

Preliminary Aboriginal Archaeological & Cultural Heritage Assessment



Elanora Conference Centre
Elanora Heights, New South Wales

Report to
Don Fox Planning and Pittwater Council

Dominic Steele Consulting Archaeology

April 2009

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1.0 Introduction

Background to this Report

This report has been prepared for *Don Fox Planning* on behalf of *Pittwater Council* and presents the results of a *Preliminary Aboriginal Archaeological & Cultural Heritage Assessment* that has been completed to inform a combined *Rezoning and Subdivision Development Application* currently being finalised for four separate parcels of land situated adjacent to the *Uniting Church Conference Centre* located in the northern Sydney suburb of Elanora Heights.

The location of Elanora Heights relative to the surrounding suburbs of Ingleside, Mona Vale, Warriewood, and North Narrabeen is illustrated in **Figures 1.1** and **1.2**. The aerial photograph presented here as **Figure 1.3** provides a more detailed view of the study area in relation to the streetscapes of Elanora Heights that are located to the south of the conference centre, and the areas of bush-land situated immediately to the north, west, and east that are the subject of this report as outlined below.

The objectives of the proposed rezoning and subdivision of the four parcels of land illustrated in **Figure 1.4** (Areas 1 to 4) are to achieve a successful transfer of the lands between *Pittwater Council* and the *Uniting Church* as part of Council's ongoing commitments to the conservation of environmentally significant areas of the broader *Warriewood-Ingleside Escarpment*. To date, Council has acquired on behalf of the Pittwater community a number of parcels of land in the local landscape surrounding the Elanora Conference Centre study area, and the land transfers presently proposed between the Church and Council (the 'Parties') represent the final stage of the escarpment land acquisition program.¹

The Elanora Conference Centre rezoning and subdivision proposal is to be supported by a *Community Plan of Management* (PoM) that is currently being prepared by Council, and will provide the basis for the development of an updated draft *Local Environmental Plan* (LEP) to ensure the proposed rezoning and future uses of the land at Elanora Heights is appropriately managed.

¹ The currently proposed land transactions between Council and the *Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust* are to be undertaken according to the *Environmental Levy* (E-Levy) financial arrangements established by the *Minister for Local Government* in 2000.

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The aim of the current study has therefore been to identify any '*clear and obvious*' Aboriginal archaeological and cultural heritage constraints at this early stage of the rezoning and planning process to ensure any potential adverse impacts upon the Aboriginal cultural heritage values of the place are avoided.

The Elanora Heights Conference Centre Rezoning & Subdivision Proposal

The proposed rezoning and subdivision of the four parcels of land at Elanora Heights illustrated in **Figure 1.4** (Areas 1 to 4) are summarised below and are discussed in further detail in following sections of this report:

Area 1: Area 1 comprises a parcel of relatively elevated, sloping, and rocky land that is unsuitable for development. The Parties propose that Area 1 be transferred to Council by the Trust. This land is currently zoned 5(a) Special Uses (Youth Centre). It is proposed to classify this land as community land and rezone it for conservation purposes (7(a) Environmental Protection).

Area 2: Area 2 forms a part of the former Heydon Estate (previously acquired by Council by the use of the E-Levy) on which the *Uniting Church's* Conference Centre encroaches. The Parties propose that Area 2 be transferred to the Trust by Council. It is currently zoned 7(a) Environmental Protection and classified as Operational Land and therefore a new reclassification process is not required for this parcel of land. It is proposed to rezone the land as 5(a) Special Uses (Youth Centre).

Area 3: The Parties propose that Area 3 be classified as Operational Land and transferred to Council's ownership but leased back to the Church. Under this arrangement, the Church would be able to construct new and/or maintain existing outdoor recreational equipment associated with low impact operations of the conference centre such as rope swings and high wire courses, subject to Council approval.

An amendment under Schedule 10 of the Pittwater LEP (1993) will be required in order to permit development for certain additional purposes. No confirmed development proposal has been put forward for this parcel of land to date.

The Church intends that any new conference centre equipment that may be considered for inclusion in Area 3 will comply with the PoM for the escarpment and Council's *Warriewood-Ingleside Escarpment Bushfire Management Plan* (BMP) that are being prepared in tandem with the current rezoning and

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subdivision proposal, and as such will be sacrificial in the event of bushfire whereby there will be no requirement for the establishment of an Asset Protection Zone (APZ).

In order to ensure the interests of the community are addressed, on transfer of Area 3 to Council, a restrictive covenant will be registered to ensure Area 3 can only be used for open space and conservation purposes, and the area will be leased to the owner of the conference centre while the facility remains operational. Upon termination of the lease, Area 3 will become part of the *Escarpment Conservation Area*.

This parcel of land is currently zoned as 5(a) Special Uses (Youth Centre). It is proposed to rezone the land as 7(a) Environmental Protection.

Area 4: Area 4 comprises a parcel of land that is proposed to be transferred to Council's ownership. Council, on behalf of the community, wishes to preserve this area for environmental protection and conservation purposes as part of the *Warriewood-Ingleside Escarpment Reserve*.

The Parties propose Area 4 be transferred to Council by the Trust. This land is proposed to be rezoned 7(a) Environmental Protection and classified as community land for conservation purposes whereby Council would manage the locality in strict accordance with the adopted PoM in a manner consistent with the new zoning and land classification.

Statutory Context and Controls

Statutory Protection for Aboriginal Cultural Heritage

Two principal pieces of legislation provide automatic statutory protection for Aboriginal heritage and the requirements for its management in New South Wales: These are:

- The *National Parks and Wildlife Act* (1974); and
- The *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act* (1979).

The implications of these statutory controls (specifically the NPW Act) within the context of the current assessment study are outlined below. The *National Parks and Wildlife Service* (NPWS) is presently the principal government agency with responsibility for the protection and management of Aboriginal archaeological sites and cultural heritage values. It now comprises an administrative branch of the *Department of Environment and Climate Change* (DECC).

National Parks and Wildlife Act (1974)

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The NPW Act provides statutory protection for all Aboriginal 'sites' or 'objects' (consisting of any material evidence of the indigenous occupation of NSW) under Section 90 of the Act, and for 'Aboriginal Places' (areas of cultural significance to the Aboriginal community) under Section 84. Aboriginal sites and objects are afforded automatic statutory protection in NSW whereby it is an offence (without the Minister's consent) to:

damage, deface or destroy Aboriginal sites without the prior consent of the Director-General of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (now the DECC).

The NPW Act defines an Aboriginal 'object' (or site) as:

any deposit, object or material evidence (not being a handicraft for sale) relating to indigenous and non-European habitation of the area that comprises New South Wales, being habitation before or concurrent with the occupation of that area by persons of non-Aboriginal European extraction, and includes Aboriginal remains.

The protection provided to Aboriginal sites/objects applies irrespective of the level of their significance or issues of land tenure. However, areas are only gazetted as Aboriginal Places if the Minister is satisfied that sufficient evidence exists to demonstrate that the location was and/or is of special significance to Aboriginal culture.

Under Section 86 of the NPW Act, it is an offence to disturb or excavate land for the purpose of discovering an Aboriginal object/site, or disturb or move an Aboriginal object on any land, without first obtaining consent (through a Preliminary Research Permit, Excavation Permit, Collection Permit or Rock Art Recording Permit etc) under Section 87 of the NPW Act from the Director-General of the DECC. Under Section 91 of the NPW Act, it is also a requirement to notify the Director-General of the DECC of the location of any Aboriginal object/site within a 'reasonable time-frame'. Identified Aboriginal items and sites are registered with the DECC on its *Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS) Register*.

As the administrator of the NPW Act, the DECC has issued guidelines outlining the preferred structure for archaeological investigations and reporting.² More recently, it has also released interim guidelines for s.87 and s.90 Permit Applicants under the NPW Act.³

² NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service 1997. 'Standards Manual for Archaeological Practice in Aboriginal Heritage Management' in the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Standards and Guidelines Kit (Draft).

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Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (1979)

In contrast with the NPW Act, the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (the EPA Act) is designed more specifically to cater for heritage issues within the context of new development projects and is closely linked with the process of preparing environmental impact studies. This Act has three main parts of direct relevance to Aboriginal cultural heritage. These are:

- Part 3 that governs the preparation of planning instruments;
- Part 4 which relates to the development assessment process for local government (consent) authorities; and
- Part 5 relates to activity approvals by governing (determining) authorities.

Part 3 of the EPA Act deals primarily with development planning in which sites and places sacred or significant to Aboriginal communities are to be assessed and are to be taken into consideration in initial studies. The DECC (and more recently the *NSW Department of Planning*) has produced guidelines on the preparation of planning instruments that explicitly list Aboriginal sites and places of significance as values which should be assessed as part of initial planning studies.

