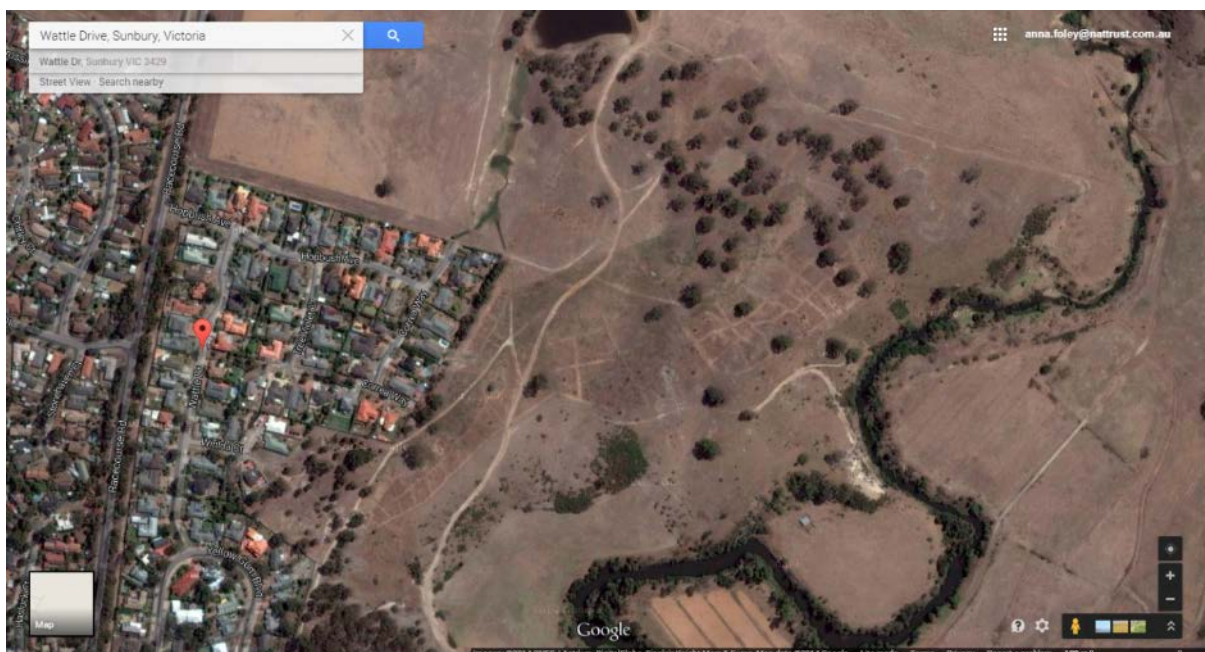


Plate A.7. Aerial photo (Google) showing area of rings, with Jacksons Creek (meandering, right). Farmed land on far right is owned by Salesians.

