Rottnest Island/Wadjemup
Cultural Landscape Management Plan

The Rottnest Island/Wadjemup Cultural Landscape Management Plan is supported through funding from the Australian Government’s Your Community Heritage Program.

WARNING: Text and images in this plan may distress some people. Aboriginal people are warned that this document contains images of deceased people.
This Rottnest Island/Wadjemup Cultural Landscape Management Plan is a strategic document that supports the Rottnest Island Management Plan (RIMP 2014-2019).

It identifies the significance of the Island as a cultural landscape and puts in place provisions for the care and management of the heritage values of the Island as a whole. Secondary and tertiary plans, including conservation management plans, interpretation plans and heritage resource management plans sit under this plan. Together this suite of plans assists the Rottnest Island Authority (RIA) in conserving, promoting and supporting the cultural heritage of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup.

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup is an important cultural landscape where human interaction with the natural systems over time has formed a distinctive landscape. It has high degree of heritage significance to the people of Western Australia and potential national heritage significance for the following reasons:

• It has an exceptional combination of geological and ecological features and processes, many of which are of international importance in the study of sea level and climate variations associated with the late Pleistocene and Holocene times

• It has significant cultural value for Aboriginal people, being associated with a number of Dreamtime stories concerning death and the creation of the offshore islands. There is also archaeological evidence of human occupation of the island prior to its separation from the mainland, possibly dating as far back as 30,000 years

• It is a key site in the early exploration and the beginning of an understanding of what became known as the Australian continent by European mariners, commencing with the Dutch mariners who landed on the Island and surveyed the coastline in the 17th century

• It is rare as a purpose-built Aboriginal prison, believed to be the only one of its kind in Australia. This penal establishment played a seminal role in the history of the development of the Swan River Colony and the State of Western Australia and is significant for its role in the removal, punishment and enforced labour of Aboriginal men and boys during the immediate Contact and post-Contact periods

• It has recognised archaeological potential to widen the understanding of Aboriginal occupation prior to the separation of the Island from the mainland and the life and traditions of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the post-colonial era

• The colonial settlement on Rottnest Island/Wadjemup remains a remarkably intact example of a British colonial outpost and penal establishment dating from the early to mid-nineteenth century, which continues to impart its influence into the present day

• The shipwrecks around the Island’s seascape and the maritime infrastructure on the Island demonstrate not only the dangers of the maritime journeys that were an essential part of the colonial development of Australia for over a hundred years, but the vital role that the ships have played in the lives of Western Australians since the founding of the Swan River Colony

• It is recognised for its strategic importance as a key site for Australia’s coastal defence during World War II. The military infrastructure from this time demonstrates the high level of technical achievements and the role of the Australian men and women in the defence of Australia during World War II. It is distinguished nationally as the only place to have retained the 9.2 inch guns in its batteries
• The transition of the Island to a place of recreation and respite provides a tangible example of the importance of islands to mainlanders, particularly in providing a strong sense of place. It embodies the quintessential Australian holiday experience of the twentieth century that was neighbourly, practical and democratic. The relaxed atmosphere and safe friendly environment combined with a sense of wildness and connection to both nature and history contribute to the strong community attachment to the Island.

• A constant, yet ever changing vision on the horizon from the metropolitan coastline, it has outstanding aesthetic qualities that continue to capture the imagination. The settlement area characterised by a sweeping bay and marked by the sea wall, distinctive limestone colonial buildings and avenues of tree plantings contributes to a strong sense of place, while the sublime coastal scenery of embayments, beaches and limestone cliffs with rolling dunes behind is enhanced by the spectacular natural phenomenon of the salt lakes, evocative lighthouses and the subtle colours of the natural geology and vegetation.

• Because of its unique and significant history, including its place as what is believed to be the largest Aboriginal deaths in custody site in Australia, and one of the largest Aboriginal burial grounds in the State, the Island has the potential to become one of the most important focal points for reconciliation and healing between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Western Australia and potentially the nation.

This document seeks to integrate the management and care of the Island’s cultural heritage landscape with the vision and mission for the Island set out in the RIMP 2014-2019. It recognises that best practice heritage management will bring enormous benefits both for present and future generations. The policy section sets out the principal vision for the management of the cultural heritage values of the Island under five headings that encapsulate best practice heritage management and provides a series of heritage management principles that support these objectives.

Managing the A-Class Reserve as a Cultural Landscape

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup will be an exemplar of cultural heritage management to support the RIA’s vision, building community attachment to the Island and confidence within the Rottnest Island Authority and its stakeholders.

Research and Information Sharing

The heritage values of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup will be conserved, and increasingly well understood. Practical tools will be established to assist the Rottnest Island Authority to achieve this goal.

Building Connections

Community connections will be strengthened through active participation and engagement with the Island. People with connections to Rottnest Island/Wadjemup will be encouraged to visit, to engage with the Island and its management and to contribute their knowledge and stories for the benefits of the Island’s managers, visitors and the wider community.

The Visitor Experience

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup will be widely recognised as a significant cultural landscape that offers visitors a quintessentially Australian holiday experience. Visitors to Rottnest Island/Wadjemup will have the unique opportunity to engage with the Island, its history and its multiple meanings through experiencing Rottnest Island/Wadjemup as a holiday destination, participating in activities and through other forms of interpretation. Visitors will be encouraged to respect and help care for its heritage values.

Shaping the Future

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup will be widely recognised as a significant cultural landscape that is highly valued by the people of Western Australia. Future change will protect, enhance and celebrate its scientific, social, historic and aesthetic values and its unique island qualities.

The RIA is responsible for implementing the principles set out in the Rottnest Island/Wadjemup Cultural Landscape Management Plan and is committed to ensuring that management arrangements, resources to the extent that they are available and processes facilitate the effective implementation of this CLMP in accordance with the requirements of the Rottnest Island Authority Act.
## Contents

1. Introduction .................................................. 1  
   Rottnest Island/Wadjemup ........................................ 1  
   Significant Cultural Landscape .............................. 3  
   Methodology .......................................................... 3  

2. The Rottnest Island/Wadjemup Narrative .................. 5  
   Timeline ................................................................. 5  
   The Formation of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup .......... 6  
   Early Aboriginal Occupation and Cultural Narrative .... 9  
   Flora and Fauna .......................................................... 11  
   Dutch Exploration .................................................... 15  
   French Explorers ....................................................... 17  
   British Exploration and Colonial Settlement .......... 18  
   Salt Production .......................................................... 20  
   Colonial Penal Establishment for Aboriginal Prisoners .. 21  
   Governor’s Summer Residence ................................. 32  
   Boys’ Reformatory ..................................................... 34  
   Shipwrecks ................................................................. 36  
   Pilot Station .............................................................. 38  
   Light Stations ............................................................. 39  
   Australian Commonwealth Defence Establishments .. 41  
   Public Park and Reserve ............................................ 45  
   Island Imagining ......................................................... 51  
   Cultural Heritage and Reconciliation ......................... 58  

3. Comparative Studies ................................. 59  
   Islands as Colonial Penal Establishments ............ 59  
   Governor’s summer retreats .................................. 62  
   Island Holiday Destinations .................................. 62  
   Analysis of Comparative Studies ............................ 64  

4. Cultural Heritage Significance .................. 65  
   Assessment of Heritage Values ............................ 65  
   Statement of Significance ........................................ 72  

5. Key Themes & Zones of Significance .................. 73  
   Key Themes .............................................................. 73  
   Zones of Significance ................................................. 76  

6. Factors Affecting the Future ....................... 79  
   Governance .............................................................. 79  
   Statutory and Planning Framework ....................... 79  
   Sustainable Tourism ................................................ 83  
   Places of Commemoration ........................................ 83  
   Condition ................................................................. 83  

7. Conservation Policy and Implementation .......... 85  
   Purpose ................................................................. 85  
   Managing the A Class Reserve as a Cultural Landscape ... 86  
   Research and Information Sharing ....................... 89  
   Building Connections .............................................. 91  
   The Visitor Experience ............................................ 91  
   Shaping the Future ................................................... 93  
   Implementation ........................................................ 97  

Appendix A ..................................................... 99  
Bibliography .......................................................... 99
1. Introduction

The Rottnest Island/Wadjemup Cultural Landscape Management Plan has been prepared in recognition of the significance of Rottnest Island to the people of Western Australia and its potential value to the nation.

The Nyungar (also spelt Noongar, Nyoongar, Nyungah, etc.) name of the Island is Wadjemup, which has been interpreted to mean ‘the place across the water where the spirits are’. While pre-colonial European maps record the Dutch name of ‘Rottenest’ and later the anglicised ‘Rottnest’, Wadjemup has not only been held in the long term cultural memory of the Nyungar people, it has been recorded as such on maps of the Island since the first colonial contact with the Aboriginal people of south-western Australia.

The Rottnest Island/Wadjemup Cultural Landscape Management Plan is intended to support good strategic planning and management decisions by the Rottnest Island Authority and to provide overarching principles and strategies that guide the care and management of Rottnest Island as a highly significant cultural landscape. It integrates valuable research and analysis to support a range of initiatives that will enhance visitor and community understanding of this important place.

ROTTNEST ISLAND/ WADJEMUP

Rottnest Island is an A-class reserve, which lies in the Indian Ocean west of the metropolitan coastline of Perth and approximately 20 kilometres from the port city of Fremantle in Western Australia. The Island (latitude 32°00’ S, longitude 115°30’ E) is 11 kms long and 4.5 kms at its widest point, lying roughly perpendicular to the mainland. The land area of 1,900 hectares and associated seascape are included in the A-class reserve.

THE ROTTNEST ISLAND AUTHORITY

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup is managed in accordance with the Rottnest Island Authority Act 1987. The Minister for Tourism is responsible for administering the Act on behalf of the Western Australian Government and ultimately the people of Western Australia. The Rottnest Island Authority Board is appointed by the Governor on advice from the Minister and consists of a chairman and five other members selected according to their relevant experience. The Board is supported by the Rottnest Island Authority, which oversees the daily operations of the Island under the leadership of the Chief Executive Officer supported by a core staff of just over one hundred people.
Strategic Role of the Plan

Under the Act, the Rottnest Island Authority (RIA) is required to operate according to a Management Plan. The 5-yearly Rottnest Island Management Plan (RIMP) which is informed by the 20 year vision, outlines the strategic direction and outcomes that the RIA is seeking to achieve for the benefit of Island. A series of operational and management plans, including this Cultural Landscape Management Plan are in place, or are intended to be put in place, to support the objectives of the RIMP.

The Rottnest Island/Wadjemup Cultural Landscape Management Plan (CLMP) is a strategic document that identifies the significance of the Island as a cultural landscape and puts in place provisions for the care and management of the heritage values of the Island as a whole. Secondary and tertiary plans, including conservation management plans, interpretation plans and heritage resource management plans sit under this plan. Together this suite of plans assists the RIA in conserving, promoting and supporting the cultural heritage of the Rottnest Island/Wadjemup.

Other supporting documents include an Aboriginal Cultural Management Strategy that will be prepared under the provisions of the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

Cultural landscapes are those where human interaction with natural systems has, over a long period, formed a distinctive landscape. These interactions arise from, and cause, cultural values to develop. (Dr Jane Lennon)
SIGNIFICANT CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

The following statement of significance is a summary of the significance of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup as a cultural landscape. It encapsulates the values of the Island as whole that are articulated within this Cultural Landscape Management Plan.

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup, a cultural landscape where human interaction with the natural systems over time has formed a distinctive landscape, has cultural heritage significance for the following reasons:

• It has an exceptional combination of geological and ecological features and processes, many of which are of international importance in the study of sea level and climate variations associated with the late Pleistocene and Holocene times.

• It has significant cultural value for Aboriginal people, being associated with a number of Dreamtime stories concerning death and the creation of the offshore islands. There is also archaeological evidence of human occupation of the Island prior to its separation from the mainland, possibly dating as far back as 30,000 years.

• It is a key site in the early exploration and the beginning of an understanding of what became known as the Australian continent by European mariners, commencing with the Dutch mariners who landed on the Island and surveyed the coastline in the 17th century.

• It is rare as a purpose-built Aboriginal prison, believed to be the only one of its kind in Australia. This penal establishment played a seminal role in the history of the development of the Swan River Colony and the State of Western Australia and is significant for its role in the removal, punishment and enforced labour of Aboriginal men and boys during the immediate Contact and post-Contact periods.

• It has recognised archaeological potential to widen the understanding of Aboriginal occupation prior to the separation of the Island from the mainland and the life and traditions of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the post-colonial era.

• The colonial settlement on Rottnest Island/Wadjemup remains a remarkably intact example of a British colonial outpost and penal establishment dating from the early to mid-nineteenth century, which continues to impart its influence into the present day.

• The shipwrecks around the Island’s seascape and the maritime infrastructure on the Island demonstrate not only the dangers of the maritime journeys that were an essential part of the colonial development of Australia for over a hundred years, but the vital role that the ships have played in the lives of Western Australians since the founding of the Swan River Colony.

• It is recognised for its strategic importance as a key site for Australia’s coastal defence during World War II. The military infrastructure from this time demonstrates the high level of technical achievements and the role of Australian men and women in the defence of Australia during World War II. It is distinguished nationally as the only place to have retained 9.2 inch guns in its batteries.

• The transition of the Island to a place of recreation and respite provides a tangible example of the importance of islands to mainlanders, particularly in providing a strong sense of place. It embodies the quintessential Australian holiday experience of the twentieth century that was neighbourly, practical and democratic. The relaxed atmosphere and safe environment combined with a sense of wilderness and connection to both nature and history contribute to the strong community attachment to the Island.

• A constant, yet ever changing vision on the horizon from the metropolitan coastline, it has outstanding aesthetic qualities that continue to capture the imagination. The settlement area characterised by a sweeping bay and marked by the sea wall, distinctive limestone colonial buildings and avenues of tree plantings contributes to a strong sense of place, while the sublime coastal scenery of embayments, beaches and limestone cliffs with rolling dunes behind is enhanced by the spectacular natural phenomenon of the salt lakes, evocative lighthouses and the subtle colours of the natural geology and vegetation.

• Because of its unique and significant history, including its place as what is believed to be the largest Aboriginal deaths in custody site in Australia, and one of the largest Aboriginal burial grounds in the State, the Island has the potential to become one of the most important focal points for reconciliation and healing between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Western Australia and potentially the nation.

METHODOLOGY

This document seeks to define the outstanding heritage values of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup as a cultural landscape and to make recommendations for the protection and enhancement of those values into the future. It builds on the previous studies that have identified the values of various elements of the Island, but is distinguished by the consideration of the Island as an interacting and evolving whole, which has not been studied in any holistic way until now.

In the late 20th century, nationally and internationally accepted approaches to the understanding and management of cultural heritage landscapes began to be formally adopted. In 1992, the World Heritage Convention became the first international legal instrument to recognise and protect cultural landscapes with guidelines applicable to cultural landscape of local, national and international significance. This report marks the first document to be underpinned by this methodology in Western Australia, as is befitting the iconic Rottnest Island/Wadjemup.
The preparation of the Cultural Landscape Management Plan has also been informed by the methodology and principles outlined in the following documents:

- The Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter and Guidelines (2013)
- ‘Standard Brief for Conservation Management Plans’, State Heritage Office of Western Australia
- ‘Guidelines for the Assessment of Places for the National Heritage List,’ Australian Heritage Council (2009)

It provides a narrative that interweaves the oral, documentary and physical evidence to provide an overview of the interaction of the environment and people over many thousands of years that has created the cultural landscape of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup that we experience today. It assesses the values of the Island as a whole and determines the rarity and representativeness of those values through both national and international comparative studies, as well as an assessment of its condition in relation to those values. The Cultural Landscape Management Plan culminates in overarching principles and strategies to guide the care and management of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup as a highly significant cultural landscape.

**Acknowledgements**

We gratefully acknowledge the numerous authors and contributors to the numerous studies, plans, reports and books that have informed the preparation of this Cultural Landscape Management Plan. The details of the sources consulted during the course of this study are included in the bibliography attached as Appendix A. We also thank the following people for their assistance in the preparation of this Cultural Landscape Management Plan:

- The Rottnest Island Authority’s CEO, Paolo Amaranti, and the Project Steering Group, who provided valuable direction on the development of the plan and who shared a commitment to illuminate the cultural heritage values of the Island, and included the following external representatives:
  - Henry Thomason and Sarah Lewis (Department of Aboriginal Affairs)
  - Dr Ian MacLeod (WA Maritime Museum)
  - Callum Crofton (State Heritage Office)
  - Jo Lyngcoln (Heritage Management)
- Harriet Wyatt who provided us with expert guidance and practical advice in her role as the RIA’s Conservation Manager.
- Patsy Vizents the RIA’s Conservation Officer who made available a rich catalogue of resources to inform our work and who enthusiastically shared her knowledge of the Island and its history.
- Roland Mau, the RIA’s Manager Marine and Terrestrial Reserve and Clinton Hull, the Parks Services Co-ordinator who guided our site surveys and provided valuable material to assist us in this study.
- Dr M. McCarthy, Curator Maritime Archaeology, who provided information on the shipwrecks surrounding Rottnest, which has informed our understanding of the Island’s maritime heritage.
- Glen Stasiuk, filmmaker, lecturer and senior Indigenous researcher at Murdoch University, who kindly made available his PhD exegesis, which provided the authors with valuable insights into the enduring significance of Wadjemup to the Aboriginal community of Western Australia.
- Peter Randolph, retired Senior Heritage Officer of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and now freelance heritage consultant, for sharing his in-depth knowledge, personal insights and resources.
- Iva Hayward-Jackson, Chairman of the Rottnest Island Deaths Group, who provided feedback on a draft of this plan and adding further insights on behalf of his community.

**Project Team**

This plan has been prepared as a collaborative effort of specialist heritage practitioners, led by TPG Town Planning, Urban Design and Heritage and assisted by Jane Lennon and Associates and Amergin Consulting/Ethnosciences.

The primary authors of this plan are:

- Nerida Moredoundt (TPG)
- Bryn Coldrick (Amergin Consulting)

Expert input into this plan has been provided by:

- Dr Jane Lennon (Jane Lennon and Associates)
- Dr Edward McDonald (Ethnosciences)
2. The Rottnest Island/Wadjemup Narrative

TIMELINE

This section outlines the Island’s narrative, starting from deep time until the present. It interweaves the oral, documentary and physical evidence to provide an overview of the interaction of the environment and people over many thousands of years to create the cultural landscape of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup that we experience today.

This section is drawn from the wide range of secondary sources that have been made available to the project team.

All sources are included in full in the bibliography.
THE FORMATION OF ROTTNEST ISLAND/ WADJEMUP

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup is the largest island in a chain of islands and shoals on the continental shelf near Perth. The Island is composed of marine and dune limestone and sand formed during Pleistocene and Holocene periods. It once formed part of the mainland until a series of sea level changes took place in the Late Pleistocene and Holocene periods, resulting in the Island we see today.

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup has an exceptional combination of geological and ecological features and processes. It is composed of three major geological units: Holocene (less than 10,000 years) coastal sand dunes; Holocene swamp and lake deposits; and Pleistocene Tamala limestone and lime sand dunes (up to 1.7 million years old). The dune terrain across the Island varies from high U-shaped dunes with a maximum elevation of 45.2m at Wadjemup Hill (once the highest point on the Swan Coastal Plain), to low, gently undulating limestone flats. Marine limestone, known as the Rottnest Limestone formation, was formed during the last Interglacial period, approximately 135,000 years ago and comprises fossil coral reef and shells. A late Pleistocene unit of coral reef limestone and associated shelly limestone is exposed at Fairbridge Bluff at Salmon Bay and at South Point. There are a number of fossil records located around the Island in exposed limestone in coastal locations.

A system of salt lakes and brackish swamps occurs in the north-east part of the Island, occupying some 200ha or about 10.5% of the area of the Island. The salt lakes are thought to have originated as collapsed underground caverns and solution features within the Pleistocene limestone. They were initially formed as sheltered marine environments and with their separation from the sea became highly saline lakes. The average summer salinity is approximately four times that of the sea.
The lakes vary in depth from 2m to over 8m. Government House Lake is the deepest, reaching a depth of 8.5m in its centre. Some of the shallower lakes completely dry up by the end of summer. The salt lakes contain diverse and scientifically important representatives of living stromatolites that were once the dominant life form on the planet for nearly 3000 million years.

Elevated marine features, which indicate sea level changes, include the fossil coral reef at Fairbridge Bluff and Mount Herschell Quarry where marine shell beds of Herschell Limestone are exposed. Some excellent examples of wave-cut platforms and notches are found around the edges of the salt lakes where they are not prone to coastal erosion. Several locations around Serpentine Lake and elsewhere feature ancient wavecut platforms and notches. They were formed by coastal erosion following changes in sea level, which took place in late Pleistocene and Holocene times. These features, together with fossil evidence and topographic evidence, are of international importance in the study of sea level and climate variations associated with the Pleistocene ice age (RNE, ID 18825, 2014).

The Mount Herschell Quarry contains the type section of Herschell Limestone, a Holocene shell bed with intercalated calcareous sand and marl, which is believed to have been deposited in subtidal to intertidal environments when the salt lakes formed lagoonal arms of the sea. The formation has been divided into two members, the lower Vincent Member, dated at 4,800 to 5,900 years old and the upper Baghdad Member, dated at 2,200 to 3,100 years old. The Herschell Limestone has very rich fauna, which is mainly molluscan. There is another small area of quarried Herschell Limestone on the beach of Thomson Bay about 100m west of the Army Jetty. It is a Quartenary sea level marker of international significance (RNE, ID 18825, 2014).
The coastline of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup is characterised by alternating rocky headlands and bays with sandy beaches backed by dunes. Much of the coastline is fringed by elevated shoreline platforms (reefs) and associated notches, storm benches, overhanging visors and intertidal reefs, which range from a few metres in width to about 100m across. They are cut almost horizontally into the Tamala Limestone and range in elevation from just below low water mark to almost mean sea level. These platforms and notches were formed by coastal erosion following changes in sea level. Three levels are recognised: an upper level at about 3m, formed c 5,500 to 5,000 years ago, an intermediate level at about 1.5m, and a lower level at about 0.7m above modern low water mark formed c 7,000 years ago.
EARLY ABORIGINAL OCCUPATION AND CULTURAL NARRATIVE

Various colonial authors recorded Nyungar cultural narratives about the creation of the offshore islands including Rottnest and Garden Island, Cockburn Sound and features of the coastline. One story, recorded by Armstrong in 1836, attributes the creation of the Sound and the offshore islands to the actions of the Waugal or Rainbow Serpent:

Another story, recorded by Moore (1884), describes a great fire which caused the ground to split asunder and the sea to rush in, cutting off the islands from the mainland. This story has been interpreted as an expression through cultural memory of the sea level rise that occurred around 6,500 years ago, and versions are also recorded in Bates (1992) and Ker Wilson (1979).

Wadjemup is also associated with Nyungar beliefs concerning death, recorded by Daisy Bates at the beginning of the twentieth century, and the Island is variously interpreted as a stop on the way to Kooranup (the home of the dead) or as being part of Kooranup. There are also other cultural narratives associated with Wadjemup which are held by particular families in the community, though not all are universally accepted.

The archaeologist Charles Dortch has been investigating early Aboriginal cultural history on Wadjemup since the 1980s, with a particular focus on defining human presence during its ‘pre-island’ phase (see Dortch 2013 and Dortch & Dortch 2012). According to Dortch, archaeological evidence for Aboriginal occupation of the ‘pre-island’ locality consists of a handful of artefacts flaked from Eocene fossiliferous chert and calcrete (indurated limestone). As sources of Eocene fossiliferous chert are now generally believed to lie submerged off shore, and ceased to be accessible following post-glacial sea level rises about 6,500 years ago (which also resulted in the formation of the offshore islands), artefacts made from this material are an important temporal marker. According to Dortch, those found on Wadjemup ‘make a compelling case for human activities on this outer part of the emergent continental shelf during the Late Pleistocene’ (Dortch 2013:18). Luminescence and isotopic dating of two Eocene chert artefacts found, respectively, in situ in ancient soils exposed in sea cliffs at Little Armstrong Bay and Bathurst Point indicate human occupation of the ‘pre-island’ locality more than 10,000 years ago to as much as 30,000 years ago (Dortch & Dortch 2012:69). The most recent finding includes ages of between 17,100 years ago (minimal age) to 6,500 years ago for artefact finds from Bathurst Pont, Little Armstrong Bay east, Charlotte Point, Little Armstrong Bay west and Fish Hook Bay (Dortch, Ward, Rhodes, Pietsch, Miller, Hellstrom, Playford & Dortch: in press).

Dortch points out that there is no archaeological evidence or historically verifiable oral traditions suggesting that Nyungar hunter-gatherers visited the offshore islands, including Wadjemup, after their separation from the mainland, and the island was uninhabited when the first Europeans arrived in the early historic period (Dortch 2013; Dortch & Dortch 2012). Nyungar hunter-gatherers, unlike their northern and eastern Australian compatriots, did not possess watercraft. The limited sailing ranges of Indigenous water craft historically recorded for south-eastern Australia suggest that Wadjemup is much too far offshore to have been within feasible voyaging distance from the mainland. This evidence and the absence of any records for water craft usage by Aboriginal populations regionally, contend strongly for groups living on the Swan Coastal Plain never having visited the island following its formation.

Plan showing sites of artefact finds [from Dortch 2013, p.27 titled “Rottnest Island with numbered Eocene fossiliferous chert artefact and other find sites”]
As archaeological survey has shown, the existing record of early human presence on Wadjemup is ‘sparse in the extreme’ (Dortch 2013:19). It would appear that what became Rottnest Island/Wadjemup was a marginal area at best. Indeed, the bulk of the archaeological material found on the Island to date arises from its use as an Aboriginal prison (including glass artefacts made by prisoners for hunting purposes), as does a sacred shield discovered underneath the floorboards of the Quod. On the other hand, following its separation from the mainland c. 6,500 years ago, sea levels continued to rise resulting in the inundation of the newly formed Island’s low-lying areas, including its shorelines, the salt lakes and several fresh-water swamps, which are all areas likely to have been favoured by hunter-gatherers. Test excavations around the margins of one or other of the formerly fresh-water swamps on the Island may well yield stone artefacts or other evidence for Aboriginal occupation on the shores of the fresh-water bodies once present there. This possibility would seem strongest for Barker Swamp, situated among sand hills well above c. 2.4 m above sea level, which approximates the height estimated to have been reached by higher sea levels c. 5,000 years ago. The Island thus may have an archaeological potential beyond that of further possible rare finds of stone artefacts in palaeosols exposed in Tamala Limestone sea cliffs.
FLORA AND FAUNA
Prior to separation from the mainland, Rottnest Island/Wadjemup would have had a similar range of plants as those on the adjacent mainland, where about 1,500 native species flourish. Exposure to sea water, salt and wind eliminated hundreds of species so that today there are only about 140 indigenous species left on the Island. In addition, the current condition of the natural environment has been predominantly influenced by the cultural activities that have occurred in the colonial and post-colonial eras on and around the Island. These practices have altered and, in places, degraded the natural environment.

Fossil remains show that Tuarts (*Eucalyptus gomphocephala*), Marri (*Corymbia calophylla*), Jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*), Banksia (*Proteaceae sp.*) and She-Oaks (*Allocasuarina fraseriana*) once grew on the Island. The plants that remain are hardy and are able to withstand the exposure of the Island and are adapted to high salinity levels.

Along the coastline plants such as Beach Spinifex (*Spinex longifolius*), Thick-leaved Fan-flower (*Scandaria cassinifolia*), and the aromatic Coastal Rosemary (*Westringia dampieri*) can be found. The vegetation of the remainder of Rottnest Island is dominated by the Prickle Lily (*Acanthocarpus preissii*) and Feather Speargrass (*Austrostipa flavescens*) heath community, which occurs in areas previously dominated by woodland. The heath comprises a variety of annuals and perennials, including Grey Cottonhead (*Constylis candicans subsp. calicola*), Cockies’ Tongues (*Templetonia retusa*) and the Rottnest Island Daisy (*Trachymene coerulea subsp. coerulea*), also known as the Blue Lace Flower. Native to Rottnest Island/Wadjemup, the Rottnest daisy is actually a member of the carrot family, although it resembles a true daisy in its form. The Rottnest daisy is only found in the wild in Western Australia, although it is now grown throughout the world as an ornamental garden plant.

On the salt lake shores an array of salt-water tolerant plants such as samphires, sedges, and Grey Saltbush (*Atriplex cinerea*) can be found. Under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999, this Subtropical and Temperate Coastal Saltmarsh Ecological Community has been listed as Vulnerable. This community is susceptible to threats including, but not limited to clearing and fragmentation, altered hydrology, invasive species, recreation, eutrophication and inappropriate fire regimes. A number of the deeper salt lakes support significant hypersaline microbialite communities that are listed as Priority Ecological Communities (PEC) under the Wildlife Conservation Act 1950. The microbialite communities on Rottnest contain fossilised structures as well as active structure forming algal mats, occurring in a variety of different colours and forms. The form and diversity of both algal mats and structures (both modern and historical) in the Rottnest lakes is unique in south-west Western Australia (Vogwill, 2013). The ecological water requirements of the microbialite communities on Rottnest are currently unknown; however previous research has shown that increased acidity, nutrients or salinity changes can all cause impacts to communities.

