Northern Rivers Flood Recovery—Richmond River High Campus Redevelopment

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report (ACHAR)

Draft Report prepared for Department of Education, July 2025

GML HERITAGE

Acknowledgement of Country

We respect and acknowledge Widjabul Wia-bal, their lands and waterways, their rich cultural heritage and their deep connection to Country, and we acknowledge their Elders past and present. We are committed to truth-telling and to engaging with Widjabul Wia-bal to support the protection of their culture and heritage. We strongly advocate social and cultural justice and support the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

Cultural warning

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this report may contain images or names of First Nations people who have passed away.

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Report register

The following report register documents the development of this report, in accordance with the GML Heritage Pty Ltd (GML) Quality Management System.

Job No.	Issue No.	Notes/description	Issue date
24-0233	1	Draft Report	18 November 2024
24-0233	2	Draft Report (for WWGAC Review)	27 November 2024
24-0233	3	Final Report	14 January 2025
24-0233C	4	Revised Draft Report (Change to Project Scope)	23 June 2025
24-0233C	5	Revised Draft Report	22 July 2025

Quality assurance

The report has been reviewed and approved for issue in accordance with the GML quality assurance policy and procedures.

It aligns with best-practice heritage conservation and management, *The Burra Charter: the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, 2013* and heritage and environmental legislation and guidelines relevant to the subject place.

Indigenous cultural and intellectual property

We acknowledge and respect the inherent rights and interests of Widjabul Wia-bal in Indigenous cultural and intellectual property. We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the right to be acknowledged and attributed for their contribution to knowledge but also respect their rights to confidentiality. We recognise our ongoing obligations to respect, protect and uphold the continuation of Widjabul Wia-bal rights in the materials contributed as part of this project.

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Cover image

Overview photo of study area taken from the northwest corner looking east towards Dunoon Road. (Source: GML Heritage)

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Executive summary

Department of Education (DoE) engaged GML Heritage Pty Ltd (GML) to prepare an Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment report (ACHAR) for the Richmond River High Campus (RRHC) project. This report will form part of the environmental assessment for the study area prepared under Part 5 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (NSW).

This report aims to:

- identify, assess and report on Aboriginal heritage values within the study area;
- involve the Aboriginal community in decisions with respect to its heritage;
- determine how the proposed development project could harm these values; and
- establish the mechanism for conservation and mitigation of harm to these values.

This ACHAR should be read in conjunction with the Aboriginal archaeological technical report (ATR; Appendix A), which details the archaeological fieldwork, scientific assessment, impact assessment and mitigation and management recommendations for the project.

The work undertaken to inform this ACHAR has identified Aboriginal social/cultural, historical, scientific and aesthetic values associated with the study area. These values are associated with a number of stone artefact sites (cultural lithics or Aboriginal objects) and ceremonial site. Widjabul Wia-bal identified numerous local values, places and associations of cultural importance. Identification of these values was combined with the need for archaeological test excavation within portions of the study area. The archaeological sampling process took into account the cultural needs of Widjabul Wia-bal, and also future works for geo-technical and contamination sampling.

The proposed activity is for construction of new school facilities to replace the extant RRHC, which was damaged during the 2022 flooding. The new campus will include school buildings, sports facilities, roads, services, and associated landscaping works including a stormwater basin and agricultural activities. The proposed works are largely limited to the low-lying floodplain present across the eastern half of the study area.

[redacted]

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Acronyms and definitions

Acronyms	Definitions
ACHAR	Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment report
AHIMS	Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System
AHIP	Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permit
ATR	archaeological technical report
Cth	Commonwealth
DoE	Department of Education
EPA Act	*Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (NSW)
GML	GML Heritage Pty Ltd
ICIP	Indigenous cultural and intellectual property
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
ILUA	Indigenous Land Use Agreement
LGA	local government area
NLP	North Lismore Plateau
NPW Act	*National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NSW)
NSW	New South Wales
OEH	Office of Environment and Heritage
PAD	Potential Archaeological Deposit
RAP	Registered Aboriginal Party
RRHC	Richmond River High Campus
TU	test unit
WWGAC	Widjabul Wia-bal Gurrumbil Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC (ICN 9856)

1 Introduction to the project

1 Introduction to the project

This Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment report (ACHAR) has been prepared to support a Review of Environmental Factors (REF) for the rebuild of Richmond River High Campus (the activity). The REF has been prepared to support an approval for the RRHC development under Section 68 of the NSW Reconstruction Authority Act 2022 (RA Act).

The purpose of the REF is to assess the potential environmental impacts of the activity prescribed by *State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021* (T&I SEPP) as "development permitted without consent" on land carried out by or on behalf of a public authority under Part 5 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act). The activity will be carried out at Dunoon Road, North Lismore, also known as 163 and 170 Alexandra Parade, North Lismore (the site).

The purpose of this report is to identify whether the study area possesses or has the potential to possess Aboriginal heritage archaeological sites, places, objects, landscapes and/or values, in accordance with Heritage NSW guidelines for an Aboriginal heritage assessment (listed below). This report should be read in conjunction with the Archaeological Technical Report (ATR) (Appendix A). The ATR details the results of a program of archaeological test excavation carried out for the project and the scientific significance assessment.

This report provides a significance assessment of the identified archaeological Aboriginal sites, places, landscapes and/or other values. An impact assessment and management recommendations are provided to assist DoE with its future responsibilities for the management of Aboriginal cultural heritage within the study area.

1.1 The study area

The site is located at Dunoon Road, North Lismore, also known as 163 and 170 Alexandra Parade, North Lismore (Figure 1.1). The site comprises of 3 separate lots, located to the north of Alexandra Parade, with Dunoon Road running parallel to the eastern boundary of the site (Figure 1.2).

The site is legally described as:

- Lot 1 DP 539012;
- Lot 2 DP 539012; and
- Lot 1 DP 376007.

The site area is approximately 33.53 hectares. The proposed activity will be undertaken mainly within the south-eastern portion of the site.

This ACHAR also assesses portions of the Dunoon Road and Alexandra Parade road corridors.

The site is outlined in Figure 1.1 and Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.1 Location of the study area in NSW. (Source: Google Earth with GML overlay)

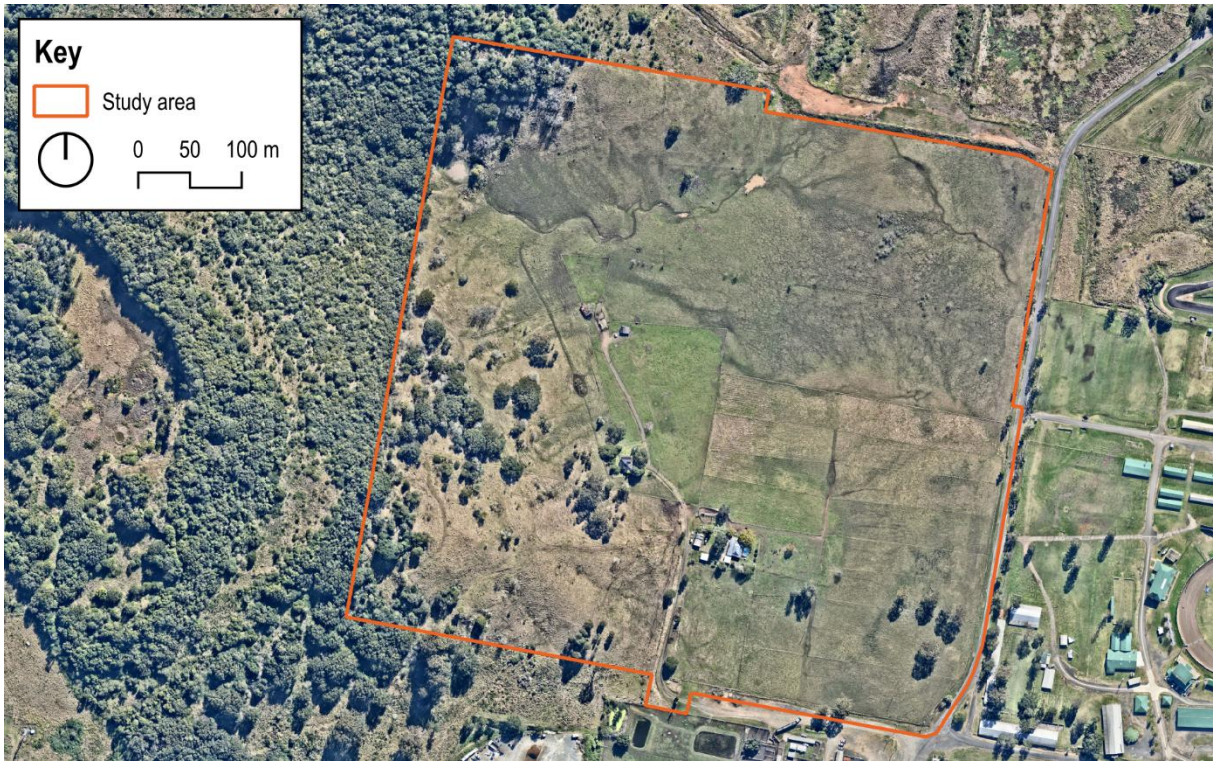

Figure 1.2 Location of the study area, Lots 1 and 2/DP 539012 and Lot 1/DP 376007. (Source: Nearmap with GML overlay)

1.2 Native title holders

Widjabul Wia-bal of the Bundjalung Nation are the recognised native title holders of the wider region, which includes the study area. While the study area land is not subject to native title, the rights of the native title holders means that modified processes for consultation and engagement are applicable under the National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2019.

