

Chapter 8

‘Survival against all odds’: The Indigenous population of metropolitan Perth, 1829–2001

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Abstract: *An 1836 name census of the known tribes identified fewer than 200 men, women and children in what may be regarded as the modern Perth metropolitan area. A survey in 1947, excluding those in institutions, counted 157 men, women and children, and at the 2001 national census the Perth metropolitan Indigenous population was beyond 23 000. This chapter examines the major shifts in population through a range of published data and archival sources and considers factors such as violence, disease, migration, legislation and policies. A unique feature of this chapter is the use of name census reports of the nineteenth century and Indigenous biographical dictionaries to trace names over several decades.*

Introduction

Noongar territory in the south-west of Australia approximates the area of mainland Victoria and was mapped by Tindale in 1940 into 12 distinct tribal groups, now collectively known as the Noongar, with one, the Whadjuck, less than 10 percent of the domain, having within its boundaries the greater Perth metropolitan area, including the Swan and Canning rivers and their tributaries (Tindale 1940). Within the set limits for this chapter, I revisit the shifts in the Indigenous population of this small region after the arrival of British settlers in 1829. The American author Mark Twain popularised the phrase ‘There are lies, damned lies, and statistics’, and all three enemies of the truth are seen in reports and publications when population data is used for personal or political gain or to support an illogical thesis.

Indigenous populations

Lancaster Jones (1970:2) writes that ‘The number and distribution of Australia’s Aboriginal population at the time of first European settlement will probably never

be accurately known' and this certainly applies to Western Australia. Nathaniel Ogle (1977[1839]:62) wrote, after a visit to Perth in 1837, 'the numbers of Aborigines cannot be ascertained; they can only be guessed at.' Captain Irwin (1835:22), commandant of the 63rd Regiment at the Swan River in 1829, guessed there were fewer than 1000 in contact with the settled districts of Perth, Fremantle, Guildford, York, Mandurah, Augusta and Albany. George Fletcher Moore, a noted Swan River settler, estimated no fewer than 3000 frequented the settled districts (*Perth Gazette*, 20 February 1841, pp.2–3). In 1832 the first governor, James Stirling, put the settler population at 1497 and estimated the Aborigines to be in the order of one person per square mile (Stirling to Goderich, 2 April 1832) and in 1837 he reported the settlers at 2032 and the Aborigines reduced to one person per two square miles (*Perth Gazette*, 9 June 1838, pp.91–2). Stirling's method of gauging the population of a country by a simple ratio of people per square mile incorrectly assumed that the productivity of the land was constant and the population evenly distributed. In 1848 the Noongar population in the settled parts of the colony was put at 2000, with an estimated 500 employed by settlers and in the Perth District (*Perth Gazette*, 23 December 1848, p.2). The 1848 census acknowledged the flaws in such estimates and offered a solution:

If, however, the names of individuals belonging to the several tribes are ascertained with a degree of certainty, useful estimates of their numbers may unquestionably be formed. And this mode having been carefully carried out in some districts, the data formed thereupon may be relied on as an approximation to truth. We may then assume about 2,000 for the located parts of the colony.

It is fortunate that, during the first 30 years of settlement, the names of several thousand Noongar were recorded in their home localities. In 1832, three years after British settlement, Yagan, the son of tribal elder Midgegooroo, described the metropolitan family tribes to Robert Lyon (*Perth Gazette*, March/April 1833, see Figure 1). The following year, Captain TE Ellis established the Mount Eliza Native Institution on the riverside within sight of Perth, and maintained a daily journal of local families and visitors from the Murray River district 100 kilometres to the south and from York, a similar distance to the east. The arrival of young men from the Murray in December 1833 was an occasion for a ceremony observed by Ellis (Ellis journal reports 1833). The next morning he rationed 91 adults, and then Monang, from the Murray district, escorted a Perth delegation to his home territory. Ellis was mortally wounded at the Battle of Pinjarra on 28 October 1834. His successor at the Native Institution was Francis Armstrong, a young man who spoke several Noongar dialects and was later the official court interpreter. Armstrong recorded the names of visitors to the institution and compiled a name census of 295 people, separated into eight tribal groups extending from the Moore River north of Perth to Bunbury, nearly 200 kilometres to the south, with those for the metropolitan area of Lyon's mapping (Armstrong 1837, see Figures 2 and 3). The Armstrong census represents the first recording of significant numbers

of Noongar within family groups, which he termed 'tribes'. In 1838 Stirling informed the Colonial Office that 'tribes' usually consisted of about 120 related persons (*Perth Gazette*, 9 June 1838, p.91), almost double Armstrong's highest count; he may have been exaggerating the situation to gain support for a civilian militia.