Part 4 of the EPA Act deals with decisions that are made within the context of new development applications. The DECC is an approving body under Part 5 of the EPA Act and will require formal consideration of a variety of cultural and community factors.

These may variously include potential impacts to significant anthropological, archaeological, and cultural and historical values, and will typically be addressed through the completion of environmental studies where appropriate including *Heritage Assessments*, *Heritage Impact Studies*, and *Review's of Environmental Factors*.

Implications for the Current Project

Damage, destruction or removal of any Aboriginal 'places' or 'objects' is only permitted where a Permit or Consent has been issued by the Director-General of the DECC according to Sections 87 and 90 of the *NSW National Parks & Wildlife Act (1974)*.

³ NSW National Park & Wildlife Service 2004. 'Interim Community Consultation Requirements for Applicants'. National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974: Part 6 Approvals. December 2004.

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NPWS Permits and Consents are only granted where sufficient information is supplied in written form to the Director-General of the DECC from Aboriginal stakeholders, archaeologists and developers that demonstrate accuracy and transparency in the site assessment process and the good faith intended by each of these parties in applying for consent to either move, disturb and/or destroy statutorily protected objects.

Best practice advocates that development impact to documented and/or potential sites of Aboriginal cultural heritage sensitivity be avoided where practicable and/or mitigated at the minimum, and that all decisions made for either course of action be made consequent to direct guidance provided by Aboriginal stakeholders.

Report Scope and Objectives

The objectives of the current study have been to prepare a *Preliminary Aboriginal Archaeological & Cultural Heritage Assessment* to inform a combined rezoning and subdivision development application for the parcels of land situated adjacent to the Elanora Heights Conference Centre (as illustrated in **Figure 1.4**) according to the following:

Aboriginal Liaison

- To initiate consultation with the *Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council* (MLALC) with regards to the rezoning and subdivision proposal.
- To incorporate the views, possible concerns, and management recommendations provided by the MLALC into the current study.

Background Research and Assessment

- To undertake background research into the location and nature of any previously recorded Aboriginal archaeological sites (and/or areas of potential Aboriginal cultural heritage sensitivity) known to be present either within the boundaries of the study area or in immediately adjacent areas.⁴

⁴ This background review has included a search of the DECC AHIMS Aboriginal Sites Register and an evaluation of previous Aboriginal cultural heritage assessments undertaken in the local Elanora Heights landscape and its surrounds.

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- To provide on the basis of the above Aboriginal archaeological and cultural heritage review, a predictive model that outlines the potential Aboriginal archaeological sensitivity of the subject lands and an evaluation of the possibility for as yet unrecorded Aboriginal archaeological sites (and/or areas of likely sensitivity) to occur within Areas 1 to 4.

Site Inspection and Evaluation

- To outline the rationale and methods that have been employed to support the recently completed preliminary site inspection and recording of the study area.
- To provide a summary of the observations recorded during the recent preliminary site inspection of the study area, and an evaluation of the results of the fieldwork.

Analysis, Evaluation and Report

- To prepare a *Preliminary Aboriginal Archaeological & Cultural Heritage Assessment* of the Elanora Heights Conference Centre lands that includes the outcomes of consultation undertaken with the MLALC for the project, an evaluation of the results of the recently completed site inspection, and a discussion of the Aboriginal archaeological and cultural heritage management conclusions that have been developed for the current study.⁵
- To provide appropriate Aboriginal cultural heritage management options and recommendations that establishes a framework for the ongoing protection of any documented and/or potential Aboriginal archaeological sites (or areas of potential cultural heritage sensitivity) to guide the current rezoning and subdivision proposal.

Aboriginal Community Consultation

The study area falls within the administrative boundaries of the *Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council* (MLALC). This organisation has a statutory responsibility 'to promote the protection of Aboriginal culture and the heritage of Aboriginal persons' within its Council boundaries.⁶ A number of

⁵ This work has been undertaken with reference to relevant Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC) guidelines as indicated in following sections of this report.

⁶ Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983, s52(1) (m).

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other Aboriginal organisations and individuals also claim traditional and historical links within the greater Sydney landscape of which Elanora Heights forms a part.

Comparatively recent changes to Aboriginal cultural heritage management policies in NSW introduced by the DECC in 2004 indicate that new projects (as in effect from January 2005) would potentially need to extend the opportunity for any Aboriginal individual or group to express an interest in being involved in the assessment process and to have due input in decision making matters where DECC s87/90 Permits are likely to be required. The DECC have advised that this outcome would be best facilitated through a process of public advertisement and the subsequent registration of expressions of interest.⁷

At this point in time, precise direction as to which specific Aboriginal stakeholder groups would be required to be consulted with and/or involved in future Aboriginal archaeological investigations in the local Elanora Heights landscape area (beyond the *Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council*) have yet to be finalised by the DECC.

Given that at the initiation of the project, it was unclear what the likely need for DECC s87/s90 approvals would be within the context of the current rezoning and subdivision proposal (mindful that it was nevertheless considered to be unlikely at the time), *Dominic Steele Consulting Archaeology* (DSCA) decided to initially consult in good-faith with the MLALC in so far as this organisation is endorsed by Council and the DECC, and has demonstrated in the past a sound commitment to the ongoing protection, conservation and management of Aboriginal cultural heritage sites and values in the local landscape.

As a result, Dominic Steele of DSCA contacted Mr Allen Madden (MLALC *Senior Cultural & Education Officer*) and the nature and scope of the project was discussed. Available plans and other pertinent background information were also forwarded to the Land Council at this time.

An inspection of the property was undertaken by DSCA (represented by Dominic Steele and Adrian Dreyer) on the 27th of November 2008. Mr Madden advised he was unavailable to attend the site visit at this time, but indicated that he was familiar with the Aboriginal archaeological sites previously recorded to occur/survive in and around Elanora Heights, and that the Land Council would be happy

⁷ The current DECC guidelines detailed in the bibliography of this report are only in draft form at this time.

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to review and comment on the results of the field work, conclusions, and management recommendations reported here.

The *Cultural Heritage Statement* that has since been prepared by the MLALC for the current project that provides their views and recommendations with regards to the combined rezoning and subdivision proposal is appended to this report (**Appendix 1**).

Report Outline

This *Preliminary Aboriginal Archaeological & Cultural Heritage Assessment* has been prepared in partnership with the *Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council* and presents the following:

- An introduction to the project (**Section 1.0**).
- A description of the environmental context of the study area including its geology, topography, vegetation and soils. This section also includes a brief discussion of how landscape conditions can determine Aboriginal archaeological/cultural heritage sensitivity predictive modelling as a management tool that can be purposively used in preliminary planning studies (**Section 2.0**).
- A review of previous Aboriginal heritage studies undertaken in the local landscape, and a predictive model of the likely archaeological evidence that may be present within the subject lands (**Section 3.0**).
- A summary of the observations recorded during the preliminary November 2008 site visit, and the results of the site inspection (**Section 4.0**).
- The conclusions that have been developed for the current project that are based upon the above background research, preliminary site inspection results and evaluation, and consultation undertaken with the MLALC. This summary is presented in the form of a *Heritage Impact Statement* relative to the potential impacts of the proposal (**Section 5.0**).
- The provision of Aboriginal cultural heritage management recommendations relative to the proposed future rezoning and subdivision of the subject lands (**Section 6.0**).
- Sources and references cited in this report (**Section 7.0**).
- Attachments including the *Cultural Heritage Statement* that has been prepared for the project by the *Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council* (**Appendices**).

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Authorship and Acknowledgements

This report has been written by Dominic Steele of *Dominic Steele Consulting Archaeology* (DSCA). DSCA would like to acknowledge the assistance and advice provided by the following people in the course of preparing this report.