1.3 Objectives of this Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment

Our objectives for the assessment were to:

- commence a process of collaborative consultation and engagement Widjabul Wia-bal of the Bundjalung Nation, who hold native title over the region including the study area;
- consult with Widjabul Wia-bal community members who can speak for Country;
- understand and record Aboriginal heritage places and values, and determine whether these are part of a larger Aboriginal cultural landscape and/or Aboriginal traditions;

- provide a culturally safe mechanism for the Widjabul Wia-bal people to identify their values, which may not necessarily be recorded as part of this ACHAR;
- understand and maintain Indigenous cultural and intellectual property (ICIP) throughout the project;
- involve the local Aboriginal community in the cultural heritage values assessment process and determine best practice options for the future management of the identified Aboriginal cultural heritage;
- determine how the proposed project may impact the identified Aboriginal cultural heritage values, aiming to minimise impacts through sensible and pragmatic site and land management; and
- provide clear recommendations for the conservation of Aboriginal heritage values and relevant impact mitigation strategies that benefit both Aboriginal cultural heritage and the proponent.

1.4 Statutory context

In NSW, Aboriginal heritage is principally protected under two Acts:

- the NPW Act; and
- the EPA Act.

1.4.1 National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974

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

The NPW Act defines an Aboriginal object as:

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

The protection provided to Aboriginal objects and places applies irrespective of the level of their significance or issues of land tenure. Sites of traditional significance that do not necessarily contain material remains may be gazetted as 'Aboriginal Places' and thereby be protected under the NPW Act. However, areas are only gazetted if the Minister is satisfied that sufficient evidence exists to demonstrate that the location was and/or is of special significance to Aboriginal culture.

A strict liability offence applies for harm to or desecration of an Aboriginal object or declared Aboriginal Place.[1] The definition of 'harm' includes destroying, defacing, damaging or moving an Aboriginal object or declared Aboriginal Place. The strict liability offence of harming Aboriginal objects has a number of defences. The two defences relevant to the proposed activity are the statutory defence of due diligence through complying with an adopted industry code or compliance with the conditions of an AHIP.

The potential for Aboriginal objects, sites, places and/or values within the study area, and for the proposed activity to impact such objects, has been assessed and the results are presented in this report.

1.4.2 Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979

The EPA Act provides a statutory framework for the determination of development proposals. It provides for the identification, protection and management of heritage items through inclusion in schedules to planning instruments such as Local Environmental Plans or Regional Environmental Plans. Most heritage items in LEPs/REPs are historical sites but Aboriginal objects/places, heritage conservation areas and archaeological items are also listed. The EPA Act requires that appropriate measures be taken for the management of the potential archaeological resource by means consistent with practices and standards adopted in meeting the requirements of the NPW Act.

The study area is in the Lismore City Council LGA and comes under the Lismore Local Environmental Plan 2012. There are no Aboriginal heritage items currently listed within the study area.

1.4.3 Approach to Aboriginal heritage management

In NSW Aboriginal heritage assessment and management is underpinned by several guidelines and policies. Our approach is based on the following guidelines:

- *Guide to Determining and Issuing Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permits* (2009);[2]
- *Operational Policy: Protecting Aboriginal Cultural Heritage* (2009);[3]
- *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Consultation Requirements for Proponents* (2010);[4]
- *Due Diligence Code of Practice for the Protection of Aboriginal Objects in NSW* (2010) (the Due Diligence Code);[5]
- *Code of Practice for Archaeological Investigation of Aboriginal Objects in New South Wales* (2010) (the Code of Practice);[6]
- *Guide to Investigating, Assessing and Reporting on Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in NSW* (2011);[7] and
- *The Burra Charter: the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance 2013* (the Burra Charter).[8]

1.4.4 The Burra Charter process

The Burra Charter process (Article 6) outlines a three-stage process for the assessment and management of heritage. The three stages are:

1 develop an understanding of heritage significance;

2 develop policy that is appropriate to the significance; and

3 undertake management in accordance with the policy.

The Burra Charter's explanations for heritage provide the basis for definitions used in this report. The Burra Charter's Indigenous Practice Note provides further guidance for application of the Burra Charter to Aboriginal heritage. We have used the following definitions:

Article 1.1—Place

Place means a geographically defined area. It may include elements, objects, spaces and views. Place may have tangible and intangible dimensions.[9]

'Place' includes locations that embody spiritual value (such as Dreaming places, sacred landscapes, and stone arrangements), social and historical value (such as massacre sites), as well as scientific value (such as archaeological sites). In fact, one place may be all of these things or may embody all of these values at the same time.[10]

Article 1.2—Cultural Significance

Cultural significance means aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations. Cultural significance is embodied in the place itself, its fabric, setting, use, associations, meanings, records, related places and related objects. Places may have a range of values for different individuals or groups.[11]

Article 1.10—Use

Use means the functions of a place, including the activities and traditional and customary practices that may occur at the place or are dependent on the place.[12]

Article 1.11—Compatible Use

Compatible use means a use which respects the cultural significance of a place. Such a use involves no, or minimal, impact on cultural significance.

Article 8—Setting

Conservation requires the retention of an appropriate setting. This includes retention of the visual and sensory setting, as well as the retention of spiritual and other cultural relationships that contribute to the cultural significance of the place.[13]

> Places of significance to Indigenous people require a holistic approach to 'setting'. 'Setting' may encompass the broadest of experiential factors including a sense of 'intrusion' occasioned when people of the 'wrong' gender, age or level of initiation trespass on defined areas, as well as auditory and visual intrusion.
>
> For some Indigenous peoples, nature and culture are indivisible. The social significance and spiritual significance of a place for Indigenous people may be wholly or partly dependent on the natural environment that the place forms a part of, including aspects such as biodiversity, and totemic and resource species.[14]

Application to the current assessment

To implement the Burra Charter process, we have undertaken the following steps:

Step 1—Understand the place

The first stage for this project was to establish contact with Widjabul Wia-bal. An initial process of consultation was undertaken to build a relationship between GML and the native title holders. Only once this consultation had been undertaken did we proceed with more conventional assessment processes.

The initial discussions involved asking and listening to Widjabul Wia-bal on the cultural values, landscape and connection to the wider place. We proposed a process of investigation into the environment, archaeology, history and local heritage literature. This process culminated in undertaking field survey and further consultation with Widjabul Wia-bal.

The Widjabul Wia-bal identified numerous local values, places and associations of cultural importance. Identification of these values was combined with the need for archaeological test excavation within portions of the study area.

The archaeological sampling process took into account the cultural needs of Widjabul Wia-bal, and also future works for geo-technical and contamination sampling.

Following approval of the project's archaeological test excavation research design, a collaborative process of archaeological sampling was implemented.

This aimed to understand the nature and extent of Aboriginal objects buried within a subsurface context and confirm where geo-technical and contamination sampling could occur without harming known Aboriginal objects.

The outcome of the Step 1 investigations was the development of archaeological and landscape maps and plans that show the known objects, sites, places and values connected to the study area. The approach identified that the study area is part of an Aboriginal cultural landscape, and the study area represents a small zone within this landscape.

Step 2—Assess cultural significance

A preliminary indication of cultural significance considered aesthetic, historic, scientific and social aspects to the study area. This preliminary assessment of value should be used for future assessments, noting both that 'cultural significance may change'[15] and 'tangible heritage should not be emphasised at the expense of intangible heritage'.[16]

Step 3—Identify factors and issues

The results from Steps 1 and 2 were used to identify key future management factors and/or issues. The issues and factors define future needs, opportunities and constraints connected with possible future compatible use.

Step 4—Develop policy

The outcome from Step 3 was applied to develop appropriate management policy, in consultation with the Aboriginal community and in accordance with relevant NSW statutory processes.

1.5 Who undertook the project

This project has been undertaken by the following people. Each person's role and affiliations are detailed.

Table 1.1 Investigators and contributors.

Name	Role	Name	Role
Sophie Jennings	GML Project Director and reviewer	Noel King Jnr	WWGAC fieldwork coordinator
Jacob Kiefel	GML Project Manager, excavation director and author	Aunty Queenie Speeding	WWGAC fieldwork coordinator
Dr Tim Owen	GML Principal, advice through the project, and reviewer	Chris Brown Jnr	WWGAC heritage monitor
Dr Chris Clarkson	Lithics specialist and author	Leon Kelly	WWGAC heritage monitor
Andie Coulson	GML archaeologist	Aunty Lena Logan	WWGAC heritage monitor
Jacob Gwiazdzinski	GML archaeologist	Thurston Moran	WWGAC heritage monitor
Minha Choi	GML archaeologist	Jamahl Roberts Snr	WWGAC heritage monitor

Name	Role	Name	Role
Madeline Gass	GML archaeologist		
Evangeline Kesteven	GML archaeologist		
Miles Robson	GML archaeologist		
Peter Woodley	GML archaeologist		

1.6 Endnotes

[1] Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water 2010, *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NSW), 'Fact sheet 1', September 2010.

[2] Department of Environment and Climate Change, *Guide to Determining and Issuing Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permits,* 2009.

[3] Department of Environment and Climate Change, *Operational Policy: Protecting Aboriginal Cultural Heritage 2009*, Department of Environment and Climate Change (NSW).

[4] Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water NSW, *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Consultation Requirements for Proponents*, Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (NSW), April 2010.

[5] Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water NSW, *Due Diligence Code of Practice for the Protection of Aboriginal Objects in New South Wales*, Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water NSW, Sydney, September 2010.

[6] Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water NSW, *Code of Practice for Archaeological Investigation of Aboriginal Objects in New South Wales*, 2010.

[7] Office of Environment and Heritage NSW, *Guide to Investigating, Assessing and Reporting on Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in NSW,* Office of Environment and Heritage, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Sydney South, April 2011.

[8] Australia ICOMOS Inc, *The Burra Charter: the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance 2013*, Australia ICOMOS Inc, Burwood, VIC.

[9] Australia ICOMOS Inc, *The Burra Charter: the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance 2013*, Australia ICOMOS Inc, Burwood, VIC, Article 1.1.

[10] Australia ICOMOS Inc, *The Burra Charter: the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance 2013*, Australia ICOMOS Inc, Burwood, VIC, p 2.