Figure 1: Place names and territories recorded by Robert Lyon in 1832 (Green 1979:174; map by Neville Green)

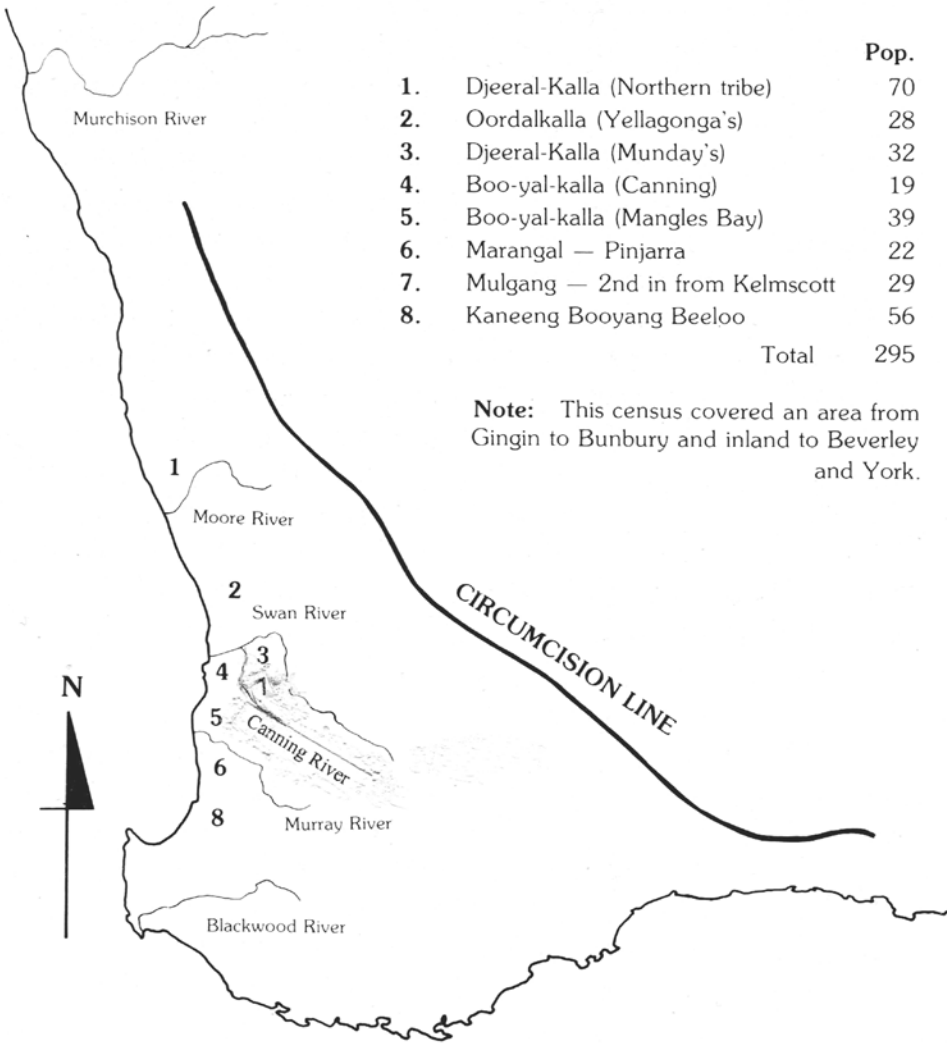


Figure 2: Name census recorded by Francis Armstrong in 1837 (Green 1979:192; map by Neville Green)