Ms Ellen Robertshaw Don Fox Planning

Mr Allen Madden Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council

Mr Adrian Dreyer DSCA Archaeologist

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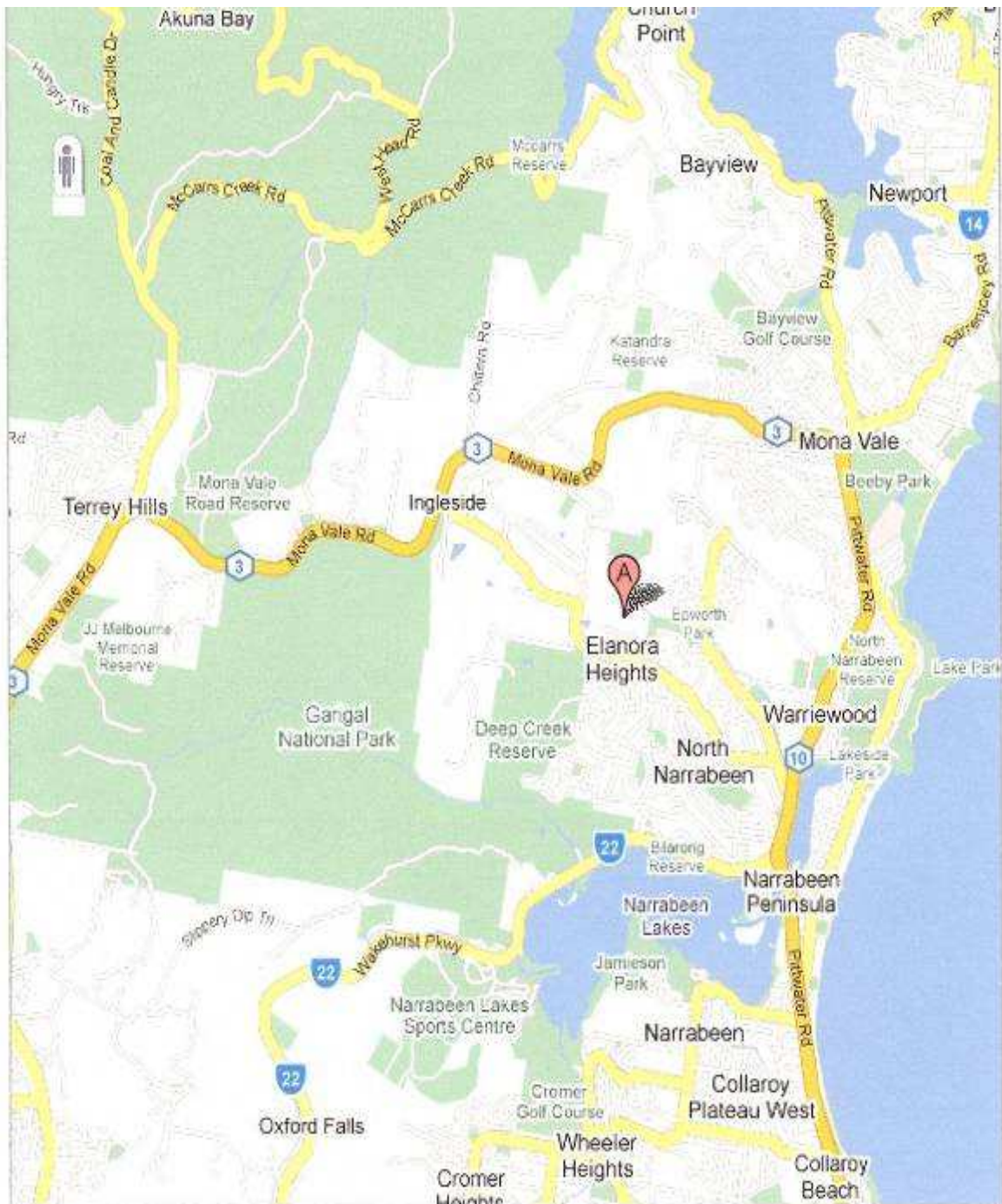


Figure 1.1: General location of Elanora Heights relative to the surrounding suburbs of Ingleside, Mona Vale, Warriewood and North Narrabeen (Source: Google Maps 2008).

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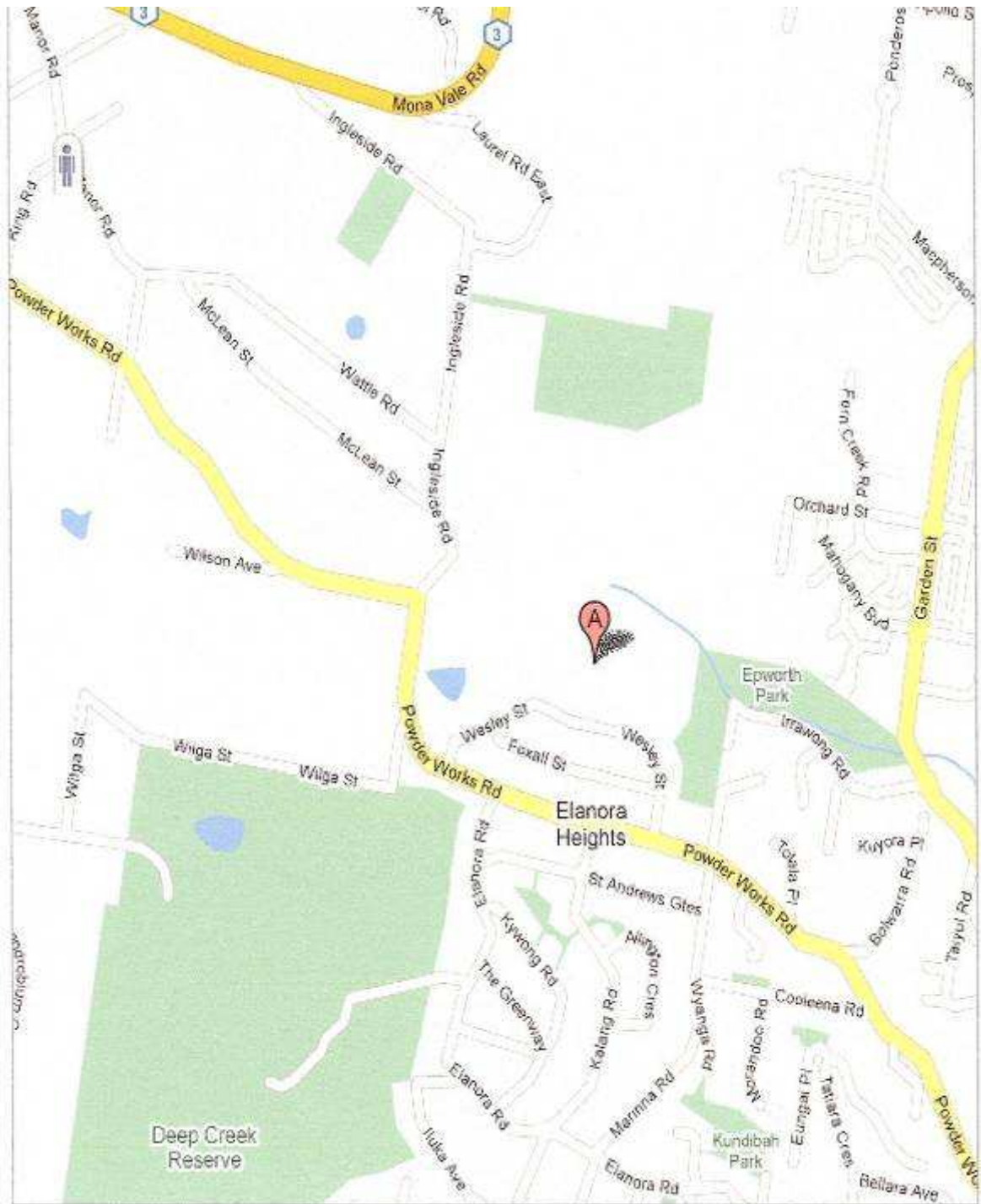


Figure 1.2: Approximate location of the Elanora Conference Centre with Wesley Street situated to the south and Mullet Creek located to the north (Source: Google Maps 2008).