Prior to colonial settlement in 1831, over half of the Island was covered in large areas of woodland. The majority of this woodland was lost during early colonial settlement due to clearing for farming, buildings and firewood, and inappropriate fire regimes (Winn, 2007). At present, approximately 4% of the Island is covered by scattered relic stands of woodland. The woodland community comprises Rottnest Island Pine (*Callitris preissii*) and Rottnest Island Tea Tree (*Melaleuca lanceolata*). This woodland community is listed as a ‘Vulnerable’ Threatened Ecological Community under the Wildlife Conservation Act 1950.
The quokka (Setonix brachyurus) is the most well-known animal on Rottnest Island/Wadjemup and is listed as 'Vulnerable' under State and Commonwealth legislation, and 'Vulnerable' on the global IUCN Redlist. A marsupial the size of a hare or domestic cat, the quokka is the sole representative of the genus Setonix. The quokka is extremely adaptable. At the western end of the Island, Cape Vlamingh, there is no fresh water in summer, but the quokkas are able to survive by obtaining water from plant life. They are herbivores, capable of stripping most species of small trees and shrubs of their leaves and bark, and they also eat grasses and succulent plants. Before the 1930s, quokkas were abundant in the south-west of Western Australia; however habitat loss, altered fire regimes, altered hydrological regimes (through surface and groundwater abstraction) and the introduction of feral predators has led to significant declines in the mainland population. The quokka was once hunted for meat on Rottnest, but was protected in 1917, from which time the quokka population began to soar, grazing heavily on the palatable succulents, grasses and shrubs.

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup is a haven for birds and thus a popular destination for bird watching. The wetlands and coastal areas provide significant food resources and breeding habitat for a multitude of shorebird species. Shorebirds around the Island include the Pied Cormorant, Australian Pied Oystercatcher, Silver Gulls, Crested Tern and Fairy Tern, and Bridled Tern. The Island’s listing as a ‘Wetland of National Importance’ under the Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia (Environment Australia, 2001) is in part due to its habitat significance for migratory and resident shorebirds. The Brine Shrimp in the salt lakes support a large number of birds such as the Red-necked Avocet, Banded Stilts, Ruddy Turnstone, Curlew Sandpiper, Red-capped Dotterel, Red-necked Stint, Grey Plover, Caspian Terns and Crested Terns. The Island is a major stop-over area for migratory shorebirds in south-western Australia, and supports regionally significant numbers of the Red-necked Stint (Calidris ruficollis) which is listed under the international CAMBA, JAMBA and ROKAMBA treaties (Department of the Environment, 2014). The wetlands on Rottnest also provide significant drought refuge area for migratory shorebirds, including over 1% of the world’s population of the Banded Stilt (Cladorhynchus leucocephalus) (BirdLife International, 2013). The brackish swamps are home to the Pacific Black Duck and Grey Teal Duck. Rottnest Island/Wadjemup supports several of the southernmost breeding colonies of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters (Puffinus
Divergence and are both listed as ‘Vulnerable’ under the Tiliqua rugosa konowi) are two examples of this genetic bobtail (Pseudonaja affinis exilis) and the Rottnest Island sub-species (Tiliqua rugosa). These changes are significant enough for these animals to be described as separate sub-species. The dugite is a slender, dark brown, venomous snake. Dugites are frequently seen during the summer months, often lying on the road obtaining warmth from the sun and bitumen.

The Island supports three species of frogs: the Moaning Frog (Heleioporus eyrei), Sandplain Froglet (Litoria moorei) and Western Green Tree Frog or Motorbike Frog (Litoria moorei). All species are morphologically distinct to those on the mainland which may indicate they are genetically distinct and could be classified as subspecies. The brackish wetlands (swamps and seeps) provide key breeding sites and habitat for these frog species. Frog population condition is dependent on the water quality of these water bodies therefore minimising anthropogenic impacts such as eutrophication and over-abstraction of groundwater is vital to ensure that the frog populations remain stable.

There are number of introduced flora and fauna on the Island, including Norfolk Island Pines (Araucaria heterophylla), Moreton Bay Figs (Ficus macrophylla), Aleppo Pines (Pinus halepensis), Olive trees (Olea europaea), Palm trees (Arecaceae sp.) and Tuarts (Eucalyptus gomphocephala). Other introduced plants include two varieties of onion weeds that are primary colonisers and a Mediterranean grass (Lagurus ovatus), commonly known as hare’s tail grass. Peafowl were introduced to the Island as a gift to the Governor in 1912 and are commonly found in the settlement area. An increase in numbers and subsequent aggressive behaviour towards visitors resulted in a RIA policy to maintain a maximum of three male peafowl at any one time. Pheasants were also introduced to the Island to facilitate the Governor’s hunting parties.

In contrast to the land-based habitats, the Rottnest Island/Wadjemup Marine Reserve has a far greater range of habitats, marine plants and animals than that of the adjacent mainland coastline of Western Australia. Extensive seagrass meadows occur on the Island, and with nine species of seagrass, it is second only to Shark Bay in species diversity.
leatherjacket, samson fish, tailor, butterfly fish, moon wrasse, blue devil and migratory fish such as marlin and tuna. The Island is also a popular area for migrating humpback whales, bottle-nose dolphins and Australian sea lions. Rottnest Island/Wadjemup has a tropical influence with records of 135 species of tropical fish as compared to eleven species recorded off the metropolitan coastline. A major factor influencing this diversity is the position of the Island in the path of the warm Leeuwin Current. This current often brings tropical visitors to these waters such as the Green Turtle (RIA, Marine Life of Rottnest, 2014)

The crustaceans around Rottnest Island/Wadjemup include several species of crab, such as the blue manna, a favourite summer food for Western Australians. However, the best known crustacean of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup is the Western rock lobster, which occurs only in continental shelf waters off the Australian west coast between the North West Cape and Cape Leeuwin. It forms the basis of a lucrative export industry particularly to the United States and Japan. A wide variety of shrimps, prawns, barnacles and hermit crabs also inhabit the waters around the Island.
DUTCH EXPLORATION

Until the early 1600s, Europeans had only a vague notion of what is now called Australia. Following the first authenticated European sighting of the Australian coastline in the Gulf of Carpentaria by Willem Janszoon on the *Duyfken* in 1606, Dutch exploration and surveying then occurred along the Western Australian coastline with Rottnest Island/Wadjemup playing a key part in the European understanding of the Australian continent.

This period of surveying was primarily due to Dutch navigators sailing to the East Indies (Indonesia) for the Dutch East India Company (VOC) seeking a quicker route for their lucrative spice trade to and from the Netherlands via South Africa. In 1610, the Dutch explorer, Hendrik Brouwer, found a new sea route that took advantage of the strong westerly winds (the ‘roaring forties’ between latitudes 40 and 50 south) leading to a sustained period of interaction along the Western Australian coastline and the mapping of ‘New Holland’.

The first sighting of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup was by explorer Frederick de Houtman in 1619 and then, in 1658, exploration by men from the *Waeckende Boey*, (captained by Samuel Volkerson) searching for survivors of an earlier shipwreck. Led by Abraham Leeman, this party was sent onshore at the north-east section of the Island in a small boat. They reported that the Island was well wooded, but could find no easy anchor due to the cliffs close to shore. Seals and a ‘bush cat’ were sighted (Gerritsen, 2011, p14).

In 1697 Willem de Vlamingh, searching for a missing VOC ship, landed just north of the Swan River mouth and then careened at what is now Thomson Bay to explore the Island. Vlamingh’s expedition named the Island ‘Rottenest’, meaning rat’s nest, which is understood to refer to the marsupial quokkas, which abound on the Island. The name remains in use today.

A reference to ‘mist eiland’ (fog island) also dates from this time. Vlamingh describe that on Rottnest they ‘found there the finest wood in the world, from which the whole land was filled with a fine pleasant smell’. The journals of De Vlamingh from this expedition are among the earliest recorded observations of Australian people by Europeans (WA Museum, 2007).

*Hollandia Nova detecta, 1644 (Commonwealth Bank Collection Dutch Sea Charts CBA745)*. This map by French scientist Melichsédéch Thévenot is the first map of Australia to incorporate all the Dutch discoveries to date and also heralded the burgeoning French interest in the region. It incorporates all the Dutch landings on the continent and results in a recognisable shape of Australia – one that would remain the European view of Australia until the British exploration of the east coast (by Captain James Cook) almost thirty years later.
The first known landscape painting of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup also dates from the era of Dutch exploration. Comprising of three profile views of the Island it was painted in 1697 by Victor Victorszoon, an artist and mapmaker on the Vlamingh expedition. It is one of only seven paintings of the Western Australian coast that has survived from that time and is held in the Maritime Museum of Rotterdam.
FRENCH EXPLORERS

During the late 1700s and early 1800s, the French played a significant role in the European discovery, charting and documentation of the mysterious land mass then known as New Holland, as well as its flora, fauna and human inhabitants.

Beginning with Louis XV, French rulers pursued a policy of exploration of ‘Terre Austral’ that focused as much on scientific study of the land and its inhabitants as on charting its coastline. Louis XVI, who ascended to the throne at his grandfather’s death in 1775, was a keen geographer, an avid reader of the accounts of Captain Cook’s voyages and a determined rival of Britain’s maritime supremacy who promoted several expeditions.

In 1801, the First Consul Napoleon supported Nicolas Baudin’s expedition to Australia. The scientific and cartographic achievements of this expedition added immeasurably to the sum of knowledge of the Terres Australes. The expedition started off with two ships Géographe, captained by Baudin, and Naturaliste captained by Jacques Hamelin. Rottnest Island/Wadjemup was a rendezvous point when the two ships became separated in a storm and the Naturaliste spent two weeks anchored off Rottnest Island/Wadjemup in June 1801. After the Casuarina joined the expedition, Rottnest Island/Wadjemup was again used as a rendezvous point when the Géographe lost sight of it in March 1803. Following this expedition, Louis de Freycinet, who was aboard the Naturaliste, published the first map of Australia in 1805. His surveys of both Thomson Bay and the salt lakes on Rottnest Island/Wadjemup remain extant from this expedition.

Freyinet’s map of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup and the approaches to Fremantle, June 1801. At the top left is a sketch of his survey of Thomson Bay and at the bottom right is part of the southern coast of the Island. (Archives Nationale, Série marine S163, scan provided by M. McCarthy, WA Maritime Museum)
BRITISH EXPLORATION AND COLONIAL SETTLEMENT

In the late 1700s sealers associated with the British Colonial settlements of the eastern seaboard of Australia are reported to have made their way west from the southern Australian coast as far north as Rottnest Island/Wadjemup. However, the outbreak of war between the French Empire and opposing coalitions led by the British, which occurred intermittently between 1803 and 1815, largely brought a halt to exploration of the western coast of Australia by Europeans.

The next explorer to visit the Island was the first Australian born maritime explorer, Philip Parker King in 1822. He, like the French and Dutch before him, was unimpressed by the area for potential settlement. However in 1827 Captain James Stirling explored the Swan River area in HMS Success, which first anchored off Rottnest Island/Wadjemup. He was accompanied by Charles Fraser, the Colonial Botanist of New South Wales, and when he returned to England spoke in glowing terms of the agricultural potential and lobbied for the establishment of a ‘free’ settlement (unlike the convict settlement of New South Wales) in the Swan River area with himself as its governor.

As a result of his reports, and a rumour in England that the French were about to establish a penal colony in the western part of Australia, the Colonial Office assented to the proposal in mid-October 1828 and the Swan River Colony was proclaimed for Britain on 2 May 1829.

Map prepared from Benjamin Symthe’s survey plan of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup in 1831, showing lots proposed lots and reserves prior to the resumption of the whole of the Island for Crown use.
British settlers soon established themselves on the Island, attracted by the prospects of salt harvesting, farming and fishing. In December 1830, Benjamin Smythe surveyed Rottnest Island/Wadjemup for the Surveyor General, John Septimus Roe. A plan for the township to be known as Kingstown was proposed, containing 177 lots of one third of an acre and other lots of 10 acres to be offered to the public. These lots were contained within the area now known as Thomson Bay and extended around to what became Bickley Bay on the site where Kingstown Barracks now stands.

William Nairne Clarke, a Scottish lawyer, and Robert Thomson took up town lots and pastureland. Clarke was granted 10 acres in 1831 and later received a grant of 300 acres for pasturing sheep. Thomson took 100 acres for the purposes of farming and salt collection. He moved his family from Fremantle to Rottnest in 1831 in order it seems, to get away from the ‘natives’ (which would make the arrival of Aboriginal prisoners on the Island in 1838 somewhat ironic), and he constructed several farm buildings from local limestone. The ruins of these and a well at the site of Thomson’s allotment remain extant.

Other requests for land continued, such as W. R. Steel’s 1834 appeal for exclusive rights over all unallocated parts of the island in exchange for landing 400 sheep. British settlers quickly changed the landscape of Rottnest, as land was cleared and tracks made, firewood gathered and the Island was repeatedly burned. In 1835, Thomas Bradford Wilson, a stockman living on the Island, referred to ‘hummocks and sandhills devoid of vegetation.’ By 1838, the farmers were grazing sheep and had established crops, vegetable gardens and vineyards.

All this changed in August 1838 when six Aboriginal prisoners were brought to the Island. After a short period when settlers and prisoners coexisted on the Island, the Colonial Secretary announced in June 1839 that Rottnest Island/Wadjemup would become a penal establishment for Aborigines. The establishment formally came into existence with the 1841 Act to Constitute the Island of Rottnest as a Legal Prison. The Crown resumed all land and restricted access to the Island, compensating settlers with property on the mainland. The Aboriginal prison officially closed in 1902, but a mere two years later it became an annex of Fremantle Prison and, until 1931, continued to receive low-risk Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal prisoners to do maintenance work on the tourist holiday cottages, roads and pathways.
SALT PRODUCTION

While there are some freshwater seeps and brackish fresh water on the Island, the salt lakes predominate. Having previously been named Duvaldailly Ponds, after a junior officer on the Naturaliste, the earliest British survey of the Island, by Benjamin Smythe in 1831, named them Threelfold Lake (which became Government House Lake, Serpentine Lake and Herschel Lake) and Sealer’s Lake (which became Lake Baghdad and Lake Vincent).

The export of salt was very important to the early colony as agricultural exports were slow to develop. The early settlers used elementary methods to gather the salt on the Island, simply collecting it in summer from the hard crust formed round the edges of the lakes. Later, Superintendent Vincent organised Aboriginal work parties to bag the salt using picks and shovels, and in 1847 he reported 150 tons were ready for export.

Henri Courderot, a Frenchman with several years experience in salt works in France, offered his services to the Government in December 1868. Courderot had been convicted in England in 1863 and sent to Western Australia in 1865; by 1868 he was on a ticket-of-leave. Courderot made several experiments with the natural salt found on Rottnest, and suggested that with the help of Aboriginal labour, it was possible to make £800 a year from the sale of salt. He was made superintendent of the Salt Works for a trial period of three months, at £5 salary per month. Proving efficient, he remained in office until 1886. Aboriginal prisoners were not only the main labour used for the production of salt, they also constructed the Causeway, which provided direct access from the Salt Works to the jetty in Thomson Bay. There is a view within the Aboriginal community that the salt lakes are sites of importance and significance because they were mined by the ancestors, under a system of enforced labour.

A new Salt Works building with a high chimneystack was built in 1869 to house the complicated process of refining salt devised by Courderot. However, an 1898 inquiry decided the Salt Works were not viable. Although refining stopped, gathering, grinding, bagging and carting by rail from the Salt Works continued into the 1950s. The Salt Works were demolished after World War II; the stack in 1947 and the buildings in 1959.
Aboriginal Prison History

‘The bold experiment’
On 25th April 1829, the HMS Challenger arrived at Cockburn Sound under the command of Captain Charles Howe Fremantle, setting the scene for the foundation of the Swan River Colony. Before long, conflict erupted between the colonials and the native Nyungar population who were displaced from their traditional runs, hunting grounds and water sources. As is often the case, those who resisted the invasion were considered troublemakers and criminals and found themselves incarcerated and punished. Notable Nyungar leaders from this period include Midgegooroo and his son Yagan (who was for a time imprisoned in the Round House at Fremantle and later on Carnac Island, before escaping), both of whom paid with their lives.

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup received its first six Aboriginal prisoners under a small party of soldiers on 17 August 1838. The prisoners’ crimes ranged from stealing butter to murdering an Aboriginal woman in the streets of Perth. As no preparation had been made to accommodate them, the guards sheltered in a cave near Bathurst Point and at night the prisoners were chained to a tree. After a few days, these first prisoners escaped by breaking free of their chains and stealing the only boat on the Island, which they had been trained to row while on Garden Island. One drowned, one was killed by his fellow convicts, and three survivors were later recaptured. Edward Watson, whose father was Superintendent of the Boys’ Reformatory from 1881 to 1901, writes in his memoirs, entitled ‘Rottnest: Its Tragedy and Its Glory’:

Thus at Rottnest in the year 1838 began martyrdom of aboriginal prisoners that lasted for 74 years (Watson 1939, p.15).

Prior to the decision to use Rottnest Island/Wadjemup as a prison, the famous Nyungar warrior, Yagan, and his companions Donmera and Ningina, had been exiled to Carnac Island in 1832, but they had soon escaped back to the mainland.

The historian Neville Green, who has undertaken extensive research on Rottnest Island/Wadjemup prison history with the assistance of Susan Moon and others, has identified three distinct phases in the history of the Island as an Aboriginal prison:

Plan showing the location of the Aboriginal Penal Establishment buildings
The first, 1838–49, might be regarded as a humanitarian period when the intention was not merely to punish but also to rehabilitate the prisoners into colonial society. The second stage, 1855–1902, was a grim period when more than 3,000 prisoners arrived on the Island. In the final stage, 1902–31, Rottnest Island became an annex of Fremantle Prison (Green and Moon 1997:14).

Sending Aboriginal prisoners to Rottnest Island/Wadjemup, rather than incarcerating them in European style gaols where they were not coping well, was supposedly based on humanitarian intentions on the part of Governor Stirling and his successor Governor Hutt. It had become apparent that the gaols in Perth and Fremantle were unsuitable for Aboriginal prisoners who were suffering physical and mental trauma which led to repeated escapes and recaptures. With respect to the new establishment on the Island, Hutt wrote, ‘it is the instruction and improvement of the natives that is desired more than their punishment’ (Hutt, quoted in Watson 1939, p.12).

Under this ‘bold experiment’, to borrow Green & Moon’s (1997) phrase, Aboriginal prisoners were to have the limited freedom of the Island and, after Superintendent Vincent’s administration at least, this was the case on Sundays when they were allowed to roam, hunt and fish. They were also permitted to perform corroborees. As prisoners, they were set to work erecting many of the buildings and other structures that still survive on the Island, including the seawall and lighthouses, and making the penal establishment a self-sustaining enterprise through cultivating the land, gathering wood, catching fish and collecting salt from the lakes. Most of these tasks, particularly the building and agricultural activities, were completely foreign to their cultural practices. Hutt believed that the skills acquired by the natives while serving out sentences ‘may be advantageous to them after their release from imprisonment’ (Hutt, quoted in Watson 1939, p.12) and that they would become useful workers for, rather than enemies of, the colony.

However, Rottnest Island/Wadjemup was, first and foremost, a penal establishment designed from the start to be a deterrent to the natives against committing what the Protector of Natives, Charles Symmons, described as ‘acts of aggression’ against the settlers (Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal (NSW: 1851 - 1904), Monday 14 April 1890, p.4). The following is an extract from a history of the establishment published in the Bathurst Free Press journal in 1890:

The majority of the prisoners were under sentence for periods ranging from six months to six years, but there were a few who were condemned to remain on the Island ‘for the term of their natural lives’. Alas! poor wretches: not a few of them filled the measure of their ‘natural lives’ on the Island, although they were only short-lived criminals (Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal (NSW: 1851 - 1904), Monday 14 April 1890, p.4).

One early English settler, Edward Wilson Landor, who briefly visited the Island while waiting for a pilot boat from Fremantle in August 1841, a mere three years after the first prisoners arrived on the Island, referred to Rottnest Island/Wadjemup in his memoirs as ‘The Prison-Island’ and his account gives an altogether less idealistic impression of the establishment’s foundation than espoused by Hutt:

… As it would have entailed a serious expense upon the colony to have had to maintain … prisoners in a gaol in the capital, his Excellency determined to establish a penal settlement at Rottnest, and this he accordingly accomplished, with very good effect. At the time we visited the island, there were about twenty native prisoners in charge of a superintendent and a few soldiers.

The prisoners were employed in cultivating a sufficient quantity of ground to produce their own food. It was they also who had built the superintendent’s residence; and whenever there was nothing else to do, they were exercised in carrying stone to the top of a high hill, on which a lighthouse was proposed to be built. … [The establishment] is maintained at very little expense to the colony, as the prisoners grow their own vegetables, and might easily be made to produce flour enough for their own consumption (Landor 1847/1998:35–36).
By the end of the nineteenth century, however, Hutt’s experiment had become ‘an expensive and inhumane failure’ and when the native establishment reopened in 1855 after a six-year hiatus, it did so as ‘a prison without rehabilitation’ and became ‘one of the most infamous penal hell-holes in Western Australia’ (Green and Moon 1997:14; Green 2011:84; Green 1984:185). As Landor observed during his brief visit to the ‘prison island’,

The Governor has certainly shown very good judgement in the formation of this penal establishment. It is the dread of the natives throughout the colony; and those prisoners who are released inspire among their fellows the greatest horror and dismay by their tales of the hardships they have suffered. No punishment can be more dreadful to these savages—the most indolent race in the world—than being compelled to work; and as their idleness brings them occasionally in contact with the superintendent’s lash, their recollections and recounts of Rottnest are of the most dreadful description. Certain, however, it is, that nothing has tended so much to keep the Aborigines in good order as the establishment of this place of punishment (Landor 1847/1998:36).

This description seems a far cry from the early rhetoric and noble intentions. In December 1842, a Perth solicitor named Clark wrote to the Secretary of the Aborigines Society in London:

You have very likely heard that a Native Penitentiary has been established on the Island of Rottnest, about sixteen miles from the mainland. To this place natives who have been found guilty of spearing sheep, pigs, &c., because white men kill their kangaroos, or who commit other offences against laws which they do not understand, are transported for such a number of years as each case may warrant, under the plenitude of authority assumed by the local Government (Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal (NSW : 1851 - 1904), Monday 14 April 1890, p.4).

In this same year (1842), Henry Trigg, the engineer who supervised the building of the first lighthouse on the Island, observed weeping prisoners sitting along the beach. They were gazing across the sea at the mainland, watching the smoke rising from the campfires of their kinsfolk who were tortuously restrained which Europeans would have looked upon as enjoyable (Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal (NSW : 1851 - 1904), Tuesday 15 April 1890, p.4).

It is easy to see why the natives lived in such fear of Rottnest when one reads of the infamous career of Henry Vincent, who served as Superintendent of the Penal Establishment from 1839—49 and again from 1855—67, and made the prisoners’ lives anything but ‘enjoyable’. Vincent is remembered to this day as a ‘devilishly cruel’ and sadistic man with a violent and uncontrollable temper. His brutality towards the prisoners has become legendary and he has been described as possibly the harshest gaoler in Australian history (Stasiuk 2013:104). As Watson put it:

When Henry Vincent (Koko-but One-eyed) as the natives called him [sic], walked briskly up the little wooden jetty and stepped ashore at Rottnest a sinister darkness clouded the destiny of the aboriginal prisoners. Under his malign control they suffered despicable cruelties for a period of twenty two years (Watson 1939, p.17).

Watson accounts ‘almost daily acts of cruelty’ inflicted on the native prisoners by Vincent and his men, including reports that he routinely beat and on one occasion personally ripped off part of a prisoner’s ear. His son, William Vincent, was sentenced to three months’ hard labour for beating another ill and elderly prisoner named Dehan with a bunch of keys, which caused Dehan to later die in his cell. Instead of hard labour, William served his sentence working at the police stables and was later appointed to the police force himself. However, it is believed that William took the blame for killing Dehan in order to protect his father who was the real assailant. There were also rumours that Henry Vincent, bluntly described by Watson as a ‘criminal’, murdered and secretly buried two other native prisoners, a claim apparently dismissed by the authorities as absurd (Watson 1939, p.17–23).

Vincent’s severity did not pass unnoticed among all his white contemporaries, however, and ‘the name of Henry Vincent became a by-word in Perth and Fremantle for all that was brutal and cruel’ (Watson 1939, p.19). The solicitor, Clark, in his letter to the Aborigines Society in London in December 1842 continued:

Several of the native criminals have died on this island, and speculation has been busy regarding the cause of their deaths. It now appears that Vincent forced the prisoners to perform harder work than they could bear, and when their work did not please him, he, like the overseer of a West Indian planter, lashed them repeatedly on the bare back, and one native died from the effects of such a brutal punishment (Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal (NSW : 1851 - 1904), Tuesday 15 April 1890, p.4).

A little confinement, even as easy as that of Rottnest, was sufficient to break the heart of men who until the white men invaded their country did not know what even a day’s deprivation of freedom was; and they quickly fretted out their lives under the restraint which Europeans would have looked upon as enjoyable (Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal (NSW : 1851 - 1904), Monday 14 April 1890, p.4).
Clark, who was apparently a ‘thorn in the side of the colonial authorities’ and had ‘more than one writing duel’ with the Governor and the Protector of Aborigines, went on to warn that:

… the extreme cruelty of this Western Australian overseer must be apparent, and may be attended with dangerous consequences to the whites, from an exasperated black population smarting under conceived wrongs. Such facts have been related to Governor Hutt for some time, but he has neglected to notice them, until roused from his apathy by the voice of public indignation (Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal (NSW : 1851 - 1904), Tuesday 15 April 1890, p.4).

In 1843, the Native Interpreter of Perth, Francis Armstrong, was dispatched to Rottnest by Governor Hutt to report on the native establishment. Although Armstrong found Vincent’s administration to be satisfactory in many ways, he concluded his report with the comment ‘I can say nothing in favour of the apparent severity with which the natives are treated at Rottnest’ (Watson 1939, p.18).

As reported by Clark, the atrocities went overlooked for several years by the Protector of Aborigines, Charles Symmons, and Governor Hutt who apparently regarded them as being ‘as false as they are malicious’ (Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal (NSW : 1851 - 1904), Wednesday 16 April 1890, p.4). However, an overseer named Joseph Morris, who had reportedly collected depositions from several native prisoners about the ill treatment they had received (which the Superintendent then allegedly stole from his waistcoat), finally got Hutt’s attention (Watson 1939, p.19). An inquiry was held on 7 August 1846 under the chairmanship of Symmons at which several witnesses, including soldiers stationed at Rottnest, gave evidence of various acts of cruelty and brutality including more than one account of the incident concerning the prisoner’s ear (which Vincent had allegedly partially ripped off) and an incident concerning two natives who were allegedly shot and injured during an apparent escape attempt. One soldier told the inquiry:

I consider Mr. Vincent treats the natives very severely. I have seen him beat the natives more severely than I thought necessary. He used to hit them with all his might. Mr. Vincent has [sic] a gun with him in the Prison yard when I saw the natives bleeding. None of the soldiers took a gun out of the Barracks that night (Watson 1939, p.20).

However, the inquiry proved ineffective. As Watson explains, ‘Although it was conclusively proven that Henry Vincent was guilty of gross cruelty towards the native prisoners, no action was taken against him’. Hutt had retired and left the colony prior to the inquiry, though it was Watson’s view that had he remained ‘there is little doubt that the Superintendent would have been retired from a position for which he was by nature and temperament totally unqualified’ (Watson 1939, p.21).

The so-called ‘humanitarian period’ had ended in 1849 when the establishment was temporarily closed and Vincent was made gaoler at Perth. During this period, native prisoners were put to work on road gangs on the mainland. However, as before, this proved too expensive and troublesome and in 1855 the penal establishment was reopened and native prisoners were returned to ‘the happy little Island’. Soon after, Vincent accidentally set fire to the prison while attempting to flush out some escaped natives from a thicket which he set alight, which led to a new prison (the Quod) having to be built (Watson 1939, p.31).

In contrast, Captain William Dockwery Jackson, who took over as Superintendent on Vincent’s retirement in 1867, is fondly remembered by Watson as a man ‘whose intelligent and kindly treatment of the aborigines stands almost unparalleled in the history of the native prisons’ and a man whom the natives came to regard ‘as a friend and protector more than as a gaoler’ (Watson 1939, p.35). A brighter side to prison life reportedly emerged under Captain Jackson and an ‘era of prosperity’ dawned during which the productivity of the Island in terms of crops, salt production and other enterprises greatly improved. Watson describes how on Sundays prisoners were at liberty to roam the island until 4pm, spending their time fishing and hunting wallabies:

They often gathered around a temporary camp fire on a Sunday afternoon on the slopes of Mt. Herschel. As a rule they seemed fairly happy, but sometimes one could sense the restlessness under-lying their captivity. Sitting brooding and crooning by a tiny fire on a wintry afternoon they would sometimes talk to us of their country. It was then that a look of pain and longing on many a sad-eyed face told of the yearning for their own women and children and for the simple joys of their wild tribal life (Watson 1939, pp.89–90).
They were also permitted to pursue other activities including holding corroborees, a practice continued under Jackson’s successor, W. H. Timperley:

W. H. Timperley was firm but kind towards the native prisoners. Like his predecessor he encouraged them to play cricket and marbles and to hold corroborees. Dry colours, red, ochre, white and cobalt blue were given to them for wilgie. Decorated with the totems of their particular tribes they presented a weird appearance and seemed to get a great deal of enjoyment from their war dances and hunting pantomimes (Watson 1939, p.57).