George Grey, an explorer and resident magistrate at King George Sound in 1838, recorded more than 400 Noongar names (Grey 1838), sketched genealogies and was one of the first Europeans to recognise, but not fully comprehend, the Noongar section system (Grey 1841). Charles Symmons, the Protector of Aborigines, followed up the Armstrong census in 1840 and identified nine tribes, including six across the metropolitan area, under the heading 'Names and census of natives original owners of the land on the right and left banks of the Swan from Fremantle to the head of the river' for a total of 99 persons (Symmons 1840). The Symmons register displays significant shifts in 'tribal' boundaries and a dip in numbers (Symmons 1840). Also in 1840, the first of four metropolitan Native schools was established and the names of many of the pupils are included in the Hallam–Tilbrook dictionary (Hallam and Tilbrook 1990). Two years later, Assistant Protector of Aborigines Henry Bland listed the names of Aborigines in the Avon (York) and King George Sound (Albany) district (Bland 1842). These names were included in the Aboriginal dictionaries discussed later.

The most detailed and reliable name census of the nineteenth century was conducted in 1858 under the supervision of Bishop Rosendo Salvado of the Benedictine New Norcia Mission in Noongar territory 135 kilometres north of Perth, who surveyed an area Hallam estimates to be 15 300 square kilometres, to record the names of 740 husbands, wives, children and others, with a population density of five to six persons per 100 square kilometres. This census was methodically transcribed and analysed by Hallam, who describes it as among 'the most valuable sources available for studying nineteenth century Aboriginal populations in Australia'. It is included in the New Norcia dictionary (Hallam 1989 in Green and Tilbrook 1989:179–216). A valued source of family names is the register of births, deaths and marriages, a legal requirement in Western Australia since 1842. Although the Act does not exclude Aborigines, relatively few Indigenous births and deaths were recorded during the nineteenth century.

An Aboriginal biographical dictionary committee consisting of Ken Colbung, Sylvia Hallam, Lois Tilbrook, Bob Reece, Neville Green and, later, Anna Haebich was established in 1978 and, with funding from AIATSIS, took on the task of collecting and collating all the Noongar names recorded in newspapers and government documents in the nineteenth century. The search was later extended to include other regions of Western Australia and these published and unpublished volumes are well used for Indigenous family histories.

Hallam and Tilbrook (1990) list the names and details of about 1217 persons, mostly from the greater metropolitan district between 1829 and 1840, and include the Ellis, Armstrong, Grey, Symmons and Bland (Avon) data and the children at the Perth Native schools. When these names are screened through the 4524 names in the 1841–90 unpublished south-west volume (Green and Moon 1993), fewer than 40 reappear, including only 17 of Armstrong's 295 names.

Natives
of
Oor-dal-kalla
commonly called
Yalagonga's Tribe

Yalagonga.
(or Drooree)
Windan.
yangan.
Nander.
Elal.
Dued.
Elup.
Noreup.
Bindup.
Quebup.
Beenup.
Warup.
Kadjup.
Barbang.

Mellum,
(or Dalbur)
Gooban.
Nignana.
Daleer.
Gayup.
Woobyte.
Domera.
Yangup.
Goongar.
Dattkup.
Ngoojar.
Edar.
Dutomerre.
Doonmooit.

Total 28 persons

Francis Trauer Armstrong

Figure 3: Natives of Oor-dal-kalla commonly called Yalagonga's Tribe by Francis Armstrong in 1836 (Acc 36 CSR 1837 v58:f163 SROWA)

The Aborigines of the Albany Region 1821–1898 (Green 1989) offers some evidence of names 'disappearing' over a period of ten years and it is impossible to determine if they are dead, absent or just avoiding the census taker. Of the Aboriginal names recorded by King (1818–21), Nind (1826–29), Collie (1831–32) and Barker (1830–31) at King George Sound (Albany), very few were found in the name census conducted in that region by Henry Bland in 1842. Of the 181 names recorded by Bland, fewer than five percent appear in later colonial records. We must recognise that most Indigenous names recorded after 1842 are in police and court records and the majority of the Noongar are only occasionally identified. Furthermore, the early attempts at counting the Indigenous population did not take into consideration family mobility and some may be counted twice and others not at all. In 1837 Governor Stirling claimed, 'seven hundred and fifty were known to have visited Perth from the district surrounding it, about forty miles each way' (Ogle 1977[1839]:62–3), and as Ellis noted in 1833, there were reciprocal visits.