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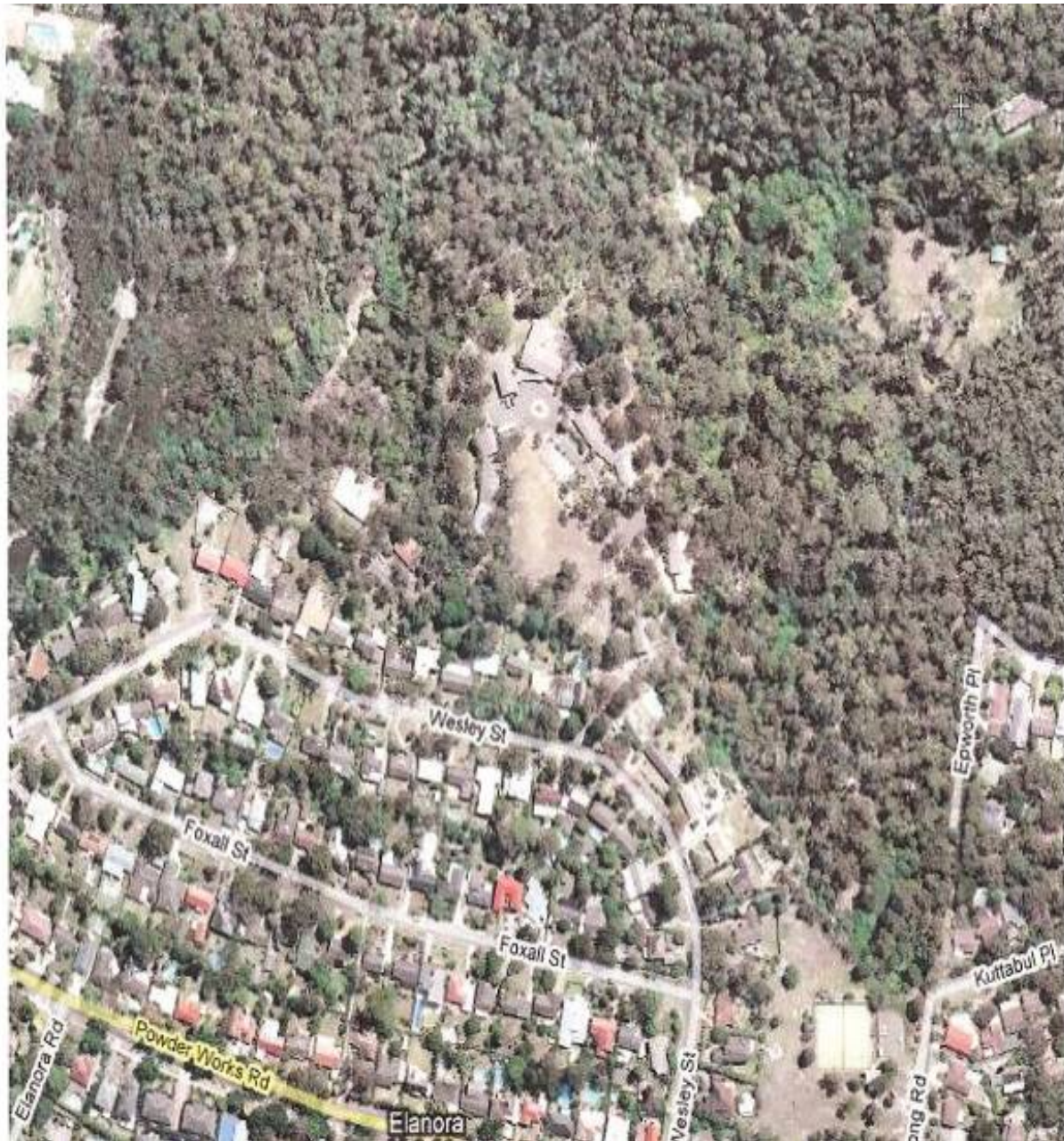


Figure 1.3: An aerial view of the current layout of the Elanora Conference Centre. This is broadly defined by the cleared area of land that is illustrated in the centre of this image. The surrounding streetscapes of Elanora Heights that are located to the south, west, and east of the study area are also shown, along with the existing bush-land that leads down towards Mullet Creek that is situated to the north (Source: Google Maps 2008).

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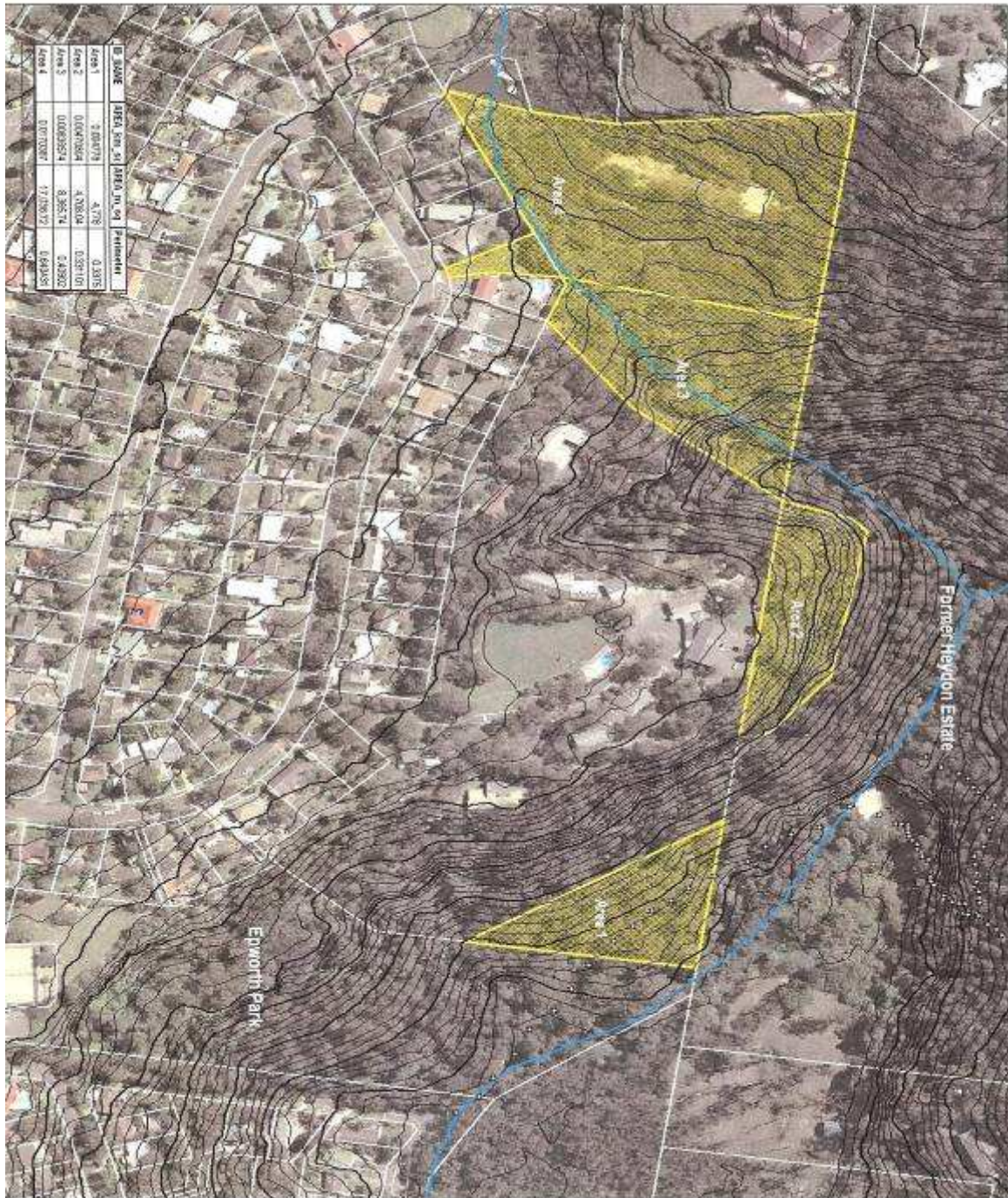


Figure 1.4: Proposed rezoning and subdivision Areas 1 to 4 located to the north, west, and east of the Elanora Conference Centre (Source: Pittwater Council 2008).

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2.0 Environmental Context

How the Environment Affects Aboriginal Archaeological Patterning

Ongoing archaeological research in the Sydney region (see for example Attenbrow 2002) demonstrates that the natural (pre-Contact) environment influenced not only the availability of resources to Aboriginal people in the past, but also largely determines in the present what types of Aboriginal archaeological sites/cultural heritage evidence is likely to be located (and/or survive) when land is assessed in contemporary rezoning, subdivision, and redevelopment circumstances.

The past distribution and availability of resources such as drinking water, plant and animal foods, raw materials of stone, wood and vegetable fibre used for tool production and maintenance were all strongly influenced by the nature of soils, the composition of vegetation cover, and the climactic characteristics of any given region. The locations of different site-types (such as open campsites, sheltered and open middens, sheltered habitation and art sites, axe grinding grooves and engravings etc) that may have originally occurred (and/or now survive) in an area was therefore strongly influenced by such factors as these, along with a range of other associated features which are specific to different land-systems and bedrock geologies.

In addition, the nature and extent to which any given parcel of land has been subject to impacts as a consequence of post-Contact land-use practices will also strongly define what types of Aboriginal archaeological evidence is likely to survive and its likely integrity.

Detailing the environmental context of a study area is therefore an integral procedure necessary for understanding potential past Aboriginal land-use practices (as well as post-Contact historical settlement and development patterns), along with predicting Aboriginal archaeological site distributions within any given landscape.

The information outlined below (in combination with the background Aboriginal archaeological review subsequently presented in **Section 3.0**) is considered to be pertinent to the current assessment of the potential Aboriginal archaeological and cultural heritage sensitivity of the parcels of land that are the subject of this report.

Description of the Study Area

The northern Sydney suburb of Elanora Heights is located approximately 27km to the north-east of the City's CBD and is situated within a landscape that consists of a mix of elevated crests, rolling hills, and

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lower slopes (variously underlain by sandstone and shale bedrock lithologies) that overlook Narrabeen Lakes (lagoon) and the catchment of Deep Creek to the south and south-west, and the coast line of the Tasman Sea to the east. The northern side of the suburb lies adjacent to natural bush-land (bordering the corridor of Mullet Creek) that extends to Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park further to the north, while the western side of the suburb adjoins the bush-land of Garigal National Park.

