

Aboriginal heritage



Updated March 2012. On this website we use the spelling **Nyungah** in conformity with the agreement below. The spelling **Noongar** (from a different dialect) has been adopted by the WA Education Department and the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council. Other spellings include Nyungar, Nyoongah, Nyoongar, Noongah, Noonga, Nungar, Nunga, Nungga, Nyugah, Noogar, Yungar, and Yunga. The name is pronounced with a soft g as in hanger.

Registered Aboriginal Sites

According to the Department of Indigenous Affairs website, Subiaco has six *Registered Aboriginal Sites* including Shenton Park Lake and Jolimont Swamp (plus four *Other Heritage Places* including Rosalie Park). For comparison Bayswater has 7 (21), Belmont 23 (43), Cambridge 6 (6), Claremont 4 (2), Nedlands 3 (10), Perth 13 (16), Stirling 28 (23), Victoria Park 7 (3), and Vincent 9 (9). Some sites such as Kings Park are shared. The average of these ten areas is 11 (15), range 3-28 (2-43). Subiaco with 6 (4) is at the low end, ranking 3rd from bottom out of 10.

According to the Ecoscape (2003) report, the Nyungah Circle of Elders were consulted about the proposed changes at Mabel Talbot in November 2002. But few details are given and no names. At Lake Jualbup it was different, with full details being recorded in the agreement shown below.

NYUNGAH CIRCLE OF ELDERS
C/- P.O. DUNDURD WESTERN AUSTRALIA T. 08 9377 3550, F. 08 9377 3559
The last of the Nyungah Elders who are standing to Save and Protect our Ancestors Religion and Culture and Sacred Sites in the Land and not take money to sell our Sacredness

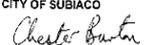

CITY OF SUBIACO

LAKE JUALBUP - SHENTON PARK AGREEMENT

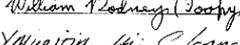
In a meeting held on Thursday, 29 March 2001, representatives of the City of Subiaco and the Nyungah Circle of Elders have discussed and agreed:

- That the perimeter wall be removed.
- That the edge of the lake to be natural slopes.
- That indigenous reeds, sedges and rushes be planted around the edge of the lake and island.
- That non-indigenous trees around the lake edge be progressively replaced for a more natural setting
- That indigenous trees and bushes (ie paperbark and sheoaks) be planted around the edge of the lake and on the island.
- That litter traps (gross pollutant traps) be installed to stop rubbish entering the lake
- That reeds, sedges and rushes be planted as a filter of pollutants from drains that flow directly into the lake.
- That the water, soil and surrounding lawn area (fertiliser use), continue to be monitored to check on the health of the lake.
- That Nyungah association with the lake and surrounding area is acknowledged
- That opportunities for input by Nyungah people on signs or artwork, and opportunities for aboriginal people to do work at the site (so the lake could later join up to an aboriginal heritage trail) be provided.
- The City, in acknowledging the Elders' concerns in retaining the integrity of the lake bed, will review those aspects of the concept plan proposals which involve disturbance of the lake bed, particularly driving poles into, or digging within the lake bed.


(AV) TONY COSTA, JP
MAYOR
CITY OF SUBIACO




William Rodney (Joopy)


Yvonne


Helen

The agreement with Nyungah Elders

Subiaco council approved the Management Plan for Lake Jualbup in July 2000. Eight months later the then mayor and CEO of Subiaco met with Nyungah Elders to seek approval for the plan. Approval was granted for the work set out in the agreement. In addition it was agreed that Nyungahs will have opportunities to work at the site, and that care will be taken not to disturb the lake bed. (The concern for not disturbing a bulldozed lake bed was not explained). But the agreement was made apparently without the knowledge of Subiaco council. Nor is it mentioned in the council minutes of 10 April 2001 when questions were asked about the lake. In reply the CEO mentioned the obligation to consult with the Aboriginal community, but (amazingly) said nothing about the agreement. Nor was the agreement mentioned in the minutes of 24 April, 8 May and 29 May 2001 despite more questions about the lake. In August 2009, the DIA ruled that repair of the path-way and perimeter wall was permitted. No time limit was set for the work described in the agreement

Before the signing, the DIA described Shenton Park Lake on its *Interim Register* as Site 3794 with open access and a status of "Insufficient Information." Ten weeks after the signing, Site 3794 was moved to the *Permanent Register* with open access, no restriction, and a new site type described as "Skeletal material / Burial" The latter information came from a 1985 DIA report by O'Connor et al on their survey of metro areas of Aboriginal significance. It states they learnt later that "*Aboriginal skeletal material had been found near there [Shenton Park Lake] in the 1920s, in*

an area where houses have since been built" (p.28). If this statement is true then, contrary to its new description, the lake reserve itself has no skeletal material and is not a burial site. The WA Museum (then the receiver of skeletal material unless it was reburied) has no record of such a find.