The official census reports for the Perth metropolitan area

The 1848 colonial census was divided into shires and the estimated Indigenous population of Perthshire was 553, with the only reliable count being the 162 adults in employment. Charles Symmons added to this figure 50 men, 32 women and 26 children residing at lakeside camps at Wanneroo, Perth and South Perth (Symmons 1848). No Aboriginal figures are given in the 1854 and 1861 official censuses and I rely upon an 1857 count of Swan, 123; Perth, 70; Fremantle, 65; and Canning, 40, for 298 persons, with Symmons' warranty, 'I believe the above to be a tolerably accurate calculation' (Symmons 1857). These figures compare favourably with the 1830s but are well below the 1848 figure. In the wake of the 1848 whooping cough epidemic, the 1859 census noted a decline in the Noongar population: 'In 1842 the number of Aborigines frequenting the Settled Districts of Perth, Fremantle, Swan, Avon, Wellington, Sussex and Albany was estimated at about 1200, whereas at the present time they are not supposed to exceed 800...' (*Western Australian Census 1859*:13).

A search of the Colonial Secretary's Records produced only one document of interest for the 1860s, a Perth police report (Police report 1864) of blankets issued on 20 May 1864 to ten men, including two from York and one from Williams, and 19 females, including two from York. Thirteen have a single given name such as Joe, Jack, Tom, Fred, Jane, Fanny and Annie and the remainder are traditional names and six may be names recorded by Hallam and Tilbrook. The replacement of traditional names with common English given names may be an obstacle to family history research.

In preparation for the 1870 census, Governor Sir Frederick Weld instructed district magistrates and police officers to report the number of Aborigines in their districts and to state whether the number was increasing or decreasing and to state why. The return

for the Swan (presumed to be the metropolitan area) was 100 adults but no children and no explanation. Eleven adults were employed in the Fremantle district and 15 in the Perth district. The districts of Plantagenet (Albany), Sussex (Busselton) and Wellington (Bunbury) failed to submit returns and the colonial statistician admitted that:

The result of this measure is not at all satisfactory, as affording anything like correct data of the number or social condition of the Natives. The nomadic habits of this people, and their inability to give numerical information, renders it a matter of difficulty to procure any very reliable returns. (*Western Australian Census 1870:26*)

The 1881 census recorded only Aborigines who were employed and yielded a figure of 71 adults for the metropolitan districts (*Western Australian Census 1881:32*). The 1891 census was the most comprehensive of the nineteenth century, with those classified as 'half-caste' counted, and here bracketed, confirming the ethnic changes occurring: Fremantle, 25 (2); Perth, 11 (17); and Swan District, 23 (33) for a total of 59 (52) and 111 (*Western Australian Census 1891:87, 181–4*).

Analysing the decline

Three common causes of a decline in the indigenous populations of colonised regions are settler violence, tribal violence and introduced disease. Curr (1886:190) generalised to the Australian continent a casual opinion that 15 to 20 percent of the Aboriginal population fell to rifles. Host (2009:93) represents the early Western pioneers as strugglers and '[O]ne would have thought that at the end of the day, they had neither the time nor the energy to set about destroying the Aboriginal people and their culture'. A 1984 tally of south-west conflict between 1829 and 1852 has 30 settlers killed and 34 wounded, with 121 Noongar killed or executed and 52 wounded. The metropolitan component was four executions, 18 dead and none killed in the decade after 1839 (Green 1984:Appendix 1, 201–25). Charles Fremantle, during his brief return to Perth in 1832, was told that soldiers came upon a group of Aborigines and bayoneted most (Cottesloe 1985[1929]:92); this may refer to an 1830 incident at the Upper Swan (Moore 1978[1884]:21) or at the Murray in 1831 (Moore 1978[1884]:123) or en route to Guildford in 1832 (Moore 1978[1884]:127). All are hearsay diary entries by George Moore. The only recorded multiple killings are the Battle of Pinjarra, one settler and uncounted but recorded as fourteen Noongar; Busselton, 1834, one settler and estimated five Noongar; York district, 1835–39, three settlers and an estimated 25 Noongar (Green 1984:Appendix 1). In recent years there have been trans-generational oral accounts of massacres in the south-west, including one in Kings Park within sight of the city, but most are unsubstantiated (Green 2010:203–14).

