Appendix J - Part B

Aboriginal Heritage Assessment

Includes the following:

- New South Wales Archaeology 2011b *Princes Highway Upgrade at Dignams Creek via Cobargo, NSW – Addendum Aboriginal CHAR.*
- Letter from New South Wales Archaeology regarding survey units
Princes Highway Upgrade at Dignams Creek via Cobargo, NSW
Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report
ADDENDUM

Report to Peter Hawkins
RTA Project Development Officer

October 2011

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1. SUMMARY

1.1 Introduction

This report is an addendum to a report titled Princes Highway Upgrade at Dignams Creek via Cobargo, NSW Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report (Dibden 2011).

The RTA is proposing to undertake a realignment of the Princes Highway at Dignams Creek near Cobargo, south east NSW. The works would replace the narrow Dignams Creek bridge and a section of the existing Princes Highway that has poor vertical and horizontal alignment. The Dignams Creek realignment is proposed to improve safety and efficiency.

In 2008, NSW Archaeology Pty Ltd conducted a preliminary heritage assessment to assist with the selection of a preferred route and to inform the RTA whether the proposed works would be likely to affect Aboriginal cultural heritage, and if Part 6 approvals under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 would be required (Dibden 2008).

In developing the concept design a number of changes have been made to the proposal. The study area for the proposal has been changed to incorporate these changes in addition to the original study area. In addition further investigations have been undertaken to extend the Aboriginal assessment of these changes. These include:

- In 2010, the bridge replacement project was extended to include upgrading the Princes Highway to the immediate south west of the study area (see Figure 1). NSW Archaeology Pty Ltd conducted further investigations of this area (Dibden 2010) and undertook a subsurface test excavation program (Dibden 2011).

  A collation of all previous assessment work and the results of the subsurface testing was documented in a report titled Princes Highway Upgrade at Dignams Creek via Cobargo, NSW Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report (Dibden 2011). The study area boundaries encompassed by the previous assessment is shown in Figure 1.

- In 2011, the alignment of the above extension was pushed further to the north west of the assessment area (see hatched area in Figure 2). This report provides an assessment of this extension. This report in an addendum to the previous studies and for a full assessment, should be reviewed in conjunction with those reports. The area surveyed in this report will be referred to as the extended study area.

This project has been managed by Julie Dibden, New South Archaeology Pty Ltd. A field investigation for Aboriginal object sites within the extended study area has been conducted by Andrew Pearce, NSW Archaeology Pty Ltd, on the 8th July 2011. The Aboriginal focus group (AFG) members for the Dignams Creek project have conducted a separate survey of the area under the direction of RTAs Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Advisor Southern. No Aboriginal objects, areas, or places were identified by the AFG members in the extended study area.

1.2 Methods, Results and Conclusions

This study has sought to identify and record the presence of Aboriginal objects, areas and places in the study area, to assess the archaeological potential of the landform elements.
present and to formulate management recommendations based on the results of background research, a field survey and an assessment of cultural and archaeological significance.

A landscape based methodological approach has been implemented for the survey and assessment (see Figure 2). The original study area was divided into a number of survey units (landform elements). The current assessment extended the area of some of these (SU’s 19, 20 and 23) and resulted in the recording of two additional survey units (SU’s 24 and 25).

A comprehensive field survey and assessment was undertaken by Andrew Pearce on 8th July 2011. No Aboriginal objects, areas or places were identified in the survey area and no other issues regarding cultural heritage were identified. Therefore, there are no Aboriginal heritage constraints relating to the proposed activity area.

Figure 1. Previous study area (from Dibden 2011).
Figure 2. Location of the extended study area surveyed for this study (hatched) (map prepared using *Topoview Raster 2006*: NSW Dept. of Lands)
2. HERITAGE CONTEXT

A search of the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage – OEH (formally Department of Environment and Climate Change) Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS) has been undertaken in respect of the extended study area (17th October 2011). The search indicates that there are no previously recorded sites listed on AHIMS in the extended survey area.

Dibden (2008, 2010, 2011) has conducted previous work in the wider proposal area. These reports and a summary of key findings are listed below:

- **2008 Princes Highway Upgrade at Dignams Creek via Cobargo, NSW. Preliminary Aboriginal Archaeological Assessment. Report to Mark Woods, RTA Environmental Planning and Assessment.**

  This report documents the preliminary heritage assessment of the proposed highway realignment at Dignams Creek. The study area was divided into 17 survey units and the total area measured approximately 69 hectares. No Aboriginal objects were recorded during the survey. A prediction of potential artefact density in a subsurface context was made in respect of each of the 17 survey units. The majority of survey units were predicted to possess very low or low stone artefact density (Survey units 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 15 and 17). Survey units 9, 11, 13 14 (north end only) and 16 were predicted to possess artefacts in moderate density (Potential archaeological deposit - PAD).