[11] Australia ICOMOS Inc, *The Burra Charter: the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance 2013*, Australia ICOMOS Inc, Burwood, VIC, Article 1.2.

[12] Australia ICOMOS Inc, *The Burra Charter: the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance 2013*, Australia ICOMOS Inc, Burwood, VIC, Article 1.10.

[13] Australia ICOMOS Inc, *The Burra Charter: the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance 2013*, Australia ICOMOS Inc, Burwood, VIC, Article 8.

[14] Australia ICOMOS Inc, *The Burra Charter: the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance 2013*, Australia ICOMOS Inc, Burwood, VIC, p 5.

[15] Australia ICOMOS Inc, *The Burra Charter: the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance 2013*, Australia ICOMOS Inc, Burwood, VIC, p 4.

[16] Australia ICOMOS Inc, *The Burra Charter: the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance 2013*, Australia ICOMOS Inc, Burwood, VIC, pp 2 and 4.

2 Understanding the study area

2 Understanding the study area

The purpose of this chapter is to provide contextual information to inform our understanding of Aboriginal occupation, use and connections within the study area. This section is separated into the following parts:

- Section 2.1 identifies the traditional Aboriginal connections with the study area; and
- Section 2.2 synthesises the information from Section 2 of the archaeological technical report (ATR). It provides an overview of the environmental setting, relevant prior Aboriginal heritage work, recent land use history and the predictive model of archaeological potential developed for this project.

2.1 Widjabul Wia-bal

The study area is situated on the traditional lands of Widjabul Wia-bal of the Bundjalung Nation. **Widjabul Wia-bal Country** includes Lismore and surrounds, it is bounded to the south by Bagotville, Tuckean Nature Reserve and Tucki Tucki, to the west by Bungabbee State Forest and Cawongla, to the north by the Mebbin State Forest, Lillian Rock and a large portion of Nightcap National Park, and to the east by Montecollum, Possum Creek and Alstonville. The Bundjalung Nation encompasses much of the northern NSW coast from Tenterfield to the west, Clarence and Logan rivers to the south, and extends northwards into southern Queensland. Thirteen dialect groups (or clans) comprise the Bundjalung who share mythology, ownership, traditions and connection to the region.[1] Specific resources and areas with foods, materials (such as stone and ochre), water and places of tradition, creation and ceremony were entrusted to specific people or groups. Access to some areas was controlled through a complex system of social control and trade, and this is reflected through the movement of certain goods and materials. Widjabul Wia-bal are the Traditional Owners of their Country.

The Bundjalung Nation has a rich and complex spiritual system whose origins are told in the 'Three Brothers Story'.[2] Archaeological evidence of the long history of Aboriginal connections with the Northern Rivers region spans at least 6,500 years at the Seelands rock shelter near the Clarence River, with evidence from the wider Clarence-Moreton region dating to at least 30,000 years ago at Stradbroke Island, Queensland (and potentially up to 45,000-49,000 years ago).[3] The rich archaeological record attests to the complex and intertwined social, spiritual and economic relationships of Aboriginal society.

North Lismore is a component of the wider traditional Bundjalung cultural landscape, which includes highly significant places and landforms (associated with ancestral creation, tradition and ceremony), as well as places where food and water resources were plentiful.

The North Lismore Plateau (NLP) is situated within Widjabul Wia-bal Country. [redacted]

Prior to colonisation, the ecology of the study area was characterised by subtropical rainforest communities known as the 'Big Scrub'. These ecologies provided Widjabul Wia-bal with abundant food, water and timber resources. Bundjalung material culture is dominated by tools and other implements manufactured from bark and wooden fibres.[10] Different animals and plants were used for specific purposes. [redacted]

2.1.1 Post-1840 Aboriginal connections

European settlement in Lismore from the 1840s marked the beginning of great environmental, cultural, demographic and economic upheaval for Widjabul Wia-bal. Impacts for Aboriginal people included loss of access to life, land, food and resources, exacerbated by the introduction of new diseases and colonial violence.

As Lismore's population grew, Widjabul Wia-bal were forced to move to the outskirts of the new colonial settlement. North Lismore became the main camping area, specifically near the railway crossing of Terania Street and along the banks of the Leycester Creek, this area was known as Roberts Lane.[15]

Where they could, Aboriginal people formed relationships with settler colonists. Such relationships often included Aboriginal people exchanging labour, or other resources from Country, for the opportunity to remain on their unceded land.

In 1883, the NSW Government established the Aboriginal Protection Board, signalling the beginning of successive waves of intervention into Aboriginal lives, impacting on Widjabul Wia-bal's tradition law and practises. Protectionism, segregation segregation and assimilation are the core themes that characterised the NSW Government's policies towards Aboriginal people. The board oversaw reserves across NSW, managed several large Aboriginal stations, took back lands previously reserved for Aboriginal people and removed children from their families. In 1903, the Board established an Aboriginal reserve ~10km north of Lismore, along Dunoon Road, with the explicit intention of moving Aboriginal people further away from Lismore.[16] Other reserves established on Bundjalung Country include Cabbage Tree Island near Wardell (established in 1880) and Box Ridge at Coraki.

In the 1920s, the Protection Board decided to convert the Dunoon Road Reserve (Modanville Reserve, now known as Modanville Public School) into an Aboriginal station. Aboriginal residents would subsequently be moved from the reserve, settling at a campsite in North Lismore in 1929 or relocating to the Cabbage Tree Island Reserve.[17] This prompted the Board to propose the establishment of an Aboriginal settlement or school in North Lismore, however, Lismore Council objected to both proposals. Aboriginal people in North Lismore camped at the 'Bahmngin' camp, near the North Lismore Quarry.[18] Bob Dhurrabin and the Roberts family were among those who lived here, and the Roberts family were the custodians of the echidna djurabihl site.[19] In 1931, police forcibly removed those camping in North Lismore to a travelling stock reserve in Tuncester, ~7km west of Lismore. This was officially gazetted as an Aboriginal reserve in 1932, called Cubawee. By the 1950s, the NSW Government adopted a policy of integration and Cubawee's residents were forcibly moved to homes in Gundurimba. Widjabul Wia-bal residents of Cubawee were strongly opposed to relocation. Cubawee was officially closed in 1964.

To this day, the Widjabul Wia-bal people maintain their cultural knowledge and connections to Country and continue to thrive in Lismore. They live and work in the region and celebrate their culture and solidarity in both old ways and new, across many fields such as arts and entertainment, sports and in caring for Country by managing and conserving significant places. Widjabul Wia-bal's native title rights were determined by consent by the Federal Court of Australia in 2022, this is a testament to the Widjabul Wia-bal's enduring cultural and spiritual connection to Country, and their long fight for recognition with the NSW State Government, Commonwealth Government and other local governments, including Lismore City Council. This always was and always will be Widjabul Wia-bal Country.

2.2 Analysis of extant site information

This section presents a summary of the regional Aboriginal archaeological and environmental context that is used to inform the development of management and mitigation measures, and a research methodology for Aboriginal cultural heritage.

A summary overview of the regional Aboriginal archaeological and environmental contexts is provided below. Detailed information is provided in the ATR (Appendix A).

The study area is situated on the southeastern slope of the of the NLP, characterised by two east-west orientated ridgelines bisected by a steep, fluvially-eroded gully. Prior to European arrival, the landscape would have been dominated by Big Scrub rainforest ecologies, potentially including patches of open-grassy forests, and freshwater creeks. These ecosystems would have provided Aboriginal people with abundant food, water and timber resources.

The study area is situated in a highly important cultural landscape in proximity to several ceremonial and mythological sites (refer to Section 2.1). Therefore, the study area is in a landform, ecological and cultural context that is associated with consistent Aboriginal occupation and land use within the region. While there are no prior recorded Aboriginal objects or Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS) sites inside the study area, the AHIMS search results suggest that archaeological evidence of these activities would most likely be stone artefact (lithic) sites, if present (Figure 2.1 and Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.1 [redacted]

Figure 2.2 [redacted]

Relating archaeological sensitivity to landform or soil types is difficult due to the relative lack of archaeological surveys or excavations in the Lismore region.[20] Previous archaeological investigations of the NLP and surrounds have ascribed sensitivity for stone artefact sites to differing landforms including floodplains,[21] slopes,[22] spurs/ridgelines,[23] the NLP itself,[24] and/or a combination of landform types.[25] Subsequent surveys and excavations have generally identified limited numbers of stone artefacts, which is generally accredited to historical disturbance or the predominance of poorly preserved organics in Bundjalung material culture, although these assessments have utilised low density sampling patterns which limit their statistical viability.[26] Furthermore, these assessments have often ignored areas or landforms considered to have low or nil sensitivity. In any case, on similar nearby landforms, excavations have recovered low densities of Aboriginal objects. These results would imply the study area holds similar levels of archaeological potential.

The NLP's slopes are highly susceptible to mass movement erosional events, such as slumping or debris flows, which is a landform context unlikely to retain in situ archaeological material. In colluvial landscapes, archaeological material tends to be eroded from its original depositional context. Erosional rates across the NLP slopes may have been exacerbated by land clearing activities in the nineteenth century. Other historical activities, such as localised construction and agricultural activities, also significantly reduce the potential for in situ archaeological material along the slopes. However, other landforms within the study area appear relatively intact. Ongoing alluvial deposition within the study area may have buried archaeological deposits, also working to protect them from anthropogenic disturbances.

On the basis of the regional archaeological modelling, and an understanding of recent changes and impacts to the study area, a predictive model showing archaeological sensitivity has been prepared (Figure 2.3). Consultation with Widjabul Wia-bal has also identified landforms within the study area that they identify as archaeologically sensitive, with the potential for subsurface deposits.