The Elanora Conference Centre is situated immediately to the north of the principal residential streetscapes of Elanora Heights, and is broadly surrounded to the south by Wesley Street, by Epworth Park/Irrawong Reserve to the east, residential properties to west, and largely unmodified bush-land on relatively rugged sandstone formations leading down to Mullet Creek to the north.

The conference centre occupies an approximately 8 ha area of land. The principal facilities of the complex include a range of modern accommodation and administration buildings, parking areas, a swimming and wading pool, a large recreational oval, and other features such as an outdoor chapel, picnic tables, and BBQ areas that are situated within a predominantly cleared and landscaped setting. A number of bushwalking tracks and trails are also present within less modified natural bush-land to the north of the principal accommodation and recreational areas of the conference centre. These variously adjoin adjacent public reserves such as Heydon Reserve located to the north, and Epworth Park/Irrawong Reserve situated to the east, both of which are in places bisected by the channel of Mullet Creek and its tributaries.

Areas 1 to 4 (see **Figure 1.4**) are in general characterised by a combination of elevated sandstone crests and rock benches along with lower shale slopes leading down to Mullet Creek that are consistent with the Erosional Gynea Soil Landscape that is predominant in the local Elanora Heights area (see for example Chapman and Murphy 1989:64-67). The underlying bedrock primarily consists of Hawkesbury Sandstone which is a medium to coarse-grained quartz sandstone with minor shale and laminite lenses, although areas of Narrabeen Sandstone may also occur in places.

The landscape of the study area forms a part of a broad convex crest with moderately inclined to steeply sloping side slopes with narrow to wide outcropping sandstone rock benches (particularly in Area 1 and 2) that have in places formed broken scarps (as illustrated and discussed in **Section 4.0**).

Excluding the immediate margins of Areas 1 to 4 to the north, west, and east of the conference centre that have been landscaped and retain a mixture of introduced plantings and some weed varieties, the subject lands are broadly vegetated by largely intact (dry sclerophyll) open-woodland comprising both

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mature trees and sapling re-growth. Common tree canopy species include Red Bloodwood (*Eucalyptus gummifera*), Yellow Bloodwood (*Eucalyptus eximia*), Scribbly Gum (*Eucalyptus haemastoma*), Brown Stringy Bark (*Eucalyptus capitellata*), and Old Man Banksia (*Banksia serrata*). Sydney Peppermint (*Eucalyptus piperita*), Smooth Barked Apple (*Angophora costata*), Black Ash (*Eucalyptus sieberi*) and Sandstone Stringybark (*Eucalyptus oblonga*) are also common canopy species in the local landscape. The under-storey of the study area appears to be dominated by species of the families *Epacridaceae*, *Myrtaceae*, *Fabaceae* and *Proteaceae* (see for example Chapman and Murphy 1989 and Benson and Howell 1995).

The soil profiles inspected during the November 2008 site visit in various locations in Areas 1 to 4 (as illustrated and described in **Section 4.0**) were observed to be generally shallow, and to consist of sandy yellow-brown loams with high quantities of sandstone materials and shale in places. Where ground visibility permitted (given the predominately dense vegetation cover), the soil profiles were also found to be largely skeletal in nature and to contain high quantities of organic-rich leaf litter. Given the generally steeply sloping topography of much of the survey area (primarily in Areas 1 to 3), the profiles in most locations inspected were found to be subject to various levels of rilling and erosion from ongoing water run-off and sheet wash.

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3.0 Aboriginal Archaeological Context

Regional Aboriginal Archaeological Overview

Site Types, Frequency and Survival

Over 4,000 Aboriginal archaeological sites have been registered with the *Department of Environment and Climate Change* (DECC) *Aboriginal Sites Register* in the greater Sydney region to date (see Attenbrow 2002 for a review). Despite extensive impacts that have accompanied some 220 years of post-Contact occupation and land development, Aboriginal archaeological sites have been located in all types of landforms in the region and include:

- Shell midden deposits contained within both sandstone rock shelters of suitable size that provided protection to people in inclement weather conditions, and also in open (most often coastal/estuarine foreshore) contexts and adjacent to principal watercourses.
- Painted and drawn art images in sandstone overhangs/shelters.
- Engraved images and axe grinding grooves created on the surfaces of flat rock platforms that are predominant in Hawkesbury Sandstone landforms.
- Open campsites usually represented by the presence of durable materials such as flaked and ground stone artefacts.
- Occasional scarred and (rarer) carved trees.
- Some stone arrangements, waterholes, burials, and mythological sites reported to have been present in the local Sydney landscape over time. Details for many of these types of sites are however often scant in the DECC AHIMS Sites Register.
- A number of post-Contact historical campsites that are documented to occur in and around the bays and hinterland of Sydney Harbour and its principal river and creek catchments.

The distribution (and likely survival) of past Aboriginal archaeological cultural evidence in the Sydney region is strongly related to bedrock geology and local topographic features including relative elevation and the presence of drinking water and associated resource zones from which needed food and other raw materials (such as stone and organic items etc) used for tool manufacture and maintenance would have been procured as people's daily needs required.

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As outlined below, the most common site types that occur within the broader Pittwater landscape surrounding the current Elanora study area consist of rock shelters/overhangs containing painted art and occupation deposits (including midden materials), rock engravings, and axe grinding grooves.

A Summary of Aboriginal Occupation of the Greater Sydney Region

Aboriginal people have inhabited the greater Sydney region for at least 20,000 years before present. Dated sheltered occupation sites have been documented to occur in the Blue Mountains and its foothills (see for example Stockton & Holland 1974 and Kohen et al 1984). Two dates ranging from 10,000 to 12,000 years before present have also been reported for an open campsite at Regentville, while a rock shelter on Darling Mills Creek at West Pennant Hills that has revealed a date of a little over 10,000 years for first occupation. A number of open campsites investigated in recent years in western Sydney have also revealed dates ranging from between approximately 4,600 and 6,000 years before present.

The earliest dated coastal sites are located at Burrill Lake that shows evidence for first occupation approximately 20,000 years ago (see Lampert 1971), and at Bass Point which is dated to some 17,000 years ago (see Bowdler 1970). Both of these sites would have been occupied at a time when the sea level was much lower and the present coastline would have formed part of an inland environment drained by a series of rivers and streams. There are no other coastal Aboriginal sites of comparable age known at present.

Two further sites dated to around 7,000–8,000 years before present that consist of a sheltered occupation site at Curracurrang and an open campsite (containing a cooking hearth) at the Prince of Wales Hospital in Randwick provide indications about how people may have lived around the time of sea level fluctuations and subsequent stabilisation along the eastern sea-board of New South Wales during this period (see for example Attenbrow 2002).

The majority of Aboriginal archaeological sites recorded in the greater Sydney region are however dated to within the last 2,500 to 3,000 years. Available evidence suggests that the early occupation of the Sydney region was not intensive nor included large groups of people, and that around 5,000-6,000 years ago (when the sea levels stabilized at the present levels) more intensive use of the landscape by Aboriginal people subsequently began. Many open sites situated away from the coast appear likely to have been first occupied in the last 1,500 years before Contact.

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Our understanding of how and when Aboriginal people occupied and used the Sydney landscape in the past is largely based upon changes that have been observed in the composition of stone tool assemblages and the use of certain types of stone materials used for tool manufacture that are apparent from the analysis of excavated archaeological assemblages undertaken in recent decades.⁸

The most widely used terminology for the archaeological phases within what is currently known as the *Eastern Regional Sequence* are the *Capertian*, and the *Early*, *Middle* and *Late Bondaian*. This sequence is still being refined and continues to be clarified by ongoing archaeological work. The sequence is generally accepted and is regularly applied throughout most of the eastern sea-board of Australia.

- The *Capertian* stone tool phase appears to have been essentially composed of large and quite heavy stone artefacts fashioned from fine grained siliceous cherts and silcrete materials. Tool types included uni-face pebble tools, core tools, denticulate stone saws, scrapers, hammer-stones, some bipolar cores and flakes, and burins.
- The change from the *Capertian* to the *Bondaian* appears to have taken place some time after 5,000 years before present, and is defined by a noticeable shift in stone tool size, raw material use, and in the range of raw materials utilised by people for subsequent tool production. Features of the *Capertian* phase appear to have continued in many areas on the east coast of Australia, but backed and edge ground implements appear to have been progressively introduced and widely used over this time period.
- The three phases which are recognised as belonging to the *Bondaian* sequence are largely based on the timing of the introduction, and subsequent decline, of backed stone implements, as well as the increased use of bi-polar flaking techniques. Other technological innovations which are evident during the *Bondaian* period include the introduction of ground edge implements (around 4,000 years before present), and the widespread use of shell fish hooks for fishing during the last 1,000 years. The three *Bondaian* phases are summarised below.