O'Connor R et al (1985). *Preliminary report on the survey of Aboriginal areas of significance in the Perth metropolitan and Murray River regions*. Dept of Indigenous Affairs, Perth WA. Updated but with no new information re Jualbup in O'Connor R et al (1989). *Report on an Investigation into Aboriginal significance of wetlands and rivers in the Perth-Bunbury region*. Water Resources Council, Leederville WA.



Connections with nature

Their sensitivity to nature led Nyungahs in the central wheatbelt to see the world in six seasons. Seasonal changes were portrayed in ritual, mime, and lore. Nyungahs lived in a world of meaning. They believed that ritual influenced their surroundings and helped to maintain the balance of nature. The land was not ripe for the taking; it was part of the Dreaming, which taught people how to coexist with nature. Some special places had spiritual powers able to renew resources on which the Nyungah depended. Such places were sacred.

This depiction of the six Nyungah seasons in the wheatbelt is from *Ballardong Noongar Budjar 'Healthy Country – Healthy People'* prepared c.2006 by the Ballardong NRM Working Group, Northam. Summer is at 1 o'clock, winter at 7 o'clock. Compare this with the neglected hard-to-read iron-stained Nyungah sign at Lake Jualbup. Surely with Nyungah help we can do better?

Importance of heritage to future generations

Although Lake Jualbup is only one of Subiaco's 30 public spaces (number is from the council website), Nyungah people recognise the importance of what we leave to future generations. In 1905 the surveyor employed by Subiaco council reported that *"Dyson's Swamp, by which name the reserve was originally known, has always been considered as a permanent water basin"* (see the original newspaper report at the bottom of page 1 of Our Proposals). So a full lake would seem to be the best way to perpetuate Nyungah traditions. Photo below shows a frosty lake soon after sunrise in June 2008.



But as noted earlier, the council is obliged to consult with **Nyungah Elders** before any work at Lake Jualbup can be carried out. In 2011 the Elders were duly consulted as part of the community consultation. The details remain confidential but in general the Elders saw water as important and they supported the 2001 Agreement. The council must also comply with the **Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972**, which requires DIA approval for any changes that may impact on Aboriginal heritage. For insight we can look at Hyde Park Lakes:

Aboriginal significance of Hyde Park Lakes

In the 1850s most of the Aborigines in Perth camped at the Third Swamp, now Hyde Park. In the *Journal and Proceedings of the Western Australian Historical Society* 1(1), 7-10, 1927, Perth-born James Kennedy (1848-1927) describes how, as a boy, he had *"seen 300 camped at the Third"*

Swamp at one time, waiting for a corroboree. There were tremendous paper bark trees there and the natives used to tear down slabs of bark to make their huts." It was a deep swamp, thickly grown with tea-trees, and was later a drover's camp and duck-shooting resort (George Seddon, *Sense of Place*, UWA Press 1972:231). The land was reserved in 1873 and gazetted as public gardens in 1897. A path around the lake was finished in 1899, followed by avenues of plane trees (planted in 1901) and a perimeter wall in 1937. A similar sequence of paths, trees and perimeter wall occurred at Shenton Park Lake, now Lake Jualbup, except it was used as Subiaco's rubbish tip for forty years starting in the 1910s, and conversion to a park occurred fifty years after Hyde Park's. Also the Aboriginal camps at Third Swamp were on a far greater scale than at Dyson's Swamp. Aborigines did camp at Dyson's Swamp, but a DIA survey found that "neither stories relating to the lake, nor names of people who camped there were available; nor was there any knowledge of the original dimensions of the camp" (O'Connor et al 1985). The Aboriginal significance of Hyde Park Lakes is clearly greater than that of Lake Jualbup. Now for the interesting bit.



Big trees along the northern wall of East Lake, Hyde Park, August 2010

Masterplan for the Restoration of Hyde Park

In 2009 the Town of Vincent adopted its *Masterplan for the Restoration of Hyde Park*. As required by the Act, their proposals have been approved by the Nyungah Elders and the DIA, with some later modifications to accommodate the high levels of acid sulphate soils and heavy metals that were subsequently found in the lake beds. Like our proposals for Lake Jualbup, theirs include retention of the European park design and putting in new walls. But unlike our proposals, theirs included excavating the lake bed to let groundwater inflow maintain water levels during summer, with some minor drying out expected. As at March 2012 the details are still being finalised.

So we might reasonably hope that, with appropriate consultation, we can obtain similar approvals for our more modest proposals at the less significant (but equally deserving) Lake Jualbup,



Lake Jualbup April 2011

For maps and a comparison of Hyde Park Lakes with Lake Jualbup, click on **Two Case Studies** on our home page and look at Case 2.