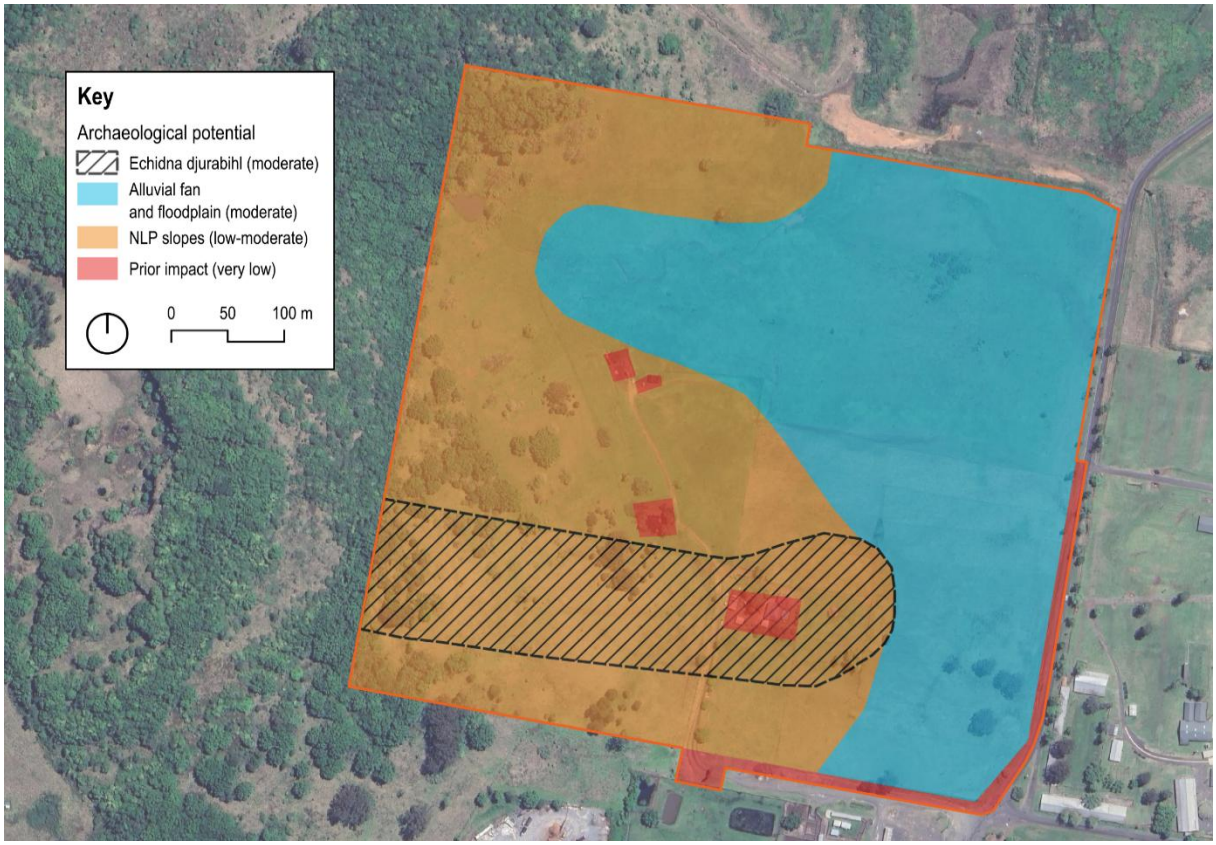

Figure 2.3 Summary of Aboriginal heritage predictive modelling for the study area. (Source: SIX Maps with GML overlay)

2.3 Endnotes

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[8] Frank Roberts, Elizabeth Torrens, Bob Collins via John Collins, Evan Williams and John Roberts quoted in Collins, M and Heron, R 2000, Wiy-abal Aboriginal Clan (Bundjalung Nation) Cultural Heritage & Values Relating to the Lismore City Council Local Government Area: An Archaeological and Anthropological Survey, unpublished report for Lismore City Council, Ngulingah and Jali Local Aboriginal Land Councils.

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[20] Collins, M and Heron, R 2000, Wiy-abal Aboriginal Clan (Bundjalung Nation) Cultural Heritage & Values Relating to the Lismore City Council Local Government Area: An Archaeological and Anthropological Survey, unpublished report for Lismore City Council, Ngulingah and Jali Local Aboriginal Land Councils.

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3 Aboriginal community consultation

3 Aboriginal community consultation

3.1 Introduction

Aboriginal community consultation is required for any assessment of Aboriginal heritage in order to make a valid assessment of Aboriginal (heritage) 'values'; especially those Aboriginal memories, stories and associations between the Aboriginal people and their traditional lands or Country. Aboriginal people frequently express an enduring connection to their Country, a connection that transcends generations, both past and present. The connection is frequently expressed as a sense of belonging, which may manifest through physical objects or place; alternatively, it may be presented as an intangible idea, where an appreciation of an unseen quality or non-materialistic value connects a place in the landscape, tradition, observance, custom, lore belief and/or history to the person or group describing the item, event or value. The notion of intangible, social, or community values is essential to Aboriginal people as 'the effective protection and conservation of this heritage is important in maintaining the identity, health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people'.[1]

In order to gather social and community views and opinions with respect to Aboriginal heritage and identify and address Aboriginal heritage values, Heritage NSW requires proponents to adhere to the guideline document *Aboriginal cultural heritage consultation requirements for proponents 2010*.[2] In addition to providing a mechanism for engaging the Aboriginal community, the directives in the guidelines must be followed for any study that might eventually be used to support an application for an AHIP under Part 6, Division 2, Section 90A of the NPW Act.

However, in this specific instance, the study area is subject to a native title determination and Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA). Under the National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2019, Section 60(3) is applicable. This section states that notice of the proposed activity must be sent to the registered native title body corporate for that land. The ILUA identifies the specific process for consultation and is detailed further below.

GML recognises and acknowledges the continuing Indigenous ownership of the traditional knowledge, traditional cultural expressions, practices, innovations and intellectual property rights in the materials provided by Aboriginal and Indigenous people, on which research and assessments in our reports may be based, and endeavour to protect the privacy, integrity and wellbeing of participants in this research.

3.2 The process of consultation

The study area is located within the Widjabul Wia-bal native title area and is subject to the Widjabul Wia-bal Goori Naa ILUA. Under the ILUA a modified Aboriginal consultation process for the purposes of Part 6 of the NPW Act applies, which provides for the Widjabul Wia-bal to be consulted exclusively in respect of Aboriginal cultural heritage within the ILUA area, including where native title has been determined to be extinguished. A copy of the correspondence from Heritage NSW outlining the modified consultation process is provided in Appendix B.

Adherence with the modified consultation process involves a number of stages that can be summarised as follows:

1. Inform WWGAC about the proposed project.
2. Provide WWGAC with a proposed methodology for the preparation of a cultural heritage assessment to understand what might be present in the landscape and its cultural significance.
3. Determine the potential impacts of the proposal on any identified Aboriginal heritage values and develop proposed strategies to mitigate or manage impacts.
4. Provide WWGAC with the draft report for review and comment.

The complete log of all communications between GML and WWGAC is provided in Appendix B.

3.2.1 2024 Consultation

Stage 1: Notification of project

Heritage NSW was contacted on 17 January 2024 regarding the modified consultation process required by the Widjabul Wia-bal Goori Naa ILUA. The response provided by Heritage NSW on 19 January 2024 included details of the process regarding notification to WWGAC and the process for consulting on and preparing the ACHAR.

An introductory meeting was held with the WWGAC board members on 28 August 2024. During this meeting GML and DoE presented on the proposed activity for RRHC. Following this meeting, a letter was issued on 30 August 2024 to WWGAC providing notification of the project in accordance with Part 4 22.1 (c) of the Widjabul Wia-bal Goori Naa ILUA.

Stage 2: Presentation of information

A letter was sent to WWGAC on 3 September 2024 providing an outline of the study area, its archaeological context, and the proposed activity.

Included was a methodology for undertaking the Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment and a request for any information on culturally sensitive areas of local traditional knowledge relating to the study area. Stage 2 allowed 28 days for WWGAC to respond.

Stage 3: Gathering information

The proposed methodology included a field survey that was completed on 9 September 2024. During the field survey participants discussed local Aboriginal heritage values, places and sites with the community representatives. This provided an understanding of the local perspective for Aboriginal habitation and subsistence patterns, as well as understanding of some local intangible values and connection with the cultural landscape. The results of the field survey are presented in the ATR and included into the methodology for the future archaeological test excavation.

The program of archaeological test excavation was undertaken from 23 September to 15 October 2024. This resulted in the identification of subsurface Aboriginal objects, which were subject to further discussion with the WWGAC. The cultural information and social values associated with these objects have been recorded and are included in the assessment of heritage significance.

Stage 4: Review of draft report

Following preparation of the draft ACHAR, the WWGAC were provided a minimum review period of four weeks to read and comment on the report. All community comments and amendments have been incorporated into the ACHAR. No comments were received regarding the Aboriginal heritage management policy (Section 6.3).

The process of Aboriginal community consultation has identified heritage values and social connections between the local Aboriginal community and study area. A summary of these Aboriginal cultural values is provided in Section 5.

3.2.2 2025 Consultation

In February 2025, DoE relocated the proposed school buildings to the southern part of the study area, primarily to reduce landslip risks associated with the originally proposed design. GML were engaged to prepare an updated methodology to revise the existing ACHAR and ATR for the proposed development.

Stage 2: Presentation of information

On 21 February 2025, a letter was sent to WWGAC providing an outline of the proposed works and a sampling methodology for additional test excavations in areas which would be impacted by the proposed redesign, on landforms with archaeological potential as delineated during the field survey, and which had not been sampled during our initial test excavations. Stage 2 allowed 28 days for WWGAC to respond. Verbal approval of the proposed methodology was provided during a WWGAC board meeting on 3 March 2025.