⁸ Over the 20,000 years of Aboriginal occupation of the region, and in particular the last 5,000 to 8,000 years, various temporal markers have been established in an attempt to distinguish the more significant changes in tool types and tool kit composition over time.

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- The *Early Bondaian* phase (from approximately 5,000 years ago to approximately 2,800 years ago) appears to have been dominated by the use of fine grained siliceous cherts and silcrete materials. While the use of the larger and heavier stone implements characterising the earlier *Capertian* period seems to have persisted, archaeological evidence suggests backed and edge ground implements were widely introduced and used over time.
- The *Middle Bondaian* phase (from approximately 2,800 years ago to approximately 1,600 years ago) appears to have been dominated by the use of fine grained siliceous cherts and silcrete materials and the manufacture and use of smaller backed implements. This phase is seemingly characterised by the increased manufacture of micro-blades such as Bondi Points and bi-polar artefacts, and the use of quartz as a ready source of a raw material for the production of flaked stone implements.
- The *Late Bondaian* phase (last 1,600 years) appears to have been dominated by the increased use of quartz (with the use of other raw materials of stone), common manufacture and use of edge ground implements, and the use of bone and shell implements (including shell fish-hooks) at some investigated Aboriginal archaeological sites.

Local Aboriginal Archaeological Context

AHIMS Aboriginal Sites Register Search

Background research into Aboriginal archaeological and cultural heritage investigations previously completed within the local landscape surrounding the Elanora Conference Centre study area was undertaken prior to the commencement of the current field survey and assessment program. Sources accessed included the *NSW Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS) Aboriginal Sites Register* maintained by the DECC (AHIMS Search #24510 for a block of land surrounding the study area measuring approximately 3km by 3km), the *DECC Catalogue of Archaeological Reports*, and other secondary sources.⁹ This research revealed the following:

- A total of twenty-four (24) Aboriginal archaeological sites have previously been recorded to occur within the site search parameters.

⁹ The search parameters were E339000-342000 and N6269000-6272000.

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- These sites comprise eighteen (18) rock engravings, two (2) rock shelters with occupation deposit, two (2) axe grinding grooves, one (1) rock shelter with art and occupation deposit, and one (1) rock shelter with art.
- The majority of the sites identified within the current search parameters occur to the west and north of the study area.
- The AHIMS search indicates no Aboriginal archaeological sites (or any specific areas of potential sensitivity) have been previously registered to occur within the boundaries of the parcels of land surrounding the Elanora Conference Centre (Areas 1 to 4) that are the subject of this report.
- The closest Aboriginal archaeological sites previously recorded relative to the current study area consist of a number of rock engravings that occur approximately 0.5km to 1km to the north-west of the study area within the vicinity of McLean Street and Powder Works Road.

An Aboriginal Archaeological Site Prediction for the Elanora Conference Centre Lands

Rationale

Predictive models of Aboriginal archaeological site location attempt to identify areas of relative archaeological/cultural heritage sensitivity (high, moderate and low etc) as a tool that can be used for the planning and management of known Aboriginal sites and places of potential sensitivity within future development and/or land-use modification circumstances.

These models are generally based upon information including the types of landscape units contained within a study area, the results of previous Aboriginal archaeological and cultural heritage investigations undertaken in the surrounding landscape, the distribution of previously recorded sites along with their known nature, integrity, and potential composition, and upon an understanding of traditional Aboriginal land-use patterns (where possible) as guided by contemporary Aboriginal communities.

Site Prediction

The following predictive model for the Elanora Conference Centre lands was prepared prior to the commencement of the current site inspection and assessment program. Based upon information compiled within the *NSW DECC AHIMS Sites Register*, and the background data for local

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archaeological contexts reviewed above, the types of sites that were expected to occur/survive within the study area prior to the field inspection (as detailed in **Section 4.0**) were outlined.

- I *Rock Engravings*: The distribution of engraved sites relates to the occurrence of suitable rock outcrops common in sandstone formations that were used by Aboriginal people in the past for the creation of engraved images. A considerable number of engraving sites are known to occur in the local Elanora Heights region and its surrounding suburbs. Engravings can occur in groups with numerous depictions of animals, human figures, possible spiritual motifs, and other images of equipment such as shields etc, or single depictions, that generally are found to occur on extensive level sandstone platforms along with smaller ledges and rock exposures.

Many engraving sites in Sydney's north remain to be located at present because of the prevalence of extensive areas of dense bush-land that occur in the region (such as contained within Ku-ring-gai Chase and Garigal National Parks for example). These conditions can often inhibit the detection of these sites because the nature of vegetation cover over previously exposed sandstone surfaces is known to change considerably over relatively short periods of time as a result of a variety of processes that can serve to obscure sandstone formations with the potential to contain engraved depictions. Furthermore, many of these bush-land areas have not been subject to systematic archaeological survey to date.

- II *Rock Shelters with Art and/or Deposit*: These sites will in most cases occur within sandstone overhangs of a size suitable for sheltered occupation or use by people in the past during perhaps inclement weather. Painted and stencilled art is generally observed upon suitable surfaces of the roof or walls of a shelter/cave (although it may be obscured by patination etc), whilst 'sub-floor' occupation deposits may be covered by archaeologically sterile materials associated with the fall of sandy roof materials and ongoing deposit accumulation over time as a result of slope-wash and other colluvial soil-creep actions.
- III *Axe Grinding Grooves*: These are grooves which resulted from the manufacture and/or maintenance of the working edge of some stone tools such as axe/hatchet heads by people in the past. They may be found where suitable sandstone is exposed in, or adjacent to, creeks or on elevated platforms where wet-grinding techniques are possible adjacent to natural rock holes and shallow 'basins'.

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As for rock engravings, axe/hatchet grinding grooves may occur in large 'clusters' that serves to facilitate their ready recognition, or may conversely comprise isolated items that are often difficult to detect within certain light conditions.

- IV *Open Camp Sites:* These sites are likely to occur on dry and relatively flat landforms along or adjacent to both major and minor watercourses, along with foreshore zones. However, repeatedly or continuously occupied sites are more likely to be located on elevated ground situated at principal creek confluences in the local landscape (such as within the catchments of Mullet Creek to the north of the study area, and Deep Creek to the south).

Surface scatters of flaked stone artefacts (or potentially durable food remains such as animal and fish bone or shell) may be the result of mobile hunting activities, while single or low density occurrences might relate to tool loss, tool maintenance activities or abandonment. These types of sites are often buried in alluvial or colluvial deposits and only become visible when subsurface sediments are exposed by erosion or disturbance. Relatively few open camp sites have been recorded at present within the sandstone country that typifies the Elanora Heights study area.

- V *Isolated Artefacts:* These items occur without any associated evidence for prehistoric activity or occupation. Isolated finds can occur anywhere in the landscape and may represent the random loss, deliberate discard or abandonment of artefacts, or the remains of dispersed artefact scatters. Manuports are items consisting of raw materials of stone that do not naturally occur within the soil profiles of a given region. Transported onto a site by Aboriginal people from sources elsewhere, these items will have subsequently been discarded before use as flaked or ground stone tools. There is some chance that isolated artefacts may occur within the study area, although they are likely to be extremely difficult to detect.

- VI *Scarred Trees:* These sites are the result of bark or wood removal to make shields, shelter, canoes containers or carving designs into the exposed wood. These sites have rarely survived early timber clearance, bush fires and timber cutting. The definite ascription of scarring on a tree to an Aboriginal origin is not always possible. Europeans often removed bark for roofing material and stock watering troughs. Other scars may be the result of surveyor and property owner blazes, lightning strikes or cockatoo pecking. Unless the tree is at least 100 years old the scarring is unlikely to have an Aboriginal origin.

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4.0 November 2008 Preliminary Site Inspection

Introduction

The following section of this report summarises the results of the preliminary site inspection of the Elanora Conference Centre study area undertaken by DSCA on the 27th of November 2008. The field survey was undertaken by Dominic Steele and Adrian Dreyer (in association with representatives of *Don Fox Planning* and Council staff), and was completed in fine weather conditions.

In general terms, ground visibility was found to be highly limited across the majority of each of the parcels of land currently being considered for future rezoning and subdivision due to the nature of their dense bush-land setting.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the illustrations and discussion provided below are considered to be sufficient to underpin at this time the conclusions and recommendations that are presented here to inform the current proposal.