Tribal violence

There are dozens of recorded incidents of internecine killings observed by settlers and it would be naive to suggest that traditional pay-back killings, or, for that matter, settler murders of Aborigines, did not occur elsewhere, merely because they were not seen and documented by Europeans. Isaac Scott Nind, the doctor at King George Sound, 1826–29, observed an alarming level of tribal murders, noting, 'When a man is killed, his tribe instantly sets about revenging his death; but they are not particular whether they kill the principal offender or any other of his tribe...They are, however, so constantly at war that their numbers must be considerably diminished by it' (Nind 1831 in Green 1979:47–9). Collet Barker, the military commandant at King George Sound in 1830, recorded three murders and five spearings following the death of a boy from snakebite (Mulvaney and Green 1992:270ff). Again it would be naive to suggest this was a 'one off' occurrence. A brief summary of internecine conflict in the south-west between 1830 and 1841 identified 25 deaths and 77 wounded, of which 18 deaths and 65 wounded were recorded within the metropolitan area between 1833 and 1840 (Green 1984:Appendix 2, 201–33). Following the Weewar case in 1842 (Green 1984:161–6), which placed British law above tribal law, Noongar arrested for tribal murders were tried and sentenced according to British law. Later in the century, many of the south-west and metropolitan cases brought to the attention of the courts appear to be domestic violence rather than pay-backs (Green and Moon 1997).

Introduced disease

Tilbrook, addressing the data she and Hallam collated for a biographical dictionary, plotted the metropolitan Indigenous population between 1829 and 1840 and contends that by 1837 introduced disease had significantly reduced the Swan River population and it continued to decline (Tilbrook 1987:72, 94). Furthermore, she claims that the failure to consider the decline has affected later population estimates. She compared Armstrong's figures with that by the Protector of Aborigines, Charles Symmons, in 1840 (Symmons 1840) and found an overall decrease of 18 percent. Not one group showed a gain. The loss for the Murray group was 38 percent and the 'First Group North' of Perth suffered a 32 percent loss (Tilbrook 1987:71–3) and in this case she identified conflict with Europeans as a factor. However, the major Murray River loss to conflict was in 1834 and well before the Armstrong census.

In the closely settled areas of the south-west, it is possible to record the passage of whooping cough, influenza and measles (Green 1984:Appendix 3) but only occasionally were Aboriginal deaths recorded. Reports of venereal disease and diphtheria were noted in the archival records and 300 Swan River Noongars were vaccinated against smallpox in 1853, but no smallpox deaths are recorded for the metropolitan area (Symmons 1854). In institutions such as missions, schools and prisons the dead are

counted with some accuracy; however, the conditions in institutions may also have spread the disease.

An influenza epidemic in 1841 killed more than half the pupils at the Church of England Guildford Native School. At least 14 Aboriginal prisoners on Rottneest Island, off the coast of Fremantle, died of influenza between 1882 and 1883 and another 27 in 1897 (Green and Moon 1997:59).

Whooping cough, which the Perth Noongar called *kulbul kulbulkan*, imitating the sound of the military bugle, was epidemic in 1832–33 and returned in 1848 with 15 settler children dead (*Inquirer*, 1 January 1848). The 1871 census referred to an 1860 whooping cough epidemic that accounted for 15 percent of all settler deaths that year; Aboriginal deaths are not acknowledged but we cannot assume that there were no deaths.

Measles entered the colony at King George Sound in 1861 and resulted in many recorded settler deaths, especially among nursing mothers and children. The government statistician noted:

The disease soon spread, and fixed its strongest hold on the Native Population... the disease caused a wide spread desolation, extending from tribe to tribe with most fatal consequences. The Local Government did everything which could be devised to alleviate the sufferings of these poor people, by the establishment of temporary hospitals, and supplying food, medicines, and comforts, but in every District of the Colony the Deaths were very numerous, as the habits of the natives are so unfavourable in the progress of a disease of this nature, and their mode of treatment so utterly at variance with all rules of medical science. (*Western Australian Census 1870:26–9*)

Fr Venancio Garido (1871) claimed that this measles epidemic severely reduced the New Norcia Mission population and, being able to base his opinion on mission inmate records and the 740 persons recorded three years before the epidemic, his assessment should be considered reliable. The Chief Protector of Aborigines, Henry Prinsep, informed Bishop Gibney that half of the south-west Aboriginal population died during this measles epidemic (Prinsep to Gibney 1907). In October 1883 measles reappeared at Albany (Colonial Secretary's Records, 8 October 1883) and its progress can be plotted through Mount Stirling, where Noongar were gathering for ceremonies (Colonial Secretary's Records, 17 April 1884), to Rottneest Island, where more than 62 prisoners died from measles and influenza (Green and Moon 1997:58–64), and continued north to the Gascoyne (Gascoyne measles report 1884).