Stage 3: Gathering information

The program of archaeological test excavation was undertaken between 9 to 16 April 2025 and 5 to 8 May 2025. This resulted in the identification of subsurface Aboriginal objects, which were subject to further discussion with the WWGAC. The cultural information and social values associated with these objects have been recorded and are included in the assessment of heritage significance.

Stage 4: Review of draft report

Following preparation of the draft ACHAR, the WWGAC were provided a minimum review period of four weeks to read and comment on the report. All community comments and amendments have been incorporated into the ACHAR.

3.3 Requirements for future Aboriginal consultation

Heritage NSW has defined a number of stages during the Aboriginal consultation process. The following table provides a synopsis of the process to date.

Table 3.1 Cultural heritage assessment program synopsis—progress to date.

Stage	Status
Confirm consultation process under the ILUA.	Complete
Write to the WWGAC to inform them about the project.	Complete
Provide a project assessment methodology to the WWGAC for their input and review.	Complete
Undertake a field survey and program of archaeological test excavation involving the WWGAC.	Complete
Consult with the WWGAC on the outcomes from the field programs, seeking their input into future Aboriginal heritage management.	Complete
Prepare a draft ACHAR for WWGAC comment and review.	Complete

Stage	Status
WWGAC to provide comment and GML to incorporate these comments into final ACHAR.	Complete
Final ACHAR (and AHIP application) provided to WWGAC and Heritage NSW.	Future action

3.4 Endnotes

[1] Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water 2010, *Aboriginal cultural heritage consultation requirements for proponents* 2010, Sydney.

[2] Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water 2010, *Aboriginal cultural heritage consultation requirements for proponents* 2010, Sydney.

4 Investigations into Aboriginal heritage

4 Investigations into Aboriginal heritage

The background investigations have established the nature of the local environment, the extent of prior heritage works, and known Aboriginal connections into the study area. This section provides a summary of Section 3 of the ATR (Appendix A). It details the results of archaeological investigations into the Aboriginal heritage of the study area. The outcomes combine to describe the over-arching cultural landscape and provide the basis for the Aboriginal heritage values assessment.

4.1 Archaeological survey

An archaeological survey of the study area was completed on 13 September 2024 in accordance with Heritage NSW guidelines.[1] [redacted] Figure 2.3. [redacted] Table 4.1 [redacted] Figure 4.1.

[redacted]

In June 2025, DoE identified that service trenching works would be required outside the initially proposed study area for RRHC. No additional site inspection or survey was undertaken across these new areas. This is because they are underlain by the same landforms and soils previously archaeologically surveyed and excavated in 2024, albeit more heavily impacted by previous road construction and service installation works, and it is therefore reasonable to conclude they hold the same levels of potential for Aboriginal stone artefacts.

Table 4.1 Landform summary—sampled areas.

Landform	Landform area (LA) (m^2)	ECA	% Landform effectively surveyed (=ECA/LA *100)	Number of Aboriginal sites located in survey	Number of artefacts or features located in survey
Floodplain	11760	58.8	0.5%	0	0
Alluvial fan	10880	54.4	0.5%	0	0
Lower slope	9349	2430.76	26%	0	0

Landform	Landform area (LA) (m^2)	ECA	% Landform effectively surveyed (=ECA/LA *100)	Number of Aboriginal sites located in survey	Number of artefacts or features located in survey
Spur	7102	35.51	0.5%	1 (echidna djurabihl)	0
Creek	2558	1772.36	69.3%	0	0
Valley infill	2493	12.465	0.5%	0	0
Total	44142	4364.295	16.21%	1	0

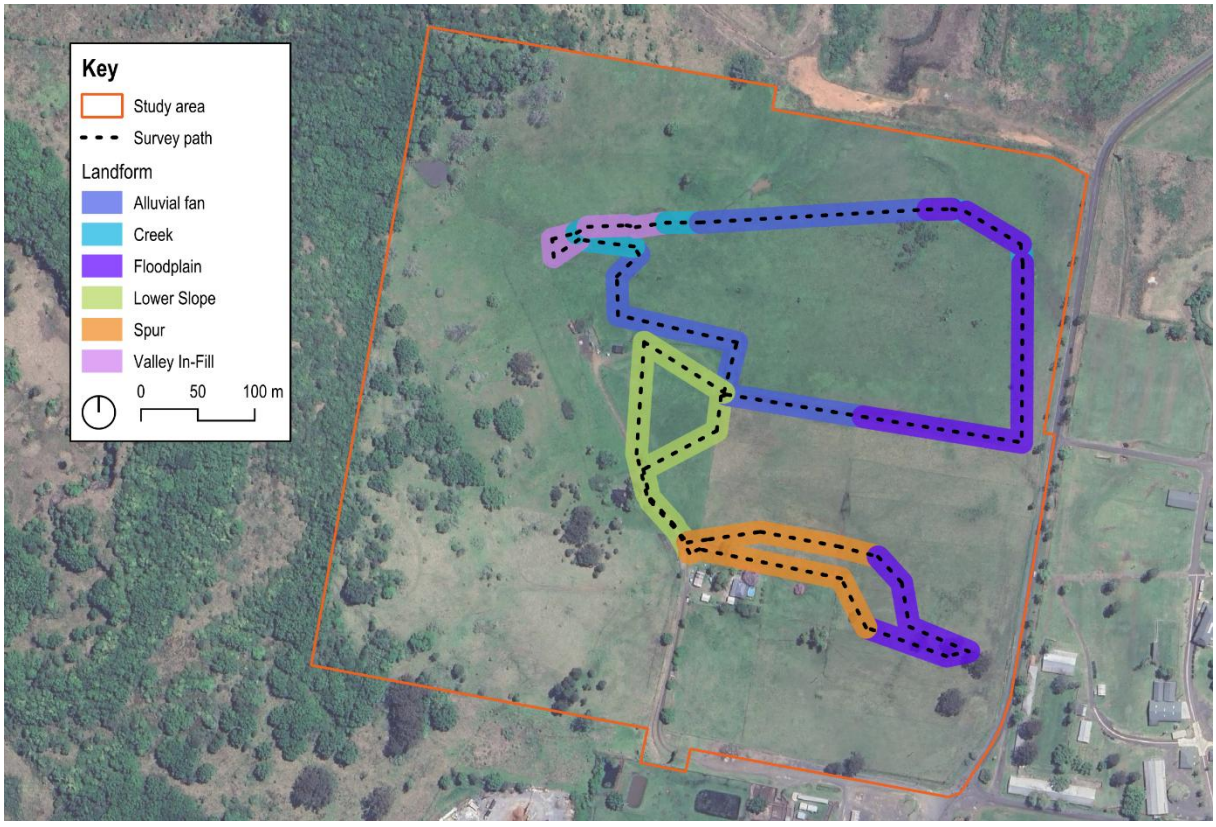

Figure 4.1 Landforms and survey transects across the study area. (Source: SIX Maps with GML overlay)

Figure 4.2

4.2 Archaeological test excavations

The Aboriginal archaeological test excavation program was completed in three phases by a team of archaeologists and WWGAC representatives. The first phase was undertaken between 23 September to 15 October 2024, the second phase between 9 to 16 April 2025, and the third phase between 5 to 8 May 2025. The test excavation compiled with the methodologies under the Code of Practice (requirements 14–17).[2]

Some TUs were excavated into the B horizon to establish its sterility. Not all initially proposed TUs could be excavated due to logistical constraints. Areas with higher levels of archaeological potential and/or intact soil deposits, as verified during initial excavations, were targeted. Onsite WWGAC representatives were consulted regarding the revised sampling grid. The revised sampling grid had sufficient spacing between TUs to adequately characterise the Aboriginal archaeological potential of each sampled landform.

[redacted]

Following consultation with the Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) T403 was expanded to 1m x 1m due to the archaeological potential of that location, resulting in the recovery of an additional lithic. No Aboriginal cultural features (for example, hearths, ground ovens, caches of stone or ochre) were identified during test excavations in any of the excavated TUs.

The archaeological test excavation recovered an overall density of 0.79 Aboriginal objects/metre square (39 objects in 31m^2), when all TUs are considered, with the highest number of artefacts from any TU totalling 3. If only TUs with Aboriginal objects are included, then the 40 objects were recovered from 27 TUs, a density of 1.5 Aboriginal objects/m^2.

Throughout the excavation, the team discussed Aboriginal cultural heritage in the region. It was identified that the study area was highly culturally significant due to its association with nearby ceremonial and significant sites in Widjabul Wia-bal's cultural landscape. The southern spur was noted as the 'snout' of the echidna, associated with the nearby djurabihl site.

The consensus was that test excavations had successfully confirmed the archaeological nature and extent of Aboriginal objects within the study area, culminating in the opinion that there are no intact Aboriginal archaeological deposits within the sampled deposits warranting further archaeological investigation. Due to the limited archaeological signature, with a total of 40 artefacts recovered, the remainder of the study area has a very low potential to contain Aboriginal objects as a background scatter, resultant from random and unpredictable redeposition of archaeological materials by erosive processes and agricultural activities.

No further Aboriginal archaeological excavations are required post the phase of archaeological test excavation.

Figure 4.3 [redacted]

4.3 Aesthetic character

This section provides a context for the aesthetic values associated with the study area. The Burra Charter defines aesthetic value as:

> …aspects of sensory perception for which criteria may include consideration of the form, scale, colour, texture and material of the fabric [interpreted as evidence of Aboriginal occupation]; the smells and sounds associated with the place and its use.

The wider area has been subject to land clearing, localised construction activities and agricultural land use. The outcome of these activities is that the immediate area has changed from the natural forest ecosystems to a rural character, as a consequence of land use change.

Any aesthetics connected with residual creeks and unmodified landforms, where Aboriginal people would have camped and undertaken other cultural activities, may hold value in terms of representing an 'unchanged' character of the area. The echidna djurabihl site extends into the study area via the southern ridgeline (the echidna's 'snout'), further providing localised views.

