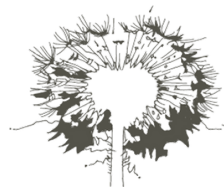




# **ILLUMANATE**

**Living Building Challenge  
Design Competition 2023**

Social Context v1  
updated 25.7.23



**LIVING FUTURE**  
INSTITUTE<sup>SM</sup>  
AUSTRALIA

## Social Context

The Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people are the Traditional Owners of the land on which the site is located. The following social context summary is drawn from the approved Cultural Heritage Management Plan (dated October 2018, not provided) and Brimbank City Council website.

The Maribyrnong River valley has been occupied intensively by Aboriginal people for at least 9,000 years, with evidence of occupation extending back to beyond 30,000 years. This makes the Brimbank Park (7.3km North of the current activity area) one of the earliest signs of human occupation of Australia.

The region predominantly sits within the Western basalt plains which were dominated by Kangaroo grass *Themeda triandra*, while the slopes of the Maribyrnong River contained bottlebrushes, acacias and Sweet Bursaria *Bursaria spinosa*. Basalt contains a large concentration of silica and when it weathers, silica is leached into the sediments beneath the basalt, forming silcrete. So, this region would have provided Aboriginal people with a raw stone material supply, suitable for tool production.

Before European settlement, the region supported a riparian zone and grassy woodland vegetation, with River Red Gums *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* forming the main overstorey species associated with this vegetation (Victorian Government of Sustainability and Environment, 2016). Other species present in this region included the starchy tuber plant, golden wattle used for its sap or gum for medicinal purposes, tussock grasses for providing string and fibre for bags, baskets, mats and fishing nets, and the outer bark of trees used to construct canoes or shelters (Zola & Gott, 1992). Other flora included orchids such as Sun-Orchid *Thelymitra* species and tubers which were important staples in the Aboriginal diet (Coutts, 1979). Riparian scrub also contained River Mint *Mentha australis*, the leaves of which could be used for coughs, colds and stomach cramps (Wigney, 1994, p. 68). The new shoots and roots of Cumbungi *Typha* sp., which grew on swamps and stream margins, were eaten and the root fibres were also wound into string (Bell & Presland, 1977a, p. 9).

The plains grasslands and woodlands supported a variety of microhabitats including a number of birds, such as ducks, quail, emus and swans, native fish such as Brown Trout

*Salmo trutta*, and larger animals like kangaroos and wallabies also occur in this region. Strict fire regimes were utilised to clear land for containing these larger animals. The fauna available would have provided resources to store food, and make clothing, medicine, tools and instruments.

## Post colonial - history of the region

The township of Sunshine was formerly known as Braybrook, to which settlers arrived from 1835 onwards. This resulted in displacement of the local Aboriginal population that previously occupied this area.

Fires devastated the western plains in 1851 where large numbers of stock and native fauna were killed and many sheep runs were wiped out. Grazing and dairying remained the dominant economic activity in Sunshine until the 1860s, after which time small scale quarries, slaughterhouses and meatworks began their operations along Maribyrnong River (Popp, 1979, p. 34). Settlement continued in this region and by 1871, Braybrook Junction was established. Braybrook at this time was still largely open basaltic plains; very few roads dissected the plains and only a few factories had been established.

During the 1880s, Melbourne underwent a property boom which increased settlement within the western districts, which then extended to Braybrook after the Braybrook Junction railway station was established in 1886, for trains to Ballarat and Bendigo. The Junction was promoted to the 'Greatest Junction in Victoria' with the intention of this region becoming the main manufacturing centre in Australia, predicting the employment of over 10,000.

By 1891, new housing estates had been established, but they lacked formal streets and basic amenities. These unsanitary conditions were reflected by a typhoid outbreak in the regions; water supplies were still not connected to houses and factories in Braybrook. The following decade did not bring any relief to residents and resulted in a closure of several companies and banks leading to high unemployment and many people leaving the region.

In 1904, H.V McKay purchased the plant and works of the Braybrook Implement Company after its closure in the same year, eventually renaming the plant 'Sunshine Harvester Works'. At the start of the 1940s, the population of Sunshine district reached 13,000 people which was then exacerbated by Australia's Immigration program after WW2, leading to 170,000 people by the 1950s, with both extensive housing estates and industrial areas being developed.