Jesse Hammond (1933:70–2), a youth during the epidemic, recalled: 'the whole [Noongar] system was upset by the great measles epidemic of the eighties which killed off the blacks by scores'. No report was found to describe the impact of this epidemic on the metropolitan Aboriginal population.

Dr John Host entered the population debate as a historiographer with a native title commission and a determination to prove there was a robust and continuous Noongar society since 1829. The report was completed in one year and Host favours secondary sources rather than direct access to archived documents; for example, he cites Green more than 300 times and Haebich more than 100 times. Neither Green nor Haebich took an active part in this native title case. Professor Bob Reece, in a review of Host's book, is critical of his research, methodology and bias, and he comments on Host's failed attempts to prevent its publication (Reece 2011:223–7). However, it was published and it is in the public domain and cannot be ignored.

Host agrees with other historians that an exact Indigenous population figure at 1829 is impossible and then he juggles numbers. He takes Green's settler figure for 1829 (Green 1984:89, citing the WA Statistical Register for 1900), he deletes his own estimate of the number of children and then scatters the remaining 1324 adults across 237 000 square kilometres of the south-west to arrive at 'one European adult to every 179 square kilometres' (Host 2009:90). He does the same with an 1840 figure of 2434 settlers to place a single adult settler on a property 25 times the area of King's Park (Host 2009:90). Host applies Stirling's 1832 ratio of one Aborigine per square mile across the same area to arrive at 11 000 Noongar in 1832 and, assuming the population is unaffected by deaths, doubles it for 1837 to 'some 22 000 Noongar' (Host 2009:94). He may have overlooked Stirling's 1837 statement that 'The nearest estimate of the population appears to be that which assigns one native to each portion of ground of two square miles.' Thus Host's 11 000 Noongar should be 5500 and not 22 000 (Stirling 1837:92). To cap this exercise he writes, 'Even were we to set aside the estimates, however, we could probably assume that the Aborigines [at 1829] were at least equal to the settlers in number (approximately 2000)' (Host 2009:94).

Having set a probable 1829 base figure of 2000 across the Noongar domain, we advance to 1901 where Haebich (1988:1) introduces her study of Noongar survival with the 1200 Noongar counted at the 1901 census, including the metropolitan distribution of Fremantle, 62; Perth, 48; and Swan, 106 for a total of 216 (Haebich 1988:9, Table 1). She explains the complex inter-ethnic relationships occurring during the first century of British settlement (Haebich 1988:47–51) and cites the *Western Australian Census 1901* (Haebich 1988:204), which shows that half the south-west Indigenous population was of mixed race and accepted within Noongar communities. Haebich follows this population to 1940 when it is estimated at 3000.

Host (2009:30) accepts Haebich's (1988:1) 1901 population figure of 1200 (800 fewer than he considered possible in 1829) and her figure of 3000 Noongar in 1940; a 200 percent gain, which he regards as a measure of a continuous and robust society. Still referring to the Noongar, he wrote, 'Those receiving rations rose from 996 in 1907 to 3,330 in 1914 and rationing was subsequently used as a means of driving them out of town camps and onto reserves. When families refused to relocate, their

rations were stopped' (Host 2009:Ch 2, 33, citing Haebich 1988:41–6 and Haebich 2000:226–9). Host does not explain how 1200 Noongar in 1901 could have increased 200 percent by 1914, then diminished by about 12 persons per year to 3000 in 1940 and still be considered a robust society. The answer lies in his sources. Haebich (1988:46, citing Biskup 1973:276) is clear that the figures 996 and 3330 refer to a total state rationing table and not exclusively to the Noongar. She does not indicate, on the pages cited, that rationing 'was used as a means of driving them out of town camps and onto reserves'. For the second sentence, Host cites a different book and 15 years into the future, and the pages cited (Haebich 2000:268–9) do not agree with the sentence.