- **2010 Revised Report Princes Highway Upgrade at Dignams Creek via Cobargo, NSW Preliminary Aboriginal Archaeological Assessment. Report to Peter Hawkins. RTA Project Development Officer.**

  This report is a revision of the 2008 document, as described above, and includes additional areas of proposed impact and addresses refinements to the proposed activity area. An additional six survey units (Survey units 18 - 23) were defined and subject to field survey and assessment. No Aboriginal objects were recorded in the additional survey areas, all of which was predicted to possess very low or low stone artefact density.

  It was recommended that the proponent develop a research design for test excavation to further investigate the PADs identified within survey units 11 and 16, located within the realignment proposal area.

- **2011 Princes Highway Upgrade at Dignams Creek via Cobargo, NSW Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report. Report to Peter Hawkins.**

  A subsurface test excavation programme was commissioned to be undertaken in survey units 11 and 16. This excavation program followed the preliminary archaeological assessment (Dibden 2008; 2010), wherein areas having the potential to contain moderate densities of artefacts were identified. This report collates all previous assessment work and details the results of the subsurface testing. It also documents an Indigenous oral history recording programme undertaken by NSW Archaeology Pty Ltd in respect of the proposal.
A total of 592 stone artefacts were retrieved during the excavation. The archaeological deposit in survey unit 11 was assessed to be of low archaeological significance, and the deposit in survey unit 16 was assessed to be of moderate archaeological significance.

The oral history recording found that the proposed activity areas adjacent to the creek hold historical associations for some members of the local Aboriginal community. The memories of the bean picking times in the district are recalled with fondness by those people interviewed. These were times when people had employment, worked together in family and community groups, and interacted with the broader community in both work and play. The Dignams Creek area was one area in which these activities took place.

During earlier assessment, the surveys of landforms which are similar to those found in the extended study area, failed to result in the recording of Aboriginal objects. Accordingly, the proposal area is predicted to be of low archaeological sensitivity and potential.
3. FIELD SURVEY AND ASSESSMENT

A field survey of the extended study area was carried out in July 2011. The purpose of the field survey was to see if Aboriginal objects are located on ground surfaces or likely to be present below the surface.

No Aboriginal objects, areas or places were found during the field inspection.

The field survey was conducted across an area measuring circa (c.) 8.4 hectares (ha). The survey entailed an inspection of five survey units (SU19, SU20, SU23, SU24 and SU25). SU’s 19, 20 and 23 were originally defined and partially surveyed during earlier assessments (Dibden 2010, 2011). Their area was extended in the current assessment and the extended area was subject to survey and assessment. The additional survey area (hatched area) is shown in Figure 2. Survey unit descriptions and survey coverage data is set out in Table 1. The survey areas are described below.

Survey Unit 19

Survey unit 19 is a simple slope with a north to north-westerly aspect and gradient ranging from 4 - 16°. A significant portion (c. 119,500 sq m) of this survey unit was previously surveyed (Dibden 2010b), and an additional c. 18,500 sq m was inspected for this study. The additional surveyed area encompasses a reasonably steep section of the landform; gradient ranges from 10 - 16° (refer to Plate 1). The surveyed area is quite thickly vegetated, predominantly with a variety of eucalypt trees and saplings, and some acacia and pittosporum species. In addition there is a distribution of shrubs and ground cover. Prior disturbance is moderate and includes clearance (at some time in the distant past) and disturbance associated with logging. The survey area is assessed to be of low to very low archaeological potential.
Survey Unit 20

Survey unit 20 is a crest with a generally open aspect and a gradient ranging from 0 - 12º. A portion (c. 71,250 sq m) of this survey unit was previously surveyed (Dibden 2010). An additional c. 5,825 sq m was inspected for this study. The surveyed area includes a section of a spur which extends west from the Princes Highway. In this area the gradient of the survey unit ranges from 7 - 12º and has a south-westerly aspect (refer to Plate 2). The surveyed area on either side of the dirt track is reasonably thickly vegetated, predominantly with a variety of eucalypts including stringybark, *Eucalyptus smithii*, as well as a lesser distribution of acacia and pittosporum species. In addition shrubs, ground cover and some weed species are present. Prior disturbance within the survey unit is moderate and includes tree clearance (in the past), vehicle track usage, and disturbance associated with the construction of the Princes Highway. The survey area is assessed to be of low archaeological potential.