There were other, far more sombre, rituals carried out at the prison including at least five executions, most of which were for murdering white men. The execution of Wanjibiddi, for example, took place on Rottnest on 18 June 1883. Described as ‘a rather old man of powerful physique’ (Green and Moon 1997:295), Wanjibiddi was convicted of murdering a white man from the Gascoyne district who ‘had taken a native woman away from her man’ (Watson 1939, p.52). Watson, who was 13 at the time, witnessed the execution first hand and provides the following vivid account:

As he stepped from his cell into the bright sunlight Wanjibiddi gave a quick startled look at the gallows looming in front of him. Then pausing a moment to gaze into the solemn faces of the natives he straightened himself and walked with firmness and dignity up the stairway of the scaffold and stood on the spot indicated to him by the warder.

Erect and undaunted he stood looking toward the south…. Standing thus, calm, tall and dignified, he presented a magnificent picture of primitive and uncultured manhood.

Bravely he faced his end. Alone, no soul to speak comfort unto him – no comrade to bid him farewell. No divinity to offer him consolation. Unbefriended? NO! Not quite. There was at least one soul that sent up a plea for his ultimate salvation – Francis Armstrong [the Native Interpreter].

A slight tremor passed through his frame as the hangman adjusted the noose and placed the blindfolding bag over his head. No cringing weakling here! The blackfellow met his death like a man and a warrior.

The hangman struck back the bolt; the trap door fell. Wanjibiddi was launched into eternity. The death-like silence of the prison yard was broken by startled ejaculations of terror from the awe-stricken natives, and two of them overcome by shock fell fainting to the ground….

The body was then taken down and placed in a cell to await internment.

Several days later Shamrock was asked what he thought of the execution. He replied ‘Me big fellow frightened’ and said also that all the natives and he were startled and terrified, for on the night of the execution the spirit or jingi of the executed native, as he called it, had come scratching at the cell doors seeking to gain admission.

The execution cast a gloom over the Island for several days. Silence deep and profound replaced the usual chatter and noise of the prison yard.

Even Captain Jackson (who always treated the natives with great humanity) lost his hearty spontaneity and it was some days before his robust greeting boomed forth again (Watson 1939, pp.53–54).

Being forced to witness an execution such as this must have been particularly traumatic for the rest of the prisoners who were lined up and forced to watch. There are those in the Aboriginal community today who believe that this was a deliberate attempt to traumatise the Aboriginal population more generally, and send a clear message that resistance to the occupation would not be tolerated (Stasiuk 2013:136). In addition to those executed on Rottnest, there were also others who were taken back to their own country to be executed.

The second phase of the establishment’s history, dubbed ‘the grim years’ by Green (1855–1902), was marked by overcrowding—which resulted from the increased number of prisoners arriving from the colony’s frontiers—and disease. The new prison, known as the Quod, was completed in 1864–65 and was designed to accommodate 150 prisoners (Watson 1939, p.32), though other accounts put the maximum capacity much lower at 106 (Green and Moon 1997:24). This may have seemed adequate at the time it was completed, as there were 51 inmates, but by 1883 there were 167 prisoners crammed into the cells and more than 60 died in the winter of that year from influenza (Green and Moon 1997:24–25).
With the establishment of regional gaols, the need for a native prison at Rottnest decreased and so the penal establishment formally ceased operating in 1902. However, the Island continued to receive low-risk prisoners as an annex of Fremantle Prison until 1931. These men were set to work on maintenance tasks for what immediately became a holiday resort, and they continued to be put to work and housed at the salt works. The cells of the Quod, where many Aboriginal men had languished in agony and died, or were stored post-execution, were converted into accommodation rooms for tourists as part of The Rottnest Lodge which also incorporated the Boys’ Reformatory (built 1879).

Crimes and Origins of the Aboriginal Prisoners
The native prisoners who were sent to Rottnest Island/Wadjemup initially came from the areas surrounding the Canning and Swan Rivers, as this was the area in which the colony had first been established. This was the traditional territory of people who would now largely identify as Nyungar or Whadjuk. As the Swan River colony expanded throughout the nineteenth century, and conflict between settlers and native populations spread, prisoners began to arrive from all over Western Australia including the South West, Goldfields, Gascoyne, Pilbara and Kimberley regions.

The offences for which these men were convicted and sentenced included murder (of settlers and other natives), assault, larceny, drunkenness, tribal speарings, stock stealing or killing, and absconding (Green and Moon 1997). ‘Absconders’ reportedly account for about 10% of Rottnest prisoners and as Green explains:

Aboriginal men, women and children employed on pastoral stations fell within the bounds of the Masters and Servants Act and were ‘signed on’ as indentured servants. In practice, however, those associated with the original lease area were regarded as a form of ‘property’ owned by the pastoralist who signed up as many as possible to ensure sufficient labour for the busy shearing season. During the slack months the workers were sent into the bush to fend for themselves and if they didn’t return they were considered to be ‘absconders’ and a warrant could be issued for their arrest (Green 2011:82).

By far the most common offence by 1884, however, was stock killing (Green 2011:79). For tens of thousands of years, Aboriginal people had survived by hunting the animals that roamed their traditional lands, such as kangaroos, bush turkeys, goannas and so on. This fundamental aspect of their traditional way of life was the means by which they had survived in this harsh continent for millennia. Killing sheep or cattle, the new species of game which suddenly appeared throughout their familiar landscapes, led to men being taken away for doing something that for them was an instinctive and natural part of daily life and increasingly necessary as traditional resources were depleted or became less accessible as a result of colonisation and pastoralism. They were removed for breaching alien laws which they didn’t understand, and then charged and sentenced by men of a race they had never seen before, speaking a strange language they could not comprehend. They were marched in chains to gaols such as Roebourne and from there taken by boat (an alien mode of transport) to Rottnest Island/Wadjemup which was outside their traditional territory to be housed alongside other men from different territories with different languages and traditional laws. Many of the sentences were found to be illegally harsh and lengthy and the result of ‘an over-zealous prosecution of the law’, with guilty pleas often secured ‘at the muzzle of the rifle’ (Green 2011:70–81).

Not all stock killings were hapless mistakes, however, as many pastoralists were met with violent resistance amounting to what might easily be described as a guerrilla war. Some of the pastoralists and other leading figures of the time were unsatisfied that the Island prison was a sufficient deterrent to the natives, and considered it ineffective in stopping the destruction of stock and attacks upon settlers. They considered Rottnest Island/Wadjemup to be ‘a pleasure trip’, a ‘most grandmotherly thing’ and ‘a place where Aborigines grew fat and were then released to re-offend’ and harsher measures such as flogging were introduced in addition to imprisonment on the Island (Green 2011:83–84). For modern observers, however, the justice system that was sending Aboriginal men to the Island, most of whom would never return, was one that ‘placed punishment and removal ahead of justice’ (Green 2011:84).

It would be a distortion to regard all of those sent to Rottnest Island/Wadjemup as heroic defenders of their people and their homeland, however. Convictions including murder of children and native women are recorded, though traditional Aboriginal Law had its own means of dealing with such people.

The Impact of Rottnest
Reflecting on one example where 216 Aboriginal men were brought to Carnarvon to face charges over a twelve month period to January 1892, Green noted that ‘The removal of 216 men from one area must have had a devastating impact upon the Indigenous economy, family life and cultural maintenance’ (Green 2011:83).

The trauma that these policies and practices inflicted on individuals and communities is difficult to imagine or indeed understand. Many of the men sent to the Island prison from regions like the Pilbara, for example, had never even seen the sea before, and many would never see their homelands or their own people again. Due to the high mortality rates suffered on the Island, many were in effect given death sentences or transportation for life for what we might now consider to be relatively minor offences such as petty theft or drunkenness. Many died alone, in agony and despair.

Even if they survived their sentences, there was no provision to repatriate ex-prisoners to their homelands. They were simply returned to the mainland and left to fend for themselves and
some are known to have died of exhaustion and starvation, far from home in foreign territory attempting to make their way back home to their own kin. Many former prisoners ‘ended their days in bush humps south of Fremantle earning sporadic employment as shepherds and pit-sawyers’ (Berson 1978:39).

Ex-prisoners from other parts of the State also intermixed with the local Nyungar population, contributing further to the disintegration of traditional cultural and social networks. The anthropologist Ronald Berndt argued that the establishment of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup prison, along with the effects of other colonial policies such as the removal of children from their parents and introduced diseases, ‘contributed to the destruction of traditional culture’ in the South West. Citing Neville (1936), he states that during the 1850s, ‘ticket-of-leave men and parties of convicts in the bush mixed with the natives...’. He also quotes Hammond (1933) who stated that a mere fifty years after European settlement had begun ‘the South-West was left with scarcely a true-blooded Aboriginal in it’ (Berndt 1979:87).

Of course, it was not just the Nyungars of the South West who suffered. Those who were taken from their traditional lands in the more remote parts of the State for transgressing the white man’s alien laws included traditional Lawmen (keepers of timeless cultural knowledge and social norms), warriors and leaders of their people. Many of the Aboriginal men sent to Rottnest Island/Wadjemup were significant people in their communities, including leaders who were the apical ancestors of native title holders today. Their names are largely forgotten in the wider community, but they are recorded in sources such as Green & Moon (1997) and Winder (1989) and, of course, are remembered by their descendants.

Their removal not only crippled active resistance to the invasion, it effectively destroyed established social structures and led to the gradual decline of traditional knowledge and culture across the State, all of which has had lasting ramifications for the Aboriginal people of WA down to the present day.

Many of the warriors of the inland Pilbara who were sent to Rottnest for cattle stealing and resisting the pastoralists had been born prior to the establishment of pastoral stations and the imposition of white sovereignty over their traditional country. Ironically, once they had been removed and white men had taken their land, their children became among the first generation to work on the vast pastoral stations that spread over their ancestral homelands (Brehaut & Vitenbergs (eds.) 2001).
Deaths in Custody
Between 1838, when the first prisoners arrived, and 1931 when the last prisoner left the Island, more than 3,700 Aboriginal men and boys from throughout the State were sent to Rottnest Island/Wadjemup. It is estimated that more than 10% of these men and boys died there, though Green and Moon have calculated that the total number of deaths in custody could be as many as 400 if one includes those who died on the mainland while serving their sentences, or died while under escort (Green and Moon 1997:59). It is believed that this makes Rottnest Island/Wadjemup the largest Aboriginal deaths in custody site in Australia and the Quod in particular the largest deaths in custody building in Australia. However, the actual number of Aboriginal people buried on the Island will probably never be known. Those who died are believed to mostly be buried in unmarked graves in the Aboriginal Burial Ground to the northwest of the Quod. These graves lay forgotten until the 1960s when human remains were reportedly unearthed and desecrated, with further remains dug up during trench digging for sewerage pipes in the early 1970s. For a number of years tourists camped on the burial ground in what was known as Tentland, and a World War One internment camp and other structures were also built over it. Ground Probing Radar (GPR) surveys have been carried out in an attempt to determine the extent of the burial ground but, for a range of reasons, its commemoration and management remain divisive and unresolved. Following the last GPR survey in 2004, Tentland was removed and relocated away from the Aboriginal Burial Ground.

The controversy that surrounds the burial ground at Rottnest–probably the largest Aboriginal cemetery in Western Australia–continues to contaminate relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to this day. Despite consultations over the past several decades, the burial ground and those men and boys who are buried there are still without any memorial other than some basic signage. In contrast, tombstones mark graves in the small European cemetery (Horton (ed.) 1994:956).

It is believed that at least five prisoners were hanged in the gaol for killing mostly white people–though Watson comments that ‘Natives do not kill white men without provocation’ (Watson 1939, p.52)–and some died through accidents including drowning in The Basin. However, the vast majority of deaths were caused by introduced diseases which were exacerbated by the poor sanitation and cramped conditions of the prison cells. In one winter alone (1883), sixty prisoners out of a prison population of 150 died from influenza.

The following is an extract from a letter dated June 1883 which was published in the Inquirer newspaper and brought the plight of the prisoners to Perth’s attention:

Near the fire lies a figure of one who once stood erect in the pride of manhood … but look at him now, and what a brutalised being he seems, naked to the skin, without any covering but a few noisome rags around his loins; rolling in anguish on the cinder-covered floor, his limbs contracted with paroxysms of pain, his every joint and sinew wrenching and twisted with agony which finds expression in appalling cries and piteous moans. There he lies – alone! (reproduced in Watson 1939, p.86).

Several prisoners gave evidence to a Commission of Inquiry in the mid-1880s, and these provide further rare insights into the miserable experiences of these men. Common references are made to the cold in winter–which took a particularly heavy toll on men brought to the Island from the tropic north–and the inadequacy of the blankets and clothes provided, as well as the overcrowded and damp conditions. Echoing Landor’s description from forty years earlier, one of the prisoners reported that ‘Rottnest is dreaded by the natives’ while another described it as ‘a bad place’. The warders, however, are commonly referred to as kind (Green and Moon 1997).

The Prison’s Role in the Development of the State
Rottnest Island/Wadjemup plays a key role in the history of the development of the Swan River Colony and the State of Western Australia, and the expansion of the colony is directly reflected in the prison population of the establishment. As Green has noted,

There was a marked increase in the number of prisoners sent to Rottnest from the 1860s, as the pastoral frontier expanded… This reached a striking peak in the 1880s. Closer inspection of the data showed that in 1884 for example, prisoners from the Murchison and Gascoyne regions accounted for more than half of the Rottnest prisoners, with the most convictions for stock killing… (Green 2011:78).

For many contemporary Aboriginal people, including several interviewed in Stasiuk’s documentary, ‘Wadjemup: Black Prison, White Playground’, the policy of placing native prisoners on the Island was a deliberate tactic aimed at eliminating those who resisted the occupation of their land and threatened the success of the fledgling colony. They also believe that their ancestors were imprisoned for no other crime than being warriors and leaders of their people.

The Island also plays a role in the development of the pearling industry in the nineteenth century. In addition to the manpower obtained through coercion by ‘native hunters’ or ‘black-birders’ who press-ganged Aboriginal people from coastal and inland regions, Aborigines were also brought up from Rottnest Island/Wadjemup prison to work for the pearlers. There is no evidence that these men were ever returned to their home territories. Conversely, Aborigines were sent to Rottnest Island/Wadjemup as punishment for absconding from pearling masters (Goulder & Associates (1998) cited in Thalanyji 2004:53).

The Aboriginal prisoners provided most of the manpower that sourced the raw materials for and built the main buildings, structures and road infrastructure on the Island, many of which survive and are still used today. They also worked the salt works, which was a thriving industry, and undertook other labour that was needed to make the establishment viable. In this respect, Rottnest Island/Wadjemup can be seen as a microcosm of the development of the State of Western Australia where Aboriginal manpower played an important, but often forgotten, role.
The Legacy of the Aboriginal Prison

The penal establishment on Rottnest Island/Wadjemup was a purpose-built Aboriginal prison—believed to be the only one of its kind in Australia—for almost half of the State’s history, and yet it is a contested history that is almost entirely forgotten and/or ignored by the wider Western Australian community, for whom the Island is simply Perth’s holiday playground.

However, progress has been made and the Rottnest Island Authority acknowledges that:

The pain suffered by Aboriginal people and the social disintegration that resulted from nearly 100 years of incarceration on the Island is still strongly felt by Aboriginal communities across the State today (RIMP 2009–14:43).

Wadjemup has timeless pre-colonial significance, and a significance born out of its more recent prison history. Contemporary Aboriginal people across the State continue to tell stories about their ancestors’ experiences at the Aboriginal prison on the Island, including stories of escapes by swimming or by shape-shifting into beings such as a fly or a crow, or even a ‘roley-poly’ (tumbleweed) to escape over the waves to the mainland. Although there is no historical evidence to support stories of escape by swimming (Green and Moon 1997:72), the fact that they exist demonstrates the lasting legacy of the place in the social and cultural life of diverse language groups across the State.

It is also little wonder, given its wretched post-contact history, that many Aboriginal people find it almost impossible to reconcile the two faces of the Island, summed up in what filmmaker Glen Stasiuk has termed ‘Wadjemup: Black Prison, White Playground’. They find it understandably difficult to come to terms with the fact that predominantly white tourists continue to relax and have fun apparently oblivious to that fact that in the not-too-distant past, little more than a century, the ancestors of Aboriginal people were imprisoned, brutalised, suffered and died; and that the Quod—considered to be the largest deaths in custody site in Australia—is slept in by tourists, while those who died in those same rooms lie nearby in almost forgotten, unmarked graves.

For the first peoples of Western Australia and their descendants, the prison is routinely compared to Alcatraz, Robben Island and even Auschwitz, comparisons which if nothing else highlight the lasting trauma that the establishment has inflicted, and continues to inflict, on the Aboriginal psyche.

For many Aboriginal people all over the State, Rottnest Island/Wadjemup is a symbol of suffering, loss and displacement and remains synonymous with oppression, dispossession, occupation, and the virtual destruction of a people. Visible as it is from the mainland, it continues to cast a dark shadow, a constant reminder of a painful history which many white people remain largely oblivious of and ambivalent about.

This was not lost on all white contemporaries of the establishment, however, as the history published in the Bathurst Free Press in 1890 illustrates:

*With the Rottnest prison on one side as the instrument of civilisation, and the firearms of the police and the settlers on the other, to say nothing of the dire diseases and scarcity of food which contact with the civilising strangers involved—it must be confessed that the lot of the Western Australian aboriginal was not by any means a happy one* (Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal (NSW : 1851 - 1904), Saturday 19 April 1890, p.4).

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup has recently been described as a place of unresolved harm (McGarty quoted in Stasiuk 2013:198), a festering wound that needs to be healed and a blight on the history of Perth that cannot be ignored any longer in post-Apology Australia. The men—many of whom were significant men from their communities—and boys who suffered and died on the Island, and sent there for spurious or minor crimes by today’s standards, still lie largely forgotten in unmarked graves. Not all of those convicted and sentenced can be regarded as freedom fighters, prisoners-of-war, or innocent victims of oppressive colonial policies—the crimes recorded suggest that at least some deserved to be punished—but all were human beings who deserve dignity through recognition, not to be forgotten by future generations, white or black.

Because of its unique and significant history, Rottnest Island/Wadjemup has the potential to become one of the most important focal points for reconciliation and healing between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people not just in Western Australia but for Australia as a nation. For this to occur, the pain and shame of the past needs to be acknowledged, and the untold history of the Island needs to be brought into the open in a much more conspicuous and inclusive way. There are those in the Aboriginal community who know that this is a painful, but shared past, which belongs not only to Aboriginal people, but to all people of Western Australia and the nation as a whole, and who feel that Rottnest Island/Wadjemup has the potential to be a catalyst for genuine reconciliation and healing (Stasiuk 2013).
Building the Settlement
Prison Superintendent Vincent supervised the construction of almost all the limestone buildings in the Settlement (with the exception of the Boys' Reformatory) as well as the Sea Wall by Aboriginal prisoners. Mostly constructed during the 1840s and 1850s, many of these buildings are still extant and they are some of the earliest colonial buildings in Western Australia. The Aboriginal men and boys imprisoned on the Island also provided the labour for the telegraph installations and in 1892 cleared all the existing roads across the Island as well as cutting a new road for a quarry to supply limestone for the light house construction.

The first prison built on the Island was constructed in the 1840s, behind the site of the Superintendent's Residence, using Aboriginal labour. However in 1856, Settlement structures including the front section of the two-storey prison and workshop building, stables, barns and piggery were burned down.

Superintendent Vincent had reportedly lit the fire with the intention of flushing two escaped prisoners out of their hiding place in nearby bush. The prevailing winds at the time were blowing away from the buildings; however, the wind changed direction, which brought the flames into the settlement.

For the next eight years the Hay Store and Cells (now the Thomson Bay General Store) housed the prisoners until 1864, when the Quod was constructed. Other buildings associated with the prison establishment included the First Superintendent's House (c1841), the Military Barracks (c1844), the Second Superintendent's House (1848), the School and Chapel (1856), Mill and Hay Store (1857), the Catechist (1863), Lomas Cottage (1871). A small prison hospital and morgue (the 'Native Hospital') was also constructed as part of this building campaign.
Each of the buildings was set out with generous spaces between them. Most sat within fenced environs, either stone walled of brush or timber fences. The establishment also included large fenced areas for livestock, crops and vegetable gardens, which produced the food for the prison.

Constrained by the availability of building materials on the Island the buildings were constructed primarily of limestone quarried on the Island with shells burnt for lime, which was used in the mortar, renders and limewash. Brushwood from the tea trees on the Island was used to thatch roofs, however this posed a fire hazard. The lack of timber led to the development of a distinctive and unusual roof structure using split beam trusses (known as ‘Vincent Trusses’) lined with timber boards and limestone slabs then covered with a slurry of lime and sand. The timber doors and windows were transported from the mainland having been fabricated by convicts at Fremantle Prison.
In 1848 Governor Charles Fitzgerald expressed an interest in a summer residence on Rottnest. British Colonial Governors all over the Empire looked to find the most pleasant area available within their purvey to retreat from the summer heat found in the colonies.

Governors and their families usually spent up to two months each year on the Island, bringing over the servants, various hunting paraphernalia and even carriages. Governor George Weld wrote of one of his sojourns on the Island:

*I have been staying lately at Rottnest, my country or rather island home, and have had Mr Howard a Lincolnshire person – one of the good old school – staying with me. We were up every morning, and out with guns at 6am, and have some fair sport: a mixed bag of quail, pigeons and sand pipers. Later in the day we used to go out sea-fishing. In fact we had a jolly week.*

Designed in the Victorian Tudor architectural style, the Governor’s Residence is the most impressive building on the Island, with its two-storey verandahs (added in 1878) and its crenelated parapets, forming a distinctive landmark on Thomson Bay. The last official occupant was Sir Gerald Strickland in 1913, when a substantial house overlooking King George Sound in Albany was purchased for use by the next three successive governors.
Following the establishment of the Rottnest Island Board of Control in 1917, the Governor’s Residence was converted to accommodation facilities for holidaymakers in 1919. The sale of liquor on Rottnest Island/Wadjemup was strictly regulated despite attempts in 1913 and 1938 to provide for licensed sales. Alcohol could only be brought from the mainland or purchased on the ferry. However, in 1953 the building was converted into the licensed Rottnest Hotel, under publican F. R. Mann.

Major modifications and extensions to the building have been made over the years, including the addition of several short-stay units for tourists and more recently a new bar/restaurant facility. The major architectural features of the residence are still clearly prominent, although the outbuildings and stables are no longer extant.
In 1881, the Western Australian Government decided Rottnest would be a suitable location to also ‘reform’ non-Aboriginal boys who had come into conflict with the law. The Boys’ Reformatory was opened in 1881 next to the Aboriginal Prison, and operated for 20 years.

Carpenter John Watson was asked to construct the Boys’ Reformatory buildings on Rottnest Island/Wadjemup, which included a workshop, kitchen, two large dormitories, a schoolroom and four small cells. Located on the southern side of the Quod, the building was constructed with limestone walls, timber floors and a pitched, shingled roof. Upon completion of the building work, Watson stayed on as the Reformatory Superintendent and to teach the boys carpentry, joinery and gardening. The boys also constructed a tennis court at Government House and re-established the old garden site next to Garden Lake. There was an average of six boys in the Reformatory from 1884 to 1897, but complaints in 1894 stated that the building was crowded with neglected children sent over to the Island from schools, orphanages and charitable institutions. They, with the juvenile offenders, attended school daily for some hours under Samuel Walcott, the Rottnest schoolmaster. The boys were employed in the workshops, on buildings, in the garden and on the farm. Some of those on vagrancy charges were released for domestic services.
The Reformatory closed in September 1901 and the 14 boys were transferred to the Salvation Army Industrial School at Collie opened for that purpose. During the summers from 1903 to 1908, the girls from the Perth Orphanage for Protestant Girls holidayed on Rottnest for three to four weeks every year and are believed to have been housed in the Reformatory buildings during these holidays (WA Superintendent of Public Charities Reports, 1905-1909). From 1909, the former Reformatory buildings have been used as general holiday accommodation and are now operated as part of the Rottnest Lodge.
SHIPWRECKS

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup is surrounded by hidden and partly exposed reefs and can be buffeted by nor’ westerly winter gales as well as very strong sou’ west summer sea ‘breezes’. It is situated almost 20 kilometres to the west of the port of Fremantle, meaning that much of the maritime traffic to Western Australia’s major port passes close by. More than fourteen ships have been wrecked within the waters off the Island.

The shipwrecks around the Island tell the story, not only of the dangers of maritime journeys, but of the important role that ships played in the lives of Western Australians since the founding of the Swan River Colony. The shipwrecks also tell the story of the changing technology from timber to composite steel and the increase in loading capacity of ships that travelled to and from the colony. The following shipwrecks can be explored in the waters around Rottnest Island/Wadjemup:

- *Transit* (1842), a 124 ton wooden two-masted schooner, from Port Leschenault to Fremantle
- *Gem* (1876), a 52 ton British-built cutter, from Port Irwin to Fremantle carrying wheat, no survivors
- *Lady Elizabeth* (1878), a 658 wooden barque, from Fremantle to Shanghai with a cargo of sandalwood, one life lost

![View of the Shark shipwreck](image)

**Legend:**
1. Transit
2. Gem
3. Lady Elizabeth
4. Macedon
5. Mira Flores
6. Janet
7. Denton Holme
8. Raven
9. City of York
10. Shark
11. Uribes
12. Miwok II
13. Kiryo Maru

![Plan showing the location of shipwrecks](image)
Unlike many other shipwreck sites around Australia, the ones at Rottnest are easily accessible due to the shallow waters around the Island. This makes them very popular for snorkelling and diving as well as important educational sites. Plaques have been located next to most of the wrecks as well as onshore to indicate their locations as part of a ‘wreck trail’ concept produced by the Western Australian Museum in association with the Rottnest Island Authority. In encouraging full access to all the sites, by marking them on navigation charts and by producing interpretive materials in exhibitions, pamphlets and on the plaques, the wrecks have become part of a ‘museum-without-walls’ concept. Many of the wrecks are protected under Commonwealth legislation in the Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976 and State legislation in the Maritime Archaeology Act 1973. The Rottnest Island/Wadjemup Wreck Trail was the first of Western Australia’s heritage trails. It is widely recognised as a leader in the field of interpretation.

- Macedon (1883), a 526 ton British-built iron steamer, from Fremantle to Beagle Bay carrying passengers, luggage and horses
- Mira Flores (1886), a 500 ton iron barque, chartered by Western Australian Shipping Brokers, from London with cargo household goods and farm machinery, crew saved
- Janet (1887), a 211 ton jarrah three-masted schooner, the largest vessel built in Fremantle at the time, from Colombo to Fremantle
- Denton Holme (1890), a 998 ton iron barque, built as the Star of Denmark, from Glasgow to Fremantle
- Raven (1891), a 343 ton British-built three-masted wooden barque, Fremantle to Newcastle, England
- City of York (1899), an 1194 ton iron barque, from San Francisco to Fremantle, twelve lives lost
- Shark (1939), a hooper barge, drifted from moorings at Fremantle
- Uribes (1942), a 118 ton British-built auxiliary schooner, laden with military stores and two motor vehicles
- Anitra (1979), a French yacht which arrived first in the bicentennial Plymouth to Fremantle race and nearing the finish
- Miwok II (1983), an iron barge used for Army Training
- Kiryu Maru I (1984), a Japanese tuna boat on its way to Fremantle

The anchor of the shipwrecked Mira Flores is displayed at the entry point at the main jetty.
PILOT STATION

The Pilot Station, located at the northern end of Thomson Bay, operated between 1848 and 1903 and was staffed by experienced sailors who guided ships around the dangerous reefs and into Fremantle harbour.

Over its 55 years of operation, the Pilot Station used a number of different boats: a double-ended whaleboat, a slightly larger lugger and a small dinghy. A secure boathouse was established in 1846 for the pilot service at the northern end of the seawall. Six years later, quarters for the pilot crew were added to the top. In 1859 another boathouse was built, which now houses a replica pilot boat and a dingy that was once used on the Island.

When the last pilot left in 1903 a new system was established with a signal station set up near Bathurst Lighthouse for the Fremantle Harbour Trust. It was dismantled in 1904 and re-erected near Wadjemup Lighthouse. Once a vessel was sighted, the news was telephoned to the lighthouse in Fremantle and a steam-powered pilot boat dispatched from there. The signal station remained in operation until 1951 when compulsory pilotage was abolished, making the signal station on Rottnest Island/Wadjemup redundant. The signal station was restored in 2002 to prevent its disintegration.