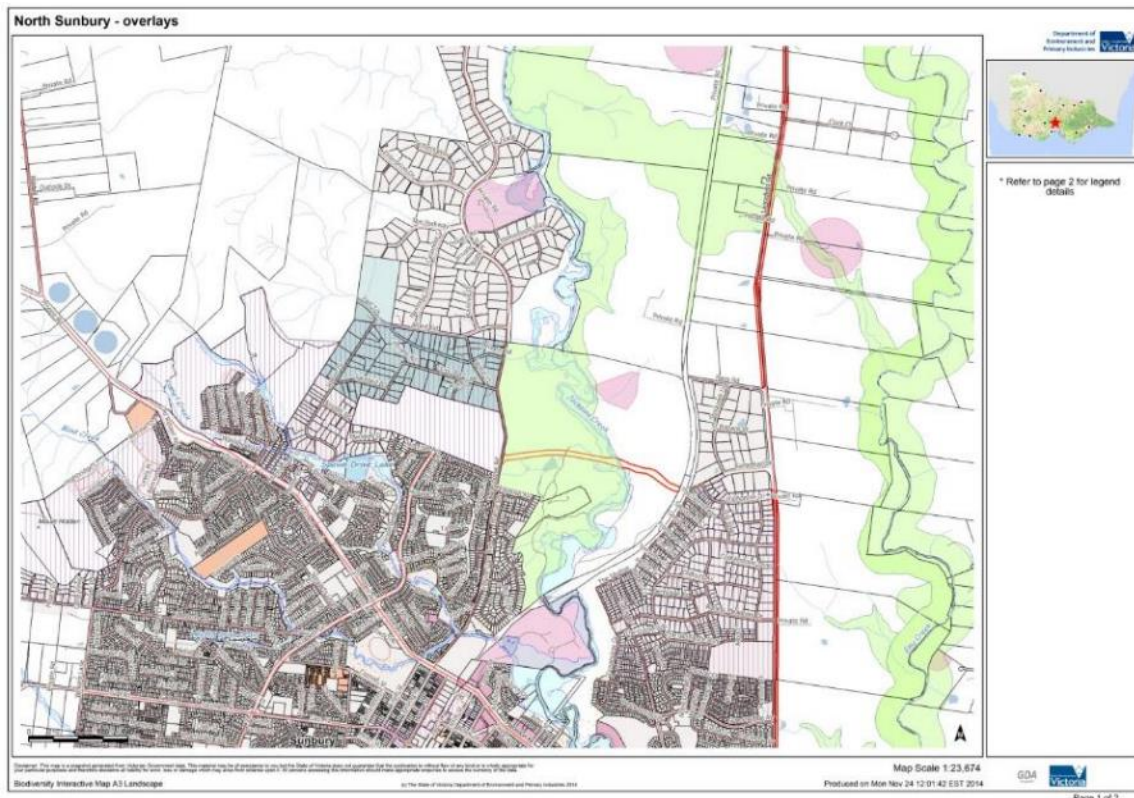


Plate A.8. Existing City of Hume planning overlays – Environmental Significance (green) and Heritage (pink)

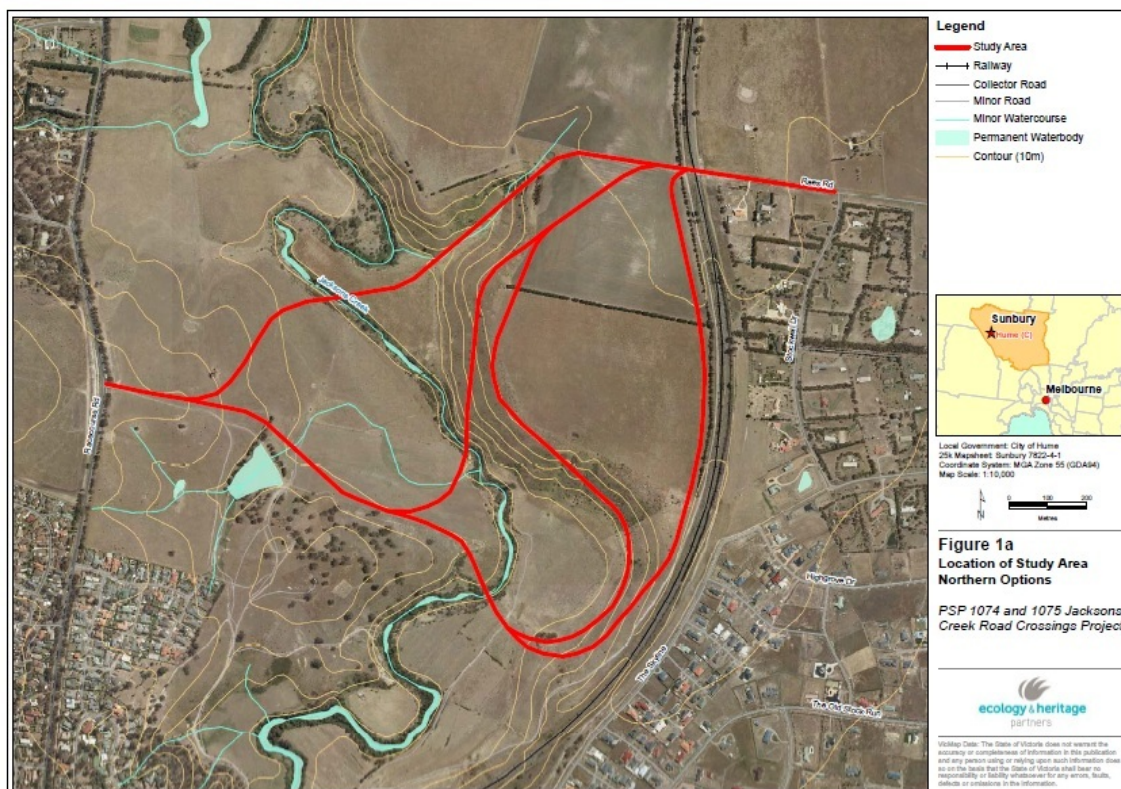


Plate A.9. Bridge alignment options (Precinct Structure Plans 1074 & 1075)