Site Inspection and Recording Methods

The preliminary site inspection reported here was undertaken according to generally accepted field and reporting methods and included the following:

- The documentation of observations pertinent to the current assessment of potential Aboriginal archaeological potential sensitivity relative to the proposal on the basis of an evaluation of landform, topography, vegetation cover, ground exposures/visibility, and extent of possible disturbance.
- The creation of a photographic catalogue to record the field work that was undertaken using a Nikon D-100 digital camera utilising a range of lenses (28mm to 105mm with 35mm lens equivalent of 42mm to 157.5mm) and sensor sizes as needs dictated.¹¹

¹⁰ The objective of the targeted site inspection reported here was to gain a familiarity of the landscape, develop an understanding of the likely nature and scope of future activities proposed for Areas 1 to 4, and to establish the potential need for more comprehensive field survey to be undertaken in the future relative to the rezoning and subdivision proposal.

¹¹ Selections of these photographs are presented here to illustrate the nature and context of the lands under consideration. Further images and descriptions have also been compiled as part of the site records for the current study.

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- The use of a Magellan Explorist 100 handheld GPS as required to accurately plot any identified Aboriginal archaeological sites/areas of potential sensitivity, and other noteworthy features.
- The use of current aerial photographs, available rezoning and subdivision concept plans, site sketch plans, and a 1:25,000 topographic map in order to correlate the field observations that are outlined below.

Field Observations

Two indicative views of the elevated sandstone topography fringing the northern and eastern sides of the main conference centre facilities are provided by **Figures 4.1** and **4.2**. These illustrations overlook the steep landscape that lead down to Area 1. The upper sandstone platforms are largely obscured by a combination of maintained lawn areas, native grasses and shrubs, and leaf litter. No rock engravings or axe grinding grooves were observed to occur on the surfaces of the sandstone exposures that occur within this portion of the conference centre complex.

The steeply sloping topography below this upper sandstone cliff-line that leads down to Area 1 and Mullet Creek is characterised by a series of sandstone benches, broken scarps, and jumbled rock outcrops that are largely obscured by a mix of tree canopy species and an understory of native shrubs and grasses. A detailed inspection of Area 1 was not considered warranted at this time in so far as the land is to be retained in its current state and is proposed to be rezoned for conservation purposes. As outlined in following sections of this report, should any future modification of Area 1 be proposed, the locality will require more detailed Aboriginal archaeological inspection and evaluation.

Indicative views of the nature of the landscape prevalent in the eastern and western portions of Area 2 are illustrated in **Figures 4.3** and **4.4** respectively. The types of sandstone exposures that typify the eastern half of Area 2 are indicated in the foreground of **Figure 4.3**. These comprise in the main of largely obscured sandstone benches and jumbled broken scarp and boulder materials supporting a range of immature trees and understory vegetation. More extensive rock outcrops were observed further to the west of Area 2 as illustrated in **Figure 4.4**. These consist of larger formations, many of which have broken and fallen away over time along joint/fault lines and form a series of benches down the sloping landform present in this portion of the study area.

No sandstone overhangs of suitable size with the potential to contain Aboriginal archaeological deposits or art were identified during the site inspection. Likewise, the majority of the exposed rock

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surfaces were found to be irregular and corrugated in nature, often highly weathered, and to contain in places high occurrences of quartz pebbling suggesting their use by people in the past for the creation of engraved images is unlikely when compared to the larger, flatter, and smoother sandstone platforms that occur in and around the principal facilities of the conference centre complex that occupies the principal cliff-line above.

Mindful that Area 2 consists of a relatively rugged and irregular parcel of land that is situated between the elevated crest above to the south and some distance away from the corridor of Mullet Creek to the north below that are likely to have represented far more attractive campsite contexts to Aboriginal people in the past, it is considered highly unlikely that as yet any undetected archaeological features or deposits of significance will be located in this portion of the study area.

The prevalent landforms and vegetation cover that dominate the north-eastern portion of Area 3 is characterised by a relatively prominent and elevated sandstone bench and lower scarp that is bisected by a section of Mullet Creek that originates to the north of Area 2 within the former Heydon Estate conservation lands and runs through Area 3 in a north-east to south-westerly direction towards lower topography situated in this part of the study area.

Although not illustrated here, the targeted inspection of the exposed upper surfaces of the shelving sandstone platforms in this locality revealed no evidence for past Aboriginal modification in the form of rock engravings or axe grinding grooves. Likewise, an inspection of the irregular and generally small roof, wall, and sloping floor areas present along this rock bench/scarp revealed no evidence for painted art of occupation deposit. This portion of Area 3 is however nevertheless densely vegetated at present which has obscured many of these sandstone features.

As outlined in following sections of this report, should any future modification of this portion of Area 3 be proposed by the Church to construct new outdoor recreational equipment associated with low impact operations of the conference centre, it is suggested that design proposals would require a combination of more detailed Aboriginal community evaluation and site inspection.

A relatively small sandstone overhang and 'scenic waterfall' feature on Mullet Creek (that is accessed by an uneven bush-track leading from the conference centre) is situated in the lower-lying topography present in the south-west portion of Area 3 as illustrated in **Figure 4.5**. A number of similar rock shelters such as these that are located adjacent to comparable watercourses in the local landscape have been found in the past to contain Aboriginal occupation deposits and/or painted art images.

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A careful inspection of the roof and walls of this sandstone feature revealed no evidence for Aboriginal art. Likewise, no occupation deposits were observed to occur beneath the roof of the shelter. It is likely that the limited protection provided by the height and depth of the overhang and the extensive water-flow over the roof of the shelter observed at the time of the site inspection would have made the locality an unattractive focus for at least sustained use by Aboriginal people in the past. It is however recognised that the ponding of areas of Mullet Creek in this locality (see below), along with locations further to the west and north (no doubt exacerbated by adjacent residential development), may well have affected the original water-flow of this watercourse.

An indicative view of the type of ponding along Mullet Creek (and the fringing vegetation) currently in evidence in this portion of the study area is provided by **Figure 4.6**. This image is looking immediately to the north (and below) the sandstone overhang illustrated in **Figure 4.5**. The flat sandstone surfaces adjacent to the current water levels of the creek channel illustrated in the foreground of this photograph are typical of where axe grinding grooves have often been identified in the local landscape in the past. Detailed inspection of the locality and surrounding rock exposures in this portion of Area 3 did not identify any grinding grooves or engravings.

The nature of the prevalent vegetation cover and sandstone exposures evident in the generally flat to undulating landscape within Area 4 is illustrated in **Figures 4.7** and **4.8**. These images present views of the relationship of existing landscaped areas, introduced plantings, and native bush-land that fringe residential properties along Wesley Street that occur along the section of Mullet Creek in this locality. No evidence for past Aboriginal occupation or use of this portion of the watercourse was identified during the November 2008 site inspection.

A targeted inspection of the Area 4 parcel of land to the north of the creek-line revealed the presence of a number of relatively cleared and flat areas within the approximate centre of the locality that are surrounded in the main by intact bush-land to the north and east that display similar characteristics to those previously described for the southern half of Area 3. No evidence for past Aboriginal occupation or use of this portion of Area 3 was identified during the current preliminary inspection of the locality.

Area 4 is to be preserved for environmental protection and conservation purposes. Should any future modification of Area 4 be proposed it is suggested that design proposals would require more detailed site inspection and evaluation beyond the scope of the current preliminary assessment.

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Summary

The preliminary November 2008 site inspection of the Elanora Conference Centre study area reported here revealed the following.

- Ground visibility was highly limited across the majority of each of the four parcels of land inspected (Areas 1 to 4) due to the nature of their respective dense bush-land settings.
- The poor visibility conditions therefore inhibited the possible detection of potential Aboriginal archaeological sites within the context and framework of the current preliminary heritage assessment study.
- The majority of the lands inspected consist largely of rugged and steep sloping bush-land topographies that are situated between the prominent sandstone crest/cliff-line currently occupied by the principal facilities of conference centre complex above, and sections of the lower corridor of Mullet Creek and its associated bush-land situated below.
- No previously recorded Aboriginal archaeological sites or items (such as rock engravings, axe grinding grooves, scarred trees, occupation deposits or stone tools etc) were located on the subject lands during the course of the current field inspection.
- It appears that most of the four areas inspected would not have represented notably attractive campsite locations to people in the past as they moved through the local landscape when compared to the vantage points provided by the elevated ridge above, and the resource zones potentially offered along the lower watercourse below.
- It would as a result be reasonable to conclude therefore unlikely that as yet any unknown archaeological features or deposits of significance will be located (or impacted upon) in many portions of the study area that are the subject of this report relative to the current rezoning and subdivision proposal.

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Figure 4.1: An indicative view of the steep landscape overlooking Area 1 (facing north-east).



Figure 4.2: An indicative view of the steep landscape overlooking Area 1 (facing east).