For most travellers to Australia in the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries, Rottnest Island/Wadjemup was the first sight of land and many waited anchored off the Island waiting to be piloted into Fremantle port. It was also the last sight of land for those who travelled back ‘Home’ (to Britain) or left for the wars in Africa, Europe and Asia on Navy ships.
LIGHT STATIONS

Lighthouses played a key role in the pilot boat operations by providing a communication link between the pilot boat station and incoming ships.

In 1842, Henry Trigg, Superintendent of Public Works, was sent to the Island to commence work on the first lighthouse, which was built on Wadjemup Hill. However, although the foundation stone was laid in that year, work progressed slowly. In October 1848, the Governor wrote to London:

Allow me to remind your Lordship that we have built a Lighthouse on the Island of Rottnest at considerable cost and labour and that we are too poor to purchase a Lantern at the present moment; I would therefore in the name of the Colonists, entreat your Lordships assistance with the worshipful Trinity House to supply us with a lantern (on loan) containing such number of Mirrors as will give a good steady light, coloured Dark Red... I name a coloured light, as at certain seasons our Natives, when on their hunting excursions make large fires in the Night (to rouse the game) which might occasionally be mistaken for the light on Rottnest if not coloured.

The Island’s first lighthouse was completed in 1849 on Wadjemup Hill, with Aboriginal prisoner labour and locally quarried stone. Half a century later it was replaced with a new, taller lighthouse also on Wadjemup Hill; and a third was built in 1900 at Bathurst Point following the loss of 11 lives with the wreck of the City of York in 1899. (The anchor from this vessel now stands outside the Accommodation Office on the Island). Bathurst Point and Wadjemup Hill lighthouses remain in operation today, with the latter opened for public tours on 2 November 2005.

The original lighthouse was Western Australia’s first and provided the only marine coastal light until the opening of a lighthouse at Geraldton in 1878. Constructed on Wadjemup Hill, the highest point on the Island and indeed on the whole Swan Coastal Plain, it was also noteworthy as a colonial design, whereas the majority of later lighthouses were designed or imported from Great Britain. Accommodation for the lighthouse keeper was built around the base, also constructed in limestone, with a flat roof and stone floors.

However, ships continued to be wrecked and it was decided to build a new taller and more powerful lighthouse. Construction began in March 1895 and the Premier, Sir John Forrest, laid the foundation stone on 25 April 1895. Limestone was taken from a nearby quarry and transported to the site on a tramway. When completed the new lighthouse stood 112 ft tall. The Governor, Sir Gerard Smith, officially opened the new lighthouse by lighting the lamp for the first time on 17 March 1896 at a ceremony attended by many local dignitaries. Speeches were made on a common theme of ‘this new light symbolises the progress and vigour of the colony’.

Plan showing the location of the lighthouses
New quarters were built for the Head Keeper, and the accommodation at the base of the old lighthouse was retained as quarters for the Assistant Keeper. It is not known exactly when the first lighthouse was demolished, although it was after the completion of the second. A small square stone building adjacent to the present lighthouse is all that remains of its predecessor.

As a major coastal light, Wadjemup Hill Lighthouse came under Commonwealth control in 1915 under the Navigation Act of 1912 (which provided for compulsory acquisition of major lighthouses). The Rottnest Island Authority has now purchased the lighthouse and leased it back to Australian Maritime Safety Authority.

Bathurst Lighthouse was built as a result of the City of York disaster in 1899, which was eventually found to have been due to the inadequate equipment and instructions supplied to the Lighthouse. Erected in 1900, Bathurst Lighthouse is on the north east point of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup. It is a subsidiary light to the Wadjemup Lighthouse in the centre of the Island. Built from local limestone, the tower is painted white with a gold lantern dome with a visibility of 15 nautical miles. The quarters are similar in plan to the Wadjemup quarters, although somewhat simpler in execution. The keeper’s cottage was sold to the Rottnest Island Board, was occupied by Board employees, and is now used as visitor accommodation.
AUSTRALIAN COMMONWEALTH DEFENCE ESTABLISHMENTS

First World War

Western Australia obtained self-government in 1890 and, in 1901, joined five other colonies to form a federation, which divided power between the six states and the Commonwealth government. The Commonwealth was given responsibility for a range of legislative areas, including naval and military defence as well as lighthouses and quarantine.

With the outbreak of World War I, the Commonwealth Defence Department commandeered Rottnest Island/Wadjemup for use as an internment camp for the detention of enemy aliens. This meant that the fledging tourism on the Island was temporarily halted. By early 1915, there were about 700 men of Serbian, Croatian and Dalmatian background housed in tents in the Rottnest Camp. Most had been employed as miners in the goldfields and some were Western Australian residents of alien origin, deemed by the military to be of risk to the security of the Empire. In addition, the Camp held the German officers and crew of three German ships, the SS Neumunster and Thuringen captured off Rottnest Island/Wadjemup by HMAS Pioneer on 16 and 26 August 1914 and the SS Greifswald, detained in Fremantle after docking.

The Western Australian Government was concerned about the overcrowding and the expense of running an internment camp on Rottnest Island/Wadjemup, as well as the loss of revenue from tourism while the camp continued to be located on the Island. By the middle of September 1915, the camp held just over 1,000 enemy aliens and prisoners of war. As conditions at the camp had still not improved, prisoners were transferred to the Holsworthy Internment Camp at Liverpool on the outskirts of Sydney, New South Wales. The Defence Department handed the Island back to the State Government on 1 December 1915, along with £2,000 compensation for damages caused as a consequence of having the internment camp on the Island. This money was used to re-establish recreational and holiday facilities on the Island.
SECOND WORLD WAR

During the 1930s as political tensions rose in Europe, the coastal defence of Australia was enhanced through the strategic placement of gun batteries around the Australian coastline, with the priority placement of 9.2 inch guns in Sydney Harbour and at Rottnest Island/Wadjemup.

The location of the Island was seen as being important to the defence of the important deep water port of Fremantle, the major base for the Allies in the Indian Ocean, as bombardment of any attacking ships could be made from the Island before the ships would come into range of the port. In September 1934, the Prime Minister informed the Western Australian Premier:

I desire to inform you that it is proposed to proceed in the near future with certain important fortification works on Rottnest Island for the protection of the Port of Fremantle. When the plans are further advanced you will be advised in greater detail, especially as to the areas of land which will be used for barrack and armament sites. In the meantime it may be assumed that the work to be undertaken will not only cause any detriment to the island as a holiday resort, but will add considerably to its interest in this respect.

Major construction works commenced on Rottnest in 1935 to establish the Kingstown Barracks and the Bickley and Oliver Hill Batteries. A narrow (3.5 foot) gauge railway from the Army Jetty to Oliver Hill with spur lines to the Kingstown Barracks and Bickley Battery was completed in April 1936. The rail line was particular important as it enabled heavy loads to be carried from the jetty to the building sites and later carried the guns and associated equipment up to the batteries. A 9.2 inch gun barrel and breech mechanism alone weighed 28.4 tonnes. A complete gun turret and all its components weighed 142.2 tonnes. Substantial earthworks in the sandy soil were undertaken at Oliver Hill to construct the two gun turrets with connecting tunnels and operational areas all concealed underground.

Completed in September 1937, Kingstown Barracks was occupied by the 6th Heavy Battery RAA and the 5th Fortress Company RAE. The Barracks complex included the main barrack block, which could accommodate up to 150 personnel, administrative buildings, a small hospital, single officers’ accommodation and officers’ mess plus ten cottages for married personnel. Prior to completion of the Barracks the troops lived in tents pitched on and around the parade ground.

The two 9.2 inch guns at Oliver Hill Battery were proof fired on 21 November 1938. The guns had an effective range of about 29,000 metres and their primary role was counter bombardment. Bickley Battery with two 6 inch guns was proof fired on 25 July 1939. However, this Battery was not officially completed until 22 December 1939. Its primary role was close defence of the shipping channel known as the South Passage between Rottnest and Carnac Islands.

In addition to these developments, four Fortress Observation Posts (FOP) were constructed at Bare Hill, Tree Hill, Mt Herschell and Cape Vlamingh, and a three storey Battery Observation Post (BOP) and the Port War Signal Station (PWSS) were constructed.
at Signal Ridge. Six searchlights with their own engine houses were also installed at strategic locations around the Island to provide illumination so that the guns could be fired at night.

On Sunday 3 September 1939, the two batteries on the Island together with the 6 inch gun batteries at Swanbourne and at Arthur’s Head, Fremantle were placed on war alert. In June 1940 Rottnest Island/Wadjemup was declared a prohibited area and all recreational activity ended. It was reported in the West Australian newspaper on 11 September 1940 that:

Rottnest Island is unlikely to be available to holiday-makers in the coming summer. Certain essential defence precautions have been taken and, necessarily, that portion of the island which would be available has been so restricted as to remove most of its attraction as a holiday resort.

It was stated at Western Command headquarters yesterday that it had been reluctantly decided to keep the island closed certainly for the next six months and in all probability for the duration of the war.

When Japan entered the war on 7 December 1941 a general strengthening of all gun batteries took place. However, as there was a shortage of manpower due to the requirement for military reinforcements in Darwin and the newly commissioned batteries in Timor and New Guinea, Bickley Battery received its first posting of 30 Australian Women’s Army Service personnel. They were billeted at Bickley Swamp and commanded by an AWAS Lieutenant.

For a short period in early 1942 anti-aircraft defences on the Island were strengthened with the arrival of a United States Army Coastal Artillery Troop. They were equipped with 0.5 inch anti-aircraft machine guns and the first radar on the Island. The Australian Army and the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) established radars on Rottnest during late 1942. The radar allowed very accurate ranging of the guns and also enabled them to be fired at night without the use of searchlights. The RAAF radar was of British origin and the Army radar was Australian designed and constructed.

In late 1942 the strength of the military on the Island peaked at 2,500, including Army, RAN, RAAF, AWAS and WRAAF personnel. The RAN personnel included WRANS who operated the Port War Signal Station, as well as manning their radar station at Stark Bay, RAAF personnel provided meteorological services for both gun batteries.

Oliver Hill Battery ceased operational duties on 1 December 1944 and was placed in combat storage in 1945 at the end of World War II. By 1950, missile and aircraft technology had made coastal guns redundant as a form of defence and all guns except Oliver Hill were removed in 1963. The 9.2 inch ammunition was removed in 1960 by No. 44 Railway Squadron RAE and disposed of at sea. All underground equipment was removed in 1963 and the guns were handed over to the Rottnest Island Authority as it was determined that the cost of dismantling and removing them and their associated equipment to the mainland far exceeded their scrap value. Bickley Battery was placed in combat storage in 1946 and in 1963 a Sydney firm of scrap dealers removed all the fittings except for the two gun barrels and gun parts, which were also considered uneconomical to ship to the mainland.
By April 1945 the military had vacated all the Thomson Bay buildings. However, the Rottnest Island Board refused to take back the Island until the Army agreed to restore facilities to their pre-war order. Whilst awaiting repatriation to Italy, about 120 Italian prisoners of war were sent to the Island to carry out repairs and renovations. By December 1945, tourists were once again visiting Rottnest.

In early 1955, the Army determined that the Kingstown Barracks would continue to be used for training purposes and in 1967, when the Army returned most of its land holdings on the Island to the State Government, they retained the Kingstown Barracks and the Bickley area. The Army’s use of Kingstown Barracks declined gradually from the 1960s and then sharply from 1974, to the point in 1979 where it was utilised for only 43 days in that year. In 1981, the State Government demanded that the Army quit the island:

'We can’t see why the Federal Government is wasting money on upkeep,’ [said Committee Chairman Sandy Lewis]. ‘The island base has no great strategic significance and if the army was removed, the entire island could be made a national park.’ …

Mr Lewis said he believed that Rottnest Island/Wadjemup should be made available to all people.

In 1984 the Army and the Rottnest Island Board of Control began negotiations for the Board to purchase the remaining Army land and buildings including Kingstown Barracks. This was formalised in an official closing ceremony in December 1984. After successful trials using Kingstown Barracks for environmental education programs over the 1984/85 summer season, the Board recommended to the Government that the Barracks be used as the Kingstown Environmental Education Centre, catering for 250 people in dormitory or cottage-style accommodation.

Accommodation for education groups continues today combined with accommodation for family groups. Some of the buildings are used to house collections and archival material held by the RIA.

In 2010, an Engineering Heritage National Landmark Award was presented to the RIA recognising the significant technical achievement of the construction of the ‘Fremantle Fortress – Rottnest Island World War II Coastal Defences Facilities’.
PUBLIC PARK AND RESERVE

Public Park

In May 1902 the Colonial Secretary, Frederick Illingworth, advised the Premier, George Leake, that there were only 40 prisoners on Rottnest Island/Wadjemup.

Due to the cost of running the prison, he recommended that the Island cease operating as a penal establishment. He further added:

*If Rottnest is closed as a penal station I feel sure it would speedily become a satisfactory health resort; & possibly we might dispose of a good portion of the Island for residential purposes...*

From 1902, ferries carried tourists to Rottnest Island/Wadjemup on Sundays. During these times visitors and prisoners were kept well apart. The first public jetty was built in 1906 to the south of Thomson Bay Settlement, where the Army Jetty stands today. Until then, passengers and cargo were brought ashore by flat-bottomed barge. A tram track was laid from the jetty to Thomson Bay Settlement and horse drawn trams used to carry visitors and goods from the ‘excursion steamer’ throughout the tourist season. The trams were later replaced by motor vehicles.

However, little was done regarding proposals to turn the Island into a tourist resort until 1907, as a result of public protests after the Colonial Secretary requested permission to subdivide the Island for private sale in 1905. Public requests were made to the Government to secure the entire Island for public use and William Somerville, who went on to become a member of both the Kings Park and Rottnest Island Boards, reflected much of the public sentiment when he wrote at the time:

*The only result which will come from the proposal as it now stands will be to encourage snobocracy by establishing a little oasis where our local silvertails can retire, secure in the knowledge that they are safe from intrusion by the common herd.*

In 1907 a scheme for transforming Rottnest Island/Wadjemup from a penal establishment to a recreation and holiday island were drawn up by the Colonial Secretary’s Department. The Governor, Admiral Frederick George Denham Bedford, wrote a Minute for consideration of the Cabinet:

- That the Island should be declared a Public Park and recreation ground for ever. It is very desirable to avoid the idea getting about that the Island is being exploited for the benefit of a few men who at this time could afford to buy or rent plots and build.
- That the natural Beauty of this Island shall not be disturbed more than is absolutely necessary.
- Better communication with the mainland.
- That it should be made more attractive by planting trees and making roads.

As part of this scheme the Bickley Bay area began to be modestly developed for public recreation. Timber and hessian camps, a store and a recreational hall were built overlooking Bickley Bay in the vicinity of where Kingstown Barracks now stand. A number of houses in the Thomson Bay Settlement were also made available for the opening season of 1911. Following a change of government in 1911, the Bickley camps were closed due to lack of sanitation and insecure foundations. Subsequently, thirty weatherboard camps were built at the Bathurst end of Thomson Bay. At the same time the Prison and Boys’ Reformatory were converted to hostel accommodation, ready for the 1913/14 summer season. The first successful attempts at reforestation and landscaping were also undertaken at this time.
A-Class Reserve for Public Recreation

In 1917, Rottnest was made an A Class Reserve for public recreation and a Board of Control was established under the Parks and Reserves Act 1895, whereby no portion of the land could be leased or sold except by legislation, and the land resided with the Crown in perpetuity.

In Western Australia, the security of tenure of Crown land reserves varies and the ‘A’ classification is used solely to protect areas of high conservation or high community value. Apart from the closures in 1914 and again from 1940 to 1945 for military purposes, recreational use of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup has continued and private ownership of land is not permitted.

More improvements for visitors followed with a large tearoom and store and several timber bungalows erected near the main jetty. The Governor’s Residence was converted into flats, the limestone cottages in the Settlement were divided into flats and let to tourists. All the limestone buildings were progressively painted with an ochre coloured limewash, possibly to reduce the glare from the original limewash, although other accounts point to the limewash being bare and grim-looking and not suitable for tourist accommodation. Income was generated by a landing fee of 6d for adults and 2d for children, together with revenue from accommodation.

However, the Board of Control considered the revenue from these premises inadequate and turned to prison labour for assistance:

*It will be remembered that when it was decided some six years ago to throw open Rottnest as a pleasure resort for the public, the penal settlement on that island was abolished. Events, however, have proved that a certain number of prisoners constitute an essential and economic factor in the development of the island, and in spite of the closing of the settlement there has always been a proportion of prisoners, particularly during the winter months, quartered there.*

Holiday-makers

During the 20th century Rottnest Island/Wadjemup provided the widest choice of holiday accommodation in the State. In the inter-war years the Board provided a ‘commodious’ hostel for 200 people, furnished cottages, bungalows, flats and campsites. All were sewer aged, the water supply was secure, and the Island had electric light, telephone and bank facilities. Prison buildings were adapted for holiday use, while canvas and timber structures, along with new timber bungalows, were built for families.

The health benefits of a holiday on Rottnest were extolled with the Island referred to in tourist marketing as ‘Westeralia’s Health Resort’. Along with fishing, swimming and boating, the curative properties of the salt lakes were extolled.

While the attractions of the Island as a holiday destination - the ‘Isle of Girls’ (thought to be a play on the French translation of the Dutch ‘Isle of Mist’) - were strongly promoted at this time, the Island’s history was also clearly articulated in tourist brochures. An article in the *West Australian* newspaper (28 November 1936) waxes lyrical about the ‘charm of Rottnest’ and its ability to offer ‘pleasure to all classes, whatever their tastes may be’. It goes on to reflect:

*A quaint mixture of old and new, Rottnest, even in its gayer moments, breathes an air of the past*

An earlier article in the *Western Mail* (21 July 1927) entitled ‘Rottnest Revisited’ recalls fishing expeditions in the late 1890s and sheds some light on attitudes towards the Island’s bleak penal history:

*The old gaol has been converted into bedrooms for the hostel. How we thank God for this change! How poignantly memory recalls the spectacle of one hundred and fifty aboriginal prisoners, clad in rough serge jumpers and with coarse kilts that barely reached to their knees, turned out to work in the rye fields*
at seven on a winter’s morning. How glad we are to think that many a morsel of bread, or meat from one’s own breakfast was thrust hurriedly into some poor eagerly clutching black hand as the shivering cough-racked horde passed our door.

Under cypress trees near the prison the summer camper cooks his lunch where no tombstones name the underlying dead, but where over three hundred unfortunate exiles found their last resting place wrapped in the prison blankets in which they died.

The curse is lifted for ever from this happy isle and we are thankful for the greater insight and understanding that has come to mankind with advancing knowledge.

The vast majority of journeys to and from the Island are made by the ferries or in privately owned boats, however aviation has had a role to play in the history of holiday-makers on the Island. In 1947, Captain James ‘Jimmy’ Woods, commenced the inaugural service of Woods Airways on 6 March 1948. The service was advertised as ‘the shortest scheduled air route in the world’. Wood’s last flight to Rottnest Island/Wadjemup was made on New Year’s Eve 1961, however the airstrip continues to be used for light aircraft flights to and from Rottnest and for emergency facilities.

The first brick cottage was constructed at the northern end of the Settlement in 1960. By 1966, eleven more brick cottages and eight brick flats were completed south of the hotel, and a further eight cottages and eight flats were completed on Bathurst Point in 1972. A nursing post was opened in 1960, a nine-hole golf course in 1961, a bowling green and primary school in 1963, and a new administration building in 1964. The Salt Store (now an Art Gallery) was converted for use by the Island engineer and ranger. In 1965, a new building was constructed for the Totalisator Agency Board (TAB), and twelve new ‘motel-style’ units were constructed in 1967.

By 1971, Thomson Bay Settlement contained 102 cottages, bungalows and flats. A police station was built in 1972 and a Roman Catholic Church in 1975. In 1976, development commenced in Longreach Bay, a popular swimming beach, where 35 units were constructed, and in Geordie Bay in 1978, where an additional 66 units were finished in 1979. In 1983, the Lodge (fmr Reformatory) was expanded to provide additional serviced accommodation. A feature of all the accommodation constructed specifically for tourism purposes is the deliberate orientation in rows facing the sea. In the development at Longreach and Geordie Bays, the units are carefully stepped above the bays to provide all visitors with a sea view.

The Island holds a special place in the hearts for the many Western Australians who holidayed there as children. Perth-born writer Andrea Black reminisces in a piece for The Australian newspaper in March 2011, entitled ‘Once upon an Island that: for kids Rottnest represented the ultimate freedom. Back in 1979, I proudly wore a yellow sleeveless Exacto windcheater emblazoned with the island’s name across my chest. With pockets full of 20c pieces, we’d form gangs with kids our age and ride our Malvern Star bikes to the pinball parlour, lolly cigar in mouth. On the way back we’d stop by the bakery to feast on its famous cream buns before playing a spot of beach cricket.

Rottnest represents many milestones in life. My parents met there, I still sport a scar on my knee from falling off my bike and it’s where we all went at the end of high school, playing songs by a bonfire on Pinky’s Beach.

A new hospital and a new bakery were constructed in 1984, with an airport building in 1985. In 1992, the Visitor Centre was completed, and 1993 saw a new bike hire building completed on a site behind the hotel. Until the mid-1990s all the Rottnest Island Authority staff resided on the Island, which had its own school for primary school aged children. Some enterprising families would even enrol their children in the school while the parents enjoyed an extended holiday.
Old ‘Rotto’ Hands

Generations of Western Australians have fond memories of holidays spent on Rottnest Island/Wadjemup in the post-war years. In the 1950s families camped at chosen spots on the Island, which they returned to year after year, and for adults and children alike it was an unfettered playground. With no private cars on the Island, bicycles were introduced and have remained a popular mode of transport around the Island.

Having been exiled from the Island during the war, many returned for the summer season anxious to see if the Island retained its charm. Writing under the pseudonym ‘Anchorite’ one regular visitor wrote of this and the ‘Island tradition’ in the West Australian (23 February 1946):

How will the Island look-will the old familiar faces reappear-what damage has been done by time and military occupation-how are the fish, the wallabies, the pea cocks and all other natural denizens and Inhabitants—do the crows still act as unsolicited alarm clocks—is the sea water in the basin that unbelievable shade of aqua marine and does it still sparkle like champagne in the early morn? . . . .

Most of the pre-war habitués were there upon the same quest as myself, but they seemed to have brought reinforcements. I saw so many replicas of old time Rottnest dwellers that I realised how strong the island tradition had become.

Australian author Robert Drewe, who grew up in Perth wrote:

Rottnest was legendary. Only thirteen miles from the coast, it could have been thirteen hundred miles away… It had a reputation as the most relaxed and seductive place anywhere. People—well, girls—were supposed to do things which on the straightlaced mainland would give them a ‘bad name’. Regular visitors knew their Island lore and they could recite the name of every bay and inlet on the Island. There was a status in knowing these things, in being seen as an old ‘Rotto’ hand.

As the population of Perth increased so too did the popularity of Rottnest, particularly for summer holidays. In the 1980s a ballot system was introduced whereby families had to apply in July each year and a maximum number of these would be assigned holiday accommodation for the following year. Some moorings have remained in the same ownership for decades, meaning that some of the boat-dwelling visitors to Rottnest have maintained the traditions of the old ‘Rotto’ hands. The ballot system stayed in place until recently, when an industry standard advance booking system was introduced for the Island.

Rottnest Today

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup is a major tourism destination that continues to play a strong role in the development of Western Australia’s tourism industry. Its value to the State’s economy is estimated to be well over $100 million per year.

More than 500,000 people now visit Rottnest Island/Wadjemup each year as both day-trippers and for overnight stays. The Island is a popular destination for local, interstate and international visitors for its laid-back beach lifestyle, in addition to the numerous events that draw large crowds over by both ferry and private boats.

Highly regarded worldwide and one of Western Australia’s iconic events, the Rottnest Channel Swim is a 19.7km open water swim from Cottesloe Beach to Rottnest Island/Wadjemup. Whether competing as a solo, duo or team, the Rottnest Channel Swim is a ‘team’ event with all swimmers surrounded by a support network of paddlers, boat skippers and crew. The event, managed by the Rottnest Channel Swim Association, is held in February of each year and is Rottnest Island/Wadjemup’s biggest day.

The Rottnest Island Country Club hosts a number of events throughout the year, including the long standing Rottnest Classic, the Rottnest Cup and the Ledger Trophy. Surfing WA hosts the three event HIF Pro AM Series surfing competition, which travels to some of the best locations in Western Australia, to crown state surfing champions across multiple divisions, Rottnest Island/Wadjemup being the final location.
The Island has a long-running association as one of the most popular destinations for end of high school ‘Leavers’ celebrations, who flock there after exams in late November. The Island also plays host to a range of other sporting and cultural events throughout the year, including the Rottnest After Dark theatre series, ANZAC Day commemorations, Rottnest Open House, Rottnest Heritage Festival, Brooks Rottnest Marathon and Fun Run, Race Around Rottnest, Wadjemup Cup, Beneteau Cup sailing competition and a variety of music concerts and events. In 2015 the annual comedy, film and music festival, ‘Rottofest’ returns for its 7th year. Many of these events are aimed at attracting people to the Island in the winter months when the accommodation options are undersubscribed.

**Sustainability**

There is a long tradition of self-reliance on the Island with almost all resources, including food production, having been sourced on the Island from the beginning of settlement. The subsequent degradation of the freshwater seeps and extensive clearing of vegetation is now a major focus of conservation and restoration. Throughout much of the twentieth century, recreational visitors used sea water for showers with the limited fresh water used only for drinking. In the 1960s, freshwater began to be barged in from the mainland. As the population of visitors increased and the need for more sustainable solutions became evident, alternative methods of sourcing water and power, such as the wind turbine and the desalination plant, have been introduced.

**Rottnest Volunteers**

The strong community appreciation of the Island is exemplified by the number of people who volunteer on a regular basis to undertake a wide variety of tasks including beach clean ups, dune rehabilitation, seed collection, tree planting, weeding, fauna monitoring, maintenance and construction works and the provision of interpretive tours. They are estimated to contribute over 35,000 volunteer hours annually to assist in preserving and communicating the natural, cultural and recreational values of the Island.

The RIA coordinates and supports a large number of independent voluntary groups who undertake a variety of important tasks on the Island throughout the year.

The Island’s longest-standing volunteer organisation is the Winnit Club, which was founded in the summer of 1930-31. While the founding members initially came together for annual sailing and camping, they soon decided they wanted to give something back to their favourite Island. Today it is virtually impossible to find a spot on the Island that has not benefited from the efforts of the Winnit Club.
The Rottnest Society, an incorporated, not-for-profit group that formed in 1984, organises scientific talks on various aspects of the natural environment of the Island and recruits up to 50 volunteers to help plant trees and remove environmental weeds on Rottnest Island for three weekends a year.

The Rottnest Foundation was established in 1985. Its mission is to conserve the unique environmental and cultural assets of the Island by encouraging community involvement and raising funds through grant submissions, sponsorships and fundraising initiatives.

The Rottnest Voluntary Guides Association (RVGA) was established in 1986 to promote awareness and appreciation of Rottnest Island’s natural environment and historical significance for visitors. Guides conduct free daily tours covering the history of the settlement, the quokka, World War II guns & tunnels and Wadjemup lighthouse.

Since the early 1990s a small team of dedicated volunteers, with the assistance of industry sponsorship, has provided the technical advice and skilled labour that is essential for maintaining the function of the Island’s railway and associated tourist train.
ISLAND IMAGINING

LANDSCAPING AND PLANTING

The focus of land management during the colonial settlement period on the Island in the 19th century was on the construction of necessary infrastructure and productive activities such as the growing of food. The first olives to be exhibited internationally were by Henri Courderot in the 1880s, from the two olive trees in the Settlement area.

The first recorded major tree plantings were undertaken in the winters of 1886 and 1887, following the Forrest Commission’s recommendation that pines should be planted all over the Island as a potential income stream. This resulted in approximately 1,000 pine trees of several species being planted at the northern end of the Settlement among the native woodland.

However by the 1890s, Governor Smith expressed some concern about the deterioration of the Island’s landscape and subsequently the recently appointed Conservator of the Woods & Forests Department, John Ednie-Brown, was instructed to report on the destruction of native trees, particularly around the lakes, and to advise on replanting. Ednie-Brown criticised the management of the penal establishment for the lack of care for the landscape and noted that the Island has natural features of considerable beauty:

The beautiful lakes are a special feature of the place, and I think their natural attractiveness should be maintained irrespective of other considerations...

He recommended pines, cypresses, tamarisks, and Moreton Bay Figs, whose dark foliage would provide a picturesque contrast with the lighter native foliage. He particularly recommended Norfolk Island Pines for their strong upright form and dark colour. Thousands of trees were planted, included a mile long avenue of Moreton Bay Figs around Serpentine Lake, however few survived, primarily because of the quokkas stripping the bark from the young trees. Superintendent Pearse was able to report that he considered planting trees ‘a futile exercise’ in response to Ednie-Brown’s earlier criticism.