[redacted]

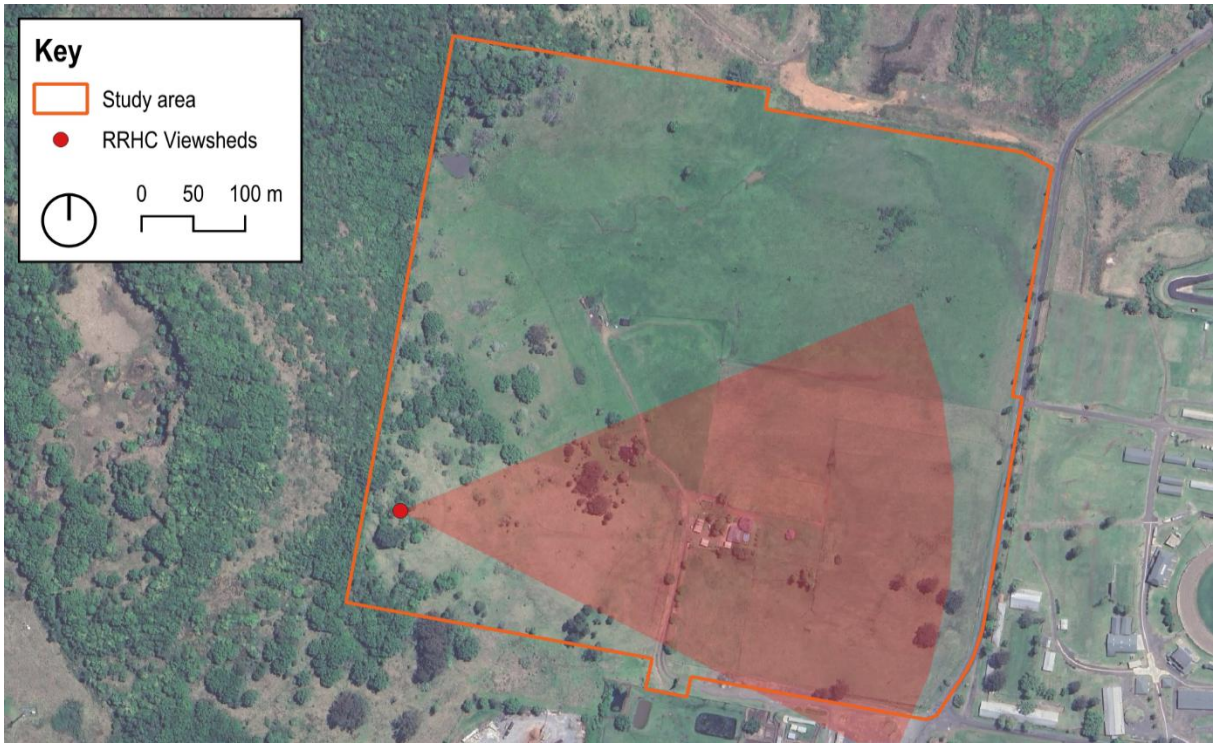

Figure 4.4 The two spur landforms provide expansive views across the surrounding landscape. (Source: SIX Maps with GML overlay)

4.4 Synopsis of Aboriginal heritage investigations

The assessment of prior archaeological and heritage studies (Section 2), consultation with the Aboriginal community (Section 3) and new investigations into the study area (this section) has identified eight tangible and two intangible aspects of Aboriginal cultural heritage directly associated with the study area. These are outlined in Table 4.2 and shown in Figure 4.5.

Table 4.2 [redacted]

Figure 4.5

4.5 Endnotes

[1] Department of Environment Climate Change and Water NSW, 2010, *Code of Practice for Archaeological Investigation of Aboriginal Objects in New South Wales*, Requirement 5, Archaeological Survey.

[2] Department of Environment Climate Change and Water NSW, 2010, *Code of Practice for Archaeological Investigation of Aboriginal Objects in New South Wales*.

5 Aboriginal heritage significance assessment

5 Aboriginal heritage significance assessment

The best practice guide to managing heritage places is the Burra Charter. It defines cultural significance as:

> Cultural significance means aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations. Cultural significance is embodied in the place itself, its fabric, setting, use, associations, meanings, records, related places and related objects. Places may have a range of values for different individuals or groups.

An assessment of aesthetic and social/spiritual values of Aboriginal cultural significance can only be made by the relevant Aboriginal community because Aboriginal people are the primary source of information about their cultural heritage values. Consulting with Aboriginal people at an early stage of the assessment process ensures they have opportunities to fulfil their heritage obligations. Aboriginal people must have control of their cultural knowledge and how it is used and shared. Restriction of cultural knowledge may be an important part of the value of the cultural knowledge. Management of impacts to Aboriginal cultural heritage values must involve the relevant Aboriginal people to ensure appropriate management is undertaken in accordance with the cultural heritage values.[1]

In line with the Burra Charter's four principal values (social, historical, scientific and aesthetic) and the NSW Heritage Office's publication *Assessing Heritage Significance*,[2] four assessment criteria can be used to assess the Aboriginal heritage values of a study area.[3] The four criteria are:

- Social value:[4] 'an item has strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group in NSW (or the local area) for social, cultural or spiritual reasons';
- Historic value:[5] 'an item is important in the course, or patterning, of NSW's cultural or natural history (or cultural or natural history of the local area)';
- Aesthetic value:[6] 'an item is important in demonstrating aesthetic characteristics and/or a high degree of creative or technical achievement in NSW (or the local area)'; and
- Scientific value:[7] 'an item has potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area)'.

Consultation with the RAPs, investigation into the background history of the study area and local region, the field inspection and archaeological excavations have facilitated the development of an understanding of the key social, historic and scientific values associated with the sites and objects within the study area.

Following OEH 2011,[8] values are graded in accordance with a basic ranking of high, moderate or low. The ranking is based upon the research potential, representativeness, rarity and educational potential of each value. The grading is stated at the end of each value assessment below.

5.1 Significance assessment

5.1.1 Social value

Onsite consultation with WWGAC representatives during the field survey and test excavations highlighted that the study area is in a culturally and socially significant area. [redacted]

The Aboriginal objects were identified in secondary contexts but are connected with specific traditional land use in association with the NLP. Higher densities (although still low) of artefacts were noted on spur landforms, which may indicate these landforms were favoured as campsites, perhaps during ceremonies or transitory use. The relative lack of archaeological material makes drawing conclusions about specific traditional activities in connection with these objects difficult. However, WWGAC representatives indicated that these objects hold moderate-to-high social value irrespective of their context and are tangible evidence of long-term Aboriginal occupation and land use in and near the study area.

Further community consultation could provide further insight into social connections with the study area.

5.1.2 Historical value

No First Nations historical connections (ie post-contact First Nations historical associations) were identified in association with the study area. As such, the study area has limited ability to contribute to our historical understanding of the Lismore area. The study area does not meet this criterion.

Post-contact, the area of the North Lismore Plateau has been privately owned, restricting Widjabul Wia-bal's access.

5.1.3 Scientific value

The Aboriginal objects recovered from within the study area hold low scientific significance. The Aboriginal artefacts have low research potential as they are typical of raw materials and artefact manufacture within the context of the region. They are neither rare nor representative examples of Aboriginal artefacts.

However, these artefacts could hold educational value if suitably interpreted as part of a small display or educational collection. This could provide value to the staff and students of RRHC who may not be familiar with the area's Aboriginal cultural heritage.

The WWGAC's cultural landscape holds scientific value, notably as an element that provides cultural context to the lithics identified. For this assessment, we have included this value as a component under social value.

5.1.4 Aesthetic value

The current landscape is a modified agricultural landscape that contrasts dramatically with the Country managed and occupied by Aboriginal people prior to 1840. However, the study area holds aesthetic value in connection with its topography, [redacted]

5.2 Statement of significance

<PLACHOLDER: TO BE PROVIDED BY WWGAC>

An overview of how these cultural values manifest within the study area is presented in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Summary of Aboriginal cultural heritage values.

Value	Manifest through	Grade of significance
Social	Association with Widjabul Wia-bal cultural landscape.	High
	[redacted]	[redacted]
	Archaeological deposit in the form of 40 subsurface artefact finds, two isolated finds and one surface stone artefact concentration.	Moderate to high
Historic	No historical associations identified.	None
Scientific	Aboriginal objects could hold educational value if utilised as part of an educational collection or display.	Low
Aesthetic	[redacted]	[redacted]

Value	Manifest through	Grade of significance
	Expansive views to surrounding area from NLP, noting these views are from elevated landforms to the west of the study area, and cross the study area.	Moderate Landscape has been heavily modified by historical activities.

5.3 Endnotes

1 Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water 2010, *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Consultation Requirements for Proponents* 2010, Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water, p 2.

2 NSW Heritage Office 2001, *Assessing Heritage Significance*, NSW Heritage Office, Sydney.

3 Office of Environment and Heritage 2011*, Guide to Investigating, Assessing and Reporting on Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in NSW*, Office of Environment and Heritage, Sydney; this guide provides a background for undertaking an Aboriginal cultural heritage values assessment in accordance with the Burra Charter and NSW Heritage Office's *Assessing Heritage Significance* 2001. The approach recommended by the OEH has been adhered to for this report.

4 NSW Heritage Office 2001, 'Criteria D' in *Assessing Heritage Significance*, NSW Heritage Office, Sydney.

5 NSW Heritage Office 2001, 'Criteria A' in *Assessing Heritage Significance,* NSW Heritage Office, Sydney.

6 NSW Heritage Office 2001, 'Criteria C' in *Assessing Heritage Significance*, NSW Heritage Office, Sydney.

7 NSW Heritage Office 2001, 'Criteria E' in *Assessing Heritage Significance*, NSW Heritage Office, Sydney.

8 Office of Environment and Heritage 2011, *Guide to Investigating, Assessing and Reporting on Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in NSW*, Office of Environment and Heritage, Sydney.