The Aborigines Department was created in 1897 and four years later the Chief Protector of Aborigines, Henry Prinsep, established a camping reserve south-east of Perth city known as Maamba, with small garden plots and a few huts to encourage permanent residency. The early occupants included people from Busselton and New Norcia. The reserve was abandoned in 1908 when a new manager was appointed (Gale to Connolly 1908). Two years later, a West Guildford 20-hectare camping reserve was created but, being alongside a cemetery and lacking adequate drinking water, it too was boycotted and the families returned to their familiar camping areas where their numbers were monitored by the local police and, in 1919, counted as 55 men, 50 women and 35 children (a total of 140) (ARCPA 1919:18–19).

We advance to 1927 with a relatively stable metropolitan Noongar population living in bush camps near fresh water, some close to the river and most within walking distance of public transport. The camps were still regularly policed to record the family names and ensure that no white men were cohabiting with the women, contrary to the *Aborigines Act 1905*. Many of these camps continued into the years after the Second World War and Makin (1970:84) identifies some in suburban Bassendean, Bayswater, East Perth, Midland Junction, Caversham, Claremont, Swanbourne and Shenton Park.

There was, however, a drift from rural districts that bothered Chief Protector Neville, and in 1927 he applied Section 39 of the *Aborigines Act 1905* to proclaim the greater metropolitan area a prohibited zone, 'in which it shall be unlawful for Aborigines or half-castes, not in lawful employment to be or to remain'. Neville's prohibition extended to a radius of about 20–30 kilometres from the city centre and included the metropolitan bush areas where new arrivals might become established. The police had the authority to arrest those in breach of the proclamation and order them to return to their own districts.

The Great Depression was severe on Aboriginal workers. With the choice of an overcrowded country town reserve or seeking out extended families in Perth, many chose the latter. The number of persons counted in 1935 was 200 (ARCPA 1935: 19–20) and Perth was now under a strict prohibition. Two years later, Neville added a new measure of control which he justified in his annual report for June 1937: 'Owing to the inroad of increasing numbers of unemployed natives in the city, it was found

necessary to institute a pass system, and to the time of writing this appears to be working satisfactory' (ARCPA 1937:6).

Neville signed every pass carried by metropolitan Aborigines aged 14 years and over. A pass identified the bearer as a 'legal' resident and described the areas wherein he or she should remain, and where he or she could venture and when. For example, pass no. 6, issued to Tommy X of Central Avenue, Swanbourne, was valid from 30 June to 30 September 1937 and allowed him to visit Perth only on Mondays and not to stay beyond 6pm (three lists in Neville 1937). In a letter to Police Commissioner Connell, Neville explained his decision to act against 'outside' Aborigines: 'In future therefore, it is desired that natives shall not be permitted to camp within the metropolitan area (as described under the Traffic Act) except by permission of this Department and henceforth this approval will be given by the issue of passes to approved people' (Neville to Connell 1937).

A list of pass holders was distributed to every police station within the prohibited zone and police could order unregistered persons to leave the metropolitan area. The population in 1938 was 276 (ARCNA 1938:24–5) and, by January, 200 passes issued included temporary passes for hospital patients and passes for women at the Native Girls' Home East Perth.

In 1941 the Commissioner of Native Affairs, Francis Bray, ordered all eastern suburban camping Aborigines to move onto the original West Guildford reserve under the supervision of Constable Herman Wilhelm (ARCNW 1959:27) but in 1943 the Commonwealth Government, using its war-time powers, resumed the reserve for an army camp (ARCNA 1944:10) and the Noongar returned to their traditional metropolitan camps. After the war the army camp served as emergency housing for white families and then, from about 1955 to 1967, it was an Aboriginal housing estate known as Allawah Grove. By this time, the policy of protection and segregation had given way to assimilation and checks on rural Noongar moving into the metropolitan area ceased.