Despite the failure of the Department’s planting, Ednie-Brown had set out how the Settlement landscape could be developed, and during the first decade of the Island as a public park, the large outlays on landscaping reflected the importance of the Island to the people of Western Australia. Landscape gardener A.M. Cowan had grand plans for scenic drives, picnic areas, golf courses and rustic summer houses on a number of the high points. He set out to plant a paradise garden, drawing on the world’s botanical riches. A great variety of seeds, bulbs, cuttings and plants were obtained from government facilities all over Western Australia and from commercial nurseries in the eastern states.

The government nursery at Hamel supplied over 3,000 trees, including Aleppo Pines, Moreton Bay Figs, Peppermint Trees, Norfolk Island Hibiscus, poplars and wattles. Most were planted in 1907/08. During this time large areas of cleared ground were planted with trees, including at Bickley and at Bathurst Point, as well as an avenue of Moreton Bay Figs from the settlement to the old Governor’s Residence and along the top of the sea wall.

Aleppo Pines were introduced into the pine plantation, which became the site of the internment camp during WWI and a favourite of summer campers. In 2007, the Rottnest Island
Authority closed this camping area known as ‘Tentland’, because it was located in the area of the Aboriginal burial ground.

In 1932 a more substantial tree nursery was established to trial different varieties, including the Tuart. This was largely driven by William Somerville, who became a Board member in 1929 and immediately began planting trees. The Peppermint Tree avenue to the former Governor’s Residence was planted in 1929 (as only two of the earlier fig trees remained from 1907/08). An experimental planting of 100 trees from the Hostel to the Basin marked the beginning of the realisation of an avenue. This was followed by tree planting behind the Hostel and a plantation at the head of Serpentine Lake. Somerville continued to see the positive future benefits from the planting of Tuarts and Olive trees, particularly noting the sharp decline in bird numbers even with shooting bans now in place.

His concept of tree lined roads and impressive shaded avenues extending throughout the Settlement was intended to enhance the amenity for the Island’s many visitors, to relieve the glare from the limestone roads and to soften the built environment. He also planted Canary Island Date Palms along the Thomson Bay foreshore and at the Basin to introduce a ‘tropical’ feel of a day at the beach in Rottnest. Somerville continued to see the positive future benefits from the planting of Tuarts and Olive trees, particularly noting the sharp decline in bird numbers even with shooting bans now in place.

In 1961, a group of volunteers established a nine-hole golf course on the former agricultural fields to the north of Garden Lake, with public access to the course and a small private club for both men and women. Also during 1961 a substantial tree planting program was reinstated with replacement plantings along roadsides as well as Oleander plantings. Again in 1962, further plantings were carried out before the winter rains, with the Rottnest Island Tea-Tree and Pine proving the most successful.

Today, the Rottnest Island Authority is actively ‘re-greening’ the Island. Planned restoration of the Island’s woodlands is occurring. Rottnest Island Pine and Rottnest Island Tea Tree seedlings are being planted, as well as direct seeding to both of these and other species of plants native to Rottnest. Areas on the Island are selected, fenced against quokkas and then either planted or seeded in winter or allowed to regenerate naturally.
**ARTISTIC INTERPRETATIONS**

The beauty of the cultural landscape of Rottnest has long held a fascination for artists. In particular, well-known artists have responded to a number of key view points around the Island.

Today Rottnest has an artist-in-residence program and holds a number of exhibitions of paintings of Rottnest by local and well-known artists. The key views of interest that are demonstrated by a range of visual media are:

- The settlement of Thomson Bay nestled in the large bay named after Robert Thomson, the farmer who settled on Rottnest Island/Wadjemup with his family in 1830. The sweeping bay features in many photographs and paintings, capturing the serenity and marine-scape that identifies Rottnest Island/Wadjemup for many people. One of the earliest images of Thomson Bay dates from c.1846.

- The sea wall, built between 1840 and 1850, painted in Rottnest ochre, stretches for some 400 metres north to south at the Thomson Bay Settlement. It is the first thing you notice when you walk down the Jetty on arrival; a monumental wall of limestone.

- The walk way in front of the historic limestone cottages, Vincent Way, now a hard surface road way is captured in paintings, photographs and videos. From the top of the sea wall, the vista into Thomson Bay and then further east to the mainland is a prominent feature of the settlement area. The Basin has been a traditional swimming favourite for generations. Holes in the reef create safe and calm swimming pools and families.

- The picturesque landscape of Garden Lake has attracted photographers and artists because of the elevated views, distant vistas and exotic plantings. Palm trees feature prominently.

---

*Possibly the earliest image of Thomson Bay settlement, c.1846 Dr John Blundell. (Battye Library)*

*Guy Grey-Smith, Thomson Bay, Rottnest, 1956, (The Artist’s Rottnest by Ted Snell, p. 105)*

*Clive Gordon, Manager’s Cottage and K1 and K2, c1970 (The Artist’s Rottnest by Ted Snell, p. 81)
• Both lighthouses are distinctive visual features in the Rottnest landscape and feature in postcards, paintings and a movie ('Under the Lighthouse Dancing').

• Government House, built in 1864, with its crenelated parapets and deep verandahs provides a romantic vista when gazed upon from Thomson Bay. The very productive salt works, located on Lake Herschell, from the early part of the 19th century held much fascination until its demolition in the 1950s. It serves as a focal point for landscape paintings and photographs and is often seen in images as a feature rather than an object of main interest. The building is one thing, but the salt and brine shrimp create an artist’s pallet of subtlety and beauty.

Views from the mainland have also been depicted in art works. Early paintings show the Island in the distant view across Fremantle harbour, while later artists were fascinated by the silhouette of the Island on the horizon at different times of day and season from Perth’s coastal suburbs.

Today, as in the past, photographers are entranced by the varied marine and coastal environment, ranging from the highly populated moorings around the settlement areas to the seclusion of the Island’s West End. It is still possible to capture views that would resemble the first sighting of the Island by de Vlamingh in 1696, when he wrote in his journal:

*I felt great pleasure in admiring this island which is a very pleasant place. Here it seems that nature has spared nothing*
to render this isle delightful above all others I have ever seen. It is very well provided for the support of man having wood and stone and lime for building houses, and wanting only labourers to cultivate these fine plains where one finds salt in abundance, while the coast swarms with fish. There one hears the chatter of birds, which make these odorous (scented) woods resound with their sweet songs. Birds make themselves heard with pleasant song in these scented groves. Thus I believe that of so many people who seek to make themselves happy there would be many who would despise the fortune of our country to choose this, which would appear to them a terrestrial paradise.

Writers and poets have also been inspired by Rottnest Island/Wadjemup and perhaps have been in a better position to convey the beauty as well as the sorrow of the Island. The shipwrecks have stirred the sympathy of many, while the misery of the prison has been portrayed by others. John Boyle O’Reilly, an Irish prisoner who had been incarcerated in Fremantle in 1866 following the Fenian uprising, wrote in part:

But of all the spots on this earthly sphere
Where these dismal spirits are strong and near,
There is one more dreary than all the rest –
’Tis the barren island of Rottenest

The sense of brutality and horror evoked in O’Reilly’s writings is one of a number of accounts in relation to the terrible legacy of the Aboriginal penal establishment. Other vivid accounts of the Island prison include the following poems by Aboriginal authors (kindly reproduced from Glen Stasiuk’s PhD exegesis):

All for the Land (Part I)
It is written “Go forth…multiply!”
the pen is mightier than the sword
Thus we shall re-write the law!
Trespassing across this land is now an offence…punishable by imprisonment
To Rottnest!
Thus reached out colonial claws
grasping Indigenous men around the throat with searing chains
marched across their ancestral homelands
Oh! The bitter sorrow and bloody pain
to never see lands or people again…
Graeme Dixon
Wadjemup (waadjermup)

Snatched from the heartland
driven from the song
Awoken from the Dreaming
accused of being wrong
Tethered like beasts together
herded to the coast
Shipped to an alien place
where the icy, death wind blows

Imprisoned by the cruel regime
not understanding why
As around them they witnessed
their brothers die like flies
The cold wind like a scalpel
cut right through their spines
Chilled the Elders to the Soul
one could only wonder why?

Why did they treat so cruelly
this race who survived so long
Far from civilisation’s brutality
singing the sacred song
Till one dark day in history
with greedy hands they came
Offering gifts of misery
and jewels of searing chains.

Graeme Dixon

I look across at Rottnest in the far off haze
where my people breathed their last sigh for home
the mainland to them the distant blue
What did they do but stand within the paths of cloven hooves
Their only crime to fight for what was rightly theirs
To them the island was a place of souls
departed down through eons of time
but by a savage twist of fate
No flight of soul for them
But chained they waited for their lot’s conclusion
to be forever part of the island of the dead

Jack Davis
Paul Rigby, Daily News c.1955 (Pamela Castle-Mann collection)  
Leach Barker, Salt Works c.1950 (RIA 2012.63)

P. Vinzents, Pearse Lakes (Photograph, 2013)
CULTURAL HERITAGE AND RECONCILIATION

Despite the many wonderful depictions and real life experiences of Rottnest as a holiday isle, it remains a place of mourning for so many Aboriginal people and a tangible reminder of all that has been lost since colonisation. While the prison was closed over a hundred years ago and the Island opened up for the public, with an equalitarian sense of Australian mateship that extended to all classes, this mateship did not in practice extend to the Aboriginal people of Western Australia. There are few stories of Aboriginal people holidaying on the Island and with the last of the prisoners not leaving the Island until 1931 it is hardly surprising that many Aboriginal people view the Island with a sense of dread.

It is not always possible to reconcile layers of history that have vastly different meanings to different people, as has been discovered in many places around the world, but it is important to recognise in meaningful ways the differing views of both the past and even of the future.

In the 21st century, the RIA formally acknowledged the cultural significance and sad history that the Island holds for Aboriginal people. In 2008, it adopted its first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) that includes a number of initiatives, which acknowledge the past with a focus on a much more positive future. The RAP 2012 – 2015 recognises that ‘Rottnest Island/Wadjemup has a unique role to play in bringing about reconciliation with Aboriginal people, and particularly Western Australian Aboriginal communities’. As well as building on the actions of the past, the following new initiatives have been included in this plan:

- **The establishment of an ongoing community grants program to provide support to local Aboriginal communities within the State to either access the Island for activities supported by this RAP, or alternatively to provide assistance to community initiatives on the mainland**
- **Building a stronger partnership with the Clontarf Foundation to support their educational and redevelopment program for young Aboriginal men including identifying employment opportunities on the Island**
- **Increasing the understanding of Aboriginal culture and the history of Wadjemup to the broader community through the development of new activities including professional development courses and corporate programs.**

The RIA also recognises, through the RAP, the cultural significance and sad history that Wadjemup holds for Aboriginal people. The sadness and grief relating to the prison history that is still experienced to this day is very different from the experience of the Island as a holiday destination. These varying meanings have been captured most pertinently by number of artists, including the well-known Sally Morgan and Naomi Grant-Mills. Sally Morgan’s artwork depicts the tourists on the Island enjoying its spoils whilst just below their feet the deceased Aboriginal prisoners lie in abundant unmarked graves, while Naomi Grant-Mills depicts an artistic interpretation of the Dreamtime, the suffering of Aboriginal prisoners and the summer holiday-makers.

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup has an important role to play in demonstrating the role of Aboriginal labour in the development of Western Australia. The prisoners provided most of the manpower that sourced the raw materials for and built the main buildings, structures and road infrastructure on the Island, much of which survives and is still used today. They also worked the salt works, which was a thriving industry, and undertook other labour that was needed to make the establishment viable. Most of these tasks were completely foreign to the cultural practices of the men and boys imprisoned on the Island and, while they remain a stark reminder of their enforced labour, they also stand as a particular testament to their skills and endeavours.

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup has a potentially positive role to play in healing the sad past, while looking to a positive future for all Western Australians.
Western culture, argues Gillis (2004), has had ambivalent relationships with islands; a combination of attraction and repulsion. Their isolation has been exploited for use as prisons and quarantine stations, and as escape to destinations of paradise for continental tourists. (Islands on the Edge, R.E. Jackson, 2008)

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup, due to its particular temporal and spatial qualities, embodies this dichotomy of both beauty and brutality. It has been both a prison and a holiday destination, with these overlaps evident to this day. It is this dichotomy that determines much of its significance as a cultural heritage landscape.

While it is a relatively straightforward matter to discuss comparative penal establishments and comparative holiday islands, it has proven difficult to find islands that have served both functions. This appears to be mostly due to the fact that Rottnest was historically used for both recreational activities (by the Governor) and as a prison (for Aboriginal men and boys) almost a hundred years from soon after the establishment of the Swan River Colony. It is also due to the particular political changes that were occurring in the newly formed state of Western Australia when the transition from prison use to another use was first mooted. The strong desire to make the Island accessible to all - rather than the moneyed few - was the driving force behind the establishment of the Island as an A-class Reserve.

In contrast, sensibilities had changed by the time new uses were being considered for Robben Island, the site of the imprisonment of political prisoners opposed to the South African government’s apartheid policies. In the 1970s there were proposals that the island could become a leisure resort or nature reserve (similar to Rottnest Island/Wadjemup) and in the 1980s, the prison administration began stocking the island with native animals and re-establishing a penguin colony. However, following the release of the political prisoners in early 1990s, the high security section of the prison became a place of pilgrimage and homage visited by dignitaries from around the world and visitors now come to the island to remember the shameful past and honour a brighter future.

### ISLANDS AS COLONIAL PENAL ESTABLISHMENTS

Islands have frequently been used as prisons throughout history, and were found particularly useful for this purpose by European colonial powers whose maritime prowess was a determinative factor in their dominance. Rottnest is distinguished in Australia as an island that was specifically set aside for the imprisonment of Aboriginal people who came into conflict with the British colonial laws as the colony was established and expanded. Other islands in the State were also used to imprison Aboriginal people, including Carnac and Garden Islands, though not to the same extent in terms of facilities, numbers and timespan as Wadjemup.

### ROBBEN ISLAND, SOUTH AFRICA

Robben Island is located 13 kms off the coast of Cape Town in South Africa. Roughly oval in shape and about a kilometre wide, it is flat and only a few metres above sea level, as a result of an ancient erosion event. The island is arid, with low scrubby vegetation and has no watercourses. It was inhabited when sea levels were considerably lower and people could walk to it thousands of years ago. Many vessels have been wrecked around the isle. In the 17th century, Dutch settlers named the island after the Dutch word for seal.

Since the end of the 17th century, Robben Island has been used as a prison and among its first permanent inhabitants were political leaders from various Dutch colonies, including Indonesia, and later African opponents to British rule were also imprisoned there. A whaling station was established in the north-eastern shore in 1806. It later became a leper colony and quarantine station.

During the Second World War, Robben Island was fortified and British coastal defence 9.2-inch guns and 6-inch guns were installed as part of the defences for Cape Town. The three 9.2 inch guns in the De Waal Battery on the island remain extant and one has been fully restored.

Racial segregation had been in place under both Dutch and British colonial rule, but was enshrined in legislation by the South African government from 1948 to 1994. Many of the political prisoners who opposed apartheid were imprisoned on Robben Island. Notable amongst these were Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Tokyo Sexwale, Govan Mbeki and Robert Sobukwe.
The island was declared a World Heritage Site in 1999 and the Robben Island Museum operates the place as a living museum on behalf of the government. Robben Island is internationally recognised as a heritage place because buildings of Robben Island bear eloquent witness to its sombre history and it symbolises the triumph of the human spirit over oppression (UNESCO World Heritage List citation).

**Devil’s Island, French Guiana**

Îles du Salut is an island group off French Guiana, about 13km northeast of Kourou, and comprising three main islands: Royale, Saint-Joseph, and Diable, the site of the infamous ‘Devil’s Island’ penal colony from 1852 to 1953. Île Royale, the largest and highest island, was used as the centre for administration and housed the majority of prisoners. The islands are rocky with tropical vegetation, ringed by coconut trees.

French Guiana was colonised by the French and used as a penal colony and place of exile during the French Revolution, and subsequently under Napoleon III permanent penal camps were established on the archipelago. Spies and political prisoners, including Alfred Dreyfus, a French Army Officer falsely accused of treason, were held there. The prison was phased out by the early 1950s.

Conditions were brutal and harsh, and of the 80,000 prisoners sent here, only 30,000 lived to tell about it. The novel (and subsequent movie) ‘Papillon’ is based on life in the prison although some restoration work has been undertaken. Tourists are encouraged to visit the museum and stay in the hotel that is in the converted prison warders’ mess hall on Île Royale.

Devil’s Island is considered the most notorious colonial prison in the world. (Larkins, 2010, p221)

French prisoners and exiles were also imprisoned on New Caledonia, where the French emulated the example of the British penal system in New South Wales from the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

**Palm Island, Queensland**

Palm Island (Bwgcolman) is a tropical island with a resident community of about 2,000 people. It is located off the east coast of northern Queensland, 65 kilometres northwest of Townsville. It is the main island of the Greater Palm group and consists of small bays, sandy beaches and steep forested mountains rising to a peak of 548 metres.

Palm Island was named by explorer James Cook in 1770 as he sailed up the eastern coast of Australia on his first voyage. It is estimated that the population of the island at the time of Cook’s visit was about 200 Manbarra people. Cook sent some of his men to Palm Island and ‘they returned on board having met with nothing worth observing’. From the 1850s locals were taken from the island by both the Europeans and Japanese to work in sea cucumber harvesting and pearling enterprises. By the end of the 19th century the population had been reduced to about 50.

In 1916 Queensland’s Chief Protector of Aborigines found Palm Island to be ‘the ideal place for a delightful holiday’ and that its remoteness also made it suitable for use as a penitentiary for ‘individuals we desire to punish’. In 1918, when the Hull River Aboriginal Settlement on the mainland was destroyed by a cyclone, the settlement was relocated to Palm Island. By the early 1920s, Palm Island had become the largest of the Government Aboriginal settlements. In the first two decades of its establishment the population of Indigenous inmates increased from 200 to 1,630. People from at least 57 different language groups throughout Queensland were relocated to the island. Many were forcibly removed, while others moved to join their family members.

New arrivals came after being sentenced by a court, or released from prison, or were sent by administrators of other missions wishing to weed out their more ‘disruptive’ Aboriginals. On arrival, children were separated from their parents and then segregated by gender (DATSIMA, 2013, p12). The Aboriginal people were forbidden to speak their language and restricted from the ‘white’ zones. Every day activity was highly controlled by administrators including nightly curfews and the vetting of mail. When in the 1930s a local doctor highlighted malnutrition on the island, his request that the Government triple rations for the islanders and that children be provided with fruit juice was denied. These removals to the Palm Island Mission continued until the late 1960s.

In 1943, the US Navy built a Naval Air Station at Palm Island, with facilities to operate and overhaul Catalina flying boats and patrol boats. The air station was built at Wallaby Point, an isolated area of Palm Island, overlooking a large stretch of sheltered water in Challenger Bay.

In 1986 ownership of the island was transferred to a newly formed Palm Island Community Council under a Deed of Grant in Trust from the Queensland government. This Council became the Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council in 2004 under the Queensland Local Government (Community Government Areas) Act. Like the other Aboriginal Shire Councils that were created, this Act gave the Council full status as a Local Government on a par with other Councils in Queensland.

Palm Island is considered to be an important site of European colonisation and Indigenous dispossession in Queensland. (Watson in Konishi and Nugent, 2010, p221)
Kingston and Arthurs Vale Historic Area (KAVHA), Norfolk Island

Kingston and Arthurs Vale Historic Area (KAVHA) is located on the southern side of Norfolk Island, which lies 1,600 kilometres to the east-north-east of Sydney, New South Wales. Set on the Kingston coastal plain and bounded by hills, it comprises a large group of buildings from the convict era, some of which have been modified during the Pitcairn period (from 1856 to the present), substantial ruins and standing structures, archaeological remains, landform and landscape elements. Early Polynesian presence has been dated to between 11th and 17th centuries. Cook had reported in 1774 that the island had rich soils, tall pines suitable for ships masts and spars, and native flax that could be used for making canvas. Governor Philip had instructions to settle and secure the island as soon as possible to secure its potential naval supplies and established a settlement named Kingston with convict labour in March 1788, six weeks after the First Fleet landed in Sydney.

Extensive clearing followed and both convicts and free settlers farmed small holdings of land. By 1804 the free settlers on the island significantly outnumbered the convicts who represented 23 percent of the total population of 1,084. On its abandonment in 1814 the settlement’s buildings were destroyed.

In response to a 1822/23 report on the effectiveness of transportation, the Colonial Secretary Lord Bathurst instructed Governor Brisbane to re-occupy the island as a ‘great hulk or penitentiary’ to provide secondary punishment. Norfolk Island was re-occupied on 6 June 1825 by Captain Turton as commandant, with a party of 50 soldiers, 57 convicts, six women and six children. The settlement was again located around Kingston and the remains of some first settlement buildings were rebuilt, old agricultural areas rehabilitated and new areas cleared. But it was to be of an entirely different character to the first settlement. This second settlement on Norfolk Island was designed to be the extreme in convict degradation and the came to stand for worst of the transportation system.

KAVHA’s major buildings include the 1829 Government House, the Old Military Barracks and officers quarters constructed between 1829-1834, the New Military Barracks commenced in 1836 that follows a similar fortress-like design, the Commissariat Store dating from 1835 and the elegant Quality Row houses that provided quarters for military and civil officers. Also to be found at KAVHA are the archaeological remains of the two convict gaols, and the perimeter walls and archaeological remains of the prisoners’ barracks (1828-48) with the Protestant chapel.

The penal settlement was gradually closed between 1847 and 1855 and a small party remained on the island in 1856 to care for the farms and livestock and to handover to the incoming settlers from Pitcairn Island, who constituted the third settlement phase of the island’s history. Their descendants today comprise nearly a third of Norfolk Island’s population.

The islanders have been self-governing for more than 30 years, supported primarily by tourism but with the financial downturn, revenue has not been enough to support the 1,500-strong community, and many people are leaving the island. The Norfolk Island and Australian Governments have joint responsibility for KAVHA, which operates as a tourist museum. It is part of the World Heritage listed Australian Convict Sites.
**GOVERNOR’S SUMMER RETREATS**

Throughout the British Empire, governor’s summer retreats were established in colonies considered to have unreasonably hot summers. These included India, the Caribbean and Australia. While the retreat in India involved the removal of the colonial administration to the cooler mountain climes for an extended period of time, in Australia, these retreats were less substantial. Essentially holiday houses, summer retreats were established for the governors of New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia. A summer retreat was also established in Tasmania.

**Hillview, Sutton Forrest, NSW**

Hillview is located in the southern highlands of New South Wales and was the country retreat of New South Wales governors between 1884 and 1957. The government had purchased the country homestead ‘Prospect’ in 1882 and extensive renovations were carried out. Lord August Loftus became the first governor to occupy the house, which was renamed ‘Hillview’. Set on a commanding summit with majestic views, this two-storey residence with its tree-lined carriageway accommodated up to 50 houseguests at one time. It is state heritage listed and is currently leased to a private owner to restore and convert to use as a hotel.

**Governor’s Summer Residence, Belair, SA**

Completed in 1860, this residence is a single storey stone building in the Georgian style with a separate kitchen. Its vice-regal use was discontinued when a larger summer residence ‘Marble Hill’ was constructed at Ashton in 1880. The building was then used as the residence for the Curator of the nearby Department of Woods and Forests Nursery from the 1880s until c1960. It opened as a museum in November 1961 and was one of the early museums established in the post-war period. Marble Hill was destroyed during the Black Sunday bushfire of 1955.

**The Rocks, Albany, WA**

With the establishment of a public park on Rottnest Island/Wadjemup, an alternative location was sought for the governor’s summer retreat. A substantial two-storey residence that had been built in 1882, overlooking the Princess Royal Harbour and the town of Albany, was purchased for this purpose in 1913. Between 1915 and 1920, the governor made the property available for use as a convalescent home for returning soldiers. After 1933, the Rocks had a variety of uses including a maternity hospital, a school, a surgery and doctor’s residence, a US Officers’ R & R centre and a girls’ hostel. Sold in 1998 for use as a private residence, it has recently been converted to a luxury hotel.

**ISLAND HOLIDAY DESTINATIONS**

Tourism in Australia has been described as both exultingly democratic and practical. At the beginning of the twentieth century, wealthier residents were still travelling to the ‘Home Country’ (England) for their holidays. However for those who could not afford to or did not wish to travel abroad, holiday destinations began to be promoted throughout the country. Steamer and ferries were popular mass transport to holiday destinations. Western Australia’s Tourist Bureau was established in 1921 and actively promoted Rottnest Island/Wadjemup, which had by far the most extensive range of holiday accommodation in the State.

In their book ‘Holiday Business: Tourism in Australia since 1870’, Jim Davidson and Peter Spearritt describe the quintessential Australian holiday experience:

…despite the swank hotels that arose in the capital cities and beyond, the predominant tone of Australian tourism was that it was neighbourly, practical (for many the last frontier) and democratic.

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup embodies these qualities and can be compared to other holiday islands around Australia. In an article about Rottnest Island/Wadjemup, historian George Seddon makes note of other ‘metropolitan islands’ around Australia:

In serving as a playground for Perth, Rottnest is a special kind of island - a metropolitan island - but it is not unique in this. Each of the Australian capital cities has one or more islands to play with, and their history, character, land-use and management throw into relief some of the characteristics of Rottnest. Brisbane has Fraser Island and the islands of Moreton Bay, especially Stradbroke, Moreton and Bribie Islands. There are nine islands in Port Jackson, and more in Pittwater and the Hawkesbury. Melbourne has Phillip Island, and Wilsons Promontory, in effect, an island. Hobart has beautiful Maria and Bruny Islands; Adelaide has Kangaroo Island.

A brief study of Bruny Island, Kangaroo Island, Phillip Island and Stradbroke Island will offer some useful insights into the similarities as well as the distinctiveness of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup. Of these islands, only Rottnest and Kangaroo Islands have their own management entities, Rottnest being the only one with State government rather then local government management.

**Bruny Island, Tasmania**

Located approximately 33 kms from Hobart and 2.8 kms offshore, almost 14 per cent of Bruny Island’s land area is National Park (declared in 1997), with several other areas of reserved land. It has a small resident population with approximately 120,00 visitors per year.

Bruny Island was occupied by Aboriginal people prior to colonial settlement and was the ancestral home to Truganini.
(probably the best known Tasmanian Aboriginal woman of the colonial era; she survived the killing of her mother, uncle and her intended husband and the abduction of her sister by sailors, a soldier, timber-cutters and sealers respectively and spent most of her life incarcerated on Flinders Island).

First noted on European maps in 1642 by Dutch mariner Abel Tasman, whalers and sealers began operating around the island in 1804. From the 1830s Bruny Island was predominantly used for timber, fruit growing, fishing, and sheep and cattle grazing. Traditionally a relaxing hideaway for Hobartians, characterised by a strong shack culture, Bruny Island is increasingly focused economically on tourism. It is valued for its laid-back lifestyle and strong community values.

**PHILLIP ISLAND, VICTORIA**

Located approximately 120 kms from Melbourne and less than a kilometre offshore, Phillip Island Nature Park (fragmented across the Island) comprises 18 per cent of the Island. There are over 8,000 residents with approximately 3.2 million visitors per year. Most visitors arrive via the vehicular bridge, which has effectively made the island into a peninsula.

Aboriginal people made seasonal visits to the island and French maritime explorers in 1826 depicted their shelters. First settled in 1842, the island was cleared of vegetation by fire for a pastoral lease. Surveyed and opened up for settlement in 1862, residential development is continuing to grow, while agriculture and tourism are now the main economic activities.

Phillip Island’s two key, internationally-known tourist attractions are the Penguin Parade and the Grand Prix racing track. The first Australian Grand Prix car race was held on the Island in 1928, and motorcycle and car racing events continue to be very popular. It is valued as Victoria’s premier island that has economic benefits to the State through its high profile tourism events.

**KANGAROO ISLAND, SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

Located approximately 110 kms from Adelaide and 15 kms offshore, Kangaroo Island, including Flinders Chase National Park (32,600ha), which was declared in 1919. Kangaroo Island has over 4,300 years ago. First mapped by Baudin and named in 1642 by Dutch mariner Abel Tasman, whalers and sealers began operating around the island in 1804. From the 1830s Bruny Island was predominantly used for timber, fruit growing, fishing, and sheep and cattle grazing. Traditionally a relaxing hideaway for Hobartians, characterised by a strong shack culture, Bruny Island is increasingly focused economically on tourism. It is valued for its laid-back lifestyle and strong community values.

The island retains 47 per cent of its natural vegetation and is home to large numbers of native wildlife. Its geological features attract many visitors. Tourists have been visiting the island since the late 19th century and today tourism and primary production (agriculture, aquaculture, viticulture and forestry) are the main economic activities. Kangaroo Island is valued for its abundant coastline and well-preserved flora and fauna as well as its social and cultural attributes.