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Figure 4.3: An indicative view of the nature of the eastern part of Area 2 (facing north).



Figure 4.4: A view of sandstone exposures present in the western part of Area 2 (facing north).

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Figure 4.5: A view of a sandstone overhang in the southern part of Area 3 (facing south).



Figure 4.6: An indicative view of a section of Mullet Creek in Area 3 (facing north).

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Figure 4.7: An indicative view of the vegetation cover prevalent in Areas 3 and 4 (facing north).



Figure 4.8: An indicative view of the south-eastern part of Area 4 (facing north-east).

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5.0 Conclusions

Potential Impacts of the Elanora Heights Conference Centre Proposal

The proposed rezoning and subdivision of the four parcels of land (Areas 1 to 4) situated adjacent to the Elanora Conference Centre (as illustrated in **Figure 1.4**) that is presently being finalised by Council in partnership with the *Uniting Church* will in summary entail the following:

- **Area 1** is to be retained in its current state and is proposed to be rezoned by Council for conservation purposes.
- **Area 2** is proposed to be transferred to the Church and rezoned for continuing use for low impact operations associated with the conference centre.
- **Area 3** is proposed to be rezoned and classified as operational land and will be transferred to Council ownership and leased back to the Church. The Church's use of Area 3 may include low impact recreational activities, the maintenance of existing outdoor recreational equipment, and the construction of new recreational equipment such as rope swings and high wire courses.
- **Area 4** comprises a parcel of land that is to be preserved for environmental protection and conservation purposes.

Aboriginal Archaeological & Cultural Heritage Impact Statement

The background Aboriginal archaeological and cultural heritage research, preliminary site inspection, and analysis and assessment of the Elanora Conference Centre lands undertaken for the current study indicate that:

- No *previously* documented Aboriginal archaeological sites or 'objects' are known to occur within the boundaries of the Area 1 to 4 lands that are proposed for rezoning and subdivision and/or in immediately adjacent areas.
- No *specific* areas of *Potential Aboriginal Archaeological or Cultural Heritage Sensitivity* relative to the current proposal have been identified in the course of preparing this report. This assessment is based upon the archaeological conclusions presented in previous sections of this document, and from a consideration of the advice provided by the *Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council* (MLALC) as appended.

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- Continued use by the conference centre of Area 2 and the potential use of Area 3 for low impact outdoor recreational purposes are unlikely to have an adverse effect upon any as yet undetected Aboriginal archaeological sites or areas of possible heritage sensitivity. Any future works proposed for these localities will be guided by a *Plan of Management* (Pom) to be prepared by Council that should include ongoing protection and management of potential Aboriginal cultural heritage matters.
- Council propose to maintain conserve Area 1 as it currently exists, and no options for Area 4 are proposed at this time.

Evaluation

On the basis of the above considerations, it is concluded that the current rezoning and subdivision proposal for the Elanora Conference Centre lands is unlikely to have an adverse impact upon the Aboriginal archaeological and cultural heritage values of the place and that no '*clear or obvious*' Aboriginal heritage constraints are apparent at this time for the proposal proceeding as planned subject to the implementation of the management recommendations provided below.

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6.0 Management Recommendations

Basis for Recommendations

The four parcels of land (Areas 1 to 4) situated adjacent to the Elanora Conference in Elanora Heights that are the subject of this report contain no currently identified Aboriginal sites or objects as recorded with the DECC AHIMS Sites Register, or any specific areas of potential Aboriginal archaeological or cultural heritage sensitivity as evaluated in partnership with the *Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council* in the course of preparing this report. As a result, the proposal is assessed to unlikely to have an adverse impact upon the Aboriginal cultural heritage values of the place.

It is therefore concluded that there are no apparent Aboriginal archaeological or cultural heritage constraints for the proposal proceeding at this time subject to the consideration of the following conditions:

- Recognition of the legal requirements and automatic statutory protection provided to Aboriginal 'objects' and 'places' under the terms of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act of 1974*, where it is an offence to knowingly damage, deface or destroy Aboriginal sites or relics without the prior consent of the Director General of the *National Parks and Wildlife Service* (NPWS) that now comprises an administration branch of the *Department of Environment and Climate Change* (DECC).
- Recognition of the views and advice provided by the *Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council* (MLALC) as outlined within their appended correspondence.

Recommendations

- I Based on the conclusion that the proposed Elanora Conference Centre rezoning and subdivision project will not directly impact upon any *identified* Aboriginal archaeological sites or objects, and also that the *potential* for undetected Aboriginal archaeological items to occur within the majority of the lands that may be affected by future uses is assessed to be *low*, it is therefore recommended that there are no *obvious* Aboriginal archaeological or cultural heritage constraints to the proposal proceeding as intended and that no further Aboriginal cultural heritage input is warranted at this time.
- II However, it is recommended that the *Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council* (MLALC) be provided the opportunity to review and comment on any future land modification plans

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proposed for Areas 2 and 3 that may be associated with the augmentation of existing conference centre outdoor recreational features at such time when they may be confirmed.

- III It is further recommended that the MLALC be provided the opportunity to inspect any future works in Areas 2 and 3 that may result in the removal of existing vegetation that may expose previously buried soils or sandstone materials should this organisation express an interest in this course of action to ensure no as yet documented Aboriginal archaeological sites or objects are disturbed/destroyed by these activities.
- IV Finally, it is recommended that the (MLALC) be provided the opportunity to review and comment on any future land modification plans that may be proposed for Areas 1 and 4 at a preliminary planning stage, and undertake more comprehensive field inspections of the localities as deemed appropriate in consultation with Council.
- V Two copies of this report should be forwarded to:

The Manager
Planning and Heritage Section – Metropolitan Region
Central Aboriginal Heritage Unit
NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change
Level 7, 79 George Street
Parramatta, NSW, 2150
- VI The Chairperson

Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council
PO Box 1103
Strawberry Hills, NSW, 2012

Dominic Steele Consulting Archaeology

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Preliminary Aboriginal Archaeological & Cultural Heritage Assessment

Elanora Conference Centre, Elanora Heights, NSW

April 2009

7.0 References

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Attachments

Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council Correspondence

Preliminary Aboriginal Archaeological & Cultural Heritage Assessment

Elanora Conference Centre, Elanora Heights, NSW

April 2009



METROPOLITAN LOCAL ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL

PO Box 1103 Strawberry Hills NSW 2012

Telephone: (02) 9267 2985 Fax: (02) 9267 8564

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PH: 83349006
FAX: 83345723

29 January 2009

Ms Ellen Robertshaw
Senior Town Planner
Don Fox Planning
11 Dartford Road
Thornleigh, NSW, 2120

Re: Preliminary Aboriginal Archaeological & Cultural Heritage Assessment Report

Elanora Conference Centre, Elanora Heights, NSW

Dear Ms Robertshaw,

We would like to confirm that the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council (MLALC) has reviewed the *Preliminary Aboriginal & Cultural Heritage Assessment Report* prepared by *Dominic Steele Consulting Archaeology* (DSCA) to inform a combined rezoning and subdivision proposal currently being finalised by *Pittwater Council* for four parcels of land located adjacent to the Elanora Conference Centre in Elanora Heights.

It is our understanding that the objectives of the proposed rezoning and subdivision of the subject lands (termed Areas 1 to 4 in the DSCA report) are to implement a satisfactory transfer of these parcels between Council and the *Uniting Church* as part of Council's ongoing commitment to the conservation of environmentally sensitive areas within the broader Warriewood-Ingleside Escarpment.

It is our further understanding that while no confirmed development plans are in place for these lands at present, there is the potential for the upgrade of existing outdoor recreational equipment associated with the current low impact operations of the conference centre in Area 2/3, and that Area 4 may be considered suitable for development in the future although Council have indicated an interest in preserving this area for community conservation purposes.

On the basis of our review of the DSCA report, we agree that no *previously documented* Aboriginal cultural heritage sites or any *specific* areas of potential Aboriginal cultural heritage sensitivity are to our knowledge known to occur within the lands that are the subject of the current rezoning and subdivision proposal.

As a result, and given the likely low impacts that may be associated with potential future uses of the lands to the north, west, and east of the conference centre, the MLALC consider that it is unlikely at this time that the Elanora Conference Centre proposal will have an adverse impact upon any potential Aboriginal cultural heritage sites/objects that may presently remain undetected in Areas 1 to 4.

The MLALC therefore support the findings, conclusions and recommendations the DSCA report provides and advise that there are no obvious Aboriginal cultural heritage reasons that are apparent at this time to inhibit the proposal proceeding as intended, subject to the consideration of the management recommendations detailed in the 2009 DSCA heritage assessment report.

Yours Sincerely,

Mr Allen Madden
Senior Cultural & Education Officer
Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council

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