Before leaving this period, it is useful to review the 1940s. The metropolitan population was counted at 337 in 1944, as 284 in 1945 and as 217 in 1946, possibly reflecting men drawn to the city for employment and families with men in uniform who rented houses in the older suburbs and at the war's end returned to the country. The spike in 1947 to 341 has its origins in the *Aborigines Act Amendment Act 1936*, better known as the Native Administration Act (an Amendment Act to the 1905 Act). The amendments meant that children described in fractional terms as 'quarter-caste' could be removed from their families and assigned to Sister Kate's Home for Children, established in 1933. In the three years 1935–37, Sister Kate's averaged 30 children a year but as increasing numbers were identified as 'quadroons' the number rose to 115 during the 1947 Bateman survey. If those counted in metropolitan institutions are excluded from Bateman's total of 341 (Table 1), the metropolitan 'free' population is only 157 men, women and children; fewer than Armstrong counted in 1836 and

27 percent below the metropolitan count of 216 in 1901. It is not the profile of a robust community. On the contrary, it matches the situation described by Anna Haebich (1988:356) when she retells the epic struggle of Noongar to survive under difficult circumstances: ‘Most were trapped in a cycle of poverty characterised by long periods of unemployment, deplorable living conditions, malnutrition, disease, and premature death. Their children were growing up without schooling or vocational training and they had few prospects of breaking out of this cycle.’ It is the profile Hasluck (1938:7) describes and Green (2005:107–40) outlines as he traces the links between poverty, disadvantage, discrimination and the substandard education of Noongar children and other Indigenous children in Western Australia. However, as Green has noted (1984:189), the Noongar survived and by 1984 there were an estimated 12 000 descendants of the original Noongar.

Table 1: Perth metropolitan Aboriginal population in 1947 (Bateman 1948; from Native Population Distribution [WA] as at 30 June 1947)

Perth metropolitan area, 30 June 1947	Male	Female	Children	Total
Beaconsfield *	4	4	5	13
Causeway *	6	5	7	18
Claremont *	1	–	5	6
Fremantle (prison)	24	1	–	25
Guildford *	19	28	33	80
Maylands *	5	4	12	21
Midland Junction *	2	–	–	2
West Perth *	2	4	11	17
Claremont Mental Hospital	14	10	–	24
Cottesloe Deaf School	–	–	1	1
Native Girls' Home East Perth	–	7	2	9
Other Perth institutions	2	2	6	10
Sister Kate's children's home	–	–	115	115
Institution population	40	20	124	184
Non-institution population	39	45	73	157
Total	79	65	197	341

* Established camps

In 1948 Bray redefined the prohibition perimeter closer to the Perth business district (*Western Australian Government Gazette* 1948) and this continued until 1954, when Stanley Middleton, Bray's successor, repealed all town and city prohibitions

throughout the state (*Western Australian Government Gazette* 1954). In the same year Middleton abolished the mandatory employment permit system in force since 1905 and, with the freedom to travel at will and seek the employment of their choice, many Noongar families sought a better life in the city.

Dr John Wilson (1964:158) commented on the causes of post-Second World War Aboriginal migration to Perth:

Anxiety has been evident in a few parts of the city with the in-flux of part-Aboriginal migrants from rural towns and fringes of the metropolitan area. This move of population is partly the result of displacement of labour through the mechanisation of farming industries. The city sectors most affected by the move have been areas of transition, parts of the older city that are falling into disrepair, yet adjoining those of the new expanding city block on one side and good working-class homes on the other.

Conclusion

This period ends with the removal of town prohibitions, increased family and individual mobility, access to state government housing, and a more equitable access to Commonwealth Government pensions for the elderly and for the unemployed. A national referendum in May 1967 removed Section 126 from the Australian Constitution and allowed all Aborigines to be counted at a national census. LR Smith (1980), who analysed census data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, found that more than 40 percent of the Perth Aborigines completing the 1971 census had migrated to Perth in the four years since 1966. This compared to 30 percent over the same period for Brisbane and Adelaide, 20 percent for Sydney and Hobart, and 15 percent for Melbourne. The metropolitan Indigenous population at the 1991 census was 11 744 and above 23 000 at the 2001 census, representing almost a 50 percent gain in ten years. The acceleration coincides with a general population growth in the Perth metropolitan region, which has seen many of the urban swamps drained and new suburbs created, with an occasional small boutique lake in a public park serving as a reminder of the Indigenous past.

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