**STRADBROKE ISLAND (MINJERRIBAH), QUEENSLAND**

Located approximately 30 kms from Brisbane and 13kms offshore, Stradbroke Island comprises two Islands – North and South (separated following a shipwreck and tidal action in 1896). Comprising a large sand mass over bedrock, there is archaeological evidence of Aboriginal occupation at a site on North Stradbroke Island which dates back to the Pleistocene Age (between 10,000 to 21,000 years ago) when the area formed part of the mainland. Aboriginal associations with the island have continued to today. There is an Aboriginal community at Dunwich, which was the site of both an early Aboriginal mission and a quarantine station in the 1840s.

The earliest recorded European explorers, both Cook and Flinders, thought that Stradbroke was part of the mainland and it wasn’t until Oxley discovered Moreton Bay to its west that it was recognised as an island. A convict depot was established in 1824 at Moreton Bay and then moved to present day Brisbane. The Moreton Bay establishments included the Helena Island prison, Fort Lytton, the quarantine station at Dunwich on Stradbroke Island and the Peel Island lazaret, which had many Aboriginal inmates. There were a number of violent clashes between the colonists and the local Aboriginal people during the 1830s and by the 1850s, Stradbroke Island was being settled. Fishing and oyster farming were the main industries. Tourism began in the 1930s with the establishment of a camping ground and cabins by a private landowner.

During World War II, armed servicemen were stationed there, radio tents were set up, and a radio direction finder and radar were erected at Point Lookout. It was during this time that the first mention of a bridge being constructed between the mainland and North Stradbroke Island was discussed. This issue has arisen many times since and has faced fierce opposition each time. The first vehicular ferry service began in 1947.

Today, North Stradbroke has three townships and a resident population of 3,000 swelling to over 30,000 during holiday periods. Affectionately known as ‘Straddie’, many of the visitors return to the island year after year. There is a range of accommodation from camping to eco and fitness resorts. South Stradbroke Island is largely a Conservation Park (1,800ha) managed by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service. A number of council run campsites are located on the island, which has high environmental values.
ANALYSIS OF COMPARATIVE STUDIES

The comparative studies indicate that Rottnest Island/Wadjemup has a high comparative level of significance for its seminal role in the colonisation of Western Australia as an island prison and its distinctive role as a holiday destination.

In an international context, Rottnest Island/Wadjemup represents the use of islands to house prisoners by colonial and state powers. It was, at times, as brutal and degrading as Devil’s Island and while the total loss of life was less, the death of hundreds of Aboriginal men and boys at Rottnest is no less significant. It also has many similarities to Robben Island. Both islands are close to the main metropolis, sparsely-vegetated landscapes, a place of many shipwrecks and both were used as military bases housing British made coastal artillery guns during World War II. Both islands remain in state ownership. Even more importantly they were both used to house prisoners who were imprisoned as a result of racially discriminatory government policies.

In the national context, Rottnest Island/Wadjemup is distinguished as a penal establishment that provides tangible evidence of the dispossession of Aboriginal people during the 19th century as the colony of Western Australia was established from the south-west into the northern most parts of the colony. In addition, unlike other comparative sites around Australia, Rottnest Island/Wadjemup’s colonial settlement area and infrastructure, including the penal establishment, pilot station and governor’s residence, paths and spaces remains largely as constructed, in use and are readily discernable to the visitor as the primary built form of the island.

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup is also distinguished nationally as the only place to have retained the 9.2 inch guns that were an integral part of the World War II coastal defence of Australia and other countries allied to the British war effort. Together, the World War II infrastructure on the Island comprising the two batteries, signal tower, barracks and associated works demonstrates the role of the defence force and Australian men and women in the defence of Australia during World War II especially port facilities and sea lanes.

As a tourist destination and place of recreation, Rottnest Island/Wadjemup is one of the least homogenised with the mainland in Australia and so clearly encapsulates the qualities of an island holiday that many seek. In particular, it is distinguished by the fact that it has limited vehicular traffic and has no private land-owners or permanent residents. It remains of immense social value to temporary residents and to visitors, particularly to Western Australians, many of whom holidayed there regularly as children and continue to visit the Island. It is recognised as an iconic Australian tourism destination in promotional material to international visitors.

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup provides a tangible example of the importance of islands to mainlanders, particularly in providing a sense of place and demonstrates the transition that occurred in the twentieth century, where islands became places of return, where the mainland urban population eager for seasonal respite could appreciate both a sense of freedom and continuity.
4. Cultural Heritage Significance

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE VALUES

The assessment of heritage values in this management plan has been undertaken utilising the National Heritage List Criteria. This enables the outstanding values of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup as a whole to be identified. It also provides a common platform for discussion of the heritage significance of the Island, as it is the basis on which the Environment Protection and Heritage Council of the Australian and State/Territory Governments adopted common criteria for the assessment of heritage significance across Australia (HERCON Criteria) in April 2008.

This plan seeks to define the outstanding heritage values of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup as a cultural landscape. It is not a formal heritage assessment for either State or National Heritage Listing. To be eligible for inclusion in the National Heritage List, a place must satisfy one or more of the nine criteria set out below. Similarly, the place must satisfy one or more of the Heritage Council of Western Australia criteria to be eligible for State listing. Recommendations as to the formal listing process are included in the Policy section of this document.

In accordance with the ‘Guidelines for the assessment of places for the National Heritage List’, pertinent documentary and physical evidence related to each of the values is reproduced here from the previous sections of this plan. While this appears somewhat repetitive, it serves the intended purpose of allowing the assessment of heritage values to be understood in their own right with sufficient evidence to support the identified values.

A. Events and Processes

The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place’s importance in the course, or pattern, of Australia’s natural or cultural history

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup has an exceptional combination of geological and ecological features and processes. Elevated marine features, which indicate sea level changes, include the fossil coral reef at Fairbridge Bluff and Mount Herschell Quarry where marine shell beds of Herschell Limestone are exposed. There are some excellent examples of ancient raised platforms and notches, formed by coastal erosion following changes in sea level, which are found around the edges of the salt lakes where they are not prone to ongoing coastal erosion. These features, together with fossil evidence and topographic evidence, are of international importance in the study of sea level and climate variations associated with the late Pleistocene and Holocene times.

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup demonstrates changes in flora and fauna that can occur over time due to rising sea levels. Since separation from the mainland 7,000 years ago, the flora and fauna on the Island have been isolated, and have experienced changes in environmental conditions. This has led in turn to changes in the appearance of a number of species from their mainland ancestors. These changes are significant enough for these animals to be described as separate sub-species. The dugite sub-species (Pseudonaja affinis exilis) and the Rottnest Island bobtail (Tiliqua rugosa konowi) are two examples of this genetic divergence and are only found on Rottnest Island/Wadjemup. The remnant Rottnest Island Pine (Callitris preissii) woodlands are rare.

The Rottnest Island/Wadjemup Marine Reserve has a far greater range of habitats, marine plants and animals than that of the adjacent mainland coastline of Western Australia due to its geological formations and its position in relation to warmer ocean currents. Extensive seagrass meadows occur around Rottnest Island/Wadjemup, and with nine species, it is second only to Shark Bay in species diversity along the Western Australian coastline. Approximately 400 species of fish and twenty species of coral occur within the Marine Reserve. The coral at Pocillopora Reef, Parker Point, is considered the southern most tropical coral reef in Australia.
Rottnest Island/Wadjemup is a key site in the early exploration and the beginning of an understanding of what became known as the Australian continent by European mariners. Following the first authenticated European sighting of the Australian coastline in the Gulf of Carpentaria by Willem Janszoon on the Duyfken in 1606, Dutch exploration and surveying then occurred along parts of the Western Australian coastline. The first sighting of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup was by explorer Frederick de Houtman in 1619 and then, in 1658, exploration of the Island was undertaken by men from the Waeckende Boey. In 1697 Willem de Vlamingh careened at what is now Thomson Bay to explore the Island. Three profile views of the Island by Victor Victorszoon were painted on this expedition. It is one of only seven paintings of the Western Australian coast that has survived from the Dutch explorations of the time and is held in the Maritime Museum of Rotterdam.

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup also played an important role in French exploration and was the rendezvous point (both in 1801 and 1803) for Nicholas Baudin’s expedition. Following this expedition, Louis de Freycinet, who was aboard the Naturaliste, published the first full map of Australia in 1805. His surveys of both Thomson Bay and the salt lakes on Rottnest Island/Wadjemup remain extant from this expedition.

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup played a seminal role in the history of the development of the Swan River Colony and the State of Western Australia, through its use as a penal establishment for Aboriginal prisoners. The expansion of the colony is directly reflected in the prison population of the establishment. For many contemporary Aboriginal people, the policy of placing native prisoners on Rottnest was a deliberate tactic that allowed the British and the colonial authorities to eliminate those who resisted the occupation of their land and threatened the success of the fledgling colony. Aboriginal people believe that their ancestors were imprisoned for no other crime than being warriors and leaders of their people.

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup is significant for its role of punishment and isolation of Aboriginal people during the settlement and expansion of the Swan River Colony and Western Australia. Between 1838, when the first prisoners arrived, and 1931 when the last prisoner left the island, more than 3,700 Aboriginal men and boys from throughout the State were sent to Rottnest. It is estimated that more than 10% of these men and boys died there, though it has been calculated that the total number of deaths in custody could be as many as 400 if one includes those who died on the mainland while serving their sentences, or died while under escort. It is believed that this makes Rottnest Island/Wadjemup the largest Aboriginal deaths in custody site in Australia and the Quod in particular the largest deaths in custody building in Australia. Those who died are believed to be buried in mostly unmarked graves in the Aboriginal Burial Ground to the northwest of the Quod.

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup demonstrates the role of Aboriginal labour in the development of Western Australia. The prisoners provided most of the manpower that sourced the raw materials for and built the main buildings, structures and road infrastructure on Rottnest, many of which survive and are still used today. They also worked the salt works, which was a thriving industry, and undertook other labour that was needed to make the establishment viable. Most of these tasks were completely foreign to the cultural practices of the men and boys imprisoned on the Island and, while they remain a stark reminder of their enforced labour, they also stand as a particular testament to their skills and endeavours. In this respect, Rottnest Island/Wadjemup can be seen as a microcosm of the development of the State of Western Australia where Aboriginal manpower played an important, but often forgotten, role.

The colonial settlement on Rottnest Island/Wadjemup demonstrates the planning and settlement of a nineteenth century island penal establishment, which has a high degree of integrity. The regimented and hierarchical layout of the Superintendent and Officers Quarters along the sea wall with the Quod, stores and mill and archaeological remnants of the fenced gardens behind, demonstrates both the self-sufficiency of the settlement as well as the harsh conditions faced by the inmates. Along with the Boys’ Reformatory, the Pilot Station and Governor’s Residence, it remains a remarkably intact example of a British colonial outpost established in the 1830s in the formative years of the Swan River Colony.

The shipwrecks around Rottnest Island/Wadjemup, along with the Wadjemup and Bathurst Lighthouses, the Signal Station and the Pilot Station, demonstrate not only the dangers of the maritime journeys that were an essential part of the colonial development of Australia for over a hundred years, but the vital role that ships have played in the lives of Western Australians since the founding of the Swan River Colony. The range of shipwrecks demonstrate the changing technology from timber to composite steel and the increase in loading capacity of ships that travelled to and from the colony.

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup is important in the military history of Australia both as a site for an internment camp during World War I and for its strategic importance as a key site for Australia’s coastal defence during World War II. During the 1930s, the coastal defence of Australia was enhanced through the strategic placement of gun batteries with the priority placement of 9.2 inch guns in Sydney Harbour and at Rottnest Island/Wadjemup to defend the port of Fremantle, the major base for the Allies in the Indian Ocean. Major construction works commenced on Rottnest in 1935 to establish the Kingstown Barracks and the Bickley and Oliver Hill Batteries, with 6 inch guns and two 9.2 inch guns respectively.
In addition four Fortress Observation Posts, a three storey Battery Observation Post and the Port War Signal Station (PWSS) were constructed. During 1941, Rottnest received its first posting of 30 Australian Women’s Army Service personnel. In late 1942, the strength of the military on Rottnest Island/Wadjemup peaked at 2,500, including Army, RAN, RAAF, AWAS and WRAAAF personnel. The RAN personnel included WRANS who operated the PWSS and, as well as manning their radar station at Stark Bay, RAAF personnel provided meteorological services for both gun batteries. The Barracks remained in Army use until 1984.

The transition of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup to an A-Class Reserve provides a tangible example of the importance of islands to mainlanders, particularly in providing a sense of place. It demonstrates the transition that occurred in the twentieth century, where islands ceased to be thought of as destinations and became places of return, where the mainland urban population eager for seasonal respite could appreciate both a sense of both freedom and continuity. Rottnest Island/Wadjemup embodies the quintessential Australian holiday experience of the twentieth century that was neighbourly, practical and democratic.

B. RARITY

The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place’s possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Australia’s natural or cultural history

The ancient raised wave-cut platforms and notches around the salt lakes are rare due to the unique formation of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup, where previously exposed coastline is now sheltered from the effects of coastal erosion enabling these features to be utilised in the study of sea level and climate variations associated with the late Pleistocene and Holocene times.

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup is rare as a purpose-built Aboriginal prison and is believed to be the only one of its kind in Australia. It demonstrates the range of attitudes towards Aboriginal prisoners and the administration of penal establishments from colonial settlement of the Swan River Colony in the 1830s until its closure almost one hundred years later. Sending Aboriginal prisoners to the Island, rather than incarcerating them in European style gaols where they were not coping well, was supposedly based on humanitarian intentions on the part of Governor Stirling and his successor Governor Hutt. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, Hutt’s experiment had become an expensive and inhumane failure and when the native establishment reopened in 1855 after a six-year hiatus, it did so as a prison without rehabilitation. It became known as one of the most infamous penal hell-holes in Western Australia.

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup is distinguished nationally as the only place to have retained the 9.2 inch guns that were an integral part the World War II coastal defence of Australia and other countries allied to the British war effort. These British made guns were in service as naval and coast defence guns from 1899 to the 1950s around the world. Two-hundred and eighty-two of the Mark X version were built by the British engineering firm, Vickers, of which only a limited number (including the two at Oliver Hill) are known to survive today.

The Governor’s Residence on Rottnest Island/Wadjemup is one of only two purpose built retreats for a colonial administrator in the Australian colonies. Governor’s retreats were a particular feature of the British Empire, in colonies considered to have unreasonably hot summers, including India, the Caribbean and Australia. Designed in the Victorian Tudor architectural style and completed in 1864, the Rottnest Island Governor’s Residence was used by successive governors until 1913. It is the most impressive building on the Island, with its crenelated parapets forming a distinctive landmark overlooking Thomson Bay. Governors, their families and guests usually spent up to two months each year on the Island, bringing over servants, various hunting paraphernalia and even carriages.
C. Research

The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place’s potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Australia’s natural or cultural history.

The wave-cut platforms and notches on Rottnest Island/Wadjemup that were formed by coastal erosion following changes in sea level, which took place in late Pleistocene and Holocene times, together with fossil evidence are of international importance in the study of sea level and climate variations associated with the Pleistocene ice age.

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup has the potential to yield information regarding the pre-island and post-island phases of human occupation by Australia’s Aboriginal peoples. To date, a handful of artefacts flaked from Eocene fossiliferous chert and calcrite (indurated limestone) have been found. As sources of Eocene fossiliferous chert are now generally believed to lie submerged off shore, and ceased to be accessible following post-glacial sea level rises about 6,500 years ago (which also resulted in the formation of the offshore islands), artefacts made from this material are an important temporal marker. There is also enormous archaeological potential to widen the understanding of the life and traditions of the Aboriginal people from all over Western Australia imprisoned on the Island in the immediate contact and post-contact period. Both in the settlement and across the Island, the finds to date include glass artefacts made by these men and boys for hunting purposes and a sacred shield discovered underneath the floorboards of the Quod.

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup has a range of habitats important for a number of vulnerable and threatened species some of which are genetically different to any mainland communities. The quokka (Setonix brachyurus) is the most well known animal on Rottnest Island/Wadjemup. It is the sole representative of the genus Setonix and there are limited populations remaining in south-western Australia, with the largest population on Rottnest. The unique saline lakes on the Island are also important sites for migratory birds. Studies of these flora and fauna populations have the potential to contribute to a wider understanding of the impact of change on vulnerable and threatened species.

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup is significant for its archaeological potential to contribute to a wider understanding of the history of the immediate pre-colonial and colonial settlement in Western Australia. In particular, an understanding of the interplay of the environment and humans seeking to become self-sufficient and to develop marketable industries and the reliance of the colony on convict and other forms of forced labour. Of particular note is the evidence of agricultural activities including land-clearing, buildings, stables, wells, fields, stock yards, gardens and fences associated with the immediate pre-colonial and colonial era.

The shipwrecks around Rottnest Island/Wadjemup are an important educational resource and research site due to the variety of ships, of both local and international origin, that are unusually accessible for viewing due to the shallow and generally hospitable waters around the Island. The range of shipwrecks provides the opportunity for a broader understanding of the changing technology applied to shipbuilding in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the increase in loading capacity of ships and of the goods and people who travelled to and from Western Australia in its formative years.
D. Principal characteristics of a class of places

The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place’s importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of:

i) a class of Australia’s natural or cultural places; or

ii) a class of Australia’s natural or cultural environments

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup is important in demonstrating the apparatus of a British colonial penal establishment in Australia from the 1830s. The settlement area buildings, spaces and pathways of the penal establishment remain extant, albeit with very different uses in the twenty-first century than the original architects of the establishment envisioned. Built with prison labour, the sea wall, quarters and salt store overlooking the bay, with stores and mill and church behind and the Quod set back behind a formal square all speak to the highly regimented and largely self-sufficient life of this colonial island outpost.

The shipwrecks around the Island tell the story, not only of the dangers of maritime journeys, but of the essential role that ships played in the lives of Western Australians since the founding of the Swan River Colony. The pilot station and lighthouses (with associated quarters), which were built to assist with safe shipping to and from the nearby major port of Fremantle, demonstrate the dependence on ocean transport for the settlement and survival of Australia’s colonies.

Together the World War II infrastructure on Rottnest Island/Wadjemup, comprising the two batteries, signal tower, barracks, railways and associated works demonstrates the role of the defence force and Australian men and women in the defence of Australia during World War II.

As a tourist destination and place of recreation, Rottnest Island/Wadjemup encapsulates the qualities of an Australian island holiday that many seek. It is distinguished by the fact that it has limited vehicular traffic and has no private land-owners or permanent residents. It is recognised as an iconic Australian tourism destination in promotional material to international visitors. It provides a tangible example of the importance of islands to mainlanders, particularly in providing a sense of place and demonstrates the transition that occurred in the twentieth century, where islands became places of return, where the mainland urban population eager for seasonal respite could appreciate both a sense of freedom and continuity.

E. Aesthetic characteristics

The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place’s importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup is outstanding for its picturesque island qualities highly valued by the community. Comprising sublime aquamarine waters on the raised platforms around the island, beautiful beaches and coastal scenery of embayments and limestone cliffs with subtle rolling dunes behind, its aesthetic qualities are further enhanced by the spectacular natural phenomenon of the salt lakes and the subtle colours of the natural vegetation. The settlement area is characterised by a sweeping bay marked by the sea wall and distinctive limestone colonial buildings creating a defined sense of place. Somerville’s avenues have been designed to both contrast and complement the natural vegetation and built form and continue to provide scenic pathways in the settlement and to the Basin. The views to and from the lighthouses are captivating and the experience of the island at its western most point is reminiscent of how the Island first appeared to the European mariners coming across the seas. A constant, yet ever changing vision on the horizon from the metropolitan coastline, Rottnest Island/Wadjemup is outstanding for its aesthetic qualities that capture the imagination of visitors, artists and writers.
F. Creative or Technical Achievement

The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place’s importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.

The lack of timber on Rottnest Island/Wadjemup led to the development of a distinctive and unusual roof structure for many of the colonial buildings on the Island including the Governor’s Residence. These roofs, which are still extant on the Superintendent’s and Officers’ Quarters, Old Mill and Hay Store, Salt Store, Chapel and Boathouse, used narrowly spaced split beam trusses (known as ‘Vincent Trusses’) lined with timber boards topped with limestone slabs. This was then covered with a slurry of lime and sand thus successfully using the limited resources available on the Island to achieve weather protection for the limestone buildings.

The major construction works that commenced on Rottnest in 1935 to the Bickley and Oliver Hill Batteries are a significant engineering achievement. A narrow gauge railway from the Army Jetty was completed in April 1936 and was initially used to carry all the heavy equipment up to Oliver Hill and Bickley Batteries. A 9.2 inch gun barrel and breech mechanism alone weighed 28.4 tonnes. A complete gun turret and all its components weighed 142.2 tonnes. The Oliver Hill Battery involved substantial earthworks in the sandy soil to construct the two gun turrets with connecting tunnels and operational areas all concealed underground.

G. Social Value

The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place’s strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.

Because of its unique and significant history, Rottnest Island/Wadjemup has the potential to become one of the most important focal points for reconciliation and healing between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people not just in Western Australia but for Australia as a nation. For this to occur, the pain and shame of the past needs to be further acknowledged, and the untold history of the Island needs to be brought into the open in a much more conspicuous and inclusive way. There are those in the Aboriginal community and the wider community who know that this is a painful but shared past which belongs not only to Aboriginal people, but to all the people of Western Australia and the nation as a whole, and who feel that Rottnest has the potential to be a catalyst for genuine reconciliation and healing.

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup has immense social value, particularly to Western Australians, many of whom have a life-long relationship to the Island, albeit with strongly contrasting emotions. These connections have arisen from the early colonial use of the Island as a penal establishment with imprisonment of Aboriginal people from all over the State within living memory of their descendants. Its subsequent use as an A-Class reserve has created a deep sense of place and belonging to a range of people from former residents and visitors to the strong volunteer base. The relaxed atmosphere and safe friendly environment combined with a sense of wilderness and connection to both nature and history contribute to the strong sense of community attachment to Rottnest Island/Wadjemup.
H. Significant People

The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place’s special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Australia’s natural or cultural history

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup is associated with Dutch mariner, Willem de Vlamingh (Waekende Boey), who in 1697 landed just north of the Swan River mouth and then careened at what is now Thomson Bay to explore the Island. Vlamingh’s expedition named the Island ‘Rottenest’, meaning rat’s nest, which is understood to refer to the marsupial quokkas, which abound on the Island. The name remains in use today. The journals of De Vlamingh from this expedition along the coast are among the earliest recorded observations of the Australian people by Europeans.

Many of the men sent to the Aboriginal penal establishment on Rottnest Island/Wadjemup were significant people in their communities, including leaders who were the apical ancestors of native title holders today. Their names are largely forgotten in the wider community, but they are recorded in sources and are remembered by their descendants.

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup is associated with the infamous career of Henry Vincent, who served as Superintendent of the Rottnest Island Aboriginal Penal Establishment from 1839 to 1849 and again from 1856 to 1867. Vincent is remembered to this day as a cruel and sadistic man with a violent and uncontrollable temper. His brutality towards the prisoners has become legendary and he has been described as one of the harshest gaolers in Australian history.

I. Indigenous Tradition

The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place’s importance as part of Indigenous tradition

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup always was for Aboriginal people a sacred special place with timeless pre-colonial significance, and a cultural narrative born out of its more recent prison history. Wadjemup has significant cultural value for Aboriginal people, being associated with a number of Dreamtime stories concerning death and the creation of the offshore Islands, some of which were recorded by early settlers. There is also archaeological evidence of human occupation of the island prior to its separation from the mainland, possibly dating as far back as 30,000 years.

Contemporary Aboriginal people across the State continue to tell stories about their ancestors’ experiences at Rottnest, including stories of escapes by swimming or by shape-shifting into beings such as a fly or a crow, or even a ‘roley-poly’ (tumbleweed) to escape over the waves to the mainland. Although there is no historical evidence to support stories of escape by swimming the fact that they exist demonstrates the lasting legacy of the place in the social and cultural life of diverse language groups across Western Australia.
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The following statement of significance provides a succinct summary of the significance of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup as a cultural landscape. It encapsulates the potential State and National heritage values of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup. As each of the values outlined below contributes to the significance of the Island as a whole, the statement is not set out in any particular hierarchical order, rather it is set out in chronological order reflecting the evolution of the cultural landscape over time.

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup, a cultural landscape where human interaction with the natural systems over time has formed a distinctive landscape, has cultural heritage significance for the following reasons:

• It has an exceptional combination of geological and ecological features and processes, many of which are of international importance in the study of sea level and climate variations associated with the late Pleistocene and Holocene times

• It has significant cultural value for Aboriginal people, being associated with a number of Dreamtime stories concerning death and the creation of the offshore islands. There is also archaeological evidence of human occupation of the island prior to its separation from the mainland, possibly dating as far back as 30,000 years

• It is a key site in the early exploration and the beginning of an understanding of what became known as the Australian continent by European mariners, commencing with the Dutch mariners who landed on the Island and surveyed the coastline in the 17th century

• It is rare as a purpose-built Aboriginal prison, believed to be the only one of its kind in Australia. This penal establishment played a seminal role in the history of the development of the Swan River Colony and the State of Western Australia and is significant for its role in the removal, punishment and enforced labour of Aboriginal men and boys during the immediate Contact and post-Contact periods

• It has recognised archaeological potential to widen the understanding of Aboriginal occupation prior to the separation of the Island from the mainland and the life and traditions of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the post-colonial era

• The colonial settlement on Rottnest Island/Wadjemup remains a remarkably intact example of a British colonial outpost and penal establishment dating from the early to mid-nineteenth century, which continues to impart its influence into the present day

• The shipwrecks around the Island’s seascape and the maritime infrastructure on the Island demonstrate not only the dangers of the maritime journeys that were an essential part of the colonial development of Australia for over a hundred years, but the vital role that ships have played in the lives of Western Australians since the founding of the Swan River Colony

• It is recognised for its strategic importance as a key site for Australia’s coastal defence during World War II. The military infrastructure from this time demonstrates the high level of technical achievements and the role of the Australian men and women in the defence of Australia during World War II. It is distinguished nationally as the only place to have retained the 9.2 inch guns in its batteries

• The transition of the Island to a place of recreation and respite provides a tangible example of the importance of islands to mainlanders, particularly in providing a strong sense of place. It embodies the quintessential Australian holiday experience of the twentieth century that was neighbourly, practical and democratic. The relaxed atmosphere and safe friendly environment combined with a sense of wildness and connection to both nature and history contribute to the strong community attachment to the Island

• A constant, yet ever changing vision on the horizon from the metropolitan coastline, it has outstanding aesthetic qualities that continue to capture the imagination. The settlement area characterised by a sweeping bay and marked by the sea wall, distinctive limestone colonial buildings and avenues of tree plantings contributes to a strong sense of place, while the sublime coastal scenery of embayments, beaches and limestone cliffs with rolling dunes behind is enhanced by the spectacular natural phenomenon of the salt lakes, evocative lighthouses and the subtle colours of the natural geology and vegetation

• Because of its unique and significant history, including its place as what is believed to be the largest Aboriginal deaths in custody site in Australia, and one of the largest Aboriginal burial grounds in the State, the Island has the potential to become one of the most important focal points for reconciliation and healing between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Western Australia and potentially the nation
5. Key Themes and Zones of Significance

The Australian Historic Themes Framework was designed to offer links between the different regional stories in Australia's history, and the heritage places that help to illustrate that history as a whole. It was endorsed by Commonwealth, State and Territory heritage agencies in March 2000. The framework can be applied to places at all levels of significance from local through to national. While it focuses on historic values, it recognises that natural, social, scientific and aesthetic values may also reside in a place.

The themes are useful tools that represent current views of the past and of the environment. They which will change over time and be subject to multiple interpretations. New sub-themes may be developed, or existing themes may be linked to the framework as required, according to regional variations or particular historical processes.

KEY THEMES

The Australian Historic Themes Framework comprise nine principal themes, which are linked to and elaborated by a network of more specific sub-themes:

1. Tracing the evolution of the Australian environment
2. Peopling Australia
3. Developing local, regional and national economies
4. Building settlements, towns and cities
5. Working
6. Educating
7. Governing
8. Developing Australia’s cultural life
9. Marking the phases of life

The Statement of Significance (Section 4) provides a summary of the heritage significance of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup as whole. Each of these values can be related to one or more of the historic themes as set out below.