6 The proposed project activity

6 The proposed project activity

This section provides a description of the proposed project activity, timing for the activity, Aboriginal values that may be harmed (directly or indirectly by the activity), and the objectives of the proposed activity. Aboriginal heritage management policy has been developed to guide and minimise impacts to Aboriginal heritage values.

6.1 Proposed activity

The proposed activity comprises the relocation and rebuild of the Richmond River High Campus from its existing temporary location alongside The Rivers Secondary College Lismore High Campus at East Lismore to the site at 163 and 170 Alexandra Parade, North Lismore.

The school will be delivered in one stage. A detailed description of the proposal is as follows:

- Demolition of existing features including existing buildings, cattle drinking well, cattle sheds, and wire fencing, and removal of trees to accommodate school development.
- Construction of new 3 storey buildings on the southeastern portion of the site for the proposed public secondary school including:
  - General and Specialist Learning Spaces, and Workshops.
  - Administration and Staff facilities.
  - Library, Hall, and Movement Studio.
  - Construction, Hospitality, and Agricultural Learning Facilities.
  - Amenity, Plant, Circulation, and Storage areas.
  - Outdoor Learning Spaces and play spaces.
- Landscaping including tree planting.
- Public domain works comprising:
  - Access road off Dunoon Road, comprising a separate shared bicycle/pedestrian pathway, and internal access roundabout.
  - Kiss and ride drop-off and pick up zones.
  - Bus transport arrangements with a separate bus zone.
- Outdoor spaces including assembly zones, agricultural spaces, sports fields, games courts, dancing circles, yarning and dancing circles, seating and shade structures.
- On-site carparking, including accessible spaces and provision for EV charging spaces.

Figures 6.1 and 6.2 below show the scope of works.

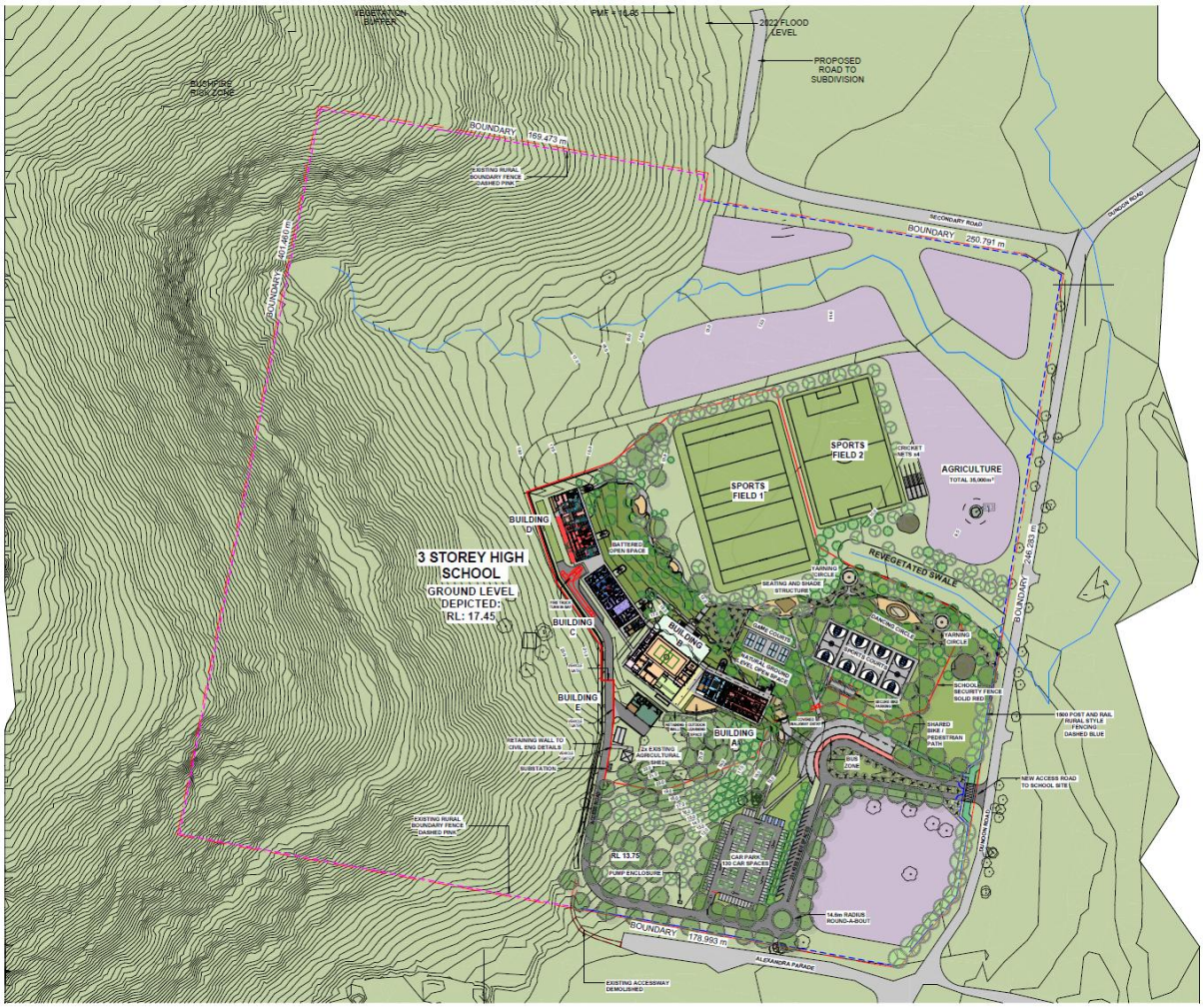

Figure 6.1 Preferred masterplan design for the RRHC. (Source: EJE Architecture 2025)

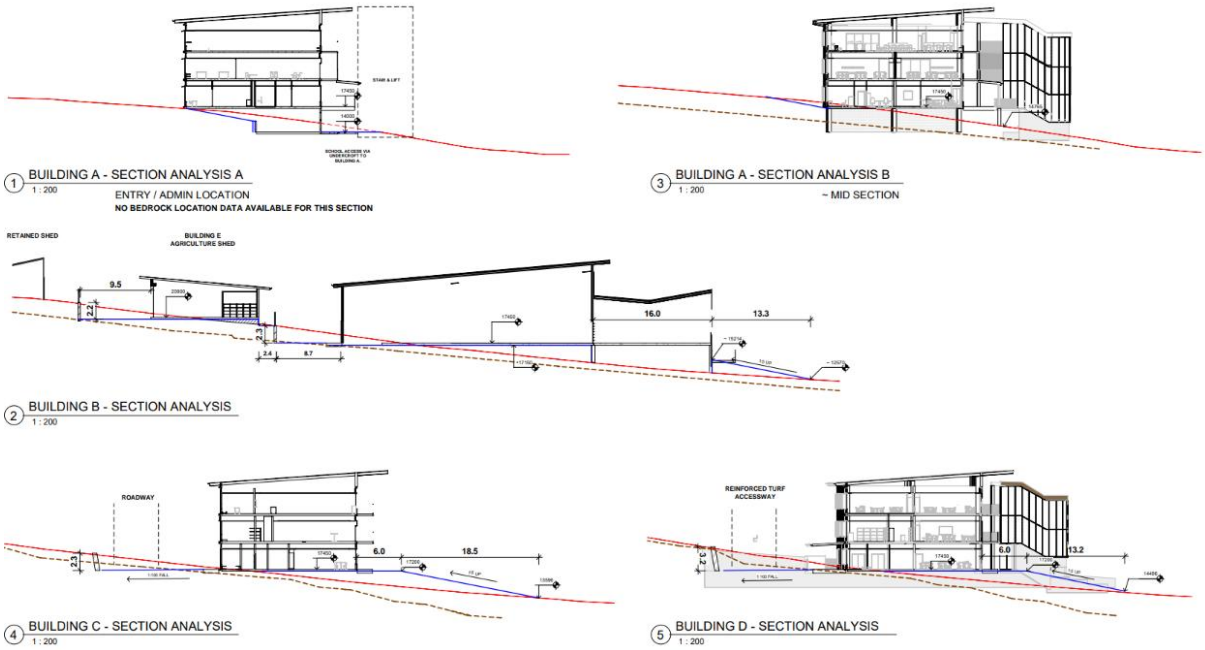

Figure 6.2 Cross-sections showing the proposed construction levels. The red dashed line is the current ground level. (Source: DoE 2025)

6.2 Harm to Aboriginal objects and values

The assessment of Aboriginal cultural heritage has identified items, places and sites in connections with the study area. An assessment of the proposed activity is able to determine whether these aspects will be 'harmed' either directly (through the removal of Aboriginal archaeological deposits) or indirectly (through the degradation of values inherent to these deposits). This analysis assumes a worst-case scenario of unmitigated harm to these values through the design; however, appropriate management and mitigation measures have been developed to minimise this harm (Section 6.3). This assessment is presented in Table 6.1.

Excavation across the study area for building and road construction, service installation and landscaping would have a direct impact [redacted] may be impacted by activities associated with future agricultural land uses as part of the proposed school. The proposed activity also has the potential to impact unrecorded Aboriginal objects, although the assessment of Aboriginal cultural heritage has determined the study area holds very low potential to contain unrecorded Aboriginal objects as a background scatter and/or isolated finds, making this eventuality unlikely.

The gradual and continuous loss of Aboriginal sites due to historical developments throughout Lismore is resulting in a cumulative impact to Aboriginal heritage values in the region. Without appropriate management and mitigation, development within the study area would contribute to the cumulative impact to Lismore's finite Aboriginal archaeological resource caused by ongoing development activities in the region. Mitigation measures to offset this impact are presented in Section 6.3.