Plate 2. Survey unit 20 looking east.
Survey Unit 23

Survey unit 23 is a simple slope with an aspect ranging from north to north-west and a gradient of 4 - 15°. A portion (c. 18,200 sq m) of this survey unit was previously surveyed (Dibden 2010). An additional c. 17,700 sq m was inspected for this study. The survey unit is reasonably thickly vegetated, predominantly with a variety of eucalypt saplings including stringybark, *Eucalyptus smithii*, as well as acacia and some pittosporum species, with an understorey of shrubs and assorted groundcover species (refer to Plate 3). In the area adjacent to survey unit 25, ferns and bracken are present in a higher proportion. Prior disturbance within the Survey Unit is moderate and includes original clearance, vehicle track usage, fencing, a Telstra cable line installation and the construction of the Princes Highway. The survey area is assessed to be of very low archaeological potential.

Plate 3. Survey unit 23 looking north-west.
Survey Unit 24

Survey unit 24 is a new survey unit that was not included as part of the original assessments. It is a simple slope with a southerly aspect and a gradient ranging from 4 - 16°. This survey unit consists of an area measuring c. 35,250 sq m. It is for the most part, very heavily vegetated with predominantly a variety of eucalypt saplings including stringybark, *Eucalyptus smithii*, as well as acacia and some pittosporum species, and an understorey of shrubs, bracken and assorted groundcovers (refer to Plate 4). A thick covering of fern and bracken is present adjacent to survey unit 25. Prior disturbance within the Survey Unit is moderate and includes original clearance with evidence of felled trees throughout, fencing, and a Telstra cable line. The survey area is assessed to be of very low archaeological potential.

Plate 4. Survey unit 24 looking south.
Survey Unit 25

Survey unit 25 is a new survey unit that was not included as part of the original assessments. It is an ephemeral first order drainage depression with a south-westerly aspect and a gradient ranging from 1 - 3°. This survey unit measures c. 7,200 sq m and is heavily vegetated with eucalypt saplings, bracken, ferns, shrubs and vines (refer to Plate 5). Given the nature and gradient of the drainage depression, it would only hold water immediately after rainfall. Prior disturbance within the survey unit is moderate and includes original clearance and the installation of a Telstra cable line. The survey unit is assessed to be of very low archaeological potential.

Plate 5. Survey unit 25 looking south-west.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SU #</th>
<th>Landform</th>
<th>Prior disturbance</th>
<th>Area sq m</th>
<th>Exposure sq m</th>
<th>Visibility sq m</th>
<th>Effective Survey Coverage ESC %</th>
<th>Predicted subsurface artefact density</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>simple slope aspect – N-NW; gradient 4 - 16º</td>
<td>moderate: original clearance; grazing; fencing; Optus cable; vehicle tracks; Princes Hwy construction</td>
<td>18456</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 very low/low</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>crest aspect open; gradient 0 - 12º</td>
<td>moderate: original clearance; vehicle track; Princes Hwy construction</td>
<td>5829</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>84.6</td>
<td>0.36 low</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>simple slope aspect NW - N; gradient 4 - 15º</td>
<td>moderate: original clearance; fencing; cleared track; Telstra cable; Princes Hwy construction</td>
<td>17658</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 very low</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>simple slope; aspect S; gradient 4 - 16º</td>
<td>moderate: original clearance; fencing; Telstra cable</td>
<td>35266</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 very low</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>drainage depression; aspect SW; gradient 1 - 3º</td>
<td>moderate: original clearance;</td>
<td>7212</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 very low</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 8.44 ha 0.018 ha 0.008 ha 0.1 %

Table 1. Summary of survey unit descriptions and survey coverage.

4. CONCLUSION

A comprehensive field survey and assessment has been undertaken of the extended survey area. No Aboriginal objects, areas or places were identified. Furthermore, all areas are assessed to be of low or very low archaeological potential. There are no Aboriginal heritage constraints relating to the proposed activity area. Therefore, no further assessments are required.

5. REFERENCES


20th August 2012

Timothy Webster
Roads and Maritime Services
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PO Box 477 Wollongong East NSW 2520

Dear Sir

Re Dignams Creek - Princess Highway realignment - the new alignment and stock pile areas:

Following a redesign, it is proposed that impacts would occur in SU13 and a part of SU14 (as defined in my earlier reports). The Survey Units have previously been defined as being archaeologically sensitive.

SU13 was originally assessed to potentially be a PAD and to contain artefacts in moderate density. However, since then, NSW Archaeology Pty Ltd has conducted subsurface excavation in a comparable landform (SU11) which was found to contain artefacts in extremely low (negligible density). Extrapolating those results, SU13 is now assessed to be of extremely low archaeological significance and potential also. Accordingly there is no need to conduct test excavation in SU13.

The proposed cut area is outside the sensitive area in SU14.

The remainder of the Survey Units which would be impacted as a result of the proposed new realignment are located in landforms previously surveyed and assessed to be of low archaeological and cultural heritage significance.

Yours faithfully

Dr Julie Dibden
New South Wales Archaeology Pty Limited