For the purpose of outlining the key themes and zones of significance, a succinct summary of each of the Statements of Significance has been introduced in this section for ease of reference.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Succinct Summary</th>
<th>Statement of Heritage Value</th>
<th>Key Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geological and ecological features</td>
<td>It has an exceptional combination of geological and ecological features and processes, many of which are of international importance in the study of sea level and climate variations associated with the late Pleistocene and Holocene times</td>
<td>1. Tracing the evolution of the Australian environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural narrative</td>
<td>It has significant cultural value for Aboriginal people, being associated with a number of Dreamtime stories concerning death and the creation of the offshore islands. There is also archaeological evidence of human occupation of the island prior to its separation from the mainland, possibly dating as far back as 30,000 years</td>
<td>2.1 Living as Australia’s earliest inhabitants 8.5.1 Preserving traditions and group memories 8.11.2 Myth making and story-telling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European exploration</td>
<td>It is a key site in the early exploration and the beginning of an understanding of what became known as the Australian continent by European mariners, commencing with the Dutch mariners who landed on the Island and surveyed the coastline in the 17th century</td>
<td>3.1 Exploring the coastline 3.3 Surveying the continent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal penal establishment</td>
<td>It is rare as a purpose-built Aboriginal prison, believed to be the only one of its kind in Australia. This penal establishment played a seminal role in the history of the development of the Swan River Colony and the State of Western Australia and is significant for its role in the removal, punishment and enforced labour of Aboriginal men and boys during the immediate Contact and post-Contact periods</td>
<td>2.6.1 Resisting the advent of Europeans and their animals 2.6.2 Displacing Indigenous people 5.1 Working in harsh conditions 7.5 Governing Australia’s colonial possessions 7.6.5 Incarcerating people 7.6.7 Enforcing discriminatory legislation 9.7 Dying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal life and traditions</td>
<td>It has recognised archaeological potential to widen the understanding of Aboriginal occupation prior to the separation of the Island from the mainland and the life and traditions of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the post-colonial era</td>
<td>2.1 Living as Australia’s earliest inhabitants 2.2 Adapting to diverse environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonial settlement</td>
<td>The colonial settlement on Rottnest Island/Wadjemup remains a remarkably intact example of a British colonial outpost and penal establishment dating from the early to mid-nineteenth century, which continues to impart its influence into the present day</td>
<td>2.5 Promoting settlement 3.4 Utilising natural resources 3.5 Developing primary production 3.11 Altering the environment 7.1 Governing Australia as a province of the British Empire 7.8 Establishing regional and local identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maritime journeys</td>
<td>The shipwrecks around the Island’s seascape and the maritime infrastructure on the Island demonstrate not only the dangers of the maritime journeys that were an essential part of the colonial development of Australia for over a hundred years, but the vital role that the ships have played in the lives of Western Australians since the founding of the Swan River Colony</td>
<td>2.4.4 Migrating through organised colonisation 3.8 Moving goods and people 3.8.1 Shipping to and from Australian ports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military establishments</td>
<td>It is recognised for its strategic importance as a key site for Australia’s coastal defence during World War II. The military infrastructure from this time demonstrates the high level of technical achievements and the role of the Australian men and women in the defence of Australia during World War II. It is distinguished nationally as the only place to have retained the 9.2 inch guns in its batteries</td>
<td>7.7 Defending Australia 8.9 Commemorating significant events 8.10.5 Advancing knowledge in science and technology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Recreation

The transition of the Island to a place of recreation and respite provides a tangible example of the importance of islands to mainlanders, particularly in providing a strong sense of place. It embodies the quintessential Australian holiday experience of the twentieth century that was neighbourly, practical and democratic. The relaxed atmosphere and safe friendly environment combined with a sense of wildness and connection to both nature and history contribute to the strong sense of community attachment to the Island.

### Capturing the Imagination

A constant, yet ever changing vision on the horizon from the metropolitan coastline, it has outstanding aesthetic qualities that continue to capture the imagination. The settlement area characterised by a sweeping bay and marked by the sea wall, distinctive limestone colonial buildings and avenues of tree plantings contributes to a strong sense of place, while the sublime coastal scenery of embayments, beaches and limestone cliffs with rolling dunes behind is enhanced by the spectacular natural phenomenon of the salt lakes, evocative lighthouses and the subtle colours of the natural geology and vegetation.

### Reconciliation

Because of its unique and significant history, including its place as what is believed to be the largest Aboriginal deaths in custody site in Australia, and one of the largest Aboriginal burial grounds in the State, the Island has the potential to become one of the most important focal points for reconciliation and healing between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Western Australia and potentially the nation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td>3.23, 8.1, 8.1.3, 8.1.4, 8.2, 8.3, 8.5, 9.2, 9.3, 9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capturing the Imagination</td>
<td>1.4, 8.10, 8.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconciliation</td>
<td>4.6, 8.9, 9.7.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ZONES OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Statement of Significance (Section 4) encapsulates the values of the Island as whole. As such it is important to recognise that all of the areas of the Island combine to form a total cultural landscape. They all in their own way contribute to the cultural heritage significance of the Island and represent particular values of the Island as a whole.

However, it is helpful for the purposes of understanding the factors that affect the Island’s future and for its on-going management to consider the Island as having the following discrete yet inter-connected zones.

1. Marine
2. Terrestrial
3. Salt Lakes
4. Settlement Area

Within each zone there will be differing levels of significance of elements that will be determined through detailed conservation planning for each area. As a general principle, the elements in each of the zones that demonstrate the particular values encapsulated in this plan are likely to be of a greater level of significance than those that do not demonstrate these values to the same extent. The values demonstrated in each zone are outlined below.

ZONE 1: MARINE

This area encompasses the whole of the area from the low tide mark to the extent of the Class A-Reserve boundary.

It demonstrates the tangible and intangible heritage values associated with:

- Geological and ecological features
- Cultural narrative
- European exploration
- Maritime journeys
- Aboriginal life and traditions
- Recreation
Zone 2: Terrestrial

This area encompasses the whole of the Island from the low tide mark, excluding the Settlement Area and the Salt Lakes.

It demonstrates the tangible and intangible values associated with:

- Geological and ecological features
- Cultural narrative
- European exploration
- Aboriginal life and traditions
- Maritime journeys
- Military establishments
- Recreation
- Capturing the imagination
- Reconciliation

Zone 3: Salt Lakes

This area encompasses all the Salt Lakes on the Island with the exception of Garden Lake.

It demonstrates the tangible and intangible values associated with:

- Geological and ecological features
- Cultural narrative
- European exploration
- Aboriginal life and traditions
- Colonial settlement
- Maritime journeys
- Military establishments
- Recreation
- Capturing the imagination
- Reconciliation

Zone 4: Settlement Area

This area encompasses the Settlement Area as defined in the Act, sited along Thomson Bay extending to Bickley Bay in the south and along the Basin, Longreach and Geordie Bays to the north.

It demonstrates the tangible and intangible values associated with:

- Cultural narrative
- European exploration
- Aboriginal penal establishment
- Aboriginal life and traditions
- Colonial settlement
- Maritime journeys
- Military establishments
- Recreation
- Capturing the imagination
- Reconciliation
This section provides an overview of the key factors to be considered in the development of the conservation policy (Section 7) for Rottnest Island/Wadjemup.

The Conservation Policy Guidelines in the Burra Charter clarify the purpose and content of a conservation policy:

*The purpose of the conservation policy is to state how the conservation of the place may best be achieved both in the long and short term. It will be specific to that place. (Article 2.1)*

Developing conservation policies requires an understanding of a wide range of factors that may constrain or create opportunities for the conservation of the significance of the place. This section therefore considers the relevant constraints and opportunities under the following headings:

- Governance
- Statutory and Planning Framework
- Australian Standards and Legislation for Safety and Universal Access
- Visitors
- Commemoration
- Condition

**GOVERNANCE**

Good governance is the single most important factor in ensuring best practice cultural heritage management. In the context of the Western Australian public sector, governance is defined as encompassing the systems and structures by which an organisation is directed, controlled and operated and the mechanisms by which it and the people within it are held to account. The Public Sector Commission of Western Australia outlines the good governance principles for public sector agencies and boards in its Governance Guides.

In effect, the Board is the body charged with outlining the vision and strategic direction for the Island and the RIA is responsible for giving effect to the vision. This is an interacting relationship that is best served by open, accessible and responsive communication, clearly defined responsibilities and a culture that serves the goals, operations of the organisation as well as individual achievements. Underpinning all this is transparent and open decision-making and effective engagement of stakeholders. Recent studies have found that governance quality is enhanced through the principles of both meaningful participation and productive deliberation.

**STATUTORY AND PLANNING FRAMEWORK**

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup is managed by the Rottnest Island Authority in the context of international agreements and the Commonwealth and Western Australia legislative framework.

While much of the history and natural beauty of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup have long been recognised by visitors to the Island, it was not until the second half of the twentieth century that heritage listing and environment protection began to be formalised under a number of legislative and guiding mechanisms.

The statutory framework, which relates directly to the management, planning, protection, conservation and maintenance of the cultural landscape of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup are briefly outlined in this section.

**STATUTORY FRAMEWORK**

Rottnest Island Authority Act (1987)

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup is an A-Class Reserve including marine and terrestrial areas. Under the Rottnest Island Authority Act (1987) the control and management of the Island is vested in the Rottnest Island Authority for the primary purposes of enabling the RIA to:

- provide and operate recreational facilities on the Island
- protect the flora and fauna on the Island
- maintain and protect the natural and man-made resources of the Island and to the extent that the RIA's resources allow, repair its natural environment

The Minister for Tourism is responsible for administering the Act on behalf of the Western Australian Government.

The RIA is the decision-maker in regards to any development on the Island and has a series of Development Planning Guidelines covering:

---

6. Factors Affecting the Future
1. Development Plans
2. Sustainable Development
3. Cultural Heritage Places and Heritage Precincts
4. Signage
5. Settlement Design
6. Colours and Materials
7. Environmental Management of Flora, Fauna and Marine
8. Transport and Movement
9. Construction Management
10. Stakeholder and Community Comment Process
11. Transportable Buildings
12. Telecommunications Infrastructure
13. Ancillary Development (Exemptions)

**Rottnest Island Management Plan (RIMP)**

Every five years, the RIA prepares the Rottnest Island Management Plan (RIMP), which provides the strategic framework for management of the Island. This framework is put into practice through a variety of plans and strategies. The RIMP outlines the major policies and summary of operations in relation to RIA’s legislative responsibilities including visitor services, facilities and conservation of the Island’s natural environment and cultural heritage.

It is intended that this Cultural Landscape Management Plan will be the plan that is relied on to guide the management of the heritage significance of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup as a whole. The RIMP 2014-2019 states that this plan will be utilised to guide future development of the Island and that it is the intention of the RIA to seek recognition of the heritage values of the Island as a whole.

**Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999**

The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (the EPBC Act) is the Australian Government’s central piece of environmental legislation. It provides a legal framework to protect and manage nationally and internationally important flora, fauna, ecological communities and heritage places.

From 1 January 2004, amendments to the EPBC Act 1999 came into effect to create a new National Heritage List of natural, Indigenous and historic places with outstanding heritage value to the nation and a Commonwealth List of heritage places owned by Commonwealth agencies. The Australian Heritage Council Act 2003 also came into effect on 1 January 2004 and it created a council of experts to assess the nominations to the National and Commonwealth Lists and make recommendations to the Minister about the heritage values of nominated places.

The approved lists under the EPBC Act include the National Heritage List, Australian places on the World Heritage List and Threatened Ecological Communities. Rottnest Island/Wadjemup is not included in any of these lists, however a number of places on and around the Island were registered under the now defunct ‘Register of the National Estate’ (now a non-statutory archive). These include:

- City of York Shipwreck
- Denton Holme Shipwreck
- Gem Shipwreck
- Janet Shipwreck
- Kingstown Barracks- Bickley Battery Conservation Area
- Lady Elizabeth Shipwreck
- Macedon Shipwreck
- Mira Flores Shipwreck
- Olivers Hill Battery
- Raven Shipwreck
- Rottnest Island Shipwrecks

**Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976**

The Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976 protects historic wrecks and associated relics in Commonwealth waters (or those that were in Commonwealth waters at the time of listing) for their heritage values and for recreational, scientific and educational purposes.

The State of Western Australia has its own legislation, the Maritime Archaeology Act 1973 that protects maritime archaeological sites on land and in State waters, such as bays, harbours and rivers. In addition to shipwrecks, the Act also protects relics, such as anchors, and land sites associated with historic ships.

Commonwealth ministerial approval is required prior to any proposed disturbance of a Commonwealth registered shipwreck. The Maritime Museum of Western Australia acts as both the Commonwealth’s delegate and the State’s advisor in relation to shipwrecks. The Museum’s advice must be sought prior to any action on or near any registered shipwreck (either State or Commonwealth).

The following shipwrecks around the Island are protected under the Historic Shipwreck Act 1976:

- City of York
- Denton Holme
- Gem
- Janet
- Kiryo Maru I
- Lady Elizabeth
• Macedon
• Mira Flores
• Raven
• Transit
• Uribes

Environmental Protection Act 1986 (WA)
The Environmental Protection Act 1986 provides for the prevention, control and abatement of pollution and environmental harm and for the conservation, preservation, protection, enhancement and management of the environment. The RIA is recognised as a ‘decision making authority’ under the Environmental Protection Act 1986. Under Section 38 of the Environmental Protection Act 1986, the RIA is required to refer proposals to the Environmental Protection Authority where the matter is considered to be a ‘significant proposal’, that is if the proposal were implemented it would have a significant effect on the environment.

The environmental sensitivities and vulnerability of the Rottnest Island/Wadjemup environment have been recognised under the Environmental Protection Act 1986. These include:

• Environmentally Sensitive Areas within 50m of wetlands listed on the ‘Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia’ (includes all salt lakes and brackish swamps)
• Threatened Ecological Communities (TEC) of ‘Callitris preissii (or Melaleuca lanceolata) forests and woodlands, Swan Coastal Plain’

Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972 (WA)
The Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972 provides ‘for the preservation on behalf of the community of places and objects customarily used by or traditional to the original inhabitants of Australia or their descendants.’ The Department of Aboriginal Affairs maintains the Aboriginal Sites Register.

Register of Aboriginal Sites
The following known places on the Island are protected under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972.

• Peacock Hill (Artefacts/Scatter)
• Cycleway (Artefacts/Scatter)
• Transit Cell (Man-made structure)
• Lodge/Quod (Ceremonial, historical, repository/cache)
• Longreach Bay (Artefacts/Scatter)
• Wadjemup Aboriginal Prisoners Cemetery – Skeletal material
• Golf Course - Artefacts/Scatter (Artefacts/Scatter)
• Golf Course South - Artefacts/Scatter (Artefacts/Scatter)
• Golf Course Northeast - Artefacts/Scatter (Artefacts/Scatter)

Other Heritage Places
The following places on the Island have been lodged with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, but have not yet been assessed under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972. It is considered prudent to treat these Lodged places as if they are Aboriginal Sites until a determination has been made under the Act.

• Little Armstrong (3399) - Artefacts/Scatter
• Old Hospital (3468) - Historical
• Stables (3784) - Artefacts/Scatter
• Fish Hook Bay (3829) - Artefacts/Scatter Engraving
• Bathurst Point Lighthouse Site (20592) - Artefacts/Scatter
• Bathurst Point Artfact (23867) - Artefact/Scatter
• Golf Course Isolated Finds (31748)

Heritage of Western Australia Act 1990
Cultural heritage places in Western Australia are afforded statutory protection under the Heritage of Western Australia Act 1990. The Heritage Council of Western Australia maintains the State Register of Heritage Places under the Act, which aims to recognise and protect places of cultural heritage significance to the people of Western Australia. The Heritage Council provides advice to the decision-making authority in regards to places entered in the State Register. The Council also enters into agreements to streamline the conservation and management of heritage places of State significance.

State Register of Heritage Places
The following places on the Island are protected under the Heritage of Western Australia Act 1990. These places are all precincts that contain a number of buildings, structures and landscape elements that together form the listed place.

• Thomson Bay Settlement
• Kingstown Barracks
• Oliver Hill Battery
• Rottnest Island Light Station
• Bathurst Lighthouse & Quarters

State Planning Policy 3.5 Historic Heritage Conservation (2007)
The State Planning Policy 3.5 ‘Historic Heritage Conservation’ was gazetted on 29 May 2007 under the Planning and Development Act 2005. This policy sets out the principles of sound and responsible planning for the conservation and protection of Western Australia’s historic heritage. It applies to places and areas of significance in the State. The objectives of this policy are:

• to conserve places and areas of historic heritage significance
• to ensure that development does not adversely affect the significance of heritage places and areas
• to ensure that heritage significance at both the State and local levels is given due weight in planning decision-making
• to provide improved certainty to landowners and the community about the planning processes for heritage identification, conservation and protection

Under this policy, the identification, conservation and protection of places and areas of State heritage significance are provided for in the Heritage of Western Australia Act 1990. The conservation and protection of places and areas of local heritage significance is provided for in the Planning and Development Act 2005, which enables local governments and State government authorities to protect heritage places and objects in local planning schemes.

GUIDING FRAMEWORK

The guiding documents, which relate directly to the management, planning, protection, conservation and maintenance of the cultural landscape of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup are briefly outlined in this section.

UNESCO World Heritage Convention

In 1993, the National Trust of Australia (WA) classified the landscape of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup as being of heritage significance. However the consideration of the Island as an interacting and evolving whole has not been studied in any holistic way until now. In the late 20th century nationally and internationally accepted approaches to the understanding and management of cultural heritage landscapes began to be formally adopted. In 1992, the World Heritage Convention became the first international legal instrument to recognise and protect cultural landscapes with guidelines applicable to cultural landscape of local, national and international significance. This report marks the first document to be underpinned by this methodology in Western Australia as is befitting the iconic Rottnest Island/Wadjemup.

Under the Operational Guidelines (2013), Rottnest Island/Wadjemup could best be described as an organically evolved landscape which has aspects of both a relict and a continuing landscape. As such its management will require careful consideration of these particular qualities.

UNESCO Convention for the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage 2001

In recent years, underwater cultural heritage has attracted increasing attention from both the scientific community and the general public. To scientists, it represents an invaluable source of information on ancient civilizations and historic seafaring. To the public at large, it offers an opportunity to further develop leisure diving and tourism. The Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage is a treaty adopted on 2 November 2001 by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The convention aims at protection of ‘all traces of human existence having a cultural, historical or archaeological character’, which have been under water for over 100 years.

Global Code of Ethics for Tourism

Adopted in 1999 by the General Assembly of the World Tourism Organisation, the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism was acknowledged by the United Nations two years later, which expressly encouraged UNWTO to promote the effective follow-up of its provisions. The Code is a fundamental frame of reference for responsible and sustainable tourism and contains a comprehensive set of principles designed to guide key-players in tourism development. Addressed to governments, the travel industry, communities and tourists alike, it aims to help maximise the sector’s benefits while minimising its potentially negative impact on the environment, cultural heritage and societies across the globe.

Burra Charter, 2013

The Australia ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) Burra Charter provides guidelines for the conservation and management of culturally significant places. The Burra Charter is based on the fundamental principle that conservation plays an integral part in the management of culturally significant places and is an ongoing responsibility. The Charter provides for natural, indigenous and/or historic places and is widely recognised as the national standard for heritage conservation in Australia.

Australian Natural Heritage Charter, 2002

The Australian Natural Heritage Charter: for the conservation of natural heritage places was first adopted in December 1996 and updated in 2002. It recognises the coexistence of natural and cultural heritage values of places. In making decisions that will affect the future of a place, the Natural Heritage Charter emphasises the importance of considering all the values of a place, encompasses a wide interpretation of natural heritage, and is fundamentally based upon a respect for that heritage. The Charter acknowledges three key principles of intergenerational equity (being the need to pass on the sites of natural and cultural values intact to future generations); existence value; uncertainty and precaution.

BUILDING AND ACCESS STANDARDS

Other legislation of relevance to the management of activities and works on the Island includes universal access provisions, the building act and national building codes, which along with occupational health and safety legislation influence management and proposals for future works.

Disability Discrimination Act 1992

The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) is Commonwealth legislation requiring that people with disabilities be given equal opportunity to participate in and contribute to the range of social, political and cultural activities. The legislation is a complaints based law which requires people who consider themselves discriminated against to lodge a complaint with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission.
PLACES OF COMMEMORATION

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup is currently a place of commemoration for a variety of social and cultural events, including a range of life stages and activities. Life stage celebrations include weddings and the annual school leavers’ events, as well as recreational activities such as the Rottnest Island Swim. Artistic exhibitions and theatre productions are held on a regular basis to commemorate many stories of the Island. All of these are popular events. Other commemorations include those related to the military history of the Island and there are a range of more informal activities such as paying respect to the land and acknowledging the Whadjuk people on arrival to the Island.

The significance of the Island to the whole of Western Australia as an Aboriginal penal establishment that housed prisoners as the colony expanded and as a deaths-in-custody burial ground is not at this point being commemorated to the extent that this value warrants. While significant steps are being taken by the RIA in terms of reconciliation, recognition of this painful past needs to be considered with reference to national and international examples of places where, increasingly, visitors are encouraged to understand the painful and often shameful past. Commemoration should also extend to recognition of the internment camps on the Island. Examples of such places include Robben Island (South Africa), Long Kesh (Northern Ireland), Three Islands Prison (New Caledonia), Hoa Lo (Vietnam), Port Arthur (Tasmania), KAVHA (Norfolk Island). All of these places look to a positive future through understanding the past. The recognition of the role that Aboriginal people had in constructing the buildings and infrastructure on the Island and in the State more generally is one aspect that could also be commemorated through this process.

CONDITION

Understanding the condition of the place is an important part of conservation management planning as it points to priorities for future conservation works. For the purpose of this plan, condition refers to the current state of the place relative to the cultural heritage values for which the place is considered significant. It reflects the cumulative effects of management, use and environmental factors and considers the integrity of the Island and the degree of intactness of elements and the Island as a whole in relation to the statement of significance. (It is not a detailed condition assessment nor does it include any assessment of the structural condition of any elements within the Reserve).

This condition assessment is not a detailed condition or structural assessment, rather it is based on a review of the RIA’s Heritage Maintenance Checklist and other studies prepared by and for the RIA, combined with observations by the project team on site visits undertaken during the preparation of this plan. It is set out under the summary headings of significance and concludes with an assessment of the condition of the Island as a whole.
Geological and ecological features (Zones 1/2/3): The geological elements are in a good condition. The ecological features are under pressure with habitat loss and erosion. The terrestrial biodiversity is in a relatively good condition. A best practice program of environmental monitoring and rehabilitation is in place. Fire poses a significant risk factor.

European exploration (Zones 1/2/3/4): The parts of the Island that demonstrate these values are in good condition. While the Thomson Bay area has undergone significant change since the first Europeans landed on the Island, these values are evident particularly at the West End.

Aboriginal penal establishment (Zone 4): The Aboriginal penal establishment has largely been converted into tourist accommodation and associated visitor amenities. The Quod has unfortunately not yet been vacated, however the intention is that it will no longer be offered as tourist accommodation from 2018. It is imperative that a program of conservation and interpretation is put in place because if it is left to languish without a strong commitment to its future, its condition may deteriorate significantly. While there is an adequate program of maintenance in place, the intactness and integrity are a risk through inappropriate use and high demand for accommodation in these buildings, which does not allow effective long-term planning and conservation of its cultural values.

Aboriginal life and traditions (Zones 1/2/3/4): The tangible evidence of these values is currently under-recognised in the long term planning for the Island and appears at risk without purposeful action, including a program of research and curatorial resources.

Colonial settlement (Zones 3/4): The colonial infrastructure including the sea wall, the Aboriginal penal establishment and the Governor’s Residence is largely in a relatively poor condition in relation to its value. While there is an adequate program of maintenance in place given the limited resources allocated to conservation, the intactness and integrity are at risk through the impact of new development and high demand for these buildings, which does not allow effective long-term planning to safeguard its values nor scheduled times for longer maintenance required for some buildings. The archaeological potential of the Island is at risk due to limited resources directed to this research area.

Maritime journeys (Zones 1/2/4): The maritime infrastructure including Pilot Station, the Light Stations, the Signal Station and the Shipwrecks are generally in a fair to good condition.

Military establishments (Zones 2/4): The military infrastructure including the Kingstown Barracks, the Oliver Hill and Bickley Batteries are in a good condition in relation to their values, primarily due to recent conservation works and adequate programs of maintenance.

Recreation (Zones 1/2/3/4): The recreation infrastructure is in a mixed condition. While there is a rolling program of maintenance for the buildings, the significant mature plantings are in a very poor condition and at risk due to lack of watering and a limited appreciation of their contribution to the cultural values of the Island.

Capturing the Imagination (Zones 2/3/4): The outstanding aesthetic qualities of the Island continue to capture the imagination. However, the value of Thomson Bay is slowly being eroded by inappropriate short-term and long-term installations. The avenues of tree plantings are also poorly maintained. The aesthetic values of the coastal scenery of embayments, beaches and limestone cliffs with rolling dunes behind as well as the salt lakes and natural geology and vegetation remain in a reasonable condition at the present time.

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup as a cultural landscape, where human interaction with the natural systems over time has formed a distinctive landscape, is in a fair to good condition. It has significant risks to its key values that will need to be carefully managed to ensure that it continues to be a place that is highly valued by the Western Australian community and the many visitors to the Island.
Purpose

The purpose of this section of the Cultural Landscape Management Plan is to establish the principles to guide the management and care of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup as a cultural landscape that has a high degree of heritage significance to the people of Western Australia and potentially to Australia as a whole.

The principles outlined in this section recognise and respond to the Rottnest Island Authority’s (RIA) legislative responsibility under the Rottnest Island Authority Act 1987 (the Act) ‘to maintain and protect the natural environment and the man-made resources of the Island and, to the extent that the Authority’s resources allow, repair its natural environment’.

They also recognise and respond to the RIA’s 20-year vision for the Island delineated in the Rottnest Island Management Plan 2014-19 (RIMP) Vision and Mission:

Vision

“Rottnest Island is an internationally recognised, sustainable, must-visit tourism destination”

Mission

“Grow visitor numbers and yield by providing best-in-class tourism products, experiences and service while enhancing Rottnest Island’s unique heritage and environment”

The overall objective of the principles is to:

• integrate the management and care of the Island’s cultural heritage landscape with the Vision and Mission for the Island as a whole.

The specific intentions are to:

• retain and reveal significance
• identify feasible and compatible uses
• meet statutory requirements
• work within procurable resources
• anticipate threats and opportunities

For ease of reference, the principles are ordered numerically and are set out under the following headings:

• Managing the A-Class Reserve as a Cultural Landscape
• Research and Information Sharing
• Building Connections
• The Visitor Experience
• Shaping the Future
MANAGING THE A CLASS RESERVE AS A CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

VISION

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup will be an exemplar of cultural heritage management to support the Rottnest Island Authority’s vision, building community attachment to the Island and confidence within the Rottnest Island Authority and its stakeholders.

Heritage Management Principles

The following heritage management principles will guide the future management of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup as a highly significant cultural landscape:

• The significant and unique heritage values of the Island as a cultural landscape impose an obligation for their conservation

• A clear understanding of the statement of significance and the cultural heritage values for the Island will contribute to good decision-making. Management decisions that have the potential to affect heritage values will be assessed against the values and modified, as required, as part of the decision-making process

• Responsible heritage management is one of the primary management outcomes for Rottnest Island/Wadjemup as a cultural landscape.

• Interpretation of the significance and meanings of the Island is integral to the successful management of the Island as a cultural landscape

• As a Western Australian icon with significant and unique heritage values, Rottnest Island/Wadjemup warrants conservation to best practice standards, including the training of staff and contractors and the use of specialist expertise as necessary for identifying, assessing and managing heritage

• A cautious approach is required where actions may have adverse heritage impacts or where heritage values are not yet clearly identified

• The effectiveness of conservation management practices and interpretation will be regularly reviewed, monitored and evaluated

Principle 1 Conservation Approach

Implementation is guided by the assessment of significance of the place as outlined in the Cultural Landscape Management Plan (CLMP).

The cultural heritage values and statement of significance for the place as outlined in this document form the basis for the conservation, planning and management of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup.

The principles outlined in this Conservation Plan will guide future work by those responsible for the strategic direction and management of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup.

Conservation at Rottnest Island/Wadjemup will make use of professional expertise and knowledge and will, where required, adopt a scientific approach to conservation, which includes assessment, analysis, managing change and monitoring.

The cultural heritage values of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup are demonstrated through a range of tangible and intangible attributes including geological formations, flora and fauna, Aboriginal heritage, buildings and structures and their settings, views, avenues, cultural deposits, artefacts, records, memories and associations, along with uses and activities. Conservation must therefore consider all of these elements and attributes if their heritage values are to be retained in the long term.

All works will be informed by an understanding of the specific heritage values attributed to the locality of the work as well as those of the Island as a whole.

Cultural landscape elements of heritage value will be used for public purposes in accordance with Burra Charter principles. Appropriate uses include:

• interpretation of the cultural heritage significance of the element or

• a use that is consistent or sympathetic with the historic use

Adaptation of significant buildings may be permitted where essential to comply with relevant fire safety, health and building or other statutory controls or as part of a sensitive adaptive reuse.

Significant heritage plants will be conserved with consideration of environmental, asset and safety aspects with an aim to maximising their life span and, in many cases, planning for their replacement.
Significant vistas and views will be reasonably maintained through vegetation management and the effects of new development will be evaluated through a heritage impact statement in accordance with the RIA Development Guidelines.

Principle 2  Use of the Burra Charter
The Burra Charter sets out the principles generally accepted in Australia for the conservation of heritage places. The philosophy embodied in that document has been used as a basis for the formulation of the Cultural Landscape Management Plan. As such, the Burra Charter forms an important reference document for the present and future custodians of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup, and may assist in resolving any issues relating to the conservation of the place that are not explicitly dealt with in this plan.

The Burra Charter process of identifying and understanding significance (through the gathering of evidence), developing appropriate strategies and managing change in a way that retains heritage values will guide proposed actions on the Island.