Table 6.1 [redacted]

[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]

The various aspects of Aboriginal heritage hold a variety of heritage values (described in Table 5.1). These values may be impacted by the proposed activity. An assessment of how the values may be directly or indirectly affected by the proposal is provided in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2 Overview of impacts to values and identified potential harm.

Value	Manifest through	Degree of harm	Consequence of harm
Social	Stone artefact sites	Total	Total loss of value
	Echidna djurabihl	Partial	Partial loss of value
Historic	None	None	None
Scientific	Stone artefact sites	Total	Total loss of value
Aesthetic	Viewing locations	None	None
	Form of buninj, echidna djurabihl visible in topography	None	None

6.3 Aboriginal heritage management policy

Unmanaged and unmitigated the impacts resulting from the proposal on Aboriginal heritage are likely to result in a loss of values, and thus impact to the local Aboriginal community. The following management and mitigation statements are based on consideration of:

- legal requirements under the terms of the NPW Act, as amended—which states that it is illegal to harm or desecrate an Aboriginal object without first obtaining an AHIP from the Director-General, Heritage NSW;
- abiding by the Code of Practice for archaeological works connected with heritage mitigation;
- the requirements for considering ecologically sustainable development principles, and applying a cautious approach under the Burra Charter;
- consideration of intergenerational equity and its application to the study area;
- consideration of cumulative impacts to Aboriginal heritage and the consequences of continued loss of Aboriginal heritage values;
- the assessment of the Aboriginal cultural heritage values;
- the interests of the local Aboriginal community members who participated in this project; and
- the size of the study area, the extent of Aboriginal heritage values and likely impacts posed by the project proposal.

Implementation of these measures will ensure the impact to Aboriginal sites and values is adequately mitigated. The proposed activity would not cause impacts considered 'significant' under Part 5 of the EP&A Act.

6.3.1 Policy—AHIP application under Section 90 of the NPW Act

The process of archaeological test excavation, and field survey, has confirmed that the RRHC study area contains Aboriginal objects. Provisions under Section 90 of the NPW Act require an application for an Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permit (AHIP) that allows harm to the identified Aboriginal objects.

It is recommended that a whole of study area AHIP be sought, which provides a statutory defence against harm to all known and unknown Aboriginal objects inside the RRHC boundary.

The AHIP should also provide approval for the management of lithics recovered during the archaeological test excavation, and collection of lithics from a surface-based context across the RRHC study area.

6.3.2 Policy—Community collection under an AHIP

For surface stone artefact sites, which will not be conserved in situ, community collection is recommended. This will ensure that Aboriginal community values are respected and acknowledged.

[redacted]

The strategy of collection would serve to mitigate the physical harm to Aboriginal stone objects that would occur during the development process.

The WWGAC should be presented with an opportunity to collect any surface Aboriginal objects that were identified within the study area that will be impacted by the proposal. This should be undertaken prior to the start of construction activities.

The following methodology will be followed for the Community Collection of surface Aboriginal artefacts to be harmed by the development:

- Members from the Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) would be provided with an opportunity to participate in the community collection prior to commencement of the development.
- Each site to be impacted by the development would be inspected by an archaeologist and the project RAPs.
- The location of surface artefacts would be flagged, their position recorded using a GPS and the area photographed. The artefacts would be bagged and labelled.

- The assemblage would be recorded for attributes (material type and colour, flake/tool type, measurements [length, breadth and width]), and weight). The assemblage of Aboriginal objects would be photographed as a whole, unless specific unusual tools were present.
- Following collection and recording, a short letter would be prepared with details of the Aboriginal objects.
- The AHIMS cards and impact forms for the relevant AHIMS sites would be updated with details from the collection. The letter outlining the collection process would be attached to the AHIMS record.

Following all activities that recover and remove Aboriginal stone artefacts from the study area, and their analysis, all stone artefacts would be subject to long-term management specified in Section 6.3.3.

6.3.3 Strategy—Management of Aboriginal stone objects

Determining the best approach to managing any Aboriginal stone objects that are recovered is the right and responsibility of WWGAC in consultation with DoE. Some options for the management of the Aboriginal objects recovered from the study area include:

- reburial within the study area and the location registered as a new site in AHIMS;
- negotiation with WWGAC for the management and care of the assemblage that would allow the assemblage to be accessed in the future by the Aboriginal community and/or archaeologists for teaching and research purposes;
- during the field survey, WWGAC representatives suggested that opportunities to incorporate any finds into a display in the new school for educational purposes; and
- a combination of these options, ie reburial within the study area while reserving a teaching assemblage in a keeping place for future generations.

We understand that reburial of all recovered stone artefacts is the preferred long-term management option. Reburial of objects would be conducted in accordance with Requirement 23c of the Code of Practice.

6.3.4 Strategy—Heritage interpretation

The project provides an opportunity for public dissemination of local Aboriginal cultural and heritage values and sites associated with the RRHC and wider Widjabul Wia-bal cultural landscape.

Specific ideas and strategies for this are suggested in the Connecting with Country report. The outcomes from this assessment could be incorporated to formulate a location-specific interpretation plan and strategy.

6.3.5 Policy—Unexpected finds procedure

The Aboriginal archaeological assessment has determined that there is very low potential for unrecorded Aboriginal objects or sites within the study area. The proposed activity can proceed with caution.

If, during the process of works, an Aboriginal object or site is suspected or identified, the following unexpected finds procedure should be enacted:

- Stop work order—all works should cease immediately in the area surrounding the suspected objects. Any identified Aboriginal object(s) should be left in situ and not disturbed in accordance with the requirements of Section 89A of the NPW Act. Heritage NSW, WWGAC and the project archaeologist should be notified immediately and an archaeologist and/or WWGAC representative experienced in the identification of Aboriginal cultural material should inspect the objects.
  - If the suspected objects are not Aboriginal in origin or manufacture (as defined under the NPW Act), they should be recorded, and the location noted. Works may continue.
  - If the objects are confirmed to be Aboriginal in origin, the site should be registered in the AHIMS database administered by Heritage NSW.
- Any Aboriginal object(s) that is identified would have an approval for harm under the project's area based AHIP.
- The find should be discussed in collaboration with WWGAC, and management implemented in proportion to the find. Future management should adhere with the policy on stone artefact management (above).
- In the unlikely event that human remains were to be identified at any time during the works, all works must cease immediately in the surrounding area. The findings would need to be reported immediately to the NSW Coroner's Office and/or the NSW Police. Further cultural and statutory management would be necessary.

6.3.6 Policy—Aboriginal heritage induction

An Aboriginal cultural heritage induction should be developed in collaboration with WWGAC. This should be provided to all employees, contractors and subcontractors engaged on the project, consistent with any AHIP conditions.

The induction should inform personnel of the significance of Aboriginal heritage and the types of Aboriginal heritage items which may be encountered (ie Aboriginal objects) during works. The induction would aim to ensure that personnel engaged on the RRHC project are able to enact the Unexpected Finds Procedure if required.

6.3.7 Policy—Monitoring

During test excavations, WWGAC representatives recommended that WWGAC representatives monitor all works requiring ground disturbance during the RRHC construction phase. Any stone artefacts observed could be collected under the project's AHIP and managed in accordance with the stone artefact policy (above).

It should be noted that Heritage NSW generally does not support archaeological monitoring as a management strategy unless logistical/safety issues require it or if there is potential for high/exceptionally significant archaeological finds. The RRHC site is unlikely to meet either criterion.

6.4 Mitigation measures

Table 6.3 provides a summary of the mitigation measures developed to manage identified impacts to Aboriginal heritage as a result of the RRHC development.

Table 6.3 Summary of mitigation measures.

Mitigation number/name	Aspect/section	Mitigation Measure	Reason for Mitigation Measure
Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permit (AHIP)	General measure	Application for a whole of study area AHIP, which would provide a statutory defence against harm to all known and unknown Aboriginal objects inside the redevelopment boundary. The AHIP should also provide approval for management of lithics recovered during the archaeological test program, community collection and any unexpected finds (see below)	Provisions under Section 90 of the NPW Act require an application for an AHIP that allows harm to known and unknown Aboriginal objects.
Community collection	Prior to commencement of any construction work	Surface collection of AHIMS sites RRHC IF 6 in accordance with Section 6.3.2.	This measure would serve to mitigate the physical harm to Aboriginal stone objects that would occur during construction.

Mitigation number/name	Aspect/section	Mitigation Measure	Reason for Mitigation Measure
Monitoring	During construction	During test excavations, WWGAC representatives recommended that WWGAC representatives monitor all works requiring ground disturbance during the RRHC construction phase. WWGAC representatives should be consulted regarding the opportunity to monitor works during construction.	This measure was requested by the WWGAC representatives.
Unexpected Finds Procedure	During construction	If during the process of works, an Aboriginal site or object is suspected or identified, then the unexpected finds protocol outlined in Section 6.3 should be enacted.	Procedure outlines statutory requirements should an unrecorded Aboriginal object or site be suspected or identified.
Aboriginal heritage induction	During demolition and construction phase	An Aboriginal cultural heritage induction should be developed in collaboration with WWGAC. This should be provided to all employees, contractors and subcontractors, consistent with any AHIP conditions.	Induction would ensure all workers are aware of the Aboriginal cultural heritage values associated with the study area, and the mitigation measures in place to mitigate harm to these values. Aboriginal heritage inductions have been included as standard AHIP conditions on most recent AHIPs.
Long-term management of Aboriginal objects	General measure	DoE should consult with WWGAC regarding the best approach to managing the Aboriginal objects that have been/will be recovered.	Ensures the objects are returned into the care and management of the WWGAC.

Mitigation number/name	Aspect/section	Mitigation Measure	Reason for Mitigation Measure
		Options are provided in Section 6.3.3.	Development and implementation of long-term management strategy will likely be an AHIP condition.

7 Appendices

7 Appendices

Appendix A

Archaeological Technical Report

Appendix B

Community Consultation Records