Principle 3  Expert Advice
Management of the cultural landscape requires access to a broad range of specialist conservation skills. These skill needs may be met through a combination of internal and external expertise, including:

- Board members with expertise in cultural heritage conservation
- specialist conservation staff
- skilled tradespeople
- liaison with university communities
- liaison with other public sector agencies
- external consultants
- community contributions

Principle 4  Statutory Framework
The statutory framework for the protection and management of the cultural heritage values of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup is provided through State and national planning and heritage statutes as well as international agreements. A number of elements and areas on the Island are protected under Aboriginal, historic and maritime heritage listing and through environmental statutory provisions. At present the cultural heritage significance of the Island as a whole has not been formally recognised through statutory heritage listing. It is considered to be worthy of State and potentially National Heritage listing.

The Island has a framework in place for maintenance works and remedial and repair works. Maintenance, capital works programs and long-term conservation planning are currently restricted to reactive works by the limited funding available to the RIA.

Maintenance of the historic structures, spaces and plantings as well as the maritime and terrestrial environment forms the most important part of the conservation program. Maintenance includes informed supervision of minor and major works and prompt corrective action to the extent that resources allow.

All heritage inspection and maintenance works must be undertaken by those with suitable professional knowledge and experience of working with Aboriginal sites, historic buildings and both natural and historic landscapes.

On-site supervision of heritage works will be carried out by persons skilled in Aboriginal heritage and historic, maritime and environmental conservation work, as appropriate.

Long-term estimates for cyclical maintenance and repair may be considered when agreeing a fair rental with leaseholders.

Building Condition Assessments and Environmental Condition Assessments will be undertaken and be incorporated into a Cultural Landscape Condition
Assessment, which includes all the elements that contribute to the significance of the Island as a whole.

**Principle 6  Fire and Safety Risk Management**

In recognition of the importance of protecting the natural environment, the historic fabric, moveable heritage and artefacts, as well as staff and visitors to the site, there is a Risk Management Plan, Safety Plan and Emergency Evacuation Plan in place. Bushfires have been a regular occurrence on the Island since settlement and have resulted in a substantial loss of the first colonial buildings and a significant reduction in the native woodlands. A Bushfire Management Plan will ensure that the fire risk across the whole Island is minimised.

A consolidated Disaster Preparedness Plan for heritage items will be developed to integrate risk management, evacuation and safety plans already in place.

**Principle 7  Heritage Impact Statements**

There is a potential risk at Rottnest Island/Wadjemup that both inaction (such as inadequate maintenance) and action (such as a works program) may affect the identified heritage values of the place. A useful way of reviewing the potential effect that a specific proposed action may have on heritage values is the preparation of a Heritage Impact Statement. Such statements are a requirement of the RIA’s Development Approvals Process and are an essential tool for risk management because they can be specific in ways that this, or other conservation planning documents, cannot be. Heritage Impact Statements will reference both this Cultural Landscape Management Plan and specific conservation management plans and will outline:

- the proposal for change
- identification of the aspects of the cultural landscape that may be affected
- how the heritage values may be affected by the proposal
- recommendations for acceptance, modification or rejection of the proposal

Decisions about new proposals, including development, activities and management actions will be informed by an assessment of the potential impact on heritage values.

Heritage Impact Statements specific to proposals for works on the Island will be prepared by the developer or proponent of the works, identifying any potential impact on specific cultural heritage values and the heritage values of the Island as a whole and the proposals modified as required in light of the findings.

Regular evaluation and review of assessment procedures for considering development, activities or management actions will be undertaken and improved as required.

**Principle 8  Monitoring and Evaluation**

Monitoring and evaluation of the RIA’s ability to realise the principles detailed in this plan will assist in the continued improvement of the management of cultural landscape of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup. Implementation of the principles within this plan will be monitored and evaluated on a regular basis to determine the extent to which they have been achieved and whether or not they are effective and relevant. Information gained from monitoring will feed into the RIA’s operations as part of a continuous improvement process.

Key performance indicators should be established against which the management of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup as a significant cultural landscape can be evaluated. Monitor and document progress in the implementation of the CLMP on an annual basis.

Continue integration of operations to ensure balance between conservation and operational requirements.

**Principle 9  Shared Responsibility**

Given that Rottnest Island/Wadjemup is of heritage significance to the people of Western Australia and potentially of national heritage significance, there is a shared responsibility for the conservation of the Island. Resourcing for conservation includes financial, sharing of skills between organisations, partnerships and other contributions.

The RIA will encourage an understanding among stakeholders that the Island is an important heritage asset and as such the provision of resources for conservation of the cultural landscape of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup is a shared responsibility between:

- the Rottnest Island Authority
- the State Government
- the Commonwealth Government
- the wider community
RESEARCH AND INFORMATION SHARING

VISION
The heritage values of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup will be conserved and increasingly well understood. Practical tools will be established to assist the Rottnest Island Authority to achieve this goal.

RESEARCH AND INFORMATION SHARING PRINCIPLES
The following principles will guide the research and information sharing of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup:

- Undertake research to inform decision-making and to engage the community
- Continue to develop a centre of research for Rottnest Island/Wadjemup and associated collections and related topics
- Continue research into community connections and enhance the collections on the Island
- Recognise and respect the archaeological potential of the whole of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup
- Communicate findings in widely available forums

Principle 10 Community Connections
It is important that knowledge about the nature and extent of community associations with Rottnest Island/Wadjemup continues to be investigated over time.

Facilitate the investigation and recording of community associations with the Island through a range of methodologies and partnerships, including:
- creating a register of associated communities (and their representatives where appropriate)
- encouraging associated communities to contribute information held within the community regarding their associations with the Island

Principle 11 Maritime and Terrestrial Archaeology
The maritime archaeology is reasonably well understood due to the work of the WA Maritime Museum; however the terrestrial archaeology of the Island is less understood. In addition to fossil finds and evidence of sea level rises, there is the potential to widen the understanding of the pre-island occupation and the life and traditions of the Aboriginal people in the immediate contact and post-contact period. The interplay of the environment and humans seeking to become self-sufficient is mostly untapped to date. The archaeological record at Rottnest Island/Wadjemup provides an opportunity to further engage with visitors to the site.

- Recognise and respect the archaeological potential of the whole of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup, including its surrounding seascape.
- Recognise the capacity of archaeological resources and methods of inquiry to add to a wider understanding of the island, and work towards establishing a framework by priority areas to guide any such research.
- Establish protocols for archaeological monitoring of ground disturbing activities, including agreements on Aboriginal community roles and responsibilities.
- Work involving excavation or investigation of sub-surface features will be preceded by an archaeological assessment of the likely location and significance of the sub-surface features, and progressively mapped as they are later revealed through monitoring of sub-surface works.
- As part of a heritage impact assessment process, establish pre-design planning processes to help avoid impacts on archaeological resources from intentional ground disturbance by:
  - early consideration of archaeological potential
  - development of alternatives in the light of findings of significance
  - prioritising archaeological protection

When archaeological investigations are being carried out then provision for appropriate visitor engagement with the process will aid in understanding and communicating the process and findings.
Principle 12  Research and Records
The RIA has a Research Strategy in place for aspects of its flora and fauna and associated habitats. Future conservation of the place and an increased understanding of the Island will benefit from continuing research, in the existing areas of research and also include on-going historical and archaeological research. The Island is the repository of a large collection of Western Australia’s built heritage, archaeological material and historic artefacts, in addition to housing an extensive oral and archival history collection. The need to keep publicly available records about places of cultural significance is guided by the Burra Charter. A system of record keeping for each zone of the Island will assist in future planning and research.

Facilitate or arrange the protection, conservation and promotion of Rottnest Island’s valuable collections to a professional museum standard, enabling their ongoing contribution to research projects and to increase the public’s understanding of the Island’s heritage values.

Maintain and update the Asset Management System to record relevant information, including relevant records and databases.

Principle 13  Publications and Lectures
The heritage of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup has a high level of significance that is worthy of exploration at a tertiary and post-graduate level and the results made available to the public.

Encourage research by tertiary institutions and post-graduates and publish the results in publically accessible forums.

Facilitate the establishment of lectures about the values of the cultural landscape including matters related to the geological heritage and climate change, the Aboriginal history of the Island, the shipwrecks, flora and fauna, the colonial settlement, and the recreational use of the Island.

Principle 14  Secondary, Tertiary and Other Plans
A number of conservation and management plans have been prepared for specific elements of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup. These provide valuable information to inform decision-making. They provide detailed and specific information on the documentary and physical evidence, the significance and care and management of each of these areas in a way that is beyond the scope of this plan. This plan, which is a strategic document under the Rottnest Island Management Plan, acts as an overarching plan for Rottnest Island/Wadjemup as a significant cultural landscape. It is supported by secondary and tertiary plans that contain more detailed discussion of management issues and more specific policy recommendations and processes.

Ensure a consistent approach to the adoption and review of secondary, tertiary and other plans is undertaken to ensure that they are consistent with this CLMP and with each other.

Secondary and tertiary plans will be consistent with this Conservation Plan. Where inconsistencies within existing documents are identified, they will form the basis for amendment as part of their next scheduled review.

Principle 15  Review of the Cultural Landscape Management Plan
From time to time new evidence may come to light that will influence interpretation of the place, its significance, and the way it should be managed. For this reason, the periodic updating of the Cultural Landscape Management Plan will be required.

Review and evaluate the CLMP at intervals of no more than five years. Compile any new information that comes to light for inclusion in the review.

This CLMP remains in force until such a time as a new CLMP is adopted. A new CLMP may amend, supplement or replace this one.
BUILDING CONNECTIONS

VISION

Community connections will be strengthened through active participation and engagement with the Island. People with connections to Rottnest Island/Wadjemup will be encouraged to visit, to engage with the Island and its management and to contribute their knowledge and stories for the benefits of Island’s managers, visitors and the wider community.

BUILDING CONNECTIONS PRINCIPLES

The following principle will guide the building of connections with community and the Island:

- The RIA will actively support the building of strong and on-going partnerships and community connections

Principle 16   Strengthening Partnerships

The RIA delivers the services on the Island in partnership with a range of organisations. Partners include the Rottnest Island Chamber of Commerce, the Aboriginal community, volunteer organisations, facilities and maintenance contractors and other government agencies such as the WA Police and Department of Health. It is important to continue to build these partnerships in ways that respond particularly to each of these partners and to strengthen community engagement with the Island.

Continue to engage people and communities with strong and enduring connections in caring for the Island. Create a relevant community awareness and education program about the significance and values of the Island and as appropriate consult with associated communities before taking actions that may impact on them.

Promote the diverse heritage values of the Island and the special Aboriginal connection to the place as well as the significant research value, to continue building strong connections with a broad range of institutions, government agencies and community groups.

Should any actions outlined in this CLMP be delegated or form part of a partnership agreement with other agencies, then the delegation will be carried out on the understanding that those agencies will undertake the actions in accordance with the requirements of this plan.

THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

VISION

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup will be widely recognised as a significant cultural landscape that offers visitors a quintessentially Australian holiday experience. Visitors to Rottnest Island/Wadjemup will have the unique opportunity to engage with the Island, its history and its multiple meanings through experiencing Rottnest Island/Wadjemup as a holiday destination, participating in activities and through other forms of interpretation. Visitors will be encouraged to respect and help care for the Island’s heritage values.

VISITOR EXPERIENCE PRINCIPLES

The following principles will guide future decision-making in regards to the cultural and heritage visitor experience of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup:

- Widely promote Rottnest Island/Wadjemup to existing and new audiences, while carefully considering the impact of visitors on the cultural heritage values of the Island
- Ensure that existing and new opportunities for visitors offer a distinct ‘Island’ experience that reflects the values of the Island
- Interpret the complex history, layered values and strong associations by implementing an interpretation plan that considers the Island as a whole
- Communicate the cultural heritage values of the Island to visitors and establish a code of responsible behaviour
- Use on-site activities to help build mutual respect, including ‘Welcome to Country’ and sharing of knowledge and stories
- Consult with and seek feedback from visitors
- Continually refine the ways that heritage values are communicated
Principle 17  The Quintessential Australian Holiday Experience
Rottnest Island/Wadjemup embodies the quintessential Australian holiday experience being neighbourly, practical and democratic. It was established as an A-class reserve to enable all the people of Western Australia to visit the Island unencumbered by private ownership. It is a tangible example of the importance of islands to mainlanders, particularly in providing a sense of place, where the mainland populations eager for seasonal respite can appreciate both a sense of freedom and continuity. The Island has always had a range of accommodation options for differing socio-economic groups, while concurrently there has always been access to the variety of holiday experiences the Island has to offer. It is highly valued for the safe and relaxed holiday experience along with the sense of wildness and connection to both history and nature.

The cultural values of the Island as a place for all will be considered in decision-making in regards to future visitor amenities.

Continue to monitor and assess the potential impact of visitor numbers and modify programs in the light of the findings.

Facilities on the Island, including commercial leaseholds, should maintain a distinct Island feel to protect the Island’s values and its sense of place.

Principle 18  Interpretation
It is important to provide the visitors with a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the place that respects its unique heritage values and encourages repeat visitation. Volunteer and staff guides have an important role to play in the interpretation of the Island’s cultural heritage values.

Preparation of an Interpretation Strategy for the Island as a whole will be investigated to reflect the heritage significance of the Island as a cultural landscape that will include consideration of:

• a comprehensive understanding of the heritage values and thematic framework across the whole of the Island with strategies for linking and interweaving stories of the Island that engage visitors in meaningful ways
• imaginative strategies to increase understanding, appreciation and awareness of all the values of the Rottnest Island/Wadjemup cultural landscape
• strategies to interpret the layering of history of the place, from deep time to colonial prison and post-colonial military history, and activities that allow for a wide range of audiences and connections across the State

A developed Interpretation Strategy should be evaluated and reviewed at intervals of no more than five years, in consultation with all involved in developing, managing and delivering that interpretation and based on sound, contemporary and scholarly research.

Ensure that the ongoing program of training for volunteer and staff guides includes an understanding of the heritage significance of the Island as a whole and the heritage values associated with the areas to which they are guiding visitors.

Principle 19  Marketing
Rottnest Island/Wadjemup makes a very important contribution to the Western Australian tourism industry with the Island attracting over 500,000 visitors each year. It is identified as a key element of the State’s tourism industry and is a key focus of the marketing of Western Australia as a destination. Destination marketing by the tourism industry plays a major role in where people decide to visit, and revenue from tourism is a major financial contributor to the Island.

The Island needs to be carefully managed to achieve a balance between the protection and conservation of its heritage values and its presentation as an attractive destination that provides appropriate services and infrastructure for tourism operations. Understanding the types of visitors and their different needs will be central in determining how best to promote visitation to and the presentation of the heritage values of the Island, as well as provision of appropriate services and facilities. Market research will aim to be complementary to other research undertaken on the Island, such as the on-going evaluation of interpretive strategies.

The RIA will promote the Island in a manner that includes enhancing the public appreciation of the Island’s heritage values, while enhancing the quality of the visitor experience, maximising the economic returns from visitors and positioning the Island at the forefront of tourism in Western Australia.

Continue to evaluate visitors to the Island on a regular basis in order to better understand visitor profiles and the values held by Western Australians and Australians more widely, as well as international visitors. Use this information to assist in the development of interpretive, educational and information measures and visitor infrastructure that appropriately present the heritage values of the Island to the community, as well as to improve the quality of the visitor experience.

Encourage the development of tourism policies and products for the Island so that they enhance an understanding of the cultural heritage values of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup as a highly significant cultural landscape.
SHAPING THE FUTURE

VISION
Rottnest Island/Wadjemup will be widely recognised as a significant cultural landscape that is highly valued by the people of Western Australia. Future change will protect, enhance and celebrate its scientific, social, historic and aesthetic values and its unique island qualities.

SHAPING THE FUTURE PRINCIPLES
The following principles will be considered in future decision-making in regards to managing change at the Island:

• Promotion of the Island as a highly valued cultural landscape
• Protection of geological and maritime sites
• Protection of remnant plantings and native vegetation, and enhancement in eroded areas
• Conservation of the diverse ecological habitats
• Protection of coastal access and significant viewing points
• Conservation of the historic built form and its associated settings
• Conservation of the historic plantings and avenues
• Careful consideration of new tourism and accommodation opportunities
• Reconciliation of the sad past with a positive future

Principle 20 Future Use
Rottnest Island/Wadjemup is an A-Class Reserve established for the purpose of public recreation. This is an important component of its significance as a cultural landscape. The RIA’s vision is that ‘Rottnest Island is an internationally recognised, sustainable, must-visit tourism destination’ with the mission ‘to grow visitor numbers and yield by providing best-in-class tourism products, experiences and service while enhancing Rottnest Island’s unique heritage and environment’. The protection of the values outlined in this Cultural Landscape Management Plan will assist the RIA in achieving these aims. The understanding of the Island as a cultural landscape that encapsulates a range of significant values will also assist the RIA to continue to refine its strategic direction.

The cultural landscape will be protected, enhanced and sustained, to the extent that resources allow, to enable future generations to continue to enjoy its unique qualities.

Principle 21 Sustainability of the Cultural Landscape
The principles of sustainability underpin much of the RIA’s strategic direction. As a cultural landscape of high significance to the people of Western Australia and with potential national significance, the sustainability principles that need to be applied to the management of the Island include those that will sustain the identified cultural heritage values.

Continue to include the cultural heritage values in strategic documents as a pivotal element of sustainability.

It is important to resolve potential or actual management conflicts that could impact heritage values and thus the long-term sustainability of those values.

Conflict resolution should take into account the guiding documents and the provisions of the CLMP and may involve the following processes:

• Identify the existence of and clarify the nature of conflict
• Identify and fill any important gaps in knowledge of values affected
• Consider alternative approaches to management that minimise the effect on heritage values
• Identify the degree of irreversibility of alternative management approaches taking into account of the potential for cumulative impacts
• Identify the relative importance of the conflict area for the maintenance of each of the conflicting values
• Give priority to the most significant of the values
(taking account of cumulative effects), unless the resolution of the conflict in favour of the less significant value would not seriously affect the overall representation of the more significant value

- Implement the most appropriate solution and monitor as required if necessary, halt or modify the solution on the basis of the results of monitoring

Principle 22  Reconciliation

Through its on-going Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), the RIA is committed to increasing the understanding of Aboriginal culture and the history of Wadjemup to the broader community, to educating and helping build relationships, and to developing respect and creating opportunities for Aboriginal people. Since 2004, the RIA has committed significant resources to improving people’s understanding of the importance of Aboriginal heritage and culture on the Island and the impact that its historical past still has within Aboriginal communities today. However, the significance of the Island to the whole of Western Australia as an Aboriginal penal establishment that housed prisoners as the colony expanded and as a deaths-in-custody site burial ground is not at this point being recognised to the extent that these significant values warrant.

Rottnest Island/Wadjemup has a high level of social value attached to both its use as a penal establishment and its subsequent use as a place for recreation. These values are often articulated as being polar opposites, and in many ways they are, however recreation on the Island is intrinsically linked through the tangible evidence of the Island’s past use. The role of commemoration has the potential to more fully integrate these values in a way that can reconcile the past and lead to a more positive future.

The Aboriginal cultural heritage values of Wadjemup will be identified, conserved and managed, to the extent that resources allow, in consultation with the Aboriginal community and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

The right of Aboriginal people to be involved in making decisions that affects their cultural heritage and their concerns in this respect will continue to be acknowledged.

The potential for encountering previously unknown Aboriginal cultural heritage during works on the Island is acknowledged. Appropriate protocols and procedures will continue to ensure that such cultural heritage material is not damaged, disturbed or concealed.

Interpretation of Aboriginal cultural heritage of Wadjemup will be formulated in consultation with the Aboriginal community.

In accordance with the provisions of the RAP, the RIA will facilitate the preparation of an Aboriginal Cultural Management Strategy.

The next RAP will include steps towards the establishment of the Reconciliation Centre in the Quod including the dignified recognition of the Aboriginal Burial Ground, that recognises the role of the Island in the establishment of the Swan River Colony and its expansion into the State of Western Australia, and the consequent suffering and devastation that resulted for Aboriginal people. The ultimate aim is to fully articulate:

- the hardship and suffering of the prisoners
- the high death rate and the numerous unmarked graves
- the role that the prison played in the colonial and post-colonial development of the whole of Western Australia
- the role the Aboriginal prisoners had in constructing the majority of the buildings and infrastructure on the Island and more broadly the role of Aboriginal people in building the State
- the devastating impact that the imprisonment of Aboriginal men and boys had upon the Aboriginal economy, family life and cultural maintenance across the State

The provisions of the RAP will include consideration of an annual memorial day with sponsored ferry travel that establishes the intent of the Centre for Reconciliation.

The RIA will facilitate the renaming of elements on the Island that are named after the reportedly brutal first Superintendent, Henry Vincent. His role on the Island should be recognised, but not celebrated.

Principle 23  Future Development

Cultural landscapes continue to evolve over time and Rottnest Island/Wadjemup will certainly do so. However, it is important to manage change in a way that allows the significant values of the Island to continue to be appreciated by current and future generations. In managing change, the cultural landscape should continue to be revealed through the protection of the geological and maritime sites, conservation of habitats, conservation
of the built form and associated settings, native vegetation enhancement, careful maintenance of cultural plantings and the protection of the coastal scenery and important view lines.

To assist in management of future development, the matters to be considered for managing change are set out below in relation to the four identified zones of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup. There will be overlap, as each of the zones is linked in the interwoven significance of the Island as a cultural landscape, however the primary considerations in relation to each zone are articulated here.

**Zone 1: Marine**

The Marine zone provides tangible evidence of the significance of geological and ecological features, cultural narrative, European exploration, maritime journeys, Aboriginal life and traditions and the values associated with recreation at Rottnest Island/Wadjemup.

The growth of boat ownership in the nearby metropolitan region and the size of boats will potentially impact on Rottnest Island/Wadjemup in terms of the nature and level of demand for marine facilities and related services. The RIA has a Boating Management Strategy intended to provide the boating community with fair and equitable access to the Island’s marine facilities. The shipwrecks found in the terrestrial environment in the Rottnest Island/Wadjemup seascape are highly significant and require on-going protection.

*The RIA will continue to monitor and control boat access and fishing activities to protect the cultural heritage values of the Island, including equity and a sense of freedom.*

*The RIA will continue to work closely with the WA Maritime Museum whose role is to monitor and protect the shipwrecks and to continue to encourage respect and appreciation of their significance and history.*

**Zone 2: Terrestrial**

The Terrestrial zone provides tangible evidence of the significance of geological and ecological features, cultural narrative, European exploration, Aboriginal life and traditions, maritime journeys, military establishments, recreation and reconciliation. It exhibits numerous intangible qualities, such as pristine bays and beaches, unique terrestrial environment and wildlife that capture the imagination of visitors to the Island. Increased visitor numbers, particularly in peak times, have the potential to impact adversely on the terrestrial zone and will have to be carefully managed. Some opportunities for additional tourist infrastructure exist in the terrestrial zone in addition to a strong focus on environmental conservation and management.

*Active environmental management intervention including site rehabilitation and restoration will continue, to the extent that resources allow, taking into account:*

- Interpretation and on-going protection of the diverse habitats through the use of subtle designated pathways

**Zone 3: Salt Lakes**

The Salt Lakes provide tangible evidence of the significance of geological and ecological features, cultural narrative, European exploration, Aboriginal life and traditions, maritime journeys, colonial settlement and reconciliation. It exhibits the intangible aspects associated with capturing the imagination of visitors to the Island. It has internationally significant values associated with sea level rise and the unique inland salt water habitat.

*Conserve and protect, to the extent that resources allow, the salt lakes to ensure the continued viability of this unique habitat for migratory birds and other flora and fauna distinctly associated with these lakes.*

*Protect the wave cut platforms and other significant geological features associated with the salt lakes and recognise their unique research potential into climate change.*

*Continue to facilitate research into the archaeological remnants of the salt works and other activities associated with the colonial and post-colonial settlement of the Island and introduce appropriate interpretation for visitors.*

**Zone 4: Settlement Area**

The Settlement area is the heart of the Island experience and provides tangible evidence of the cultural narrative of Aboriginal people, European exploration, Aboriginal life and traditions, maritime journeys, colonial settlement, the Aboriginal penal establishment, the military establishments and the recreation values of the Island. It exhibits the intangible qualities associated with capturing the imagination of visitors to the Island, of recreation and of its diverse history and evolution over time. It is also the focus of reconciliation and healing.

Thomson Bay offers protection to visitors from prevailing winds to the Island due to its north-eastern orientation. It is where Vlamingh first careened to explore the Island and where the British colonial settlement including the prison, governor’s residence and pilot station were built by the Aboriginal prisoners along a substantial sea wall. It has been
the point of arrival and departure for millions of people over the last century, including the military personnel stationed on the Island and the numerous visitors and staff. Additional accommodation has fanned out to either side of the colonial era infrastructure.

This concentration of visitors to the Settlement area has brought both positive and negative benefits to the Island. It provides a sense of continuity to visitors, which is an important aspect of the Island’s value as a cultural landscape, but has also put significant pressures on this zone, predominantly during peak periods of visitation, which may not be sustainable unless clear action is taken to plan for its future. The RIA has prepared a number of conservation plans and landscape plans for the Settlement area, which are useful guiding documents. The integration of these plans into the core business of the RIA’s day-to-day management and long-term strategic vision will assist in ensuring that the heart of the Island is enhanced and continues to contribute to the strong attachments that the people of Western Australia have for the Island.

If additional visitor infrastructure is required in the heart of the Settlement area, then its location will be very carefully considered so as to minimise potential impact on the historic core buildings, spaces and avenues and archaeological evidence dating from the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The RIA will protect and enhance the Settlement area as the heart of the Island’s cultural heritage significance, to the extent that resources allow. It will ensure that the qualities it embodies as part of a significant cultural landscape are retained and enhanced for current and future generations. Any minor or major infrastructure that is considered for the core colonial Settlement area will only be introduced after a thorough assessment of its impact on the cultural landscape values.

An Accommodation and Visitor Plan for the historic core of the Settlement area will be prepared to ease the constant visitor pressure on the historic buildings and spaces in the Settlement to enable considered planning and implementation for their long-term conservation, sustainable use and interpretation.

A Vegetation and Landscaping Plan for the historic core of the Settlement will be prepared, which includes management actions for conserving significant plantings and spaces.

A Vegetation and Landscaping Plan will also include a considered approach to the interpretation of the former food bowl of the Island around Garden Lake, which retains remnants of planting and fencing dating from the colonial and post-colonial periods. Interpretation of this and the lakes’ values would aid visitor’s appreciation of the cultural landscape of Rottnest Island/Wadjemup.

Planning for jetties and visitor arrival points through the Boating Management Strategy will consider the visual amenity of Thomson Bay and minimise potential impact on the visual amenity through sensitive siting of new jetties and associated buildings.
IMPLEMENTATION

The RIA is responsible for implementing the principles set out in the Rottnest Island/Wadjemup Cultural Landscape Management Plan.

The Rottnest Island/Wadjemup Cultural Landscape Management Plan should firstly be adopted under the provisions of the Rottnest Island Management Plan (2014-19). The Chief Executive Officer, who has delegated authority, will oversee the implementation of this CLMP and its integration into the strategic direction and day-to-day management of the Island. This will involve prioritising the principles, cross referencing them with existing management documents, establishing measurable outcomes and identifying gaps in supporting documents to assist with future planning and management of the Island’s heritage values.

A management plan is only effective if its provisions are implemented. Therefore the RIA is committed to ensuring that management arrangements, resources to the extent that they are available and processes facilitate the effective implementation of this CLMP in accordance with the requirements of the Rottnest Island Authority Act.

Implementation of the Rottnest Island/Wadjemup Cultural Landscape Management Plan will be reviewed annually by the Board.
Appendix A

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Arbor Logic (2008) Register of Trees of Special Significance to the Settlement, RIA


Bates, D. (n.d.i.) Unpublished Notes and Manuscripts, Section II Geographical Distribution, Daisy Bates Collection, State Archives, Battye Library Acc 1212A


Brearley, A. (2005) Ernest Hodgkin’s Swanland, University of Western Australia Press and the National Trust


Cross, E. (undated) Early French explorers and Australia, National Gallery of Victoria


Department of Environment and Conservation (2012) Fauna Profiles: Quokka, Western Australia


Dixon G. (2003) Holocaust revisited: killing time, University of Western Australia, Centre for Indigenous History and the Arts


Dortch J. Absolute dating of Late Pleistocene chert artefact bearing palesols on Rottnest Island, in press.


Palassis Architects (2005) *Oliver Hill Battery Conservation Plan* (draft), RIA


Queensland Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs (DATSIMA) (2013) *Palm Island*


Rottnest Island Authority (2012) *Rottnest Island – A guide to Aboriginal history on Wadjemup*, RIA

Rottnest Island Authority (2012) *Rottnest Island – A guide to the colonial buildings of the Thomson Bay settlement*, RIA


Rottnest Island Authority (2012) *Rottnest Island – It’s our Heritage*, RIA


WA Government (1905-1910) *Reports by the Superintendent of Public Charities and Inspector of Industrial and Reformatory Schools*


